



DISCIPLESHIP MINISTRIES
The United Methodist Church

A New Vision, A Shared Calling

**Embracing a New Era of Ministry
as United Methodists**

WRITTEN BY
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Contents

2	Introduction
8	Session 1: Disciples Formed by Jesus Christ
15	Session 2: Disciples Empowered by the Holy Spirit
22	Session 3: Love Boldly
28	Session 4: Serve Joyfully
34	Session 5: Lead Courageously
41	Session 6: Disciples Transform the World
49	Appendix A: Congregational Action Guide (Miracle Sunday)
51	Appendix B: Facilitator's Guide

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Introduction

The United Methodist Church forms disciples of Jesus Christ, who, empowered by the Holy Spirit, love boldly, serve joyfully, and lead courageously in local communities and worldwide connections.

—United Methodist Vision Statement
Created by Council of Bishops and Connectional Table (2025)

The people of The United Methodist Church are stepping into a new era of ministry, rooted in our rich Wesleyan heritage, grounded in God’s love, and propelled by the leading of the Holy Spirit. As disciples of Jesus Christ, God calls us to love boldly, serve joyfully, and lead courageously, spreading Christ’s hope in our communities and the world.

A New Vision, A Shared Calling

Every impactful movement begins with a clear and faithful vision. Without it, communities lose direction and momentum. Our church’s renewed vision invites us to imagine the kind of world God desires—a world shaped by justice, compassion, mercy, joy, and human flourishing.

The Bible offers glimpses of this vision:

- A world where people of every age, race, gender, and background experience the healing and liberating love of Jesus Christ (John 3:16, Revelation 7:9).
- A world where all people are encouraged and equipped to live into the abundance God calls them to (John 10:10, Ephesians 2:10).
- A world where communities thrive through justice, generosity, and shared life (Micah 6:8, Acts 2:44-47).

This is not just a dream; it is a call to action to love boldly, serve joyfully, and lead courageously. When the church embraces this vision, our work becomes a meaningful partnership with God in renewing the world around us.

Our mission remains unchanged: *to make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world*. This is the core of our purpose—the reason we exist. Our new vision provides direction, showing us where we are journeying towards and guiding how we will continue to embody and fulfill our mission.

This guide helps us reflect on that vision through the rhythm of a six-week worship series:

- Disciples Formed by Jesus Christ
- Disciples Empowered by the Holy Spirit
- Love Boldly
- Serve Joyfully
- Lead Courageously
- Disciples Transform the World (Miracle Sunday)

For churches that choose to follow along, there are themes, preaching notes, liturgical resources, and other age-level resources for the Miracle Sunday available.

To learn more about this six-week worship series, and to access available resources for it and for Miracle Sunday, please scan the QR code or visit the Discipleship Ministries website at:



<https://www.UMCdiscipleship.org/articles/miracle-sunday-worship-study-resources>

Living the Vision Together

The renewed vision of The United Methodist Church provides a clear and unified direction for how we work together across our worldwide connection. It calls us to:

- Grow and form disciples of Jesus Christ.
- Be empowered by and dependent on the Holy Spirit.
- Develop, equip, and resource Christ-like leaders.
- Stand in solidarity with those who are most vulnerable.
- Work toward healing and wholeness for all people and the planet.

This study invites us to pause, reflect, and ask, “How can we bring this vision to life—intentionally, consistently, and together—in our daily lives, communities, and shared ministry as United Methodists?”

About This Resource

This guide can be used by both individuals and small groups. Each session includes brief reflections on selected scripture passages, quotes, and guiding questions to spark personal discovery, reflection, and meaningful group conversation.

At the heart of each session is an invitation to journal. Journaling is a simple but powerful practice. Writing down your thoughts, experiences, and insights helps you slow down, reflect, and become aware of what is stirring within you. John Wesley, the founder of the Methodist movement, saw journaling not as a personal indulgence but as a valuable tool for growth, helping people become more grounded, compassionate, and self-aware.

Participants may journal on their own between sessions, giving them time to reflect more deeply. Alternatively, they might choose to include journaling during small-group time: select a prompt, have participants write quietly for a few minutes, and then invite them to share their thoughts. This kind of reflection often leads to honest conversations and deeper connections.

Each session ends with a shared musical moment. Singing together or simply reflecting on the words of a hymn can be a powerful way to express our hopes, commitments, and sense of shared purpose. Whether spoken or sung, these moments help us feel more connected to God, to one another, and to the journey we are on.

A Note for Facilitators

If used in a group setting, this study is designed to be led by anyone (clergy or laity) willing to create space for prayerful reflection, holy conversation, and attentive listening for the Holy Spirit. Facilitators are not expected to be experts in the Bible or theology.

The role of the facilitator is to hold the conversation with care, keeping the group grounded, encouraging participation, and honoring the different voices and experiences present. In the Wesleyan tradition, we are formed as disciples of Jesus Christ through shared practices and holy conferencing, trusting that God uses our life together as a means of grace.

Facilitators are encouraged to use the additional guidance and preparation resources available in **Appendix B**.

A Word of Encouragement

As we step into this new season together, we do so with hope and anticipation. God is already at work; lives are being renewed; communities are finding strength; and people are stepping into new possibilities. May this journey spark fresh vision, deepen our purpose, and help us move forward with joy, courage, and faith as we make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world.

Together in Christ's mission,
Bishop Héctor A. Burgos-Núñez

How This Vision Was Developed

The new vision statement was created to serve as a unifying and transformative guide for the United Methodist Church as it discerns how to live more fully into its enduring mission of making disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world. Led by the Council of Bishops and articulated in partnership with the Connectional Table, the vision responds to a shared question facing the denomination: not what the mission is, but how the church moves forward in a season of change, healing, and renewed purpose. The vision statement was developed collaboratively and is intended to provide clarity, inspire alignment, and support adaptive leadership across diverse contexts. Its timely adoption offers hope and direction, particularly for communities navigating conflict and transition. It is supported with resources to help the whole church embody this vision in practice.

SESSION 1

Disciples Formed By Jesus Christ

*The United Methodist Church **forms disciples of Jesus Christ**, who, empowered by the Holy Spirit, love boldly, serve joyfully, and lead courageously in local communities and worldwide connections.*

Primary Scriptures:

- Psalm 119:1–8
- Ephesians 4:11–16
- Luke 5:1–11

Framing/Big Idea

Disciples are formed by Jesus Christ through God's Word, the work of the Holy Spirit in individual lives and in community, and the daily practice of responding to God's love.

Gathering Grace/Opening Prayer

Take a moment to open your heart(s) to God through prayer.

Gracious and loving God, You are the source of all wisdom and the foundation of our vision. As we gather to reflect on the direction You have set before us as United Methodists, open our hearts to Your guidance. Strengthen our faith,

inspire our mission, and empower us to walk in Your love. May Your Spirit move among us as we look to love boldly, serve joyfully, and lead courageously in our ministries, communities, and daily lives. In Jesus' name, we pray. Amen.

Opening Questions/Conversation Starters

Before diving into the study, take a moment to reflect and share.

- What is one moment in your life when you sensed God inviting you to grow or step into something new?
- When you think about the church's purpose today, what word or phrase comes to mind? What led you to choose that word or phrase?

Why This Matters

Vision gives direction and meaning to a faith community. It is the compass that helps people stay focused, work together, and move forward with purpose. Without it, the church can lose momentum or drift apart. As Proverbs 29:18 (KJV) reminds us, *"Where there is no vision, the people perish."*

As The United Methodist Church steps into a new chapter of its journey, it embraces a renewed vision—one that calls disciples, leaders, and faith communities to embody bold love, joyful service, and courageous leadership. Through this transformative spirit, lives are renewed, neighborhoods and entire communities are uplifted, and the world is reshaped by the liberating and healing love of Jesus Christ.

This vision invites us to be energized by God's presence, grounded in compassion, and committed to making a real difference in the lives of others and the world around us.

Anchored in the Word

Vision and discipleship are inseparable. God's vision calls us forward, and formation, which begins with God's initiative, propels us to live into God's vision. Psalm 119:1–8 describes a longing to walk closely with God, to be shaped from the inside out by God's instruction, and thus to desire God's way of life. When God forms us, God aligns our hearts with the divine vision to love boldly, serve joyfully, and lead courageously.

Formation is God's gift, and it happens through our daily response to the vision God has for us individually and as the church. God forms disciples not only for personal faithfulness, but also so that, together with the body of believers, our lives might bear witness to Christ's love in the world God so loves.

In Habakkuk 2:2–3, God tells the prophet:

“Write the vision;
make it plain on tablets,
so that a runner may read it.
For there is still a vision for the appointed time...
If it seems to tarry, wait for it;
it will surely come; it will not delay.”

This passage also reminds us that vision shapes us as we wait. Jesus shared that vision with his first disciples:

“Do not be afraid; from now on you will be catching people.’ When they had brought their boats to shore, they left everything and followed him” (Luke 5:10b–11).

Jesus lived with *divine vision*, proclaiming the good news and calling his followers to build a *communal reality*

marked by justice, mercy, and love. In the disciples' response, God's vision became their lived reality, reshaping their priorities, identities, and future. What begins as a personal response to Jesus' call does not remain individual; it grows into a shared life, shaped and sustained within the community of faith.

In Ephesians 4:11–16, Paul offers a similar picture of God's unfolding vision for the church and reminds the church that formation happens in and through community. This is a picture of the church being shaped into maturity, equipped for ministry in community, and joined together in love.

Discipleship is not a private journey but a shared one. This kind of formation unfolds over time, as we respond to God's love again and again through prayer, scripture, worship, and shared life in the community of faith.

This passage reminds us that divine vision is never private or abstract; it forms a community that grows toward Christ, strengthening one another so that God's purposes might take flesh among us. As we remain attentive to the Spirit's leading, we are invited to live into this shared calling with clarity, unity, and hope.

John Wesley Quote

“[T]rue religion consists of righteousness...This righteousness also implies gentleness, meekness, and patience...[the righteous] love without partiality or hypocrisy.”

–John Wesley, “The Way to the Kingdom”¹

¹ John Wesley, Sermon 7, “The Way to the Kingdom,” cited in Kenneth Cain Kinghorn, *John Wesley on Christian Beliefs: The Standard Sermons in Modern English* (Abingdon Press, 2002), 129-130.

Whispers of Grace/Reflection Questions

Take a moment to pause, breathe, and open your heart to God's gentle guidance. Use the prompts below for personal journaling, small-group conversation, or both. Follow whichever questions draw you deeper into God's love.

1. Reflect on a time when God led you through uncertainty. How did that experience shape your trust in God?
2. Where do you sense God inviting you or calling to embrace a new vision or take a new step of faith?
3. Psalm 119 describes a longing to walk closely with God. Which action or attitude from that passage feels most relevant to your journey?
4. Luke 5 shows the cost and joy of responding to Jesus' call. When have you felt invited to leave behind something familiar to follow Christ more fully?
5. Ephesians 4 paints a picture of the community growing toward Christlike maturity. What helps you stay open to the Holy Spirit's forming work—personally and within your congregation?
6. Which “adverb” feels most true for you in this season—boldly, joyfully, courageously, abundantly? Which one feels like an invitation from God?
7. Where have you sensed God (re)shaping your character recently, and how might you respond with deeper obedience or trust?
8. Describe a way you can encourage someone else to walk boldly into God's vision for their life this week.

Echoes of Grace/Hymn Suggestions

Sing one of the following Hymns or simply reflect on the words.

- “Be Thou My Vision” (UMH 451)
- “Take Time to Be Holy” (UMH 395)
- “Open My Eyes, That I May See” (UMH 454)

Grace for the Journey/Closing Prayer

Lord Jesus, You are the foundation of our vision, the light that leads our steps, and the hope that strengthens our mission. As we move forward in faith, may Your Spirit guide us in unity with a shared purpose. Help us to trust in Your wisdom, embrace Your calling, and boldly proclaim Your love to the world. May our church remain faithful to Your vision, sharing Christ’s love, and seeking justice, mercy, and transformation in all we do. In Jesus’ name, we pray. Amen.

Call to Action

Choose one simple practice this week as a response to God’s vision.

- **Pray** each day for clarity about where God may be forming you or your church.
- **Read** Psalm 119:1–8 slowly at least twice this week, noticing what stirs longing or desire in you.
- **Act** by encouraging someone who is discerning a next step in discipleship.

Commit to that practice as a step toward Christlike formation. If possible, share your commitment with someone in your group so you can walk the journey together. Notice what God is doing within you and how God may be shaping you through the people with whom you worship, learn, and serve.

Facilitator Note

Encourage participants to share practical examples of formation rather than abstract concepts.

SESSION 2

Disciples Empowered By the Holy Spirit

*The United Methodist Church forms disciples of Jesus Christ, who, **empowered by the Holy Spirit**, love boldly, serve joyfully, and lead courageously in local communities and worldwide connections.*

Primary Scriptures:

- Psalm 16
- Colossians 2:6–10
- John 10:10

Framing/Big Idea

Disciples are empowered by the Holy Spirit to live with purpose, joy, and the abundant life Jesus promises.

Gathering Grace/Opening Prayer

Take a moment to open your heart(s) to God through prayer.

Gracious and Holy God, we come seeking your Spirit—not for comfort alone, but for courage. Stir within us a holy boldness, that we might live your vision with joy. May your Spirit fall afresh on us today, awakening hearts, renewing minds, and empowering hands for your mission. In the name of Jesus, who sends us forth, Amen.

Opening Questions/Conversation Starters

Before diving into the study, take a moment to reflect and share.

- When during the week do you feel most at peace or most yourself?
- When have you sensed God's presence in a way that made your faith feel real or alive?
- What would a Spirit-led renewal in your community look or feel like? What would it smell like?

Why This Matters

Living as a disciple, and apprentice of Jesus—responding to God's love, growing in love, and helping transform the world—is not something we can do on our own; it's only possible through the active presence of the Holy Spirit, who awakens us, helps us grow, and equips us to make a difference. The Holy Spirit makes the journey real, sustainable, and transformative.

There are three main ways the Holy Spirit moves in our lives:

1. Conviction: The Spirit awakens us to God's unconditional love, helps us recognize where we have fallen short, and nudges us toward honesty, healing, and change.
2. Transformation: Through God's love, the Spirit reshapes our character, helping us become more loving, patient, and grounded in Christ.
3. Empowerment: The Spirit gives us the tools, gifts, and courage we need to serve others and live with purpose.

The Holy Spirit is how we experience God's presence moving through the world, working within our communities, and in us. It is through this Spirit that we

grow into the people we are meant to be. The Holy Spirit helps us live with purpose, guiding us to build a world shaped by fairness, kindness, and deep connection with God and others.

Anchored in the Word

The Holy Spirit is not a distant mystery but a present and active force—guiding, renewing, and empowering us for lives of love and service. In Psalm 16, the hymn book of the people of God, we read the following:

“You show me the path of life. In your presence there is fullness of joy; in your right hand are pleasures forevermore” (Psalm 16:11).

The Holy Spirit is the one who reveals the “path of life” and in whom we can experience God’s presence. Psalm 16 reminds us that the Spirit’s work often begins quietly—with refuge, trust, and a growing assurance that our lives are held securely in God’s care.

We see this Spirit-filled life in the witness of the disciples of scripture. As we grow in awareness of God’s presence, we can experience it, too. Paul’s letter to the Colossians puts it this way:

“As you therefore have received Christ Jesus the Lord, continue to walk in him, rooted and built up in him and established in the faith, just as you were taught, abounding in thanksgiving...In [Christ] the whole fullness of deity dwells bodily, and you have come to fullness in him, who is the head of every ruler and authority” (Colossians 2:6-7, 9-10).

Paul speaks to a church tempted to look for meaning elsewhere, reminding them that fullness is not something to be achieved, but something already given in Christ through the Holy Spirit.

Jesus also reminds us that the Spirit's work leads us into the life God wants for us. At the heart of this Spirit-empowered life is Jesus' promise of abundance—not as excess or ease, but as fullness rooted in God's presence.

“I came so that they could have life and have it abundantly” (John 10:10). This abundant life is not simply endurance, but a Spirit-shaped way of living marked by purpose, joy, and steady trust. Through the Spirit, we learn to receive this fullness as a gift and to walk in it with humility.

The Holy Spirit's work is not limited to moments of instruction or inspiration. The Spirit dwells with us, forming lives rooted in Christ and sustained by God's love. Through the Spirit, we are drawn into the fullness Jesus promises. This is a life of discipleship marked by trust, gratitude, and the quiet confidence that God is at work within us, among us, and through us.

As United Methodists, we trust that the Holy Spirit continues to lead us into the abundant life Jesus promises, forming us in faith, grounding us in Christ, and sustaining us with joy for the journey.

John Wesley Quote

“God’s love was poured into the believers’ hearts through the Holy Spirit that was given to them...Furthermore, the believers’ filial love for God grew continually, due to the testimony of God’s pardoning love now within them...God was now their desire, the strength of their hearts and their portion forever.”

–John Wesley, “Scriptural Christianity”²

Whispers of Grace/Reflection Questions

Take a moment to pause, breathe, and open your heart to God’s gentle guidance. Use the prompts below for personal journaling, small-group conversation, or both. Follow whichever questions draw you deeper into God’s love.

1. Psalm 16 describes a movement from refuge toward fullness and joy. Which stage feels closest to your life right now—seeking refuge, growing in trust, or living more fully in God’s presence?
2. Jesus promises abundant life in John 10:10. What does “fullness” look like for you? Where do you sense the Spirit inviting you to receive it?
3. In Colossians 2, Paul warns against anything that diminishes our joy. What can “empty” your faith or drain your joy? How might the Spirit restore that fullness?
4. Abundance is both communal and personal. Where might the Spirit be empowering your church or community to live more abundantly?

² John Wesley, Sermon 4, “Scriptural Christianity,” quoted in Kenneth Cain Kinghorn, *John Wesley on Christian Beliefs: The Standard Sermons in Modern English* (Abingdon Press, 2002), 81.

5. The Spirit leads us into truth that is lived, not just intellectually understood. How have you experienced the difference between knowing about God and sensing God's active presence in your life?
6. When have you recently felt the Spirit nudging, guiding, or encouraging you? What helped you recognize that movement?
7. In your daily decisions, what helps you stay open to the Spirit's guidance? What tends to make that openness more difficult?
8. Where might the Spirit be inviting you to offer your gifts, not just for personal satisfaction, but to build up others and to bear witness to God's love in action?

Echoes of Grace/Hymn Suggestions

Sing one of the following Hymns or simply reflect on the words.

- "Spirit of the Living God" (UMH 393)
- "Breathe on Me, Breath of God" (UMH 420)
- "Sweet, Sweet Spirit" (UMH 334)

Grace for the Journey/Closing Prayer

Holy Spirit, You have stirred our hearts and opened our eyes. Send us forth now, not as passive observers, but as bold disciples. May we live your vision with joy, serve with humility, and lead with courage. Empower us to be the church the world needs, for the glory of Christ and the healing of creation. Amen.

Call to Action

Choose one intentional practice that helps you stay open to the Holy Spirit's work of renewal and fullness. It might be:

- setting aside a few minutes each day for prayer or scripture,
- pausing regularly to notice God's presence and give thanks, and
- paying attention to where the Spirit is nudging you toward trust, joy, or deeper faith.

Commit to these practices as a way of receiving the abundant life Jesus promises, trusting that the Spirit is already at work guiding, sustaining, and forming you in God's love.

Facilitator Note

If time allows, ask participants to share moments when they sense the Spirit strengthening or guiding them.

SESSION 3

Love Boldly

*The United Methodist Church forms disciples of Jesus Christ, who, empowered by the Holy Spirit, **love boldly**, serve joyfully, and lead courageously in local communities and worldwide connections.*

Primary Scriptures:

- Leviticus 19:9–18
- John 13:34–35
- Mark 12:28–34

Framing/Big Idea

Loving boldly means responding to God’s love with courage, compassion, and intentional action—embracing neighbor and stranger alike with the generous love of Christ.

Gathering Grace/Opening Prayer

Take a moment to open your heart(s) to God through prayer.

Gracious and loving God, You have called us to love boldly, just as You have loved us. As we gather to reflect on Your Word, open our hearts to Your transformative presence. Help us to deepen our relationship with Jesus Christ, so that our love may overflow to those around us. Guide us to embrace and uplift every person, regardless of background or circumstance, as a reflection of Your unconditional love.

May Your Spirit lead us in this time of study, filling us with wisdom, compassion, and a renewed sense of purpose. In Jesus' name, we pray. Amen.

Opening Questions/Conversation Starters

Before diving into the study, take a moment to reflect and share.

- When have you received bold love (*Christ-like love that loves God fully and loves neighbor as Jesus loves us*) from someone, and how did it shape you?
- Can you recall a moment when loving someone required patience, compassion, or courage? How did your faith support you in that experience?

Why This Matters

To love boldly is to live with holy audacity, grounded in a deep connection to what is good, true, and life-giving, and reaching toward the world with open arms. Bold love is not soft or sentimental; it is strong and steady. It is the kind of love that listens deeply, shows up consistently, and speaks up when it matters.

In the Wesleyan tradition, love is never passive. It is a force that (re)shapes us—from the inside out and across our communities. It calls us to break down barriers, confront injustice, and build a world where everyone belongs. To love boldly is to live with intention, deeply committed to Christ and to one another.

Anchored in the Word

Bold love is deeply rooted in God's character. Scripture anchors this calling, beginning with Leviticus 19:9-18, where love is expressed through justice, generosity, and

neighborliness, forming a people shaped by God's holiness. Love is not abstract. Love takes shape in tangible, often sacrificial, acts of compassion. God's law in Leviticus established a standard of equity and righteousness rooted in God's holiness (Lev. 19:2). The law shaped how God's people lived together and cared for one another.

Jesus draws on and expands this vision. Much as the Levitical law shaped a people learning how to live together, Jesus' teaching reveals the foundation that holds all the commandments together. In the Gospels, when asked by a teacher of the law about the greatest commandment, Jesus names love:

“‘You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.’ This is the greatest and first commandment. And a second is like it: ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself’” (Matthew 22:37–39; see also Mark 12:28–34).

For United Methodists, this is not merely a sentiment; it is a sacred call to embody God's love in every relationship, every decision, every act of ministry. To love boldly is an expansive vision of love that calls us to love God with all our heart, all our understanding, and all our strength, and to love our neighbors with the same wholehearted devotion. This wholehearted love is not merely an action but a way of being, one that reflects the generous and hospitable way of life described in Leviticus 19 and forms us as disciples together. Such love requires the courage to stay present, to listen across difference, and to choose compassion when it would be easier to withdraw.

We love because God first loved us (read 1 John 4:19). This divine initiative is the foundation of our boldness—not arrogance, but assurance. We are empowered by grace to love beyond fear, beyond convenience, beyond comfort.

In John 13:34–35, Jesus gives the new commandment, “Just as I have loved you, you also should love one another.” To love God fully and to love our neighbor faithfully are not separate callings, but one shared life of devotion shaped by grace. God’s love dismantles barriers, restores dignity, and reaches those at the margins, drawing us into God’s work of healing and justice. This love reshapes communities and calls us beyond what is familiar. As we deepen our relationship with Christ, we are strengthened to love beyond fear or convenience, living out the bold love to which we are called.

John Wesley Quote

“May we all move beyond being merely Almost Christians. We can become Altogether Christians. Then, we will be justified through faith by the redemption that is in Jesus, knowing that we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. Rejoicing in anticipation of the glory of God, we experience God’s love poured into our hearts by the Holy Spirit whom he has given us.”

–John Wesley, “The Almost Christian”³

³ John Wesley, Sermon 2, “The Almost Christian,” cited in Kenneth Cain Kinghorn, *John Wesley on Christian Beliefs: The Standard Sermons in Modern English* (Abingdon Press, 2002), 57.

Whispers of Grace/Reflection Questions

Take a moment to pause, breathe, and open your heart to God's gentle guidance. Use the prompts below for personal journaling, small-group conversation, or both. Follow whichever questions draw you deeper into God's love.

1. Leviticus 19 describes practical ways of loving our neighbors with justice and compassion. Which action or attitude from this passage stands out to you today?
2. In Mark 12, Jesus calls us to love God with *all* our heart, soul, mind, and strength. What part of that wholehearted love feels most challenging—or most hopeful—for you right now?
3. Jesus commands us to love one another “as I have loved you” (John 13:34). Where do you sense Christ inviting you to offer that kind of bold love?
4. What barriers—personal, cultural, or spiritual—make bold love difficult in your daily life? How might Christ be helping you move through them?
5. Recall a moment when you experienced God's bold love toward you. How did that experience shape your understanding of what it means to love others?
6. Bold love often involves risk or vulnerability. Where might the Spirit be nudging you to take a step of courageous love this week?
7. What helps you remain rooted in Christ's love when loving others feels costly or uncertain?
8. Identify one relationship or situation where you sense Christ calling you to extend bold love in a tangible way. What might that look like in practice?

Echoes of Grace/Hymn Suggestions

Sing one of the following hymns or simply reflect on the words.

- “Love Divine, All Loves Excelling” (UMH 384)
- “The Gift of Love” (UMH 408)
- “Lord, I Want to Be a Christian” (UMH 402)

Grace for the Journey/Closing Prayer

Loving God, thank You for Your renewing love. By Your Spirit, shape us to embody Christ’s bold love and witness to Your hope. Send us forth as disciples who form disciples, sharing faith and serving others. In Christ’s name, we pray, Amen.

Call to Action

Choose one concrete expression of bold love this week.

- **Notice** someone on the margins—at work, in your neighborhood, or in your church—and take a step to listen, include, or affirm them.
- **Risk reconciliation** by reaching out to someone with whom a relationship feels strained or distant.
- **Act with compassion** by offering time, resources, or advocacy on behalf of someone in need.

Commit to this act as a response to Christ’s command to love as God has loved us, and if possible, share your intention with someone in your group so you can reflect together on how God is shaping you to love boldly.

Facilitator Note

Invite participants to connect scripture insights with specific relationships or community needs.

SESSION 4

Serve Joyfully

*The United Methodist Church forms disciples of Jesus Christ, who, empowered by the Holy Spirit, love boldly, **serve joyfully**, and lead courageously in local communities and worldwide connections.*

Primary Scriptures:

- Psalm 100
- Mark 10:42–45
- John 13:14–15
- 1 Peter 4:8–11

Framing/Big Idea

Serving joyfully reflects Christ’s mission—offering our gifts, time, and presence with gladness, humility, and compassion for the sake of others.

Gathering Grace/Opening Prayer

Take a moment to open your heart(s) to God through prayer.

Gracious and loving God, we come before You with gratitude for the gift of service. You call us to serve joyfully, reflecting Your love in our actions and attitudes. May we be strengthened by Your presence and find joy in giving, helping, and sharing. Teach us to serve not out of obligation, but from a heart full of love. As we reflect on Your Word, shape our hearts to be more like Yours. In Jesus’ name, we pray. Amen.

Opening Questions/Conversation Starters

Before diving into the study, take a moment to reflect and share.

- What have you done for someone that brought unexpected joy?
- When have you experienced joy while serving someone?
- Who has modeled joyful, Christlike service for you? How has that inspired you?
- How do you understand the difference between happiness and joy?

Why This Matters

True service begins with joy—not duty, guilt, or obligation, but the deep gladness that comes from knowing Christ and being formed into the image of Christ. Scripture reminds us in Nehemiah 8:10 that joy is not just a feeling—it’s a source of strength.

When we offer our time, gifts, skills, and presence with joyful hearts, we do more than meet needs; we restore dignity, build trust, and reflect the heart of Christ.

Anchored in the Word

Psalm 100 invites us to “serve the Lord with gladness.” Joyful service flows from gratitude and becomes the posture that sustains faithful service over time. It is a natural response to God’s goodness, and it comes from a posture of obedience that transforms how we show up for others.

Scripture teaches us that joy is not the reward for service, but the soil from which faithful service grows. Psalm 100:1 proclaims, “Make a joyful noise to the Lord, all the earth.”

Joy is much more than a feeling. Joy is a response to who God is and God's work in the world, shaping how we live and serve.

Joyful service requires humility. Jesus embodied this kind of service when he knelt to wash his disciples' feet, a quiet act that gathers joy, humility, and love into one faithful response.

“So if I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet. For I have set you an example, that you also should do as I have done to you” (John 13:14-15).

Jesus also models joyful service in Mark 10:42-45, teaching that true greatness comes not from power but from serving, “The Son of Man came not to be served but to serve.” This reveals that joy and humility are held together in faithful discipleship.

Jesus did not serve from a place of power, but from love. Jesus calls us to do the same: to serve one another with love, tenderness, and joy. In this humble act, Jesus shows that true service is shaped by love and sustained by joy, a joy that comes from knowing we serve in the strength God provides.

Joyful service recognizes that we all have something to give to others and that joy deepens when our gifts are offered for the sake of the community.

“Like good stewards of the manifold grace of God, serve one another with whatever gift each of you has received” (1 Peter 4:10).

Peter reminds us that God's gifts are entrusted to us for the sake of others, and when we offer them freely, the joy of Christ is made visible in the life of the community. To serve joyfully is to live with open hands, journeying alongside the most vulnerable among us with compassion and hope. When we serve with joy, we reflect the goodness of God in ways that uplift others and renew our own hearts. Whether it's a listening ear, a warm meal, or a word of encouragement, joyful service turns ordinary moments into sacred ones.

John Wesley Quote

“One of the principal rules of religion is, to lose no occasion of serving God. And since He is invisible to our eyes, we are to serve Him in our neighbour, which He receives as if done to Himself, in person standing visibly before us.”

–John Wesley⁴

Whispers of Grace/Reflection Questions

Take a moment to pause, breathe, and open your heart to God's gentle guidance. Use the prompts below for personal journaling, small-group conversation, or both. Follow whichever questions draw you deeper into God's love.

1. What words or images in Psalm 100 describe the spirit of joyful service?
2. What does Jesus teach about servanthood in Mark 10:42–45?

⁴ John Wesley, Journal, August 21, 1740, in *The Works of John Wesley*, vol. 19.

3. What attitudes or fears sometimes limit our joy in serving?
4. Where might God be inviting you to serve with renewed joy and humility?
5. Write down three ways God has blessed you through the service of others. How can you extend that same kindness?
6. Think about a time when you served joyfully. What made it special? How did it affect your heart?
7. What is the cost of serving, but without joy? How could you check in with yourself the next time you feel called to serve, but don't experience joy in that invitation?
8. What gifts has God entrusted to you for serving others?
9. What gift—big or small—do you feel called to offer others right now, and how might you do it with joy and compassion?
10. Identify one small act of joyful service you can commit to doing in the coming days—at home, in church, or in your community.

Echoes of Grace/Hymn Suggestions

Sing one of the following hymns or simply reflect on the words.

- “Come, Thou Fount of Every Blessing” (UMH 400)
- “Here I Am, Lord” (UMH 593)
- “Make Me a Channel of Your Peace” (TFWS 2171)

Grace for the Journey/Closing Prayer

Lord, we thank You for the joy of serving and the blessings that come from giving with a heart of love. May we always reflect Your kindness in our actions, serving not for recognition, but to glorify You. Fill us with Your joy so that our service may be a light to those in need. Strengthen us to embrace every opportunity to serve with humility, gratitude, and love. In Jesus' name, we pray. Amen.

Call to Action

Choose one simple expression of joyful service this week.

- **Offer a gift** God has entrusted to you—time, listening, encouragement, skill, or care—for the sake of someone else.
- **Serve quietly and humbly**, without seeking recognition, trusting that God is at work through your offering.
- **Pay attention to joy**—not as a feeling you must create, but as the love of God that meets you as you serve.

If possible, share your experience with someone in your group and reflect together on how God uses joyful service to shape both the giver and the receiver.

Facilitator Note

Encourage participants to reflect on the difference between serving out of duty/obligation and serving from joy.

SESSION 5

Lead Courageously

*The United Methodist Church forms disciples of Jesus Christ, who, empowered by the Holy Spirit, love boldly, serve joyfully, and **lead courageously** in local communities and worldwide connections.*

Primary Scriptures:

- Joshua 1:5–9
- Psalm 27:1–3, 14
- Isaiah 58:6–10
- Ephesians 6:10–18

Framing/Big Idea

Courageous leadership follows Jesus' example—grounded in God's presence, committed to justice, and expressed through humble, faithful action.

Gathering Grace/Opening Prayer

Take a moment to open your heart(s) to God through prayer.

Gracious and mighty God, we come before You in awe of Your strength and wisdom. You have called us to lead courageously, not through power, but through humility, justice, and unwavering faith. As we reflect on Your Word today, open our hearts to Your guidance. Help us to stand firm in our convictions, to act with compassion, and to

follow Jesus' example of bold obedience to Your call. May Your Spirit empower us to be leaders who bring light and hope to the world. In Jesus' name, we pray. Amen.

Opening Questions/Conversation Starters

Before diving into the study, take a moment to reflect and share.

- Who in your life has shown courageous leadership in their life? What did you learn from them?
- Can you recall a time when you had to stand up for what was right, even when it was difficult? How did God guide you?

Why This Matters

To lead courageously is to follow Jesus—not by grasping for power, but by embodying love, humility, mercy, compassion, and justice in the face of fear and opposition. Leadership must never be about controlling; it is about liberating and healing transformation. It is about building communities of dignity and belonging, where all people are seen, valued, and empowered to live into their God-given potential.

Courageous leadership calls us to speak truth, extend love, and remain grounded in God's presence as we navigate complex challenges together.

Anchored in the Word

We lead not because we are fearless, but because we have confidence in God's abiding presence. This confidence steadies us for courageous leadership in uncertain times. Courageous leadership in scripture begins with God's presence, moves toward faithful action, and is sustained by trust rather than control.

In a time of transition, God repeatedly assures the new leader, Joshua, “Be strong and courageous...for the Lord your God is with you wherever you go” (Joshua 1:9). We learn through Joshua’s leadership that courage is not the absence of struggle, but the presence of God. Thus, leadership is grounded in God’s promises, not certainty.

Psalm 27 reminds us that courage is rooted in God’s light and salvation, even amid fear and opposition. Waiting on the Lord builds resilience and forms leaders who trust God.

Biblical courage does not stop at personal resolve; it presses outward into public faithfulness. We see in Isaiah 58 how courage moves us from conviction into action. The prophet connects the righteous act of fasting with confronting injustice and shares this vision:

“Is not this the fast that I choose:
to loose the bonds of injustice,
to undo the straps of the yoke,
to let the oppressed go free,
and to break every yoke? (v. 6)
If you remove the yoke from among you,
the pointing of the finger, the speaking of evil,
if you offer your food to the hungry
and satisfy the needs of the afflicted,
then your light shall rise in the darkness
and your gloom be like the noonday.” (vv. 9–10).

Faithfulness and justice cannot be separated. Jesus declared his mission with clarity, embodying the vision Isaiah proclaimed:

“The Spirit of the Lord is upon me,
because he has anointed me

to bring good news to the poor.
He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives
and recovery of sight to the blind,
to set free those who are oppressed,
to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor" (Luke 4:18-19).

Jesus offers us the blueprint for courageous leadership, showing what justice, mercy, and faithfulness look like, and that leadership is oriented toward others. It means standing with those who are marginalized, confronting systems that harm, and proclaiming hope where despair has taken root.

Micah 6:8 also offers a simple yet profound guide for courageous leadership, gathering these themes into a way of life.

"He has told you, O mortal, what is good,
and what does the Lord require of you
but to do justice and to love kindness
and to walk humbly with your God?"

These are not passive virtues; they are active commitments we are called to embody in the world around us. To act justly is to challenge inequity. To love mercy is to extend compassion even when it costs us. To walk humbly is to lead without ego, always listening, always learning.

The strength required to lead courageously is not self-made; it is Spirit-given, rooted in God's mighty power, and expressed through lives of faithful action rather than control.

"Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his power" (Ephesians 6:10).

Courageous leadership is sustained not by self-reliance, but by ongoing dependence on God's Spirit at work within us. This is the strength that sustains courageous leadership grounded in love, justice, and hope.

John Wesley Quote

Whoever will reign with Christ in heaven must have Christ reigning in him [or her] on earth.

–John Wesley, “A Blow at the Root”⁵

Whispers of Grace/Reflection Questions

Take a moment to pause, breathe, and open your heart to God's gentle guidance. Use the prompts below for personal journaling, small-group conversation, or both. Follow whichever questions draw you deeper into God's love.

1. Joshua 1:9 and Ephesians 6:10 remind us that courage is a Spirit-given gift. What helps you stay grounded in God's strength when leadership feels risky, lonely, or unclear?
2. What does Psalm 27 suggest about the source of courage?
3. Micah 6:8 calls us to act justly, love mercy, and walk humbly. Which of these feels most urgent in your leadership right now? Which one stretches you the most?

⁵ John Wesley, "A Blow at the Root," Wesleyan Heritage Library, <https://media.sabda.org/alkitab-6/wh2-hdm/hdm0306.pdf#:~:text=A%20BLOW%20AT%20THE%20ROOT,John%20Wesley&text=Who%20ever%20would%20reign%20with,reigning%20in%20him%20on%20earth.>

4. Where do you see the Spirit calling you or your community to proclaim good news and set the oppressed free, as Jesus did in Luke 4:18–19?
5. What helps you remain grounded in God’s strength when leadership feels difficult?
6. Which part of Ephesians 6:10–18 speaks most to your current season?
7. Identify one area where God may be calling you to lead with greater courage.

Echoes of Grace/Hymn Suggestions

Sing one of the following hymns or simply reflect on the words.

- “Here I Am, Lord” (UMH 593)
- “Be Strong in the Lord” (Hope Publishing Company, https://www.hopecublishing.com/W1047_Be_Strong_in_the_Lord)
- “Lord, Whose Love Through Humble Service” (UMH 581)

Grace for the Journey/Closing Prayer

Lord, You have called us to lead with faith, strength, and humility. As we leave this time of study, may we carry Your wisdom into our daily lives. Grant us the courage to stand firm in our convictions, the compassion to lead with love, and the humility to always seek Your guidance. Fill our hearts with Your Spirit so that our leadership reflects Your justice and mercy. In all that we do, may we glorify You and bring light into the world. In Jesus’ name, we pray. Amen.

Call to Action

Prayerfully identify one place this week where courage is needed—at home, in your church, workplace, or community. Take one faithful step:

- speak a truth that needs to be spoken with love,
- stand alongside someone who is vulnerable or overlooked,
- or act in a way that advances justice and compassion.

Trust that God’s presence goes with you as you lead.

Facilitator Note

Invite participants to define “courage” not as bold personality but as faithful obedience to God’s call.

Disciples Transform the World

*The United Methodist Church forms disciples of Jesus Christ, who, empowered by the Holy Spirit, love boldly, serve joyfully, and lead courageously **in local communities and worldwide connections.***

Primary Scriptures:

- Psalm 96
- Romans 12:1-8
- Matthew 28:16-20

Framing/Big Idea

Transformed by God's mercy, disciples join Christ in transforming the world, offering their gifts, witness, and service for God's mission to all nations.

Gathering Grace/Opening Prayer

Take a moment to open your heart(s) to God through prayer.

Gracious God, You call us to follow Jesus and be formed in his likeness. Open our hearts to Your Word, renew our minds, and strengthen our spirits. Empower us by Your Spirit to love boldly, serve joyfully, and lead courageously. May this time of study deepen our discipleship and prepare us to transform lives and communities. In Christ's name, Amen.

Opening Questions/Conversation Starters

Before diving into the study, take a moment to reflect and share.

- How has following Jesus changed the way you see yourself and the world around you?
- Talk about someone who has been influential in your journey of discipleship in Jesus Christ and how their witness, encouragement, and mentorship shaped your faith and made a meaningful difference in your life.

Why This Matters

Following Jesus is not simply a belief. It is a way of life shaped by God's love and sustained by the Holy Spirit in community. It becomes visible in everyday choices of love, service, leadership, and care for others.

To be a disciple, an apprentice of Jesus, means responding to God's forgiving, saving, and renewing love through a living and transformative relationship with Christ. It means learning from Jesus with mind and heart: listening to his words, practicing Jesus' example, and allowing the Spirit to shape us into becoming the people God calls us to be.

John Wesley, the founder of the Methodist movement, described our experience of God's grace in three rhythms:

1. Prevenient grace awakens us to God's love (John 6:44).
2. Justifying grace reconciles us to God through Christ (Romans 5:1).
3. Sanctifying grace continually renews our hearts and lives (Philippians 2:13).

Disciples also form other disciples. God's call to form disciples is an invitation to grow together in what we learn, in the experiences that shape us, and in the ways we

embody Christ's love through our choices, relationships, daily living, and care for those in need. Discipleship is a shared journey, lived out in community across our homes, churches, workplaces, neighborhoods, and throughout the world.

This invitation also calls us to witness to our faith story, to welcome others into God's love and hope revealed through Jesus Christ, and to offer them a community where they can belong, be nurtured in faith, discover their spiritual gifts, and be equipped and empowered for service and leadership in the world.

Miracle Sunday ^{6,7}

Miracle Sunday invites United Methodists to live into the Great Commission together. On this day, we join a connectional effort to strengthen theological education in Africa, Europe, and the Philippines, equipping pastors, forming disciples, and transforming communities worldwide. This shared offering reflects our belief that discipleship and servant leadership are nurtured through education, sustained by partnership, and multiplied through the Church's global witness.

Discover Miracle Sunday Worship Resources:

<https://www.UMCdiscipleship.org/articles/miracle-sunday-worship-study-resources>

⁶ Heather Hahn, "Big Push Planned to Fund Pastoral Education," UMNews (September 15, 2025), <https://www.umnews.org/en/news/big-push-planned-to-fund-pastoral-education>.

⁷ Heather Hahn, "Bishops Plan Gathering to Follow Spirit's Lead," UMNews (November 10, 2025), <https://www.umnews.org/en/news/bishops-plan-gathering-to-follow-spirits-lead>.

Anchored in the Word

Scripture reminds us that discipleship does not end with personal transformation; it leads us outward into God's mission for the sake of the world.

Psalm 96 calls God's people to declare God's glory among the nations, a reminder that transformation is not a private experience but a public witness grounded in praise. Psalm 96 shows that praise naturally leads to proclamation, as God's people are called to make God's saving work known beyond themselves. God's people are invited to sing, tell, and declare, bearing witness to God's saving work in ways that reach beyond the sanctuary and into the world.

God's love is the foundation of discipleship. It begins not with our effort, but with love freely given. Scripture proclaims:

“For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life” (John 3:16).

God's love is expansive, reaching toward the entire world God loves. Discipleship begins in grace and moves outward in response to that grace.

When we embrace this love revealed in Jesus Christ, we are drawn into a lifelong journey of growth and transformation. This journey is dynamic, reshaping us from the inside out. As the apostle Paul reminds us:

“Do not be conformed to this age, but be transformed by the renewing of the mind, so that you may discern what is the will of God—what is good and acceptable and perfect” (Romans 12:2).

Paul reminds the church that this renewed life is lived for the sake of others. Transformed lives lead to offered lives, as disciples present themselves and their gifts for building up the body and the service of God's mission in the world. Through the renewing work of the Holy Spirit, disciples are formed in character, shaped to reflect Christ's love, patience, and courage.

Discipleship is not only about being formed; it is also about being sent. Formation leads somewhere. Jesus gathers his disciples and entrusts them with God's mission to the world.

Jesus commissions his followers:

“Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age” (Matthew 28:19-20).

The Great Commission is not an optional task for a few, but the shared vocation of all who have been formed by Christ's love. The Great Commission reveals the heart of Christian discipleship: formed by love, sustained by Christ's presence through the Holy Spirit, and sent to participate in God's transforming work among all nations.

This means discipleship is both personal and communal: we grow in holiness through prayer, scripture, worship, and acts of mercy. We share God's love by inviting, embracing, and *forming others*.

John Wesley Quote

“The gospel of Christ knows of no religion but social; no holiness but social holiness.”

–John Wesley⁸

Whispers of Grace/Reflection Questions

Take a moment to pause, breathe, and open your heart to God’s gentle guidance. Use the prompts below for personal journaling, small-group conversation, or both. Follow whichever questions draw you deeper into God’s love.

1. John Wesley spoke of prevenient, justifying, and sanctifying grace. Which of these rhythms of grace do you most recognize in your journey of discipleship, and how has it shaped your daily life?
2. Psalm 96 calls God’s people to sing, tell, and declare God’s glory among the nations. Where do you see worship and witness coming together in your life or in the life of your congregation?
3. In Romans 12:1–8, Paul reminds us that transformed lives are offered in service through diverse gifts. What gifts has God entrusted to you, and how might they be used to help transform lives or strengthen the church’s witness locally or globally?
4. Romans 12:2 calls us to be transformed by the renewing of our minds. What practices or choices help you stay open to the Spirit’s renewing work in your everyday routines?

⁸ John Wesley, *Preface to Hymns and Sacred Poems* (1739), *The Works of John Wesley*, vol. 14 (Jackson ed.)

5. Matthew 28:19–20 reminds us that disciples are not only formed but also sent to form others. How can you live out this commission in your congregation and community today?
6. Write about how you have experienced God’s grace in your life and how this has shaped your journey as a disciple.
7. Reflect on a recent moment when you sensed the Holy Spirit reshaping your thoughts, attitudes, or actions.
8. Jesus commissions his followers to “make disciples of all nations.” Reflect on how you are being called to witness to your faith story, welcome others into God’s love, and empower them for service and leadership.

Echoes of Grace/Hymn Suggestions

Sing one of the following hymns or simply reflect on the words.

- “Take My Life, and Let It Be” (UMH 399)
- “Go, Make of All Disciples” (UMH 571)
- “Send Me, Lord” (UMH 497)

Grace for the Journey/Closing Prayer

Loving God, thank You for Your renewing grace. By Your Spirit, shape us to embody Christ’s love and witness to Your hope. Send us forth as disciples who form disciples, sharing faith and serving others. In Christ’s name, we pray, Amen.

Call to Action

As a disciple sent by Christ, prayerfully choose one way this week to participate in God's transforming work. Offer your gifts, voice, or resources in service to others—locally or globally. This may include:

- sharing your faith story,
- encouraging someone in their calling,
- committing to a spiritual practice that renews your mind, or
- participating in Miracle Sunday as an expression of our shared mission to form disciples around the world.

Take one faithful step, trusting that God's grace is already at work.

Facilitator Note

Encourage participants to seek additional opportunities for growth as disciples, individually and collectively.

Congregational Action Guide (Miracle Sunday)

This optional page provides leaders with simple next steps for empowering congregational engagement.

Prayer Focus

Invite the congregation to pray for:

- The worldwide United Methodist connection.
- Theological education and leadership development in Africa.
- Missionaries, pastors, and local leaders serving communities in need.

Giving Focus

Encourage one of the following:

- A special Miracle Sunday offering to support theological education in Africa, Europe, and the Philippines:
<https://www.endowftecc.org/donate>
- A monthly giving commitment toward theological education.
- A youth or children's ministry fundraising moment.

Storytelling Focus

Include one brief story from your conference or the General Board of Global Ministries highlighting transformation through leadership development. (*Leader inserts appropriate story.*)

Invitation to Serve

Offer tangible ways for congregants to participate in mission:

- Praying for a global partner.
- Writing encouragement notes to mission personnel.
- Learning about cultural contexts and mission priorities.

Facilitator's Guide

A facilitator can take specific steps to create a small-group space for prayer, scripture exploration, reflection, and identification of calls to action. Below are links to two resources that explore two types of preparation for facilitators to deepen the small group experience.

- **Technical or safety-oriented preparation:** Is a space clearly marked and barrier-free for participants? Is there a sense of hospitality toward newcomers, whether the group meets in the church, a private home, or even in virtual space? (Consider the resources noted below.)
- **Spiritual and theological preparation:** Teaching is a spiritual gift that invites disciples deeper into relationship with God. This guide offers assistance for those facilitating a small group. If leading the group has been valuable to the facilitator, that person might consider exploring the gift and ministry of teaching through the resource noted below.

Facilitating a small group is a practical responsibility and a spiritual practice. Facilitators help shape a space where scripture is engaged, stories are shared, and participants listen for how God may be forming and calling each of them. The guidance below is offered to support facilitators as they prepare for and lead this study.

Holding the Space

The facilitator's primary role is to create and maintain a space for dialogue. This includes attending to the flow of discussion, the tone of the room, and the shared purpose of the gathering. Facilitators help the group stay grounded in scripture and focused on the session's theme, while remaining open to where the Spirit may be leading through the voices present.

Faithful facilitation often includes:

- Encouraging participation without pressure.
- Making room for silence as well as speech.
- Honoring a range of perspectives and experiences.
- Gently redirecting the conversation when it moves too far from the session's focus.

Facilitators are not responsible for answering every question or reaching a group consensus. Often, the most faithful work is helping the group listen well to God and to one another.

Practical Preparation

The setting can significantly shape the group's experience. As you prepare, consider:

- Is the space clearly marked, accessible, and welcoming?
- Does the environment convey hospitality, especially to newcomers?
- Are materials prepared in advance so the gathering can unfold smoothly?

Recommended Resource:

“Settings for Faith Formation Checklist”

This resource offers practical guidance for creating safe, accessible, and hospitable environments for faith formation in churches, homes, and virtual settings.

<https://www.umcdiscipleship.org/articles/settings-for-faith-formation-checklist>

Spiritual and Theological Preparation

Facilitation is grounded in prayer and reflection. Before leading, facilitators are encouraged to spend time with the session’s scripture, noticing what stirs, challenges, or invites deeper reflection. This personal preparation helps facilitators lead not from expertise, but from attentiveness.

In the Wesleyan tradition, teaching and guiding conversations are understood as spiritual gifts exercised for the building up of the community. Facilitators lead most faithfully when they remain learners themselves, open to being formed alongside the group.

Recommended Resource:

“Teachers as Spiritual Leaders and Theologians”

This resource explores teaching as a form of spiritual leadership, grounding facilitation in theology, discipleship, and reliance on the Holy Spirit.

<https://www.umcdiscipleship.org/articles/teachers-as-spiritual-leaders-and-theologians>

During the Session

As the group gathers, facilitators may find it helpful to:

- Begin and end with prayer, even when time feels tight.
- Allow scripture to shape the conversation rather than rushing toward answers.
- Use the questions as guides, not requirements.
- Adapt pacing based on the needs and energy of the group.

Faithful facilitation values presence over perfection.

A Final Word

Facilitation is an act of trust—trust that God is already at work, trust that the community’s shared life is a means of grace, and trust that faithful conversations can shape disciples for the sake of the world. By offering your presence and care, you participate in the church’s shared calling to form disciples of Jesus Christ.

Bishop's Biography

Bishop Héctor A. Burgos-Núñez serves The United Methodist Church with a steadfast commitment to disciple-making, spiritual formation, and community engagement in God's mission of healing and transformation.

In his leadership, Bishop Burgos-Núñez calls the church to remain deeply rooted in its Wesleyan heritage while responding faithfully and creatively to the needs of a changing world. He encourages congregations to deepen their spiritual practices, strengthen community life, and embody Christ's compassion in tangible, everyday ways.

Guided by a heart for justice, Bishop Burgos-Núñez emphasizes solidarity with vulnerable communities and champions ministries that cultivate servant leaders who engage their contexts with courage, humility, and compassion.

He envisions The United Methodist Church as a Holy Spirit-led, worldwide movement that is:

- Flourishing and united in its mission to transform the world by nurturing disciples who share God's love, compassion, and justice every day and everywhere.
- Spiritually vibrant and counter-culturally relevant.

- Committed to personal and social holiness, celebrating diversity as a gift from God.
- A multigenerational family of faith communities that welcome all people as beloved children of God.
- A mission-focused, agile, creative, and resilient body—global in scope yet deeply contextual in ministry.

Elected on November 4, 2022, at the Northeastern Jurisdictional Conference in College Park, Maryland, Bishop Burgos-Núñez became the first Hispanic-Latino bishop in the Northeastern Jurisdiction and the first Puerto Rican bishop in The United Methodist Church.

**Love Boldly
Serve Joyfully
Lead Courageously**



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