

Sacraments

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The United Methodist Church considers Baptism and Communion as sacraments. “Sacrament” means sacred, holy, set apart. Sacraments help us draw close to God. They are outward and visible signs of inward spiritual graces.

Baptism

Baptism uses water by sprinkling—which symbolizes cleansing, by immersion—which symbolizes that you are dying to self and rising to Christ, or by pouring—which symbolizes outpouring of God’s spirit. No matter which of these ways you receive the water, the water represents that you are cleansed or forgiven of your sins.

Baptism celebrates that God chooses you. When we baptize children, the adults are committing to introducing the child to Jesus and supporting them as they make their own decisions. When adults are baptized, they are making a profession of faith. We believe that a person only needs to be baptized once.

“By baptism, we enter into covenant with God; into that everlasting covenant... we are admitted into the Church, and consequently made members of Christ, its head...we who were ‘by nature children of wrath’ are made the children of God.”
John Wesley

Jesus’ baptism is found in Matthew 3:13-17.

Communion

Communion is also called the Lord’s Supper or Eucharist (Greek for thanksgiving).

“And he took bread, gave thanks and broke it, and gave it to them, saying, ‘This is my body given for you; do this in remembrance of me.’ In the same way, after the supper he took the cup, saying, ‘This cup is the new covenant in my blood, which is poured out for you.’” **Luke 22:19-20**

We believe that God is uniquely present in communion and in baptism. Communion symbolizes Jesus' death, his body being broken represented by the bread, and his blood being shed represented by the juice. Communion is offered to anyone and everyone who desires to be closer to God. When we drink from the cup and eat the bread, we accept God's forgiveness and offer our lives to God. We are remembering the sacrifice Jesus made because he loves us, and we are committing to following God in our own lives.

GROUP DISCUSSION

1. Have you been baptized? If so, what do you remember about that experience? Did you choose this for yourself, or did your parents choose this for you? If you have not been baptized, what is your Next Step?

2. When adults are baptized in the Methodist church these questions are often asked. What are your answers to these questions today?
 - a. Do you renounce the forces of wickedness, reject the evil powers of this world, and repent of your sins?
 - b. Do you accept the freedom and power God gives you to resist evil, injustice, and oppression?
 - c. Do you confess Jesus Christ as your Savior, put your whole trust in his grace, and promise to serve him as your Lord, in union with the church which Christ has opened to people of all ages, nations, and races?

3. Why do you think Jesus would choose something as simple as bread and wine to explain his upcoming death to his disciples?

4. What benefit do these two traditions serve to Christians and non believers?