



We invite you to join in the renewal of our beloved United Methodist Church! Confessing faith in Jesus Christ as Son, Savior, and Lord, the Confessing Movement exists to help The United Methodist Church retrieve and celebrate its classic doctrinal identity and to live it out together as disciples of Jesus Christ.

The Confessing Movement is a witness by United Methodist lay women and men, clergy, and congregations who with one voice pledge our confident allegiance to the Lord Jesus Christ according to “the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints” (*Jude 3*). The faith of which Jude wrote is the Church’s apostolic faith as witnessed to in Holy Scripture. This heritage centers on Jesus Christ, fully God and fully human, and on his life, death, resurrection, ascension, gift of the Holy Spirit to the Church, and promised return in the fullness of the Kingdom of God.

This faith is a gift from God. It is not an ideology we invent or imagine out of our own desires and experiences. The Church has a written deposit of doctrine and teachings which binds the conscience of the faithful to the whole of God’s self-revelation in history as read in Holy Scripture, summarized in creeds and confessions, updated and extended in the official body of our doctrinal materials, and praised in liturgical language that remains true to the apostolic witness. We affirm that a faithful Church lives in continuity with that apostolic Christianity. To minimize or ignore this deposit is to deny and distort our identity as a Church.

WHY IS DOCTRINE IMPORTANT?

Doctrine is official and essential Church teaching. It is our DNA and preserves our deep identity as Christians. It is the good news about who our Triune God is and what this great God has done for us in his Son Jesus and through his people in the power of the Holy Spirit.

Claiming the Church’s doctrine with confidence does not make believers rigid or unthinking. Within the faithful boundaries of our received doctrinal standards, there is freedom for theological exploration and development. Those boundaries, however, are important. Generations before ours have discovered that the classic teachings of Christianity are stepping stones to a life-giving, truly intimate fellowship with God. It is this relationship which is the source of all that is good, hopeful, and grace-filled. C.S. Lewis is helpful when he writes in *Mere Christianity*:

Doctrines are not God: they are only a kind of map. But that map is based on the experience of hundreds of people who really were in touch with God— experiences compared with which any thrills or pious feelings you and I are likely to get on our own are very elementary and very confused...If you want to get any further, you must use the map.

The danger of ignoring our heritage is that, if we use a bad map, we and those we influence are lost.

THE PRESENT CHALLENGE

We live in an age of moral and theological relativism which hedges and equivocates on doctrinal and ethical clarity. Some imagine that anything goes in United Methodist theology, that there are no firm boundaries whatever. Others elevate their private experience to the position of judge and arbiter of Christian truth. Some others exchange the historic faith for a variety of wide ranging ideologies with religious veneers.

In the process, our Church has nearly lost its immune system with regard to false teaching and has grown timid and negligent of even a minimal level of doctrinal faithfulness. Our courage is low because convictions about the truths of the faith have grown thin. This, we believe, is one of the reasons for the Church's current malaise and lack of vitality. Too often we offer the world nothing more life-giving than the limited and transient wisdom of whatever is popular in the present culture.

NAMING A MYTH

It has at times been claimed that The United Methodist Church is not a confessional body, affirming a clear doctrinal center. Yet, from the beginning the evidence shows that Methodists have had a clear and documented tradition of Doctrinal Standards. Since 1808, the General Conference has had no constitutional authority to "revoke, alter, or change our Articles of Religion, or to establish any new standards or rules of doctrine contrary to our present existing and established standards of doctrine."

Our Doctrinal Standards are established in five documents:

- (1) The Articles of Religion,
- (2) The Confession of Faith,
- (3) The Standard Sermons of Wesley,
- (4) The Explanatory Notes Upon the New Testament,
- (5) The General Rules.

(Go to www.confessingumc.org for links to these documents.)

The Confessing Movement seeks authenticity in our Wesleyan practice of faith, as when we ask candidates seeking ordination, "Have you studied the doctrines of The United Methodist Church? After full examination, do you believe that our doctrines are in harmony with the Holy Scriptures?" (*The Book of Discipline 2016*, Par. 330) The Church seeks and expects a heartfelt affirmation in reply, signifying an ongoing commitment. Again, in the ordination service, the theme of doctrinal conviction and fidelity is once more made binding where it is asked, "In covenant with the other elders, will you be loyal to The United Methodist Church, accepting its order, liturgy, doctrine and discipline, defending it against all doctrines contrary to God's Holy Word?" (*The Book of Worship 1992*, 676) These are binding promises and sacred vows taken before witnesses. In other words, we are a confessing Church, and we have something worth confessing!

AN INVITATION

Will you join us in this holy and happy work of bearing witness to the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit and to the truths of the faith within our beloved United Methodist Church? We believe that the Christian truth, which has been revealed in Christ Jesus and empowered by the Holy Spirit, is to be personally embraced; yet this same faith can and must once again be explained in clear and decisive terms faithful to the apostolic witness. We believe that God has called the Confessing Movement to pay close and sustained attention to this task, and we would love to have you join us.

We look forward to hearing from you. We stand for the apostolic faith in its Wesleyan expression within The United Methodist Church and for the sake of the Church worldwide. We work to reclaim and reaffirm the Church's ancient ecumenical treasures in Wesleyan terms, even as we celebrate the common ground we share with all Christians. As the Church reaches out in love and ministry, it is essential to maintain our doctrinal center so that— together— we might be effective in making disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world!

May God bless you, your joyful service, and the Spirit-filled growth of Christ's great Church.

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