

Dr. Clayton Oliphint

On the Way

first united methodist church

Richardson



September 16, 2021

E. Stanley Jones (1884-1973) was one of the greatest Methodist missionaries the church has ever known. For well over 60 years, he served on every continent and had a special interest in and relationship with India. He was sometimes called the “Billy Graham of India.” His influence around the world was profound, touching the lives of Mahatma Gandhi, President Franklin Roosevelt, Martin Luther King, Jr., and countless others. When I was a small child he came to speak to the Methodist churches in Monroe, Louisiana, where my father was a pastor.

His granddaughter, Anne Mathews-Younes, is working with Abingdon Press to have many of his books re-released. I was invited by Anne to write an afterword for one of the books, *The Reconstruction of the Church*. This book was first released in 1970, just a few years before Jones died. Now re-released, it is as timely in 2021 as it was in 1970.

The book focuses on the church in Antioch, found in the New Testament book of Acts. Jones suggests a pattern for how the church should function that mirrors Antioch, which I found so hopeful. He shares that the church at Antioch:

1. Looked to one head, Jesus Christ, as the source of unity;
2. Was largely powered by the laity, taking seriously the priesthood of all believers;
3. Cared for the spiritual and physical needs of the world, not just themselves;
4. Was a classless church, where greatness was measured by service and contribution, not worldly status;
5. Was a racially mixed church, open to all;
6. Held together people who had strongly differing views;
7. Developed leaders and helped them grow;
8. Used its oppositions instead of bearing them; and
9. Was founded on the good news of Jesus Christ.

This book is much more than that, and I’d encourage you to pick up a copy and read it. As we look to the church, both present and future, it provides a roadmap and a guideline. Unity is found in Jesus Christ. As Jones says, “If you belong to Christ and I belong to Christ, we belong to each other. It is as simple as that and as profound.” Another of my favorite E. Stanley Jones sayings: “You can’t be on the witness stand and in the judgement seat at the same time.”

I love FUMCR, and I hope and pray we embody the best of those qualities of the church at Antioch. I’ll see you this Sunday in worship, either online or in person. We’ll continue our Genesis series with a look at Noah’s Ark. This story is both troubling and hope-filled.

In Christ,

Clayton Oliphint

THE 21ST CENTURY IN OUR TIMES SERIES

E. Stanley Jones

THE
RECONSTRUCTION
OF THE CHURCH

E. STANLEY JONES

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