

STATEMENT ON DOCTRINAL STANDARDS

The Bible as Holy Scripture is the primary authority for faith, morals, and service, against which all others must be measured. Yet through the Church, the Holy Spirit has spoken in the form of authoritative statements of teaching that are biblically-grounded, crucial for spiritual formation, consonant with the rule of faith, and which have stood the test of time.

101. DOCTRINAL STANDARDS

Foundational Documents:

Taken together, our doctrinal standards represent a Wesleyan expression of the Great Tradition of Christian orthodoxy. This orthodox faith is grounded in the apostolic witness given over to us in Scripture and defined and developed in the Church's creedal tradition. In particular, the Apostles' Creed, the Nicene Creed (381), and the Definition of Chalcedon provide a foundation for orthodox Christian theology and doctrine. Many Christian communities have developed additional statements of faith that are consistent with this creedal tradition, but which also express the community's particular emphases and concerns. Our Articles of Religion and Confession of Faith are among these.

We recognize three historic doctrinal statements as foundational for the faith we profess in our current doctrinal standards:

The Apostles' Creed

I believe in God, the Father Almighty,
creator of heaven and earth.
I believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord,
who was conceived by the Holy Spirit,
born of the Virgin Mary,
suffered under Pontius Pilate,
was crucified, died, and was buried;
he descended to the dead.
On the third day he rose again;
he ascended into heaven,
is seated at the right hand of the Father,
and will come again to judge the living and the dead.
I believe in the Holy Spirit,
the holy catholic** church,
the communion of saints,
the forgiveness of sins,
the resurrection of the body,
and the life everlasting. Amen.

** universal

The Nicene Creed (381 A.D.)

We believe in one God,
the Father, the Almighty,
maker of heaven and earth,
of all that is, seen and unseen.

We believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ,
the only Son of God,
eternally begotten of the Father,
God from God, Light from Light,

true God from true God,
begotten, not made,
of one Being with the Father;
through him all things were made.
For us and for our salvation
he came down from heaven,
was incarnate of the Holy Spirit and the Virgin Mary
and became truly human.
For our sake he was crucified under Pontius Pilate;
he suffered death and was buried.
On the third day he rose again
in accordance with the Scriptures;
he ascended into heaven
and is seated at the right hand of the Father.
He will come again in glory
to judge the living and the dead,
and his kingdom will have no end.

We believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life,
who proceeds from the Father and the Son,
who with the Father and the Son
is worshiped and glorified,
who has spoken through the prophets.
We believe in one holy catholic* and apostolic church.
We acknowledge one baptism
for the forgiveness of sins.
We look for the resurrection of the dead,
and the life of the world to come. Amen.

The Definition of Chalcedon

Therefore, following the holy fathers, we all with one accord teach men to acknowledge one and the same Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, at once complete in Godhead and complete in manhood, truly God and truly man, consisting also of a reasonable soul and body; of one substance with the Father as regards his Godhead, and at the same time of one substance with us as regards his manhood; like us in all respects, apart from sin; as regards his Godhead, begotten of the Father before the ages, but yet as regards his manhood begotten, for us men and for our salvation, of Mary the Virgin, the God-bearer; one and the same Christ, Son, Lord, Only-begotten, recognized in two natures, without confusion, without change, without division, without separation; the distinction of natures being in no way annulled by the union, but rather the characteristics of each nature being preserved and coming together to form one person and subsistence, not as parted or separated into two persons, but one and the same Son and Only-begotten God the Word, Lord Jesus Christ; even as the prophets from earliest times spoke of him, and our Lord Jesus Christ himself taught us, and the creed of the fathers has handed down to us.

Standards of Doctrine.

Standards here refer to those statements which, as an application of Holy Scripture in the living Body of Christ which is the Church, make up the standards and provide the boundaries for orthodoxy (right praise of God in our teaching), the guideposts for the development of our collective theology and teaching, and the launching point for orthopraxis (right living and service).

We recognize two types of standards: *Constitutive and Wesleyan*.

- A. *Constitutive Standards* express our agreement with the Great Tradition of Christian faith, the "faith once for all entrusted to the saints" (Jude 3). They express beliefs that are held in

common with Christians of many branches and traditions of the faith around the world. As constitutive standards, they serve as a bulwark against false teaching.

1. The Articles of Religion of The Methodist Episcopal Church (1808, including the additions of the Uniting Conference of The Methodist Church, 1939)
 2. The Confession of Faith of The Evangelical United Brethren Church (1963)
- B. *Wesleyan Standards* represent the normative, distinctive contributions and emphases of Wesleyan Christianity, and its heritage in the Anglican tradition. They are, to one degree or another, broadly shared between the Methodist/Wesleyan bodies of the Church. These *Standards* express the core teaching of Wesleyan tradition, and therefore are that to which we hold ourselves accountable. These include:
1. The Forty-four Standard Sermons of John Wesley*
 2. John Wesley's *Explanatory Notes Upon the New Testament*
 3. The General Rules of the United Societies (1740/1808, as amended 1848 and 1868, as revised for today)

Liturgical Norms & Guidelines

Liturgical Norms & Guidelines give voice to the living faith of Wesleyan people, and are suitable as guides for living worship and teaching on the life of worship.

1. The Orders of Sunday and Daily Service
2. The Rites and Ritual of the Church, including but not limited to:
 - a. The Services of Baptismal Covenant, including rites for Membership and Confirmation
 - b. The Services of Holy Communion
 - c. The Service of Death and Resurrection
 - d. The Service of Christian Marriage
 - e. The Services of Consecration & Ordination
 - f. The Service for Covenant Renewal
3. Recommended collections of Hymns and Songs

*All 150 sermons should be read for spiritual renewal and spiritual disciplines.