



METHODIST
COLLEGIATE CHURCH

The Transitional
Doctrines & Discipline of the
Central Texas College of the
Methodist Collegiate Church

Now the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain where Jesus told them to go. When they saw him, they worshipped him, but some doubted. Jesus came near and spoke to them, “I’ve received all authority in heaven and on earth. Therefore, go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to obey everything that I’ve commanded you. Look, I myself will be with you every day until the end of this present age.”
Matthew 28: 16-20 (CEB)

When the Pharisees heard that Jesus had left the Sadducees speechless, they met together. One of them, a legal expert, tested him. “Teacher, what is the greatest commandment in the Law?” He replied, “*You must love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your being, and with all your mind.* This is the first and greatest commandment.³⁹ And the second is like it: *You must love your neighbor as you love yourself.* All the Law and the Prophets depend on these two commands.”
Matthew 22: 34-40 (CEB)

INTRODUCTION

The Methodist Collegiate Church, (MCC) a cooperative, voluntary association of like-minded, common-hearted congregations and ministries, was established in 2023 to return to an ancient form of connectionalism and cooperation – one of shared ministry, equal accountability, and practical governance. Evangelical at its core and grace-filled in its practice, this partnership of autonomous Methodist churches seeks to proclaim the gospel of Jesus Christ to the world and equip disciples for the life of ministry.

Scripture calls us to live our lives together as people of God and as churches. Jesus prays for us to be one as he and the Father are one¹. The apostle Paul builds the powerful metaphor of the church as the “Body of Christ” in 1 Corinthians and Ephesians. As the Body, we each bring our particular gifts and graces to the church as a whole, filled with the Holy Spirit² and led by Christ as our Head³. We join as autonomous Methodist churches to walk together with Christ, drawing people to Him through the power of the Spirit and working to embrace the call of Jesus to love God and to love others in our daily lives.

Using the ancient term, we call our national assembly a “collegium”, meaning “a group in which each member has approximately equal power and authority” (Merriam-Webster). As a collegium, we embrace Romans 12 as our statement of strategy for our life together in our efforts to fulfill the Great Commission⁴ and the Greatest Commandment:⁵

“I appeal to you therefore, brothers and sisters, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your minds, so that you may discern what is the will of God—what is good and acceptable and perfect.

For by the grace given to me I say to everyone among you not to think of yourself more highly than you ought to think, but to think with sober judgement, each according to the measure of faith that God has assigned. For as in one body we have many members, and not all the members have the same function, so we, who are many, are one body in Christ, and individually we are members one of another. We have gifts that differ according to the grace given to us: prophecy, in proportion to faith; ministry, in ministering; the teacher, in teaching; the exhorter, in exhortation; the giver, in generosity; the leader, in diligence; the compassionate, in cheerfulness.

¹ John 17:21

² Romans 8:9

³ Ephesians 1:22-23

⁴ Matthew 28:18-20

⁵ Matthew 22:34-40

Let love be genuine; hate what is evil, hold fast to what is good; love one another with mutual affection; outdo one another in showing honor. Do not lag in zeal, be ardent in spirit, serve the Lord. Rejoice in hope, be patient in suffering, persevere in prayer. Contribute to the needs of the saints; extend hospitality to strangers.

Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse them. Rejoice with those who rejoice, weep with those who weep. Live in harmony with one another; do not be haughty, but associate with the lowly; do not claim to be wiser than you are. Do not repay anyone evil for evil, but take thought for what is noble in the sight of all. If it is possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all. Beloved, never avenge yourselves, but leave room for the wrath of God; for it is written, 'Vengeance is mine, I will repay,' says the Lord.' No, 'if your enemies are hungry, feed them; if they are thirsty, give them something to drink; for by doing this you will heap burning coals on their heads.' Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good."⁶

⁶ Romans 12 (NRSV)

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THE HISTORY OF THE METHODIST COLLEGIATE CHURCH

Ecclesiastical Heritage

The history of The Methodist Collegiate Church includes God's self-revelation and action in history through the call of Abraham, the Hebrew exodus from Egypt, and especially the incarnation, life, death, and resurrection of God's Word Jesus Christ, and the outpouring of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost. The Methodist Collegiate Church shares this history with the whole Church, as contained in the canonical Holy Scriptures.

In the early 1500s, various reform movements emerged in Western Europe that created forms of western Christianity not in communion with the Roman Catholic pope. These movements became known as Protestantism and emphasized a return to the sources of faith: that is, God's action in salvation and Scripture as the authority for doctrine and practice. Different leaders, contexts and visions produced Lutheran, Reformed, Anabaptist, and Anglican Protestantism, all of which influenced the beliefs and traditions that came together to shape today's Collegiate Methodism.

During the late 1600s, a renewal movement, often referred to as Pietism, emerged in Europe. Broadly conceived, the movement emphasized the Christian experience of new birth, sanctification, the possibility of societal transformation, and small groups. The movement affected most confessions including Lutheran, Reformed, Anglican, and Anabaptist. Expressions of this movement included the philanthropic and mission work of August Hermann Franke in Germany, the growth of Moravianism under the leadership of Ludwig von Zinzendorf, the Religious Societies Movement begun by Anthony Horneck in England, as well as Reformed and more radical groups.

John and Charles Wesley and the Evangelical Revival in England

Wesleyan and Methodist Christians are connected to the lives and ministries of John Wesley (1703-1791) and his brother, Charles (1707-1788). Both John and Charles were Church of England priests who volunteered as missionaries to the colony of Georgia, arriving in March, 1736. Their mission was far from an unqualified success, and both returned to England disillusioned and discouraged, Charles in December, 1736, and John in February, 1738.

The Wesley brothers had transforming religious experiences in May, 1738, under the influence of Moravian missionaries. John's experience on May 24 of that year at a Moravian meeting on Aldersgate Street, London, has a prominent place in the Church's memory. Shortly thereafter, both brothers began preaching a message of new birth and sanctification in Anglican religious societies and outdoors to whomever would listen. They also established missional and philanthropic enterprises to promote social change.

The goal of this movement was to "reform the nation, particularly the church; and to spread scriptural holiness over the land." Over time a pattern of organization and discipline emerged. It included a set of General Rules, societies made up of class meetings (small groups in which members of Methodist societies watched over one another), and band meetings (smaller confessional groups divided by gender), all connected by traveling lay preachers.

Beginnings in America, 1760-1816

Methodism in America began without authorization or support from England, as lay Methodists immigrated to America. Among its earliest leaders were Robert Strawbridge, an immigrant farmer who organized work in Maryland and Virginia around 1760; Philip Embury and his cousin Barbara Heck, who began work in New York in 1766; and Captain Thomas Webb, whose labors were instrumental in Methodist beginnings in Philadelphia in 1767. The first Methodist societies included active participation by people of European and African descent.

To strengthen the Methodist work in the colonies, John Wesley sent two lay preachers, Richard Boardman and Joseph Pilmore, to America in 1769. Two years later, Richard Wright and Francis Asbury were dispatched to undergird the growing American Methodist societies. Asbury became the most important figure in early American Methodism. His energetic devotion to the principles of Wesleyan theology, ministry, and organization shaped Methodism in America in ways unmatched by any other individual.

The first conference of Methodist preachers in the colonies was held in Philadelphia in 1773. The ten who attended pledged allegiance to Wesley's leadership and agreed that, as laypeople, they would not administer the sacraments. Methodists would receive the sacraments of baptism and the Lord's Supper at a local Anglican parish church. They emphasized strong discipline among the societies and preachers. A system of regular conferences was inaugurated, similar to those Wesley had instituted in England to conduct the business of the Methodist movement.

The American Revolution profoundly impacted Methodism. John Wesley's loyalty to the king and his writings against the revolutionary cause did not enhance the image of Methodism among many who supported independence. Furthermore, a number of Methodist preachers refused to bear arms to aid the patriots.

When independence from England was won, Wesley recognized that changes were necessary for American Methodism to thrive. He sent Thomas Coke to America to superintend the work with Asbury. Coke brought with him a prayer book entitled *The Sunday Service of the Methodists in North America*, prepared by Wesley and incorporating his revision of the Church of England's Thirty-Nine Articles of Religion. Richard Whatcoat and Thomas Vasey, whom Wesley had ordained, accompanied Coke. Wesley's ordinations set a precedent that ultimately permitted Methodists in America to become an independent church.

In December 1784, the famous Christmas Conference of preachers was held in Baltimore at Lovely Lane Chapel. Most of the American preachers attended, probably including African Americans, Harry Hosier and Richard Allen. At this gathering the movement became organized as The Methodist Episcopal Church in America. In the following years The Methodist Episcopal Church published its first *Discipline* (1785), adopted a quadrennial General Conference, the first of which was held in 1792, and drafted a Constitution (1808). It also established a publishing house and became a proponent of revivalism and the camp meeting.

Two other churches were forming in America, which, in their earliest years were composed almost entirely of German-speaking people. The first was founded by Philip William Otterbein (1726-1813) and Martin Boehm (1725-1812). Otterbein, a German Reformed pastor, and Boehm, a Mennonite,

preached an evangelical message similar to the Methodists. In 1800, their followers formally organized the Church of the United Brethren in Christ, which included a similar organization of traveling preachers. Otterbein attended the Christmas Conference and participated in Asbury's ordination. A second church, The Evangelical Association, was begun by Jacob Albright (1759-1808). Albright, a Lutheran farmer and tile-maker in eastern Pennsylvania, was converted by the United Brethren and nurtured in a Methodist class meeting. He later established his own connection of preachers, better to reach fellow German-speakers. The Evangelical Association was officially organized in 1803. Early attempts at merging these churches failed. By the time of Asbury's death in March 1816, Otterbein, Boehm, and Albright had also died. The churches they nurtured had survived and were beginning to expand numerically and geographically. The German churches united in 1946 as The Evangelical United Brethren Church, which in turn joined with The Methodist Church in 1968 to form The United Methodist Church.

Revival and Growth, 1817-1843

The Second Great Awakening was the dominant religious development among Protestants in America during the first half of the nineteenth century. Through revivals and camp meetings, sinners experienced conversion. Circuit-riding preachers and lay pastors knit them into a connection. This style of Christian faith and discipline was very agreeable to Methodists, United Brethren, and Evangelicals who favored its emphasis on the experiential. The memberships of these churches increased dramatically, as did the number of preachers serving them.

Preachers and laity were expected to be seriously committed to both the faith and mission. Preachers were to possess a sound conversion and divine calling, as well as to demonstrate gifts and skills for fruitful ministry. The financial benefits were meager. The general membership's commitment was exhibited in their willingness to submit to the discipline of their churches. Methodists, for example, were strictly guided by the General Rules adopted at the Christmas Conference of 1784 and still included in Methodism's *Book of Discipline*. They were urged to avoid evil, do good, and use the means of grace supplied by God. Those who did not adhere to the *Discipline* were to be removed from membership.

The structure of Methodist, United Brethren, and Evangelical Association churches allowed them to function in ways to support, consolidate, and expand their ministries. Local classes could spring up wherever a few women and men were gathered under the direction of a class leader. The itinerant preacher, who had a circuit of appointments under his care, visited regularly. This system served the diverse needs of city, town, or frontier outpost. The churches could go to the people wherever they settled. Annual conferences under episcopal leadership provided the mechanism for admitting and ordaining clergy, appointing itinerant preachers to their churches, and supplying them with mutual support. General Conferences, meeting quadrennially, proved sufficient to set the main course for the church, including the creation of the *Discipline* by which it was governed.

The Methodist Book Concern, organized in 1789, was the first church publishing house in America. The Evangelical Association and United Brethren also authorized the formation of publishing agencies in the early nineteenth century. From these presses came a succession of hymnals, *Disciplines*, newspapers, tracts, and magazines. Profits were usually designated for the support and welfare of retired and indigent preachers and their families.

The founding period was not without serious problems, especially for the Methodists. Conflict between Methodism's structure and values and American cultural norms (especially over episcopacy, race, and slavery) sometimes led to schism. In 1792, James O'Kelly founded the Republican Methodists to reduce the authority of bishops. Richard Allen (1760-1831), an emancipated slave and Methodist preacher who was mistreated because of his race, left the church and in 1816 organized The African Methodist Episcopal Church. For similar reasons, The African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church was begun in 1821. In 1830, about 5,000 preachers and laypeople left the denomination because it would not grant representation to the laity or permit the election of presiding elders (district superintendents). This new body was called The Methodist Protestant Church, which in 1939 united with The Methodist Episcopal Church and The Methodist Episcopal Church, South, to become The Methodist Church. In 1843, abolitionist preachers Orange Scott and Luther Lee formed the Wesleyan Methodist Church over Methodism's weakening prohibition against slaveholding.

Even with these tensions, Methodism spread to new cultures and overseas. African American Methodist preacher, John Stewart, began an unauthorized mission to the Wyandot Indians in Ohio in 1815, which was adopted by the Ohio Conference in 1819. Another African American preacher, Daniel Coker, who had been ordained by Asbury and participated in the organizing conference of the African Methodist Episcopal Church, was among the eighty-eight emigrants who sailed to Africa in 1820, assisted by the American Colonization Society. While still at sea he organized a church. The group landed in what is today Liberia. Missionary work in Africa was carried out mainly by lay people until 1833, when Melville Beveridge Cox became the first missionary of the Methodist Episcopal Church appointed to Liberia.

Other institutions also developed. By 1841, Methodists, Evangelicals, and United Brethren had all begun denominational missionary societies. Sunday schools were encouraged in every place where they could be started and maintained. Interest in education was also evident in the establishment of secondary schools and colleges. By 1845, each had instituted courses of study for their preachers to ensure that they had a basic knowledge of the Bible, theology, and pastoral ministry.

Division in America and Expansion Overseas, 1844-1860

John Wesley had been an ardent opponent of slavery. In 1789, the General Rules were officially adopted by American Methodism. A rule forbidding participation in slavery, which had not been deemed necessary in England, was included. But as Methodism expanded, that prohibition was relaxed or not enforced where slavery was legal. Because membership spanned regions, classes, and races, contention over slavery ultimately split Methodism into separate northern and southern churches.

At the 1844 General Conference, pro-slavery and anti-slavery factions clashed over episcopacy, race, and slavery. Their most serious conflict concerned one of the church's five bishops, James O. Andrew, who had acquired slaves through marriage. After acrimonious debate, the General Conference voted to suspend Bishop Andrew from the exercise of his office so long as he could not, or would not, free his slaves. A few days later, dissidents drafted a Plan of Separation, which permitted the annual conferences in slaveholding states to separate from The Methodist Episcopal Church in order to organize their own ecclesiastical structure. The Plan of Separation was adopted and the groundwork laid for the creation of The Methodist Episcopal Church, South.

Delegates from the southern states met in Louisville, Kentucky, in May 1845, to organize their new church. Their first General Conference was held the following year in Petersburg, Virginia, where a *Discipline* and hymnbook were adopted. The Methodist Protestant Church was also affected by the slavery controversy, splitting in 1858 and reuniting in 1877. The United Brethren and The Evangelical Association, being concentrated in northern states, were able to avoid the passionate struggle that fractured The Methodist Episcopal Church.

Despite conflict and division in America, Methodism continued to expand overseas. In 1847, Judson D. Collins, Moses C. White, and his wife Jane Isabel Altwater landed in Fuzhou, China, under the auspices of the Missionary Society of the Methodist Episcopal Church. Despite a slow beginning, the Missionary Society gained valuable lessons that enabled Robert S. Maclay to enter Japan in 1873. In 1885, William B. Scranton, his mother Mary F. Scranton, and Henry G. Appenzeller began work in Korea. American Methodists also set their sights on South Asia. In 1856, William Butler landed in Kolkata with his wife, Clementina Rowe Butler (one of the future founders of Woman's Foreign Missionary Society), and two of their children.

European Methodism also began, as migrants, sailors, soldiers, and others who encountered Methodism outside of Europe shared the message back home. Ludwig Jacoby joined the Methodists after immigrating to Cincinnati in 1838. He returned to Germany in 1849 and began gathering a church in Bremen. The Evangelical Association, with ethnic and linguistic links to Germany, sent Conrad Link as its first official missionary to Germany in 1850. Norwegian seaman Ole Peter Petersen, after hearing Methodists in Charleston, South Carolina, in 1845, preached to Norwegians and Danes in America and Norway in 1849. The first congregation in Denmark was established by Christian Willerup in 1856.

The Civil War to World War I, 1860-1913

Bitterness between northern and southern Methodists had intensified in the years leading to Abraham Lincoln's election in 1860 and then through the carnage of the Civil War. Each church claimed divine sanction for its region and prayed fervently for God's will to be accomplished in victory for its side. The Civil War devastated The Methodist Episcopal Church, South. Its churches lay in ruins or were seriously damaged. Many of its clergy were killed or wounded, and its educational, publishing, and missionary programs were disrupted. African American membership declined significantly during and after the war. In 1870, the General Conference voted to transfer all remaining African Americans to a new church. The Colored Methodist Episcopal Church (now The Christian Methodist Episcopal Church) resulted. The Methodist Episcopal Church, Methodist Protestants, United Brethren, and Evangelicals also lost preachers and members but did not suffer the same economic loss as southern Methodism.

The period from the Civil War to World War I saw growth in membership for all branches of Methodism, Evangelicals, and United Brethren. The value of church property increased dramatically, Sunday schools were strengthened through increased training of teachers, and publishing houses maintained ambitious programs to furnish members with literature. Higher educational standards for the clergy were cultivated, and theological seminaries were founded. The period was also marked by theological developments and controversies. The holiness movement, which emphasized a Christian's experience of entire sanctification, together with the rise of liberal theology and the Social Gospel Movement, were sources of conflict.

Rural and poorer segments of the church, especially those associated with the holiness movement, were skeptical of prestige and affluence. A Methodist preacher, Benjamin Titus Roberts, had formed the Free Methodist Church in 1860 to oppose worldliness, especially the grand middle-class churches in cities financed by renting pews. In 1895, the Pentecostal Church of the Nazarene (now the Nazarene Church) was formed under the encouragement of Phineas Bresee, a Methodist Episcopal preacher, presiding elder, and delegate to the General Conferences of 1872 and 1892. The goal for the new denomination, founded in 1894, was to have churches furnished to welcome the poor where holiness was preached.

Two other issues that caused substantial debate in the churches during this period were lay representation and the role of women. Methodist Protestants had granted the laity representation from the time they organized in 1830. The clergy in The Methodist Episcopal Church, The Methodist Episcopal Church, South, The Evangelical Association, and the Church of the United Brethren in Christ were much slower in permitting laity an official voice. It was not until 1932 that the last of these churches allowed lay representation.

Even more contentious was the question of women's ordination and eligibility for lay offices and representation in the church. Women had been ordained in holiness denominations as early as the 1860s, and the United Brethren General Conference approved ordination for women in 1889. However, The Methodist Episcopal Church and The Methodist Episcopal Church, South, did not ordain women until well after their reunion in 1939.¹ The Evangelical Association never ordained women. Lay representation for women was also resisted. Women were not admitted as delegates to the General Conferences of The Methodist Protestant Church until 1892, the United Brethren until 1893, The Methodist Episcopal Church until 1904, and The Methodist Episcopal Church, South, until 1922.

Mission work continued to rise on the agendas of the churches. Women formed missionary societies beginning in 1869 to educate, recruit, and raise funds for these endeavors. Missionaries like Isabella Thoburn, Susan Bauernfeind, and Harriett Brittan, and administrators like Bell Harris Bennett and Lucy Rider Meyer, motivated thousands of church women to support home and foreign missions.

Domestic mission programs sought to Christianize the city. Home missionaries established schools for former slaves and their children. In 1871, the southern Methodist church ordained Alejo Hernandez, making him the first Hispanic preacher ordained in Methodism, although Benigno Cardenas had preached in Spanish in Santa Fe, New Mexico, as early as 1853. Significant Methodist ministries among Asian Americans were instituted during this period, especially among Chinese and Japanese immigrants. A Japanese layman, Kanichi Miyama, was ordained in California in 1887.

Methodism continued to expand in Asia, Europe, Africa, and Latin America. From 1870 to 1875 Methodist missionaries embarked on revival campaigns in India south of the Ganges River under the leadership of James M. Thoburn, and the famous holiness evangelist William Taylor. These efforts gave birth to the South India Conference in 1876. Thoburn also began work in Southeast Asia when he opened mission work in Rangoon, Burma (Myanmar), in 1879. In 1885, he led the establishment of Methodist work in Singapore, which later expanded into the Malaya Peninsular and Sarawak to become the Malaysia Annual Conference in 1902. The conference also sent the first Methodist pastor to Indonesia in 1905. Methodism reached the Philippines when Thoburn organized work in Manila in 1899, which quickly grew to become the Philippine Islands Annual Conference in 1908.

At the Methodist Episcopal General Conference of 1884, a petition from the Liberia Conference was presented, asking for a resident bishop in Africa. William Taylor was elected to the episcopacy as missionary bishop to Africa. Taylor went with two specific assignments: overseeing Liberia and expanding missions on the African continent. Between May 20 and September 10, 1885, the Methodist Episcopal Church founded five strategic points to start their work in Angola. In 1886, the bishop and his party entered the Lower Congo. Taylor also visited the king of Portugal in 1886 and received permission to do mission work in Portuguese East Africa (Mozambique). Taylor established self-supporting churches in southern Liberia, Sierra Leone, Angola, in what is today Mozambique, and in Zaire. In 1896, Joseph Crane Hartzell was elected Bishop for Africa, and by 1897 the Methodist Episcopal Church reached Rhodesia (Zimbabwe). During this period, annual conferences other than those in the United States were organized regionally into what was termed central conferences.

The War Years of the Early 20th Century, 1914-1945

In the years prior to World War I, the Methodist Episcopal Church demonstrated its concern for social issues by adopting a Social Creed at its 1908 General Conference. Social problems were also a spur in the movement toward ecumenism and interchurch cooperation. Each of the denominations now included in The United Methodist Church became active in the Federal Council of Churches, the first major ecumenical venture among American Protestants. There was also much sympathy in the churches for negotiation and arbitration as an alternative to international armed conflict. Many church members and clergy openly professed pacifism. When the United States officially entered the war in 1917, pacifism faded as American patriotism was identified with the war effort.

After the war, the churches returned their energies to social change. One of their perennial concerns was temperance, and they were quick to recognize it among their highest priorities. They published and distributed large amounts of temperance literature. Members pledged that they would abstain from alcoholic beverages.

There was significant theological ferment during this period. Biblical fundamentalists and neo-orthodox theologians questioned liberal Protestant theology and accused it of undermining the very essence of the Christian message. Since each of these theological parties—fundamentalist, neo-orthodox, and liberal—was well represented among the forerunners of United Methodism, heated doctrinal disputes were present in these churches.

Despite internal theological strife, the churches continued to cooperate with other denominations and acted to heal earlier schisms. A division that had occurred in The Evangelical Association in 1894 was repaired in 1922, when two factions united as The Evangelical Church.

A numerically larger union took place among three Methodist bodies – The Methodist Episcopal Church, The Methodist Protestant Church, and The Methodist Episcopal Church, South. Representatives of these churches began meeting in 1916 to forge a plan of union. By the 1930s, their proposal included partitioning the united church into six administrative units called jurisdictions. Five of these were geographical; the sixth, the Central Jurisdiction, was racial, including African American churches and annual conferences wherever they were geographically located in the United States. African American Methodists and some others were troubled by this prospect and opposed the plan. The majority of Methodist Protestants favored the union, even though it meant episcopal government, which they had not had since their church was organized in 1830. Following overwhelming approvals

at the General Conferences and annual conferences of the three churches, they were united in April, 1939, into The Methodist Church. At the time of its formation, the new church included 7.7 million members.

Conflict in Europe was heating up again. Although Methodists, Evangelicals, and United Brethren each had published strong statements condemning war and advocating peaceful reconciliation among the nations, once again the strength of their positions was largely lost with American involvement in the hostilities of World War II.

Quest for Unity, 1945-1968

As the war ended, the churches actively worked to secure world peace and order. Many laity, pastors, bishops, and church agencies supported the establishment of a world organization to serve as a forum for the resolution of international social, economic, and political problems. In April 1945, their labors contributed to the founding of the United Nations.

During this era, there were at least three other important matters that occupied the attention of the churches that now compose United Methodism. First, they maintained their concern for ecumenism and church union. On November 16, 1946, in Johnstown, Pennsylvania, The Evangelical Church and The United Brethren Church were united into The Evangelical United Brethren Church following twenty years of negotiation. At the time of union, the new church included about 700,000 members. The Methodist Church was also interested in closer ties with other Methodist and Wesleyan bodies. In 1951, it participated in the formation of the World Methodist Council, successor to the Ecumenical Methodist Conferences that began in 1881. Methodists and the Evangelical United Brethren became active members of the World Council of Churches, founded in 1948, and the National Council of Churches, founded in 1950. The two churches also cooperated with seven other Protestant denominations in forming the Consultation of Church Union in 1960.

Second, the churches demonstrated growing uneasiness with the problem of racism in both the nation and the church. Many Methodists were especially disturbed by the manner in which racial segregation was built into the fabric of their denominational structure. The Central Jurisdiction was a constant reminder of racial discrimination. Proposals to eliminate the Central Jurisdiction were introduced at General Conferences from 1956 to 1966. Finally, plans to abolish the Central Jurisdiction were agreed upon with the contemplated union with the Evangelical United Brethren in 1968, although a few African American annual conferences continued for a short time thereafter.

Third, the churches debated women's ordination. The issue was critical in the creation of The Evangelical United Brethren Church. The Evangelical Church had never ordained women. The United Brethren had ordained women since 1889. In order to facilitate the union of these two churches, the United Brethren accepted the Evangelical practice, and women's ordination was stopped. Methodists debated the issue for several years after their unification in 1939. The Methodist Church began ordaining women in 1956. In that same year, women were granted full clergy rights and could be elected as members in full connection to an annual conference.

United Methodism as a World Church, 1968-2022

In 1968, The Evangelical United Brethren and The Methodist Church united. Full clergy status for women was included in the plan of union. Since then, an increasing number of women have been admitted to the ordained ministry, appointed to the district superintendency, elected to positions of denominational leadership, and consecrated as bishops. In 1980, Marjorie Matthews was the first woman elected to the Church's episcopacy.

When The United Methodist Church was created in 1968, it had approximately 11 million members, making it one of the largest Protestant churches in the world. Since then, the church has become increasingly aware of itself as a world church with membership and conferences in Africa, Asia, Europe, and the United States. While worldwide membership in The United Methodist Church has grown since 1968, membership in Europe and the United States has declined, offset by significant growth in Africa and Asia. In Africa, The United Methodist Church has expanded episcopal areas to include East Africa, Sierra Leone, Cote d'Ivoire, East Congo, Zimbabwe, Mozambique, and South Africa.

Changes in worship style, the rise of the charismatic movement, the growth of non-denominationalism, and the emergence of megachurches have all challenged the church as it entered its third century. Most trying, The United Methodist Church had to negotiate cultural shifts with regard to gender and sexuality, especially in the United States and Europe. Conflicts over homosexuality, marriage, and abortion continued uninterrupted nearly since the formation of the denomination. These debates opened up large domestic, international, and ecumenical rifts over the church's doctrine and discipline.

The Birth of the Methodist Collegiate Movement, 2022-

In 2022, faced with the ongoing and growing rifts within The United Methodist Church, several local congregations met to pray and discern a new way forward – a way that focused on the Holy Scriptures and honored historic Wesleyan teachings while adapting to the evolving global mission-field. The product of that season of discernment was a return to an ancient model of being the Church. Rooted in Medieval Christianity, the collegiate form of church polity afforded an opportunity for like-minded, common-hearted congregations and ministries to recreate an ancient form of connectionalism – one of shared ministry, equal accountability, and practical governance.

THE DOCTRINE OF THE COLLEGIATE METHODIST CHURCH

The pioneers in the Methodist traditions understood themselves as standing in the central stream of Christian spirituality and doctrine, loyal heirs of the authentic Christian tradition. In John Wesley's words, theirs was "the old religion, the religion of the Bible, the religion . . . of the whole church in the purest ages." Their gospel was grounded in the biblical message of God's self-giving love revealed in Jesus Christ.

This perspective is apparent in the Wesleyan understanding of "catholic spirit." While it is true that Methodists are fixed upon certain religious affirmations, grounded in the gospel and confirmed in their experience, they also recognize the right of Christians to disagree on matters such as forms of worship, structures of church government, modes of baptism, or theological explorations. They believe such differences do not break the bond of fellowship that ties Christians together in Jesus Christ. Wesley's familiar dictum was, "As to all opinions which do not strike at the root of Christianity, we think and let think."

But even as they were fully committed to the principles of religious toleration and theological diversity, Methodists were equally confident that there is a "marrow" of Christian truth that can be identified and that must be conserved. This living core, as they believed, stands revealed in Scripture, illumined by tradition, vivified in personal and corporate experience, and confirmed by reason. Early Methodists were very much aware, of course, that God's eternal Word⁷ never has been, nor can be, exhaustively expressed in any single form of words.

The Articles of Faith

Thirty-Nine Articles of Religion were finalized in 1571 to define the doctrine of the Church of England. When Methodism emerged as a church, independent of the Church of England two centuries later, John Wesley abbreviated the formulation to 24 Articles. An additional article dealing with the duty of Christians to civil authority was added by the Methodist Episcopal Church when it was formed in 1784. The Articles were officially adopted by the General Conference of 1808, when the first Restrictive Rule was also implemented, and revised by the Uniting Conference of 1939 when three Methodist movements within America became one. The Twenty-Five Articles are as follows:

Article I - Of Faith in the Holy Trinity

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

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

⁷ God's eternal Word is Jesus Christ, the second person of the Holy Trinity.

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

Article III - Of the Resurrection of Christ

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

Article IV - Of the Holy Ghost

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

Article V - Of the Sufficiency of the Holy Scriptures for Salvation

The Holy Scripture containeth all things necessary to salvation; so that whatsoever is not read therein, nor may be proved thereby, is not to be required of any man that it should be believed as an article of faith, or be thought requisite or necessary to salvation. In the name of the Holy Scripture we do understand those canonical books of the Old and New Testaments of whose authority was never any doubt in the church. The names of the canonical books are: Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy, Joshua, Judges, Ruth, The First Book of Samuel, The Second Book of Samuel, The First Book of Kings, The Second Book of Kings, The First Book of Chronicles, The Second Book of Chronicles, The Book of Ezra, The Book of Nehemiah, The Book of Esther, The Book of Job, The Psalms, The Proverbs, Ecclesiastes or the Preacher, Cantica or Songs of Solomon, Four Prophets the Greater, Twelve Prophets the Less.

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

Article VI - Of the Old Testament

The Old Testament is not contrary to the New; for both in the Old and New Testaments everlasting life is offered to mankind by Christ, who is the only Mediator between God and man, being both God and Man. Wherefore they are not to be heard who feign that the old fathers did look only for transitory promises. Although the law given from God by Moses as touching ceremonies and rites doth not bind Christians, nor ought the civil precepts thereof of necessity be received in any commonwealth; yet notwithstanding, no Christian whatsoever is free from the obedience of the commandments which are called moral.

Article VII - Of Original or Birth Sin

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

Article VIII - Of Free Will

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

Article IX - Of the Justification of Man

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

Article X - Of Good Works

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

Article XI - Of Works of Supererogation

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

Article XII - Of Sin After Justification

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

Article XIII - Of the Church

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

Article XIV - Of Purgatory

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

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

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

Article XVI - Of the Sacraments

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

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

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

Article XVII - Of Baptism

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

Article XVIII - Of the Lord's Supper

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

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

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

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

Article XIX - Of Both Kinds

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

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

The offering of Christ, once made, is that perfect redemption, propitiation, and satisfaction for all the sins of the whole world, both original and actual; and there is none other satisfaction for sin but that alone. Wherefore the sacrifice of masses, in the which it is commonly said that the priest doth offer Christ for the quick and the dead, to have remission of pain or guilt, is a blasphemous fable and dangerous deceit.

Article XXI - Of the Marriage of Ministers

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

Article XXII - Of the Rites and Ceremonies of Churches

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

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

Article XXIII - Of the Rulers of the United States of America

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

Article XXIV - Of Christian Men's Goods

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

Article XXV - Of a Christian Man's Oath

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

Of Sanctification (from the Methodist Protestant *Discipline*)

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

[The following provision was adopted by the Uniting Conference (1939).]

Of the Duty of Christians to the Civil Authority

It is the duty of all Christians, and especially of all Christian ministers, to observe and obey the laws and commands of the governing or supreme authority of the country of which are citizens or
The following Article from the Methodist Protestant Discipline was placed here by the Uniting

Conference (1939). It was not one of the Articles of Religion voted upon by the three churches.] subjects or in which they reside, and to use all laudable means to encourage and enjoin obedience to the powers that be.

The Doctrinal Standards

The Doctrinal Standards of The Methodist Collegiate Church shall consist of *The Standard Sermons of John Wesley* and Wesley's *Explanatory Notes on the New Testament*.

The Creedal Affirmations of The Methodist Collegiate Church

The following summaries of the apostolic witness disclosed in Scripture have been affirmed by many Christian communities, and express orthodox Christian teaching.

The Apostles' Creed

I believe in God, the Father Almighty, creator of heaven and earth. I believe 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, died, and was buried; He descended to the dead. On the third day He rose again; He ascended into heaven, Is seated at the right hand of the Father, and will come again to judge the living 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.

* *universal*

The Nicene Creed (A.D. 381)

We believe in one God, the Father, the Almighty, maker of heaven and earth, of all that is, seen and unseen.

We believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ, the only Son of God, eternally begotten of the Father, God from God, Light from Light, true God from true God, begotten, not made, of one Being with the Father; through Him all things were made. For us and for our salvation He came down from heaven, was incarnate of the Holy Spirit and the Virgin Mary and became truly human.

For our sake He was crucified under Pontius Pilate; He suffered death and was buried.

On the third day He rose again in accordance with the Scriptures; He ascended into heaven and is seated at the right hand of the Father.

He will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead, and His kingdom will have no end.

We believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life, who proceeds from the Father and the Son, who with the Father and the Son is worshiped and glorified, who has spoken through the prophets.

We believe in one holy catholic* and apostolic church. We acknowledge one baptism for the forgiveness of sins. We look for the resurrection of the dead, and the life of the world to come. Amen.

* *universal*

The Definition of Chalcedon (A.D. 451)

Following the holy fathers, we teach with one voice that the Son of God and our Lord Jesus Christ is to be confessed as one and the same Person, That He is perfect in Godhead and perfect in manhood, truly God and truly man, of a reasonable soul and body consisting of one substance with the Father as regards His Godhead, and at the same time of one substance with us as regards His manhood, like us in all respects, apart from sin.

Begotten of His Father before the ages as regards His Godhead, But in these last days born for us and for our salvation of the Virgin Mary, the God-bearer.

This one and the same Jesus Christ, the only-begotten Son of God, must be confessed to be in two natures, without confusion, without changes, without division, not as parted or separated into two persons, but one and the same Son and only-begotten God the Word, our Lord Jesus Christ.

Even as the prophets from earliest times spoke of Him, And our Lord Jesus Christ Himself taught us, And the creed of the fathers has handed down to us.

THE MINISTRY OF THE METHODIST COLLEGIATE CHURCH

The mission of the Church is to join as autonomous Methodist churches to walk together with Christ, drawing people to Him through the power of the Spirit and working to embrace the call of Jesus to love God and to love others in our daily lives. The fulfillment of God's reign and realm in the world⁸ is the vision Scripture holds before us. The Methodist Collegiate Church affirms that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, the Savior of the world, and the Lord of all. As we invite others to join us, we respect persons of all religious faiths and we defend religious freedom for all persons. Jesus' words in Matthew provide the Church with our mission: "Therefore, go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to obey everything that I've commanded you"⁹, and "You must love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your being, and with all your mind. . . . You must love your neighbor as you love yourself"¹⁰.

This mission is our grace-filled response to the Reign of God in the world announced by Jesus. God's grace is active everywhere, at all times, carrying out this purpose as revealed in the Bible. It is expressed in God's covenant with Abraham and Sarah, in the Exodus of Israel from Egypt, and in the ministry of the prophets. It is fully embodied in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. It is experienced in the ongoing creation of a new people by the Holy Spirit.

John Wesley, Phillip Otterbein, Jacob Albright, and our other spiritual forebears understood this mission in this way. Whenever Methodism has had a clear sense of mission, God has used our Church to save persons, heal relationships, transform social structures, and spread scriptural holiness, thereby changing the world. In order to be truly alive, we embrace Jesus' mandate to love God and to love our neighbor and to make disciples of all peoples.

The General Rules

In order to make explicit the expectations upon those who are members of the Methodist societies, John Wesley first devised a set of rules in 1738, publishing it five years later. The General Rules were subsequently adopted by the Methodist Episcopal Church in 1785, one year after its formation. The General Rules provide a helpful summation of the kind of intentional discipleship which marked early Methodism, summed up in three simple rubrics: do no harm, do good to all, and attend to the ordinances of God.

First: By doing no harm, by avoiding evil of every kind, especially that which is most generally practiced. Wesley cited profanity, taking God's name in vain, drunkenness, slaveholding, fighting and other similar behaviors as the types of activities to be avoided.

⁸ See Jesus' preaching the Kingdom of God, Luke 8:1 et.al.

⁹ Matthew 28:19-20

¹⁰ Matthew 22:37, 39

Secondly: By doing good; by being in every kind merciful after their power; as they have opportunity, doing good of every possible sort, and, as far as possible, to all people. Wesley used feeding the poor, clothing the naked, and visiting those in prison as examples, and he expanded his call beyond the Christ's mandate in Matthew 25 to include exhortation, frugality, patience and economic assistance.

Thirdly: By attending upon all the ordinances of God. These include public worship, the ministry of the word, the Lord's Supper, prayer, searching the scriptures and fasting or abstinence.

In 1739, John Wesley organized a group of people wanting to grow in holiness into a United Society that met weekly for prayer, teaching and mutual support. The members of a society divided themselves into smaller groups, which they called classes. The classes provided an opportunity for people to discuss the state of their souls and to receive advice, encouragement and reproach from their peers and their leader. This structure maintained a focus on inspiration, reinforcement and accountability in living a Christian life.

The Wesleyan Quadrilateral

In 1964, theologian Albert C. Outler described a methodology that he believed John Wesley used in his examination of scripture. Outler coined the term Quadrilateral for the method because it includes four points of focus: scripture, tradition, reason and experience. The simplicity and familiarity of the points of focus caused the Quadrilateral to become very popular in Methodism.

The points of focus in the Quadrilateral are often misunderstood by casual users of the methodology because they mistakenly see the four points of focus as equal. From the very definition of the term, Outler taught that scripture is the primary source, and stands above the other three. Other theologians have proposed other refinements, definitions and corrections to the points of focus, further refining their use in scriptural exploration.

The Wesleyan Quadrilateral is an important component of Methodist tradition, and is an excellent tool in teaching the detailed study of scripture. However, the use of the Quadrilateral to exclude passages of scripture from our canon is not appropriate because scripture is our primary source.

Scripture

Methodists share with other Christians the conviction that Scripture is the primary source and criterion for Christian doctrine. The Bible is sacred canon for Christian people, formally acknowledged as such by historic ecumenical councils of the church. Our doctrine identifies as canonical thirty-nine books of the Old Testament and the twenty-seven books of the New Testament.

We properly read Scripture within the believing community, informed by the tradition of that community. We interpret individual texts in light of their place in the Bible as a whole. We are aided by scholarly inquiry and personal insight, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. As we work with each text, we take into account what we have been able to learn about the original context and intention of that text. In this understanding we draw upon the careful historical, literary, and textual studies of recent years, which have enriched our understanding of the Bible. Through this faithful reading of Scripture, we may come to know the truth of the biblical message in its bearing on our own lives and

the lives of others. Thus, the Bible serves both as a source of our faith and as the basic criterion by which the truth and fidelity of any interpretation of faith is measured.

Tradition

The theological task¹¹ does not start anew in each age or each person. Christianity does not leap from New Testament times to the present as though nothing were to be learned from that great cloud of witnesses in between ancient days and today. For centuries Christians have sought to interpret the truth of the Gospel for their time and developed traditions grounded in those truths. Tradition is the history of that continuing environment of grace in and by which all Christians live, God's self-giving love in Jesus Christ. As such, tradition transcends the story of particular traditions. In this deeper sense of tradition, all Christians share a common history.

Experience

Wesley described faith and its assurance as “a sure trust and confidence” in the mercy of God through our Lord Jesus Christ, and a steadfast hope of all good things to be received at God's hand. Such assurance is God's gracious gift through the witness of the Holy Spirit. This “new life in Christ” is what we as Methodists mean when we speak of “Christian experience.” Christian experience gives us new eyes to see the living truth in Scripture. It confirms the biblical message for our present. It illumines our understanding of God and creation and motivates us to make sensitive moral judgments. In our attempts to understand the biblical message, we recognize that God's gift of liberating love embraces the whole of creation. We interpret experience in the light of scriptural norms, just as our experience informs our reading of the biblical message. In this respect, Scripture remains central in our efforts to be faithful in making our Christian witness.

Reason

Although we recognize that God's revelation and our experiences of God's grace continually surpass the scope of human language and understanding, we also believe that any disciplined theological work calls for the careful use of reason. By reason, we:

- read and interpret Scripture.
- determine whether our Christian witness is clear
- ask questions of faith and seek to understand God's action and will.
- organize the understandings that compose our witness and render them internally coherent.
- test the congruence of our witness to the biblical testimony and to the traditions that mediate that testimony to us.
- relate our witness to the full range of human knowledge, experience, and service

Since all truth is from God, efforts to discern the connections between revelation and reason, faith and science, grace and nature, are useful endeavors in developing credible and communicable

¹¹ The theological task is our effort to reflect upon God's gracious actions in our lives.

doctrine. We seek nothing less than a total view of reality that is decisively informed by the promises and imperatives of the Christian gospel, though we know well that such an attempt will always be marred by the limits and distortions characteristic of human knowledge. Nevertheless, by our quest for reasoned understandings of Christian faith we seek to grasp, express, and live out the gospel in a way that will commend itself to thoughtful persons who are seeking to know and follow God's ways. In theological reflection, the resources of tradition, experience, and reason are integral to our study of Scripture without displacing Scripture's primacy for faith and practice. These four sources each make distinctive contributions and work together to lead our responses to God's Grace and guide our quest as Methodists for a vital and appropriate Christian witness.

The Sacraments

A Sacrament is an outward and visible sign of an inward and spiritual grace. God gives us the sign as a means whereby we receive this grace and as a tangible assurance that we do in fact receive it. The two Sacraments ordained by Christ are Holy Baptism and Holy Communion (also called the Lord's Supper or the Eucharist). We receive the Sacraments by faith in Christ, with repentance and thanksgiving. Faith in Christ enables us to receive the grace of God through the Sacraments, and obedience to Christ is necessary for the benefits of the Sacraments to bear fruit in our lives.

The Sacrament of Holy Baptism

Through Holy Baptism we are united in Christ's death in repentance of our sins; raised to new life in Him through the power of the resurrection; incorporated into the Body of Christ; and empowered through the work of the Holy Spirit to go on to perfection. Holy Baptism is God's gracious gift to us, flowing from the once for all work of Christ Jesus, and our pledge to follow as His disciples.

Holy Baptism may be performed by sprinkling, pouring, or immersion. The outward and visible sign of Holy Baptism is water. Candidates are baptized "in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit" (Matthew 28:19). The inward and spiritual grace is death to sin and new birth to righteousness by faith through union with Christ in His death and resurrection.

Holy Baptism is administered among a gathered congregation. Those present vow on behalf of Christ's Holy Church to receive the baptized into the Church universal, to grow together in grace, and to remember the profession made and benefits received in Holy Baptism. Candidates for Holy Baptism, and those presenting candidates unable to answer for themselves, shall be instructed in the Christian faith and the meaning of Holy Baptism.

Holy Baptism, as initiation into Christ's Holy Church, occurs once in a person's life. Holy Communion serves as the regular and continual affirmation of baptismal vows within the church. Through a service of baptismal remembrance and reaffirmation of baptismal vows people can renew the covenant declared at baptism.

The Sacrament of Holy Communion

In Holy Communion also known as the Lord's Supper or the Eucharist (from the Greek word for "thanksgiving"), we are invited into fellowship (*koinonia* in the Greek) with Christ Jesus who is spiritually present in the whole of the Sacrament. We participate in the communion of saints with the

Church universal and we are given a foretaste of God's eternal banquet, the marriage supper of the Lamb. The Sacrament may be offered to all who repent of sin and desire to draw near to God and lead a life of obedience to Christ.

Holy Communion is normally celebrated in the midst of the congregation, physically gathered to remember and respond to God's mighty acts of salvation revealed in Holy Scripture. Local congregations are urged to ensure regular opportunities for the congregation to commune.

The elements of Holy Communion may be taken to those whose condition prevents them from being physically present. When Holy Communion cannot be offered, the Love Feast¹² provides an opportunity for significant fellowship in a wide array of settings. We encourage the use of non-alcoholic wine or juice for Holy Communion. Non-alcoholic juice options must be offered as an option where alcoholic wine is used.

The Meaning of Confirmation

Through the Rite of Confirmation, we personally renew the covenant declared at our baptism, witness to God's work in our lives, affirm our commitment to Christ and His Holy Church, and receive the outpouring of the Holy Spirit through the laying on of hands enabling our lifelong journey toward holiness. The Apostles prayed for and laid hands on those who had been baptized.

It is the duty of pastors to prepare confirmands, teaching them the basic tenets of the historic Christian faith, the history and theology of the Wesleyan revival movement, and the practical meaning of church membership in agreement with the *Book of Doctrines & Discipline* and approved catechism.

Our Social Witness

Following both the example and teaching of Jesus, we believe that God calls us to love and serve others around the world in His name.

As Methodists, we affirm the work of God the Father and Creator, Christ the Redeemer and the Holy Spirit who sustains us. As worshippers of the Triune God who seek to live deeply into the Greatest Commandment and the Great Commission; we affirm our responsibilities to all of God's creation.

All people are created in the image of God and deserve to be treated justly, with dignity and respect. We reject as sin, behavior that unjustly discriminates against any person.

The beginning and ending of life are in the hands of God. The church is called to protect those who are weak and powerless, especially in matters of life and death. The sacredness of life compels us to resist abortion, unless the life of the mother is imminently at risk. We reject the use of abortion as a form of gender selection or birth control.

¹² A love feast is a nurturing gathering of a class or the local church community sharing water and bread as a community-building endeavor.

Scripture and tradition lift marriage between one man and one woman as the proper relationship for human sexuality. We reject all forms of sexual exploitation, including pornography, promiscuity, adultery, and sex trafficking of any kind.

All people should have the right to work in safe conditions, with fair compensation and free of grinding toil or exploitation by others. We pray that all should be allowed to freely follow their vocations.

We are called, through the ministry of the Church and our individual Christian walks, to advance the quality of life, and encourage constructive opportunities, for all of God's people—as we share the Good News to the poor and oppressed. We reject the abdication of these responsibilities from the Church to government.

God's world is one world, ordered among the nations. As God's people, we are committed to make disciples in all nations and to love others as ourselves.

The Ministry of All Christians

The Apostle Paul eloquently explained the Ministry of all Christians in his first letter to the Corinthians.¹³ He taught that Christian people have a variety of gifts that all flow from the Holy Spirit. Christ provides many ways to serve Him and those around us. God provides an abundance of ways for our work to align with God's work in acts of co-creation. The Ministry of all Christians takes place both locally and throughout the world and reflects the diversity of ways we understand our relationship with God and each other.

The ministry of the laity flows from a commitment to Christ's outreaching love. Lay members of the Methodist Collegiate Church are, by history and calling, active advocates of the gospel of Jesus Christ. Every layperson is called to carry out the Great Commission¹⁴; every layperson is called to be missional through the Greatest Commandment¹⁵. The witness of the laity, their Christ-like examples of everyday living as well as the sharing of their own faith experiences of the gospel, is the primary evangelistic ministry through which all people will come to know Christ and the Methodist Collegiate Church will fulfill its mission.

Connectionalism in the Methodist tradition is multi-leveled, global in scope, and local in thrust. Our connectionalism is not merely a linking of one church to another. It is rather a vital web of interactive relationships. We are connected by sharing a common tradition of faith, including Our Doctrinal Standards and General Rules, by sharing a common mission, which we seek to carry out by working

¹³ 1 Corinthians 12:4-31

¹⁴ Matthew 28:16-20

¹⁵ Matthew 22:34-40

together in and through cooperative structures that reflect the inclusive and missional character of our fellowship; by sharing a common ethos that characterizes our distinctive way of doing things.

Ordained and Licensed Ministry

All Christian ministry is grounded in the covenant of baptism by which we are initiated into the body of Christ and called into a life of discipleship. The sacraments of baptism and Holy Communion ground the ministry of the whole church. They are celebrated in the Christian community as means of grace. Within the church community, there are persons whose gifts, evidence of God's grace, and promise of future usefulness are affirmed by the community, and who respond to God's call by offering themselves in leadership as set-apart¹⁶ ministers, ordained and licensed. Following the example of the disciples in Acts 6, called people can improve their fruitfulness by focusing their ministry in areas that match their God-given gifts and graces. Individuals discern God's call as they relate with God and their communities, and the Church guides and confirms those callings. Calls—and the discernment and confirmation of them—are gifts of the Holy Spirit.

Ordination, Licensing and Apostolic Ministry

The pattern for response to a call to set apart ministry is provided in the development of the early church. The apostles led in prayer, teaching and preaching, ordered the spiritual and temporal life of the community, established leadership for the ministry of service, and provided for the proclamation of the gospel to new persons and in new places. The early church, through the laying on of hands, set apart persons with responsibility to preach, to teach, to administer the sacraments, to nurture, to heal, to gather the community in worship, and to send them forth in witness. The church also set apart people to care for the physical needs of others, reflecting the concerns for the people of the world. In the New Testament, we see the apostles identifying and authorizing persons to a ministry of service. These functions, though set apart, were never separate from the ministry of the whole people of God.¹⁷ Paul states that different gifts and ministries are given to all persons. The Wesleyan tradition has, from the beginning, encouraged a culture of call and a community of discernment, which affirms and supports the ministry of all Christians and identifies and authorizes persons into ministries of the ordained and licensed. The gifts of ordination and licensing to ministry are a gift from God to the church. In ordination, the church affirms and continues the apostolic ministry through persons empowered by the Holy Spirit. As such, those who are ordained make a life-long commitment to conscious living of the whole gospel and to the proclamation of that gospel to the end that the world may be saved. Those who are licensed make a similar commitment to living and proclaiming the Word for the period of their ministry.

Those who serve as clergy within the Methodist Collegiate Church shall be elected by the Collegium's Commission on Ministry, approved by the local church and ordained or licensed by the Dean on

¹⁶ See Romans 1:1. A person with a vocation focused on the Gospel.

¹⁷ Ephesians 4:11-13

behalf of the whole Church. Election is the action by which the Commission, after carefully examining the qualifications, abilities, and readiness of a candidate for set-apart ministry, incorporates individuals into the membership of the covenant fellowship of those called to serve the Church. Ordination is the action by which the Church sets apart those who have been so elected to a particular society of ministry for the good of the whole Church. Ordination is conferred by the laying on of hands by a Dean and others among the people of God in the Collegium. Licensing is conferred by a blessing by a Dean and others among the people of God in the Collegium. Called people within the Methodist Collegiate Church serve without guaranteed appointments and without the requirement of itineration.

Fellowships

People called into ministry become part of a fellowship of people with similar calls and spiritual gifts. Fellowships bring together people engaged in ministry to provide opportunities for collaboration and friendship. The fellowship can provide a forum for sharing best practices and discussing current issues and challenges.

The Fellowship of the Ordained is charged with ministry to the world that flows through the local church. Members share full sacramental authority and are full voting participants in the life of their college and the collegium. The Fellowship of the Ordained is comprised of the Society of Elders and the Society of Deacons. Members of the Fellowship of the Ordained may change societies at their discretion annually around the anniversary of their ordination by written notification to the Commission of Ministry. The Members of the Fellowship of the Ordained share a devotion to Word, Service and Sacrament. They support and uphold each other in Order of the church and the nurturing of Compassion and Justice.

The Fellowship of the Licensed is charged with ministry through the local church. They share sacramental authority in their ministry contexts. The Fellowship of the Licensed is comprised of the Society of Local Pastors and the Society of Lay Leaders. Local Pastors are full voting participants in the life of their college. Lay Leaders are voting participants in their college and lay people elected to vote in the Collegium must be members of the Society of Lay Leaders. Members of the Fellowship of the Licensed may change societies upon the completion of the educational requirements of that society, and with the approval and supervision of the Collegium Commission on Ministry.

Following the scriptural pattern, there is no retirement for clergy or laity from the work of God's Kingdom. However, clergy persons may choose to lay aside paid ministry by choosing senior status within the Collegium. There is no mandatory age for such status, although the local church Pastor-Parish Relations Committee, in consultation with the Collegium Commission on Ministry, may request clergy people to move to senior status. Senior clergy retain their active voting status in the Collegium.

The Societies of the Ordained and Licensed

The Society of Deacons: The Society of Deacons is charged with living as the hands and feet of Christ in the world through Word, Service, Sacrament, Compassion and Justice. From the earliest days of the church, Deacons were called and set apart for the ministry of Love, Justice, and Service and for connecting the church with the most needy, neglected, and marginalized among the children of God. This ministry grows out of the Wesleyan passion for social holiness and ministry among the poor. It

is the Deacons, in both person and function, whose distinctive ministry is to embody, articulate, and lead the whole people of God in its servant ministry.

The Society of Elders: The Society of Elders is charged with the administration of the instituted means of grace through Word, Service, Sacrament and Order. They do this through the careful study of scripture and its faithful interpretation; through effective proclamation of the gospel and responsible administration of the sacraments; through diligent pastoral leadership of their congregations for fruitful discipleship; and by following the guidance of the Holy Spirit in witnessing beyond the congregation in the local community and to the ends of the earth. The distinctive ministry of the Elder is the ordering and leadership of worship, Christian education and ministry to encourage congregational growth in holiness and the welcoming of all into the Body of Christ.

The Office of Canon: In the Society of Elders, there will be those called to assume the senior leadership responsibilities of churches and/or other ministry settings (e.g., Senior Pastor, Lead Pastor, Executive Director, CEO, etc.). Following the historic Anglican nomenclature, these individuals shall hold the office of Canon. Canons are entrusted with the oversight and discipline of a church and may be called upon to serve in the absence of a Dean. Those seeking the Office of Canon must hold full membership in the Methodist Collegiate Church.

The Office of Dean: The Office of Dean is entrusted with the oversight and discipline of a College or the Collegium. Upon election to the office, the Dean is authorized to guard the faith, order, liturgy, doctrine, and discipline of the Church. The Dean exercises oversight and support of the College or Collegium in its mission of reaching the world for Jesus Christ and serving the world after the example of Jesus. The Dean is responsible for ordaining and licensing approved Candidates in their College.

The Society of Local Pastors – A Local Pastor is charged with the administration of the instituted means of grace through Word, Service, Sacrament and Order just as an Elder is, but the Local Pastor's charge is limited to a single congregation. Local Pastors are often people who choose to enter ministry later in life or who have other life circumstances that make seminary impractical for them. Local Pastors preach, teach, administer the sacraments and provide congregational guidance within the context of their local church. Local Pastors are licensed annually by the Dean of a College and interview with their local PPR to renew their licenses each year.

The Society of Lay Leaders – A Lay Leader is an individual who commits to lead individual ministries of the Church. Lay Leaders act as volunteers who choose to bring their specific talents and skills into the life of the church. They may be teachers, mission leaders, group coordinators, church staff or committee members filling the role of Christ's representatives in the world. Lay leaders commit to receiving Methodist leadership training and to conducting themselves in a manner that reflects the love of Jesus Christ. Lay Leaders are licensed annually by the Dean of a College on the recommendation of the PPR.

The Process and Qualifications for Ordination and Licensing

The call to Holy Orders is a sacred journey not to be undertaken hastily or unadvisedly. As such, it is the expectation of the Methodist Collegiate Church that every candidate shall enter a season of counseled discernment before beginning the candidacy process.

Educational Requirements

Methodists have a tradition of highly educated clergy and well-prepared lay leaders. Wesley taught that preparation for ministry includes the study of church doctrine and polity, a deep understanding of Holy Scripture, and a commitment to work hard, be diligent and be punctual. As part of their preparation, people seeking membership in the Fellowship of the Ordained or in the Society of Local Pastors must receive formal training from an accredited college or university in eight foundational theological courses. Potential members of the Fellowship of the Ordained must complete these courses at a graduate level, while potential members of the Society of Local Pastors may complete them at an undergraduate or graduate level, or through a Course of Study program. These foundational theological courses, which all candidates must complete, include survey courses in Old Testament, New Testament, theology, church history, mission of the church in the world, evangelism, worship /liturgy, and Methodist doctrine, polity and history.

People seeking provisional membership in the Fellowship of the Ordained must have been an active member of a Methodist Collegiate Church (or a predecessor church) for at least one year. They must hold a bachelor's degree from an accredited college or university and must have completed a minimum of four of the eight foundational graduate theological courses in the Christian faith. In order to become full members of the Fellowship of the Ordained, candidates must complete either a Master of Divinity degree or a master's degree which includes the foundational graduate theological studies and a certification or master's degree in an area of specialized ministry. This educational requirement is intended to stipulate an approximately equivalent academic preparation while providing flexibility to the candidate to receive specialized training that will enhance their ministry. Academic requirements may be adjusted by the Dean of the Collegium upon the recommendation of the Collegium's Commission on Ministry.

People seeking provisional membership in the Society of Local Pastors must have been an active member of a Methodist Collegiate Church (or a predecessor church) for at least one year. They must hold high school diploma or the equivalent. Certified candidates must enter an approved Course of Study program to be completed over no more than five years or actively pursue a bachelor's or master's degree that includes the foundational theological studies. In order to become full members of the Society of Local Pastors, candidates must complete the Course of Study or earn a college degree that includes the basic graduate theological studies. Academic requirements may be adjusted by the Dean of the Collegium upon the recommendation of the Collegium's Commission on Ministry.

People seeking membership in the Society of Lay Leaders must have been an active member of a Methodist Collegiate Church (or a predecessor church) for at least one year. They must hold a high school diploma or the equivalent. They must complete the Methodist Collegiate Church Lay Leader Curriculum, Stephen Minister training, or spiritual direction training prior to licensing. To retain their license, Lay Leaders must take at least one unit of relevant continuing education per year.

The Ordination & Licensing Process

1.) Persons who hear a call to ordained or licensed ministry should meet with their Canon or the Canon's designee to inquire about candidacy. They must have held membership in a local Methodist Collegiate church (or its predecessor) for at least one year and shall complete a background and credit check. Upon the recommendation by two-thirds vote of the Pastor-Parish Relations Committee (or equivalent,) the Administrative Board of the local church shall, by simple majority, vote whether to approve and certify them for candidacy. Candidates for Lay Leader do not require the certification of the Administrative Board, but the Administrative Board will be notified of each candidacy.

2.) Candidacy Discernment and residency. After local church approval, a certified candidate shall spend a minimum of six months in discernment. During that time, the candidate shall participate in a process of ministerial and spiritual formation developed by the Commission on Ministry. The Commission shall determine the length and content of the process for each of the Societies of ministry, which focus on the development of spiritual maturity and leadership skills necessary for successful ministry in the candidate's ministry setting. The process will include a supervised internship, volunteer leadership or employment in a ministry setting, depending upon the Fellowship and Society of the call.

During this time, the candidate shall:

- a.) Engage with discernment, including but not limited to, completion of a guidebook, mentoring, and participation in a small group with other candidates
- b.) Undergo a psychological evaluation; and
- c.) Upon completion of the foregoing, the candidate shall write a statement detailing his/her call to ordained ministry and submit it to the Commission on Ministry.
- d.) Candidates for the Fellowship of the Ordained and for the Society of Local Pastors shall also write a statement detailing:

- their experience and understanding of God
- their understanding of grace
- their understanding of the Great Commission
- their understanding of the Greatest Commandment
- their role as an Elder, Deacon or Local Pastor
- the role of the church in the world
- their understanding of connectionalism

The statement should not exceed ten double-spaced pages using a 10-point font and 1-inch margins.

3.) Following the successful completion of the preparation requirements, a candidate shall interview with the Collegium's Commission on Ministry which shall vote by three-fourths majority to approve the candidate for commissioning as a provisional Deacon, Elder, or Local Pastor. Candidates for Lay Leader will not be required to serve provisionally.

A provisional Deacon, Elder, or Local Pastor shall serve no less than one year and no more than five years as a provisional clergy person in a full-time ministry setting, during which time the educational requirements must be fulfilled. If the provisional clergy person is unable to serve full-time, their provisional status will be extended until the equivalent of one year's full-time employment is reached.

The Pastor-Parish Relations committee of the local church will provide supervision of provisional members and will appoint a lay person as a discussion partner for each provisional member as an avenue for suggestions, observations, and feedback for the provisional member. Provisional clergy are granted the voting rights within the Colleges and Collegium conferred to the Society to which they belong.

4.) Following the provisional year, the completion of the educational requirements, and upon the recommendation of the Pastor-Parish Relations Committee of the local church, a provisional Deacon, Elder, or Local Pastor may interview with the Commission on Ministry which, by three-fourths majority, shall elect the candidate for ordination in full connection. The provisional period may not extend beyond five years. Those not recommended for ordination at the conclusion of their provisional period shall no longer remain in the ordination process and will no longer have the rights associated with the Society and Fellowship.

Comparison of Pastoral Societies

| | Society of Deacons | Society of Elders | Society of Local Pastors | Society of Lay Leaders |
|--|--|--|---|---|
| Fellowship | Fellowship of Ordained People | Fellowship of Ordained People | Fellowship of Licensed People | Fellowship of Licensed People |
| When is voting granted? | Provisional | Provisional | Provisional | Licensed |
| Voting duration | Permanent | Permanent | Annual | Annual |
| Voting Level | Collegium | Collegium | College | College - Collegium if lay delegate |
| Sacramental Authority | In all Contexts | In all Contexts | At local church | Within specific ministry |
| Call | Word, Service, Sacrament, Compassion and Justice | Word, Service, Sacrament, Order | Word, Service, Sacrament, Order | Word, Service, Sacrament, Compassion and Justice |
| Context | World | World | Local Church | Local Church |
| High School Diploma or GED | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes |
| Can be Canon | No | Yes | No | No |
| Can be Dean | No | Yes | No | No |
| Transfer to another Society? | Annually | Annually | Fulfill educational requirements | Fulfill educational requirements |
| Path to Provisional Appointment | | | | |
| Entry Educational Requirements | Bachelors Degree | Bachelors Degree | HS Diploma | HS Diploma |
| Educational requirement to complete | MDiv or Masters & Certification | MDiv or Masters & Certification | Course of Study or Bachelors/Masters including the foundational theological studies | MCC Lay Leader Curriculum or Stephen Minister Training |
| Discernment Meeting with Canon | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes |
| Background Check | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes |
| Credit Check | Yes | Yes | Yes | No, unless ministry is Financial |
| Approval of PPR | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes |
| Approval of Admin Board | Yes | Yes | Yes | No |
| Six months Service | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes |
| Complete guidebook | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes |
| Mentoring | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes |
| Small Group | Bi-weekly | Bi-weekly | Bi-weekly | Monthly |
| Psychological Evaluation | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes |
| Statement detailing call to ministry | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes |
| Statement detailing responses to Wesley | Yes | Yes | Yes | No |
| Provisional Interview | Yes - CCM | Yes - CCM | Yes - PPR | No |
| Time of Provisional Service | 1-5 years | 1-5 Years | 1 year | None |
| Path to Ordination/Licensing | | | | |
| Requirements for Ordination or Licensing | Complete provisional residency and complete educational requirements | Complete provisional residency and complete educational requirements | Complete provisional year and complete educational requirements | Complete six months of service and residency requirements |
| Ordination or Licensing Interview | CCM | CCM | PPR with Admin Board Approval | PPR |

Concordant Relationships & Recognition of Orders

In conjunction with the work of the Commission on Ministry, individuals ordained in other Christian faith traditions may be eligible to serve in the pastoral office(s) of congregations/ministries affiliated with the Methodist Collegiate Church while maintaining their denominational orders. Such Concordant Relationships shall be approved through the Collegium's Commission on Ministry and the individual's affiliated denomination.

Individuals wishing to fully affiliate with Methodist Collegiate Church by Recognition of Orders shall be considered upon the submission of a written application to and interview with the Commission on Ministry. All such Recognitions shall be determined on a case-by-case basis by the Commission, which may prescribe further academic or other work.

THE GOVERNANCE OF THE CHURCH

The Organization of Local Churches & Faith Communities

The Role of the Local Church

The Church of Jesus Christ exists in and for the world. The local church is a strategic base from which Christians move out to the structures of society, providing the most significant arena through which disciple-making occurs. It 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. The function of the local church, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, is to help people to accept and confess Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior 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. 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. Such a society of believers, being within the denomination 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.

Church Membership

The Methodist Collegiate Church is a part of the holy catholic (universal) church, as we confess in the Apostles' and Nicene Creeds. In the church, Jesus Christ is proclaimed and professed as Lord and Savior. All people may attend its worship services, participate in its programs, receive the sacraments and, upon taking the vows of membership, become members in any local church in the connection.

Faithful membership in the local church is essential for personal growth and for developing a deeper commitment to the will and grace of God. As members involve themselves in private and public prayer, worship, the sacraments, study, Christian action, systematic giving, and holy discipline, they grow in their appreciation of Christ, understanding of God at work in history and the natural order, and an understanding of themselves. Faithful discipleship includes the obligation to participate in the corporate life of the congregation with fellow members of the body of Christ. A member is bound in sacred covenant to shoulder the burdens, share the risks, and celebrate the joys of fellow members. A Christian is called to speak the truth in love, always ready to confront conflict in the spirit of forgiveness and reconciliation.

An Inclusive Church

We recognize that God made all creation and saw that it was good. As a diverse people of God who bring special gifts and evidences of God's grace to the unity of the Church and to society, we are called to be faithful to the example of Jesus' ministry to all persons. Inclusiveness means openness, acceptance, and support that enables all persons to participate in the spiritual life of the Church and its service to the community and the world. The services of worship of every local church of the Methodist Collegiate Church shall be open to all persons and church activities wherever possible should take place in facilities accessible to persons with disabilities.

Organization of the Local Church

It is the expectation that all Methodist Collegiate Churches will be organized in such a way to foster, develop, and grow the ministries of the church. As a voluntary cooperative of local churches and ministries, each church will have flexibility in its own organizational structure. It is expected, though, that each local church/ministry setting – at the discretion of the Canon, clergy, and lay leadership – make such arrangements as necessary to ensure that the functions of oversight, counsel, and strategic planning are accounted for.

Every local church shall develop a plan for organizing its administrative and programmatic responsibilities. That plan should include adequate provision for these basic responsibilities: (1) planning and implementing a program of nurture, outreach, and witness for persons and families within and without the congregation; (2) providing for effective pastoral and lay leadership; (3) providing for financial support, physical facilities, and the legal obligations of the church; (4) utilizing the appropriate relationships and resources of the College and Collegium; (5) providing for the proper creation, maintenance, and disposition of documentary record material of the local church; and (6) seeking inclusiveness in all aspects of its life. The Discipline refers to an Administrative Board for the administrative functions and a Pastor-Parish Relations committee for managing the relationships with clergy and lay leadership, but the local church may organize in any way it sees fit as long as the listed functions are addressed.

Each church may create a Supplemental Book of Discipline for use by the local church to address issues of significance not covered by the Collegium Book of Discipline. The supplemental discipline may not contradict the Collegiate Book of Discipline, but may be used to address local issues and concerns in a formal manner.

The Organization of the Collegium

The Role of the Collegium

From ancient days, churches and local faith communities have joined together for mutual support, resource sharing, missional engagement, and faith development. Believing in the incredible potential of the historic Methodist understanding of connectionalism, the collegiate model of polity strives to unite like-minded, common-hearted regional churches in voluntary missional associations. These “coalitions of the willing” are intended to allow independent Wesleyan churches/ministries to connect

with one another, to learn from one another, and to journey alongside one another to make more deeply committed followers of the way of Jesus Christ in their specific missional contexts. At the same time, these partnerships are intended to provide a mode of accountability, support, and intentional oversight to independent local Wesleyan congregations.

Collegiate Membership Process

A church's membership in a Collegium is granted by three-fourths vote of the Collegium after making formal application and the acceptance of the Collegiate Covenant.

Termination of Collegium Membership

Following a season of intentional discernment, a local church's affiliation with the Collegium may be terminated by either the church/ministry or, by three-fourths vote, the Collegium itself.

Organization

Groups of approximately ten autonomous Methodist churches, ideally located within a 100-mile WHY 100 miles? geographic radius, will join to form a "college".

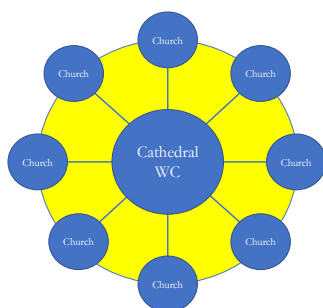


Figure 1 - A College

Each college will be anchored by a large thriving congregation that will serve a cathedral function, providing encouragement, resources, administrative support and critical mass to each of the individual churches in the college. Each church within the college is expected to add its own strengths and spiritual gifts to the college so that the whole is stronger than simply the sum of its parts. Each college will elect an experienced ordained Elder to lead the college as its Dean. Each college will maintain a Commission on Ministry to administer the ordination and licensing processes of the College in cooperation with the local Pastor-Parish Relations committee.

The churches within each college will have the opportunity to work together on service and mission, share educational and spiritual formation programs, partner in discipleship endeavors and cooperate to innovate and engage the world in new ways.

Each college will join with the other colleges to form the Collegium. The Collegium will act as a decision-making entity for the group and as the home for centrally managed administrative functions that will provide economies of scale for the member churches. The Collegium will maintain a Commission on Ministry, a Commission on Education and will be the organizing entity for the Collegium Book of Discipline. The Collegium will be led by a Dean

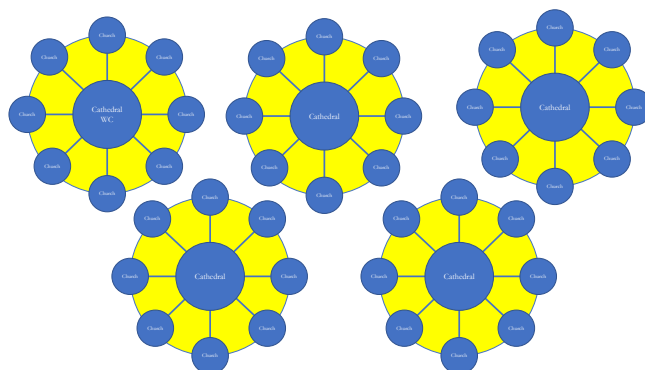


Figure 2 - The Collegium

elected by the colleges every four years. Each of the member churches will appoint delegates to the Collegium. The church delegations shall be equally composed of ordained people and lay people.

Functions of the Assembly of the Collegium and of the Assemblies of the Colleges

To be determined

Pastoral Appointments, Dismissals & Discipline:

Pastoral appointments shall be made only upon the request of a local church/ministry and/or clergyperson.

The consultative process for appointment-making shall be interpreted to mean the Collegium will serve as a “clearing house” for interested persons to make application for pastoral openings. The Dean (or his/her agent) shall make known all openings and shall forward all interested parties to the local church’s Pastor-Parish Relations Committee, who will then be responsible for interviewing pastoral candidates. With prayer and in consultation with the local church and Collegium, the Dean shall make the appointment as requested by the church.

All matters relating to clergy dismissals and discipline shall, likewise, be resolved by the local church in consultation with the Dean. Egregious transgressions and matters possibly leading to loss of clergy credentials shall be forwarded to the Collegium Commission on Ministry.

In the Methodist Collegiate Church, clergypersons shall not have the right to a guaranteed appointment. Clergypersons will not be required to itinerate.

Cooperative Responsibilities & Expectations (“The Collegiate Covenant”)

As member churches/ministries of the Methodist Collegiate Church, we voluntarily and joyfully covenant to hold one another mutually accountable to:

- Love the Lord with all your heart, soul, strength, and mind.
- Love our neighbors as ourselves.
- Share the Gospel.
- Grow towards personal, social, and corporate holiness in all matters.
- Uphold the standards of our *Doctrines & Disciplines*; and
- Participate in the life, work, and ministry of the Collegium.