



WHAT MAKES US METHODIST?

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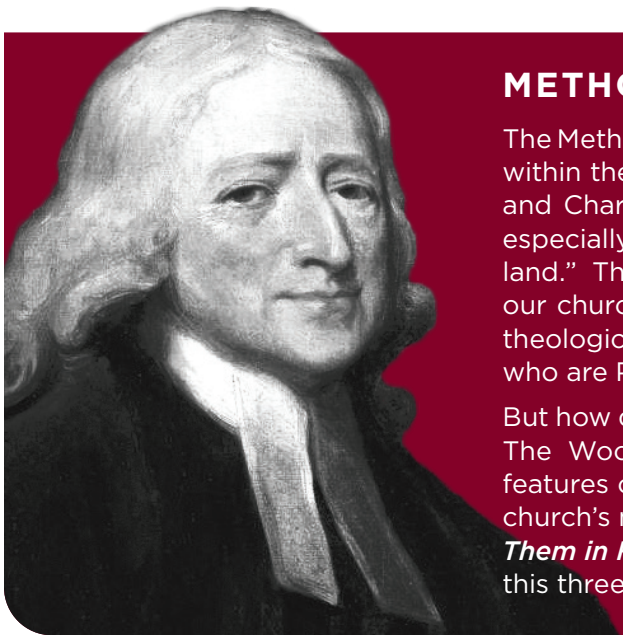
WHAT'S IN A NAME?

Our names convey not only a sense of identity, but of heritage and distinctiveness. As a community member of The Woodlands Methodist Church, you have likely spoken and written our church's name countless times. But I wonder how many of us have paused to reflect on what it means to be a Methodist, how that name defines our church and why it even matters.

As we discern our denominational affiliation, we believe now is the time to remember our Methodist heritage as we seek God's wisdom for the future of our ministry together.

When our church disaffiliated from The United Methodist Church in 2022, we did so to uphold the traditional Christian doctrines and Methodist disciplines that we view as non-negotiables shared by Methodists:

- The authority of Holy Scripture
- God's grace for all
- Discipleship as essential
- Service to others in the name of Christ



METHODISM THEN AND NOW

The Methodist movement began as an 18th century revival movement within the Church of England, led primarily by two brothers — John and Charles Wesley — who wanted “to reform the Continent, and especially the Church, and spread scriptural holiness across the land.” This desire has led people called Methodists to structure our churches in a certain way, sing certain songs, and have certain theological beliefs that are different from our brothers and sisters who are Presbyterian, Lutheran or Baptist.

But how does the name “Methodist” describe and define our church, The Woodlands Methodist Church? Three of the most essential features of the Methodist movement are beautifully captured in our church's mission statement: ***Reach People for Jesus Christ, Disciple Them in Faith, and Help Those in Need.*** Let's look at each phrase of this three-part statement through the lens of our faith heritage.

REACH PEOPLE FOR JESUS CHRIST

Methodists are a people who emphasize the amazing grace of God in Jesus Christ. At The Woodlands Methodist Church, when we say we want to ***Reach People for Jesus Christ***, we are aligning with the vision of the people called Methodists throughout the centuries. Rather than preaching a gospel of wrath and condemnation, Methodists preach a gospel of love,

grace, mercy and forgiveness. John and Charles Wesley preached that the grace of God has three distinct but related facets.

First, the Wesleys taught that all people get to experience God's prevenient grace. This grace is a free gift to all — Christians and non-Christians alike — and is meant to draw us closer to God. Prevenient grace is experienced in a beautiful sunset, in the eyes of a newborn child, and in our bodies

when they are healed. Prevenient grace is meant to bring us to a place of Justifying Grace, which is the grace that saves us. When we receive Jesus Christ as our Lord and Savior and repent of our sins, we receive His atoning sacrifice for our sins and are made right (we are justified) with God.

As Methodists, we know that our Christian journey does not end when we are justified. Instead, John Wesley taught that we should

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all be striving for sanctification, or growing in the grace, knowledge and love of God in Christ Jesus. We believe that this journey is available for all people, not just God's so-called "elect." That's why, along with the Wesleys, our church seeks to reach all people for Jesus Christ and lead them to a lifelong journey of following God.

DISCIPLE THEM
IN FAITH

The primary way for the early Methodists to grow in grace according to the Wesleys was through a smaller group of believers. The second component of our church's mission statement, *Disciple Them in Faith*, is all about this emphasis of Methodism.

John and Charles Wesley did not seek to begin a new denomination. Instead, they wished to reform the Church of England by creating small groups of believers called

Societies, Classes and Bands. Societies were regional gatherings of 50 or so members. Classes were comprised of 10-12 Methodists who wanted to grow in their faith. Bands were small, same-sex groups of no more than six believers who held each other accountable for their walks with Christ. The Wesleys believed that true discipleship and life transformation happened not just during Sunday morning gatherings, but all throughout the week. Our church's initiative to see 100% of our church membership involved in a discipleship program (G.R.O.W.) aligns perfectly with John Wesley's vision for the people called Methodists.

HELP THOSE IN NEED

Finally, our church understands that Christ calls us to heal the sick, feed the hungry, and *Help Those in Need*. John Wesley once wrote, "There is no holiness but social holiness." In

other words, Wesley knew that the church should transform the world not just through evangelism, but also by being the hands and feet of Christ. Early American Methodists took this call seriously and founded countless hospitals, schools and orphanages across the country and the world. The Woodlands Methodist Church continues this mission in Montgomery County and around the globe. We often say, "Missions is the heartbeat of our church," and the Wesleys' vision for the people called Methodists necessitates this type of vision.

As a part of The Woodlands Methodist Church, you might have wondered if you are a Methodist. If you believe in the authority of Holy Scripture, that God's grace is for all, that discipleship to Christ is a priority, and that we are called to help the less fortunate, congratulations — you're a Methodist!

NOW
WHAT?

The decision to affiliate with another Methodist denomination or independent network is an important one: Which option best aligns with our 45-year-old mission to *Reach People for Jesus Christ, Disciple Them in Faith, and Help Those in Need*?



When we disaffiliated from The United Methodist Church, we said that we needed to change our denomination to remain the same church. Now, we have the wonderful opportunity to decide

which option going forward allows us to continue to remain true to who we are. In this crucial decision, you have a vital role to play: Leading up to our Vision Night and congregational vote

on May 7, we encourage you to continue exploring what it means to be a Methodist. Visit our website for more information at twmc.org/affiliation-decide

WANT TO LEARN MORE?

Here are some recommended reading sources:

- *The Next Methodism: Theological, Social, and Missional Foundations for Global Methodism* | by Kenneth J. Collins and Ryan N. Danker
- *John Wesley's The Character of a Methodist: Set in Modern Language with Introduction and Suggestions for Group Use* | by David Wentz
- *Multiplying Methodism: A Bold Witness of Wesleyan Faith at the Dawn of the Global Methodist Church* | by Jeff Greenway

