

ALPHARETTA FIRST METHODIST CHURCH, INC.

STATEMENT OF FAITH

Alpharetta Methodist is a community of faith, hope, and love helping our neighbors, the next generation, and the nations take their next steps with Jesus.

Our mission is based on the Great Commission, the personal directive that was given by our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ to his disciples in Matthew 28:18-20:

“All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age.”

We believe in the teachings of Jesus as found in the Bible. Our uniqueness comes from our place in the Methodist tradition, where our statement of faith was originally written down by John Wesley, the founder of Methodism. Wesley was an Anglican preacher who in the early years of his ministry had an experience in a worship service that brought about a change in his heart. He not only felt an assurance of his salvation, but a burning desire to share the good news that he had discovered with the world. His open-air sermons for the working class, his writings and emphasis on the Bible as the inspired word of God, and the need for holy living began a movement that transformed England and ultimately led to the creation of the largest church movement in the American colonies.

Based on his study of Paul's letter to the Romans, Wesley taught that salvation is not something to be earned through individual worthiness or “good works”, but that true faith is accomplished by God's grace and will inevitably reveal itself through the fruit produced by holy living.

Wesley taught that evangelical faith must be seen in evangelical living. He summarized this in three commitments: 1. To do no harm, avoiding every kind of evil. 2. To do all the good we can, in every way we can, to all people we can. 3. To practice the ordinances of God regularly.

The statements of faith that follow were adopted from Wesley's original text in *The Sunday Service of the Methodists* (1784). The language has been updated and context added in the interest of clarity for modern readers.

1. **The Holy Trinity:** There is only one real and living God. He is eternal, has no physical body, and is infinitely powerful, wise, good, and perfect. God created and preserves all things, both visible and invisible. God exists in unity as three persons - the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. God the Father is the first person of the trinity, ruler and sustainer of the universe, and the Father of all believers. (Deuteronomy 4:35, Matthew 28:19, 2 Corinthians 13:14, Genesis 1:1)
2. **Jesus Christ, The Son of God:** The Son, who is eternal and the same essence of the Father, took on human nature in the womb of his mother, Mary, indivisibly joining God and man together in one person, Jesus. He suffered and was crucified, died, and was buried to reconcile us to his Father. He became a sacrifice for our sins on our behalf, while he had no guilt of his own. (John 1:14, 8:58, & 10:30, Philippians 2:6-7)
3. **The Resurrection of Christ:** After his death, Jesus rose from the dead and physically ascended into heaven. He will remain there until he returns to Earth to judge all men and women at the last day. (1 Corinthians 15:3-5 & 20-22, Luke 24:6-7)
4. **The Holy Spirit:** The Holy Spirit, who comes from the Father and the Son, is a person of the same substance, majesty, and glory with the Father and the Son, and is the same and eternal God. He lives in all believers/Christ-followers, helping us live for God, giving us strength and comfort, and guiding us into God's truth. (Luke 1:35, John 14:26 & 16:7, 13 & 14, Acts 1:8 & 5:3-4)
5. **The Sufficiency of the Holy Scriptures for Salvation:** The Bible contains everything necessary for salvation and is the ultimate authority for Christian faith and practice. No belief or statement outside of what the Bible directly teaches is necessary for your salvation. The Bible includes only the traditional sixty-six books of the Old and New Testament, whose inspired authority has been affirmed since the earliest days of the church. (2 Timothy 3:16-17, Psalm 119:105, Romans 15:4, Matthew 5:17)

6. **Original or Birth Sin:** Original sin does not come from willfully following after the sin of Adam but is an inherent part of our corrupted nature. We have gone far from God's original plan for righteousness and are naturally and repeatedly inclined to evil. (Romans 5:12 & 7:18-25, Ephesians 2:3, 1 John 1:8, Psalms 51:5)
7. **Free Will:** As a result of Adam's original sin, we are unable to turn to faith by our own strength or through our good works and can do nothing on our own that pleases God. All we can do is call out to God to ask for His grace through Jesus, which makes us acceptable to Him. He then helps us perfect our will as we desire to work to please Him. (John 3:16, 1 Peter 2:15-16, Deuteronomy 30:19)
8. **The Justification of Man:** If we believe in Jesus' sacrifice for our sin, we are accounted righteous before God based only on the merit of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. It is this faith in Him, not our own works or anything we deserve, that saves us. Being saved by faith alone is an incredible comfort since Jesus' sacrifice on our behalf completely frees us from the eternal penalty of our sin. (Romans 3:28, Romans 4:3 & 5, Romans 5:1, Galatians 2:16, Ephesians 2:8, 1 John 4:9-10, Hebrews 10:10, 1 Corinthians 15:22)
9. **The One Sacrifice of Christ, Finished upon the Cross:** Jesus' death on the cross was a one-time sacrifice for all of the sins of the whole world. No other sacrifice is needed for salvation. Any religious ceremony that claims to offer redemption for sin or freedom from its pain and guilt is deceptive and dangerous. (Romans 5:8-11, Romans 6:23, Hebrews 10:11-18)
10. **Sanctification:** Sanctification is the ongoing process of becoming more Christ-like through the work of the Holy Spirit. When we accept Jesus' grace and are cleansed of the guilt of our sin, we receive the Holy Spirit, who continues to wash us from sin's pollution, save us from its power, and enable us to love God with all our hearts and to not stumble as we follow his holy commandments. (Hebrews 12:7-14, Galatians 5:16-25, Philippians 3:13-17, Romans 12:1-2, 2 Corinthians 5:17)
11. **The Church:** The visible church of Christ is a congregation of faithful men and women where the pure Word of God is preached and all of the sacraments

that Jesus instructed are duly administered. (Ephesians 4:11-13, 1 Corinthians 12:12-31, Hebrews 10:19-25)

- 12. The Sacraments:** The sacraments that Jesus instructed us to follow are not just badges or tokens of a Christian's public profession. Instead, they are sure signs of God's grace and good will toward us. Through these public acts, God invisibly works in us to speed, strengthen, and solidify our faith in him.

Jesus only defined two Sacraments in the Gospel: Baptism and the Lord's Supper.

Other practices that are commonly called sacraments (confirmation, penance, orders, matrimony, and extreme unction) are quite different from these two, and are either a natural part of the life of the believer or come from later writings that are not consistent with Jesus' teachings in the Bible.

Jesus did not give us the Sacraments to be put on a pedestal or held up proudly, but to be used. When properly conducted by those who come in grace, the sacraments fulfill their complete, intended purpose. When performed by those who have not submitted their will to God's grace, the sacraments bring condemnation. (1 Corinthians 11:26-30)

- 13. Baptism:** Baptism is not only an outward sign and public profession that distinguishes Christians from others that are not baptized, it is also a sign of regeneration and the new birth. We baptize young children for the same reason, as a public profession on their behalf until they can accept God's grace for themselves. (Matthew 28:19-20, Romans 6:3-4)

- 14. The Lord's Supper or Communion:** The Lord's Supper is not just a sign of the love that Christians ought to have for each other, it is a reminder of our redemption by Christ's death. As we receive it in faith, the bread which we break is a reminder of Christ physical sacrifice; and likewise, the cup of blessing is a reminder of sin-cleansing blood of Christ.

Jesus is not physically, but spiritually present in the elements of the Lord's Supper, which can only be received by faith.

Jesus did not create the sacrament of the Lord's Supper to deny access to anyone, and did not intend for it to be paraded about proudly or worshiped. (1 Corinthians 11:23-30, Luke 22:14-20, Mark 14:22-24)

15. **The Marriage of Ministers:** God's law does not command ministers of Christ to remain single and abstain from marriage, so they may use their judgement to best pursue godliness and marry at their own discretion. (Titus 1:5-6, 1 Corinthians 7:9)
16. **Marriage:** We believe in Marriage as Defined by God in the Holy Bible in Genesis 2, by Jesus in Matthew 19, and by the authors of the Letters in the New Testament. There is only one, legitimate meaning of marriage sanctioned by God, that which joins one man and one woman in a single, covenantal union. Marriage ceremonies performed in any facility owned, leased, or rented by Alpharetta First Methodist Church, Inc. will only be ceremonies sanctioned by God, joining one man with one woman as the gender was determined by God at birth. (Genesis 2:24, Matthew 19:4-6, Ephesians 5:22-23)
17. **The Duty of Christians to the Civil Authority:** It is the duty of all Christians, and especially of all Christian ministers, to observe and obey the laws and commands of the governing or supreme authority of the country of which they are citizens or subjects or in which they reside, and to use all appropriate means to instruct and encourage obedience to the powers that be. (Romans 13:1-6, Titus 3:1, 1 Peter 2:13-15)