

# WHO

## WE ARE





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The United Methodist Church  
Office for Communications  
Dielmannstrasse 26  
60599 Frankfurt am Main, Germany  
+49 69 242521-152  
communications@emk.de  
www.emk.de

Purchase order number: 998.885  
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Blessings 4 you GmbH  
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70471 Stuttgart, Germany  
+49 711 83000-0  
info@blessings4you.de  
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## AN UNUSUAL NAME: briefly explained

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*We are “evangelisch” (evangelical) because we are founded on the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Also the German word characterizes us as part of the worldwide protestant family that emerged through the Reformation.*

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**“Methodist”** as part of our name reflects the mocking expression used in the first half of the 18<sup>th</sup> century for a group of students gathered around John and Charles Wesley. Instead of the normally casual approach to student life of the day, they followed a consequent lifestyle, which included intensive Bible study and prayer.

## Another important aspect

was the practical service they gave to the poor, the sick, the unemployed and those in prison. They were therefore mocked as “Methodists”. A student movement turned into a revival that changed the lives of many people. Within a few decades, it had become a global church.

The English name of the church (The United Methodist Church) reflects the merger of the Methodist Church and the Evangelical United Brethren Church in 1968.



## BASIS FOR PERSONAL FAITH: the Bible

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*The Bible is the fundamental basis for the life and church work of the United Methodist Church.*



It is as **Holy Scripture** comprising the Old and New Testament the source in which God reveals himself to humankind. All people are accepted by God and can therefore trust in God's love.

### Those who believe in God

receive new life freely. It does not have to be earned. People are invited to experience this love of God for themselves and also to let other people know about it.



## BINDING AND BROAD: theology

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*"Think and let think" is the guideline for Methodists when it comes to talking about faith, about life, about God and the world. The starting point for thinking and for open-minded and wide-hearted encounters is the Bible as the foundation of faith.*



**The Bible** was written over a period of about one thousand years and relates many people's encounters with God. This message of God through the experiences of different peoples, cultures and eras has to be rediscovered anew for every age. The process of theological work to foster understanding of the Bible and Christian traditions allows the discussion of different opinions, which in turn often leads to a better understanding of Biblical statements.

**The value** of theology is therefore its capacity to bring old views and traditions to bear when exploring present-day experiences and findings. The task of theology is to hear God's voice in the Bible and in the world in which we live, so that people will recognize God, entrust themselves to Him and live with Him.



**We trust** that God gives His Spirit to those who ask Him and open themselves to Him so that they will be better able to understand God's Word. Theology is therefore a task not just for experts but for all Christians.

## BELIEVERS AND SEEKERS: the congregation

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*All people are equal before God. This is why the United Methodist Church welcomes believers and seekers.*



**Whether young or old**, rich or poor, simple or intellectual, doubting or convinced, everyone who is interested in the faith and willing to join others on the journey are always welcome. It is for us self-evident that this community will be open for all nationalities and that all ministries, tasks and functions can be performed by men and women alike.

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As a **Protestant free church**, we invite people to decide to live a life of faith in Jesus Christ. People who join the United Methodist Church contribute to church life through their intercessions, their participation and through voluntary donations. Everyone is invited to help shape the community within their own possibilities. "Church" is therefore never finished or completed. It needs participation and constant renewal. It changes through the people who join it. Constant involvement in specifically shaping the church is therefore an on-going task for those who belong to the church and who follow Jesus Christ.

## WORKING THROUGH LOVE: Practical faith

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*John Wesley, co-founder and leader in the Methodist revival movement, was once asked "What distinguishes the Methodist revival movement?" His answer: "Faith that is working through love."*



**Active faith** in service for people, thus became one of the characteristics of Methodist work worldwide. Many of society's achievements that are taken for granted today have resulted from Methodist commitment. For example, the abolition of slavery, the founding of trade-unions or the cooperative building society movement, all resulted from Methodist participation and initiatives.

**Children** received an education in the 18<sup>th</sup> century by learning to read and write from the Bible on Sundays. This resulted in Sunday School with its many different forms of work with children today. Right through to the present, education plays a quite natural role in Methodist church work. Hospitals, retirement homes, multi-generation facilities and activities, volunteering at food banks, in hospices or with projects to protect the environment are also expressions of active faith.



## TALKING TOGETHER: shared spiritual direction

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*Talking together under the guidance of the Holy Spirit embodies the shared search for viable solutions.*

*The role model for this is the Council of Apostles in Jerusalem, recounted in Acts chapter 15.*

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The **rapidly expanding** Methodist revival movement was populated by people who needed spiritual guidance and supportive structures. As a gifted organizer, John Wesley developed suggestions, rules and orders based on the Bible which continue to shape Methodism through to today. This also included what was called “holy conferencing”, or talking together under the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

“What to teach? How to teach? **What to do?**” – these were the key questions at the conferences. Right through to today, this conference system for a shared spiritual direction penetrates all organizational levels of the United Methodist Church. Local churches have the “Charge Conference”, larger regions have the “Annual Conference”, while on the global level the “General Conference” is the top policy-making body of the United Methodist Church in the world.



## RESPECTFUL TOGETHERNESS: Give me thy hand

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*“Is thine heart right, as my heart is with thy heart, give me thy hand!” Since the earliest days of the Methodist movement, this has been the basic principle for encounters between people of other spiritual or ecclesiastical conviction.*

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Love for God and mutual respect should suffice for Christians and churches to be respectful in their dealings with each other. There does not necessarily always have to be agreement in all aspects of the Bible’s teachings and practical piety. A love for God and a “right heart” will give guidance and help to overcome previous divisions. This is why Methodists always give **their hands for ecumenical togetherness** and have been and still are committed to many ecumenical processes.



Methodists therefore naturally also **take part** in the various ecumenical Christian and Protestant organizations and committees throughout Germany, such as the German Council of Churches, as well as Regional and Local Councils of Churches, the Association of Free Churches in Germany and the Evangelical Alliance. There is a full communion relationship with the Evangelical Church in Germany.

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## IN GERMANY ...

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... around **52,000** people belong to the United Methodist Church. About 500 local churches belong to the Germany North, Germany East and Germany South Conference regions.

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**On a global scale** there are more than 80 million people who belong to churches in the Methodist tradition and associated or united churches affiliated with them.



If you are **interested**, there is a wealth of information on the internet:

**Find your nearest Methodist congregation:**  
[www.atlas.emk.de](http://www.atlas.emk.de)

**More explanations** (in German) of what “typically Methodist” means:  
[www.emk.de/glaube/typisch-methodistisch](http://www.emk.de/glaube/typisch-methodistisch)

**Detailed information** (in German) about the United Methodist Church in Germany:  
[www.emk.de](http://www.emk.de)

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How can hurtful mockery be defused?  
With self-confidence!

This was how the initially mocking expression  
“Methodists” became the respected name of a  
globally expanding church family.

Find out more about the  
United Methodist Church here.