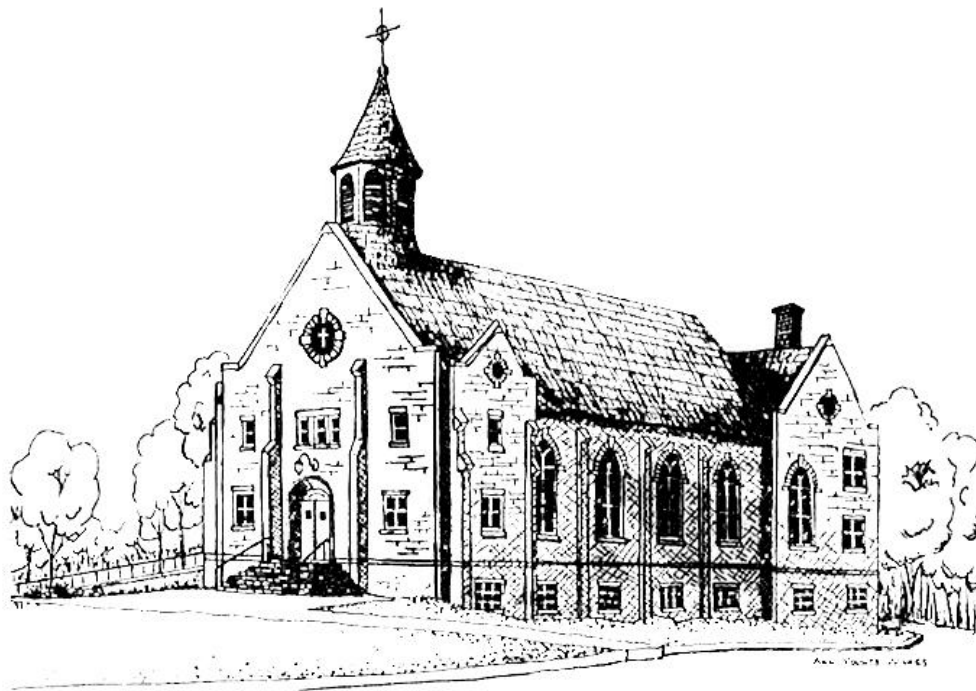


# *This we Believe*

A Historical Perspective of Beck's Reformed Church and  
Its Faith



# *Who we are...*

## A Brief History

Beck's Reformed Church is one of the oldest German Reformed Churches in Davidson County and enjoys a rich History that dates back to before the American Revolutionary War. While November 5, 1787 is recognized as the official beginning of Beck's Church (the deed to the church property was signed on this date), early deeds and records indicate that Beck's Church probably began around 1770.

Beck's Reformed Church has been a cornerstone of the community for two hundred and twenty years. During this time, Beck's Church has been affiliated with three denominations and presently operates as an independent, non-affiliated church. From the official beginning on November 5, 1787, Beck's Church was affiliated with the German Reformed Church until 1934. In 1934, the German Reformed and the Evangelical Church of America merged, forming the Evangelical and Reformed Church. Beck's Church became affiliated with the new denomination as Beck's Evangelical and Reformed Church.

In 1961, the Evangelical and Reformed Church merged with the Congregational and Christian Church, forming the United Church of Christ. Once again Beck's Church became a member of a new denomination, the United Church of Christ and remained a member of the United Church of Christ until August 27, 2006.

Due to theological differences between Beck's Church and the United Church of Christ's leadership, on August 27, 2006, the congregation of Beck's Church voted to withdraw from the United Church of Christ. On this date, Beck's Church returned to its roots and once again became known as Beck's Reformed Church. While returning to the traditions and beliefs of the historic German Reformed Church, Beck's Reformed Church stands as an independent, unaffiliated congregation.

While we can not live in the past, history does record the very foundation of Beck's Church, where we came from, who we are and documents how people of humble means left the religious persecution of their war-torn German homeland and braved the hardships of a new world. Here they were free to worship without fear of persecution and formed a thriving, strong community. A community that had as its cornerstone a strong belief in Christian values and morality and was built around the community church----- Beck's Church. The foundation of their church was rooted in the historic

Apostolic traditions of the German Reformed Church. A church in which the Bible is affirmed as the inerrant, inspired Word of God and Jesus is heralded as Lord and Savior.

It is upon this strong spiritual foundation that Beck's Reformed Church must continue to grow and follow Jesus' command to spread the Gospel. Beck's Reformed Church stands strongly rooted in Christian values and traditions of her founders while growing to the future----realizing what Jesus expected His Church to be.

# *Who we are...*

## The Christian Church, A Theological Perspective

The Church is a unique community of people drawn together through a commitment to Jesus. This Church reaches out to all people and offers support during the many stages on our journey from birth to death. In the rites and sacraments of the church, we gather in fellowship to share our sorrows and to celebrate our blessings. In all those experiences surrounding the birth and nurture of children, the guidance of young people, the support for couples approaching marriage, the upholding of families as they struggle with the issues of life, the Church offers its counsel and direction. In being present when people are suffering with physical or emotional illness, facing death and dying and ministering to people in their grief and all times of trial, the Church reminds people that they are not alone.

We come into this fellowship through baptism and, around the Lord's table, we join hands with each other to celebrate the victory of Life over Death. From this fellowship, we move into the world, strengthened to assist others on their journey through life. In such a community, we come to discover our significance as children of God, our relationships with significant others who have witnessed to the Lordship of Christ, a belief in God, a respect for the Bible and a desire to be of service to others.

In the Church, we come to discover that the Bible communicates a standard for spiritual living. The Bible witnesses to the covenant between God and the Jews, the life of Jesus Christ, his death and resurrection and the beginning of the Church. In the Word of God's to us, we come to see the depths to which human life can descend and the heights to which we can aspire. The Bible holds before us a standard which judges us when we fall short of what we are called to be; the Bible also addresses us with the Word bringing grace and love that so touches us in the Christian community.

This Word was made flesh in Jesus Christ. We believe that Jesus is Lord of our life and creation. Christ Jesus, as the Word made flesh, gives to us the final revelation of God's plan to save the fallen world. This He accomplished through His fulfillment of the Old Covenant and through His grace and love, fulfills the New Covenant written in His blood. Christ reveals God's plan for all of humanity. Jesus also reveals to us the face of God. Consistent with the witness of scripture and the tradition of the Church, the "Father" to whom Jesus prayed is the God who reveals Himself as the origin of all things good and holy, and He is Love. This Holy God of love is personal; in God we live, move, and have our being. As Paul reminds us in Romans, we and all creation have been groaning for the revelation of what the kingdom and its heirs shall be. God, in His mercy and grace, has provided the means for all who will believe in Christ Jesus and come to a saving faith in Him as their Lord and Master to be reconciled to God. When saving faith comes into a person's life, God Himself comes to dwell in that life through the presence and power of the Holy Spirit. Our justification is accomplished in Jesus Christ the moment we

truly believe and God begins, through the work of the Holy Spirit, to remake our lives in the image of Christ. All who are justified (rescued) by Christ Jesus will be in the process of moving in a life devoted to Christ. This process after faith is called “sanctification”, and happens in the lives of all that are truly saved.

The Church’s role is to proclaim the Gospel of Jesus Christ and the saving message of that Gospel. It is to instruct people in the teachings of that faith and to encourage and discipline believers in their following of Christ. This is done through teaching, counseling, encouraging, correcting and prayer. The Church’s aim is to be the place where the Kingdom of God is not only proclaimed but lived out in the world as a witness to Him who is the Way, the Truth and the Life.

When sin entered the world through man’s free choice, it distorted the whole of creation. Sin affects our lives as individuals and all our social organizations. The Church has the sacred calling to address all people and organizations and witness to them of the life and justice of God. The Church has the sacred duty to God to speak against the sin that enslaves individuals and society and to work for bringing God’s rule over our lives and societies. The mission of the Church is to proclaim and call the world unto reconciliation with God through Jesus Christ, to nurture and care for those who are in Christ, to speak to the world when people are not honored and respected as children of God, and to work for justice for all persons according to the Word of God.

In this brief description of our theological position, the importance of the Christian community is, therefore, emphasized as a place where persons can grow to develop into the fullness of maturity in Christ. We believe the sacraments and rites of the Church, for the believer, provide means of grace and comfort of life through the Word of God and with prayerful consideration of historic Christian teachings, the whole world is shown the life unto which all men are called. Finally, for those persons who have no access to such a full life, we believe the Church has a responsibility to help them. This theological position is regarded as central to our understanding of Christianity.

Why should we as individuals be concerned about theological positions? Is theology not for scholars and professional clergy? The answer is a resounding “no”. Theology is for everyone. Each believer shall stand alone before God in some time and place. God determines our calling, but we are called to work out our response to God’s grace. In this way, each of us will give witness to the authenticity of his or her salvation based on what God has already done for us. We must understand what God requires of us as individuals because when we stand before God we are required to answer for our actions as an individual with no support from anyone or any group. Salvation comes by grace through faith in Jesus Christ, and this will include a decided response in the life of all who are saved. Every person will be judged on whether or not he or she have truly believed in Jesus Christ as the Lord and Savior of the world and has acknowledged through true faith His Lordship over his or her life.



God has acted and it is every believer's calling to respond. The Church and all Christians must witness clearly, what God has done in Jesus Christ and the nature of a true response to that mighty and merciful act. It is here that the Church is helped in its witness through the testimony of creeds and confessions. The creeds and doctrines are summaries of what God has expressed to us in His Holy Word----the Bible. While the creeds and doctrines are no substitute for studying the Bible, they do offer us a summary that directs us to the heart of the Christian faith.

What the Church believes is expressed through the Creeds. A Creed is a statement of one's beliefs. It is a summary of beliefs based on the historical Jesus. Christianity is not a religion about Jesus but is based on the religion of the historical Jesus and the facts of his life. Christianity is not a philosophy of ideas so that it could exist even if there were no real Jesus. In the creeds the Christian faith comes to understanding. They explain the significance of the Gospel.

In and through the Bible, the truth of God, life and salvation is revealed. If this is true, why do we need Creeds to state what to believe? We need to remember that the Bible was written by approximately sixty authors over a thousand years. The truth came in a progressive way, with high and low points in understanding God, and in the statements of morality until the coming of Jesus Christ who is the fullness of God's Self revelation to mankind. There is the danger that anyone with preconceived ideas can go to the Bible for support and, using scripture out of context and misinterpreted scripture, find

support for many positions. Therefore, one must study the entire Bible and distill its essential truths because the Bible does speak with one voice on the essentials of the Christian faith and practice. The Church has thoroughly studied the Bible under the guidance of the Holy Spirit and has determined the essential truths about God and humanity in the Bible.

These truths are enunciated in the Creeds. No important truth is omitted or slighted. Everything that the Creeds say is directly or indirectly in the Bible.

# *What we believe*

Through the Apostles' Creed we define and declare our Christian Faith.

The Apostles' Creed dates from the sixth century and has always been honored as an authentic summary of the faith of the Apostles. It is probably the most widely and frequently used of all Christian statements of belief. It was used regularly in worship in the churches of the Evangelical and Reformed tradition. It is fundamental to that part of our heritage. It links us to the whole of Christian history and the whole Ecumenical Church.

## **The Apostles' Creed**

*I believe in God the Father Almighty, maker of heaven and earth,  
and in Jesus Christ His only begotten Son, our Lord; who was  
conceived by the Holy Ghost, born of the Virgin Mary, suffered  
under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, dead and buried; He  
descended into Hades; the third day He rose again from the dead;  
He ascended into Heaven and sitteth on the right hand of God the  
Father Almighty; From thence He shall come to judge the quick  
and the dead.*

*I believe in the Holy Ghost, the Holy catholic church; the  
communion of the saints; the forgiveness of sins; the resurrection  
of the body; and the life everlasting.*

*Amen*

Faith always requires action and commitment. The Greek words for faith and belief have the same root. Faith and belief in the New Testament always ties faith to action. When faith is put into practice, the fulfillment of that faith becomes a part of our inner being and our total spiritual and physical life. The commitment to understand and practice the true Christian faith requires fellowship: a fellowship of believers who come together as one in spirit ----a community of believers. It is this community of believers in the historical Jesus Christ as recorded in God's Holy Word, The Bible, that is the very foundation of the Christian Church.

From the creeds, statements and theological perspectives, the beliefs held at Beck's Reformed Church are evident and can be stated as follows:

***We believe*** in the one true, holy and living God, Eternal Spirit, who is Creator, Sovereign and Preserver of all things visible and invisible. He is infinite in power, wisdom, goodness and love, and rules with gracious regard for the well-being and salvation of men, to the glory of His name. We believe the one God reveals Himself as the Trinity: Father, Son and Holy Spirit, distinct individuals but inseparable, eternally one in essence and power. He makes Himself clearly and fully known to us in and through His Holy Word.

***We believe*** in Jesus Christ, truly God and truly human, in whom the divine and human natures are perfectly and inseparably united. He is the eternal Word made flesh, the only begotten Son of the Father, born of the Virgin Mary by the power of the Holy Spirit. As ministering Servant, He lived, suffered and died on the cross. He was buried, rose from the dead and ascended into Heaven to be with the Father, from whence He shall return. He is our eternal Savior and Mediator, who intercedes for us, and by Him, all men will be judged.

***We believe*** all men have sinned and come short of the glory of God and stand under the righteous judgement of Jesus Christ, both now and in the last day. We believe in the resurrection of the dead, the righteous to have life eternal, and the wicked to suffer endless condemnation.

***We believe*** in the Holy Spirit who proceeds from and is one in being with the Father and the Son. He convinces the world of sin, righteousness and judgement. He leads men through faithful response to the gospel into the fellowship of the Church. He comforts, sustains, and empowers the faithful and guides them into all truth.

***We believe*** the Holy Bible, Old and New Testaments, is the infallible and inerrant Word of God. It is to be received through the Holy Spirit as the true rule and guide for faith and practice. Whatever is not revealed in or established by the scriptures is not to be made an article of faith nor is it to be taught as essential to salvation.

***We believe*** the Old Testament is not contrary to the New Testament, for both in the Old and New Testaments, everlasting life is offered to mankind by Christ. Although the law given from God by Moses as touching ceremonies and rites does not bind Christians, nor ought the civil precepts thereof of

necessity be received in any commonwealth, yet not withstanding, no Christian is free from the dictates of the Commandments, which are called moral.

***We believe*** man is fallen from righteousness and, apart from the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, is destitute of holiness and inclined to evil. Except a man be born again, he cannot enter the Kingdom of God. In his own strength, without divine grace, man has no power to good works pleasing and acceptable to God. We believe, however, man influenced and empowered by the Holy Spirit is responsible in freedom to exercise his will for good.

***We believe we*** are never accounted righteous before God through our works or merit but that penitent sinners are justified or accounted righteous before God only by faith in our Lord Jesus Christ as the very Son of God whose death paid the price for all who believe in Him and thus receive the promise of the resurrection. We believe regeneration (sanctification) is the renewal of man in righteousness through Jesus Christ, by the power of the Holy Spirit, whereby we are made partakers of the divine nature and experience newness of life. By this new birth, the believer becomes reconciled to God and is enabled to serve Him with the will and affections. We believe, although we have experienced regeneration, it is possible to fall into

sin; and we may even then, by the grace of God, be renewed in righteousness. We believe this experience does not deliver us from the infirmities, ignorance, and mistakes common to man, nor from the possibilities of further sin. The Christian must continue on guard against spiritual pride and seek to gain victory over every temptation to sin. He must respond wholly to the will of God so that sin will lose its power over him.

***We believe*** good works are the necessary fruits of faith and follow regeneration, but they do not have the virtue to remove our sins or to avert divine judgement. We believe good works, pleasing and acceptable to God in Christ, spring from a true and living faith, for through and by them faith is made evident.

***We believe*** the Christian Church is the community of all true believers under the Lordship of Christ. We believe it is one, holy, apostolic and catholic. It is the redemptive fellowship in which the Word of God is preached by men divinely called, and the sacraments are duly administered according to Christ's own appointment. Under the discipline of the Holy Spirit, the Church exists for the maintenance of worship, the edification of believers, and the redemption of the world.



***We believe*** the sacraments, ordained by Christ, are symbols and pledges of the Christian's profession of faith and of God's love toward us. They are means of grace by which God works invisibly in us, quickening, strengthening and confirming our faith in Him. Two sacraments are ordained by Christ our Lord, namely Baptism and the Lord's Supper. We believe Baptism signifies entrance into the household of faith, and is a symbol of repentance and inner cleansing from sin, a representation of the new birth in Christ Jesus and a mark of Christian discipleship. We believe children are under the atonement of Christ and, as heirs of the Kingdom of God, are acceptable subjects for Christian baptism. Children of believing parents become the special responsibility of the Church until they reach the age of accountability. At which time, through confirmation and a true confession of faith, they receive the full rewards offered by Jesus to all believers. We believe the Lord's Supper is a representation of our redemption, a memorial of the sufferings, and a token of love and union which Christians have with Christ and with one another.

***We believe*** God has appointed a day wherein He will judge the world in righteousness by Jesus Christ, to whom all power and judgement is by the Father. In which day, not only the apostate angels shall be judged but, likewise, all persons who have lived upon earth shall appear before the

tribunal of Christ to give an account of their thoughts, words, and deeds, and, to receive, judgement according to what they have done, in the body, whether good or evil. For then shall the righteous receive everlasting life and receive that fullness of joy and refreshing which shall come from the presence of the Lord. But the wicked, who know not God, and obey not the Gospel of Jesus Christ, shall be cast into eternal torment and shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power.

*We believe* civil government derives its just power from the sovereign God. As Christians, we recognize the governments under whose protection we reside and believe such governments should be based on and responsible for the recognition of human rights under God. We believe it is the duty of Christian citizens to give moral strength and purpose to their respective governments through sober, righteous and Godly living. We are commanded by God to pray for our leaders and rulers.