



What makes
us....*US.*

**Spanish
Fort**
UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

DISCIPLESHIP GROUP

JAN-FEB 2026

WHAT MAKES US, US

SESSION 1: SACRAMENTS

Sacraments are an outward and visible sign of an inward and spiritual grace.

EMBODIED

The Church as the Body of Christ

- *Wesley viewed the Church not primarily as an institution, but as a community through which God forms holy lives. Practices divorced from the community lose their formative power.*
- *When faith becomes private, grace becomes optional. When grace becomes optional, formation collapses.*

Embodied Sacraments

- *"Grace is truly offered in the sacramental practices, but its fruit depends upon responsible participation shaped by faith." Randy Maddox *Responsible Grace**
- *"The means of grace are not simply channels of divine action but practices that shape Christian identity and life." Rex Matthews, *Wesleyan Theology Today**

MEANS OF GRACE

- *"By 'means of grace' I understand outward signs, words, or actions, ordained of God, and appointed for this end, to be the ordinary channels whereby he might convey to men, preventing, justifying, or sanctifying grace." - *The Means of Grace, Sermon 16**
- *"For Wesley, the sacraments are not automatic conduits of grace, but neither are they merely symbolic acts. They are divinely appointed practices through which God has promised to be present and active." Randy Maddox, *Responsible Grace*, ch. 8*

BAPTISM

- *"Baptism marks the beginning of life in grace, not its completion." Randy Maddox *Responsible Grace**

- "Baptism incorporates persons into the covenant community where the life of grace is nurtured and sustained." - Rex Matthews
 - Baptism in the UMC
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COMMUNION

- "The grace of God given herein confirms to us the pardon of our sins, and enables us to leave them." - The Duty of Constant Communion
 - "Wesley affirmed a real presence of Christ in the Lord's Supper without attempting to define the manner of that presence." Rex Matthews, *John Wesley's Doctrine of the Sacraments*
 - Communion in the UMC
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VARIOUS TRADITIONS

- "Certain Sacrament" Model 1: Roman Catholic & Eastern Orthodox
 - "Certain Sacrament" Model 2: Lutheran
 - "Symbolic Testimony" Model: Baptist and Anabaptist
 - "Contingent Sacrament" Model: Presbyterian, Reformed, Anglican, Wesleyan/Methodist
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OTHER THINGS TO CONSIDER

WHAT MAKES US, US

SESSION 2: GRACE

"For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God— 9 not by works, so that no one can boast." Ephesians 2:8-9

GRACE AS RELATIONSHIP

- *"Grace is not a substance infused into the soul, but the active presence of God empowering us to respond in faith and love."*
- *"For Wesley, grace is fundamentally relational. It is God's personal involvement with humanity, not a transferable commodity."*
- *"Wesley consistently resisted depictions of grace as something humans possess. Grace is God at work, not a spiritual resource we control."*
- Randy Maddox *Responsible Grace*
- *When faith becomes private, grace becomes optional. When grace becomes optional, formation collapses.*

Salvation = Ongoing Relationship

- "The Path to Salvation": Wesley's Via Salutis

THREE FORMS OF GRACE

- *Prevenient grace is God's initiative*
- *Justifying grace offers assurance*
- *Sanctifying grace provides transformation*

FAITH AND WORKS

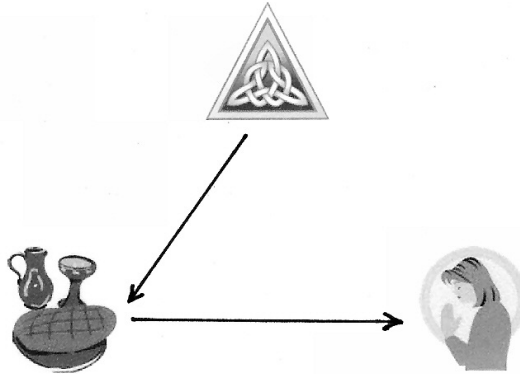
- "We are saved by faith alone, but not by a faith that is alone." - Sermon 43
- Ephesians 2 and James 2

CHEAP GRACE

- "Cheap grace is grace without discipleship."

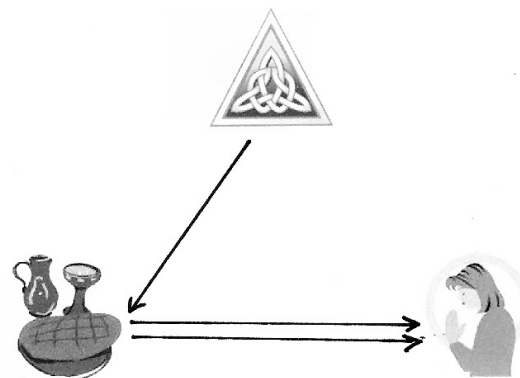
Alternative Models of Christian Sacraments

“Certain Sacrament” Model 1: Roman Catholic & Eastern Orthodox



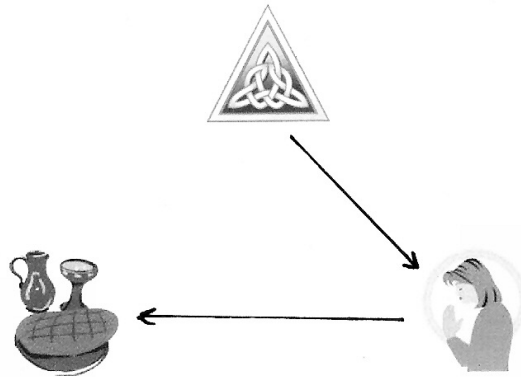
- Notes:* (1) The substance of the bread and wine are changed into the substance of the body and blood of Christ (*transubstantiation*)
- (2) God's grace becomes objectively present in the elements, remains resident there, and is communicated through the elements to recipients; leads to "adoration of the host" and reservation of consecrated elements.
- (3) If taken with faith, the sacrament results in spiritual benefits to recipients; if taken without faith ("unworthily") can result in spiritual hardening; as a result, this model tends to have a "closed table."

“Certain Sacrament” Model 2: Lutheran



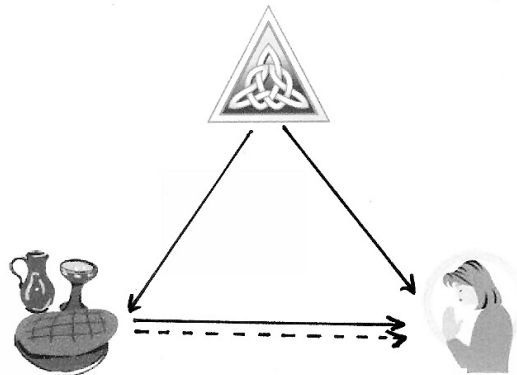
- Notes:* (1) The substance of the bread and wine are *not* changed; instead, the substance of the body and blood of Christ is *added* and is present "in, with, under, and through" the substance of the bread and wine (*consubstantiation*)
- (2) God's grace becomes objectively present in the elements and is communicated through the elements to recipients.
- (3) If taken with faith, the sacrament results in spiritual benefits to recipients; if taken without faith ("unworthily") can result in spiritual hardening; as a result, this model tends to have a "closed table."

“Symbolic Testimony” Model: Baptist and Anabaptist



- Notes:
- (1) Since the physical cannot benefit us spiritually (cf. John 6), taking the physical elements does nothing for recipients.
 - (2) God’s grace is communicated directly to believers through faith through such spiritual (or intellectual) means as Bible study, preaching, and prayer
 - (3) Believers participate in the “ordinances” (baptism and Lord’s Supper) because Christ has commanded (“ordained”) them to do so—but they do so in order to acknowledge and make public testimony about what God has *already done* in their lives.
 - (4) First developed by Zwingli, becomes dominant sacramental model in most radical forms of Protestantism; some (Quakers, Salvation Army) take the logic a step farther and no longer practice the physical rites, in favor of purely spiritual baptism and spiritual communion.

“Contingent Sacrament” Model: Presbyterian, Reformed, Anglican, Wesleyan/Methodist



- Notes:
- (1) There is no change in the substance of the elements — bread remains bread, wine remains wine — but the body and blood of Christ are *spiritually* present in the elements and are communicated to the recipients through faith.
 - (2) God’s grace is communicated by the Holy Spirit to believers “immediately” during the act of receiving the elements, allowing them to perceive and appropriate the spiritual presence of Christ’s body and blood *through* the bread and wine.
 - (3) If taken with faith, the sacrament results in spiritual benefits to recipients; if taken without faith (“unworthily”) there is no spiritual effect; as a result, this model tends to have a “open table” available to all so long as they are open to growing in grace.

“The Path to Salvation”: Wesley’s Via Salutis

Creation — original perfection; image of God (natural, political, moral)

Fall — loss of image of God

Incarnation and Atonement — the person and work of Christ

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Original Sin — human beings apart from God’s saving grace

- “entire corruption” of human nature leads to actual sin (*outward* and *inward*)
- the “natural man” is captive to both the *guilt* and the *power* of sin

Prevenient Grace — “the *dawning* of salvation”

- illumines reason
- awakens affections
- empowers will

Repentance — “the *gate* of salvation”

- self-knowledge = mind/reason
- conviction of sin = heart/affections
- desire for change = will/intentionality

Justification — “*present* salvation”

- by faith alone; hence instantaneous — “saving grace”
- pardon/forgiveness — cancels *guilt* of sin (past)
- “*relative* change” — “*for us*” — external relationship — “*favor* of God”
- basis/agency: the work of Christ (Atonement)

Regeneration (“New Birth”) — “*present* salvation”

- by faith alone; hence instantaneous — “saving grace”
- transformation/renewal — breaks *power* of sin (present)
- “*real* change” — “*in us*” — internal nature — “*image* of God”
- basis/agency: the work of the Holy Spirit
- sacrament: Baptism

Assurance —

“Witness of the Spirit”

Sanctification — “*continuing* salvation”

- process of growth; gradual development — “sanctifying grace”
- “God’s action, our reaction” — “spiritual respiration”
- “one who is born of God does not *commit* sin” — outward sin overcome
- “repentance of believers” — inward sin “*remains*, but does not *reign*”
- sacrament: Lord’s Supper
- context: the life of the Societies — “disciplined fellowship”
- works of piety; works of mercy; use of the means of grace
- cultivation of the “fruits of faith” — “by their fruits . . .”

Entire Sanctification/Christian Perfection — “*full* salvation”

- by faith alone; instantaneous — “perfecting grace”
- freedom from sin (outward *and* inward)
- presence of love of God and of the neighbor
- “holiness of heart and life”

Assurance —

“Witness of the Spirit”

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Resurrection and Last Judgment

- “as to the least of these, so to me”

Glorification — “*final* salvation”

- final perfection; “from glory to glory”; “the fellowship of the saints”