

A GLOBAL PERSPECTIVE TO NORTH AMERICAN
ORDINATION AND CREDENTIALING
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As a way of introduction, consider the following:

1. **A Global Perspective to Ordination and Appropriate Credentialing:** At this symposium we have heard (are hearing) about Wesleyan theological and historical perspectives of ordination and ministerial credentialing, ordination as understood in this current day, and the types and levels of ministerial credentials: Lay, Local, District, and Denominational. There's another perspective in our ministerial preparation leading to ordination and appropriate credentialing. This is the global perspective, and it's increasingly impacting our Wesleyan world in NA and beyond.
2. **A world that's come to us.** Today we are doing the right thing: thinking about how an intentional, relational, holistic, multiplying, and life-long approach to raising up ordained and appropriately credentialed ministers influences us to properly think about and interact particularly as well as globally. That world has come, keeps coming, and won't stop coming to us...our calling is to that world. And our thinking influences to one degree or another our character and day-to-day behaviors.
3. **The words of Wesley.** I take as the foundation for a global perspective John Wesley's famous, four word expression: *The world is my parish*. His actual words, penned in his Journal on June 11, 1739, are, "I look upon all the world as my parish." Wesleyans have used these words to foster missional clarity to

ministry activities since our beginning. An educated clergy with a global perspective is in our DNA.

4. **Two considerations, one perspective.** As some of the key Wesleyan leaders in North America, join me in contemplating a deeper understanding and practice of **ordination education** and let's consider how that might positively influence your involvement in global **ordination practices**. These two considerations help lend a global perspective to this year's symposium. That's what these 30 minutes are about and what our single objective is.

Ordination Education

Wesleyans place high value on an educated, ordained clergy.

Notice with me this very helpful visual that ECD has produced for us regarding Ministerial Education and Training:



As we reflect on the visual we notice at least two things:

1. North American Wesleyans place high value on an **educated clergy**, whether this education and learning are obtained through an undergraduate, graduate, training programs, competency based options, or alternative coursework pathway. We expect, from an educational perspective, that our pastors and those giving ordained leadership have adequate knowledge, possess holy character, and develop practical skills for the ministry in which she or he will be involved. How well do I remember the summer several years ago when the Kingswood faculty worked diligently to identify as best we could what we meant by those words! And, though the visual doesn't show it, high value usually translates into significant resources being dedicated to this important need.
2. North American Wesleyans also place high value on **educational options**. We have two major 'Pathways to Ministry', a Preferred (**Standard**) as well as an

Alternative Pathway to Ministerial Education and Training. There are over twenty well-marked pathways that provide to the minister-in-training the formal education required to become an ordained minister in the North American General Conference of The Wesleyan Church.

It seems quite feasible to conclude that a future North American ordained minister traveling on one or a combination of these pathways should be able to finish the academic requirements for ordination in a relatively short period of time, all other things being equal. Most of us in this room did exactly that.

Thank the Lord for the places globally where effective training is happening! For most of The Wesleyan Church outside North America, however, this is not the case.

Approximately 80% of global Wesleyan churches are pastored by pastors who are not ordained. A very different educational pathway exists for them, as indicated by the following:

- There are few educational options available to ministerial students.
- Religious, political, social, and/or other contextual issues effectively block the path for the potential ministerial student.
- Ministerial education, when it is available, is often too costly for the student who is an older ‘mature’ student with family and work responsibilities.
- Family roots go deep, and many times families are not easily displaced in order to go into a residential educational setting.

- Displacement can sometimes mean having to go thousands of miles away to an entirely different location in the country, or even to another country, where the dominant cultural group with a different worldview may be markedly different from the student's own.
- Too often a student outside North America will start on the path of ministerial training only to drop away because of one or more of the realities presented above.

I'm so thankful The Wesleyan Church in North America is addressing this need primarily through Global Partners but also through her other ministries. Yet more needs to be done 'here' as well as 'there.' As we consider the world as our parish, we are living out what we have always been -- a people with a global perspective, and in this context, a global perspective to ordination and appropriate credentialing.

Much of our international ministerial 'family' sees the value that North America places on a quality ministerial education and training experience and want a similar one.

However, most of our global family today also looks across an educational chasm that restricts them from obtaining necessary training for ministry. They are influenced by a context that shackles their pursuit of those studies.

As the ministries of the North American Church reach across the globe, we need to continue to have an ever-deepening global perspective to ordination and credentialing.

Ordination and Credentialing – Servants to the World

An applied global perspective to ordination and credentialing will help cause us to want to serve our global Wesleyan brothers and sisters training for the ministry. “I look upon all the world as my parish.”

North American Church leaders can serve as catalysts to increase the training capacity of the global church. The role the North American Church could play would vary based on whether national training solutions are early, intermediate, or advanced. The following examples are provided from our Asia Pacific Area of potential North American engagement.

Early: China

In China, the church has grown from 4 million in 1949 to 60-120 million today. Conditions have made it difficult for churches to affiliate with denominational systems outside China.

The smaller registered church has seminaries for training their leaders. The larger house church movement often sends leaders to a secret location for a year of training following high school.

AS IS - The conditions that necessitate further training:

- Some house church leaders have training sufficient for an urban environment, but they lack the training to engage today's urban population.
- The combination of secrecy resulting from persecution and a lack of denominational structures has been a breeding ground for heresy. Some house church networks have fallen prey to cults.
- Chinese culture values official credentialing. This may be an opportunity for The Wesleyan Church to offer a "Good Housekeeping Seal of Approval" certification.

COULD BE - How North Americans can engage:

- PhD level teachers can teach a lecture or a course in registered seminaries.
- Doctoral or Masters level teachers can teach in a customized program in one of the two major cities where we have significant partnerships with a house-church movement.
- An ordination track architect could consult with field leadership on creating a Wesleyan training and certification track.

Intermediate: Cambodia*

The Christian movement in Cambodia, as well as the country as a whole, has endured great suffering and difficulty. Theological and ministerial leaders who are trained locally and serve in their local contexts are needed to guide the church into an era of revitalization and growth.

AS IS - The conditions that necessitate further training:

Theological education in developing countries such as Cambodia faces two distinct challenges for Majority World leaders:

1. Residential training programs necessitate participants to leave their village, occupation and relational contexts.
2. Such programs are traditionally locked into literate forms and methodologies that do not translate to peoples from oral cultures.

COULD BE - How North Americans can engage:

To navigate these challenges, The Wesleyan Church of Cambodia, Global Partners, and Wesley Seminary, with its emphasis upon Global Learning Communities, have collaborated to devise a methodology for training leaders and disciple-makers in Cambodia. Video-based curriculum, intensives and mentoring programs all play a role in preparing future leaders of the movement.

North Americans can contribute in the following specialties:

- Curriculum development
- Video production
- Website Design

**Content modified from Concept Note by Cambodia Mission Director Tim Gallant*

Other Intermediate contexts: India, Nepal, Mongolia

Advanced: Papua New Guinea

Wesleyan missionaries began working Papua New Guinea in 1961. Today, The Wesleyan Church of Papua New Guinea has over 5,000 members worshipping in approximately 100 local churches. Twenty years ago, they opened the Wesleyan Bible College, which offers a 3-year certificate-level training program to fulfill the ordination requirements of the church.

AS IS - The conditions that necessitate further training:

- The two primary teachers at the Wesleyan Bible College have the equivalent of B.Th. degrees. In order to protect the church from heresy in future generations, we need to develop anchor theologians and educators who have at least Masters level training.
- While most people in PNG claim to be Christian, their Christianity is often a thin veneer over an unconverted way of living. Tribal feuds persist, and people claim to be Christian while living lives contrary to the gospel.
- Many lay people in the church - particularly women, who culturally are often passed over for educational opportunities - need basic Bible training.

COULD BE - How North Americans can engage:

- The church has requested a *Missionary Principal* who can provide expertise the church lacks on developing the school's academic offerings.

- Doctoral and Masters level trainers can teach a modular course at Wesleyan Bible College.
- A Discipleship architect could partner with church and field leadership to develop a model for making basic training broadly available.

Conclusion

There is an African proverb that says, ‘If you want to go faster, go alone. If you want to farther, go with others.’ Wesleyan DNA becomes more apparent when we in North America and beyond take the time and carefully consider a global perspective to ordination and credentialing. Walking together with our international pastors to enhance their training options for meeting ordination requirements will build the Kingdom. Just think of the greater Kingdom-advancing impact that would be possible if a Spirit-filled, well-trained, ordained minister pastored every church worldwide.

Question for Discussion

When we visit our values and observe our options, and then recognize the realities of much of the global Wesleyan church, what questions should we be asking ourselves (think know, be, or do kinds of questions) **or** what 'big ideas' should we be thinking about, when it comes to developing a global perspective to our ordination and credentialing beliefs and practices in North America?