**A Methodist Way of Life service outlines**

**Before using this service outline,
read the notes on** [**how to use the sessions**](https://www.methodist.org.uk/mwoloutlines)**.**

**Intro session: A Methodist Way of Life – discipleship**

**Key themes**

* God loves us unconditionally. Nothing we do can make God love us more, but our response to God can help reveal God’s love to us.
* The calling of the Methodist Church is to respond to the gospel of God's love in Christ and to live out its discipleship in worship and mission.
* A Methodist Way of Life is a way of unpacking what this means in practice in our daily lives. Both Methodists and spiritual seekers can use it to tune into God and respond to God’s love.
* We are all learning; we do not have to practice each of these commitments all the time. We are called to practice them “as far as we are able, with God’s help”. We practice them both individually and together as a community of followers, supporting and challenging one another.

**Relevant Bible passages**

Genesis 1:26-31; John 3:16, 13:34-35, 15:16-17; Acts 1:8

**Background reflection**

We sometimes feel like we must do certain things, or live a certain way, to be a follower of Jesus. But nothing we do can make God love us more – God loves us unconditionally, no strings attached.

Because of our commitment to God, and with God’s help, we try to live our lives being like Jesus and doing as Jesus would do. This is at the heart of the calling of the Methodist Church — to respond to the gospel of God's love in Christ and to live out its discipleship in worship and mission.

A Methodist Way of Life (MWOL) is a way of thinking about what this might look like in our everyday lives. It includes 12 commitments, or practices, that explore the four areas of Our Calling: worship, evangelism, learning and caring, and service. Another way of expressing this, which is familiar to anyone who has attended 3Generate in recent years, is that MWOL provides ways we can ‘tune into God’ and respond to what we hear. All generations can explore MWOL together. Engaging in these practices and reflecting on our experiences does not earn God’s love, but can help us to realise how deeply we are loved by God.

*This may be a good time to include the activity or discussion questions about ‘home stations’.*

We are not superheroes who can do all these things at once. But we live out these commitments “as far as we are able, with God’s help”, knowing that no one is perfect. We practise them both individually and together as communities of followers, supporting and challenging one another.

These practices are not just relevant to Methodists. Almost all of these commitments could be made by people of other Christian traditions, other faiths, or no faith. But their practice may look a little different. Each can be a ’thin place’ or ‘means of grace’; a way we encounter God and are transformed by the Holy Spirit. Because God is at work in us all, so MWOL is open to all people, not just Methodist members.

*This may be a good time to think about how your community provides opportunities to engage with the 12 practices using the discussion questions or activities.*

**Further notes**

* A model for the discipleship journey can be found at [methodist.org.uk/Discipleship](http://www.methodist.org.uk/discipleship). This includes three stages, told in the parable of a train journey: committing to Jesus (get on the train), practising all 12 commitments (visit every station) and reflecting theologically and expectantly (reflect on the journey). You may find this helpful to explore in this session.
* Many discipleship resources discuss belief, practice, or both. A Methodist Way of Life is practice-based; it focuses on what we do. However, this does not negate belief. While all people can challenge injustice (for example), the Methodist understanding of how to practise this may be different to others because of a) belief in Jesus and b) interpretation of Scripture and tradition. You do not ‘become a Christian’ because you practise these 12 commitments, but through them you may encounter Jesus in new ways that lead to a Christian faith, or deepen existing faith.
* No individual or community can do everything at once, and it can help to think about one commitment from each area of Our Calling in a particular season. Examples of this are in the PowerPoint. When considering the community, it may be helpful to refer to your mission plans and/or vision statements.

**Song and hymn suggestions**

For once in my life – Stevie Wonder

The Glass – Foo Fighters

It’s a kind of magic – queen

Desire – Calvin Harris, Sam Smith

State of Grace – Taylor Swift

*The journeying of discipleship*

God who sets us on a journey (*StF*+)
O Lord we are always in your presence (*StF* 33)
One more step along the world I go (*StF* 476)

*God loves us unconditionally. Nothing we do can make God love us more, but our response to God can help reveal God’s love to us.*

O love that wilt not let me go (*StF* 636)
There’s a wideness in God’s mercy (*StF* 416)
Where shall my wondering soul begin? (*StF* 454)

*The calling of the Methodist Church is to respond to the gospel of God's love in Christ and to live out its discipleship in worship and mission.*

Jesu, Jesu, fill us with your love (*StF* 249)
We’ll walk with you (God called you, Jesus, into Jordan's deep) (*StF+*)
When I survey the wondrous cross (*StF* 287)

*A Methodist Way of Life is a way of unpacking what this means in practice in our daily lives. Both Methodists and spiritual seekers can use it to tune into God and respond to God’s love.*

Forth in thy name, O Lord, I go (*StF* 550)
From heaven you came, helpless babe (*StF* 272)
Listen, my people, here is my challenge (*StF+*)

 *We are all learning; we do not have to practice each of these commitments all the time. We are called to practice them “as far as we are able, with God’s help”. We practice them both individually and together as a community of followers, supporting and challenging one another.*

Just as I am, without one plea (*StF* 556)
Speak in the stillness, God we pray (*StF* 511)
Take this moment, sign, and space (*StF* 513)

**Creative activities**

* Explore the ‘home stations’ of your community – the commitments they most value, or practices through which they most easily tune into God. There are some activities to help you do this on the [MWOL](https://www.methodist.org.uk/our-work/our-work-in-britain/evangelism-growth/discipleship-pathways-travelling-together/being-a-discipleship-leader/exploring-a-methodist-way-of-life-as-a-church/) resources page. If you are using these outlines as a full series, you could celebrate people who pick the practice you are exploring in the service. Perhaps they could be involved in leading or sharing stories.
* Explore our range of [resources](https://www.methodist.org.uk/mwolresources/) for exploring MWOL (including videos), and some suggestions for [creative ideas for groups](https://www.methodist.org.uk/our-work/our-work-in-britain/evangelism-growth/discipleship-pathways-travelling-together/being-a-discipleship-leader/exploring-a-methodist-way-of-life-as-a-church/).

**Discussion questions**

* Through which practice do you most easily tune into God? Or, if using the train analogy, which is your ‘home station’?
* How could you support others who find your practice difficult?
* Which practice do you find challenging, or even fearful? How could others in the community support you in exploring these?
* Are there are commitments that we as a community are neglecting? What could we do about this?

**Prayer ideas**

* Ask people to stand when their home station (or growth station) is called out and ask the people around them to pray aloud for them.
* Using the [MWOL postcards,](https://www.methodistpublishing.org.uk/books/EGMWOLPC23/a-methodist-way-of-life-postcard-set) ask people to write or draw a prayer relating to one of the commitments. It might be their home or growth station, or a random station. The prayer could be for themselves, or for the whole community.

**Ways to respond**

* Go to [methodist.org.uk/PersonalDiscipleship](https://www.methodist.org.uk/personaldiscipleship)
* Use a postcard to journal over the next week. Write down your experiences of one of the commitments – perhaps one you find difficult, or the one that you’ll be exploring next week if you’re running the whole series. If journalling is a new practice, check out [our online guidance](https://www.methodist.org.uk/our-faith/a-methodist-way-of-life/reflect-on-the-journey/journalling/).