

AFFIRMATIONS OF FAITH

The Apostle Paul challenges Christians of all ages as follows: *“I urge you, brothers, to watch out for those who cause divisions and put obstacles in your way that are contrary to the teaching you have learned”* (Romans 16:17). Therefore we affirm our belief in the historic Reformed Christian faith given in the Scriptures, commit ourselves to live according to it, and reject all that is contrary to the Word of God. Furthermore, we affirm this testimony concerning the following points over which uncertainty has sometimes arisen.

I. CONCERNING THE WORD OF GOD

A. Foundation of Our Faith and Practice

WE AFFIRM:

1. That the foundation for all that the church believes and teaches both in faith and practice is the infallible and inerrant Word of God written, the Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments.
2. That the Scriptures possess absolute authority and that the Ecumenical Creeds and the Three Forms of Unity, our confessions, possess authority subordinate to the Scriptures in our churches.
3. That the Holy Spirit will lead, guide, and direct His church always in accord with and never in ways which run contrary to the Word of God.

John 17:17; Matthew 4:4; 5:17-20; 2 Timothy 3:14-17; Hebrews 4:12; Psalm 119:105; Belgic Confession Articles 2, 3, 5, 7, 29

WE REJECT:

1. “With all our hearts whatsoever does not agree with this infallible rule” (Belgic Confession Article 7).
2. The error of those who teach that the Holy Spirit leads, guides, and directs His church contrary to the Word of God, or that He provides new divine revelation in addition to the Word of God (Deuteronomy 12:32).
3. The efforts of all who set aside or subtract from God’s Word (in the name of evangelism, for example), because these efforts invalidate the church’s total witness to the world and make obedience to the Great Commission impossible.

WE COMMIT OURSELVES:

1. To preach and teach the whole counsel of the Word of God as our fundamental duty, to make, nurture, and equip disciples of Jesus Christ, and to obey the Great Commission joyfully.
2. To live according to the Word of God in all of life: in the context of our interpersonal relationships, our families, our churches and schools, our daily callings and tasks in the marketplace.
3. To submit to the final authority of the Word of God instead of the rules and regulations of those who “ascribe more power and authority” unto themselves “than to the Word of God” (Belgic Confession Article 29).

B. The Inerrancy of Scripture

WE AFFIRM:

1. That the Scripture is the very Word of God written. Since God does not lie nor does He make mistakes, His Word cannot contain error. Scripture is inerrant and authoritative. “Scripture in its whole extent and in all parts is the infallible and inerrant Word of God” (*Acts of Synod 1979*, p. 127).
2. That Scripture’s primary subject is the glory of God, a central demonstration of which is the message of redemption. Since the Scripture’s authority, however, extends to all that it actually teaches, all of Scripture’s subject matter is God’s Word and always true. When Scripture speaks concerning matters of history, science, ethics or anything else, it is true and authoritative, and it governs our thinking in these areas.

3. That the infallibility of Scripture necessarily implies the inerrancy of Scripture.

2 Timothy 3:16, 17; 2 Peter 1:20, 21; Mark 13:31; Titus 1:1-3; Hebrews 6:16-20; Revelation 22:18, 19; Belgic Confession Articles 3, 7; Acts of Synod 1979, pp. 127-128

WE REJECT:

1. The error of those who teach that the Scripture is not itself in its entirety the Word of God; but becomes the Word of God, or contains the Word of God.
2. The error of those who teach that because of the secondary or human factor in the Scripture’s authorship there are errors, contradictions, or discrepancies in the Word of God.

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3. The error of those who teach that Scripture's authority only extends to matters of salvation but not to the Scripture's references to matters of history, science, ethics, or anything else.
4. The error of those who teach that we need not study God's World as well as God's Word in matters of history, science, ethics, or other areas of general revelation, or who claim that Scripture provides a complete description of such areas.

WE COMMIT OURSELVES:

1. To teach diligently and defend faithfully the Word of God as infallible and inerrant, and to reject all teaching that militates against this doctrine.
2. To believe and teach all that the Word of God teaches, accenting the primary message of Scripture that there is redemption for us from sin only through Jesus Christ.
3. To preach the law as a teacher of sin and rule of gratitude.

II. THE CHURCH OF GOD

A. Its Savior

WE AFFIRM:

1. That the redemptive work of Jesus Christ was unique and He remains the only way of salvation, our only comfort in life and death.
2. That we are made right with God by grace alone through faith alone on account of Christ alone.
Acts 4:12; 1 Timothy 2:5; John 14:6; 2 Timothy 1:8-12; Hebrews 10:11-14; Romans 5:1-2, 9-11; 8:1-4; Ephesians 2:1-10; Belgic Confession Articles 20, 21, 22, 23, 26

WE REJECT:

1. The error of those who teach that there may be salvation apart from inclusion in the covenant of grace mediated by Jesus Christ, for this is a subversion of the gospel.
2. The error of those who teach that the ground of salvation is in any part the work of those who are saved.

WE COMMIT OURSELVES:

1. To exalt the Son of God, our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, to whom the name above all names and all authority in heaven and earth has been given.
2. To proclaim this gospel of Christ to our world as the only answer to mankind's sin, rebellion, and separation from God.

B. Its Worship

WE AFFIRM:

1. That the elements in the worship of the church and the content of these activities must be done for the glory of God as prescribed by the Word of God.
Exodus 20:4; Deuteronomy 5:8-10; Leviticus 10:1-7; 1 Samuel 15:22, 23; John 4:23, 24; Heidelberg Catechism Q/A 96; Belgic Confession Article 32

WE REJECT:

1. The error of those who confuse worship with entertainment, who substitute man-centered activities for God-centered worship, who neglect law or gospel to remove the offense of the Word, who preach or teach "self-esteem" or self-improvement as alternatives to repentance and faith, or who "worship Him in any other way than He has commanded in His Word" (Heidelberg Catechism, Answer 96).

WE COMMIT OURSELVES:

1. To promote in worship only that which brings glory to God and that which He has commanded in His Word, as the author of Hebrews says, "Therefore, since we are receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken, let us be thankful, and so worship God acceptably with reverence and awe" (Hebrews 12:28).

C. Its Offices

WE AFFIRM:

1. That men and women equally bear the image of God and are to serve Him with all their gifts according to His specific callings to them.
2. That from creation men were given authority leadership in the family and in the church.
3. That Christ, as He makes clear in His Word, does not call women to the offices of minister, elder, and deacon in the church, and therefore the church may not ordain them to these offices.

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4. That the purpose of the spiritual gifts given to men and women in Christ is not self-fulfillment but service to others, to the end that God receives all the glory.
5. That Christ rules His church through the officers He calls to govern it according to the regulations of His Word.

1 Timothy 2 & 3; Titus 1; 1 Corinthians 14; Belgic Confession Articles 30, 31; Acts of Synod 1994, pp. 505-508, 513-516

WE REJECT:

1. The error of those who teach that permitting women to be ordained as office bearers in the church (minister, elder, and deacon) is a position which honors the Scriptures as the infallible Word of God.
2. The error of those who deny these offices to women for reasons which are contrary to the Scriptures such as bigotry, male-chauvinism, or tradition.

WE COMMIT OURSELVES:

1. To develop and use the gifts and abilities of all of God's people - men, women, and our youth - in accord with the Word of God and for the good of God's kingdom and people.
2. To preserve the holiness and authority of the offices of the church in accord with the Word of God.

D. Its Unity

WE AFFIRM:

1. That the church is the universal body of Christ. The basis of its unity is not a denominational name, ethnicity, or similarity of background, but solely the Lord Jesus Christ, the Word of God, and the doctrines which the Word teaches.
2. That God's people are accountable to admonish and encourage one another, according to the Word of God, both on the local level and whenever possible on a wider basis.
3. That each church must seek ecclesiastical fellowship and union with other churches who faithfully adhere to the Word of God, but only with such bodies.
4. That, though the local church comes primarily under the authority of the local elders, the rulers of each church are also accountable through broader assemblies to other elders who live and rule in accord with God's Word.

Ephesians 2:11-22; 4:1-16; Acts 15; 1 Corinthians 5-6:11; 11:17-34; 12:12-31; Belgic Confession Articles 27, 28, 29

WE REJECT:

1. The error of those who teach that there is no accountability for the church beyond the local congregation.
2. The error of those who teach that we should not seek ecclesiastical fellowship with those who believe and adhere faithfully to the Word of God and Reformed confessions, and who are therefore content to remain by themselves.

WE COMMIT OURSELVES:

1. To demonstrate openly in our world that we are part of the body of Christ by a pure and holy lifestyle, by our words and deeds, by being and sending missionaries of the gospel, and by seeking unity with believers everywhere who faithfully adhere to God's Word.
2. To submit ourselves to one another out of reverence to Christ and before His Word, and to hold one another accountable to live, act, teach and minister in accordance with that Word.
3. To seek, where possible, ecclesiastical fellowship and union with all who believe and faithfully adhere to the Word of God and Reformed Confessions.
4. To pray for the unity of the church and its faithfulness to the Word of God throughout the world.
5. To call churches to repentance which do not adhere faithfully to God's Word, and sever relationships with churches which do not repent after repeated admonitions, lest by our association we share in condoning their sin.
6. To the principle expressed in the Church Order Article 65, "No church shall in any way lord it over another church, and no office-bearers shall lord it over other office bearers."

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III. THE LIFE OF GOD'S PEOPLE

A. Great Commission

WE AFFIRM:

1. That it is a fundamental duty of God's people to strive to make and nurture disciples for Jesus Christ in joyful adherence to the Great Commission.
2. That the task of fulfilling the Great Commission can only be done effectively in our community and world if we stand firmly on the teachings of the Scripture, and if all of God's people, not simply a select few, actually are engaged in being Christ's witnesses.
3. That faithfulness in fulfilling this Great Commission is not dependant on marketing methods or techniques which minimize Biblical standards for worship and evangelism.

Matthew 10:32, 33; 28:16-20; Mark 8:38; Luke 9:26; 2 Timothy 2:12; 1 Peter 2:1-12; 3:15; Acts 1:8; Heidelberg Catechism Q/A 54.

WE REJECT:

1. The error of those who teach that missions is not properly the concern of the church or its members.
2. The error of those who teach that by trusting in or using marketing methods and techniques which minimize or undermine Biblical standards for worship or evangelism they are being faithful in fulfilling the Great Commission.
3. The error of those who seek to attract people to Christ through entertainment and proceed to teach them only concepts which are designed not to offend non-Christians.
4. The error of those who teach or defend that all will be saved (universalism) or that all religions are valid (theological pluralism).

WE COMMIT OURSELVES:

1. To fulfill this Great Commission by repenting of our failure to be Christ's witnesses adequately in the past and by making His Commission a priority for the life of the church and its members.
2. To fulfill this Great Commission by training and equipping ourselves and others to accomplish this mandate better.
3. To pray fervently and compassionately for our lost world and neighbors.
4. To employ those methods, and only those methods, for outreach which conform to the Scripture and the Reformed confessions.

B. The Christian life

WE AFFIRM:

1. That Jesus Christ is the Lord of all of life, not simply of a particular aspect of the Christian's life.
2. That every part of our hearts and lives must be brought into conformity to the Word of the Lord of life.
3. That no part of life is spiritually neutral, but that Christ is the covenant Head and Lord of every endeavor of the Christian: education, business, labor, family, recreation, political activity, social activity, and so forth.
4. That the Christian life begins with Christ's gift of regeneration. that we embrace this life by repentance and faith as our response to the gospel, that this repentance and faith will characterize the Christian throughout this life, and that we are unable to submit any part of our lives to Christ unless they continue to be present.

Ephesians 1:15-23; 4:1-6; 1 Corinthians 6:12-20; 10:31; Matthew 5; 6:10; John 3:1-21; Belgic Confession Article 29

WE REJECT:

1. The error of those who teach that some vocations or parts of life are holier than others, or that some vocations or parts of life are not subject to the claims of Jesus Christ.
2. The error of those who teach and live as if the Christian faith does not or should not control what we do in daily life.
3. The error of those who teach that kingdom living can exist where there is no regeneration, or no personal holiness.

WE COMMIT OURSELVES:

1. To acknowledge Christ's exalted position as Lord and to humble ourselves before Him by obeying His Word in every aspect of daily life
2. To honor Christ as Lord, and covenant head, and King by educating our children (wherever possible) from a specifically Christian perspective; by living as families and individuals, as husbands and wives, fathers

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and mothers, men and women, children and young adults in obedience to God's Word; and by using our gifts and abilities to fulfill our callings in society all to the glory of God.

3. To live a holy lifestyle of thanksgiving in accordance with God's Word.
4. To proclaim the Lord Jesus Christ to our churches and world as our Savior from ongoing sin, and as our only help who enables us to submit to His lordship.

IV. CRITICAL MORAL/ETHICAL ISSUES AND CONTROVERSIES FACING THE CHURCH TODAY

A. Homosexuality

WE AFFIRM:

1. That homosexual desires and actions in any context, whether promiscuous relations or so called relationships of troth, are a result of the fall and are sinful.
2. That those who are guilty of these desires and actions or who argue their legitimacy must, like all sinners, be clearly called to repentance and faith.
3. That the church acts contrary to love for God and its neighbor when it declares morally good or neutral anything which God has declared sinful.

1 Corinthians 6:9-11; Leviticus 18:22; Romans 1:26, 27; Genesis 19

WE REJECT:

1. The error of those who teach that people do not have to repent of homosexual desires or actions because these actions and desires are not sinful, or because such actions and desires are morally neutral.
2. The error of those who would ordain to ecclesiastical office those who practice or advocate homosexuality as a legitimate lifestyle.
3. The error of those who would have no compassion for the homosexual offender.

WE COMMIT OURSELVES:

1. To provide loving support, patient encouragement, and care for those struggling against homosexual temptations, and to encourage them to seek forgiveness and grace to overcome these temptations.
2. To disallow ecclesiastical office to those who practice or advocate homosexuality as a legitimate lifestyle, and to those who deny that "homosexuality – as explicit homosexual practice – must be condemned as incompatible with obedience to the will of God as revealed in Holy Scripture" (*Acts of Synod 1973*, p. 52).
3. To discipline those who deny that the Bible condemns homosexual activity and desires.

B. Feminine Language for God

WE AFFIRM:

1. That God alone has the sole right and authority to tell us how He ought to be addressed by His church.
2. That persons of the Trinity receive masculine reference in the Scriptures, not as a result of a cultural bias of a previous age, but because this is how God chooses to reveal and characterize Himself.

Matthew 6:9; Luke 1:34, 35; John 4:23, 24; Matthew 3:16-17

WE REJECT:

1. The error of those who teach that the Scriptures or Confessions should be changed to reflect gender neutral titles in their references to God.
2. The error of those who teach that it is acceptable to substitute the term "goddess" for God, "Mother" for Father in the Lord's Prayer, or to call Christ a sister, and all such similar terms which are unbiblical.

WE COMMIT OURSELVES:

1. To uphold the full revelation of God, and to seek to understand carefully all that He has revealed about Himself in the Scriptures including His character, His attributes, and His names.
2. To be mindful, honoring, and respectful of the way God has characterized Himself in His Word in our prayers, writings, speech, teaching, preaching, and educational material

C. Abortion

WE AFFIRM:

1. That God's gift to us of human life is so precious in God's sight that He is the only one who may decide when human life shall end.
2. That the unborn child from conception is a human being in the image of God.
3. That intentional abortion except to prevent the death of the mother is a grievous sin.

Psalms 139:13; Jeremiah 1:5; Exodus 20:13; Acts of Synod 1972, pp. 63-64; Acts of Synod 1976, p. 64

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WE REJECT:

1. The error of those who teach that the unborn child is not, or may be less than a human being.
2. The error of those who teach that abortion is not the taking of the life of a human person.

WE COMMIT OURSELVES:

1. To teach and exemplify the goodness of sexual relations only within marriage.
2. To honor and protect all human life from conception on.
3. To provide support services for pregnant women who find it difficult to keep their children in order to encourage them to choose a live birth.
4. To support all moral efforts to protect the life of the unborn in our land and throughout the world.

D. Genesis

WE AFFIRM:

1. That the Book of Genesis was written by Moses under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit and in all its parts is an accurate, historical presentation.
2. That Genesis 1 teaches that God created everything out of nothing and that He created it good.
3. That God created the first man, Adam, from the dust of the ground and the first woman, Eve, from that man. The first man was a unique creation of God, not descending from any previously existing creature. All human beings are descended from these first parents.
4. That at creation each creature was made according to its own kind, thus ruling out the notion that the various creatures evolved from one form of life (Genesis 1, I Corinthians 15:39).

Genesis 1-11; Hebrews 1:2, 10; Hebrews 11:3; Mark 10:6; Luke 24:27; Belgic Confession Articles 2, 3, 4, 9, 10, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 23; Acts of Synod 1982, pp. 107-108; Acts of Synod 1991, p.767

WE REJECT:

1. The error of those who teach that the first 11 chapters of Genesis are not the inerrant record of historical factual events of the beginning of our world, but are myth or only a literary device designed to teach religious truth.
2. The error of those who teach that Adam was not a historical figure, and the error of those who teach that Adam was not the first human being, that he descended from "evolutionary forebears of the human race" (*Acts of Synod 1991, p. 767*), or that he was not a direct creation of God.

WE COMMIT OURSELVES:

1. To understand and teach the Book of Genesis, not only as an accurate account of the beginning of the world, but also as the foundation for many of the Reformed, Christian doctrines so precious to and important for the church.
2. To respect the uniqueness of human beings as the only image-bearers of God.

By these statements may believers more readily discern truth from error, be instructed in the Word, witness effectively to our world, defend against error, and become instruments in preserving and promoting the true unity of Christ's church in accord with the Word of God.