

# The North Carroll Cooperative Parish



A United Methodist Community

## PART 1

# The Methodist Movement

### Holy Club. Bible Moths. Methodists.

These are just a few of the names people called Charles and John Wesley and those gathered around them before anyone called their group a movement, let alone a church. Charles and John Wesley are considered founders of the Methodist movement that led to what is now The United Methodist Church.

It all began around 1728 with a few men at Oxford University, where Charles was finishing his studies. Charles Wesley had not always been very good at focusing on his studies or his faith. His first year at school was full of diversions like playing cards and enjoying music, theater and dancing. Nevertheless, by his final year, he was ready to devote himself to a more focused method of engaging study and faith.

Charles knew he could not do this on his own. He gathered with others in a small group, a practice common at Oxford in those days.



*The Holy Club started here at Christ Church College, Oxford, England. Image by Photochrom Print Collection (Public domain), via Wikimedia Commons.*

Originally, the group discussed classical literature, but they eventually moved onto spiritual materials. According to Dale

Patterson of the United Methodist Archives and History agency, they would read classical literature during the week but on weekends, especially Sundays, read works about divinity or theology as we call it today.

Even with these conversations, Charles continued to feel like he was struggling. He reached out to his brother John for assistance. "There is no one person I would so willingly have to be the instrument of good to me as you," Charles wrote in a letter to John. "It is owing, in great measure, to somebody's prayers (my mother's most likely) that I am come to think as I do; for I cannot tell myself how or why I awoke out of my lethargy, only that it was not long after you went away."

John had been away for a time helping at his father's parish since he had already graduated and was ordained in the Church of England. When he returned to Oxford, where he was also a fellow, he soon assumed leadership of the group and brought to it his organization skills and some initial instruction.

Others started noticing the group. Some called them "Sacramentarians," that is they sought the sacrament of communion frequently. The Wesleys thought it good to have communion at least weekly, though the common thought was monthly was satisfactory.

This was one of the first items to grow out of their meetings. They had to search out communion since no single Protestant congregation offered it every week.

Others called the group "Enthusiasts." Were they religious fanatics of some sort? "That was an insulting term," says Patterson. "People claiming to be spirit-filled [or enthused] were considered suspicious." The term pointed back to "the wild-eyed people of a century ago," during the English civil war. Despite that, John Wesley considered himself a "reasonable enthusiast," says Patterson.

"Supererogation-men," was another term applied to this small, but growing, group. Supererogation refers to their desire to go beyond what is typically required by most religious in hopes of winning divine approval.

It was common for the Wesleys and their companions to engage regularly in prayer, fasting (twice a week), giving alms and visiting those in prison. Many of these activities were not even the Wesleys' ideas, though John would check in with the local bishop to ensure there was no problem with their activity.

"These guys are accused of doing too much good," says Ted A. Campbell, professor of Church History at Perkins School of Theology. The supererogation-men nickname was also, Campbell continues, "a veiled accusation of Catholicism." There remained tension in those days between Protestant and Catholic supporters, and the practice of Catholicism was restricted. The group the Wesleys were a part of engaged in regular Bible study and were then called "Bible-moths." Did they eat their Bibles as a moth may eat their clothes?

They were viewed as "Bible-bigots," because they reproved others who they thought did not live up to scriptural standards. "A lot of people thought of them as sourpusses," Campbell says. By the time they were called "The Holy Club," there were actually at least four small groups connected with the growing movement. "These were all names foisted upon him," Campbell says, "but John Wesley had the habit of taking them onto himself." It was "Methodist" that eventually stuck. While John Wesley initially did not like the name, he eventually made it his own. Why did it stick? "It was something people could see," Campbell says.

The initial Holy Club dissipated when the Wesleys and two others went on a mission trip to Georgia. However, many, if not most, of the evolving group went onto ministry. The Wesleys and their colleagues stuck to their methods upon their return to England and the Methodist movement would

spread throughout Great Britain and into the Americas and now the world.

Today, United Methodists pledge in their membership vows to give of their “prayers, presence, gifts, service and witness.” Thus, United Methodists continue the active life the Wesleys and their colleagues brought forward. Our methods may have evolved over the years, but we still seek to follow John and Charles Wesley's desire to live a more holy life.

\*Andrew J. Schleicher works for [UMC.org](http://UMC.org)

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## PART 2

### Distinctive Beliefs

#### Methodist Emphases

Wesley and the early Methodists were particularly concerned about inviting people to experience God's grace and to grow in their knowledge and love of God through disciplined Christian living. They placed primary emphasis on Christian living, on putting faith and love into action. This emphasis on what Wesley referred to as "practical divinity" has continued to be a hallmark of United Methodism today. The distinctive shape of our theological heritage can be seen not only in this emphasis on Christian living, but also in Wesley's distinctive understanding of God's saving grace. Although Wesley shared with many other Christians a belief in salvation by grace, he combined them in a powerful way to create distinctive emphases for living the full Christian life.

#### Grace

Grace is central to our understanding of Christian faith and life. Grace can be defined as the love and mercy given to us by God because God wants us to have it, not because of anything we have done to earn it. We read in the Letter to the Ephesians: "For by grace you have been saved through faith, and this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God — not the result of works, so that no one may boast" (Ephesians 2:8-9). Our United Methodist heritage is rooted in a deep and profound understanding of God's grace. This incredible grace flows from God's great love for us. Did you have to memorize John 3:16 in Sunday school when you were a child? There was a good reason. This one verse summarizes the gospel: "For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life." The ability to call to mind God's love and God's gift of Jesus Christ is a rich resource for theology

and faith.”<sup>1</sup> John Wesley, the founder of the Methodist movement, described God’s grace as threefold:

- prevenient grace
- justifying grace
- sanctifying grace

### Prevenient Grace

Wesley understood grace as God’s active presence in our lives. This presence is not dependent on human actions or human response. It is a gift — a gift that is always available, but that can be refused.

God’s grace stirs up within us a desire to know God and empowers us to respond to God’s invitation to be in relationship with God. God’s grace enables us to discern differences between good and evil and makes it possible for us to choose good.... God takes the initiative in relating to humanity. We do not have to beg and plead for God’s love and grace. God actively seeks us!<sup>1</sup>

### Justifying Grace

Paul wrote to the church in Corinth: “In Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them” (2 Corinthians 5:19). And in his letter to the Roman Christians, Paul wrote: “But God proves his love for us in that while we still were sinners Christ died for us” (Romans 5:8). These verses demonstrate the justifying grace of God. They point to reconciliation, pardon, and restoration. Through the work of God in Christ our sins are forgiven, and our relationship with God is restored. According to John Wesley, founder of the Methodist movement, the image of God — which has been distorted by sin — is renewed within us through Christ’s death. Again, this dimension of God’s grace is a gift. God’s grace alone brings us into relationship with God. There are no hoops through which we have to jump in order to please God and to be loved by God. God has acted in Jesus Christ. We need only to respond in faith.<sup>1</sup>

## Conversion

This process of salvation involves a change in us that we call conversion. Conversion is a turning around, leaving one orientation for another. It may be sudden and dramatic, or gradual and cumulative. But in any case, it's a new beginning. Following Jesus' words to Nicodemus, "You must be born anew" (John 3:7 RSV), we speak of this conversion as rebirth, new life in Christ, or regeneration.

Following Paul and Luther, John Wesley called this process justification. Justification is what happens when Christians abandon all those vain attempts to justify themselves before God, to be seen as "just" in God's eyes through religious and moral practices. It's a time when God's "justifying grace" is experienced and accepted, a time of pardon and forgiveness, of new peace and joy and love. Indeed, we're justified by God's grace through faith. Justification is also a time of repentance — turning away from behaviors rooted in sin and toward actions that express God's love. In this conversion we can expect to receive assurance of our present salvation through the Holy Spirit "bearing witness with our spirit that we are children of God" (Romans 8:16).<sup>2</sup>

## Sanctifying Grace

Salvation is not a static, one-time event in our lives. It is the ongoing experience of God's gracious presence transforming us into whom God intends us to be. John Wesley described this dimension of God's grace as sanctification, or holiness.<sup>1</sup>

Through God's sanctifying grace, we grow and mature in our ability to live as Jesus lived. As we pray, study the Scriptures, fast, worship, and share in fellowship with other Christians, we deepen our knowledge of and love for God. As we respond with compassion to human need and work for justice in our communities, we strengthen our capacity to love neighbor. Our inner thoughts and motives, as well as our outer actions and behavior, are aligned with God's will and testify to our union with God. <sup>1</sup> We're to press on, with God's help, in the path of



sanctification toward perfection. By perfection, Wesley did not mean that we would not make mistakes or have weaknesses. Rather, he understood it to be a continual process of being made perfect in our love of God and each other and of removing our desire to sin.<sup>3</sup>

### Faith and Good Works

United Methodists insist that faith and good works belong together. What we believe must be confirmed by what we do. Personal salvation must be expressed in ministry and mission in the world. We believe that Christian doctrine and Christian ethics are inseparable, that faith should inspire service. The integration of personal piety and social holiness has been a hallmark of our tradition. We affirm the biblical precept that "faith by itself, if it has no works, is dead" (James 2:17).<sup>4</sup>

### Mission and Service

Because of what God has done for us, we offer our lives back to God through a life of service. As disciples, we become active participants in God's activity in the world through mission and service. Love of God is always linked to love of neighbor and to a passionate commitment to seeking justice and renewal in the world.

### Nurture and Mission of the Church

For Wesley, there was no religion but social religion, no holiness but social holiness. In other words, faith always includes a social dimension. One cannot be a solitary Christian. As we grow in faith through our participation in the church community, we are also nourished and equipped for mission and service to the world.

"From Wesley's time to the present, Methodism has sought to be both a nurturing community and a servant community. Members of Methodist Societies and class meetings met for personal

nurture through giving to the poor, visiting the imprisoned, and working for justice and peace in the community. They sought not only to receive the fullness of God’s grace for themselves; but...they saw themselves as existing `to reform the nation...and to spread scriptural holiness over the land.’” <sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Excerpted from Teachers as Spiritual Leaders and Theologians. Used by permission.

<sup>2</sup> Excerpted from "The United Methodist Member’s Handbook," George E. Koehler (Discipleship Resources, 2006), pp. 78-79. Used by permission.

<sup>3</sup> Excerpted from "Who Are We? Doctrine, Ministry, and the Mission of The United Methodist Church, Revised Leader’s Guide," Kenneth L. Carder (Cokesbury, 2001), p. 46. Used by permission.

<sup>4</sup> Excerpted from "The United Methodist Primer, 2005 Revised Edition," Chester E. Custer (Discipleship Resources, 2005); p. 59.

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## Part 3

### The General Rules of the Methodist Church

*First: By doing no harm, by avoiding evil of every kind, especially that which is most generally practiced, such as:*

- The taking of the name of God in vain.
  - The profaning the day of the Lord, either by doing ordinary work therein or by buying or selling.
    - Drunkenness: buying or selling spirituous liquors, or drinking them, unless in cases of extreme necessity.
    - Slaveholding; buying or selling slaves.
    - Fighting, quarreling, brawling, brother going to law with brother; returning evil for evil, or railing for railing; the using many words in buying or selling.
    - The buying or selling goods that have not paid the duty.
    - The giving or taking things on usury—i.e., unlawful interest.
      - Uncharitable or unprofitable conversation; particularly speaking evil of magistrates or of ministers.
      - Doing to others as we would not they should do unto us.
      - Doing what we know is not for the glory of God, as:
        - The putting on of gold and costly apparel.
        - The taking such diversions as cannot be used in the name of the Lord Jesus.
      - The singing those songs, or reading those books, which do not tend to the knowledge or love of God.
      - Softness and needless self-indulgence.
      - Laying up treasure upon earth.
      - Borrowing without a probability of paying; or taking up goods without a probability of paying for them.
- It is expected of all who continue in these societies that they should continue to evidence their desire of salvation,

*Secondly: By doing good; by being in every kind merciful after their power; as they have opportunity, doing good of every possible sort, and, as far as possible, to all men:*

- To their bodies, of the ability which God giveth, by giving food to the hungry, by clothing the naked, by visiting or helping them that are sick or in prison.
  - To their souls, by instructing, reproofing, or exhorting all we have any intercourse with; trampling under foot that enthusiastic doctrine that "we are not to do good unless our hearts be free to it."
  - By doing good, especially to them that are of the household of faith or groaning so to be; employing them preferably to others; buying one of another, helping each other in business, and so much the more because the world will love its own and them only.
  - By all possible diligence and frugality, that the gospel be not blamed.
  - By running with patience the race which is set before them, denying themselves, and taking up their cross daily; submitting to bear the reproach of Christ, to be as the filth and offscouring of the world; and looking that men should say all manner of evil of them falsely, for the Lord's sake.
- It is expected of all who desire to continue in these societies that they should continue to evidence their desire of salvation,

*Thirdly: By attending upon all the ordinances of God; such are:*

- The public worship of God.
- The ministry of the Word, either read or expounded.
- The Supper of the Lord.
- Family and private prayer.
- Searching the Scriptures.
- Fasting or abstinence.

## PART 4 Sacraments

The United Methodist Church recognizes two sacraments in which Christ himself participated: baptism and the Lord's Supper.

### Baptism

- Baptism marks the beginning of our lifelong journey as disciples of Jesus Christ.
- Through baptism, we are joined with the Triune God, the whole of Christ's church, and our local congregation.
- The water and the work of the Holy Spirit in baptism convey God's saving grace, the forgiveness of our sins, and new life in Jesus Christ.
- Persons of any age may be baptized—infants, children, youth, and adults.
- United Methodists baptize in a variety of ways—immersion, pouring, or sprinkling.
- A person receives the sacrament of baptism only once in his or her life.

### The Lord's Supper (also called Holy Communion, Eucharist)

- The Lord's Supper is another name for the Eucharist, the sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving the church offers to God for all God has done, is doing, and will do to save us and renew all things in Christ.
- Through offering ourselves in praise and thanksgiving, and through receiving the bread and cup—which the Spirit makes for us the body and blood of Christ—celebrating the Lord's Supper together nourishes and sustains us in our journey as disciples of Jesus Christ.
- As we pray together and receive the body and blood of Christ together, we are united with Christ, with one another, and in ministry to all the world.

- All who love Christ, earnestly repent of their sin and seek to live in peace with one another are invited to join us in offering our prayer of thanksgiving and receive the body and blood of Christ—regardless of age or church membership.
- Congregations serve the elements of the Lord’s Supper several ways, but always include both bread and cup.
- The Lord's Supper is to be celebrated and received regularly —John Wesley said, “as often as [one] can.”

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## PART 5

# The Connection

### Denominational Structure

United Methodist leaders often speak of the denomination as “the connection.” This concept has been central to Methodism from its beginning.

The United Methodist structure and organization began as a means of accomplishing the mission of spreading scriptural holiness. Methodism’s founder, John Wesley, recognized the need for an organized system of communication and accountability and developed what he called the “connexion,” a network of classes, societies, and annual conferences.

Today, our denomination continues to be organized in a “connectional” system, which “enables us to carry out our mission in unity and strength” (Book of Discipline, ¶ 701). Every local church is linked to an interconnected network of organizations that join together in mission and ministry, allowing us to accomplish far more than any one local church or person could alone.

Within the connectional structure of The United Methodist Church, conferences provide the primary groupings of people and churches for discernment and decision-making. Wesley described Christian conferencing as a spiritual discipline through which God’s grace may be revealed. At every level of the connection, church leaders and members come together in conversation, or conferencing, to discuss important issues and discover God’s will for the church. The word, conference, thus refers to both the assembly and organization of people as well as the process of discerning God’s call together.

The list below begins with the local church and moves to ever larger, interconnected groupings. Another way of looking at our structure would be to move from the local and specific bodies to the larger bodies, though the relationships among these are not merely linear and hierarchical:

### General Conference

As the primary legislative body, General Conference is the only entity with the authority to speak on behalf of the entire United Methodist Church. The General Conference meets every four years to consider the business and mission of the church. An equal number of lay and clergy delegates are elected from United Methodist conferences around the world to decide matters of policy and procedure for the denomination.

### Jurisdictional Conferences

There are five geographic jurisdictions, or regions, in the United States, which are comprised of eight to 15 annual conferences each. Our annual conference is in the Northeastern Jurisdiction.

### Central Conferences

In Africa, Europe and the Philippines, there are seven geographical regions, called central conferences, each of which is comprised of annual conferences and divided into several episcopal areas.

### Annual Conferences

The annual conference is a geographical entity, an organizational body (made up of elected lay and clergy members), and a yearly meeting. It is the fundamental body of the church (*Book of Discipline*, ¶ 11). We are part of the Baltimore Washington Annual Conference.

### Districts



Each local church is part of a district, which is an administrative grouping of churches in a geographic area. The District Superintendent oversees these areas, and we are part of the Baltimore Suburban District, in the Baltimore Region.

Charge Conferences and Local Churches

As the visible presence of the body of Christ, the local church is the place where members grow in faith and discipleship, putting their faith into action through ministry in the world.

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## Part 6

### The Parish Vision: NCCP UMC

The North Carroll Cooperative Parish is a United Methodist Faith Community created to be a place for people of all ages to Belong, Grow, and Share in the Love of Christ.

#### Belong

Augustine once said that "our hearts will not rest until they rest in Thee." In other words, until our hearts belong to Christ, we will walk aimlessly and hopelessly in an endless journey that will ultimately wear us out. Luke 20:32 says "Weren't our hearts on fire when he spoke to us along the road and when he explained the scriptures to us?" Sacraments of Baptism and Communion. If you have not been Baptized, we encourage you to talk to the pastors as soon as possible. Holy Communion is open to everyone in our parish services regardless of your membership or Baptismal status.

#### Grow

NCCP members and friends grow in faith through reading and studying the Scriptures. We find various ways to encourage you to read. One of our favorite methods is to provide the Sermon Series' readings in booklet and PDF formats. Visit [www.nccpumc.com/read](http://www.nccpumc.com/read) for more info.

#### Share

We don't believe in "selling Jesus" or in packaged evangelism programs. We simply ask our members to Share Life. We follow the example of the Apostle Paul who said, "We were glad to share not only God's good news with you but also our very lives because we cared for you so much." 1 Thessalonians 2:8. We believe what was true in the 1st Century is even more important

today when people crave authentic relationships. Sharing Life simply meets people where they are seeks to build authentic friendship with no agenda. With that we recommend L.I.F.E.:

L: Look around and listen for God's nudges to speak or interact with others

I: Invite someone (with a specific invitation to church or event)

F: Follow up after

E: Eat a meal or share coffee with them

A very high percentage of people are not attending church. The amazing thing is, surveys say, they will attend with you if asked!

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## PART 7

### Parish Teams

Our parish is not a multi-point charge, we are a cooperative; we are one community of faith. Each location maintains its own culture, celebrates its history, and carries its own identity. However, we work as one to make a wider impact; we are stronger when we do ministry together. This includes 3 powerful parish teams: The Care Team, Go Team and YAK (Youth and Kids).

#### Care Team

Our Lay Care Team connects home-bound, sick, or injured members through prayer, communication, and visits. If you are looking for an opportunity to serve Christ, then the Lay Care Team may be one of the most rewarding ways to do so. In addition, if you want to submit prayers or contact the team, you visit [www.nccpumc.com/care](http://www.nccpumc.com/care) or call/text 443-564-1884. ***This is the way to notify our team and ensure our pastors know of a pastoral emergency.*** Dennis Mitzel is our Care Team Coordinator.

#### Go Team

Our Go Team plans, recruits and equips people for mission and service. Go Team projects include local service opportunities as well as long range mission trips. If you want to serve, know someone in need, or just want to know more contact our Go Team Director, Jim Maness at 570-977-1300 or visit [www.nccpumc.com/go](http://www.nccpumc.com/go)

YAK (Youth and Kids) Team

Each location has Sunday School for all ages including youth and kids. For non-Sunday activities we divide the team:

eleYAK: for families with young children. We generally gather at Greenmount the 1st Friday of each month. Sometimes a special event like the Easter Egg hunt will take the place of a gathering. The leadership is shared but coordinated by Pastor John.

midYAK: is for youth grades 3-8 and meets at St. John's on Saturday night from 7- 9 p.m. Lynne and Liz Piper are the leaders with help from high school students and other parents.

hiYAK: our high school youth have a strong Sunday presence but are not currently meeting on a regular basis outside of Sunday. All high schoolers are invited to attend Camp Harrison this Summer. see [www.nccpumc.com/students](http://www.nccpumc.com/students) for info.

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## Part 8

### Belong & Grow Questions

#### Guidelines

Read Scripture & on your own or with one or two others:

Meet 1x a week in person, by phone, online or journal answers privately

1. What does this passage say about God?
2. What does this passage say about human nature?
3. What does this passage say about you personally?
4. How has this passage encouraged you?
5. How have you experienced God in your life this week?
6. How have your actions and words shown others that you love Jesus?
7. What known sins have you committed in thought, word, action or inaction?
8. What worries or issues are you facing?
9. Did the Bible live in me today?
10. How have you Shared Life or talked about Christ to others this week?

## Part 9

### Contact Information

Parish Website: [www.nccpumc.com](http://www.nccpumc.com)

Parish email: [nccpumc@gmail.com](mailto:nccpumc@gmail.com)

Pastor's email: [pastorjohn@nccpumc.com](mailto:pastorjohn@nccpumc.com)

Pastor's email: [pastormelissa@nccpumc.com](mailto:pastormelissa@nccpumc.com)

Parish Administrator / Calendar: Tara Gallant [admin@nccpumc.com](mailto:admin@nccpumc.com)

Parish office: 1205 N Main St. Hampstead, MD 21074

(P.O. Box 185)

Phone: 410-239-8088

Care Team: 443-564-1884

### Locations

Grace - 4618 Black Rock Road, Upperco: 10:30 Worship

Greenmount - 2001 Hanover Pk, Hampstead, MD: 9:45 Worship

St. John's - 1205 N Main St, Hampstead, MD: 9 & 11 Worship