

A BRIEF STATEMENT OF FAITH—
PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH (U.S.A.)

[TEXT]

A Brief Statement of Faith

In 1983, the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) was formed by the reunion of the United Presbyterian Church in the United States of America and the Presbyterian Church in the United States. Integral to reunion was the preparation of a brief statement of faith. While recognizing realities of diversity and disagreement in both the church and the world, members of the drafting committee sought to articulate Presbyterians' common identity.

Early in its discussions, the committee decided to write a statement of faith that could be used in worship. The committee drew extensively on the documents in the *Book of Confessions* and on Scripture for its formulations, and arranged them within a trinitarian framework.

The Brief Statement of Faith (statement) is distinctive in several respects. Unlike the Apostles' and Nicene Creeds, which move directly from Jesus' birth to his death, the statement emphasizes the significance of Jesus' ministry in Judea and Galilee. The Brief Statement of Faith emphasizes gender-inclusiveness. It underscores the role of both men and women in God's covenant, uses feminine as well as masculine imagery of God, and affirms ordination of both women and men. The statement also expresses concern for the integrity of God's creation.

Affirming at its beginning that "In life and death we belong to God" (11.1, line 1) and, at its end, that "nothing in life or in death can separate us from the love of God in Jesus Christ our Lord," (11.05, lines 78, 79) the Brief Statement of Faith concludes liturgically with the church's familiar doxology of praise and thanksgiving.

**PREFACE¹ TO
A BRIEF STATEMENT OF FAITH
PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH (U.S.A.)**

In 1983 the two largest Presbyterian churches 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*. This statement is therefore not intended to stand alone, apart from the other confessions of our church. 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. 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. The Spirit of Truth gives new light to the churches when they are willing to become pupils together of the Word of God. This statement therefore intends to confess the catholic faith.

We are convinced that to the Reformed churches a distinctive vision of the catholic faith has been entrusted for the good of the whole church. Accordingly, “A Brief Statement of Faith” includes the major themes of the Reformed tradition (such as those mentioned in the *Book of Order*, The Foundations of Presbyterian Polity, Chapter 2),² 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. And as a confession that seeks to be both catholic and Reformed, the statement (following the apostle’s blessing in 2 Cor. 13:14) is a trinitarian confession in which the grace of Jesus Christ has first place as the foundation of our knowledge of God’s sovereign love and our life together in the Holy Spirit.

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. Reformed confessions, in particular, when necessary even reform the tradition itself in the light of the Word of God. From the first, the Reformed churches have insisted that the renewal of the church must become visible in the transformation of human lives and societies. Hence “A Brief Statement of Faith” lifts up concerns that call most urgently for the church’s attention in our

¹ The preface and the appendix do not have confessional authority.

² The appendix provides cross-references that will enable the reader to place the affirmations of “A Brief Statement of Faith” in the context of the Reformed tradition.

time. The church is not a refuge from the world; an elect people is chosen for the blessing of the nations. 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.

THE STATEMENT

11.1

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

11.2

7 We trust in Jesus Christ,
 8 fully human, fully God.
 9 Jesus proclaimed the reign of God:
 10 preaching good news to the poor
 11 and release to the captives,
 12 teaching by word and deed
 13 and blessing the children,
 14 healing the sick
 15 and binding up the brokenhearted,
 16 eating with outcasts,
 17 forgiving sinners,
 18 and calling all to repent and believe the gospel.
 19 Unjustly condemned for blasphemy and sedition,
 20 Jesus was crucified,
 21 suffering the depths of human pain
 22 and giving his life for the sins of the world.
 23 God raised this Jesus from the dead,
 24 vindicating his sinless life,
 25 breaking the power of sin and evil,
 26 delivering us from death to life eternal.

11.3

27 We trust in God,
 28 whom Jesus called Abba, Father.
 29 In sovereign love God created the world good
 30 and makes everyone equally in God's image,
 31 male and female, of every race and people,
 32 to live as one community.
 33 But we rebel against God; we hide from our Creator.
 34 Ignoring God's commandments.
 35 we violate the image of God in others and ourselves,
 36 accept lies as truth,
 37 exploit neighbor and nature,
 38 and threaten death to the planet entrusted to our care.
 39 We deserve God's condemnation.
 40 Yet God acts with justice and mercy to redeem creation.
 41 In everlasting love,

11.3–.6**BOOK OF CONFESSIONS**

42 the God of Abraham and Sarah chose a covenant people
 43 to bless all families of the earth.
 44 Hearing their cry,
 45 God delivered the children of Israel
 46 from the house of bondage.
 47 Loving us still,
 48 God makes us heirs with Christ of the covenant.
 49 Like a mother who will not forsake her nursing child,
 50 like a father who runs to welcome the prodigal home,
 51 God is faithful still.

11.4

52 We trust in God the Holy Spirit
 53 everywhere the giver and renewer of life.
 54 The Spirit justifies us by grace through faith,
 55 sets us free to accept ourselves and to love God and neighbor,
 56 and binds us together with all believers
 57 in the one body of Christ, the Church.
 58 The same Spirit
 59 who inspired the prophets and apostles
 60 rules our faith and life in Christ through Scripture,
 61 engages us through the Word proclaimed,
 62 claims us in the waters of baptism,
 63 feeds us with the bread of life and the cup of salvation,
 64 and calls women and men to all ministries of the Church.
 65 In a broken and fearful world
 66 the Spirit gives us courage
 67 to pray without ceasing,
 68 to witness among all peoples to Christ as Lord and Savior,
 69 to unmask idolatries in Church and culture,
 70 to hear the voices of peoples long silenced,
 71 and to work with others for justice, freedom, and peace.
 72 In gratitude to God, empowered by the Spirit,
 73 we strive to serve Christ in our daily tasks
 74 and to live holy and joyful lives,
 75 even as we watch for God's new heaven and new earth,
 76 praying, "Come, Lord Jesus!"

11.5

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

11.6

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

* Instead of saying this line, congregations may wish to sing a version of the Gloria.