TRUST Brief Statement of Faith & Psalms of Trust November 22, 2026

Pastor Sarah Dickinson

Let's learn a little bit about the Brief Statement of Faith. It was written in the United States when the two biggest denominations of Presbyterians were not together and they reunited. They said, let's write a confession. It was a time of celebration. They knew when they wrote the statement that they were picturing, it would go in the Book of Confessions. So it didn't need to be a confession that had every single possible theological thing. It was not exhaustive. But they thought, let's add our witness to the Book of Confessions. So the Confession celebrates elements of Christian and Reformed heritage and theology. When you read it, you'll notice the word “belong”. Belong is a big word in the Heidelberg Catechism. There's that other big word used with God, that God is “sovereign". That's kind of a Reformed word. It’s Trinitarian. It's structured around God, Jesus, Holy Spirit, like much of Christian writing. So it honors the theological structure, but it uses fresh Bible language, and it also uses fresh theological language. So the things were always there, but it just brought new energy and life to our traditions. I think it is a lovely statement.

Let's take a look at the outline of it. They wanted to write a statement that could be used in worship and also in education. I was startled today. Did you hear our liturgist, Greg, say the Brief Statement of Faith earlier? I didn't even remember it was there, but part of the words in our Assurance of Pardon today come from the Brief Statement of Faith. So, as we read through it, if it sounds kind of familiar to you, we have used those words in our worship. And if you've come through a new member class, it's the backbone of that class. The Brief Statement is about the size of a sheet of paper, two sides. So, it's fairly brief. Some new elements of it are: it lifts up women and men in ministry, it lifts up care for creation and it's kind of poetic. It has lines that are numbered. There are 80 lines. There are some opening words, then some words about Jesus, some words about God, some words about the Holy Spirit, and then it ends with a doxology, which means a praise to God. The Statement is structured around 2 Corinthians 13:14, where it talks about the grace of Jesus, the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit. So it's structured around that Trinitarian blessing that ends Paul's second letter to the Corinthians.



Book of Confessions
Brief Statement of Faith
United States 1983
Overview, 80 lines

11.1 Opening Words (1-6)
11.2 Jesus (7-26)
11.3 God (27-51)
11.4 Holy Spirit (52-76)
11.5 Doxology (77-80)

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ,
the love of God,
and the communion of the Holy Spirit
be with all of you.
2 Corinthians 13:14

So now let's dig in. The first part is about the opening words. “In life and in death, we belong to God. Through the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit, we trust in the one triune [Trinitarian] God, the Holy One of Israel, whom alone we worship and serve.” I know you're just hearing this, but any

1 In life and in death
we belong to God.
2 Through the grace
of our Lord Jesus Christ,
3 the love of God,
4 and the communion
of the Holy Spirit,
5 we trust in the one triune God,
the Holy One of Israel,
6 whom alone we worship and serve.

thoughts about those opening words? From the congregation: The first line is very comforting. Belonging to God, whether you're alive or dead, you belong to God. Yes, a lot of you recognize it. It's often the very first words I say at a funeral. In life and in death, we belong to God. It's like an anchor liturgy I use. Yes, it really emphasizes God's grace, perhaps more than other confessions. It lifts that up.

It talks about Jesus, God, and Holy Spirit. Here are some of the words about **Jesus**. "We trust in Jesus Christ, fully human, fully God. Jesus proclaimed the reign of God: preaching good news to the poor and release to the captives, teaching by word and deed and blessing the children, healing the sick and binding up the brokenhearted, eating with outcasts, forgiving sinners, and calling all to repent and believe the gospel." Thoughts about this excerpt from the Jesus section? From the congregation: No matter what we're going through, no matter what we're doing, he is there. He is there for us across lots of different situations. He is there for us. It feels so Bible verse-based. So, when Presbyterians say we are biblical, this is what we're talking about. It's not just words or a theory. It is like that story, and that story, or a summary of patterns. We are humbled by what Jesus did for everybody. Yes, everybody—not the wealthy, not the powerful, everyone. It's like here's the example, and maybe it plants seeds, and here's what we're supposed to do and care about. It includes children. Yes! Isn't that incredible? It names children as part of the Confession. Isn't that lovely? It's really telling us how to live our everyday lives. Isn't it great? I think it's such a great statement, so practical.

7 We trust in Jesus Christ,
8 fully human, fully God.
9 Jesus proclaimed the reign of God:
10 preaching good news to the poor
11 and release to the captives,
12 teaching by word and deed
13 and blessing the children,
14 healing the sick
15 and binding up the brokenhearted,
16 eating with outcasts,
17 forgiving sinners,
18 and calling all to repent and believe the gospel.

Let's take a snippet from the **God** part. "We trust in God. In sovereign…" [There's that word, kind of a clunker word, but it's part of our Reformed heritage. We believe in the independence of God. God moves in freedom.] "In sovereign love God created the world good and makes everyone equally in God's image, male and female, of every race and people, to live as one community. But we rebel against God; we hide from our Creator. Ignoring God's commandments, we violate the image of God in others and ourselves, accept lies as truth, exploit neighbor and nature, and threaten death to the planet entrusted to our care. We deserve God's condemnation. Yet God acts with justice and mercy to redeem creation." Thoughts about that chunk of material about God? Does that seem who God is to you, or what is it lifting up about God? From congregation: Even though we have done a lot of things that are wrong, we're forgiven. Although there is wrong, we are forgiven. We believe in God's goodness, and we all are made in God's image. Yes, it's loaded. To be made equally in God's image, Beth is remembering that it took until 1983 for the Southern and Northern Presbyterians to rejoin with

27 We trust in God,
29 In sovereign love God created the world good
30 and makes everyone equally in God's image,
31 male and female, of every race and people,
32 to live as one community.
33 But we rebel against God; we hide from our Creator. 34 Ignoring God's commandments.
35 we violate the image of God in others and ourselves, 36 accept lies as truth,
37 exploit neighbor and nature,
38 and threaten death to the planet entrusted to our care. 39 We deserve God's condemnation.
40 Yet God acts with justice and mercy to redeem creation.

each other. They split during the Civil War. So it took over 100 years. This is saying that we are made equally in God's image, so it took a while for all Presbyterians to say that together. It was written over 40 years ago, but these ideas seem so current and relevant. More from congregation: I love that statement, we hide from our Creator. Why do we hide from God? Pastor Sarah: Yeah, we hide from our Creator. It seems to be evoking Genesis where they try to hide. I was struck by how creation kind of glues together those lines: God created us and creation is wonderful, and we are created in God's image, but we rebel against that, and yet God restores us as new creation. So "creation" is an interesting thread to follow there.

Now let's take a look at the Holy Spirit part. "We trust in God the Holy Spirit, everywhere the giver and renewer of life. In a broken and fearful world the Spirit gives us courage to pray without ceasing, to witness among all peoples to Christ as Lord and Savior, to unmask idolatries in Church and culture, to hear the voices of peoples long silenced, and to work with others for justice, freedom, and peace. [That's in our liturgy.] In gratitude to God, empowered by the Spirit, we strive to serve Christ in our daily tasks and to live holy and joyful lives." Let's have a banner with that! Wouldn't that be awesome? A banner with the chunk about the Holy Spirit. It speaks of courage, pray, witness. It's kind of gutsy. Speak out. Other thoughts about this, the Holy Spirit part? Just being out there in a rough world. Yeah, being out there in a rough and broken world. It makes me appreciate the banner and what we were trying to show today. In a broken world, it's not perfect, that's exactly where we're called.

52 We trust in God the Holy Spirit
53 everywhere the giver and renewer of life.
65 In a broken and fearful world 66 the Spirit gives us courage 67 to pray without ceasing, 68 to witness among all peoples to Christ as Lord and Savior, 69 to unmask idolatries in Church and culture, 70 to hear the voices of peoples long silenced, 71 and to work with others for justice, freedom, and peace. 72 In gratitude to God, empowered by the Spirit, 73 we strive to serve Christ in our daily tasks 74 and to live holy and joyful lives,

So what are your overall reflections about the Brief Statement of Faith? Do you like it? Do you not like it? What do you think? From congregation: Because of the way it's been used in various places across the years, it seems like such familiar words that we all should recognize, even if we didn't realize that's where it came from. It's familiar. Yes, it's like is that where that comes from? They did a good job of coming up with something that's usable. They got a lot in two pages. And it wasn't dense paragraphs. They packed a lot in there. Yes, Sally? It's lovely, gentle, and clear. Is it gentle or not gentle? Maybe it pointed at who we are, our identity. Maybe we can feel a little humble pride about this statement. And if we're ever confused, it's like this is who we are. This is our brand. There are different brands of church out there. This is a good brand for us, a good wording for us to know. When the churches merged, there were quite a few that decided to stay where they were, where it was still a point of faith, or maybe a small southern church didn't want to merge into a much larger northern church. So not all agreed. That's the nature of the world, too.

I'll lift up a reflection I had that surprised me studying the Confession this go-round, and maybe you heard it in the Psalm reading. Did you hear a certain word over and over again in the Psalms? **Trust**. I don't know that I had noticed that **in the opening lines it says, we trust in the Triune God, and then every section— Jesus, God, Holy Spirit— begins with trust**. **We trust in Jesus Christ. We trust in God. We trust in God the Spirit.** So that took me on a journey this

week thinking about trust. Weeks ago when I had to figure out what scripture to put with what creed or confession, I thought about trust and I thought of the Psalms. I just had this vague sense that the Psalms are a good place to go to talk about trust. So, in our study guide, I had Psalm 9 and Psalm 37, and then early this week I thought, oh, I like Psalm 52 better, and then at Wednesday Bible study, it became very clear. You might notice that I'm quite enthusiastic about the Psalms and guys aren't, and I'm okay with that. There's an enthusiasm gap between where I am with Psalms and where you are. I totally get that.



you

As I was contemplating how to put this together for Sunday, I thought let me test my theory about the word trust. So I got out my trusty Bible concordance for NRSV and looked up the word trust. And oh my goodness, the word trust in the Psalms, it appears about 32 times. Trust occurs a few times in Proverbs, and really nothing much in the Gospels or Paul. So I was on the right track thinking about trust in terms of the Psalms. Of course, trust has the connotation of I trust, I believe, I have faith in. I kind of group those words together. I think this is one reason you hate the Psalms—there are these beautiful lines about trust, but they're embedded in such grisly stories. Probably virtually every time the word trust pops up in a verse, ahead of that, nasty things are going on. Such brokenness, such treachery, such pain, physical, mental, social, horrible, horrible, soul-searing, body-sucking pain. Enemies, oppressors, attackers, assaulters, danger, friends coming after the psalmist, all manner of horrific things. **Then the psalmist will say, but I trust in you**. So it's a reminder that trust gets hauled out when things are really a mess and when things are really broken. Trust is that thing we need in the gap. Trust is that glue, that leap, that reminder of who we believe in. Trust. Think about what is trust to you? What does it mean to trust? The Psalms point to all manner of dumpster fire, pain, treachery, horror. Yet the Spirit gives us trust, or **the Psalm says, trust in the Lord**. So that's one thing, when trust happens is when the chips are down. Trust.

Then I pivot back to the Statement of Faith. I notice that it says, **we trust in Jesus**, and then it describes who Jesus is. **We trust in God**, then it describes who God is. **We trust in the Holy Spirit**, and then it spells out, when we say Holy Spirit, this is what we're talking about. **So it is not blind trust. It is evidence. Here's the evidence from the Bible.** Here's the evidence from our tradition. Here's the evidence from lived experience of courageous people, and about what we're supposed to do and how we're supposed to apply ourselves to present tasks. This is our evidence. And, you know, faith and trust and belief are not certitude. They are a risk that we take. It is a calculated risk. **When we say we trust God and Jesus and the Holy Spirit, we trust based on what we know** of this particular idea, and then **that inspires us to act in the world and demonstrate the trust in God to fix things**. **May you trust in this beautiful God that we know. In the Reformed tradition, we are all about knowledge, and then from that pattern, we take this big leap of trust every single day**. We kind of jump off the cliff. To God be the glory. Amen.