



HIGHER EDUCATION & MINISTRY

General Board of Higher Education and Ministry

THE UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

Unity of the Church and Human Sexuality: Toward a Faithful United Methodist Witness Study Guide: How to Use This Resource

Purpose

The purpose of this study guide is to invite persons into holy conversation and think about who we are and who we want to be as United Methodists, especially regarding issues surrounding human sexuality and the church.

Description

A resource suitable for a four-week study about how the church can be a witness and provide for a diversified human community as faithful Christians.

This study is for individual or group study, in Sunday morning Church School classes, retreats or weekly settings, or with church leaders on a local, sub-district, district, or conference level. Bishops are invited to use this study with their staff and cabinets. District superintendents may find it helpful to use this study with pastors and church leaders or as a part of leadership training. This study is also suitable for United Methodist Women's and United Methodist Men's groups. The "Helps for Leaders" make it possible for anyone to lead this study.

How to Use This Book

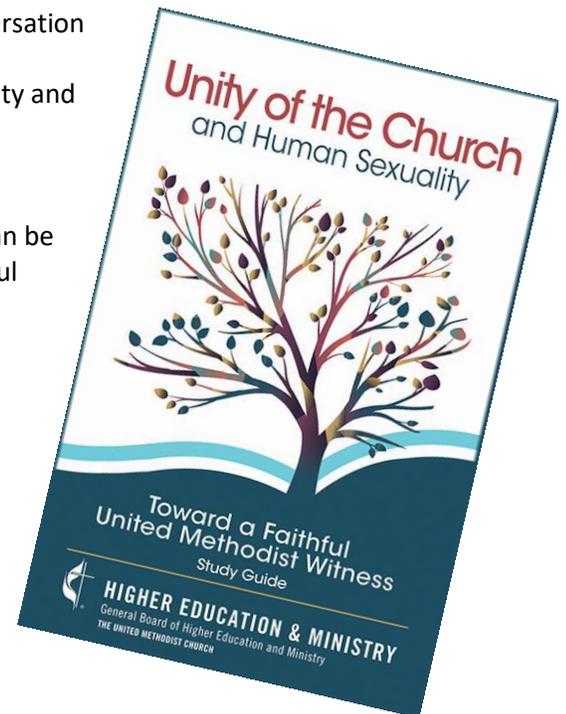
Each session is accessibly written with questions that are meant to lead into deeper and deeper conversation. Leaders can take participants through the questions, which are non-threatening and designed to invite participation and help people listen to each other as they share their faith experiences. Each session opens with scripture, which sets the tone for the group discussion. Directions about leading groups are in the appendix at the back of the book.

Study Guide Summary

Foreword by Dr. Kim Cape offers the rationale for the study—the church is thirsty for in-depth conversation and discernment as we seek the truth and love God together.

Session One: The Conversation Matters says that our church is at a crossroads. Many are asking how we should or can move forward as a denomination. This session asks how hopeful are we and how diverse do we have to be to follow God's call as a community of faith?

Session Two: Loving God with Our Mind Matters looks at our theological task and says that the church is God's *gift* to us but also God's gift to *us*. This session asks how can we give God's love away and find new ways to be faithful together even when we disagree? Are we being the church that God intends?



Session Three: The United Methodist Church Matters opens with the witness The United Methodist Church made during the Bosnian War. People still want to see Jesus and our hope is that people will see Jesus in us personally and as a community of faith. This session asks us to consider if there might be new ways to be a connectional denomination.

Session Four: Finding a Way Forward Matters says that God is at work reconciling the world even in our disagreements. The session asks how we are doing, as individuals and as a church, with our vows to serve God with prayers, presence, gifts, service, and witness; and how can we better join together to love God with our minds and accept God's grace to live as mature Christians lost in wonder, love, and praise.

Bishop Kenneth H. Carter Jr. concludes in the *Afterword* with the statement that God calls us to lean into our differences and listen more closely to our convictions. "We are being led from our silos and divisions into creative collaboration and possible new construction."

Appendix A is Dr. Charles Wood's essay, "An Ecclesial Vision for The United Methodist Church."

Appendix B contains helps for leaders.