

*Extracts from*

# *Our Words of Faith*

*Cherished,*

*Honoured,*

*and Living*



A resource document prepared  
for the remit (January to May 2012)  
concerning  
the Doctrine section of the Basis of Union  
of The United Church of Canada

February 2, 2010

# Our Words of Faith Remit

## INTRODUCTION

The 40th General Council that met in Kelowna, British Columbia, in August 2009 approved a motion to add to the Doctrine section currently in the Basis of Union three other doctrinal statements that General Councils of the United Church have approved since 1925. Those three statements are the **Statement of Faith** (1940), **A New Creed** (adopted in 1968; revised in 1980 and again in 1994), and **A Song of Faith** (2006). For this proposed action to take place, the General Council authorized remits, which are votes by presbyteries and, in this case, also by pastoral charges, on whether to add some or all of these three statements to the Doctrine section of the Basis of Union.

## THE PROCESS

When the United Church wishes to change The Basis of Union, which functions as its constitutional document, a number of steps must take place before the proposed change can be adopted. First, a General Council must approve the proposed change. Then the proposed change is sent to presbyteries and, in instances such as this, to the church council of each pastoral charge for that body to vote on.

This referral to presbyteries and sessions for a vote is called a **remit**. If a majority of the presbyteries and a majority of the sessions vote in favour of the proposed change, then the next meeting of the General Council must also vote one more time in favour of the proposed change in order for it to take effect. Only if an absolute majority of the presbyteries and an absolute majority of the sessions vote in favour of the proposed change can the subsequent General Council consider ratifying that change—not just a majority of those who vote. In other words, the failure of a presbytery or session (or equivalent) to vote is in effect a negative vote.

Each Pastoral Charge is being asked to vote on the addition of each of the three statements individually as to whether they should be added to the formal Doctrine of the church.

## THE BASIS OF UNION

The United Church of Canada came into being in 1925 as a result of a union of the Congregationalists, the Methodists, two-thirds of the Presbyterians, and a group of Union Churches. The agreement, known as the Basis of Union, outlined in a general way the shape this new United Church would take.

The **Basis of Union** functions as the United Church's constitution, which can be changed only when a majority of all presbyteries—and when they also are required to vote, a majority of all sessions —vote in favour.

## HOW?

The remit asks us to expand the Doctrine section of the Basis of Union by adding further statements of faith. Each of these additional statements has, in its time, been formally approved by the actions of a General Council. The remit will test the church's agreement to include each of them in the Doctrine section of the Basis of Union following the 20 Articles of Faith.

Through the remit process we are invited to reflect on: Have these statements touched our hearts? Have they taken on meaning in our daily lives? Have any or all become cherished, honoured, and living?

## WHAT ARE THE IMPLICATIONS OF THE REMIT?

When presbyteries examine candidates for ministry to determine whether they are “in essential agreement with the statement of doctrine” (*The Manual* 026(c)), both presbyteries and candidates would take into consideration all of the faith statements the United Church acknowledges as its formal doctrine.

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Another implication of accepting any of these statements is that the United Church would be declaring its openness to affirming other standards in the future.

### THE TASK AT HAND

Between January and May 2012, each pastoral charge and presbytery will be asked in the remit whether to include each of three statements in the Doctrine section of the Basis of Union.

This remit process asks whether other statements of faith and creeds can be added to our understanding of faith, not as alternatives to scripture and doctrine but as more contemporary expressions of members of the United Church living as activists

Please read these faith statements, and be prepared to discuss the following:

1. Does each expression reflect continuity with The United Church of Canada of previous generations, as expressed in the Basis of Union and ultimately in scripture?
2. Does each expression reflect the practice of The United Church of Canada as you experience it today?
3. Does each expression reflect the faith of your worshipping community?

### FURTHER QUESTIONS THAT MAY GUIDE OUR CONVERSATION

Each of these statements of faith has its own particular character, use, and place in the church's life. Each speaks to its time and context in its own way. Review each statement and the information about it, and consider these questions:

1. Is it a cherished, honoured, or living statement of our faith?
2. What theological principles or expressions of faith does it offer?
  - a. Are they authentic expressions of the faith held by others in The United Church of Canada?
  - b. How does the statement of faith reflect the way we talk about faith, think about faith, and live our faith?
3. Does this statement describe a common United Church understanding of God, God's purposes, and God's mission?
  - a. Is it helpful to you on your own faith journey?
  - b. Does it reflect the dynamic of faith in your congregation?
  - c. Does it seem to encompass the faith of other United Church congregations?
4. Does this statement contribute to our understanding of differences in The United Church of Canada?
5. Does this statement have a role in reflecting the continuity of faith in our denomination?
6. Should this statement be included in the Doctrine section of the Basis of Union?

# 1940 Statement of Faith

## INTRODUCTION

The additional inclusion of the 1940 Statement of Faith acknowledges that it was used widely in the United Church into the 1970s. It reminds us that the sub-clauses of the Doctrine represent the desire of the church to give expression to its faith in its day, and that the theological journey of the church continues over time.

The 7th General Council, meeting in 1936 in Ottawa, received a resolution from London Conference regarding a new statement of faith which led to the preparation of a Statement of Faith that embodied in concise and intelligible form what The United Church conceive to be the substance of Christian belief. It provided a briefer statement for the average member than the Basis of Union. It was approved by the 9th General Council in 1940.

It reflects the cultural changes brought on by the social, political, and economic turmoil between 1908 when the Basis of Union had in fact been substantially written and 1936. The events of this period, and what they revealed about the extent of human greed and violence and the limits on “progress” by human efforts, led many Christians to reassess their beliefs about, for example, how God is revealed and the depth of human sinfulness. And by the middle of the 1930s, many in the United Church had begun this kind of theological reassessment.

Another factor in the 1936 decision to develop a new statement of faith was how the first generation of United Church members saw the status and function of the Basis of Union. The United Church of Canada Act preserves “the independent and exclusive right and power of the United Church to legislate in all matters concerning its doctrine, worship, discipline and government, including therein the right and power from time to time to frame, adopt, alter, change, add to or modify its laws, subordinate standards and formulas,” thereby indicating that the Doctrine section of the Basis of Union was regarded as neither fixed nor final.

With this conviction about statements of faith being essential but never final, and in light of the devastating events of the period from the start of World War I to the start of World War II, the 9th General Council approved the new statement of faith in 1940.

# 1940 Statement of Faith

## Preamble

It is the purpose of this Statement to set out briefly and simply the substance of the Church's faith.

No attempt is made to answer all the questions which devout men may reasonably ask in regard to God and man and salvation. But we believe that we have included what is essential to the life of the Church. If our purpose were apologetic we should have to use more of the language of modern science and philosophy. Because our purpose is affirmative we have as far as possible adopted rather the language of Scripture, a language which matches the supreme facts it tells of, God's acts of judgment and of mercy.

The Church's faith is the unchanging Gospel of God's holy, redeeming love revealed in Jesus Christ. It is declared in Scripture; it is witnessed to both in the creeds of the Universal Church and in the Confessions of the Reformed Churches; and it is formulated for a specific purpose in our Basis of Union. But Christians of each new generation are called to state it afresh in terms of the thought of their own age and with the emphasis their age needs. This we have attempted to do for the people of The United Church of Canada—seeking always to be faithful to Scripture and to the testimony of the Universal Church, and always aware that no statement of ours can express the whole truth of God.

## I. God

We believe in God, the eternal personal Spirit, Creator and Upholder of all things.

We believe that God, as sovereign Lord exalted above the world, orders and overrules all things in it to the accomplishment of His holy, wise, and good purposes.

We believe that God made man to love and serve Him; that He cares for him as a righteous and compassionate Father; and that nothing can either quench His love or finally defeat His gracious purpose for man.

So we acknowledge God as Creator, Upholder, and Sovereign Lord of all things, and the righteous and loving Father of men.

## II. Jesus Christ

We believe in Jesus Christ, the Son of the Father, Who, for us men and our salvation became man and dwelt among us.

We believe that He lived a perfect human life, wholly devoted to the will of God and the service of man.

We believe that in Him God comes face to face with men, so that they learn that God loves them, seeks their good, bears their sorrows and their sin, and claims their exclusive faith and perfect obedience.

We believe that in Jesus Christ God acted to save man, taking, at measureless cost, man's sin upon Himself; that the Cross reveals at once God's abhorrence of sin and His saving love in its height and depth and power; and that the Cross is for all time the effectual means of reconciling the world unto God.

We believe that Jesus was raised victorious over death and declared to be the Son of God with power; and that He is alive for evermore, our Saviour and our Lord.

So we acknowledge Jesus Christ as the Son of God Incarnate, the Saviour of the world.

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### **III. The Holy Spirit**

We believe in the Holy Spirit by whom God is ever at work in the minds and hearts of men, inspiring every right desire and every effort after truth and beauty.

We believe that the Spirit of God moves men to acknowledge their sins and accept the divine forgiveness and grace.

We believe that the Spirit was present with power at the beginning of the Church, enabling the disciples to bear witness to what they had seen and heard, filling them with love of the brethren, and hope of the coming Kingdom, and sustaining them in the sense of Christ's continuing presence in their midst.

We believe that by the same Spirit the Church is continually guided and empowered, and her members fortified against temptation, fear and doubt, and built up in faith and holiness unto salvation.

So we acknowledge the Holy Spirit as the Lord and Giver of life, through whom the creative, redeeming love of God is ever at work among men.

### **IV. The Holy Trinity**

Knowing God thus, as Creator and Father, as Redeemer in Christ, and as Holy Spirit working in us, we confess our faith in the Holy Trinity.

So we acknowledge and worship one God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

### **V. Man and Man's Sin**

We believe that God gave to man, as He did not to the lower creatures, capacity to share His thought and purpose, and freedom to choose whether he would or would not love and serve Him.

We believe that man has used his freedom of choice for low and selfish ends, thus estranging himself from God and his brother-man, and bringing upon himself the judgment and wrath of God, so that he lives in a world of confusion and distress, and is unable of himself to fulfil God's high purpose for him.

So we acknowledge man's sin, God's righteous judgment, and man's helplessness and need.

### **VI. Redemption**

We believe that in the greatness of His love for man God has in Christ opened up a way of deliverance from the guilt and power of sin.

We believe that Christ, by living our life without sin, by dying at the hands of sinful men with faith unshaken and unfaltering love, has done for man what man could not do for himself. On the Cross He bore the burden of sin, and He broke its power; and what He did there moves men to repentance, conveys forgiveness, undoes the estrangement, and binds them to Himself in a new loyalty.

We believe that by His resurrection and exaltation Christ stands victorious over death and all evil, and that He fills those who commit themselves to Him with such grace and strength that in Him they too are conquerors. His redemption of man is at once an awful mystery and a glorious fact; it is the Lord's doing and marvellous in our eyes.

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So we acknowledge the unmerited love and the mercy of our God in giving His only-begotten Son that we might not perish, but have everlasting life.

### **VII. The Church**

We believe that the Church, the society of the redeemed, was brought into existence by God Himself through the work and risen power of Christ, Who in calling men into fellowship with Himself calls them by the same act into fellowship with one another in Him.

We believe that the Church is the organ of Christ's mind and redemptive will, the body of which He is the Head. Under Him the Church is called to the proclamation of the everlasting Gospel with its offer of salvation, to the worship of God, Creator and Redeemer, to the loving service of mankind, and to the care and nurture of the flock.

We believe that all members of the Church are one in Him, and that the life of the Church in every age is continuous with that of the first apostolic company. The groups commonly known as "churches" are called to share in the life of the whole Church, of all ages and of all lands, entering freely into the full heritage of thought, worship, and discipline, and living together in mutual confidence.

We believe that for the fulfilment of her mission in the world God has given to the Church the Ministry, the Scriptures, and the Sacraments.

So we acknowledge one holy, catholic, apostolic Church, the Body of Christ, the household and family of God.

### **VIII. The Ministry**

We believe that God has appointed a Ministry in His Church for the preaching of the Word, the administration of the Sacraments, and the pastoral care of the people.

We believe that the Church has authority to ordain to the Ministry by prayer and the laying on of hands those whom she finds, after due trial, to be called of God thereto.

We believe that, for the due ordering of her life as a society, God has appointed a government in His Church, to be exercised, under Christ the Head, by Ministers and representatives of the people.

So we acknowledge the Holy Ministry appointed by God for the spread of the Gospel and the edification of His Church.

### **IX. The Holy Scriptures**

We believe that the great moments of God's revelation and communication of Himself to men are recorded and interpreted in the Scriptures of the Old and New Testament.

We believe that, while God uttered His Word to man in many portions progressively, the whole is sufficient to declare His mind and will for our salvation. To Israel He made Himself known as a holy and righteous God and a Saviour; the fullness of truth and grace came by Jesus Christ. The writings were collected and preserved by the Church.

We believe that the theme of all Holy Scripture is the redemptive purpose and working of God, and that herein lies its unity.

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We believe that in Holy Scripture God claims the complete allegiance of our mind and heart; that the full persuasion of the truth and authority of the Word of God contained in the Scripture is the work of the Holy Spirit in our hearts; that, using Holy Scripture, the Spirit takes of the things of Christ and shows them unto us for our spiritual nourishment and growth in grace.

So we acknowledge in Holy Scripture the true witness to God's Word and the sure guide to Christian faith and conduct.

### **X. The Sacraments**

We believe that the Sacraments of Baptism and the Lord's Supper are effectual means through which, by common things and simple acts, the saving love of God is exhibited and communicated to His people, who receive them in faith.

We believe that in Baptism men are made members of the Christian society. Washing with water in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit signifies God's cleansing from sin and an initial participation in the gifts and graces of the new life. The children of believing parents are baptized and nurtured in the family of God so that they may in due time take upon themselves the yoke of Christ.

We believe that the Lord's Supper perpetuates the fellowship between Christ and His disciples sealed in the upper room, that at His table He is always present, and His people are nourished, confirmed, and renewed. The giving and receiving of bread and wine accompanied by His own words signifies the gracious self-giving of Christ as suffering and living Lord in such wise that His faithful people live in Him and He in them.

So we acknowledge Baptism as God's appointed means of grace at initiation into the Christian fellowship; and the Lord's Supper as His appointed means of maintaining the fellowship in health and strength, and as the act of worship in which the whole soul of man goes out to God and God's grace comes freely to man.

### **XI. Christian Life and Duty**

We believe that the Christian life is the life lived in fellowship with Christ and His Church. It begins with repentance and faith. In repentance men turn from sin to serve the holy and forgiving God with new and glad obedience. In faith they entrust themselves to Christ and rest upon Him alone for salvation.

We believe that by the teaching and example of Jesus the Holy Spirit shows men the way and the end of the Christian life, what it means to love God with all the heart and soul and mind and strength, and to love their neighbour as themselves.

We believe that Christian men are called to abide within the fellowship of the Church, to maintain its peace and unity, and to give diligent heed to prayer, to the reading of Scripture, to common worship and the sacraments.

We believe that they are likewise called to live as those who are of the Kingdom of God, and to seek His righteousness both in individual and social life, serving their fellowmen in love for Christ's sake, and striving and waiting in prayer for an ordered common life where the will of God for the well-being and peace of men shall be done over all the earth.

We believe that in denying themselves and in following Christ men are enabled by the Spirit of God more and more to die unto sin and live unto righteousness; that they are, under the hand of a faithful Father, in labour, love, and duty, in suffering, sorrow and defeat, renewed in the inner man after the image of the

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crucified and victorious Christ; and that they receive in this life a foretaste of the final redemption, assurance of the divine favour, peace and joy, and the confidence that He is able to keep them to the end.

So we acknowledge the Christian life as the life lived within the family of God, with the graces and privileges, the duties and discipline, through which the Christian man grows up in all things into Christ.

### **XII. The Consummation**

We believe that the resurrection and exaltation of Christ, following on His crucifixion, gives assurance that the long struggle between sin and grace will have an end, the Kingdom be revealed in its fullness, and God's eternal purpose accomplished.

We believe that God will judge all men by Jesus Christ, the Son of Man.

We believe that, while salvation is offered to all, God does not take away or override the freedom with which He has endowed men. If they stubbornly refuse His mercy and prefer sinful ways they shut themselves out from the light and joy of salvation and fall under the righteous judgment of God.

We believe that those who accept the offer of salvation and persevere in the Christian way do after death enter into the joy of their Lord, a blessedness beyond our power to conceive. They see God face to face, and in the communion of saints are partakers with the Church on earth of its labours and prayers.

So we acknowledge the righteous and merciful judgment of God, and we wait for the coming of the Kingdom which shall have no end.

"We know Whom we have believed, and are persuaded that He is able to keep that which we have committed to Him."

"To the only wise God our Saviour be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and ever."

# A New Creed

## INTRODUCTION

Creeds tend to be brief expressions of faith to be recited in worship, often from memory, while statements of faith tend to be longer, more detailed expressions to be used for educating members and others inside the community and for communicating the community's beliefs to those outside the community. In many respects, however, creeds and statements of faith are similar: both are ways of using words to express the beliefs of a religious community, and both can powerfully shape the faith identity of individuals and communities.

The process that led to the development of A New Creed began in 1965, when a proposed new order of service for baptism was reviewed. In the conversation that followed, the place of the Apostles' Creed was questioned, and the need for a brief, modern profession of faith to be used as an alternative was suggested. At the same time, Guelph Presbytery, reflecting the wish by many in the United Church for an alternative to the Apostles' and Nicene creeds for use in worship and also the broader ferment in ecumenical liturgical renewal in the 1960s, asked for "a modern creed in modern language".

After reviewing a few drafts the new creed was approved by the General Council Executive. It was published in *Service Book for the Use of Ministers Conducting Public Worship* and *Service Book for the Use of the People* (both published in 1969). Ten years later it was suggested that the creed be rewritten to use inclusive language. As a result, the following version of A New Creed was approved in 1980:

We are not alone, we live in God's world.

We believe in God:

who has created and is creating, who has come in Jesus,  
the Word made flesh,  
to reconcile and make new,  
who works in us and others by the Spirit.

We trust in God.

We are called to be the church:

to celebrate God's presence,  
to love and serve others,  
to seek justice and resist evil,  
to proclaim Jesus, crucified and risen,  
our judge and our hope.

In life, in death, in life beyond death,

God is with us.

We are not alone.

Thanks be to God.

Before it took the form we know today, A New Creed was changed one more time. In 1994, Toronto Conference petitioned the 35th General Council to "amend the United Church creed to explicitly acknowledge our responsibility for the integrity of creation and our place in it." The General Council approved this motion.

In March 1995, the General Council Executive agreed to add the phrase "to live with respect in creation" immediately after the phrase "to celebrate God's presence". The General Council Executive noted that its inclusion continues our attempt to live out the apology to First Nations peoples, it calls us to care for a creation of which we are a part and the phrase acknowledges respect for self as integral to respect for creation.

## A New Creed

### A New Creed

We are not alone,  
we live in God's world.

We believe in God:  
who has created and is creating,  
who has come in Jesus,  
the Word made flesh,  
to reconcile and make new,  
who works in us and others  
by the Spirit.

We trust in God.

We are called to be the Church:  
to celebrate God's presence,  
to live with respect in Creation,  
to love and serve others,  
to seek justice and resist evil,  
to proclaim Jesus, crucified and risen,  
our judge and our hope.

In life, in death, in life beyond death,  
God is with us.

We are not alone.

Thanks be to God

# A Song of Faith

## INTRODUCTION

A Song of Faith is intended to provide a verbal picture of what The United Church of Canada understands its faith to be at the beginning of the 21st century. It is a means of reflection and an invitation for the church to live out its convictions in the current theological, social, political, and historical context.

The genesis of this 2006 statement of faith was threefold. First, the writers of the Doctrine section of the Basis of Union indicated when they wrote it in 1908 that it was a piece for the time, and that with their blessing, following generations should craft statements that were true to the particulars of their own time. Second, questions had arisen about the relevance of the Doctrine section and the 1940 Statement, and concern about how those statements of faith could be both affirmed and credited for their foundation of contemporary formulations of faith. Third, over the years the United Church had made statements about sexuality, scripture, and interfaith relations, among many things, but had not addressed or summarized them in one place.

A Song was written with an understanding that each generation has fresh perspectives, challenges, and mission. This statement is clearly a testimonial from a particular time and place. It is intended to be timely and contextual, part of the whole of who we are. It is not a statement for all time, but for this time.

A Song of Faith took six years to compose. Consultations were held across the United Church. Groups and individuals were asked for input. Presentations were made in congregations, presbyteries, Conferences, and our colleges. The 16 writers of the statement represented a broad range of United Church membership, as is our current practice. They read historical and contemporary creeds. Sister denominations, Canadian and abroad, and interfaith neighbours commented on the statement to determine whether it reflected the contemporary United Church they knew.

To many, statements seem directive rather than expansive or open-minded; poetry, on the other hand, can be evocative and can deepen faith. For these reasons, the writers decided to use the metaphor of song, and named the new statement A Song of Faith. It was never intended to replace the United Church Creed, which remains our common liturgical expression of faith.

A statement of faith in the Reformed tradition is not necessarily identical to the particular faith expressions of individual members. Giving voice to the diverse understanding of our denomination, it means different things to different people. This is the genius of our time: holding faith together despite and even because of our differences. Such is the character of our church as we have nurtured it. Such is the evocative, rather than definitive, nature of A Song of Faith.

## A Song of Faith

God is Holy Mystery,  
beyond complete knowledge,  
above perfect description.

Yet,  
in love,  
the one eternal God seeks relationship.

So God creates the universe  
and with it the possibility of being and relating.  
God tends the universe,  
mending the broken and reconciling the estranged.  
God enlivens the universe,  
guiding all things toward harmony with their Source.

Grateful for God's loving action,  
We cannot keep from singing.

With the Church through the ages,  
we speak of God as one and triune:  
Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.  
We also speak of God as  
Creator, Redeemer, and Sustainer  
God, Christ, and Spirit  
Mother, Friend, and Comforter  
Source of Life, Living Word, and Bond of Love,  
and in other ways that speak faithfully of  
the One on whom our hearts rely,  
the fully shared life at the heart of the universe.

We witness to Holy Mystery that is Wholly Love.

God is creative and self-giving,  
generously moving  
in all the near and distant corners of the universe.  
Nothing exists that does not find its source in God.  
Our first response to God's providence is gratitude.  
We sing thanksgiving.

Finding ourselves in a world of beauty and mystery,  
of living things, diverse and interdependent,  
of complex patterns of growth and evolution,  
of subatomic particles and cosmic swirls,  
we sing of God the Creator,  
the Maker and Source of all that is.

Each part of creation reveals unique aspects of God the  
Creator,  
who is both in creation and beyond it.  
All parts of creation, animate and inanimate, are related.  
All creation is good.  
We sing of the Creator,  
who made humans to live and move  
and have their being in God.

In and with God,  
we can direct our lives toward right relationship  
with each other and with God.  
We can discover our place as one strand in the web of  
life.  
We can grow in wisdom and compassion.  
We can recognize all people as kin.  
We can accept our mortality and finitude, not as a curse,  
but as a challenge to make our lives and choices  
matter.

Made in the image of God,  
we yearn for the fulfillment that is life in God.  
Yet we choose to turn away from God.  
We surrender ourselves to sin,  
a disposition revealed in selfishness, cowardice, or  
apathy.

Becoming bound and complacent  
in a web of false desires and wrong choices,  
we bring harm to ourselves and others.

This brokenness in human life and community  
is an outcome of sin.

Sin is not only personal  
but accumulates  
to become habitual and systemic forms  
of injustice, violence, and hatred.

We are all touched by this brokenness:  
the rise of selfish individualism  
that erodes human solidarity;  
the concentration of wealth and power  
without regard for the needs of all;  
the toxins of religious and ethnic bigotry;  
the degradation of the blessedness of human bodies  
and human passions through sexual exploitation;  
the delusion of unchecked progress and limitless  
growth  
that threatens our home, the earth;  
the covert despair that lulls many into numb  
complicity  
with empires and systems of domination.

We sing lament and repentance.

Yet evil does not—cannot—  
undermine or overcome the love of God.

God forgives,  
and calls all of us to confess our fears and failings  
with honesty and humility.

God reconciles,  
and calls us to repent the part we have played  
in damaging our world, ourselves, and each other.

God transforms,  
and calls us to protect the vulnerable,  
to pray for deliverance from evil,  
to work with God for the healing of the world,  
that all might have abundant life.

## A Song of Faith

We sing of grace.

The fullness of life includes  
moments of unexpected inspiration and courage lived  
out,  
experiences of beauty, truth, and goodness,  
blessings of seeds and harvest,  
friendship and family, intellect and sexuality,  
the reconciliation of persons through justice  
and communities living in righteousness,  
and the articulation of meaning.

And so we sing of God the Spirit,  
who from the beginning has swept over the face of  
creation,  
animating all energy and matter  
and moving in the human heart.

We sing of God the Spirit,  
faithful and untameable,  
who is creatively and redemptively active in the  
world.

The Spirit challenges us to celebrate the holy  
not only in what is familiar,  
but also in that which seems foreign.

We sing of the Spirit,  
who speaks our prayers of deepest longing  
and enfolds our concerns and confessions,  
transforming us and the world.

We offer worship  
as an outpouring of gratitude and awe  
and a practice of opening ourselves  
to God's still, small voice of comfort,  
to God's rushing whirlwind of challenge.

Through word, music, art, and sacrament,  
in community and in solitude,  
God changes our lives, our relationships, and our  
world.

We sing with trust.

Scripture is our song for the journey, the living word  
passed on from generation to generation  
to guide and inspire,  
that we might wrestle a holy revelation for our time  
and place  
from the human experiences  
and cultural assumptions of another era.  
God calls us to be doers of the word and not hearers only.

The Spirit breathes revelatory power into scripture,  
bestowing upon it a unique and normative place  
in the life of the community.  
The Spirit judges us critically when we abuse scripture  
by interpreting it narrow-mindedly,

using it as a tool of oppression, exclusion, or hatred.  
The wholeness of scripture testifies  
to the oneness and faithfulness of God.  
The multiplicity of scripture testifies to its depth:  
two testaments, four gospels,  
contrasting points of view held in tension—  
all a faithful witness to the One and Triune God,  
the Holy Mystery that is Wholly Love.

We find God made known in Jesus of Nazareth,  
and so we sing of God the Christ, the Holy One  
embodied.

We sing of Jesus,  
a Jew,  
born to a woman in poverty  
in a time of social upheaval  
and political oppression.  
He knew human joy and sorrow.  
So filled with the Holy Spirit was he  
that in him people experienced the presence of God  
among them.

We sing praise to God incarnate.

Jesus announced the coming of God's reign—  
a commonwealth not of domination  
but of peace, justice, and reconciliation.  
He healed the sick and fed the hungry.  
He forgave sins and freed those held captive  
by all manner of demonic powers.  
He crossed barriers of race, class, culture, and gender.  
He preached and practised unconditional love—  
love of God, love of neighbour,  
love of friend, love of enemy—  
and he commanded his followers to love one another  
as he had loved them.

Because his witness to love was threatening,  
those exercising power sought to silence Jesus.  
He suffered abandonment and betrayal,  
state-sanctioned torture and execution.  
He was crucified.

But death was not the last word.  
God raised Jesus from death,  
turning sorrow into joy,  
despair into hope.  
We sing of Jesus raised from the dead.  
We sing hallelujah.

By becoming flesh in Jesus,  
God makes all things new.  
In Jesus' life, teaching, and self-offering,  
God empowers us to live in love.  
In Jesus' crucifixion,  
God bears the sin, grief, and suffering of the world.

## A Song of Faith

In Jesus' resurrection,  
God overcomes death.  
Nothing separates us from the love of God.

The Risen Christ lives today,  
present to us and the source of our hope.  
In response to who Jesus was  
and to all he did and taught,  
to his life, death, and resurrection,  
and to his continuing presence with us through the  
Spirit,  
we celebrate him as  
the Word made flesh,  
the one in whom God and humanity are perfectly  
joined,  
the transformation of our lives,  
the Christ.

We sing of a church  
seeking to continue the story of Jesus  
by embodying Christ's presence in the world.  
We are called together by Christ  
as a community of broken but hopeful believers,  
loving what he loved,  
living what he taught,  
striving to be faithful servants of God  
in our time and place.  
Our ancestors in faith  
bequeath to us experiences of their faithful living;  
upon their lives our lives are built.  
Our living of the gospel makes us a part of this  
communion of saints,  
experiencing the fulfillment of God's reign  
even as we actively anticipate a new heaven and a  
new earth.

The church has not always lived up to its vision.  
It requires the Spirit to reorient it,  
helping it to live an emerging faith while honouring  
tradition,  
challenging it to live by grace rather than entitlement,  
for we are called to be a blessing to the earth.

We sing of God's good news lived out,  
a church with purpose:  
faith nurtured and hearts comforted,  
gifts shared for the good of all,  
resistance to the forces that exploit and marginalize,  
fierce love in the face of violence,  
human dignity defended,  
members of a community held and inspired by God,  
corrected and comforted,  
instrument of the loving Spirit of Christ,  
creation's mending.  
We sing of God's mission.

We are each given particular gifts of the Spirit.  
For the sake of the world,  
God calls all followers of Jesus to Christian ministry.  
In the church,  
some are called to specific ministries of leadership,  
both lay and ordered;  
some witness to the good news;  
some uphold the art of worship;  
some comfort the grieving and guide the wandering;  
some build up the community of wisdom;  
some stand with the oppressed and work for justice.  
To embody God's love in the world,  
the work of the church requires the ministry and  
discipleship of all believers.

In grateful response to God's abundant love,  
we bear in mind our integral connection  
to the earth and one another;  
we participate in God's work of healing and mending  
creation.  
To point to the presence of the holy in the world,  
the church receives, consecrates, and shares  
visible signs of the grace of God.  
In company with the churches  
of the Reformed and Methodist traditions,  
we celebrate two sacraments as gifts of Christ:  
baptism and holy communion.  
In these sacraments the ordinary things of life  
—water, bread, wine—  
point beyond themselves to God and God's love,  
teaching us to be alert  
to the sacred in the midst of life.

Before conscious thought or action on our part,  
we are born into the brokenness of this world.  
Before conscious thought or action on our part,  
we are surrounded by God's redeeming love.  
Baptism by water in the name of the Holy Trinity  
is the means by which we are received, at any age,  
into the covenanted community of the church.  
It is the ritual that signifies our rebirth in faith  
and cleansing by the power of God.  
Baptism signifies the nurturing, sustaining,  
and transforming power of God's love  
and our grateful response to that grace.

Carrying a vision of creation healed and restored,  
we welcome all in the name of Christ.  
Invited to the table where none shall go hungry,  
we gather as Christ's guests and friends.  
In holy communion  
we are commissioned to feed as we have been fed,  
forgive as we have been forgiven,  
love as we have been loved.

## A Song of Faith

The open table speaks of the shining promise  
of barriers broken and creation healed.  
In the communion meal, wine poured out and bread  
broken,  
we remember Jesus.

We remember not only the promise but also the price that  
he paid  
for who he was,  
for what he did and said,  
and for the world's brokenness.

We taste the mystery of God's great love for us,  
and are renewed in faith and hope.

We place our hope in God.  
We sing of a life beyond life  
and a future good beyond imagining:  
a new heaven and a new earth,  
the end of sorrow, pain, and tears,  
Christ's return and life with God,  
the making new of all things.

We yearn for the coming of that future,  
even while participating in eternal life now.

Divine creation does not cease  
until all things have found wholeness, union, and  
integration  
with the common ground of all being.

As children of the Timeless One,  
our time-bound lives will find completion  
in the all-embracing Creator.

In the meantime, we embrace the present,  
embodying hope, loving our enemies,  
caring for the earth,  
choosing life.

Grateful for God's loving action,  
we cannot keep from singing.  
Creating and seeking relationship,  
in awe and trust,  
we witness to Holy Mystery who is Wholly Love.

Amen.