



Focus: The Real Challenges That Face The United Methodist Church (Adaptive Leadership Series)

Lovett H. Weems Jr

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Few would argue that many challenges face The United Methodist Church. But what are the core issues and concerns, the ones that must be addressed if the church is to follow God's leading into the future? Laying aside what can be merely tweaked or adjusted, what must the UMC "reset" about itself? Lovett Weems, one of the most highly-respected interpreters of contemporary United Methodism, suggests that we start with the following:

- What will happen now that the increased giving that United Methodists have enjoyed (despite declining membership numbers) has reached a plateau and begun to decline?
- Why, with 34,000 congregations and \$6.5 billion in annual giving, can't United Methodists add a net increase of even 1 new disciple of Jesus Christ in a given year?
- Why are United Methodist clergy less concerned with reaching young adults than are laity? Why are laity unwilling to make the changes to worship and budgets required to attract these same young adults?
- If the percentage of married couples with young children has declined by half since the 1950s, why is that still the group we focus on reaching?
- Why are so many mid-sized churches on their way to becoming small-membership congregations?

With insight, conviction, and calm resolve, Lovett Weems challenges United Methodists not only to ask these hard questions, but to face up to the difficult decisions they require of us as we continue to seek God's will for our lives together.

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