

Testimony
A Vocabulary of Faith

OVERVIEW

How do we articulate what we believe fluently and in ways that clearly demonstrate our faith to the world? How do we live and move and have our being in ways that embody our deepest Christian commitments?

These questions guided the creation of this curriculum. Having heard from church leaders that they struggled to find accessible, affordable, engaging materials from a Reformed theological perspective, the

Presbyterian Outlook, sought a grant to fund a project that resulted in “A Vocabulary of Faith.” The team that created this content wanted to offer the church material that could be used in-person or virtually, with people long steeped in the faith and with those new to Christianity.

After energetic brainstorming sessions, lots of flipcharts and one well used dry erase board, the idea of creating a vocabulary of faith emerged.

What key concepts should be understood for discipleship to take hold and be embodied? What words and ideas do we need to remember, reclaim and rearticulate in our chapter of God’s salvation history?

The curriculum writers, in good Reformed fashion, began with God. Unit one of “A Vocabulary of Faith” explores testimony: What do we know through Scripture, tradition and experience about God? Unit one covers various attributes and actions of God, inviting participants to not only intellectually assent to these theological and biblical concepts, but seek to live them in ways that demonstrate the liberating love and grace of Jesus Christ.

“A Vocabulary of Faith” assumes that faith formation is lifelong. Disciples always have more to learn and God is always doing a new thing.

The creators’ hope is that each unit of “A Vocabulary of Faith” spurs conversation, invites real-life questions and encourages disciples of Jesus Christ to remember, reclaim and rearticulate what they believe about who God is and who in turn they are, all to the end of glorifying God and embodying the love and grace of Jesus Christ in the world.

Such dynamic faith cannot be found apart from authentic, relational, trusting, intimate communities that offer the space to share openly, care deeply, foster accountability and welcome radically. The Presbyterian Outlook prayerfully hopes that with the help of the Holy Spirit “A Vocabulary of Faith” both nurtures and creates such sacred space.

CORE VALUES

- » We can live into our baptismal vows.
 - » We can learn to live our theological witness.
 - » We live our best theological lives.
 - » We manifest the transformational nature of our baptism by living into its radical reality.
 - » We can intentionally decenter whiteness, achievement-based worth and other death-dealing practices and attitudes.
 - » We value, live into and intentionally build
 - authentic,*
 - relational,*
 - trusting,*
 - intimate*
 - communities*
- so that the stories we tell ourselves and our children –
about who God is and who we are -
shape our embodied faith in ways that
reflect the life-giving liberation of God’s best intention
for all who are created in the Divine Image.

Video Instructions

Each week we will watch a short video. If you wish to watch them before or after the class, here is the information:

The video supplements for each session are available on the Outlook website using the link and password below.

pres-outlook.org/TestimonyVideos

password: TestimonyVideo20

(password is case sensitive with no space)

TESTIMONY

A VOCABULARY OF FAITH

WHO IS GOD

ALMIGHTY?

Week One

TEACHING PROPOSITION

**Through Scripture's testimony to God as Creator,
Almighty, Sovereign and Triune, we come to
understand God's powerful choice of providential
care and loving kindness, so that we can live in
confident and assured faith.**

Scriptures for Week One

Group One

Genesis 1:1-3

In the beginning when God created* the heavens and the earth, the earth was a formless void and darkness covered the face of the deep, while a wind from God* swept over the face of the waters. Then God said, 'Let there be light'; and there was light.

Genesis 9:8-17

Then God said to Noah and to his sons with him, "As for me, I am establishing my covenant with you and your descendants after you, and with every living creature that is with you, the birds, the domestic animals, and every animal of the earth with you, as many as came out of the ark. I establish my covenant with you, that never again shall all flesh be cut off by the waters of a flood, and never again shall there be a flood to destroy the earth." God said, "This is the sign of the covenant that I make between me and you and every living creature that is with you, for all future generations: I have set my bow in the clouds, and it shall be a sign of the covenant between me and the earth. When I bring clouds over the earth and the bow is seen in the clouds, I will remember my covenant that is between me and you and every living creature of all flesh; and the waters shall never again become a flood to destroy all flesh.

When the bow is in the clouds, I will see it and remember the everlasting covenant between God and every living creature of all flesh that is on the earth." God said to Noah, "This is the sign of the covenant that I have established between me and all flesh that is on the earth."

Group Two

Genesis 17:1-2

When Abram was ninety-nine years old, the LORD appeared to Abram, and said to him, 'I am God Almighty;* walk before me, and be blameless. And I will make my covenant between me and you, and will make you exceedingly numerous.'

Exodus 6:1-8

Then the LORD said to Moses, 'Now you shall see what I will do to Pharaoh: Indeed, by a mighty hand he will let them go; by a mighty hand he will drive them out of his land.' God also spoke to Moses and said to him: 'I am the LORD. I appeared to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob as God Almighty,* but by my name "The LORD"* I did not make myself known to them. I also established my covenant with them, to give them the land of Canaan, the land in which they resided as aliens. I have also heard the groaning of the Israelites, whom the Egyptians are holding as slaves, and I have remembered my covenant. Say therefore to the Israelites, "I am the LORD, and I will free you from the burdens of the Egyptians and deliver you from slavery to them. I will redeem you with an outstretched arm and with mighty acts of judgement. I will take you as my people, and I will be your God. You shall know that I am the LORD your God, who has freed you from the burdens of the Egyptians. I will bring you into the land that I swore to give to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; I will give it to you for possession. I am the LORD.'"'

Group Three

Job 42:1-6

Then Job answered the LORD: 'I know that you can do all things, and that no purpose of yours can be thwarted.

"Who is this that hides counsel without knowledge?"

Therefore I have uttered what I did not understand, things too wonderful for me, which I did not know.

"Hear, and I will speak; I will question you, and you declare to me."

I had heard of you by the hearing of the ear, but now my eye sees you; therefore I despise myself, and repent in dust and ashes.'

Romans 8:18-30

I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory about to be revealed to us. For the creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the children of God; for the creation was subjected to futility, not of its own will but by the will of the one who subjected it, in hope that the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to decay and will obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God. We know that the whole creation has been groaning in labor pains until now; and not only the creation, but we ourselves, who have the first fruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly while we wait for adoption, the redemption of our bodies. For in* hope we were saved. Now hope that is seen is not hope. For who hopes* for what is seen? But if we hope for what we do not see, we wait for it with patience.

Likewise the Spirit helps us in our weakness; for we do not know how to pray as we ought, but that very Spirit intercedes* with sighs too deep for words. And God,* who searches the heart, knows what is the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit* intercedes for the saints according to the will of God.*

We know that all things work together for good* for those who love God, who are called according to his purpose. For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, in order that he might be the firstborn within a large family.* And those whom he predestined he also called; and those whom he called he also justified; and those whom he justified he also glorified.

Group Four

2 Corinthians 3:14

But their minds were hardened. Indeed, to this very day, when they hear the reading of the old covenant, that same veil is still there, since only in Christ is it set aside.

Matthew 3:16-17

And when Jesus had been baptized, just as he came up from the water, suddenly the heavens were opened to him and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and alighting on him. And a voice from heaven said, 'This is my Son, the Beloved,* with whom I am well pleased.'

Matthew 28:19

Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit,

BOOK OF CONFESSION GROUP

The Nicene Creed

We believe in one God,
the Father, the Almighty,
maker of heaven and earth,
of all that is,
seen and unseen.

We believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ,
the only Son of God,
eternally begotten of the Father,
God from God, Light from Light,
true God from true God,
begotten, not made,
of one Being with the Father;
through him all things were made.

For us and for our salvation
he came down from heaven,
was incarnate of the Holy Spirit and the Virgin Mary
and became truly human.

For our sake he was crucified under Pontius Pilate;
he suffered death and was buried.

On the third day he rose again
in accordance with the Scriptures;
he ascended into heaven
and is seated at the right hand of the Father.

He will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead,

and his kingdom will have no end.

We believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life,
who proceeds from the Father and the Son,
who with the Father and the Son is worshiped and glorified,
who has spoken through the prophets.

We believe in one holy catholic and apostolic Church.

We acknowledge one baptism for the forgiveness of sins.

We look for the resurrection of the dead,
and the life of the world to come. Amen.

The Scots Confession

Chapter 1

We confess and acknowledge one God alone, to whom alone we must cleave, whom alone we must serve, whom only we must worship, and in whom alone we put our trust. Who is eternal, infinite, immeasurable, incomprehensible, omnipotent, invisible; one in substance and yet distinct in three persons, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost. By whom we confess and believe all things in heaven and earth, visible and invisible, to have been created, to be retained in their being, and to be ruled and guided by his inscrutable providence for such end as his eternal wisdom, goodness, and justice have appointed, and to the manifestation of his own glory.

A Brief Statement of Faith

THE STATEMENT

- 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.
- 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.
- 19 Unjustly condemned for blasphemy and sedition,
- 20 Jesus was crucified,
- 21 suffering the depths of human pain
- 22 and giving his life for the sins of the world.
- 23 God raised this Jesus from the dead,

24 vindicating his sinless life,
25 breaking the power of sin and evil,
26 delivering us from death to life eternal.
27 We trust in God,
28 whom Jesus called Abba, Father.
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.
41 In everlasting love,
42 the God of Abraham and Sarah chose a covenant people
43 to bless all families of the earth.
44 Hearing their cry,
45 God delivered the children of Israel
46 from the house of bondage.
47 Loving us still,
48 God makes us heirs with Christ of the covenant.
49 Like a mother who will not forsake her nursing child,

50 like a father who runs to welcome the prodigal home,
51 God is faithful still.
52 We trust in God the Holy Spirit
53 everywhere the giver and renewer of life.
54 The Spirit justifies us by grace through faith,
55 sets us free to accept ourselves and to love God and neighbor,
56 and binds us together with all believers
57 in the one body of Christ, the Church.
58 The same Spirit
59 who inspired the prophets and apostles
60 rules our faith and life in Christ through Scripture,
61 engages us through the Word proclaimed,
62 claims us in the waters of baptism,
63 feeds us with the bread of life and the cup of salvation,
64 and calls women and men to all ministries of the Church.
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,
75 even as we watch for God's new heaven and new earth,

76 praying, "Come, Lord Jesus!"

77 With believers in every time and place,

78 we rejoice that nothing in life or in death

79 can separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

80 Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit. Amen.