The United Church of Christ's Preamble to the Constitution and their Statement of Faith, both powerfully and profoundly, express an identity that is not only shaped by the respective traditions that created the UCC, but also consists of an identity grounded in Christ and committed to God's ongoing work in the world or *missio Dei*. Collectively, these two documents demonstrate how the United Church of Christ can demonstrate both diversity and unity without also requiring uniformity. In reflecting on the history of the UCC, both the Constitution and Statement of Faith preserve the denomination's theological heritage while also allowing, at the same time, each generation to interpret and embody its faith in a changing world and within changing contexts.

The Preamble provides theological grounding for a denomination that was created in 1957 when the Evangelical and Reformed Church and the Congregational Christian Churches merged. In it, the UCC identifies Christ "as its sole Head," and "it acknowledges as kindred in Christ all who share in this confession."[1] In addition to Christ as the sole Head, it also affirms Scripture, the Holy Spirit, the historic creeds, and the insights of the Protestant Reformation. It also powerfully emphasizes that "it affirms the responsibility of the Church in each generation to make this faith its own in reality of worship, in honesty of thought and expression, and in purity of heart before God."[2] One aspect of the Preamble, as well as the Constitution overall, that is extremely powerful is its framework because it is one of covenant. It intentionally emphasizes relationships and shared responsibility, not a form of governance that relies on centralized control. This approach reflects the UCC's commitment to holding congregations together through covenant while respecting their freedom and responsibility as well as their uniqueness and individuality.

Two years after the Preamble was created, the Statement of Faith was adopted first in 1959 in Oberlin, prior to their adoption of a Constitution.[3] Like the Preamble, it also expresses a shared theological foundation. One aspect that I found resonated with me was that it powerfully leaves room for diverse interpretations. These interpretations did not end when it was drafted in 1959. Since its adoption, there have been several times when language was changed and amendments added, which, to me, demonstrate the denomination's willingness to revisit its language as its understanding of inclusive Christian witness develops.

As pointed out by Roger Shinn, the original version, which was first adopted officially in 1961, was "loaded with male pronouns."[4] He goes on to point out that Robert V. Moss's adaptation revises that language, and the 1981 doxological version addresses God directly in prayer. As Shinn's historical reflection explains, this final form emphasizes God's actions: creating, seeking, judging, coming, calling, and promising; instead of simply defining theological propositions. I find that these revisions illustrate that faithfulness to Christian tradition does not require preserving every inherited expression unchanged. As Shinn illustrates, "the original Commission had given only slight attention to that. The women said that everybody would realize that God is not male."[5]

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[1] United Church of Christ, Constitution and Bylaws of the United Church of Christ, accessed October 17, 2026, https://www.new.uccfiles.com/pdf/UCC_Constitution.pdf.
[2] United Church of Christ, Constitution and Bylaws of the United Church of Christ.
[3] Roger L. Shinn, A Statement of Faith of the United Church of Christ, United Church of Christ, https://d3n8a8pro7vhmx.cloudfront.net/unitedchurchofchrist/legacy_url/197/shinn-ucc-statement-of-faith.pdf?1418423560.
[4] Shinn, A Statement of Faith.
[5] Shinn, A Statement of Faith.

There are several aspects of the Statement of Faith that resonate with me. One can be found in its affirmation that God seeks to save all people and its promise of "courage in the struggle for justice and peace."[6] Through my theological education, I have come to understand that these commitments are inseparable. God's love is not limited to our personal salvation or the promise of eternal life. God's love calls the church to confront suffering, exclusion, and injustice in the present, to bring salvation to here and now. The affirmation that God comes to humanity in Jesus Christ and shares our common lot also resonates with my understanding of a God who is present with people experiencing rejection and pain.

As someone who identifies as a progressive Christian who is also preparing for ordained ministry in the United Church of Christ, there are several elements of the statement that I am particularly drawn to which includes its vision of discipleship as service, its resistance to evil, and its participation in Christ's mission.

I believe that our faith becomes credible, and even tangible, when we as the church welcome those who various communities have marginalized, pressed to the margins, and want to forget about. I think that it also becomes credible and tangible when we work toward a more just and compassionate world. The UCC's understanding of historic confessions as testimonies rather than tests of faith supports this approach by allowing shared Christian commitments to guide ministry without imposing absolute uniformity.[7]

I believe both the Preamble and Statement of Faith challenge me to see the church as something unfinished; we are always working and striving towards perfecting and completing our union- both as a community rooted in tradition and a community continually being shaped by the Holy Spirit to achieve that completion. Their enduring significance lies in calling the church to proclaim Christ not only through words but also through practices of justice, inclusion, and covenantal love.

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[6] United Church of Christ, "Statement of Faith," accessed October 17, 2026, https://www.ucc.org/what-we-believe/worship/statement-of-faith/.

[7] United Church of Christ, "Statement of Faith."

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