

UNION IN CHRIST: A DECLARATION

The following Declaration was adopted during Gathering III of the Presbyterian Coalition (Dallas, 1998).

Preamble

The Church's one foundation is Jesus Christ her Lord. God has called the church into being in order to carry out God's mission to the world. We believe that the Presbyterian Church (USA) must respond to that commission by reaffirming its Christ-centeredness, reclaiming its biblical faith, and remobilizing its missionary service.

Toward these ends, this Declaration and Strategy Paper calls us to prayer and self-examination, so that the church may seek to fulfill God's mission, embracing Christ's transformation by the power of the Holy Spirit.

“Union in Christ: A Declaration for the Church”
“He is before all things and in him all things hold together”
(Colossians 1:17)

With the witness of Scripture and the Church through the ages we declare:

I.

Jesus Christ is the gracious mission of God

to the world
and for the world.
He is Emmanuel and Savior,
One with the Father,
God incarnate as Mary's son,
Lord of all,
The truly human one.

His coming transforms everything.

His Lordship casts down every idolatrous claim to authority.
His incarnation discloses the only path to God.
His life shows what it means to be human.
His atoning death reveals the depth of God's love for sinners.
His bodily resurrection shatters the powers of sin and death.

II.

The Holy Spirit joins us to Jesus Christ by grace alone, uniting our life with his through the ministry of the Church.

In the proclamation of the Word, the Spirit calls us to repentance, builds up and renews our life in Christ, strengthens our faith, empowers our service, gladdens our hearts, and transforms our lives more fully into the image of Christ.

We turn away from forms of church life that ignore the need for repentance, that discount the transforming power of the Gospel, or that fail to pray, hope and strive for a life that is pleasing to God.

In Baptism and conversion the Spirit engrafts us into Christ, establishing the Church's unity and binding us to one another in him.

We turn away from forms of church life that seek unity in theological pluralism, relativism or syncretism.

In the Lord's Supper the Spirit nurtures and nourishes our participation in Christ and our communion with one another in him.

We turn away from forms of church life that allow human divisions of race, gender, nationality, or economic class to mar the Eucharistic fellowship, as though in Christ there were still walls of separation dividing the human family.

III.

Engrafted into Jesus Christ we participate through faith in his relationship with the Father.

By our union with Christ we participate in his righteousness before God, even as he becomes the bearer of our sin.

We turn away from any claim to stand before God apart from Christ's own righteous obedience, manifest in his life and sacrifice for our sake on the cross.

By our union with Christ we participate in his knowledge of the Father, given to us as the gift of faith through the unique and authoritative witness of the Old and New Testaments.

We turn away from forms of church life that discount the authority of Scripture or claim knowledge of God that is contrary to the full testimony of Scripture as interpreted by the Holy Spirit working in and through the community of faith across time.

By our union with Christ we participate in his love of the Father, manifest in his obedience "even unto death on the cross."

We turn away from any supposed love of God that is manifest apart from a continual longing for and striving after that loving obedience which Christ offers to God on our behalf.

IV.

Though obscured by our sin, our union with Christ causes his life to shine forth in our lives. This transformation of our lives into the image of Christ is a work of the Holy Spirit begun in this life as a sign and promise of its completion in the life to come.

By our union with Christ our lives participate in the holiness of the One who fulfilled the Law of God on our behalf.

We turn away from forms of church life that ignore Christ's call to a life of holiness, or that seek to pit Law and Gospel against one another as if both were not expressions of the one Word of God.

By our union with Christ we participate in his obedience. In these times of moral and sexual confusion we affirm the consistent teaching of Scripture that calls us to chastity outside of marriage and faithfulness within the covenant of marriage between a man and a woman.

We turn away from forms of church life that fail to pray for and strive after a rightly ordered sexuality as the gracious gift of a loving God, offered to us in Christ by the power of the Holy Spirit. We also turn away from forms of church life that fail to forgive and restore those who repent of sexual and other sins.

V.

As the body of Christ the Church has her life in Christ.

By our union with Christ the Church binds together believers in every time and place.

We turn away from forms of church life that identify the true Church only with particular styles of worship, polity, or institutional structure. We also turn away from forms of church life that ignore the witness of those who have gone before us.

By our union with Christ the Church is called out into particular communities of worship and mission.

We turn away from forms of church life that see the work of the local congregation as sufficient unto itself, as if it were not a local representation of the one, holy, catholic and apostolic Church called together by the power of the Spirit in every age and time until our Lord returns.

By our union with Christ our lives participate in God's mission to the world:
to uphold the value of every human life,
to make disciples of all peoples,
to establish Christ's justice and peace in all creation,
and to secure that visible oneness in Christ that is the promised inheritance of every believer

We turn away from forms of church life that fail to bear witness in word and deed to Christ's compassion and peace, and the Gospel of salvation.

By our union with Christ the Church participates in Christ's resurrected life and awaits in hope the future that God has prepared for her. Even so come quickly, Lord Jesus!

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.