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## Making Disciples of All Nations: Evangelism in the African Context

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The Africa Evangelism Summit, held in Maputo, Mozambique, December 4–6, 2016, brought together African leaders—pastors, theologians, and teachers—from Methodist-related theological schools in Africa as well as church planters and missionaries from General Board of Global Ministries Mission Initiatives.

In attendance at the summit were representatives from Global Ministries, Foundation for Evangelism, Discipleship Ministries, Church and Society, Higher Education and Ministry, and The United Methodist Church in Mozambique.

Also present was Bishop Joaquina Nhanala of the Mozambique Episcopal area. She opened the summit with assertions that the seminar should offer something to apply, something practical. She addressed the critical and varied roles of laity in the evangelism movement and their empowerment. The Bishop also stressed the role of Christian education in the movement, along with the necessity of showing people that the Church cares about their problems, i.e. HIV. She addressed the spiritual and day-to-day challenges of evangelism.



Photo by Aliado S. Zunguza

The 2016 summit is a result of a vital partnership between Global Ministries and the Foundation for Evangelism in advancing the United Methodist Connection made possible through strategic conversations between General Secretary Thomas Kemper and President Jane Boatwright Wood. This partnership will continue to grow as the two agencies seek to equip local evangelists and offer opportunities to the global United Methodist Church to learn about best practices of evangelism that are critical for church growth in other regions of the world.

A goal of the 2016 summit was to equip African evangelists of The United Methodist Church with Wesleyan principles.

Guest speaker, Dr. John Wesley Zwononondiita Kurewa, E. Stanley Jones Professor of Evangelism at Africa University, Mutare, Zimbabwe, focused on five characteristics of the Wesleyan movement for the 21st century in Africa. These characteristics are that leaders underwent an evangelical experience, preached a gospel of free grace, established Methodist societies, nurtured the converted, and deployed lay people to transform society.

"I celebrate the connections that were made, particularly those between the practitioners and seminaries that will no doubt blossom and help to equip practitioners with resources to succeed in the practice of Wesleyan evangelism across the African continent. While the story captures so well Dr. Kurewa's message for the day, there is simply no way to distill into a simple article the impact this man of God has had on the Church, Africa, Zimbabwe, and Africa University. We are so honored that he was willing to share his expertise with those gathered for this event" said Jane Wood, president of the Foundation for Evangelism.

### The Spirit of Giving

"Dr. Kurewa's reframing of evangelism in the African context put into dialogue African cultural, experiences and practices with the five distinctive features of the Wesleyan movement pointing out the spirit of *ubuntu* in approaching evangelism," shared Rev. Dr. Mande Muyombo, Executive Director, Global Mission Connection for Global Ministries.



Photo By Rev. Joseph Bleck

Dr. Kurewa illustrated his point by telling a story from his own ministry. Two young people were sent to serve in their community as part of an evangelism program. In one of the homes the youth visited, they found a frail elderly man whom they learned had not eaten for days. One of the youth offered his money to buy food at the market while another cooked the meal. The man then ate the food, bathed, and changed into clean clothes.

After regaining enough strength to engage in a conversation, the man asked the young people a question, "Who sent you here?" To Dr. Kurewa, this is the point of entrance for evangelism. The young people shared that Jesus sent them to care for their neighbors in need. Touched by their actions, the man showed up at church the following Sunday, where the youth gladly welcomed him and introduced him to the congregation.

Evangelism in the African context means learning to meet the needs of the poor and suffering, then preaching and trusting God for the transformation.

"[The] poor are being robbed by healers and prophets; we do not need a gospel of 'purity' [rather] a gospel of healing," said Dr. Kurewa, while speaking about challenges the mainline churches face today because of fast-growing non-denominational churches.

### Emergence of the African Evangelism Summit

In 2015, Global Ministries, in partnership with some key African Evangelism Practitioners and Discipleship Resources International (a ministry of Discipleship Ministries), published a book entitled, *Evangelization and Church Growth in the African Context*. The book was followed by a consultation on Evangelism in Africa, held at Africa University in Mutare, Zimbabwe in February 2015. There, issues related to evangelization and church growth in Africa were discussed.

The event was also an opportunity for African United Methodist leaders to reflect on the need to develop a new theology of mission that will move the church towards being self-supporting, self-governing and self-propagating. One of the results of the consultation was the realization that more events of the same kind were needed.

### Looking Ahead

Building on the success of this year's summit sets the stage for two more summits dedicated to Wesleyan evangelism in the African context. The group decided to produce a collection of booklets for training local pastors and leaders in Volume 2 of the book: *Evangelization and Church Growth in the African Context*.

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