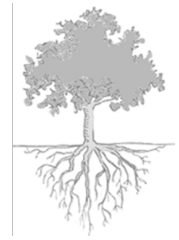


Telkwa Community Church Membership Booklet



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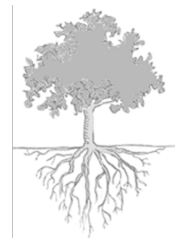
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Welcome!

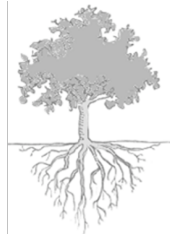
This booklet is for anyone interested in becoming a new member of Telkwa Community Church. As a congregation, we are committed to building the community of Christ one person at a time, and it is our hope that you will want to be a more meaningful part of the family.

This booklet explores our history and our vision of where we believe God is leading us as a church, describes our church structure and denominational affiliation, outlines ways we as followers of Jesus can experience growth in our spiritual walks, and finally remind us all of the call to be a blessing for others around us.

Scripture uses the imagery of a plant as a reminder that the Christian faith is not just a one-time decision, but a lifestyle of remaining rooted in the God-life so we can be “trees planted by streams of water, bearing fresh fruit every month, never dropping a leaf and always in blossom.” (Psalm 1:3). We use plant imagery in this class to remind us how organic the life of faith is, and how we as a congregation together can grow in Christ.

We believe that being disciples of Jesus Christ means that first, we are absolutely dependent on the work of God through Jesus, our Vine, who has rescued us, and second, that we are Jesus’ apprentices striving to learn what he taught and, in the power of the Holy Spirit, seeking to do what he did in his earthly ministry. Therefore, this booklet is one part of the overall journey of faith and discipleship, as we are lifelong learners of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

This class has been largely adapted from the Roots Membership Class produced by First Christian Reformed Church in Vancouver, BC. We are in their debt :)



I. Deep Roots, New Branches...Where We Come From

THE STORY OF Telkwa CRC

When World War II ended in 1945, life began returning to normal in Holland. The country's population grew more and more crowded, and many experienced difficulties finding housing, as well as difficulties in farming and business. A solution came in 1948-49, when Canada enticed prospective citizens with farmland, lumber and other opportunities. Canada opened its door to immigrants, and many Europeans worked their way West across the country. Many of the founding members of our congregation to Northern BC arrived at the forest and mountains of Telkwa through such circumstances.

Our history officially began on November 15, 1951, when our first official meeting was held as an organized Church. The sermon was based on Matthew 6:5-13, focusing on the second petition of the Lord's Prayer, "Thy Kingdom Come". Reverend Hannening emphasized how establishing the church in Telkwa was also working towards the coming of the Kingdom of God. To this day, our congregation holds firm to the belief that in every aspect of our life, we wish to partner with God in bringing His Kingdom to Earth. Then the total membership of the congregation was 121, with 57 confessing members. At this point the church included members from Smithers, as our neighbor to the north had not yet established their own congregation.

In 1953 a building committee formed, and they purchased the Telkwa CRC site. Many in the congregation donated lumber, equipment, as well as their time and skills. They worked industriously through summer and winter, and many rejoiced when the building opened its doors in 1955.

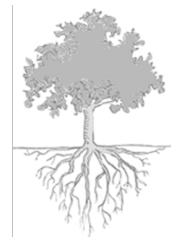
The life of the church took off, as members immersed themselves in the life of the church such as teaching the Heidelberg Catechism, Calvinettes, Choir, Men's Life, and the evangelism committee. Couples were married, and babies were baptized. Pastor's came and went but a faithful core remained within the congregation. Over the years, the congregation grew and changed, especially as new members joined our congregation through different church ministries, such as Coffee Break.

1991 is likely to be remembered as the most difficult year in the history of our congregation. Over the issue of women as officebearers, our congregation split. The split was hard and painful, testing and dividing the loyalties within families. Many in



our congregation felt weakened and wounded as many members left to begin a new church. Their absence required remaining members to take on new responsibilities, as the church moved forward forming its new identity. Today, the split remains a painful memory amongst many in our congregation. However, members of both churches seek to be involved in the lives of one another.

Today, our congregation has experienced significant change and transition throughout its 60+ year history. We are pleased to have many large Dutch families in our congregation, yet we are also pleased to have grown ethnically diverse, reflecting our villages demographics. We very much see our God blessing us in our setting here. We give thanks for the past and look to the future for God's ongoing presence and guidance.



THE STORY OF OUR CHURCH TODAY AND BEYOND

**The Purpose of Telkwa Community Church is to be a community
Devoted to:
Worshipping God
Growing Together as Disciples, and
Making Christ Known.**

We believe devotion to Christ is not a task, but a way of life.

Therefore....

1. We value worship that honours God and fully engages all of God's people.
2. We value Biblical, Reformed, Christ-centered preaching that transforms us.
3. We value being a praying church.
4. We value loving, grace-filled relationships in which members and seekers are enfolded and cared for.
5. We value our church to be a safe place for those who are broken and hurting.
6. We believe Christ followers of all ages should be nurtured and trained as we yearn for continuous growth.
7. We steward our gifts such as time, money and talents in service to God and community.
8. We seek to reach out and enfold the lost.
9. We minister locally and globally.

TELLING YOUR STORY

These are some of the elements that we believe are important to God as He continues writing His story in our congregation. We believe our congregation best participates in God's story when we are incorporating these elements into our lives. We think that we can break these elements into three broad categories: attentiveness to God, attentiveness to one another, and attentiveness to our community. When we are able to be attentive to these three aspects of the story God is writing among us, our congregation then really kicks into high gear. If one of those are out of whack, then our plot wears a little thin.

That's why you are such a key component to how God is writing the story of us! We're going to have a different story because you are here! And we believe that your character has a huge impact on the shape of our congregation's story. How you relate to God will



shape the congregation's relationship to God. How you relate to the congregation will shape the way our congregation relates to one another. How you relate to our community shapes our congregation's impact on the community. Who you are has a huge impact on who our congregation is, and how we live in God's story. We invite you to share with us a little bit about your relationship with God. It is a unique and important story. We would ask you to reflect on its beginnings, significant events that happened along the way, and where it is at right now. The purpose of writing your story is to help you shape your own understanding of God's work in your life, to jog your memory and remind you of God's faithfulness.

To help you tell your story, reflect on some of these questions:

1. Where did your story begin? When did you first become aware of God? What were your first impressions of God? Was there a turning point where God became more personal to you, more than just an idea?
3. Have you realized a need for Jesus Christ? Was there a time when you became aware of sin and expressed a need for a Saviour? Was there a time when you placed your life in his hands and trusted him?
4. How has your relationship with God grown or changed? How have you changed in response to knowing God?
5. What community has most influenced your spiritual life? How?
6. How do you relate with our congregation? Is there anything holding you back from diving into this community?
7. How is God inviting you to impact the Bulkley Valley for His Kingdom?

II. A Place to Grow...How We Are Led



Telkwa Community Church's LEADERSHIP

We recognize that Jesus Christ is the Lord of the Church. We submit to his rule and his authority. His Word & Spirit function as our guide in all of our decisions. We believe God has called everyone of his followers to be his priests bringing God's love to all and continue Jesus' work in the Kingdom of God in the ministry of rescue and restoration. Therefore, this calling is not left to a few, but is something we are all called to live out.

To encourage the congregation in this calling, we have a church council, made up of pastors, elders, and deacons. The council gives oversight to the whole ministry of the church and therefore, those on council have been affirmed to have the passion, the gifts and character to serve the church in this way.

Elders and deacons typically serve for three years, with one third of the council changing annually. Members of the church are nominated for office by members of the congregation, screened by our church council, and affirmed by the entire body at a public meeting. In all of this, the church council seeks to serve God by praying with and for those in our church family, overseeing the work of our church ministries, and discerning the direction God is leading us.

Pastors

The word pastor has a very specific connotation referring to a shepherd. Jesus' favorite description of the church was that of a flock and, therefore, the pastors of the church have responsibility to see that the flock is properly led, protected, and cared for, though ultimately we believe that Jesus Christ himself is the shepherd of his church. Care is the sole or even primary responsibility of the pastor. That is a task that the whole "flock" shares. We are all responsible to care for each other.

The primary responsibility of the pastors is to work with the Holy Spirit to encourage and equip the people of God for ministry. "God gave some to be apostles, prophets, evangelists, and pastor / teachers to prepare God's people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up." Eph. 4:11-12. Pastors are constantly engaged in equipping the people of God. This involves ministry of the Word of God. "All scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting, and training in righteousness, so that the people of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work." (2 Tim. 3:16).

In the journey of encouraging and equipping, pastors are also called to help congregation members process their faith in light of events happening to them, journeying alongside the joys and concerns, directing our attention to how God fits into the picture.



Elders

The word Elder means “Overseer” and therefore, the ministry of elders is to encourage and equip those in the congregation to become by grace what Christ is by nature. The New Testament is clear that the church is to be led by a plurality of godly leaders. For two examples, see Titus 1:5, Acts 20:28

Elders are to encourage all those in the church family in their journey of life-long faith in discipleship with Jesus. They are called to care for the church family regarding their spiritual and physical well-being, and by regularly praying for them. With the Holy Spirit’s discernment, they are to guard the congregation against harmful influences, challenging what contradicts biblical truth, and holding accountable those who are continuing in a pattern of sinful behavior. Each member of the church is specifically supported by one of the elders.

Elders are also those who are ultimately responsible that the church remains on the right path, and that the life of the church is managed well, that the services have insightful and accurate biblical teaching. In addition to this, they seek to protect the church’s unity and testimony, and to provide faithful counsel, encouraging fellowship, hospitality and ensuring that the Good News of Jesus and the Kingdom of God is being shared.

Deacons

The word deacon means ‘servant’ or ‘minister.’ Deacons are called to do works of mercy and stewardship and to be voices of justices in our church. They not only model the work of mercy and justice, they are also called to encourage the whole church family to be actively involved in addressing injustices and to help us to better steward our resources of time, talents and finances.

Part of the deacons’ role is to collect and disburse the congregation’s tithes and offerings. They are to manage the financial resources of the church with wisdom, discernment, and integrity and therefore ensure that the ongoing work of the church and kingdom is properly funded and that relief in Christ’s name takes place for the poor, the distressed, and for victims of injustice.



Other roles in the church

The roles of pastor, elder and deacon are only three of the many roles in the church. The Apostle Paul regularly describes the range of gifts that God's Spirit has given to all of his people. Other roles at Telkwa CRC include participating and leading small groups, working on a committee or ministry team. Some use their gifts during the Sunday services or help drive members to church on Sunday. The important thing to remember is that everyone in the church family plays an important role in the life of the church.

Telkwa Community Church's AFFILIATION: (CRC ministries in BC and around world)

We are a local congregation in Northern BC, but we are part of the Christian Reformed Church (CRC) in North America. There is increasing diversity in this denomination now numbering around 320,000, which began in 1857 by a small number of Dutch immigrants. In BC, there are over 40 CRC congregations totaling over 6,000 professing members. These 40 churches make up two distinct regional groups, called a classis. We are part of Classis BC Northwest. Representatives from each congregation meet twice a year to discuss matters of mutual importance and concern, and each summer, representatives from all the classes in North America meet in a large group setting called Synod.

Why are we affiliated with a denomination?

On the one hand, we are self-governed and determine our own affairs. Therefore, we call our own pastor, own our building and property, and set our own direction for ministry. On the other hand, our affiliation allows us to participate in missionary activities across Canada and the USA and throughout the world which unites us with other Christian churches. It also allows for mutual accountability and provides a resource for our various ministries.

What joint ministries do CRC churches participate in?

In addition to the ministries within our own church community, we partner and support other Christian Reformed ministries across BC, North America and around the world. Members from across the denomination volunteer time and expertise to give guidance and support to the following ministries, but we also give significant support to these ministries through our tithes and offerings.

Some of the CRC ministries we support in BC:

Ministry to the Seafarers: A Chaplain works at Vancouver and Delta Ports by encouraging and supporting the many Seafarers who come through our city.
www.ministrytoseafarers.com/



1Life: 1Life exists to curate a curriculum of resources that equips individuals and congregations to become increasingly whole-hearted, vibrant communities of Christian worship, discipling & mission.
website: crc1life.ca

Chaplain and Refugee Support Mobilizer: Chaplain **Dena Nicolai**: dnicolai@van1crc.org
Ministering out of First Christian Reformed Church of Vancouver, the Chaplain and Refugee Support Mobilizer serves in a chaplaincy and support role to:

- Provide a ministry of presence and neighbourhood welcome for refugees during the time they are living at or accessing services at the Immigrant Services Society of BC Welcome Centre.
- Support their integration into the communities into which they are moving.
- Mobilize local congregations to partner in this integration support.

Safe Church Team: Faye Martin works with CRC congregations in BC to ensure our churches are safe for everyone, especially children, youth and other vulnerable individuals by training church leaders, and helping congregations with their Safe Church Policies. <http://www.crcna.org/SafeChurch> \

Christian Reformed Campus Ministry at UNBC

Leadership Development Network (LDN): The goal of the BC LDN is to train and equip lay leaders for ministry in local congregations. Wilma VanderLeek is the coordinator and various CRC pastors are involved in teaching. <http://www.bcldn.ca/>

Restorative Practices Task Force: In 2014, Classis BCSE approved the support of The Restorative Practices Task Force in order to promote Restorative Practices in local congregations. In 2022, Classis BCNW joined to make it a bi-classical task force.

Website: [Restorative Congregations BC](http://RestorativeCongregationsBC)

Some denominationally-wide ministries we support:

Reframe Ministries: www.reframeministries.org

Resonate Global Mission: www.resonateglobalmission.org

Thrive: Equipping and Encouraging Congregations: www.crcna.org/thrive

World Renew: World Renew envisions a world where people experience and extend Christ's compassion and live together in hope in God's community:

www.worldrenew.net

We also support more ministries as a church. To better understand how the contributions are spent, watch the following video on Ministry Shares: www.crcna.org/ministry_shares.cfm

How do we partner with all these ministries?

Our commitment to our classis and our denomination means that our congregation is committed to make financial contributions to various ministries across BC, in North America, and around the World. This commitment is in addition to the commitment members have for the ongoing ministry of Telkwa Community Church. The way we commit and donate resources to our broader interests is based on a system called Ministry Shares, where congregations commit finances to our Classis BC Northwest, Diaconal Work across Canada, and to the Christian Reformed Church of North America.

Telkwa Community Church's BELIEFS

As a congregation of Jesus' followers, we find our place within the Church that spans both time and geography. As a Christian church we hold to the historic ecumenical creeds which summarize the essentials of Christian teaching which are The Apostles Creed (c. 250 AD), the Nicene Creed (350AD) and the Athanasian Creed (c. 400 AD), particularly their emphasis on expressing God as the Trinity. This unites us to all other Protestant, Orthodox and Catholic churches as they were written before these divisions existed, and therefore we confess with all other Christians that in Christ, we are one—"there is one Lord, one faith, one baptism, and one God and Father of us all."

Ephesians 4:4-6





However, just because we all worship the same God and depend on the authority of Scripture, we confess that the church is also broken and divided, primarily due to differences in the way we interpret the Bible and the way God has led his Church through history. In these differences, we hold on to our own confessions with humility, admitting that no one of us perfectly understands the complete picture of God working with his church. And therefore, we root even our own convictions and interpretations in the context of love. As Paul wrote in 1 Corinthians 13, if we have not love, we have nothing.

Our congregation stands in the Reformed tradition, and along with other Reformed traditions originating in Continental Europe, we have the following Confessions: the Heidelberg Catechism (1563), the Belgic Confession (1561), and the Canons of Dort (1618–19). The CRC also has its own document called Our World Belongs to God (1986) which is the most recent document to communicate the Reformed faith of our denomination.

There are many ways to describe the Reformed lens, but a keyword is holistic. First, in reflecting on the Fall and God's grace in Christ, all of creation was affected by sin and each area of our lives has been tainted by sin, so that our dependence on Jesus Christ is complete. Second, our response to God's rescue, is complete gratitude. Therefore, our work and our home, our friendships and family relationships, our small conversations and the larger level work in the world, all fits into God's kingdom, seeking to bring shalom, peace and wholeness, to broken places through the love, the grace and the power of our Trinitarian God.



III. Tapping in...How to Connect

There are many ways to root ourselves in the life that God has available to us, but the primary ways we feed our faith are primarily through prayer, the Word of God, Worship and Fellowship. As we spend time in these areas, we are shaped, grow and mature in our faith.

Prayer

All through the Bible we read about people who had close and personal relationships with God. Adam and Eve walked and talked with God, living in his presence. Enoch "walked with God". Abraham was called "God's friend". Moses talked with God and even reflected his glory. Jesus, as well, both modelled and taught his followers the importance of prayer as the way for us to maintain a close, personal relationship with God. Every relationship we have only deepens and grows when we are honest and we spend time commitment to that relationship—our relationship with God is no exception.

For Christians, the way we communicate with God is prayer. Prayer is more than reciting a list of concerns, instead is a way for us to express to God our thankfulness, and to learn how God is calling us to live in our particular situations. In prayer we can pray about everything we need, spiritually and physically and we are confident that when we pray, God hears us and even answers our prayers, in his own timing and wisdom.

As a church, we continue to remind ourselves and others of the need for constant contact with God so that we can remember that we live in his presence throughout the day, we are open to his direction and leading, we are aware of his activity in this world and his power to overcome evil. Because of this, we encourage that everyone in our church family will carve out times of solitude to express our love, give him thanks, confess our sins, present our needs, and seek his power.

Word of God

The Bible is God's written Word for his people and therefore the words of the Bible are powerful. Not only do we read about what God has done for this world and all the

ways God was faithful to his people over thousands of years, but we also believe that when we read the Bible, the Holy Spirit is also speaking to us helping us to see God at work in our lives today.



Because the Bible contains the living and active voice of God, we are committed to spend time reading it. Joshua 1 reaffirms the importance of the Bible, “Do not let this book depart from your mouth; meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do everything in it.” Therefore, we not only read the Word, or study it (although those are helpful), but we seek to also live into the life God lays out for his followers.

Worship

Worship means “to declare one’s worth” and so for Christians, we express our thanks to God for who he is and what he has done. The Psalms give us many different examples of expressing our worship, but essentially, worship is all of who we are responding to all that God is. It is within the context of daily expressing our worship in our lives that we can understand our time of worshipping with others. The people of Israel in the Old Testament, and then the Church in the New Testament model for us the importance of gathering together regularly for corporate worship.

In our weekly gatherings to worship God, we can encourage each other in our faith, we can be comforted and challenged by God’s Word, and we can also celebrate the Sacraments of Baptism and Communion—the physical and tangible signs to help us understand the way God works with his people and to remind us that Jesus Christ is the only ground of our salvation. When God reaches out to us, he reaches out with his love and grace and reveals himself and his salvation to his people.

Baptism

As a congregation, we practice infant baptism trusting that God works uniquely with those who are born into the family of God. We don’t believe that baptizing a child as an ‘insurance policy’, but rather see baptism as a way God shows his love, as a call for parents to faithfully raise their child in following Christ, and ultimately, a way to name the hope that this child will grow up and decide of his or her own will to follow Jesus for the rest of their lives. When children of believers are born, they become a part of the family, but they also become part of the family of God. In baptism, those in the church family also make a commitment to this little child to love them, encourage them, train them, and help them grow to be fully devoted followers of Jesus.

When people become Christians as adults, we practice believers baptism which stands as a symbol of God's grace washing away our sins, that we 'die' to our own self-serving wills, and replace it with a commitment to live within the life that Christ gives us. We encourage believing parents to bring their children forward publicly for baptism. These children are encouraged as they grow to acknowledge Jesus personally as their Lord and Savior. When they reach an age where they are capable of making a personal and informed decision to follow Jesus, they are encouraged to publicly profess their faith.



Communion

In Communion, or The Lord's Supper, we re-experience a meal that Jesus had with his followers the night before he died on the cross. Jesus never told his followers to remember his birth, but he did teach them to remember his death so we reflect on the central event of Jesus' death and also reflect on our own sin, failure, and brokenness before God. This meal is a time to receive God's forgiveness, healing, mercy and grace so that we can have fellowship with God himself and with each other. It's also a time to taste food for eternal life.

Just as Israel ate manna in the desert as a foretaste for the food they'd eat in the Promised Land, the bread and juice in Communion refresh and strengthen us as we focus on Jesus who is the Bread from Heaven. As a church, those who believe and are committed to follow Jesus, take the time once a month to celebrate God's grace—we don't participate lightly, but we do take the bread and juice joyfully.

Fellowship

When we belong to Christ, we belong to each other. One of the many descriptions the Bible for the church is as a family within God's household, but the bond keeping the family together is not along ethnic lines, but rather with love. Belonging to this family means that we journey with each other, celebrating in the good times and bringing comfort in the difficult times. While some fellowship happens during and after the Sunday worship services, there are usually so many people and conversations, that it is difficult to really connect and to share our faith stories together. Ideally, the best place for this level of care and fellowship is in the context of a small group. Over time, those who are part of a small group will grow closer together and you'll find a place to fully engage a discussion in Bible study, spend time in meaningful prayer, both give and receive care, and occasionally have opportunities as a group to bless others.

If you are interested in finding a place which seeks to establish mutual encouragement, support and accountability, and to grow in Christlikeness together, small groups at Telkwa Community Church meet on various evenings throughout the week.



Other Gatherings:

There are other opportunities to join in the life of the church, such as becoming part of one of our church's small groups, serving as a nursery volunteer, serving on the greeting and hospitality team, teaching Sunday school, becoming a youth group leader, participating in our contemplative prayer evenings, being part of quilting group that meets at the church, playgroup on Fridays, and more! Ultimately, it is our prayer that everyone in the congregation will be meaningfully fed in the worship services, will be encouraged in a small group, and will be intentional about the personal habits of prayer and Scripture reading, so that each person in our church family will continue to grow in faith and be discipled in the Christian life.

The best way to figure out where to connect is to have a conversation with Pastors Joe and Michelle.



IV. Bearing Fruit...Using Our Gifts

BLESSED TO BE A BLESSING

The blessing of faith that God gives to us is not meant to stay with us, but are meant to be shared with others. Right after God promised to bless Abraham, he was told that “all peoples of the earth will be blessed through you.” We trust that as we tap in to the deeper life that God gives us, that we will grow and will bear fruit which will bless others.

The local Starbucks has a poster that says, “the deeper the roots, the higher the branches.” We believe this is deeper than coffee-shop truth—we believe it describes the Christian life. The deeper we root ourselves in our faith and in a faith community, the better we can thrive and bear fruit in our faith. The primary ways we live out and express the fruit of our faith are through the areas of service, giving and witness.

Service

In Jesus’ life and ministry, he encouraged his followers to express our love by taking the role of servant. In fact, he led by example when he washed his disciples’ feet and, as it says in Philippians 2, Jesus became a servant in the incarnation. Service is sometimes seen as work we’d rather not do, and this is perhaps the biggest barrier to showing our love for God in this way. But service can take place in many different ways, at times by serving others in the church or by serving those in need around us.

The various expressions of service are as unique as each person is. God didn’t just command us to love and serve each other in our own strength; instead he equips and gifts each of us to serve by the power of the Holy Spirit within us. In 1 Corinthians 12, we read about gifts given to believers by the Holy Spirit. Paul writes, “There are different kinds of gifts, but the same Spirit. There are different kinds of service, but the same Lord. There are different kinds of working, but the same God works all of them in all people. Now to each one the expression of the Spirit is given for the common good....All these are the work of one and the same Spirit, and he gives them to each one, just as he determines...” Some people are very aware of their spiritual gifts of encouragement, teaching, showing mercy or giving hospitality, but every Spirit-given, Spirit-directed, and

Spirit–empowered ability used for building up the body of Christ is a spiritual gift, regardless of what name we may give it.



We acknowledge that some of the spiritual gifts listed in 1 Corinthians 12 and Romans 12 might not surface within our congregation, we believe that the Holy Spirit has given each of us the gifts needed for our congregation at this particular time, and that the church is made up of people who are each uniquely gifted by the Holy Spirit for the purpose of building up the body of Christ and the work of the Kingdom of God. And so as a church we seek to discover, develop and deploy those God–given gifts and to discover a place of service within the church, with the support and affirmation of the body.

Giving

In addition to the time and energy we spend in service, Christians who are part of a church community also commit to sharing their tithes and offerings. The first reason for this is demonstrate that all of our resources ultimately come from God and so when we give, our motivation is gratitude. The second reason we give of our money is to support the building of God’s church and kingdom. Many aspects of the work of the Lord are dependent on the giving of God’s people and giving of our tithes and offerings are also a way to help those in need.

Throughout Scripture, God’s people have always made tithing and offerings a priority in order to show God honour, to show complete dependence on our Creator, and as a way to show express celebration of blessings. Therefore, committed followers of Jesus have usually given more out of generosity and less out of fear or duty, seeking to give cheerfully, regularly, expectantly, locally, freely, quietly, generously and proportionally. Because everything we are and have belongs to Him, we desire to be responsible stewards of the resources God has entrusted to us. Therefore, responding to Christ’s abundant giving, we continue to submit our finances to His Lordship. When you become a member, you’ll be provided with tithing/offering envelopes. But even if you are not a member, green envelopes in the pews can also be used for offerings going to our own church ministries. If you provide an address and contact info with your donation, at the end of the year you’ll receive a tax donation for all your contributions.

Witness

We bear our fruit by blessing others with our gifts of time and resources, but also by being witnesses to the Good News of Jesus Christ. A witness is someone who gives a testimony to what he or she has seen, heard, or experienced. As we come to experience the saving love of Jesus and the empowering of the Spirit, we become witnesses to that love. In Acts

1:8, Jesus sent his disciples with a mission saying, “You will receive the power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you and you will be my witnesses.” To a man who he healed, Jesus said, “Go tell how much the Lord has done for you, and how he has had mercy on you.”



There are many examples of Christians who are witnesses, and tragically, some of them were simply insensitive to the context and person and have made it more difficult for others to share about our faith in Jesus Christ. But there are many different ways Christians can be salt and light to the world, and usually friendships are the strongest way for sharing the love of Jesus with others because there is common trust. Jesus modeled for us an emphasis on those who are (or feel) far away from God and those who were rejects, poor or disrespected. In fact, he regularly spent time with them and even welcomed them into his inner circle of friends. He was often criticized for this, but so many around him were able to experience firsthand the love and grace of God. When we look to Jesus as our example, we also spend intentional time thinking and praying for opportunities to share the Good News of Jesus Christ with our friends and neighbours. At times this will look like faithful living, other times it means sharing your story or it might mean saying, “Come and See!” Regardless of how the sharing happens, as a church we are committed to joyfully share the life we have received in Jesus with our friends, relatives and neighbours.

CHURCH GATHERED, CHURCH SCATTERED

It is through service, giving and witness that we as a congregation live out the growth and fruit that we have by remaining rooted in Christ and with his people. We intentionally have regular times of gathering together as a church, but as we scatter back to our homes and neighbourhoods, we continue to live as the church, seeking to be a blessing to our community, our neighbours, our coworkers, family and friends.

It is in this context of living out your faith at home, work and play that each follower of Jesus has a calling to be a blessing to others because of what Jesus has done for you. Generally speaking, all Christians are called to “do justice, love mercy, walk humbly,” and ultimately for all of us to be in relationship with God for his purposes. And yet God also gives each of us a specific call and to discover what that is can take some time. Here are a few questions to help in the discernment process: (1) When you look at the world around you, what things break your heart that also break God’s heart? (broken families, poverty, racism...), (2) When you think about God’s mission to establish his peace in a broken world, how do you see yourself participating in it? The process of discovering your specific calling is summarized well by Fredrick Buechner: “The place God calls you to is the place where your deep gladness and the world’s deep hunger meet.”



NEXT STEPS: BECOMING A MEMBER OF Telkwa CC

Telkwa Community Church is a place where we seek to be known as a safe place for people to discover or rediscover God and experience the life-transforming power of the gospel of Jesus Christ. We have attendees and guests, but we also have members. Some have asked, “I’ve already decided to follow Jesus, and I attend worship services regularly, so what’s the point of formal membership? Isn’t it enough for me to profess my faith in Jesus?”

Membership is a way of becoming solidly connected as people become clearly identified with and devoted to a specific local congregation. Formal membership is valuable to the leadership of the church as we seek to fulfill our God-given task of leading the church and knowing who is also committed to this task. We live in an age where commitment to jobs and even marriages are weakening, and in church we see this as people shop for the best church around. Membership takes a stand against this religious consumerism as people take a step out of the stands for those who want to publicly affirm their commitment to Christ and a specific local body. As followers of Jesus take this step, it becomes a milestone decision in one’s lifelong journey of faith because it first displays a step of gratitude and even a desire for accountability. The leadership of our church is committed to those who become members of the church. If you become a member we commit to help you understand God’s Word through preaching, teaching, and personal counsel with the purpose of growing and maturing in your faith. We strive to help your spiritual, mental, relational, and physical needs and to provide training and opportunities to serve the Lord and his people.

Most of all, we will love and support you by sharing your joys and by standing with you through your personal difficulties and times of grief. In addition to this, members are given the privilege of full participation in both sacraments of the church, the privilege of voting in the selection of leadership, and by having a voice regarding the use of our facility and our congregational meetings.

We ask of our members to make the following commitments: (1) To protect the unity of the church by acting in love toward other members, by refusing to gossip, and by supporting the leadership in doing the work of the Lord, (2) to share the responsibility of our church by praying for its growth, by inviting the unchurched to attend and by warmly welcoming visitors, (3) to serve the ministry of our church by discovering your

gifts and talents, by being equipped to serve and by developing a servant's heart, and (4) to support the testimony of our church by attending faithfully, by living a godly life, and by giving of your tithes and offerings regularly.



Many people who are new to church go through a typical process of investigation and attendance, which is sometimes followed by a decision to want to join this church family. If you would like to become a member, the process will look different depending on your own particular story as described below, but this would be followed by you being presented at a Sunday morning worship service.

If you are a new follower of Jesus, you are invited to make your commitment public through baptism and profession of faith. As a church, we want to celebrate with you the ways that God has been at work and the ways he'll continue to work. If this is your desire, you'll be invited to meet with the elders and you can share your story and share with them your desire to be baptized.

If you have been baptized as a baby, you are invited to make your profession of faith. As we've already seen, baptism celebrates God's promises and at some point, all followers of Jesus are invited to share publicly their response of wanting to be identified as a disciple of Jesus. If you'd like to share your faith publicly, you'll be invited to meet with our church's elders so you can share your story and also your desire to be baptized.

If you have been baptized as a teenager or adult, we consider your baptism to represent your baptism and your profession of faith as you have already shared publicly your desire to be identified as a disciple of Jesus.

If you are already a member of another church, we invite you to contact your former church and transfer your membership to our church. Some congregations, particularly other Christian Reformed Churches, have an established system of helping you move your membership.

If you attended another church but have no official membership, you are invited to speak with one of the elders to decide the next steps.



Resources:

Apostles' Creed

I believe in God, the Father almighty, creator of heaven and earth.

I believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord,
who was conceived by the Holy Spirit and born of the virgin Mary.
He suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died, and was buried;
he descended to hell.

The third day he rose again from the dead.
He ascended to heaven and is seated at the right hand of God the Father almighty.
From there he will come to judge the living and the dead.

I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy, universal church,
the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins,
the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting. Amen.

Our World Belongs to God

A Contemporary Testimony

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.

Among the texts referenced in this paragraph, see Matthew 5:17-20, 48; John 1:1-5, 9-13; 3:19-21; Romans 12:1-2; Galatians 5:1, 13-25; 1 Thessalonians 4:16-5:11; 2 Peter 3; 1 John 2:7-11; and Revelation 22:20.

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.

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.

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.

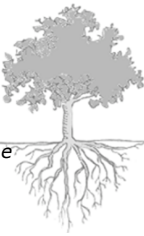
21. The Lord promised to be God
to Abraham, Sarah, and their children,
calling them to walk faithfully before him
and blessing the nations through them.
God chose Israel to show the glory of his name,
the power of his love, and the wisdom of his ways.
The Lord gave them the law through Moses
and led 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.



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.

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.

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.

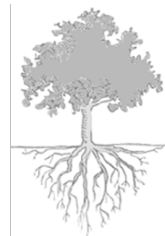
32. The Bible is the Word of God, the record and tool of his redeeming work. It is the Word of truth, breath of God, fully reliable in leading us to know God and to walk with Jesus Christ in new life.

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.

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.



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 neighbourhoods 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 14:45-49, 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 Paul's discussion of singleness and marriage in 1 Corinthians 7. On the importance of teaching & modeling the ways of the Lord, see Deuteronomy 6:4-9, Proverbs 22:6, & Ephesians 6:1-4. Jesus' teaching on divorce is found in Matthew 19:1-12 & Mark 10:1-12. That we together reflect the love of God is taught in John 13:34-35 & 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).

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.

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