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Global Ministries Holds Mission Initiatives Training at New Atlanta Headquarters

The United Methodist General Board of Global Ministries on Nov. 9, 2016 held its first Mission Initiatives staff training at its new global mission center in Atlanta, Ga. The objective of the Mission Initiative is "primarily about planting and nurturing a Wesleyan movement in a region where there is no or a limited Wesleyan presence."

Mission Initiatives oversees the planting of new faith-based communities that include housing churches, Bible studies, and small groups. The purpose of this training was to expose new and old staff to the nature of the program.



Thomas Kemper talking to Mande Muyombo at the Mission Initiative Training at the New Atlanta Headquarters. Photo By: Cynthia Mack

Global Ministries General Secretary Thomas Kemper kicked off the training with a message of hope from the Book of Lamentations. Held on the day after the 2016 U.S. presidential election, Kemper during his devotion reminded participants about God's faithfulness, saying, "We rely on God, who is our rock [and] who renews his mercies every morning."

During the training, Kemper's presentation focused on the Theology of Mission and Mission Initiatives, with an underlying concept of "mission from everywhere to everywhere." This invites us to participate in missio Dei, a concept that reflects the role of Mission Initiatives as it participates in God's mission by planting new Wesleyan movements around the world.

Kemper acknowledged that "Holy tensions" are inevitable with Mission Initiatives due to factors such as cultural differences. However, he reminded staff that "we are stronger together" as a mission agency and privileged to participate in God's mission, which makes all possible.



Rev. Dr. Arun Jones speaking to program areas at the Mission Initiative Training. Photo By: Cynthia Mack

The guest speaker, the Rev. Dr. Arun Jones, associate professor of World Evangelism at Candler School of Theology, added another dimension to the concept of Holy tension as he talked about the challenges and opportunities of evangelism in the 21st century.

Evangelism is part of the mission of God, said Jones, adding that it invites us to witness while making disciples of Christ. The challenge of evangelism is learning to live in three types of tensions described by Jones. They are: 1) the tension between already and not yet; 2) between particular and universal, and; 3) between apostolic and the congregation.

In the first category, we share the good news about Jesus and the kingdom of God that is present the moment we share the Gospel. The yet to come is because we are still expecting Jesus' return.

The particular and universal is based on the idea that Christian traditions were adopted from a particular context and people that are now practiced universally.

Apostolic are people who talk to others about their faith and draw them into the congregation, said Dr. Jones, adding that a congregation is a group of people who have been introduced to Christ — a community of support where nurturing takes place.

Therefore, in going into a community as a Mission Initiative, he urged we recognize that we are ushering in the kingdom of God, not by ourselves, but through the power of God in the particular context.

Dr. Jones has a multicultural background and experience, born of an Indian mother and American father, and married to a Pilipino. He illustrated what Holy tension can look like. In an interview, he said that being of a multicultural background can be a blessing because, "home becomes everywhere. You're never at home, but you're always at home." The grief, he said, is the sense of always wishing to be somewhere else, because home has now become everywhere and not just one place, which translates to the Mission Initiative experience.



Watch highlights from the Mission Initiative Training