

Our Distinctive Values

Extravagant Welcome (An Open and Affirming Church of the United Church of Christ)

We affirm that loving relationships permeate every aspect of the Church's life together and that the way we treat one another is both an inward and outward expression of our distinctive values.

We affirm that the church is a community where all people are welcomed and recognized as God's good creation. It is a place where acceptance moves beyond mere toleration of differences and diversity to complete acceptance of all people, affirming that to be the way of Jesus.

We affirm that the Church seeks to develop relationships with all people, inviting and welcoming all people into its midst with sincere hearts and without coercion or manipulation.

We affirm that all sorts and conditions of people are to be invited and included in the Church's membership, leadership, and in our common life as full partners in the Gospel of Jesus, embracing diversity, without regard to social labels. Therefore, we do not exclude or hinder people's participation in the full life of the church based on, but not limited to, gender, race, age, sexual orientation or gender identity/expression, socio-economic status, marital circumstance, ethnic origin, theological perspective, or physical/mental challenges.

We affirm that our sharing of bread and cup in the name of Jesus to be a representation of God's feast for all peoples.

Responsible Freedom

We affirm that where there is union with the Spirit, there is complete and abiding liberty. This liberty is joyfully extended to

Individual Freedom:

We affirm that the individual is ultimately accountable to God and that, led by God's Spirit within the community of faith, we are both free and responsible to think and to act in ways that shape our spiritual journey positively and for good.

We affirm that people of faith are both free and responsible to dissent from majority opinion within the community of faith when conscience dictates, recognizing the individual's ultimate accountability to God and realizing that to dissent is at times both appropriate and necessary. This freedom is extended to both clergy and laity alike without fear of retribution or judgment.

We affirm that testimonies of faith are more important than tests of faith, recognizing that faith can be expressed in many different ways.

Congregational Freedom:

We affirm the local church is both free and responsible to shape its own life and mission, call its own leadership, and act in accordance with the collective decisions of its members, guided by the working of the Spirit in the light of the Scriptures and through the life and teachings and example of Jesus of Nazareth.

We affirm the Church is called to live in a covenantal relationship with other congregations for the sharing of insights and for cooperative action in giving full expression to the good news of Jesus in order to carry out God's mission in the world more effectively.

We affirm the Church should be "ecumenical" in its spirit, always seeking to participate with and to heal the divisions in the larger Body of Christ as well as "interfaith," always seeking to welcome the presence and insights of our neighbors who practice other faith traditions.

We affirm all members of the Church are called to minister to others and to each other and to participate as equals in the common life and worship of the Church.

We affirm that the Church must be culturally relevant in its methods while remaining thoroughly Christian in its message, making every effort in its language, its witness, and its practices to communicate effectively and relevantly the hope and power of God as revealed in Jesus.

Biblical Freedom:

We affirm that individuals are free to study the Scriptures, relying on the illumination of the Spirit and the historical understanding by the Church using the best methods of modern biblical study, with a reverence for biblical witness and a respect for open inquiry and responsible scholarship.

We affirm that there is yet more light and truth to break forth from God's Holy Word, recognizing that the Bible, though written in specific historical times and places, still speaks to us in our present condition and that the study of scriptures should not be limited by past interpretations but is to be pursued with expectancy for new insights for meaning and living today.

Religious Freedom:

We affirm a free Church in a free state and opposition to any effort either by Church or state to use the other for its own purposes.

We affirm that if the Church is to be truly free, religious freedom must be extended to all religious people as well as to those of no religion.

Intentional Spiritual Practice

We affirm that we as Christians need to take seriously the call to follow Jesus and intentionally seek to grow in God's grace and knowledge, guided by the presence of the Spirit, and that we, as a community of faith, need to support one another in our faith journey.

We affirm that we find grace more in the search for Christian meaning than in absolute certainty and more in the questions than in the answers.

We affirm that exercising the classic practices of spiritual formation such as, but not limited to, prayer, study, service, and worship, are essential for spiritual growth and vitality.

We affirm that regular, active worship and small group participation work together as catalysts for transformation in individual lives and in the life of the Church.

Transformative Ministry

We affirm the role of servant leadership within the church, following the model of the servant Jesus and to full partnership of all God's people in mission and ministry.

We affirm that we are called as God's people to work and pray diligently for justice, peace, and understanding and to consider justice and peace in all our church decisions and life together as well as in all aspects of our lives.

We affirm creating a sustainable environment that balances full and equal human development with the protection of the eco-system and in the faithful stewardship of all of God's creation: human, natural and spiritual.

We affirm that every follower of Jesus is a minister gifted by God for the building up of the Church, the expansion of the realm of God, and instrumental in God's desire for reconciliation.

We affirm that our faithfulness locally can and does have a global impact.

Celebrative Worship

We affirm that the church celebrates its relationship with God and each other through worship experiences that are liberating, encouraging, and uplifting and that worship is the heart of the Congregation's life together.

We affirm that through our worship we offer our praise and honor and gratitude to God and are better equipped to offer our very lives.

We affirm that worship is a catalyst for transformation in the life of individuals and in the life of the church.