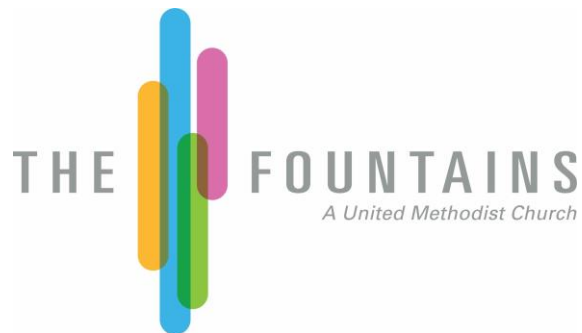


So what's the United Methodist Church all about, anyway?

Ideally: *it's an inclusive, theologically pluralistic, non-dogmatic Christian church that encourages its members to think, question, and explore is hard to characterize with precision. Here are a few items that may help in describing this diverse and global gathering of disciples:*

- 1) We are a church in which the warmhearted personal experience with Jesus Christ is central to our teaching, preaching, and outreach.
- 2) We are a world-wide church upon which the sun never sets. We operate ministries and missions in more than 90 countries worldwide.
- 3) We are the only church in the United States that has a local church in every community with a population of 10,000 people or more.
- 4) We are a church that is open to all of God's people. We have more Native Americans and Asian Americans than any other denomination. We are second in the number of Hispanic Americans and seventh in the number of African Americans.
- 5) We are a church that has founded, owns, and operates more colleges, children's homes, homes for seniors and hospitals than any other.
- 6) We are a church that owns and operates the oldest and largest church-owned publishing house in the world.
- 7) We are a church that cares about people who are hurting; we feed a million children every day! Within hours of a natural disaster anywhere in the world, we are there through the United Methodist Committee on Relief to provide aid and love (sometimes even beating the Red Cross to the scene!).
- 8) We are a church that gives more beyond the local church to benevolences per member than any other.
- 9) We are a church with a social creed that has been and still is the marvel and model of much of Christendom in the area of the social Gospel.



- 10) We are a church with a connectional structure and ties every one of the more than 38,000 local congregations together in common purposes and a united ministry around the world.
- 11) We are a church that offers an amazing variety of resources to every local church in areas of leadership, financial, and program resources.
- 12) We are a church that is ecumenical and interfaith in its outlook and one that is always ready to cooperate with other Christians in advancing the cause of Jesus Christ.

What makes a Methodist a Methodist? THE WESLEYAN QUADRILATERAL

One of Methodism's most distinctive theological traits is the methodology Wesley used in wrestling with living the life of a disciple. It's called the "Quadrilateral" and it represents the four sources that inform our faith, help us make decisions, and live out balanced, healthy lives in Christ. They are Scripture, Tradition, Experience, and Reason.

Although they are in no particular order of importance (they're supposed to be held in creative tension with one another), an easy way to remember the four elements is by their initials: "STER" (the quadrilateral helps "steer" our decision-making along the way) As you see, this is a "methodology" not a "theology". For John Wesley, *why* you believe something is just as important as *what* you believe. *How* you arrive at your convictions is the work of the individual within the community.

That's why we've never been a confessional or dogmatic church with a specific theology. Wesley felt there was plenty of room for religious "opinions."

"As to opinions which do not strike at the root of Christianity, we think and let think"
(Bishop Ken Carter)

"In essentials, unity; in nonessentials, liberty; in all things, charity."
(attributed to John Wesley)