

| Reformed Confessions | | | |
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| Date | Name | Context | Themes |
| 4 th Century | The Nicene Creed | Centuries of vigorous discussion about the nature of God and salvation came to their climax in a definitive Ecumenical Council designed to forge doctrinal agreement that would strengthen the power of the church as a cohesive element for the Roman Empire. | How must our apprehension of God be modified in light of the salvation revealed in Jesus Christ through the Holy Spirit? |
| 5 th Century | The Apostles' Creed | Based on a baptismal creed used in Rome at the end of the second century, this statement reflects primitive trinitarian summaries of the faith dating from as early as the end of the first century. It was affirmed by those seeking membership in the church through baptism, and later was used to summarize Christian belief in the triune God. | Who is the God into whom we are baptized, and in whom we place our trust? |
| 1560 | The Scots Confession | Written to articulate Reformed faith for the first General Assembly in Scotland. Mary, Queen of Scots, a Catholic, ruled the land while Elizabeth of England gave support to the Scottish Protestants. John Knox had just returned from his exile in Geneva and was a major contributor to the confession, along with 5 other authors named "John." | Distinguishes the biblically-based Calvinistic perspective of the Church of Scotland from problematic medieval developments. Important themes include fresh perspectives on the church, the work of Christ, and the sacraments. |
| 1563 | The Heidelberg Catechism | The area around Heidelberg, Germany, had both Lutheran and Reformed influences, as well as a considerable Catholic population. Frederick III ordered the writing of this catechism in order to have a mutually agreeable doctrinal statement to settle the unrest in his kingdom. The two men he asked to write this statement had been influenced by the Swiss Reformation, and they produced an accessible and devotional statement in question and answer format. | The catechism focuses on Christ as the only comfort of Christians, in three sections: our need, our gracious redemption in Christ, and our grateful and obedient response to God's grace. |
| 1566 | The Second Helvetic Confession | Heinrich Bullinger, Zwingli's son-in-law and successor in Zurich, originally wrote this as an exposition of his personal faith. It filled out needed detail regarding the distinctives of the Reformed movement, and was especially influential among the Reformed Churches in Switzerland. | A careful, comprehensive, and conciliatory statement emphasizing the continuity of the Reformed faith with the perspectives of scripture and the early Church. |

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| 1646 | The Westminster Confession of Faith and the Larger and Shorter Catechisms | Commissioned by the Long parliament in England as a means of articulating its Protestant viewpoint against the Catholic King Charles. The assembly, chosen by Parliament, included members of the House of Lords, the House of Commons, and ministers. The Westminster documents were the only doctrinal standard for all American Presbyterianism until 1967, when additional documents in this chart were added to provide a broader historical and confessional basis for contemporary Presbyterian faith. The versions of the Westminster Confession currently used in the Presbyterian Church (USA) were modified to better reflect the experiential, evangelistic, and missional emphases of the late 19 th century. | The Westminster Assembly was influenced by Puritanism and Reformed orthodoxy. It emphasizes precise verbal formulation and rational consistency. Important themes include Holy Scripture, the sovereignty of God, the importance of covenant, the work of Christ, and the Christian life. |
| 1934 | The Theological Declaration of Barmen | Written as a protest by the German Confessing Church (Lutheran and Reformed) in the face of the rising power of Hitler and his attempts to make the church subservient to the state. The declaration sets six statements from Scripture against six false doctrines current in the Germany of that day. | Jesus Christ is Lord. |
| 1967 | The Confession of 1967 | Organized according to the trinitarian pattern of II Corinthians 13:13, this confession reflects the mood of the 1960's in its conviction that the church must bear "a present witness to God's grace in Jesus Christ." Its theme of reconciliation is influenced by Karl Barth and also drawn from II Corinthians. In a time when biblical criticism was increasingly influential, it seeks a nuanced understanding of scripture and tradition in its conviction that "confessions and declarations are subordinate standards in the church, subject to the authority of Jesus Christ, the Word of God, as Scriptures bear witness to him." | "Our generation stands in peculiar need of reconciliation in Christ. Accordingly, this Confession of 1967 is built upon that theme." Themes of political, racial, and familial reconciliation are set in the context of the church's equipment for "fulfilling its service of God among humankind." |
| 1986 | Belhar Confession | How should the church respond when sin disrupts the church's unity, creates division among the children of God, and constructs unjust systems that steal life from God's creation? Members and leaders of the Dutch Reformed Mission Church in South Africa faced these questions under apartheid, a system of laws that separated people by race from 1948–1994. The Uniting Reformed Church of Southern Africa (URCSA), the church that succeeded the Dutch Reformed Mission Church after apartheid, has offered the Confession of Belhar to the global Reformed family as a gift, believing that the themes of unity, reconciliation, and justice issue a call from God to the whole church toward holy action, transformation, and life. | "We believe...that God has entrusted the church with the message of reconciliation in and through Jesus Christ; ...[and] that the credibility of this message is seriously affected...when...the enforced separation of people on a racial basis promotes and perpetuates alienation, hatred, and enmity." |
| 1990 | A Brief Statement of Faith | When the former northern and southern "streams" of the Presbyterian Church reunited in 1983, a brief statement of faith was commissioned, emphasizing those beliefs held in common by all Presbyterians. The statement sought a basis for unity in the midst of the growing diversity present in church and culture. | "In life and in death, we belong to God." "We trust in the one triune God, the Holy One of Israel, whom alone we worship and serve." |