

“The United Methodist Church’s Struggle with Evangelism in Its Approach to Other Faith Communities”

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Abbreviations used in this paper (page citations refer to print versions):

*ADCA: Daily Christian Advocate Advance Edition.*

*BD: The Book of Discipline of The United Methodist Church.*

*BR: The Book of Resolutions of The United Methodist Church.*

*DCA: Daily Christian Advocate.*

EICD memo: Ecumenical and Interreligious Concerns Division, Board of Global Ministries, memo to Research and Development Committee, Board of Global Ministries, August 28, 1977.

EICD study document: Ecumenical and Interreligious Concerns Division, Board of Global Ministries, “Evangelism and Persons of Other Faiths: A Study Document of the Ecumenical and Interreligious Concerns Division,” January 1980.

*GCJ: General Conference Journal.*

## I. The Classic Methodist Dialectic and the UMC's Struggle with Evangelism

A hallmark of the Wesleyan heritage is its holistic understanding of the personal and social dimensions of holiness. Drawing upon this heritage, the traditional Methodist approach to other religions has emphasized “the dual proclamation of Christ and the transformation of society,” thus producing “the classic Methodist dialectic between evangelism and social justice,” to borrow phrasing from the overview of Methodist mission history by Dana Robert and Douglas Tzan.<sup>2</sup>

As Robert and Tzan note, the “productive tension” of the classic Methodist dialectic “lost its focus” in the 1960s-1980s, the period during which the newly formed United Methodist Church would become a “battleground” for dichotomous understandings of mission as either evangelism or social justice.<sup>3</sup>

This paper will examine the UMC’s struggle with the evangelism side of the classic Methodist dialectic in its approach to “other faith communities.”<sup>4</sup> I take my cue in using the word “struggle” from a denominational official’s response to Jewish concerns about Christian evangelism (to be discussed below). An analysis of key denominational resolutions and documents reveals difficulty in finding an acceptable balance between a traditional Wesleyan and Methodist understanding of evangelism and the interreligious dialogue approach adopted early in the denomination’s history. The paper will conclude by suggesting that a bolder and more systematic appeal to the Wesleyan heritage may ease the UMC’s struggle with evangelism.

## II. UMC Resolutions<sup>5</sup> and Documents

The first General Conference resolution regarding other faith communities, “Dialogue between Jews and Christians” (1972 *BR*, pp. 25-30), introduces the interreligious dialogue approach although it is only minimally developed and no sources are cited for it.<sup>6</sup> The word “evangelism” does not appear in this resolution; however, the evangelism side of the Methodist dialectic is addressed in nuanced fashion, undoubtedly because it falls under what the resolution calls “the fundamental and inherently mutual theological problems” that are raised by Jewish and Christian understandings of a covenantal relationship with God (p. 26). In Christian-Jewish dialogues, “an aim of religious or political conversion, or of proselytizing, cannot be condoned,” yet “To commend the love of God in Jesus Christ through saving word and serving work is an ingredient of dialogue for Christians” (p. 27). Under the section “Guidelines for Conversations,” proselytization is again eschewed: “Joint planning of conversations should emphasize the broad purposes of dialogues and lessen suspicion that conversion is a deliberate intention” (p. 29).

The late 1970s saw significant intra-denominational debate about the place of evangelism in relating to other faith communities. A 1977 paper by Bishop Roy C. Nichols titled “A Global View of Evangelism and Church Growth for the Board of Global Ministries” elicited severe criticism in a memo from that Board’s Ecumenical and Interreligious Concerns Division. The EICD rejected the bishop’s narrow definition of evangelism as proselytization, advocating instead the broader notion of bearing witness to one’s “commitment to Jesus Christ and the life of discipleship which that involves,” citing a 1966 National Council of Churches policy statement (1977 EICD memo, p. 4). The bishop was also criticized for viewing interreligious dialogue as a means for winning converts; rather, “dialogue is an exchange of witness between persons of different faiths” (pp. 5, 7).

In the months leading up to the 1980 General Conference, the EICD circulated a study document titled “Evangelism and Persons of Other Faiths” (see 1980 *ADCA*, p. G-40). The document opens by stating that “The time appears to be ripe for Christians to take a new look at their relationships with persons of other faiths,” later elaborating that “We are searching to find words which more adequately describe for today what we mean by mission, evangelism and our relationship with persons of other faiths” (1980 EICD study document, pp. 1, 4).

The study document proposes dialogue as the best new way of relating to other religions, drawing upon recent interreligious initiatives around the globe, including guidelines produced by the World Council of Churches’ unit on Dialogue with Persons of Living Faiths and Ideologies (p. 2). The only precondition for dialogue is the willingness to enter into “a relationship of mutual acceptance, openness, and respect” in which “fundamental convictions about life, faith and salvation” are not suspended but mutually honored; quoting verbatim from the earlier EICD memo: “at its most profound level, dialogue is an *exchange of witness* between persons of different faiths” (1980 EICD study document, p. 15; emphasis in original). Moreover, “The difference between dialogue and other forms of witness is that it is a context of learning from the other the truth and wisdom of their faith as well as sharing with the other the truth and wisdom of our own” (p. 16). Summarizing the sentiment of the earlier EICD memo, this document calms the suspicion that dialogue is merely “a new and more subtle tool for conversion” (p. 16).

Significant content is carried over from the EICD study document into the 1980 resolution “Called to Be Neighbors and Witnesses” (1980 *BR*, pp. 114-25). Dialogue is again offered as “a different approach to persons of other faiths” (p. 117), described as an “exchange of witness” to the “truth and wisdom” of the respective faith communities, and rejected as “a new and more subtle tool for conversion” (p. 120). The resolution goes beyond the EICD study document in presenting a systematic case for the dialogue approach. In effect, the resolution offers dialogue as the integrating rubric for the classic Methodist dialectic, substituting the notion of “witnessing” for evangelism and defining social justice in terms of responsibility to neighbor. This is summarized in the resolution (p. 117) in a verbatim quote from the EICD study document: “‘Dialogue’ is the word which has come to signify a different approach to persons of other faiths, one which takes seriously both the call to witness and the command to love and be neighbors, and sees witnessing and neighborliness as interrelated activities” (1980 EICD study document, p. 13; 1980 *BR*, p. 117).

The word “evangelism” appears only once in “Called to Be Neighbors and Witnesses,” in the context of the need to think about it “in new ways” (p. 125). Nevertheless, in two places the resolution proclaims Christ, an essential element of evangelism. The first speaks of Christian witness in today’s multireligious world: “Within this religiously diverse community, Christians, trusting in Jesus Christ for their salvation, are called to witness to him as Lord to all people, (cf. Acts 1:8)” (p. 116). The word choices here—“Christians, trusting in Jesus Christ for *their* salvation,” and “witness to him as Lord *to* all people” rather than “Lord *of* all people”—seem to be an intentional softening of the universal implications of the Lordship of Christ. However, these universal implications are clearly stated two paragraphs later where we read that God “has acted in Jesus Christ for the salvation of the whole world,” “is Lord of all” (citing Ephesians 4:6), and “has acted redemptively for the whole creation in Jesus Christ.” Furthermore, “Christians witness to God in Jesus Christ in the confidence that here all people find salvation . . .” (p. 117).

“Called to Be Neighbors and Witnesses” represents a shift from a traditional understanding of evangelism as making new disciples of Christ to a new understanding of

witnessing as disciples of Christ through dialogue. The emphasis on the mutual exchange of witness has the earmarks of a pluralist approach to other religions, as formulated in the well-known exclusivism/inclusivism/pluralism typology.<sup>7</sup> The pluralist approach is summarized by Diana Eck, director of Harvard University's Pluralism Project and a United Methodist layperson who served from 1976-1991 on the World Council of Churches' unit on interreligious dialogue (which influenced the 1980 EICD study document, as noted above):

Truth is not the exclusive or inclusive possession of any one tradition or community. Therefore the diversity of communities, traditions, understandings of the truth, and visions of God is not an obstacle for us to overcome, but an opportunity for our energetic engagement and dialogue with one another. It does not mean giving up our commitments; rather, it means opening up those commitments to the give-and-take of mutual discovery, understanding, and, indeed, transformation.<sup>8</sup>

The word “pluralism” is not used in “Called to Be Neighbors and Witnesses,”<sup>9</sup> yet pluralist sentiments suffuse the resolution. However, a few muted expressions of inclusivism can also be found. Eck summarizes the inclusivist approach to other religions: “There are, indeed, many communities, traditions, and truths, but our own way of seeing things is the culmination of the others, superior to the others, or at least wide enough to include the others under our universal canopy and in our own terms.”<sup>10</sup> Inclusivist leanings in the 1980 version of “Called to Be Neighbors and Witnesses” are found in references to the activity of God or the Holy Spirit in the world and in interreligious relations (pp. 117, 118, 120, 121). Although not identified as such, this is a Wesleyan inclusivist theme that will gain a greater hearing in later versions of the resolution.<sup>11</sup>

Most of the substantive revisions in the 2000 version of “Called to Be Neighbors and Witnesses” can be understood as attempts to clarify—that is, struggle with—the implications of the evangelism side of the Methodist dialectic. Most notably, a paragraph is added about the “missionary mandate” of Matthew 28:20 (p. 223),<sup>12</sup> which picks up on the denomination’s mission statement about making disciples of Jesus Christ in the 1996 *Book of Discipline* (1996 *BD*, p. 114). This follows the paragraph in the 1980 version that calls Christians “to witness to him [Christ] as Lord to all people,” which we examined above. The new paragraph includes the point that “As disciples of Jesus, our outreach draws upon the gospel call to be even more than neighbors” (p. 223). In other words, Christian witness encompasses more than the social justice side of the classic Methodist dialectic.

The original (1980) version of “Called to Be Neighbors and Witnesses” included some theological assessment of the significance and purpose of other religions though it did not rise to the level of a systematic theology. For instance, negative terms such as “non-Christians” and “nonbelievers” are rejected because they reflect inappropriate “attitudes [that] have developed out of confidence in the ultimate truth of our own faith, and from ignorance of and insensitivity to other faiths, to the truth they contain, and to the profound meaning and purpose they give to the lives of people” (p. 115).

The 2000 version of the resolution expends considerable energy assessing the significance and purpose of other religions. A significant qualifying word is added to the original phrase quoted above, which now refers “to the truth they [other religions] *may* contain” (compare 1980 *BR*, p. 115 and 2000 *BR*, p. 222). This qualifier softens the original claim that other religions *do* contain truth. Another softening qualifier is added to the statement “Christians

witness to God in Jesus Christ in the confidence that here all people *can* find salvation" (compare 1980 *BR*, p. 117 and 2000 *BR*, p. 224), rather than all people will or must find salvation in Christ. The 2000 version of "Called to Be Neighbors and Witnesses" also includes statements about receiving grace from a stranger (2000 *BR*, p. 222), "the possibility of sharing mutually beneficial *spiritual gifts*" with others (a substantive change from the phrase "mutually beneficial *insights*" in the original version; compare 1980 *BR*, p. 119 and 2000 *BR*, p. 225), and "guidance as we yearn to proclaim the Savior whom we know among people who believe in other saviors and lords" (2000 *BR*, p. 228; note the capitalization of "Savior" in reference to Christ but not for "other saviors"). Also, a statement in the 1980 version about the purpose of dialogue—"To engage in interreligious dialogue is not to say that any religion is all right just so you have one" (1980 *BR*, p. 124)—is revised as follows in the 2000 version: "To engage in interreligious dialogue is neither to endorse nor to deny the faith of other people" (2000 *BR*, p. 229).

The 2000 version of "Called to Be Neighbors and Witnesses" also adds two statements about the work of the Holy Spirit: United Methodists must ask whether they have "participated in promoting the work of the Holy Spirit" in their relations with adherents of other faiths (p. 223) and must "seek to learn how the Holy Spirit works among all peoples of the world, especially among those in other religious traditions" (p. 228). This is not identified as a Wesleyan inclusivist theme.

Thus, at the 2000 General Conference, the theological underpinnings of the evangelism side of the Methodist dialectic in "Called to Be Neighbors and Witnesses" were meticulously edited and amended. This focus on evangelism is consistent with the tenor of the 2000 Conference, which added evangelism requirements to the clergy candidacy processes,<sup>13</sup> adopted a resolution titled "Emphasize Evangelism" (2000 *BR*, pp. 817-18), and featured a sermon by the bishop from Liberia that prioritized evangelization over social justice.<sup>14</sup> Strong criticisms of the denomination's lack of attention to evangelism had arisen in the years since the original (1980) resolution.<sup>15</sup> As the keynote speaker at the 1998 national gathering of the Confessing Movement within the UMC put it, "The heresy of universalism has performed a frontal lobotomy on Methodism's evangelistic urgency."<sup>16</sup>

The next revision to "Called to Be Neighbors and Witnesses" came at the 2008 General Conference with the addition of a paragraph that draws explicitly upon "John Wesley's insistence on prevenient grace" and elaborates on the statements about the work of the Holy Spirit in the world in the 2000 version of the resolution (2008 *BR*, p. 286). Here it is stated that Christians give witness in a world "where people have already experienced the love of God in good measure through the activity of the Holy Spirit. Because we understand prevenient grace that 'goes before,' we know that the activity of the Holy Spirit is at work in the church and in the world, in the lives of all persons, including those of other religious traditions." The last sentence of this new paragraph reads: "A large part of our task, and foundational to interreligious dialogue and cooperation, is to learn to discern the Spirit's work." The 2008 revision thus continued the 2000 trend of bolstering the Wesleyan inclusivism in "Called to Be Neighbors and Witnesses."

The 2008 General Conference was held during "a critical juncture" for the denomination, according to a pre-conference statement prepared by all the general secretaries of the UMC, who affirmed both sides of the Methodist dialectic: "By joining heart and hand, we assert personal religion, evangelical witness and Christian social action are reciprocal and mutually reinforcing."<sup>17</sup> Even so, the word "evangelism" continued to be mentioned only once in "Called to Be Neighbors and Witnesses," in the context of the need to think about it "in new ways" (2008 *BR*, p. 289).

Returning now to the UMC's approach to Judaism specifically, the 1996 resolution "Building New Bridges in Hope" (1996 *BR*, pp. 189-97) again emphasizes the importance of interreligious dialogue, citing the World Council of Churches almost as often as UMC sources. The resolution does not mention the word "evangelism," but it does identify the tension created by "evangelization": "Essential to the Christian faith is the call to proclaim the good news of Jesus Christ to all people. . . . Yet we also understand that the issues of the evangelization of persons of other faiths, and of Jews in particular, are often sensitive and difficult." The resolution includes several nuanced statements about Judaism. For instance the sentence, "As Christians, we stand firm in our belief that Jesus was sent by God as the Christ to redeem all people, and that in Christ the biblical covenant has been made radically new," is followed quickly by a disavowal of any notion that the New Covenant has superseded the Old. Again, "As Christians, we are clearly called to witness to the gospel of Jesus Christ in every age and place. At the same time, we believe that God has continued, and continues today, to work through Judaism and the Jewish people." The resolution also admits that "While we as Christians respond faithfully to the call to proclaim the gospel in all places, we can never presume to know the full extent of God's work in the world, and we recognize the reality of God's activity outside the Christian church," an implicit appeal to Wesleyan inclusivism (pp. 193, 194).

This resolution prompted the publication of a joint commentary by the General Secretary of the UMC's General Commission on Christian Unity and Interreligious Concerns and the Director of Interfaith Affairs of the Anti-Defamation League. Reflecting on the section of the resolution that begins "While we as Christians respond faithfully to the call to proclaim the gospel in all places," the ADL official cuts to the heart of the matter for Jews: "The question considered by this principle is very crucial in the relationship of Christians and Jews. It reminds us of the word 'evangelism' which brings great uneasiness to Jewish hearts. Through the centuries, evangelism has been a way by which Christians tried to convert and persecute Jews in the Western world. As Jews, we need to understand the exact meaning of evangelism." Acknowledging the Christian's duty "to proclaim his or her belief in Jesus and his message," the ADL official discloses that "at the same time, I am uneasy about the possibility of this sharing as an attempt to convert me from my Jewish tradition."<sup>18</sup>

The UMC official responds by confessing the denomination's struggle with the evangelism side of the Methodist dialectic (as alluded at the outset of this paper) and also by implicitly appealing to Wesleyan inclusivism: "The group that developed the principles outlined in ["Building New Bridges in Hope"] struggled long and hard to find ways to honor their belief that the universality of the Gospel can still be proclaimed, while acknowledging in humility that salvation belongs to God alone and that we can never presume to know the full extent of God's work in the world."<sup>19</sup>

The 2008 resolution "Strengthening Bridges" returns to the evangelization question that was broached in "Building New Bridges in Hope": "The United Methodist Church holds that the time for action on this issue is now, and because of the long history of Christian hostility toward Jews, the initiative clearly lies with the Church." Citing the ADL official's concerns in the joint commentary on "Building New Bridges in Hope," this resolution confesses: "That our lack of clarity on this point is a break in the bridge between United Methodism and the Jewish community is certain" (2008 *BR*, pp. 304-5).

"Strengthening Bridges" appeals to a Vatican authority who states that "mission as understood as conversion from idolatry to the living and true God . . . does not apply and cannot be applied to the Jews." The resolution "reject[s] any and all forms of evangelism which are

coercive in their nature, violent in their means, or anti-Semitic in their intent.” That said, the resolution maintains that “our mission is to make disciples of Jesus Christ. This mission invites us to bear witness to Christ’s light. In this context, The United Methodist Church neither makes the Jews a unique focus of our witness-bearing, nor excludes Jews from our longing that all persons may of their own volition believe in Jesus Christ our Savior and Lord.” The resolution promises that such witness will be “winsome and respectful of the culture and religious convictions of others” (2008 *BR*, pp. 305, 306).

The UMC’s resolutions regarding Judaism reflect the same struggle with evangelism that we see in the evolution of “Called to Be Neighbors and Witnesses.” Great angst is expressed over proselytization/conversion/evangelization, especially surrounding the 1996 resolution “Building New Bridges in Hope.” Yet in the 2008 resolution “Strengthening Bridges,” the word “evangelism” is used for the first time and Jews are not excluded from the traditional understanding of evangelism as making disciples of Christ.

The key resolution about Islam, “Our Muslim Neighbors,” was adopted by the 1992 General Conference (1992 *BR*, pp. 606-12). The importance of interreligious dialogue is once again touted, but, surprisingly given the reticence of the time, the word “evangelism” appears in this resolution in a pointed affirmation of both sides of the classic Methodist dialectic: “We recommend that the General Commission on Christian Unity and Interreligious Concerns as it initiates and engages in dialogue with representatives of Islam remain mindful of the evangelism imperatives of the gospel and the gospel mandate to seek justice for those who are oppressed” (p. 611). Even so, the “evangelism imperatives of the gospel” are not elaborated beyond the simple admonition to witness to one’s Christian faith. The amended 2004 version of “Our Muslim Neighbors” adds an eschewal of any proselytizing motive for dialogue: “Mutual respect requires the church to recognize and affirm that, although individuals may move from one religion to another, we do not enter into formal interfaith dialogue with the intent to convert the Muslim community to Christianity” (2004 *BR*, p. 800).<sup>20</sup>

### III. Appealing to Wesleyan Inclusivism

During the formative years of the United Methodist Church, the productive tension of the classic Methodist dialectic between evangelism and social justice had lost its focus. I have argued that the UMC adopted “dialogue” as the integrating rubric for the Methodist dialectic in its approach to other faith communities. The broad notion of dialogue was introduced with the 1972 General Conference resolution “Dialogue between Jews and Christians,” while the particulars of the dialogue approach were refined in documents prepared by the Ecumenical and Interreligious Concerns Division of the Board of Global Ministries in 1977 and 1980 and especially in the 1980 General Conference resolution “Called to Be Neighbors and Witnesses.” The evangelism side of the Methodist dialectic was interpreted to mean the exchange of witness to the truth and wisdom found in each faith community conducted in a relationship of mutual acceptance, openness, and respect. The notion of—even the word—“evangelism” became problematic and proselytization was rejected. In framing this new approach to other faith communities, the UMC drew primarily upon the World Council of Churches and other leading voices in the interreligious dialogue movement.

The meticulously parsed denominational resolutions and documents we have considered reveal the UMC’s struggle to find an acceptable balance between a traditional Wesleyan and Methodist understanding of evangelism and the new dialogue approach. Further research is

needed to trace this struggle at various levels of the denomination. I have heard it, for instance, in the uncertainty expressed by some seminarians and congregational lay leaders regarding the appropriate content of their Christian witness in interreligious contexts. The struggle with evangelism may also account for a pattern of emphasizing the social justice side of the Methodist dialectic in interreligious relations, particularly with Muslims.<sup>21</sup> I was interested to hear from one of our plenary speakers that the British and Irish branches of Methodism seem to have a similar struggle with evangelism, in his words exhibiting a “weak orthopraxis.”<sup>22</sup> This poses another research topic: How do we account for the struggle on both sides of the Atlantic?

We can detect a trajectory of increasing appeal to a traditional Wesleyan and Methodist understanding of evangelism in UMC resolutions over the years. For instance, the three versions of “Called to Be Neighbors and Witnesses” progressively, though rather timidly, lay claim to the Wesleyan inclusivist theme of God’s (or the Holy Spirit’s) activity in the world, explicitly identifying this as Wesleyan only in 2008 and then only in a single paragraph.

I suggest that a bolder and more systematic appeal to Wesleyan inclusivism may hold the key to easing the UMC’s struggle with the evangelism side of the Methodist dialectic. As Philip Meadows explains, Wesleyan inclusivism acknowledges “that the scope of God’s presence and activity extends throughout the world to all human beings, but [it also claims] that the possibility of salvation cannot be understood without reference to the person of Christ.”<sup>23</sup> The “universal possibility of salvation” stems not from the particularities of any religion (including Christianity), but only through the “particularity of Christ.”<sup>24</sup> Meadows agrees that Christians are “beholden” to engage in interreligious dialogue, that they should in fact “read mission dialogically.” But as he goes on to say, “Such a stance does not, however, detract from the task of evangelism, that is, inviting all people to embark on the more excellent way and to become followers of Jesus Christ.”<sup>25</sup>

Meadows knows that adopting this Wesleyan inclusivism in bold fashion “will mean facing the criticism of all inclusivist options, that of interpreting other religions through Christian categories and, therefore, denying their own ultimate claims and metaphysical grounds.”<sup>26</sup> However, if pluralist sentiments borrowed from the interreligious dialogue movement initially created the UMC’s struggle with a traditional Wesleyan and Methodist understanding of evangelism, then a bolder appeal to Wesleyan inclusivism may ease that struggle. Perhaps a new appreciation of Wesleyan resources for interreligious relations will be found on both sides of the UMC’s conservative-liberal divide.<sup>27</sup> My experience with UMC seminarians suggests that an inclusivist approach to other religions might satisfy conservatives while not unduly putting off liberals despite the “scandal of particularity” it could represent to the latter.<sup>28</sup>

Consider again the statement that was introduced into “Called to Be Neighbors and Witnesses” in 2000: “To engage in interreligious dialogue is neither to endorse nor to deny the faith of other people” (2000 *BR*, p. 229). While this reflects the pluralist value of respectful mutual exchange of witness through dialogue, it also obviates the traditional Christian litmus test for all truth claims, namely, the revelation of God in Jesus Christ. Wesleyan inclusivism retains that traditional litmus test without devolving into an uncharitable exclusivism.<sup>29</sup>

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1. My thanks to Paul Burnam and David Powell of the Methodist Theological School in Ohio’s Dickhaut Library for their expert navigation of the resources of the United Methodist Church, and to Stephen Zeller of Trinity Lutheran Seminary for his valuable research assistance.

2. Dana L. Robert and Douglas D. Tzan, “Traditions and Transitions in Mission Thought,” in *The Oxford Handbook of Methodist Studies*, ed. William J. Abraham and James E. Kirby (Oxford: Oxford

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University Press, 2009), 436, 446. On the conjunctive nature of the Wesleyan heritage, see Paul Wesley Chilcote, *Recapturing the Wesleys' Vision: An Introduction to the Faith of John and Charles Wesley* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2004).

3. Robert and Tzan, "Traditions and Transitions in Mission Thought," 437, 438.
4. The phrase "other faith communities" is a preferred designation for non-Christian religions in the General Conference resolution "Called to Be Neighbors and Witnesses" (discussed below).
5. *The Book of Resolutions* "collects in one volume all current and official social policies and other resolutions adopted by the General Conference of The United Methodist Church" and serves as "an official guide from our denomination to be used responsibly for reference, encouragement, study, and support" (2012 *BR*, pp. 25, 26).
6. This resolution is given alternate titles in various sources: "A Statement on Interreligious Dialogue: Jews and Christians" (1972 *GCJ*, vol. 2, pp. 1607-11), "Bridge in Hope: Jewish-Christian Dialogue" (<http://archive-us.com/page/549171/2012-10-29/><http://www.cjcr.us/dialogika-resources/documents-and-statements/protestant-churches/na/methodist/690-umc72apr>), accessed April 6, 2013), and "Jewish-Christian Relationships" (an apparent reference in the 1980 *GCJ*, vol. 2, p. 1316). "Dialogue between Jews and Christians" does not appear in the *Book of Resolutions* after 1972.
7. See Alan Race, *Christians and Religious Pluralism: Patterns in the Christian Theology of Religions* (London: SCM, 1983); Don A. Pittman, Ruben L. F. Habito, and Terry C. Muck, eds., *Ministry and Theology in Global Perspective: Contemporary Challenges for the Church* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996), 54-61. For a critical appraisal of the typology, see Terry C. Muck, "Instrumentality, Complexity, and Reason: A Christian Approach to Religions," *Buddhist-Christian Studies* 22 (2002): 115-21.
8. Diana L. Eck, *Encountering God: A Spiritual Journey from Bozeman to Banaras* (Boston: Beacon, 1993), 168.
9. The phrase "pluralistic world" is used at one point in the general sense of "diverse" (1980 *BR*, p. 116).
10. Eck, *Encountering God*, 168.
11. "Wesley's emphasis on divine revelation is grounded in the providential presence and activity of the Spirit in *all creation* and in *all human beings*, to flourish and to save." Philip R. Meadows, "'Candidates for Heaven': Wesleyan Resources for a Theology of Religions," *Wesleyan Theological Journal* 35,1 (Spring 2000): 104; emphasis in original.
12. Although not cited, the resolution's exegesis of Matthew 28:20 seems to rely on Jonathan Lewis, ed., *World Mission: An Analysis of the World Christian Movement*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Portland, OR: CBF Mission Services, 1994), 3-11.
13. "Evangelism as Alternate Route Requirement for Candidates" (<http://gc2000.org/pets/CAL/INFO/c1244i.asp>); "Evangelism as Requirement for Local Pastor Candidate" (<http://gc2000.org/pets/CAL/INFO/c1203i.asp>); "Evangelism as Requirement for Candidates" (<http://gc2000.org/pets/CAL/INFO/c1202i.asp>); all accessed April 22, 2013.
14. Arthur F. Kulah, "Authority for What?", 2000 *DCA*, p. 1745.
15. See Robert and Tzan, "Traditions and Transitions in Mission Thought," 440, 441-42.
16. "Confessing Movement Focuses Criticism on United Methodist Church," United Methodist News Service, April 21, 1998, archived at [http://archives.umc.org/umns/news\\_archive1998.asp?ptid=&story=%7B932836E0-5967-4220-82AD-2AC45591F135%7D&mid=3370](http://archives.umc.org/umns/news_archive1998.asp?ptid=&story=%7B932836E0-5967-4220-82AD-2AC45591F135%7D&mid=3370), accessed April 20, 2013.
17. "Commentary: Church Builds Vision for Addressing Critical Issues facing United Methodists, World," United Methodist News Service, October 9, 2007, available at <http://www.umc.org/site/apps/nlnet/content3.aspx?c=lwL4KnN1LtH&b=3082929&ct=4507939&notoc=1#.UXMZEUrT31U>, accessed April 27, 2013.

18. Leon Klenicki and Bruce W. Robbins, “Building New Bridges in Hope: A Commentary on the United Methodist Statement on Christian-Jewish Relations” (New York: Anti-Defamation League, n.d.), 12.
19. Ibid., 13. ‘Building New Bridges in Hope’ was either deleted or allowed to expire at the 2012 General Conference (2012 *BR*, pp. 1013-16).
20. ‘Our Muslim Neighbors’ was either deleted or allowed to expire at the 2012 General Conference (2012 *BR*, pp. 1013-16).
21. See, e.g., these examples from the Northern Illinois Conference: “Report: Muslim-United Methodist Interfaith Dinner a Success,” March 31, 2009, [http://www.umcnic.org/n\\_report\\_muslimunited\\_methodist\\_interfaith\\_dinner\\_a\\_.php](http://www.umcnic.org/n_report_muslimunited_methodist_interfaith_dinner_a_.php); Susan Hogan, “Muslim Leaders Honor United Methodists,” [http://www.umc.org/site/apps/nlnet/content3.aspx?c=lwL4KnN1LtH&b=5259669&ct=8500535&tr=y&a\\_uid=6603102](http://www.umc.org/site/apps/nlnet/content3.aspx?c=lwL4KnN1LtH&b=5259669&ct=8500535&tr=y&a_uid=6603102), July 8, 2010; “News: Community with Our Muslim Neighbors,” [http://www.umcnic.org/k\\_newsdetail.php?id=993](http://www.umcnic.org/k_newsdetail.php?id=993), April 6, 2011; all accessed June 27, 2013.
22. Stephen Skuce, “Authentically Wesleyan: Towards a Complete Wesleyan Engagement with People of Other Faiths,” August 12, 2013 plenary address.
23. Meadows, “‘Candidates for Heaven’,” 120.
24. Ibid., 126.
25. Ibid., 128. Cf. Randy L. Maddox, “Wesley and the Question of Truth or Salvation through Other Religions,” *Wesleyan Theological Journal* 27,1-2 (Spring-Fall 1992): 18: “It is also important to note that Wesley would not see this possibility of salvation among the heathen as in any way lessening the urgency of their evangelization. . . .”
26. Meadows, “‘Candidates for Heaven’,” 128-29.
27. On Wesleyan resources for interreligious relations, see Rebekah L. Miles, “John Wesley as Interreligious Resource: Would You Take This Man to an Interfaith Dialogue?” in *A Great Commission: Christian Hope and Religious Diversity: Papers in Honour of Kenneth Cracknell on His 65<sup>th</sup> Birthday*, ed. Martin Forward, Stephen Plant, and Susan White (Oxford, UK: Peter Lang, 2000), 61-75; cf. D. Lyle Dabney, “Pneumatology in the Methodist Tradition,” in *The Oxford Handbook of Methodist Studies*, ed. William J. Abraham and James E. Kirby (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 573-86.
28. See Meadows, “‘Candidates for Heaven’,” 120, n. 68.
29. Diana Eck summarizes the exclusivist approach to other religions in this way: “Our own community, our tradition, our understanding of reality, our encounter with God, is the one and only truth, excluding all others.” Eck, *Encountering God*, 168.