Bible as God's Word to humanity; that is, God's revelation of Himself and His will to all people. This is particularly true of the Protestant church, whose founder, Martin Luther, once said, "You are so to deal with the scriptures that you bear in mind that God Himself is saying this."

<u>Where does the United Church of Christ</u> <u>stand on Scripture?</u>

The Book of Worship is indicative of recent trends. The introduction to the Book of Worship attests that "Holy scripture provides the trustworthy and normative record of the history of salvation... This Book of Worship ... crowns every service of the church with the abundant witness of scripture." (p.3)

However, a cursory reading of the services will show a glaring lack of confidence in the words of scripture. Again and again, they are "adapted". The language is changed so as to reflect "inclusive language and other concerns for social justice." (p. 9, Introduction)

In the *Book of Worship* there is a question asked the candidate seeking ordination which demonstrates a departure from the church's stance on the Bible. Both the Evangelical and Reformed Church and the Congregational Christian Church required the candidate to "accept the Holy scriptures...as the Word of God". The present Book of Worship asks, "Do you ...hear the Word of God in the scriptures...and do you accept the Word of God as the rule of Christian faith and practice?" No longer is the Bible the written Word of God; rather, it depends on the one who "hears." He or she determines which portions of scripture constitute the Word of God.

Sadly, some of our leaders years ago exhibited the same lack of confidence in the scripture. In a speech delivered to the Ohio conference in May, 1981. United Church of Christ President Avery Post said that the Bible contains "error, hyperbole, contradictions, inconsistencies." Dr. Burton Throckmorton, New Testament Professor of the United Church of Christ-related Bangor Theological Seminary in Bangor, Maine, professes: "There is no reason...that I can see why the church can't add to its scripture-delete from its scripture. I think the church can do with the scripture what it wants to do with the scripture." (Christianity Today, Dec. 16, 1983; p. 40)

In recent years, the United Church of Christ has been promoting the thinking of the Jesus Seminar. This group of fifty "scholars" meets to vote on which sayings and actions of Jesus in the Gospels are true, most likely true, probably aren't true, or definitely not true. The group bases these decisions on secular writings of the times and non-biblical sources such as the Gospel of Thomas. One of their main spokesmen, Marcus Borg was the keynote speaker at a Massachusetts Conference annual meeting and at the 1997 Orlando Consultation for pastors. Many churches are using his books for Bible study.

How does BWF view scripture?

The Biblical Witness Fellowship takes its stand with the historic Christian church and with the Bible's own estimation of its authority and reliability: "The Bible is the written Word of God, the infallible rule of faith and practice." (Dubuque Declaration, see inside back cover)

God's revelation in Jesus Christ is faithfully set forth in Holy scripture. If, as the present trend in the United Church of Christ suggests, we are free to pick and choose which parts we want to use, we set ourselves up as judges of the Bible's truth. We decide which parts contain the Word of God. When this happens, our purpose and priorities, our message, and our mission are confused and inconsistent. We have no rock upon which to stand. Instead, we are subject to ideas that are soon out of fashion. We are *"blown here and there by every wind of teaching..."* (Ephesians 4:14) However, when we embrace the Holy scriptures as the authoritative and inspired word of God, we gain a clear understanding of God and His eternal will for humanity, since they *"are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus."* (II Timothy 3:15)