

# Introduction<sup>1</sup>

1. What is a creed or statement of faith?
  - Definition – “Creed” comes from the Latin *credo*, which means “I believe.” It is not just a body of beliefs (“I believe that”) but a confession of faith (“I believe in”). As we gather corporately and confess our one faith in the one Lord, who is Trinitarian, this becomes “we believe.”
  - Purpose – Creeds served a fourfold function: baptismal, instructional (catechetical), doctrinal, and liturgical.
  - Benefits – helps define and state what we believe. “Facilitates public confession, forms a succinct basis of teaching, safeguards pure doctrine, and constitutes an appropriate focus for the church’s fellowship of faith.”
  - Dangers – Can become formal, complex, abstract, too detailed, superimposed over and replace Scripture.
    - The Bible, and the Bible alone, is the absolute, authoritative, inerrant Word from and of God. A creed or statement of faith is a brief summary of what is true as revealed in the Bible, but it is not the Bible and thus it is not inerrant and it is, and must be, revisable as new errors and heresies arise.
  - Why revise it?
    - The Bible alone is unchangeable, not a Statement of Faith or Creed, and is thus our ultimate authority. Every doctrinal statement is a human product and should never be accorded the status of authority and permanence that is held by the Bible alone.
    - Every doctrinal statement is written at a specific time in a particular historical context.
    - One of the key EFCA principles is to preserve evangelical unity in the gospel, and is at the heart of our identity, and more importantly, our theology.
    - The opportunity to make a great statement better—to update archaic language, to clarify some theological ambiguities, to seek greater theological precision, to address new issues, to have a SOF that would be better suited to be used as teaching tool in our churches.

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<sup>1</sup> Adapted from “EFCA Statement of Faith: Introduction,” by Greg Strand, Director of Biblical Theology and Credentialing

- A revision should result from a very careful, prayerful, and deliberate process, and not from a reaction to any particular crisis, controversy, or trend.

## 2. EFCA History of a Statement of Faith

1884 – Swedish Evangelical Free Church – one point on the Scripture

1912 – Norwegian-Danish Free Church Association – 12 point SOF

1947 – Swedish Evangelical Free Church Ministerial Association – 9 points, 10<sup>th</sup> added later

1950 – Evangelical Free Church of America – 12 point SOF

1987-Present – discussion about revisions

2008 – New SOF adopted by EFCA

## 3. Principles guiding the revision

- Focus on the gospel
- Strengthen commitment to biblical authority
- Reflect evangelical tradition
  - Committed to the Bible as our authority.
  - Shaped by the Trinitarian and Christological Creeds of the early church.
  - Shaped by the Reformation of the 16<sup>th</sup> Century.
  - Shaped by the Evangelical Revivals of the 18<sup>th</sup> & 19<sup>th</sup> centuries.
  - Shaped by the Modernist/Fundamentalist debates of the early 20<sup>th</sup> century.
  - Shaped by more recent debate between fundamentalists and evangelicals in the 1940's, a call to move away from separatism and isolationism.
- Address new issues
  - Denial that God knows the future exhaustively (open theism).
  - How do we know anything – postmodern relativism (epistemology).
  - Reality of the spirit world.
  - Ministry and mission among all people.

- God-centered.
  - Increase theological clarity.
  - Be brief.
    - Without being minimalist.
    - Without being maximalist.
    - Remembering the purpose of our SOF in the EFCA—ordination, tenure of faculty, missionary candidates, those serving in an officially approved capacity in a national ministry.
  - Embody unity in the gospel
    - We are a believer’s church with a strong commitment to Evangelical unity in the gospel.
    - We are a church for “believers only but for all believers.”
    - We “major on the majors and minor on the minors.”
4. General themes of the Statement of Faith (adopted June 2008)
- Biblical theology & Systematic theology – note the headings, the order of the articles and the actual articles themselves
    - Difference between biblical theology and systematic theology. Biblical theology takes only what is in Scripture. Systematic theology takes what is in Scripture and adds logic to organize and categorize the ideas.
  - God’s glory – The SOF begins (“for his own glory”) and ends (“to the praise of his glorious grace”) with an emphasis on God and his glory.
  - Theology and doxology – all theology is doxological, i.e. it is the context of worship. This is how the SOF ends: “to the praise of his glorious grace. Amen.”
  - Orthodoxy and orthopraxy – doctrinal statements are made along with the practical implications of those truths in our lives as the people of God. In any given day in the life of the church, certain truths are necessary to emphasize to ensure that the faith once for all entrusted to the saints is being upheld.
    - See articles 2, 7, 8, 9, 10

- Logical and theological statement – each phrase will make sense in the context of the article, in the context of the whole SOF.
- Builds to response – the only appropriate response to this great God and what he has done is to believe the gospel: “We believe that God commands everyone everywhere to believe the gospel by turning to him in repentance and receiving the Lord Jesus Christ.”
- Themes—theology (emphasis on God in all his fullness), epistemology (the basis of how we know), soteriology (salvation in its broadest biblical sense)

5. EFCA Statement of Faith (adopted June 2008)

- Credo – we believe.
- Intended as a statement or confession for believers, not unbelievers.
- Consists of explicit and implicit truths.
- States what we affirm and what we deny.
- Determines who is in and who is out.
- Affirms the “significance of silence.”
- Consists of what must be true to be saved, but not what must be believed to be saved.

# EFCA Statement of Faith

*Adopted by the Conference on June 26, 2008*

The Evangelical Free Church of America is an association of autonomous churches united around these theological convictions:

**God** We believe in one God, Creator of all things, holy, infinitely perfect, and eternally existing in a loving unity of three equally divine Persons: the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. Having limitless knowledge and sovereign power, God has graciously purposed from eternity to redeem a people for Himself and to make all things new for His own glory.

**The Bible** We believe that God has spoken in the Scriptures, both Old and New Testaments, through the words of human authors. As the verbally inspired Word of God, the Bible is without error in the original writings, the complete revelation of His will for salvation, and the ultimate authority by which every realm of human knowledge and endeavor should be judged. Therefore, it is to be believed in all that it teaches, obeyed in all that it requires, and trusted in all that it promises.

**The Human Condition** We believe that God created Adam and Eve in His image, but they sinned when tempted by Satan. In union with Adam, human beings are sinners by nature and by choice, alienated from God, and under His wrath. Only through God's saving work in Jesus Christ can we be rescued, reconciled and renewed.

**Jesus Christ** We believe that Jesus Christ is God incarnate, fully God and fully man, one Person in two natures. Jesus-Israel's promised Messiah-was conceived through the Holy Spirit and born of the virgin Mary. He lived a sinless life, was crucified under Pontius Pilate, arose bodily from the dead, ascended into heaven and sits at the right hand of God the Father as our High Priest and Advocate.

**The Work of Christ** We believe that Jesus Christ, as our representative and substitute, shed His blood on the cross as the perfect, all-sufficient sacrifice for our sins. His atoning death and victorious resurrection constitute the only ground for salvation.

**The Holy Spirit** We believe that the Holy Spirit, in all that He does, glorifies the Lord Jesus Christ. He convicts the world of its guilt. He regenerates sinners, and in Him they are baptized into union with Christ and adopted as heirs in the family of God. He also indwells, illuminates, guides, equips and empowers believers for Christ-like living and service.

**The Church** We believe that the true church comprises all who have been justified by God's grace through faith alone in Christ alone. They are united by the Holy Spirit in the body of Christ, of which He is the Head. The true church is manifest in local churches, whose membership should be composed only of believers. The Lord Jesus mandated two ordinances, baptism and the Lord's Supper, which visibly and tangibly express the gospel. Though they are not the means of salvation, when celebrated by the church in genuine faith, these ordinances confirm and nourish the believer.

**Christian Living** We believe that God's justifying grace must not be separated from His sanctifying power and purpose. God commands us to love Him supremely and others sacrificially, and to live out our faith with care for one another, compassion toward the poor and justice for the oppressed. With God's Word, the Spirit's power, and fervent prayer in Christ's name, we are to combat the spiritual forces of evil. In obedience to Christ's commission, we are to make disciples among all people, always bearing witness to the gospel in word and deed.

**Christ's Return** We believe in the personal, bodily and premillennial return of our Lord Jesus Christ. The coming of Christ, at a time known only to God, demands constant expectancy and, as our blessed hope, motivates the believer to godly living, sacrificial service and energetic mission.

**Response and Eternal Destiny** We believe that God commands everyone everywhere to believe the gospel by turning to Him in repentance and receiving the Lord Jesus Christ. We believe that God will raise the dead bodily and judge the world, assigning the unbeliever to condemnation and eternal conscious punishment and the believer to eternal blessedness and joy with the Lord in the new heaven and the new earth, to the praise of His glorious grace. Amen.

**UEFC Statement of Faith**  
(1950 EFCA Statement of Faith)

1. We believe the Scriptures, both Old and New Testaments, to be the inspired Word of God, without error in the original writings, the complete revelation of His will for the salvation of men, and the Divine and final authority for all Christian faith and life.
2. We believe in one God, Creator of all things, infinitely perfect and eternally existing in three persons, Father, Son and Holy Spirit.
3. We believe that Jesus Christ is true God and true man, having been conceived of the Holy Ghost and born of the Virgin Mary. He died on the Cross a sacrifice for our sins according to the Scriptures. Further, He arose bodily from the dead, ascended into heaven, where at the right hand of the Majesty on High, He is our High Priest and Advocate.
4. We believe that the ministry of the Holy Spirit is to glorify the Lord Jesus Christ, and during this age to convict men, regenerate the believing sinner, indwell, guide, instruct and empower the believer for Godly living and service.
5. We believe that man was created in the image of God but fell into sin and is therefore lost and only through regeneration by the Holy Spirit, can salvation and spiritual life be obtained.
6. We believe that the shed blood of Jesus Christ and His resurrection provide the only ground for justification and salvation for all who believe, and only such as receive Jesus Christ are born of the Holy Spirit, and thus become children of God.
7. We believe that the Lord's Supper and Water Baptism are ordinances to be observed by the Church during this present age. They are, however, not to be regarded as means of salvation.
8. We believe that the true Church is composed of all such persons who through saving faith in Jesus Christ have been regenerated by the Holy Spirit and are united together in the body of Christ, of which He is the head.
9. We believe that only those who are thus members of the true Church are eligible for membership of this church.
10. We believe that Jesus Christ is the Lord and Head of the Church, and that every local church has the right, under Christ, to decide and govern its own affairs.
11. We believe in the personal, and premillennial and imminent coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and that this "Blessed Hope" has a vital bearing on the personal life and service of the believer.
12. We believe in the bodily resurrection of the dead; of the believer to everlasting blessedness and joy with the Lord, of the unbeliever to judgment and everlasting conscious punishment.

## Comparison of 1950 & 2008 Statement of Faith

	<b>New EFCA Statement of Faith</b> (adopted 6/26/08)	<b>UEFC Statement of Faith</b> (1950 EFCA Statement of Faith)
<b>Preamble</b>	The Evangelical Free Church of America is an association of autonomous churches united around these theological convictions:	
<b>God</b>	1. We believe in one God, Creator of all things, holy, infinitely perfect, and eternally existing in a loving unity of three equally divine Persons: the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. Having limitless knowledge and sovereign power, God has graciously purposed from eternity to redeem a people for Himself and to make all things new for His own glory.	2. We believe in one God, Creator of all things, infinitely perfect and eternally existing in three persons, Father, Son and Holy Spirit.
<b>The Bible</b>	2. We believe that God has spoken in the Scriptures, both Old and New Testaments, through the words of human authors. As the verbally inspired Word of God, the Bible is without error in the original writings, the complete revelation of His will for salvation, and the ultimate authority by which every realm of human knowledge and endeavor should be judged. Therefore, it is to be believed in all that it teaches, obeyed in all that it requires, and trusted in all that it promises.	1. We believe the Scriptures, both Old and New Testaments, to be the inspired Word of God, without error in the original writings, the complete revelation of His will for the salvation of men, and the Divine and final authority for all Christian faith and life.
<b>The Human Condition</b>	3. We believe that God created Adam and Eve in His image, but they sinned when tempted by Satan. In union with Adam, human beings are sinners by nature and by choice, alienated from God, and under His wrath. Only through God's saving work in Jesus Christ can we be rescued, reconciled and renewed.	5. We believe that man was created in the image of God but fell into sin and is therefore lost and only through regeneration by the Holy Spirit, can salvation and spiritual life be obtained.

	<b>New EFCA Statement of Faith</b> (adopted 6/26/08)	<b>UEFC Statement of Faith</b> (1950 EFCA Statement of Faith)
<b>Jesus Christ</b>	4. We believe that Jesus Christ is God incarnate, fully God and fully man, one Person in two natures. Jesus-Israel's promised Messiah-was conceived through the Holy Spirit and born of the virgin Mary. He lived a sinless life, was crucified under Pontius Pilate, arose bodily from the dead, ascended into heaven and sits at the right hand of God the Father as our High Priest and Advocate.	3. We believe that Jesus Christ is true God and true man, having been conceived of the Holy Ghost and born of the Virgin Mary. He died on the Cross a sacrifice for our sins according to the Scriptures. Further, He arose bodily from the dead, ascended into heaven, where at the right hand of the Majesty on High, He is our High Priest and Advocate.
<b>The Work of Christ</b>	5. We believe that Jesus Christ, as our representative and substitute, shed His blood on the cross as the perfect, all-sufficient sacrifice for our sins. His atoning death and victorious resurrection constitute the only ground for salvation.	6. We believe that the shed blood of Jesus Christ and His resurrection provide the only ground for justification and salvation for all who believe, and only such as receive Jesus Christ are born of the Holy Spirit, and thus become children of God.
<b>The Holy Spirit</b>	6. We believe that the Holy Spirit, in all that He does, glorifies the Lord Jesus Christ. He convicts the world of its guilt. He regenerates sinners, and in Him they are baptized into union with Christ and adopted as heirs in the family of God. He also indwells, illuminates, guides, equips and empowers believers for Christ-like living and service.	4. We believe that the ministry of the Holy Spirit is to glorify the Lord Jesus Christ, and during this age to convict men, regenerate the believing sinner, indwell, guide, instruct and empower the believer for Godly living and service.

	<p align="center"><b>New EFCA Statement of Faith</b> (adopted 6/26/08)</p>	<p align="center"><b>UEFC Statement of Faith</b> (1950 EFCA Statement of Faith)</p>
<p><b>The Church</b></p>	<p>7. We believe that the true church comprises all who have been justified by God's grace through faith alone in Christ alone. They are united by the Holy Spirit in the body of Christ, of which He is the Head. The true church is manifest in local churches, whose membership should be composed only of believers. The Lord Jesus mandated two ordinances, baptism and the Lord's Supper, which visibly and tangibly express the gospel. Though they are not the means of salvation, when celebrated by the church in genuine faith, these ordinances confirm and nourish the believer.</p>	<p>7. We believe that the Lord's Supper and Water Baptism are ordinances to be observed by the Church during this present age. They are, however, not to be regarded as means of salvation.</p>
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		<p>9. We believe that only those who are thus members of the true Church are eligible for membership of this church.</p>
		<p>10. We believe that Jesus Christ is the Lord and Head of the Church, and that every local church has the right, under Christ, to decide and govern its own affairs.</p>
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<b>Christ's Return</b>	9. We believe in the personal, bodily and premillennial return of our Lord Jesus Christ. The coming of Christ, at a time known only to God, demands constant expectancy and, as our blessed hope, motivates the believer to godly living, sacrificial service and energetic mission.	11. We believe in the personal, and premillennial and imminent coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and that this "Blessed Hope" has a vital bearing on the personal life and service of the believer.
<b>Response and Eternal Destiny</b>	10. We believe that God commands everyone everywhere to believe the gospel by turning to Him in repentance and receiving the Lord Jesus Christ. We believe that God will raise the dead bodily and judge the world, assigning the unbeliever to condemnation and eternal conscious punishment and the believer to eternal blessedness and joy with the Lord in the new heaven and the new earth, to the praise of His glorious grace. Amen.	12. We believe in the bodily resurrection of the dead; of the believer to everlasting blessedness and joy with the Lord, of the unbeliever to judgment and everlasting conscious punishment.