**Annual Report of Executive Director**

**Global Wesleyan Alliance**

**December 1, 2018**

**Connections, Research, and Exploration** are three words summarizing activities this year.

**Connections** would include the Global Wesleyan Alliance forums that were conducted for the specialists within each tribe in specific areas: Mission Directors, Chief Financial Officers, Church Multiplication. The Executive Summary of those events are on the web site for review.

In each of these events participants decided to schedule a forum in 2019-Mission Directors, Free Methodist host in Indianapolis, March 21-22; CFO’s-Church of God Ministries host, March11-12; Church Multiplication-Free Methodist in Dearborn, Michigan host, September 16-18; Church Publishers and Curriculum, Indianapolis Airport-Crowne Plaza, September 19.

Two outside connections occurred with participation at the New Room Conference and Association of Statisticians for American Religious Bodies.

The New Room Conference was initiated by Seedbed. The conference was conducted in Nashville at the Brentwood Baptist Church. More that 2200 participants gathered to hear dynamic presenters, pray for an Awakening within America, and explore what avenues might be utilized to bring about an Awakening. I was asked to serve on a panel in the preconference for selected leaders. On the panel were Foley Beach, Archbishop and Primate of the Anglican Church in North America; Bob Fetherlin, President of OMS; Sandra Gray, President of Asbury University; James Swanson, Bishop of the United Methodist Church in Mississippi; Cheryl Bridges Johns, faculty member Church of God Cleveland Seminary and myself.

Our discussion was to be around this question: what would it take for an awakening in America? What are the impediments? How would we gauge the church’s nerve for evangelism today? What is the greatest need of our leadership moment? How can the church in the West (North) learn from the church in non-West (South)? After the panel discussion, table discussion followed and the conclusion was a time of prayer for awakening.

Other GWA members were present: Steve Jones and wife; David Kendall and wife; Michael Forney; and Anita Eastlack.

The leaders of the Wesleyan Covenant Association were present and we had a brief introduction and conversation with Keith Boyette, the leader of WCA. Kim Riseman of World Methodist Evangelism was present.

Bishop Robert Farr of the United Methodist Church in Missouri indicated to me at the New Room conference he would like to sponsor a meeting of middle judicatory leaders of GWA within Missouri. We have selected a tentative date, but I await guidance from GWA leadership about moving forward with this type of activity.

The New Room Conference will be held September 25-27, 2019 in Nashville. David Thomas, Executive Director of New Room, has already made inquiry about the possibility of The Wesleyan Holiness Connection, GWA, and New Room co-hosting specific dialogues around evangelism, the role of the Holy Spirit in awakening, and church multiplication. GWA members will need to address this issue. David was invited to the meeting of the Wesleyan Holiness Connection recent board meeting.

**The second outside connection was with ASARP.** I have attached an executive summary statement.

**The research component** has revolved around two projects: Is there a Wesleyan ethos for church multiplication? and “The Changing Demographics Impacting the Local Church.” Both papers are attached to this report.

**Exploration** has taken two avenues: dialogue with Executive Committee and dialogue with outside groups.

Since the inception of GWA in 2002, with incorporation in Indiana in February 6, 2013, and IRS 501©(3) status granted August 5, 2015 , the role and the purpose has been defined by the GWA Covenant Agreement of the members. The four objectives and goals approved in December of 2012 are:

*1. Creating greater community through intentional relationship building between organizations, leaders,​​and​ ​congregations.*

*2. Collaboration in fulfilling Christ’s mission through pooling resources, sharing best practices, recommending standards to enable mutual recognition of ministerial credentials, joint resource development​ ​and​ ​publishing,​ ​and​ ​ministerial​​ ​​placement.*

*3. Convening events and conferences for the promotion of holiness, discipleship, church health and multiplication, leadership development, prayer, denominational or judicatory leadership training​ ​and​ ​networking,​ ​and​ ​other​ ​issues​ ​of​ ​mutual​ ​concern.*

*4. Communicating with one another through sharing calendars, news, and information about special events, and issuing joint statements (subject to endorsement by individual partner organizations)​ ​addressing​ ​contemporary​ ​moral​ ​and​ ​spiritual​ ​issues.*

When the Executive Director was hired in December of 2013 on a one year renewable contract, the assignment was to “shepherd the initiatives” of GWA. Beginning in January of 2014, this has been the task. An appropriate review of the objectives and goals started last year (Dec 2018) and continues as GWA looks toward the future. This dialogue and review will be beneficial in setting the direction for the next several years.

As I have dialogued with outside groups and made them aware of GWA, the information has been received well and with interest. There are numerous faith groups and denominations that are not connected to any broader group for encouragement, inspiration, and resources. According to recent statistics provided by The Center for the Study of Global Christianity,” there are 425,089 churches in North America in 4,541 faith groups or denominations representing 192,485,395 adults. Of the 425,089 churches, more than one half (227,730) are classified as independent\*”. Do we have a role to play in connecting with any of the groups that share our Wesleyan perspective? We have recently had an inquiry from the Brethren in Christ denomination.

The broader question for conversation relates to the future emphasis of GWA among its members and in the broader Christian community.

It has been a joy to interact with many of your servant leaders and with you as we seek to glorify Christ by our work together and expand the kingdom of God.

Humbly submitted,

Rev. Ronald V. Duncan, D. Min

Executive Director of GWA

\*Todd M. Johnson and Gina A. Zurlo, eds. *World Christian Database*. Leiden/Boston: Brill, accessed November 2018.

**Potential Calendar of Forums and Events for 2019**

March 11-12-CFO’s Forum

March 21-22-Mission Directors Forum

April 26-Missouri Meeting of GWA leaders serving in Missouri at invitation of Methodist Bishop Robert Farr

June 27-30-Church of God Convention

July 16-19-Free Methodist General Conference

September 16-18-Church Multiplication Forum

September 19 -Publishers Forum

September 25-27-New Room Conference

October 22-23-ASARB

**Executive Summary of the Annual Meeting of the Association of Statisticians for American Religious Bodies held at the headquarters of Presbyterian Church in Louisville, Kentucky, October 23-24, 2018.**

Thirty-two persons were in attendance representing nineteen different groups. The meeting was developed in three parts: participants bringing updates on their work within their respective groups; presentations (three) on selected issues; and updates on the two major projects of this group-2020 Yearbook of churches and Religious Census by county.

Two of the three presentations were about Effective Data Presentation. How do you present statistics so they inform and keep the attention of the reader? Very informative and well presented.

The third presentation was from the Associate Director of the Center for the Study of Global Christianity and co-author of the World Christian Encyclopedia, Dr. Gina Zurlo from Gordon Conwell Seminary. Every five years, the World Christian Encyclopedia is updated. The info graphic she presented for Global Christianity 2018 was very informative. You can go to the web site, [www.globalchristianity.org](http://www.globalchristianity.org) and have access to a tremendous amount of useful information. Two of the factoids for me was the largest Protestant Denominations by Country-in 2015-Han House churches in China numbered 82,400,000; and Africa has the largest number of Christians-631,000,000.

The group also heard about the two major projects-Yearbook of American and Canadian Churches and U.S. Religious Census. The U.S. Religious Census project has received a major grant from the Lilly Foundation to complete this religious census by county.

The group elected officers for the coming two years and celebrated the retirement of three long standing members by issuing them emeriti status. Next year’s meeting will be at the Glenmary Research Center in Cincinnati, Ohio October 22-23, 2019.

The important part of this meeting for GWA members is that we encourage all our covenant members to turn in accurate numbers so we can have realistic statistics which we can use to track trends and be informed of our cultural changes**. If your group has not turned in numbers, please go to the website and do so: www.asarb.org.**

Respectfully submitted,

Ronald V. Duncan, D. Min

Executive Director

Global Wesleyan Alliance

**Wesleyan Ethos for Church Multiplication**

**By**

**Dr. Ronald V. Duncan and Dr. William Wiesman**

**November 15, 2018**

**Introduction**

Is there a distinctive Wesleyan/Holiness ethos of church multiplication? We believe the answer is yes.

**Historical Perspective**

“As early as 1730, Wesley stated his firm determination to become “a man of one book, the Bible.”(p65 Volume 1, Oden). With this affirmation, everything Wesley proclaimed was grounded from Scripture. This belief of the essential foundation of Scripture was further expanded as he sought to understand how God speaks to us. “Scripture confirmed by the apostolic tradition, reason enabled by grace, and the personal experience of the Spirit in grasping the Word of God proclaimed in Scripture” (p65 Volume 1, Oden) became the formula used by Wesley to discern truth.

According to Oden, modern terms like “the Evangelical Imperative” do not “appear prominently in Wesley.”(p273, Volume 3, Oden) His concern was the spread of the gospel (ibid). “The Wisdom of Winning Souls” was a homily very early in his ministry in 1731. His text was Proverbs 11.30:”He that winneth souls is wise.” Wesley connected holy living with the ability to win souls (ibid.p274).

Wesley was not concerned with “how to” evangelism as much as he was concerned with the holy living of those who had experienced the grace of God.

This holy living would become attractive to those who saw a difference in the lives of the believers who had a sense of “happiness” that the unbeliever did not enjoy. Times were hard for most persons in the context of 1731 and happiness was difficult to find.

As Wesley shared the good news of Jesus Christ, persons were saved and started their spiritual formation. Wesley would in the tradition of his day prepare “instructional homilies” to help guide those who were part of “his connection.” Discipleship was personal to Wesley. The coming together of believers in “bands” would eventually lead to churches being formed. The winning of souls will at some point lead to the establishment of a church. The key to church planting or church multiplication is the winning of souls and then intentional discipleship.

**Four Threads**

With the centrality of Scripture, we must examine how church multiplication is formed from Scripture.

Thread One, the radical optimism of grace extended to all persons. (John 3:16; Ephesians 2:8-9) 2 Peter 3.9 *“The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise…not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance.”* Drawing people by our “holiness” and “holy living” will see us actively engaged in reaching out to all of society especially those in need and therefore taking on the status quo by proclaiming the message of Luke 4:18. *“…he has anointed me to preach the good news to the poor. …to proclaim freedom to the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to release the oppressed…”* Wesleyans recognize that no person is beyond the reach of God’s amazing grace; that the Holy Spirit is already at work in drawing all persons to a salvation encounter with the Living Lord. Going to the “least of these” is a hallmark of Holiness people. Scripture and our heritage inform us that beginning new churches for middle class, suburbanites with 2.1 children is an insufficient, incomplete strategy for multiplication. The first thread of a Wesleyan/Holiness ethos is that God’s grace extended through his body the church must be intentionally offered to all persons.

Thread Two, the mandate to make disciples (Matt 28:19-20, Acts 1.8);

The church is the divine/human means through which the sovereign Head of the church has chosen to extend His call to all people (2Co 5:20). Those who respond and receive Him by grace through faith (Ep 2:8-9) become a part of His church and disciple making occurs. The book of Acts is the history of early disciple making. Three thousand were added to the church after Peter’s sermon on the day of Pentecost and that was only the beginning. Soon the young church and its leaders were accused of turning the whole world upside down as more members were added and local churches were multiplied (Ac 9:31, 17:6).

The building of the church of Jesus Christ cannot be less but it is certainly more than merely increased numbers of members and churches. Ephesians 4:10‑12 clearly points out the maturing, growing process necessary for all believers. This too is disciple making. It is growing in Christlikeness, a maturing in character that goes beyond the destiny changing new‑birth experience and the purifying, empowering experience of entire sanctification. It is the privilege and responsibility of every believer to grow in grace, to experience qualitative growth in his/her relational experience with Christ. This growth in grace is a maturing process as God’s grace leads to increased knowledge and wisdom in discerning His will. A Wesleyan ethos of church multiplication includes a process of discipleship with a balance of evangelism and growth in Christlikeness.

Thread Three, the leadership of the Holy Spirit. (Acts 13:1-3 & ff) We know from the book of Acts how the Holy Spirit worked through the believers to spread the Good News of Jesus Christ into communities.

What was true in the New Testament first century church and what was happening in the 18th century church in England was a dependence on the Holy Spirit to lead and guide. We must discover what dependence on the Holy Spirit means for us in our cultural situation. What does the work of the Holy Spirit look like in our context of using metrics, demographics, and analytics to develop our vision and strategies? How does the resourced scientific mind develop a dependence on the Holy Spirit? In the past history of the church, it seems that dependence on the Holy Spirit has risen out of desperation from the believers. Famine and persecution were the catalyst in the past. What are the catalysts for today? Can we experience a “new awakening” out of our current context?

Wesley said, “The purpose of your praying is not to inform God, as though he knew not your wants already; but rather to inform yourselves; to fix the sense of those wants more deeply in your hearts, and the sense of your continual dependence on Him who only is able to supply all your wants.(Vol 4, Oden, p 228). For church multiplication to be successful, the prayer emphasis in each context will be prominent. Believing that God still speaks today, we seek him and his will, and his vision. The key is keeping “continual dependence on Him” through the leadership of the Holy Spirit. The third thread of a Wesleyan/Holiness ethos is total dependence upon the leadership of the Holy Spirit as discerned in prayer.

Thread Four, the establishment of churches (Matt 16.18; Book of Acts; Ephesians 3.10-21;Rom 12.5-8; I Cor 12.12-13,27-31; Ephesians 4:4-6,11-16).

The first century believers cared about one another (Acts 2.42-47;4.32-37). Church planting in a community starts with understanding the community make -up, the needs (education, safety, services, jobs, etc.), and discussing with the community what they bring to the table. Dialogue with the community (some who are saved and others who are not) is a critical step in developing trust. Trust is the foundation necessary giving rise to the opportunity to speak into someone’s life. Trust acts as a catalyst to create momentum and motivation to be part of a dynamic community of faith. Trust is a strong component of love. Incarnational daily life means you care deeply about what is happening to those around you. As Jesus stated in John 13.35, “by this all men will know you are my disciples if you love one another.” No “cookie-cutter” church planting strategy will meet the needs of every community. A Wesleyan/Holiness ethos means that each new church will be as unique as the believers that comprise it and the contextual community of “not-yet” believers.

To summarize, from a Wesleyan/Holiness perspective, the ethos of Church Multiplication will be grounded in Scripture weaving together four threads: 1), God is reaching out to all persons through His body the Church; 2), that “disciple making” includes “new-birth” evangelism and maturing in Christlikeness; 3), that total dependence upon the Holy Spirit through prayer is essential; and, 4), new churches will reflect the unique community context of each.

**White Paper concerning the greatest challenges facing the kingdom of God in the next few years or the Changing Demographics Impacting the Local Church**

**By Dr. Ronald V. Duncan, Executive Director GWA**

**THE CONTEXT AND SITUATION**

The sense of milling around waiting for someone to give direction or discussing what direction to take seems to describe what is happening in many within the kingdom of God. Here are some facts that should get our attention: the faithful, those attending and contributing, are declining in 90 percent of the churches in America; 425,000 churches in America, 80% average less than 100, most are underfunded for the ministries they are attempting; the mega churches(2000 and greater) seemed to be the only growing churches and most of the growth is transfer; the trend is fewer churches because groups cannot sustain the smaller church; and regular attendance is defined as once a month.

Continuing with facts to get our attention the closer of churches is happening faster than successful church plants. Looking at the net gain over the past decade of almost any tribe within the kingdom and you will see a decline in churches, attendance, and financial support.

At this same time, you see a growing rejection of the kingdom of God by American citizens. In terms of lifestyle, it is becoming more difficult to distinguish a faithful follower of Jesus Christ from a non-follower. Christian divorce rate is very similar to non-Christian divorce rate. Alternate lifestyles are embraced by numerous Christian groups. Christian kids are becoming addicted to one drug or another just like the non-Christian kids. Social media is now the teacher of our childrens’ values. Parents who spend less than one hour a week talking with their children wonder why the child doesn’t do what they want. The child has spent forty hours in the week with social media, technology, games, and tv which has promoted values alien and in many cases antithetical to Biblical values.

Because of recent happenings within our nation and around the world, there is an uneasiness about life. This is a golden opportunity for the gospel of the New Testament to be presented to a community looking for hope, a sense of worth, a confidence in who holds the future, and a release from evil anxiety which grips so many.

The need for greater synergism among Christian faith groups to address these challenges and speak with confidence into our cultural milieu is upon us. With the ability of technology and social media, we have an opportunity to address all the challenges listed above, but it will take some new thinking and initiatives from church leadership to do this together. I believe leadership is standing at a major crossroads of history. The direction discussed and taken will have significant impact on the world. What shall we do? I am praying God will speak to each of us through the Holy Spirit and bring us to the place He wants us to be.

**The Changing Demographics Impacting the Local Church**

Change has always been part of the human experience since time began. However, in the last twenty years the accelerator of change has been pushed to new limits. For instance, how long does it take for information to be transferred to another part of the world? We know that the speed of technology and the availability of that technology abounds even in third world countries. Information is now spread more widely than ever before. This raises multiple questions: Are individuals and groups prepared to receive this new information? Do they have a groundwork that is capable of accommodating such massive qualities of input?

When we think of intangible ideas and concepts, how long does it take for an individual or group to consider, think through, and make changes based on new information or ideas? Here again, we have accelerated the rate of input, but the internal processing mechanisms within the individual or group may not have changed for years or decades.

We have all heard, “we have always done it this way.” Look at the banking industry for a concrete example of massive change in a short period of time. Today, most of us bank from home using apps that do everything we would have done if we had gone to the bank. We are getting close to “cashless” needs thru credit cards, Pay Pal, and other banking innovations. What pushed the banking industry into these changes? It was technology and the cry for convenience from customers.

When we think about the church and its ability to adapt to the current internal and external influences, we encounter a reluctant and less responsive group. Why has “slow to change” been a dominate theme throughout church history? There are hundreds of books written about the shortcomings of the church in regards to many issues. My goal is not to hammer the church, but to love her into action. Action is the watchword for the coming decade if we are to close the gap on several major fronts hurling toward and engulfing the church.

As I write mainly about the American church, some of the thoughts being put forward may be applicable worldwide. For centuries the American church has been dominated in thought by the European church according to some church historians.\* However, with the influx of ideas and folks from below the 40th parallel, one of the strong influences in America will be from the southern half of the hemisphere. Their view of Christianity is radically different from the Christianity being practiced in America today.\*

I want to address specific topics in the coming pages which I believe need acceleration by church leadership across the board. By church leadership I mean denominational, middle judicatories, and local churches.

Aging happens. What is the impact in the next decade on the aging population in the pews and in leadership? Some denominations are reporting more than 50% of the congregational population is above 50 years of age. How does this compare with the aging demographics of America?

Leadership is also an aging issue in terms of chronology and skill sets required to lead in today’s environment.

Rapid changing neighborhoods and growth of cities are impacting who is within the local church’s sphere of influence. The homogeneity principle touted by Donald McGravan and C. Peter Wagner in the 60’s and 70’s built the American church culture. Today the challenge is how does a homogeneity church become a multi cultural, multi ethic, multi economic church because they are now surrounded by these demographics? How does a pastor trained in the 70’s, 80’s, 90’s retool his/her skill sets to be an effective pastor leader today?

As we know brand loyalty began to disappear in the American culture during the 70’s. Today, identifying with one brand is almost at the bottom of the list of reasons why a person chose a particular church.\*

Theological diversity within the same tribes has and is causing grave concerns and even some splits. What has caused such change within a short period of time when compared to centuries of continuity?

These and other questions I want to address in this white paper.

I am listing eight challenges I believe we need to address..

**CHALLENGES**

**Transformation of the homogeneity congregations** within the kingdom of God to a multi-ethnic, multi-cultural, multi -economic congregations represents a significant challenge to national and local leaders. Because of the demographic changes within our cities and communities, the current homogeneity congregation is on track for extinction.

Questions to be pondered in discussing this issue are:

Why transformation now and what are the facts?

What is the role of the church in the kingdom of God and the changes within our society?

What are the paradigm shifts occurring within churches in the presentation of the gospel?

What will reach the “nones”, the outsiders, the adversaries, the apathetic, the bored, the millennial, Gen Z?

Aa second major issue facing the kingdom of God will be the **funding of ministries to include local churches, mission endeavors, national structures, and Christian higher education.**

Questions to be pondered in discussing this issue are:

The impact of cultural values on the giving of the faithful?

The aging of the faithful givers within the kingdom of God?

The “value added” issue working its way into tithing conversations?

What are the new motivations for giving?

The role of theology or lack thereof in developing new giving patterns?

A third major issue is **the recruitment and training of new leaders to face the changing paradigm.**

Questions to be pondered in discussing this issue are:

Are we training our new leaders as well as our leaders already in the field to deal with the changing culture we face as a nation?

Do the training models currently in existence provide the best opportunity for effective equipping?

How do we motivate the 20, 30, 40 year leaders currently serving to retool or retrofit their skill and gift sets to meet the current demands?

A fourth major issue revolves around **ministry groups tangentially associated** with some faith group maybe, but serves a very specific and limited ministry area.

Questions to be pondered in discussing this issue are:

How do we develop adequate lines of communication which will produce synergism among para church groups who are all fishing in the same pond for support as the denominations?

How do we help our parishioners discern which are worthy of support and consideration?

**A fifth major issue concerns church planting and church multiplication.**

The questions to be pondered include:

Is the mother-daughter model still viable?

Will multi-site mega churches be the best way to insure survival of a church plant?

With such a diverse culture, what are the strategic goals of the church plant and how do they fit into the community context?

What about the micro church concept?

Where are the best models today?

How does the paradigm shift from “believe and belong” to “belong then believe” impact our doctrine and way we do ministry?

**A sixth issue relates to the new role of the large-mega-super mega church** in regard to denominational support and loyalty.

Questions to be pondered include:

When the local church no longer looks to the denominational headquarters for anything and acts somewhat independently, what is the response of national leadership?

The local church moves away from the goals of the national church to pursue their goals, what happens to the relationship between church and national connection?

Are the various disciplines and manuals written for churches under 500?

**A seventh issue relates to the changing dynamic within the local church in terms of aging.** The baby boomers have started what some have called the “death Tsunami.” This trend will last over the next twenty years as the baby boomers die. Many of them are in key leadership positions and financially support the church (30% of members give 70% of the funds-the 30% are mainly baby boomers).

**And the eighth issue relates to the theological diversity prevalent even within the same tribes.** The cultural impact on the church has been discounted over the past fifty years, but the current influence of the culture on members of churches is vastly understated. A major question in regards to social mores, politics and education is, what behaviors today are acceptable as Christian? What is the standard to live by? The Judaeo-Christian ethic which has undergirded this nation since the beginning is being questioned, rejected in some quarters, and replaced in some quarters by humanistic hedonistic materialism. This world view impacts what you think about immigration, marriage, politics, war, hunger, oppression, etc.

Questions to be considered are:

How do we interpret separation of church and state?

How do we measure the influence of culture on church members and the church?

How do we communicate the divine and foundational principles to a world bent on serving self?

How do we speak the truth in love?

**Summary**

I am confident I have just scratched the surface of major issues or challenges facing the local church. The question for GWA focuses on how do we want to assist one another in addressing these issues and perhaps others? Do we want to convene some of our best strategists to give time and thought to these issues? Do we want to assign certain topics to certain groups for research and development? How do we proceed or do we proceed at all?

\*Statistics and conclusions taken from Barna Research, Pew, Baylor Institute of Religion and Lifeway Resources.