

Whoever finds his life will
lose it, and whoever loses
his life for my sake will
find it.
Mt 10:39

Share the teaching
Guard the sharing

Male Call

Nov 30 – Dec 7, 2007—The Evangelical Covenant Church

<p>6:00 – 6:05</p>	<p>1) Coffee & Donuts 2) Opening Prayer</p>
<p>6:05 – 7:00</p>	<p>1) Covenant history: is it important to know about?</p>

It is the purpose of this to provide a context for the affirmation of our living faith for people both within and outside of our fellowship. Such a statement is not to be construed as a creed or a formal doctrinal statement. Covenanters affirm that sound doctrine, subject to the authority of the word of God alone, is a necessary though not sufficient condition for vital and growing faith. With this as background, we make four basic affirmations concerning our faith in common with the whole Christian Church.

- We are an *apostolic* church (2Tim 3:16)
- We are a *catholic* church (Ps 119:63)
- We are a *Reformation* church (Rom 3:22)
- We are an *evangelical* church (Jn 3:16)

We are an apostolic church because we confess Jesus Christ and the faith of the apostles as recorded in the Holy Scriptures. Covenanters have always affirmed the Bible to be “the Word of God and the only perfect rule for faith, doctrine, and conduct.” The Apostle Paul writes that “all scripture is inspired by God and is useful for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness” (2 Timothy 3:16). The Covenant Church has not chosen to be more precise than this in stating its view of inspiration. The authority of the Bible is supreme in all matters of faith, doctrine, and conduct, and is to be trusted. “Where is it written?” was and is the Covenant Church’s touchstone of discussion with regard to faith and practice. In this sense, we are an apostolic church.

We are a catholic church. The word *catholic* literally means *universal*. We are part of the universal Church that has existed from the days of the apostles until now. This includes all who confess faith in Christ. In the first several centuries of the Christian era, the Church developed a series of affirmations concerning the faith that has been accepted by Christians throughout history. The Covenant Church considers itself a part of that catholic tradition and recognizes its indebtedness to the early creeds and confessions of the Church as concise statements of biblical faith. We refer especially to the Apostles’ Creed and the Nicene Creed, though the same could be said for the Chalcedonian and Athanasian creeds.

The Apostles’ Creed [ancient—2nd c. This is the 8th c version]

I believe in God the Father Almighty, maker of heaven and earth; and in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord; who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, dead, and buried; he descended into hades; the third day he rose again from the dead; he ascended into heaven, and sitteth on the right hand of God the Father Almighty, from thence he shall come to judge the quick and the dead. I believe in the Holy Spirit; the holy Christian Church; the communion of saints; the forgiveness of sins; the resurrection of the body; and the life everlasting. Amen.

The Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed [Began in A.D. 325, finalized in 381]

We believe in one God, the Father, the Almighty, maker of heaven and earth, of all that is, seen and unseen. We believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ, the only Son of God, eternally begotten of the Father, God from God, Light from Light, true God from true God, begotten, not made, of one Being with the Father; through him all things were made. For us and for our salvation he came down from heaven, was incarnate of the Holy Spirit and the Virgin Mary and became truly human. For our sake he was crucified under Pontius Pilate; he suffered death and was buried. On the third day he rose again in accordance

with the Scriptures; he ascended into heaven and is seated at the right hand of the Father. He will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead, and his kingdom will have no end. We believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life, who proceeds from the Father and the Son, who with the Father and the Son is worshiped and glorified, who has spoken through the prophets. We believe in the one holy catholic and apostolic Church. We acknowledge one baptism for the forgiveness of sins. We look for the resurrection of the dead, and the life of the world to come. Amen.

We are a Reformation church in that we see ourselves as standing in the mainstream of the Protestant Reformation, particularly with reference to the doctrine that justification is by faith alone. While affirming with the reformers the sovereignty of the word of God over all creeds, and the priesthood of all believers, the Covenant Church has placed particular importance on the Reformation emphasis on salvation by grace alone through faith alone—apart from the works of the law. This is well stated in the following excerpt from the Augsburg Confession of 1530, a Lutheran confession with which other Reformation churches would generally have agreed: It is also taught among us that we cannot obtain forgiveness of sin and righteousness before God by our own merits, works, or satisfaction, but that we receive forgiveness of sin and become righteous before God by grace, for Christ's sake, through faith, when we believe that Christ suffered for us and that for his sake our sin is forgiven and righteousness and eternal life are given to us. For God will regard and reckon this faith as righteousness, as Paul says in Romans 3:21-26 and 4:5. The Covenant Church continues to be shaped by Pietism, a renewal movement that originated in seventeenth-century Europe and emphasized the need for a personal life in Jesus Christ, sanctification through the Holy Spirit, and call to service in the world. Pietism, in seeking a balance between the head and the heart, affirmed that correct doctrine is a necessary though not sufficient condition for vital and growing faith. A leading spirit in this movement was Philipp Jakob Spener (1635- 1705), who through his widely influential writings challenged the Church to deeper spirituality. Particularly important was his call for widespread reading and study of the Bible; greater participation by lay people in the work of the Church; simple, clear, and direct preaching geared to the needs of the people; and the abandonment of theological hair-splitting in favor of practical concern for living the Christian life. The influence of Pietism extended throughout northern Europe and enriched the lives of many through its emphasis on the new life in Christ.

We are an evangelical church. Five centuries have passed since the Reformation. New issues have arisen upon which Scripture has shed light. The Covenant Church, consistent with its background in Pietism, sees in the emergence of evangelicalism a movement that gives expression to several of its basic emphases. Many have defined evangelicalism as Protestantism. It is more accurate, however, to view it as a religious awakening that flowered in Europe and America during the nineteenth century. Waves of spiritual revival have swept the Protestant West for more than two centuries. The Covenant Church has grown out of these awakenings, and Covenanters have enjoyed cooperating in mission at home and abroad with all who follow Christ. In this they are true to the spirit of the text expounded at the birth of the Covenant in 1885: "I am a companion of all who fear you" (Psalm 119:63). Evangelicals historically have been characterized by a number of significant emphases: a strong insistence on biblical authority; the absolute necessity of new birth; Christ's mandate to evangelize the world; the continuing need for education and formation in a Christian context; and responsibility for benevolence and the advancement of social justice.

7:00

Closing Prayer