

What do Reformed



Christians Believe?

We Orthodox Presbyterians take our stand in the Reformed tradition of the Christian church. What do we mean by that name, Reformed? And from where did the name come? We call our tradition Reformed because of the Protestant Reformation. During the medieval era the church became more and more distorted. Truths taught in the Bible were obscured. Ideas and practices without biblical warrant came into prominence. This led to a movement by Christians to reform the faith and practice of the medieval church. It is from this effort to reform that our name Reformed comes.

Of course not everything about the Reformed tradition can be explained in this brochure. Only some of what makes it distinctive will be mentioned. The Reformed tradition of the Christian church is, first of all, a turning away from all forms of self-help salvation in order to find God's true salvation in Jesus Christ alone. As Reformed Christians we believe that Jesus Christ is our only and all-sufficient savior. We cannot add our good works, our religious efforts, or anything else to the work of Jesus Christ. Rather, Christ by his death and resurrection has provided a full

and complete salvation for us. Therefore, we enter into God's salvation by faith in Jesus Christ. It is through believing the good news of his death and resurrection, and trusting in him, that our sins are forgiven and we become the beloved children of God. His sacrifice cancels all of our sins. His resurrection brings eternal life to us. By faith we receive Christ and all that he has accomplished for us. In him our salvation is complete, even though we have yet to experience that salvation completely. Yet, we have assurance that we are now saved, are being saved and will be saved on the last day.

As the Reformed tradition is a rejection of all human efforts to achieve salvation, it is also an affirmation that it is the Holy Spirit who alone unites us to Christ in heaven.

It is by the Spirit of God (not our own efforts) that we are born anew. The Spirit of God renews our minds and remolds our wills enabling us to believe in Jesus Christ, and keeping us in that faith all of our lives. The Holy Spirit leads us away from sin to obedience of God. He is the source of our desire to do what pleases the Lord. The Spirit of God works in us to will and to do according to his good pleasure. Our good works are not the means by which we are saved. They are the fruit of salvation freely received.

The Holy Spirit works in and through God's Word, the Bible. Indeed, it was the Spirit of God who inspired the writers of the Bible so that what they wrote is the Word of God. As the Word of God, the Bible is the sole authority from God for what we are to believe and how we are to live. The Reformed tradition is a return to the Bible as the standard for the faith and practice of the church. By the Bible we judge what to believe and what not to believe, as well as what we are to do and not to do.

The Spirit of God who inspired the Bible was at work in the Christian church in every past age even as he is at work now. Therefore, as Reformed Christians we do not reject the historical Christian church. Rather, we recognize that God is teaching us through others who lived before us. They made mistakes. We make mistakes. But we make an even bigger mistake if we throw away the wisdom of earlier ages, for then we set ourselves up to repeat their mistakes and errors. We impoverish ourselves by neglecting that treasure of spiritual insight and learning the Holy Spirit has given to those who came before us.

As we do not reject the church that lived before us, neither do we reject the Old Testament as no longer relevant to the Christian. Rather, the whole Bible, the Old and New Testaments, is the Word of God. Its grand theme is Jesus Christ. All of it instructs us about how to live as

Christians. Of course, the Old Testament was written to the old covenant people of God. So we must be careful to understand how it is fulfilled in Christ and how it applies to us as the new covenant people of God. The Ten Commandments, for example, are used in the church as an essential summary of God's will for our lives. Likewise, the Psalm's are used to guide the church's prayer life.

Just as we believe that the Old Testament is God's word for today, we believe that the old covenant with Israel was not abolished but fulfilled in Christ. What God promised to Abraham, Moses and David, he fulfills for us in Jesus Christ. The church is the new Israel, composed of people from every nation, who inherit all the promises of God. As God made his covenant with the Israelites and their children, so he made the new covenant with believers and their children. As in the old covenant the children of the Israelites were to be circumcised, so in the new covenant the children of believers are to be baptized. It is the duty of every Christian parent to raise his or her children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord, being diligent to pray for and with their children. Only the Holy Spirit can make baptism and Christian instruction to be effective in the life of the child.

God has been saving people from the day Adam and Eve sinned. During the old covenant God saved his people in the expectation of Christ's death and resurrection. Now we are also saved through Christ who died and was raised. Therefore, there is only one people of God and only one way of salvation, namely, Jesus Christ. The Bible has one essential message, whether that message is from the prophets and is represented in the Old Testament, or declared openly as in the New Testament. Likewise, since all of the covenants of the Bible are fulfilled and completed in Christ and in the New Covenant, we can say there is ultimately one covenant, the covenant of grace.

Behind this one covenant of grace, this one way of salvation through faith in Jesus Christ, is God's eternal will. The Bible teaches that as believers in Jesus we can know that we are God's chosen people, the apple of his eye. Before the world began God chose us in Christ. He set his love upon us in the beginning. He loved us when we became his enemies, and gave his only Son for us. He loved us by his Spirit who brought us to faith in Jesus Christ. And he loves us now.

This message of God's saving love is the heart and soul of what we call the Reformed tradition. We do not deny that there are other Christians besides Reformed Christians. There are fundamentalist Christians, Pentecostal Christians, Lutheran Christians, Eastern Orthodox

Christians, Roman Catholic Christians and so on. But we do believe that the Reformed tradition is an important expression of Christianity and contributes to the reform of Christ's church by the Word of God.

If you would like to know more about the Reformed tradition, just ask! We love to talk about Jesus Christ and the salvation he freely gives. Feel free to ask us why we do what we do. Most of all, ask us about Jesus. We very much want you to join us and be part of Christ's church and the Reformed tradition, but to do so begins with receiving and resting upon Jesus Christ alone for salvation as he is offered to us in the gospel.

"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ...in whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace which he lavished upon us." Ephesians 1:3,7



Providence Orthodox Presbyterian Church
Invites you to worship with us and learn more about us.

- Sunday Worship—10:00 AM
- Sunday Christian Education—11:45 AM
- Wednesday Morning Prayer—7:00 AM
- Christian Faith and Life Meetings on Wednesdays—7:00 PM
- Friday Evening Prayer in North Oakland County
(2nd and 4th Fridays of the month)—7:00 PM

Located at 18451 W. 10 Mile Rd (near Southfield Rd.)
For information call The Rev. Jeffrey B. Wilson

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