

1 **BEAVER-BUTLER ESSENTIALS OF THE FAITH**

2 *The Book of Order of the Presbyterian Church (USA), in chapter 2 entitled "the Church*
3 *and its Confessions," identifies three categories of faith essentials for the Presbyterian*
4 *Church (USA): the "catholic" essentials that all Christians profess; the essentials from*
5 *the Reformation that are common to all Protestant believers; and the essentials that*
6 *are shared by all Reformed Christians. Drawing on those essentials and other scriptural*
7 *and confessional sources,*

8 We, the Presbytery of Beaver-Butler, declare the following to be essentials of the faith.
9 We shall use these to order our life together under the authority of Scripture and
10 guided by God and our Confessions.

11 **1. The Authority of the Scripture**

12 We believe that the Scriptures of the Old and New Testament are, by the power of
13 God's Holy Spirit, the Word of God revealing the whole counsel of God concerning all
14 things necessary for God's glory and our salvation, faith and life. The Scriptures bear
15 unique and authoritative witness to Jesus Christ in whom the fullness of God was
16 pleased to dwell, and through whom God is made fully known to human persons.

17 **2. The Sovereignty of God**

18 We believe that God, in holiness and majesty, exists beyond and beside all that is
19 created, and that the whole created order is sustained by his power. In love, God
20 creates, sustains, rules and redeems the world according to his good and perfect will.
21 Nothing that takes place is outside of the providential care of God, and God will
22 ultimately cause everything to work toward his purposes and glory. God's work to
23 redeem a rebellious world is an act of his sovereign grace and power.

24 **3. The Trinity**

25 We believe that God is the creator of heaven and earth, the sovereign and self-
26 sufficient ruler of all that is. He exists eternally as One God in three distinct and equal
27 persons, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.

28 The revelation of God in Scripture is rich and varied, and encompasses key metaphors
29 such as "Shepherd" and "Fortress", as well as analogous references such as "Rock of
30 my salvation" and "Bright and morning star." Historic orthodox theology, as expressed
31 in the Nicene Creed and elsewhere, names the Triune God as Father, Son and Holy
32 Spirit. While accepting the use of standard Scriptural metaphors and analogies to
33 convey God's nature and work, we affirm "Father, Son and Holy Spirit" as the
34 appropriate term for addressing and referring to the Triune God by name as revealed in
35 Scripture. We believe it is inappropriate to use any language about God that would
36 have the effect of redefining the very persons or nature of God according to human
37 frames of reference.

38 **4. Sin**

39 We believe that disobedience to the revealed law of God, or disregard for the will of
40 God, is sin. Sin is both an action and an inescapable aspect of our human condition,
41 corporate and personal, and includes acts of both omission and commission.
42 Sinfulness, at its core, involves our tendency to attempt to become gods, or to replace

43 God in our hearts and minds with other things such as persons, ideas, activities or
44 possessions. Anything or anyone that we allow to replace God's sovereign reign in our
45 lives is an idol.

46 We believe that sin separates us from God and from other people. We cannot, because
47 of our utter depravity, fully recognize sinfulness within ourselves or repent on our own.
48 We are dependent on God's law to convict us of our sin, on God's grace through his Son
49 Jesus Christ to redeem us from sin, and on God's Spirit to aid us in living holy lives
50 before him.

51 **5. *The Incarnation of Jesus Christ***

52 We believe that God has acted in the history of his covenant people to redeem human
53 persons from destruction and restore his glory in them.

54 In the Old Testament God revealed the plan of redemption to Israel. Acting in love,
55 God called Abraham and his descendants into a covenant relationship. Responding in
56 mercy, God set Israel free from slavery and provided a means for sin to be covered,
57 anticipating the Christ, the ultimate sacrifice. Restoring hope, God lived among his
58 people and promised the Messiah.

59 In the fullness of time God sent his only begotten Son, Jesus Christ, born of the virgin
60 Mary, fully human and fully divine, our promised Messiah. Jesus calls disciples to follow
61 him; offered himself as the final atonement for our sin; and, through his death and
62 resurrection, has provided the means for us to be reconciled to our heavenly Father.

63 **6. *The Gospel of Jesus Christ***

64 We believe that human persons are justified by God and reconciled to him through the
65 sole, saving work of Jesus Christ on the cross. The gospel of Jesus Christ, as attested
66 to by the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments, speaks of God's grace and love
67 by:

- 68 • Proclaiming human sinfulness and captivity to sin, both individually and
69 corporately;
- 70 • Revealing God's righteous wrath against, and condemnation of, human
71 godlessness and wickedness;
- 72 • Offering God's gift of forgiveness and acceptance in the person and work of
73 Jesus Christ, through his righteousness imputed to us on the cross;
- 74 • Encouraging all people to accept this gift of salvation that we might be justified
75 before God through faith;
- 76 • Affirming that there is no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus;
- 77 • Asserting that Jesus Christ is God's sole provision for the salvation of
78 humankind;
- 79 • Assuring believers that as children of God they have been given the promise of
80 eternal life, and that the Holy Spirit will make them wholeheartedly willing and
81 ready from now on to live for him;
- 82 • Drawing all attention and glory in salvation to God alone;
- 83 • Committing us to the ministry of reconciliation to God through Christ;
- 84 • Proclaiming the sure and certain promise of Christ's return.

85 **7. The Election of God's People for Salvation and Service**

86 We believe that God exercises sovereign freedom in choosing people for salvation,
87 which we receive by God's grace through faith in Jesus Christ alone, and not on the
88 basis of any person's merit. Since God is the author and initiator of faith, those that
89 God predestines he also calls, justifies and glorifies. God also chooses, equips and calls
90 persons to serve him in specific ways. While invariably accompanied by divine
91 blessings and providential gifts, such calls are neither rights nor privileges, but rather,
92 our thankful service in response to God's sovereign will and love.

93 **8. One Holy, Catholic, Apostolic Church**

94 We believe that in his great mercy, the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ has
95 given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the
96 dead. By the power of the Holy Spirit, Christ is formed in us and we are drawn into
97 God's family, the Church. The Church of Jesus Christ is one Church, held together in
98 the mystery and by the power of God until the revelation of its splendor on the day of
99 Christ's coming. The Church is holy, called by God and set apart for God's purposes
100 with Jesus Christ as the Head. The Church is universal, grounded in Word and
101 Sacrament and called to be gracious in the varied expressions of its life together. The
102 Church is apostolic, sent by God to all peoples with the message of salvation through
103 Jesus Christ.

104 Enabled by the Spirit the Church proclaims the great truths of the gospel to all people:

- 105 • That Jesus Christ, King of Kings and Lord of Lords, is to be glorified and desired
106 above all;
- 107 • That Jesus Christ is God's sole provision for the salvation of humankind and for
108 living in right relationship with him;
- 109 • That through baptism we die to sin, are raised to newness of life in Christ, and
110 are incorporated into God's family of faith, the church;
- 111 • That through the Lord's Supper we are nourished by the Holy Spirit as we walk in
112 our God-given identity as God's people;
- 113 • That the Holy Spirit equips all believers with gifts to serve for the upbuilding of
114 church so that together we become more like Christ through faith and obedience,
115 and grow into the fruit of the Spirit as we worship, study scripture and follow as
116 Christ has commanded us;
- 117 • That the Holy Spirit empowers believers to a life of prayer in communion with
118 the Father and Son;
- 119 • That God's kingdom is advancing now, coming in fullness soon, and eternal.

120 **9. The Covenant Life of the Church**

121 We believe in a relational God who enters into a covenant with his people. As followers
122 of Christ, we affirm the covenant of grace through faith established through Abraham
123 and Sarah and their descendants. Christians are called by Jesus Christ into the church
124 in order to be in communion and fellowship. Our common life brings glory to God as we
125 worship, bear witness to God's Word through mission and service, and equip sister and
126 brother Christians to function within, and as, the body of Christ. Ordering ourselves
127 under Jesus Christ as our Head and in accordance with the concern for church order

128 and unity as evidenced in the New Testament, we are to be faithful stewards of the
129 covenant we share as Christ's church.

130 We believe that in the ordering of our life together God calls and gifts Ministers of Word
131 and Sacrament and Elders to lead God's people, and Deacons to serve God's people.
132 Elders and Ministers of Word and Sacrament are chosen by God from among God's
133 people to discern God's will and to lead the church into a life that reflects the whole
134 gospel of Jesus Christ. Power in the Presbyterian Church (USA) is held lightly, as those
135 who are first will be last, and those who are greatest will be the least, in keeping with
136 the example and pattern given to us in Jesus Christ. Decisions in the Presbyterian
137 Church (USA) are made in humility as our representative leaders meet, discern, pray
138 and seek to be the church in submission to our head, Jesus Christ.

139 We believe that the church is called to Christ-like mission in and to the world furthering
140 the Kingdom of God. All believers, individually and the church corporately, are called
141 and sent into neighborhoods, schools, workplaces, families and relationships as Christ's
142 winsome ambassadors. God makes his appeal for reconciliation through us.

143 **10. Christian Stewardship**

144 We believe that we are called by God to be faithful stewards. Recognizing that we
145 belong to God and are to glorify him in all things, we seek to be faithful in the use of
146 our personal and corporate time and resources. All of creation belongs to God. As
147 stewards, we are to serve God through the wise use of, and proper care for, earth's
148 resources. We are also, as people who have been "bought with a price," stewards of
149 the gospel of Jesus Christ. We are accountable to God and to one another for living
150 faithful, obedient lives in a manner worthy of the transforming gospel of our Lord Jesus,
151 who "makes all things new."

152 **11. Living Obediently, Seeking Justice and Holiness**

153 We believe that a faith-filled response to God involves living in obedience according to
154 God's will, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, and as prescribed for us in the
155 Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments. In the practice of spiritual disciplines, such
156 as prayer, worship, service, study, fellowship, fasting or tithing, and in our life together
157 in the body of Christ, we are to spur one another on to love and good deeds, to the
158 glory of God in Christ.

159 We believe that in a broken and fearful world the Holy Spirit gives us courage to pray
160 without ceasing, to witness among all peoples to Christ as Lord and Savior, and to work
161 for biblical justice, freedom and peace.

162 We believe that in a morally confused time Christ calls the church, as the household of
163 God, to give witness to the responsible freedom of the new life in Christ and to teach
164 and exhibit the relational, sexual and social holiness to which the Scriptures and the
165 confessions call us.