

Faith and Good Works

We see God's grace and human activity working together in the relationship of faith and good works. God's grace calls for human response and discipline. Faith is the only response essential for salvation. However, salvation evidences itself in good works. Both faith and good works belong within an all-encompassing theology of grace, since they stem from God's gracious love.

Personal salvation always involves service to the world. Personal faith, witness to that faith, and social action are mutually reinforcing.

The Sacraments

We believe there are two sacraments, ordained by Christ as symbols and pledges of God's love for us—Baptism and Communion.

Baptism

Entrance into the church is acknowledged in Baptism and may include persons of all ages. Baptism is followed by nurture and the awareness of the baptized of Christ's claim upon their lives. For persons baptized as children, this claim is ratified by the baptized in confirmation, where the pledges of Baptism are accepted.

Communion

We believe the Lord's Supper is a memorial of the suffering and death of Christ, and a symbol of the union Christians have with Christ and with one another. All persons, regardless of age and regardless of church affiliation, are invited to the table of our Lord.

One Universal Church

With other Christians, we declare the essential oneness of the church in Christ Jesus. Our unity with other Christian communities is affirmed in the historic creeds as we confess one holy, catholic (universal), and apostolic church.

We are initiated into this community of faith by Baptism and through the celebration of Holy Communion.

Service to the World

John Wesley, the founder of the Methodist movement, said there was no religion except for social religion. In his name and in his spirit the United Methodist church reaches out to establish peace and justice in the world.

Our Mission

The heart of Christian ministry is Christ's ministry of outreaching love. All Christians are called to minister wherever Christ would have them serve and witness in deeds and words that heal and free

The mission of the United Methodist Church is to make disciples of Jesus Christ.



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THE UNITED METHODIST STORY

**Our History,
Our Beliefs,
&
Our Mission**



Introduction

The United Methodist Church is part of a Wesleyan movement that now claims a total of 18 million members of various Methodist churches around the world. There are 8.5 million United Methodists in the United States and one million members of the denomination outside the United States.

The United Methodist Church is part of the church universal. All persons, regardless of race, color, national origin, status, or economic condition are welcome to attend its services, receive Holy Communion, and after taking vows, be baptized and admitted into membership.

Denominational practices and standards are set by General Conferences that meet once every four years. Delegates to that conference are elected by clergy and lay representatives from local churches gathered in various regional (annual) conferences.

Our History

In 1729 in England, a small group of Oxford University students were ridiculed as "Bible Bigots,

" the "Holy Club" and "Methodists" because they spent so much time in methodical prayer and Bible reading. Led by John and Charles Wesley, the students held their ground against jeering students and went out to preach and pray with those considered to be the underbelly of English society.

The United Methodist Church is the result of the 1939 merger of three Methodist bodies (Methodist Episcopal, Methodist Episcopal South and Methodist Protestant churches), and a 1968 union of the Evangelical United Brethren and The Methodist churches.

Our Beliefs

United Methodist preaching and teaching is grounded in Scripture, informed by Christian tradition, enlivened in personal experience, and tested by reason.

Scripture

The Holy Bible is our primary source for Christian doctrine. Biblical authors testify to God's self-disclosure in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ as well as in God's work of creation, in the pilgrimage of Israel, and in the Holy Spirit's ongoing activity in human history.

Tradition

Our attempt to understand God does not start anew with each generation or each person. Our faith also does not leap from New Testament times to the present as though nothing could be learned from all Christian thinkers and preachers in between. We learn from traditions found in many cultures, but Scripture remains the norm by which all traditions are judged.

Experience

In our theological task, we examine experience, both personal and church-wide, to confirm the realities of God's grace attested in Scripture. Experience is the personal appropriation of God's forgiving and empowering grace. Experience authenticates in our own lives the truths revealed in Scrip-

ture and illuminated in tradition.

Reason

Although we recognize that God's revelation and our experiences of God's grace continually surpass the scope of reason, we also believe that disciplined theological work calls for the careful use of reason. By reason we read and interpret Scripture. By reason we determine whether our Christian witness is clear. By reason we ask questions of faith and seek to understand God's action and will.

A Triune God

With Christians of other communions, we believe in a triune God-Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. We believe in God's self revelation as three distinct but inseparable parts.

The Father

We believe in one true, holy, and living God who is creator, sovereign and preserver of all things visible and invisible. God is infinite in power, wisdom, justice, goodness, and love, and rules with gracious regard for the well-being and salvation of all people.

The Son

We believe that God is best known in the life of Jesus of Nazareth. He is the source and measure of all valid Christian teaching. We believe in the mystery of salvation in and through the redeeming love of God found in the teachings of Jesus, in his resurrection, and in his promised return. The Son is the Word of the Father and one substance with the Father. Through him we are forgiven and reconciled to God.

The Holy Spirit

We believe that God's love is realized in human life by the activity of the Holy Spirit, both in our personal lives and in the church. The Holy Spirit, proceeding from the Father and the Son, is a constant presence in our lives, whereby we find strength and help in time of need. The spirit comforts, sustains, and empowers us.

God's Grace

By grace we mean the undeserved, unmerited, and loving action of God in human existence through the ever-present Holy spirit. While the grace of God is undivided, it precedes salvation as "prevenient grace," continues in "justifying grace," and is brought to fruition in "sanctifying grace in the life of the believer."

In spite of suffering, violence, and evil, we assert that God's grace is present everywhere. Despite our brokenness, we remain creatures brought into being by a just and merciful God. The reign of God is both a present and a future reality.

God summons us to repentance, pardons us, receives us by grace given to us in Jesus Christ and gives us hope of life eternal.

Justification and New Birth

In justification we are, through faith, forgiven our sins and restored to God's favor. This process of justification and new birth is often referred to as conversion. Such a change may be sudden and dramatic, or gradual and cumulative. In either case it marks a new beginning, yet it is also part of an ongoing process.

We believe God reaches out to the repentant believer in justifying grace with accepting and pardoning love.

Sanctification and Perfection

We hold that the wonder of God's acceptance and pardon does not end God's saving work, which continues to nurture our growth in grace. Through the power of the Holy Spirit, we are enabled to increase in the knowledge and love of God and in love for our neighbor.