

1 All excerpted from *The Book of Confessions*, Constitution of the Presbyterian  
2 Church (U.S.A.), Part I.

3 **CONFESSION OF 1967** (Inclusive Language Version)

4 4. Reconciliation in Society

5 9.43 In each time and place, there are particular problems and crises through  
6 which God calls the church to act. The church, guided by the Spirit, humbled by its  
7 own complicity and instructed by all attainable knowledge, seeks to discern the  
8 will of God and learn how to obey in these concrete situations. The following are  
9 particularly urgent at the present time.

10 9.44 a. God has created the peoples of the earth to be one universal family. In his  
11 reconciling love, God overcomes the barriers between sisters and brothers and  
12 breaks down every form of discrimination based on racial or ethnic difference,  
13 real or imaginary. The church is called to bring all people to receive and uphold  
14 one another as persons in all relationships of life: in employment, housing,  
15 education, leisure, marriage, family, church, and the exercise of political rights.  
16 Therefore, the church labors for the abolition of all racial discrimination and  
17 ministers to those injured by it. Congregations, individuals, or groups of Christians  
18 who exclude, dominate, or patronize others, however subtly, resist the Spirit of  
19 God and bring contempt on the faith which they profess.

20 9.45 b. God's reconciliation in Jesus Christ is the ground of the peace, justice, and  
21 freedom among nations which all powers of government are called to serve and  
22 defend. The church, in its own life, is called to practice the forgiveness of enemies  
23 and to commend to the nations as practical politics the search for cooperation  
24 and peace. This search requires that the nations pursue fresh and responsible  
25 relations across every line of conflict, even at risk to national security, to reduce  
26 areas of strife and to broaden international understanding. Reconciliation among  
27 nations becomes peculiarly urgent as countries develop nuclear, chemical, and  
28 biological weapons, diverting human power and resources from constructive uses  
29 and risking the annihilation of humankind. Although nations may serve God's  
30 purposes in history, the church which identifies the sovereignty of any one nation  
31 or any one way of life with the cause of God denies the Lordship of Christ and  
32 betrays its calling.

33 9.46 c. The reconciliation of humankind through Jesus Christ makes it plain that  
34 enslaving poverty in a world of abundance is an intolerable violation of God's  
35 good creation. Because Jesus identified himself with the needy and exploited, the  
36 cause of the world's poor is the cause of his disciples. The church cannot condone  
37 poverty, whether it is the product of unjust social structures, exploitation of the  
38 defenseless, lack of national resources, absence of technological understanding,  
39 or rapid expansion of populations. The church calls all people to use their abilities,  
40 their possessions, and the fruits of technology as gifts entrusted to them by God  
41 for the maintenance of their families and the advancement of the common  
42 welfare. It encourages those forces in human society that raise hopes for better  
43 conditions and provide people with opportunity for a decent living. A church that  
44 is indifferent to poverty, or evades responsibility in economic affairs, or is open to  
45 one social class only, or expects gratitude for its beneficence makes a mockery of  
46 reconciliation and offers no acceptable worship to God.

47 9.47 d. The relationship between man and woman exemplifies in a basic way  
48 God's ordering of the interpersonal life for which God created humankind.  
49 Anarchy in sexual relationships is a symptom of alienation from God, neighbors,  
50 and self. Perennial confusion about the meaning of sex has been aggravated in  
51 our day by the availability of new means for birth control and the treatment of  
52 infection, by the pressures of urbanization, by the exploitation of sexual symbols  
53 in mass communication, and by world overpopulation. The church, as the  
54 household of God, is called to lead people out of this alienation into the  
55 responsible freedom of the new life in Christ. Reconciled to God, people have joy  
56 in and respect for their own humanity and that of other persons; a man and  
57 woman are enabled to marry, to commit themselves to a mutually shared life,  
58 and to respond to each other in sensitive and lifelong concern; parents receive  
59 the grace to care for children in love and to nurture their individuality. The church  
60 comes under the judgment of God and invites rejection by society when it fails to  
61 lead men and women into the full meaning of life together, or withholds the  
62 compassion of Christ from those caught in the moral confusion of our time.

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65 **BRIEF STATEMENT OF FAITH**

66 In life and in death we belong to God.  
67 Through the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ,  
68 the love of God,  
69 and the communion of the Holy Spirit,  
70 we trust in the one triune God, the Holy One of Israel,  
71 whom alone we worship and serve.

72 We trust in Jesus Christ,  
73 Fully human, fully God.  
74 Jesus proclaimed the reign of God:  
75 preaching good news to the poor  
76 and release to the captives,  
77 teaching by word and deed  
78 and blessing the children,  
79 healing the sick  
80 and binding up the brokenhearted,  
81 eating with outcasts,  
82 forgiving sinners,  
83 and calling all to repent and believe the gospel.  
84 Unjustly condemned for blasphemy and sedition,  
85 Jesus was crucified,  
86 suffering the depths of human pain  
87 and giving his life for the sins of the world.  
88 God raised this Jesus from the dead,  
89 vindicating his sinless life,  
90 breaking the power of sin and evil,  
91 delivering us from death to life eternal.

92 We trust in God,  
93 whom Jesus called Abba, Father.  
94 In sovereign love God created the world good  
95 and makes everyone equally in God's image  
96 male and female, of every race and people,  
97 to live as one community.

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100 But we rebel against God; we hide from our Creator.  
101 Ignoring God's commandments,  
102 we violate the image of God in others and ourselves,  
103 accept lies as truth,  
104 exploit neighbor and nature, and threaten death to the planet entrusted to our  
105 care.  
106 We deserve God's condemnation.  
107 Yet God acts with justice and mercy to redeem creation.  
108 In everlasting love,  
109 the God of Abraham and Sarah chose a covenant people  
110 to bless all families of the earth.  
111 Hearing their cry,  
112 God delivered the children of Israel  
113 from the house of bondage.  
114 Loving us still,  
115 God makes us heirs with Christ of the covenant.  
116 Like a mother who will not forsake her nursing child,  
117 like a father who runs to welcome the prodigal home,  
118 God is faithful still.

119 We trust in God the Holy Spirit,  
120 everywhere the giver and renewer of life.  
121 The Spirit justifies us by grace through faith,  
122 sets us free to accept ourselves and to love God and neighbor,  
123 and binds us together with all believers  
124 in the one body of Christ, the Church.  
125 The same Spirit  
126 who inspired the prophets and apostles  
127 rules our faith and life in Christ through Scripture,  
128 engages us through the Word proclaimed,  
129 claims us in the waters of baptism,  
130 feeds us with the bread of life and the cup of salvation,  
131 and calls women and men to all ministries of the church.  
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134 In a broken and fearful world  
135 the Spirit gives us courage  
136 to pray without ceasing,  
137 to witness among all peoples to Christ as Lord and Savior,  
138 to unmask idolatries in Church and culture,  
139 to hear the voices of peoples long silenced,  
140 and to work with others for justice, freedom, and peace.  
141 In gratitude to God, empowered by the Spirit,  
142 we strive to serve Christ in our daily tasks  
143 and to live holy and joyful lives,  
144 even as we watch for God's new heaven and new earth,  
145 praying, "Come, Lord Jesus!"  
  
146 With believers in every time and place,  
147 we rejoice that nothing in life or in death  
148 can separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.  
149 Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit. Amen.  
  
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## Theological Declaration of Barmen

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### I. An Appeal to the Evangelical Congregations and Christians in Germany

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**8.01** The Confessional Synod of the German Evangelical Church met in Barmen,

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May 29-31, 1934. Here representatives from all the German Confessional

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Churches met with one accord in a confession of the one Lord of the one, holy,

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apostolic Church. In fidelity to their Confession of Faith, members of Lutheran,

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Reformed, and United Churches sought a common message for the need and

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temptation of the Church in our day. With gratitude to God they are convinced

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that they have been given a common word to utter. It was not their intention to

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found a new Church or to form a union. For nothing was farther from their minds

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than the abolition of the confessional status of our Churches. Their intention was,

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rather, to withstand in faith and unanimity the destruction of the Confession of

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Faith, and thus of the Evangelical Church in Germany. In opposition to attempts to

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establish the unity of the German Evangelical Church by means of false doctrine,

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by the use of force and insincere practices, the Confessional Synod insists that the

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unity of the Evangelical Churches in Germany can come only from the Word of

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God in faith through the Holy Spirit. Thus alone is the Church renewed.

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**8.02** Therefore the Confessional Synod calls upon the congregations to range

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themselves behind it in prayer, and steadfastly to gather around those pastors

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and teachers who are loyal to the Confessions.

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**8.03** Be not deceived by loose talk, as if we meant to oppose the unity of the

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German nation! Do not listen to the seducers who pervert our intentions, as if we

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wanted to break up the unity of the German Evangelical Church or to forsake the

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Confessions of the Fathers!

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**8.04** Try the spirits whether they are of God! Prove also the words of the

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Confessional Synod of the German Evangelical Church to see whether they agree

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with Holy Scripture and with the Confessions of the Fathers. If you find that we

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are speaking contrary to Scripture, then do not listen to us! But if you find that we

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are taking our stand upon Scripture, then let no fear or temptation keep you from

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treading with us the path of faith and obedience to the Word of God, in order that

186 God's people be of one mind upon earth and that we in faith experience what he  
187 himself has said: "I will never leave you, nor forsake you." Therefore, "Fear not,  
188 little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom."

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## 190 II. Theological Declaration Concerning the Present Situation of the German 191 Evangelical Church

192 **8.05** According to the opening words of its constitution of July 11, 1933, the  
193 German Evangelical Church is a federation of Confessional Churches that grew out  
194 of the Reformation and that enjoy equal rights. The theological basis for the  
195 unification of these Churches is laid down in Article 1 and Article 2(1) of the  
196 constitution of the German Evangelical Church that was recognized by the Reich  
197 Government on July 14, 1933:

- 198 • Article 1. The inviolable foundation of the German Evangelical Church is the  
199 gospel of Jesus Christ as it is attested for us in Holy Scripture and brought to  
200 light again in the Confessions of the Reformation. The full powers that the  
201 Church needs for its mission are hereby determined and limited.
- 202 • Article 2 (1). The German Evangelical Church is divided into member  
203 Churches (*Landeskirchen*).

204 **8.06** We, the representatives of Lutheran, Reformed, and United Churches, of free  
205 synods, Church assemblies, and parish organizations united in the Confessional  
206 Synod of the German Evangelical Church, declare that we stand together on the  
207 ground of the German Evangelical Church as a federation of German Confessional  
208 Churches. We are bound together by the confession of the one Lord of the one,  
209 holy, catholic, and apostolic Church.

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211 **8.07** We publicly declare before all evangelical Churches in Germany that what  
212 they hold in common in this Confession is grievously imperiled, and with it the  
213 unity of the German Evangelical Church. It is threatened by the teaching methods  
214 and actions of the ruling Church party of the "German Christians" and of the  
215 Church administration carried on by them. These have become more and more  
216 apparent during the first year of the existence of the German Evangelical Church.  
217 This threat consists in the fact that the theological basis, in which the German  
218 Evangelical Church is united, has been continually and systematically thwarted

219 and rendered ineffective by alien principles, on the part of the leaders and  
220 spokesmen of the "German Christians" as well as on the part of the Church  
221 administration. When these principles are held to be valid, then, according to all  
222 the Confessions in force among us, the Church ceases to be the Church and th  
223 German Evangelical Church, as a federation of Confessional Churches, becomes  
224 intrinsically impossible.

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226 **8.08** As members of Lutheran, Reformed, and United Churches we may and must  
227 speak with one voice in this matter today. Precisely because we want to be and to  
228 remain faithful to our various Confessions, we may not keep silent, since we  
229 believe that we have been given a common message to utter in a time of common  
230 need and temptation. We commend to God what this may mean for the  
231 intrrelations of the Confessional Churches.

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233 **8.09** In view of the errors of the "German Christians" of the present Reich Church  
234 government which are devastating the Church and also therefore breaking up the  
235 unity of the German Evangelical Church, we confess the following evangelical  
236 truths:

237 **8.10 - 1.** "I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father,  
238 but by me." (John 14.6). "Truly, truly, I say to you, he who does not enter the  
239 sheepfold by the door, but climbs in by another way, that man is a thief and a  
240 robber. . . . I am the door; if anyone enters by me, he will be saved." (John 10:1,  
241 9.)

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243 **8.11** Jesus Christ, as he is attested for us in Holy Scripture, is the one Word of God  
244 which we have to hear and which we have to trust and obey in life and in death.

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246 **8.12** We reiect the false doctrine, as though the church could and would have to  
247 acknowledge as a source of its proclamation, apart from and besides this one  
248 Word of God, still other events and powers, figures and truths, as God's  
249 revelation.

250 **8.13 - 2.** "Christ Jesus, whom God has made our wisdom, our righteousness and  
251 sanctification and redemption." (1 Cor. 1:30.)



252 **8.14** As Jesus Christ is God's assurance of the forgiveness of all our sins, so, in the  
253 same way and with the same seriousness he is also God's mighty claim upon our  
254 whole life. Through him befalls us a joyful deliverance from the godless fetters of  
255 this world for a free, grateful service to his creatures.

256

257 **8.15** We reject the false doctrine, as though there were areas of our life in which  
258 we would not belong to Jesus Christ, but to other lords--areas in which we would  
259 not need justification and sanctification through him.

260 **8.16** - 3. "Rather, speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in every way into  
261 him who is the head, into Christ, from whom the whole body [is] joined and knit  
262 together." (Eph. 4:15,16.)

263

264 **8.17** The Christian Church is the congregation of the brethren in which Jesus  
265 Christ acts presently as the Lord in Word and sacrament through the Holy Spirit.  
266 As the Church of pardoned sinners, it has to testify in the midst of a sinful world,  
267 with its faith as with its obedience, with its message as with its order, that it is  
268 solely his property, and that it lives and wants to live solely from his comfort and  
269 from his direction in the expectation of his appearance.

270

271 **8.18** We reject the false doctrine, as though the Church were permitted to  
272 abandon the form of its message and order to its own pleasure or to changes in  
273 prevailing ideological and political convictions.

274 **8.19** - 4. "You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their  
275 great men exercise authority over them. It shall not be so among you; but  
276 whoever would be great among you must be your servant." (Matt. 20:25,26.)

277

278 **8.20** The various offices in the Church do not establish a dominion of some over  
279 the others; on the contrary, they are for the exercise of the ministry entrusted to  
280 and enjoined upon the whole congregation.

281

282 **8.21** We reject the false doctrine, as though the Church, apart from this ministry,  
283 could and were permitted to give itself, or allow to be given to it, special leaders  
284 vested with ruling powers.

285 **8.22 - 5.** "Fear God. Honor the emperor." (1 Peter 2:17.)  
286 Scripture tells us that, in the as yet unredeemed world in which the Church also  
287 exists, the State has by divine appointment the task of providing for justice and  
288 peace. [It fulfills this task] by means of the threat and exercise of force, according  
289 to the measure of human judgment and human ability. The Church acknowledges  
290 the benefit of this divine appointment in gratitude and reverence before him. It  
291 calls to mind the Kingdom of God, God's commandment and righteousness, and  
292 thereby the responsibility both of rulers and of the ruled. It trusts and obeys the  
293 power of the Word by which God upholds all things.

295 **8.23** We reject the false doctrine, as though the State, over and beyond its special  
296 commission, should and could become the single and totalitarian order of human  
297 life, thus fulfilling the Church's vocation as well.

299 **8.24** We reject the false doctrine, as though the Church, over and beyond its  
300 special commission, should and could appropriate the characteristics, the tasks,  
301 and the dignity of the State, thus itself becoming an organ of the State.

302 **8.25 - 6.** "Lo, I am with you always, to the close of the age." (Matt. 28:20.) "The  
303 word of God is not fettered." (2 Tim. 2:9.)

305 **8.26** The Church's commission, upon which its freedom is founded, consists in  
306 delivering the message of the free grace of God to all people in Christ's stead, and  
307 therefore in the ministry of his own Word and work through sermon and  
308 sacrament.

310 **8.27** We reject the false doctrine, as though the Church in human arrogance could  
311 place the Word and work of the Lord in the service of any arbitrarily chosen  
312 desires, purposes, and plans.

314 **8.28** The Confessional Synod of the German Evangelical Church declares that it  
315 sees in the acknowledgment of these truths and in the rejection of these errors  
316 the indispensable theological basis of the German Evangelical Church as a  
317 federation of Confessional Churches. It invites all who are able to accept its  
318 declaration to be mindful of these theological principles in their decisions in  
319 Church politics. It entreats all whom it concerns to return to the unity of faith,  
320 love, and hope.

321

322 **Confession of Belhar September 1986 1**

323 We believe in the triune God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, who gathers, protects  
324 and cares for the church through Word and Spirit. This, God has done since the  
325 beginning of the world and will do to the end.

326 We believe in one holy, universal Christian church, the communion of saints called  
327 from the entire human family.

328 We believe

329 • that Christ's work of reconciliation is made manifest in the church as the  
330 community of believers who have been reconciled with God and with one  
331 another;

332 • that unity is, therefore, both a gift and an obligation for the church of Jesus  
333 Christ; that through the working of God's Spirit it is a binding force, yet  
334 simultaneously a reality which must be earnestly pursued and sought: one which  
335 the people of God must continually be built up to attain;

336 • that this unity must become visible so that the world may believe that  
337 separation, enmity and hatred between people and groups is sin which Christ has  
338 already conquered, and accordingly that anything which threatens this unity may  
339 have no place in the church and must be resisted;

340 • that this unity of the people of God must be manifested and be active in a  
341 variety of ways:

342 >in that we love one another;

343 >that we experience, practice and pursue community with one another;

344 >that we are obligated to give ourselves willingly and joyfully to be of  
345 benefit and blessing to one another;

346 >that we share one faith, have one calling, are of one soul and one mind;

347 >have one God and Father, are filled with one Spirit, are baptized with one  
348 baptism, eat of one bread and drink of one cup, confess one name, are  
349 obedient to one Lord, work for one cause, and share one hope;

350 >together come to know the height and the breadth and the depth of the  
351 love of Christ;

352 >together are built up to the stature of Christ, to the new humanity;

353 >together know and bear one another's burdens, thereby fulfilling the law  
354 of Christ that we need one another and upbuild one another, admonishing  
355 and comforting one another;

356 >that we suffer with one another for the sake of righteousness; pray  
357 together; together serve God in this world; and together fight against all  
358 which may threaten or hinder this unity;

359 • that this unity can be established only in freedom and not under constraint; that  
360 the variety of spiritual gifts, opportunities, backgrounds, convictions, as well as  
361 the various languages and cultures, are by virtue of the reconciliation in Christ,  
362 opportunities for mutual service and enrichment within the one visible people of  
363 God;

364 • that true faith in Jesus Christ is the only condition for membership of this  
365 church;

366

367 Therefore, we reject any doctrine

368 • which absolutizes either natural diversity or the sinful separation of people in  
369 such a way that this absolutization hinders or breaks the visible and active unity of  
370 the church, or even leads to the establishment of a separate church formation;

371 • which professes that this spiritual unity is truly being maintained in the bond of  
372 peace while believers of the same confession are in effect alienated from one  
373 another for the sake of diversity and in despair of reconciliation;

374 • which denies that a refusal earnestly to pursue this visible unity as a priceless  
375 gift is sin;

376 • which explicitly or implicitly maintains that descent or any other human or  
377 social factor should be a consideration in determining membership of the church.

378

379

380 3We believe

381 • that God has entrusted the church with the message of reconciliation in and  
382 through Jesus Christ;

383 that the church is called to be the salt of the earth and the light of the world, that  
384 the church is called blessed because it is a peacemaker, that the church is witness  
385 both by word and by deed to the new heaven and the new earth in which  
386 righteousness dwells.

387 • that God's lifegiving Word and Spirit has conquered the powers of sin and  
388 death, and therefore also of irreconciliation and hatred, bitterness and enmity,  
389 that God's lifegiving Word and Spirit will enable the church to live in a new  
390 obedience which can open new possibilities of life for society and the world;

391 • that the credibility of this message is seriously affected and its beneficial work  
392 obstructed when it is proclaimed in a land which professes to be Christian, but in  
393 which the enforced separation of people on a racial basis promotes and  
394 perpetuates alienation, hatred and enmity;

395 • that any teaching which attempts to legitimate such forced separation by  
396 appeal to the gospel, and is not prepared to venture on the road of obedience  
397 and reconciliation, but rather, out of prejudice, fear, selfishness and unbelief,  
398 denies in advance the reconciling power of the gospel, must be considered  
399 ideology and false doctrine.

400 Therefore, we reject any doctrine which, in such a situation sanctions in the  
401 name of the gospel or of the will of God the forced separation of people on the  
402 grounds of race and color and thereby in advance obstructs and weakens the  
403 ministry and experience of reconciliation in Christ.

404

405 4. We believe

406 • that God has revealed himself as the one who wishes to bring about justice and  
407 true peace among people;

- 408 • that God, in a world full of injustice and enmity, is in a special way the God of  
409 the destitute, the poor and the wronged
- 410 • that God calls the church to follow him in this; for God brings justice to the  
411 oppressed and gives bread to the hungry;
- 412 • that God frees the prisoner and restores sight to the blind;
- 413 • that God supports the downtrodden, protects the stranger, helps orphans and  
414 widows and blocks the path of the ungodly;
- 415 • that for God pure and undefiled religion is to visit the orphans and the widows  
416 in their suffering;
- 417 • that God wishes to teach the church to do what is good and to seek the right;
- 418 • that the church must therefore stand by people in any form of suffering and  
419 need, which implies, among other things, that the church must witness against  
420 and strive against any form of injustice, so that justice may roll down like waters,  
421 and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream;
- 422 • that the church as the possession of God must stand where the Lord stands,  
423 namely against injustice and with the wronged;
- 424 that in following Christ the church must witness against all the powerful and  
425 privileged who selfishly seek their own interests and thus control and harm  
426 others.

427

428 Therefore, we reject any ideology

- 429 • which would legitimate forms of injustice and any doctrine which is unwilling to  
430 resist such an ideology in the name of the gospel.

431

432 We believe that, in obedience to Jesus Christ, its only head, the church is called to  
433 confess and to do all these things, even though the authorities and human laws  
434 might forbid them and punishment and suffering be the consequence.

435

436 Jesus is Lord.

437 To the one and only God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, be the honor and the glory  
438 for ever and ever.

439

440 Note 1. This is a translation of the original Afrikaans text of the confession as it  
441 was adopted by the synod of the Dutch Reformed Mission Church in South Africa  
442 in 1986. In 1994 the Dutch Reformed Mission Church and the Dutch Reformed  
443 Church in Africa united to form the Uniting Reformed Church in Southern Africa  
444 (URCSA). This inclusive language text was prepared by the Office of Theology and  
445 Worship, Presbyterian Church (USA).

446