



let it shine

Theological Foundations in the UCC

The Preamble to the UCC Constitution

What is our theology? What are the basic ideas about God, Jesus, humanity and Creation that hold us together in the United Church of Christ?

Some say we have no theology. In fact, we have a lovely constituting theology, one that is as rich as it is terse. It is found in the Preamble to our constitution:

The United Church of Christ acknowledges as its sole head, Jesus Christ, Son of God and Savior. It acknowledges as kindred in Christ all who share in this confession. It looks to the Word of God in the Scriptures, and to the presence and power of the Holy Spirit, to prosper its creative and redemptive work in the world. It claims as its own the faith of the historic Church expressed in the ancient creeds and reclaimed in the basic insights of the Protestant Reformers. It affirms the responsibility of the Church in each generation to make this faith its own in reality of worship, in honesty of thought and expression, and in purity of heart before God. In accordance with the teaching of our Lord and the practice prevailing among evangelical Christians, it recognizes two sacraments: Baptism and the Lord's Supper or Holy Communion.

The *God is still speaking*, initiative is grounded in our confessional and covenantal theology. The breadth of Christ's authority necessitates our rich and sometimes troublesome diversity, as we become family with all who are touched by grace and moved to confess Christ as Son of God and Savior. We do not choose our Christian family, rather we are chosen by God's embrace. In faith, we learn not to define who is in and who is out, but rather how to live with the family that bears Christ's name.

Our Theological Roots

This Christian family hears God's Word in scriptures, though not always in the same tone of voice, or twist of phrase. Even so, we affirm that collectively--as the United Church of Christ--the Holy Spirit will bless our endeavors and teach us truths of ancient weight and present application. Scripture and tradition form the indispensable framework, but it is ours to narrate the holy story in the language of our time.

As we approach the 50th anniversary of the union that created the United Church of Christ, we celebrate a theology that has been as flexible as it is durable. In it, churches of orthodox practice, of social engagement, of traditional habit, of immigrant populations, and of progressive formation have found a particular home and a broad communion. Our orthodoxy is that we have our center in Christ, and our progress follows the trajectory of Christ in compassion and inclusion.

Reflections:

- Are you equally comfortable with all members of your Christian family? Whose fellowship do you treasure most? Which family members challenge and provoke you?
- How has your church made the faith its own?
- What particular gifts does your church bring to its community?

Resources:

- UCC Constitution and Bylaws: www.ucc.org/aboutus/constitution.htm
- Still Speaking Web Site: www.stillspeaking.com
- Daniel L. Johnson and Charles Hanbrick-Stowe, eds., *Theology and Identity: Traditions, Movements, and Polity in the United Church of Christ*

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