

# WHO ARE WE?

A JOURNEY FROM  
HEAD TO HEART

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BY BISHOP LATRELLE MILLER EASTERLING &  
THE BALTIMORE-WASHINGTON CONFERENCE

## WHY THIS STUDY NOW?

Our beloved denomination is in the midst of another pivotal moment in history. Globally, in our churches, we are considering the future of the denomination, what it means to be the Church, what it means to be United Methodists, and what it means to be spirit-filled Christ-followers making disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world in this present age. Some may question, “Will we remain united? Will we create a new form of unity? Will we dissolve? Will the Church continue to be able to give a faithful voice and witness to the will of God in the days ahead? What is the will of God?”

There are many conversations and questions that may arise in our uncertainty. We can see the ground shift as we engage in strategic sessions, pour over new plans, and predict the year to come. These are natural and necessary steps. And in the midst of all of our uncertainty, this we know for sure – God is. God is with us and God’s Spirit has the power to birth in us a common understanding of how we might live together, disciple together, love together, and serve God together.

This Bible Study was developed so that we might enter into a process of discernment and wonder together. It isn’t meant to cater to one outcome or cajole participants into a certain line of thinking. Rather, receive this study as an invitation into communal dialogue chiefly interested in our common roots and the common interests we share as United Methodists within the universal body of Christ today.

This study was designed to center us in our core identity. And so we ask: Who are we? Who are we as the people of God? Who are we as the people called United Methodists shaped by Wesleyan theology? Who are we as the members of the Baltimore-Washington Conference? Who are we becoming as we journey on toward perfection? It is our deepest hope that you will allow responses to emerge around the room and that you will receive these responses with great care. Furthermore, it is our hope that as we study and wrestle with Scripture alongside people we know, and hopefully with people we do not know so well, that we will pay close attention to and compassionately engage one another, quiet ourselves and await God’s voice in our discernment in order to make room for emerging responses that can guide us.

## PART 2

# WHO ARE WE AS THE PEOPLE CALLED METHODISTS?

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Please let us know if your church is engaging in the study and with whom so that we might pray for your time together and provide additional materials and support as needed.

## A GUIDE

As you begin this study, we invite leaders and participants to explore and reflect on the following materials, which will enrich the group's experience.

## UNDERSTANDING AND INTERACTING WITH THE SACRED TEXT

The Word of God is our Word, meant to speak to us now and inform our lives and our discipleship. The Word of God is a breathing expression between Creator and creation, alive and at work with us. What would it mean for us, as United Methodists, if we presuppose that others love God as much as we do; that others have dedicated themselves to follow Christ as passionately and faithfully as we have; that others open themselves to the movement and truth of the Holy Spirit as we do? Might we presuppose that others hold Scripture as sacred and precious as we do? In these presuppositions, we free ourselves (as much as humanly possible) from the bondage of judgment, ridicule, superiority, dismissal and disdain. We open ourselves, not to the possibility of losing our faith, but to the possibility of seeing through a different lens and thereby understanding from another perspective. At the conclusion of this study, we hope that you can have a deeper appreciation of how others view God and a deeper understanding of your own views. In our view finder, we just might make out more fully who God is calling us to be as United Methodists and as the Baltimore-Washington Conference at this particular moment.

## WHAT TO EXPECT

You won't find an exhaustive and definitive study here. You will find a wholehearted attempt to capture frames of current critical conversations that we need to have as a people of faith. You are invited to bring your experience to this content as you share with others in your community. Do so knowing that there are fellow United Methodists throughout the Baltimore-Washington Conference engaging the same material, sharing their own experiences with one another, and listening attentively to what the Spirit would yet teach us. May God's grace be sufficient for the journey ahead. To God be the Glory! Expect to learn something new in your brave space as you journey through the study using the Who Are We Affirmation. Intentionally set aside time to meditate on the Scriptures, pray, be in conversation with one another and grow in fellowship with one another. You will also have an opportunity to interact with 8-12 minutes of video content from several conversation partners across our connection.

## GROUP STUDY SUGGESTIONS

As you approach this study, please keep in mind that there is no one "right way" to engage together. As your group develops a shared culture, remember that you are taking up a collective lens. Each person's contribution brings new opportunities for shared creativity and wisdom. We have included some tools for creating safe and bold spaces. As a first activity, begin your study with the Who Are We Affirmation and make modifications as necessary. We have also included guidelines for RESPECTful Communication and Mutual Invitation (Appendix A) to help maintain a space where each voice is honored. Appendices B, C, and D provide useful tips for incorporating the study and making it come to life in your group. Stay curious. Even if your fellow group members are deeply known to you, prepare to be surprised by how God's grace will show up in and through each participant. Celebrate that groups across our Conference are affirming the Spirit's presence with us in this season through shared study. Your holy conversations as a group are a part of a larger sacred dialogue. Each time you gather, you contribute to the widening perspective of our faith and the wideness of God's mercy alive among us.

## WHO ARE WE AFFIRMATION

In the gift of this moment, **we affirm** that we are divinely loved and lovable.

We are the **children of God**.

**Together**, we will **learn** from the actions and words of one another.

**Christ's** lessons on love are **centered** in how we treat others and in how we treat ourselves.

We will exercise **courage** in this study as we share stories of **struggle** and **strength**.

We will **stay at the table** and receive those stories with **grace**.

We will not be afraid to **launch into the deep**.

We will **commit** to the vulnerability necessary **to allow God** to break us open.

We will set and **respect** boundaries and **honor** confidentiality together.

When uncertainty arises, we will remember the **Spirit of "peace** that passes our own understanding" and can intercede for us.

We will **remember** that even when we don't feel "United," the **uniting love of Christ** can reveal a pathway to greater **wisdom** and mutual respect.

No matter what, **there is a place for each one** of us in this study together.

Let us **hold each other up** in prayer, hold each other **accountable** in love, and **trust** that our God is making **all things new**.

Thank you for the gift of **being present** to one another in this holy time.



## PART 2

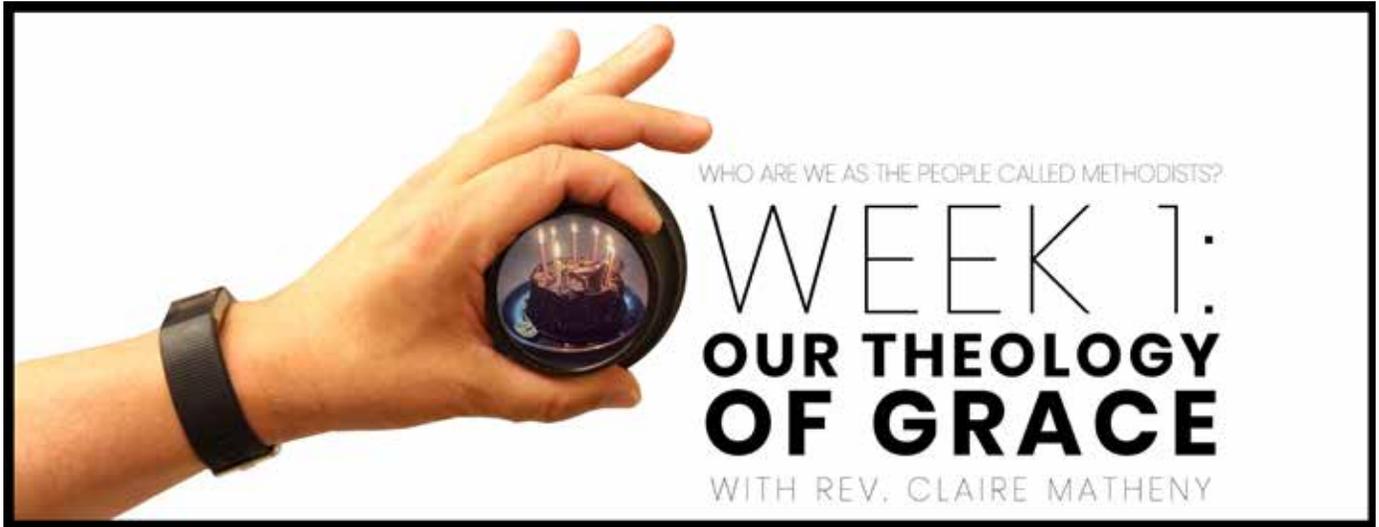
# WHO ARE WE AS THE PEOPLE CALLED METHODISTS?

### [What is Grace?](#)

Part 2 of this three-part study, *Who Are We: A Journey from Head to Heart*, explores our identity as United Methodists shaped in the Wesleyan spirit. While first and foremost our identity is rooted in our understanding of God and in seeking to follow Jesus, there are uniquely Wesleyan ways of experiencing and expressing that. Methodism began as a spiritual movement, a response of the Holy Spirit to the needs of the world. In the six weeks of this study, we'll delve into the theology and passion of this movement of faith.

United Methodists are a 12-million member global faith community connected together by the Spirit of God, our Wesleyan theology of grace, a doctrine of personal and social holiness, a holistic understanding of discipleship and reading the Bible, all started by a Holy Spirit-filled movement maker and his brother. Imagine what would happen if all of us reclaimed enough of our shared identity to be able to live and grow together as the church God intends for us to be.

<sup>1</sup>In the pdf version of this guide all links are embedded (if you can click on them, you will be taken to the resource). For those using a printed copy, a list of tiny URLs is available in the index.



Grace pervades everything. As United Methodists, we share the conviction that grace “is the unmerited and love action of God in human existence through the ever-present Holy Spirit.” We celebrate prevenient grace, which precedes salvation; justifying grace, which illuminates God’s accepting and forgiving love; and sanctifying grace, which nurtures our growth in the love of God and our neighbor.

## PRE-SESSION ASSIGNMENTS

**Article:** [“Why Am I Still a United Methodist: Grace for All, Grace in All”](#) by Bishop William Willimon. One of the denomination’s best professors explores grace as the power of God that works within us.

**Scripture:** [Romans 8:31-39](#)

## SMALL GROUP SESSION AGENDA

### OPENING PRAYER

We do not know how to pray as we ought, but the Holy Spirit intercedes for us with sighs too deep for words. (Breathe Deeply).

Marvelous, Infinite and Matchless God: we thank You for the gift of Your presence and for Your amazing grace. Without condition or qualification, Your unmerited favor has called us here and makes it possible to be in a right relationship with You. Your grace precedes our existence, justifies our unworthiness, and sanctifies and perfects our humanity. Thank You. Thank You for this precious gift. Center us now in the power of this moment. Experience our hearts, minds and wills bowing before You as we study, learn and grow together. Let Your will be done, even now. In the Name of the Most Merciful One, we pray and ask it all. *Amen.*

# WHO ARE WE AFFIRMATION

See page 5.

## SCRIPTURE

[Romans 8:31-39](#)

## VIDEO

with Rev. Claire Matheny

Rev. Matheny is pastor of Kittamaqundi Community Church in Columbia, Md.

Living by sanctifying grace means that I choose to meet God in the unsettled places of my community and world."

*Rev. Claire Matheny*



## HEAD & HEART DISCUSSION (30 minutes)

1. In the video's cake story, there are countless reasons why it makes sense that the little girl not be allowed access to the table. When do our human rules – spoken and unspoken – cloud the pathway for grace? How can we better extend God's grace to all?

2. In the article by Bishop Willimon, he warns against a "mushy" interpretation of grace that won't require us to change anything. What is the downfall of receiving grace passively as bystanders rather than being active participants in God's transforming grace?

3. What does it mean for The United Methodist Church to keep "growing in grace" as a denomination? How do we receive the words of Romans 8:31-39 and the grace we know in Christ at such a time as this?

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## CLOSING PRAYER

## BEYOND THE SESSION

### PRAYER AND PATHWAY TO JOURNALING

Often, when we become reflexively resistant to what we've experienced through study, it is pointing towards an area worthy of more reflection and prayer. In this part of study, we invite you to examine your areas of resistance or struggle. Allow God to reveal how transformation can occur in those areas.

Use these open-ended questions to facilitate your journey from head to heart:

What surprised you or caught your attention?

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How does the discussion we had apply to your life, your church, our denomination?

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Where is the Spirit revealing to you areas for growth and transformation?

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How does what we talked about transform your relationship with God and others?

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Write a prayer to ask for God's support and enlightenment, which applies what you learned, and then go forth and live it.

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Grace is God's "bounty, or favor: God's free, undeserved favor, ... humanity having no claim to the least of God's mercies. It was free grace that 'formed humans of the dust of the ground, and breathed into them a living soul,' and stamped on that soul the image of God, and 'put all things under God's feet.' ... For there is nothing we are, or have, or do, which can deserve the least thing at God's hand."

Paraphrased and excerpted from John Wesley's sermon: "The Scripture Way of Salvation"

## ADDITIONAL RESOURCES:

- **Book:** [A Grace-full Life](#) by Jorge Acevedo and Wes Olds. In this four-session study, grace is defined as God's all-reaching, never-ending, game-changing love for you and me.
- **Movie:** *Les Misérables*, 2012
- **Hymn:** ["Grace Greater than Our Sin," Hymn #365](#). To learn more about the hymns and prayers that sing of our Wesleyan Theology of Grace, visit The United Methodist Hymnal, pages 336-536; Prevenient Grace (pages 337-360); Justifying Grace (pages 361-381); and Sanctifying and Perfecting Grace (pages 382-536).
- **John Wesley's Sermon:** Paraphrased and excerpted from: ["The Scripture Way of Salvation"](#)



At the heart of Methodism is the uniting of vital piety and social holiness. We accomplish this by practicing the Rule of Discipleship with personal acts of compassion and devotion, and communal acts of justice and worship. With these acts, we grow in our ability to love God with all our heart, soul and mind, and our neighbors as ourselves. As a vital part of our spiritual journey, we practice the means of grace, which include Bible study, prayer, fasting, healthy living, celebrating Communion, visiting the sick and those in prison, feeding the hungry, seeking justice, working to end oppression, and more. In these practices, God works in and through us.

## PRE-SESSION ASSIGNMENTS

**Book:** ["The Wesleyan Way of Discipleship."](#) Learn about practices for living our your faith with this comprehensive resource from Discipleship Ministries.

**Scripture:** [Mark 12:28-34](#)

## SMALL GROUP SESSION AGENDA

### OPENING PRAYER

Eternal Word whose love never fails: thank You for the gift of Your Presence and for allowing Your breath to flow through Your creation. In this moment, inspire our ways of learning through earnest fervent prayer and let our daily living reveal You everywhere. Transform the yearnings of Your people through the power of Your Holy Spirit and grant us the strength and wisdom needed to enact the changes You will for each one of us this day. Let Your will be ours. We ask it all in the Name of Jesus, our Savior and Lord. *Amen.*

# WHO ARE WE AFFIRMATION

See page 5.

## SCRIPTURE

[Mark 12:28-34](#) (Ephesians 2:1-10 and Matthew 25:31-46)



## VIDEO with Rev. Jessica Hayden and Rev. Travis Knoll

Rev. Hayden, right, is pastor of Old Otterbein UMC in Baltimore, Md, and chairperson of the Conference Discipleship Council. Rev. Knoll, left, is pastor of Hunt’s Memorial UMC in Riderwood, Md.

## HEAD & HEART DISCUSSION

1. Reflect on the Great Commandment in Mark 12:29-31. What are some of the most powerful ways you’ve seen this recently lived out? How do these stories include elements of Wesley’s Means of Grace?

2. Wesley’s Rule of Discipleship includes personal acts of devotion and compassion, and communal acts of worship and justice. For John Wesley, each was essential for well-formed discipleship under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. In what ways does this “method” of faith influence your experience of loving God and loving neighbor?

3. Give an example of ways your love of God has caused you to confront injustice. How can we move beyond an intellectual understanding of our faith and into a lived daily practice of accountable discipleship?

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## CLOSING PRAYER

May the favor of the Lord our God rest on us;  
establish the work of our hands for us –  
yes, establish the work of our hands. So be it, Amen.  
*Psalm 90:17*

## BEYOND THE SESSION

### PRAYER AND PATHWAY TO JOURNALING

In your journal this week, we invite you to answer the traditional questions below. We also invite you to dig more deeply into discipleship.

Communal Means of Grace include acts of worship (like celebrating the sacraments, Christian conferencing, and Bible study) and acts of justice (which include actions to seek God's shalom and to end oppression and discrimination). Which of these is your faith community doing well? Which do you celebrate? And which, in your opinion, are your church's growing edges?

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Individual Means of Grace include acts of devotion (like reading, meditating, fasting, healthy living, and sharing our faith with others) and acts of compassion (like doing good works, visiting the sick, feeding the hungry, and more). Which of these acts do you do well? Which are your growing edges?

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As you reflect upon acts of worship, justice, devotion, and compassion, what thoughts arise that will help you to grow in discipleship?

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During this session, what surprised you or caught your attention?

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Where is the Spirit revealing to you areas for growth and transformation?

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How does what we talked about transform your relationship with God and others?

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Write a prayer to ask for God's support and enlightenment, which applies what you learned, and then go forth and live it.

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**As recipients of such a wonderful grace, we now go forth empowered to be the means of grace for others."**

*Rev. Jessica Hayden*

“By ‘means of grace,’ I understand outward signs, words, or actions, ordained of God, and appointed for this end, to be the ordinary channels whereby God might convey... preventing, justifying, or sanctifying grace.

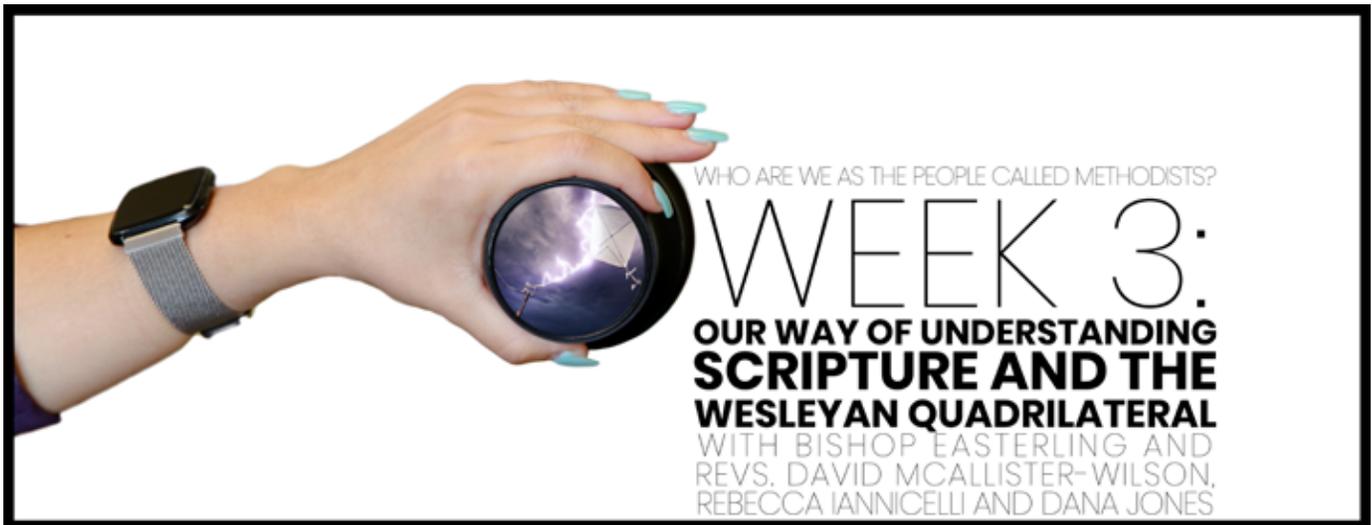
“I use this expression, ‘means of grace,’ because I know none better; and because it has been generally used in the Christian church for many ages; -- in particular by our own Church, which directs us to bless God both for the means of grace, and hope of glory; and teaches us, that a sacrament is ‘an outward sign of inward grace, and a means whereby we receive the same.’

“The chief of these means are prayer, whether in secret or with the great congregation; searching the Scriptures; (which implies reading, hearing, and meditating thereon;) and receiving the Lord's Supper, eating bread and drinking wine in remembrance of Him: And these we believe to be ordained of God, as the ordinary channels of conveying his grace to the souls of all.”

*["The Means of Grace"](#)* by John Wesley

## ADDITIONAL RESOURCES:

- **Book:** [Five Means of Grace](#) by Elaine A. Heath. Learn about “experiencing God’s love the Wesleyan Way” on a discipleship pathway.
- **Movie:** *Babette's Feast*, 1987
- **Hymn:** "Go, Make of All Disciples", Hymn #571
- **John Wesley's Sermon:** ["The Means of Grace"](#)



One defining trait of United Methodists is our use of the Wesleyan Quadrilateral, created in 1964 by theologian Albert Outler as a tool for discernment for people of faith seeking to live out their theology. With Scripture as primary, reason, experience, and tradition serve as additional sources of wisdom as we seek to discern God's will. How can United Methodists use the Quadrilateral to engage in a world where the Spirit of God is alive and moving in our everyday lives? In what ways do these sources of wisdom inform our faith and our future?

## PRE-SESSION ASSIGNMENTS

**Article:** [“Our Theological Guidelines: Wesley Quadrilateral;”](#) the denomination’s web page provides insights into our theological task and how we can pursue it using Scripture, reason, tradition and experience.

**Scripture:** [Proverbs 2:1-6;](#) [Luke 6:1-11](#)

## SMALL GROUP SESSION AGENDA

### OPENING PRAYER

Spirit of the Living God, fall afresh on us. Melt us. Mold Us. Fill Us. Use Us. Spirit of the Living God, fall afresh on not some of us, but all of us. Holy One, thank You for the gift of Your presence. With every breath, we are made anew. Reveal Yourself to us as the Great I Am and speak through the Scriptures, hymns, and experiences that are lifted before You this day. By the Power of Your Holy Spirit, move among and in spite of us. Remind us of who we are, why we exist, and what we are here to do for Your glory and for the transformation of Your world. In the beauty of silence, and as we communicate with one another, lead us. Interpreter of our collective cries and transformer of our groans, help us to deeply understand and have mercy upon one another. We are Yours, wholly Yours, and we live to glorify Your Name both now and forever. In Jesus’ Name, we pray. *Amen.*

# WHO ARE WE AFFIRMATION

See page 5.

## SCRIPTURE

[Proverbs 2:1-6](#); [Luke 6:1-11](#)

**As United Methodists, we believe God is yet active in our midst. How does (the quadrilateral) help reveal God's living Word?"**

*Bishop Easterling*



## VIDEO with Bishop Easterling and Revs. David McAllister-Wilson, Rebecca Iannicelli and Dana Jones

Bishop Easterling, top left, is the presiding bishop of the Baltimore-Washington Conference. Rev. McAllister-Wilson, top right, is president of Wesley Theological Seminary in Washington, D.C. Rev. Iannicelli, bottom left, is superintendent of the Annapolis District and Dean of the Cabinet. Rev. Dana Jones, bottom right, is pastor of Mount Olive UMC in Prince Frederick, Md.

## HEAD & HEART DISCUSSION

1. When we approach our lives and our faith open to the movement of the Holy Spirit, things change. When have you witnessed the Holy Spirit at work in your church?

2. Rev. David McAllister-Wilson talks of how Scripture helps us access "heaven opening in the soul." Read the passage about Jesus healing on the Sabbath in Luke 6:1-11 using the Quadrilateral to better understand this passage. How is your understanding deepened by the lenses of experience, tradition and reason?

3. Bishop Easterling spoke about God at work in the world today, and how we might live as co-creators with God. In what ways would delving deeply into the Wesleyan Quadrilateral affect your faith and your thinking about how the Holy Spirit is moving through our church and culture?

## CLOSING PRAYER

"The Lord bless you and keep you; the Lord make his face shine on you and be gracious to you; the Lord turn his face toward you and give you peace." – Numbers 6:24-26



## BEYOND THE SESSION

### PRAYER AND PATHWAY TO JOURNALING

Often, when we become reflexively resistant to what we've experienced through study, it is pointing towards an area worthy of more reflection and prayer. In this part of study, we invite you to examine your areas of resistance or struggle. Allow God to reveal how transformation can occur in those areas.

Use these open-ended questions to facilitate your introspection:

What surprised you or caught your attention?

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How does the discussion we had apply to your life, your church, our denomination?

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Where is the Spirit revealing to you areas for growth and transformation?

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How does what we talked about transform your relationship with God and others?

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Write a prayer to ask for God's support and enlightenment, which applies what you learned, and then go forth and live it.

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“Here then I am, far from the busy ways of men (sic). I sit down alone: only God is here. In God’s presence I open, I read God’s book; for this end, to find the way to heaven. Is there a doubt concerning the meaning of what I read? Does anything appear dark or intricate? I lift up my heart to the Father of Lights: ‘Lord, is it not Thy word, “If any person lacks wisdom, let them ask of God?” Thou ‘givest liberally, and upbraidest not.’ You have said, ‘If any be willing to do Your will, they shall know.’ I am willing to do; let me know Your will.

“I then search after and consider parallel passages of Scripture, ‘comparing spiritual things with spiritual.’ I meditate thereon with all the attention and earnestness of which my mind is capable. If any doubt still remains, I consult those who are experienced in the things of God; and then the writings whereby, being dead, they yet speak. And what I thus learn, that I teach.”

["From Preface to Sermons on Several Occasions"](#) by John Wesley

## ADDITIONAL RESOURCES:

- **Books:**
  - [Wesley and the Quadrilateral: Renewing the Conversation](#); a variety of United Methodist thinkers join in a conversation on the quadrilateral that examines the past while focusing on our current society and future cultural trends.
  - [A Year with John Wesley and Our Methodist Values](#); What is the Methodist way of living? A collection of 12 essays by a variety of authors explores the quadrilateral and the impact it can have on one’s faith in today’s world.
- **Movie:** *Dead Poet’s Society*, 1989
- **Hymn:** ["Spirit of the Living God"](#), Hymn #393
- **John Wesley’s Sermon:** ["From Preface to Sermons on Several Occasions"](#)



John Wesley, the founder of Methodism, stood as a counter-cultural presence, daring to stand-up and confront the culture of his day. Wesley was a champion for the enslaved, the working poor, and all those who lived in the margins. But his resistance came at a cost as he struggled with the established church, culture, and even his own ideas about acceptable faith. What relevance does Methodism's founder have for the denomination today? Which of his lessons can impact our lives in significant ways?

## PRE-SESSION ASSIGNMENTS

**Article :** ["Who is John Wesley Today?"](#) by Rev. Mark Gorman. To help create a more accurate portrait of Methodism's founder, Gorman suggests discarding three common beliefs about John Wesley and replacing them with three new understandings.

**Scripture:** [Galatians 3:25-29](#)

## SMALL GROUP SESSION AGENDA

### OPENING PRAYER

The Lord is compassionate and gracious, slow to anger, abounding in love. - Psalm 103:8.

Compassionate and Gracious God who is slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love: You are with us and You have time for us. Thank You. Thank You for the gift of Your breath.

As You've anointed and sent Jesus, our Savior, into the world to bring Good News to the poor, to proclaim release to the oppressed, recovery of [spiritual] sight to the blind, and to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor," anoint us to do likewise.

Cross and burden bearer, embolden us to share Your good news in ways that liberate right relationships, transform oppressive systems, and shift unhealthy mindsets. We are a part of Your family.

Thank You for claiming each one of us and for giving us an opportunity to better Your world according to the gifts that You have given us. With faith in You and Your ability to guide us, we pray in Jesus' Name. *Amen.*

# WHO ARE WE AFFIRMATION

See page 5.

## SCRIPTURE

[Galatians 3:25-29](#)

## VIDEO with Bishop Tom Bickerton

Bishop Bickerton is the episcopal leader of the New York Annual Conference.



**Those who had grown comfortable in the established Anglican Church had no room for innovation, cultural relevancy and contextual adaptation."**

*Bishop Tom Bickerton*

## HEAD & HEART DISCUSSION

1. John Wesley said, "I am not afraid that the people called Methodists should ever cease to exist either in Europe or America. But I am afraid lest they should only exist as a dead sect, having the form of religion without the power. And this undoubtedly will be the case unless they hold fast both the doctrine, spirit, and discipline with which they first set out." How is this playing out in your church and our denomination?

2. We have a founder who renounced slavery even though it was legal and Christians owned other human beings, justifying their actions with Scripture. What was it about Wesley's interpretation of Scripture that allowed him boldly to proclaim and work to transform systems that oppressed people?

3. Bishop Bickerton said we must find courage and discover our voices, even when we are tempted to be silent. In our weekly affirmation we say: "We will commit to the vulnerability necessary to allow God to break us open." In what ways do you need to be broken open today to resist injustice and oppression? As a Christ-follower, what will it cost?

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## CLOSING PRAYER

## BEYOND THE SESSION

### PRAYER AND PATHWAY TO JOURNALING

Often, when we become reflexively resistant to what we've experienced through study, it is pointing towards an area worthy of more reflection and prayer. In this part of study, we invite you to examine your areas of resistance or struggle. Allow God to reveal how transformation can occur in those areas.

Use these open-ended questions to facilitate your introspection:

What surprised you or caught your attention?

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How does the discussion we had apply to your life, your church, our denomination?

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Where is the Spirit revealing to you areas for growth and transformation?

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How does what we talked about transform your relationship with God and others?

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Write a prayer to ask for God's support and enlightenment, which applies what you learned, and then go forth and live it.

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**Perhaps we need to resist our own understanding of faith and once again discover that our methods will not save us, but the Holy Spirit will."**

*Bishop Tom Bickerton*

“Perhaps you will say, ‘I do not buy any negroes: I only use those left me by my father.’ So far is well; but is it enough to satisfy your own conscience? Had your father, have you, has anyone living, a right to use another as a slave? It cannot be, even setting revelation aside. It cannot be that either war, or contract, can give any person such a property in another as they have in sheep and oxen. Much less is it possible, that any child... should ever be born a slave. Liberty is the right of every human creature, as soon as they breathe the vital air. And no human law can deprive anyone of that right, which they derive from the law of nature.

“If therefore you have any regard to justice, (to say nothing of mercy, nor of the revealed law of GOD) render unto all their due. Give liberty to whom liberty is due, that is to every child, to every partaker of human nature. Let none serve you but by their own act and deed, by their own voluntary choice. Away with all whips, all chains, all compulsion! Be gentle towards all. And see that you invariably do unto every one, as you would they should do unto you.”

[“Thoughts on Slavery,”](#) 1774, John Wesley

## ADDITIONAL RESOURCES:

- **Book:** [Jesus and the Disinherited](#) by Howard Thurman. In this premiere theological work, Thurman speaks for those in the margins, claiming that hatred can only destroy and that only through love can God’s justice prevail.
- **Movie:** *Wesley: A Heart Transformed Can Change the World*, 2009
- **Hymn:** “And Are We Yet Alive”, Hymn #553 (6th verse)
- **John Wesley Booklet:** [“Thoughts on Slavery,”](#) 1774



The *Book of Discipline*, which has been described as a covenant or set of laws for the denomination, outlines a shared way of life for United Methodists. Within the Discipline is a set of foundational documents, or doctrinal standards, that give us direction and enables us to stand together as disciples of Jesus Christ. What does a lived-out doctrine look like in today's world? How can our differences spur conversation and draw us deeper into discipleship?

## PRE-SESSION ASSIGNMENTS

*(Exploring these assignments before the meeting is particularly important for this session.)*

**Article:** "[United Methodist Foundational Documents](#)" on The United Methodist Church's website provide the "basics" that define United Methodism. Follow the links on the page to explore: The Articles of Religion; Confession of Faith; and the General Rules of the Methodist Church.

**Scripture:** [2 Timothy 1:3-14](#)

## SMALL GROUP SESSION AGENDA

### OPENING PRAYER

Holy Creator: fervently You have called us into Your church and have placed us upon the sure foundation of Your Son, Jesus Christ. By water and the Word, You've made us a new creation. Thank You for the gift of one another. Strengthened by the power of Your Holy Spirit and united with disciples of every time and place, we are here. Guide us through Your words of life in and beyond our time together. Enable us to respond faithfully to Your calling and rest secure in Jesus. Bless our conversations and our actions in the Name of Your Son and our Savior, we pray. *Amen.*

## WHO ARE WE AFFIRMATION

See page 5.

## SCRIPTURE

[2 Timothy 1:3-14](#)

## VIDEO with Rev. Mark Gorman

Rev. Gorman is pastor of Centre UMC in Forest Hill, Md., and chairs the Rules Committee of the Baltimore-Washington Conference.



**Our mission, our doctrine and our life together are not three separate things. They are three parts of a greater whole, which is faithful discipleship of Jesus Christ. Whenever we open the Discipline, we want to keep this greater whole in mind."**

*Rev. Mark Gorman*

## HEAD & HEART DISCUSSION

1. In what ways does the *Book of Discipline* influence your personal understanding of what it means to be a United Methodist?

2. The denomination's foundational documents, or doctrinal standards, point to a shared way of life. If *you* were writing these documents, what would be essential to include as you define what it means to be United Methodist?

3. In the video, Rev. Gorman says, "Our differences ... are meant to spur conversation and discussion, and not just set us apart from other Christians." When we have disagreements about rules in the *Book of Discipline*, how do we faithfully engage one another in love?

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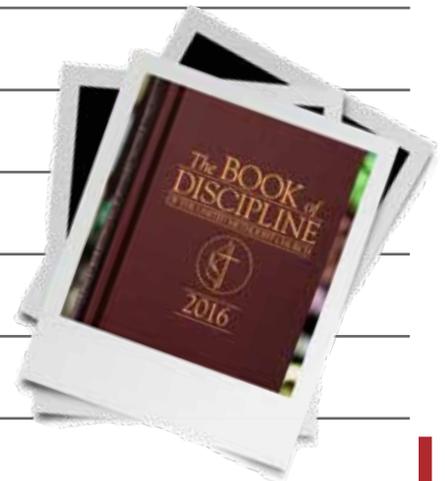
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## CLOSING PRAYER

# BEYOND THE SESSION

## PRAYER AND PATHWAY TO JOURNALING

Often, when we become reflexively resistant to what we've experienced through study, it is pointing towards an area worthy of more reflection and prayer. In this part of study, we invite you to examine your areas of resistance or struggle. Allow God to reveal how transformation can occur in those areas.

Use these open-ended questions to facilitate your introspection:

What surprised you or caught your attention?

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How does the discussion we had apply to your life, your church, our denomination?

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Where is the Spirit revealing to you areas for growth and transformation?

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How does what we talked about transform your relationship with God and others?

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Write a prayer to ask for God's support and enlightenment, which applies what you learned, and then go forth and live it.

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**||** Our *Book of Discipline* documents a shared way of life for those who call ourselves United Methodists."

*Rev. Mark Gorman*

"I am not afraid that the people called Methodists should ever cease to exist in either Europe or America. But I am afraid lest they should only exist as a dead sect, having the form of religion without the power. And this undoubtedly will be the case, unless they hold fast to both the doctrine, spirit, and **discipline** with which they first set out."

Paraphrased and excerpted below from John Wesley, "[Thoughts Upon Methodism](#)," 1786, in *Works* [vol. 13; Jackson edition, 1879], 258; emphasis added.

## ADDITIONAL RESOURCES:

- **Book:** [Bid Our Jarring Conflicts Cease](#) by David N. Fields. Fields moves beyond the frequently quoted wisdom of Wesley to explore his ideas of holiness and diversity, and how the church can move forward with a greater love.
- **Article:** "[Organization: The Church as Connection.](#)" Read more about how United Methodism is a connectional church.
- **Movie:** *Just Mercy*, 2019
- **Hymn:** "The Church's One Foundation," Hymn # 545
- **John Wesley's Sermon:** "[Thoughts Upon Methodism](#)," 1786, in *Works* [vol. 13; Jackson edition, 1879], 258.



When the Evangelical United Brethren (EUB) and Methodist churches united 50 years ago, the EUB leaders insisted on an integrated denomination. But many questions of race and justice remained unresolved. As the church considers its response to homosexuality, how does racism shape the conversation? How must the church and its people redefine or reinvent themselves so that we can stand united in Christ? How is the church “forever beginning?”

## PRE-SESSION ASSIGNMENTS

**Article:** [“Fifty Years On, the Central Jurisdiction’s Shadow Still Looms,”](#) by Joey Butler, United Methodist News Service. The 1968 merger that created The United Methodist Church birthed a new denomination and also sought to address racial segregation by abolishing the all-black Central Jurisdiction.

**Scripture:** [Ephesians 4:1-6, 11-16](#)

## SMALL GROUP SESSION AGENDA

### OPENING PRAYER

God of our weary years, God of our silent tears, Thou who hast brought us thus far on the way; Thou who hast by Thy might led us into the light: keep us forever on Thy path we pray.

God our help in ages past, our hope for years to come: we gather in Your Name thankful for Your abiding presence. You’ve breathed Your dignity into our very essence and we move in response to Your voice. Thank You for being our Great Hope among the adversities, joys, and stony paths of life. Thank You for claiming each one of us and for giving us great purpose and identity in You. In this time together, incline our hearts to Your testimonies, give us a teachable heart and the ability to do all that You ask of us. Establish Your word and confirm Your promises in this moment. Speak the truths that You would have us echo. Bless us in this time together and enable us to wholly focus on and be strengthened by all that is You. In Jesus’ Name, we pray and ask it all. *Amen.*

## WHO ARE WE AFFIRMATION

See page 5.

### SCRIPTURE

[Ephesians 4:1-6, 11-16](#)

*Lift every voice and sing  
Till earth and heaven ring,  
Ring with the harmonies of Liberty;  
Let our rejoicing rise  
High as the listening skies,  
Let it resound loud as the rolling sea.  
Sing a song full of the faith that the dark past has taught us,  
Sing a song full of the hope that the present has brought us.  
Facing the rising sun of our new day begun,  
Let us march on till victory is won.*

*Stony the road we trod,  
Bitter the chastening rod,  
Felt in the days when hope unborn had died;  
Yet with a steady beat,  
Have not our weary feet  
Come to the place for which our fathers sighed?  
We have come over a way that with tears has been watered,  
We have come, treading our path through the blood of the slaughtered,  
Out from the gloomy past,  
Till now we stand at last  
Where the white gleam of our bright star is cast.*

*God of our weary years,  
God of our silent tears,  
Thou who hast brought us thus far on the way;  
Thou who hast by Thy might  
Led us into the light,  
Keep us forever in the path, we pray.  
Lest our feet stray from the places, our God, where we met Thee,  
Lest, our hearts drunk with the wine of the world, we forget Thee;  
Shadowed beneath Thy hand,  
May we forever stand.  
True to our God,  
True to our native land.*

**Four hundred years ago, slavery came to this country and it's never been the same. It's affected every inch and area of human life and existence in this country. Everything, including the church, has been affected."**

*Bishop Forrest Stith*



## BEYOND THE SESSION

### PRAYER AND PATHWAY TO JOURNALING

Often, when we become reflexively resistant to what we've experienced through study, it is pointing towards an area worthy of more reflection and prayer. In this part of study, we invite you to examine your areas of resistance or struggle. Allow God to reveal how transformation can occur in those areas.

Use these open-ended questions to facilitate your introspection:

What surprised you or caught your attention?

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How does the discussion we had apply to your life, your church, our denomination?

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Where is the Spirit revealing to you areas for growth and transformation?

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How does what we talked about transform your relationship with God and others?

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Write a prayer to ask for God's support and enlightenment, which applies what you learned, and then go forth and live it.

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**||** The Central Jurisdictions were always just a symptom of the racism that was endemic to the church."

*Rev. Sarah Schlieckert*

“(By unity) I do not mean, ‘Be of my opinion.’ You need not: I do not expect or desire it. Neither do I mean, ‘I will be of your opinion.’ I cannot; it does not depend on my choice: I can no more think, than I can see or hear, as I will. Keep you your opinion; I mine; and that as steadily as ever. You need not even endeavor to come over to me or bring me over to you. I do not desire you to dispute those points, or to hear or speak one word concerning them. Let all opinions alone on one side and the other: only ‘give me your hand.’ (2 Kings 10:15)

“I do not mean, ‘Embrace my modes of worship,’ or, ‘I will embrace yours.’ This also is a thing which does not depend either on your choice or mine. We must both act as each is fully persuaded in their own mind. Hold you fast that which you believe is most acceptable to God, and I will do the same. I believe infants ought to be baptized; and that this may be done either by dipping or sprinkling. If you are otherwise persuaded, be so still, and follow your own persuasion. I have no desire to dispute with you one moment upon any of the preceding. Let all these smaller points stand aside. Let them never come into sight ‘If thine heart is as my heart,’ if you love God and all humanity, I ask no more: ‘give me your hand.’

“I mean, first, love me...: love me with a very tender affection, as a friend that is closer than a brother; as a brother in Christ, a fellow citizen of the New Jerusalem, a fellow soldier engaged in the same warfare, under the same Captain of our salvation. Love me as a companion in the kingdom and patience of Jesus, and a joint heir of his glory.

“I mean, Secondly, commend me to God in all your prayers; wrestle with God on my behalf, that God would speedily correct what God sees amiss, and supply what is wanting in me.

“I mean, Thirdly, provoke me to love and to good works.

“I mean, Lastly, love me not in word only, but in deed and in truth. So far as in conscience you can (retaining still your own opinions, and your own manner of worshipping God), join with me in the work of God; and let us go on hand in hand.”

Excerpted from: [“On Catholic Spirit”](#) by John Wesley

## ADDITIONAL RESOURCES:

- **Book:** [Methodism’s Radical Dilemma: The Story of the Central Jurisdiction](#) by James S. Thomas. In 1939, the African-American members of the Methodist Episcopal Church, Methodist Episcopal Church South, and the Methodist Protestant Church were segregated in the Central Conference. This is their story.
- **Timeline:** [“Lessons of the Black Church in History: A listing of key dates,”](#) by Bishop Forrest Stith; A listing of highlights of African-Americans within the Methodist Church.
- **Article:** [“The Racial Crisis in the Methodist Church,”](#) by Peter C. Murray from Christian History, Oct. 1987; A scholarly look at the black church in Methodist history.
- **Movie:** *The Hate U Give*, 2018
- **Hymn:** "Lift Every Voice and Sing", Hymn #519
- **John Wesley's Sermon:** ["On Catholic Spirit"](#)

## INDEX OF PART 2 RESOURCES

[BWCUMC.ORG/WHOAREWELINKS](http://BWCUMC.ORG/WHOAREWELINKS)

Watch: [What is Grace?](#)

### WEEK 1: OUR THEOLOGY OF GRACE

Watch: Rev. Claire Matheny, <http://tiny.cc/theologyofgrace>

Watch: "Grace Illuminates our Why" <http://tiny.cc/knowyourwhy>

Movie: *Les Misérables*, 2012

Sermon: "The Scripture Way of Salvation", <https://tinyurl.com/h7zxdgw>

Sing: "Jesus, Lover of My Soul." <http://tiny.cc/loverofmysoul>

Sing: "Grace Greater than Our Sin", Hymn #365

Read: "Why Am I Still a United Methodist: Grace for All, Grace in All", <http://tiny.cc/whyamethodist>

Read: *A Grace-full Life*, <http://tiny.cc/gracefullife>

### WEEK 2: OUR WESLEYAN DISCIPLESHIP

Watch: Revs. Jessica Hayden and Travis Knoll, <http://tiny.cc/wesleyanddiscipleship>

Watch: Quick video on discipleship, <http://tiny.cc/jesussaidgo>

Movie: *Babette's Feast*, 2012

Sermon: "The Means of Grace", <https://tinyurl.com/y6olamw2>

Sing: "Go, Make of All Disciples", Hymn #571

Read: "Five Means of Grace", <http://tiny.cc/fivemeans>

Read: *Five Marks of a Methodist: The Fruit of a Living Faith*, <http://tiny.cc/fivemarksmethodist>

Read: "[The Wesleyan Way of Discipleship](#)"

### WEEK 3: OUR WAY OF UNDERSTANDING...

Watch: Bishop Easterling, Revs. David McAllister-Wilson, Rebecca Iannicelli & Dana Jones, <http://tiny.cc/understandingscripture>

Movie: *Dead Poet's Society*, 1989, <http://tiny.cc/deadpoetsmovie>

Sermon: From Preface to Sermons on Several Occasions, <http://tiny.cc/wesleysermonpreface>

Sing: "Spirit of the Living God", Hymn #393, <http://tiny.cc/spiritofthelivinggod>

Read: Wesley and the Quadrilateral: Renewing the Conversation, <http://tiny.cc/quadrilateral>

Read: A Year with John Wesley and Our Methodist Values, <http://tiny.cc/methodistvalues>

Read: Our Theological Guidelines: Wesley Quadrilateral, <http://tiny.cc/UMCguidelines>

### WEEK 4: ON JOHN WESLEY, THE RESISTER

Watch: Bishop Tom Bickerton, <http://tiny.cc/foundingfather>

Movie: *Wesley: A Heart Transformed Can Change the World*, 2009, <http://tiny.cc/wesleymovie>

Sing: "And Are We Yet Alive", Hymn #553 (6th verse)

Read: Who is John Wesley Today?, <https://tinyurl.com/whoiswesleytoday>

Read: Three short poems on resistance, <http://tiny.cc/fergusonpoem>

Read: Jesus and the Disinherited, <http://tiny.cc/thurmanbook>

Read: Thoughts on Slavery, <http://tiny.cc/thoughtsonslavery>

Read: John Wesley Letter to William Wilberforce, <http://tiny.cc/wesleyletter>

### WEEK 5: OUR FOUNDATIONAL DOCTRINE

Watch: Rev. Mark Gorman, <http://tiny.cc/foundationaldoctrines>

Movie: *Just Mercy*, 2019

Sermon: Thoughts Upon Methodism, <https://tinyurl.com/thoughtsuponmethodism>

Sing: "The Church's One Foundation," Hymn # 545

Read: United Methodist Foundational Documents, <http://tiny.cc/foundational>

Read: Bid Our Jarring Conflicts Cease, <http://tiny.cc/conflictscease>

Read: Organization: The Church as Connection, <http://tiny.cc/UMCorganization>

## WEEK 6: ON WHAT REALLY HAPPENED IN 1968

Watch: Bishop Stith and Rev. Sarah Schlieckert, <http://tiny.cc/1968>

Movie: *The Hate U Give*, 2018

Timeline: "Lessons of the Black Church in History", <http://tiny.cc/blackchurchhistory>

Sermon: "On Catholic Spirit", <https://tinyurl.com/y3ojp97u>

Sing: "Lift Every Voice and Sing", Hymn #519

Read: "Methodism's Radical Dilemma: The Story of the Central Jurisdiction", <http://tiny.cc/centraljurisdiction>

Read: "The Racial Crisis in the Methodist Church", <http://tiny.cc/racialcrisis>

Read: "Fifty Years On, the Central Jurisdiction's Shadow Still Looms", <http://tiny.cc/50yearson>

## GOING DEEPER STILL / OTHER RESOURCES

### WEEK 1: GRACE

- **"A Wesleyan Understanding of Grace;"** by Bishop Kenneth Carder, Interpreter Magazine, Nov.-Dec. 2016. (<https://tinyurl.com/yxk2vqgh>) An exploration of the pathways of prevenient, justifying and sanctifying grace as a gift, which are both gift from, and response to, God.
- **"Our Wesley Heritage: Grace."** On the UMC website, an exploration of practical divinity and the invitation to grow in knowledge and love of God.
- **"The Wesleyan Concept of Grace;"** Four illustrations with Bible passages that highlight ideas about grace.
- **"Skit Guys on Grace."** In this conversation between Jesus and Peter, grace is illustrated when Jesus forgives the unforgivable.

### WEEK 2: OUR WESLEYAN DISCIPLESHIP

- ***A Disciple's Heart: Growing in Love and Grace* by James Harnish.** What does it mean to grow in love and faith and move on toward Christian perfection? This small-group workbook helps readers explore their hearts from a Wesleyan perspective.
- ***Eight Life-Enriching Practices of United Methodists* by Henry H. Knight III.** This United Methodist resource looks at prayer, Bible study, evangelism, community, worship and the sacraments, outreach, and justice.

### WEEK 3: OUR WESLEYAN QUADRILATERAL

- ***Methodism as an Experiment in Grace* by David McAllister-Wilson;** the president of Wesley Seminary, explores Methodism's heritage and how John Wesley, who was a peer of Benjamin Franklin, experimented with, and experienced, the grace and power of God.
- ***How John Wesley Read the Bible* by Randy Maddox.** John Wesley was "a man of one book," but his relationship with that book was complex and profound.

### WEEK 4: OUR FOUNDER: JOHN WESLEY THE RESISTER

- ***Sacred Resistance: A Practical Guide to Christian Witness and Dissent* by Ginger Gaines-Cirelli.** As society becomes more polarized, religious leaders are called upon to lead with courage as they help people face their fears and society's challenges.

- ***The Cost of Discipleship* by Dietrich Bonhoeffer.** One of the 20th century's greatest theologians examines the meaning of discipleship and the difference between cheap and costly grace.
- ***Wesley and the People Called Methodists: Second Edition* by Richard P. Heitzenrater.** A notable history of the Wesleyan movement as the story of the many people who contributed to the theology, organization, and mission of Methodism.
- ***Methodist Identity: Part 1: Our Story*,** an eight-week study hosted by Justo Gonzalez.
- ***The 19: Questions to Kindle the Wesleyan Spirit* by Carolyn Moore.**

#### WEEK 5: OUR FOUNDATIONAL DOCTRINE

- [Wesley's Standard Sermons](#)
- [Wesley's Notes Upon the New Testament](#)
- **Cartoon: ["The Wesley Bros"](#)**
- ***Methodist Doctrine: The Essentials, Revised edition* by Ted Campbell.** This is a basic summary of Methodist doctrinal standards, covering The United Methodist Church and other denominations.
- ***Keeping Faith: An Ecumenical Commentary on the Articles of Religion and Confession of Faith in the Wesleyan Tradition* by D. Stephen Long.** Long gives serious theological comments on the Articles of Religion and Confession of Faith. This book is the first in a series called Wesleyan Doctrine Series.
- ***The Method of Our Mission: United Methodist Polity & Organization* by Lacey C. Warner.** Warner introduces The Book of Discipline and helps readers understand its place in the life of our denomination.
- ***Responsible Grace: John Wesley's Practical Theology* by Randy Maddox.** This is the most significant study of John Wesley's theology to date, but it is definitely a challenging read.

# APPENDIX

## APPENDIX A: ADDITIONAL GROUND RULES

### **Respectful Communication Guidelines by Eric Law**

As a way to create a brave and safe space for faithful dialogue, please consider using the *RESPECTful Communication Guidelines* by Eric Law and the process of Mutual Invitation. These guidelines are written in a way for you to share with your group. If your group is larger than seven people, consider breaking people into smaller groups and provide time for sharing.

R = take RESPONSIBILITY for what you say and feel without blaming others.

E = use EMPATHETIC listening.

S = be SENSITIVE to differences in communication styles.

P = PONDER what you hear and feel before you speak.

E = EXAMINE your own assumptions and perceptions.

C = keep CONFIDENTIALITY.

T = TRUST ambiguity because we are not here to debate who is right or wrong.

### Mutual Invitation

Taken from *The Wolf Shall Dance With the Lamb* by Eric Law

In order to ensure that everyone who wants to share has the opportunity to speak, we will proceed in the following way: The leader or a designated person will share first. After that person has spoken, he or she then invites another to share.

Whom you invite does not need to be the person next to you. (As a matter of fact it is best if it is NOT the person next to you.) After the next person has spoken, that person is given the privilege to invite another to share.

If you are not ready to share yet, say “I pass for now” and you will be invited to share later on. If you don’t want to say anything at all, simply say “pass” and proceed to invite another to share. We will do this until everyone has been invited.

We invite you to listen and not to respond to someone’s sharing immediately (also known as crosstalk). There will be time to respond and to ask clarification questions after everyone has had an opportunity to share.

### **Grounding Virtues by Krista Tippett from On Being Project**

Taken from Krista Tippett’s *Grounding Virtues: What we Practice We Become* at

<http://tiny.cc/betterconversations>

### WORDS THAT MATTER

We are starved for fresh language to approach each other. We need what Elizabeth Alexander calls “words that shimmer” – words with power that convey real truth, which cannot be captured in mere fact. Words have the force of action and become virtues in and of themselves. The words we use shape how we understand ourselves, how we interpret the world, how we treat others. Words are one of our primary ways to reach across the mystery of each other. As technology reframes the meaning of basic human acts like making and leading and belonging, the world needs the most vivid and transformative universe of words we can muster.

### HOSPITALITY

Hospitality is a bridge to all the great virtues, but it is immediately accessible. You don’t have to love or forgive or feel compassion to extend hospitality. But it’s more than an invitation. It is the creation of an inviting, trustworthy space – an atmosphere as much as a place. It shapes the experience to follow. It creates the intention,

the spirit, and the boundaries for what is possible. As creatures, it seems, we imagine a homogeneity in other groups that we know not to be there in our own. But new social realities are brought into being over time by a quality of relationship between unlikely combinations of people. When in doubt, practice hospitality.

#### HUMILITY

Humility is a companion to curiosity, surprise, and delight. Spiritual humility is not about getting small. It is about encouraging others to be big. It is not about debasing oneself but about approaching everything and everyone with a readiness to be surprised and delighted. This is the humility of the child. It is the humility in the spirituality of the scientist and the mystic – to be planted in what you know, while living expectantly for discoveries yet to come. The wisest people we've interviewed carry a humility that manifests as tenderness in a creative interplay with power.

#### PATIENCE

Like humility, patience is not to be mistaken for meekness and ineffectuality. It can be the fruit of a full-on reckoning with reality – a commitment to move through the world as it is, not as we wish it to be. A spiritual view of time is a long view of time – seasonal and cyclical, resistant to the illusion of time as a bully, time as a matter of deadlines. Human transformation takes time – longer than we want it to – but it is what is necessary for social transformation. A long, patient view of time will replenish our sense of our capacities and our hope for the world.

#### GENEROUS LISTENING

Listening is an everyday art and virtue, but it's an art we have lost and must learn anew. Listening is more than being quiet while others have their say. It is about presence as much as receiving; it is about connection more than observing. Real listening is powered by curiosity. It involves vulnerability – a willingness to be surprised, to let go of assumptions and take in ambiguity. It is never in "gotcha" mode. The generous listener wants to understand the humanity behind the words of the other and patiently summons one's own best self and one's own most generous words and questions.

#### ADVENTUROUS CIVILITY

The adventure of civility for our time can't be a mere matter of politeness or niceness. Adventurous civility honors the difficulty of what we face and the complexity of what it means to be human. It doesn't celebrate diversity by putting it up on a pedestal and ignoring its messiness and its depths. The intimate and civilizational questions that perplex and divide us will not be resolved quickly. Civility, in our world of change, is about creating new possibilities for living forward while being different and even continuing to hold profound disagreement.

## APPENDIX B: UNITED METHODIST FOUNDATIONAL DOCUMENTS

### United Methodist Foundational Documents

#### SHARE:

Just as creeds such as the Apostles' Creed summarize the belief of all Christians, the Articles of Religion of The Methodist Church and the Confessions of Faith of The Evangelical United Brethren Church form a foundation of doctrine for United Methodists. They, along with Wesley's Sermons on Several Occasions and Explanatory Notes Upon the New Testament, are "standards" of doctrine for United Methodists.

#### **The Articles of Religion**

When the Methodist movement in America became a church in 1784, John Wesley provided the American Methodists with a liturgy and a doctrinal statement, which contained twenty-four "Articles of Religion" or basic statements of belief. These Articles of Religion were taken from the Thirty-Nine Articles of the Church of England—the church out of which the Methodism movement began—and had been the standards for preaching within the Methodist movement. When these articles were voted on by the American conference, an additional article was added regarding the American context, bringing the total number of articles to 25.

These articles became the basic standards for Christian belief in the Methodist church in North America. First published in the church's Book of Discipline in 1790, the Articles of Religion have continued to be part of the church's official statement of belief.

#### **The Confession of Faith**

The Confession of Faith is the statement of belief from The Evangelical United Brethren Church. Consisting of 16 articles, the current form of this statement of faith was presented and adopted by the 1962 General Conference.

When The United Methodist Church was formed in 1968 from the union of several branches of the Methodist Church and the Evangelical United Brethren Church, both The Articles of Religion and the Confession of Faith were adopted as basic statements of the Christian faith.

#### **The General Rules of the Methodist Church**

Wesley knew how difficult it would be for his followers, particularly those recently converted, to live a holy life. To this end, he created structures and practices that would help foster faithful living in the members of the Methodist Societies. In 1743 he outlined these practices in the "General Rules," which functioned as a sort of contract by which group members held one another accountable.

These rules are organized into these three basic categories:

- Do no harm, "avoiding evil of all kinds";
- Do good, "of every possible sort, and as far as possible, to all;"
- Practice "the ordinances of God," or engage in individual and communal spiritual practices such as prayer, Bible reading, worship and the Lord's Supper.

#### **Wesley's Sermons and Notes on the New Testament**

Wesley's sermons contain his basic understanding of the Christian faith and his thinking about how we are to live out this faith both personally and corporately. His written sermons were intended to teach the basic beliefs of the faith as well as nurture and encourage his followers in their discipleship.

Wesley's Explanatory Notes Upon the New Testament provided his followers with tools for interpreting the Bible. These notes contained both Wesley's own ideas as well as insights borrowed from other interpreters and commentaries.

Adapted from:

- *Who Are We? Doctrine, Ministry and Mission of the United Methodist Church (Leader's Guide)* by Kenneth L. Carder (Cokesbury, 1998), pp. 33-34, 36, 39.
- *This We Believe: The Articles of Religion and the Confession of Faith of The United Methodist Church (Student)* by Norman P. Madsen (Cokesbury, 1987), pp. 5, 9; and 10.
- *The 2012 Book of Discipline of The United Methodist Church (The United Methodist Publishing House, 2012)*

## The Articles of Religion of the Methodist Church

### Article I – Of Faith in the Holy Trinity

There is but one living and true God, everlasting, without body or parts, of infinite power, wisdom, and goodness; the maker and preserver of all things, both visible and invisible. And in unity of this Godhead there are three persons, of one substance, power, and eternity—the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost.

### Article II – Of the Word, or Son of God, Who Was Made Very Man

The Son, who is the Word of the Father, the very and eternal God, of one substance with the Father, took man's nature in the womb of the blessed Virgin; so that two whole and perfect natures, that is to say, the Godhead and Manhood, were joined together in one person, never to be divided; whereof is one Christ, very God and very Man, who truly suffered, was crucified, dead, and buried, to reconcile his Father to us, and to be a sacrifice, not only for original guilt, but also for actual sins of men.

### Article III – Of the Resurrection of Christ

Christ did truly rise again from the dead, and took again his body, with all things appertaining to the perfection of man's nature, wherewith he ascended into heaven, and there sitteth until he return to judge all men at the last day.

### Article IV – Of the Holy Ghost

The Holy Ghost, proceeding from the Father and the Son, is of one substance, majesty, and glory with the Father and the Son, very and eternal God.

### Article V – Of the Sufficiency of the Holy Scriptures for Salvation

The Holy Scripture containeth all things necessary to salvation; so that whatsoever is not read therein, nor may be proved thereby, is not to be required of any man that it should be believed as an article of faith, or be thought requisite or necessary to salvation. In the name of the Holy Scripture we do understand those canonical books of the Old and New Testament of whose authority was never any doubt in the church. The names of the canonical books are:

Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy, Joshua, Judges, Ruth, The First Book of Samuel, The Second Book of Samuel, The First Book of Kings, The Second Book of Kings, The First Book of Chronicles, The Second Book of Chronicles, The Book of Ezra, The Book of Nehemiah, The Book of Esther, The Book of Job, The Psalms, The Proverbs, Ecclesiastes or the Preacher, Cantica or Songs of Solomon, Four Prophets the Greater, Twelve Prophets the Less.

All the books of the New Testament, as they are commonly received, we do receive and account canonical.

### Article VI – Of the Old Testament

The Old Testament is not contrary to the New; for both in the Old and New Testament everlasting life is offered to mankind by Christ, who is the only Mediator between God and man, being both God and Man. Wherefore they are not to be heard who feign that the old fathers did look only for transitory promises.

Although the law given from God by Moses as touching ceremonies and rites doth not bind Christians, nor ought the civil precepts thereof of necessity be received in any commonwealth; yet notwithstanding, no Christian whatsoever is free from the obedience of the commandments which are called moral.

#### Article VII – Of Original or Birth Sin

Original sin standeth not in the following of Adam (as the Pelagians do vainly talk), but it is the corruption of the nature of every man, that naturally is engendered of the offspring of Adam, whereby man is very far gone from original righteousness, and of his own nature inclined to evil, and that continually.

#### Article VIII – Of Free Will

The condition of man after the fall of Adam is such that he cannot turn and prepare himself, by his own natural strength and works, to faith, and calling upon God; wherefore we have no power to do good works, pleasant and acceptable to God, without the grace of God by Christ preventing us, that we may have a good will, and working with us, when we have that good will.

#### Article IX – Of the Justification of Man

We are accounted righteous before God only for the merit of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, by faith, and not for our own works or deservings. Wherefore, that we are justified by faith, only, is a most wholesome doctrine, and very full of comfort.

#### Article X – Of Good Works

Although good works, which are the fruits of faith, and follow after justification, cannot put away our sins, and endure the severity of God's judgment; yet are they pleasing and acceptable to God in Christ, and spring out of a true and lively faith, insomuch that by them a lively faith may be as evidently known as a tree is discerned by its fruit.

#### Article XI – Of Works of Supererogation

Voluntary works—besides, over and above God's commandments—which they call works of supererogation, cannot be taught without arrogancy and impiety. For by them men do declare that they do not only render unto God as much as they are bound to do, but that they do more for his sake than of bounden duty is required; whereas Christ saith plainly: When you have done all that is commanded you, say, We are unprofitable servants.

#### Article XII – Of Sin After Justification

Not every sin willingly committed after justification is the sin against the Holy Ghost, and unpardonable. Wherefore, the grant of repentance is not to be denied to such as fall into sin after justification. After we have received the Holy Ghost, we may depart from grace given, and fall into sin, and, by the grace of God, rise again and amend our lives. And therefore they are to be condemned who say they can no more sin as long as they live here; or deny the place of forgiveness to such as truly repent.

#### Article XIII – Of the Church

The visible church of Christ is a congregation of faithful men in which the pure Word of God is preached, and the Sacraments duly administered according to Christ's ordinance, in all those things that of necessity are requisite to the same.

#### Article XIV – Of Purgatory

The Romish doctrine concerning purgatory, pardon, worshiping, and adoration, as well of images as of relics, and also invocation of saints, is a fond thing, vainly invented, and grounded upon no warrant of Scripture, but repugnant to the Word of God.

#### Article XV – Of Speaking in the Congregation in Such a Tongue as the People Understand

It is a thing plainly repugnant to the Word of God, and the custom of the primitive church, to have public prayer in the church, or to minister the Sacraments, in a tongue not understood by the people.

4. For the contemporary interpretation of this and similar articles, (i.e. Articles XIV, XV, XVI, XVIII, XIX, XX, and XXI) in consonance with our best ecumenical insights and judgment, see "Resolution of Intent: With a View to Unity," *The Book of Resolutions*, 2008, p.292).

#### Article XVI – Of the Sacraments

Sacraments ordained of Christ are not only badges or tokens of Christian men's profession, but rather they are certain signs of grace, and God's good will toward us, by which he doth work invisibly in us, and doth not only quicken, but also strengthen and confirm, our faith in him.

There are two Sacraments ordained of Christ our Lord in the Gospel; that is to say, Baptism and the Supper of the Lord.

Those five commonly called sacraments, that is to say, confirmation, penance, orders, matrimony, and extreme unction, are not to be counted for Sacraments of the Gospel; being such as have partly grown out of the corrupt following of the apostles, and partly are states of life allowed in the Scriptures, but yet have not the like nature of Baptism and the Lord's Supper, because they have not any visible sign or ceremony ordained of God.

The Sacraments were not ordained of Christ to be gazed upon, or to be carried about; but that we should duly use them. And in such only as worthily receive the same, they have a wholesome effect or operation; but they that receive them unworthily, purchase to themselves condemnation, as St. Paul saith.

#### Article XVII – Of Baptism

Baptism is not only a sign of profession and mark of difference whereby Christians are distinguished from others that are not baptized; but it is also a sign of regeneration or the new birth. The Baptism of young children is to be retained in the Church.

#### Article XVIII – Of the Lord's Supper

The Supper of the Lord is not only a sign of the love that Christians ought to have among themselves one to another, but rather is a sacrament of our redemption by Christ's death; insomuch that, to such as rightly, worthily, and with faith receive the same, the bread which we break is a partaking of the body of Christ; and likewise the cup of blessing is a partaking of the blood of Christ.

Transubstantiation, or the change of the substance of bread and wine in the Supper of our Lord, cannot be proved by Holy Writ, but is repugnant to the plain words of Scripture, overthroweth the nature of a sacrament, and hath given occasion to many superstitions.

The body of Christ is given, taken, and eaten in the Supper, only after a heavenly and spiritual manner. And the mean whereby the body of Christ is received and eaten in the Supper is faith.

The Sacrament of the Lord's Supper was not by Christ's ordinance reserved, carried about, lifted up, or worshiped.

#### Article XIX – Of Both Kinds

The cup of the Lord is not to be denied to the lay people; for both the parts of the Lord's Supper, by Christ's ordinance and commandment, ought to be administered to all Christians alike.

#### Article XX – Of the One Oblation of Christ, Finished upon the Cross

The offering of Christ, once made, is that perfect redemption, propitiation, and satisfaction for all the sins of the whole world, both original and actual; and there is none other satisfaction for sin but that alone.

Wherefore the sacrifice of masses, in the which it is commonly said that the priest doth offer Christ for the quick and the dead, to have remission of pain or guilt, is a blasphemous fable and dangerous deceit.

#### Article XXI – Of the Marriage of Ministers

The ministers of Christ are not commanded by God's law either to vow the estate of single life, or to abstain from marriage; therefore it is lawful for them, as for all other Christians, to marry at their own discretion, as they shall judge the same to serve best to godliness.

#### Article XXII – Of the Rites and Ceremonies of Churches

It is not necessary that rites and ceremonies should in all places be the same, or exactly alike; for they have been always different, and may be changed according to the diversity of countries, times, and men's manners, so that nothing be ordained against God's Word. Whosoever, through his private judgment, willingly and purposely doth openly break the rites and ceremonies of the church to which he belongs, which are not repugnant to the Word of God, and are ordained and approved by common authority, ought to be rebuked openly, that others may fear to do the like, as one that offendeth against the common order of the church, and woundeth the consciences of weak brethren.

Every particular church may ordain, change, or abolish rites and ceremonies, so that all things may be done to edification.

#### Article XXIII – Of the Rulers of the United States of America

The President, the Congress, the general assemblies, the governors, and the councils of state, as the delegates of the people, are the rulers of the United States of America, according to the division of power made to them by the Constitution of the United States and by the constitutions of their respective states. And the said states are a sovereign and independent nation, and ought not to be subject to any foreign jurisdiction.

#### Article XXIV – Of Christian Men's Goods

The riches and goods of Christians are not common as touching the right, title, and possession of the same, as some do falsely boast. Notwithstanding, every man ought, of such things as he possesseth, liberally to give alms to the poor, according to his ability.

#### Article XXV – Of a Christian Man's Oath

As we confess that vain and rash swearing is forbidden Christian men by our Lord Jesus Christ and James his apostle, so we judge that the Christian religion doth not prohibit, but that a man may swear when the magistrate requireth, in a cause of faith and charity, so it be done according to the prophet's teaching, in justice, judgment, and truth.

[The following Article from the *Methodist Protestant Discipline* is placed here by the Uniting Conference (1939). It was not one of the Articles of Religion voted upon by the three churches.]

#### *Of Sanctification*

Sanctification is that renewal of our fallen nature by the Holy Ghost, received through faith in Jesus Christ, whose blood of atonement cleanseth from all sin; whereby we are not only delivered from the guilt of sin, but are washed from its pollution, saved from its power, and are enabled, through grace, to love God with all our hearts and to walk in his holy commandments blameless.

[The following provision was adopted by the Uniting Conference (1939). This statement seeks to interpret to our churches in foreign lands Article XXIII of the Articles of Religion. It is a legislative enactment but is not a part of the Constitution. (See Judicial Council Decisions 41, 176, and Decision 6, Interim Judicial Council.)]

#### *Of the Duty of Christians to the Civil Authority*

It is the duty of all Christians, and especially of all Christian ministers, to observe and obey the laws and commands of the governing or supreme authority of the country of which they are citizens or subjects or in which they reside, and to use all laudable means to encourage and enjoin obedience to the powers that be.

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## Confession of Faith of The Evangelical United Brethren Church

### Article I – God

We believe in the one true, holy and living God, Eternal Spirit, who is Creator, Sovereign and Preserver of all things visible and invisible. He is infinite in power, wisdom, justice, goodness and love, and rules with gracious regard for the well-being and salvation of men, to the glory of his name. We believe the one God reveals himself as the Trinity: Father, Son and Holy Spirit, distinct but inseparable, eternally one in essence and power.

### Article II – Jesus Christ

We believe in Jesus Christ, truly God and truly man, in whom the divine and human natures are perfectly and inseparably united. He is the eternal Word made flesh, the only begotten Son of the Father, born of the Virgin Mary by the power of the Holy Spirit. As ministering Servant he lived, suffered and died on the cross. He was buried, rose from the dead and ascended into heaven to be with the Father, from whence he shall return. He is eternal Savior and Mediator, who intercedes for us, and by him all men will be judged.

### Article III – The Holy Spirit

We believe in the Holy Spirit who proceeds from and is one in being with the Father and the Son. He convinces the world of sin, of righteousness and of judgment. He leads men through faithful response to the gospel into the fellowship of the Church. He comforts, sustains and empowers the faithful and guides them into all truth.

### Article IV – The Holy Bible

We believe the Holy Bible, Old and New Testaments, reveals the Word of God so far as it is necessary for our salvation. It is to be received through the Holy Spirit as the true rule and guide for faith and practice. Whatever is not revealed in or established by the Holy Scriptures is not to be made an article of faith nor is it to be taught as essential to salvation.

### Article V – The Church

We believe the Christian Church is the community of all true believers under the Lordship of Christ. We believe it is one, holy, apostolic and catholic. It is the redemptive fellowship in which the Word of God is preached by men divinely called, and the sacraments are duly administered according to Christ's own appointment. Under the discipline of the Holy Spirit the Church exists for the maintenance of worship, the edification of believers and the redemption of the world.

### Article VI – The Sacraments

We believe the Sacraments, ordained by Christ, are symbols and pledges of the Christian's profession and of God's love toward us. They are means of grace by which God works invisibly in us, quickening, strengthening and confirming our faith in him. Two Sacraments are ordained by Christ our Lord, namely Baptism and the Lord's Supper.

We believe Baptism signifies entrance into the household of faith, and is a symbol of repentance and inner cleansing from sin, a representation of the new birth in Christ Jesus and a mark of Christian discipleship.

We believe children are under the atonement of Christ and as heirs of the Kingdom of God are acceptable subjects for Christian Baptism. Children of believing parents through Baptism become the special responsibility of the Church. They should be nurtured and led to personal acceptance of Christ, and by profession of faith confirm their Baptism.

We believe the Lord's Supper is a representation of our redemption, a memorial of the sufferings and death of Christ, and a token of love and union which Christians have with Christ and with one another. Those who rightly, worthily and in faith eat the broken bread and drink the blessed cup partake of the body and blood of Christ in a spiritual manner until he comes.

#### Article VII – Sin and Free Will

We believe man is fallen from righteousness and, apart from the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, is destitute of holiness and inclined to evil. Except a man be born again, he cannot see the Kingdom of God. In his own strength, without divine grace, man cannot do good works pleasing and acceptable to God. We believe, however, man influenced and empowered by the Holy Spirit is responsible in freedom to exercise his will for good.

#### Article VIII – Reconciliation Through Christ

We believe God was in Christ reconciling the world to himself. The offering Christ freely made on the cross is the perfect and sufficient sacrifice for the sins of the whole world, redeeming man from all sin, so that no other satisfaction is required.

#### Article IX – Justification and Regeneration

We believe we are never accounted righteous before God through our works or merit, but that penitent sinners are justified or accounted righteous before God only by faith in our Lord Jesus Christ.

We believe regeneration is the renewal of man in righteousness through Jesus Christ, by the power of the Holy Spirit, whereby we are made partakers of the divine nature and experience newness of life. By this new birth the believer becomes reconciled to God and is enabled to serve him with the will and the affections.

We believe, although we have experienced regeneration, it is possible to depart from grace and fall into sin; and we may even then, by the grace of God, be renewed in righteousness.

#### Article X – Good Works

We believe good works are the necessary fruits of faith and follow regeneration but they do not have the virtue to remove our sins or to avert divine judgment. We believe good works, pleasing and acceptable to God in Christ, spring from a true and living faith, for through and by them faith is made evident.

#### Article XI – Sanctification and Christian Perfection

We believe sanctification is the work of God's grace through the Word and the Spirit, by which those who have been born again are cleansed from sin in their thoughts, words and acts, and are enabled to live in accordance with God's will, and to strive for holiness without which no one will see the Lord.

Entire sanctification is a state of perfect love, righteousness and true holiness which every regenerate believer may obtain by being delivered from the power of sin, by loving God with all the heart, soul, mind and strength, and by loving one's neighbor as one's self. Through faith in Jesus Christ this gracious gift may be received in this life both gradually and instantaneously, and should be sought earnestly by every child of God.

We believe this experience does not deliver us from the infirmities, ignorance, and mistakes common to man, nor from the possibilities of further sin. The Christian must continue on guard against spiritual pride and seek to gain victory over every temptation to sin. He must respond wholly to the will of God so that sin will lose its power over him; and the world, the flesh, and the devil are put under his feet. Thus he rules over these

enemies with watchfulness through the power of the Holy Spirit.

#### Article XII – The Judgment and the Future State

We believe all men stand under the righteous judgment of Jesus Christ, both now and in the last day. We believe in the resurrection of the dead; the righteous to life eternal and the wicked to endless condemnation.

#### Article XIII – Public Worship

We believe divine worship is the duty and privilege of man who, in the presence of God, bows in adoration, humility and dedication. We believe divine worship is essential to the life of the Church, and that the assembling of the people of God for such worship is necessary to Christian fellowship and spiritual growth.

We believe the order of public worship need not be the same in all places but may be modified by the church according to circumstances and the needs of men. It should be in a language and form understood by the people, consistent with the Holy Scriptures to the edification of all, and in accordance with the order and Discipline of the Church.

#### Article XIV – The Lord's Day

We believe the Lord's Day is divinely ordained for private and public worship, for rest from unnecessary work, and should be devoted to spiritual improvement, Christian fellowship and service. It is commemorative of our Lord's resurrection and is an emblem of our eternal rest. It is essential to the permanence and growth of the Christian Church, and important to the welfare of the civil community.

#### Article XV – The Christian and Property

We believe God is the owner of all things and that the individual holding of property is lawful and is a sacred trust under God. Private property is to be used for the manifestation of Christian love and liberality, and to support the Church's mission in the world. All forms of property, whether private, corporate or public, are to be held in solemn trust and used responsibly for human good under the sovereignty of God.

#### Article XVI – Civil Government

We believe civil government derives its just powers from the sovereign God. As Christians we recognize the governments under whose protection we reside and believe such governments should be based on, and be responsible for, the recognition of human rights under God. We believe war and bloodshed are contrary to the gospel and spirit of Christ. We believe it is the duty of Christian citizens to give moral strength and purpose to their respective governments through sober, righteous and godly living.

## The General Rules of the Methodist Church

### The Nature, Design, and General Rules of Our United Societies

In the latter end of the year 1739 eight or ten persons came to Mr. Wesley, in London, who appeared to be deeply convinced of sin, and earnestly groaning for redemption. They desired, as did two or three more the next day, that he would spend some time with them in prayer, and advise them how to flee from the wrath to come, which they saw continually hanging over their heads. That he might have more time for this great work, he appointed a day when they might all come together, which from thenceforward they did every week, namely, on Thursday in the evening. To these, and as many more as desired to join with them (for their number increased daily), he gave those advices from time to time which he judged most needful for them, and they always concluded their meeting with prayer suited to their several necessities.

This was the rise of the United Society, first in Europe, and then in America. Such a society is no other than “a company of men having the form and seeking the power of godliness, united in order to pray together, to

receive the word of exhortation, and to watch over one another in love, that they may help each other to work out their salvation.”

That it may the more easily be discerned whether they are indeed working out their own salvation, each society is divided into smaller companies, called classes, according to their respective places of abode. There are about twelve persons in a class, one of whom is styled the leader. It is his duty:

1. To see each person in his class once a week at least, in order: (1) to inquire how their souls prosper; (2) to advise, reprove, comfort or exhort, as occasion may require; (3) to receive what they are willing to give toward the relief of the preachers, church, and poor.

2. To meet the ministers and the stewards of the society once a week, in order: (1) to inform the minister of any that are sick, or of any that walk disorderly and will not be reprov'd; (2) to pay the stewards what they have received of their several classes in the week preceding.

There is only one condition previously required of those who desire admission into these societies: “a desire to flee from the wrath to come, and to be saved from their sins.” But wherever this is really fixed in the soul it will be shown by its fruits.

It is therefore expected of all who continue therein that they should continue to evidence their desire of salvation,

First: By doing no harm, by avoiding evil of every kind, especially that which is most generally practiced, such as:

The taking of the name of God in vain.

The profaning the day of the Lord, either by doing ordinary work therein or by buying or selling.

Drunkenness: buying or selling spirituous liquors, or drinking them, unless in cases of extreme necessity.

Slaveholding; buying or selling slaves.

Fighting, quarreling, brawling, brother going to law with brother; returning evil for evil, or railing for railing; the using many words in buying or selling.

The buying or selling goods that have not paid the duty.

The giving or taking things on usury—i.e., unlawful interest.

Uncharitable or unprofitable conversation; particularly speaking evil of magistrates or of ministers.

Doing to others as we would not they should do unto us.

Doing what we know is not for the glory of God, as:

The putting on of gold and costly apparel.

The taking such diversions as cannot be used in the name of the Lord Jesus.

The singing those songs, or reading those books, which do not tend to the knowledge or love of God.

Softness and needless self-indulgence.

Laying up treasure upon earth.

Borrowing without a probability of paying; or taking up goods without a probability of paying for them.

It is expected of all who continue in these societies that they should continue to evidence their desire of salvation,

*Secondly:* By doing good; by being in every kind merciful after their power; as they have opportunity, doing good of every possible sort, and, as far as possible, to all men:

To their bodies, of the ability which God giveth, by giving food to the hungry, by clothing the naked, by visiting or helping them that are sick or in prison.

To their souls, by instructing, reproofing, or exhorting all we have any intercourse with; trampling under foot that enthusiastic doctrine that “we are not to do good unless our hearts be free to it.”

By doing good, especially to them that are of the household of faith or groaning so to be; employing them preferably to others; buying one of another, helping each other in business, and so much the more because the world will love its own and them only.

By all possible diligence and frugality, that the gospel be not blamed.

By running with patience the race which is set before them, denying themselves, and taking up their cross daily; submitting to bear the reproach of Christ, to be as the filth and offscouring of the world; and looking that men should say all manner of evil of them falsely, for the Lord’s sake.

It is expected of all who desire to continue in these societies that they should continue to evidence their desire of salvation,

*Thirdly:* By attending upon all the ordinances of God; such are:

- The public worship of God.
- The ministry of the Word, either read or expounded.
- The Supper of the Lord.
- Family and private prayer.
- Searching the Scriptures.
- Fasting or abstinence.

These are the General Rules of our societies; all of which we are taught of God to observe, even in his written Word, which is the only rule, and the sufficient rule, both of our faith and practice. And all these we know his Spirit writes on truly awakened hearts. If there be any among us who observe them not, who habitually break any of them, let it be known unto them who watch over that soul as they who must give an account. We will admonish him of the error of his ways. We will bear with him for a season. But then, if he repent not, he hath no more place among us. We have delivered our own souls.

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A content outline for part 3 is provided below. Part 3 is designed to be a Lenten study and will be available in mid-January.

## **PART 3: WHO ARE WE AS PEOPLE OF THE BALTIMORE–WASHINGTON CONFERENCE?**

Suggested start date: Week of Feb. 23, 2020 (Ash Wednesday is Feb. 26)

### **Week 1: Hope Born Out of History: The Cradle of Methodism**

In 1784, Methodists gathered in Baltimore at the Christmas Conference to create what would grow into one of the most diverse expressions of faith in modern Christendom. Its early circuit riders created a movement of scriptural and social holiness that transformed a continent. How do our spiritual roots shape us today? What should we embrace and what should be relegated to history? How does the phrase “what’s past is prologue,” apply to the Church today?

### **Week 2: Hope Born Out of History: Law and Grace**

Robert Strawbridge was a man who practiced the power of the Spirit in action. Bishop Francis Asbury was a person who gave all for his faith. Their conflict over the rules of the *Book of Discipline* and how we live out our doctrine define us still. What do our denomination’s historic conflicts over law and grace have to teach us today?

### **Week 3: Hope Born Out of History: Our Diversity**

Diversity is the lifeblood of the Baltimore-Washington Conference. Geographic, ethnic, cultural, theological and economic diversity shape its identity in countless ways. But one strand of difference has had a defining impact – the inclusion of women as full-participants and leaders in the life of The United Methodist Church. How has the intention of having a Table, and a church, open to all people reflect our understanding of God? How have the contributions of women shaped our history and our faith today?

### **Week 4: Hope Born Out of History: Telling the Whole Truth**

Too often we allow ourselves to be lulled into thinking that we are living in a post-racial world, where racism doesn’t shape our culture and our lives. Too often, we ignore the evils of racism, preferring instead to dwell in partial truths and spiritual platitudes. This tendency causes us to tame the calls to action from prophets like Martin Luther King, Jr., and Dietrich Bonhoeffer. How is the church today being called to deep transformation? How do we combat the remnants of the sin of segregation? In the BWC, we can learn from many examples.

### **Week 5: Hope Born Out of History: Our Missional Impact**

Even in its darker moments, United Methodists shine as a light to the nations. We are missional. We embrace the vision that “transformed lives transform lives” and live out our call to make disciples for the transformation of the world with ministries like VIM, the UMW, UMCOR, Imagine No Malaria and more. Over the decades, the people of the BWC have built hospitals, universities, retirement communities, orphanages, camps and so much more. How does our mission define us? How do we honor God in our actions as a Church?

### **Week 6: Hope for Our Next Steps**

Drawing on the lessons from the entirety of the Who Are We? resource, the Baltimore-Washington Conference creates a vision for becoming a movement once again.

## AN EXPRESSION OF GRATITUDE

I am deeply indebted to everyone who contributed to Part 2 of this study. Their contributions make it a special resource that will greatly enhance our shared understanding of what it means to be people called United Methodists. And, as we all know, once you begin listing persons, someone will inevitably be overlooked or omitted. If that is the case, please forgive me in advance.

I would like to thank each of the content presenters: the Revs. Claire Matheny, Jessica Hayden, Travis Knoll, David McAllister-Wilson, Dana Jones, Rebecca Iannicelli, Mark Gorman, and Sarah Schlieckert, and Bishops Thomas Bickerton and Forrest Stith.

I would like to thank our editorial and design team of the Revs. Erik Alsgaard, Claire Matheny, Bill Brown, Rodney Smothers and Bryan P. Stone, Alison Burdett, Kayla Spears, Cheryl Cook, and Sharonda Jones.

I would like to thank those who contributed their insights into the nature of grace: Taeron Flemming, Emma Escobar, Richard Willson, Moorosi Mokuena, Ophelia Brown Carter, Ryan McDanill, Madison Sadler, Cristin Cooper, Chris Dillard, Hjarman Cordero and the Revs. Daniel Mejia, Mark Gorman, Travis Knoll and Yu Jung Hwang.

And, I would especially like thank Christie Latona, Melissa Lauber, Myca Jones and the Rev. Stacey Cole Wilson for their gifts and contributions. I cannot thank you enough.

To God be the glory!  
*Bishop LaTrelle Easterling*