



Wesleyan Roots

What Makes United Methodism Distinct

FACILITATOR GUIDE



Unit 2: Understanding the Nature and Action of God

Session 8: More Than a Memory—Meeting God at the Table

Gathering, Introductions and Prayer (5 Minutes)

- Check to be sure everyone in the group brought a copy of the Session 8 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 during the closing liturgy.
- Lead the group in an opening prayer of your own, or you can use this prayer.

Loving God, we give you thanks for your abiding presence with us, and for the means of grace through which we experience your love and mercy in powerful ways. Pour out your Holy Spirit on us during this session of Wesleyan Roots, that we might better understand your gift of Holy Communion to us. We ask this in the name of Jesus Christ, through the Holy Spirit, in your Holy Church. Amen.

Session 8 Introduction and Video (15 minutes)

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

- "Today's presenter in our video is Rev. Cammy Gaston. Rev. Gaston will talk about the meaning of Communion.
- 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 26:26-29 (15 Minutes)

- Say, "Our scripture for Session 8 is Matthew 26:26-29. Listen for God's word to you."
- Read the passage below.

While they were eating, Jesus took a loaf of bread, and after blessing it he broke it, gave it to the disciples, and said, "Take, eat; this is my body." Then he took a cup, and after giving thanks he gave it to them, saying, "Drink from it, all of you;

for this is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins. 29I tell you, I will never again drink of this fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father's kingdom."

- In these, or your own words, say: "These words are familiar to us. They are part of the prayer offered by the pastor, blessing the bread and the juice for Holy Communion. They are called the "words of institution," and they are a necessary part of Holy Communion in the United Methodist Church."
- Ask: "Do you think it is important that the pastor repeats the words of Jesus whenever Holy Communion is celebrated? Why or why not?"
- Say, "In the gospels of Matthew, Mark, and Luke, Jesus' last supper was the Passover meal called the seder. During the seder meal, Jews remember the gift of freedom as God delivered them from captivity in Egypt. In Exodus 12, God commanded the Hebrew people in Egypt to prepare a lamb to eat using a specific method of cooking and, on a given night, mark the two doorposts and lintel of their homes with blood from that lamb. When the final plague came, the "angel of death" would pass over the homes marked with the blood of the lamb, thus the people would be saved. Being the seder meal, Jesus' words at the last supper identified himself with that lamb that was sacrificed for the salvation of God's people."
- Ask, "What do you think it would have been like for the disciples when Jesus stated the words of institution ("This is my body ... this is my blood) in light of their understanding of the seder meal?"
- What does Jesus give or offer at the Last Supper?
- How is Holy Communion a means of experiencing God's grace?

Wesleyan Roots Session 8: More Than a Memory—Meeting God at the Table

Questions for Prayerful and Thoughtful Discussion (15 Minutes)

- How do you understand Holy Communion? Do you experience the presence of God in the sacrament, or is it more of a memorial service to you?
- What difference might it make in your experience of Holy Communion if you approached the table expecting God to be present?
- How important is the “open table” to you? How would you describe this Wesleyan understanding to a non-Wesleyan friend or family member?

- "Let us review the United Methodist Identity Points from Session 8 in the box at the bottom of your session guide. This session has three identity points. Let's read these out loud together."
- Say, "Please turn in your hymnals to #616 and let us read together the words of the hymn "Come, Sinners, to the Gospel Feast." These words were written by Charles Wesley in 1747.

Marsha Engle Middleton

United Methodist Identity Points and Closing Liturgy (5 Minutes)

- In these or similar words say, "Session 9 is about John Wesley's notion of social holiness and how it influences our lives as Christians. I encourage you to read the session guide prior to us getting together next week."

United Methodist Identity Points:

- Holy Communion is a sacrament offering us an opportunity to experience the real spiritual presence of Christ in a unique way.
- All people have access to Holy Communion within the Methodist tradition. You do not need to be United Methodist, nor a member of another church, to respond to the invitation.
- Holy Communion is a means of grace to us, serving as a conduit of God's love and mercy which we then can extend to others.