

UB

250TH
ANNIVERSARY
EDITION



GETTING ACQUAINTED
with the CHURCH OF THE UNITED
BRETHREN IN CHRIST, USA

our history

It All Started in a Barn

It was 1767, and a spiritual renewal movement — the Great Awakening — was sweeping through the colonies. Back then, Christians would gather in what they called “Great Meetings.” These were independent religious gatherings, not connected to any particular church groups, and they were typically held at farms over a period of two or three days. Word would go out about an upcoming meeting — time, place, etc. Hundreds of people might show up. They would pack enough clothes and food to last a few days, and bunk in homes, barns, tents, or crude shelters built just for the event. The host would stockpile food and maybe slaughter a few hogs, sheep, or even a cow.

Various preachers would show up, gather a crowd, and let loose to everyone in hearing range. Several might be preaching at the same time on different parts of the farm.

Isaac Long, a Mennonite, hosted a Great Meeting at his big barn in Lancaster, Pa., on May 10, 1767. William Otterbein, a German Reformed pastor, traveled 30 miles from York for the event. As a minister from Virginia preached to an overflow crowd in the orchard, Otterbein went into the barn to hear Martin Boehm, a Mennonite preacher. Boehm told his story of becoming a Christian and a minister. It paralleled Otterbein’s own experience in 1754, when he was a pastor in Lancaster. He realized, *This man and I believe and have experienced the same things!*

Deeply moved, Otterbein left his seat, embraced Boehm, and said loud enough for everyone to hear, “Wir sind bruder!” (Oh — we spoke German back then.) Otterbein’s words meant, “We are brethren!”

And thus began a new movement...and, eventually, the United Brethren denomination.

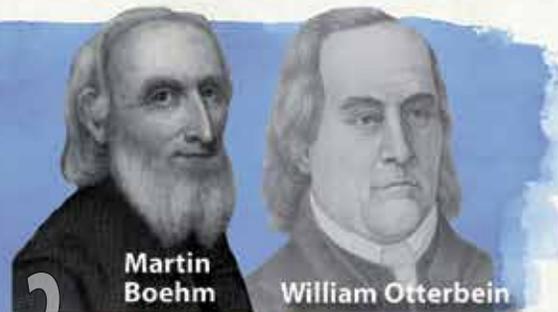


Long’s Barn remains in use on a farm in Lancaster, Pa.

Tell Me More About These Guys

William Otterbein grew up in Germany and began his ministry there. But German Reformed immigrants in America were appealing for ministers, and the 26-year-old Otterbein became one of six missionaries sent to the New World in 1752. He started out pastoring in Lancaster, Pa. Two years later, during a time of prayer, God did something mighty in his heart. It transformed his life and ministry.

Martin Boehm’s roots were in Switzerland. His father came to America in 1715 and settled in Lancaster County. Upon



Martin Boehm

William Otterbein

reaching adulthood, Martin took possession of 181 acres of his father’s farm and expanded it to 400 acres. In those days, when a Mennonite church needed a new pastor, the congregation voted on men they felt were worthy. The nominees then lined up at the pulpit, and each man selected one of the Bibles standing before them. One Bible contained a slip of paper with Proverbs 16:33 written on it. Boehm chose that Bible in 1756, and that’s how he became a minister.

He came to realize that he hadn’t experienced the salvation he preached about. One day as Boehm plowed his fields, he knelt at the end of each row to pray. The word “Lost! Lost!” continually hovered over him. Finally, halfway through a row, he fell to his knees and cried out, “Lord save, I am lost!” The words of Luke 19:10 immediately came to him: “I am come to seek and save that which is lost.” Joy poured through him. From that day on, preaching became a joy — a passion — and he zealously spread the message of salvation to which he had been oblivious for so long.

Which is pretty much what Otterbein had experienced, and why they were drawn together. For the next 30 years, they spearheaded a loose revival movement which spread through Pennsylvania, Maryland, and Virginia. A common belief united these people — that when you gave your life to Christ, he radically transformed you into a new person. Many persons, upon being converted, left everything and became ministers, telling others how Christ could transform their lives, too.

Men of Contrasts

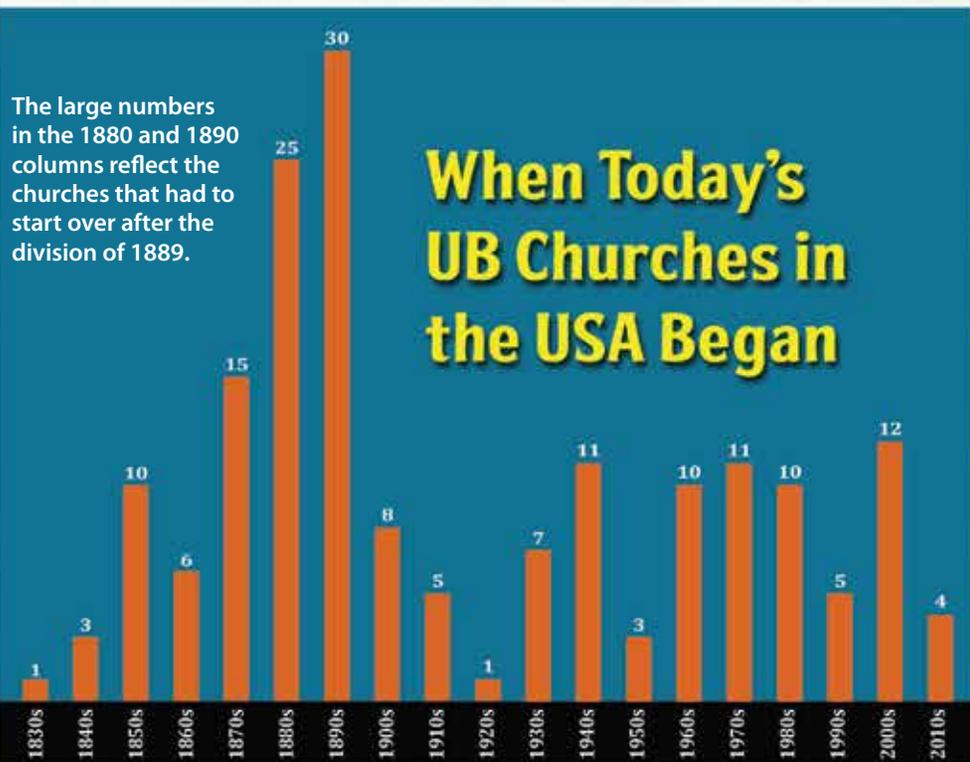
Boehm and Otterbein were very different.

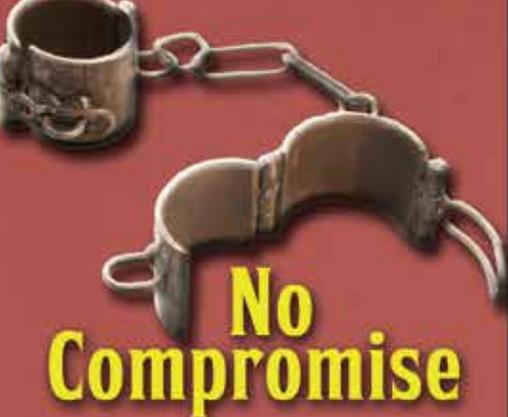
Boehm was short, Otterbein tall.

Boehm, a farmer, was described as “plain in dress and manners.” Otterbein was cultured and well-educated.

Boehm lacked confidence in his speaking ability. Otterbein exuded confidence.

Boehm was prosperous, with a large estate covering hundreds of acres. Otterbein owned no





No Compromise

In 1821, over 40 years before Abraham Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation, UBs took a strong stand against slavery. Beginning in 1825, slave owners couldn't continue as members. While other denominations made compromises to appease their churches in slave states, we never did.

This conviction kept us from spreading into the South, and brought some persecution against UB members. The first person killed during Quantrill's infamous Civil War raid on Lawrence, Kansas, was a United Brethren minister, shot dead as he milked his cow in the morning hours.

Our first college, Otterbein University in Westerville, Ohio, was a noted station on the Underground Railroad, helping fugitive slaves escape to Canada. At least two bishops during that time, William Hanby and Lewis Davis, were active in helping runaway slaves.

Hanby's son, Benjamin, wrote the popular anti-slavery song "Darling Nelly Gray" based on the story of a fugitive slave who died in their home. (Benjamin also wrote "Up on the Housetop" and "Jolly Old St. Nicholas.")

property and always lived in parsonages.

Boehm's home was filled with children and grandchildren. Otterbein, a widower after just six years of marriage, never had children.

Boehm wore a long beard; Otterbein was clean-shaven.

Otterbein commanded attention, while Boehm could easily shrink into the background.

Otterbein and Boehm realized that, despite their many differences — in theology, background, education, personality, and even stature — they agreed on the basics of the faith.

These were the perfect guys to head a new church which united diverse people from many backgrounds around the Christian essentials.

When Did We Become a Denomination?

We start the clock there in Long's Barn, 1767. But it was a loose, unorganized movement for many years.

The movement spread to include a bunch of German-speaking churches in Pennsylvania, Virginia, Maryland, and Ohio. In time, they saw the need for some organization and common standards. So in 1800, they began holding a yearly "General Conference." The 13 ministers at that first conference, meeting in a house in Maryland, did two major things:

- Adopted a name: Church of the United Brethren in Christ.
- Elected Boehm and Otterbein as bishops. Both men, at the time, were in their mid-60s.

And thus, we became the first denomination to actually begin in the United States.

Other denominations existed at the time (Lutheran, Reformed, Mennonite, and others), but they were transplants from Europe. The United Brethren Church was truly Made in America.

Boehm died in 1812, and Otterbein in 1813, both at age 79. But the church moved ahead with new leaders. In 1815 we adopted a Confession of Faith, which outlined our basic doctrines. Today, it's the main document which unites all United Brethren around the world. In 1841, we adopted a Constitution.

Circuit Riding Preachers

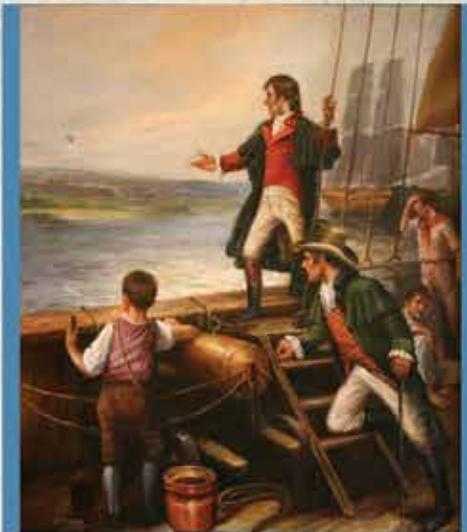
The frontier spread west into Ohio and Indiana, and the church spread with it. Circuit-riding preachers, on horseback, carried the Gospel from community to community, organizing churches and doing whatever they could to tell people about Christ. Many of them were farmers who traveled around preaching in their spare time, sometimes supervising a circuit of up to 30 churches spread over hundreds of miles. A preacher would travel for hours over rugged terrain on horseback getting to the next meeting (not quite like hopping in the car and driving across town). They were very dedicated folks. Ministers barely scraped by, usually by farming or doing other things on the side. But the church grew rapidly under their tireless leadership.

Untrained, but Effective

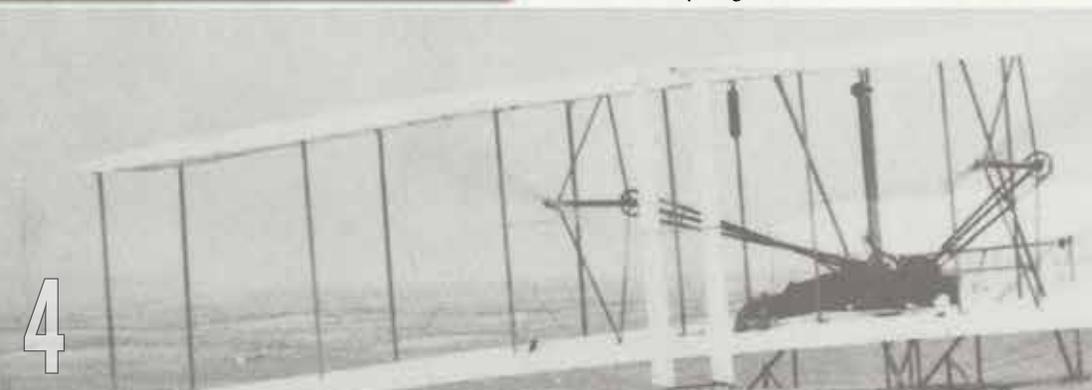
Most pastoral preparation occurred on-the-job. When you expressed interest in becoming a minister, you were promptly given a church — or more likely, a whole circuit of churches. No classes on sermon preparation or theology.

Bishop Jonathan Weaver wrote about UB preaching in general: "The preachers were lame in philosophy, and knew nothing of the higher criticism, but on the cardinal doctrines of the Gospel they were giants. They would preach on the judgment and future rewards or punishments until one would think the day had come."

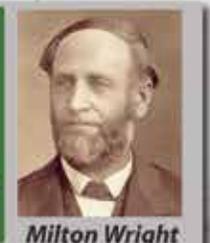
During the first 60 years or so, only a couple bishops had any college training. In fact, people with college education were viewed with suspicion, because they might rely more on their learn-



Francis Scott Key, who wrote "The Star Spangled Banner," was a United Brethren Sunday school teacher.



The Wright Brothers were active in the United Brethren church in various ways. Their father, Bishop Milton Wright, led the church after the traumatic division in 1889, as we pretty much started over.



Milton Wright





Education is a central part of our church work in Sierra Leone, which began in 1855.

ing from a “preacher factory” than on God.

But in the 1800s, we started a bunch of colleges. Unlike most other colleges at the time, all of our colleges admitted women. And Otterbein College in Ohio did something unheard of: opened its doors to blacks. Other UB colleges followed this example.

Wagons West, and Across the Ocean

In 1853, a mission agency was organized under the cumbersome name “Home, Frontier, and Foreign Missionary Society.” That year, we launched our first missionary venture, sending a wagon train of nearly 100 UB people on a five-month trip from Iowa to Oregon. The church had now spread from coast to coast.

In 1855, we expanded overseas by sending missionaries to Sierra Leone, West Africa. By 1889, we had started mission work in Germany and Canton, China.

The Church Divides

The United Brethren church grew to over 200,000 members. We had six bishops, plus a full-blown denominational bureaucracy. But trouble was brewing, and it came to a head at the 1889 General Conference.

The controversy centered around the desire to make three changes in the Constitution. However, the amendment procedure spelled out in the Constitution made it almost impossible to change the Constitution. Not to be deterred, the denominational leaders decided to just ignore the Constitution and make the changes anyway. They essentially adopted a new Constitution — and more significantly, a new Confession of Faith — in an unconstitutional way.

Only one of the six bishops opposed these changes. His name was Milton Wright. He, by the way, had sons named Wilbur and Orville, who invented this thing called the airplane.

Wright led our group — probably around 15,000 people — away from the larger body. Wright’s followers stuck to the original Constitution and Confession of Faith. But beyond that, they pretty much started over — no headquarters, no publishing house, no mission work. Most of the congregations which sided with Wright lost their property to the larger group, which most courts recognized as the legitimate owner of all church property.

Under Bishop Wright’s capable leadership, these churches reorganized and rebuilt. The United Brethren church of today is descended from them.

What Happened to the Other Group?

For 57 years, two denominations used the name “Church of the United Brethren in Christ.”

Our group was known as the “Radicals,” and the other group was known as the “Liberals.”

The duplication ended in 1946, when the other United Brethren church merged with the

Evangelical Association to form the Evangelical United Brethren Church. The EUBs merged into the Methodist Church in 1968 to form today’s United Methodist Church.

The UB Church Today

In 1897, we launched Huntington University (originally called Central College) in Huntington, Ind. At the same time, we located our denominational headquarters and a publishing house in Huntington.

Throughout the 1900s, the United Brethren church continued developing and expanding. Much of the growth came overseas. Today, the denomination consists of over 500 churches in nearly 20 countries. Only about 40% of our churches are located in the United States.

We have nine “national conferences,” self-governing entities which include all of the UB churches in a single country: the United States, Canada, Honduras, Nicaragua, Sierra Leone, Jamaica, Hong Kong, Mexico, and Guatemala. They have all agreed to abide by the Confession of Faith, a set of Core Values, and an international Constitution. Leaders from these conferences gather every three years for a meeting called General Conference.

In addition, we have mission districts in India, Haiti, Thailand, Macau, Costa Rica, El Salvador, Germany, and Liberia. These come under the supervision of a national conference until they are ready to organize as a national conference.

US National Conference

The highest governing body for the United States churches is the US National Conference. It meets once every two years. The voting delegates include actively-serving ministers and at least one layperson from every church (more, depending on the church’s size).

The National Conference is held over a period of several days during the summer. It’s a family event, open to anybody, whether or not they are delegates. We’ve had over 900 people at these conferences. One day is set aside for business. The rest of the time involves workshops, energetic evening services, social events, and free time.

The National Conference elects a bishop every four years, and elects members to the Executive Leadership Team, which handles business between sessions of the National Conference.

The National Office occupies a building right next to Huntington University. The small staff, about 12 people, include the bishop, directors for specific areas (missions, finance, communications, national ministries, ministerial licensing), and various support personnel.



Huntington University, in Huntington, Ind., started in 1897. It’s our only denominational college — but it’s a good one. Huntington University is a comprehensive Christian liberal arts college offering graduate and undergraduate programs in more than 70 areas. US News and other organizations regularly rank Huntington among the best colleges in the Midwest. Want a solid Christian college for your kids? This is it. Huntington is Christ-centered and academically superb, with a strong emphasis on volunteerism and missions. Most all of the buildings are new since 1985. It’s a great place. Website: Huntington.edu

distinctives

People sometimes want to know where the Church of the United Brethren in Christ fits into the religious spectrum. Let's examine some of our distinctives. We'll start with broad descriptions and work our way down to more specific descriptions.

We are Christian

We are part of the Christian religion, which centers on Jesus Christ. Not part of Islam, Buddhism, or Hinduism. We learn all about Christ through the Bible. His importance to us is reflected in our denomination's name — Church of the United Brethren in *Christ*.

We are Orthodox

We are an orthodox church, which means we cling to the traditional and established beliefs about Jesus, the forgiveness of sins, heaven and hell, and other doctrines. That makes us different from groups which come under the "Christian" umbrella yet deny various crucial beliefs — the Jehovah's Witnesses, the Mormons, the Christian Scientists, and others.

We are Protestant

Orthodox Christian churches can be divided into two categories: Catholics and Protestants. We are a Protestant church. As Protestants, we believe God works in a personal way with all believers, we believe in salvation by faith, and we believe the Bible has greater authority than tradition.

We are Evangelical

Within Protestantism, there are extreme fundamentalists on one side and mainline liberals on the other side. As evangelicals, we lie somewhere in between.

We differ from the liberals, who are more interested in relationships than in doctrine. Yet we differ from the extreme fundamentalists, whose interest in doctrine over relationships leads to their separatist attitudes (not wanting to associate with those who hold different views).

We hold the same doctrinal views as fundamentalists, yet we are not separatists. We cooperate with those who hold similar orthodox views, but won't compromise doctrine to do so.

What Makes Our Doctrines Distinctive?

Now we will discuss what distinguishes us from other evangelical churches.

Predestination and Free Will

The Reformation of the 16th Century resulted in the Lutheran, Reformed, and Anabaptist churches. Lutherans followed the teachings of Martin Luther, Reformed churches followed John Calvin, and Anabaptists followed Menno Simmons (from whose name "Mennonite" comes).

John Calvin, a reformer from Geneva, Switzerland, taught that nothing happens unless God allows it. This includes whether or not someone goes to heaven. This is the "Predestination" view.

Jacob Arminius, a Dutch theologian who had received strict Reformed training, developed an alternate view which combines the sovereignty of God with the free will of man: God offers

salvation to us, but we have the freedom to accept or reject it. His followers are called Arminians. The United Brethren church has historically been Arminian in theology.

Communion: Zwingli vs. Luther

While Martin Luther led the Reformation within Germany, Huldreich Zwingli's voice arose in Zurich, Switzerland.

Martin Luther taught that Christ was physically present in the bread and wine served during communion (the Lord's Supper). After all, at the Last Supper, Christ said, "This is my body" and "This is my blood." Zwingli reached a different conclusion. He believed that Christ's words actually meant, "This *signifies* my body...blood."

We follow Zwingli's view, remembering Christ's suffering and death through the *symbols* of bread and wine (or grapejuice, which is commonly used in our churches).

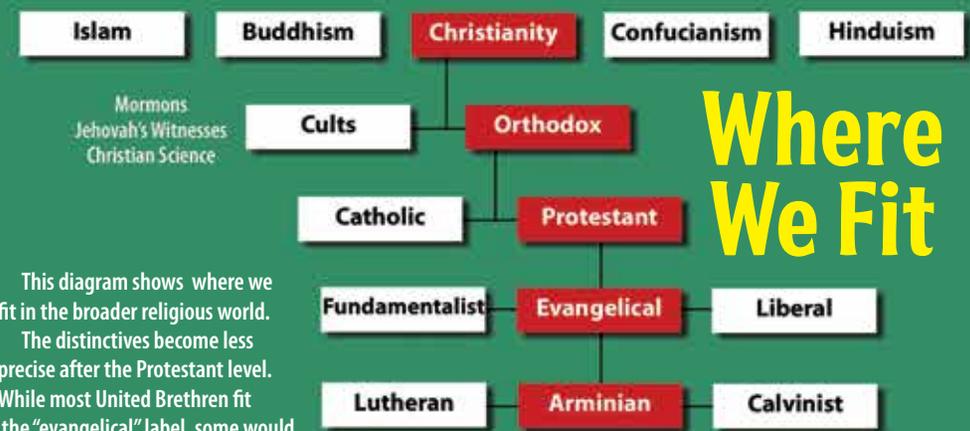
Sanctification: Crisis or Process?

Wesleyanism (which emerged from John Wesley's teachings) has traditionally taught that a person is sanctified instantly through an experience which occurs sometime after salvation. This "second work of grace" enables a person to resist sinning and live a more victorious Christian life. The Wesleyan, Free Methodist, and Nazarene churches hold this view.

The United Brethren church has predominantly taught the Arminian view that sanctification is *progressive*—that we gradually become more like Christ through a life-long process of growth which begins at conversion. We become perfect and complete only after we die and see Christ.

Spiritual Gifts

Pentecostalism is often associated with speaking in tongues. Some church groups regard speaking in tongues as proof of the Holy Spirit's fullness. We don't. We believe that all spiritual gifts mentioned in the Bible are available today, but that people who never speak in tongues may still have the Spirit's fullness and power.



This diagram shows where we fit in the broader religious world. The distinctives become less precise after the Protestant level. While most United Brethren fit the "evangelical" label, some would prefer calling themselves fundamentalist. The lines can get blurry.

The bottom level yields even more leeway in doctrine. While we are a predominantly Arminian denomination, a number of ministers would consider themselves mostly Calvinist in theology; we make room for that. As the Discipline states, "The church's historic position has been to stand firm on biblical absolutes, allow freedom where the Bible allows freedom, and maintain unity when disagreements arise."

Mode of Baptism

Another distinctive concern is baptism. We appreciate the emphasis our Baptist brethren place on baptism. However, we do not agree with them in accepting only one method of baptism: immersion (the whole body being submerged in water). We permit Christians to be baptized any way they choose — by sprinkling, pouring, or immersion. Just get it done.

How Does the UB Church Function?

A Connectional Church

In an *autonomous* structure, the local congregation is the highest authority. Such congregations may belong to an association of churches with similar doctrines and practices, but that association does not impose binding requirements. The nation's largest denomination, the Southern Baptist Convention, is an association of autonomous churches.

We are a *connectional* denomination. Our churches submit to being part of a denominational hierarchy. Local churches cooperate to support mission work, Huntington University, new churches, publications, and other ministries.

A Modified Episcopal Church

There are three basic church systems:

- The *Episcopal* system places authority in ministers, the chief ministers being bishops.
- The *Presbyterian* system places authority in both ministers and laypersons.

• The *Congregational* system places authority in the local church.

Probably none of these systems appear in pure form without some elements of the other forms. That was true of the New Testament church, and it is true of the United Brethren church. We are mostly Episcopal at the denominational level, and more Congregational at the local level. Authority is held by ministers and laypersons together. We could call it a “modified Episcopal” system.

Our bishop is elected by the National Conference, our highest governing body, and serves a four-year term, providing general oversight and setting the vision for the entire US National Conference. All senior pastors participate in a “cluster” of usually 5-7 persons, with a leader appointed by the bishop. The cluster provides training, accountability, and support.

The Itinerant System

Most denominations use one of two methods for assigning ministers to churches.



All Together Now

Being “connectional” means our churches do some things cooperatively.

- Licensing ministers
- Assigning ministers to churches
- Sponsoring Huntington University
- Missions work
- Annual Youth Leaders Summit
- Pension and insurance programs
- Starting new churches
- Short-term mission trips
- Cluster groups for ministers
- National Conference meetings
- Denominational publications
- Women's conferences

Ministerial Licenses

The Pastoral Ministry Handbook, which can be downloaded from the ub.org website, contains all of the information about United Brethren ministers — categories, education, qualifications, stationing, expectations, accountability, etc. We have several categories of ministers.

Local Church Ministers

Churches can grant a Local Church license to affirm a person's call to ministry in that local church. They work only under the direction of that church's senior pastor, and are not assumed to be pursuing professional recognition from the denomination.

National Conference Ministers

We offer three licenses for persons whose call to ministry has been affirmed by the National Conference, but who are not yet ordained. At this level, ministers come under the authority of the denominational Pastoral Ministry Leadership Team.

National Conference License. These ministers are on a track toward eventual ordination, and are expected to pursue the education needed for ordination. They undergo an examination by the Pastoral Ministry Leadership Team, and become accountable to the PMLT.

Specialized Ministry License. This license is for persons who specialize in a certain field, and have received education specific to that field. Typically, Specialized ministers serve on

“The United Brethren church does not discriminate in granting ministerial credentials on the basis of gender or race.” (United Brethren Discipline)

a church staff and focus on such roles as youth ministry, music, Christian education, counseling, etc. This license is granted by the Pastoral Ministry Leadership Team after an examination process, and is viewed on the same level as a National Conference license. However, Specialized ministers are not expected to pursue ordination.

Provisional License. This license serves as the entry level for both the National Conference/Ordination track and for the Specialized Ministry license. It is also used for persons transitioning from other church groups. It recognizes individuals as ministers until they can meet our specific qualifications.

Ordained Elders

To be ordained, a person must hold a National Conference license for two years, serve at least one year in a ministry role, and complete certain educational requirements.

Getting ordained is a big deal. Typically, the bishop performs the ordination service. As the licentiate and (if married) spouse kneel on the platform, the bishop and others lay hands on the couple and pray for them.

A related license, Ordained Chaplain, recognizes UBs serving as chaplains in the military, hospitals, and other settings.



- Under the *call* system, churches find their own pastor. Southern Baptists use this method. When the church needs a new pastor, a “search committee” is appointed to find one. Often, a prospective pastor preaches a “trial sermon” and goes through an interview process, after which the congregation or church leaders vote on whether or not to hire that person as pastor.

- Under the *itinerant* system, ministers are assigned by higher church leadership.

The United Brethren church uses the itinerant system. Ministers are assigned by a stationing committee, which consists of persons from the church and persons representing the denomination. The stationing committee has the final say in appointing pastors, but works closely with church representatives and ministers before making appointments. (See the box on the right.)

What Distinguishes Our Standards?

We, like similar denominations, hold certain doctrinal and behavioral standards for members. While persons may claim to be Christians without displaying purity in these areas, we believe they will show increasing purity as they mature in the faith.

Purity of Doctrine: Christ and Salvation

First, members must accept our Confession of Faith. It states the key beliefs about Jesus Christ — that he is both God and man, that he died on the cross and rose from the dead, that he ascended into heaven and now sits at God’s right hand interceding for us, and that he will someday come again. We believe that salvation comes only through faith in Jesus Christ.

Our view of salvation conflicts with the teachings of various lodges (such as Freemasonry), which claim salvation can be achieved through human effort or degrees. We do not say that a lodge member can’t be a Christian. But to uphold doctrinal purity, we do not allow a lodge member to join the church. That has been our stand since 1841. A number of other evangelical denominations share our position.

Purity of Life: How You Treat Yourself

God wants us to show good stewardship of our body, mind, soul, and influence. The Bible implies that we should avoid anything — whether heard, seen, eaten, inhaled, or injected — that would harm the body, mind, soul, or influence.

No Bible verse states, “You shall not drink alcohol” or “You shall not smoke cigarettes.” Never-



Assigning Senior Pastors

We don’t use the “call system,” under which churches are responsible for finding a new pastor. Instead, pastors are assigned to churches by what we call a “stationing committee.”

Churches have full authority to hire and release most employees. But when it comes to finding a new senior pastor, the denomination gets involved.

Typically, the stationing committee consists of the bishop, the church’s cluster leader, and at least one person

from the church. The stationing committee interacts with local church leaders to understand the needs and vision of the congregation. The goal is to match the congregation’s needs and vision with a pastor’s strengths.

The process emphasizes much interaction between the church and prospective pastor. We don’t force churches to accept a pastor they don’t want. But the final decision is made by the stationing committee, not by the church.

theless, we urge members to not drink alcohol or use tobacco.

The “Standards of the Church” section in our Discipline lists various other standards concerning purity of life (see pages 26-29). Although a person can disobey some of these and remain a member, we urge members to abstain.

Purity of Love: Social Behavior

A Christian should act like a Christian around other people. This includes attitudes. We must not only avoid those fleshly habits most people regard as sinful, but also display a spirit of love and compassion toward others.

In “Standards of the Church,” the Discipline applies this spirit of love to certain social issues — war, peace, marriage, the family, sexual purity, and other issues.

God created men and women as sexual creatures (Genesis 1:27). He designed marriage to complement the spiritual, physical, and psychological needs of the couple. This includes sexual union. However, the Bible firmly limits sexual relations to marriage. We cannot condone premarital sex, adultery, or homosexuality, because these clearly contradict the will of God.

The United Brethren church teaches love in our family relationships, extends love to all other persons, and adheres to the ethic of love in pursuing national peace.

Adapted from materials originally written by Paul R. Fetters and C. Ray Miller.



what matters

As a denomination, one of our great strengths is that we're flexible in how we operate and not dogmatic about what we believe. Some people may argue that we're wishy-washy, afraid to take a strong stand one way or the other on various issues. But we don't see it that way.

There is a saying, "In essentials, unity. In non-essentials, liberty. In all things, charity." This very much describes United Brethrenism.

Our Confession of Faith says we believe in the Triune God, Jesus Christ the Son, the Holy Spirit, the Church, the Bible, salvation, and the Christian ordinances. Those seven points contain the basic beliefs on which we won't compromise. But there are numerous other issues on which we allow freedom. There may be a *predominant* view, but not a *required* view.

This was modeled by our founders, Martin Boehm and William Otterbein. They came from totally different religious backgrounds. While Boehm would only baptize adults and preferred pouring, Otterbein would baptize infants and preferred sprinkling. But one story tells of Boehm, who would never baptize an infant, watching with a delighted smile as Otterbein baptized an infant. He appreciated this genuine expression of Otterbein's convictions.

We still give individuals the freedom to choose the method — sprinkling, pouring, or immersion. If somebody wants to be sprinkled or poured (perhaps because of a medical condition), we're free to accommodate them. Most United Brethren people choose to be immersed, but even there you have differences, such as three times forward or one time backward. Any method is okay in the UB church. The Bible commands us to be baptized, but doesn't specify what method to use. We want to follow the Bible, but not go beyond its teachings.

Let's take another issue: the Second Coming. The Confession of Faith says Christ will return, but doesn't say how. Some church groups require belief in a specific view of the End Times. But in the UB church, you can be premillennial or amillennial, pre-trib, mid-trib or post-trib. It's not something we want to embed in doctrinal cement.

Regarding salvation, we could spell out a series of steps for becoming a Christian, or set other rules about how, when, and where you can be saved. But we don't. Why limit how God chooses to work in people's lives?

Likewise, the Confession of Faith affirms the role of the Bible, but doesn't say which Bible version people must use. You'll find many different versions being used in UB churches. The NIV may be most prevalent, but ministers all have their own preference.

If you travel across our denomination, you'll encounter a wide range of worship styles and settings. Some churches have very formal worship services, some use a contemporary style, and

WE DON'T GET HUNG UP ON:

Worship styles

What people wear

Methods of baptism

End Times scenarios

Bible versions

Church organizational structure

How a person becomes a Christian

Music preferences

Male/female roles

Membership

Buildings

Military service

"The Bible gives clear instruction on many issues, but on other issues, it leaves room for Christians of equal spiritual commitment and insight to disagree. The church's historic position has been to stand firm on biblical absolutes, allow freedom where the Bible allows freedom, and maintain unity when disagreements arise."

— from the *United Brethren Discipline*

some are on the cultural cutting edge. You'll find churches singing hymns with a pipe organ, and churches with a full band and screaming guitars. Larger churches may hold multiple services with different styles.

Some churches meet in beautiful sanctuaries, while others hold services in fellowship halls or store fronts. Some stick to the hymns and use hymnbooks, others use brand new songs with lyrics projected on a screen. Some ministers preach in suits, others in bluejeans.

We just don't get worked up about these things. We give churches the freedom to worship in a way which best fits their situation.

Recognizing that every church is different, we let churches adopt whatever structure best fits their needs and situation. We state a few basic requirements which enable us to work together — an administrative board, a personnel committee to deal with pastoral assignments, and a lay delegate to represent the church at the national conference. Beyond that, we let churches operate in whatever way works best for them (within reason).

Those are a few of the areas in which we allow freedom. It's much better than imposing a dogmatic "This is how it must be!" stand. We stick to the basics. And where the Bible allows room for differing views, we prefer to allow room. Many people find this attitude reasonable, attractive, and refreshing.

Ten churches are located in the province of Ontario. They are part of our Canadian national conference.

Location of United Brethren Churches in North America

Most of our churches are located in four states: Indiana (24), Michigan (33), Ohio (43), and Pennsylvania (32). (2017 figures)

worldwide

UB Global is the international arm of United Brethren churches in the United States and Canada. Through UB Global, we interact with United Brethren churches in nearly 20 countries. UB Global also supports missionaries serving in a number of countries — sometimes as direct employees of UB Global, sometimes with other mission agencies.

United Brethren mission work began in 1855 in Sierra Leone, West Africa. Over the years, the church has branched into many other countries. This has occurred in three ways:

1. Missionaries from North America pioneered churches in countries with no United Brethren presence. Most of our original overseas churches started this way.
2. Conferences outside of North America pioneered ministry in countries with no United Brethren presence. For instance, Honduras started churches in Nicaragua and El Salvador, and Nicaragua went on to start work in Costa Rica. Hong Kong started the work in Thailand, and partnered with the US to begin churches in Macau.

3. Churches in a country with no UB presence chose to affiliate with the denomination. Examples: Haiti, Mexico, Guatemala, Germany, and Liberia.

Here is an overview of how our work started in each country.

Sierra Leone

Through the years, Sierra Leone has been our largest mission field. Missionaries were sent in 1855, and the first two churches were organized in 1876. The work grew to include a hospital, dozens of primary schools, five high schools, and nearly 80 churches.

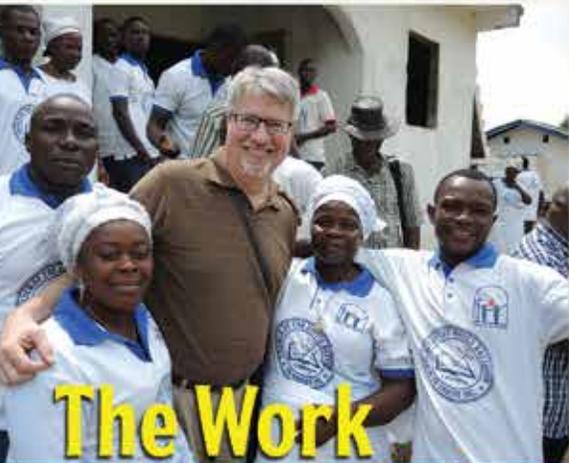
Sierra Leone

In 1985, the work in Sierra Leone was nationalized. Missionaries continued serving there, but under the leadership of Sierra Leoneans.

In 1994, all UB missionaries were evacuated because of the rebel war, which continued throughout the 1990s and devastated the country.

By 2001, a high degree of peace had returned to Sierra Leone. The Mattru Hospital reopened, and our churches have been rebuilding and expanding.

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The Work of UB Global

UB Global oversees all mission-related activities of the US and Canadian national conferences. The work involves:

- Partnerships with our other national conferences.
- Everything pertaining to missionaries — recruitment, training, fundraising, etc.
- Helping local churches develop their own vision for impacting the world.
- Pioneering new ministries among the least-reached peoples of the world.
- Fundraising for UB mission work.
- Working with the many short-term teams that travel to our overseas fields every year.



China

For several decades, we operated a school for Chinese people in Oregon. The school served as a bridge for opening a school near Canton, China, in 1924. This work was discontinued in 1952, a few years after the communist takeover of China. By then, Dr. Y. T. Chiu, the original contact in China, had moved to Hong Kong and started United Brethren mission work there. The Hong Kong Conference was officially organized in 1962, and now includes eight churches. In 1997, Hong Kong became part of China (it had been governed by Great Britain).

Hong Kong's leaders have aggressively reached out to neighboring countries. Their initiative led to the establishment of work in Macau (1987), Thailand (1993), and Myanmar (1998). No missionaries have ever served in Hong Kong; it has always operated fully under Chinese leadership.

Jamaica

Our work in Jamaica goes back to 1945. Originally, Rev. James B. O'Sullivan, a Jamaican living in the United States, was sent to investigate possible new mission work in the Bahamas. On the way there, a hurricane shipwrecked him off the coast of Cuba. Several weeks later, he made his way to Jamaica. By then, the mission board had decided against expanding into the Bahamas. Instead, they invited O'Sullivan to begin working in Jamaica.

That is how Jamaica Conference got started. A conference of eleven churches was organized in 1952. Today, there are about 30 churches.

Honduras

In 1929, Rev. James Elliott left his native Belize to pastor several English-speaking churches for the English Methodist Church on the north coast of Honduras. A year later, the Methodists abandoned their work in that country, but Elliott remained. Around 1944, he came in contact with the United Brethren church. Beginning in 1947, missionaries were sent to teach in Elliott's school in La Ceiba and to help out in the churches.

The work took a major turn in 1952 after the Archie Cameron family arrived in Honduras. Cameron, along with Honduran coworker Eudaldo Mejia, focused major attention on the largely unevangelized Spanish population. When Elliott's English-speaking churches (against Elliott's wishes) severed their relationship with the United Brethren church in 1953, the Camerons stayed and focused entirely on the Spanish-speaking population.

The first Spanish church organized in 1953, and Honduras Conference officially organized in



Short-Term Trips

Every year, scores of UB people minister with our overseas churches and staff. They build churches, conduct Vacation Bible Schools, hold medical clinics, teach English, and much more.

1956. Over the next 20 years, Cameron helped start numerous churches in villages throughout northern Honduras. The work expanded into the southern part of the country.

Since 1990, the Honduran churches have operated under national supervision. Honduras sets the pace in church planting, with around 80 churches, and is responsible for starting churches in Nicaragua and El Salvador.

Nicaragua

In 1965, Honduras Conference sent one of its pastors, Juan Campos, to Nicaragua to start churches. He was joined in 1970 by Rev. Guillermo Martinez, a native of El Salvador whom Honduras expelled after the 1969 Soccer War between Honduras and El Salvador. Under the leadership of Martinez, the work expanded.

The Sandinista revolution of 1979 started almost in Martinez's back yard in Masaya. The UB churches in Nicaragua weathered the years of Sandinista rule, and since the establishment of democracy and national elections in the 1990s, the church has aggressively expanded from less than 10 churches to over 30 churches. The Nicaragua Conference was officially organized in 1993.

India

In 1974, we began supporting missionaries Richard and Miriam Prabhakar in India. Richard was chief medical officer at the Narsapur Christian Hospital and director of the nearby Bethesda Leprosy Hospital. Their work grew to include a large Bible correspondence program, radio ministry, AIDS/HIV ministries, child support, a school, and other ministries. In the mid-1980s, they began working with Indian ministers to start churches in remote Hindu tribal areas. We now have 12 UB churches in India. The United States provides oversight of the work in India.

Macau

In the mid-1980s, Hong Kong Conference approached UB Global about partnering to start churches in Macau, a peninsula west of Hong Kong off of the Chinese mainland. The United States provided two families, and Hong Kong provided a Chinese coworker.

Many UB Global staff and volunteers have served in Macau since 1988. The work focuses on two areas: a school for teaching English, and church planting (mostly using contacts made through teaching). Two UB churches now exist in Macau. In 1999, Macau became part of China (it had been governed by Portugal). Macau has passed Las Vegas as the world's gambling capital.

Thailand

In 1994, Hong Kong began working among the Akha people high in the mountains of northern Thailand, on the border with Myanmar, in the area known as the Golden Triangle. The Akha are a group of people who migrated from China in the early 1900s. Rev. H. M. Lee, a Thai minister, has spearheaded the work from the beginning. The work includes churches and schools in two villages. Hundreds of people have become Christians in this predominantly Buddhist area.

In addition, in 2016 a multinational group of UB missionaries from the US, Honduras, and Hong Kong established a ministry center in Chiang Rai, a major city. Their goal is to reach Thai Buddhists — the majority population among whom very few groups are ministering.

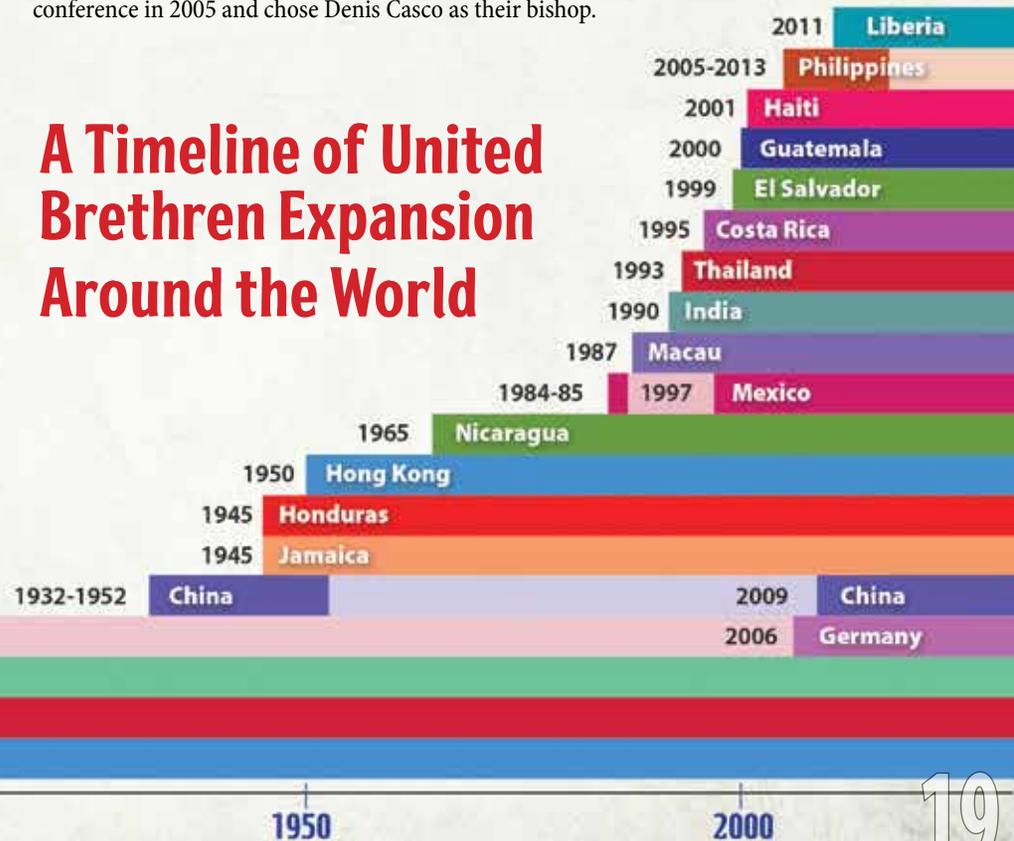
Costa Rica

The work in Costa Rica began in 1995 as an outreach of Nicaragua Conference. A Nicaraguan pastor who had married a Costa Rican woman launched the work in an impoverished section of San Jose, the nation's capital. Today, we have one church in Costa Rica operating under the supervision of Nicaragua Conference.

Mexico

Rev. Denis Casco, a Honduran who came to the United States in 1988 to start Hispanic UB churches in southern California, developed connections with a group of churches in Mexico. These churches — about 45 of them, mostly in central Mexico with a cluster of churches across the border from El Paso, Texas — affiliated with us in 1997. They were accepted as a national conference in 2005 and chose Denis Casco as their bishop.

A Timeline of United Brethren Expansion Around the World



General Conference

International Executive Committee

Sierra Leone

Germany
Liberia

Canada

Haiti

Hong Kong

Thailand
Macau

Jamaica

United States

India
Macau

Honduras

El Salvador

Nicaragua

Costa Rica

Mexico

Guatemala

UB National Conferences

and the Mission Districts They Oversee



El Salvador

In 1999, the UB churches of Nicaragua, Honduras, and the United States partnered to begin working in El Salvador. In 2007, the Hondurans sent their best church planter, Rev. Gonzalo Alas, to start a church planting movement in El Salvador. Alas had been working in the Copan region of Honduras where previously there were no UB churches. When he left Copan to go to El Salvador, 13 established churches and 5 church plants were functioning. Honduras provides oversight of the work in El Salvador.

Haiti

United Brethren work in Haiti began when Rev. Oliam Richard, a Haitian minister then living in Paris, France, learned about the United Brethren church through the UB website. He was supervising a group of churches in Haiti and wanted to find a group for them to affiliate with. Contacts were made. In October 2000, UB Global decided to launch into Haiti. Rev. Richard moved back to Haiti to personally supervise the Haitian churches.

We have about 19 churches in Haiti, most in the southern part of the country. The Canadian national conference provides the primary oversight of the work in Haiti, and regularly sends work teams to Haiti.

Germany

In 1997, Eric Mustapha, an ordained minister from Sierra Leone Conference, fled the civil war and resettled in Berlin, Germany. He started a church consisting mostly of other Sierra Leone immigrants. Mustapha later relocated to London, but another Sierra Leone minister, Peter Mansary, assumed leadership of the church. Peter attended the Sierra Leone conference meeting in 2006 and said, "We're a United Brethren church, and have come back to our roots for a relationship." He asked Sierra Leone to accept them as a mission district, and the conference agreed.



Guatemala

In 1997, two families in Guatemala City began meeting in their homes. The movement grew, and other churches started. In 2000, a UB leader from Nicaragua stopped in Guatemala while on his way to Mexico and became acquainted with these churches. They inquired about the United Brethren denomination. One thing led to another.

In January 2010, the 13 churches of Guatemala (now there are 17) were accepted as a United Brethren national conference. Like many of our Central American churches, most of the Guatemalan congregations minister to the poorest of the poor.

Liberia

A group of about ten churches had been using the name "Church of the United Brethren in Christ" since about 1980. Around 2011, they began working with Sierra Leone Conference to become part of the worldwide UB church.



United Brethren leaders representing seven national conferences and five mission districts met in Chambersburg, Pa., for the 2017 General Conference.

OUR doctrinal beliefs

Next to the Bible, the Confession of Faith is the most important United Brethren document. It was adopted in 1815, and contains the key beliefs which all United Brethren members must accept. For clarification purposes, the wording below has been revised without changing any of the meaning. Consult the Discipline (available at ub.org) for the official wording.

The Triune God

We believe in the only true God — the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost. These three are one—the Father in the Son, the Son in the Father, and the Holy Ghost equal in essence or being with both. This triune God not only created the heavens and the earth and everything in them, but sustains, governs, protects, and supports it all.

Jesus Christ, the Son

We believe that Jesus Christ is both God and man. He became a man by the power of the Holy Ghost in the Virgin Mary and was born of her. He is the Savior and mediator of the whole human race, if they accept with full faith in Christ the grace offered in him.

We believe that Jesus suffered and died on the cross for us, was buried, arose again on the third day, ascended into heaven, and now sits at the right hand of God interceding for us. He will come again at the last day to judge the living and the dead.

The Holy Spirit, Comforter and Guide

We believe that the Holy Ghost is equal in being with the Father and the Son. He comforts the faithful and guides them into all truth.

The Church

We believe in the holy Christian church, the communion of saints, the resurrection of the body, and eternal life.

The Holy Bible and Salvation

We believe that the Bible, Old and New Testaments, is the Word of God. It contains the only true way of salvation. Every true Christian is bound to acknowledge and receive it, with the influence of the Spirit of God, as the only rule and guide.

We believe that without faith in Jesus Christ, true repentance, forgiveness of sins, and following after Christ, no one can be a true Christian.

The Salvation Message

We also believe that what is contained in the

Bible — the fall in Adam and redemption through Jesus Christ — should be preached throughout the world.

The Christian Ordinances

We believe that the ordinances — baptism, and the remembrance of the sufferings and death of Christ — are to be used and practiced by all Christian churches.

We also believe that all of God's children are to practice these ordinances, but that the manner in which they practice them should always be left to the judgment and understanding of the individual. Whether or not to practice footwashing is also to be left to the individual.

No ministers should, either in public or in private, criticize any of their brethren whose judgment and understanding in these respects differs from their own. Whoever does shall be considered a traducer of his brethren, and shall be answerable for it.

How Do You Become a UB Member?

The starting point for United Brethren membership is a professed personal relationship with Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord. In choosing to become a United Brethren member, a Christian chooses to voluntarily follow a set of standards and expectations, and to be held accountable for their Christian faith and practice. This is important to the unity and stability of the congregation.

Membership is not about acquiring certain privileges, but about the spiritual development of the Christian and the integrity and health of the church.

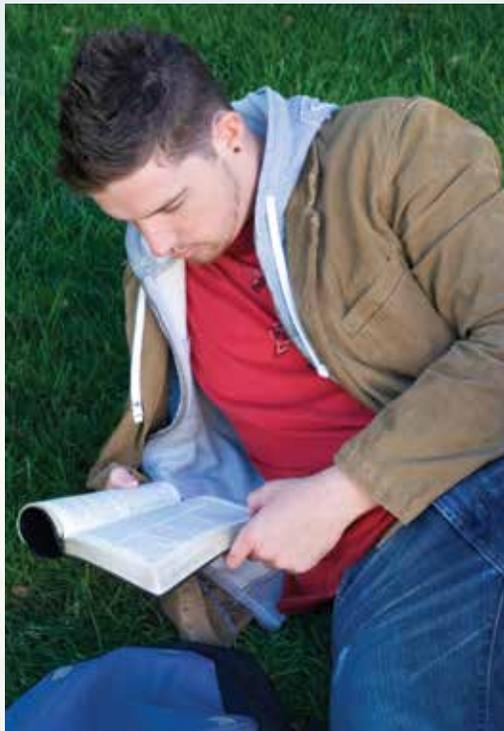
We have two levels of membership.

1. *Adult* membership for ages 16+.
2. *Student* membership for ages 9-15.

Some UB churches emphasize membership, some don't. Typically, a person becomes a member by going to the front of the church on a Sunday morning and responding to these questions from the pastor:

1. Do you believe the Bible to be the Word of God and that therein only is revealed the knowledge of the way of salvation?
2. Have you asked God to forgive your sins, and do you now believe that he accepts you as his child?
3. Are you determined by the grace of God to follow Christ, renouncing the world and all ungodliness and seeking to live a life of holiness and devotion to God and his cause?
4. Are you willing to be governed by our church Discipline, and are you willing to be placed under the authority of the local church?
5. Are you willing to give of your time, talent, and means to the support of the various interests of this church according to your ability?
6. Have you received water baptism? If not, are you willing to be baptized at your earliest convenience?

To become a member, a person must say "Yes" to all of these questions (or to at least one of the questions in number 6). If someone was baptized in a non-United Brethren church, we don't require that they be re-baptized to join with us.



OUR core values

These eight Core Values, adopted in 2001, are part of the international governing documents which apply to all United Brethren worldwide.

1. 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.

2. 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.

3. 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.

4. 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, in-

justice, 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.

5. 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.

6. 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.

7. 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 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.

8. 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.

standards

We want to help members understand how we interpret the Bible in relation to important contemporary issues. Therefore, over the years we have adopted statements on a number of issues. All of these stands are included in the Discipline, our sort of “manual of operations.” Here is a condensed and paraphrased selection. Consult the Discipline for the complete statements, official wording, and Scripture references.

Marriage and the Family

The Family

A family can take four forms:

1. A married couple (male husband and female wife) who may or may not have children.
2. A single parent household, in which a male or female parent is raising natural or adopted children.
3. A widow or widower who is left without children at home.
4. A single person who chooses to live as a separate household.

Singleness

Scripture affirms singleness. Some people experience singleness as a calling, others as a result of life circumstances. From Scripture, we understand that neither marriage nor sexual intimacy is essential for wholeness.

Marriage

God instituted marriage, and he regulates it. Therefore, we must resist any attempt to change marriage from what the Bible says about it.

God ordained marriage and defined it as the covenant relationship between a man, a woman, and himself. The purpose of marriage is companionship between a man and a woman in a permanent relationship which ends when one of the partners dies. It is out of the marriage relationship that God intended for children to be produced and nurtured.

A Christian should marry only another Christian. Their relationship is supposed to express God’s original intent for marriage: the wife alongside her husband as an equal.

United Brethren ministers shall only participate in weddings between one genetic, biological man and one genetic, biological woman, and church facilities shall only host such weddings.

Cohabitation

Simulating the marriage relationship by living together without the covenantal commitments associated with marriage circumvents God’s plan for family life. Even when the cou-

ple’s intention is to remain sexually pure, cohabitation increases the temptation for sexual sin and fails to avoid the appearance of evil. Members must avoid cohabitation prior to marriage.

Illicit Sexual Relations

The Bible establishes sex as a part of marriage. This design must not be substituted (e.g. pornography), duplicated (adultery, polygamy), pre-empted (premarital sex, cohabitation), altered (same-sex relations), coerced (sexual assault, abuse), exploited (pedophilia, sex trafficking), or corrupted (non-human sexual relations).

Divorce

Divorce was never in God’s original plan. However, Jesus said divorce may be granted when fornication occurs. Fornication includes all forms of sexual sin, such as adultery, prostitution, sodomy, incest, bestiality, homosexuality, and lesbianism. Divorce is justified when sexual sin is continual and deliberate.

Paul gives an exception applying to the marriage of believers and unbelievers. If the unbeliever wants a divorce, the believer may agree to it. This also applies when believers renounce their faith or assume the position of unbelievers, and choose to end the marriage.

Human Sexuality

In 2017, the United Brethren Church adopted lengthy statements titled “Sex and Gender Distinctions” and “The Local Church and Human Sexuality.” They are part of the “Family Standards” chapter of the Discipline. The following snippets don’t do justice to the thoughtfulness of the full statements, but at least give you an idea of the church’s approach to such issues.

- All persons, irrespective of physicality, gender, or sexual orientation, are made in the image and likeness of God. Congregations should honor all persons as deeply loved by God, and extend hospitality to all persons who are drawn to its public gatherings.
- The Church must guard against any attempt to demean or trivialize individual suffering related to gender identity.
- The Church cannot celebrate or support the choice to alter one’s sex or gender.
- God created humankind male and female. A distinction between the sexes needs to be honored and maintained.
- Persons struggling with gender identity need to confide in fellow Christians and seek competent Christian counseling. They need to understand God’s design for human sexuality and exercise discretion and care when deciding how to live faithfully in the midst of very real inner struggles.
- Believers who don’t struggle with gender identity need to manifest the fruit of the Spirit when interacting with persons who do, both within and outside of the Church.
- The Church must compassionately minister to those struggling with sexual identity issues by becoming a place of understanding, healing, and hope.
- God desires that we live in loving, committed, life-giving, healing relationships.
- Congregations should encourage healthy and biblical sexual boundaries. Celibacy can be a more radical, sacrificial expression of love than sexual intimacy.



Even though the Bible tells Christians not to divorce each other, spouses may decide divorce is essential when they or the children suffer severe physical or emotional abuse.

God does not advocate divorce in such situations. But when it does occur, he regulates it. So although divorce should not occur, the Bible recognizes that this ideal isn't always maintained. In all cases, every effort should be made to bring about repentance, restoration, and reconciliation.

Pornography

Pornography is a sin that is deeply damaging to individuals, relationships, and society. All members are to abstain from using pornography. Those struggling with pornography or an addiction to sexually explicit materials should seek help through the counsel of Christian therapists as well as the support and accountability of fellow followers of Christ.

Abortion

We believe that human life is sacred from the moment of conception, and that abortion must not occur anytime after conception. Therefore, abortion cannot occur in these situations:

1. As a means of birth control.
2. To end a pregnancy resulting from rape or incest.
3. To prevent or eliminate congenital or hereditary defects.

We recognize the possibility of therapeutic abortion. However, it can be performed only when the mother's life is in imminent danger, as determined by two competent doctors. One of those doctors must be the one who is or would be attending her pregnancy.

Genetic Engineering

We do not condone the following:

1. Sex selection or genetic screening, through information obtained from amniocentesis, which results in an abortion.
2. Artificial insemination — placing a fertilized ovum in the fallopian tube or the uterus. The only exception is when a married couple use their own sperm and ovum.
3. Cloning in the human reproductive system.
4. Experiments to develop artificial uteruses and placentas, with the ultimate goal of developing a fullterm fetus without the mother's presence.

Euthanasia

Persons being kept alive artificially should have the privilege of rejecting artificial support. If they can't make the decision, family members should have authority to make it for them.

Personal Morality

Gambling

Gambling is a menace to personal character, social morality, and biblical stewardship. We urge members to abstain from participating in gambling in any form, including lotteries, and to oppose the spread of gambling.

Lodges and Other Heretical Groups

United Brethren members must not be members of any other church, group, or organization which teaches a way of salvation incompatible with the United Brethren Confession of Faith, such as a Masonic lodge or the Order of Oddfellows.

Alcohol, Tobacco, and Drugs

Christians are directed in the Bible to be temperate in all things. This implies discipline in all emotions, passions, and appetites. It means the proper use of wholesome food and drink.

We urge members to avoid using alcoholic beverages.

We urge members to abstain from using any kind of tobacco.

Members must abstain from using narcotic, hallucinogenic, mind-altering, and mood-altering drugs, except under medical prescription.

The Occult

Members must not participate in the occult. This includes all types of fortunetelling, astrology, communication with spirits, and witchcraft.

Lord's Day Observance

Everyone should make room for attending worship services on Sunday. Members are encouraged to not buy or sell needlessly on Sunday.

Government and Society

Human Relations

The Bible gives no basis for believing any people are superior or inferior. Therefore, we object to discrimination based on national, creedal, or social differences. Members should use every means possible to promote human equality, and to oppose every influence — economic, social, moral, or religious — which discriminates against people.

We believe in equal rights and justice for all. Members should oppose any form of prejudice which might prevent persons or ethnic groups from participating fully in society's benefits.

We advocate using the legal process and the democratic system to achieve these goals: no poverty or unemployment, fair wages, fair practices between employer and employees, adequate provisions for the elderly and unemployable, decent housing available for everyone, and a concern for total human need in our world.

Members should strive for a society characterized by unselfish compassion and service to all.

Peace

We disapprove of voluntary, aggressive warfare by any nation. However, we recognize the government's authority, and we hold it responsible for preserving and defending the country against treason and invasion.

Our members have the right to serve and bear arms in the military. They also have the right to be conscientious objectors who refuse to bear arms and, instead, choose humanitarian service to their nation.

Obeying the Government

It is the duty of every member to lead a quiet, peaceable, and godly life. A Christian should live in peace and be subject to the higher or ruling powers, as the Bible requires.

Legal Action

Members may be expelled if they refuse to refer a debt or dispute to arbitration, or if they sue another member before trying arbitration. This doesn't apply to criminal and other cases which justify legal action.

our churches

The real work of the denomination occurs at the local church level. This is where people are reached for Christ, and where they receive the teaching and nurture needed to develop into mature Christians. The other denominational entities exist to help churches be more effective.



To organize as a church, you need adult members from at least ten families, and an attendance of 50 or more for 12 months.

We give churches the freedom to develop whatever organizational structure best fits their situation — their needs, ministry, congregation, and community. This flexibility is very important, because no single structure can fit every context. We have only a handful of requirements.

Board of Administration

Each church must have a board of administration at the top. The senior pastor must be a member (but not necessarily chairperson). All board members must be members of the church. Churches might hold board meetings monthly, bi-monthly, or quarterly — it's their choice. The church can decide who serves on the board (besides the pastor) and what they call the board.

Personnel Relations Commission

The church must form a Personnel Relations Commission to work with the stationing committee in securing a new senior pastor. This group may also deal with such matters as salaries, job descriptions, and monitoring the relationship between the pastor and congregation.

Lay Delegates

A church must select from its membership lay delegates to represent the church at the national conference. An average attendance of 0-150 gets you one lay delegate. You then merit another delegate for every 100 persons of average attendance above 150.

Clusters

Every senior pastor must participate in a cluster. These are groups of 5-7 senior pastors, usually in a certain geographic area. A cluster leader, appointed by the bishop, is in charge of each cluster. We have over 30 clusters, most of them organized geographically.

Partnership Fee

Churches are required to give 3.5% of their income (excluding giving to missions and building funds) to support denominational ministries. In many denominations, that figure exceeds 10%. We want to keep resources in the local church, rather than support a big bureaucracy.

National Church Covenant

Every church must sign the National Church Covenant. This is just a reminder of what they have agreed to do as member churches of the United Brethren denomination. The covenant has four points. It goes like this:

1. We commit to the Confession of Faith and Core Values of the Church of the United Brethren in Christ, International.
2. We agree to abide by the Constitution and Discipline of the US National Conference.
3. We will prioritize our assets, energies, and ministries toward fulfilling the Great Commission.
4. We will support the broader ministry and mission of the Church of the United Brethren in Christ, USA, through prayer, promotion of its interests, and the annual partnership fee.

The church board approves the Covenant, and should review the Covenant every year.

Find Us On the Web

ub.org. The official website for United Brethren churches in the United States. Come here for pretty much anything you want to know about the denomination.

ubglobal.org. The UB Global website. It contains a wealth of information about our missionaries, work trips, countries, mission projects, resources, etc.

ubcentral.org. The UB news site, with almost daily postings about news from churches, missions, Huntington University, and anything else happening in the United Brethren world. You can have the posts sent to you by email each day.

ubchurches.org. Our online church directory. Search for UB churches by name, location, and other criteria.

facebook.com/unitedbrethren. Our Facebook page. Visit and "like" us.

huntington.edu. The website for our college, Huntington University.

To Order More Copies
Toll-free: 888-622-3019
Or go to ub.org

Our Governing Documents

These can be found at ub.org.

The Discipline. This is our main guidebook (beyond the Bible, of course). It consists of three parts: the Confession of Faith, Constitution, and Bylaws (details on standards, procedures, etc.).

Pastoral Ministry Handbook. Contains lots of info about ministers—licenses, education, expectations, assignments, and much more.

International Documents. Three documents unite the worldwide UB church: the Confession of Faith, the eight Core Values, and the international Constitution (which explains how we organize ourselves at the international level).



United Brethren
ALL FOR CHRIST

United Brethren National Office
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**All about the Church of the United Brethren in Christ —
the first denomination to begin on American soil.
Our history. Beliefs. Distinctives. Mission work.
Membership standards. Core values. Ministers.
Countries. Structure. Family standards. And more.**

