

United Methodist Beliefs

United Methodism is the second largest Protestant denomination in the United States with over 8 million members. There are another 1.5 million Methodists in 165 countries around the world.

We are, by design, a self-governing people dedicated to a life of purpose, a life of participation and personal responsibility, of generosity, sacrifice and self-restraint, responding to the call of Jesus Christ.

We are a community concerned about God's children everywhere, embracing different cultures and ethnic traditions. In life's clouds of doubt and division, we see the sunlight of God's purpose that brings healing, hope and harmony.

We welcome people who are searching for answers to life's tough questions, because we know what it is like to feel alone and unsure, to need a welcoming place with open hearts, open minds and open doors.

We live the promise we made the day we joined The United Methodist Church, the promise of our prayers, our presence, our gifts, our service and our witness.

United Methodists share a common heritage with Christians of every age and nation:

- 1) **God created humanity to live in covenant with God.** Because God truly loves us, God acted through the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ to bring us salvation and the hope of eternal life.
- 2) **God's love comes alive in us by the work of the Holy Spirit.** The Spirit works in both our personal experience and in the common life of the church.
- 3) **We are part of Christ's universal church.** We enter the church through baptism. In Holy Communion, we celebrate the presence of Christ and find strength for Christian living.
- 4) **We believe that the reign of God is both a present and future reality.** This prospect gives us hope in our present actions.
- 5) **We believe that Scripture contains everything necessary for salvation.** We believe in justification by grace through faith in Christ and in the general ministry of all Christians.
- 6) **We believe that the church is one in Jesus Christ.** We express our unity in hymns and liturgy, in the historic creeds and in the belief in one holy, catholic (universal) and apostolic church.

United Methodists also have distinctive emphases, a legacy of our founder, John Wesley:

- 1) **Prevenient Grace.** God's love surrounds us even before we are aware of it. It leads us to want to please God, to discover God's will, and to an awareness of our sin.
- 2) **Justification and Assurance.** God reaches out to the repentant believer with accepting and pardoning love. Through faith in Jesus Christ, we are justified-forgiven and restored to God's favor.
- 3) **Sanctification and Perfection.** God's sanctifying grace helps us grow more loving toward God and neighbor, drawing us toward God's gift of Christian perfection, being perfect in love.

- 4) **Faith and Good Works.** Faith in God's redeeming work in Jesus Christ is the only response to God's love we need. However, we express our salvation in good works, sharing God's love with others.
- 5) **Mission and Service.** Salvation always involves Christian mission and service to the world. Personal religion, evangelical witness, and social action go hand in hand and build on each other.
- 6) **Nurture and Mission of the Church.** The church nurtures our personal faith and equips us for mission and service in the world.

Frequently Asked Questions:

What is expected of me as a member of The United Methodist Church?

You are asked to declare your commitment to follow Jesus Christ with your life...to participate faithfully in the life of the church with your prayers, your presence, your gifts, your service and your witness.

Where did the word "Methodist" originate?

John and Charles Wesley and a few other young men attending Oxford University met regularly in the 1720s to improve themselves intellectually and spiritually and to help others become better Christians. So systematic were their habits of religious duty and their rules of personal conduct that other students began to refer to them as "Methodists."

Where can I find the basic positions and regulations of The United Methodist Church?

Two books are helpful – The Book of Discipline and The Book of Resolutions. Both are updated every four years following General Conference. The Book of Discipline covers every aspect of church life...doctrine...guidance for Christian behavior...the procedures for becoming a church member and for ministers...protocols for organizing and administering local churches, annual conferences, districts and church wide boards and agencies, as well as rules of church laws. The Book of Resolutions includes statements on social, ethical and moral concerns adopted by the delegates at General Conference.

What are the sacraments of The United Methodist Church?

United Methodists recognize two sacraments – Holy Baptism and Holy Communion.

What special days of the Christian year does the church observe?

With other Christian churches, The United Methodist Church celebrates the seasons of Advent, Christmas, Epiphany, Lent, Easter and Pentecost.

If I became a member will the Church tell me what to do or what to give?

Although we are a community of faith, participation and generosity are personal responses. It is our belief that if a person is truly inspired by their relationship to God through Jesus Christ then participation and generosity happens with a sense of joy and gratitude.

To learn more about the United Methodist Church, you can visit the following websites:

The United Methodist Church www.umc.org

West Virginia Conference United Methodist Church www.wvumc.org