

Jesus Christ: Our Common Ground and Common Cause

As 21st century Christians, we are both heirs of the faith once delivered to the saints and living witnesses to the transforming power of Jesus Christ for life. Called together from diverse streams of the Christian tradition, we acknowledge the unity of the Spirit and the bond of peace that exist among those who call on the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and Him alone for salvation. Even as we fully acknowledge the imperfections of Christian institutions and the broken nature of our collective witness to the world, we commit to strive together for a faithful way of being the Church together. Our hearts are burdened for the millions of our neighbors who are estranged from God and the Church.

As leaders in the Anglican, Lutheran, Methodist, Presbyterian, and Reformed traditions, we hold in common the historic faith of the Church, around which we come together. In light of our context of mission and ministry, we affirm the following:

1) Jesus said, "You will know the truth and the truth will set you free" (John 8:32).

We affirm that there is unchanging truth that is known through Jesus Christ and God's revelation in Scripture.

2) Jesus said, "Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you" (Matthew 28:19, 20a)

We affirm that the one God is Triune, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

3) Jesus said, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me" (John 14:6).

We affirm that Jesus Christ is the Son of God and Savior of the world who died and was bodily raised for the salvation of sinners as a gift received by grace through faith; therefore, salvation is through Christ alone.

4) Jesus said, "Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away" (Matthew 24:35).

We affirm that the Bible is God's written word -- inspired, truthful, and the final authority for faith and life.

5) Jesus said, "As the Father has sent me, even so I am sending you" (John 20:21).

We affirm that the Church, as the community of baptized believers whom our Lord has called and sent to make disciples of all people in His name, is essential to the fulfillment of the Great Commission.

6) Jesus said, "Truly, I say to you, as you did it to one of the least of these my brothers, you did it to me" (Matthew 25:40).

We affirm that the Church is called to seek justice for all, to extend God's compassion for those in need, and to work for peace among all nations and peoples.

7) Jesus said, "Have you not read that he who created them from the beginning made

them male and female, and said, 'Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and they shall become one flesh'?" (Matthew 19:4-5).

We affirm that God created us male and female, and that marriage is a divinely ordained lifelong covenant of fidelity between one man and one woman. God's gift of sexual intimacy is to be expressed solely within this bond of marriage.

8) Jesus said, "I came that they may have life and have it abundantly" (John 10:10b). And in the Psalms we read, "For you formed my inward parts; you knitted me together in my mother's womb. " (Psalm 139:13).

We affirm that every human life is a gift from God to be cherished and respected from conception to natural death.

Engaging Culture

Recognizing a climate increasingly hostile to the living out of a faithful Christian witness, due to trends which include pervasive secularism, changing ethical norms, the challenge of effectively proclaiming the Gospel in a pluralistic context, and the vacuum created by the decline of Protestantism:

- 1) We proclaim and defend the faith that uplifts Jesus Christ as the Way, and the Truth, and the Life and confronts the ethical and theological relativism of our day.
- 2) We earnestly pray that all believers will deepen their commitment to the historic Christian faith, engage worldviews intolerant of Christianity with insight and compassion, and reassert the Gospel's influence throughout society.
- 3) We desire to see all persons transformed by the Gospel, equipped through discipleship, and accepting personal responsibility for the fulfillment of Christ's Great Commission. Relational evangelism through person-to-person discipleship is the mission.
- 4) We sincerely and humbly seek to fulfill our Lord's desire expressed in John 17:21: That we become one, "that the world may believe." To that end, we invite our congregations to find ways to express that unity through church planting, missions, and social witness together.

Church Planting and Missions

We are on common ground in obeying the Great Commission in reaching people for Jesus Christ through the salvation of souls both at home and abroad. We covenant together to communicate, cooperate and collaborate in living out our missional identity as disciples of Jesus Christ. We will look for ways, as God blesses and matures our relationships, to make authentic disciples who have a heart for following Jesus into the world. Therefore, we will explore together cooperatively planting churches and sending missionaries through:

- 1) Sharing training opportunities
- 2) Sharing information and resources, including the use of web-based technologies
- 3) Engaging in joint ministries and offering incubator facilities to support new church plants
- 4) Providing theological education, including remote theological education domestically

and globally

- 5) Identifying locations where we can encourage catalytic leadership toward collaborative church plants.
- 6) Sharing space with dislocated congregations

Social Witness

We are grateful recipients of scriptural teaching and heirs of great Christian traditions that insist that following Christ means loving our neighbors and taking responsibility to advance their well-being. God, through the prophet Jeremiah, instructed His exiled people to “seek the welfare of the city where I have sent you into exile, and pray to the LORD on its behalf, for in its welfare you will find your welfare” (Jeremiah 29: 7). The primary social witness of the Church is in our proclamation of the Gospel in word and sacrament, challenging the sins and idolatries that hold so many captive and building worshiping communities that demonstrate God’s kingdom. We are called to act with justice and charity toward others within and outside our churches. The Church also serves society through the Christian formation of laypersons who exercise their religiously-based moral convictions as citizens, political leaders, and participants in voluntary associations.

We share the biblical understanding of government as “God’s servant for [our] good,” appointed to encourage righteousness and restrain evil (Romans 13:1-7). Further, we affirm that the Church at times needs to address government and act publicly in matters related to society and its governance. We wish to do so in ways that evince humility, respect for biblical authority, careful study, reasoned judgment, and consistency between our words and actions. In our view, the Church should speak only on the issues that follow directly from core Christian moral convictions. These include:

- 1) Upholding the dignity of each human person as created in God’s image
- 3) Protecting human life at all stages
- 2) Addressing the needs and expanding the opportunities of the poor
- 4) Strengthening the marriage of man and woman and the bonds between parents and children as the necessary building blocks of society
- 5) Defending the free exercise of religion in North America and around the world

We commit ourselves anew to Christ and to one another. We recognize that the Holy Spirit has called us together, and that only through the Spirit can we hope to accomplish what we have set forth today.

“Now to him who is able to do far more abundantly than all that we ask or think, according to the power at work within us, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, forever and ever. Amen.” (Ephesians 3:20-21)