

Make Us **One** with Christ:

The Study Guide Version

Prepared by the offices of

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New York, NY 10017

and

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The Study Guide Version*

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MAKE US ONE WITH CHRIST:

THE STUDY GUIDE VERSION

A PROCESS FOR
FACILITATING FELLOWSHIP AMONG
EPISCOPAL AND UNITED METHODIST CONGREGATIONS

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Introduction

This Study Guide version of *Make Us One With Christ* is a process guide for use by congregations of The Episcopal Church and The United Methodist Church as we live into the period of Interim Eucharistic Sharing inaugurated in 2006. It is the congregations, clergy, and lay people of The Episcopal Church and The United Methodist Church that will live out full communion in mission and witness in its most fundamental and meaningful sense.

Through the process outlined in this study guide, congregations from each communion will explore each other's history, traditions, faith, worship, and life. It will also guide congregations in looking at how they might engage in common mission in their communities. This discussion guide assumes:

1. Two congregations, one Episcopal and one United Methodist, from the same community have agreed to engage with each other in this discussion;
2. Each congregation will be represented in the discussion by roughly the same number of people, most likely 10-12 from each congregation but with other options possible;

3. Sessions will be held weekly or biweekly, with representatives of the two congregations sharing leadership as appropriate and jointly planning how discussions will be structured; each session may last up to one and a half hours;
4. Sessions will meet alternately in each congregation's building and begin with worship led by the host congregation in a manner so as to express something of its authentic liturgical and devotional tradition, concluding with a joint Eucharistic service at the last session;
5. Participants from each congregation, under the guidance of their clergy where possible, will complete the appropriate evaluation and planning response form and return it to The United Methodist–Episcopal Church Dialogue.¹

This discussion process is self-explanatory and requires few additional resources. However, plan carefully so that leadership may be shared between the two congregations and participants may have the best opportunity to see what full communion between The Episcopal Church and The United Methodist Church may mean for their congregation's witness.

¹Return completed evaluation forms to: The United Methodist–Episcopal Dialogue Team, c/o The Office of Ecumenical and Interfaith Relations, 815 Second Avenue, New York, NY 10017.

Session Summaries

Session One—Providing opportunity for participants to begin to know one another and to be introduced to the present dialogue between The United Methodist Church and The Episcopal Church, a dialogue whose goal is full communion by 2012.

Session Two—The session provides an opportunity to look at a brief history of the two communions.

Sessions Three, Four, and Five—In these sessions, participants explore three areas which will be important in the hoped-for full communion relationship between our two churches: (1) the faith we have in common; (2) structure and polity; and (3) ordered (i.e., ordained) ministry (including the role of bishops) and the ministry of the laity.

Session Six—This session concentrates on having participants brainstorm ways their two congregations might “live into” full communion.

Session Seven—This closing session has two parts: first, participants will take their brainstorming ideas from session five and decide on some practical next steps together; second, the Study Guide process will conclude with a joint celebration of the Eucharist.

While the first and second sessions and the last two sessions need to be done in order, sessions three through five may be reordered to suit the needs and calendars of participating congregations.

Thank you for your participation and God’s blessings as you begin your study!

Session One

Getting to Know One Another

OBJECTIVES

By the end of this session, participants will have begun to:

1. Know each other as individuals and as people of faith;
2. Know each other's congregation, identifying similarities and differences; and
3. Know the goal of the present dialogue between The United Methodist Church and The Episcopal Church

PREPARATIONS

Prior to the start of the session, consider making the following preparations:

- Have simple refreshments available;
- Arrange chairs in a large circle so participants can easily see and hear each other;
- Have a name tag available for each participant;
- Have available a flip chart, paper, markers, and masking tape (or a chalk board and chalk);
- The host congregation for this session should prepare a brief opening worship drawing on its authentic liturgical and devotional tradition (see Activity A below);
- Have teams of two or three from each congregation prepared to introduce their congregation to the whole group (see Activity B); and
- Have one or more persons from each congregation prepare to present a brief history of their respective communion (see Activity D for two suggestions on how this might be done).

ACTIVITY A Opening Worship *15 minutes*

Representatives of the host congregation, after welcoming participants, should lead a brief worship period. This could be an Evening Prayer Service, or another service, as appropriate to the time of day or time of year the congregational study is taking place.

ACTIVITY B Introductions *30 minutes*

With participants seated in a circle, invite them to introduce themselves, telling their name, congregation, and how long they have been a member, and sharing what they recall or know of their baptism and something of their personal faith journey.

When all have had the opportunity to introduce themselves, invite participants to discuss
What do we seem to have in common as individuals?
How do we seem to be different as individuals?

Note these similarities and difference on the flip chart or chalkboard.

ACTIVITY C Congregational Introductions *30 minutes*

Ask each team to introduce its congregation to the group. The introduction might contain some or all of the following:

- A brief history of the congregation;
- The congregation's self-understanding of its mission and identity-defining core values;
- Something of the congregation's programmatic ministry, including its support of and participation in denominational and ecumenical ministry; and
- Something of the congregation's organization and governance.

When the two teams have finished their introductions, invite participants to discuss

- What do we seem to have in common as congregations?
- How do we seem to be different as congregations?
- What might we be able to learn or appropriate from each other as faith communities?

Again, note the similarities, differences, and possible learnings on the flip chart or chalkboard.

ACTIVITY D The goal of the current dialogue

The story of Anglican-Methodist Dialogue is told in Appendix A. One of the facilitators should summarize this history for the members of the group. This study session is so that people in both our churches can become more aware of this dialogue and what Episcopalians and United Methodists have in common.

Share the definition of full communion, also in Appendix A. Ask people what they think of the relationship described: How does it sound?

CLOSING *5 minutes*

Close with prayer.

Be sure to remind people when and in which congregation the next session will be held!

Session Two

Sharing History Highlights

History is important for both our communions. Consequently it is important that participants share common understanding of each other's communion story over time. While this might be accomplished in a variety of ways, here are two ideas for how it might be done within the time available.

PREPARATIONS

- Follow the list of preparations made for Session One.
- The co-facilitators should study the material in Appendix B.
- Prepare the Opening Worship using materials from The Episcopal Church Book of Common Prayer and the United Methodist Book of Common Worship.

ACTIVITY A **Opening Worship.** 15 minutes

Before the worship take time for each person to say their name.

ACTIVITY B **Sharing History Highlights** 55 minutes

Distribute the historical material (found in Appendix B) and have someone (either one or both of the clergy or a pair of lay persons) provide a summary and overview.

Afterwards ask these questions:

What surprised you about your own history?

What surprised you about the history of the other church?

ACTIVITY C **Closing prayer.** 5 minutes

Be sure to remind people when and in which congregation the next session will be held!

Session Three

The Faith We Affirm

PREPARATION

- Follow the list of preparations made for Session One.
- The co-facilitators should study the material in Appendix C.

ACTIVITY A

Introductions 10 minutes

Unless you are sure participants have come to know each other's names, invite each to briefly introduce herself or himself.

ACTIVITY B

Worship 15 minutes

Representatives of the host congregation, after welcoming participants, should lead a brief worship period.

ACTIVITY C

Small Group Discussion 55 minutes

Have people divide up into a number of small groups, either two or more depending on the number attending. Have each group read through, out loud, "The Faith We Affirm."

After the group has read this, then move on to the suggested questions.

A special note to those theologically trained: Allow the discussion to settle at a level suitable to participants' capabilities. The point is not to have a nuanced dogmatic discussion, but, rather, to realize that our two communions do share a substantial body of faith in common.

After the small groups have had ample time to discuss, gather the whole group and ask each small group to report its findings.

ACTIVITY D

Small Group Discussion 15 minutes

For both our traditions, our faith is also lived out in worship. Break the group up into smaller groups with mixed United Methodist and Episcopal representation. Ask each group to come up with some favorite hymns of Charles Wesley that both our traditions share. What do these hymns say about what we believe?

CLOSING

5 minutes

Remind participants of the activities planned and the meeting place for the next session. Close with prayer.

Session Four

Structure and Polity

OBJECTIVE

By the end of this session, participants will have begun to understand how each communion structures and governs itself.

PREPARATIONS

Well in advance of this session, select two participants from each congregation to be presenters.

One person from each congregation should prepare a presentation (lasting no more than ten minutes) on how her/his communion is structured (using the resource on polity in Appendix D).

One person from each congregation should prepare a presentation (lasting no more than ten minutes) on how her/his communion is governed (using the resource on polity in Appendix D).

One person from each congregation to present should be prepared to present the demographic overviews of the two churches (using the resource provided in Appendix E)

As always, have refreshments, name tags, etc. available; arrange the room with chairs in a circle, and have a flip chart and markers or chalkboard and chalk available.

ACTIVITY A

Introductions

Unless you are sure participants have come to know each other's names, invite each to briefly introduce herself or himself.

ACTIVITY B

Worship

15 minutes

Representatives of the host congregation, after welcoming participants, should lead a brief worship period.

ACTIVITY C

Presentations and Discussion 1 hour

There is a lot to cover in this activity and limited time (presentations themselves could take almost half of the time allotted). Participants at least need to (a) hear the presentations, (b) have an opportunity to ask clarifying questions, and (c) note similarities and differences between the communions. Choose one of the following two ways to handle all this material.

Option 1

Divide the total group into three sections. One section will hear, respond to, and report on the presentations on structure; the second will hear, respond to, and report on the presentations on governance; a third will hear, respond to, and report the presentation on demographics

Instruct the sections to take no more than 15-20 minutes to (a) listen to the presentation on the assigned topic, (b) pose clarifying questions, (c) discuss similarities and differences between the two communions on the assigned topic, and (d) prepare a summary of their discussion for the whole group to hear.

After the two sections have had opportunity to complete their tasks, reconvene the whole group and ask each section to report on its conversation.

Option 2

Keeping the groups together, allow about 15-20 minutes for presentations and discussion on each topic. After each topic has been discussed, be sure to have the group note differences and similarities between the two communions.

CLOSING

5 minutes

Remind participants of the activities planned and the meeting place for the next session. Close with prayer.

Session Five

Ministry

OBJECTIVES

By the end of this session, participants will have:

1. Explored similarities and differences in the way the two communions order (ordained) ministry;
2. Identified ways the two communions understand ministry to include lay persons; and
3. Explored the ways the two communions understand the role and responsibilities of the episcopacy.

PREPARATIONS

One from each congregation should prepare a presentation (lasting no more than ten minutes) on how her/his communion understands the ordained ministry, including the different orders (deacons—whether transitional or permanent, priests/presbyters, etc.), using the resource in Appendix F

One from each congregation should prepare a presentation (lasting no more than ten minutes) on how her/his communion understands the ministry of the laity and its relationship to the ordained ministry, using the resource in Appendix F

One from each congregation should prepare a presentation (lasting no more than ten minutes) on how her/his communion understands bishops, using the resource in Appendix F

As always, have refreshments, name tags, etc. available; arrange the room with chairs in a circle, and have a flip chart and markers or chalkboard and chalk available.

ACTIVITY A

Introductions

Unless you are sure participants have come to know each other's names, invite each to briefly introduce herself or himself.

ACTIVITY B

Worship

15 minutes

Representatives of the host congregation, after welcoming participants, should lead a brief worship period.

ACTIVITY C

Presentations and Discussion 1 hour

Option 1

Divide the total group into three sections. One section will hear, respond to, and report on the presentations on ordained ministry; the second will hear, respond to, and report on the presentations on ministry of the laity; a third will hear, respond to, and report on the presentation on bishops

Instruct the sections to take no more than 30 minutes to (a) listen to the presentation on the assigned topic, (b) pose clarifying questions, (c) discuss similarities and differences between the two communions on the assigned topic, and (d) prepare a summary of their discussion for the whole group to hear.

After the three sections have had opportunity to complete their tasks, reconvene the whole group and ask each section to report on its conversation.

Option 2

Keeping the groups together, allow about 15-20 minutes for presentations and discussion on each topic. After each topic has been discussed, be sure to have the group note differences and similarities between the two communions.

CLOSING

5 minutes

Remind participants of the activities planned and the meeting place for the next session. Close with prayer.

Session Six

Planning for Common Mission

OBJECTIVE

By the end of this session, participants will have begun to brainstorm ideas about how the two congregations might “live into” full communion and enrich their lives and ministries in the community.

PREPARATIONS

By this time, we assume that participants have come to know each other and their respective congregations relatively well and have, because of this knowledge and deepening personal relationships, begun also to sense possibilities for a future common life between the congregations, a common life that takes seriously the nature and mission of each as well as common Christian commitments in witness and service.

Prepare copies of the description of Interim Eucharistic Sharing found in Appendix H to give to participants.

Prepare copies of the Guidelines for Interim Eucharistic Sharing in Appendix H to prepare for the joint celebration of the Eucharist in Session 7.

While our two communions are living in an in-between period of Interim Eucharistic Sharing, congregations can assist both dialogue participants and their respective communions in exploring what a full communion relationship might mean for congregations, the places where we gather for worship, witness, and service in the name of our common Lord. So, plan for a future life together!

In preparing for this session

Identify several spaces where working groups can meet—3–5 spaces should be adequate.

ACTIVITY A

Worship

15 minutes

Representatives of the host congregation, after welcoming participants, should lead a brief worship period.

ACTIVITY B

Common Mission

20 minutes

Circulate the “Mission and Call” resource found in Appendix G

Discuss each of the definitions of mission in “Mission and Call.” Ask participants which one resonates the strongest with them.

ACTIVITY C

Brainstorming

40 minutes

1. Divide participants into working groups of 3–5 persons each, taking care to be sure each group contains representatives of each congregation. Ask each group to build a list of ideas for how the two congregations *together* might “live into full communion,” i.e., ideas about what the two congregations might do to express the unity recognized in full communion. Instruct the groups to note their ideas on newsprint (see that each group has a supply of paper and markers), writing enough about each idea so that others can figure out what the idea means. Then, send the groups to separate workspaces.
2. After the groups have had a chance to work, gather everyone together in the common meeting place and collect the sheets of newsprint. (You can post them on the walls while groups are working on the next task.)

ACTIVITY D

Distribute the statement on Interim Eucharistic Sharing in Appendix H. Ask participants to prayerfully consider all the ideas the group has collected and the proposal for Interim Eucharistic Sharing for the next (and last) meeting

CLOSING

5 minutes

Remind participants of the activities planned and the meeting place for the next session. Close with prayer.

Session Seven

Celebration of the Eucharist and Next Steps

OBJECTIVES

By the end of this session, participants will have begun to plan for specific common actions expressing full communion and will hold a joint celebration of the Eucharist.

PREPARATIONS

This final session is made up of two parts. The first part gives participants a chance to take brainstormed ideas from the previous session and “flesh them out” so it will be easier to implement them. In preparing for this session, you’ll need just what you had last time.

The second is a joint celebration of the Eucharist. Clergy and lay leaders from both congregations should also plan a joint celebration of the Eucharist, using the guidelines attached in Appendix H. Be sure to be in contact with each respective bishop in advance of this session, since these celebrations need to be approved by the bishops.

Most likely only those who have been a part of the study series will in attendance for the planning session. However, be sure to extend an invitation to all members of both churches to attend the joint celebration of the Eucharist.

Before this session, carefully review the newsprint from last session. On new sheets of paper, carefully copy those items which got the most “votes” (i.e., check marks); these items will make up the “action agenda” for this session. You’ll have to use your judgment about how many items to include on this agenda. Divide the list into two sections, so that the group can address half the items at a time.

Post the newsprint from the last session around the room.

ACTIVITY A

Welcome

5 minutes

Welcome the participants, and explain that there will not be the usual opening worship because of the joint celebration of the Eucharist at the end of the session.

ACTIVITY B

Planning for Action

30 minutes

Tell participants that they’ll have a chance to be a part of two separate committees. Each committee will meet for 30 minutes and will take one of the items from the “action agenda” and do some “what, by whom, and by when” planning for implementing the item. Then, invite participants to “sign up” quickly to work on one item from each section of the action agenda. Direct each group to a workspace and encourage them to work quickly.

Invite everyone back to the common space and ask each working group to briefly summarize its planning.

ACTIVITY C

Evaluating the process

15 minutes

Take the last fifteen minutes of this session, divide into congregational groups, and briefly give participants an opportunity to suggest comments for the evaluation and planning response form.

WORSHIP

Thank participants for their energy and creativity. Have someone explain what Interim Eucharistic sharing is, using the Resource in Appendix G. Explain what full communion is using the resource in Appendix H. Close with a brief prayer, then invite the people to move into the sanctuary.

Evaluation and Planning Response Form

Return this completed form to The United Methodist–Episcopal Dialogue Team, c/o The Office of Ecumenical and Interfaith Relations, 815 Second Avenue, New York, NY 10017. Thank you for your participation.

Congregation _____

Address _____

Person(s) submitting this response: _____

1. Significant things we learned about the other communion during this study are:
2. Significant things we learned about ourselves as a communion or as a congregation during this study are:
3. Creative ideas for how we might “live into” full communion, should it be established, in our community are:
4. Comments we’d like to share about the discussion process:

Appendix A

Historical Summary of Anglican and Methodist Dialogue

In Advent 1999 a group of Methodists and Anglicans, mostly in the United States, agreed to pray together for Anglican-Methodist unity through the liturgical year that began in Advent 1999. Their prayers reflect the deep longing of many Anglicans and Methodists that our churches somehow find a way to stronger, more visible unity in Christ. Their prayers could be summarized in the petition that serves as the title of this study guide: “Make us one.”

The Episcopal-United Methodist dialogue has set full communion as the goal for our two churches. In this case, full communion is understood as a relationship between two distinct churches or communions in which each maintains its own autonomy while recognizing the catholicity and apostolicity of the other, and believing the other to hold the essentials of the Christian faith. In such a relationship, communicant members of each church would be able freely to communicate at the altar of the other, and ordained ministers may officiate sacramentally in either church. Specifically, in our context, we understand this to include transferability of members; mutual recognition and interchangeability of ministries; freedom to use each other’s liturgies; freedom to participate in each other’s ordinations and installations of clergy, including bishops; and structures for consultation to express, strengthen, and enable our common life, witness, and service, to the glory of God and the salvation of the world.

Methodists and Episcopalians have much in common from our roots in the Church of England and in how our traditions went through a process of adaptation to the American colonies. This is particularly the case in the post-Revolutionary period, which was an extraordinarily formative period for both of our traditions. Despite many commonalities, Methodists and Episcopalians have rarely been in one-on-one, bilateral dialogue with one another in the United States. Initial attempts in the 1930s were postponed from the Methodist side to focus on the reunion of the Methodist Episcopal Church’s Northern and Southern branches, which was accomplished in 1939. Following the Second World War, and building on Archbishop Geoffrey Fisher’s call in his famous Cambridge Sermon for renewed dialogue between Anglicans and other

churches, the Methodist Church and the Episcopal Church engaged in dialogue from 1948-1961. These conversations, however, were ended in favor of both churches’ participation in the multi-church Consultation on Church Union. In 1968 the Methodist Church merged with the Evangelical United Brethren Church to form the United Methodist Church. From 1964-2002, the Methodist and, later, The United Methodist Church, dialogued with the Episcopal Church within the context of the Consultation on Church Union.

Meanwhile, Anglicans and Methodists in Great Britain and Ireland engaged in several different rounds of bilateral dialogue for the last fifty years. An initial proposal for reunion in England was approved by the Methodist Conference in 1972 but failed to achieve the necessary 75% threshold in the General Synod of the Church of England. In 1982, a Covenanting for Unity proposal which included Methodist, Moravians and the Reformed churches in Great Britain again failed to receive the required 75% in General Synod. In 1994, the Methodist Church approached the Church of England to engage in preliminary talks. These talks eventually lead to both churches embarking on formal conversations in 1996, setting as their goal the visible unity of the church. These conversations have continued, and issued the seminal Anglican-Methodist Covenant in 2001. In 2002, this Covenant was signed by the British Methodist Church and the Church of England, committing the churches to a ten-year process of covenant relationship marked by increasing cooperation in mission, witness, and education.

Similar advances have been made on the international level. Responding to an initiative from the 1988 Lambeth Conference, the Anglican Communion and the World Methodist Council engaged in a communion-wide dialogue from 1993-1996. It issued its final report, *Sharing the Apostolic Communion*, which detailed the substantial theological convergence reached between Anglicans and Methodists. On the basis of such convergence, the 1998 Lambeth Conference encouraged local provinces of the Communion to engage in dialogues with Methodist Churches (Resolution IV.17, 1998 Lambeth Conference).

Building on the momentum from the International dialogue and the Anglican-Methodist Conversations in England, and from an important and very productive local Episcopal-United Methodist dialogue in North Carolina, The United Methodist Church, authorized by its 2000 General Conference, and the Episcopal Church, authorized by the 2000 General Convention, met for its first bilateral dialogue in 2002. The period from 2002-2006 marked the initial stage of the dialogue, and has focused on two goals. The first was an examination of one another's polities, ecclesiologies, and shared history. Papers by Dr. R. Bruce Mullin, the Rev. Dr. Ephraim Radner, and the Rev. Dr. Russell Richey formally addressed these issues, supplemented by presentations provided by the Rev. Betty Gamble and Dr. Thomas Ferguson. The dialogue also sought to identify convergence on matters of core doctrine for both churches. Meetings in Minneapolis and New York City addressed these questions. The Minneapolis dialogue meeting in August of 2003 featured papers by Dr. Marion Grau, the Very Rev. Bill Petersen, and the Rev. Dr. Ted Campbell, which attempted to describe the doctrinal ethos and standards of Anglicans and Methodists. The Dallas meeting of January 2004 focused on this question, with papers presented by the Rev. Canon J. Robert Wright and Bishop William Oden on the historic episcopate, and by the Very Rev. Titus Presler and Dr. Billy Abraham on mission. The September 2004 dialogue meeting in New York City focused more specifically on two very important United Methodist theological statements, *By Water and the Spirit*, about Baptism, and *This Holy Mystery*, about the Lord's Supper or Holy Communion. The Rev. Dr. Gayle Fenton, who served on the study and drafting committees for these documents, presented them from The United Methodist Church, and the Rev. Dr. Ruth Meyers and the Rt. Rev. Neil Alexander provided responses from the Episcopal Church.

While focusing on matters of core doctrine, the two churches also began to discuss the one issue upon which convergence was unlikely to be reached during the initial phase of dialogue: that of the ordained ministry, in particular the historic episcopate. The two churches chose to begin discussion on the ordained ministry by looking at how both churches have maintained faithfulness to the apostolic faith through mission and through the episcopate.

The two churches have also sought practical ways to find areas of cooperation in witness and mission. Fifteen bishops from each church met in Chicago, Illinois, in 2005 to discuss how our two churches face similar challenges. It is hoped that this initial consultation may lead to future joint meeting of the House of Bishops of the Episcopal Church and the Council of Bishops of The

United Methodist Church. The January 2006 meeting of the dialogue met with members of the local North Carolina United Methodist-Episcopal dialogue (which has been meeting since 1992) to share the learnings of that productive dialogue. Further, the September 2006 meeting has invited leadership and members from a joint Methodist-Episcopal congregation to attend in order to see how joint mission can happen on a local level. A statement summarizing the historical and theological work of the dialogue, *Make Us One*, was published in 2007. Many of the resource documents in these appendices are drawn from *Make Us One*.

After four years of dialogue, and with nearly forty years of discussion in the Consultation on Church Union, The United Methodist Church and the Episcopal Church feel that they can endorse without hesitation that both churches have maintained the apostolic faith and are members of the one, holy, catholic, and apostolic church. On the basis of this substantial theological agreement, the Episcopal Church is submitting a resolution authorizing Interim Eucharistic Sharing with The United Methodist Church to its 2006 General Convention. The United Methodist Council of Bishops, which has the authority to authorize Eucharistic sharing, has already passed a similar resolution. With the inauguration of Interim Eucharistic Sharing, it is hoped that this will begin to bring parishes together in joint worship, mission, witness, and study. In Interim Eucharistic Sharing, the two churches recognize one another as members of the only, holy, Catholic, and apostolic church, and authorize joint celebrations of the Eucharist as a way to live into a deeper relationship for the sake of mission and witness. Having reached agreement in matters of essential doctrine, the second round of dialogue between The United Methodist Church and the Episcopal Church, commencing in 2006, will focus on the remaining matter upon which the two churches have been unable to reach complete agreement: that of the historic episcopate, a fully interchangeable ordained ministry, and commonly agreed upon Eucharistic elements.

We give thanks to God, whose Spirit has moved through our conversations and brought us thus far in our discussions. With thanksgiving we offer this study guide to the bishops, clergy, and deputies of the General Convention to assist in their deliberations at the 2006 General Convention. We also commend this study guide to the clergy and congregations of both our churches to deepen the relationship between our two churches and to foster better understanding for the sake of mission in local communities.

As we look forward to the continued work of this dialogue, we give thanks for the progress made and ask for God's guidance in addressing matters which need further

discussion. As we do we are reminded of the words of the Apostle Paul and take heart: “Glory to God, whose power working in us can do infinitely more than we can ask or

imagine. Glory to God from generation to generation in the Church, and in Christ Jesus for ever and ever” (Ephesians 3:20-21).

Members of the Dialogue

The Rt. Rev. Franklin Brookhart, Co-Chair

EPISCOPAL CHURCH

The Rt. Rev. Philip Duncan 2007-
The Very Rev. David Bird, 2002-
The Rev. Lois Boxill, 2002- 2006
The Rev. Theodora Brooks, 2002-
Ms. Jan Farmer, 2004-
The Rt. Rev. John Lipscomb, 2002-2003
Deacon Sunny Lopez, 2004-2006
Dr. Bruce Mullin, 2002-
Dr. Patricia Page, 2002-
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Bishop Gregory V. Palmer, 2007-
The Rev. Dr. Ted A. Campbell, 2006-
The Rev. Trey Hall, 2002-2006
The Rev. Erica R. Jenkins, 2002-
The Rev. Dr. Diedra Kriewald, 2002-
The Rev. Dr. Russell E. Richey, 2002-
The Rev. Jeannie Treviño-Teddlie, 2002-
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A Shared Heritage

A COMMON BACKGROUND

The United Methodist Church and the Episcopal Church are both descendants of the Church of England, and both adapted this common background in different ways. This resource examines those common backgrounds, looks at how the two traditions diverged, and notes a few convergences between Methodists and Episcopalians.

Some aspects of this common heritage are:

A grounding in eighteenth century questions of religious **revival and identity**:

Methodism emerged in the colonies presenting itself, as it did in Britain, as a reform movement with Anglicanism. Methodism found a place with lay persons and clergy who shared Wesleyanism's aspiration for a religion that moved your heart, not only your mind, and holy living, shaping your actions to match your faith. Both churches emerged after the American Revolution in crisis, seeking independence from "foreign" authority and thrust into profound self-examination and a struggle for survival.

◆ Appreciation for the **threefold ministry** of the church.

Both Anglicans and Methodists retained a threefold understanding of the ministry of bishops, presbyters, and deacons. The names chosen for the new ecclesial expressions – the Protestant Episcopal Church and the Methodist Episcopal Church (the name of the main Methodist church body until 1939) – reflect the centrality of the episcopate to the two churches' self-understanding. Likewise there was a common emphasis on adapting the episcopacy to meet the need of mission.

◆ This perspective offers parallels between how the two churches developed. William White was a prominent Anglican and one of the first consecrated as bishop for the new church. In his pamphlet, *A Case for the Episcopal Churches, Considered*, he argued for a different kind of

episcopate than in the Church of England: he spoke of the restoration of an apostolic episcopacy, where bishops would be pastors, teachers, and leaders, not prelates. Likewise, in John Wesley's ordination of superintendents for the American Methodist societies, and in the implementation of episcopacy in the Methodist Episcopal Church, the goal was for the restoration of apostolic models of episcopacy to suit the needs of the new American society. Both churches retained the threefold office of deacon, elder/presbyter, and bishop, though adapted in different ways.

◆ Shaped by the Book of Common Prayer (BCP).

Wesley himself had a high understanding of the sacraments, and advocated frequent reception of Holy Communion. Accordingly he adapted the BCP for the Methodists, titled *The Sunday Service of the Methodists in North America*. This book provided a full set of rituals—morning prayer, evening prayer, weekday litany, Sunday service, Eucharist; two baptismal rites; orders for marriage, communion of the sick, and burial; and ordination services for deacons, elders and superintendents. It also included a brief lectionary and twenty-four Articles of Religion, excerpted from Anglicanism's Thirty-Nine.

The founders of the Protestant Episcopal Church likewise expressed their strong intent to keep intact "the wise and liberal part of the system of the Church of England..." and developed a Book of Common Prayer similar (but by no means identical) to that of the Church of England. The Prayer Book which was adopted by the Protestant Episcopal Church was deemed acceptable by the English bishops, and, though formal adherence was not required, the Thirty-Nine Articles of Religion were added to the *Book of Common Prayer* in 1801.

◆ Church-state relationships

Methodists and Episcopalians were both descendants of a legally established state church, the Church of England. While separation of church and state was the norm in the new United States, certainly aspects of being a “state” religion carried over for both Episcopalians and Methodists. Both have seen their churches as not ends to themselves, but for service to the larger nation. Methodists quickly undertook missions that tracked settlement west and later founded schools, hospitals, and universities on a larger scale than Episcopalians, establishing a large “infrastructure”, so to speak. Methodists also sought a greater role in shaping the morals and religiosity of society and were active in what we would now call “social justice” movements.

Episcopalians were less likely to get involved in many of the movements that Methodists did (such as temperance) and founded fewer institutions – on the other hand, they came to play a larger role in political, legal, financial, and judicial leadership. To give but one example, the percentage of Episcopalians elected to the Presidency, the Senate, and Congress far exceeds the overall percentage of the population.

- ◆ English traditions of **hymnody**, including that of Charles Wesley.

Both churches were shaped by the explosion in hymn-writing that was a byproduct of the Methodist renewal movement. The hymns of Charles Wesley in particular have had a formative role in shaping the popular piety in both churches.

- ◆ Continued links to the **British** churches.

Even after formal separation from their English founders, the Methodist Churches and the Episcopal Church both continued to remain in contact with the British Methodist Churches and the Church of England. Later, both churches would form more formal relationships which would lead to an understanding of Anglicanism and Methodism taking shape as global communions, the Anglican Communion and the World Methodist Council.

CRISIS: ONE CHURCH BECOMES TWO

One should not underestimate the grave situations which both churches faced after the American Revolution.

- ◆ Anglicans and Methodists needed to address questions of **identity**: what did it mean to be a Methodist or an Anglican in a newly independent nation and apart from the formal structures of the Church of England or of John Wesley and the Methodist conference?
- ◆ Both churches were also suspect because of their **ties with England**. A significant number of Anglican clergy and lay people fled the colonies because of their loyalty to the Crown, as did most of the preachers whom Wesley had sent to the colonies. Wesley himself had criticized the Revolution.
- ◆ In addition, Anglicans and Methodists were very much **in the minority**: they had to shape their identities against the backdrop of a religious landscape dominated by Calvinist theology and the Presbyterian, Congregationalist, and Baptist denominations.

In the crucial decade of the 1780s, decisions were made which set into motion important “trajectories” which would lead to increasing distance between Anglicans and Methodists. Neither of these trajectories is meant to oversimplify the complex realities of the time, but are designed as ways to look at how the choices the two churches made set into motion different developments.

The Episcopal Trajectory

Episcopalians emphasized **order**: at their founding conventions in the 1780s, they drafted a Constitution and Canons and a Book of Common Prayer.

Episcopalians emphasized **continuity**: they made changes to the Book of Common Prayer and the Constitution and Canons in order to preserve a relationship with the Church of England. This in turn eventually convinced English bishops to consecrate Americans to the episcopacy.

The Methodist Trajectory

Methodists emphasized **mission**: they quickly set up a system of church organization – the circuit riders, for example – that allowed for the church to expand at a phenomenal pace, becoming the largest

denomination in the United States by 1860. Methodists emphasized **preaching**: Wesley's Order for Sunday service fell into disuse as Methodism became more influenced by the revival practices on the frontier and gave a larger prominence to hearing and preaching the Word.

Methodists experienced **isolation** from John Wesley, who disapproved of some of these choices, and from British Methodists.

DEVELOPMENT OF TWO TRADITIONS

Thus a variety of expressions of colonial Anglicanism coalesced into two organizations in the post-Revolutionary period: The Protestant Episcopal Church and the Methodist Episcopal Church. As a result of decisions made in these foundational years, each church began to develop its own "charisms" or distinctive gifts.

Methodist Charisms

Many distinctive points of Methodist church life developed in the early American period. Some of these distinctive points may be summarized as follows.

- ◆ The Methodist Episcopal Church quickly adopted revivalist practices and pioneered the camp meeting on the new American frontier.
- ◆ It functioned with a missional understanding of the church and its purposes, the church as an evangelistic movement, down to its organization into conference and circuits.
- ◆ Wesleyan language, norms, structures, offices and doctrines were fit into an "episcopal" framework (although not all Methodists churches have adopted episcopacy).
- ◆ Methodism accommodated various democratic, reformist and populist impulses, including anti-slavery and openness to women's leadership roles.
- ◆ It emphasized preaching as central, leading to the celebration of Communion less frequently than weekly.
- ◆ Adopting a connectional, itinerant and missional rather than parish/diocesan understanding of the episcopacy, Methodism described its bishops as "itinerant, general superintendents".
- ◆ It sustained Wesley's effective use of discipline, practices of piety and small groups (class meeting) as well as camp meetings.
- ◆ Methodist churches developed considerable strength within African American communities in the early American period, with black constituents and clergy in the Methodist Episcopal Church and in separate African-

American Methodist denominations which also emerged in this era (the African Methodist Episcopal and African Methodist Episcopal Zion Churches).

Episcopal Charisms

During the nineteenth century the Episcopal Church developed along several broad fronts.

- ◆ The first was a revival of the "catholic" understanding of Anglicanism. This in part highlighted and revived the sacramental nature of the church. New forms of spirituality became popular, including a revival of religious orders for men and women.
- ◆ A second was the development of a broader understanding of Anglicanism. By the second decade of the nineteenth century three distinct parties or wings developed:
 - a **high church** party emphasizing the church's catholic heritage, with an emphasis on the sacraments
 - a **low church** party emphasizing the church's evangelical heritage, including the place of individual conversion, and
 - a **broad church party** emphasizing the church's openness to modern intellectual and social trends.

The presence of these three viewpoints forced the Episcopal Church to see itself in inclusive terms. As a result the role of the liturgy became elevated as that which defined the church and held it together (this principle is often summarized in the expression *lex orandi, lex credendi*, "the rule of prayer is the rule of belief," or, more simply, "prayer shapes belief").

A NEW MILIEU

Understanding the significance of the post-Revolutionary period is important in understanding the common heritage of both churches as well as how the two traditions separated. However, by the early twentieth century a number of factors began to emerge that called both churches to reassess some of its nineteenth century developments.

- ◆ The first was the **global expansion of Christianity** as a result of the great missionary outreach of the nineteenth century. From a global perspective many of the divisions of Western Christendom looked much smaller. By the beginning of the 20th century the vision of Christian unity attracted many. Prominent Episcopalians (such as Charles Brent, missionary

bishop to the Philippines) and Methodists (John R. Mott, a Methodist layman who had been active in YMCA work) became leaders in this enterprise.

- ◆ Connected with this were new movements in *scholarship*. Fresh examinations of thought and practice of the early church began to suggest that the ancient tradition was different from the later developments in theology, liturgy, and ecclesiology. This allowed for a new basis for consensus.
- ◆ By the second half of the nineteenth century there was a *perceived crisis* in both Western Christendom and in America. As Europe began to move away from its historic Christian identity baptized people sensed they were in the same boat, and needed to stand together to hold certain values and beliefs. In America the old Protestant establishment centering upon the historic Anglo churches (which both Methodists and Episcopalians in their own ways had labored to defend) began to give way. This freed the churches to see themselves in a more ecclesial way.

The way the two churches responded to the changing world has allowed for movements of convergence, as opposed to the original trajectories of separation.

Methodist Convergences with the New Milieu

- ◆ Methodists began a gradual balancing of revivalist and conversionist emphases through communication and education. They established national modes of communication (Methodist Magazine, the Christian Advocate) and numerous colleges and seminaries, especially from the middle of the nineteenth century onwards.
- ◆ Methodists supplemented their structures of Conferences and emphasis on “connection” by creating **central structures** for programs—boards and agencies.
- ◆ Methodists actively participated in social reforms in the late nineteenth century and in the Social

Gospel movement from the early twentieth century, cooperating in this movement with Episcopalians and others.

- ◆ Alert to liturgical developments in the Anglican/Episcopal church, Methodists began to study and reflect these developments in their own worship practices and publications, leading to the gradual re-appreciation of what had been Wesley’s appreciation of the Christian year, the lectionary, sacramental sensibilities, and even liturgical vestments. This can be seen in a succession of Methodist books of worship.
- ◆ There has been increased Methodist attention to the teaching and sacramental responsibilities of the clergy office, particularly as exercised and modeled by the bishops.
- ◆ Methodists also have been noted for active participation in the ecumenical movement. Such an image represents the importance of the mission field in motivating ecumenical spirit for Methodists.

Episcopal Convergences with New Milieu

- ◆ New scholarship in history and liturgy began to weaken party divisions within the Episcopal Church. From this new perspective, catholicism and evangelicalism did not appear to be mutually exclusive. Likewise new scholarship offered fresh ways of approaching some of the old issues, such as episcopacy and apostolic succession.
- ◆ An ecumenical vision dictated that a divided church is not acceptable and the Chicago-Lambeth Quadrilateral (formulated by Anglicans in the late nineteenth century) expressed Anglican understanding of criteria for future church unions.
- ◆ There was a fresh look at traditional theological and ecclesial divisions.

Episcopalians likewise have come to understand the importance of the global as well as domestic mission field in motivating ecumenical spirit.

The Faith We Affirm

Introduction

In addition to common origins in the early American period, United Methodists and Episcopalians also share a significant degree of agreement in theological areas. This section summarizes that agreement. It also notes several issues the dialogue team has identified as being of particular importance: theology of baptism, understanding of the Eucharist, and the issue of human sexuality.

Theological Convergence: Sources

This theological convergence has been expressed in a wide range of formulations.

The Episcopal Church summarized the basis of theological agreement for ecumenical relations in the *Chicago-Lambeth Quadrilateral*. These four “points” of the Quadrilateral are:

- ◆ the Old and New Testament as containing all things necessary for salvation
- ◆ the Apostles’ and Nicene Creeds as sufficient summaries of the Christian faith
- ◆ the two gospel sacraments, and
- ◆ the historic episcopate, locally adapted.

The Episcopal Church and The United Methodist Church have been active in the Faith and Order Commission of the World Council of Churches.

- ◆ both churches have endorsed and affirmed the important theological statement *Baptism, Eucharist, and Ministry* of the World Council of Churches.

The Episcopal Church and The United Methodist Church were represented in the international theological dialogue sponsored by our two world communions.

- ◆ This dialogue produced the 1996 statement *Sharing in the Apostolic Communion*, which is an important summary of theological agreement between Methodists and Anglicans.

Furthermore, important discussions have been taking place between our sister churches in the United Kingdom, the Church of England the British Methodist Church.

- ◆ The British Methodist Church and the Church of England have declared that no substantial theological differences exist between Anglicans and Methodists

A Shared Faith

Both United Methodists and Episcopalians

- ◆ proclaim Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior;
- ◆ claim scripture as “containing all things necessary for salvation,” and as the primary rule for the life of the church;
- ◆ affirm and use the Nicene and Apostles’ Creeds as sufficient summaries of the Christian faith;
- ◆ understand the sacrament of holy baptism as a means of divine grace that initiates one into the life of Christ in the Church;
- ◆ understand the sacrament of the Eucharist as a means of divine grace that sustains and deepens our faith;
- ◆ continue to worship in ways that reflect our common liturgical and sacramental roots.

A Lived Faith

Both churches affirm:

- ◆ the gifts and ministries of all persons, laity and clergy, women and men;
- ◆ the need for prayer and holiness of heart and life as ways of growth in the Christian faith;
- ◆ the pursuit of social action and justice as inherent practices of Christian discipleship;
- ◆ the unity of the church as the will of Christ for the sake of mission, service, and evangelism;
- ◆ the role of bishops as leaders of the life of the church, and as guiding and maintaining the apostolic faith and work.

Holy Baptism

Both of our churches affirm baptism as a sacrament and have affirmed the definition of sacraments used by the broader Christian church as “outward and visible signs of inward and spiritual grace”;

- ◆ our churches affirm together that all ministries of the church, lay and ordained, are grounded in baptism.
- ◆ our churches affirm that baptism is a grace and gift received by faith;
- ◆ we affirm that baptism and the covenantal relationship established through it is the doorway to the life of holiness;
- ◆ both of our churches baptize infants as well as adults; and

- ◆ we affirm that holy baptism initiates women and men into the one, holy, catholic, and apostolic church. Thus, in baptism we are already united in Christ.
- ◆ An area of **non-convergence** is that the United Methodist Church has informally developed in some places “open communion” that on certain occasions allows communion of unbaptized persons.

Holy Eucharist

- ◆ Both churches affirm a complete pattern of worship involving word and table;
- ◆ Both churches urge regular participation in and celebration of the Eucharist;
- ◆ Both churches affirm that Christ is truly present in the Eucharist, with a variety of emphases on the manner of Christ’s presence; and
- ◆ Both churches understand that faithful participation in the Eucharist nurtures and sustains the life of the community and of the individual baptized person;
- ◆ An area of **non-convergence** is that The Episcopal Church uses traditional wine, whereas United Methodist Church congregations traditionally use unfermented communion wine in the Eucharist.

Human Sexuality

In their official statements, both churches affirm the sanctity of marriage and the family, as well as chastity in singleness. Both churches affirm that all persons have dignity and sacred worth, and therefore are deserving of the acceptance and pastoral care of the church as well as common human rights and civil liberties. Nonetheless, issues of sexuality have become increasingly complex in the current period in both of our churches.

We trust the guidance of the Holy Spirit to lead us in these areas. We agree that we do not find this to be an impediment towards full communion. While there may be differences within and between our denominations, standards and qualifications for ordination are matters of internal polity of each church. Exchange of clergy in any possible full communion agreement is always by invitation, and we envision that in any future agreement for full communion, each church will continue to order its ministry as it sees fit.

Questions for Reflection and Discussion

1. In what ways can you perceive both the Episcopal Church and The United Methodist Church as proclaiming the Gospel of Jesus Christ? Are we in agreement on the most central Christian teachings?
2. How do differences in teachings and practices related to baptism affect the life of church members in our denominations? What do we believe that God does in baptism, and how is this reflected in our practices of baptism?
3. What would a Methodist attending an Episcopal service of Holy Communion find to be different about the service and about the manner in which it is celebrated? What would an Episcopalian find to be different about a United Methodist service of Holy Communion? In what ways do you discern or understand the presence of Christ in the sacrament? How significant are these differences in practices or beliefs for our churches to have “full communion” with each other?
4. Why might issues related to human sexuality be seen as an impediment to communion between our churches today?

Polity of The Episcopal Church

AN OUTLINE OF THE POLITY OF THE EPISCOPAL CHURCH

Introduction

One of the first elements to keep in mind in examining the development of the Episcopal Church is that the formation of the Anglican Communion was not systematically laid out. Anglicanism was formulated and developed in an English setting as an established church. Bishops exercised temporal as well as spiritual authority, and each citizen of England was considered a member of the Church of England. These and many other aspects underwent fundamental changes as Anglicanism was exported. While there were missionary impulses in the centuries following the Reformation, no one in 1600 would have envisioned Anglicanism becoming a global communion of 38 independent provinces. Thus each expression of Anglicanism outside of England accommodated and adapted to the local circumstances, from the non-juring Scottish Church (which refused to swear allegiance to William and Mary after James II's abdication) down to the present day.

The Episcopal Church in the United States of America is an excellent example of Anglicanism adapted to local circumstances. Almost obliterated by the American Revolution, within fifty years of 1783 Treaty of Paris The Episcopal Church had secured an episcopate, a prayer book, a host of voluntary societies, and several seminaries. Meeting in Philadelphia in 1789, the disparate strands of Anglicanism in the former colonies met to draft a constitution. The essential structure and governing principles remain unchanged.

The General Convention

The Episcopal Church is envisioned as a **federation of dioceses**. As such the diocese, in turn made up of parishes, was seen as the essential unit of the church. Ultimate legislative authority is vested in the **General Convention**, which meets once every three years. Initial plans for a unicameral body were scrapped in favor of a General Convention comprised a **House of Bishops** and a **House of Deputies** (which was made up of clergy and laity). Legislation can originate in either House but needs to be passed by both Houses.

In the **House of Deputies**, each diocese may be represented by no more than four clergy and four lay

persons, elected by conventions held in each diocese. The goal is equal representation in the House of Deputies, regardless of the size of the diocese.

In the **House of Bishops**, active and retired bishops have voice and vote. However, on the votes which are required to confirm the election of bishops, only bishops with jurisdiction (diocesan bishops) may vote.

To enact legislation requires a majority of both houses; to change the Prayer Book or Constitution requires legislation to pass two successive Conventions; and for significant legislation a **vote by orders** in the House of Deputies is required. Rather than individual delegates, in a vote by orders each diocese casts one vote. To determine this vote, each diocesan delegation is divided into clergy and laity. Each delegation deliberates and casts their votes individually within their delegation. If a majority of both clergy and laity assent, a single "yes" vote for the diocese is cast; if a majority of both do not assent, a single "no" vote is cast; should clergy and laity vote differently, a single "split delegation" vote is cast. The key aspect of voting by orders is that **split delegations count towards the need for a majority**. In effect, split delegations count as a "no" vote. Thus there is a system of checks and balances within the Episcopal Church's polity, and because of this polity it is difficult to effect change quickly.

National and international organizations

As time passed and the church grew, the need for additional instruments for governance became clear. The General Convention of 1919 was instrumental in adapting the governing structures of the Episcopal Church. The Presiding Bishop's office became an elected one; previously the Presiding Bishop had been the senior bishop in the House of Bishops. It was only in 1943 that the Presiding Bishop was required to resign his see. At the 1919 Convention a National Council was established, with administrative heads charged with specific program areas of the church. In addition, General Convention has established a variety of Standing Commissions charged with various aspects of the church's ministry: Ecumenical Relations, Mission, etc. General Convention later established an Executive Council, vested with legislative authority between meetings of General Convention.

In addition, the Episcopal Church is part of the Anglican Communion. The relationship between the

national church and the diocese is mirrored in the relationship between the Episcopal Church and the Anglican Communion. The Communion is a global federation of self-governing expressions of Anglicanism. These churches of the Communion are in full communion with the see of Canterbury and united by a common historical, liturgical, theological, ecclesiological heritage derived from the Church of England but significantly adapted to local concerns. Much as with the Episcopal Church, over time this loose federation realized the need to established organs to promote unity and clarify various issues. The **Lambeth Conference** of Bishops first met in 1867, and has grown immensely over the years. In the last century the **Archbishop of Canterbury**, originally primate of all England, has taken on an increasing role in the Anglican Communion as a symbol of unity. The **Anglican Consultative Council** was established by the 1968 Lambeth Conference to provide for greater dialogue and discussion between Lambeth Conferences. In addition, since 1979 the **Primates Meetings** of the heads of the member churches have met to discuss various issues. In recent years these meetings have become annual ones. These four entities in bold face type are sometimes called “instruments of unity” in Anglicanism.

The Local Church: Diocese and Parish

The Episcopal Church is a federation of dioceses, which are understood as the central unit of the church. Dioceses can organize themselves and pass canons governing their lives so long as they do not contradict the national canons or constitution of the Episcopal Church—kind of an ecclesial version of the 10th Amendment of the

US Constitution. Dioceses are governed by diocesan conventions, which meet annually. Authority is exercised through the Bishop and the Standing Committee, which is comprised of clergy and laity elected by the diocese. For example, candidates for ordination must be approved by **both** the Standing Committee and the Bishop. In the event the death or resignation of a bishop, administrative (but not sacramental) authority passes to the Standing Committee. Bishops are elected by the conventions of dioceses. In turn, in another example of checks and balances, episcopal elections must be confirmed by a majority of the House of Bishops and a majority of diocesan standing committees.

Dioceses are in turn made up of parishes. Parishes may set their own standards and by-laws as long as they do not contradict diocesan or national canons. Parishes elect a Rector, whose must in turn be confirmed by the bishop of the diocese. Priests may not serve in parishes of a diocese without a license to do so from the diocesan bishop. Parishes are governed by Vestries. A Vestry may not dismiss a Rector without the Rector’s consent; nor may a Rector resign unless the resignation is accepted by the Vestry. Candidates for ministry must be approved by the Vestry of the parish. Mission churches are new church starts or small congregations requiring diocesan financial support. A mission is governed by a Bishop’s Committee (similar to a Vestry) and the priest in charge is called a Vicar (one who “stands in” for the bishop and diocese in a mission church).

Polity of The United Methodist Church

AN OUTLINE OF THE POLITY OF THE UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

Introduction

The United Methodist Church (UMC) was formed in 1968 as a merger of the Methodist Church and the Evangelical United Brethren Church. Its polity reflects traditions of American episcopal Methodism shared in common with the African Methodist Episcopal (AME) Church, the African Methodist Episcopal Zion (AME Zion) Church, and the Christian Methodist Episcopal (CME) Church. The polity of the UMC was based on the Anglican polity that John Wesley knew as a priest of the Church of England and was modified by the addition of independent structures (such as classes, bands, societies, and the conference of traveling preachers) that developed in the eighteenth-century Methodist movement.

The Book of Discipline and the Constitution

The primary document that specifies United Methodist polity is the denomination's *Book of Discipline*, which is revised quadrennially at the church's General Conference (see below). At the beginning of the *Discipline* is a **constitution** which lays out the authorities and responsibilities of church conferences (see below) and restricts the General Conference from altering specific doctrinal statements (the Articles of Religion, the Confession of Faith, and the General Rules) and from altering specific aspects of church life (right to a trial before removing church members or clergy, the institutions of itinerant ministry and superintendency, and the use of funds from the publishing house to support retired clergy). The *Discipline* lays out the structures of Methodist conferences and local congregations, describes procedures for authorization of lay preachers and for the ordination of ordained clergy (deacons or elders), lays out responsibilities of general church agencies, describes provisions for judicial administration through the denomination's **Judicial Council** (which is authorized to interpret the *Discipline*), and lays out procedures for trials by which clergy and church members may be removed.

United Methodist Conferences

The United Methodist Church is governed by a series of church assemblies or judicatory bodies referred to as

conferences (from John Wesley's assemblies of preacher to "confer" together).

The **General Conference** meets quadrennially and is the highest decision-making body of the denomination. Only the General Conference can speak on behalf of the denomination, and it has the responsibility of revising the denomination's *Discipline* and adopting resolutions that enunciate positions on behalf of the denomination.

Jurisdictional Conferences are assemblies in large regions of the US (there are five jurisdictions) which meet quadrennially to elect bishops and to nominate representatives to general church boards and commissions. **Central Conferences** are large-scale regional assemblies outside the United States. They function like jurisdictional conferences in the election of bishops and the nomination of representatives to general church boards and agencies, but they have extensive authority to revise the *Discipline* (and reprint it) to suit the needs of their regions.

Annual Conferences are regional assemblies that would answer to dioceses in Anglican polity. The annual conference is defined by the *Discipline* as "the basic unit" of The United Methodist Church, and clergy hold their membership in the annual conference rather than in a local congregation. Annual conferences are composed of all ordained clergy in the conference and an equal number of lay delegates. They deal with issues of the ministerial standing of ordained clergy and issues relevant to the church's ministries in their own areas and they elect delegates to general and jurisdictional (and central) conferences. Meetings of annual conferences also involve worship and sometimes training activities. An **episcopal area** is defined as the area in which a bishop presides and in most cases this is coterminous with a single annual conference. However, in some cases a bishop will preside over two annual conferences grouped together in an episcopal area. Annual conferences are divided into smaller **districts**, each presided over by a **district superintendent**.

Local Congregations

A local congregation is governed by a **church council** (which would answer to the vestry in Episcopal polity and to the local session in Presbyterian polity), whose work is to oversee the ministries of the congregation. The church council may develop smaller committees, task forces, or work areas to address specific areas of ministry. A **lay leader** is designated annually as the lay representative for the congregation. The congregation designates **trustees** annually who have responsibility for church property. United Methodist congregations hold their property in trust from the annual conference, and a congregation is not allowed to leave the denomination and retain its property. The congregation holds annually either a **charge conference** (consisting of church council members and other officials) or a **church conference** (in which all professed church members can participate), presided over by the district superintendent.

Bishops and the Council of Bishops

United Methodist bishops are consecrated to exercise superintendency (oversight) over the church in their episcopal areas. They represent the continuity of teaching in the church, and perform ordinations of deacons and elders. The bishops of the denomination meet together as the **Council of Bishops** and are authorized to speak and negotiate on behalf of the denomination on specific matters defined by the *Discipline*. They act together to give executive leadership for the denomination between general conferences.

General Church Boards and Agencies

The UMC has a number of general (denominational) **boards** and commissions composed of lay and clergy representatives and **agencies** with full-time professional staff designated to address specific areas of the

denomination's ministries. The **Connectional Table** (established in 2004) serves to coordinate ministries in these boards and agencies. The general boards and commissions are as follows: the General Board of **Church and Society**, the General Board of **Discipleship**, the General Board of **Global Ministries**, the General Board of **Higher Education and Ministry**, the General Commission on **Christian Unity and Interreligious Concerns**, the General Commission on **Religion and Race**, the General Commission on the **Status and Role of Women**, and the General Commission on **United Methodist Men**. The denomination's General Council on **Finance and Administration** oversees the financial administration of the denomination, and the United Methodist **Publishing House**, the General Commission on **Communications**, the General Commission on **Archives and History**, and the General Board of **Pension and Health Benefits** are service agencies of the denomination.

Appointment of Clergy

A distinctive feature of the polity of American episcopal Methodist churches (UMC, AME, AME Zion, and CME) is that clergy are appointed by bishops in consultation with district superintendents (in AME, AME Zion, and CME churches, these are referred to as "presiding elders"). In the UMC, the bishop and his or her "cabinet" of superintendents are required to consult with a congregation's **pastor-parish relations committee** (or **staff-parish relations committee** in larger congregations) and with clergy themselves in matters of clergy appointments. This distinctive mode of clergy appointment is referred to historically as **itinerancy** (or "itinerant ministry") and is an aspect of United Methodist life protected by the constitution of the denomination.

Church Identity and Culture

The Episcopal Church and The United Methodist Church each have formed a unique and distinctive spirit, a way of being “church.” Our individual denominations exhibit a particular “tone,” an underlying sentiment of thought and practice that is immediately recognizable by the members of each communion. This combination of ideas, customs, interests, and skills is called its “ethos”—that is, its own particular church “culture.” Our common ancestry, our denominational history in the United States, the differing congregational ambiance found in different regions of the country, and the reception of ecumenical work in this century have produced distinctive church cultures.

Stereotypes

Members of each church readily recognizes the denominational stereotypes that have produced laughter from places like the *New Yorker* magazine cartoons to the omnipresent, “who gets to heaven” and “how many Episcopalians/Methodists does it take to change a light bulb” jokes that illustrate many a sermon. If persons were

to say that they had attended worship at “The Church of the Covered Dish,” United Methodists would immediately recognize themselves in the place name. In fact, not all United Methodist churches have covered dish suppers anymore, but “the covered dish experience” is in their historical memory bank. Covered dish suppers remind United Methodists of their small town and rural past when neighbors shared garden produce and home-cooked culinary delights.

Most jokes are light-hearted and we enjoy puncturing our own ecclesial pretensions.

Can you think of some jokes that your church tells on itself?

1. Do you recognize your church ethos in these jokes?
2. What “zings” home in the punch lines?
3. What is left-out in the caricature?

BY THE NUMBERS: DEMOGRAPHICS TELL A STORY

The following statistics are meant to provide an overview, or a “snapshot” of the each denomination.

Statistics from *the Fact Book and Index of Resources of The United Methodist Church*; Cokesbury Publishing © 2004, Nashville, Tenn. 37203, and the 2006 Episcopal Church Annual and Office for Congregational Development of the Episcopal Church.

MEMBERSHIP

EPISCOPAL CHURCH

Total Membership:	2,284,233
Euro-American	89.1%
African-American	2.5%
Multi-Racial	7.0%
Other	1.4%
Clergy	17,174
Clergywomen	4,607

THE UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

Total Membership:	8,255,207
Asian	73,558
African American	423,456
Hispanic-Latino	55,143
Native American	21,765
Pacific Islander	12,196
Clergy:	44,987
Clergywomen:	7,706

ETHNIC CONGREGATIONS

THE EPISCOPAL CHURCH

Asian	75
African American	230
Hispanic Latino	238
Native American	n/a

THE UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

Asian	371
African American	2,439
Hispanic Latino	313
Native American	142
Pacific Islander	43

INTERNATIONAL

The Episcopal Church

The Episcopal Church is an international church, with over nine dioceses outside of the United States. The largest diocese of the Episcopal Church, in fact, is very likely the Diocese of Haiti. Each of these dioceses sends representatives to the General Convention of the Episcopal Church, and their bishops sit in the House of Bishops.

The United Methodist Church

There are 41,000 local United Methodist churches in Africa, Europe, and the Philippines. These churches are divided into 117 Annual Conferences. They elect delegates every four years to the General Conference of The United Methodist Church, held in The United States, which is the highest decision-making body of the church.

Members of both The United Methodist Church and the Episcopal Church must be careful not to assume that there is only one ethos within its denomination. Each ethnic group, no matter what its numerical size, has its own distinctive church culture. Every ethnic group contributes to the larger ethos of the denomination. Nor is every ethnic group monolithic: within each of the categories listed here there are diversities of culture and identity

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION AND DISCUSSION

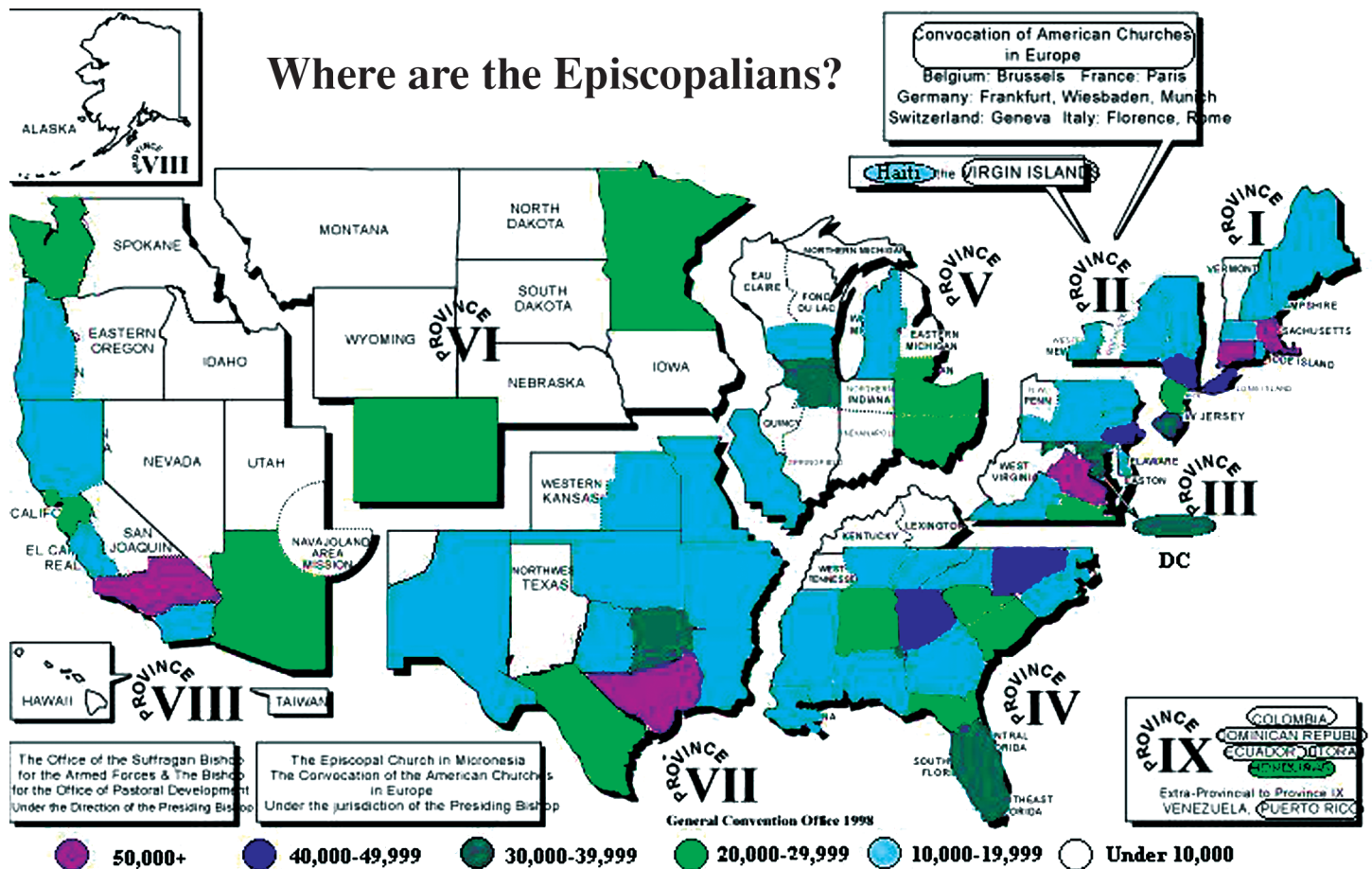
Statistics can tell a story. The numbers make it clear that both churches are heavily populated by Christians of European ancestry. Yet, each church has significant ethnic minority and interest groups. Do you know how minority voices are received in each church? Reflect on the following questions:

1. What do the membership numbers tell us about each of our churches?
2. What might the racial-ethnic populations in our churches indicate about our church cultures?
What structures exist within each church to insure full rights for minority voices?
3. Compare the number of women clergy in each church. Are the numbers larger or smaller than male clergy? Do you think that women, lay or ordained, hold the same number of high ranking

positions within the churches as male lay or ordained members? What organizations advocate for women in each of the churches?

4. Do you think it is possible for a denomination to reflect only one ethos? If so, how do the various ethnic and interest groups contribute to the culture that reflects the denomination as a whole? If not, how does your church deal with the underlying tensions of diverse church cultures?

LOCATION OF EPISCOPAL CHURCH MEMBERSHIP



Based on Communicants in Parochial Reports file for 2003

Display Prepared by Louie Crew Using Map Provided by the General Convention Office

As the map indicates, Episcopalians are concentrated largely on the East and West Coasts, and in the Southeastern part of the country. Approximately 1,458,000 Episcopalians live in dioceses along one of the two Coasts, almost 65% of the total.

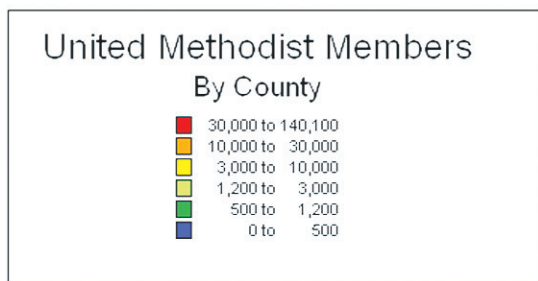
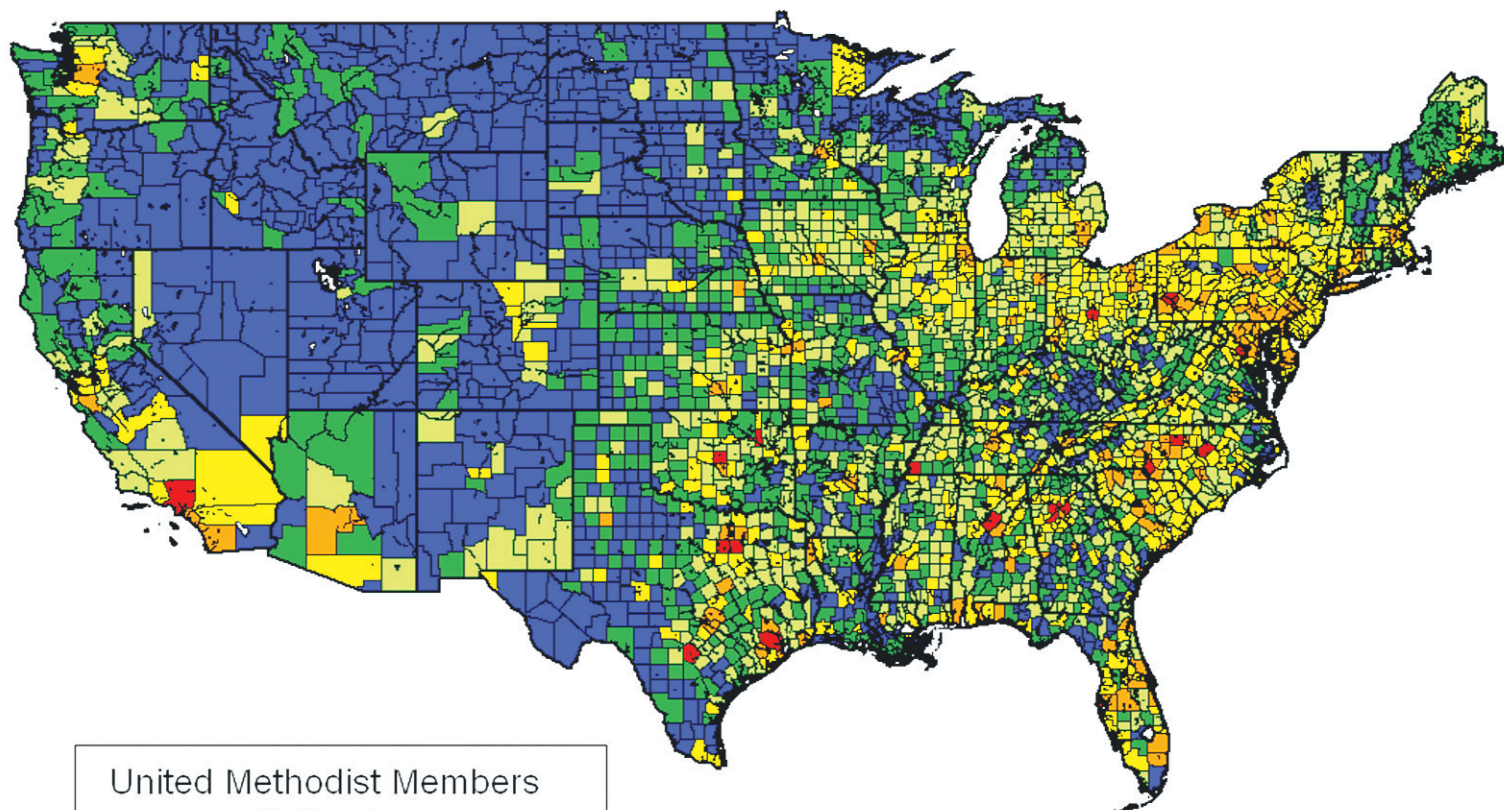
The Episcopal Church also has a number of smaller congregations: 78% of Episcopal Churches have fewer than 200 members. However, unlike The United Methodist Church, these smaller churches are not necessarily rural ones. The Episcopal Church is largely an urban or suburban phenomenon: over 64% of Episcopal Churches are located in cities

or suburbs, 30% in smaller towns, and 6% are classified as “rural.”

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION AND DISCUSSION

1. Do the maps indicate that our respective churches are basically rural, small town, urban or suburban? Can you think of how the location of persons attending our churches influences the general culture of our national churches?
2. What does the regionalism of each church contribute to the larger perspective of the thought and action of the national organization?
3. How does income and education affect the ethos of a church?
4. Has the social class of each changed over the years of living in this country?

LOCATION OF THE UNITED METHODIST MEMBERSHIP



As the map shows, the largest percentage of United Methodists, 2,934,012 of its members, are located in the Southeastern part of the United States. Compare this number with the 419,430 United Methodists located in the Western Conferences. The Northeastern Conferences have a membership of 1,503,779, with 1,806,997 located in the South Central region.

There are over 8 million United Methodist members spread throughout this country. One significant fact to note is that 80% of these congregations have a membership under 200, and they are located in rural areas and small towns. However, the many United Methodists are now located in larger churches in the suburbs. The trend in membership from rural and small town America to urban ring churches is a major shift for a denomination that began its life with clergy on horseback bringing the Gospel to the new frontier of this country.

Ministry: Ordained and Lay

I. MINISTRY IN THE EPISCOPAL CHURCH

From the Book of Common Prayer *Catechism*:

Q. Who are the ministers of the church?

A. The ministers of the Church are lay persons, bishops, priests, and deacons.

(Book of Common Prayer, 855.)

Ministry of Lay Persons

One of the more important developments in The Episcopal Church in the last generation has been the recovery of *baptismal ministry*. There were major changes to the baptism liturgy in the revision of the 1979 Book of Common Prayer. Central to this recovery has been the understanding that baptism is the full incorporation into the life of the church. Other changes in the liturgy allowed for more active participation of lay persons in worship. Commissions on ministry have been established in each diocese, and part of their mandate is to help all persons, not just those ordained, to discern the ministry to which they are called.

Lay persons serve in a variety of roles and capacities in the church. Some lay persons are commissioned missionaries of The Episcopal Church and serve in the global mission field. Others serve in education and church administration. There are ministries to which lay persons can be commissioned and licensed, such as lay preacher or lay reader (reading services in absence of an ordained minister). Very popular commissioned ministries include Lay Eucharistic Minister and Lay Eucharistic Visitor, persons who assist in the distribution of communion in the liturgy as well as to the sick and infirm.

Ministry of Bishops

The Episcopal Church received a succession of bishops from the Church of England which dates back to the consecration of the first Archbishop of Canterbury in 597 (and prior to that to the apostolic church).

There are at least four different kinds of bishops in The Episcopal Church:

Diocesan bishops are elected by special gatherings of a diocese, where lay persons and clergy are represented. Each election of a bishop must in turn be confirmed by

the broader church. A majority of bishops with jurisdiction (diocesan bishops) and the Standing Committees of each diocese must consent to an election. If an election falls within 120 days of the Episcopal Church's General Convention, then the consents take place at the Convention.

Bishops Coadjutor are bishops elected by dioceses bishop and serve jointly with the outgoing diocesan (from the Latin *co-adjuo*, to work together). Once the diocesan formally resigns the bishop coadjutor becomes the diocesan bishop.

Bishops Suffragan are bishops elected by a diocesan convention – but they are not diocesan bishops, they are assigned an area of oversight by the diocesan bishop. Some bishops suffragan have regional areas; others have specific thematic areas (such as oversight of deacons). They also do not serve coterminously with the diocesan: when a diocesan retires, a suffragan is under no obligation to resign and may serve until his or her own resignation or retirement.

Assisting Bishops are bishops who are employed by a diocese to assist the diocesan and suffragan bishops. They are bishops who have been elected and served elsewhere and have either retired or resigned from a previous episcopal position. They serve at the discretion of the diocesan bishop.

In the Episcopal Church, bishops have **sacramental** functions. Only a bishop may ordain; however, all candidates for ordination must be approved by both the diocesan bishop and the diocese's Standing Committee. Only a bishop may preside a Confirmation.

Bishops have **administrative** functions as part of their exercise of oversight. Bishops play a central role in the disciplinary process involving clergy, and are the ones which pronounce sentences on clergy, though they are assisted by other committees in this work. Bishops also play an advisory role in the process by which congregations select their clergy, but may not appoint clergy persons.

Bishops also serve the broader church. Bishops are seen as having a particular responsibilities as chief pastor in the

diocese. They also have a special responsibility to guard the faith and doctrine of the wider church, and are “called to guard the faith, unity, and discipline of the Church.” (BCP, 517)

Ministry of Priests/Presbyters

In The Episcopal Church you will often see two words to describe this ministry.

In The Book of Common Prayer and in some other official church documents, the word *presbyter* is often used. This is an English version of the word used in the New Testament, *presbuteros* or elder. Also in the Book of Common Prayer and in much more common usage is the word *priest*.

Presbyters/priests are the primary ministers of word and sacrament in a worshipping community. Presbyters/priests are charged with preaching the Gospel and administering the sacraments.

There are several different ways in which priests exercise ministry in The Episcopal Church.

Rectors are the pastors of local congregations. A rector is chosen by the local congregation, and once chosen, have tenure: they may not resign without the consent of the Vestry nor may the Vestry dismiss the Rector.

Curate is a term borrowed from the English tradition, and is sometimes used to describe *assisting* or *associate* priests ministering in a congregation. Congregations have input in selecting assisting clergy, but they report directly to the Rector, who in turn reports to the Vestry.

There some congregations which due to a variety of

factors are under the direct ministry of the bishop. The leaders of these congregations are chosen by the bishop, and are referred to as a *Vicar* or *priest-in-charge*.

There are also priests who serve in a variety of non-parish based settings.

Ministry of Deacons

There are two kinds of deacons that serve in The Episcopal Church.

One kind are *transitional deacons*. All priests in The Episcopal Church are first ordained deacon for a period of no less than six months and no more than eighteen months. The transitional diaconate is seen as a time of training for the future priest.

The Episcopal Church also ordains persons as deacons who have no intention of being ordained as priests/presbyters, often called *vocational deacons*. Both transitional deacons and vocational deacons are ordained using the same liturgy, but vocational deacons are seen as particularly embodying the servant ministry of Jesus. The deacon is called “to make Christ and his redemptive love known, by...word and example, to those among whom you live, and work, and worship. You are to interpret to the Church the needs, concerns, and hopes of the world” and “to serve all people, particularly the poor, the weak, the sick, and the lonely.” There are approximately 4000 vocational deacons in The Episcopal Church, serving in a variety of roles. A few work in parishes or in diocesan administration. Many deacons also serve in chaplaincies or other ministries.

II. MINISTRY IN THE UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

In the broadest sense, all Christians, lay and ordained, are baptized into ministry. The Book of Discipline of The United Methodist Church declares: “All Christians are called through their baptism to the ministry of servanthood in the world.” United Methodists understand that there is only one ministry which is always the expression of the mission of Christ through the church. This common ministry, shared by all baptized believers, is both a “gift” of God’s unmerited grace, and the “task” of Christian service in and for the world.

The Threefold Ministry

Within The United Methodist Church, there are baptized members who are called, in the narrower sense, to the particular work of the ordained ministries. Such a call must be accompanied by “special gifts, evidence of God’s grace, and promise of usefulness.” United Methodists inherited a threefold pattern of ordained ministry from the Church of England that goes back to the second century. Through the laying on of hands and praying for the guidance and empowering of the Holy Spirit, the early church set apart persons as deacons, presbyters (priests, elders), and bishops with particular responsibilities in the church. The United Methodist Church continues this apostolic practice by ordaining deacons and elders who are called and qualified to ministries of Service, Word, Sacrament, and Order. While continuing the threefold pattern, United Methodists have held to the historic Methodist teaching of understanding the bishop as an elder who is consecrated for episcopal oversight of the church.

Bishops

Bishops are ordained elders in full connection who have been elected and set apart for the leadership of governance and superintending the churches under their charge. The purpose of superintending (episcopal oversight) is to administrate the temporal and spiritual matters of the church, its structures and strategies, “to equip the church in its disciple-making ministry by ordering the life of the church.”

Bishops are responsible for ordaining the clergy, and for commissioning other United Methodist leaders for their ministries. Bishops are the presiding officers at the official Conferences. Bishops are leaders in the itinerancy system where they are authorized to appoint the ordained clergy to their responsibilities in local churches or in extension ministries. Bishops are elected for life. The office of Bishop is understood to be a sign of unity within the

Christian faith, and United Methodist bishops are “authorized to guard the faith, order, liturgy, doctrine, and discipline of the Church.”

The authority of United Methodist bishops does not rely on a literal, unbroken succession of bishops from the ancient church. On the other hand, The United Methodist Church has provided leadership for the Churches Uniting in Christ, and through this ecumenical structure has expressed its willingness to adapt to the more historic form of succession. This move suggests that historic succession is a powerful symbol of the unity of the church, but it does not signal a belief by United Methodists that apostolic succession is necessary to the existence of the church.

Ordained Deacons and Elders

Within the ministry of the baptized, some persons are called out and ordained to be deacons. Deacons are ordained to Service and Word, and they function as a bridge between the worship of the gathered community and service to Christ in the world. Deacons equip and support all baptized members in their own ministries. The Order of Deacon in The United Methodist Church is not a transitional order to a higher office. Deacons give leadership: “in the teaching and proclamation of the Word; in assisting the elders in the administration of the sacraments of baptism and the Lord’s Supper; in forming and nurturing disciples; in conducting marriages and burying the dead; in the congregation’s mission to the world.”

Elders are ordained to a broader mandate of “Service, Word, Sacrament, and Order.” Many members of the Order of Elders are sent to exercise pastoral supervision of a congregation. Others are sent into “extension ministries” — ministries located beyond the local church. Whatever the appointment, elders are authorized: “to preach and teach the Word of God; to administer the sacraments of Baptism and Holy Communion; to lead the people of God in worship and prayer; to engage the people in study and witness; to lead persons to faith in Jesus Christ; to order the life of the Church for mission and ministry; and to lead the Church in obedience to mission in the world.”

Commissioned and Licensed Lay Ministries

The United Methodist Church has also relied on authorized laity who are licensed for pastoral ministry. After completing the “Course of Study,” these licensed laity are called “Local Pastors” and are appointed to provide leadership in congregations. A fully licensed Local Pastor can perform all the duties of an ordained elder, including presiding at the sacraments, services of marriage,

burial, confirmation, and membership reception. Certified “lay speakers” and “lay missionaries” are two other lay ministries commissioned by the church.

The Office of Deaconess is staffed by persons who are available for service with any agency or program of The United Methodist Church with the mandate: “to relieve suffering, eradicate the causes of injustice, facilitate the development of full human potential, and share in building global community through the church universal.” After approval by the General Board of Global Ministries, Deaconesses are commissioned by a Bishop to full-time service.

III. HISTORICAL BACKGROUND ON BISHOPS

The Episcopal Church and The United Methodist Church both retain an episcopal ordering of the church. While the New Testament does not lay down any one particular form of church organization, from the earliest period the ordering of the ministry of the church has been in the pattern of deacons, elders/priests, and bishops. The two churches have affirmed the relationship between episcopacy and apostolic succession as described in the seminal ecumenical document *Baptism, Eucharist, and Ministry*.

The primary manifestation of apostolic succession is to be found in the apostolic tradition of the Church as a whole... The orderly transmission of the ordained ministry is therefore a powerful expression of the continuity of the Church throughout history; it also underlines the calling of the ordained minister as guardian of the faith... Under the particular historical circumstances of the growing Church in the early centuries, the succession of bishops became one of the ways, together with the transmission of the Gospel and the life of the community, in which the apostolic tradition of the Church was expressed. This succession was understood as serving, symbolizing and guarding the continuity of the apostolic faith and communion [*Baptism, Eucharist, and Ministry*, ¶¶ 35, 36].

Along with this agreement on the relationship between the episcopacy and the apostolic succession, the two churches have developed their own understandings of the role and function of bishops.

The Episcopal Church

The Episcopal Church outlined its understanding of the need for agreement on the historic episcopate in relationships with other churches as part of the Chicago-

Lambeth Quadrilateral (proposed by the House of Bishops of the Episcopal Church, 1886, and subsequently affirmed by the Lambeth Conference of Bishops):

The Historic Episcopate locally adapted in the methods of its administration to the varying needs of the nations and peoples called of God into the unity of His Church [Book of Common Prayer, 877, 878].

The United Methodist Church

The ordained ministry of The United Methodist Church derives from the ordinations by John Wesley of superintendents for the Methodist societies. United Methodist Bishops are elected at jurisdictional conferences and assigned to geographic areas of oversight. They normally serve no more than three four-year terms in an episcopal area. Episcopacy itself is so foundational for The United Methodist Church that it has included its definition of the episcopacy in a restrictive rule in its constitution:

The General Conference shall not change or alter any part or rule of our government so as to do away with episcopacy or destroy the plan of our itinerant general superintendency.

The “Break” in Succession

As noted in Resource A of this study guide, in the early 1780s Anglicans in the former colonies were in a difficult situation. The Church of England was legally unable to ordain persons for either the Methodist societies or for the Anglicans who remained in the new American republic.

Consequently several groups were forced to take matters into their own hands and find ways to provide for pastoral care and missional work. In March of 1783 eleven clergymen in the state of Connecticut met to elect Samuel Seabury as bishop. Seabury was consecrated by bishops of the Scottish Episcopal Church in 1784.

Concurrently, John Wesley was concerned about the future of the Methodist societies. In 1784 he ordained Thomas Coke as a “superintendent” for the Methodist societies. At the organizing conference of American Methodists in December of 1784, Francis Asbury and Thomas Coke were elected superintendents and Asbury consecrated, employing the Book of Common Prayer’s ordinal, as adopted by Wesley. Soon, thereafter, Methodists adopted the term “bishop,” and after Wesley’s ordination have sustained a regular succession of consecration. Wesley’s actions should be seen in their context — as an emergency measure given the fact that the Church of England was unable to provide ordination for leaders of the Methodist societies. It must also be noted that

although they adopted an episcopal method of governance, the historic succession was broken among Methodists.

By its formal approval of *The COCU Consensus* in 1988, The United Methodist Church signaled its willingness to understand the episcopacy as a third order of ministry while retaining it as an office, and indicated its desire to incorporate historic episcopal succession as a visible sign of apostolic continuity.

The Road to Full Communion: Recognizing Each Other's Ministries

The manner of the reconciliation of the two episcopacies is still a matter of discussion and study. As part of this discussion, it is our hope that with regards to a future reconciliation of episcopal ministries, Episcopalians and United Methodists affirm the following:

- ◆ Our journey toward full communion will include a way to recognize and reconcile the two episcopacies in such a manner as not to call into question the authenticity of each other's ordinations.
- ◆ Both churches affirm the historic episcopate, in the language of the *Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry* statement, as a "sign, but not a guarantee, of the catholicity, unity, and continuity of the church."
- ◆ Both churches agree that the historic episcopate is always in a process of reform in the service of the Gospel.
- ◆ From their formative periods in the colonial age both churches locally adapted the historic episcopate for the sake of mission.

Mission and Call

Introduction

We believe that God is the one who calls Christians into unity with one another for the sake of mission and witness in the world. This is the essence of Jesus' prayer in the Gospel of John, where mission and unity are linked:

I ask not only on behalf of these, but also on behalf of those who will believe in me through their word, that they may all be one. As you, Father, are in me and I am in you, may they also be in us, so that the world may believe that you have sent me. The glory that you have given me I have given them, so that they may be one, as we are one, I in them and you in me, that they may become completely one, so that the world may know that you have sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me [John 17:20-23].

Episcopalians and United Methodists affirm that God is calling our two churches into relationship for the sake of mission and witness. Our divisions are a scandal, and our drawing closer together will allow for a stronger witness. We engage more fully in mission when we are in full communion. Further, full communion consists of the free sharing of our gifts.

Common Calling through Baptism

We recognize that over the past three centuries the Episcopal Church and The United Methodist Church have grown apart. Differences in history, structure, and ethos have developed, nonetheless we also affirm a "strong foundation of shared faith" (*Sharing in the Apostolic Communion*, p. 8) on which to build.

The center point of our calling to full communion is our baptism. We affirm together that baptism is the act appointed by Christ by which we are initiated into the Christian community, and our calling as Christians is grounded in our common baptism. Episcopalians and Methodists mutually recognize one another's baptisms.

Both of our churches understand baptism to involve a covenant or sacred agreement between God, the Christian community, and the person who is initiated into the community through this sacrament. Both The United Methodist Church and the Episcopal Church have liturgies identified as the "baptismal covenant" that include the renunciation of evil and the affirmation of historic Christian faith on the part of candidates or their sponsors, prayers for the candidates, and the blessing of the

baptismal water by reciting the biblical narrative of God's saving acts associated with water. The document *By Water and the Spirit*, adopted by the 2000 General Conference of The United Methodist Church, describes the covenant entered into in baptism in the following way:

In The United Methodist Church's ritual for baptism, the Church declares that it is bound in covenant to God; through baptism new persons are initiated into that covenant. The covenant connects God, the community of faith, and the person being baptized; all three are essential to the fulfillment of the baptismal covenant [*By Water and the Spirit*, p. 8].

Two key passages about the notion of covenant in the Bible are in Exodus 19:1-6 and in I Peter 2:9-10. The first tells of the covenant between God and God's people recorded by Moses which was to be lived out by obedience to the Ten Commandments found in Exodus 20:1-17. The second passage speaks of a new covenant in baptism. This letter is thought by many scholars to have been a sermon to the newly baptized in the early Christian church. It tells what God expects of those who are newly baptized.

Questions for Reflection and Discussion: Baptism

In order better to understand our common call to mission in baptism, we suggest the following:

- A. Read the material concerning the services of the Baptismal Covenant in *The United Methodist Hymnal*, pp. 32-39. (There are other forms of this service on pp. 39-49 which you might want to look at also.)
- B. Read the service of Holy Baptism in the Book of Common Prayer of the Episcopal Church, pp. 299-314.
- C. Some questions to ask:
 - What words in each of these services express ways in which we are called to deeper witness in Christ?
 - What are the similarities between our two services?
 - The differences?

Common Mission

How do we as United Methodists and Episcopalians understand "mission" in our churches today? What is the common mission to which our churches are being called by the Spirit today?

- ◆ *Mission* is God's mission.
- ◆ God creates, makes whole, and works for peace, justice, and righteousness.
- ◆ God is working towards God's kingdom to come, God's will to be done, on earth as in heaven.

One of the most relevant definitions of "mission" is *the actions our two churches have taken to bring about the spread of God's reign here on earth, to make disciples for the transformation of the world*. Our two churches have common historic roots as well as differences in carrying out this mission.

The United Methodist Church and the Episcopal Church have a long history of involvement in mission, rooted in the work of the Church of England's Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge (SPCK) founded in 1698 and its sister organization, the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel (SPG), begun in 1701. SPCK was concerned with educating the people in the American colonies and provided Bibles, Books of Common Prayer, and catechisms. It has been estimated that the SPCK sent over one million copies of printed materials to the colonies prior to the American revolution. In addition, the SPG sent missionaries to these colonies. In 1735 John and Charles Wesley traveled to the colony in Georgia as SPG missionaries. These two societies were instrumental in helping to plant our common Anglicanism ancestors in the American colonies, particularly in New England.

Ways to express the meaning of mission:

Both of our churches' governing documents try to define the mission of the Church in carrying out God's mission.

The mission of the Church is "to make disciples of Jesus Christ" [*Book of Discipline of The United Methodist Church 2004*, ¶ 120.]

The mission of the Church is to restore all people to unity with God and each other in Christ (Book of Common Prayer of the Episcopal Church, p. 855).

The Episcopal understanding of mission has changed from the late eighteenth century to the twenty-first century.

In 1988 the Lambeth Conference of Bishops, a once in a decade gathering of all Anglican bishops, offered the following definition:

The mission of the Church includes: Proclaiming the Gospel and enabling response; teaching, baptizing and nurturing new believers; response to human need by loving service; challenging and transforming unjust structures of society (cited from *Sharing in the Apostolic Communion*, ¶ 36).

In the twenty-first century, mission is both to a world that is hungry for Christ and to a post-Christian world.

Questions for Reflection and Discussion: Mission

What other words besides "mission" can we use to describe God's work?

Study a day in the life of Jesus: Mark 1:14-39.

Make a list of all the ways Jesus showed us the way to be and do God's work.

Ask: How do Jesus' actions show us how to be and do God's work today?

Choose a couple of examples from Mark to apply to our call in today's world, such as:

Mark 1:14, "proclaiming the good news of God"

Mark 1:16-17, calling the disciples;

Mark 1:21-28, healing the man with an unclean spirit;

Mark 1:29-31, healing Peter's mother-in-law so she could serve them.

How do the definitions of mission given by our churches (see above) compare with Jesus' actions in the Gospels?

Full Communion

The goal of dialogue between our churches is "full communion." This does not simply mean unity in the sacrament of Holy Communion, although our unity in the Eucharist is perhaps the most important sign of our communion or fellowship together as Christians. "Communion" involves sharing, fellowship, and unity together in our calling and mission. Full communion as we envision it involves "a relationship between two distinct churches or communions in which each maintains its own autonomy, while recognizing the catholicity and apostolicity of the other and believing the other to hold the essentials of the Christian faith."

As we heard in Jesus' prayer in John 17, unity and mission are closely linked. In fact, this is so important here that we repeat Jesus' words to his disciples:

I ask not only on behalf of these [i.e., the eleven disciples that were still with him], but also on behalf of those who will believe in me through their word [that includes us Christians in the twenty-first century] that they may all be one. As you, Father, are in me and I am in you, may they also be in us, so that the world may believe that you have sent me (John 17:20-21).

The word the Greek New Testament uses for "communion" is most often *koinonia*, which can also be translated as "fellowship." It denotes that which is held "in common" (*koinos*) between persons and groups. It is a term with rich meaning in the New Testament and rich with implications for the unity we seek together.

Koinonia is used to speak of communion with God, as in 2 Corinthians 13:13.

Koinonia also refers to sharing in the very life of God, as in 1 John 1:3.

Koinonia indicates partaking of the divine nature, as in 2 Peter 1:4.

Questions for Reflection and Discussion: Full Communion

For reflection: Look up the word *koinonia* in a New Testament Greek lectionary, one which lists the places where the word appears in the Scriptures.

What do these references tell us about the place of *koinonia* in the life of the Church?

What do these references tell us about the place of *koinonia* in God's mission?

What is the connection between *koinonia* and "the Holy Communion" of bread and wine?

What other understandings do we have of full communion?

Gifts of Our Churches for Each Other

We have all been blessed with gifts from God, as Paul describes in 1 Corinthians 12 and 14. While our divisions are a scandal (1 Corinthians 1:10-13), we also believe that both of our churches, the Episcopal Church and The United Methodist Church, have been given gifts that have made possible living out our call to God's mission.

As stated in the introduction to this study guide, full communion does not have to mean organic merger or union, and in the communion we envision neither of our churches seeks to remake the other. We seek to be open to the gifts of one another and to work more closely in mission and witness in the world.

We seek a fullness of communion that will empower substantial sharing of gifts between our churches at all levels of church life, especially among local Episcopal and United Methodist congregations.

The following lists of gifts we bring to each other were compiled from conversations between United Methodist and Episcopal bishops. Consider these lists of gifts, and then in the questions for reflection and discussion at the end of this section we will invite you to develop your own lists of gifts we can share with each other.

Gifts The United Methodist Church Can Offer to the Episcopal Church:

- ◆ Commitment to mission and evangelism
- ◆ Passion for preaching
- ◆ Strong tradition of hymnody
- ◆ Historic involvement in social justice
- ◆ Wesleyan notion of conferencing

- ◆ Emphasis on holiness of heart and life; personal and communal holiness
- ◆ Emphasis on religious experience
- ◆ Remnants of class meeting still among UMC, small group life
- ◆ Commitment to education through institutions and educational materials

Gifts the Episcopal Church can offer to The United Methodist Church:

- ◆ Centrality of the Book of Common Prayer
- ◆ Liturgy articulates theology
- ◆ Consistent celebration of Eucharistic liturgy and daily prayer
- ◆ The Historic Episcopate
- ◆ Understanding of clergy standing in the place of the bishop
- ◆ Bishops as sacramental and pastoral leaders
- ◆ Historic episcopate as a sign of the apostolicity of the Church
- ◆ Power of liturgy for continued liturgical and congregational renewal
- ◆ Bishop's place in discernment and ordination process
- ◆ Chicago-Lambeth Quadrilateral
- ◆ Emphasis on a healing ministry, including Order of St. Luke and liturgical healing

Questions for Reflection and Discussion: Gifts to One Another

What gifts do you think the United Methodist Church would bring to a relationship of full communion with the Episcopal Church?

What gifts do you think the Episcopal Church would bring to a relationship of full communion with the United Methodist Church?

After this discussion, compare your list to the lists given above by United Methodist and Episcopal bishops reflecting on the same questions.

How would your own list differ from theirs? What additional gifts did you note?

How might our two churches begin to share these gifts? How would full communion, including interchangeability of clergy, strengthen these gifts? What would it mean for your congregation?

Interim Eucharistic Sharing

Interim Eucharistic Sharing is an important step on the way to full communion. The United Methodist Church Council of Bishops approved Interim Eucharistic Sharing with The Episcopal Church in 2005. The General Convention of The Episcopal Church approved Interim Eucharistic Sharing with The United Methodist Church in June of 2006.

Interim Eucharistic Sharing is not the same as allowing members of another's church to received communion. Rather, it is an intentional time of worshipping and being together as our two churches work to resolve issues which stand in the way of full communion.

In Interim Eucharistic Sharing our two churches have agreed:

Formally to recognize one another as members of the one, holy, catholic and apostolic church;
and

Through study of each church's theological documents and traditions, to declare that the teaching of each church on the sacraments of baptism and the Eucharist are comparable

As a result, Episcopalians and United Methodists are encouraged to hold joint celebrations of the Eucharist under the guidelines below.

Common Guidelines for Bishops, Clergy and Laity for the Implementation of Interim Eucharistic Sharing Between The Episcopal Church and The United Methodist Church

In 2005, the Council of Bishops of The United Methodist Church adopted a covenant relationship of **Interim Eucharistic Sharing** with The Episcopal Church. A complimentary resolution was approved by the General Convention of The Episcopal Church in June of 2006. In this covenant, the two traditions recognize each other as members of the one, holy, catholic, and apostolic church in which the Gospel is rightly preached. The resolution permits common, joint celebration of the Eucharist where it is deemed appropriate for the sharing of worship by congregations of the respective Churches. The adopted resolutions require that an ordained United Methodist elder or bishop and an ordained Episcopal priest or bishop stand together at the Lord's Table. Further, the resolution requires that the service of worship be an authorized one and agreed upon by the United Methodist and Episcopal bishops involved.

Implementation Guidelines

Episcopal and United Methodist bishops are encouraged to hold joint services of worship. Episcopal and United Methodist bishops acting together also can encourage local congregations to establish or strengthen relationships in support of the vision for eventual full communion.

As a general rule, the normative patterns of Eucharistic worship in the host location should govern the joint worship service. Out of respect for the two traditions, the following conventions should be observed:

- ◆ In either Episcopal or United Methodist settings, the clergy should stand together at the Lord's Table.
- ◆ The elements for the Lord's Supper should include bread, wine, and grape juice.
- ◆ Any and all of the consecrated elements should be reverently consumed.
- ◆ Authorized services should be used. For United Methodists, those authorized liturgies are in the *Book of Worship* and *The United Methodist Hymnal*; for Episcopalians they are in the *Book of Common Prayer* and other authorized liturgies.
- ◆ Joint Eucharistic services should be approved by the bishops in whose areas the celebrations will be located.
- ◆ Approved joint Eucharistic services between congregations are not intended to and do not normally replace Sunday worship.

Bishops can urge congregations to extend to the members of the other tradition a special welcome to their regular Sunday worship. Members of the partner congregation could be invited to preach, read Scripture, or offer prayer.

The covenant calls on bishops to encourage the development of common Christian life throughout our respective Churches by urging:

- ◆ mutual prayer and mutual support, including parochial/congregational and diocesan/annual conference covenants or agreements;

- ◆ common study of the Holy Scriptures, the histories and theological traditions of each Church, and the materials produced by the Episcopal—United Methodist Dialogue;
- ◆ joint programs of religious education, theological discussion, mission, evangelism, and social action; and
- ◆ the joint use of facilities.

Authorized Episcopal—United Methodist dialogues will continue for the discussion of any other outstanding questions that must be resolved before full communion can be established between the respective Churches.

For additional information, contact your ecumenical office:

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