

Core Values

The Church of the United Brethren in Christ, International, is characterized by these core values:

We Adhere to the Confession of Faith

The United Brethren Confession of Faith, adopted in 1815, states the core doctrinal beliefs to which all United Brethren conferences, churches, and members must adhere. On many theological and social issues, people of equal Christian commitment and insight may interpret the Bible differently, and we allow room for that. But when it comes to the simple statements contained in the Confession of Faith--on God, Jesus, the Holy Spirit, the Church, the Bible, salvation, and the ordinances--we do not allow diversity. As such, it is our denomination's key unifying document, our line in the sand which must not be crossed.

We Respect Unity Amidst Diversity

The United Brethren church began with two very different men, Martin Boehm and William Otterbein, who realized that on the essentials of the faith, they were alike--that they were brothers in Christ. They differed in church background, in temperament, in stature, and in the finer points of theology. But when it came to the core of what it meant to be a Christian, they found unity.

This spirit has characterized the United Brethren church over the years. We prefer to allow diversity when it comes to worship style, Bible versions, military service, social and political action, church programs, method of baptism, end times scenarios, and other issues, as long as the positions taken do not clearly conflict with God's Word or our Confession of Faith.

In the same way, we let churches and national conferences organize in the way they think will best fit their vision, needs, and culture. We don't want our mission to be hindered by man-made structures. We also realize that a persecuted, underground United Brethren church will look much different from a United Brethren church in a free society, and that various cultural issues will cause further diversity. Our mission must take precedence over methods.

Yet amidst this diversity, we expect unity. We stand firm on biblical absolutes, allow freedom where the Bible allows freedom, and seek to maintain unity when disagreements arise.

We Seek the Lost

The United Brethren church began as a movement of people with a passion to reach lost people. They were willing to do whatever would bring people to Christ. As people accept Christ as Savior, we then lead them further down the road of discipleship, which includes baptism, training in righteousness, the use of spiritual gifts, and holy living.

We believe in a radical conversion which results in a transformed life. This goes beyond head knowledge, beyond church attendance, beyond practicing the sacraments. Christ's presence in a Christian's life is demonstrated by a lifestyle of faithfulness and obedience to God.

We Demonstrate Social Concern

We must not only seek the salvation of our fellow human beings, but show genuine concern for their total well-being. We recognize our responsibility to victims of poverty, prejudice, injustice, and other forms of human suffering.

The poor will always be among us, and we cannot ignore their plight; the Bible clearly states our obligation to those living in poverty. But there are many others, whether they are poor or not, whose situation requires our aid. They include persons in prison, immigrants, widows, orphans, the unborn, the handicapped, the homeless, the elderly, and victims of abuse. We also respond corporately to large-scale tragedies, giving sacrificially to help victims of natural disasters or social strife.

Demonstrating social concern also involves raising our voice against injustice and prejudice. We stand against discrimination, slavery, and injustice, insisting that equal rights be granted to everyone. We advocate fairness in the workplace, in the courts, and in all other settings, and seek the end of any discrimination based upon racial, national, economic, or social differences.

We Preserve Our Christian Witness

We believe that our lifestyles need to reflect God to other people. For that reason, we will make choices, sometimes stated through national conference moral and social standards, to behave in certain ways which identify us as Christians and protect the integrity of Christ's church. These choices will vary from culture to culture, and may involve participating or not participating in certain activities. While we resist legalistic rules, we value a lifestyle which clearly honors Christ in the eyes of others, both Christians and nonChristians.

We Protect the Family

God instituted the family as our main social unit, and it is within the family that children are to be created, nurtured, and trained. Families come in many forms, but all need to be regulated by God's Word. A husband and wife must remain faithful and loving to each other, and faithful and loving to the children God has entrusted to them. We realize we must constantly resist the forces attempting to undermine the strength and integrity of marriages and families, and the design outlined for them in God's Word: a married husband and wife, and any children they might have.

We Esteem Each Other

We are a connectional church. As United Brethren people across the world, we recognize that what happens in any of our churches matters to each of us. We are concerned about the welfare of sister churches not only in the next town, but in other countries. From Central America to West Africa to the Far East to North America, we are part of each other. We help each other, we learn from each other, we esteem each other, and we cooperate with each other to accomplish more for the Kingdom than we could by ourselves.

In the same vein, we value "the counsel of the brethren," meaning the collective wisdom and advice of our fellow believers. While individuals may not agree with the decision of a committee, commission or conference, or with a stand taken by the conference or denomination, unity demands that we respect that corporate view as the counsel of the brethren and follow it. We believe in holding each other accountable to the standards set corporately.

We Link with the Larger Church

We value connections with Christians outside of the United Brethren family. We are not separatist in mentality or practice. Rather, we intentionally develop connections with other Christian denominations and groups which are similar in purpose and spirit, so that we can more broadly advance the work of the Great Commission and impact our world.