

February 25, 2019

One Bread, One Body, One Church

By Bethany Hader Crabbs

"One bread, one body, one Lord of all,
One cup of blessing which we bless.
And we, though many throughout the earth,
We are one body in this one Lord."
-Hymn 620 UMH, by John B. Foley

As United Methodists gather to figure out our way forward, we continue to pray for the delegates. May love and grace prevail. May we find a way to stay together, honoring the diversity of convictions, beliefs, and theologies. May we have a way to welcome the LGBTQIA community into our midst without fear of penalties to our clergy and staff. May our retired pastors continue to receive their well-deserved pensions. Most of all, may the divine, sacred worth of all of people be welcomed into our royal priesthood of all believers. May we affirm the calling that God has placed on the lives of our queer brothers and sisters.



As a reconciling ministry, the Evanston Center for Spiritual Wholeness and Healing supports the One Church Plan, which allows the diversity of convictions to stay together in connectional ministry while allowing each church to fulfill their mission in a way that does not violate their beliefs. It is our hope that LGBTQIA candidates for ministry will be able to apply without fear of judicial action against them and that pastors will be able to marry (or not) any members of their congregation and community. We do not want to leave, and we do not want to split apart.

Here is how John Wesley, our founder, describes the character of a Methodist (emphasis mine):

"The distinguishing marks of a methodist are not his opinions of any sort. His assenting to this or that scheme of religion, his embracing any particular set of notions, his espousing the judgment of one man or of another, are all quite wide of the point...

Neither are words or phrases of any sort. We do not place our religion, or any part of it, in being attached to any peculiar mode of speaking, any quaint or uncommon set of expressions...

Nor do we desire to be distinguished by actions, customs, or usages, of an indifferent nature...

Nor, lastly, is he to be distinguished by laying the whole stress of religion on any single part or it...

What then is the mark? Who is a methodist according to your own account?" I answer: A methodist is one, who has the love of God shed abroad in his heart, by the Holy Ghost given unto him: one who loves

the Lord his God with all his heart, and with all his soul, and with all his mind, and with all his strength. God is the joy of his heart, and the desire of his soul; which is constantly crying out, "Whom have I in Heaven but thee, and there is none upon Earth that I desire beside thee! My God and my all! Thou art the strength of my heart, and my portion for ever!"

...And while he thus always exercises his love to God, by praying without ceasing, rejoicing evermore, and in everything giving thanks, this commandment is written in his heart, **that he who loveth God, loves his brother also. And he accordingly loves his neighbour as himself; he loves every man as his own soul. His heart is full of love to all mankind, to every child of the father of the spirits of all flesh. That a man is not personally known to him is no bar to his love: No, nor that he is known to be such as he approves not, that he repays hatred for his good-will.** For he loves his enemies, yea, and the enemies of God, the evil and the unthankful. And if it be not in his power to do good to them that hate him, yet he ceases not to pray for them, though they continue to spurn his love, and still despitefully use him and persecute him.

...By these marks, by these fruits of a living faith do we labour to distinguish ourselves from the unbelieving world, from all those whose minds or lives are not according to the gospel of Christ. But from real Christians of whatsoever denomination they be, we earnestly desire not to be distinguished at all: Not from any, who sincerely follow after what they know they have not yet attained. No: whosoever doth the will of my Father which is in heaven, the same is my brother, and sister and mother. **And I beseech you brethren, by the mercies of God, that we be in no wise divided among ourselves. Is thy heart right, as my heart is with thine? I ask no farther question. If it be, give me thy hand. For opinions or terms, let us not destroy the work of God. Dost thou love and serve God? It is enough. I give thee the right-hand of fellowship. If there be any consolation in Christ, if any comfort of love, if any fellowship of the spirit, if any bowels and mercies. Let us strive together for the faith of the gospel; walking worthy of the vocation wherewith we are called; with all lowliness and meekness, with long-suffering, forbearing one another in love, and endeavoring to keep the unity of the spirit, in the bond of peace: remembering, there is one body and one spirit, even as we are called with one hope of our calling: One Lord, one faith, one baptism; One God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all!"**

-John Wesley "The Character of a Methodist"