

What We Believe

As a part of the United Methodist Church, Riverside is connected to a denomination that values diversity. Within every United Methodist Congregation, there is room for a wide variety of opinions. Though there are Social Principles that help guide how United Methodists interact with the social world, these are not understood to be irrefutable stances. That being said, there are foundational beliefs that help define who we are as United Methodist Christians. More details can be found at www.umc.org.

Triune God

There is but one living and true God, everlasting, without body or parts, of infinite power, wisdom, and goodness; 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. God is also sometimes described as the Creator, Redeemer, and Sustainer.

[Our Christian Roots: God](#)

Jesus, the Son of God

Jesus is the Word of God made flesh. He is fully human and fully divine. He was born of a virgin woman, healed the sick, fed the hungry, and called people to right relationship with the Father. He suffered, was crucified, died, and was buried. He did and truly rise again from the dead. He appeared to his disciples in the breaking of bread, and in many times and places. He ascended to heaven to sit at the right hand of the Father.

[Our Christian Roots: Jesus](#)

The Holy Spirit

Jesus promised that the Father would send the Advocate, the Companion, the Holy Spirit to empower the Church. On Pentecost, the Holy Spirit gave birth to the Church, which is the body and presence of Christ on earth.

[Our Christian Roots: The Holy Spirit](#)

The Bible

The Holy Bible contains all things necessary to salvation. Both the Old and New Testaments reveal the Word of God, which is to be received through the Holy Spirit as the true rule and guide for faith and practice.

[Our Christian Roots: The Bible](#)

Baptism

Through the Sacrament of Baptism, we are initiated into Christ's Church. The baptized receives the Holy Spirit, and becomes a member of the Body of Christ. United Methodists believe that this is an act of God alone. It is a gift that can be granted to someone of any age, and by any means. The amount of water is not important.

[A United Methodist Understanding of Baptism](#)

Communion

On the first Sunday of every month, the people of Riverside celebrate Communion. This is also called The Great Thanksgiving. In the sharing of the bread and grape juice, we remember the life, ministry, death and resurrection of Jesus. There are many ways to understand Communion, and there a variety of modes to share Communion, but one thing is sure: All are welcome. The table of Communion is not the pastor's table. It is not a United Methodist table. It is Christ's table. And at Christ's table, all are welcome.

[We Are Nourished By Communion](#)

The Wesleyan Heritage

As the founders of the Methodist movement, John and Charles Wesley remain important figures in the United Methodist Church. The Wesley brothers brought a unique understanding of faith and practice, which led to the birth of the Methodist Church. There are some distinctive features of Wesleyan tradition and theology which are at the roots of our Church today.

"Wesley and the early Methodists were particularly concerned about inviting people to experience God's grace and to grow in their knowledge and love of God through disciplined Christian living. They placed primary emphasis on Christian living, on putting faith and love into action. This emphasis on what Wesley referred to as "practical divinity" has continued to be a hallmark of United Methodism today." ([Read more at umc.org Our Wesleyan Heritage](#))

Scripture

In thinking about our faith, we put primary reliance on the Bible. It is the unique testimony to God's self-disclosure in the life of Israel; in the ministry, death, and resurrection of Jesus the Christ; and in the Spirit's work in the early church. It's our sacred canon and, thus, the decisive source of our Christian witness and the authoritative measure of the truth in our beliefs.

In our theological journey we study the Bible within the believing community. Even when we study it alone, we're guided and corrected through dialogue with other Christians. We interpret individual texts in light of their place in the Bible as a whole. We use concordances, commentaries, and other aids prepared by the scholars. With the guidance of the Holy Spirit, we try to discern both the original intention of the text and its meaning for our own faith and life.

Tradition

Between the New Testament age and our own era stand countless witnesses on whom we rely in our theological journey. Through their words in creed, hymn, discourse, and prayer, through their music and art, through their courageous deeds, we discover Christian insight by which our study of the Bible is illuminated. This living tradition comes from many ages and many cultures. Even today Christians living in far different circumstances from our own—in Africa, in Latin America, in Asia—are helping us discover fresh understanding of the Gospel's power.

Experience

A third source and criterion of our theology is our experience. By experience we mean especially the “new life in Christ,” which is ours as a gift of God's grace; such rebirth and personal assurance gives us new eyes to see the living truth in Scripture. But we mean also the broader experience of all the life we live, its joys, its hurts, its yearnings. So we interpret the Bible in light of our cumulative experiences. We interpret our life's experience in light of the biblical message. We do so not only for our experience individually but also for the experience of the whole human family.

Reason

Finally, our own careful use of reason, though not exactly a direct source of Christian belief, is a necessary tool. We use our reason in reading and interpreting the Scripture. We use it in relating the Scripture and tradition to our experience and in organizing our theological witness in a way that's internally coherent. We use our reason in relating our beliefs to the full range of human knowledge and in expressing our faith to others in clear and appealing ways

From The Book of Discipline of The United Methodist Church — 2012. Copyright 2012 by The United Methodist Publishing House. Used by permission.