

Being an United Methodist...

History, Polity and Doctrine

John Wesley

- Born 1703
- Anglican Priest
- Missionary to Colony of Georgia
- Founded, with brother Charles, the Methodist Movement as a "reform" of Anglicanism
- Followed Armenianism instead of Calvinism over debate of free will
- Started Evangelistic Movement to the "Common Man"– Open Air Preaching

John Wesley

- Three Point Theology– Prevenient Grace, Justification, Sanctification
- The Quadrilateral– Scripture, Tradition, Reason and Experience
- Personal Philosophy– "Save Souls and Build Up the Body"
- Ordained "Bishops" for work in the Americas
- Methodist Movement became The British Methodist Church, The United Methodist Church, The African Methodist Episcopal Church, The Nazarene Church, and 173 other denominations.

A History of the United Methodist Church

- Founded in Baltimore, Maryland in 1784
- Thomas Coke and Francis Asbury were ordained as the first "bishops" in America by John Wesley
- The movement was two pronged, theologically, including Anglican and Moravian influences. Thus, "Order" and "Holiness" were the two primary doctrinal influences
- The "movement" became a denomination because of the American Revolution

A History of the United Methodist Church

- Church employed “circuit riders”, “itinerancy” and “lay leadership” for organization.
- Church grew rapidly in new American nation and became largest mainline Protestant denomination and second largest Protestant church.
- The official name of the new church was the Methodist Episcopal Church.

A History of the United Methodist Church

- In 1830, the Church split into the Methodist Episcopal Church and the Methodist Episcopal Church, South. The Congregational Methodist Church, The Wesleyan Church, and the AME and AME, Zion churches were also formed during the pre-Civil War years.
- The organization of the two primary churches within the denomination followed the structural patterns of the USA with three branches of government--- Executive (Bishops), Legislative (The General Conference) and the Judicial (Judicial Council)

A History of the United Methodist Church

- In 1939, The ME, ME South, and Methodist Protestant Church merged to form “The Methodist Church”.
- In 1968, The Methodist Church and the United Evangelical Brethren Church merged to form “The United Methodist Church”.
- There are currently 12 million members of the United Methodist Church--- 8 million in the USA and Canada, and 4 millions in other parts of the world.
- There are over 60 million members of the “World Methodist Council” family.

A History of the United Methodist Church

- The Primary Theological Framework for the church is the Apostle's Creed and Nicene Creed.
- The Doctrinal Standards of the Church include:
 - The Articles of Religion of the Methodist Church
 - The Confessions of Faith of the UEB
 - General Rules of Methodist Societies
 - The Sermons of John Wesley
 - Wesley's Explanatory Notes of the New Testament

A History of the United Methodist Church

- The Book of Discipline includes the Theological Standards and the organization of the church which includes (in descending order)—
 - The General Conference
 - Central and Jurisdictional Conferences
 - Annual Conferences
 - Districts
 - Parish or Charges
 - Local Churches

A History of the United Methodist Church

- The Seven "Basic" Theological Beliefs of the UMC are:
 - The Trinity— orthodox view
 - Scripture— holy, sacred, inspired and infallible in Word
 - Sin— born good, but corrupted
 - Salvation— through faith in Jesus Christ alone
 - Sacraments— Holy Communion and Baptism
 - Free Will— as related to the Sovereignty of God
 - Grace— the precursor to the option of Salvation through Jesus Christ.

A History of the United Methodist Church

- Distinctives of the United Methodist Church
 - Pastors are appointed by Bishops at both discretion and consultation
 - Bishops are elected by Central and Jurisdictional Conferences for life. They lead by appointment to Annual Conferences
 - The "cabinet" of the UMC is any bishop's gathering of District Superintendents and Advisors
 - The General Agencies are the worldwide expressions of the church
 - The Church is supported through apportionments– fair share offerings assigned to each congregation and each Annual Conference.

A History of the United Methodist Church

- Our Stance on Social Issues (from the Social Standards in the Book of Discipline)
 - Abortion-- The United Methodist Church upholds the [sanctity of unborn human life](#) and is reluctant to affirm abortion as an acceptable practice, but is equally bound to respect the sacredness of the life and well-being of the mother and the unborn child.
 - Alcohol-- affirms our long-standing support of abstinence from alcohol as a faithful witness to God's liberating and redeeming love for persons

A History of the United Methodist Church

- Social Standards (continued)
 - Capital Punishment-- condemns [capital punishment](#), saying that it cannot accept retribution or social vengeance as a reason for taking human life
 - Gambling-- opposes [gambling](#), believing that it is a [sin](#) which feeds on human [greed](#) and which invites people to place their trust in possessions, rather than in God, whom Christians should "love ... with all your heart"
 - Homosexuality-- affirm[s] all persons are individuals of sacred worth, created in the image of God" and encourages United Methodists to be in ministry with all people.[55] However, the Church officially considers, "the practice of

homosexuality (to be) incompatible with Christian teaching." It states that "self-avowed practicing homosexuals" cannot be ordained as ministers,[57] and supports "...laws in civil society that define marriage as the union of one man and one woman"

A History of the United Methodist Church

- Social Standards (continued)
 - Inclusivity-- includes and welcomes people of all [races](#), [ethnicities](#), and ages
 - War and Military Service-- maintains that [war](#) is incompatible with [Christ's](#) message and teachings. Therefore, the Church rejects war as an instrument of national foreign policy, to be employed only as a last resort in the prevention of such evils as [genocide](#), brutal suppression of human rights, and unprovoked international aggression -- opposes [conscription](#) as incompatible with the teaching of Scripture-- supports and extends its ministry to those [persons](#) who [conscientiously oppose](#) all war, or any particular war, and who therefore refuse to serve in the armed forces. However, the United Methodist Church also supports and extends its ministry to those persons who conscientiously choose to serve in the armed forces or to accept alternative service.

A History of the United Methodist Church

- The United Methodist Church is a movement of "laity" and professes a unique connection between salvation by faith and social responsibility.
- The General Conference, which meets every four years, is the official authority of the church. Representatives are chosen from each annual conference to attend.
- The UMC is connectional, meaning that each local church is not autonomous but a "mission station" for the general church. Property of each congregation is held in trust by the UMC

A History of the United Methodist Church

- Pastors in the United Methodist Church belong to one of two orders or fellowships—
 - Order of Elders— responsible for Word, Order and Sacrament of the Church. Requires a college education, four years of theology school (M.Div.) and three years of residency under appointment after theology school.
 - Order of Deacon— responsible for Service, Education and Care. Requires a college education, a graduate theological degree (M.A., M.T.S or M.R.E) and two years of residency under appointment.

A History of the United Methodist Church

- Pastors in the United Methodist Church belong to one of two order or fellowships—
 - Fellowship of Diaconal Pastors— consecrated to the work of ministry through education, age-level support and worship. Requires a college education, a graduate level degree and years of service.
 - Fellowship of Local Pastors— licensed for Pastoral work under appointment to a specific congregation by the Bishop. Requires partial completion of a college education, must be 35 years or older, must complete Course of Study. Majority of UMC pastors are Local Pastors.

A History of the United Methodist Church

- The local church is organized as follows:
 - The pastor is the Chief Executive Officer of the church, appointed by the Bishop.
 - The Charge Conference, which meets annually and at special called times, is the policy making authority and legal binding authority of the congregation.
 - The Church Council is the operational authority of the congregation. The council consists of the following—
 - Chairs of the Council, Committee on Finance, Board of Trustees, Staff Parish Relations, and Lay Leaders, Delegates to Annual Conference, At-large members, and other properly appointed officials of the congregation for Nurture, Ourtreach and Witness.

A History of the United Methodist Church

- On average, a local congregation's apportionments represent 15-20% of the church's operational budget.
- Of that, 60-70% are funds required for the pension, care and health benefits of appointed and retired clergy.
- 10-15% are used for General Church agencies.
- The balance is used for Annual Conference ministries and administrative costs.