



# THE GARDEN

Comprehensive Spiritual Formation  
and Christian Education

at

First United Methodist Church  
Franklin, Tennessee

Unanimously approved by FUMC Church Council

May 2, 2013

**MATTHEW 28 OUTCOME TEAM ON  
INTENTIONAL FAITH DEVELOPMENT**



First United Methodist Church  
FRANKLIN, TENNESSEE

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***by email:***

secretary@franklinfumc.org

***by regular mail:***

Membership Secretary  
First United Methodist Church  
143 Fifth Avenue South  
Franklin, TN 37064  
615-794-2734

FIRST UNITED METHODIST CHURCH  
143 FIFTH AVENUE SOUTH  
FRANKLIN, TENNESSEE 37064  
615-794-2734



## **OUR MISSION**

Knowing Christ; Sharing Christ; Making Disciples

## **OUR VISION**

We are a vibrant Christ-centered community:

- boldly embracing the power of the Holy Spirit;
- growing through the divinely inspired Word of God;
- faithfully serving others;
- inviting all to experience the transforming love of Jesus Christ.





Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

Welcome to *The Garden*:

*The Garden* is a remarkable vision which is comprehensive at many levels within church life. Its origins came from Franklin First's finalized mission and vision statements which were adopted in May 2007 following the two-year-long Matthew 28 Strategic Visioning process. The formal statements which appear on page three of this document are rich with doctrinal and theological meaning.

Following the official adoption of the mission and vision statements by the then Board of Ministry, a number of committees were formed to integrate the implications of the statements into the working life of the church. The Committee on Intentional Faith Development (IFD) was one of these groups. This committee met for nearly a year deliberately and prayerfully wrestling with the question of how to integrate these bold spiritual aspirations into congregational life. Ultimately it was discerned that the education and small group ministries were the most appropriate vehicle to impact the broadest cross section of spiritual life at Franklin First.

The IFD committee began a two-year process of prayerfully evaluating the church's prevailing educational methods and visualizing what were felt to be the best practices possible to insure that true Christianity is inculcated in our church's educational enterprise at all age levels and all variety of settings. Months passed as brainstorming coalesced into concrete strategies. Ultimately the first draft of *The Garden* was presented by a subcommittee tasked with creating the preliminary draft. Another year of prayerful reading, changing, and editing by the whole IFD committee followed before the final draft version was shared with the church staff.

Church staff then received draft copies and began careful reading and analysis. Two special work sessions were conducted with all pastoral and professional staff and selected IFD committee members proceeding page-by-page, line-by-line, through the document. Many changes and suggestions were made, each one clarifying and strengthening the document. Following this extensive staff review, individual amended copies of *The Garden* were distributed to the church council

members for review. After sufficient time for thorough individual reading, the document was discussed in considerable detail, again going through it page-by-page at two specially called church council meetings over a three-month period. Numerous suggestions and points of clarification were then also incorporated into what became a formal document ready for approval.

The final amended version of *The Garden* was distributed in April 2013 to church council members in advance of a called meeting convened solely to discuss and vote on *The Garden*. This well attended meeting was held on May 2, 2013. After a number of clarifying comments and questions the council unanimously adopted *The Garden* as the operational guidelines for Christian Education and Spiritual Formation at Franklin First.

The rationale for sharing the above process is to highlight the substantial consensus and shared vision that has accompanied the development of *The Garden*. Its origins came directly from the church leadership in the Matthew 28 strategic planning process. The IFD committee, itself reflecting a healthy cross section of congregational representation, was appropriately tasked with developing practical applications in church life and pursued its work diligently over nearly three years. Church staff were then thorough in their oversight with very cautious attention to matters of church doctrine, scriptural authority, UMC disciplinary fidelity, and implications to church life. Finally, the church council, over two exclusive sessions, fully studied and debated the end product prior to a third called meeting which resulted in unanimous approval. Rarely has such an exhaustive process been undertaken in the life of a local church. Truly *The Garden* has upon it the inspiration of the Holy Spirit and the handprints of a comprehensive and diverse group of staff and church members and can claim to fully represent the mind and heart of the pastoral staff and lay leadership of Franklin First.

While recognition is appropriate for many who helped see *The Garden* through to completion, it is important to specifically recognize the members of the IFD committee who worked prayerfully for many, many months in developing the strategies and perfecting the document itself. These individuals include:

Tim Menzies—*chair 2007–2010*  
Angela Overstreet—*chair 2011–*  
Cindy Bellini  
Vicky Crigger  
Tim DiPeri  
Dot Ginn  
John Lerchenfeld

JeNan Merrill  
Andy Miller  
Amy Mitchell  
Dorma Tabisz  
Katie Yommer  
Sarah Carty, *staff*  
Mark Coursey, *staff*

# Contents

<b>A Resolution</b>	8
<b>The Garden—A Bold Vision for Franklin First</b>	9
<b>The Garden Metaphor</b>	10
<b>Garden Principles Summary</b>	11
<b>Section One—The Garden Principles: Explanation and Application</b>	13
• <i>Biblical • Comprehensive • Complete • Covenantal</i>	
• <i>Challenging • Disciplined • Doctrinal • Intentional • Lifelong</i>	
• <i>Prayerful • Trinitarian • Wesleyan</i>	
<b>Section Two—Guidance for Ministry Areas</b>	29
• <i>Children’s Ministries Teachers and Leaders</i>	
• <i>Parents/Caregivers of School-Age Children</i>	
• <i>School-Age Children</i>	
• <i>Church Professional and Pastoral Staff</i>	
• <i>Youth and Adult Students and Leaders</i>	
• <i>The Confirmation Process</i>	
<b>Section Three—Appendices</b>	37
• <i>Appendix A—John Wesley’s Twenty-Five Articles of Religion of the Methodist Church</i>	
• <i>Appendix B—Membership and Confirmation Vows in the United Methodist Church</i>	
• <i>Appendix C—Baptismal Vows in the United Methodist Church</i>	
• <i>Appendix D—The Nicene Creed from the United Methodist Hymnal</i>	
• <i>Appendix E—The Apostles’ Creed from the United Methodist Hymnal</i>	
• <i>Appendix F—Glossary of Terms</i>	

# A RESOLUTION

WHEREAS since 1799 Franklin First United Methodist Church has stood as a witness to Jesus Christ in Franklin, Tennessee, and has in that time experienced great and marvelous movements of the Holy Spirit, *and*

WHEREAS, Franklin First United Methodist Church has in recent years resolved to renew and even surpass previous levels of spiritual growth and faithfulness, *and*

WHEREAS, in 2007, the Matthew 28 Committee and church council adopted a powerful mission and vision statement which include “boldly embracing the power of the Holy Spirit; growing through the divinely inspired Word of God; faithfully serving others; inviting all to experience the transforming love of Jesus Christ,” *and*

WHEREAS, the Matthew 28 Committee and church council established several committees, or “outcome teams” charging them with the responsibility to develop a conceptual and practical framework for integrating this bold vision and mission into the full life of the church, *and*

WHEREAS, the Outcome Team on Intentional Faith Development has worked for over two and a half years to develop a comprehensive approach to spiritual formation and Christian education at Franklin First, *and*

WHEREAS, spiritual formation and Christian education is one of the most extensive and important ministries of the church, touching persons of all ages and levels of spiritual maturity and as such is deserving of much prayerful attention, *and*

WHEREAS, the assigned team, consisting of a representative cross section of Franklin First members and leaders has developed an unprecedented set of operational guidelines for the faithful administration of the church’s educational program,

LET IT THEREFORE BE RESOLVED, this handbook of Spiritual Principles and Operational Guidelines for Christian Education at Franklin First is adopted by the church council as the guiding principles for all spiritual formation and Christian education at Franklin First.



# The Garden

## A BOLD VISION FOR FRANKLIN FIRST

*“All scripture is inspired of God—the Spirit of God not only once inspired those who wrote it, but continually inspires, supernaturally assists, those that read it with earnest prayer. Hence it is so profitable for doctrine, for instruction of the ignorant, for the reproof or conviction of them that are in error or sin, for the correction or amendment of whatever is amiss, and for instructing or training up the children of God in all righteousness.”*

John Wesley, from sermon on Scriptural Christianity  
based on 2 Timothy 3:16–17

**A** GREAT CHURCH MUST POSSESS A GREAT VISION. The vision for the spiritual formation and Christian education ministries at Franklin First is truly powerful. As this congregation has grown in spiritual maturity it has become possessed of a mind to follow Jesus Christ in a real and truly meaningful way. John Wesley made a clear distinction between what he called *Almost Christians* and *Altogether Christians*. We can say declaratively that Franklin First sees as its sole purpose to raise up *Altogether Christians*.

Raising up generations of altogether Christians requires a serious, determined, and disciplined approach to all that we do in the life of the church. Countless persons encounter the influence and ministries of this church in the course of the year. Some only engage it tangentially, but many are deeply invested in its activities and programs. What the church preaches and teaches will have lasting—even eternal consequences in the lives of all who trust it for their spiritual nurture and education. Young children will have the seeds of faith planted and nurtured from their earliest conscious memories. Elderly seniors will receive vital understanding, reconciling their lives to their ultimate embracing of eternity. All ages and families will find life-giving instruction as they are led to surrender to Christ as their source of true joy and freedom.

Our stewardship of this sacred trust must be taken with great seriousness. As church leaders we will be held accountable by God for how we order the work and ministry of our congregation to insure that each and every precious child of God that comes within the shadow of our influence receives our very best effort to teach the timeless tenets of our faith to draw them into a saving relationship with Jesus Christ, and to learn to live in the ongoing empowerment of the Holy Spirit.

The Matthew 28 Outcome Team on Intentional Faith Development has prayerfully developed a vision for a comprehensive Christian education program at Franklin First. The vision for the program is large and bold enough to command its own name. We have prayerfully titled this visionary program *The Garden*.

## The Garden Metaphor

THE GARDEN METAPHOR IS RICH WITH BIBLICAL and spiritual meaning. Implied here is rich soil, good seed, nourishing rain, life giving sunlight, and a fruitful harvest. The teaching on the care of the garden reveals divine pruning to spur new growth, removing threatening weeds and thorns, defending against an enemy that sows tares, recruiting laborers for the harvest, and the burning of useless chaff. Over and over Jesus used agricultural analogies in His teaching parables. These were highly relevant to the culture of the time, but they are just as easily understood by us today in our modern suburban high-tech world as well as in future generations at Franklin First.

We could not possess a more fitting biblical image upon which to articulate its spiritual formation and education ministry. We need not spend too much time elaborating on this highly appropriate symbol because the vision is largely self-evident. However for our “garden” model at Franklin First we must expand on four significant images arising from this rich vision.

**First**, the *Bible*, the Holy Scriptures, the divinely inspired Word of God, is the *seed* (Luke 8:11). Implicit here also is Jesus, the Word (John 1:1-17) who from the beginning spoke the world into existence. The divine seed or Word, the speaking of God to the hearts and minds of His beloved human creation, is to be treasured and taught by us throughout our entire lives. The complete and perfect foundation of the Christian church, the body of Christ, is defined by and grounded upon the foundation of biblical truth.

**Second** is the *soil*. As lifelong learners, as students of the Bible, as seekers of the truth, we see all participants as individuals; precious children of God, which collectively is the soil. In the parable of the sower (Luke 8:12-15) Jesus describes four conditions of soil, each having immediate impact on the sustainability of the life of the new growth. We know well the story, so we can draw the obvious conclusion that at Franklin First we declare decisively, emphatically, *intentionally*, that we desire to be the *good* soil—the soil that allows deep roots and abundant harvest.

**Third** are the life-giving elements of *sunlight and water* (1 Cor 3:6-9). Seed planted in good soil needs a healthy environment to grow. It requires nourishing rain and the radiant life-giving power of sunlight. Seed deprived of moisture or sunlight may be weak and vulnerable or will wither and die. We understand that it is God Himself that makes the seed grow; we are simply His co-laborers.

**Fourth** is the work of *tending*. The ordered ministries of the church, properly conceived, provide the careful loving work of the gardener. The never-ceasing cycle of tilling, planting, weeding, pruning, fertilizing, harvesting, and the removal of the cuttings, are frequently shown to us in Scripture. We must diligently tend the work of maintaining the garden to insure the maximum harvest (Matt. 9:37-38).

There could be a lengthy expansion on the deep richness of *The Garden* vision as it relates to the small group, Sunday school, and other spiritual formation activities at Franklin First. We encourage all who read this document and seek to fully discern the strong rationale and spiritual urgency in this work to imagine for themselves the appropriateness of this vision.



## GARDEN PRINCIPLES SUMMARY

With the biblical and spiritual rationale for *The Garden* vision now articulated as derived from the church's adherence to the Holy Scriptures, the ancient creeds of the church, John Wesley's Articles of Religion, from the UM *Book of Discipline* (see Appendices beginning on page 37), we turn to the specific overall principles and guidelines that we envision for the Spiritual Formation and Christian Education ministries at Franklin First. We will first give a brief overview statement in list form and then more fully articulate the concept in the subsequent narrative.

- 1.0 **Biblical.** Our spiritual formation and education ministries will be thoroughly grounded in Holy Scripture. We agree with the biblical proclamation that "*all Scripture is God breathed*" and authoritative.
- 2.0 **Comprehensive.** The vision for biblical study must incorporate all areas—from small groups, Wednesday evening classes, weekday studies, and most importantly, Sunday school.
- 3.0 **Complete.** We must teach the totality of the gospel—the entirety of the revealed truth of the Scripture, as age appropriate, not sidestepping perplexing prophecies and the endtimes, discussions of Satan and demonic forces, the reality of heaven and hell, man's sinful nature, etc.
- 4.0 **Covenantal.** A covenant of commitment must exist between the congregation and the teachers; and the teachers and the students (including the parents of younger students)
- 5.0 **Challenging.** Students are drawn to compelling truth emphatically presented.
- 6.0 **Disciplined.** Our spiritual formation work is important and must be carefully planned and administered for true transforming effectiveness.
- 7.0 **Doctrinal.** Doctrines are the life-giving applications that define a people's beliefs and overall worldview. Lack of the clear teaching of sound doctrine leaves students immature and open to speculation and opinion rather than biblical truth.
- 8.0 **Intentional.** We must always be good stewards of the time and attention of the precious or hurting souls that God entrusts to our care.

- 9.0 Lifelong.** From the youngest child to the oldest senior we will provide the most transformational education experience possible.
- 10.0 Prayerful.** We understand that God has promised to move in response to our prayers; we intend for our leaders, teachers, and students to be always before Him in prayer.
- 11.0 Trinitarian.** God the Father is the sovereign Creator who is still creating. Jesus Christ is our Lord and Savior. The Holy Spirit is the vital power that teaches and encourages us.
- 12.0 Wesleyan.** Wesley was “a man of one book” and established Methodists in a distinctive biblical understanding of the grace of God



## *Section One*

# **THE GARDEN PRINCIPLES**

## **EXPLANATION AND APPLICATION**

THE CONCEPTUAL QUALITIES INTENDED FOR OUR educational ministries at Franklin First having been summarized, herein defining each area of emphasis. The greater the specificity, the greater will be the unity around the principle. Some of the points covered will be in the form of a general imperative statement, others will be explicit and directive. The biblical-spiritual truths that underpin *The Garden* principles represent the very foundation stones of Christian faith. The tenets of the church reaching centuries back to the apostles, incorporating the theological reforms of the protestant reformation, and encompassing the spiritually powerful doctrinal inheritance of our Arminian-Wesleyan tradition are all respected in this biblically faithful vision. The appendices contain rich reference material which affirm that in its totality, the theological and doctrinal objectives of Franklin First, as reflected in *The Garden* vision are wholly in keeping with sound teaching.



# I.O

## Biblical

**BIBLICAL.** Our spiritual formation and education ministries will be thoroughly grounded in Holy Scripture. We agree with the biblical proclamation that “all Scripture is God breathed” and authoritative.

*All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; so that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work.*  
—2 Timothy 3:16–17 NASB

- 1.1 Bringing Bibles to church.** We encourage each person attending Sunday school to bring their Bible with them to church. This has several purposes including showing an intentional witness, preparing students for biblical teaching, and reminding them to stay grounded in the Word. We suggest that all persons, especially parents, model this behavior for the benefit of the rising generation. We encourage worship leaders to have worshippers follow along with the text as Scriptures are read.
- 1.2 Solid resources only.** We call upon all classes and study groups to intentionally seek materials consistent with the church’s adherence to the Holy Scriptures, the ancient creeds of the church, John Wesley’s Articles of Religion, and the *UM Book of Discipline*, utilizing the very best and most valuable teaching resources available. Let us constantly ask our leaders and ourselves if the material considered or topic or proposed curriculum is sufficiently Word based and substantive to justify its study.
- 1.3 Staff assistance in choices.** We call upon appropriate program staff to constantly raise this objective, being aware of each class’s teaching choices and always assisting and challenging groups and classes to select the best biblical content available that fits their preferred teaching formats. Appropriate staff will serve as consultant and coach to classes and groups helping them always to make the most valuable use of their study opportunities.
- 1.4 Class experience with resources shared.** We encourage classes to share their experience with biblical resources and maintain a library of only the most solid materials that have been successfully used by other groups.
- 1.5 Information sharing between classes.** We propose that the church’s program staff circulate a news-filled monthly or quarterly roundup that informs all leaders of what each class is studying and other upcoming events or curriculum plans. This sharing of information will raise the horizons of all classes.
- 1.6 Authority of Scripture.** At Franklin First, consistent with our 2007 Vision Statement which declares Scripture to be “the Divinely inspired Word of God” we begin all teaching with the understanding that Scripture is God Himself speaking through human writers over many years. Each passage of Scripture is valued and sought to be approached with utmost faithfulness.

# 2.0

## Comprehensive

**COMPREHENSIVE.** The vision for biblical study must incorporate all areas in both formal and informal settings—small groups, Wednesday evening classes, weekday studies, and most importantly, Sunday school.

*Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one. Love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength. These commandments that I give you today are to be on your hearts. Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up. Tie them as symbols on your hands and bind them on your foreheads. Write them on the doorframes of your houses and on your gates.* —Deuteronomy 6:4–9 NIV

- 2.1 Value of each lesson.** Each learning opportunity must be valued to the maximum. Jesus Christ calls us to use every means possible to invite all persons to salvation and increase the knowledge and maturity of those growing in faith. We cannot squander a single class or meeting time.
- 2.2 All teaching settings.** As our congregation grows well beyond Sunday school as our sole or primary educational venue, it is imperative that all educational contexts be addressed. We seek to encourage sound biblical Wesleyan teaching in the church’s many formal and informal settings. Small groups, no less than Sunday morning settings, provide indispensable opportunity to influence hearts and lives to true faithful devotion to Jesus Christ. These groups must always present the most powerfully nourishing spiritual food available.
- 2.3 Bible study is first priority.** All educational and group activities must combine a healthy mix of Christian fellowship and biblical instruction. While primarily emphasizing sound biblical instruction, we recognize that our unity in Christ compels us to know and be known by one another. Wesley instructed us “to look after one another in love,” and to “work out together our salvation with fear and trembling.” This vital Christian community is one that binds us together and holds us accountable to our shared commitment to the joyful experience of real Christianity.
- 2.4 New believers embraced.** In response to our faithfulness, we anticipate that God will with increasing frequency bring into our various classes and small group meetings seekers or newcomers who may be seriously investigating faith for the first time. We must always be alert and prepared to embrace and encourage these new believers and help them find their way into the full fellowship of the church and salvation in Jesus Christ.



# 3.0

## Complete

**COMPLETE.** We must teach the totality of the gospel—the entirety of the revealed truth of the Scripture, as age appropriate, not sidestepping perplexing prophecies and the endtimes, discussions of Satan and demonic forces, the reality of heaven and hell, man’s sinful nature, etc.

*For I have not shunned to declare to you the whole counsel of God.*

—Acts 20:27 NKJV

- 3.1 Teach sound doctrine.** From the time of the fall in the garden of Eden until today, the Bible declares that we are a people who will not endure sound doctrine. It is difficult for us to find spoken today biblical truths which were until recent years common teaching. The Bible’s truth hasn’t changed—but our faith-denying culture has. We stand in resolve that we will address the full body of biblical truth and intend to teach the full counsel of God as contained in the Old and New Testaments.
- 3.2 Human sinful nature.** Human sinful nature must be recognized as an essential starting place for heartfelt confession and the need for a Savior. Failure to call all to repentance has been significantly lacking in the teaching of the modern church. With agreement on this foundational truth, all subsequent doctrines take on greater urgency as we sinners seek to find our salvation and deliverance from sinful bondage.
- 3.3 Spiritual Warfare.** Spiritual warfare is going on all around us whether we choose to recognize it or not. If we fail to understand this unseen battle we will be continually defeated by our demonic enemies. We must regularly offer classes that challenge our members to confront their comfortable personal beliefs with the truth of Scripture. Our historic Methodist tradition is complete with warnings and strategic advice on addressing the forces of spiritual darkness. We have at our disposal classic teachings that can be used to prepare us today for this ongoing battle (see glossary page 53).
- 3.4 Endtimes studies and prophecy.** Most students say they are confused and overwhelmed by biblical prophecy and endtimes study. As age appropriate, we recognize our profound need to study these topics. Prophetic scriptural proclamations encourage us to be ready for the imminent return of Jesus Christ. We must be alert to the signs and the times and assist others in reconciling their faith before that great day.
- 3.5 Heaven and hell.** Many persons in this generation prefer to believe that heaven and hell are metaphorical or imaginary places. Our biblical understanding makes clear that there is a joyful, magnificent, eternal destiny for believers in heaven, and a devastating, miserable place of loss and darkness in eternal hell for those who reject Christ. For those persons attending Franklin First’s educational ministries it must be taught that these two certain realities exist and need to be reconciled while time is left for decision.

**3.6 Human sexuality.** Many persons willfully reject the biblical teaching on sexual purity. Sexual perversions of innumerable types infect the body of Christ, the Christian church, as pervasively as the culture at large. As the increasingly godless secular and political world embraces all forms of sexual deviancy, we stand on the Bible's ancient teachings against anything other than traditional families bound together in the covenant of marriage between one man and one woman. In agreement with the *UM Book of Discipline*, we teach our children and youth to honor the holiness code of the Old and New Testaments, understanding the loving Father's purpose in establishing His people in faithful integrity before Him and one another. Consistent with the "Doctrinal Standards" and the "Social Principles" of the United Methodist Church as presented in the *Book of Discipline*, we recognize that all persons are inherently sinful, manifesting that sin in many ways, and yet are of sacred worth and must be lovingly invited into the transforming fellowship of the body of Christ (1 Cor. 6:18–20).

**3.7 Jesus Christ as the only way to heaven.** Perhaps the most controversial of all biblical teachings and, for good reason, the most threatening to nonbelievers, is the biblical truth that no persons are admitted to heaven without having confessed faith in Jesus Christ (John 14:6). The good news is that we are not responsible for defining the true extent or nature of that confession. Our loving Father in heaven who searches all hearts and from whom no secrets are hidden is the only judge. We are only required to speak the truth as Jesus Himself declared it. We are only under judgement if we are unfaithful watchmen and fail to speak clearly that which Scripture reveals to us (Ezek. 33:7–9). Our merciful heavenly Father is the final mediator of all person's eternal destinies.

**3.8 We are required to witness to our faith.** Where there is strong resistance to Christianity, it is easy to withdraw into silence where matters of faith are concerned. However, Jesus commands us to be His witnesses (Matt. 28:18–20). He has shown that when persons are willing to testify and bear witness to what He has done in their hearts and lives, He is inclined to continually give them more good things to testify about. We must be a people with a joyful and confident testimony to the gracious work of our Savior and be ready to invite anyone the Lord places in our path to discover this same powerful reality for their own lives.

**3.9 Divine nature of Christ.** We hold to the eternal biblical witness of essential truths about Jesus Christ. Christ is the Word incarnate. He was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary. He died, was buried, and resurrected on the third day. These are indisputable tenets of our faith which are stated in all the creeds we embrace. The miraculous divine nature of Christ is questioned and even denied in some contemporary study material. We agree with the biblical assertion that Jesus Christ is fully God and fully man. Appendix D and E are two historic creeds—the Nicene Creed and the Apostles' Creed which are recognized by the United Methodist Church and are recommended for use when questions arise in classroom discussion when opinion or speculation cause the authority of Holy Scriptures or the divinity of Jesus Christ to be challenged.

# 4.0

## Covenantal

**COVENANTAL.** A covenant of commitment must exist between the congregation and the teachers; and the teachers and the students (including the parents of younger students).

*Now to each one the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good. . . . Now you are the body of Christ, and each one of you is a part of it.*

—1 Corinthians 12:7, 27 NIV

- 4.1 High levels of commitment.** Unless each person participating in the educational and group study ministries is truly committed to his or her walk in faith, very little change will occur. We call on each member of the congregation to enter into self examination and settle critical questions about their resolve to seek a deeper foundation for their lives.
- 4.2 The covenant document.** At Franklin First, students (children, youth, and adults) parents, teachers, staff, and volunteers will make a covenant commitment which is appropriate to their role in the spiritual formation ministries of the church. These covenants will not present a new form of legalism, but will be helpful guidelines to aid in establishing boundaries and standards that insure responsible teaching and sound doctrine in our ministries. These principles will derive from the church's adherence to the Holy Scriptures, the ancient creeds of the church, John Wesley's Articles of Religion, and the United Methodist *Book of Discipline*.
- 4.3 Three dimensions of covenant.** The covenant we make in our ministry life together relies on three distinct dimensions. *First* and foremost is the covenant each of us makes with God to offer Him the fullest expression of ourselves; The *second* is the covenant we make with the church, the body of Christ; The *third* is the covenant we make as brothers and sisters in Christ, one with another. It is important that we recognize the seriousness of our covenant commitment, understanding that we are making a vow to God and to fellow members of the body of Christ at Franklin First.

# 5.0

## Challenging

**CHALLENGING. Students are drawn to compelling truth emphatically presented.**

*And I, brethren, could not speak to you as to spiritual people but as to carnal, as to babes in Christ. I fed you with milk and not with solid food; for until now you were not able to receive it, and even now you are still not able.* —1 Corinthians 3:1–3 NKJV

- 5.1 Demanding teaching.** It may seem counterintuitive, but the more doctrinally, spiritually, theologically, and morally demanding the teaching is, the higher priority the students (at all age levels) will place upon it. Too often the tendency is to simplify lessons, minimize preparation time, side step difficult topics, attempt not to alienate persons with opposing views, or myriad other reasons to skirt serious teaching. Lukewarm teaching such as this is a formula for irrelevancy and valuelessness in the eyes of God.
- 5.2 Urgent excitement.** We seek teachers who love and respect the content presented and also place enormous value on the lives and hearts of their students so that it matters greatly to them the effectiveness of their teaching. The church must be constantly identifying called, spiritually gifted teachers of the Word, establishing them in appropriate settings. We are prayerful and expectant that God will raise up and bring to us increasing numbers of anointed teachers and leaders.
- 5.3 Awakened believers.** Many prayers are being lifted up to heaven that God will awaken and raise up believers within the church's fellowship. This will occur as stronger and more compelling teaching is offered. There must always be deeper levels of learning and spiritual experience available as our members grow in their faith. As believers grow from simple milk-drinking faith to mature solid food-consuming faith, no one must ever feel that they have outgrown Franklin First's growth potential for them—both in Bible knowledge and in the experience of the Holy Spirit's empowering presence.

# 6.0

## Disciplined

**DISCIPLINED.** Our spiritual formation work is important and must be carefully planned and administered for true transformed effectiveness.

*For the Spirit God gave us does not make us timid, but gives us power, love and self-discipline.*  
—2 Timothy 1:7 NIV

- 6.1 Membership and attendance.** Each class will maintain a Membership Roster and Roll Book. Each week, the books from each class will be collected and a churchwide master attendance database will be updated. The database will be similar to the one used currently to track worship attendance. Among other things this will help classes keep up with those who have fallen away so that they can show concern and help meet personal needs.
- 6.2 Curriculum reporting.** In order to help place newcomers in proper classes and assist classes by showing what resources may have been previously used by other classes, each class will regularly update the master curriculum form, a document which details the curriculum or learning format being taught or used by each class and study group.
- 6.3 Information sharing.** The church's electronic marquee monitors will run the list of class names, meeting locations, scheduled times, and topics being taught on an ongoing basis to help promote new participants.
- 6.4 Master Sunday school email list.** Maintaining regular contact with our members will enhance connectedness. To facilitate this, a master email list (obtained by agreement) of consolidated Sunday school and group study participants will be maintained and used to promote churchwide events or seasonal announcements.
- 6.5 Changing/moving classes.** In order to develop a healthy pattern of dividing and multiplying our groups, larger groups and classes should be receptive to periodic reorganization. This practice will also assist in the goal of finding strong persons to come out of existing groups to seed the formation of new groups and classes. This healthy practice should be encouraged and considered a strength of the community. It should not be perceived as a disappointment or feeling of betrayal of friendships as class members respond to God's call to join in or lead a new work within the church. We also recognize that as individuals grow and their spiritual horizons expand they may desire to change adult classes or small groups which better meet their spiritual needs.
- 6.6 Stewardship of church facilities.** Classroom assignments must be regularly under evaluation. Groups and classes must not become possessive of their spaces, recognizing that rooms must be consistently aligned with attendance patterns. Children's classrooms must be assigned in alignment with Safe Sanctuary policies.

# 7.0

## Doctrinal

**DOCTRINAL.** Doctrines are the life-giving applications that define a people's beliefs and overall worldview. Lack of the clear teaching of sound doctrine leaves students immature and open to speculation and opinion rather than biblical truth.

*Preach the word; be prepared in season and out of season; correct, rebuke and encourage—with great patience and careful instruction. For the time will come when people will not put up with sound doctrine. Instead, to suit their own desires, they will gather around them a great number of teachers to say what their itching ears want to hear. They will turn their ears away from the truth and turn aside to myths.* —2 Timothy 4:2–4 NIV

- 7.1 Scripture and tradition.** Church doctrine is grounded in the Holy Scriptures. We place a high respect on church tradition, especially the early fathers, the reformers, the Wesleys, and our American Methodist forebearers. However, if a contradiction is observed, we seek always to conform to the truth of Scripture over human traditions.
- 7.2 Wesley's "Twenty-Five Articles of Religion."** John Wesley prepared sound and timeless doctrinal statements for the Methodist people. They are called "Twenty-Five Articles of Religion of the Methodist Church." They were first included in the Methodist's 1770 *Book of Discipline*—as they still are today. They provide the foundation of the present Constitution of the United Methodist Church. They are included in this document as Appendix A. They define the foundation of our theological and doctrinal beliefs as an Arminian–Wesleyan–Methodist tradition.
- 7.3 Doctrinal education.** Previous generations were well educated on church doctrine. The Calvinistic beliefs of bodies arising from the Reformed traditions, the Catholic doctrines of the Roman church, the Pelagian and antinomian distortions of the organized church were always vigorously debated. We must inculcate an appreciation for sound church doctrine.
- 7.4 Doctrinal melting pot.** Franklin First is a rich body of persons from the spectrum of doctrinal traditions. A possibility exists that the strong vital empowerment originally characteristic of Arminian–Wesleyan Methodism is lost to ambiguity. Conceptually, our deeply held biblical beliefs bring with them a gracious promise of supernatural Holy Spirit empowerment. If we allow our beliefs to become diluted with conflicting theologies, or even heresies, our strength as a true body of Christ is lost.
- 7.5 New member education.** It is seen now that the majority of new members joining come from other theological traditions. We further recognize that we are boldly asking God to use us as an instrument of salvation to the lost. With this in mind, a strong program for teaching new believers must be maintained. Additionally, newcomers coming from other traditions should receive teaching on the tenets of our Wesleyan faith. All persons must be invited to accept Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior if they have not previously done so.

# 8.0

## Intentional

**INTENTIONAL.** We must always be good stewards of the time and attention of the precious or hurting souls that God entrusts to our care.

*He said to him the third time, “Simon, son of John do you love Me?” Peter was grieved because He said to him the third time, “Do you love Me?” And he said to Him, “Lord, You know all things; You know that I love You.” Jesus said to him, “Tend My sheep.”*  
—John 21:17 NASB

- 8.1 High priority ministry.** Our human experience tells us that unless a priority is expressly stated and full attention and resources are given to it, it will soon lose its importance. At Franklin First we place full attention on our missional objective of *Making Disciples* through the diligent administration of our small group and Christian education ministries.
- 8.2 Watchful for new believers.** We take seriously our intention to be watchful for new believers and hurting persons and are expectant that in response to our faithfulness God will bring scores of them into our fellowship. Our ministries must be carefully ordered to make it easy for newcomers and those unfamiliar with church life to understand and find their place in our loving and welcoming community. We must constantly seek and embrace those new or different or in need of special care, understanding that Jesus sees these special persons as His beloved sheep and desires that we as His faithful body will embrace them in our love and fellowship.
- 8.3 Diligent internal systems.** We must have a strong staff support and lay involvement in our ministries to newcomers and those new in faith. Satan seeks to discourage and scatter these precious ones. Our visitor followup and new member tracking must be highly effective, valuing each and every soul God places in our path, for Jesus tells us that we are to leave the ninety-nine and pursue the lost sheep.
- 8.4 Welcoming to all.** In Hebrews 13:2 we read *“Be not forgetful to entertain strangers: for thereby some have entertained angels unawares.”* (KJV) Jesus said in Matthew 25:40, *“Assuredly, I say to you, inasmuch as you did it to one of the least of these My brethren, you did it to Me.”* (NKJV) Our warm seeking out and embracing of the lost, the socially different, the poor, or the lonely will be seen by the Lord with gladness and favor. We affirm the *Book of Discipline* as it states that all persons are of sacred worth and are welcome to participate in the transforming fellowship of the body of Christ.
- 8.5 Always learning and changing.** Lay leadership and staff must be constantly examining other dynamic churches, emerging technologies, and studying best practices to make sure that this ministry area stays relevant to the emerging culture that Jesus intends for us to constantly be adding to our fellowship in successive generations.

# 9.0

## Lifelong

**LIFELONG.** From the youngest child to the oldest senior we will provide the most transformational education experience possible.

*Train up a child in the way he should go, Even when he is old he will not depart from it.*

—Proverbs 22:6 NASB

*. . . and that from childhood you have known the sacred writings which are able to give you the wisdom that leads to salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus.*

—2 Timothy 3:15 NASB

**9.1 Youngest to oldest.** The theological and doctrinal principles outlined in *The Garden* are intended to govern all educational and group study activities beginning with the youngest preschoolers, progressing through the elementary school levels, through youth and adults, to our most senior members.

**9.2 Lifelong learning.** The vision for biblical Christian education knows no age limit. All persons are learning and growing in grace their whole lives. Education is a dimension of the gracious work of sanctification in which God is continuously perfecting us through the illumination of His transforming Word.

**9.3 Future application.** As time advances and the church program changes, it is imperative that the continuing value of this educational model be maintained. Lay leadership and staff responsible for the various ministry areas governed by *The Garden's* conceptual framework will make logical application of the principles to their present-day situations.

**9.4 Age appropriate.** From the earliest ages, our children should be taught to expect serious biblical teaching. As a pattern of spiritual truth is brought to them from their earliest memory they will become mature beyond their years and expect great things from the God they have come to know, and love, and trust. Children and youth raised in this church will have the knowledge of the Word of God imparted in their hearts and minds and will be equipped to live fully and joyfully free from fear and doubt. They will be equipped to defeat the enemy as they live Godly lives strong in faith.



# 10.0

## Prayerful

**PRAYERFUL.** We understand that God has promised to move in response to our prayers; we intend for our leaders, teachers, and students to be always before Him in prayer.

*For where two or three gather in my name, there am I with them.*

—Matthew 18:20 NIV

*You do not have because you do not ask. You ask and do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, . . .*

—James 4:2–3 NASB

- 10.1 Begin and close with prayer.** We call on all church committees, Sunday school classes, small groups, etc. to begin and end with prayer. It is our purpose to invite God into all church business and study and to thank the Holy Spirit for His presence and inspiration in all our efforts to learn about and faithfully serve Him.
- 10.2 Prayer saturation.** As a congregation, Franklin First is fully committed to prayer. It is imperative that all aspects of our educational ministries be saturated in prayer. This requires that all teachers and leaders be attuned to the importance of prayer and practice it with diligence.
- 10.3 Teacher’s prayer discipline.** We call on all teachers and leaders to maintain a disciplined practice of praying for their students and group members, lifting them up by name before the Lord regularly.
- 10.4 Covenantal community.** We call upon each class or group, as appropriate to age level and setting, to serve as covenantal community, always aware of one another’s concerns and lifting those with prayer needs before the Lord.
- 10.5 Church prayer list.** Each class and group is encouraged to maintain a prayer and praise list to help in the disciplined administration of prayer. Prayer which is not of a confidential nature should be forwarded to the church’s more extensive prayer list for larger exposure.

# II.O

## Trinitarian

**TRINITARIAN.** God the Father is the sovereign Creator who is still creating. Jesus Christ is our Lord and Savior. The Holy Spirit is the vital power that teaches and encourages us.

*In the beginning was the Word, [Jesus] and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning. Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made.*

—John 1:1–3 NIV

*All this I have spoken while still with you. But the Advocate, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you.*

—John 14:25–26 NIV

**II.1 God the Father.** In an era when the secular world denies even the existence of a living God, when establishment Christians often choose to emphasize peacemaking, justice, social equality, ecology, and a host of other albeit good but secondary priorities, we are determined to honor God the Father, the Creator of all things, the Author of life, the Source of all goodness and beauty. We will raise the timeless truth of God’s benevolent laws—the Ten Commandments—and the holiness code of the Old and New Testaments as God’s loving guidance for how human creation is intended by Him to live faithfully and obediently.

**II.2 Jesus Christ.** Jesus Christ is the object of our worship and devotion. Jesus is God made manifest and dwelt among humanity. Franklin First’s mission statement boldly declares: *Knowing Christ, Sharing Christ, Making Disciples*. Jesus Christ is at the very core of the church’s mission and purpose. Anything that the church does or teaches beyond this must be carefully scrutinized lest it distract us from our primary task.

**II.3 Holy Spirit of Jesus Christ.** It is virtually impossible to overemphasize the vital supernatural role of the Holy Spirit in traditional Methodism’s theological and spiritual practice. The unseen Holy Spirit is so often misunderstood or invoked for inappropriate or excessive purposes that people will often avoid embracing Him for fear of being named among those whose abuses they reject. It is a great poverty of the modern church when the Holy Spirit is repelled rather than embraced. We call on all areas of the small group and Christian education ministries at Franklin First to fully welcome, embrace, and seek the empowerment of the Holy Spirit. We make clear here that the Holy Spirit is the mighty spiritual power who works in signs and wonders and miracles that result sometimes in bodily manifestations. John Wesley’s early Methodists wrestled with these outpourings and chose to embrace rather than refuse or reject the Spirit. At Franklin First we intend to follow Wesley’s example should unexpected revival-induced happenings occur here.

# I2.0

## Wesleyan

**WESLEYAN.** Wesley was “a man of one book” and established Methodists in a distinctive biblical understanding of the grace of God

**12.1 High spiritual empowerment.** The names “Methodist,” “Wesleyan,” and “Arminian” have long been synonymous with the highest levels of spiritual empowerment. These historic names represent vital expectation of Holy Spirit experience:

- a. *The indwelling Holy Spirit* is sought as the divine presence of the Creator of the world alive in the heart of humans. As a person petitions the Spirit of Jesus Christ to fill his or her soul with His living presence, astonishing and marvelous things often occur. We understand and anticipate this, welcoming the mysterious and often unpredictable—possibly even disruptive and emotional—work of the Spirit into our church and its educational ministries.
- b. An important role of the educational and small group ministries is to prepare believers for the *seeking and receiving of the Holy Spirit*. At Franklin First we seek to reclaim our traditional practice of inviting the Holy Spirit into the whole life of the church.
- c. *The doctrine of sanctification* has been the cardinal teaching of the church. This term, also known as *Christian perfection* or *perfect love*, was declared by John Wesley to be the “Grand Depositum” of Methodism, “*that for which we were chiefly raised up.*” There are numerous exceptional resources, published both contemporaneously and in previous generations, which are highly relevant and suitable for study today.
- d. The companion doctrines of *prevenient* and *justifying grace* precede the gracious work of sanctification and must rightly be understood by all persons carrying the name Methodist.
- e. The role of the church’s small group and educational ministries is to constantly be instructional and experiential settings for *persons to learn about and receive the Holy Spirit*. This may be through classroom instruction, workshops, retreats, special worship settings, etc. Leaders must be creative and responsive to create invitational environments for the Spirit to work in the church body.
- f. The supernatural manifestations of the Holy Spirit working in signs and wonders, healings, and miracles, always bring excitement and controversy. Franklin First, in its more than two-hundred-year history, has witnessed such manifestations. Today we, as the mature leaders of the church, recognize the possibility of such manifestations by the Holy Spirit. If we are so blessed, we will follow the example of John Wesley and receive the powerful outpouring with maturity and wisdom remembering Peter’s bold oration on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2:14–36).





## *Section Two*

# GUIDANCE FOR MINISTRY AREAS

HAVING CAREFULLY STATED THE FOUNDATIONAL BIBLICAL values that comprise *The Garden*, we now apply these principles to the practical ministry areas and specific groups of people who make up Franklin First. Each of these groupings of persons represent the faithful students, parents, and leaders that *are* the ministries of the church. There is obviously much overlap in these groupings as most individuals fall under multiple categories.

- Children’s Ministries Teachers and Leaders
- Parents/Caregivers of School-Age Children
- School-Age Children
- Church Professional and Pastoral Staff
- Youth and Adult Students and Leaders
- The Confirmation Process



## *Children's Ministries Teachers and Leaders*

*The following are specific guidelines that should regulate our work as teachers and leaders in the children's education ministries:*

1. **Long-term teaching assignments.** We encourage long-term teacher relationships in our school-age teaching settings. Whenever possible, we prefer this over short-term commitments or rotational teaching options.
2. **Recruit gifted and called teachers.** We continue our commitment to recruit the special teachers who are both gifted and called to a long-term teaching ministry.
3. **Intentional biblical curriculum.** We seek to provide intentional Bible teaching curriculum that will firmly establish God's Word in the children's lives.
4. **Engaging teaching.** We are creative in innovating new and exciting ways to interest and engage children in spiritual life. Our activities must be at the same time both very serious and delightfully enjoyable for the participants. Our children should experience what previous generations used to call "the joy of the Lord."
5. **Prayer support for teachers.** We support our teachers with sincere and expectant prayer so that God's maximum blessings will be on them as they teach and in all of their lives as well. As the church's Prayer Ministry becomes better established, a covenant of prayer with intercessors can be established for additional prayer support.
6. **Unchurched newcomers expected.** We carefully plan for the continual introduction of new children into our education program. We expect God to continue to bring us new families many of which will be unfamiliar with church and religious practices. We will be prepared to receive them and nurture them in faith.
7. **Value of each child and family.** We place high value on each child and each family represented by the children. We see them each individually and uniquely as precious sheep that Jesus has asked us to care for. If one goes astray (stops coming) we must be diligent in inquiring after them.

## ***Parent(s)/Caregiver(s) of School-Age Children***

*The following are the encouragements to parent(s)/caregiver(s) in creating an environment with us where children can experience the greatest potential for their spiritual formation at Franklin First:*

- 1. Bring Bibles to church.** Parent(s)/caregiver(s) are encouraged to bring their Bibles with them to church to model this practice for their children.
- 2. Attendance a high priority.** Parent(s)/caregiver(s) will make attendance at church each week a priority.
- 3. Child's behavior monitored.** Parent(s)/caregiver(s) will be attentive to their child's behavior at church activities and assist in helping their child grow in maturity and responsibility. We recognize our baptismal response to help raise the children in the way of God. We acknowledge ourselves, and ask all parent(s)/caregiver(s), to be open to having their children lovingly corrected in their absence in conformance with Safe Sanctuary policies.
- 4. Parent(s)/Caregiver(s) as volunteers.** Parent(s)/caregiver(s), who aren't called to teach or lead, will assist in the support of the education program volunteering as a helper or assistant to teachers and leaders as opportunities arise.
- 5. Attend worship as a family.** Parent(s)/caregiver(s) are encouraged to attend both Sunday school and worship each Sunday, with their child(ren) attending worship with them (as appropriate). This will help establish children in a future of lifetime worship attendance as well as modeling this behavior for them as parents.
- 6. Pray and read the Bible together.** Parent(s)/caregiver(s) will read the Bible and pray with their child(ren) on a regular basis to model these spiritual disciplines. We encourage parent(s)/caregiver(s) to be watchful for the many benefits that will accrue to their family-life, marriage, and childrearing when their home becomes a house of prayer.



## *School-Age Children*

*School-age students [K thru sixth grade] in the Sunday school and spiritual formation activities at Franklin First are considered responsible members of the body of Christ. We consider it appropriate to set high expectations for their participation and behavior.*

- 1. Regular attendance.** Students are encouraged to be regular in their attendance, making every effort to arrive at class on time and ready to learn and participate as their teachers direct. Church attendance is sometimes a family decision. The enthusiastic expectation of the children can help encourage all family members to attend consistently.
- 2. Prayer for teachers.** Students are encouraged to pray for their teachers, leaders, and pastors of the church knowing that God has given them a great responsibility and only with God's help can they do the work properly.
- 3. Personal and parental Bible reading.** As able, students are encouraged to read their Bible and pray often, either alone or with their parent(s)/caregiver(s), knowing that God hears both silent and spoken prayers. God will speak to them in thoughts and through the Word they read in the Bible.
- 4. Attentiveness to Bible teaching in classroom.** Students are encouraged to bring a Bible with them to class each week and pay close attention to the Bible lessons that their teachers share. The Bible is the most important book in the world. It is God's truth and they will spend their whole life reading and learning the Word God has for them as they grow and change.
- 5. Responsible classroom behavior.** Students are encouraged to pay attention in class and help their teachers maintain a good learning environment, keeping noisy activities and talking down so that everyone can learn.
- 6. Worship attendance with parents.** Students are encouraged to attend worship with their parent(s)/caregiver(s) knowing that it pleases God that they are there, even if they don't always understand all that is being said in the sermons or other parts of the worship.
- 7. Welcoming new classmates.** Students are encouraged to help make sure that any new children that come to their class are made to feel welcome. They will invite them to become friends and encourage them to come back and become a regular member of their class.

## *Church Professional and Pastoral Staff*

1. **Prayerful administration.** Our staff will continually seek the Lord in prayer, asking His blessing and favor on our church's educational program and that He will give them wisdom and strength as they lead and support these vital ministries.
2. **Work through lay volunteers.** Our staff will establish a strong organizational relationship with gifted and called lay volunteer leaders who will eagerly and joyfully assist in the creating and administering of a far-reaching and ever-expanding educational and small-group ministry. Nurturing a corps of committed volunteers can be more difficult than accomplishing work with paid staff, however for Franklin First, the value of deeply invested participant-leaders cannot be overstated.
3. **Facilitating role.** Our staff recognize that their role is to facilitate the shared vision of the church's leadership, parents, and professional staff. Staff's role at Franklin First is to encourage and implement the vision and educational objectives of the ongoing church membership rather than set policy themselves outside lay leadership consensus.
4. **Skilled and gifted staff.** Franklin First seeks the most skilled and gifted staff available and look to them to provide exemplary administrative oversight and leadership, however when philosophies or priorities conflict, the shared spirit of laity and staff for *The Garden* vision must prevail, with each holding the other accountable for adherence to these vital principles.
5. **Garden principles affirmed.** Our staff understands and affirms the stated vision, articulated in Franklin First's mission and vision statement and in *The Garden*, that this church maintains a Holy Spirit infused biblical education and small group ministry and commits all diligence to see that this vision is maximized.
6. **Constant expansion of learning opportunities.** Our staff must provide for the continuous development of small groups and new classes, recognizing that *participation will expand with availability*. We believe that sustained life transformation is best realized in an intimate biblical fellowship. We see it is our sacred responsibility to offer such vital spiritual-relational opportunities to all persons, turning none away directly or indirectly due to a lack of planned capacity.

## *Youth and Adult Students and Leaders*

*We celebrate the gifts and commitment of our countless leaders and teachers. In order to insure that all such persons share consistent values and principles we outline here some general guidelines and a conceptual framework for our teaching ministry.*

- 1. Responsibility of church membership.** As maturing and mature Christians, confirmed into the faith and fellowship of Franklin First, our youth and adult membership consider regular participation in Sunday school and small group ministries part of their responsibility in church membership.
- 2. Care for others in groups.** Members of a class or small group see it as fully their responsibility to encourage all leaders and fellow class or group members in Christian love. It is each member's responsibility to pray for one another, notice the other's absence when missing, and caring for their personal needs when occasions arise.
- 3. Sacrificial participation.** As ongoing members of the church's ministry our more spiritually mature persons see it as their responsibility and privilege to sacrifice for others for the sake of advancing them in faith. They commit to choosing the less convenient schedules, the less adjacent parking spots, the less optimum seat in worship, hearing God's call to teach or lead, or by humbly assuming less visible supporting roles in an effort to provide the best opportunity for others to be established in the faith.
- 4. Churchwide spiritual formation.** As opportunities arise our youth and adult students will stand alongside their fellow church members in spiritual outreach activities. As the church calls for prayer vigils, seasons of fasting, special worship services, ongoing prayer ministries, etc. our adult students will be attentive to the spiritual formation of the church for the benefit of the body of Christ as well as their own spiritual empowerment.
- 5. Partners in discernment.** Our youth and adult students will honor the church's request to place themselves in a position of discernment to determine if they are gifted and called to lead in the education or small group ministries. If they sense God's calling they will consider seriously responding to His call. We encourage all individuals to be alert for others with teaching or leadership gifts whom they may suggest consider assuming a teaching role in the church.
- 6. Garden vision affirmed.** Adult teachers and leaders are to be familiar with the vision and spirit of *The Garden* and affirm the principles outlined herein. As a teacher or group leader they accept as their responsibility to teach and lead in affirmation of the vision of our church.

## *The Confirmation Process*

1. **Powerful opportunity to claim youth for Christ.** The Lord has given us a remarkable opportunity to have our youth's undivided attention at a critical time in their maturing life as a future believer. As an individual emerges from childhood and begins maturing as an adult they begin to make numerous decisions about the character and faith they will possess as they proceed through the rest of life.
2. **Excellent present program.** Our present confirmation process is one of the best administered programs at Franklin First. The large numbers of confirmands speaks to a future vitality of the congregation. The staff and lay leadership that present the half-year course have set a great foundation for an even stronger program.
3. **Once-in-a-lifetime chance.** We must carefully maintain an environment in which a spiritual journey for our youth is offered, giving them a glimpse of what authentic spiritual living can look like. Every powerful biblical truth and doctrine can be carefully outlined with authority and clarity. The Holy Spirit can be mightily present if we prayerfully ask Him in to this special season in the young people's coming-of-age as Christians.
4. **Daniel as a teenage role model.** Daniel and his three friends Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego provide a great inspiration to our youth about the potential for living Godly lives (Dan.1, 3). By establishing this vision for holy living in their minds at this highly formative time we may have an excellent opportunity to forever change the future course of their lives.
5. **Claiming our youth for lifetime faith.** There is an abundance of hugely alarming statistics relating to the sharp falloff in church participation among youth of all denominational traditions when once active church-going youth graduate high school and leave for college and then on to young adulthood and marriage. We see this confirmation season in a young person's life as very critical in helping establish a lifelong biblical worldview, thereby establishing firmly in them the need of salvation and a joyful intimate life with Jesus Christ through the presence of the Holy Spirit alive in them. We have a rare opportunity to teach and model for them the biblical doctrines, and through retreats and other very special activities make a lasting impression on these young people in the most formative time of their lives.



## *Section Three*

# APPENDICES

THE SEMINAL DOCUMENTS INDLUCED AS APPENDICES ARE ONES that Methodists and Christians throughout the centuries have relied upon to establish teaching and church discipline. The creeds are ancient and yet to this day define the doctrinal beliefs of the body of Christ. The contemporary documents unique to the United Methodist Church are familiar to all who have participated in baptism and church membership rituals. *The Garden* appropriately embraces the totality of these teachings—in full accord with the sacred Scriptures—as the foundation of our faithful obedient teaching at Franklin First.

- Appendix A—John Wesley’s “Twenty-Five Articles of Religion of the Methodist Church” from the *Book of Discipline*
- Appendix B—Membership and Confirmation Vows in the United Methodist Church
- Appendix C—Baptismal Vows in the United Methodist Church
- Appendix D—Nicene Creed from the *United Methodist Hymnal*
- Appendix E—Apostles’ Creed from the *United Methodist Hymnal*
- Appendix F—Glossary of Terms



## APPENDIX A

# JOHN WESLEY'S TWENTY-FIVE ARTICLES OF RELIGION OF THE METHODIST CHURCH

### ARTICLE I OF FAITH IN THE HOLY TRINITY

There is but one living and true God, everlasting, without body or parts, of infinite power, wisdom, and goodness; the maker and preserver of all things, both visible and invisible. And in unity of this Godhead there are three persons, of one substance, power, and eternity—the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost.

### ARTICLE II OF THE WORD, OR SON OF GOD, WHO WAS MADE VERY MAN

The Son, who is the Word of the Father, the very and eternal God, of one substance with the Father, took man's nature in the womb of the blessed Virgin; so that two whole and perfect natures, that is to say, the Godhead and Manhood, were joined together in one person, never to be divided; whereof is one Christ, very God and very Man, who truly suffered, was crucified, dead, and buried, to reconcile his Father to us, and to be a sacrifice, not only for original guilt, but also for actual sins of men.

### ARTICLE III OF THE RESURRECTION OF CHRIST

Christ did truly rise again from the dead, and took again his body, with all things appertaining to the perfection of man's nature, wherewith he ascended into heaven, and there sitteth until he return to judge all men at the last day.

### ARTICLE IV OF THE HOLY GHOST

The Holy Ghost, proceeding from the Father and the Son, is of one substance, majesty, and glory with the Father and the Son, very and eternal God.

### ARTICLE V OF THE SUFFICIENCY OF THE HOLY SCRIPTURES FOR SALVATION

The Holy Scripture containeth all things necessary to salvation; so that whatsoever is not read therein, nor may be proved thereby, is not to be required of any man that it should be believed as an article of faith, or be thought requisite or necessary to salvation. In the name of the Holy Scripture we do understand those canonical books of the Old and New Testament of whose authority was never any doubt in the church. The names of the canonical books are: Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy, Joshua, Judges, Ruth, The First Book of Samuel, The Second Book of Samuel, The First Book of Kings, The Second Book of Kings, The First Book of Chronicles, The Second Book of Chronicles, The Book of Ezra, The Book of Nehemiah, The Book of Esther, The Book of Job, The Psalms, The Proverbs, Ecclesiastes or the Preacher, Cantica or Songs of Solomon, Four Prophets the Greater, Twelve Prophets the Less. All the books of the New Testament, as they are commonly received, we do receive and account canonical.

**ARTICLE VI  
OF THE OLD TESTAMENT**

The Old Testament is not contrary to the New; for both in the Old and New Testament everlasting life is offered to mankind by Christ, who is the only Mediator between God and man, being both God and Man. Wherefore they are not to be heard who feign that the old fathers did look only for transitory promises. Although the law given from God by Moses as touching ceremonies and rites doth not bind Christians, nor ought the civil precepts thereof of necessity be received in any commonwealth; yet notwithstanding, no Christian whatsoever is free from the obedience of the commandments which are called moral.

**ARTICLE VII  
OF ORIGINAL OR BIRTH SIN**

Original sin standeth not in the following of Adam (as the Pelagians do vainly talk), but it is the corruption of the nature of every man, that naturally is engendered of the offspring of Adam, whereby man is very far gone from original righteousness, and of his own nature inclined to evil, and that continually.

**ARTICLE VIII  
OF FREE WILL**

The condition of man after the fall of Adam is such that he cannot turn and prepare himself, by his own natural strength and works, to faith, and calling upon God; wherefore we have no power to do good works, pleasant and acceptable to God, without the grace of God by Christ preventing us, that we may have a good will, and working with us, when we have that good will.

**ARTICLE IX  
OF THE JUSTIFICATION OF MAN**

We are accounted righteous before God only for the merit of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, by faith, and not for our own works or deservings. Wherefore, that we are justified by faith, only, is a most wholesome doctrine, and very full of comfort.

**ARTICLE X  
OF GOOD WORKS**

Although good works, which are the fruits of faith, and follow after justification, cannot put away our sins, and endure the severity of God's judgment; yet are they pleasing and acceptable to God in Christ, and spring out of a true and lively faith, insomuch that by them a lively faith may be as evidently known as a tree is discerned by its fruit.

**ARTICLE XI  
OF WORKS OF SUPEREROGATION**

Voluntary works—besides, over and above God's commandments—which they call works of supererogation, cannot be taught without arrogance and impiety. For by them men do declare that they do not only render unto God as much as they are bound to do, but that they do more for his sake than of bounden duty is required; whereas Christ saith plainly: When you have done all that is commanded you, say, We are unprofitable servants.

**ARTICLE XII  
OF SIN AFTER JUSTIFICATION**

Not every sin willingly committed after justification is the sin against the Holy Ghost, and unpardonable. Wherefore, the grant of repentance is not to be denied to such as fall into sin after justification. After we have received the Holy Ghost, we may depart from grace given, and fall into sin, and, by the grace of God, rise again and amend our lives. And therefore they are to be condemned who say they can no more sin as long as they live here; or deny the place of forgiveness to such as truly repent.



**ARTICLE XIII  
OF THE CHURCH**

The visible church of Christ is a congregation of faithful men in which the pure Word of God is preached, and the Sacraments duly administered according to Christ's ordinance, in all those things that of necessity are requisite to the same.

**ARTICLE XIV  
OF PURGATORY**

The Romish doctrine concerning purgatory, pardon, worshiping, and adoration, as well of images as of relics, and also invocation of saints, is a fond thing, vainly invented, and grounded upon no warrant of Scripture, but repugnant to the Word of God.

**ARTICLE XV  
OF SPEAKING IN THE CONGREGATION IN SUCH  
A TONGUE AS THE PEOPLE UNDERSTAND**

It is a thing plainly repugnant to the Word of God, and the custom of the primitive church, to have public prayer in the church, or to minister the Sacraments, in a tongue not understood by the people.

**ARTICLE XVI  
OF THE SACRAMENTS**

Sacraments ordained of Christ are not only badges or tokens of Christian men's profession, but rather they are certain signs of grace, and God's good will toward us, by which he doth work invisibly in us, and doth not only quicken, but also strengthen and confirm, our faith in him.

There are two Sacraments ordained of Christ our Lord in the Gospel; that is to say, Baptism and the Supper of the Lord.

Those five commonly called sacraments, that is to say, confirmation, penance, orders, matrimony, and extreme unction, are not to be counted for Sacraments of the Gospel; being such as have partly grown out of the corrupt following of the apostles, and partly are states of life allowed in the Scriptures, but yet have not the like nature of Baptism and the Lord's Supper, because they have not any visible sign or ceremony ordained of God.

The Sacraments were not ordained of Christ to be gazed upon, or to be carried about; but that we should duly use them. And in such only as worthily receive the same, they have a wholesome effect or operation; but they that receive them unworthily, purchase to themselves condemnation, as St. Paul saith.

**ARTICLE XVII  
OF BAPTISM**

Baptism is not only a sign of profession and mark of difference whereby Christians are distinguished from others that are not baptized; but it is also a sign of regeneration or the new birth. The Baptism of young children is to be retained in the Church.

**ARTICLE XVIII  
OF THE LORD'S SUPPER**

The Supper of the Lord is not only a sign of the love that Christians ought to have among themselves one to another, but rather is a sacrament of our redemption by Christ's death; insomuch that, to such as rightly, worthily, and with faith receive the same, the bread which we break is a partaking of the body of Christ; and likewise the cup of blessing is a partaking of the blood of Christ.

Transubstantiation, or the change of the substance of bread and wine in the Supper of our Lord, cannot be proved by Holy Writ, but is repugnant to the plain words of Scripture, overthroweth the nature of a sacrament, and hath given occasion to many superstitions.

The body of Christ is given, taken, and eaten in the Supper, only after a heavenly and spiritual manner. And the mean whereby the body of Christ is received and eaten in the Supper is faith.

The Sacrament of the Lord's Supper was not by Christ's ordinance reserved, carried about, lifted up, or worshiped.

**ARTICLE XIX  
OF BOTH KINDS**

The cup of the Lord is not to be denied to the lay people; for both the parts of the Lord's Supper, by Christ's ordinance and commandment, ought to be administered to all Christians alike.

**ARTICLE XX  
OF THE ONE OBLATION OF CHRIST, FINISHED UPON THE CROSS**

The offering of Christ, once made, is that perfect redemption, propitiation, and satisfaction for all the sins of the whole world, both original and actual; and there is none other satisfaction for sin but that alone. Wherefore the sacrifice of masses, in the which it is commonly said that the priest doth offer Christ for the quick and the dead, to have remission of pain or guilt, is a blasphemous fable and dangerous deceit.

**ARTICLE XXI  
OF THE MARRIAGE OF MINISTERS**

The ministers of Christ are not commanded by God's law either to vow the estate of single life, or to abstain from marriage; therefore it is lawful for them, as for all other Christians, to marry at their own discretion, as they shall judge the same to serve best to godliness.

**ARTICLE XXII  
OF THE RITES AND CEREMONIES OF CHURCHES**

It is not necessary that rites and ceremonies should in all places be the same, or exactly alike; for they have been always different, and may be changed according to the diversity of countries, times, and men's manners, so that nothing be ordained against God's Word. Whosoever, through his private judgment, willingly and purposely doth openly break the rites and ceremonies of the church to which he belongs, which are not repugnant to the Word of God, and are ordained and approved by common authority, ought to be rebuked openly, that others may fear to do the like, as one that offendeth against the common order of the church, and woundeth the consciences of weak brethren.

Every particular church may ordain, change, or abolish rites and ceremonies, so that all things may be done to edification.

**ARTICLE XXIII  
OF THE RULERS OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA**

The President, the Congress, the general assemblies, the governors, and the councils of state, as the delegates of the people, are the rulers of the United States of America, according to the division of power made to them by the Constitution of the United States and by the constitutions of their respective states. And the said states are a sovereign and independent nation, and ought not to be subject to any foreign jurisdiction.

**ARTICLE XXIV  
OF CHRISTIAN MEN'S GOODS**

The riches and goods of Christians are not common as touching the right, title, and possession of the same, as some do falsely boast. Notwithstanding, every man ought, of such things as he possesseth, liberally to give alms to the poor, according to his ability.

**ARTICLE XXV  
OF A CHRISTIAN MAN'S OATH**

As we confess that vain and rash swearing is forbidden Christian men by our Lord Jesus Christ and James his apostle, so we judge that the Christian religion doth not prohibit, but that a man may swear when the magistrate requireth, in a cause of faith and charity, so it be done according to the prophet's teaching, in justice, judgment, and truth.

• • •

*[The following Article from the Methodist Protestant Discipline is placed here by the Uniting Conference (1939). It was not one of the Articles of Religion voted upon by the three churches.]*

#### **OF SANCTIFICATION**

Sanctification is that renewal of our fallen nature by the Holy Ghost, received through faith in Jesus Christ, whose blood of atonement cleanseth from all sin; whereby we are not only delivered from the guilt of sin, but are washed from its pollution, saved from its power, and are enabled, through grace, to love God with all our hearts and to walk in his holy commandments blameless.

*[The following provision was adopted by the Uniting Conference (1939). This statement seeks to interpret to our churches in foreign lands Article XXIII of the Articles of Religion. It is a legislative enactment but is not a part of the Constitution. (See Judicial Council Decisions 41, 176, and Decision 6, Interim Judicial Council.)]*

#### **OF THE DUTY OF CHRISTIANS TO THE CIVIL AUTHORITY**

It is the duty of all Christians, and especially of all Christian ministers, to observe and obey the laws and commands of the governing or supreme authority of the country of which they are citizens or subjects or in which they reside, and to use all laudable means to encourage and enjoin obedience to the powers that be.

## APPENDIX B

# MEMBERSHIP AND CONFIRMATION VOWS IN THE UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

### Membership Covenant

As members of Christ's universal church,  
will you be loyal to Christ through the United Methodist Church,  
and do all in your power to strengthen its ministries?

***I will.***

As members of this congregation,  
will you faithfully participate in its ministries  
by your prayers, your presence,  
your gifts, your service,  
and your witness?

***I will.***

### Congregational Response

**We give thanks for all that God has already given you  
and we welcome you in Christian love.**

**As members together with you  
in the body of Christ  
and in this congregation  
of the United Methodist Church,  
we renew our covenant  
faithfully to participate  
in the ministries of the church  
by our prayers, our presence,  
our gifts, our service,  
and our witness,  
that in everything God may be glorified  
through Jesus Christ.**

## APPENDIX C

# BAPTISMAL VOWS IN THE UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

*The pastor makes the following statement to the congregation:*

Brothers and sisters in Christ: Through the sacrament of baptism we are initiated into Christ's holy Church. We are incorporated into God's mighty acts of salvation and given new birth through water and the Spirit. All this is God's gift, offered to us without price.

On behalf of the whole Church, I ask you:

Do you renounce the spiritual forces of wickedness, reject the evil powers of this world, and repent of your sin?

**I do.**

Do you accept the freedom and power God gives you to resist evil, injustice, and oppression in whatever forms they present themselves?

**I do.**

Do you confess Jesus Christ as your Savior, put your whole trust in his grace, and promise to serve him as your Lord, in union with the Church which Christ has opened to people of all ages, nations, and races?

**I do.**

Will you nurture these children (persons) in Christ's holy Church, that by your teaching and example they may be guided to accept God's grace for themselves, to profess their faith openly, and to lead a Christian life?

**I will.**

*The pastor addresses candidates who can answer for themselves:*

According to the grace given to you, will you remain faithful members of Christ's holy Church and serve as Christ's representatives in the world?

**I will.**

*The pastor addresses the congregation, and the congregation responds:*

Do you, as Christ's body, the Church, reaffirm both your rejection of sin and your commitment to Christ?

**We do.**

Will you nurture one another in the Christian faith and life and include these persons now before you in your care?

**With God's help we will proclaim the good news and live according to the example of Christ. We will surround these persons with a community of love and forgiveness, that they may grow in their trust of God, and be found faithful in their service to others. We will pray for them, that they may be true disciples who walk in the way that leads to life.**

## APPENDIX D

# THE NICENE CREED FROM THE UNITED METHODIST HYMNAL

We believe in one God,  
the Father, the Almighty,  
maker of heaven and earth,  
of all that is, seen and unseen.

We believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ,  
the only Son of God,  
eternally begotten of the Father,  
God from God, Light from Light,  
true God from true God,  
begotten, not made,  
of one Being with the Father.  
through him all things were made.

For us and for our salvation  
he came down from heaven;  
by the power of the Holy Spirit  
he became incarnate from the Virgin Mary,  
and became truly human.

For our sake he was crucified under Pontius Pilate;  
he suffered death and was buried.

On the third day he rose again  
in accordance with the Scriptures;  
he ascended into heaven  
and is seated at the right hand of the Father.  
He will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead,  
and his kingdom will have no end.

We believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life,  
who proceeds from the Father and the Son.

Who with the Father and the Son  
is worshiped and glorified,  
who has spoken through the Prophets.

We believe in one holy catholic\* and apostolic Church.

We acknowledge one baptism  
for the forgiveness of sins.

We look for the resurrection of the dead,  
and the life of the world to come. *Amen.*

\* or “universal”

## APPENDIX E

# THE APOSTLES' CREED FROM THE UNITED METHODIST HYMNAL

I believe in God, the Father Almighty,  
maker of heaven and earth.

And in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord;  
who was conceived by the Holy Spirit,  
born of the virgin Mary,  
suffered under Pontius Pilate,  
was crucified, died, and was buried;\*  
the third day he rose from the dead;  
he ascended into heaven,  
and sitteth at the right hand of the Father Almighty.  
from thence he shall come again to judge the quick and the dead.

I believe in the Holy Spirit,  
the holy catholic\*\* Church,  
the communion of saints,  
the forgiveness of sins,  
the resurrection of the body,  
and the life everlasting. *Amen.*

\*or "He descended to hell."

\*\* or "universal"

## APPENDIX F

### GLOSSARY OF TERMS

**Almost and Altogether Christians:** John Wesley made a significant distinction between persons who simply attended church but had never made a true confession of faith or surrender to Jesus Christ. The former he referred to as “Almost Christians” the latter were “Altogether Christians.” Early Methodists understood the fallacy of a nominal faith or “Christian in name only” religion. Methodists have traditionally made a distinction between regular church attendance and truly being a fully confessed Christian.

**Anglican Church or Church of England:** John Wesley (1703–1791) the founder of Methodism was an ordained priest in the Anglican Church, the Established Church, or the Church of England as it is often referred. Methodism was essentially a reform movement within the Anglican Church. In Wesley’s day all Methodists were also members of the Church of England whose ordained ministers provided the sacraments and formal worship. In 1784, as a result of the American Revolution, Wesley commissioned Francis Asbury to establish what became officially known as the Methodist Episcopal Church in America as an independent denomination, with Asbury and Thomas Coke as the first bishops.

**Antinomian:** The doctrine or belief that the Gospel frees Christians from required obedience to any law, whether scriptural, civil, or moral, and that salvation is attained solely through faith and the gift of divine grace. Wesley argued against this belief on the grounds that it undermined the scriptural call to holiness of heart and life. True Christians, he taught, were with the Holy Spirit’s indwelling presence, to be progressively free of the bondage to sin—not allowed to redefine “sin” as “not sin” as this doctrine allows.

**Arminian:** Jacob Arminius (1560–1609) was a Dutch theologian whose teaching on God’s grace profoundly influenced Methodist founders John and Charles Wesley. Arminius argued against the teachings of John Calvin, known as Calvinism which emphasizes salvation by predestination or the doctrine of election. Today, very broadly speaking, Protestant Christians in America are basically of a Calvinist or Arminian theological perspective, with Methodists being clearly Arminian (John 3:16; Rom. 10:4–13; Eph. 2:1–10).

**Baptism:** The sacrament of water baptism has biblical origins dating back to John the Baptist. Understandings regarding the appropriate age for baptism as well as the best method of baptism have been debated within the Christian church for centuries. United Methodists embrace the full spectrum of practices as valid. Methodists recognize infant and “believer’s” baptism (in which an adult makes a public profession of faith in Jesus Christ). The UMC’s *Book of Discipline* recognizes sprinkling, pouring, and immersion as fully appropriate methods of baptism. At Franklin First it is most common for infants to be baptized by sprinkling. Our pastors willingly administer all methods as requested by the individual and family (Matt. 3:1–6, 11–17; Matt. 28:16–20).

**Baptism of the Holy Spirit:** A traditional Methodist teaching that when a person ultimately surrenders his or her will to Jesus Christ and seeks to be fully led by His Spirit, a memorable event often occurs. Individual testimonies to the exact nature of this occurrence range from deeply moving to a subtle change of heart. What is undeniable to all who have truly experienced transformation is that life is infused with a new joy and peace and all things are made new within them. Such was the radiant testimony of early Methodists and is still today the experience of many within our faith community and across the world. It represents the highest level of spiritual attainment promised to Christians in the New Testament (John 7:37–39; John 14:15–17, 25–26).



**Biblical worldview:** Many competing opinions exist in our culture about religion and theology and right and wrong. We embrace a worldview that has the holy Scriptures and the Trinitarian Godhead of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit as our center. Often secular individuals and nominal Christians will place faith in man's goodness, scientific discoveries, the role of government, etc. over a true faith in God alone to reveal His truth and meet all man's needs.

**Born again:** The New Birth, or regeneration, is a special act of God in which He awakens the person spiritually through the power of His Holy Spirit. The act of being "born again" or regeneration takes place at the moment of conversion as the individual is spiritually awakened. This spiritual truth has been a profoundly important teaching of Methodism throughout its history. In the mid 1700s, John Wesley was practically a lone voice in preaching the necessity of new life in Christ. It was this understanding, which was synonymous with the cardinal Methodist teaching of justifying grace, in which new believers were encouraged to make a memorable, life changing confession of faith in Jesus Christ. Remarkably, as Methodism grew and its faith practices became accepted as normative for American Christians, this emphasis on a born again faith response has been more identified with other evangelical churches and less so the spiritual descendants of John Wesley (John 3:3; Rom. 8:9; 2 Cor. 5:17; 1 John 4:7-13, 5:1).

**Called:** A recognition that the Holy Spirit will place in each person a gift or skill and invite faithful believers to use that God-given ability in partnership with Him for the advancement of His earthly kingdom. People often struggle to discern a call or live in denial of a strongly felt call. We often associate the term "calling" to pastoral ministry or the mission field. It can just as easily mean being called to teach Sunday school or help with Meals on Wheels or any other area of service within the body of Christ (Eph. 4:1-7; 2 Thess. 1:11-12; 2 Peter 1:5-10).

**Calvinism:** Jacob Arminius (1560-1609) argued vigorously against the theological teachings of John Calvin (1509-1594) in which specific emphasis on the doctrines of *predestination* and *limited atonement* stated that salvation was reserved for select individuals known only in advance to God. This was in direct contradiction to a biblical teaching that "whosoever would believe" is justified through faith alone through a certain and memorable confession of belief in Christ and thereby assured an eternal place in heaven. Wesley became a strident opponent of Calvinism seeing that it undermined the very core of his emphasis on God's grace alone as the true source of salvation, available to any and all who would confess Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior (John 3:16; 6:37; 7:37-38; Rom. 3:22).

**Church council:** The governing body at Franklin First. Previously called the administrative board or board of ministry, since 2009 it has been called church council. Its members are elected annually by the action of the "charge conference" in which all nominations for church leadership are formally voted on under the supervision of the district superintendent. Many members serve as representatives of various areas in which they serve as leaders, others are placed there on three-year "at-large" standing positions. The "nominating committee" or Committee on Lay Leadership recommends a slate of persons for the charge conference to approve in its annual meeting held in the fall of the year.

**Confirmation:** Young persons in the United Methodist Church are typically given special course of study and received into full membership of the church during their seventh- thru twelfth-grade years. At Franklin First we offer a confirmation class from January to May each year and receive confirmands into membership on a Sunday in the late Spring.

**Covenant, covenantal:** A covenant is a solemn promise made before God and fellow man to follow a certain path or complete a commitment or vow. At Franklin First we have developed a number of covenants that are in reality promises that our members and leaders make with each other and to God that we will be faithful to live rightly and serve God and each other through the ministries of Franklin First.

**Curriculum:** The study materials used to teach students. This means both the big-picture plan of teaching as an over arching endeavor as well as the individual study books that classes use. At Franklin First we have a fully Bible-based philosophy as interpreted through the teachings of the apostles, ancient church fathers, and our Arminian-Wesleyan forebearers in full alignment with the creeds of the early church.

**Discernment:** The process that individuals or groups of Christians use to supernaturally understand God's intentions and purposes. This process always involves times of prayer and waiting and listening for God's response. God's response can take many varied forms—from coincidental circumstances, sharpened instinct, counsel from prayerful friends, discoveries found in the reading of God's Word, and many other possibilities. At Franklin First we seek to be always in God's will. This can only be accomplished as we listen and watch to understand, or discern, what God intends (Matt. 16:15–17; Luke 24:44–45; 1 Cor. 2:12–15).

**Divinely inspired Word of God:** The Holy Bible or the Holy Scriptures, are recognized by biblical Christians, including United Methodists, to be written under the divine inspiration of God Himself. Individual men were the human writers, but God revealed His truth to them and gave them the inspiration to write down what they received. John Wesley made clear that this was his view of the Scriptures. The doctrines of the UMC outlined in the *Book of Discipline* make clear that this is the position of the church (Ex. 17:14; 24:4; John 1:1–2; Rom. 1:1–4; Gal. 1:11–12; 2 Tim. 3:16–17; 2 Peter 1:20–21).

**Doctrine:** The belief systems and theologies that define all religion. The doctrines of various Christian churches have biblical origins, but often differ in interpretation as to the meaning of scriptural references. Methodists receive much of our biblical doctrine from John Wesley's understanding of the Bible and the teaching of Dutch theologian Jacob Arminius (1560–1609) as well as the experiential practices of German Moravians. Wesley offered the church no new beliefs. Methodism was a reform movement within the established church (the Anglican Church or Church of England) and as such only emphasized some of what Wesley considered to be under-emphasized parts of the church's prevailing beliefs and doctrines. The beliefs of Methodism are in line with centuries of historical church teaching. At Franklin First we seek to raise up future generations of biblical Christians who put less confidence in the "doctrines of man" relying instead on the true Word of God that they will discover as they study for themselves the Word of God (Acts 17:11).

**Endtimes.** The biblically-based recognition that Jesus Christ promised to one day return and personally begin a new kingdom and a new earth. When this happens has been one of the most speculated about topics of all human history. Scripture in fact says that "no one knows the exact time, not even the Son of God Himself" (Matt. 24:36). We are told to expect that it could happen any moment and to always live as though it could begin now. The prophecies of the Old Testament and the Revelation to John in the New Testament must be constantly studied by faithful believers with an active discernment of current events as this present age will surely end and we hope that all within the influence of Franklin First will be fully confessed of Jesus Christ and able to avoid the coming judgement (Matt. 24:27–31).

**Fruit of the Spirit:** *But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control* (Gal. 5:22). Believers who are alive in Christ increasingly possess gifts and graces which are given by the power of the Holy Spirit which dwells within them. Also, faithful disciples are expected to be "fruit-bearing" in their service to the body of Christ.

**Garden, The:** *The Garden* is the title of the *comprehensive spiritual formation and Christian education program at Franklin First*. It has been entirely developed by Franklin First members and is not presently in operation in this form at any other congregation.

**Grace:** The undeserved favor of God in providing salvation for those deserving of condemnation. In the more specific Christian sense it speaks of the saving activity of God which is manifested in the gift of His Son to die in the place of sinners. There is one “grace” that manifests itself in three stages or dispensations as described below (Rom. 3:22–26; 5:8–9; Gal. 2:16; Eph. 2:1–10):

**Prevenient grace:** This is the preliminary, everpresent grace with which God covers all humanity. God desires all men to be saved. He cares for each person individually and provides for the deliverance and salvation of any and all who will call upon His name. His attentive care does not wait for man’s acceptance of His love, it is always attending us, calling and inviting us to deeper relationship with Him, and ultimately salvation and eternal life. Prevenient grace is the first of the three stages of grace taught by Wesley, the others being justifying grace and sanctifying grace.

**Justification, justifying grace:** When an individual intentionally decides to accept Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior and confesses this to men he is “born again” or “saved.” Many lifelong believers do not have a specific moment that they point to as a their “born again” moment. This is fine so long as they have thoughtfully and sincerely reasoned and confessed Jesus in a heartfelt manner. Nominal (in name only) or cultural Christians can easily be what John Wesley labeled as “Almost Christians.” It is a moment of great joy to witness a lost person (and often even long-time church attenders) find new life in Jesus Christ.

**Sanctification, sanctifying grace:** This is the state of grace in which the “born again” or “saved” individual grows ever deeper in their spiritual union with Jesus Christ thereby increasingly becoming more Christ-like. This doctrinal truth is the very foundation of John Wesley’s faith. Man is able by the grace and power of the Holy Spirit, which abides within the hearts of surrendered believers, to resist the evil manipulations of Satan and live peaceful joyful lives free of the domination of sin in their lives. Also expressed as *holiness*, *perfection*, *Christian perfection*, or *perfect love*, it is realized through God’s love being poured out in the believer’s heart changing it from sin-hardened stone to flesh.

**Grand Depositum:** Shortly before his death John Wesley, reflecting on the profound influence of the Methodist revival in Great Britain, stated that the deepest truth of Methodism was the understanding of *sanctification*. He called it the “Grand Depositum, that for which the Methodist’s were chiefly raised up.” Methodists were taught to pursue and make room in their hearts for the divine love that would so fill the heart and soul of the seeker that sin would lose its allure and the marvelous “new man” would arise from the old. The infectious spread of Methodism was in reality a generation of average persons so filled with the love of Christ that their family, friends, and coworkers constantly saw before them the reality of deeply and joyfully transformed men and women. The revival of this joyous and liberating Spirit-filled religion swept working class England and came to America before the revolution. Methodism’s call to “spread scriptural holiness across the land” bore much fruit in the new continent as evidenced by the fact that Methodism was by far the largest and most influential religious group in America until the early 1900s (John 17:13–19).

**Heaven and hell:** Biblical Christians fully recognize the reality of man’s eternity in terms of heaven and hell. Contemporary culture often seeks to downplay this most central foundation of the faith. Jesus Himself spoke often of both heaven and hell. Failure of men to understand this truth could have dire consequences for individuals who foolishly disregard scriptural teaching of the need for confession of faith in Jesus Christ as a requirement for an eternal home in heaven with Christ (Matt. 10:28; John 5:28–30; Luke 16:19–31, Phil. 3:20–21).

**Holy Spirit:** God’s Spirit through whom He acts, reveals His will, convicts of sin, empowers individuals, and discloses His personal presence in the Old and New Testament (John 14:15–27; 16:5–16; Acts 2:1–4; Rom. 5:1–5).

**Inculcating:** The effective teaching and modeling of faithful belief to the rising generation.

**Intentional:** It is recognized that unless a priority is deliberately pursued and managed it will fall by the wayside. At Franklin First great strategic importance is placed on the spiritual formation of the members of the church. Systematic care under the prayerful administration of lay and staff leadership will insure that these important objectives will not be set aside.

**Lay or laity:** The individual members of the congregation are referred to as laity. This typically designates church members serving in volunteer capacities (1 Cor. 12:27; 1 Peter 2:9–10).

**Matthew 28 Committee:** In 2006 the then Board of Ministry (now Church Council) of Franklin First established a visioning committee to discern God’s leading for the congregation. A new mission and vision statement was adopted in 2007 and a number of task forces or “outcome teams” were created to implement key parts of the vision. The outcome team on Intentional Faith Development is the team which discerned the vision known as *The Garden* (Matt. 28:16–20).

**Methodist:** The derisive term given to the small group of English Oxford University students led by John and Charles Wesley in the 1730s. Today, the United Methodist Church is the largest denominational group carrying this designation. The Church of the Nazarene, Wesleyan Church, Free Methodist Church, Church of God, most Pentecostal denominations, as well as many of the new fast-growing nondenominational congregations are generally considered part of a larger Methodism that shares its Arminian–Wesleyan theology.

**Milk-consuming vs. meat-eating:** In the New Testament a distinction is made between immature believers and strong Christians by whether they were able to eat solid food or meat versus the milk typically served to infants. The gospel is strong food for those able to consume it. The goal of a faithful church is to raise a generation of persons truly alive in faith and able to consume the meat of God’s Word (1 Cor. 3:2; Heb. 5:12–14; 1 Peter 2:2).

**Mission and vision statement:** In 2007 the Church Council adopted the Matthew 28 Committee recommended mission and vision statement which appears on page two of this document

**Moravians:** John Wesley (1703–1791) first became acquainted with the Moravians during his brief sojourn in America in 1737. He witnessed first hand the calm faith that a group of Moravians who were immigrating to America from Germany demonstrated during a terrifying storm while sailing to Georgia on the ship *Simmonds*. These Moravians possessed abundant love and peace that so impressed Wesley that he sought out their leaders for spiritual conversation as he was ministering in Savannah. These Moravians would ultimately found the Salem community in Winston-Salem, North Carolina. Moravians had a strong practice of faith, engaging the Holy Spirit as a means of experiencing God’s unlimited power and agency in human affairs. After Wesley returned to England in 1738 he continued in fellowship with the Moravians. It was at a Moravian meeting on Aldersgate Street in London when on May 24, 1738 Wesley had his well-known heart warming experience. Much of Methodism’s understanding of the supernatural work of the Holy Spirit is traced to Moravian origins.

**Pelagian:** The theological doctrine propounded by Pelagius, a British monk, and condemned as heresy by the Roman Catholic Church in AD 416. It denied original sin and claimed the ability of humans to be righteous by the exercise of their own free will, denying the atoning death of Jesus Christ for salvation.

**Sin:** Actions by which humans rebel against God, miss their purpose for life, and surrender to the power of evil instead of to God (Rom. 3:23–26; 5:8; Gal. 5:16–26).

**Spirit led:** The exciting recognition that the Holy Spirit of Jesus Christ is the unseen power of the indwelling Spirit that fills the lives of surrendered believers with hope and joy and peace. John Wesley taught his early followers how to receive and live in the power of the Spirit (Rom. 8:1–17; Gal. 5:15–18).

**Spiritual empowerment:** The Holy Spirit, by Jesus' own declaration is meant to indwell human hearts and become the "Helper" and "Comforter" of believers. The Holy Spirit's methods and capability is not bound by earthly physical law. Jesus modeled for man the faithful prayer life by which we are in relationship with Himself and the Father through the ministry of the Holy Spirit alive in the heart. Constant prayerful communion with God brings inner peace, a witness of the presence of God, and real authority and empowerment. Jesus said "greater things than these you will do" (John 14:12–14). This divine empowerment is granted to the believer as he grows in maturity before all-seeing God who only gives gifts which will be wisely used by the one receiving the gift (Matt. 10:19–20; Eph. 6:19–20).

**Spiritual gifts:** A spiritual gift is a God given ability or talent that the Christian sees as a natural talent joyfully used in the service of God for the advancement of the body of Christ (1 Cor. 12).

**Spiritual warfare:** The recognition that good and evil is always in contention. Unseen demonic forces loyal to Satan are strategically opposed to the angelic forces of the kingdom of God. Jesus spoke often on these themes. We recognize that much of the evil in the world is directly attributed to the enemy's manipulations. Satan's sole goal is to steal, kill, and destroy. Jesus' purpose is to seek and to save those who are lost (Dan. 10:12–14; Eph. 6:10–20).

**Staff or professional staff:** Church staff are the employees of the congregation who provide consistent leadership to church activities and administration. These individuals can be non-ordained laity or ordained clergy serving in non-pastoral roles.

**Supernatural:** The Holy Spirit works outside the boundaries of the physical or natural realm. God the Creator is still creating. Miracles and signs and wonders as shown in Scripture and reported by men through recorded history can be attributed to divine intervention in an extra-ordinary demonstration of heavenly power and authority over earthly physical law. In the formative stages of John Wesley's ministry, many supernatural events occurred which convinced Wesley that the Holy Spirit was in the midst of the work. Methodists have traditionally recognized the unpredictability of Holy Spirit visitation and have embraced Him when He comes—either individually in conversion or collectively in revival (Acts 14:3; as well as the entire book of Acts).

**Testimony:** The telling of the truth that one has discovered in his own heart and life. Men can and will dispute differing interpretations and doctrines, but no one can argue with an individual's personal experience of what Christ has done in their heart. Methodists were rich in the experience of the Holy Spirit and bold and unhesitating in telling others of the joys of true biblical faith and the urgency of need for salvation (Acts 1:8).

**Tradition.** Methodism has always considered itself to be a contemporary expression of ancient centuries-old beliefs and doctrines. Wesley developed no unique or different beliefs—in fact he intentionally did not do so. The traditions of Methodism are traceable through the Anglican Church of England, Luther's Reformation, Roman Catholicism before that, and the apostles themselves. Our tradition is graciously enlivened with the Holy Spirit emphasis of the German Moravians which God brought to John Wesley during his American sojourn in Georgia.

**Transformation:** Jesus Christ, through the power of His indwelling Holy Spirit, gives new life to those who surrender their lives to Him. This traditional Methodist emphasis on transformation has been termed *sanctification*, *new birth*, *holiness*, *Christian perfection*, and a number of other similar names. John Wesley placed this teaching as a cardinal emphasis of the church. Persons who become alive in Christ are set free from bondage to sin and focus on self, and become radiant persons demonstrating the fruit of the Spirit (Rom. 8:5–11; 12:1–2; 2 Cor. 3:18).

**Wesleyan:** The English revival that began in the 1740s under the influence of John and Charles Wesley have been labeled as the “Wesleyan Revival.” Today, the United Methodist Church is the largest denominational group carrying this designation. The Church of the Nazarene, Wesleyan Church, Free Methodist Church, Church of God, most Pentecostal denominations, as well as many of the new fast-growing nondenominational congregations are generally considered under the Wesleyan umbrella.

**Wesleyan Quadralateral:** Originally conceived by SMU Wesleyan scholar Albert Outler in the 1960s, the quadralateral is a helpful tool to understand foundational Wesleyan precepts. Wesleyan theology is grounded in *Scripture*, *Tradition*, *Reason*, and *Experience*, defined as follows: *Scripture* reigns supreme over all other other opinions or human teaching. Wesley professed himself to me a “man of one book” or “homo unis libre”; *Tradition* is strictly understood as the inherited teachings and doctrines of the apostolic and Anglo-catholic faith; *Reason* respects that God will not require of us faith and belief that He has not validated in the Holy Scripture; *Experience* represents the inner witness of the Spirit to which a believer filled with the love and power of Jesus Christ can confidently testify. Wesley stated that he desired to “possess that faith that no man could have without knowing that he had it.”

**Whole counsel of Scripture:** Christians are notorious for picking and choosing the parts of the Bible they agree with and are not threatening to their convenience, status, indulgence, sin, and wealth. The truth is that the Bible speaks judgement into virtually all dimensions of human experience. The church does no one any favor—in fact it truly jeopardizes persons—when it side steps these inconvenient truths. At Franklin First, as specifically stated in *The Garden*, we seek to teach the “whole counsel of God” as reveled solely in the divinely inspired Word of God, the Holy Bible. No church has the right or ability to ignore or redefine scriptural truth to fit the fleshly desires of sinful man (Acts 20:27; Gal. 5:16–26).

**Witness:** Christians are mandated specifically by Jesus Himself to bear witness to the truth of the gospel. To possess the knowledge of salvation in Christ and not tell others of this life saving truth is called disobedience in the Scriptures. We should always be ready to tell others of the saving power and love of Jesus from our own personal salvation experience (Matt. 28:18–20; Acts 1:7–11).