

# *The Wesleyan Church*



*Our  
Statements  
Of Faith*

**The Wesleyan Church** is an evangelical, Protestant, holiness denomination organized to proclaim the good news of Jesus Christ. The technical name for our church's theological heritage is Arminian-Wesleyan. This refers to the teachings of James Arminius and John Wesley. Arminius (1560-1609), a Dutch theologian, stressed that God has predestined all who believe in Jesus Christ for eternal life and those who reject Him for eternal separation from God; that He has given us as human beings true freedom to accept or reject this salvation; that He offers grace to enable all persons to repent and believe; and that believers are secure spiritually in Christ based on continued faith and obedience to God.

Wesley was a priest in the Church of England in the 1700s and the founder of the Methodist movement. He added to Arminius' insights an emphasis on the assurance of salvation believers can enjoy through the inner "witness of the Spirit." He also taught about the entire sanctification of believers by which their hearts are made perfect in love for God and other persons.

Wesleyans are convinced that the Bible is God's written Word and the final authority for all Christian beliefs and practices. Therefore, our statements of faith, which we call "Articles of Religion," seek to express only what the Bible teaches, as those teachings have been understood by the Church as a whole in its official assemblies. *The Discipline*, the book containing the constitution and bylaws of The Wesleyan Church, includes twenty-one "Articles of Religion." Each has its own brief list of supporting Scripture passages.

### *1. Faith in the Holy Trinity*

We believe in the one living and true God, both holy and loving, eternal, unlimited in power, wisdom, and goodness, the Creator and Preserver of all things. Within this unity there are three persons of one essential nature, power, and eternity—the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

Gen. 1:1; 17:1; Ex. 3:13-15; 33:20; Deut. 6:4; Ps. 90:2; Isa. 40:28-29; Matt. 3:16-17; 28:19; John 1:1-2; 4:24; 16:13; 17:3; Acts 5:3-4; 17:24-25; 1 Cor. 8:4, 6; Eph. 2:18; Phil. 2:6; Col. 1:16-17; 1 Tim. 1:17; Heb. 1:8; 1 John 5:20.

### *2. The Father*

We believe the Father is the Source of all that exists, whether of matter or spirit. With the Son and the Holy Spirit, He made man in His image. By intention He relates to man as Father, thereby forever declaring His goodwill toward man. In love, He both seeks and receives penitent sinners.

Ps. 68:5; Isa. 64:8; Matt. 7:11; John 3:17; Rom. 8:15; 1 Peter 1:17.

### *3. The Son of God*

We believe in Jesus Christ, the only begotten Son of God. He was conceived by the Holy Spirit and born of the Virgin Mary, truly God and truly man. He died on the cross and was buried, to be a sacrifice both for original sin and for all the transgressions of men, and to reconcile us to God. Christ rose bodily from the dead, and ascended into heaven, and there intercedes for us at the Father's right hand until He returns to judge all men at the last day.

Ps. 16:8-10; Matt. 1:21, 23; 11:27; 16:28; 27:62-66; 28:5-9, 16-17; Mark 10:45; 15; 16:6-7; Luke 1:27, 31, 35; 24:4-8, 23; John 1:1, 14, 18; 3:16-17; 20:26-29; 21; Acts 1:2-3; 2:24-31; 4:12; 10:40; Rom. 5:10, 18; 8:34; 14:9; 1 Cor. 15:3-8, 14; II Cor. 5:18-19; Gal. 1:4; 2:20; 4:4-5; Eph. 5:2; 1 Tim. 1:15; Heb 2:17; 7:27; 9:14, 28; 10:12; 13:20; 1 Peter 2:24; 1 John 2:2; 4:14.

### *4. The Holy Spirit*

We believe in the Holy Spirit who proceeds from the Father and the Son, and is of the same essential nature, majesty, and glory, as the Father and the Son, truly and eternally God. He is the Administrator of grace to all mankind, and is particularly the effective Agent in conviction for sin, in regeneration, in sanctification, and in glorification. He is ever present, assuring, preserving, guiding, and enabling the believer. Job 33:4; Matt. 28:19; John 4:24; 14:16-17; 15:26; 16:13-15; Acts 5:3-4; Rom. 8:9; II Cor. 3:17; Gal. 4:6.

### *5. The Sufficiency and Full Authority of the Holy Scriptures for Salvation*

We believe that the books of the Old and New Testaments constitute the Holy Scriptures. They are the inspired and infallibly written Word of God, fully

inerrant in their original manuscripts and superior to all human authority, and have been transmitted to the present without corruption of any essential doctrine. We believe that they contain all things necessary to salvation; so that whatever is not read therein, nor may be proved thereby, is not to be required of any man that it should be believed as an article of faith, or be thought requisite or necessary to salvation. Both in the Old and New Testaments life is offered to mankind ultimately through Christ, who is the only Mediator between God and man. The New Testament teaches Christians how to fulfill the moral principles of the Old Testament, calling for loving obedience to God made possible by the indwelling presence of His Holy Spirit.

The canonical books of the Old Testament are:

Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy, Joshua, Judges, Ruth, I Samuel, II Samuel, I Kings, II Kings, I Chronicles, II Chronicles, Ezra, Nehemiah, Esther, Job, Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, The Song of Solomon, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Lamentations, Ezekiel, Daniel, Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah, Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi.

The canonical books of the New Testament are:

Matthew, Mark, Luke, John, Acts, Romans, I Corinthians, II Corinthians, Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, I Thessalonians, II Thessalonians, I Timothy, II Timothy, Titus, Philemon, Hebrews, James, I Peter, II Peter, I John, II John, III John, Jude, and Revelation.

Ps. 19:7; Matt. 5:17-19; 22:37-40; Luke 24:27, 44; John 1:45; 5:46; 17:17; Acts 17:2, 11; Rom. 1:2; 15:4, 8; 16:26; II Cor. 1:20; Gal. 1:8; Eph. 2:15-16; I Tim. 2:5; II Tim. 3:15-17; Heb. 4:12; 10:1; 11:39; James 1:21; I Peter 1:23; II Peter 1:19-21; I John 2:3-7; Rev. 22:18-19.

## *6. God's Purpose for Man*

We believe that the two great commandments which require us to love the Lord our God with all the heart, and our neighbors as ourselves, summarize the divine law as it is revealed in the Scriptures. They are the perfect measure and norm of human duty, both for the ordering and directing of families and nations, and all other social bodies, and for individual acts, by which we are required to acknowledge God as our only Supreme Ruler, and all men as created by Him, equal in all natural rights. Therefore all men should so order all

their individual, social, and political acts as to give to God entire and absolute obedience, and to assure to all men the enjoyment of every natural right, as well as to promote the fulfillment of each in the possession and exercise of such rights.

Lev. 19:18, 34; Deut. 1:16-17; Job 31:13-14; Jer. 21:12; 22:3; Micah 6:8; Matt. 5:44-48; 7:12; Mark 12:28-31; Luke 6:27-29, 35; John 13:34-35; Acts 10:34-35; 17:26; Rom. 12:9; 13:1, 7-8, 10; Gal. 5:14; 6:10; Titus 3:1; James 2:8; I Peter 2:17; I John 2:5; 4:12-13; II John 6.

## *7. Marriage and the Family*

We believe that man is created in the image of God, that human sexuality reflects that image in terms of intimate love, communication, fellowship, subordination of the self to the larger whole, and fulfillment. God's Word makes use of the marriage relationship as the supreme metaphor for His relationship with His covenant people and for revealing the truth that that relationship is of one God with one people. Therefore God's plan for human sexuality is that it is to be expressed only in a monogamous lifelong relationship between one man and one woman within the framework of marriage. This is the only relationship which is divinely designed for the birth and rearing of children and is a covenant union made in the sight of God, taking priority over every other human relationship.

Gen. 1:27-28; 2:18, 20, 23, 24; Isa. 54:4-8; 62:5b; Jer. 3:14; Ezek. 16:3ff.; Hosea 2; Mal. 2:14; Matt. 19:4-6; Mark 10:9; John 2:1-2, 11; I Tim. 5:14; I Cor. 9:5; Eph. 5:23-32; Heb. 13:4; Rev. 19:7-8.

## *8. Man's Choice*

We believe that man's creation in the image of God included ability to choose between right and wrong. Thus man was made morally responsible for his choices. But since the fall of Adam, man is unable in his own strength to do the right. This is due to original sin, which is not simply the following of Adam's example, but rather the corruption of the nature of every man, and is reproduced naturally in Adam's descendants. Because of it, man is very far gone from original righteousness, and of his own nature is continually inclined to evil. He cannot of himself even call upon God or exercise faith for salvation. But through Jesus Christ the preventient grace of God makes possible what

man in himself cannot do. It is bestowed freely upon all men, enabling all who will to turn and be saved.

Gen. 6:5; 8:21; Deut. 30:19; Josh. 24:15; I Kings 20:40; Ps. 51:5; Isa. 64:6; Jer. 17:9; Mark 7:21-23; Luke 16:15; John 7:17; Rom. 3:10-12; 5:12-21; I Cor. 15:22; Eph. 2:1-3; I Tim. 2:5; Titus 3:5; Heb. 11:6; Rev. 22:17.

### 9. The Atonement

We believe that Christ's offering of himself, once and for all, through His sufferings and meritorious death on the cross, provides the perfect redemption and atonement for the sins of the whole world, both original and actual. There is no other ground of salvation from sin but that alone. This atonement is sufficient for every individual of Adam's race. It is unconditionally effective in the salvation of those mentally incompetent from birth, of those converted persons who have become mentally incompetent, and of children under the age of accountability. But it is effective for the salvation of those who reach the age of accountability only when they repent and exercise faith in Christ.

Isa. 52:13-53:12; Luke 24:46-47; John 3:16; Acts 3:18; 4:12; Rom. 3:20, 24-26; 5:8-11, 13, 18-20; 7:7; 8:34; I Cor. 6:11; 15:22; Gal. 2:16; 3:2-3; Eph. 1:7; 2:13, 16; I Tim. 2:5-6; Heb. 7:23-27; 9:11-15, 24-28; 10:14; I John 2:2; 4:10.

### 10. Repentance and Faith

We believe that for man to appropriate what God's prevenient grace has made possible, he must voluntarily respond in repentance and faith. The ability comes from God, but the act is man's.

Repentance is prompted by the convicting ministry of the Holy Spirit. It involves a willful change of mind that renounces sin and longs for righteousness, a godly sorrow for and a confession of past sins, proper restitution for wrongdoings, and a resolution to reform the life. Repentance is the precondition for saving faith, and without it saving faith is impossible. Faith, in turn, is the only condition of salvation. It begins in the agreement of the mind and the consent of the will to the truth of the gospel, but issues in a complete reliance by the whole person in the saving ability of Jesus Christ and a complete trusting of oneself to Him as Savior and Lord. Saving faith is expressed in a public acknowledgment of His Lordship and an identification

with His church.

Mark 1:15; Luke 5:32; 13:3; 24:47; John 3:16; 17:20; 20:31; Acts 5:31; 10:43; 11:18; 16:31; 20:21; 26:20; Rom. 1:16; 2:4; 10:8-10, 17; Gal. 3:26; Eph. 2:8; 4:4-6; Phil. 3:9; II Thess. 2:13; II Tim. 2:25; Heb. 11:6; 12:2; I Peter 1:9; II Peter 3:9.

### 11. Justification and Regeneration

We believe that when man repents of his sin and believes on the Lord Jesus Christ, he in the same moment is justified, regenerated, adopted into the family of God, and assured of his salvation through the witness of the Spirit.

We believe that we are accounted righteous before God only on the basis of the merit of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, being justified by faith alone, and not on the basis of our own works.

We believe that regeneration is that work of the Holy Spirit by which the pardoned sinner becomes a child of God. This new life is received through faith in Jesus Christ, and by it the regenerate is delivered from the power of sin which reigns over all the unregenerates, so that they love God and through grace serve Him with the will and affections of the heart, receiving the Spirit of Adoption.

**Justification:** Hab. 2:4; Acts 13:38-39; 15:11; 16:31; Rom. 1:17; 3:28; 4:2-5; 5:1-2; Gal. 3:6-14; Eph. 2:8-9; Phil 3:9; Heb. 10:38.

**Regeneration:** John 1:12-13; 3:3, 5-8; II Cor. 5:17; Gal. 3:26; Eph. 2:5, 10, 19; 4:24; Col. 3:10; Titus 3:5; James 1:18; I Peter 1:3-4; II Peter 1:4; I John 3:1.

**Adoption:** Rom. 8:15; Gal. 4:5, 7; Eph. 1:5.

**Witness of the Spirit:** Rom. 8:16-17; Gal. 4:6; I John 2:3; 3:14, 18-19.

### 12. Good Works

We believe that although good works cannot save us from our sins or from God's judgment, they are the fruit of faith and follow after regeneration. Therefore they are pleasing and acceptable to God in Christ, and by them a living faith may be as evidently known as a tree is discerned by its fruit.

Matt. 5:16; 7:16-20; John 15:8; Rom 3:20; 4:2, 4, 6; Gal. 2:16; 5:6; Eph. 2:10; Phil. 1:11; Col. 1:10; I Thess. 1:3; Titus 2:14; 3:5; James 2:18, 22; I Peter 2:9, 12.

### *13. Sin After Regeneration*

We believe that after we have experienced regeneration, it is possible to fall into sin, for in this life there is no such height or strength of holiness from which it is impossible to fall. But by the grace of God one who has fallen into sin may by true repentance and faith find forgiveness and restoration.

Mal. 3:7; Matt. 18:21-22; John 15:4-6; I Tim. 4:1, 16; Heb. 10:35-39; I John 1:9; 2:1, 24-25.

### *14. Sanctification: Initial, Progressive, Entire*

We believe that sanctification is that work of the Holy Spirit by which the child of God is separated from sin unto God and is enabled to love God with all his heart and to walk in all His holy commandments blameless. Sanctification is initiated at the moment of justification and regeneration. From that moment there is a gradual or progressive sanctification as the believer walks with God and daily grows in grace and in a more perfect obedience to God. This prepares for the crisis of entire sanctification which is wrought instantaneously when the believer presents himself a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, through faith in Jesus Christ, being effected by the baptism with the Holy Spirit who cleanses the heart from all inbred sin. The crisis of entire sanctification perfects the believer in love and empowers him for effective service. It is followed by lifelong growth in grace and the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ. The life of holiness continues through faith in the sanctifying blood of Christ and evidences itself by loving obedience to God's revealed will.

Gen. 17:1; Deut. 30:6; Ps. 130:8; Isa. 6:1-6; Ezek. 36:25-29; Matt. 5:8, 48; Luke 1:74-75; 3:16-17; 24:49; John 17:1-26; Acts 1:4-5, 8; 2:1-4; 15:8-9; 26:18; Rom. 8:3-4; I Cor. 1:2; 6:11; II Cor. 7:1; Eph. 4:13, 24; 5:25-27; I Thess. 3:10, 12-13; 4:3, 7-8; 5:23-24; II Thess. 2:13; Titus 2:11-14; Heb. 10:14; 12:14; 13:12; James 3:17-18; 4:8; I Peter 1:2; II Peter 1:4; I John 1:7, 9; 3:8-9; 4:17-18; Jude 24.

### *15. The Gifts of the Spirit*

We believe that the Gift of the Spirit is the Holy Spirit himself, and He is to be desired more than the gifts of the Spirit which He in His wise counsel bestows

upon individual members of the Church to enable them properly to fulfill their function as members of the body of Christ. The gifts of the Spirit, although not always identifiable with natural abilities, function through them for the edification of the whole church. These gifts are to be exercised in love under the administration of the Lord of the church, not through human volition. The relative value of the gifts of the Spirit is to be tested by their usefulness in the church and not by the ecstasy produced in the ones receiving them.

Luke 11:13; 24:49; Acts 1:4; 2:38-39; 8:19-20; 10:45; 11:17; Rom. 12:4-8; I Cor. 12:1-14:40; Eph. 4:7-8, 11-16; Heb. 2:4; 13:20-21; I Peter 4:8-11.

### *16. The Church*

We believe that the Christian church is the entire body of believers in Jesus Christ, who is the founder and only Head of the church. The church includes both those believers who have gone to be with the Lord and those who remain on the earth, having renounced the world, the flesh, and the devil, and having dedicated themselves to the work which Christ committed unto His church until He comes. The church on earth is to preach the pure Word of God, properly administer the sacraments according to Christ's instructions, and live in obedience to all that Christ commands. A local church is a body of believers formally organized on gospel principles, meeting regularly for the purposes of evangelism, nurture, fellowship, and worship. The Wesleyan Church is a denomination consisting of those members within district conferences and local churches who, as members of the body of Christ, hold the faith set forth in these Articles of Religion and acknowledge the ecclesiastical authority of its governing bodies.

Matt. 16:18; 18:17; Acts 2:41-47; 9:31; 11:22; 12:5; 14:23; 15:22; 20:28; I Cor. 1:2; 12:28; 16:1; II Cor. 1:1; Gal. 1:2; Eph. 1:22-23; 2:19-22; 3:9-10, 21; 5:22-33; Col. 1:18, 24; I Thess. 1:1; II Thess. 1:1; I Tim. 3:15; Heb. 12:23; James 5:14.

### *17. The Sacraments: Baptism and the Lord's Supper*

We believe that water baptism and the Lord's Supper are the sacraments of the church commanded by Christ and ordained as a means of grace when received through faith. They are tokens of our profession of Christian faith and signs of God's gracious ministry

toward us. By them, He works within us to quicken, strengthen, and confirm our faith.

We believe that water baptism is a sacrament of the church, commanded by our Lord and administered to believers. It is a symbol of the new covenant of grace and signifies acceptance of the benefits of the atonement of Jesus Christ. By means of this sacrament, believers declare their faith in Jesus Christ as Savior.

**Matt. 3:13-17; 28:19; Mark 1:9-11; John 3:5, 22, 26; 4:1-2; Acts 2:38-39, 41; 8:12-17, 36-38; 9:18; 16:15, 33; 18:8; 19:5; 22:16; Rom 2:28-29; 4:11; 6:3-4; I Cor. 12:13; Gal. 3:27-29; Col. 2:11-12; Titus 3:5.**

We believe that the Lord's Supper is a sacrament of our redemption by Christ's death and of our hope in His victorious return, as well as a sign of the love that Christians have for each other. To such as receive it humbly, with a proper spirit and by faith, the Lord's Supper is made a means through which God communicates grace to the heart.

**Matt. 26:26-28; Mark 14:22-24; Luke 22:19-20; John 6:48-58; I Cor. 5:7-8; 10:3-4, 16-17; 11:23-29.**

### ***18. The Second Coming of Christ***

We believe that the certainty of the personal and imminent return of Christ inspires holy living and zeal for the evangelization of the world. At His return He will fulfill all prophecies made concerning His final and complete triumph over evil.

**Job 19:25-27; Isa. 11:1-12; Zech. 14:1-11; Matt. 24:1-51; 25; 26:64; Mark 13:1-37; Luke 17:22-37; 21:5-36; John 14:1-3; Acts 1:6-11; I Cor. 1:7-8; I Thess. 1:10; 2:19; 3:13; 4:13-18; 5:1-11, 23; II Thess. 1:6-10; 2:1-12; Titus 2:11-14; Heb. 9:27-28; James 5:7-8; II Peter 3:1-14; I John 3:2-3; Rev. 1:7; 19:11-16; 22:6-7, 12, 20.**

### ***19. The Resurrection of the Dead***

We believe in the bodily resurrection from the dead of all mankind—of the just unto the resurrection of life, and of the unjust unto the resurrection of damnation. The resurrection of the righteous dead will occur at Christ's Second Coming, and the resurrection of the wicked will occur at a later time. The resurrection of Christ is the guarantee of the resurrection of those who are in Christ. The raised body will be a spiritual body,

but the person will be whole and identifiable.

**Job 19:25-27; Dan. 12:2; Matt. 22:30-32; 28:1-20; Mark 16:1-8; Luke 14:14; 24:1-53; John 5:28-29; 11:21-27; 20:1—21:25; Acts 1:3; Rom. 8:11; I Cor. 6:14; 15:1-58; II Cor. 4:14; 5:1-11; I Thess. 4:13-17; Rev. 20:4-6, 11-13.**

### ***20. The Judgment of Mankind***

We believe that the Scriptures reveal God as the Judge of all mankind and the acts of His judgment are based on His omniscience and eternal justice. His administration of judgment will culminate in the final meeting of mankind before His throne of great majesty and power, where records will be examined and final rewards and punishments will be administered.

**Ecc. 12:14; Matt. 10:15; 25:31-46; Luke 11:31-32; Acts 10:42; 17:31; Rom. 2:16; 14:10-12; II Cor. 5:10; II Tim. 4:1; Heb. 9:27; II Peter 3:7; Rev. 20:11-13.**

### ***21. Destiny***

We believe that the Scriptures clearly teach that there is a conscious personal existence after death. The final destiny of man is determined by God's grace and man's response, evidenced inevitably by his moral character which results from his personal and volitional choices and not from any arbitrary decree of God. Heaven with its eternal glory and the blessedness of Christ's presence is the final abode of those who choose the salvation which God provides through Jesus Christ, but hell with its everlasting misery and separation from God is the final abode of those who neglect this great salvation.

**Dan. 12:2; Matt. 25:34-46; Mark 9:43-48; Luke 13:3; John 8:21-23; 14:2-3; II Cor. 5:6, 8, 10; Heb. 2:1-3; 9:27-28; 10:26-31; Rev. 20:14-15; 21:1-22:5, 14-15.<sup>1</sup>**

<sup>1</sup>*The Discipline of The Wesleyan Church*, 1988 (Indianapolis, Ind.: Wesleyan Publishing House, 1989), pars. 103-126, pp. 20-28.