

General Rules of the United Societies

The *General Rules of the United Societies* were developed by the Rev. John Wesley in the 18th century to guide the Methodist movement in holy living. These rules were not just personal guidelines but a communal covenant that bound early Methodists together in their pursuit of holiness. Centered on love for God and neighbor, the rules—do no harm, do good, and attend upon the ordinances of God—emphasize a faith that is lived out through action, fostering both personal transformation and social impact.

1. Do No Harm

Wesley's first rule calls for intentional avoidance of evil, including actions like dishonesty, cruelty, and injustice. By refusing to cause harm, Methodists were challenged to create a community where peace and love thrived. This principle remains a vital call to examine our words, actions, and systems, ensuring they do not perpetuate pain or oppression.

One: Holy God, we confess our part in harm done to others and to your creation.

All: Forgive us, O Lord, and guide us to live peacefully and justly.

2. Do Good

Wesley's second rule moves beyond avoiding harm to actively pursuing good. This involves showing kindness to others, working for justice, and offering mercy to those in need. It is a call to intentional living, where faith is expressed in tangible acts of service and love, reflecting Christ's care for the world.

One: Christ, inspire us to be your hands and feet in acts of love and mercy.

All: Renew us to serve with compassion and courage.

3. Attend Upon God's Ordinances

The third rule underscores the importance of spiritual practices that deepen our relationship with God. Wesley encouraged prayer, worship, fasting, Holy Communion, and Bible study as means to experience God's grace and grow in faith. By staying connected to these "means of grace," we are empowered to live faithfully and reflect God's love.

One: Spirit of Truth, you call us to seek your presence through prayer, worship, and your holy Word.

All: Help us delight in your ordinances, finding strength and grace in these sacred practices.

One: May our hearts be transformed as we draw closer to you in faith.

All: Keep us steadfast in your love, growing in holiness and reflecting your light to the world.

Amen.