

# United Church of Christ

## Statement of Faith/Mission Statement

### United Church of Christ Statement of Faith—adapted by Robert V. Moss

We believe in God, the Eternal Spirit, who is made known to us in Jesus our brother, and to whose deeds we testify: God calls the worlds into being, creates humankind in the divine image, and sets before us the ways of life and death.

God seeks in holy love to save all people from aimlessness and sin.

God judges all humanity and all nations by that will of righteousness declared through prophets and apostles.

In Jesus Christ, the man of Nazareth, our crucified and risen Lord, God has come to us and shared our common lot, conquering sin and death and reconciling the whole creation to its Creator.

God bestows upon us the Holy Spirit, creating and renewing the church of Jesus Christ, binding in covenant faithful people of all ages, tongues, and races.

God calls us into the church to accept the cost and joy of discipleship, to be servants in the service of the whole human family, to proclaim the gospel to all the world and resist the powers of evil, to share in Christ's baptism and eat at his table, to join him in his passion and victory.

God promises to all who trust in the gospel forgiveness of sins and fullness of grace, courage in the struggle for justice and peace, the presence of the Holy Spirit in trial and rejoicing, and eternal life in that kingdom which has no end.

Blessing and honor, glory and power be unto God.

Amen.

The UCC states that they:

- Believe in **extravagant welcome** - insist that God's communion table is open, not closed, and God's gift and claim in baptism are irrevocable.
- **Believe in a God that is still speaking**, a God that is all-loving and inclusive.
- Are a church that welcomes/accepts everyone as they are, where the mind is nourished as much as your soul.
- Advocate justice for all - congregations extend hospitality as a sign of God's inclusive love.
- Teach that evangelism — offering bread to those in search of it — is God's mission.
- Their perspective is global, not provincial.
- Are a church where Jesus the healer meets Jesus the revolutionary, and where together, we grow a just and peaceful world.

## History

- The **United Church of Christ** was formed when two Protestant churches, the Evangelical and Reformed Church and the General Council of the Congregational Christian Churches united in 1957.
- With **over 5,000 churches and nearly one million members across the U.S.**
- The UCC is a church of firsts, a church of extravagant welcome, and a church where "...they may all be one" (John 17:21)
- The UCC's many "firsts" mean that we have inherited a tradition of acting upon the demands of our faith. When we read in Galatians: "There is no longer Jew or Greek, there is no longer slave or free, there is no longer male and female; for all of you are one in Christ Jesus"—a demand is made upon us.

**Side Note: Martin Luther King used Galatians 3:28 in his "I have a dream" speech.**

- The First:
  - Historically white denomination to ordain an African American (1785)
  - To ordain a woman (1853)
  - To ordain an openly gay man, and the first (1972)
  - Christian church to affirm the right of same-gender couples to marry. (1972)

## **Theological Distinction**

- Believe the church's mission is to change lives — individually, systemically and globally.
- The United Church of Christ gives autonomy to its local churches, many of which are controversial.
- **The Bible is used for inspiration, guidance, and for preaching. Members are not required to believe literally any version of Scripture.**
- **Many members do not believe in specific places of reward or punishment (Heaven and Hell), but do believe God gives believers eternal life.**
- **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.**

**Side Note: They have no hierarchy or body that can impose doctrine or worship format onto individual congregations.**

## **Evangelical**

Definition of Evangelical: of or according to the teaching of the gospel or the Christian religion.

- "We teach that evangelism – offering bread to those in search of it – is God's mission."
- "In accordance with the teaching of our Lord and practice prevailing among evangelical Christians, the United Church of Christ recognizes two sacraments: Baptism and the Lord's Supper or Holy Communion."

## **What you didn't know**

### **Worship Ways**

Worship Ways: **a variety of prayers, liturgies, and "how-to" articles for use on Sundays, Festivals, and special UCC calendar days.** These resources come from all settings of the UCC; they are written by pastors, educators, musicians and covenanted ministry staff members. We encourage you to use the material "as is" or to take it and adapt it for your local setting.

### **Baptism**

- Through baptism a person is joined with the universal church, the body of Christ
- Baptism with water and the Holy Spirit is the sign and seal of our common discipleship.
- **The act of baptism marks the beginning of new life of discipleship with Christ, the human response to that gift.**
- Baptism marks their acceptance into the care of Christ's church, the sign and seal of God's grace and forgiveness, and the beginning of their Christian faith and life.
- Baptism may take place at any worship service where the community is gathered.
- **If circumstances require baptism to take place outside of corporate worship, members of the local church may participate in the ceremony with the pastor.**
- **In urgent circumstances, such as imminent death, any Christian may perform the baptism.**

Sources:

[www.ucc.org](http://www.ucc.org)

<https://blog.logos.com/2013/04/jesus-the-revolutionary/>