

PROVIDENCE ORTHODOX PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

AN INTRODUCTION TO WHAT WE BELIEVE, TEACH, AND PRACTICE

As Summarized from the

HOLY SCRIPTURES

in our

CONFESsION OF FAITH & CATECHISMS

and our

STANDARDS OF GOVERNMENT, DISCIPLINE AND WORSHIP

PROVIDENCE ORTHODOX PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

Meeting at Denver South SDA's building

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This is only a brief statement of what we believe the Bible teaches. A fuller statement may be found in the Westminster Confession of Faith, Larger and Shorter Catechisms, and the Book of Church Order of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church (<https://opc.org/confessions.html> and <https://opc.org/order.html>). Thanks to Rev. Leonard J. Copes, who authored the original document.

I. The Bible

We believe that the Bible, consisting of the Old and New Testaments (as appearing in one of the Protestant versions), is the only and sufficient standard for faith (what we are to believe) and practice (what duty God requires of us). It is without error in all it teaches and reports. We maintain that we do now have and always have had a reliable Bible (this is the work of God in preserving the Bible). Although the Word of God is sufficiently set forth in all the major translations (KJV, NASV, RSV, NIV, and ESV), we use the NKJV as the preferred translation (II Tim. 3:16, 17; II Pet. 1:20-21).

We believe that God has so revealed himself through creation that His goodness, wisdom, power, and glory are evident; and that all men know that He exists and that they ought to worship and obey Him. (Rom. 1:19-20; Ps. 19:1-4)

II. God and the Trinity

We believe that God is a Spirit, infinite, eternal, and unchangeable, in His being, wisdom, power, holiness, justice, goodness, and truth (John 4:24; I Tim. 1:17; Luke 24:39; Deut. 4:15-19).

We believe there are three persons in the Godhead: the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit; and these three are one true, eternal God, the same in substance, equal in power and glory; although different as to, and distinguished by, their personal properties (Matt. 3:16, 17; 28:19; II Cor. 13:14).

We believe that the Son and the Holy Spirit are God equal with the Father because the Bible ascribes to them such names (Jer. 23:6; I John 5:20; Ps. 45:6; Acts 5:3, 4; Tit. 2:13; II Pet. 1:1), attributes (John 1:1; Isa. 9:6; John 2:24-25; I Cor. 2:10,11; Heb. 9:14), works (Col. 1:16; Gen. 1:2; Ps. 104:30; John 1:3), and worship (Matt. 28:19; II Cor. 13:14) as belong to God alone.

III. Decrees of God

We believe that the decrees of God are His eternal purpose, according to the counsel of His own will, whereby, for His own glory, He has foreordained whatsoever comes to pass (Eph. 1:11; Acts 4:27-28; Ps. 33:11; Eph. 2:10; Rom. 9:11,13,16,18; 22-23; 11:36; Prov. 16:4, 33; cf., Isa. 45:7 with 41:23; Acts 13:48; John 10:27-29)

IV. Creation

We believe God made all things and creatures of nothing, for Himself, within the space of six days, and all very good (Heb. 11:3; Rev. 4:11; Gen. 1:1-31). God made man, male and female, after His own image, in knowledge, righteousness, and holiness, with dominion over the creatures (Gen. 1:27; Col. 3:10; Eph. 4:24; Gen. 1:28).

We believe that God creates each person as male or female (Gen 1:26-27). Rejection of one's biological sex or gender and the attending responsibilities is a rejection of God's creation and natural law (Gen. 1:18-23, Rom. 1:26-28, 1 Cor. 6:9). Such responsibilities ordinarily include men leading and defending and women supporting and assisting. Rejections of God's creation include women in combat and effeminate men, as well as the means, causes, and occasions, such as requiring women to sign up for the draft (Deut. 22:5, 1 Cor. 11:7-9, 14, 15).

V. Providence

We believe that God's providence is His most holy, wise, and powerful preserving and governing all His creatures and all their actions, and all His creation and all that happens in and to it (Ps. 145:17; 104:24; Heb. 1:3; Ps. 103:19; Matt. 10:29, 30; Job chapters 38-41; Prov. 16:1, 4, 9, 33; 19:21). God in His ordinary providence makes use of means, yet is free to work to work without, above, or against them at His pleasure. (Acts 27:24,31,44b; Hos 1:7; Rom 4:19-21, Dan 3:27).

VI. The Fall of Man, Sin, and Its Punishment

We believe that when God created man, He entered into a covenant of life (or works) with him commanding man to live perfectly before Him and forbidding him to eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, and promising that if he did eat of that tree, he would surely die. (Compare Gen. 2:16, 17 with

Rom. 5:12-14; Rom. 10:5; Luke 10:25-28 and with the covenants of Noah and Abraham). A covenant is an agreement between two or more persons. In the case of God's covenant(s) with man, He has determined the conditions of the covenant and imposed them on man (John 14:6; 3:3, 7-8, 13-16).

We believe sin is any thought, word, or action where we do not do what God requires or where we do what God forbids. (I John 3:4; Jas. 4:17; Rom. 3:10-13).

We believe in original sin: that our first parents (Adam and Eve), being left to the freedom of their own will, fell from the estate (being without sin) in which they were created by sinning against God (Gen. 3:6-8; II Cor. 11:3) God when they ate of the forbidden fruit. As a result and punishment of that sin, that they and all their posterity fell from the original state of righteousness, knowledge, and holiness into the state of sin and misery (compare Rom. 5:12-20 with I Cor 15:21-22, 49). All mankind, by their fall, lost communion (fellowship) with God, are under His just wrath and curse, and so made liable to all miseries in this life, to death itself, and to the pains of hell forever (Gen. 3:8, 24; Eph. 2:2-3; Rom. 5:14).

We believe in total depravity: all parts of every man and woman are warped from their original moral perfection such that they are hostile to God, do not wish to please Him, and are unable to do so. We suppress our knowledge of God. We sin because we wish to. Without the Holy Spirit's help, we cannot understand spiritual things and will purposefully and knowingly choose to continue in sin (Jer. 17:9; Rom. 3:10-12; 5:6, 8:7; John 3:6; Rom. 7:18; Gen. 8:21; John 6:37-40, 44, 64-66). The effects of this corrupt nature remain in us all after we are regenerated, tempting Christians to sin. (Rom. 7:14, 17, 18, 23; James 1:14, 3:2; I John 1:8, 10; Prov. 20:9; Rom. 6:23; 7:5, 7, 8, 25).

VII. The Covenant of Grace

We believe that when God created man, He entered into the covenant of works with him as set forth above. We believe that this covenant of works continues to be binding upon all mankind so that they are responsible to worship and obey God (Rom. 1:18-21; 5:12ff.) and that this covenant finds continued expression in all of God's commands to men (Rom. 1:20-2:2, 5-10).

We believe that all mankind has broken, will continue to break, and is unable to keep this covenant of works (Rom. 3:10ff.). Therefore, God has made the covenant of grace. By this covenant, God freely offers to every sinner life and salvation by Jesus Christ. Man, being left to the freedom of his own will, is bound by his sinful nature and always rejects God's wonderful offer. Under the covenant of grace, God promises to all those who are ordained to life His Holy Spirit, who will make them willing and able to believe (Matt. 26:28; Gal. 3:21; Rom. 8:3; Isa. 42:6; Gen. 3:15; Heb. 10:5-10. John 3:16; Acts 16:30, 31. John 3:5, 6, 7; 6:37, 44; Ezek. 36:25-27).

We believe the one covenant of grace was differently administered during the period preceding Christ and the period following Christ. What is presented in terms of figures, types, promises, and symbols in the Old Testament period is now presented in terms of explanations, antitypes, fulfillments, and substance in this New Testament era. Jesus is the fulfillment of all the promises of God (II Cor. 1:20). Hence, there is but one religion revealed in the Bible (Gal. 3:8-13; I Cor. 10:1; Heb. 11).

VIII. Christ Our Mediator

We believe that the only Savior and Mediator for God's people is the Lord Jesus Christ (I Tim. 2:5). He was and continues to be fully God (John 1:1; 10:30; Gal. 4:4; Phil 2:5-11; Col. 2:9; Tit. 2:13; II Pet. 1:1). The eternal Son of God became and continues to be man. Hence, He is both man and God.

We believe Jesus Christ is only perfect and the final prophet (Acts 3:22; Luke 4:18, 21; I Cor. 3:10-11; Eph. 2:20; Jude 3), priest (Ps. 110:4; Heb. 9:14, 28; Rom. 3:25, 26; 10:4; Heb. 2:17; 7:25) and king (Isa. 33:22; I Cor. 15:25; Acts 12:17; 18:9, 10).

We believe the Lord Jesus Christ, by his perfect obedience and his sacrifice of himself on the cross, fully satisfied the justice of the Father and redeemed from God's everlasting punishment all those whom the Father has elected unto eternal life. (Rom. 5:19; Heb. 9:14)

IX. The Holy Spirit

We believe that the Holy Spirit is the Lord and Giver of life, everywhere present, the source of what is written in the Bible, and the one who so moved upon its writers that all they wrote was the very Word of God. In this present age He prepares the way for the Gospel, accompanies it with His persuasive power; and irresistibly and efficaciously applies it in the hearts of all God's elect people (John 3:1-8; Acts. 2:38; Luke 11:13; I Cor. 12:3; John 7:37-39; 16:13, 7-11; Rev. 22:17; Titus 3:5-7; II Thess. 2:13; Gal. 4:6; I John 4:2; Rom. 8:14, 17, 26, 27; 11:7; 8:2; Eph. 4:30; I Cor. 2:13-16).

X. The Gospel

We believe that all men and women are born in sin, are under God's righteous judgment, and are without hope in this world. Their just end is God's everlasting punishment (Ps. 51:5; Rom. 5:17-19).

We believe that the only way of salvation is believing in the Gospel (which means Good News) of our Lord Jesus Christ (John 14:6). In this Gospel, God declares His love for the world and His desire that all men should be saved. He reveals fully and clearly that faith in His son, Jesus Christ, is the only way of salvation (John 14:6; Acts 4:11-12). He promises eternal life to all who truly repent and believe in Christ. This free offer is to be made by the church to all mankind (Mark 16:15; Acts 17:30-31).

We believe that God offers redemption and eternal life to all who confess and forsake their sin, seeking His mercy and forgiveness through Jesus Christ. (Acts 3:19-21; Rom 10:9-10; 1 Cor 6:9-11.)

XI. Free Will

We believe God has given all men free will so that a man is not forced or by any necessity of nature determined to do good or evil (Deut. 30:19; John 7:17; Rev. 22:17; James 1:14; John 5:40).

We believe, due to the fall into sin, man is totally unable to do any spiritual good leading to or contributing to salvation (Jer. 17:9; Rom. 5:6; 8:7; John 15:5). The unregenerate man is totally hostile to pleasing God, (Rom. 3:10, 12; 8:7), dead in sin, and unable to convert himself or to prepare himself for conversion (Eph. 2:1, 5; Col. 2:13; John 6:44, 65; I Cor. 2:14; Rom. 8:8; Eph. 2:2-5; Tit. 3:3-5).

We believe the regenerate (born-again) man is no longer bound only to sin, but by His grace, God has freed him and enabled him to do that which is spiritually good. On the other hand, corruption remains in him so that he continues to sin even though he now loves God and hates sin (Col. 1:13; John 8:34, 36; Phil. 2:13; Rom. 6:18, 22. Gal. 5:17; Rom. 7:15).

XII. The Order of Salvation

We believe that the order in which God applies salvation is purposing, planning, foreknowledge, election, effectual calling, regeneration, conversion (faith and repentance), justification, adoption, sanctification, perseverance, and glorification.

XIII. Election

We believe God did, from all eternity, decree to justify all the elect (I Pet. 1:2, 19, 20; Rom. 8:30), and Christ did, in the fullness of time (Gal. 4:4; I Tim. 2:6; Rom. 4:25), die for their sins (and not for the sins of the non-elect, John 10:3, 11, 14-16, 26-28) and rise again for their justification; nevertheless they are not justified until the Holy Spirit actually applies Christ to them (John 3:5, 18, 36; Gal. 2:16; Titus 3:4-7).

XIV. Justification

We believe that man is justified (made right with God) freely and solely on the basis of the finished work of Christ Jesus (Rom. 8:30; 3:24). This is not because a man's faith is imputed (accounted and received) as his righteousness but by God's imputing the obedience and satisfaction of Christ to that man who receives and rests on Him and His righteousness by faith (Rom. 4:5-8; II Cor. 5:19, 21; Tit. 3:5, 7; Eph. 1:7; Jer. 23:6; Rom. 3:22, 24, 27, 28; I Cor. 1:30, 31; Rom. 5:17-19). This faith does not come from man apart from the prior work of God in him and is the gift of God (Phil 3:9; Eph. 2:8; Acts. 13:38, 39).

XV. Sanctification

We believe that once effectually called and regenerated, God places a new heart and a new nature into the believer. By the indwelling Holy Spirit, the old nature's lusts are more and more weakened and mortified (1 Thess. 5:23-24; 2 Thess. 2:13-14; Rom 6:14; Rom 8:13).

We believe sanctification is the process of being made holy. This is imperfect in this life, and there abides still some remnants of corruption in every part. The believer is called to continue to put to death the sinful nature and grow in grace and holiness, though he will never reach perfection in this life (Rom 7:14-25; 2 Cor. 7:1; 1 John 1:8-10; Titus 2:11-14).

XVI. The Law of God

We believe that God has revealed His will to man since the creation and has recorded all that is necessary for us to believe and do in the Scripture. Man is responsible, therefore, to believe and do what is recorded in Scripture. God alone has the authority to change what man is responsible to obey. He teaches

us in the Bible that since He does not change, neither do His commandments (Mal. 3:6; Matt. 5:17-20; II Tim. 3:16-17). Although the law of God does not change in principle, its application may and has been changed by the Lord Himself.

We believe the sum of God's law is the ten commandments; and the ten commandments are summarized in the two commandments to love God and one's neighbor (Matt. 19:16-22; 22:37-40; Deut. 6:5; Lev. 19:18).

We believe the Ten Commandments are to be observed by all men and women. Where a duty is commanded, the contrary sin is forbidden. Where a sin is forbidden, the contrary duty is commanded. What God forbids is never to be done. What God commands is always our duty, yet every particular duty is not to be done all the time. Under one sin or duty, all of the same kind are forbidden or commanded, together with all the means, occasions, appearances thereof, and provocations thereunto.

XVII. Christian Liberty

We believe that God alone is Lord of the conscience and that the Bible alone sets forth His will for our lives in the Bible to which men are forbidden to either add or subtract (Deut. 4:2; 12:32; Prov. 30:6; Matt. 15:2-9; Gal. 3:15; Rev. 22:18, 19).

We believe that all church power is ministerial and declarative of the Word of God and that church power is wholly moral and spiritual. All members of the church are to submit themselves to the authorities in the church (1 Thess. 5:12-13; Heb. 13:17).

XVIII. Religious Worship and the Sabbath Day

We believe the worship of God is to be conducted as He has specified in the Bible and limited to what He has told us. It is not to include or allow anything not set down in the Bible (Deut. 12:32; Matt. 15:9; 4:9, 10; Acts 17:24, 25; Ex. 20:4-6; Deut. 4:15-20; Col. 2:20-23). The ordinary or usual parts of public worship are the call to worship; prayer; singing of psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs; the giving of tithes and offerings; confessing the faith; the reading of the Scripture; the preaching of the Word, and the benediction. Extraordinary or occasional elements of worship include the ordaining of officers, the observance of the sacraments, and the reception of new members.

We believe ordinarily public worship is to be observed on the Lord's Sabbath (Sunday, Acts 20:7; I Cor. 16:2; Rev. 1:10; Heb. 4:9) and twice each Sabbath (morning and evening) as it was in the Old Testament (Exodus 29:38-42; Num. 28:3-4, 9-10; II Chron. 2:4; 31:3; Ezra 3:3). It is the universal law of God from the creation that one day in seven be set aside for public worship (Gen. 2:3; Heb. 4:4; Ex. 20:8-11; Isa. 56:1, 4, 6). From the creation until the resurrection of Christ, God commanded that men worship Him on the seventh day of the week, but since then, He has consecrated to Himself the first day of the week (Matt. 24:20; Mark 2:23-28; I Cor. 16:1, 2; Acts 20:7).

We believe that in the New Testament dispensation, there are only two sacraments: baptism and the Lord's Supper. These two function as signs and seals of the covenant of grace (Rom. 4:11; I Cor. 11:29-30; Col. 2:11-12).

We believe that unless providentially hindered, Christians should set Sundays aside and meet with God's people for instruction and worship (both morning and evening).

XIX. Marriage

We believe that the term "marriage" has only one meaning: the uniting of one man and one woman in a single, exclusive union, as defined in Scripture. (Gen 2:18-25.) We believe that God intends sexual intimacy to occur only between a man and a woman who are married to each other. (1 Cor 6:18; 7:2-5; Heb 13:4.) We believe that God has commanded that no intimate activity be engaged in outside of a marriage between a man and a woman.

We believe that any form of sexual immorality (e.g., adultery, fornication, homosexuality, bisexuality, bestiality, incest, pornography, pedophilia, and similar paraphilias) is sinful and offensive to God. (Matt 15:18-20; 1 Cor 6:9-10.)

XX. The Church

We believe that the church universal, which is invisible, consists of all the elect of all ages. The head of the church is Christ alone (Eph. 1:22, 23; Col. 1:18; Eph. 5:23, 27, 32).

We believe the visible or organized church is also universal and consists of all those throughout the world who profess the true religion, together with their children (I Cor. 1:2; 12:12, 13; Rom. 15:9-12;

Gen. 17:7; Gal. 3:7, 9, 14; Rom. 4; Acts. 2:39; I Cor. 7:14; Mark 10:13-16). The church is also known as the kingdom of the Lord Jesus Christ, the house and family of God and it is through the church that men are ordinarily saved and in union with which they receive what is essential to their best growth and service (Matt. 13:47; Col. 1:13; Isa. 9:7 / Eph. 2:19; Heb. 3:1-6 / Mat. 28:19; Acts. 2:38; I Cor. 12:13; Matt. 26:26-28).

We believe the church is sometimes more visible and sometimes less visible. Particular churches and congregations may be closer or further from observing and/or believing the true religion in proportion to how faithfully they teach and observe what God has revealed in the Scripture. Some churches are so impure as to be no church at all (Rom. 11:3, 4; Acts. 9:31 / I Cor. 5:6, 7; Rev. 2, 3 / Matt. 13:24-48; Rom. 11:18-22). The marks of the true church are the faithful preaching of the Gospel (Rom. 16:17; Gal. 1:9), the due exercise of church discipline (Matt. 18:15-20; I Cor. 5:4-8, 13), and the right administration of the sacraments (Acts 2:38; Col. 2:11-12; I Cor. 11:23-26).

We believe the church is to be governed by a plurality of elders (Acts 14:23) who meet the standards set forth in the Bible (I Tim. 3; Tit. 1). There are to be two kinds of elder: (1) the teaching elder who is responsible for the public and formal teaching of the Word and the administration of the sacraments (I Tim. 5:7), and (2) the ruling elders who are responsible to share in the government and pastoring of the congregation (Acts 20:28-32; I Pet. 5:1-4).

We believe the elders may be helped in their work by deacons who are to be elected by the congregation for the ministry of mercy and whatever assignments deemed practicable by the elders to free them for the ministry of prayer and of the Word (Acts 6:1-7; I Tim. 3:8-13).

We believe all Christians should be members of a visible, Bible-believing, and preaching congregation when not providentially hindered. They should pledge/vow their fidelity to Christ, their obedience to their elders, and their love for each other.

XXI. The Sacraments

We believe the sacraments are holy signs and seals of the covenant of grace. They were instituted by God to represent Christ and his benefits (Rom 6:3-4; 1 Cor 11:25-26). They are means of grace from God unto believers. They are to be administered only by a minister of the Gospel and only when accompanied by the preaching of the Word.

We believe there are only two sacraments since Jesus' death: Baptism and the Lord's Supper. They are commanded by Christ and ought not to be neglected, but are not so inseparably annexed unto salvation that without them, one may not be saved (1 Cor 4:1; Acts 10:44-48).

We believe Baptism is required for admission into the visible church. Baptism is in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Baptism is rightly administered by pouring or sprinkling water upon the person. Not only those that profess faith in, and obedience unto, Christ; but also, the infants of one, or both, believing parents are to be baptized. The sacrament of baptism is to be administered but once to any person (1 Cor. 12:13; Heb. 9:19-20; Acts 8:36-38; Acts 10:47).

We believe the Lord's Supper is a perpetual remembrance of the Lord Jesus Christ's sacrifice that seals to the worthy believer the benefits of that sacrifice for spiritual nourishment and their growth in Him. It is to be received only by communicant members of the visible church who are not under the discipline of the elders (1 Cor. 11:23-27; 1 Cor. 5:6-7, 13).

XXII. The Return of the Lord Jesus Christ

We believe in the physical, bodily, and personal return of the Lord Jesus Christ, who will come to judge all mankind. This return will occur at the end of this age (Acts 17:31; Matt. 25: 31-46).

Membership Vows

When a new member wishes to join Providence Orthodox Presbyterian Church, the minister shall then require the person to profess publicly his Christian faith by giving assent to these or equivalent questions:

- (1) Do you believe the Bible, consisting of the Old and New Testaments, to be the Word of God and its doctrine of salvation to be the perfect and only true doctrine of salvation?

- (2) Do you believe in one living and true God, in whom eternally there are three distinct persons—God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit—who are the same in being and equal in power and glory, and that Jesus Christ is God the Son, come in the flesh?
- (3) Do you confess that because of your sinfulness, you abhor and humble yourself before God, that you repent of your sin, and that you trust for salvation not in yourself but in Jesus Christ alone?
- (4) Do you acknowledge Jesus Christ as your sovereign Lord, and do you promise that, in reliance on the grace of God, you will serve him with all that is in you, forsake the world, resist the devil, put to death your sinful deeds and desires, and lead a godly life?
- (5) Do you promise to participate faithfully in this church's worship and service, to submit in the Lord to its government, and to heed its discipline, even in case you should be found delinquent in doctrine or life?