

Methodism 101

Week 4

February 15, 2022

Topic: The Sacraments and the Wesleyan Quadrilateral

What are sacraments?

- The United Methodist Church recognizes two sacraments, baptism and communion.
- The Sacraments were ordained and experienced by Christ.
 - 1.) Jesus was baptized by John the Baptist and encouraged his disciples to continue baptizing in the Great Commission.
 - 2.) Jesus initiated the experience of communion at the Last Supper and encouraged his disciples to carry on the practice.
 - 3.) John Wesley defined the sacraments as "an outward sign of an inward grace."
 - 4.) Through the sacraments, God works through ordinary elements. It is always God who is at work in the Sacraments, not the person presiding over the sacraments.

Baptism

- In the United Methodist Church, people can be baptized at any age. We practice infant baptism and believer's baptism.
- Baptism uses the element of water- sprinkled, poured, or immersion.
- Baptism is done within the context of a congregation's regular public worship.
- Baptism is presided over by an ordained elder, or a licensed local pastor.
- Through the waters of baptism a covenant is established between God, the baptized, and the community of faith in which the baptism occurs.
- The Articles of Religion in the *United Methodist Book of Discipline* describe Baptism as a "sign of regeneration or new birth."
- Baptism only occurs one time, because even if we fall short of our duty in upholding the baptismal covenant, God never falls short in upholding God's part of the Baptismal covenant.
- Through Baptism we are given our identity within the body of Christ.

Communion

- Communion is the sacrament that sustains participants as they live out their lives as Christian disciples.
- Communion uses the elements of bread and wine or grape juice.
- Welch's grape juice was invented to allow temperament Methodists to experience non-alcoholic communion,
- Jesus initiated this sacrament with the Last Supper (Matthew 26:17-29).

- As United Methodists, we do not believe in transubstantiation, but do expect to encounter the real presence of Jesus Christ at the communion table.
- John Wesley encouraged regular opportunities for communion.
- Communion is presided over by an ordained elder or licensed local pastor.
- Through communion we experience God's grace, we are reminded of our forgiveness, and are sustained.
- The United Methodist Church practices an "open table" allowing all who wish to encounter the presence and grace of Jesus Christ to participate regardless of membership or baptismal status. There is no age limit on when one can begin participating in communion.

Resources: *The Book of Discipline of the United Methodist Church* and *United Methodist and the Sacraments* by Gayle C. Felton.

What is the Wesleyan Quadrilateral?

- A tool for theological reflection, particularly with modern ethical issues.
- Introduced into the *Book of Discipline* in 1972 in "Our Theological Task."
- The Wesleyan Quadrilateral was not invented by John Wesley.
- Some thinkers privilege Scripture above the other 3 points of the quadrilateral. We are all included to privilege on aspect of the quadrilateral.
- Encourages thinkers to analyze an issue through 4 lenses.
 - 1.) Scripture: What does the Bible say about this issue?
 - 2.) Tradition: How has this issue been responded to throughout church history?
 - 3.) Experience: How does your specific life experience inform your thoughts about this issue?
 - 4.) Reason: What does logic, knowledge, and scientific fact tell us about this issue??

