

Draw the circle.

Draw the circle wide, draw the circle.

Draw the circle wide.

No one stands alone. We'll stand side by side.

Draw the circle. Draw the circle wide.

The reverend Dr. Jacqueline K. Thompson, writes in an article that the words of the refrain "Draw the Circle Wide" brings to mind that in a circle, all points are the same distance from the center. When in the circle, or visible to one another, no one stands alone.

We'll stand side by side.

The refrain also reminds us that a circle is drawn when the outside points revolve around the center point, rather than vice versa.

I love this song, Draw the Circle. I love it because it is a song of inclusion. We all are the same distance from the center of the universe— God. We all see one another sacred of worth.

We all stand side by side.

Draw it wide, draw it wide, so that all are included, and we'll have a space in a circle.

And in this last chapter, Chilcote criticizes Jeff and Mike's vision of the Global Methodist Church as sharply diverging from a genuinely Wesleyan vision in the following three areas: congregational in polity, not connectional, credal in orientation, not oriented around practical theology, and the service of a "faith working by love".

And essentially exclusivist not inclusive in vision, despite its global title. He continues to argue the five compelling reasons why he decided to stay in and celebrate all that God has done and is doing in the United Methodist Church.

These are the points of a renewal for the United Methodist Church. Paul finds each point supported by a writing, sermon, or hymn written by the Wesley Brothers.

Wide embrace.

The United Methodist Church has a wide, gracious, and loving embrace. In the sermon "Catholic Spirit", John Wesley says, "they— Methodists, love one another as friends, as companions in the Lord, as members of Christ and children of God.

As joint partakers now of the present kingdom of God and fellow heirs of God's eternal kingdom, they assist them to the uttermost of their power in all things spiritual and temporal. They are ready to spend and be spent for them.

Second, Christ-like practice.

The United Methodist Church aspires to be Christ-like in practice. We are merciful, compassionate, and forgiving. Charles Wesley's lyrical reflection on the Beatitudes express this, characteristic well. Happy soul, you know, whose active love emulates the blessed above and thy every actions in, sparkling from the soul within.

Third: scriptural dynamism.

The Bible is the bedrock upon which the faith of the United Methodist identity is built. But it's view of the Bible is not simplistic, antithetical to literalistic and the legalistic views of the scripture. The United Methodist view offers a rich, robust, indeed a scriptural foundation for life in the triune God. John Wesley said, "I lift up my heart to the father of lights. I then search after and consider parallel passages of scripture comparing spiritual things with the spiritual. I meditate thereon with all the attention and the earnestness of which my mind is capable."

Fourth: Spiritual Growth.

The United Methodist Church is deeply concerned about growth in grace. It elevates the importance of practices of piety, such as prayer, but also advocates, acts of mercy, compassion, and a justice for all, and as a plain account of the people called Methodists, John Wesley calls for continuing growth of discipleship. He says, "Who marked their growth in grace? Who advised and exhorted them from time to time? Who prayed with them and for them as they had need? This and this alone is Christian fellowship. We introduced a Christian fellowship where it was utterly destroyed, and the fruits of it have been peace, joy, love, and zeal for every good word and work."

Fifth: Missional Captor.

The United Methodist is a mission oriented, mission driven and mission centered. Charles Wesley sings about mission as a joyful offer of boundless love.

"Enlarge, inflame and fill my heart  
to with a boundless charity divine.  
So shall I all my strength exert,  
and love them with a zeal like thine,  
and lead them to thine open side, the sheep  
for whom their shepherd died."

Paul Chilcote concludes his book with the following punchline. "Inclusive love, in fact, nothing more and nothing less, must be the foundation of a renewed Methodism. He recalls John Wesley once again.

"Let love not visit you as a transient guest,  
but be the constant ruling disposition of your soul.  
Be not constrained or limited in your affection,  
but let it embrace every child of God."

Inclusion to an immigrant like me is a hallmark of the United Methodist Church. Back in 2005, I began to serve my first cross-racial cross-cultural appointment in a small town, Mille Lacs, Minnesota. At that time, I had lived only three years in this country. On my first Sunday, I asked the congregation to get me a new English name. I found that many people were a little cautious about pronouncing my Korean name in order not to insult me. The SPRC chair promoted this fun project, "Naming Woojae", for three weeks, and on the fourth Sunday, the result was to be announced. Whatever name was submitted most was supposed to be my name, and my wife and I tried to guess what name would take the most votes. Maybe Tom, Smith, or Jeff... Who knows? The result was amazing.

The name that got most of the votes, was Woojae Im. The message of the congregation was clear, "We accept you as you are. You don't need an English name."

I was blown away by the radical acceptance and inclusion of the congregation. It is the greatest welcome gift I have ever received. 19 years have passed, but to me it is still fresh in my memory as if it had taken place yesterday. One instant, just one incident of inclusion made me a lifelong United Methodist. I saw myself in the circle of radical hospitality, love, acceptance, and full inclusion.

Grace and love are the core of the gospel, culminated on the cross on good Friday. The cross tore down the veil in the sanctuary. The cross broke down all sorts of barriers. Through Jesus' cross, all people can access the love and grace of God. Inclusion is the embodiment of the grace and love of God.

So, draw your circle wide, multiply your love.  
That's the gospel of Jesus Christ.  
That's the message of Good Friday. Jesus died for you.  
Jesus died for all.  
All means all.