

A Methodist Way of Life for January 2025

Serve “We will help people in our communities and beyond”

Introduction

The theme of “To Serve” was chosen as we celebrate our Covenant Service on the 5th January and make our distinctive resolutions of devotion and discipleship and pastoral care for one another.

Key themes

- From the very beginning, God created us to need each other.
- When we help someone, or receive help from someone, God invites us to see God in one another (Matthew chapter 25 verse 40).
- All people can give and receive. And just because someone has a need, it doesn't make them powerless to also serve and give kindness to others.

Relevant bible passages

Let's explore three bible passages to understand the theological context of this theme “to serve”.

Matthew's Gospel

“Then the King will say to those on his right, ‘Come, you who are blessed by my Father; take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world. For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me.

Source: Matthew Chapter 25 verses 31 to 46.

Luke's Gospel

“Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind; and, Love your neighbor as yourself”.

Source: Luke chapter 10 verse 27;

Epistle of James

“What good is it, my brothers and sisters, if someone claims to have faith but has no deeds? Can such faith save them? Suppose a brother or a sister is without clothes and daily food. If one of you says to them, “Go in peace; keep warm and well fed,” but does nothing about their physical needs, what good is it? In the same way, faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action, is dead”.

Source: James chapter 2 verses 14 to 17

Reflections

A commitment to serving or helping people in our local communities and beyond has always been an essential trait of Methodism. Examples range from Methodism's involvement in the abolition of slavery through to hundreds of foodbanks, night shelters and community centres run by Methodist people and/or located in Methodist buildings around the country.

A Methodist Way of Life has a natural rhythm, which has been compared to breathing: we breathe in the love of God and breathe out the love of God to others. We read this in Luke 10:27 – love God and out of that, love your neighbour.

As Ephesians 2:10 puts it: “For we are what he has made us, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand to be our way of life.”

Who is our ‘neighbour’?

By this, we mean more than the person who lives next door, or even the people in your local village, town or city. There is something both local and global in the biblical use of neighbour. It is important that we recognise the ‘we’ in this commitment. Individually we may feel powerless to change things, but between us, together, we can make a difference in our world. We can all play our parts in helping others, led by their needs rather than our assumptions on what ‘help’ looks like. The invitation is to listen and learn the needs of our communities and our whole world, and then to put that learning to good use.

‘Servant leadership’

This is a popular phrase within Christian circles. However, it is often misapplied to suggest that Christians should only serve, not lead. In Jesus, we see that servanthood is a posture of leadership, not the abdication of leadership. It is a leadership that exists to serve others, and to support the leadership of others, but which also takes action when needed.

Helping others can involve self-sacrifice; this is something we should both embrace and be cautious about. There is a common thread in the gospel stories that Jesus was often asked to help people when he was in a rest period. We must prepare to be interrupted at inconvenient times. But while sacrificing for others can be a beautiful thing, we must also care for ourselves, and be wary of overcommitting ourselves.

Discussion questions

- How is God inviting you to serve your neighbours? What is yours to do?
- Who have you helped recently? Who has helped you recently?
- What choices do you make about making the world a better place?
- If you are serving too much, might God be encouraging you to stop something?

What is yours to do?

- Who could you help today? Locally and globally? Write a commitment on a card or add an alert on your phone. Share this with others and pray for each other.
- Consider whether God might be encouraging you to step back from any roles, for your own self-care. Could you support others in taking over these roles?

Source: Abridged and amended from “A Methodist Way Of Life”.
www.methodist.org.uk/faith/a-methodist-way-of-life/ then search for “Serve”.

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