Abstract

“METHODISM 101: THEOLOGY THROUGH CHARLES WESLEY’S HYMNS”

JOSHUA STUART FELTON

Project under the direction of Professor Joe Burnett

Why should United Methodist members care about their Christian foundational beliefs? United Methodist members know less and less about the theology of the church. Charles Wesley’s hymns, specifically those in *The United Methodist Hymnal*, grounded in Methodist theology. This study utilized Wesley’s hymns, found in *The United Methodist Hymnal* to instruct the learner about foundational United Methodist beliefs. The aim of the study was to use the hymns to increase knowledge in a believer’s faith, which leads to a deeper relationship with God. This, in turn, motivates the believer to witness and use their gifts to serve others within the church and their communities.

A program model of a church group study was used to encourage the education in the United Methodist doctrine. The studies were held on Wednesday evenings at a rural Appalachian church, Central United Methodist, in Bean Station, Tennessee. Central United Methodist Church averages sixty-four attendees per Sunday morning service. This program was ten sessions in length, lasting 1-1.5 hours each. The study was a lecture-style approach with Power Point visuals, along with audio and video of Charles Wesley’s hymns from *The United Methodist Hymnal*. Furthermore, a written pre-test was administered prior to the study starting time and then a written post-test was administered at the end of the lecture to assess if learning had increased. Average attendance was twenty-two individuals. The average pre-test grade was 40.9%, and the average post-test grade was 88.7%. The ten session titles, along with their

Developing a deeper knowledge of the key concepts of United Methodist doctrine is vital for a Christian’s foundational understanding of their faith. Targeting individual concepts in the Christian faith through dissecting Charles Wesley’s hymns gives the learner insight to why they believe what they believe. Increasing their knowledge could have a profound impact on their faith development.

The Trinity/God the Father (Maker) teaches about who the Trinity is: God, Jesus and the Holy Spirit, and the Maker, meaning God is the creator of humanity. Next, the learner understands that Jesus is the reconciler between humanity and God, as well as our redeemer through his crucifixion and resurrection. Furthermore, the Holy Spirit makes God known to the unbeliever and inspires the Christian’s faith. Through prevenient grace, the learner can understand that God loved all humanity before humanity understood they needed it, God welcomes all into a relationship through salvation. Justifying grace shows the learner that by accepting God’s love through faith in Jesus Christ, one is saved from sin. Sanctifying grace and perfection is striving to live out the love of God in one’s life. The learner is taught the means of
grace are channels to experience God’s grace through prayer, worship, fasting and scripture. Through the sacraments of communion and baptism, the learner understands the importance of remembering Christ’s crucifixion and their own commitment to God and the church. Session nine on the nature of the church instructs learners in the significance of keeping Jesus Christ the head of the church, and the importance of unity among the church members. In the resurrection of the saints session, the learner understands more about eternal life and Christ’s second coming.

In conclusion, Methodism 101: Theology through Charles Wesley’s Hymns was a study to promote increased learning about the United Methodist doctrine utilizing Charles Wesley’s hymns in *The United Methodist Hymnal*.
Methodism 101: Theology through Charles Wesley’s Hymns

by

Joshua Stuart Felton

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Introduction

Ernest S. Lyght, retired bishop in the Greater New Jersey Annual Conference, states the following about the current reality in regards to United Methodist believers,

Over the years there has been a constant dumbing down of our worship experiences; thus, the common forum for learning our theology has been diluted by the frequent absence of United Methodist hymnody, Wesleyan doctrine, affirmations of faith, prayers of confession, and the Social Principles. This is exacerbated by an ever-diminishing denominational loyalty. A lack of theological formation among clergy and laity further weakens the people called United Methodists. A fervent UM theology that nurtures our heads and hearts will guide our hands and feet in our witness.¹

Oftentimes, individuals join The United Methodist Church from another denomination without understanding Methodism. Even those United Methodist members who have gone through confirmation may have forgotten or not fully understood the foundational Methodist beliefs. Also, other denominational beliefs may trickle down from another prominent denomination in the area, promoting their beliefs into the local Methodist church.

Utilizing Charles Wesley’s hymns, the following study brings to light the dilemma of the decreasing knowledge of what it means to be a United Methodist. Often, individuals may underestimate the power of hymns, thinking they are just poetic words routinely sung during worship; however, Charles Wesley’s hymns address key United Methodist doctrine. The following study dissects Charles Wesley’s lyrics, identifying crucial components of Methodism. The ten session titles, along with their respective hymns from The United Methodist Hymnal, are as follows: Introduction to Charles Wesley/Trinity/God the Father (Maker), (“Maker in Whom We Live”); Jesus Christ, (“Hark the Herald Angels Sing”); Holy Spirit, (“Spirit of Faith, Come Down”); Prevenient Grace, (“Come, Sinners, to the Gospel Feast”); Justifying Grace, (“And Can It Be that I Should Gain”); Sanctifying Grace and Perfection, (“Love Divine, All Loves Excelling”); The Means of Grace, (several hymns, see session 7); The Sacraments, (communion


This study is a ten session program presented in a lecture style along with Power Point presentations and approximately one hour in length. Participants are given a pre-test and a post-test to observe if learning has occurred. Questions for each session are listed in the appendix.

Developing a deeper knowledge in the key concepts of the United Methodist belief is vital for a Christian’s foundational understanding of their faith. Targeting individual concepts in the Christian faith through dissecting Charles Wesley’s hymns gives the learner insight to why they believe what they believe. Increasing their knowledge will have a profound impact on their faith development.
Session 1

Introduction to Charles Wesley/Trinity/God the Father (Maker)

Introduction to Charles Wesley

John 1: 35-42 states,

The next day John again was standing with two of his disciples, and as he watched Jesus walk by, he exclaimed, ‘Look, here is the Lamb of God!’ The two disciples heard him say this, and they followed Jesus. When Jesus turned and saw them following, he said to them, ‘What are you looking for?’ They said to him, ‘Rabbi’ (which translated means Teacher), ‘where are you staying?’ He said to them, ‘Come and see.’ They came and saw where he was staying, and they remained with him that day. It was about four o’clock in the afternoon. One of the two who heard John speak and followed him was Andrew, Simon Peter’s brother. He first found his brother Simon and said to him, ‘We have found the Messiah’ (which is translated Anointed). He brought Simon to Jesus, who looked at him and said, ‘You are Simon son of John. You are to be called Cephas’ (which is translated Peter).²

This Biblical passage can be used to compare the brothers Andrew and Simon Peter to the brothers Charles and John Wesley. Andrew led Peter to Christ, whereas Charles led John into the Holy Club (beginning of Methodism) he founded.³ Both Andrew and Charles Wesley wanted their brothers to be a part of what they were experiencing. Furthermore, Peter is better known and mentioned more in the Bible than his brother Andrew. Comparatively, John Wesley is more famous than his brother, Charles, as the founder of Methodism. Despite Charles’ vast contribution to the Methodist movement, his brother, John, is better known. The disciple Andrew and composer Charles may have been overshadowed by their brothers Peter and John, but their dedicated involvement in the cause for Christ was just as vital. All four of these Christ-followers committed their lives to Jesus through servanthood.

Charles Wesley was born prematurely on December 18, 1707 in England. The physician


³ Paul Wesley Chilcote, John and Charles Wesley: Selections from Their Writings and Hymns—Annotated and Explained, (Woodstock, VT: SkyLight Paths, 2011); and Elmer T. Clark, Charles Wesley, (Lake Junaluska, NC: Commission on Archives and History The United Methodist Church, 1976), 5; and John R. Tyson, Assist Me to Proclaim: The Life and Hymns of Charles Wesley, (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2007), 10-11.
said he neither opened his eyes nor cried, and seemed more dead than alive.\footnote{Clark, \textit{Charles Wesley}, 4.} At one point, one could say this is how Charles felt about his Christian life. He was one of nineteen children, born of Samuel and Susanna Wesley, but only three boys and seven girls survived into adulthood.\footnote{Chilcote, \textit{John and Charles Wesley: Selections from Their Writings and Hymns—Annotated and Explained}, 4.}

His father, Samuel, was a priest in the Church of England at Epworth in Lincolnshire and his mother stayed home and taught him basics of education. Charles was raised in church and in a Christian home. When he was eight years old, he went to Westminster boarding school, London, where he spent ten years with his older brother Samuel.\footnote{Chilcote, \textit{John and Charles Wesley: Selections from Their Writings and Hymns—Annotated and Explained}, 5.}

In 1726, Charles began studying at Christ Church, Oxford. Three generations plus two of Charles’ bothers attended Oxford.\footnote{Clark, \textit{Charles Wesley}, 5.} The college was “the largest and some say, the most prestigious of the schools that constitute the University (Oxford). The majority of scholars at Oxford were preparing for a position in government, medicine, law, or the Church.”\footnote{Richard P. Heitzenrater, \textit{Wesley and the People Called Methodist}, (Nashville: Abingdon, 1995), 34.}

During this time Charles was not practicing his religion. He showed significant proclivities at the popular diversions, like cards, theatre, music, and dancing. Charles’s success at these things aroused significant concern back at Epworth, and his brother John dispatched to make a lightning visit to Oxford for an onsite investigation. He describes his brother’s frame of mind in this way: He pursued his studies diligently, and led a regular, harmless life; but if I spoke to him about religion he would warmly answer, “What! Would you have me be a saint all at once?” and would hear no more.\footnote{Tyson, \textit{Assist Me to Proclaim: The Life and Hymns of Charles Wesley}, 8-9.}

During his second year of college, Charles began to change his perspective on spiritual matters. It is unknown where this influence came from, either from his brother, father or himself. “Charles wrote reporting to John his brother that he had awoke out of his lethargy (spiritual-laziness).”\footnote{Heitzenrater, \textit{Wesley and the People Called Methodist}, 38.}
Charles asked his brother, John, for some spiritual guidance. John was already using a spiritual logbook diary, and Charles would ask him, “What should he record? Should he mark both the good and the bad? Keep track of learning as well as religion? Use a cipher? What books should he read?”

Charles sought his brother out because he admired him. John was an ordained priest and highly educated.

Because of his new passion for spirituality, Charles began a prayer group; His brother, John, eventually joined and took more of a leadership role. Even though John was a priest and working at two churches, he came to visit the group weekly. The group was known as the Holy Club people from the outside referred to them as Methodist. At this time, the word “Methodist” was not a compliment, but a derogatory term. This small group took on social issues of visiting the prisons and helping the poor. Furthermore, they studied the Bible and prayed together, and read different authors and works such as Rules and Exercises of Holy Living and Holy Dying by Jeremy Taylor and Serious Call to a Devout and Holy Life written by William Law. Weekly Eucharist was a priority for the Holy Club.

Even though he was active in the group, Charles still felt something missing in his spiritual life. “Describing his own spiritual state, Charles complained of a spiritual ‘coldness’ which he was willing to interpret as the ‘natural and just consequences of my past life.’ As he explained, ‘One who like myself has for almost thirteen years been utterly inattentive at public prayers can’t expect to find there that warmth he has never known at his first seeking, he must knock oftener than once before ‘tis opened to him; and this is (I think) in some measure answerable for a heartlessness of which he himself is the cause.’”

Charles yearned for a deeper connection with God but he held onto his past, believing works would eventually bring him

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11 Ibid.

12 Chilcote, John and Charles Wesley: Selections from Their Writings and Hymns—Annotated and Explained, 6.

13 Heitzenrater, Wesley and the People Called Methodist, 46.

14 Ibid.

15 Tyson, Assist Me to Proclaim: The Life and Hymns of Charles Wesley, 11.
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In 1733, Charles completed his Master’s Degree and it seemed he was going to work in academics, instead of pastoral ministry.\(^{16}\) Then his father Samuel died in 1735 and his brother John felt the call to go to America.\(^{17}\) John and Charles’ grandfathers had intended to travel to America, and their father—who corresponded with James Oglethorpe, the first governor of the colony, about his publications and other religious matters—would have gone to Georgia had he been a younger man when the colony began. In a letter dated November 7, 1734, he told Oglethorpe, “I had always so dear a love for your colony, that if it had but been ten years ago, I would gladly have devoted the remainder of my life and labors to the place.”\(^{18}\) It appeared John wanted to fulfill something his father wanted to do, so he brought this idea to Charles. Charles did not initially want to go, because he was an academic person, not someone who thrilled to the new frontier. However, John changed his brother’s heart.

I took my Master’s Degree, and only thought of spending all my days at Oxford. But my brother, who always had the ascendant over me, persuaded me to accompany him and Mr. Oglethorpe to Georgia. I exceedingly dreaded entering into holy orders; but he overruled me here also, and I was ordained Deacon by the Bishop of Oxford, Dr. Potter, and the next Sunday, Priest, by the Bishop of London, Dr. Gibson.”\(^{19}\)

Eventually, Charles would serve as administrative secretary, as well as an ordained minister of the Church of England to the colonies.\(^{20}\)

Charles’ missionary experience in Georgia was a disaster. Charles was struggling; he was beaten down to the point of questioning if he was a Christian. This all began when he tried to mediate a dispute between a Mrs. Hawkins and her maid. Mrs. Hawkins struck her maid, and her maid ran away. Charles asked Mrs. Hawkins to forgive her maid and she refused. On

\(^{16}\) Tyson, *Assist Me to Proclaim: The Life and Hymns of Charles Wesley*, 18.

\(^{17}\) Heitzenrater, *Wesley and the People Called Methodist*, 56.


\(^{19}\) Tyson, *Assist Me to Proclaim: The Life and Hymns of Charles Wesley*, 21.

another occasion, Mrs. Hawkins believed Charles Wesley was the reason her husband was arrested. General Oglethorpe had a rule of no gun shooting on the Sabbath. Mrs. Hawkins believed the reason Oglethorpe made this a law was because of the influence of Charles Wesley. She would seek revenge for this. Mrs. Hawkins would spread lies to Mr. Oglethorpe that Charles was committing sexual improprieties. After six months of dealing with disputes and lies, Charles decided to head back to England.

Despite the disastrous missionary experience in Georgia, a life-changing experience occurred on the boat ride from England to Georgia. Traveling from December 22, 1735 to February 5, 1736, Charles and John were accompanied by Moravian Christians. He and his brother were dumbfounded by the Moravians’ faith in the midst of difficult storms. The Moravians were singing songs of faith; they were not afraid to die. These individuals had a faith of feeling, whereas the Wesleys had a faith based on head knowledge and correct doctrine and practice. The Moravian Christians sought a direct, personal relationship with Christ. When Charles arrived in England, he began having conversations with Peter Bohler, a disciple of Nicholas Ludwig von Zinzendorf, the bishop of the Moravian Church. He taught Charles about the Moravian beliefs, such as the doctrine of salvation by faith alone, instead of good works. In turn, Charles taught Peter Bohler English.

Not long after, Charles contracted either pneumonia or pleurisy, and he stayed with an English Moravian man named John Bray. Not only did John Bray give Charles a place to recuperate, but they also prayed together for Charles to have faith. While recuperating, Charles received a visit from a friend, William Holland, who shared Martin Luther’s commentary on Paul’s letter to the Galatians. Galatians 2:20 states,

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21 Tyson, Assist Me to Proclaim: The Life and Hymns of Charles Wesley, 29-32.

22 Tyson, Assist Me to Proclaim: The Life and Hymns of Charles Wesley, 43-44.

23 Tyson, Assist Me to Proclaim: The Life and Hymns of Charles Wesley, 44.

24 Tyson, Assist Me to Proclaim: The Life and Hymns of Charles Wesley, 45.
And it is no longer I who live, but it is Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.”

When Wesley heard the words, “he loved me and gave himself for me,” he had a spiritual transformation. On May 21, 1738, Charles had a religious experience and witnessed the love of God upon his heart. His journal reports, “I waked under the protection of Christ, and gave myself up, soul, body, to him.” This life-altering experience would motivate the vigor and witness of Charles to make a difference for Christ with his life. Soon his brother, John, had a spiritual conversion. The Wesley brothers’ spiritual awakening would inspire a new movement within the Church of England with societies like the Holy Club. Eventually this movement became known as the Methodist church.

Charles would go forth preaching the gospel in chapels and outside of the church. He would counsel and minister to people, but his most profound witness was his poetry and hymns. Poetry had always been part of Charles’ life, as well as his father’s and his other older brother Samuel’s. Charles studied classical poetry in school and wrote poetry before his conversion experience. The year following his conversion, Charles began utilizing hymn books in worship. He even introduced some of his own hymns in worship. Charles wrote over 9,000 poems. He wrote approximately 180,000 lines of poetry and 27,000 stanzas, producing on average about 180 hymns per year.

The hymns and poems of Charles Wesley express his theology, his understanding of God and the church. Charles Wesley had the “…ability to combine a multiplicity of Christian beliefs, 

26 Tyson, Assist Me to Proclaim: The Life and Hymns of Charles Wesley, 48.
27 Chilcote, John and Charles Wesley: Selections from Their Writings and Hymns—Annotated and Explained , 7.
29 Kimbrough, The Lyrical Theology of Charles Wesley: A Reader, 43.
30 Kimbrough, The Lyrical Theology of Charles Wesley: A Reader, 95.
31 Chilcote, 10.
values, and morals, sometimes in almost telescopic fashion, in his sacred hymns and poems.\textsuperscript{32}

The author, S T. Kimbrough Jr, shares in his book, \textit{The Lyrical Theology of Charles Wesley}, six points in regards to Charles Wesley and his hymns. He states, (1) Charles Wesley was a biblical interpreter. He was a person of the book, the Holy Scriptures, (2) Charles was committed to Christ and the church. He believed in Christ and understood that his salvation was to be lived out in the community of faith, the church.

Charles’ hymns express tension as well. He continued to struggle between the beliefs of the Church of England and his new found understanding of faith from the Moravian Christians. “Even though he developed a passionate loyalty to the Church of England, its beliefs, liturgy, and practices, to some extent he held his heritage of conformity and non-conformity in tension throughout his life and ministry.”\textsuperscript{33} He held to the Church of England and the thirty-nine articles but also was influenced by the Moravians and their understanding of salvation. (3) Charles was an ecclesial theologian. He lived and breathed the liturgies of the church in his poems. He paraphrases litanies, canticles and prayers, and uses the language of the Nicene Creed and the Book of Common Prayer. (4) Charles was a sacramental evangelist. He did not conceive the task of evangelism apart from the sacrament of Holy Communion. (5) Charles was a person of catholic vision. He believed in unity. Even though he believed in the Church of England, Charles believed in universal Christianity. (6) Charles was an advocate of the poor.\textsuperscript{34}

In conclusion, Charles Wesley’s hymns would be sung whenever Methodists gathered, whether in camp meetings, indoor or outdoor church services, and in class meetings.

David Hempton notes, in his book, \textit{Methodism: Empire of the Spirit},

Almost every Methodist gathering began and ended with a hymn…hymns were not only sung on public occasions, they were sung privately or memorized. Wherever one looks in Methodist archives, from the recorded experience of itinerant preachers to the diaries of the faithful, hymns are used for expression, consolation, anticipation, and

\textsuperscript{32} Kimbrough, 54.
\textsuperscript{33} Kimbrough, 43.
\textsuperscript{34} Kimbrough, 45-50.
interpretation. Methodists absorbed their faith through the words of their hymns and sacred verse.”

The hymns written by Charles Wesley, one of the founders of Methodism, included themes of hope, comfort and faith, and are still alive in the Methodist hymnbook, *The United Methodist Hymnal*. Charles expressed his love and praise of God and positioned these virtues into lyrics within poems and hymns sharing the theology of Methodism and evangelizing the message Christ.

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Trinity

In the 1980’s there was a television game show, *The $25,000 Pyramid*. The program featured two competing teams of celebrities paired with regular contestants. The teams would try to answer as many questions as possible in 30 seconds. One member of each team tries to describe the answer on the screen in front of him or her. Their teammate would try his or her best to come up with the correct word or phrase based on the clues given.

After three rounds, whichever team had the most points moved on to battle the pyramid. Either the celebrity or their partner would try to answer six words or phrases, while the other describes the correct word by using clues and vivid imagery. The six answers, all having different money values, had to be answered correctly in sequence; $50, $100, $150, $200, $250, and $25,000.

We all come today with different understandings of who God is. If someone asked you to describe God, what would you say? What descriptive words would you use? Illustrative words such as the Almighty, holy, loving, forgiving or righteous might lead one to envision God. We may describe God’s character, attributes, or how we believe God might appear physically.

If someone asked Charles Wesley to describe God, his answer would not take long. He would declare God as the Trinity. Charles Wesley saw God as threefold. He believed in the Trinity. Trinity is defined as God is three in one. Wesley understood God as three persons and all three are equal. He believed the Trinity included God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Wesley lived in a time where not everyone understood the Trinity as God. “Wesley lived a period of much Trinitarian dispute. Arianism and Socinianism paralyzed the Dissenting communities and threatened the Church.”36 Arianism was the belief that the Son of God was created by the Father, and was therefore, not coeternal with the Father. Rather, Jesus was subordinate to God the Father; hence they denied the divinity of Christ.

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“Socinianism was an adherent of a 16th and 17th century theological movement professing belief in God and adherence to the Christian Scriptures but denying the divinity of Christ and consequently denying the Trinity.” Furthermore, this group believed Christ was not both divine and human; they denied the latter. These individuals understood God as a single person.

The debate of a Triune God was a major concern right before Charles was born. Diarmaid MacCulloch notes, in his book, *Christianity: The First Three Thousand Years,*

The English parliament passed in 1697-8 an ‘Act for the effectual expressing of blasphemy and profaneness’, by which it principally meant systematic anti-Trinitarian belief. The Act was an admission by the legislators that it was now possible to see ‘Socinianism’ as a serious threat to the Church, and that the Church (Church of England) was not capable of taking its own action against the threat.

“The aridity of non-Trinitarian religion frightened Charles.” Wesley held and believed in the Church of England’s stance on the Trinity, which is found in the Thirty-Nine Articles. The article addressing the Trinity said,

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

The stance Wesley believed is the same wording and bearing in the United Methodist Church found in the Articles of Religion; Article I.

Also, United Methodists embrace the belief found in the other aspect of our faith tradition, the Evangelical United Brethren Church, Confession of Faith:

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38 Diarmaid MacCulloch, *Christianity: The First Three Thousand Years* (New York: Viking, 2009), 748.


40 Article I of the “Articles of Religion” in *The Book of Common Prayer and Administration of the Sacraments and Other Rites and Ceremonies of the Church: Together with the Psalter or Psalms of David According to the Use of the Episcopal Church*, (New York: Seabury Press, 1979), 867.
We believe the one God reveals himself as the Trinity: Father, Son and Holy Spirit, distinct but inseparable, eternally one in essence and power.\(^{41}\)

The confession reiterates the unity and distinct aspects of the Trinity.

People have been known to describe the Trinity in different ways. Some churches use the image of the Trinity as a shamrock, each leaf representing one of the three persons of God. The Trinity concept has also been symbolized using an apple: skin (God), flesh (Jesus) and core (Holy Spirit).

Charles Wesley described the Trinity utilizing hymns. Wesley wrote between two hundred and three hundred hymns on the Trinity.\(^{42}\) One particular hymn in *the United Methodist Hymnal* portraying the Trinity is “Maker, in Whom We Live,” which was originally titled, “To the Trinity”\(^{43}\) and published in the *Hymns for those that seek and those that have Redemption in the Blood of Jesus Christ* in 1747. The fourth stanza states:

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Eternal, Triune God, let all the hosts above,
Let all on earth below record and dwell upon thy love.
When heaven and earth are fled before thy glorious face,
sing all the saints thy love hath made thine everlasting praise.\(^{44}\)
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Charles Wesley glorifies God by calling forth people in heaven and on earth to praise God for the love God has given through the experience of the Triune God. The first three stanzas provide us with a glimpse of each person of the Trinity.

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Maker, in whom we live, in whom we are and move,
the glory, power, and praise receive for thy creating love.
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\(^{42}\) Rattenbury, *The Evangelical Doctrines of Charles Wesley’s Hymns*, 137.

\(^{43}\) Charles Wesley, *Hymns for those that seek and those that have Redemption in the Blood of Jesus Christ*, (London: Strahan, 1747), 44-45, No. 34

Let all the angel throng give thanks to God on high,
while earth repeats the joyful song and echoes to the sky.

Incarnate Deity, let all the ransomed race
render in thanks their lives to thee for thy redeeming grace.
The grace to sinners showed ye heavenly choirs proclaim,
and cry, "Salvation to our God, salvation to the Lamb!"

Spirit of Holiness, let all thy saints adore
thy sacred energy, and bless thine heart-renewing power.
No angel tongues can tell thy love's ecstatic height,
the glorious joy unspeakable, the beatific sight.45

Charles shares that God is a God of action: God creates, redeems, and sustains. In the
first stanza, Wesley expresses God the Father as the Maker. In the second, he speaks of Jesus as
the incarnate deity--in the flesh--who has redeemed us. Finally, in the third stanza, Wesley
speaks of the Holy Spirit as the Spirit of holiness with the power to renew us.

45 *The United Methodist Hymnal*, 88, Stanzas 1-3.
God the Father (Maker)

Charles Wesley declared God as “Maker, in whom we live.” God, the maker (Father), is expressed less in his hymns when compared to the other two aspects of the Trinity. The reason why may be due to the fact “…that the statements and implications in his verses which dealt with the challenging Deity of the Son and the Holy Spirit were, from the Trinitarian point of view, sufficient.” Also, people were not questioning the role of God the Father.

Wesley composed hymns about God the Father. “Some of the best hymns on God the Father, the Creator, Providential Guide and Guardian of mankind, are found in his other books of 1767, Hymns for a Family, and in his Hymns for Children of 1763. The home was the natural place to teach the Fatherhood of God.” This hymn, “Maker, in Whom We Live,” celebrating the Trinity, includes Charles’ teaching about the creative work of God. He shared, “in whom we live, in whom we are,” a statement which brings to light that humanity is made in image and likeness of God. Wesley held to Genesis 1:27:

So God created humankind in his image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them.

Charles believed humanity is created in God’s image. This thought brings to mind the childhood experience of playing with Play-Doh. Play-Doh is soft clay that comes in different colors and, with a little imagination, can be formed into various shapes or pressed into a mold. This mold then reflects the original image. Like the image portrayed from the mold, humanity is made from the image of God.

46 Rattenbury, The Evangelical Doctrines of Charles Wesley’s Hymns, 150.
47 Ibid.
48 Genesis 1:27 (New Revised Standard Bible).
Charles’ brother, John, in his sermon “The Image of God,” describes the Wesleyan understanding of the image of God in humanity:

The natural image, in which the human capacity for understanding, freedom of the will, and love are expressions of God’s image. We have the ability to think and make decisions. The political image, in which human beings exercise stewardship over creation and share in God’s ongoing governance of the earth. The moral image, in which the human potential for righteousness, true holiness, and happiness are signs of the divine image.49

The natural, political and moral images are reflections on how to understand humanity being created in the image of God. These avenues indicate how humanity should reflect God’s image in our everyday lives.

United Methodists understand humanity is made in the image of God. “…human beings were created in the image of God and were endowed at first with the perfect righteousness and holiness that God intended for them.”50 Being created in the image of God, people have the abilities to think, have free will, show compassion, express love. Believers are a reflection of God and therefore, have a responsibility to God to be about God in our lives.

In stanza two of the hymn “Maker, in Whom We Live,” Charles uses the word “move.” God’s creating work is moving. God is continuously creating. Continuously moving brings to mind the popular commercial advertising the Energizer Battery. The advertisement shows an energizer bunny that is always on the go with a narrator saying, “He keeps going and going.” United Methodists understand God is consistently creating new opportunities, new lives and new thinking in our lives. Daily, God is creating believers into God’s image.

Wesley then goes on to say, “glory, power, and praise for thy creating love.” He sees

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God as creating us out of love for humanity. Wesley praised God for God’s glory and power.

God did not have to create humanity or give humans free will and freedom. God did these things because God loves humanity. God cares about people.

In the movie, *Charlotte's Web*, a pig named Wilbur understands that he is going to become food on a plate by the end of the season. He comes up with a strategy to keep himself from becoming food with a spider named Charlotte. In one scene, Wilbur and Charlotte are meeting for the first time. "I think now is the time for me to say, 'salutations,'" says Charlotte. "What?" asks Wilbur. "Salutations," says Charlotte. "Oh," says Wilbur, "I'll let you." "No," Charlotte chuckles. "Wilbur, salutations is just a funny way of saying 'hello.'" "Oh! Hello! Hey!" Wilbur exclaims, "You know my name. What's yours?" "My name is Charlotte—Charlotte *eg vaticus*." "Charlotte. Great name!" "Thank you," replies Charlotte, "I've always thought so." "Hey, since you said 'salu…', you know—that word—does that mean we're friends?" Wilbur asks. "Hmm. I suppose it does," answers Charlotte. "Yeah! Woohoo!" Wilbur shouts, as he dances around the barn. "Golly," says Gussy the goose, "go see what's going on over there." "Hey, kid," says Golly the goose, "what's going on over here?" "Oh, sorry," answers Wilbur, "I just made a new friend. That's all." "The spider? Oh yeah. Good choice," Golly sarcastically says. Templeton, the rat, joins the conversation: "Yeah, perfect. You've picked someone even more despised than me!" "Why would anyone despise Charlotte?" Wilbur asks. "She made that amazing web, and she keeps bugs out of the barn." "Look at her," Templeton answers, "don't you think she's a little—oh, what's the word?" "I think she's beautiful," says Wilbur. Samuel, the sheep, comments: "I beg your pardon; are we even seeing the same ruddy creature?" "I guess not," answers Wilbur.51

God views humanity as valuable and beautiful just as Wilbur views Charlotte the spider.

God created humanity and can perceive our beauty and potential despite our human nature to be despicable.

Moreover, Wesley ends stanza two by being thankful to God as a creator and glorifies God for this attribute. Wesley said, “Let all the angel throng give thanks to God on high, while earth repeats the joyful song and echoes to the sky.” He calls for both those in heaven and on earth to sing thanks to God, thanks for being made in the image of God the Father, our Maker.

In conclusion, Charles Wesley characterizes the Trinity, as well as God the Maker/Father, in the hymn “Maker, in Whom We Live.” He emphasizes God’s love for humanity by creating

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humanity in God’s image, a belief United Methodist members continue to believe or proclaim.
Session 2

Jesus Christ

In 1986 from the movie “Short Circuit,” the song “Who’s Johnny” hit number one on the charts. The song was written by Peter and Ina Wolf and recorded by El Debarge. The song is about a girl who pretends she does not know who Johnny is.

"Who's Johnny?" she said
And smiled in her special way.
"Johnny," she said
"You know I love you."
"Who's Johnny?" she said
And tried to look the other way.
Still pretending.

"Who's Johnny? Who's Johnny?"
Whoa, oh, oh, no
"Who's Johnny? Who's Johnny?"
Oh, no, no, no. I don't believe it.52

Charles Wesley composed many hymns depicting the Trinity: the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. In every generation, there have been those who have asked, “Who’s Jesus?” We see Charles Wesley answers the question “Who’s Jesus?” in his hymn titled “Hark! the Herald Angels Sing.”53

In 1734, Charles wrote the poem, “Hark! the Herald Angels Sing,” but it was not published until 1739 in *Hymns and Sacred Poems*. The original title Charles used was “Hymn for Christmas-Day.”54 The opening words were “Hark how all the welkin rings.” One may ask, “What is a welkin?” Welkin means the sky, heaven. In other words, Hark how all the sky

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(heavens) rings. In *The United Methodist Hymnal* the notation “atl.” after Charles Wesley’s name indicates that the words were altered by George Whitefield in 1753. Whitefield thought the hymn sounded better by using angels instead of welkin. Charles was distraught by the changes for the hymn which is based on Luke 2:8-14:

> And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host, praising God and saying, “Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace among those whom he favors!”

Charles saw the change of “welkin” to “angels” as unbiblical picture for the angels were not singing; rather, they are *saying* as noted in Luke 2. The Wesley brothers were not altogether pleased about the changes made to their hymns, including “Hymn for Christmas-Day.” They believed altering their lyrics was changing the original meaning. Printed below is the version of “Hark! the Herald Angels Sing” most individuals have come to know and love.

> Hark! the herald angels sing,  
> "Glory to the new born King,  
> peace on earth, and mercy mild,  
> God and sinners reconciled!"  
> Joyful, all ye nations rise,  
> join the triumph of the skies;  
> with th’ angelic host proclaim,  
> "Christ is born in Bethlehem!"  
> Hark! the herald angels sing,  
> "Glory to the new born King!"

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55 *The United Methodist Hymnal*, 240.


59 Ibid.

60 *The United Methodist Hymnal*, 240, Stanza 1.
In the first stanza, we read “God and sinners reconciled!” Who are sinners? All people are sinners. In each of us, there is sin. How then can we be sinners but also made in the image of God? Remember, John Wesley’s assertion that believers have the natural, political, and moral characteristics of God in them? Believers are made with holy qualities, but something occurs that distorts God’s image within us—sin. Sin is any thought, action or word that is disobedient to God.

Charles Wesley preached a sermon called, “The One Thing Needful” several times in his life. “Charles Wesley preached this sermon twice on September 26, 1736, while he was in Boston waiting for his ship to be made seaworthy enough to voyage back to England. The sermon was also preached in England, both before and after Charles’s conversion.”61 The sermon brings to light how Wesley understood sin in relation to the image of God:

But sin has now effaced the image of God! He (She) is no longer nearly allied to the angels; alas! he (she) is sunk lower than the very beast of the field! His (Her) soul is not only earthly, addicted to covetousness and ideology—sensual, a lover of pleasure more than of God; but devilish, inclined to hatred, malice, and revenge! Thus is the mighty fallen! The glory is departed from him (her)! His (Her) is swallowed up in utter darkness!62

Charles believed sin distanced humanity from the image they were created to exhibit. He saw sin as separating humanity from the life God has called them to live. God’s character can be described using three images: natural, political and moral. Charles’s brother, John, defines these three images in his sermon, “Image of God:”

The ‘natural image’ with its capacity for understanding, freedom, and love has been permeated by confusion, bondage, and hatred. We are blind to the purpose and presence of God, captive to our own appetites and desires, and filled with selfishness, apathy, and animosity. The political image, which gives us the ability to share in God’s care and


nurture of the world, is distorted by greed and exploitation. Our potential for righteousness and holiness—the moral image—is twisted and defamed by pervasive evil that invades our thoughts, relationships, and actions."^{63}

In short, sin keeps humanity from fully living out their lives in God’s image. Sin separates us from the possibilities of living a fully holy and righteous life.

Moreover, Charles believed sin goes back to the beginning of humanity, which is called “original sin.” He believed in the Church of England’s Thirty-Nine Articles stance:

Original sin standeth not in the following of Adam, (as the Pelagians do vainly talk;) but it is the fault and 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 is of his own nature inclined to evil, so that the flesh lusteth always contrary to the Spirit; and therefore in every person born into this world, it deserveth God's wrath and damnation.\(^{64}\)

John Wesley in his sermon, “New Birth” said this about original sin:

But this separation from God, Adam sustained in the day, the hour, he ate of the forbidden fruit. And of this he gave immediate proof; presently showing by his behaviour, that the love of God was extinguished in his soul, which was now alienated from the life of God. Instead of this, he was now under the power of servile fear, so that he fled from the presence of the Lord. Yea, so little did he retain even of the knowledge of Him who filleth heaven and earth, that he endeavored to hide himself from the Lord God among the trees of the garden (Gen. 3:8). So had he lost both the knowledge and the love of God, without which the image of God could not subsist.\(^{65}\)

The belief in original sin is the stance of the United Methodist Church. United Methodists understand original sin is in the nature of all humanity. The result of original sin is “We do not truly love and serve God as we should, and we cannot help but commit actual sin.”\(^{66}\)

The problem is sin separates humanity from God. Sin damaged the image that we were created


\(^{64}\) IX of the “Articles of Religion” in The Book of Common Prayer, 869.


\(^{66}\) William J. Abraham and David F. Watson, Key United Methodist Beliefs, (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2013), 70.
to bear. There is nothing we can do on our own to undo the corruption of sin in our lives.

“Basically, original sin is the idea that human beings cannot help but think, act, and speak in ways that violate God’s will—until, that is, God goes to work on them, changing them from inside out.”\(^{67}\)

How does God change us from inside out? Charles Wesley believed that Jesus dying on the cross rescues us from the trap of sin. Jesus giving up His life and dying on the cross makes our salvation possible. Jesus’ sacrifice is atonement, or payment, for humanity’s disobedience. Atonement is “to cleanse, cover, cross out, or forgive.”\(^{68}\) The cross is the finishing work of atonement for the sins of humanity.

The ten stanzas of Charles Wesley’s hymn, “Tis Finished! The Messiah Dies”\(^{69}\) were written over a period of time, and were never published altogether in one place.\(^{70}\) *The United Methodist Hymnal* contains stanzas 1, 5, 7, 10, and they appear with small differences in *Scripture Hymns* in 1762. These verses share the finishing work of Christ’s suffering and death for the atonement of humankind.

’Tis finished! The Messiah dies,
Cut off for sins, but not His own:
Accomplished is the sacrifice,
The great redeeming work is done.

’Tis finished! All my guilt and pain,
I want no sacrifice beside;

\(^{67}\) Abraham and Watson, *Key United Methodist Beliefs*, 63.


\(^{69}\) Charles Wesley, “’Tis Finished! the Messiah Dies,” in *Short Hymns on Select Passages of the Holy Scriptures*, 2 vols, (Bristol: Farley, 1762), 2:234; and “’Tis Finished! The Messiah Dies,” written by Charles Wesley in *The United Methodist Hymnal: Book of United Methodist Worship*, 282.

\(^{70}\) Kimbrough, *The Lyrical Theology of Charles Wesley: A Reader*, 144.
for me, for me the Lamb is slain;
'tis finished! I am justified.71

Charles believed that reconciliation into God’s image comes from Jesus. Jesus is the atonement that provides us reconciliation with God. In Wesley’s hymn originally titled, “Another [Desiring to Love]”72 in Hymns and Sacred Poems in 1742 (which was retitled later as “O Love Divine, What Hast Thou Done”),73 he speaks about the reconciliation Jesus has completed for humanity. The second stanza reads:

Is crucified for me and you,
To bring us rebels back to God.
Believe, believe the record true,
Ye all are bought with Jesus blood.
Pardon for all flows from his side.
My Lord, my Love, is crucified.74

Jesus brings us rebels (sinners) back to God. Jesus is the person by which God and sinners are reconciled. United Methodists believe Christ came to reconcile humanity with God. “Methodism is rooted in the belief that God seeks to reconcile the whole creation and restore all persons into the image of Jesus Christ.”75 Christ’s reconciliation wipes away the sins we have committed in our lives. Christ is like a magnet that pulls us into connection with God again.

In the second stanza of “Hark! The Herald Angels Sing,” Wesley continues to show us the importance of Christ:

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71 United Methodist Hymnal, 281, Stanza 1 and 3.


74 The United Methodist Hymnal, 287, Stanza 2.

75 Kenneth Carder, The United Methodist Way: Living Our Beliefs, 2nd edit, (Nashville: Discipleship Resources, 2009), 70.
Christ, by highest heaven adored;
Christ, the everlasting Lord;
late in time behold him come,
offspring of a virgin's womb.
Veiled in flesh the Godhead see;
hail th' incarnate Deity,
pleased with us in flesh to dwell,
Jesus, our Emmanuel.
Hark! the herald angels sing,
"Glory to the new born King!"76

Charles Wesley not only believed Christ reconciles humanity with God, but also that Christ is God. As noted in The Thirty Nine Articles, of the Church of England, he accepts as truth that Jesus is…

The Son, which is the Word of the Father, begotten from everlasting of the Father, the very and eternal God, and of one substance with the Father, took Man's nature in the womb of the blessed Virgin, of her substance: so that two whole and perfect Natures, that is to say, the Godhead and Manhood, were joined together in one Person, never to be divided, whereof is one Christ, very God, and very Man; who truly suffered, was crucified, dead, and buried, to reconcile his Father to us, and to be a sacrifice, not only for original guilt, but also for actual sins of men.77

Also, Wesley considers Jesus is both human and divine. He emphasizes this idea twice in the second stanza by using the words, “veiled in flesh the Godhead” and “th’ incarnate Deity.” Incarnate means in the flesh. Charles believed Jesus Christ was God who came to earth in human flesh.

He shares of the humanity of Jesus by saying that Jesus was the offspring of a virgin’s womb. Jesus was born from a human woman, Mary. Wesley is highlighting the importance of the humanity of Jesus. It is in Jesus’ human form that he would suffer and die to atone for the sins of people. Christ would become a living sacrifice for others. The reason God became incarnate was for the salvation of humanity.

76 The United Methodist Hymnal, 240, Stanza 2.
The stanza also includes “late in time behold him come.” Israel was waiting for the everlasting Lord, the Messiah, to come. Wesley emphasizes that Jesus came in the fullness of time; Jesus came in the right time to bring salvation to humanity. Wesley understood Jesus as a fulfillment of the promised Messiah. He shares the anticipation and redemption to come in another hymn “Come, Thou Long-Expected Jesus” written in Nativity Hymns (1745).

Come, thou long expected Jesus,
Born to set thy people free;
From our fears and sins release us,
Let us find our rest in thee.
Israel's strength and consolation,
Hope of all the earth thou art;
Dear desire of every nation,
Joy of every longing heart.79

The second stanza brings to light that Jesus is both human and divine. The United Methodist Church holds to the same traditional words that Charles Wesley believed from the Church of England. Also, we add from the Confession of Faith, Article II:

We believe in Jesus Christ, truly God and truly man, in whom the divine and human natures are perfectly and inseparably united. He is the eternal Word made flesh, the only begotten Son of the Father, born of the Virgin Mary by the power of the Holy Spirit. As ministering Servant he lived, suffered and died on the cross. He was buried, rose from the dead and ascended into heaven to be with the Father, from whence he shall return. He is eternal Savior and Mediator, who intercedes for us, and by him all men will be judged.80

“This article sets forth in one long sentence the whole matter of the gospel: that God became man and lived on earth; that Godhood and manhood (womanhood) were joined in one person, Jesus Christ, who was truly both God and man (woman); and that this Christ was


79 The United Methodist Hymnal, 196, Stanza 1.

80 Article II of the “Confession of Faith” in The Book of Discipline, 71.
“crucified, dead, and buried” to restore the broken fellowship of God and man (woman), and save men (women) from their sin.”81

In the first two stanzas of “Hark! the Herald Angels Sing,” one can see Charles’ understanding of Christ. In the third stanza, he describes more of Jesus’ identity.

Hail the heaven-born Prince of Peace!
Hail the Sun of Righteousness!
Light and life to all he brings,
Risen with healing in his wings.
Mild he lays his glory by,
Born that we no more may die,
Born to raise us from the earth,
Born to give us second birth.
Hark! the herald angels sing,
“Glory to the new born King!”82

Wesley writes, “light and life he (Jesus) brings.” Charles is depicting the resurrection. He believed Christ rose from the dead and defeated death. He held to the belief stated in the Church of England’s Thirty-Nine Articles:

Christ did truly rise again from death, and took again his body, with flesh, bones, and 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.83

Charles Wesley holds as truth that Jesus was “Risen.” Jesus did not die, rather Jesus is alive. The resurrection is God’s way of demonstrating the defeat of death. The resurrection was the closure and confirmation of Christ’s saving act on the cross. Resurrection completes the redemption for an eternal relationship between God and humanity.

In the hymn, “Christ the Lord Is Risen Today,” originally titled, “Hymn for Easter Day”84 from Hymns and Sacred Poems (1742), the resurrection is depicted by stating,

82 The United Methodist Hymnal, 240, Stanza 3.
Love's redeeming work is done, Alleluia!
Fought the fight, the battle won, Alleluia!
Death in vain forbids him rise, Alleluia!
Christ has opened paradise, Alleluia!  

Furthermore, the Resurrection also offers believers hope. Wesley says Jesus was “born that we no more may die, born to raise us from the earth.” Jesus’ resurrection opens the door for others to be resurrected.

The United Methodist Church views Christ’s Resurrection as fundamental to our faith. Methodism holds true to the same words of Charles in Article III of the Articles of Religion. We see “the resurrection of Christ, as affirmed in Article 3, was the seal and confirmation of all Jesus’ teachings, of all that he had said of himself. When Christ rose from the dead, he not only certified to the truth of all that had been believed regarding him, but started a new order of beings in the universe of God.”  

Moreover in Wesley’s hymn, he states Jesus was “born to give us a second birth.” How can one have a second birth? Wesley believed Jesus gives humanity a new birth. John Wesley describes the Wesleyan understanding of the new birth like this:

Before a child is born into the world he has eyes, but sees not; he has ears, but does not hear. He has a very imperfect use of any other sense. He has no knowledge of any of the things of the world, or any natural understanding. To that manner of existence which he then has, we do not even give the name of life. It is then only when a man is born, that we say he begins to live. For as soon as he is born, he begins to see the light, and the various objects with which he is encompassed. His ears are then opened, and he hears the sounds which successively strike upon them. At the same time, all the other organs of sense

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86 Harmon, Understanding the United Methodist Church, 31.
begin to be exercised upon their proper objects. He likewise breathes, and lives in a manner wholly different from what he did before (The New Birth, II-4).”

Humanity becomes a new creation in Christ; old ways of life (sin) disappear. Through Christ’s suffering, death and Resurrection, the lives of all men and women are forever changed. A person sees, understands and experiences forgiveness and grace for his (her) life. Christ provides people another chance, a new opportunity, a new birth to live out the image of God in their lives. As United Methodists, “the incarnation says something about the way in which God believes that human beings should live. Jesus lived in a particular way that teaches us about the virtues that we, his followers, should try to embody.”

In summary, Charles Wesley used the hymn, “Hark! the Herald Angels Sing,” to express who Jesus is. Jesus is a reconciler, he is our personified God, the expected and resurrected Messiah, and the giver of new life.

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88 Abraham and Watson, *Key United Methodist Beliefs*, 22.
Session 3
Holy Spirit

Charles Wesley believed the Holy Spirit was the third person of the Trinity. The Holy Spirit is God, the very Spirit of Jesus. He understood the Holy Spirit as,

“… proceeding from the Father and the Son, is of one substance, majesty, and glory, with the Father and the Son, very and eternal God.”

This continues to be the stance and the same words of the United Methodist Church in Article IV. The Church views the Spirit as being the Spirit of the Father, as well as the Spirit of the Son.

Wesley and Methodists consider this Spirit was given as a gift on Pentecost. When Jesus was on earth, he was the guardian, the guide and the comforter of the disciples. Before his ascension to heaven, he promised his disciples the Holy Spirit. When Jesus ascended, the Holy Spirit became the guardian, the guide and the comforter of the disciples. Pentecost is the day in which the Spirit descended into the lives of Jesus’ disciples.

In 1746, Charles and John Wesley released a hymn book, *Pentecost Hymns*. “The hymnal was the largest of the collection of hymns for special Christian year festivals and the last to be published jointly under the names of both brothers.” The hymns in this collection were about the Holy Spirit. “He emphasizes throughout the small volume the importance of the indwelling of God’s Spirit in the individual and in the community, the church…the hymns are some of Charles’s most fervent and effective prayers for the individual and corporate yearning

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90 Article IV of the “Articles of Religion” in *The Book of Discipline*, 64.

for the gift of God’s Spirit.”

The hymn, “Spirit of Faith, Come Down,” comes from Pentecost Hymns and was originally titled, “Praying for a Blessing.” The hymn expresses a prayer for the blessing of faith through the Holy Spirit.

Spirit of faith, come down,  
Reveal the things of God,  
And make to us the Godhead known,  
And witness with the blood.  
’Tis thine the blood to apply  
And give us eyes to see,  
Who did for every sinner die  
Hath surely died for me.

Charles begins the hymn by saying the work of the Holy Spirit is to “reveal the things of God.” The Holy Spirit teaches, guides and magnifies the power of God in a person’s life. The Spirit works to bring one to faith in God. Wesley shares in “Spirit of Faith, Come Down,” the yearning for the knowledge of the “Godhead known.” The Godhead is the Trinity: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit teaches and shows the unity and work of the Trinity.

Next, Charles uses the words, “and witness with the blood” and “’Tis thine the blood to apply.” “’Tis thine the blood to apply” describes the salvation God supplies to the individual. In understanding the work of the Trinity, one witnesses and experiences salvation. God the Father created the plan for salvation, and Jesus accomplished the atoning, redemptive plan to save humanity by his blood. The Holy Spirit brings God’s redemptive work to realization. This realization is expressed by Charles in the words, “give us eyes to see, who did for every sinner

92 Kimbrough, The Lyrical Theology of Charles Wesley: A Reader, 102.


94 John Wesley and Charles Wesley, “Praying for a Blessing,” in Hymns of Petition and Thanksgiving for the Promise of Father, (Bristol: Farley, 1746), 30-31, Hymn 27.

95 The United Methodist Hymnal, 332, Stanza 1.
die hath surely died for me.” A function of the Holy Spirit is to make the work of God’s salvation known to a sinner.

The Holy Spirit is like a teacher at school. Teachers instill in their students specific skills, whether in math, English, social studies. They make known information the students may have never known or refresh their memory with information that can assist them in life. The Holy Spirit teaches us so humanity can realize the blessing God has done for us, Christ dying for our sins.

No one can truly say
That Jesus is the Lord,
Unless thou take the veil away
And breathe the living Word.
Then, only then, we feel
Our interest in his blood,
And cry with joy unspeakable,
"Thou art my Lord, my God!"96

In the second stanza of “Spirit of Faith, Come Down,” Charles begins by making the statement, “No one can truly say that Jesus is the Lord, unless thou take the veil away and breathe the living Word.” What does he mean by this? Anyone can have head knowledge about Jesus. Anyone can read scripture in the Bible, or even say the words, “Jesus is Lord.” It does not require any feeling to say these words.

However, Charles believed in order to truly say these words, one had to have faith in Christ. The Holy Spirit works in a person’s life to have faith. The Holy Spirit takes the veil away so one can see and experience Christ. The Holy Spirit “breathes,” goes into, dwells, so that the “living Word,” which is Christ can enter into a person’s life.

Once the Holy Spirit breathes or dwells inside, Charles says, “we feel our interest in his blood.” “We feel our interest” means if you feel the Holy Spirit, you have an experience with it,

96 The United Methodist Hymnal, 332, Stanza 2.
and you understand it better and have an appreciation of the cost. The Holy Spirit works so people can experience, feel and understand Christ’s sacrifice, “his blood.” One understands that through Christ’s atonement, they find forgiveness in their soul from sin and guilt; they are reconciled with God. This view is expressed in the Methodist term assurance. Assurance is when the Holy Spirit witnesses inwardly in the heart of a believer that he or she is a child of God. God has pardoned them and enabled a firm conviction that the believer is reconciled to God.

Assurance can be perceived in Charles Wesley’s hymn, “How Can We Sinners Know,” which was originally titled, “The Marks of Faith” in *Hymns and Sacred Poems* (1749).

> How can we sinners know  
> Our sins on earth forgiven?  
> We who in Christ believe  
> That he for us hath died,  
> We all his unknown peace receive  
> And feel his blood applied.

> We by his Spirit prove  
> And know the things of God,  
> The things which freely doth impart  
> And signs us with his cross.

Wesley shares the Holy Spirit provides us with the knowledge and “things of God,” and the Spirit does this “freely.” Furthermore, Wesley declares the Holy Spirit marks us “with his cross.” One is given assurance upon their life through Christ’s sacrifice and death. United

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97 “How Can We Sinners Know,” written by Charles Wesley in *The United Methodist Hymnal*, 372.


99 *The United Methodist Hymnal*, 372, Stanzas 1, 3-4.
Methodists comprehend the Holy Spirit is “…speaking in the heart and bearing witness that we really are children of God.”

We do not have to beat ourselves up for the mistakes in the past. God has forgiven us for the sins we have committed. The Holy Spirit tells us that we do not have to live in the past, rather we can live purpose-driven lives for God now and in the future. What God does is like an artist working with an *Etch A Sketch*. *Etch A Sketch* is a square toy that allows you to draw a picture on a screen by using knobs. If you make a mistake, you can take the device and shake it. With a few shakes, the drawing disappears, and you can start over. God does this with sin. God, by means of the cross, grants forgiveness. God wipes sin away so that it does not exist. The Holy Spirit works in us to give the assurance God has absolved s and has made us God’s child.

When experiencing the Holy Spirit, Charles says one will “cry with joy unspeakable, ‘Thou art my Lord, my God!’” Charles illustrates this joy because people will now know they have a personal experience with God; they can truly call Jesus, “Lord.”

O that the world might know  
the all atoning Lamb!  
Spirits of faith, descend and show  
the virtue of his name;  
the grace which all may find,  
the saving power, impart,  
and testify to humankind,  
and speak in every heart.

In the third stanza of “Spirit of Faith, Come Down,” Charles is praying that the world may know Jesus. The Holy Spirit not only works for the believer but also for non-believers. He speaks of Jesus as “the all atoning Lamb.” Wesley is remembering the sacrifice of Jesus, describing Jesus as a lamb. The lamb was the symbol for Passover. The Passover goes back to

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100 Abraham and Watson, *Key United Methodist Beliefs*, 35.

101 *The United Methodist Hymnal*, 332, Stanza 3.
the Exodus story where God instructed the people to sacrifice a lamb by eating it, then taking the blood and putting it on their door post. God said that when He saw the lamb’s blood on the doorframe of a house, He would “pass over” that home and not permit “the destroyer” (Exodus 12:23) to enter. Any home without the blood of the lamb would have its firstborn son struck down that night (Exodus 12: 12-13). Just as the Passover lamb’s applied blood caused God to pass over each household, Christ’s applied blood provides the ultimate atonement which causes God’s judgment to pass over humanity.

Furthermore, Charles prays that the Spirit would show non-believers the different virtues of his name, Jesus. One of those virtues the Holy Spirit tries to show the unbeliever is grace. Grace is the unmerited favor of God towards humanity. Grace is a free gift of God’s love, a gift that one cannot earn.

Another virtue of the Holy Spirit is “the saving power.” The Holy Spirit moves to show the non-believer the saving power of salvation. The Holy Spirit longs to teach the sinner that Jesus has freed people from sin and provides forgiveness. The Spirit attempts to enter the sinner so they can be prompted to seek forgiveness from sin and guilt, as well as to attain power over sin. The Holy Spirit works to testify, penetrating the sinner’s soul with the proof of Christ.

Wesley’s stance on the power of the Holy Spirit to work in the unbeliever is something believers continue to affirm. We pray for family members, friends, our community and the world to experience the love of God. As believers in the power of the Holy Spirit, we pray that they will turn from their ways, whether it is addiction, anger, or unbelief, and begin a relationship with God.

Inspire the living faith
(Which whoso'er receive,
The witness in themselves they have
And consciously believe),
The faith that conquers all,
And doth the mountain move,
And saves whoe'er on Jesus call,
And perfects them in love.\textsuperscript{102}

In the Fourth stanza of “Spirit of Faith, Come Down,” Wesley shares how the Holy Spirit lights a fire in a believer’s faith. Charles used the word “inspire.” Inspire is defined as “to make (someone) want to do something: to give (someone) an idea about what to do or create.”\textsuperscript{103} The Holy Spirit inspires the faithful to “conquer all” and “move mountains.” The Holy Spirit empowers one to overcome any obstacles or upheaval. Charles Wesley experienced hardships for sharing the gospel. The Methodist movement which Charles and John Wesley started came under physical attack.\textsuperscript{104} The brothers preached outside because many churches would not allow them inside due to their beliefs as Methodists.\textsuperscript{105} As a result, the Wesleys were outside with local people, who did not like the messages they were sharing, as well as with clergy from the Church of England.\textsuperscript{106} Riots began and the Wesley brothers had to overcome many hurdles while trying to share their faith.

For instance, on May 21, 1743, Wesley was in Walsal, which is eight miles north-west of the City of Birmingham, where he met a mob upon his arrival to town. His journal states,

\begin{quote}
I walked with many of the brethren to Walsal, singing. We were received with the old complaint, "Behold, they that turn the world upside down are come here also." I walked through the town amidst the noisy greetings of our enemies, and stood on the steps of the market-house. An host of men was laid against us. The floods lifted up their voice, and raged horribly. I opened the book on the first-presented words, Acts 20:24: "But none of
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{102} The United Methodist Hymnal, 332, Stanza 4.


\textsuperscript{104} Clark, Charles Wesley, 9.

\textsuperscript{105} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{106} Clark, Charles Wesley, 9-10.
these things move me; neither count I my life dear unto myself, so that I might finish my course with joy, and the ministry which I have received of the Lord Jesus, to testify the Gospel of the grace of God."

The street was full of fierce Ephesian beasts, (the principal man setting them on,) who roared, and shouted, and threw stones incessantly. Many struck, without hurting, me. I besought them in calm love to be reconciled to God in Christ. While I was departing, a stream of ruffians was suffered to bear me from the steps. I rose, and, having given the blessing, was beat down again. So the third time, when we had returned thanks to the God of our salvation. I then, from the steps, bade them depart in peace, and walked quietly back through the thickest rioters. They reviled us, but had no commission to touch an hair of our heads.107

This would not be the only time in Wesley’s life he dealt with mobs, but through these hurdles, he continued on in the Christian faith. He was inspired by the Holy Spirit to continue to do the work of Christ by preaching the gospel and writing songs of praise.

Moreover, the Holy Spirit inspires and works through a believer to perfect them in love. The Wesley brothers held to the importance of taking on a life of love, a love towards God and others. For instance, even in the face of mobs, Charles was submissive. “Charles Wesley advocated non-violence and passive resistance. By example and by exhortation Charles urged Methodists to follow Jesus’ injunction to ‘turn the other cheek’ and to ‘resist evil’”108 Wesley believed the best way to combat his enemy was to show love and to remain meek.

The Wesley brothers would show forgiveness and welcome people who had disputes with them to join their Methodist society.

Preaching in Wednesbury on October 25th Charles discovered that the leader of the rioters, a man named Munchin, petitioned to join the society. Wesley wrote, I took several new members into the society; and among them, the young man whose arm was broke [during the riot] and (upon trial) Munchin, the late captain of the mob. He has been constantly under the Word since he rescued my brother (John). I asked him what he

107 Tyson, Assist Me to Proclaim: The Life and Hymns of Charles Wesley, 146.
108 Tyson, Assist Me to Proclaim: The Life and Hymns of Charles Wesley, 136.
John and Charles Wesley were able to love their protestors because of the Holy Spirit inspiring them to love. The Holy Spirit is working in all believers to take on a life of forgiveness and love. As you look at your life, who do you need to forgive and love?

Wesley also expresses the work of the Holy Spirit in this hymn; the Holy Spirit inspires, breathes, gives knowledge and penetrates the hearts of non-believers. “These are still how we understand the work of the Holy Spirit as a church. When we see Christians engage in great works of love and mercy, when people give their lives over to Christ, when someone we never thought would change suddenly embarks on a new kind of life, this is the work of the Holy Spirit.”

Charles’ connection with the Holy Spirit can be observed in his hymns. Article III in the Confession of Faith shares similar words but also adds the work of the Holy Spirit within the church,

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

In this confession, the work of the Holy Spirit can be observed in “the fellowship of the Church.” The Spirit works through each unbeliever, revealing their sin and leading them to respond with the acceptance of Jesus Christ. The Holy Spirit also provides peace, strength and guidance. What aspect of the Holy Spirit do you love? What do you think the Holy Spirit is still working on in your life?

109 Tyson, Assist Me to Proclaim: The Life and Hymns of Charles Wesley, 146.
110 Abraham and Watson, Key United Methodist Beliefs, 36.
111 Article III of the “Confessions of Faith” in The Book of Disciple, 71.
Lastly, through Charles Wesley’s hymn, “Spirit of Faith, Come Down,” we learn the Holy Spirit reveals the things of God, making the Godhead known. The Holy Spirit yearns to create more than just the knowledge of God in our minds, but also the feeling of God in our inner-most being. Also, assurance is given through the Holy Spirit that we are reconciled with God.

In conclusion, the ultimate goal of Wesley’s hymn, “Spirit of Faith, Come Down,” is to display salvation. The common theme of salvation can be detected in the phrases “tis thine blood to apply,” “we feel our interest in his blood,” and “all atoning Lamb.” The Holy Spirit, in Charles’ view, carries the sinner to salvation.
Charles and John Wesley understood the process of salvation as having three components: prevenient grace, justification and sanctification. John Wesley explains these salvation parts in his work *The Principles of a Methodist Farther Explained*, “Prevenient grace serves as the porch, justification as the door, and sanctification or holiness as the rooms of the house wherein we are called to dwell.” Charles shared his understanding of these components through his hymns.

Prevenient grace is exhibited in Charles Wesley’s hymn, “Come, Sinners, to the Gospel Feast.” Charles’ original version contained twenty-four stanzas and was titled, “The Great Supper” from *Redemption Hymns* (1747). *The United Methodist Hymnal* uses five of them. Stanzas one and three are below,

Come, sinners, to the gospel feast;
Let every soul be Jesus' guest.
Ye need not one be left behind,
For God hath bid all humankind.

Come, all ye souls by sin oppressed,
Ye restless wanderers after rest;
Ye poor, and maimed, and halt, and blind,
In Christ a hearty welcome find.

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115 *United Methodist Hymnal*, 339, Stanzas 1 and 3.
These words of Charles Wesley are based on a parable found in Luke 14:16-24. In the parable, Jesus shares that a certain man invites a guest to have dinner. This particular man is God; God is inviting people to a feast, salvation.

The first and third stanzas portray God’s action of invitation to salvation. Prevenient grace means “comes before” faith in Christ. Before we ever began a relationship with God, God loved us. God loved humanity before humanity knew or understood their love or need for God. God took the initiative; God sought humanity out with love through the life, death, and Resurrection of Christ. Prevenient grace is entirely the work of God.

Next, Charles expresses, “Come, sinners, to the gospel feast, let every soul be Jesus’ guest.” In Charles’ view, the summons to the feast is an invitation to experience the prevenient grace of God. Prevenient grace is an invitation to salvation. Salvation begins with God’s love while we were trapped in sin. We cannot save ourselves from sin without God’s intervention in our lives. God chose to bring us back to God through Jesus Christ. He did this freely without charge as a gift of love.

Then, Wesley shares, “Ye need not one be left behind, for God hath bid all humankind.” Wesley believed in universal grace, unlimited atonement; all can experience the love of God. Charles believed there was no limit on God’s saving love. This invitation is open for all, no matter how poorly one has lived; all can find grace from God. Also, Wesley makes mention of those who are “sin oppressed,” and “restless wanderers.” He is stating one does not need to remain in bondage to sin and guilt. One can come to the realization that God’s grace is available to them.

Prevenient grace is a conviction the United Methodist Church believes. “We acknowledge God’s prevenient grace, the divine love that surrounds all humanity and precedes
any and all of our conscious impulses.”¹¹⁶ Also, we understand prevenient grace attempts to get into the conscience through the Holy Spirit so one realizes that God loves them and Christ died for them. God’s grace is free and available, whether the person is a murderer, terrorist, or the most evil person in the world. God is available to all sinners! United Methodists believe God’s love is for all. Bishop William R. Cannon exhibits this in his book, *Theology of John Wesley*:

To be sure, it is free to all in the sense that it is given without price, that it does not demand anything of us before it is bestowed, and that it flows from the free mercy of God. But note the change. Grace is free for all. It is not free only for those whom God has ordained to life, but it is like the air we breathe, or the wind that blows in our faces; it is for everyone who dwells upon the face of the earth.¹¹⁷

How does that make you feel, that God loves you and all in this world? Do you remember a time in your life when you felt the love of God?

Stanzas two and four of Wesley’s hymn, “Come, Sinners, to the Gospel Feast,” state:

> Sent by my Lord, on you I call;  
> The invitation is to all.  
> Come, all the world! Come, sinner, thou!  
> All things in Christ are ready now.
> My message as from God receive;  
> Ye all may come to Christ and live.  
> O let his love your hearts constrain,  
> Nor suffer him to die in vain.¹¹⁸

Wesley in these two stanzas makes reference to himself: “Sent by my Lord I call” and “My message as from God receive.” He believed this message was from God, not something he made up or created on his own. Charles is sharing the message he believed in, Christ’s invitation to salvation is for all. He uses the word “all” three times in the two stanzas. “…the little word

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¹¹⁸ *United Methodist Hymnal*, 339, Stanzas 2 and 4.
“all” allowed him to insist, incessantly, that there are no limits on God’s saving love—that Christ died for all”

Wesley shared a message others disagreed with. Calvinist Christians believed in predestination, or election. Predestination is the belief God has already chosen some individuals for salvation and some for damnation. Charles preached a message that was against predestination. Charles believed, as did his brother John, in condition election, “…the idea that God has eternally decreed to save all those who profess faith in Jesus Christ. In Wesley’s view, God’s decree had to do with the ‘means’ and conditions whereby all people could be saved.” God’s grace is for all, not for some people and withheld from others.

The battle of predestination and condition election would create an early schism in the Methodist movement. Some members would become Calvinist Methodists while others would join the Wesley Methodists. One of those Calvinist Methodists was George Whitefield. Whitefield was a friend of Charles Wesley. Their friendship started in college. “During his Oxford years, Charles had loaned him several devotional books, through which he (Whitefield) experienced an evangelical conversion. Soon, Charles Wesley became a spiritual mentor to the nineteen-year old Whitefield, and Wesley began integrating him into his Oxford, ‘Holy Club.’” Whitefield would become one of the leaders of the Great Awakening in the colonies. The Great Awakening movement, “…emphasized personal conviction of sin and the need to be

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119 Tyson, Assist Me to Proclaim: The Life and Hymns of Charles Wesley, 109.
120 Tyson, Assist Me to Proclaim: The Life and Hymns of Charles Wesley, 101.
121 Tyson, Assist Me to Proclaim: The Life and Hymns of Charles Wesley, 115.
122 Ibid.
123 Tyson, Assist Me to Proclaim: The Life and Hymns of Charles Wesley, 119.
‘born again’”\textsuperscript{124} Also, Whitefield introduced the Wesley brothers to the importance of reaching the masses of people by preaching outdoors.\textsuperscript{125} The relationship began to be tested when Whitefield professed a belief in predestination. As a result, their relationship would be hot and cold. The Wesleys and Whitefield would preach and publish articles that challenged the other’s views.\textsuperscript{126}

Whitefield would establish his own movement in 1743.\textsuperscript{127} In spite of this turmoil, “Their friendship weathered the storms of controversy and grew stronger as the century wore on.”\textsuperscript{128} They would not allow doctrinal differences to end their friendship. “In September 1747, when someone had written to George Whitefield spreading unfavorable gossip about Charles Wesley, Whitefield responded by writing Charles to assure him of the constancy of his love and support for him: ‘Some have wrote me things to your disadvantage. I would not believe them. Love thinks no evil of a friend. Such are you to me. I love you most dearly.’”\textsuperscript{129} Do you have friendships that have weathered the storm? How do you feed your friendships?

In the final stanza of Charles Wesley’s hymn, “Come, Sinners, to the Gospel Feast,” he encourages unbelievers to no longer postpone their acceptance of the Lord:

This is the time, no more delay!
This is the Lord’s accepted day.

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\textsuperscript{125} Tyson, \textit{Assist Me to Proclaim: The Life and Hymns of Charles Wesley}, 123.

\textsuperscript{126} Heitzenrater, \textit{Wesley and the People Called Methodists}, 120-121. Also Tyson, 102-116.

\textsuperscript{127} Tyson, \textit{Assist Me to Proclaim: The Life and Hymns of Charles Wesley}, 129.

\textsuperscript{128} Tyson, \textit{Assist Me to Proclaim: The Life and Hymns of Charles Wesley}, 134.

\textsuperscript{129} Tyson, \textit{Assist Me to Proclaim: The Life and Hymns of Charles Wesley}, 129.
Come thou, this moment, at his call,
And live for him who died for all.\textsuperscript{130}

Prevenient grace is not only coming to awareness of God’s grace, but also it is coming to the realization of one’s need for God. Wesley uses the words, “this is the time,” “no more delay,” and “this is the Lord’s accepted day.” He is calling for the hearer not to put their salvation off any longer, rather come and accept Jesus. In Luke 14: 16-24, the author reminds us of accepting God’s invitation. \textit{The New Interpreter’s Bible One Volume Commentary} expresses it in this manner. “This parable depicts God’s realm as a domain of grace, where all sorts of people find welcome and nourishment. But one does need to accept the invitation.”\textsuperscript{131}

United Methodists believe in accepting the invitation of God’s salvation through Jesus Christ. “God does not force us into belief or faith. We have a choice to accept or reject the Holy Spirit’s work in our lives.”\textsuperscript{132} Robots, like R2D2 or C3PO from \textit{Star Wars}, cannot make their own choices. They are controlled. We humans have the opportunity to practice free will. God does not control our thoughts and actions. Humanity has the opportunity to make the decision to accept and cherish the love God has for us.

Wesley believed that acceptance of Christ’s invitation leads to conviction, also known as an “awakening.” “Awakening is the experience in which a person comes to the terrible realization of one’s dangerous condition before God.”\textsuperscript{133} It is the realization that one falls short

\textsuperscript{130} \textit{United Methodist Hymnal}, 339, Stanza 5.


\textsuperscript{132} Abraham and Watson, \textit{Key United Methodist Beliefs}, 75.

\textsuperscript{133} Ted A. Campbell, \textit{Methodist Doctrine Essentials}, 55.
of God because of sin. “Awakening is a term used to specify the work of the Holy Spirit that arouses our awareness of our sin, our accountability before God, and our need for salvation.”\textsuperscript{134}

United Methodists believe, as Charles Wesley did that the awakening occurs because of the grace of God upon their lives. \textit{The Book of Discipline} states, “this grace prompts our first wish to please God, our first glimmer of understanding concerning God’s will, and our ‘first slight transient conviction’ of having sinned against God.”\textsuperscript{135} Methodists comprehend, “The Holy Spirit draws us to God, calling us into a loving, life-giving relationship with God, and creating within us a desire to know and love God.”\textsuperscript{136} The Holy Spirit works in our conscience to convict us of the mistakes we have made so that we seek God for help. People cannot save themselves. Author William J. Abraham reinforces the need for an individual’s awakening, “At some point the individual must see what is at stake and look to God for forgiveness; God alone can supply relief for the soul.”\textsuperscript{137}

Once one becomes awakened, they realize it is necessary, as Wesley says, “to live for him” meaning one is required to repent. Repentance is a change in behavior based on a distaste for sin and confession of sin. “Although our salvation is completely a work of grace, it involves our cooperation with God. Our appropriate response to the work of prevenient grace includes confessing that we are guilty sinners who need God's grace to pardon us and to change our hearts.”\textsuperscript{138}


\textsuperscript{135} \textit{The Book of Discipline}, 50.

\textsuperscript{136} Abraham and Watson, \textit{Key United Methodist Beliefs}, 75.


\textsuperscript{138} Kinghorn, \textit{The Gospel of Grace} 72.
Charles Wesley wrote about repentance in his hymn, “Depth of Mercy,” which was originally titled, “After a Relapse into Sin”\textsuperscript{139} from \textit{Hymns and Sacred Poems} (1740). The hymn states:

\begin{quote}
I my Master have denied,  
I afresh have crucified,  
And profaned His hallowed Name,  
Put Him to an open shame.  

There for me the Savior stands,  
Shows His wounds and spreads His hands.  
God is love! I know, I feel;  
Jesus weeps and loves me still.  

Now incline me to repent,  
Let me now my sins lament,  
Now my foul revolt deplore,  
Weep, believe, and sin no more.\textsuperscript{140}
\end{quote}

Wesley shares a confession of sin: denying the Master, profaning Jesus’ name, and shaming Jesus Christ. He shares remorse and sorrow, lamenting and deploring the actions of sin. Charles expresses the desire to change in the line, “weep, believe, and sin no more.” These words are expressions of repentance to God by Charles Wesley.

The lyrics, “There for me the Savior stands, Shows His wounds and spreads His hands. God is love! I know, I feel: Jesus weeps and loves me still.” Wesley is stating repentance turns us back to Christ, who is standing there waiting for our awakening. Jesus continues to love us despite our sin.

\textsuperscript{139} John and Charles Wesley, “After Relapse into Sin” in \textit{Hymns and Sacred Poems}, (London: Strahan, 1740), 82-84.

Methodists believe prevenient grace leads to repentance. *The Book of Discipline* states, “God’s grace also awakens in us an earnest longing for deliverance from sin and death and moves us toward repentance and faith.” Repentance comes from knowing God loves us; because of this, we love God. Repentance is “…responding to God’s love and reorienting our lives in love and service to God.” Repentance leads to a change in behavior and actions that have been damaging to the relationship with God. Understanding our need for God turns us away from sin and commits us to the ways of God.

How do you describe repentance? What kind of changes have you made in your life to strengthen your relationship with God?

In summary, prevenient grace is displayed in Charles Wesley’s hymn, “Come, Sinners, to the Gospel Feast,” Prevenient grace is where salvation begins. It is the recognition that God’s grace is for all. Jesus died, not for a few, but for all humanity. Prevenient grace prompts the realization of our need for God and encourages the awakening of our conscience. This awaking leads to the acceptance of God’s grace and to the repenting of sins, which leads ultimately to our changing for God!

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141 *The Book of Discipline*, 50.

142 Abraham and Watson, *Key United Methodist Beliefs*, 75.
In the video game *Wreck It Ralph*, Ralph goes on rampages of breaking windows and destroying other obstacles. Fix It Felix is a character that follows behind Ralph, repairing his damage. Like Ralph, sinners destroy their lives by participating in sin. Like, Fix It Felix, God can restore the damage sinners have done. God has the power to repair our mistakes by making us right, renewed and restored in God’s image.

Justifying grace, or justification, is the process of salvation that means to be “made right.” Justifying grace is restoring us into the image of God. Charles Wesley depicts justifying grace in his hymn, “And Can It Be that I Should Gain,” which was originally titled, “Free Grace.”

The original version contained six stanzas and was published in *Hymns and Sacred Poems* (1739).

And can it be that I should gain
An interest in the Savior's blood!
Died he for me? who caused his pain!
For me? who him to death pursued?
Amazing love! How can it be
That thou, my God, shouldst die for me?
Amazing love! How can it be
That thou, my God, shouldst die for me?

Christ’s crucifixion is referenced in the first stanza of Wesley’s hymn, using the words, “And can it be that I should gain an interest in the Savior’s blood!” The author Chilcote states, “Today, the term ‘share’ or ‘part’ would be used instead of Wesley’s ‘interest.’” Therefore, Charles is stating he is thankful to be a part of the process or part of salvation through Christ’s

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blood. There is a sense of hope and excitement found in these words. This is not a question; rather, it is a statement with an exclamation point! The joy is the realization that Jesus “died for me.” Humanity cannot earn, merit or do good works to gain salvation. Sinners experience justifying grace when they are made right or restored because of Christ’s blood. Salvation is what God does for sinners through justification. It is the gift of God’s amazing love to humanity.

This hymn is framed in first person form, and hence has the feel of Charles Wesley’s spiritual autobiography. The repeated emphasis upon the phrase “for me,” brings to light Wesley’s conversion experience as he read Galatians 2:20:

And it is no longer I who live, but it is Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.”

Charles was astounded that God’s amazing love was for him. Wesley felt the love of God upon his heart and sensed renewal. He understood the process of justification begins with God’s grace.

’Tis mystery all: th’ Immortal dies!
Who can explore his strange design?
In vain the firstborn seraph tries
To sound the depths of love divine.
’Tis mercy all! Let earth adore;
Let angel minds inquire no more.
’Tis mercy all! Let earth adore;
Let angel minds inquire no more.

Wesley begins the second stanza in his hymn, “And Can It Be that I Should Gain,” by expressing how it is a mystery that the immortal, Jesus, died. Then, Charles asks the question, “Who can explore his strange design?” He is pondering the question “Who can make sense of

147 The United Methodist Hymnal, 363, Stanza 2.
why Jesus died?” The answer to this mystery is being shouted out from heaven and earth, “Tis mercy all. Let earth adore.” Wesley believes justification, the ability to be made right with God, showcases God’s mercy. Mercy “is a synonym for compassion and means to have pity or to feel sorry for someone.” Wesley articulates God’s compassion for sinners, and all of humanity.

Have you ever felt God’s compassion and mercy in your life? How would you explain the process of being made right before God?

He left his Father's throne above
  (So free, so infinite his grace!),
Emptied himself of all but love,
  And bled for Adam's helpless race.
'Tis mercy all, immense and free,
  For O my God, it found out me!
'Tis mercy all, immense and free,
  For O my God, it found out me!

In the third stanza of “And Can It Be that I Should Gain,” Charles Wesley shares this mercy that is brought to sinners through Jesus Christ. Jesus left the “throne” and “emptied himself” and “bled.” He gave His life. The reason Christ died was for “Adam’s helpless race” to be freed from original sin. Jesus showed grace as Wesley states, “so free, so infinite his grace.” God did not have to do anything for humanity, but God chose to give grace and mercy. God’s mercy costs humanity nothing, it is free. Wesley shares this “immense and free mercy found me.” God sought him out; God brings mercy to humanity. Have you ever sought someone out to give them mercy? You did not have to do it, but you did it because you care about them.

Mercy and restoration has been given to humanity from God through Christ’s birth, death, and resurrection.

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149 *The United Methodist Hymnal*, 363, Stanza 3.
Long my imprisoned spirit lay,
Fast bound in sin and nature's night;
Thine eye diffused a quickening ray;
I woke, the dungeon flamed with light;
My chains fell off, my heart was free,
I rose, went forth, and followed thee.
My chains fell off, my heart was free,
I rose, went forth, and followed thee.  

The fourth stanza in the hymn, “And Can It Be that I Should Gain,” is written from the inspiration of Acts 16:26,

All at once there was such a violent earthquake that it shook the prison’s foundations. The doors flew open and everyone’s chains came loose.”

Wesley is not portraying the literal translation, but rather is suggesting an allegory of God’s pardon of sin. Justification is being shown when comparing the words “chains fell off, my heart was free” to God’s restoration in Wesley’s life upon conversion.

Pardon is “an act of officially saying that someone who was judged to be guilty of a crime will be allowed to go free and will not be punished, forgiveness for something.” Wesley is using this passage to emphasize God has thrown open the doors of salvation and now everyone’s chains of sin have come loose. One is free from the bondage of sin. A person is free from condemnation. Justification and restoration in God’s image replaces condemnation and blame.

Justification is a gift to a sinner from God. Humanity has no inherent claim to it. God has given the gift of pardon. John Wesley said, “Justification is another word for pardon. It is the forgiveness of all our sins and our acceptance with God. The price whereby this has been

150 The United Methodist Hymnal, 363, Stanza 4.


procured for us is the blood and righteousness of Christ, or all that Christ has done and suffered for us till ‘he poured out his soul for the transgressors’”\(^{153}\) Christ’s atoning blood at the cross brings our pardon and frees us from judgment.

George Michael, a noted musician and singer, released a song in 1987 titled “Faith.” Michael sings about this important virtue in the chorus:

‘Cause I gotta have faith  
I gotta have faith  
‘Cause I gotta have faith, faith  
‘Cause I gotta have faith, faith, faith.\(^{154}\)

Even though George Michael’s faith was in a relationship with a person, he depicts the importance of certainty and confidence between two people. Likewise, Charles Wesley expresses the significance of faith, not in a human, but in God. He says, “I rose, went forth, and followed thee.” “God graciously forgives those who have no claim to pardon and can hardly expect it. But the crux of the problem of pardon is our acceptance of it.”\(^{155}\) Acceptance of pardon requires faith. Faith is the firm conviction of the grace of God. Faith receives the gift of pardon. Without faith, the gift is given but not received. Through faith in Christ, sins are forgiven. One becomes justified through faith in Jesus Christ alone.

As seen in Wesley’s sermon, he understood faith as not only being about head knowledge, but about God’s Spirit transforming the soul.

The faith which justifies is not purely an assent to things creditable as known. It is not that speculative, notional, airy shadow which floats in the heads of some learned people.


\(^{155}\) Chilcote, John and Charles Wesley: Selections from Their Writings and Hymns—Annotated and Explained, 130.
It is not a lifeless, cold, historical faith, common to devils and nominal Christians. It is not learned from books or teachers. It is not a human thing, but a divine energy.\(^{156}\)

Another aspect of faith is trust. Before Charles’s conversion on February 24, 1738, he had an ongoing conversation with Peter Bohler, a Moravian.

Bohler asked him, “Do you hope to be saved?” Charles answered, “Yes.” “For what reason do you hope it?” Bohler continued. Charles replied, “Because I have used my best endeavors to serve God.” Charles continues his record of the conversation, “He Bohler shook his head, and said no more. I thought him very uncharitable, saying in my heart, ‘What, are not my endeavors a sufficient ground of hope? Would he rob me of my endeavors? I have nothing else to trust to.’”\(^{157}\)

Wesley thought it was his endeavors that would save him. He was wrong. He would soon realize trust did not come from endeavors, rather through faith alone. He had to fully trust in God’s love for him. Wesley had to believe in God’s grace upon his life. On Pentecost day, Wesley had his conversion experience and witnessed God’s amazing love, and he believed in it. He trusted and put his faith alone in Christ.\(^{158}\)

United Methodists believe, “The faith by which we are justified involves not merely knowledge about Christ; it involves heartfelt trust in Christ.”\(^{159}\) First of all, in order to have a relationship with God, one has to put their trust in Christ. “Faith is the hand extended to receive God’s gift. First God offers, then we believe, then we accept.”\(^{160}\) In life, we place our trust in many things. We trust that when we go to a restaurant, we will have good food. We trust when we put our money in the bank, it will be there when we decide to take money out. We trust our

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\(^{157}\) Tyson, *Assist Me to Proclaim: The Life and Hymns of Charles Wesley*, 44.

\(^{158}\) Tyson, *Assist Me to Proclaim: The Life and Hymns of Charles Wesley*, 45-46.


\(^{160}\) Harmon, *Understanding the United Methodist Church*, 41.
favorite sports team will win each time they play. None of these things are guaranteed! If one puts their trust in Christ, they are guaranteed salvation; an everlasting relationship with God.

Wesley utilizes the belief in justification frequently in his hymns. Likewise, the United Methodist Church holds to the same conviction,

We are accounted righteous before God only for the merit our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, by faith, and not for our own works and deservings. Wherefore, that we are justified by faith only, is a most wholesome doctrine, and very full of comfort.\textsuperscript{161}

Moreover, trust in Christ is discovered in Charles Wesley’s fifth stanza of “And Can It Be that I Should Gain:”

No condemnation now I dread;  
Jesus, and all in him, is mine;  
Alive in him, my living Head,  
And clothed in righteousness divine,  
Bold I approach th’ eternal throne,  
And claim the crown, through Christ my own.  
Bold I approach th’ eternal throne,  
And claim the crown, through Christ my own.\textsuperscript{162}

Moreover, trust in Christ is discovered in Charles Wesley’s fifth stanza of “And Can It Be that I Should Gain:”

No condemnation now I dread;  
Jesus, and all in him, is mine;  
Alive in him, my living Head,  
And clothed in righteousness divine,  
Bold I approach th’ eternal throne,  
And claim the crown, through Christ my own.  
Bold I approach th’ eternal throne,  
And claim the crown, through Christ my own.\textsuperscript{162}

Wesley understood faith leads to assurance. Assurance is when the Holy Spirit witnesses inwardly into the heart of a believer that he or she is a child of God. God has pardoned sin and enabled a firm conviction that the believer is reconciled to God. The sinner is made right with God, justified and restored.

Charles says, “no condemnation,” meaning Christ has given pardon for our sins. One no longer has to live with guilt. Guilt is “responsibility for a crime or for doing something bad or wrong as well as a bad feeling caused by knowing or thinking that you have done something bad

\textsuperscript{161} Article IX, of the “Articles of Religion,” in \textit{The Book of Disciple}, 65.

\textsuperscript{162} \textit{The United Methodist Hymnal}, 363, Stanza 5.
or wrong.” Because of Christ’s death on the cross, one does not have to live with guilt. Assurance brings peace upon a person’s soul.

Christ’s atonement is an important understanding for sinners. Wesley’s lyrics, “all in him is mine,” signify Jesus’ atonement and sacrifice. A blessing from Christ’s sacrifice is the forgiveness of sin, restoring us into God’s image. This is a display of God’s justifying grace. Charles makes mention “clothed in righteousness,” meaning clothed in Christ’s goodness, absolved from guilt, released from sin, despite past unrighteousness.

Furthermore, Charles believed assurance goes from this life into eternity. Wesley says, “Bold I approach the eternal throne and claim the crown,” meaning heaven. Assurance does not end at physical death. One does not have to worry about the guilt of sin, rather peace is granted in eternity.

Charles, a journal entry from May 19, 1738, communicates what assurance looks like from a lady named Mrs. Turner. Mrs. Turner was a friend of Charles who visited him during an illness before his spiritual conversion. He asked her some questions:

“How God then bestowed faith upon you?” “Have you peace with God?” “And do you love Christ above all things?”

Her answers being responsive and affirmative to these questions, Wesley, ventured further:

“They are you willing to die?” Mrs. Turner answered patiently and fully: “I am; and would be glad to die this moment; for I know all my sins are blotted out; the hand writing that was against me is taken out of the way, and nailed to his cross. He has saved me by his death; he has washed me with his blood; he has hid me in his wounds. I have peace with Him and rejoice with joy unspeakable, and full of glory.”

Upon receiving this remarkable witness, Charles recorded his own reaction:

“Her answers were so full to these and the most searching questions I could ask, that I had no doubt of her having received the atonement; and waited for it myself with a more assured hope.”\textsuperscript{164}

Wesley eventually would experience this same assurance himself on the day of his conversion.

In conclusion, Charles Wesley’s hymn, “And Can It Be that I Should Gain,” is a reflection of his faith in God and his assurance of salvation through Jesus Christ. Moreover, this hymn displays Charles’s understanding and rejoicing in justification. God’s justifying grace is there for humanity, but it is through faith alone in Jesus Christ that we experience salvation. Through faith, one becomes justified, made right and restored with God.

\textsuperscript{164} Tyson, \textit{Assist Me to Proclaim: The Life and Hymns of Charles Wesley}, 46.
Session 6
Sanctifying Grace and Perfection

In Matthew 5:48, Jesus gives Christian believers a commandment in regards to holiness:

Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father [God] is perfect.\textsuperscript{165}

Holiness is what believers are to strive for in their daily lives. This characteristic may seem unattainable when a believer attempts righteousness on their own; however, the Holy Spirit is available to assist in reaching this goal.

Sanctification is the process of what the Holy Spirit does in a believer, growth in holiness. When one comes to faith in Jesus Christ, the Holy Spirit works to bring about holiness in a person’s life.

John Wesley said of sanctification,

“And at the same time that we are justified, yes, in that very moment, sanctification begins. In that instant we are ‘born again,’ ‘born from above,’ ‘born of the Spirit.’ There is a real as well as a relative change. We are inwardly renewed by the power of God. We feel the ‘love of God shed abroad in our heart by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us,’ producing love to all humankind, and more especially to the children of God, expelling the love of the world, the love of pleasure, of ease, of honor, of money; together with pride, anger, self-will, and every other evil disposition—in a word, changing the ‘earthly, sensual, devilish’ mind into ‘the mind which was in Christ Jesus.’\textsuperscript{166}

John’s ideas on sanctification can be seen in Charles Wesley’s hymn, “Love Divine, All Loves Excelling,” originally titled, “Desiring to Love,”\textsuperscript{167} from \textit{Hymns for those that seek and

\textsuperscript{165} Matthew 5:48 (The New Revised Standard Version).


\textsuperscript{167} Charles Wesley, “Desire to Love,” in \textit{Hymns for Those that Seek and Those that have Redemption in the Blood of Jesus Christ}, (London: Strahan, 1747), 11-12, Hymn 9.
those that have *Redemption in the Blood of Jesus Christ* (1747). The shortened title of this hymn collection is *Redemption Hymns*.

Love divine, all loves excelling,
Joy of heaven, to earth come down;
Fix in us thy humble dwelling;
All thy faithful mercies crown!
Jesus thou art all compassion,
Pure, unbounded love thou art;
Visit us with thy salvation;
Enter every trembling heart.\footnote{168}

Charles Wesley understood for sanctification to occur, one must receive grace, God’s love. He expresses this in the opening words of the first stanza, “Love divine, all loves excelling.” God’s love is above all other loves. Love is what God is and does for humanity by God’s actions. Charles believed there could be joy in one’s life by accepting God’s love and living a sanctified life. He expresses this by stating, “joy of heaven, to earth come down.” Charles desires God’s love to come into a person’s life. He calls upon God’s love to come and fix the individual’s heart so the sinner may experience the mercy of God.

Next, Wesley speaks about God in the second person of the Trinity, Jesus. He expresses some attributes of Jesus; his compassion and unbounded (unconditional) love which provide atonement (Salvation) in a sinner’s heart. The author Chilcote states the following about God’s love, “In him (Jesus) we see what love looks like and how it behaves. Compassion defines God’s life in the flesh.”\footnote{169} Wesley uses the first stanza to illustrate the importance of sanctification coming from the Holy Spirit into the heart of people. He believes God fills a


believer’s life with God’s very own love and compassion, leading one to a life of sanctification.

How does God love? How do you love?

Breathe, O breathe thy loving Spirit
Into every troubled breast!
Let us all in thee inherit;
Let us find that second rest.
Take away our bent (power) to sinning;
Alpha and Omega be;
End of faith, as its beginning,
Set our hearts at liberty.¹⁷⁰

The second stanza of Wesley’s hymn, “Love Divine, All Loves Excelling,” continues the theme of sanctification by Charles summoning the Holy Spirit. Wesley calls on the Holy Spirit to “breathe” into every breast, every being. He believes the Holy Spirit can work in the life of a believer leading them to righteousness by removing their desire to sin. Charles considers that through the Holy Spirit, a believer can “inherit” a new identity and hope. The believer becomes a child of God, adopted by God through Christ. God’s adoption leads one to experience a “second rest,” another term for peace with God.

Regeneration or new birth is another theme displayed in the second stanza of this hymn. Regeneration is the work of the Holy Spirit to bring an inward change, new life away from sin. It is also the beginning of sanctification in which one becomes new and righteous through the power of the Holy Spirit. One takes on holiness as a way of life through the sanctification process. Charles expresses this by stating how the Holy Spirit is to “Take away our bent to sinning; Alpha and Omega be; end of faith, as its beginning, set our hearts at liberty.” The Holy Spirit works to set one free from falling for the traps of sin and aids one’s growth in the Christian faith. Freedom from sin can lead to liberation, allowing one to grow in sanctification. Wesley, “…celebrates the effects of the indwelling Spirit of love: she (he) relieves trouble, secures rest,

¹⁷⁰ The United Methodist Hymnal, 384, Stanza 2.
removes the desire to sin, and liberates the hearts of those who put their trust in Christ, the Alpha and Omega.\textsuperscript{171}

*Transformers*, an animated television and movie series, illustrates the action of regeneration. The series is based on vehicles that transform into robots. Likewise, regeneration through the power of the Holy Spirit transforms a believer. The sinner is changed. One is changed back into the carbon copy we are created to be, the image of God. Regeneration is the beginning of the sanctification process in which one becomes new through the Holy Spirit, setting the new believer on the path of holy living.

The United Methodist Church upholds Charles Wesley’s thoughts about the concept of regeneration by stating, “…the giving of a new spiritual life, the actual regenerative act, is by the power of God and God alone. Souls are born anew not of the will of flesh, nor of the will of man (humanity), but of God.”\textsuperscript{172} God, through the work of the Holy Spirit, transforms a believer to become a reflection of God in their life. The reflection is of holiness and righteousness, for God is holy. “God’s work in changing us, giving us hearts and minds that naturally do God’s will, rather than rebel against it.”\textsuperscript{173}

How have you experienced the work of the Holy Spirit changing you? What are some habits that you no longer take part in because of the Holy Spirit’s presence in your life? How has the Holy Spirit led you in the sanctification process of living a more holy life?

\begin{verbatim}
Come, Almighty to deliver,
Let us all thy life receive;
Suddenly return and never,
Nevermore thy temples leave.
\end{verbatim}


\textsuperscript{172} Nolan B. Harmon, *Understanding the United Methodist Church*, 62.

\textsuperscript{173} Abraham and Watson, *Key United Methodist Beliefs*, 77.
Thee we would be always blessing,
Serve thee as thy hosts above,
Pray and praise thee without ceasing,
Glory in thy perfect love.\textsuperscript{174}

In the third stanza of “Love Divine, All Loves Excelling,” Charles appeals to the Almighty (God) to come into a believer’s life with God’s own life, God’s holiness. Sanctification unites both a believer and God; they become one. Holy living draws us closer to God and God’s attributes. God’s will becomes the believer’s will. One’s inner thoughts and motives, as well as their outer actions and behavior, are aligned with God’s will and testify to their union with God. Wesley’s use of “‘Let us all’ expresses the possibility of universal redemption (all of humanity is invited to experience the love of God), while ‘all thy life’ implies God’s desire to make us totally Christ-like.”\textsuperscript{175} Furthermore, he closes the sentence with “receive.” Charles does this to show the importance of unity with believer and God always being there. He wants believers to preserve this connection, as he writes, “never, never more thy temples leave.” Wesley wishes the process of sanctification to remain and never disappear in the life of a believer.

Next, Wesley states how one can sanctify themselves by “serving thee,” God. Wesley understood serving God comes in two ways. One manner is through personal holiness. Personal holiness is undertaking acts like Wesley shares in his lyrics “pray” and “praise” to God “without ceasing.” As believers “pray and praise thee without ceasing,” we are communicating with God and blessing God, furthering our sanctification process. Another method to pursue personal holiness is studying scripture. The Bible, the Word of God, explains who God is and how God

\textsuperscript{174} \textit{The United Methodist Hymnal}, 384, Stanza 3.

\textsuperscript{175} Chilcote, \textit{The Song Forever New: Lent and Easter with Charles Wesley}, 50.
expects believers to conduct their lives. Serving, praying, praising and studying scripture are avenues to explore to increase sanctification, moving the believer towards a life of holiness.

Moreover, performing these holy habits, on a daily basis, can strengthen our relationship with God. Believers are constantly growing in faith and with the aid of the Holy Spirit, not making the same mistakes of sin. We get rid of the old life and live a new, holy life in Christ. “...when the Holy Spirit comes into your life and begins to change you, a real change takes place. You begin to become a new kind of person, with different ideas, wishes, hopes, and goals.”

In addition, these actions of prayer, worship and scripture reading exhibit God as the priority of our lives. A good example of God taking precedence in our lives is portrayed in another hymn by Charles Wesley published in The United Methodist Hymnal, “O For a Heart to Praise My God,” formerly titled, “Psalm 2:10.”

An humble, lowly, contrite heart,
Believing, true, and clean,
Which neither life nor death can part
From Christ who dwells within.

Charles is articulating he will live a holy, sanctified life by remaining “humble, lowly” and continue to be “true, and clean.” He will live a righteous life that even death cannot remove because “Christ who dwells within.”

Furthermore, personal holiness requires the guidance of the Holy Spirit, but it also entails accountability and encouragement from other believers. Methodism was started as small groups/class meetings where believers could share their joys and trials as they navigated their

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176 Abraham and Watson, Key United Methodist Beliefs, 77.
178 “O For a Heart to Praise My God,” written by Charles Wesley in The United Methodist Hymnal, 417, Stanza 3.
personal sanctification process. These small groups of believers practiced accountability of living a holy life by stressing the importance of Bible study, prayer, and repentance.

Where are you in your personal sanctification journey as a believer in Jesus Christ? What ways are you spending time with God, and how often? What attributes of God can others see displayed in your daily life as you grow in personal sanctification?

The other manner love can be expressed to God is through social holiness. One particular hymn displaying social holiness is written by Charles Wesley and is found in The United Methodist Hymnal, “Forth in Thy Name, O Lord,” originally titled, “Hymns for Believers – Before Work.” 179 The first stanza states,

Forth in thy name, O Lord, I go,
My daily labor to pursue;
Thee, only thee, resolved to know
In all I think or speak or do.180

Charles expresses believers are to go in their “daily labor” in God’s name with their thoughts, words, and actions. He wishes believers to be about the business of God with their everyday lives. “…sanctification is not limited to the holiness of individual persons. It is a process in which believers seek the sanctification of the world around them.”181

Also, social holiness emphasizes loving God by loving others; it is loving others like God loves them. Social holiness is helping people in need and showing the love of God. Loving others is turning the other cheek, going the extra mile, showing hospitality, and providing encouragement to others. Furthermore, social holiness is being the feet, hands, and mouth of Christ to the world; living out Christ so others can experience the love of God. Social holiness


181 Ted. A. Campbell, Methodist Doctrine: The Essentials, 60.
feeds the personal sanctification process. Serving and loving others promotes our personal spiritual growth.

Can you remember a time when someone showed you love? What are some ways you can demonstrate social holiness to those around you? Is there someone in particular at your job or in your community that needs God’s love shown to them?

Each day a believer is to strive to become more loving in both personal and social holiness. “We grow in our love for God, our understanding of God and the Christian life, our desire to live as God would have us live, and our ability to live in that way.” These two qualities are portrayed in the Bible in Christ’s greatest commandments to believers; love God and love others (Matthew 22:36-40). The Book of Discipline shares, “Through the power of the Holy Spirit, we are enabled to increase in the knowledge and love of God and in love for our neighbors.” The Holy Spirit works in us to develop personal and social sanctification, in our lives to glorify God’s perfect love.

Finish, then, thy new creation;  
Pure and spotless let us be.  
Let us see thy great salvation  
Perfectly restored in thee; 184

The fourth stanza of Charles Wesley’s hymn, “Love Divine, All Loves Excelling,” brings to light the belief of Christian perfection. Christian perfection is complete through the progression of sanctification, holiness. Wesley understood through the method of sanctification, believers will become completely “restored” in the image of God. He believed God’s “great salvation” for humanity is constructing them back into perfection. In his hymns, Charles pleads

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182 Abraham and Watson, Key United Methodist Beliefs, 77-78.
184 The United Methodist Hymnal, 384, Stanza 4.
with God to “finish” them as God’s “new creation.” Believers cannot achieve sanctification without the work of God through the Holy Spirit; such is the case with Christian perfection. God’s own Spirit, which is perfection, is to live and breathe in humanity to make us perfect. Wesley emphasizes that as God’s “new creation” through Christian perfection, believers will be made “pure” and “spotless.”

Charles’s brother, John, also believed in Christian perfection. John Wesley said of perfection:

“By Christian perfection I mean loving God with all our hearts. Do you object to this? I mean regaining the whole image of God. What objection to this? I mean having all the mind that was in Christ. Is this going too far? I mean walking uniformly as Christ walked. And this surely no Christian will object to…if anyone means anything more, or anything else, by perfection, I have no concern with it.”

Both Wesley brothers supposed believers were to make every effort to live out holiness in their lives. Even though both Charles and John fundamentally held to the same idea of the nature of perfection, they had their own different opinions. “John Wesley taught that it was possible for a person to live every day in such a manner as to be blameless before God and man (humanity). He held that it was possible for one to be made ‘perfect in love’ while yet lived, and asked every preacher who joined the Methodist Conference to answer this question: Do you expect to be made perfect in love in this life?”

John Wesley would use the examples of loving God and others, as well as the fruits of the Spirit to express his understanding of experiencing Christian perfection in this life:

What is then the perfection of which people are capable while they dwell in a corruptible body? It is the complying with that kind command, “Give me thy heart.” It is the “loving the Lord his (her) God with all his (her) heart, and with all his (her) soul, and with all his (her) mind.” This is the sum of Christian perfection. It is all comprised in that one word,

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186 Harmon, Understanding the United Methodist Church, 69.
love. The first branch of it is the love of God, and as they that love God their brothers and sisters also, it is inseparably connected with the second, “Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself.” You shall love everyone as your soul, as Christ loved us. “on these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets.” These contain the whole of Christian perfection.

St. Paul, when writing to the Galatians, places perfection in yet another view. It is the one undivided “fruit of the Spirit” which he describes thus: “The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, fidelity (so the word should be translated here), meekness, temperance.” What a glorious constellation of grace is here! Now suppose all these to be knit together in one, to be united together in the soul of a believer—this is Christian perfection.  

Moreover, John Wesley “was convinced that it is possible to so love God that one loses the desire to sin and consistently lives in the light of God’s love.” He thought believers could eventually become blameless in sin. “He means that if we can live one day without sin, we can live two; if two, then many—why not all? So there can be a growing in grace and drawing closer and closer to God each day until time arrives when one literally becomes what God would have him/her be—and is not that a perfect man?”

Charles did not believe Christian perfection was possible until death. Charles’ understanding of perfection being finalized at death is seen in his journal writings. On Friday May 1, 1741, Charles reports,

“I visited a sister dying in the Lord; and then two others, one mourning after, then rejoicing in, God her Saviour. I found sister Hooper sick of love. Her body too, sunk under it.”

After visiting Mrs. Hooper several times, Wesley was at her side, on May 6 when she died, and he believed he had witnessed an example of Christian perfection:

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188 Kenneth L. Carder, The United Methodist Way: Living Our Beliefs, 76.

189 Harmon, Understanding the United Methodist Church, 70.
My soul was tenderly affected for her suffering, yet the joy swallowed up the sorrow. How much more then did her consolations abound! The servants of Christ suffer nothing. I asked her whether she was not in great pain. “Yes,” she answered, “but in greater joy. I would not be without either.” “But do you not prefer life to death?” She replied, “All is alike to me; let Christ choose; I have no will of my own.” This is that holiness, or absolute resignation, or Christian perfection!  

Moreover, the author, Chilcote, furthers Charles’s stance by stating the following about his belief, “Christian perfection could never be absolute, nor was he willing to define it as ‘sinlessness.’”

Changed from glory into glory,
Till in heaven we take our place,
Till we cast our crowns before thee,
Lost in wonder, love, and praise.

In the final stanza of Wesley’s hymn, “Love Divine, All Loves Excelling,” he writes “glory into glory,” in other words, from this life to the next. Charles illustrates this by saying, when a believer reaches heaven, they will be present with Christ. Believers will cast their crowns before God. Once their earthly life is complete, believers will find themselves “lost in wonder, love, and praise,” in the presence of God.

The United Methodist Church disagrees with Charles Wesley’s stance on Christian perfection, and upholds the teaching of John. Article XI of the “Confession of Faith” states:

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

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191 Chilcote, *John and Charles Wesley: Selections from Their Writings and Hymns—Annotated and Explained*, 152.


Moreover, United Methodists believe perfection does not mean that one does not continue to sin, or fall for temptations, or that humanity is unrestricted from fault; rather, one can willfully not sin. One will not deliberately and perceptively go against God.

We believe this experience does not deliver us from the infirmities, ignorance, and mistakes common to man, nor from the possibilities of further sin. The Christian must continue on guard against spiritual pride and seek to gain victory over every temptation to sin. He must respond wholly to the will of God so that sin will lose its power over him; and the world, the flesh, and the devil are put under his feet. Thus he rules over these enemies with watchfulness through the power of the Holy Spirit.¹⁹⁴

In summary, Charles Wesley’s hymn, “Love Divine, All Loves Excelling,” expresses the idea of sanctification. Sanctification can be practiced by living a righteous life through growth in personal and social holiness. A believer can practice daily righteous living through prayer, worship and studying scripture, as well as, loving God and loving others through acts of service. The Holy Spirit translates the holiness of God into a believer’s life. Through regeneration, getting rid of the sin in our old life and pursuing our new life with righteous thoughts and actions, the believer experiences a sanctified life.

¹⁹⁴ Ibid.
Session 7

The Means of Grace

In the movie, *Mary Poppins*, the word, *supercalifragilisticexpialidocious* was used in a song:

> It's Supercalifragilisticexpialidocious!
> Even though the sound of it
> Is something quite atrocious
> If you say it loud enough
> You'll always sound precocious
> Supercalifragilisticexpialidocious!
> Um-dittle-ittl-um-dittle-I
> Um-dittle-ittl-um-dittle-I
> Um-dittle-ittl-um-dittle-
> Um-dittle-ittl-um-dittle-I\(^{195}\)

*Supercalifragilisticexpialidocious* is a not a fictitious, made-up word. The word actually means “Extraordinarily good; wonderful.”\(^{196}\) As humans, we learn new vocabulary every day, adding to our body of knowledge. “Means of grace” may be a term, like *supercalifragilisticexpialidocious*, that one may not understand clearly.

John Wesley described the means of grace as, “outward signs, words, or actions ordained by God and appointed for this end—to be the ordinary channels whereby God might convey preventing, justifying, or sanctifying grace to God’s beloved children.”\(^{197}\)

Charles Wesley believed, like his brother, in the means of grace. In his hymn, “Thou Meetest Those That Remember Thee in Thy Ways”\(^{198}\) in *A Short View of the Difference between*

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one can read Wesley’s belief in the means of grace. Despite the hymn not being printed in *The United Methodist Hymnal*, it has been printed in various song books.

'Tis here I look up, And grasp at thy Mind,
Here only I hope Thine image to find:
The Means of bestowing Thy Gifts I embrace;
But all things are owing to Jesus's Grace.199

These words by E. Bryon Anderson, express Charles’s understandings even further “…that through these ways the Christian will encounter the image of God and receive God's grace.”200 Moreover, Charles believed through these channels, one will experience the presence of God.

In addition, the means of grace are understood to promote growth in the Christian faith. Good works are considered a means of grace. “…good works, while not earning salvation, are the fruit of justification by faith and are therefore a part of the process of sanctification.”201 They are ways to continue to grow in one’s relationship with Christ. Charles and John saw them as spiritual disciplines. The brothers believed these means come from Christ himself. “Hence, failure to use these ‘ordinances,’ for the Wesleys, was a very serious matter. It not only barred a person from opportunities to receive God’s sanctifying grace; it also constituted a willful disobedience of important injunctions given to Christians by Jesus Christ.”202


201 Tyson, Assist Me to Proclaim: The Life and Hymns of Charles Wesley, 85.

202 Ibid.
Furthermore, the Methodist societies held to the General Rules. “(John) Wesley drew up the General Rules in 1739 at the request of certain members of the Methodist societies. They asked him to give them a definite plan for Christian living. This he did, and from that day to this, the General Rules have been at the heart of the Methodist movement.” There are twenty-seven General Rules broken into three major components; by doing no harm, by doing good, and by attending upon all the ordinances of God. The third component is where the means of grace are discussed, rules twenty-two through twenty-seven. Furthermore, “Attendance upon the ordinances (means) of God was required for continued membership in the early Methodist societies because they provided indispensable food for the pilgrimage toward personal and social holiness.”

The means of grace are still disciplines the United Methodist Church practices. Methodists understand the means of grace as ways or channels given by God in which people can experience God and receive grace. “They are means of living in God’s presence and thereby growing in the mind of Christ.” These are avenues for us to mature in the Christian faith.

By the time humans are twenty years old, they stop growing in height. Some persons even shrink as aging occurs. The church never wants believers to stop growing in the faith. The means of grace are ways to aid the development of our faith. These are habits which keep believers grounded and empowered in the faith because through these means, believers can have an encounter with Christ.

What are these means or channels by which a believer can experience the grace of God?

203 Harmon, *Understanding the United Methodist Church*, 75.
204 Carder, *The United Methodist Way: Living Our Beliefs*, 96.
In his journal, Charles Wesley shared the different ordinances by which one can experience God’s grace. E. Byron Anderson, in his essay, “The Power of Godliness to Know: Charles Wesley and the Means of Grace,”

The briefest list seems to occur in a journal entry from 1739: fasting, prayer and sacrament. The longest list appears in a hymn from 1745, “Thou meetest those that remember thee in thy Ways;” fasting, prayer, searching and hearing the Life-giving Word, the mystical bread. A similar full list appears in a journal entry from 1756: word and prayer of all kind, reading the scriptures daily, going constantly to church and sacrament.206

One of the means of grace Wesley believed in was prayer. Prayer is having a conversation with God. Paul Wesley Chilcote, in his book, John and Charles Wesley: Selections from Their Writings and Hymns—Annotated Explained,

John and Charles Wesley were men of prayer. Virtually every day of the Wesleys’ lives began and ended with morning and Evening prayer out of the Anglican Book of Common Prayer. But prayer did not function simply as the bookends of each day; rather, the Wesleys filled every moment of every day with the spirit of prayer. They understood that prayer provides us with glimpses of God; it enables us to find God in every aspect of our lives.207

We get a glimpse of how Charles viewed prayer in the hymn, “Soldiers of Christ, Arise”208 which was originally titled, “The Whole Armour of God”209 in Hymns and Sacred Poems (1749). The third stanza states:

Pray without ceasing, pray,  
(Your Captain gives the word)  
His summons cheerfully obey  
And call upon the Lord;  
To God your every want  
In instant prayer display,

206 Anderson, “The Power of Godliness to Know: Charles Wesley and the Means of Grace,” The journal entries are from October 27, 1739 (Journal, I: 192) and October 21, 1756 (Journal, II: 130). The hymn is the third of six attached to A Short View, 19), 9-10.

207 Chilcote, John and Charles Wesley: Selections from Their Writings and Hymns—Annotated Explained, 188.

Pray always, pray and never faint,
Pray, without ceasing pray.\textsuperscript{210}

Prayer was a vital tool that Charles utilized. Prayer is a way he communicated and had a personal conversation with God. Charles encourages believers to pray continuously and happily as they summon God to their desires. In addition, Wesley pours out his heart to God in prayer for his son in a poem titled, “For a Child in the Small Pox.”

\begin{quote}
Life and death are in thine hand; 
In thine hand our child we see 
Waiting thy benign command, 
Less beloved by us than thee. 
Need we then his life request? 
Jesus understands our fears, 
Reads a mother’s panting breast 
Knows the meaning of her tears

Human tears may freely flow  
Authorized by tears divine, 
“Till thine awful will we know,  
Comprehend thy whole design. 
Jesus wept! And so may we; 
Jesus suffering all thy will, 
Felt the soft infirmity, 
Feels his creature’s sorrow still.

Jesus blends them with his own,  
Mindful of his suffering days. 
Father, hear thy blending Son, 
Son of man for us he prays. 
What for us he asks, bestow; 
Ours he makes his own request; 
Send us life and death, we know, 
Life and death from thee is best.\textsuperscript{211}
\end{quote}

Charles writes comforting words in this prayer, emphasizing “…with an affirmation that the One who has stood with us will never abandon us and loves every person with an undying


\textsuperscript{211} Charles Wesley, “For a Child in the Small Pox,” in \textit{Hymns for the Use of Families}, (Bristol: Pine, 1767), 76-78:4, 6-7.
love.”

Although his son lost his battle to the disease, Wesley did not give up on the power of prayer. He continued to rely on and turn to God for strength throughout his life.

Prayer is vital for believers. There are different ways to pray. “Traditional forms of prayer include thanksgiving and praise, petitions, and confession.” Which form of prayer do you think you gravitate to? Which form of prayer do you steer away from?

God is present when we pray. God hears and answers prayer. General Rule twenty-five states, “[Must not neglect] family and private prayer.”

Prayer is an avenue for believers to grow in their relationship with God on a daily basis. In prayer, one can find a place of knowing that God will provide comfort and support. “No matter how busy the schedule or how rushed the life, time must be taken for this.”


Deep in the Arabian Desert rests a small fortress which stands silently on the vast expanse of sand. Thomas Edwards Lawrence, known as Lawrence of Arabia, often came to this fortress. Though unpretentious, it was sufficient for protection. Whenever he was under attack, often from superior forces, Lawrence would retreat there. He took over the resources of the fortress. The food and water which he had stored were life-supporting, and the strength of the fortification became the strength of its occupants. Old desert-dwellers around the fortress recall that Sir Lawrence felt confident and secure inside the walls. He learned to trust the secret fortress and his experience proved its worth.

Sir Lawrence was depending on the fort; it provided what he needed. A believer’s fort is God; through prayer, we enter God’s fortress. One enters into a relationship with God, a place of

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212 Chilcote, John and Charles Wesley: Selections from Their Writings and Hymns—Annotated Explained, 56.

213 Harmon, Understanding the United Methodist Church, 92.

214 Ibid.

communication with God. Prayer is where a believer can find rest for their souls. When times get tough or appear bleak, people can pray turning to God for help. Prayer is our 9-1-1; it is the line that gives us direct access to God.

Scripture reading is another means of grace. Scripture, for Charles Wesley, was the Bible, which contains sixty-six books making up the Old (Hebrew) and New Testament. He held to the Church of England’s stance:

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 the Faith, or be thought requisite or necessary to salvation. In the name of the holy Scripture we do understand those Canonical Books of the Old and New Testament, of whose authority was never any doubt in the Church.\textsuperscript{216}

Charles found inspiration and insight for his life in the Holy Scriptures. When he was struggling in Georgia, “Wesley’s main source of comfort during these trying days was his devotional and public reading of the scriptures. Often the words of the Bible seemed directly to address his own trials and tribulations.”\textsuperscript{217} In Wesley’s journal he wrote,

This morning we began our Lord’s last discourse to his disciples: every word was providentially directed to my comfort, but particularly these: “Let not your heart troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me.” “I will not leave you comfortless: I will come to you.’ ‘Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you. Let not your heart be troubled neither let it be afraid’ (At the beginning of another trying day Charles ‘was revived by those words of our Lord: …In the world ye have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world (John 16:33).”\textsuperscript{218}

This inspiration can be seen in Charles Wesley’s hymn, “Come, Holy Ghost, Our Hearts Inspire,” which was originally titled, “Another [Before Reading the Scriptures],”\textsuperscript{219} in \textit{Hymns}

\textsuperscript{216} Article IV of the “Articles of Religion” in \textit{The Book of Common Prayer}, 868.

\textsuperscript{217} Tyson, \textit{Assist Me to Proclaim: The Life and Hymns of Charles Wesley}, 32.

\textsuperscript{218} Ibid.

and Sacred Poems 1740. The hymn brings to light the work of the Holy Spirit in inspiring the hearts of believers by revealing to them the truth of the Bible:

Come, Holy Ghost, our hearts inspire,  
Let us thine influence prove;  
Source of the old prophetic fire,  
Fountain of life and love.

Come, Holy Ghost (for moved by thee  
The prophets wrote and spoke),  
Unlock the truth, thyself the key,  
Unseal the sacred book.220

Wesley was a man of the Bible because he was daily in the scriptures. His hymns are full of scripture references. In 1762, he “published a two-volume commentary on the Bible with the title Short Hymns on Select Passages of the Holy Scriptures with over 2,000 hymns and poems based on every book of the Bible.”221 Scripture played a major role in Wesley’s life because in them, he found and experienced God.

Scripture is to have a major impact on our lives daily. General Rule twenty-six states “[must not neglect] searching the Scriptures.”222 Scriptures are a way in which one hears and learns God’s will for their life. “…they are a means of God’s revelation and presence to the people of God in the here and now.”223 God’s word can provide God’s companionship.

Greg Asimakoupoulos, in his article, "Why Holmgren’s Back in Church,"

Former Green Bay Packers head coach, Mike Holmgren, looks back at a heartbreaking moment, when he was cut from the New York Jets as backup quarterback to Joe


221 Kimbrough, The Lyrical Theology of Charles Wesley: A Reader, 46.

222 Harmon, Understanding the United Methodist Church, 92.

223 Carder, The United Methodist Way: Living Our Beliefs, 103.
Namath, that directed him to a bigger plan. "I had committed my life to Jesus Christ when I was 11, but in my pursuit to make a name for myself in football, I left God next to my dust-covered Bible. But after getting cut from the Jets, I pulled out my Bible and found comfort in a verse I had memorized in Sunday school: “Trust in the Lord with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths (Proverbs 3:5-6).” Holmgren said, "I asked Jesus Christ to take control again. My priorities in life are faith, family, and football—in that order.

Holmgren found comfort in the Bible when he was struggling. God’s Word is there to console us in times of trials. In God’s Word, God expresses comforting words of love. The Bible is God’s love letter to humanity; it is a message of God conveying love by dying on the cross and showing us grace. “By searching the scriptures, learning the stories of faith, wrestling with their meaning, looking for a Word from the Lord, God comes walking from the pages of the Bible and into our mind and spirit.”

In addition to prayer and scripture, another discipline, or means of grace, is fasting. Rule number twenty-seven, the last rule in the General Rules, states: “[Must not neglect] fasting or abstinence.” Fasting is not eating any food or drink for a definite amount of time as a way to focus on God. John and Charles Wesley observed this weekly; Charles fasted on Fridays. The brothers began this practice in the Holy Club, which started the Methodist movement. John Wesley “saw prayer and fasting as important means of denying self in order to gain a proper

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224 Greg Asimakoupoulos, "Why Holmgren’s Back in Church” in Men of Integrity, Vol. 1, no. 2 (March 6, 2000).

225 Carder, The United Methodist Way: Living Our Beliefs, 103.

226 Harmon, Understanding the United Methodist Church, 93.

227 Kimbrough, The Lyrical Theology of Charles Wesley: A Reader, 32.

228 Heitzenrater, Wesley and the People Called Methodists, (Nashville: Abingdon, 1995), 44.
perspective on both earthly and eternal considerations.”

John even prepared an entire sermon on the practice of fasting in a series called “The Sermon on the Mount.”

Charles mentions fasting in the hymn, “Isaiah 64:5, Thou Meetest Those that Remember Thee in Thy Ways,” found in A Short View of the Difference between the Moravian Brethren, Lately in England; And the Reverend Mr. John and Charles Wesley (1745), which describes fasting as a means by which, one seeks and looks forward to experiencing God.

With fasting and prayer
My Savior I seek,
And listen to hear
The Comforter speak;

In searching and hearing
The life-giving Word
I wait thy appearing,
I look for my Lord

In the United Methodist Church, fasting is not used like the other means of grace. It is a practice that is used minimally. Lent is a time of year in the church where fasting often occurs. People will say, “I gave up chocolate” or “I’m giving up caffeine,” but these are not pertaining to God. Rather, they are ways for us to diet. Lent is a season for believers to increase their focus on God, and grow in their relationship with God. An example for Lent or for everyday living might be, “I’m giving up my favorite television program so I can read the Bible, and listen to what God has to say to me.” Or instead of surfing the internet for hours, rather spend time in prayer for five to ten minutes. We do not often give up food like earlier Methodists did, but we could


participate in other practices of fasting. Fasting is self-denial. What are some activities you could give up or deny yourself as an avenue to grow in your relationship with God? Are you willing to deny yourself certain pleasures in order to spend more time with God in prayer?

Charles Wesley believed that one could experience the means of grace at a public church service because the elements of prayer, scripture, and sacrament were present. Worship services are gatherings of believers united for the purpose of experiencing the presence and grace of God. A service contains hymn singing, prayers, giving of the tithe, proclamation and response to the Word, communion. Through a worship service, one gains and experiences the grace of God. Charles Wesley was a man who dedicated his life to preaching at, as well as attending worship services. “He often attended Anglican worship and received the Lord’s Supper and then spent the afternoon or evening preaching outdoors.”232 The hymns and hymnals Wesley created were resources that believers could utilize to show their praise and adoration for God while experiencing God’s grace.

“Charles insists throughout his years among the Methodists that ‘allowing of and using’ the means of grace is essential to their Christian life and to the character and identity of the societies.”233 He wrote in October 1756, to a Mr. Grimshaw:

Nothing but grace can keep our children, after our departure, from running into a thousand sects, a thousand errors. Grace, exercised, kept up, and increased in the use of all the means, especially family and public prayer, and sacrament, will keep them steady. Let us labour, while we continue here, to ground and build them up in the Scriptures, and all the ordinances. Teach them to handle well the sword of the Spirit, and the shield of faith.”234

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232 Tyson, Assist Me to Proclaim: The Life and Hymns of Charles Wesley, 72.

233 Ibid.

In summary, Charles Wesley believed through prayer, scripture, fasting and public worship, one could experience the grace of God upon their life. Charles expressed the means of grace through hymns, journal entries and poems. Wesley encouraged believers to spiritually ground themselves using these channels to experience God’s grace.
Session 8
The Sacraments

Charles Wesley believed in the Church of England’s Thirty-Nine Articles stance on the sacraments:

Sacraments ordained of Christ be not only badges or tokens of Christian men's profession, but rather they be certain sure witnesses, and effectual signs of grace, and God's good will towards us, by the which he doth work invisibly in us, and doth not only quicken, but also strengthen and confirm our Faith in him.\(^{235}\)

Furthermore, Wesley believed,

There are two Sacraments ordained of Christ our Lord in the Gospel, that is to say, Baptism, and the Supper of the Lord.\(^{236}\)

In addition to prayer, scripture, worship and fasting, two other means of grace are communion and baptism.

Likewise, the United Methodist Church has the same stance as Charles Wesley in regards to the sacraments which are found in Articles of Religion, Article XVI: Of the Sacraments.\(^{237}\)

Just as Wesley saw the sacraments as means of grace, so does the church today. In the United Methodist Confessions of Faith we read:

They are means of grace by which God works invisibly in us, quickening, strengthening, and confirming our faith in him (God).\(^{238}\)

Furthermore, United Methodists believe “God has chosen to use natural elements of water, bread, and wine as vehicles of grace when they are employed in the sacramental services of the church. When we participate in baptism and Holy Communion, we can be assured that

\(^{235}\) Article XXV of the “Articles of Religion” in *The Book of Common Prayer*, 872.

\(^{236}\) Ibid.


\(^{238}\) Article VI of the “Confession of Faith” in *The Book of Discipline*, 72.
grace is active and accessible.” United Methodists consider the table as open for all to experience the grace of God.

Charles Wesley describes how he valued the Lord’s Supper in the following hymn, “Glory to Him Who Freely Spent,” originally published in *Hymns on the Lord’s Supper*. This hymn is not published in *The United Methodist Hymnal*.

This is the richest legacy
Thou hast on us bestowed,
Here chiefly, Lord, we feed on thee,
And drink thy precious blood

The Lord’s Supper was a critical part of Charles’s spiritual life. He participated in communion regularly. In the beginning of the Methodist movement, during the Holy Club meetings, he and his brother, John, and the others members gathered frequently to celebrate communion. “They were called ‘Sacramentarians,’ because they stressed the duty of frequent (they sometimes said ‘constant’) communion.” “He often attended Anglican worship and received the Lord’s Supper—along with a troop of Methodists—and then spent the afternoon or evening preaching outdoors.”

In 1745, Charles and John Wesley published an entire hymnal on the Lord’s Supper titled, *Hymns on the Lord’s Supper*. Charles wrote one hundred sixty-six hymns in the book.

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244 Ibid, 72.
There are sections in the hymnal which share how Charles and John understood the sacrament:
As it is a Memorial of the Suffering and Death of Christ (Hymns 1-27), As it is a Sign and a
means of Grace (Hymns 28-92), The Sacrament as a Pledge of Heaven (Hymns 93-115), The
Holy Eucharist as it Implies a Sacrifice (Hymns 116-127), Concerning the Sacrifice of Our
Persons (Hymns 128-157), and After the Sacrament(158-166).  

The mystery of communion can be observed in Charles Wesley’s hymn, “O the Depth of
Love Divine,” in Hymns on the Lord’s Supper. It was originally titled, “Sure and Real is the
Grace.” “The Greek word used in the early church for sacrament is mysterion, usually
translated mystery. It indicates that through sacraments, God discloses things that are beyond
human capacity to know through reason alone.” The author, Kimbrough, expresses Wesley’s
thoughts about the mystical communion, “He knows that he can express the mystery of God’s
presence in the Eucharist, but his verse reveals his full awareness that he cannot ‘capture’ the
mystery with finality in words. He cannot lock into words the precise meaning of the mystery,
for it transcends human expression.”

I remember when I was in seminary, my worship professor, Richard Eslinger stated:

An adult congregation member had a problem with children participating in communion.
He thought children did not understand the meaning of communion and therefore, should
not take part in the practice. My professor’s rebuttal was, “Do any of us truly know the
meaning, the sacrifice?”

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245 John and Charles Wesley, Hymns on the Lord’s Supper, (Bristol: Farley, 1745).
246 “O the Depth of Love Divine” written by Charles Wesley in The United Methodist Hymnal, 627.
247 John and Charles Wesley, “Sure and Real is the Grace” in Hymns on the Lord’s Supper, (Bristol: Farley, 1745),
41, Hymn 57.
248 Felton, This Holy Mystery: A United Methodist Understanding of Holy Communion, 16.
249 Kimbrough, The Lyrical Theology of Charles Wesley, 55.
Communion for United Methodists is a mystery; we cannot truly and fully understand it. We cannot justly grasp what God has done for us through communion, but we participate because of Jesus Christ’s example, and by doing so, we experience the grace of God.

Wesley articulates the mystery of communion in the hymn, “O the Depth of Love Divine,” by emphasizing the scripture passage John 6:35-58, where the author speaks about how Jesus is the Bread of life. Specifically, words expressing the mystery are contained in verses 52-58:

The Jews then disputed among themselves, saying, “How can this man give us his flesh to eat?” So Jesus said to them, “Very truly, I tell you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you have no life in you. Those who eat my flesh and drink my blood have eternal life, and I will raise them up on the last day; for my flesh is true food and my blood is true drink. Those who eat my flesh and drink my blood abide in me, and I in them. Just as the living Father sent me, and I live because of the Father, so whoever eats me will live because of me. This is the bread that came down from heaven, not like that which your ancestors ate, and they died. But the one who eats this bread will live forever.”

In this passage, Jesus discloses disputes among the Jews due to a lack of understanding. It is a mystery to them how Jesus provides his flesh to eat. The Jews cannot see past the literal meaning of Christ’s message.

In Charles Wesley’s hymn, “O the Depth of Love Divine,” one can observe Charles expressing the nature of communion as a mystery. Charles sets up question after question trying to comprehend this mystery.

O the depth of love divine,
The unfathomable grace!
Who shall say how bread and wine
God into us conveys!
How the bread his flesh imparts,
How the wine transmits his blood,

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Charles begins the stanza with what communion expresses: God’s love has “depth,” and God’s grace is “unfathomable,” profound. Despite being a mystery to Charles, he shows in this hymn that God takes part in the communion process by imparting God’s flesh and blood in the taking of bread and wine. Wesley writes how communion allows God to enter into the believer by stating, “With all the life of God!” Charles saw communion as a remembrance of God’s mighty act through Jesus; sacrificing his life, His body and blood, by dying on the cross.

Another Charles Wesley hymn with this theme is, “Come, Sinners, to the Gospel Feast,” which consisted of twenty-four stanzas and was originally titled “The Great Supper” and published in Redemption Hymns (1747). In this hymn, Wesley emphasizes Christ’s sacrifice by sharing:

See him set forth before your eyes;
Behold the bleeding sacrifice;
His offered love make haste to embrace;
And freely now be saved by grace.

Charles reminds the reader that during the Lord’s Supper one can perceive “the bleeding sacrifice.” Christ choosing to be sacrificed was “His offered Love,” so the believer should rush to receive what has been extended to them. Communion reminds the believer salvation is given “freely” because of Christ’s grace, his love for humanity.

In our country, many towns honor those who lost their lives for our country in military service. In Washington D.C., The Freedom Wall is a part of the National World War II

252 The United Methodist Hymnal, 627, Stanza 1.


Memorial. There are over four thousand stars on The Freedom Wall. Each star represents one hundred soldiers from the United States who perished in the war. Near the wall, a plaque is hung with the words, “Here we mark the price of freedom.”

Likewise, United Methodists understand communion is partly a remembrance of the freedom the believer gains through Christ’s death and sacrifice on the cross. “We believe the Lord’s Supper is a representation of our redemption, a memorial of the sufferings and death of Christ, and a token of love and union that Christians have with Christ and with one another.”

According to Abraham and Watson in Key United Methodist Beliefs, “This is why, when we receive the bread during communion, the person serving it says to us something like, ‘The body of Christ, broken for you,’ and when we receive the cup, ‘The blood of Christ, shed for you.’ The server is remembering the words Jesus said on the night on which Judas, one of his followers, betrayed him.”

Charles Wesley did not consider communion as “…merely a memorial or reminder of Christ’s sacrifice and a sign of Christian fellowship.” Wesley believed communion was a remembrance of Christ’s sacrifice, but he further supposed Jesus is present in the communion process. He showcases this belief in the hymn, “Come, Sinners, to the Gospel Feast,” which states, “See Him set forth before your eyes” meaning Jesus is there, present, in communion. Moreover, Wesley emphasizes the presence of Christ in the second part of the first stanza in “O the Depth of Love Divine,” when he illustrates a meeting between God and humanity through communion, “Who shall say how bread and wine God into us conveys!” When one

255 Article VI of the “Confession of Faith,” in The Book of Discipline of the United Methodist Church, 72.
256 Watson, Key United Methodist Beliefs, 108.
257 Campbell, Methodist Doctrine: The Essentials, 74-75.
partakes in communion, they are experiencing in the here and now, the risen Lord, Jesus Christ. Authors Abraham and Watson further Wesley’s thoughts on Christ’s presence at communion by stating, “We believe that Christ really is present, though the essence of the bread and wine remains the same. When the minister prays over the bread and wine, the Holy Spirit makes Christ really present for us.”258

The second question asked, “How the bread his flesh imparts, How the wine transmits his blood,” indicates once again the mystery of the transposition of bread into Christ’s flesh and wine into Christ’s blood. These words similarly convey Charles’s belief that one is transformed by the presence of God to live out Christ’s Spirit in their life. United Methodists hold to this stance as well, “…like spiritual medicine, Christ goes to work on our hearts, healing them of everything that can separate us from God.”259 We understand that, “…we meet Christ at the table and receive the spiritual benefits made available there…including forgiveness, nourishment, healing, transformation, ministry and mission, and eternal life.”260 Furthermore, we believe God’s sanctifying grace works in the life of believers to show the world God’s love. A believer is “…to be used by God in the work of redemption, reconciliation, and justice.”261

In the second stanza of Wesley’s hymn, “O the Depth of Love Divine,” he speaks once again of the mystery of communion.

Let the wisest mortals show
How we the grace receive;
Feeble elements bestow
A power not theirs to give.
Who explains the wondrous way,
How through these the virtue came?

258 Abraham and Watson, Key United Methodist Beliefs, 109.
259 Ibid.
260 Felton, This Holy Mystery: A United Methodist Understanding of Holy Communion, 17.
261 Felton, This Holy Mystery: A United Methodist Understanding of Holy Communion, 17-18.
These the virtue did convey,
Yet still remain the same.\textsuperscript{262}

Let the smartest people try to explain how believers receive power through “feeble elements” (bread and wine). Next, Charles asks who can explain how through “these elements” “the virtue,” meaning, Jesus, came? Then Wesley explains that Jesus’ power did transfer into the elements, but the bread and wine’s physical features remained the same. This stanza emphasizes Charles’ belief in virtualism, a belief continued in Methodism. Virtualism “maintains although Christ’s body ascended to heaven, the Supper of the Lord, when received with true faith, conveys a unique power.”\textsuperscript{263}

In Accordance with Charles Wesley, United Methodists do not believe this unique power during communion changes the bread and wine to the actual body and blood of Jesus. However, the Roman Catholic Church considers the bread and wine to be Christ’s actual flesh and blood, called transubstantiation. Charles held to the Church of England’s Thirty-Nine Articles stance:

\begin{quote}
Transubstantiation (or the change of the substance of Bread and Wine) in the Supper of the 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.\textsuperscript{264}
\end{quote}

In the third stanza of Wesley’s hymn, “O the Depth of Love Divine,” Charles asks how believers can experience God, who is divine, by way of earthly food and drink.

\begin{quote}
How can spirits heavenward rise,
By earthly matter fed,
Drink herewith divine supplies
And eat immortal bread?
Ask the Father’s wisdom how:
Christ who did the means ordain;
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{262} The United Methodist Hymnal, 627, Stanza 2.

\textsuperscript{263} Campbell, Methodist Doctrine: The Essentials, 75.

\textsuperscript{264} Article XXVIII of the “Articles of Religion” in The Book of Common Prayer, 873.
Angels round our altars bow
To search it out, in vain.\textsuperscript{265}

Wesley suggests Christ is the one who provided the means of grace by writing, “Christ who did the means ordain.” He closes the stanza with angels searching the idea of how the elements are spiritual, but they cannot figure it out: “angels round our altars bow to search it out, in vain.” This stanza portrays those on earth and heaven viewing communion as a mystery; only God fully understands the method.

In the final stanza of Wesley’s hymn, “O the Depth of Love Divine,” he testifies that communion is a means of grace.

Sure and real is the grace,
the manner be unknown;
only meet us in thy ways
and perfect us in one.
Let us taste the heavenly powers,
Lord, we ask for nothing more.
Thine to bless,'tis only ours
to wonder and adore.\textsuperscript{266}

Charles begins by stating, “sure and real is the grace “acknowledging communion as a way to experience God’s love. “He testifies to his own certainty about the sacrament as a means of grace.”\textsuperscript{267} The means of grace are ways given by God in which people can experience God and receive grace. When one partakes in communion, they experience God’s love upon their life.

Wesley viewed The Lord’s Supper as, “the manner be unknown;” meaning communion is a mystery. He asks God to “only meet us in thy ways,” meaning connect with us in the best way God sees fit through salvation and reconciliation. God’s ways deal with salvation and work to

\textsuperscript{265} The United Methodist Hymnal, 627, Stanza 3.

\textsuperscript{266} Ibid, Stanza 4.

\textsuperscript{267} Chilcote, John and Charles Wesley: Selections from Their Writings and Hymns—Annotated and Explained, 222.
reconcile and recreate humanity in the image of God. God offers grace that cleanses, sustains and nurtures humanity at the communion table.

Then, Charles asks God to “perfect us in one,” suggesting communion brings unity among believers. He saw communion as joining us with Christ and with one another. Charles uses the words, “us”, “we”, and “our” which demonstrate the importance of being communal. In the United Methodist communion rite, it speaks of this oneness,

By your Spirit make us one with Christ, one with each other, and one in ministry to all the world.”

At times, believers may fall into the trap of thinking communion is an individual encounter. However, communion should also be thought of as communal. “Holy communion is the communion on the church—gathered community of the faithful, both local and universal…the sharing and bonding experienced at the Table exemplify the nature of the church and the model of the world as God would have it be.”

It should be noted, United Methodists’ communal table is open to all Christian believers no matter their denominational background or where they are in their faith journey.

Next, Charles considers that through communion, believers can taste God’s power, “Let us taste the heavenly powers.” He is suggesting the elements transport God’s power into the believer as they partake in the bread and wine, supporting the virtualism belief.

Wesley closes the hymn with, “Thine to bless,' tis only ours to wonder and adore,” portraying God’s blessing on the communion. He is further suggesting it is humanity who partakes in the phenomenon of communion while exhibiting adoration for God. Communion is a

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268 “A Service of Word and Table I,” in The United Methodist Hymnal, 10.
269 Felton, This Holy Mystery: A United Methodist Understanding of Holy Communion, 17.
blessing from God that is a mystery to humanity, but it is to be praised and esteemed. “At the table we encounter that mystery in an immediate and personal way.”

Communion is one way to experience God or means of grace, as well as baptism.

Charles held to the Church of England’s Thirty-Nine Articles stance:

Baptism is not only a sign of profession, and mark of difference, whereby Christian men are discerned from others that be not christened, but it is also a sign of Regeneration or new Birth, whereby, as by an instrument, they that receive Baptism rightly are grafted into the Church; the promises of forgiveness of sin, and of our adoption to be the sons of God by the Holy Ghost, are visibly signed and sealed; Faith is confirmed, and Grace increased by virtue of prayer unto God.

Charles’ understanding of baptism is expressed in the hymn “Come, Let Us Use the Grace Divine,” which was originally titled, “Covenant Service” in Scripture Hymns (1762).

The hymn was based on Jeremiah 50:5,

They shall ask the way to Zion, with faces turned toward it, and they shall come and join themselves to the LORD by an everlasting covenant that will never be forgotten.

Wesley considered baptism as a covenant relationship with God.

Come, let us use the grace divine,
   And all with one accord,
In a perpetual covenant
   Join ourselves to Christ the Lord;
Give up ourselves, thru Jesus' power,
   His name to glorify;
And promise, in this sacred hour,
   For God to live and die.

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270 Chilcote, John and Charles Wesley: Selections from Their Writings and Hymns—Annotated and Explained, 222.


Charles begins the stanza by saying, “Come, let us use the grace divine,” which shows how the baptismal covenant comes from God’s grace. God was the one who initiated the covenant.

United Methodists understand, “It is a declaration of God’s initiative in claiming us as beloved children, cleansing and redeeming us, empowering us to share in the divine mission in the world. Baptism celebrates what God has done, is doing, and shall do on our behalf.”

Author Runyon furthers the United Methodist belief by declaring, “…it is a work of God in which this person, this individual life, is singled out to inherit the promises of God’s covenant and receive the benefits of Christ’s life, death, and resurrection.”

Next, Charles makes the statement in which one could interpret his understanding of the baptismal covenant as possibly being two-fold, “And all with one accord, in a perpetual covenant Join ourselves to Christ the Lord.” First, Wesley’s words, “And all with one accord, in a perpetual covenant,” could be seen as portraying the believer becoming part of the church community. Charles is asking people to join together in a never-ending covenant with a body of believers.

Moreover, the United Methodist Church views baptism as becoming part of a church community. Baptism is a public testimony that the new believer has made a commitment to Jesus, acknowledging Jesus as The Christ, God in human flesh, dying on the cross to free believers from sin and death. As a result, believers can have a personal relationship with Christ. Article VI of the Confession of Faith, states, “We believe Baptism signifies entrance into the

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275 Carder, The United Methodist Way: Living Our Beliefs, 99.
276 Theodore Runyon, The New Creation: John Wesley’s Theology Today, 144.
household of faith.” methodists share in the covenant relationship with god as a community of believers through baptism. believers become an active and productive member of the faith community. we understand, “the church is the instrument chosen by god to continue the work of christ on earth. it functions as his body—his arms—his feet, and so on—by doing the tasks that god has assigned it.” believers are to give their lives to the church to make a difference by the gifts and talents they have. in “the baptismal covenant i” in the united methodist hymnal, believers who have just gone through holy baptism, confirmation, reaffirmation of faith, reception into the united methodist church, or reception into a local congregation, are asked if they will faithfully participate in its ministries through prayers, presence, gifts/talents and service? through baptism, a believer lives out their faith in the body of christ. methodists believe in the idea of one baptism. this idea upholds an individual’s previous baptism. however, methodists do believe in reaffirmation where the individual rededicates their life to the work of christ and this new promise with the act of baptism.

second, wesley’s lyrics, “join ourselves to christ the lord,” indicates baptism serves to “join” believers in a relationship with christ. they confess jesus as their personal savior. the believer gives their life to christ by starting a new life, new birth, in christ. “the baptismal covenant i” in the united methodist hymnal, asks the following to a new believer,

do you confess jesus christ as your savior, put your whole trust in his grace, and promise to serve him as your lord, in union with the church which christ has opened to people of all ages, nations, and races?

277 article vi of the confession of faith in the book of discipline, 72.


279 “the baptismal covenant i,” in the united methodist hymnal, 38.

280 “the baptismal covenant i,” in the united methodist hymnal, 34.
Charles shares the idea of a new life in Christ by stating in his hymn, “Give up ourselves, thru Jesus’ power, his name to glorify; and promise, in this sacred hour, for God to live and die.” Wesley illustrates that through the baptismal covenant, individuals are giving up themselves (the old way of life) and making a promise to turn their lives over to Christ. United Methodists also understand the importance of giving up their old lives, creating a new life and joining Christ. “The Baptismal Covenant I” in The United Methodist Hymnal, exhibits this by asking the new believer,

Do you accept the freedom and power God gives you to resist evil, injustice, and oppression in whatever forms they present themselves?281

The following story emphasizes that the decision to follow Christ may come with unexpected consequences, as the new believer is leaving their old life of sin and entering into a new life with Christ:

When Texas pastor Jim Denison was in college, he served as a summer missionary in East Malaysia. While there he attended a small church. At one of the church’s worship services, a teenage girl came forward to announce her decision to follow Christ and be baptized. During the service, Denison noticed some worn-out luggage leaning against the wall of the church building. He asked the pastor about it. The pastor pointed to the girl who had just been baptized and told Denison, "Her father said that if she was baptized as a Christian she could never go home again. So she brought her luggage."282

There is no saving faith without the confession, “Jesus is Lord.” Romans 10:9 states,

Because if you confess with your lips that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved.283

Charles Wesley and the United Methodists both understood that as a new believer confesses Jesus Christ as their Lord, the result is Christ’s power entering into the believer’s life.

281 Ibid.
Wesley shows this by writing, “thru Jesus' power,” the new believer can walk away from their old life of sin. Christ’s power is the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit works and dwells in a believer so they are no longer about themselves, rather they are about God. They express their new state of sanctification by glorifying Christ through their actions and deeds.

The covenant we this moment make  
Be ever kept in mind;  
We will no more our God forsake,  
Or cast these words behind.  
We never will throw off the fear  
Of God who hears our vow;  
And if thou art well pleased to hear,  
Come down and meet us now.  

In the second stanza of Wesley’s hymn, “Come, Let Us Use the Grace Divine,” Charles Wesley continues with his stance of understanding baptism as a commitment. He believes this was a commitment to be “ever kept in mind,” meaning the believer should remember the day their promise to God was made and never lose interest in their journey with God. “We never will throw off the fear of God who hears our vow,” depicts the believer having a sense of respect, awe and submission to God.

Next, Charles paints an allusion of people coming to get baptized by Jesus and the baptism of Jesus. Charles stated, “And if thou art well pleased to hear” which relates to Jesus’ baptism contained in Mark 1:11,

A voice came from heaven (God), “You are my Son, the Beloved; with you I am well pleased”  

Charles is making the point that through a baptismal covenant, God gives approval to the believer. God blesses the commitment; God is pleased with the commitment. Another biblical

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284 *The United Methodist Hymnal*, 606, Stanza 2.

285 Mark 1:10 (New Revised Standard Version).
The triune immersion is shown in the final stanza of Wesley’s hymn, “Come, Let Us Use the Grace Divine.” Wesley makes reference to the triune immersion by writing, “…Father, Son and Holy Ghost,” which is based upon the Trinity into which the believer is to be baptized "into

Thee, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit,
Let all our hearts receive,
Present with thy celestial host
The peaceful answer give;
To each covenant the blood apply
Which takes our sins away,
And register our names on high
And keep us to that day!

The triune immersion is shown in the final stanza of Wesley’s hymn, “Come, Let Us Use the Grace Divine.” Wesley makes reference to the triune immersion by writing, “…Father, Son and Holy Ghost,” which is based upon the Trinity into which the believer is to be baptized "into

286 Ibid.


288 *United Methodist Hymnal*, 606, Stanza 3.
the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.” Authors Abraham and Watson note, “To be baptized in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit means that we enter into a covenant of faithfulness to the Holy Trinity. We belong to the Trinity, are part of God’s household, and the Trinity is the only God whom we will worship.”

When individuals accept Jesus as their personal Savior, they experience forgiveness. Charles displays this idea by saying, “to each covenant the blood apply which takes our sins away.” Charles is emphasizing the baptismal covenant brings atonement of sins. Since baptism stresses the commitment to Christ, Charles believed one is forgiven of their sins by the grace of God. “This grace covers more than the personal sins that have been committed prior to receiving the sacrament. We continue to sin throughout our lives and are continually in need of pardon. God’s forgiveness is always and repeatedly available to us when we repent.”

The movie, *The Piano*, chronicles the journey toward emotional freedom of a 19th-century single mother named Ada. Motivated by the promise of an arranged marriage, Ada moves with her young daughter from Scotland to the New Zealand outback. Ada is mute, unable to speak since childhood. She lives in an emotional prison of shame and anger. Ada's sole source of pleasure is her piano, which she brought with her from Scotland.

In New Zealand, Ada marries a Kiwi farmer who turns out to be abusive. A mysterious man by the name of George (Harvey Keitel) arranges to take her away from the abusive marriage, along with her daughter and her cherished piano. They are to escape by sea. As they row from shore towards an awaiting ship, the weight of the piano begins to sink the dinghy. In that moment, Ada suddenly gains insight into her life. She realizes that her piano is a symbol of her shame and regret. Ada signals to push the piano out of the boat.

"What did she say?" George asks the girl Flora.

"She says, throw the piano overboard," Flora replies.

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289 Abraham and Watson, *Key United Methodist Beliefs*, 107.

290 Felton, *By the Water and Spirit*, 22.
Convinced that the piano can be saved, George counters, "It's quite safe. They are managing."

More determined, Flora speaks on her mute mother's behalf. "She says throw it overboard. She doesn't want it. She says it's spoiled."

Finally, George gives in to Ada's request. But as the piano splashes into the sea, a rope tied to the piano encircles Ada's boot. Ada is pulled into the sea and sinks with the piano. She kicks and frees her foot from the boot, and then frantically swims back to the surface. When her head breaks the water, she gasps her first breath as a free woman, released from the bondage of shame.²⁹¹

Comparatively, as illustrated in the movie above, after confession and baptism, a new believer can have the experience of a release of shame and guilt. The believer can let go of all their baggage connected to their old life and begin their new life in Christ with the feelings of peace and pardon. “With the pardoning of sin which has separated us from God, we are justified-freed from the guilt and penalty of sin and restored to right relationship with God.”²⁹² New believers then have assurance through the work of the Holy Spirit of God’s ownership on their life. This assurance signifies the believer is adopted as sons/daughters of God. God claims ownership of an individual upon their confession and baptism. It should be noted that the United Methodist Church accepts previous baptisms, whether within Methodism or from another Christian denomination. Have you made a commitment to Christ through confession and baptism? If you have confessed Jesus Christ as your Savior, can others observe your life and see reflections of God? Are you fulfilling your baptismal vows?

Just as Charles Wesley believed in baptism, he also believed in infant baptism. Charles


²⁹² Felton, By the Water and Spirit, 22.
was baptized as an infant.\textsuperscript{293} He held Charles held to the Church of England’s Thirty-Nine Articles stance:

The Baptism of young Children is in any wise to be retained in the Church, as most agreeable with the institution of Christ.\textsuperscript{294}

Likewise, United Methodists also believe in infant baptism. Article VI, “Sacraments” in The Confession of Faith states,

We believe children are under the atonement of Christ and as heirs of the Kingdom of God are acceptable subjects for Christian Baptism.\textsuperscript{295}

Methodists understand infant baptism as a “…covenant with God and to receive God’s healing grace.”\textsuperscript{296} Infant baptism expresses prevenient grace. “Infant baptism rests firmly on the understanding that God prepares the way of faith before we request or even know that we need help.”\textsuperscript{297} Furthermore, “So when the infant of Christian parents is baptized, the baptism of a baby is a wonderful sign that God comes to us before we could come to God, a wonderful image of the mystery of prevenient grace.”\textsuperscript{298}

John Lawson, in his book, \textit{The Wesley Hymns: As a Guide to Scriptural Teaching} stated, “The Wesleys carried out their mission in the country where practically everyone, even the ungodly, had been baptized as an infant, apart from the small minority who had been brought up in denominations which did not baptize infants.\textsuperscript{299} Wesley highlights infant baptism in one

\begin{footnotes}
\item[293] Tyson, \textit{Assist Me to Proclaim: The Life and Hymns of Charles Wesley}, 55.
\item[294] \textit{Article XXVII of the “Articles of Faith,” The Book of Common Prayer}, 873.
\item[295] \textit{Article VI of the “Confession of Faith,” The Book of Discipline}, 72.
\item[296] Abraham and Watson, \textit{Key United Methodist Beliefs}, 107.
\item[297] Felton, \textit{By Water and the Spirit}, 28.
\item[298] William H. Willimon, \textit{This We Believe: The Core of Wesleyan Faith and Practice}, (Nashville: Abingdon, 2010), 122.
\item[299] Lawson, \textit{The Wesley Hymns: As a Guide to Scriptural Teaching}, 162.
\end{footnotes}
particular hymn not found in *The United Methodist Hymnal* titled, “Jesus, In Earth and Heaven the Same.” The hymn is based on Matthew 19:13, “Then little children were being brought to him in order that he might lay his hands on them and pray.”

> Jesus, in earth and heaven the same,  
> Accept a parent's vow,  
> To thee, baptized into thy name,  
> I bring my children now;  
> Thy love permits, invites, commands,  
> My offspring to be blessed;  
> Lay on them, Lord, thy gracious hands,  
> And hide them in thy breast.

> To each the hallowing Spirit give  
> Even from their infancy;  
> Into thy holy church receive  
> Whom I devote to thee;  
> Committed to thy faithful care,  
> Protected by thy blood,  
> Preserve by thine unceasing prayer,  
> And bring them all to God.

In this hymn, Wesley portrays the following functions of infant baptism: dedication of the child to God (“I bring my children now,”), admission into the church (“Into thy holy church receive,”), and prayer for their future holiness (“And bring them all to God”). Therefore, the family, the church and God work in unity to teach and guide the child in the faith of Jesus Christ. The desire for infant baptism is that this will be the beginning of their faith journey. The goal is when the infant becomes older; he/she will make a commitment of confessing Jesus as their Lord and Savior and give their life to the work of the church.

Moreover, the tradition of placing responsibility on the parents to provide Christian influences and experiences for their children is vital. The church, as well, plays a role in the


301 John Wesley, “Jesus, In Earth and Heaven the Same,” in *A Collection of Hymns for the Use of the People called Methodists*, (Syracuse, N.Y Wesleyan-Methodist Book-Room, 1889), Hymn 893.
faith development of children, “Children of believing parents through Baptism become the special responsibility of the Church. They should be nurtured and led to personal acceptance of Christ, and by profession of faith confirm their Baptism.”

The church makes a commitment to help the child grow in the faith. In The Baptismal Covenant II, the congregation is asked,

Will you nurture one another in the Christian faith and life and include these persons now before you in care?

The response from the church congregation states,

With God’s help we will proclaim the good news and live according to the example of Christ. We will surround these persons with a community of love and forgiveness that they may grow in their service to others. We will pray for them that they may be true disciples who walk in the way that leads to life.

In conclusion, Charles Wesley, held communion and baptism in high regard. He led a sacramental life. Charles not only wrote about the sacraments but also lived them out in his life. In his hymns, Wesley depicts the importance of communion and baptism. Wesley’s lyrics are often coordinated with the theology of Methodism. He viewed communion as a mystery, but also emphasized it was a remembrance of Christ’s sacrifice. Wesley shows communion can provide an avenue for the believer to encounter Christ. Moreover, Charles regarded baptism as an outward symbol of an inward change. He understood that through baptism, the new believer is adopted into the family of God. Baptism is a promise of the believer’s committed service to Jesus Christ and to the church. Wesley stresses both means of grace as a way to experience God. He demonstrated communion and baptism were a community event to promote unity among believers. In addition, communion and baptism were individual events through which the believer strengthened their relationship with Jesus Christ.

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302 Article VI of the “Confession of Faith,” in The Book of Discipline, 72.

303 “Baptismal Covenant II,” in The United Methodist Hymnal, 9

304 Ibid.
Session 9

The Church

As stated in the Church of England’s Thirty-Nine Articles, Charles Wesley believed the church to be,

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

These same words are expressed in Article XIII—Of the Church in our church today.

United Methodists understand the church as,

It is the redemptive fellowship in which the Word of God is preached by persons divinely called and the sacraments are duly administered to Christ’s own appointment.

Wesley not only understood the church as a congregation that hears the gospel and receives the sacraments, but he also viewed the church having other dynamics. He expresses these other aspects in his hymn, “Christ, from Whom All Blessings Flow,” which was originally titled, “The Communion of Saints” in Hymns and Sacred Poems (1740).

Christ, from whom all blessings flow,
Perfecting the saints below,
Hear us, who thy nature share,
Who thy mystic body are.

Join us, in one spirit join,
Let us still receive of thine;

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307 The Book of Discipline, 143.
Still for more on thee we call,
Thou who fillest all in all.\(^{309}\)

“Christ, from whom all blessings flow,” is the lyric Wesley uses to express the foundational belief of Christ being the head of the church. Christ oversees the church. Wesley’s understanding of Christ’s authority is how United Methodists perceive the church to this day. In Article V—The Church, The Confession of Faith:

The church is the community of all true believers under the lordship of Christ.\(^{310}\)

Christ brings Christ’s own spirit, the Holy Spirit, into the lives of the church. “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.”\(^{311}\) Charles recognized that Christ is at work in the church to bring perfection. As Christ is holy, the church is to be holy. “From the first days of the Church, the Holy Spirit has been with us, empowering us to do the work to which we are called by Christ. Yes, human beings are imperfect and we often sin, but the Holy Spirit works within us to make us new. We are a part of God’s new creation, and therefore we are also holy insofar as God makes us holy.”\(^{312}\)

Wesley asks Christ to hear the church, who by its “nature” and “mystical body,” represents Christ. The church acts as an instrument of Christ’s work, mission and purpose as a community to the world. Charles desires Christ’s presence to be on the church by asking Christ to, “Join us, in one spirit join.” The request is for Christ to watch over and move the church. Then, Charles calls on Christ to “still receive of thine” because he knows that Christ will provide

\(^{309}\) “Christ, from Whom All Blessings Flow,” written by Charles Wesley in *The United Methodist Hymnal*, 550, Stanzas 1-2.

\(^{310}\) *Book of Discipline*, 71.

\(^{311}\) *Book of Discipline*, 143.

\(^{312}\) Abraham and Watson, *Key United Methodist Belief*, 91.
the church all it needs to be a light for Him. Christ will equip, direct and offer the church vision through the Spirit to be about Christ’s redeeming work. Furthermore, the church’s goal is to undertake the redemptive work of Christ. “As Jesus Christ came ‘to bring good news to the poor…to proclaim release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free, to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor (Luke 4:18),’ so the church is to be redemptively present with the poor, the captive, the blind, and the oppressed. It is to announce in word and deed the coming of God’s justice and righteousness.”

Do you view Christ as the head of the church? How do you see Christ in the work of the church? How and why do you participate in the life of the church?

Move and actuate and guide,
Diverse gifts to each divide;
Placed according to thy will,
Let us all our work fulfill.\(^{314}\)

In the third stanza of Wesley’s hymn, “Christ, from Whom All Blessings Flow,” he speaks about Spiritual gifts. God gives each person “diverse gifts to each divide,” gifts that “move, actuate, and guide.” These gifts are various and distributed, meaning not everyone has the same gifts. Each person is given gifts according to God’s will. God appoints talents to believers to be utilized to fulfill the work of God. “Wesley describes these gifts as blessings. When identified and practiced, these blessings lead the faithful into deeper levels of maturity, service, and love.”\(^{315}\)

Moreover, believers’ gifts and talents are to make a difference and to assist the spiritual growth of others. In the United Methodist church, Sunday school teachers, musicians, lay leaders, and others provide opportunities for spiritual growth. The United Methodist Church recognizes the importance of spiritual gifts and encourages members to identify and use their gifts to serve others.

\(^{313}\) Carder, *The United Methodist Way: Living Our Beliefs*, 112.

\(^{314}\) *The United Methodist Hymnal*, 550, Stanza 3.

leaders, lay speakers, youth workers, committee members and leaders, elders, deacons, local pastors, secretaries, so many others use their gifts to benefit and nurture the church. Also, these gifts are to be used outside the church in our communities. “The Spirit moves, actuates, and guides the use of these gifts in order that, together, we might realize God’s mission in the world.”

The church is to motivate others and lead them to Christ.

Wesley does not mention or express what these gifts are, but “Christ, from Whom All Blessings Flow” is based on 1 Corinthians 12:8-11, which Paul shares as wisdom, knowledge, faith, healing, miracles, prophecy, discernment, tongues, interpretation of tongues. Other biblical texts mention gifts such as administration, apostleship, compassion, evangelism, exhortation, giving, helping, leadership, pastor, servanthood, shepherding and teaching (Rom.12:6-8 and Eph. 4:11). Which gifts do you have? How can you use these gifts in and outside the church?

Never from thy service move,
Needful to each other prove;
Use the grace on each bestowed,
Tempered by the art of God.

Many are we now, and one,
We who Jesus have put on;
There is neither bond nor free,
Male nor female, Lord, in thee.

Stanza four and five of Wesley’s hymn, “Christ, from Whom All Blessings Flow,” brings to light that the church is to be in unity. God is one through the Trinity and the church is to be one, unified. All the members of the church are to be one body. Christ is the head of the church; as the head has only one body, so the church is to be one, in unity. The task of the church is to embody the oneness of Christ with each other. The church is to be about Christ’s service with

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317 *The United Methodist Hymnal*, 550, Stanzas 4-5.
each other. The church is to be there for each other, needing each other, counting on one another.

Then, Charles shares how the grace of God is to be in the church by stating, “use the grace on each bestowed.” The art, or skill, of God is grace. God gives unmerited mercy and forgiveness to humanity. The church is to take on the art of God by bestowing grace to each other, by being people of forgiveness.

Wesley shares the beauty of the church as growing and remaining together by writing, “Many are we now, and one.” The church is diverse yet unified. As pictured in Galatians 3:27-28. People from different social and gender backgrounds join together as one body in Christ, equal members of Christ’s community.

Unity was a characteristic that Charles Wesley sought for the Methodist movement. The Methodist movement is different now than when it first began. The movement was not started as a denomination. John and Charles Wesley were ordained priests in the Church of England. The crusade was to bring renewal upon The Church of England from within through practical ways of living out Christianity. The Wesleys developed and oversaw societies of believers who met for spiritual growth and accountability. The societies were “a company of men [women] having the form and seeking the power of godliness, united in order to pray together, to receive the word of exhortation, and to watch over one another in love, that they may help each other to work out their salvation.” John Wesley developed disciplines which the societies would follow, called the General Rules. The General Rules were strategies for Christian living; twenty-seven rules

318 Tyson, Assist Me to Proclaim: The Life and Hymns of Charles Wesley, 215.

319 The Book of Discipline, 76.

320 Nolan B. Harmon, Understanding the United Methodist Church, 75.
Classes, which were small groups within the society, were developed because of an increased amount of people joining the movement. The classes brought about fellowship and accountability within the groups.

There is an article by Christophe Haubursin titled, “Why Costumed Times Square Performers Keep Attacking People,”

A man dressed as Spider-Man punched an NYPD officer after resisting arrest for harassing a tourist. He joins a long list of characters behaving badly, a list that includes a Cookie Monster who shoved a 2-year-old and an anti-Semitic Elmo. Four more characters were arrested later that night.

Why all the drama? According to Sam Sommers, an associate psychology professor at Tufts, the performers’ masks may have encouraged them to blur the line between action and consequence. “When we are anonymous, the unwritten rules of society fall by the wayside and we engage in acts that we wouldn’t usually want to be held accountable for,” he said. “Masks are a good physical substantiation of that.”

Likewise, believers need accountability. Believers may seclude themselves from other Christians and hide behind a mask the secular world views as acceptable and true. Promoting unity in the church and accountability among believers encourages believers to drop their disguise the world has deemed acceptable and promote the goal of Christlikeness.

In the Methodist movement, each class had up to twelve members and met once a week with a leader to examine if they retained the General Rules since they last gathered. Also, the leader, who was a lay person, would provide pastoral care within the group and report to the minister of the society, which was either Charles or John Wesley, or another ordained priest.

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321 Harmon, *Understanding the United Methodist Church*, 77-93.


assigned. Eventually, there were societies all across England and there were too many societies for the number of priests, so the Wesleys developed and established lay ministers. The increase and interest in the societies and class meetings express the overall importance of people feeling a sense of belonging. “Belonging to a small group showed that one mattered as a person, as the unique individual that one is; belonging to the bigger local church with the national Church [England] showed that one was part of something grander and even global.”

Charles desired for the societies to be connected within the Church of England. He believed in the Methodist societies and provided pastoral leadership. He held that the Methodist movement should never separate from the Church of England. Charles was loyal to the Church. His allegiance is seen through the last lines of a hymn in *Hymns for the Methodist Preachers*.

> And ne’er from England’s Church will move
> Till torn away-to that above

Charles Wesley was strongly committed to the work of the Church. One could conclude he was more devoted to the Church than his brother, John. Adam Clark, an early Methodist minister, wrote Bible commentaries, and noted:

> Mr. J. Wesley mildly recommended the people to go to the Church and sacrament. Mr. C. Wesley threatened them with damnation if they did not.

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325 Ibid.
327 Abraham and Watson, *Key United Methodist Beliefs*, 89-90.
Charles would do all he could to keep the unity of the societies within the Church intact. He understood that the societies were a blessing to the Church, but problems would soon exist that would test their unity.

One concern was the sacrament given by lay preachers. Lay preachers were able to proclaim the Word, provide leadership and provide pastoral duties among the societies, but they did not have the right to give the sacrament. Communion could only be performed by ordained Church of England priests. There were lay ministers who questioned the decree. “…two Moravians in Fetter Lane society, Shaw and Wolf, who claimed that there was no Christian Priesthood as such, and that they could administer the Sacrament as well as anyone. Charles did all he could to oppose Shaw, whom he called the ‘self-ordained priest.’” Shaw, through his conflict with Charles, soon left Fetter Lane society because he could not administer the sacrament. On another occasion, “Thomas Walsh, a convert from Irish Catholicism, had put the case before (John) Wesley: the people must have the ordinances of Christ, but they will not go to the Church because of the ungodly priests; they would however, ‘joyfully communicate with those whom they have been brought to God.’ In the end, Walsh and some others began giving the sacrament.

John did not support the decision of these lay preachers. Charles suspected that John was ready to bow to the desires of such preachers, in order to provide for sufficient sacramental ministry among the societies. This would have amounted to a clear separation from the Church of England, and Charles strongly resisted it. Charles wrote An Epistle to the Reverend

331 Heitzenrater, Wesley and the People Called Methodist, 115.
332 Heitzenrater, Wesley and the People Called Methodist, 191.
333 Tyson, Assist Me to Proclaim: The Life and Hymns of Charles Wesley, 217.
334 Tyson, Assist Me to Proclaim: The Life and Hymns of Charles Wesley, 218.
Mr. John Wesley in poetry. “The epistle stresses Charles’s appreciation for Methodism as a movement, while insisting that it is not the church, and it pleads with John to restrain any act that would turn Methodism into a dissenting church.”

The beginning of the Epistle speaks these words:

My first and last unalienable friend,
A brother’s thoughts with due regard attend,
A brother, still as thy own soul belov’d,
Who speak to learn, and write to be reprov’d:
Far from the factious undiscerning crowd,
Distrest I fly to thee, and think aloud;
I tell thee, wise and faithful as thou art,
The fears and sorrows of a burthen’d heart,
The workings of (a blind or heav’nly) zeal,
And all my fondness for the Church I tell,
The Church whose cause I serve, whose faith approve,
Whose altars reverence, and whose name I love.

This issue of communion by lay preachers would continue to be a problem within the society, and soon the concern had reached America. John did his best to try to emphasize the importance of not separating from the Church of England. The first two preachers John sent to America were Joseph Philmore and Richard Boardman who upheld Wesley’s General Rules for Societies of which the first rule stated:

That the Methodist Society was never designed to make a Separation from the Church of England or be looked upon as a Church.  

The first rule would soon not be a practice in the societies, because the Revolutionary War broke out in which the Colonies battled for independence from England. After the Colonies won the war, the Church of England was no longer present in America. There was no one

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authorized to give communion because all the priests left. The societies would then appeal to
John Wesley to do something about the situation. What John did would upset his brother, and
would forever change Methodism in America. The societies eventually would become a church.

John Wesley took matters into his own hands. Instead of having a Bishop of the Church of
England ordain men to come to America to give the sacrament, John ordained them himself. 337
When Charles got word, he was disgusted by what his brother did, and in turn, he wrote a poem
titled, “Epigram.” Charles made shrewd comments about all parties involved:

So easily are bishops made
By man’s or women’s whim?
Wesley his hands on Coke hath laid
But who laid hands on him? 338

Charles scorns his brother, John, for not having the authoritative, “laying the hands”
power and questioned Coke becoming a bishop. Coke became the first Bishop in Methodism in
America. Furthermore, Charles ridicules Coke for ordaining Francis Asbury, as they both
became bishops in Methodism:

Cokes ordination of Asbury
A Roman emperor, ‘tis said,
His favorite horse a consul made;
But Coke brings other things to pass,
He makes a bishop of an ass. 339

Not only did Wesley write these words, he also reprinted The Epistle to the Reverend Mr.

John Wesley. Charles never wanted the Methodist movement to separate from the Church of
England. He wanted to maintain the church, but this result was not to his liking. John, on the
other hand, believed the unity was still present, not within the Church of England, but within the

337 Heitzenrater, Wesley and the People Called Methodist, 307-308.


339 S.T. Kimbrough, Jr. and Oliver A. Beckerlegge, eds, The Unpublished Poetry of Charles Wesley, 3 vols,
(Nashville: Abingdon/Kingswood, 1988) 3.81.
unity of the societies. John believed in order for the societies to continue in America, he had no other choice but to ordain two lay preachers and appoint another as a bishop. The American societies became known as a church in 1784, naming themselves the Methodist Episcopal Church. The societies in England stayed within the Church of England until the death of John Wesley.

This would not be the only schism in Methodist history. There are a number of denominations having Wesleyan heritage, around one hundred and eleven. Just a few examples include Free Methodist, Nazarene, Wesleyan, African Methodist Episcopal (AME), African Methodist Episcopal Zion (AME Zion), Southern Methodist Church, Bible Methodist Connection of Tennessee. Many of these denominational splits were due to doctrinal, theological and polity disputes.

Charles closes his hymn, “Christ, from Whom All Blessings Flow,” with the words:

Love, like death, hath all destroyed,
Rendered all distinctions void;
Names and sects and parties fall;
Thou, O Christ, art all in all!

The words are similar to Matthew Prior in his poem, Solomon:

Or grant thy passion has these names destroy’d:
That Love, like Death, makes all distinctions void.

Frank Baker makes Wesley’s connection to Prior in his book, Charles Wesley's Verse: An Introduction. He believes, “Solomon was a favorite poem with both John and Charles Wesley; it

[Footnotes]

341 Ibid.
342 Heitzenrater, Wesley and the People Called Methodist, 316.
343 The United Methodist Hymnal, 550, Stanza 6.
occupies a hundred pages of John’s Collection of Moral and Sacred Poems, and Charles urged his daughter Sally to memorize it completely.”  

Moreover, Wesley shares that the church is to be “all in all” in Christ’s love. The church’s love will avoid any distinctions, whether in names, sects, or parties. “The church is not reserved for a single people, race, or nation. The Church is for all people. We have a responsibility, then, to further the work of Christ in reaching out to all people, offering them the love of God in Jesus Christ.” The church is to look past differences and bless people by conveying Christ in all it does.

In 1938, three denominations came together to reunite through their Methodist Episcopal Church heritage. One was the Methodist Protestant Church, which left over the issue of laity not having power to make decisions in the governing body of the church. They believed in lay representation. The other two groups were divided in 1844 over the issue of slavery. The proslavery church became known as the Methodist Episcopal Church, South. The anti-slavery church continued with the original name, the Methodist Episcopal Church. Planning began in 1916, and the three churches came together to form The Methodist Church twenty-two years later. The three church organizations resolved their historical differences and begin a relationship again. The merger showed that healing and forgiveness could occur within bodies of Christ that were separated. The Methodist Church was founded on love and unity.


345 Abraham and Watson, Key United Methodist Beliefs, 92.


347 Norwood, The Story of American Methodism, 204.


349 Book of Discipline, 20.
In summary, the Methodist Church exhibits the messages and meanings in Charles Wesley’s hymn, “Christ, whom all blessings flow.” Both promote Christ as the head of the church and the utilization of God-given talents within the church body and community. In addition, church unity, grace and forgiveness are encouraged in Wesley’s hymn and the United Methodist Church. What issues could bring division in the church today? Are denominational splits acceptable? What can we do to prevent separation within the church? How do we prompt unity, love and forgiveness amongst each other?
In 1746, Charles Wesley released hymns dealing with death and eternal life titled, *Funeral Hymns*. The collection originally consisted of sixteen hymns. Several years later in 1759, he used the same title and included forty-three hymns. The hymns demonstrate his belief in eternal life, life beyond the grave. In the hymn, “Come, Let Us Join Our Friends Above,” Wesley expresses his belief in the afterlife, as well as in Christ’s second coming. Wesley begins the hymn by saying,

Come, let us join our friends above  
Who have obtained the prize,  
And on the eagle wings of love  
To joys celestial rise.  
Let saints on earth unite to sing  
With those to glory gone,  
For all the servants of our King  
In earth and heaven are one.  

Charles emphasizes a connection between believers on earth and “our friends above,” believers who are in heaven. He shares “our friends” have “obtained the prize” meaning eternal life. He believed those that have died are in heaven. Those who have died ran the course of life and have won a prize through faith, and now dwell with God in eternity. Charles suggests those who are alive will experience heaven as well. He uses the image of “eagle wings,” which is an allusion from the Exodus story when God told Moses,

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350 Charles Wesley, “Come, Let Us Join Our Friends Above,” in *Funeral Hymns*, (London: Strahan, 1759), 1-2; and Hymn 1 and in *the United Methodist Hymnal*, 709.

351 *The United Methodist Hymnal*, 709, Stanza 1.
You have seen what I did to the Egyptians, and how I bore you on eagles’ wings and brought you to myself.\textsuperscript{352}

God lifted the Hebrews out of slavery and set them free. He uses the image to illustrate believers who are alive will be lifted up as well someday by God’s love to the place where “joys celestial rise,” meaning heaven.

Also, Charles conveys the connection between those in heaven and on earth by using words like, “all,” “unite,” and “one.” Additionally, Charles states the following about the saints, “Let saints on earth unite to sing.” People often equate the term “saint” with individuals in heaven; Wesley here uses “those to glory gone.” Furthermore, he connects saints with the living, meaning Christians on earth. The term is used in the New Testament for Christians who are alive (Rom 1:7, 1 Cor 1:2, Eph 1:1). Wesley portrays both groups as saints in the lyrics, “In earth and heaven are one,” because they are faithful in living out God’s purposes in their lives. Wesley emphasizes the connection to express the importance of those on earth feeling they belong as well to heaven. Charles is attempting to provide reassurance for the living followers of Christ.

Heaven is there for believers. United Methodists uphold the belief of eternal life. Through Christ’s Resurrection, believers will be resurrected. Article, XII—The Judgment and the Future State notes,

We believe in the Resurrection of the dead; the righteous to life eternal and the wicked to endless condemnation.\textsuperscript{353}

Believers can find comfort knowing when they take their last breath they will be with Christ. In John 14:2-3,

\textsuperscript{352} Exodus 19:4 (New Revised Standard Version).

\textsuperscript{353} Article XII of the “Confession of Faith” in The Book of Discipline, 74.
In my Father’s house there are many dwelling places. If it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you? And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, so that where I am, there you may be also.”

Christ promises a place in heaven for believers when they die. What fears do people have about death? What joys do believers have when they think about heaven? How often do you think about the afterlife?

The second stanza of Wesley’s hymn, “Come, Let Us Join Our Friends Above,” states:

One family we dwell in him,
One church above, beneath,
Though now divided by the stream,
The narrow stream of death;
One army of the living God,
To his command we bow;
Part of his host have crossed the flood,
And part are crossing now.

Wesley continues the belief of joining earthly and heavenly believers in Christ. He uses the word, “one,” three times in reference to family, church, and army of the living God (Christ). He makes the connection with family, which is more personal than friends, because they are brothers and sisters in Christ, having the same DNA, the blood of Christ in their life. They are the Church, they are the body of Christ, all having roles to encourage and strengthen each other by being people of grace. Charles is designating the joint uniting of all members of Christ’s body, the church, in heaven and on earth. The church unites all the faithful as one in both places. They are both the “army of the living God.” The army bows to Christ’s commands. These believers have been about the mission of Christ to the world, displaying God’s love to humanity and doing the will of God. Charles understood this fellowship as sharing God’s life together.

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355 The United Methodist Hymnal, 709, Stanza 2.
Wesley shares what divides these two groups, the “stream of death.” However, death ended for humanity upon Christ’s death and resurrection. Charles states those who have died in Christ have already crossed the stream, and those who are on earth are now crossing. They are making their way to heaven; they will be there soon. Death has no sting because of Christ. Christ has ended the separation; those who are redeemed are not separated from each other because they are not separated from Christ.

Marcello Di Cintio notes in his book *Walls: Travels Along the Barricades*, Human beings have always been preoccupied with building walls. In the first century, the Roman emperor Hadrian built a 75-mile wall across Roman Britain. In the 1870s, Argentina built a line of trenches and watchtowers called the Zanja de Alsina to protect Buenos Aires from invasion by indigenous peoples. The Berlin Wall went up in 1961, dividing East from West for almost thirty years. In 1975, South Africa built a 3,500-volt electric fence dubbed the Snake of Fire to keep the civil war in Mozambique from spilling over into the frontier. In the middle of the night in August 2006, Italian officials constructed a steel wall around Via Anelli, a run-down neighborhood known for drug trafficking and prostitution.

Walls do not just divide us. They make us ill. After the Berlin Wall went up, East German psychiatrists reported an increase in clients suffering from mental illness, rage, dejection and addiction. The closer to the physical wall people lived, the more acute their disorders. The only cure for "Wall Disease" was to bring the Wall down. In 1990, psychiatrists noted the "emotional liberation" felt after November 9, 1989 when the Wall finally fell. Thousands of jubilant Germans climbed the Wall, wept, and embraced each other atop the concrete. They proceeded to tear the Wall down with joyful abandon.\(^{356}\)

Christ has ended the dividing wall of death and we are no longer separated from Christ.

Romans 8:35-39 teaches us:

> Who will separate us from the love of Christ? Will hardship, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? As it is written, ‘For your sake we are being killed all day long; we are accounted as sheep to be slaughtered.’ No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor rulers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.\(^{357}\)

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Wesley’s third stanza in his hymn, “Come, Let Us Join Our Friends Above,” says,

Ten thousand to their endless home  
This solemn moment fly,  
And we are to the margin come,  
And we expect to die.  
E’en now by faith we join our hands  
With those that went before,  
And greet the blood-besprinkled bands  
On the eternal shore.  

Charles describes how “ten thousand,” meaning an uncountable amount of people, have just made it to “their endless home,” heaven. He mentions how those on earth are on the edge of reaching heaven because death is expected for all. Even though the earthly believers have not made it to heaven, they are still in fellowship with those who have gone on. Those joining hands on earth are united with those in eternity. Those in heaven, pictured as “blood-besprinkled bands,” due to Christ’s sacrifice on their lives, are on the shore waiting to meet those coming. There will be a union with those who have gone before.

The movie, Antwone Fisher, is based on the true story of a young man abandoned at birth by an incarcerated woman, who was raised in abusive orphanages, foster homes, and reform schools. After Antwone’s 18th birthday, he joins the Navy where his anger towards life brims to the surface. After several fights, he is ordered to undergo counseling. Psychologist Jerome Davenport encourages Antwone to find his roots to begin healing.

After several phone calls, he reaches one aunt and uncle in Cleveland, who escort him to a dilapidated apartment complex where his estranged mother lives. A suspicious and aloof woman answers the door. Upon realizing that Antwone is the child she gave up at birth, she retreats to another room and sits down on a soiled and worn couch and cries silently. Antwone asks for some explanation as to why she never came to rescue him or why she never sought him out. She could not answer. She simply stares ahead, not daring to look at him, tears rolling down her expressionless face.

He gently kisses her on the cheek as if to say, "I forgive you," and walks away. His mother remains on the couch and stares at nothing, making no effort to respond. A

\[358 \text{ The United Methodist Hymnal, 709, Stanza 3.}\]
despondent Fisher leaves the apartment with his questions unanswered and rides back to his aunt's house with his uncle.

As he exits the car, his slow gait betrays the loneliness of a man with no hope of a meaningful connection to anyone. However, as Antwone enters the front door, his world changes. He is met with a chorus of cheers from 50 plus relatives, all waiting to meet Antwone for the first time.

There are children, couples, cousins, uncles, and family friends, all smothering him with hugs, slaps on the back and beaming smiles. One cousin tells him his name is Edward and says, "I'm named after your dad," and an older aunt squeezes his cheeks. Antwone takes it all in, overwhelmed.

The hallway stairs are filled with kids holding up signs with his name scribbled next to Crayola-sketched smiley faces and rainbows. He is then led into the next room where a grand feast is spread across a long table. The table is overflowing with chicken, mashed potatoes, pancakes, fruit salad, and every other possible dish. The room is prepared for a party. For the first time in his life, he is being adored. For the first time, he belongs.

As the clamor quiets, an elderly woman sitting behind the table knocks to get Antwone's attention and then waves for him to come over next to her. With slow, deliberate moves, she raises her arms, grabbing his hands and then caressing his face. A slow tear runs down her cheek, and with a raspy voice that seems as if it is mustering all the strength it possesses, she whispers the redemptive invitation: "Welcome." 359

In much the same way, we are welcomed into the family of God. There will be a welcoming in eternity for us. Just imagine in your life, who will you like to see in heaven waiting for you?

Wesley not only believed in the resurrection, but also he believed that Christ would return. He believed in Christ’s second coming. Through Charles’s hymns, we witness that Christ’s second coming has many purposes. Charles understood Christ would bring judgment. His faith was grounded on the Church of England’s Thirty-Nine Articles,

…he ascended into Heaven, and there sitteth, until he return to judge all Men at the last day." 360


Rejoice in glorious hope! Jesus the Judge shall come.\(^{362}\)

In another one of Wesley’s hymns, “Lo, He Comes with Cloud Descending,” originally titled, “The Same [Thy Kingdom Come]” and published in *Intercession Hymns* (1758), he provides some judgment imagery for unbelievers based on Revelation 1:7,

Look, he is coming with the clouds, and every eye will see him, even those who pierced him; and all peoples on earth will mourn because of him. So shall it be! Amen.\(^{364}\)

Every eye shall now behold him,
Robed in dreadful majesty;
Those who set at naught and sold him,
Pierced and nailed him to the tree
Deeply wailing…\(^{365}\)

United Methodists believe in Christ’s second coming. During the Great Thanksgiving of the communion rite in the *United Methodist Hymnal*, the following is said as a community:

“Christ has died; Christ has risen; Christ will come again.”\(^{366}\) It is unknown the date or the time when Christ will come. Judgment does await us. Article XII—The Judgment and the Future State states,

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365 *The United Methodist Hymnal*, 718, Stanza 2.

366 “A Service of Word and the Table” in *The United Methodist Hymnal*, 10.
We believe all men stand under the righteous judgment of Jesus Christ, both now and in the last day."\(^{367}\)

Mack B. Stokes, in *Major United Methodist Beliefs*, stated, “It is our belief that we cannot express ourselves more clearly about our duties before God than by saying this: How we live here makes all the difference between heaven and hell in the world to come."\(^{368}\) How are you living out Christ in your life? Scripture teaches that we do not know the time or day Christ will come, but we are to be ready. How can we conduct our lives to prepare for Christ’s second coming?

Wesley also describes in his hymn, “Lo, He Comes with Clouds Descending,” that the second coming would bring Christ’s reign. He states,

\begin{verbatim}
Lo, he comes with clouds descending,
Once for favored sinners slain,
Thousand, thousand saints attending
Swell the triumph of his train.
Hallelujah! Hallelujah! Hallelujah!
God appears on earth to reign.\(^{369}\)
\end{verbatim}

In this particular hymn, Charles does not go into depth describing how God will rule only that God’s reign will inspire rejoicing: “Hallelujah! Hallelujah!, Hallelujah!” United Methodists believe God’s reign is both now and in the future. God’s reign now can be observed in people turning their lives over to Christ. “Wherever persons are being made new creatures in Christ, whatever the insights and resources of the gospel are brought to bear on the life of the world, God’s reign is already effective in its healing and renewing power."\(^{370}\) The reign is displayed through our lives every time we show others Christlikeness, providing acts of forgiveness and

\(^{367}\) Article XII of the “Confession of Faith” in *The Book of Discipline*, 74.


\(^{369}\) *The United Methodist Hymnal*, 718, Stanza 1.

\(^{370}\) *The Book of Discipline*, 48.
servanthood. “Though the Kingdom is not fully, completely come, there’s enough of the Kingdom to live with joy and transformed lives right now.” Christ’s second coming brings about the completion of God’s kingdom. Christ will end the fallen and corrupt world. John Wesley said,

And we have strong reason to hope that the work he hath begun, he will carry on unto the day of the Lord Jesus; that he will never intermit this blessed work of his Spirit, until he has fulfilled all his promises, until he hath put a period to sin, and misery, and infirmity, and death; and re-established universal holiness and happiness, and caused all the inhabitants of the earth to sing together, “Hallelujah, the Lord God omnipotent reigneth!” “Blessing, and glory, and wisdom, and honour, and power, and might, be unto our God for ever and ever!”

John Wesley looked forward to Christ’s reign bringing the end of evil and reestablishing righteousness. What would you like to see Christ defeat when he comes again?

In “Come, Let Us Join Our Friends Above,” Charles Wesley visualizes Christ’s coming will bring the faithful to eternity. He writes,

Our spirits too shall quickly join,
Like theirs with glory crowned,
And shout to see our Captain's sign,
To hear this trumpet sound.
O that we now might grasp our Guide!
O that the word were given!
Come, Lord of Hosts, the waves divide,
And land us all in heaven.

Charles speaks about how those on earth will quickly meet those in heaven. They will now experience the victory that those already in heaven have experienced. He goes on to

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373 *The United Methodist Hymnal*, 709 Stanza 4.
illustrate that those who are on earth will “shout,” which expresses a loud voice of excitement, to see a sign of Christ. Wesley’s lyrics are making a reference to Matthew 24:30:

Then the sign of the Son of Man will appear in heaven, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see ‘the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven’ with power and great glory.\(^{374}\)

Furthermore, Charles mentions the image of a trumpet. The trumpet in the New Testament symbolizes Christ’s second coming. The trumpet is the sound heard when Christ will come and gather the faithful (1 Thess. 4:16 and 1 Cor. 15:52).

Then, Wesley expresses, “grasp our Guide!” showing his happiness at having the opportunity to encounter Christ, who will escort them to heaven. Christ will take them to their new home.

Additionally, he states the joy of the command of Christ’s coming has arrived. There is no more delay, or waiting; the time has now come to experience eternity. He is showcasing heaven as a blessing, a promise of happiness.

John R. Tyson shares one of the last hymns Charles Wesley ever wrote:

O that the joyful hour was come,  
Which calls Thy ready servant home,  
Unites me to the Church above,  
Where angels chant the song of love,  
And saints eternally proclaim  
The glories of the heavenly Lamb.

Tyson states, “Wesley describes his attitude about the prospect of his translation from this life to the next. For him, death meant the final arrival of true holiness and a wonderful

\(^{374}\) Matthew 24:30 (New Revised Standard Version).
homecoming for God’s ‘ready servant,’ with the saints departed and ‘the heavenly lamb.’”

Wesley is sharing the bliss that awaits him.

Charles closes the stanza in his hymn, “Let Us Join Our Friends Above,” using the words, “Come, Lord of Hosts, the waves divide, And land us all in heaven,” with an allusion to the Exodus story of the Hebrews escaping slavery from the Egyptians. God told Moses to lift his staff, and the sea parted and the Hebrews traveled safely on dry land (Exodus 14:16-22). Charles saw Christ’s second coming as dividing the waters, bringing the faithful to the safety of landing in heaven.

In conclusion, Charles Wesley composed hymns like, “Come, Let Us Join Our Friends Above,” to depict the experiences of believers entering heaven and of Christ’s second coming. United Methodists also show their beliefs about heaven and Christ’s return in the Articles of Confession of Faith. Charles utilizes his lyrics to remind us of the connection we already have with heaven, and to paint a picture of what awaits believers as we anticipate the return of Christ. Charles did not experience the second coming while he was living on earth. He did experience death, and is now experiencing the glories of heaven he portrayed in his hymns. Charles died on March 29, 1788. On his tombstone are these words:

With poverty of spirit blest,
Rest, happy saint, in Jesus rest;
A sinner saved, through grace forgiven.
Redeemed from earth to reign in heaven.

Thy labours of unwearied love,
By thee forgot, are crowned above;
Crowned, through the mercy of thy Lord,
With a free, full, immense reward.

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375 Tyson, Assist Me to Proclaim: The Life and Hymns of Charles Wesley, 335.
376 Heitzenrater, Wesley and the People Called Methodists, 300.
377 Tyson, Assist Me to Proclaim: The Life and Hymns of Charles Wesley, 338.
Tyson states, “The words carved on his tombstone were his own; they had been written for the death of his friend, the Moravian bishop Latrobe, but they fit their author’s character equally well.”\textsuperscript{378} What are words others might use to describe you after your life on earth has passed?

\textsuperscript{378} Ibid.
Concluding Statements on Charles Wesley’s Life

Charles was a family man. He loved his wife, Sally. He had eight children, but only three would reach adulthood: Samuel, Charles Jr. and Sally Jr, (Sarah). All his children were musically talented. Charles Jr. was an organist and musician. Sally Jr. was a poet. Both of them were members of a Methodist society; while Samuel became a Catholic and composed music for the Catholic Church. Charles struggled with his son’s decision; he was hurt and would share this lament in conversations with people, as well as in his poetry. Charles eventually came to peace with his son’s decision and continued to love him. “About a week before Charles’s death, his son Samuel visited him. Though it was difficult for the dying man to speak, Sally recalled, upon seeing Samuel he took hold of his hand and said, ‘I shall bless God to all eternity that ever you were born. I am persuaded I shall.’” Eventually, Samuel did leave the Catholic Church.

Furthermore, Charles continued to seek for the Methodist societies to remain within the Church of England. He ministered in society chapels in London, mainly at Foundry, and at two others, City Road and West Street. Charles would not call them churches. He referred to them as chapels, so they were not seen as separate from the church. He preached and gave

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379 Clark, Charles Wesley, 14.
380 Clark, Charles Wesley, 20.
381 Tyson, Assist Me to Proclaim: The Life and Hymns of Charles Wesley, 327-328.
382 Tyson, Assist Me to Proclaim: The Life and Hymns of Charles Wesley, 334.
383 Tyson, Assist Me to Proclaim: The Life and Hymns of Charles Wesley, 329.
384 Tyson, Assist Me to Proclaim: The Life and Hymns of Charles Wesley, 330.
385 Tyson, Assist Me to Proclaim: The Life and Hymns of Charles Wesley, 291.
leadership to the congregations. “Even in the last years of his life, Charles went regularly to London’s Newgate Prison.”

Charles loved the Church of England. He never wanted the Methodist movement to leave the church. He did all he could to keep the connection in place in England. Charles told an Anglican priest who visited him in his last days, “Sir, whatever the world may have thought of me, I lived, and died, in the communion of the Church of England, and I will be buried in the yard of my parish church.” Charles is buried behind Marlebone Parish Church in London.

After all the turmoil with the ordination of two laypersons and Coke as Bishop, Charles said this in a letter to Dr. Chandler about his brother John,

Thus our Partnership here is dissolved, but not our friendship. I have taken him for better or worse, till death do us part; or rather, re-unite us in love inseparable. I have lived on earth a little too long—who have lived to see this evil day. But I shall very soon be taken from it, in steadfast faith, that the Lord will maintain his own cause, and carry on his own work, and fulfill his promise to his church, “Lo, I am with you always, even to the end!”

Eventually, Charles would find peace with his brother; they would continue to have a relationship with each other.

Due to his travel schedule, John was unable to attend Charles’s funeral, but Charles’s family was there. Charles’s daughter, Sally Jr. (Sarah) sent a letter to John about Charles’s death:

Last morning which was the 29th of March, being unable to speak, my mother entreated him to press her hand, if he knew her; which he feebly did. His last words which I could hear were, ‘Lord, my heart my God!’ He then drew his breath short, and the last so

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386 Tyson, Assist Me to Proclaim: The Life and Hymns of Charles Wesley, 292.

387 Tyson, Assist Me to Proclaim: The Life and Hymns of Charles Wesley, 337.

388 Clark, Charles Wesley, 16; and Tyson, Assist Me to Proclaim: The Life and Hymns of Charles Wesley, 338.

389 Tyson, Assist Me to Proclaim: The Life and Hymns of Charles Wesley, 313.

390 Tyson, Assist Me to Proclaim: The Life and Hymns of Charles Wesley, 330 and 333.
gently, that we knew not exactly the moment in which his happy spirit fled. His dear hand was in mine for five minutes before, and at the awful period of, his dissolution.\textsuperscript{391}

Even though John was not present for Charles’s funeral, there is evidence he grieved deeply for his brother. “Two weeks later at a service in Bolton, while lining out his brother’s hymn, ‘Come, O Thou Traveler Unknown’ (‘Wrestling with Jacob’), John could not get past the words, ‘My company before is gone, and I am left alone with Thee.’ He burst into tears and sat down in the pulpit, his face in his hands. The singing stopped, but John was finally able to continue.”\textsuperscript{392}

Without Charles Wesley, there would not be a Methodist movement. He was the one who started the small group that would spring into a movement within the Church of England and eventually have its own identity as a church, now called the United Methodist Church. Charles Wesley used his gifts from God to have a lasting impact on the church, and his hymns express the theology of Methodism. “As the Methodists began to sing, they began to enunciate their theology with a fervor that theology often seems to lack. The hymns would provide a way to express the intensity of their new experience, an outlet for a joy they had never before known and hardly knew how to express.”\textsuperscript{393} Wesley’s hymns were a way to evangelize, to share the gospel with people. He wrote hymns so others could experience the God he knew, a God of grace. Many of his hymns are still in use in the church today, being sung and proclaimed in the hearts of Christian congregations.

S.T. Kimbrough in \textit{The Lyrical Theology of Charles Wesley} speaks of Charles Wesley’s hymns saying, “They continue to summon nonbelievers to faith and believers to deeper faith and

\textsuperscript{391} Tyson, \textit{Assist Me to Proclaim: The Life and Hymns of Charles Wesley}, 337.

\textsuperscript{392} Heitzenrater, \textit{Wesley and the People Called Methodists}, 300.

more faithful living. Charles Wesley does so through poetry and song, which create a vibrant, lyrical theological memory individually and corporately for Christians and the church as a whole.**394

In closing, the following is a stanza from a Charles Wesley hymn that has not been discussed, in this project, but is famous in Methodist circles. The stanza comes from the hymn, “O For a Thousand Tongues to Sing,” which Charles wrote after his conversion. The hymn speaks of his love for God, and expresses why he gave his life to God and to God’s redeeming work in the world:

O for a thousand tongues to sing
My great Redeemer’s praise,
The glories of my God and King,
The triumphs of his grace.395

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394 Kimbrough, The Lyrical Theology of Charles Wesley: A Reader, 72.

395 “O For a Thousand Tongues to Sing” written by Charles Wesley in The United Methodist Hymnal, 57, Stanza 1.
Conclusion

Methodism 101: Theology through Charles Wesley’s Hymns was a thorough study promoting knowledge about foundational United Methodist doctrine. By studying Charles Wesley, I gained insight into his biography. I expanded my perspective of Charles’s significance and impact on Methodism. Despite being overshadowed by his brother, John, Charles played an integral role in the development of the United Methodist doctrine. Also, Wesley’s hymns aided me in a deeper understanding of United Methodist beliefs, as I was immersed in its doctrine. Wesley’s lyrics provided an outline to depict major components of the foundational beliefs of the United Methodist Church. Furthermore, I gained an appreciation of the vast number of Wesley’s hymns, along with an appreciation of their theology-rich content. Engrossed in my research, I developed a deeper understanding of United Methodist beliefs which, in turn, increases my ability to communicate this theology to the congregation. During my investigation, I read many different authors, giving me a variety of perspectives on theology, grounding me even further in my Methodism. I began to examine my own belief system and faith practices, whether I uphold the different views I was researching, comparing my current theology with other viewpoints.

After each session, I would evaluate how I would have done things differently. First, I would have used only one hymn per session. My goal was to pull in several other hymns, in addition to the main hymn, to provide more support for the topic; however, adding other hymns could be confusing to the listener/reader. Another change, I would have expanded this project to twelve sessions instead of ten. One session would have focused entirely on Charles Wesley’s biography. Also, the sacrament session contained a great deal of information, and it was difficult to communicate all the material in one session. Communion and baptism should have been separated into two different sessions. In hindsight, breaking learners into small groups and
having each group dissect one stanza of the hymn could have been another learning strategy to get their perspective prior to the presentation of the material.

I consider this project a success. Learners were provided with United Methodist foundational truths, leading to an increased knowledge of their faith. Two of the study attendees decided to become church members. In addition, learning increased and was demonstrated through pre- and post-testing. Test questions and percentages/scores can be viewed in the appendices. One of the last questions on the final test (which was not scored as part of the test) was as follows: “What will you take away from this study of Charles Wesley?” A summary of the comments were: Charles was an educated man and a preacher; Charles wrote many hymns and poems; Charles was faithful through adversity; Charles had a strong connection to the Church of England and he started the Methodist movement; increased knowledge of Methodist beliefs and Methodist history; better understanding of the means of grace, Christ’s resurrection and his second coming; and an increased knowledge of United Methodist terms/vocabulary. Presenting Charles Wesley’s hymns to the learners provided them with another avenue to gain information about their Christian faith. In worship, these individuals can not only sing, but also proclaim theology, with a greater understanding of the underlying meaning of the lyrics.
Appendix A

Pre- and Post-Test Questions

Session 1: Introduction to Charles Wesley/Trinity/God the Father (Maker)

1. What church did Charles Wesley grow up in and become ordained in?
2. Which colony did Charles do missionary work in?
3. Which book of the Bible was Charles reading when he had his conversion experience?
4. Provide two modes of how Charles Wesley shared the Gospel.
5. What makes up the Trinity?
6. Describe three characteristics of the image of God.

Session 2: Jesus Christ

1. What does the word “welkin” mean?
2. What distorts the image of God?
3. What does the word “atonement” mean?
4. How has Jesus reconciled humanity and God?
5. True or False, Jesus is both human and divine?
6. What does the word “incarnate” mean?
7. What is the Resurrection?
8. What does the term “new birth” mean?

Session 3: Holy Spirit

1. What does the Holy Spirit do?
2. What is Pentecost?
3. What is the Passover?
4. What does the term “grace” mean?
5. What does the term “assurance” mean?

Session 4: Prevenient Grace

1. What does the word “prevenient grace” mean?
2. What does “universal grace” mean?
3. What does the word “predestination” mean?
4. What does “condition election” mean?
5. Define the word “awakening.”
6. What is repentance?

Session 5: Justifying Grace

1. Define “justifying grace.”
2. What does “pardon” mean?
3. Define “faith.”
4. How does one become made right before God?

Session 6: Sanctifying Grace and Perfection

1. What does the term “sanctification” mean?
2. Define “regeneration.”
3. What is personal holiness?
4. What is social holiness?
5. What is perfection?
6. What are the 3 graces of salvation?

Session 7: The Means of Grace

1. Define “means of grace.”
2. What are 3 examples of means of grace?
3. Define prayer.
4. What is scripture?
5. What is fasting?
6. What is a worship service?

Session 8: The Sacraments

1. What are the two sacraments?
2. What is the term “memorialism?”
3. Define “virtualism.”
4. Define the term “transubstantiation?”
5. Did Charles Wesley believe in infant baptism, yes or no?

Session 9: The Church

1. What is the church?
2. List 3 spiritual gifts.
3. Did Charles Wesley believe only ordained priest could give communion, yes or no?
4. Who ordained lay preachers, Charles or John Wesley?
5. Did Charles want the Methodist societies to stay a part of the Church of England, yes or no?

Session 10: Resurrection of Saints/Concluding Statements on Charles Wesley’s Life

1. What does Christ’s resurrection provide for believers?
2. Who represents the saints?
3. What does Christ’s second coming provide for the believers on earth?
4. Did Charles Wesley ever find peace with his brother, John, after the decision of the Methodist movement in America to separate from the Church of England, yes or no?
5. Did Charles Wesley stay with the Methodist movement after the separation from the Church of England and ordination of lay persons, yes or no?
Appendix B

Percentages for Pre- and Post-Tests

Session 1: Introduction to Charles Wesley/Trinity/God the Father (Maker)
  pre-test: 16%  post-test: 74%
Session 2: Jesus Christ
  pre-test: 40%  post-test: 90%
Session 3: Holy Spirit
  pre-test: 51%  post-test: 83%
Session 4: Prevenient Grace
  pre-test: 30%  post-test: 90%
Session 5: Justifying Grace
  pre-test: 73%  post-test: 92%
Session 6: Sanctifying Grace and Perfection
  pre-test: 44%  post-test: 94%
Session 7: The Means of Grace
  pre-test: 66%  post-test: 100%
Session 8: The Sacraments
  pre-test: 20%  post-test: 98%
Session 9: The Church
  pre-test: 32%  post-test: 96%
Session 10: Resurrection of Saints/Concluding Statements on Charles Wesley’s Life
  pre-test: 52%  post-test: 80%
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