

“A Brief Statement of Faith” PC(USA) Book of Confessions

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The Preface (with some editing)

In 1983 the two largest Presbyterian churches (that is, two separate denominations) in the United States reunited. The “Plan for Reunion” called for the preparation of a brief statement of the Reformed faith for possible inclusion in The Book of Confessions. ... It does not pretend to be a complete list of all our beliefs, nor does it explain any of them in detail. It is designed to be confessed by the whole congregation in the setting of public worship. .. and it may also serve pastors and teachers as an aid to Christian instruction. (We are using it with our confirmation class.) It celebrates our rediscovery that for all our undoubted diversity, we are bound together by a common faith and a common task.

The faith we confess unites us with the one, universal church. The most important beliefs of Presbyterians are those we share with other Christians and especially with other evangelical Christians who look to the Protestant Reformation as a renewal of the gospel of Jesus Christ. Diversity remains. But we are thankful that in our time the many churches are learning to accept, and even to affirm, diversity without divisiveness, since the whole counsel of God is more than the wisdom of any individual or any one tradition.

“A Brief Statement of Faith” includes the major themes of the Reformed tradition, without claiming them as our private possession, just as we ourselves hope to learn and to share the wisdom and insight given to traditions other than our own. ...

No confession of faith looks merely to the past; every confession seeks to cast the light of a priceless heritage on the needs of the present moment and so to shape the future. “A Brief Statement of Faith” lifts up concerns that call most urgently for the church’s attention in our time ...

A sound confession, therefore, proves itself as it nurtures commitment to the church's mission, and as the confessing church itself becomes the body by which Christ continues the blessing of his earthly ministry.

(This preface does not have confessional authority, but is included as an aid to interpret the "Brief Statement of Faith.")

A BRIEF STATEMENT OF FAITH: THE STATEMENT

In life and in death we belong to God.
Through the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ,
the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit,
we trust in the one triune God, the Holy One of Israel,
whom alone we worship and serve.

We trust in Jesus Christ,
Fully human, fully God.
Jesus proclaimed the reign of God:
preaching good news to the poor
and release to the captives,
teaching by word and deed
and blessing the children, healing the sick
and binding up the brokenhearted,
eating with outcasts, forgiving sinners,
and calling all to repent and believe the gospel.
Unjustly condemned for blasphemy and sedition,
Jesus was crucified, suffering the depths of human pain
and giving his life for the sins of the world.
God raised this Jesus from the dead, vindicating his sinless life,
breaking the power of sin and evil, delivering us from death to life eternal.

We trust in God, whom Jesus called Abba, Father.
In sovereign love God created the world good
and makes everyone equally in God's image
male and female, of every race and people, to live as one community.

But we rebel against God; we hide from our Creator.
Ignoring God's commandments, we violate the image of God
in others and ourselves, accept lies as truth, exploit neighbor and nature,
and threaten death to the planet entrusted to our care.
We deserve God's condemnation.
Yet God acts with justice and mercy to redeem creation.
In everlasting love,
the God of Abraham and Sarah chose a covenant people
to bless all families of the earth.
Hearing their cry, God delivered the children of Israel
from the house of bondage.
Loving us still, God makes us heirs with Christ of the covenant.
Like a mother who will not forsake her nursing child,
like a father who runs to welcome the prodigal home,
God is faithful still.

We trust in God the Holy Spirit,
everywhere the giver and renewer of life.
The Spirit justifies us by grace through faith,
sets us free to accept ourselves and to love God and neighbor,
and binds us together with all believers
in the one body of Christ, the Church.
The same Spirit who inspired the prophets and apostles
rules our faith and life in Christ through Scripture,
engages us through the Word proclaimed,
claims us in the waters of baptism,
feeds us with the bread of life and the cup of salvation,
and calls women and men to all ministries of the church.

In a broken and fearful world the Spirit gives us courage
to pray without ceasing,
to witness among all peoples to Christ as Lord and Savior,
to unmask idolatries in Church and culture,
to hear the voices of peoples long silenced,
and to work with others for justice, freedom, and peace.

In gratitude to God, empowered by the Spirit,
we strive to serve Christ in our daily tasks
and to live holy and joyful lives,
even as we watch for God's new heaven and new earth,
praying, "Come, Lord Jesus!"

With believers in every time and place,
we rejoice that nothing in life or in death
can separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit.
Amen.