

Chapter 1 : Her Story: Does Satan really exist? Many United Methodists see evil as more subtle.

Understanding The United Methodist Church by Diana L. Hynson The mission of The United Methodist Church is "to make disciples of Jesus Christ" (The Book of Discipline of The United Methodist Church   ,   ) The mission had its beginnings through the ministry of John Wesley in the eighteenth century.

I do not know what kind of weeds they are, someone told me they call it Creeping Charlie, though looking at pictures I really do not think that is what it is. It may be Spurge. Anyway, I was pulling weeds, and though it is not a favorite pastime of mine, these weeds were pretty easily uprooted. While the tap root is long and can run deep, it is thin and brittle. The plant creeps along the ground, or in our case the rocks, and sets down roots, the roots are shallow, and while the plant is very invasive, unsightly, and annoying, it is easily uprooted because of its lack of depth. Let me qualify that statement. The image of the invasive weed in my rock bed was not related to the whole report but rather, a certain section of it. I finished reading the entire report yesterday and came away rather depressed, heartbroken, and even angry. I did fine reading through the One Church Model, which in essence creates local control in the denomination for clergy, local churches, and Annual Conferences in terms of whether they will officiate or host same gender weddings and whether Annual Conferences will ordain LGBTQ persons. While my conviction is I cannot sign on in full support of this model, to me it is the sanest of the three. I believe I can probably exist in the environment this model would create though, I cannot fully support it because it continues to allow the United Methodist Church to discriminate and do harm to our LGBTQ members and clergy. It is wrong and needs to be rectified and should this pass I would continue to be a voice of advocacy and change until the denomination makes available to the whole of the church the grace and life we claim to all persons including LGBTQ persons in our communities. The second model I read was a little more difficult to get my head around though in theory I think I understand. The summary version is it would create three conferences in the U. Once again, while this seems to be an attempt at a step forward, it allows our churches to discriminate and do harm. The third model is called the Traditional Model, herein is where the image of the weed in my rock bed began to take shape. This model would leave our United Methodist Discipline as is, continue to discriminate against and do harm to LGBTQ persons within and outside the church. But it would not stop there. This model creates even more punitive reactions to those who long for an open inclusive church. Clergy, churches, boards of ordained ministry, conferences, and bishops who we unable to sign on to an agreement that they support this model would in essence be invited to leave. While this model is referred to as Traditional it is anything but. Such legalism and punitive faith is not traditional as its literalness is only two hundred to three hundred years old at best. Its roots are shallow, thin, and brittle, invasive and unsightly. When looking at loving relationships between same gender couples, the prohibitions are simply not in the scriptures. The clobber passages that are cited in our bible do not address same gender relationships as we know them today. To continue to cite these passages to discriminate and do harm to LGBTQ persons is uninformed at best and disingenuous at worse. To continue to cite two thousand to four-thousand-year-old understandings and writings without consideration of twenty first century education, science, reason, and experience is ludicrous and unfaithful. It boggles the mind that we as a denomination, founded by Wesley and his commitment to grace, understanding, and education, are even giving this model a voice and place on the floor at General Conference. It is a weed. A weed with at best a thin and brittle taproot creeping across the landscape of our beloved United Methodist Denomination setting down shallow roots in an attempt to cover the foundational bedrock of the Grace and Love of God so treasured by our church. February is still months away. There is much work to be done in preparation for this Special Called General Conference. There will be much work to be done after it is completed regardless of what the decision is. I will be there, not as a delegate, but as an observer and in prayer. I hope you join me in earnest prayer and action for our United Methodist Church, its soul is at risk. May we once again be a church grounded in grace, immersing in love  a church making justice happen, loving as God loves, and being the very reflection of God in the world. Until there are no others. Only one Beloved Community of All. Peace and Light for this Journey.

Chapter 2 : Church Templates | United Methodist Communications

There are few issues in Church law more perplexing than understanding the ownership of Church property. This is even more true with respect to a local congregation that is affiliated with the United Methodist Church.

Methodism first spread to Ireland and then to America where it officially became its own denomination in 1828. Today United Methodist membership stands at nearly 10 million worldwide more than 1 million are outside of the United States. Part of the mark of being a United Methodist is that we hold a wide range of theological beliefs. John Wesley said, "As to all opinions which do not strike at the root of Christianity, we think and let think. We believe in a Triune God: Father, Son and Holy Spirit. We believe in the mystery of salvation through Jesus Christ. And we believe in celebrating the Sacraments of Baptism and Holy Communion. For United Methodists, social consciousness has always gone hand in hand with faith. We believe, with John Wesley, "that the world is our parish. We cherish an ecumenical tradition and seek to work together with other Christian denominations as well as other religions. John 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. United Methodists today follow four main guidelines that help us understand our faith. Scripture - United Methodists share with other Christians the conviction that Scripture is the primary source and criterion for Christian doctrine. Through Scripture the living Christ meets us in the experience of redeeming grace. We are convinced that Jesus Christ is the living Word of God in our midst whom we trust in life and death. As such, tradition transcends the story of particular traditions. Experience - Some facets of human experience tax our theological understanding. Everyday experiences of birth and death, of growth and life in the created world, and an awareness of wider social relations also belong to serious theological reflection. A new awareness of such experiences can inform our appropriation of scriptural truths and sharpen our appreciation of the good news of the kingdom of God. By reason we read and interpret Scripture. By reason we determine whether our Christian witness is clear. Local churches provide the most significant arena through which disciple-making occurs. The created order is designed for the well-being of all creatures and as the place of human dwelling in covenant with God. As sinful creatures, however, we have broken that covenant, become estranged from God, wounded ourselves and one another, and wreaked havoc throughout the natural order. We stand in need of redemption. A Triune God - There is but one living and true God, everlasting, without body or parts, of infinite power, wisdom, and goodness; the maker and preserver of all things, both visible and invisible. And in unity of this Godhead there are three persons, of one substance, power, and eternity -- the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost. God the Father - We believe in the one true, holy and living God, Eternal Spirit, who is Creator, Sovereign and Preserver of all things visible and invisible. He is infinite in power, wisdom, justice, goodness and love, and rules with gracious regard for the well-being and salvation of men, to the glory of his name. We believe the one God reveals himself as the Trinity: Father, Son and Holy Spirit, distinct but inseparable, eternally one in essence and power. God the Son - We believe in Jesus Christ, truly God and truly man, in whom the divine and human natures are perfectly and inseparably united. As ministering Servant he lived, suffered and died on the cross. He was buried, rose from the dead and ascended into heaven to be with the Father, from whence he shall return. He is eternal Savior and Mediator, who intercedes for us, and by him all men will be judged. He convinces the world of sin, of righteousness and of judgment. He leads men through faithful response to the gospel into the fellowship of the Church. He comforts, sustains and empowers the faithful and guides them into all truth. The Cross - Sin separated all persons from God. Sin - Because of rebellion against God going all the way back to Adam, all persons are inclined toward sin and selfishness. A person by strength of will power alone cannot forsake sin and please God. Salvation - When a person repents of sin and trusts in Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord, that person is forgiven of sin and receives the gift of eternal salvation right relationship with God. The Holy Spirit takes up residence in that person, teaching and equipping him or her to be a disciple of Christ, and confirming that the person is indeed a child of God. Justification and Assurance - We believe God reaches out to the repentant believer in justifying grace with accepting and pardoning love. Wesleyan theology stresses that a decisive

change in the human heart can and does occur under the prompting of grace and the guidance of the Holy Spirit. This righting of relationships by God through Christ calls forth our faith and trust as we experience regeneration, by which we are made new creatures in Christ. This process of justification and new birth is often referred to as conversion. Such a change may be sudden and dramatic, or gradual and cumulative. It marks a new beginning, yet it is part of an ongoing process. Christian experience as personal transformation always expresses itself as faith working by love. Our Wesleyan theology also embraces the scriptural promise that we can expect to receive assurance of our present salvation as the Spirit "bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God. Faith and Good Works - We believe good works are the necessary fruits of faith and follow regeneration but they do not have the virtue to remove our sins or to avert divine judgment. We believe good works, pleasing and acceptable to God in Christ, spring from a true and living faith, for through and by them faith is made evident. Service to the World - We insist that personal salvation always involves Christian mission and service to the world. By joining heart and hand, we assert that personal religion, evangelical witness, and Christian social action are reciprocal and mutually reinforcing. Scriptural holiness entails more than personal piety; love of God is always linked with love of neighbor, a passion for justice and renewal in the life of the world. Nurturing and Serving of the Church - We emphasize the nurturing and serving function of Christian fellowship in the Church. The personal experience of faith is nourished by the worshipping community. For Wesley there is no religion but social religion, no holiness but social holiness. The communal forms of faith in the Wesleyan tradition not only promote personal growth; they also equip and mobilize us for mission and service to the world. The outreach of the church springs from the working of the Spirit. As United Methodists, we respond to that working through a connectional polity based upon mutual responsiveness and accountability. Connectional ties bind us together in faith and service in our global witness, enabling faith to become active in love and intensifying our desire for peace and justice in the world. Baptism - Baptism is not only a sign of profession and mark of difference whereby Christians are distinguished from others that are not baptized; but it is also a sign of regeneration or the new birth. The Baptism of young children is to be retained in the Church. The body of Christ is given, taken, and eaten in the Supper, only after a heavenly and spiritual manner. And the mean whereby the body of Christ is received and eaten in the Supper is faith. Its members have often taken forthright positions on controversial issues involving Christian principles. Early Methodists expressed their opposition to the slave trade, to smuggling, and to the cruel treatment of prisoners. The Social Principles are a prayerful and thoughtful effort on the part of the General Conference to speak to the human issues in the contemporary world from a sound biblical and theological foundation as historically demonstrated in United Methodist traditions. They are intended to be instructive and persuasive in the best of the prophetic spirit. The Social Principles are a call to all members of The United Methodist Church to a prayerful, studied dialogue of faith and practice. We joyfully receive for ourselves and others the blessings of community, sexuality, marriage, and the family. We commit ourselves to the rights of men, women, children, youth, young adults, the aging, and people with disabilities; to improvement of the quality of life; and to the rights and dignity of racial, ethnic, and religious minorities. We believe in the right and duty of persons to work for the glory of God and the good of themselves and others and in the protection of their welfare in so doing; in the rights to property as a trust from God, collective bargaining, and responsible consumption; and in the elimination of economic and social distress. We dedicate ourselves to peace throughout the world, to the rule of justice and law among nations, and to individual freedom for all people of the world. God has granted us stewardship of creation. We should meet these stewardship duties through acts of loving care and respect. The Nurturing Community - The community provides the potential for nurturing human beings into the fullness of their humanity. We believe we have a responsibility to innovate, sponsor, and evaluate new forms of community that will encourage development of the fullest potential in individuals. We therefore support social climates in which human communities are maintained and strengthened for the sake of all persons and their growth. We also encourage all individuals to be sensitive to others by using appropriate language when referring to all persons. Language of a derogatory nature with regard to race, nationality, ethnic background, gender, sexuality, and physical difference does not reflect value for one another and contradicts the gospel of Jesus Christ. The Family - We believe the family to be the basic human community through which persons are

nurtured and sustained in mutual love, responsibility, respect, and fidelity. We affirm the importance of both fathers and mothers for all children. We also understand the family as encompassing a wider range of options than that of the two-generational unit of parents and children the nuclear family , including the extended family, families with adopted children, single parents, step families, and couples without children. We affirm shared responsibility for parenting by men and women and encourage social, economic, and religious efforts to maintain and strengthen relationships within families in order that every member may be assisted toward complete personhood. Marriage - We affirm the sanctity of the marriage covenant that is expressed in love, mutual support, personal commitment, and shared fidelity between a man and a woman. We reject social norms that assume different standards for women than for men in marriage. We support laws in civil society that define marriage as the union of one man and one woman. The church must be on the forefront of premarital and postmarital counseling in order to create and preserve strong marriages. However, when a married couple is estranged beyond reconciliation, even after thoughtful consideration and counsel, divorce is a regrettable alternative in the midst of brokenness. We grieve over the devastating emotional, spiritual, and economic consequences of divorce for all involved and are concerned about high divorce rates. It is recommended that methods of mediation be used to minimize the adversarial nature and fault-finding that are often part of our current judicial processes. Although divorce publicly declares that a marriage no longer exists, other covenantal relationships resulting from the marriage remain, such as the nurture and support of children and extended family ties. We urge respectful negotiations in deciding the custody of minor children and support the consideration of either or both parents for this responsibility in that custody not be reduced to financial support, control, or manipulation and retaliation. The welfare of each child is the most important consideration. Divorce does not preclude a new marriage.

Chapter 3 : Methodist Beliefs & Practices | Northfield United Methodist Church

Our United Methodist heritage is rooted in a deep and profound understanding of God's grace. This incredible grace flows from God's great love for us. Did you have to memorize John in Sunday school when you were a child?

John Wesley first proposed these in the mids as he began a number of small group meetings called classes or societies to encourage, spiritually develop and support his new Methodists. Fighting, quarreling, brawling, returning evil for evil. Uncharitable or unprofitable conversation. Doing to others as we would not they should do unto us. Doing what we know is not for the glory of God. Softness and needless self-indulgence. Second, by doing good: Third, by using the means of grace: Means of Grace United Methodists encourage spiritual growth. Our heritage begins with John Wesley, a clergyman of 18th century England and the founder of the Methodist movement. Wesley taught that Christian spirituality should include "the means of grace" or "works of piety". The means of grace included: Wesley encouraged daily private devotion, usually in both the morning and evening, as well as time for family or household devotions. He suggested that these prayers should include expressing: Wesley encouraged daily reading of the Scriptures. He suggested that we read the Bible seriously with prayer , systematically reading entire books or through the Bible , carefully with good commentaries and scholarship , and fruitfully immediately putting into practice what we learn. We are also urged to meditate on what we read, and to take every opportunity we can find to hear the Bible read by others in worship or small groups. Wesley asked Christians to always keep a Bible with them so they could read whenever they had time available. Methodists welcome the opportunity to "confer" or converse individually and in small groups in order to encourage one another in the spiritual life, and to help each one to be accountable for responsible discipleship. The 18th century founder of Methodism, John Wesley, said that a "Methodist" was nothing other than a plain "scriptural Christian". The Standards of Our Doctrine: The doctrines we teach are based upon basic Christian standards: We hold in common with all Christians a faith in the mystery of redemption or salvation in and through Jesus Christ. With other Christians we recognize that the reign of God is both a present and a future reality. We give distinctive emphasis to what is called the "order of grace". This grace awakens in us a desire to repent, to be profoundly changed, so that we might live in love toward God and neighbor. We hope through Christ to experience profound personal transformation. Through the power of the Holy Spirit, we become more like Christ and are enabled to increase in the knowledge and love of God and in love for our neighbor. We increasingly receive the mind and the motives of Christ. Faith and Works of Mercy: Scriptural holiness involves both personal piety or intimacy with God, and a strong desire to love the neighbor God gives to us. We work for justice and the renewal of life in the world. Copies are available at local United Methodist churches all over the country. We are companions in Christ, called, nurtured and sent for this purpose:

Chapter 4 : Understanding The United Methodist Church by Nolan B. Harmon

Lawrence recently chose the United Methodist stand on health care for a Sunday school class at one of the Dallas area's largest United Methodist congregations. More about being a United Methodist From the Mission to the Theology to the Organization, review the basics of The United Methodist Church.

Summary of basic beliefs[edit] The basic beliefs of the United Methodist Church include: God is one God in three persons: Father , Son and Holy Spirit. The Bible is the inspired word of God. Belton Joyner argues that there is a deep division within Methodism today about what this means. Does it mean the Bible was inspired when written and the text today is always true and without error , or is it inspired when actually read by a Christian and therefore depends on the interaction with the reader. In the first case, says Joyner, the Christian is concerned only with the precise wording of the original manuscript, without regard to historical setting. In the other case, the reader tries to read the biblical text in terms of all of the influences of modern thought, with little regard for the meaning offered in the ancient texts. In that Wesleyan tradition, United Methodists balance these two extremes, aware that the same Holy Spirit who inspired the Scriptures is alive and well to bring the written Word alive for the twenty-first century. In this way, the Bible itself becomes the balancing, clarifying, even correcting tool for understanding the Scripture. While human beings were intended to bear the image of God, all humans are sinners for whom that image is distorted. Sin estranges people from God and corrupts human nature such that we cannot heal or save ourselves. The grace of sanctification draws one toward the gift of Christian perfection, which Wesley described as a heart "habitually filled with the love of God and neighbor" and as "having the mind of Christ and walking as he walked. The UMC recognizes two sacraments: Holy Baptism and Holy Communion. Other rites such as Confirmation , Ordination , Holy Matrimony , Funerals , and Anointing of the Sick are performed but not considered sacraments. In Holy Baptism, the Church believes that "Baptism is not only a sign of profession and mark of difference whereby Christians are distinguished from others that are not baptized; but it is also a sign of regeneration or the new birth. The church opposes evils such as slavery, inhumane prison conditions, capital punishment, economic injustice, child labor, racism, and inequality. Wesley defined the Way of Salvation as the operation of grace in at least three parts: Prevenient grace , or the grace that "goes before" us, is given to all people. It is that power which enables us to love and motivates us to seek a relationship with God through Jesus Christ. It is in justifying grace we are received by God, in spite of our sin. In this reception, we are forgiven through the atoning work of Jesus Christ on the cross. The justifying grace cancels our guilt and empowers us to resist the power of sin and to fully love God and neighbor. Today, justifying grace is also known as conversion , "accepting Jesus as your personal Lord and Savior," or being " born again ". Sanctifying grace enables us to respond to God by leading a Spirit-filled and Christ-like life aimed toward love. Wesley never claimed this state of perfection for himself but instead insisted the attainment of perfection was possible for all Christians. Here the English Reformer parted company with both Luther and Calvin, who denied that a man would ever reach a state in this life in which he could not fall into sin. Such a man can lose all inclination to evil and can gain perfection in this life. Faith and good works go hand in hand in Methodist theology: Wesleyan theology rejects the doctrine of eternal security , believing that salvation can be rejected. Characterization of Wesleyan theology[edit] Wesleyan theology stands at a unique crossroads between evangelical and sacramental, between liturgical and charismatic , and between Anglo-Catholic and Reformed theology and practice. It has been characterized as Arminian theology with an emphasis on the work of the Holy Spirit to bring holiness into the life of the participating believer. The United Methodist Church believes in prima scriptura , seeing the Bible as the primary authority in the Church and using sacred tradition , reason , and experience to interpret it, with the aid of the Holy Spirit see Wesleyan Quadrilateral. Comparatively, the UMC stands to the right of liberal and progressive Protestant groups such as the United Church of Christ and the Episcopal Church on certain issues especially regarding sexuality , but to the left of historically conservative evangelical traditions such as the Southern Baptists and Pentecostalism , in regard to theological matters such as social justice and Biblical interpretation. However, it should be noted that the UMC is made up of a broad diversity of thought, and so

there are many clergy and laity within the UMC that hold differing viewpoints on such theological matters. Diversity within beliefs[edit] In making an appeal to a tolerance of diversity of theological opinion, John Wesley said, "Though we may not think alike, may we not all love alike? The United Methodist Church allows for a wide range of theological and political beliefs. For example, former President George W.

Chapter 5 : Understanding Shared Ministry | United Methodist Church of Greater New Jersey

The United Methodist Church (UMC) is a mainline Protestant denomination and a major part of www.nxgvision.com the 19th century, its main predecessor, the Methodist Episcopal Church, was a leader in evangelicalism.

Chapter 6 : United Methodist Church - Wikipedia

I am seriously considering joining the United Methodist Church but I am turned off by the internal dissention and some of the more liberal theology (especially in the Chicago area where I live).

Chapter 7 : What United Methodists Believe

The United Methodist connection means we can do more good together than we can do alone. To support our mission together, each local church contributes a portion of its budget to Shared Ministry which supports the ministry of our annual conference, the global church and special funds set up by the denomination to move our ministry further.

Chapter 8 : United Methodist Church – www.nxgvision.com

The official insignia of The United Methodist Church has been the Cross and Flame since its founding in The symbols and seals for other predecessor denominations were generally varied in form and use.

Chapter 9 : An open table: How United Methodists understand communion – The United Methodist Church

The Church - Christians are part of a universal church under the Lordship of Jesus Christ, and they must work with fellow Christians to spread the love and redemption of God. Logic and Reason - The most fundamental distinction of Methodist teaching is that people must use logic and reason in all matters of faith.