

## **We Are the Church Together: Script**

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### **SCRIPT**

First and foremost, let's invite the Holy Spirit to dwell with us as we begin our work.

[Offer a prayer, sing a hymn]

The time we spend together will remind us of who we are as United Methodists and what transformational work we have before us. We'll talk about what we believe, how our connection is making the world a better place, and key themes of a new effort, the #BeUMC campaign, which celebrates the core values that we share.

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Let's talk about what we, as United Methodists, believe. Our beliefs are at the center of everything we do. They are what ground us, unite us and lead us forward. These beliefs are detailed on our Book of Discipline - this is not a rule book, it's much more than that. The Book of Discipline helps to define who we are as a global denomination. It acts as a compass, bringing clarity and consistency among our 43,000 local churches.

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Our historic beliefs about God are steadfast.

We believe in one God in three persons.

Review the Confession of Faith here: <https://www.umc.org/en/content/confession-of-faith>

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We believe:

Jesus is fully divine.

Jesus is fully human, born of the Virgin Mary.

Through Jesus's death we are reconciled to God and our sins are forgiven.

Review the Confession of Faith here: <https://www.umc.org/en/content/confession-of-faith>

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United Methodists affirm Jesus's resurrection.

Jesus truly, physically rose from the dead and ascended into heaven.

Review the Confession of Faith here: <https://www.umc.org/en/content/confession-of-faith>

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The United Methodist Church also affirms the divinity of the Holy Spirit, present with us in the world today.

We believe that the Spirit is with us in times of worship, joy, struggle, and more.

Review the Confession of Faith here: <https://www.umc.org/en/content/confession-of-faith>

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The United Methodist Church is anchored in Scripture.

John Wesley's preface to his Sermons on Several Occasions was:

"I want to know one thing — the way to heaven; how to land safe on that happy shore. God himself has condescended to teach the way: For this very end he came from heaven. He hath written it down in a book. O give me that book! At any price, give me the book of God! I have it: Here is knowledge enough for me. Let me be homo unius libri [a person of one book]. Here then I am, far from the busy ways of [others]. I sit down alone: Only God is here. In his presence I open, I read his book; for this end, to find the way to heaven."

Review the Confession of Faith here: <https://www.umc.org/en/content/confession-of-faith>

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It's possible you've heard something about our foundational beliefs changing. If you did, I'm sure you are anxious about that and you are wondering what these changes might be. It is vital that you hear this: **it is actually very challenging to change our official beliefs**, as detailed in the Book of Discipline. It's not an easy process or a likely occurrence, as you can see in these various references from the Restrictive Rules. These rules were established by the General Conference of 1808, which voted that the General Conference would have broad authority over the denomination except for those items protected by what are now called the Restrictive Rules. Through all these years the Restrictive Rules have been modified only slightly through the constitutional amendment process.

[Further reading:

Restrictive Rules information: <https://www.umc.org/en/content/glossary-restrictive-rules-the>

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Wesley's General Rules may not be revoked or changed:

<https://www.umc.org/en/content/glossary-general-rules-the>]

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Our church's structure is designed with checks and balances that strengthen the authority of the Book of Discipline and shield us from foundational changes that are not desired by a

representational majority of the entire connection. All churches have the opportunity to be represented at and participate in their Annual Conference...this leads to representation at General Conference via elected delegates.

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When we take time to remember our Wesleyan roots, our core values and our identity, we see that there are no foundational changes that have taken place, and again, any changes are unlikely. Our rich history has set us on a path of mission and ministry that continues to be transformational in communities around the world.

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The Articles of Religion and Confession of Faith remain our foundation. The Apostles Creed expresses many of these commitments. Let's say it together now.

Review the Confession of Faith here: <https://www.umc.org/en/content/confession-of-faith>  
Learn more about our United Methodist beliefs here: <https://www.umc.org/en/who-we-are/what-we-believe/our-christian-roots>

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Now let's think more about who we really are as United Methodists. What are the core values that connect us and make us unique? The following foundational statement and key themes were identified as the #BeUMC campaign was developed. These are essential elements that help to further define who we are, together.

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This is the foundational statement of the #BeUMC campaign. You'll see that it encapsulates the beliefs we already spoke about.

[Share the entire Scripture passage, Acts 2:42-47]

The believers devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching, to the community, to their shared meals, and to their prayers. A sense of awe came over everyone. God performed many wonders and signs through the apostles. All the believers were united and shared everything. They would sell pieces of property and possessions and distribute the proceeds to everyone who needed them. Every day, they met together in the temple and ate in their homes. They shared food with gladness and simplicity. They praised God and demonstrated God's goodness to everyone. The Lord added daily to the community those who were being saved.

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Let's examine this statement a bit further by reminding ourselves of Wesley's theology of grace.

Alongside grace and faith, we hold fast to Scripture as we seek guidance in our daily living, ministries and congregational mission.

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Let's discuss the foundational statement.

[Allow time for discussion and be sure to add your own questions that apply to your unique context.]

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This is the first key theme of the #BeUMC campaign. It reiterates and reminds us of the mission we share as United Methodists. In all that we do, wherever we are, the call to make disciples and transform the world is upon us. Each of the 12 million United Methodists who will gather for worship this week will be reminded of this call and then sent out into their communities to bring this mission into reality.

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Here is our official mission statement as included in the Book of Discipline. Notice that local churches just like ours are magnified here. We live and work and dwell in a mission field. This is where God has called us to serve. This is where we can bring the love and light of Christ into our world. People so desperately need the hope, joy and grace that a relationship with Jesus can bring and it's up to us to share that good news.

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We Are Making Disciples

There are so many ways that United Methodists are making disciples around the world! Let's celebrate the numerous efforts that are familiar to us and consider further opportunities for our church to grow in this area.

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A few of the ways United Methodists make disciples:

The Wesleyan hymns contained in The United Methodist Hymnal  
Disciplined engagement with scripture at all ages

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A few of the ways United Methodists make disciples:

Works of piety, mercy and justice locally and around the world  
The sacraments of Baptism and Eucharist and other means of grace  
Small group accountability and support

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The ministries of our church make a difference in our community, in our state, in our nation, and in our world.

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This is the second key theme of the #BeUMC campaign. Every church has an opportunity to be a safe place where all can be who God created them to be, find the love of Christ and grow in their faith. Don't we all yearn for a place where we can ask hard questions? A place to find support? A place to belong? As we see in the Scripture, we are called to create and protect this safe place and invite everyone to join us here.

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The Book of Discipline currently states, "The practice of homosexuality is incompatible with Christian teaching. Therefore self-avowed practicing homosexuals are not to be certified as candidates, ordained as ministers, or appointed to serve in The United Methodist Church." (§ 304.3 Qualifications for Ordination)

We can't predict what will happen when General Conference gathers again in 2024 - we don't know if this statement, and others relating to homosexuality, will be changed via the voting body of delegates that represent our global denomination, or not. In the meantime, and always, we are called to focus on sharing the love of God and being in community with all people, everywhere.

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One of the most beautiful aspects of our denomination is the vast diversity that is reflected in our congregations. And this diversity is deep, multi-faceted and meaningful. The safe places we build in our churches are set apart from the world in that many of the labels that we wear in our daily life are wiped away when we gather. We are people on a journey to be better disciples and to make the world a better place. That journey should be shared with the entire body of Christ, with believers who might not look like us or have political beliefs like ours. We don't all need to agree. We don't even have to fully understand each other's viewpoints. God's love and our calling as Jesus-followers surpasses such things. Our sacred community should be a place for all people to belong and thrive.

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John Wesley affirms this concept! Agreeing to disagree is part of our commitment to each other as members of the same body. Our love of God and neighbor should supercede all else. The hope

we find in God, which keeps us going day after day, and the sharing of that hope with all people, should be our focus.

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Our Baptismal Vows also affirm this! As people experience the holy mystery of baptism and choose to journey alongside us, we promise to support each other. There are no promises to agree on everything or to share common political views. We promise to live as Christ lived. To love as he loved. To be the best people we can be, by the grace of God.

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Our bishops also affirm this! In 2021, the Council of Bishops adopted a vision statement that reminds us of The United Methodist Church's diversity and the opportunity we have to be one body, focused on a central mission.

[For reference, find the entirety of the narrative: A Narrative for the Continuing United Methodist Church, at [ngumc.org/BeUMC](http://ngumc.org/BeUMC)]

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As a denomination, we are committed to work for global health, education, creation care, child welfare, disaster recovery, and countless other efforts. But none of us as individuals, or even as one local church, have the ability to accomplish so much by ourselves.

This is where our global connection is such a special and important part of who we are as United Methodists. Together, we are equipping leaders, empowering communities and planting seeds of peace across the globe. This allows all of us to fulfill our calling, our mission. We are living out our faith in tangible acts that truly are transforming the lives of countless people. Kids are eating a meal right now because The UMC helped their family establish a garden. A missionary will baptize someone this week because we supported her as she followed her call. A home is being rebuilt today because a United Methodist mission team and UMCOR is standing with a community until it recovers from a disaster.

WE did this work together because of the power of our denominational ties. We must continue this work. People are relying on us.

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Again, we find the Wesleys affirming us! Even as the people called Methodists first gathered, they envisioned the kind of mission and ministry that is a reality for our church today. Yet there is so much more to be done! Our time, finances and sweat equity can expand the work that's underway, strengthening our reach as a church and spreading the light of Christ to all corners of the world.

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Let's consider the numbers that outline The UMC's presence in the world. The photos you see are snapshots of transformational ministries in Africa, Europe and Asia. What influence we have as a denomination! And what opportunities are before us!

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This is the fourth key theme of the #BeUMC campaign. Here, we reflect upon our traditions, our faith stories, our heritage, our familial experiences in the church. We may think about the creaky pews of our childhood where we held our grandmother's hand during a prayer, the Bible Study discussion we had last week, the potluck lunch where we broke bread and laughed together, the food boxes we've packed and distributed to hungry families. These are all moments of drawing close, not just to each other, but to God. God delights in us. As part of God's family, we can delight in each other as gifted, unique creations made in God's own image. The experiences we have together strengthen our faith, our appreciation for each other, and our dedication to serving all people in the name of Jesus.

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The #BeUMC campaign is not just a list of key themes and ideas. It also provides a way for all of us to continue learning, exploring, sharing and connecting with each other and with United Methodists from around the world. Be a part of celebrating our continuing global mission and ministries. This work has been, is, and will be changing lives and growing the Kingdom of God for generations.

This campaign is a grassroots effort on social media. People are posting their United Methodist stories and adding the hashtag #BeUMC!

And check our [ngumc.org/BeUMC](http://ngumc.org/BeUMC) for more resources from the North Georgia Conference.