

The Church Herald

Stony Brook Community Church (United Methodist), Stony Brook, New York

Don't Look Back?

"Jesus said to him, 'No one who puts a hand to the plow and looks back is fit for the kingdom of God.'" - Luke 9:62

After leading study groups and talking with folks here at SBCC for the last six years, I have come to realize that many of us are not aware of some of our interesting history and heritage as United Methodists in the Wesleyan tradition. On Sunday I shared some of the history of our country and our Anglican roots, as John Wesley, the father of Methodism, was a priest in the Episcopal Church of England. In contrast to my sermon of two Sundays ago, based on the above quote from Luke chapter nine, maybe looking in the rearview mirror is a good thing sometimes, especially when it comes to understanding our roots, our heritage, and where we come from. Here are some thoughts and history I would like to share with all of you fellow Methodists here in the Three Village area in 2019.



Often in our conversations we spend time talking about how difficult it is to be a Christian in 21st century western culture. In response to this, I thought I would provide a small window into our roots and some of the issues addressed by John and Charles Wesley in eighteenth century England.

While you may not be surprised at the rigor with which John and Charles pursued their faith, you may be surprised at the issues they addressed back then and how the disciplines they outline have impacted how we practice our faith even today, especially when it comes to small group studies and support systems or groups offered within our own church. While they may not be the same exact experience, the support, growth, honesty, self accountability, strengthened relationships, and learning about God and self is very much a by-product and wonderful God-given benefit of both. Enjoy! (I hope.)

NYAC VISION STATEMENT

The New York Annual Conference, through the grace of God, embodies a beloved community of hope, building up a healthy Body of Christ, with heartwarmed United Methodists in mission for the transformation of the world.



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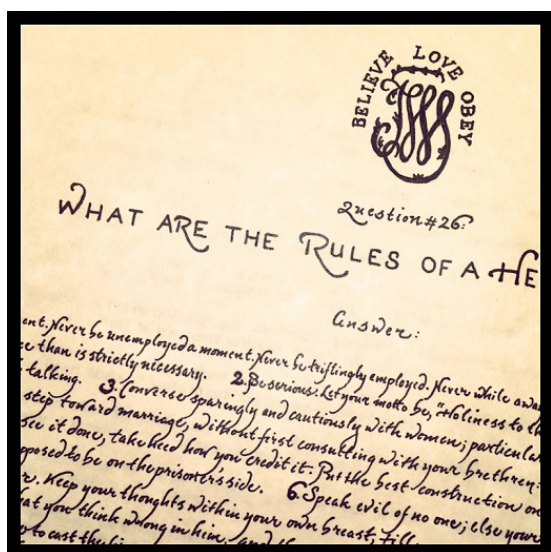
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Please send items for the Newsletter to the Church office at:
stonybrookcommunitychurch@gmail.com
by the 26th of each month.



John Wesley entered Christ Church College at Oxford as an undergraduate in 1720 when he was 17 years old. At that time Christ Church students had a reputation as the loose living students, but Wesley does not seem to have been guilty of such behavior. Soon thereafter his brother Charles joined him as well, and we find that Charles enjoyed the “levity” of his college experience. John graduated in 1724, was ordained a deacon in the Church of England in 1725, and found himself appointed as a fellow or professor at Lincoln College in Oxford where he taught Greek and was a class moderator.

After being fully ordained in 1727, he left Oxford to help his father Samuel (also an ordained minister in the Church of England) with the ministerial duties at Epworth and the St. Andrew’s Parish. In 1729, Lincoln College recalled him and, on his return, he was glad to see that his brother Charles had “put away his former levity, and become serious.” It was in the fall of 1729 that the Wesley brothers

and others began the famous Holy Club. It attempted to bring together people who tried to live a righteous life of faith followed by works in social action. If this sounds familiar, it is with good reason. Faith fueling social action is a major tenant of The United Methodist Church and Wesleyan thought throughout the centuries to the present.

They worked daily at visiting the prison in Oxford and helping the poor. They were known for being strictly religious and adhering to a daily routine of prayer, meditation, attending services, and reciting collects. Other Oxford students and fellows began to jokingly call them the “Bible Moths” and eventually “Methodists” because they were so methodical in their daily routine.

Of course, John eventually chose to accept the term Methodist as a badge of honor, and thus the term Methodist stuck and is part of our name and heritage to this day.

During their weekly meetings, they became a support group and a faith group. The following were the questions they asked of themselves each day and were held accountable in the group setting to answer.

John and Charles Wesley put this test together, and it cost them most of their friends. When they drew up their list and gave it to other fellows and students, the Wesley’s were called “Exhibitionist prigs” and some said they were incapable of being ordinary. Here is their twenty-one question test:

1. Am I, consciously or unconsciously, creating the impression that I am a better person than I really am? In other words, am I a hypocrite?
2. Am I honest in all acts and works, or do I exaggerate?
3. Do I tell other people what was told to me in confidence? Can I be trusted?
4. Am I a slave to fashion, friends, fads, work or habits? [See, this isn’t just a 20th or 21st century issue!]
5. Am I self-conscious, self-pitying, or do I justify my actions even when I am wrong?
6. Did I live today according to bible precepts?
7. Did I allow God’s word to speak to me today by reading the bible at least one hour?



8. Am I enjoying prayer?
9. When did I last speak to someone with the objective of my conversation being leading that person to a knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ?
10. Are there contacts that I make for the sake of business or entertainment only, or do I minister Christ to everyone for the glory of God?
11. Do I pray about the Money I spend?
12. Do I go to bed on time and do I get up on time?
13. Do I knowingly disobey God in anything, which means that I have rebellion in my heart?
14. Do I insist upon doing something at the prompting of my conscience even though no one else cares?
15. Am I defeated in any part of my life? Am I jealous, impure, critical, touchy, irritable or distrustful?
16. How do I spend my spare time and do my spare-time activities honor God?
17. Am I proud?
18. Do I thank God that I am not as other people and think myself more significant than other people? (See questions 1 and 17).
19. Is there anyone whom I fear, hate, resent or criticize? If so, what am I doing about it?
20. Do I grumble and complain easily and often?
21. Is Christ real to me so that I do all that I do for His glory?

That's quite a list. Pretty difficult questions, don't you think? Perhaps I need to take the magnet off the refrigerator that says "Jesus is coming. Look busy" and put up these twenty-one questions the Wesley brothers asked daily over 250 years ago. While many of them may seem quite unrealistic, they may be worth pondering as we choose to be honest with ourselves and God, this summer and all year long.

Either way, it is my hope that we will look at these questions as part of our roots and not use them to make ourselves feel inadequate nor dismiss them as unrealistic. It is my prayer that we will make use of them as we each see fit this summer – or not – and hopefully allow ourselves to become more fulfilled and loving children of God.

Nevertheless, I pray you will have a blessed and somewhat restful – maybe even contemplative – summer. May God bless you in all of your summer wandering.

In God's love, joy, and humor
Pastor Chuck

(The 21 questions are from an article by Terrence D. McLean from the July 1997 issue of Pulpit Helps; the history of the Holy Club is from my year long class in United Methodist History, Doctrine, and Polity at Drew University, 1998-1999.)



Lectionary Readings for July/August

July 21, 2019: Sixth Sunday after Pentecost

Amos 8:1-12

Psalms 52 or 82 (UMH 804)

Colossians 1:15-28

Luke 10:38-42

July 28, 2019: Seventh Sunday after Pentecost

Hosea 1:2-10

Psalms 85 (UMH 806)

Colossians 2:6-15 (16-19)

Luke 11:1-13

August 04, 2019: Eighth Sunday after Pentecost

Hosea 11:1-11

Psalms 107:1-9, 43 (UMH 830)

Colossians 3:1-11

Luke 12:13-21

August 11, 2019: Ninth Sunday after Pentecost

Isaiah 1: 1, 10-20

Psalms 50:1-8, 22-23 (UMH 783)

Hebrews 11:1-3, 8-16

Luke 12:32-40

August 18, 2019: Tenth Sunday after Pentecost

Isaiah 5:1-7

Psalms 80:1-2, 8-19 (UMH 801)

Hebrews 11:29-12:2

Luke 12:49-56

August 25, 2019: Eleventh Sunday after Pentecost

Jeremiah 1:4-10

Psalms 71:1-6 (UMH 794)

Hebrews 12:18-29

Luke 13:10-17

September 1, 2019: Twelfth Sunday After Pentecost

Jeremiah 2:4-13

Psalms 8:1, 10-16 (UMH 803)

Hebrews 13:1-8, 15-16

Luke 14:1, 7-14



Please join us on Sunday, August 4th, for the dedication of this bench in loving memory of Judy Estes.



Once again our grounds look gorgeous thanks to the efforts of Whitney Roberts and his grounds crew: Peter Lunde, Bill Hamilton, Bill Trawick, and Dave Seyfert (Jim Davey and Jerry Meyer who usually help were unavailable for this work shift). Please admire their work and then thank them in person.

August 2019

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
28 10:00 Worship 11:00 Fellowship	29 7:00 (pm) AA	30	31	1 7:00 AA	2 11:15 AlAnon	3
4 10:00 Worship 11:00 Fellowship	5 7:00 (pm) AA	6	7	8 7:00 AA	9 11:15 AlAnon	10
11 10:00 Worship 11:00 Fellowship	12 7:00 (pm) AA	13 7:30 Finance Committee	14	15 7:00 AA	16 11:15 AlAnon	17
18 10:00 Worship 11:00 Fellowship	19 7:00 (pm) AA	20 7:30 Church Council – to be confirmed	21	22	23 11:15 AlAnon	24
25 10:00 Worship 11:00 Fellowship	26 7:00 (pm) AA	27 7:30 (pm) Trustees – to be confirmed	28	29 7:00 AA	30 11:15 AlAnon	1



2019 Apple Festival News

Ideas are flowing and plans are progressing for this year's Apple Festival on **Saturday, September 21.**

This is such an important event for our congregation. We come together to create something that touches all ages in our local community and in our surrounding communities. It is an incredible undertaking, so please save the date because...



WE NEED YOU!

We'll need everyone's help the evening before and the day of, but if you want to help now...

- Let us know if you have a contact at Newsday or any of the LI TV or radio stations
- Volunteer to be a part of our new **Staging Group**—help plan how to enhance the “festival atmosphere” of the grounds (corn stalks, hay bales, balloons, canopies...)
- Mark your calendar for **Pie Making**: Sunday afternoon, September 15
- Bake early and often and freeze items for the **Bake Table**
- Set aside gently-used items for the **Attic Treasures** table
- Become a member of the **Sign Team**, an indispensable group who updates and puts in place our signage that lets the community know the festival is coming!

As always, please speak to Pat or Donna if you have questions or suggestions.

IS ON-DEMAND CULTURE CHANGING US?

By Jeanne Torrence Finley



Bigstock/Piotr Adamowicz

“Not a Lick Smarter”

Back in 2011, comedian Pete Holmes announced to his audience on the *Conan* show that he had an iPhone, adding, “I have Google on my phone now. . . . It’s ruining life because we know everything, but we’re not a lick smarter for it. . . . You don’t know something? Wait two seconds. You will know! Having Google on your phone is like having a drunk know-it-all in your pocket. There’s no time for mystery or wonder. . . . The time between not knowing and knowing is so brief that . . . life is meaningless.”

In the past decade, we’ve seen an explosion in what might be called “on-demand” culture. Whenever we want, we can watch practically any movie ever made on Netflix or Amazon Prime; we can see what our friends and acquaintances are up to from minute to minute through their most recent Facebook, Twitter and Instagram posts; and we can text or email anyone in our contact list whenever the feeling hits us, whether they live down the street or on the other side of the earth. We can use an app on our phones to get a ride from a stranger or order meals and have groceries delivered to our house. In certain zip codes, Amazon offers same-day delivery, but who needs that when a credit card and one click can download a book instantly to Kindle?

Research indicates that this culture of convenience and constant access has changed us. As people of faith, we’re challenged to understand how these cultural shifts have changed who we are and to figure out how to respond to these changes in keeping with our traditions and our values.

How does on-demand culture affect us?

The benefits of these changes are obvious. Used judiciously, on-demand culture can save us time and perhaps even money. The liabilities, on the other hand, are less obvious. We may well use all the time and money we save to do more “on-demanding” and in the process hurt both our character and our relationships. A February 2, 2013, article in *The Boston Globe* titled “Instant Gratification Is Making Us Perpetually Impatient” indicates that the Pew Research Center’s Internet & American Life Project studied people under the age of 35 who led “hyperconnected lives” and concluded, “Negative effects include a need for instant gratification and loss of patience.”

Darrell Worthy, an assistant professor of psychology at Texas A&M University, found that our society is becoming more likely to play a computer game on their phones than to read books or magazines, a conclusion in line with the Pew study. “A lot of things that are really valuable take time,” Worthy said in the *Globe* article. “But immediate gratification is the default response. It’s difficult to overcome those urges and be patient and wait for things to come over time.” In other words, our use of technology may help us do things more quickly, but at the expense of depth and meaning.



Nicholas Carr, author of the 2010 best seller *The Shallows: What the Internet Is Doing to Our Brains*, writes in his book, “When we go online, we enter an environment that promotes cursory reading, hurried and distracted thinking, and superficial learning.” Carr continues, “The ability to skim text is every bit as important as the ability to read deeply. What is different, and troubling, is that skimming is becoming our dominant mode of reading.” It may also be true that skimming has become our dominant mode of being.

Writer and Sojourners website editor Sandi Villarreal asks in a 2014 post, “When does our reliance upon a constant stream of multi-channel entertainment and instant gratification become harmful?” She argues, “Our cling to convenience is an obvious . . . stumbling block to spiritual growth. . . . Gluttony is not a sin reserved for the portly; it is the reality of a culture that emphasizes overconsumption and steals our attention away from relationships — especially our relationship with God.”

In different words, these writers are all sounding the same alarm. All of them are warning that what we lose in our on-demand culture is significant: the ability to wait patiently, the ability to think deeply, the capacity to form and nurture relationships with others and with God. Its downside is captured in Pete Holmes’s statement about how our on-demand “information” culture allows no time to contemplate mystery or wonder, thus rendering our lives meaningless.

How do we respond?

A desire for wonder and mystery is a good place to start counteracting our on-demand culture, especially when the 24/7 cycle of news and information is instantly available through our smartphones and social media offers us a constant forum to chat about it. In a 2017 Sojourners post, Joe Kay writes of how he is drained by the daily recital of injustice: “A sense of fatigue sets in on those of us who feel a divine call to protect the vulnerable, fight injustice, and treat God’s creation as sacred.” He says that this “background noise . . . can slowly drain our energy, inspiration, and courage if we allow it to happen. We need daily moments of awe and wonder to rejuvenate and recharge us — especially now.”

Jesus modeled for us the value of taking time for solitude, contemplation and prayer in the midst of his public ministry. He took time for moments of awe and wonder and recommended the same to his disciples: “Notice how the lilies in the field grow. They don’t wear themselves out with work, and they don’t spin cloth. But I say to you that even Solomon in all of his splendor wasn’t dressed like one of these” (Matthew 6:28b-29).

Franciscan priest Richard Rohr, founder of the Center for Action and Contemplation in Albuquerque, New Mexico, calls contemplation “a positive choosing of the deep, shining, and enduring divine mysteries that are hidden beneath the too-easy formulas.” Among those enduring mysteries are love, creation, beauty, justice, and wisdom, none of which can be reduced to mere information. Rohr says that in contemplative prayer, “we let go of habitual thoughts and sensations and connect with an Inner Witness (Romans 8:16)—God’s presence within — that gazes back at ourselves and out at reality with an Abiding Love.”



Jeanne Torrence Finley is a regular contributor to *FaithLink*, a weekly United Methodist curriculum on current affairs. A retired clergy member of the Virginia Conference, she has been a campus minister, pastor, and college English teacher. Currently she is writing a book with Noel Paul Stookey—the “Paul” of Peter, Paul, and Mary—about his faith journey, solo music, and social activism. Visit her website, *Tell It Slant*, for more.