2 Corinthians 5:6-21 **Confession of 1967** November 15, 2026
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Welcome to the Confession of '67, a great year. I just kept thinking of the word groovy all week long. We're doing C67, and I had to get out our tie-dye that we've had on our communion table to honor the Confession of 1967, which was written when? 1967. Yes, 1967. And where was it written? United States by Presbyterians. Some of you may remember 1967, or some of you have studied it. What was going on in 1967? Unrest. Vietnam. What was it like? What was it like in the system? Were you aware when you were in high school? JFK? Yes, this is the '60s overall. The idea for the Confession began among Presbyterians about 11 years before in 1956.

Let's look at bit of background. You know how we talk about Session, and then Presbytery, and then Synod. Do you know the next step up, what that's called? General Assembly. It's like all the church. At General Assembly around 1956, it was brought up that the Westminster Confession was quite a long time ago, and maybe it needed to be updated. Remember the Westminster Confession, 1600s? That was the banner with the eye that kind of freaked the kids out. Why is there an eye on there? It looked kind of scary. It's meant to symbolize the sovereignty and the power of God. But maybe some things have changed in 300 years.

The first idea was, let's revise the Westminster Confession. Then across time, and I love this that it's okay if ideas evolve across time, the Presbyterians realized there's no revising it. We need to have a "present witness" to address what's going on before our very eyes and who we are in the midst of our times. They kind of got out of their box and thought maybe it's time to have another confession. Then rather than we have this confession over here and there's that confession, they thought let's have a book of confessions. So what do we want to put in a book of confessions? I think it honors that ideas and needs change across time, and that's fine. That's part of our Reformed heritage, that we're not handcuffed to the Nicene Creed or the Apostles' Creed. We can honor our history and also honor how things evolve. That doesn't mean that we've lost our tradition. No. Our tradition is take a look around and what's going on and how do we have something present to say? So in the Book of Confessions, as you saw, there's the ancient creeds, and then there's Reformation creeds. There are several dozen Reformation creeds, and they just picked out 3 from different areas, and then Westminster, which was kind of the big boss in Presbyterianland for a long time and in some places still is the big boss.

But for us, we say, we're Reformed, and always being reformed by the Spirit. So they brought in Barmen against Nazism, and then they said Confession of '67, or "C67". They had this idea, and it was the '60s. So the Confession addresses, I was surprised, nationalism, toxic nationalism. It addresses racial discrimination. It talks about discrimination against women. It talks about the era of the space race, Vietnam War, war and peace, poverty. (Everything we've solved since then, right? Just kidding.) When we read the Confession of '67 Wednesday night, we were stunned in the paragraphs about technology, how it was applicable to AI right now. It was remarkable. The Confession is maybe 6 or 8 pages long. So much of it is relevant to us today. It provides a framework for talking about modern things.

I was struck, there were so many different issues that people could disagree about, but they landed on one verse as the anchor for the whole Confession, and that verse is, "in Christ God was reconciling the world to God's self." That verse is from Second Corinthians 5:19. When we were reading 2 Corinthians on Wednesday, we discovered that in this verse most translations of

the Bible use the word reconciliation, reconciliation, reconciliation. Then we discovered that Charlene's Bible, the Good News Bible, didn't use the word reconciliation. It says, “God was making all human beings God's friends through Christ.” So reconciliation is that $5 word, but it really just means making friends. God is making friends— through Jesus Christ, God is making friends. Isn't that beautiful and simple? So, the Presbyterians found a verse everybody could agree with in order to address lots of different complicated modern challenges. Now that we know the word reconciliation, don't be intimidated by it, it essentially means friend-making.

There's a preface to the Confession of ‘67, and then it has 3 different parts. And when you look at the parts, you think, oh, that's familiar. I mean, that's what all the Confessions do. And C67 kept the thread of reconciliation. Part 1 is about God's work of reconciliation. Part 2 is the ministry of reconciliation. Part 1 lays a big theological foundation. Part 2 says this theological foundation isn't up there in the sky with God; it is applicable to today. In part 2, we have been given the ministry of reconciliation. And that's what it says in 2 Corinthians, that God reconciles everybody in the world, and then gives us the ministry of reconciliation, of friend-making. Or one translation says, “we are ambassadors”. We are ambassadors for God's work of friend-making. Then part 3 is very brief, the fulfillment of reconciliation. Part 3 kind of pats us on the back and says, it's okay. You're not going to finish the job. Just because you're not going to finish the job, just because bad things happen, things go horribly astray, remember this reconciliation business is bigger than all of us still. So, keep hope.



Book of Confessions
Confession of 1967
United States UPCUSA
OUTLINE

Reconciliation

Preface 9.01-9.07
PART I God’s Work of **Reconciliation** 9.08-9.30
A. The **Grace** of Our Lord Jesus Christ
B. The **Love** of God
C. The **Communion** of the Holy Spirit
PART II The Ministry of **Reconciliation** 9.31-9.52
A. The **Mission** of the Church
B. The **Equipment** of the Church
PART III Fulfillment of **Reconciliation** 9.53-56

Back to part 1. Look at that. It has God, Jesus, Holy Spirit. It starts with Jesus. The grace of Jesus, the love of God, the communion of the Holy Spirit. Have the other confessions really lifted up the love of God very much? I don't think they have. They've told us God is omnipotent and sovereign, and God is way up there in the clouds. How lovely in Confession of '67, God is love, and Jesus is grace, really centering grace, and the Holy Spirit is this communion. Then I love that Part 2 says, okay, get to work.

Let's walk through some of the words of the Confession of '67. I figure we’ll equip you all, and you can read it on your own and learn more, but even today, I think it's very inspiring. First, in the preface, before it even gets into the meat of the Confession, it explains why do we even have this Confession. It says “the Church confesses its faith when it bears a **present witness** to God's grace in Jesus Christ. The purpose of Confessions are to call the church to unity in confession and mission, **which is required of disciples today**.” So this is required of us if we want to be disciples. Joyce, remember you wanted to brand this Sunday Disciples Sunday? This is the Sunday that we welcome financial pledges. (If you have one, great, or bring it in another week.) But today is a day we respond as disciples. What is our response as disciples? The confession says, “God's **reconciling** work in Jesus Christ and the mission of **reconciliation** to which God has called the church **are the heart of the gospel in any age**.” Did you know

reconciliation is the heart of the gospel in every single age? I didn't know that. When I think about what's in the Bible and what's central to the Bible, God is love, Jesus is love, I didn't think about 2 Corinthians 5. So I salute the genius of whoever landed on this verse as being a verse for us to meditate upon. When you really, really think about this verse, it's the heart of the Gospel, this reconciliation, this peacemaking, this friendship. So that's from the preface.

Let's read more from the Confession itself. What's the meaning of life? The Confession says, "**life is a gift to be received with gratitude and a task to be pursued with courage.**" Doesn't that sound like a graduation card? I'd like to write that for a graduation card. "Humans are free to seek life within the purpose of God: to develop and protect the resources of nature for the common welfare, to work for justice and peace in society, and in other ways use their creative powers for the fulfillment of human life." Isn't that inspiring? This is what we're supposed to do with our lives. There is so much, ugh, in the interweb about what am I supposed to do with my life, what's the meaning of life. Come on. This is life. This is what life's all about. Wow. Amen.

What else does it say? This part is about us, the church. "**The members of the church are emissaries of peace.**" Did you know that? You're an emissary of peace. I thought we all need like little ambassadorial sashes today, and we can choose our country. I get the Bahamas. We are all emissaries wherever we go, with our family, our friends, our groups, our work, wherever we go. Just imagine yourself wearing a little sash or having your ambassadorial letters or credentials or something. You are an ambassador. Don't let it go to your head but use that power for good and seek the good of humanity. And this is interesting: "in cooperation with powers and authorities in politics, culture, and economics." So don't think there's church sphere and then everything else is not church sphere. No. You're an ambassador everywhere, every single sphere. You are to cooperate with all spheres of the world, but then get this, but they, meaning we, "**have to fight against pretensions and injustices when those same powers endanger human welfare**." So we are to cooperate with the broader sphere of life, and we are called to *not cooperate*. The distinguishing thing is, is it really helping human welfare, the well-being of humans? So we can cooperate and then we can non-cooperate. We can set a boundary. And "**our strength is in our confidence that God's purpose rather than human schemes will finally prevail**." We know God's purpose will ultimately prevail rather than, this has to turn out a certain way or it's no good. No, we have confidence in God's great arc of love.

Okay, a couple more things about members. "**Each member is the church in the world.**" That means all of us. You are church in the world. So go church it, everybody. Go church it. "You are **endowed by the Spirit with some gift of ministry, and you are responsible for the integrity of your witness.**" You are a present witness, and you're responsible for that witness in whatever situation you find yourself. Pause and think about, if you're responsible for your witness in the world and your responsibility is reconciliation or friend-making…what does that look like in you? I invite you to think about what that looks like? It doesn't mean you just go on a crusade.

So maybe some theological structure for how you are an ambassador. In this reconciliation and friend-making, there's a vertical aspect— God and us, God and humanity— that it starts there about reconciliation and friend-making, that that's who God is. God scoops up everybody. God is a friend. And in Jesus Christ, that is our witness without parallel of what God means by friend-making. Then from that friend-making, it's horizontal, because when we understand who God is, what kind of God that we belong to, we horizontally look out for other people and share



that friend-making. But not to be lost also is within ourselves. It says God, neighbor, and ourselves. Within ourselves, friend-making within us, within our minds, bodies, spirits, with God's knowledge, that is, being friends within yourself, self-love, healthy self-love. Then the last arrow, there's this ultimate friend-making reconciliation that is just beyond us. It includes us and is beyond us. So with this reconciliation, friend-making, there are all sorts of directions to think about.

Back to that idea of reconciliation and friend-making, I thought of something a friend did for me in the last couple of months. I am friends with a diverse group of people who have different religious backgrounds, and we get together about once a month, and it's wonderful. A couple months ago, one of my friends from this group sent me a text and said, I thought of you today. She must have been coming home from work and saw a sticker on someone's car. I'm sure she waited for a stop sign and then took a picture of the bumper sticker. It wasn't very clear, so she got as much as she could figure out and then went on the internet to search what exactly it was. Or can I get a better picture of this to send to Sarah? She did her little research and got a nice clear picture and sent it to me. Do you see, Prays Well with Others? It has symbols from all sorts of different religious traditions. Let me tell you why I love this. One, that it came from my friend, and again, from a group of people from very diverse or no religious backgrounds. It just made me appreciate my friend, how my friend listens to me, how my friend pursued something that she thought Sarah might like, and how dogged she was. And how she connected dots and shared this. What a wonderful friend. A friend blesses us, right? A friend who listens carefully, connects dots, and then offers something to us, maybe holds up a mirror and says this is maybe what they like about us or what they notice about us. I love that. I love this because it was my friend. Second, I love what it says. Prays well with others. Prayer, and it's not just hoity-toity prayer, it's a powerful idea of prayer, in that prayer is a uniting force for all spiritual, ethical people, and that prayer doesn't put me in a bubble because I'm this religious group and I'm this denomination. It's that prayer can be a uniting force with other people. I just love that. I wish John S was here. There's a pun: prays well with others. What do you usually say? Plays well with others. Isn't that a foundational building block of friendship when you're a little kid? Do they play well with others? Plays well with others, doesn't play well with others. It's just such a building block, so I love the nod to human relations. She sent that to me, I had it printed out, it's on my office door, and then do you recognize it? It's actually in our liturgy. That we pray well with others.



There's a huge religious marketplace out there. In the U.S. and abroad, there's huge ideas, different currents of what Christianity is and following Jesus Christ. **I would commend to you, Discovery, that praying well with others is our brand among many.** It gets at our DNA, our reconciliation, our friendship, our flavor. I think **it is a present witness that we can offer to the world. And we sum it up as everyone's our neighbor. So go and be ambassadors. You are the church.** In Jesus' name, Amen.