

SECTION ONE - THE METHODIST CHURCH

The Church of Christ is the Company of His Disciples, consisting of all those who accept Him as the Son of God and their Saviour from sin, and who unite in loving fellowship, and strive to promote the Kingdom of God. It includes the blessed company of all faithful people, not only those sojourning on earth but the saints departed who live unto God. The Visible Church consists of all persons throughout the world who profess to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ for salvation, and to live obedient to the precepts of His Word, together with their children. Though gathered in many folds, and differing in race and language, and differing also in doctrine and usage, there subsists notwithstanding "One Holy Catholic and Apostolic Church," united in "the faith and knowledge of the Son of God." Among the living branches of the Church of Christ, the Methodist Church with its missionary and daughter Churches in many lands holds a responsible and influential place.

The Methodist Church had its origin in the eighteenth century in an extensive revival of experimental and practical religion consequent on the labours of Rev. John Wesley and his colleagues and followers, and was introduced into Ireland in the year 1747. The revival produced, in the minds and hearts of those who were the subjects of it, an earnest striving after holiness, a desire for Christian fellowship, and a passion for evangelisation. In seeking to attain these objects the early Methodists reproduced in a simple and unstudied way the modes of Church life indicated in the New Testament, and under the guidance of God's Spirit the Methodist Societies gradually developed into a distinct and strongly featured Church. Methodism imposes no new terms or narrow tests upon the people of God, but asserts that the desire for salvation is the condition of entrance into the Church of Christ, and that the practice of Christian love and service is an indispensable condition of abiding therein.

For the leadership and oversight of His people in the work of God's Kingdom, our Lord appointed the Apostles; and after these, as need arose, others were chosen for various offices in the Church, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit and with the concurrence of the local communities. The Christian ministry thus originated has continued, with many adaptations of name and function unto this day. Christ's Ministers in the Church are Stewards in the Household of God and Shepherds of His Flock. In the Methodist Church a separated and ordained ministry is recognised as being in full accord with New Testament principles and necessary for the proper maintenance and promotion of the work of God. But every member of the Church is equal in spiritual privilege, has the same access to God through Christ, and is charged with the duty of establishing His Kingdom upon earth. The acknowledgment of this spiritual equality in the Methodist Church has led to the recognition of laypersons as being of an equal status with ministers in all the Courts of the Church.

The Sacraments of Baptism and the Lord's Supper are of divine institution, and in them the presence of Christ through His Spirit is realised by the faith of His people.