



# Wesleyan Roots

What Makes United Methodism Distinct

FACILITATOR GUIDE



## Unit 1: God's Grace Goes Before Us

# Session 3: The Covenant of Christian Baptism

### Gathering, Introductions and Prayer

(5 Minutes)

- Check to be sure everyone in the group brought a copy of the Session 3 Participants' Guide with them. Provide a copy for any participants who did not bring their own.
- Also provide a copy of *The United Methodist Hymnal* for each participant to use as the group explores the baptismal vows of the United Methodist Church.
- Lead the group in an opening prayer of your own, or you can use this baptismal prayer, adapted from *An Australian Prayer Book*:

*Almighty God, you delivered your chosen people from slavery in Egypt, through the waters of the Red Sea, and established with them a covenant of your unending love; mercifully grant that we may be delivered from the slavery of sin through the new covenant, and obtain the promise of eternal life which you have given us in your Son our Saviour Jesus Christ. Amen*

### Session 3 Introduction and Video

(15 minutes)

In these words, or in your own words, say:

- "Today's presenter on our video is Rev. Patty Froehlich. She will talk about baptism in the Wesleyan tradition."
- 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: Matthew 3:13-17 and 28:16-20

(15 Minutes)

- Say, "Our first scripture is Matthew 3:13-17. Listen for God's word to you." Read the passage below.

*Then Jesus came from Galilee to John at the Jordan, to be baptized by him. John would have prevented him, saying, "I need to be baptized by you, and do you come to me?" But Jesus answered him, "Let it be so now; for it is proper for us in this way to fulfill all righteousness." Then he consented. And when Jesus had been baptized, just as he came up from the water, suddenly the heavens were opened to him and he saw*

*the Spirit of God descending like a dove and alighting on him. And a voice from heaven said, "This is my Son, the Beloved, with whom I am well pleased."*

- In these, or your own words, ask: "The author points out that baptism is more than the washing away of sin. Considering Jesus' baptism, what do you think was the 'righteousness' that Jesus' baptism was to fulfill in the passage above?"
- What other things are going on in baptism today other than the cleansing of sin?
- What does Matthew 3:17 indicate might be going on in baptism?
- Say, "Our second reading is from Matthew 28:16-20." Read the passage below.

*Now the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain to which Jesus had directed them. When they saw him, they worshipped him; but some doubted. And Jesus came and said to them, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age."*

- In these or your own words say, "This is a passage known as the Great Commission. The risen Christ tells the disciples to go, make disciples, baptize, and teach. Why do you think baptism was included in the Great Commission?"

### Questions for Prayerful and Thoughtful Discussion

(15 Minutes)

- Have you been baptized? If so, were you an infant, a youth, or an adult?
- In your understanding, what does it mean to be baptized?
- If you have been baptized, how do you think it has helped to shape your identity as a Christian?

## Wesleyan Roots Session 3: The Covenant of Baptism

- If you have not yet been baptized, do you think it would make a difference in how you understand your identity? Why or why not?
- In what ways do you think entering into a covenant relationship with God and a local church at baptism can help an individual move along in their Christian journey?
- Then say, “Turn to page 40 in the front of your hymnals. Let us close our time together by reading aloud together the Renunciation of Sin and Profession of Faith on pages 40-41.”

*Marsha Engle Middleton*

### **United Methodist Identity Points and Closing Liturgy (5 Minutes)**

- In these or similar words say, “Session 4 is about how United Methodists understand God’s gift of free will. I encourage you to read the session guide prior to us getting together next week. Let us review the United Methodist Identity Points in the box at the bottom of your session guide. Session 3 has three identity points. Let’s read these out loud together.”

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### United Methodist Identity Points:

- Baptism is an outward act that recognizes God’s inward action of transforming the identity of the one receiving baptism to that of “Christian.”
- Baptism is a sacrament in the United Methodist Church during which God, the congregation, and the individual receiving baptism (or their parents or other family) enter a covenant relationship with one another.
- Baptism is primarily God’s action of grace on our behalf, and it is because of this that United Methodists baptize persons of all ages, including infants.