

A Brief Statement of Faith (1-pager)

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The Reliable Record of God in Action

The Bible is the norming source for what the Church holds to be true. Therefore, any Christian statement of faith (as long as faith is necessary, until one is fully in the eternal presence of the Triune God) must find its parameters within the canon of Scripture. To do otherwise would amount to defamation of one's own character by the slanderous label of *heretic*. All experiences (heavenly and mundane), all reason, and all traditions that are to be helpful for the Church will be consistent with the snapshots we have of God in action as transmitted to us in the Bible.

Human Faith in Action

Throughout the biblical album, the Church sees the Three Persons of the Triune Godhead (the Father, the Son, the Holy Spirit) manifesting love for one another which overflows into love for others. We see God creating humanity in his own image. We see Jesus the Son sacrificing himself for fallen humanity. We see the Holy Spirit empowering Christians to live life the way God intended.

Just as the Triune God's internal ethic of love results in outward acts of love for others, so too the Church's life of faith — that is, living the temporal life on earth according to the eternal perspective and ways of the Triune God — ought to have concrete ramifications in the world in which we live. Paul the Ambassador wrote, "If I had such faith that I could move mountains, but didn't love others, I would be nothing" (1 Corinthians 13.2). Similarly Jim the Ambassador emphasized that "faith by itself isn't enough. Unless it produces good deeds, it is dead and useless" (James 2.17). The Church's ethics not only grow out of its faith, but these actions are a window through which the Church reveals (and the whole world sees) what our theology really is, what our truth convictions really are, and what priorities we really desire to pursue.

The premodern, pre-Christian social context of the early Church necessitated emphasis on those beliefs which made the Christian community distinct from non-Christian or heretical communities. Today's postmodern, post-Christian context similarly requires the Church to major on

the majors. Too often, creeds and doctrinal statements have been used as tools to build walls around territories, to disenfranchise minorities, and unnecessarily divide members of the Body of Christ. Christians who agree on the authority of the Bible can harmoniously make room for disagreements, tempering themselves by a culture of honour, humbly acknowledging that the Church has yet to probe all the depths of God's wisdom and revelation. Thus, the 4th century maxim of Ambrose of Milan finds relevant application in the 21st century: "In the essentials, unity; in the non-essentials, liberty; in all things, love (*In necessariis unitas, in dubiis libertas, in omnibus caritas*)."

Some Essential Good News

Jesus the Messiah is the good news. Through Jesus' historic works (i.e., incarnation, sinless life, suffering, unjust execution, burial, resurrection, ascension) we have received God's radical inclusion: reconciliation to God the Father, liberation from the fallenness of this world, and empowerment through the Holy Spirit to be part of his eternal universal realm. We are thus able to live life on earth in loving relationships with God and other people (traditionally referred to as the *Greatest Commandments*). As we grow in these loving relationships our lives are filled with ever deepening joy and peace. Such growth, in relational joy and peace organically brings a profound transformation to our lives.

When we experience God's radical inclusion and profound transformation, we are able to live lives of inspired service: (1) We naturally are motivated to share the good news about Jesus with yet other people (a process traditionally referred to as the *Great Commission*). (2) We see the joy and peace in our lives rippling through our spheres of influence (e.g., family, business, school, neighbourhood, etc. — traditionally referred to as *vocation*). As spheres of influence are affected, the spiritual climate of the world is altered. (3) As we begin to see fruit from our stewardship of the Great Commission and our vocation, we desire to heap more adoration on God (traditionally referred to as *worship*).