

# The Commitment of a Methodist

All this past month, we've been talking about our shared heritage – John Wesley, Charles Wesley, Jacob Albright, and others. We've talked about the Wesleyan traditions of a strong lay leadership, an extraordinary openness to new roles for women, the Wesleyan “Quadrilateral,” and the deep Wesleyan commitment to education and learning.

I believe, though, that the most important thing we can learn from examining our origins is that Methodism was never intended to be just another denominational option. The defining feature of a Methodist was never supposed to adherence to this or that point of doctrine. To our forebears, a Methodist was simply someone who takes her or his faith seriously, one who is willing to sacrifice personal convenience for Christ's service, one whose commitment to Christ is both visible and deep. That's what a Methodist is supposed to be.

So, how are we doing?

Some of us are doing very well. Our church is blessed with many true Methodists, people whose commitment to Christ is clear and profound and who are an example to all. They are people who are faithful in worship, intentional about growing in faith, creative and courageous in service to others, and generous in giving.

But it's a little harder to argue that those disciples of Christ are representative of our congregation as a whole. We have about 500 members, and we average about 175 in Sunday worship, about 35%. (Not a new thing, by the way, that percentage has been consistent here for at least the past 40 years.) I have a list of over 200 church members who have attended worship three times or fewer in the past year. In terms of financial commitment, we see a similar pattern. Some are dedicated and generous; dozens of members give nothing at all. Of those who give, about a tenth have given less than \$50 this year. John Wesley would hesitate to call many of us Methodists.

Now, a commitment to Christ is not exactly the same thing as being busy at church. But a commitment to the Body of Christ is at least one indicator of our larger discipleship. This month, I ask you to consider your commitment. In November, you will be receiving financial pledge cards for 2012, and through our Time & Talent Survey you have opportunities to volunteer, participate, learn, and serve through this congregation. As you consider your involvement in 2012, ask yourself this: Are you a Methodist? No, I mean a *Methodist*.