



UNION IN CHRIST:

A DECLARATION  
FOR THE CHURCH

“HE IS BEFORE ALL  
THINGS AND IN HIM  
ALL THINGS HOLD  
TOGETHER”

COLOSSIANS 1:17

## A Pastoral Affirmation

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Our Presbyterian Church (USA) has confronted for the past 20 plus years the question of the ordination to ministry posts within our denomination of those persons who are living in homosexual relationships. Advocacy for and against this issue has been a reality at every General Assembly meeting since 1978.

The General Assembly in 1978 adopted a definitive guidance statement on this question that is responsible and pastorally helpful. It clearly affirmed that all people wherever they are in their life and faith journey are beloved by God and it sternly warns against the sin of those who seek to do harm to people because of their sexual orientation.

It also affirms that because of the Biblical teaching concerning sexual behavior and the meaning of marriage those persons who are participants in a homosexual relationship should be welcomed into the fellowship of the church but should not be ordained to leadership posts within the church. This standard for leadership was expanded in 1997 to include extra marital heterosexual behavior as well by the phrase "faithfulness in marriage of a man or a woman or, chastity in singleness."

For us as Pastors, as a Session and all who serve in ministries here at University Presbyterian Church it is our privilege and mandate to welcome and minister to all who enter our church. Our goal is to share in the good news of the gospel of Jesus Christ and that good news is that our deepest identity does not arise from our desires whether they are sexual, material or spiritual. Identity is not fundamentally a matter of sexual orientation any more than it is dependent upon our material possessions or our spiritual intuitions. Rather our belovedness as man and woman comes from the sheer grace of Jesus Christ. Our desires and

our interpersonal affection preferences should therefore not rank so high on any list that we equate sexual preference, or material possessions, or spiritual self-awareness with self worth.

Our goal here at UPC is to minister faithfully toward all people, young and old regardless of their place in life or their personal affections, but we believe that a pastorally encouraging ministry is not helped by creating confusion about the nature and meaning of marriage, nor are we encouraging to brothers and sisters if there is confusion about the meaning of every other human relationship.

As for our church we will seek to be a faithful and generous congregation. We cannot control other churches and what they choose to do but we can be a congregation that seeks to be a model of hope in the way God enables us to be encouraging to all who enter our doors.

Your Pastor,

Earl F. Palmer

**Union in Christ  
An Affirmation by the Session**

**University Presbyterian Church  
Seattle, Washington**

The Confessing Church Movement within the Presbyterian Church (USA) is made up of Sessions of Presbyterian congregations who have affirmed Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior and who seek to live in faithfulness to His gospel.

The Session of University Presbyterian Church of Seattle, Washington at its regular meeting February 26, 2002 has adopted the Union in Christ Statement of Faith as an expression of our Biblical faith that we believe is faithful to the historic confessions of our church in the Book of Confessions and is a helpful guidance statement in the present controversy regarding the ordination standards of our church.

We have also joined with our pastor Senior Pastor Reverend Earl F. Palmer in a Pastoral Affirmation that shares our ministry goal as a church.

University Presbyterian Church Session

Adopted February 26, 2002

Seattle, Washington

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**“Union in Christ: A Declaration for the Church”**

*“He is before all things and in him all things hold together”*

*(Colossians 1:17)*

With the witness of Scripture and the Church through the ages we declare:

**I.**

**Jesus Christ is the gracious mission of God**

to the world  
and for the world.

He is Emmanuel and Savior,  
One with the Father,  
God incarnate as Mary’s son,  
Lord of all,  
The truly human one.

His coming transforms everything.

His Lordship casts down every idolatrous claim to authority.  
His incarnation discloses the only path to God.  
His life shows what it means to be human.  
His atoning death reveals the depth of God’s love for sinners.  
His bodily resurrection shatters the powers of sin and death.

**II.**

**The Holy Spirit joins us to Jesus Christ by grace alone, uniting our life with his through the ministry of the Church.**

In the proclamation of the Word, the Spirit calls us to repentance, builds up and renews our life in Christ, strengthens our faith, empowers our service, gladdens our hearts, and transforms our lives more fully into the image of Christ.

We turn away from forms of church life that ignore the need for repentance, that discount the transforming power of the Gospel, or that fail to pray, hope and strive for a life that is pleasing to God.

In Baptism and conversion the Spirit engrafts us into Christ, establishing the Church's unity and binding us to one another in him.

We turn away from forms of church life that seek unity in theological pluralism, relativism or syncretism.

In the Lord's Supper the Spirit nurtures and nourishes our participation in Christ and our communion with one another in him.

We turn away from forms of church life that allow human divisions of race, gender, nationality, or economic class to mar the Eucharistic fellowship, as though in Christ there were still walls of separation dividing the human family.

### **III.**

#### **Engrafted into Jesus Christ we participate through faith in his relationship with the Father.**

By our union with Christ we participate in his righteousness before God, even as he becomes the bearer of our sin.

We turn away from any claim to stand before God apart from Christ's own righteous obedience, manifest in his life and sacrifice for our sake on the cross.

By our union with Christ we participate in his knowledge of the Father, given to us as the gift of faith through the unique and authoritative witness of the Old and New Testaments.

We turn away from forms of church life that discount the authority of Scripture or claim knowledge of God that is contrary to the full testimony of Scripture as interpreted by the Holy Spirit working in and through the community of faith across time.

By our union with Christ we participate in his love of the Father, manifest in his obedience "even unto death on the cross."

We turn away from any supposed love of God that is manifest apart from a continual longing for and striving after that loving obedience which Christ offers to God on our behalf.

### **IV.**

#### **Though obscured by our sin, our union with Christ causes his life to shine forth in our lives. This transformation of our lives into the image of Christ is a work of the Holy Spirit begun in this life as a sign and promise of its completion in the life to come.**

By our union with Christ our lives participate in the holiness of the One who fulfilled the Law of God on our behalf.

We turn away from forms of church life that ignore Christ's call to a life of holiness, or that seek to pit Law and Gospel against one another as if both were not expressions of the one Word of God.

By our union with Christ we participate in his obedience. In these times of moral and sexual confusion we affirm the consistent teaching of Scripture that calls us to chastity outside of marriage and faithfulness within the covenant of marriage between a man and a woman.

We turn away from forms of church life that fail to pray for and strive after a rightly ordered sexuality as the gracious gift of a loving God, offered to us in Christ by the power of the Holy Spirit. We also turn away from forms of church life that fail to forgive and restore those who repent of sexual and other sins.

**V.**

**As the body of Christ the Church has her life in Christ.**

By our union with Christ the Church binds together believers in every time and place.

We turn away from forms of church life that identify the true Church only with particular styles of worship, polity, or institutional structure. We also turn away from forms of church life that ignore the witness of those who have gone before us.

By our union with Christ the Church is called out into particular communities of worship and mission.

We turn away from forms of church life that see the work of the local congregation as sufficient unto itself, as if it were not a local representation of the one, holy, catholic and apostolic Church called together by the power of the Spirit in every age and time until our Lord returns.

By our union with Christ our lives participate in God's mission to the world:

to uphold the value of every human life,  
to make disciples of all peoples,  
to establish Christ's justice and peace in all creation,  
and to secure that visible oneness in Christ that is the promised inheritance of every believer

We turn away from forms of church life that fail to bear witness in word and deed to Christ's compassion and peace, and the Gospel of salvation.

By our union with Christ the Church participates in Christ's resurrected life and awaits in hope the future that God has prepared for her. Even so come quickly, Lord Jesus!

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

Note: A study guide has been published for "Union in Christ" as a tool to understanding this statement and grow in your discipleship in Christ. It is titled, Union in Christ: A Declaration for the Church, A Commentary with Questions for Study and Reflection. It can be found in the University Presbyterian Church library.