

This We Believe

God spoke in the creation.

We look around us at awesome mountains and rivers and believe that this beauty is the signature of a Creator. We believe that God spoke this wondrous world into existence. We believe that God created humankind to be live in loving relationship with God. From the beginning God spoke with us and we spoke back in love and obedience. But then, in pride, we cut the conversation off by disobeying God. Ever since the fall, God has been working to re-establish communication.

God spoke to humanity more clearly in the Son of God, Jesus Christ.

To make a long story short, God made the ultimate attempt at reconciliation some 2000 years ago. God came to be with us in the person of the Son of God, Jesus Christ. God's word was fully and perfectly expressed in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus, the Son of God. Eyewitnesses recorded this event in our New Testament. God came and spoke to those people as the risen Lord Jesus Christ. That appearance transformed them, creating the church.

When we speak of God's word, we mean the self-communication of God in Jesus Christ. We accept the Christian Scriptures as authentic witnesses to that divine communication. We call ourselves "Reformed," which means that we accept a good number of changes in religious practices as the centuries go by. Our congregation has been together since 1891 and we have seen many practices change along with the changing culture. That's OK with us. But our focus on the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ must never change. Believing in him as the Son of God is our salvation. Having faith in him saves us from sin and the power of death. The life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ are of first importance to us.

God speaks the word to us today.

The truth that God expressed in the Son of God must be communicated to people today. We must work to keep this event in our collective memory. Aware of how easily the memory can slip away from us, we come together in congregations to help each other stay in the faith. When we come together, the reading of Scripture is central. We open the Bible and read, trusting that the Holy Spirit will show us everything that we need to have fullness of life now and in eternity. We don't believe we can save ourselves by obeying the commandments in the Bible. We are saved only by the grace God, through faith. We believe that Jesus Christ is present with us when we gather in his name to preach the word and administer the two sacraments—Baptism and Holy Communion. Through the Holy Spirit, Christ communicates with us. The Holy Spirit enables us to hear and obey the word of God.

We believe that the Holy Spirit, the personal presence of Jesus Christ, is with us to help us understand the Scriptures. For that reason we encourage each other to read the Scriptures daily, as well as in our weekly gatherings. Without knowing the word of God,

how can we call our society to be subject to the principles of God's word? We see the church as a community that hears and speaks God's word.

We are very much aware that we have fallen short of the glory of God. We are sinners who constantly need to turn again to Jesus Christ. **By the grace of God we are what we are, and God's grace toward us has not been in vain.** (1 Corinthians 15: 10) While we try to live lives that are worthy of Christ, we are careful never to focus on our own glory. Our motto has for centuries been "to God alone the glory." We constantly remind each other not to worship the good things that God gives us, but to worship God alone! We encourage each other to be good stewards of the time, talents, and money with which God has entrusted us. We believe that the good things we receive actually belong to God. **"The earth is the Lord's and the fullness thereof, the world and those who dwell therein."** (Psalm 24:1)

God will speak in the final consummation.

We believe that in the fullness of time, Jesus Christ will return to earth to set up the reign of God. At that time, the dead will rise to eternal life. If we have lived this life in faithfulness to the Son of God, we believe we will share in the glory of the Holy Trinity in eternity. We live in the blessed hope of joining the communion of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit in eternity. We live each day in the present age as citizens of that realm of love. We receive God's love and are able to love God and to love one another.

There you have our guiding principal—the word of God. God spoke, first in the creation, then through the Son of God. God the Holy Spirit brings us the presence of the Son of God as we read the Scriptures. God will speak to us in eternity, communicating the love of the Holy Trinity fully in communion that has no end. This we believe!