

WHAT WE BELIEVE
INTRODUCTION TO IMPORTANCE OF BELIEFS

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Beliefs define ultimate reality

Ultimate reality defines our perception of present reality

Ultimate reality defines character, values and meaning of life as we exist and interpret every day present realities

Character, values and meaning of life have implications for all of human relationships, issues of human fulfillment

Beliefs are learned from some source(s): cultural, familial, institutional, personal reflection, etc.

We must be sure about the source that we choose to define ultimate reality for us that shapes our character and determines the quality and character of our lives

As Christians we believe certain things that other human beings may not believe

As Protestant Christians we believe certain things that other Christians may not believe

As Methodist Christians we believe certain things that other Protestant Christians may not believe

As African Methodist Christians we believe certain things that other Methodist Christians may not believe

As members of St. Philip Church (A.M.E.) we believe certain things that other African Methodists may not believe (Ex. Worship, church decorum, giving, Christian education, outreach, pastoral authority)

Therefore, we walk in the vision God has for our lives that is greater than any vision we can have for ourselves or that others can have for us, we need to have a clear understanding about what we believe

WE BELIEVE IN THE HOLY TRINITY

WE BELIEVE in God who is infinite and eternal, omniscient (all knowing), omnipotent (all powerful) and omnipresent (everywhere at the same time), who has been manifested and revealed in Jesus Christ and still lives among us as the Holy Spirit.

Nature of God we believe in:

Infinite, beyond measurement

Eternal, beyond time

Omniscient, beyond learning

Omnipotent, beyond limitation

Omnipresent, beyond space

Manifested in Jesus Christ, not beyond our understanding

Living among us as the Holy Spirit, not beyond our access

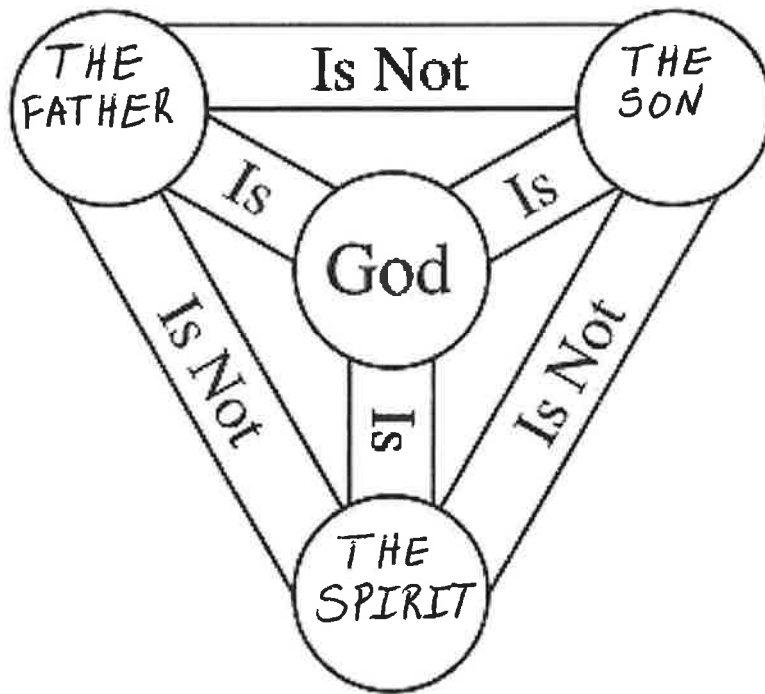
We believe one God who is manifested in three persons sharing the same essence (Trinity or Tri-unity) The Holy Trinity is the fundamental Christian belief regarding the nature, character and identity of God. We as Christians believe that the fullness of the one true and living God is manifested in our lives in three distinct personalities, whom we know as Father, Son and Holy Spirit, who share the same essence, nature, and authority.

What the Trinity is not:

As Christians we do not believe in three Gods. We are not “three God people” (practice of baptism in the name of Jesus only)

We do not believe that God has a split personality or that God is schizoid. (OT, God of wrath and judgment; NT, God of love and grace)

We believe that God is best known and understood in God’s three aspects of God’s relationship with and ministry to us, whom we know as Father, Son and Holy Spirit.



The fullness of who God is as Father, Son and Holy Spirit is both fundamental to our faith and a mystery, like much of life itself.

Human birth

Metamorphosis of caterpillar to butterfly, and tadpole into a frog

Return of salmon to the place of their birth to give birth before they die

Love

Music

The human mind and body

Construction of pyramids

The Holy Trinity epitomizes the meaning of faith---that which must be believed with the heart if not fully comprehended by the head. The Holy Trinity is not anti-logical, but supra-logical. The Holy Trinity goes beyond logic.

The Holy Trinity, the fullness of who God is, can no more be understood than
A cat can understand a computer
A monkey can understand surgery
An elephant can understand botany
An ant can understand cooking
Or a human fetus can understand life outside of the womb

Some Scripture References:

Genesis 1: 26

Matthew 28: 19

John 14: 26

John 15: 26

Romans 8: 11

II Corinthians 13: 14

Human Analogies of the Holy Trinity (No analogy is perfect)

Water, ice, steam, three manifestations of same essence

Triangle, unity of three in one, and if one is missing then the triangle ceases to be
a triangle

Human beings in their multiple roles and relationships---father, son, companion