

WHAT WE BELIEVE



JOHN WESLEY
METHODIST CHURCH



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WHAT WE BELIEVE

Our Statement of Faith

John Wesley Methodist Church is part of the historic Christian faith. We hold true to the same beliefs that Christians always and everywhere have believed. We believe in the one true God who is revealed in the three persons of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. We believe in salvation by grace through faith in Jesus Christ. We believe the Bible is the inspired Words of God. We also share other Christian beliefs like belief in the Church, the Kingdom of God, and in the sacraments of baptism and the Lord's Supper. John Wesley Methodist Church is distinctly Christian in the Wesleyan Methodist tradition.

John Wesley Methodist Church has been birthed out of the United Methodist Church. The United Methodist Church has a unique heritage that came from the faith experience of two brothers in 18th century England, Charles and John Wesley. These two priests in the Church of England came to believe and experience that God is a God of amazing grace. The Lord used their faith, actions, and leadership to give birth to the Methodist movement that became one of the largest and most influential revivals in world history.

John Wesley became most known for his preaching. Charles Wesley became most known for his music and hymns. Together they focused on small group discipleship that emphasized holiness of heart and life, and they led a vision to reform and spread scriptural holiness. Through music, word, and actions of service, they led the Christians of their day in bringing the Gospel of the Kingdom to their land. Sinners found forgiveness. The lost were found. The poor, the orphan, the widow, the sick, the imprisoned, and the uneducated all found help and hope. Through the Methodist movement society was truly changed.

We are a Wesleyan Methodist Church of the Christian faith connected with a common purpose of experiencing the joy of living in community, intent on welcoming and discipling others into a relationship with Jesus Christ. We believe God redeems and transforms us through grace, mercy and love. We grow in the truth by the power of God's Spirit which transforms our lives and equips us to lead others to discover God's purpose. We believe the love of God, activated through the people of Jesus, changes us and our world.

We are a church with a mission. We exist to connect people to Jesus. Jesus Christ died for our sins and our salvation. He was resurrected from the dead. We believe these things. We believe God is love and grace. We believe God died for us so we can be in a relationship with a holy God. We want all people to know our God. This is not something we take lightly. It is our mission, and whatever distracts from that mission must be overcome and set aside.

We envision and dream of a church filled with people who are connected to Jesus, growing in faith and Christ-likeness, and activated by the Holy Spirit to change the world for God's glory. We are disciples of Jesus who seek to make more disciples. We believe it is our calling to make disciples in order to transform the world for God's glory. We remain focused on this mission by carrying out our strategic vision made up of three important words: Connect, Grow and Activate. We are unified through prayer, the gospel and our mission to connect people to Jesus. We do not connect people to a denomination, a pastor or a ministry, but to the person of Jesus Christ. Jesus is our Lord and Savior.

John Wesley Church connects people to their personal place in God's epic story of faith in Jesus Christ. By connecting to the Living Vine in faith, we discover who we are in God and we grow deeper in faith and embrace our call to engage others with the gospel of Jesus Christ. Making Disciples of Jesus Christ involves connecting to a life of faith and discipleship through the ministries of the local church. Jesus says in John 15:5 (NLT), "Yes, I am the vine; you are the branches. Those who remain in me, and I in them, will produce much fruit. For apart from me you can do nothing."

John Wesley Church uses God's grace and forgiveness to grow people into a deeper relationship with God. A growing follower of Jesus Christ seeks to look more like the one whom they are following, in their hearts and through their words and deeds. Colossians 3:10-11 (NLT) says, "Put on your new nature, and be renewed as you learn to know your Creator and become like him. In this new life, it doesn't matter if you are a Jew or a Gentile, circumcised or uncircumcised, barbaric, uncivilized, slave, or free. Christ is all that matters, and he lives in all of us."

John Wesley Church activates the disciple of Jesus Christ, by providing practical and powerful ways to serve God and neighbor in our world. A Spirit-empowered life is a living witness to an active faith which deploys disciples to love and impact the world for Christ both locally and globally. Connecting to Jesus activates what is learned in the holy places of life to impact the marketplaces of life.

1 Peter 4:10-11 (ESV) says, “As each has received a gift, use it to serve one another, as good stewards of God’s varied grace: whoever speaks, as one who speaks oracles of God; whoever serves, as one who serves by the strength that God supplies—in order that in everything God may be glorified through Jesus Christ. To him belong glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen.”

As Wesleyan Methodists we look to four sources to guide us in living out our faith in Jesus Christ. The first and foremost source is the Bible. The Old and New Testament scriptures are the primary guide we have for living out our faith. In addition to and secondary to the scriptures are tradition (the witness of faith of past generations), reason, and experience. Using these four sources as guides, we seek to interpret and apply the truth of the Gospel in the 21st century.

John Wesley Methodist Church adheres to “The Biblically Guided Positions on Current Social Principles.” We look to these as an invitation for us all to have a prayerful and studied dialogue of current issues. From this study and dialogue, we seek to live out our faith through loving action that will change the world.

The Wesleyan Concept of Grace

The Bible teaches us that everything we have from God is given because of God’s great love for us. “You are saved by God’s grace because of your faith,” Ephesians 2 reads. “This salvation is God’s gift. It’s not something you possessed. It’s not something you did that you can be proud of” (Ephesians 2:8-9 CEB).

Methodists recognize God’s grace at work throughout our spiritual journeys. John Wesley, the historic founder of the Methodist movement, wrote and preached about the role of God’s grace to prepare us, redeem us, and continually shape us into the people we were created to be. Wesley’s sermons and writings teach about three forms of grace. These forms of grace are reflected in the Wesleyan Way of Salvation.

- Prevenient grace is the grace of the porch. It prepares us to hear the gospel of Jesus Christ, and to respond in faith.
- Justifying grace is the grace of the door. At the moment of justification, we cross the threshold from unbelief to belief.
- Sanctifying grace is the grace of the interior. Our spiritual growth as followers of Jesus is a gift from God.

The Wesleyan Way of Salvation

1. The gift of grace is available to all persons. Our Father in Heaven is not willing that any should be lost (Matthew 18:14), but that all may come to “the knowledge of truth” (1 Timothy 2:4). With St. Paul, we affirm the proclamation found in Romans 10:9, “That if you confess with your mouth, ‘Jesus is Lord,’ and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved.”
2. Grace is the manifestation of God’s love toward fallen creation, to be freely received and freely given. This undeserved gift works to liberate humanity from both the guilt and power of sin, and live as children of God, freed for joyful obedience. In the classic Wesleyan expression, grace works in numerous ways throughout our lives, beginning with the general providence of God toward all.
3. God’s prevenient or preventing grace refers to “the first dawning of grace in the soul,” mitigating the effects of original sin, even before we are aware of our need for God. It prevents the full consequences of humanity’s alienation from God and awakens conscience, giving an initial sense of God and the first inclinations toward life. Received prior to our ability to respond, preventing grace enables genuine response to the continuing work of God’s grace.
4. God’s convincing grace leads us to what the Bible terms “repentance,” awakening in us a desire to “flee the wrath to come” and enabling us to begin to “fear God and work righteousness.”
5. God’s justifying grace works by faith to bring reconciliation to God through the atoning sacrifice of Jesus Christ, what God does for us. It is pardon for sin and ordinarily results in assurance, “God’s Spirit witnessing with our spirit that we are children of God.”
6. God’s sanctifying grace begins with God’s work of regeneration, sometimes referred to as “being born again.” It is God’s work in us as we continually turn to Him and seek to be perfected in His love. Sanctification is the process by which the Holy Spirit works to replace sin with the fruit of the Spirit. With John Wesley, we believe that a life of holiness or “entire sanctification” should be the goal of each individual’s journey with God.

Our ultimate hope and promise in Christ is glorification, where our souls and bodies are perfectly restored through this grace.

THE DOCTRINE OF JOHN WESLEY METHODIST CHURCH

**** The unchanging doctrine of all Methodists****

The Articles of Faith

Thirty-Nine Articles of Religion were finalized in 1571 to define the doctrine of the Church of England. When Methodism emerged as a church, independent of the Church of England two centuries later, John Wesley abbreviated the formulation to 24 Articles. An additional article dealing with the duty of Christians to civil authority was added by the Methodist Episcopal Church when it was formed in 1784. The Articles were officially adopted by the General Conference of 1808, when the first Restrictive Rule was also implemented, and revised by the Uniting Conference of 1939 when three Methodist communions within America became one. The Twenty-Five Articles are as follows:

Article I - Of Faith in the Holy Trinity

There is but one living and true God, everlasting, without body or parts, of infinite power, wisdom, and good; the maker and preserver of all things, both visible and invisible. And in unity of this Godhead there are three persons, of one substance, power, and eternity – the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost

Article II - Of the Word, or Son of God, Who Was Made Very Man

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; so that two whole and perfect natures, that is to say, the Godhead and Manhood, were joined together in one person, never to be divided; whereof is one Christ, very God and very Man, who truly suffered, was crucified, dead, and buried, to reconcile us to His Father, and to be a sacrifice, not only for original guilt, but also for actual sins of men.

Article III - Of the Resurrection of Christ

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 returns to judge all men at the last day.

Article IV - Of the Holy Ghost

The Holy Ghost, proceeding from the Father and the Son, is of one substance, majesty, and glory with the Father and the Son, very and eternal God.

Article V - Of the Sufficiency of the Holy Scriptures for Salvation

The Holy Scripture containeth all things necessary to salvation; so that whatsoever is not read therein, nor may be proved thereby, is not to be required of any man that it should be believed as an article of faith, or be thought requisite or necessary to salvation. In the name of the Holy Scripture, we do understand those canonical books of the Old and New Testaments of whose authority was never any doubt in the church. The names of the canonical books are: Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy, Joshua, Judges, Ruth, The First Book of Samuel, The Second Book of Samuel, The First Book of Kings, The Second Book of Kings, The First Book of Chronicles, The Second Book of Chronicles, The Book of Ezra, The Book of Nehemiah, The Book of Esther, The Book of Job, The Psalms, The Proverbs, Ecclesiastes or the Preacher, or Songs of Solomon, Four Prophets the Greater, Twelve Prophets the Less. All the books of the New Testament, as they are commonly received, we do receive and account canonical.

Article VI - Of the Old Testament

The Old Testament is not contrary to the New; for both in the Old and New Testaments everlasting life is offered to mankind by Christ, who is the only Mediator between God and man, being both God and Man. Wherefore they are not to be heard who feign that the old fathers did look only for transitory promises. Although the law given from God by Moses as touching ceremonies and rites doth not bind Christians, nor ought the civil precepts thereof of necessity be received in any commonwealth; yet notwithstanding, no Christian whatsoever is free from the obedience of the commandments which are called moral.

Article VII - Of Original or Birth Sin

Original sin standeth not in the following of Adam (as the Pelagians do vainly talk), but it is the corruption of the nature of every man, that naturally is engendered of the offspring of Adam, whereby man is very far gone from original righteousness, and of his own nature inclined to evil, and that continually.

Article VIII - Of Free Will

The condition of man after the fall of Adam is such that he cannot turn and prepare himself, by his own natural strength and works, to faith, and calling upon God; wherefore we have no power to do good works, pleasant and acceptable to God, without the grace of God by Christ preventing us, that we may have a good will, and working with us, when we have that good will.

Article IX - Of the Justification of Man

We are accounted righteous before God only for the merit of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, by faith, and not for our own works or deserving. Wherefore, that we are justified by faith, only, is a most wholesome doctrine, and very full of comfort.

Article X - Of Good Works

Although good works, which are the fruits of faith, and follow after justification, cannot put away our sins, and endure the severity of God's judgment; yet are they pleasing and acceptable to God in Christ, and spring out of a true and lively faith, insomuch that by them a lively faith may be as evidently known as a tree is discerned by its fruit.

Article XI - Of Works of Supererogation

Voluntary works – besides, over and above God's commandments – which they call works of supererogation, cannot be taught without arrogance and impiety. For by them men do declare that they do not only render unto God as much as they are bound to do, but that they do more for his sake than of bounden duty is required; whereas Christ saith plainly: When you have done all that is commanded you, say, we are unprofitable servants.

Article XII - Of Sin After Justification

Not every sin willingly committed after justification is the sin against the Holy Ghost, and unpardonable. Wherefore, the grant of repentance is not to be denied to such as fall into sin after justification. After we have received the Holy Ghost, we may depart from grace given, and fall into sin, and, by the grace of God, rise again and amend our lives. And therefore, they are to be condemned who say they can no more sin as long as they live here; or deny the place of forgiveness to such as truly repent.

Article XIII - Of the Church

The visible church of Christ is a congregation of faithful men in which the pure Word of God is preached, and the Sacraments duly administered according to Christ's ordinance, in all those things that of necessity are requisite to the same.

Article XIV - Of Purgatory

The Romish doctrine concerning purgatory, pardon, worshiping, and adoration, as well of images as of relics, and also invocation of saints, is a fond thing, vainly invented, and grounded upon no warrant of Scripture, but repugnant to the Word of God.

Article XV - Of Speaking in the Congregation in Such a Tongue as the People Understand

It is a thing plainly repugnant to the Word of God, and the custom of the primitive church, to have public prayer in the church, or to minister the Sacraments, in a tongue not understood by the people.

Article XVI - Of the Sacraments

Sacraments ordained of Christ are not only badges or tokens of Christian men's profession, but rather they are certain signs of grace, and God's good will toward us, by which he doth work invisibly in us, and doth not only quicken, but also strengthen and confirm, our faith in him. There are two Sacraments ordained of Christ our Lord in the Gospel; that is to say, Baptism and the Supper of the Lord.

Those five commonly called sacraments, that is to say, confirmation, penance, orders, matrimony, and extreme unction, are not to be counted for Sacraments of the Gospel; being such as have partly grown out of the corrupt following of the apostles, and partly are states of life allowed in the Scriptures, but yet have not the like nature of Baptism and the Lord's Supper, because they have not any visible sign or ceremony ordained of God.

The Sacraments were not ordained of Christ to be gazed upon, or to be carried about; but that we should duly use them. And in such only as worthily receive the same, they have a wholesome effect or operation; but they that receive them unworthily, purchase to themselves condemnation, as St. Paul saith.

Article XVII - Of Baptism

Baptism is not only a sign of profession and mark of difference whereby Christians are distinguished from others that are not baptized; but it is also a sign of regeneration or the new birth. The Baptism of young children is to be retained in the Church.

Article XVIII - Of the Lord's Supper

The Supper of the Lord is not only a sign of the love that Christians ought to have among themselves one to another, but rather is a sacrament of our redemption by Christ's death; insomuch that, to such as rightly, worthily, and with faith receive the same, the bread which we break is a partaking of the body of Christ; and likewise, the cup of blessing is a partaking of the blood of Christ.

Transubstantiation, or the change of the substance of bread and wine in the Supper of our Lord, cannot be proved by Holy Writ, but is repugnant to the plain words of Scripture, overthroweth the nature of a sacrament, and hath given occasion to many superstitions.

The body of Christ is given, taken, and eaten in the Supper, only after a heavenly and spiritual manner. And the mean whereby the body of Christ is received and eaten in the Supper is faith. The Sacrament of the Lord's Supper was not by Christ's ordinance reserved, carried about, lifted up, or worshiped.

Article XIX - Of Both Kinds

The cup of the Lord is not to be denied to the lay people; for both the parts of the Lord's Supper, by Christ's ordinance and commandment, ought to be administered to all Christians alike.

Article XX - Of the One Oblation of Christ, Finished upon the Cross

The offering of Christ, once made, is that perfect redemption, propitiation, and satisfaction for all the sins of the whole world, both original and actual; and there is none other satisfaction for sin but that alone. Wherefore the sacrifice of masses, in the which it is commonly said that the priest doth offer Christ for the quick and the dead, to have remission of pain or guilt, is a blasphemous fable and dangerous deceit.

Article XXI - Of the Marriage of Ministers

The ministers of Christ are not commanded by God's law either to vow the estate of single life, or to abstain from marriage; therefore, it is lawful for them, as for all other Christians, to marry at their own discretion, as they shall judge the same to serve best to godliness.

Article XXII - Of the Rites and Ceremonies of Churches

It is not necessary that rites and ceremonies should in all places be the same, or exactly alike; for they have been always different, and may be changed according to the diversity of countries, times, and men's manners, so that nothing be ordained against God's Word. Whosoever, through his private judgment, willingly and purposely doth openly break the rites and ceremonies of the church to which he belongs, which are not repugnant to the Word of God, and are ordained and approved by common authority, ought to be rebuked openly, that others may fear to do the like, as one that offend against the common order of the church, and wound the consciences of weak brethren.

Every particular church may ordain, change, or abolish rites and ceremonies, so that all things may be done to edification.

Article XXIII - Of the Rulers of the United States of America

The President, the Congress, the general assemblies, the governors, and the councils of state, as the delegates of the people, are the rulers of the United States of America, according to the division of power made to them by the Constitution of the United States and by the constitutions of their respective states. And the said states are a sovereign and independent nation, and ought not to be subject to any foreign jurisdiction.

Article XXIV - Of Christian Men's Goods

The riches and goods of Christians are not common as touching the right, title, and possession of the same, as some do falsely boast. Notwithstanding, every man ought, of such things as he possesses, liberally to give alms to the poor, according to his ability.

Article XXV - Of a Christian Man's Oath

As we confess that vain and rash swearing is forbidden Christian men by our Lord Jesus Christ and James his apostle, so we judge that the Christian religion doth not prohibit, but that a man may swear when the magistrate requires, in a cause of faith and charity, so it be done according to the prophet's teaching, in justice, judgment, and truth.

Of Sanctification (*from the Methodist Protestant Discipline*)

Sanctification is that renewal of our fallen nature by the Holy Ghost, received through faith in Jesus Christ, whose blood of atonement cleanse all from sin; whereby we are not only delivered from the guilt of sin, but are washed from its pollution, saved from its power, and enabled, through grace, to love God with all our hearts and to walk in His holy commandments blameless.

[The following provision was adopted by the Uniting Conference (1939).]

Of the Duty of Christians to the Civil Authority

It is the duty of all Christians, and especially of all Christian ministers, to observe and obey the laws and commands of the governing or supreme authority of the country of which are citizens or The following Article from the Methodist Protestant Discipline was placed here by the Uniting Conference (1939). It was not one of the Articles of Religion voted upon by the three churches.] subjects or in which they reside, and to use all laudable means to encourage and enjoin obedience to the powers that be.

The Doctrinal Standards:

The Doctrinal Standards of John Wesley Methodist Church shall consist of *The Standard Sermons of John Wesley and Wesley's Explanatory Notes on the New Testament*.

The Restrictive Rule: In continuity of our Wesleyan heritage, the governing body of a John Wesley Methodist Church shall not establish any new standards of rules or doctrines contrary to our preexisting and established Statement of Faith or Doctrinal Standards.

The Creedal Affirmations of John Wesley Methodist Church

The following summaries of the apostolic witness disclosed in Scripture have been affirmed by many Christian communities, and express orthodox Christian teaching.

The Apostles' Creed:

I believe in God, the Father Almighty,
maker of heaven and earth.
And in Jesus Christ, His only Son, our Lord,
who was conceived by the Holy Spirit,
born of the Virgin Mary,
suffered under Pontius Pilate,
was crucified, dead, and buried;
the third day He rose from the dead;
He ascended into heaven,
and sitteth at the right hand of God the Father Almighty,
from thence He shall come again to judge the quick and the dead.
I believe in the Holy Spirit,
the holy catholic church,
the communion of saints,
the forgiveness of sins,
the resurrection of the body
and the life everlasting. Amen.

The Nicene Creed (A.D. 381):

We believe in one God, the Father, the Almighty, maker of heaven and earth, of all that is, seen and unseen. We believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ, the only Son of God, eternally begotten of the Father, God from God, Light from Light, true God from true God, begotten, not made, of one Being with the Father; through Him all things were made. For us and for our salvation He came down from heaven, was incarnate of the Holy Spirit and the Virgin Mary and became truly human. For our sake He was crucified under Pontius Pilate; He suffered death and was buried. On the third day He rose again in accordance with the Scriptures; He ascended into heaven and is seated at the right hand of the Father. He will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead, and His kingdom will have no end. We believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life, who proceeds from the Father and the Son, who

with the Father and the Son is worshiped and glorified, who has spoken through the prophets. We believe in one holy catholic* and apostolic church. We acknowledge one baptism for the forgiveness of sins. We look for the resurrection of the dead, and the life of the world to come. Amen.

The Definition of Chalcedon (A.D. 451):

Following the holy fathers, we teach with one voice that the Son of God and our Lord Jesus Christ is to be confessed as one and the same Person,
That He is perfect in Godhead and perfect in manhood, truly God and truly man, of a reasonable soul and body consisting of one substance with the Father as regards His Godhead, and at the same time of one substance with us as regards His manhood, like us in all respects, apart from sin. Begotten of His Father before the ages as regards His Godhead,
But in these last days born for us and for our salvation of the Virgin Mary, the God-bearer. This one and the same Jesus Christ, the only-begotten Son of God,
must be confessed to be in two natures, without confusion, without changes, without division, not as parted or separated into two persons, but one and the same Son and only-begotten God the Word, our Lord Jesus Christ.
Even as the prophets from earliest times spoke of Him,
And our Lord Jesus Christ Himself taught us,
And the creed of the fathers has handed down to us.

BIBLICALLY GUIDED POSITIONS ON CURRENT SOCIAL ISSUES

John Wesley Methodist Church's biblically guided position on some of today's most pressing social issues, including human sexuality, marriage, and sanctity of life are available at jwchurch.org/social. These positions have been written with our best effort to balance the grace and truth which defined Jesus Christ our Lord (John 1:14, 17), and are built from our conviction that God's Word is our ultimate authority. Should you have any questions or wish to discuss these issues further, we encourage you to contact any of our pastors.



5830 Bermuda Dunes Dr.,
Houston, TX 77069

281-444-2112

www.jwchurch.org