



Trinity United Methodist Church Newsletter



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Wesleyan (United Methodist) Theology Three Simple Rules

⁸ *He has told you, O mortal, what is good;
and what does the LORD require of you
but to do justice, and to love kindness,
and to walk humbly with your God? Micah 6:8 NRSV*

³⁴ *I give you a new commandment, that you love one another. Just as I have loved you, you also should love one another. ³⁵ By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.” John 13:34-35 NRSV*

We’re looking at our core Methodist beliefs. Those beliefs about Christian life and theology derived from our heritage as Methodists. This week I want to talk about the General Rules for living as handed down from Wesley’s day. These rules address the question, “How do I live my life as a Christian?”

Knowing something intellectually and understanding what it means for your life are two different things. Understanding something often comes when we have to express our beliefs to others. For example, I conducted bible studies for a number of years at the Community Correctional Facility in Nashville. This is the jail run by the Davidson County Sheriff. The prisoner mix is everything from fathers who are behind on child support to people awaiting trial or sentencing for more serious crimes. At one point early on, a prisoner asked me how he was supposed to live by all this “love your neighbor” stuff in the prison pod. Even inside a prison, violence breaks out on a regular basis. This prisoner stated that he both hated and feared some of his pod mates.

I told him that Christian love didn’t have a thing to do with affection. You don’t have to like someone to deal with that person in Christian love. Now I knew this intellectually, but as I began to talk with this prisoner I began to really understand what it meant. Christian love has to do with caring about another person’s welfare as much as you would if that person was a member of your family. You can show Christian love to someone you hate. That doesn’t mean your hate is unimportant to God. Hate eats away at our lives and causes **us** more damage than others. But, even if you hate someone, you don’t have to act on that hate and you can do what you can to insure the welfare of that person.

Christian love does not require that you let someone else hurt you or take advantage of you. You don't have to ignore the reality that the world is filled with dangerous and destructive people. But you do need to care about the welfare of this person who you may hate, despise and fear. This is still a hard task, but maybe more achievable than affection.

Wesley had to address this issue early on when the Methodist societies starting forming. Wesley spread Methodism through some of the poorest, roughest areas of England. Through city slums and mining camps, and even in the prisons at a time when the principal penalty for many crimes was hanging. He had to give his people a standard for living that they could understand and use day to day in often harsh and violent environments. And so the three general rules of the Methodist societies were born:

Do no Harm
Do all the Good you can
Stay In Love with God

Do no harm. So far as it is in your power, do not add to the world's hurt. Are you entitled to revenge? Instead of getting mad, you want to get even? Get mad instead. You have a choice between a kind response and a hurtful response. Chose the kind response or don't respond at all. Do all within your power to minimize the harm you cause.

Imagine what the world around us starts to look like if we just seek to minimize the harm we cause. Every decision we make might have harmful consequences. To the extent we can avoid harming others, the world is a better place.

One way we can cause harm is by the example we set. I once had a Lutheran pastor take me to task because the United Methodist Church uses unfermented juice, non-alcoholic juice, for communion. "That is not wine," he said. I pointed out to him that, in the congregation I then served, there were a high number of sober alcoholics. People who had been on the wagon for years, some for decades, but they all knew that they were one drink away from getting caught back up into the cycle of drinking. Using wine for communion might be "more biblical," but it also constituted a temptation to people who were already being tempted daily. Must I effectively deny them the sacrament by requiring that they either take the wine or go without? Even if I offered both wine and juice and let people choose, wasn't I still putting temptation before them?

You parents, have you ever moderated your own behavior conscious of how you were an example for your children? Maybe as a teenager, have you ever moderated your behavior as an example for younger children?

There are many ways that we cause harm to others. We can't avoid them all and sometimes it's a matter of choosing the least harmful conduct we can. But, to the extent that the matter is under your control, strive to do no harm.

To the extent you can, **do good**. This is not complicated. Rule one, minimize the harm you cause. Rule two, maximize the good you do.

No one of us can change the world and we are not called to change the world. We are called to care about the world and the people around us. We are even called to care for the people we don't much like. As I told my prison friend, Christian love is about caring, not affection.

Wesley believed that acts of compassion were channels for the Grace of God to work in the world and in our own lives. As we practice what we preach, as we seek to live our lives in relationship to the world, God's grace is working in our lives. Whenever we help others, we invite God's Grace to work in our lives as well.

What if someone takes advantage of you and your willingness to help? You know what? That's going to happen. Someone is going to come to you seeking help and, in actuality, it's nothing but a con; someone trying to get something for nothing. But, if you let that fear keep you from taking a chance you'll pass up many opportunities to offer help. You and the world will be poorer for it. Think about it this way. If the highpoint of someone's day is coning you out of what amounts to pennies, they lead a pitiful life.

I know I've been taken advantage of many times over the years. Sometimes over the years I'd get 15 to 20 requests for help of one type or another every week. Some of these people were scammers, and I usually figured out who they were over time. I'd be a lot more circumspect in offering them help. But the majority of people were folks who had fallen on hard times and discovered that our society, in general, is not very tolerant of poverty. There are some proverbs that speak of this:

*4 Wealth brings many friends,
but the poor are left friendless.*

*7 If the poor are hated even by their kin,
how much more are they shunned by their friends!
19:4,7NRSV*

In this society there **are not** a lot of avenues for obtaining needed help, no matter who you are. The idea that people are living grand lives with government assistance is nonsense. This is something that many people have shown for themselves when they tried to live within the benefit limits of food stamps and other government assistance. Your simple act of kindness and compassion might just have an impact beyond all proportion to what you expect. Dare to do good. In so far as it is in your power, do good.

Stay in Love with God. Actually, Wesley's rule was "Observe the ordinances of God." By that he meant, worship regularly, receive the sacrament of communion, study scripture daily, pray and fast. A United Methodist Bishop rephrased the Rule "Stay in Love With God," and I much prefer that version. I think it does a better job of expressing what Wesley was trying to say. Unless we keep our hearts and minds focused on God, we go astray.

Come together in worship. Remind yourself who you are and whose you are every week. You are the Body of Christ made so by the Spirit of God. Worship reminds us of that.

Share the sacrament of Communion. Communion is not a meaningless liturgy. It is an expression of who we are as a people. We come together as Jesus commanded, gather around the table as Jesus commanded, and we share the elements and remember as Jesus commanded. We ask that God make us one with Christ, one with each other, and one in ministry to the world. We are a people of the table.

Read the scripture. Share the study of scripture with one another. It is through the daily reading of scripture that we hear the word of God for our lives. It's through the joint study of scripture that we experience the Holy Spirit working in our lives.

Pray. Come before God with an open heart, ready to experience the presence of God. Pray for the Church, for your family, for one another, for the world. There is a power in prayer that we often discount. Scripture reminds us to pray without ceasing, in good times and bad. Prayer is a way of moving our lives closer to God. Prayer helps sustain us and recharge us for the work we are called to do. Stay in Love with God.

Three Simple Rules. **Do no harm, Do Good, Stay in Love with God.** Most of what scripture has to say, most of what Christ said when he walked the earth, can be summed up in those three rules.

Daylight Saving Time

¹² When he opened the sixth seal, I looked, and there came a great earthquake; the sun became black as sackcloth, the full moon became like blood... Revelation 6:12

Please note that this Sunday is the beginning of Daylight Saving Time. It probably has nothing to do with the end of the world as we know it and I don't think Satan is involved. Probably.

Wesley's Advice on Voting

The English Parliamentary election in the Fall of 1773 was one of the most significant in British history. Among the candidates was the eminent Edmund Burke who was running in his first election and who would become one of the most famous legislators in British history. Another of the candidates was an American born Englishman named Henry Cruger. Among the issues being debated was how best to deal with the unrest in the American Colonies. Wesley told his Methodists to approach the exercise of their sovereign franchise thoughtfully and without rancor.

Thur. October 6, 1773.—I met those of our society who had votes in the ensuing election, and advised them (1) to vote, without fee or reward, for the person they judged most worthy; (2) to speak no evil of the person they voted against; and (3) to take care their spirits were not sharpened against those that voted on the other side.

Although not explicitly biblical advice, Wesley is speaking about how Christians should approach any duty and how they should deal with those with whom they disagree. It is advice that we should take seriously today, especially point (3).

Thursday Morning Bible Study

Our Thursday morning Bible Study meets between 10:00 and 11:30. Everyone is welcome to attend. It has been my practice to allow the group to decide what parts of the bible they wish to study. We have concluded our study of Mark and Matthew and have begun a study of Acts.

Prayer Ministry

The following persons are part of the prayer ministry at Trinity UMC:

Elva Beard	Mac McAfee	Kenneth Stevens	Judy Richardson
Larry Eastwood	Rachel Newman	Patricia Stevens	Charles Wilson
Leslie Eastwood		Sam Richardson	

The members of the prayer ministry of Trinity United Methodist church covenant with one another to pray daily for:

- Those concerns on the prayer list of the Church and for healing of body and spirit for all persons listed;
- For each ministry of the church that each ministry would work to bring the Gospel to those within our community and most especially to bring the Gospel to those who have not yet accepted Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior;
- For all the members of the Trinity UMC community that they be led and enabled to live as the Body of Christ;
- For our local community and all its needs, especially for those who are struggling with the burden of poverty;
- For our nation and our world that God help lead the people of the world to live in peace with God's Kingdom.

If you would like to be a part of this ministry (or if you have already spoken to me about it and were inadvertently left off the list) please let me know and I will see that you are added.

Up-Coming Sermons

March 13th: Sermon: A New Thing. One of the most intriguing lines in scripture is Isaiah 43:19. *I am about to do a new thing; now it springs forth, do you not perceive it?* Do we? My texts are Isaiah 43:16-21; Philippians 3:4b-14.

March 20th: Palm Sunday. It's our tradition to recall the events of Holy Week on Palm Sunday, beginning with the entry into Jerusalem and ending with the Crucifixion and burial of Christ. We cannot fully enter into Easter morning without first experiencing the Passion of Christ. Join us for this service of scripture, hymns, music and Holy Communion.

Worship Leader's Schedule

March 13

Judy Richardson, **Liturgist**

Linda Robinson & Jeanne Rybolt, **Greeters**

Sam Richardson & Larry Eastwood, **Ushers**

March 20

Renita Hartsock, **Liturgist**

Hal & Rachel Newman, **Greeters**

Mike & Renee Fetting, **Ushers**

Announcements

Men's Club Meeting: The men will meet this **Saturday, March 12 at 8:30 AM**. All men are cordially invited to attend.

Upcoming activities for the children's ministry:

Easter Egg Hunt

This year's event will take place Saturday, March 26 at 10:00 AM. We'll have a few activities indoors as the children are gathering prior to releasing them to the hunt.

Needs: 1. Individually wrapped candies with which to stuff the eggs. (No chocolate please).
2. A bounce house.

Want to help?

1. Join the fun Sunday, March 20 after church for fellowship and to stuff the eggs.
2. Come on Easter Egg Hunt day at 8:30 AM to do a little decorating and a little egg hiding.
3. Invite your friends, neighbors, relatives to join us for this great day.

Vacation Bible School

Dawn Stevens will be the leader for VBS this year. This promises to be an exciting and wonderful experience for the children. Dawn will need all of us to help in preparation for this great event.

Children's Ministries

Our church is in a period of discernment with respect to our children's ministries. The Nelsons gave us such a fantastic gift in honor of our beloved Nanette. Please continue to pray for us as we determine how best to use it in her honor and to continue Trinity's legacy of "Living as, and leading others to become, Disciples of Jesus Christ."

Easter Lilies: It is our tradition at TUMC to have beautiful Easter Lilies to adorn our sanctuary on Easter Sunday in honor of or in memory of our loved ones. Join us in helping make our sanctuary beautiful and reflect the meaning of Easter. Order your lilies today! The order forms are located on the bookshelves in the hallway just outside Rev. Meaker's office. Please place your order form and check marked "Lilies" in the offering plate. The cost is **\$8.00** for each lily ordered. All orders must be in by **Palm Sunday, March 20th**.

The **Nanette Crowell Companions in Christ Sunday School class has begun** a new study. We are involved in a six-session study, "Fire On The Mountain" by Ray Vander Laan.

We enjoy fellowship beginning at 9:45 with our study beginning at 10:00. All are welcome to join us as we pursue Biblical truths and the application for our lives.

Birthdays in March

Pat Moran, Marty Bauguess, Tom Moore, Lilly Otto, Herb Haynes, Ava Fetting

Happy Birthday to each of you!