

ABOUT US

Our Church

Chinese United Methodist Church (UMC) in San Antonio is a Bible-believing, Christ-centered church. It is a faith community of Christian believers under the Lordship of Christ. It is a local church within the connectional network of the Las Misiones District of the Rio Texas Annual Conference. We accept The Book of Discipline of The United Methodist Church, which reflects the Wesleyan way of serving Jesus Christ through doctrine and disciplined Christian life.

Our Mission

Our mission is to carry out the great commission by proclaiming the gospel and making devoted disciples for our Lord Jesus Christ as we start from San Antonio, but try to reach out ultimately to other parts of the world.

Although we seek to minister mainly to the Chinese community in the greater area of San Antonio and New Braunfels, we welcome and encourage people from other ethnic groups to join us in our worship and ministries.

Our Brief History

Rev. William Lee started our church in the premises of a Presbyterian church in San Antonio in February 1986. The Chinese church moved to the premises of a Baptist church in July 1986. The church moved to the premises of a local United Methodist Church on Hunters Green Street after it joined the connectional system of The United Methodist Church in 1988. In August 1991 the church moved again to the Kyle Center on Research Drive. Rev. Lee had been leading the church before he passed away in 1993. Following the steps of Rev. Lee, Rev. Dale Stewart, a retired United Methodist minister, volunteered to pastor the church. In 1993, the church moved to the premises of University United Methodist Church on De Zavala Road.

In 1994, Rev. Paul Yuen, an army chaplain stationed in San Antonio, volunteered to partner with Rev. Stewart in serving the church. During the same year, the church moved to its current location in the campus of Providence Place (formerly Methodist Mission Home) at 6487 Whitby Road, San Antonio. The Chinese church was reconstituted in 1998. Rev. Samuel Yu was appointed by the Southwest Texas Annual Conference to be the local pastor for the church January, 1999 and he continued his pastoral work until he retired in May 2011. After Rev. Yu's retirement, Rev. Charlie Parker served as an interim pastor from June 2011 through June 2013, and Rev. John Lee served as an interim pastor from July 2013 through June 2015.

At the beginning of 2015, the Southwest Texas Annual Conference and Rio Grande Annual Conference became the Rio Texas Annual Conference. Rev. Chengju (Newman) Huo followed the steps of Rev. John Lee, and has been working as Licensed Local Pastor for this church since he was appointed by the Rio Texas Annual Conference on July 1, 2016.

Our Uniqueness

Chinese UMC in San Antonio is the only Chartered Chinese United Methodist church in Texas. We use Mandarin in our worship services. However, it is also an international evangelical church because we share the Gospel with many students and visiting scholars from the Chinese mainland, Taiwan and some Southeast Asian countries.

We are a unique church within the Las Misiones District of the Rio Texas Annual Conference. Our annual Charge Conference reviews and evaluates the total mission and ministry of the local church. We have been trying to collaborate not only with other churches within the Las Misiones District in all possible programs, but also with the two other Chinese churches in San Antonio in reaching out to the Chinese community in the greater area of San Antonio, including New Braunfels. All the year around, we conduct small-group Bible studies at the homes of our church members in San Antonio on a weekly basis (Friday evening or Saturday) as well as in New Braunfels on a monthly basis.

Our Outreach Program

Our pastors have been providing pastoral visits and care to all church members, especially those elderly with chronic diseases, on regular basis as well as to all needy people in the Chinese community. We make use of our annual Thanksgiving dinner and our annual Chinese New Year dinner to share the gospel with guests who are either seekers or non-believers. We also team up with the San Antonio Chinese Professional Association in organizing the annual family health fair to provide free medical consultations especially for the elderly Chinese who have problems communicating with English speaking Physicians. We also have a health club promoting the health of members through Tai-Chi classes. Our after-church activities every year include cultural programs like Chinese music & art appreciation. We also invite guests to come to our church picnics, BBQ and other special programs. Our Church provides bilingual spiritual & social services, such as wedding, memorial and funeral, transportation, visiting hospice patients as well as helping new immigrants settle down, etc.

Our Needs and Your Support

The growth of our church has been adversely impacted by our lack of human & financial resources as well as by the very fact that many visitors attending our church are not residing permanently in San Antonio. To enable us to do a better job in sharing the gospel in our community, we need all gracious support & assistance not only from other churches within our connectional network of The United Methodist Church, but also from the general public. We need your continual prayers as well as your financial support. We invite you to partner with us to grow our local church so that we can and will become more effective in our efforts to minister to the Chinese community and share the gospel with more souls in the greater area of San Antonio.

What We believe

United Methodists share a common heritage with all Christians. According to our foundational statement of beliefs in The Book of Discipline, we share the following basic affirmations in common with all Christians:

Who God is

When we say the Apostles' Creed, we join with millions of Christians through the ages in an understanding of God as a Trinity—three persons in one: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. From early in our Judaic roots we've affirmed that God is one and indivisible, yet God is revealed in three distinct ways. "God in three persons, blessed Trinity" is one way of speaking about the several ways we experience God. We also try to find adjectives that describe the divine nature: God is transcendent (over and beyond all that is), yet at the same time immanent (present in everything). God is omnipresent (everywhere at once), omnipotent (all-powerful), and omniscient (all-knowing). God is absolute, infinite, righteous, just, loving, merciful...and more. Because we cannot speak literally about God, we use metaphors: God is a Shepherd, a Bridegroom, and a Judge. God is Love or Light or Truth.

What God does

We cannot describe God with certainty. But we can put into words what God does and how we experience God's action in our lives. God works in at least these seven ways:

- God creates. In the beginning God created the universe, and the Creation is ongoing. From the whirling galaxies, to subatomic particles, to the unfathomable wonders of our own minds and bodies—we marvel at God's creative wisdom.
- God sustains. God continues to be active in creation, holding all in "the everlasting arms." In particular, we affirm that God is involved in our human history—past, present, and future.
- God loves. God loves all creation. In particular, God loves humankind, created in the divine image. This love is like that of a parent. We've followed Jesus in speaking of God as "our Father," while at times it seems that God nurtures us in a motherly way as well.
- God suffers. Since God is present in creation, God is hurt when any aspect of creation is hurt. God especially suffers when people are injured. In all violence, abuse, injustice, prejudice, hunger, poverty, or illness, the living God is suffering in our midst.
- God judges. All human behavior is measured by God's righteous standards—not only the behavior itself but also the motive or the intent. The Lord of life knows our sin—and judges it.
- God redeems. Out of infinite love for each of us, God forgives our own self-destruction and renews us within. God is reconciling the individuals, groups, races, and nations that have been rent apart. God is redeeming all creation.

- God reigns. God is the Lord of all creation and of all history. Though it may oftentimes seem that the “principalities and powers” of evil have the stronger hand, we affirm God’s present and future reign.

When all is done, if we have difficulty in imagining who God is or in relating to God, there’s a simple solution: Remember Jesus—for in the New Testament picture of Jesus, we see God.

Who Jesus Is

In trying to find words to express their faith in Jesus, the New Testament writers gave him various names. Jesus was Master, Rabbi, Teacher. He was the Way, the Truth, and the Life. He was the Doorway to the sheepfold, the Light of the world, the Prince of Peace, and more. In the church’s long tradition, scores of other names or titles have been given. Let’s look at five of the most central biblical names for Jesus:

1) Son of God

We believe in Jesus as God’s special child. We call this the Incarnation, meaning that God was in the world in the actual person of Jesus of Nazareth. The Gospel writers explain this in different ways. In Mark, Jesus seems to be adopted as God’s Son at his baptism. In Matthew and Luke, Jesus is conceived by the Holy Spirit. In John, Jesus is God’s pre-existing Word who “became flesh and lived among us” (1:14). However, this mystery occurred, we affirm that God is wholly present in Jesus Christ.

2) Son of man

Paradoxically, we also believe that Jesus was fully human. One of the church’s first heresies claimed that Jesus only seemed to be human, that he was really a divine figure in disguise. But the early church rejected this. It affirmed that Jesus was a person in every sense that we are. He was tempted. He grew weary. He wept. He expressed his anger. In fact, Jesus is God’s picture of what it means to be a mature human being.

3) Christ

We say “Jesus Christ” easily, almost as if “Christ” were Jesus’ surname. Yet this name is another way

of expressing who we believe Jesus to be. Christ is the Greek translation of the Hebrew word Messiah, which means God's Anointed One. For years before Jesus' time the Jews had been expecting a new king, a descendant of the revered King David, who would restore the nation of Israel to glory. Like kings of old, this one would be anointed on the head with oil, signifying God's election; hence, the Chosen One = the Anointed One = the Messiah = the Christ. The early Jewish Christians proclaimed that Jesus was, indeed, this Chosen One. Thus, in calling him our Christ today, we affirm that he was and is the fulfillment of the ancient hope and God's Chosen One to bring salvation to all peoples, for all time.

4) Lord

We also proclaim Jesus as our Lord, the one to whom we give our devoted allegiance. The word Lord had a more powerful meaning for people of medieval times, because they actually lived under the authority of lords and monarchs. Today some of us may find it difficult to acknowledge Jesus as Lord of our lives. We're used to being independent and self-sufficient. We have not bowed down to authority. To claim Jesus as Lord is to freely submit our will to his, to humbly profess that it is he who is in charge of this world.

5) Savior

Perhaps best of all, we believe in Jesus as Savior, as the one through whom God has freed us of our sin and has given us the gift of whole life, eternal life, and salvation. We speak of this gift as the atonement, our "at-oneness" or reconciliation with God. We believe that in ways we cannot fully explain, God has done this through the mystery of Jesus' self-giving sacrifice on the cross and his victory over sin and death in the Resurrection.

Who the Holy Spirit Is

The Holy Spirit is God's present activity in our midst. When we sense God's leading, God's challenge, or God's support or comfort, we say that it's the Holy Spirit at work.

In Hebrew, the words for Spirit, wind, and breath are nearly the same. The same is true in Greek. In trying to describe God's activity among them, the ancients were saying that it was like God's breath, like a sacred wind. It could not be seen or held: "The wind blows where it chooses, and you hear the sound of it, but you do not know where it comes from or where it goes" (John 3:8). But the effect of

God's Spirit, like the wind, could be felt and known. Where do we find the evidence of the Spirit at work?

1) In the Bible

The Spirit is mentioned often throughout the Bible. In Genesis a "wind from God swept over the face of the waters," as if taking part in the Creation (1:2). Later in the Old Testament (Hebrew Bible), we often read of "the Spirit of the Lord."

In Matthew's account of Jesus' baptism, Jesus "saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and alighting on him" (3:16) and he "was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted" (4:1). After his Resurrection Christ told his disciples, "You will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you" (Acts 1:8). A few weeks later, on the Day of Pentecost, this came to pass: "And suddenly from heaven there came a sound like the rush of a violent wind.... All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit" (Acts 2:2, 4). As the Book of Acts and Paul's letters attest, from that time on, the early Christians were vividly aware of God's Spirit leading the new church.

2) In guidance, comfort, and strength

Today we continue to experience God's Spirit. As one of our creeds puts it, "We believe in the Holy Spirit, God present with us for guidance, for comfort, and for strength" (The United Methodist Hymnal, No. 884). We sense the Spirit in time alone—perhaps in prayer, in our study of the Scriptures, in reflection on a difficult decision, or in the memory of a loved one. The Spirit's touch is intensely personal.

Perhaps we're even more aware of the Holy Spirit in the community of believers—the congregation, the church school class or fellowship group, the soup kitchen, the planning committee, the prayer meeting, the family. Somehow the Spirit speaks through the thoughtful and loving interaction of God's people. The Holy Spirit, who brought the church into being, is still guiding and upholding it, if we will but listen.

3) In the gifts we receive

How does the Holy Spirit affect our lives? By changing us! By renewing us and by strengthening us for the work of ministry.

- Fruits: Jesus said, "You will know them by their fruits" (Matthew 7:16). What sort of fruit? Paul asserts that "the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control" (Galatians 5:22).
- Gifts: Paul also writes that the Spirit bestows spiritual gifts on believers. In 1 Corinthians 12:8-10 he lists nine, which vary from one person to another: the utterance of wisdom, the utterance of knowledge, faith, healing, working of miracles, prophecy, the discernment of spirits, various kinds of tongues, and the interpretation of tongues.

These fruits and gifts are not of our own achievement. They and others are the outgrowth of the Spirit's work in us, by grace, through our faith in Jesus the Christ. And they are not given for personal gain. Through these fruits and gifts, the Holy Spirit empowers us for ministry in the world.