

**A Christian Theory of Reality**  
*A Brief Testimony*

**Our World Belongs to God**  
A Contemporary Testimony of the  
Christian Reformed Church in North America

## **Preamble**

As followers of Jesus Christ,  
living in this world—  
which some seek to control,  
and others view with despair—  
we declare with joy and trust:  
Our world belongs to God!

From the beginning,  
through all the crises of our times,  
until the kingdom fully comes,  
God keeps covenant forever:  
Our world belongs to God!  
God is King: Let the earth be glad!  
Christ is victor: his rule has begun!  
The Spirit is at work: creation is renewed!  
Hallelujah! Praise the Lord!

Still, despair and rebellious pride fill the earth:  
some, crushed by failure  
or broken by pain,  
give up on life and hope and God;  
others, shaken,  
but still hoping for human triumph,  
work feverishly to realize their dreams.  
As believers in God,  
we also struggle with the spirits of this age,  
resisting them in the power of the Spirit,  
testing them by God's sure Word.

Our world, fallen into sin,  
has lost its first goodness,  
but God has not abandoned the work of  
his hands:

our Maker preserves this world,  
sending seasons, sun, and rain,  
upholding all creatures,  
renewing the earth,  
promising a Savior,  
guiding all things to their purpose.

God holds this world  
with fierce love.  
Keeping his promise,  
he sends Jesus into the world,  
pours out the Holy Spirit,  
and announces the good news:  
sinners who repent and believe in Jesus  
live anew as members of the family of God—  
the firstfruits of a new creation.

We rejoice in the goodness of God,  
renounce the works of darkness,  
and dedicate ourselves to holy living.  
As covenant partners,  
set free for joyful obedience,  
we offer our hearts and lives  
to do God's work in the world.  
With tempered impatience,  
eager to see injustice ended,  
we expect the Day of the Lord.  
We are confident  
that the light  
which shines in the present darkness  
will fill the earth  
when Christ appears.  
Come, Lord Jesus.  
Our world belongs to you.



## Creation

Our world belongs to God—  
not to us or earthly powers,  
not to demons, fate, or chance.  
The earth is the Lord's.

In the beginning, God—  
Father, Word, and Spirit—  
called this world into being  
out of nothing,  
and gave it shape and order.

God formed sky, land, and sea;  
stars above, moon and sun,  
making a world of color, beauty, and variety—  
a fitting home for plants and animals, and us—  
a place to work and play,  
worship and wonder,  
love and laugh.  
God rested  
and gave us rest.  
In the beginning  
everything was very good.

Made in God's image  
to live in loving communion with our Maker,  
we are appointed earthkeepers and  
caretakers  
to tend the earth, enjoy it,  
and love our neighbors.  
God uses our skills  
for the unfolding and well-being of his world  
so that creation and all who live in it may  
flourish.

Together,  
male and female,  
single and married,  
young and old—  
every hue and variety of humanity—  
we are called to represent God,  
for the Lord God made us all.  
Life is God's gift to us,  
and we are called to foster  
the well-being of all the living,  
protecting from harm  
the unborn and the weak,  
the poor and the vulnerable.

Even now,  
as history unfolds  
in ways we know only in part,  
we are assured  
that God is with us in our world,  
holding all things in tender embrace  
and bending them to his purpose.  
The confidence that the Lord is faithful  
gives meaning to our days  
and hope to our years.  
The future is secure,  
for our world belongs to God.

## **Fall**

In the beginning of human history,  
our first parents walked with God.  
But rather than living by the Creator's word  
of life,  
they listened to the serpent's lie  
and fell into sin.  
In their rebellion  
they tried to be like God.  
As sinners, Adam and Eve feared  
the nearness of God  
and hid.

Fallen in that first sin,  
we prove each day  
that apart from grace  
we are guilty sinners:  
we fail to thank God,  
we break God's laws,  
we ignore our tasks.  
Looking for life without God,  
we find death;  
grasping for freedom outside the law,  
we trap ourselves in Satan's snares;  
pursuing pleasure,  
we lose the gift of joy.



When humans deface God's image,  
the whole world suffers:  
we abuse the creation or idolize it;  
we are estranged from our Creator,  
from our neighbor,  
from our true selves,  
and from all that God has made.

All spheres of life—  
family and friendship,  
work and worship,  
school and state,  
play and art—  
bear the wounds of our rebellion.  
Sin is present everywhere—  
in pride of race,  
arrogance of nations,  
abuse of the weak and helpless,  
disregard for water, air, and soil,  
destruction of living creatures,  
slavery, murder, terror, and war,  
worship of false gods,  
the mistreatment of our bodies,  
and our frantic efforts to escape reality.  
We become victims of our own sin.

In all our striving  
to excuse or save ourselves,  
we stand condemned  
before the God of truth.  
But our world,  
broken and scarred,  
still belongs to God,  
who holds it together  
and gives us hope.

## **Redemption**

While justly angry,  
God did not turn away  
from a world bent on destruction  
but turned to face it in love.  
With patience and tender care  
the Lord set out  
on the long road of redemption  
to reclaim the lost as his people  
and the world as his kingdom.

Although Adam and Eve were expelled  
from the garden  
and their days burdened  
by the weight of sin,  
the Lord held on to them in love  
and promised to crush  
the evil forces  
they had unleashed.

When evil filled the earth,  
God judged it with a flood  
but rescued Noah and his family  
and animals of every kind.  
He covenanted with all creatures  
that seasons will continue  
and that such destruction  
will not come again  
until the last day  
when the Lord returns  
to make all things new.

The Lord promised to be God  
to Abraham, Sarah, and their children,  
calling them to walk faithfully before him  
and blessing the nations through them.  
God chose Israel to show the glory of  
his name,  
the power of his love,  
and the wisdom of his ways.  
The Lord gave them the law  
through Moses  
and led them  
by rulers and teachers,  
shaping a people  
in whom God is revealed—  
a light to the nations.

When Israel spurned God's love—  
lusting after other gods,  
trusting in power and wealth,  
and hurting the weak—  
God scattered them among the nations,  
yet kept a faithful remnant  
and promised them the Messiah:  
a prophet to speak good news,  
a king to crush evil and rule the earth with  
justice,  
a priest to be sacrificed for sinners.  
God promised to forgive their sins  
and give them a new heart and a new spirit,  
moving them to walk in his ways.



## **Christ**

Remembering the promise  
to reconcile the world to himself,  
God joined our humanity in Jesus Christ—  
the eternal Word made flesh.  
He is the long-awaited Messiah,  
one with us  
and one with God,  
fully human and fully divine,  
conceived by the Holy Spirit  
and born of the virgin Mary.

As the last Adam,  
Jesus chose the path we had rejected.  
In his baptism and temptations,  
teaching and miracles,  
battles with demons  
and friendships with sinners,  
Jesus lived a full and righteous human life  
before us.

As God's true Son,  
he lovingly obeyed the Father  
and made present in deed and word  
the coming rule of God.

Standing in our place,  
Jesus suffered during his years on earth,  
especially in the tortures of the cross.  
He carried God's judgment on our sin—  
his sacrifice removed our guilt.  
God raised him from the dead:  
he walked out of the grave,  
conqueror of sin and death—  
Lord of Life!  
We are set right with God,  
given new life,  
and called to walk with him  
in freedom from sin's dominion.

Being both divine and human,  
Jesus is the only mediator.  
He alone paid the debt of our sin;  
there is no other Savior.  
We are chosen in Christ  
to become like him in every way.  
God's electing love sustains our hope:  
God's grace is free  
to save sinners who offer nothing  
but their need for mercy.

Jesus ascended in triumph,  
raising our humanity to the heavenly throne.  
All authority, glory, and sovereign power  
are given to him.  
There he hears our prayers  
and pleads our cause before the Father.  
Blessed are all  
who take refuge in him.

## **The Spirit**

At Pentecost, promises old and new are fulfilled.  
The ascended Jesus becomes the baptizer,  
drenching his followers with his Spirit,  
creating a new community  
where Father, Son, and Holy Spirit make their  
home.

Revived and filled with the breath of God,  
women and men,  
young and old,  
dream dreams  
and see visions.

The Spirit renews our hearts  
and moves us to faith,  
leads us into truth,  
and helps us to pray,  
stands by us in our need,  
and makes our obedience fresh and vibrant.  
God the Spirit lavishes gifts on the church  
in astonishing variety—  
prophecy, encouragement, healing,  
teaching, service, tongues, discernment—  
equipping each member  
to build up the body of Christ  
and to serve our neighbors.

The Spirit gathers people  
from every tongue, tribe, and nation  
into the unity of the body of Christ.  
Anointed and sent by the Spirit,  
the church is thrust into the world,  
ambassadors of God's peace,  
announcing forgiveness and reconciliation,  
proclaiming the good news of grace.  
Going before them and with them,  
the Spirit convinces the world of sin  
and pleads the cause of Christ.  
Men and women, impelled by the Spirit,  
go next door and far away  
into science and art,  
media and marketplace—  
every area of life,  
pointing to the reign of God  
with what they do and say.



## **Revelation**

God gives this world  
many ways to know him.

The creation shows his power and majesty.

He speaks through prophets, poets,  
and apostles,

and, most eloquently, through the Son.

The Spirit, active from the beginning,  
moved human beings to write the Word of God  
and opens our hearts to God's voice.

The Bible is the Word of God,  
the record and tool of his redeeming work.  
It is the Word of truth,  
breath of God,  
fully reliable in leading us  
to know God  
and to walk with Jesus Christ  
in new life.

The Bible tells the story  
of God's mighty acts  
in the unfolding  
of covenant history.

As one revelation in two testaments  
the Bible reveals God's will  
and the sweep of God's redeeming work.  
Illumined and equipped by the Spirit,  
disciples of Jesus hear and do the Word,  
witnessing to the good news  
that our world belongs to God,  
who loves it deeply.

## **God's New People**

In our world,  
where many journey alone,  
nameless in the bustling crowd,  
Satan and his evil forces  
seek whom they may scatter and isolate;  
but God, by his gracious choosing in Christ,  
gathers a new community—  
those who by God's gift  
put their trust in Christ.  
In the new community  
all are welcome:  
the homeless come home,  
the broken find healing,  
the sinner makes a new start;  
the despised are esteemed,  
the least are honored,  
and the last are first.  
Here the Spirit guides  
and grace abounds.

The church is the fellowship of those  
who confess Jesus as Lord.  
She is the bride of Christ,  
his chosen partner,  
loved by Jesus and loving him:  
delighting in his presence,  
seeking him in prayer—  
silent before the mystery of his love.

Our new life in Christ  
is celebrated and nourished  
in the fellowship of congregations,  
where we praise God's name,  
hear the Word proclaimed,  
learn God's ways,  
confess our sins,  
offer our prayers and gifts,  
and celebrate the sacraments.

God meets us in the sacraments,  
communicating grace to us  
by means of water, bread, and wine.  
In baptism,  
whether of the newly born  
or newly converted,  
God reminds and assures us  
of our union with Christ in covenant love,  
the washing away of our sin,  
and the gift of the Holy Spirit—  
expecting our love and trust in return.

In the Lord's Supper, Christ offers  
his own crucified body and shed blood  
to his people,  
assuring them a share  
in his death and resurrection.  
By the Holy Spirit, he feeds us  
with his resurrection life  
and binds us to each other  
as we share one loaf and cup.  
We receive this food gladly,  
believing, as we eat,  
that Jesus is our life-giving food and drink  
and that he will come again  
to call us to the wedding feast of the Lamb.



The church is a gathering  
of forgiven sinners called to be holy.  
Saved by the patient grace of God,  
we deal patiently with others  
and together confess our need  
for grace and forgiveness.  
Restored in Christ's presence,  
shaped by his life,  
this new community lives out  
the ongoing story of God's reconciling love,  
announces the new creation,  
and works for a world of justice and peace.

We grieve that the church,  
which shares one Spirit, one faith, one hope,  
and spans all time, place, race, and language,  
has become a broken communion in a broken  
world.

When we struggle  
for the truth of the gospel  
and for the righteousness God demands,  
we pray for wisdom and courage.

When our pride or blindness  
hinders the unity of God's household,  
we seek forgiveness.

We marvel that the Lord gathers the broken  
pieces  
to do his work  
and that he blesses us still  
with joy, new members,  
and surprising evidences of unity.

We commit ourselves to seeking and expressing  
the oneness of all who follow Jesus,  
and we pray for brothers and sisters  
who suffer for the faith.

## **The Mission of God's People**

Joining the mission of God,  
the church is sent  
with the gospel of the kingdom  
to call everyone to know and follow Christ  
and to proclaim to all  
the assurance that in the name of Jesus  
there is forgiveness of sin  
and new life for all who repent and believe.  
The Spirit calls all members  
to embrace God's mission  
in their neighborhoods  
and in the world:  
to feed the hungry,  
bring water to the thirsty,  
welcome the stranger,  
clothe the naked,  
care for the sick,  
and free the prisoner.  
We repent of leaving this work to a few,  
for this mission is central to our being.

In a world estranged from God,  
where happiness and peace are offered in  
many names  
and millions face confusing choices,  
we witness—  
with respect for followers of other ways—  
to the only one in whose name salvation is  
found:

Jesus Christ.

In Jesus, God reconciles the world to  
himself.

God loves all creation;  
his compassion knows no bounds.

Jesus Christ rules over all.  
To follow this Lord is  
to serve him wherever we are  
without fitting in,  
light in darkness,  
salt in a spoiling world.

Life is a gift from God's hand,  
who created all things.  
Receiving this gift thankfully,  
with reverence for the Creator,  
we protest and resist  
all that harms, abuses, or diminishes the gift of  
life,  
whether by abortion, pollution, gluttony,  
addiction, or foolish risks.  
Because it is a sacred trust,  
we treat all life with awe and respect,  
especially when it is most vulnerable—  
whether growing in the womb,  
touched by disability or disease,  
or drawing a last breath.  
When forced to make decisions  
at life's raw edges,  
we seek wisdom in community,  
guided by God's Word and Spirit.

Since God made us male and female in his image,  
we respect each other as equals,  
not flaunting or exploiting our sexuality.  
While our roles and capacities may differ,  
we are careful not to confine God's gifts and calling  
to the shape of our cultural patterns or expectations.  
Sexuality is disordered in our fallen world—  
brokenness, abuse, pornography, and loneliness are the result—  
but Christ's renewing work gives hope  
for order and healing  
and surrounds suffering persons  
with compassionate community.

We are the family of God,  
serving Christ together in Christian community.  
Single for a time or a life,  
devoted to the work of God,  
we offer our love and service  
to the building of the kingdom.  
Married, in relationships of lifelong loyalty,  
we offer our lives to the same work:  
building the kingdom,  
teaching and modeling the ways of the Lord  
so our children may know  
Jesus as Lord  
and learn to use their gifts  
in lives of joyful service.  
In friendship and family life,  
singleness and marriage,  
as parents and children,  
we reflect the covenant love of God.  
We lament the prevalence of divorce  
and of selfish individualism in our societies.  
We belong to God.



Serving the Lord  
in whom all things hold together,  
we support sound education in our communities,  
and we foster schools and teaching  
in which God's truth shines in all learning.  
All students,  
without regard to abilities, race, or wealth,  
bear God's image  
and deserve an education  
that helps them use their gifts fully.

Our work is a calling from God.  
We work for more than wages  
and manage for more than profit  
so that mutual respect  
and the just use of goods and skills  
may shape the workplace.  
While we earn or profit,  
we love our neighbors by providing  
useful products and services.  
In our global economy  
we advocate meaningful work  
and fair wages for all.  
Out of the Lord's generosity to us,  
we give freely and gladly  
of our money and time.

Rest and leisure are gifts from God  
that relax us and set us free  
to discover and to explore.

But we confess  
that often our addiction to busyness  
allows our tools and toys to invade our rest  
and that an internet world with its temptations  
distorts our leisure.

Reminding each other that  
our Maker rested and gave us rest,  
we seek to rest more trustingly  
and to entertain ourselves more simply.

Grateful for advances  
in science and technology,  
we participate in their development,  
fostering care for creation  
and respect for the gift of life.  
We welcome discoveries that prevent or  
cure diseases  
and that help support healthy lives.  
We respect embryonic life,  
approaching each new discovery,  
whether of science or of medical technique,  
with careful thought,  
seeking the will of God.

We lament that our abuse of creation  
has brought lasting damage  
to the world we have been given:  
polluting streams and soil,  
poisoning the air,  
altering the climate,  
and damaging the earth.

We commit ourselves  
to honor all God's creatures  
and to protect them from abuse and extinction,  
for our world belongs to God.

We obey God first;  
we respect the authorities that rule,  
for they are established by God:  
we pray for our rulers,  
and we work to influence governments—  
resisting them only when Christ and conscience  
demand.

We are thankful for the freedoms  
enjoyed by citizens of many lands;  
we grieve with those who live under  
oppression,  
and we seek for them the liberty to live without  
fear.

We call on all governments to do public justice and to protect the rights and freedoms of individuals, groups, and institutions so that each may do their tasks.

We urge governments and pledge ourselves to safeguard children and the elderly from abuse and exploitation, to bring justice to the poor and oppressed, and to promote the freedom to speak, work, worship, and associate.

Followers of the Prince of Peace  
are called to be peacemakers,  
promoting harmony and order  
and restoring what is broken.  
We call on our governments to work for peace  
and to restore just relationships.  
We deplore the spread of weapons  
in our world and on our streets  
with the risks they bring  
and the horrors they threaten.  
We call on all nations to reduce their arsenals  
to what is needed  
in the defense of justice and freedom.  
We pledge to walk in ways of peace,  
confessing that our world belongs to God;  
he is our sure defense.



## **New Creation**

Our hope for a new creation is not tied  
to what humans can do,  
for we believe that one day  
every challenge to God's rule  
will be crushed.

His kingdom will fully come,  
and the Lord will rule.

Come, Lord Jesus, come.

We long for that day  
when our bodies are raised,  
the Lord wipes away our tears,  
and we dwell forever in the presence of God.  
We will take our place in the new creation,  
where there will be no more death  
or mourning or crying or pain,  
and the Lord will be our light.  
Come, Lord Jesus, come.

On that day  
we will see our Savior face to face,  
sacrificed Lamb and triumphant King,  
just and gracious.  
He will set all things right,  
judge evil, and condemn the wicked.  
We face that day without fear,  
for the Judge is our Savior,  
whose shed blood declares us righteous.  
We live confidently,  
anticipating his coming,  
offering him our daily lives—  
our acts of kindness,  
our loyalty, and our love—  
knowing that he will weave  
even our sins and sorrows  
into his sovereign purpose.  
Come, Lord Jesus, come.

With the whole creation  
we join the song:  
“Worthy is the Lamb, who was slain,  
to receive power and wealth  
and wisdom and strength  
and honor and glory and praise!”  
He has made us a kingdom of priests  
to serve our God,  
and we will reign on earth.  
God will be all in all,  
righteousness and peace will flourish,  
everything will be made new,  
and every eye will see at last  
that our world belongs to God.  
Hallelujah! Come, Lord Jesus!







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