

What Do United Methodist Christians Believe?

Methodist doctrine is based on four things:

- Methodist Articles of Religion
- Evangelical United Brethren Church's Confession of Faith
- John Wesley's standard sermons (52 sermons)
- John Wesley's Explanatory Notes upon the New Testament

The doctrine cannot change per the Book of Discipline

- ¶ 17. Article I.—The General Conference shall not revoke, alter, or change our Articles of Religion or establish any new standards or rules of doctrine contrary to our present existing and established standards of doctrine.
- ¶ 18. Article II.—The General Conference shall not revoke, alter, or change our Confession of Faith.

Immutable Doctrine (Selected)

Scripture: "United Methodists share with other Christians the conviction that Scripture is the primary source and criterion for Christian doctrine. ...Our standards affirm the Bible as the source of all that is 'necessary' and 'sufficient' unto salvation (Articles of Religion) and 'is to be received through the Holy Spirit as the true rule and guide for faith and practice' (Confession of Faith)."

Jesus and Resurrection: "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" (Confession of Faith) "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." (Articles of Religion)

Statements of Position

Mission: "The mission of the Church is to make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world. Local churches and extension ministries of the Church provide the most significant arenas through which disciple-making occurs. ...Whenever United Methodism has had a clear sense of mission, God has used our Church to save persons, heal relationships, transform social structures, and spread scriptural holiness, thereby changing the world. In order to be truly alive, we embrace Jesus' mandate to love God and to love our neighbor and to make disciples of all peoples." (Book of Discipline ¶120)

Homosexuality and Marriage: "We affirm that sexuality is God's good gift to all persons... Although all persons are sexual beings whether or not they are married, sexual relations are affirmed only with the covenant of monogamous, heterosexual marriage... The United Methodist Church does not condone the practice of homosexuality and considers this practice incompatible with Christian teaching. We affirm that God's grace is available to all... We implore families and churches not to condemn or reject lesbian or gay members and friends. We commit ourselves to be in ministry for and with all persons." (Book of Discipline: ¶161g)

An Important Decision: Considerations for the Church Council

1. At the Central South District "Discernment Meeting" on August 6, 2022, Bishop Scott Jones proposed that churches have specific options they may choose to consider at this time:
 - a. decide to remain in the United Methodist Church, without entering a period of discernment
 - b. decide to enter a period of discernment, and if two-thirds of the congregation votes to disaffiliate from the United Methodist Church, they then can:
 - i. become an independent church
 - ii. join a non-Wesleyan denomination, if accepted, such as the United Church of Christ, or the Episcopal Church
 - iii. join another Wesleyan denomination, if accepted, such as the Free Methodist Church, the Global Methodist Church, the African Methodist Church, or the Nazarene Church

2. Because a period of discernment can have very negative consequences for a church, it is completely optional. Without a reasonable expectation of consensus or two-thirds approval, it may bring division and factions, consume time and energy for some time, and impact programs and ministries. There is no requirement that churches take any action at all.
3. In order to disaffiliate from the United Methodist Church and receive title to church property, a church must:
 - a. work through a discernment period of no less than 40 days, involving the whole congregation.
 - b. hold a church conference with every member eligible to vote and have a vote to disaffiliate with a supermajority of two-thirds present and voting.
 - c. pay current and prior year's apportionments in full and pay unfunded pension liability.
4. Clergy make a separate decision from any decision the church makes. They may remain United Methodist or surrender credentials and seek credentialing from a new denomination or local congregation. All St. Luke's clergy have indicated a desire to remain United Methodist.
5. The current paragraph allowing disaffiliation expires 12/31/2023. It may or may not be extended by General Conference in 2024.
6. This is not a decision regarding sexuality. While the policy of the United Methodist Church may or may not change in the future, the United Methodist church currently prohibits same sex marriage and ordination of self-avowed, practicing homosexual persons. Should the position change, local churches have an option to determine wedding and building policies, and clergy may choose, as always, what weddings they are willing to officiate.

St. Luke's Church Council
churchcouncil@stlukesmethodist.org

Steve Carroll, chair	Carter Dugan	Robbie McDonough
Kristin Reynolds, chair elect	Bryan Fisher	Robert McEvoy
Camilo Amezcuita	Linda Goehrs	Erin Naman
Sam Autry	Kelly Beth Hapgood	Sherry Ritcheson
Morgan Davis	Tim Hilpert	Lance Schuler
Cindy Donaldson	Vicki Keiser	

Church Council Roadmap

Monday, June 20	Church Council discussion of local church disaffiliation option
Saturday, August 6	Central South District "Discernment Meeting" with Bishop Scott Jones, attended by St. Luke's Church Council
Monday, September 19	Church Council discussion of local church disaffiliation option
Sunday, September 25	Family Gathering Church Conference discussion of local church disaffiliation process
Monday, October 10	Church Council decision on whether to enter formal process toward churchwide disaffiliation vote

We want your thoughts and questions!

Do you have concerns, questions or comments to share? St. Luke's Church Council would love to hear from you. Please make a note on the form below, fold it, and drop it in the basket on your way out of our meeting. Or you can email churchcouncil@stlukesmethodist.org and we will try to answer your question or distribute your comments to the full Church Council.

Here is my question:

Here is what I want St. Luke's Church Council to hear:

Here is what I need more information about:

Name (optional) _____

Email (optional) _____