

CONCERNING THE CHURCH

A. PBCC STATEMENT

The Church is the body of Christ on earth, and consists of all who have been regenerated by God. This body finds expression as local churches, operating under the direction of Jesus Christ as Lord and Head of His body, through elders, pastor-teachers, and evangelists, who equip the saints for the work of the ministry. All believers are responsible to utilize their spiritual gifts for the common good. All believers are His witnesses in the world and are to further the task of making disciples of all nations. All believers are to remember the sacrifice of the Lord on their behalf by observing the Lord's Supper until His return.

[Matt 28:18-20; Rom 5:10; 8:16-17; 12:3-8; 1 Cor 11:23-34; 12; Eph 4:11-12; 1 Pet 2:4-5, 9-10; 4:10-11]

¹⁸And Jesus came and said to them, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me.¹⁹Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit,²⁰teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age." (Matt 28:18-20)

For if while we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, now that we are reconciled, shall we be saved by his life. (Rom 5:10)

¹⁶The Spirit himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God,¹⁷and if children, then heirs—heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, provided we suffer with him in order that we may also be glorified with him. (Rom 8:16-17)

³For by the grace given to me I say to everyone among you not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think, but to think with sober judgment, each according to the measure of faith that God has assigned. ⁴For as in one body we have many members, and the members do not all have the same function,⁵so we, though many, are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another. ⁶Having gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, let us use them: if prophecy, in proportion to our faith; ⁷if service, in our serving; the one who teaches, in his teaching; ⁸the one who exhorts, in his exhortation; the one who contributes, in generosity; the one who leads, with zeal; the one who does acts of mercy, with cheerfulness. (Rom 12:3-8)

²³For I received from the Lord what I also delivered to you, that the Lord Jesus on the night when he was betrayed took bread,²⁴and when he had given thanks, he broke it, and said, "This is my body which is for you. Do this in remembrance of me." (1 Cor 11:23-24)

¹Now concerning spiritual gifts, brothers, I do not want you to be uninformed. ²You know that when you were pagans you were led astray to mute idols, however you were led. ³Therefore I want you to understand that no one speaking in the Spirit of God ever says "Jesus is accursed!" and no one can say "Jesus is Lord" except in the Holy Spirit. ¶ ⁴Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit; ⁵and there are varieties of service, but the same Lord; ⁶and there are varieties of activities, but it is the same God who empowers them all in everyone. ⁷To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good. ⁸To one is given through the Spirit the utterance of wisdom, and to another the utterance of knowledge according to the same Spirit, ⁹to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healing by the one Spirit, ¹⁰to another the working of miracles, to another prophecy, to another the ability to distinguish between spirits, to another various kinds of tongues, to another the interpretation of tongues. ¹¹All these are empowered by one and the same Spirit, who apportions to each one individually as he will. ¶ ¹²For just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ. ¹³For in one Spirit we were all baptized into one body—Jews or Greeks, slaves or free—and all were made to drink of one Spirit. ¶ ¹⁴For the body does not consist of one member but of many. ¹⁵If the foot should say, "Because I am not a hand, I do not belong to the body," that would not make it any less a part of the body. ¹⁶And if the ear should say, "Because I am not an eye, I do not belong to the body," that would not make it any less a part of the body. ¹⁷If the whole body were an eye, where would be the sense of hearing? If the whole body were an ear, where would be the sense of smell? ¹⁸But as it is, God arranged the members in the body, each one of them, as he chose. ¹⁹If all were a single member, where would the body be? ²⁰As it is, there are many parts, yet one body. ¶ ²¹The eye cannot say to the hand, "I have no need of you," nor again the head to the feet, "I have no need of you." ²²On the contrary, the parts of the body that seem to be weaker are indispensable, ²³and on those parts of the body that we think less honorable we bestow the greater honor, and our unpresentable parts are treated with greater modesty, ²⁴which our more presentable parts do not require. But God has so composed the body, giving greater honor to the part that lacked it, ²⁵that there may be no division in the body, but that the members may have the same care for one another. ²⁶If one member suffers, all suffer together; if one member is honored, all rejoice together. ¶ ²⁷Now you are the body of Christ and individually members of it. ²⁸And God has appointed in the church first apostles, second prophets, third teachers, then miracles, then gifts of healing, helping, administrating, and various kinds of tongues. ²⁹Are all apostles?

Are all prophets? Are all teachers? Do all work miracles? ³⁰Do all possess gifts of healing? Do all speak with tongues? Do all interpret? ³¹But earnestly desire the higher gifts. ¶ And I will show you a still more excellent way. (1 Cor 12)

¹¹And he gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the pastors and teachers, ¹²to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, (Eph 4:11-12)

⁴As you come to him, a living stone rejected by men but in the sight of God chosen and precious, ⁵you yourselves like living stones are being built up as a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ...¶ ⁹But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light. ¹⁰Once you were not a people, but now you are God's people; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy. (1 Pet 2:4-5, 9-10)

¹⁰As each has received a gift, use it to serve one another, as good stewards of God's varied grace: ¹¹whoever speaks, as one who speaks oracles of God; whoever serves, as one who serves by the strength that God supplies—in order that in everything God may be glorified through Jesus Christ. To him belong glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen. (1 Pet 4:10-11)

B. OTHER CREEDAL STATEMENTS

1. Apostles' Creed

I believe in the holy, catholic Church; the communion of saints.

2. Nicene Creed

I believe in one holy catholic and apostolic Church.

C. DISCUSSION

1. What is the Church?

Words

“church” < ME *kirke* < Gk *kyriakē (oikia)*, “Lord’s (house).”

NT Gk *ekklēsia*. This is often defined etymologically as the group that is “called out” of the world (*ek* out + *kalēō* call). But Gk *ekklēsia* refers to an assembly, a group that is summoned together, cf.:

- assembly (L *ad-* to + *simul* together)
- congregation (L *congregatio*) < *com-* together + *gregare* gather)
- synagogue < Gk *synagōgē* < *syn-* together + *agō* bring)

OT Heb *qāhāl* 123x (LXX *ekklēsia* 68x, *synagōgē* 36x). Israel gathered together.

Conclusion: the Church is the people of God the Father, the body of Christ the Son, the temple of the Holy Spirit. Though separated by time and space the members of this family are viewed as gathered before God. The Church is the colony of heaven on earth, the kingdom of God.

One holy catholic and apostolic church

- one: one in Christ despite the division of the visible church
- holy: set apart as a body
- catholic: universal
- apostolic: founded on the teaching of the apostles

The visible church and the invisible Church

Catholics maintain an identity between the visible and invisible Church. There is only one true Church, that which submits to the authority of the pope as Christ's vicar general on earth, and whose leaders are in apostolic succession.

Protestants maintain a distinction between the visible church and the invisible church:

Concerning The Church

- invisible Church: all of God's people throughout time and space (includes OT saints and the redeemed in heaven).
- visible church: local assemblies of those who profess to be God's people.

The Church triumphant and the Church militant

- Church triumphant: the saints who have persevered and emerged victorious through death and are now gathered around the throne in heaven.
- Church militant: the saints on earth, still in the fight.

2. Church leadership

- Universal leadership: The Head of the Church is Jesus Christ. It is his body of which he is the head, God's kingdom over which he is king, God's flock over which he is the shepherd. It is God who builds the Church as he brings people into Christ to be his people.
- Local leadership: Jesus Christ leads through under-shepherds, people whom he has gifted for the proper functioning of local assemblies: elders, pastor-teachers, evangelists.

Eph 4:11-12 is PBC's charter verse when it comes to the functioning of the local church:

- who does the work of the ministry? the leaders equip the people to do the work of the ministry.
- apostles, prophets: these offices have ceased.
- elders: PBCC spiritual leadership rests with the board of elders. Elders are male. They are appointed not elected: the board formally recognizes someone whom the Lord is already using as an elder. They are appointed without term. The elders seek to find not their own will but the will of the Lord; therefore, decisions of the elder board are unanimous.
- pastor-teachers: a combined office. At PBCC the pastor-teachers are not necessarily elders. Some churches (e.g. certain Presbyterian churches) distinguish between ruling elders and teaching elders.
- evangelists:
- deacons: in many churches deacons function in spiritual leadership (effectively as elders), but deacon is a serving gift.

3. Spiritual gifts

Given through the Spirit to every one of God's people for the proper functioning of the church.

4. Mission

5. The Lord's Supper

What do we call it?

- communion, holy communion (L *communio* sharing < *communis* common).
- eucharist (Gk *eucharistia* gratitude < *eu-* well + *charis* favor)
- Lord's Supper
- Lord's Table
- Mass (L *missa*, dismissal; from priest's words of dismissal): Catholic celebration of the eucharist.

Is it a sacrament or an ordinance?

- ordinance: an ordained practice.
- sacrament: "the visible form of an invisible grace," a "sign of a sacred thing" (Augustine).

- Catholic Church recognizes seven sacraments: baptism, confirmation, communion, penance, marriage, ordination, extreme unction.
- Protestant Church recognizes two sacraments: baptism, communion.

Christ's presence

What did Jesus mean when he said, "This is my body...this is my blood"? There are four major theories of the eucharist, depending upon how Christ is considered to be present:

- transubstantiation: the Catholic view that upon consecration by the priest the bread and the wine are transformed into the actual body and blood of Jesus. Christ's presence is real.
- consubstantiation: Luther's view (and hence the Lutheran view) that Christ's body and blood is present "in, with and under" the bread and the wine. Christ's presence is real.
- memorialist: the view developed by Zwingli that this is a symbolic rite memorializing Christ's self-giving on the cross and his last supper. Christ's presence is real in the gathered believers, but he is not present in the bread and the wine.
- Calvinist: though Christ is not physically present in the bread and the wine he is sacramentally and really present. The elements themselves have no inherent power or grace; rather, grace is conveyed by God's Spirit. When the Holy Spirit is present and the recipient receives in faith, the sacrament becomes a means of grace.

Frequency

People with a similarly high view of the eucharist arrive at very different conclusions about its frequency: either it is so important that it must be celebrated daily, or it is so important it must be celebrated rarely.

PBCC has no set policy, but currently tries to schedule communion once per month.

The Church's One Foundation

The Church's one foundation
Is Jesus Christ her Lord;
She is his new creation
By water and the Word:
From heaven he came and sought her
To be his holy bride;
With his own blood he bought her,
And for her life he died.

Elect from every nation,
Yet one o'er all the earth,
Her charter of salvation
One Lord, one faith, one birth;
One holy name she blesses,
Partakes one holy food,
And to one hope she presses,
With every grace endued.

'Mid toil and tribulation
And tumult of her war,
She waits the consummation
Of peace forevermore;
Till with one vision glorious
Her longing eyes are blest,
And the great Church victorious
Shall be the Church at rest.

Yet she on earth hath union
With God the Three in One,
And mystic sweet communion
With those whose rest is won:
O happy ones and holy!
Lord, give us grace that we,
Like them, the meek and lowly,
On high may dwell with Thee.

Samuel J. Stone, 1866