

Many discussions about the separation of the United Methodist Church reference **Traditionalists** and **Progressives**. This is a brief summary of the two perspectives and their beliefs. Under each theological topic are statements which present a *general* view of the Traditionalist and Progressive perspectives. As each person has his or her personal relationship with God, these bullet points may not be absolute for all people. This chart is to be used as a *guide* for understanding the differences.

Two Major Doctrinal Perspectives

Traditionalist

- Historic interpretation of the Bible
- Does not believe in culturally redefining the Bible
- Beliefs align with the current UMC Book of Discipline

Progressive

- Includes a wide range of interpretation and theological ideas (may believe in a few, many, or all views listed)
- Range from moderate to strongly progressive

Both groups believe their view is true to the Gospel

Theology – Scripture

Traditionalist

- The Bible is the inspired Word of God
- Biblical revelation is complete
- The Bible is true and authoritative
- Tradition, reason and experience are subject to Scripture

Progressive

- The Bible contains the word of God
- New revelation takes precedence over old
- Parts of the Bible are true; portions can be dismissed as not authoritative; not relevant today.
- Tradition, reason and experience supersede Scripture
- *Not all beliefs are shared, but all are accepted*

Theology – Nature and Role of Jesus

Traditionalist

- Incarnate (fully human and fully divine)
- Virgin birth
- Physical death
- Bodily resurrection

Progressive

- May or may not believe in any or all of these tenets of the Apostles' Creed
- *Not all beliefs are shared, but all are accepted*

Theology – Nature and Role of Sin

Traditionalist

- Sin is personal and separates us from God
- Requires atonement
- Forgiveness comes by grace through faith in the life, death and resurrection of Jesus

Progressive

- Sin is societal from external forces
- No original sin (man is inherently good)
- It is possible for sin to be corrected through works of justice and mercy
- Jesus' death on the cross is not necessary for atonement
- *Not all beliefs are shared but all are accepted*

Theology – Salvation

Traditionalist

- It is a precious gift received in response to God's grace
- It only comes through faith in Jesus

Progressive

- Universal salvation- all receive salvation regardless of belief
- There is more than one path to salvation
- *Not all beliefs are shared but all are accepted*

UMC Book of Discipline

Traditionalist

- Language related to human sexuality should remain the same
- Marriage in the church is between one man and one woman

Progressive

- All language related to human sexuality should be removed
- Allows for same sex marriage and ordination of practicing homosexuals
- *Not all beliefs are shared, but all are accepted*

Irreconcilable Positions

- Theological orientations are significantly different
- Both groups believe their perspective is true to the gospel