

WHAT DOES MY CHURCH SAY?

See Mack Stokes, *Major United Methodist Beliefs* (Abingdon, 1998)

About God:

1. “. . . God alone is the sovereign of the universe and the Lord of all the earth. God alone has the last word. . . at the same time, we affirm the freedom and responsibility of people under God. Some tell us that if God is sovereign, God controls and determines in advance whatever we do. We United Methodists could never believe that God binds us hand and foot and allows no place for our responsible action” (p. 42).

2. “We United Methodists believe in the Trinity. . . the doctrine of the trinity is pragmatic. It specifies the practical differences God makes when we open ourselves to God and put our trust in God. All this is essential to vital or experienced Christianity. In Unitarian religion, revelation tends to be for contemplation. It seeks to satisfy the intellect. In Trinitarian religion, the revelation of God, without sacrificing the interest in the intellect, leads to our total response and commitment to the divine summons” (pp. 43-44).

About Jesus Christ:

3. “We believe that the eternal God was uniquely and redemptively present in what Jesus said and thought and did. God was in the birth and in the actual life that Jesus lived” (p. 46)

4. “. . . we United Methodists notice how Jesus estimated all people as belonging essentially on the same level before God. He was no respecter of persons. It mattered not whether they were rich or poor, strong or weak, young or old, men or women, one race or another, Jesus viewed them all as on the same level before God. So he struck mightily against that chronic plague of the human race that has led the proud people of all the ages to look down on their fellow human beings” (p. 48).

About the Holy Spirit:

5. “We United Methodists, then, believe that in Pentecost we confront a primal fact of Christian history. What people in their own strength alone could not do, they did under the power of the Holy Spirit. No wonder the earliest Christians talked so much about the Spirit. . . For those disciples had entered into a new dimension of existence by the power of the Spirit. We too can feel the power of the Holy Spirit blowing new energies into our wills” (p. 53).

6. “. . . who is this Spirit? The Spirit is God’s nearness, made known and available in Jesus Christ. The Spirit is God close beside us, at work within us. . . The Holy Spirit is the unseen Presence rebuking us for every evil thought and deed, confirming us in every good thing, and summoning us to creative advances with God and our fellow human beings” (p. 53).