Introduction and Soteriology

**Purpose of the Class**

* Explore who we are and what we believe
* Preparation for membership
* Refresher for those who already are members

**Who We Are**

Three Rivers Presbyterian Church, in Grove, OK, is a Christian congregation that is part of the Presbyterian Church in America (PCA). Founded in 1973, the PCA is a denomination that is faithful to the Scripture, true to the Reformed Faith, and obedient to the Great Commission.

We embrace the Christian faith as revealed in the Bible and expressed in the historic creeds and confessions of the Christian church, including the Apostles’ and Nicene Creeds. As an evangelical and reformed congregation, we submit to the *Westminster Confession of Faith*, along with the *Larger and Shorter Catechisms*.

**Summary**

We are Evangelical.

We proclaim the gospel of salvation through faith in Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ is the heart of who we are and what we do. The word “evangelical” comes from the Greek word meaning “good news.” The Bible teaches that the good news is Christ came into the world to die for our sins, was raised on the third day, and is renewing all things for his glory.

We are Reformed.

We teach the biblical truth recovered during the Protestant Reformation. The Bible, not tradition, is the source of truth. We are saved by God’s grace alone, not by human works. Salvation is received by faith in Jesus Christ alone, not by human merit or achievement. We are saved as a result of God’s sovereign will and plan. We believe the system of doctrine taught in the Bible is summarized best in the Westminster Confession of Faith with the Larger and Shorter Catechisms.

We are Presbyterian.

We are a church that embraces a representative form of church government. As a congregation, we are led by elders (1 Tim. 3 & Titus 1). Elders are elected by members of the congregation. Together, the elders and pastor comprise the Session. Pastors and representatives of local churches in a region form a “Presbytery.” Representatives of Presbyteries and local churches meet annually at a “General Assembly.”

We are Missional.

We believe in the Great Commission (Matt. 28:18-20). We take seriously Christ’s call to go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature. Our desire is to expand the Kingdom of our Lord Jesus Christ to reach people from every tribe and people and language and nation (Rev. 5:9). We long to join in cooperative ministry with other parts of the universal church to pursue God’s global mission. We hope to engage the culture with Reformed thinking and leadership, along with deeds of love, mercy, and justice to show the transformational power of the gospel.

**What We Believe – Salvation**

1. Five Solas

* These five statements of the evangelical faith lay at the center of what distinguished the theology of the Reformation from the theology of the Roman Catholic church in the 16th century.
* **Sola scriptura** is the belief that because Scripture is God’s inspired Word, it is the only inerrant, sufficient, and final authority for the church (2 Tim. 3:16; 2 Pet. 1:19-20).
* **Solus Christus**is the assertion that Christ alone is the basis on which the ungodly are justified in God’s sight (John 14:6; 1 Tim 2:5; Acts 4:12).
* **Sola fide**maintains that the believer receives the redemption Christ has accomplished only through faith (Rom 3:24; Gal. 2:15-16; Phil 3:9).
* **Sola gratia** proclaims that all of our salvation, from beginning to end, is by grace and grace alone (Eph. 2:8-9; Titus 3:4-6).
* **Soli Deo gloria** declares that God receives all the glory for our salvation (Rom. 11:36).

1. TULIP

**T** – Total Depravity is the view that every aspect of our human nature (mind, will, affections) has been corrupted by the Fall. Thus, human beings are unable to save themselves. A better term would be total inability (Eph 2:1; 1 Cor 2:14; Jer 13:23; Rom 3:10-12).

**U** – Unconditional Election is the view that God’s sovereign choice in who is saved is not conditioned upon anything foreseen in human beings, including faith, works, or obedience. God’s election unto salvation is based upon his sovereign and immutable will (Deut 7:7; Eph 1:4-5; Rom. 9:11-12; 2 Tim. 1:9).

**L** – Limited Atonement is the view that Christ died to secure the salvation of his people. Christ didn’t die to make people savable; he died to accomplish their salvation. A better term to call this is “Definite Atonement.” Everyone limits the atonement – either in its scope or power (Acts 13:48; John 1:12-13; 10:25-30; 17:12; Eph 1:11-14 & 2:1-10).

**I** – Irresistible Grace is the view that the Holy Spirit effectually calls those to saving faith in Christ whom God has chosen – not “kicking and screaming against the will,” but because he changes the heart and gives new desires that long to come to Christ freely (Acts 13:48; John 6:37 & 10:27-30; Rom 8:29; John 1:13).

**P** – Perseverance of the Saints is the view that all whom God has chosen to be saved will be saved. His people will not fall away from the faith but will persevere to the end (Phil 1:6; Rom. 8:31).

1. Objections

* If God chooses who is saved, then is he not unfair or arbitrary?
* What about the “whosoever will” passages?
* Why should we still evangelize, support missions?

**Membership Questions (BCO 57-5)**

1. Do you acknowledge yourselves to be sinners in the sight of God, justly deserving His displeasure, and without hope save in His sovereign mercy? **(God and Man)**

2. Do you believe in the Lord Jesus Christ as the Son of God, and Savior of sinners, and do you receive and rest upon Him alone for salvation as He is offered in the Gospel? **(Christ)**

3. Do you now resolve and promise, in humble reliance upon the grace of the Holy Spirit, that you will endeavor to live as becomes the followers of Christ? **(Holy Spirit)**

4. Do you promise to support the Church in its worship and work to the best of your ability?

5. Do you submit yourselves to the government and discipline of the Church, and promise to study its purity and peace?

**Questions & Discussion**