

# What's so Great about being United Methodist?

## *At our best . . .*

### *We embrace God's grace.*

God loves us completely before we know it. That love, that grace, is a free gift offered to all people. We accept God's free gift of love through the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus the Christ and open ourselves to the ongoing work of the Holy Spirit, who accompanies us and empowers us to become like Christ for the world. One God creates in love, saves us for the sake of love, and renews us through love.

### *We follow three simple rules.*

These General Rules have governed Methodists from the beginning of the movement:

- first—do no harm by thought, word, or action;
- second—do all the good you can in building up the body of Christ and in loving and serving others and all of creation;
- third—follow the ordinances (spiritual practices) of God including the Lord's Supper, study of the Scriptures, prayer, and good works.

Though these rules may be simple to say, they are not easy to follow. We need one another and the ongoing work of the Holy Spirit to guide, motivate, and help us remember to keep it simple and keep our focus on God.

### *We are a connected community.*

The people of The United Methodist Church *are* The United Methodist Church, loving God and neighbor. Clergy and laity are equal partners in leadership, but Christ is the head of the church.

We are connected through our structure, our will, and the power of the Holy Spirit to learn how to be Christ in and for the world. Each individual builds a relationship with God in community with the local congregation, which is linked and knit together with other congregations and with the larger body (regional conferences, denominational service and support agencies, and the General Conference, which sets policy and direction for the global United Methodist Church). Together, as the body of Christ, we shine the light of God's love throughout the world!

### *We are devoted to social holiness.*

"There is no holiness but social holiness." Our tradition of social justice began with John Wesley; it continues with us; and it is our hope for future generations. We take the joy of the gospel story to the world in word and action as

- advocates for the poor and marginalized;
- active participants in the work for restorative justice;
- environmental accountability;
- equality of access to the essentials of life (food, clothing, shelter, health care, and education) and to opportunity;
- political and personal freedom;
- the dignity and value of each person and all people;
- building a world of trustworthy relationships among people and between people and God.

### *We are compassionate and generous.*

The United Methodist Church reaches out with deep compassion to help hurting people. Our United Methodist Committee on Relief (UMCOR) is quickly on the scene all over the world to provide aid, love, and care to victims of natural disasters, violence, and warfare. The offerings collected in local congregations help support the work of the church in the neighborhood, the community, and the world. It is the people, however, who do that work, who are the body of Christ in and for the world.

### *We are open and diverse.*

Jesus sought out and welcomed all who wished to know and love God—the poor and marginalized as well as the powerful. The Methodist movement brought new life to this focus on openness and diversity, taking the good news beyond the church walls to meet people where they were,

to nurture and strengthen them as human beings and beloved children of God, and to send them out to continue sharing the joyful message of God's love.

### *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 all persons.

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.

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As United Methodists, we are called to

- open our hearts to love and care for all people;
- open our minds to learn all we can about God's love and explore new ideas, fresh perspectives, and thoughtful dialogue; and
- open our doors so that we may both welcome the stranger and go out to love and serve the world.

We are a worldwide church. You can find a United Methodist church, mission, school, hospital, or clinic in villages, hamlets, towns, and cities around the world. More important, you can find United Methodists around the globe (more than 11 million of us) working, serving, and loving in the name of the risen Christ.

### *We are moving toward perfection.*

Will you find all of these wonderful aspects of United Methodism actively at work in every local congregation? No, we are not perfect. What you will find is that we, following the teachings of John Wesley, believe that we are called to live in ways that move us toward perfection. We work together and pray together and study together and worship together so that we can go out into the world with the love of God, empowered by the Holy Spirit to love and serve in the name of the risen Christ—to transform the world.

### *Learn more about it . . .*

To learn more about what makes The United Methodist Church special, to find a local United Methodist congregation, and to find ways to serve and connect, speak to a United Methodist pastor or:

- Go to <http://www.umc.org>, the official website of The United Methodist Church with links to services, information, opportunities, and local congregations across the globe.
- Ask InfoServ: a ministry of United Methodist Communications and the official information service of The United Methodist Church. E-mail them directly at [InfoServ@umcom.org](mailto:InfoServ@umcom.org).
- Read our Social Principles: <http://archives.umc.org/interior.asp?mid=1686>
- Learn about and donate to UMCOR: <http://gbgm-umc.org/umcor/>
- Read *The Social Principles of The United Methodist Church 2009–2012* (Nashville: The United Methodist Church, 2009); *Three Simple Rules* by Rueben P. Job (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2007); and *Questions and Answers About The United Methodist Church* by Thomas S. McAnally (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1995), available at 1-800-672-1789, <http://www.cokesbury.com>, or at your local Cokesbury store.

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