

Comparative Christianity
by
Fr. William G. Brown
via
Zoom 5:30 – 6:30 pm



Methodist Church

April 20, 2022

The Seal of the United Methodist Church

The history and significance of the Cross and Flame emblem are as rich and diverse as The United Methodist Church. The insignia's birth quickly followed the union of two denominations in 1968: The Methodist Church and the Evangelical United Brethren Church.

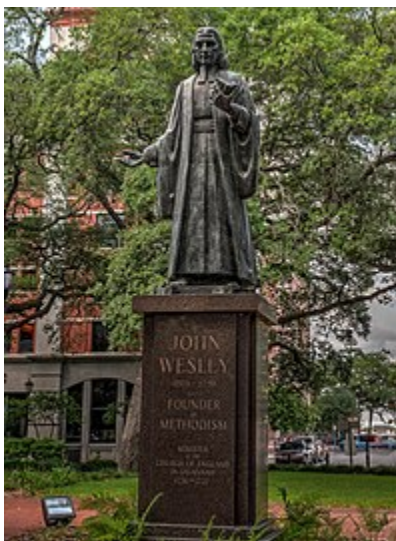
Following more than two dozen conceptualizations, a traditional symbol—the cross—was linked with a single flame with dual tongues of fire. The resulting insignia is rich in meaning. It relates The United Methodist church to God through Christ (cross) and the Holy Spirit (flame). The flame is a reminder of Pentecost when witnesses were unified by the power of the Holy Spirit and saw "tongues, as of fire" (Acts 2:3).

The elements of the emblem also remind us of a transforming moment in the life of Methodism's founder, John Wesley, when he sensed God's presence and felt his heart "strangely warmed." The two tongues of a single flame may also be understood to represent the union of two denominations.

The insignia, one with lettering and one without, was formally adopted by the General Conference in 1968 and registered in 1971 with the U.S. Patent and Trademark Office. Since 1996, the General Council on Finance and Administration (GCFA) of The United Methodist church has supervised the emblem's use.

<https://www.umc.org/en/content/a-mark-known-the-world-over>

Church origins



Statue of John Wesley in Savannah, Georgia, where he served as a missionary

The movement which would become the United Methodist Church began in the mid-18th century within the **Church of England**. A small group of students, including John Wesley, Charles Wesley and George Whitefield, met at Oxford University. They focused on Bible study, *methodical* study of scripture and living a holy life. Other students mocked them, saying they were the "Holy Club" and "the Methodists", being methodical and exceptionally detailed in their Bible study, opinions and disciplined lifestyle. Eventually, the so-called Methodists started individual societies or classes for members of the Church of England who wanted to live a more religious life.

John Wesley

John Wesley was an English cleric, theologian, and evangelist, who was a leader of a revival movement within the Church of England known as Methodism. The societies he founded became the dominant form of the independent Methodist movement that continues to this day.

Born: June 28, 1703, Epworth, United Kingdom

Died: March 2, 1791, London, United Kingdom

Spouse: Mary Wesley (m. 1751–1781)

Church: Church of England

John Wesley was an English cleric, theologian, and evangelist, who was a leader of a revival movement within the Church of England known as Methodism. The societies he founded became the dominant form of the independent Methodist movement that continues to this day.

Educated at Charterhouse and Christ Church, Oxford, Wesley was elected a fellow of Lincoln College, Oxford, in 1726 and ordained as an Anglican priest two years later. At Oxford, he led the "Holy Club", a society formed for the purpose of the study and the pursuit of a devout Christian life; it had been founded by his brother Charles and counted George Whitefield among its members. After an unsuccessful ministry of two years, serving at Christ Church, in the Georgia colony of Savannah, he returned to London and joined a religious society led by Moravian Christians. On 24 May 1738, he experienced what has come to be called his evangelical conversion, when he felt his "heart strangely warmed". He subsequently left the Moravians and began his own ministry.

In less than two years, the "Holy Club" disbanded. John Wesley met with a group of clergy, and afterwards said "they appeared to be of one heart, as well as of one judgment, resolved to be Bible-Christians at all events; and, wherever they were, to preach with all their might "plain, old, Bible Christianity." The ministers nonetheless retained their membership in the Church of England. Though not always emphasized or appreciated in the Anglican churches of their day, their teaching emphasized salvation by God's grace, acquired through faith in Christ.

Three teachings they saw as the foundation of Christian faith were:

1. People are all by nature *dead in sin* and, consequently, *children of wrath*.
2. They are *justified by faith alone*.
3. Faith produces inward and outward *holiness*.

These clergymen quickly became popular, attracting large congregations. The nickname students had used against the Wesleys was revived; they and their followers subsequently became known as *Methodists*.

A key step in the development of Wesley's ministry was, like Whitefield, to travel and preach outdoors. Moving across Great Britain and Ireland, he helped form and organise small Christian groups (societies) that developed intensive and personal accountability, discipleship, and religious instruction. He appointed itinerant, unordained evangelists – both women and men – to care for these groups of people. Under Wesley's direction, Methodists became leaders in many social issues of the day, including the abolition of slavery and prison reform.

Although he was not a systematic theologian, Wesley argued for the notion of Christian perfection and against Calvinism—and, in particular, against its doctrine of predestination. His evangelicalism, firmly grounded in sacramental theology, maintained that means of grace sometimes had a role in sanctification of the believer; however, he taught that it was by faith a believer was transformed into the likeness of Christ. He held that, in this life, Christians could achieve a state where the love of God "reigned supreme in their hearts", giving them not only outward but inward holiness. Wesley's teachings, collectively known as Wesleyan theology, continue to inform the doctrine of Methodist churches.

Throughout his life, Wesley remained within the established Church of England, insisting that the Methodist movement lay well within its tradition. In his early ministry years, Wesley was barred from preaching in many parish churches and the Methodists were persecuted; he later became widely respected, and by the end of his life, was described as "the best-loved man in England".

The doctrines which Wesley emphasised in his sermons and writings are prevenient grace, present personal salvation by faith, the witness of the Spirit, and entire sanctification. Prevenient grace was the theological underpinning of his belief that all persons were capable of being saved by faith in Christ. Unlike the Calvinists of his day, Wesley did not believe in predestination, that is, that some persons had been elected by God for salvation and others for damnation. He understood that Christian orthodoxy insisted that salvation was only possible by the sovereign grace of God. He expressed his understanding of humanity's relationship to God as utter dependence upon God's grace. God was at work to enable all people to be capable of coming to faith by empowering humans to have actual existential freedom of response to God.

In 1735, John and Charles Wesley went to America, hoping to teach the gospel to the Native Americans in the colony of Georgia. Instead, John became vicar of the church in Savannah. His preaching was legalistic and full of harsh rules, and the congregation rejected him. After two years in America, he returned to England dejected and confused.

These clergymen quickly became popular, attracting large congregations. The nickname students had used against the Wesleys was revived; they and their followers subsequently became known as *Methodists*.

Methodism in America



Barratt's Chapel, built in 1780, is the oldest Methodist church in the United States built for that purpose. The church was a meeting place of Asbury and Coke.

The English preacher Francis Asbury arrived in America in 1771. He became a "circuit rider", taking the gospel to the furthest reaches of the new frontier as he had done as a preacher in England. The first official organization in the United States occurred in Baltimore, Maryland, in 1784, with the formation of the Methodist Episcopal Church at the Christmas Conference with Francis Asbury and Thomas Coke as the leaders.



The ordination of Bishop Francis Asbury by Bishop Thomas Coke at the Christmas Conference establishing the Methodist Episcopal Church, 1784

Though John Wesley originally wanted the Methodists to stay within the Church of England, the American Revolution decisively separated the Methodists in the American colonies from the life and sacraments of the English Church. In 1784, after unsuccessful attempts to have the Church of England send a bishop to start a new church in the colonies, Wesley decisively appointed fellow priest Thomas Coke as Superintendent (the equivalent of a bishop) to organize a separate Methodist Society. Together with Coke, Wesley sent a revision of the Anglican prayer book and the Articles of Religion which were received and adopted by the *Baltimore Christmas Conference of 1784*, officially establishing the **Methodist Episcopal Church**. The conference was held at the Lovely Lane Methodist Church, considered the mother church of American Methodism.

The new church grew rapidly in the young country as it employed circuit riders, many of whom were laymen, to travel the mostly rural nation by horseback to preach the Gospel and to establish churches until there was scarcely any village in the United States without a Methodist presence. With 4,000 circuit riders by 1844, the Methodist Episcopal Church rapidly became the largest Protestant denomination in the country.

St. George's United Methodist Church, located at the corner of 4th and New Streets, in the Old City neighborhood of Philadelphia, is the oldest Methodist church in continuous use in the United States, beginning in 1769. The congregation was founded in 1767, meeting initially in a sail loft on Dock Street, and in 1769 it purchased the shell of a building which had been erected in 1763 by a German Reformed congregation. At this time, Methodists had not yet broken away from the Anglican Church and the Methodist Episcopal Church was not founded until 1784.



19th-century Methodist hymnal, [Barratt's Chapel](#)

Richard Allen and Absalom Jones became the first African Americans ordained by the Methodist Church. They were licensed by Saint George's Church in 1784. Three years later, protesting racial segregation in worship services, Allen led most of the black members out of St. George's; eventually they founded the Mother Bethel A.M.E. Church and the African Methodist Episcopal Church. Absalom Jones became an Episcopal priest. In 1836, the church's basement was excavated to make room for a Sunday school. In the 1920s, a court case saved the church from being demolished to

make way for the Benjamin Franklin Bridge. The case resulted in the bridge being relocated. Historic Saint George's welcomes visitors and is home to archives and a museum on Methodism.

In the more than 220 years since 1784, Methodism in the United States, like many other Protestant denominations, has seen a number of divisions and mergers. In 1830, the Methodist Protestant Church split from the Methodist Episcopal Church over the issue of laity having a voice and vote in the administration of the church, insisting that clergy should not be the only ones to have any determination in how the church was to be operated. In 1844, the General Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church split into two conferences because of tensions over slavery and the power of bishops in the denomination.

The two general conferences, Methodist Episcopal Church (the northern faction) and Methodist Episcopal Church, South remained separate until 1939. That year, the northern and southern Methodist Episcopal Churches and the Methodist Protestant Church merged to create The Methodist Church. The uniting conference took place at First Methodist Church (now First United Methodist Church) of Marion, Indiana.

1968 merger The first Methodist clergy were ordained by John Wesley, a priest of the Church of England, because of the crisis caused by the American Revolution which isolated the Methodists in the States from the Church of England and its sacraments. Today, the clergy includes men and women who are ordained by bishops as elders and deacons and are appointed to various ministries. Elders in the United Methodist Church itinerate and are subject to the authority and appointment of their bishops. They generally serve as pastors in local congregations. Deacons are in *service* ministry and may serve as musicians, liturgists, educators, business administrators, and a number of other areas. Elders and deacons are required to obtain a master's degree (generally an M.Div.), or another equivalent degree, before *commissioning* and then ultimately ordination. Elders in full connection are each a member of their Annual Conference Order of Elders. Likewise each deacon in full connection is a member of their Annual Conference Order of Deacons.^[202]

On April 23, 1968, the United Methodist Church was created when the Evangelical United Brethren Church (represented by Bishop Reuben H. Mueller) and The Methodist Church (represented by Bishop Lloyd Christ Wicke) joined hands at the constituting General Conference in Dallas, Texas. With the words, "Lord of the Church, we are united in Thee, in Thy Church and now in The United Methodist Church" the new denomination was given birth by both churches which had distinguished histories and influential ministries in various parts of the world.

2020–2022 potential schisms

Global Methodist Church

On January 3, 2020, the denomination's leadership released a proposal to split the Church over what it described as "fundamental differences" over homosexuality, particularly same-sex marriage. The proposal would need to be approved by the General Conference in order to take effect. The 2020 General Conference, originally scheduled to be held in Minneapolis, Minnesota, was postponed due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

A small group of the progressive wing announced the creation of a new denomination in November 2020, the *Liberation Methodist Connexion*. It was launched on the First Sunday in Advent through an online service.

Meanwhile, the name *Global Methodist Church* for the traditionalist denomination was revealed March 1, 2021, along with a new website and logo. The next General Conference is set for August 29 through September 6, 2022. At that time, delegates are expected to vote on the Protocol for Reconciliation and Grace through Separation. The conservative Transitional Leadership Council said the Global Methodist Church would be officially started, with individual churches or conferences able to join, when the General Conference adopts legislation implementing the Protocol, although the Council "will consider bringing the new church into existence without delay" "if it becomes apparent" that leaders "who covenanted to support the Protocol no longer do so."

According to The United Methodist Book of Discipline (a new edition of which is usually approved by the United Methodist General Conference every four years), the Church "affirm[s] that all persons are individuals of sacred worth, created in the image of God" and encourages United Methodists to be in ministry with and for all people. In accordance with its view of Scripture, the Church considers "the practice of homosexuality (to be) incompatible with Christian teaching." It states that "self-avowed practicing homosexuals" cannot be ordained as ministers, and supports "...laws in civil society that define marriage as the union of one man and one woman." However, this official position remains controversial and hotly debated within the denomination; for instance, the Western Jurisdiction of the UMC voted to elect the denomination's first openly gay bishop. According to polling from Pew Research, the majority of United Methodists in the US support the inclusion of homosexual persons, 60 percent of United Methodists said "homosexuality should be accepted by society", and 40 percent supported same-sex marriage.

The United Methodist Church prohibits same-sex unions. Clergy are officially prohibited from overseeing the vows or signing the union or marriage license, but clergy can offer the premarital counseling, prayers, the homily at the wedding, or read the scriptures. It also forbids any United Methodist board, agency, committee, commission, or council to give United Methodist funds to any gay organization or group, or otherwise use such funds to promote the acceptance of homosexuality.

On January 3, 2020, some denominational leaders along with various advocacy groups submitted a plan called, "Protocol of Reconciliation and Grace through Separation,"

to split the church over what it described as "fundamental differences" over issues pertaining to sexual orientation and gender identity, particularly same-sex marriage. The "Protocol of Reconciliation and Grace through Separation" plan would create a new traditionalist Methodist denomination, with the existing church moving to more acceptance of non-heterosexual and gender-nonconforming identities. The church's General Conference was expected to vote on the plan in May 2020. The plan would have needed to be approved in May 2020 by the General Conference. It would grant the new denomination \$25 million and would allow local churches to vote to affiliate with the new denomination and keep their assets if they leave. The vote was later postponed to 2021 due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Progressives too announced the creation of a new denomination in November 2020, the **Liberation Methodist Connexion**.

[Homosexuality and Methodism - Wikipedia](#)

[United Methodist Church - Wikipedia](#)

Beliefs

Characterization of Wesleyan theology

[Wesleyan theology - Wikipedia](#)

Methodist theology stands at a unique crossroads between evangelical, holiness and sacramental, as well as between liturgical and charismatic, and between Anglo-Catholic and Reformed worship.

It has been characterized as Wesleyan-Arminian theology with an emphasis on the work of the Holy Spirit to bring holiness into the life of the participating believer. The United Methodist Church believes in *prima scriptura*, seeing the Bible as the primary authority in the Church and using sacred tradition, reason, and experience to interpret it, with the aid of the Holy Spirit (see Wesleyan Quadrilateral). Therefore, according to *The Book of Discipline*, United Methodist theology is at once "catholic, evangelical, and reformed."

Today, the UMC is generally considered one of the more moderate and tolerant denominations with respect to race, gender, and ideology, though the denomination itself includes a wide spectrum of attitudes. Comparatively, the UMC stands to the right of liberal and progressive Protestant groups such as the United Church of Christ and the Episcopal Church on certain issues (especially regarding sexuality), but to the left of historically conservative evangelical traditions such as the Southern Baptists and Pentecostalism, in regard to theological matters such as social justice and Biblical interpretation. The UMC is made up of a broad diversity of thought, and so there are

many clergy and laity within the UMC that hold differing viewpoints on such theological matters.

The United Methodist Church seeks to create disciples for Christ through outreach, evangelism, and through seeking holiness, also called sanctification, by the power of the Holy Spirit. The flame in the church logo represents the work of the Holy Spirit in the world, and the two parts of the flame also represent the predecessor denominations, the Methodist Church and the Evangelical United Brethren, united at the base symbolizing the 1968 merger.

The United Methodist Church understands itself to be part of the holy catholic (or universal) church and it **recognizes** the historic ecumenical creeds, the Apostles' Creed and the Nicene Creed; which are used frequently in services of worship. The Book of Discipline also recognizes the importance of the Chalcedonian Creed of the Council of Chalcedon. *It upholds the concept of the "visible and invisible Church,"* meaning that all who are truly believers in every age belong to the holy Church invisible, while the United Methodist Church is a branch of the Church visible, to which all believers must be connected as it is the only institution wherein the Word of God is preached and the Sacraments are administered.

Apostolic Succession Some argue that the United Methodist Church can lay a claim to apostolic succession, as understood in the traditional sense. As a result of the American Revolution, John Wesley was compelled in 1784 to break with standard practice and ordain two of his lay preachers as presbyters, Thomas Vasey and Richard Whatcoat. Thomas Coke, already an Anglican priest, assisted Wesley in this action. Coke was then "set apart" as a Superintendent (bishop) by Wesley and dispatched with Vasey and Whatcoat to America to take charge of Methodist activities there. In defense of his action to ordain, Wesley himself cited an ancient opinion from the Church of Alexandria, which held that bishops and presbyters constituted one order and therefore, bishops are to be elected from and by the presbyterate. He knew that for two centuries the succession of bishops in the Church of Alexandria was preserved through ordination by presbyters alone and was considered valid by the Early Church. Methodists today who would argue for apostolic succession would do so on these grounds.

While many United Methodist congregations operate in the evangelical tradition, others reflect the mainline Protestant traditions. Although United Methodist practices and interpretation of beliefs have evolved over time, these practices and beliefs can be traced to the writings of the church's founders, especially John Wesley and Charles Wesley (Anglicans), but also Philip William Otterbein and Martin Boehm (United Brethren), and Jacob Albright (Evangelical Association). With the formation of the United Methodist Church in 1968, theologian Albert C. Outler led the team which systematized denominational doctrine. Outler's work proved pivotal in the work of union, and he is largely considered the first United Methodist theologian.



Doctrine

The officially established Doctrinal Standards of United Methodism are:

- The [Articles of Religion](#) of the Methodist Church;
- The [Confessions of Faith](#) of the Evangelical United Brethren Church;
- The *General Rules* of the Methodist Societies;
- The Standard Sermons of John Wesley;
- John Wesley's *Explanatory Notes on the New Testament*.

These Doctrinal Standards are constitutionally protected and nearly impossible to change or remove.^[40] Other doctrines of the United Methodist Church are found in the [Book of Discipline of the United Methodist Church](#).

Summary of basic beliefs

The basic beliefs of the United Methodist Church include:

- **Triune God.** God is one God in three persons: Father, Son and Holy Spirit.
- **The Bible.** The Bible is the inspired word of God. F. Belton Joyner argues that there is a deep division within Methodism today about what exactly this means. Questions include whether the Bible was inspired when written (and the text today is always true and without error), or if it is inspired when actually read by a Christian (and therefore dependent on the interaction with the reader.) In the first case, says Joyner, the Christian is concerned only with the precise wording of the original manuscript, without regard to historical setting. In the other case, the reader tries to read the biblical text in terms of all of the influences of modern thought, with little regard for the meaning offered in the ancient texts. In that Wesleyan tradition, United Methodists balance these two extremes, aware that the same Holy Spirit who inspired the Scriptures is alive and well to bring the written Word alive for the present. United Methodists take seriously both the original inspiration and today's contemporary inspiration. "...In this way, the Bible itself becomes the balancing, clarifying, even correcting tool for understanding the Scripture. God's gifts in the written Word are so rich that they can continue to give light and life as one digs again and again into the same Scriptures."
- **Sin.** While human beings were intended to bear the image of God, all humans are sinners for whom that image is distorted. Sin estranges people from God and corrupts human nature such that we cannot heal or save ourselves.
- **Salvation through Jesus Christ.** God's redeeming love is active to save sinners through Jesus' incarnate life and teachings, through his atoning death, his resurrection, his sovereign presence through history, and his promised return.

- **Sanctification.** The grace of sanctification draws one toward the gift of Christian perfection, which Wesley described as a heart "habitually filled with the love of God and neighbor" and as "having the mind of Christ and walking as he walked." This emphasis in Methodism has led to the heralding of the motto "Holiness unto the Lord".
- **Sacraments.** United Methodists recognize two sacraments: **Holy Baptism** and **Holy Communion**. Other rites such as Confirmation, Ordination, Holy Matrimony, Funerals, and Anointing of the Sick are performed but not considered sacraments.
- **In Holy Baptism**, the Church believes that "Baptism is not only a sign of profession and mark of difference whereby Christians are distinguished from others that are not baptized; but it is also a sign of regeneration or the new birth. It believes that Baptism is a sacrament in which God initiates a covenant with individuals, people become a part of the Church, is not to be repeated, and is a means of grace. The United Methodist Church generally practices Baptism by sprinkling, pouring, or immersion and uses the Trinitarian formula. United Methodists also recognize as valid baptisms performed in several other Christian denominations. *The Church practices and encourages infant baptism; when persons baptized as infants mature, they may confirm (or reject) the baptismal vows made on their behalf as infants by families, guardians, and congregations through a process of Christian education called Confirmation.*
- **Holy Communion** The United Methodist Church affirms the real presence of Christ in Holy Communion, but does not hold to the Catholic dogma of transubstantiation. The Church believes that the bread is an effectual sign of His body crucified on the cross and the cup is an effectual sign of His blood shed for humanity. Through the outward and visible signs of bread and wine, the inward and spiritual reality of the Body and Blood of Christ are offered to believers. The Church holds that the celebration of the Eucharist is an anamnesis of Jesus' death, and believes the sacrament to be a means of grace, and practices open communion.
- **Free will.** The UMC believes that people, while corrupted by sin, are free to make their own choices because of God's divine grace enabling them, and that people are truly accountable before God for their choices.
- **Social Justice.** The Church opposes evils such as slavery, inhumane prison conditions, capital punishment, economic injustice, child labor, racism, and inequality.

[United Methodist Church - Wikipedia](#)

Distinctive Wesleyan emphases

The key emphasis of Wesley's theology relates to how divine grace operates within the individual. Wesley defined the Way of Salvation as the operation of grace in at least three parts: Prevenient Grace, Justifying Grace, and Sanctifying Grace.

Prevenient grace, or the grace that "goes before" us, is given to all people. It is that power which enables us to love and motivates us to seek a relationship with God through Jesus Christ. This grace is the present work of God to turn us from our sin-corrupted human will to the loving will of the Father. In this work, God desires that we might sense both our sinfulness before God and God's offer of salvation. Prevenient grace allows those tainted by sin to nevertheless make a truly free choice to accept or reject God's salvation in Christ.

Justifying Grace or Accepting Grace is that grace, offered by God to all people, that we receive by faith and trust in Christ, through which God pardons the believer of sin. It is in justifying grace we are received by God, in spite of our sin. In this reception, we are forgiven through the atoning work of Jesus Christ on the cross. The justifying grace cancels our guilt and empowers us to resist the power of sin and to fully love God and neighbor. Today, justifying grace is also known as conversion, "accepting Jesus as your personal Lord and Savior," or being "born again." John Wesley originally called this experience the New Birth. This experience can occur in different ways; it can be one transforming moment, such as an altar call experience, or it may involve a series of decisions across a period of time.

Sanctifying Grace is that grace of God which sustains the believers in the journey toward Christian Perfection: a genuine love of God with heart, soul, mind, and strength, and a genuine love of our neighbors as ourselves. Sanctifying grace enables us to respond to God by leading a Spirit-filled and Christ-like life aimed toward love. Wesley never claimed this state of perfection for himself but instead insisted the attainment of perfection was possible for all Christians. Here the English Reformer parted company with both Luther and Calvin, who denied that a man would ever reach a state in this life in which he could not fall into sin. Such a man can lose all inclination to evil and can gain perfection in this life.

Wesleyan theology maintains that salvation is the act of God's grace entirely, from invitation, to pardon, to growth in holiness. Furthermore, God's prevenient, justifying, and sanctifying grace interact dynamically in the lives of Christians from birth to death.

According to Wesleyan understanding, good works are the fruit of one's salvation, not the way in which that salvation was earned. Faith and good works go hand in hand in Methodist theology: a living tree naturally and inevitably bears fruit. Wesleyan theology rejects the doctrine of eternal security, believing that salvation can be rejected.^[66] Wesley emphasized that believers must continue to grow in their relationship with Christ, through the process of Sanctification.

A key outgrowth of this theology is the United Methodist dedication not only to the Evangelical Gospel of repentance and a personal relationship with God, but also to the Social Gospel and a commitment to social justice issues that have included abolition, women's suffrage, labor rights, civil rights, and ministry with the poor.

Diversity within beliefs

In appealing for tolerance of diversity of theological opinions, John Wesley said, "Though we may not think alike, may we not all love alike?" The phrase "In essentials, unity; in non-essentials, liberty; in all things, charity" has also become a maxim among Methodists, who have always maintained a great diversity of opinion on many matters within the Church.

The United Methodist Church allows for a wide range of theological and political beliefs. For example, former President George W. Bush (R-TX), former First Lady Laura Bush and former Attorney General of the United States, Jeff Sessions, are United Methodists, as are Senator Elizabeth Warren (D-MA), former Secretary of State Hillary Clinton (D-NY) and former Senator Max Cleland (D-GA).

[Wesleyan theology - Wikipedia](#)



Holy Trinity—One God

Worship and liturgy



An [Elder](#) presides over [Holy Communion](#)

The United Methodist Church includes a variety of approaches to public worship. The common pattern of worship is found in the official liturgies of the church, while the practices of congregations across the denomination are quite diverse.

The common pattern comes from John Wesley, who wrote that "there is no Liturgy in the world, either in ancient or modern language, which breathes more of a solid, scriptural, rational piety, than the Common Prayer of the Church of England."¹ When the Methodists in America were separated from the [Church of England](#), John Wesley himself provided a revised version of The [Book of Common Prayer](#) called [*The Sunday Service of the Methodists; With Other Occasional Services*](#). Wesley's *Sunday Service* has shaped the official liturgies of the Methodists ever since.

Like other historic Christian churches, the United Methodist Church has official liturgies for services of Holy Communion, baptism, weddings, funerals, ordination, anointing of the sick and daily office prayer services. Some clergy offer healing services, while exorcism is an occasional practice by some clergy in The United Methodist Church in Africa. These services involve the laying on of hands and anointing with oil. Along with these, there are also special services for holy days such as All Saints Day, Ash Wednesday, Maundy Thursday, Good Friday, and Easter Vigil. These services are contained in *The [United Methodist Hymnal](#)* and *The [United Methodist Book of Worship \(1992\)](#)*. Many of these liturgies are derived from the [Anglican](#) tradition's [Book of Common Prayer](#). In most cases, congregations also use other elements of liturgical worship, such as candles, optional use of incense at evening prayer, vestments, paraments, banners, and liturgical art.

Typical worship services in United Methodism will include:

- Singing. Since the days of Charles Wesley, the hymn-writer and early Methodist leader, lively singing has been, and remains, an important aspect of United Methodist worship. The church publishes an official hymnal, [*The United Methodist Hymnal*](#), for use in churches, and allows for music ranging from hymns to contemporary worship music to be played as part of the service.
- A Biblical Message. Listening to the reading of Scripture and a sermon based upon the Biblical text is virtually always included in United Methodist worship. Many United Methodist churches follow the [Revised Common Lectionary](#) for their Sunday Bible readings.
- Prayer. Many churches include a time of response or a prayer time in which people may share concerns or pray with ministers. This time of response may include celebrations of baptism, confirmation, or profession of faith.
- Holy Communion. Some congregations celebrate communion on the first Sunday of the month and a few celebrate it only quarterly. A growing number of congregations celebrate the sacrament of Holy Communion on a weekly basis, as John Wesley himself encouraged his followers to practice. In adopting the statement on Holy Communion entitled *This Holy Mystery* in 2004, the General Conference of the Church urged congregations to move toward weekly celebration of communion and to use the official liturgies of the church when doing so.

- Lovefeast. Many congregations celebrate the Lovefeast (also known as the Agape Feast) on a quarterly basis, which is accompanied by the partaking of bread and water, as well as the sharing of [testimonies](#), Scripture readings and hymn singing.
- Giving. Almost every service has an opportunity for those gathered to give of their "tithes and offerings" to support the ministry of that particular congregation. Through apportionments, a portion of those gifts go to Christian ministries that have a national or global impact.

Many larger United Methodist congregations have incorporated more contemporary styles of music and audio-visual technology into some of their worship services, though these churches generally also offer more traditional services.

As John Wesley advocated outdoor evangelism, revival services are a traditional worship practice of Methodism that are often held in United Methodist churches, as well as at outdoor camp meetings and at tent revivals.

The chancel of United Methodist churches usually features a lectern and baptismal font on one side of the altar table and a pulpit on the other side.^[181] The chancel also features the Christian Flag and sometimes, a processional cross.^{[182][183]} The chancel is often delimited by chancel rails, sometimes with a mourner's bench in front of it.

Videos of Methodist Service from YouTube

[Methodism - OneDrive \(live.com\)](#)

[Methodism - OneDrive \(live.com\)](#)

[Methodism - OneDrive \(live.com\)](#)

Governance

The church is decentralized with the [General Conference](#) being the official governing body. However, administratively the church has a governing structure that is similar to that of the United States government:

- [General Conference](#)—The legislative branch that makes all decisions as to doctrine and polity.
- [Council of Bishops](#)—When taken into consideration along with the various general agencies of the church, takes on a role similar to an executive branch. The Council of Bishops consists of all active and retired bishops and meets twice a year. According to the Book of Discipline 2000, "The Church expects the Council of Bishops to speak to the Church and from the Church to the world, and to give leadership in the quest for Christian unity and interreligious relationships." The council is presided over by a President who serves a two-year term. The President has no official authority beyond presiding. Administrative work is handled by the secretary of the council.

- [Judicial Council](#)—The judicial branch consisting of nine persons elected by the General Conference to rule on questions of constitutionality in church law and practice.

General Conference

The United Methodist Church is organized into conferences. The highest level is called the [General Conference](#) and is the only organization which may speak officially for the church. The General Conference meets every four years ([quadrennium](#)). Legislative changes are recorded in [The Book of Discipline](#) which is revised after each General Conference. Non-legislative resolutions are recorded in the *Book of Resolutions*, which is published after each General Conference, and expire after eight years unless passed again by a subsequent session of General Conference. The next General Conference is set for August 29 through September 6, 2022. The event is currently rotated between the US jurisdictions of the church. Bishops, councils, committees, boards, elders, etc., are not permitted to speak on behalf of the United Methodist Church as this authority is reserved solely for the General Conference in accordance with the *Book of Discipline*.

Jurisdictional and central conferences

Subordinate to the General Conference are the jurisdictional and central conferences which also meet every four years. The United States is divided into five jurisdictions: Northeastern, Southeastern, North Central, South Central and Western. Outside the United States the church is divided into seven central conferences: Africa, Congo, West Africa, Central & Southern Europe, Germany, Northern Europe and Eurasia, and the Philippines. The main purpose of the jurisdictional and central conferences is to elect and appoint bishops, the chief administrators of the church. Additionally, central conferences may limitedly adapt the church law to the needs of their areas. Bishops thus elected serve *episcopal areas*, which consist of one or more *annual conferences*.

In the US, decisions in-between the four-year meetings are made by the Mission Council (usually consisting of church bishops). One of the most high-profile decisions in recent years by one of the councils was a decision by the Mission Council of the South Central Jurisdiction which in March 2007 approved a 99-year lease of 36 acres (150,000 m) at Southern Methodist University for the George W. Bush Presidential Library. The decision generated controversy in light of Bush's support of the Iraq War which the church bishops have criticized. A debate over whether the decision should or could be submitted for approval by the Southern Jurisdictional Conference at its July 2008 meeting in Dallas, Texas, remains unresolved.

Judicial Council

The Judicial Council is the highest court in the denomination. It consists of nine members, both laity and clergy, elected by the General Conference for an eight-year term. The ratio of laity to clergy alternates every eight years. The Judicial Council interprets the *Book of Discipline* between sessions of General Conference, and during General Conference, the Judicial Council rules on the constitutionality of laws passed by General Conference. The Council also determines whether actions of local churches, annual conferences, church agencies, and bishops are in accordance with church law.

The Council reviews all decisions of law made by bishops The Judicial Council cannot create any legislation; it can only interpret existing legislation. The Council meets twice a year at various locations throughout the world. The Judicial Council also hears appeals from those who have been accused of chargeable offenses that can result in defrocking or revocation of membership.

Annual Conference

The *Annual Conference*, roughly the equivalent of a diocese in the Anglican Communion and the Roman Catholic Church or a synod in some Lutheran denominations such as the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, is the basic unit of organization within the UMC. The term *Annual Conference* is often used to refer to the geographical area it covers as well as the frequency of meeting. Clergy are members of their Annual Conference rather than of any local [congregation](#), and are appointed to a local church or other charge annually by the conference's resident Bishop at the meeting of the Annual Conference. In many ways, the United Methodist Church operates in a connectional organization of the Annual Conferences, and actions taken by one conference are not binding upon another.

Administrative offices



[Interchurch Center](#) in New York City, headquarters of the UMW

There is no official headquarters of the UMC although many of its biggest administrative offices are in Nashville, Tennessee, and are physically located near Vanderbilt University (which has historic Methodist ties but is no longer associated with the church).

While the General Conference is the only organization that can officially speak for the United Methodist Church as a whole, there are 13 agencies, boards and commissions of the general church. These organizations address specific topic areas of denomination-wide concern with administrative offices throughout the United States.

[Annual conferences - Wikipedia](#)

How do Episcopal and Methodists Churches differ?

Both churches were shaped by the American revolution, and both were offshoots of the Church of England. The Episcopal Church began as an attempt to find a way for Americans to worship in the style of the Church of England without actually being part of the state church which was (nominally) headed by and owed allegiance to the king. As a result, the Episcopal Church resembled the English church in many ways: worship in English according to a “Book of Common Prayer”, married clergy who wore robes like Roman Catholic priests, bishops with almost absolute authority over areas called dioceses, to name a few. What was different and unique at the time was the Episcopal Church's governing structure. The church was established with a constitution that created a bicameral government called the General Convention. This group meets once every three years and consists of a House of Bishops (who are elected by the clergy and people of their dioceses) and a House of Deputies, made up of clergy and laypeople from each Diocese. The head of the House of Bishops is called the Presiding Bishop, and the Archbishop of Canterbury is understood to be the Primate or leader of the church. Unlike Canterbury, the American primate has very limited authority.

The Methodist Church grew up in England slightly before the Revolution as a faithful dissenting movement within the Church of England. John Wesley who began the movement was, to the day he died a priest of the Church of England, and his goal was to wake up and spiritually renew the Church of England, not to create a new church. After a mystical experience in which he felt his “heart strangely warm”, he came to believe that ordinary people could feel and be led by the Holy Spirit with the proper guidance or method. This consisted of informal prayer meetings and Bible study and hymn singing—hence the prodigious number of Protestant hymns written by John and his brother Charles.

The Methodist with the CofE in America happened as Americans who already worshipped according to Wesley's methods were joined by missionaries from the movement in England (who saw the new country as ripe for converts) realized that they neither wanted nor needed most of the trappings of the English church. In consequence Methodists have Bishops who supervise certain areas, but without the medieval trappings of Episcopal Bishops. Their worship is much less formal and clergy wear simple “preaching gowns”. They are governed by representative assemblies called synods.

<https://www.quora.com/How-do-Episcopalians-and-Methodists-differ>

What part of Anglicanism does Methodism still keep today?

In the United States, Methodists may have been birthed in the Anglican tradition, but, in general, they look different than the Anglican liturgical tradition.

Big differences: less attention on Eucharist in most Methodist churches; no regular use of the book of Common Prayer; more variety in liturgy/worship styles in Methodist churches; use of lectionary not as common among Methodists; both traditions have experimented with a variety of music, Methodists tend to be more varied in the U.S.

Similarities: within higher liturgy churches, clergy would wear robes and vestments; the use of the organ is common in both traditions within more liturgical expressions; there is still a hierarchy within the clergy in both tradition with bishops, elders/priests and deacons.

<https://www.quora.com/What-parts-of-the-Anglican-tradition-does-the-Methodist-church-still-retain-today>

Why did Wesley break from Anglicanism?

Well, John didn't do that. He died an Anglican. He did not intend to form a new denomination; he just wanted to add some features to Anglicanism that would help the poor to be more fulfilled. Experience shows he was so very right. The Anglican Communion has followed John too, learning from his successes and their mistakes.

As to why the denominations, I suspect that it has to do with the idea that we can know the will of God and can form a church which perfectly fulfills the pattern of God. All human made denominations Every denomination, even the first one, which would be the Orthodox Church, is human made. We can clearly see corruption in all of them, but we can also see testimony to the wonders of the Spirit in most of them as well. But when people insist that they can know perfectly, they see error in others, ignore it in themselves, and voila! you have a split. If we all admit that we just don't have the full story and just would hold out love for each other as the priority (scripture does sort of say that, after all) we could be on the road to a better, fuller church.

Question: *Why did John Wesley break away from the Anglicans to form the Methodist Church? And why did William Booth break away from Methodist Church Christmas to create The Salvation Army? What causes in Christianity the mushrooming of so many denominations?*

Many breakaways come about as a result of greater light that is received from the Holy Spirit. Others come from squabbles over obscure doctrinal differences that ought not to separate God's people in the first place.

God has been steadily turning up the light since the Reformation, and now those who live laid down lives before the Lord are coming into greater light than has ever been accessed before.

There is a deeper reason for the breakaways, however, which is the fact that Christianity fell into relative darkness very early on in its history. Carnal minded men

took hold of spiritual truths and codified them into rock hard doctrines and traditions, placing the Holy Spirit into an iron-clad box of their own making.

Not that the Holy Spirit can actually be limited in that way. But it meant that only the “experts” could decide what was truth. Their word was law and the Holy Spirit was shut out. Anyone who dared to go against their declarations of law was in danger of

- imprisonment, torture, and death, including being burned at the stake
- the Inquisition
- at the very least, being ostracized and excommunicated

This kept the common man in the dark until the advent of the printing press. Suddenly, the Bible became available to the man in the street, rather than being chained to the altar in the church. Suddenly, people began to see the darkness in the church system and, following the lead of the Holy Spirit, were able to begin gaining their freedom from that darkness.

Christ came to show us the Way back to the Father, not to found a new religion. The fact that there are over 30,000 denominations in Christianity is indicative of its fractured condition. There are no such fractures or divisions within the organic body of Christ where the ruling principle is love—which overcomes all petty intellectual squabbles.

<https://www.quora.com/Why-did-John-Wesley-break-away-from-the-Anglicans-to-form-the-Methodist-Church-And-why-did-William-Booth-break-away-from-Methodist-Church-Christmas-to-create-The-Salvation-Army-What-causes-in-Christianity-the-mushrooming-of-so-many>