

# Contents

# Nature, Faith & Order

# 4 THIS IS A LIVE SESSION COURSE FOR SMALL GROUPS OF YOUNG ADULTS IN LOCAL CHURCHES

FOR CHURCH MEMBERSHIP THROUGH THE UNITED REFORMED CHURCH FOR WHATEVER REASON WANTING UNDERSTANDING OF OUR TRADITION

THE STATEMENT CONCERNING ORDER IS THE ONE WE SAY OF OUR BIG PUBLIC OCCASIONS VIVID SNAPSHOT OF WHAT WE DO WITH WELL TUNED HISTORICAL LANGUAGE ABLE TO PICK UP ALL SORTS OF SOMETIMES TURBULENT PASTS THAT ARE STILL DIVISIVE AMONG US. SAY THESE WORDS SOME COULD BE HELPFUL ALONG WITH AN INVITATION TO DEBATES. THEN THE DEEPER MEANINGS OF THESE PHRASES ARE APPRECIATED. NOT EMPTY WORDS TO BE PAID ATTENTION TO AT AN INDUCTIVE OR TINGLING TESTIMONY TO THE TRUTH. ARE OR HOPE TO BE

THE SESSIONS ARE BASED ON THE RESPONSIVE FORM OF THE STATEMENT SINCE THIS IS THE VERSION WITH WHICH MOST PEOPLE WILL BE FAMILIAR.



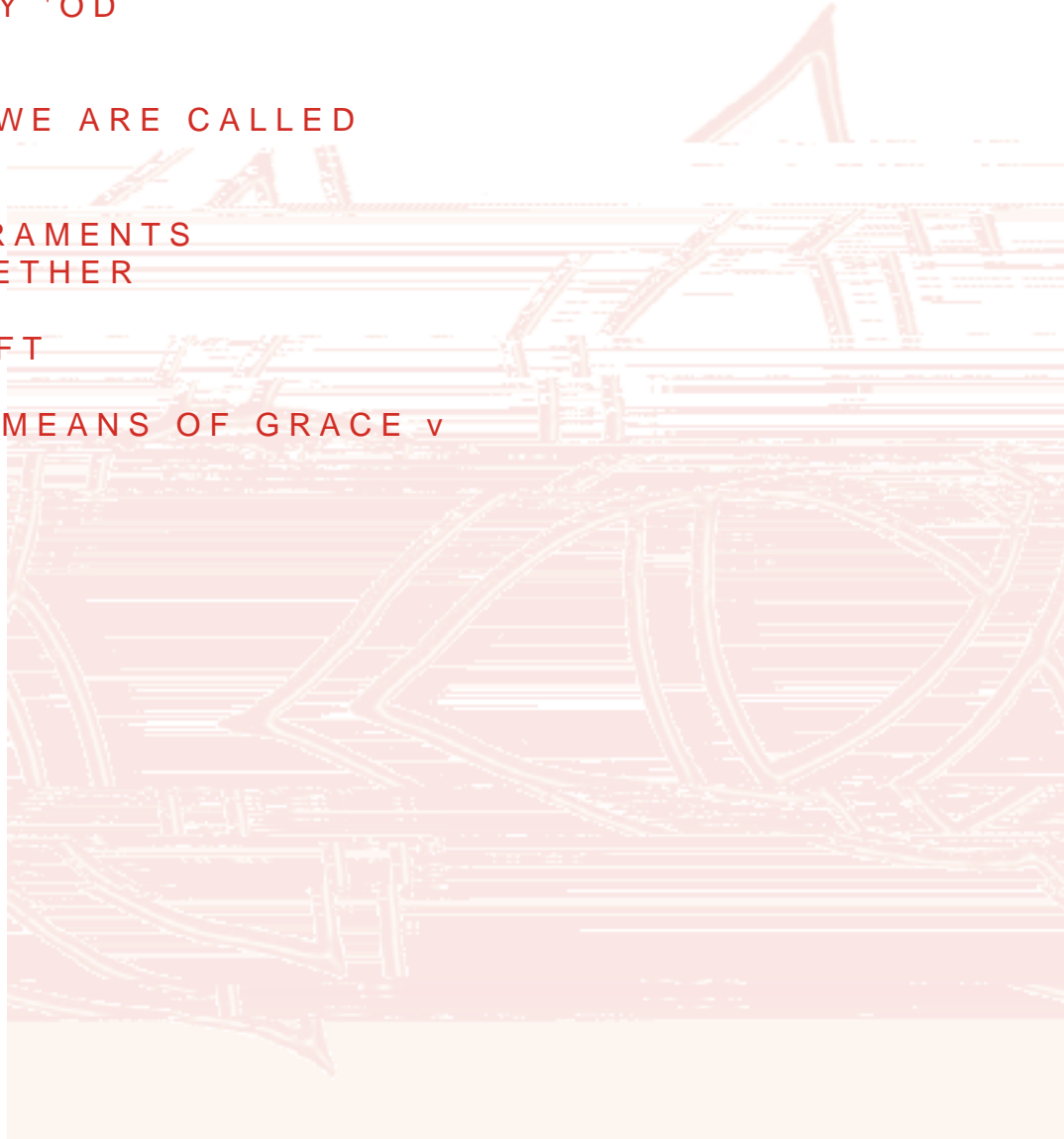


WITH THE WHOLE CHRISTIAN CHURCH  
THE UNITED REFORMED CHURCH BELIEVES IN  
ONE GOD  
& THE SON AND HOLY SPIRIT

THE LIVING GOD THE ONLY GOD  
EVER TO BE PRAISED

THE LIFE OF FAITH TO WHICH WE ARE CALLED  
IS THE SPIRIT'S GIFT  
CONTINUALLY RECEIVED  
THROUGH THE WORD THE SACRAMENTS  
AND OUR CHRISTIAN LIFE TOGETHER

WE ACKNOWLEDGE THE GIFT  
AND ANSWER THE CALL  
GIVING THANKS FOR THE MEANS OF GRACE



WHAT WOULD IT BE LIKE NOT TO HAVE A COPY OF THE BIBLE BUT TO DISCUSS YOUR OWN AND OTHERS' WORSHIP A GROUP AT REMEMBERING A PARABLE IF YOU CAN PUT TOGETHER THE PARABOLICAL CONCEPT FROM YOUR COACHING? REMEMBER THE SHAPE OF THE PARTICULAR PHRASES AS POSSIBLE. YOU CAN ABOUT THE CONTEXT OF INTERPRETATION GIVEN IN THE PARABLE. LIKE THE EXERCISE ON WHY YOU REMEMBERED IT AND HOW THIS STORY HAS BEEN REMEMBERED AND THEN BY THE EARLY CHRISTIANS

GO ON TO TALK ABOUT THE PART IT HAS PLAYED IN YOUR LIFE. WHAT DOES IT MEAN? DOES IT HAVE ANY OTHER STORIES IN THE BIBLE? YOU OF ANY OTHER STORIES AND ELSE (OW WE DO NOT IT CONNECT WITH THE CENTRAL WORK AND OF THE GOSPEL AND THE CROSS ROSE AGAIN

WE DO NOT HAVE TO WORK AND AS WE DO

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WHAT ARE YOUR EARLIEST MEMORIES OF READING THE BIBLE OR HEARING BIBLE STORIES

ARE THERE ANY BITS OF THE BIBLE THAT YOU STRUGGLED WITH OR THAT HELPED YOU IN YOUR STRUGGLES

IF YOU HAVE A DIFFICULT TIME WITH THE BIBLE, HOW MIGHT IT BE DIFFERENT IF THE BIBLE HELPED YOU IN YOUR STRUGGLES

DO YOU HAVE ANY SUGGESTIONS FOR HOW THE BIBLE MIGHT BECOME MORE CENTRAL TO THE LIFE OF YOUR LOCAL CHURCH

IF YOU COULD ADD A NEW BOOK TO THE BIBLE, WHAT WOULD IT BE? IF YOU COULD TAKE A BOOK AWAY FROM THE BIBLE, WHICH WOULD YOU CHOOSE? HOW WOULD YOU LIKE TO COMPARE YOUR ANSWERS TO THE BIBLE

WHAT CAN BE SAID IN FAVOR OF KEEPING THE BIBLE AS A CATEGORY OF LITERATURE? WHAT BITS OF THE BIBLE ARE YOUR FAVORITE? HOW MIGHT WE USE POETRY



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THE HIGHEST AUTHORITY FOR WHAT WE BELIEVE AND HOW WE LIVE IS GOD'S WORD IN THE BIBLE ALIVE FOR HIS PEOPLE TODAY THROUGH THE HELP OF THE (ONLY)

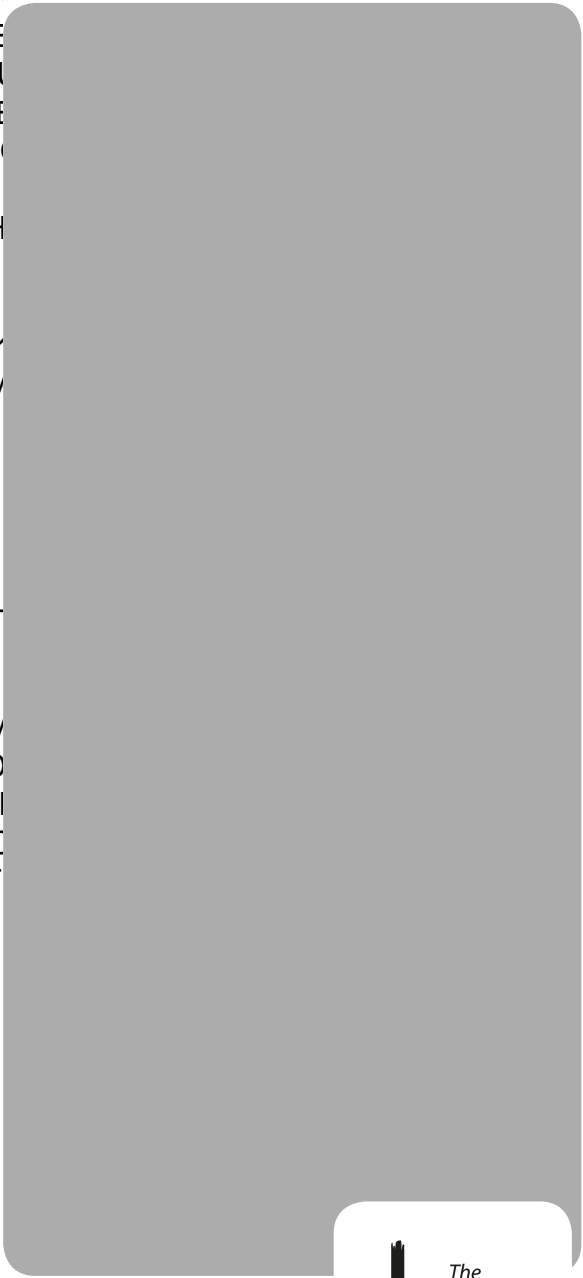
WE RESPOND TO THIS WORD WHOSE SERVANTS WE ARE WITH ALL GOD'S PEOPLE THROUGH THE YEARS

MANY HOMES AND CHURCHES FROM LOOKING BACK OVER AMAZINGLY QUICKLY "BIBLES ARE NOT ALWAYS BOOKS AND COMMENTARIES AND WEIGHT WE SEE WITH HIGHLY VALUED AMONGS REFORMED CHRISTIANS IN 3 COMMUNITIES FROM WHICH WE HAVE TAUGHT THEM TO COME ALTHOUGH THEY REMAINED THEIR WAS GOD'S WORD CONTROVERSIAL IN SOME COUNTRIES WE CAN READ WITHOUT HAVING TO WORK AND PRAY AS WE DO SO

WITH THIS EMPHASIS ON "BUT WE TRUST THAT IT AND SEEKING TO UNDERSTAND THE BIBLE

4 THE BIBLE IS VERY IMPORTANT FOR EVERY KIND OF CHRISTIAN CHURCH AND FOR OUR BELIEVING PARTICULAR CHURCH TRADITIONS WERE SHAPED OUT OF A TIME WHEN THERE WAS GREAT INTEREST IN THE BIBLE THROUGH REFORMATION WHICH STRETCHED FROM THE END OF THE FIFTEENTH CENTURY TO THE END OF THE SEVENTEENTH CENTURY. SOME ARE READING AND INTERPRETING AGAIN TO STUDY THE BIBLE TEXTS IN THEIR ORIGINAL LANGUAGES (HEBREW AND GREEK) AND TO MAKE NEW DISCOVERIES ABOUT THEM. SOME ALSO ARGUED AT A TIME WHEN LITERACY WAS EXPANDING THAT EVERYONE SHOULD BE ABLE TO READ THE BIBLE IN HIS OR HER OWN LANGUAGE AND SO TRANSLATIONS BEGAN TO BE MADE. SOME FEARED THAT IGNORANT PEOPLE READING THE BIBLE WOULD LEAD TO MISINTERPRETATION BUT OUR PARTICULAR FOREBARS WERE FIRMLY ON THE SIDE OF OPENING IT UP TO EVERYONE. AT THE SAME TIME THEY WANTED MINISTERS TO BENEFIT FROM THE THINGS OF GOD SO THAT THEY COULD INTERPRET AND UNDERSTAND THE BIBLE. THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE PRINTING PRESS OFFERS OUR SUREST HOPE OF BIBLES IN LOCAL LANGUAGES BECOMING AVAILABLE. WHAT IS GOD'S WILL FOR US? WE KNOW

TIMES & FAITH IS NOT TO BE LIVED  
BUT IS FOR LIFE TODAY. SOME  
FOR THIS OR AT LEAST WARN US  
WE COULD BECOME SO IDENTIFIED  
PRESENT CULTURE THAT WE DON'T  
HOW CHRIST SPEAKS TO IT TO  
RENEW IT. IF WE SIT TOO LIGHT  
OF THE CHURCH WE MIGHT MISS  
GREAT WEALTH OF WISDOM AND  
PERHAPS WE MAKE THE MISTAKE  
HAVE TO START AGAIN. IN EVERY  
WE FORGET THAT WE ARE NOT  
BEING CHRISTIAN  
THAT COUNTLESS  
GENERATIONS HAVE  
GONE BEFORE US  
CAN OFFER US THE  
WITNESS OF THEIR  
FAITH. (HOWEVER  
THERE ARE ALSO PLENTY OF VOICES  
CRY THAT THE CHURCH IS TOO  
THE PAST AND THAT THE WORLD  
CHRISTIANS WHO HAVE THE CROSS  
(ONLY SPIRIT RENEW THEM IN THEIR  
OWN TIMES



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THROUGHOUT THE WORLD AND THROUGHOUT CREENS IN  
MANY CENTURIES AND BECAUSE FORMED AS PART OF  
THEY WERE FRAMED AT CRIBACTILETSMEIS WOULD NOT  
WHEN THE #HRISTIAN FASTAM E/ASAYS (OWEVER THEY  
BEING SHAPED 9OU CANGRNODU THISMFOR OUR OWN AT  
BOTH IN 2EJOICE AND 3INGIAND FOR TODAY  
THERE ARE FASCINATING STORIES TO TELL  
ABOUT THEM 7E OFTEN4THEIBK AOTFEMENT ALSO ACKN  
ATTENTION TO THE 6IRGON -ARITHASMADE BY OUR PAR  
A RATHER LATE DEVELOPM E/ETHANKS FOR THEM 7E  
#HURCH S LIFE SO IT S WASCERTAINING TOO DO IN THE  
NOTICE THAT SHE IS NAMED E/SCRIBING THE FAITH A  
COMPARATIVELY BRIEF n! FAND WESHONOUR THEM "U  
#REED !ND IT S WORTH THDANOW E/UTONOUR THEM ONL  
THE LONG STORY BEHIND WDRS BREAKACTS BUT RATH

3 SOMETIMES PEOPLE HAVE DESCRIBED US AS A  
OWN CREDAL CHURCH BELIEVING THAT WE RARELY  
EVER SAY CREENS IN OUR WORSHIP AND THAT  
WE WANT TO GIVE INDIVIDUALS FREEDOM TO STATE THE  
FAITH IN THEIR OWN WORDS (OWEVER IT S NOT QUITE  
AS SIMPLE AS THAT )IT IS TRUE THAT THE SAYING OF  
CREENS HAS NOT GENERALLY PLAYED A REGULAR PART  
WORSHIP AT MOST OF OUR CHURCHES AND IT IS TRUE  
THAT WE HAVE PLACED A HIGH VALUE ON FREEDOM OF  
CONSCIENCE BUT IT IS NOT TRUE THAT WE HAVE NO  
SENSE OF THE FAITH WE CAN HOLD TOGETHER OR THAT  
@YOU CAN BELIEVE WHAT YOU LIKE IN THE 52#  
THEIR ACHIEVEMENTS BEARS BUT WE ALSO  
FRAMING THESE CREENS WE BELIEVE THAT FAITH HAS TO  
TO THE FAITH GIVEN BY THE !POSTLES AND SEEMS A CAUSE OFBE RENEWED FOR EVERY  
#REEDS .OTE THAT @CATHOLIC FAITH SOMEHOW PREFERRED TO  
THE FAITH OF THE WHOLE #HURCH AND DOES NOT  
MEAN THE SAME AS 2OMAN #ATHOLIC  
TODAY THESE WE WRITE HYMNSTOR ONIFIED PEARFORMS #HUR  
TWO CREENS BOTH FROM THE EARLY WENTHURKS OF THE  
#HURCH S LIFE ARE IMPORTANT TO US BECAUSE OF HOW FAR WBTM WE SAY • IS @ IN  
GREAT AGE BECAUSE THEY ARE HONOURED BY CHURCHES



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OF SOCIAL EXCLUSION WE WERE EXCLUDED FROM THE UNIVERSITIES AND THE PROFESSIONS AND NOT ABLE TO WORSHIP IN THE WAYS OF OUR CHOOSING IN THE PARISH CHURCHES WE LEARNED OVER CENTURIES THE HARSH LESSONS OF COMING OUT ON THE LOSING SIDE OF HISTORY THIS EXPERIENCE HAS TAUGHT US THE IMPORTANCE OF CERTAIN FREEDOMS AND THE DESIRABILITY OF A SOCIETY THAT ALLOWS MORE THAN ONE FORM OF FAITH EXPRESSION THEN WE ACQUIRED THE NAME @NONCONFORMIST IN ENGLAND AND SALES WE TURNED THIS OFTEN TO POSITIVE VALUE AS A LABEL THAT SUGGESTS THE KIND OF COURAGE REQUIRED SOMETIMES TO RESIST OR TO QUESTION THE STATUS QUO WE ALSO HAD CONSIDERABLE POLITICAL IMPACT AS THOSE WHO SPOKE FROM SOMEWHERE ELSE THAN THE @RULING CLASS IS MANY OF THE FREEDOMS FOR WHICH WE HAVE STOOD ARE NOW COMMONLY ACCEPTED AND SINCE MANY IN THE #CHURCH OF ENGLAND NOW QUESTION THE RIGHTNESS OF AN @ESTABLISHED

MANY OF FREEDOM WHICH WE H STOOD AR COMMONLY

CHURCH THESE STANCES ARE NOT OUSALONE (OWEVER IN A CULTURE WHICH IS INCREASINGLY MULT CULTURAL AND MULTI FAITH THEY HAVENEW FORCE AND

IMPORTANCE WE HAVE EXPERIENCE OF WEIGHING IN THE BALANCE QUESTIONS OF FREEDOM OF SPEECH WITH THE NEED TO BE CAREFUL OF CAUSING OFFENCE WE HAVE EXPERIENCE OF LIVING IN A SOCIETY WHERE WE ARE NOT THE DOMINANT VOICE WE HAVE EXPERIENCE OF THINKING ABOUT THE PROPER RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN CHURCH AND STATE IS WE THINK TODAY ABOUT SUCH THINGS AS BLASPHEMY LAWS FAITH SCHOOLS AND @DEFENDER OF FAITH VERSUS @DEFENDER OF FAITHS WE HAVE SOMETHING TO OFFER INTO THE DISCUSSION



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S 7HERE HAVE YOU EXPERIEN  
DISUNITY BETWEEN #HRISTI  
WHERE HAVE YOU SEEN EXA  
UNITY BECOMING REAL AND

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S 3OME PEOPLE SAY THAT WE  
TOO MUCH TIME ON ECUMEN  
WHILE FORGETTING MISSION  
DO YOU THINK IS THE RELAT  
BETWEEN THE TWO

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S )F WE ARE IN AN @E CUMEN  
DO YOU THINK 3PRING WILL  
IF SO WHAT MIGHT IT LOOK

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S )F ALL THE CHURCHES CAM  
OVERNIGHT WHAT C NTRIB  
WOULD THE 5NITED 2EFORM  
#HURCH BRING TO IT IND W  
THINGS WOULD WE GAIN FR  
#HRISTIAN TRADITIO S

S )S THERE A DIFFERENCE BE  
WCRTO BUILD UNITY BETWE  
#HRISTIANS AND WORK TO  
PEACE BETWEEN FAITH S

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FURTHER SEPARATIONS AMONG THE  
CHURCHES AND THERE HAVE BEEN  
MORE SINCE AND THESE DIVISIONS  
HAVE BEEN A GREAT SADNESS TO  
MANY OVER THE CENTURIES 4HE  
5NITED 2EFORMED #HURCH  
BELIEVES THAT THE #HURCH IS ONE  
AND THAT THE UNITY WHICH 'OD  
GIV

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ATCIVCÄHTPATB GRÐ •PAHOMJMU@T.D

**4**HE #HURCH HAS ALWAYS BEEN A VERY  
DIVERSE COMMUNITY AND THERE HAVE BEEN  
DEBATES ARGUMENTS AND DIVISIONS SINCE  
THE BEGINNING 9OU ONLY HAVE TO READ THE .EW  
4ESTAMENT TO SEE THAT THERE NEVER WAS A GOLDEN  
AGE WHEN PERFECT PEACE REIGNED AMONG AND  
BETWEEN #HRISTIANS (OWEVER THERE HAVE BEEN  
SOME MAJOR DIVISIONS IN THE #HURCH WHICH HAVE  
CAUSED GREAT PAIN AND DAMAGE @  
NOT ONLY TO THE WITNESS  
OF THE #HURCH BUT  
TO IETSYVLIFE .EAR  
THE END OF THE IRST  
MILLENNIUM THE #HURCH  
SEPARATED INTO %AST  
AND 7EST NOT QUITE  
BUT ALMOST EQUIVALENT TO THE CHURCHES WE  
WOULD NOW DESCRIBE AS /RTHODOX AND 2OMAN  
#ATHOLIC 4HE 2EFORMATION PERIOD LED TO