



Wesleyan Roots

What Makes United Methodism Distinct

FACILITATOR GUIDE



Unit 3: The Way of Christ

Session 12: Living and Leading with Hope in Uncertain Times

Gathering, Introductions and Prayer

(5 Minutes)

- Check to be sure everyone in the group brought a copy of the Session 12 Participants' Guide with them. Provide a copy for any participants who did not bring their own.
- Provide a copy of *The United Methodist Hymnal* for each participant to use during the closing liturgy.
- Lead the group in an opening prayer of your own, or you can use this prayer adapted from the prayer of St. Teresa of Avila by Joyce Rupp.¹

(Take a few moments of silence at the beginning of your prayer)

Let nothing disturb me, nothing frighten me. Let nothing take away my peace. May I wait with trust, with patience, knowing you will provide for me. I lack for nothing in you, God. You are my strong foundation. You are enough for me. In the name of Jesus Christ, Amen.

Session 12 Introduction and Video

(15 minutes)

- In these words, or in your own words, say: "Today's presenter on our video is Rev. Chris Yost. He will talk about living and leading with hope in uncertain times."
- Show the video.
- Ask, "What did this video bring to mind for you?" Be prepared to share something yourself if needed to get the group started.
- Give a few moments for the group to respond.

Scriptures of the Day: Revelation 21:1-7

(15 Minutes)

- Say, "Our scripture passage for Session 12 is Revelation 21:1-7."
- Read the passage.

Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth; for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea was no more. And I saw the holy city, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. 3And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "See, the home of God is among mortals. He will dwell with them as their God; they will be his peoples, and God himself will be with them; 4he will wipe every tear from their eyes. Death will be no more; mourning and crying and pain will be no more, for the first things have passed away." 5And the one who was seated on the throne said, "See, I am making all things new." Also he said, "Write this, for these words are trustworthy and true." 6Then he said to me, "It is done! I am the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end. To the thirsty I will give water as a gift from the spring of the water of life. 7Those who conquer will inherit these things, and I will be their God and they will be my children.

- In these words, or in your own words, say: "In this passage from Revelation, we read about the John's vision of the Reign of God in its fulfillment. Revelation is one example of apocalyptic writing in the Bible, along with portions of the book of Daniel, portions of Matthew, and others. The author of Wesleyan Roots thinks that the vision from Revelation 21:1-7 is a word-picture of how the Reign of God will be after it is brought to fulfillment.
- As time passed for the first Christians, people became concerned because some of them began to die and Jesus had not returned as they had expected. Paul wrote to assure them that all Christians would meet Jesus at the appointed time, not only those who were alive but also those who had already died (1 Thessalonians 4: 13 - 18). Here and in other writings, the Pauline tradition implied that the dead in Christ will "rise" to a heavenly realm, and this was in keeping with Greco-Roman thought at the time.

¹ Rupp, Joyce. *The Cup of Our Life: A Guide to Spiritual Growth*. Nitre Dame, Indiana: Sorin Books, 2012.

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- Ask: "How do you picture heaven? What do you think happens to Christians at the point of our deaths?"
- Say: "The Bible depicts several ideas of what happens to Christians after physical death but gives very little detail about what heaven is like. Some scripture states that our bodies, in some form, are resurrected to meet God (1 Corinthians 15:35-44) and implies that this resurrection of the dead will happen after Christ's return. Other scripture implies that deceased people of faith encounter Jesus at the point of death (Luke 23: 39-43) and whether or not a body is included is not addressed.
- Ask: "Why do you think the Bible depicts different ideas about what happens to a Christian at the point of death?"
- Say: "In Revelation 21 we see something really different. Instead of Christians going up to meet God in heaven, heaven comes down to meet Christians on Earth. Verses 3-4 state, "And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, 'See, the home of God is among mortals. He will dwell with them as their God; they will be his peoples, and God himself will be with them; he will wipe every tear from their eyes. Death will be no more; mourning and crying and pain will be no more, for the first things have passed away.'"
- Ask: Do you think of heaven as being up in the cosmos, within us in our hearts, on Earth as the New Jerusalem, or somewhere else?
- Where in the Wesleyan roots do you find the most hope? What is one way you can share this hope with others?
- Have you thought through your own story of faith? Take an opportunity to think about and plan a thirty-second "elevator speech" in which you describe it to another. Do you believe God will provide you an opportunity to use it in real life? Do you think you have the courage to put it to use?
- Out of all the Wesleyan roots named in this study, which one is most important to your own life of faith? Which ones were surprising? Name one new thing you learned about the United Methodist approach to Christianity. If anything was confusing, please reach out to a pastor or friend who is familiar with the United Methodist theological tradition. Remember that we are a body that is open to asking questions, talking things over with others, and thinking through our faith.

United Methodist Identity Points and Closing Liturgy (5 Minutes)

- In these or similar words say, "Session 12 was about how we can live our lives, and lead others, with hope rather than despair. The session also reviewed the Wesleyan roots covered in previous sessions. Let us read aloud together the four United Methodist Identity Points from Session 12 in the box at the bottom of your session guide.
- Say, "Please turn your hymnal to #881 (or #882, whichever one with which your participants are most familiar). Let us stand as we are able and read together the words of the Apostle's Creed, as we remind ourselves of the aspects of faith we share with Christians from all traditions."

Marsha Engle Middleton

Questions for Prayerful and Thoughtful Discussion (15 Minutes)

- Think of a time in your life when you were in need of hope. How did God show up in your situation?

United Methodist Identity Points:

- Christians can have hope, even in hard times, through the empowerment of the Holy Spirit.
- Christian hope is deeply connected to the concept of the kingdom, or reign, of God. United Methodists focus not only on the future fulfillment of God's reign, but also on the partial fulfillment of God's reign right now. We are encouraged to participate in making God's reign a reality now by sharing our story of faith with others, by acts of mercy and piety, and by working to bring about peace and justice in our world.
- Because we remember God's faithfulness in the past and can recognize God's work in our present, we can also face the future with hope knowing God will continue to be present with us and with those we love.
- We are all called to leadership in some venue, and our faith can impact how we lead others. Most people come to faith in Jesus Christ one person at a time, so it is important for Christians to be able and willing to share the story of their own faith with others, as well as to do the work of social holiness in the world.