

Occasional Papers

PREPARING GLOBAL LEADERS FOR A GLOBAL CHURCH

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My Vision of the Future of United Methodist Higher Education and Theological Education

Kah-Jin Jeffrey Kuan

Let me begin by expressing my deepest gratitude for the kind invitation to be the Willson lecturer for this year. For eight years, I had the honor and privilege of serving on this esteemed board of one of the leading agencies of our denomination. Over the years, I have come to know many of you as colleagues and friends. The more closely I have worked with many of you over the years, the deeper my appreciation had grown for the ministry you do in this agency.

I have always been committed to higher education, and in fact, my own sense of Christian calling is to higher education in general and theological education in particular. In addition, I am committed to Methodist-related higher education because I am a beneficiary of such an education, having earned degrees from Trinity Theological College in Singapore, an institution Methodists had a role in starting; Southern Methodist University; and Emory University. Moreover, I am currently doing my ministry at Drew University, serving as the dean of The Theological School, the first graduate theological school started by Methodists in 1867. So, Methodist institutions have played a significant role in my education, my life, my career, and my ministry.

The Beginnings of Methodist Higher Education and Theological Education

It is hardly necessary to rehearse the history of the relationship between education and Methodism. Suffice it to observe that John Wesley was an Oxford don and that it is widely acknowledged, “he was learned, scholarly, and erudite.”¹ His scholarly production, namely, his Sermons, his Notes, his Journals, and other writings, revealed that he was indeed a major scholar of his time.

Wesley’s class meetings were also organized around education. In fact, evangelism for Wesley was rooted in education. The two are inseparable. “Into the class converts came as probationers. . . . The weekly class meetings provided the regular pastoring, discipline, guidance, nurture, instruction, mentoring, and encouragement that the system afforded.”²

Accepting George Whitefield’s invitation and encouragement to go to the Bristol area to preach in the open fields, Wesley left the comfort of the academic setting, yet his commitment to and passion for education never left him. Discovering the paucity of educational opportunities for the poor, the children of coal miners he was preaching to, Wesley founded Kingswood Academy in 1748. Here, the students were nurtured in true learning and vital piety, where the roots and tradition of a Wesleyan education may be found.

The heirs of Wesley have repeated this heralded tradition of establishing educational institutions wherever the gospel was preached many times over. A few examples will suffice. In 1784, at the Christmas Conference that marked the beginning of Methodism in the United States of America, Thomas Coke and Francis Asbury emulated what Wesley had done at Kingswood by founding a college named after themselves, Cokesbury College in

Abingdon, Maryland. Unfortunately, American Methodists were not prepared for such a college, leading to the demise of the college in 1796. Important lessons were learned. Richey, Rowe, and Schmidt note: “Three decades later, Methodism started over. It established academies in 1817 in Newmarket, New Hampshire, and two years later in New York City. The next General Conference took up the matter and did so with a new sense of education’s importance to denominational well-being.”³ And so, the General Conference of 1820 recommended that all the annual conferences “establish, as soon as practicable, literary institutions under their control.”⁴ Literally hundreds of institutions were founded over the decades and centuries that followed and many of them still remain today. Among these are some of the best and renowned colleges and universities in the world.

It didn’t take long for Methodists in the United States to turn their attention to theological education. New England Methodists started the first theological institution, Newbury Biblical Institute, in 1839 that eventuated into what is today Boston University School of Theology. In 1854, a second Methodist seminary, Garrett Biblical Institute, was started in Evanston, Illinois. Neither of these institutes were graduate theological seminaries. While there were conversations and advocacies for a graduate theological seminary dating back to the 1850’s, it was not until the centenary year of American Methodism that the aspirations of people like John McClintock, James Strong, and Randolph Sinks Foster came to fruition. At the celebration of the Centenary Jubilee of American Methodism at St. Paul’s Church in New York City in 1866, John McClintock gave a rousing speech where he began by extolling the successes of Methodism in the first century. Then he asked, “Who of us here is willing that Methodism shall die? Who is there of us rather

that is not ready, if need be, to devote himself to the cause and say, 'Sooner than it shall die, I will, and I will die in its service?'"⁵ This was but the preamble to what he was to announce that day: "I think it right to say that one of your members has set you a noble example. I hope that Daniel Drew's life may be spared to see the erection of a Theological Seminary to which he has consecrated a quarter of a million dollars and to which he will give as much more before it is finished. It is a grand start."⁶ A few months later, the New York State Legislature issued a charter for a "Theological Seminary" that would provide for "theological instruction and education therein, in promotion of the doctrine, tenets, and discipline of the Methodist Episcopal Church, under the direction and supervision of the General Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church in the United States."⁷

Over the next decades, Methodists in different regions in the country established seminaries: Wesley Theological Seminary in 1882, Gammon Theological Seminary in 1883, Claremont School of Theology in 1885, Iliff School of Theology in 1892, Candler School of Theology in 1914, Perkins School of Theology in 1914, Duke Divinity School in 1926, Saint Paul School of Theology in 1958, and Methodist Theological School in Ohio in 1960. United Theological Seminary traces its roots as a seminary of the Church of the United Brethren in Christ in 1871. Today, our 13 United Methodist theological schools are among the strongest in theological education. Together we enrolled more than 5,100 students, of whom 3,700 are full-time and 1,400 part-time. Our theological schools are among the most diverse, with the ethnic/cultural diversity of the student population ranging from 19 percent to 57 percent. Our faculty members are among the best in their fields. They are internationally renowned and well published. Of our 13 theological schools, eight offer the Ph.D. program, among which are some of the top-ranked

programs in the world. Our doctoral graduates teach in many seminaries across the country and in many parts of the world. Collectively, we make a tremendous contribution to the training of religious leaders, lay and clergy, not only for our United Methodist Church, but also for a wide range of denominations all over the world.

The tandem of evangelism and education has been carried by Methodists to the continents of Africa, Asia, and Latin America. Out of my context of Drew Theological School, I want to mention Henry Gerhard Appenzeller, who had answered the call for overseas missionary service while still a student at Drew. He was the first Methodist pioneer and missionary to land in Korea. Arriving in Incheon, Korea, on Easter day 1885 with his wife and a Presbyterian counterpart, Horace Underwood, Appenzeller found that Seoul was in the midst of major political struggles. Hence, for the first two years after he arrived, Appenzeller spent much of his time preparing a missionary residence as missionary activity was prohibited. When the prohibition was lifted in 1887, he began his missionary work. He founded Pai Chai Hakdang, a school for boys, in February 1887. He saw this school as a means to reach young Korean men with the gospel, to introduce beneficial Western knowledge into Korean society, to train Koreans to lead Korean Methodism, and to establish a fully rounded university. Here again we see the tandem of education and evangelism fully implemented by a Methodist pioneer. From its roots as a school for boys, Pai Chai College was established in 1895. Today, it is a significant university of 14,000 students with five colleges. Mary F. Scranton, another Methodist pioneer in Korea, also started the first school for girls, Ewha Hakdang, in 1886. Ewha Womens University, one of the most prestigious universities in Korea, grew out of this girls' school in 1946. Today it enrolls almost 20,000 students in its undergraduate and graduate programs.

This story is repeated in Malaysia, my native land, and Singapore. Methodism in Singapore and Malaysia started out as a missionary initiative in 1885 by missionaries who were already in India. William Oldham travelled to Singapore to plant the foundations of the mission. Oldham started the church's first English-language boys' school, the Anglo-Chinese School, in 1886. Two girls' schools, namely Methodist Girls' School and Fairfield Methodist Girls' School, were subsequently established in 1887 and 1888, respectively. A decade or so later, Methodists also started schools for boys and girls in many places in Malaysia. The educational efforts of Methodists in Singapore and Malaysia have been rather remarkable and significant. Today, the Anglo-Chinese Schools in Singapore are regarded as premier schools and the Methodist College in Kuala Lumpur is a highly regarded and sought after pre-university institution. These schools have become symbols of educational excellence.

The story of Methodist education continues. In 1992, in response to the critical need of higher education in the continent of Africa, The United Methodist Church founded Africa University in Old Mutare, Zimbabwe. "The mission of Africa University is to provide quality education within a pan-African context through which persons can acquire general and professional knowledge and skills, grow in spiritual maturity, develop sound moral values, ethics and leadership qualities."⁸ Twenty years later, Africa University has 1,700 students from 27 countries, and graduates are serving in 38 countries and participating in nation building in many parts of Africa.

The Legacy and Heritage of Methodist Higher Education

This brief and selective rendering of the beginnings and heritage of Methodist education in

general and higher education—including theological education—in particular leads me to draw out the legacy and distinctiveness of a Wesleyan educational enterprise.

First and foremost, education for Methodists has always been about ministry. Richey, Rowe, and Schmidt note: "In founding schools and colleges, Methodists had several purposes in view: moral/Christian formation, the advancement of knowledge, and the training of leaders."⁹ Indeed, in the early decades of the nineteenth century, the Methodist colleges in North America produced the majority of leaders for the church and academic institutions. "Through the colleges, the church would carry on its larger mission of reforming the nation, joining with other denominations in common endeavor to instill Protestant commitment, republican ideals, and civic virtue in the nation's rising leaders."¹⁰ While colleges and universities in the U.S. are no longer as strongly tied to the church, this sense of the ministry of the church has persisted and can still be found in many Methodist-related institutions in the global context. Take for example, Africa University. The involvement in higher education through this institution on the continent of Africa is celebrated as a ministry of the church as recent as the General Conference of The United Methodist Church in Tampa, Fla., in May 2012. United Methodists see this as a ministry to form leaders for the church, society, and the nations of Africa.

The second point follows from the first. Methodist education has never been just about the imparting of intellectual knowledge. It has never been merely about preparing men and women to be successful people in the workforce. It has never been just about training the best pastors, teachers, doctors, engineers, lawyers, business executives, CEO's, etc. That, of course, is important for any educational endeavor and cannot be minimized. The Wesleyan tradition of

education, however, is about marrying vital piety and true learning. It is as much about character formation as it is about intellectual formation. It is about the formation of the total person. This is certainly the case with theological education but not limited to theological education. It is at the core of all Methodist higher education. During the opening convocation of the IAMSCU-NASCUMC Conference at Washington's National Cathedral last July, James Laney reminded us that church-related colleges "are not just in the education business. We're custodians of the soul." It has often been said that the college years are the most formative years in the life of a young woman or man. The training of the mind and soul is at the very heart of a Methodist higher education, to help shape young men and women during these formative years to become responsible citizens of the world.

If Methodist education is about the formation of the entire person, it follows that the third distinctive feature of a Methodist education is service. Laney has noted that "John Wesley was a product of the establishment of privilege to privilege; and he could have remained within that system, being very dedicated and pious."¹¹ Yet, because Wesley never remained stuck in the establishment of privilege, he was able to forge the tradition of education for service. By bringing in the poor, educating them, empowering them, and then turning them "upon the world so they could become productive citizens, people who had a sense of purpose, a direction, a focus, people who made contributions,"¹² Wesley unleashed his students, his heirs, for a life of service. Thus, a Methodist education is about instilling in women and men a sense of service to the world. It is not just about getting a job after college or an appointment or call after seminary; it is all about leaving college or seminary with a sense of purpose to create change, to transform the lives of others. Laney once said:

"In my conversations with people around the country and in my city, Atlanta, and indeed around the world, what I hear most is that leaders are looking for moral guidance. They don't want a bunch of new bright kids; they want people who care."¹³ Drew University's motto is this: "Freely have you received, freely give." Methodist education has always been more than providing knowledge, but encouraging students to see themselves as stewards of community who should use what they have received in their education to give back to the community and the world. This dedication to service is certainly at the very heart of our Methodist theological education.

The fourth distinctive feature of a Methodist education is inclusiveness. Inclusiveness dates back to Wesley's founding of Kingswood School, when he made education available and accessible to the poor and the disadvantaged. Inclusiveness means "reaching out and providing education to as many as possible."¹⁴ It is about "the education of those societies so that people who couldn't read were now able to read Scriptures, newspapers, and legal papers and become conversant with the world."¹⁵ As Laney further notes, "Wesley's educational vision opened the door to these people; it changed their hearts, gave them a motive for improvement, educated them, and turned them upon the world."¹⁶ It was this same vision of inclusiveness that led Methodists to start schools all over the world, to make education accessible to those for whom such opportunities were once absent. It was this same vision that moved Methodists in the United States to found many of the historically Black colleges and universities. It was this same vision that propelled Methodists to establish schools for girls, in Japan, in Korea, in India, in Malaysia, in Singapore. Methodist education empowered the poor, the underprivileged, the disadvantaged,

and women to become agents of transformation. Inclusiveness is not just about providing opportunities for others, not just about letting others have a seat at the table. It is about change, about transformation. Sharon Hels notes, “When we go out as Wesley did and include others, something changes not only in them but in us. And the empowerment is not only with them but also with us, in the new way that we can live a more open and sympathetic and understanding life.”¹⁷

What a legacy and a heritage we are recipients of, particularly those of us who are privileged to carry on this heritage of Methodist higher education! What then is the task before us in a world that has become even more complex and more global?

My Vision of United Methodist Higher Education and Theological Education

In this increasingly plural world, in which localities are intricately linked in webs of global connection, higher education must find expression in multiplicity, communal and global partnerships. Taking seriously our shared lot in a global community, higher education is not just interested in “small talk”—we strive for hard talk, demanding friendships, and challenging partnerships. This particular orientation of rethinking higher education more globally requires transformations of our cultural imagination, as Taiwanese cultural theorist Kuan-Hsing Chen puts it, to “[diversify] our frames of reference, multiply our perspectives, and enrich our subjectivity.”¹⁸ Such a rethinking of higher education will position Methodist-related institutions of higher learning even more strongly for the global village and making it even more relevant for meeting the global challenges.

Let me tease this out a little more. Higher education, including United Methodist higher education, tends to focus on the formation, both

intellect and character, of the individual. What if United Methodist higher education takes on the challenge of rethinking education not only in terms of individual formation but also of communal formation? This will necessitate a rethinking of curriculum, frames of reference, perspectives, and pedagogies. I have no idea what that would look like, but I have a hunch that it will at the minimum move us and our students away from competition to collaboration, and help repair the increasing fragmentation of our societies. Such an education will create a balance between individual freedom and equality and communal principles and values of respect and compassion for the elderly, the poor, the underprivileged. It has the potential to help our universities to produce more compassionate and caring citizens for the world.

Second, in living out the Methodist legacy and heritage, there is an important role our institutions can play in making our world-class education available to the poor and underprivileged. Even in the twenty-first century, there are still a lot of people for whom they will be the first generation in their families to pursue a college education.

Let me tell you personal story. I have known Jenny Wong since she was a little girl, growing up in the United Methodist church to which I belong.¹⁹ I had been an advocate of United Methodist-related colleges and universities and so the year before when Jenny began to explore colleges to attend, she and I chatted about options. Jenny began to research, and there was a particular United Methodist-related college she got really excited about. She submitted her application to this school along with 10 other colleges, and was accepted to all of them. This United Methodist-related college offered her a merit scholarship. However, there was still \$16,510 of unmet need.

You see, Jenny comes from a working-poor family. Her father suffers from bipolar disorder and has never been able to hold a job. Jenny's mother works two jobs, and Jenny has had a part-time job since she was 16. When she received the offer letter of admission and merit scholarship, she wrote back to the college. You could say that it is one young person's desperate appeal to "institutional conscience." In the letter, Jenny wrote: "I would like to thank you . . . for accepting me. I am looking forward to my first year in college and am excited that I was accepted because [your] University is my number one choice for college. . . . I am asking if it would be possible to re-evaluate my financial aid package and offer additional funds. I am willing to do more work study and I am applying to as many scholarships as possible, but any help I could get from the school through a review of my financial aid package would be greatly appreciated. . . . I am saddened by the thought that I may not be able to attend [your] University purely for financial reasons. . . . I was really excited in learning more about your pre-medicine program. . . . Once I researched more about . . . the school, I knew that it is where I belong."

Jenny was to be the first person in her family to enter college. Young people like Jenny are entering institutions of higher learning and being prepared for social and economic futures about which we as a global society are very nervous. For the 1998 World Congress of Philosophy, which convened under the theme "Paideia: Philosophy Educating Humanity," political scientist Elemer Hankiss of the University of Budapest asked gathered educators to imagine the educational agenda for the future with these questions: "Do we really know the kind of life for which we want to prepare our students?"²⁰ "How do we prepare our students for a future that is so uncertain and unpredictable?"²¹

Uncertain and unpredictable as the "measurable outcomes" may be, we continue to assure young intelligent minds that they are preparing to be formidable movers and shapers of new social, cultural, economic, and political realities. Shirley Ann Jackson, the two-time U.S. presidential appointee and president of Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute, spoke the following words to the graduates of 2011 at Drew University: "So whether you are raising crops or raising children, reaching out to the very edge of the universe, or probing the minute spaces between atoms, speaking to your friends, or writing diplomacy policies or sermons, you will be shaping the future for us all."

Such is the promise of an education at an institution of higher learning, an education that prepares principled leaders for global challenges. Yet, Jenny's story eerily reminds us that such life—and world-altering experiences—thought to be unthinkable *for all* just over a century ago—is still inaccessible *to all* today.

As we talk about the "social," the "just," and the "public" components of education within our United Methodist-related colleges and universities, we could very well begin with the question of *access* and *opportunity* for working-poor families like Jenny's. Is our church-related education, because it is private, available only to those who can afford it? Last year, at the IAMSCU-NASCUMC conference, it was heartening for me to hear from Dr. Luis Cardoso that the Methodist University in Brazil took in a number of students from Haiti recently. In the United States, there is one population, many of whom are Methodists, which I have been concerned about. I am talking about Pacific Islander or Oceanic people, particularly Tongans. Many of the families are new immigrants and working-poor. College education is not encouraged because families often need their children to get a job after high school to help support the

family. The affordability of a college education is a serious concern. The same can be said of the growing Hispanic immigrant population. This is a matter of social justice, for the fashioning of the mind is part and parcel of contributing to the dignity, integrity, and wholeness of persons and of peoples.

It is important to remind ourselves yet again that when John Wesley founded Kingswood School, he knew that the poor children of coal miners could also become dynamic Christian leaders, dedicated to serving others. The United Methodist Church continues to see this as a social justice issue when it articulates in its Social Principles the following: “We believe that every person has the right to education. . . . Persons should not be precluded by financial barriers from access to church-related and other independent institutions of higher learning.” (¶164E)

We can talk about educational “standards” and “excellence,” but ultimately, we need to talk about the *habitus* and the *habitat* of our academic institutions, to see whether our “habits” and “practices” cohere with the values we propound. We could discuss the moral ethical foundations of character formation—to examine what it means to educate citizens for the common good. We could discuss the “justice” of social and educational policies which either enable or inhibit learning. We could discuss effective educational curricula to see what it means to *teach justice* and *teach justly*.

To these conversations, I would like to contribute my understanding of the issue of social justice as it is shaped by my scholarly and religious background, particularly one rooted in the tradition of the Hebrew prophets. Modern societies may understand duties and obligations to the education of young persons in terms of “social contracts.” I gain from the

Hebrew prophetic tradition the notion of “social covenant.”

The prophets are known to pronounce judgment on behalf of the divine. The content of the prophetic message of judgment evolved around an indictment of self-interest, self-righteousness, and self-delusion, especially on the part of the political and religious leadership. The prophets constantly point to the abuses that come from the placing of one’s self-interest above the interests of all others, even to the extent of exploiting the weaker members of the society. Social class consciousness, economic exploitation, judicial corruption, political oppression, and exclusivism these were all condemned by the prophets as antithetical to God’s desire for full life and wholeness for all. (Amos 2:6–8; Isaiah 5:1–10; 58:3–7; Hosea 4:1–3)

Two terms are of particular significance as we consider the prophetic call for justice, *mishpat* and *tsedaqah*. Both are covenant terms and relate to qualities for guiding the community away from self-interested actions. The first is *mishpat*, which is a word that connotes both justice and judgment. Customarily used in the legal sense, it seeks after full integrity for the life of every person. In the sense of justice, *mishpat* is used to advocate for those in need of support; in the sense of judgment, *mishpat* confronts those who exploit others for their own advantage.

The second term, *tsedaqah*, connotes a relational quality of covenant obedience. It is usually translated as righteousness and represents the most important ethical concept of relating to the social and legal life of the people of God. It represents a social phenomenon concerning right relations between two parties. In ancient Israel, behavior was not judged in accordance with an abstract and absolute norm but was a function of concrete, human relations. In the community sense then, one achieves

righteousness not by obeying some abstract standard or set of rules but by caring for the welfare of those with whom one is in relationship, seeking their wholeness and integrity.

Methodist education cannot afford to forget its legacy and heritage of making education accessible and available for the poor and underprivileged. In our attempts to prepare leaders for global challenges, we need to ensure that this population is not left out and left behind. Are we willing to make available an educational opportunity to them that they otherwise will not have? Are we willing to honor the social covenant required of our church-related institutions?²²

Turning now to theological education specifically, I believe that theological education in the twenty-first century must by necessity be different from what it used to be. In an increasingly diverse world, in which localities are intricately connected in one global community, theological education now must find expression in multiplicity, communal, and global partnerships. Additionally, theological education must be attentive to the multiplicity of voices, particularly those from racial-ethnic and minority communities, and engaging in critical dialogue with other religious traditions. In a global community, theological education should engage in conversation and seek partnership with theological institutions in other parts of the world.

As we think about theological education in the twenty-first century, we need to be cognizant of the several shifting realities. The first shifting reality: According to the U.S. Census Bureau projection, the non-Hispanic white population will no longer be the majority by 2042, with the population dropping to 46 percent in 2050 from the 2008 figure of 66 percent. Currently, the Latino/a population stands at about 48 million and is projected to grow to 102 million in 2050, growing from the current 15.5 percent

to about a quarter of the total population. Ninety-two percent of Latinos/as identify themselves as Christian.

A second shifting reality: We are all aware that the mainline Protestant church in the United States context has been in decline for more than 50 years. According to the General Social Surveys, “the Protestant share of the population decreased by nearly 14 percentage points in the 30 years between 1974 and 2004, dropping from 64.3 percent to 50.4 percent.” In the same period, “the share of the unaffiliated more than doubled between 1974 and 2004, from 6.8 percent to 14.2 percent, and those identifying with religions other than Christianity and Judaism also increased significantly, from 0.5 percent to 8.1 percent of the population.” The most recent NCC’s 78th annual church *Yearbook*, which studies growth trends of the 25 largest churches in the U.S., reports membership decline in nearly all major Protestant denominations in 2009, including the 16.2 million-member Southern Baptist Convention, and the 7.8 million-member United Methodist Church, whose memberships dropped by 0.24 percent and 0.98 percent, respectively. The picture of the decline of Protestant churches, however, cannot be overly generalized. Within mainline denominations, with the increase of the racial-ethnic population, there is growth in racial-ethnic membership. Let me cite the example from my annual conference. In 2009, the California-Nevada Annual Conference showed a total decline membership. At the same time, there is an increase in membership among every racial-ethnic group, with increases of between 5 percent to 15 percent.

A third shifting reality: Within the last 10 years, we have witnessed a new trend of seminaries closing their programs or merging with other seminaries. With declining membership, what was already a challenging situation was

made worse by the economic downturn. According to ATS reports, about 50–60 percent of 260 members schools struggle with chronic deficits and 30–40 percent of ATS schools have less than 12 months of flexibility. Many seminaries, hence, are “financially stressed.” In past years, a number of historic mainline seminaries like Lexington Theological Seminary, Seabury-Western Theological Seminary, and Bangor Theological Seminary have moved to either terminate their degree programs or move to a non-residential mode of delivery. Schools are selling property and engaging in conversations about merger.

A fourth shifting reality: We have seen the declining trend of Christianity in Europe and North America. According to a 2005 report by Todd Johnson for the Pew Forum on Religion & Public Life, “whereas in 1900 over 80 percent of all Christians lived in Europe and Northern America, by 2005 this proportion had fallen to under 40 percent, and will likely fall below 30 percent before 2050.” The projection is that in 2050, almost 50 percent of all Christians will live in Africa and Asia.

Given these shifting realities, what is the future of theological education? Or, more particularly, what is my vision of the future of theological education? Let me try to sketch some of my thoughts.

First, if we take seriously the demographic changes in church membership, theological education must begin to make similar shifts to prepare itself to educate leadership for the changing face of the church. Ministry is culturally contextualized because as humans we are culturally contextualized. We can only be humans within our cultural constructs. If this is true, then the kind of theological education we offer must have cultural relevancy. A monolithic Euro-American centered theological education will not suffice to meet the commitments

to racial-ethnic churches. Is there a way to develop a curriculum that has multiple centers? In biblical studies, for example, Vincent Wim-bush has asked, “How might putting African Americans at the center of the study of the Bible affect the study of the Bible?”²³ (Wimbush 2000: 2). We can ask similar questions about any of our disciplines. Is it necessary to begin teaching any of our disciplines from a Euro-American center? In reality, decentering Euro-American theological education serves not only racial-ethnic students and churches, but also white students who will be going into communities that are increasingly ethnically heterogeneous.

Second, a theological education that is attentive to the shifting realities must also pay attention to the changing religious landscape in the United States. If our societies and communities are no longer religiously homogeneous but increasingly pluralistic, should we not be preparing religious leaders that have knowledge of and conversant with other religious traditions? At Drew Theological School, our M.Div. program requires a course in world religions. Yet, is one course sufficient for the kind of world we are sending our students into? What about other degree programs? Is such a requirement unimportant for other degree programs where we send students out as deacons, teachers, and activists? To engage our neighbors in a complex society of multiple relations of difference requires that theological education be carried out in dialogue with other religious traditions, whereby we can learn new modes of religious discourse. In so doing, we help students to come to a better appreciation of their own traditions.

Third, theological education must be global in its orientation. With the shifting center of Christianity to Africa and Asia, theological education must engage in dialogue and part-

nership with churches and institutions in other parts of the world. Drew Theological School has an historic relationship with Korean churches. We need to engage theological institutions in Africa, Asia, or Latin America as real and serious partners in the educational mission. We need to engage in mutual relationship to teach and learn mutually. In so doing, we break out of that old colonial paradigm of the West as possessors of knowledge to be imparted on the rest.

This global orientation is particularly important for doctoral education. One of the major challenges of theological institutions in Africa and Asia is faculty development. There are not enough strong programs for the training and education of faculty. I know a good percentage of doctoral students in our United Methodist doctoral programs are international. Yet, I have constantly asked myself how well are we training them to return to teach in their native contexts and what percentage do return. Is it possible to explore a different kind of partnership to train these theological educators together, so that the training is more relevant as well as creating a better chance for their return?

I appreciate this opportunity to share some raw ideas and thoughts, and I hope they will stimulate conversations for all GBHEM directors and staff as you lead the denomination in rethinking ministry and higher education for this quadrennium. I look forward to engaging in further conversation with all of you.

Notes

1. James Laney, "Methodism and Education: From Roots to Fulfillment," *Quarterly Review: A Journal of Theological Resources for Ministry* 18/4 (1998): 323.
2. Russell E. Richey, Kenneth E. Rowe, and Jean Miller Schmidt, *The Methodist Experience in America: Volume I, A History* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2010), 23-24.
3. Richey *et al.*, 136.
4. Quoted in Richey *et al.*, 137.
5. John T. Cunningham, *University in the Forest: The Story of Drew University* (Andover, N.J.: Afton Publishing Co., 1990), 36.
6. Cunningham, 37.
7. Cunningham, 38-39.
8. <http://www.africau.edu/AboutUs/Mission.html>
9. Richey *et al.*, 137.
10. Richey *et al.*, 139.
11. Laney, 324.
12. Laney, 325.
13. Laney, 328.
14. Sharon J. Hels, "Introduction: On Learning the Liberal Arts," *Quarterly Review: A Journal of Theological Resources for Ministry* 18/4 (1998): 320.
15. Laney, 324.
16. Laney, 325.
17. Hels, 329.
18. Kuan-Hsing Chen, *Asia As Method: Toward Deimperialization* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 2010), 255.
19. Used with the permission of Jenny Wong.
20. Elemer Hankiss, "Paideia in an Age of Uncertainty," in *Educating for Democracy: Paideia in an Age of Uncertainty*, ed. Alan M. Olson, David M. Steiner, and Irina S. Tuuli (Lanham, Md.: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2004), 149.
21. Hankiss, 154.
22. Jenny Wong is today a sophomore at the University of California-San Diego.
23. Vincent L. Wimbush, "Introduction: Reading Darkness, Reading Scriptures," in *African Americans and the Bible: Sacred Texts and Social Textures*, ed. Vincent L. Wimbush (New York: Continuum, 2000), 2.

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