



**Directed by  
Scripture Readings  
and  
The Book of Confession**

## Wednesday, March 9 — Ash Wednesday

Morning: Ps. 5, 147:1–11

Evening: Ps. 27, 51

Jonah 3:1—4:11

Heb. 12:1–14

Luke 18:9–14

In the first three centuries, the church found itself in a hostile environment. On the one hand, it grappled with the challenge of relating the language of the gospel, developed in a Hebraic and Jewish-Christian context, to a Graeco-Roman world. On the other hand, it was threatened not only by persecution, but also by ideas that were in conflict with the biblical witness.

In A.D. 312, Constantine won control of the Roman Empire in the battle of Milvian Bridge. Attributing his victory to the intervention of Jesus Christ, he elevated Christianity to favored status in the empire. “One God, one Lord, one faith, one church, one empire, one emperor” became his motto. The new emperor soon discovered that “one faith and one church” were fractured by theological disputes, especially conflicting understandings of the nature of Christ, long a point of controversy. (p 2 BOC)

Why Was the Nicene Creed written?

## Thursday, March 10

Morning: Ps. 27, 147:12–20

Evening: Ps. 126, 102

Deut. 7:6–11

Titus 1:1–16

John 1:29–34

The Nicene Creed is the most ecumenical of creeds. The Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) joins with Eastern Orthodox, Roman Catholic, and most Protestant churches in affirming it. (p2 BOC)

How widely used is the Nicene Creed?

## Friday, March 11

Morning: Ps. 22, 148

Evening: Ps. 105, 130

Deut. 7:12–16

Titus 2:1–15

John 1:35–42

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. (Nicene Creed section 1.2) p 3. BOC)

What does the Nicene Creed say about the humanity of Jesus Christ?

**Saturday, March 12**

Morning: Ps. 43, 149

Evening: Ps. 31, 143

Deut. 7:17–26

Titus 3:1–15

John 1:43–51

Although not written by apostles, the Apostles' Creed reflects the theological formulations of the first century church. The creed's structure may be based on Jesus' command to make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. In a time when most Christians were illiterate, oral repetition of the Apostles' Creed, along with the Lord's Prayer and the Ten Commandments, helped preserve and transmit the faith of the western churches. P 6 BOC

Did the Apostles write the Apostle's Creed?

What is the purpose of the Apostle's Creed?

**Sunday, March 13** — 1st Sunday in Lent

Morning: Ps. 84, 150

Evening: Ps. 42, 32

Jer. 9:23–24

1 Cor. 1:18–31

Mark 2:18–22

Candidates for membership in the church, having undergone a lengthy period of moral and doctrinal instruction, were asked at baptism to state what they believed. They responded in the words of this creed. P 6 BOC

How is the Apostle's Creed a requisite for baptism?

**Monday, March 14**

Morning: Ps. 119:73–80, 145

Evening: Ps. 121, 6

Deut. 8:1–20

Heb. 2:11–18

John 2:1–12

I believe in the Holy Ghost; the holy catholic Church; the communion of saints; the forgiveness of sins; the resurrection of the body; and the life everlasting. Amen. (Section 2.3 Apostles Creed p. 7 BOC)

What is meant by the holy catholic Church?

What is the communion of saints?

**Tuesday, March 15**

Morning: Ps. 34, 146

Evening: Ps. 25, 91

Deut. 9:(1–3) 4–12

Heb. 3:1–11

John 2:13–22

The Scots Confession was written at a turning point in the history of the Scottish nation. When the Queen Regent Mary of Guise died in her sleep in 1560, the Protestant nobility of Scotland was able to secure English recognition of Scottish sovereignty in the Treaty of Edinburgh. To the Scots, this favorable conclusion to the civil war with Mary's French-supported forces represented a providential deliverance. (P. 10 BOC)

What precipitated the composition of the Scot's Confession?

### **Wednesday, March 16**

Morning: Ps. 5, 147:1–11

Evening: Ps. 27, 51

Deut. 9:13–21

Heb. 3:12–19

Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)

John 2:23—3:15

The Scottish Parliament, having declared Scotland a Protestant nation, asked the clergy to frame a confession of faith. Six ministers, including John Knox, completed their work in four days. In 1560, the document was ratified by Parliament as “doctrine grounded upon the infallible Word of God.” (P. 10 BOC)

Who was John Knox and why was he important to Presbyterianism?

### **Thursday, March 17**

Morning: Ps. 27, 147:12–20

Evening: Ps. 126, 102

Deut. 9:23—10:5

Heb. 4:1–10

John 3:16–21

The Scots Confession sets forth three marks of the true and faithful church: “the true preaching of the Word of God,” “the right administration of the sacraments of Christ Jesus,” and “ecclesiastical discipline . . . whereby vice is repressed and virtue nourished.” (P. 10 BOC)

What are the three principal hallmarks that define the church according to the Scots Confession?

### **Friday, March 18**

Morning: Ps. 22, 148

Evening: Ps. 105, 130

Deut. 10:12–22

Heb. 4:11–16

John 3:22–36

“Cleave, serve, worship, trust” are key words in this document. As a call to action in a turbulent time, the Scots Confession reflects a spirit of trust and a commitment to the God whose miraculous deliverance the Scots had experienced firsthand. (P. 10 BOC)

What are some key words in the Scots Confession? Why are they key words in this profession of faith?

### **Saturday, March 19**

Morning: Ps. 43, 149

Evening: Ps. 31, 143

Deut. 11:18–28

Heb. 5:1–10

John 4:1–26

We most surely believe that God preserved, instructed, multiplied, honored, adorned, and called from death to life his Kirk in all ages since Adam until the coming of Christ Jesus in the flesh. Section 3.05 Chapter 5 Scots Confession p. 12 BOC

What does the Scots Confession say about the Continuance, Increase, and Preservation of the Church?

**Sunday, March 20** — 2nd Sunday in Lent

Morning: Ps. 84, 150

Evening: Ps. 42, 32

Jer. 1:1–10

1 Cor. 3:11–23

Mark 3:31–4:9

To this same people from time to time he sent prophets, to recall them to the right way of their God, from which sometimes they strayed by idolatry. Section 3.05 Chapter 5 Scots Confession p. 12 BOC

What purpose did the prophets play according to the Scots Confession?

**Monday, March 21**

Morning: Ps. 119:73–80, 145

Evening: Ps. 121, 6

Jer. 1:11–19

Rom. 1:1–15

John 4:27–42

The cause of good works, we confess, is not our free will, but the Spirit of the Lord Jesus, who dwells in our hearts by true faith, brings forth such works as God has prepared for us to walk in. Section 3.13 Chapter 13 Scots Confession p. 16 BOC

What is the purpose of good works? What are the limits of good works?

**Tuesday, March 22**

Morning: Ps. 34, 146

Evening: Ps. 25, 91

Jer. 2:1–13, 29–32

Rom. 1:16–25

John 4:43–54

These works are of two kinds. The one is done to the honor of God, the other to the profit of our neighbor, and both have the revealed will of God as their assurance. To have one God, to worship and honor him, to call upon him in all our troubles, to reverence his holy Name, to hear his Word and to believe it, and to share in his holy sacraments, belong to the first kind. To honor father, mother, princes, rulers, and superior powers; to love them, to support them, to obey their orders if they are not contrary to the commands of God, to save the lives of the innocent, to repress tyranny, to defend the oppressed, to keep our bodies clean and holy, to live in soberness and temperance, to deal justly with all men in word and deed, and, finally, to repress any desire to

harm our neighbor, are the good works of the second kind, and these are most pleasing and acceptable to God as he has commanded them himself. Section 3.14 Chapter 14 Scots Confession p. 17 BOC

What works are counted as “good” in God’s eyes according to the Scots Confession?  
Why does the confession even discuss “works”?

### **Wednesday, March 23**

Morning: Ps. 5, 147:1–11

Evening: Ps. 27, 51

Jer. 3:6–18

Rom. 1:(26–27) 28—2:11

John 5:1–18

As we believe in one God, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, so we firmly believe that from the beginning there has been, now is, and to the end of the world shall be, one Kirk, that is to say, one company and multitude of men chosen by God, who rightly worship and embrace him by true faith in Christ Jesus, who is the only Head of the Kirk, even as it is the body and spouse of Christ Jesus. This Kirk is catholic, that is, universal, because it contains the chosen of all ages, of all realms, nations, and tongues, be they of the Jews or be they of the Gentiles, who have communion and society with God the Father, and with his Son, Christ Jesus, through the sanctification of his Holy Spirit. Section 3.16 Chapter 16 Scots Confession p. 18 BOC

### **Thursday, March 24**

Morning: Ps. 27, 147:12–20

Evening: Ps. 126, 102

Jer. 4:9–10, 19–28

Rom. 2:12–24

John 5:19–29

The chosen departed are in peace, and rest from their labors; not that they sleep and are lost in oblivion as some fanatics hold, for they are delivered from all fear and torment, and all the temptations to which we and all God’s chosen are subject in this life, and because of which we are called the Kirk Militant. Section 3.17 Chapter 17 Scots Confession p. 19 BOC

What is the church militant? What is the church triumphant? What happens to our souls after death according to the Scots Confession?

### **Friday, March 25**

Morning: Ps. 22, 148

Evening: Ps. 105, 130

Jer. 5:1–9

Rom. 2:25—3:18

John 5:30–47

As we believe and confess the Scriptures of God sufficient to instruct and make perfect the man of God, so do we affirm and avow their authority to be from God, and not to depend on men or angels. We affirm, therefore, that those who say the Scriptures have no other authority save that which they have received from the Kirk are blasphemous against God and injurious to the true Kirk. Section 3.19 Chapter 19 Scots Confession p. 20 BOC

What does the Scots Confession say about the authority of Scripture?  
Is scripture the inerrant or inspired word of God?

**Saturday, March 26**

Morning: Ps. 43, 149

Evening: Ps. 31, 143

Jer. 5:20–31

Rom. 3:19–31

John 7:1–13

Because the Reformed did not believe in the real, bodily presence of Christ in bread and wine, Lutherans believed that they were desecrating the Lord's Supper. Acting to end the, Frederick the Elector, ruler of the Palatinate, asked two young men of Heidelberg—Zacharias Ursinus, professor of theology, and Kaspar Olevianus, preacher to the city—to prepare a catechism acceptable to both sides. (BOC p. 28)

What controversy is addressed in the Heidelberg Catechism?

**Sunday, March 27** — 3rd Sunday in Lent

Morning: Ps. 84, 150

Evening: Ps. 42, 32

Jer. 6:9–15

1 Cor. 6:12–20

Mark 5:1–20

**Q. 1. What is your only comfort, in life and in death?**

A. That I belong—body and soul, in life and in death—not to myself but to my faithful Savior, Jesus Christ, who at the cost of his own blood has fully paid for all my sins and has completely freed me from the dominion of the devil; that he protects me so well that without the will of my Father in heaven not a hair can fall from my head; indeed, that everything must fit his purpose for my salvation. Therefore, by his Holy Spirit, he also assures me of eternal life, and makes me wholeheartedly willing and ready from now on to live for him. Heidelberg Catechism (BOC p 29)

What is your comfort, in life and in death? How does that define a sense of belonging for you?

**Q. 2. How many things must you know that you may live and die in the blessedness of this comfort?**

A. Three. First, the greatness of my sin and wretchedness. Second, how I am freed from all my sins and their wretched consequences. Third, what gratitude I owe to God for such redemption. Heidelberg Catechism (BOC p 29)

Rename the three things you need to know as a child of God's covenant according to the Heidelberg Catechism.

**Monday, March 28**

Morning: Ps. 119:73–80, 145

Evening: Ps. 121, 6

Jer. 7:1–15

Rom. 4:1–12

John 7:14–36

**Q. 27. What do you understand by the providence of God?**

A. The almighty and ever-present power of God whereby he still upholds, as it were by his own hand, heaven and earth together with all creatures, and rules in such a way that leaves and grass, rain and drought, fruitful and unfruitful years, food and drink, health and sickness, riches and poverty, and everything else, come to us not by chance but by his fatherly hand. (section 4.027 Heidelberg Catechism p 33 BOC)

How would you express your understanding of God's providence?

**Tuesday, March 29**

Morning: Ps. 34, 146

Evening: Ps. 25, 91

Jer. 7:21–34

Rom. 4:13–25

John 7:37–52

Reflecting the theological maturity of the Reformed churches, the Second Helvetic Confession is moderate in tone and catholic in spirit. From the opening paragraphs it emphasizes the church and its life and affirms the authority of the Scriptures for the church's government and reformation. By including an article on predestination, the confession asks the church to trust in God's free and gracious election of its membership in Jesus Christ. At the same time, the confession addresses the practical life of the gathered community, detailing matters of worship, church order and conflict, ministry, the sacraments, and marriage. (p 52 BOC)

What issues does the Second Helvetic Confession address and why? What does Helvetic mean?

**Wednesday, March 30**

Morning: Ps. 5, 147:1–11

Evening: Ps. 27, 51

Jer. 8:4–7, 18–9:6

Rom. 5:1–11

John 8:12–20

RELICS OF THE SAINTS. Much less do we believe that the relics of the saints are to be adored and revered. Those ancient saints seemed to have sufficiently honored their dead when they decently committed their remains to the earth after the spirit had ascended on high. And they thought that the most noble relics of their ancestors were their virtues, their doctrine, and their faith. Moreover, as they commend these "relics" when praising the dead, so they strive to copy them during their life on earth.

SWEARING BY GOD'S NAME ALONE. These ancient men did not swear except by the name of the only God, Yahweh, as prescribed by the divine law. Therefore, as it is forbidden to swear by the names of strange gods (Ex. 23:13; Deut. 10:20), so we do not perform oaths to the saints that are demanded of us. We therefore reject in all these matters a doctrine that ascribes much to the saints in heaven.

THE SECOND HELVETIC CONFESSION Chapter 5 Section 5.027 – 5.028 p 59-60 BOC

How are we to rely on the saints? How not?

**Thursday, March 31**

Morning: Ps. 27, 147:12–20

Evening: Ps. 126, 102

Jer. 10:11–24

Rom. 5:12–21

John 8:21–32

Now concerning man, Scripture says that in the beginning he was made good according to the image and likeness of God;2 that God placed him in Paradise and made all things subject to him (Gen., ch. 2). This is what David magnificently sets forth in Psalm 8. Moreover, God gave him a wife and blessed them. We also affirm that man consists of two different substances in one person: an immortal soul which, when separated from the body, neither sleeps nor dies, and a mortal body which will nevertheless be raised up from the dead at the last judgment, in order that then the whole man, either in life or in death, abide forever. THE SECOND HELVETIC CONFESSION Chapter 5 Section 5.034 p 62 BOC

What does it mean that we are created in God’s image?

### **Friday, April 1**

Morning: Ps. 22, 148

Evening: Ps. 105, 130

Jer. 11:1–8, 14–17

Rom. 6:1–11

John 8:33–47

OF WHAT KIND ARE THE POWERS OF THE REGENERATE, AND IN WHAT WAY THEIR WILLS ARE FREE. Finally, we must see whether the regenerate have free wills, and to what extent. In regeneration the understanding is illumined by the Holy Spirit in order that it may understand both the mysteries and the will of God. And the will itself is not only changed by the Spirit, but it is also equipped with faculties so that it wills and is able to do the good of its own accord (Rom. 8:1 ff.) Unless we grant this, we will deny Christian liberty and introduce a legal bondage. But the prophet has God saying: “I will put my law within them, and I will write it upon their hearts” (Jer. 31:33; Ezek. 36:26 f.). The Lord also says in the Gospel: “If the Son makes you free, you will be free indeed” (John 8:36). Paul also writes to the Philippians: “It has been granted to you that for the sake of Christ you should not only believe in him but also suffer for his sake” (Phil. 1:29). Again: “I am sure that he who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ” (v. 6). Also: “God is at work in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure” (ch. 2:13). THE SECOND HELVETIC CONFESSION Chapter 5 Section 5.047 p 65 BOC

How does redemption change us? What does it change us to do or be?

### **Saturday, April 2**

Morning: Ps. 43, 149

Evening: Ps. 31, 143

Jer. 13:1–11

Rom. 6:12–23

John 8:47–59

In 1643, the English House of Commons adopted an ordinance calling for the “settling of the government and liturgy of the Church of England (in a manner) most agreeable to God’s Holy Word and most apt to procure the peace of the church at home and nearer abroad.” After the ordinance passed the House of Lords, an assembly to accomplish this work convened in Westminster Abbey. The Parliament nominated one hundred fifty-one persons to the assembly. Thirty were members of Parliament; the others were “learned, godly, and

judicious divines.” Five Scottish clergymen were in attendance and had the right of discussion but not vote. (BOC p 118)

Who wrote the Westminster Confession? Where was it written?

**Sunday, April 3** — 4th Sunday in Lent

Morning: Ps. 84, 150

Evening: Ps. 42, 32

Jer. 14:1–9 (10–16) 17–22

Gal. 4:21–5:1

Mark 8:11–21

In 1647, the Scottish General Assembly adopted the Westminster Standards for use in the kirk, replacing the Scots Confession of 1560 and the Heidelberg Catechism. The standards came to New England with the Puritans (Independents) and to the Middle Atlantic states with the Scotch-Irish Presbyterians. In 1729, the standards were adopted as the confessional position of the newly organized Presbyterian synod in the colonies and have played a formative role in American Presbyterianism ever since. The Westminster Standards represent the fruits of a 118 Protestant scholasticism that refined and systematized the teachings of the Reformation. The standards lift up the truth and authority of the Scriptures, as immediately inspired in Hebrew and Greek, kept pure in all ages, and known through the internal witness of the Holy Spirit. Divine sovereignty and double predestination are also emphasized. In appealing to Scripture to formulate a covenant theology, the standards had important implications for political thought and practice, reminding both ruler and people of their duties to God and to each other. (BOC p. 118-119)

What is the historical significance of the Westminster Confession?

What is the educational significance of the Westminster Confession?

**Monday, April 4**

Morning: Ps. 119:73–80, 145

Evening: Ps. 121, 6

Jer. 16:(1–9) 10–21

Rom. 7:1–12

John 6:1–15

The Westminster Confession affirms God’s work from its beginning in creation to its end in resurrection and last judgment. God is first, last, and preeminent in all things. God’s people are to understand and bring their lives into accord with God’s wondrous ways and magnificent will. The confession begins with God’s self-revelation in Scripture: God is the “one living and true God, infinite in being and perfection, invisible, immutable, immense, eternal, incomprehensible, almighty, most wise, most holy, most free, most absolute.” Out of nothing, God created all that is, including humans, whom God upholds, directs, and governs. Humans, however, did not remain in blessed harmony with God’s will. Sin’s intervention, which God permitted but did not cause, resulted in corruption of the human condition and of humans’ relationship to God. Yet, God has made a covenant of grace with humans; through Christ, relationship to God is restored. The Christian life—nurtured by prayer, preaching, and the sacraments, and lived in grace and glory—prepares for God’s predetermined end of mercy (salvation of the elect) and of justice (damnation of the reprobate). BOC p. 120)

What is the spiritual significance of the Westminster Confession?

**Tuesday, April 5**

Morning: Ps. 34, 146

Evening: Ps. 25, 91

Jer. 17:19–27

Rom. 7:13–25

John 6:16–27

### **The Westminster Catechisms**

The Larger Catechism (Westminster), written primarily by Dr. Anthony Tuckney, professor of divinity and vice-chancellor of Cambridge University, was designed for public exposition from the pulpit. Both the longer and shorter catechisms deal with questions of God, Christ, the Christian life, the Ten Commandments, the sacraments, and the Lord's Prayer; unlike most earlier catechisms, neither contains a section on the Apostles' Creed. (BOC p. 120)

### **Wednesday, April 6**

Morning: Ps. 5, 147:1–11

Evening: Ps. 27, 51

Jer. 18:1–11

Rom. 8:1–11

John 6:27–40

The Shorter Catechism (Westminster), primarily the work of the Reverend John Wallis, an eminent mathematician who later became professor of geometry at Oxford University, was written for the education of children. Especially famous is the first question and answer of the Shorter Catechism. "What is the chief end of man? Man's chief end is to glorify God and enjoy Him forever."

Both the longer and shorter catechisms deal with questions of God, Christ, the Christian life, the Ten Commandments, the sacraments, and the Lord's Prayer; unlike most earlier catechisms, neither contains a section on the Apostles' Creed. (BOC p. 120)

### **Thursday, April 7**

Morning: Ps. 27, 147:12–20

Evening: Ps. 126, 102

Jer. 22:13–23

Rom. 8:12–27

John 6:41–51

7. As it is of the law of nature that, in general, a due proportion of time be set apart for the worship of God; so, in his Word, by a positive, moral, and perpetual commandment, binding all men in all ages, he hath particularly appointed one day in seven for a Sabbath, to be kept holy unto him:<sup>34</sup> which, from the beginning of the world to the resurrection of Christ, was the last day of the week; and, from the resurrection of Christ, was changed into the first day of the week, which in Scripture is called the Lord's Day, and is to be continued to the end of the world as the Christian Sabbath. <sup>35</sup>

8. This Sabbath is then kept holy unto the Lord when men, after a due preparing of their hearts, and ordering of their common affairs beforehand, do not only observe an holy rest all the day from their own works, words, and thoughts about their worldly employments and recreations;<sup>36</sup> but also are taken up the whole time in the public and private exercises of his worship, and in the duties of necessity and mercy.<sup>37</sup>

Westminster Confession of Faith Chapter XXIV section 6.118 -6.119 BOC p. 145)

Why is worship attendance important according to the Westminster Confession of Faith?

**Friday, April 8**

Morning: Ps. 22, 148

Evening: Ps. 105, 130

Jer. 23:1–8

Rom. 8:28–39

John 6:52–59

1. Sacraments are holy signs and seals of the covenant of grace, immediately instituted by God,<sup>1</sup> to represent Christ and his benefits, and to confirm our interest in him: 2 as also to put a visible difference between those that belong unto the church, and the rest of the world; 3 and solemnly to engage them to the service of God in Christ, according to his Word. 4

2. There is in every sacrament a spiritual relation, or sacramental union, between the sign and the thing signified; whence it comes to pass that the names and effects of the one are attributed to the other.<sup>5</sup>

3. The grace which is exhibited in or by the sacraments, rightly used, is not conferred by any power in them; neither doth the efficacy of a sacrament depend upon the piety or intention of him that doth administer it, but upon the work of the Spirit,<sup>6</sup> and the word of institution, which contains, together with a precept authorizing the use thereof, a promise of benefit to worthy receivers.<sup>7</sup>

4. There be only two sacraments ordained by Christ our Lord in the gospel, that is to say, baptism and the supper of the Lord:

Westminster Confession of Faith Chapter XXIX section 6.149 -6.152 BOC p. 154)

What is a sacrament? How many are there? What is essential for the efficacy of the sacrament?

**Saturday, April 9**

Morning: Ps. 43, 149

Evening: Ps. 31, 143

Jer. 23:9–15

Rom. 9:1–18

John 6:60–71

**Q. 33. What is justification?**

A. Justification is an act of God's free grace, wherein he pardoneth all our sins,<sup>1</sup> and accepteth us as righteous in his sight,<sup>2</sup> only for the righteousness of Christ imputed to us,<sup>3</sup> and received by faith alone.<sup>4</sup>

**Q. 34. What is adoption?**

A. Adoption is an act of God's free grace,<sup>1</sup> whereby we are received into the number, and have a right to all the privileges, of the sons of God.<sup>2</sup>

**Q. 35. What is sanctification?**

A. Sanctification is the work of God's free grace,<sup>1</sup> whereby we are renewed in the whole man after the image of God,<sup>2</sup> and are enabled more and more to die unto sin and live unto righteousness.<sup>3</sup> Westminster Shorter Catechism Section 7.033-7.035 BOC p 178.

How does the Shorter Catechism shape your view of justification?

How does the Shorter Catechism shape your view of adoption?

How does the Shorter Catechism shape your view of sanctification?

**Sunday, April 10** — 5th Sunday in Lent

Morning: Ps. 84, 150

Evening: Ps. 42, 32

Jer. 23:16–32

1 Cor. 9:19–27

Mark 8:31–9:1

**Q. 1. What is the chief and highest end of man?**

A. Man's chief and highest end is to glorify God,<sup>1</sup> and fully to enjoy him forever. (Westminster Longer Catechism 7.111 BOC p. 195)

Why do you think that both the Shorter and Longer Catechism begin with this same question? What is a catechism?

**Monday, April, 11**

Morning: Ps. 119:73–80, 145

Evening: Ps. 121, 6

Jer. 24:1–10

Rom. 9:19–33

John 9:1–17

The Theological Declaration of Barmen was written by a group of church leaders in Germany to help Christians withstand the challenges of the Nazi party and of the so-called "German Christians," a popular movement that saw no conflict between Christianity and the ideals of Hitler's National Socialism. Most Germans took the union of Christianity, nationalism, and militarism for granted, and patriotic sentiments were equated with Christian truth. The German Christians exalted the racially pure nation and the rule of Hitler as God's will for the German people. BOC p 246.

What was the principal purpose for composing the Theological Declaration of Barmen?

**Tuesday, April 12**

Morning: Ps. 34, 146

Evening: Ps. 25, 91

Jer. 25:8–17

Rom. 10:1–13

John 9:18–41

The Theological Declaration of Barmen contains six propositions, each quoting from Scripture, stating its implications for the present day, and rejecting the false doctrine of the German Christians. The declaration proclaims the church's freedom in Jesus Christ who is Lord of every area of life. The church obeys him as God's one and only Word who determines its order, ministry, and relation to the state. BOC p 246.

Read the narrative for the next two days and ponder why the church remained largely silent through the atrocities of Nazi Germany. Does the church face similar "peril" today?

**Wednesday, April 13**

Morning: Ps. 5, 147:1–11

Evening: Ps. 27, 51

Jer. 25:30–38

Rom. 10:14–21

John 10:1–18

In view of the errors of the “German Christians” of the present Reich Church government which are devastating the church and are also thereby breaking up the unity of the German Evangelical Church, we confess the following evangelical truths:

1. “I am the way, and the truth, and the life: no one comes to the Father, but by me.” (John 14:6.) “Truly, truly, I say to you, he who does not enter the sheepfold by the door but climbs in by another way, that man is a thief and a robber. . . . I am the door; if anyone enters by me, he will be saved.” (John 10:1, 9.)

Jesus Christ, as he is attested for us in Holy Scripture, is the one Word of God which we have to hear and which we have to trust and obey in life and in death. We reject the false doctrine, as though the church could and would have to acknowledge as a source of its proclamation, apart from and besides this one Word of God, still other events and powers, figures and truths, as God’s revelation.

2. “Christ Jesus, whom God made our wisdom, our righteousness and sanctification and redemption.” (I Cor. 1:30.) As Jesus Christ is God’s assurance of the forgiveness of all our sins, so in the same way and with the same seriousness is he also God’s mighty claim upon our whole life. Through him befalls us a joyful deliverance from the godless fetters of this world for a free, grateful service to his creatures. We reject the false doctrine, as though there were areas of our life in which we would not belong to Jesus Christ, but to other lords—areas in which we would not need justification and sanctification through him. 3. “Rather, speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ, from whom the whole body [is] joined and knit together.” (Eph. 4:15–16.)

The Christian Church is the congregation of the brethren in which Jesus Christ acts presently as the Lord in Word and Sacrament through the Holy Spirit. As the church of pardoned sinners, it has to testify in the midst of a sinful world, with its faith as with its obedience, with its message as with its order, that it is solely his property, and that it lives and wants to live solely from his comfort and from his direction in the expectation of his appearance.

We reject the false doctrine, as though the church were permitted to abandon the form of its message and order to its own pleasure or to changes in prevailing ideological and political convictions. Theological Declaration of Barmen 8:09 - .18 BOC p. 249

What are the first three false doctrines Barmen addresses?

#### **Thursday, April 14**

Morning: Ps. 27, 147:12–20

Evening: Ps. 126, 102

Jer. 26:1–16 (17–24)

Rom. 11:1–12

John 10:19–42

4. “You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great men exercise authority over them. It shall not be so among you; but whoever would be great among you must be your servant.” (Matt. 20:25, 26.)

The various offices in the church do not establish a dominion of some over the others; on the contrary, they are for the exercise of the ministry entrusted to and enjoined upon the whole congregation. We reject the false doctrine, as though the church, apart from this ministry, could and were permitted to give to itself, or allow to be given to it, special leaders vested with ruling powers.

5. "Fear God. Honor the emperor." (I Peter 2:17.) Scripture tells us that, in the as yet unredeemed world in which the church also exists, the State has by divine appointment the task of providing for justice and peace. [It fulfills this task] by means of the threat and exercise of force, according to the measure of human judgment and human ability. The church acknowledges the benefit of this divine appointment in gratitude and reverence before him. It calls to mind the Kingdom of God, God's commandment and righteousness, and thereby the responsibility both of rulers and of the ruled. It trusts and obeys the power of the Word by which God upholds all things. We reject the false doctrine, as though the State, over and beyond its special commission, should and could become the single and totalitarian order of human life, thus fulfilling the church's vocation as well. We reject the false doctrine, as though the church, over and beyond its special commission, should and could appropriate the characteristics, the tasks, and the dignity of the State, thus itself becoming an organ of the State.

6. "Lo, I am with you always, to the close of the age." (Matt. 28:20.) "The word of God is not fettered." (II Tim. 2:9.) The church's commission, upon which its freedom is founded, consists in delivering the message of the free grace of God to all people in Christ's stead, and therefore in the ministry of his own Word and work through sermon and Sacrament. We reject the false doctrine, as though the church in human arrogance could place the Word and work of the Lord in the service of any arbitrarily chosen desires, purposes, and plans. The Confessional Synod of the German Evangelical Church declares that it sees in the acknowledgment of these truths and in the rejection of these errors the indispensable theological basis of the German Evangelical Church as a federation of Confessional churches. It invites all who are able to accept its declaration to be mindful of these theological principles in their decisions in church politics. It entreats all whom it concerns to return to the unity of faith, love, and hope. Theological Declaration of Barmen 8:19 - .28 BOC p. 249-250

### **Friday, April 15**

Morning: Ps. 22, 148

Evening: Ps. 105, 130

Jer. 29:1 (2-3) 4-14

Rom. 11:13-24

John 11:1-27 *or* John 12:1-10

In approving the Confession of 1967, the United Presbyterian Church in the United States of America adopted its first new confession of faith in three centuries. The turbulent decade of the 1960s challenged churches everywhere to restate their faith. While the Second Vatican Council was reformulating Roman Catholic thought and practice, Presbyterians were developing the Confession of 1967. The 168th General Assembly (1956) of the United Presbyterian Church in the United States of America (UPCUSA) received an overture asking that the Westminster Shorter Catechism be revised. A committee labored at the task seven years. After extensive debate, more than 90 percent of the presbyteries voted approval. Final adoption came at the 179th General Assembly (1967) (UPCUSA).

Modestly titled, the Confession of 1967 is built around a single passage of Scripture: "In Christ God was reconciling the world to himself. . ." (2 Cor. 5:19, NRSV). BOC p 252

When the Confession of 1967 was implemented, how long had it been since the denomination had adopted or revised a confessional stance?

To what was the Confession of 1967 reacting? How long did it take to be composed? How was it accepted into the UPCUSA? Is the UPCUSA the same denomination we are affiliated with today? What is the Scriptural passage that anchors this confession? What is the key word?

**Saturday, April 16**

Morning: Ps. 43, 149

Evening: Ps. 31, 143

Jer. 31:27–34

Rom. 11:25–36

John 11:28–44 *or* John 12:37–50

The first section, “God’s Work of Reconciliation,” is divided into three parts: the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit. The second section, “The Ministry of Reconciliation,” has two parts: the mission of and the equipment of the church. The last section, “The Fulfillment of Reconciliation,” affirms the church’s hope in God’s ultimate triumph. BOC p 252

Now that we have established the key word and motivation for the Confession of 1967 consider the three ways that theme is enunciated in the document.

**Sunday, April 17 — Passion / Palm Sunday**

Morning: Ps. 84, 150

Evening: Ps. 42, 32

Zech. 9:9–12

1 Tim. 6:12–16 *or* Zech. 12:9–11, 13:1, 7–9

Matt. 21:12–17

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 in living this life, and the Christian community nurtures and equips them for their ministries.

The members of the church are emissaries of peace and seek the good of man 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 man’s schemes will finally prevail. Life in Christ is life eternal. The resurrection of Jesus is God’s sign that he will consummate his work of creation and reconciliation beyond death and bring to fulfillment the new life begun in Christ. The Confession of 1967 Section 9.24-9.26 BOC p.256-257

What does the reconciled life look like?

**Monday, April 18**

Morning: Ps. 119:73–80, 145

Evening: Ps. 121, 6

Jer. 11:18–20, 12:1–16 (17)

Phil. 3:1–14

John 12:9–19

To be reconciled to God is to be sent into the world as his reconciling community. This community, the church universal, is entrusted with God’s message of reconciliation and shares his labor of healing the enmities which separate men 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. The life, death, resurrection, and promised coming of Jesus Christ has set the pattern for the church’s mission. His life as man involves the church in the common life of men. His service to men commits the church to work for every form of human well-being. His suffering makes the church sensitive to

all the sufferings of mankind so that it sees the face of Christ in the faces of men in every kind of need. His crucifixion discloses to the church God's judgment on man's inhumanity to man and the awful consequences of its 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 man's life in society and of God's victory over all wrong. 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. The Confession of 1967 Section 9.31-9.33 BOC p.257-258

What is the pattern of the church's mission?

### **Tuesday, April 19**

Morning: Ps. 34, 146

Evening: Ps. 25, 91

Jer. 15:10–21

Phil. 3:15–21

John 12:20–26

In 1983, the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) was formed by the reunion of the United Presbyterian Church in the United States of America and the Presbyterian Church in the United States. Integral to reunion was the preparation of a brief statement of faith. While recognizing realities of diversity and disagreement in both the church and the world, members of the drafting committee sought to articulate Presbyterians' common identity. BOC p 264

Why was the Brief Reformed Statement of Faith prepared? What different denominations were involved? When did it all happen?

### **Wednesday, April 20**

Morning: Ps. 5, 147:1–11

Evening: Ps. 27, 51

Jer. 17:5–10, 14–17 (18)

Phil. 4:1–13

John 12:27–36

Early in its discussions, the committee decided to write a statement of faith that could be used in worship. The committee drew extensively on the documents in the *Book of Confessions* and on Scripture for its formulations, and arranged them within a trinitarian framework BOC p 264

What was the primary intended purpose for the Brief Reformed Statement of Faith?

### **Thursday, April 21 — Maundy Thursday**

Morning: Ps. 27, 147:12–20

Evening: Ps. 126, 102

Jer. 20:7–11 (12–13) 14–18

1 Cor. 10:14–17, 11:27–32

John 17:1–11 (12–26)

The Brief Statement of Faith (statement) is distinctive in several respects. Unlike the Apostles' and Nicene Creeds, which move directly from Jesus' birth to his death, the statement emphasizes the significance of Jesus' ministry in Judea and Galilee. The Brief Statement of Faith emphasizes gender-inclusiveness. It underscores the role of both men and women in God's covenant, uses feminine as well as masculine imagery of God, and

affirms ordination of both women and men. The statement also expresses concern for the integrity of God's creation. BOC p 264

What distinguishes Brief Reformed Statement of Faith from other creedal or faith statements?

**Friday, April 22 — Good Friday**

Morning: Ps. 22, 148

Evening: Ps. 105, 130

Gen. 22:1–14

1 Peter 1:10–20

John 13:36–38 *or* John 19:38–42

The Spirit gives us courage to pray without ceasing, to witness among all peoples to Christ as Lord and Savior, to unmask idolatries in Church and culture, to hear the voices of peoples long silenced, and to work with others for justice, freedom, and peace. Brief Reformed Statement of Faith 66-71 BOC p 268

What does a life enlivened by the Holy Spirit encourage and enable?

**Saturday, April 23**

Morning: Ps. 43, 149

Evening: Ps. 31, 143

Job 19:21–27a

Heb. 4:1–16

Rom. 8:1–11

The same Spirit who inspired the prophets and apostles rules our faith and life in Christ through Scripture, engages us through the Word proclaimed, claims us in the waters of baptism, feeds us with the bread of life and the cup of salvation, and calls women and men to all ministries of the Church. In a broken and fearful world the Spirit gives us courage to pray without ceasing, to witness among all peoples to Christ as Lord and Savior, to unmask idolatries in Church and culture, to hear the voices of peoples long silenced, and to work with others for justice, freedom, and peace. Brief Reformed Statement of Faith 58-71 BOC p 268

Who are called to all ministries of the Church? Why is that statement made? What idolatries exist that need to be unmasked?

**Sunday, April 24 — Easter / Resurrection of the Lord**

Morning: Ps. 93, 150

Evening: Ps. 136, 117

Exod. 12:1–14

John 1:1–18 *or* Isa. 51:9–11

Luke 24:13–35 *or* John 20:19–23

With believers in every time and place, we rejoice that nothing in life or in death can separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord. Brief Reformed Statement of Faith 77-79 BOC p 268

In, by and through the resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ – do we rejoice?