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I have the privilege of serving in leadership positions in two very dynamic energetic agencies of the United Methodist Church: The United Methodist Publishing House and The Wesley Theological Seminary where I am the immediate past board chair.

It is remarkable how two such disparate organizations as Wesley and the Publishing House are working on many of the same concerns and opportunities, each in its own way.

First, each organization is optimistic that our church can renew itself and regain its vigor and momentum. A great number of people are hungry for spiritual growth, anxious to be of service, and seeking ministries to which they can contribute in many different ways. The church can provide those opportunities. It is a breathtaking calling to accept.

Second, we must strive to understand the direction and implications of the array of rapid changes taking place in our society—demographically, technologically, and culturally. We must strive to understand and adapt to the changes in order to be relevant, attractive, and useful. If we remain comfortable with status quo, we will slowly fade away.

Third, we must strongly foster ecumenism. Our future is in openness.

Fourth, we must foster skills and competencies in the leadership of growing and vital congregations. Pastoring, preaching, teaching, and administration are all separate skill sets, and becoming competent in all of them is a tall order. But it can be done, and is being done. These skills can be taught, and the church can do much more to create and empower many more leaders who can be effective in each area.

Finally, we need to redouble our efforts to search out ways to connect with today's and tomorrow's young people. Obviously, they are our future, and the church should be a vital part of their future. Given the nature of the society into which they are being born, this is a major challenge, but there is no more important one for us to address.

To me, these focus areas being addressed by the two agencies in which I serve represent a large part of where we can and should devote our ministries as The United Methodist Church.