

Our World Belongs to God

Preface from the 2008 Revision Committee

The CRC is a confessional church. We base our faith, teaching, and preaching on the solid, biblical, and Reformed confessions of the 16th century: the Belgic confession, the Canons of Dort, and the Heidelberg Catechism.

While these historic confessions anchor the church's faith, they fail to take into account the changes in church, society, technology, and politics that confront us in the 350 years since the confessions were written. In order to restate the church's faith in today's language and address the pressing new issues of the twentieth century, Synod 1986 approved *Our World Belongs to God: A Contemporary Testimony*.

It was called a testimony rather than a confession in order to distinguish it from the historic confessions of the sixteenth century and to preserve their central place. As the original preface states, "A testimony contains what a church finds essential to confess at this time. It is more temporary than a confession..." There was also the stated hope that, over time, this testimony might gain confessional status.

After twenty years the Contemporary Testimony has won wide usage throughout the CRC for personal study, teaching, and in worship. In 2005 synod asked the Board of Trustees of the CRCNA to appoint a committee to write an updated version of *Our World Belongs to God*. It reasoned that "given the changes in our world that have taken place since [1986], along with the fact that *Our World Belongs to God: A Contemporary Testimony* does not function at the level of a confession but has served instead as a dynamic statement of faith, it must periodically be reviewed and perhaps revised if it is to speak contemporaneously."

A committee was appointed, and began to work on updating the Contemporary Testimony. We sought church-wide participation in the process and were deeply gratified that hundreds of individuals, church councils, and Calvin Theological Seminary faculty responded. Many of their comments and suggestions are reflected in the final document. Synod approved this revised version in 2008.

All the members of the revision committee loved the narrative structure and poetic language of the original document and worked hard to maintain that narrative structure and the poetic but accessible language. At the same time, we discovered ways to refine and focus certain sections, while adding material that reflected the emerging issues confronting the twenty-first century church.

We are content to maintain this document as a testimony rather than raise it to confessional status. That implies that periodically the church will take it up again to make sure it speaks to the church of tomorrow.

We conclude with the words of the original committee: “It is our prayer that this testimony may help you live by faith in God’s world, and that some of these words may assist you in giving reason for the hope that you have through our Lord Jesus Christ.”

1-6: Preamble

Preamble

1. As followers of Jesus Christ,
living in this world—
which some seek to control,
and others view with despair—
we declare with joy and trust:
Our world belongs to God!

For God’s ownership of all things, see Psalm 24:1 (quoted in 1 Cor. 10:26), Job 41:11, and Deuteronomy 10:14. That this is also “our world”—given to the human race to keep and care for—is one of the themes of the creation stories in Genesis 1 and 2.

2. From the beginning,
through all the crises of our times,
until the kingdom fully comes,
God keeps covenant forever:
Our world belongs to God!
God is King: Let the earth be glad!
Christ is victor: his rule has begun!
The Spirit is at work: creation is renewed!
Hallelujah! Praise the Lord!

For God’s faithfulness, see, among many passages, Psalm 89, 117, 145; Romans 8:31-39; and Hebrews 10:23. For the victory of God in Christ and the rule of Christ, see 1 Corinthians 15:54-57, Philippians 2:9-11, and Revelation 1:13-18. For the Spirit’s work renewing creation, see Genesis 1 and Romans 8.

3. Still, despair and rebellious pride fill the earth:
some, crushed by failure
or broken by pain,
give up on life and hope and God;
others, shaken,
but still hoping for human triumph,
work feverishly to realize their dreams.
As believers in God,
we also struggle with the spirits of this age,

resisting them in the power of the Spirit,
testing them by God's sure Word.

Psalm 2 expresses the rebellious spirit of the human race. See also Romans 1-3. Ephesians 6:10-17 describes the struggle of believers with the spirits of the age. On testing the spirits, see 1 John 4.

4. Our world, fallen into sin,
has lost its first goodness,
but God has not abandoned the work of his hands:
our Maker preserves this world,
sending seasons, sun, and rain,
upholding all creatures,
renewing the earth,
promising a Savior,
guiding all things to their purpose.

See Genesis 3; 9:8-16; Psalm 104, especially verse 30; Matthew 5:45; and Acts 14:17. For the promises of a Savior, see Genesis 3:15; Isaiah 7:14; 11:1-5; 42:1-7, 53; and Micah 5:2.

5. God holds this world
with fierce love.
Keeping his promise,
he sends Jesus into the world,
pours out the Holy Spirit,
and announces the good news:
sinners who repent and believe in Jesus
live anew as members of the family of God—
the firstfruits of a new creation.

For God's fierce love, see Hosea 11, especially verses 10-11. For statements of the gospel message, see John 3:1-21, Acts 2:36-39, Romans 10:7-11, and Ephesians 2:1-10. For "firstfruits," see Leviticus 23:9-14 and James 1:18.

6. We rejoice in the goodness of God,
renounce the works of darkness,
and dedicate ourselves to holy living.
As covenant partners,
set free for joyful obedience,
we offer our hearts and lives
to do God's work in the world.
With tempered impatience,
eager to see injustice ended,
we expect the Day of the Lord.
We are confident

that the light
which shines in the present darkness
will fill the earth
when Christ appears.
Come, Lord Jesus.
Our world belongs to you.

7-12: Creation

7. Our world belongs to God—
not to us or earthly powers,
not to demons, fate, or chance.
The earth is the Lord's.

For references, see the first paragraph.

8. In the beginning, God—
Father, Word, and Spirit—
called this world into being
out of nothing,
and gave it shape and order.

See Genesis 1, where Creator, Word, and Spirit call creation into order. For the role of the Word in creation and Jesus as the Word, see John 1:1-14.

9. God formed sky, land, and sea;
stars above, moon and sun,
making a world of color, beauty, and variety—
a fitting home for plants and animals, and us—
a place to work and play,
worship and wonder,
love and laugh.
God rested
and gave us rest.
In the beginning
everything was very good.

On creation, besides Genesis 1 and 2, see Psalm 19; 33:6-9; and 104.

10. Made in God's image
to live in loving communion with our Maker,
we are appointed earthkeepers and caretakers
to tend the earth, enjoy it,
and love our neighbors.

God uses our skills
for the unfolding and well-being of his world
so that creation and all who live in it may flourish.

For the image of God, see Genesis 1:26-27; 9:6; Ephesians 4:24; Colossians 3:10; and James 3:9.

11. Together,
male and female,
single and married,
young and old—
every hue and variety of humanity—
we are called to represent God,
for the Lord God made us all.
Life is God's gift to us,
and we are called to foster
the well-being of all the living,
protecting from harm
the unborn and the weak,
the poor and the vulnerable.

See Genesis 1:26-27, Galatians 3:26-28, and Acts 2:5-11. On how we treat the vulnerable among us as a measure of justice, see Isaiah 1:15-17 and James 1:27.

12. Even now,
as history unfolds
in ways we know only in part,
we are assured
that God is with us in our world,
holding all things in tender embrace
and bending them to his purpose.
The confidence that the Lord is faithful
gives meaning to our days
and hope to our years.
The future is secure,
for our world belongs to God.

For the providential care of God, see Isaiah 45:6-7, Matthew 6:25-34, and Luke 12:4-7.

13-17: Fall

13. In the beginning of human history,
our first parents walked with God.
But rather than living by the Creator's word of life,
they listened to the serpent's lie
and fell into sin.

In their rebellion
they tried to be like God.
As sinners, Adam and Eve feared
the nearness of God
and hid.

For the fall of humanity into sin, see Genesis 3. On the serpent, see, in addition to Genesis 3, Revelation 12:9 and 20:2.

14. Fallen in that first sin,
we prove each day
that apart from grace
we are guilty sinners:
we fail to thank God,
we break God's laws,
we ignore our tasks.
Looking for life without God,
we find death;
grasping for freedom outside the law,
we trap ourselves in Satan's snares;
pursuing pleasure,
we lose the gift of joy.

For the effects of the fall on humanity, see especially Romans 1:18-3:18.

15. When humans deface God's image,
the whole world suffers:
we abuse the creation or idolize it;
we are estranged from our Creator,
from our neighbor,
from our true selves,
and from all that God has made.

On the defacing of God's image, see Romans 1:21-23; for the restoration of the image in Christ, see Romans 8:29, 2 Corinthians 3:18, Ephesians 4:22-24, and Colossians 3:10.

16. All spheres of life—
family and friendship,
work and worship,
school and state,
play and art—
bear the wounds of our rebellion.
Sin is present everywhere—
in pride of race,
arrogance of nations,
abuse of the weak and helpless,

disregard for water, air, and soil,
destruction of living creatures,
slavery, murder, terror, and war,
worship of false gods,
the mistreatment of our bodies,
and our frantic efforts to escape reality.
We become victims of our own sin.

Among many passages, see Psalm 14 and 53, Amos 1-2, Romans 1:28-32, and Galatians 5:19-21.

17. In all our striving
to excuse or save ourselves,
we stand condemned
before the God of truth.
But our world,
broken and scarred,
still belongs to God,
who holds it together
and gives us hope.

See Psalm 62 and 89:28-37; Romans 5:3-11; 15:13; and Hebrews 11:1.

18-22: Redemption

18. While justly angry,
God did not turn away
from a world bent on destruction
but turned to face it in love.
With patience and tender care
the Lord set out
on the long road of redemption
to reclaim the lost as his people
and the world as his kingdom.

For God's response to sin, see Genesis 3:9-15, John 3:16, and Luke 1:68-75; for the aim to restore the kingdom, see Revelation 11:15.

19. Although Adam and Eve were expelled
from the garden
and their days burdened
by the weight of sin,
the Lord held on to them in love
and promised to crush
the evil forces
they had unleashed.

For God's kindness to Adam and Eve, see Genesis 3:15-19.

20. When evil filled the earth,
God judged it with a flood
but rescued Noah and his family
and animals of every kind.
He covenanted with all creatures
that seasons will continue
and that such destruction
will not come again
until the last day
when the Lord returns
to make all things new.

*For God's promise not to repeat the flood, see Genesis 9:8-17, 1 Peter 2, and 2 Peter 3;
for the final renewal, see Revelation 21:1-5.*

21. The Lord promised to be God
to Abraham, Sarah, and their children,
calling them to walk faithfully before him
and blessing the nations through them.
God chose Israel to show the glory of his name,
the power of his love,
and the wisdom of his ways.
The Lord gave them the law
through Moses
and led them
by rulers and teachers,
shaping a people
in whom God is revealed—
a light to the nations.

*For God's promise to Abraham and to his people Israel, see Genesis 12:1-3,
Deuteronomy 7-8, and Romans 9; for Abraham's children as the light to the nations, see
Micah 6:8 and Isaiah 60.*

22. When Israel spurned God's love—
lusting after other gods,
trusting in power and wealth,
and hurting the weak—
God scattered them among the nations,
yet kept a faithful remnant
and promised them the Messiah:
a prophet to speak good news,
a king to crush evil and rule the earth with justice,
a priest to be sacrificed for sinners.

God promised to forgive their sins
and give them a new heart and a new spirit,
moving them to walk in his ways.

For the scattering, see 2 Chronicles 36 and Isaiah 10:1-11; for the promises, see Isaiah 53, Jeremiah 31, and Ezekiel 36.

23-27: Christ

23. Remembering the promise
to reconcile the world to himself,
God joined our humanity in Jesus Christ—
the eternal Word made flesh.
He is the long-awaited Messiah,
one with us
and one with God,
fully human and fully divine,
conceived by the Holy Spirit
and born of the virgin Mary.

For Jesus as the incarnate Son of God, see Luke 1:31-35, John 1:1-14, and Hebrews 1:2-3.

24. As the second Adam,
Jesus chose the path we had rejected.
In his baptism and temptations,
teaching and miracles,
battles with demons
and friendships with sinners,
Jesus lived a full and righteous human life before us.
As God's true Son,
he lovingly obeyed the Father
and made present in deed and word
the coming rule of God.

In Romans 5:12-21, Christ is designated the second Adam. Hebrews 2:10-18 and 4:14-5:2 teach about his life of righteous humanity; the announcement of the kingdom is found, among other places, in Mark 1:1, 14, 15.

25. Standing in our place,
Jesus suffered during his years on earth,
especially in the tortures of the cross.
He carried God's judgment on our sin—
his sacrifice removed our guilt.
God raised him from the dead:
he walked out of the grave,

conqueror of sin and death—
Lord of Life!
We are set right with God,
given new life,
and called to walk with him
in freedom from sin's dominion.

For Jesus' lifelong suffering, see Hebrews 5:7-10. All four of the gospel passion accounts portray the depths of his suffering on the cross. Jesus' resurrection victory is proclaimed often, especially in Matthew 28:1-10 and 1 Corinthians 15:20-28.

26. Being both divine and human,
Jesus is the only mediator.
He alone paid the debt of our sin;
there is no other Savior.
We are chosen in Christ
to become like him in every way.
God's electing love sustains our hope:
God's grace is free
to save sinners who offer nothing
but their need for mercy.

Christ is shown to be our mediator in 1 Timothy 2:5 and Hebrews 9:11-15, and our only Savior in John 14:6 and Acts 4:12. For our election in Christ to be like Christ, see Romans 8:29, 2 Corinthians 3:18, and Ephesians 1:3-4.

27. Jesus ascended in triumph,
raising our humanity to the heavenly throne.
All authority, glory, and sovereign power
are given to him.
There he hears our prayers
and pleads our cause before the Father.
Blessed are all
who take refuge in him.

For Christ's universal authority and intercession as ascended Lord, see Matthew 28:18, Psalm 2:12, 1 John 2:1-2, and Hebrews 7:25. For the ascension of our humanity with him, see Hebrews 4:14-16; Ephesians 1:20-22; 2:6; and Colossians 3:1-4.

28-30: The Spirit

28. At Pentecost, promises old and new are fulfilled.
The ascended Jesus becomes the baptizer,
drenching his followers with his Spirit,
creating a new community
where Father, Son, and Holy Spirit make their home.

Revived and filled with the breath of God,
women and men,
young and old,
dream dreams
and see visions.

On the fulfillment of promises at Pentecost along with dreams and visions, see Acts 2:16-21. On the ascended Jesus as baptizer and also the imagery of drenching in baptism of the Spirit, see Luke 3:16; John 1:32-33; 20:22; and Acts 2:32-33. On the Spirit creating a new community, note Acts 2:41-47 following Pentecost. On the Father, Son, and Spirit making their home with God's people, see John 14:15-24.

29. The Spirit renews our hearts
and moves us to faith,
leads us into truth,
and helps us to pray,
stands by us in our need,
and makes our obedience fresh and vibrant.
God the Spirit lavishes gifts on the church
in astonishing variety—
prophecy, encouragement, healing,
teaching, service, tongues, discernment—
equipping each member
to build up the body of Christ
and to serve our neighbors.

On the Spirit's work of renewing our hearts, see Titus 3:4-7; moving us to faith, Romans 5:1-5; leading us into truth, John 16:13; helping us to pray, Romans 8:26-27; standing by us in our need, Hebrews 2:18; and making our obedience fresh and vibrant, Romans 8:1-11. On the Spirit's gifts, see 1 Corinthians 12 and Romans 12:3-8.

30. The Spirit gathers people
from every tongue, tribe, and nation
into the unity of the body of Christ.
Anointed and sent by the Spirit,
the church is thrust into the world,
ambassadors of God's peace,
announcing forgiveness and reconciliation,
proclaiming the good news of grace.
Going before them and with them,
the Spirit convinces the world of sin
and pleads the cause of Christ.
Men and women, impelled by the Spirit,
go next door and far away
into science and art,
media and marketplace—

every area of life,
pointing to the reign of God
with what they do and say.

On the gathering of all nations, see Revelation 7:9-17; on the Spirit and the church's mission, John 20:21-22, Luke 24:49, and Acts 1:8; on the church's mission as ambassadors, 2 Corinthians 5:18-21; on the work of the Spirit in the world, John 16:7-11; and on the breadth of the church's mission in the Spirit, Philippians 1:27-2:15.

31-33: Revelation

31. God gives this world
many ways to know him.
The creation shows his power and majesty.
He speaks through prophets, poets, and apostles,
and, most eloquently, through the Son.
The Spirit, active from the beginning,
moved human beings to write the Word of God
and opens our hearts to God's voice.

For general revelation, see Romans 1 and Acts 14; for the inspiration of the Bible, see 1 Timothy 3:14-17 and 2 Peter 1:16-21; and for the full revelation in Christ, see Hebrews 1 and Colossians 1.

32. The Bible is the Word of God,
the record and tool of his redeeming work.
It is the Word of truth,
breath of God,
fully reliable in leading us
to know God
and to walk with Jesus Christ
in new life.

For the nature of Scripture, see Luke 1:1-4, John 20:30-31, Acts 8:26-39, James 1:18, and references in paragraph 31.

33. The Bible tells the story
of God's mighty acts
in the unfolding
of covenant history.
As one revelation in two testaments
the Bible reveals God's will
and the sweep of God's redeeming work.
Illumined and equipped by the Spirit,
disciples of Jesus hear and do the Word,
witnessing to the good news

that our world belongs to God,
who loves it deeply.

For God's mighty acts, see Acts 2 and 7; for our instruction, see Matthew 16:13-19, 1 Corinthians 10:1-11, 2 Timothy 3:14-17, and James 1:19-27.

34-40: God's New People

34. In our world,
where many journey alone,
nameless in the bustling crowd,
Satan and his evil forces
seek whom they may scatter and isolate;
but God, by his gracious choosing in Christ,
gathers a new community —
those who by God's gift
put their trust in Christ.
In the new community
all are welcome:
the homeless come home,
the broken find healing,
the sinner makes a new start;
the despised are esteemed,
the least are honored,
and the last are first.
Here the Spirit guides
and grace abounds.

For the new community, see 1 Peter 2:4-7; for the attacks of Satan, 1 Peter 5:8-11; for the gracious welcome, Matthew 11:28-30 and 1 Peter 5:5-7.

35. The church is the fellowship of those
who confess Jesus as Lord.
She is the bride of Christ,
his chosen partner,
loved by Jesus and loving him:
delighting in his presence,
seeking him in prayer —
silent before the mystery of his love.

For the confession, see Matthew 10:32-33; for the church as the bride of Christ, see Ephesians 2:6; 5:21-33; 1 John 3:11-17; 4:13-21; and Revelation 21:9.

36. Our new life in Christ
is celebrated and nourished
in the fellowship of congregations,

where we praise God's name,
hear the Word proclaimed,
learn God's ways,
confess our sins,
offer our prayers and gifts,
and celebrate the sacraments.

For the church's worship, see Matthew 6:5-15; 28:18-20; Acts 2:41-47; Romans 10; and 1 Corinthians 11:17-34.

37. God meets us in the sacraments,
communicating grace to us
by means of water, bread, and wine.
In baptism,
whether of the newly born
or newly converted,
God reminds and assures us
of our union with Christ in covenant love,
the washing away of our sin,
and the gift of the Holy Spirit—
expecting our love and trust in return.

Matthew 3:13-17, with Matthew 28:19, establishes baptism as a gospel sacrament. That baptism is for children as well as adults and is accompanied by the gift of the Spirit is indicated in Acts 2:28-29. Titus 3:5 calls baptism a washing away of sins. Romans 6:1-11 and Galatians 3:27 show how it forms us as members of Christ. 1 Corinthians 10:1-10 indicates that baptism in itself is not a guarantee of salvation.

38. In the Lord's Supper, Christ offers
his own crucified body and shed blood
to his people,
assuring them a share
in his death and resurrection.
By the Holy Spirit, he feeds us
with his resurrection life
and binds us to each other
as we share one loaf and cup.
We receive this food gladly,
believing, as we eat,
that Jesus is our life-giving food and drink
and that he will come again
to call us to the wedding feast of the Lamb.

Matthew 26:17-29 and parallels establish the Lord's Supper as a gospel sacrament. On the meaning of the Lord's Supper, see 1 Corinthians 5:7-8; 8:1-13; 10:14-21; and 11:23-26. See also Jesus' strong words on his presence in the Lord's Supper in John 6:48-58.

39. The church is a gathering
of forgiven sinners called to be holy.
Saved by the patient grace of God,
we deal patiently with others
and together confess our need
for grace and forgiveness.
Restored in Christ's presence,
shaped by his life,
this new community lives out
the ongoing story of God's reconciling love,
announces the new creation,
and works for a world of justice and peace.

On the church as a forgiven community called to be holy, see Ephesians 1:3-7; on dealing with one another patiently, Galatians 6:1-5 and Colossians 3:12-14; on the need for confession and restoration, 1 John 1:8-2:6; and on living out God's reconciling love as part of a new creation, 2 Corinthians 5:17-21 and 1 John 3:16-17.

40. We grieve that the church,
which shares one Spirit, one faith, one hope,
and spans all time, place, race, and language,
has become a broken communion in a broken world.
When we struggle
for the truth of the gospel
and for the righteousness God demands,
we pray for wisdom and courage.
When our pride or blindness
hinders the unity of God's household,
we seek forgiveness.
We marvel that the Lord gathers the broken pieces
to do his work
and that he blesses us still
with joy, new members,
and surprising evidences of unity.
We commit ourselves to seeking and expressing
the oneness of all who follow Jesus,
and we pray for brothers and sisters
who suffer for the faith.

On the unity of the church, see John 17:20-23 and Ephesians 2:11-22; 4:1-16.

41-54: The Mission of God's People

41. Joining the mission of God,
the church is sent
with the gospel of the kingdom

to call everyone to know and follow Christ
and to proclaim to all
the assurance that in the name of Jesus
there is forgiveness of sin
and new life for all who repent and believe.
The Spirit calls all members
to embrace God's mission
in their neighborhoods
and in the world:
to feed the hungry,
bring water to the thirsty,
welcome the stranger,
clothe the naked,
care for the sick,
and free the prisoner.
We repent of leaving this work to a few,
for this mission is central to our being.

On our part in God's mission, see Matthew 28:18-20, Luke 24:45-49, and John 17:18; on seeing our mission beyond our local community, Matthew 24:14 and Acts 13:1-3; on meeting the needs of people, Matthew 25:31-46 and Luke 4:18-19; and on the centrality of mission to our being, John 20:21.

42. In a world estranged from God,
where happiness and peace are offered in many names
and millions face confusing choices,
we witness—
with respect for followers of other ways—
to the only one in whose name salvation is found:
Jesus Christ.
In Jesus, God reconciles the world to himself.
God loves all creation;
his compassion knows no bounds.

On the exclusive claims of Christ, see John 14:6 and Acts 4:12; on God's love and compassion for the world, see Matthew 9:36-38 and John 3:16.

43. Jesus Christ rules over all.
To follow this Lord is
to serve him wherever we are
without fitting in,
light in darkness,
salt in a spoiling world.

On the rule of Christ over the whole world, see Philippians 2:9-11, Colossians 1:15-20, and Revelation 11:15; on being light, salt, and not fitting in, see Matthew 5:13-16 and Romans 12:1-2.

44. Life is a gift from God's hand,
who created all things.
Receiving this gift thankfully,
with reverence for the Creator,
we protest and resist
all that harms, abuses, or diminishes the gift of life,
whether by abortion, pollution, gluttony,
addiction, or foolish risks.
Because it is a sacred trust,
we treat all life with awe and respect,
especially when it is most vulnerable—
whether growing in the womb,
touched by disability or disease,
or drawing a last breath.
When forced to make decisions
at life's raw edges,
we seek wisdom in community,
guided by God's Word and Spirit.

On respect for all life, see Deuteronomy 5:17 and Psalm 104:14-30 and 139:14-16. Our very bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit: 1 Corinthians 6:19-20.

45. Since God made us male and female in his image,
we respect each other as equals,
not flaunting or exploiting our sexuality.
While our roles and capacities may differ,
we are careful not to confine God's gifts and calling
to the shape of our cultural patterns or expectations.
Sexuality is disordered in our fallen world—
brokenness, abuse, pornography, and loneliness are the result—
but Christ's renewing work gives hope
for order and healing
and surrounds suffering persons
with compassionate community.

*Male and female, we are all made in God's image: Genesis 1:26-27 and Galatians 3:27.
On sexual disorder as a result of sin, see Romans 1:24 and 1 Corinthians 6:15-20.*

46. We are the family of God,
serving Christ together in Christian community.
Single for a time or a life,
devoted to the work of God,

we offer our love and service
to the building of the kingdom.
Married, in relationships of lifelong loyalty,
we offer our lives to the same work:
building the kingdom,
teaching and modeling the ways of the Lord
so our children may know
Jesus as Lord
and learn to use their gifts
in lives of joyful service.
In friendship and family life,
singleness and marriage,
as parents and children,
we reflect the covenant love of God.
We lament the prevalence of divorce
and of selfish individualism in our societies.
We belong to God.

See the apostle Paul's discussion of singleness and marriage in 1 Corinthians 7. On the importance of teaching and modeling the ways of the Lord, see Deuteronomy 6:4-9, Proverbs 22:6, and Ephesians 6:1-4. Jesus' teaching on divorce is found in Matthew 19:1-12 and Mark 10:1-12. That we together reflect the love of God is taught in John 13:34-35 and all of 1 John.

47. Serving the Lord
in whom all things hold together,
we support sound education in our communities,
and we foster schools and teaching
in which God's truth shines in all learning.
All students,
without regard to abilities, race, or wealth,
bear God's image
and deserve an education
that helps them use their gifts fully.

For the importance of education, see Deuteronomy 6:1-9 and Proverbs 4:1-9; for the need for God's light, Psalm 119:105; for the central place of Christ, Colossians 1:17; for equal acceptance, James 2:1-13.

48. Our work is a calling from God.
We work for more than wages
and manage for more than profit
so that mutual respect
and the just use of goods and skills
may shape the workplace.
While we earn or profit,

we love our neighbors by providing
useful products and services.
In our global economy
we advocate meaningful work
and fair wages for all.
Out of the Lord's generosity to us,
we give freely and gladly
of our money and time.

For the place of work, see Genesis 2:15, Exodus 20:9, Ephesians 6:5-9, and 2 Thessalonians 3:6-13; for justice in the workplace, Ezekiel 34 and James 5:1-5; for generosity, 2 Corinthians 9 and 1 Thessalonians 4:9-12.

49. Rest and leisure are gifts from God
that relax us and set us free
to discover and to explore.
But we confess
that often our addiction to busyness
allows our tools and toys to invade our rest
and that an internet world with its temptations
distorts our leisure.
Reminding each other that
our Maker rested and gave us rest,
we seek to rest more trustingly
and to entertain ourselves more simply.

For rest, see Genesis 2:2-3 and Deuteronomy 5:12-15; for the discriminating use of leisure, Philippians 4:8-9 and Ephesians 4:17-32.

50. Grateful for advances
in science and technology,
we participate in their development,
fostering care for creation
and respect for the gift of life.
We welcome discoveries that prevent or cure diseases
and that help support healthy lives.
We respect embryonic life,
approaching each new discovery,
whether of science or of medical technique,
with careful thought,
seeking the will of God.

In Genesis 1:28-31 and 9:1-7, God gives to humanity the right and responsibility to develop and care for creation; for a reflection on the limitations of human technology and need for divine wisdom, see Job 28; for the continuing goodness of creation and the need for a prayerful approach to what we use of it, see 1 Timothy 4:4-5.

51. We lament that our abuse of creation
has brought lasting damage
to the world we have been given:
polluting streams and soil,
poisoning the air,
altering the climate,
and damaging the earth.
We commit ourselves
to honor all God's creatures
and to protect them from abuse and extinction,
for our world belongs to God.

Genesis 1:28-29; 7:1-5; Psalm 8; and Romans 8:18-25 teach that we are entrusted with caring for the earth.

52. We obey God first;
we respect the authorities that rule,
for they are established by God:
we pray for our rulers,
and we work to influence governments—
resisting them only when Christ and conscience demand.
We are thankful for the freedoms
enjoyed by citizens of many lands;
we grieve with those who live under oppression,
and we seek for them the liberty to live without fear.

Romans 13:1-7 teaches respect for governing authorities (see also 1 Peter 2:13-17); Revelation 13 illustrates government gone wrong. Colossians 1:16 teaches that authority and power come from Christ; Ephesians 6:12 warns us that authority and power can become infected by evil.

53. We call on all governments to do public justice
and to protect the rights and freedoms
of individuals, groups, and institutions
so that each may do their tasks.
We urge governments and pledge ourselves
to safeguard children and the elderly
from abuse and exploitation,
to bring justice to the poor and oppressed,
and to promote the freedom
to speak, work, worship, and associate.

That governments are called to justice generally and that how a government treats the poor and the weak is a key indicator of a society's commitment to justice is taught in all the prophets and in psalms like Psalm 72.

54. Followers of the Prince of Peace
are called to be peacemakers,
promoting harmony and order
and restoring what is broken.
We call on our governments to work for peace
and to restore just relationships.
We deplore the spread of weapons
in our world and on our streets
with the risks they bring
and the horrors they threaten.
We call on all nations to reduce their arsenals
to what is needed
in the defense of justice and freedom.
We pledge to walk in ways of peace,
confessing that our world belongs to God;
he is our sure defense.

Isaiah 2:1-4 expresses God's will for peace, and Jesus said, "Blessed are the peacemakers . . ." (Matthew 5:9).

55-58: New Creation

55. Our hope for a new creation is not tied
to what humans can do,
for we believe that one day
every challenge to God's rule
will be crushed.
His kingdom will fully come,
and the Lord will rule.
Come, Lord Jesus, come.

On this hope, see 1 Peter 1:3-12, 2 Peter 3:3-13, 1 Thessalonians 4:13-5:11, and Revelation 11:15.

56. We long for that day
when our bodies are raised,
the Lord wipes away our tears,
and we dwell forever in the presence of God.
We will take our place in the new creation,
where there will be no more death
or mourning or crying or pain,
and the Lord will be our light.
Come, Lord Jesus, come.

For the coming of the kingdom of God, see Matthew 24, Acts 1:10-11, 1 Thessalonians 4:13-5:11, and Revelation 19:11-16. 1 Corinthians 15 speaks of the resurrection of the

body, Revelation 21:4 of the wiping away of tears, and Revelation 21:22-27 of the light of heaven.

57. On that day
we will see our Savior face to face,
sacrificed Lamb and triumphant King,
just and gracious.
He will set all things right,
judge evil, and condemn the wicked.
We face that day without fear,
for the Judge is our Savior,
whose shed blood declares us righteous.
We live confidently,
anticipating his coming,
offering him our daily lives—
our acts of kindness,
our loyalty, and our love—
knowing that he will weave
even our sins and sorrows
into his sovereign purpose.
Come, Lord Jesus, come.

Revelation 5 describes the Lion and the Lamb. For the just judgments of the Lord, see Revelation 19:1-10. A picture of the multitude of those declared righteous in Christ is found in Revelation 7:9-17. The concept of God weaving all things together is found, among other places, in Romans 8:28-39.

58. With the whole creation
we join the song:
“Worthy is the Lamb, who was slain,
to receive power and wealth
and wisdom and strength
and honor and glory and praise!”
He has made us a kingdom of priests
to serve our God,
and we will reign on earth.
God will be all in all,
righteousness and peace will flourish,
everything will be made new,
and every eye will see at last
that our world belongs to God.
Hallelujah! Come, Lord Jesus!

For the imagery of this paragraph, see Exodus 19:5-6, Isaiah 40, 1 Peter 2:9-10, and Revelation 4-5.

