

First Presbyterian Church



A Brief Statement of Faith

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.

A Brief Statment of Faith - Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)

Stop me if you've heard this one before, but in 1983, two Presbyterian denominations merged and decided that they should have a new statement of faith for their new denomination. As a result, in 1984, a committee was appointed that began the process of creating what would become A Brief Statement of Faith, a document that was officially adopted at the 203rd General Assembly in 1991.

A Brief Statement of Faith draws from scriptural witness as well as previous creeds and confessions of the church in its attempt to point to beliefs that form the core of the church's faith. If you'll recall, the authors of the Scots Confession invited anyone who had questions about their statements to write to them and ask for an explanation. The writers of A Brief Statement of Faith included their citations so that anyone could follow their reasoning.

In terms of structure, the statement follows the trinitarian formula found in 2 Corinthians 13:14 with sections first on Jesus the Christ, then God, and then the Holy Spirit. A Brief Statement also touches on many of the foundational aspects of reformed theology, including the sovereignty of God, the form and shape of human sin, the importance of Scripture, the role of the sacraments, the purpose of the Church, and the call of faith for believers.

A Brief Statement of Faith was intended, at least in part, to be an umbrella under which many people could find shelter. Its brevity—it is only 80 lines long—points towards and restates fundamental aspects of reformed theology while also allowing room for interpretation and application. Its brevity also allows for it to be easily used as a teaching tool or adapted as a worship resource, which is how it is often used in Presbyterian Churches today.

The Creed

I will admit, they did manage to create a statement of faith that is actually brief. However, due to its poetic structure, it is still too long to be reproduced here. If you'd like, you can find a full version here.

<https://www.presbyterianmission.org/what-we-believe/brief-statement-of-faith/>

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.

Romans 8:26-39

What then are we to say about these things? If God is for us, who is against us? He who did not withhold his own Son, but gave him up for all of us, will he not with him also give us everything else? Who will bring any charge against God's elect? It is God who justifies. Who is to condemn? It is Christ Jesus, who died, yes, who was raised, who is at the right hand of God, who indeed intercedes for us.

Who will separate us from the love of Christ? Will hardship, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? As it is written, "For your sake we are being killed all day long; we are accounted as sheep to be slaughtered." No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor rulers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Monday, March 27

"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"*

A Brief Statement, Lines 1-6 (reformatted)

I do not belong to my things. I do not belong to my schedule. I do not belong to my list. I belong to You. I do not belong to my team. I do not belong to my company. I do not belong to advertisers. I belong to You. I do not belong to my broken relationships. I do not belong to my shattered dreams. I do not belong to my grief. I belong to You. I do not belong to my anxiety. I do not belong to my fear. I do not belong to anyone else's assumptions of me. I belong to You, the Holy One of Israel, the mother who will not forsake her nursing child, the father who runs to welcome the prodigal. I belong to You. Amen.

Contemplative question(s) for the day

What freedom do you receive from belonging to God and to nothing else?

Tuesday, March 28

"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."*

A Brief Statement, Lines 9-18 (reformatted)

Look at all those action words, verbs I guess they're called: to preach, to teach, to bless, to heal, and to bind up. That's a full day right there. Add in eating and forgiving? Well, that's a full lifetime. To follow in such ways, to embrace the pathways of Jesus, would never leave us without something to do, some spot in the world where we could ply our trade. Help us, O God, to make these actions our own actions. Nurture and challenge us so that our days may be just as full as those of Jesus. Amen.

Contemplative question(s) for the day

What actions will describe your day? What verbs will describe your life?

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Wednesday, March 29

*"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."*

A Brief Statement of Faith, Lines 29-32

A love that has no limits, such is the love you, O God, have for the world. My love, on the other hand, seems to be limited. If I'm running late, I'm much less loving. Being tired or hungry seems to limit the reach of my love. My love is governed by how I was raised and what I watch and what I always thought was true. Your love calls for a world where all are welcomed and held in equal esteem. I believe in such a place. But help my unbelief as well. Amen.

Contemplative question(s) for the day

What limits your love for others? What has expanded it over the years?

Thursday, March 30

*"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."*

A Brief Statement of Faith, Lines 58-64

I thank you, O God, for the touchstones and guideposts you give your followers along the way, for communion that draws us to your table of mercy, for baptism that marks us with your grace, for the Bible that illumines our lives, for preaching that nurtures and challenges our faith, for a community that helps us through our lives. Thank you, O God, for all your means of salvation. Amen.

Contemplative question(s) for the day

How has the Holy Spirit shown you the faith?

Friday, March 31

*"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!'"*

A Brief Statement of Faith, Lines 72-76

Empower us, O God. When your words catch in our throats, give us your breath to speak them. When our feet hesitate along your path, give us your haste to move them. When our hearts respond too slowly to the pain of others, grant that your compassion may quicken them. Build us. Equip us. Send us into the world to lives that are holy and joyful. Amen.

Contemplative question(s) for the day

Where are you in need of God's empowerment?

Saturday, April 1

*"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."*

A Brief Statement of Faith, Lines 77-79

We do not belong to our things. We do not belong to our schedules. We do not belong to our lists. We belong to You. We do not belong to our squabbles. We do not belong to our alignments. We do not belong to our agendas. We belong to You. We do not belong to my broken relationships. We do not belong to our shattered dreams. We do not belong to our grief. We belong to You. We belong to the Christ who redeemed us. We belong to the Spirit that guides us. We belong to one another. Thanks be to You. Amen.

Contemplative question(s) for the day?

What seeks to separate us from God? What seeks to separate us from one another?

*WE
Believe*

Thoughts and Notes From the Week

Holy Week

Maundy Thursday - April 6 at 7 p.m.

Honoring the Last Supper - Sanctuary

Good Friday - April 7 at 7 p.m.

The Shadow of the Cross - Sanctuary

Prayer Vigil - Good Friday through Easter Morning

Chapel or at Home

Easter Sunday - April 9 at 8:30 & 10:30

Both services to feature choir, bells and brass

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LIVING A LEGACY OF LOVE



FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH
HASTINGS, NEBRASKA

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