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Q&A

The North Georgia Conference of The United Methodist Church

Answering Questions About The United Methodist Church

Theology and Doctrine

Who are United Methodists?

The United Methodist Church is a worldwide connection of more than 12 million members. There is a United Methodist church in nearly every county in the United States, and across Africa, Asia, and Europe, all with the same mission: to make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world.

What do United Methodists believe?

The United Methodist Church is founded on a Wesleyan theology of grace which is anchored in Scripture, and professes faith in the teachings, life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, and the continuing movement of the Holy Spirit.

The Articles of Religion, Confessions of Faith, The Standard Sermons of John Wesley, The Explanatory Notes on the New Testament, and The General Rules are our doctrinal standards as stated in The Book of Discipline.

They are our theological foundation for faith, and the ministry and mission of the church in the world. This is what we believe as United Methodists. Read these in the Book of Discipline or online at: Articles of Religion - www.ngumc.org/umc-doctrine

- Confessions of Faith - www.ngumc.org/umc-doctrine
- The Standard Sermons of John Wesley - www.ngumc.org/umc-doctrine
- The Explanatory Notes on the New Testament - www.ngumc.org/umc-doctrine
- The General Rules (Do no harm, do good, and attend to the ordinances of God.) - www.ngumc.org/umc-doctrine

All United Methodists have access to a free digital copy of the Book of Discipline (www.cokesbury.com/book-of-discipline-book-of-resolutions-free-versions) or can order a copy from Cokesbury. Our Doctrinal Standards begin on page 47 of the 2016 Book of Discipline.

Though we do hold our doctrinal standards in common, our Wesleyan heritage reminds us that Christians are not called to be of one mind on all matters. In other words, “In essentials unity, in non-essentials liberty, in all things charity.”

How can we disagree on matters of human sexuality?

Rev. Dr. Dan Johnson, a retired pastor and former chair of the board of trustees of Asbury Seminary wrote the reflection linked below to Trinity UMC in Gainesville, Florida, following the 2016 General Conference. His reflection offers good insight into this question. Read it here: www.ngumc.org/how-can-we-disagree

It's important to know that you do not have to change your mind on this matter to be United Methodist.

I have heard/read a series of allegations that United Methodists no longer uphold historically and traditionally affirmed theological and doctrinal beliefs. Is this true?

No. Though there are outliers in every denominational system, the UMC holds fast to the historic and traditional doctrines of the Christian church.

Is the UMC going to alter its doctrine to deny the virgin birth, the divinity of Jesus Christ, the resurrection of Jesus Christ, or salvation through Christ alone?

No. All of these positions are bedrock in the doctrinal standards of The United Methodist Church. If you have heard that this doctrine is changing, it is a red flag that your information may not be coming from a trustworthy source.

Here is what the Articles and Confessions say on these matters and will continue to say:

Virgin Birth and Divinity of Jesus
Articles of Religion, Article II: "The Son, who is the Word of the Father, the very and eternal God, of one substance with the Father, took man's nature in the womb of the blessed Virgin." (2016 Book of Discipline, page 66, ¶104)

Confession of Faith, Article II:
"We believe in Jesus Christ, truly God and truly man, in whom the divine and human natures are perfectly and inseparably united. He is the eternal Word made flesh, the only begotten Son of the Father, born of the Virgin Mary by the power of the Holy Spirit." (2016 Book of Discipline, page 73, ¶104)

Resurrection of Jesus Christ:
Articles of Religion, Article III: Christ did truly rise again from the dead, and took again his body, with all things appertaining to the perfection of man's nature, wherewith he ascended into heaven, and there sitteth until he return to judge all men at the last day. (2016 Book of Discipline, page 66, ¶104)

Confession of Faith, Article II:
"Jesus Christ… was buried, rose from the dead and ascended into heaven to be with the Father, from whence he shall return." (2016 Book of Discipline, page 73, ¶104)

Salvation apart from faith in Jesus Christ
Articles of Religion, Article IX: "We are accounted righteous before God only for the merit of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, by faith." (2016 Book of Discipline, page 66, ¶104)

Confession of Faith, Article IX:
"We believe we are never accounted righteous before God through our works or merit, but that penitent sinners are justified or accounted righteous before God only by faith in our Lord Jesus Christ." (2016 Book of Discipline, page 73, ¶104)

Sources for this document:
Produced by the North Georgia Conference Communications Office. Answers were adapted from The United Methodist Church State of the Church Report, "Ask the UMC" at www.UMC.org, www.NGUMC.org, www.NGUMC.org/BeUMC, www.UMC.org/BeUMC, and quoted from the 2016 Book of Discipline.

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