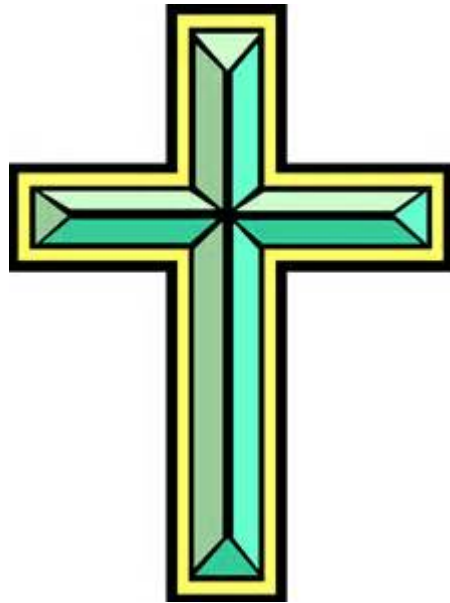


MODULE 3

What We Believe as Christians and Methodists



The Doctrine of the AME Church

The AME Church is a part of the Methodist Family of Churches. Our church separated from the Methodist Episcopal Church (now called the United Methodist Church) in 1787, due to racial discrimination where Africans were pulled up from their knees while praying at the altar of St. George's Methodist Episcopal Church in Philadelphia, PA. Following their prayer, the African worshippers walked out of the church in one body and after much prayer and deliberation formed the Free African Society, which evolved into the African Methodist Episcopal Church. Richard Allen, who helped lead the walkout was consecrated our first Bishop in 1816.

Our beliefs had no variation from that of the Methodist Episcopal Church, which was founded by John Wesley. Richard Allen, the first Bishop of the AME Church (consecrated in 1816), believed that the Methodist Doctrine suited the plight of African worshippers best because of the simplicity of the gospel and its social implications. In addition, the Methodist Church had a clear set of procedures and order that he felt could be easily followed.

Bishop Gregory Ingram writes that “the Articles of Religion found in the AME Book of Discipline are identical with those of the Methodist Church.” This means that the founding members of the AME Church saw no need to change any of the doctrinal beliefs of their former church (the Methodist Episcopal Church), but did see the value in living out the true meaning of these beliefs through a lens of racial equality and social justice. In total there are twenty-five Articles, which were extracted by John Wesley from the Anglican Church of England. Article 23 was added to refer to the church's attitude towards our national government. More than half of these Articles are a protest against the errors of the Roman Catholic Church.

The Articles at a Glance:

Article 1: Belief in the Holy Trinity

There is one living and true God who is the maker and preserver of all things. We experience the one God through three aspects of his personality, Father, Son and Holy Spirit. We call this the Holy Trinity.

Article 2: The Incarnation of Christ

In Christ there are two natures, divine and human. The two are joined in one person. Jesus is truly God and truly man at the same time.

Article 3: The Resurrection of Christ

Christ truly arose from the dead and ascended into Heaven.

Article 4: The Holy Spirit

The Holy Spirit is on one substance with the Father and the Son. It is one of the three aspects through which we experience God.

Article 5: The Holy Scripture

The Bible contains all that we need to be saved.

Article 6: The Old Testament

In both the Old and New Testaments, eternal life is offered to humankind.

Article 7: Original or Birth Sin

All people have inherited evil impulse from their ancestors. This corruption of nature of every person is called the “Original Sin” and is traced back to Adam, the first man.

Article 8: Of Free Will

Every person is free to choose right or to choose wrong. Even when a person chooses to do right, they must have God’s help to live a holy life.

Article 9: The Justification of Man

We are saved by faith in Christ and by that faith alone. Good works cannot save us.

Article 10: Good Works

Good works are the fruits of our faith in Christ. We do good works because we are saved, not to be saved.

Article 11: Works of Supererogation

The belief that one can do more good than God requires is called works of supererogation (super=beyond; and erogation=to pay out). We do not believe in this doctrine because people cannot do more good than they ought to do or be better than they ought to be.

Article 12: Sin After Justification

A Christian may depart from grace and fall into sin again after being saved. Those who truly repent and receive God’s forgiveness will rise again to a good and holy life.

Article 13: The Church

The visible Church of God is a congregation of faithful people in which the pure Word of God is preached and the sacraments are duly administered.

Article 14: Purgatory

The AME Church does not believe in the doctrine of purgatory, which is a belief that claims there is a condition or process of purification or temporary punishment in which the souls of those who die in a state of grace are made ready for Heaven.

Article 15: Of Speaking in Tongues

Public worship and the sacraments should be conducted in a language that the people can understand (for example, not conducting service in Latin when the people only know English).

Article 16: The Sacraments

Baptism and the Lord’s Supper are the only two Sacraments that the AME Church observes.

Article 17: Baptism

Baptism is the sign of regeneration or the new birth. It marks the start of the Christian life and is the official welcoming of the convert into the community of faith. Infants and children are to be baptized along with adults. There are three modes by which one can be baptized: sprinkling, poured, or immersion.

Article 18: The Lord's Supper

The Supper of the Lord is a symbol of Christ's suffering and death for us. The bread and wine are not changed into the actual body and blood (as some denominations believe), but rather, represent his broken body and shed blood. Communion is typically offered every first Sunday of the month.

Article 19: Communion

Both the bread and the wine are to be given (distributed) to the people in the Lord's Supper.

Article 20: The Sacrifice of Christ

The sacrifice of Christ is for the sins of the whole world. There is no other satisfaction for sins to be done as it was completed at the Cross.

Article 21: The Marriage of Ministers

The ministers of Christ are not commanded by God's law to abstain from marriage, but are free to marry the person of their choice.

Article 22: Rites and Ceremonies of the Church

Every Denomination has the right to adopt and use a ritual or its own, but the rites that have been established by the Church should be faithfully observed by its members.

Article 23: The Government of the USA

The United States of America is and ought to be a free and independent nation. All righteous governments should be supported and defended by Christians. In other words, one cannot use their AME membership to seek deferment from serving in the Armed Forces.

Article 24: A Christian Person's Goods

Christians have the right to own property. However, every person should give liberally of his own possessions to help others and support the church.

Article 25: A Christian's Oath

Christians are to take oaths as may be required or requested as in a court of law.

Ten Points of What we Believe

1. We believe that all people are sinners.
2. We believe that God the Father loves all people and hates all sin.
3. We believe that Jesus Christ died for all people, to make possible their salvation from sin, and to make sure the salvation of all who believe in Him.
4. We believe that the Holy Spirit is given to all people, to enlighten and to incline them to repent of their sins and to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ.
5. We believe that all who repent of their sins and believe in the Lord Jesus Christ receive the forgiveness of sin.
6. We believe that all who receive forgiveness of sin are at the same time made new creatures in Christ Jesus.
7. We believe that all who are made new creatures in Christ Jesus are accepted as children of God.
8. We believe that a person born of God is consecrated and set apart for divine service and that the process of growth begins and is followed by degrees of development, ever having for its goal entire sanctification or Christian Perfection.
9. We believe that all who are accepted as children of God may receive the inward assurance of the Holy Spirit to that fact.
10. We believe that all who truly desire and seek it may love God with all their heart and soul, mind and strength and their neighbors as themselves.