

Union Church is a church under the lordship of Jesus Christ (Co. 1:18). Therefore, we are committed to contending for the faith that was once for all delivered to the saints (Jude 1:3). In unity with the historic Christian church, we believe and confess the Apostles', Nicene, Athanasian, and Chalcedonian Creeds as accurate representations of Scripture's teaching. In addition to these historic formulations, we are situated within the evangelical and Reformed traditions.

Who is God? (The Triune God)

God is the triune Creator of all things. There is one God who eternally exists in three equally divine persons: the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

We believe in one God (De. 6:1; Is. 43:10) eternally existing as one essence and three persons: God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit, who know, love and glorify one another (Ge. 1:26; Mt. 3:16-17, 28:19; Jn 14:16-17). Each person is fully, equally and eternally God, yet there is one God. The entire Christian faith is bound together with the confession of God's Trinitarian nature (Matt. 28:18-20).

This one true and living God is infinitely perfect both in his love and in his holiness (De. 32:4; 2 Sa. 22:31; Is. 6:3; 1 Jn 4:8). He is the Creator of all things, visible and invisible, and is therefore worthy to receive all glory and adoration (Ge. 1:1; Is. 40:26; Ro. 11:36; Co. 1:16-17). Immortal and eternal, he perfectly and exhaustively knows the end from the beginning, sustains and sovereignly rules over all things, and providentially brings about his eternal good purposes. (Is. 46:9-10; Ps. 33:10; Col 1:17).

How can we know God? (Revelation)

We can know God through the ways he has revealed himself to the world in creation, in the Scriptures, and in Jesus Christ.

We believe that God is not unknowable. Rather, He has graciously made Himself known to the world by revealing Himself in creation (Ps. 8; 19:1; Ro. 1:20), in Scripture, the inspired Word (2 Ti. 3:16), and in Jesus Christ, His Son, the incarnate Word (He.1:1-2).

First, God reveals Himself generally in the creation, preservation, and government of the universe. These manifest the invisible things of God, namely His eternal power and divine nature in such a way as to leave women and men without excuse (Ro. 1:20).

God also reveals himself specifically in Scripture. The 66 books of the Old and New Testaments, in all their diversity of genres and original audiences, are the inspired Word of God and are therefore without error in their original writings. These writings alone constitute the verbally inspired Word of God, which is utterly authoritative and free from error. The Scripture is sufficient for all that God requires for us to believe and do and is therefore to be believed, obeyed, and trusted (2 Sa. 22:31; Ps. 119:105; Is. 40:6-8). As God's people hear,

believe, and obey the Word, they are equipped as disciples of Christ and witnesses to the gospel (Ro. 10:14-17, 2 Ti. 3:16). Most importantly Jesus Christ, God the Son, is the perfect revelation of God. Jesus Christ is the “image of the invisible God” (Col. 1:15), “the exact imprint of his nature” (Heb. 1:3) and a perfect reflection of God the Father (John 5:19).

Why are we here? (Creation/Humanity)

God created the world for His glory and our good. He created women and men in his image to worship him alone, enjoy his love fully, and steward his creation responsibly.

We believe that God created the world in order to reveal his glory. Through creation, his infinite worth as well as his attributes of power, holiness, wisdom, and goodness are on display for all to see (Rom. 1:20, Jer. 10:12). He created all things (John 1:2-3), visible and invisible (Col. 1:16), from nothing through his Word (Heb. 11:3).

We believe that this manifestation of God’s glory is also an overflow of his love meant for the good and enjoyment of all his creatures (Ps. 33:5-6), especially humans, who are made in the image of God (Gen. 1:27). The purpose of creation, then, is tied to the glorifying of God by enjoying him—longing for him, experiencing his love in communion with him, and treasuring him above all else (Ps. 37:4, 73:25-26, 96:6-8).

God made humanity—male and female—in His own image (Gen. 1:27-30). Set apart as His image bearers, every human being is sacred. All men and all women, bearing the image of God, are meant to represent God in His creation in everything they do (1 Cor. 10:31). God declares the created order to be very good, distinguishing men and women as His agents to care for, manage and govern over it. They enjoy equal access to God by faith in Christ Jesus and are both called to move beyond passive self-indulgence to significant private and public engagement in family, church, and civic life. Adam and Eve were made to complement each other in a one-flesh union in the covenant of marriage that establishes the only God-ordained pattern of sexual relations for men and women. In God’s wise purposes, men and women are not simply interchangeable, but rather they complement each other in mutually enriching ways.

Union Church Distinctive: Complementarianism

Men and women are absolutely equal in essence, dignity and value but are distinct by divine design. As part of God’s good created order, men and women are to have different yet complementary roles and responsibilities in the home and church. As it relates to the church, men and women are both expected to lead; however, the office of elder is reserved for qualified men (1 Tim. 3; Titus 1).

What is wrong with the world? (The Fall)

Though the world was originally good, sin has fractured all things, introducing death and brokenness and leaving the world in desperate need of salvation.

Through the temptation of Satan, humanity transgressed the command of God and fell from their original holiness and righteousness (Gen. 3). Now the entire human race inherits a corrupt nature that is opposed to God and His law (Rom. 3:9-20). Therefore, all humans are under condemnation, deserving of God's wrath. This depravity is radical and pervasive. It extends to the mind, will, body, and affections; being blind and callous toward our own corruption (Eph. 4:18-19), drawn to evil and twisted desires (Rom. 1:26), and slaves to our sin and Satan (2 Tim. 2:26). Unregenerate humanity lives under the dominion of sin and Satan (Eph. 2:1-3). He is at enmity with God, hostile toward and hateful of God. The consequences of sin are not limited to this life, but will one day result in eternal suffering and separation from God in hell (2 Thes. 1-9, Mark 9:43-48, Luke 16:24). Sin has not just corrupted humanity, but all of creation feels the effects of sin (Gen. 3:17-18) and longs for things to be made right (Romans 8:22).

What will put things right? (The Gospel)

God will carry out His perfect plan to save His people.

We believe that before the foundation of the world God graciously determined to save a great multitude of guilty sinners from every tribe and language and people and nation (Re. 7:9). God foreknows, predestines, calls, justifies, and glorifies His people by His Spirit, giving saving faith in Jesus to those whom he has chosen (Jn. 10:25-29; Ep. 1:3-14; Ro. 8:28-30; 9:11-18).

Union Church Distinctive: Sovereignty of God in Salvation

The salvation of humanity is fundamentally the work of God. Before the foundation of the world, God elected His people, setting His affection and grace upon them (Rom. 8:29-30). In love God predestined His people for adoption (Eph. 1:4-6). Faith is a gift of grace that is given by the mercy and pleasure of God, so that no one may boast. Apart from the intervention of God, humanity cannot choose of his own accord to worship God and pursue righteousness (Rom. 3; Eph. 2:1-3). God's sovereignty in salvation is comprehensive: from first to last, all of salvation is the work of God.

God will redeem people through the life, death, resurrection, and ascension of Jesus Christ.

We believe that the eternal Son became human: the Word became flesh - fully God and fully human, one Person in two natures (Jn 1:1-18). As an incarnate man Jesus was miraculously conceived through the Holy Spirit and was born of the virgin Mary. He perfectly obeyed his heavenly Father, lived a sinless life, was crucified under Pontius Pilate, arose bodily from the dead on the third day, and ascended into heaven. He is now seated at the right hand of God the Father (Ph. 2:5-11) as our Mediator and Advocate (1 Ti. 2:5; 1 Jn. 2; He. 4:14-16). On the cross he canceled sin, satisfied God's wrath for sin, and reconciled to God all those who believe by bearing the full penalty of our sins (Is. 53; Jn 1:29; 1 Pe 2:24; Co 2:13-14). In his resurrection Christ Jesus was vindicated by his Father, broke the power of death, defeated Satan, and brought everlasting life to all his people (1 Co. 15; Jn

3:16). In his ascension he has been forever exalted as Lord and has prepared a place for us to be with him. We believe that salvation is found in no one else (Jn 14:6; Ro. 3:21-26).

God will justify sinners by grace, through faith in Jesus Christ.

We believe that Christ fully paid the debt for his people's sin by his perfect obedience and death on the cross. He took the punishment we deserve for our sins and satisfied God's justice on our behalf. This is a grace from God given freely and not for anything in us. Now - by faith alone - Christ's perfect obedience is credited to all who trust in him alone for their acceptance with God. Therefore we believe we are justified before God by grace through faith.

(Romans 4:3-8; Romans 3:26; Galatians 2:16-17; Titus 3:5-7; Philippians 3:8-9; 2 Corinthians 5:21; Romans 5:1; Psalm 51)

The Holy Spirit will give new life to God's people, apply his salvation to them, and indwell them with Christ's presence.

We believe that the redemption purchased for us by Jesus Christ is applied to the Church by the Holy Spirit (Tit. 3:5-6), sent by the Father and the Son. The Spirit regenerates God's people and works out faith and repentance among them (Eph. 2:8). By him, we are united to Christ (Eph. 2:4-5, 3:16-17) and guaranteed of our promised salvation (Eph. 1:13-14). In this age, the Spirit indwells believers—guiding and instructing them (Rom. 12:1-2) as well as sanctifying them (2 Thess. 2:13) and equipping them for life in this world.

God will transform his people, using them for his mission and preparing them for eternal life to come.

We believe that God's people are transformed through the sanctifying work of the Holy Spirit, a free work of grace (2 Thess. 2:13). This sanctification does the work of conforming us to the image of Christ (2 Cor. 3:18) as new creations, renewed continually by the Spirit as we put off sin (2 Cor. 3:17) and put on Christ. (Eph. 4:22-24). Though we will not reach perfection in this life (1 John 1:10), the sanctifying work of the Spirit is a witness to the power of God's saving grace (Matt. 5:16). The sanctification of God's people leads to flourishing in this life and prepares us for our eternal life with Christ (Rev. 19:7-9).

The Kingdom of God is experienced in the present through the body of Christ and will one day be fully experienced as his reign over all creation.

We believe that in the incarnation, life, death, resurrection, and ascension of Jesus Christ, the Son of God, inaugurated his Kingdom here on earth (Matt. 4:17)—that is, his reign over all creation as the King of kings and Lord of lords (Rev. 11:15). Though Christ has inaugurated his kingdom, it has not yet been fully consummated—we who have entered into his kingdom by faith in Christ longingly wait for its consummation as its heirs in Christ (James 2:5). God's Kingdom is imperfectly manifested today through the Church, but God will one day fully consummate his kingdom both spiritually and physically in the New Heavens and New Earth (Rev. 21:1-4). As citizens of God's kingdom, Christians are living witnesses and expressions of the kingdom (Rev. 1:6, 2 Thess. 1:5), longing and striving for unity (Mark 3:24), healing (Matt. 4:23), holiness (Matt. 5:19-20), justice (2 Thess. 1:4-6), peace, and joy (Rom. 14:17).

What is the Church?

The Church is God's new people, the body of Christ sent into the world to shine forth the glory of God.

We believe that God, by His Word and Spirit, creates the Church by calling sinful humanity into the fellowship of Christ's body. By the same Word and Spirit, He builds up, guides, and preserves that newly redeemed humanity. The church is the body of Christ, the apple of his eye, graven on his hands, and he has pledged himself to her forever. Jesus is the head, the chief shepherd over his Church (Col 1:18; 1 Peter 5:4).

The Church exists to worship and glorify the triune God. As the body of Christ, the ministry of the Church is an extension of the ministry of Jesus in the Power of the Spirit. The ultimate mission of the Church is to bring glory to God by making disciples of Jesus Christ.

We can think about the Church in two ways: the invisible (or universal) Church and the visible church local. The invisible Church is made up of people from across time and geography who are saved by grace through faith in Jesus Christ and ultimately won't be known by us until the consummation of the Kingdom and the gathering of all of God's people from every corner of the earth. The visible church consists of all people throughout the world who profess the faith of the gospel and display obedience to God. Though the invisible church is made up of true believers only, the visible church is composed of both genuine and false disciples. Local churches are made up of the visible church.

The church is distinguished by the gospel message, the practice of the sacraments, the practice of discipline, our great mission, and—above all—by our love for God, our love for one another, and our love for the world.

The church is designed and called to help its members grow in Christ-likeness and fight sin. In preaching, teaching, prayer, corporate worship, fellowship, and godly oversight by pastors and elders we engage in the discipline of discipleship. When sin in the life of the body needs to be corrected, we engage in church discipline. The Bible calls us to correct sin through church discipline, which can ultimately include the exclusion of unrepentant people from membership in the church and participation in the Lord's Supper, in passages like Matthew 18:15-17, 1 Corinthians 5:1-13; and 2 Corinthians 2:6.

(Isaiah 56:1-8; Isaiah 54:1-3; Ma. 28:18-20; Galatians 3-4; 1 Timothy 3:15; Ephesians 2:11-22; Ephesians 4:1-16; 1 Cor. 12:12-31; 2 Corinthians 6:16; 1 Peter 2:4-12; 1 John 3:11-24)

Union Church Distinctives: The Gifts of the Holy Spirit

The gifts of the Holy Spirit that we see on display in the New Testament are still active within the life of the church. These gifts did not end with the close of the New Testament or the death of the last apostle (1 Cor. 12:1-11).

What are sacraments?

Sacraments are holy signs and seals instituted by God for his church to practice so that God might declare and seal to us the promise of the gospel. There are two sacraments: baptism and the Lord's supper.

We believe that baptism and the Lord's Supper are commanded by the Lord Jesus himself for his Church to practice. They are signs and seals that remind God's people of the benefits of the gospel, strengthen believers, nourish their faith, testify to the bond of love in the fellowship of believers, and distinguish the Church from the world.

Baptism is connected with entrance into the new covenant community. In baptism, we see a depiction of a disciple's union with Christ in His death, burial, and resurrection and cleansing from sin. The Lord's Supper is tied to ongoing covenant renewal. In the Lord's supper Christ's broken body and shed blood are shown. At the table we are nourished in faith and reassured of our union and communion with Christ. Together baptism and the Lord's supper are simultaneously God's pledge to us, a divinely ordained means of grace, our public vows of submission to Christ, and anticipations of his return and of the consummation of all things.

(Ex 12; Mat 28:19; Act 2:38-39; Rom 6:3-4; 1 Cor 10:16; 11:24-26; 12:13; Gal 3:27; Eph 4:2-5)

Union Church Distinctive: Dual Practice of Credobaptism & Covenantal Paedobaptism:

We acknowledge that faithful, biblically committed, orthodox Christians in our theological "family tree" have interpreted the Bible differently on the issue of baptism. Both credobaptism (baptism after a credible profession of faith) and covenantal paedobaptism (baptism of the children of believing parents) are Biblically reasonable positions. This, combined with our desire to honor Christ's command for unity and humility in his church (Jn 17:20-23; Ph 2:1-7), leads us to practice both credobaptism and paedobaptism according to the convictions of the individuals and families of Union Church.

How will it all end? (Restoration/Eschatology)

Jesus Christ will return as the final Judge and glorious King to restore all things.

We believe in the personal, glorious, and bodily return of our Lord Jesus Christ when he will exercise his role as final Judge, and his kingdom will be consummated. We believe in the bodily resurrection of both the just and the unjust—the unjust to judgment and eternal conscious punishment in hell and the just to eternal blessedness in the presence of him who sits on the throne and of the Lamb in the new heaven and the new earth.

Christ will make all things new. On that day the church will be presented faultless before God, all sin purged and its wretched effects forever banished by the obedience, suffering, and triumph of Christ. He will be our God, we will be His people, and we will live with Him forever to the praise of His glorious grace.

(Isaiah 65:17-25; Isaiah 66:18-24; Revelation 21; Romans 8:18-25; Matthew 10:28; 2 Peter 2:4-22; Hebrews 10:26-31)