

United Methodist Church Beliefs

Our Christian Roots

United Methodists share a common heritage with all Christians. According to our foundational statement of beliefs in The Book of Discipline, we share the following basic affirmations in common with all Christian communities:

Trinity

We describe God in three persons. Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are commonly used to refer to the threefold nature of God. Sometimes we use other terms, such as Creator, Redeemer, and Sustainer.

God

- We believe in one God, who created the world and all that is in it.
- We believe that God is sovereign; that is, God is the ruler of the universe.
- We believe that God is loving. We can experience God's love and grace.

Jesus

- We believe that Jesus was human. He lived as a man and died when he was crucified.
- We believe that Jesus is divine. He is the Son of God.
- We believe that God raised Jesus from the dead and that the risen Christ lives today. (Christ and messiah mean the same thing—God's anointed.)
- We believe that Jesus is our Savior. In Christ we receive abundant life and forgiveness of sins.
- We believe that Jesus is our Lord and that we are called to pattern our lives after his.

The Holy Spirit

- We believe that the Holy Spirit is God with us.
- We believe that the Holy Spirit comforts us when we are in need and convicts us when we stray from God.
- We believe that the Holy Spirit awakens us to God's will and empowers us to live obediently.

Human Beings

- We believe that God created human beings in God's image.
- We believe that humans can choose to accept or reject a relationship with God.
- We believe that all humans need to be in relationship with God in order to be fully human.

The Church

- We believe that the church is the body of Christ, an extension of Christ's life and ministry in the world today.
- We believe that the mission of the church is to make disciples of Jesus Christ.
- We believe that the church is "the communion of saints," a community made up of all past, present, and future disciples of Christ.
- We believe that the church is called to worship God and to support those who participate in its life as they grow in faith.

The Bible

- We believe that the Bible is God's Word.
- We believe that the Bible is the primary authority for our faith and practice.

United Methodist Church Beliefs

- We believe that Christians need to know and study the Old Testament and the New Testament (the Hebrew Scriptures and the Christian Scriptures).

The Reign of God

- We believe that the kingdom or reign of God is both a present reality and future hope.
- We believe that wherever God's will is done, the kingdom or reign of God is present. It was present in Jesus' ministry, and it is also present in our world whenever persons and communities experience reconciliation, restoration, and healing.
- We believe that although the fulfillment of God's kingdom--the complete restoration of creation--is still to come.
- We believe that the church is called to be both witness to the vision of what God's kingdom will be like and a participant in helping to bring it to completion.
- We believe that the reign of God is both personal and social. Personally, we display the kingdom of God as our hearts and minds are transformed and we become more Christ-like. Socially, God's vision for the kingdom includes the restoration and transformation of all of creation.

Sacraments

With many other Protestants, we recognize the two sacraments in which Christ himself participated: Baptism and the Lord's Supper.

Baptism

- Through baptism we are joined with the church and with Christians everywhere.
- Baptism is a symbol of new life and a sign of God's love and forgiveness of our sins.
- Persons of any age can be baptized.
- We baptize by sprinkling, immersion or pouring.
- A person receives the sacrament of baptism only once in his or her life.

The Lord's Supper (Communion, Eucharist)

The Lord's Supper is a holy meal of bread and wine that symbolizes the body and blood of Christ.

- The Lord's Supper recalls the life, death and resurrection of Jesus and celebrates the unity of all the members of God's family.
- By sharing this meal, we give thanks for Christ's sacrifice and are nourished and empowered to go into the world in mission and ministry.
- We practice "open Communion," welcoming all who love Christ, repent of their sin, and seek to live in peace with one another.

We Are All Called to Minister

Though our gifts vary widely, we're all called to and engaged in the one ministry of Jesus Christ. Some aspects of our ministry are easy and come naturally. Some are difficult, involving long hours, tough work, perhaps with conflict, perhaps with disappointing results. What drives us? What keeps us going? The list includes at least these three things:

- the memory of Jesus' life of service to others, which inspires us to follow him in ministry;
- the assurance of God's gracious love for us, which empowers us to love others;
- the promise of God's coming reign on earth, which draws us into action directed toward this vision.