



Awakening H O L I N E S S

A CALL TO THE 21ST CENTURY CHURCH

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AWAKENING HOLINESS: A SERIOUS CALL TO THE 21ST CENTURY

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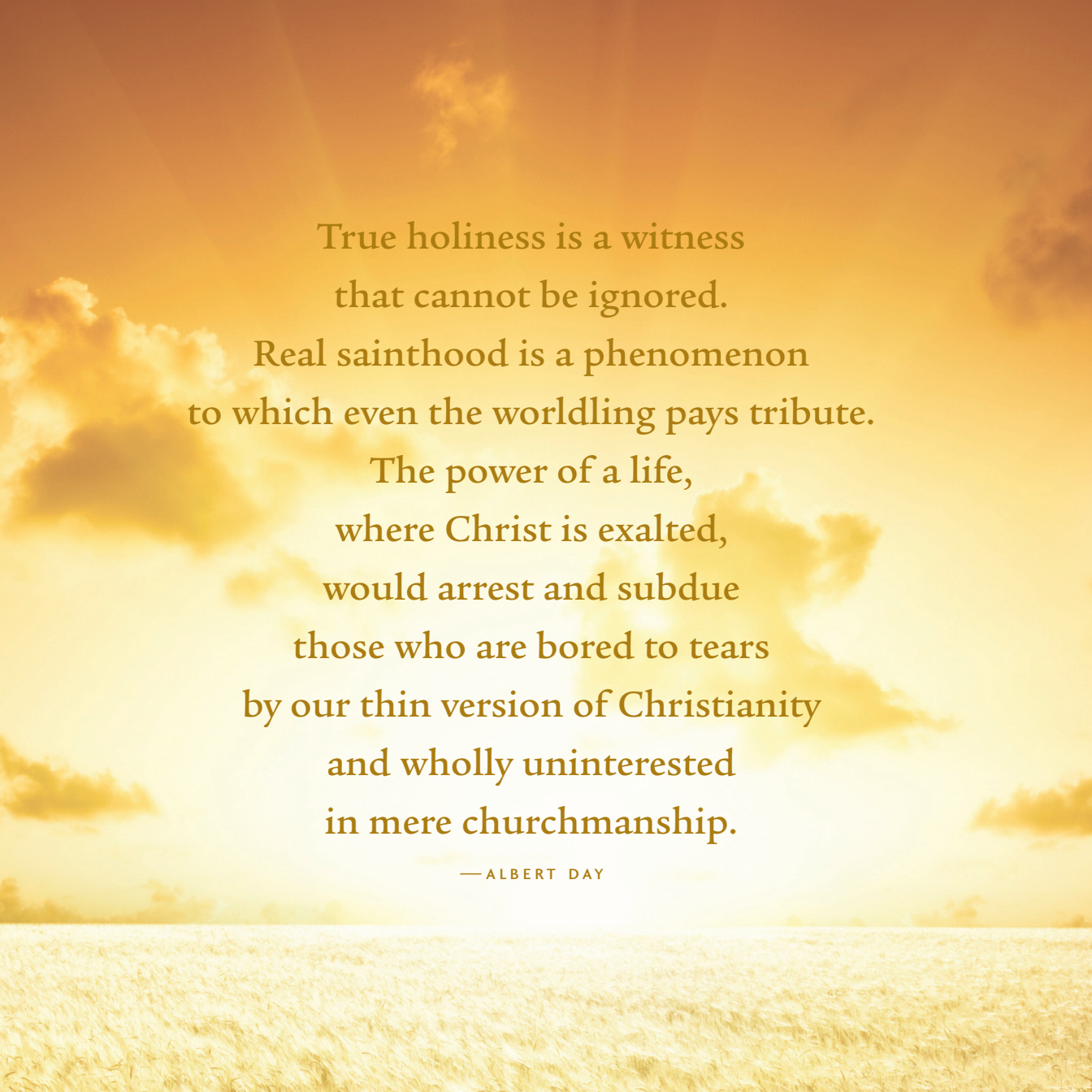
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T A B L E O F C O N T E N T S

Foreword.....	3
Missional Holiness.....	5
Personal Holiness.....	17
Community Holiness.....	25
Global Holiness	31
Increasing and Abounding in Holiness.....	39

The background of the image is a warm, golden-hued landscape. The bottom half shows a field of tall, golden grasses or wheat, slightly out of focus. The top half is a bright sky with soft, golden clouds, suggesting a sunrise or sunset. The overall color palette is monochromatic, dominated by shades of yellow, orange, and gold.

True holiness is a witness
that cannot be ignored.

Real sainthood is a phenomenon
to which even the worldling pays tribute.

The power of a life,
where Christ is exalted,
would arrest and subdue
those who are bored to tears
by our thin version of Christianity
and wholly uninterested
in mere churchmanship.

—ALBERT DAY

F O R E W O R D

There is nothing more powerful than an idea whose time has come.

Though wrong about many things, Victor Hugo got it right when he spoke these words. To this famous quip I would append one additional word: *again*. Nothing is more powerful than an idea whose time has come again. The idea is holiness. Holiness is the radiant, beautiful idea at the heart of God. If the essence of the Triune God can be captured by human language, it would cohere in the words, “Holy Love.” Holiness is the beautiful movement of the presence and power of God sweeping across the cosmos, spreading Scriptural holiness across the lands, bringing New Creation in its powerful wake.

John Wesley, in his revolutionary little book, *A Plain Account of Christian Perfection*, captures the call to holiness in this passage:

This man can now testify to all mankind, ‘I am crucified with Christ: Nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me.’ He is ‘holy as God who called’ him ‘is holy,’ both in heart and ‘in all manner of conversation.’ He ‘loveth the Lord his God with all his heart,’ and serveth him ‘with all his strength.’ He ‘loveth his neighbour,’ every man, ‘as himself;’ yea, ‘as Christ loveth us;’ them, in particular, that ‘despitefully use him and persecute him, because they know not the Son, neither the Father.’ Indeed his soul is all love, filled with ‘bowels of mercies, kindness, meekness, gentleness, longsuffering.’ And his life agreeth thereto, full of ‘the work of faith, the patience of hope, the labour of love.’ And whatsoever he ‘doeth either in word or deed,’ he ‘doeth it all in the name,’ in the love and power, ‘of the Lord Jesus.’ In a word, he doeth ‘the will of God on earth, as it is done in heaven.’

This it is to be a perfect man, to be ‘sanctified throughout;’ even ‘to have a heart so all-flaming with the love of God,’ (to use Archbishop Usher’s words,) ‘as continually to offer up every thought, word, and work, as a spiritual sacrifice, acceptable to God through Christ.’ In every thought of our hearts, in every word of our tongues, in every work of our hands, to ‘show forth his praise, who hath called us out of darkness into his marvellous light.’ O that both we, and all who seek the Lord Jesus in sincerity, may thus ‘be made perfect in one!’

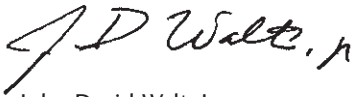
His brother, Charles, in characteristic fashion, brings this gospel into the realm of song:

*Finish, then, Thy new creation;
Pure and spotless let us be.
Let us see Thy great salvation
Perfectly restored in Thee;
Changed from glory into glory,
Till in heaven we take our place,
Till we cast our crowns before Thee
Lost in wonder, love, and praise.*

In the fall of 2010, Dr. Timothy C. Tennent, the eighth President of Asbury Theological Seminary, offered the following series of addresses to the Seminary community. He outlines the broad contours of an ancient movement ready to burst forth into a new day. He boldly calls for a new movement of holiness, a Kingdom renaissance, naming it Neo-Holiness.

Please receive this word from our President as a gift from our Seminary to you. Please pass it along to friends and allies in the faith. And remember, "There is nothing so powerful as an idea whose time has come again!"

For the Lord and for Asbury Seminary,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "J.D. Walt, Jr." The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, sweeping initial "J" and a trailing flourish.

John David Walt, Jr.
Seedbed Publishing
The Day of Epiphany, 2012

Missional HOLINESS

During July 2009, just a few days after I began my ministry as president of Asbury Theological Seminary, someone came up to me and thrust a copy of the *Jessamine Journal* into my hands and said, “Congratulations, you made the front page!” Now the *Jessamine Journal* is not the *New York Times* or the *Boston Globe*. Okay, it’s not even like being mentioned in Miley Cyrus’ blog, but I was on the front page of the *Jessamine Journal*. I glanced down and saw the Asbury Seminary article... and then it happened. My eye scanned the rest of the front page, and then I saw it—the real front page story that had people talking—not my Presidency, but, on the same page as our presidential announcement, was the other front page story of the day. Cracker Barrel announced the opening of a new restaurant on Nicholasville Road. That was the real news on everyone’s lips: Cracker Barrel at Brannon Crossing!

There is at least one thing that Asbury Theological Seminary and Cracker Barrel have in common. We both have mission statements. Cracker Barrel’s mission statement is three single syllable words—it’s simple, it’s unforgettable, and it clearly captures their mission: eat, shop, relax! That is the Cracker Barrel mission: EAT, SHOP and RELAX. The **eating** is, of course, classic southern cuisine—the kind of stuff that many of us grew up eating—biscuits and gravy, corn bread, chicken, country fried steak, etc. You won’t find any sushi or cappuccino at Cracker Barrel. The **shopping** is, of course, a reference to the fact that every Cracker Barrel restaurant is attached to a store that sells a wide array of goods, all mass produced in China, but made to look like your grandparents handcrafted them in Appalachia. The **relaxing** is the most interesting part of the mission statement. You see, Cracker Barrel is not just selling food and knick knacks. They sell an experience, a feeling of going back in time when the pace of life was slower, things were simpler, and people seemed to be happier. This feeling is conveyed through hundreds of symbols of the past, which are hanging on the walls. Their walls are festooned with objects from the past—mostly early 20th century items, including washboards, advertisements for talcum powders and old automobile tags. The front of every Cracker Barrel is a porch, lined with rocking chairs and large checker boards, recalling a slower paced, more relaxed period. The store sells old TV serials such as *Leave it to Beaver*, *The Partridge Family*, and *The Andy Griffith Show*. In many ways Cracker Barrel is a shrine to the past. Modern 21st century people sit at tables in this shrine and eat, relax and maybe

do some shopping. Then they return to the “real world” where nobody has ever heard of talcum powders and it’s hard to find a *Leave it to Beaver* family anywhere.

This is, in a nutshell, a picture of what it is like for many people who go to church today. Church, for many, is a shrine to the past, a weekly escape from the worries and anxieties of the real world they inhabit. Modern people come and sit in strange, long chairs called pews in church buildings, surrounded by numerous relics from the past, many of which they know little to nothing about. However, church does produce a certain kind of feeling. The stained glass, the agrarian scenes, the strange swaths of first century clothing, maybe even a sheep in Jesus’ arms, can be comforting. For many, the inside of a church is a strange, alien world—the sights, sounds, and if it is a Roman Catholic or Eastern Orthodox, the smells are all unusual. The Church has its own vocabulary, our own “foreign language.” Words such as *redemption* and *sanctification* are not normally bandied about the market place! All of it makes perfect sense to the cultural and ecclesiastical insiders—those who have been raised in church, who have learned the language of discourse, who are not surprised to see a group of people standing in choir robes, or people lifting their hands singing “Blessed be Your Name.” It is a “come and see” model, a “come and experience” model. It is not really set up to be a “go and tell” model. It is hard to export all of that into the streets. Its DNA is not really missional, though many have tried to adapt it as such.

You see, the non-missional church is the inevitable child of Christendom. By Christendom I don’t mean merely the notion of an official state church as has been experienced in Western Europe or Latin America, but the broader idea of Christendom, which is simply a church that occupies the center of cultural life and assumes that people grow up in Christian homes. Christendom recalls a church where the vocabulary of discourse is consonant with the broader culture’s vocabulary of discourse.

In Christendom it is assumed that most people in the culture are “church-goers” and evangelism happens passively. The dominant values of the culture flow out of the church, albeit in a domesticated form that has sanded down the harsh prophetic edges and, all too frequently, has succumbed to the seductive temptations of power and social location. However, that is a world of our past. It is no longer the world of

the early 21st century, nor will it likely be the world of 2050, which is the world where you will exercise your greatest influence and leadership.

The Church must awaken to these new realities and transition to equip men and women for ministry in a post-Christendom world. This is a challenge, not only for those of us in the Western world that has become decidedly post-Christendom, and, perhaps, culturally post-Christian, but even more so for those parts of the world, particularly throughout Asia and Africa, where the Church is growing rapidly in a context where Christianity is on the margins of the culture. Their culture grows in a post or non-Christendom world that doesn't even have the memory of Christendom. The challenge of training, preparing and equipping a new generation of leaders for a post-Christendom world is a challenge that is shared by every seminary in the country.

What does it mean for us to “spread scriptural holiness” in a post-Christendom, global Christian context?

In response to these questions,

I implore the Church to embrace and become practitioners of what I call *missional holiness*.

What do I mean by missional holiness? Missional holiness brings together two streams of historical understandings of pneumatology (Holy Spirit) that have often lived in isolation from one another. **The first stream**, which is central to our holiness roots, is understanding the Holy Spirit's primary role as inwardly sanctifying us from sin—the eradication of that sinful orientation and living a life of dedicated purity. It recalls the great call of God that stretches from Leviticus 11:44-45 to I Peter 1:16, to be holy, because He is holy.

The second pneumatological stream is understanding the role of the Holy Spirit as empowering the Church for effective and bold witness in the world. This stream recalls that bold unction of the Holy Spirit which turned the denying Peter of Matthew 26 into the proclaiming Peter of Acts 2. The first stream emphasizes the Holy Spirit's work in our interior life. The second stream thinks of the Holy Spirit as the one who empowers us for bold, external witness in the world. Today, we must embrace a radical form of missional holiness that unites these two streams. Inward and outward holiness together in full

embrace. missional holiness is what our mission statement is pointing to when it calls us to “spread scriptural holiness throughout the world.” One or the other of these streams can be observed in the holiness movement, the Keswick movement, the Pentecostal movement, the Charismatic movement, the Convergence movement, or the missional church movement, but rarely have they been effectively brought together.

Methodism was, as we well know, an 18th century protest movement to revitalize the church of its day. Because Methodism arose two centuries after the Reformation, Wesley observed the long-term fruit of the weak pneumatology of the Reformation. Therefore, Methodism represented, among other things, a pneumatological and ecclesiastical corrective to the theology of the magisterial reformers, who inadvertently had created a functional subordinationism in their doctrine of the Holy Spirit. [Methodism, among other things, corrected the theology inadvertently created by the Magisterial Reformers, which placed the Holy Spirit in subordination to the other two members of the Trinity.] This continues to this day in many of the classic works of Reformed theology. There is a robust defense of the deity of the Holy Spirit as a full member of the Trinity, but the actual work of the Holy Spirit is often organized as a subset of Christology, as the One who applies the work of Christ to the believer. Compare, for example, the systematic theologies of Henry Theissen or Louis Berkhof with Thomas Oden’s three volume work and you will really see this point in stark contrast.

We shouldn’t be overly critical of the Magisterial Reformers on this point. They never claimed that they had completed the Reformation. In fact, Luther, himself, proclaimed, *ecclesia semper reformanda*—the Church always in Reformation. Furthermore, the Reformers understood that the loss of Biblical Christology in the overall meta-narrative during the late medieval period was so great that it required the full attention of the Church to re-articulate who Christ is, the centrality of His person, work and the need to call men and women to faith in Jesus Christ. The words *sola scriptura*, *sola fide*, *sola gratia*, *solus Christus* are the rallying cries of the Reformation, and we should only applaud them for their focus on the central acts of the meta-narrative centered on Jesus Christ and our response to them. Luther’s task was to re-establish the doorway into the household of faith, i.e. to unambiguously set forth what it means to *become* a Christian. The full implications for what it means, not just to become, but to be a Christian had to unfold over time. However, in retrospect—200 years after Luther—Wesley discerned the glaring neglect of the significance of Pentecost, the coming of the Holy Spirit, sanctification and the life and social impact of the Church in the world.

The Reformation left us with a truncated meta-narrative that, speaking frankly, moves from Fall to Covenant to Incarnation to Cross, and finally to the Resurrection and ascension, and then comes to a virtual stop.

While this truncated meta-narrative did restore the centrality of Christ and His work, it also, over time, created problems in the life of the Church that an 18th century Wesley keenly observed. The Church needed then, as it does today, more reformation, as it more fully responds to the full meta-narrative.

Wesley continued the ongoing reformation process by making the radical suggestion that a believer must be “filled with the Holy Spirit,” as this alone is the evidence of true Christianity (*Scriptural Christianity*). In Wesley, faith and fruit are finally being joyfully wed! If the gospel ends in the resurrection of Christ, then the Church has only an instrumental function to look back and proclaim what God did in the past, with no clear connection to what He is doing now in and through His Church in the world. In this truncated meta-narrative, a parachurch organization might get the job done with greater efficiency and less cost—a marketed gospel domesticated by American pragmatism. From this vantage point, the Church is like a food court, with varying programs to meet the needs of religious consumers.

However, Wesley saw that the Church had not only an instrumental role in God’s unfolding meta-narrative, but was itself part of the meta-narrative.

The Church is more than a community of individuals who have appropriated the work of Christ. The Church has a corporate, ontological role, embodied in community, reflecting the Trinity, and central to God’s unfolding plan.

The Church doesn’t just proclaim what God did, the Church is what God is doing in the world.

“I will build my Church,” (Matthew 16:18) declares our Lord Jesus. The heart of the gospel may, indeed, be in the cross and resurrection, but the gospel continues to unfold in the coming of the Holy Spirit, the life

of the Church in the world, and culminated in the return of Christ and the ushering in of the New Creation. The Bible does not run from Genesis 3 to Revelation 20—the Fall to the Return. It runs from Genesis 1 to Revelation 22—from Creation to New Creation. Missional holiness enables the Church to see the full meta-narrative that stretches from creation to fall to covenant to incarnation to cross and resurrection to ascension, the gift of the Holy Spirit, the life of the Church, the return of Christ and the final ushering in of the New Creation. Along the way, the *ordo salutis* gets a more robust understanding of sanctification!

Wesley profoundly understood this and, therefore, the Methodist movement represents a corrective, a renewed sense that the gospel continues to unfold in the world. Wesley saw that the people of God must not be declared holy in merely a forensic, judicial, private sense, but be holy in the practical, lived out public sense! Faith and fruit must meet and be joyfully wed. Wesley's emphasis on sanctification is his attempt to extend the meta-narrative to be fully Trinitarian, fully embracing that God is building the people of God. The subsequent holiness movement in all of its manifestations represents a holy “push back” of Luther's doctrine of *simul iustus et peccator*—simultaneously righteous and sinner. In Luther's theology righteousness is *alien* righteousness. We are not made upright. We cannot become upright. We can only be declared upright as the righteousness of Christ is imputed into the life of the believer. For Luther, sanctification is still largely a subset of his Christology. This makes perfect sense from the perspective of a truncated meta-narrative, which ends in Christ and never quite makes it to Pentecost. However, Wesley was not prepared to accept sin as the inevitable and ongoing experience of the believer. Through the power of the Holy Spirit, Wesley affirmed that “one might overcome sin and the world.”¹ The new creation has broken into the present age in Jesus Christ. Through the empowering presence of the Holy Spirit it is being appropriated into the life and experience of the believer—that's what the second blessing is all about! Brothers and sisters, we are called to be holy, as the Scripture declares, “Without holiness no one will see the Lord.” Luther experienced anxiety about the book of James because Luther's task was to defend the front door of the house. When you look at the entire household of faith, James is more interested in the living room than in the front door. The life of holiness is not a novel doctrine. Wesley re-discovered it in the Scriptures. Wesley heard it afresh from the Nicene Creed, which set forth four marks of the true Church: One, *Holy*, Catholic and Apostolic Church. Wesley learned it from the fourth century saint Macarius the Egyptian. He learned it from the 15th century Thomas á Kempis. He learned it from the pietistic Moravians of his own day, such as Peter Bohler and Nicholas von Zinzendorf.

¹ Donald W. Dayton, *Theological Roots of Pentecostalism* (Grand Rapids: Francis Asbury Press, 1987), 37.

The Moravians represented the non-magisterial reformation; therefore, they were inherently more in touch with a post-Christendom world since they never accepted the Christendom project. These were Wesley's tutors in holiness: Biblical authors, patristic saints, pre-Reformation mystics and pietistic Moravians, not to mention his own heart-warming experiences of Aldersgate and Fetter's Lane.

Wesley eventually emphasized the Spirit's role in the sanctification of believers and accepted the idea of a "second" crisis experience subsequent to justification, a doctrine that would become a key feature in later holiness and Pentecostal pneumatology. He referred to this experience in various ways, including "perfect love," "eradication of inbred sin," "second blessing," and "entire sanctification," all of which influenced the theology of the holiness tradition.² Christian movements around the world will use different terminology to describe this. We say "entire sanctification," or "second blessing." Pentecostals call it "baptism in the Holy Spirit," while the Eastern Orthodox call it becoming "living icons." But, taken together, the Church around the world is increasingly recognizing that along with *sola Scriptura*, *sola fide*, *sola gratia*, *solus Christus*, we must add *solus Spiritus*—the Holy Spirit *alone* makes the Church holy! The Holy Spirit *alone* empowers us for holy mission in the world. Missional holiness!

Wesley's emphasis on sanctification is his attempt to extend the meta-narrative—to continue the Reformation—to help the Church be more fully Trinitarian. His theology began with a focus on holiness as the eradication of sin, the inward pneumatological stream. However, as Wesley's pneumatology developed, he came to see the public and external power of holiness as the Church bears fruit for the kingdom. The witness of the Spirit that confirms faith becomes in Wesley the power of the Spirit to produce fruit and to transform the world—to spread scriptural holiness through the world.

This is missional holiness. The Holy Spirit empowering believers for witness, service, evangelism and church planting.

This is why I call us to embrace missional holiness.

² It should be noted that Wesley's doctrine of 'entire sanctification' does not imply that believers are without sin. Also, Wesley himself did not use the phrase, 'baptism in the Holy Spirit,' but it was used by John Fletcher, the theologian of Methodism, who applied the phrase to Wesley's doctrine of sanctification in his multi-volume work, *Checks to Antinomianism*.

Missional holiness insists on discipleship and sanctification in the lives of believers, but also joins that with a deeper appreciation that we are cleansed from sin so that we can more effectively proclaim and model Christ's life into the world.

It is this missional focus that unleashed the dynamic church planting ministry of Francis Asbury. It is missional holiness that made Wesley an evangelical preaching, church planting, society organizing theologian.

What does this mean for us today? What does it mean for us to embrace missional holiness? I would like to make three suggestions.

First, missional holiness renews the emphasis on our evangelistic-church planting history and calling. In the world of Christendom, evangelism happens passively, mostly within the home—pillow and hearth catechesis—and through the ordinary work of confirmation classes. However, the traditional heartlands of the Church are today increasingly post-Christendom. The Western world is the fastest growing mission field in the world. The Church in Africa and Asia is growing in a context where Christianity is quite separate from any Christendom models. Even Latin America, after centuries of Christendom, is today emerging as a post-Christendom church, in large part due to the dramatic inroads Pentecostalism is making in traditional, magisterial Roman Catholicism.

We have to learn how to evangelize and plant churches again, and do it from the prophetic margins, not the center, of culture.

I look for the day when the Wesleyan Church will be one of the great church planting centers in the world, modeling how to plant churches in post-Christendom cultures around the world. This can happen if we embrace missional holiness.

Second, missional holiness reminds us that holiness is central to the meta-narrative, a true mark of the Church, not a sectarian doctrine. We must embody for the world what it means to be a holy people.

We must never forget the basic lesson of the Reformation that teaches what is necessary to become a Christian, but we also dare not lose our

holy momentum in setting forth what it means to be a Christian—to live as a disciplined believer.

We must not forget that the only actual imperative form in Matthew's Great Commission is the word *matheteusate*—‘make disciples.’ This was Wesley's passion, which led to holy clubs and class meetings and people being called “Methodists.” If people ask you what in the world happened to Methodism, say, happened the day that the word *Methodist* became a noun rather than an adjective. The day we get our adjective back, is the day we will once again model missional discipleship. If we at as a Church can't model holiness, then we ought to change our name, because holiness is central to the DNA of who we are.

We still believe in a post-conversion experience with the Holy Spirit that re-orientes our affections away from sin and toward holiness. The second blessing makes perfect sense once the meta-narrative itself is released from its truncated state and fully embraces not only the person, but the work of the Holy Spirit. Missional holiness is the bridge between faith and fruit.

Third, if we, in true Wesleyan tradition, capture the full meta-narrative from creation to New Creation, then we will also capture a truly global, non-sectarian vision of the Church. You see, what I am advocating today is not a “quick fix,” but a generational transformation of Asbury Theological Seminary and the Church. Like building a cathedral, each generation had its part.

For us, missional holiness means understanding “theological education” holistically, including formation of the mind, inward transformation and discipleship, and missional equipping for bold service in the world.

We go forth not only as bearers of the gospel to those who have not heard, but as partners with the Church of Jesus Christ around the world. We have resources and capacities that can enormously encourage and assist the global Church. Likewise, the global Church has insights into evangelism and church planting for a post-Christendom world that we desperately need to receive. In India, I have met brothers who have seen the lame healed, the dead raised, and the good news preached to the poor. I have had the privilege of training hundreds of church planters in India and have seen the fruit of this vitality. In Africa, I have met sisters in Christ who have seen visions and seen thousands come to Christ in the dawning of new days of Pentecost. I had the joy of personally baptizing a new Chinese believer in the Yangtze River. We baptized in the dead of night for fear of the authorities, but in the process, I captured a renewed glimpse of what God is doing in China. God is moving in the global Church, and we are called to be a part of it.

John Wesley prophetically wrote what I believe is one of the best definitions of missional holiness. In *General Spread of the Gospel* he says, “May we not suppose that the same leaven of pure and undefiled religion of the experimental knowledge and love of God, of inward and outward holiness, will... gradually be diffused... to the remotest parts of not only Europe, but of Africa, Asia and America.” You see, Wesley’s missional holiness and fully envisioned meta-narrative, not only gives us *solus spiritus*, but it also gives us *sola ecclesia*. This phrase means that the Church *alone* is the embodiment of the New Creation and is the visible expression of God’s redemptive *missio dei* in the world.

Brothers and sisters, we are called to go into all the world precisely because God’s prevenient grace has already beat us there. That prevenient grace becomes embodied in modern flesh and blood versions of the Macadonian Man, who continues to call and beckon us. The worship of Jesus that John eschatologically sees in the New Creation is from men and women from every tribe, tongue, and language worshipping the Lord. Today, worship is rising in Spanish and English and German and French, but that will never suffice—not at this banquet! The New Creation is calling forth worship in Mandarin and Farsi and Kurdish and Afrikaans and Lao and Hausa and Hindi and Swahili and Korean and Arabic and hundreds more! I can almost hear the strains of

the New Creation now as the global Church explodes in growth!

Holiness never impacts the world in some vague, generic, or merely forensic sense, but in the enfleshed lives of real people in local contexts.

Missional holiness must become embodied in the lives of the rice farmer in Tianjin, China, the textile worker in Hanoi, the literature professor in Sao Paulo, the construction worker in Nairobi, the businesswoman in Budapest, the soccer mom in Seattle, the IT professional in Mumbai, and the school teacher in Orlando. This is missional holiness for a post-Christendom world!

Cracker Barrel may have given us those three comforting words:

EAT, SHOP, RELAX

But, we have a far more compelling, powerful and transforming mission. Not, EAT, SHOP, and RELAX, but Faith, Holiness, and New Creation! May those words summon us afresh as the people of God called to missional holiness.

Amen.

Personal HOLINESS

I CANNOT FULLY EXPRESS TO YOU THE JOY THAT WAS OURS WHEN IN THE SPRING OF 1985—OVER 25 YEARS AGO—OUR FIRST CHILD WAS BORN.

Jonathan was born rather late at night after 30 hours of labor, and I remember looking at my watch right there in the delivery room when he was born. It was 10:30 p.m. on May 24. For a Methodist to have a child born on May 24 is a great gift indeed. May 24 you will recall, is also the day when John Wesley had his famous heartwarming experience at Aldersgate. It ranks as the most well known historical event in our movement. (In contrast, my birthday is September 24 and about the only thing I know in history that happened on September 24, is the birth of the American Postal Service—shall we say, not quite up there with Aldersgate). But, it was on May 24 that Wesley went “unwillingly” down to a Christian society meeting and there encountered a reading of Martin Luther’s preface to Paul’s Epistle to the Romans. Listen to Wesley’s own words: “About a quarter before nine, while the reader was describing the change which God works in the heart through faith in Christ, I felt my heart strangely warmed. I felt I did trust in Christ alone for salvation; and an assurance was given me that He had taken away my sins, even mine, and saved me from the law of sin and death.”

Scholars and historians still debate about what precisely happened to Wesley that night—was this his conversion experience or not. The point, however, is that Wesley went away transformed. That night he heard the gospel. He really heard it at the deepest level. It was a *spagnitzomoi* moment, the word used to describe Jesus being “deeply moved within.” He got the point. He understood we are justified through the completed work of Jesus Christ on the cross of Calvary. We cannot add to that work—*sola fide*—*solus Christus*. Wesley really heard the Reformation recovery of the biblical message. It is no mistake that this transformation came as someone was reading Martin Luther’s preface to the book of Romans. That point should not be lost on us. For Luther’s “tower experience” in the 16th century (tower of the Black Cloister in Wittenburg, Augustine monastery), was much like Wesley’s Aldersgate experience in the 18th century. They suddenly really heard the full force of Paul when he says, “For in the gospel a righteousness from God is revealed, a righteousness that is by faith from first to last” (Romans 1:17). They really heard something deep within when they read those words, “This righteousness from God comes through faith in Jesus Christ to all

who believe” (Romans 3:22). Some fresh wind blew across their darkened soul when they read those words of St. Paul, “No one is justified by observing the law, but by faith in Jesus Christ” (Galatians 2:16). It is not less than a doctrine, but it is much more than a doctrine. It must be personalized. We need to understand that the doctrine of justification by faith is one of those doctrines that you don’t just believe or affirm ... like people believe or don’t believe in infant baptism or the rapture or supralapsarianism. This is not in that category. This is a foundational doctrine that defines Christian identity. The doctrine of justification by faith is a doctrine that you really need to personally hear at some deep level. You need to believe it; yet, you also need to experience it. To use the language of the 18th century revivalists, this is not theoretical religion. This is experimental religion. We would say experiential. This is precisely what happened to Wesley on May 24, 1738, at about quarter till nine. For convenience sake, let’s call this the May 24 story.

You need to have a May 24 story.

It may not have happened to you on May 24. You may not even remember the date or that it took place at a quarter before nine! But you need a May 24 story. This is your stake in the ground. This is the point when you “got it.” This is the point when you said, “I did trust in Christ, Christ alone for my salvation, and an assurance was given to me that my sins, even mine, were taken away, and I was delivered from the law of sin and death.” It was a true doctrine on May 23, but something happened that took it from the 30,000 foot level of Pauline theology or biblical theology or even a major 16th century church fight, and made it come alive! So, let’s call it the May 24 story. It’s your birth story! It’s about the foundation. It’s about walking through the front door.

On May 24, 1738, Wesley had a heartwarming, life changing, course altering experience at Aldersgate. Suddenly he discovered the word *faith*. Wesley scholars in our midst can correct my memory, but as I recall Wesley only used the word *faith* seven times in his pre-Aldersgate sermons. He always used the term in kind of generic “faith of the Church” kind of theme, never in reference to personal, justifying faith. After Aldersgate, his sermons were filled with references to faith.

I was on a youth group trip in the mountains of Northern Georgia, and we stopped one evening at a boarding school in Rabun Gap (Nacoochee Valley-Rabun Gap). We, along with a few hundred residents of the school, sat on wooden stools around tables and ate supper in a large, grungy cafeteria. It was the summer of 1975. At

the end of supper we were anxious to board the bus and get on home to Atlanta when a man got up to give an after-supper devotional. I—if I may borrow the language of Wesley—reluctantly sat back down on my wooden stool to wait out the devotional. The chaplain opened his Bible to Philippians 3 and shared very clearly from Paul’s declaration that he counts all things rubbish that he might be “found in Him, not having a righteousness of my own... but that which is through faith in Christ” (Philippians 3:8-9). Something happened as I sat there—I heard the gospel. Wesley’s “Aldersgate experience,” like Luther’s “tower experience,” or my own “boarding school cafeteria experience,” and you fill in your own story... these are May 24 stories.

There are some stories that you can’t tell until other stories are told. There are some stories in life that are logically prior and necessary pre-requisites to other stories. Your birth story, or your conversion story, or your wedding story, are often stories that logically lay prior to other kinds of stories. Your May 24 story is a vital and logically prior story.

I want to tell another story—not the May 24 story, but another one, maybe a new story for some of you. However, I’m acknowledging up front that this new story requires that you already have a May 24 story as a prerequisite. If you don’t have that, then nothing I am about to say will make a bit of sense.

This brings us to New Year’s Eve, bringing in the year 1739. Wesley goes to another society meeting. This one hasn’t penetrated the popular imagination like Aldersgate, but it is essential if you are going to really understand Wesley and the whole Methodist movement. He traveled, not to Aldersgate, but to Fetters Lane.

That night at Fetters Lane they had a prayer meeting, a kind of night watch vigil to bring in the New Year. It is a long standing tradition among many Christians to pray in the New Year. It is a lot more exciting than watching the ball drop with Dick Clark. So they are praying, and around 3 a.m. (Wesley was very particular in his journals about recording the time things happened!) January 1, 1739, something dramatic happened to Wesley. He later called it his personal Day of Pentecost. He received a sanctifying experience where God re-oriented his heart and life. Listen to his own words, “On Monday morning, January 1, 1739, Mr. Hall and my brother Charles were present in Fetters Lane, with about sixty of our brethren.

At about three in the morning, as we were continuing instant in prayer, the power of God came mightily upon us insomuch that many cried out for exceeding joy and many fell down to the ground.

As soon as we were recovered a little from that awe and amazement at the presence of His majesty, we broke out with one voice, ‘we praise Thee, O God, and we acknowledge Thee to be the Lord.’”

Wesley believed in sanctification as a doctrine before 1739, but it is was here that he experienced it. It became a new chapter in his spiritual journey. We’ll call it the Fetters Lane story. There is the May 24 story and there is the Fetters Lane story. Both are essential in the life of the believer. Wesley’s life was re-oriented. He became sanctified. He was filled with the Holy Spirit.

The doctrine of entire sanctification is one of the most misunderstood doctrines in our movement. It is misunderstood because we haven’t been prepared to hear it. When most of us hear the word *sanctification* we think of it as a forensic term. We thing being sanctified means that you are divinely certified before God’s court of justice as someone without any sin in your life and, once sanctified, you will never sin again. That is not what Wesley taught or meant by sanctification. For Wesley sanctification is not really a forensic term at all. You could be justified alone on a deserted island, but sanctification is inherently relational. In fact, it is relational to the core. It is Trinitarian. It is that which happens when we are brought fully into relationship with the Triune God. You see, we are judged not just for the temporal sins that we commit. This reduces the whole conversation to a forensic discussion. When we sin, we are judged because in that moment of choosing sin we are actually electing the absence of God in our lives at that point. You see, sanctification is always relational. Sin separates us from God. Sin is our embrace of the absence of God in our lives.

We are justified by faith in Jesus Christ, but we are sanctified by faith as we come into full relationship with the Triune God.

Wesley taught that we are justified by faith and we are sanctified by faith. As a relational term, entire sanctification means that your whole life, your body and your spirit have been re-oriented.

Entire sanctification means that our entire heart has been re-oriented toward the joyful company of the Triune God. You are in a new colloquy.

Sanctification was, for Wesley, not the end of some long drudge out of the life of sin, but joining the joyful assembly of those who have truly found joy. For Wesley, holiness is the crown of true happiness.

Sanctification is what purifies us from everything that “contaminates body and spirit, perfecting holiness out of reverence for God.”

Sin is encamped around us on every side, but it is no longer our ally. We burn the secret agreements we have—to nod and wink and to dance with sin in the night while we confess Christ in the day. We leave behind the agonizingly torn hearts, where we always live under condemnation because sin is always creeping back into our lives.

To be sanctified is to receive a second blessing—a great gift from God—a gift that changes your heart, re-orientes your relationships with the Triune God and with others, giving you the capacity to love God and your neighbor in new and profound ways.

It transforms your perspective because your heart is re-oriented.

Even sanctified people sin, but the difference is that in the life of a sanctified person, sin becomes your permanent enemy and no longer your secret lover!

The language of *entire sanctification* uses the word *entire* in reference to Greek, not Latin. In Greek *entire* or *complete* can still be improved upon. Our founder H. C. Morrison once said, “There is no state of grace that cannot be improved on.” Whenever someone asked J. C. McPheeters, our second President, “How are you doing?” he joyfully replied, “I’m improving.” It is a new orientation that no longer looks back on the old life, but is always looking forward to the New Creation. It is a life that has been engulfed by new realities, eschatological realities, not the realities of that which is passing away.

A sanctified person is “hard pressed on every side, but not crushed; perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not abandoned; struck down, but not destroyed.” How can Paul write such things? How can you declare such things in your own life? Because he, and you, have been caught up into a higher frame of reference. Your heart has been re-oriented. You have what Wesley once called a “self-forgetful heart,” a life engulfed by “perfect love.”

The best metaphor I ever heard for “perfect love” was a story told by Robert Coleman who taught at Asbury Theological Seminary for 27 years. He, after years at Trinity and Gordon-Conwell, is back at Asbury Seminary teaching in retirement. Coleman was out in the garden working on a hot day, sweat pouring off his body. His son saw him working hard and decided to bring him a glass of water. He went down to the kitchen, pulled up a stool and managed to get up to the sink. He picked up a dirty glass laying in the sink, filled it with luke-warm water, and brought it out to his dad. Coleman commented, “the glass may have been dirty and the water warm, but it was brought to me in perfect love.” Don’t you love that? The self-forgetful heart—the heart that has been reoriented towards love.

Brothers and sisters, hear the word of God...

HEAR THE WORD OF THE APOSTLE PETER IN I PETER 1:13-16:

“Therefore prepare your minds for action: Be self-controlled; set your heart fully on the grace to be given you when Jesus Christ is revealed. As obedient children, do not conform to the evil desires you had when you lived in ignorance. But just as he who called you is holy, so be holy in all you do; for it is written, ‘be holy, because I am holy.’”

HEAR ST. PAUL IN I THESSALONIANS 4:3-8:

“It is God’s will that you should be sanctified: that you should avoid sexual immorality; that each of you should learn to control his own body in a way that is holy and honorable... For God did not call us to be impure, but to live a holy life.”

HEAR OUR LORD JESUS IN ACTS 26:16-18 AS HE COMMISSIONS SAUL OF TARSUS:

“Now get up and stand on your feet. I have appeared to you to appoint you as a servant and as a witness of what you have seen of men and what I will show you. I will rescue you from your own people and from the Gentiles. I am sending you to them to open your eyes and turn them from darkness to light and from the power of Satan to God, so that they may receive forgiveness of sins and a place among those who are sanctified by faith in me.”

HEAR I CORINTHIANS 6:9-11:

“Do you not know that the wicked will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: Neither the

sexually immoral nor idolaters nor adulterers nor male prostitutes nor homosexual offenders nor thieves nor the greedy nor drunkards nor slanderers nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God. And that is what some of you were. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God.”

HEAR I THESSALONIANS 5:23:

“May God himself, the God of all peace, sanctify you through and through. May your whole spirit, soul and body be kept blameless at the coming on our Lord Jesus Christ. The one who calls you is faithful and he will do it.”

HEAR OUR LORD JESUS IN JOHN 17: 17-19:

“Sanctify them by the truth; your word is truth. As you sent me into the world, I have sent them into the world. For them I sanctify myself, that they too may be truly sanctified.”

HEAR THE WRITERS OF HEBREWS IN HEBREWS 12:14:

“Make every effort to live in peace with all men and to be holy, without holiness no one will see the Lord.”

I shared with you earlier that I have a May 24 story. In September of 1977, I was freshmen at Young Harris College, a small United Methodist related college, nestled in the mountains of Northern Georgia. I was a baptized Christian believer, but I had many other affections. I was engrossed in politics, and, the same day I received the second blessing, I was also elected president of my freshman class in college. I had two narratives unfolding in my life. One was to be a Christian but still follow my own affections. The other narrative was to become totally reoriented to divine purposes. I thank God for those dear brothers in Christ who came to me and said, “Do you really want to live for Jesus? Are you prepared for radical change? Do you really want to be put on fire for Jesus and be filled with the Holy Spirit?” I said yes. They prayed for me and I was filled with the Holy Spirit. My heart was reoriented, and I’ve never looked back. I believe that there are some of you who this day would like to stand before God and say, “Fill me with the holy spirit! Give me the second blessing! Lord, sanctify me in Jesus Name! Lord, re-orient my heart!”

Let me be governed by love...
deliver me from me so that I am
truly crucified with Christ and it is
no longer I who live, but Christ
who lives in me.

Community HOLINESS

THERE ARE FEW MORE ESTABLISHED ROUTINES IN LIFE THAN THE FAMOUS BEDTIME STORY. WHEN OUR CHILDREN WERE SMALL IT WAS THE ONLY WAY A DAY COULD BE BROUGHT PROPERLY TO AN END. The number of stories that we read, remembered from our own childhood or made up on the spot during that sacred nightly ritual, must number in the thousands. Eugene Peterson gave us the classic version of the expectant question, “Daddy, tell me a story and put me in it.” Story telling is the most basic human activity. All of our memories are built around stories. When we get together with our friends, what do we do? We tell stories. We exchange little narratives with each other. We laugh and we tell more stories. Life is not just filled with facts and information like much of our email; it is an unfolding story, a narrative. A grand narrative. We call it the “meta-narrative”—the grand story—the *Missio Dei*—the mission of God. “All the world’s a stage,” Shakespeare famously wrote. But, history is more than merely a stage for our stories, our “exits and entrances.”

For Christians the whole of history is a grand stage for God’s mighty acts—our exoduses and His entrances! Elizabeth Browning says, “Earth is crammed with heaven, and every common bush aflame with God, but only those who SEE take off their shoes. The rest sit around eating blackberries and daub their natural faces unaware.” Most people don’t get it. They’re sitting around eating blackberries! (Or looking at their Blackberry!) We live our whole lives in light of this grand story! “Daddy, tell us a story and put us in it!” God is unfolding a grand story and, as the ultimate story teller, He is putting us in it!

The Bible faithfully records that Grand Story. The Bible serves to constantly call us back to the Story, when we are all too often prepared to accept lesser stories, smaller narratives. The greatest positive work of Postmodernism is that it broke the back of the Enlightenment project, or the overt confidence in the inevitability of human progress, while sounding the death knell of Christendom. The great tragedy is that in the process, Postmodernism tore down the meta-narrative, the canopy of truth, leaving us with only our personal truths....When the biblical curtain first rises on this great story—like all the great Epics—it begins “*en medias res*,” or in the middle of the action. We see God creating us in His own image and

breathing into us the breath of life. We are established in this paradise called Eden where we are to live perpetually in His presence. We see a great **cosmic river** that runs right through Eden and separated into four rivers—Pishon, Gihon, Tigris and Euphrates—so that the presence of God dwelling in His people and radiating through us might be exported to the ends of the earth, for we were told to be fruitful and to multiply. In the midst of the Garden we see the **Tree of Life**. All trees are symbols of life, but this tree stands as a symbol for The Life that is ours when we are united with Him who is Life indeed. The serpent is there reminding us that we are stepping onto a stage which has already had previous drama unfold on it. The loss and restoration of that divine Presence through sin is one of the central themes of this great unfolding story. Early on we learn that it is God's presence that makes us the people of God. Christianity is more than Torah, more than Sabbath keeping, and more than circumcision. Those are all crucial marks of identity, but fundamentally Christianity is about God's Presence. Moses would later make this clear when he said to the Lord, "If your Presence does not go with us, do not send us from here. How will anyone know that you are pleased with me and with your people unless you go with us? What else will distinguish your people from all the other people on the face of the earth?" (Exodus 33:15-16). The consequence of sin at the Fall recorded in Genesis 3 is death, which is, at its root, the loss of Presence. The human race lives in perpetual exile from the Presence. Presence lost—Presence regained—that's one of the main themes of this Epic! Sin is more than the deeds we commit, such as legally breaking God's law. Sin is also relational. Sin is electing the absence of God; therefore, holiness is all the ways we elect the presence of God in our lives.

The grand story continues to unfold rather oddly, actually. Strange things are done, agreements are made with certain marginal people, promises are given, and strange rituals are performed. There is a particularly long part of the story that seems to go on endlessly about curtains, a lot of special garments and special pieces of furniture. This furniture includes lamp stands, bowls, a table and a very fancy golden box with fierce looking creatures on the lid. Two men named Bezalel and Oholiab made all the furniture. But, like a 10,000 piece puzzle, slowly enough pieces to the big story start getting placed on the table and we begin to notice the bigger picture. Like the time God said that this big tent—mobile temple—they were constructing was called *Mishkan*. The English renders this Tent of Meeting or Tabernacle, but the word is richer than that; it means "dwelling place." We finally begin to see the reason for all of these elaborate rituals and curtains and outer and inner rooms and a most Holy Place where the Ark of the Covenant was to be kept. These instructions kept the

holiness and showed how God re-establishes His presence. In Exodus 25:8 God declares, “Have them make a sanctuary, a Mishkan, and I will dwell among them!” It’s about the restoration of Presence! This is the theme! If I can quote Sandra Richter in her book, *Epic of Eden*, the holy of holies was “God’s outpost in Adam’s world.” God was re-establishing a beachhead for His presence among His people! The Temple became the place where God’s presence was officially established among the people of God. You will remember that when they were told to construct the Mishkan and, later, Solomon’s Temple, the instructions nourished the idea that localized the holy of holies into a certain place: “God’s outpost in Adam’s world.”

The same pattern is repeated years later when they are settled into the Promised Land and, under Solomon, the Temple is constructed according to a precise pattern. Finally, in I Kings 8 we read the account of the Ark of the Covenant being brought into the Temple and into the holy of holies. Picture the ark being brought on long poles, carved by the sons of Aaron, with innumerable sheep and cattle sacrifices. The priests brought the ark into the Holy of Holies and placed it beneath the wings of the cherubim. These cherubim remind us of the Garden of Eden. After the Fall, Cherubim were placed in the garden to guard the Tree of Life. Inside the ark were, of course, the tablets of stone with the words of the covenant upon them. When the priests withdrew, the glory of the Lord filled the Temple. The priests could not even stand and minister because the presence of God was so powerful and manifest. Solomon declares in I Kings 8:13 that the Temple will be a place for the Lord to dwell forever!

The holy of holies remained, “God’s outpost in Adam’s world” until, in the fullness of time, the Grand Story-teller made a surprise move. He entered into the very history of His own making. God in human flesh. (Christ is the second Adam, revealing God to man, but also man to man). Incarnation. Divine Presence. To use the language of St. John the Apostle, “That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked at and our hands have touched—this we proclaim concerning the Word of life!” (I John 1:1).

At the moment when Christ utters “it is finished” and dies upon the cross, cosmic things begin to happen. One of these is recorded in Matthew 27:51: “At that moment (the death of Christ) the curtain of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom.” This is the curtain that separated the holy place from the Holy of Holies. It certainly is symbolic of the new and living way where, through Christ, we have access into the presence of God. But it is more than that. It is not merely a torn veil, so that we, who were formerly barred not being high priests, can go in. The torn veil affirms the priesthood of all believers. It is never less than

these great truths, but it is more. It is not merely a human movement into the holy of holies, but a divine invasion out of the holy of holies—not just our movement in, but God’s movement out. The holy of holies was God’s outpost in Adam’s world. Now God’s presence dwells in His people, the Church. I will build my Church, declares Jesus.

Paul’s letters use temple imagery to refer to the Church three times. Paul writes to a church that, in many ways, reflects the compromised church of our own day. It is a church filled with division and sin, jealously and quarrelling. “I belong to Paul, I belong to Cephas, I belong to Apollos.” They missed the Grand Epic being caught up in little petty narratives. They pick blueberries when every bush is aflame with the presence of God! Yet, they proudly assert that everything they do is a sign of Sophia, worldly wisdom. This is a sophisticated group. This is the passage—the place—where Paul corrects their view of the church and their vision of what it means to be the People of God!

He begins with the imagery of the field. You are God’s field. Some plant, some water, but God causes the growth. He is trying to lift them up to the big vision. It is not about the people planting or watering; it is about God’s work. Then, in verse 9, Paul shifts the metaphor from a field to a building. You are God’s building. Here he makes the same point in a different way. Paul may be the bricklayer, Peter a roofer, and Apollos the plumber, but it is God’s building. He’s the architect. Jesus Christ is the foundation stone. Here we meet that great text, one that always makes the “must memorize” list. I Corinthians 3:11 says, “For no one can lay any foundation other than the one already laid, which is Jesus Christ!” But, as Paul develops the metaphor, it is not just a generic building that God is constructing, it is the temple! Here is where we begin to capture a deeper understanding of holiness. In the last chapter, we focused on personal holiness and what it means for you and me to have an experience of sanctification—a second work of grace in your life.

But for the Apostle Paul, holiness cannot be understood in merely personal, private terms. It is here that our tradition, speaking frankly, has sometimes let us down.

Holiness had been reduced to something personal and framed in wholly negative terms. We say “Don’t smoke, don’t chew, don’t run with boys who do,” and “No make up, no make out.”

The time has come for a NEO-HOLINESS MOVEMENT! You see, if you eradicate every single sin in your life by the power of the Holy Spirit, you are only half way there. Because the real story of holiness is not what we avoid, but what we produce. It is not just saying no. Rather, it is about a lot of yes! You can't be holy without your neighbor!

In this text we see Paul moving theologically from justification to sanctification. Yet, for St. Paul, it can never be construed as only a personal journey. For Paul, it is a journey in community. It is an eschatological journey that is embodied in community of the church in the present. Jesus Christ is the foundation—that's justification. We are saved by and through and in Jesus Christ—*sola fide, sola Christus*. Hallelujah!

But how are we building on that one foundation? The building happens in community. Here Paul recalls the Temple. Are we building on it with gold, silver, and costly stones? Are we using wood, hay, or straw? It is clear the Corinthians, though their division and sin and bickering, were building with wood, hay and straw. None of it would survive the great eschatological test, the fire of God, which is the Presence and Shekinah glory of God!

Don't you know, Paul declares, that you are God's temple? It is not you singular, but you, the people of God, are God's temple. Paul uses the word *vaos*—the actual sanctuary, the place of God's dwelling, the holy of holies—not merely *iepor*, the larger temple precincts (LXX distinction). The Church—that is, the community of God's people—is the place where the Spirit of God dwells in His people, the restored temple of Ezekiel's vision (40-48) where God promises “to live among them.” The “Holy of Holies”—where is it today? It is now wherever God's people are gathered in His name! Remember the veil in the Temple rent in two symbolizes not only our access in, but God's presence going forth.

God's outpost in Adam's world goes viral—make disciples of all nations and create communities of holiness all over the world.

All of the realities of the New Creation breaking into the people of God... forgiveness, reconciliation, holiness. Holiness become mobile. Contrast this perspective with Jewish and Islamic views of holy space. For us, holiness is community based and it is virally mobile.

There were many pagan temples in Corinth. Corinthians were used to visiting them. Paul is declaring to the Corinthians that actually the living God only has one temple in Corinth, and it is them. They are the temple of God. They are the eschatological community! The spirit of God dwells in your midst! The Church is the people of the spirit!

Many of you have a broken, fragmented view of the Church. You think it's just about you and Jesus. Listen to the songs that our generation sings. You think it's about being justified. Brothers and sisters, the Word of God declares you wrong! Sexual immorality, greed, enmity, broken relationships—all of these mark the old life. The Church is not just the aggregate gathering of all the justified individuals who happen to come together. The Church is what God is building in the world. Jesus Christ is the foundation, and He is building His Church.

You cannot fully enter into personal holiness unless and until you are rightly related to the Church, the people of God. It is the Church that is the lens through which you capture the glorious work of God.

You (plural) are God's temple and God's Spirit dwells in you (plural)!

We are more than Luther's "dung hills covered in snow."

God's temple is sacred, and you plural are that temple. The Church of Jesus Christ is sacred—we are God's temple. The Almighty God of the universe wants to fill this temple with his glory! He wants to fill it with His Holy Spirit. He is preparing a spotless bride. He is anticipating that day at the dawn of the New Creation when we shall be eternally wed at the marriage supper of the Lamb. We are preparing for that day in the New Creation when we will once again see the Cosmic River and not one, but two trees of life, one on each side, bearing fruit. In the New Creation, the gates are never closed. Open gates mean that we are no longer living in fear! Some of you have been hurt by the church or discouraged about your experience with the church, but the Church is what God is building in the world. Allow Him to restore your vision for the Church, because there is no true sanctification without your brothers and sisters.

Global HOLINESS

WHEN WAS THE LAST TIME YOU READ THE PROPHECY OF JOEL? TALK ABOUT LIVING IN A POST-CHRISTENDOM WORLD, HE REALLY LIVED IN DIFFICULT DAYS. These prophets who prophesied on the brink of exile, during exile, and post exile are the real treasures for us today (Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Habakkuk, and Joe—this is your lifeblood!). Those prophets, along with Ezra and Nehemiah, are our great wells of spiritual strength and insight which will help us negotiate passage through our own times.

Joel is calling everyone to repentance. I did a little survey of the text of Joel and found the following people he calls to repentance: old people, young people, men, women, children, drunkards, farmers, servants, priests, Jews, non-Jews, nations under covenant, nations not under covenant. He covers the whole field. Everybody's going the wrong way! Joel is like a lone voice, crying out, waving his arms, "*Hey, you're all going the wrong way!*" YAHWEH is the other way! The Covenant is the other way!! Salvation is the other way! So, it is a powerful moment when in the midst. Faithlessness at every turn, armies invading, the people of God going into exile that Joel lifts the eyes of his heart up and catches a vision of the last days. Joel 2:28 says, "In the last days I will pour out My Spirit on all flesh. Your sons and daughters will prophesy, your old men will dream dreams, your young men will see visions. Even on my servants, both men and women I will pour out my Spirit in those days." I love this! Joel is living in a living hell, but he captures a vision of the great reversal. He sees something better for all those he is prophesying against. What a vision!

Jeremiah prophesied on the brink of and into exile. Nebuchadnezzar and his Babylonian hoards had repeatedly attacked Jerusalem, humiliating Jehoiakim, later Jehoiachin and later Zedekiah. Jeremiah witnessed the final decades that dismantled the entire nation. Jews were being locked into chains and put on carts and taken to Babylon. Others fled to Egypt in disobedience to God, thinking that they might be safe there. Toward the end of all of this national humiliation and the chaining of the last exiles, Jeremiah does something that really seems crazy. He buys a piece of land. Can you imagine? Read it for yourself in Jeremiah 32. (In verses 9-14 he says, "I bought the field at Anathoth from my cousin Hanamel and weighed out for him seventeen shekels of silver. I took the deed and purchase... and I gave this deed to Baruch... This is what the Lord Almighty,

the God of Israel says, ‘Houses, fields and vineyards will again be bought in this land!’” “Ah, Lord God, thou hast made the heavens and the earth by thy great power... nothing is too difficult for thee...”

Jeremiah buys the field of Anathoth because he was caught up in a greater narrative. He was tuned into a narrative that was even louder than the deafening march of Babylonian armies. He could see beyond the Babylonians to the final victory of God for the people of God! Jeremiah, like Joel, lifted up the eyes of his heart and had an eschatological moment. Jeremiah 31 says, “This is the covenant I will make with the house of Israel... I will put my law in their minds and write it on their hearts. I will be their God and they will be my people. No longer will a man teach his neighbor, or a man his brother, saying, ‘Know the Lord,’ because they will all know me, from the least of them to the greatest.” The great weeping prophet is also a prophet of hope. He captured a glimpse of a better day.

John the Baptist stood at the end of a lot of promises, but none of them realized this after 400 years of waiting. John declares, “I baptize with water, but one is coming who is greater than I, He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and with fire.”

You see, they are all pointing to a day—not just a 24-hour period type day—but an eschatological time when future realities will break in to the present world. It actually wasn’t fully realized in the incarnation or even the death and resurrection of Christ, because it was something that could be only fully accomplished by the work of the Triune God in the world. The full redemption of the world is not the work of the Son alone, but is, in fact, the work of the Triune God. The Father plans the mission, initiates it and is the great sending agent from patriarchs to prophets to his only Son. Jesus, as the Son of God, is the full embodiment of the New Creation. He fulfills the Law, the Priesthood, the Sacrificial system, and the Suffering Servant. As the second Adam on the cross of Calvary and through His resurrection, He provides the final sacrifice and atonement, defeating the power of sin and death.

The Holy Spirit is the empowering presence of God who applies all of the future realities of the New Creation into the gathered communities of the Church.

Acts 2:1 says, “*The day of Pentecost had come.*” It is, of course, one of the major Jewish holy days. The word *Pentecost* means “50” or “fiftieth.” Pentecost was a major holiday the Jews celebrated 50 days after Passover.

Passover is the chief festival of celebration in the Old Testament. It corresponds to our Easter. Passover was the celebration which marked their deliverance from 430 years of Egyptian slavery. The fiftieth day after they left Egypt, they received the Law at Mt. Sinai. Therefore, Pentecost celebrates the giving of the Law.

Passover (deliverance)

Pentecost (giving of the Law)

Easter (deliverance)

Pentecost (giving of the Spirit)

Jesus is crucified at the Passover; He is raised on Easter. He appears to them over a period of almost 40 days before His ascension. The disciples then go into the Upper Room where they meet together and they pray for ten more days, bringing them to the Day of Pentecost. It is on that high and holy day that every Jew worth their salt celebrated the giving of the Law. It was on that day, the Day of Pentecost, that the Spirit of God came, tongues of fire rested on the heads of each person present, and they began to speak in other tongues.

...this is the covenant I will make with the house of Israel... I will put my law in their minds and write it on their hearts...

The Law will not be written on tablets of stone, but on tablets of the human heart.

The old covenant is characterized by rebellion and disobedience. That is the legacy of the Law written on tablets of stone. The new covenant is written on the tablets of human hearts.

There are quite a few sermons in the first few verses of Acts, but let us focus on the three manifestations that the text records. “Blowing of a mighty wind,” vs. 1; “tongues of fire,” vs. 2; “being filled with the Holy Spirit and speaking in other tongues,” vs. 3.

WIND

Ruah—means breath, wind, or spirit. The Greek equivalent is “*pneuma*,” which means breath, wind, or spirit.

There is no missing that the “blowing and rushing of a mighty wind” is a sign of the Spirit of God.

God breathes into us his Spirit (Genesis 1).

The Spirit of God resting on the 70 elders (Numbers 1).

Spirit of the Lord coming upon Elijah or Elisha...the purging fire falling on the sacrifice! (1 and 2 Kings).

This is the text that Peter quotes: “I will pour out my Spirit on all people, your sons and daughters will prophesy, your old men will dream dreams... even on my servants, both men and women, I will pour out my Spirit in those days...” (Joel 2:28).

FIRE

Fire in the burning bush (Exodus 3:2).

Pillar of fire that led the Israelites through the wilderness... pillar of cloud by day and the pillar of fire by night! (Exodus 13).

Fire of God which fell on the Prophet Elijah’s sacrifice (1 Kings 18).

John, “I baptize with water, but he will baptize with the Holy Spirit and with fire” —Jesus is the great baptizer! (Matthew 4:11, Luke 3:16).

TONGUES

Tongues of fire rested on them and they spoke in other tongues as the Spirit enabled them. Some of you in this gathering have spoken in tongues and come from traditions where that is very normative. Others find the whole idea a bit crazy. I’m not going to address that topic this morning. Tongue speaking is a sign and a pointer to a deeper mystery.

Sometimes our preoccupation with all kinds of controversies that swirl around glossolalia we miss the deeper mystery to which it points.

Listen to God’s word:

“... Each one heard them speaking in his own language... Are not all these people who are speaking Galileans? How is it that each of us hears them in our own native language? Parthians, Medes and Elamites; residents of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya near Cyrene, visitors from Rome; Cretans and Arabs—we heard them all declaring the wonders of God in our own tongues!! What does this mean?” (Acts 2:6-12).

They ask the crucial question... what does this mean? Why did the Holy Spirit do this? Don't get de-railed from the central point by asking the question whether we can or should speak in tongues. It is an important consideration, but we must first focus on the fact that this is a sign of what He is doing! What is he doing by granting this gift, this manifestation?

To get the impact of this we have to see the "sign" or pointer of these languages pointing in two directions. The first points back, the second sign points forward.

God never forgets anything. His plots are complex and mysterious. No thread is left, without at some point being tied back in—completed, explained, revealed and fulfilled—everything.

God doesn't mind doing his greatest work under a cloak of failure. He doesn't mind retreating in someone's life if it gives Him a tactical advantage for a later more lasting advance. God always works in a way that pursues and conforms to the big picture of Redemption. There was an event that took place in Genesis 11, which most of us have forgotten, but God hasn't: The Tower of Babel.

They wanted to settle, to build a city, to make a name for themselves.

(This classic paradigm of the human project gets recapitulated over and over through movements such as the Enlightenment.)

(Abraham to be a pilgrim... "looking for a city whose maker and builder is God"... I will make your name great!)

One thread left untied, the scattering of the languages... Babel... confusion...

Pentecost looks back and reverses the Tower of Babel. Pentecost sees not multiple languages to confused, but multiple languages united in praise and worship. In Jesus Christ, the curse is reversed.

Babel was a pronouncement of judgment—a curse.

Pentecost is the reversal of that judgment—a blessing—through the power of the Spirit!

Babel is about building our towers to heaven, making a name for ourselves, settling down.

Pentecost is about the invasion of God's presence, making His name great, and sending us to the ends of the earth!

Pentecost not only reaches back and reverses the curse of the Tower of Babel, but it reaches forward to the New Creation. St. John captured a glimpse of this greater reality when he looked and saw, “every multitude that no one could count, from every nation, tribe, people and language, standing before the throne and in front of the lamb!” Wow, what a vision... redeemed humanity... a global vision... nation, every tribe, every people, every language... open gates, no fear!

The diversity of languages at Pentecost is not primarily a sociological event, but a theological statement by God.

Day one: We must reclaim the basic theological point that salvation is the work of the Triune God. We need to be justified through the work of Jesus Christ and be sanctified through the work of the Holy Spirit, all according to the purposes and for the glory of God the Father. You need a May 24 story—your Aldersgate, your justification, and you need a Fetters Lane story, your sanctification. Sanctification re-orientes your heart away from sin and towards God. It doesn’t mean that your life is free from sin. But it does mean that sin becomes your mortal enemy, not your secret lover. Salvation is about more than justification. For Wesley, righteousness is more than God just looking at us through a different set of glasses. Alien righteousness must become native righteousness.

**Imputed righteousness must become actualized righteousness.
Declared righteousness must become embodied righteousness,
wrought in us not by our own strength, but through the power of the
living God.**

We are marked, oriented and re-oriented by love.

Day two: Re-orienting away from sin only gets you halfway there!

**Sanctification is not just about what we avoid, but what we produce—
fruitfulness.**

In Wesley, “faith and fruit meet and are joyfully wed.”

**I pointed out that we have been passing on a truncated view of holiness,
which is forensic, private, negative and static. That becomes legalistic,**

self-focused, identified by what we don't do, and non-missional. I told you that neo-holiness focuses on the full range of holiness, which is the positive vision. It is not merely forensic, but it is relational. It is not private, but embedded in community, not negative, but is a vision of the in-breaking New Creation—not static, but virally mobile.

It is this virally mobile point that fully explores what I am calling missional holiness—holiness which extends to the ends of the earth, to all peoples, and all nations.

Neo-holiness moves us out from the long night of self-imposed exile as the larger Christian discourse. We are no longer content with simply being known as “those folks who are not Reformed.” We would boldly declare that we have a powerful and transformative message for the whole world which is Biblical, global, and Trinitarian. The witness of the Spirit, that confirms faith, becomes in Wesley the power of the Spirit to produce fruit and to transform the world—to spread scriptural holiness through the world. This is missional holiness: The Holy Spirit empowering believers for witness, service, evangelism, and church planting.

This viral, mobile holiness is crucial to our understanding of a neo-holiness movement, which not only embraces the full purging of sin within, but also sees the implications of holiness as both personal and corporate, both individual and systemic.

Mobile holiness declares the year of Jubilee for those who are enslaved by human trafficking in Bangkok. Mobile holiness announces the good news to the Wasi people of north-central Tanzania who have never heard the good news of Jesus Christ. Mobile holiness shines the

light of justice on child labor in China! Mobile holiness establishes peace in broken homes in America.

Mobile holiness sets the drug addicts free in our inner cities.

You see, mobile holiness is viral and there is no part of creation that it does not declare under the Lordship of Jesus Christ!

We claim the “whole field.” We look at the most dismal situation on the planet and we declare, in faith, that we will buy that field. We will buy the field of Anathoth even as the Babylonians are moving in! We’ll buy the field of hope, even when the drugs still hold reign. We’ll buy the field of faith, even while the Wasi are still resistant! We’ll buy the field of victory, even when the divorce papers are on the table. Because we hear the strains of the New Creation! We have been caught up in a greater narrative!

A Wesleyan, neo-holiness vision does not fall into the trap of an over-realized eschatology which fails to take seriously the full force of human—personal and systemic—rebellion against God. However, it also avoids the trap of an under-realized eschatology which can only rehearse the bad news and does not see the New Creation already breaking in—in the faith, life, experience and witness of the Church of Jesus Christ. We have a vision for the power of transforming righteousness in the world.

And the best part of all is we’re going to have a great time doing it! Who needs wine, when we’ve got the Holy Spirit! We’ve kept the dour face too long; we live in the light of the Resurrection. We are the people of the Risen Lord. Let’s keep the feast!

When will an outsider come into our churches and say, “Oh my, those holiness folks have had too much wine!” Who would waste their time on a beer when we’ve got the Holy Spirit! Brothers and sisters, be filled with the Holy Spirit! Allow the Holy Spirit to drain the swamp of your sadness! Allow the Holy Spirit to break the chains of your despair!

Allow the Holy Spirit to enable you to recapture a vision for His Grand Story. Be filled with the beauty of holiness. May your life be an ongoing overflow of His eternal joy! Amen.

Increasing and Abounding in **H O L I N E S S**

HOLINESS IN 3D

My earlier statement primarily conceptualized holiness within the frame of personal, even private holiness. It could have left the impression that if someone—through the power of the Holy Spirit—had eradicated sin from their personal lives, they could be declared holy. However, biblically speaking, this is holiness in only two dimensions. We have been called to a deeper holiness—3D holiness.

Neo-holiness is holiness in 3D. Let me be clear. Holiness is never less than personal holiness. However, it is more than personal holiness.

When you capture a vision of holiness in 3D there are several ways we can see deeper dimensions to this concept. (1) The first deeper dimension, which we might call ‘fruitful holiness,’ is that 3D holiness helps us to see that even if you eradicated every sin in your personal life, you are actually only halfway there. Holiness can never be simply about what sins you avoid, it must be about the fruits you bear because you are abiding in Christ. To put it another way, holiness is not merely about the eradication of sin, but the cultivation of righteousness. It is not just cutting away the dead limbs, it is cultivating the fruitful branches! (2) The next deeper dimension of 3D holiness is what I have called missional holiness. This is an expression of biblical holiness that embraces both personal and social holiness.

Christians must be as concerned with the perils of personal substance abuse as the perils of human trafficking. We must see that holiness is as concerned about the bondage of pornography as we are orphaned AIDS children in the Sudan.

Holiness in 3D sees the connections between personal and social holiness. A person who views pornography is setting themselves up for failure in their commitment to celibacy as a single, or their faithfulness in the marriage bond. Celibacy in singleness and faithfulness in marriage between a man and a woman is, for us, not a political slogan or position, but is a theological statement that deeply resonates with God's purposes and design in creation itself.

Holiness in 3D still calls us to a life of purity, that says no to the destructiveness of drunkenness and debauchery, but also says no to the destructiveness of economic systems that trap people in poverty, robbing them of dignity and hope. Holiness in 3D continues to say no to the destructiveness of smoking cigarettes, but it also says no to the smokestacks of factories that prosper on child labor in the sweatshops of China. Holiness must be framed as personal, social, and global. It is holiness in 3D. It is missional holiness.

WESLEYAN ACCOUNTABILITY

Three-D Holiness actually returns us more explicitly to the questions that John Wesley asked in establishing the ethos for the earlier class meetings and holy clubs of 18th century Methodist formation.

This was their so-called "Method" from which we get the word *Methodist*. The Method was peer and small group accountability, based on asking questions that arose out of a covenantal commitment that the group had made one with another.

I am indebted to one of our students, Geoffrey Whiteman, for pointing out to me the theological difference between the two ways the 20th century responded to the abuse of alcohol. Both took the issue very seriously. Both understood the dangers. However, the responses and strategy was different. The 19th century passed Prohibition (18th Amendment to the Constitution). The ratification of Prohibition on January 16, 1919, was sincerely believed to solve all alcohol abuse in America. It didn't work. Two years after the end of Prohibition Bill Wilson and Bob Smith founded AA in Akron, Ohio. The former policy denied that alcohol abuse happened; the latter created a small group and twelve steps to help people. The former had to deny that anyone could even have a problem with alcohol because no one was permitted to drink, so it just "didn't happen." AA, on the other hand, gives people a lifeline and a pathway of support to live free from the bondage of alcohol.

This rootedness in our origins will actually, and perhaps unintuitively, help us to become more global and less sectarian in our conceptions of holiness. There are many aspects of holiness that are timeless and cross-cultural. However, if we are honest, we will also note that there is also an array of culturally specific determiners in how holiness is understood in any given point in time, whether it be 14th century China or 19th century Britain. My grandmother never wore a pair of pants in her life because she grew up in a time in which that was a defining cultural indicator, in the same way that, perhaps, getting a tattoo was in my generation. In Scotland the Free Church of Scotland will not allow a woman to worship without her head covered, will not permit anyone to sing a hymn (only the Psalms are allowed) in church, or play a musical instrument, and vigorously cite Scriptural support for all of these. Interestingly, they have no qualms about the modest consumption of alcohol. In the Indian Pentecostal Church (where I have preached many times), it is considered a serious breach of holiness for someone to wear a piece of jewelry. I must remove my wedding band and my shoes, too, if I am to preach in an IPC church in India. My son came home from Egypt and proudly showed me (to my horror) a tattoo on his wrist. I asked him where he had it done. He assured me that it was done in the church! You see Coptic Christians in Egypt have a cross tattooed onto their wrist as a sign and seal of their commitment to Jesus Christ. It is actually a badge of holiness. I could give many more examples. The point is that as we move toward a more global community, we have to recognize that our community no longer shares the same social, cultural markers. We have a great diversity of markers. The adoption of missional holiness roots us more explicitly in the timeless indicators of holiness that are true for all Christians of every generation, but acknowledge that as we increasingly inhabit the joyful assembly of global Christianity, we will have differing cultural determiners. Rather than forcing everyone to adopt our cultural determiners, we will learn to celebrate our shared commitment to holiness on that which is true for all Christians, but we also learn to accept the real differences in our midst. This also calls for sacrifice and self-denial for the sake of our brothers and sisters in Christ.

Amen.

ABOUT DR. TIMOTHY C. TENNENT



Dr. Timothy C. Tennent has served as President since July 2009. Prior to his coming to Asbury Theological Seminary, Dr. Tennent was the professor of World Missions and Indian Studies at Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary where he served since 1998. Ordained in the United Methodist Church in 1984, he has pastored churches in Georgia, and in several of the largest churches in New England. Since 1989, he has taught annually as an adjunct professor at the New Theological College in Dehra Dun, India. He is a frequent conference speaker around the country and throughout the world, including numerous countries in Asia, Africa and Europe.

Dr. Tennent received his M.Div. from Gordon-Conwell, a Th.M. from Princeton Theological Seminary and a Ph.D. from the University of Edinburgh in Scotland. He is also a 2008 graduate of a three-year mentor project in Academic Leadership sponsored by the Lilly endowment.

Dr. Tennent is the author of numerous books and articles. His books include, *Building Christianity on Indian Foundations* (ISPCK), *Christianity at the Religious Roundtable* (Baker Academic), *Theology in the Context of World Christianity* (Zondervan) and *Invitation to World Missions: A Trinitarian Missiology for the 21st Century* (Kregel Academic).

Dr. Tennent's wife, Julie, is also a graduate of Gordon-Conwell, has led numerous Bible Studies and is active in Friendship International in Lexington, Ky. She is a church organist and pianist, having produced several CDs and a cantata known as *All the Glory*. The Tennents have two children, Jonathan (26) and Bethany (24). Jonathan is currently a graduate student at the University of Kentucky and Bethany is a missionary serving with AIM in Tanzania.

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