

WELCOME TO
A NEW MEMBERS CLASS

WHY DO I WANT TO BE A CHURCH MEMBER?

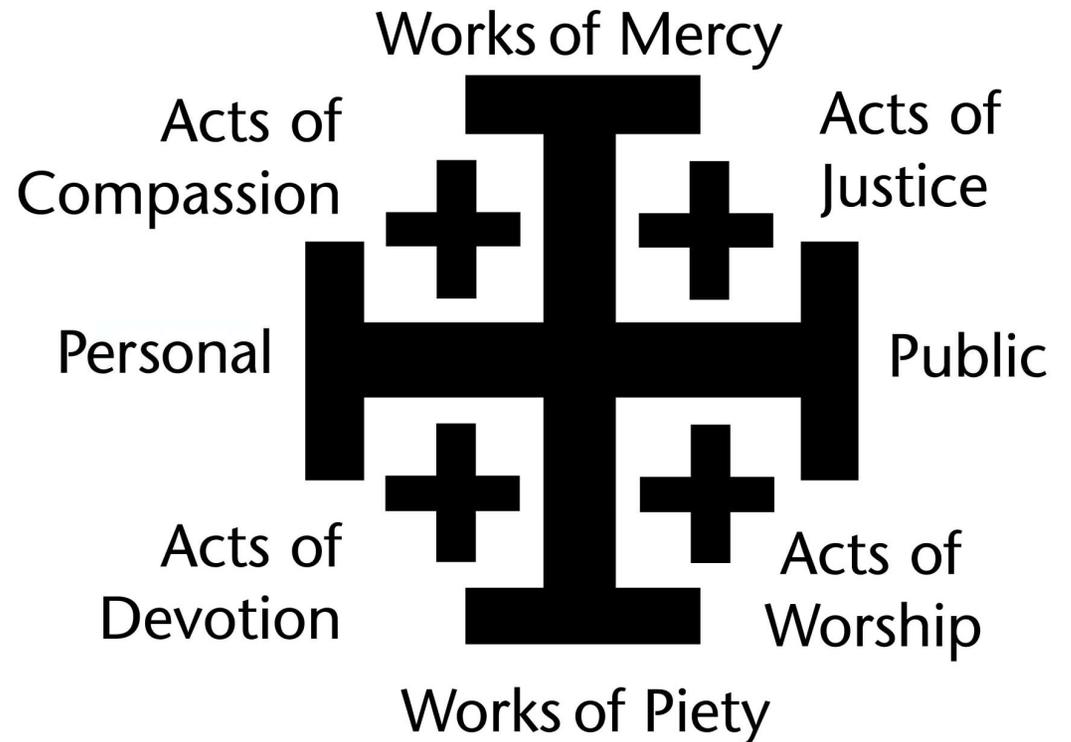
- You can live with other person without wedding celebration. If you had a wedding ceremony, why did you have a wedding ceremony?
- What are the duties and rights of being a member?

DUTIES AND RIGHTS

- Duties: Attending worship services regularly, giving tithe (one tenth of income) to church mission and ministry, serving in church committees, volunteering church mission and ministries like jury duty and paying tax as citizen of a country.
- Rights: Voice and vote at a church conference when church decides its direction. Serve as a Trustee (legal representative of a church) or SPRC (Staff Parish Relations Committee, which is HR of a church) member.
- Which ones do you like or dislike? Why?

WHY DO I WANT TO BE A MEMBER OF THE UNITED METHODIST CHURCH?

- United Methodist Church has couple characteristics. UMC emphasizes both personal holiness and social holiness. UMC holds balance between God's Grace and our human works. We do not use predestination, but rely on prevenient Grace. We are not predestined to be saved, but God's prevenient grace works in us to choose to accept God's grace for us.



WHICH THEORY WORKS FOR YOU AND WHY?

- Double predestination: God predestined people who were saved and who were damned.
- Predestination: Those who are destined to be saved cannot resist God's grace-irresistible grace.
- Prevenient Grace: God's prevenient grace restores conscience and reason for us to choose salvation. It is still 100% God's grace that saves us, but it is also 100% human choice to be saved.

WHAT ARE THE
PRACTICAL
DIFFERENCES
BETWEEN UMC
AND OTHER
DENOMINATIONS?

- UMC has Connectionalism. It means all the UMC churches are connected as one body. Because of such connectionalism, we have Appointment.
- When a local church needs a pastor, bishop of the conference appoints a pastor to the local church, matching the needs of the church and the gifts of the pastor.

APPORTIONMENT AND APPOINTMENT

- Because bishop appoints pastors to local churches, salary of each pastor should be equal according to the years of service. If a local church cannot pay the salary of the pastor appointed, the conference pays the gap between the capacity of the local church and the standard salary of UMC pastors. For this purpose, each local churches pays Apportionment to the conference. Rich churches give money to support poor churches. We call this equitable salary in our connectionalism.
- What do you like or dislike about this connectionalism?

WHAT ARE THEOLOGICAL DIFFERENCES THAT WE CAN EXPERIENCE IN UMC?

- We have infant baptism. Some denominations allow only adult baptism because they understand baptism as an individual's decision to follow Jesus. We understand baptism as God's gift to an individual through the community of saints. When a parent promises to raise the child as a follower of Jesus, we allow infant baptism.
- What do you think about infant baptism?

OPEN COMMUNION

- We have open communion. Some denominations allow communion only to those who are baptized in their churches. We understand communion as a means of grace. In other words, we believe that communion is a tasting sermon. We preach a sermon to all people, even non-believers with the hope that they become believers after they hear a sermon. In the same way, we hope that people taste God's love when they receive communion. That is why we give communion to all people who want to receive it.
- Do you like open communion or closed communion? Why?

WHAT ARE THE CHARACTERISTICS OF THE CENTRAL UMC IN STOCKTON?

- Our church started with lay people, and we emphasize lay ministries. Our church was founded by lay people 173 years ago. When everybody came to Stockton, looking for gold, a couple of lay people started our church as a place for worship in a tent. On September 15, 1849, James Clayton Westbay held the first Methodist gathering in Tuleburg (later Stockton) at San Joaquin and Miner in a tent alone. When he came out of his tent he found out that about 70-80 men worshipped with him outside of his tent! That was the first worship as the UMC.
- What part of this story do you like or dislike? Why?

RELATIONSHIP WITH UPO

- Westbay had arrived here on Sept, 5th in a boat called the Wave with a library of Methodist books, Bibles and hymnals. Two other lay persons who were Methodist helped with the service: Upton Reamer and George Pierce. Westbay was a blacksmith from Green Methodist Church in New York City. He died in 1875 and spent exactly half of his life in California and is buried in the Stockton's Rural Cemetery. Central was formally organized on March 16, 1850 with the Rev. Issac Owens: one of the founders of C.O.P (later U.O.P.)
- Is it good or bad for a church to have a relationship with a college nearby? Why?

WE ARE STILL A LAITY-RUN CHURCH

- Pastors are appointed annually. They come and go. However, lay people are the real ministers of our church.
- On Laity Sunday, we have tasted some of the lay ministries presented during the worship services. Prayer Chain, Prayer Shawl Ministry, Cancer patient family support group, home visitation, membership committee, education committee, mission committee, godly play team, finance committee, trustee, SPRC, and many other administrative or mission oriented ministries are done by laity.
- Do you like pastor-run church or laity-run church? Why?

PASTOR'S ROLE

- Pastors are like coaches. Laity are field players. Laity are the ones who actually carry out mission and ministry of the church. We still pay for the coaches! They are the first ones who are responsible if something goes wrong!
- What should be a pastor's role in your mind?

WHEN DID THE METHODIST CHURCH START?

- When the Industrial Revolution started in England, many people came to cities to have jobs in factories.
- The condition of the workers were miserable. Men became alcoholics and gamblers, children were abused, women suffered domestic violence and sexual assaults. John Wesley formed bands, classes, societies to transform their lives.

SMALL GROUP MINISTRY

- In bands, four or five people gathered and repent their sins, resolve to live new lives. Bands are small groups of men or women. They were accountable to each other and kept their covenant to be better Christians.
- Classes are mixed group of men and women. They are combination of many bands. Societies are gathering of many classes. Societies are church of modern times. In England, they were not called churches because Church of England used the term “church” exclusively.
- What were the benefit of this small group approach at that time?

WHY DID WESLEY DO THAT?

- Wesley was a child of a priest of the Church of England. His mother, Susanna Wesley was a methodical woman. She had 19 children and disciplined all her children with methodical schedule. The children had to wake up at a certain time, read the Bible, pray at certain time, give offering, fast regularly, and worship regularly.
- Wesley went to Oxford University and followed the methodical disciplinary schedule with his brother Charles Wesley and his friends. They got the nick name Methodists, who did everything methodically.

SALVATION BY WORKS DOES NOT WORK!

- However, such discipline did not give him assurance of salvation. Even he was a professor of the Bible, Hebrew and Greek language, and Theology he was not at peace. Even he went to the colony (now USA) as a missionary to preach the Gospel to the native people, he failed. He was miserable.

TURNING POINT OF JOHN WESLEY

- After his miserable failure as a missionary in colony, he came back to England.
- On his way back to England he experienced great storm at sea. He was afraid of dying while certain Moravians sang hymns with peace. John Wesley wanted to have such peace and assurance of salvation in front of death threat.

MY HEART WAS STRANGELY WARMED!

- With his miserable feeling, he was walking on the Aldesgate Street on May 23, 1738. He entered a small church where small number of people had Wednesday worship.
- The worship leader read the preface to the commentary to the Romans written by Martin Luther. When Wesley listen to the reading, suddenly he felt his heart strangely warmed and had such assurance that God saved a sinner like him.

ZEAL FOR EVANGELISM

- Since then, he decided to share such amazing Grace of God with others, especially with those who suffer from the condition of his times in his country.
- He shared his experience of assurance, salvation by grace, and practical supports in feeding, healing, and changing social systems.
- What was your faith journey story? Tell your story!

DID WESLEY START A NEW DENOMINATION?

- No, he just wanted to share God's grace with others.
- He used small groups to nurture people.
- He also had food pantry, clothing distribution, after school alongside of the worship room. This is his way of sharing Gospel.
- When his message and practical helps received enthusiastic responses from the crowd, his ministry became a movement in England.

NEW DENOMINATION IN A NEW NATION

- Later it was spread to the colony. Wesley sent out lay preachers to the colony to meet the needs of the people.
- Then Independence War broke out and Colony wanted to be independent from England. People in the colony organized their own church, Methodist Church. A new denomination started.
- Sometimes political situation affects to church situation. What are the other examples of such corelationship with church and state?

HAS THE METHODIST CHURCH EXPERIENCED DIVISION?

- Yes. The Methodists have grown, divided, and merged many times.
- First, the race issue came up. African American Methodists have started their own denomination to resist the racism in the Methodist Church. Then the Methodist Church itself experience division because of the slave owners. Southern Methodist Church supported slave owners. Northern Methodist Church condemned them. The church was split because of the issue.

GROWING PAIN AND DIVISION

- About a hundred years later, northern and southern churches merged again to become a Methodist Church.
- Then it merged with the United Evangelical Brethren Church and became United Methodist Church.
- Now UMC faces again threat of division because of human sexuality issue. Now UMC holds the position that same sex practice is not compatible with the teachings of the Bible. Some do not want to change this position. Some do.
- What is your personal stance on human sexuality?

UMC AND GMC

- Those who want to support the LGBTQAI+ brothers and sisters want to remain as UMC.
- Those who want to uphold the biblical authority on the passages against homosexual activity want to go out and form a new denomination, GMC.
- Both denominations will serve different groups of people and work together in many areas.
- What can we do together as two denominations?

WE NEED DIVERSITY

- We need Republicans and Democrats for creative tensions in our political area.
- We need Conservatives and Liberals for creative tensions for our spiritual growth.
- In God's creation, there is no garbage. Everything is created with good reason. We may not know every reason behind every creation.

GOOD AND EVIL

- And the Lord God commanded Adam, “You may freely eat of every tree of the garden, but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall die.” (Genesis 2:16-17)
- We do not judge what is good and what is evil. When we start judging our jobs, spouse, children, church, we shall die. What experience have you had to support that statement?
- Our job is to love and accept everybody as God’s children. Community’s job is to protect the community from harms with its police power. God’s job is to judge or save them. Do you agree or disagree? Why?

WHAT ARE YOUR QUESTIONS ABOUT OUR CHURCH, THEOLOGY, AND POLITY?

- If you have any more questions, please email pastor lee slee@stocktonumc.org
- Please send your answers to the questions in these slides or questions about the statements in these slides to pastor Lee.
- We can have an in-person session if you want. Please make an appointment with pastor Lee.