**Unity Creed**

By Craig Garriott from WTS D.min. – “Growing Reconciled Communities” 1996

Richard DeRidder grieves that no creeds exist to help the church reconcile the various cultures that exist in America.

*The heathen, the pagan, the "not-my-people" are no longer oceans away, but all around the disciples today. They are neighbors to each other. Their children play together. They meet at work, in shopping centers, on the beaches. And unfortunately, at this crucial point where the Church of Christ is dispersed in the world confessional statements are silent where they ought to be most articulate.[[1]](#footnote-1)*

Harvie Conn argues that creeds need to go beyond mere affirmation of orthodoxy and catechism instruction. To keep creeds from drifting into abstraction they need to*.utter its words to the world.... Their richest service lies in their function of translating the gospel to address the needs of their own day and cultural context."* In this way creeds become *"evangelistic declarations"* and invitations to faith for *"those who are without.[[2]](#footnote-2)*

 He quotes Donald McGavran, who affirms this need:

*A missionary confession of faith for today will in every doctrine similarly spell out at great length the will of God as revealed in the scriptures, that all men of every economic stratum, every tongue, every tribe, every religion, and every ideology be given the opportunity to say "yes" to Jesus Christ.[[3]](#footnote-3)*

At the same time, creeds can help nurture a context for the spiritual transformation of believers and their world views. As Biblical principles are elevated and translated to address specific cultural issues, they become a redemptive grid to help people process the information and values they receive from the world. In this regard, they help create a theological foundation to nurture emerging leaders**.** Cornell West states that *"quality leadership is neither the product of one great individual nor the result of odd historical accidents. Rather, it comes from deeply bred traditions and communities that shape and mold talented and gifted persons"*.[[4]](#footnote-4) Good creeds can help us nurture leaders in community where spiritual truth is applied to all of life and where a vibrant resistance to injustice and evil is normative.

The following Unity Declaration for Faith Christian Fellowship, in Baltimore city is an expression of a PCA congregation's serious effort to *keep the unity* and apply principles of unity throughout the church's ministry. It clarifies and expresses a commitment to celebrate diversity while maintaining unity. At the same time, it speaks to the world concerning the urgent matters of racial justice and reconciliation. In this it invites outsiders to become part of a universal fellowship whose identity is in Jesus and His Kingdom. It reflects 3 years of devoted labor and prayer by a multicultural group of PCA church members who participated in the congregation's ongoing Reconciliation Task Force.

**UNITY DECLARATION**

(Adopted by Faith Christian Fellowship, PCA, May 20, 2000)

**UNITY DECLARATION STATEMENT 1:**

**Our Fundamental Identity**

We declare that God our Father, in His great love, has redeemed us by sending His Son Jesus Christ and united us as people from diverse cultures into one family through the Holy Spirit committing to us the message of reconciliation.

John 17:20-24; 20:17; Eph 2:19-22; Col 3:11; Gal 3:26-29; Eph 4:4,5; Acts 2:5-12, 2Cor.5:19

**UNITY DECLARATION STATEMENT 2:**

**Cultural Affirmation**

We declare that God's truth transcends culture and speaks to all cultures. We affirm the Biblical value, dignity and distin ctions of our varying cultures because God uses culture to communicate His truth and grace and receives glory from our cultural expressions. Yet we acknowledge that God declares the fallen condition of all people and their cultures. We claim a personal and corporate responsibility to evaluate and bring Christ-centered reformation to our cultures and society by the Word of God in dependence on the Holy Spirit.

Gen.1:26,28; 2:15,19; Rom. 8:18-25;Rom. 1:18-32; Rom 3:9-20;Rev 21:24; 1Cor 9:19-23; Acts 17:16, 22-31; John 17:15-19; Matt. 5:27-43

**UNITY DECLARATION STATEMENT 3:**

**Repentance & Forgiveness**

We acknowledge that great transgressions based on race, gender, class and faith have tragically marked our life together as a human family throughout the history of the world and this nation. While the Church has pursued justice and reconciliation, regrettably it has often participated in this sin through active support or indifference. We join with those believers who confess that true reconciliation cannot be realized without a commitment to repentance, forgiveness and the pursuit of justice.

Neh 1:4-11; Dan 9:4-19; Eph 4:1-6, 32; Phil 2:1-11; Acts 6:1-7

**UNITY DECLARATION STATEMENT 4:**

**Necessity Of Grace**

We seek to apply God's grace to our lives. His grace enables us to love God with all our being and our neighbor as ourselves. God’s grace provides the only means to conquer our fears, remove our guilt, resolve our anger and give us the strength to persevere as one family where Jesus Christ is Lord. We declare that the Holy Spirit is our only source of power for true unity in the Body, and that He strengthens us through daily repentance, prayer and the cleansing power of the Word.

Matt. 22:37-40; Eph 3:14-19; 4:1-5; 5:1,2,15-21; 6:10,11; Heb 2:14,15; 1Peter 4:19

**UNITY DECLARATION STATEMENT 5:**

**Cultural Awareness**

We commit ourselves to acquiring greater cultural awareness and sensitivity, starting first with our own cultural bias and prejudices, recognizing that we live in a multicultural city and world. We believe that cultural awareness is foundational to the way in which we develop leaders, conduct worship, equip the body for evangelism and discipleship, and promote justice and community development.

1Cor 9:19-23; Acts 15:19-21; Acts 17:16-34; Acts 26:28,29; Rom 15:1-4

**UNITY DECLARATION STATEMENT 6:**

**Leadership**

We commit ourselves to modeling the reconciliation of culturally diverse believers before the world in our church and ministry leadership. We promote reconciled leadership which understands and values church membership, the unity of the Church, spiritual accountability, the benefit of cultural diversity, shared servant leadership, cross cultural skills, strategic service, sound theology, godly character, spiritual renewal, and discipling emerging leaders.

Luke 6:12-16; Acts 6:1-7; 13:1-3; Gal 2:2; Isa 56:1-8; Rev 21:24

**UNITY DECLARATION STATEMENT 7:**

**Worship**

We declare that as a reconciled community in Christ we work in our worship services to represent God's Kingdom in our local context. We work to offer God our most precious and valuable expressions of devotion from our varying cultures. Such worship requires the pursuit of excellence as we glorify God in a Christ-centered, believer edifying and seeker welcoming service.

Rom 15:5-11; Isa 19:23; Zeph 3:9; Ps 22:27; Rev 7:9,10; Rev 21:24

**Unity Declaration Statement 8:**

**Evangelism**

We commit ourselves to work together as a multicultural body to proclaim Good News that communicates Christ to people in their particular cultures with Biblical integrity through culturally sensitive means.

1Cor 9:19-23; 10:33; Matt 20:26-28; Rom 1:14; 2Cor 4:5; Prov 11:30; Rom 11:14;

1Pet 3:1

**Unity Declaration Statement 9:**

**Discipleship**

We declare that as we disciple one another towards Christian maturity, we must obey Christ’s command to love our neighbors as ourselves. We do this by keeping the unity of the Spirit, who indwells believers of diverse and historically separated cultures, in the bond of peace.

Eph 2:11-22; Eph 4:1-4;11-16; Phil 2:1-5; Col 3:5-14; John 17:23; Rom 14:17-19; 1Cor 1:10; 2Cor13:11

**Unity Declaration Statement 10:**

**Justice & Community Development**

We declare that the church is called to be the redemptive presence of Christ by proclaiming Good News which is demonstrated through concrete deeds of mercy and justice. This Good News affirms dignity, cultivates an environment of hope, and restores people to God through Christ and to service in God’s kingdom.

Micah 6:8; Luke 4:18,19; Acts 6:1-7; Gal 2:10; James 2:1-9

1. DeRidder, Discipling The Nation, 213. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Conn, Eternal Word and Changing Worlds, 241-246. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Ibid., 244. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. West, Race Matters, 37. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)