

**TO SERVE THE PRESENT AGE, OUR CALLING TO FULFILL
SHALOMALIZATION: TO CREATE THE BELOVED COMMUNITY
Ecclesiology, Mission, and Vocation**

Introduction

The Beloved Community as a vision of the Church was first articulated by Josiah Royce at turn of the Twentieth Century. His vision of the Beloved Community placed Love and “loyalty to a cause” at the center of what is meant to be the Church in the Twentieth Century as the purest expression of the of Christian Faith whose goal is an Universal Community:

...a community where love and justice rule in a community of unique distinct individuals who are loved for who they are in a plurality of their circumstances. Yet, they share a common memory and future. It is a community of interpretation where our stories, context and future hope have meaning and inspires hope and each individual is assured that they are loved. (The Problem with Christianity Josiah Royce)

This was also the dream of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. as he sought to hold America accountable to it highest ideals and bring justice to those counted as the least of these on American soil.

The dream is one of equality of opportunity, of privilege and property widely distributed; a dream of a land where persons will not take necessities from the many to give luxuries to the few: a dream of a land where persons do not argue that the color of one’s skin determines the content of one’s character; the dream of a place where all our gifts and resources are held not for ourselves alone but as instruments of service for the rest of humanity; the dream of a country where everyone will respect the dignity and worth of all human personality, and humankind will dare to live together as sisters and brothers... Whenever it is fulfilled, we will emerge from the bleak and desolate midnight of man’s inhumanity to man into the bright and glowing daybreak of freedom and justice for all of God’s children. (Search for the Beloved Community, Smith and Zepp)

For King, the Beloved Community is the actualization of an inclusive human community.

It is a mutually cooperative and voluntary venture of humans to assume a semblance of responsibility for their brothers and sisters. King describes the Beloved Community as a vision of total interrelatedness. It is the solidarity of the human family. Because, people

are dependent upon each other and are knitted together in a single garment of destiny, caught in a inescapable network of mutuality. King declared that each of us living lives eternally in the red.

To create the Beloved Community as we enter a new Millennium requires a reshaped church that can imagine and dream together:

A Beloved Community where Love and Justice rule, would be a community where equality of opportunity, of privilege and property is widely distributed.

A Beloved Community, where everyone's worth is affirmed is a community where everyone will respect the dignity and worth of all human personality.

A Beloved Community, where diversity enriches all lives through common memories and a shared future is a community where one is judged by content of one's character rather than color of one's skin.

A Beloved Community, where stories inspire hope is a community of interpretation where our stories, context and future hope have meaning.

A Beloved Community, where all are loved unconditionally and forever is a community where our gifts and resources are held not for ourselves alone but as instruments of service for the rest of humanity.

Ecclesiology Part 1

Five principles of the Beloved Community: Shaping the Church to become Body of Christ in an ERA of Globalization.

Beloved Community: As Body Christ

The Beloved Community is as defined by Jesus as the Kingdom of God, Wesleyan heritage of New Creation, Josiah Royce idealistic pragmatism and the Christian Church and Martin Luther King Jr. Utopian Social Vision for radical communalism. The five principles of the Beloved Community utilizing four criterion Scripture, Tradition, Experience and Reason will form framework of our discussion of the Wesleyan church in the era of globalization as it relates to children and the poor "the lease of these".

Scripture: Explore the biblical concept of the Kingdom of God; the early Christian communities as described and prescribed by books of John, Paul, James and Peter; and Jesus' preferences for the poor and children.

Tradition: Describe Wesley' instruction to his preachers and his love for children and the poor. The work that the early Methodist with children and the poor.

Experience: Critical Reflection on present practice in the church today. How is the present church structured specially in relation to the children and the poor? How does it differ from its Biblical mandate and Wesleyan heritage?

Reason: A constructive discussion of some possible configuration of the basic aspects Methodism if it took seriously it Biblical Mandate and Wesleyan Tradition.

The Beloved Community is:

Principle I. a community where love and justice rule

I give you a new commandment, that you love one another. Just as I have loved you, you also should love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another. (John 13: 34-35)

We know love by this, that he laid down his life for us and we ought to lay down our lives for one another. 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 love, not in word or speech but in truth and action. (1John 3:16-17)

Christ comes to us as one of the poor and whose mission and ministry was among the impoverished and the excluded of Galilee and who instructed his followers that what they did for those who were imprisoned, hungry destitute was done to and for him. The exaltation of Christ as Lord and savior must not become oblivious to the specific features of the Incarnational reality disclosed in the Gospels.

While the plight of the children and the poor are inextricably tied to such geo- economic, political and social discussions of Globalization, War, Family breakdown, the AID epidemic and so on. Yet, these alone do not adequately explain the conditions of children and the poor worldwide. Only a theological discussion of sin and demonic social forces of rampant materialism, the myth redemptive violence and radical individualism can explain the injustice and indifference to the suffering of others adequately. At the roots of

poverty and the abuse and abandonment of children, is a community of mortals in living fear of their own mortality. Where there is greed and hate, in its varying forms of bigotry, prejudice, avarice and apathy which persist in the face of the suffering of others, is the fear of our own death and the insufficiency nature to sustain our life. Only the Love of God can cast out fear (1 John 4:18) and faith in Jesus Christ grant abundant eternal life. (John 10:10) The Church as the Body of Christ as the Incarnational reality of Christ in the world is a community ruled by love and justice.

However, too often the name of God is invoked to bless power, prestige and privilege and the God disclosed in the Exodus who hears they cry of the violated people of the earth is forgotten. The gods of national and imperial power are sometimes honored rather than the one who hears the cry of the impoverished and the marginalized. the church is call to a more biblical understanding of the God through a commitment to the vulnerable and violated.

A Beloved Community is a community where love is defined as loyalty to this incarnation cause of Christ which is expressed as active concern for others and self-sacrificing love for our brothers and sisters (John 15:12-13). This is not just a utopian social vision but the demand of the Gospel to be the body of Christ in the world. This is the one command of Jesus for his disciples (John 14:34-35), it is true religion (James 1:27).

According to Martin Luther King Jr. this meant that equality of opportunity, of privilege and property is widely distributed rather than the reserve of the few.

Wesley's maxim was that whatever is given to the poor should be counted as "so much given to God", a church shape as the Body of Christ the offering taken in the service of worship is truly an offering for the poor and so given to God. This would have grave implication for building campaigns and church budgets.

Accordingly, Wesley's instructions about how preaching houses should be plain, therefore a church as a body of Christ would measure the building of new churches by how they make the poor welcome, the designation of sites for building new churches by how they are placed to make outreach to the poor possible.

Principle II. A community of unique distinct individuals who are loved for who they are in a plurality of their circumstances.

You shall Love the Lord your God with all our heart, and with all your soul, and with all your strength and with your entire mind and the second like it; you shall love neighbor as yourself (Luke 10:27)—on these two commandment rest all the laws and the prophets.

Listen, my beloved brothers and sister. Has not God chosen the poor in the world to be rich in faith and to be heirs of the kingdom that he has promised to those who love him? But you have dishonored the poor. (James 2:5-6)

It will take the Spirit of God to come upon many of the church today to free it of its love of position and possession in order to make it a community of sharing and of welcoming so that it may indeed be the body of Christ, the visible form, of Christ's presence in the world. The reshaping of the church will require Pentecostal power to call us out of all merely interior spiritualism and into the koinonia of sharing and community. The Spirit of God makes the Beloved Community possible

Each person is created uniquely and distinctly under differing circumstances. Yet, every person is created in God's own image (Genesis 1: 27 and 2:7) and the breath of God has made each a living soul. Each person bearing God's image and breath (spirit) equally entitles them to the love and justice that enables their pursuit of life, liberty and happiness.

Therefore, each person must be judged by the content of their own Character rather than their economic status, color of their skin, gender, origin of birth, religion or sexual orientation. Each person is worthy of our active concern and self-sacrificing love, because the Spirit of God is worthy of our Love as are those who bear God's image. The Trinity is not an exercise in mystical mathematics but the very essence of love that reaches out beyond itself to create and redeem and sanctify until God be all in all. The Trinity is the divine example of the Beloved Community.

Therefore the Church must be a dramatic sign of the presence in the world of Christ's body offered freely for all, in which the walls of separation are broken down so that Greek and Jew, male and female slave and free, those near and those far off may be one. Thus the church must be reshaped to become a more inclusive fellowship in which

divisions of race and gender, culture and class are broken down thus pointing toward the accomplishment of the divine purpose of a beloved community.

As Martin Luther King admonished “ do not argue that the color of one’s skin determines the content of one’s character; MLK

Wesley’s own example was of openness to learn from other peoples and cultures so must our relations to our sisters and brothers across the globe will be characterized not by one-sided charity and paternalism but by partnership and solidarity in which we receive from one another the gifts that God so richly bestows on all God’s children.

Principle III. *Yet, they share a common memory and future*

*Beloved, let us love one another, because love is from God: everyone who loves is born of God and knows God. Whoever does not love does not know God, for God is love. God is love, and those who abide in love abide in God and God abides them.
(1John 4:7 and 16b)*

The reign of God is not the victory of an institution but the coming of God’s own rule of justice generosity and joy in which God in person will wipe away every tear of suffering and sorrow; in which the whole of suffering creation will be restored to its intended glory. The church shape as the body of Christ must give a count through word and deed of the hope for this consummation to which the cause of Christ has awakened it.

Each person is bound together by a common human memory and particularly a shared story of the Good News of Jesus Christ. Those who confess Christ belong to this community because the Author and finisher of faith have proclaimed it in word and deed. It is sacramental community shape by water, blood and spirit. This community is a sign of coming Reign of God. It is a confessional community that reaches those who confess Christ and beyond with active concern and self-sacrificing love as witness to a common future under God’s reign.

Again King challenges us to count our gifts and resources as held not for ourselves alone but as instruments of service for the rest of humanity;

Wesley’s intention of measuring all that the Methodist movement did by its affect upon the poor. Every church conference must ask: how is this congregation related to the impoverished? How does this congregation reach out to include the impoverished? What members of this congregation, either as volunteers or as a matter of their daily work (as

nurses, social workers and so on) are engaged directly with the impoverished? How is their vocation recognized within the life of the congregation as an essential expression of the ministry of the congregation as a whole?

Principle IV. It is a community of interpretation where our stories, context and future hope have meaning and inspires hope

...that he might create in himself on new humanity in place of two, thus making peace, and might reconcile both groups to God in one body through the cross, thus putting to death that hostility through it.... So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are citizens with the saints and also members of the household of God, built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the cornerstone. Ephesians 2:15b-16 and 19

The Cross of Christ is very the word of God become suffering flesh, sharing the pain and torment of all who have seemed to be abandoned by God so that all may know that nothing can ever separate us from the love of God that was in Christ Jesus. Thus those who draw near the cross of Christ are drawn nearer to all who are humiliated, scorned, and abandoned.

To interpret is to endeavor to understand. The great gift of love is to be understood by others, and this especially children and the poor. To seek to understand the lives of children and the poor is to give meaning to their lives. To give meaning to story of those whose existence once seemed meaninglessness is to inspire hope. Each of our stories, contexts and futures can be examined in light of the hope that is in Christ Jesus. The stories of the “least of these” are sacred tales which give meaning to us all. When each individual’s story and context are investigated for theological themes that are inspired by the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, then all people’s futures rich and poor, young and old are anticipated with expectant hope. Each of our stories, context and future hope are the causes for which the Christ came and die.

In the Beloved Community the theme justification is interpreted as unmerited favor of God directed toward us and toward all through Jesus Christ which causes us to love even as we have been loved and so to become truly just through that love which is itself a fulfilling of the intent of the law. We therefore intend to teach more clearly a justification that produces justice, a divine mercy that produces in us works of mercy.

The Beloved Community inspires the hope of regeneration as the work of God's spirit within us that frees us from the mortal power of sin and lovelessness within us and so summons us to grow in grace to full maturity in Christ and empowers us to become life-giving witnesses to the Spirit of life and liveliness for all who labor under the shadow of death and domination.

King pleaded, for everyone come to respect the dignity and worth of all human personality and humankind, for when this happens then we can will dare to live together as sisters and brothers

Wesley's constant advice to his preachers both to study and to visit the poor. To reshape the Methodist church into the body of Christ in the world, United Methodist related seminaries should make the resources for outreach to those who are left out and left behind a required part of the seminary curriculum.

Wesley's commitment to make resources available to the poor that they could use. Likewise curriculum materials and other publishing efforts should be evaluated by how accessible they are to those who are not affluent, how readable they are to those who do not have a college education. And to what degree what is published arises from the issues articulated by the poor.

Principle V. And each individual is assured that they are loved.

There was not a needy person among them, for as many as owned Lands or houses sold them and brought the proceeds of what was sold. (Acts 4: 34)

The assurances of love are expressions active concern and self sacrificial giving for welfare of all and each individual as an expression of biblical holiness. A truly biblical holiness awakens us to the urgency of becoming dramatic signs of the love of God in the world, a love that uproots self-interest and self-protection and makes us each beacons of an all embracing love, a holiness therefore that does not condemn but that embraces, that does not exclude but that reaches out to welcome one another in love, as Christ has welcomed us. Thus each person is assured that are loved. For they are the cause for which Christ came, died and was resurrected.

As we open ourselves to community with children and the impoverished we are awakened anew to our theological task in which these and many more elements of the church's treasure of sound doctrine become not mere museum pieces but fountains of living water for the renewal not only of the church but of the world as well.

This means in this community we will not take necessities from the many to give luxuries to the few.

Wesley's commitment to the most effective deployment of his preachers and the United Methodist Church must be set free from a salary system that rewards those who serve only the affluent and relegates those who are determined to serve the poor to the bottom rungs of a salary system that imitates the corporate ladder rather than the divine mission. Those called to superintend the ministry of elders in the church in the body of Christ in the global Era must use as the primary means of evaluation inot the number of members or the size of apportionment obligation but faithfulness to the ministry of Christ who was among the least of these, and the integrity of a Wesleyan commitment to the poor.

The Mission Part 2

Our Generation's Challenge: The End of Poverty

If the church is to be reshaped according to word and will of God and the precedent set by of our founder John Wesley, then it must become a grassroots movement starting in the pews among the truly convinced.

Many important passionate issues seek to tear the Church apart and pit brother and sister against one another and all claiming that it is in the Bible. Yet, no other biblical mandate or Methodist tradition can unit us more than "least of these" children and the impoverished. According to Jeffery Sachs in his groundbreaking book, The End of Poverty, yesterday more than 20,000 people die of extreme poverty. Eight thousand children die of malaria yesterday. Five thousand mothers and fathers die of tuberculosis. Seventy-five hundred young adults die of AIDS. One sixth of the world's population,

(over a billion people) lives off less than one dollar a day. Every 3 seconds one of these children dies of extreme poverty! However, the tragedy is we have the means but lack the moral will to prevent this needless waste of God given life.

When Jesus returns upon his throne, and gathers the nations before himself and separates the sheep to the right and goats to left. He will evaluate them by only one set criteria. When I was hunger, did you feed me? When I was thirsty, did you give me drink? When I was stranger, did you take me in? When I was naked, did you cloth me? When I was sick, did you come and visit me? When I was in prison, did you come and see about me? Me, who is among the “least of these” (paraphrased Matthew 25:31-46). Every Methodist and Christian should read the parable of the last Judgment over and over again. Jesus does not ask about membership rolls, church budgets, endowments, church graveyards, or building campaigns. When Christ returns he is going to ask about the children who died of malaria, the mothers and fathers who die of tuberculosis, the young adults who die of AIDS, those who lived on less than one dollar a day. He will want to know what you did about those children dying of extreme poverty every three seconds.

Generations before us heard the call of Jesus and ended slavery, colonialism, Apartheid and Jim Crow. Our generation’s challenge is to end extreme poverty because we can and because the Love of God compels us. Everything we do including: how we appoint and pay pastors; when, where and how we build churches; and who we elect as Bishops must be evaluated on how it will impact “the least of these.”

Due to supersonic air travel, cell phone, email, laptop computers, huge ocean liners, instant capital flows and jobs, the world has become one global community. As Martin Luther King Jr. proclaims in his book *Where do We Go from Here: Chaos or Community*,

we have become a “World House.” Our shared dream is to achieve God’s Shalom through prayer and faithful action not just for selves but for the whole world.

Vocation Part 3

From Globalization to Shalomalization

Shalomalization: Jeremiah 29:7

Seek the peace (Shalom) of the city...and pray to the Lord for it: for in its Shalom you will have Shalom

Globalization refers largely to the economic interdependence of human societies across the globe. The rich have become richer as multinational corporations who manufacture products in many different countries where labor is cheap and sell to consumers around the world. The poor get poorer as money, technology and raw materials move ever more swiftly across national borders and national debt grows for those nations least able to pay. Culture is also moving across borders along with products and finances which for billions of the world’s people. The business-driven globalization is uprooting old ways of life and threatening livelihoods and cultures. This globalization has been both a curse and blessing because it a largely a technological movement without a soul. It has been a curse for many of the world’s poor, because it has been an economic movement with no moral compass. Shalomalization can be a faith-based global development movement, as a by-product of globalization, but driven by a religious and moral aim to create the Beloved Community.

Shalom is a state of completeness and wholeness in which people individually and collectively experience health, prosperity, security, oneness with nature and neighbor and spiritual renewal. A Rabbi friend of mind gave me an interesting etymology of Shalom.

He said, *Sha* in the Hebrew refers to the fire of God. The fire of God represents, the sun the gives life, lighting signals the life giving rain or the Holy Spirit bring order out of chaos. OM refers to the water or the surface of the earth. Shalom is to ground God's fire into the Earth. Shalom is often pictured as the rising "Sun" over the "Tree of Life" planted by the rivers of water. Shalomalization is the transformation of the economic-driven globalization into a moral driven movement for the "least of these." Because of the technologies, open markets, fluid flow of money and jobs as a result of globalization for the first time in human history the end of poverty is possible. Shalomalization must be driven by multinational churches as globalization is driven by multinational corporations. Shalomalization is the role of a church that has been reshape by the Spirit of Christ to be the lighting rod that grounds the fire of God in the Earth.

Global Shalom Zones: The Millennium Development Goals

At the beginning of the third Millennium, the largest gathering of world leaders in human history convened in New York September 2000. One hundred and forty-seven heads of states met at the United Nation in essence to propose a Global Shalom Zone. They set sevens goals for the new Millennium to address the injustices of the second Millennium (extreme poverty):

- 1. Eradicate extreme Poverty and Hunger**
- 2. Achieve universal primary education**
- 3. Promote gender equality and empower women**
- 4. Reduce child mortality**
- 5. Combat HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases**
- 6. Ensure environmental sustainability**
- 7. Develop a global partnership for development**

Shalom Zone was the 1992 the General Conference in response to the riot Los Angeles, which sought to make Los Angeles a Shalom Zone. The goal of the Millennium goals in

the create countries of Shalom. This is the hope for children and the poor in this Millennium. Our challenge is to be the Church of Jesus Christ in the tradition of John Wesley to create the Beloved Community.

Our Generation Challenge to Create the Beloved Community:

Jeffrey D. Sachs his epoch book, *The End of Poverty*, challenges each of us to the following:

- Commit to End Poverty
- Adopt a Plan of Action
- Raise the Voice of the Poor
- Redeem the Role of the United States in the World

Bishop Peter D. Weaver of the New England Annual Conference challenges us:

The world is in a position to end extreme poverty in this generation. The technology, resources and cooperative networks are in place to get it done.

No longer does a child need to die every three seconds of preventable causes. No longer do more than one billion people need to live with little or no food, education or health care. No longer do the poor need to become poorer because of trade injustices.

Jesus' vision of good news for the poor and the human family is within sight. This was the first objective for his spirit-anointed ministry, according to Luke 4:18.

Bishop Peter D. Weaver calls on us to create the Beloved Community by:

- Pray for our churches and the leaders of all nations as we work together to end extreme poverty.
- Participate in your congregation's "Children and Poverty" and "Hope for the Children of Africa" efforts.
- Connect with the "ONE" campaign.
- Keep yourself and your congregation informed about the Millennium Development Goals, global debt relief, aid to poor nations, just trade policies, global health issues, education issues, and children's and women's issues.
- Communicate your concerns and encouragement to President Bush and Congress.

The “One Campaign”

WE COMMIT ourselves - one person, one voice, one vote at a time - to make a better, safer world for all.”

Shalom to you.