

Open hearts. Open minds. Open doors.  
**The people of The United Methodist Church®**

**UNITED METHODISTS** speak many languages and live in many countries with many different cultures, ethnic traditions, national histories and understandings of Christian faith and practice.

**WE ARE** people dedicated to a life of participation, personal responsibility, generosity, sacrifice and self-restraint, responding to the call of Jesus Christ.

**WE ARE** a covenant community, concerned about God's children everywhere. In life's clouds of doubt and division, we see the sunlight of God's purpose bringing healing, harmony and hope.

**WE LOVE** worship, study of God's Word, music, potluck dinners and a sense of community, a sense of belonging.

**WE WELCOME** people of faith into our churches, and especially people who are searching for answers to life's tough questions, because we know what it's like to feel alone, unsure...to need a welcoming place with open hearts, open minds, open doors.

**WE ROLL** up our sleeves and say, "Let's get to work," as we answer the call of making disciples for Jesus Christ.

**WE LIVE** the promise we made the day we joined The United Methodist Church...the promise of our prayers and our presence...our gifts and our service.

## THE HISTORY OF THE UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

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### **Roots (1736-1816) | Español**

The United Methodist Church shares a common history and heritage with other Methodist and Wesleyan bodies. The lives and ministries of John Wesley (1703–1791) and of his brother, Charles (1707–1788), mark the origin of their common roots.



### **The Churches Grow (1817-1843) | Español**

The Second Great Awakening was the dominant religious development among Protestants in America in the first half of the nineteenth century. Through revivals and camp meetings sinners were brought to an experience of conversion. Circuit riding preachers and lay pastors knit them into a connection.



### **The Slavery Question and Civil War (1844-1865) | Español**

John Wesley was an ardent opponent of slavery. Many of the leaders of early American Methodism shared his hatred for this form of human bondage. As the nineteenth century progressed, it became apparent that tensions were deepening in Methodism over the slavery question.



### **Reconstruction, Prosperity, and New Issues (1866-1913) | Español**

The Civil War dealt an especially harsh blow to The Methodist Episcopal Church, South. Its membership fell to two-thirds its pre-war strength. Many of its churches lay in ruins or were seriously damaged.



### **World War and More Change, 1914–1939 | Español**

In the years immediately prior to World War I, there was much sympathy in the churches for negotiation and arbitration as visible alternatives to international armed conflict. Many church members and clergy openly professed pacifism.



### **Movement Toward Union (1940-1967) | Español**

Although Methodists, Evangelicals, and United Brethren each had published strong statements condemning war and advocating peaceful reconciliation among the nations, the strength of their positions was largely lost with American involvement in the hostilities of World War II.

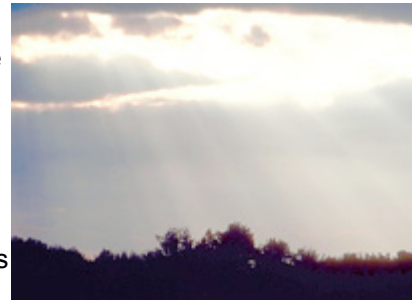


### **Developments and Changes Since 1968 | Español**

When The United Methodist Church was created in 1968, it had approximately 11 million members, making it one of the largest Protestant churches in the world.

## **What We Believe**

As United Methodists, we have an obligation to bear a faithful Christian witness to Jesus Christ, the living reality at the center of the Church's life and witness. To fulfill this obligation, we reflect critically on our biblical and theological inheritance, striving to express faithfully the witness we make in our own time.



### **Social Principles**

The United Methodist Church has a long history of concern for social justice. Its members have often taken forthright positions on controversial issues involving Christian principles. Early Methodists expressed their opposition to the slave trade, to smuggling, and to the cruel treatment of prisoners.

### **The Natural World**

All creation is the Lord's, and we are responsible for the ways we use and abuse it. Water, air, soil, minerals, energy resources, plants, animal life, and space are to be valued and conserved because they are God's creation and not solely because they are useful to human beings. God has granted us stewardship of creation. We should meet these stewardship duties through acts



of loving care and respect. Economic, political, social, and technological developments have increased our human numbers, and lengthened and enriched our lives. However, these developments have led to regional defoliation, dramatic extinction of species, massive human suffering, overpopulation, and misuse and overconsumption of natural and nonrenewable resources, particularly by industrialized societies. This continued course of action jeopardizes the natural heritage that God has entrusted to all generations. Therefore, let us recognize the responsibility of the church and its members to place a high priority on changes in economic, political, social, and technological lifestyles to support a more ecologically equitable and sustainable world leading to a higher quality of life for all of God's creation.

## The Nurturing Community

The community provides the potential for nurturing human beings into the fullness of their humanity. We believe we have a responsibility to innovate, sponsor, and evaluate new forms of community that will encourage development of the fullest potential in individuals. Primary for us is the gospel understanding that all persons are important—because they are human beings created by God and loved through and by Jesus Christ and not because they have merited significance. We therefore support social climates in which human communities are maintained and strengthened for the sake of all persons and their growth. We also encourage all individuals to be sensitive to others by using appropriate language when referring to all persons. Language of a derogatory nature (with regard to race, nationality, ethnic background, gender, sexuality, and physical difference) does not reflect value for one another and contradicts the gospel of Jesus Christ.



## Our Social Creed

We believe in God, Creator of the world; and in Jesus Christ, the Redeemer of creation. We believe in the Holy Spirit, through whom we acknowledge God's gifts, and we repent of our sin in misusing these gifts to idolatrous ends.

We affirm the natural world as God's handiwork and dedicate ourselves to its preservation, enhancement, and faithful use by humankind.

We joyfully receive for ourselves and others the blessings of community, sexuality, marriage, and the family.

We commit ourselves to the rights of men, women, children, youth, young adults, the aging, and people with disabilities; to improvement of the quality of life; and to the rights and dignity of racial, ethnic, and religious minorities.

We believe in the right and duty of persons to work for the glory of God and the good of themselves and others and in the protection of their welfare in so doing; in the rights to property as a trust from God, collective bargaining, and responsible consumption; and in the elimination of economic and social distress.

We dedicate ourselves to peace throughout the world, to the rule of justice and law among nations, and to individual freedom for all people of the world.



We believe in the present and final triumph of God's Word in human affairs and gladly accept our commission to manifest the life of the gospel in the world. Amen.

(It is recommended that this statement of Social Principles be continually available to United Methodist Christians and that it be emphasized regularly in every congregation. It is further recommended that "Our Social Creed" be frequently used in Sunday worship.)

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## **The World Community**

God's world is one world. The unity now being thrust upon us by technological revolution has far outrun our moral and spiritual capacity to achieve a stable world. The enforced unity of humanity, increasingly evident on all levels of life, presents the Church as well as all people with problems that will not wait for answer: injustice, war, exploitation, privilege, population, international ecological crisis, proliferation of arsenals of nuclear weapons, development of transnational business organizations that operate beyond the effective control of any governmental structure, and the increase of tyranny in all its forms. This generation must find viable answers to these and related questions if humanity is to continue on this earth. We commit ourselves as a Church to the achievement of a world community that is a fellowship of persons who honestly love one another. We pledge ourselves to seek the meaning of the gospel in all issues that divide people and threaten the growth of world community.

