

A New Vision for a New Methodist Movement

By Paul Lawler – March 3, 2020

<https://wesleyancovenant.org/2020/03/02/a-new-vision-for-a-new-methodist-movement/>



It was Dr. George Hunter who once said, “There was a time when we Methodist would say with John Wesley, ‘The world is my parish.’ Today, we far too often say, ‘The parish is my world.’”

While Wesley spoke the former words out of his burden to see spiritually anemic Anglicans awakened to Christ, it was [Thomas Coke](#), the first Methodist bishop, who is considered the father of Methodist missions. Filled with affection for Jesus and His gospel, Coke died while on his way to share Christ with people in India. Coke is also credited with pioneering the sharing of the Gospel to islands in the West Indies, Sierra Leone, Nova Scotia, Ireland, and France. In light of Coke’s legacy, many overlook how the [Great Commission](#) was part of Methodism’s originating impulses.

I have the honor of serving as lead-pastor of a people called [Christ Church Birmingham](#). Through the years, Christ Church has commissioned teams of Gospel sharing, disciple-making, lay-people who have served in Asia, Africa, the Middle East, Europe, as well as Central and South America. Through these efforts, we have witnessed over 20,000 persons come to faith in Christ. The majority of these faith decisions have taken place inside the [10/40 window](#), a geographical area stretching between 10 and 40 degrees north latitude, from North Africa through the Middle East to Asia, covering 68 countries. Thousands of new churches have been planted in this regional belt. These efforts are also wed with Christ Church’s goal of sending out 100 long-term missionaries to the unreached people groups of the world.

Many people ask, “How is this possible? How does a United Methodist Church have this kind of DNA?” While paragraphs can be written on our Great Commission strategy, we have discovered the following axiom to be true: *when affections for Jesus are awakened, affections for His mission are awakened*. We would say with the late Anglican theologian, John Stott, “We must be global Christians because we have a global God.”

Presently, over 2 billion people have no access to the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

- Over **6,000 people groups** around the world have no access to the Gospel of Christ.
- Over 40 percent of the world’s people groups have no indigenous community of believing Christians able to reach the rest of their people group.
- 86% of the world’s Muslims, Hindus, Buddhists do not personally know a Christian.

Bishop Coke would not have been indifferent to these realities in his time. In a new Methodist movement, we are determined not to be indifferent to these realities in our time.

In light of the **Protocol of Reconciliation and Grace through Separation**, we are living on the cusp of a new global Methodist movement. And as we embrace this hour, a series of **task forces** have been formed to make advanced preparations for the new day. One of the task forces will be focused on global missional partnerships. This task force will focus on developing and deploying effective partnerships for local churches to be in ministry with one another globally across geographic boundaries to advance the Kingdom of God and reach people of diverse cultures with the love of Jesus. As we move into the development of a new Methodist movement, we are committed to reaching all people with the Gospel and inviting every person to be a follower of Jesus Christ transformed by the grace and love of God on a global scale.

Therefore, let us birth new strategies of disciple making, church planting, and church revitalization for regions of the United States where there is an absence of vibrant, traditionally orthodox Methodism. With the understanding that “the world is our parish,” let us also step into the development of strategies for reaching countries in Asia, Europe, the Middle East, and North Africa for the transformation of the world. With Great Commission hearts, let us develop intentional strategies for the 10/40 window and beyond.

So let us imagine a new day for a people called Methodists. Let us imagine a day of the unreached people groups of the world coming to Christ through a people called Methodists. Let us imagine the Great Commission being fanned into flame like never before through a new Methodist movement for the glory of God!

*Paul Lawler is the lead-pastor of **Christ Church UMC**, president of the North-Alabama WCA Regional Chapter, and serves as the chairperson of the WCA’s Global Missional Partnership Task Force for a new Methodist denomination. Readers can contact him at plawler@christchurchbham.com.*