

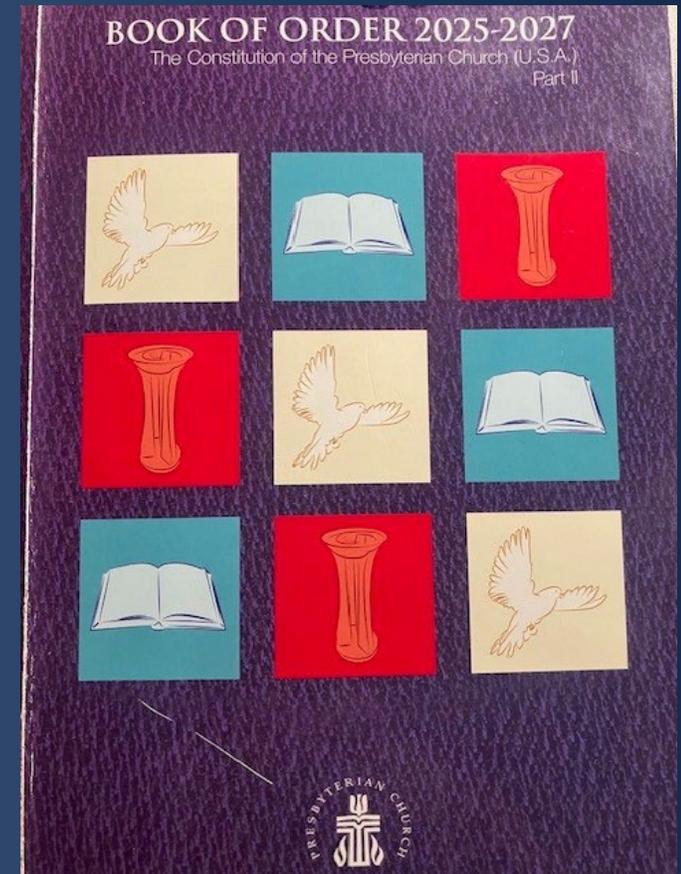
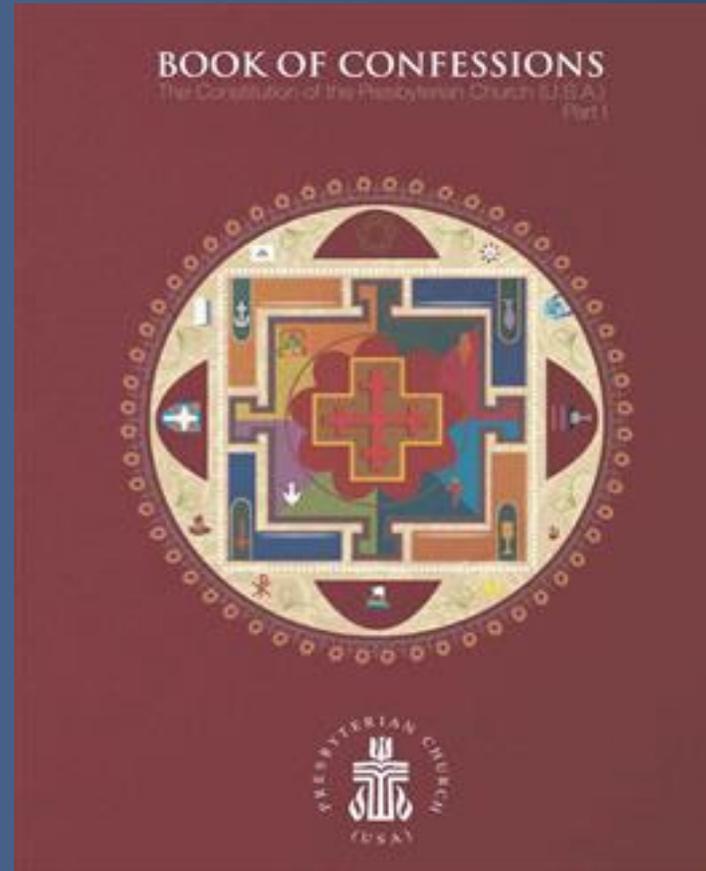
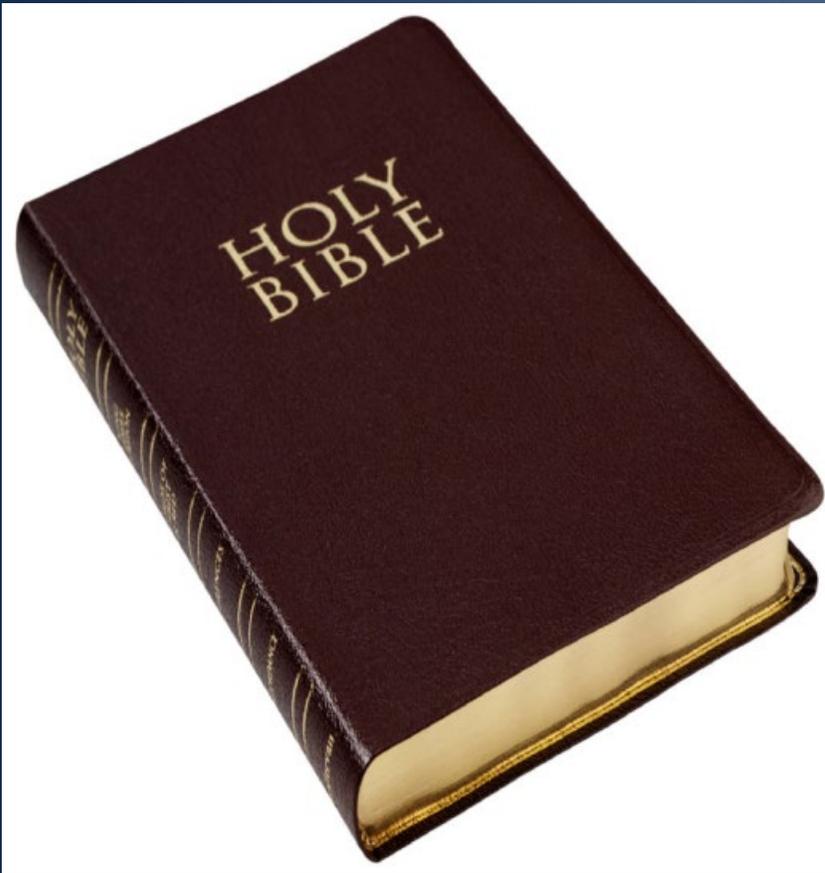
# Officers Training

The Book of Confessions

February 2, 2026

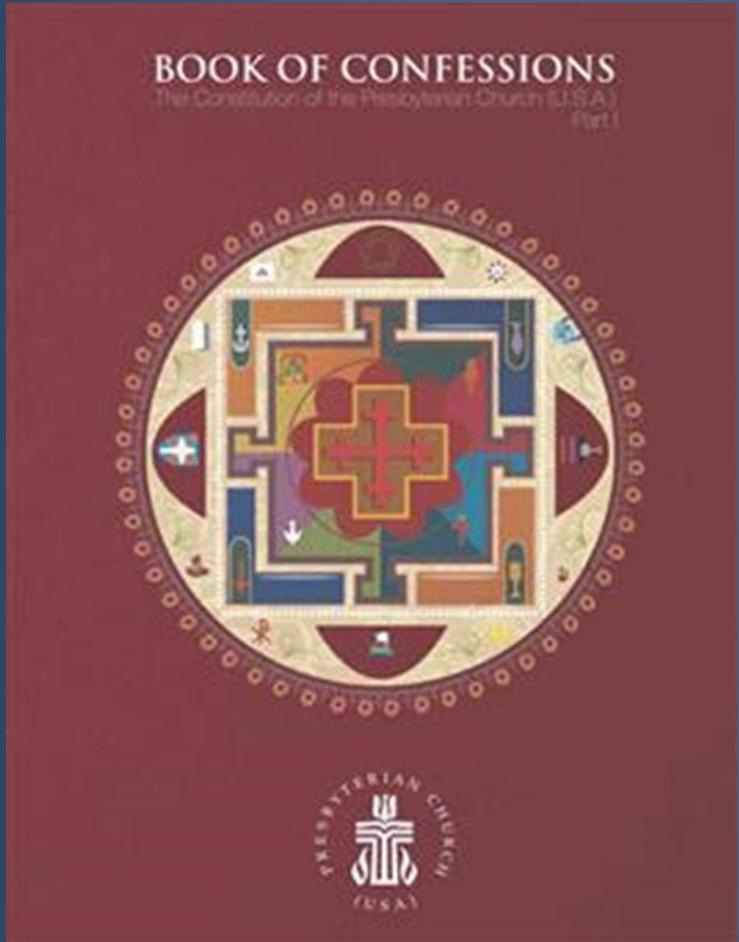


# People of the Books

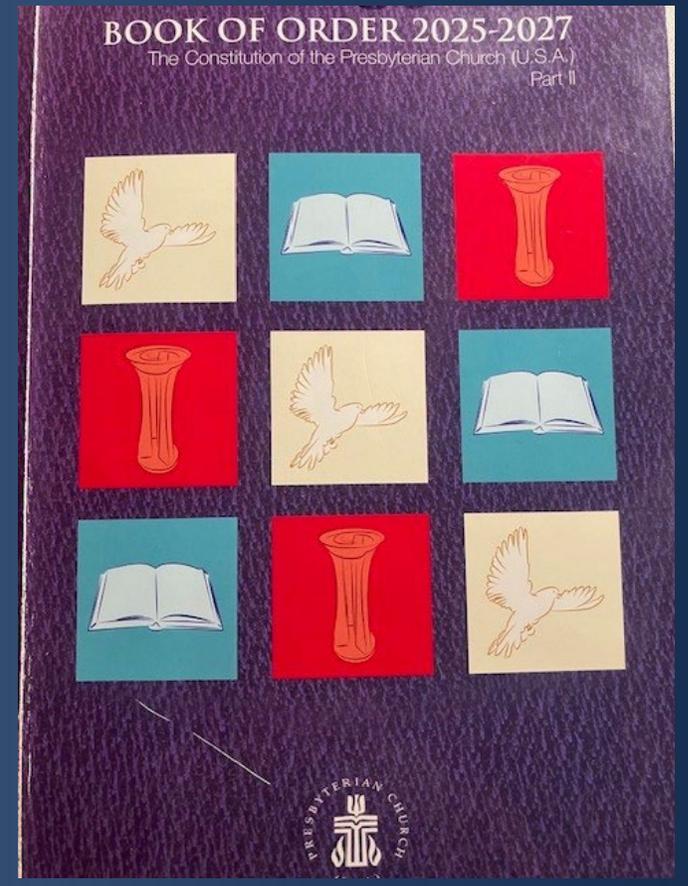


# Constitution of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)

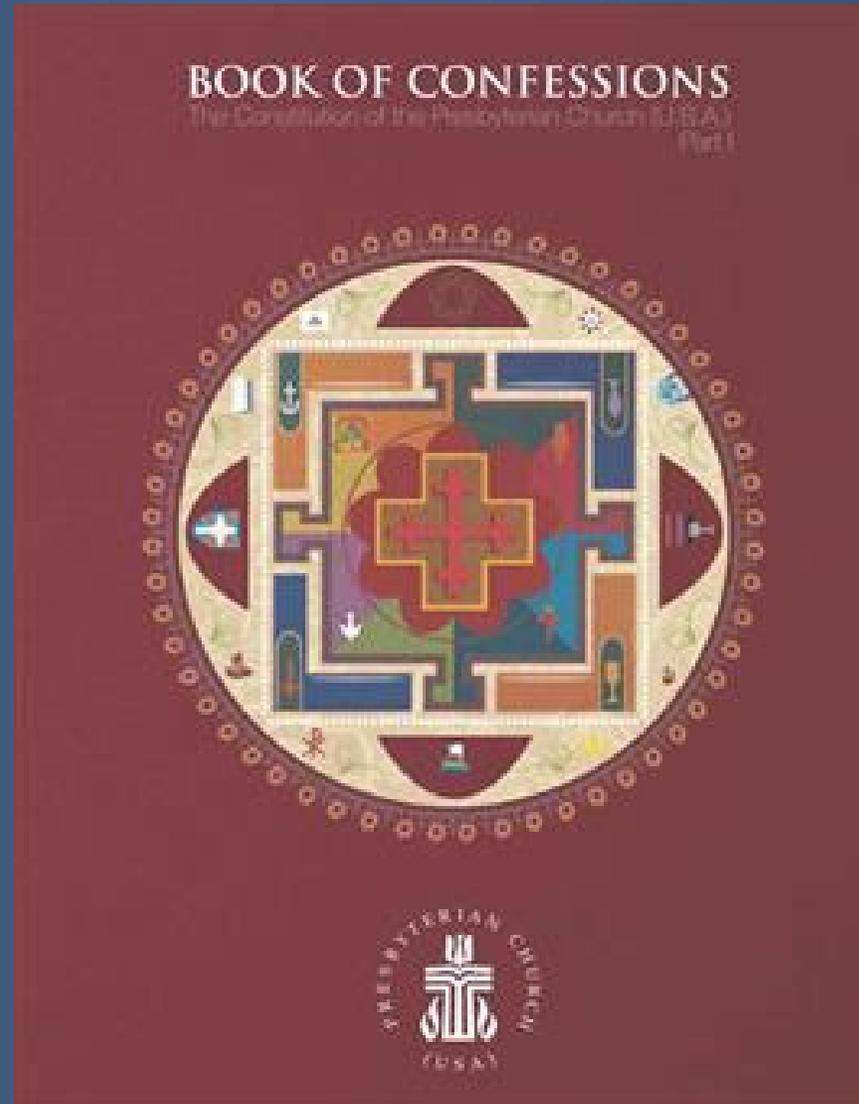
- Part I.



- Part II.



# The Book of Confessions

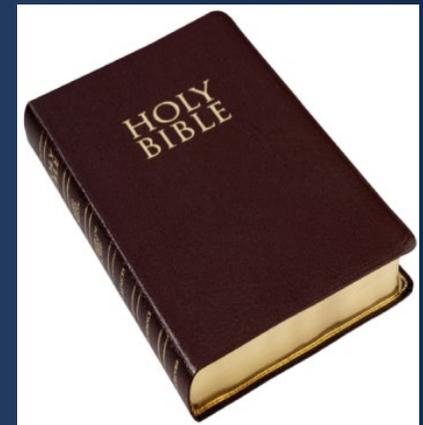
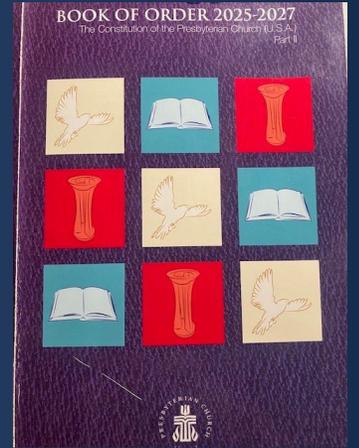


# Foundations of Presbyterian Polity

- F-2.01 The Purpose of the Confessional Statements
- In these statements the church declares to its members and to the world who and what it is, what it believes, and what it resolves to do.

# Foundations of Presbyterian Polity

- F-2.02 The Confessions as Subordinate Standards
- These confessional statements are subordinate standards in the church, subject to the authority of Jesus Christ, the Word of God, as the Scriptures bear witness to him.



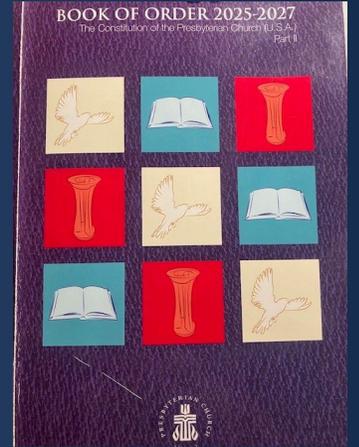
# Foundations of Presbyterian Polity`

- F-2.02 The Confessional as Subordinate Standards
- *Ecclesia reformata, semper reformanda secundum verbum Dei*
- “The church reformed, always to be reformed according to the Word of God” in te power of the Spirit.



# Foundations of Presbyterian Polity

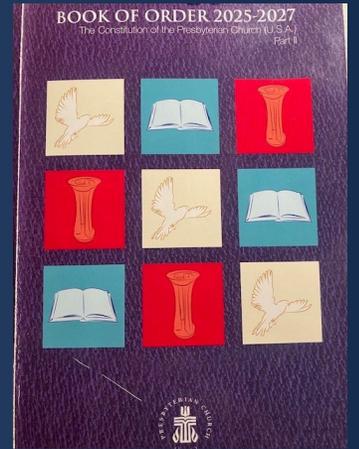
- F-2.03 The Confessions as Statements of the Faith of the Church Catholic



The confessions express the faith of the one, holy, catholic, and apostolic Church in the recognition of the canonical Scriptures and the formulation and adoption of the ecumenical creeds, notably the Nicene and Apostles' Creeds and their definition of the mystery of the triune God and of the incarnation of the eternal Word of God in Jesus Christ.

# Foundations of Presbyterian Polity

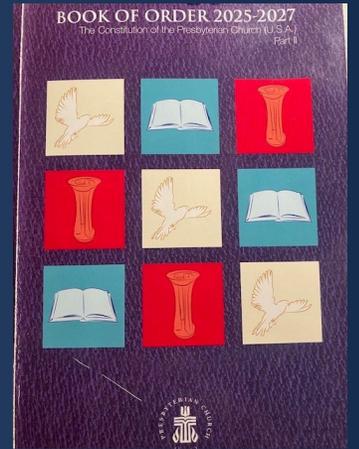
- F-2.04 The Confessions as Statements of the Protestant Reformation



The focus of these affirmations is God's grace revealed in Jesus Christ as revealed in the Scriptures. The Protestant watchwords – **grace alone, faith alone, Scripture alone**- embody principles of understanding that continue to guide and motivate the people of God in the life of faith.

# Foundations of Presbyterian Polity

- F-2.05 The Confessions as Statements of the Faith of the Protestant Reformation

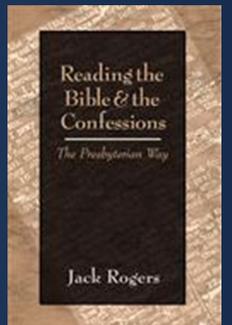


- \*The sovereignty of God
- \*Election of the people for service as well as salvation
- \*God brings us together in Covenant life
- \*Faithful stewardship of God's creation that shuns ostentation
- \*Human tendency to idolatry and tyranny (sin)
- \*Call to an obedient life, transforming society and seeking justice

# Scripture is interpreted by the confessions

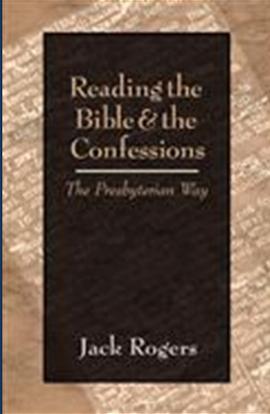
- The Confessions unanimously direct our attention to Jesus Christ as our Savior and Sovereign
- The Confessions point us to the overarching themes, doctrines, and major topics that Christians in every age have discovered in Scripture and found essential to their guidance in living the Christian life

- Jack Rogers, *Reading the Bible and the Confessions the Presbyterian Way*, p.59



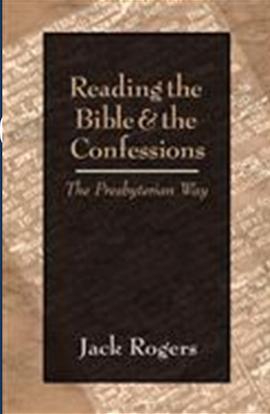
# Guidelines for Interpreting the Confessions

- 1. The Redemptive Gospel of Jesus Christ is the Central Theme of the BoC as it is of Scripture
- 2. The plain text of each confession must be interpreted in its own historical and cultural context to understand its original meaning
- 3. The Holy Spirit leads us to clearer and more complete understanding of the truth of Scripture and thus the BoC



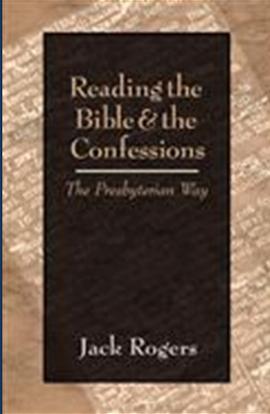
# Guidelines for Interpreting the Confessions

- 4. Overarching themes that run through the BoC, from the ancient creeds to the most contemporary statement of faith, are the rule of faith
- 5. The church, as a rule of love, has rejected, and should continue to reject, cultural norms that have been used to oppress people in the name of confessional conformity



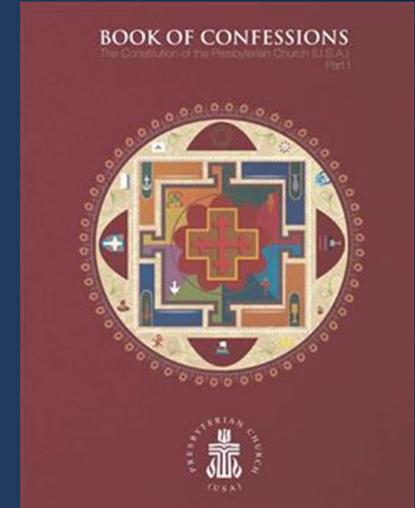
# Guidelines for Interpreting the Confessions

- 6. The church needs to do careful study to distinguish between the appropriate theological application and cultural context of confessional statements
- 7. A study of the whole BoC is an instructive resource for Presbyterians



# Functions of the Confessions

- Worship
- Defense of Orthodoxy
- Instruction
- Rallying-point in times of danger and persecution
- Church order and discipline



# Historical Limitations of the Confessions

- Written before the discoveries of modern science
- Shaped by the normative familial, social, economic, cultural, and political patterns of a particular period of history

# What the Book of Confessions is...

- A guide for how Presbyterians interpret scripture from a Reformed perspective
- A series of statements of faith
- Half of the constitution of the PCUSA (along with the Book of Order)
- A product of the merger between the northern and southern Presbyterian churches in 1983

## What the Book of Confessions is...

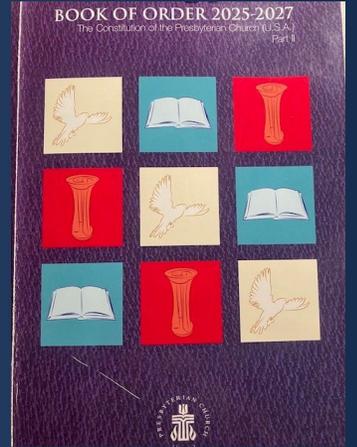
- Filled with statements both historic and contemporary
  - ◆ Coming from a particular time and place
  - ◆ Guiding us today in our interpretation of scripture and preaching
- A sign that the PCUSA is a confessional church

# Creeds and Confessions Vary in Terms of Purposes, Forms, and Functions

- Short summaries of Christian belief
- Comprehensive statements (detailed expositions of Christian theology, covering many doctrines)
- Statements on specific issues in reply to specific crises or problems by witnessing to the gospel

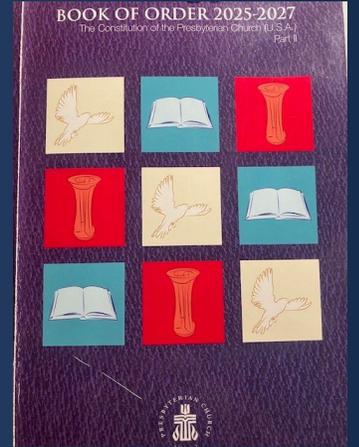
# Amending the Book of Confessions

- G-6.03
- Send to the church for study
- GA appoints a committee
- After report to GA, if approved by GA sent to the presbyteries
- Requires 2/3 vote of presbyteries
- Approved by subsequent GA



# Ordination Questions

- W-4.4003
- Do you sincerely receive and adopt the essential tenets of the Reformed faith as expressed in the confessions of our church as authentic and reliable expressions of what Scripture leads us to believe and do, and will you be instructed and led by these confessions as you lead the people of God?



# The Book of Confessions

- **The Nicene Creed** (4<sup>th</sup> century)
- **The Apostles' Creed** (2<sup>nd</sup>-9<sup>th</sup> centuries)
- **The Scots Confession** (1560; Scotland)
- **The Heidelberg Catechism** (1563; Germany)
- **The Second Helvetic Confession** (1566; Switzerland)
- **The Westminster Confession of Faith** (1647; England)
- **The Shorter Catechism** (1647; England)
- **The Larger Catechism** (1647; England)
- **The Theological Declaration of Barmen** (1934; Germany)
- **The Confession of 1967** (1967; United States)
- **A Brief Statement of Faith** (1991; United States)
- **Confession of Belhar** (2016; South Africa)

# Banners

- Port Jervis Presbyterian Church, New York
- First Presbyterian Church, Fort Charlotte, Florida



# Nicene Creed

325 Constantine, the Roman emperor sought to address disputes on the nature of Christ



# Nicene Creed

**The Cross which is also a sword** - A symbol for the Emperor Constantine, and his successors, because he called the ecumenical council .

The cross is central here because the doctrine of Christ is central in the Creed.

**The Triangle and the Three symbols with it** - The doctrine of the Trinity formalized in the Nicene Creed.

**The Hand Reaching Down** - God the Father.

**The CHI RHO Monogram** - Christ - the first two letters of the Greek word for Christ, used by Constantine on shields and helmets of his army.

**The Dove** - The Holy Spirit.

**The Crowns** - The rule and glory of God



# Nicene Creed



We believe in one God, the Father, the Almighty, maker of heaven and earth, of all that is, seen and unseen.

We believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ, the only Son of God, eternally begotten of the Father, God from God, Light from Light, true God from true God, begotten, not made, of one Being with the Father; through him all things were made.

For us and for our salvation he came down from heaven, was incarnate of the Holy Spirit and the Virgin Mary and became truly human.

For our sake he was crucified under Pontius Pilate; he suffered death and was buried.

# Nicene Creed



On the third day he rose again in accordance with the Scriptures; he ascended into heaven and is seated at the right hand of the Father. He will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead, and his kingdom will have no end.

We believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life, who proceeds from the Father and the Son, who with the Father and the Son is worshiped and glorified, who has spoken through the prophets.

We believe in one holy catholic and apostolic Church.

We acknowledge one baptism for the forgiveness of sins.

We look for the resurrection of the dead, and the life of the world to come. Amen.

# Apostles' Creed

Not written by the apostles

In a time when most Christians were illiterate, oral repetition of the Apostles' Creed, along with the Lord's Prayer, and the Ten Commandments, helped preserve and transmit the faith

Plays no role in Eastern Orthodoxy

An early form was first formulated in Rome around 180, finalized by the 9<sup>th</sup> Century



# Apostles' Creed

**The Somber Brown Color** - The difficulty and rigor of early Christianity under persecution; also, the monastic tradition.

**The Purple Arches** - The entrances to caves or catacombs, where early Christians met in secret: also, the shape of Gothic church windows.

**The Fish** - An ancient symbol for the Christian faith, perhaps a secret code mark; Letters of the Greek word for fish can be used as first letters in the phrase, "Jesus Christ God's Son Savior."

**The Chalice** - The Lord's Supper, and thus the earnest and simple fellowship of the early church.

**The Upside-Down Cross** - Peter, chief of the apostles, who in legend, is said to have been crucified upside down because he thought himself unworthy of a death like his Master's.



# Apostles' Creed

- I believe in God, the Father almighty, Creator of heaven and earth, and in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord, who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died and was buried; he descended into hell; on the third day he rose again from the dead; he ascended into heaven, and is seated at the right hand of God the Father almighty; from there he will come to judge the living and the dead. I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy catholic Church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and life everlasting. Amen.



# Apostles' Creed

- Baptismal Creed
- W-3.0405



## W-3.0405 Profession of Faith

Candidates for Baptism or their parents shall renounce evil and profess their faith in Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior. Those who are being baptized upon profession of faith declare their intent to participate actively and responsibly in the church's worship and mission. Together with the congregation they profess their faith, using the Apostles' Creed, the baptismal affirmation of the early Church.

# Scots' Confession

- Commissioned by the Scottish Parliament after declaring Scotland a Protestant nation
- Written in by John Knox and 5 other leaders of the Protestant Reformation in Scotland
- Was the first Subordinate Standard for the Protestant church in Scotland.
- While the Parliament approved the Confession, Mary, Queen of Scots, refused to agree, and the Confession was not enacted as law until 1567.
- It remained the Confession of the Church of Scotland until it was superseded by the Westminster Confession of Faith in 1648.
- Emphasis on the providence of God and calls for trust and commitment in turbulent times



# Scots' Confession

- **The Blue of the Shield** - The background color of the Church of Scotland.

**The Tartan, X-shaped Cross** - A form called St. Andrew's Cross, he being the apostle who brought the gospel to Scotland. The tartan, or plaid, is that of the Hamilton clan in honor of the first martyr of the Scottish Reformation, Patrick Hamilton.

**The Celtic Cross** - Another ancient form associated with Christians of the British Isles.

**The Ship** - A symbol for the Church; the Confession contains a remarkable, strong doctrine of the Church.

**The Bible and the Sword** - Paul called the word of God "The sword of the Spirit," and the sharpness of John Knox's preaching of the Word was major power for reformation in Scotland.

**The Burning Bush which is Not Consumed** - Reminding us of Moses' Sinai experience, thus a symbol of God's presence and call: the chief symbol of the Church of Scotland.



# Scots Confession (1560)

- 3.01 We confess and acknowledge one God alone, to whom alone we must cleave, whom alone we must serve, whom only we must worship, and in whom alone we put our trust. Who is eternal, infinite, immeasurable, incomprehensible, omnipotent, invisible; one in substance and yet distinct in three persons, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost. By whom we confess and believe all things in heaven and earth, visible and invisible, to have been created, to be retained in their being, and to be ruled and guided by his inscrutable providence for such end as his eternal wisdom, goodness, and justice have appointed, and to the manifestation of his own glory.

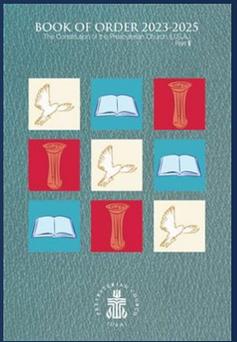


# Scots Confession 3.18

- The notes of the true Kirk, therefore, we believe, confess, avow to be:
- first, the true preaching of the Word of God, in which God has revealed himself to us, as the writings of the prophets and apostles declare;
- secondly, the right administration of the sacraments of Christ Jesus, with which must be associated the Word and promise of God to seal and confirm them in our hearts;
- and lastly, ecclesiastical discipline uprightly ministered, as God's Word prescribes, whereby vice is repressed and virtue nourished.



# The Notes of the Reformed Church



Where Christ is, there is the true Church. Since the earliest days of the Reformation, Reformed Christians have marked the presence of the true Church wherever



The Word of God is rightly preached and heard



The Sacraments are rightly administered, and



Ecclesiastical discipline is uprightly ministered.  
F-1.0303



# Scots Confession 3.20



- ... The second was that good policy and order should be constituted and observed in the Kirk where, in the house of God, it becomes all things done decently and in order.
- P. 21

# Scots Confession 3.22



## The Right Administration of the Sacraments

- Two things are necessary for the right administration of the sacraments. The first is that they should be ministered by lawful ministers, and we declare that these are men appointed to preach the Word, unto whom God has given the power to preach the gospel, and who are lawfully called by some Kirk. ...
- P. 23

# Scots Confession 3.22

## The Right Administration of the Sacraments



... The second is that they should be ministered in the elements and manner which God has appointed. Otherwise they cease to be the sacraments of Christ Jesus. This is why we abandon the teaching of the Roman Church and withdraw from its sacraments; firstly, because their ministers are not true ministers of Christ Jesus (*indeed they even allow women, whom the Holy Ghost will not permit to preach in the congregation to baptize*) and, secondly, because they have so adulterated both the sacraments with their own additions that no part of Christ's original act remains in its original simplicity.

# The Heidelberg Catechism

- Zacharias Ursinus is commonly regarded as the catechism's principal author.
- **The Misery of Man:** This part consists of the Lord's Day 2, 3, and 4
- **The Redemption (or Deliverance) of Man** Lord's Day 5 through to Lord's Day 31.
- **The Gratitude Due from Man** Lord's Day 32 through to Lord's Day 52. It discusses:
  - Conversion (Lord's Days 32-33)
  - The Ten Commandments (Lord's Days 34 - 44)
  - The Lord's prayer (Lord's Days 45 - 52)



# The Heidelberg Catechism

- **The Regal Red and Gold** - A tribute to the rule of Frederick III, who ordered the writing of the Catechism for followers of John Calvin in Germany.

**The Crown of Thorns, the "German" Cross and the Tablets** - Symbol of Misery, Redemption and Thankfulness - the three basic themes of the Catechism. (The tablets stand for the Ten Commandments, which appear in the Catechism where it teaches that obedience is the proper form of thankfulness.

**The Two Lights and the Fire** - The Trinity - with the Hebrew name of God on the left orb, the Greek monogram for Jesus on the right orb, and the flame standing for the Holy Spirit. These is a long discussion of the Trinity in the Catechism.



# Lord's Day 1

4.01



- 1 Q. What is your only comfort in life and in death?
- A. That I am not my own, but belong— body and soul, in life and in death to my faithful Savior, Jesus Christ. He has fully paid for all my sins with his precious blood, and has set me free from the tyranny of the devil. He also watches over me in such a way that not a hair can fall from my head without the will of my Father in heaven; in fact, all things must work together for my salvation. Because I belong to him, Christ, by his Holy Spirit, assures me of eternal life and makes me wholeheartedly willing and ready from now on to live for him.

# Lord's Day 1

4.02



- Q. What must you know to live and die in the joy of this comfort?
- A. Three things: first, how great my sin and misery are; second, how I am set free from all my sins and misery; third, how I am to thank God for such deliverance.

# Lord's Day 2

4.03

- Q. How did you come to know your misery?
- A. The law of God tells me.



# Lord's Day 2

4.04



- Q. What does God's law require of us?
- A. Christ teaches us this in summary in Matthew 22:37–40: “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind.’
- This is the greatest and first commandment.
- “And a second is like it: ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’ “On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets.”

# Lord's Day 7

4.021



- Q. What is true faith?
- A. True faith is not only a sure knowledge by which I hold as true all that God has revealed to us in Scripture; it is also a wholehearted trust, which the Holy Spirit creates in me by the gospel, that God has freely granted, not only to others but to me also, forgiveness of sins, eternal righteousness, and salvation. These are gifts of sheer grace, granted solely by Christ's merit.

# Lord's Day 32

4.086



- Q. Since we have been delivered from our misery by grace through Christ without any merit of our own, why then should we do good works?
- A. Because Christ, having redeemed us by his blood, is also restoring us by his Spirit into his image, so that with our whole lives we may show that we are thankful to God for his benefits, so that he may be praised through us, so that we may be assured of our faith by its fruits, and so that by our godly living our neighbors may be won over to Christ.

# The Second Helvetic Confession

- The common belief of the Reformed churches of Switzerland.
- Was written by Heinrich Bullinger in 1562 and revised in 1564 as a private exercise.
- It came to the notice of Elector Palatine Frederick III, who had it translated into German and published



# The Second Helvetic Confession

**The Blue and White** - Heraldic colors of ancient Switzerland.

**The Cross** - Again dominant on this banner because of the extensive discussion of salvation in the Confession.

**The Hand and the Burning Heart** - A traditional symbol for John Calvin, father of Presbyterianism in its Swiss homeland.

**The Lamp** - Knowledge and discipline, two of the themes of the Helvetic which make it unique.

**The Shepherd's Crook and the Pasture** - The pastoral ministry and flock's care for its own members.

**The Chalice and the Waves** - Holy Communion and Baptism.



# THE PREACHING OF THE WORD OF GOD IS THE WORD OF GOD.



5.004 Wherefore when this Word of God is now preached in the church by preachers lawfully called, we believe that the very Word of God is proclaimed, and received by the faithful; and that neither any other Word of God is to be invented nor is to be expected from heaven: and that now the Word itself which is preached is to be regarded, not the minister that preaches; for even if he be evil and a sinner, nevertheless the Word of God remains still true and good.

# 5.134 OF THE NOTES OR SIGNS OF THE TRUE CHURCH.



Moreover, as we acknowledge **no other head of the Church than Christ**, so we do not acknowledge every church to be the true Church which vaunts herself to be such; but we teach that the true Church is that in which the signs or marks of the true Church are to be found, especially the lawful and sincere preaching of the Word of God as it was delivered to us in the books of the prophets and the apostles, which all lead us unto Christ, who said in the Gospel: “My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me; and I give unto them eternal life. A stranger they do not follow, but they flee from him, for they do not know the voice of strangers” (John 10:5, 27, 28).

# The Westminster Confession of Faith



- The Westminster Assembly was convened in 1643 by the Long Parliament
- Purpose was to restructure the Church of England
- Also included representatives of religious leaders from Scotland.
- The Assembly met for six years (1643–49)
- The Assembly consisted of ~150 members - 30 laymen (10 lords and 20 commoners) and the rest divines or clergymen
- 1648 Approved by Parliament

# The Westminster Confession of Faith

**The Three Long Panels and the Maroon Triangle** - The Trinity.

**The Eye** - God's providence and control of all life and history - a dominant theme of Westminster

**The Crown** - God's Rule

**The Open Bible** - The authority of the written Word, basic to this Confession's teachings.

**The Alpha and the Omega** - The A and Z of the Greek alphabet, the first and last - referring to Christ and his death for us as central to our faith.



# The Westminster Confession of Faith

- 1729 every Presbyterian minister in the colonies was required to subscribe to it as “essential and necessary”
- 1898-1927 series of GA interpretations to be the confessional norm for the denomination



# The Westminster Shorter Catechism



- 107 questions and answers.
- 1-12 questions concern God as Creator.
- 13-20 deal with original sin and the fallen state of humankind
- 21-38 concern Christ the Redeemer
- 39-84 discuss the ten commandments.
- 85-97 teach concerning the Sacraments of Baptism and Holy Communion.
- 98-107 teach and explain the Lord's Prayer



- 7.001 Q. 1. What is the chief end of man?
- A. Man's chief end is to glorify God, and to enjoy him forever.
  
- 7.111 Q. 1. What is the chief and highest end of man?
- A. Man's chief and highest end is to glorify God, and fully to enjoy him forever



- 7.004 Q. 4. What is God?
- A. God is a Spirit, infinite, eternal and unchangeable, in his being, wisdom, power, holiness, justice, goodness, and truth.
  
- 7.117 Q. 7. What is God?
- A. God is a Spirit, in and of himself infinite in being, glory, blessedness, and perfection; all-sufficient, eternal, unchangeable, incomprehensible, everywhere present, almighty; knowing all things, most wise, most holy, most just, most merciful and gracious, long-suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth.



- 7.014 What is sin?
- A. Sin is any want of conformity unto, or transgression of, the law of God.
  
- 7.134 Q. 24. What is sin?
- A. Sin is any want of conformity unto, or transgression of, any law of God, given as a rule to the reasonable creature.

# The Theological Declaration of Barmen

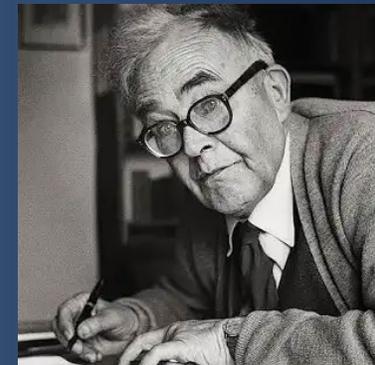
- **The Swastika Crossed Out and the Cross Rising** - A protest and witness against Nazi tyranny and any effort to take the role of God and control of the church
- **The Fire** - The suffering and death which follows from defense of the faith against tyranny, as for some of the Barmen signers. But the cross survives such persecution and crisis of war, rising out of the flames.



# The Theological Declaration of Barmen



- **May 29-31, 1934**
- **Hans Asmussen, Karl Koch, Karl Iraruer, Martin Niemoller, and Karl Barth**
- 
- Is a statement of the Confessing Church opposing the Nazi-supported "German Christians" movement known for its anti-Semitism and extreme nationalism, patriotism, and militarism.
- The Barmen Declaration rejects
  - (i.) the subordination of the Church to the state
  - (ii.) the subordination of the Word and Spirit to the Church.



Karl Barth  
1886-1968

- 8.12 We reject the false doctrine, as though the church could and would have to acknowledge as a source of its proclamation, apart from and besides this one Word of God, still other events and powers, figures and truths, as God's revelation.



- 8.15 We reject the false doctrine, as though there were areas of our life in which we would not belong to Jesus Christ, but to other lords—areas in which we would not need justification and sanctification through him.



- 8.18 We reject the false doctrine, as though the church were permitted to abandon the form of its message and order to its own pleasure or to changes in prevailing ideological and political convictions.



- 8.21 We reject the false doctrine, as though the church, apart from this ministry, could and were permitted to give to itself, or allow to be given to it, special leaders vested with ruling powers.



- 8.23 We reject the false doctrine, as though the State, over and beyond its special commission, should and could become the single and totalitarian order of human life, thus fulfilling the church's vocation as well.



- 8.24 We reject the false doctrine, as though the church, over and beyond its special commission, should and could appropriate the characteristics, the tasks, and the dignity of the State, thus itself becoming an organ of the State.





- 8.27 We reject the false doctrine, as though the church in human arrogance could place the Word and work of the Lord in the service of any arbitrarily chosen desires, purposes, and plans.



- 8.27 We reject the false doctrine, as though the Church in human arrogance could place the Word and work of the Lord in the service of any arbitrarily chosen desires, purposes, and plans." On the contrary, The Declaration proclaims that the Church "is solely Christ's property, and that it lives and wants to live solely from his comfort and from his direction in the expectation of his appearance."

# The Confession of 1967

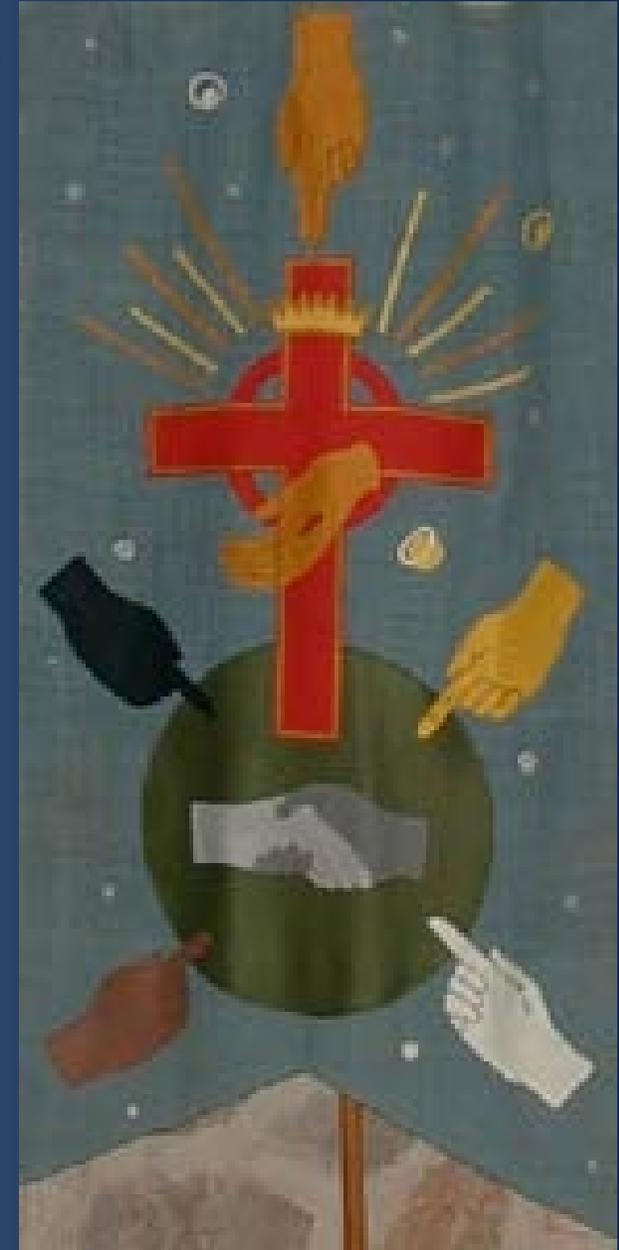
**The Blue, The Red and the Gold** - Colors of the official seal of the United Presbyterian Church in the United States of America.

**The Golden, Down-reaching Hand (Repeated from the Nicene Banner.)** - God, relating to his world.

**The Crown (repeated from the Westminster Banner) and the Nail-scarred Hand** - The death and victory of Christ as he reconciles the world.

**The Four Hands of Different Colors, the Clasped Hands and the Green Circle** - The reconciled world at the foot of the cross - God's act of reconciliation being the starting point and theme of the Confession of 1967.

**The Stars and Planets on the Blue Background** - The Space-Age setting of this Confession.



# The Confession of 1967

- Was written and debated in a denomination that found itself in an era shaped by the social movements of the 1950s and 1960s:
  - The Sexual Revolution
  - Woman's Liberation
  - the Civil Rights movement
  - the Anti-war effort





9.06 God's reconciling work in Jesus Christ and the mission of reconciliation to which he has called his church are the heart of the gospel in any age. Our generation stands in peculiar need of reconciliation in Christ. Accordingly this Confession of 1967 is built upon that theme.



- 9.15 God's sovereign love is a mystery beyond the reach of man's mind. Human thought ascribes to God superlatives of power, wisdom, and goodness. But God reveals his love in Jesus Christ by showing power in the form of a servant, wisdom in the folly of the cross, and goodness in receiving sinful men. The power of God's love in Christ to transform the world discloses that the Redeemer is the Lord and Creator who made all things to serve the purpose of his love.

9.29 The Bible is to be interpreted in the light of its witness to God's work of reconciliation in Christ. The Scriptures, given under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, are nevertheless the words of men, conditioned by the language, thought forms, and literary fashions of the places and times at which they were written. They reflect views of life, history, and the cosmos which were then current. The church, therefore, has an obligation to approach the Scriptures with literary and historical understanding. As God has spoken his word in diverse cultural situations, the church is confident that he will continue to speak through the Scriptures in a changing world and in every form of human culture.





- 9.30 God's word is spoken to his church today where the Scriptures are faithfully preached and attentively read in dependence on the illumination of the Holy Spirit and with readiness to receive their truth and direction.



- 9.35 Wherever the church exists, its members are both gathered in corporate life and dispersed in society for the sake of mission in the world.

- 9.44 a. God has created the peoples of the earth to be one universal family. In his reconciling love, he overcomes the barriers between brothers and breaks down every form of discrimination based on racial or ethnic difference, real or imaginary. The church is called to bring all men to receive and uphold one another as persons in all relationships of life: in employment, housing, education, leisure, marriage, family, church, and the exercise of political rights. Therefore, the church labors for the abolition of all racial discrimination and ministers to those injured by it. Congregations, individuals, or groups of Christians who exclude, dominate, or patronize their fellowmen, however subtly, resist the Spirit of God and bring contempt on the faith which they profess.



9.46 The church calls every man to use his abilities, possessions, and the fruits of technology as gifts entrusted to him by God to maintain his family and advance the common welfare. It encourages those forces in human society that raise men's hopes for better conditions and provide them with opportunity for a decent living. A church that is indifferent to poverty, or evades responsibility in economic affairs, or is open to one social class only, or expects gratitude for its beneficence makes a mockery of reconciliation and offers no acceptable worship to God.





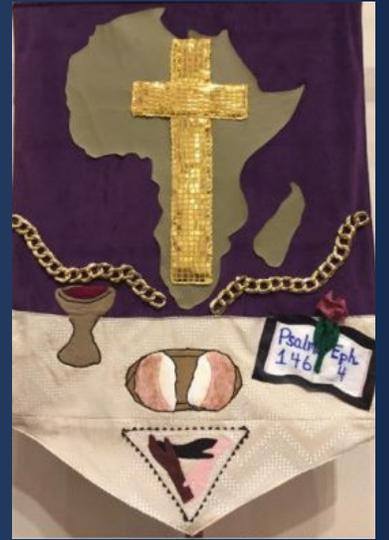
- 9.49 God instructs his church and equips it for mission through preaching and teaching. By these, when they are carried on in fidelity to the Scriptures and dependence upon the Holy Spirit, the people hear the word of God and accept and follow Christ. The message is addressed to men in particular situations. Therefore, effective preaching, teaching, and personal witness require disciplined study of both the Bible and the contemporary world. All acts of public worship should be conducive to men's hearing of the gospel in a particular time and place and responding with fitting obedience.



- 9.53 God's redeeming work in Jesus Christ embraces the whole of man's life: social and cultural, economic and political, scientific and technological, individual and corporate. It includes man's natural environment as exploited and despoiled by sin. It is the will of God that his
- purpose for human life shall be fulfilled under the rule of Christ and all evil be banished from his creation.

# Belhar Confession

- Originally written from South Africa and written in Afrikaans.
- Belhar came from South Africa and took shape in the early 1980s, during the era when apartheid was the official policy of the white controlled government and of the white, Dutch Reformed Church in South Africa.
- Adopted as a confession of faith by the Dutch Reformed Mission Church (DRMC) in South Africa in **1986**.



# Three Denominations



- Dutch Reformed Church – all white
- Dutch Reformed Mission Church – “colored”
- Dutch Reformed Church in Africa – “blacks”
- Enforced separation at the table and in worship and ministry

# Belhar Confession



- Belhar named division based on race as sin, and called Christians and the Church to ministries of reconciliation and justice.
- Belhar has three central points: Unity, Reconciliation, and Justice. It is structured like the Theological Declaration of Barmen. There is a biblical affirmation followed by a rejection of false teaching.
- The PCUSA approved the Confession of Belhar as part of the *Book of Confessions* at the 222<sup>nd</sup> General Assembly in 2016.

- THE PURPLE BACKGROUND suggests the royalty of Christ and reminds that Christ is at the foundation.
- THE AFRICAN CONTINENT is green to suggest life and God's continued sustenance and recalls the geographic origin of this confession.
- THE GOLD CROSS is rooted in South Africa and covers the African continent reminding us that reconciliation across geopolitical and cultural borders is only possible through Christ.



- **THE BROKEN CHAINS** serve as a reminder of former oppression and division that has been broken at the foot of the cross and that there is no longer any separation between peoples.
- **THE BROKEN BREAD** reminds us that we share one loaf, but that Christ's body which is broken for us and for our salvation.
- **THE CHALICE AND PATEN** draw to mind the former fencing of the table that was standard under apartheid, but in denouncing this division, Belhar affirms that communion is available for all



- **THE OPEN BIBLE AND TULIP** recall the scriptural rootedness of the confession and two salient passages are highlighted. Then, the tulip suggests the five points of Calvinism, as well as serve to remind of the Dutch roots of the confession.
- **THE INTERLINKING HANDS** draw to mind both the Trinity and the reconciliation that is only possible through God.



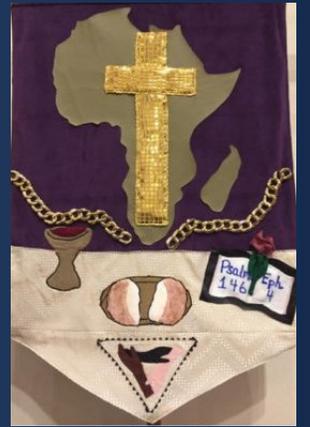
# Belhar Confession



- **10.1 We believe** in the triune God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, who gathers, protects and cares for the church through Word and Spirit. This, God has done since the beginning of the world and will do to the end.
- **10.2 We believe** in one holy, universal Christian church, the communion of saints called from the entire human family.

# Belhar Confession

- We believe
- that Christ's work of reconciliation is made manifest in the church as the community of believers
- That this unity must be visible
- That this unity be manifested
  - In that we love one another
  - Give ourselves willingly and joyfully to the benefit and blessing to one another
  - Know and bear one another's burdens
  - Suffer with one another for the sake of righteousness



# Belhar Confession

- **10.4 We reject any doctrines**
- **Which absolutizes either natural diversity or the sinful separation of people**
- **Which explicitly or implicitly maintains that descent or any other human or social factor should be a consideration in determining membership of the church**



# Belhar Confession



- **Therefore, we reject any ideology which would legitimate forms of injustice and any doctrine which is unwilling to resist such an ideology in the name of the gospel.**

# A Brief Statement of Faith

**The Cross** - A rainbow of colors representing the celebration of unity with the diversity of cultures and races living in Christ.

**The Blue Background** - Symbolizes the universe as the light of the Word of God bringing us together.

**The Earth** - Cracks symbolizing our divisiveness and diversity, yet the faith we confess unites us with the one universal Church.

**The Secure Hands of God** - Remind us that he who holds our world together in turmoil will unite us in grace of Jesus Christ. This is the foundation of our knowledge of God's sovereign love and our living together in the Holy Spirit.

**Seal of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)** - This symbol represents the descending dove of peace and the baptism of Christ. The open Bible symbol is the Word of God. The Font recalls the Sacrament of Baptism, while the table image recalls the other Sacraments of Communion, the Last Supper, and the pulpit as the preaching of the Word. The flames represent the burning bush and Pentecost. The overall image suggests the human figure with stretched out arms.



# A Brief Statement of Faith

- Written by a committee of this church following the 1983 reunion of the Northern (UPCUSA) and Southern (PCUS) branches of the church.
- Added to the Book of Confessions in 1991
- Written for use in worship, as well as educational, settings.





11.1 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.



11.2 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.



11.3 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.



11.4 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.

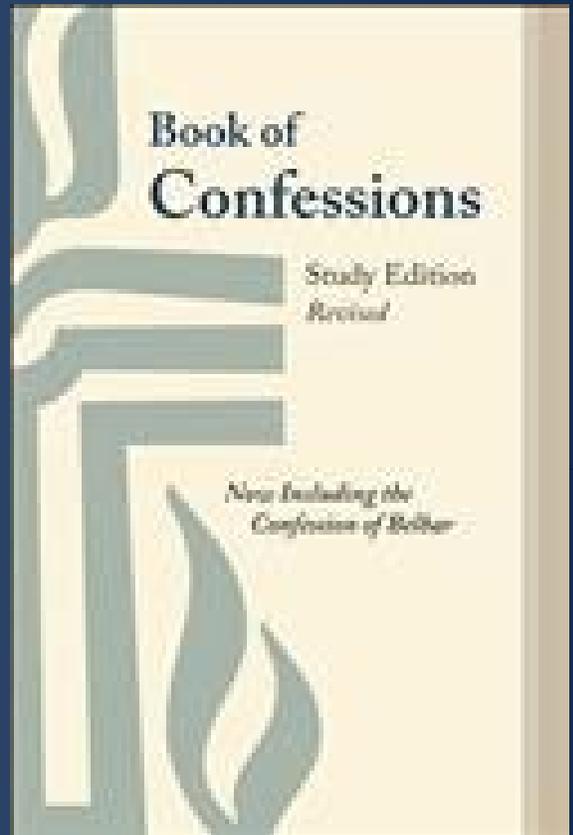
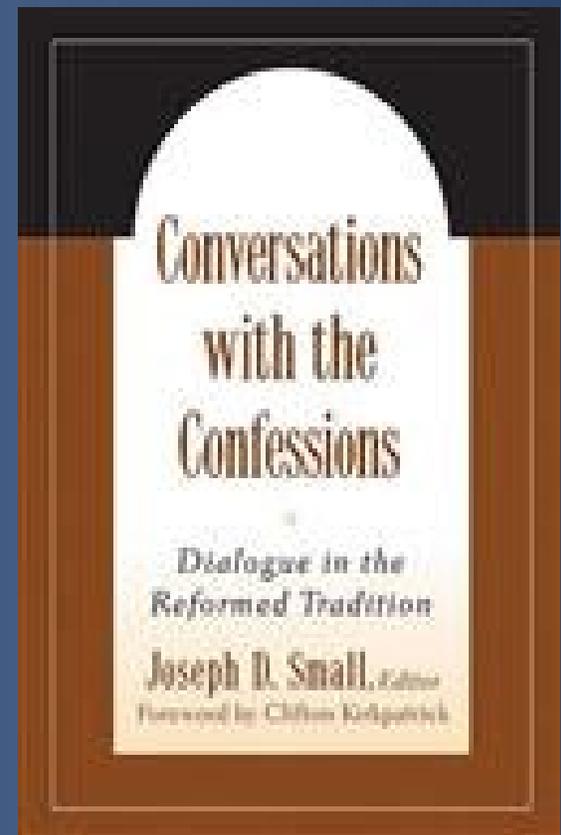
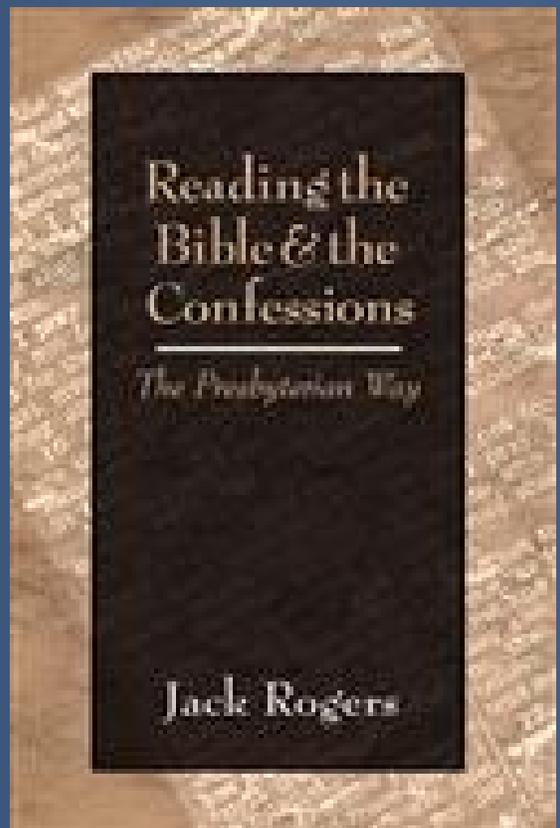
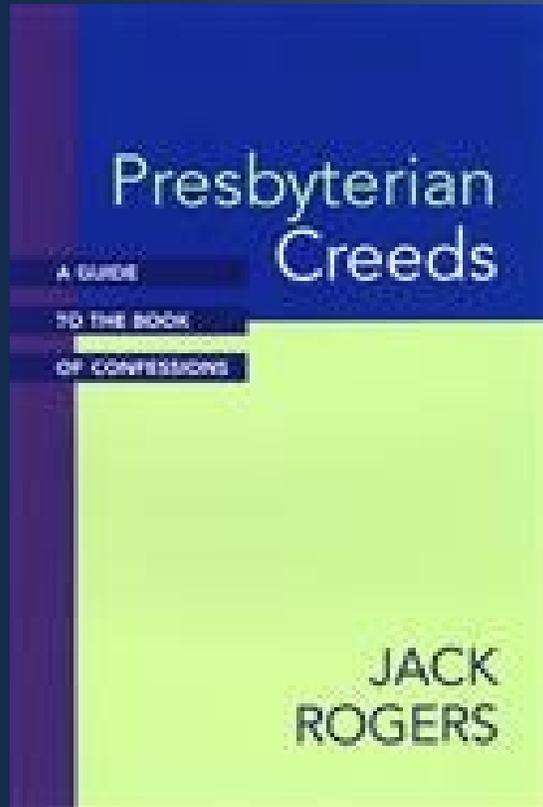


In gratitude to God, empowered by the Spirit, we strive to serve Christ in our daily tasks and to live holy and joyful lives, even as we watch for God's new heaven and new earth, praying, "Come, Lord Jesus!"

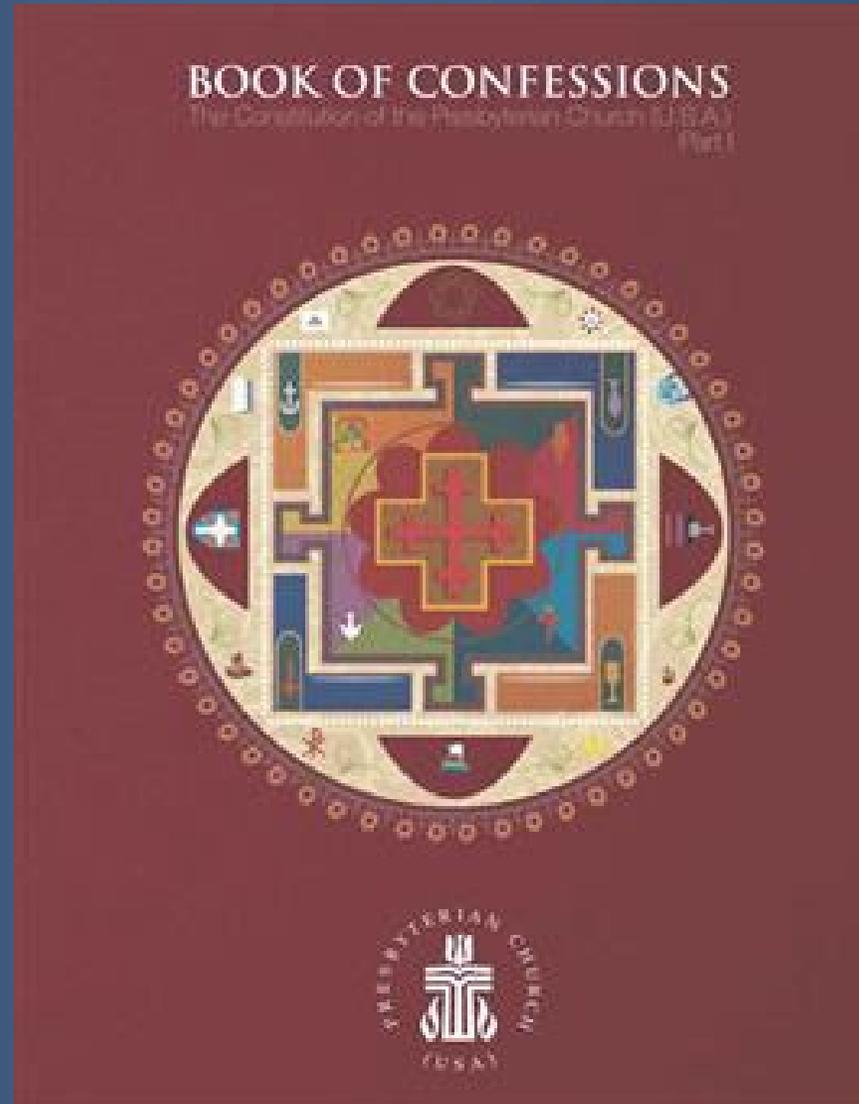
Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit. Amen.



- 11.5 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.
- 11.6 Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit. Amen.



# The Book of Confessions



# *“The Great Ends of the Church*



The proclamation of the gospel for the salvation of humankind;



The shelter, nurture, and spiritual fellowship of the children of God;



The maintenance of divine worship;



The preservation of the truth;



The promotion of social righteousness; and



The exhibition of the kingdom of Heaven to the world.



# The Notes of the Reformed Church

Where Christ is, there is the true Church. Since the earliest days of the Reformation, Reformed Christians have marked the presence of the true Church wherever



The Word of God is rightly preached and heard



The Sacraments are rightly administered, and



Ecclesiastical discipline is uprightly ministered.

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# Prayer at the Close of Day



O God, come to our assistance.

**\*O Lord, hasten to help us.\***

The Lord grant us a restful night and peace at the last.

**\*Amen.\***

# Prayer of Confession

Almighty God, Maker of all things

**\*Have mercy on us.\***

Jesus Christ, Redeemer of the world,

**\*Have mercy on us.\***

Holy Spirit, Giver of Life,

**\*Have mercy on us.\***

# Unison Prayer

**We confess to God Almighty,  
before the whole company of heaven  
and before each other that we have sinned in thought,  
word, and deed;  
wherefore we pray God Almighty to have mercy upon us,  
forgive our sins and give us time to amend our ways,  
and bring us to everlasting life.  
Amen.**

<sup>28</sup> “Come to me, all you who are weary and are carrying heavy burdens, and I will give you rest. <sup>29</sup> Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. <sup>30</sup> For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.”

This is the word of the Lord.

**Thanks be to God.**

O God, who appointed the day for labor and the night for rest:

Grant that we may rest in peace and quietness during the coming night so that tomorrow we may go forth to our appointed labors.

Take us into your holy keeping, that no evil may befall us, nor any ill come near our home.

When at last our days are ended and our work is finished, grant that we may depart in your peace, in the sure hope of that glorious kingdom where there is day without night, light without darkness, and life without the shadow of death forever, through Jesus Christ, the Light of the world.

**\*Guide us waking, O Lord, and guard us sleeping;  
That awake we may watch with Christ, and asleep rest  
in his peace.\***

May Almighty God bless, preserve and keep us, this night  
and forevermore.

**\*Amen.\***

Bless the Lord.

**\*The Lord's name be praised.\***

**###**