

# **We Believe: Foundations of the Christian Faith**

**Session 6: The Church**

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# **The Articles of Religion**

## **Article XIII: Of the Church**

The visible church of Christ is a congregation of faithful men in which the pure Word of God is preached, and the sacraments duly administered according to Christ's ordinance, in all those things that of necessity are requisite to the same.

# The Confession of Faith

## Article V: The Church

We believe the Christian Church is the community of all true believers under the Lordship of Christ. We believe it is one, holy, apostolic, and catholic. It is the redemptive fellowship in which the Word of God is preached by men divinely called, and sacraments are duly administered according to Christ's own appointment. Under the discipline of the Holy Spirit the Church exists for the maintenance of worship, the edification of believers and the redemption of the world.

# The Nicene Creed

## The Church

- **One** - one Lord, one faith, one baptism (Ephesians 5:25-27)
- **Holy** - set apart; the Holy Spirit dwells within and consecrates its members to do God's work
- **Catholic** - universal - proclaims the whole faith to all people, to the end of time. Identifies global identity of Christians all over the world.
- **Apostolic** - the "sent ones." The church continues in the teaching, fellowship and mission of the apostles (Matthew 28:18-20)

# The Biblical View

## *Ecclesia* - the gathering, assembly

- The church is the new humanity formed by faith in Christ as Lord and commissioned to work for his Kingdom.
- The Body of Christ (Colossians 1:18; 1 Corinthians 12)
- The Bride of Christ (Ephesians 5:22-33, 2 Corinthians 11:1-4; Revelation 21:9-11)
- The Household of Faith (Ephesians 2:19; Galatians 6:10)
- God's Temple (1 Corinthians 3:16-19)

# **Why does the Church exist?**

## **The United Methodist Book of Discipline**

- The maintenance of worship
- The edification of believers
- The redemption of the world

# The Maintenance of Worship

## Word and Table

- Proclaiming the Word of God
- Preaching the Gospel
- Administering the Sacraments
- Prayer
- Worship
- Developing rhythms and habits for Christian formation while entering into the worship of God and experiencing his transforming power

# The Edification of Believers

## Disciple Formation

- Teaching, learning, habituating the way the discipleship
- Study of the Word
- Spiritual formation

# The Redemption of the World

## The Great Commission

- Evangelism
- Care for the poor, the sick, the hurting
- Mission and acts of justice

Public

Acts of Piety



Acts of Mercy

Private

# **“The Communion of Saints”**

## **Identifies us with Christians throughout time**

- We share a common confession of faith
- We have a mystical connection with one another and with Christ since we are called the “Body of Christ.”
- We are reminded that the Church is not an institution or bureaucratic structure — we are a community of redeemed people

# The Sacraments and the Church

## Baptism and Holy Communion

- Two sacraments ordained and commanded by Jesus
- “Outward signs of an inward grace”
- “Certain signs of grace, and God’s good will toward us, by which he doth work invisibly in us” (Article XVI, Articles of Religion)
- Baptism initiates us into the family of God and the life of the Church (done once); Holy Communion is the ongoing means of grace by which we receive “Christ and all his benefits”

# Baptism

- “Through the sacrament of baptism we are initiated into Christ’s holy church. We are incorporated into God’s mighty acts of salvation and given new birth through water and the Spirit. All this is God’s gift, offered to us without price.”  
- Baptismal Covenant I
- Baptism enters us into covenant relationship with God and the Church
- For Methodists, God is the primary agent in baptism through grace
- Infant baptism (Acts 16:15, 33; Matthew 19:13-15)

# Holy Communion

- Instituted by Christ and celebrated at his command (“Do this...”)
- Mirrors the practice of the early church (1 Corinthians 11:23-26)
- Methodists - not consubstantiation or transubstantiation but “real presence”
- Conveys prevenient, justifying, or sanctifying grace
- Officiated by an Elder
- Wesley encouraged regular communion, at least weekly
- Converting ordinance (not unbelief to belief but to an assurance of faith)

# Why we need the Church

## An appeal to a better ecclesiology

- Jesus came from the family of Israel and established a new family of disciples called the Church. As the Trinity is unity in community, so the Church is the unity of one Body with many members.
- Remove a member from the Body and it does not long survive
- Worship, discipleship, and mission are non-negotiable for Christian believers
- The Church is an embodied community. We do not merely believe in a Christian “philosophy” but we join a Christian community where we live out our faith
- Jesus established the Church for his mission

**Questions?**