

Sermon 28th February 2021
“Our Statements of Faith - Part 2 The 1940 Statement of Faith.”
Mark 8: 31 - 38

Gracious God, be with us today
in this place, in the
Scriptures and in our
words.

May the words of my mouth and
the meditations of our
hearts praise your Holy
name. Amen.

What do we believe in the United
Church of Canada?

Last week I talked about the
formation of our church as
a national church with a
vision to serve as a strong
united church from coast to
coast in what was then a
young growing and fairly
new nation.

The foundation for what was the
faith of the UCC was set
forth in the basis of union
written in the years 1904-
1908.

This set of 20 articles written in
the language of that day
still forms the official
statement of the faith of the
UCC.

The first world war forced the
issue of church union onto

the back burner for a
number of years, but after
the first world war, church
union happened in 1925.

Before many more years, our
nation was once again
facing war and a crippling
depression that rocked the
foundations of the nation
and its new united church
as people struggled to
understand what was
happening in the world in
the light of their faith.

A new statement of faith was
called for, one that was
more easily understood by
everyday Christians than
the faith expressed in the
basis of union, and also one
that helped everyday people
who were struggling to
understand human evil and
suffering.

And so in the year 1940 a new
statement of faith was
articulated for the UCC.

Instead of the 20 articles of the
original basis of union...
this new statement of faith
contained only 12 articles
and was written in a more

understandable manner.
So today I wanted to introduce
you to the 1940 Statement
of faith to refresh your
memory.

The Introduction:

*It is the purpose of this
Statement to set out briefly
and simply the substance of
the Church's faith.

No attempt is made to answer all
the questions which devout
men may reasonably ask in
regard to God and man and
salvation.

But we believe that we have
included what is essential
to the life of the Church.

If our purpose were apologetic
we should have to use more
of the language of modern
science and philosophy.

Because our purpose is
affirmative we have as far
as possible adopted rather
the language of Scripture, a
language which matches
the supreme facts it tells of,
God's acts of judgment and
of mercy.

The Church's faith is the
unchanging Gospel of
God's holy, redeeming love
revealed in Jesus Christ.

It is declared in Scripture; it is
witnessed to both in the
creeds of the Universal
Church and in the
Confessions of the
Reformed Churches; and it
is formulated for a specific
purpose in our Basis of
Union.

But Christians of each new
generation are called to
state it afresh in terms of
the thought of their own
age and with the emphasis
their age needs.

This we have attempted to do for
the people of The United
Church of Canada—
seeking always to be
faithful to Scripture and to
the testimony of the
Universal Church, and
always aware that no
statement of ours can
express the whole truth of
God.

...so we hear in this passage the
intention not to declare for
all time what the faith of
the church is to be, but to
give a snapshot for that one
particular point in time
what was the faith of the
church...

The language is not the language
we hear today.

It sounds, to my ears anyway,
very dated in its lack of
inclusive language.

But we need to remember that
this was written in a time
before woman were
considered people under the
charter of this nation and so
the heavy use of words
such as he, men etc.

In the rest of the statement of
faith please try to get past
this language and listen for
what the underlying
message of faith.

I think this is in many ways a
beautiful snapshot of a very
important time in the
history and evolution of our
church and does express in
fairly clear, if dated terms,
what the church understood
and understands..

Read rest of articles...

Here is the first and the last
articles.

*I. God

We believe in God, the eternal
personal Spirit, Creator and
Upholder of all things.

We believe that God, as

sovereign Lord exalted
above the world, orders and
overrules all things in it to
the accomplishment of His
holy, wise, and good
purposes.

We believe that God made man
to love and serve Him; that
He cares for him as a
righteous and
compassionate Father; and
that nothing can either
quench His love or finally
defeat His gracious purpose
for man.

So we acknowledge God as
Creator, Upholder, and
Sovereign Lord of all
things, and the righteous
and loving Father of men.

*XII. The Consummation

We believe that the resurrection
and exaltation of Christ,
following on His
crucifixion, gives assurance
that the long struggle
between sin and grace will
have an end, the Kingdom
be revealed in its fullness,
and God's eternal purpose
accomplished.

We believe that God will judge
all men by Jesus Christ, the
Son of Man.

We believe that, while salvation is offered to all, God does not take away or override the freedom with which He has endowed men.

If they stubbornly refuse His mercy and prefer sinful ways they shut themselves out from the light and joy of salvation and fall under the righteous judgment of God.

We believe that those who accept the offer of salvation and persevere in the Christian way do after death enter into the joy of their Lord, a blessedness beyond our power to conceive.

They see God face to face, and in the communion of saints are partakers with the Church on earth of its labours and prayers.

So we acknowledge the righteous and merciful judgment of God, and we wait for the coming of the Kingdom which shall have no end.

“We know Whom we have believed, and are persuaded that He is able to keep that which we have committed to Him.”

“To the only wise God our

Saviour be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and ever.”

I suspect some of us who have been part of this UCC all our lives, are hearing these for the first time,

Our church was built on the solid foundation of faith that was articulated long ago by faithful people trying to understand and live their faith.

I know it is hard to digest, and maybe not the most exciting information I have ever presented, but still I think it is important that we try to understand how we fit into the church of which we are a part and how the faith of this church speaks to us.

The 1940 statement of faith can be found in our United Church Manual on page 21.

I have attached a copy of the Manual to our webpage or you can find it on the UCC website.

What do you believe?

How do you understand the existence of sin and evil in

our world, and why bad things happen to good people?

What do you see as the role and purpose of the church?

What do you think of when someone mentions the Holy Spirit?

What do you think it means when someone asks if you have been saved?

These are all questions that come from how we understand our faith.

Questions that we struggle to understand today just as they struggled in 1940 to understand.

May God guide us on this journey as we seek to understand more fully our faith and our history as a part of this united church.

Thanks be to God. Amen.