



# METHODIST HOUSE OF STUDIES

at

*Memphis Theological Seminary*



## **Covenant Group Leadership and/or Participation**

The Orders of The Tennessee and Memphis Conference in partnership with The Methodist House of Studies at Memphis Theological Seminary, are offering training retreats for clergy leaders who are interested in leading covenant groups or in deepening existing covenant groups.

We are also committed to helping interested clergy find covenant groups that work geographically and in relationship to size, ethos, structure and participants.

We invite you to fill out the application on the opposite page in order to aid us in determining the need for trainings and the interest in geographic areas of the two Conferences.

### **If you are interested in becoming a leader of a covenant group:**

- A. What has stirred your interest in leading a covenant group?
- B. What are the gifts you believe you have that would be valuable to a group focused on covenant accountability?
- C. What do you believe are the main goals a covenant group should have?
- D. What are the essential “touchstones” or “rules of engagement” that you believe are needed for covenant groups to be effective over the long haul?

### **If you are interested in being a participant in a covenant group:**

- A. What has stirred your interest in being in a covenant group?
- B. Do you prefer a group with all clergy colleagues (elders, local pastors and deacons) or one that involves both lay and clergy members?
- C. Do you prefer one that is congregationally based or one with participants outside your local church?
- D. How often would you be willing to meet (weekly, twice a month, monthly)?
- E. What is the maximum distance you are willing to travel for a covenant group?

The Wesleyan Tradition of class meetings and bands – of taking seriously our ongoing growth in discipleship by way of accountable discipleship - is in our DNA as Methodists. We hope you will join us in sponsoring and living into this work.

Memphis Theological Seminary  
of the Cumberland Presbyterian Church

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## Application – Covenant Group Leadership and/or Participation

Name \_\_\_\_\_

e-mail \_\_\_\_\_ phone \_\_\_\_\_

Church/Charge \_\_\_\_\_

District \_\_\_\_\_ Annual Conference \_\_\_\_\_

I am interested in (check one) becoming a covenant group leader \_\_\_\_\_ or a covenant group participant \_\_\_\_\_.

Please provide below written responses to the questions given on the opposite page. Feel free to attach additional pages if more space is needed.

A.

B.

C.

D.

E.

Please return this form to one of these persons:

- Ken Edwards, [ken@belmontumc.org](mailto:ken@belmontumc.org)
- Cherie Parker, [cherie@hillcrestumc.org](mailto:cherie@hillcrestumc.org)
- Trey Carey, [revtrey@gmail.com](mailto:revtrey@gmail.com)
- Phoebe Jowers, [pjower@ntatesting.com](mailto:pjower@ntatesting.com)
- Josh McClurkan, [pastor.j.mcclurkan@gmail.com](mailto:pastor.j.mcclurkan@gmail.com)

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- Billy Vaughan, Dir. Of the Formation for Ministry Program  
at Memphis Theological Seminary, [bvaughan@memphisseminary.edu](mailto:bvaughan@memphisseminary.edu)
- Lee Ramsey, Marlon and Sheila Foster Professor of Pastoral Theology and Homiletics  
At Memphis Theological Seminary, [lr Ramsey@memphisseminary.edu](mailto:lr Ramsey@memphisseminary.edu)  
**Wesleyan Covenant Group Leadership Training**

**Sponsored by:**

**The Methodist House of Studies at Memphis Theological Seminary  
The Orders of Elders, Deacons and Local Pastors of the Memphis and Tennessee Conferences.**

## Overview

**Our Wesleyan heritage** is an amazing resource for how we become mature Christians. Methodist societies, bands and class meetings were at the very core of the Methodist revival that began in England and spread through the American colonies. Intentional discipleship – “methodical” Christianity – was both the criticism of others and, in a sense, the mantra of the early people called Methodists.

- How do we draw on this heritage?
- How do we raise up leaders who help us live into the call of Christian discipleship in this day and time?

These are the questions guiding **a six week training** for Wesleyan covenant group leaders being co-sponsored by The Methodist House of Studies at Memphis Theological Seminary and The Orders of Elders, Deacons and Local Pastors of The Memphis and Tennessee Annual Conferences.

**Leadership** for this training will be offered by Dr. Lee Ramsey and Rev. Billy Vaughan from the faculty at Memphis Theological Seminary. Drawing from our Wesleyan heritage this training will involve both personal narrative and theological reflection. We will focus more on ethos than skill or technique as we will seek to model and share ideas of ways to be at the table with one another that lead toward a depth of Christian discipleship. A brief description of the six week’s training and the opening retreat is listed below. Participants will be expected to share their narratives of discipleship while also imagining ways to provide such a table to others. The final 3 hour session will include how we “sound the call” for covenant groups and imagine ways to be supportive of one another as covenant group leaders.

### **Brief description and outline for the Six Week Training for Covenant Group Leaders**

Covenant Group Leaders (elders, deacons, local pastors) will gather for leadership training on **six consecutive Tuesdays from August 23–September 27, 2016 at Northside UMC, Jackson, TN.**

Throughout weeks 1-6 a biblical text will be assigned that participants will be expected to engage in-depth. As both Jacques Ellul and Karl Barth insisted, the greatest engagement with scripture takes place when we move from trying to analyze the text to allowing the text to analyze and question us. We will also form covenants around classic faith practices (the Wesleyan “Means of Grace”) (searching the

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scripture, prayer, worship, befriending the poor, etc.) and have covenant partners with whom we share weekly accountability for the joys and struggles of keeping these practices.

## (over) Training Schedule

### **August 23, 9:00 a.m. – 3:00 p.m. (Northside UMC, Jackson, TN)**

The **opening 6 hour retreat** will lay the groundwork for a model of sacred community and accountable discipleship that has borne fruit in the Formation For Ministry program at Memphis Theological Seminary. The retreat will include prayer, worship, dialogue about our Wesleyan Tradition regarding covenant life and how such a covenant life can help us live into what Parker Palmer calls “an undivided life.”

We will prepare for this retreat by reading: *The Christian Community and the Means of Grace* from the book The New Creation: John Wesley’s Theology Today, by Theodore Runyon, along with a chapter on *The Undivided Life* from the book A Hidden Wholeness, by Parker Palmer. We will each write a brief (1 to 2 page paper) on the fruit that we yearn for by way of a well-organized and practiced covenant life and be prepared to share stories of the joys and struggles of living toward an “undivided life.”

### **August 30, Sept. 6, Sept. 30, 10:00 – 11:30 a.m.**

**Weeks 2-4 will be 1 ½ hour sessions** drawing on brief chapters from Tattoos on the Heart by Gregory Boyle and Find Your Way Home by Becca Stevens. We will write brief (1 to 2 page papers) on our particular journeys around the themes: “Clothed in God’s Goodness,” “Grace” and “God’s Jurisdiction.”

### **Sept. 20, 9:00-12:00**

**Week 5 will be a three hour session** on Race and The Beloved Community. We will view a video interview between Bill Moyers and James Cone on “The Cross and The Lynching Tree,” write and share our racial autobiographies and reflect on the challenge of living toward and sponsoring Beloved Community.

### **Sept. 27, 9:00-3:00**

**Week 6 will be a six hour retreat** imagining the way ahead. We will share our dreams and visions on the way to a costly and lively discipleship. This final week will include imagining ways to sponsor covenant life, steeped in our biblical and Wesleyan tradition, that can provide the much needed grit and character for our pastoral leaders and congregations.

How will we “sound the call” for covenant life that matters? How will we support one another as leaders as we live into this call? We’ll read *Let God Be God*, from the book With God in the Crucible:



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Preaching Costly Discipleship by Peter Story and *Making Covenant Together* from the book So Much Better: How Thousands of Pastors Help Each Other Thrive, by The Sustaining Pastoral Excellence Peer Learning Project.

**\*Note:** Throughout these six weeks we will also draw on select sermons from John Wesley and hymns from Charles Wesley that express the theology of grace, covenant life and discipleship that undergirds our life together as Methodists.

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