



## **Minnesota** **Annual Conference** of the United Methodist Church

### **Who We Are as United Methodists:**

*If you are coming from another tradition, and wondering if the United Methodist Church is a good fit for you and if you would be comfortable serving within our annual conference, here are a few of the things that you would need to be able to say “yes” to in order for this to feel like your home.*

#### **Prevenient Grace**

All Christian traditions talk about grace, but as United Methodists we call out three aspects of God’s grace:

- Prevenient: God is at work in the world and our lives before we knew or said yes to God
- Justifying: Jesus death and resurrection brings into right relationship with God, and this is God’s gift, not because of our efforts
- Sanctifying: we continue to grow in grace as we commit to the practices of faith and pursue living a Christ-like life, and allow the power of the Holy Spirit to form and shape us, guide and direct our lives.

Because of our understanding of prevenient grace, we practice that baptism can occur at any age, including infancy, since we understand baptism to be God’s work within, claiming and naming us as beloved children of God; and we practice an open communion table, welcoming everyone no matter what, since Jesus is the host. John Wesley, our founder, understood that communion could even be a converting sacrament. He saw that people who did not know Jesus could discover him in the act of partaking, so our invitation will often include those who are seeking after Jesus even if they are not yet baptized or a follower.

#### **Connectional**

We are a connectional polity versus a congregational one. All clergy and churches are members of an annual conference, and the Book of Discipline, which is set every four years by the General Conference, governs our work. Clergy are appointed to churches by the bishop, and the district superintendent is responsible for overseeing the work of the clergy and the congregations in their district. Each local church is assigned an apportionment for their financial share of our connectional work and the clergy is expected to lead the congregation in paying 100% of that amount. This also means you are not in ministry alone. We expect clergy to meet with colleagues for shared learning and growth through first the Clergy Leadership Academy in the first three years, and then continuing in Covenant groups.

#### **All Are Called**

The early Methodist movement was a lay-led movement. We believe all are called and gifted through their baptism. As a church, we do license and ordain people for a certain tasks, but they are set apart for a function, which is to equip the saints for the work of ministry, which belongs to all the people. Therefore, lay-clergy partnership is key to our understanding of being the body of Christ. In affirming the gifts of all God’s people and we raise up and value the leadership of women, young people and people of color in all arenas of the church.

## **Ways You Will Hear United Methodists Talk:**

We are a wide tent theologically, but our center is very much rooted in the faith as expressed in the historic creeds of the church. What you might notice about United Methodists is we tend to have an “AND” approach to life and faith. Some things you might hear that capture this:

- We make decisions by considering *Scripture, tradition, reason AND experience.*
- We are committed to *personal piety AND social justice.*
- We seek to be a church of *open hearts, open minds AND open doors.*
- We strive to live by the three simple rules: *do no harm, do good, AND stay in love with God.*
- We work to fulfill the Gospel Imperatives: *grow in love of God and neighbor, reach new people, AND heal a broken world.*