

## 1. What is your understanding of God?

We cannot describe God with certainty. But we can put into words what God does and how we experience God's action in our lives. God works in at least these seven ways:

**God creates.** In the beginning God created the universe, and the Creation is ongoing.

**God sustains.** God continues to be active in creation, holding all in "the everlasting arms

**God loves.** God loves all creation. In particular, God loves humankind, created in the divine image. This love is like that of a parent (Father).

**God suffers.** Since God is present in creation, God is hurt when any aspect of creation is hurt.

**God judges.** All human behavior is measured by God's righteous standards.

**God redeems.** Out of infinite love for each of us, God forgives our own self-destruction and renews us within.

**God reigns.** God is the Lord of all creation and of all history.

## 2. What is your understanding of who Jesus is?

### Son of God

We believe in Jesus as God's special child. We call this the Incarnation, meaning that ***God was in the world in the actual person of Jesus of Nazareth.***

### Son of man

We also believe that Jesus was fully human. Jesus was a person in every sense that we are. ***Jesus is God's picture of what it means to be a mature human being.***

### Christ

In calling Jesus our Christ today, we affirm that he was and is ***the fulfillment of the ancient hope and God's Chosen One to bring salvation to all peoples, for all time.***

### Lord

We also proclaim Jesus as our Lord, the one to whom we give our devoted allegiance. To claim Jesus as Lord is to ***freely submit our will to his***, to humbly profess that ***it is he who is in charge of this world.***

### Savior

We believe in Jesus as Savior, as the one through whom God has ***freed us of our sin*** and ***has given us the gift of whole life, eternal life, and salvation.*** We speak of this gift as the atonement, our "at-oneness" or reconciliation with God. We believe that in ways we cannot fully explain, God has done this through the mystery of Jesus' ***self-giving sacrifice on the cross and his victory over sin and death in the Resurrection.***

### 3. What might the Holy Spirit help you do?

The Holy Spirit is God's present activity in our midst. When we sense *God's leading, God's challenge, or God's support or comfort*, we say that it's the Holy Spirit at work.

#### In guidance, comfort, and strength

We continue to experience God's breath, God's Spirit. As one of our creeds puts it, "We believe in the Holy Spirit, God present with us for *guidance, for comfort, and for strength*".

The Spirit speaks through the thoughtful and loving interaction of God's people. The Holy Spirit, *who brought the church into being*, is still guiding and upholding it.

#### In the gifts we receive

How does the Holy Spirit affect our lives? By changing us! By *renewing us and by strengthening us for the work of ministry*.

**Fruits:** Paul asserts that "the fruit of the Spirit is *love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control*" (Galatians 5:22).

**Gifts:** Paul also writes that the *Spirit bestows spiritual gifts* on believers. In 1 Corinthians 12:8-10 he lists nine, which vary from one person to another: the utterance of wisdom, the utterance of knowledge, faith, healing, working of miracles, prophecy, the discernment of spirits, various kinds of tongues, and the interpretation of tongues.

*These fruits and gifts are not of our own achievement.* They and others are the outgrowth of the *Spirit's work in us*, by grace, *through our faith in Jesus the Christ*.

### 4. Can you name the two Sacraments of the United Methodist Church?

#### Baptism and Communion

##### a. What happens at Baptism?

Baptism marks the beginning of our lifelong journey as disciples of Jesus Christ.

Through baptism, we are joined with the Triune God, the whole of Christ's church, and our local congregation.

The water and the work of the Holy Spirit in baptism convey God's saving grace, the forgiveness of our sins, and new life in Jesus Christ.

##### b. What basic elements are used for Communion?

Congregations serve the elements of the Lord's Supper several ways, but always include both bread and cup (grape juice in our case).

##### c. Why do we receive Communion?

Through offering ourselves in praise and thanksgiving, and through receiving the bread and cup—which the Spirit makes for us the body and blood of Christ—celebrating the Lord's Supper together *nourishes and sustains us in our journey as disciples of Jesus Christ*.

As we pray together and receive the body and blood of Christ together, we ***are united with Christ, with one another, and in ministry to all the world.***

## 5. Can you describe what Salvation means?

The process of salvation involves a change in us that we call conversion. Conversion is a turning around, leaving one orientation for another. It may be sudden and dramatic, or gradual and cumulative. But in any case, it's a new beginning. Following Jesus' words to Nicodemus, "You must be born anew" (John 3:7 RSV), we speak of this conversion as rebirth, new life in Christ, or regeneration.

Salvation cannot be earned. There's no behavior, no matter how holy or righteous, by which we can achieve salvation. Rather, it's the gift of a gracious God. We're saved by grace alone through faith alone. We're made whole and reconciled by the love of God as we receive it and trust in it.

## 6. Who is John Wesley and why is he important to the United Methodist Church?

***John Wesley was the founder of the Methodist movement.*** He was born at Epworth, England, the son of a Church of England clergyman. He was graduated from Christ College, Oxford, England. For a brief period he was a missionary to Georgia. In 1738 he had an intense religious experience at a meeting on Aldersgate Street, London. Following this he began to preach throughout the country. He was a prolific preacher and writer, and his writings provided a core of standard doctrine and interpretation to guide the new Methodist movement. In 1784, he sent instructions to America for the formation of a separate Methodist church for the United States.

## 7. Can you name the three types of Grace?

### Prevenient Grace

Wesley understood grace as ***God's active presence in our lives.*** This presence is not dependent on human actions or human response. ***It is a gift — a gift that is always available, but that can be refused.***

God's grace stirs up within us a desire to know God and empowers us to respond to God's invitation to be in relationship with God.

### Justifying Grace

The justifying grace of God points to ***reconciliation, pardon, and restoration.*** Through the work of God in Christ ***our sins are forgiven, and our relationship with God is restored.*** According to John Wesley, founder of the Methodist movement, the image of God — which has been distorted by sin — is renewed within us through Christ's death.

Justification is what happens when Christians abandon all those vain attempts to justify themselves before God, to be seen as "just" in God's eyes through religious and moral practices. It's a time when God's "justifying grace" is experienced and accepted, a time of pardon and forgiveness, of new peace and joy and love. Indeed, ***we're justified by God's grace through faith in Jesus Christ.***

## **Sanctifying Grace**

***Salvation is not a static, one-time event in our lives.*** It is the ***ongoing experience of God's gracious presence transforming us*** into whom God intends us to be. John Wesley described this dimension of God's grace as sanctification, or holiness. As we pray, study the Scriptures, worship, and share in fellowship with other Christians, we deepen our knowledge of and love for God.

Through God's sanctifying grace, we grow and mature in our ability to live as Jesus lived.

### **8. Who has helped you in your spiritual journey?**

**ANSWERS WILL VARY**

### **9. In what ways can you serve the Church and community?**

**ANSWERS WILL VARY**

### **10. What does it mean to be confirmed in the Faith?**

Confirmation is the act by which persons who were baptized as infants or young children make their first public statement of their declaration or profession of faith. In this sense they ***confirm their faith***. Confirmation is performed in preparation for reception into full membership in The United Methodist Church.

Confirmation is an opportunity to respond to the grace of God available to us, as acknowledged in baptism, and to promise to live as a person of faith.

Confirmation includes three aspects:

- a) God confirms the divine promise to those who were too young to grasp what God was doing in their baptism,
- b) they respond by professing their own acceptance of the grace they have received and their own faith in Christ,
- c) the Church, as represented by this congregation, confirms the commitments they make.

It is also a time for a congregation to celebrate their young people's commitment to "live as a faithful disciple of Jesus Christ," and to renew their commitment to do the same.

### **11. Are you ready to say yes to living like Jesus and be confirmed?**