

Session One: Leader's Guide

Preparation

- Collect the following materials: newsprint, markers, copies of “Session One: Participant Material,” Bibles, *United Methodist Hymnals*, participant journals/notebooks and pens.

1. Introduce the Study

When everyone has arrived, ask people to introduce themselves by telling their names and the first words that come to their minds when they hear the word *church*. As words are mentioned, record them on the newsprint.

Watch video “Orientation to Wonder, Love and Praise Study” found at www.umc.org/CFOWonderLovePraise (English language only, no hyphen in URL)

If the video is not available to you, explain that during this four-session study the group will be using excerpts from a working document that has been prepared by the Committee on Faith and Order of The United Methodist Church to explore how we as United Methodists understand the nature of the church. Congregations from all across The United Methodist Church are being asked to participate in this study and provide feedback to the Committee on Faith and Order. This feedback will help the committee to shape a document that will be submitted to the General Conference of 2020.

Read together Acts 2:43-47. Ask the group to reflect upon what this Scripture indicates about the nature of the early church. Who was included? What did they do? How did they relate to one another? As ideas are mentioned, add them to the newsprint.

2. Read and Discuss the Participant Material

Distribute copies of “Session One: Participant Material” and invite the group to silently read the first page.

When they have finished, **watch video “WLP Study: Session 1 Introduction” found at www.umc.org/CFOWonderLovePraise (English language only, no hyphen in URL)**

Direct the group's attention back to the newsprint. Review each of the items listed and, using different colors of markers to differentiate, star those items that relate to one of the three convictions mentioned:

- The saving love of God is meant for all people.
- The saving love of God is transformative.
- The saving love of God creates community.

The group may decide that some items relate to more than one of the convictions and therefore are starred multiple times, and other items don't relate to any of the convictions.

Use the following questions to further the discussion:

- What trends do you see?
- What surprises you?
- What questions do you have?
- Where do you see the three convictions lived out in the life of our congregation or community?
- How might our congregation or community live out these convictions more fully?

3. Sing the Hymn

United Methodists have always expressed our theology through our hymns. Point out to the group that the working title of the study paper is called *Wonder, Love, and Praise: Sharing a Vision of the Church*. This title comes from the last stanza of the well-known Charles Wesley hymn, “Love Divine, All Loves Excelling,” found at number 384 of *The United Methodist Hymnal*.

Sing together the hymn or read the hymn responsively as a poem. Point out that this hymn is found in the “Sanctifying and Perfecting Grace” section of the hymnal. Invite the group to discuss ways the words reflect the three convictions.

4. Offer Advice to the Committee

Remind the group that one of the purposes of this study is to provide feedback to the Committee on Faith and Order. Discuss the following questions, and ask the participants to note their responses in their journal or notebook. At the end of the study, you will be asked to submit your feedback to the committee.

- In what ways do you recognize The UMC in the materials for this session? What themes or topics accurately reflect who we are as United Methodists?
- Is there anything essential to the life of The UMC related to the topics discussed in this session that is missing?

5. Close With Prayer

Point out that page 2 of the participant material offers suggestions for further reading. Each session will include additional reading for those who wish to dig deeper.

Use the first and fourth stanzas of “Love Divine, All Loves Excelling” as a closing prayer.