

WHAT WE BELIEVE

God

We believe in the one true holy and living God, Creator of the universe; Who by His sovereign power continues to sustain His creation and Who is infinite in power, wisdom, justice, goodness, mercy and love. We believe the one God reveals Himself as the Trinity: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, each distinct but inseparable, eternally one in essence and power.

(Genesis 1,2, 3:22; Deuteronomy 4:13; Psalm 34:8; 89:14; 90:2; Proverbs 3:13; Isaiah 25:8; 40:10; Jeremiah 10:10,12; Ephesians 4:2,32)

Jesus Christ

We believe that Jesus Christ is the one true Son of God, fully God and fully human, our only Savior and Lord. He was conceived of the Holy Spirit and born of the Virgin Mary. He lived a sinless life. He was crucified, suffered, and died on the cross as a sacrifice for our sins. On the third day He arose bodily from the dead. He ascended into Heaven, where He intercedes for us. We believe that He will come again in glory. (Isaiah 7:14; Matthew 1:20; 24:30; John 1:1,2; 3:16; Acts 1:11; I Timothy 3:16; Hebrews 7:25)

The Holy Spirit

We believe that the Holy Spirit, like Jesus Christ, is true God. We believe that the ministry of the Holy Spirit is to reveal and glorify the Lord, Jesus Christ, and during this age to convict humanity, regenerate the sinner and indwell, guide, instruct, and empower the believer for godly living, witnessing, and service. The Holy Spirit incorporates and unifies believers into the body of Christ, gives them spiritual gifts for the common good of the church body, and produces the fruit of the Spirit in their lives. (John 14:16-18; 16:7-15; Acts 1:8; Romans 8:13,14,26; I Corinthians 12:7-13; Galatians 5:22-23; Ephesians 4:1-6; 5:18; Titus 3:5)

The Holy Scripture

We believe in the inspiration of the Holy Scriptures -- both the Old and New Testaments—as our true rule and guide for faith and practice. We believe the Bible is God’s written Word, and that it is our ultimate authority on all matters of belief and morality. All teaching and doctrine are to be based on what the Bible says and not on popular culture and opinion. (Joshua 1:8, Psalm 33:4; Mark 13:31; I Thessalonians 2:13; II Timothy 3:16-17, I Peter 1:24-25; II Peter 1:20-21).

Salvation

We believe we **all** have sinned and fallen short of God’s glory (Romans 3:23). We believe that God offers redemption and restoration to all who confess and forsake their sin, seeking His

mercy and forgiveness through Jesus Christ (Acts 3:19-21; Romans 10:9-10; I Corinthians 6:9-11).

We believe that eternal life with God is offered as a free gift, not the result of any human works or goodness. We believe that the shed blood of Jesus Christ and His resurrection provide the only ground for justification and salvation for all who believe, and such as receive Jesus are born of the Holy Spirit, and they become children of God. This salvation requires an individual acknowledgment of sin and a recognition that the penalty for that sin was paid by the death of Jesus Christ on the cross. This act of salvation thereby transfers our trust from ourselves and our own merits or work to a trust in Christ and His substitutionary death as the only means of salvation. (Exodus 15:2; Psalm 27:1; John 1:12; 3:16; 6:47; Romans 6:23; Ephesians 1:7-9; Rev. 7:10)

The Church

We believe that the true Church is composed of those who, through saving faith in Jesus Christ, have been regenerated by the Holy Spirit and are united together in the body of Christ, of which He is the head. We believe that only those who are believers in Jesus Christ shall be eligible for membership in the local church. As United Methodists, we believe in two sacraments: the Lord's Supper and Water Baptism.

(Matthew 16:18; 28:19; Luke 22:14-20; I Corinthians 11:23-29; 14:12; Ephesians 1:22-23; 2:19-22; 4:11-16; 5:23; Colossians 1:18; Hebrews 10:24,25)

Gender, Marriage, and Sexuality

We believe that God wonderfully and immutably creates each person as male or female. These two distinct, complementary genders together reflect the image and nature of God (Genesis 1:26-27; Matthew 19:4).

We believe that the term "marriage" has only one meaning: the uniting of one man and one woman in a single, exclusive union, as delineated in Scripture (first found in Genesis 2:18-25 and then reaffirmed by Jesus in Matthew 19:5-6 and by Paul in Ephesians 5:31). We believe that God intends any sexual intimacy to occur only between a man and a woman who are married to each other (I Corinthians 6:15-7:4; Hebrews 13:4).

The Unborn

We believe that innocent human life is precious and should be protected from conception to birth (Psalm 139:13-16; Jeremiah 1:4-5).

The Worth of Each Person

We believe that all people have been created in the image of God, and we fully recognize the sacred worth of each individual (Acts 10:34-35; Galatians 3:28). Every person must be afforded compassion, love, kindness, respect, and dignity (Mark 12:28-31; Luke 6:31). Hateful and harassing behavior or attitudes directed toward any individual are to be repudiated and are not in accord with Scripture nor the doctrines of BUMC.

Accountability

We believe that in order to preserve the function and integrity of Bethlehem UMC as a local Body of Christ and to provide a biblical role model to BUMC members and the community, all persons in a BUMC leadership role -- including staff, ministry leaders, and teachers, whether paid or unpaid -- agree to abide by this Statement of Faith in its entirety (Matthew 5:16; Philippians 2:14-16; I Thessalonians 5:22).