

The Confession of 1967

Inclusive Language Text



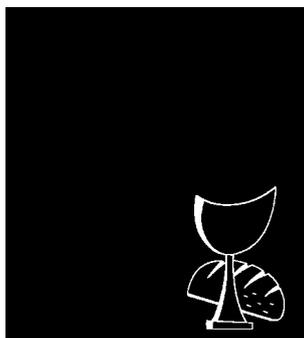
*The Confession of 1967—
Inclusive Language Version*

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INTRODUCTION

It may seem odd that the 214th General Assembly (2002) acted unanimously to recognize the thirty-fifth anniversary of the Confession of 1967. Quarter and half centuries seem more appropriate markers for remembrance and celebration. Yet the very name of the confession, locating it by the date of its adoption, is evidence of its enduring connection to time—its original time and our time. Most of the creeds, confessions, and catechisms in *Book of Confessions* are located by place rather than date—Nicea, Scotland, Heidelberg, Helvetia [Switzerland], Westminster, Barmen. However, both place and date indicate a central feature of the Reformed tradition: the church is called to confess its faith anew in each time and place. The Reformed tradition understands the formulation of confessions as part of the mandate of proclamation entrusted to the church.

The freedom and necessity to express the faith locally has always led Reformed churches to be confession-making churches, giving present testimony to their faith and action. In the sixteenth century alone, more than sixty confessions were produced by Reformed churches. The World Alliance of Reformed Churches has published a representative collection of more than twenty-five confessions from the twentieth century. Churches are responsible for their own confession, and their own confession does not bind other churches unless it is freely adopted by them. The Reformed stance toward confessions is found in the statement of Heinrich Bullinger at the signing of the First Helvetic Confession:

We wish in no way to prescribe for all churches through these articles a single rule of faith. For we acknowledge no other rule of faith than Holy Scripture. . . . We grant to everyone the freedom to use his own expressions which are suitable for his church and will make use of this freedom ourselves, at the same time defending the true sense of this Confession against distortions.

The Preface to the Confession of 1967 puts the matter succinctly. It begins with the conviction, “The church confesses its faith when it bears a present witness to God’s grace in Jesus Christ.” The need for present witness is an enduring feature of ecclesial witness, for “in every age the church has expressed its witness in words and deeds as the need of the time required. . . . No one type of confession is exclusively valid, no one statement is irreformable.”

The particularity of Reformed confessions does not confine them to their own time and place, however. In each time and place, the church benefits from the witness of the church in other times and places. Listening to the faithful voices of our forebears in the faith can liberate us from captivity to the limitations of our own cultural and ecclesial assumptions.

The Confession of 1967 notes that God's reconciling work in Jesus Christ and the church's mission of reconciliation are the heart of the gospel in any age, but "our generation stands in peculiar need of reconciliation in Christ." Thirty-five years later it is clear that *our* present generation also stands in peculiar need of reconciliation in Christ. Thus, the Confession of 1967 (C67) is especially important to a contemporary articulation of Christian faith and life. However, the capacity of C67 to bear present witness to the necessity of reconciliation has been limited by its pervasive use of male language for the whole people of God. The profound truth articulated in C67 is muted by such gender-limiting statements as "Jesus Christ is God with man" and "the church calls men to be reconciled to God and to one another."

It is ironic that a confession shaped around the gospel's message of reconciliation was unaware of its own complicity in the linguistic exclusion of women. Perhaps the language would have been inclusive of both women and men if it had been the Confession of 1970! The problem was recognized almost immediately. The first formal attempt to rectify the problem was made by Freda Gardner and Cynthia Jarvis in preparation for a conference celebrating fifteen years of the Confession of 1967 (another odd anniversary). In the following years, others suggested changes that employed inclusive language for people—including many pastors who routinely adjusted the text for use in worship and study.

The 214th General Assembly (2002) asked the Office of Theology and Worship to prepare a revised text of the Confession of 1967 employing fully inclusive language for the people of God. In response, the Office of Theology and Worship has made revisions that honor the church's inclusive language guidelines, adopted in 1982 and reaffirmed by the 213th General Assembly (2001). This inclusive language text does not seek to alter the confession in any other way. C67's linguistic style and characteristic formulations have been preserved throughout.

In addition to the inclusive language version of the Confession of 1967, the Office of Theology and Worship has prepared inclusive language selections from the *Book of Confessions* for use in worship. Some of the liturgical selections from C67 are included as an addendum to this publication of the full text. They evidence more freedom than the complete text version, most noticeably in replacing objective statements with liturgically appropriate language that voices personal and communal engagement.

The differing approaches of the full inclusive language text and the inclusive language liturgical selections can be illustrated by paragraph 9.22:

The new life takes shape in a community in which men know that God loves and accepts them in spite of what they are. They therefore accept themselves and love others, knowing that no man has any ground on which to stand, except God's grace. [original text]

The new life takes shape in a community in which people know that God loves and accepts them in spite of what they are. They therefore accept themselves and love others, knowing that no one has any ground on which to stand, except God's grace. [inclusive language text]

We believe that the new life takes shape in a community in which we know that God loves and accepts us in spite of what we are.

We therefore accept ourselves and love others, knowing that no one has any ground on which to stand, except God's grace. [liturgical text]

The Preface to the *Book of Confessions* notes that “each confessional document should be respected in its historical particularity; none should be altered to conform to current theological, ethical, or linguistic norms.” Thus, the current revisions are not intended to replace the constitutional version of the Confession of 1967. However, respect for C67's historical particularity should not be a barrier to reception of its focused articulation of the church's faith. The Preface to the *Book of Confessions* also states, “The confessions are not respected if they are robbed of contemporary authority by

imagining that they are historical artifacts. They are best able to instruct, lead, and guide the church when they are given freedom to speak now to the church and the world.” The Office of Theology and Worship hopes that its inclusive language revisions to the Confession of 1967 will make it more accessible to the whole church so that it can “call the church to that unity in confession and mission which is required of disciples today.”

Joseph D. Small
Office of Theology and Worship

INCLUSIVE LANGUAGE TEXT
of the
Confession of 1967*

The purpose of this unofficial revision is solely to alter the male-oriented language that was commonly and uncritically accepted in 1967. All departures from the official text which is found in the Constitution of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) are indicated, and the original language is quoted in the notes. In addition, one note (no. 142) includes a Scripture reference for an exact quotation from the New Revised Standard Version of the Bible.

PREFACE

- 9.01 The church confesses its faith when it bears a present witness to God's grace in Jesus Christ.
- 9.02 In every age, the church has expressed its witness in words and deeds as the need of the time required. The earliest examples of confession are found within the Scriptures. Confessional statements have taken such varied forms as hymns, liturgical formulas, doctrinal definitions, catechisms, theological systems in summary, and declarations of purpose against threatening evil.
- 9.03 Confessions and declarations are subordinate standards in the church, subject to the authority of Jesus Christ, the Word of God, as the Scriptures bear witness to him. No one type of confession is exclusively valid, no one statement is irreformable. Obedience to Jesus Christ alone identifies the one universal church and supplies the continuity of its tradition. This obedience is the ground of the church's duty and freedom to reform itself in life and doctrine as new occasions, in God's providence, may demand.

*This inclusive language text of the Confession of 1967 was prepared informally by the Rev. Cynthia A. Jarvis (Associate Pastor, Nassau Presbyterian Church, Princeton, NJ) and Professor Freda A. Gardner for use at the October 21-22, 1982, Symposium on "The Confession of 1967: Contemporary Implication." Subsequently the text was reviewed with Professors Daniel Migliore and Edward Dowey, and later by a group of scholars solicited by the Rev. Dr. Christian Iosso. After receiving a referral from the 214th General Assembly (2002), the text was revised once more by the Office of Theology and Worship.

- 9.04 The United Presbyterian Church in the United States of America acknowledges itself aided in understanding the gospel by the testimony of the church from earlier ages and from many lands. More especially it is guided by the Nicene and Apostles' Creeds from the time of the early church; the Scots Confession, the Heidelberg Catechism, and the Second Helvetic Confession from the era of the Reformation; the Westminster Confession and Shorter Catechism from the seventeenth century; and the Theological Declaration of Barmen from the twentieth century.
- 9.05 The purpose of the Confession of 1967 is to call the church to that unity in confession and mission which is required of disciples today. This Confession is not a "system of doctrine," nor does it include all the traditional topics of theology. For example, the Trinity and the Person of Christ are not redefined, but are recognized and reaffirmed as forming the basis and determining the structure of the Christian faith.
- 9.06 God's reconciling work in Jesus Christ and the mission of reconciliation to which he has called his church are the heart of the gospel in any age. Our generation stands in peculiar need of reconciliation in Christ. Accordingly, this Confession of 1967 is built upon that theme.

THE CONFESSION

- 9.07 In Jesus Christ, God was reconciling the world to himself. Jesus Christ is God with humankind.¹ He is the eternal Son of the Father, who became human² and lived among us to fulfill the work of reconciliation. He is present in the church by the power of the Holy Spirit to continue and complete his mission. This work of God, the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit is the foundation of all confessional statements about God, humanity,³ and the world. Therefore, the church calls all people⁴ to be reconciled to God and to one another.

PART I
GOD'S WORK OF RECONCILIATION

Section A. The Grace of Our Lord Jesus Christ

1. Jesus Christ

9.08 In Jesus of Nazareth, true humanity was realized once for all. Jesus, a Palestinian Jew, lived among his own people and shared their needs, temptations, joys, and sorrows. He expressed the love of God in word and deed and became a brother to all kinds of sinful men and women.⁵ But his complete obedience led him into conflict with his people. His life and teaching judged their goodness, religious aspirations, and national hopes. Many rejected him and demanded his death. In giving himself freely for them, he took upon himself the judgment under which everyone stands⁶ convicted. God raised him from the dead, vindicating him as Messiah and Lord. The victim of sin became victor, and won the victory over sin and death for all.⁷

9.09 God's reconciling act in Jesus Christ is a mystery which the Scriptures describe in various ways. It is called the sacrifice of a lamb, a shepherd's life given for his sheep, atonement by a priest; again it is ransom of a slave, payment of debt, vicarious satisfaction of a legal penalty, and victory over the powers of evil. These are expressions of a truth which remains beyond the reach of all theory in the depths of God's love for humankind.⁸ They reveal the gravity, cost, and sure achievement of God's reconciling work.

9.10 The risen Christ is the savior of all people.⁹ Those joined to him by faith are set right with God and commissioned to serve as God's reconciling community. Christ is head of this community, the church, which began with the apostles and continues through all generations.

9.11 The same Jesus Christ is the judge of all people.¹⁰ His judgment discloses the ultimate seriousness of life and gives promise of God's final victory over the power of sin and death. To receive life from the risen Lord is to have life eternal; to refuse life from him is to choose the death which is separation from God. All who put their trust in Christ face divine judgment without fear, for the judge is their redeemer.

2. Human Sin¹¹

- 9.12 The reconciling act of God in Jesus Christ exposes the evil in people¹² as sin in the sight of God. In sin, people¹³ claim mastery of their own lives, turn against God and each other,¹⁴ and become exploiters and despoilers of the world. They lose their humanity in futile striving and are left in rebellion, despair, and isolation.
- 9.13 Wise and virtuous men and women¹⁵ through the ages have sought the highest good in devotion to freedom, justice, peace, truth, and beauty. Yet all human virtue, when seen in the light of God's love in Jesus Christ, is found to be infected by self-interest and hostility. All people,¹⁶ good and bad alike, are in the wrong before God and helpless without God's¹⁷ forgiveness. Thus everyone falls¹⁸ under God's judgment. No one is more subject to that judgment than those who assume¹⁹ that they are²⁰ guiltless before God or morally superior to others.
- 9.14 God's love never changes. Against all who oppose the divine will, God expresses love in wrath.²¹ In the same love, God bore²² judgment and shameful death in Jesus Christ, to bring all people²³ to repentance and new life.

Section B. The Love of God

- 9.15 God's sovereign love is a mystery beyond the reach of the human²⁴ mind. Human thought ascribes to God superlatives of power, wisdom, and goodness. But God reveals divine²⁵ love in Jesus Christ by showing power in the form of a servant, wisdom in the folly of the cross, and goodness in receiving sinful men and women.²⁶ The power of God's love in Christ to transform the world discloses that the Redeemer is the Lord and Creator who made all things to serve the purpose of God's²⁷ love.
- 9.16 God has created the world of space and time to be the sphere of God's²⁸ dealings with humankind.²⁹ In its beauty and vastness, sublimity and awfulness, order and disorder, the world reflects to the eye of faith the majesty and mystery of its Creator.

9.17 God has created human beings for³⁰ a personal relation with himself that they³¹ may respond to the love of the Creator. God³² has created male and female and given them a life which proceeds from birth to death in a succession of generations and in a wide complex of social relations. God has endowed humans with capacities to make the world serve their needs and to enjoy its good things.³³ Life is a gift to be received with gratitude and a task to be pursued with courage. People are³⁴ free to seek life³⁵ 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 to use their³⁶ creative powers for the fulfillment of human life.

9.18 God expressed love³⁷ for all humankind³⁸ through Israel, whom God³⁹ chose to be a⁴⁰ covenant people to serve him in love and faithfulness. When Israel was unfaithful, God⁴¹ disciplined the nation with judgment⁴² and maintained the covenant⁴³ through prophets, priests, teachers, and true believers. These witnesses called all Israelites to a destiny in which they would serve God faithfully and become a light to the nations. The same witnesses proclaimed the coming of a new age, and a true servant of God in whom God's purpose of Israel and for humanity⁴⁴ would be realized.

9.19 Out of Israel, God in due time raised up Jesus. His faith and obedience were the response of the perfect child of God. He was the fulfillment of God's promise to Israel, the beginning of the new creation, and the pioneer of the new humanity. He gave history its meaning and direction and called the church to be his servant for the reconciliation of the world.

Section C. The Communion of the Holy Spirit

9.20 God the Holy Spirit fulfills the work of reconciliation in human life.⁴⁵ The Holy Spirit creates and renews the church as the community in which people⁴⁶ are reconciled to God and to one another. The Spirit⁴⁷ enables people⁴⁸ to receive forgiveness as they forgive one another and to enjoy the peace of God as they make peace among themselves. In spite of their sin, the Spirit⁴⁹ gives people⁵⁰ power to become representatives of Jesus Christ and his gospel of reconciliation to all.⁵¹

1. The New Life

- 9.21 The reconciling work of Jesus was the supreme crisis in the life of humankind.⁵² His cross and resurrection become personal crisis and present hope for women and men⁵³ when the gospel is proclaimed and believed. In this experience, the Spirit brings God's forgiveness to all,⁵⁴ moves people⁵⁵ to respond in faith, repentance, and obedience, and initiates the new life in Christ.
- 9.22 The new life takes shape in a community in which people⁵⁶ know that God loves and accepts them in spite of what they are. They therefore accept themselves and love others, knowing that no one⁵⁷ has any ground on which to stand, except God's grace.
- 9.23 The new life does not release people⁵⁸ from conflict with unbelief, pride, lust, and fear. They still have⁵⁹ to struggle with disheartening difficulties and problems. Nevertheless, as they mature⁶⁰ in love and faithfulness in their⁶¹ life with Christ, they live⁶² in freedom and good cheer, bearing witness on good days and evil days, confident that the new life is pleasing to God and helpful to others.
- 9.24 The new life finds its direction in the life of Jesus, his deeds and words, his struggles against temptation, his compassion, his anger, and his willingness to suffer death. The teaching of apostles and prophets guides men and women⁶³ in living this life, and the Christian community nurtures and equips them for their ministries.
- 9.25 The members of the church are emissaries of peace and seek the good of all⁶⁴ in cooperation with powers and authorities in politics, culture, and economics. But they have to fight against pretensions and injustices when these same powers endanger human welfare. Their strength is in their confidence that God's purpose rather than human⁶⁵ schemes will finally prevail.
- 9.26 Life in Christ is life eternal. The resurrection of Jesus is the sign that God⁶⁶ will consummate the⁶⁷ work of creation and reconciliation beyond death and bring to fulfillment the new life begun in Christ.

2. The Bible

- 9.27 The one sufficient revelation of God is Jesus Christ, the Word of God incarnate, to whom the Holy Spirit bears unique and authoritative witness through the Holy Scriptures, which are received and obeyed as the word of God written. The Scriptures are not a witness among others, but the witness without parallel. The church has received the books of the Old and New Testaments as prophetic and apostolic testimony in which it hears the word of God and by which its faith and obedience are nourished and regulated.
- 9.28 The New Testament is the recorded testimony of apostles to the coming of the Messiah, Jesus of Nazareth, and the sending of the Holy Spirit to the Church. The Old Testament bears witness to God's faithfulness in his covenant with Israel and points the way to the fulfillment of God's⁶⁸ purpose in Christ. The Old Testament is indispensable to understanding the New, and is not itself fully understood without the New.
- 9.29 The Bible is to be interpreted in the light of its witness to God's work of reconciliation in Christ. The Scriptures, given under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, are nevertheless words of human beings,⁶⁹ conditioned by the language, thought forms, and literary fashions of the places and times at which they were written. They reflect views of life, history, and the cosmos which were then current. The church, therefore, has an obligation to approach the Scriptures with literary and historical understanding. As God has spoken the divine word⁷⁰ in diverse cultural situations, the church is confident that God⁷¹ will continue to speak through the Scriptures in a changing world and in every form of human culture.
- 9.30 God's word is spoken to the⁷² church today where the Scriptures are faithfully preached and attentively read in dependence on the illumination of the Holy Spirit and with readiness to receive their truth and direction.

Part II

THE MINISTRY OF RECONCILIATION

Section A. The Mission of the Church

1. Direction

9.31 To be reconciled to God is to be sent into the world as God's⁷³ reconciling community. This community, the church universal, is entrusted with God's message of reconciliation and shares God's⁷⁴ labor of healing the enmities which separate people⁷⁵ from God and from each other. Christ has called the church to this mission and given it the gift of the Holy Spirit. The church maintains continuity with the apostles and with Israel by faithful obedience to his call.

9.32 The life, death, resurrection, and promised coming of Jesus Christ has set the pattern for the church's mission. His human life⁷⁶ involves the church in the common life of all people.⁷⁷ His service to men and women⁷⁸ commits the church to work for every form of human well-being. His suffering makes the church sensitive to all human suffering⁷⁹ so that it sees the face of Christ in the faces of persons⁸⁰ in every kind of need. His crucifixion discloses to the church God's judgment on the inhumanity that marks human relations,⁸¹ and the awful consequences of the church's⁸² own complicity in injustice. In the power of the risen Christ and the hope of his coming, the church sees the promise of God's renewal of human⁸³ life in society and of God's victory over all wrong.

9.33 The church follows this pattern in the form of its life and in the method of its action. So to live and serve is to confess Christ as Lord.

2. Forms and Order

9.34 The institutions of the people of God change and vary as their mission requires in different times and places. The unity of the church is compatible with a wide variety of forms, but it is hidden and distorted when variant forms are allowed to harden into sectarian divisions, exclusive denominations, and rival factions.

9.35 Wherever the church exists, its members are both gathered in corporate life and dispersed in society for the sake of mission in the world.

- 9.36 The church gathers to praise God, to hear God's word for humankind,⁸⁴ to baptize and to join in the Lord's Supper, to pray for and present the world to God⁸⁵ in worship, to enjoy fellowship, to receive instruction, strength, and comfort, to order and organize its own corporate life, to be tested, renewed, and reformed, and to speak and act in the world's affairs as may be appropriate to the needs of the time.
- 9.37 The church disperses to serve God wherever its members are, at work or play, in private or in the life of society. Their prayer and Bible study are part of the church's worship and theological reflection. Their witness is the church's evangelism. Their daily action in the world is the church in mission to the world. The quality of their relation with other persons is the measure of the church's fidelity.
- 9.38 Each member is the church in the world, endowed by the Spirit with some gift of ministry and is responsible for the integrity of his or her⁸⁶ witness in each⁸⁷ particular situation. Each member⁸⁸ is entitled to the guidance and support of the Christian community and is subject to its advice and correction. In turn, each member, in her or his⁸⁹ own competence, helps to guide the church.
- 9.39 In recognition of special gifts of the Spirit and for the ordering of its life as a community, the church calls, trains, and authorizes certain members for leadership and oversight. The persons qualified for these duties in accordance with the polity of the church are set apart by ordination or other appropriate act and thus made responsible for their special ministries.
- 9.40 The church thus orders its life as an institution with a constitution, government, officers, finances, and administrative rules. These are instruments of mission, not ends in themselves. Different orders have served the gospel, and none can claim exclusive validity. A presbyterian polity recognizes the responsibility of all members for ministry and maintains the organic relation of all congregations in the church. It seeks to protect the church from exploitation by ecclesiastical or secular power and ambition. Every church order must be open to such reformation as may be required to make it a more effective instrument of the mission of reconciliation.

3. Revelation and Religion

9.41 The church in its mission encounters other religions⁹⁰ and in that encounter becomes conscious of its own human character as a religion. God's revelation to Israel, expressed within Semitic culture, gave rise to the religion of the Hebrew people. God's revelation in Jesus Christ called forth the response of Jews and Greeks and came to expression within Judaism and Hellenism as the Christian religion. The Christian religion, as distinct from God's self-revelation,⁹¹ has been shaped throughout its history by the cultural forms of its environment.

9.42 Christians find⁹² parallels between other religions and their own and must approach all religions with openness and respect. Repeatedly God has used the insight of non-Christians to challenge the church to renewal. But the reconciling word of the gospel is God's judgment upon all forms of religion, including the Christian. The gift of God in Christ is for all.⁹⁴ The church, therefore, is commissioned to carry the gospel to all⁹⁵ whatever their religion may be and even when they profess none.

4. Reconciliation in Society

9.43 In each time and place, there are particular problems and crises through which God calls the church to act. The church, guided by the Spirit, humbled by its own complicity and instructed by all attainable knowledge, seeks to discern the will of God and learn how to obey in these concrete situations. The following are particularly urgent at the present time.

9.44 a. God has created the peoples of the earth to be one universal family. In his reconciling love, God⁹⁶ overcomes the barriers between sisters and brothers⁹⁷ and breaks down every form of discrimination based on racial or ethnic difference, real or imaginary. The church is called to bring all people⁹⁸ to receive and uphold one another as persons in all relationships of life: in employment, housing, education, leisure, marriage, family, church, and the exercise of political rights. Therefore, the church labors for the abolition of all racial discrimination and ministers to those injured by it. Congregations, individuals, or groups of Christians who exclude, dominate, or patronize others,⁹⁹ however subtly, resist the Spirit of God and bring contempt on the faith which they profess.

9.45 b. God's reconciliation in Jesus Christ is the ground of the peace, justice, and freedom among nations which all powers of government are called to serve and defend. The church, in its own life, is called to practice the forgiveness of enemies and to commend to the nations as practical politics the search for cooperation and peace. This search requires that the nations pursue fresh and responsible relations across every line of conflict, even at risk to national security, to reduce areas of strife and to broaden international understanding. Reconciliation among nations becomes peculiarly urgent as countries develop nuclear, chemical, and biological weapons, diverting human power¹⁰⁰ and resources from constructive uses and risking the annihilation of humankind.¹⁰¹ Although nations may serve God's purposes in history, the church which identifies the sovereignty of any one nation or any one way of life with the cause of God denies the Lordship of Christ and betrays its calling.

9.46 c. The reconciliation of humankind¹⁰² through Jesus Christ makes it plain that enslaving poverty in a world of abundance is an intolerable violation of God's good creation. Because Jesus identified himself with the needy and exploited, the cause of the world's poor is the cause of his disciples. The church cannot condone poverty, whether it is the product of unjust social structures, exploitation of the defenseless, lack of national resources, absence of technological understanding, or rapid expansion of populations. The church calls all people to use their¹⁰³ abilities, their¹⁰⁴ possessions, and the fruits of technology as gifts entrusted to them¹⁰⁵ by God for the maintenance of their families¹⁰⁶ and the advancement of the common welfare. It encourages those forces in human society that raise¹⁰⁷ hopes for better conditions and provide people¹⁰⁸ with opportunity for a decent living. A church that is indifferent to poverty, or evades responsibility in economic affairs, or is open to one social class only, or expects gratitude for its beneficence makes a mockery of reconciliation and offers no acceptable worship to God.

9.47 d. The relationship between man and woman exemplifies in a basic way God's ordering of the interpersonal life for which God¹⁰⁹ created humankind.¹¹⁰ Anarchy in sexual relationships is a symptom of alienation from God, neighbors, and self.¹¹¹ Perennial¹¹² confusion about the meaning of sex has been aggravated in our day by the availability of new means for

birth control and the treatment of infection, by the pressures of urbanization, by the exploitation of sexual symbols in mass communication, and by world overpopulation. The church, as the household of God, is called to lead people¹¹³ out of this alienation into the responsible freedom of the new life in Christ. Reconciled to God, people have¹¹⁴ joy in and respect for their¹¹⁵ own humanity and that of other persons; a man and woman are enabled to marry, to commit themselves to a mutually shared life, and to respond to each other in sensitive and lifelong concern; parents receive the grace to care for children in love and to nurture their individuality. The church comes under the judgment of God and invites rejection by society¹¹⁶ when it fails to lead men and women into the full meaning of life together, or withholds the compassion of Christ from those caught in the moral confusion of our time.

Section B. The Equipment of the Church

9.48 Jesus Christ has given the church preaching and teaching, praise and prayer, and Baptism and the Lord's Supper as means of fulfilling its service of God among all people.¹¹⁷ These gifts remain, but the church is obliged to change the forms of its service in ways appropriate to different generations and cultures.

1. Preaching and Teaching

9.49 God instructs the¹¹⁸ church and equips it for mission through preaching and teaching. By these, when they are carried on in fidelity to the Scriptures and dependence upon the Holy Spirit, the people hear the word of God and accept and follow Christ. The message is addressed to men and women¹¹⁹ in particular situations. Therefore, effective preaching, teaching, and personal witness require disciplined study of both the Bible and the contemporary world. All acts of public worship should be conducive to people's hearing¹²⁰ of the gospel in a particular time and place and responding with fitting obedience.

2. Praise and Prayer

9.50 The church responds to the message of reconciliation in praise and prayer. In that response it commits itself afresh to its mission, experiences a deepening of faith and obedience, and bears open testimony to the gospel. Adoration of God is acknowledgment of the Creator by the creation. Confession of sin is admission of every person's¹²¹ guilt before God and of their need for God's forgiveness.¹²² Thanksgiving is rejoicing in God's goodness to all people¹²³ and in giving for the needs of

others. Petitions and intercessions are addressed to God for the continuation of divine¹²⁴ goodness, the healing of human¹²⁵ ills, and deliverance¹²⁶ from every form of oppression. The arts, especially music and architecture, contribute to the praise and prayer of a Christian congregation when they help people¹²⁷ to look beyond themselves to God and to the world which is the object of God's¹²⁸ love.

3. Baptism

9.51 By humble submission to John's baptism, Christ joined himself to men and women¹²⁹ in their need and entered upon his ministry of reconciliation in the power of the Spirit. Christian baptism marks the receiving of the same Spirit by all his people. Baptism with water represents not only cleansing from sin, but a dying with Christ and a joyful rising with him to new life. It commits all Christians to die each day to sin and to live for righteousness. In baptism, the church celebrates the renewal of the covenant with which God has bound us to God's very self.¹³⁰ By baptism, individuals are publicly received into the church to share in its life and ministry, and the church becomes responsible for their training and support in Christian discipleship. When those baptized are infants, the congregation, as well as the parents, has a special obligation to nurture them in the Christian life, leading them to make, by a public profession, a personal response to the love of God shown forth in their baptism.

4. The Lord's Supper

9.52 The Lord's Supper is a celebration of the reconciliation of people¹³¹ with God and with one another, in which they joyfully eat and drink together at the table of their Savior. Jesus Christ gave his church this remembrance of his dying for sinners¹³² so that by participation in it they have communion with him and with all who shall be gathered to him. Partaking in him as they eat the bread and drink the wine in accordance with Christ's appointment, they receive from the risen and living Lord the benefits of his death and resurrection. They rejoice in the foretaste of the kingdom which he will bring to consummation at his promised coming, and go out from the Lord's Table with courage and hope for the service to which he has called them.

PART III
THE FULFILLMENT OF RECONCILIATION

- 9.53 God's redeeming work in Jesus Christ embraces the whole of human¹³³ life: social and cultural, economic and political, scientific and technological, individual and corporate. It includes the¹³⁴ natural environment as exploited and despoiled by sin. It is the will of God that the divine¹³⁵ purpose for human life shall be fulfilled under the rule of Christ and all evil be banished from creation.¹³⁶
- 9.54 Biblical visions and images of the rule of Christ, such as a heavenly city, the household of God,¹³⁷ a new heaven and earth, a marriage feast, and an unending day culminate in the image of the kingdom. The kingdom represents God's triumph over all that resists the divine will and disrupts God's creation.¹³⁸ Already God's reign is present as a ferment in the world, stirring hope in all people¹³⁹ and preparing the world to receive its ultimate judgment and redemption.
- 9.55 With an urgency born of this hope, the church applies itself to present tasks and strives for a better world. It does not identify limited progress with the kingdom of God on earth, nor does it despair in the face of disappointment and defeat. In steadfast hope, the church looks beyond all partial achievement to the final triumph of God.
- 9.56 "Now to him who by the power within us is able to do far more abundantly than all we ask or think, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus to all generations, forever and ever. Amen."¹⁴⁰

Footnotes

1. "humankind": man
2. "human": man
3. "humanity": man
4. "all people": men
5. "men and women": men
6. "everyone stands":
men stand
7. "all": men
8. "humankind": man
9. "people": men
10. "people": men
11. "Human Sin":
The Sin of Man
12. "people": men
13. "people": men
14. "each other":
their fellowmen
15. "men and women": men
16. "people": men
17. "God": his
18. "everyone falls": men fall
19. "those": the man
20. "they are": he is
21. "Against all who oppose
the divine will, God
expresses love in wrath":
Against all who oppose
him, God expresses his
love in wrath.
22. "bore": took on himself
23. "all people": men
24. "the human": man's
25. "divine": his
26. "men and women": men
27. "God's": his
28. "God's": his
29. "humankind": men
30. "God has created human
beings for": God has creat-
ed man in
31. "they": man
32. "God": He
33. "God has endowed
humans with capacities to
make the world serve their
needs and to enjoy its
good things.": He has
endowed man with capaci-
ties to make the world
serve his needs and to
enjoy its good things.
34. "People are": Man is
35. "life": his life
36. "their": his
37. "love": his love
38. "all humankind":
all mankind
39. "God": he
40. "a": his
41. "God": he
42. "with judgment":
with his judgments
43. "covenant": his cause
44. "humanity": mankind
45. "human life": man
46. "people": men
47. "The Spirit": He
48. "people": them
49. "the Spirit": he
50. "people": them
51. "all": men
52. "humankind": mankind
53. "women and men": men
54. "all": men
55. "people": them
56. "people": men
57. "no one": no man
58. "people": man
59. "They still have":
He still has
60. "they mature": he matures
61. "their": his
62. "they live": he lives
63. "men and women": men

64. "all": men
65. "human": man's
66. "the sign that God":
God's sign that he
67. "the": his
68. "God's": his
69. "human beings": men
70. "God has spoken the
divine word": God has
spoken his word
71. "God": he
72. "the": his
73. "God": his
74. "God's": his
75. "people": men
76. "His human life":
His life as man
77. "all people": men
78. "men and woman": men
79. "human suffering": all the
sufferings of man
80. "persons": men
81. "the inhumanity that
marks human relations":
man's inhumanity to man
82. "the church's": its
83. "human": man's
84. "humankind": mankind
85. "God": him
86. "his or her": his
87. "each": his
88. "each member": he
89. "In turn, each member,
in her or his": He, in turn,
in his
90. "other religions":
the religions of men
91. "God's self-revelation":
God's revelation of himself
92. "Christians find":
The Christian finds
93. "their": his
94. "all": men
95. "": men
96. "God": he
97. "sisters and brothers":
brothers
98. "all people": men
99. "others": their fellow men
100. "human power and
resources": their manpow-
er and resources
101. "of humankind":
of mankind
102. "humankind": man
103. "all people to use their":
everyman to use his
104. "their": his
105. "them": him
106. "of their families":
of his family
107. "": men's
108. "people": them
109. "he": God
110. "humankind": mankind
111. "Anarchy in sexual rela-
tionships is a symptom of
alienation from God,
neighbors, and self.":
Anarchy in sexual relation-
ships is a symptom of
man's alienation from
God, his neighbor, and
himself.
112. "Perennial":
Man's perennial
113. "people": men
114. "people have":
each person has
115. "their": his
116. "by society": by men
117. "all people": men
118. "the": his
119. "Men and women": men
120. "people's": men's
121. "every person's": all men's
122. "God's forgiveness":
his forgiveness
123. "people": men
124. "divine": his

125. "human": men's
126. "deliverance":
their deliverance
127. "people": men
128. "God's": his
129. "to men and women":
to men
130. "God has bound us to
God's very self.": God
has bound his people
to himself
131. "people": men
132. "sinners": sinful men
133. "human": man's
134. "the": man's
135. "the divine": his
136. "creation": his creation
137. "the household of God":
a father's house
138. "The kingdom represents
God's triumph over all
that resists the divine
will and disrupts God's
creation.": The kingdom
represents the triumph
of God over all that resists
his will and disrupts his
creation.
139. "all people": men
140. (Eph. 3:20, NRSV text)

THE CONFESSION OF 1967
Selections for Use in Worship

Confession of Sin

Announcement of the gospel

In Jesus Christ, God was reconciling the world to himself.
The reconciling act of God in Christ
exposes the evil in us as sin in the sight of God.
In sin, we claim mastery of our own lives,
turn against God and neighbors,
and become exploiters and despoilers of the world
In Jesus Christ, God was reconciling the world to himself.

Prayer of Confession . . .

Declaration of pardon and new life

Hear the good news:
God was in Christ, reconciling the world to himself.
The risen Christ is the savior of all.
All who are joined to Christ by faith
are set right with God
and commissioned to serve as Christ's reconciling community.
[9.07, 12, 10]

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Introduction to the Reading of Scripture

The one sufficient revelation of God is Jesus Christ,
the Word of God incarnate,
to whom the Holy Spirit bears unique and authoritative witness
through the Holy Scriptures,
which are received and obeyed as the word of God written.
The Scriptures are not a witness among others,
but the witness without parallel,
by which our faith and obedience
are nourished and regulated.

Listen for the Word of God . . .

[9.27]

Affirmations of Faith

In Jesus Christ, God was reconciling the world to himself.
We confess that Jesus Christ is God with us,
the eternal Son of the Father,
who became human and lived among us
to fulfill the work of reconciliation.
We believe that the risen Christ is present in the church
by the power of the Holy Spirit
to continue and complete his mission.
This work of God,
the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit,
is the foundation of all we say
about God, ourselves, and the world.

[9.07]

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We believe that in Jesus of Nazareth,
true humanity was realized once for all.
Jesus, a Palestinian Jew, lived among his own people
and shared human needs, temptations, joys, and sorrows.
He expressed the love of God in word and deed
and became a brother to all kinds of sinful people.
In giving himself for them,
he took upon himself the judgment under which all people
stand convicted.
We believe that God raised him from the dead,
vindicating him as Messiah and Lord.
The victim of sin became victor,
and won the victory over sin and death for all.

[9.08]

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We acknowledge that God's sovereign love
is a mystery beyond the reach of human minds.
We ascribe to God superlatives of power, wisdom, and goodness.
But in Jesus Christ God reveals love
by showing power in the form of a servant,
wisdom in the folly of the cross,
and goodness in receiving sinful people.
The power of God's love in Christ
transforms the world
and discloses that the Redeemer is the Lord and Creator
who made all things to serve the purpose of his love.

[9.15]

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We believe that God has created the world of space and time
to be the sphere of his dealings with humankind.
In its beauty and vastness,
sublimity and awfulness,
order and disorder,
the world reflects to the eye of faith
the majesty and mystery of its Creator.
We believe that God has created us
for personal relationship in which
we may respond to the love of the Creator.
Life is a gift to be received with gratitude
and a task to be pursued with courage.

[9.16, 17]

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We believe that the reconciling work of Jesus
was the supreme crisis in the life of humankind.
His cross and resurrection become personal crisis and present hope
when the gospel is proclaimed and believed.
In this experience, the Spirit brings God's forgiveness to us,
moves us to respond in faith, repentance, and obedience,
and initiates the new life in Christ.
We believe that the new life takes shape in a community
in which we know that God loves and accepts us
in spite of what we are.
We therefore accept ourselves and love others,
knowing that no one has any ground on which to stand,
except God's grace.

[9.21, 22]

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We believe that God the Holy Spirit fulfills the work of reconciliation.
The Holy Spirit creates and renews the church
as the community in which we are reconciled to God
and to one another.
The Spirit enables us to receive forgiveness as we forgive
one another
and to enjoy the peace of God as we make peace among ourselves.
We believe that in spite of our sin,
the Holy Spirit gives us power
to become representatives of Jesus Christ
and to proclaim the good news of reconciliation to all.

[9.20]

Call to Prayer

The church responds to the gospel of reconciliation
in praise and prayer.

In our prayer, we commit ourselves afresh to Christ's mission,
experience a deepening of faith and obedience,
and bear open testimony to the gospel.

Let us pray . . .

[9.50]

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The Peace

The new life takes shape in a community
where people know that God loves and accepts us
in spite of what we are.

So we accept ourselves and love others,
knowing that no one has any ground on which to stand,
except God's grace.

The peace of Christ be with you . . .

[9.22]

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Offering

The reconciliation of humankind through Jesus Christ
makes it plain that enslaving poverty in a world of abundance
is an intolerable violation of God's good creation.
Because Jesus identified with the needy and exploited,
the cause of the world's poor is the cause of his disciples.
We are called to use our abilities, our possessions,
and the fruits of technology
as gifts entrusted to us
for the maintenance of God's family
and the advancement of the common welfare.

Let us share gifts . . .

[9.46]

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Charge

To be reconciled to God
is to be sent into the world as God's reconciling community.
We are entrusted with God's message of reconciliation,
sharing the labor of healing enmities
that separate people from God and from each other.
Christ has called us to this mission
and given us the gift of the Holy Spirit.

[9.31]