

# **HELPING HANDS BULLETIN**

**MARCH 2009**



**THE PRINCIPAL DOCTRINE  
AND ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE  
OF THE CHRISTIAN METHODIST EPISCOPAL CHURCH:  
THE FOUNDATION ON WHICH WE STAND**



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This Helping Hands Bulletin is designed to serve as a brief but factual explanation and reminder of our doctrine and organizational structure.

**THE PRINCIPAL DOCTRINE AND ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE OF  
THE CHRISTIAN METHODIST EPISCOPAL CHURCH: THE FOUNDATION ON WHICH WE STAND:**

**DOCTRINE DEFINED:** Doctrine is something that is taught; a principle or creed of principles presented for acceptance or belief; a system of beliefs. (Pronunciation: dok-rin. Also Known As: dogma; code of tenets. Example: Watch your life and doctrine closely).

**COMPARISON OF CHRISTIAN DENOMINATIONS BELIEFS**

DENOMINATION	BASIS FOR DOCTRINE					
	The Scriptures and the Gospels	Church Fathers	THE BIBLE	The Confession of Faith	Popes	Bishops
Anglican/Episcopalian						
Assembly of God						
Baptist						
Lutheran						
<b>METHODIST</b>						
Presbyterian						
Roman Catholic						

**CME DOCTRINE**

**IN THE BEGINNING** – John Wesley and the early Methodists were particularly concerned about inviting people to experience God's grace and to grow in their knowledge and love of God through disciplined Christian living. They placed primary emphasis on Christian living and on putting faith and love into action. Thus, we hold traditional Christian beliefs based on the *Bible* and our doctrine is the doctrine of early Methodism and the *parent Church, the Methodist Episcopal Church, South.*

**METHODIST BELIEFS**  
(Methodist beliefs that are important because of their emphasis within the Methodist tradition)

**Christian Perfection:** Though the Methodist never claimed that a perfect, sinless life was ever attained, they taught that it was attainable. The Methodists taught that every Christian must strive for perfection and should evidence some progress in that direction.

**Universal Redemption:** The universal redemption proclaims that Jesus Christ died for all people and that all people can be saved – not just a select few. It also declares that acceptance by Jesus Christ has nothing to do with one's position or possessions.

**Justification by Faith:** The belief that one is saved by faith in the saving grace of Jesus Christ alone is central to Methodist Doctrine. The service of the Christian life is an expression of one's faith – not the faith. It is because of the grace, the unmerited love of God in Jesus Christ that men and women are saved – not because of anything they do.

The Witness of the Holy Spirit: The inner certainty which each Christian can have that he/she is a child of God as well as the conviction that God is at work in the world and in the life of the believer, bringing about His Kingdom and giving credence to the witness of the Holy Spirit in the believer's life.

Falling from Grace: Emphasis upon the real possibility that a Christian can live in such a way that he/she will reject God's grace even though it was once accepted.

The Sacraments: Methodists believe that a sacrament is a "visible sign of an inward and spiritual grace" instituted by Jesus Christ. There are two sacraments observed by Methodists: Baptism and The Lord's Supper.

THE APOSTLE CREED [Our statement of faith and embedded summary of beliefs] - Modern English Version  
From the Book of Common Prayer - *I believe in God, the Father almighty, creator of heaven and earth. I believe Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord, who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died, and was buried; On the third day he rose again; he ascended into heaven, he is seated at the right hand of the Father, and he will come to judge the living and the dead. I believe in: the Holy Spirit; the holy catholic church; the communion of saints; the forgiveness of sins; the resurrection of the body; and the life everlasting. Amen.*

## OUR GOVERNMENTAL STRUCTURE

The Executive Branch, The Legislative Branch, and The Judicial Branch form the governmental structure of the Christian Methodist Episcopal Church.

- I. Our ten (10) Bishops represent the EXECUTIVE BRANCH.
- II. The General Conference represents the LEGISLATIVE BRANCH.
- III. The Judicial Council represents the JUDICIAL BRANCH.

The General Conference – The General Conference meets once every four years. The General Conference has full powers to make rules and regulations for the Church subject to the limitations of the restrictive rules. (\*Page 29 of the 2006 Book of Discipline). The General Conference is comprised of delegates elected by the Annual Conferences, one half of whom are ministers and one half laity.

The General Connectional Board - The General connectional Board meets once a year in May, except during the year of a General Conference. It governs the general affairs of the church with such powers as may be fixed and determined by the General Conference.

The Episcopacy – The Bishops of the Christian Methodist Episcopal Church who are elected by the General Conference and consecrated in the historic manner of Episcopal Methodism. They form the College of Bishops comprised of all the Bishops of the church. The college of Bishops plans for the general oversight and promotion of the entire church and each active bishop presides over an Episcopal District and the Regions of which it is made up.

Judicial Council – The Judicial Council was voted into existence by the 1946 General Conference, and became operative in 1950. Prior to 1946, the bishops of the church were the final interpreters of The Book of Discipline. The Judicial Council, whose members (nine currently) are elected by the General Conference, guarantees "due process" for members and clergy of the Church and are the final interpreter of The Book of Discipline. Members, lay or clergy, may petition the Council for declaratory judgment (interpretation) of paragraphs in The Discipline.