

A Brief Overview of the Wesleyan Holiness Consortium

[Jonathan S. Raymond](#)
Trinity Western University

Presented at the first WHC University/College Presidents Meeting
Washington D.C. – January 2009

I want to thank Kevin Mannoia for this opportunity to share some background information about the Wesleyan Holiness Consortium and its importance for Wesleyan heritage, Wesleyan oriented colleges and universities. So I offer this brief overview.

Over six years ago (late 2002), over breakfast together, three friends carried on with a seminal conversation on “the influence of the Holiness message on the global Church over the past century.” The three friends were Kevin Mannoia, David Bundy, and Don Dayton. From their discussion grew the Wesleyan Holiness Study Group, a meeting of approximately forty scholars from initially seven and eventually thirteen historically Wesleyan Holiness oriented denominations. What followed was the Wesleyan Holiness Consortium, the Wesley Holiness Manifesto, events for pastoral resourcing and networking, regional Holiness Summits focusing on Holiness preaching and inspiration, and many other initiatives, in the words of John Wesley, “to spread Scriptural Holiness across the land.”

In May 2004, The Wesleyan Holiness Study Group was brought together as The Wesleyan Holiness Study Project at Azusa Pacific University. Behind this initiative the blessing and financial support of denominational leaders. Three academic representatives gathered at APU from each denomination including Nazarene, Free Methodist, Brethren in Christ, Missionary, The Salvation Army, Evangelical Friends and Church of God. The WHSG met four times over four years adding to the groups several more denominations including Four Square, International Pentecostal Holiness, Shield of Faith, Church of God in Christ, Church of God Cleveland, and Christian & Missionary Alliance.

This inaugural meeting in May 2004 served to take a global and historical view of Holiness, and its basic issues and themes leading up to the present day. A three year working agenda was crafted a some shared consensus on major themes, final outcomes, writing assignments and next steps. Study group members agreed to meet again in a year's time. The study group's work continued over a four year period with some loss, gain, and growth in participants including eventually 40 Wesleyan academics over the four years.

Out of the four years of study and dialogue grew the Wesleyan Holiness Consortium and a three pronged, integrated initiative (movement) including: 1. continuing Academic Reflection, Writing, and Dialogue (WHSG); 2. Pastoral Resourcing and Networking of national and regional denominational leaders; and 3) a focus on Preaching and Inspiration through Wesleyan Holiness Summits.

Academic Reflection, Writing, & Dialogue

The annual gathering of academic & scholars generated a modest, but engaging body of literature reflecting contemporary thinking on the matter of Holiness. Participants read and discussed papers on a range of topics and worked in small groups to develop and discuss consensus position statements. The fruit of their labors include three significant products:

- “The Wesleyan Holiness Manifesto” – a two page document that describes the crisis we face today, the message we have, and the action we may take regarding Holiness. (Feb.2006)
- “Fresh Eyes on Holiness: Living Out The Holiness Manifesto” – a discussion of seven Dimensions of Holiness: the Essence of holiness, the Catholicity of Holiness, Holiness and Culture, Holiness and Community, Holiness and Social Concern, and the challenge of Communicating Holiness. (March 2007)

- The publication by Eerdmans of a book entitled *The Holiness Manifesto*. The book is a collection of several papers written by participants and edited by Kevin Mannoia and Don Thorsen (January 2008)

The first two products of the study group may be found on the Wesleyan Holiness Consortium's website: <http://holinessandunity.org> . Other essays written for the study group discussions are also listed on the website under "monthly article". The website is rich in a variety of innovations promoting the work of the WHC including the publication of the Wesleyan Holiness Manifesto document in English, Spanish, Chinese, and Korean.

Pastoral Resourcing and Networking

Not long after the first study group meeting in May 2004, the practical ministry of networking with regional leaders (Superintendents, District Superintendents, Divisional Commanders, etc.) began an initiative to reach-out to local pastors to extend the influence and benefit of the work being done by the Wesleyan Holiness Study Group. The Southern California Regional Leaders Network planned the first Holiness Pastors' Day. This key event was held in conjunction with the second meeting of the study group in May 2005. A milestone event, titled Holiness in the 21st Century, it brought together and reunited the black and white Holiness movement and elements of Pentecostal and Revivalist Holiness groups and reestablished common ground in the Wesleyan tradition. This first Holiness Pastors' Day success set a model. It occasioned future gatherings of like nature in February 2006 (Pomona, CA), March 2007 (Ontario, CA), September 2007 (Indianapolis, IN), April 2008 (Pasadena), September 2008 (Anderson, IN) and a Young Holiness Leaders' Hang Out gathering (August 2006).

Preaching and Inspiration

The most recent innovation within the work of the consortium was discovered initially among Nazarene local leaders. They initiated local events organized by local leaders.

Two Holiness Summits provided preaching and inspiration centered on Holiness for local people and area pastors (Circleville, Ohio; Colorado Springs, CO).

Sustained Leadership: Vision, Initiative, and Support

Several realities come into focus when looking back over the past six years. There is the reality that -

1. God is at work renewing his church. “Behold; I will do a new thing;” – Isaiah 43:19
Where in the church there is atrophy, unraveling, decline, lost ground, diminishment or neglect, God is known to raise-up a new, fresh means of grace, a renewed way forward, a reviving of human agency for Kingdom ends.

2. A collective resolve to embrace a vision, take initiative, and provide support was embraced by national, denominational leaders brought together in Dallas, Texas in September 2006 to consider the emergent outcomes of the Wesleyan Holiness Study Group and to form the Wesleyan Holiness Consortium. This leadership group agreed to continue the spread of “Scriptural Holiness Across the Land”. They did this 1) by facilitating the ongoing theological dialogue among groups with common heritage and a common message; 2) by supporting events that would gather young leaders and others around the idea of Holiness; and 3) by encouraging and supporting the multiplication of regional networks, pastor’s days, and local summits centering on Holiness. They agreed to give themselves to unity within and among participating churches, to lift up a Holiness voice to the broader Church, and to promote the centrality and missional importance of Holiness to the future of the Church.

3. There is no master plan. There has been no grand strategy. There is only the ongoing, dynamic of the Holy Spirit’s guidance and direction. In that dynamic there is the calling of a growing number of persons to obedience, consecration and fidelity of response to the leading of the Holy Spirit and a reawakening to the rich Wesleyan Holiness tradition which is ours in both orthodoxy and orthopraxy for the 21st century.

4. There is human agency. God delights in pouring out his grace upon the world through human agency. The saints at the core of this renewal movement include David Bundy, Don Thorsen, and many others. But I would be greatly remiss if I did not mention the persevering, sustaining servant leadership of Kevin Mannoia. His vision, focus, and openness to the Spirit's leading has been the central thread throughout the developing tapestry. As central protagonist, organizer, and chairman of the Wesleyan Holiness Consortium, Kevin Mannoia is an exemplary proponent of fidelity to the Great Commission that takes seriously the *via salutis* of a full salvation in Christ. As one participant in the Wesleyan Holiness Study Group who has admired your vision and drive, I want to say thank you to you Kevin for your faithfulness and inspiration.

Finally, there is much that CCCU Academic faith communities (colleges and universities) can do and may benefit by in this Wesleyan Holiness initiative. To name just a few, we can -

- Make holiness and wholeness a theme for the year on our campuses.
- Get the Holiness Manifesto book into our book stores.
- Encourage discussion of the Holiness Manifesto and Fresh Eyes on Holiness documents in specific courses.
- Speak in chapel on the topic ourselves.
- Those of us who have a seminary within our colleges or universities, we can support pastoral development and seminary enrolment recruitment through encouraging our seminary faculty to be involved and supportive of the pastoral resourcing and networking events in our regions.

These are but a few ideas that I am presently engaged in at Trinity Western University, a university that does not have much of a Wesleyan heritage or constituency. I am sure you can think of other means of engagement. As colleges and universities founded and grounded in the Wesleyan Holiness tradition, we have much to reclaim and the Wesleyan

Holiness Study Group and Consortium can help us find our way back and our way forward.

JSR

January 29, 2009