

Confirmation Lesson #6 - *What is a Christian and What is the Church?*

Lesson Preparation

Topic: The Church and being Christian.

Core Teaching: To help class members understand what it means to be a Christian, what the church is, and how the two relate to each other.

Scripture: I Kings 6:11-13, Matthew 7:24-27, Jeremiah 31:31-34, Amos 5:21-24, Matthew 18:20, Matthew 16:15-19, Acts 8:1-8, Acts 8:27b-31, 35-38, Joshua 24:14-15, Acts 2:1-4, Acts 1:8, I Corinthians 12:3-4, Galatians 3:26-38.

Small Group Resources:

- white paper
- markers
- masking tape
- butcher paper
- markers (for each small group)
- one set of “Christianity is:” cut into slips and placed in an envelope
- Bibles for each class member.

Preparation: Outline of classic New England chapel drawn on large sheet of newsprint and taped in front of the class.

Large Group

Singing: Music team sings 2-3 high-energy songs.

Offering: Two students bring the offering collection box to the leader.

Doxology: Sing Doxology.

Affirmation of Faith: Have the class join together in reciting the “Apostle’s Creed”.

Introduction To The Topic: What is a “church”?

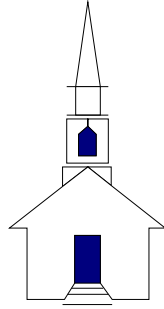
Have an outline drawn on butcher paper of a classic New England church chapel.

Ask: *What do you **think of** when you hear the word church?*

Write down responses on the newsprint inside the church drawing.

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Ask: What - exactly - is a "church"? (Encourage as many answers as possible).



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Large Group

Ask: *How many of you remember the little song we learned as children?*

Recite: Recite the following quotation to them and see if they can fill in the blank.

*The church is not a building
The church is not a steeple.
The church is not a resting place.
The church is: _____?*

[The answer is: "a people'.]

Go over this again, and teach the group a slightly different version, with motions.

<i>The church is not a building The church is not a steeple. Gathered in Christ's name, The church is people</i>	Hands in prayer stance, like a chapel. Interlace fingers, with index fingers pointing up- like a steeple. Hold position, then raise arms and point up to the sky. Reverse locked fingers and wiggle fingers for the people.
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Note: you could divide the class into four parts and have each part do one of the lines of the song with motions - similar to "the wave" at games.

Let the class know that today we will be looking at what the Bible says about the church - not the architecture, or the size, but what God intended the people called "church" to be. We'll be relating this to what it means to be a Christian.

Prayer: Large group leader closes with a prayer.

Dismiss to small groups:

Small Group

Small group leader: if you only get to one activity, make sure that it is the "Bible on your Head" game. This is the key activity for today's session.

Opening Prayer: Begin the small group session with a prayer. You may want to do a sentence completion prayer, a "build a prayer", or ask for a volunteer to pray. The main idea is for the youth themselves to pray. This is how they learn and how they become comfortable with prayer.

Discuss the Opening Session: If you prefer, you may want to repeat the opening exercise with your small group. If so, you will need to have an outline drawn on butcher paper of a classic New England church chapel.

Ask: *What do you **think of** when you hear the word church? Write down responses on the butcher paper inside the church drawing.*

Ask: *What - **exactly** - is a "church"?*
1) *Did any of the descriptions or things we said about the "church" in the opening session surprise you?*
2) *Did you have any questions about the church raised by the opening session?*
3) *How many different kinds of churches can you think of? (Presbyterian, Catholic, etc.)*
4) *Why do you think there are so many different churches?*

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Small Group

What Is A Christian?

- Ask the group:**
- 1) *What is a Christian?*
 - 2) *What's the relationship between being a Christian and belonging to a church?*

Let the group know that being a “*Christian*” means a lot of different things. Here are a few that you can share with them. These should be cut up and placed in an envelope in your supply basket. Have the members each read one. Or you may want to hand a sheet to each person and have them read the items “round robin” style. Don’t spend a lot of time on this. Just give them a feel for the information. We will return to this basic idea in the future.

Christianity Is:

1. A Basic Trust

At a very fundamental level, being a Christian means having a fundamental trust - a trust in God and a trust in Jesus as God’s Son. To “accept Jesus Christ as your personal Lord and Savior” is not so much an intellectual belief as it is a statement of profound trust.

2. A Set of Beliefs

Christians believe certain things. We believe in God. We believe in Jesus Christ as our personal Lord and Savior. Some beliefs we share with other religious groups. Some of our beliefs are unique to our faith. Be we do have certain, distinctive beliefs that help make us who we are.

3. A Set of Values

Christians not only believe certain things, we also have certain values. Some things are important to us. We value justice. We value peace. We value those things which enhance the quality of life. We place a negative value on those things that are harmful to people.

4. A World View

We also have a certain view of the world, or reality. We believe that a loving God is behind all that we see. We believe life has meaning and purpose. We believe that as creatures we are not God. We believe that God and goodness will ultimately triumph over evil. These and other basic, fundamental beliefs shape how we view the world. Our world view is distinctively different from that of many others in our society and culture.

5. A Life Style

Being a Christian is not just beliefs, values, and views. It is also a way of living in the world. It is a life style. Our faith is a faith of action. It is expected that our beliefs will be reflected in the way we live. We seek to live a Christ-like life.

6. Being a Part Of A Community

Being a Christian means all of these things, but we have missed the one that is probably the most important. Christians have disagreed and argued over beliefs, and values, and life styles. But Christians have always been a part of a community - a community called the “church”. Ever since Jesus called the 12 disciples and said “*where ever two or more are gathered in my name, know that I am with you*”, Christians have been a community. As the children’s song says, “*I am the church. You are the church. We are the church together. All of God’s people, all across the world; we are the church together.*” Being a Christian does not mean doing your own thing. It means belonging - belonging to God and to God’s people. In short, being “Christian” means doing God’s thing with God’s people.

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Small Group

Whose Faith Is It, Anyway?

Share the following information with your group:

Being in a community raises an important question. Whose faith are we going to be studying? Our own? Or the church's? The answer is: both! Actually there are three levels of faith that will be important this year: our own personal faith, the shared faith of the living community, and the formal faith of the institutional church.

Help your group members to understand these three dimensions of "our faith".

The Three Dimensions of Our Faith

The Personal Faith of the Individual

Your **own personal faith** is important. This involves your **awareness**, your **trust**, your **loyalty**, and your **ability to respond** in faith. Confirmation is designed to help you grow in your own personal faith.

The Shared Faith of the Living Community

But there is more. This is more than just "your faith" and "my faith". There is also "**our faith**" - the faith that we share as a living community. This includes our values, morals, attitudes, priorities, beliefs, expectations, our shared meaning, and a sense of belonging. All of these things are very real and they transcend just you or me.

The Formal Faith of the Historic Church

There is still one more dimension of faith. No only do we each have our own personal faith, or the faith we share as a community; there is also the formal faith of the institution to which we belong. This is **our historic faith**. This is the faith of the Bible, of our tradition. It includes sacraments, liturgy, doctrine, commandments, government, institutions, allegiance, and citizenship. We don't always agree with everything our formal faith says. Sometimes we argue with it or even seek to change it, but it is an important part of "our faith". When we say **the Apostles' Creed**, we affirm this faith.

"Bible on your Head" Game

Have each member of the group hold a closed Bible on his/her head. Call out each Bible verse one at a time. Whoever finds it first will get to read it out loud. Tell the group members to listen for the answers to the questions listed on the next page following each verse. Discuss the answers. If time allows, **have the whole group make a visual response** to these questions. This could be a drawing, a design, or simply the words the group thought significant written on the piece of paper. Try to keep the response neat so we can post them all on the bulletin board to create an overall "snapshot".

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John 13: 34-35 How can you tell if someone is a Christian?
(By their ability to love.)

Matthew 7: 24-27 What kind of foundation is the Church built on?
(It is built on the words and teachings of Jesus.)

Jeremiah 31: 31-34 What kind of covenant is our faith based on?
(A covenant written in the heart of every believer)

Amos 5: 21-24 What kind of work does God call us to do?
(God wants justice and righteousness.)

Matthew 18: 20 How many people does it take to be a church?
(At least two.)

Matthew 16: 15-18 What is the Church built on?
(On our profession that Jesus is the Christ, the Lord of our lives.)

Joshua 24: 14-15 What part does decision play in the Church?
(No one has to follow Jesus – it is a decision, a choice that each person must make for him/herself.)

Acts 2: 1-4, 14-17 How was the church born?
(At Pentecost, when the Holy Spirit came.)

Acts 1: 8 What did Jesus ask the Church to do?
(To witness to others.)

I Corinthians 12: 4-6 Why are there different kinds of people in the Church?
(Each has different gifts and abilities – to help each other.)

Galatians 3: 26-28 What is the source of our unity?
(Jesus is the source of our unity.)

Matthew 28: 19-20 How do people become Christians?
(By learning God's will and following it.)

**The following questions
may be helpful in your
discussion as well:**

- 1) *How does this scripture describe the church (or the people of Israel)?*
- 2) *What does this say about God's or Jesus' expectations for the church?*
- 3) *What does this mean for the church today?*

**Helpful discussion
points:**

- 1) *The one people of God includes the patriarchs of ancient Israel, Jesus and his disciples, the earliest Christian community immediately after the resurrection; the Church of Paul.*
- 2) *Jesus revealed - not a new God - but a new way of worshipping the same God.*
- 3) *The church acts as a witness to God's grace, love, and the everyday presence of the Holy Spirit.*

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Small Group

Wrap up: After your group has made its visual response, post it on the wall with tape. Briefly summarize the main points of the lesson.

Joys & Concerns: Ask students to share any Joys & Concerns for the week.

Lord's Prayer: Lead the small group in the Lord's Prayer.

Large Group Closing

Announcements/Birthdays

Sanctuary

UMYF Benediction

Additional Background Reading: Use the material below to supplement your knowledge of what our United Methodist understanding is of both the church and what it means to be Christian.

Confirmation Lesson #6 - *What is a Christian and What is the Church?* Supplemental Reading

The Book Of Discipline Of The United Methodist Church, Paragraphs 201-204,

Our Understanding Of The Church

¶ 201. **A local church is a community of true believers** under the Lordship of Christ. It is the redemptive fellowship in which the Word of God is preached by persons divinely called, and the Sacraments are duly administered according to Christ's own appointment. Under the discipline of the Holy Spirit the Church exists for the maintenance of worship, the edification of believers, and the redemption of the world.

¶ 202. **The Church of Jesus Christ exists in and for the world.** It is primarily at the level of the local church that the Church encounters the world. The local church is a strategic base from which Christians move out to the structures of society. The function of the local church, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, is to help people to personally know Jesus Christ and to live their daily lives in light of their relationship with God. Therefore, the local church is to minister to persons in the community where the church is located, to provide appropriate training and nurture to all, to cooperate in ministry with other local churches, to defend God's creation and live as an ecologically responsible community, and to participate in the worldwide mission of the Church, as minimal expectations of an authentic church.

¶ 203. **The local church is** a connectional society of persons who have professed their faith in Christ, have been baptized, have assumed the vows of membership in The United Methodist Church, and are associated in fellowship as a local United Methodist church in order that they may hear the Word of God, receive the Sacraments, praise and worship the triune God, and carry forward the work which Christ has committed to his Church. Such a society of believers, being within The United Methodist Church and subject to its Discipline, is also an inherent part of the Church Universal, which is composed of all who accept Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior, and which in the Apostles Creed we declare to be the holy catholic Church.

¶ 204. **Each local church shall have** a definite evangelistic, nurture, and witness responsibility for its members and the surrounding area, and a missional outreach responsibility to the local and global community. It shall be responsible for ministering to all its members, wherever they live, and for persons who choose it as their church.

The Book Of Discipline Of The United Methodist Church, Paragraph 60

Our Understanding Of What It Means To Be "Christian"

(How We Are Like Other Christians *and* What Makes Us Unique As United Methodists)

¶ 60. **United Methodists profess the historic Christian faith** in God, incarnate in Jesus Christ for our salvation and ever at work in human history in the Holy Spirit. Living in a covenant of grace under the Lordship of Jesus Christ, we participate in the first fruits of God's coming reign and pray in hope for its full realization on earth as in heaven.

Our heritage in doctrine and our present theological task focus upon a renewed grasp of the sovereignty of God and of God's love in Christ amid the continuing crises of human existence.

Our forebears in the faith reaffirmed the ancient Christian message as found in the apostolic witness even as they applied it anew in their own circumstances.

Their preaching and teaching were grounded in Scripture, informed by Christian tradition, enlivened in experience, and tested by reason.

Their labors inspire and inform our attempts to convey the saving gospel to our world with its needs and aspirations.

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Our Common Heritage as Christians

United Methodists share a common heritage with Christians of every age and nation. This heritage is grounded in the apostolic witness to Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord, which is the source and measure of all valid Christian teaching.

Faced with diverse interpretations of the apostolic message, leaders of the early church sought to specify the core of Christian belief in order to ensure the soundness of Christian teaching.

The determination of the canon of Christian Scripture and the adoption of ecumenical creeds such as the formulations of Nicaea and Chalcedon were of central importance to this consensual process. Such creeds helped preserve the integrity of the church's witness, set boundaries for acceptable Christian doctrine, and proclaimed the basic elements of the enduring Christian message. These statements of faith, along with the Apostles' Creed, contain the most prominent features of our ecumenical heritage.

The Protestant reformers of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries devised new confessional statements that reiterated classical Christian teaching in an attempt to recover the authentic Biblical witness. These documents affirmed the primacy of Scripture and provided formal doctrinal standards through their statements of essential beliefs on matters such as the way of salvation, the Christian life, and the nature of the church.

Many distinctively Protestant teachings were transmitted into United Methodist understandings through doctrinal formulations such as the Articles of Religion of the Church of England and the Heidelberg Catechism of the Reformed tradition.

Various doctrinal statements in the form of creeds, confessions of belief, and articles of faith were officially adopted by churches as standards of Christian teaching. Notwithstanding their importance, these formal doctrinal standards by no means exhausted authoritative Christian teaching.

The standards themselves initially emerged from a much wider body of Christian thought and practice, and their fuller significance unfolded in the writings of the church's teachers. Some writings have proved simply to be dated benchmarks in the story of the church's continuing maturation.

By contrast, some sermons, treatises, liturgies, and hymns have gained considerable practical authority in the life and thought of the church by virtue of their wide and continuing acceptance as faithful expositions of Christian teaching. Nonetheless, the basic measure of authenticity in doctrinal standards, whether formally established or received by tradition, has been their fidelity to the apostolic faith grounded in Scripture and evidenced in the life of the church through the centuries.

Basic Christian Affirmations

With Christians of other communions we confess belief in the triune God—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. This confession embraces the Biblical witness to God's activity in creation, encompasses God's gracious self-involvement in the dramas of history, and anticipates the consummation of God's reign.

The created order is designed for the well-being of all creatures and as the place of human dwelling in covenant with God. As sinful creatures, however, we have broken that covenant, become estranged from God, wounded ourselves and one another, and wreaked havoc throughout the natural order. We stand in need of redemption.

We hold in common with all Christians a faith in the mystery of salvation in and through Jesus Christ. At the heart of the gospel of salvation is God's incarnation in Jesus of Nazareth. Scripture witnesses to the redeeming love of God in Jesus' life and teachings, his atoning death, his resurrection, his sovereign presence in history, his triumph over the powers of evil and death, and his promised return. Because God truly loves us in spite of

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our willful sin, God judges us, summons us to repentance, pardons us, receives us by that grace given to us in Jesus Christ, and gives us hope of life eternal.

We share the Christian belief that God's redemptive love is realized in human life by the activity of the Holy Spirit, both in personal experience and in the community of believers. This community is the church, which the Spirit has brought into existence for the healing of the nations.

Through faith in Jesus Christ we are forgiven, reconciled to God, and transformed as people of the new covenant.

"Life in the Spirit" involves diligent use of the means of grace such as praying, fasting, attending upon the sacraments, and inward searching in solitude. It also encompasses the communal life of the church in worship, mission, evangelism, service, and social witness.

We understand ourselves to be part of Christ's universal church when by adoration, proclamation, and service we become conformed to Christ. We are initiated and incorporated into this community of faith by Baptism, receiving the promise of the Spirit that re-creates and transforms us. Through the regular celebration of Holy Communion, we participate in the risen presence of Jesus Christ and are thereby nourished for faithful discipleship.

We pray and work for the coming of God's realm and reign to the world and rejoice in the promise of everlasting life that overcomes death and the forces of evil.

With other Christians we recognize that the reign of God is both a present and future reality. The church is called to be that place where the first signs of the reign of God are identified and acknowledged in the world. Wherever persons are being made new creatures in Christ, wherever the insights and resources of the gospel are brought to bear on the life of the world, God's reign is already effective in its healing and renewing power.

We also look to the end time in which God's work will be fulfilled. This prospect gives us hope in our present actions as individuals and as the Church. This expectation saves us from resignation and motivates our continuing witness and service.

We share with many Christian communions a recognition of the authority of Scripture in matters of faith, the confession that our justification as sinners is by grace through faith, and the sober realization that the church is in need of continual reformation and renewal.

We affirm the general ministry of all baptized Christians who share responsibility for building up the church and reaching out in mission and service to the world.

With other Christians, we declare the essential oneness of the church in Christ Jesus. This rich heritage of shared Christian belief finds expression in our hymnody and liturgies. Our unity is affirmed in the historic creeds as we confess one holy, catholic, and apostolic church. It is also experienced in joint ventures of ministry and in various forms of ecumenical cooperation.

Nourished by common roots of this shared Christian heritage, the branches of Christ's church have developed diverse traditions that enlarge our store of shared understandings. Our avowed ecumenical commitment as United Methodists is to gather our own doctrinal emphases into the larger Christian unity, there to be made more meaningful in a richer whole.

If we are to offer our best gifts to the common Christian treasury, we must make a deliberate effort as a church to strive for critical self-understanding. It is as Christians involved in ecumenical partnership that we embrace and examine our distinctive heritage.

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Our Distinctive Heritage as United Methodists

The underlying energy of the Wesleyan theological heritage stems from an emphasis upon practical divinity, the implementation of genuine Christianity in the lives of believers.

Methodism did not arise in response to a specific doctrinal dispute, though there was no lack of theological controversy. Early Methodists claimed to preach the scriptural doctrines of the Church of England as contained in the Articles of Religion, the Homilies, and the Book of Common Prayer.

Their task was not to reformulate doctrine. Their tasks were to summon people to experience the justifying and sanctifying grace of God and encourage people to grow in the knowledge and love of God through the personal and corporate disciplines of the Christian life.

The thrust of the Wesleyan movement and of the United Brethren and Evangelical Association was "to reform the nation, particularly the Church, and to spread scriptural holiness over the land."

Wesley's orientation toward the practical is evident in his focus upon the "scripture way of salvation." He considered doctrinal matters primarily in terms of their significance for Christian discipleship.

The Wesleyan emphasis upon the Christian life—faith and love put into practice—has been the hallmark of those traditions now incorporated into The United Methodist Church. The distinctive shape of the Wesleyan theological heritage can be seen in a constellation of doctrinal emphases that display the creating, redeeming, and sanctifying activity of God.

Distinctive Wesleyan Emphases

Although Wesley shared with many other Christians a belief in grace, justification, assurance, and sanctification, he combined them in a powerful manner to create distinctive emphases for living the full Christian life. The Evangelical United Brethren tradition, particularly as expressed by Phillip William Otterbein from a Reformed background, gave similar distinctive emphases.

Grace pervades our understanding of Christian faith and life. By grace we mean the undeserved, unmerited, and loving action of God in human existence through the ever-present Holy Spirit. While the grace of God is undivided, it precedes salvation as "prevenient grace," continues in "justifying grace," and is brought to fruition in "sanctifying grace."

We assert that God's grace is manifest in all creation even though suffering, violence, and evil are everywhere present. The goodness of creation is fulfilled in human beings, who are called to covenant partnership with God. God has endowed us with dignity and freedom and has summoned us to responsibility for our lives and the life of the world.

In God's self-revelation, Jesus Christ, we see the splendor of our true humanity. Even our sin, with its destructive consequences for all creation, does not alter God's intention for us—holiness and happiness of heart. Nor does it diminish our accountability for the way we live.

Despite our brokenness, we remain creatures brought into being by a just and merciful God. The restoration of God's image in our lives requires divine grace to renew our fallen nature.

Prevenient Grace— We acknowledge God's prevenient grace, the divine love that surrounds all humanity and precedes any and all of our conscious impulses. This grace prompts our first wish to please God, our first glimmer of understanding concerning God's will, and our "first slight transient conviction" of having sinned against God.

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God's grace also awakens in us an earnest longing for deliverance from sin and death and moves us toward repentance and faith.

Justification and Assurance— We believe God reaches out to the repentant believer in justifying grace with accepting and pardoning love. Wesleyan theology stresses that a decisive change in the human heart can and does occur under the prompting of grace and the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

In justification we are, through faith, forgiven our sin and restored to God's favor. This righting of relationships by God through Christ calls forth our faith and trust as we experience regeneration, by which we are made new creatures in Christ.

This process of justification and new birth is often referred to as conversion. Such a change may be sudden and dramatic, or gradual and cumulative. It marks a new beginning, yet it is part of an ongoing process. Christian experience as personal transformation always expresses itself as faith working by love.

Our Wesleyan theology also embraces the scriptural promise that we can expect to receive assurance of our present salvation as the Spirit "bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God."

Sanctification and Perfection— We hold that the wonder of God's acceptance and pardon does not end God's saving work, which continues to nurture our growth in grace. Through the power of the Holy Spirit, we are enabled to increase in the knowledge and love of God and in love for our neighbor.

New birth is the first step in this process of sanctification. Sanctifying grace draws us toward the gift of Christian perfection, which Wesley described as a heart "habitually filled with the love of God and neighbor" and as "having the mind of Christ and walking as he walked."

This gracious gift of God's power and love, the hope and expectation of the faithful, is neither warranted by our efforts nor limited by our frailties.

Faith and Good Works— We see God's grace and human activity working together in the relationship of faith and good works. God's grace calls forth human response and discipline.

Faith is the only response essential for salvation. However, the General Rules remind us that salvation evidences itself in good works. For Wesley, even repentance should be accompanied by "fruits meet for repentance," or works of piety and mercy.

Both faith and good works belong within an all-encompassing theology of grace, since they stem from God's gracious love "shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit."

Mission and Service—We insist that personal salvation always involves Christian mission and service to the world. By joining heart and hand, we assert that personal religion, evangelical witness, and Christian social action are reciprocal and mutually reinforcing.

Scriptural holiness entails more than personal piety; love of God is always linked with love of neighbor, a passion for justice and renewal in the life of the world.

The General Rules represent one traditional expression of the intrinsic relationship between Christian life and thought as understood within the Wesleyan tradition. Theology is the servant of piety, which in turn is the ground of social conscience and the impetus for social action and global interaction, always in the empowering context of the reign of God.

Nurture and Mission of the Church— Finally, we emphasize the nurturing and serving function of Christian fellowship in the Church. The personal experience of faith is nourished by the worshiping community.

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For Wesley there is no religion but social religion, no holiness but social holiness. The communal forms of faith in the Wesleyan tradition not only promote personal growth; they also equip and mobilize us for mission and service to the world.

The outreach of the church springs from the working of the Spirit. As United Methodists, we respond to that working through a connectional polity based upon mutual responsiveness and accountability. Connectional ties bind us together in faith and service in our global witness, enabling faith to become active in love and intensifying our desire for peace and justice in the world.

Doctrine and Discipline in the Christian Life

No motif in the Wesleyan tradition has been more constant than the link between Christian doctrine and Christian living. Methodists have always been strictly enjoined to maintain the unity of faith and good works through the means of grace, as seen in John Wesley's *The Nature, Design, and General Rules of the United Societies* (1743). The coherence of faith with ministries of love forms the discipline of Wesleyan spirituality and Christian discipleship.

The General Rules were originally designed for members of Methodist societies who participated in the sacramental life of the Church of England. The terms of membership in these societies were simple: "a desire to flee from the wrath to come and to be saved from their sins."

Wesley insisted, however, that evangelical faith should manifest itself in evangelical living. He spelled out this expectation in the three-part formula of the Rules:

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

- First: By doing no harm, by avoiding evil of every kind . . . ;**
- Secondly: By . . . doing good of every possible sort, and, as far as possible, to all . . . ;**
- Thirdly: By attending upon all the ordinances of God (see ¶ 62).**

Wesley's illustrative cases under each of these three rules show how the Christian conscience might move from general principles to specific actions. Their explicit combination highlights the spiritual spring of moral action.

Wesley rejected undue reliance upon these rules. Discipline was not church law; it was a way of discipleship. Wesley insisted that true religion is "the knowledge of God in Christ Jesus," "the life which is hid with Christ in God," and "the righteousness that [the true believer] thirsts after."