

Mission in the Wesleyan Traditions

The Wesleyan Theological Society will explore mission in the Wesleyan traditions with attention to the past, present and future at the 2002 Annual Meeting. Contributions are encouraged that are framed in light of the following questions:

- What does it mean to claim the “world” as “parish”? With the insistence that true religion is the conjoining of radical personal holiness and radical social holiness, the definitions of the nature, theories and practices of mission have provoked contention within and about the Wesleyan movements as well as self-sacrificial action by adherents of the Methodist, Holiness and Pentecostal Movements. The calls to “renew” the churches and announce salvation to the poor have meant that every aspect of Wesleyan community life may be considered to have missional elements. There has historically been resistance to treating separately “home” and “foreign” mission. These have been viewed as accidents of location, not distinctions in mission. How, why, where and when do Wesleyans undertake mission?
- How does one understand the children of Wesley taken as a whole in our world today? What does it mean to be Wesleyan in the 21st century? This issue, more difficult perhaps with regard to sources and scholarly methodology, involves the description and analysis of the results of Wesleyan mission around the world in its Methodist, Holiness and Pentecostal forms. This influence has been both direct through the efforts of mission agencies of various descriptions, and indirect through the influence of frequently translated publications and traveling evangelists. The first indigenous believers often played crucial roles that have not always been included in the self-promoting histories of the mission agencies. As a result, the Wesleyan traditions can no longer be understood as exclusively British or North American. How might the theology, history and sociology (all broadly understood) look written from the perspective of the recipients of mission efforts? How does one deal with history, theology and practices that have been adapted within diverse cultural contexts? What does the inculturation (adaptation) of Wesleyan ideals and theological values in diverse contexts mean for claims about the Wesleyan traditions?
- What does it mean that the fastest growing segments of the Wesleyan traditions in North America have long been among peoples not of European American descent? Can approaches to the Wesleyan traditions in North America be developed that take into account the experiences of African Americans, Korean Americans, Brazilian Americans, Dominican Americans, Haitian Americans, Japanese Americans, and Chinese Americans, among others?
- What have been the roles of women in mission in the Wesleyan traditions? It could be argued that one can not appreciate the significance of the Wesleyan family in World Christianity without reference to the roles of women. As missionaries, teachers, writers, administrators, fund raisers, medical personnel, evangelists, deaconesses, temperance workers, Bible women, industrial/agricultural mentors and wives, women have generally outnumbered men in most missional areas. Their contributions to the diffusion of the Wesleyan traditions around the world has been underrepresented in the historiography. In nearly every aspect of mission, however defined, women have provided the majority of activists and have played definitive roles.
- What are models, methods and venues of mission for the 21st century? What are the roles of intercultural missions? How do these relate to the host and sending cultures? Can one find resources in our past for enhancing our futures?

This call for papers recognizes the diversity of definitions, practices and fields of mission, the diverse artifacts of mission work, and range of scholarly methodologies that can be used to analyze and interpret the data. It calls for presentations that will examine mission in the Wesleyan traditions from all disciplines: biblical studies, philosophy, theology, history, missiology, comparative religions, urban/rural studies, sociology, women’s studies, and intercultural studies, among others.

Abstracts Due, on paper and on disk (Word or Word Perfect) accompanied by curriculum vitae (resume):
1 August 2001; or by e-mail to <dbundy@cts.edu>.
Finalized Program, completed by 15 September 2001.
Papers Due for inclusion in Bound Volume: 1 February 2002
WTS Conference, Hobe Sound College: March 2002