



ROAD TO HOLY DISCERNMENT

Doing God's will....finding common ground.

February 2024
Volume 10

Church Harmony During the Season of Lent

Lent is a time of inner reflection, a time to concentrate on Christ through self-sacrifice, denial, and repentance. As Bethany continues its period of discernment during the Lenten season, maintaining harmony as a body of believers is paramount to our calling as followers of Jesus Christ. Romans 15:1-13 lists 7 ways we can continue to build and sustain harmony here at Bethany. The following is a list of those 7 ways using the letter of the first sentence to form the word HARMONY.

HELP one another up (15:2)

"Each one of us must please his neighbor for his good, to build him up." (Romans 15:2, HCSB)

As a church, we come together to encourage each other. We gather to meet each other's needs, through prayer and worship. We take this work of encouragement and use it to help others around us.

AGREE to be in unity (15:4-6)

"so that you may glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ with a united mind and voice." (Romans 15:6, HCSB)

To be united in mind and voice means that we decide to agree. We work together to get things done. We work to diminish division. For the greater good of the church, sometimes we have to agree as Christians to disagree with one another in love – without being disagreeable.

RECEIVE one another (15:7)

"Therefore accept one another, just as the Messiah also accepted you, to the glory of God." (Romans 15:7, HCSB)

If we agree to work together, and if we agree to help one another, then we also agree to accept one another. We learn as a church that we, when we receive new people in the church, that we should learn to accept them. Even when people have their differences – whether it is worship traditions, how one dresses, how one looks, people in the church live in harmony when they learn to receive and accept one another.

MINISTER to one another (15:8)

"For I say that the Messiah became a servant of the circumcised-on behalf of God's truth, to confirm the promises to the fathers," (Romans 15:8, HCSB)

Jesus served all kinds of people. As Christians, we learn to follow His example. The church builds harmony when we spend time serving and ministering to one another.

OFFER worship to God with one another (15:9-12)

"Again it says: Rejoice, you Gentiles, with His people!" (Romans 15:10, HCSB)

Our worship can be a very unifying thing. It helps other people know that all of us are God's children. We show people how unified we are as Christians by the way we worship together. The way we offer our worship and with whom we offer our worship is something that tells people we want to live in harmony with one another.

Three times, these verses quote from the Old Testament and in each case, it is about the praise of the Gentiles to God. Gentiles (non-Jews) will offer their worship. Jews are not the only ones who have an exclusive right to worship God. God is big enough to let all kinds of people worship Him. The same is true today. God is big enough for this church to have all kinds of people in the community come together and worship Him. No one can claim an exclusive right to worshipping God in this church.

NURTURE the hope which builds harmony in your life (15:12-13)

"Now may the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you believe in Him so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit." (Romans 15:13, HCSB)

What does hope have to do with building harmony? Everything. It is the positive ingredient that every Christian needs to have harmony with one another. God fills us up with hope, and that gives us joy and peace. God gives us enough hope that we can share this hope with other people who need hope. Why? Because there is much hopelessness going on all around us.

YIELD to the power of the Holy Spirit

"Now may the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you believe in Him so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit." (Romans 15:13, HCSB)

Harmony comes by the power of the Holy Spirit. God provides different spiritual gifts to help people be harmonious with one another. The Holy Spirit is like the conductor of the orchestra. We play different instruments, but He provides the direction. He leads the players to play the right notes at the right time. When it works, the church makes beautiful music.

It should be our hope that we continue to be in harmony with one another through and because of the power of the Holy Spirit.

What We Believe – Doctrinal Standards—Confession of Faith



Lent is often described as a time of preparation and an opportunity to go deeper with God. The Lenten season is therefore a perfect time for us to examine the beliefs of the United Methodist Church, Methodism, and Bethany as we continue to discern where God is leading us as a congregation and as individuals. For this reason, the *Road To Holy Discernment* will focus on our beliefs during the 40 days of Lent through a series of “What We Believe” newsletters. *This newsletter will take a look at the second of two documents that comprise the United Methodist Church doctrinal standards: **Confession of Faith.***

The United Methodist Church **Confession of Faith** is descended from the Methodist Articles of Religion adopted by the United Brethren Church in 1809. These Methodist Articles of Religion subsequently underwent several revisions by the United Brethren Church through the years to become the **Confession of Faith**. The **Confession of Faith** in its current form was officially adopted in 1962 by the Evangelical United Brethren Church.

Per the United Methodist Church, the **Confession of Faith** along with the **Articles of Religion** “provide the foundational framework for United Methodist doctrine. All United Methodists are expected to teach in accordance with the statements of these two documents.”

The **Confession of Faith** contain sixteen “articles”. Following is a summarized version of these 16 articles. The full version of the **Confession of Faith** along with other UMC doctrinal information is available via the link provided at the end of this newsletter.

Article I – God

We believe in one true God who reveals himself as the Trinity: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

Article II – Jesus Christ

We believe in Jesus Christ who is truly God and truly man. He was born of the Virgin Mary, was crucified, dead, and buried. He rose from the dead and ascended into heaven. He will return to judge all men.

Article III – The Holy Spirit

We believe in the Holy Spirit. He leads men in faithful response to Christ and comforts, sustains, and guides all men.

Article IV – The Holy Bible

The Bible contains all things necessary for salvation – if it is not contained in the Bible, then it is not necessary for salvation. The Bible includes all of the books of the Old and New Testament.

Article V – The Church

The church of Christ is any congregation of believers where the Word of God is preached and the sacraments are administered.

Article VI – The Sacraments

There are two sacraments: Baptism and the Lord's Supper. Baptism is available to all including infants and young children. The bread and cup are spiritual representations of Christ's body and blood.

Article VII – Sin and Free Will

All persons are born with sin – it is in their human nature. We may be saved by grace only and we are free to accept or reject this grace

Article VIII – Reconciliation Through Christ

Christ's death on the cross satisfies all sins (original and actual).

Article IX – Justification and Regeneration

We are justified to God through faith in Christ. Once saved, we may sin but still be saved by grace.

Article X – Good Works

Good works are the fruits of faith – they cannot save us but are pleasing to God when they are the result of our faith in Christ.

Article XI – Sanctification and Christian Perfection

We are sanctified by grace through Christ. Once sanctified, we must continue to strive to be more Christ-like.

Article XII – The Judgement and Future State

We believe that all men are under the judgment of Christ and in the resurrection of the dead.

Article XIII – Public Worship

We believe that divine worship is essential to the church and believers. The order of public worship may differ from place to place. Worship should be conducted in the language of the worshipers.

Article XIV – The Lord's Day

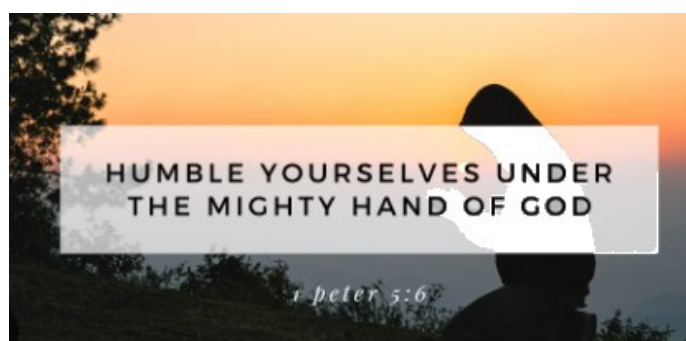
The Lord's Day is ordained for worship (public and private). It is a day of rest from unnecessary work. It is a day for spiritual improvement and is essential.

Article XV – The Christian and Property

Christians may own private property. Private property should be used for the manifestation of Christian love.

Article XVI – Civil Government

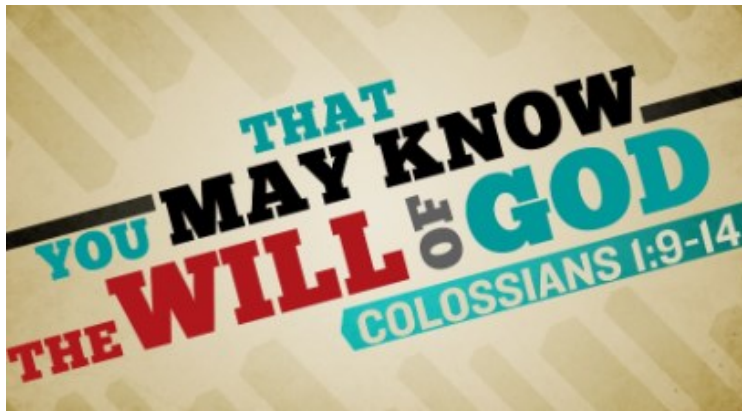
Church members and clergy should follow the laws and regulations of the governments in which they live. Governments derive their power from God and should govern accordingly.



The link below will take you to a website where you can read pages 47 – 91 of the 2016 Book of Discipline (BOD). These pages contain Part III of the BOD which includes:

- Our Doctrinal Heritage (Paragraph 102)
Includes Wesleyan belief of Grace: Prevenient, Justifying, Sanctifying
- Our Doctrinal History (Paragraph 103)
- Our Doctrinal Standards and General Rules (Paragraph 104)
Articles of Religion
Confession of Faith
General Rules
- Our Theological Task (Paragraph 105).

https://issuu.com/abingdonpress/docs/doctrinal_standards_and_our_theological_task



BETHANY UNITY PRAYER

Gracious Heavenly Father,

We come to You, acknowledging that Bethany is Your church. You have brought together people who love You and Your church with a desire to serve together in Your Kingdome. Give us a spirit of humility, gentleness, and patience. Help us be united in thought and purpose. WE seek the Holy Spirit to enable us to see our sin and suffering caused by our division. Unite us in seeking Your perfect will for Bethany.

In Your Holy Name we pray.
Amen



Remember the Unity Prayer for our church during the period of discernment. Unity stands for peace in the presence of conflict; for love in the presence of hatred; for forgiveness in the presence of injury. Each of us must independently pray for God's will to determine the future of Bethany.

Remember Lenten services each Wednesday night at 6:15 pm in Spell Chapel. What a perfect time to pray for God's guidance as we seek to do his will.