

## Holiness for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century

God is holy and calls us to be a holy people.

Holiness means, in the first place, what is peculiar to God. God loves without need or compulsion. God's holy love takes shape in, among and through us in the life and teachings, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord. God continues to work, giving life, hope and salvation through the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, drawing us into God's own holy, loving life. God transforms us, delivering us from sin, idolatry, bondage, and self-centeredness to love and serve God, others and the entire creation. So are we renewed in the image of God, revealed in Jesus Christ.

God's call to holiness has been proclaimed throughout history. The essence of holiness is Christ-likeness. It is the culture of God's Kingdom, engaging all the cultures of the world and powerful in drawing all peoples and nations to God. Holiness is both a gift and a response, personal and communal, ethical and missional, requiring reflection and action.

Holiness for Christians is not achieving a final perfection that entitles one to be legalistic or judgmental. It is not the pursuit of an exclusive, private state of being better than others.

God's call to holiness finds expression in balancing biblical priorities such as:

- justification *and* sanctification;
- faith *and* repentance;
- evangelism *and* discipleship;
- the sanctity of the church *and* personal purity;
- social *and* personal ethics;
- compassionate ministries *and* solidarity with the poor, and advocacy for equality, justice, reconciliation, and peace;
- social activism *and* contemplative spirituality;
- care for people *and* care for God's creation;

- formal observances *and* other means of grace;
- evidence of the fruit of the Spirit *and* expressions of the gifts of the Spirit;
- character *and* conduct;
- consolation *and* healing; and
- dignity in suffering *and* triumph over powers of evil.

God wants us to be, think, speak, and act in the world in a Christ-like manner. We invite all to embrace God's call to:

- be filled with all the fullness of God in Christ—living lives that are devout, pure, and reconciled, thereby being Jesus' counterculture in witness to the world;
- exercise for the common good a beautiful and effective array of ministries and callings, according to the diversity of the gifts of the Spirit;
- live in full allegiance to Jesus Christ—Spirit-endowed co-workers for the kingdom of God;
- live as a faithful covenant people, building accountable community, growing up into Jesus Christ, embodying the spirit of God's law in holy love; and
- care for the earth, God's gift in trust to us, working in faith, hope, and confidence for the healing, care and feeding of all creation, leading the nations to the reconciliation of all things—visible and invisible, in heaven and on earth.

By the grace of God, let us covenant together to be a holy people. For this we live and labor to the glory of God.

Working document drafted by the Wesleyan Holiness Study Project, Azusa, CA, May 3, 2005.