

REPORT OF THE FINDINGS COMMITTEE
WESLEYAN URBAN/ETHNIC STUDY CONFERENCE
Jersey City, New Jersey
November 26-28, 1984

I. What Is The Opportunity?

For two thousand years we have had the Great Commission "go into all the world." In the modern missions movement the church has begun to obey this first-century command of our Lord. The gospel has made encouraging progress into foreign cultures and peoples.

We now face a new challenge. The world has come to us. It is on our doorsteps--in the cities of North America. New immigrants flood North America in unprecedented numbers facing us with a growing mission field at home. More than ever before this field is a true "mission" field--since many of the ethnics now migrating to North America are not abandoning their ethnicity to be melted into the traditional American "melting pot." Further, some of these groups are "unmeltable" for one reason or another, leaving us with an increasingly multiethnic culture.

Middle America doubtless is not fully aware of the growing proportion of the population of the North American countries which is other than Anglo-Saxon in culture.

- Los Angeles is the second largest Mexican city in the world.
- The U.S. is the fourth largest Spanish nation in the world.
- The U.S. is the second largest Polish nation, the largest Jewish nation.
- The U.S. is the second largest black nation in the world, surpassed only by Nigeria, of all 53 African countries!
- 55% of the Chinese in America are American born, but 99% of the Chinese churches are for foreign-born Chinese.

The facts go on and on, piling up a momentous amount of evidence to persuade us to seek a fresh commitment to ethnic and urban ministries. We cannot simply wait around until they "become like us." The chances are that many of these cultures--perhaps most of them--will never be totally assimilated into the mainstream of the WASP culture, nor do they wish to join it.

The Wesleyan Church is faced with an unprecedented situation. The world we have been faithfully sending the gospel to is now coming to our doorstep. What will we do? Shall we undertake the mission of evangelization of these ethnic groups with as much vigor now as we did before they came to our country?

The answer is yes. The Great Commission commands us to see that the gospel spreads--even into our cities, now the home of a myriad of peoples from around the world. The need is great. God is counting on us. The Wesleyan Church will do its part in this evangelistic endeavor just as it is doing its fair share on foreign soil. We recognize that this ministry will not be just giving

but sharing. We will not be just ministering to ethnic, but ministering with ethnic/urban groups in a mutually enriching endeavor.

As we look toward the future we can envision The Wesleyan Church as a multi-ethnic denomination which is increasingly kaleidoscopic, including a variety of patterns—ethnic churches, integrated churches, and anglo churches. We see The Wesleyan Church breaking convention in the future by initiating a considerable number of urban and ethnic churches. We see these ethnic and urban churches reproducing themselves at such a rate that our denomination could become a largely ethnic church in the future. The challenge lies before us. We believe The Wesleyan Church will respond. We cannot envision Wesleyans swirling around a little eddy ministering only to people like ourselves in the future. We believe a growing and vital urban and ethnic ministry is the Lord's will for us.

II. What Is The Plan?

1. Involve the entire Wesleyan Church in a sense of mission to ethnic/urban peoples in the "home nations" (USA and Canada) comparable to that for overseas missions. This will involve an honest confrontation with our past selfishness and neglect, our present prejudices and fears, and our future correction and struggle. We must use our influence as leaders to seek the demise of the "winners only" philosophy so pervasive in our world today, so that ministries like this will not be dismissed as nothing more than "losers leading losers." Success cannot be measured by the super-church rule in all cases. Success is obeying the will of the Father—and that sometimes means working for ten years in the inner city and having less than 100 people in attendance. "Faithfulness" must no longer be identified with failures who don't have 300 in their churches.

We must make heroes out of those presently in ethnic ministries. The Church needs to hear about them. There are more ethnic and urban ministries already happening than most people realize. The entire church can be redirected simply by attracting attention to those who are doing what we want others to do.

We need to edit the papers presented at this study conference and publish and distribute them to our leaders free of charge.

We propose four levels of activity, in sequence but none being completed before its successor begins.

- a. Begin with General Superintendents, General Officers, and GBA—Headquarters Retreat, GBA report and discussion.
- b. Follow through with DSs—perhaps through area meetings of GSs with DSs in fall of 1985.
- c. Follow through with pastors—perhaps through area or district ministerials, printed materials.
- d. Follow through with laity—through the Advocate, evangelism conventions, films and videotapes and printed materials which

highlight heroes, publicize programs, etc., provide for pairing of Anglo families with ethnic families in correspondence, visits, prayer partners, etc.

2. Challenge our youth to hear the call to this vital ministry and prepare those who respond for such a ministry.
 - a. Religion professors need their own conditioning--perhaps at the upcoming Conference of Teachers of Religion. Promote joint planning of schools and churches.
 - b. Through sociology, anthropology, and pastoral work courses and field education, make sure that youth who are called know the current trends and future projections and through biblical and theological courses they understand The Wesleyan Church's responsibility.
 - c. Rotate some missionaries from overseas and those working with ethnic/urban groups here between mission field and campus, for periods from a few days to entire semesters spent on campus, sharing needs and burden--the missionary's burden will be contagious.
 - d. Provide some firsthand exposure to ethnic/urban ministries for all ministerial trainees through field education program and immersion in such ministries for ministerial trainees planning on long-term commitment to such ministries.
 - e. Aim to develop ethnic leaders and workers, both overseas and here. Perhaps rotate between here and there.
 - f. Develop leadership support within each district for those committed to ethnic/urban ministries--both those given to this exclusively and those attempting to be involved inclusively with more traditional forms of ministry.
3. Target specific areas for outreach.
 - a. Congregations in changing neighborhoods making transition to integrated church, shared facilities, or mothering/transfer of property to an ethnic congregation.
 - b. Wesleyans migrating to North America from mission fields.
 - c. Minorities traditionally important to The Wesleyan Church--American Blacks, Native Americans.
 - d. Other groups for which the Holy Spirit burdens responsible segments of the church.
 - e. Great cities of the United States and Canada not currently being reached meaningfully by The Wesleyan Church.

4. Devise programs fitted to needs and opportunities for physical, mental, spiritual, social and financial service.
 - a. Implement Metro-Move for church-planting and GRADE for discipling and church growth across North America.
 - b. Provide for rotation of some missionary personnel between overseas field and comparable ethnic/urban group in home nations.
 - c. Develop corps of ethnic/urban consultants available for at least part-time ministry, traveling to point of need, training others, providing resources, etc.
 - d. Enlist our present educational institutions in an attempt to develop ethnic leaders.
 - e. Develop specialized service programs by ethnic consultants and others that minister to the whole person and seek to minister redemptively to society and its institutions.
 - f. Develop a support network among those involved in ethnic/urban ministries including conventions, seminars, etc.
5. Develop support materials for targeted groups and special programs. For the immediate future the General Department of Local Church Education and the Wesleyan Publishing House should proceed "full steam ahead" with the plans already underway. Major documents, including the Discipline, should be translated into basic English and other languages in which numbers of ethnics justify it.
6. Develop a means of collecting, updating, distributing ethnic statistics to keep pace with what is happening in Wesleyan ethnic ministries.

III. What Is The Structure?

We need to recognize from the beginning that with such a complex challenge as that of ethnic/urban ministries it is impossible to develop a simple, rigid, and inflexible structure which will work. The structure we need must be flexible, adaptable, responsive to sudden shifts and transitions--it must be our servant and not our master. So we may well need to develop our structure and programs in stages, revising our long-range plans as our short-range accomplishments indicate will be beneficial.

1. On the general level, we recommend two stages of development for the foreseeable future:

Stage A. For the balance of the 1984-88 quadrennium.
One of two alternatives:

- (1) Merge the Commissions on Extension and Evangelism and Evangelism and World Missions into one Commission on Missions and Evangelism with the present departments

responsible to the same commission and charged with joint responsibility under the commission for inter-cultural ministries. Perhaps add ethnic/urban representatives as honorary members of the commission.

or

- (2) At each session of GBA schedule joint meetings of the two commissions, under alternating chairmanship to discuss cross cultural matters and process joint resolutions on cross-cultural ministries from the two departments.

Stage B. Look favorably to the following for 1988 and beyond: Restructure the two commissions and the two missions departments along different lines. World Missions would be converted into the General Department of Cross-Cultural Missions with a commission of the same name; it would be responsible for all ministries carried on across cultural lines at home and abroad—able to work with Latin Americans in their homelands and Hispanics here as well. In the USA and Canada it would work in an advisory and cooperative way with the districts in cross-cultural ministries. Extension and Evangelism would be converted into the General Department of Evangelism and Church Growth with a commission of the same name. It would be responsible for traditional evangelism, extension, church growth, and mass media programs. And it would serve in an advisory capacity to the Department of Cross-Cultural Missions for outreach just as the Departments of LCE, Youth, and E & M do now to World Missions for their respective ministries. The next three years would test the possibilities of Stage A and allow the perfection of plans for Stage B if it still seems advantageous in 1988.

2. On the district level, we recommend a flexible approach which we believe is possible under the current Discipline and the recently approved ruling of the BGS. It would allow for any of three possibilities.
 - a. Geographical District. If a district so chose, it would be structured entirely on a geographical basis, with Anglo churches, integrated churches, and the various minority churches all relating without distinction to the multi-cultural whole. Cross-cultural churches would have access to ethnic/urban consultants, special programs and materials.
 - b. Ethnic Zones. If a district so chose, it could group churches of a particular ethnic identity as a zone, with special provision for a zone leader who would provide liaison between district leadership and the zone, and with special provisions for group meetings, training, and development of the zone. Ethnic/urban consultants provided by the denomination would be available to coordinate all zones of the same ethnic grouping across the denomination. The first of these consultants should be available for service in 1986.

- c. Ethnic District. While "a" or "b" would be considered the norm, the possibility of ethnic districts would not be totally precluded. This would allow for an orderly transition for our two existing ethnic districts to move toward "b" at a sensible pace. It would also make possible the establishment of an ethnic district if conditions clearly required such in the future.

3. Educational Structures.

We have already made provision for exceptions from our educational structure for ethnic ministerial education. In the past, Brainerd Indian School was such an exception, although currently its relation to ministerial education is tenuous. Also the Manual of Ministerial Education issued by the General Department of Education and the Ministry and approved by the BGS during this past quadrennium provided for the department to adapt academic requirements for ordination to the realities of ethnic groups. We would recommend that the upcoming Conference of the Teachers of Religion study the following possibilities and advise the General Secretary of E & M concerning the same.

- (1) Simplifying the course of study for ministers in ethnic groups for which our present program is entirely unrealistic.
- (2) Providing correspondence courses in languages other than English--perhaps through adaptation of existing programs developed by other denominations.
- (3) Establishment of special institutes for ethnic groups within their own culture and/or cooperation with existing such institutes sponsored by other denominations.

IV. How Will Such A Program Be Financed?

We believe that "there is always God's money for God's will." The critical question is not, "Can we afford ethnic and urban ministries?" Rather it is, "Is God calling us to the cities?" We believe that God is calling The Wesleyan Church to enter the cities, thus we believe that the financing of such a God-ordained effort will be forthcoming if we properly present the need to those with the resources.

We recommend the following concepts as a guide to our procurement of resources for ethnic and urban ministries:

- (a) Primarily emphasis must continually be placed on raising the vision of our people for the cities. We believe that where the hearts of our people are, their treasure will follow.
- (b) We see no reason why we cannot implement for works in the home nations some of the same methodology used for overseas missions for fund raising, including deputational workers, special offerings, large gifts, and bequests. We also see potential in revising

Wesleyan Card Call to raise greater amounts of money for establishing new urban churches.

- (c) We recognize that a certain infusion of money is necessary to get an ethnic or urban ministry off the ground--probably a minimum of \$30,000. Continued support is also required to get the local congregation established and on a sound footing. However, we believe that ultimately local churches should be both self-supporting and reproducing. The principle of tithing must be emphasized from day one. Even people below the poverty line should tithe, and can support a viable church ministry.
- (d) The concept of a self-supporting church does not release the rest of us from the burden of giving. "Unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall be much required." We must challenge our people to even greater giving in order to launch new works. If Wesleyans could abandon materialistic lifestyles and adopt sacrificial giving patterns, the resulting explosion of ethnic and urban ministries would exceed even our wildest imagination.
- (e) We recognize that essentially all financial resources reside in the local church. While the general and district levels of our denomination are often the natural places we turn for funding, actually the greatest financial and personnel resources reside in the local church. Therefore we recommend that a program of mothering ethnic and urban churches be developed and promoted across the denomination--both within and across district lines.
- (f) We recognize that there are some ethnic ministries which will require permanent financial support from the rest of the church. These mission-type services include feeding programs, health services, financial counseling, educational programs, special evangelistic ministries, legal aid, and other social services. These are God-ordained actions and thus cannot be considered on a business or profitability basis. We must permanently support such service ministries.
- (g) We recommend that the general church budget be studied carefully so as to provide a sound financial basis for the new thrust in ethnic/-urban ministries, including the possibility of shifting of funds currently assigned elsewhere.
- (h) We recommend that The Discipline provision concerning the reinvestment of property funds be revised at the next General Conference.

A Concluding Reminder. Urban/ethnic ministries must be more than just a fad. Some programs are short-term in nature. Others are long-term. If a renewed thrust is to be had in ethnic ministries we must make it a 10-year or 20-year thrust at least, and pour determined efforts into it. We believe The Wesleyan Church can develop a major ministry to urban and ethnic people. But, we remind

ourselves that we must be willing to "pay the price" for this effort. An urban/ethnic ministry is a long-term project.

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