

First Presbyterian Church



Scots Confession

Why Creeds?

At its core, a creed is a statement of basic beliefs or set of guiding principles. Organizations of all shapes, sizes, and persuasions have used creeds to instruct members, guide their decision making, and remind themselves of their core identity while they seek out new ways of being in a world in a constant state of flux. Creeds are crafted to remind people of where they have been while also offering guidance for where they may be going. In this 150th anniversary year of First Presbyterian Church, it seemed a good idea to study some of the creeds that are foundational to the faith we proclaim. During the course of lent, we will take a brief look at a set of creeds that range from ancient to surprisingly modern. We'll learn a bit about their social and historical context and consider what they may mean for our contemporary lives of faith. It is our hope that this study provides depth and illumination for your lenten journey.

Scots Confession

Confessions, as opposed to creeds, are understood to address specific needs and questions of their time. Confessions are meant to say, essentially, “This is how we see things right here and right now.” The Scots Confession is certainly a document of its time. Written in 1560 the document is the result of great political and religious upheaval. The political upheaval had to do with who would control Scotland. The religious upheaval was to do with what we now call The Reformation.

Guided by the principles of scripture alone, grace alone, and faith alone, reformers all throughout Europe dating back to the 14th century had sought to make changes within the Roman Catholic Church. In Scotland, this movement came to a head when, in 1560, during a brief moment of political independence, the Scottish Parliament directed six protestant reformers to lay out the foundation of the Reformed Faith in Scotland. The resulting Scots Confession is, at times, harshly polemic even while expressing many of the core tenets to which the Presbyterian Church still assents.

Scholar Rev. Dr. David B. Calhoun identifies five “guideposts” or governing principles within the Scots Confession. They are an insistence on the glory of God alone, an appeal to the authority of the Word of God, an acknowledgement of the gift of Christ, a reminder of the gift of grace, and an outline of the marks of the church. In 1560, these five guideposts set the path of reformation in Scotland, and they continue to offer direction for our faith today.

The Confession

Consisting of twenty-five chapters, the Scots Confession is not as easily digestible as the Nicene Creed. So instead of reading it all at once, we will include portions of it with each daily prayer. If you’d like to read it all at once, you can find it online here: <https://www.fpchurch.org.uk/about-us/important-documents/the-scots-confession-1560/>

Scripture and Prayers

Each day during the week ahead return to this scripture passage. Read it silently. Read it aloud. Read it to your children, partner, friends, or dog. Read it differently every day if you want but hear the words again and again and let them sink into your being. If you have questions, thoughts, or insights write them down!

Let these words become a part of your life.

Ephesians 2:1-10

You were dead through the trespasses and sins in which you once lived, following the course of this world, following the ruler of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work among those who are disobedient. All of us once lived among them in the passions of our flesh, following the desires of flesh and senses, and we were by nature children of wrath, like everyone else.

But God, who is rich in mercy, out of the great love with which he loved us even when we were dead through our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ—by grace you have been saved— and raised us up with him and seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, so that in the ages to come he might show the immeasurable riches of his grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus. For by grace you have been saved through faith, and this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God— not the result of works, so that no one may boast. For we are what he has made us, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand to be our way of life.

Monday, March 6

“We confess and acknowledge one God alone, to whom we must cleave, whom alone we must serve, whom only we must worship, and in whom we put our trust.” - Scots Confession, Chapter I

There is so much, O God, that calls for our attention, that demands our focus and our allegiance. We're asked to swear by political parties and economic philosophies. We're asked to pledge ourselves to governments and principalities. A multitude of brands and teams and corporations would greatly appreciate it if we would place them before everything else in our lives. But during this season of Lent, we return our hearts, our lives, and our ultimate loyalty to You. You alone do we worship. You alone do we serve. Above and before all else, we pledge ourselves to you. Amen.

Contemplative question(s) for the day

What does it mean to place God before all other things in your life?

Tuesday, March 7

“That our Lord Jesus offered himself a voluntary sacrifice unto his Father for us, ... that he was wounded and plagued for our transgressions, that he, ... was condemned in the presence of an earthly judge, that we should be absolved before the judgment seat of our God” - Scots Confession, Chapter IX

We thank you, O God, for your willingness to come to us and join our imperfection. We thank you for the love so clearly demonstrated through the birth, teaching, death, and resurrection of Jesus. We confess that the cruel indignities that Jesus suffered continue to be suffered by people today. Many are mocked. Many are scarred. Many are falsely sentenced. Many have their lives ended too soon by abuses of power. The death of your Son brought with it a type of redemption. Let the world now be redeemed so that still more may not need to suffer such indignities. Amen.

Contemplative question(s) for the day

Whom do you see suffering? How might you help them?

Wednesday, March 8

“We undoubtedly believe, since it was impossible that the sorrows of death should retain in bondage the Author of life, that our Lord Jesus crucified, dead, and buried, who descended into hell, did rise again for our justification,... and brought life again to us who were subject to death and its bondage.” - Scots Confession, Chapter X

During this season when we move so close to the cross, we ask that you bring a new life to us. Give us again the courage to love you and our neighbors. Restore within us the joy of your creation. Heal our wounded hearts. Console our sorrow. Ease our anxiety. Assure us again that ear has not heard, nor eye seen, nor human imagination envisioned the consolation you intend for your servants. Amen.

Contemplative question(s) for the day

What new life is God calling you to live into?

Thursday, March 9

*“Our faith and its assurance do not proceed from flesh and blood, that is to say, from natural powers with us, but are the inspiration of the Holy Ghost... who sanctifies us and bring us into all truth by his own working”
-Scots Confession, Chapter XII*

We have not, O God, encountered you by our own merit. Whatever divine wisdom we have procured, whatever holy insight has illuminated our lives has not come by our own effort. The assurance of our salvation, the knowledge of our identity as your children, the calling to live as your disciples has come to us through your revelation. We thank you for the many varied ways that you reveal yourself. We remember with joy when Jesus breathed upon his followers and gifted them with the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Contemplative question(s) for the day

How might God be speaking to you these days?

Friday, March 10

“God has given to man his holy law, in which... those (works) which please him and which he has promised to reward are commanded.... (O)ne is done to honor God, the other to the profit of our neighbor, and both have the revealed will of God as their assurance.”

It is your grace that saves us, and our works are the gratitude we show. In thanksgiving for your tender mercy, help us to deal graciously with our neighbors, our strangers, and our so-called enemies. As we rejoice in your eternal love, help us to love you with the whole of our beings. Grant, O God, that our very selves may become living embodiments of the kindness, generosity, peace, patience, gentleness, and faithfulness that we have received. You have told us, O God, what is good. Help us to live humble lives overflowing with loving-kindness and insistent-justice. Amen.

Contemplative question(s) for the day

What good works are happening in the world today? How can you join them?

Saturday, March 11

“(W)e assuredly believe that by Baptism we are engrafted into Christ Jesus, to be made partakers of his righteousness, by which our sins are covered and remitted, and also that in the Supper rightly used, Christ Jesus is so joined with us that he becomes the very nourishment and food of our souls.” - Scots Confession, Chapter XXI

“Engrafted” means inseparable, right? It means that the two become one, don’t they? I looked it up. It means that you sustain me. That I draw my sustenance from your roots. That your bark eventually enfolds me, covers me, offers me its strength for my growth. You do more, O God, than nourish me. You give me shape, form, and purpose. Thank you, O God, for the many ways you give me life. Amen.

Contemplative question(s) for the day

How does God sustain you? How might you sustain others?

Thoughts and Notes From the Week

LIVING A LEGACY OF LOVE



FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH
HASTINGS, NEBRASKA

*WE
Believe*