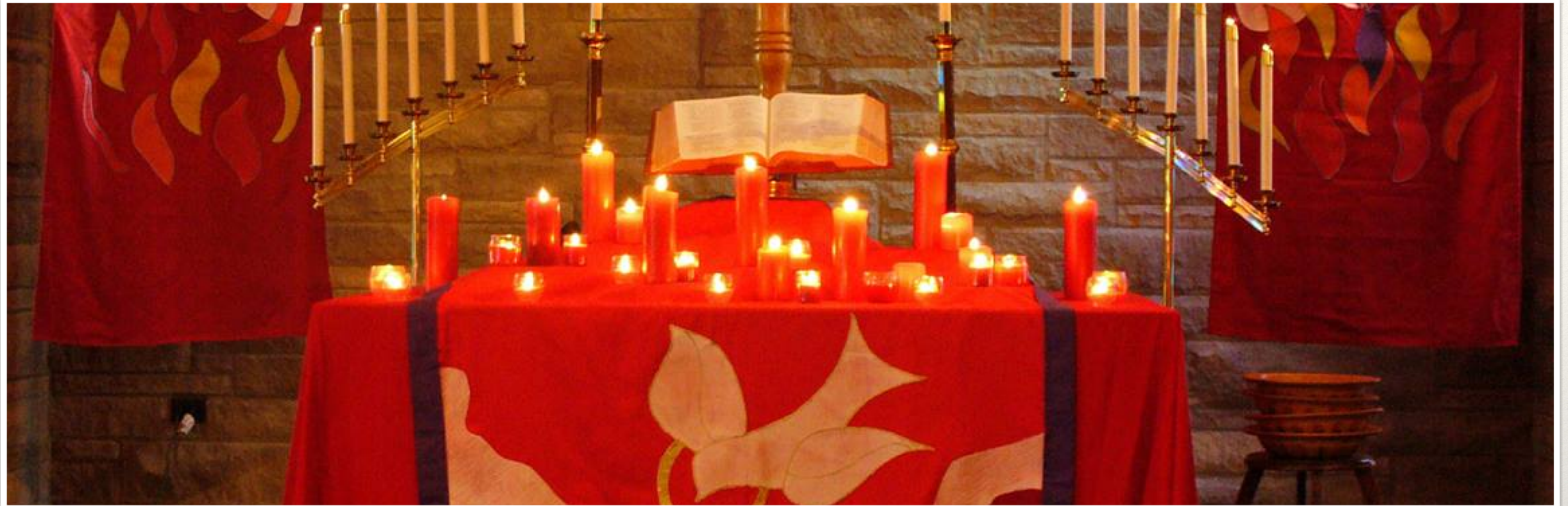


First United Methodist Church Richardson, 2020 Learning Community

Methodist Identity in the 21st Century

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Session 3

Who are we today?

Internal identity conflict

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Who are the people called
Methodist today?



Brief History of the Methodists in the 20th Century

20th Century

- ❖ The Social Gospel
- ❖ The Ecumenical movement
- ❖ Albert Outler
- ❖ The 1968 union
- ❖ The 1988 General Conference

Doctrinal Standards of the UMC

¶ **17. Article I.**—The General Conference shall not revoke, alter, or change our Articles of Religion or establish any new standards or rules of doctrine contrary to our present existing and established standards of doctrine.40

¶ **18. Article II.**—The General Conference shall not revoke, alter, or change our Confession of Faith.

¶ **21. Article V.**—The General Conference shall not revoke or change the General Rules of Our United Societies.42

- ❖ Articles of Religion (MEC/ Anglican)
- ❖ Confession of Faith (EUB)
- ❖ General Rules
- ❖ ALSO: Wesley's *Sermons* (which ones?) and *Explanatory Notes on the New Testament*

“Our Theological Task”

- ❖ Outler’s formation of the United Methodist Identity
- ❖ Quadrilateral is not part of our doctrinal standards - Judicial Council decision 358, 1972
- ❖ Not in the constitution, not protected by restrictive rules
- ❖ Make the claim that “the apostolic witness to Jesus Christ as Savior and lord [is] the source and measure of all valid Christian teaching” (i.e. scripture is measured by fidelity with apostolic witness).
- ❖ An additional document added to the Book of Discipline
- ❖ *Fundamentalism* was his deep worry at the time

The Outler Quadrilateral

- ❖ Scripture
 - ❖ Tradition
 - ❖ Reason
 - ❖ Experience
-
- ❖ Practicing epistemology without a license...
 - ❖ Scripture / tradition are sources; reason / experience are “tools”

The Outler Quadrilateral

- ❖ The quadrilateral has become UM Orthodoxy — to the point that it is now a key part of the ordination interviews

Internal Identity Conflicts

- ❖ Our Identity is complex, multifaceted, and not always consistent
- ❖ This leads to tensions
- ❖ e.g. NASCAR in 2020. An American past-time with deep roots in the south. Wants to be All-American, but the Confederate battle flag was not-unusual. Fidelity with “Southern” identity vs. fidelity with All-American identity. A change was made to align more with All-American vs. Southern.

Tensions are not the same as contradictions

Most of us have internal tensions.

Creativity and life happens in tension.

But tensions are also the source of conflict in corporate identities.

Tensions in Methodism: Long-standing

- ❖ High-Church sacramentalism vs. Revivalism / Evangelicalism
- ❖ High view of scripture vs. High view of science / reason
- ❖ Commitment to Church of England & Crown vs. Need for clergy in America
- ❖ Focus on preaching vs. liturgical worship
- ❖ “Knowledge and vital piety” (head / heart)
- ❖ “Folk Theology” vs. ... the careful complexity of Wesley’s sermons
- ❖ Ministry to the poor vs. middle-class sensibilities

Tensions in Methodism: 20th/21st century

- ❖ Modern vs. post-modern (vs. pre-modern)
- ❖ Prototypically American vs. global
- ❖ Institution / denomination vs. a movement
- ❖ “The Quadrilateral” vs. *prima scriptura*
- ❖ Democratic vs. Clergy-lead
- ❖ Holiness / discipline (fasting, etc.) vs. consumerism
- ❖ MEC vs. EUB - “The United Methodists” (AoR / CoF differences)

Tensions in Methodism: 20th/21st century

- ❖ Scripture (traditionally interpreted) vs. justice / inclusiveness
- ❖ Covenant connexion vs. justice / inclusiveness
- ❖