

Adopted April 29, 1995, by unanimous vote during the Confessing Movement Conference in Atlanta, Georgia, attended by more than 900 United Methodists in response to open invitation.

WE CONFESS JESUS CHRIST: THE SON, THE SAVIOR, THE LORD

Preamble

During the First Week of Easter, 1994, a group of 92 laity, clergy, bishops, and professors gathered to consult about the future of The United Methodist Church. We issued “An Invitation to the Church” for others to join us in exalting Jesus Christ as we confront the crisis of faith within The United Methodist Church. In love for the Church we now present this Confessional Statement for the renewal and reform of The United Methodist Church. The crisis before us is this: Will The United Methodist Church confess, and be unified by, the apostolic faith in Jesus Christ; or will The United Methodist Church challenge the primacy of Scripture and justify the acceptance of beliefs incompatible with our Articles of Religion and Confession of Faith? The United Methodist Church is now incapable of confessing with one voice the orthodox Trinitarian faith, particularly Jesus Christ as the Son of God, the Savior of the world, and the Lord of history and the Church. While giving assent to Jesus Christ as Lord, our denomination tolerates opinions that “strike at the root of Christianity” (John Wesley). Our church suffers from private versions of the faith that do not find their root in Scripture. The purpose of this Confessional Statement is to call The United Methodist Church, all laity and all clergy, to confess the person, work, and reign of Jesus Christ. This Statement confronts and repudiates teachings and practices in The United Methodist Church that currently challenge the truth of Jesus Christ – the Son of God, the Savior of the world, and the Lord of all. Aware of our own sinfulness, we who make this Confession submit our common witness and our lives to the judgment and mercy of God, as attested in Scripture, the written Word of God.

WE CONFESS JESUS CHRIST

The Son

“He [Jesus] said to them, ‘But who do you say that I am?’ Simon Peter answered, ‘You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God.’ And Jesus answered him, ‘Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah! For flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my Father in heaven.’” (Matthew 16:15-17 NRSV)

We confess, in accordance with Holy Scripture and with the Holy Spirit’s help, that Jesus Christ is the one and only Son of God. Confession of Jesus as the Son is essential, not a matter of personal opinion. It is a matter of revelation, which was given to Peter and to the Church by God, whom Jesus called Father. With Peter and the other Apostles, we confess that Jesus is the Christ. We confess with John and the other Apostles that in Jesus of Nazareth, the Word made flesh, the eternal Son of God has come into the world to make known the fullness of God’s glory in grace and truth (John 1). Therefore we confess, in continuity with the apostolic witness of the Church, that Jesus Christ is “true God from true God” (Nicene Creed), the Second Person of the Holy Trinity: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. We repudiate teachings that claim the person of Jesus Christ is not adequate to reveal the fullness of God (Heb. 1:1-3). We reject the claim that the maleness of Jesus disqualifies him as the true revelation of God. We reject the claim that God can be fully known apart from Jesus Christ. According to the apostolic faith, such teachings are false and unfaithful to the Gospel.

The Savior

“There is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among mortals by which we must be saved.” (Acts 4:12 NRSV)

We confess, in accordance with Holy Scripture and with the Holy Spirit’s help, that Jesus Christ is the one and only Savior of the world. In him, we see not only the fullness and the glory of God, but also the model and power for our own freedom from the bondage of sin and death (Heb. 2:14-18). Through his obedient life, teaching, and ministry, his death on the cross for the sins of the world, and his bodily

resurrection, he is the Savior of the world. God through Jesus Christ conquers sin and death, brings salvation to this rebellious world, and reconciles “the world to himself” (2 Cor. 5:18-21). We repudiate teachings that repress, turn away from, or offer substitutes for the atoning death and life-giving resurrection of Jesus. We oppose any redefinition of the Christian faith that diminishes or eliminates the saving work of Jesus Christ in order to make dialogue with others more agreeable. We reject any claim that regards the incarnation, crucifixion, and resurrection as merely one salvation among others. According to the apostolic faith, such teachings are false and unfaithful to the Gospel.

The Lord

“As you therefore have received Christ Jesus the Lord, continue to live your lives in him, rooted and built up in him and established in the faith, just as you were taught, abounding in thanksgiving. See to it that no one takes you captive through philosophy and empty deceit, according to human tradition, according to the elemental spirits of the universe, and not according to Christ. For in him the whole fullness of deity dwells bodily, and you have come to fullness in him, who is the head of every ruler and authority.” (Colossians 2:6-10 NRSV)

We confess, in accordance with Holy Scripture and with the Holy Spirit’s help, that Jesus Christ is the one and only Lord of creation and history. In the midst of many competing voices, the Church seeks to hear, trust, and obey Jesus the Lord and his commandments (1 Cor. 8:5, 6). True authority in the Church derives from and furthers obedience to this Lord. True authority in the Church holds the community accountable to this Lord, especially when teachings and practices arise that undermine or deny his Lordship. We repudiate teachings and practices that misuse principles of inclusiveness and tolerance to distort the doctrine and discipline of the Church. We deny the claim that the individual is free to decide what is true and what is false, what is good and what is evil. We reject widespread and often unchallenged practices in and by the Church that rebel against the Lordship of Jesus Christ. For example:

- experimenting with pagan ritual and practice
- consuming the world’s goods without regard for the poor
- accommodating the prevailing patterns of sexual promiscuity, serial marriage, and divorce
- resigning ourselves to the injustices of racial and gender prejudice
- condoning homosexual practice
- ignoring the historic Church’s long-standing protection of the unborn and the mother

Any new teachings in the Church that seek to set aside the biblical witness cannot be established by votes, or appeals to personal experience, or by responding to contemporary social pressures. According to the apostolic faith, such teachings and practices are false and unfaithful to the Gospel.

The Confessional Charge

This, then, is our confession: we confess that Jesus Christ is the Son, the Savior, and the Lord, according to the Scriptures. The United Methodist Church has never had an institutional guarantee of doctrinal diversity without boundaries. We implore other United Methodists, laity, and clergy to join us in this confession. Relying upon the power of the Holy Spirit, we vow to make this confession in the congregations, boards, divisions, agencies, seminaries, and conferences of our denomination. We will faithfully support United Methodist activities, groups, programs, and publications that further this confession and spread the Good News throughout the world in faithful obedience to the apostolic witness. We will vigorously challenge and hold accountable those that undermine this confession. All the while, readying for the coming of Jesus Christ in power and glory, we welcome ecumenical partnerships in the advancement of the confession.

The CONFESSING MOVEMENT invites all United Methodists to affirm this Confessional Statement and invites each local church to affirm the Statement by action of its Administrative Board, Administrative Council, or Charge Conference.