**Annual Report of Executive Director**

**Global Wesleyan Alliance**

**December 7, 2019**

The necessity for the church in America to remain strong and provide a foundation for our culture continues with renewed vision and vigor. The covenant members of the Global Wesleyan Alliance have assisted one another this past year through sharing of ideas, support, encouragement, and problem solving. It is always difficult to measure the value added from one conversation to another, but the relationships that are built are invaluable and provide a framework for future engagement in beneficial and positive ways.

The summary reports provided throughout the year on the Forums conducted provide some insight into the actual happenings, but the greater values occurring among the participants is difficult to capture but are very powerful.

To briefly review the summary reports starting with the CFOs meeting in Anderson, Indiana, I will seek to list more of the intangible since the report covered the factual happenings. The world of the CFOs impacts the ministry of each organization and if exchange of ideas on the many fronts considered can alleviate problems and create greater efficiency’s then the result is more effective ministry. The CFOs do not have technical partners generally within the organization they serve. Therefore, connectivity to likeminded souls in covenant partners is a relationship bonus and a safety net. When they have technical questions regarding their areas of speciality the relationship built previously provides the avenue for contact. One of the many insights emerging from the last meeting was the recognition that not all auditors are created equal or hold to the same interpretation of general accounting rules. This makes for an interesting discussion.

The Church Multiplication Forum in Dearborn, Michigan engaged the group both in new dynamics and resources as well as personal soul searching and challenge. To broaden one’s view within two days is a challenge to process. The Forum introduced to all the participants a new way to view church multiplication and practical applications. Shifting paradigms for a group, congregation, or denomination is always difficult and depends on timing, circumstances, vision, and promotion of the same.

What has happened in SW Michigan district of the Free Methodist Church is an example it can be done with astounding results. One church multiplication attendee told me he had participated in numerous Exponential Conferences and a multitude of church multiplication seminars, but that this Forum was eye opening and life changing for him.

The Publishers and Curriculum Forum was our smallest in number of participants. Yet they were able to engage in the main agenda item, come to some conclusions, and generate some possibilities for the future. One of the difficult issues within the Forum structure is the processing of fresh new ideas and suggestions. As the convener, I have taken the posture that any new initiatives must come back to the covenant members before any action can be taken by the executive director. This check and balance are probably best, but means any new initiative receives attention once a year.

The idea shared in the summary of this Forum suggests changing our web site design to point inquiries toward the resources (curriculum and books) existing from our publishers. Depending on the number of hits would then help to assess if we wanted to create a more robust system. In addition, they suggested all the educational institutions website links be included. These decisions will need attention by the GWA leadership.

The Missions’ Forum also had a small group gather this year, but they covered a great deal of material, shared ideas, and discussed cutting edge questions. All the representative groups present testified to the working of God through the Holy Spirit all around the world. To hear the stories of salvation and growth in the kingdom is something the American church has not experienced since the Asbury Revival. The church in numerous areas is undergoing persecution yet growth and multiplication continues. As it becomes more difficult for the USA church to send missionaries and sustain them, the indigenous church is positively responding resulting in growth. I would draw your attention to some of the numbers shared in the Mission Forum Summary.

We were fortunate to have Mark Surbrook and Paul Confer from Church of God (Holiness) to be with us. The interaction was exactly what was envision when GWA was formed. Their desire to learn from others and their insightful questions provided a rich exchange. Out of this interaction Mark and Paul representing Church of God (Holiness) initiated conversation about becoming a covenant member of GWA. I shared this with the Executive Committee and Mark will be attending our December meeting as a guest. GWA members will be given the opportunity to interact and vote on their desire to join.

My attendance at the ASARB-Association of Statisticians of American Religious Bodies-serves as a connecting function for our groups that are not represented at this meeting. Currently, only the Nazarene Church is represented. In the summary on this event, I listed the agenda.

The two items I want to highlight in this report is the request to participate in providing accurate and current numbers for the Yearbook of the American and Canadian Churches 2020 and the Religious Census. Both tasks are being directed by ASARB. The news media, political parties, researchers uses these numbers. For us to be accurate and current cuts down on fake news.

If you have not receive the forms after the first of the year from ASARB in order to be counted, then let me know so I can get you included.

Dr. J. Gordon Melton, distinguished professor at Baylor University’s Institute of Religious Studies was present and I had the opportunity for several conversations. He has a wealth of information and is on the cutting edge in terms of research about Christianity in America and around the world. One of his observations was that in the “*2010 Yearbook of American and Canadian Churches*” there are listed “227 distinct church traditions”. According to their research reported in the eighth edition of “*Melton’s Encyclopedia of American Religions”* there are more than “2300 independent religious groups” in America in 2008. His numbers include those outside of Christianity, but are considered “religious groups.” The ninth edition has been published, but I did not have access to it to compare. Regardless, it seems we are lacking a complete picture if we only rely on the 2010 Yearbook. Hopefully, the 2020 Yearbook will be more accurate.

His second observation conceerns the Religious Census, which is a county by county listing. In the spot checking they(Baylor IRS) had done, they found the counties were under counted by 25-30%. So, the number of churches in America is greater than reported. So, what difference does all this make? From Foundations to government entities, many groups use these numbers in making decisions. To understand our own landscape with some certainty should inform us in the development of strategies for mission.

The main reason for the disparity in numbers is due to the collection of data methods. ASARB discussed at length how to improve data collection from all groups.

Finally, in recent weeks, I talked with John Graves, the CEO of Vision America. The web site gives complete details of what he and his organization are seeking to accomplish which is to mobilize Christians in America to vote. They support no political party but believe all Christians should exercise their constitutional right to vote. Their research shows Christians in America are well below 50% in voting. The focus is getting people registered and then getting them to vote. Their services are free. I would encourage you to check it out [www.VisionAmerica.org](http://www.VisionAmerica.org).

**Future Considerations**

1. Out of my dialogue with Dr. Melton he asked why the other groups within the Wesleyan family were not part of GWA. I said probably because they have not been asked and we did not know they existed. Therefore, should we devise some plan to explore the invitation to other Wesleyan and holiness family members?
2. The Publishers would like to see our web site include all the publisher’s web sites and all our educational institutions.
3. For several years now, the covenant members have been dialoguing about the direction of the GWA and the role of the Executive Director. This conversation needs to continue. Even though I think the Forums have a definite positive influence it feels like we need to do more. What the “more” should look like, is obviously the question.

**FUTURE DATES**

**CFO Forum-The Missionary Church in Fort Wayne is the Host, March 16-17,2020.**

**Church Planters-Tampa Florida-April 20-22, 2020**

**Mission Directors-April 20-21,2021, host to be determined.**

**GWA Annual Meeting-December 4-5, 2020-Barberton, Ohio**

**Host is Christian Healthcare Ministries**

**GWA Annual Meeting-December 3-4,2021-Churches of Christ in Christian Union-Circleville, Ohio**

Respectfully submitted,

Ron Duncan

Executive Director