

A CATECHETICAL GUIDE ON THE UCCP STATEMENT OF FAITH

Rev. Luna L. Dingayan
Ecumenical Theological Seminary
#42 Bokawkan Road, Baguio City

STATEMENT OF FAITH

WE BELIEVE

In One God: Creator, Redeemer and Sustainer, who provides order, purpose, meaning and fulfillment to all creation.

That in Jesus Christ, who was born of Mary, God became human and is Sovereign Lord of life and history.

That in the Holy Spirit God is present in the world, empowering and guiding believers to understand and live out their faith in Jesus Christ.

WE BELIEVE

That persons are created in the image of God and destined to live in community with God, with other persons and with all creation.

That, by disobedience, they have become sinful, but, by grace through faith, they are redeemed in Jesus Christ.

That being entrusted with God's creation, they are called to participate in the establishment of a just and compassionate social order.

WE BELIEVE

That the Church is the one body of Christ, the whole community of persons reconciled to God through Jesus Christ and entrusted with God's ministry.

WE BELIEVE

That the Holy Bible is a faithful and inspired witness to God's self-revelation in Jesus Christ and in history to illumine, guide, correct and edify believers in their faith and witness.

WE BELIEVE

God is at work, to make each person a new being in Christ, and the whole world, God's Kingdom — in which love, justice and peace prevail.

The Kingdom of God is present where faith in Jesus Christ is shared, where healing is given to the sick, where food is given to the hungry, where light is given to the blind, and where liberty is given to the captive and oppressed.

WE BELIEVE

The resurrection of Jesus Christ has overcome the power of death and gives assurance of life after death.

And we look forward to His coming again in all fullness and glory to make all creation new and to gather all the faithful under God's Kingdom. Amen.

Revised. Version, September 3, 1992 UCCP Faith and Order Committee

I. PRELIMINARIES: WE BELIEVE

What is UCCP?

The United Church of Christ in the Philippines (UCCP) is an organic union, of five Protestant groups brought by American missionaries at the turn of the 20th century, namely: Presbyterian, Methodist, Congregationalist, Evangelical United Brethren, and Disciples. It was organized in 1948. It is a united and uniting church, concretizing the faithful's response to the prayer of our Lord, "That they all may be one." (*John 17:22*)

What is Statement of Faith

A Statement of Faith is a formal confession or declaration of what we believe in.

What made UCCP formulate its own Statement of Faith?

UCCP decided to formulate its own Statement of Faith because of the crisis of faith among UCCP churches brought about by the inroads of fundamentalist teachings, coupled with the crisis in Philippine society brought about by the Martial Law regime. The Statement of Faith provides the UCCP authoritative handles to face the crises. It would also give UCCP an identity.

How did the UCCP Statement of Faith come into being?

As a response to the clamor from the churches, the 1978 UCCP General Assembly decided to formulate a Statement of Faith. A faith and order committee was organized to draft the Statement. It was chaired by then Bishop Pedro Raterta. The draft was distributed to the churches for comments and suggestions. A liturgical version was drafted as suggested. And after some years of study and discussions in the conference and local church levels, the 1986 General Assembly approved the Statement. A book of commentaries on the Statement entitled, *Like A Mustard Seed*, was prepared by the members of the Faith and Order Committee chaired by Dr. Feliciano V. Cariño. In 1992 a revised version of the Statement was issued by the Faith and Order Committee. One important feature of the 1992 revision was the use of a more inclusive language and the inclusion of a statement on Mary.

How do we interpret the UCCP Statement of Faith?

We should interpret the UCCP Statement of Faith in the light of its own historical context. We should study, understand, and affirm it in the light of the situation in which it was formulated. The process of formulating the statement formally started in 1978 and the draft statement was approved by the General Assembly in 1986. This was the period of Martial Law leading to the EDSA Revolution, as well as the time when there was an influx of new religious movements that started to challenge the faith and witness of mainline Protestant churches. It was also the period when "liberating ideas" — including the feminist movement

were at its peak. Moreover, we should not treat the Statement as a dogma (established doctrine) nor a systematic theology. It is open to re-interpretation, re-statement or even reformulation. Like any other creeds, the UCCP Statement of Faith includes only the kernel (most basic) of the Christian faith.

What are the key issues addressed by the UCCP Statement of Faith?

There are at least three key issues addressed by the UCCP Statement of Faith, namely: political idolatry, concern for the human, and concern for justice and social order. One of the grave dangers faced by any government, especially authoritarian regimes, is the danger of political idolatry. The real problem in an authoritarian regime is not that people do not believe in God, but rather they believe in god or goddesses other than the One True God, the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. Rulers, both secular and religious, have the tendency to arrogate unto themselves the power and authority, obedience and loyalty, which belong only to God. In the context of repression that necessarily accompany authoritarian regimes, the value of human life becomes less and less. Hence, the concern for the human, for justice and social order become legitimate Christian concerns.

II. GOD

Who is God?

God is One: the Creator, Redeemer and Sustainer.

Ref.: Gen. 1-2; Ex. 3, 20; In. 1; Mt. 28; Acts 1

What do we mean by "God is One"?

It means that there is only One God whom we put our ultimate trust, obedience and loyalty — the God of Abraham and Sarah, the God of the prophets, the God and Father of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

Ref: Ex. 20; Dent. 5; Jos. 24; I Cor.. 8:6; Eph. 4:6

What do we mean by "God is the Creator"?

It means that everything is created by God. We are called to be co-creators with God and have been given the gift of creativity. But ultimately it is God who creates. We are simply participating in God's creative work.

Ref.: Gen. 1-2; Ps. 8; Epk 2:10, 4:24; Cc I. 1:16; Rev. 4:11

What do we mean by "God is the Redeemer"?

It means that God alone is the One who redeems or saves. We are called to participate in God's work of redemption or salvation. But ultimately it is God who redeems or saves expressing this finally in Jesus Christ on the Cross at Calvary.

Ref: Ex. 3; Lk. 4; Mk. 10; Lk. 1:68, 24:21; Eph. 1:7; Col. 1:14

What do we mean by "God is the Sustainer"?

It means that God alone is the One who sustains life. We are called to be instruments of God's sustaining grace so that all may experience abundant life. But ultimately it is only God who sustains life.

Ref.: Joshua 1; Jer. 1; Mt. 28; Acts 1:8

What do we mean by God "provides order, purpose, meaning and fulfillment to all creation"?

It means we should understand creation, not in terms of profit, exploitation or "development" to satisfy human greed; but rather in terms of the will of God the Creator for the whole of creation. In short, we should understand creation in terms of responsible stewardship, of caring and sharing to fulfill God's promise of abundant life for all.

Ref: Gen. 1-2; Is. 40; Eph. 2:10, 4:24; Col. 1:16; Rev. 4:11; In. 10:10

Who is Jesus Christ?

Jesus Christ is God becoming human, the sovereign Lord of life and history. He was born of Mary.

Ref.: Mk. ; Mk ; Lk. ; John

What do we mean by "God became human"?

It means that God identifies with humanity. God sees the suffering of people and suffers with them; God hears their cries and cries with them. God feels the peoples' pain, and struggles and hopes with them for a new humanity, for a new way of life, a "new heaven and a new earth".

Ref: Ex. 3; In. 1; Rev. 21

What do we mean by Jesus Christ as "the sovereign Lord of life and history"?

It means that Jesus Christ has conquered life by putting meaning to life. The meaning of life is to share it, especially to those who have less in life. Jesus Christ also has conquered history by putting meaning to it. He has made, shaped, molded, and has given direction to history by the life he has lived. his in Jesus Christ, therefore, that we find meaning and fulfillment of life and history.

Ref.: Mt. 28; Mk. 16; Lk 24; In. 20; Rev. 21

What do we mean by Jesus Christ as "born of Mary"?

It means that Jesus Christ is fully human as well as fully divine. The divinity of Jesus Christ is fulfilled in his humanity. Like us, Jesus Christ our Lord and Savior is born of a woman. This statement underscores the important role women play in God's work of salvation.

Ref.: Mt. 1:18-25; Lk 1:46-56, 2:1-7

Who is the Holy Spirit?

The Holy Spirit is God's Presence in the world.

Ref.: In. 15:26-27, 16:1-15; Acts 1:8, 2

What is the role of the Holy Spirit?

The Holy Spirit empowers and guides believers to understand and live out their faith in Jesus Christ.

Ref: in. 15:26-27, 16:1-15; Acts 1:8, 2

What are the signs of the presence of the Holy Spirit?

The Holy Spirit is present where the fruits of the Holy Spirit are present, like love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, humility, and self-control.

Ref.: Gal. 5:22-23; Acts 2:43-47; 4:32-35

What is trinity?

Trinity is the belief that God is one, but is revealed in three ways, as Father, Son and Holy Spirit or in the words of the UCCP Statement of Faith as Creator, Redeemer, and Sustainer.

Ref: Mt. 28:16-20; Is. 63:16, 64:8; Mt. 6:9; Jn. 20:17; Jn. 3:16, 18; 4:24; 2 Cor. 3:17

III. PERSON

What is a person?

A person is God's creature male and female — created in the image of God and destined to live in community with God, with other persons and with all creation.

Ref.: Gen. 1:26-31; Ps. 8; Mic. 6:8; I Jn. 3:23

What do we mean by persons "created in the image of God"?

It means that we are created by God to image or reflect God's purpose for humanity, which is to live in community with God, with other persons and with all creation. ,

Ref.: Gen. 1:26-31; Ps. 8; Mic. 6:8; I Jn. 3:23

What is God's purpose for humanity? What is the destiny of the - human race?

God's purpose for humanity is for them to live in community with God, ' with other persons and with all creation. This is the destiny of the human race.

Ref: Gen. 1:26-31; Ps. 8; Mic. 6:8; I Jn. 3:23

What do we mean by "live in community"?

Living in community means that we do not live our lives alone by our-selves and for ourselves. Rather, we should live our lives ever mindful of God our Creator, our fellow human beings, and the whole of creation.

Ref.: Gen. 1:26-31; Ps. 8; Mw. 6:8; I Jn. 3:23

What is sin?

Sin is disobedience to God's will. More forcefully, it is a rebellion against God.

Ref: Gen. 3; Rom. 5:19

What makes persons sinful?

Persons become sinful by disobeying and rebelling against God's will for humanity.

Ref.: Gen. 3; Rom. 5:19

What do we mean by disobeying God's will?

Disobeying God's will means obeying our own selfish will. It means refusal to live in community with God, with other persons and with all creation. It means playing like God, making ourselves the center of everything, lording it over other people and the rest of God's creation.

Ref.: Gen. 3-11; Rom. 5:19

What do we mean by "by the grace through faith, they are redeemed in Jesus Christ?"

It means that redemption from sin comes to us in and through Jesus Christ like a gift that we should receive through faith and respond to it with a life of thanksgiving.

Ref.: Acts 15:11; Rom. 3:24, 4:4; Eph. 2:5; 2 Thess. 2:16; Titus 3:7; 1 Peter 1:10

What do we mean by "being entrusted with God's creation"?

It means that we are called to be responsible and faithful stewards of God's creation. We should take care of God's creation according to the will and purpose of the Creator.

Ref.: Gen. 1:26-31

What is our calling as person created in God's image?

We are called to participate in the establishment of a just and compassionate social order.

Ref: Amos 5; Mic. 6:8; Lk. 4:18-19; Ps. 82

What do we mean by a "just and compassionate social order"?

A just and compassionate social order is one wherein the needs of everyone are being met. It is a social order wherein the least, the last, and the lost are given gracious attention.

Ref: Lk. 4,15; Mt. 25; Is. 65

IV. THE CHURCH

What is the church?

The church is the one body of Christ, the whole community of persons reconciled to God through Jesus Christ and entrusted with God's ministry.

Ref.: Rom. 12; 1 Cor. 12; 2 Cor. 5:18; Rom. 5; Eph. 2:16; Col. 1:20; Heb.

What do we mean by "the church is one body of Christ"?

It means that the church is one because Christ is one. The churches, therefore, should strive to work for unity in Christ.

Ref.: Rom. 12; 1 Cor. 12

What is Christ's ministry?

Christ's ministry is the ministry of reconciliation.

Ref.: 2 Cor. 5:19; Rom. 5,7.Eph. 2:16; Col. 1:20; Heb. 2:17

What do we mean by Ministry of reconciliation?

The ministry of reconciliation aims. to reconcile people to God, to their fellow human beings, and to the rest of God's creation in and through Jesus Christ; and to establish a community 'where love, justice and peace prevail. Genuine reconciliation comes when justice is served 'arid love permeates the whole of community .relationship.

Ref.: 2 Cor. 5:19; Rom. 5; Eph..2:16; Col. 1:20; Heb. 2:17

What do we mean by the church as "the whole community of persons reconciled to God through Jesus Christ"?

It means that the church is composed of people who are bound together with a common experience of being reconciled to God, to their fellow human beings, and to the rest of God's creation in and through Jesus Christ. And thus, the church, being a reconciled community, should also be an instrument of reconciliation in the world.

Ref.: 2 Cor. 5:19; Rom. 5; Eph. 2:16; Col. 1:20; Heb. 2:17

V. THE BIBLE

What is the Bible?

The Holy Bible is a faithful and inspired witness to God's self-revelation in Jesus Christ and in history to illumine, guide, correct and edify believers in their faith and witness.

Ref.: Job. 32:8; 2 Tim. 3:16

What do we mean by "Holy Bible"?

It means that the Bible is not simply an ordinary book, because it is in and through a serious Study of the Bible that we realize God's Word (will and purpose) for us. The word "holy" literally means different.

Ref.: 2 Tim. 3:16; Jn. 20:30-31

What do we mean by "faithful and inspired witness to God's self-revelation in Jesus Christ and in history"?

It means that the Bible is a book that is both human and divine. Human in the sense that it has been subjected to human frailties and limitations in the long process of its formation, from the oral tradition to written tradition to translation. Yet, it is also divine in the sense that it bears witness to God's self-revelation in Jesus Christ and in history.

Ref.: 2 Tim. 3:16; Jn. 20:30-31

What do we mean by "faithful witness"?

It means that in spite of the fact that the Bible has been subjected to human .frailties, it does not depart from the truth of God's self-revelation in Jesus Christ and in history.

Ref.: 2 Tim. 3:16; Jn. 20:30-31

What do we mean by "inspired witness"?

It means that God's Spirit has worked in and through the whole process in the formation of the Bible. The storytellers, writers, compilers, editors, those who canonized, translators, and even interpreters of the Bible are all instruments of the Divine Spirit in making the truth of God's self-revelation alive then and now. and. we who seriously study the Bible should also be inspired by God's Spirit in order to understand and live out the Biblical message in our daily lives.

Ref.: 2 Tim. 3:16; Jn. 20:30-31

What do we mean by "illumine, guide, correct, and edify believers in their faith and witness"?

It means that believers do need a serious and sustained study of the Bible in order to deepen their faith and to have a more effective witnessing. A serious and sustained study of the Bible illumine our minds to the truth of

God's self-revelation, guide our path of service to people, correct our wrongdoings, and edify our way of life. The Bible, indeed, is like a mirror for is to see ourselves inwardly as well as outwardly.

Ref.: 2 Tim. 3:16; Ps. 119:105

VI. KINGDOM OF GOD

What is the Kingdom of God?

The Kingdom of God is where love, justice, and peace prevail.

Ref.: Mt. 11:4-5; Lk. 4:18-19

Where can we experience the presence of God's Kingdom?

The Kingdom of God is present where faith in Jesus Christ is shared, where healing is given to the sick, where food is given to the hungry, light is given to the blind, and where liberty is given to the captive and oppressed.'

Ref.: Lk. 4:18-19; Mt. 11:4-5

What is God's work?

God's Work is to make each person a new being in Christ, and the whole world God's Kingdom — in which love, justice, and peace prevail.

Ref: Mt. 11:4-5; Lk. 4:18-19; Lk. 49

What do we mean by "God is at work to make each person a new being in Christ"?

It means that God's Spirit is empowering us to pattern our life from Christ's way of life. We are new beings only in so far as we reflect in our life Christ's way of life.

Ref.: Lk. 19; II Cor. 5:17

What is the basic characteristics of Christ's way of life?

Christ's way of life is a life of love and compassion for people, especially the sinners, the outcasts, the poor and oppressed.

Ref: In. 8:1-11; Mt. 15:32; 20:34; Lk. 7:13, 21; Heb. 2:18; 4:15; 5:2

What do we mean by God is at work to make "the whole world God's Kingdom"?

It means that though God has created the whole world, every knee is yet to bow down and every tongue is yet to confess that God alone is Lord. Love, justice, and peace are yet to prevail in the world. Thus, God in wondrous ways is continuously working to make the whole world (not only a portion of it) God's Kingdom.

Ref.: Rom. 14:11-12; Phil. 2:1-11

What do we mean by God's Kingdom is present 'where faith in Jesus Christ is shared'?

It means that one of the signs of the presence of God's Kingdom is the sharing of faith in Jesus Christ. Genuine sharing comes only in the context of a genuine community wherein faith in Jesus Christ would also mean mutual faith in each other. We share our faith in Jesus Christ by the word we speak and by the life we live.

Ref.: Acts 2,4

What do we mean by God's Kingdom is present "where healing is given to the sick"?

It means that another sign of the presence of God's Kingdom is the giving of healing and wholeness to the sick. Healing the sick is not just a physical or medical issue; it is also a social and spiritual issue. People get sick not only because of virus or bacteria, but also because of problems in life. As a matter of fact, many of the killer diseases, like heart disease and cancer, are caused primarily by emotional tensions. Moreover, poor people get sick due to

malnutrition, and they receive inadequate medical care due to financial limitations. Healing the sick, therefore, means addressing the root causes of illness not only to the sick individual but also to the sick society.

Ref: Acts 3; Mt. 4:23; Lk. 9:11

What do we mean by God's Kingdom is present "where food is given to the hungry"?

It means that another sign of the presence of God's Kingdom is the giving of food to the hungry. Giving food to the hungry is not just an economic issue; it is also a political and spiritual issue. In many cases, people are deprived of food simply because a few have too much while many have too little or even nothing at all. Human greed expressed in economic terms produces a world of hunger. Giving food to the hungry, therefore, means addressing the root causes of hunger.

Ref: Lk. 16:19-31; Mt. 4:1-14.25

What do we mean by God's Kingdom is present "where light is given to the blind"?

It means that another sign of the presence of God's Kingdom is the giving of light to the blind. Giving light to the blind is not just a physical issue; it is also an spiritual issue. Many may have 20-20 vision, but are blind to the realities around them. There is such a thing as selective perception. Some vested interests may hinder us to freely see what we ought to see, thus we perceive only those that we want to perceive or what the powers-that-be want us to see. Giving light to the blind, therefore, means dealing With that which prevents people to see the truth.

Ref.: Mk. 10:46-52; Acts 4

What do we mean by God's Kingdom is present "where liberty is given to the captive and oppressed"?

It means. that another sign of the presence of God's Kingdom is the giving of liberty to the captive' s and oppressed. Genuine liberty is not simply given on a silver platter; it has to be struggled for. Sometimes captives are not only those behind bars; but also those whose minds and hearts are captives to oppressive ideologies and fanatical religiosity. Sometimes a whole country and people are captives to international powers-that-be. Hence, giving liberty to the captive and oppressed is not just a political issue; it is also an spiritual issue. Giving liberty to the captive and oppressed, therefore, means dealing with the root causes of captivity and oppression in its deepest and broadest sense.

Ref: Lk. 4:16-20

Who would establish God's Kingdom in the world?

It is God who is working patiently to establish God's Kingdom in the world. We are called, however, to participate in God's work to make the whole world God's Kingdom..

Ref.: Mark 10:35-45

VII. RESURRECTION

"What is death?"

Death is the consequence of sin. It is not simply a cessation of physical life; it is also t a cessation from the kind of life God intends us to live with. Physical death is real and terrible; but death as a consequence of sin is even more real and terrible.

Ref.: Lk. 12:4; Rom. 6:23; 1 Car. 15:56

What is the "power of death"?

The power of death is sin. Sin claims death to be the end; that death has the final say. Hence, people are anxious and fearful to face death. Enemies of truth do kill the bearers of truth, thinking that death is already the end. But the resurrection of Christ says otherwise: death is not the end.

Ref.: Rom. 6:23; I Cor. 15:56

What is resurrection?

Resurrection is the overcoming of the power of death and the assurance of life after death.

Ref.: Jn. 11:25; I Cor. 15; I Thess. 4-5

What do we mean by the "resurrection of Jesus Christ has overcome the power of death"?

It means that Christ's resurrection has shown that death is not the end, but a beginning of a new life in Christ; that life is more powerful than death. Hence, death has no more power to instill fear and hopelessness to people. Jesus Christ has overcome the power of death by living the kind of life God intends us to live with — a life of love and com-*passion*. It is this kind of life that transcends death.

Ref.: Jn. 11:25; I Cor. 15; I Thess. 4-5

What do we mean by the "resurrection of Jesus Christ gives assurance of life after death"?

It means that our hope of life after death is based not on mere speculation, but on what has already happened in the past — in Jesus Christ.

Ref.: Mt. 28; Mk. 16; Lk 24; Jn. 20

What is our hope in Jesus Christ?

We hope that Christ will come again in all fullness. and glory to make . all things new and to gather all the faithful under God's Kingdom.

Ref.: Mt. 24; I Thess. 4-5; Rev. 21-22

When will Christ come again?

Only God knows when Christ will come again.

Ref.: Mt. 24:36; 1 Thess. 5:1-11

What is the purpose of Christ's coming?

Christ will come to make all creation new and to gather all the faithful under God's Kingdom.

Ref.: Rev. 21-22

What do we mean by Christ coming to "make all creation new"?

IL means that it is Christ, not us, who makes all creation new, and that this newness Christ brings will be total and complete. We are called, however, to participate in this task of making all creation new.

Ref.: Rev. 21-22

What do we mean by Christ's coming to "gather all the faithful under God's Kingdom"?

It means first of all that working for God's Kingdom of love, justice and peace is not an easy task; it is like walking in a narrow road. Hence, the faithful may be hesitant to join the task of Kingdom-building, though they claim to be believers of Christ. It is Christ, however, not us, who gathers them all together under God's Kingdom. It is Christ who challenges and enjoins them to participate in the struggle to establish God's Kingdom. It is Christ who works patiently to bring them all together into a common struggle to build God's Kingdom of love, justice, and peace.

Ref.: Rev. 21-22; Mt. 25; Lk. 14:15-24

VIII. AMEN

What is "Amen"?

The word "Amen" literally means may it be so. It is a prayer of blessing or benediction, hoping that our declaration or confession of faith may come to full realization. It also implies a firm conviction and affirmation on what we have confessed or declared.