

~ Pastor Steve Nofel

In October, we will explore being Presbyterian, being Methodist, and what it means to be a union church.

October 1, 2024

Q. 13. Just what is the Presbyterian Church (USA)?

A. 13. The national Presbyterian Church U.S.A. (PCUSA) is organized into 172 presbyteries which are grouped into 16 synods. The Presbytery of Baltimore is part of the Synod of the Mid-Atlantic located in Richmond, VA.

Q. 14. What is Baltimore Presbytery?

A. 14. Baltimore Presbytery consists of all the PCUSA congregations from the mountains of western Maryland to the Chesapeake Bay and, in addition to Baltimore City, include nine counties: Allegany, Anne Arundel, Baltimore, Carroll, Frederick, Harford, Howard, Washington. There are 65 churches in Baltimore Presbytery consisting of 12,000 parishioners. (SJU is special, as we are the only union church in the presbytery).

October 3, 2024

Q. 15. How is SJU related to the presbytery?

A. 15. Every church in every presbytery is governed by its own normally called "The Session" (our governing body is our SJU Council - more about the Council in the coming weeks). The presbytery is here to serve each congregation, provide resources, help set mission goals and strategies. The Presbytery through the Commission on Ministry is also the pastoral care provider to the churches and pastors.

Q. 16. Who are the leaders of Baltimore Presbytery?

A. 16. Rev. Dr. Jackie Taylor is our General Presbyter. She is our Presbyterian version of a bishop. Rev. Mary Gaut is our Stated Clerk. She guides and leads us through the process of being Presbyterian. Rev. Mary Speers is the moderator of the Commission on Ministry (COM). The COM is working with us to find our next pastor.

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October 8, 2024

Q.17. What is a Methodist?

A.17. "A Methodist is...one who loves the Lord our God with all our hearts, with all our souls, with all our minds and with all our strength" John Wesley (1703-1791)

Q.18. Who was John Wesley?

A.18. John Wesley was an ordained Anglican priest. At a prayer meeting in London on May 24, 1738, he received the new inspiration which led him to become the first teacher of "Methodism."
Source for A. 17&18, Scriptograph Booklet by Channing Bete Co., "About Being United Methodist."

October 10, 2024

Q.19. Why is it called the United Methodist Church?

"On April 23, 1968, the United Methodist Church was created when the [Evangelical United Brethren Church](#) and The Methodist Church merged at the General Conference in [Dallas, Texas](#). With the words, "Lord of the Church, we are united in Thee, in Thy Church and now in The United Methodist Church" the new denomination was given birth by both churches which had distinguished histories and influential ministries in various parts of the world since the early 1700s". (Wikipedia, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United_Methodist_Church)

Q.20. How are we at SJU connected to the United Methodist Church?

A.20. SJU is part of the Washington-Baltimore Conference of the UMC. Within the Conference we are part of the Central Maryland District.

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October 15, 2024

Q.21. What is the Washington-Baltimore Conference of the United Methodist Church?

A.21. The Baltimore-Washington Conference of The United Methodist Church has 571 churches with approximately 129,000 members in Washington, D.C., parts of Maryland, the eastern panhandle of West Virginia, and Bermuda. (Answer from the Baltimore-Washington Conference website, www.bwcumc.org)

Q.22. Who are the leaders of our UMC conference and district?

A.22. While being a connectional church, the UMC has an episcopacy, that is church government led by bishops. Bishop LaTrelle Easterling is the episcopal leader of the Baltimore-Washington Conference. Rev. Dawn Hand is currently our District Superintendent. (Answer from the Baltimore-Washington Conference website, www.bwcumc.org)

October 17, 2024

Q.23. What does it mean that SJU is a Union Church?

A.23. In 1969 St. John United Methodist Presbyterian was born out of the ecumenical movement of the 1960s. "From the signing of the charter in 1969, its members believed that they were called by God to be a worshipping commune that celebrates the unity known through Christ in the midst of diversity." (from 2002 Membership Directory, The Church of Saint John the Evangelist United Methodist-Presbyterian).

Q.24. What does it mean to be a member of a union church.

A.24. The members of the congregation are members in full standing in the United Methodist Church and in the Presbyterian Church (USA). It does not mean you give up your denominational identity. It means we are united in our diversity as we serve God and humanity.

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October 22, 2024

Q.25. Why is the Wilde Lake Interfaith Center (WLIFC) SJU's home?

A.25. Originally home to four worshipping communities, WLIFC was born from the guiding vision of James Rouse in his planning for the new city of Columbia in the early 1960s. The congregations, including SJU, shared Mr. Rouse's goals of ecumenism inclusiveness. (from 2002 Membership Directory, The Church of Saint John the Evangelist United Methodist-Presbyterian).

Q.26. With whom do we share WLIFC today?

A.26. We share the WLIFC with St. John the Evangelist Roman Catholic Church. Three of the original congregations in the center have gone in other directions and worship in other facilities.

October 24, 2024

Q.27. Who are the leaders of SJU?

A.27. SJU is governed by the SJU Council. They are a body elected by the congregation from among its members to lead and guide the church's ministry, missions, and worship.

Q.28. Who are the current members of the SJU Council?

A.28. Debbie Parker, chair of the Council, Pamela Brown, Pamela Love, Jen McClurg, Noella Sama, Lisa Cooper Green, Guy Moody, Trena Perez, Eric Schoch, Pastor Steve Nofel, Caroline Evans, Patsy Nwagbaraocha, Meredith Phillips, and Alvin Thompson.

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October 29, 2024

Q.29. Who is the SJU pastor?

A.29. Rev. Steve Nofel is the interim pastor of SJU.

Q.30. What does interim pastor mean?

A.30 Rev. Nofel's ministry is to pastor churches that do not currently have a permanent pastor.

October 31, 2024

Q.31. Why didn't SJU immediately receive a permanent pastor when Pastor Mary Ka was reassigned?

A.31. The Presbyterian Church and the Methodist Church alternate pastors. Our dear Pastor Mary Ka, a Methodist minister, was reassigned by the bishop. It is the Presbyterians "turn" to provide pastoral leadership. Presbyterians do not assign pastors to churches, as the Methodist bishop does. Presbyterians follow "the call system."

Q.32. What is "the call system"?

A.32 It is a process in which the church seeks their next installed pastor. It is similar to a job search. The biggest difference is this call process is a spiritual journey for the congregation with the hope and expectation that we will recognize God's intention to perfectly match pastor and congregation. More about the pastor search in future Q&As.