

The Essential Tenets of our Reformed Faith

(Unanimously adopted by the FOPC Session, 2005)

Hallelujah! Salvation and glory and power belong to our God! (Rev 19:1).

In his great mercy he has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead (1 Peter 1:3).

Joyfully and humbly, as undeserving recipients of the gracious work of God through Jesus Christ, we confess these essentials of our shared faith:

1. God is majestic, compassionate, (Deut 4:31; Ps 62:12; Ps 27:4);¹ [4.026-4.027; 4.121-4.122; 10.3]², and lovingly desires to be known (Heb 1:1, 2; Gal 1:11, 12); [3.04]; {6.00}³. Therefore we worship Him. God is revealed generally through creation (Rom 1:19, 20; 2:14); {6.001; 6.022}; [9.16], specifically through the Holy Scriptures (2 Tim. 3:16); [3.19], and finally in the living Word who became flesh, Jesus Christ our Lord (Jn 1:14; 1 Jn 1:1-3); [8.11; 9.27].

2. The Bible is the only infallible rule of faith and practice (1 Thess 2:13; 2 Tim 3:16; 2 Pet 1:21); [3.19; 5.001]; {6.004}. The Holy Spirit spoke through its authors (Gal 1:11, 12; Is 8:20); {6.001; 6.004}, and witnesses to us today that it is indeed and in truth the very word of God, God's gift to the world and guide for His people (1 Cor 2:10, 11; Jn 16:13, 14); {6.005; 6.006}.

3. In the beginning, the sovereign God created all things good (Gen 1:1-3; Ex 20:11; Heb 11:3); [5.032]; {6.022}; {7.125-127}. Humanity, bearing God's likeness, crowns creation (Gen 1:26; Col 3:10; Eph 4:24); [3.02; 4.006]; {6.023}. Through the disobedience of those made in the image of God, the whole of creation fell into the darkness of sin and rebellion (Gen 3:6-8; 2 Cor 11:3; Rom 5: 12); [4.007; 5.036]; {7.131-133}. In love, God initiated the plan of redemption (Rom 8:29, 30; 1 Cor 2:7; Rom 16:25, 26); [3.04; 5.062]; {6.055-056}, which stands upon the historic events of the crucifixion, resurrection, and exaltation of Jesus the Messiah (Heb 5:5-6; Rom 3:26; Eph 1:19, 20); {7.023, 025-026, 028}; [9.08-11]. God's gracious redemptive work results in the Church (Matt. 16:18); [9.22-23], and culminates in the new creation (Rom 8:20-21); [9.26].

4. The LORD our God, the LORD is one (Mk 12:29); [1.1; 5.015]. The one true God exists in three Persons: Father, Son and Holy Spirit (Matt 28:19; 2 Cor 13:14); [3.01; 5.016]. We believe that each Person of the Trinity is engaged in all that God has done, does now, and will yet do (2 Cor 3:17; Col 1:16; Jn 1:3); [3.01; 5.015, 017]; {6.022}. The LORD our God is the One who is, who was, and who is to come, the Almighty (Rev 1:8; 4:8; 11:17); {6.011; 7.044}; [9.56].

5. We believe in God the Father, who created all things in, through, and for His Son (Col 1:15-17; Rom 11:36); [5.032; 5.062]. The Father adopts as children (Eph 1:5); {7.034} all who are drawn by the Holy Spirit to believe in His Son (Jn 6:44, 45); {7.031}, giving to them all the riches of God's glorious Kingdom (Jn 1:12); {6.074}. The loving heart of our Father is poured out in eternal redemption through Jesus Christ (Eph 1:5-7); [4.018-019], and in the ongoing discipline that shapes God's children into the image of Christ (Heb 12:3-11; Prov 3:11, 12; Ps 94:12; 119:67, 75); [5.198; 3.13]; {6.075, 077}.

¹ Scripture references appear in parentheses.

² Bracketed annotations correspond to major confessions of the Reformed church as published and numbered in the *Book of Confessions*, Copyright © 1999 by the Office of the General Assembly Presbyterian Church (USA).

³ These particular annotations refer specifically to the *Westminster Confession of Faith* (and the Shorter and Larger Catechisms) as published and numbered in the *Book of Confessions*, Copyright © 1999 by the Office of the General Assembly Presbyterian Church (USA), pages 118-243.

6. Jesus Christ is the living Word (Jn 1:1); [8.11], the promised Messiah (Is 11:1-4); [5.077], the eternal Son of the Father (Matt 16:13-20); [4.033], sent in mission to the earth (Is 42:1); Jn 3:16; 1 Pet 1:19, 20); [5.077]; {6.043}; [9.08]. Incarnated in the womb of the Virgin Mary (Lk 1:26ff); [4.035], He is fully God and fully human (Rom 1:3, 4); [10.2], come to reconcile God and humanity (1 Tim 2:5); [5.076]. During His earthly ministry Jesus lived a sinless life (Jn 14:30); {6.044}, healed the sick, raised the dead, drove out demons, befriended sinners, preached the gospel to the poor (Lk 7:22); [10.2], and died as our substitute on the cross (Matt 20:28); {6.046}. He rose bodily from the dead, ascended to the Father, and remains our faithful Mediator and High Priest (1 Cor 15:4; Lk 24:50, 51; 1 Tim 2:5); [3.10; 1.2]; {6.043-046}. He is the Way, the Truth, and the Life; no one comes to the Father but by faith in Him (Jn 14:6; Heb 9:11-14; Acts 4:12); [4.029; 9.11; 9.42]. He is the only Head of the Church, our Lord and Savior (Eph 1:22, 23; 1 Cor 12:3; Matt 1:21); [4.050; 5.131]; {6.043}.

7. The Holy Spirit has come to glorify Jesus Christ (Jn 16:14); [5.062] and to apply His saving work to our lives (Rom 5:5); {7.169}. By the Spirit, the redeemed cry “Abba” as God’s adopted children (Rom 8:15, 16; Gal 4:5; Is 56:5); {6.097-6.098; 7.190}. The Spirit awakens from spiritual death those whom God has chosen (Eph 2:5); [3.12], convicting them of sin (Jn 16:8); {6.185}, comforting their hearts with the hope of the Gospel (2 Cor 1:21, 22); {6.053}, uniting them to Christ (Eph 3:16-19); {6.146}, making Christ real to them (Jn 14:26); {7.031}, gathering them into a people of His own possession (1 Pet 2:9); [10.4], and sealing their salvation (2 Cor 1:22); {6.185}. Indwelling their hearts (Rom 8:9-11); {6.186}, the Spirit sanctifies them for lives of holiness (Acts 20:32); {6.075}, and empowers them for ministry in the Church and mission to the world (Acts 1:8, 22; 4:33); [9.31, 32, 38].

8. From the beginning God has sovereignly elected and called a people, who are the true Church, the Body of Christ (Deut 32:6; Eph 1:4; 2:10); [1.3; 3.05; 4.054; 5.126, 130]. The Church is the fruit of God’s redemptive work (Jas 1:18); [5.125]; a covenanted community of worship, prayer, and service, called to love God and neighbor and to live out the ethical and moral imperatives revealed in Holy Scripture (2 Chr 30:12; Acts 2:42-47; 4:32, 34, 35); [9.35, 36, 48]. All believers are baptized in one Spirit into this Body (1 Cor 12:13); [10.4], which finds expression in local congregations (1 Cor 1:2); [5.128]. In these believing communities the loving presence of God is embodied (Acts 9:36-43); [9.07], the Gospel is preached in truth, the sacraments of Baptism and the Lord’s Supper are rightly administered, compassionate and godly discipline is exercised, and Kingdom mission is faithfully carried out (Matt 28:20; 16:19); {7.218}; [9.31]. The Church is a connectional and confessional community in which theological, ethical, and moral accountability is demonstrated (1 Thess 2:14; Titus 2:1; 1 Cor 5:9-13); [5.125-126, 130].

9. The Church is called to make disciples of all nations, proclaiming the Gospel to the spiritually lost and equipping believers so that they may be presented mature in Christ (Matt 10:5-23; Luke 10:1-12; 2 Cor 11:12); [8.12; 9.21, 48-50]. The Lord calls all believers to be ministers and witnesses to God’s amazing grace, and readily to participate in the task of making disciples, for which God gives the Church powers, gifts, and talents (Matt 9:36-38; Acts 13:2-4; Col 3:16); [4.055]; {6.058, 088}. It is the responsibility of the Church and its leaders to develop, equip, and release people into their God-given ministries in the Church and the world (Acts 9:15; 13:1, 2; Gal 2:7-10); [5.163]; {6.054; 6.186}.

10. In death, the believer is made whole and enters eternally the loving presence of the Father and the Son (Phil 1:21; Rev 14:13; 2 Cor 5:1-5); [3.17]; {7.037, 196}. Finally, in the fullness of time, Jesus Christ will leave the Father’s side to return to earth in glory (1 Thess 2:19; 4:13-18; 1 Cor 15:23); {7.028, 166}; [8.17]. Christ will liberate creation from its bondage to corruption (Rom 8:20, 21; Acts 3:21); {7.197}; [9.52], judge the living and the dead, (Acts 17:31); {6.180-181}, usher in a new heaven and earth, and establish God’s everlasting Kingdom. “Even so, come Lord Jesus!” (Rev 21:1-4); {7.196}.

Amen, Hallelujah!