



Ridgway, Colorado

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We are affiliated with: Presbyterian Church (USA), Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, United Church of Christ and United Methodist Church.

Following are the belief statements of each of our denomination affiliates.

Presbyterian Church (USA) – Basic Beliefs



Scriptures - Revelation

1. Jesus is the incarnate Word of God. The Holy Scriptures are the means by which God has chosen to reveal His Son to His church.
2. The Word of God, "which is contained in the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments, is the only rule to direct us how we may glorify and enjoy God."
3. Linguistic and literary study of authenticated ancient manuscript fragments causes us to believe that the Scripture we have is an accurate and authoritative representation of God's intended word to us.
4. For contemporary reformed people, no singular translation is held out as the 'authorized' translation. An informed student of the Bible would be wise to, in their study of scriptures, look at several translations, commentaries, and original language word studies, all under the guidance of God's Holy Spirit.

God

1. God is One. [cf., Deuteronomy 6:4]
2. God is known to us in three 'persons' - Father, Son and Holy Spirit.
3. God is Spirit, Infinite, Eternal. God is unchangeable in His Being, Wisdom, Power, Holiness, Justice, Goodness and Truth. [Westminster Shorter Catechism]
4. God's Activities in Creation.
 - a. God as Creator - i.e., God created, creates, continues to create.
 - b. God as Sustainer - God sustains creation through His *providence*.
 - c. God as Redeemer – God's will is to redeem all of creation to Himself.

Christ

1. Jesus Christ is the pre-existent Son of God. [cf., the Gospel of John, ch. 1]
2. Jesus Christ, while on earth, was fully God and fully human.

3. Christ as our Redeemer, executes the offices of *Prophet, Priest, and King*.
 - a. Jesus Christ's work as Redeemer is to restore our broken relationship with God.
 - b. As Prophet, Jesus makes God's will known to us.
 - c. As Priest, Jesus breaks down the barriers that sin has placed between God and humanity.
 - d. As King, Jesus reigns over His universal Kingdom, all things have been placed under his feet.
4. Jesus Christ is the only way by which a person can enter into relationship with God. Jesus Christ said, "I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life. No one comes to the Father except through me."
5. Jesus' atoning death on the cross was the absolutely necessary and sacrificial act of a loving God that must be appropriated by anyone who would begin a relationship with God.

Holy Spirit

1. The Holy Spirit is God, the 'third person' of the Trinity that is God. The Spirit is to be worshipped with the Father and the Son.
2. The Spirit brings about the 'new birth' of faith in a believer's life. The Spirit is the power of God who brings about change in the believer and in the church.

Sin

1. Ours is a world fully afflicted by sin, we are a 'fallen' Creation, i.e., All have sinned a fall short of the glory of God' - Paul the Apostle.
2. Sin is anything done, or un-done, which denies God's Lordship in our lives, in our minds, in our relationships, with God and with others.
3. Sin is the result of our free will whenever we deny God's will and follow evil.

Humanity

1. We are inextricably related to God.
2. God created us, God judges us, God redeems us, through His love for us.

Grace

1. God seeks us before we even know to seek God. We cannot even know to seek God without the prevenient gift of Grace from God.
2. The gift of God's grace is for all people at all times. God desires that all should come to a saving knowledge of Him.
3. God's grace is given to us so that we might:
 - a. Come to a restored and full understanding of the true nature of God
 - b. That our inner 'unity' might be restored - that we would come to see ourselves as God intends for us to see ourselves
 - c. That we might be restored to full fellowship with God and our neighbor
4. God's gift of Grace is made available for us through Jesus Christ's atoning death for us on the cross.
5. God's redemptive power of Grace comes to us through our faith/trust in God's offer of forgiveness. Grace and faith are revealed to us through our repentance for our sinful ways.

The Christian Life

1. We are called to remember that we are to be dependent on God.
2. We are called:
 - a. to acknowledge and worship the majesty of God;
 - b. to serve God;
 - c. to love God through our love of our neighbor;
 - d. to be a prayerful people;
 - e. to be people of the word, faithfully seeking God's will through our study of Scripture.

The Church

1. The church is God's ordained, established community of faith in this world.
"The church is a community, a society, a people, who sustain a peculiar relationship to God and to one another in Christ. The church is a community of people whose hope is in the redeeming work of Jesus Christ. [Her] life is dependent upon the presence of the living Lord; through the indwelling power of the Holy Spirit."
2. The church is present "wherever the Word of God is truly preached and heard, wherever the Sacraments are rightly administered and received, and wherever church discipline is wisely enforced."
3. The church exists to be a living testimony to the redeeming love of God in Christ and is the vehicle through which God's love is made known and His will is done on earth. The church was given existence in order to disclose the love, purpose, and character of God - that is, to glorify God.

The Sacraments

1. Presbyterians hold that there are only two sacraments - *Baptism* and the *Lord's Supper*. The Sacraments enable faith to grow, show that the Holy Spirit is at work in the lives of believers, and make Christ real in the lives of believers. Sacraments are *Signs and Seals* of God's work in our lives.
 - a. Baptism must include the application of water (degree or amount is not consequential) and must be administered in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. Baptism recognizes the sovereign work of God in a person's life, whereby he has brought a person into the fellowship and life of His church. Parents may bring/are encouraged to bring their children to be baptized before the gathered fellowship of believers in worship.

Membership in the church is dependent on a person's personal profession of faith in Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior. Persons making a profession of faith, and having not previously been baptized, will also be baptized at this time.

- b. The Lord's Supper is open to anyone who has been baptized in Christ's church - universal (with water/utilizing the Trinitarian formula). Again, trusting the sovereign work of God in a person's life and the Holy Spirit's power to convict and to bring new life into the life of a person, we Presbyterians extend an open invitation [without prior examination] to the Table of the Lord to anyone who might wish to partake of this gift from God.

Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) – Statements of Belief



Statements of Belief

Lutherans believe in the Triune God. God created and loves all of creation - the earth and the seas and all of the world's inhabitants. We believe that God's Son, Jesus Christ, transforms lives through his death on the cross and his new life, and we trust that God's Spirit is active in the world.

We are part of God's unfolding plan. When we gather for worship, we connect with believers everywhere. When we study the Bible or hear God's word in worship, we are drawn more deeply into God's own saving story.

The convictions shared by Christians from many different traditions are expressed in statements of belief called creeds.

These ecumenical creeds that Lutherans affirm and use in worship confess the faith of the church through the ages and around the world.

The Confession of Faith of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America is part of our founding constitution. The ELCA accepts the following creeds as true declarations of the faith of this church:

ELCA Confession of Faith

What we believe in the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America.

- This church confesses the Triune God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.
- This church confesses Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior and the Gospel as the power of God for the salvation of all who believe:
 - Jesus Christ is the Word of God incarnate, through whom everything was made and through whose life, death, and resurrection, God fashions a new creation.
 - The proclamation of God's message to us as both Law and Gospel is the Word of God, revealing judgment and mercy through word and deed, beginning with the Word in creation, continuing in the history of Israel, and centering in all its fullness in the person and work of Jesus Christ.
 - The canonical Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments are the written Word of God. Inspired by God's Spirit speaking through their authors, they record and announce God's revelation centering in Jesus Christ. Through them God's Spirit speaks to us to create and sustain Christian faith and fellowship for service in the world.
- This church accepts the canonical Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments as the inspired Word of God and the authoritative source and norm of its proclamation, faith, and life.
- This church accepts the Apostles', Nicene, and Athanasian Creeds as true declarations of the faith of this church.
- This church accepts the Unaltered Augsburg Confession as a true witness to the Gospel, acknowledging as one with it In faith and doctrine all churches that likewise accept the teachings of the Unaltered Augsburg Confession.
- This church accepts the other confessional writings in the Book of Concord, namely, the Apology of the Augsburg Confession, the Smalcald Articles and the Treatise, the Small Catechism, the Large Catechism, and the Formula of Concord, as further valid interpretations of the faith of the Church.
- This church confesses the Gospel, recorded in the Holy Scriptures and confessed in the ecumenical creeds and Lutheran confessional writings, as the power of God to create and sustain the Church for God's mission in the world.

The Confession of Faith is published in the Constitution of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America.

United Church of Christ (UCC) – Beliefs



Baptism - Baptism is the church community's promise of "love, support, and care." United Church of Christ (UCC) churches baptize infants brought by parents, or adults, when they are received into membership.

Bible - The Bible is used for inspiration, guidance, and for preaching. Members are not required to believe literally any version of Scripture.

Communion - All people of faith are invited to participate in the sacrament of communion. The act is seen as a reminder of the cost of Christ's sacrifice. Communion is celebrated as a mystery, honoring Christ and those who have died in his faith.

Creed - The UCC does not require its congregations or members to follow a creed. The only profession necessary is love.

Equality - There is no discrimination of any type in United Church of Christ beliefs.

Heaven, Hell - Many members do not believe in specific places of reward or punishment, but do believe God gives believers eternal life.

Jesus Christ - Jesus Christ is recognized as fully human and fully God, Son of the Creator, Savior, and Head of the Church.

Prophecy - United Church of Christ beliefs call the UCC to be a prophetic church. Many of the church's positions call for the same treatment of people as did the prophets and apostles.

Sin - According to the UCC, sin is "opposition or indifference to the will of God."

Trinity - The UCC believes in the Triune God: Creator resurrected Christ and the Holy Spirit.

The United Church of Christ sets itself apart from other Christian denominations with its emphasis on the belief that God still speaks to his followers today. New light and understanding are constantly being revealed through interpretation of the Bible, says the United Church of Christ.

Sacraments - Congregations conduct baptism during worship services when the community is present. Sprinkling is the usual practice, although some congregations use immersion. Communion elements are usually brought to members in their pews.

Worship Service - United Church of Christ beliefs account for wide diversity in services. Local needs and traditions usually dictate worship styles and music. While no single liturgy is imposed, a typical Sunday service includes a sermon, adoration of God, general confession of sins, an assurance of forgiveness, prayers or songs of thanksgiving, and members dedicating themselves to God's will.

All members of the UCC are equals as the priesthood of believers, and though ordained ministers have special training, they are considered servants. Individuals are free to live and believe based on their interpretation of God's will for their lives.

UCC stresses unity within the church and a unifying spirit to heal divisions. It seeks unity in essentials but allows for diversity in nonessentials, with a charitable attitude toward disagreement. The unity of the church is a gift from God, UCC teaches, yet diversity is to be accepted with love.

United Methodist – Beliefs



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.

Two considerations are central to this endeavor: the sources from which we derive our theological affirmations and the criteria by which we assess the adequacy of our understanding and witness.

Wesley believed that the living core of the Christian faith was revealed in Scripture, illumined by tradition, vivified in personal experience, and confirmed by reason.

The United Methodist Church seeks to create disciples for Christ through outreach, evangelism, and through seeking holiness through the process of sanctification. With a focus on triune worship, United Methodists seek to bring honor to God by following the model of Jesus Christ, which is made possible by the power of the Holy Spirit. The flame in the church logo represents the work of the Holy Spirit in the world, which is seen in believers through spiritual gifts. The two parts of the flame represent the predecessor denominations, the Methodist Church and the Evangelical United Brethren, and are united at the base symbolizing the 1968 merger.

The United Methodist Church understands itself to be part of the holy catholic (or universal) church as it recognizes the historic ecumenical creeds, the Apostle's Creed and the Nicene Creed; they are used frequently in services of worship. The Book of Discipline also recognizes the importance of the Chalcedonian Creed of the Council of Chalcedon. Nevertheless, it also upholds the concept of the "visible and invisible Church," meaning that all who are truly believers in every age belong to the holy Church invisible, while the United Methodist Church is a form of the Church visible, to which all believers should belong as it is the institution where worship in the name of Jesus is conducted and the sacraments are administered; nonetheless, there may be many unworthy members in the visible church. The Methodist Church can lay a claim on apostolic succession, as understood in the traditional sense since the Rt. Rev. John Wesley ordained and sent forth every Methodist preacher in his day, who preached and baptized and ordained, and since every Methodist preacher who has ever been ordained as a Methodist was ordained in this direct "succession" from Wesley, who was consecrated a bishop by Erasmus of Arcadiay. Despite this fact, most Methodists view apostolic succession outside its high church sense, presenting the Rt. Rev. Wesley's citing of an ancient opinion from the Church of Alexandria, which held that the bishops and presbyters constituted one order and therefore, bishops are to be elected from and by the presbyterate; as such, the United Methodist Church follows this ancient precedent today.

Free Will - One of the overarching beliefs of the Methodist Church is its view of free will for humans. This is a strong departure from other forms of Christianity that support the ideas of predestination.

Trinity - In addition to the belief in the Trinity of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, Methodism also supports the celebration of the saints. In the United States, this is most commonly associated with the holiday All Saints Day.

Reason - Throughout its history, the Methodist Church believes that all theological work must be conducted with the strict concept of reason. It is expected that members and religious officials will use reason when asking questions of faith and attempting to understand the will of God.

Service - According to the traditions of Methodism, public service and love of neighbors outweighs personal piety. In order to succeed at personal salvation, a member of the Church should engage in Christian missions and have a passion for helping others.

Sacraments - Methodists practice the historical interpretations of two Sacraments. The Church believes that both Baptism and Holy Communion should be conducted for members and are ordained by Christ.