

# *PILGRIM REFORMED CHURCH HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE AND FAITH*

Pilgrim Reformed Church was founded in 1757 by a group of German settlers, who migrated from Pennsylvania between 1745 and 1755 looking for fertile land to farm. A brush arbor was constructed on the original 50 acres of land and served the people until the first permanent house of worship was constructed sometime between 1757 and 1764. This community of “soil tillers” became known as the Dutch Settlement on Abbots Creek.

A second house of worship was constructed in 1807 and was shared with the Lutherans. A third house of worship was constructed in 1882 with the majority of the lumber being harvested from the church property. Sermons were spoken in German the first 50 years and English was included in the next 50 years. In 1903 the church parted ways with the Lutherans and the current facilities is located on an 18 acre tract of land that was part of the original 50 acres. In 1965 a new Educational Building was constructed and the fourth house of worship was constructed in 1972.

Pilgrim Reformed Church has been one of the cornerstones in the community for two hundred and fifty-six years. During this time Pilgrim has been affiliated with three denominations and presently operates as an independent, non-affiliated church. From its beginning Pilgrim was affiliated with the German Reformed Church until 1934 when the German Reformed and Evangelical Church of America merged producing Pilgrim Evangelical and Reformed Church.

In 1957 the Evangelical and Reformed Church merged with the Congregational and Christian Church forming the United Church of Christ. Upon completion of the ratification of the merger in 1961, Pilgrim became a member of the new denomination. The Church has supported and encouraged women to participate in all leadership positions of the church since 1970 when members elected its first woman as Deacon to serve on the Consistory.

Due to theological differences between Pilgrim Church and the United Church of Christ, the congregation of Pilgrim Church voted and passed a new Church Constitution which, in reality, removed the church from the United Church of Christ denomination and Pilgrim returned to its traditions and beliefs of the historic German Reformed Church in November 2007.

While not living in the past, it is clearly documented how this “Dutch (Deutsch) Settlement” on Abbots Creek of humble people left their war-torn German homeland and braved the hardships of the new world. Here they were free to worship without fear of persecution and formed a thriving, strong community. A community with a strong belief in Christian values and morality 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.

We define and declare our Christian faith through the Apostle's Creed. We affirm the Trinitarian name of God as the Father, Son and Holy Spirit; the Old and New Testaments of the Bible as the authoritative word of God; the sanctity of human life at every stage; the biblical guideline of human sexuality; marriage as the union of one man and one woman, fidelity and holiness in the marriage and chastity outside the marriage for the sake of the Kingdom and the mission of the church is to spread the good news of the Gospel in every word and deed.

### 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 hell; the third day He rose again from the dead; he ascended into Heaven and sitteth on the right 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*

From the creeds, statements and theological perspectives, the beliefs held at Pilgrim 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 judgment 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 judgment. 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 to be received in any commonwealth, yet notwithstanding, 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, or 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 judgment. 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 judgment 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, judgment 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, which 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.