



Peace Church

Basics Class

Manual

BASICS CLASS OVERVIEW.....	2
1) THE HOLY BIBLE	2
2) GOD THREE-IN-ONE – THE TRINITY (FATHER, SON, & HOLY SPIRIT).....	3
3) HUMANKIND	6
4) WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO BE REFORMED?	7
5) THE CHURCH UNIVERSAL.....	11
6) PEACE CHURCH ORIGINS AND STRUCTURE	12
7) PEACE CHURCH CALLING, MISSION, VISION.....	14
8) MEMBERSHIP AT PEACE CHURCH	16
9) YOUR FAITH STORY.....	17
APPENDIX 1 - Church History Overview.....	19
APPENDIX 2 - Historical Overview of Peace Christian Reformed Church.....	19
APPENDIX 3 – Creeds and Confessions.....	21
RESOURCES / ADDITIONAL READING	22

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BASICS CLASS OVERVIEW

We are excited that you are worshipping and joining activities at Peace Church. Since you have expressed interest in becoming a member of Peace, you are asked to participate in this Basics Class as the first step to becoming an adult professing member. As a member you have the privilege of voting in congregational meetings held throughout the year. As your relationship with Jesus becomes stronger, and relationships develop at Peace Church, we encourage you to share in the ministry of the church as a member.

As you become more involved in the life of Peace Church, you will be encouraged to take additional steps to develop your potential in the role God calls you to fill. The next steps include discovering your spiritual gifts, becoming involved in a care group, and grow in practical Christian living. The Spiritual Development Plan contains details on steps members can take to gain spiritual maturity as they work in roles at Peace Church.

Additional material on topics presented in this manual can be found in the Practical Christian Living manual.

~ *The Elders of Peace Church*



1) THE HOLY BIBLE

A. *Inspiration & Infallibility:*

The Bible, in its entirety, is the written Word of God, and is God-breathed (inspired) to be the basis for our believing and living. The human authors of the Old and New Testament were moved by the Holy Spirit so that their writing would reflect their own personalities, language, and style while still perfectly, (infallibly) communicating God's Word to us. Belief in the inspiration and infallibility of Scripture is foundational to Christian faith. (2 Timothy 3:16-17)

B. *Authority:*

The Bible is from God and is acknowledged as having the right to teach and command. The authority of Scripture is inseparable from the historical reality of the events recorded in it. Interpreted historical events are presented in Scripture not simply as isolated events, but for their divinely revealed meaning. The Bible is self-authenticating; it bears evidence within itself of its own divine origins.

The doctrine of the supreme authority of the Bible does not mean that there are no secondary authorities in life such as: parents, governors, and church leaders. What it does mean is that the Bible, and the Bible alone, is the final and ultimate authority for our lives. (1 Thessalonians 2:13)

C. *Revelation:*

1. God reveals truths concerning Himself, what He created, and our life, death, and purpose. If we desire to know about God, we need not speculate about Him; we must rely on what He tells us about Himself.



The Bible conveys the knowledge which is necessary for salvation in a form which is understandable with the help of the Holy Spirit. In other words, you can read the Bible yourself and understand the message.

2. There are two basic methods which God has used to reveal Himself to us:
 - a. *General Revelation* - God's glory and existence are displayed to all in the creation (Psalm 19). Because of the general character of this revelation every human being is confronted with the reality of God. Romans 1:18-23 teaches that God's general revelation is so clear, that no one can miss it.
 - b. *Special Revelation* – Special revelation is necessary to communicate the way of salvation. These means of communication by God can be found in: Scriptures, miracles, appearances of God, dreams and visions, direct communication, angels, and prophecy. The Bible reveals God's activity and Jesus Christ's death and resurrection for the sake of our salvation. The Old and New Testament Scriptures are essential for understanding these special revelations and seeing God's means of grace.

D. *Versions of the Bible:* A paraphrase is a retelling of something in your own words. A paraphrase of the Bible is different from a translation in that a translation attempts (to varying degrees) to communicate as "word-for-word" or as "thought-for-thought" as possible. A paraphrase takes the meaning of a verse or passage of Scripture and attempts to express the meaning in "plain language" – essentially the words the author of the paraphrase would use to say the same thing. Archaeological research has found earlier manuscripts (e.g. the Dead Sea Scrolls were found in 1947) which are closer to the originals and thus have resulted in more accurate translations. **Approved versions of Christian Reformed Church of North American (CRCNA).*

*1611-King James Version (KJV)

1885-Revised Version

1901-American Revised Version

*1926-American Standard Version (ASV)

*1946-Revised Standard Version (RSV)

1958-Phillips (paraphrase) (PHILLIPS)

1971-The Living Bible (paraphrase) (TLB)

*1973-New International Version (NIV)

*1989-New Revised Standard Version (NRSV)

1993-The Message (paraphrase) (MSG)

*2001-English Standard Version (ESV)

*2002-Today's New International Version (TNIV)

2005-New Century Version (NCV)

*2015-New Living Translation (NLT)

- 1.1 How can you know the Bible is true?
- 1.2 What is the difference between general and special revelation?
- 1.3 Why are Scriptures necessary?
- 1.4 How does the Bible apply to your life?
- 1.5 Which is more accurate a translation and a paraphrase of the Bible?



2) GOD THREE-IN-ONE – The Trinity

"The Trinity is an ever-moving circle of dance in which Father, Son, and Holy Spirit constantly and forever move in and through one another in perfect bliss, harmony and self-forgetful joy. The three Persons of God are so invested in one another, so interested in one another, so



caring of one another that, although three Persons, they form just one God.” (Scott Hoezee, The Center for Excellence in Preaching)

- A. *We believe in the Triune God who has revealed Himself as one God in three Persons:* (Matthew 3:16-17, Matthew 28:19, Luke 1:35, 2 Corinthians 13:14)
- B. *We believe in the Unity of God*
There is one God. (Deuteronomy 6:4, 1 Corinthians 8:6)

The Apostles’ Creed reveals the foundational truths of God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. ^[1]

1. **God**

I believe in God,

- The creed begins with a simple affirmation of belief in God. The following three sections describe the three persons of this one God.

2. **God the Father**

*the Father almighty,
Creator of heaven and earth.*

- The first person of the Trinity is the one Jesus revealed to us as “the Father.” God is not some remote, unknowable spiritual entity. Rather God is our loving, powerful heavenly Father.
- Against all other ideologies about the beginning of the world, we profess that God created heaven and earth and all that is in them. This profession affirms the goodness of creation and gives it with meaning and purpose.
- Further, all that is good and beautiful points to a Creator God. Thus, all humans can know something about God through what creation reveals.

3. **God the Son**

*I believe in Jesus Christ, His only Son, our Lord,
who was conceived by the Holy Spirit
and born of the virgin Mary.
He suffered under Pontius Pilate,
was crucified, died, and was buried;
He descended to hell.
The third day He rose again from the dead.
He ascended to heaven
and is seated at the right hand of God the Father almighty.
From there He will come to judge the living and the dead.*

- We affirm that Jesus of Nazareth, though born of a woman, was more than a human being. He was actually God’s Son and thus also God Himself, fully Divine and fully human. (Philippians 2:5-11, Mark 1:24, Hebrews 2:17-18)
- As the Christ, Jesus fulfilled all the Old Testament prophecies about a Messiah who would redeem God’s people. (Isaiah 53, Galatians 3:13-14, Romans 5:8) The life, death, and resurrection of Jesus are grounded in historical fact.
- After His earthly work of redemption was finished, Jesus took His place in heaven as Lord of all things. He will come again to make all things new. (Acts 1:9-11, Matthew 24:30, Revelation 22:20)



4. **God the Holy Spirit**

*I believe in the Holy Spirit,
the holy catholic* church,
the communion of saints,
the forgiveness of sins,
the resurrection of the body,
and the life everlasting. Amen.*

**that is, the true Christian church of all times and all places.*

- When Jesus ascended bodily to heaven, He promised His disciples a Comforter, a source of power; one that would “lead them into all truth.” This gift was the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is not an “it” or impersonal force, but a Person of the Trinity. Ever since then, the Holy Spirit has dwelled in and empowered God’s people. (John 14:26, Acts 9:31)
- His work is not as visible as the work attributed to the Father or the Son. His work is not designed to call attention to Himself, but to give glory to the Father and the Son. (John 16:13-15)
- The Spirit intercedes for us when we pray. (Romans 8:26-27)
- The Holy Spirit is the presence and power of God with us here and now, leading the church, uniting God’s people, applying God’s forgiveness to our broken lives, speaking to us, and spurring us individually and communally to godly living. (1 Corinthians 12-14, Galatians 5:22-25, Ephesians 3:16-19)

C. *Some of the Attributes of God:*

God is Unchanging (Psalm 33:11); Infinite (Revelation 1:8); Incomprehensible (Psalm 145:3); Sovereign (Psalm 135:5-6); Holy (Revelation 4:8); Loving (John 3:16-17); Righteous (Psalm 145:17); All-Knowing/Omniscient (Psalm 139:1-4); All-Powerful/Omnipotent (Jeremiah 32:17); Ever-Present/Omnipresent (Psalm 139:7-10). We share some of these attributes with God because we are created in His image. However, because of sin we have them in a finite and imperfect way.

- 2.1 Is it possible to define God?
- 2.2 How many Gods are there?
- 2.3 What is the work of God the Father?
- 2.4 What is the work of God the Son?
- 2.5 What is the work of God the Holy Spirit?
- 2.6 Does the word Trinity appear in Scripture?



3) HUMANKIND

God created humankind good and in His own image, but man sinned and as a result is spiritually dead. Through regeneration by the Holy Spirit, and faith in Jesus Christ, God’s grace grants us eternal life. (*Belgic Confession Articles 14 & 15; Heidelberg Catechism Lord’s Days 3-7*)



The entire Bible forms one richly textured story of God's loving purpose in relation to humans and the whole creation. "*God created them good and in His own image, that is, in true righteousness and holiness, so that they might truly know God their creator, love Him with all their heart, and live with God in eternal happiness, to praise and glorify Him*" (Heidelberg Catechism Lord's Day 3, Q&A 6). Adam fell into sin (original sin) and as our representative, we all are also born in sin, which spoils all that we do and say; even our best efforts (actual sin).

- A. **Creation** - In the beginning God created a world where everything was in perfect harmony and peace (*shalom*). God's relationship between humans and the creation were good and whole. The world was made for living in joy in the presence of our Maker, worshiping God by loving Him and one another forever. (Genesis 1:27)
- B. **Fall (Sin/Guilt)** – "Just as sin entered the world through one man, and death through sin, and in this way death came to all people, because all sinned" (Romans 5:12). Adam and Eve rejected God's rule over them. We refer to their rebellious choice as "the fall," and because they represented all of humanity, their action affects us too. We have—through our attitudes and actions—declared ourselves to be God's enemies. This rebellion results in physical and spiritual death. God must act justly and judge sin (i.e. respond with wrath), otherwise God would not be God.

Sin is any act, thought, or word which fails to equal God's perfect plan. All of us have sinned and fallen short of God's glory. The results of sin affect every part of our lives and creation. The most devastating effect of sin is alienation from God. Still, sin cannot obliterate the "image of God" in us that longs for God and for wholeness. Our only hope is in Jesus Christ and His saving work. (Romans 3:23, Genesis 3, Romans 7:19-20, Romans 5:18, Romans 6:23)

- C. **Redemption (Salvation/Grace)** - God's wrath is His love in action against sin. God did not allow sin to have the last word in this story. Because of His great love for humans and for the whole creation, God set out to redeem the world from its sinful condition. He sent His only Son, Jesus the Messiah, to live a fully human life and then die, thus paying the price for humanity's sinful actions and covering God's wrath. We are not saved by the good we may do, we are saved by grace alone. But death could not defeat Jesus. God raised Him from the dead to show that He had conquered sin and death. Now God's kingdom is growing and spreading in this world, and Christians are part of that great work. (John 3:16-17, 2 Corinthians 5:18-21, Ephesians 2:8-9)
- D. **New Life (Service/Gratitude)** – In Christ we are given a new nature. We are justified (made right with), not because of our obedience to the law, but in order that we may become obedient to God's law. We are not saved **by** our good works, we are saved **for** good works. Good works are evidence of our faith, and a key characteristic of a life lived out of gratitude and thanksgiving to God for His great gift of salvation. The purpose of good works is for the glory of God. (Ephesians 4:22-24, Ephesians 2:10, James 2:17)
- E. **New Creation** - One day, Jesus is coming back again to extend God's reign on earth completely. Christ will judge sin and evil, and usher in righteousness and peace. He will do away with any traces of sin and its effects. There will be no more sickness, no more



suffering, no more alienation from God, no more death. Evil will be eradicated. God Himself will dwell with humans and all creation will be fully restored. Praise God!
(Matthew 25:31-46) ^[1]

What is true faith?

“True faith is not only a knowledge and conviction that everything God reveals in His Word is true; it is also a deep-rooted assurance, created in me by the Holy Spirit through the gospel, that, out of sheer grace earned for us by Christ, not only others, but I too, have had my sins forgiven, have been made forever right with God, and have been granted salvation.” (Heidelberg Catechism, Q&A 21)

- 3.1 Are man’s actions completely good or bad? Why?
- 3.2 Is man incapable of doing any good? Why?
- 3.3 How does original sin differ from actual sin?
- 3.4 Which of the following do you agree with:
 - Having doubts is a sign of a sick faith or no faith? Explain.
 - Most Christians have doubts at one time or another? Explain.
- 3.5 When/if you have doubts about what you believe or about God in general, how do you deal with those feelings? What in Heidelberg Catechism, Q&A 21 could help you in times of doubt?



4) WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO BE REFORMED?

The term “Reformed” has two different meanings. Reformed Theology is a study of God and what He says in His Word. It emphasizes the sovereignty of God in all things and the centrality of faith in Christ. It can also refer to particular tradition or branch of the Christian churches. These churches have their historical roots to the Protestant Reformation in the 1500’s and are based on the teachings of John Calvin. Peace Christian Reformed Church fits into both categories-Reformed Theology and Tradition.

- A. *Reformed Protestants use the five `solos` as pillars which consist of their foundational beliefs:*
1. **Scripture Alone (Sola Scriptura):** We believe the Bible is God’s inspired word. It is the ultimate authority in our life and guides all aspects of our life. (2 Timothy 2:16, Matthew 4:4,7,10)
 2. **Christ Alone (Solus Christus):** We believe that Christ is King, and that it is our task to bring every part of personal and social life into obedience to the Lord Jesus. (Colossians 1:15-20, 1 Corinthians 15:21-22)
 3. **Grace Alone (Sola Gratia):** We believe that our salvation comes by God’s grace or “unmerited favor” only. It is a completely free gift. It is not based on anything done by us, the sinners. (Ephesians 2:8)
 4. **Faith Alone (Sola Fide):** We believe that salvation comes only by faith in Christ Jesus as Savior and Lord. (Romans 1:16-17)
 5. **Glory to God Alone (Soli Deo Gloria):** We believe that God is sovereign, thus all honor and glory belongs to God and God alone. (Romans 11:36)



B. *What are the main aspects of Reformed Theology?*

People often use different acronyms, F.A.I.T.H. and T.U.L.I.P, to describe and summarize five main points of Reformed theology.

1. **F**allen Humanity (**T**otal Depravity):
All of humanity and our entire world are affected by sin. Internally, personally, all people sense they are “not right”—not at peace, not whole, not everything they could be. Externally, we’re all surrounded by evidence that the world is not right. It’s filled with crime, hunger, bloodshed, etc. (Romans 3:10-11)
2. **A**dopted by God (**U**nconditional Election):
With a heart full of love, someone brings a child home to cherish and raise, to make him or her a part of the family. That’s just what God does for the lost, fallen, and wandering people of this world. Adopted children do nothing to merit their adoption. Likewise, we do not (indeed, cannot) take the initiative in being chosen by God. We are dependent on God’s electing love. (Ephesians 1:4-5)
3. **I**ntentional Atonement (**L**imited Atonement):
The good news of the gospel is that Jesus did for us what we are unable to do for ourselves. Because we are fallen—tainted with sin—we cannot offer ourselves as a pure, blameless sacrifice needed to atone (pay the price) for our sin. But because Jesus was without sin, He could be such a sacrifice. And He was. His death on the cross paid the price for “the sin of the world”. (1 John 4:9-10)
4. **T**ransformed by the Holy Spirit (**I**rresistible Grace):
God loves us and draws us to Himself. The Holy Spirit opens our sin-darkened eyes and sin-stopped ears, enabling us to see and hear the good news that we have been saved from sin. He gives us the gift of faith, enabling us to believe. The Holy Spirit renews us so that we desire God and His will. Do you desire God and the things of God? That’s the Holy Spirit at work in your life. Salvation is God’s gracious work. (John 9:35-41, Ezekiel 36:26, Acts 16:14, Ephesians 2:8-10, John 3:1-8)
5. **H**eld by God (**P**erseverance of the Saints):
The joyous conclusion of all this is that we are held eternally secure in the hands of God. Because we are in God’s grip, we cannot lose our salvation. The Bible teaches that our eternal security does not depend on our hanging on to God, but on God hanging on to us. (Hebrews 13:5, Ephesians 1:13-14, Philippians 1:6, Philippians 3:12, Romans 8:37-39, Isaiah 41:13)

C. *Our Creeds and Confessions*

The Christian Reformed Church holds to three creeds (statements of faith) and three confessions (doctrinal statements). Since we always bring preconceptions to the Bible, the confessions serve to shape our understanding in faithful ways and provide a needed theological lens for interpreting Scripture’s message. The ecumenical creeds and Reformed confessions, most arising from the process of theological struggle and at times fierce persecution, continue to guide our faith by returning us again and again to the heart of the revelation of the triune God in His Word. (Appendix 3)

Creeds (statements of faith)

The Apostles’ Creed
The Nicene Creed
The Athanasian Creed

Confessions (doctrinal statements)

The Belgic Confession
The Heidelberg Catechism
The Canons of Dort



D. *Our Sacraments*

1. **Baptism:** The sacrament of baptism is a sign and seal of God's promise to:
 - a. unite us with Christ in His death and resurrection,
 - b. wash away our sins,
 - c. give us new birth in Christ,
 - d. incorporate us into the church,
 - e. give us the gift of the Holy Spirit, and
 - f. include us in the covenant and kingdom of God.

We believe our children ought to be baptized and sealed with the sign of the covenant, just as little children were circumcised in Israel. We are to teach our children that they have been baptized and prayerfully encourage them to affirm the promises of their baptism by professing their faith in Jesus Christ. Since baptism is a covenantal act, it requires faith and commitment on the part of those being baptized or their covenant representatives (parents). For adults, this requires a profession of faith, and for infants, the faith of the parents and the congregation, and their commitment to nurture the faith of the child toward a mature profession of faith.

In contrast, "dedication speaks of our believing approach to God. That's all. Infant baptism goes far beyond that to speak also of God's faithfulness and promises to us." (Rev. Henry De Moor)

Baptism was instituted by Christ after His victorious resurrection. *"All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to Me. Therefore, go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely, I am with you always, to the very end of the age"* (Matt. 28:18-20). In this command, Christ Himself makes baptism the universal entrance into His church, and the mark of our discipleship.

2. **Lord's Supper:**

"All baptized members who come with age- and ability-appropriate faith in Jesus Christ are welcome to the Lord's Supper (Holy Communion)" (Church Order, Article 59-a). "We receive the spiritual nourishment and refreshment of the bread and cup of the Lord 'as sure signs' in remembrance of Christ's body and blood poured out for us in His once-for-all sacrifice on the cross" (Heidelberg Catechism, Q. and A. 75-82).

- a. The Lord's Supper is a celebration of God's grace, not human achievement. It is a means of grace through which God acts to seal the promises from His Word. The power of the celebration does not lie in our ability to think hard about Jesus' death and our sin, but in the way God's Spirit uses the celebration to nourish and sustain us. The Lord's Supper is a gift!
- b. The Lord's Supper is not an end in itself. It always points beyond itself to celebrate God's grace, covenant faithfulness, and Christ's coming again.
- c. The Lord's Supper is a sign of a covenantal relationship. Our relationship with God in Christ is based on promises.
- d. The Lord's Supper is deeply personal, but never private. It is a communal action of the gathered congregation, which represents the church in all times and places.



It is a good practice to review 1 Corinthians 11:23-29, especially verses 27-29 prior to partaking in the Lord's Supper.

For I pass on to you what I received from the Lord Himself. On the night when He was betrayed, the Lord Jesus took some bread and gave thanks to God for it. Then He broke it in pieces and said, *"This is My body, which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of Me."* In the same way, He took the cup of wine after supper, saying, *"this cup is the new covenant between God and His people – an agreement confirmed with My blood. Do this in remembrance of Me as often as you drink it."* For every time you eat this bread and drink this cup, you are announcing the Lord's death until He comes again.

So anyone who eats this bread or drinks this cup of the Lord unworthily is guilty of sinning against the body and blood of the Lord. That is why you should examine yourself before eating the bread and drinking the cup. For if you eat the bread or drink the cup without honoring the body of Christ, you are eating and drinking God's judgment upon yourself.

There are different names for this celebration:

- e. "Lord's Supper" conveys that Jesus Himself is host of the supper, and that we celebrate this feast in obedience to Christ.
- f. "Communion" highlights the intimate union we experience with both Christ and fellow believers.
- g. "Eucharist" (Greek for thanksgiving) names this feast as a meal of gratitude, just as the last supper was, for Jesus and His disciples, a meal of thanksgiving.

Matthew 26:26 shares four verbs from the last supper:
Jesus <i>took</i> bread,
<i>gave thanks</i> ,
<i>broke it</i> , and
<i>gave it</i> to His disciples.

Therefore, we are to:
<i>take</i> the bread, announcing that it is God's gift for us
<i>give</i> thanks for all God's faithfulness to us
<i>break</i> the bread, with gestures of hospitality
<i>offer</i> it to the gathered community in love

Through the Lord's Supper, we receive Christ and all His benefits by the mediation of the Holy Spirit through faith. Therefore, we celebrate it often, with appropriate joy, reverence, and faith.

E. *Reformed Perspective on End Times:*

1. Amillennialism or "realized millennialism" holds that the 1000 years (millennium) spoken of in Revelation 20 is not exclusively in the future but refers to the kingdom of God which is currently in the process of realization. The emphasis in this view is that Christ can return at any time, so we must watch and be prepared. This is the predominate perspective in the Christian Reformed denomination.



2. Postmillennialism holds that the millennium has yet to begin. As the world is increasingly evangelized and converted to Christianity, as the signs of the times are progressively reached, a golden age of spiritual prosperity will be reached that will last for 1000 years. After these 1000 years, Christ will return to this Christianized world. The emphasis in this view is to make the world Christian so that Christ can return.
3. Premillennialism also holds that the millennium has yet to begin, but that Christ will return prior to this 1000-year period and His reign will characterize the millennium. It is after this millennial period that there will be the final judgment and the institution of the new heaven and earth. Among premillennialists are many differences and varying computations of the timeline.

- 4.1 What takes place in us so that we can come to God?
- 4.2 Can we lose our salvation? Explain.
- 4.3 Baptism is a sign and seal of which promise/s?
- 4.4 What is the significance of the bread and cup?
- 4.5 Are the bread and cup, actually the body and blood of Christ?
- 4.6 Why do we participate in the sacraments communally? Is this something we can do at home by ourselves or with our families? Why or why not?
- 4.7 What is the difference between baptism and dedication of children?
- 4.8 Do you think it's important to use creeds and confessions? Why or why not?



5) THE CHURCH UNIVERSAL

"We believe that the Son of God through His Spirit and Word, out of the entire human race, from the beginning of the world to its end, gathers, protects, and preserves for Himself a community chosen for eternal life and united in true faith. And of this community we are and always will be a living member." (*Heidelberg Catechism, Q&A, 54*)

In the simplest of terms, the church of Christ consists of all those who testify to the name of Jesus Christ, who is the son of the living God. The church exists to bear witness to Christ and His Kingdom.

A. *As the church:*

1. We are called by God to belong to Him and not to the world.
2. We are the bride of Christ reflecting the powerful love, dedication, and sacrifice of Christ for the church. Christ is the bridegroom and the church is His bride (Revelation 19:7-9).
3. We are the body of Christ; Christ is the head of the church...which is the body. The church functions with the members as various parts. In the Ascension, Jesus bodily returned to heaven, and the church is now the living body of Christ in the world. (Acts 1-2; Romans 12:5; 1 Corinthians 12:12-31; Ephesians 1:22-23)



B. *The Invisible Church*

This is the church from God's point of view. God looks upon a person's heart and knows the true members of His body as the church. All true believers are members of the invisible church. It is called the "invisible church" not because we can't see any of it, but because we can't see all of it.

C. *The Visible Church*

This is the church from our point of view. Whoever makes a credible profession of trust in Christ as Savior can join a local body of believers. These people reveal through word and deed that they are committed to the ministry of reconciling people to God and to one another.

1. Marks of the visible church:

- a. *The pure preaching of the Word.*
- b. *The proper administration of the sacraments.*
- c. *The faithful exercise of discipline.* The word "discipline" comes from the same word as "disciple," meaning that the church is to be faithful in following Jesus. Those who are weak are to be encouraged, those who sin are to be corrected, those who stray are to be sought.
- d. *The active call to tell others of Christ.* We are to be consistent with the ministry of Christ Himself, who came to seek and to save the lost and with the Great Commission to "Go and make disciples."

2. The local church and its membership: We teach that believers have a responsibility to declare their identity with the visible body of Christ through membership in a local congregation. The first church devoted themselves to teaching, fellowship, breaking of bread, and prayer (Acts 2:42). Similarly, today the local church gathers and offers thankful service through:

- a. *Worship* (Colossians 3:16).
- b. *Mutual accountability and encouragement* (Hebrews 10:24-25).
- c. *Nurturing disciples* (Ephesians 4:12-13).

5.1 How is the church related to Christ?

5.2 What is the difference between the visible and invisible church?

5.3 What are the marks of the visible church?

5.4 Why do we gather as a church?



6) PEACE CHURCH ORIGINS AND STRUCTURE

A. *Origins*

1. Peace Church has its foundation in and is affiliated with the Christian Reformed Church in North America (CRCNA) denomination. Our denomination emphasizes the Bible as central to our life, personal faith in Christ, the all-powerful care of God and the inspiration through the Holy Spirit.
2. The name "Reformed" identifies the church as historically tied to the Protestant Reformation of the 1500's. The reformers believed the Bible taught the following



principles: a personal faith in Christ as the only way of salvation, the Bible as authoritative, and the life of believers marked by thankfulness to God for His great gift of grace. These views opposed the beliefs of the Roman Catholic Church of that time.

3. Reformed churches flourished in Europe, particularly Germany and the Netherlands. In the early 1800's, some of these Dutch Reformed people moved to North America, and in 1857 formed the Christian Reformed Church in North America. While there are many rural and Dutch roots in the CRCNA, today portions of the church are among Korean, Native Americans, Cambodian, Vietnamese, Hispanics, and African people. The CRCNA is a group of approximately 1100 churches located in the United States and Canada with missions and organized churches in several other countries.
4. Refer to Church History Overview (Appendix 1; 2 for Peace Church history) for a summary of the origins of the Christian Reformed Church.

B. *Organizational Structure and Authority*

1. Church government systems

Christ is the head of the church. How the church is led by Christ is understood and practiced in different ways:

- a. Presbyterian: The local church is governed by elders in the local church, with a mutual accountability between churches.
- b. Episcopal: The local church is governed by bishops who rule over a group of local churches.
- c. Congregational: The local church is governed by the members of that local church.

2. Peace Church is Presbyterian in its organization

The Council has the responsibility of expressing the authority of Christ in the church. Full consideration is given to the advice expressed by the congregation (for example, in a vote taken at a congregational meeting) but the authority for making and carrying out final decisions remains with the Council as the governing body of the church.

3. The organizational structure of Peace Church

- a. The Members: Every member has the calling, responsibility, and privilege to minister in ways that are fitting to that person's spiritual gifts, interests, and abilities which honor God and serve the purpose of the church.
- b. The Council: Peace Church typically has a council comprised of elders, deacons, and the pastor. The Council meets monthly to administrate and conduct the ministry of the church.
- c. The Elders: Have oversight of the doctrine and life of the members of the congregation, exercise spiritual warning and encouragement as well as discipline, provide pastoral care, promote the work of evangelism, and defend the faith.
- d. The Deacons: Administer mercy; stimulate the members to faithful and obedient stewardship; collect, administer and distribute monies; serve the congregation with counsel and assistance.
- e. The Ministry Teams serve to assist the Council in these areas of ministry: Education, Fellowship, Service, Shepherding Cluster, Worship, Buildings and Grounds. Ministry Team Leaders are approved by the Council. Ministry Teams administrate and lead their respective areas of ministry, and meet periodically to coordinate their ministry tasks.



- f. The annual operating and mission support budgets are prepared by the Council and presented to the congregation for approval.
- 4. Church Order

The congregations of the denomination operate collectively with common consent so that all things in the church may be done "in a fitting and orderly way". It is called the Church Order. The Church Order is a document that shows how the congregations of the CRCNA have decided to live together and to organize themselves.
- 5. Church Assemblies
 - a. *The Council* members include the elders, deacons, and pastor, and is the official assembly of the local congregation.
 - b. *The Classis* is the official assembly of area CRCNA churches. Classis Central Plains meets twice each year. The CRCNA has 48 Classes. Peace Church is a part of Classis Central Plains, which is made up of 23 congregations in Southcentral Iowa and Missouri. Three delegates (pastor, elder, and deacon) are sent from each congregation to each Classis meeting.
 - c. *The Synod* is the official assembly representing all the Classes from the CRCNA. Synod meets once a year. Four delegates from each Classis (1 pastor, 1 elder, 1 deacon, 1 delegate-at large: pastor or elder) are sent to Synod.

C. *Ministries*

The ministries we participate in with the classis and denomination are many and world-wide. They can be found on the Christian Reformed Church website www.crcna.org. Some ministries are:

1. The Back to God Ministries International
2. Denominational College - Calvin
3. Calvin Theological Seminary
4. Other Associated Colleges: Dordt and Trinity
5. Resonate Global Missions
6. World Renew

- 6.1 The organization of Peace Church is _____ in its structure.
- 6.2 Who is the ultimate authority of the church?
- 6.3 What are the three church offices?
- 6.4 What are the three church assemblies?
- 6.5 If you were to describe the church with one word, which of the following would you use to describe it? Hospital, Rotary Club; Dorm Room; Fortress; Home/Family; Fellowship Center; Open Community; School; Other.
- 6.6 What is the purpose of going to church?



7) PEACE CHURCH CALLING, MISSION, VISION

Our mission statement defines what we are about, and our vision statement paints a picture of where we believe God is calling us to go.



- A. *Mission Statement* – In celebration of God's grace, through the work of the Holy Spirit, we are committed to loving God, loving our neighbor, and sharing the Gospel of Jesus Christ with all people. (The Great Commandment, Matthew 22:37-39, and The Great Commission, Matthew 28:18-20.)

Therefore, our mission is:

Proclaiming God through Word and Sacrament, responding with prayer and praise (through Worship and Prayer)

Ministry Team: Worship

Aspects of ministry: worship service, music, banners, prayer, ushers and greeters, nursery

Encouraging one another with Christ-like care and fellowship (through Fellowship and Shepherding Cluster Care)

Ministry Team: Fellowship

Aspects of ministry: social activities, fellowship groups, care groups, potlucks

Advancing the Kingdom by sharing our faith in Christ as Savior and Lord (through Outreach and Mission)

Ministry Team: the outreach effort is spread among all teams

Aspects of ministry: missionary support

Challenging one another to grow in Christ by learning God's Word (through Education and Discipleship)

Ministry Team: Education

Aspects of ministry: adult and youth Sunday school, Cadets, GEMS, youth group, book corner, DivorceCare, DC4K, men's ministry

Equipping one another to serve in the church, community, and world in the name of Christ (through Service and Human Resources)

Ministry Team: Service

Aspects of ministry: service projects, blood drive, angel tree, food drives, special fund raising

B. *Peace Church Vision Process*

To move us closer to completing that mission, we recognize four elements of community life here at Peace. These goals work together in a progression, with each element building on its predecessor.

1. Mobilize leadership so that the work of elders and deacons will be primarily people-oriented, instead of focused on systems and policy. Our elders and deacons will lead us to increase the:
2. Care and support of our own church members, providing a place where people are connected to one another, where burdens are shared, and encouragement is expected. This will allow us to:
3. Be involved in community. We will be aware of the greatest needs in our community, both directly surrounding Peace Church, as well as our own neighborhoods. We will have the backing and the resources of our church to offer Jesus as the source of hope and healing at the point of each person's need. As a result, we will see:



4. More people coming to know Jesus. Each of us will expect to participate in the conversion of people to a saving knowledge of Jesus on a regular basis. With God working through each of us personally, we will be able to identify new brothers and sisters who have come to salvation in Jesus.

Our vision, then, is to:

Mobilize leaders who will support a caring congregation, allowing us to address the needs in our community, resulting in more people being saved by Jesus Christ.

7.1 Whose responsibility is it to carry out our mission and vision? The pastor? The council? Members of the church?



8) MEMBERSHIP AT PEACE CHURCH

A. *All members of Peace Church are expected to grow as disciples of Christ.*

A member's life at Peace Church will be characterized by:

1. *Regular Bible Study and prayer.* (2 Timothy 3:16-17 & 1 Thessalonians 5:16-18)
2. *Regular worship participation.* (Hebrews 10:25-26 & Ephesians 5:19-20)
3. *Producing the fruit of the Spirit.* (Galatians 5:22-25)
4. *Thankful service through discerning and deploying spiritual gifts.* (1 Peter 4:10)
5. *Grateful Giving and Tithing.* (Malachi 3:10 & 2 Corinthians 8:7)
6. *Witnessing to others in word and deed.* (Acts 1:8)
7. *Participate in a care group.* (Acts 2:42-47)

[Refer to Practical Christian Living]

B. *Joining the adult membership*

Individuals who:

- believe in Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord,
- believe the Bible is the Word of God,
- accept God's promise of forgiveness,
- promise with the strength of the Holy Spirit to commit to Christ, His church, and His work

are invited by the elders to join the adult membership of Peace Church.

Adult membership, under the supervision of the elders is recognized through:

- Completion of the "Basics" class.
- Requesting that any previous church records (such as baptism, membership, etc.) be forwarded to the elders of Peace Church.
- Meeting with the elders to personally express your relationship to God, and your intent to grow in the expectations of membership.
- Being invited by the elders to join the adult membership.

Depending upon any previous church relationship(s) you may have been blessed with, the elders may invite you to either:



1. *Receive Adult Baptism.* This is for new adult believers/members who have not been previously baptized.
2. *Make a Profession of Faith.* This is for new adult believers, who have been previously baptized.
3. *Make a Reaffirmation of Faith.* This is for adult believers who previously made profession of faith and desire to join the adult membership of Peace Church. This includes:
 - a. Transfer of an existing adult membership from another church.
 - b. Communicant youths who seek adult membership.

Questions that will be considered during the membership interview:

- 8.1. What relationship do you have with Jesus?
- 8.2. Why did Jesus die on the cross?
- 8.3. Why did Jesus come back from the dead after three days?
- 8.4. Are you going to heaven? Why?
- 8.5. Is there anything that you could do to earn your way into heaven?
- 8.6. Is there one God or three Gods?
- 8.7. Is Jesus God?
- 8.8. How do you learn more about God?
- 8.9. What authority do Scriptures have in life?
- 8.10. Are there errors in the Scriptures?
- 8.11. What are the two sacraments celebrated in this church?
- 8.12. What do we receive from each of these sacraments?
- 8.13. What can this church do for you?
- 8.14. What can you do for this church?



9) YOUR FAITH STORY

Sometimes, by putting our story into writing, we can more clearly see how God has been working, and where He may be taking us. Would you write out your faith story, and share it with the elders?

Here are a few values we want to assume:

- A. Each person's story is unique to their relationship with God. There is no one "right" story.
- B. People come to love God and grow in Him at different rates and in different ways.
- C. There is no need for embarrassment.
- D. Individual's stories or parts of their stories are not to be shared outside the room. In this way we can make this a safe place to share our own unique stories.

Some guidelines for your story:

- A. Please write or type out your story. This will help you stay focused. You can say what you wrote out, or even read it. Some people find it calms their nerves to simply read it.
- B. Answering these questions may help as you form your story:



1. When do you first remember experiencing Jesus as your own Savior (it may have been a moment or over a much longer season)? Describe how it happened.
 2. What did you understand of God (the Father, Son and Holy Spirit) before you came to a saving knowledge of God?
 3. In what other ways was life like, before Jesus acted in your life? Describe the experience.
 4. If you can remember, what adjective would best describe your relationship with God and His Kingdom during each decade of adult life (20s, 30s, 40s, etc.)?
 5. What types of experiences have helped you grow more deeply in love with God in your life as a Christian?
 6. Share one or more experiences in which your relationship with God was not what you had hoped it would be.
 7. Share some types of ministries and service you have found yourself serving God in during your Christian life.
 8. What is it about God you most appreciate?
 9. If you currently are sensing a trial getting in the way of your growing deeper in love with God, please describe that challenge. If you have hit such a difficulty in the past, please include these wall(s) in your story.
 10. What would you like to improve in your relationship with God? In other words, imagine your love with God being at a better place. What has improved?
- D. It is your story, so don't worry about the grammar. Please do not be self-conscious about the story. Let it be you.
- E. Ask God to move you to share your story as accurately and transparently as possible.

[See Spiritual Journey in Practical Christian Living for more details]



APPENDIX 1 - Church History Overview

MAJOR BRANCHES OF THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH

1st to 11th century	The Christian Church		
11th century	Western Catholic	Eastern Orthodox	
16th century	Protestant	Roman Catholic	Eastern Orthodox

Note: In the following, the farther to the left, the more radical the break from the Roman Catholic Church.

Protestant Churches

16th century	Anabaptist	Reformed	Lutheran	Anglican
17th century	Quakers	Puritans		
18th century	Methodist			
19th century	Free Church			
20th century	Pentecostal			



APPENDIX 2 - Historical overview of Peace Christian Reformed Church

- 1963 Five CRC families in Cedar Rapids signed a request asking the Board of Home Missions to begin work in Cedar Rapids.
- 1964 Rev. Albert Haan arrived in June to open the field; toward the end of the year he recommended not to proceed at this time; the field was closed December 31, 1964.
- 1966 March – Rev. John Piersma and two Cedar Rapids families met with Classis Pella Home Missions Committee to discuss possibilities of beginning the work again.
May – First CRC in Pella asked Classis to adopt Cedar Rapids as a Classis Home Mission project. Classis decided that First CRC of Pella “should do what it can.”
Rev. Piersma arranged for himself and others to come to Cedar Rapids for afternoon worship services. Worship and Sunday School met in the Marion Library. A midweek Bible Study group was also started in homes.
- 1967-’69 Vacation Bible School tents were set up in Donnelly Park. Calvin Seminarians assisted with VBS.
- 1968 Late in 1968 First CRC in Pella and the Cedar Rapids group petitioned the Board of Home Missions again to reopen Cedar Rapids as a denominational field; the request was endorsed.
- 1969 February – The Board began calling for a missionary pastor.
November – Rev. Peter Hondred arrived to be stated supply until the following spring; meetings were held in the newly built Bowman Woods School.
- 1970 Rev. Earl Dykema arrived to become the first missionary-pastor in June. In September, the church site at 6600 C Avenue was purchased for \$35,000.
- 1971 The congregation adopted a budget of \$119,000 for the church building.
- 1972 The congregation gives final approval for the church plan, and holds groundbreaking.
Organizational meeting with charter membership of 11 families including 52 persons.
- 1973 February 4 – First meeting in the new building.



- February 15 & 18 – Dedication of the church, to serve 60 families initially, then to be enlarged to serve 125 families.
- 1977 February – Rev. Dykema accepted a call to be Regional Home Missionary in the Southwest (Classis Red Mesa).
June – Rev. Ken Van De Griend of Ackley, Iowa, accepted the call to be our second pastor.
- 1979-'83 Membership grows fast due to booming economic conditions.
- 1981 Groundbreaking and construction of the education wing at a cost of approximately \$100,000.
- 1982 Dedication of the education wing.
- 1983 Rev. Van De Griend accepted a call to Shawnee Park CRC in Grand Rapids, Michigan.
September – Candidate Gerald Hoek (former intern 1982) accepted the call to be our third pastor and was ordained and installed.
- 1983-'84 An economic slump hits Cedar Rapids resulting in a loss of Peace Church over 15 families.
- 1985 Peace Church became independent from Home Missions funding.
- 1990 The sanctuary was remodeled to provide more seating; windows replaced the sliding glass doors on the south side of building.
- 1992 June – Rev. Hoek accepted a call to become pastor of Faith CRC in Nashville, Tennessee.
- 1993 August – Rev. Douglas MacLeod accepted the call to be our fourth pastor.
- 1996 Architect produced a full site and facility expansion master plan; completed in 1997.
- 1997 To accommodate increasing attendance, two morning worship services began, as well as the evening service. 25th anniversary celebration held. Promised Land Christian Preschool started with 12 students.
- 1998 Preschool enrollment increased to 28 students; fully licensed by the state of Iowa.
Congregation approves \$770,000 for the fellowship hall project.
- 1999 The 1985 building loan was paid off. Expansion of fellowship and education wing began. We returned to one morning worship service and an evening service.
- 2003 Back Yard Bible Clubs in members' yards replaced VBS.
- 2004 DivorceCare and DivorceCare for Kids is incorporated as a ministry of Peace Church.
- 2008 Council approved beginning a convergent (blended) worship service to start in September.
Pastor MacLeod accepted a call to Calvin CRC in Grand Rapids.
Following a major flood in Cedar Rapids and surrounding communities in June, a CRWRC Needs Assessment team used Peace Church as a staging area; team members stayed with church members.
The Full Grace Ministries congregation began using our facility after losing their facility in flood.
- 2009 Rev. Gary Brouwers accepted our call to be our fifth pastor and arrived in July.
- 2010 The parking lot was expanded.
- 2012 A new exterior electronic sign was installed at the C Ave. entrance.
Peace celebrated 40 years on August 4 & 5.
- 2015 Promised Land Christian Preschool closed its doors on May 19, 2015, because of declining enrollment caused by free public preschool.
New Vision is launched with seminars on the spiritual journey and faith stories.
- 2017 Building renovation starts on west end storage and adding gathering/cry room off sanctuary as well as additional handicap parking added to lower level.
The last evening service is held December 17, 2017.



APPENDIX 3 – Creeds and Confessions:

Three Ecumenical Creeds:

Apostles' Creed - This most widely accepted and used creed of the universal Christian church stems from the early second century and is a summary of the apostles' teachings. Contrary to popular belief, it was not written by the early apostles. It sets forth their doctrine "in sublime simplicity, in unsurpassed brevity, in beautiful order and with liturgical solemnity" (*Psalter Hymnal*, p. 813). The creed tells about the work and person of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

Nicene Creed

This ancient creed is also Trinitarian and can be seen as an 'expansion', if you will, of the Apostles' Creed, written in opposition to the heresy of Arianism, which teaches that only the Father is eternal, and that the Son was created. This creed emphasizes that both the Father and the Son are eternal God.

Athanasian Creed

This creed too takes issue with Arianism and affirms that the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit are eternal. It also deals with Christ's incarnation (humanity), stressing that Christ has both a divine and a human nature and able to reconcile us to God and represent us before Him.

Three Reformed Confessions:

Belgic Confession

This confession from the Reformation era is a comprehensive statement of the Christian faith: God's person and work, the nature of Scripture, creation and the fall of humanity, Christ's person and work, the church, the sacraments, and the return of Christ.

Heidelberg Catechism

Written in 1563, the Heidelberg Catechism is the book of doctrinal instruction for churches of Reformed affiliation. Drafted in question and answer form, it explores the greatness of human *sin (misery)*, the gift of *salvation (deliverance)*, and the new life of *service (gratitude)*.

The Canons of Dort

The Canons were drafted by the international Synod of Dort in 1618-19. This creed does not intend to set forth a summary of the faith but, rather, to take issue with the Arminians, who denied that salvation is totally the product of God's grace. The Canons are a forthright declaration that our redemption is from start to finish the work of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, grounded in eternity.



Resources: / Additional Reading:

Websites:

www.crcna.org

^[1] <https://www.crcna.org/welcome/beliefs>

Position Statements of the Christian Reformed Church

<http://www.crcna.org/welcome/beliefs/position-statements>

https://www.crcna.org/sites/default/files/what_it_means_to_be_reformed.pdf

Network CRCNA

<https://network.crcna.org>

www.peacechurch-cr.org

<http://www.peacechurch-cr.org/about/confessions.cfm>

<http://www.peacechurch-cr.org/resources/>

Digital Library - <https://www.crcna.org/resources/digital-library>

Magazine:

The Banner (CRCNA denominational magazine) - <https://thebanner.org/>

Apps:

The Banner - Free

Devotionals:

Today - <https://today.reframemedia.com/>

Our Daily Bread - <https://odb.org/>

Words of Hope - <https://www.woh.org/devotionals/>

Daylight, Andrew Kuyvenhoven

Sixty at Sixty, James C. Schaap

Books:

Body & Soul – Reclaiming the Heidelberg Catechism, M. Craig Barnes

Every Bit of Who I Am – Devotions for Teens, James C. Schaap

f.a.i.t.h. Unfolded, Jim Osterhouse

Foundations of the Christian Faith, James M. Boice

Quest of Faith – Understanding What You Confess, Robert DeMoor

Reformed: What It Means, Why It Matters, Robert De Moor

The Jesus Storybook Bible-Every Story Whispers His Name, Sally Lloyd-Jones

The Worship Sourcebook, Second Edition, (The Practice of Christian Worship section) Carrie Steenwyk & John D. Witvliet

Additional Resources:

Practical Christian Living Manual

Spiritual Development Plan

