

Study Guide
for
Leadership in the
Wesleyan Spirit

By Lovett H. Weems, Jr.

Group Experience with 4 Core Congregational Questions

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Introduction

In 2006, the entire Oklahoma Annual Conference participated in Holy Conversations to begin the dialogue about what discipleship looked like in each of our contexts. At Annual Conference 2007, all were invited to deepen this discussion through a conference-wide study of *Leadership in the Wesleyan Spirit* focused on the four core questions:

**How do we relate to our community?
How do we relate to one another?
How do we help people relate to God?
How do we serve God's mission?**

It is our hope and intent that this time spent in study, prayer and exploration will help all of us open our hearts and minds to the rich possibilities and unique challenges in being true to our Methodist heritage and the Great Commission.

Your congregation is undertaking this study as an 8-week study or as a 4-week study. The four week study requires more reading between sessions and uses four focusing questions as the basis for the study. If you are doing the 4 week study, you will probably only be able to do one activity per chapter.

Session	Core Question	Chapters
1	How do we relate to our community?	1 & 3
2	How do we relate to one another?	7 & 8
3	How do we help people relate to God?	10 & 11
4	How do we serve God's mission?	4 & 12

There is no single "right" answer. There is no silver bullet. There *is* a need to boldly demonstrate our love of God and neighbor and our call to be and make disciples. There *is* the need to reclaim the core of our Methodist heritage. We pray that the answers that emerge from this study will help you and your congregation recommit, redefine and respond in fresh and meaningful ways.

Session 1:

How do we relate to our community?

Answering this question well is the difference between relevancy and irrelevancy. The Great Commandment is the scriptural heart of the answer.

"...You shall love your neighbor as yourself."
Matthew 22:34-40

In Chapters 1 & 3 in *Leadership in the Wesleyan Spirit* we understand that as United Methodists the answer "Begins with People" and "Focuses on Serving."

Chapter 1: Begins with People

The beginning point for John Wesley was always people and their needs. More than any other value of Wesley's, it was a holistic concern for the children of God that provided the starting point for leadership decisions and actions. (Weems, 13)

Prayer:

God of choices, we have a tendency to do things the way they've always been done simply because they've always been done that way. But we need change, God. We need something different. If we have to keep moving on like this, we will just dig ourselves into a hole. Show us some light, God—a little flash off to the side so we know you are there and watching. Give us the strength to break away from the comfort of routine and march headlong into something new. Help us take the leap of faith, knowing you will provide a net. Amen. (*The Book of Uncommon Prayer*, vol. 2, 94)

Scripture: Matthew 22: 34-40

Key Question:

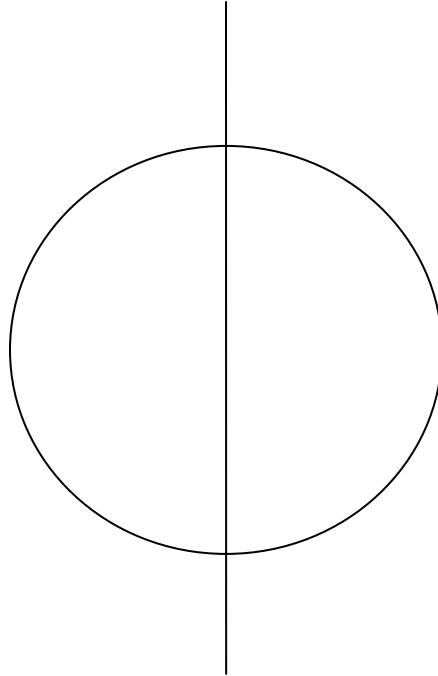
Who are the people God has given to your congregation to be in ministry with?

Activity: *People God Has Given Us*

Draw a circle on a piece of paper. The box represents your church. Draw a line down the center of the box. The left hand side represents types of people (e.g., young professionals, homeless, etc.). The right hand side represents their needs (a sense of belonging, a warm place to stay, etc.). First write all the types of people who don't enter your church but who live in your community (left hand side of the paper, outside the circle). Then write all the needs people you just listed have (right side of the paper, outside the circle). Finally, ask yourself, what is it about your congregation that creates this invisible circle; reasons why the people listed aren't in our congregation? Put these answers inside the circle to the left of the line. Then why we aren't meeting their needs to the right of the line.

People

Needs



Process Prompt: Do this activity individually, and then compare responses in small groups. Each small group reports their top 3 answers. Capture the top 3 answers for all groups on newsprint.

Commitment to Action:

Congregationally: Reflecting on what we've discussed today, what ideas would be important to share more widely? What is the best way(s) to share it (e.g., sermon, a "ministry education moment" during worship, newsletter, website, etc?)

Personally: What simple thing will you commit to doing between now and next session to live out what we've discussed? (Note: You will be asked to share your personal action experiences at the next session.)

Covenant Prayer in the Wesleyan Tradition:

I am no longer my own, but thine.
Put me to what thou wilt, rank me with whom thou wilt.
Put me to doing, put me to suffering.
Let me be employed by thee or laid aside for thee,
Exalted for thee or brought low for thee.
Let me be full, let me be empty.
Let me have all things, let me have nothing.
I freely and heartily yield all things to thy pleasure and disposal.
And now, O glorious and blessed God,
Father, Son, and Holy Spirit,
Thou are mine, and I am thine. So be it.
And the covenant which I have made on earth,
Let it be ratified in heaven. Amen (The United Methodist Hymnal, 607)

Chapter 3: Focuses on Serving

"If you want to thrive, serve." (Weems, 40)

*"The world hears the gospel when it sees it—
when its witnesses are clearly concerned with human existence and
clearly committed to a more fully human future in this world and the next."
Albert Outler*

Prayer

Suffering God, present with all human beings, help us to know you in the hungry, the stranger, the ill, and the prisoner, that our souls may be fed with the fruits of justice, our hearts made glad with healing and hospitality, and our feet set to dancing with the freedom of your Spirit alive in Jesus Christ. Amen. (Duck, 124)

Scripture: Matthew 25:31-46

Share Personal Action Experiences (5 minutes per person)

Key Question:

How do we relate to our community?

Activity:

Thriving Through Serving

What does being a servant mean to you? Spend some time discussing Jesus' teachings about servanthood. (See p. 36 for a few passages or use a concordance to locate more.)

Read the section called "Thriving through Serving" found on pages 38-39 and participate in the ministry audit as described.

1. Make 3 columns titled "Who," "What," and "How Much" on newsprint.
2. In the first column, "Who," make a list of people and groups in the community outside your membership who would miss your church?
3. In the second column, "What," indicate what they would miss? Be as specific as possible.
4. In the last column, "How Much," pick a number between 1 and 10 that represents how much that group would miss what it is that you do for them. (1="who?" 10="What will we do now?" or "Where will we turn?")
5. BONUS: Add to the "Who" column all persons or groups your church could potentially serve and "what" you could provide that they would miss. (Hint: use the circle exercise from the last session as a prompt).

Commitment to Action:

Congregationally: Reflecting on what we've discussed today, what ideas would be important to share more widely. What is the best way(s) to share it (e.g., sermon, a "ministry education moment" during worship, newsletter, website, etc?)

Personally: What simple thing will you commit to doing between now and next session to live out what we've discussed?

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I freely and heartily yield all things to thy pleasure and disposal.

And now, O glorious and blessed God,

Father, Son, and Holy Spirit,

Thou are mine, and I am thine. So be it.

And the covenant which I have made on earth,

Let it be ratified in heaven. Amen (*The United Methodist Hymnal*, 607)

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Session 2:

How Do We Relate To One Another?

By asking this question, the community of faith uncovers its core values and discovers its strengths and weaknesses.

"...so in Christ we who are many form one body, and each member belongs to all the others."
Romans 12: 4-6

"But you are the ones chosen by God, to be a holy people, God's instruments to do his work and speak out for him."
1 Peter 2: 4-9

In Chapters 7 & 8 we learn the necessity for leaders in the Methodist movement to constantly and consistently *"Live in a Tension"* and *"Seek to Include."*

Chapter 7: Lives in Tension

"Holding in tension may mean advocating or questioning in ways unfamiliar to us, but ways that the situation requires in order to preserve the wholeness of the truth.

When we abandon the tension, we are no longer leaders toward a greater truth. We are merely partisan advocates for a part of the truth." (Weems, 85)

Prayer:

God, we need the darkness in order to appreciate the light. We need silence so we can enjoy the sound. We need laughter because we have so many tears. Our lives are so out of balance, God. We have too much of one thing and not enough of another. This is our own fault. We fill our lives with worthless things that throw off our balance.

When one person jumps off the seesaw, disaster happens. Life out of balance is a path to destruction. Give us what we need. Help us take on the burdens others are carrying so we may walk along together. Help us share all we have so no one is hungry, hurting, grieving, lost, or alone. Amen. (*The Book of Uncommon Prayer*, vol. 2., 90)

Scripture: 1 Peter 2: 1-7

Share Personal Action Experiences (5 minutes per person)

Key Question: Which existing tension in your congregation is in need of a "third solution"?

Activity: The Wesleyan Search for "Third Alternatives"

Read the paragraph at the bottom of page 85.

This chapter is filled with seeming dichotomies that describe Wesleyan leaders:

"radical conservative"

"romantic realist"

"quiet revolutionary"

"reasonable enthusiast"

"evangelical liberal"

"tolerance with decisiveness"

"open-mindedness with Christian conviction"

It also includes some common congregational sticking points:

Relocate	OR	Stay
New Music Staff	OR	New Youth Staff
Traditional Music	OR	Contemporary Music
Focus on reaching out to those who aren't participants	OR	Focus on nurturing those who are participants

One aspect of Wesley's style of leadership was his shift from the "tyranny of the OR" to integration (i.e., leading from the center). Let's experiment with a process that might help us generate third alternatives in the Wesleyan spirit.

Let's use the description of Doctrinal Dogmatism vs. Doctrinal Indifferentism on page 88 as an example. The answers from the text are in the shaded areas below

Step 1: Name the sticking point in either-or terms. <i>What is pulling at each end of the tug-of-war rope and creating tension?</i>			
TENSION:	Doctrinal Dogmatism	OR	Doctrinal Indifferentism
Step 2: What is the strength of each position?			
STRENGTH:	Responsibility		Freedom
Step 3: <i>What shared agenda or purpose do both points of tension have in common?</i>			
COMMONALITY/ CENTER:		Be & Form Disciples of Jesus Christ	
Step 4: <i>How can we uphold both strengths as we honor or move toward the center or point of commonality?</i>			
THIRD ALTERNATIVE:		Free to believe, but not free from belief	

Now it is your turn to try to generate a third alternative.

Brainstorm a list of tensions that can be express in "either-or" terms. Choose one to start the process with. Choose one either-or and fill in the answers to the questions in the shaded blocks below:

Step 1: Name the sticking point in either-or terms. <i>What is pulling at each end of the tug-of-war rope and creating tension?</i>			
TENSION:		OR	
Step 2: <i>What is the strength of each position?</i>			
STRENGTH:			
Step 3: <i>What shared agenda or purpose do both points of tension have in common?*</i>			
COMMONALITY/ CENTER:			
Step 4: <i>How can we uphold both strengths as we honor and move toward the center**?</i>			
THIRD ALTERNATIVE:			

Tips:

*If you are having difficulty identifying the commonality, ask, "What is most needed?")
 "The question ... is not 'What do people want?' It is not 'What do people expect?'
 Rather the question is 'What is most needed?'" p 84

**The answer becomes the "3rd Alternative" by creating a new position where the strengths of the original two tension points are maintained AND that moves us toward the center (commonality). If you struggle on finding a viable 3rd alternative, we recommend using prayer as a part of your discernment process. Start by making a sentence out of "Commonality" with "Strength 1" and "Strength 2." Going back to our example, the sentence formed for the centering breathing prayer might be something like: "Be & Form Disciples of Jesus Christ with Responsibility and Freedom." Often to discern the will of God we must quiet our minds and listen for the gentle promptings.

Commitment to Action:

Congregationally: Reflecting on what we've discussed today, what ideas would be important to share more widely? What is the best way(s) to share it (e.g., sermon, a "ministry education moment" during worship, newsletter, website, etc?) What simple thing can we be doing as a congregation to live into our third alternative?

Personally: What simple thing will you commit to doing between now and next session based on our discussion?

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Let me be full, let me be empty.
Let me have all things, let me have nothing.
I freely and heartily yield all things to thy pleasure and disposal.
And now, O glorious and blessed God,
Father, Son, and Holy Spirit,
Thou are mine, and I am thine. So be it.
And the covenant which I have made on earth,
Let it be ratified in heaven. Amen (*The United Methodist Hymnal*, 607)

Chapter 8: Seeks to Include

"Indeed, all true inclusion comes as a consequence of a shared common center. Diversity and inclusiveness flower best not so much as ends in themselves but rather as by-products of a faith that unites all kinds of people more tightly than any differences can separate."(Weems, 100)

The goal of inclusion is unity of purpose, direction and commitment, but never uniformity. (Weems, 93)

Prayer:

We are a broken, divided family of lonely individuals, each alone; truly, we're not a family. Communication with each other seems impossible, and love vanishes into the void. Yet both are what we desperately need. We all need and want each other, but we're too proud to admit it or to confess that we're each to blame for our separation, loneliness, and pain. We add brick upon brick to the wall that divides and isolates us.

You alone are our hope, O God of our salvation. Your love breaks down walls that isolate and divide us. Your love heals, forgives, and makes us whole again. Restore us, O God of our salvation. Reconcile us, that we may be a family, and live. Amen.

Vienna Cobb Anderson, (*The Complete Book of Christian Prayer*, 192)

Scripture: 1 Corinthians 1:10-13

Share Personal Action Experiences (5 minutes per person)

Key Question: How can we make inclusiveness a consequence?

Activity:

Discuss the following in pairs:

- What are all the different types of diversity available to you given your setting?
- What is at the center of your community that can be a beacon for diversity?
- What is the religious source of your unity? How are we using this to inform our discipling activities?

Collect gems (no more than 7 words) from each pairing to answer the key question.

Commitment to Action:

Congregationally: Reflecting on what we've discussed today, what ideas would be important to share more widely? What is the best way(s) to share it (e.g., sermon, a "ministry education moment" during worship, newsletter, website, etc?) What simple thing can we be doing as a congregation to live into our third alternative?

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Session 3:

How Do We Help People Relate to God?

"If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me."

Luke 9:23

"For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life. Indeed, God did not send the Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him"

John 3:16-17

It is the daily exercises of faith that help us to know God personally. Wesley had a very clear sense of the importance of "Knowing God" (Weems, ch. 10) and "Proclaiming Christ" (Weems, ch. 11). Wesley never forgot what was primary.

"Proclaiming the Good News revealed in Jesus Christ was the beginning, middle and end of his entire life's work. He reminded others of this passion repeatedly." (Weems, 123)

Chapter 10: Knows God

"No faithful Christian witness is possible apart from a lively and ongoing experience of God's presence in our lives. It is from this communion with God's spirit that our spirits find direction, purpose, power and resilience."

"Lost spiritual power today because we have cut ourselves off from the source of power, from the message that energizes"

Prayer:

God, I give you the praise for days well spent. But I am yet unsatisfied, because I do not enjoy enough of you. I apprehend myself at too great a distance from you. I would have my soul more closely united to you by faith and love.

You know Lord that I would love you above all things. You made me; you know my desires, my expectations. My joys all centre in you and it is you that I desire. It is your favor, your acceptance, the communications of your grace that I earnestly wish for more than anything in the world.

I rejoice in your essential glory and blessedness. I rejoice in my relationship with you, that you are my Father, my Lord, and my God. I thank you that you have brought me so far. I will beware of despairing of your mercy for the time which is yet to come, and will give you the glory of your free grace. Amen.

(Susanna Wesley (1669-1742), *The Book of Uncommon Prayer*, 62)

Scripture: Romans 12: 1-2

Share Personal Action Experiences (5 minutes per person)

Key Question: How do we help people connect to God?

Activity: Do Justice, Love Kindness

Lectio Divina adapted from The Upper Room Spiritual Formation Bible

*"What does the Lord require of you
but to do justice, and to love kindness,
and to walk humbly with your God?" -- Micah 6:8 (NRSV)*

Use the Scripture passage above or another of your choosing. The passage can be posted in clear view, or a reader can read the passage aloud for each step. Allow 1- 3 minutes of silent reflection after each step.

READ

1. Read the above scripture slowly. Watch for a key phrase or word that jumps out at you or promises to have special meaning for you.

It is better to dwell profoundly on one word or phrase than to skim the surface of several chapters. Read with your own life and choices in mind.

REFLECT

2. Reflect on a word or phrase. Let the special word or phrase that you discovered in the first phase sink into your heart. Bring mind, will and emotions to the task. Be like Mary, Jesus' mother, who heard of the angel's announcement and "treasured" and "pondered" what she had heard (Luke 2:19).

RESPOND

3. Respond to what you have read. Form a prayer that expresses your response to the idea, then "pray it back to God." What you have read is woven through what you tell God.

REST

4. Rest in God's word. Let the text soak into your deepest being, savoring an encounter with God and truth. When ready, move toward the moment in which you ask God to show you how to live out what you have experienced.

REFLECT

When was the last time you felt God's presence?

When was the last time that you have let God lead in making a big decision or casting a vision for what's next?

Commitment to Action:

Congregationally: Reflecting on what we've discussed today, what ideas would be important to share more widely. What is the best way(s) to share it (e.g., sermon, a "ministry education moment" during worship, newsletter, website, etc?)

Personally: What simple thing will you commit to doing between now and next session to feel God's presence in your life?

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Exalted for thee or brought low for thee.

Let me be full, let me be empty.

Let me have all things, let me have nothing.

I freely and heartily yield all things to thy pleasure and disposal.

And now, O glorious and blessed God,

Father, Son, and Holy Spirit,

Thou are mine, and I am thine. So be it.

And the covenant which I have made on earth,

Let it be ratified in heaven. Amen (*The United Methodist Hymnal*, 607)

Chapter 11: Proclaims Christ

*The first question of leadership is always a spiritual question of primacy...
Remembering what is primary will sustain leadership.
Forgetting leads to foolishness and weakness. (Weems, 123)*

Scripture: Ezekiel 34

Prayer:

Our Father.

Our Creator, Redeemer, Comforter and savior.

Who are in heaven.

You are with the angels and saints, bathing them in your light that they may be enlightened by your love, and dwelling within them that they may be filled with your joy. You are the supreme good, the eternal good, from whom comes all goodness, and without whom there is no goodness.

Hallowed be your name.

May our knowledge of you become ever clearer, that we may know the breadth of your blessings, the length of your promises, the height of your majesty, and the depth of your judgments.

Your kingdom come.

Rule on our hearts with your grace, that we may become fit subjects for your kingdom. We desire nothing more than to dwell in your kingdom, where we can watch you on your throne, and enjoy your perfect love.

Your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.

May we love you with our whole heart by always thinking of you, with our whole soul by always desiring you, with our whole mind and directing all our intentions to you, and with our whole strength by spending all our energies in your service. And may we love our neighbors as ourselves, drawing them to your love, rejoicing in their good fortunes, and caring for them in their misfortunes.

Give us this day our daily bread.

In memory and understanding and reverence of the love which our Lord Jesus Christ has for us, revealed by his sacrifice for us on the cross, we ask for the perfect bread of his body.

And forgive us our trespasses.

We know that you forgive us, through the suffering and death of your beloved son.

As we forgive those who trespass against us.

Enable us to forgive perfectly and without reserve any wrong that has been committed against us. And strengthen our hearts truly to love our enemies, praying for them and striving to serve them.

And lead us not into temptation.

Save us not only from obvious and persistent temptations, but also those that are hidden or come suddenly when our guard is lowered.

But deliver us from evil.

Protect us from past evil, protect us against present evil, and free us from future evil. Amen.

(Francis of Assisi (1182-1226), *The Book of Uncommon Prayer*, 304-305)

Share Personal Action Experiences (5 minutes per person)

Key Question:

How does your congregation proclaim Christ and embody the Good News to both “insiders” and “outsiders”?

Activity: Proclamation as Primary Passion

At the very time we need to proclaim, “Behold the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world,” we want to argue instead. Just when we need to say, “Where sin abounded, grace did much more abound,” we want to condemn. (Weems, 126)

On newsprint or whiteboard list the major categories of things your leaders are spending their time doing instead of proclamation. Now add proclamation to the list.

Have each person in the group indicate the top 3 items; based on the amount of time & energy it is given. (You can have people indicate their vote by raising their hands, or have them place a check mark or sticker next to the category).

If proclamation doesn't end up as the number 1 priority, what is your congregation actually broadcasting?

Commitment to Action:

Congregationally: Reflecting on what we've discussed today, what ideas would be important to share more widely? What is the best way(s) to share it (e.g., sermon, a "ministry education moment" during worship, newsletter, website, etc?) Are there some things we can stop doing that would help us make proclaiming Christ more of a priority?

Personally: What simple thing will you commit to doing between now and next session to proclaim Christ more intentionally?

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Session 4:

How Do We Serve God's Mission?

This final core question serves as a reminder that "it is not about us."

"... do justice, and love kindness, and walk humbly with your God."
Micah 6:8

"...As the Father has sent me, I am sending you."
John 21:20

"You are the Salt of the Earth, the Light of the World"
Matthew 5: 13-14

Chapter 4: Remember the Poor

Call:

Leader: Lord, we remember the millions in our world who must go hungry today, all those who do not have even the basic necessities of life, and for whom life itself has become a burden.

ALL: "Out of the depths we cry to you Lord, Hear our cry and listen to our prayer"

Leader: Lord, we remember all those who, because of their caste or class, color or sex, are exploited and marginalized.

ALL: "Out of the depths we cry to you Lord, Hear our cry and listen to our prayer"

World Council of Churches (The Book of Christian Prayer #330)

Prayer:

Strengthen us, O God, to relieve the oppressed, to hear the groans of poor prisoners, to reform the abuses of all professions; that many may not be made poor to make a few rich; for Jesus Christ's sake. Amen.

Oliver Cromwell (1599-1658, The Book of Uncommon Prayer, 365)

Scripture:

"How does God's love abide in anyone who has the world's goods and sees a brother or sister in need and yet refuses help?"

Little children, let us in love, not in word or speech, but in truth and action"

1 John 3:17-24

Share Personal Action Experiences (5 minutes per person)

Key Question:

What does poverty look like in our community and what are we going to do about it?

Activity:

Look at the circle you drew in the first chapter.

Did you include the invisible, marginalized people in your community?

Undocumented Workers?

Immigrant Populations?

Hungry Children?

High School Dropouts?

Ask the key question and brainstorm ways big and small answer both parts of this important question.

Commitment to Action:

Congregationally: Reflecting on what we've discussed today, what ideas would be important to share more widely? What is the best way(s) to share it (e.g., sermon, a "ministry education moment" during worship, newsletter, website, etc?) What can we do as a congregation to erase that circle of division and provide meaningful interaction with those outside the circle?

Personally: What simple thing will you commit to doing between now and next session to live out your Christian response to poverty in our local community?

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Father, Son, and Holy Spirit,

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Chapter 12: Seeks Justice

"How many more generations will we have to go through, putting our faith in our youth because we have failed the faith our parents' generation had put in us, when we were the youth?" (Weems, 142)

Prayer:

Almighty God, you created us in your own image. Grant us grace fearlessly to contend against evil, and to make no peace with oppression. And, that we may reverently use our freedom, help us to employ it in the maintenance of justice to the glory of your holy name; through Jesus Christ our Savior. Amen. (*The United Methodist Book of Worship, 513*)

Scripture: Micah 6:6-8

Share Personal Action Experiences (5 minutes per person)

Key Question:

How do we serve God's mission?

Activity:

Refer back to the activity in Chapter 1.

What social justice issues are present in our community?

Racism?

War?

Poverty?

Immigration issues?

Gender issues?

Class issues?

What else?

Where might God be calling us to respond within the next 6 months?

Commitment to Action:

Congregationally: Write a congregational affirmation statement which encapsulates the discoveries you've made through this study and the changes you are willing to make to live out the Great Commission and how that will impact yourself, your community, and maybe even the world. How will we check back and hold each other accountable?

Personally: What simple thing will you commit to doing in order to continue growing your leadership in the Wesleyan spirit?

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I am no longer my own, but thine.
Put me to what thou wilt, rank me with whom thou wilt.
Put me to doing, put me to suffering.
Let me be employed by thee or laid aside for thee,
Exalted for thee or brought low for thee.
Let me be full, let me be empty.
Let me have all things, let me have nothing.
I freely and heartily yield all things to thy pleasure and disposal.
And now, O glorious and blessed God,
Father, Son, and Holy Spirit,
Thou are mine, and I am thine. So be it.
And the covenant which I have made on earth,
Let it be ratified in heaven. Amen (*The United Methodist Hymnal*, 607)

NOTES

NOTES

Bibliography

Case, Steven L. The Book of Uncommon Prayer Vol 1. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2002.

Case, Steven L. The Book of Uncommon Prayer Vol 2. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2006.

The Complete Book of Christian Prayer. New York City: Continuum International Publishing, 2000.

Duck, Ruth C. Touch Holiness: Resources for Worship. Cleveland, Ohio: Pilgrim Press, 1990.

The Oxford Annotated Bible, NSRV. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991.

The Spiritual Formation Bible. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan Publishing House, 1999.

The United Methodist Hymnal. Nashville: The United Methodist Publishing House, 1989.

The United Methodist Book of Worship. Nashville: The United Methodist Publishing House, 1992.

Weems, Jr., Lovett H. Leadership in the Wesleyan Spirit. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1999.

Other Resources for Facilitators using the Weems Study Guide

Online copies of this Study Guide can be found at
www.okumc.org/Leadership

The Lewis Center for Church Leadership – www.churchleadership.com –
Under the 'Resources' tab you can sign up for the free bi-weekly *Leading Ideas* E-Newsletter.

SESSION 1 How do we relate to our community?

Chapter 3

Kids Guide for Social Action ISBN# 157542-038-4

Kids Guide for Service Projects ISBN 978-0-915793-822

Hands on Service Projects ISBN 1559457899

OK Volunteers in Mission (VIM) www.okumcministries.org/vim/ok.asp

OK Youth Force www.okumcministries.org/Youth/Youth_Force.htm

SESSION 2 How do we relate to one another?

Chapter 8

Immigration is an important issue for us in Oklahoma. For a controversial discussion on Immigration reform you might use this article:

http://www.captc.org/pubpol/immigration/HB1804brief_final.pdf

SESSION 3 How do we help people relate to God?

Chapter 10

Companions in Christ

Living the Questions

Journaling

Walk to Emmaus

Academy for Spiritual Formation

SESSION 4 How do we serve God's Mission?

Chapter 4

Book of Resolutions paragraph 160 on page 414

Social Principles: Economic Community Paragraph E. (page 28)

Other data that of interest:

By county www.oica.org

Percept information: Contact Diana Northcutt for more information:
dnorthcutt@okumc.org

Or logon at www.Link2lead.com for help in the local church

Chapter 12

See additional resources in the *Book of Worship*, Peace with Justice Sunday, p 428

OK Conference Board of Church & Society – contact Allen Buck,
fumclg@sstelco.com

Social Principles Study Guide

Justice p 36

Poverty p 28

War p 36

Racism p 15

The Social Creed found either in the *Book of Worship*, *UM Hymnal*, or the *Social Principles* Study Guide

Other resources to read to enhance the Study Guide:

Nixon, P. *I Refuse to Lead a Dying Church*. Pilgram Press, 2006.

*Downloadable Study Guide @ www.epicentergroup.org - \$16.00

Schnase, R. *5 Practices of Fruitful Congregations*. Abingdon Press, 2006.

Weems, L. *Taking the Next Step: Leading Lasting Change in the Church*. Abingdon Press, 2003.

Facts about Poverty in Oklahoma

- Over 50% of all babies born in Oklahoma are born under Medicaid
- One out of every four Oklahoma children lives in poverty
- Oklahoma's youngest are Oklahoma's poorest with more than eighty-four thousand infants, toddlers, and preschoolers under the age of five living in poverty
- Oklahoma led all other states in worsening poverty for young children over the last two decades
- During the most recent three years on record, the proportion of Oklahoma children living in poverty worsened from 21.7% in 1990 to 25.4 % in 1993 with comparable rates also worsening in the vast majority of Oklahoma's counties.
- Poverty kills Oklahoma children. Poor children are three times more likely to die during their childhood than non-poor children.
- Poverty hurts Oklahoma children. Poor children are more likely than non-poor children to eat an inadequate diet, to stay cold in the winter, and to receive little health care.
- Children represent twenty five percent of the residents in Oklahoma's general population homeless shelters.
- Poor children are more likely to experience poor health, have out-of-wedlock births, experience violent crime, act out violently later in life, and end up poor as adults.
- The younger the child, the greater the harm The first years of a child's life are a formative period, crucial to emotional and intellectual development. Poverty for infants and toddlers poses serious threats to brain development. Poverty increases the risks of inadequate nutrition, poor health care, exposure to environmental toxins and substance abuse, maternal depression, trauma and abuse, and inadequate childcare.
- Poor children are more likely than non-poor children to score low on standardized tests, drop out of school and face resulting severe economic and social consequences including less employment opportunity, poorer earning ability, higher rates of substance abuse, and higher unemployment.
- Oklahoma ranked 13th in the nation for people in poverty (14.8%) for the 3 year average of 1996-98.
- Half (50.3%) of the respondents reported they were currently employed for an average of 34 hours per week. While the pay rate averaged \$6.51 per hour, respondents most often reported their pay rate was \$5.15 per hour (minimum wage). Most jobs were clerical or service-related, such as nursing aide, receptionist, or housekeeping.
- A family of three, with no other income, is eligible for a maximum of \$335 in Food Stamps in Oklahoma. That is less than \$1.25 per person, per meal.
- The same size family would be eligible for \$292 in Temporary Assistance for Needy Families payments per month. From that they would pay rent, utilities, clothing, transportation, insurance, and all the other daily living costs.
- The percentage of people in poverty in Oklahoma for the most recent two-year period was 11.8, while the percentage of those without health insurance was 20.1 a 1.3 percent increase from the previous period, and third highest in the nation, behind only Texas and New Mexico.

- Median household income in Oklahoma for the most recent period was \$38,274, up \$693 from the previous period and about \$6,000 under the national median income. Only seven states had a lower median income than Oklahoma.
- The poverty threshold differs by the size and makeup of a household. For instance, a family of four with two children was considered living in poverty if income was \$19,157 or less. For a family of two with no children, it was \$12,649. For a person 65 and over living alone, it was \$9m060.
- Twenty percent of women with incomes from job or business live below 100% of the Federal Poverty Level.
- Forty four percent of women living below 100% of the Federal Poverty Level had an income from a job or business..
- 48% of Oklahoma school children qualified for free and reduced-price meals.
- While the national average for People Under Age 18 in poverty was an estimated 20.8 percent in 1995, the state average was 26 percent. Six Oklahoma counties had more than 40 percent of their children in poverty and one (Harmon County) had a 52.4 percent child-poverty rate.

For information on hosting a poverty simulation event, contact our office at:

Kathy McLaughlin, Director of Programs
Oklahoma Department of Commerce
900 North Stiles/PO Box 26980, Oklahoma City, OK 73104
405-815-5339 or 1-800-879-6552/405-605-2839 fax -
Kathy_McLaughlin@odoc.state.ok.us
www.nccp.org
Oklahoma: Demographics of Low-Income Children:
http://nccp.org/profiles/state_profile.php?state=OK&id=6