

*The Central Washington Presbytery on the Trinity and the Person of Jesus Christ*

**We worship the one only living and true God who is revealed in the Bible and who is the source of all life, glory, goodness, and blessedness.**

***Trinity.* With the holy catholic church in all ages, we confess the mystery of the holy Trinity—that there is one God alone, infinite and eternal, Creator of all things, the greatest good, who is one in essence or nature, yet who exists in a plurality of three distinct persons—the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.**

**Jesus Christ is fully God and fully human. In the person of Jesus of Nazareth, the eternal Son of God uniquely entered human history and became a real human being. He is truly the Word of God (John 1:1-3)—that is, the perfect and culminating expression of God’s mind and heart, of God’s will and character—present in the intimate fellowship of the Holy Trinity from eternity and fully engaged with the Father in the work of creation and redemption.**

**Becoming human, Jesus was “all of God in a human body” (Colossians 1:19) and “God with us” (Matthew 1:23)—a living tabernacle of God’s holy presence, “full of grace and truth” (John 1:14-18). His divine-human identity is corroborated by the true witness of scripture—in his divine conception and virgin birth, in God’s own**

**testimony concerning Jesus, in Jesus’ supernatural works of healing and deliverance, in his obedience to the point of sacrificial death, and in his bodily resurrection from the dead, ascension, and exaltation. He is now Lord over everything in creation.**

**The early church in the creeds of Nicea and Chalcedon accurately interpreted and expressed the apostolic testimony concerning Jesus—fully God and fully human. The significance of this is: in Christ we are dealing with God himself; in Christ we have a human being who truly represents us.**

**Jesus Christ is God’s only Mediator between God and humankind and God’s unique agent for the salvation of the world. He is also the perfect expression of what humanity was designed to be. In his complete obedience, he became the representative Human Being, a second Adam, modeling for us human life and offering to God on our behalf human life that is rightly in God’s image—reflecting God’s glory in a wholly submitted life of steadfast love and righteousness.**

**This same Lord Jesus Christ, the incarnate Son of God, as attested in scripture, is to be the center of the Christian Church’s proclamation, worship, discipleship, and mission. As we eagerly and prayerfully anticipate that “he will come again to judge the living and the dead” and to establish God’s righteous kingdom in fullness and perfection, we say, “Come Lord Jesus!” (Revelation 22:20)**

## *The PC USA on the Trinity and the Person of Jesus Christ*

### *The Person of Jesus Christ*

These were rejected as essential tenets in 1927 in order to embrace a “number of different theories” regarding the person of Jesus:

- Jesus’ Virgin Birth
- Jesus’ miracles
- Jesus’ bodily resurrection
- Jesus’ imminent return

### *A statement of the issue from Beaver-Butler Presbytery’s Open Declaration concerning errors of the 218<sup>th</sup> General Assembly (2008):*

The most profound errors of this Church Council are biblical. While a range of valid methods and approaches to biblical interpretation is practiced, this range must be defined confessionally, and it must be faithful to a Reformed theological framework. We acknowledge and confess that we look to Jesus Christ as the Word of God Living, yet we also affirm, with the Confession of 1967, that Scripture is the Word of God Written. Faulty interpretation and skewed exegesis of Scripture gave rise to two unbiblical actions of the General Assembly. These were (1) the recommendation encouraging Presbyterians to seek worship opportunities with Jews and Muslims, and (2) the approval of a study guide for the previously received Trinity paper.

1. While specific language that Muslims, Jews, and Christians worship “a common God” was removed from the final resolution, the recommendation encouraging common worship between Jews, Muslims and ourselves was based on the assumption of the removed language. This practical recommendation remained unchanged in final form. This recommendation is not congruent with the Scriptural witness to the Divinity and the univocal Lordship of Jesus Christ, or of the full divinity and co-equality of Christ, the Holy Spirit, and the Father within the Godhead. We worship the thrice-holy, Triune God. Because of their theology, neither Muslims nor Jews can participate in worshiping the Triune God. So, too, we betray our faith when we deny the Divinity and presence of Christ and the Holy Spirit in any worship context. This recommendation is based on a profound misrepresentation of the Trinity. Therefore we cannot sponsor worship together and should not be encouraged to do so.
2. Further, the argument has been made and advanced that the Study Paper on the Trinity utilizes only Scriptural language and imagery for the discussion of the Deity. Although this is true, the method employed continuously throughout this paper routinely confuses the natures of simile and metaphor to such a degree that it effectively confuses what we think we know about the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. In a great many places it skirts perilously close to propounding either pantheistic (God is everything) or panentheistic (God is in everything) views of God.
3. One may argue, and many have, that studies of such important topics as the Trinity risk “pushing the envelope” theologically and philosophically, but that such risks must be taken as we delve deeply into the Doctrine of God. We agree that we should study deeply, but we also believe that we must mine with care the great treasure-filled depths of God’s Word. We must always pay primary attention to contexts, historical situations and literary genres of the texts we study. Our goal should always and only be to reflect the

truth contained therein, and never to speculatively invent or intuit material that is at best tangentially contained. To do so we risk becoming false guides.

***Excerpts from a PC USA defense of The Trinity; God's Love Overflowing:***

As for appropriate ways of speaking of the triune God, the Report strongly and repeatedly affirms the traditional trinitarian designations of Father, Son, and Spirit. According to the Report, "The language of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, rooted in Scripture and creed, remains an indispensable anchor for our efforts to speak faithfully of God" (331-332). On at least a dozen occasions, the Report employs the language of Father, Son, and Spirit, and it upholds the use of this language in baptismal practice in concert with the church catholic. Cut loose from this anchor, "the historical faith of the one, holy, catholic, and apostolic church risks being set adrift" (333-335). Thus in venturing other ways of speaking of the reality and activity of the triune God, we must always be guided by the words of Scripture and creed that speak of God as Father, Son, and Spirit" (356-357). *Yet while privileged, these designations of the triune persons do not preclude other supplementary designations that seek to bring out some particular aspect of the infinite riches of the triune life and activity toward us. With the anchor of the language of Father, Son, and Spirit in place, "we are liberated to amplify and expand upon the ways of naming the triune God" (336-337). We are free to speak of "God, the Word of God, and the Spirit of God," of "God the Speaker, God the Word Enfleshed, and God the enlivening Breath," of "God the Lover, God the Beloved, and God the Love that binds Lover and Beloved," of "God from whom, God through whom, and God in whom, are all things," of "God the compassionate mother, God the beloved child, and God the life-giving womb."*

***Excerpts from The Trinity; God's Love Overflowing:***

At the same time, we should not insist on the exclusive use of the traditional trinitarian names, lest we quench the Spirit and even foster idolatry. Such a view would insufficiently acknowledge the divine mystery, would neglect the freedom of God's children to glorify God imaginatively with all our hearts and minds, and would diminish the joy of knowing God ever more fully.

In this act of gift sharing, we recognize the Trinity as  
Giver, Gift, and Giving;  
Truth, Goodness, and Beauty;  
Sun, Light, and Burning Ray.

In praising the triune God we use biblical language, both classic –

- Father, Son, and Holy Ghost,

and surprising –

- Mother, Child, and Womb.

We may use words that speaks of the inner relations of the Godhead –

- Lover, Beloved, Love,

and those that speak of the loving activity of the Three among us –

- Creator, Savior, Sanctifier,
- Rock, Redeemer, Friend,
- King of Glory, Prince of Peace, Spirit of Love.
- rainbow of promise, ark of salvation, dove of peace

***Overture O-12 to the 218<sup>th</sup> General Assembly, section 4, recommendation 1 as amended:***

- To encourage congregations of these faiths (Islam, Judaism and Christianity) to celebrate religious holidays together, setting aside days of worship during which there can be congregational suppers, and dialogue groups.

FPCW's Assessment of the Trinity Paper

The one aspect that this report fails to acknowledge is the following:

### THE THIRD COMMANDMENT

“You shall not misuse the name of the LORD your God, for the LORD will not hold anyone guiltless who misuses his name.” (Exodus 20:7 NIV)

We interpret this to mean that we do not have the right to envision new names or formulas for the Godhead which have not specifically been revealed by God Himself.

The 218<sup>th</sup> General Assembly only received this document and did not adopt it. However, the document has nonetheless been published and distributed to our congregations with a study guide by the PC USA Office of Theology and Worship at the direction of our General Assembly.

We now have a document which has been received by our General Assembly, prepared by our Office of Theology and Worship, a study guide prepared for it, a publishing and distribution plan of it to all of our congregations. In our estimation, our own Office of Theology and Worship is now promoting materials that run contrary to the Third Commandment and attempt to reinvent the Godhead in to something that is more to their liking. Any violation of the Third Commandment has classically been referred to as blasphemy.

FPCW's Assessment of the current movement within the PC USA toward universalism and universal Salvationism:

1. We believe that Scripture clearly teaches that God has uniquely revealed Himself as Father, Son and Holy Spirit.
2. We believe that Scripture clearly teaches that Jesus is God's only provision for salvation.
3. We believe that the Scripture clearly teaches that it is through faith alone in Jesus Christ alone that anyone may be saved.

Because of these teachings of Scripture we are left to conclude the following:

1. This self-revelation of God as Trinity in the Scriptures is unique. In this we are united with all Christians across many denominational lines, on all continents and throughout the history of the Church. No other religious system conceives of God in this way. To say then that we worship the same God as others who happen to worship a god but understand that god completely differently from us is inaccurate and idolatrous. This does not mean that we cannot learn from and dialogue about religious differences with people of other faiths. It does mean that we embrace God, as much as He has enabled us to do by His grace alone, as He has revealed Himself.
2. God's unique revelation in Jesus Christ teaches us that all of humanity will not be saved. God will determine who is and is not based on faith alone in His Son Jesus Christ alone. We cannot embrace a theology that implies that all are saved or that all are saved in Jesus Christ. The Scriptures indicate that it is the grace of God alone by faith alone in Jesus

Christ alone that saves anyone. By saying this, we do not place ourselves in the judgment seat of determining who is saved and who is not. This privilege belongs to God alone. We simply are explaining the Bible as it defines the means and extent of salvation that God Himself has revealed and affirming it to be true.

3. Since God has provided salvation only in Jesus Christ, this motivates our witness in the world. Indeed, if we were to embrace any other theology, any reason for mission would evaporate as mission is proclaiming the Good News of Jesus Christ with the world. This is the God-ordained means of reaching the lost. We seek to simply and humbly affirm that this truth is taught by the Scriptures.

### ***The Official Stance of First Presbyterian Church of Wenatchee***

#### ***The FPCW Biblical Beliefs Statement on the Trinity***

In one Triune God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit (I Peter 1:2; Matthew 28:19). Pastors, elders, deacons & staff shall believe that the Persons of the God-head are co-equal in power and glory, identical in their essential nature, attributes and perfections and that they are co-eternal (Genesis 1:2; John 17:5). In His essential nature God is spirit as opposed to material (John 4:24); as to His essential attributes God is absolutely holy, embracing the sum of all moral perfections (I Peter 1:16); as to His essential character.

#### ***The FPCW Biblical Beliefs Statement on Jesus***

That Jesus Christ, "being the eternal Son of God, became man" (Hebrews 2:16; John 1:14; Luke 1:35); and that He continues to be fully God & fully man, one glorified Person in two natures forever (John 1:14; Romans 9:5; Colossians 2:9; Hebrews 13:8); That Jesus died upon the cross a vicarious substitutionary death, thereby making atonement for the sin of the world (Jn 1:29). Pastor, elders, deacons & staff shall believe that He is the only Redeemer apart from Whom there is no salvation (Acts 4:12; Jn 14:6); that His atonement is sufficient for the sins of all the world (Heb. 7:25; I Jn 2:2), & efficient for all who believe (Jn 3:16,36; Is 45:22); & justification is by grace through faith alone in Jesus only (Romans 3:21-28). That He bodily arose from the dead, that He ascended into Heaven, that there in His state of glorification He is now the interceding High Priest, intercessor, and Advocate for all believers (I Cor. 15:20; Luke 24; Acts 1:3; Heb. 7:25, 4:15, 2:17; I John 2:1).