

One way (Acts 2:42-47)

I'll let you into a secret ... I have become a bit of a Great British Bake Off fan. Every week the contestants are given three baking challenges which they have to attempt. And each week, the weakest contestant is eliminated until at the end the winner remains.

I am not sure what it is that attracts me, whether it is the baking, the glorious successes or the even more glorious failures. But it has me hooked.

But what fascinates me is that they can be given the same instructions and pretty much the same set of ingredients, but you end up with very different results.

As people of faith, and together with all Christians around the world and across the centuries, we can see many of our practices in those verses from Acts.

We do our best to follow the Apostles' teaching, we share fellowship with one another, we pray and we break bread together. We care and are charitable towards those in need and we worship. And we are open with others about who we are as Christians and invite people to join us.

We have the same ingredients as any other Church, yet how come there are so many different Churches and denominations? (And before I go any further, I want to stress that I think this is a good thing.)

I imagine it is like in Bake Off. Everyone has the same ingredients and the same purpose. But the way they combine them and work with them means that very different things emerge.

We can celebrate that we are Methodists, or that we find something in the Methodist Church that attracts us or appeals to us.

Over the last few years, a group of people have been thinking and praying about what it means to be a Methodist. Rather than coming up with a list of rules or regulations, they have discerned what they call a Methodist Way of life – or what it means to show that we follow Jesus.

It is in four parts – Worship, Learning and Caring, Service and Evangelism. It builds on what Methodists have always done since the time of John Wesley (who instigated the Methodist movement) to follow Jesus and live out their Christian faith. And it treads the same path as those the first followers in that reading from Acts.

You can read them below. None of them is radical, and you may say or think that they are common to many or all Christians. And that is true. But I believe it is the combination of the statements when they are put together that says something about what it means to be distinctively Methodist and or follow a Methodist Way of Life.

In a sense it is just like like the contestants on Bake Off – it is what happens with the same ingredients makes the biscuits, the cakes, the bread into something distinctive and special.

And it is what we do with these principles and how we work them out in our daily lives and in our particular situations, that makes our discipleship particular, both in the church, in our work, in the community and in our homes. And it is who we are in all this (not just what we do) that makes us unique and treasured by God.

Because in all this, just like that first Christian community in Acts and every disciple every since, we seek to follow and be faithful to Christ – our head and our centre.

A Methodist Way of Life

A Methodist Way of Life is a way of living. It is how we try to live our lives in response to God's love, made known to us in Jesus.

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.

As far as we are able, with God's help:

Worship

- We will pray
- We will worship with others regularly.
- We will look and listen for God in Scripture, and the world.

Learning and Caring

- We will care for ourselves and those around us.
- We will learn more about our faith.
- We will practise hospitality and generosity.

Service

- We will help people in our communities and beyond.
- We will care for creation and all God's gifts.
- We will challenge injustice.

Evangelism

- We will speak of the love of God.
- We will live in a way that draws others to Jesus.
- We will share our faith with others.

May we be a blessing within and beyond God's Church, for the transformation of the world.

Prayer for the Week

Lord Jesus, you are the way, you are our way –
in what we do, in what we say and who we are.
Show us your way in our lives,
in the church, in our work,
in our communities and in our homes.
Guide us in the way of life
that is both faithful and honourable to you.
Amen.

Sunday 11th October 2020

