



## **Proposed Revision of the EFCA Statement of Faith Tools and Resources**

### Broad, General Themes

1. Biblical Theology and Systematic Theology – note the headings, the order of the articles and the actual articles themselves.
2. 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.
3. 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.”
4. 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.
  - Article 2: The Bible: “Therefore, it is to be believed in all that it teaches, obeyed in all that it requires, and trusted in all that it promises.”
  - Article 7: The Church: “The Lord Jesus mandated two ordinances, baptism and the Lord’s Supper”
  - Article 8: 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.”
  - Article 9: Christ’s Return: “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.”
  - Article 10: 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.”
5. Logical and Theological Statement (coherent whole) – each phrase will make sense in the context of the article, in the context of the whole SOF.

6. 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.”
7. Themes: theology (an emphasis on God in all His fullness: Father, Son and Holy Spirit), epistemology (the basis of how we know), soteriology (salvation in its broadest biblical sense)

#### Key changes in the Draft Revisions from the 1950 SOF

1. Essentialist Statement emphasizing the essentials of the gospel
2. Structure around the gospel
3. Soteriological essentials, without overly emphasizing or downplaying or denying either Arminianism or Calvinism
4. Autonomy of the local church (placed in the preamble, though it is important to know that our present SOF does not state we are congregational, but it is stated in our Articles of Incorporation)
5. Eschatology broadened, premillennialism removed
6. Question of Spiritual Heritage

#### Eschatology

“XI. We believe that Jesus Christ who ascended into heaven, shall come again in great power and glory.” The (Norwegian-Danish) Evangelical Free Church Association (1912)

#### Soteriology

“IV. We believe that the ministry of the Holy Spirit is to glorify the Lord Jesus Christ, and during this age to convict men of sin, regenerate the unbelieving sinner, indwell, guide, instruct and empower the believer for godly living and service.” The (Swedish) Evangelical Free Church Ministerial Association (1947)

#### Christian Living

XII. We believe that the sole duty of the Christian Church is to proclaim the Gospel to the whole world, and to assist charitable institutions, to work for righteousness and temperance, for unity and cooperation with all believers, and for peace among all people and nations on the whole earth.” The (Norwegian-Danish) Evangelical Free Church Association (1912)

#### Key changes in the Proposed Revision from the Draft Revisions

1. Gospel structure removed, though headings remain and gospel references remain in articles 7, 8 and 10.
2. Premillennialism reinserted
3. Tension between essential and non-essential, ideal and real – major on majors and minor on minors, unity in the essentials and charity in the non-essentials

#### Statement of Faith

1. Credo – we believe
2. It consists of explicit and implicit truths
3. It states what we affirm and what we deny.
4. It determines who is in and who is out
5. It also affirms the “significance of silence”
6. Purpose – essentials and identity, theological triage

#### Key References Used

**God – Three equally divine persons –**  
One God, Creator, Persons, reference to the Trinity

**Father –**  
God (this name refers both to the Father and the Trinity)

**Son/Jesus –**  
Son, Jesus Christ, God incarnate, fully God and fully man, one Person in two natures, Jesus, Israel’s promised Messiah, High Priest, Advocate, Representative, Substitute, Sacrifice, Lord Jesus Christ, Christ, Head, Lord Jesus, Lord Jesus Christ, Judge, Lord

**Holy Spirit –**  
Holy Spirit (Rather than using other names or references, we focus on what He does in an active sense.)

**God Has Spoken –**  
Scriptures, Old and New Testaments, Word of God, Bible, God’s Word

**Church –**  
Heirs, family of God, true church, body of Christ, local church, believer

**Salvation (broadly speaking) –**

Redeem, believed, obeyed and trusted (the Bible), sinned, union with Adam, sinners by nature and by choice, alienated from God, under His wrath, God's saving work in Jesus Christ, rescued, reconciled, renewed, salvation, perfect, all-sufficient sacrifice for our sins, atoning death, victorious resurrection, salvation, convicts the world of its guilt, regenerates sinners, baptized into union with Christ, adopted as heirs, indwells, illuminates, guides, equips, empowers, Christ-like living and service, justified by God's grace, faith alone in Christ alone, united by the Holy Spirit in the body of Christ, believers, genuine faith, confirm and nourish the believer, justifying grace, sanctifying power and purpose, loving God supremely and others sacrificially, live out our faith, God's Word and prayer, combat the spiritual forces of evil, obedience to Christ, make disciples, bearing witness to the gospel in word and deed, constant expectancy which motivates believer to godly living, sacrificial service and energetic mission, believe the gospel, turning to God in repentance, receiving the Lord Jesus Christ, eternal blessedness and joy with the Lord

Specific Ways the SOF has been strengthened, or new issues addressed

1. God - open theism, God-centered
2. The Bible – ultimate authority by which every realm of human knowledge and endeavor should be judged.
3. The Human Condition – Satan, union with Adam, alienated from God, and under His wrath.
4. Jesus Christ – Israel's promised Messiah, sinless life
5. The Work of Christ – representative and substitute, shed His blood, perfect all-sufficient sacrifice, atoning death and victorious resurrection
6. The Holy Spirit – convicts the world of its guilt, regenerates sinners, baptized into union with Christ, adopted as heirs in the family of God, illuminates
7. The Church – justified by God's grace through faith alone in Christ alone, true church is manifest in local churches, ordinances visibly and tangibly express the gospel, not the means of salvation, celebrated, genuine faith confirm and strengthen the believer
8. Christian Living – justifying grace and sanctifying power and purpose, Great Commandment, Great Commission, corporate engagement in combating the spiritual forces of evil, witness to the gospel in word and deed
9. Christ's Return – bodily, at a time known only to God, demands constant expectancy, motivates the believer to godly living, sacrificial service and energetic mission
10. Response and Eternal Destiny - Commands everyone everywhere to believe the gospel by turning to Him in repentance and receiving the Lord Jesus Christ, all – believers and

unbelievers – will be judged, unbeliever to condemnation, 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.

Ongoing Work - *This We Believe* updated, instructional and catechetical tools, etc.

Teach and Preach – 12 week series (introduction, 10 articles, conclusion)

### *God*

1. We believe in one God (**Dt. 6:4; Mk. 12:29**), Creator of all things (**Gen. 1:1; Ps. 33:6; Jn. 1:3; Col. 1:15-17; Heb. 11:3**), holy (**Ex. 15:11; Isa. 6:3; 57:15**), infinitely perfect (**Dt. 32:4; Job 1:7-10; Ps. 18:30; 50:2; 90:2; 145:3; Matt. 5:48**), and eternally existing (**Ps. 33:11; 102:25-27; 115:3; Dan. 4:34-35; Jn. 5:26; Acts 17:24-25**) in a loving unity (**Jn. 3:35; 17:24; 1 Jn. 4:8,16**) of three equally divine Persons (**Jn. 17:11; Matt. 3:16-17; 28:19; 2 Cor. 13:14; 1 Pet. 1:2**): the Father (**Dt. 32:6; Mt. 6:6; Rom. 8:15; 1 Cor. 8:6**), the Son (**Matt.3:17; Jn. 1:14; 3:16; Gal. 4:4; Heb. 1:5**), and the Holy Spirit (**Jn. 14:16, 17, 26; 15:26; 16:7-15; Rom. 8:9, 26; Gal. 4:6**). Having limitless knowledge (**Ps. 139:1-16; 147:5; Isa. 46:10; Jn. 21:17**) and sovereign power (**Jer. 32:17; Eph. 1:11; Rm. 8:28; 2 Cor. 6:18; Eph. 3:20; Rev. 1:8**), God has graciously purposed from eternity to redeem a people for Himself (**1 Cor. 2:7; Eph. 1:11; 3:10,11; 2 Tim. 1:9; Tit. 1:2; 1 Pet. 1:20; Rev. 13:8**) and to make all things new (**Matt. 19:28; Acts 3:21; Rom. 8:19-21; Rev. 21,22**) for His own glory (**Ps. 19:1-2; Isa. 43:7; Jer. 13:11; Col. 1:15-23; Rev. 4:11; 5:9-14**).

#### **Preaching/Teaching Texts:**

Isaiah 40:9-31

Ephesians 1:3-14

#### **Memory Verses:**

Numbers 23:19

Revelation 4:11

#### **Questions for Further Study**

1. What does it mean that God is the Creator of all things? What does this affirm? What does it deny?
2. God is “holy.” What does it mean that God is holy? How is He unique in His holiness? What is an implication towards His creation and creators of His holiness?
3. God is also “infinitely perfect” in all His attributes and in all His ways. This means that He never has and never will lack anything. It also means that He does not grow or change for He is unchangeable. What does this mean for God? What about for you?

4. This “one God” is “eternally existing in a loving unity of three equally divine Persons: the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.” The Trinity is the one doctrine that distinguishes Christianity from all other religions. Can you think of some biblical texts that validate the doctrine of the Trinity? What is the significance of the Trinity in creation? What about redemption? How does this belief in the Trinity differ from one Islam, one of the growing religions of the world today?
5. God has “limitless knowledge and sovereign power.” This means God is all-knowing (omniscient) and all powerful (omnipotent). How does this truth about God’s person and attributes differ from the position of open theism, which believes God has limited what He knows?
6. “God has graciously purposed from eternity to redeem a people for Himself.” God created with a purpose and He redeems for a purpose. We are redeemed “for Himself.” What does this mean, and what are the implications for our lives? What is the importance of the reference to a corporate people? How does this view of God’s purpose in redemption differ from many in evangelicalism?
7. God will “make all things new for His own glory.” God’s work in creation and redemption is for His own renown. What does God’s glory mean? Why is it right that He would only do things for His glory, whereas for us it would be so wrong? This puts God and His work at the center of everything, and anything that would displace Him would be a chief act of treason. As you examine your life, is it about God in all His fullness, or is it about you?

**Hymns:**

A Mighty Fortress is our God, Martin Luther  
 Holy, Holy, Holy, Reginald Heber

**Choruses:**

God of Wonders, Steve Hindalong and Marc Byrd  
 Indescribable, Chris Tomlin

*The Bible*

2. We believe that God has spoken in the Scriptures (**Matt. 1:22; 4:4; 19:4,5; Heb. 1:1-2**), both Old and New Testaments (**2 Pet. 3:15,16**), through the words of human authors (**Lk. 1:1-4**). As the verbally inspired Word of God (**2 Tim. 3:16; 2 Pet. 1:20,21**), the Bible is without error in the original writings (**Num. 23:19; 2 Sam. 7:28; Prov. 30:5; Ps. 119:96, 160; Matt. 5:18; Jn. 10:35; 17:17; Tit. 1:1,2**), the complete revelation of His will for salvation (**Lk. 16:29-31; Gal. 1:8,9; 2 Tim. 3:15**), and the ultimate authority by which every realm of human knowledge and endeavor should be judged (**Jn. 17:17; 1 Tim. 3:15-17; 1 Pet. 1:23; Ps. 119:44,45,165**). Therefore, it is to be believed in all that it teaches (**Matt. 22:29; Rom. 15:4; 2 Tim. 3:16**), obeyed in all that it requires (**Matt. 28:20; 2 Thess. 3:14; 1 Jn. 2:5**), and trusted in all that it promises (**Rom. 1:2; 4:21; Heb. 10:23; 2 Pet. 1:4; 3:13**).

Preaching/Teaching Texts:

Psalm 1

2 Timothy 3:10-17

Memory Verses:

Isaiah 40:8

2 Timothy 3:16-17

Questions for Further Study

1. What are the similarities and differences between these references: Scriptures, Old and New Testaments, Word of God, Bible?
2. God who has always been has spoken. Where are His words recorded? Why is it important to state that God has spoken “in the Scriptures” over against that God has spoken through the Scriptures?
3. The Scriptures consist of the “Old and New Testaments.” How many books are there in the Old Testament? What about the New Testament? Why is it important today to state explicitly the scope, or canon, of the Scriptures? How is it being undermined?
4. “God has spoken . . . through human authors.” This explains specifically what is meant by “verbally inspired.” How would you explain the verbal inspiration of the Bible?
5. Because this is a word from God accurately recorded by human authors, it is “without error in the original writings.” The technical term is *inerrant*. What or who is the heart of inerrancy? Why is it important to state that it was the original writings that were without error? Do we have them, and if not, what is the importance of this statement?
6. The Bible is “the complete revelation of His will for salvation.” What does it mean that it is complete? Why is it that many look elsewhere for something to add to what is in the Word? Why is it not considered sufficient? “Revelation” carries the meaning of “to make known.” How do we know? What is the role of the Holy Spirit in inspiring the Bible, and what is His role in my understanding it? What are some challenges to the sufficiency of the Bible today?
7. It is also “the ultimate authority by which every realm of human knowledge and endeavor should be judged.” Because it is God’s Word, He has the final say in everything. This is true with what the Scriptures state explicitly, but it is also true with what they state implicitly. No matter the discipline, it submits to the Lord Jesus Christ as revealed in the Word. How is this true in your life? The fact that the word “should” is used acknowledges that not all use the Word to judge all they do and say. That is a statement of our sinfulness. What do you need to

confess in relation to your posture to the Lord of the Word as revealed in the Word of the Lord?

8. The appropriate response to God and His Word, as recorded in the Bible, is to believe “all that it teaches, to obey “all that it requires” and to trust “all that it promises.” Though the Bible is true with or without our response to it, what is wrong when it merely remains abstract words that do not affect our lives? Why is it that biblical a-literacy is so rampant even among Christians? Why is it that the morality of many Christians is not noticeably different than non-Christians?

**Hymns:**

Holy Bible, Book Divine, John Burton, Sr. (words) and William B. Bradbury (melody)  
Standing on the Promises, R. Kelso Carter

**Choruses:**

Ancient Words, Lynn DeShazo  
Thy Word, Arul John