



**Participants Guide**



# Table of Contents

|    |                                    |
|----|------------------------------------|
| 4  | Session 1<br>Growing in Our Faith  |
| 22 | Session 2<br>Having a Living Faith |
| 34 | Session 3<br>Our Faith in Action   |
| 46 | Next Steps                         |

Our mission is to make  
disciples of Jesus Christ for the  
*transformation* of the world.  
We do this by *offering* Christ,  
*nurturing* one another, and  
*serving* all.

# Session 1

## Growing in Our Faith

Who are we? (Historically, Theologically, Denominationally)

## Getting to know you – Introduce Your New Friend

Sit next to someone you don't know. Each partner will have about a minute to ask questions to learn a little about the other partner. You will then have about 30 seconds to introduce them to the group.

Here are a few questions you might ask:

- Where are you from?
- How long have you been coming to Auburn UMC?
- What would you like to tell me about your family?
- Where have you connected best so far at Auburn UMC?

Take some notes about your partner here:

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## Our Doctrinal History

\_\_\_\_\_ is the founder of the Methodist movement. In the mid- to late-1800's, John, his brother, Charles, and a few of their friends, believed the church in England was "\_\_\_\_\_" to the needs of the world around them.

They were young Christian leaders who went about serving the world and learning about God in a very \_\_\_\_\_ way. Their peers made fun of them and called them "Methodists," a term that was not particularly endearing at the time.

Their ministry turned into a \_\_\_\_\_, which eventually turned into a denomination. Now we are part of the United Methodist Church, a group of Christians who worship, serve, and connect to the world in the \_\_\_\_\_ tradition.

*The spirit of charity takes into consideration the limits of human understanding. "To be ignorant of many things and to be mistaken in some," Wesley observed, "is the necessary condition of humanity."*

*In essentials, \_\_\_\_\_;  
in non-essentials, \_\_\_\_\_;  
and in all things, \_\_\_\_\_.*

## Take a few moments to read this excerpt from the United Methodist Book of Discipline:

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

Wesley's portrayal of the spiritual pilgrimage in terms of "the scripture way of salvation" provided their model for **experiential Christianity.** They assumed and insisted upon the integrity of basic Christian truth and emphasized its practical application in the lives of believers.

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

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

They were also prepared, as a matter of course, to reaffirm the ancient creeds and confessions as valid summaries of Christian truth. But they were careful not to set them apart as absolute standards for doctrinal truth and error.

Beyond the essentials of vital religion, United Methodists respect the diversity of opinions held by conscientious persons of faith. Wesley followed a time-tested approach:

**"In essentials, unity; in non-essentials, liberty; and in all things, charity."**

**The spirit of charity takes into consideration the limits of human understanding. "To be ignorant of many things and to be mistaken in some," Wesley observed, "is the necessary condition of humanity."** The crucial matter in religion is steadfast love for God and neighbor, empowered by the redeeming and sanctifying work of the Holy Spirit.

**In the 18th c. the word "charity" meant LOVE.  
It means we are expected to show love, no matter what**

Here are some things we think are essential to our faith?  
What might be non-essential?

| Essential  | Non-essential |
|--|---------------|
| <p>Worship</p> <p>-----</p> <p>Read the Bible /<br/>Study Scripture</p> <p>-----</p> <p>Baptism</p> <p>-----</p> <p>Communion</p> <p>-----</p> |               |



## How do we come to an understanding of those things that are essential in our faith?

- Study of \_\_\_\_\_ and other Christian literature
- \_\_\_\_\_ with pastors and teachers
- Regular attendance in \_\_\_\_\_
- Participation in a \_\_\_\_\_ group
- Personal and corporate \_\_\_\_\_

## How do we discern God's will for our lives?

This is a difficult question to answer. We believe that God is actively shaping and continuing the work of creation in our world. But what does that look like for us personally, for our church, for our community?

As United Methodists, we historically have used Wesley's "*Quadrilateral*" to help us try to understand what God may desire of us...

1. \_\_\_\_\_

- Scripture is the primary source of how God's nature is revealed to us. In Scripture we discover who God is and who we are in relationship to God.
- Is the source of all that is "necessary" and "sufficient" for salvation and faith practice
- Take time this week to read *What do UM's believe about the Bible*.

2. \_\_\_\_\_

- We look to the history of the church to help us discern what our predecessors have understood about scripture and their faith over the centuries.
- We do this with the help of our creeds, our liturgies, the ancient writings of the church, and even with modern thought about theology from contemporary writers.
- When we talk about tradition in this sense, we are not talking about worship style. People all across our world worship God in many ways.

## What do United Methodists believe about the Bible?

United Methodists share with other Christians the conviction that Scripture is the primary source and criterion for Christian doctrine. Through Scripture the living Christ meets us in the experience of redeeming grace. We are convinced that Jesus Christ is the living Word of God in our midst whom we trust in life and death.

As we open our minds and hearts to the Word of God through the words of human beings inspired by the Holy Spirit, faith is born and nourished, our understanding is deepened, and the possibilities for transforming the world become apparent to us.

The Bible is sacred canon for Christian people, formally acknowledged as such by historic ecumenical councils of the church. Our doctrinal standards identify as canonical thirty-nine books of the Old Testament and the twenty-seven books of the New Testament.

Our standards affirm the Bible as the source of all that is “necessary” and “sufficient” unto salvation (Articles of Religion) and “is to be received through the Holy Spirit as the true rule and guide for faith and practice” (Confession of Faith).

We properly read Scripture within the believing community, informed by the tradition of that community.

## Wesley's Quadrilateral (Continued)

### 3. \_\_\_\_\_

- We all experience God in many different ways. We learn about our faith from our own experiences of God.
- For Wesley, experiencing God was equally as important as having an intellectual understanding of theology. He valued and communicated a faith that impacted both the heart and the mind.
- We also learn from the experiences that others have of God.
  - The great cloud of witnesses who have gone before us (Hebrews 12:1-12)
  - The priesthood of all believers (1 Peter 2:1-17)
  - The Body of Christ (1 Corinthians 12:12-31)

### 4. \_\_\_\_\_

- Wesley believed that people are reasonable and should draw upon their own understanding in their discernment of God. However, to Wesley, reason was grounded on a thorough understanding of both scripture and tradition.
  - How does this feel?
  - Does this make sense?
  - Is this right?

We believe that, as we are shaping and understanding our faith, we must be prepared to do **two** things:

- Understand that there are some things we will just never \_\_\_\_\_ this side of heaven.
- Be open to being \_\_\_\_\_ by God. If we think we know all the answers, we may miss an opportunity for God to do a work in our hearts and minds.

## The Image of God

How we think about God shapes how we see the world. We believe that all persons are created in the *image of God*, and therefore possess *inestimable value*. We are made in God's image, but often we try to make God reflect our image. The idea of the image of God is about the \_\_\_\_\_ attributes of God not about \_\_\_\_\_ attributes. We are created by love, in love, with love, and for love.

What are some characteristics of God?

**We believe that all persons are a COGPOW**

**A \_\_\_\_\_ and a \_\_\_\_\_**

## The Work of God

We believe that God loves this world and that God most often chooses to work in this world through \_\_\_\_\_. The church is not a building. The church is people, particularly those who say and behave like they are followers of Jesus Christ (we sometimes call them \_\_\_\_\_).

We believe that salvation comes through \_\_\_\_\_ in God. We are not saved by the things we do; however, the Bible teaches us that, ***“Faith by itself, if it has no works, is dead.”*** (James 2:14-19)

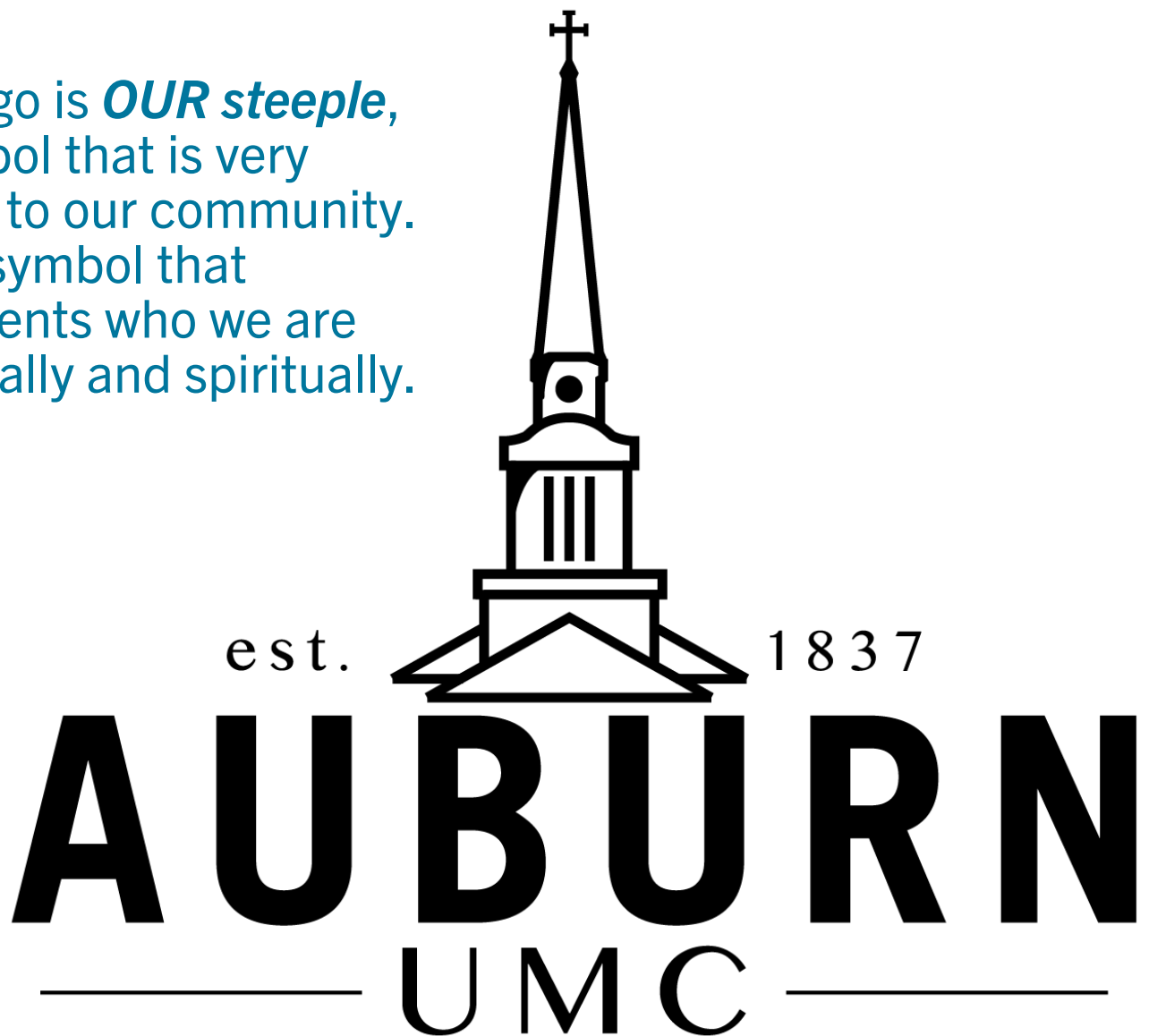
Disciples are the “\_\_\_\_\_” of God’s Kingdom, the ***managers*** of God’s creation. We, as followers of Christ, partner in the work of God because of an outflowing of love to those whom God created. We do this as a response to the \_\_\_\_\_ we have in our own lives—***because God loves us, and as we love God, we also love others***. We feed people because they are hungry, and we love them when they seem unlovable.

Wesley believed that there is no holiness without \_\_\_\_\_ holiness. In other words, ***because God loves us, we take action, together in community as the Body of Christ, to demonstrate God’s love in and to the world.***

## Auburn UMC in Mission

Take a careful look at our logo. It says a lot about who we are, and it has been carefully crafted to symbolize important aspects of our relationship to our Auburn community.

Our logo is ***OUR steeple***, a symbol that is very visible to our community. It is a symbol that represents who we are physically and spiritually.



offer. nurture. serve. transform.



The cross at the top of our steeple is the highest point in Auburn. It is a great reminder that our roots run as deep as our steeple is high.

There have been Methodists in ministry on the corner of Magnolia and Gay **since 1837**. Methodists established a church here, influenced the development of our loveliest village, and helped to give birth to the university that is an essential part of our community.

We are reminded with the “UMC” that we are connected in ministry to a global organization of the Body of Christ, participating in the work of **transforming** our world into the image of Christ. At Auburn UMC, we do this by **offering** Christ, **nurturing** others, and **serving** all.

## Auburn UMC - Our Organization

We believe that all followers of Christ are \_\_\_\_\_ by God to participate in the transforming work of the world through \_\_\_\_\_ and radical \_\_\_\_\_.

\_\_\_\_\_ members of the United Methodist Church are, by history and calling, ***the principal active advocates of the gospel of Jesus Christ***. The everyday living witness of the laity of our church is the primary ministry through which we will fulfill our mission to make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world. (UMC Discipline ¶ 127) While our clergy have significant influence in the community, our laity are ***always impacting the community*** in their families, workplaces, schools, places of recreation, etc.

The United Methodist Church ordains clergy persons as ***Elders*** and ***Deacons***.

Our ***Elders*** are called to ***word and sacrament***. They are responsible for ordering the whole life of the church, as well as administering our ***two sacraments***, \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_.

Licensed Local Pastors serve local churches in a role similar to that of an Elder but are not yet ordained or may not feel a call to ordination.

- Ordained Elders: Rev. Dr. Cory Smith, Rev. Charles Cummings
- Licensed Local Pastor: Rev. Kelli Hitchman-Craig

### ***What is hospitality?***

Hospitality at Auburn UMC happens when we create an ***inviting*** and ***caring*** environment where all who come are ***welcomed*** as a part of God's family.

## What do United Methodists believe about the ministry of the laity?

### UMC Book of Discipline ¶ 130. Faithful Ministry

The people of God, who are the church made visible in the world, must convince the world of the reality of the gospel or leave it unconvinced. There can be no evasion or delegation of this responsibility; the church is either faithful as a witnessing and serving community, or it loses its vitality and its impact on an unbelieving world.

**laity [noun]:**the people of a religious faith as distinguished from its clergy.

Our **Deacons** are called to ***word and service***. Their ministry is focused on ***connecting the church to the world*** in God's transforming mission to make disciples of Jesus Christ.

- Ordained Deacons: Rev. John Fox, Rev. Sarah Goolsby, Rev. Julie Hare, and Rev. Chris Kelsey

In addition to our clergy, Auburn UMC employs full-time and part-time paid staff to carry out the day-to-day ministry and business of our church. We have \_\_\_\_\_ staff members who are responsible for organizing and implementing our program ministries, such as Christian education for children, youth, and older adults, as well as worship and music. Our administrative staff helps our program ministries run smoothly and makes sure that we are keeping up with our membership, our finances, and our facilities.

## Looking Ahead...

John Wesley was asked what was important for daily living as a Christian. He responded with three “rules” that we still try to follow in our modern Wesleyan tradition:

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_

The first two are fairly self-explanatory, but with the third one, Wesley had some specific things in mind to help us stay in love with God. Over the next two weeks we will explore what it means to be a faithful and intentional follower of Christ in our daily lives, trying each day to stay in love with God.

We encourage you to **pray** for your church, your pastors, and your community.

We also encourage you to try to *read a little each day in your Bible*. Start with Matthew in the New Testament and just try to read one chapter each day. If you're not already in the habit of reading your Bible every day, this is a great way to get started.

Monday - Read *Matthew Chapter 1*.

What is one word or phrase that stood out to you in this chapter?

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Tuesday - Read *Matthew Chapter 2*.

What is one word or phrase that stood out to you in this chapter?

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Wednesday - Read *Matthew Chapter 3*.

What is one word or phrase that stood out to you in this chapter?

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Thursday - Read *Matthew Chapter 4*.

What is one word or phrase that stood out to you in this chapter?

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Friday - Read *Matthew Chapter 5*.

What is one word or phrase that stood out to you in this chapter?

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Saturday - Read *Matthew Chapter 6*.

What is one word or phrase that stood out to you in this chapter?

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# Session 2

## Having a Living Faith

What does it mean to be a faithful disciple of Jesus Christ?

## Getting to know you...

Pair up or get together with a few others. Spend a few moments answering the question:

***“What brings you joy?”***

Tell about something you really enjoy doing. Keep it brief and make sure everyone gets time to talk if they want to.

What did you learn about the others in your group?

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## Discipleship: Holiness of Heart and Holiness of Life

There are two important parts of the Christian life: our \_\_\_\_\_ and our \_\_\_\_\_. John Wesley talked about how it is vital that we have balance with both *holiness of heart* and *holiness of life*. Being a faithful follower of Jesus, a \_\_\_\_\_, means that *we are being transformed into the image of Christ for the sake of others*.

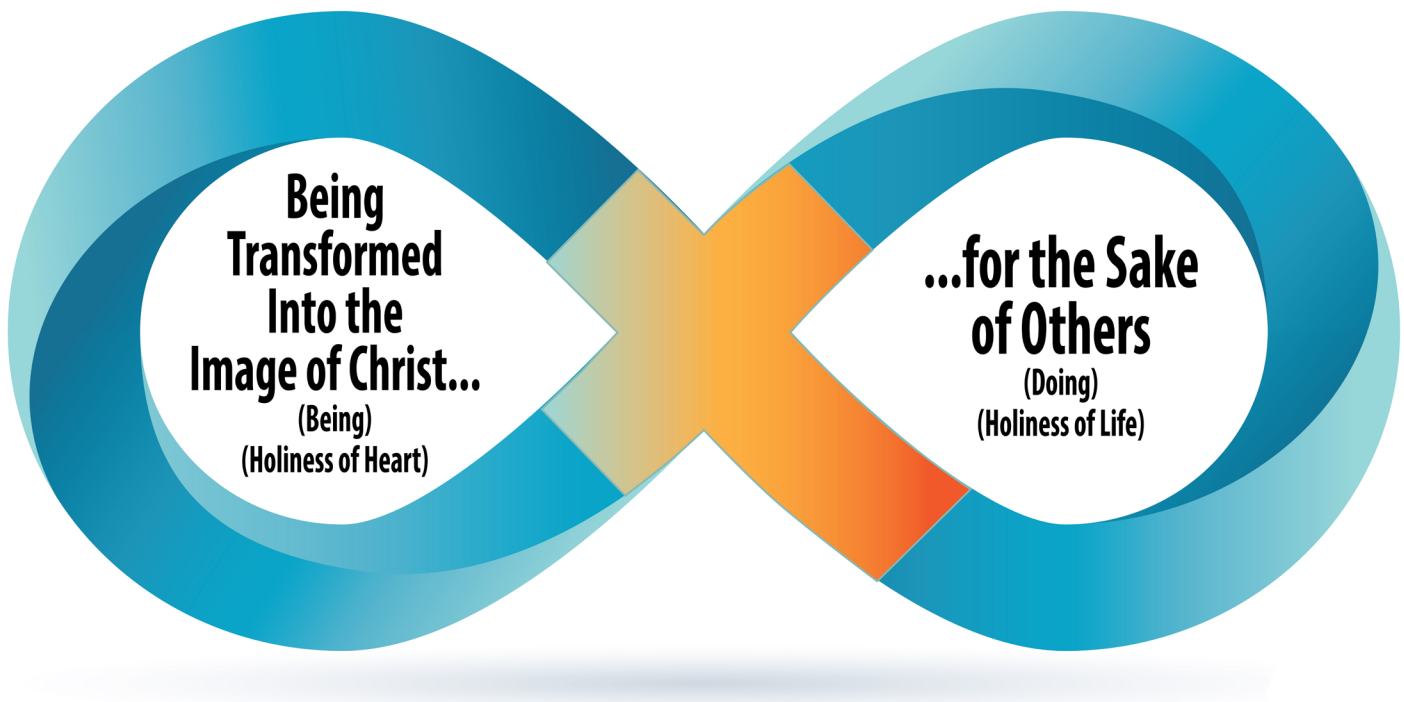
It is important that we have an *intellectual* and *emotional* understanding of our faith. Holiness of heart explores the \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ questions we have about faith, theology, and doctrine. Spending time in *worship, bible study, discipleship training*, and other similar types of activities help us to *grow in our faith* and learn more about who God is and who we are in relationship to God.

Holiness of Life is that part of our Christian walk where others see \_\_\_\_\_ of our faith. When we practice hospitality, speak kindly to others, have patience in moments of frustration, or help people in need, we are living out our faith. This is all part of *a culture of hospitality and service* that is critical to being a Christian.

*The word “Holy” means to be set apart for God’s purposes.*



**Making disciples of Jesus for the transformation of the world.**



This week, we will spend most of our time exploring our “being.” Next week will spend more time talking about our “doing.”

## The Trinity

There is one God, and the world *experiences God* in three ways. As Christians, we acknowledge our understanding of God as “\_\_\_\_\_” – which means consisting of three-in-one.

Divide up into three smaller groups. Each group should take one of these sections, read the short passages, and fill in the blanks. Choose one person in your group to briefly share your answers with the whole class. All the Biblical references below come from the *New Revised Standard Version*, which is the official translation of the UMC.

God the \_\_\_\_\_

- Genesis 2:4-9 – God is the \_\_\_\_\_
- Exodus 3:13-15 – God is the “\_\_\_\_\_”
- Isaiah 43:1-3 – God is the \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_,  
and \_\_\_\_\_
- Psalm 23 – God is my \_\_\_\_\_
- 1 John 4:7-8 – God is \_\_\_\_\_

The word “**trinity**” does not appear anywhere in the Bible. Before the concept of the trinity was ever a doctrine as expressed in our Christian creeds, it was an *experience* of the early followers of Jesus Christ. The *mystery* of trinity will always remain, and our languages are insufficient to capture the mystery.

## God the \_\_\_\_\_

- Matthew 1:21-25 – \_\_\_\_\_ – which means “God is with us”
- Luke 1:26-33 – His name will be called \_\_\_\_\_
- John 1:1-5 – Jesus is the \_\_\_\_\_ of God
- John 9:1-7 – Jesus is the \_\_\_\_\_ of the World
- John 10:1-18 – Jesus is the Good \_\_\_\_\_
- John 13:12-17 – Jesus is our \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_
- John 14:1-7 – Jesus is the \_\_\_\_\_, the \_\_\_\_\_, and the \_\_\_\_\_
- John 15:5-11 – Jesus is the \_\_\_\_\_ so that we may bear fruit
- Mark 10:42-45 – Jesus is the \_\_\_\_\_ and gave his life as \_\_\_\_\_
- Luke 24:44-47 – Jesus is the \_\_\_\_\_
- 2 Timothy 1:8-10 – Jesus is our \_\_\_\_\_

## God the \_\_\_\_\_

- John 14:15-17 – the Holy Spirit is our \_\_\_\_\_
- John 14:25-26 – The Holy Spirit is our \_\_\_\_\_
- Acts 1:6-8 – The Holy Spirit \_\_\_\_\_ us
- 1 Corinthians 12:4-7 – The Holy Spirit is a giver of \_\_\_\_\_
- Galatians 5:22-26 – The Holy spirit produces \_\_\_\_\_ in us

## God's Grace and our Salvation

We believe that God loves us and loves this wonderful world. God wants the best for us and wants us to remain in right \_\_\_\_\_ with God.

Scripture and Christian tradition teach us that God has given us \_\_\_\_\_, which is God's gift of *forgiveness and love*. God's grace is *undeserved and unmerited*, which means there is nothing we can do to \_\_\_\_\_ it. As Wesleyans, we believe that God *forgives our sins*, that God's grace \_\_\_\_\_ us our whole lives, and that grace is *available for everyone*.

Similar to the doctrine of the trinity, we believe that there is *one grace*. In our Wesleyan tradition, we say that the world experiences God's grace in at least three ways: \_\_\_\_\_ grace, \_\_\_\_\_ grace, and \_\_\_\_\_ grace. *There are not three different kinds of grace*, but *three vantage points* from which we might understand how God's grace works in the world.

## Prevenient Grace

- The word prevenient means “preceding in time”  
or “\_\_\_\_\_.”
- We believe God is creating, moving, working, and loving in the world *long before* we ever have any \_\_\_\_\_ of who God is or what God can do.
- We believe God \_\_\_\_\_ to us, wooing us, yearning for us to say *“YES!”* to a life of discipleship.
- Prevenient grace is an important part of our theology of \_\_\_\_\_ infants. Because of God’s grace, they are already a part of God’s family. When we baptize our children, we are *promising* to raise them in the church *surrounded by believers*, teaching them about our faith, until they are ready to make a choice about becoming a follower of Jesus on their own.
- It is also an important part of our theology for our work in \_\_\_\_\_. We don’t believe that we are “taking God” to anyone on our missions. We believe that God has *already been working* in all parts of the world *since creation*, and we look to see where we can join in God’s great work in a particular place and time.

## Justifying Grace

- God loves us so much that God came to earth to \_\_\_\_\_ *perfect love, service, and sacrifice* for us.
- God forgives us, saves us, and ransoms us. This is God's justifying grace, and God is always waiting for us to have faith, to trust God as \_\_\_\_\_, and to simply say **"YES!"** to becoming a devoted *follower* of Jesus Christ.
- God doesn't \_\_\_\_\_ when we say yes--*we do*. And we must recognize that there are *lifestyle and behavioral choices* that come with that choice.

What does the word **"Lord"** mean to you?

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## Sanctifying Grace

- Wesley believed that there would be \_\_\_\_\_ of our belief. He called them *“marks” of our faith*. The apostle Paul called them the *fruit of the spirit... love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control*. (Gal 5:22-23) We don't have to have the fruit of the spirit in order to become Christians; instead, we receive this fruit because we have faith.
- Some faith traditions view a profession of faith in Jesus as Lord and Savior as the \_\_\_\_\_, but we believe it is the exciting \_\_\_\_\_ for an amazing *journey of discipleship*.
- We believe that discipleship is God moving us, or \_\_\_\_\_ *us into the image of Christ for the sake of others*. This last part, for the sake of others, is very important. We aren't just becoming like Jesus for our own good, but *for the good of all of God's creation*.
- We might ask ourselves the difficult question:

*If we're not moving toward becoming more like Jesus, what are we moving toward?*

## Looking Ahead...

Can you remember John Wesley's three "rules" that we mentioned last week:

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_

In our next session, we will explore what it means to stay in love with God and how we can all *participate* in the transforming work of God.

Don't forget to *pray* for your church, your pastors, and your community.



So... How did it go with reading your Bible last week?

Remember to try to read at least one chapter each day. If you're not already in the habit of reading your Bible every day, this is a great way to get started.

Monday - Read *Matthew Chapter 7*.

What is one word or phrase that stood out to you in this chapter?

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Tuesday - Read *Matthew Chapter 8*.

What is one word or phrase that stood out to you in this chapter?

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Wednesday - Read *Matthew Chapter 9*.

What is one word or phrase that stood out to you in this chapter?

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Thursday - Read *Matthew Chapter 10*.

What is one word or phrase that stood out to you in this chapter?

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Friday - Read *Matthew Chapter 11*.

What is one word or phrase that stood out to you in this chapter?

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Saturday - Read *Matthew Chapter 12*.

What is one word or phrase that stood out to you in this chapter?

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# Session 3

## Our Faith in Action

What is our mission and how do we live into it?

Pair up or get together with a few others. Spend a few moments answering the question:

**“Where do you think you may have seen God at work lately?”**

Take turns and make sure everyone gets a chance to share if they want to.

# Staying in Love with God

## Means of Grace and Spiritual Disciplines

Do you remember Wesley's three rules?

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_

“A lawyer asked [Jesus] a question to test him. “Teacher, which commandment in the law is the greatest?” He said to him, “‘You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind.’ This is the greatest and first commandment. And a second is like it: ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’ On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets.” Matthew 22:35b-40

Jesus told us that the most important things we could do were to love \_\_\_\_\_ and love \_\_\_\_\_. How we stay in love with God is an important part of our *journey of sanctification* and personal *transformation* as disciples of Jesus.

The things we do to stay in love with God are called \_\_\_\_\_ of grace and spiritual \_\_\_\_\_.

These are things we do **regularly** as Christians that help us to:

- \_\_\_\_\_ who we are as disciples of Jesus.
- \_\_\_\_\_ in our faith – personally and with others.
- \_\_\_\_\_ the world in Christian love and hospitality.

The term **“means”** simply reminds us that God can use \_\_\_\_\_ things like words, prayers, actions, and even bread and grape juice to **communicate grace** to us and allow us to **encounter God’s presence**.

And the term **“spiritual discipline”** simply reminds us that being a follower of Jesus isn’t always easy or popular and requires us to have **discipline in our Christian practice**.

Here are two ways we understand the ***Means of Grace*** and ***spiritual disciplines*** in our Wesleyan tradition:

| <b>Acts of Piety</b><br>(things we do to grow in our faith)   | <b>Acts of Mercy</b><br>(things we do in service for others)   |
|---|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reading and studying the Bible</li> <li>• Prayer</li> <li>• Regularly attending worship</li> <li>• Practicing generosity</li> <li>• Meditating</li> <li>• Journaling</li> <li>• Fasting</li> <li>• Communion</li> <li>• Reading books from Christian authors and ancients in the faith</li> <li>• Sharing our faith with others</li> <li>• Healthy living</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Taking dinner to someone</li> <li>• Working in a food pantry to feed people who are hungry</li> <li>• Mowing the lawn for someone who needs some help</li> <li>• Visiting and caring for those who are sick and for those who cannot care for themselves</li> <li>• Giving generously and addressing the needs of those who have less than yourself</li> <li>• Seeking justice in the world</li> <li>• Ending oppression and discrimination</li> <li>• Participating in mission and outreach in our community and globally</li> </ul> |

## Connectional vs Congregational

### How the church connects

We're not meant to live the Christian life in \_\_\_\_\_. In fact, almost every part of the transformational life of a disciple of Jesus is meant to be *lived in community* with other believers.

We're in community together here, and Auburn UMC is a vital \_\_\_\_\_. As you might remember from session one, Methodists have been in ministry to the Auburn community since 1837. But we are not a church in isolation. *We are connected to other Christians and United Methodists throughout the world.*

Our guiding document as a church is called *The Book of Discipline of the United Methodist Church*. Most people just call it "*the Discipline*." The Discipline beautifully states our shared denominational \_\_\_\_\_ and helps guide our understanding of *theology and practice* as Christians in the world. It includes instructions for how a person can become an ordained minister in the UMC. The Discipline also contains guidance for how we should conduct the "\_\_\_\_\_" of our local church, such as organizing our leadership committees, purchasing and taking care of our buildings, and managing our finances.

## Polity [noun]

- 1: political organization
- 2: a specific form of political organization
- 3: a politically organized unit
- 4a: the form or constitution of a politically organized unit
- 4b: the form of government of a religious denomination

One of the most important and interesting aspects of United Methodist \_\_\_\_\_ is how *decisions* for the local churches and the denomination are made. Some faith traditions are “\_\_\_\_\_,” which means that almost every decision for a local church is made right there at that local church. In contrast, Auburn UMC is part of a “\_\_\_\_\_” system with other United Methodist Churches around the world.

The UMC has always emphasized lay people answering God’s call to participate actively in ministry. Our clergy are appointed by a bishop to serve the local congregations and to *equip and empower the laity for ministry* in the community.

## The United Methodist Connectional System

### General Conference

- *Only body that can speak for the denomination or change anything in our Discipline*
- Global
- Meets every four years (unless a special session is called)
- 4 lay and 4 clergy delegates sent from our AWF conference
- Bishops influence and lead, but do not vote



### Jurisdiction

- We are in the Southeastern Jurisdiction
- Primary function is to elect Bishops
- 4 lay and 4 clergy delegates sent from our AWF conference

### Conference

- We are in the Alabama West Florida Conference
- Managed by an elected Bishop (Rev. David Graves)
- The Bishop ordains and appoints clergy
- Annual Conference meets every year in June (half clergy and half laity delegates)
- We elect 8 delegates for Jurisdictional Conference and 8 for General Conference



### District

- Several local UMC churches grouped together primarily by geography
- We are in the Montgomery-Opelika District
- Managed by a District Superintendent (Rev. Jeff Wilson)

### Local Church

- Laity provide primary leadership through committees and teams
- Clergy are appointed and are itinerate - which means they work at, not for, the local church
- Responsible for worship and Christian education





As you see from the diagram, the \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_ is the *only body in the UMC that can speak for the denomination or change anything about our Book of Discipline*. It is a complex structure, and it is a delicate and sometimes difficult process to change something; but it requires the global church to *carefully and prayerfully consider* our doctrine and polity.

### How are delegates chosen for General Conference?

The total number of delegates to a General Conference must consist of an equal number of clergy and lay delegates. Lay delegates are elected by ballot by the lay members of their respective Annual Conferences. Clergy delegates are elected by ballot by the clergy members. These elections are held during sessions of the Annual Conference in the year preceding the General Conference.

The number of delegates an Annual Conference is entitled to send to a General Conference is based on two factors: the number of clergy members of the Annual Conference and the number of members of local churches in the Annual Conference.

Source: A Dictionary for United Methodists, Alan K. Waltz, Copyright 1991, Abingdon Press. Used by permission

## Auburn UMC

### Offer, Nurture, Serve, Transform

Our mission is to make disciples of Jesus Christ for the *transformation* of the world. We do this by *offering* Christ, *nurturing* one another, and *serving* all.

This is our mission statement. You've probably seen these words (Offer, Nurture, Serve, Transform) on our church emails and publications.

Give some ideas on how we can do each of these:

- Offer Christ

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- Nurture One Another

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- Serve All

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Part of our challenge in the church is moving from *information to transformation*.

What does this statement mean to you?

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Break up into smaller groups and spend a few minutes discussing this question:

We say our mission is to make disciples of Jesus for the transformation of the world. What do you think it means to *MAKE* a disciple of Jesus?

Write your thoughts here:

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Choose someone from your group to share some thoughts from your discussion with the class.

## A Culture of Hospitality and Service

As followers of Jesus, we are called to create a culture of hospitality and service at Auburn UMC.

Read this passage from 1 Peter 4:7b-11:

Be serious and discipline yourselves for the sake of your prayers. Above all, maintain constant love for one another, for love covers a multitude of sins. Be hospitable to one another without complaining. Like good stewards of the manifold grace of God, serve one another with whatever gift each of you has received. Whoever speaks must do so as one speaking the very words of God; whoever serves must do so with the strength that God supplies, so that God may be glorified in all things through Jesus Christ.

What does this passage say we should do?

- Maintain \_\_\_\_\_ for one another
- Be \_\_\_\_\_ to one another without \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_ one another with whatever \_\_\_\_\_ each of you has received
- Speak as one speaking the \_\_\_\_\_
- Serve with the \_\_\_\_\_ that God supplies

And why should we do those things?

- So that God may be \_\_\_\_\_ in \_\_\_\_\_ things through Jesus Christ

When you join the church (or if you already joined), you will be asked if you will support Auburn UMC with your *prayers, presence, gifts, service, and witness*.

What does each of those mean to you?

- Prayers: \_\_\_\_\_
- Presence: \_\_\_\_\_
- Gifts: \_\_\_\_\_
- Service: \_\_\_\_\_
- Witness: \_\_\_\_\_

We believe that \_\_\_\_\_ who professes to be a follower of Jesus is called to \_\_\_\_\_ participate in the ministry of a local church. We call this idea the *Priesthood of all Believers*. Everyone can do \_\_\_\_\_:

Some are good at building things; some are good at visiting sick people and shut-ins; some love to talk about their faith; some love to teach and work with kids; some love computers and media equipment; some are just simply good at being generous.

Whatever you might enjoy or do well, God is *calling you* to use your gifts to *offer, nurture, and serve others as we make disciples of Jesus for the transformation of the world!*

## Next Steps

Thank you for participating in *Embark*. We hope that you have found this class transformative to your faith and understanding of what we believe at Auburn UMC.

Here are some *NEXT STEPS* as you *Embark* on your journey as a disciple.

- **Say “YES!” to God by becoming a follower of Jesus Christ...**
  - Perhaps you have never professed your faith in Jesus and would like to do so. Please let us know. *We would love to talk to you and pray with you.*
- **Pray...**
  - *We invite you to pray* for Auburn, for our church, and for our mission of making disciples of Jesus for the transformation of the world by offering Christ, nurturing one another, and serving all.
- **Read your Bible...**
  - See if you can carve out a little time to spend reading your Bible every day. If you are not already in a habit of reading, we recommend that you simply start in Matthew in the New Testament and *try to read at least one chapter each day*. Find a word or idea in that chapter that really seems to speak to you. If you want, write down that word and some thoughts that came to mind as you read your chapter.
- **Join Auburn UMC...**
  - If you are ready to become part of the Auburn UMC church family, we will be happy to work with you to get connected in membership.

- **Connect with a small group...**

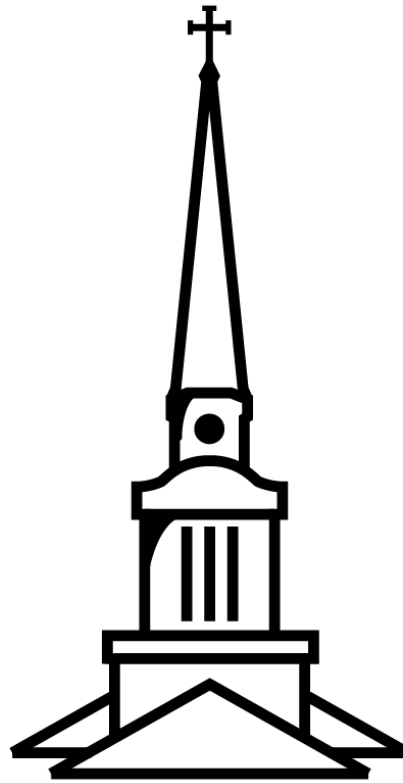
- The best of our Christian life can happen when we *share life with a small group* of believers. We would love to get you connected to a Sunday School class, Bible study, or other small group as soon as possible.

- **Learn more about the Bible or what it means to be a faithful disciple...**

- If you would like more information about any of the materials we have covered in *Embark*, please let Sarah Goolsby know. We can recommend many different types of studies.
- Join a small group study or Sunday School class.
- We will soon be offering a study called *A Disciple's Path*. It is a great next study after *Embark* to learn more about discipleship in our Wesleyan faith tradition.

- **Getting connected in ministry...**

- *Be active with your faith*. Find a way to offer, nurture, and serve. If you don't know what you can do or what the choices are, let us know. *We can help you get connected*.
- Here are just a few ideas of opportunities to serve...
  - Teach Sunday school for kids
  - Lead a small group of youth or college kids
  - Serve on the Wednesday Night Supper kitchen or hospitality crew
  - Serve in the Auburn UMC food pantry
  - Visit people in the hospital or shut-ins
  - Run a camera or computer for the media ministry
  - Take a mission trip or participate in a local outreach
- Look under the "Quick Links" tab at [www.AUMC.net](http://www.AUMC.net) to find an online *spiritual gifts assessment* that can help you identity your gifts and some ways that you might like to serve.



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**AUBURN**

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offer. nurture. serve. transform.