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Good News' RENEW Network Publishes Important New Book,

Reclaiming the Wesleyan Social Witness: Offering Christ

WILMORE, KY – For United Methodists who are thinking anew about what it means to live “The United Methodist Way,” an important new book will be a helpful resource for clergy and laity alike to rediscover the heart of the Wesleyan message—the message that had such a transforming impact on England and the world.

Reclaiming the Wesleyan Social Witness: Offering Christ, by Mrs. L. Faye Short, president of Good News' RENEW Network for women and Mrs. Katy Kiser, laywoman from Carrollton, Texas, and member of the RENEW Steering Committee, has just been released by Providence House Publishers, in Franklin, Tennessee.

If John Wesley could speak to us today about our witness and service in the world, what might he say? This newly-released book explores this and related questions in depth. Where did the Methodist witness begin? When and why did it flourish? Why is it experiencing a decline? What can we do to reclaim our unique and powerful gospel and social witness in the twenty-first century? Responding to these questions, the book offers United Methodists a valuable tool in the reclaiming of their Wesleyan heritage.

In the Preface, the authors cite the “great divide” within the United Methodist Church regarding personal salvation and social witness, and insist that for an authentic Wesleyan witness, the two must go hand-in-hand. The authors acknowledge that some have neglected the substance of the gospel while others have neglected the social witness that so characterized the Wesleyan revival.

“We believe the United Methodist Church needs not only to reclaim a Wesleyan social witness, but even more important, to rediscover the core of the Wesleyan witness—faith working by love. In rediscovering this, we will find the catalyst for a personal and social witness that is as relevant to the twenty-first century as it was to John Wesley’s eighteenth century,” say authors Short and Kiser.

Reclaiming the Wesleyan Social Witness: Offering Christ bears the endorsements of Bishop Lindsey Davis and Bishop William Willimon, who saw in the manuscript a message for United Methodists. Bishop Willimon wrote, “Alas, we later-day Wesleyans have allowed the indefensible positions of ‘conservative’ versus ‘liberal’ or ‘evangelical’

versus ‘social activist’ to characterize our discipleship. This is unfortunate. Now in this engaging, passionate book, we are invited back (or is it forward?) to embrace the full Wesleyan vision. Here is a grand invitation and opportunity for us to rethink our Christian commitments.”

“We believe the message of this book points forward—toward a faithful witness that can impact our individual hearts, our church, the society, the nation and the world,” says Faye Short.

“In a day when the church spends much capital and time calling upon government and international institutions to do the work of justice that it once took upon itself, this book invites us to rethink our definition of social justice and free it from the failed ideologies of the twentieth century,” said co-author, Mrs. Katy Kiser. “*Reclaiming the Wesleyan Social Witness: Offering Christ* gives us a glimpse into how our social witness became politicized. It reminds us that our Wesleyan heritage is built on Christ’s invitation to make disciples of all people, reaching out to the least of these with bread and water and the bread of life.”

“I am really excited about this book,” said James V. Heidinger II, president and publisher of Good News. “It is well researched, carefully documented, and is a great resource for the whole church. With study questions for each chapter, it will be a wonderful tool for helping local church study groups rediscover the core of our Wesleyan witness. I can’t recommend it highly enough. Also, I am pleased we are able to send a complimentary copy to all of the 2008 General Conference delegates.”

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Endorsements for *Reclaiming the Wesleyan Social Witness: Offering Christ* from the back cover of the book:

“*Reclaiming the Wesleyan Social Witness: Offering Christ* attempts to reconcile the tragic separation of Methodism’s gospel proclamation and its social witness. Authentic Wesleyan evangelism always weds the two, and this book leads us boldly toward such a re-marriage. This is an important read for General Conference delegates, and an excellent study guide on the Wesleyan way for all United Methodists.”

Reverent Bill Bouknight, DD
Columbia, South Carolina

“Those of us who are trying to live the Wesleyan way have a great challenge. One of Wesley’s great contributions to Christendom was the linkage of passionate commitment to Christ with courageous social witness. Wesley believed that wherever the good news of Christ is preached and received, social holiness follows. . . Now, in this engaging, passionate book, we are invited back (or is it forward?) to embrace the full Wesleyan vision. Here is a grand invitation and opportunity for us to rethink our Christian commitments. Through Short and Kiser’s book, there is real hope for a reclamation of our Wesleyan social witness.”

Bishop William H. Willimon
North Alabama Conference

“Reclaiming the Wesleyan Social Witness: Offering Christ is an important voice about what it means for The United Methodist Church to be centered in risk-taking mission and service. This book offers fresh insights into how our social witness can be transformational and firmly rooted in the Christian faith.”

Bishop Lindsey G. Davis
North Georgia Conference

“Challenging widespread practices that divorce faith and works, Kiser and Short have offered an important contribution to ongoing conversations within United Methodism, evangelical Christianity, and liberal traditions. . . .I commend this work to all who claim to articulate Christianity with a Wesleyan voice.”

Joy J. Moore, PhD
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