

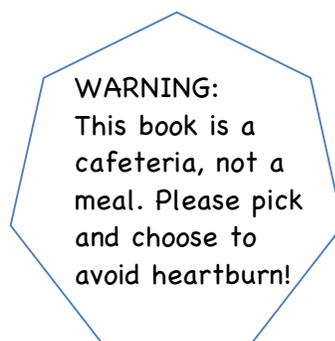
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### BUILDING RELATIONSHIPS



## INTRODUCTION

It is a given to most Americans that education is the great leveler, the “x” factor that can make a child from poverty as successful as the child of a millionaire. Yet, whether or not a child receives a worthwhile education in America or anywhere else in the world depends on a great number of factors, many of which are economic. We smile at that bumper sticker that says, “If you think education is expensive, try ignorance,” but we know that ignorance threatens not just our economic stability and our democracy, but peace and justice throughout the entire world.

From the very beginning of the movement, education was embraced by Methodists as important both to the individual and to Christianity. The Methodist Publishing House began in 1789, when John Dickens was appointed “Book Steward” in Philadelphia, but even as early as 1737, a United Methodist-related book, “A Collection of Hymns and Psalms” appeared in Charleston, South Carolina. “Reading Christians will be knowing Christians,” said John Wesley in 1776.

The Sunday School movement, begun by English Methodist Robert Raikes was quickly imported to America “for poor children, both black and white,” according to Asbury. Methodist Sunday Schools often included reading, writing and arithmetic, out of necessity, because children from the poorest families were often unable to afford a basic education, even when one was available. The connection between poverty and lack of education was as apparent to early Methodists as it is to us today, and the understanding by early Americans that citizens of a democracy must be educated in order to run a country meant that the religious, economic and political interests of the young nation found common ground in education.

This section provides resources for United Methodists to examine current issues in education as they relate to peace in the world and to the equal application of justice for individuals. Some of these issues are as local as whether or not children in our town have a breakfast that allows them to concentrate in class, and some are as global as the stabilizing effect that the education of women has on governments. Whatever issues you choose to explore, we hope you will engage in your discussions with loving hearts and open minds.

We would value your feedback regarding how you used these resources. Please let us know what additional resources you have discovered in your studies. Please contact Rev. Dee Ivy at [deecharlie@msn.com](mailto:deecharlie@msn.com) or 505-265-4123.

## RESOURCES

### **BIBLE STUDY**

1. **To Do Justice: A Guide for Progressive Christians**: Section on Public Education. By Rebecca Todd Peters, Elizabeth Hinson-Hasty. Westminster John Knox Press. Available at [www.thethoughtfulchristian.com/](http://www.thethoughtfulchristian.com/) for \$12.97.

Encouraging Christians to call for public policies that benefit those most vulnerable in our nation, *To Do Justice* offers tools for studying complex domestic social problems such as Social Security, immigration, the environment, and public education, and serves as a guidebook to becoming involved in social action. Rooted in Christian tradition, each essay analyzes a contemporary problem from social, biblical, and theological perspectives before providing directions for public policy. These engaged ethicists from across the mainline denominations provide concrete examples of how progressive-minded Christians can work for justice in response to these moral dilemmas. With discussion questions in each chapter, this book is an excellent resource for classrooms—both in colleges and in churches. (review excerpted from *The Thoughtful Christian*)

### **UMC TEACHINGS**

1. Wikipedia provides a backdrop for asking why education has been and continues to be important to United Methodists in its discussion of the **Wesleyan Quadrilateral**. (See Appendix or [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wesleyan\\_Quadrilateral](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wesleyan_Quadrilateral))

2. **United Methodist Women’s Statement on responsibility for Education**  
<http://new.gbqm-umc.org/umw/act/education/>

3. **Statement by Ohio UMC Bishops Ough and Hopkins** regarding the future of public education in Ohio. They ask: What would a strong and just public school system look like in Ohio? What are some barriers to establishing that? How can the United Methodist Church help to remove those barriers? These are questions that would apply to any community struggling with a low-performing school system.  
[http://woconsole.brickriver.com/files/olmage\\_Library\\_FQADXU/education\\_letter\\_17x22\\_highres\\_XVZCXNXG.pdf](http://woconsole.brickriver.com/files/olmage_Library_FQADXU/education_letter_17x22_highres_XVZCXNXG.pdf)

### **BOOKS**

**1. Three Cups of Tea** by Greg Mortenson and David Oliver Relin, Penguin Press (From Publishers Weekly) Dangerously ill when he finished his climb of K2 mountain in 1993, Greg Mortenson was sheltered for seven weeks by the small Pakistani village of Korphe; in return, he promised to build the impoverished town's first school, a project that grew into the Central Asia Institute, which has since constructed more than 50 schools across rural Pakistan and Afghanistan. Coauthor Relin recounts Mortenson's efforts in fascinating detail, presenting compelling portraits of the village elders, con artists, philanthropists, mujahideen, Taliban officials, ambitious school girls and upright Muslims Mortenson met along the way. As the book moves into the post-9/11 world, Mortenson and Relin argue that the United States must fight Islamic extremism in the region through collaborative efforts to alleviate poverty and improve access to education, especially for girls. Captivating and suspenseful, with engrossing accounts of both hostilities and unlikely friendships, this book will win many readers' hearts. (Mar.) Copyright © Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved.

\*This book is required reading for US Marine officers going to Afghanistan and would make a good 4-6 week study.

**2. The Death and Life of the Great American School System: How Testing and Choice Are Undermining Education** by Diane Ravitch (2010), Basic Books [Excerpted from the book's jacket] Diane Ravitch—former assistant secretary of education and a leader in the drive to create a national curriculum—examines her career in education reform and repudiates positions that she once staunchly advocated. Drawing on over forty years of research and experience, Ravitch critiques today's most popular ideas for restructuring schools, including privatization, standardized testing, punitive accountability, and the feckless multiplication of charter schools. She shows conclusively why the business model is not an appropriate way to improve schools. Using examples from major cities like New York, Philadelphia, Chicago, Denver and San Diego, Ravitch makes the case that public education today is in peril.

Ravitch includes clear prescriptions for improving America's schools:

- leave decisions about schools to educators, not politicians or businessmen
- devise a truly national curriculum that sets out what children in every grade should be *learning*
- expect charter schools to educate the kids who need help the most, not to compete with public schools
- pay teachers a fair wage for their work, not "merit pay" based on deeply flawed and unreliable test scores
- encourage family involvement in education from an early age

Diane Ravitch is Research Professor of Education at New York University and a senior fellow at the Brookings Institution. From 1991 to 1993, she was Assistant Secretary of Education and Counselor to the Secretary of Education Lamar Alexander in the administration of President George H. W. Bush. President Clinton appointed her to the National Assessment Governing Board, which oversees federal testing. She is the author or editor of over twenty books, including *The Language Police* and *Left Back*. A

native of Houston, Ravitch graduated from the Houston public schools, Wellesley College, and Columbia University.

\*This book offers a number of positions that are counter to those in the movie, *Waiting for Superman* (below). A joint study of these two resources would provide an even richer conversation than the study of each individually.

## **FILMS AND VIDEOS**

**1. *Waiting for "Superman"*** is a 2010 [film](#) from director [Davis Guggenheim](#) and producer Lesley Chilcott.<sup>[1]</sup> [Excerpted from *Time* review] Americans also can't afford the fantasy that we have the world's best educational system. The U.S. is near the bottom of advanced countries in math and reading scores. We may not pass sleepless nights worrying about Finland, but that country's kids get a world-class public-school education, and ours don't. Our problems are bigger and more systemic: that, in the world's richest nation, a seventh of our citizens live in poverty; that the majority of African Americans form a near perpetual underclass; that the nuclear family has detonated into pieces, leaving many children with only one parent, if that, to love, instruct and keep an eye on them; that the culture of instant gratification convinces kids that studying is a bore, while the infinitesimal chance of making millions as a pro athlete or a rap star is worth pursuing. Surely the young deserve full-time parents, more realistic goals and inspiring teachers. But maybe that too is a fantasy.

*Waiting for "Superman,"* Davis Guggenheim's edifying and heartbreaking new documentary, says that our future depends on good teachers — and that the coddling of bad teachers by their powerful unions virtually ensures mediocrity, at best, in both teachers and the students in their care...

As part of your discussion of the movie, you may want to read this article in Newsweek about the resignation of Michelle Rhee as chancellor of the Washington, D.C. school system. Ms. Rhee is one of the heroes of *Waiting for "Superman."*

<http://www.businessweek.com/news/2010-10-13/michelle-rhee-resigns-as-d-c-schools-chancellor.html>

**2. *Jose Abreu on Kids Transformed by Music*** is a TED talk ([www.ted.com](http://www.ted.com)) by the founder of "el sistema," which has formed the lives of thousands of children in Venezuela, rich and poor, through the playing and singing of classical music. Download the 20 minute talk from the website. Type the title in the finder.

### QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION:

1. Let's recall for a moment what Jose said the effects of El Sistema's music program were?

He said it develops the intellectual and emotional side of a child and develops the dimensions of the human being, thus elevating the spirit and full development of one's personality.

Do you agree with Jose's assessment that "the emotional and intellectual profits are huge?" If you do agree, can you give us a personal example?

2. Mother Theresa's quote "the most miserable and tragic thing about poverty is not the lack of bread or roof, but the feeling of being no-one, the feeling of not being anyone, the lack of identification, the lack of self-esteem." Can you relate to the feeling of "being no-one" of feeling like you have no identity?

3. Early in his talk Jose said "each child has his own story, and they are all important and of great significance to me." What aspects of our educational system (or society) reflect this level of respect and love for each of our children?

4. Jose refers to his program as a "social rescue program." What aspects of our educational system need rescuing? Make a list of them. Note ways in which you can participate in addressing the change needed.

5. How might addressing some of the items on the list afford our communities a "deep cultural transformation" like the one Jose said took place in Venezuela?

6. Jose reminds us that Arnold Toynbee said "the world is suffering a huge spiritual crisis. Not an economic or social crisis, but a spiritual crisis." Do you agree? If yes, why?

7. Do you agree with Jose that ONLY art and religion can give proper answers to humanity's problems? If not, what else can contribute?

### **3. Sir Ken Robinson: Changing the Education Paradigm**

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zDZFcDGpL4U>

#### QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

This fast-paced, unconventional mix of analytical thinking, humor, and cartoons is worth viewing several times to be sure of absorbing all that is presented.

A paradigm is an example, a pattern, a model, a mold. What does it mean to change paradigms? It means thinking outside the box. That is definitely what Sir Ken Robinson does as he discusses education in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

#### **Before viewing:**

How can a paradigm be useful? In what ways can a paradigm become un-useful? How can we recognize when and how it has lost its value?

If your public school system is plagued by dropouts or by a failure to educate some or even many youth, do you repeat the past or try to change its future? How does the

current paradigm work with the problems in your community's educational system? (The word *system* implies a paradigm.)

**View Sir Ken Robinson's commentary on "Changing Education Paradigms." You may need to view it more than once**

1. How does he describe the existing model of education, its origins, and purposes? Do you agree? ...Disagree? In what ways?
2. He refers to ADHD (Attention deficit hyperactivity disorder). What is your understanding of this symptom among our youth? Do you think he is referring to it as an epidemic or as a metaphor? Explain.
3. How does the concept of "academic standards" work within the existing paradigm, in his opinion? ...In your opinion?
4. In what ways might the current education paradigm be changed to keep and educate effectively ALL our youth?
5. What do you think works in favor of or against a paradigm change?
6. Experiential education is a concept that has been around for more than a century. In examining your own education, has experiential education been part of your early learning? Should it? (To know more about experiential education, research John Dewey or Paulo Freire.)

## **WEBSITES**

### **1. United Nations Educational, Cultural, and Scientific Organization**

<http://www.unesco.org/en/education>. The website contains articles and statistics on education across the planet.

On the website, you can find *Education for All* (see "articles"), the 2010 Global Monitoring Report, which looks at education systems in many of the world's poorest countries that are now experiencing the aftermath of the global economic downturn. The report argues that the crisis could create a lost generation of children whose life chances will have been irreparably damaged by a failure to protect their right to education. The report examines who these children are and why they are being left behind, and looks at concrete solutions for making sure that no children are excluded from schooling.

**2. World Education** (<http://www.worlded.org>), a non-profit foundation, is dedicated to improving the lives of the poor through education and economic and social development programs world-wide. There are specific projects detailed, a world-report, and a special section on the education of women and girls and how that can lead to peace and prosperity. The World Education 2009 Annual Report can be downloaded and used as a basis for study.

**3. Website for UN Global Education Initiative:** <http://www.ungei.org/index.php>. This website includes articles and resources for the study of education in developing countries. There is a chart with information on work being done in specific geographic areas. Archives includes such things as an address to the organization by Laura Bush on illiteracy.

**4. Brookings Institute** study on remaking Head Start [http://www.brookings.edu/reports/2010/1013\\_investing\\_in\\_young\\_children\\_haskins.aspx](http://www.brookings.edu/reports/2010/1013_investing_in_young_children_haskins.aspx) This new collection of papers issued assesses federal policies for early childhood education and child care, and includes ways to reform Head Start and other early education programs to make them better targeted, more effective, and provide better taxpayer bang-for-the buck in these tough fiscal times. The report is downloadable from this site. The section on home visits is of particular interest.

## **ARTICLES**

**1. Download:** *The Global Monitoring Report*, developed annually by an independent team and published by UNESCO, assesses progress towards the six Education for All goals to which over 160 countries committed themselves in 2000. The 2010 Report, *Reaching the marginalized*, charts some striking advances in education over the past decade. Despite these gains, however, the world is not on track to achieve the goal of universal primary education by 2015. (download at <http://www.unesco.org>)

**2. *The Danger of a Poor Education: The Correlation Between Education and Crime in Today's Society.*** This brief article, which explores how a poor education has both economic and violent consequences in our society, is found on the website of *Education Voters of Pennsylvania*. Download at: <http://www.educationvoterspa.org/site/issues/the-danger-of-a-poor-education/f>

**2. Essay:** *Girls' Education in Developing Countries: Mind the Gap* . Print it at: <http://www.pbs.org/wnet/wideangle/uncategorized/time-for-school-essay-girls-education-in-developing-countries-mind-the-gap/1612/> This essay is from 2003 and is somewhat dated, but it lays out clearly what educating girls can do to relieve poverty and suffering in the world.

3. Essay: *Girls' Education Key to Global Wealth, Health, New Council Report Finds*. Similar to the essay above, this report is by the U.S. Council on Foreign Relations. It can be printed at

[http://www.cfr.org/publication/6950/girls\\_education\\_key\\_to\\_global\\_wealth\\_health\\_new\\_council\\_report\\_finds.html](http://www.cfr.org/publication/6950/girls_education_key_to_global_wealth_health_new_council_report_finds.html)

4. Essay: *Struggling School Age Boys*. *Newsweek*, September 7, 2008.

<http://www.newsweek.com/2008/09/07/struggling-school-age-boys.html> [Excerpt] Every other week it seems a new study comes out that adds to our already-formidable arsenal of parental worries. But even by those escalating standards, the report issued last week by the federal government's National Center for Health Statistics contained a jaw-dropper: the parents of nearly one of every five boys in the United States were concerned enough about what they saw as their sons' emotional or behavioral problems that they consulted a doctor or a health-care professional. By comparison, about one out of 10 parents of girls reported these kinds of problems. The full report can be found at: <http://www.cdc.gov/nchs/data/databriefs/db08.htm>

5. *Cheating in schools: Cause and Effect*.

Last year's standardized tests in Georgia showed an unusually high number of eraser marks, prompting allegations of widespread cheating in Georgia's public schools. More than 50 schools in Atlanta were flagged for cheating. Some say that cheating is a result of too much pressure on testing. In thinking about school reform, we need to include this in our deliberations.

<http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=130335370&f=3&sc=17>

## **LOCAL SPEAKERS/EXPERTS**

1. **Jean Peet** will be happy to share a film and talk with your group about her experience in helping to establish scholarships for students from a rural Andes community in Peru. Her contact information is: 12819 Sandia Ridge Place NE, Albuquerque, NM 87111 (505) 797-3965, [abqpeets@yahoo.com](mailto:abqpeets@yahoo.com).

2. **Stephanie Silver**, Director of Development for *Road Runner Food Bank*, will talk with your group about why hunger is such a road block to a good education in New Mexico and how the Food Bank's *School Back Pack* program is working to eliminate that block. Her contact information is: Roadrunner Food Bank, 5840 Office Blvd NE, Albuquerque, NM 87109, 505-349-8678, [Stephanie@rrfb.org](mailto:Stephanie@rrfb.org)

## **BUILDING RELATIONSHIPS**

**1. Self-Study.** The following are a set of questions to help your group explore possible ways to engage with your neighbors around issues of education.

1. Who lives within walking distance of your church?
2. What educational needs relate to adults/drop outs? Select all that apply.

- Acquiring a GED
- Learning English
- Learning Spanish
- Creating a community for the lonely
- Understanding American democracy and how to participate at all levels
- Preparing taxes
- Finding good childcare
- Finding good eldercare
- Finding good healthcare
- Finding affordable clothing
- Shopping on a budget
- Learning about community resources located at parks, libraries, community centers
- Navigating public transportation
- Other

3. Regarding younger students: What opportunities exist for early learning?
4. What important parts of the curriculum have dropped from the neighborhood schools and other schools attended by area children and youth?

- Sports
- Arts
- Music
- Languages
- Social sciences
- Science
- Other

5. What courses are mandated? For what reasons?
6. What issues do students face at school that detract from learning?
7. What is the best way to stress the importance of tests and deadlines as upper middle and high school students plan to graduate and go to the next level of education? (How do those who've never advanced beyond high school advise children of the many hurdles they must jump to graduate and attend schools of higher learning?)

8. What gifts and talents do members of the church and other friends have to share?

9. What facilities can be used? What modifications might be needed?

10. What special tools might be needed? Is the church able to provide these tools? Do outside sources/sponsors need to be found?

11. If neighbors refuse to enter the church to participate, what community activities held in the parking lot and on church grounds might break the ice and create relationships among all who participate, building a sense of neighborhood throughout the area?

**2. St. Andrews Education Initiative**, Rev. Lourdes Calderon, St. Andrews UMC received a grant from The Board of Discipleship to fund the tutoring of community members (not necessarily church members) in adult education, ESL and GED preparation. The church has received 13 wireless computers to use in the project. These were a gift from Highland Park UMC in Dallas. Because child care will be offered, hosting the program allows opportunities of Christian education and music for the children and youth.

**3. St. John's in Albuquerque** has started an evening **tutoring program** for students and adults in their neighborhood schools. Clifford Renschler can talk with your group about how to set up such a program and how to avoid certain pitfalls. Contact Cliff at 505-281-1796 or [mailto:c\\_renschler@msn.com](mailto:c_renschler@msn.com).

**3.** Sponsored by the United Methodist Church, **McCurdy School** is located in the Espanola Valley of Northern New Mexico and offers a college-bound academic education with United Methodist principles. With 40 buildings located throughout the 44-acre campus, it requires enormous amounts of effort to maintain the facilities. In order to fulfill our mission, McCurdy is dependent upon volunteers and work teams. Each year dozens of teams from across the country make their way to our campus in order to repair, restore and prepare the facilities for the new school year. In many cases, new construction projects are undertaken by the work teams. Contact information: McCurdy School, 261 McCurdy Road, Espanola, NM 87532, 505-753-7221.

**4. Of Thee I Sing** is a children's book, written by President Barack Obama for his daughters, which models how a parent or any adult can convey expectations to a child in a positive way.

**Scriptures to consider as you read the book:**

All verses from New Interpreter's Study Bible NRSV 2003

Proverbs 22:6

Train children in the right way,  
And when old, they will not stray.

Isaiah 11:6

...and a little child shall lead them.

Matthew 19:13-15

..."Let the little children come to me, and do not stop them; for it is to such as these that the kingdom of heaven belongs."

Luke 2:49

He said to them, "Why were you searching for me? Did you not know that I must be in my Father's house?"

John 15:9, 11

As the Father has loved me, so I have loved you; abide in my love...I have said these things to you so that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be complete.

### **Questions to discuss after reading the book:**

As children enter our faith communities, what visions and dreams do we offer them?

As children reach the questioning years, what understanding and guidance do we provide them?

As adults face crises, what hope and support do we offer?

As adults reach the end of life, what message do they share with those left behind?

Also, see Ken Medema's song, "A Little Child Shall Lead Them," from the album, *Yesterday's Sign*. Available at <http://www.kenmedema.com>.

## **APPENDIX**

1. The **Wesleyan Quadrilateral** is a methodology for [theological reflection](#) that is credited to [John Wesley](#), leader of the [Methodist movement](#) in the late 18th Century. The term itself was coined by 20th century [American Methodist Albert C. Outler](#) in his introduction to the 1964 collection *John Wesley* ([ISBN 0-19-502810-4](#)).<sup>[1][2]</sup>

Upon examination of Wesley's work, Outler theorized that Wesley used four different sources in coming to theological conclusions. The four sources are:

- Scripture - *the Holy Bible (Old and New Testaments)*

- Tradition - *the two millennia history of the Christian Church*
- Reason - *rational thinking and sensible interpretation*
- Experience - *a Christian's personal and communal journey in Christ*

In practice, at least one of the Wesleyan denominations, [The United Methodist Church](#), asserts that "Wesley believed that the living core of the Christian faith was revealed in Scripture, illumined by tradition, vivified in personal experience, and confirmed by reason. Scripture [however] is primary, revealing the Word of God 'so far as it is necessary for our salvation.'"<sup>[3]</sup>

Wesley saw the Quadrilateral not merely as prescriptive of how one should form their theology, but also as descriptive of how almost anyone does form theology. As an astute observer of human behavior, and a pragmatist, Wesley's approach to the Quadrilateral was most certainly [phenomenological](#), describing in a practical way how things actually work in actual human experience. Thus, when Wesley speaks of "Tradition," he does not merely refer to ancient Church Tradition and the writings of the great theologians and Church Fathers of days past, but also of the immediate and present theological influences which contribute to a person's understanding of God and of Christian theology. "Tradition" may include such influences as the beliefs, values, and instruction of one's family and upbringing. It may also include the various beliefs and values which one encounters and which have an effect on one's understanding of Scripture.

It must be understood, however, that for Wesley, Tradition, Reason, and Experience do not form additional "sources" for theological truth, for he believed that the Bible was the sole source of truth about God, but rather these form a matrix for interpreting the Bible. Therefore, while the Bible is the sole source of truth, Tradition forms a "lens" through which we view and interpret the Bible. But unlike the Bible, Tradition is not an infallible instrument, and it must be balanced and tested by Reason and Experience. Reason is the means by which we may evaluate and even challenge the assumptions of Tradition. Reason is the first means by which we may "trim our sails" and adjust interpretations of Scripture.

But for Wesley, the chief test of the "truth and nothing but the whole truth" of a particular interpretation of scripture is how it is seen in practical application in one's Experience. Always the pragmatist, Wesley believed that Experience formed the best evidence, after Scripture, for the truthfulness of a particular theological view. He believed Scriptural truths are to be primarily lived, rather than simply thought about or merely believed. Thus, how a particular interpretation of scripture is lived out is the best and most viable test of our theology.

Each of the "legs" of the Wesleyan Quadrilateral must be taken in balance, and none of the other three apart from scripture should be viewed as being of equal value or authority with scripture. None of these should be taken in isolation without the balancing effect of the others, and always Scripture should have the central place of authority.

In United Methodist understanding, both laypeople and clergy alike share in "our theological task." The theological task is the ongoing effort to live as Christians in the midst of the complexities of a secular world. Wesley's Quadrilateral is referred to in Methodism as "our theological guidelines" and is taught to its pastors in seminary as the

primary approach to interpreting the scriptures and gaining guidance for moral questions and dilemmas faced in daily living. (See [\*The Book of Discipline of The United Methodist Church\*](#)—2008, pp. 76-83.)