

BELONGING



LEADER 2022

MEMBERSHIP GUIDE FOR THE WESLEYAN CHURCH

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*FOCUSING ON **MEMBERSHIP** IN THE WESLEYAN CHURCH*

1. SO, WHAT DOES MEMBERSHIP IN THE WESLEYAN CHURCH LOOK LIKE?

The Wesleyan Church has crafted a membership plan that:

- Honors our strong system of doctrine and lifestyle commitments
- Offers a membership training strategy that also provides discipleship material with much more to come
- Provides one-tier membership for adults
- Encourages clarity, integrity, and good preparation for membership
- Recognizes the biblical concept of greater expectations for those in leadership positions
- Gives members the opportunity to reaffirm their commitment to their experience of regeneration, Christian baptism, their acceptance of the Articles of Religion, Elementary Principles, and the authority of The Wesleyan Church in matters of church government
- Student membership is provided as an option for children and youth.

A training program for membership need not be limited to those joining as new members, but could be extended throughout the educational system of the church. Many current members would benefit from instruction in the Bible, Wesleyan doctrine, personal spiritual growth, relationships, and Christian service.

Read “How to Use this Training Guide” on pages 9–10.

2. WHY MEMBERSHIP TRAINING?

The following are primarily for the instructor’s use, but may also help explain the rationale for each category to a seminar group.

- We recognize that many people who come to our churches are not Wesleyan by birth or background, and may be “in Christ,” but in the dark about us!
- Therefore, many of those newest to our churches may love us and want to officially belong (membership), but are not yet ready to embrace some facets of our beliefs or lifestyle commitments.
- In light of the above discoveries, these are the folks that we most need and want to disciple and assimilate into membership.
- During a membership training seminar, a prospective candidate gets a clear picture of the “what and why” of Wesleyan beliefs, yet they feel a graciousness and openness that we extend to them.
- This approach helps ensure church leaders prevent candidates from becoming members without truly understanding who Wesleyans are and what we believe. It also allows for maximum integrity for the candidate and an understanding that there is a journey we want them to take with us!
- Finally, this approval provides a system of protecting the integrity of our belief and lifestyle system. It sets a standard of excellence and expected development.

- Membership now becomes more meaningful than ever and discipleship training is strengthened.

3. HOW DO WE SET UP THESE MEMBERSHIP SEMINARS?

First, you can call them whatever you wish. Various phrases you might use could include: “Membership Training Class,” “Membership Is Belonging,” “Membership Seminar,” “Membership Information Group,” or whatever title your church prefers.

It is best to choose a title that doesn’t give the impression that they must join after taking the membership seminar.

We recommend a minimum of four to six hours of contact time. Eight to sixteen hours are better. There is a lot of material and interaction that needs to take place over time. If you choose to have only one four-hour marathon session, it is extremely helpful to give out the Participant Guide in advance and at least have them read the *Articles of Faith*, the provided history of The Wesleyan Church, and encourage them to ask questions.

Scheduling options could include: (1) Three two-hour seminars on a week-night, Saturday morning, or late Sunday afternoon; (2) Some churches prefer using a number of weeks within the Sunday school or small groups setting. Offering it in two to six two-hour segments has been done successfully.

Offering more than one option is very helpful, such as a Thursday evening group and a Saturday morning group. The advantage of this approach is that a person can do a “make up” class if they miss one at the other time. You know the schedules of your folks best. You choose. But try to get a “system” going where you offer the sessions at least once or twice every year, depending on the need.

HOW TO USE THIS **TRAINING GUIDE**

1. READ AHEAD

Some of the advance preparation will take modest blocks of time and will sometimes require making copies and bringing in a resource person(s).

2. BUILD EACH LESSON TO FIT YOUR TIME

The seven sessions provided could be presented in a minimum of 45 minutes each. It is advisable to get the group involved in discussion and to build team spirit, which takes time.

3. HOW DO I SHRINK OR EXPAND THE SEVEN SESSIONS?

Each session has several units. You may choose to omit one or more units. The three types of lesson material that let you shrink or expand your time are: discussion activities (and personal testimonies/storytelling); study sections where you dig into life and Scripture; and the Beliefs sections which can be as brief or as lengthy as you choose.

4. TEACH IT ACCORDING TO YOUR STYLE

Read and absorb the information, but express it in your own words and way. Add your own research. Expand on the information and the activities. Watch for the additional teaching tips in the columns.

5. REMEMBER THAT PARTICIPANT GUIDES ARE AVAILABLE

They make a great workbook for the participants to use, keep, and review. They can also be viewed as a courteous investment in their discipleship future. If you see cost as a factor, the Leader Guide has all of the worksheets and they can be copied. Participant Guides are available from Wesleyan Publishing House (www.wphstore.com; 1-800-493-7539).

6. CONSIDER TAPING YOUR SESSIONS

You should expect your candidates to be present at all of the seminars or make up the ones they miss. Therefore, if you audio or video record your sessions, the tapings can serve as “makeup” sessions. And you can use the tapes for evaluation of the sessions.

**7. CALL THE CLASS WHATEVER YOU WANT, BUT ADVERTISE IT
BIG TIME!**

8. ENCOURAGE CURRENT MEMBERS TO JOIN!



MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

(One application per person)

Name: _____ Phone: _____

Mailing Address: _____

How long have you been regularly attending our church? _____

Are you a member of another church? _____

Which one? _____

Have you completed our membership training seminars? _____ Year? _____

Do you need further counsel or instruction before making a decision about joining? _____

Have you ever taken a step to establish personal faith in Jesus Christ as your Savior? _____

Have you been baptized by water since making the above decision? _____

If you've not been baptized, are you willing to be at the next opportunity? _____

At this point, what might be a personal barrier or point of hesitation for you to join? _____

Is it your desire to join the church at our next time for publicly receiving members? _____

Do you intend to join as a ☐ student member, ☐ adult member? (Check one.)

Are you willing to take additional training classes that the church makes available for members? _____

Signed: _____ Date: _____

SESSION 1

WE'RE BUILT TO BELONG

SESSION GOALS

- Communicate appreciation for their presence.
- Get to know others in their seminar group.
- Identify key values of membership.
- Explore the Bible on membership.
- Brainstorm a strategy for creating a climate of belonging in this congregation.
- Create a thirst to return!

ADVANCE PREPARATION CHECKLIST



- Since this guide has enough material for 10–13 sessions of 45 minutes each, use this material selectively.
- If you have, for example, only 4–6 hours of contact time, carefully select the units you prefer to use.
- It may be best, if time is limited, to have them read assigned sections ahead of time, such as the portions on history and beliefs.

- Make clear, innovative announcements about this seminar.
- Confirm location and setup of your meeting place.
- Provide name tags and pens.
- Drinks and snacks enhance hospitality.
- Have extra Bibles, Participant Guides, and pencils.
- Audiovisual equipment needed?

- Consider taping each session for those who must miss a session.
- Keep accurate attendance records. An attendance roster is on page 23 of this guide.
- Contact Wesleyan Publishing House at wphstore.com or 1-800-493-7539 for needed material.

LESSON OVERVIEW AND DESIGN

Unit 1 Class Time—Launching Out.
Welcome and provide your group a synopsis of the session.
(5–10 min.)

Unit 2 Values of Membership
(approx. 10 min.)

Unit 3 Community Time: Interaction, get acquainted
(10–30 min., possibly half of your class time.)

Unit 4 What about the Bible and Membership? (10–20 min.)

Unit 5 Tough Questions (Q and A) (5–10 min.)

Unit 6 Application and Affirmation (5–7 min.)

Minimum Session Time = 45 min. Maximum = 75 min.

- Notice the minimum/maximum time spent on each unit.
- Use the estimated times to help select the amount of material to use for the time you have available.



1. CLASS TIME—LAUNCHING OUT

Thank them for joining the membership seminar.

Thanks for making time to join this membership seminar! We are honored that you have chosen to take 'belonging' to this congregation to a new level. As we meet together, we hope to make several discoveries:

1. *New acquaintances with others interested in a deeper level of involvement in our church.*

A WARM WELCOME

You may say something like this.



2. *Additional knowledge about the history, beliefs, and mission of The Wesleyan Church.*
3. *Grow in your personal faith and learn ways you can serve God in and through this congregation.*

In a few minutes, we will take time to get acquainted with each of you. But first, let's work together to uncover some of the values of membership. Let's discuss the benefits of belonging.

2. VALUES OF MEMBERSHIP

Early in this first session, help them relax with input and a bit of group discussion. Don't worry about going too quickly to the worksheet. Let them have a bit of "freelance" discussion before filling in the blanks.

Remind them that this is a membership information seminar. Whether or not they choose to join the church, it will help prepare them for increased understanding and involvement in our congregation.

Say something like, *"OK, I want to invite all of you to help us figure out what in the world we are doing here! Membership. What is the point? Why join? What are some of the values and benefits of officially joining a church?"*

(Allow time to respond.)

After a time of volunteer input, without going so long that you wear them out on this one, have them turn to their worksheet titled "We're Built to Belong."

NOTE: Where they have blanks, you have suggested answers indicated in bold. Please do not let them struggle to guess or read your mind. Recap with the worksheet, affirming their correct responses and providing the remaining answers for them to fill in as each point is read.

Why Bother to Belong?

1. Humans are made with a need to **belong** and Christians are part of a community of believers. Membership is a response to these realities.
2. Becoming a member is a form of **witness** to your values and priorities.
3. Public commitment is also a type of **accountability**. Everyone needs to be held accountable for the important things in life. Membership attempts to help.
4. Membership gives expanded opportunities for your **growth** and service for Christ.
5. We all tend to need mutual **encouragement**.
6. Membership involves **responsibility**.
7. It is an affirmation of your personal commitment to **Christ** to be a serious part of His Church on earth.
8. Your committed involvement becomes one added blessing to the congregation; your **gifts** and abilities contribute to the strength of the total effort. Everybody wins!

3. COMMUNITY TIME

This activity may take up to half of the time for your first session. It is time well spent and should be enjoyable. The point is to learn the names and a bit of background about your group members. Here are a couple of suggestions, but you may have creative approaches of your own that would be useful.

LET'S GET ACQUAINTED



UNIT 3

- The size of the group may affect time needed, so adjust other portions of the lesson.



LEADER'S
EDGE

- Keep this portion moving without denying them a word or two.



• Do not, at this point, ask for “testimonies” of their salvation. Prompt safe and simple responses like any two or three of the following:

- Name
- Length of time at your church
- Church background if any
- Hobbies
- Family
- Occupation
- What got them to this church the first time
- First impression when they first attended

Option 1

The simplest approach, especially with a group of fewer than 15, is to go around the group and have each person share any two or three of the following: name; length of time attending this church; what prompted their first visit to this church; former church background, if any; hobbies; or brief information about their family. Decide ahead of time which two or three pieces of information are preferred.

Option 2

Divide up into twos (or if necessary a group of three) with another person they do not know. Instruct them that they have three minutes each to interview the other person and learn several things about them. After each has done this, the total group gets back together and takes turns introducing their recent acquaintance to the others.

Option 3

Have them select one or two items from their wallet or purse that tells something about them as person.



• Remind them to use the following section in their study guide to write the names of their group-mates.

Leader p. 24
Participant p. 5

MY WITNESS TO BELIEVE

Why Believe in Believing?

1. I believe in the power of the Holy Spirit, who dwells in me and gives me the ability to love others as I love myself.
2. I believe in the power of the Holy Spirit, who dwells in me and gives me the ability to love others as I love myself.
3. I believe in the power of the Holy Spirit, who dwells in me and gives me the ability to love others as I love myself.
4. I believe in the power of the Holy Spirit, who dwells in me and gives me the ability to love others as I love myself.
5. I believe in the power of the Holy Spirit, who dwells in me and gives me the ability to love others as I love myself.
6. I believe in the power of the Holy Spirit, who dwells in me and gives me the ability to love others as I love myself.
7. I believe in the power of the Holy Spirit, who dwells in me and gives me the ability to love others as I love myself.
8. I believe in the power of the Holy Spirit, who dwells in me and gives me the ability to love others as I love myself.

My Witness to Believe

NOTE: It is likely that you will have a very diverse group, in terms of religious backgrounds and life experiences. If so, take time to recognize it, and celebrate what a great thing it is to have a congregation with such diversity, yet unified in Christ and mission.

My Membership Group:

[illegible]

4. WHAT ABOUT THE BIBLE AND MEMBERSHIP?

Some would argue that the Bible does not directly address the membership issue. That is technically true, but that does not mean that membership is not a biblical issue. The Bible is clear and strong about many of the dynamics that membership represents.

Make sure each person has access to a Bible, their worksheet, and that you give them plenty of hints on how to find the passages you indicate to look up. Lead on!

What Does the Bible Say about Membership?

Good question! The Bible doesn't really give us the kind of membership guidelines we are sharing with you, but there really is a focus on belonging, fellowship, accountability, responsibility, regular meetings, objectives, and even ejection!

BIBLE STUDY ON MEMBERSHIP




UNIT 4

- Plan your time. You may study all of the following Scriptures, add your own, or you can select some of the suggested passages.



LEADER'S EDGE

Leader p. 25
Participant p. 6



What Does the Alliance Say about Worldwide?

Adults: 12-17
Children: 12-17
Members: 12-17

Spontaneously, think if you can locate the words where the writer (Paul) mentions Worldwide "worldwide" types of worldwide, including:

Spontaneously _____
Family _____
Education _____
Country _____
People of the common bond _____

Link Application

What kinds of things can we learn to do to show that we care for those who are different?

What helped you realize that this church wanted you here?

How do we help people sense that they belong?

What can each of us do to contribute to a caring congregation?

24

Help your group look up the following Scriptures and list the things mentioned that seem to be “membership-type” issues, such as belonging, contribution, regular meeting, devotion, accountability, sacrificing to belong, caring for one another, and other dynamics that you see emerging. Write those membership characteristics as you find them in the following Bible passages.



LEADER'S
EDGE

- Be sure to have loaner Bibles and pens/paper available in class.

- Make clear what they are looking for: “membership-like” characteristics.

- Insert your ideas only if they seem stuck, or need an early example, or if you are pushed for time.

- To save time, you could have them do one or two of the Scriptures in class, then work on the others as a personal study or devotional.

- You could assign each Scripture to a small group and have all groups share what they found.

- Don't assume that all persons in your group can do this on their own or will be comfortable doing it at all.

- Have them read a portion or all of Ephesians 6, and gently instruct them about how to write a Scripture reference:

Chapter number
Colon
Verse number

Membership Characteristics

Acts 2:42–47 Thirst to learn (v. 42); fellowship, camaraderie, and belonging (v. 42); serious about prayer (v. 42); they were influential in demonstrating the power of God (v. 43); a strong bond and generosity among them (v. 44); sacrificial and servant-hearted (v. 45); faithfully met in the existing temple (church) for worship and fellowship (vv. 46–47); well thought of by outsiders (v. 47); reached out to others in witness and welcome (v. 47).

1 Corinthians 12:12–27 Like parts of the human body, they each had something to offer the whole. They were learning to contribute and appreciate other members for their contributions.

Romans 12:3–8 Humility with confidence (v. 3); sense of responsibility for one another (vv. 4–5); each has a “gift” to use in serving Christ; use it energetically (vv. 6–8).

Ephesians 6 See if you can locate the verses where the writer (Paul), mentions the following types of relationships, including:

Family: Verses _____

Employee: Verses _____

Army: Verses _____

Country: Verses _____

People of the common bond: Verses _____

From *The Discipline of The Wesleyan Church* (2022)

The overall objective of membership in

The Wesleyan Church is:

To acknowledge believers as belonging to
the body of Christ;

To disciple them into a meaningful
relationship with The Wesleyan Church; and

To equip them for meaningful ministry in the world.

AN "OFFICIAL" WORD!

See *The Discipline of The Wesleyan Church*, paragraph 551, introductory paragraph.



5. TOUGH QUESTIONS (OPTIONAL)

You may wish to skip this section entirely or use it later. Included are several questions often raised in membership training groups.

Q & A TIME



UNIT 5

The religious background I came from did not have or believe in membership. Why do Wesleyans?

We understand that certain church groups do not use the term *membership* or have that kind of structure. We honor that viewpoint and choose not to argue it, but offer the following comments:

1. Wesleyans do not require official membership for a person to take Holy Communion or to be baptized. Baptism does not automatically make you a member.

EXCELLENT SUPPORT PIECE

On page 110, there is a great article by Stan Baker, Wesleyan pastor and national church leader in Australia. Make copies if you wish.



Q&A



We have many positions of service and responsibility where membership is not required. And our pastors do not treat differently those constituents who are not members.

2. Membership is revocable. You can always back out, even after you join, if you find that it simply is not what you hoped it would be.
3. You could be a member of the kingdom of God without being a member of a church. Likewise, you may be a member of a church, and not truly be a member of God's kingdom! Many are members of neither. What is most important is for you to be sure to establish a personal faith relationship with our Savior, Jesus Christ. He is our hope and assurance. The church exists to help establish us in our faith and spiritual maturity.

Many people say: “I can be a Christian without attending or belonging to a church.”

Technically, that is correct. Practically and biblically, that is off base. The Bible repeatedly makes the case that Christianity is not merely a “me” issue, but a “we” issue. One of the strongest analogies the Bible gives for Christ's Church is that of “the Body.” Body parts need to be in direct and continuing connection, communication, and cooperation with one another, or the body is in trouble. The church is Christ's Body, and all parts need to be connected!

Remind them that the Bible is clear about the existence and importance of the Church; it is the collection of God's people who are sometimes gathered together and most of the time scattered about to be a “salt and light” influence for Christ.

What about The Wesleyan Church being named after a person (John Wesley)?

There is a huge difference between name and essence. All people trusting in Jesus Christ as their Savior, Lord, and Hope are in fact a part of Christ's Church. The name tag on a specific organization

is simply to identify that one from the many Christian sub-groups. Just because my church may be called “The Church of Christ,” “The Church of God,” or “The Church of the Nazarene” does not mean that only the true believers are “contained” within that particularly named group, or that that group is more genuinely “in Christ” than other groups.

The name “Wesleyan” is simply to identify the person who had a significant human influence on the specific values and beliefs of our church. Christ in our hearts and lives is the vital issue, not the name on the church sign.

6. APPLICATION AND AFFIRMATION

Before bringing closure to this session, have them take several minutes to respond to the following:

1. What kinds of things can our church do to show that we care for those who come?
2. What helped you sense that this church wanted you here?
3. How do we help people sense that they belong?
4. What can each of us do to contribute to a caring congregation?

Conclude this group session with prayer.

Remind them that “caring” for one another begins in this group. In this first session, it is probably best that you or a co-leader pray. But first, give opportunity to express, within the confidence of the group, any situation for which they would like us to support them in thought and prayer. Pray and go.

PULLING IT TOGETHER



UNIT 6

Real life issues
and answers!



Leader p. 25
Participant p. 6

What Does the Bible Say about Belonging?

WJL-00-01

©2000 World Council of Churches

Revised 2010-10

Application: How can you care for the person who is lonely? How can you help them sense that they belong? How can you help them sense that they belong?

Write your name _____

Write your address _____

Write your phone number _____

Write your email address _____

Write your date of birth _____

Write your date of baptism _____

Write your date of conversion _____

Life Application

What kinds of things can our church do to show that we care for those who come?

What helped you sense that this church wanted you here?

How do we help people sense that they belong?

What can each of us do to contribute to a caring congregation?

25

Sharing and prayer
time!





Reminders!

- Time and place of next meeting?
- Any class assignments?
- Any tasks to delegate?

Evaluation?

- Fresh notes to yourself (the instructor) about this session that may enhance further sessions?

[illegible]



WE'RE BUILT TO BELONG

Why Bother to Belong?

1. Humans are made with a need to _____ and Christians are part of a community of believers. Membership is a response to these realities.
2. Becoming a member is a form of _____ to your values and priorities.
3. Public commitment is also a type of _____. Everyone needs to be held accountable for the important things in life. Membership attempts to help.
4. Membership gives expanded opportunities for your _____ and service for Christ.
5. We all tend to need mutual _____.
6. Membership involves _____.
7. It is an affirmation of your personal commitment to _____ to be a serious part of His Church on earth.
8. Your committed involvement becomes one added blessing to the congregation; your _____ and abilities contribute to the strength of the total effort. Everybody wins!

My Membership Group

_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____



What Does the Bible Say about Membership?

Acts 2:42–47

1 Corinthians 12:12–27

Romans 12:3–8

Ephesians 6: See if you can locate the verses where the writer (Paul) mentions the strong “membership” types of relationships, including:

Family: _____

Employee: _____

Army: _____

Country: _____

People of the common bond: _____

Life Application

What kinds of things can our church do to show that we care for those who come?

What helped you sense that this church wanted you here?

How do we help people sense that they belong?

What can each of us do to contribute to a caring congregation?

SESSION 2

THE PERFECT CHURCH

SESSION GOALS

- Grasp a new appreciation for the Church.
- Discover what they think and what the Bible says about “good” churches.
- Ponder their need for the church and how they can contribute to its mission.
- Act on their insights, impressions, and convictions.

ADVANCE PREPARATION CHECKLIST



• If you are short of Participant Guides, you can copy the material found at the end of each session in this Leader Guide.

- Be sure to use the provided attendance roster to keep records. Make copies of the one on page 23 of this Leader Guide.
- Nametags are very helpful. Avoid ones that pin on. Nobody likes what they do to clothing.
- Continue to provide refreshments.
- Have extra Bibles and writing utensils?

NOTE TO SEMINAR LEADER: Know your time! There may be more material in this session than you have time to complete. This could be the case with any session. Preview this lesson, identify the priority units you want your group to cover, and focus on those sections, doing others as time permits or in future sessions.

- Notice the minimum/maximum time spent on each unit.
- Use the estimated times to help select the amount of material to use for the time you have available.



LESSON OVERVIEW AND DESIGN

- Unit 1** Class Time—Launching Out (5–10 min.)
 - Unit 2** Why Believe in the Church of Jesus Christ? (10–15 min.)
 - Unit 3** The Perfect Church (10–15 min.)
 - Unit 4** Biblical Models of Healthy Churches (10–25 min.)
 - Unit 5** Article of Religion (17): The Church (5–15 min.)
 - Unit 6** Sharing Life and Prayer (5–10 min.)
- Minimum Session Time = 45 min. Maximum = 85 min.

1. CLASS TIME—LAUNCHING OUT

- After greeting the group and getting things going, take time to acknowledge new attendees and have each person say their name to remind the whole group.
- Encourage them to realize that they need to look for each other at church and let their membership seminar experience be a bond between them, like, “Hey, you were in my membership class.”
- Since this session gives them lots of interaction opportunities, you might want to get into the lesson fairly quickly after calling them to order and other brief introductory activities.

GETTING STARTED



- You may also wish to briefly pray or even take requests.
- Remember, be very careful about asking one of the students to pray unless you have cleared it with them in advance!



2. WHY BELIEVE IN THE CHURCH OF JESUS CHRIST?



UNIT 2

THERE'S NOTHING LIKE THE CHURCH



• As with each session, use your own terms and style to convey this material. Digest it, make your own notes and highlights, customize your lesson plan, and go forth!

• Occasionally you will find suggested questions, quotes, or “leading lines” to use.

Leader p. 36
Participant p. 7

• The whole purpose of this brief study is to emphasize that the Church is doing things that no other organization will touch, and we are dedicated to lasting truths and lasting transformation! It is an honor to belong!

1. Matthew 28:18–20
John 17:20–21
Acts 1:7–8
Philippians 2:14–16

The first activity of this session is intended to reinforce a sense of appreciation for the local church as a vital part of God’s work in our world.

Refer them to their Participant Guide (page 7) for this part of the session.

Human weaknesses abound in Christ’s Church, worldwide and in local congregations. Yet with all of its flaws, the Church is unique and irreplaceable in our world.

Christians are those who have made a personal commitment to Jesus Christ and have a living faith in Christ for their salvation, for daily guidance, and a sure hope of heaven. We are also a part of God’s Church on earth, no matter what humanly organized church we join.

Following are reasons why we can believe in the unique and amazing role God has for His people on earth, the Church!

1. The Church is the only organization committed to addressing ultimate issues (i.e.: time and eternity).

Think of it! What other group or organization is speaking to us about anything besides ordinary issues of this world?





2. Christ, the gospel, and the Church give dignity and hope to those who believe and belong.

2. Ephesians 5:25–33

We have a terrific truth to share. The gospel is everything positive and enriching for us, and nothing detrimental.

3. The Church of Jesus Christ is a moral and spiritual compass in a world of moral chaos.

3. Matthew 5:13–16

Our culture struggles to even acknowledge that *universal* values of goodness exist. Morality, for many, is a matter of “building truth as you see it” and treating all values as relative. Jesus calls us “salt of the earth” and “light of the world.”

4. The Church is a community of love and healing for all people, regardless of age, education, culture, or class, available to help from birth to death.

4. 1 Corinthians 13
Ephesians 4:29–5:2
1 John 3:16–18

Emphasize the totally unique calling of the local congregation! With all of its faults and weaknesses, there is no other kind of group in all the world that is called to *attempt* to reach and relate to:

all ages
all backgrounds
all races, cultures

all social “brackets”
all educational strata



5. 1 Corinthians 12:12–26
Ephesians 4:16

5. In the Church of Jesus Christ, everybody is somebody special!

The Bible teaches the incredible value and contribution of each person in His Church.

6. Matthew 16:17–18

6. When everything else has fallen, the Church will still be standing!

If you want to be part of the winning side, choose Jesus!

Discussion Option: Ask them to give additional reasons for the importance of the Church.

3. THE PERFECT CHURCH—WHAT DOES IT LOOK LIKE?



UNIT 3

WHAT DOES
IT LOOK LIKE?

This exercise will get your group involved in discussion and it helps reveal the qualities they look for in a church. This exercise might go something like this:

Let's work together to describe the "perfect church." Actually, no such church exists, but there are certain qualities that each of you considers important in a church that you would attend and invite friends and family to attend. Let's build a list of those qualities. What is important to you?

The Perfect Church According to Us Qualities We Want:

- | | |
|----|-----|
| 1. | 9. |
| 2. | 10. |
| 3. | 11. |
| 4. | 12. |
| 5. | 13. |
| 6. | 14. |
| 7. | 15. |
| 8. | 16. |

Agree or Disagree (Optional)

Research identifies the most common reasons why people select a church: the pastor/preaching (90%), doctrines (88%), friendliness of members (49%), “someone from the church witnessed to me” (41%), a family member attends the church (38%), and sensed God’s presence/atmosphere of the church (37%).

1. Ask the group if they identify with these findings.
2. Ask what their top three reasons were that attracted them to this church.

4. BIBLICAL MODELS OF HEALTHY CHURCHES

You may wish to select only one or two of the following passages. Or you may divide the group and have each study a passage, then report their findings. Know your group, and decide accordingly.

Leader p. 37
Participant p. 8

THE PERFECT CHURCH

Write notes of your responses to the questions of what a church is our world.

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

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Optional



- Know how much time you can afford to spend on this discussion, give the class a tip, then move forward.



THE BIBLE AND
HEALTHY CHURCHES



UNIT 4

Leader p. 38
Participant p. 9

FIVE HABITS OF A HEALTHY CHURCH
Reflection questions and notes for the leaders of the early church

1. What is your? (v. 22)

2. Remember to their? (v. 23)

3. Remember to their? (v. 24)

4. Remember to their? (v. 25)

5. Remember to their? (v. 25)

NOTE: If you studied Acts 2:42–47 in the first session, simply review its characteristics or skip it completely.



LEADER'S
EDGE

- Have Bibles, pens, and paper available.
- Help them find the passages and respond as a total group or break into small groups (3–5 persons) and watch them.
- If time permits, ask discussion questions like:
 - What does that mean?
 - How do we do that?
 - What are the values of doing that?



These passages either imply or state what kinds of things the early church did.

1. Acts 2:42–47. This passage reveals the following admirable qualities about this group: study, fellowship, prayed together, ate together, shared, generous, sacrificial, worshiped, likeable, growing, evangelistic, genuine, miracle working, home groups, earnest, awe-inspired.

2. Ephesians 4:1–16. Loaded with more insights into the nature of the early Church, or at least the challenge they were given! Following are some characteristics: live worthy lives, humility, gentleness, patient, loving, peacemaking, gifted, knowledgeable, mature, Christlike, steady, discerning, wise, truth speakers in love, growing, responsible, teamwork, edifying.

3. Hebrews 10:19–25. This one is a fun study! It is a simple, but insightful Scripture search. Look for the repeated phrase “let us,” then copy or paraphrase what the writer tells the saint to do or keep doing. Let us call this study:

Five Habits of a Healthy Church

1. Their priority is drawing near to **God** (v. 22).
2. They cling firmly to their **hope** (v. 23).
3. They keep finding ways to **motivate** each other (v. 24).
4. They will never give up **meeting** together (v. 25).
5. They specialize in **encouraging** one another (v. 25).

- **Group activity option.** If you wish, a good **application time** could be to have each person identify one characteristic or activity from each of the above Scripture studies based on what *they most need to work on* for their own Christian growth.
- **Group activity option.** If time permits, work with your group to apply the Bible study. Challenge them to identify which of the biblical characteristics discovered in the above Bible study also describe this local congregation.

APPLICATION

This brings the subject home!



5. ARTICLE OF RELIGION (17): THE CHURCH

Please turn to page 42 in your Participant Guide, and let's look at Article of Religion 17, The Church.

Take time to read this article of religion and the alternate statement provided in Articles of Faith. Look up several of the Bible references. Be cautious not to embarrass those who may not be very familiar with the Scriptures or who are shy about reading publicly. Let them volunteer rather than appointing readers.

Respond to whatever questions they raise. Use selected Scriptures referenced if time permits.

FROM THE DISCIPLINE

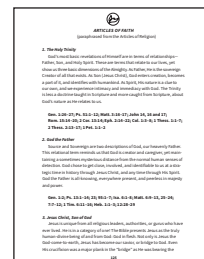
UNIT 5

Articles of Religion (The official version)

Leader p. 113
Participant p. 34

Articles of Faith (paraphrased version)

Leader p. 125
Participant p. 46



Biblical Names for and Description of the Church:



1–4. 1 Peter 2:9

5. Acts 11:26

6. 1 Corinthians 12:27

1. A Chosen People (1 Pet. 2:9)
2. A Royal Priesthood (1 Pet. 2:9)
3. A Holy Nation (1 Pet. 2:9)
4. A People Belonging to God (1 Pet. 2:9)
5. Christians (Acts 11:26)
6. The Body of Christ (1 Cor. 12:27)

Discussion and Application



BEWARE!

No blanks to fill in.

Leader p. 38
Participant p. 9

BIBLICAL NAMES OF HEALTHY CHURCHES
(Read 1 Peter 2:9 and write the names of the healthy churches.)

1. A Chosen People
2. A Royal Priesthood
3. A Holy Nation

FIVE HABITS OF A HEALTHY CHURCH
(Read Acts 11:26 and 1 Corinthians 12:27.)

1. They are united in loving one another (1 Cor. 12:27)
2. They are united in their faith (1 Pet. 2:9)
3. They are united in their love (1 Pet. 2:9)
4. They are united in their prayer (1 Pet. 2:9)
5. They are united in their service (1 Pet. 2:9)

Leave 5–10 minutes for this time of applying the session to their lives. Select one or more of the following for their voluntary responses.

- Which of the above names or titles for the Church do you like best, and why?
- Share which one or two of the “Five Habits of Healthy Churches” is:
 1. A great need for congregations.
 2. An area for personal improvement.

6. SHARING LIFE AND PRAYER



UNIT 6

SHARING AND CLOSURE



LEADER'S EDGE

• Be careful in the early lessons not to embarrass people by expecting or asking them to pray unless you know them well or have asked in advance.

1. As time permits, share prayer requests and ask for volunteers to lead in prayer either before you pray or during the prayer time.
2. Consider writing a well-thought-out prayer that you have them repeat in unison.

3. Do prayer cards occasionally that they can write out requests during class and give to the leader for his/her prayer support that week.

• Same with reading Scripture! Ask for volunteers before class, and if you read around the table, let them always feel OK about saying “pass” to reading or praying.



HOMEWORK? It will be helpful if they read the history of The Wesleyan Church provided on pages 56–64 of the Participant Guide and pages 138–146 of the Leader Guide.



THE PERFECT CHURCH

Why I Believe!

1. The Church is the only organization committed to addressing _____ issues (i.e.: time and eternity).
(Matt. 28:18–20; John 17:20–21; Acts 1:7–8; Phil. 2:14–16)

2. Christ, the gospel, and the Church give dignity and _____ to those who believe and belong. (Eph. 5:25–33)

3. The Church of Jesus Christ is a moral and spiritual _____ in a world of moral chaos. (Matt. 5:13–16)

4. The Church is a community of love and healing for _____ people, regardless of age, education, color, or class, available to help from birth to death. (1 Cor. 13; Eph. 4:29–5:2; 1 John 3:16–18)

5. In the Church of Jesus Christ, everybody is _____ special! (1 Cor. 12:12–26; Eph. 4:16)

6. When everything else has fallen, the Church will still be _____ !
(Matt. 16:17–18)



***Give some of your reasons for the importance
of Christ's Church in our world:***

- A. _____
- B. _____
- C. _____
- D. _____
- E. _____
- F. _____

***THE PERFECT CHURCH?
Qualities We Want***

- | | |
|----------|-----------|
| 1. _____ | 9. _____ |
| 2. _____ | 10. _____ |
| 3. _____ | 11. _____ |
| 4. _____ | 12. _____ |
| 5. _____ | 13. _____ |
| 6. _____ | 14. _____ |
| 7. _____ | 15. _____ |
| 8. _____ | 16. _____ |

What Factors Led You to Choose This Church?



BIBLICAL MODELS OF HEALTHY CHURCHES

Read these Scriptures and write the activities of the early Christians.

1. Acts 2:42–47
2. Ephesians 4:1–16
3. Hebrews 10:19–25

FIVE HABITS OF A HEALTHY CHURCH

(A Study of Heb. 10:19–25)

1. Their priority is drawing near to _____ . (v. 22)
2. They cling firmly to their _____ . (v. 23)
3. They keep finding ways to _____ each other. (v. 24)
4. They will never give up _____ together. (v. 25)
5. They specialize in _____ one another. (v. 25)



Biblical Names for and Description of the Church

1. A Chosen People (*1 Pet. 2:9*)
2. A Royal Priesthood (*1 Pet. 2:9*)
3. A Holy Nation (*1 Pet. 2:9*)
4. A People Belonging to God (*1 Pet. 2:9*)
5. Christians (*Acts 11:26*)
6. The Body of Christ (*1 Cor. 12:27*)

Application

Which of the above names or titles for the Church do you like best and why?

Share which one or two of the “Five Habits of Healthy Churches” is:

1. A great need for congregations:
2. An area of personal improvement:

SESSION 3

WHAT IN THE WORLD IS A **WESLEYAN CHURCH**?

SESSION GOALS

- Expose your group to the rich and interesting history of The Wesleyan Church.
- Recognize points of similarity and difference with other groups in the Christian community.
- Catch the desire to embrace The Wesleyan Church as their own.

ADVANCE PREPARATION CHECKLIST



COPIES NEEDED?

See Unit 4 of this session.

- Be aware that there are items in this session that you may need copies of for your group!
- Make sure to track the group attendance carefully, by name.
- Have Bibles, pencils, Participant Guides, and possibly snacks.
- Have you appointed someone to help you with distributing literature, greeting folks as they arrive, and taking accurate attendance records?
- Do you want to train a class host or hostess who will lead the opening of the class?

LESSON OVERVIEW AND DESIGN

- Unit 1** Class Time—Community Time (5–10 min.)
- Unit 2** Your Answer, Please (5 min.) (Optional, but fun and useful.)
- Unit 3** A Few Interesting Facts about The Wesleyan Church (5–6 min.)
- Unit 4** A Very Short Story of The Wesleyan Church (3–5 min.)
- Unit 5** How Do Wesleyans Compare and Contrast with Other Groups? (20–30 min.)
- Unit 6** Application and Closure (5–15 min.)

Minimum Session Time = 45 min. Maximum = 75 min. Know your group. If you choose to spend more time on certain units, eliminate something. The story of The Wesleyan Church and the compare and contrast sections could easily be expanded. Choose what your people need.

Also, the Application and Closure section could be powerful. This is where the rubber meets the road. Keep this from just being informative, but make it apply to life!

OH, YES!

**1. CLASS TIME—COMMUNITY TIME**

- Take a few minutes for life-sharing. Following is a simple idea you may use or provide your choice of life-conversation material.
- How has the past week been? Highs and lows? Greet them and thank them for being prompt and present! Then say something like, “*Hey, let’s spend the first few minutes ‘taking our pulses.’ What’s been a little extreme in your life?*” Take a few minutes to let folks share a bit of their lives, then provide a time of prayer. If nobody offers a response, just say, “*That’s good! I’ll assume that we are ready to have a great class.*”

COMMUNITY TIME



UNIT 1

- If there are any newcomers to the group, take a moment to introduce them.

2. YOUR ANSWER, PLEASE



UNIT 2

YOUR ANSWER, PLEASE

Information and Interaction

Inform them that this lesson will focus specifically on The Wesleyan Church, its history, and its nature. We will compare and contrast it with other Christian groups. But first, let's have a little fun with this activity.

Use the following activity to engage their thoughts and interest and to find out what they know.

“Let’s say a friend of yours recently attended a Wesleyan church then asked you the question: ‘What in the world is a Wesleyan Church?’ How would you respond?”



What about these responses?

- Kind of like conservative Methodists
- Into John Wesley’s teachings
- Conservative Evangelical group
- Focus on Christ and holiness or Christlikeness



TAKE NOTICE!

Give five minutes maximum for this exercise. Take note of what they say that is accurate so you can reinforce it later. Be aware of what may be inaccurate so you can gently revise that understanding.

This is a great way to determine the level of knowledge or lack of understanding they have as a group, helping you know how much time to spend informing them about the Wesleyans!

3. A FEW INTERESTING FACTS ABOUT THE WESLEYAN CHURCH

Call their attention to Participant Guide page 11 and instruct them to complete the statements as you review the information together.

1. Our name comes from the eighteenth-century preacher and scholar, **John Wesley**.
2. The Wesleyan Church is historically connected to the **Methodist** Church.
3. The Wesleyan Church is a **1968** merger of the Wesleyan Methodist Church and the Pilgrim Holiness church.
4. Other church groups that are similar to us in doctrine are: Free Methodists, Nazarenes, Churches of Christ in Christian Union, Church of God (Anderson), and The **Salvation** Army.
5. We have more than **1,500** churches in North America and about **6,000** congregations around the world.
6. On a given weekend, there will be more than **500,000** Wesleyans in worship around the world.
7. Our earliest beginnings were in the year **1843**.
8. We may be the only denomination founded primarily on response to the **social** issues of the time.
9. Those key social issues were: slavery, women's rights, and **child** labor atrocities.
10. We were one of the first denominations in America to ordain a **woman**.
11. Our home office, or headquarters, is in **Fishers**, Indiana.
12. We have a presence in **over 100** countries around the world (see globalpartnersonline.org).

WESLEYAN FACTS

Leader p. 52
Participant p. 11

WHAT IS THE WORLD OF THE WESLEYAN CHURCH?
Learning facts

1. Our name comes from the eighteenth-century preacher and scholar, _____.
2. The Wesleyan Church is historically connected to the _____ Church.
3. The Wesleyan Church is a _____ merger of the Wesleyan Methodist Church and the Pilgrim Holiness church.
4. Other church groups that are similar to us in doctrine are: Free Methodists, Nazarenes, Churches of Christ in Christian Union, Church of God (Anderson), and The _____ Army.
5. We have more than _____ churches in North America and about _____ congregations around the world.
6. On a given weekend, there will be more than _____ Wesleyans in worship around the world.
7. Our earliest beginnings were in the year _____.
8. We may be the only denomination founded primarily on response to the _____ issues of the time.
9. Those key social issues were: slavery, women's rights, and _____ labor atrocities.
10. We were one of the first denominations in America to ordain a _____.
11. Our home office is in _____, Indiana.
12. We have a presence in _____ countries around the world.

- Check it out! There is a fun set of facts about John Wesley on pages 135–137, if you choose to take time for it.
- Otherwise, you could simply make copies for your group to read on their own.



4. A VERY SHORT STORY OF THE WESLEYAN CHURCH



UNIT 4



LEADER'S EDGE

A SHORT WESLEYAN HISTORY

• A more detailed history is on pages 138–146, and in the Participant Guide pages 56–64.

• If you have access to a copy of *The Discipline of The Wesleyan Church*, there is excellent historical data on pages 1–9.

In the 1700s, Christianity experienced a dynamic surge across England. This spiritual awakening was due, in part, to God's use of John and Charles Wesley and George Whitefield. The eighteenth-century revival was eventually mobilized by the Wesleys and others into "class meetings," "societies," and other means of discipleship, which gave birth to a major Wesleyan movement, later called Methodism.

Wesley's labors led to the birth of Methodism in England. Later, in 1766, Methodism took root in the American colonies. Under the leadership of Francis Asbury and Thomas Coke, The Methodist Episcopal Church was organized in Baltimore, Maryland, on Christmas Eve, 1784.

After several decades, the Methodists began to lose focus on the issues of Christian holiness, and the issue of slavery was one that was generally tolerated. However, many early Methodists believed that slavery and other social trends were clearly against the spirit of Christianity. Eventually in 1843, the Wesleyan Methodist Connection was formed. The new organization had no bishops, opposed slavery, opposed war, supported women's rights, encouraged child labor reform, supported the emerging labor movement, and battled an assortment of social and political reform issues.

In 1966, the Reformed Baptist Church of Canada merged with the Wesleyan Methodist Church. In 1968, the Wesleyan Methodist and Pilgrim Holiness Churches merged to form The Wesleyan Church, which continues to be a thriving and visionary movement for Christ.

5. HOW DO WESLEYANS COMPARE AND CONTRAST WITH OTHER GROUPS?

Have your students find the chart on page 12 in their Participant Guide.

Five words help define and describe who we are in the vast religious market:

CHRISTIAN **ORTHODOX**
PROTESTANT
EVANGELICAL **WESLEYAN**

1. Christian. The religious market is flooded with groups of all kinds.

The Wesleyan Church is firmly entrenched as one of those organizations called Christian.

The heart and soul of Christianity is the person of Jesus Christ. Christianity is not a political alignment or a combination of good causes. It is not a religious system based on the writings of Jesus. As Christians, we believe that Jesus Christ, as the Son of God, “is the radiance of God’s glory and the exact representation of his being” (Heb. 1:3).

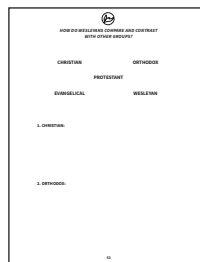
There are several “Articles of Religion” of The Wesleyan Church about Christ that distinguish us from other groups.

Have them refer to the resource section of their Participant Guide on page 34 titled “Articles of Religion,” Articles 1–4.

Christianity also includes a wide variety of denominations and independent churches, as well as all of Catholicism and groups like the Greek and Eastern Orthodox churches.

COMPARING AND CONTRASTING WESLEYANS WITH OTHERS

Leader p. 53
Participant p. 12



Check out
Hebrews 1:1–3

A paraphrased version of our Articles of Religion occurs under the title, “Articles of Faith.” Please consult them for additional perspective.



2. Orthodox. This word has the fairly generic meaning of “straight, correct, or upright in belief or doctrine.” When applied to Christianity, there have been creeds (statements of belief) that represent the essentials of Christianity. No matter what their various distinctives might be, any group that affirms the statement of orthodoxy qualifies as belonging within Christianity. Two such creeds which are embraced by all Christian groups would be the Apostles’ Creed and the Nicene Creed:

THE APOSTLES’ CREED

I believe in God, the Father Almighty, maker of heaven and earth:

And in Jesus Christ His only Son, our Lord; who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, dead, and buried; He descended into hades; the third day He rose again from the dead; He ascended into heaven, and sits on the right hand of God, the Father Almighty; from thence He shall come to judge the quick and the dead.

Leader p. 54
Participant p. 13



I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy catholic church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting. Amen.

THE NICENE CREED

I believe in one God, the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth, and of all things visible and invisible:

And in one Lord Jesus Christ, the only-begotten of His Father before all worlds, God of God, Light of Light, very God of very God, begotten, not made, being of one substance with the Father, by whom all things were made;

Who for us men and for our salvation came down from heaven, and was incarnate by the Holy Spirit of the Virgin Mary, and was made man, and crucified also for us under Pontius Pilate;

He suffered and was buried, and the third day He rose again according to the Scriptures, and ascended into heaven, and sits on the right hand of the Father;

And He shall come again with glory to judge both the quick and the dead;

Whose kingdom shall have no end.

And I believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord and Giver of life, who proceeds from the Father and the Son together is worshiped and glorified; who spoke by the prophets. And I believe in one catholic and apostolic church; I acknowledge one baptism for the remission of sins, and I look for the resurrection of the dead, and the life of the world to come. Amen.

The Wesleyan Church fully endorses the creeds of Christian orthodoxy.

Leader p. 55
Participant p. 14

1. PROTESTANT

Do all Protestants and Catholics Agree?

1. Both view the Bible as our written authority.

2. Both ascribe to the Apostles' Creed.

3. Both believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God and Savior.

4. Both aggressively evangelize the world by winning converts to Christ.

5. Both believe in heaven and hell.

14

3. Protestant. If one asks the question, “Are there various divisions or categories of orthodox Christians?” the answer is “yes,” and the most fundamental subdivision is Protestant and Catholic. The root word of *protestant* is, of course, *protest*. Protestants began as a protest movement out of Roman Catholicism. The term *catholic* means “universal.” At one time the Roman Catholic Church considered itself *the* Church.

In the sixteenth century, there was a protest movement, one of its prominent leaders being Martin Luther (hence the source for the name of the Lutheran churches). This movement arose from within the Catholic Church and the resulting movement became known as “Protestant.” The Wesleyan Church is one group among many in the Protestant segment of Christianity.

Do Protestants and Catholics Agree on Anything?

Leader p. 55
Participant p. 14

1. PROTESTANT

Do all Protestants and Catholics Agree?

1. Both view the Bible as our written authority.

2. Both ascribe to the Apostles' Creed.

3. Both believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God and Savior.

4. Both aggressively evangelize the world by winning converts to Christ.

5. Both believe in heaven and hell.

14

We certainly do! For example:

1. Both view the **Bible** as our written authority.
2. Both ascribe to the **Apostles' Creed**.
3. Both believe that **Jesus Christ** is the Son of God and Savior.
4. Both aggressively **evangelize** the world by winning converts to Christ.
5. Both believe in **heaven and hell**.

What Are Some of the Differences That Divided Us?

- Source of **Authority**: Protestants believe that the Bible is our sufficient source of common authority. Catholics view the authority of tradition and the (Catholic)

church on virtually equal footing with Scripture.

- The **Sacraments** (Communion and baptism) are sacred rituals that are means of grace when received through faith. The Roman Catholic Church recognizes seven sacraments and considers baptism to be the instrument of regeneration.
- **Human Authority:** In the Roman Catholic system, the authority of the Pope has long been considered infallible. Protestants believe that no human leader carries that kind of divine authority.

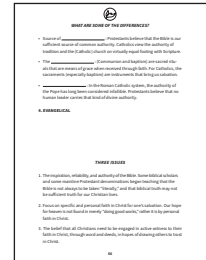
There are many other differences, but the above three are significant, and at the root of other differences.

4. Evangelical. This term is fairly new in Christian history, and began to be used most extensively during the twentieth century. In part, it was a reactionary term taken by certain groups that became restless with some of the more “liberal” trends among Christianity.

At Least Three Issues Identify Evangelicals:

1. The inspiration, reliability, and authority of the Bible. Some biblical scholars and some mainline Protestant denominations began teaching that the Bible is not always to be taken “literally” and that biblical truth may not be sufficient truth for our Christian lives.
2. Focus on specific and personal faith in Christ for one’s salvation. Our hope for heaven is not found in merely “doing good works,” rather it is by personal faith in Christ.

Leader p. 56
Participant p. 15



The Catholic Church recognizes seven sacraments:

1. Baptism
2. Holy Eucharist
3. Confirmation
4. Penance
5. Anointing the sick
6. Holy orders
7. Matrimony



3. The belief that all Christians need to be engaged in active witness to their faith in Christ, through word and deeds, in hopes of drawing others to trust in Christ.

The Wesleyan Church is definitely “evangelical,” though we *do not* necessarily subscribe to every belief of all evangelicals. Evangelicals may have very different views of certain doctrines or Christian practices, but they share common passion for the above concerns.



To be continued in
Session 5.

5. Wesleyan. So far we have learned that Wesleyans are Christian, Orthodox, angelical. But, the word *Wesleyan* helps description. (We continue this in Session 5.)

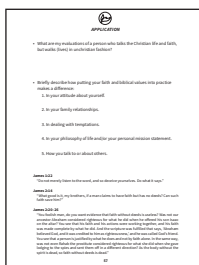
6. APPLICATION AND CLOSURE



APPLICATION AND CLOSURE

UNIT 6

Leader p. 57
Participant p. 16



James 1:22
“Do not merely listen
to the word, and so
deceive yourselves.
Do what it says.”

- Review with your group the potent fact that much of the spiritual fuel that sparked the early beginning of the Church was the merging of spiritual faith and passion with social action. Living faith should affect the character and quality of our everyday lives. The New Testament book of James is descriptive of our founding DNA. Even take a moment to quote a verse or two from James. *(See margin note on page 51.)*
- Let your participants reflect for a few moments (and write in their Participant Guide, page 16) on the following:
 - ▶ What are my evaluations of a person who talks the Christian life and faith, but walks (lives) in unchristian fashion?

- ▶ Briefly describe how putting your faith and biblical values into practice makes a difference:
 1. In your attitude about yourself.
 2. In your marriage (if married) and/or your family relationships.
 3. In dealing with temptations.
 4. In your philosophy of life and/or your personal mission statement.
 5. How you talk to or about others.
- Depending on available time, share needs and requests, then pray in whatever manner seems best.

James 2:14

“What good is it, my brothers, if a man claims to have faith but has no deeds? Can such faith save him?”

James 2:20–26

“You foolish man, do you want evidence that faith without deeds is useless? Was not our ancestor Abraham considered righteous for what he did when he offered his son Isaac on the altar? You see that his faith and his actions were working together, and his faith was made complete by what he did. And the scripture was fulfilled that says, ‘Abraham believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness,’ and he was called God’s friend. You see that a person is justified by what he does and not by faith alone. In the same way, was not even Rahab the prostitute considered righteous for what she did when she gave lodging to the spies and sent them off in a different direction? As the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without deeds is dead.”



WHAT IN THE WORLD IS A WESLEYAN CHURCH?

Interesting Facts

1. Our name comes from the eighteenth-century preacher and scholar, _____ .
2. The Wesleyan Church is historically connected to the _____ Church.
3. The Wesleyan Church is a _____ merger of the Wesleyan Methodist Church and the Pilgrim Holiness church.
4. Other church groups that are similar to us in doctrine are Free Methodists, Nazarenes, Churches of Christ In Christian Union, Church of God (Anderson), and The _____ Army.
5. We have about _____ churches in North America and about _____ congregations around the world.
6. On a given weekend, there will be about _____ Wesleyans in worship around the world.
7. Our earliest beginnings were in the year _____ .
8. We may be the only denomination founded primarily on response to the _____ issues of the time.
9. Those key social issues were slavery, women's rights, and _____ labor atrocities.
10. We were one of the first denominations in America to ordain a _____ .
11. Our home office is in _____ , Indiana.
12. We have churches in _____ countries around the world.



***HOW DO WESLEYANS COMPARE AND CONTRAST
WITH OTHER GROUPS?***

CHRISTIAN

ORTHODOX

PROTESTANT

EVANGELICAL

WESLEYAN

1. CHRISTIAN:

2. ORTHODOX:



THE APOSTLES' CREED

I believe in God, the Father Almighty, maker of heaven and earth:

And in Jesus Christ His only Son, our Lord; who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, dead, and buried; He descended into hades; the third day He rose again from the dead; He ascended into heaven, and sits on the right hand of God, the Father Almighty; from thence He shall come to judge the quick and the dead.

I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy catholic church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting. Amen.

THE NICENE CREED

I believe in one God, the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth, and of all things visible and invisible:

And in one Lord Jesus Christ, the only-begotten of His Father before all worlds, God of God, Light of Light, very God of very God, begotten, not made, being of one substance with the Father, by whom all things were made;

Who for us men and for our salvation came down from heaven, and was incarnate by the Holy Spirit of the Virgin Mary, and was made man, and crucified also for us under Pontius Pilate;

He suffered and was buried, and the third day He rose again according to the Scriptures, and ascended into heaven, and sits on the right hand of the Father;

And He shall come again with glory to judge both the quick and the dead;

Whose kingdom shall have no end.

And I believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord and Giver of life, who proceeds from the Father and the Son together is worshiped and glorified; who spoke by the prophets. And I believe in one catholic and apostolic church; I acknowledge one baptism for the remission of sins, and I look for the resurrection of the dead, and the life of the world to come. Amen.



3. PROTESTANT

On What Do Protestants and Catholics Agree?

1. Both view the _____ as our written authority.
2. Both ascribe to the _____ .
3. Both believe that _____ is the Son of God and Savior.
4. Both aggressively _____ the world by winning converts to Christ.
5. Both believe in _____ .



WHAT ARE SOME OF THE DIFFERENCES?

- Source of _____ : Protestants believe that the Bible is our sufficient source of common authority. Catholics view the authority of tradition and the (Catholic) church on virtually equal footing with Scripture.
- The _____ : (Communion and baptism) are sacred rituals that are means of grace when received through faith. For Catholics, the sacraments (especially baptism) are instruments that bring us salvation.
- _____ : In the Roman Catholic system, the authority of the Pope has long been considered infallible. Protestants believe that no human leader carries that kind of divine authority.

4. EVANGELICAL

THREE ISSUES

1. The inspiration, reliability, and authority of the Bible. Some biblical scholars and some mainline Protestant denominations began teaching that the Bible is not always to be taken “literally,” and that biblical truth may not be sufficient truth for our Christian lives.
2. Focus on specific and personal faith in Christ for one’s salvation. Our hope for heaven is not found in merely “doing good works,” rather it is by personal faith in Christ.
3. The belief that all Christians need to be engaged in active witness to their faith in Christ, through word and deeds, in hopes of drawing others to trust in Christ.



APPLICATION

- What are my evaluations of a person who talks the Christian life and faith, but walks (lives) in unchristian fashion?
- Briefly describe how putting your faith and biblical values into practice makes a difference:
 1. In your attitude about yourself.
 2. In your family relationships.
 3. In dealing with temptations.
 4. In your philosophy of life and/or your personal mission statement.
 5. How you talk to or about others.

James 1:22

“Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says.”

James 2:14

“What good is it, my brothers, if a man claims to have faith but has no deeds? Can such faith save him?”

James 2:20–26

“You foolish man, do you want evidence that faith without deeds is useless? Was not our ancestor Abraham considered righteous for what he did when he offered his son Isaac on the altar? You see that his faith and his actions were working together, and his faith was made complete by what he did. And the scripture was fulfilled that says, ‘Abraham believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness,’ and he was called God’s friend. You see that a person is justified by what he does and not by faith alone. In the same way, was not even Rahab the prostitute considered righteous for what she did when she gave lodging to the spies and sent them off in a different direction? As the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without deeds is dead.”

SESSION 4

WHAT ABOUT OUR CHURCH— ITS STORY AND DREAMS

SESSION GOALS

- Inform and intrigue your group with an interesting historical saga of your congregation.
- Share your church's mission and vision.
- Acquaint them with staff and/or program leaders.
- Help them review their spiritual journey, then sense where they can fit into the ministry of this congregation.

ADVANCE PREPARATION CHECKLIST



BEWARE!

You will need to get to work early on these issues.

- Obtain (or write) a history of your church.
- Or have an informed member take 5–10 minutes to “tell the story.”
- Invite selected staff or program leaders to share a few minutes about specific church ministries that will likely match the needs of your group. Give them time limits.
- Are old photographs available, or maybe the church has an informative video or other memorabilia?
- Prepare helpful handouts that may not be in the Participant Guide.

LESSON OVERVIEW AND DESIGN

- Unit 1** Class Time—Interaction (5–10 min.)
- Unit 2** Our Church Story (10–20 min.)
- Unit 3** Our Church Mission and Vision (5–15 min.)
- Unit 4** Our Ministries (10–20 min.)
- Unit 5** Where Are You in Our Picture? (10–40 min.)
- Unit 6** Application and Closure (5–10 min.)

Minimum Session Time = 45 min. Maximum = 120 min. As you can see this could be two average length sessions or one longer one. Discern and decide.

• There are several units in this lesson that could take more or less time, especially if you invite guests to speak (staff, etc.).

• Determine what is most needed and hold other items for later sessions or provide it in written form for them.

**1. CLASS TIME—INTERACTION**

After greeting the group, let this be a fun time doing some “memory chasing.” Ask them to recall a personal memory about one of the following:

- Favorite activity as a child
- Childhood fantasy
- Favorite pet
- Ancestral nationality/race
- Best gift or surprise
- Happiest age (approximately) and why
- Childhood memory that makes me smile
- Childhood memory that makes me sad

Depending on group size, this activity could take too long. A quicker exercise could be to share the state and town of their birth and an early childhood memory of the neighborhood where they lived.

ENGAGING YOUR GROUP**WHAT AN OPPORTUNITY!**

Offer individual time for further conversation if desired.

**WATCH YOUR TIME!**

Here's an alternate activity.



Unit Wrap-up and Transition: Memories can be powerful. They sometimes evoke pleasure and sometimes pain. For many, tradition in a church represents who they are, not just what the church was. That's one reason why it is often difficult to change it.

2. OUR CHURCH STORY



UNIT 2

OUR HISTORY

Leader p. 66
Participant p. 17

WHAT ABOUT OUR CHURCH—ITS STORY AND ORIGIN?
Our Church's Family Album

Our Church's Identity	Our Founding Pastor
Why Our Church Was Started	Our Mission Statement
Our History for Ministry	

46

- Provide helpful facts about your church, such as date of its founding, key events in its origins, and early existence.
- Highlight key leaders, relocations, programs, and outreach that they were known for in the early days.
- Maybe have an informed knowledgeable member in the church take a few minutes to share.
- If you plan for this session early enough, you could locate a written church history or have someone write a brief history of your church.

3. OUR CHURCH MISSION AND VISION



UNIT 3

MISSION AND VISION

Leader p. 67
Participant p. 18

THE MISSION OF THE WESLEYAN CHURCH
The Wesleyan Church is a Spirit-led, growing movement called to evangelize and serve disciples of Jesus Christ.

- changing behaviors
- changing hearts
- the kingdom of God
- transforming communities

THE VISION OF THE WESLEYAN CHURCH
Transforming lives, churches, and communities through the power of the Holy Spirit.

And the particular way we envision doing this is by

-
-
-
-

47

- Before discussing the vision of your church, share the mission, vision, and core values of The Wesleyan Church (denomination). Have your group find those items in their Participant Guide.

The Mission of The Wesleyan Church

The Wesleyan Church is a Spirit-led, praying movement called to evangelize and make disciples of all people by:

- Equipping believers
- Developing leaders
- Multiplying churches
- Transforming communities

Our Vision

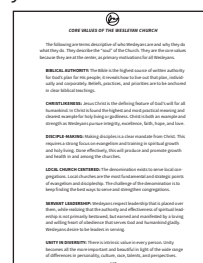
Transforming lives, churches, and communities through the hope and holiness of Jesus Christ.

Our Core Values

- Biblical authority
 - Christlikeness
 - Disciple making
 - Local church centered
 - Servant leadership
 - Unity in variety
 - Cultural relevance
- **What about the mission and the vision of *this* congregation?**
Do we have any recent written versions of either a mission or vision statement? Are there goals that the church has formulated?

Make copies available of whatever you have to present to them. If this material does *not* exist, take time to either write some statements with the help of church leadership *or* simply “own” the denominational statements!

Fuller explanation is on p. 147 in Resources of your Leader Guide



NOT A BAD IDEA!





Scripture References:
Matthew 28:18–20
Matthew 22:37–40

Suggestion: Take the Vision Statement of our denomination, which is:

Transforming lives, churches, and communities through the hope and holiness of Jesus Christ.

Now, using this as a sort of “preamble,” take time to add specific vision points to personalize it for your congregation. One congregation adds these three:

1. Developing cradle to grave ministries
2. Building bridges to our community
3. In every way, making Christ attractive (Titus 2:10)

4. OUR MINISTRIES



UNIT 4

OUR MINISTRIES

In this unit, you can let your church shine!
Following are items of interest worth sharing:

- Introduction of staff members or program directors, including nursery leaders. Briefly describe their ministry, what it offers, and where it might need volunteers.
- A brochure describing various services, programs, classes, studies, and groups that are available for the new members.
- Share some specific dreams for the church’s ministry offerings. You never know when a membership class member may have skills to offer.
- Idea: One church printed a listing called “500 Ways to Get Involved.”

5. WHERE ARE YOU IN OUR PICTURE?

After reviewing the next couple of pages, you will see that the activities and discussions they suggest could take an entire session or two.

Knowing your time, possibly use portions of the following. The vital concern is to clarify the importance of personal commitment to Christ and give each member the opportunity to make or confirm that commitment. (See “B” below.)

WHERE ARE YOU?



A. Retracing Your Spiritual Journey—So Far

Options for discussion (form groups of three or four):

1. Describe the major influences in your spiritual life so far. Identify both the positive and negative ones.
2. When and how did God first become real to you?
3. Has your faith in Christ become personal? If so, please describe. If not, describe the barriers.
4. How have your expectations about the Christian life been changed or confirmed?
5. What things seem to be testing points for your faith and living a Christian life?

WHAT AN OPPORTUNITY!

Offer individual time for further conversation if desired.

Leader p. 68
Participant p. 19

WHERE ARE YOU?

1. Describe the major influences in your spiritual journey. Be as specific as possible, both positive and negative ones.

Positive influences

Negative influences

2. When and how did God first become real to you?

3. Has your faith in Christ become personal to you? If yes, please describe it. If not, describe the barriers.

4. How have your expectations about the Christian life been changed or confirmed?

5. What things seem to be testing points for your faith and living a Christian life?

Transition: The next section is basically sharing how to become a Christian. Think it through carefully and present this, or your version of it, as clearly as possible. Solicit questions.

B. Your Most Important Relationship

1. God created us, loves us, and wants to have a personal relationship with us. That's incredible!



Psalms 139:13–14;
John 3:16; 17:3

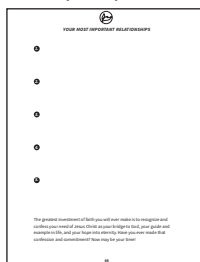
James 4:17;
Romans 3:23;
Isaiah 59:2

John 14:6; 1 Peter 3:18;
Ephesians 2:8–9

John 1:12; Acts 3:19

Colossians 2:6–7;
2 Peter 3:18;
Philippians 1:6; 3:7–11;
Ephesians 5:1–2

Leader p. 69
Participant p. 20



1. Matthew 5:13–16



WOW!
LET IT SOAK IN!



2. 1 Corinthians
12:12–26

2. There are major barriers that hinder a personal relationship (ignorance, attitudes, sins).
3. We are inadequate to bridge the barriers through personality, effort, or good works, so God has given us Jesus Christ as the bridge—our Savior.
4. Your part is to receive Christ by faith and trust Him as your personal Savior, example, counselor, and hope.
5. Continue to grow and help develop that relationship, making it your goal to become more like Christ.

C. Your Relationship to This Church

Many of us lack self-confidence and self-esteem, wonder what difference we are making in the world, or ponder, “Where do I fit?”

That is a common struggle. The Bible can help us. Take them on a journey of the following Scriptures (or as many as time will allow) to affirm their value in the body of Christ (the Church).

1. First, think of the great compliments Christ gave His followers: “You are the salt of the earth; you are the light of the world!”
(Take a few minutes to examine and celebrate with your group the implications of that passage for every Christian.)
2. Next, consider this passage of Scripture, and its emphasis that every part (person) of the body (of Christ) is important. Let them ponder the questions: How does

this passage advise me to view myself, as a person and a Christian? How does it advise me to view others?

3. Finally, tell them that the Bible teaches us that in the Church of Jesus Christ, everybody is somebody special!

3. Ephesians 2:4–10



6. APPLICATION AND CLOSURE

1. Give the group a chance to respond to the following: Think of those who know you best. What would they say about you and your abilities to help the church in practical ways?
 2. Before praying, bring the class to a moment of serious personal consideration of the following:
 - Can I say with confidence that I am “in Christ”? (Have I invited Christ into my life, and am I trusting Christ with my life?)
 - On what or whom am I building my sense of truth, security, and stability? Have I maximized the importance of possessions, prominence, power, or other people, and minimized the power of God’s love and my importance in His body, the Church?
 - Do I have Christian vision? Do I see and evaluate others as Christ would?
 - What changes in my perspective, values, and view points need to begin ASAP?
 3. Give them whatever homework assignments may be helpful for the next session.
- Let’s pray!

REAL-LIFE
CONSIDERATIONS



UNIT 6



WHAT ABOUT OUR CHURCH—ITS STORY AND DREAMS

Our Church's Family Album

Our Church's Birthday

Our Founding Pastor

Why Our Church Was Started

Our Mission Statement

..... Our Vision for Ministry



THE MISSION OF THE WESLEYAN CHURCH

The Wesleyan Church is a Spirit-led, praying movement called to evangelize and make disciples of all people by:

- Equipping believers
- Developing leaders
- Multiplying churches
- Transforming communities

THE VISION OF THE WESLEYAN CHURCH

Transforming lives, churches, and communities through the hope and holiness of Jesus Christ.

And the particular way we envision doing this is by

1.

2.

3.

4.



WHERE ARE YOU?

1. Describe the major influences in your spiritual/religious life so far. Identify both the positive and negative ones.

Positive Influences

Negative Influences



2. When and how did God first become real to you?
3. Has your faith in Christ become personal for you? If so, please describe. If not, describe the barriers.
4. How have your expectations about the Christian life been changed or confirmed?
5. What things seem to be testing points for your faith and living a Christian life?



YOUR MOST IMPORTANT RELATIONSHIPS

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

The greatest investment of faith you will ever make is to recognize and confess your need of Jesus Christ as your bridge to God, your guide and example in life, and your hope into eternity. Have you ever made that confession and commitment? Now may be your time!

SESSION 5

WHAT WESLEYANS BELIEVE AND WHY

SESSION GOALS

- Help group members explore sources of their beliefs.
- Challenge them to confirm their trust in Christ, and learn how to share their faith with others.
- Begin to explore and better understand Wesleyan doctrines and convictions.
- Arrive at an appreciation for and embracing of our beliefs and convictions.

ADVANCE PREPARATION CHECKLIST



NOTE: This session involves a total of five participant activity items on two pages of their guide. Decide ahead of time which ones you plan to have them use.

- Think through this session regarding timing and material. It could easily be expanded.
- You may have your own favorite charts, lists, drawings, or analogies that explain our beliefs. Feel free to make copies and use them.
- These next two sessions have a lot of technical material. It could be not only controversial, but also very deep or boring for some of your participants. Know your group. Keep it interesting and moving along. Let their questions help guide how deep you go with this material.

- Sessions 5 and 6 should focus on content and have a minimum of “community time” or fellowship.

LESSON OVERVIEW AND DESIGN

Unit 1 Class Time—Sharing Our Sources (10–20 min).

Unit 2 Religious Beliefs Are Like Onions (5–10 min).

Unit 3 Common Doctrines (10–20 min).

Unit 4 Viewpoints That Differ (20–60 min).

Unit 5 Review and Reflection (5–10 min).

Minimum Session Time = 45 min. Maximum = 120 min.

THINK AHEAD.

The first unit can be quickly skimmed or you can take plenty of time with it. Decide its importance for your group!



1. CLASS TIME—SHARING OUR SOURCES

This opening is important, but don’t let it drag. We have a ton of material to cover in sessions 5 and 6.

The responses they give will help you understand where they have been and let you be more considerate in the controversial things you will discuss.

Get them involved by responding to the following:

1. What persons or other influences have had the greatest impact on your present beliefs, values, and viewpoints?

OUR SOURCES



UNIT 1

Give your group a big, enthusiastic welcome!



Leader p. 81
Participant p. 21

OUR SOURCES

GREATEST INFLUENCES ON MY BELIEFS AND VIEWPOINTS

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

4. _____

5. _____

THE BELIEVER'S QUALIFICATION

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

4. _____

5. _____

RELIGIOUS BELIEFS ARE LIKE ONIONS

1. _____

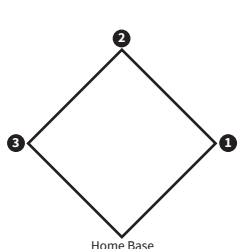
2. _____

3. _____

4. _____

5. _____

2. Research scholars have suggested that John Wesley referred often to four major sources for our values and beliefs. See if you identify with what we call the “Wesleyan Quadrilateral.”



A moment of reflection
and open discussion.

The four influences are:

- Scripture (home base)
 - Tradition (culture/peers; first base)
 - Reason (second base)
 - Experience (third base)
-
- Feel free to say whatever you wish about each. Clarify, however, that the beliefs we each hold have multiple influences, but the Bible is where we begin and conclude. We consider it to be “home base.”
-
- You might ask: How would you rank those four sources in terms of their power of influence during your:
 - a) childhood?
 - b) teen years?
 - c) current time of life?

2. RELIGIOUS BELIEFS ARE LIKE ONIONS



UNIT 2

THEY HAVE
MANY LAYERS

A. See *Articles of Religion*

1. Faith in the Holy Trinity
2. The Father
3. The Son of God
4. The Holy Spirit
5. The Sufficiency and Full Authority of the Holy Scriptures for Salvation

Most religious groups, Wesleyans included, have several levels or layers of viewpoints.

A. Biblical Teachings. These are the major issues of the Bible on which most Christian groups tend to agree. They include: creation; God the Father; Jesus, God’s Son; the Holy Spirit; the family; human nature; sin; salvation; final accountability; heaven and hell; the second coming of Jesus; and the authority and inspiration of the Bible.

B. Interpretations. Doctrine. Now we get into various viewpoints among Bible-believers. Examples are evolutionary creation, predestination, eternal security, gifts of the Holy Spirit, and sexuality.

C. Collective Conscience. These are the viewpoints that may be debated as biblical issues. They are the “thou shalts” and the “thou shalt nots” of our various groups. These convictions are usually lifestyle issues that are considered “wisdom” to help us in our Christian growth and witness. Examples are personal and family devotions; modesty of dress; use of alcohol and tobacco; membership in secret societies; social viewpoints, such as abortion, capital punishment, homosexuality, and others; marriage and divorce; vulgarity; and the list goes on.

Members of our denomination may disagree on some issues in “B” and “C.” However, our denomination puts forth viewpoints on a number of these issues that members are expected to respect.

First, let’s celebrate the numerous biblical teachings where Wesleyans and other Christian groups have basic agreement.

B. See Articles of Religion

19. The Second Coming of Christ
21. The Judgment of All Persons
22. Destiny

C. See Articles of Religion

8. Personal Choice
9. Sin: Original Willful, and Involuntary
10. The Atonement
11. Repentance and Faith
12. Justification, Regeneration and Adoption
16. The Gifts of the Spirit

3. COMMON DOCTRINES

Look in Resources, page 113, Articles of Religion, at the following:

1. *Faith in the Holy Trinity*
2. *The Father*
3. *The Son of God*
4. *The Holy Spirit*
5. *The Sufficiency and Full Authority of the Holy Scriptures for Salvation*

CHRISTIANS ALL AGREE

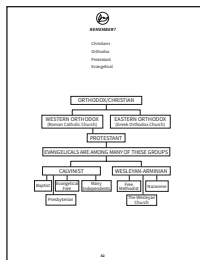
NOTE: If you have already reviewed some of these, just mention them, don’t rehash them.



UNIT 3



Leader p. 82
Participant p. 22



• You may wish to assign these *Articles of Religion* as homework rather than reviewing each one in this session. Or you may wish to expose them to the paraphrased version of these, called *Articles of Faith*, beginning on page 46 in the Participant and on page 125 in the Leader.



Christians do agree!

Remember?

Christians
Orthodox
Protestant
Evangelical

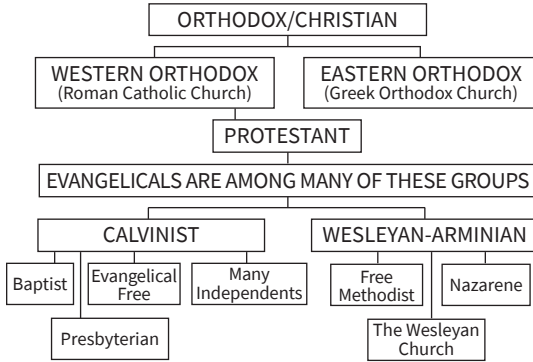
6. *God's Purpose for Humanity*
7. *Marriage and the Family*
12. *Justification, Regeneration and Adoption*
13. *Good Works*
14. *Sin After Regeneration*
17. *The Church*
18. *The Sacraments: Baptism and the Lord's Supper*
19. *The Second Coming of Christ*
20. *The Resurrection of the Dead*
21. *The Judgment of All Persons*
22. *Destiny*

As you can see, Wesleyans are right in step with the vast majority of Christianity regarding major beliefs.

In an earlier session, we used four terms that represent the huge mix of religions with whom Wesleyans are identified. The four terms are:

Now, we use the term *Wesleyan* to distinguish how our views differ from those of other Christian groups.

The following Christianity flowchart helps show where Wesleyans are. Take a few minutes to review it with your group before continuing.

**NOT COMPLETE**

There are many other specific groups that fit into these categories. Only a few are listed.



4. VIEWPOINTS THAT DIFFER

On the flowchart, notice the term *Arminian* beside the term *Wesleyan*. Explain briefly to your group that the terms *Calvinist* and *Arminian* are derived from the last names of the formulators of these theologies, namely John Calvin and James Arminius. Wesleyan-Arminianism is the combination of John Wesley's influence and the teachings of James Arminius.

Remind your group that the following *Articles of Religion* bring us some disagreement with Calvinist views:

- 8. *Personal Choice*
- 9. *Sin: Original, Willful, and Involuntary*
- 10. *The Atonement*
- 11. *Repentance and Faith*
- 15. *Sanctification: Initial, Progressive, Entire*

Inform them that within Protestantism, there are two major streams of doctrine: Calvinism and Arminianism. They generally agree on most

DISAGREEMENTS

UNIT 4

Wesleyan-Arminian?**HEADS UP!**

The term *Arminian* has nothing to do with the country called Armenia!

**OOPS!**

We don't see quite eye-to-eye on these. Depending on who you talk to, the differences can be all the way from mild to severe!

Two Streams:

Arminianism
Calvinism

points of theology, but they disagree to varying degrees on several issues. For example:



LEADER'S
EDGE

• You might ask your group what the Calvinist teaching is. This will help you know what they think!

Salvation

How is one's salvation and final destiny determined?

Response: Calvinist teaching says that God has already “chosen” or “predestined” certain individuals for salvation and heaven and others for hell. The person has no real choice. We simply play out the plan God has determined for us.

The Wesleyan-Arminian response is that God has predestined (predetermined) that Christ is God's plan for our salvation. God's grace gives us an inner sense of need for deliverance, and He has given us the ability to respond by faith in Christ for salvation and eternal life.



NOTE: Security for eternity, or assurance of salvation is found in:

faith
love
obedience
witness of the Spirit

Security

Response: The Calvinistic position is “once saved, always saved.” Terms used for this doctrine are *eternal security* or *perseverance of the saints*. This doctrine is based on the logic that God predestines and that God is absolutely sovereign. Therefore, it makes sense that those God predestines for heaven will get there.

The Wesleyan-Arminian response is that God's “assignment” of our final destiny is made on the “day of judgment.” Until that time, we can find assurance of salvation through the clear criteria Scripture gives—a persevering trust (faith) in Christ as our security for eternity.

Sanctification

Response: The Calvinist position is that sanctification (total dedication to God, and development of Christian character) begins at salvation, is completed when we get to heaven, and tends to be a progressive journey.

The Wesleyan-Arminian view agrees with nearly all of the above, except for two things:

1. There is a “point-in-time” aspect to sanctification, as well as the progressive aspect. There needs to be a time when, by a conscious decision, one presents his or her life completely to God for His glory and service (see Rom. 12:1).
2. There is a completeness (entire sanctification) in a conscious, sweeping decision of consecration. I present *all* of my life to do *all* of God’s will, love God with *all* of my heart, mind, and strength (see Matt. 22:37–40).

Romans 12:1–2

“Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God’s mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God—this is your spiritual act of worship. Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God’s will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will.”



It is entire sanctification but not in the sense that no room remains for growth. And it is not perfect in performance. It is entire in that it is all that one knows. It is perfect in intention and completeness.

Many folks from the Calvinist persuasion have moderated or “Wesleyanized” their views. The way that a serious Calvinist Christian actually lives his or her faith in total dedication to God is much more like the Wesleyan view than the Calvinist view.

And, fortunately, many Wesleyans realize that a big act of consecration does not insulate them from falling into sin and stupidity. Both “camps” of belief realize that our Lord can help us live lives of holiness and obedience, day by day, without being involved in conscious daily sinning.

SEE: *Article of Religion 15*, Sanctification: Initial, Progressive, Entire.



NOTE: Refer to *Article of Religion 14*, Sin after Regeneration.



Good Works

Response: There are some who falsely assume that Wesleyans believe in “salvation by good works.” Not so. We are saved by faith (Eph. 2:8), but as people saved by grace and faith, we are called to do good works (Eph. 2:9–10).



Refer also to the book of James: 1:22 and 2:14–26.

Also the teachings of Jesus: Matthew 7:21–23.



LEADER'S
EDGE

- The greatest gift any person receives or gives is love. Jesus affirms the experiences and expressions of love as the greatest thing (Matt. 22:37–40).

- Many charismatics claim a “private prayer language.” In such cases, grace and wisdom would say let it be private, like fasting.

- Charismatics and pentecostals have reminded us all of the importance and power of the Holy Spirit in our lives. On that point we can all agree.

- Wesleyans tend to lean more on the importance of the fruit of the Spirit (Gal. 5:22–23) than the gifts.

- Giving the gifts is the prerogative of the Holy Spirit (Heb. 2:4) not by human spirits. Stay open to the Spirit.

Spiritual Gifts

Response: Our charismatic and pentecostal brothers and sisters emphasize the gifts of the Holy Spirit. Speaking in tongues and healing are two gifts that tend to be their centerpieces of doctrine and experience. The strongest proponents of the gifts may even say that speaking in tongues is the evidence (or an evidence) of salvation or being filled with the Holy Spirit.

The biblical interpretation of our charismatic/pentecostal friends is an issue with which both Calvinists and Wesleyans disagree.

The Wesleyan teaching on this issue is in disagreement with some. However, it is a very defensible, yet gracious viewpoint on which we base our understanding of Scripture, tradition, reason, and experience.

Article of Religion 16: The Gifts of the Spirit (The Discipline of The Wesleyan Church 2022, par. 238):

16. The Gifts of the Spirit

238. We believe that the Gift of the Spirit is the Holy Spirit himself, and He is to be desired more than the gifts of the Spirit which He in His wise counsel bestows upon individual members of the Church to enable them properly to fulfill their function as members of

the body of Christ. The gifts of the Spirit, although not always identifiable with natural abilities, function through them for the edification of the whole Church. These gifts are to be exercised in love under the administration of the Lord of the Church, not through human volition. The relative value of the gifts of the Spirit is to be tested by their usefulness in the Church and not by the ecstasy produced in the ones receiving them.

**Luke 11:13; 24:49; Acts 1:4; 2:38–39; 8:19–20; 10:45; 11:17;
Rom. 12:4–8; 1 Cor. 12:1–14:40; Eph. 4:7–8, 11–16; Heb. 2:4;
13:20–21; 1 Pet. 4:8–11**

And paragraph 265:10 (*The Discipline of The Wesleyan Church* 2022):

(10) To preserve the fellowship and witness of the Church with reference to the use of languages. The Wesleyan Church believes in the miraculous use of languages and the interpretation of languages in its biblical and historical setting. But it is contrary to the Word of God to teach that speaking in an unknown tongue or the gift of tongues is the evidence of the baptism of the Holy Spirit or of that entire sanctification which the baptism accomplishes; therefore, only a language readily understood by the congregation is to be used in public worship. The Wesleyan Church believes that the use of an ecstatic prayer language has no clear scriptural sanction, or any pattern of established historical usage in the Church; therefore, the use of such a prayer language shall not be promoted among us.

NOTE: We leave room for the views of others, but our view is our best understanding of Scripture and experience.



Acts 8:14–17; 1 Cor. 12:1–14:40; Gal. 5:22–24

5. REVIEW AND REFLECTION

Probably, you are out of time! That is understandable. You can make this closure a quick, but helpful one. Ask the following questions before you pray and dismiss your group. Refer them to their worksheet item with these questions:

WRAPPING IT UP



UNIT 5

1. Take time this week to review some of your strongly held Christian views and opinions. Reflect on where you got them. What are your sources?
2. Celebrate the fact that all Christian groups are rock-solid about Christ being at the center.
3. What Wesleyan viewpoints are you agreeing with and which ones are a stretch for you to grasp or embrace?
4. Are your beliefs your own? Have you settled for secondhand faith? Is it time to read God's Word, reflect, and be stretched in your faith?
5. Remember, Wesleyans do not believe we have the first or last word on biblical interpretations. Our views are our best understanding of the issues.

God bless you till we meet again!



GREATEST INFLUENCES ON MY VALUES AND VIEWPOINTS

_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

THE WESLEYAN QUADRILATERAL

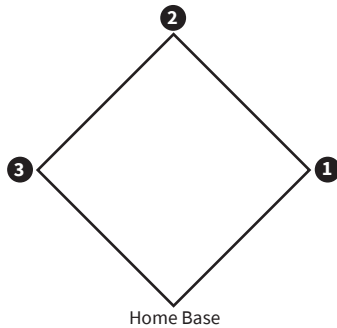
Sources of our Values and Beliefs

Home Base—Scripture

1—Tradition

2—Reason

3—Experience



RELIGIOUS BELIEFS ARE LIKE ONIONS

A. Biblical _____ .

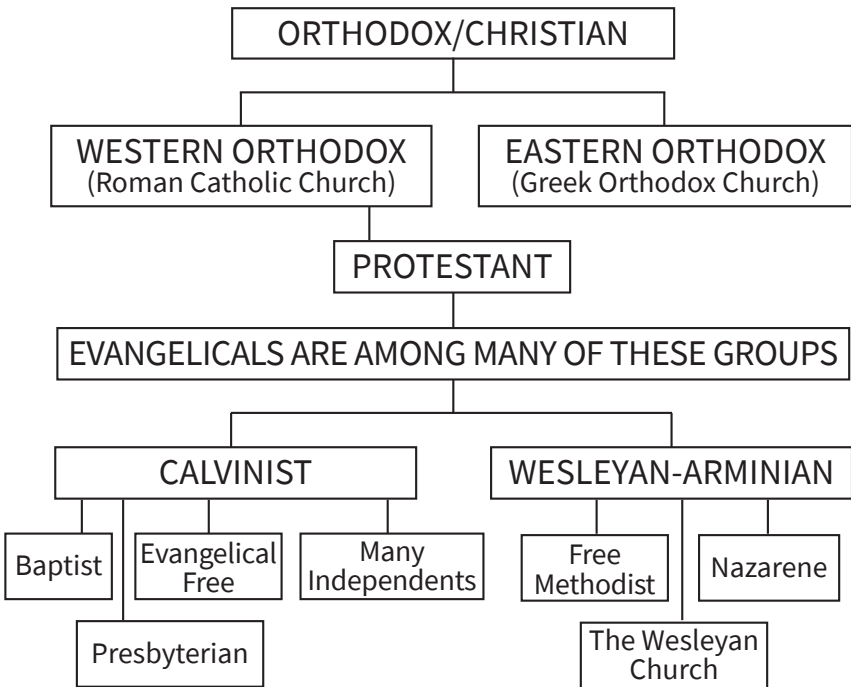
B. _____ .

C. _____ Conscience.



REMEMBER?

Christians
Orthodox
Protestant
Evangelical



WHAT (ELSE) WESLEYANS BELIEVE

SESSION GOALS

- Review the “collective conscience” of The Wesleyan Church.
- Explore how faith and life intersect.
- Appreciate the wisdom of personal convictions.
- Work on a review of needed personal convictions.

“Collective convictions” is another phrase to use that means the same thing as “collective conscience.”



ADVANCE PREPARATION CHECKLIST

- You really should record this session. It will be useful for absentees or for other interested persons to hear or watch.
- Carefully read the supplementary articles on “Abstinence from Alcohol” and “Social Issues,” including “What’s So Wrong with Abortion?”
- Be aware that resources are provided to you that will need to be copied if you have not provided Participant Guides.

FASTEN YOUR SEATBELTS!

• This could be a hotly contested set of subjects. Remember, you have lots of additional resources in your Leader Guide that you can use for personal notes, or you can copy them for the group.



LESSON OVERVIEW AND DESIGN**Unit 1** Convictions—Everybody Has 'Em (10–15 min.)**Unit 2** Collective Convictions (10–15 min.)**Unit 3** Convictions and Membership (15–30 min.)**Unit 4** Social Issues (10–60 min.)**Unit 5** Closure and Departure (5–10 min.)

Minimum Session Time = 45 min. Maximum = 120 min.

1. CONVICTIONS—EVERYBODY HAS 'EM**UNIT 1****PERSONAL
CONVICTIONS**

A. Getting Started. After giving them a warm welcome, maybe take time to ask your group, “What’s new since we last met? Good news? Bad news?” Begin with a brief word of prayer and express gratitude to God for His patience as we all learn.

**Engage their minds!**

Their answers:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

B. Personal Convictions—We All Have 'Em!
Ask your group how they would define or describe the term *convictions*.

Allow a minute or two to respond, then ask for a few examples of their convictions. (Allow five minutes at the most for this.)

Definition of *conviction*: “A strong persuasion or belief; a firmly held viewpoint or opinion.”

In the realm of social interaction, politics, and religion, convictions are deeply held and influential.



ASK: Can you give an example of a conviction?

Open any magazine or newspaper, view the morning news, or watch a talk show and you will read, hear, and see people’s convictions—their view for and against whatever issue you can imagine.

2. COLLECTIVE CONVICTIONS

In the religious, moral, and social realm, we hear them called convictions, standards, values, or even issues of conscience.

COLLECTIVE CONVICTIONS



Just as we each have personal convictions, groups of people have them, too. Families have values; nations tend to have them; businesses and schools have them; clubs and civic organizations have them; and so do religious groups.

These group values and views are sometimes called the “collective conscience” or collective convictions of that group. Wesleyans have them, too. See how it is explained in *The Discipline of The Wesleyan Church* 2022, par. 260–268 under Article 3, Guides and Helps to Holy Living:

... From the Church’s beginnings in the New Testament age, it has been understood that such identification involves putting off the old patterns of conduct and putting on the mind of Christ. In maintaining this Christian concept of a transformed life, The Wesleyan Church intends to relate timeless biblical principles to the conditions of contemporary society in such a way as to respect the integrity of the individual believer, yet maintain the purity of the Church and the effectiveness of its witness. This is done in the conviction that there is validity in the concept of the collective Christian conscience as illuminated and guided by the Holy Spirit. The following items (265) represent historic, ethical and practical standards of The Wesleyan Church. . . .

Our official church statement.



In the last session, we indicated that, like an onion, religious beliefs have layers. Religious groups, or denominations, also have these layers of teachings and values:

1. Bible Teachings are the clear, central truths of Scripture that make up the core of orthodox Christianity—the things on which virtually all Christians agree.

1 Peter 1:13–16



Example: Be holy.



1 Peter 1:17-22

1 Peter 1:17-22

2. Interpretations are those viewpoints or doctrines extracted from Scripture that reflect what we think the Bible means about a given statement that tends to be debatable.

Example: Holiness relates to attitudes and actions, and nonconformity with evil.

3. Convictions (collective conscience) are those “guidelines and guardrails” that help shape our thoughts, words, and deeds in a way that help us achieve a life pleasing to God.

Example: How do we become holy?

Commitment

Cleansing from _____

Obeying

Abstaining from _____

Loving

Ordinarily, convictions are personal and tailored to assist one's spiritual growth. However, Christians sometimes tend to assume that "*my convictions must be your convictions.*" As you might guess, *imposed* convictions often become *disposed* convictions.

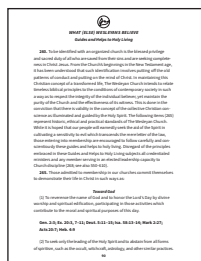
3. CONVICTIONS AND MEMBERSHIP



UNIT 3

MEMBERSHIP COMMITMENTS

Leader p. 90
Participant p.23



Denominations usually form a set of convictions, called the “collective conscience,” for those who will accept them. In The Wesleyan Church, they are called Membership Commitments.

Your Reaction

Read the thirteen commitments and the preface paragraph, then respond to the following:

1. Which of the thirteen do you view as positive and fairly non-debatable?
2. Which do you believe to be unreasonable?
3. Which ones are confusing to you?
4. Assuming that you might disagree with one or more of the Wesleyan “convictions,” if you were to abide by them all, would you say that any one of them is unwise or unhealthy for you, or would cause you to have a negative witness for Christ? Support your response.

Let’s assume that your group will say most of the membership commitments are positive and fairly non-debatable. There will be those classic issues where they may challenge you, namely:

- (4) Abstinence from alcohol, secret societies, and forms of gambling such as the lottery. (See statement in column at right.)
- (10) Speaking in tongues or private prayer languages.

This membership material in your guide and the Participant Guide provides rationale to use in response to these typical reactions.

After reviewing and discussing the above questions and the provided resources, remind them:

1. We understand that other Christians have different convictions on these issues, and we accept that disagreement.
2. We also believe that these Wesleyan convictions, though debatable in a

Leader p. 95
Participant p. 28

Extra Resource Item
for (4) “Abstinence from Alcohol” is found in your Leader Guide, page 149. Make copies for your group, if you wish. The following is a brief statement that you may find helpful:



The Wesleyan Church’s position of abstinence from alcoholic beverages is legitimately debatable among Christians, and we do not see it as a test of one’s salvation.

It is less a biblical position than one based on prevention, tradition, cultural abuse, and negative association. We call those who are in Christ, yet have a different viewpoint on this issue, to respect and prayerfully consider our conviction. Additionally, we require those in an elected or credentialed leadership capacity to follow these guidelines carefully and conscientiously. Sacrificing a personal liberty for what we believe will be a greater good in the partnership of service and leadership, enhances the commitment of membership.



Remind your group that membership in any group often calls us beyond agreement to acceptance and to accommodate those things that are not yet a part of our personal views and values.

couple of points, are certainly not detrimental to a person. They are safeguards and show consideration for others.

3. Even if they disagree with us in principle and practice, it need not be a barrier to membership. We realize that not everyone is ready to embrace the

Membership Commitments, which is why we **encourage** all members to follow them, but **require** those in leadership to follow them.

4. SOCIAL ISSUES



UNIT 4

SOCIAL ISSUES



Make copies for your group, if you wish.

You have a reproducible version of these in your Leader Guide, beginning on page 154.

- Remind your group that The Wesleyan Church was born out of applying a holy life to the holistic needs of society.
- Remind them that one of the vital, but difficult, tasks of Christ's Church is to provide a moral compass in a world of moral chaos.
- An article in your Leader Guide (pages 154–156) addresses the following social issues: abortion, abuse, marriage and sexual purity, homosexuality, substance abuse, racism, women in leadership, and political-action.
- Additional information is offered in *The Discipline of The Wesleyan Church* 2016 beginning on par. 400–475, under Special Directions, Christian Social Concern. It is reprinted in the Leader Guide, pages 162–169.

5. CLOSURE AND DEPARTURE

1. Convictions. Have you taken time to review the convictions you have? Are they healthy? Do you live by them? Is it time to drop, add, or change some of them? Do you flaunt them or judge others unfairly by them? Are they held and used in the Spirit of Christ and love and compassion?
2. Remind them that this is a great lesson for all to be reminded of the importance of *unity* in the context of *diversity*. We have one Lord, and we must each follow the “light” He gives.
3. Ask them, if time permits: “Are you the one God wants to use to bring harmony and unity in a situation where strong and different viewpoints are creating division?”

Pray.

WRAPPING IT UP



UNIT 5



WHAT (ELSE) WESLEYANS BELIEVE

Guides and Helps to Holy Living

260. To be identified with an organized church is the blessed privilege and sacred duty of all who are saved from their sins and are seeking completeness in Christ Jesus. From the Church's beginnings in the New Testament age, it has been understood that such identification involves putting off the old patterns of conduct and putting on the mind of Christ. In maintaining this Christian concept of a transformed life, The Wesleyan Church intends to relate timeless biblical principles to the conditions of contemporary society in such a way as to respect the integrity of the individual believer, yet maintain the purity of the Church and the effectiveness of its witness. This is done in the conviction that there is validity in the concept of the collective Christian conscience as illuminated and guided by the Holy Spirit. The following items (265) represent historic, ethical and practical standards of The Wesleyan Church. While it is hoped that our people will earnestly seek the aid of the Spirit in cultivating a sensitivity to evil which transcends the mere letter of the law, those entering into membership are encouraged to follow carefully and conscientiously these guides and helps to holy living. Disregard of the principles embraced in these Guides and Helps to Holy Living subjects all credentialed ministers and any member serving in an elected leadership capacity to Church discipline (268; see also 550–610).

265. Those admitted to membership in our churches commit themselves to demonstrate their life in Christ in such ways as to:

Toward God

(1) Reverence the name of God and to honor the Lord's Day by divine worship and spiritual edification, participating in those activities which contribute to the moral and spiritual purposes of this day.

Gen. 2:3; Ex. 20:3, 7–11; Deut. 5:11–15; Isa. 58:13–14; Mark 2:27; Acts 20:7; Heb. 4:9

(2) Seek only the leading of the Holy Spirit and to abstain from all forms of spiritism, such as the occult, witchcraft, astrology, and other similar practices.



Lev. 19:31; 20:6; Deut. 18:10–14; Acts 19:18–19; Gal. 5:19–20

Toward Self

(3) Exercise faithful stewardship through the wise use of their time and material resources, practicing careful self-discipline in order to further the mission of Christ's church (remembering the principle of tithing which is basic to the New Testament standard of stewardship) and to demonstrate compassion to those in need.

**Prov. 3:9; Mal. 3:10; Matt. 23:23–24; Acts 20:35; 1 Cor. 16:2;
2 Cor. 9:7; Eph. 5:16; Col. 3:17; James 2:15–16; 1 John 3:17**

(4) Follow the teachings of the Scriptures regarding gender identity and sexual conduct.

Gen. 1:27; 1 Cor. 6:12–20; 7:17–24

(5) Demonstrate a positive social witness by abstaining from all forms of gambling and by abstaining from using or trafficking (production, sale or purchase) in any substances destructive to their physical, mental and spiritual health, such as alcoholic beverages, tobacco and drugs (other than proper medical purposes of drugs); and by refraining from membership in secret societies and lodges which are oath bound, believing that the quasi-religious nature of such organizations divides the Christian's loyalty, their secret nature contravenes the Christian's open witness and the secret nature of their oaths is repugnant to the Christian conscience.

Ex. 20:17; Rom. 14:21; 1 Cor. 6:12. Gambling violates the principle of Christian stewardship and the tenth commandment, is harmful to the individual in that it is emotionally addictive, is a poor example to others, and pollutes the moral climate of society.

**Prov. 20:1; Rom. 6:12; 14:21; 1 Cor. 6:12–20; 10:23; 2 Cor. 7:1;
Eph. 5:18; 1 Thess. 5:22.** Christians are to regard their bodies as temples of the Holy Spirit. While no "thing" of itself is sinful, the Christian



should avoid the use of anything which would not help build the fellowship of the church, would not help the believers to realize their full potential in Christ, or which would enslave them. In the light of the scientific knowledge of our day concerning the actual and potential harm of these substances, total abstinence is more in keeping with these biblical principles than is moderation.

Ex. 20:3; Matt. 5:34–36; John 18:20; Acts 4:12; James 5:12.

These prohibitions do not restrict membership in labor, civic or other organizations which do not contradict loyalty to Christ and the Church. When in these relationships Christian principles are violated, members shall be dealt with because of such violations and not because of the membership itself.

Toward Family

(6) Follow the teachings of the Scriptures regarding marriage and divorce. We affirm that sexual relationships outside of marriage and sexual relationships between persons of the same sex are immoral and sinful. We further affirm that marriage between one man and one woman is God's design, and we regard sexual sin of the spouse, such as adultery, homosexual behavior, bestiality or incest, as clear biblical grounds for considering divorce, and then only when appropriate counseling has failed to restore the relationship.

Ex. 20:14, 17; 22:19; Lev. 20:10–16; Matt. 5:32; 19:19; Mark 10:11–12; Luke 16:18

(7) Preserve the sanctity of the home by honoring Christ in every phase of family life and by demonstrating Christlike love (always avoiding violence, including physical, psychological, emotional, or sexual abuse toward one's spouse or family members, as well as sexual infidelity or desertion, any of which warrant church discipline for the offender and may justify separation or divorce if true repentance and appropriate counseling cannot bring about reconciliation), and by living peacefully with one another, thereby building



up one's spouse and family members through word and deed, and encouraging the nurture and education of the children in the Christian faith so as to bring them early to the saving knowledge of Christ.

**Prov. 22:6; Malachi 2:13–16; Mark 10:9; 1 Cor. 7:10–16;
Eph. 5:28; 6:4**

Toward the Church

(8) Work together for the advancement of God's kingdom and for the mutual edification of fellow believers in holiness, knowledge, and love; walk together in Christian fellowship by giving and receiving counsel with gentleness and affection; by praying for each other; by helping each other in sickness and distress; and by demonstrating love, purity, and courtesy to all.

Rom. 15:1–2; Eph. 4; 1 Thess. 5

(9) Grow in the knowledge, love, and grace of God by participating in public worship, the ministry of the Word of God, the Lord's Supper, family and personal devotions, and fasting.

**Mark 2:18–20; Acts 13:2–3; 14:23; Rom. 12:12; 1 Cor. 11:23–28;
Eph. 6:18; Phil. 4:6; 1 Tim. 2:1–2; 2 Tim. 3:16–17; Heb. 10:25;
1 Pet. 2:2; 2 Pet. 3:18**

(10) Preserve the fellowship and witness of the Church with reference to the use of languages. The Wesleyan Church believes in the miraculous use of languages and the interpretation of languages in its biblical and historical setting. But it is contrary to the Word of God to teach that speaking in an unknown tongue or the gift of tongues is the evidence of the baptism of the Holy Spirit or of that entire sanctification which the baptism accomplishes; therefore, only a language readily understood by the congregation is to be used in public worship. The Wesleyan Church believes that the use of an ecstatic prayer language has no clear scriptural sanction, or any pattern



of established historical usage in the Church; therefore, the use of such a prayer language shall not be promoted among us.

Acts 8:14–17; 1 Cor. 12:1–14:40; Gal. 5:22–24

Toward Others

(11) Do good as much as is possible to all people as God gives opportunity, especially to those in the body of Christ, by giving food to the hungry, by clothing the destitute, by visiting or helping those who are sick or in prison; by instructing, correcting or encouraging them in love.

Matt. 25:31–46; Eph. 5:11; 1 Thess. 5:14; Heb. 3:13; 10:23–25

(12) Respect the inherent individual rights of all persons, regardless of race, color or sex.

1 Cor. 8:13; 12:13; Gal. 3:28; 1 Tim. 5:21

(13) Live honestly, be just in all dealings and faithful in all commitments.

Eccl. 5:4–5; Rom. 12:17; Phil. 4:8–9; 1 Pet. 2:12



YOUR REACTION

After reading the thirteen commitment statements in *The Discipline of The Wesleyan Church* (called Membership Commitments), offer your responses to the following:

1. Which of the thirteen do you view as positive and fairly non-debatable?

2. Which do you believe to be unreasonable?

3. Which ones are confusing to you?

4. Assuming that you might disagree with one or more of the Wesleyan convictions, if you were to abide by them all, would you say that any one of them is unwise or unhealthy for you or would cause you to have a negative witness for Christ? Support your response.

SESSION 7

YOUR MEMBERSHIP OPPORTUNITY

SESSION GOALS

- Clarify the qualifications for membership.
- Present their opportunity for membership.
- Challenge them to step forward and join!

ADVANCE PREPARATION CHECKLIST



NOTE: This could be the simplest lesson of all. It is not loaded with tons of detail. But it is in this lesson where you are “closing the deal”!

- Try to confirm maximum attendance—vital session.
- Record this session because of its pivotal nature.
- Have calendars ready to discuss make-up classes if needed.
- Provide date(s) for the public membership introductions service.
- Give target dates for completing the Membership Application. Try to give them time on the spot.
- Plan to present the names of membership candidates to the local church conference or church board for approval.
- Make adequate copies of the Membership Application form, found on page 11 in this Leader Guide.



Don't Miss This!

LESSON OVERVIEW AND DESIGN

Unit 1 Your Membership Opportunity (5–10 min.)

Unit 2 Student Membership (5 min.)

Unit 3 Adult Membership (10 min.)

Unit 4 Questions and Clarifications (15–30 min.)

Unit 5 Membership Application (2 min.)

Unit 6 Wrap Up (3 min.)

Minimum Session Time = 45 min. Maximum = 65 min.

1. YOUR MEMBERSHIP OPPORTUNITY

- After greeting your group and doing whatever interaction, announcements, and prayer you prefer, launch right into this “rubber meets the road” session that leads them toward a decision on membership.

YOUR MEMBERSHIP OPPORTUNITY



UNIT 1

2. STUDENT MEMBERSHIP

564. Those children and youth who have testified to the experience of regeneration may be received as student members immediately after their conversion and baptism. The local board of administration, having provided for their examination concerning their relationship with Christ and their intention to develop toward spiritual maturity, may receive them by majority vote. Student members should be received formally in a public ceremony led by the pastor or staff pastor. The local church shall provide a program that will guide student members toward spiritual maturity and an understanding of the importance, privileges, and commitments of membership.

STUDENT MEMBERSHIP

Leader p. 104
Participant p. 29



UNIT 2

YOUR MEMBERSHIP OPPORTUNITY

Student Membership

564. Those children and youth who have testified to the experience of regeneration may be received as student members immediately after their conversion and baptism. The local board of administration, having provided for their examination concerning their relationship with Christ and their intention to develop toward spiritual maturity, may receive them by majority vote. Student members should be received formally in a public ceremony led by the pastor or staff pastor. The local church shall provide a program that will guide student members toward spiritual maturity and an understanding of the importance, privileges, and commitments of membership.

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Membership

566. Parents or guardians of children and youth who have testified to the experience of regeneration may be received as student members immediately after their conversion and baptism. The local board of administration, having provided for their examination concerning their relationship with Christ and their intention to develop toward spiritual maturity, may receive them by majority vote. Student members should be received formally in a public ceremony led by the pastor or staff pastor. The local church shall provide a program that will guide student members toward spiritual maturity and an understanding of the importance, privileges, and commitments of membership.

565. Student members shall have all the rights of adult-level members except to vote and hold office. They may become adult-level members at any time the local board of administration deems they are qualified, and should be received as given in 553. If student members are not qualified for adult-level membership by their sixteenth birthday, every effort shall be made by the pastor and local board of administration during the following year to prepare them for adult-level membership. When they are twenty-one years of age, they must either become adult-level members or be dropped from the student membership list (cf. 782:9). Student members who desire to become adult-level members shall be received as given in 553.

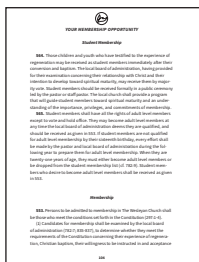
3. ADULT MEMBERSHIP



UNIT 3

ADULT MEMBERSHIP

Leader p. 104
Participant p. 29



553. Persons to be admitted to membership in The Wesleyan Church shall be those who meet the conditions set forth in the Constitution (297:1–4).

(1) Candidates for membership shall be examined by the local board of administration (782:7; 835–837), to determine whether they meet the requirements of the Constitution concerning their experience of regeneration, Christian baptism, their willingness to be instructed in and acceptance of the Articles

of Religion, Elementary Principles and the authority of *The Discipline* in matters of church government, and their willingness to enter into a membership and discipleship relationship with The Wesleyan Church through the local church.

(2) Candidates for membership who have satisfactorily passed the examination by the local board of administration, shall be voted upon by the local church conference unless the local church conference has delegated this responsibility to the local board of

administration (297:5; 655:1). In either case, it shall require a majority vote of those present and voting to receive; and if objections are urged against the reception of a member, it shall require a two-thirds vote of those present and voting.

(3) Candidates for membership be asked to affirm their commitment to their experience of regeneration, Christian baptism, their acceptance of the Articles of Religion, Elementary Principles and the authority of The Discipline in matters of church government, and their willingness to continue a membership and discipleship accountability relationship with The Wesleyan Church through the local church annually. The local board of administration shall carry out this reaffirmation process in a fair and responsible manner, taking care to preserve both the life and health of the church as well as the established rights of the member. If a member chooses not to participate in the reaffirmation process, that choice will be considered as a voluntary withdrawal from membership.

(4) Persons who have been duly accepted for membership as explained in 553:2, should be received into membership in a public service, in which they shall make their confession and vows public, (5565), and be given the right hand of fellowship by the pastor or the representative of the pastor.

557. Guides and Helps to Holy Living. The Membership Commitment Guides and Helps to Holy Living (260–268) are the biblically-based convictions historically held by The Wesleyan Church, which all members are encouraged to prayerfully consider and embrace.

558. Leadership Qualifications. All those serving in elected or credentialed office in The Wesleyan Church shall be required to follow carefully and conscientiously the Guides and Helps to Holy Living found in paragraphs 260–268.

297. The conditions of membership are:

- (1) Confession of faith in Jesus Christ as evidenced by an inner witness of new birth through the Holy Spirit and a commitment to pursue holiness in all things.

- (2) Christian baptism.
- (3) Instruction in, acceptance of, and a commitment to abide by the Articles of Religion (210–250) which are summarized in 299, the Elementary Principles, and the authority of The Wesleyan Church in matters of church government.
- (4) A commitment to live out the mission and vision of The Wesleyan Church through a discipling relationship within the local church.

Further, a candidate for membership must

- 1. Complete an application form for membership.
- 2. Participate in a public service of vows for assuming membership status.

555. The rights of membership are set forth in the Constitution (302). The judicial process for dealing with any member charged with failure to uphold the Articles of Religion are located in the Judiciary section of *The Discipline* (5000–5004) and in the *General Board Policy on Church Discipline and Ministerial Restoration*.

302. The rights of membership are:

- (1) The fellowship of the saints and the encouragement, admonition and spiritual guidance of the ministry.
- (2) The access to the sacraments and ordinances of the Church.
- (3) The right to participate in any vote being taken by the local church conference.
- (4) The eligibility to hold leadership positions (552:2–3), providing the qualifications are met (260–268; 558) and if not under discipline.
- (5) The right to hearing and appeal if charged with failure to maintain the conditions of membership, with the specific provision that joining another religious body shall of itself sever membership in the Church.
- (6) A member in good standing in any Wesleyan church is entitled to membership privileges in any Wesleyan church

to which a transfer of membership may be desired, subject to 567.

305. Church membership may be terminated only by one or more of the following (585):

- (1) Voluntary withdrawal.
- (2) Joining another religious body or a secret order.
- (3) Expulsion after proper hearing and conviction.
- (4) Persistent neglect of Church relationship as defined by *The Discipline*.
- (5) Death.

4. QUESTIONS AND CLARIFICATIONS

Q. Does the term *acceptance of and commitment to abide by the Articles of Religion* mean that we totally agree with them?

Q & A



A. Very insightful question! Many churches have chosen to receive into membership those from different doctrinal backgrounds, different spiritual experiences, and even different lifestyle convictions.

If a person is in Christ, has been baptized, is committed to spiritual growth and the pursuit of holiness, yet still holds some views of doctrine and practice of lifestyle that are not in harmony with those required for membership, membership is still available based on the following rationale:

1. That person acknowledges an awareness of what those Wesleyan views are (knowledge); and
2. Agrees that, while being a member of our church, he/she will not protest those views, and will comply with them.

In the above manner, we reach middle ground, with unity and integrity.



Q. I use tobacco and alcohol. Can I become a member?

REMEMBER! A fuller treatment of abstinence from alcohol is available in Resources on pages 149–153.

You may wish to copy it and make it available to your class.

A. Even the non-religious sector of our culture sees alcohol and tobacco as “compromising substances.” Many public facilities prohibit both alcohol and smoking, and it has nothing to do with religion or morality.

Alcohol compromises one’s thinking and behavior and can have massive impact on the partaker and those around him/her. It gives very little and can cost you the “farm.”

Tobacco compromises one’s health, life, the surrounding environment, and those in it. Add to that, the biblical mandate for stewardship of the body and “avoiding even the appearance of evil,” one can see the wisdom in the position that many Christians and churches (including Wesleyan) take on these issues.

Agreement and acceptance are not the same. To agree means to “see it the same way” or “come to terms” with someone. To accept something means to recognize and to favorably regard some view or person, and even to accommodate without agreement. Sometimes, to comply is honor without surrender.

So, in answer to your question, if you disagree with these Wesleyan convictions or struggle to change a habit, we ask that you *publicly* practice our church’s convictions and agree to work toward them in your personal life. That would honor our Wesleyan witness and constitute a basis of integrity for becoming a member.

Q. Isn’t that hypocritical?

A. Yes and no. If you are trying to falsely impress people, and you have a personal double standard, then the answer is “yes.” If you are simply complying with a membership agreement, the answer is “no.” Intention and motive determine hypocrisy.



YOUR MEMBERSHIP OPPORTUNITY

Student Membership

564. Those children and youth who have testified to the experience of regeneration may be received as student members immediately after their conversion and baptism. The local board of administration, having provided for their examination concerning their relationship with Christ and their intention to develop toward spiritual maturity, may receive them by majority vote. Student members should be received formally in a public ceremony led by the pastor or staff pastor. The local church shall provide a program that will guide student members toward spiritual maturity and an understanding of the importance, privileges, and commitments of membership.

565. Student members shall have all the rights of adult-level members except to vote and hold office. They may become adult-level members at any time the local board of administration deems they are qualified, and should be received as given in 553. If student members are not qualified for adult-level membership by their sixteenth birthday, every effort shall be made by the pastor and local board of administration during the following year to prepare them for adult-level membership. When they are twenty-one years of age, they must either become adult-level members or be dropped from the student membership list (cf. 782:9). Student members who desire to become adult-level members shall be received as given in 553.

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(3) Candidates for membership will be asked to affirm their commitment to their experience of regeneration, Christian baptism, their acceptance of the Articles of Religion, Elementary Principles and the authority of The Discipline in matters of church government, and their willingness to continue a membership and discipleship accountability relationship with The Wesleyan Church through the local church annually. The local board of administration shall carry out this annual reaffirmation process in a fair and responsible manner, taking care to preserve both the life and health of the church as well as the established rights of the member. If a member chooses not to participate in the annual reaffirmation process, that choice will be considered as a voluntary withdrawal from membership.

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LEADER

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MULLINGS ON MEMBERSHIP

- Why should I become a member of a local church?
- Does the Bible say anything about membership of a local church?
- If I am a Christian, am I not already a member of the great, universal Church that Jesus is building?

These are just a sample of the questions raised before and after our national conference last January.

Though the expression “church membership” does not appear in the Bible, the sorts of things that church membership should reflect are spoken of over and over again. I have arrived at a simple definition of what I believe church membership should express: Membership in a local church expresses a commitment to being the best that one can be for Jesus Christ.

In making a commitment to membership, a person publicly affirms, among other things:

- That he/she is trusting Jesus and wants to be the best he/she can be for Him;
- That the local church is a primary means of growing him/her up to be the best he/she can be for Him;
- That he/she willingly accepts responsibility for the ministry of the local church, recognizing its key role in God’s purpose for him/her and the world.

This all emphasizes the difference between membership of a local church and membership of a local club. It also causes one to question whether one should speak of the “honor and privilege” of being a member as though one should command some respect or has somehow paid for or merited such privilege. One does not speak of being a child of God in that sense.



What Is Church Membership?

1. Church membership is a commitment to a local body of believers.

In a similar way that marriage partners publicly covenant to be faithful to one another through the ups and downs of life, church members covenant to grow together, build up, encourage, and even correct one another so that all might be the best they can be for Jesus Christ. The “one another” verses charge believers to express such a commitment within a local fellowship. We cannot escape this and be true to God’s Word.

2. Church membership is a commitment to particular beliefs and values held important.

Though we may wish there were no denominational tags, we cannot ignore two thousand years of church history. We have to acknowledge that there are fellow believers who are equally committed to the Bible, who love the Lord Jesus, and yet with whom we cannot agree in all good conscience. Membership commitment, on the one hand, saves a lot of time and energy hassling over issues, and on the other hand preserves beliefs and values held important. It saves the church from being sidetracked from its mission, to save souls and to disciple them into Christlikeness.

At the same time we must have the most generous and warm-hearted attitude toward fellow believers, no matter what their denominational loyalty may be.

3. Membership within The Wesleyan Church is also a commitment to what we call the “collective conscience.”

We recognize that it is legitimate for an individual to do, or not do, certain things for conscience’s sake. I believe it is also legitimate for a group of people to have a collective conscience. Total abstinence from alcohol is such a collective conscience lifestyle position to which leaders in The Wesleyan Church commit themselves. This lifestyle position is in response to the obvious carnage of which the alcohol industry is a root cause.

4. In addition, membership within The Wesleyan Church, ideally, is a recognition of Christian growth and maturity.

Some leadership positions are therefore restricted to members who meet the leadership



qualifications because of such Christian maturity and their acceptance of doctrinal and lifestyle commitments.

In Acts 15, a contentious issue in the early church was dealt with by a leadership body. These were people who had the spiritual maturity and understanding for the issues to make a wise and godly decision. Their decision was conveyed to the churches, and the church was helped.

- 5. Adult membership and student membership represent a commitment to growing as a Christian and being willing to be nurtured and instructed.** The opportunity to participate in the decisions and ministry of the local church is a means of growth. It is recognized that some members will evidence Christian maturity and grace without embracing all of the commitments required of leaders.

Summary

- Church membership should reflect a vital and growing relationship with Jesus Christ.
- Church membership is a public commitment to a local body of Christians recognizing that a healthy local church is God's primary instrument in winning people to His kingdom and growing them in Christlikeness.
- Church membership for a Wesleyan is a commitment to distinctive beliefs and practices that are considered biblical and practical, therefore, important.

It is my experience that when a person makes a commitment to membership they have a stronger sense of "belonging." They also take a greater ownership for the well-being and ministry of the local church. It generally is the case that their spiritual well-being is enhanced.

(Stan Baker, national superintendent and
pastor of Caboolture Wesleyan Methodist Church, Australia)

Adapted for use in North America



ARTICLES OF RELIGION

(from *The Discipline of The Wesleyan Church* 2022)

1. Faith in the Holy Trinity

210. We believe in the one living and true God, both holy and loving, eternal, unlimited in power, wisdom, goodness, the creator and preserver of all things. Within this unity there are three persons of one essential nature, power and eternity—the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.

Gen. 1:1; 17:1; Ex. 3:13–15; 33:20; Deut. 6:4; Ps. 90:2; Isa. 40:28–29; Matt. 3:16–17; 28:19; John 1:1–2; 4:24; 16:13; 17:3; Acts 5:3–4; 17:24–25; 1 Cor. 8:4, 6; Eph. 2:18; Phil. 2:6; Col. 1:16–17; 1 Tim. 2:1–7; Heb. 1:8; 1 John 5:20

2. The Father

212. We believe the Father is the source of all that exists, whether of matter or spirit. With the Son and the Holy Spirit, He made man, male and female, in His image. By intention He relates to people as Father, thereby forever declaring His goodwill toward them. In love, He both seeks and receives penitent sinners.

Ps. 68:5; Isa. 64:8; Matt. 7:11; John 3:17; Rom. 8:15; 1 Pet. 1:17

3. The Son of God

214. We believe in Jesus Christ, the only begotten Son of God. He was conceived by the Holy Spirit and born of the Virgin Mary, truly God and truly man. He died on the cross and was buried, to be a sacrifice both for original sin and for all human transgressions, and to reconcile us to God. Christ rose bodily from the dead, and ascended into heaven, and there intercedes for us at the Father's right hand until He returns to judge all humanity at the last day.



Ps. 16:8–10; Matt. 1:21, 23; 11:27; 16:28; 27:62–66; 28:5–9, 16–17; Mark 10:45; 15; 16:6–7; Luke 1:27, 31, 35; 24:4–8, 23; John 1:1, 14, 18; 3:16–17; 20:26–29; 21; Acts 1:2–3; 2:24–31; 4:12; 10:40; Rom. 5:10, 18; 8:34; 14:9; 1 Cor. 15:3–8, 14; 2 Cor. 5:18–19; Gal. 1:4; 2:20; 4:4–5; Eph. 5:2; 1 Tim. 1:15; Heb 2:17; 7:27; 9:14, 28; 10:12; 13:20; 1 Pet. 2:24; 1 John 2:2; 4:14

4. The Holy Spirit

216. We believe in the Holy Spirit who proceeds from the Father and the Son, and is of the same essential nature, majesty, and glory as the Father and the Son, truly and eternally God. He is the administrator of grace to all mankind, and is particularly the effective agent in conviction for sin, in regeneration, in sanctification, and in glorification. He is ever present, assuring, preserving, guiding, and enabling the believer.

Job 33:4; Matt. 28:19; John 4:24; 14:16–17; 15:26; 16:13–15; Acts 5:3–4; Rom. 8:9; 2 Cor. 3:17; Gal. 4:6

5. The Sufficiency and Full Authority of the Holy Scriptures for Salvation

218. We believe that the books of the Old and New Testaments constitute the Holy Scriptures. They are the inspired and infallibly written Word of God, fully inerrant in their original manuscripts and superior to all human authority, and have been transmitted to the present without corruption of any essential doctrine. We believe that they contain all things necessary to salvation; so that whatever is not read therein, nor may be proved thereby, is not to be required of any man or woman that it should be believed as an article of faith, or be thought requisite or necessary to salvation. Both in the Old and New Testaments life is offered ultimately through Christ, who is the only mediator between God and humanity. The New Testament teaches Christians how to fulfill the moral principles of the Old Testament, calling for loving obedience to God made possible by the indwelling presence of His Holy Spirit.



The canonical books of the Old Testament are:

Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy, Joshua, Judges, Ruth, 1 Samuel, 2 Samuel, 1 Kings, 2 Kings, 1 Chronicles, 2 Chronicles, Ezra, Nehemiah, Esther, Job, Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Songs, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Lamentations, Ezekiel, Daniel, Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah, Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi.

The canonical books of the New Testament are:

Matthew, Mark, Luke, John, Acts, Romans, 1 Corinthians, 2 Corinthians, Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, 1 Thessalonians, 2 Thessalonians, 1 Timothy, 2 Timothy, Titus, Philemon, Hebrews, James, 1 Peter, 2 Peter, 1 John, 2 John, 3 John, Jude, and Revelation.

Ps. 19:7; Matt. 5:17–19; 22:37–40; Luke 24:27, 44; John 1:45; 5:46; 17:17; Acts 17:2, 11; Rom. 1:2; 15:4, 8; 16:26; 2 Cor. 1:20; Gal. 1:8; Eph. 2:15–16; 1 Tim. 2:5; 2 Tim. 3:15–17; Heb. 4:12; 10:1; 11:39; James 1:21; 1 Pet. 1:23; 2 Pet. 1:19–21; 1 John 2:3–7; Rev. 22:18–19

6. God's Purpose for Humanity

220. We believe that the two great commandments which require us to love the Lord our God with all our hearts, and our neighbors as ourselves, summarize the divine law as it is revealed in the Scriptures. They are the perfect measure and norm of human duty, both for the ordering and directing of families and nations, and all other social bodies, and for individual acts, by which we are required to acknowledge God as our only supreme ruler, and all persons as created by Him, equal in all natural rights. Therefore all persons should so order all their individual, social and political acts as to give to God entire and absolute obedience, and to assure to all the enjoyment of every natural right, as well as to promote the fulfillment of each in the possession and exercise of such rights.

Lev. 19:18, 34; Deut. 1:16–17; Job 31:13–14; Jer. 21:12; 22:3; Mic. 6:8; Matt. 5:44–48; 7:12; Mark 12:28–31; Luke 6:27–29, 35; John 13:34–35; Acts 10:34–35; 17:26; Rom. 12:9; 13:1, 7–8, 10; Gal. 5:14; 6:10; Titus 3:1; James 2:8; 1 Pet. 2:17; 1 John 2:5; 4:12–13; 2 John 6



7. Marriage and the Family

222. We believe that every person is created in the image of God, that human sexuality reflects that image in terms of intimate love, communication, fellowship, subordination of the self to the larger whole, and fulfillment. God's Word makes use of the marriage relationship as the supreme metaphor for His relationship with His covenant people and for revealing the truth that that relationship is of one God with one people. Therefore God's plan for human sexuality is that it is to be expressed only in a monogamous lifelong relationship between one man and one woman within the framework of marriage. This is the only relationship which is divinely designed for the birth and rearing of children and is a covenant union made in the sight of God, taking priority over every other human relationship. We adhere to the teachings of Scripture regarding the sacredness of gender identity, sexual conduct, and marriage, and believe that sexual relationships outside of marriage and sexual relationships between persons of the same sex are immoral and sinful.

Gen. 1:27–28; 2:18, 20, 23–24; Isa. 54:4–8; 62:5; Jer. 3:14; Ezek. 16:3ff.; Hos. 2; Mal. 2:14; Matt. 19:4–6; Mark 10:9; John 2:1–2, 11; 1 Cor. 9:5; Eph. 5:23–32; 1 Tim. 5:14; Heb. 13:4; Rev. 19:7–8

8. Personal Choice

224. We believe that humanity's creation in the image of God included ability to choose between right and wrong. Thus individuals were made morally responsible for their choices. But since the fall of Adam, people are unable in their own strength to do what is right. This is due to original sin, which is not simply the following of Adam's example, but rather the corruption of the nature of each mortal, and is reproduced naturally in Adam's descendants. Because of it, humans are very far gone from original righteousness, and by nature are continually inclined to evil. They cannot of themselves even call upon God or exercise faith for salvation. But through Jesus Christ the preventive grace of God makes possible what humans in self effort cannot do. It is bestowed freely upon all, enabling all who will to turn and be saved.



Gen. 6:5; 8:21; Deut. 30:19; Josh. 24:15; 1 Kings 20:40; Ps. 51:5; Isa. 64:6; Jer. 17:9; Mark 7:21–23; Luke 16:15; John 7:17; Rom. 3:10–12; 5:12–21; 1 Cor. 15:22; Eph. 2:1–3; 1 Tim. 2:5; Titus 3:5; Heb. 11:6; Rev. 22:17

9. Sin: Original, Willful, and Involuntary

225. We believe that through the disobedience of Adam and Eve sin entered the world and all creation suffered its consequences. The effects of sin include disruption of the relationship between God and humanity, deterioration of the natural order of creation, and exploitation of persons by evil or misguided social systems. The whole of creation groans for redemption. Each person is born with a proclivity toward sin, manifested in an inordinate orientation toward self and independence from God, leading to deliberate acts of unrighteousness. The residual effects of Adam and Eve's disobedience include a marred human nature from which arise involuntary shortcomings, faults, infirmities, and imperfect judgments, which should not be accounted the same as willful sin. However, as manifestations of the fallen nature of humanity, these shortcomings of God's holiness still necessitate the merits of the atonement, the sanctifying work of the Holy Spirit, and the self-control of the believer. Willful sin results when a morally accountable person chooses to violate a known law of God, using freedom of choice to please self rather than obey God. The consequences of willful sin include a loss of fellowship with God, a self-absorption with one's own interests rather than love and concern for others, a bondage to things which distort the divine image, a persistent inability to live righteously, and ultimately everlasting misery and separation from God. The atoning work of Christ is the only remedy for sin, whether original, willful or involuntary.

10. The Atonement

226. We believe that Christ's offering of himself, once and for all, through His sufferings and meritorious death on the cross, provides the perfect redemption and atonement for the sins of the whole world, both original and actual. There is no other ground of salvation from sin but that alone.



This atonement is sufficient for every individual of Adam's race. It is unconditionally effective in the salvation of those mentally incompetent from birth, of those converted persons who have become mentally incompetent, and of children under the age of accountability. But it is effective for the salvation of those who reach the age of accountability only when they repent and exercise faith in Christ.

Isa. 52:13–53:12; Luke 24:46–47; John 3:16; Acts 3:18; 4:12; Rom. 3:20, 24–26; 5:8–11, 13, 18–20; 7:7; 8:34; 1 Cor. 6:11; 15:22; Gal. 2:16; 3:2–3; Eph. 1:7; 2:13, 16; 1 Tim. 2:5–6; Heb. 7:23–27; 9:11–15, 24–28; 10:14; 1 John 2:2; 4:10

11. Repentance and Faith

228. We believe that for men and women to appropriate what God's prevenient grace has made possible, they must voluntarily respond in repentance and faith. The ability comes from God, but the act is the individual's.

Repentance is prompted by the convicting ministry of the Holy Spirit. It involves a willful change of mind that renounces sin and longs for righteousness, a godly sorrow for and a confession of past sins, proper restitution for wrongdoings, and a resolution to reform the life. Repentance is the precondition for saving faith, and without it saving faith is impossible. Faith, in turn, is the only condition of salvation. It begins in the agreement of the mind and the consent of the will to the truth of the gospel, but issues in a complete reliance by the whole person in the saving ability of Jesus Christ and a complete trusting of oneself to Him as Savior and Lord. Saving faith is expressed in a public acknowledgment of His lordship and an identification with His church.

Mark 1:15; Luke 5:32; 13:3; 24:47; John 3:16; 17:20; 20:31; Acts 5:31; 10:43; 11:18; 16:31; 20:21; 26:20; Rom. 1:16; 2:4; 10:8–10, 17; Gal. 3:26; Eph. 2:8; 4:4–6; Phil. 3:9; 2 Thess. 2:13; 2 Tim. 2:25; Heb. 11:6; 12:2; 1 Pet. 1:9; 2 Pet. 3:9



12. Justification, Regeneration and Adoption

230. We believe that when one repents of personal sin and believes on the Lord Jesus Christ, that at the same moment that person is justified, regenerated, adopted into the family of God, and assured of personal salvation through the witness of the Holy Spirit.

We believe that justification is the judicial act of God whereby a person is accounted righteous, granted full pardon of all sin, delivered from guilt, completely released from the penalty of sins committed, by the merit of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, by faith alone, not on the basis of works.

We believe that regeneration, or the new birth, is that work of the Holy Spirit whereby, when one truly repents and believes, one's moral nature is given a distinctively spiritual life with the capacity for love and obedience. This new life is received by faith in Jesus Christ, it enables the pardoned sinner to serve God with the will and affections of the heart, and by it the regenerate are delivered from the power of sin which reigns over all the unregenerate.

We believe that adoption is the act of God by which the justified and regenerated believer becomes a partaker of all the rights, privileges and responsibilities of a child of God.

Justification: Hab. 2:4; Acts 13:38–39; 15:11; 16:31; Rom. 1:17; 3:28; 4:2–5; 5:1–2; Gal. 3:6–14; Eph. 2:8–9; Phil. 3:9; Heb. 10:38

Regeneration: John 1:12–13; 3:3, 5–8; 2 Cor. 5:17; Gal. 3:26; Eph. 2:5, 10, 19; 4:24; Col. 3:10; Titus 3:5;

James 1:18; 1 Pet. 1:3–4; 2 Pet. 1:4; 1 John 3:1

Adoption: Rom. 8:15; Gal. 4:5, 7; Eph. 1:5

Witness of the Spirit: Rom. 8:16–17; Gal. 4:6; 1 John 2:3; 3:14, 18–19

13. Good Works

232. We believe that although good works cannot save us from our sins or from God's judgment, they are the fruit of faith and follow after regeneration. Therefore they are pleasing and acceptable to God in Christ, and by them a living faith may be as evidently known as a tree is discerned by its fruit.



Matt. 5:16; 7:16–20; John 15:8; Rom. 3:20; 4:2, 4, 6; Gal. 2:16; 5:6; Eph. 2:10; Phil. 1:11; Col. 1:10; 1 Thess. 1:3; Titus 2:14; 3:5; James 2:18, 22; 1 Pet. 2:9, 12

14. Sin After Regeneration

234. We believe that after we have experienced regeneration, it is possible to fall into sin, for in this life there is no such height or strength of holiness from which it is impossible to fall. But by the grace of God one who has fallen into sin may by true repentance and faith find forgiveness and restoration.

Mal. 3:7; Matt. 18:21–22; John 15:4–6; 1 Tim. 4:1, 16; Heb. 10:35–39; 1 John 1:9; 2:1, 24–25

15. Sanctification: Initial, Progressive, Entire

236. We believe that sanctification is that work of the Holy Spirit by which the child of God is separated from sin unto God and is enabled to love God with all the heart and to walk in all His holy commandments blameless. Sanctification is initiated at the moment of justification and regeneration. From that moment there is a gradual or progressive sanctification as the believer walks with God and daily grows in grace and in a more perfect obedience to God. This prepares for the crisis of entire sanctification which is wrought instantaneously when believers present themselves as living sacrifices, holy and acceptable to God, through faith in Jesus Christ, being effected by the baptism with the Holy Spirit who cleanses the heart from all inbred sin. The crisis of entire sanctification perfects the believer in love and empowers that person for effective service. It is followed by lifelong growth in grace and the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. The life of holiness continues through faith in the sanctifying blood of Christ and evidences itself by loving obedience to God's revealed will.

Gen. 17:1; Deut. 30:6; Ps. 130:8; Isa. 6:1–6; Ezek. 36:25–29; Matt. 5:8, 48; Luke 1:74–75; 3:16–17; 24:49; John 17:1–26; Acts 1:4–5, 8; 2:1–4; 15:8–9; 26:18; Rom. 8:3–4; 1 Cor. 1:2; 6:11; 2 Cor. 7:1; Eph. 4:13, 24;



5:25–27; 1 Thess. 3:10, 12–13; 4:3, 7–8; 5:23–24; 2 Thess. 2:13; Titus 2:11–14; Heb. 10:14; 12:14; 13:12; James 3:17–18; 4:8; 1 Pet. 1:2; 2 Pet. 1:4; 1 John 1:7, 9; 3:8–9; 4:17–18; Jude 24

16. The Gifts of the Spirit

238. We believe that the gift of the Spirit is the Holy Spirit Himself, and He is to be desired more than the gifts of the Spirit which He in His wise counsel bestows upon individual members of the church to enable them properly to fulfill their function as members of the body of Christ. The gifts of the Spirit, although not always identifiable with natural abilities, function through them for the edification of the whole church. These gifts are to be exercised in love under the administration of the Lord of the church, not through human volition. The relative value of the gifts of the Spirit is to be tested by their usefulness in the church and not by the ecstasy produced in the ones receiving them.

Luke 11:13; 24:49; Acts 1:4; 2:38–39; 8:19–20; 10:45; 11:17; Rom. 12:4–8; 1 Cor. 12:1–14:40; Eph. 4:7–8, 11–16; Heb. 2:4; 13:20–21; 1 Pet. 4:8–11

17. The Church

240. We believe that the Christian church is the entire body of believers in Jesus Christ, who is the founder and only head of the church. The church includes both those believers who have gone to be with the Lord and those who remain on the earth, having renounced the world, the flesh and the devil, and having dedicated themselves to the work which Christ committed unto His church until He comes. The church on earth is to preach the pure Word of God, properly administer the sacraments according to Christ's instructions, and live in obedience to all that Christ commands. A local church is a body of believers formally organized on gospel principles, meeting regularly for the purposes of evangelism, nurture, fellowship and worship. The Wesleyan Church is a denomination consisting of those members within district conferences and local churches who, as members of the body



of Christ, hold the faith set forth in these Articles of Religion and acknowledge the ecclesiastical authority of its governing bodies.

Matt. 16:18; 18:17; Acts 2:41–47; 9:31; 11:22; 12:5; 14:23; 15:22; 20:28; 1 Cor. 1:2; 12:28; 16:1; 2 Cor. 1:1; Gal. 1:2; Eph. 1:22–23; 2:19–22; 3:9–10, 21; 5:22–33; Col. 1:18, 24; 1 Thess. 1:1; 2 Thess. 1:1; 1 Tim. 3:15; Heb. 12:23; James 5:14

18. The Sacraments: Baptism and the Lord's Supper

242. We believe that water baptism and the Lord's Supper are the sacraments of the church commanded by Christ and ordained as a means of grace when received through faith. They are tokens of our profession of Christian faith and signs of God's gracious ministry toward us. By them, He works within us to quicken, strengthen and confirm our faith.

We believe that water baptism is a sacrament of the church, commanded by our Lord and administered to believers. It is a symbol of the new covenant of grace and signifies acceptance of the benefits of the atonement of Jesus Christ. By means of this sacrament, believers declare their faith in Jesus Christ as Savior.

Matt. 3:13–17; 28:19; Mark 1:9–11; John 3:5, 22, 26; 4:1–2; Acts 2:38–39, 41; 8:12–17, 36–38; 9:18; 16:15, 33; 18:8; 19:5; 22:16; Rom. 2:28–29; 4:11; 6:3–4; 1 Cor. 12:13; Gal. 3:27–29; Col. 2:11–12; Titus 3:5

We believe that the Lord's Supper is a sacrament of our redemption by Christ's death and of our hope in His victorious return, as well as a sign of the love that Christians have for each other. To such as receive it humbly, with a proper spirit and by faith, the Lord's Supper is made a means through which God communicates grace to the heart.

Matt. 26:26–28; Mark 14:22–24; Luke 22:19–20; John 6:48–58; 1 Cor. 5:7–8; 10:3–4, 16–17; 11:23–29



19. The Second Coming of Christ

244. We believe that the certainty of the personal and imminent return of Christ inspires holy living and zeal for the evangelization of the world. At His return He will fulfill all prophecies made concerning His final and complete triumph over evil.

Job 19:25–27; Isa. 11:1–12; Zech. 14:1–11; Matt. 24:1–51; 25; 26:64; Mark 13:1–37; Luke 17:22–37; 21:5–36; John 14:1–3; Acts 1:6–11; 1 Cor. 1:7–8; 1 Thess. 1:10; 2:19; 3:13; 4:13–18; 5:1–11, 23; 2 Thess. 1:6–10; 2:1–12; Titus 2:11–14; Heb. 9:27–28; James 5:7–8; 2 Pet. 3:1–14; 1 John 3:2–3; Rev. 1:7; 19:11–16; 22:6–7, 12, 20

20. The Resurrection of the Dead

246. We believe in the bodily resurrection from the dead of all people—of the just unto the resurrection of life, and of the unjust unto the resurrection of damnation. The resurrection of Christ is the guarantee of the resurrection that will occur at Christ's Second Coming. The raised body will be a spiritual body, but the person will be whole and identifiable.

Job 19:25–27; Dan. 12:2; Matt. 22:30–32; 28:1–20; Mark 16:1–8; Luke 14:14; 24:1–53; John 5:28–29; 11:21–27; 20:1–21:25; Acts 1:3; Rom. 8:11; 1 Cor. 6:14; 15:1–58; 2 Cor. 4:14; 5:1–11; 1 Thess. 4:13–17; Rev. 20:4–6, 11–13

21. The Judgment of All Persons

248. We believe that the Scriptures reveal God as the Judge of all and the acts of His judgment are based on His omniscience and eternal justice. His administration of judgment will culminate in the final meeting of all persons before His throne of great majesty and power, where records will be examined and final rewards and punishments will be administered.



Eccl. 12:14; Matt. 10:15; 25:31–46; Luke 11:31–32; Acts 10:42; 17:31; Rom. 2:16; 14:10–12; 2 Cor. 5:10; 2 Tim. 4:1; Heb. 9:27; 2 Pet. 3:7; Rev. 20:11–13

22. Destiny

250. We believe that the Scriptures clearly teach that there is a conscious personal existence after death. The final destiny of each person is determined by God's grace and that person's response, evidenced inevitably by a moral character which results from that individual's personal and volitional choices and not from any arbitrary decree of God. Heaven with its eternal glory and the blessedness of Christ's presence is the final abode of those who choose the salvation which God provides through Jesus Christ, but hell with its everlasting misery and separation from God is the final abode of those who neglect this great salvation.

Dan. 12:2; Matt. 25:34–46; Mark 9:43–48; Luke 13:3; John 8:21–23; 14:2–3; 2 Cor. 5:6, 8, 10; Heb. 2:1–3; 9:27–28; 10:26–31; Rev. 20:14–15; 21:1–22:5, 14–15



ARTICLES OF FAITH

(paraphrased from the Articles of Religion)

1. *The Holy Trinity*

God's most basic revelations of Himself are in terms of relationships—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. These are terms that relate to our lives, yet show us three basic dimensions of the Almighty. As Father, He is the sovereign Creator of all that exists. As Son (Jesus Christ), God enters creation, becomes a part of it, and identifies with humankind. As Spirit, His nature is a clue to our own, and we experience intimacy and immediacy with God. The Trinity is less a doctrine taught in Scripture and more caught from Scripture, about God's nature as He relates to us.

**Gen. 1:26–27; Ps. 51:1–12; Matt. 3:16–17; John 14, 16 and 17;
Rom. 15:14–20; 2 Cor. 13:14; Eph. 2:14–22; Col. 1:3–8; 1 Thess. 1:1–7;
2 Thess. 2:13–17; 1 Pet. 1:1–2**

2. *God the Father*

Source and sovereign are two descriptions of God, our heavenly Father. This relational term reminds us that God is creator and caregiver, yet maintaining a sometimes mysterious distance from the normal human senses of detection. God chose to get close, involved, and identifiable to us at a strategic time in history through Jesus Christ, and any time through His Spirit. God the Father is all-knowing, everywhere present, and peerless in majesty and power.

**Gen. 1:2; Ps. 13:1–14; 23; 95:1–7; Isa. 6:1–8; Matt. 6:9–13, 25–24;
7:7–12; 1 Tim. 6:11–16; Heb. 1:1–3; 12:28–29**

3. *Jesus Christ, Son of God*

Jesus is unique from all religious leaders, authorities, or gurus who have ever lived. He is in a category of one! The Bible presents Jesus as the truly human-divine being of and from God: God in flesh. Not only is Jesus the God-come-to-earth, Jesus has become our savior, or bridge to God. Even His crucifixion was a major plank in the “bridge” as He was bearing the



consequences for the sins and waywardness of mankind. He was truly our sacrificial lamb. He is our best help and hope, and literally our salvation!

Matt. 1:18–21; 3:13–17; Mark 10:45; 15:38–39; John 1:1–18; 3:16–17; 5:17–19; 8:19–20; 10:25–30; Phil. 2:5–11; 1 Cor. 15:1–8; 2 Cor. 2:6–10; 4:6; Col. 1:15–20; 2:6–10; Heb. 1:1–4; 4:14–16; 2 John 5:1–12

4. *The Holy Spirit*

This title refers to the intimate and living essence of God. We have been created with a capacity for God. When humankind was created, God breathed into us His breath of life. Our *human* spirit, or soul is our God-given connection with His own Spirit. Our human spirit connects with His *Holy* Spirit. His Spirit is our helper, counselor, strengthener, protector, and our true God-connection, not bound by time and space. The Holy Spirit is God *in* us, *with* us, and *for* us. He is the life-changing resurrection power of God at work within us!

Matt. 1:18–19; John 4:24; 14:16–17; 15:26; 16:13–15; Rom. 1:1–5; 8:1–17; 26–28; Gal. 5:16–26; Eph. 1:1–10; 1:15–23; 2:14–22; Phil. 3:17–15

5. *The Bible, God's Word*

We believe that the Bible is the inerrant God-inspired account of creation history and His relationship with humankind. His wisdom and truth were also given to us through divine inspiration, using human writers to frame His word in words. Jesus Christ is also called the Word, in flesh, and His Spirit also “communicates” to us. Yet, the Bible is the totally reliable, inerrant, God-inspired revelation that is designed to help us understand who God is and what God is like, who we are, what our needs are, and how we get together with God and find His salvation, life, and love to be ours for time and eternity. The Bible is our God-given compass for all matters of faith and relationship with God and each other.

Matt. 22:37–40; 28:19–20; John 10:10; 2 Tim. 3:15–17; Heb. 4:12–13; 2 Pet. 1:19–21



6. God's Purpose for Us

We are made for relationship and stewardship. God made us with an internal desire for companionship and love in relationship with Himself and with one another. We are also created to be managers of the creation and the opportunities we are given. In a sense, He calls us to be “partners in creation” with Him, not as equals, but in a relationship of love, commitment, and service to one another. He has given us the right to enjoy, explore, and expand; we have been given responsibilities for which we are accountable.

Gen. 1:26–28; 2:15–19; Ps. 8; Luke 10:25–37; Eph. 2:8–10

7. Marriage and the Family

God's title as Father implies family. We were created to be the “human family.” Adam and Eve were created for partnership and family development. Marriage and family are outcomes of the nature God gave us, with desires for love, companionship, and creative capacities. The family is an analogy used in Scripture to describe for us the nature of our relationship with Him. We further believe that God's desire and design intended that marriage be a monogamous relationship between one man and one woman, committed to one another for a lifetime. Children are an appropriate and divine-like outcome of that relationship. God is unhappy over that which violates this intention for marriage and family. We believe that same gender marriage is not God's intention and that it violates His basic plan for marriage.

Gen. 1:27–28; Mal. 2:14; Matt. 19:4–6; John 2:1–2; 1 Cor. 7; Eph. 4:25–32; 5:20–33

8. Freedom to Choose

Two amazing capacities God gave us are *discernment* and *choice*. We are called to cultivate a sense of moral righteousness and be responsible to make choices that respect the guidance God *has* given and *continues* to give us.

From creation, humankind has demonstrated the ability and the tendency to use our freedom of choice unwisely. We have proven repeatedly that we are all flawed deeply in a way that inclines us to fall short of the way of life



that God intended for us. This is sometimes called our sin nature. Our nature is also subject to being misled (temptation) and treating others with unkindness that breeds from our natural problems with selfishness, greed, hatred, contempt, pride, and other related maladies. We need help! Without it, we are in huge trouble with each other and God. Help arrived in Jesus Christ. But, once again, we must exercise that choosing capacity to reach out for what God has made available.

Gen. 4:6–7; Deut. 30:19; Josh. 24:15; Prov. 8:10; 16:16; Eph. 4:22–24; 5:20–33

9. Sin

Adam and Eve's disobedience to God has resulted in sin's entering the world and has affected all creation. It not only affects our relationship with God, but it has affected the natural order of creation and has resulted in the sinful exploitation of many. Every person is born with a tendency toward sin and independence from God. In addition, human beings are prone to shortcomings, faults, and imperfections of various kinds, which are not the same as willful sin. Nevertheless they point to the need for atonement, God's sanctifying work, and self-discipline on the part of the individual. Whether original, willful, or involuntary, sin is only forgiven and cleansed through the atoning work of Christ.

10. Salvation

In a real sense, our waywardness presented God with a dilemma. How could His love and justice be accomplished as humanity violated His moral standards? Self-sacrifice was and is God's solution for our sake. Entering this world of flesh through Jesus Christ, God lived, loved, taught, suffered, died, and was raised in celebration and victory over death, sin, and Satan (the living force of evil in our universe). In essence, Christ became the bridge that makes possible our return to God. His life and death were a colossal "price" or punishment paid for our sin. This is sometimes called the "atonement," which means payment for an offense and provision for reconciliation. That's what God has done for us through Jesus Christ! It is the divinely offered opportunity for our literal salvation, for time and eternity. Christ makes new life (being born again) a reality. Now, comes our response.



**Matt. 1:18–21; John 1:1–14; 3:16–17; 14:5–7; Col. 1:13–17; 4:14–16;
1 Tim. 2:1–6; Heb. 5:1–10**

11. Repentance and Faith

Two of the most beautiful and powerful words in human language! To repent means to recognize that something (in or with us) is not the way it *should* be. We must change. We regret things, as they are. We decide to turn away from the way it has been, turn toward God and the way it should be, make decisions, and take actions to follow through with our repentant spirit. In the case of our relationship to God and to sin, we turn away from sin and to Christ. We place our trust and hope in Jesus Christ for our forgiveness, and trust Him as our bridge to God, our Savior. Those steps of repentance and faith are prompted by God's Spirit as we are enabled to develop a relationship of faith in God and practice the healthy habit of repentance as often as needed to keep life on course as God's Word and Spirit help us.

**Mark 1:15; Luke 5:32; 13:3; 24:47; John 3:16; 17:20; 20:31; Acts 5:31;
10:43; 11:18; 16:31; 20:21; 26:20; Rom. 1:16; 2:4; 10:8–10, 17; Gal.
3:26; Eph. 2:8; 4:4–6; Phil. 3:9; 2 Thess. 2:13; 2 Tim. 2:25; Heb. 11:6;
12:2; 1 Pet. 1:9; 2 Pet. 3:9**

12. Justification, Regeneration, and Adoption

We believe that the Bible teaches that salvation is both an event and a relationship. The event is sometimes referred to as conversion, being born again, receiving Christ into our lives, or any one of several other terms or phrases. Personal and decisive faith in Christ assures us of God's forgiveness. We are justified (made right before God) and regenerated (given new life), but we must also give attention to walking in faith and obedience to Christ. St. Paul uses the term "in Christ." When you take a plane to some destination, you board it and remain on board for the duration of the journey. Just as you would not jump off after takeoff, your faith journey continues after justification and regeneration.

When one is in Christ, that person is a child of God, adopted, as it were, and now an heir of the vast kingdom of the Father.



Matt. 5:9; John 1:12; Rom. 8:14–19; 10:13; 2 Cor. 6:17–18; 4; Gal. 3:26, 29; 4:5–7; Eph. 1:5; 2:19; Phil. 1:6; 1 Tim. 2:1–6; 2 Tim. 4:6–8; Heb. 12:1–3; 1 Pet. 1:3–9; 1 John 3:1–2

13. Good Works

Living the Christian life is an issue of faith *and* works, not faith *or* works. The two go together like each half of a pair of scissors. The following Bible references clarify the necessity of each in a healthy relationship to God and one another.

Eph. 2:8–10; 1 Thess. 1:3; book of James

14. Satan and Sin

The author of sin is Satan, the living embodiment of spiritual rebellion and ungodliness. Satan is limited in power but active in the world to tempt, lure, and otherwise con us into doubting God and distrusting His values, priorities, and commitments. Sin has various definitions, but in its clearest form is disobedience to a known expectation of God or conscience. It may also be *not doing* what *should* be done. The most common biblical meaning of sin is “missing the mark.” The Bible reveals that God’s greatest concern is for those sins of intention and malice. However, as God helps mature our consciences and spiritual capacity, sin is that which is not love toward ourselves or others. Sin is unhealthy in its mildest consequences, and deadly for time and eternity in its worst consequences. We are accountable for our sins. That is why repentance, forgiveness, and reform are so important. We believe that God who offers forgiveness for our sins also gives us wisdom, desire, and power to live increasingly without conscious and intentional sinning. Forgiveness from sins committed is just the beginning. Deliverance from the inner push toward sin, sometimes called the “sin nature,” requires divinely assisted participation and ongoing discipline.

Job 1–2; Zech. 3:1–2; Matt. 4:11; 12:24; John 8:44; 12:31; Rom. 3:23; 6:1–23; 2 Cor. 6:15; Eph. 5:25–28; 6:10–18; 4:4; 1 Thess. 3:5; 1 Pet. 4:1–6; 5:8; 1 John 1:1–10; 2:1–2; 3:4–10



15. Sanctification and Holy Living

When we initially come to Christ in faith, it is pretty much a self-serving experience. It is about *our* sins, *our* lostness, *our* need of God. Me, me, me, and my needs and the benefits and blessing *I* can receive. Now, think about it for a minute.

What is described above is wonderful, but it is strictly a *consumer mentality*. We learn from life experience and Scripture the following:

First, we can't measure up to basic Christianity without help. Second, Christianity is not just about "taking," but also about giving and serving. Third, there will continue to be three major enemies that we face; the world, the flesh, and the devil (Satan). We need help.

A much deeper and more comprehensive commitment and clean up is needed, and one that is not as self-serving in nature. That's where Romans 12:1-3 hits the nail on the head.

Sanctification *begins* when we first come to Christ. We have been separated from our sins and given new life and are in right relationship with God. That's a wonderful beginning, but there is more! Essentially, sanctification and holy living are about becoming a fully committed and cleaned up "tool" to be used for serving God. The "holy" part of it can be best summarized as living a life of love, like Christ has lived for us. Christlikeness is holiness.

**Matt. 5-7; Rom. 8:1-4; 12:1-21; Eph. 4:22-24, 25-32; 5:1-2, 15-20;
Col. 2:6-12; 3:1-17; 1 Thess. 4:1-8; 5:23; 1 Pet. 1:13-23; 2:1-25; 3:15-18**

16. The Gifts, Fruit, and Guidance of the Holy Spirit

To tackle the sanctification and holy living issues, we need big help. Our spirit needs the ongoing help of God's Holy Spirit. The human spirit is the most intimate and immediate aspect of who we are. The Holy Spirit is the intimate and immediate presence and personality of God in touch with and helping us in areas of discernment, character, and service. Terms that the Bible uses in this regard are fruit, gifts, and guidance of the Spirit. The following Scriptures help us understand in what ways the Spirit helps us.

**John 14:15-21; 15; 16:5-11; Rom. 12:4-8; 1 Cor. 12:1-14; Eph. 4:7-8;
Gal. 5:16-26; Heb. 2:4**



17. The Church of Jesus Christ

Amazing as it sounds, the Church is the tangible and collective presence or representation of Christ on earth! Christianity is not just about “me” but about “we.” We are individually created and accountable before God, but we are called together and sent out to be God’s representatives on earth. The Christian movement was initially sparked and fueled by the resurrection of Christ, then given an official “launch” when God’s Holy Spirit came powerfully on the disciples of Jesus in Jerusalem, shortly after the ascension (departure into the heavens) of Christ. It has since been built and strengthened by The Spirit of God to be salt and light in our world, and to make the gospel of Christ attractive to those who are not yet His followers. We are called to worship, witness, and win others to Him. None of us is, individually, the “perfect” Christian. All of us together make the “perfect” Christian body.

Matt. 16:18; 28:19–20; John 17; Acts 2:1–12; Eph. 1:22–23; 2:19–22; 4; 1 Cor. 12

18. The Sacraments: Baptism and The Lord’s Supper

Sacraments are those specific religious acts that Christ intended for us to continue until He returns. Catholics identify seven sacraments. The exact number that God would endorse is a mystery. Sacraments are means of confirming our faith and giving public witness to the sacred nature of what we believe. They remind us of the gracious Christ of history and His death for us, the Christ of the ever present, who abides with us to help day by day, and a powerful reminder that He will fulfill His promise to return some day for His followers! We recognize and practice two sacraments: the Lord’s supper and baptism.

Matt. 3:13–17; 26:26–28; 28:19; Mark 14:22–24; Luke 22:19–20; John 6:48–58; Acts 2:38–41; Rom. 6:1–2; 1 Cor. 5:7–8; 10:3–4; 11:23–29

19. The Return of Christ

Often called the second coming of Christ, it is the biblical teaching about the amazing return of Jesus Christ to earth. It is a dramatic statement of



need for the world to get serious about their faith in Him. Christ will someday come to take believers out of this world. There is lively debate about when the second coming will occur in light of world events and the role of Christians in the world.

Matt. 24:36–51; Luke 12:39–40; John 21:15–25; Acts 1:1–11; 1 Thess. 1:8–10; 2:17–20; 3:13; 4:13–18; 5:1–11; 2 Pet. 3:10; Rev. 3:3; 16:15

20. Resurrection of the Dead

The Bible teaches that when Christ returns He will raise the “dead in Christ,” who will live forever with Him! It is a belief offering amazing hope and optimism in light of the waves of massive meaninglessness of life for some, the difficulty of earthly life for others, and even the suffering and martyrdom of millions on earth who hold out hope that God has something infinitely better for us on the “other side” of this world and life. It is indeed a living hope that is worth living toward!

John 11:25–26; 14:1–4; 1 Cor. 15:12–58; 1 Thess. 4:13–18; Rev. 20:11–13

21. Final Accountability

We believe that the Bible teaches final accountability of all persons to God. That accountability will happen, we believe, in the form of a judgment time in which there will be assignments of human beings to heaven or hell. Stark and contrasting as they are, they are intended to remind us of the reality of consequences beyond time, into eternity, on the basis of our lives lived and faith in our great hope through Jesus Christ. “Where are you intending to spend eternity?” is the question. And, on what basis are you firming up your plans? Faith in Christ and following Christ are the only sure options for each and all of us! *Are you exercising those options?*

22. Made for Eternity

We are made for eternity. We are all finally accountable to God. Beyond death there exists eternity, with incredibly different characteristics. The ultimate best is heaven. The ultimate worst is hell. Our destiny is according to



God's judgment, grace, and final determination rather than some arbitrary decree of God, disconnected from our relationship with and response to His love and redemption extended to us in Christ.

Ps. 73:12–20; Matt. 10:28; 13:30–50; 25:34–46; Mark 9:42–49; Luke 13:3; John 3:16–17; 8:21–30; 14:1–4; 2 Cor. 5:1; Heb. 2:1–3; 9:27–28; 10:26–31; 1 Pet. 1:3–9; 2 Pet. 1:3–11; Rev. 20:14–15; 21–22

23. Christian Assurance

We strongly believe that persons need not be in doubt about their salvation or relationship to God. We believe in spiritual security for now and into eternity based on four clear biblical essentials:

Faith: John 20:31; Rom. 10:9, 13–14; Heb. 11:6; 1 John 3:23; 5:1, 4–5, 13

Love: Gal. 5:6; Heb. 6:10; 1 John 3:23–24; 5:2–3

Obedience: Heb. 5:9; 12:7–9; 13:17; 1 John 1:7; 2:3–6, 17; 3:23–24

The Witnesses:

- a. Witness of the Holy Spirit:** John 16:12–15; Rom. 8:14–16; 1 John 3:24; 4:13; 5:6–8
- b. Witness of the Human Spirit:** 1 John 3:18–21; 5:10
- c. Witness of the Word:** John 20:31; 2 Tim. 3:16; 1 John 5:11–13
- d. Witness of the Works:** Gal. 5:22–23; 2 Tim. 4:6–8; Heb. 6:7–9; 1 John 5:1–5
- e. Witness of the World:** 1 John 5:9

We do *not* believe that the above four considerations are invalidated by a fairly common view of eternal security that is based on the doctrine of double predestination, which teaches that God has predetermined or predestined certain persons for heaven and other others for hell. Our true security rests in what Christ has done for us and our ongoing faith relationship in Christ.



***WEIRD, WILD, AND LITTLE-KNOWN FACTS
ABOUT JOHN WESLEY (1703–1791)***

1. A “ghost” named Old Jeffrey was said to have inhabited the Wesley home earlier in John’s life. Old Jeffrey reportedly made annoying noises, rapped on the wooden floors, and even shoved someone on one occasion. Several pieces of correspondence between family members refers to Old Jeffrey, making him perhaps the best documented “ghost” in history.
2. Wesley was ordained in the church of England (as a deacon, lecturer, and preacher) a full 13 years before professing a conversion experience.
3. John mastered at least nine languages: German, Italian, Spanish, French, Latin, Greek, Arabic, Hebrew, and English.
4. John arose at four every morning, preached his first sermon an hour later—sometimes preaching four more times in the day. One week, he preached 15 times in 13 different places.
5. He traveled between 4,000 and 5,000 miles by horseback every year, usually reading while his horse was left to find its own way. He once wore out two horses before stopping to rest. On another occasion, he traveled 280 miles in six days through the mud, snow, and ice of England to keep appointments.
6. Traveling sometimes 20 hours a day by horseback, and never sleeping more than six hours, Wesley read primarily from four subjects: religion, law, medicine, and philosophy. He carried his books in pouches on horseback and read while he rode.
7. Wesley wrote or edited between 200 and 300 books in his lifetime and carried on an enormous amount of correspondence with people from all over the world.



8. On one occasion, Wesley preached to over 32,000 people in a half-natural amphitheater . . . without the aid of amplifiers.
9. Charles Wesley, John's younger brother, composed over 6,000 hymns in his lifetime, nearly three times as many as the second most prolific songwriter in history.
10. Over his lifetime, Wesley masterminded the distribution of wealth to poor families, medical services for the needy, the lending of money (interest-free) to families in crisis, the education of poor children in Sunday school, the abolition of child labor, the abolition of slavery, prison ministries, and the implementation of Christian principles in politics.
11. Wesley was engaged twice and lost one fiancée to a man he had asked to "watch her" while he was gone. He finally married at the age of 48 to a woman he had known only nine days. She left him 20 years later and they never reunited. She was dead and buried several days before he knew of her death.
12. John Wesley never founded a church; he only founded a movement, and never ordained anyone until the last few years of his life, and only then when he could not find another governing body to ordain them.
13. At the time of Wesley's death, there were 1,500 Methodist (members of his Holy Clubs) in America. Fifty years later, there were nearly a million.
14. Wesley was well-versed in medicine and even dispensed his own homeopathic remedies during some of his preaching tours. Typically, his clientele were the poor and his services and medicines were free (and often very effective), which angered some of the local physicians.
15. Wesley and his colleagues insisted on letting their hair grow in order to give the money (for haircuts) to the poor.



16. While he was sympathetic to the American colonies and their oppression, Wesley was opposed to the American Revolution.
17. Regardless of how much money he earned (which was substantial in his later years), Wesley lived on the same amount (usually less than \$100) every year and always gave the balance away to the poor. At the time of his death, the sum of his assets consisted of two silver spoons, a silver teapot, and a well-worn frock.

Note: Used with permission by Pastor Stephen DeNeff



THE HISTORY OF THE WESLEYAN CHURCH:

Its Story and Scriptural Base

The Wesleyan Story

The Wesleyan Church finds its roots in the church of the New Testament, sharing with the primitive church its saving faith in Jesus Christ. The great expressions of doctrinal truth worked out by the worldwide church in the centuries following the New Testament era are found in the Articles of Religion of The Wesleyan Church, testifying to its oneness with the historic fellowship of the church universal.

Occasionally throughout church history, however, one or more of the biblical doctrines has become neglected by the mainstream of the church, and God has had to raise up a man who with his followers has sought to renew a balanced presentation of the whole gospel. So it was with the doctrines of God's gift of grace to all men, of personal assurance in salvation, and of Christian perfection. The renewal of these doctrines began with a man who was born in England over 300 years ago: John Wesley.

John Wesley's Experience

John Wesley was born June 17, 1703, in the little town of Epworth, England, where his father was pastor of the Anglican Church. Shortly before John's sixth birthday, the parsonage burned at night and John was snatched from an upstairs window by a neighbor standing on another's shoulders, just before the roof fell in. He always afterward thought of himself as a "brand plucked from the burning."

It was while John was completing his education at Oxford University that the reading of some religious books kindled within him a desire for a holy life. He and some of his friends became so zealous in their attempts to please God that they were nicknamed "the Holy Club" and "Methodists."

Although John Wesley had earned two degrees at Oxford and had been ordained to the ministry, his desire to know that he was personally saved was not yet satisfied. He served for three years as a missionary to the Native Americans and colonists in America, yet returned to England as frustrated as ever. But Peter Boehler, a faithful Christian friend from Germany, pointed the way. On May 24, 1738, at a home Bible study, Wesley felt his heart "strangely



warmed” and knew that Christ had taken his sins and saved him from the law of sin and death.

From this time on, John Wesley devoted his life to sharing with others his “warmhearted” relationship to God. He spent over 50 years traveling up and down through the British Isles, preaching several times a day to great throngs of people. He organized his followers into “societies” and “classes.” He was aided in his work by his younger brother, Charles, who not only preached, but also wrote some 6,000 hymns.

John Wesley had Christian holiness as his goal all along, and he soon saw that both the Bible and Christian experience taught that there was a possibility of entire sanctification in this present life. He recognized in the Bible—and saw confirmed in the testimonies of those reached through his preaching—that after conversion there is another necessary experience. In this, the Christian completely consecrates himself to God, is cleansed of his tendency to sin, and is filled with the Holy Spirit. So he preached, wrote, and exhorted others to seek all that God had for them. He declared that God had raised up the Methodists to spread scriptural holiness through “these lands.”

Methodism Comes to America

After John Wesley died on March 2, 1791, his societies withdrew from the Church of England and formed the Methodist churches. Even before Wesley’s death, members of his societies had found their way to the American colonies. The first known Methodist service in the colonies was held by Philip Embury in New York City in 1766. Quickly the word spread to Philadelphia, and from a separate beginning in Maryland, it spread to Delaware and northern Virginia.

After the colonies gained their independence, Wesley had ordained preachers for the American churches and two superintendents, Francis Asbury and Thomas Coke. On Christmas Eve, 1784, the preachers convened in Baltimore, Maryland, and organized the Methodist Episcopal Church.

At the time of the American Revolution, the Methodists were only a tiny sect, but by 1850, they had become the largest of all denominations. In between was written an exciting story of evangelism and revival. On the American frontier, the Methodist message of salvation available for all people and the Methodist system of circuit-riding were just what was needed; hundreds of thousands were brought to Christ.



From the beginning, the American Methodists gave strong emphasis to Wesley's doctrine of Christian perfection or holiness. However, in 1812, the General Conference voted to separate Wesley's *Plain Account of Christian Perfection* and the other doctrinal tracts from the *Discipline*. Unfortunately, 20 years passed before the *Plain Account* was again available. Most Methodist preachers were dependent upon what they could carry in their saddlebags for a library; when they could not read about holiness, it was soon neglected in their preaching.

Wesleyan Methodism Begins

Another emphasis of early Methodism which was later neglected was that of opposition to slavery. John Wesley had strongly denounced human slavery. Francis Asbury and other early American Methodist preachers had followed suit. But with the growth of Methodism in the southern states and the increasing economic advantage of slavery due to invention of the cotton gin, church leaders became increasingly reluctant to offend the preachers and members in the slaveholding states.

Orange Scott, a district superintendent in New England, became a strong proponent of abolitionism, an emerging movement calling for the immediate end of slavery. Many other Methodists joined his call for the Church to return to its earlier standards. When they encountered bitter opposition, they were removed from office or denied pulpits for refusing to be silent on the issue. Seeing no hope of change, they decided that it was time to form a new denomination. Accordingly, from May 31–June 7, 1843, a convention was held in Utica, New York, to organize the Wesleyan Methodist Connection of America.

The new church was organized free of bishops, having only presidents to moderate its conferences. It not only opposed slavery, but it championed many forms of social and political reform. It opposed war, the use of alcoholic beverages and tobacco, membership in secret societies and lodges, and supported women's rights and the emerging labor movement.

At the first General Conference of the new denomination, held in 1844, there was adopted the first article on sanctification ever incorporated by any denomination in its doctrinal statement. It was subsequently ratified by the annual conferences and printed in *The Discipline* of 1848.



The Holiness Revival

The neglect among Methodists of holiness preaching in the years following 1812 soon called forth protests and appeals for revival. In 1835, there began in New York City a remarkable women's prayer meeting, called the Tuesday Meeting for the Promotion of Holiness. It was led by two sisters, Sarah Lankford and Phoebe Palmer. Eventually, it was opened to men; for more than 60 years ministers and laymen, district superintendents and bishops, and college and seminary professors came to those meetings to seek the infilling of the Holy Spirit. Not only within Methodism, but also among Congregationalists and Presbyterians, Episcopalians, and Baptists, a holiness revival broke out that grew in scope and power.

During the Civil War, the holiness revival became somewhat dormant, although Phoebe Palmer and her physician husband carried it to Great Britain. But following the Civil War, the revival was vigorously renewed. In 1867, the first camp meeting for the promotion of holiness was held at Vineland, New Jersey. As a result, a national organization was formed that eventually became known as the Christian Holiness Partnership. Soon there were regional, state, and local associations. Then came holiness conventions, a multiplication of holiness periodicals and publishing houses, and hundreds of evangelists specializing in the preaching of entire sanctification.

The Wesleyan Methodist Connection had successfully concluded its crusade against slavery. Now it was caught up in the holiness revival, the early stages of which had been reflected in its doctrinal statement of 1844–1848. It further refined its statements, insisted that its pulpits would be open only to preachers who proclaimed perfect love, and turned its energies from changing a person's external condition to changing his internal motives and attitudes.

Eventually, the larger, older denominations became concerned about those who were specializing in holiness preaching, and they began to put pressure on them to confine themselves to accepted forms of worship and evangelism. At the same time, there was a growing multitude of people who had been saved through the ministry of holiness evangelists who had never had ties to the older churches. And there were many from the lowest levels of society who had been saved through holiness rescue missions who did not feel at home in the older churches. So, many small holiness



denominations began to emerge from the various associations and prayer bands.

Among these tiny denominations were several which eventually became a part of The Wesleyan Church. In 1880, there began in Southern California what was later to be known as The Holiness Church. In 1882, in Pennsylvania and later spreading to Indiana, there emerged what was to be known as the Holiness Christian Church. In 1885, a group appeared in the Midwest that at a later time took the name Missionary Bands of the World. In 1888, in eastern Canada, some Baptist ministers who were entirely sanctified encountered opposition from their brethren and formed the Alliance of the Reformed Baptists of Canada. In 1893, a group known as the Hephzibah Faith Missionary Society formed in Iowa. In 1896, the Pentecostal Rescue Mission was established in Binghamton, New York. In 1897, in Cincinnati, Ohio, a prayer band was started which later became the International Apostolic Holiness Church. In 1899, in Colorado, there began what was to be the People's Mission Church. Sometime during these years, there emerged in Ohio a small group known as the Pentecostal Brethren in Christ. And in 1917, the Pilgrim Church organized in Pasadena, California.

The Pilgrim Holiness Church

In 1897, in Cincinnati, Ohio, two holiness evangelists, Martin Wells Knapp, a Methodist, and Seth Cook Rees, a Quaker, organized the international Holiness Union and Prayer League. It was designed to promote worldwide holiness evangelism, not as a denomination but as an interdenominational fellowship.

In the years that followed, under General Superintendent George B. Kulp, the Union became the International Apostolic Holiness Church. Then, from 1919 to 1925, there followed a series of mergers, involving in turn the Holiness Christian Church, the Pentecostal Rescue Mission, the Pilgrim Church, the Pentecostal Brethren in Christ, the People's Mission Church, and some overseas missions. The new national denomination, with mission fields around the world, came to be known as the Pilgrim Holiness Church.

In 1930, the Church found itself in need of a drastic reorganization. The coming together of tiny groups had left it with overlapping boards and officers and no means of correlating the whole. The General Assembly of that



year revised the *Manual* (the book of church law) and established one general superintendent, one general board, one unified budget, and one centralized headquarters in Indianapolis, Indiana.

In the years that followed, Paul Westphal Thomas, former leader of the People's Mission Church, was the man who patiently made the new plan work. He served in many different departments of the Church, climaxing his service with four years as general superintendent. The Church grew through evangelism, through world missions, and through better organization and administration. In its later years, the Pilgrim Holiness Church was again involved in mergers and in reorganization. In 1946, it received into its ranks the Holiness Church of California. In 1958, it changed from one general superintendent to three. And in 1962, the Africa Evangelistic Mission merged with the Pilgrims.

The Wesleyan Methodist Church

Once caught up in the holiness revival, the Wesleyan Methodists soon realized that in their reaction against autocratic church government, they had structured their own too loosely. So they started a process of restructuring that was to go on across nearly one hundred years. Some of their annual conferences led the way by making their presidents actual superintendents. Eventually, the name of the denomination was changed to The Wesleyan Methodist Church of America, dropping the old idea of "Connection." Denominational leadership evolved slowly, first with departmental heads and then, in 1947, a full-time general conference president correlating the whole. In 1959, he gave way to three general superintendents.

The holiness revival also brought renewed zeal among Wesleyans for communicating the gospel to others. Overseas missions began in Africa in 1889, and, one by one, other fields around the world were added. At home, growth accelerated slowly. But after World War II, the Church launched many new extension projects in the mushrooming suburbs, and church growth reached levels never before experienced.

The key persons in the revitalizing and restructuring of the Church were Eber Teter and Roy S. Nicholson. Rev. Teter served for 14 years as the first "superintendent-type" annual conference president and followed that with 18 years of service heading up both home and foreign missions. Dr. Nicholson



became the only full-time general conference president, besides serving in many other general offices and leading the Church to greater efforts in outreach.

During the later years, the Wesleyan Methodists enjoyed the addition of some of the smaller groups which had formed out of the holiness revival. In 1947, a significant portion of the Hephzibah Faith Missionary Association joined the Wesleyan Methodists. In 1958, the Missionary Bands were added. And in 1966, the Alliance of the Reformed Baptists of Canada also merged.

The Merging of the Streams

The Pilgrim Holiness Church and the Wesleyan Methodist Church had often discussed the possibility of combining their forces—in the 1920s, in the 1940s, and in the late 1950s. But in 1962 and 1963, the respective general conferences authorized renewal of negotiations. And in 1966, the two general conferences were held simultaneously to hear reports from the Joint Commission on Merger. As a result, merger was approved.

The union as The Wesleyan Church was consummated in Anderson, Indiana, beginning June 26, 1968. A *Discipline* was adopted and officers and a general board were elected. In the following months, the headquarters for the new denomination was located in Marion, Indiana. Districts and colleges underwent mergers and realignment.

The merged body began to grow more rapidly than either former group had done. The 1972 General Conference at Lake Junaluska, North Carolina, authorized the development of new general conferences overseas, providing for the full maturing of the mission fields. The Caribbean Provisional General Conference was organized on April 3, 1974, and the Provisional General Conference of the Philippines on April 22–23, 1975. Two denominational conferences on evangelism were held which helped speed growth on the home front. On October 5, 1975, *The Wesleyan Hour* began its radio broadcast, soon extending its ministry to over 100 stations. By the 1976 General Conference at Wichita, Kansas, the Church heard reports of a 20 percent gain in membership since merger.



THE BIBLICAL BASE

One of the distinguishing marks of The Wesleyan Church, from the life of John Wesley through the histories of the various denominational bodies, has been that of deep respect for the authority of the Bible and an insistence that doctrine and practice must be based upon it.

John Wesley said that from 1730 on, he began to be a man of one Book. Later in life he declared, “My ground is the Bible. Yea, I am a Bible-bigot. I follow it in all things, both great and small.” And he said, “in all cases, the Church is to be judged by the Scripture, not the Scripture by the Church.” When the Methodist Episcopal Church was organized in 1784, it took as its doctrinal statement on the Scriptures the article of the Church of England:

Holy Scripture containeth all things necessary to salvation: so that whatsoever 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.

This statement was adopted later by the Wesleyan Methodists, the Pilgrim Holiness Church, and most of the tributary groups that merged into them. A couple of the groups did reflect rather early the growing conflict between liberal theologians and those committed to a solid belief in the Bible. The International Apostolic Holiness Union in 1902 adopted the following:

Rationalism is making awful havoc in the religious world, under the specious names of “The Higher Criticism” and “The New Theology.” We therefore emphatically affirm our unwavering faith in the Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments as Divinely and supernaturally given, and our only Divinely authorized outward rule of faith and practice.



But by 1910, this group had also settled for the older Methodist statement.

In 1951, the Wesleyan Methodists decided that a stronger statement was needed to counteract the tendencies of many modern Christians to look upon the Bible as simply another human book. So they added to the old statement one sentence. With only slight changes in wording, it was retained as a part of the official statement of The Wesleyan Church as follows:

These Scriptures we hold to be the inspired and infallibly written Word of God, fully inerrant in their original manuscripts and superior to all human authority.

So The Wesleyan Church has not only maintained its position on the divine origin and authority of the Scriptures, but has made its doctrinal statement even more explicit. It is first and foremost a church of the Bible, seeking to set forth nothing but what the Bible teaches, and seeking to require only what the Bible requires.



CORE VALUES OF THE WESLEYAN CHURCH

The following are terms descriptive of who Wesleyans are and why they do what they do. They describe the “soul” of the Church. They are the core values because they are at the center, as primary motivations for all Wesleyans.

BIBLICAL AUTHORITY: The Bible is the highest source of written authority for God’s plan for His people; it reveals how to live out that plan, individually and corporately. Beliefs, practices, and priorities are to be anchored in clear biblical teachings.

CHRISTLIKENESS: Jesus Christ is the defining feature of God’s will for all humankind. In Christ is found the highest and most practical meaning and clearest example for holy living or godliness. Christ is both an example and strength as Wesleyans pursue integrity, excellence, faith, hope, and love.

DISCIPLE-MAKING: Making disciples is a clear mandate from Christ. This requires a strong focus on evangelism and training in spiritual growth and holy living. Done effectively, this will produce and promote growth and health in and among the churches.

LOCAL CHURCH CENTERED: The denomination exists to serve local congregations. Local churches are the most fundamental and strategic points of evangelism and discipleship. The challenge of the denomination is to keep finding the best ways to serve and strengthen congregations.

SERVANT LEADERSHIP: Wesleyans respect leadership that is placed over them, while realizing that the authority and effectiveness of spiritual leadership is not primarily bestowed, but earned and manifested by a loving and willing heart of obedience that serves God and humankind gladly. Wesleyans desire to be leaders in serving.

UNITY IN DIVERSITY: There is intrinsic value in every person. Unity becomes all the more important and beautiful in light of the wide range of differences in personality, culture, race, talents, and perspectives.



Loving each other eliminates devaluation and deprivation of life to one another.

CULTURAL RELEVANCE: Wesleyans are called to keep serving the present age. The Church respects and builds on its past without becoming its slave. Wesleyans are “culture informed” for the sake of reaching people for Christ but not “culture captives” in the sense of surrendering core values, beliefs, and behaviors.



ABSTINENCE FROM ALCOHOL

One Wesleyan Perspective

One of the commitments for membership, especially for those in leadership positions in The Wesleyan Church, is abstinence from alcoholic beverages. The culturally accepted use of alcohol in North America makes this membership commitment one that is frequently seen as debatable and disagreeable by some.

It seems that the cultural admonition on alcohol is “moderation,” or at the very least, “designated driver.” Many religious groups, including some Christian organizations, would agree with that stance. Why, then, does The Wesleyan Church hold such a “severe” position on alcohol? This is a reasonable question, and the following is an explanation for our position of abstinence. The following rationale is presented from four perspectives: tradition, human experience, Scripture, and reason.

I. Tradition

The formal rules and regulations that comprise our lifestyle commitments are *not* necessarily *unanimously* agreed upon by all Wesleyans, but through prayer and legislative process have been formally adopted as the broad *collective conscience* of our church. And, in that spirit, even those who may disagree choose to comply for the sake of the whole.

In the early days of our church, the core of its mission was social impact and a faith that was expressed not only through one’s personal actions, but also through the collective impact of the faithful on society in certain redemptive ways.

Alcohol was clearly a substance of frequent abuse and devastating power. Additional social ills included slavery, inhumane child labor practices, and tremendous need for improved rights and dignities for the women of the culture. Our church was born and grew at great price and suffering for such social initiatives, especially over our anti-slavery position. Consistent with our inclination for social activity, we developed deep roots in the prohibitionist movement.

During those days, our church reached out to and helped redeem the lives of many who had abused and been abused by alcohol. It was clear that *abstinence was, and is, the clearest safeguard against abuse of alcohol.*



Over the decades, we have viewed this position as one not always popular, but consistently wise. Therefore, we call members, and especially those who aspire to the leadership level of membership in our churches, to retain the abstinence commitment.

II. Human Experience

Consequences. Consequences of alcohol consumption are another factor in our position of abstinence. Drinking engages one in a kind of “beverage roulette.” According to the National Center for Drug Abuse Statistics, one in ten Americans over the age of twelve have Alcohol Use Disorder. In the US, 385 people lose their lives every day due to excessive use of alcohol. Perhaps even more disturbing is the statistic that intoxicated adults cause 150 child deaths every year. Annually, more than 140,000 Americans die because of alcohol, and worldwide, that number jumps to 3 million. Is such risk worth it?

A toll impossible to estimate in terms of dollars is exacted on our younger generation as the use and abuse of alcohol is a virtual rite of passage on college campuses, not to mention in local neighborhoods and hangouts. The impairment of judgment created by alcohol spawns physical, mental, emotional, spiritual, and relational harm that is one of the best-kept secrets of our culture.

Massive devastation occurs in personal lives, marriages, and families as a direct result of the impact of alcohol. According to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, around 30% of fatalities from car accidents involve drunk drivers. In 2020, someone in the U.S. was killed in a drunk driving crash every forty-five minutes. Lost time and productivity at work, health related costs and damage take a huge toll on us all. Some research indicates that the destructive and draining impact of alcohol is far more pervasive, more costly, and more sustained than all illegal drugs put together!

Inconsistency. Cultural inconsistency is apparent with our virtual double standard of tolerance and punishment when it comes to a legal drug, such as alcohol, compared to the host of illegal drugs. Alcohol has become such a cash cow for government and businesses that it has been difficult to regulate. That, of course, is fueled by the public demand for alcohol.



Witness. Our witness to culture is another consideration for Wesleyans. Even though alcohol consumption in our culture is common, it is by no means unanimous. Many have chosen abstinence for other than religious reasons. Alcohol is viewed by many as a substance that is not only easily abusable but dangerously abusable and having little to no true redeeming value, so they avoid it. Many other folk consider drinking to be far more of a vice than a virtue and believe that Christians shouldn't do it. So, even to the non-Wesleyans in our culture, abstinence is seen as consistent with who we say we are.

Trends. The current trend is that drinking at younger ages is on the increase, which radically enhances the likelihood of one becoming an alcoholic. We would rather establish a discipline that does not support that trend in our homes and families.

Science. The voice of science weighs in on this issue as well. For years, Wesleyans and others who practiced abstinence from tobacco products were teased about their standard. Now human experience and science have presented such strong cases for the personal and social damage of tobacco products. We even enforce selective abstinence of tobacco (i.e.: in public buildings), and lawsuits abound over its culpability for human devastation. Although alcohol is not at all the same product, the underlying concerns we have are very similar. In both cases, the church is just one voice among many urging avoidance of such dangerous products.

Some cite the voices of certain dietary research that claims a little wine actually contributes to one's health. But we know by now that the messages from research on what is good or bad for our health is a message that changes like the weather forecast. Even so, such a consideration is overwhelmed by the risks.

A May 7, 2001, *U. S. News and World Report* article offers the following quote in its cover article on alcohol and the brain: "Alcohol . . . is the most widespread and damaging substance we have in society." There is really nothing about alcohol that is essential for our well-being that cannot be found elsewhere. Abstinence is a safe and considerate discipline.

III. Scripture

Wesleyans do not claim that our primary case for abstinence is from the Bible. And for that reason, we do not consider abstinence as a test of one's



salvation or goodness as a person. We do not even believe that moderate use of alcohol violates clear Scripture on that issue. Our reasons are a combination of biblical principle and cultural wisdom.

Some of our Christian brothers and sisters claim that if the Bible makes no case on an issue, neither should we. Well, the Bible makes no case for or against abortion, but it does teach us that the sacredness of human life is a gift from God. From that point and others, we officially choose a pro-life position.

As you might expect, drunkenness and the debauchery it causes are forbidden by Scripture:

“Be imitators of God, therefore, as dearly loved children” (Eph. 5:1).

“I have written you in my letter not to associate with sexually immoral people—not at all meaning the people of this world who are immoral, or the greedy and swindlers, or idolaters. In that case you would have to leave this world. But now I am writing you that you must not associate with anyone who calls himself a brother but is sexually immoral or greedy, an idolater or a slanderer, a drunkard or a swindler. With such a man do not even eat” (1 Cor. 5:9–11).

“The acts of the sinful nature are obvious: sexual immorality, impurity and debauchery; idolatry and witchcraft; hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissensions, factions and envy; drunkenness, orgies, and the like. I warn you, as I did before, that those who live like this will not inherit the kingdom of God” (Gal. 5:19–21).

The clearest way to avoid abuse is abstinence.

Peter challenges us to be clear-minded and self-controlled:

“Therefore, prepare your minds for action; be self-controlled; set your hope fully on the grace to be given you when Jesus Christ is revealed” (1 Pet. 1:13).

“And to knowledge, self-control; and to self-control, perseverance; and to perseverance, godliness” (2 Pet. 1:6).

Paul calls for Christians to “take every thought captive and make it obedient to Christ (2 Cor. 10:5). Alcohol diminishes that likelihood.

We might say that Scripture actually gives us the personal freedom of conscience as Christians. That is true, and it is a wonderful thing. First Corinthians 8:9 says, “Be careful, however, that the exercise of your freedom does not become a stumbling block to the weak.”



Wesleyan *convictions*, or collective conscience, deal with those things that we think are safely moving *toward* the spirit of biblical teachings and in support of accomplishing biblical goals for individuals and humanity. Concerning alcohol, it is not only our own lives we are considering, but the importance of being our brother's keeper to some extent.

IV. Reason

The Wesleyan Church believes that abstinence is reasonable, if not totally agreeable. It is one example of avoiding the risk of unnecessary disaster.

And, it is true, we are choosing to make a countercultural statement. We are saying that it is OK to *not* drink.

We do not require abstinence of our church attendees. We take people where they are and trust that God will help us all grow. We do not require abstinence of our members because we recognize that sincere Christians have different views on certain doctrinal and lifestyle issues. We understand that and encourage our members to prayerfully consider this position of abstinence.

However, we require members who desire to serve in elected leadership positions to follow carefully and conscientiously all membership commitments (260–268).

In Summary

Wesleyan churches are increasingly reaching people who bring with them a wide variety of religious experiences, beliefs, and personal convictions. We think that is refreshing. We desire that our primary focus be on our mission, which is to exalt Christ and mentor people to become fully devoted followers and witnesses of the Savior as we all grow in holiness—becoming more like Christ.

The value of individual liberty may even be exceeded by corporate unity. Therefore, we urge the reader who may disagree with our position on abstinence to carefully consider it and after considering it, even if still in disagreement with it, to consider embracing it in practice. We believe it is a great good to lend your life and gifts in service and leadership to God's kingdom through a wonderful group in that kingdom called Wesleyans!



SOCIAL ISSUES AND POSITIONS TAKEN BY THE WESLEYAN CHURCH

The Wesleyan Church was born in the nineteenth century through a determined struggle to abolish slavery and other social sins. We continue to claim the task of being “salt and light” in society and bring a balanced ministry of truth and grace.

1. Abortion

We believe that abortion is the taking of human life and the victimization of women; therefore, society brings grave danger to itself by permitting abortion on demand and thus treating God-given life lightly. We call our members to oppose this social evil with great vigor. However, we reject the use of violence as a means of bringing about this needed change in society. Except in the case of risk to the life of the mother, The Wesleyan Church stands firm against the evil of abortion—both the personal evil of abortion by an individual and the worldwide social evil of abortion, which we believe must someday end. Until that day, we will instruct our people to avoid this sin personally and call them to the work of enlightening a blind culture, as we once did with the sin of slavery.

2. Abuse

We condemn sexual, physical, emotional, and verbal abuse by all persons everywhere but especially abuse perpetrated by members of a family or a church community. We commit ourselves to provide safe havens for the abused victims among us and to seek out and prosecute offenders. While we understand there are differing interpretations among us of the Bible's teachings on the role of husband and wife in the home, we totally reject any exercise of abuse by one spouse of another by twisting these Scriptures out of context. Such abuse is sin and the sinner should be called to repent and cease all such abusive behavior.

Among the displays of ultimate abuse is the increasing practice of euthanasia. We reject any deliberate effort to shorten life or hasten death by any means on the part of a physician, other health care provider, or any other person.



3. Marriage and Sexual Purity

We have witnessed a general decline of our culture's standards on both divorce and premarital sexual activity, but we reaffirm that divorce is a sin, sexual intercourse before marriage is a sin, and sexual intercourse with anyone except one's spouse after marriage is likewise a sin. In a day of easy divorce, we continue to stand firmly on the Bible's teaching that God's plan for marriage is the joining of one man and one woman together for one entire life and that sexual immorality is the only possible reason for divorce, and then only after serious spiritual counsel. We further call our members to flee from any relationships fraught with temptations toward a level of sexual intimacy short of actual intercourse, which are totally improper for God's holy people. While others may compromise on matters of divorce and premarital and extramarital sex, we affirm the sinfulness of these behaviors and call on ourselves to treat a sinner in each case with loving confrontation, a call to repentance, forgiveness, and restoration.

4. Homosexuality

While we believe God loves—and we should love also—all sinners including adulterers, fornicators, and those who practice homosexuality, we specifically reaffirm our strong position that the practice of homosexuality is a sin, and that even the propensity toward homosexuality is out of step with both the order of creation and the will of God. On this matter we cannot and will not compromise—the only marriage blessed by God is a lifelong commitment between one man and one woman. Those practicing homosexuality should be treated as any other sinner—with love and concern yet with a call to repentance and conversion through God's grace, which results in the cessation of sinful behavior.

5. Substance Abuse

Wesleyans have traditionally stood against all substance abuse such as the use of tobacco, alcohol, and other drugs. While we understand the biological and psychological nature of addictions, we affirm that God's grace is powerful enough to deliver any seeking believer from slavery to any of these substances. Furthermore, we believe that the sale and trafficking of tobacco, alcohol, and other nonmedicinal drugs is a social evil which is



draining and corrupting to society, and thus we believe that the best position is to practice total abstinence, protesting both the legal and illegal trade of such substances.

6. Racism

We vigorously oppose the denial of basic human and civil rights to any individuals due to their race, gender, or national origin. We admit that while our denomination was born in an antislavery movement, we ourselves have sometimes ignored our own heritage and been guilty of both personal and collective racism and prejudice. For this sin, we collectively repent today and ask for God's forgiveness, and we intend to strive for complete racial reconciliation, for we know that this is the will of God.

7. Women in Leadership

In spite of some forces that seek to undo our long-standing position on the ordination of women, we refuse to budge on this issue. We will not tolerate the blocking of a person's ordination due to their gender, for we believe that both men and women are called to the ministry and thus should be ordained. Furthermore, we condemn any practice of exclusive male-only leadership on boards and committees in the church, excluding women from these positions by either public policy or unofficial, behind-the-scenes policy, for we believe that when it comes to God's gifts, graces, and callings, there is neither male nor female.

8. Political Action

While we do not place our hope in political action and partisan politics but in God alone, we do recognize that North American society is crumbling morally and culturally. We call upon all political parties to cease their petty bickering, position posturing, and political one-upmanship and get about the task of rebuilding a strong, God-fearing civilization where the poor receive compassionate care, criminals are punished, governments live within their means, the next generation is educated with wisdom, and trust in God comes to the core of our culture.



ABORTION

The 27 books of the New Testament are silent about abortion. Yet many Christians base their opposition to abortion on biblical foundations, especially the sixth commandment, which condemns murder. Other Christians are confused by this puzzling silence. Still others insist that where the Bible is silent, we must leave such matters to individual conscience.

However, the abortion issue is important, and it should be! Why? Because it involves issues of life and death, emotions, relations, morality, values, and accountability. The stakes are high. We should never trivialize this issue!

Aborted fetuses worldwide far outnumber all other forms of life extinction by choice, including war and genocide, or other forms of extinction. We are talking about hundreds of millions of abortions.

Abortion is about rights—those of the mother, the father, and the unborn. And, if God has a clear word for us, we need to listen.

The issue is complicated because every single abortion represents an intimately personal situation, yet it will always be an issue with implications for society at large. Make abortion totally illegal, and true misfortune will abound in personal situations. Legalize it in all cases, and we begin to dull our conscience as a culture. This opens doors for “expected” abortion and, someday, “enforced” abortion. Abortion must be seen as a moral issue, which implies responsibility to life and one another and accountability to God, regardless of current laws.

The abortion issue is really a range of “pregnancy interference” issues, all the way from birth control to partial birth abortions, with people striking the line between right and wrong all along the continuum.

What Are the Big Questions?

Why do people have abortions?

Is abortion ever murder? Always? Sometimes?

When does life begin?

Isn't it rightfully the mother's choice?

Does the Bible prohibit abortion?



The Big Personal Question

What if I have already had an abortion?

I don't want to have this baby. What can I do?

Reasons Commonly Given for Abortion

Inconvenience: This is a bad time for me to have a baby.

Mistake, fear, shame: An especially common reason for girls and younger women.

Extreme conditions: Do I really want a child reared in this living hell?

Rape or incest: Can such a conception ever be considered the “will of God”?

Life and health of the mother: Difficult decisions require much prayer and counsel.

IS ABORTION MURDER?

There are at least six widely held positions, described as follows.

1. The first group says the fetus becomes fully human at the “point of conception,” while others would describe it not as a moment but a process.
2. Others claim that the problem with the first theory is that possibly 50 percent of conceptions experience a “natural abortion.” In light of that, were those early pregnancies a “life,” was there a soul? If so, what is its post-aborted state? This group states that life begins at some point during successful implantation of the embryo in the uterus.
3. A third group says the fetus becomes human when it takes human shape. They say it will measure at least three centimeters, which will happen between 45 and 49 days after conception.
4. Still another group claims the fetus becomes human at animation. When it came to animation, people believed—and in some circumstances, still do believe—that a time exists when the fetus becomes ensouled, or receives a soul.
5. A fifth way of thinking says the fetus becomes human at viability—the point at which it could survive without its mother. However, because of rapidly advancing technology, the fetus’s viability point changes all the time.



6. Another set of people would try to get the problem out of the way simply by declaring the fetus human at birth, not before. If so, how do you take into account the biblical passages such as Psalm 139?

So, when is abortion an act of killing? Only God knows the answer to this question, in each case.

The Official Position of The Wesleyan Church

The Wesleyan Church seeks to recognize and preserve the sanctity of human life from conception to natural death, thus, is opposed to the use of induced abortion. However, it recognizes that there may be rare pregnancies where there are grave medical conditions threatening the life of the mother, which could raise a serious question about taking the life of the unborn child. In such a case, a decision should be made only after very prayerful consideration following medical and spiritual counseling. The Wesleyan Church encourages its members to become informed about the abortion issue and to become actively involved locally and nationally in the preparation and passage of appropriate legislation guaranteeing protection of life under law to unborn children (*The Discipline*, paragraph 410:11).

Again, Why Is the Bible Silent on Abortion?

Two responses prevail among Christians. One is that the prevailing view in the early days of Christianity was anti-abortion; thus, there was no need to mention it further. The other view is that since no specific case is made against it, as is the case with many moral issues, God leaves us to take larger biblical principles and make decisions of conscience under divine direction, which may at times allow for abortion. How do you evaluate these views?

The Bible Speaks to Life in the Womb

Two Scriptures inform us that God recognizes life in the womb, and that gives sacredness to such a life. Jeremiah 1:5 says, “Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, and before you were born, I set you apart.” Then, in Psalm 136:13, the writer attributes life that God is attending to: “For You created my inmost being: You knit me together in my mother’s womb.”



Then, in Luke 1:41, the writer, who was a medical doctor, cites the time when pre-born John the Baptist leaped in his mother's womb as Mary announced her pregnancy with the child we now know was Jesus Christ.

Isn't Abortion Rightfully the Mother's Choice?

Practically speaking, of course it is. But along with decisions come responsibility, consequences, and accountability. And, on many occasions, parents, the biological father, and friends can pressure the mother to act against her desires. The circle of accountability is usually larger than one.

What Is the Bottom Line?

Life is a gift given by our Creator and heavenly Father. Therefore, the right to life should be seen as sacred and worthy of protection and development. Abortion is ill-described as a "right," no matter what the circumstances. Even in the most understandable circumstances (mother's life in jeopardy, rape, incest), it is a most regrettable option to exercise. Even when abortion seems justifiable, it should never be simply viewed as a right.

Pregnancy resulting from consensual sexual relations results in an obligation by both parties involved. Other options, such as adoption, make abortion unnecessary. In previously mentioned extreme cases, abortions could be seen as a regrettable but understandable and defensible option.

Please note: Only a tiny percentage of abortions occur in order to save the life of the mother. On the other end of the spectrum, a fairly small percentage occur because of rape and incest. A "D and C" procedure following rape and incest should not be considered an abortion. In the middle is the huge bulk of abortions that occur for other reasons, which many see as morally questionable, at the least, to immoral savagery, as in the case of partial birth abortions.

But I Am Pregnant, Unmarried, and 15 Years Old. There Are Other Complications, What Can I Do?

Get counsel. It's time to become pro-life about yourself. Save your body for the commitment of marriage, and honor yourself, your future family, and God by becoming the person God can help you be.



You do have choices. Plenty of people would love to have the child you are carrying, maybe even in your own family. Have the courage to face some of the consequences of the pregnancy, but don't take it out on the baby, who is innocent.

Increase your faith in God. The future can be brighter than you think. Your heavenly Father will help you become just what your child needs. Don't give up on yourself, your child, or God.

It's too Late for Me. I've Already Had the Abortion. Now What?

It must have been a difficult decision, with plenty of pressures, maybe painful regrets, and even some need for emotional and spiritual healing.

Abortion is not the unpardonable sin. God's grace is great enough to forgive you, help you forgive yourself, and enable you to become a person who helps others deal with the traumas of life.

God's grace in God's people is great enough to forgive you, help you forgive yourself, and enable you to become a person who helps others deal with the traumas of life. You are not alone.

And there is one other bright piece of news that never justifies abortions, but helps us to remember the rest of the story. If, in God's sovereign knowledge, that fetus was a life, you already have at least one child in heaven. Make sure that you place sincere trust in Jesus Christ for your hope of heaven, for your own "new birth." Your child cannot come to you, but you can someday go to your child!



SPECIAL DIRECTIONS

(from The Discipline of The Wesleyan Church 2022)

400. The Special Directions are expressions by which The Wesleyan Church seeks to bear witness to contemporary society concerning the Christian life and character required by its Articles of Religion and Guides and Helps to Holy Living. While they may or may not be membership commitments, they are official admonitions to the members, ministers, and officials of The Wesleyan Church, and provide guidelines for bearing public testimony on the issues discussed.

A. CHRISTIAN SOCIAL CONCERN

410. The Wesleyan Church seeks recognition by the society which surrounds it of the authority of Almighty God, and the authority of the Lord Jesus Christ, in civil, political and temporal as well as spiritual matters, and the transformation of that society into the image of Christ insofar as is possible in this present age. It believes that such a transformation of society shall primarily be accomplished by the divine transformation through faith in Christ of the individuals who compose society, but that Christians ought also to manifest social concern in every manner that is in keeping with their Christian testimony. To this end:

(1) **Equal Rights.** The Wesleyan Church upholds the right of all individuals to equal opportunity politically, economically, and religiously, and pledges itself to an active effort to bring about the possession of dignity and happiness by all people everywhere (cf. 220; 265:10, 11; 360:3d).

(2) **Peace.** The Wesleyan Church, knowing that war results in great suffering for the bodies, minds, and souls of men and women, staggering economic loss with its legacy of debt for future generations, and the unleashing of the baser passions of life, urges that persons and nations seek by every legitimate means to avoid armed conflict among the peoples and nations of the world. The Wesleyan Church also urges that holy people everywhere pray earnestly for those in authority, so that peace may prevail (1 Tim. 2:2), and for the quick return of the Prince of Peace.



(3) **Military Service.** The Wesleyan Church teaches respect for properly constituted civil authority and the proper loyalty to one's country. It recognizes the responsibility of the individual to answer the call of government and to enter into military service. However, there are those within the fellowship of The Wesleyan Church who believe that military service is contrary to the teaching of the New Testament and that their consciences are violated by being compelled to take part in such. The Wesleyan Church will therefore lend moral support to any member who asks and claims exemption by legal processes from military service as a sincere conscientious objector and who asks to serve one's country as a noncombatant.

(4) **Care of the Body and Substance Abuse.** The Bible teaches the sanctity of the human body as the temple of the Holy Spirit (1 Cor. 6:19–20). Christians should avoid the use of anything which would damage the body, destroy the family, harm society (1 Cor. 10:23–24), undermine the fellowship of the church, hinder reaching full potential in Christ, enslave the will (1 Cor. 6:12), inhibit evangelism (1 Cor. 9:19–23), breach the Lord's command to love God supremely and to love one's neighbor as oneself (Deut. 6:5; Lev. 19:18; Matt. 22:37–39), or become a stumbling block to the young in age or faith (Matt. 18:6; 1 Cor. 8:9, 13; 10:32–33). The Wesleyan Church encourages its members to practice self-discipline and temperance in matters of proper eating, exercise, and rest. We oppose the production, sale, purchase, and use of alcoholic beverages, tobacco, narcotics, and other harmful drugs, unless for mechanical, chemical or medicinal purposes (cf. 265:4). The unprescribed use of hallucinogens, stimulants, and depressants, and the misuse and abuse of regularly prescribed medicines should be prohibited; only on competent medical advice and under medical supervision should such drugs be used. The consequences to society stemming from substance abuse are of major concern because of their unarguably negative impact on the spiritual character and nature of individuals and the welfare of society. These include the creation of barriers to conversion, family dysfunction and breakdown, poverty, disease and death, increased violence and crime, the incalculable loss to national economies, and the destruction of the individual caught by the power of addiction. In light of the overwhelming evidence of damage to society and the spiritual health of the individual by the abuse of such substances, we



believe that even where their use may be legalized, we choose total abstinence as our appropriate response (i.e., voluntarily refraining from and totally avoiding the use of something in all unnecessary circumstances as determined by the individual Christian's conscience in submission to the lordship of Christ and the admonitions of the Church). Such abstinence is a willing act of self-discipline, an acceptance of group accountability, and never a test of salvation or an evidence of superior spirituality.

(5) **Human Sexuality.** The Wesleyan Church maintains a biblical view of human sexuality which makes the sexual experience, within the framework of marriage, a gift of God to be enjoyed as communion of a man and woman, as well as for the purpose of procreation. Sexual relationships outside of marriage and sexual relationships between persons of the same sex are immoral and sinful. Yet we believe the grace of God sufficient to overcome both the practice of such activity and the inclination leading to its practice.

(6) **Divorce and Remarriage.** On the basis of a careful study of the Scriptures, and in keeping with its Guides and Helps to Holy Living (265:5), The Wesleyan Church teaches the following with reference to divorce and remarriage after divorce:

(a) To obtain a divorce on other than scriptural grounds is a sin against God and humanity. Such putting asunder of what God has joined is a direct and deliberate act of disobedience against both the Law and the Gospel. It separates one from God and may subject a member to Church discipline (222).

(b) However, recognizing the fallen state of humanity, divorce has been recognized in the Scriptures as a valid and permanent dissolution of marriage with all its rights and responsibilities. Divorce is not reversible. There is no way to "restore" a dissolved marriage. The divorced (unmarried) status can be changed only by a new marriage to the same person or another person. No divorced and remarried person has two spouses, only a former spouse and a present spouse, as in Deuteronomy 24:1–4 and 1 Corinthians 7.

(c) Divorce, however sinful the act and however serious the consequences, is not "unpardonable." A redeemed sinner or reclaimed backslider is "free" to marry "in the Lord" or to remain unmarried,



a eunuch for the kingdom of God's sake. The one exception to this freedom of choice is mentioned by the apostle Paul. It is a believer who disobeys the commandment of God and puts away a believing spouse. That person must remain unmarried to leave room for reconciliation to the spouse (1 Cor. 7).

(d) The right to remarry in no way excuses the sin of divorce. It only implies that the Church must forgive and restore those whom the Lord forgives and restores. Neither penance nor penalty remain for the truly penitent and restored sinner, or backslider, whatever the traumatic consequences of the sin may be.

(7) **The Lord's Day.** God prescribed that one day a week be set aside for the spiritual, mental, and physical well-being of humankind (Gen. 2:2-3; Deut. 5:12-14). The Wesleyan Church encourages its members to observe the Lord's Day in an appropriate manner (Rom. 14:4-6) (265:1).

(8) **Religion in Public Life.** The Wesleyan Church, believing that it is possible to allow recognition of God and the invoking of His aid in public functions without violating the personal rights and freedoms granted in many nations, advocates the enactment of suitable legislation by legislative bodies at all levels of government which will strengthen provision for the free exercise of individuals serving, writing, speaking, leading, or contributing to any public function. The Wesleyan Church further affirms its belief in the public school's duty to recognize the historical and ongoing contribution of the Judeo-Christian tradition to world cultures and modern life. The Wesleyan Church verifies the Bible as an appropriate book for reading in public schools and the right of students to pray as desired.

(9) **Public School.** The Wesleyan Church supports the right and responsibility of parents to determine what is appropriate education for their children, testing the education their children are receiving in accordance with biblical principles and striving for excellence in the education provided for all children. We maintain the right of our members to seek exemption from participation by their children in all matters that are contrary to scriptural doctrines and principles as expressed in the Articles of Religion, Guides and Helps to Holy Living, Elementary Principles, or Special Directions of our Church, without prejudice to academic standing.



(10) **Judicial Oaths.** The Wesleyan Church reserves for its members the right to affirm the truth in testimony before the civil and criminal courts rather than to engage in a judicial oath.

(11) **Abortion.** The Wesleyan Church seeks to recognize and preserve the sanctity of human life from conception to natural death and, thus, is opposed to the use of induced abortion. However, it recognizes that there may be rare pregnancies where there are grave medical conditions threatening the life of the mother, which could raise a serious question about taking the life of the unborn child. In such a case, a decision should be made only after very prayerful consideration following medical and spiritual counseling. The Wesleyan Church encourages its members to become informed about the abortion issue and to become actively involved locally and nationally in the preparation and passage of appropriate legislation guaranteeing protection of life under law to unborn children.

(12) **Use of Time and Entertainments.** The Wesleyan Church believes that its members should exercise responsible stewardship of their time for worship, work, rest, personal leisure, and service to others. Special care should be given to honoring Christ in one's choices and pursuit of entertainments. This will include refusing to patronize and to carefully regulate the use in the home of activities, media and communication featuring the cheapening of human life, the gratuitously violent, the use of immoral or profane language, and the sexually explicit and pornographic. Members should avoid involvement with activities that tend to be addictive or conducive to gambling (i.e., risking one's assets or property on the outcome of legal or illegal games of chance, including government-sponsored lotteries). We believe gambling violates the principle of Christian stewardship (i.e., trusting God's provision for us, as exemplified in Matt. 6:25-34) and the tenth commandment which forbids coveting (Deut. 5:21); is harmful to the individual in that it is emotionally addictive; can be a poor example to others of how to manage the resources of God or trust in God's provision; appeals to greed; endangers families; lowers socio-economic standards and self-esteem; engenders false hopes; and is exploitative in that it takes advantage of the misplaced hopes, compulsions, or poor judgment of others. We believe that total abstinence is the best Christian response to gambling in all its forms.



(13) **Modesty in Attire.** The Wesleyan Church believes that our people should provide clear testimony to Christian purity and modesty by properly clothing the body and by dressing with Christian simplicity.

B. CHRISTIAN WORSHIP AND FELLOWSHIP

420. Rites and Ceremonies of Churches. True religion does not consist in any ritual observances such as forms or ceremonies, even of the most excellent kind, be they ever so decent and significant, ever so expressive of inward things. The religion of Christ rises infinitely higher and lies infinitely deeper than all these. Let no one conceive that rites and ceremonies have any intrinsic worth, or that true worship cannot subsist without them. Therefore, it is not necessary that rites and ceremonies should in all places be the same or exactly alike, for they have always been different and may be changed according to the diversities of countries, times and customs, provided that nothing be ordained against God's Word.

Acts 15:10, 28–29; Rom. 14:2–6, 15, 17, 21; 1 Cor. 1:10; 12:25; 14:26; 2 Cor. 13:11; Gal. 5:1, 13; Col. 2:16–17; 2 Thess. 3:6, 14; 1 Tim. 1:4, 6; 1 Pet. 2:16

430. Healing. The truth that Jesus is both able and willing to heal the body as well as the human soul, whenever such healing is for His glory, is clearly set forth in God's Word and attested by the experience of many of His people at the present day. Prayer for healing according to the pattern set forth in the Scriptures shall be encouraged.

Matt. 10:8; Luke 9:2; 10:9; Acts 4:10, 14; 1 Cor. 12:9, 28, James 5:14–16

440. Christian Liberty. Christ, through His death on the cross, has freed His followers from sin and from bondage to the law. Christians are "called unto liberty" (Gal. 5:13), and are not under the law as a means of salvation. They are rather exhorted, "Stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage" (Gal. 5:1).



This liberty, however, is not to be construed as license (Gal. 5:13). Rather, love for Christ constrains the Christian to live a righteous and holy life as God demands. By the Spirit of God, His laws are written on the heart (Heb. 8:10). So Christians resist evil and cleave to the good, not in order to be saved, but because they have been saved.

Within the bounds of Christian liberty, there will be differences of opinion. In such cases, the believer seeks to avoid offending other believers. The stronger one is mindful of the opinions of the one with the weaker conscience (1 Cor. 8 and 10), and is careful not to put a stumbling block in another's way (1 Cor. 10:24; Gal. 5:13). On the other hand, the weak does not criticize the strong (1 Cor. 10:29–30), for the conscience of the weak may need instruction.

The recognition and exercise of that liberty which Christ affords will glorify God and promote the unity of the Church.

450. Christian Unity. The Wesleyan Church, having originated through merger between those of like precious faith, is fully committed to that true Christian unity which is based on scriptural truth and the fellowship of the Spirit, and deplores the separation or division of Christians over peripheral and nonessential matters. While The Wesleyan Church opposes the building of one all-inclusive ecclesiastical organization which regards neither scriptural doctrine nor practice, it welcomes fellowship with those who are committed to the same doctrines and standards of holy living, and cooperation across denominational lines with those who hold the cardinal doctrines of the Christian religion revealed in the Bible.

C. CHRISTIAN STEWARDSHIP

460. Meaning of Stewardship. The Scriptures teach that God is the owner of all persons and all things, that people are His stewards of both life and possessions, that God's ownership and one's stewardship ought to be acknowledged, and that every person shall be held personally accountable to God for the exercise of their stewardship (cf. 265:3). God, as a God of system and order in all of His ways, has established a system of giving which acknowledges His ownership and humankind's stewardship. To this end all His children should faithfully tithe and present offerings for the support of the gospel.



465. Storehouse Tithing. Storehouse tithing is a scriptural and practical performance of faithfully and regularly placing the tithe into that church to which the member belongs. Therefore, the financing of the church shall be based on the plan of storehouse tithing, and The Wesleyan Church shall be regarded by all its people as the storehouse. All who are a part of The Wesleyan Church are urged to contribute faithfully one-tenth of all their increase as a minimum financial obligation to the Lord and freewill offerings in addition as God has prospered them.

Gen. 14:20; 28:22; Lev. 27:30–32; Deut. 14:22; Prov. 3:9–10; 11:24–25; Mal. 3:10–11; Matt. 23:23; Acts 4:34–35; 6:1–3; 1 Cor. 16:2; 2 Cor. 8:13–14; Heb. 7:1–2, 6, 9

470. Methods of Fund-Raising. In the light of the scriptural teaching concerning the giving of tithes and offerings (cf. 465) for the support of the gospel, and for the erection of church buildings, no Wesleyan church should engage in any method of fund-raising which would detract from these principles, hinder the gospel message, sully the name of the Church, discriminate against the poor, or misdirect the people's energies from promoting the gospel.

475. Wills, Bequests, and Annuities. It is essential in the exercise of Christian stewardship that careful thought be given as to what shall be done with one's estate after death. Civil laws often do not provide for the distribution of an estate in such a way as to glorify God. Each Christian should give careful attention to the preparation of a last will and testament in a careful and legal manner, and The Wesleyan Church and its various ministries through the local church, the district, world missions, extension and evangelism, education, and benevolences are recommended for consideration. The General Superintendent's office is prepared to assist in these matters (4240; 4940).



ANNUAL MEMBERSHIP REAFFIRMATION

In keeping with the recommendation of The Wesleyan Church for its members to make an annual reaffirmation of their commitment to Christ and their loyalty to The Wesleyan Church, I affirm the following:

1. I have been born again through faith in Jesus Christ.
2. I am committed to pursue holiness in all things.
3. I have been baptized.
4. I am committed to abide by the teachings of The Wesleyan Church, including the Articles of Religion and the Elementary Principles (see below the summary of the Articles of Religion).
5. I accept the authority of The Wesleyan Church in matters of church government.
6. I am committed to live out the mission and vision of The Wesleyan Church through a discipling relationship within the local church.

By signing below, you are reaffirming your commitment to Christ and your loyalty to The Wesleyan Church:

Member Name: _____ Date: _____

Signature: _____

SUMMARY OF THE ARTICLES OF RELIGION

We believe in God the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.

We believe that Jesus Christ the Son suffered in our place on the cross, that He died but rose again, that He now sits at the Father's right hand until He returns to judge every person at the last day.

We believe in the Holy Scriptures as the inspired and inerrant Word of God.

We believe that by the grace of God every person has the ability and responsibility to choose between right and wrong, and that those who



repent of their sin and believe in the Lord Jesus Christ are justified by faith.

We believe that God not only counts the believer as righteous, but that He makes such persons righteous, freeing them from sin's dominion at conversion, purifying their hearts by faith, perfecting them in love at entire sanctification, and providing for their growth in grace at every stage of spiritual life, enabling them through the presence and power of the Holy Spirit to live victorious lives.

THE  CHURCH

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