

The Essentials

All Scripture is self-attesting, and being Truth requires our unreserved submission in all areas of life. The infallible Word of God—the 66 books of the Old and New Testaments—is a complete and unified witness to God’s redemptive acts culminating in the incarnation of the Living Word, the Lord Jesus Christ. The Bible, uniquely and fully inspired by the Holy Spirit, is the supreme and final authority on all matters on which it speaks. On this sure foundation, we affirm these additional essentials of our faith.

1. We believe in one God, the sovereign Creator and Sustainer of all things, infinitely perfect and eternally existing in three Persons: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. To Him be all honor, glory, and praise forever!
2. Jesus Christ, the living Word, became flesh through His miraculous conception by the Holy Spirit and His virgin birth. He who is true God became true man united in one Person forever. He died on the cross a sacrifice for our sins according to the Scriptures. On the third day He arose bodily from the dead, ascended into heaven where, at the right hand of the Majesty on High, He now is our High Priest and Mediator.
3. The Holy Spirit has come to glorify Christ and to apply the saving work of Christ to our hearts. He convicts us of sin and draws us to the Savior, indwelling our hearts. He gives new life to us, empowers and imparts gifts to us for service. He instructs and guides us into all truth, and seals us for the day of redemption.
4. Being estranged from God and condemned by our sinfulness, our salvation is wholly dependent upon the work of God’s free grace. God credits His righteousness to those who put their faith in Christ alone for their salvation, and thereby justifies them in His sight. Only such as are born of the Holy Spirit and receive Jesus Christ become children of God and heirs of eternal life.
5. The true Church is composed of all persons who through saving faith in Jesus Christ and the sanctifying work of the Holy Spirit are united together in the body of Christ. The Church finds her visible yet imperfect expression in local congregations where the Word of God is preached in its purity and the sacraments are administered in their integrity, where scriptural discipline is practiced, and where loving fellowship is maintained. For her perfecting she awaits the return of her Lord.
6. Jesus Christ will come again to the earth personally, visibly, and bodily—to judge the living and the dead, and to consummate history and the eternal plan of God. “Even so, come, Lord Jesus” (Revelation 22:20).
7. The Lord Jesus Christ commands all believers to proclaim the gospel throughout the

world and to make disciples of all nations. Obedience to the Great Commission requires total commitment to “Him who loved us and gave Himself for us.” He calls us to a life of self-denying love and service. “For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them” (Ephesians 2:10).

The Essentials are set forth in greater detail in the Westminster Confession of Faith.

In Essentials ... Unity
In Non-Essentials ... Liberty
In All Things ... Charity

Explanatory Statement to “Essentials of Our Faith”¹

The *Westminster Confession of Faith* (WCF) is a confessional statement of orthodox Presbyterianism. The WCF is our standard of doctrine as found in Scripture. It is a positive statement of the Reformed Faith. The WCF constitutes a system of biblical truth that an officer of the Evangelical Presbyterian Church is required to believe, while acknowledging that each individual court has the freedom to allow exceptions that do not infringe upon the system of the doctrine in the WCF.

“Essentials of Our Faith” is an irenic statement of historic evangelicalism. The purpose of “Essentials of Our Faith” is to define core beliefs of the Christian faith. It expresses historic Christian beliefs common to all true believers and churches throughout the world.

“Essentials of Our Faith” is not intended to be the exclusive test of orthodoxy for ordination, nor as an explicit standard for minimal core beliefs for candidates, ordination, or ministerial examinations. It is not to be construed as a substitute for the WCF.

Both the WCF and “Essentials of Our Faith” are important documents in the Evangelical Presbyterian Church. The WCF and “Essentials of Our Faith” are not alternative statements of truth, nor are they competitive statements of truth. They each serve important and harmonious purposes within the EPC. The WCF preserves our commitment to the historic orthodoxy of the Reformed Faith. “Essentials of Our Faith” preserves our commitment to historic evangelicalism.

¹Ratified by the 22nd General Assembly, June 2002.