



*New Life Community Wesleyan Church*

*"The Caring Church"*

## Membership Manual

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## **Welcome to New Life Community Wesleyan Church's Membership Class!**

The purpose of this manual is to introduce you to NLCWC – who we are, what we believe and how we are following God into our community. It is to help you get to know us better, so you can make an informed choice about your commitment to belong to our church family.

### **Why Membership?**

Membership is our way of committing to journeying with you, as you commit to journeying with us! It's about relationship and commitment, not about joining another organization or institution. Visitors and attenders will always be welcome at NLCWC, but our members are part of our family, they share our vision, our beliefs and our love of God. We believe membership represents an important biblical principle of an individual committing to a 'body' of believers and that 'body' of believers in turn committing itself to the individual Christian.

*"Those who accepted his message were baptized, and about 3,000 were added to their number that day. They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to their fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer." -Acts 2:41, 42*

*"...You are a **member** of God's very own **family**...and you **belong** in **God's household** with every other Christian." -Ephesians 2:19*

The invisible Church consists of all Christians everywhere and across time. The visible church, however, is a local expression of the Church.

*It has been said, "You can't be part of the Church which is everywhere without being part of the church which is somewhere."*

God builds His Kingdom through the Church – none of us individually can be the Body of Christ.

## Why Membership? (continued)

### Six Reasons to Become a Member of the Church

- 1) **Identification**: It says, “I’m in” – officially. I don’t just attend – I’m fully part of this!
- 2) **Submission**: It says, “I am not alone.” I submit my beliefs and interpretations to the larger community of Christians, past and present.
- 3) **Accountability**: It says, “I’m under authority” – and I am granting the right to others to hold me accountable, i.e. “the family right to ask.”
- 4) **To Vote**: It says, “God can guide through me” – and I will let the Holy Spirit guide the church through my voice, such as in matters of pastoral vote, electing leaders, etc.
- 5) **To Serve**: It says, “I am willing to serve” – as there are some service roles in the church that require membership for people to fill them.
- 6) **Because of what it might say if I don’t:**
  - I’m not (fully) in?
  - I don’t (completely) submit?
  - I’m not (totally) accountable?
  - I don’t care about decisions and votes?

## Why Membership? (continued)

### **Common Opinions on Church Membership:**

- 1) We ought to give to the church where we attend. (We ought to support the storehouse where we get our food.)
- 2) For the most part, we ought to attend the church where we belong.
- 3) **We don't have to agree 100% with everything to join a church.** (All issues are not of equal weight. There are doctrines, lifestyle and "snapshot convictions." It may not be about agreeing so much as recognizing and respecting.)

### **The Big Question:**

-Why should you become a member of NLCWC?

### **The Best Answer:**

-To be a part of building and maintaining the local church vision!



## *Who We Are*



### The VISION of New Life Community Wesleyan Church

-Our vision is to exalt Jesus Christ by providing physical, emotional and spiritual guidance through biblical encouragement, discipleship, fellowship, training and prayer support.



### The MISSION of New Life Community Wesleyan Church

- To show Christ to others in the way that we care for each other.
- Offer a support system to those in need.
- Share the truth and transforming message of the gospel. (Evangelize and Equip)
- Intersect the issues of life with the power of the written Word (the Bible) and the living Word (Jesus).
- Embrace the Great Commission by making disciples (Operation "Bring Them In").



### The CALLING of New Life Community Wesleyan Church

-The gospel offers real hope through a life-changing relationship with Jesus. Our church will strive to reflect the reality, power, and experience of real life change personally and through caring for the souls of others. ("The Caring Church")

## **Conditions for Membership at NLCWC**

### **The conditions of membership are:**

- 1) Confession of faith in Jesus Christ as evidenced by an inner witness of new birth through the Holy Spirit and a commitment to pursue holiness in all things.
- 2) Christian baptism.
- 3) Instruction in, acceptance of, and a commitment to abide by the articles of Religion, the Elementary Principles and the authority of the Wesleyan Church in matters of church government.
- 4) A commitment to live out the vision, mission, and calling of The Wesleyan Church and the local vision, mission, and calling of NLCWC. This includes a commitment to being discipled through the membership class.
- 5) Local pastoral recommendation and approval by the church board.

# The Wesleyan Denomination

## -Our Wider Movement-



### **Vision of The Wesleyan Church**

*Transforming lives, churches, and communities through the hope and holiness of Jesus Christ.”*

*We are “Made New.”*

### **About The Wesleyan Church**

The Wesleyan Church is a Protestant, evangelical, holiness denomination with a rich heritage. We have seen it as our special mission to emphasize the message of “full salvation from all sin.”

We teach that a victorious Christian life is possible for all believers through the experience of both forgiveness of sins and the filling of the Holy Spirit in our lives.

The name “Wesleyan” is in honor of John Wesley, a priest in the Church of England who was the inspiration and founder of the Methodist movement. Wesley was an outstanding Oxford scholar, yet regarded himself as “a man of one book,” the Bible. It was while studying the Bible that he received assurance of his own salvation through faith. It was the Bible which motivated his vision for offering Christ to the common people of England in a way that led to that nation’s greatest spiritual revival. It was biblical truth that inspired Wesley to develop a school for orphans, job programs, and medical assistance for the poor, efforts to reform inhumane prisons, and arguments for the abolition of slavery, a great evil of his time. Confidence in the Bible as “the only and sufficient rule for Christian faith and practice” (to use Wesley’s own words) is still a hallmark of The Wesleyan Church today.



# **Missional Priorities**

The Wesleyan Church is a Spirit-led, praying movement called to evangelize and make disciples of all people by equipping believers, developing leaders, multiplying churches, and transforming communities.



## Wesleyan Core Values and Beliefs

Wesleyans believe in one God, who is Father, Son, and the Holy Spirit, and the Savior of all who put their faith in Him alone for eternal life. We believe that those who are made new in Christ are called to be holy in character and conduct, and can only live this way by being filled with the Lord's Spirit. We believe in the Bible and its sufficiency to establish our faith and conduct. We believe God wills for people everywhere to know Him and be made new in Christ. We believe that the purpose of the Church is to worship God in spirit and in truth, and to reach a lost and fallen world with the gospel of Jesus Christ through its worship, witness, and loving deeds.

The following are terms descriptive of who Wesleyans are and why they do what they do. They describe the "soul of the Church":

**BIBLICAL AUTHORITY:** The Bible is God's holy Word. It uniquely and infallibly reveals God's plan for His people and how to live out that plan, individually and corporately. Beliefs, practices, priorities, and our mission are to be anchored in clear biblical teachings.

**CHRISTLIKENESS:** Jesus Christ is the defining feature of God's will and relationship with all humankind. In Christ is found both newness of life and the highest and clearest example for godliness. People made new in Christ find Him to be the source of faith, hope, and love in both the inner life and in our outward actions engaging a world desperate for hope and life.

**DISCIPLE-MAKING:** Making disciples is a clear mandate from Christ. This requires a strong missional focus on evangelism and training in spiritual growth and holy living. Done effectively, this will produce and promote growth and health in and among the churches.

**LOCAL CHURCH CENTERED:** The denomination exists to help local congregations grow and multiply, be healthier, and more authentically reflect God's plan. Local churches are the most fundamental and strategic points of evangelism and discipleship. The challenge of the denomination is to keep finding the best ways to serve, strengthen, and multiply congregations.

**SERVANT LEADERSHIP:** Wesleyans respect leadership that is placed over them, while realizing that the authority and effectiveness of spiritual leadership is not primarily bestowed, but earned, and is characterized by a loving and willing heart of obedience that serves God and mankind gladly. Wesleyans desire to be leaders in serving.

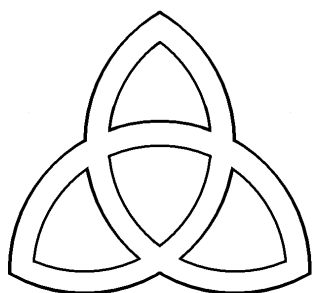
**UNITY IN DIVERSITY:** There is intrinsic value in every person. Biblical unity becomes all the more important and beautiful in the light of the wide-ranging differences in personalities, cultures, races, languages, talents, and perspectives. Finding unity and mutual love in Christ eliminates devaluation and deprivation of life to one another.

## Top 10 Reasons Why I Like Being a Wesleyan:

(borrowed from Rev. Jo McKinnell)

- 1) Wesleyans love Jesus. They're not the only ones who love Him, but it's an important first thing to check.
- 2) They aren't heretics. They've got their theology right when it comes to the big things...their thinking on the Trinity, salvation, free will, Jesus, and a whole host of other things, is rock solid. I like not being a heretic.
- 3) They really, really like grace, and so do I. I'm not holy enough to do life without Jesus; Wesleyans know that, they accept that, and they normalize that.
- 4) Wesleyans believe our faith matters here and now and today and tomorrow, as well as in heaven. As a Wesleyan I get to live my faith, not just maintain it until die. I like that.
- 5) Wesleyans reckon that God is big enough to care about **both** my personal holiness **and** the world at large. They're into mission; they're into social justice; they're into making the wrong things right and doing it all in Jesus' name.
- 6) Wesleyans like doing life together. They've inherited a tradition of small groups, accountability groups – people doing life together.
- 7) Wesleyans are multicultural. I really like that.
- 8) Wesleyans believe in gifts-based leadership. That means that if you love Jesus, and you've got leadership gifts, you can lead. Male or female, whatever nationality – doesn't matter. Your gender and your nationality don't disqualify you from serving God.
- 9) Wesleyans give local churches a lot of autonomy. Wesleyan churches will look different because they are different, and that's ok.
- 10) Wesleyans believe that God is not a dictator. They believe that God, in His sovereignty, has insisted and continues to insist on giving you and I the dignity of free choice. God has, will, and does go to extraordinary lengths to prove He loves us, to prove He's real, to prove He wants to be involved in our lives; but He WILL NOT take away the dignity of free choice, even if that means, in the greatest of all tragedies, some people ultimately reject Him.

# WHY I LOVE WESLEYAN THEOLOGY



## **A Solid Starting Point:**

A Trinitarian God who is “holy love” in His very nature – a constant exchange of self-giving love between the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit – created people out of love and sent Jesus to earth out of love, so that people could experience His loving forgiveness and be empowered to love Him and other fully. Wesleyan theology is solidly orthodox.

## **Grace All Over the Place:**

Grace is often defined as God’s undeserved favor. A truly Wesleyan understanding of grace recognizes that this favor is an extension of God’s relational and loving power. God is always reaching out to us by His grace. Grace changes things. Grace changes US, as we are willing to cooperate with it. Wesleyans speak of three kinds of grace which God extends to us at different points in our journeys – and all of it is beautifully undeserved and unearned.



- 1) **Prevenient grace:** This is the grace which comes before salvation. God’s grace is extended to us because of what Jesus did on the cross. Prevenient grace is God’s pursuit of us before we ever thought to pursue Him. Think of the ways God was active in your life to draw you to Him before you knew Him – through people, circumstances, etc. That is prevenient grace at work, making a way for us to have the opportunity to choose to put our faith in Jesus.
- 2) **Justifying grace:** This is God’s grace at work when we respond to His prevenient grace and put our faith in Jesus. It is saving grace – the grace that makes us right with God – amazing grace.
- 3) **Sanctifying grace:** After we have experienced justifying grace, God is not done with extending His undeserved favor. At the point of justification/salvation, he begins to administer His sanctifying grace in our lives. To be “sanctified” is to be set apart or made more holy – to be made more like Jesus. So sanctifying grace is God’s powerful favor working to make us more and more like Christ. Grace changes us (if we cooperate).



**A Holistic View of God's Salvation:** Wesleyans believe that salvation is way more than just a “ticket to heaven.” Rather, putting one’s faith in Jesus begins the process of individual transformation by God’s sanctifying grace through the fullness of His Spirit. Salvation isn’t just about eternity – it’s about salvation from the power of sin in our lives HERE AND NOW. This breaking of the power of sin isn’t limited to just my personal experience of Jesus, but it overflows into my relationships with others and the world around me. We are saved TO be agents of transformation in our community and the wider world. In this way, everyone who becomes a follower of Jesus is brought into the wider mission of God. We become part of the means by which God’s kingdom comes and His will is done, on earth as it is in heaven. Therefore, Wesleyans are passionate about mission in all its dimensions – evangelizing, ministering with compassion to meet needs, and fighting for social justice.

**An Epic History:** The Wesleyan Methodist Church was first formed in the United States by a group of Methodist ministers who refused to tolerate the terrible sin of slavery. The Methodist Church had become corrupt in that it relied on the financial giving of plantation owners who owned slaves. Those ministers who would eventually spark the Wesleyan movement tried to reform the Methodist Church, but when unsuccessful, they accidentally formed a new denominational movement. These first Wesleyans were extremely active in the Underground Railroad. They fought to end the legalized slave trade in the USA when many people who claimed to be Christian either did not have the eyes to see the evil for what it was or did not have the heart to fight against it. This history of social justice remains a present reality in the global Wesleyan movement, as Wesleyans fight against human trafficking and take steps to protect any people who are marginalized.

**More Than A Social Gospel:** The beauty of Wesleyan theology is often found in its balance. While Wesleyans value social justice, they also understand the importance of sharing the Good News that people can discover a personal relationship with God through Jesus Christ. Therefore, Wesleyans value creative evangelistic missions which suits context and culture, ensuring that there are no unnecessary barriers standing in the way of people coming to know Christ. While the message remains the same, Wesleyans support changing the means of communicating the message so that those who hear can be made new.



**An Epic Approach to the Church Community:** Wesleyan ecclesiology (the theology of the church) is rooted in a deep understanding of community. During the first Methodist revival in England, John Wesley encouraged the people that they needed to remain faithful to corporate worship with the wider church to receive the sacrament of communion as well as the other corporate means of grace (channels by which God administers His powerful and undeserved favor to His people). However, Wesley did not believe this corporate service was enough to foster the kind of spiritual growth God intended. Rather, He instructed people to meet in small groups throughout the week and in accountability relationships in order to do life together and foster a deeper spiritual life. Clearly, this idea has now influenced all kinds of Christian movements and denominations around the world.

In addition, the Wesleyan community is extremely diverse, believing God invites ALL people into His family and uses ALL people for His ministry. Thus, the Wesleyan Church exists in over 200 countries around the world and has a rich history of being a leading Christian movement.

The Strong Wesleyan views about mission and diversity in community means that local Wesleyan churches have great freedom in regards to how their local expression of community “looks.”

## Wesleyan-Arminian Theology

	<b>John Calvin*</b> Foundation laid by Augustine	<b>John Wesley</b> Foundation laid by Arminius
<b>T</b>	<b>Total Depravity</b> - Human beings are so affected by the negative consequences of original sin that they are incapable of being righteous, and are always and unchangeably sinful; human freedom is totally enslaved by sin so we can only choose evil.	<b>Deprivation</b> - Human beings are sinful and without God, incapable (deprived) on their own of being righteous; however, they are not irredeemably sinful and can be transformed by God's grace; God's prevenient grace restores to humanity the freedom of will.
<b>U</b>	<b>Unconditional Election</b> - Since human beings cannot choose for themselves, God by His eternal decree has chosen or elected some to be counted as righteous, without any conditions being placed on that election.	<b>Conditional Election</b> - God has chosen that all humanity be righteous by His grace, yet has called us to respond to that grace by exercising our God-restored human freedom as a condition of fulfilling election.
<b>L</b>	<b>Limited Atonement</b> - The effects of the Atonement, by which God forgave sinful humanity, are limited only to those whom He has chosen.	<b>Unlimited Atonement</b> - The effects of the Atonement are freely available to all those whom He has chosen, which includes all humanity, "whosoever will."
<b>I</b>	<b>Irresistible Grace</b> - The grace that God extends to human beings to effect their election cannot be refused, since it has been decreed by God.	<b>Resistible Grace</b> - God's grace is free and offered without merit; however, human beings have been granted freedom by God and can refuse His grace.
<b>P</b>	<b>Perseverance of the Saints</b> - Since God has decreed the elect, and they cannot resist grace, they are unconditionally and eternally secure in that election.	<b>Assurance and Security</b> - There is security in God's grace that allows assurance of salvation, but that security is in relation to continued faithfulness; we can still defiantly reject God.

### Two Common (Orthodox) Theological Camps:

Most believers can place themselves in one of two theological "camps." It's important to recognize that both of these camps are considered to land within Christian orthodoxy (right belief). Both base their understandings on Scripture and the historic Christian creeds. These two camps are known as Calvinism and Arminianism. **Wesleyan theology would fall in the Arminian camp.** Both begin with a view of total depravity, meaning that people are sinful to the point of being unable to seek God. (However, remember that a Wesleyan view of prevenient grace - Conditional Election – means that God in fact seeks people first, taking the initiative they cannot take, and freeing them to choose how they will respond to the Gospel).

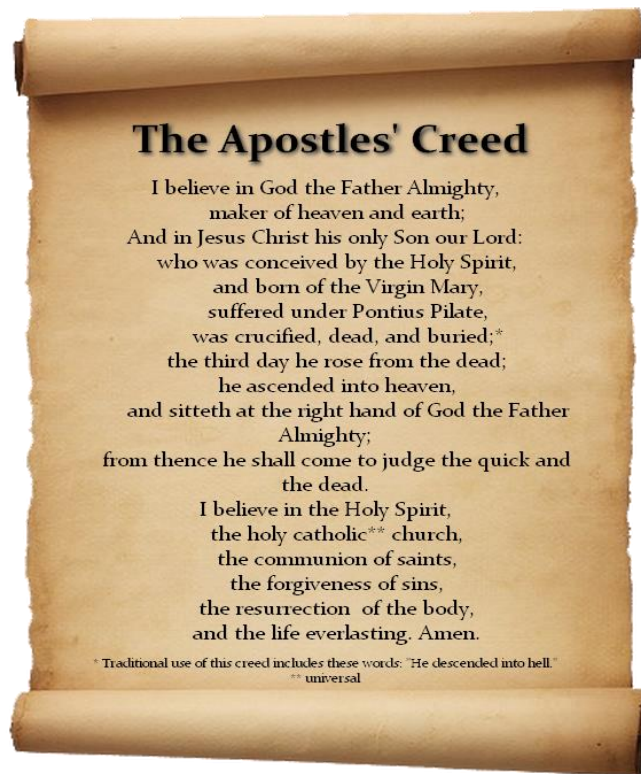
The basic point of difference lies in a different understanding of God's sovereignty and our free will. A five-point **Calvinist perspective** (note that not all Calvinists believe all five points) takes the view that God, in His sovereignty, chooses who will be saved and who will not. It's all God – people don't have any real choice in the matter. In fact, Jesus only died for those who were already predestined to be saved. There is no atonement available to those who are not predestined. Someone who is predestined cannot lose their salvation. Someone who is not predestined can never be saved.

A **Wesleyan-Arminian perspective**, on the other hand, says that Jesus died for ALL people, and because of prevenient grace, ALL people have the opportunity to choose whether or not they will cooperate with God's grace which pursues them. They can decide whether or not to resist the pull of God's love. Once they put their faith in Christ, they can be secure in Him as long as they keep their faith in Him.

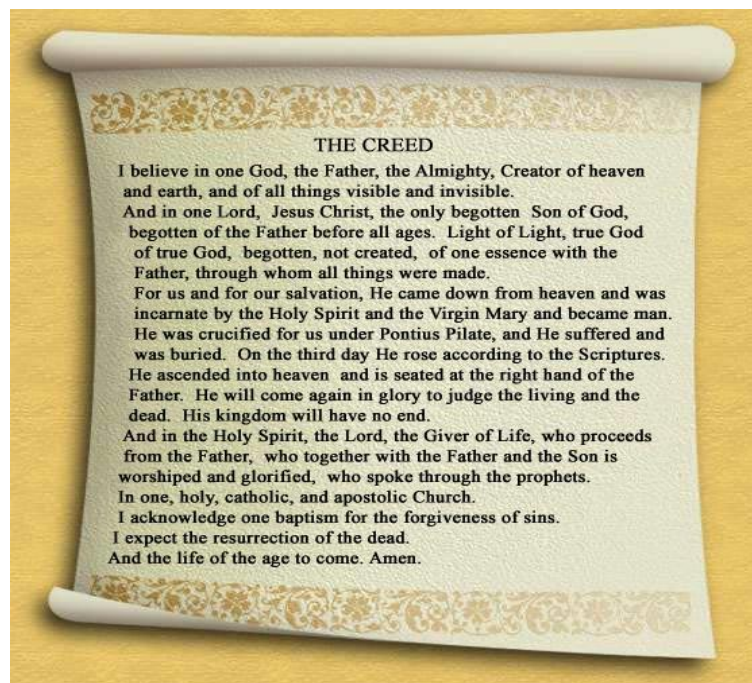


## Orthodoxy and Where Wesleyans Fit

The following Christian creeds are affirmed by ALL Christians across all orthodox (“right belief”) denominations.



### *The Nicene Creed*





## **How Does the Membership Process Work?**

- Anyone interested in membership attends and completes the membership class. (Please check with the Pastor for dates, times, and locations.)
- If you desire to become a church member, you must meet and agree to the Conditions for Membership.
- The Local Board of Administration will need to approve and accept your membership for nomination to the church members.
- You will be contacted about possible dates for the Reception of New Members Service, to take place on a Sunday morning.
- At the Reception of New Members Service, you will publicly affirm what you have already affirmed privately through the Membership Covenant, and it will be official!

### **Questions or concerns about church membership?**

-Please contact Pastor Michael for your questions and concerns.

-Reading material to help explain the importance of membership

- Finding a Church You Can Love and Loving the Church You've found, by Kevin Harney
- The Unity Factor, by Larry Osborne
- Building a Discipling Culture, by Mike Breen

## **The Wesleyan Church Articles of Religion**

### ***1. Faith in the Holy Trinity***

**210.** We believe in the one living and true God, both holy and loving, eternal, unlimited in power, wisdom, and goodness, the Creator and Preserver of all things. Within this unity there are three persons of one essential nature, power and eternity—the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

### ***2. The Father***

**212.** We believe the Father is the Source of all that exists, whether of matter or spirit. With the Son and the Holy Spirit, He made man, male and female, in His image. By intention He relates to people as Father, thereby forever declaring His goodwill toward them. In love, He both seeks and receives penitent sinners.

### ***3. The Son of God***

**214.** We believe in Jesus Christ, the only begotten Son of God. He was conceived by the Holy Spirit and born of the Virgin Mary, truly God and truly man. He died on the cross and was buried, to be a sacrifice both for original sin and for all human transgressions, and to reconcile us to God. Christ rose bodily from the dead, and ascended into heaven, and there intercedes for us at the Father's right hand until He returns to judge all humanity at the last day.

### ***4. The Holy Spirit***

**216.** We believe in the Holy Spirit who proceeds from the Father and the Son, and is of the same essential nature, majesty, and glory, as the Father and the Son, truly and eternally God. He is the Administrator of grace to all, and is particularly the effective Agent in conviction for sin, in regeneration, in sanctification, and in glorification. He is ever present, assuring, preserving, guiding, and enabling the believer.

### ***5. The Sufficiency and Full Authority of the Holy Scriptures for Salvation***

**218.** We believe that the books of the Old and New Testaments constitute the Holy Scriptures. They are the inspired and infallibly written Word of God, fully inerrant in their original manuscripts and superior to all human authority, and have been transmitted to the present without corruption of any essential doctrine. We believe that they contain all things necessary to salvation; so that whatever is not read therein, nor may be proved thereby, is not to be required of any man or woman that it should be believed as an article of faith, or be thought requisite or necessary to salvation. Both in the Old and New Testaments life is offered ultimately through Christ, who is the only Mediator between God and humanity. The New Testament teaches Christians how to fulfill the moral principles of the Old Testament, calling for loving obedience to God made possible by the indwelling presence of His Holy Spirit.

*The canonical books of the Old Testament are:*

Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy, Joshua, Judges, Ruth, 1 Samuel, 2 Samuel, 1 Kings, 2 Kings, 1 Chronicles, 2 Chronicles, Ezra, Nehemiah, Esther, Job, Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, The Song of Solomon, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Lamentations, Ezekiel, Daniel, Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah, Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah and Malachi.

*The canonical books of the New Testament are:*

Matthew, Mark, Luke, John, Acts, Romans, 1 Corinthians, 2 Corinthians, Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, 1 Thessalonians, 2 Thessalonians, 1 Timothy, 2 Timothy, Titus, Philemon, Hebrews, James, 1 Peter, 2 Peter, 1 John, 2 John, 3 John, Jude and Revelation.

#### **6. God's Purpose for Humanity**

**220.** We believe that the two great commandments which require us to love the Lord our God with all the heart, and our neighbors as ourselves, summarize the divine law as it is revealed in the Scriptures. They are the perfect measure and norm of human duty, both for the ordering and directing of families and nations, and all other social bodies, and for individual acts, by which we are required to acknowledge God as our only Supreme Ruler, and all persons as created by Him, equal in all natural rights. Therefore all persons should so order all their individual, social, and political acts as to give to God entire and absolute obedience, and to assure to all the enjoyment of every natural right, as well as to promote the fulfillment of each in the possession and exercise of such rights.

#### **7. Marriage and the Family**

**222.** We believe that every person is created in the image of God, that human sexuality reflects that image in terms of intimate love, communication, fellowship, subordination of the self to the larger whole, and fulfillment. God's Word makes use of the marriage relationship as the supreme metaphor for His relationship with His covenant people and for revealing the truth that this relationship is of one God with one people. Therefore God's plan for human sexuality is that it is to be expressed only in a monogamous lifelong relationship between one man and one woman within the framework of marriage. This is the only relationship which is divinely designed for the birth and rearing of children and is a covenant union made in the sight of God, taking priority over every other human relationship. We adhere to the teachings of Scripture regarding gender identity, sexual conduct, and the sacredness of marriage, and believe that sexual relationships outside of marriage and sexual relationships between persons of the same sex are immoral and sinful.

*(The last sentence of Article 7 was added by the 2016 North American General Conference and submitted for approval to the subsequent Caribbean and Philippine General Conferences in keeping with the provisions of 6765:1.)*

#### **8. Personal Choice**

**224.** We believe that humanity's creation in the image of God included ability to choose between right and wrong. Thus individuals were made morally responsible for their choices. But since the fall of Adam, people are unable in their own strength to do the right. This is due to original sin, which is not simply the following of Adam's example, but rather the corruption of the nature of each mortal, and is reproduced naturally in Adam's descendants. Because of it, humans are very far gone from original righteousness, and by nature are continually inclined to evil. They cannot of themselves even call upon God or exercise faith for salvation. But through Jesus Christ the prevenient grace of God makes possible what humans in self effort cannot do. It is bestowed freely upon all, enabling all who will to turn and be saved.

## **9. Sin: Original, Willful, and Involuntary**

**225.** We believe that through the disobedience of Adam and Eve sin entered the world and all creation suffered its consequences. The effects of sin include disruption of the relationship between God and humanity, deterioration of the natural order of creation, and exploitation of persons by evil or misguided social systems. The whole of creation groans for redemption. Each person is born with a proclivity toward sin, manifested in an inordinate orientation toward self and independence from God, leading to deliberate acts of unrighteousness. The residual effects of Adam and Eve's disobedience include a marred human nature from which arise involuntary shortcomings, faults, infirmities, and imperfect judgments, which should not be accounted the same as willful sin. However, as manifestations of the fallen nature of humanity, these shortcomings of God's holiness still necessitate the merits of the atonement, the sanctifying work of the Holy Spirit, and the self-control of the believer. Willful sin results when a morally accountable person chooses to violate a known law of God, using freedom of choice to please self rather than obey God. The consequences of willful sin include a loss of fellowship with God, a self-absorption with one's own interests rather than love and concern for others, a bondage to things which distort the divine image, a persistent inability to live righteously, and ultimately everlasting misery and separation from God. The atoning work of Christ is the only remedy for sin, whether original, willful or involuntary.

*(Article 9 was approved by the 2016 North American General Conference and submitted for approval to the subsequent Caribbean and Philippine General Conferences in keeping with the provisions of 6765:1.)*

## **10. The Atonement**

**226.** We believe that Christ's offering of himself, once and for all, through His sufferings and meritorious death on the cross, provides the perfect redemption and atonement for the sins of the whole world, both original and actual. There is no other ground of salvation from sin but that alone. This atonement is sufficient for every individual of Adam's race. It is unconditionally effective in the salvation of those mentally incompetent from birth, of those converted persons who have become mentally incompetent, and of children under the age of accountability. But it is effective for the salvation of those who reach the age of accountability only when they repent and exercise faith in Christ.

## **11. Repentance and Faith**

**228.** We believe that for men and women to appropriate what God's prevenient grace has made possible, they must voluntarily respond in repentance and faith. The ability comes from God, but the act is the individual's.

Repentance is prompted by the convicting ministry of the Holy Spirit. It involves a willful change of mind that renounces sin and longs for righteousness, a godly sorrow for and a confession of past sins, proper restitution for wrongdoings, and a resolution to reform the life. Repentance is the precondition for saving faith, and without it saving faith is impossible. Faith, in turn, is the only condition of salvation. It begins in the agreement of the mind and the consent of the will to the truth of the gospel, but issues in a complete reliance by the whole person in the saving ability of Jesus Christ and a complete trusting of oneself to Him as Savior and Lord. Saving faith is expressed in a public acknowledgment of His Lordship and an identification with His Church.

## ***12. Justification, Regeneration and Adoption***

**230.** We believe that when one repents of personal sin and believes on the Lord Jesus Christ, that at the same moment that person is justified, regenerated, adopted into the family of God, and assured of personal salvation through the witness of the Holy Spirit.

We believe that justification is the judicial act of God whereby a person is accounted righteous, granted full pardon of all sin, delivered from guilt, completely released from the penalty of sins committed, by the merit of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, by faith alone, not on the basis of works.

We believe that regeneration, or the new birth, is that work of the Holy Spirit whereby, when one truly repents and believes, one's moral nature is given a distinctively spiritual life with the capacity for love and obedience. This new life is received by faith in Jesus Christ, it enables the pardoned sinner to serve God with the will and affections of the heart, and by it the regenerate are delivered from the power of sin which reigns over all the unregenerate.

We believe that adoption is the act of God by which the justified and regenerated believer becomes a partaker of all the rights, privileges, and responsibilities of a child of God.

## ***13. Good Works***

**232.** We believe that although good works cannot save us from our sins or from God's judgment, they are the fruit of faith and follow after regeneration. Therefore they are pleasing and acceptable to God in Christ, and by them a living faith may be as evidently known as a tree is discerned by its fruit.

## ***14. Sin After Regeneration***

**234.** We believe that after we have experienced regeneration, it is possible to fall into sin, for in this life there is no such height or strength of holiness from which it is impossible to fall. But by the grace of God one who has fallen into sin may by true repentance and faith find forgiveness and restoration.

## ***15. Sanctification: Initial, Progressive, Entire***

**236.** We believe that sanctification is that work of the Holy Spirit by which the child of God is separated from sin unto God and is enabled to love God with all the heart and to walk in all His holy commandments blameless. Sanctification is initiated at the moment of justification and regeneration. From that moment there is a gradual or progressive sanctification as the believer walks with God and daily grows in grace and in a more perfect obedience to God. This prepares for the crisis of entire sanctification which is wrought instantaneously when believers present themselves as living sacrifices, holy and acceptable to God, through faith in Jesus Christ, being effected by the baptism with the Holy Spirit who cleanses the heart from all inbred sin. The crisis of entire sanctification perfects the believer in love and empowers that person for effective service. It is followed by lifelong growth in grace and the knowledge of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. The life of holiness continues through faith in the sanctifying blood of Christ and evidences itself by loving obedience to God's revealed will.

## ***16. The Gifts of the Spirit***

**238.** We believe that the Gift of the Spirit is the Holy Spirit himself, and He is to be desired more than the gifts of the Spirit which He in His wise counsel bestows upon individual members of the Church to enable them properly to fulfill their function as members of the body of Christ. The gifts of the Spirit, although not always identifiable with natural abilities, function through them for the edification of the whole Church. These gifts are to be exercised in love under the administration of the Lord of the Church, not through human volition. The relative value of the gifts of the Spirit is to be tested by their usefulness in the Church and not by the ecstasy produced in the ones receiving them.

## ***17. The Church***

**240.** We believe that the Christian Church is the entire body of believers in Jesus Christ, who is the founder and only Head of the Church. The Church includes both those believers who have gone to be with the Lord and those who remain on the earth, having renounced the world, the flesh, and the devil, and having dedicated themselves to the work which Christ committed unto His church until He comes. The Church on earth is to preach the pure Word of God, properly administer the sacraments according to Christ's instructions, and live in obedience to all that Christ commands. A local church is a body of believers formally organized on gospel principles, meeting regularly for the purposes of evangelism, nurture, fellowship, and worship. The Wesleyan Church is a denomination consisting of those members within district conferences and local churches who, as members of the body of Christ, hold the faith set forth in these Articles of Religion and acknowledge the ecclesiastical authority of its governing bodies.

## ***18. The Sacraments: Baptism and the Lord's Supper***

**242.** We believe that water baptism and the Lord's Supper are the sacraments of the church commanded by Christ and ordained as a means of grace when received through faith. They are tokens of our profession of Christian faith and signs of God's gracious ministry toward us. By them, He works within us to quicken, strengthen, and confirm our faith.

We believe that water baptism is a sacrament of the church, commanded by our Lord and administered to believers. It is a symbol of the new covenant of grace and signifies acceptance of the benefits of the atonement of Jesus Christ. By means of this sacrament, believers declare their faith in Jesus Christ as Savior.

We believe that the Lord's Supper is a sacrament of our redemption by Christ's death and of our hope in His victorious return, as well as a sign of the love that Christians have for each other. To such as receive it humbly, with a proper spirit and by faith, the Lord's Supper is made a means through which God communicates grace to the heart.

## ***19. The Second Coming of Christ***

**244.** We believe that the certainty of the personal and imminent return of Christ inspires holy living and zeal for the evangelization of the world. At His return He will fulfill all prophecies made concerning His final and complete triumph over evil.

## ***20. The Resurrection of the Dead***

**246.** We believe in the bodily resurrection from the dead of all people— of the just unto the resurrection of life, and of the unjust unto the resurrection of damnation. The resurrection of Christ is the guarantee of the resurrection which will occur at Christ's Second Coming. The raised body will be a spiritual body, but the person will be whole and identifiable.

## ***21. The Judgment of All Persons***

**248.** We believe that the Scriptures reveal God as the Judge of all and the acts of His judgment are based on His omniscience and eternal justice. His administration of judgment will culminate in the final meeting of all persons before His throne of great majesty and power, where records will be examined and final rewards and punishments will be administered.

## ***22. Destiny***

**250.** We believe that the Scriptures clearly teach that there is a conscious personal existence after death. The final destiny of each person is determined by God's grace and that person's response, evidenced inevitably by a moral character which results from that individual's personal and volitional choices and not from any arbitrary decree of God. Heaven with its eternal glory and the blessedness of Christ's presence is the final abode of those who choose the salvation which God provides through Jesus Christ, but hell with its everlasting misery and separation from God is the final abode of those who neglect this great salvation.

## **Elementary Principles of The Wesleyan Church**

**270.** Christ is the only Head of the Church, and the Word of God the only rule of faith and conduct.

**272.** No person who loves the Lord Jesus Christ, and obeys the gospel of God our Savior, ought to be deprived of church membership.

**274.** Every person has an inalienable right to private judgment in matters of religion, and an equal right to express personal opinions in any way which will not violate the laws of God or the rights of others.

**276.** All church hearings should be conducted on gospel principles only; and no minister or member should be excommunicated except for immorality, the propagation of unchristian doctrines, or for neglect of duties enjoined by the Word of God.

**278.** The pastoral or ministerial office and duties are of divine appointment, and all ordained ministers in the church of God are equal; but ministers are forbidden to be lords over God's heritage, or to have dominion over the faith of the saints.

**280.** The Church has a right to form and enforce such rules and regulations only as are in accordance with the Holy Scriptures, and may be necessary or have a tendency to carry into effect the great system of practical Christianity.

**282.** Whatever power may be necessary to the formation of rules and regulations is inherent in the ministers and members of the Church; but so much of that power may be delegated from time to time, upon a plan of representation, as they may judge necessary and proper.

**284.** It is the duty of all ministers and members of the Church to maintain godliness and oppose all moral evil.

**286.** It is obligatory upon ministers of the gospel to be faithful in the discharge of their pastoral and ministerial duties, and it is also obligatory upon the members to esteem ministers highly for their works' sake, and to render them a righteous compensation for their labors.



**GUIDES AND HELPS TO HOLY LIVING**  
**Article 3. Membership Commitments**  
**(Requirements)**

**The following are the biblically-based convictions historically held by The Wesleyan Church, which all members are encouraged to prayerfully consider and embrace.**

**260.** To be identified with an organized church is the blessed privilege and sacred duty of all who are saved from their sins and are seeking completeness in Christ Jesus. From the Church's beginnings in the New Testament age, it has been understood that such identification involves putting off the old patterns of conduct and putting on the mind of Christ. In maintaining this Christian concept of a transformed life, The Wesleyan Church intends to relate timeless biblical principles to the conditions of contemporary society in such a way as to respect the integrity of the individual believer, yet maintain the purity of the Church and the effectiveness of its witness. This is done in the conviction that there is validity in the concept of the collective Christian conscience as illuminated and guided by the Holy Spirit. The following items (265) represent historic, ethical and practical standards of The Wesleyan Church. While it is hoped that our people will earnestly seek the aid of the Spirit in cultivating a sensitivity to evil which transcends the mere letter of the law, those entering into membership are encouraged to follow carefully and conscientiously these guides and helps to holy living. Disregard of the principles embraced in these Membership Commitments subjects all credentialed ministers and any member serving in an elected leadership capacity to Church discipline (268; see also 550-610).

**265.** Those admitted to membership in our churches commit themselves to demonstrate their life in Christ in such ways as:

(B. Leadership Commitments – All those serving in elected and credentialed office in The Wesleyan Church shall be required to follow carefully and conscientiously these Guides and Helps to Holy Living.

*Toward God*

(1) To reverence the name of God and to honor the Lord's Day by divine worship and spiritual edification, participating in those activities which contribute to the moral and spiritual purposes of this day.

**Gen. 2:3; Ex. 20:3, 7–11; Deut. 5:11–15; Isa. 58:13–14; Mark 2:27; Acts 20:7; Heb. 4:9.**

(2) To seek only the leading of the Holy Spirit and to abstain from all forms of spiritism, such as the occult, witchcraft, astrology and other similar practices.

**Lev. 19:31; 20:6; Deut. 18:10–14; Acts 19:18–19; Gal. 5:19–20.**

### *Toward Self*

(3) To exercise faithful stewardship through the wise use of their time and material resources, practicing careful self-discipline in order to further the mission of Christ's church (remembering the principle of tithing which is basic to the New Testament standard of stewardship) and to demonstrate compassion to those in need.

**Prov. 3:9; Mal. 3:10; Matt. 25:34–40; Acts 20:35; 1 Cor. 16:2;**

**2 Cor. 9:7; Eph. 5:16; Col. 3:17; James 2:15–16; 1 John 3:17.**

(4) To demonstrate a positive social witness by abstaining from all forms of gambling and by abstaining from using or trafficking (production, sale or purchase) in any substances destructive to their physical, mental and spiritual health, such as alcoholic beverages, tobacco and drugs (other than proper medical purposes of drugs); and by refraining from membership in secret societies and lodges which are oath bound, believing that the quasi- religious nature of such organizations divides the Christian's loyalty, their secret nature contravenes the Christian's open witness and the secret nature of their oaths is repugnant to the Christian conscience.

**Ex. 20:17; Rom. 14:21; 1 Cor. 6:12.** Gambling violates the principle of Christian stewardship and the tenth commandment, is harmful to the individual in that it is emotionally addictive, is a poor example to others, and pollutes the moral climate of society.

**Prov. 20:1; Rom. 6:12; 14:21; 1 Cor. 6:12–20; 10:23; 2 Cor.**

**7:1; Eph. 5:18; 1 Thess. 5:22.** Christians are to regard their bodies as temples of the Holy Spirit. While no "thing" of itself is sinful, the Christian should avoid the use of anything which would not help build the fellowship of the church, would not help the believers to realize their full potential in Christ, or which would enslave them. In the light of the scientific knowledge of our day concerning the actual and potential harm of these substances, total abstinence is more in keeping with these biblical principles than is moderation.

**Ex. 20:3; Matt. 5:34–36; John 18:20; Acts 4:12; James 5:12.**

These prohibitions do not restrict membership in labor, civic or other organizations which do not contradict loyalty to Christ and the Church. When in these relationships Christian principles are violated, members shall be dealt with because of such violations and not because of the membership itself.

(5) To follow the teachings of the Scriptures regarding gender identity and sexual conduct.

**Gen. 1:27; 1 Cor. 6:12–20; 7:17–24.**

### *Toward Family*

(6) To follow the teachings of the Scriptures regarding marriage and divorce. We affirm that sexual relationships outside of marriage and sexual relationships between persons of the same sex are immoral and sinful. We further affirm that marriage between one man and one woman is God's design, and we regard sexual sin of the spouse, such as adultery, homosexual behavior, bestiality or incest, as clear biblical grounds for considering divorce, and then only when appropriate counseling has failed to restore the relationship.

**Ex. 20:14, 17; 22:19; Lev. 20:10–16; Matt. 5:32; 19:19; Mark 10:11–12; Luke 16:18.**

(7) To preserve the sanctity of the home by honoring Christ in every phase of family life and by demonstrating Christlike love (always avoiding violence, including physical, psychological, emotional, or sexual abuse toward one's spouse or family members, as well as sexual infidelity or desertion, any of which warrant church discipline for the offender and may justify separation or divorce if true repentance and appropriate counseling cannot bring about reconciliation, and by living peacefully with one another, thereby building up one's spouse and family members through word and deed, and encouraging the nurture and education of the children in the Christian faith so as to bring them early to the saving knowledge of Christ.

**Prov. 22:6; Malachi 2:13-16; Mark 10:9; 1 Cor. 7:10–16, Eph. 5:28; 6:4.**

### *Toward The Church*

(8) To work together for the advancement of God's kingdom and for the mutual edification of fellow believers in holiness, knowledge and love; to walk together in Christian fellowship by giving and receiving counsel with gentleness and affection; by praying for each other; by helping each other in sickness and distress; and by demonstrating love, purity and courtesy to all.

**Rom. 15:1–2; Eph. 4; 1 Thess. 5.**

(9) To grow in the knowledge, love and grace of God by participating in public worship, the ministry of the Word of God, the Lord's Supper, family and personal devotions and fasting.

**Mark 2:18–20; Acts 13:2–3; 14:23; Rom. 12:12; 1 Cor. 11:23–28; Eph. 6:18; Phil. 4:6; 1 Tim. 2:1–2; 2 Tim. 3:16–17; Heb. 10:25; 1 Peter 2:2; 2 Peter 3:18.**

(10) To preserve the fellowship and witness of the Church with reference to the use of languages. The Wesleyan Church believes in the miraculous use of languages and the interpretation of languages in its biblical and historical setting. But it is contrary to the Word of God to teach that speaking in an unknown tongue or the gift of tongues is the evidence of the baptism of the Holy Spirit or of that entire sanctification which the baptism accomplishes; therefore, only a language readily understood by the congregation is to be used in public worship. The Wesleyan Church believes that the use of an ecstatic prayer language has no clear scriptural sanction, or any pattern of established historical usage in the Church; therefore, the use of such a prayer language shall not be promoted among us.

**Acts 8:14–17; 1 Cor. 12:1–14:40; Gal. 5:22–24.**

*Toward Others*

- (11) To do good as much as is possible to all people as God gives opportunity, especially to those in the body of Christ; by giving food to the hungry, by clothing the destitute, by visiting or helping those who are sick or in prison; by instructing, correcting or encouraging them in love.

**Matt. 25:31–46; Eph. 5:11; 1 Thess. 5:14; Heb. 3:13; 10:23–25.**

- (12) To respect the inherent individual rights of all persons, regardless of race, color or sex.

**1 Cor. 8:13; 12:13; Gal. 3:28; 1 Tim. 5:21.**

- (13) To live honestly, be just in all dealings and faithful in all commitments.

**Eccl. 5:4–5; Rom. 12:17; Phil. 4:8–9; 1 Peter 2:12.**

**268.** These are the Membership Commitments of our Church. We believe all these to be consistent with the principles of Christ as taught in the Word of God, which is the only and sufficient rule both of our faith and practice. If any among us do not observe them, and/or habitually break any of them, we will admonish such persons in love with the hope of restoring them to lives of harmony with the above Membership Commitments. If such efforts of restoration continue to prove fruitless, official action may be taken toward termination of said persons' church membership. However, the church members are encouraged to continue efforts toward the spiritual restoration of these persons.

**Matt. 18:15–17; 1 Cor. 5:6–7, 9–13; 2 Cor. 2:5–7; 5:18–20;**

**6:14–18; Gal. 6:1–10; Eph. 4:25–32; Titus 3:10–11**

