

**1. How do you reflect a life and ministry rooted in Wesleyan theology, spirituality and practice?**

Reflecting on my life and ministry rooted in Wesleyan theology, spirituality and practice draws me to our *Theological Task* in the Book of Discipline, ¶ 105. SECTION 4 (*italics below*):

*“Theology is our effort to reflect upon God’s gracious action in our lives. In response to the love of Christ, we desire to be drawn into a deeper relationship with ‘faith’s pioneer and perfecter.’*

Wesleyan theology begins and ends with God’s gift of grace. Jesus Christ, the Source of Life, is the foundation of my relationship with God and through the Spirit, informs the way I interpret, live, and extend grace. Through God’s prevenient grace, our recognition of God’s justifying grace, and our participation in sanctifying grace that we are being made perfect in God’s gift of love. The more deeply drawn into relationship with the perfecter of faith, the more grace and love flow from my life and ministry toward others. Caring for this gift is of utmost importance through personal and communal spiritual formation practices, engaging the sacraments, and intentional engagement with my neighbor’s needs.

*“Our theological explorations seek to give expression to the mysterious reality of God’s presence, peace, and power in the world. By so doing, we attempt to articulate more clearly our understanding of the divine-human encounter and are thereby more fully prepared to participate in God’s work in the world.”*

God’s presence, peace and power in the world through the Holy Spirit fuel my life. Incarnation matters! My incarnational life reflects the gift of the divine-human encounter and catapults me to join God’s work in the world. The intentionality of attending every human being with respect and dignity is how I live life. This intentionality did not emerge without some shifts in self-awareness.

My first experience of serving a ministry for homeless persons (25 years ago) involved spending a night in the shelter. I was uncomfortable with the plight of sisters and brothers entering the shelter with their entire life’s belongings in a plastic grocery sack. I began overcompensating with my hospitality. A homeless guest approached me and said, “you’re trying too hard.” My heart sank. I realized I could not fix the multi-faceted complexities of homelessness (inequity of distribution of resources, mental health, substance abuse, poverty, domestic violence, racial inequity and so much more). My discomfort had turned into a Pollyanna façade. I was devastated and redirected my time to being fully present with each person, seeing them as God’s beloved, my sisters and brothers. I was changed. That experience heightened my awareness of God’s desire for Jesus’ incarnational mutuality in every relationship.

*“The theological task, though related to the Church’s doctrinal expressions, serves a different function. Our doctrinal affirmations assist us in the discernment of Christian truth in ever-changing contexts. Our theological task includes the testing, renewal, elaboration, and application of our doctrinal perspective in carrying out our calling ‘to spread scriptural holiness over these lands.’”*

Our denomination is in a season of testing, renewal, elaboration, and application of our doctrinal perspective. This discernment has created angst and paralysis in our connectional system. I give thanks to God that God does not leave us to ourselves but continues to invite us into reflective, prayerful, and discerning lives as we seek to spread scriptural holiness. The breadth and depth of scriptural holiness, interpretation, and imagination can paralyze. But I believe we are invited by God to experience this breadth and depth as a deep pool from the Source of life, never allowing our delusions of domesticating God or God's word to be in our control. The Spirit blows where it will. We are called to ongoing testing, renewal, elaboration, and application of our calling! Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, shapes our testing and renewal. Our witness during this renewal season is profoundly important. The summation of scriptural holiness is God's love shed abroad in our hearts (Romans 5:5). This tenor of scriptural holiness is what is primary.

I seek to reflect Wesleyan theology, spirituality, and practices, joining God's mission in the world, in my preaching, ordering of life in the church, administering the sacraments, and service to the community by participating with God where God is already at work among those suffering, such as:

- supporting communities with demographic shifts,
- helping young people cultivate their callings into ministry,
- paying attention to persons whose voices have been ignored,
- caring for persons in the hospital and hospice
- creating spaces and developing leadership with an eye toward racial healing,
- engaging teenagers through local church and district gatherings,
- supporting students from the Methodist Children's Home,
- strengthening systems and the board of directors for Trinity Mission serving our Spanish speaking families,
- creating a responsive structure of support for those harmed in the ICE raids,
- attending students at Millsaps College,
- encouraging local churches to birth fresh expressions for overlooked people in their communities, and
- leading spiritual life retreats across the SEJ.

Wesleyan theology challenges us beyond "either/or" ways of thinking and interpreting. As the theological task reminds us, theology is both critical and constructive: it is critical as we test expressions of faith by asking "are they based on love?" It is constructive "in that every generation must appropriate creatively the wisdom of the past and seek God in their midst in order to think afresh about God, revelation, sin, redemption, worship, the church, freedom, justice, moral responsibility, and other significant theological concerns. Our summons is to understand and receive the gospel promises in our troubled and uncertain times" (2016 BOD, p. 80+). As the Book of Discipline frames for us, "our theological task is both individual and

communal. Our theological task is contextual and incarnational.” We live in humility and expectation within the liminal tension.

In the early days of my first appointment in a local church, a beloved teenager – the apple of the church’s eye – walked the aisle alongside his parents at the close of a worship service. Through his tears, Charlie said, “I’ve come to ask God and my church family for forgiveness. Last night, I was busted for cocaine.” We wept. We prayed. As the invitational hymn neared closure, I asked Charlie what he’d like for me to say to the congregation. He said, “tell them the truth.” I shared with the congregation that our beloved son was asking for God’s and our forgiveness for his arrest for a cocaine charge. Much to my surprise, the congregation began to weep and make their way to the front of the church to pray over and support Charlie and his parents. The movement of the Holy Spirit created space for the congregation to love, not condemn; to forgive, not shame; and to walk alongside, not shun.

Wesley’s theology of grace colors my life! The primacy of scripture alongside tradition, reason, and experience is the lens through which I discern, serve, and lead. I add the focus of Jesus to the quadrilateral. While I know that there is an assumption that Jesus is part of scripture, there is a strong temptation in our culture to talk about the “Word of God” without the life, death and resurrection of Jesus expanding the lens. Reading scripture through the lens of Jesus and his chief commandment “to love God and neighbor” is paramount. The Word made flesh in Jesus is central to how I do life, interpretation, church, and discipleship.

Following Jesus, I try to enact love through social holiness as well as practice personal piety to deepen my relationship with the Triune God and by following John Wesley’s instruction to live a holistic life. While my nature and personality urge me toward workaholism, I daily attend balance of body, mind, spirit, and relationships. My physical disciplines include swimming and walking. My healthy eating can be sporadic; carbohydrates cannot be trusted! I read daily, both for my devotional life and for intellectual stimulation. Podcasts play an important learning role when I am in a heavy traveling season. I tend to my spiritual life through an intentional practice of Sabbath and daily devotional (both individually and through our cabinet corporate devotional). I practice stillness every day. In stillness, I sense the voice and nudge of God in particular ways. My relationships with my husband and two daughters (22 years and 17 years) are grounding. We banter, dialogue, laugh, and enjoy a good game of Wheel of Fortune when we gather. Vacations to Disney World, the beach, the mountains, and white water rafting give us recovery time each year. I have deep, holy friendships (both lay and clergy) that give my life perspective and profound joy. I am accountable to my District Leadership Team which meets monthly for six hours. Those lay and clergy relationships give meaning and texture to my life. I am intentional in every conversation and listening with a Holy Spirit informed compassion that is a gift.

The following tools help me discover how I process and relate to others and inform my servant leadership. I’m an Enneagram – 3, Myers Briggs - ENT/FJ, DiSC - iD. My spiritual gifts are shepherding, healing, and administration. The StrengthsFinder confirms the following strengths: strategic, relator, arranger, connectedness, and learner.

**2. Describe your record of pastoral fruitfulness in the local church.**

In my first appointment, prior to my arrival, the congregation decided to remain in the city rather than relocate to a suburb. The congregation had a strong, small group of faithful worshipers who were open to the changing demographic around the church. By the power of the Holy Spirit, we grew in number, racial and socio-economic diversity and became a brighter light in the downtown community.

In my mid-year appointment as Executive Director of The United Methodist Hour, we expanded the broadcast area across the Southeastern U.S. By faith and the generosity of a few extraordinary board members, we purchased a new facility where audiences gathered for “live taping” of telecast and radio programs. The space lent itself to deeper relationships with viewers, supporters, pray-ers, and local churches to whom we connected viewers.

In my mid-year appointment to Duke Divinity School as Field Education Director, we revised mentor training, produced videos for local church training, and established new teaching congregations. We redesigned the evaluative processes for students, supervisors, and placements. The questions raised through the evaluative process became a mirror to students and local churches of the virtues that make congregations healthy. These processes positively impacted the local churches and the students as both focused upon spiritual formation, education, and mentorship of students to become strong ordained clergy leaders post seminary.

In my mid-year appointment to Galloway Memorial United Methodist Church, Jackson, MS, the unexpected growth in persons engaged in mission and ministry was inspiring. The weekly telecast expanded ministry across the metro area and connected Galloway across racial and socio-economic lines. The ministry to persons who called the streets of Jackson “home” expanded in numbers of guests and numbers of disciples walking alongside the guests: Innovative ministry emerged beyond food and clothing distribution; Relationships deepened; Ministries of obtaining identification cards evolved; Art ministry took root; The former conference office building was repurposed to serve as a gathering place.

In my appointment as Director of Connectional Ministries and Communications, I facilitated the birth of a new conference structure to “form spiritual leaders, faith communities, and connections so more disciples of Jesus Christ transform the world.” Fruit continues in the local church from the intentionality of the conference to resource the local church.

As District Superintendent/Chief Missional Strategist, I’ve cast a vision in my district for every church to create a new place for new people. The response has been: a congregation developed a dinner church; a church with five people in Bible Study created a “conference call” Bible Study that averages 60 people – many who have never attended the church or a Bible Study; two churches birthed new worship services; a bi-district partnership cultivated a new fresh expression faith community.

Our district is engaged in mission leading to fruitfulness in the local church. Our disaster and early response teams have served 500 flood victims’ homes caused by February 2020 flooding. Africa University has received \$100,000 and No More Malaria \$50,000 from our district. We

support our district Hispanic ministry and engage and sustain families impacted by the ICE raids of 2019.

**3. How have you demonstrated the spiritual gift of leadership?**

Empowering others is central to servant leadership. When pastoring in the local church, I often sensed gifts in a person and invited them into a specific role, office, or position to use those gifts. I walked alongside the person to help them embrace, develop, and use their gifts. Their service was not always immediate. But over time, I watched people who had never done so, claim and use their gifts. It was very satisfying to witness their confidence increase and their service multiply.

When serving as Director of Field Education at Duke Divinity School, I guided students to discern and discover their vocational calling, pastoral identity, and gifts for ministry. Matching students with their contextual learning was a unique role of developing and deploying. The gift of practicing theological reflection with students while in their deployed setting gave opportunity to encourage, coach, and develop gifts emerging and expanding.

As District Superintendent, I am blessed to be in ongoing relationship with 64 active pastors and 38 retired pastors. I hear the call story of persons discerning candidacy and in the candidacy process, we discover and develop leaders, preparing them for deployment! I value collaborative leadership between laity and clergy. We model shared leadership in the district and conference.

I am deeply formed by the work of Spiritual Leadership Incorporated (SLI). I have integrated their values of forming spiritual leaders who model loving, learning, and leading together; creating environments that foster transformation and processes that bear fruit. I lead through team ministry with spiritual formation as our bedrock.

As an Enneagram “3” – a healthy “3” – a redeemed “3”, I am wired to motivate others to greater accomplishment than others thought they were capable. The innate gift to empower and motivate others plays an important role in discovering, developing, and deploying spiritual leaders.

**4. How have you demonstrated a willingness to be held accountable for results and an ability to hold others accountable, with grace, for their results?**

Articulating clear expectations and gracefully holding accountable for stewardship for the lives we are entrusted is at the heart of the Gospel message. We see in the story of the rich, young ruler the obstacles we face by Jesus’ invitation to “follow me.” Our unwillingness to let go of what we are holding tightly reminds us that we may miss the magnificent adventure. I create an environment for those to whom I am accountable to “speak the truth in love.” Whether it’s the bishop, cabinet, pastors, PPRC chairs, or laity, I invite people to hold me accountable when I have failed to do what I said I would do. And I have had to apologize more than once, owning my missteps, miscommunication, or process failure. I have a strong work ethic and expect it of the clergy in my district. They also hold me accountable for self-care when I am preaching it but not practicing it. Mutual accountability is glue for faithful ministry.

John Wesley’s clear message of grace and practice of accountability through societies, classes, and bands is the foundation for disciple-making. In the local church, the nominations process is a

clear path for discerning leaders, laying out expectations, and then following through with accountability. As a pastor of a local church, I observed disciples flourish with the simple practice of clarity of expectation, encouragement, resourcing, feedback, and then holding accountable to what we had agreed.

In my role as district superintendent, I have clear expectations for clergy to lead their communities to develop a healthy disciple-making system – and then practice it! They are also encouraged to create new places for new people, a fresh expression, or a unique model of ministry to draw people who do not yet know of Jesus' love. The accountability comes both in charge conferences and through district gatherings where we celebrate innovative ministry. All our year end statistics, fund balance reports/audits, and mission share giving reflect expectations and accountability toward follow-up for innovative vision for the future.

The district I serve led our conference in mission share (apportionment) giving in 2019, with district mission shares at 99.4% and conference mission shares at 90%.

A challenge regarding accountability is working alongside pastors whose effectiveness is waning. Through supervisory responses, I've had to exit pastors from full time ministry into vocational discernment toward their next chapter. And through other supervisory responses, I've helped pastors refocus and become increasingly effective through clear expectations and accountability.

I've also facilitated *just resolutions* with pastors who have broken covenant, as well as received surrendered credentials from pastors who have had sexual misconduct complaints. I've worked closely with the Board of Ordained Ministry to respect each of our roles in these complex processes. The goal in all these situations is healing for all parties: the complainant, the complainant's family, clergy, clergy families, the local church, the clergy community, and the connection.

I am a champion advocating for clergy to receive renewal leave. I facilitate conversation and reflection with Pastor/Staff Parish Relations Committees to cheerfully send their pastors for seasons of restoration. I work with the congregation to create a plan to cover preaching responsibilities both with my own presence and with other available pastors in the connection. Local churches experience energy from the new rhythm of guest pastors and the pastor receives the opportunity to “restore the joy of salvation” (Psalm 51:12).

**5. Describe your track record of doing the “right thing” in difficult situations.**

I am willing to have hard conversations and address things immediately. I am not impulsive and allow the Spirit to give me guidance. When confidentiality is not at stake, I seek counsel from others and practice group discernment.

I take seriously doing the “right thing” in the *appointment process*. The whole conference is my parish when making appointments so that churches have a greater opportunity to make disciples of Jesus Christ.

I've had to make challenging *personnel decisions* over the years which resulted in dismissing staff persons for the mission of the ministry. It was deeply painful in the local church, in the district, and in extension ministry, but proved to be necessary.

The incongruence I saw with the metrics reflected on *year-end statistical reports* and the reality of the number of worshipers in a congregation surprised me. While it made it look like the district had a loss over several years, I asked clergy and laity to cease inflating their statistics. It is dishonest and doesn't allow for real expressions of growth when the numbers are not accurate. Congregations now report the current reality of their statistics. This single act of doing the "right thing" has helped churches see both their strengths and their true vulnerability.

On the *Board of Ordained Ministry*, we collectively discerned the gifts, potential, and readiness for ministry for the credentialing process. Participating in the interviews for candidates for ordination inspired my life for the future of the church. "Deferring continuing" or "discontinuing" persons for ordination was painful but evidenced wisdom over time by doing the "right thing".

Perhaps, the most painful of all is receiving a *complaint on a clergy person*. Attending the faithful process of transparency and making decisions toward healing for all can create competing goals. Doing the "right thing" often includes receiving surrendered credentials and creating a path for restoration for individuals, families, and churches.

**6. What has been your exposure to the Annual, Jurisdictional and General Conference? (for example, cabinet experience, service on a committee, board or agency, etc.)**

In 2013, Bishop James E. Swanson, Sr., appointed me as *Director of Connectional Ministries and Communications*. My first focus was to facilitate the birth of a new conference structure in Mississippi, the first in almost a decade. After coordinating many listening sessions, our conference defined our purpose to "form spiritual leaders, faith communities and connections so more disciples of Jesus Christ transform the world." We organized our conference office with corresponding offices to reflect our purpose. As DCM, I was the steward of the vision of the conference (as the Book of Discipline describes).

In 2015, I was appointed as *District Superintendent/Chief Missional Strategist*. Now completing my fifth year, I have lived into the purpose our new structure envisioned. In every local church and through my district leadership team, I am developing spiritual leaders, faith communities, and connections, so more disciples of Jesus Christ transform the world. As a district, we discover, develop, and deploy leaders who model loving, learning, and leading, who create environments that foster transformation, and who develop processes that bear fruit. We do that work through Ministry Action Planning (MAP), trainings, gatherings for reflection, and district events.

Rev. Dr. Connie Mitchell Shelton, Mississippi

I served on the ***Board of Ordained Ministry*** (BOOM) for two quadrennia. I served as conference relations chair for four years. Engaging clergy in the midst of status change was deep, discerning work. From pastors going on leave to working with the executive committee to place a pastor on suspension, the work of BOOM was always intentional with a goal toward wholeness, effectiveness, and transparency. Credentialing pastors through the Residence in Ministry (RIM) process proved to be life-giving and formative.

I serve on the MS ***Committee on Episcopacy*** to assist and support the Bishop for effective ministry. We also work with the Board of Trustees to upkeep, maintain and improve the episcopal residence.

I serve on the ***Board of Pensions*** as a cabinet representative and serve as a liaison between the cabinet and the Board of Pensions. I attend Wespath meetings twice each year as a Board of Pensions representative.

I am in my second term of serving on our ***Southeastern Jurisdiction Lake Junaluska Board of Trustees***. I served on the Executive Director Search Committee in 2018. The mission of Lake Junaluska is to be a place of Christian hospitality where lives are transformed through renewal of soul, mind, and body.

I am an emeritus member of the ***Board of Visitors of Duke Divinity School***, Durham, NC.

I served on the ***General Commission on Communications (UMCOM)*** 2004-2008. The ongoing work of “Open Hearts, Open Minds, Open Doors” shaped our work through the general church.

I served as a ***Southeastern Jurisdictional delegate*** in 2000, 2004, 2012, 2016 first reserve, and will serve as a delegate in 2020. I served as a ***General Conference delegate*** in 2004, 2012, and will serve as 2020 first reserve.

**7. Based upon your experience, how do you relate to the global United Methodist Church communion? (For example, boards and agencies, publishing, short-term mission teams, UMVIM, UMCOR, etc.).**

As Director of Connectional Ministries and Communications, the impact of Mississippi tornadoes, floods and hurricanes were in my area of oversight. During that season of life, ***United Methodist Committee on Relief (UMCOR)*** staff was on speed dial. From participating in UMCOR’s case management training to setting up long term recovery structures in both Louisville and Columbia, MS, I was able to facilitate and empower local leadership toward inclusive tables of reconciliation across race, class, and gender for expansive recovery.

I served on the ***General Commission on United Methodist Communications*** for a quadrennium. The good news of “Open Hearts, Open Minds, Open Doors” was at the center of our work.



Rev. Dr. Connie Mitchell Shelton, Mississippi

The *General Board of Higher Education and Ministry (GBHEM)* is integral to my life with candidates for ministry beginning the process with the District Superintendent. I participated in GBHEM's eight year assessment training two years ago.

I have attended several trainings with the *Commission on the Status and Role of Women (COSROW)* and value their important work around sexual ethics. As a District Superintendent, the staff of COSROW has resourced my office and the cabinet regarding complaints toward clergy regarding sexual ethics.

*Discipleship Ministries* production of "See All the People" resource became a focus for my district in 2017-2018. Each pastor was given the resource and encouraged to develop discipleship practices in the congregations to pay attention to all the people surrounding their communities. We received Discipleship Ministries staff for several trainings.

By virtue of serving on the Board of Pensions for MS, I attend *Wespath* meetings twice each year learning to interpret plans, practices, and policies. *Wespath* works with people who serve The United Methodist Church, making a difference in their lives by helping them plan for a brighter financial future.

**8. What is your response to these "hot topics" in the United Methodist Church? Please limit your responses to two paragraphs for each topic.**

***a. Human sexuality:***

Human sexuality is a gift from God. Covenant relationship grounds human sexuality and relationships. I am committed to uphold the discipline of the United Methodist Church, and I dream of a church embracing full inclusion of all people: conservatives, progressives, centrists, LGBTQ and heterosexual orientations, gender identities, celibacy in singleness, fidelity in covenant marriage.

There are faithful disciples of Jesus who differ in thought, belief, interpretation and deed regarding human sexuality. I believe Jesus is inviting us to bear witness to the breadth of his Church. I've coined a phrase: the Wesleyan Quintrilateral (Scripture, tradition, experience, reason, "and Jesus.") I am deeply aware that in our understandings of Scripture, we are convinced that Jesus Christ is the living Word of God in our midst (BOD, p. 83), yet I continuously experience faithful disciples reducing the "Word of God" to words in the canon without the expansion of our Lord and Savior, Jesus. Jesus' life, death and resurrection inform how I understand human sexuality and how I see the Body of Christ affirming and welcoming all people.

***b. Local church closures and establishing new faith communities:***

Congregations experience a life cycle. Sometimes decline is beyond the control of parishioners with industries fading and populations aging. In those cases, a merger, death or closing of a congregation is a faithful response.

Other times, decline is a response to the unfaithfulness of a congregation to welcome the demographic shift surrounding the church. These congregations demand a prayerful visioning process and ministry action plans to move them from who they “have been” to who “God is calling them to become.” If decline continues and the congregation remains stagnant, closing and birthing a new community with leadership reflecting the broader community becomes a means of grace. In either case of closing, we trust in resurrection power and that God is doing a new thing (Isaiah 43:19).

**c. *Next generations leaders:***

A mutual formation is required for the next generation of leaders with existing leaders. The next generation can learn history and practices from the past while existing leaders can be formed by the creative, innovation passion of next generation leaders. Conferences and congregations will be challenged to find financial resources to support next generation leaders creating new places for new people without traditional funding.

Next generation leaders ignite the church with passionate innovation valuing diversity, inclusion, justice, and deep spirituality. These values and practices will create space for God’s transforming work in the world and in the church.

**d. *Impending death tsunami (Dr. Lovett Weems):***

Weems’ reality check with the church almost ten years ago beckons the church to face our current reality: facing a higher death rate than at any time since 1940s with the total number of deaths each year predicted to go up every year until 2050. Weems asserts that the church will be called to make difficult and life-saving decisions “to reduce the financial baseline to one that is more realistic for the new circumstances.”

I led both the local church and the district I serve toward reducing the financial baseline for the past twelve years. In the last local church I served before serving as Director of Connectional Ministries and Communications, we focused on an endowment to relieve the financial burden of building/trustee costs. Over six years, we moved the endowment from less than \$250,000 to close to \$3 million dollars allowing over \$100,000 per year in interest to support the building as our mission station. In my present district, we have thrived with a lean staff. With my finance team’s support, we have successfully worked toward two years of reserves for sustainability. Be clear, we are a thriving district with mission and ministry. We simply have prioritized funding for sustainability.

**e. *Guaranteed appointment for clergy:***

The gift of guaranteed appointments gives strength to our value of open itineracy. Guaranteed appointments serve the entire church through cross-racial appointments and the reception of clergy women as the “firsts” in a local church. Guaranteed appointments also allow pastors to be prophetic without fear of losing their appointment. Unlike other denominations whereby a pastor can be fired for a sermon that steps on toes, the UMC gives clergy the support to preach the Gospel without (immediate) fear.

While guaranteed appointments play an important role in the partnership with open itineracy, the challenge of guaranteed appointments leaves the potential for ineffectiveness. More than one congregation can be impacted by an ineffective pastor through guaranteed appointments before an exit plan is realized. Guaranteed appointments create space for the UMC to appoint pastors across race and gender expectations. But we must guard against complacency and ineffectiveness with this guarantee. There is also an increasing concern that the denomination may face a higher number of clergy receiving guaranteed appointments than there are appointments available.

***f. Term episcopacy:***

I believe term episcopacy has value so that the strength of Bishops can return into leadership in a local church, extension ministry, or academia. However, term episcopacy should not emerge as a power tool to displace bishops for their vision, prophetic role, race, gender, and/or unwelcome style of leadership. Term episcopacy to enhance the mission of the UMC is a viable option.

***g. The World-Wide Nature of the Church: Global Book of Discipline/Global Structure:***

The Book of Discipline (paragraph 101) allows flexibility in the rules for the churches outside the United States, however, presently, the flexibility is not offered to the UMC in the United States. At the same time, Central Conferences find the Book of Discipline does not apply for many of their processes. At every general conference, it becomes clearer that our global governance structure is creating more harm than good. It creates a chasm whereby faithful disciples demonize one another with disregard to context.

I welcome a new governance structure that celebrates every region with an intentional eye toward mission and mutuality for partnership. Such a governance with beautiful expressions of mission and ministry will demand trust and respect of differing perspectives across the church. I dream of a global church connection whereby we agree on the Nicene Creed, Apostles Creed, the tenets of Wesley regarding grace, personal piety and social holiness, an accountability among laity and clergy, and mission beyond our communities with discernment toward context *to make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world.*