

“Being a United Methodist is as Easy as 1, 2, 3, 4, 5” – July 6, 2009

Sometimes I think we make it too hard to understand. We throw around words like “connectional” and “itinerancy” and a hodgepodge of alphabetical terms (like UMC, UMW, GBGM, GBOD, BOOM, etc). Sometimes we make it hard for our own United Methodist people to describe how we United Methodists are followers of Jesus.

So here it is, in simple 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 ways to describe how we United Methodists live our Christian faith:

1. We have **ONE** mission statement: “to make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world.” We have all agreed on this statement, it is Biblical, it is in our Book of Discipline, and it is the mission statement of our new Indiana Conference.

2. We believe in **TWO** forms of holiness: personal holiness and social holiness. That is why we United Methodists work to bring individuals to a Christian way of life, but we also work to change our society.

3. We try to live by the **THREE** Simple Rules: do no harm, do good, stay in love with God. John Wesley gave us those rules, all clergy agree to them when they are ordained, and all United Methodist people are called to follow them.

4. We believe that truth is found by the **FOUR** sides of the Wesley Quadrilateral: Scripture is primary and it is interpreted by Tradition (what the church has taught), Reason, and Experience. We are a Biblical people, but we also see the importance of learning from the Christian teachings of the past, using our minds to think through our faith, and bringing our own experience of God into our understanding.

5. We know that our congregations flourish when we engage in the **FIVE** Practices of:

- Radical Hospitality**
- Passionate Worship**
- Intentional Faith Development**
- Risk-Taking Mission and Service**
- Extravagant Generosity**

There it is. Five steps to being faithful United Methodist followers of Christ. Those **FIVE** describe what is unique about being followers of Jesus in the Wesleyan Way. Once a person has committed to follow Jesus, these Five Steps are the hallmarks of The United Methodist Church.

Maybe those of us who lead the UMC, both laity and clergy, would do well to focus on those Five steps and to use that common language. I plan to do so, and I invite you to join me.

from Bishop Michael J. Coyner
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