

# **First Parish Congregational Church**

Wakefield, Massachusetts

April 2015



*First Parish organized in 1644*

**Who are we?**

**Volume 1: Affiliations**

Authored by the First Parish Transition Team



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## A Summary

In July of 2013, we hired Pastor Ron Cousineau as our Transition Pastor to guide us through an intentional interim process. Our church decided that after having Pastor Rich as our pastor for 30 years, it would benefit us to engage in a methodical approach to beginning a new chapter in the long history of First Parish. Often times, when a church has a pastor for an extended period of time, the church members default much of the direction of the church to the pastor. The intentional interim process is designed to help church membership take ownership of the church's direction, with the help of God through Jesus Christ.

In November of 2013, First Parish initiated a Transition Team. Your team consists of 11 members of First Parish and one non-member. Pastor Ron has helped guide the process and Phyllis Cousineau has been the secretary (relieving any of the other team members from this duty).

Andy Black (chair)  
Tom Carpenter  
Sharon Covell  
Linda D'Agostino  
\*\*Kara Dodds  
Jo Lynn Foster

\*Kellie Roden (non- member)  
Nancy Jackson  
Bruce Londino  
Dom Mercurio  
Lou Prosperi  
Ruth Ross

\*\* resigned Jan 2015  
(not replaced)

\* Replaced Phil Gindi  
(Dec. 2014)

Part of our journey this past year was to discover who we are and what we believe. This is an integral part of engaging in the intentional interim process. We hired Pastor Ron to lead us through this process, which is structured but also requires skilled leadership in customizing the process for the particular needs of the church.

An added benefit to engaging in a purposeful process is that it gives our congregation a time to adjust to Pastor Rich's retirement AND get accustomed to our new church family life without him.

Many of our church members are fully committed to this process and have stepped forth to help lead First Parish into a new chapter in its long and bountiful history as part of the body of Christ. Praise to God for all the support and involvement from our church family!

In the spring of 2014, we engaged in a church wide study called the Journey. During this study, fourteen study groups began the journey of discovering who we are and what we believe in. We did this under the

sovereignty of God and with the guidance of Jesus Christ, our Lord and Savior.

As a result, we developed First Parish's Core Values, Mission and Vision (4Es). Here is a summary of what the Lord has shown the members and friends of First Parish.

## **Core Values**

### **At First Parish, we value...**

#### **Biblical Principles**

We assure that everything we do is rooted in Scripture. (Matthew 7:24-27)

#### **Christian Education**

We teach biblical truth to children, youth, and adults. (2 Timothy 3:14-17)

#### **Fellowship**

We relate to one another and welcome all who come to us as we grow together in our relationship with Jesus. (Philippians 2:1-4)

#### **Tradition**

We honor our customs and history when considering change and new ideas. (2 Thessalonians 2:14, 15)

#### **Worship**

We provide an atmosphere where people can praise God in song and in His Word. (John 4:23, 24)

#### **Preaching Biblical Truth**

We communicate God's Word to people. (Colossians 1:28, 29)

### **We are committed to growing in...**

#### **Evangelism**

Sharing with others everywhere the good news about experiencing new life in Jesus. (Matthew 28:18-20)

#### **Outreach**

Reaching outside the church to care for and serve the needs of others. (John 13:34, 35)

#### **Prayer**

Communicating with God. (Ephesians 6:18)

## **Our Mission**

Our mission is to reflect the love of God by welcoming all people into a life-changing, ever-growing relationship with Jesus.

The following vision statements we have nicknamed the 4Es.

EXALTING: “Come, Praise the Lord”

EQUIPPING: “We’re Here to Serve”

EDIFYING: “I Belong”

EVANGELIZING: “We Reach Out”

## **Our Vision**

### **EXALTING: “Come, Praise the Lord”**

Approaching the “Stone Church by the Lake,” the atmosphere at First Parish is warm and welcoming, thriving and vibrant. It says that if you’re looking for a place to honor and humbly serve God, welcome home! First Parish is known for being the place where people lead extraordinary lives in Jesus. Individually and in small groups, people are daily lifting joys and concerns to the Lord. Our church offers both traditional and contemporary worship services at a variety of times to meet the needs of the community. The state-of-the-art technology in our historic sanctuary enhances a creative, inspiring worship experience. Our exuberant, dynamic preacher brings relevance to an easy-to-follow Bible message that ignites a Monday-to-Friday connection to life for people of every age. The ringing of our church bells on Sundays welcomes worshippers to our church and reminds them throughout the week of their connection to First Parish. People are inviting friends and relatives to come and share the worship experience with our loving church family. Everything about First Parish says, “Come, praise the Lord.”

## **EQUIPPING: “We’re Here to Serve”**

Our creative, inspiring pastor leads the way in mentoring and empowering us with relevant, biblical messages. Gifted people are being recruited, trained and supported to effectively teach God’s Word in our Sunday classes. Bible studies throughout the week attract people of every age and life stage, encouraging and developing growing relationships with Jesus Christ and with one other. People are identifying their unique, God-given design prompting practical ways to serve God at church and in their workplaces. Our financially sound and technologically connected church attracts a wide variety of people. Our website offers the latest resources available to equip people to effectively serve God and posts up-to-date opportunities available for growth and support for our life journey. Everything about First Parish says, “We’re here to serve.”

## **EDIFYING: “I Belong”**

First Parish is the hub of authentic Christian community in the heart of Wakefield. Christ-like love is contagious at First Parish, influencing our marriages, family relationships and friendships. Regardless of what day or night it is, people of every age group are actively involved in the growing ministries sponsored by our church. Our “Welcome Team” enthusiastically greets everyone who enters our building and serves as the “go to” people for current and upcoming events around the church. First Parish provides a comfortable place where newcomers can readily connect with people from our church. Opportunities abound for those who are seeking encouragement, acceptance and love to help them in their spiritual journey. Our Stephen Ministers, our “Caring Response Team,” and our prayer teams offer spiritual support and encouragement to anyone in need. No matter what the event may be, First Parish has a growing reputation throughout Wakefield and the local communities for its warm, inviting atmosphere. Everything about First Parish says, “I belong.”

## **EVANGELIZING: “We Reach Out”**

Our people are learning to appropriately apply God’s Word to everyday settings. Motivated by a personal, growing relationship with Jesus, increasing numbers of people at First Parish are demonstrating a strong desire to introduce others to this exciting new life in Jesus. Pinpoint prayer for spiritual power and receptive hearts supports this growing passion. Understanding the local demographics enables us to implement the best practices for effectively reaching the variety of people who need Jesus. Adults, youth and children are being encouraged to actively and lovingly tell others about their relationship with God. People trained in biblical discipleship mentor and train others to effectively share their faith. Our “Caring Response Teams” leads the way in reaching out to care for the physical and spiritual needs of others. We strategically use our building and design events to reach others for Christ. As a result, increasing numbers of people are being baptized and joining our church. Everything about First Parish says, “We reach out.”



As a church, we recite the Apostles' Creed every Communion Sunday. Although not written by the apostles, the Apostles' Creed is a concise summary of their teachings.

It originated as a baptismal confession, probably in the second century, and developed into its present form by the sixth or seventh century.

## **The Apostles' Creed**

I believe in God the Father Almighty,  
Maker of heaven and earth.

I believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord,  
who was conceived by the Holy Spirit,  
and born of the virgin Mary,  
He suffered under Pontius Pilate,  
was crucified, died and was buried;  
he descended into hell.

The third day he rose again from the dead.  
He ascended into heaven  
and is seated at the right hand of God the Father Almighty.  
From there he will come to judge the living and the dead.

I believe in the Holy Spirit,  
the holy catholic church,  
the communion of saints,  
the forgiveness of sins,  
the resurrection of the body,  
and the life everlasting. Amen.

# Scriptural Covenant for Working and Worshiping Together

## Preamble

**Believing that God has called us to order and to peace,<sup>1</sup> we covenant before God and one another to conduct ourselves in the following manner:**

- The Word of God says: “Rather, speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in every way into Him who is the head, into Christ” (Ephesians 4:15, ESV).  
**Therefore, we will be as honest as we can with each other.**
- The Word of God says: “Be devoted to one another in love. Honor one another above yourselves” (Romans 12:10, NIV).  
**Therefore, we will speak to one another with respect.**
- The Word of God says: “Work willingly at whatever you do, as though you were working for the Lord rather than for people” (Colossians 3:23, NLT).  
**Therefore, we will all be responsible for the successful implementation of any action we decide to take.**
- The Word of God says: “Therefore each of you must put off falsehood and speak truthfully to your neighbor, for we are all members of one body” (Ephesians 4:25, NIV).  
**Therefore, we will communicate directly to each other using the first person “I.”**
- The Word of God says: “Each one of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others” (Philippians 2:4, NIV).  
**Therefore, we will recognize and identify merit in another person’s idea before we note its weakness.**
- The Word of God says: “The purpose in a man’s heart is like deep water, but a man of understanding will draw it out” (Proverbs 20:5, ESV).  
**Therefore, we will repeat what the other person has said to confirm we have understood them, and ask them to do the same if we feel we have not been understood.**

<sup>1</sup> “For God is not a God of disorder but of peace—as in all the congregations of the Lord’s people” (1 Corinthians 14:33, NIV).

- The Word of God says: “The Lord doesn’t see things the way you see them. People judge by outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart” (1 Samuel 16:7, NLT).

**Therefore, we will not jump to conclusions.**

- The Word of God says: “Understand this, my dear brothers and sisters: You must all be quick to listen, slow to speak, and slow to get angry” (James 1:19, NLT).

**Therefore, we will listen to understand, but don’t necessarily have to agree.**

- The Word of God says: “Every matter must be established by the testimony of two or three witnesses” (2 Corinthians 13:1, NIV).

**Therefore, we will deal only with “Directly Observable Data” (D.O.D.), not rumors, and seek to understand all sides.**

Every year we read our 1644 Church Covenant...



## **1644 Church Covenant**

We, whose names are underwritten, do covenant with the Lord, and one with another, and do solemnly bind ourselves before the Lord and His people that we will, through the help of Christ’s strengthening of us, walk after the Lord in all His ways according as He has traced them out to us in His word of grace and truth. And

1. We avouch the Lord to be our God, and give up ourselves (with our seed after us in their generations) to be His people, in the truth and sincerity of our hearts.
2. We give up ourselves up to the Lord Jesus Christ, to be ruled and guided by him in the matters of His worship, and in our whole conversation, acknowledging Him not only our alone Savior, but also our King to reign and rule over us, our Prophet and Teacher by His word and spirit, forsaking all other teachers and doctrines, which He has not commanded; and we wholly disclaim our own righteousness in point of justification,

and look at it as a monstrous cloth; and do cleave unto Him for righteousness and life, grace and glory.

3. We do farther promise, by the help of Christ, to walk with our brethren and sisters of the congregation, in the spirit of brotherly love, watching over them and caring for them; avoiding all jealousies, superstitions, backbitings, censurings, quarrelings, and secret risings of heart against them; forgiving and forbearing, and yet seasonably admonishing and restoring them by a spirit of meekness, and set them in joint again that have been through infirmity overtaken in any fault among us.
4. We will not in the congregation be forward to show our gifts or parts in speaking, nor be ready to disgrace our brethren, or discover their failings, but attend an orderly call before we put forth ourselves, doing nothing to the offense of the church, but in all things endeavoring our own brethren's edification and trust in God.
5. We farther bind ourselves, in the strength of Christ, to labor how we may advance the gospel, and how we may advance the kingdom of Christ, and how we may win and gain them that are without, and how we may settle grace and peace among ourselves, and seek, as much as in us lieth, the peace of all the churches, seeking the help, the counsel, and direction of other churches if need be, not putting any stumbling block before any, but laboring to abstain from all appearance of evil.
6. We do hereby promise to behave and demean ourselves obediently in all lawful things to those that God hath placed over us in the Church and Commonwealth; knowing that it is our duty not to grieve them, but to encourage them in their places, and in the administration of their charge that God hath committed to them.
7. We resolve in the same strength to approve ourselves in our particular callings, shunning idleness, not slothful in business, knowing that idleness is the bane of any society. Neither will we deal hardly or oppressingly with any wherein we are the Lord's stewards; promising to our best abilities, to teach our children the good knowledge of the Lord, that they may also learn to serve and fear him with us, that it may go well with them and with us forever.

## **An Evaluation of our Affiliations**

This time of transition is the perfect time to review our connections, which include our denominational affiliations.

In 1964, First Parish affiliated with the UCC (United Church of Christ). In 2006, First Parish affiliated with the 4Cs (Conservative Congregational Christian Conference).

The Transition Team took a methodical approach of evaluating each belief statement from both of these affiliations in the light of our new Core Values, Mission and Vision.

Each team member came prepared to discuss and more fully understand those belief statements. The discussions were open and full, and allowed each team member to carefully consider each of the statements and how well aligned they are to First Parish's tenets. The team took a subsequent vote on each section of each of the statements. For each of us on the team, the discussion with our team members was an important component of our understanding and we want to be sure to share those discussion points with you, our church family.

The results are summarized below. We numbered each of the statements so we could easily identify them. The team read each statement aloud, engaged in full discussion initiated by questions or clarification requests by team members, and then we voted on how closely aligned each statement is with the Core Values, Mission and Vision of First Parish. The voting range was from 5 to 0, with 5 indicating wholehearted alignment with the statement and 0 indicating wholehearted misalignment.

Nine team members were present at each of the two voting discussions. The max number each member could vote for each belief was 5, the minimum was 0; creating a range of 0 to 45 total votes per belief or statement of faith.

## UCC (United Church of Christ)

### What the UCC Believes

[http://www.ucc.org/about-us\\_what-we-believe](http://www.ucc.org/about-us_what-we-believe)

1. **We believe in the triune God:** Creator, resurrected Christ, the sole Head of the church, and the Holy Spirit, who guides and brings about the creative and redemptive work of God in the world.
2. **We believe that each person is unique and valuable.** It is the will of God that every person belong to a family of faith where they have a strong sense of being valued and loved.
3. **We believe that each person is on a spiritual journey** and that each of us is at a different stage of that journey.
4. **We believe that the persistent search for God produces an authentic relationship with God,** engendering love, strengthening faith, dissolving guilt, and giving life purpose and direction.
5. **We believe that all of the baptized 'belong body and soul to our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.'** No matter who – no matter what – no matter where we are on life's journey – notwithstanding race, gender identity or expression, sexual orientation, class or creed – we all belong to God and to one worldwide community of faith. All persons baptized – past, present and future – are connected to each other and to God through the sacrament of baptism. We baptize during worship when the community is present because baptism includes the community's promise of 'love, support and care' for the baptized – and we promise that we won't take it back – no matter where your journey leads you.
6. **We believe that all people of faith are invited to join Christ at Christ's table for the sacrament of Communion.** Just as many grains of wheat are gathered to make one loaf of bread and many grapes are gathered to make one cup of wine, we, the many people of God, are made one in the body of Christ, the church. The breaking of bread and the pouring of wine reminds us of the costliness of Christ's sacrifice and the discipleship to which we are all called. In the breaking of bread, we remember and celebrate Christ's presence among us along with a 'cloud of witnesses' – our ancestors, family and friends who have gone before us. It is a great mystery; we claim it by faith.
7. **We believe the UCC is called to be a united and uniting church.** "That they may all be one." (John 17:21) "In essentials—unity, in nonessentials—diversity, in all things—charity," These UCC mottos survive because they touch core values deep within us. The UCC has no rigid formulation of doctrine or attachment to creeds or structures. Its overarching creed is love. UCC pastors and teachers are known for their

*Our Evaluation of UCC (cont'd)*

commitment to excellence in theological preparation, interpretation of the scripture and justice advocacy. Even so, love and unity in the midst of our diversity are our greatest assets.

8. **We believe that God calls us to be servants in the service of others** and to be good stewards of the earth's resources. 'To believe is to care; to care is to do.'
9. **We believe that the UCC is called to be a prophetic church.** As in the tradition of the prophets and apostles, God calls the church to speak truth to power, liberate the oppressed, care for the poor and comfort the afflicted.
10. **We believe in the power of peace,** and work for nonviolent solutions to local, national, and international problems.
11. **We are a people of possibility.** In the UCC, members, congregations and structures have the breathing room to explore and to hear ... for after all, God is still speaking, ...

*Our Evaluation of UCC:*

1. **We believe in the triune God:** Creator, resurrected Christ, the sole Head of the church, and the Holy Spirit, who guides and brings about the creative and redemptive work of God in the world.

TT: Average 3, total of 25 out of 45

We affirm belief in the triune God who in the scriptures and church creeds is referred to as, "Father, Son and Holy Spirit". The phrasing of the statement above denies creedal confessions of faith by deliberately omitting both the gender-specific reference to God as "Father" (substituting instead with the term "Creator") and leaves out reference to the sonship of Christ. This omission/substitution is deeply concerning and is inconsistent with the routine, collective re-affirmation our belief in the apostle's creed every communion Sunday at FPCC.

It is a basic tenet of our faith

No mention of the Fatherhood of God. In essence, this is a denial of the Bible's title for the First Person of the Trinity, God the Father, a name given by divine revelation. To deny the Father is to deny the inerrancy of the Bible.

The name "Jesus" is omitted. Jesus is the Christ. Why not use His name? This sacrifices biblical truth to placate gender-neutrality.

*Our Evaluation of UCC (cont'd)*

<p>It seems to say what we want, but not exactly as what we profess every communion Sunday.</p> <p>I almost feel as though it is slightly deceiving.</p>
<p>I believe UCC should use the word Father not Creator, as in Father, Son and Holy Spirit. This is intentional, they want to push and promote their unbiblical egalitarian bent.</p>
<p>No mention of Father, who is an integral part of the “triune” God.</p>
<p>The trinity is stated as the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, not the Creator. Why change it?</p>
<p>The purposeful excision of the Father from the traditional definition of the Trinity is a pander to the popular culture that denies what is used in Scripture. Jesus specifically refers to God the Father.</p>
<p>Seems simple... Of course we believe in a triune God but I am concerned that this does not clearly say God is 3 in 1: God the Father Almighty, Jesus Christ his only son and the Holy Spirit. At first glance it was ok.</p>

2. **We believe that each person is unique and valuable.** It is the will of God that every person belong to a family of faith where they have a strong sense of being valued and loved.

TT: Average 3, total of 24 out of 45

<p>I personally feel that way</p>
<p>The highest purpose of belonging to a family of faith is <i>not</i> so that they can be valued and loved, but that together they might be conformed to Jesus Christ. Nowhere in the Scriptures is this expressed as the “will of God.” Behind this is the push for churches to be “open and affirming,” tolerant of alternative lifestyles at the expense of sound biblical teachings.</p>
<p>Again, it almost seems slightly deceiving. We believe in what the Bible states, that we are all created in Gods image. I think this statement says more than it needs to, or should.</p>



This is a misguided statement. In particular the words “every person belong to a family of faith.”

The Bible states, “So, my brothers and sisters, you also died to the law through the body of Christ, that you might belong to another, to him who was raised from the dead, in order that we might bear fruit for God.” It is not about a “family of faith” which you can find in any religion. It is about a personal relationship with the living God. Faith is given by God (Ephesians 2:8-10), not a family you can join.

Note: This UCC statement does not point to God’s Word or talk about His church. Rather, it comes across as an all-inclusive statement using religious language (family of faith), and I believe this to be intentionally deceptive.

Even though I believe that each person is unique and valuable, I believe the verbiage here is allowing for a feel good mentality. A relationship with God is not about feeling good about

This statement is too vague. It leaves it open to all kind of interpretations. We are not a family of faith; we are the family of the living God who have faith.

In reference to the “family of faith”, one can be involved in a “family of faith” that has nothing to do with Christ. The uniqueness and value of each person in Christianity is driven by Christ’s sacrifice on the cross – because He valued and loved us first is the biggest reason to feel valued and loved. This tenet is not elaborated on at all.

Of course each person is unique and valuable...God loves all his children. However, a family of faith is essential to hold us accountable to live according to God's word in a fallen world not to solely make us feel valued and loved. Deeply concerned about the simplicity of this statement. Feels like anything goes.

- 3. We believe that each person is on a spiritual journey** and that each of us is at a different stage of that journey.

TT: Average 4, total of 37 out of 45

It’s obviously to me that each person develops during their life and each person is in a different stage of that journey

This is true, but the motivation for this statement is suspect.

Why it is true that we are all in a different place, this does seem to lack scriptural reference.
This statement is too vague. It is also wrong! We are not all at different stages of a common spiritual journey. This statement has a all-inclusiveness tone to it and neglects the fact that there are those who are lost inside and outside the church, people who are on a very different journey – one that leads to hell (Matthew 7:13-14).
I totally believe this. I only gave it a 3 because it doesn't belong here. Again, I think this is about a feel good mentality.
Why does this statement need to be here? Yes we are all on a journey to follow Christ and we are all at different stages, but all heading in the same direction.
It's hard to deny this statement, but some spiritual journeys are not going in the right direction. It is concerning that there is no indication that there is a desire by this denomination that this journey be toward developing a relationship with Christ.
Seems true but this is a very broad statement. It does not seem purposeful enough to even be included in this document. Leaves me wondering why?

- 4. We believe that the persistent search for God produces an authentic relationship with God,** engendering love, strengthening faith, dissolving guilt, and giving life purpose and direction.

TT: Average 3, total of 27 out of 45

A relationship with God is <u>not produced</u> , it does not result from human effort or merit –“searching” in the statement above. Relationship with God is <u>received</u> as one repents and accepts the atoning death of Christ as payment to satisfy the just wrath of God in relation to mankind’s sin.
If a person truly strives to search for God, they of necessity have to achieve a better relationship with Him.
It is not the persistent search for God that produces an authentic relationship with Him, but trusting in Jesus as the way, the truth and the life. Jesus says, “No one comes to the Father except through Me” (John 14:6). This is a veiled denial of biblical revelation as God’s prescription for a relationship with Him.
Lacks scriptural reference.

What does the UCC mean persistent? What's authentic? Are the Jehovah Witnesses and Mormons in an authentic relationship with God; because they certainly are persistent.

Again the UCC avoids the Bible and does not use any biblical language, such as John 3:3 where "Jesus replied, 'Very truly I tell you, no one can see the kingdom of God (enter relationship with God) unless they are born again.'" Rather, they intentionally omit biblical terms (born again) and verses that speak to salvation- the Roman Road.

It's my faith in Jesus that allows me to have an authentic relationship with God, not my persistent search. These are other "feel good" words.

An authentic relationship with God is not produced by searching for God. It is the result of my faith in Jesus and accepting him as your Lord and Savior.

Where's the relationship with Christ? Is this the Christian God?

Searching alone will not produce an authentic relationship with God. We must trust and obey.....repent and truly seek after the kingdom of God. This statement does not turn us to the scriptures as a way to do this. Again, too loose.

- 5. We believe that all of the baptized 'belong body and soul to our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.'** No matter who – no matter what – no matter where we are on life's journey – notwithstanding race, gender identity or expression, sexual orientation, class or creed – we all belong to God and to one worldwide community of faith. All persons baptized – past, present and future – are connected to each other and to God through the sacrament of baptism. We baptize during worship when the community is present because baptism includes the community's promise of 'love, support and care' for the baptized – and we promise that we won't take it back – no matter where your journey leads you.

TT: Average 1, total of 12 out of 45

What does this FPCC believe about the sacrament of baptism? In general, I agree with the statement above. Baptism is an identification with the death, burial and resurrection of Christ and it is also a public proclamation of identification with the body of believers, the universal Church.

If one is baptized, their soul is given to God. Whether or not they maintain this relationship depends on the free will choices they make in their life

Baptism doesn't save a person. It is personal faith in Jesus Christ apart from works (baptism is a work) that saves a person (Ephesians 2:8-9).

We do not all belong to God equally. We are all His creatures and accountable to God as Creator, but only those who receive Jesus as sent from God are given the right to become children of God (John 1:10-13).

Jesus describes Kingdom faith in His Sermon on the Mount. At the heart of Kingdom faith is a transformation of lifestyle. Repentance ("Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is near" –Jesus in Matthew 4:17).

We are united, not by baptism, but by our common belief: one body, one Spirit, one hope to which we have been called, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all" (Ephesians 4:4-6).

While this seems to be ideal, I don't believe it is scriptural. If one falls away from God and denies Him, I do not feel that if one is baptized but no longer believes, that they are still saved.

First, I voted against this statement because it is outrageous. The idea that baptism is the all-inclusive main ingredient in salvation is unbiblical. Many babies and adults have experienced baptism but have never had a personal relationship with Christ and do not belong to Christ. The Bible states that "if you declare with your mouth, 'Jesus is Lord,' and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved (Romans 10:9). This is the only way! In short, baptism is the fulfilling of two ordinances that the Lord gave his church, the other being communion. It is simply an act of obedience which occurs after one confesses that Jesus is Lord, an outward sign of an inward change of heart.

Secondly, the UCC is making excuse for sin when they say, "No Matter who- no matter what- no matter where we are on life's journey- not withstanding race, gender identity or expression, sexual orientation, class or creed." The UCC is twisting/misappropriating Galatians 3:28 where it states "There is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither slave nor free, nor is there male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus. They take this verse to mean there is freedom in Christ regardless of your homosexuality and/or gender identity or expression. Again, this goes back to their egalitarian views and their denial of certain sinful nature. It's the same theme of inclusiveness. Here you see their open and affirming stance.

I feel like they're hiding behind baptism to promote tolerance of any and all behavior. And I have a problem with the verbiage "no matter where your journey leads you". This wording is about having a "feel good" mentality and tolerance (I believe, of sinful behavior).

It is not at baptism where you are saved. It is when you declare that Jesus is your Lord and Savior that you are saved. I don't think an infant baby can declare that.

If baptism is the secret, why elaborate on race, gender identity etc.?

Sounds like the UCC is saying as long as you are baptized, no matter where your journey takes you or whatever you personally decide to do with your life, you will be saved as long as you were baptized.

Baptism does not save us from sin. This is just not true.

- 6. We believe that all people of faith are invited to join Christ at Christ's table for the sacrament of Communion.** Just as many grains of wheat are gathered to make one loaf of bread and many grapes are gathered to make one cup of wine, we, the many people of God, are made one in the body of Christ, the church. The breaking of bread and the pouring of wine reminds us of the costliness of Christ's sacrifice and the discipleship to which we are all called. In the breaking of bread, we remember and celebrate Christ's presence among us along with a 'cloud of witnesses' – our ancestors, family and friends who have gone before us. It is a great mystery; we claim it by faith.

TT: Average 3, total of 23 out of 45

Jesus said to take bread and wine and remember Him.

The bread and the wine are not reminders of the many people of God. They are reminders of Jesus' death, resurrection and His promise to come again for us.

This seems innocent, but it again feels deceiving in its wordiness and I do not believe we feel it is a great mystery. It is a very deliberate action commanded by Jesus to remember Him.

This statement says "all people of faith are invited to join." This clearly comes across as an all-inclusive invitation to all people of faith, rather than those who have a saving faith in Jesus Christ, who are the true members of the body of Christ (church). Also, such an open ended invitation does not consider the apostle Paul's words in 1 Corinthians 11:28-29, where we are called to examine ourselves.

*Our Evaluation of UCC (cont'd)*

The working “all people of faith” leads me to believe that it’s open to all faiths, not just faith in Jesus Christ our Lord.

What is the mystery? Jesus said “This is my body broken for you, do it in remembrance of me” (Luke 22:19). We go to the table to remember the sacrifice of Jesus made for all of us.

What does “people of faith” mean? Those invited to the sacrament of Communion are those that have accepted Christ as their Lord and Savior.

All people with a faith in Jesus as Lord and Savior are invited to the table. Remember Jesus said do this in remembrance of me. He is the connection.

**7. We believe the UCC is called to be a united and uniting church.**

"That they may all be one." (John 17:21) "In essentials—unity, in nonessentials—diversity, in all things—charity," These UCC mottos survive because they touch core values deep within us. The UCC has no rigid formulation of doctrine or attachment to creeds or structures. Its overarching creed is love. UCC pastors and teachers are known for their commitment to excellence in theological preparation, interpretation of the scripture and justice advocacy. Even so, love and unity in the midst of our diversity are our greatest assets.

TT: Average 0, total 2 out of 45

I appreciate that the UCC holds “unity in essentials, diversity in non-essentials, in all things charity” and “unity in the midst of diversity”. However, this statement is self-contradicting in holding that there are essentials of the faith while denying creedal confessions. FPCC affirms the apostle’s creed every communion Sunday and therefore, we cannot hold to the above statement.

Regarding of what the UCC says they are, they promote many liberal values not in keeping with the Congregationalist view. Allowing all things does not mean that the UCC is following the teachings of Christ

We hold to the Apostles Creed.

Our Core Values are not the same as the UCC.

Unity at the expense of biblical truth is dishonoring to God. John 17:21 is taken out of context. Jesus states in context, <sup>20</sup>“My prayer is not for them [His disciples] alone. I pray also for those who will believe in Me through their message, <sup>21</sup> that all of them may be one, Father, just as You are in Me and I am in You. May they also be in Us so that the world may believe that You have sent me.” The purpose of our unity is so that the message of the

*Our Evaluation of UCC (cont'd)*

gospel that Jesus was sent by the Father will have a powerful impact in the world. Our unity is tied to our doctrinal belief.

The Bible is the rigid doctrine that we should be following.

If the UCC believed in being a united church and being one in essentials then they would not have allowed an “open and affirming” church stance to separate the UCC body. They also would recognize that marriage is a covenant (an essential) from God (Gen. 2:24) and not a man-made institution. Further, the UCC has no right to push their gay lifestyles upon members or the culture at large through government activist judges in the pretense of advocating justice.

They say it right here: They have “no rigid formulation of doctrine or attachment to creeds or structure”. Although Jesus offers grace, he is solid on doctrine. This statement, again, is all about offering support of a feel good mentality. It reminds me of the Unitarian church: anything goes.

This is a very disturbing statement. “The UCC has no rigid formulation of doctrine or attachment to creeds or structures. Then this goes against the core values here at First Parish as we hold true to the Apostles Creed. The doctrine that we should all be following is the Bible. Why is the Bible not mentioned?

Where is there any mention of Christ in unity? What is our unity based on? Christ is love, but love isn't Christ. Here is another instance of the UCC taking scripture out of context for its own use “That they may all be one”. They are quoting Christ and the whole quote is as follows: “I do not ask for these only, but also for those who will believe in me through their word,<sup>21</sup> that they may all be one, just as you, Father, are in me, and I in you, that they also may be in us, so that the world may believe that you have sent me.<sup>22</sup> The glory that you have given me I have given to them, that they may be one even as we are one,<sup>23</sup> I in them and you in me, that they may become perfectly one, so that the world may know that you sent me and loved them even as you loved me.”

"The UCC has no rigid formulation of doctrine or attachment to creeds or structures". This is very worrisome. They are affirming they can change with the wind or with the worldly culture whenever they want. They do not affirm the Apostle's Creed and FPCC does.

- 8. We believe that God calls us to be servants in the service of others** and to be good stewards of the earth's resources. 'To believe is to care; to care is to do.'

TT: Average 3, total of 31 out of 45

Jesus challenged us to do as He did and serve others instead of themselves
There are many biblical passages that call us to be servants and to work and care for the earth and its resources. Instead, they use some quotation that betrays the lack of respect for biblical truth. Even if it sounds good, it lacks power. This smacks of "Environmentalism" and a promotion for Global Warming.
Serving and caring are essential, but it lacks the great commission which is to share Gods word and to evangelize.
I feel this statement is part of the green environmental movement. Why is it that the UCC never backs up their beliefs by pointing to Scripture, like Genesis 1:27-31, where God talks about being stewards of the earth.
Although I believe that we are servants, I don't think that the earth's resources need to be a part of my belief system regarding my faith in Jesus Christ. I think this wording is included for political purposes and doesn't belong here.
I believe this statement is true. We are called to serve others, just as Jesus served. Where does "stewards of the earth's resources" fit in with serving others? It sounds political and environmental.
I don't think this is in contravention to anything stated in our mission, vision or core values. I'm concerned that there is little connection to the role of Christ's servant example and how that informs our servanthood and stewardship. We specifically speak to "Christ-like love" and a "personal growing relationship with Jesus."
God does call us to be servants Jesus came not to be served but to serve. We are called to His example always thru scripture.



- 9. We believe that the UCC is called to be a prophetic church.** As in the tradition of the prophets and apostles, God calls the church to speak truth to power, liberate the oppressed, care for the poor and comfort the afflicted.

TT: Average 2, total 17 out of 45

I believe we are called to follow the teachings of Jesus. Too often, the word of God that “holy men” profess to hear only is self-serving

Again, this sounds good, but who does the UCC speaking “truth” to, who are the “oppressed” they’re trying to liberate, who are the “poor” and “afflicted” they seek to care for and to comfort? Look at their website. “By their fruits you shall know them” (Jesus, Matthew 7:16).

This again feels very wordy and not quite clear enough scripturally.

This was written to sound biblical (Luke 4:16-21), yet, the underlining message here is not the gospel of Jesus Christ. Rather, this statement is a political statement, where in the name of religion alternative lifestyles are portrayed as the oppressed and afflicted. I believe the UCC is setting themselves up as a prophet. But they cannot point to the traditions of the apostles because their agenda is not supported by Scripture.

I feel like the UCC has its focus on themselves too much. Our faith system should be all about Jesus.

We are to follow the teachings of Jesus, not men. Very wordy and no reference to scripture.

Again, where is the mention of Christ in this?

God does call the church to speak the truth.....scriptural truth, not the world's truth.

- 10. We believe in the power of peace,** and work for nonviolent solutions to local, national, and international problems.

TT: Average 2, total of 20 out of 45

Yes and Amen!

Peace is the goal. Jesus said to turn the other cheek. He didn't say to commit suicide.
This is not a doctrinal statement. Romans 13:4 states, "For the one in authority is God's servant for your good. But if you do wrong, be afraid, for rulers do not bear the sword for no reason. They are God's servants, agents of wrath to bring punishment on the wrongdoer."
This reads too loosely and feels as though it is meeting a liberal perspective as opposed to a biblical truth.
The job of the church is to fulfill the great commission (Matthew 28:16-20) not to work for non-violent solutions as if the church is a political body. It makes me wonder if the UCC understands that the gospel message is an offense to the world, have they not heard Jesus' words in Matthew 10:22, "all men will hate you because of me, but he who stands firm to the end will be saved."
Again, this is political in nature and doesn't belong in a statement of faith.
Why is this in a statement of faith? This sound like a political statement.
Christ and the peace He provides through the Holy Spirit. Again Christ not mentioned.
Of course we believe in peace. But we must still speak the truth in love. This seems unnecessary for this document.

- 11. We are a people of possibility.** In the UCC, members, congregations and structures have the breathing room to explore and to hear ... for after all, God is still speaking, ...

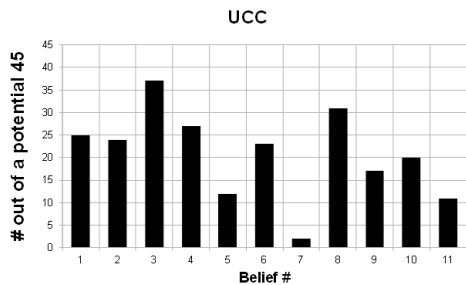
TT: Average 1, total 11 out of 45

In general, I agree with the statement above on the condition that we are careful to recognize that what the Holy Spirit speaks is always in line with (not contradicting) God's revelation in the Scriptures.
This is an example of nonsensical "feel good speak"
Jude, the brother of James, writes, "Dear friends, although I was very eager to write to you about the salvation we share, I felt I had to write and urge you to contend for the faith that was once for all entrusted to the saints" (v. 3). The

*Our Evaluation of UCC (cont'd)*

possibilities of every church are framed by biblical doctrine. This is not what this UCC statement is saying.
If we are to believe the Bible is God’s word, then He has spoken and we merely need to trust in His word and follow His commandments.
“God is still speaking,” this statement is intentional and its purpose is to take away from the Biblical inerrancy of the Word of God. I believe the UCC intention here has to do with historical revisionism and reinterpretation of orthodox views which have existed for thousands of years in the church. They continue to push their egalitarian views at any cost. Even if that means going against the Bible.
God spoke. With the help of the Holy Spirit, we are still hearing and learning. Jesus meets us where we’re at, which I am grateful for, but this statement is allowing for the flexibility and legitimacy of my own interpretation as if it can stand on its own.
The bible is the written word of God. Then the Holy Spirit is speaking to us to follow the Bible, not to explore and have “breathing room”. Breathing room equals your own or other human interpretations.
This is a very nebulous statement. This could be a statement for any secular organization. While it doesn’t contravene what we’ve stated as a church, it does not inform our possibility in Christ.
God Spoke.. In His holy inspired word. This is a misleading statement. It suggests that we are free to hear what we want. The statement says "the UCC members, congregations and structures have breathing room to explore and to hear." God's word does not change. It is the same yesterday, today and tomorrow. We are not free to conform it to today's world.

Transition Team evaluation results from UCC (What the UCC Believes) compared to our Core Values, Mission and Vision Statements



## 4Cs (Conservative Congregational Christian Conference)

### The CCCC Statement of Faith

<http://www.cccusa.com/about-us/statement-of-faith/>

1. We believe the Bible consisting of the Old and New Testament, to be the only inspired, inerrant, infallible, authoritative Word of God written.
2. We believe that there is one God, eternally existent in three persons: Father, Son and Holy Spirit.
3. We believe in the deity of Christ, in His virgin birth, in His sinless life, in His miracles, in His vicarious and atoning death through His shed blood, in His bodily resurrection, in His ascension to the right hand of the Father, and in His personal return in power and glory.
4. We believe that for salvation of lost and sinful man regeneration by the Holy Spirit is absolutely essential.
5. We believe in the present ministry of the Holy Spirit by Whose indwelling power and fullness the Christian is enabled to live a godly life in this present evil world.
6. We believe in the resurrection of both the saved and the lost; they that are saved unto the resurrection of life and they that are lost unto the resurrection of damnation.
7. We believe in the spiritual unity of all believers in Christ.

### ***Our Evaluation of CCCCs:***

1. We believe the Bible consisting of the Old and New Testament, to be the only inspired, inerrant, infallible, authoritative Word of God written.

TT: Average 5, total of 44 out of 45

What other word is there to believe, the Rev Al Sharpton?
Consistent with what the Bible teaches. Consistent with our Core Values, Mission and Vision.
I believe this statement to be biblical teaching.

*Our Evaluation of CCCCs (cont'd)*

Amen.
The Bible is the written word of God and our foundation.
This is a necessary underpinning for three of our stated core values.
This is correct. Our Core Values state "we assure that everything we do is rooted in scripture".

2. We believe that there is one God, eternally existent in three persons: Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

TT: Average 5, total of 45 out of 45

This is the basic philosophy of Christianity.
Consistent with what the Bible teaches. Consistent with our Core Values, Mission and Vision.
I totally agree that the Bible teaches this fact and that the Holy Spirit testifies to this fact in the believer's life.
Amen.
Father, Son and Holy Spirit. They got it right.
I believe this is FPCC's understanding of who God is.
We do believe this and it is affirmed by the Apostle's Creed.

3. We believe in the deity of Christ, in His virgin birth, in His sinless life, in His miracles, in His vicarious and atoning death through His shed blood, in His bodily resurrection, in His ascension to the right hand of the Father, and in His personal return in power and glory.

TT: Average 5, total 45 out of 45

To be a Christian requires this leap of faith
Consistent with what the Bible teaches. Consistent with our Core Values, Mission and Vision.

*Our Evaluation of CCCCs (cont'd)*

This is what the Scriptures teach the church of Jesus Christ. .
This is completely consistent with the Apostles Creed that we read each month.
It is what the bible teaches us about Jesus.
This is consistent with what we state in the Apostle's Creed and would be a required understanding to support Evangelism – one of our four focus points in the Vision.
Yes. This is taught in scripture and we affirm it each month in the Apostle's Creed as a church family.

4. We believe that for salvation of lost and sinful man regeneration by the Holy Spirit is absolutely essential.

TT: Average 5, total 44 out of 45

Man cannot absolve himself. Divine intervention is required
Consistent with what the Bible teaches. Consistent with our Core Values, Mission and Vision.
Absolutely! Titus 3:5-7 is one of many verses that support this fact of life.
This is what being born-again is all about: a regeneration, not on our own, but by the help of the Holy Spirit.
We cannot do it alone. It is only by the power of the Holy Spirit.
This is also an essential understanding for Evangelism.
Praise God. The Bible teaches this and how blessed we are when the Holy Spirit is present in our lives.

5. We believe in the present ministry of the Holy Spirit by Whose indwelling power and fullness the Christian is enabled to live a godly life in this present evil world.

TT: Average 5, total 44 out of 45

*Our Evaluation of CCCCs (cont'd)*

God, as the Holy Spirit, lives within us and helps us resist the temptation to do evil
Consistent with what the Bible teaches. Consistent with our Core Values, Mission and Vision.
Yes, I believe that the Christian who walks in the power of the Holy Spirit is enabled to live a godly life.
Amen.
We cannot do it alone. It is only by the power of the Holy Spirit.
The necessity of this ministry of the Holy Spirit enables everything that we've identified in the Vision. We can't do this work with our own energy.
Yes....We live in a fallen world and with the presence of the Holy Spirit and God's enduring grace we face each new day with the opportunity to live the example of Christ Jesus our Lord and Savior. Hallelujah

6. We believe in the resurrection of both the saved and the lost; they that are saved unto the resurrection of life and they that are lost unto the resurrection of damnation.

TT: Average 5, total 41 out of 45

Jesus teaches that the dead will be resurrected at judgment day. He will cast the unworthy into Hell and those who atoned for their sins will achieve heaven
Consistent with what the Bible teaches. Consistent with our Core Values, Mission and Vision.
The reason I voted the way I did is because this statement is a Biblical statement which is found in the book of Revelation.
Even though I don't like the use of "damnation" this is biblical.
This is what the Bible teaches.

*Our Evaluation of CCCCs (cont'd)*

This is another element that emphasizes the necessity of Evangelism for what we do as a church family. It's what we are called to do.

Always difficult to hear but the Bible does teach the reality of not only Heaven but also Hell.

7. We believe in the spiritual unity of all believers in Christ.

TT: Average 5, total 45 out of 45

Believers draw inspiration from each other to follow the teaching of Christ

Consistent with what the Bible teaches.  
Consistent with our Core Values, Mission and Vision.

This is a biblical teaching. Note that the 4C's states "unity of all believers in Christ." Ephesians 4:13

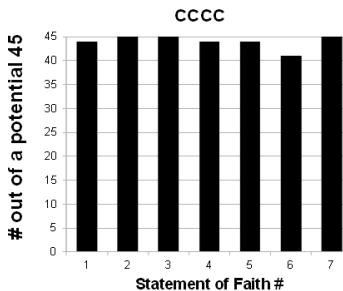
Amen. This is why I instantly feel connected to another person who claims to be born-again. Praise God!

We are called to be a family of believers in Christ. The Bible teaches that we cannot do it alone. We are called to help each other in our walk with Jesus.

The Edifying element of the Vision really speaks to this as an essential element of who we are as a church.

Yes. Believing in Christ is where our spiritual unity must begin.

Transition Team evaluation results from CCCC (Statement of Faith) compared to our Core Values, Mission and Vision Statements

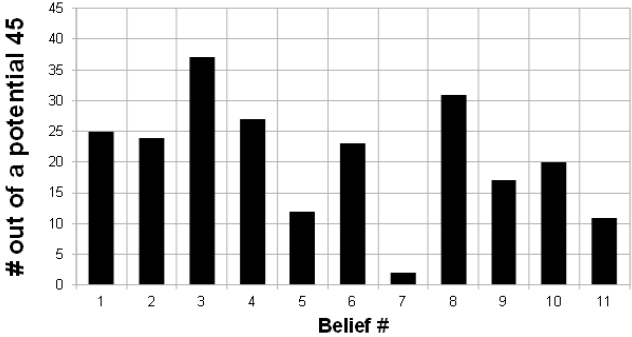




## Evaluation Graphs

Below are graphs that show the results of the Transition Team's evaluation of each belief statement from both affiliations in light of our new Core Values, Mission and Vision Statements.

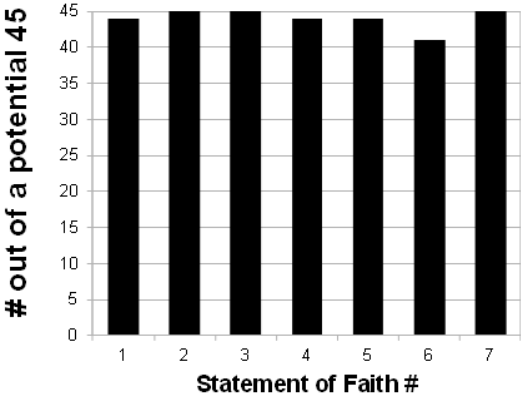
### UCC (What the UCC Believes)



**46% alignment**

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### CCCC (Statement of Faith)



**98% alignment**

## UCC History of changes to their Statement of Faith

It is important to note that the UCC has changed its Statement of Faith three times since First Parish first became affiliated with the denomination. The current version is significantly different from the original. The different statements are set forth below.

### The UCC has had 4 versions of Statement of Faith

1. The 1959 Original Version  
This is the version that was in place when FPCC joined the UCC.
2. 1976 “Robert V. Moss” Version  
According to Wikipedia: *This revision of the Statement of Faith was prepared by Robert V. Moss, Jr., President of the United Church of Christ from 1969–1976, in order to express the statement in more 'inclusive' language, removing all references to the masculinity of God.*
3. The 1981 Version “In the Form of a Doxology”  
According to Wikipedia: *This version of the Statement of Faith was approved by the United Church of Christ Executive Council in 1981 for use in connection with the twenty-fifth anniversary of the denomination. It expresses another path toward shaping the statement in more 'inclusive' language, this time changing most references to God to 'you', and removing the line referring to creation.*

The 1959, 1976, and 1981 versions can be found here:

[http://www.ucc.org/beliefs\\_statement-of-faith#TRAD](http://www.ucc.org/beliefs_statement-of-faith#TRAD)

4. Current version called “What We Believe” (date of inception unknown)  
[http://www.ucc.org/about-us\\_what-we-believe](http://www.ucc.org/about-us_what-we-believe)

For a side by side comparison of all 4 versions of the UCC Statements of Faith see pages 40 – 43.

## **The 1959 Original Version**

We believe in God, the Eternal Spirit,  
Father of our Lord Jesus Christ and our Father,  
and to his deeds we testify:

He calls the worlds into being,  
creates man in his own image  
and sets before him the ways of life and death.

He seeks in holy love to save all people from aimlessness and sin.

He judges men and nations by his righteous will  
declared through prophets and apostles.

In Jesus Christ, the man of Nazareth, our crucified and risen Lord,  
he has come to us and shared our common lot,  
conquering sin and death  
and reconciling the world to himself.

He bestows upon us his Holy Spirit,  
creating and renewing the church of Jesus Christ,  
binding in covenant faithful people of all ages, tongues, and races.

He calls us into his church  
to accept the cost and joy of discipleship,  
to be his servants in the service of men,  
to proclaim the gospel to all the world  
and resist the powers of evil,  
to share in Christ's baptism and eat at his table,  
to join him in his passion and victory.

He promises to all who trust him  
forgiveness of sins and fullness of grace,  
courage in the struggle for justice and peace,  
his presence in trial and rejoicing,  
and eternal life in his kingdom which has no end.

Blessing and honor, glory and power be unto him.

Amen.

## **1976 “Robert V. Moss” Version**

We believe in God, the Eternal Spirit,  
who is made known to us in Jesus our brother,  
and to whose deeds we testify:

God calls the worlds into being,  
creates humankind in the divine image,  
and sets before us the ways of life and death.

God seeks in holy love to save all people from aimlessness and sin.

God judges all humanity and all nations by that will of righteousness  
declared through prophets and apostles.

In Jesus Christ, the man of Nazareth, our crucified and risen Lord,  
God has come to us  
and shared our common lot,  
conquering sin and death  
and reconciling the whole creation to its Creator.

God bestows upon us the Holy Spirit,  
creating and renewing the church of Jesus Christ,  
binding in covenant faithful people of all ages, tongues, and races.

God calls us into the church  
to accept the cost and joy of discipleship,  
to be servants in the service of the whole human family,  
to proclaim the gospel to all the world  
and resist the powers of evil,  
to share in Christ's baptism and eat at his table,  
to join him in his passion and victory.

God promises to all who trust in the gospel  
forgiveness of sins and fullness of grace,  
courage in the struggle for justice and peace,  
the presence of the Holy Spirit in trial and rejoicing,  
and eternal life in that kingdom which has no end.

Blessing and honor, glory and power be unto God.

Amen.

## **The 1981 Version “In the Form of a Doxology”**

We believe in you, O God, Eternal Spirit,  
God of our Savior Jesus Christ and our God,  
and to your deeds we testify:

You call the worlds into being,  
create persons in your own image,  
and set before each one the ways of life and death.

You seek in holy love to save all people from aimlessness and sin.

You judge people and nations by your righteous will  
declared through prophets and apostles.

In Jesus Christ, the man of Nazareth, our crucified and risen Savior,  
you have come to us  
and shared our common lot,  
conquering sin and death  
and reconciling the world to yourself.

You bestow upon us your Holy Spirit,  
creating and renewing the church of Jesus Christ,  
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You call us into your church  
to accept the cost and joy of discipleship,  
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to proclaim the gospel to all the world  
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to share in Christ's baptism and eat at his table,  
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You promise to all who trust you  
forgiveness of sins and fullness of grace,  
courage in the struggle for justice and peace,  
your presence in trial and rejoicing,  
and eternal life in your realm which has no end.

Blessing and honor, glory and power be unto you.

Amen.

## **The Current Version called “What We Believe”**

(date of inception: unknown: sometime after 1981)

**We believe in the triune God:** Creator, resurrected Christ, the sole Head of the church, and the Holy Spirit, who guides and brings about the creative and redemptive work of God in the world.

**We believe that each person is unique and valuable.** It is the will of God that every person belong to a family of faith where they have a strong sense of being valued and loved.

**We believe that each person is on a spiritual journey** and that each of us is at a different stage of that journey.

**We believe that the persistent search for God produces an authentic relationship with God,** engendering love, strengthening faith, dissolving guilt, and giving life purpose and direction.

**We believe that all of the baptized 'belong body and soul to our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.'** No matter who – no matter what – no matter where we are on life's journey – notwithstanding race, gender identity or expression, sexual orientation, class or creed – we all belong to God and to one worldwide community of faith. All persons baptized – past, present and future – are connected to each other and to God through the sacrament of baptism. We baptize during worship when the community is present because baptism includes the community's promise of 'love, support and care' for the baptized – and we promise that we won't take it back – no matter where your journey leads you.

**We believe that all people of faith are invited to join Christ at Christ's table for the sacrament of Communion.** Just as many grains of wheat are gathered to make one loaf of bread and many grapes are gathered to make one cup of wine, we, the many people of God, are made one in the body of Christ, the church. The breaking of bread and the pouring of wine reminds us of the costliness of Christ's sacrifice and the discipleship to which we are all called. In the breaking of bread, we remember and celebrate Christ's presence among us along with a 'cloud of witnesses' – our ancestors, family and friends who have gone before us. It is a great mystery; we claim it by faith.

**We believe the UCC is called to be a united and uniting church.** "That they may all be one." (John 17:21) "In essentials—unity, in nonessentials—diversity, in all things—charity," These UCC mottos survive because they touch core values deep within us. The UCC has no rigid formulation of doctrine or attachment to creeds or structures. Its overarching creed is love. UCC pastors and teachers are known for their commitment to excellence in theological preparation, interpretation of the scripture and justice advocacy. Even so, love and unity in the midst of our diversity are our greatest assets.

**We believe that God calls us to be servants in the service of others** and to be good stewards of the earth's resources. 'To believe is to care; to care is to do.'

**We believe that the UCC is called to be a prophetic church.** As in the tradition of the prophets and apostles, God calls the church to speak truth to power, liberate the oppressed, care for the poor and comfort the afflicted.

**We believe in the power of peace,** and work for nonviolent solutions to local, national, and international problems.

**We are a people of possibility.** In the UCC, members, congregations and structures have the breathing room to explore and to hear ... for after all, God is still speaking, ...

## A comparison of the UCC Statements of Faith

The 1959 Original Version	1976 “Robert V. Moss” Version	The 1981 Version “In the Form of a Doxology”
<p>We believe in God, the Eternal Spirit,            Father of our Lord Jesus Christ and our Father,            and to his deeds we testify:</p> <p>He calls the worlds into being,            creates man in his own image            and sets before him the ways of life and death.</p> <p>He seeks in holy love to save all people from aimlessness and sin.</p> <p>He judges men and nations by his righteous will declared through prophets and apostles.</p> <p>In Jesus Christ, the man of Nazareth, our crucified and risen Lord,            he has come to us and shared our common lot,            conquering sin and death and reconciling the world to himself.</p> <p>He bestows upon us his Holy Spirit,            creating and renewing the church of Jesus Christ,            binding in covenant faithful people of all ages, tongues, and races.</p> <p>He calls us into his church to accept the cost and joy of discipleship,            to be his servants in the service of men,            to proclaim the gospel to all the world</p>	<p>We believe in God, the Eternal Spirit,            who is made known to us in Jesus our brother,            and to whose deeds we testify:</p> <p>God calls the worlds into being,            creates humankind in the divine image,            and sets before us the ways of life and death.</p> <p>God seeks in holy love to save all people from aimlessness and sin.</p> <p>God judges all humanity and all nations by that will of righteousness declared through prophets and apostles.</p> <p>In Jesus Christ, the man of Nazareth, our crucified and risen Lord,            God has come to us and shared our common lot,            conquering sin and death and reconciling the whole creation to its Creator.</p> <p>God bestows upon us the Holy Spirit,            creating and renewing the church of Jesus Christ,            binding in covenant faithful people of all ages, tongues, and races.</p> <p>God calls us into the church to accept the cost and joy of discipleship,            to be servants in the service of the whole human family,            to proclaim the gospel to all the world</p>	<p>We believe in you, O God, Eternal Spirit,            God of our Savior Jesus Christ and our God,            and to your deeds we testify:</p> <p>You call the worlds into being,            create persons in your own image,            and set before each one the ways of life and death.</p> <p>You seek in holy love to save all people from aimlessness and sin.</p> <p>You judge people and nations by your righteous will declared through prophets and apostles.</p> <p>In Jesus Christ, the man of Nazareth, our crucified and risen Savior,            you have come to us and shared our common lot,            conquering sin and death and reconciling the world to yourself.</p> <p>You bestow upon us your Holy Spirit,            creating and renewing the church of Jesus Christ,            binding in covenant faithful people of all ages, tongues, and races.</p> <p>You call us into your church            to accept the cost and joy of discipleship,            to be your servants in the service of others,            to proclaim the gospel to all the world</p>



## **The Current Version called “What We Believe”**

(date of inception: unknown: sometime after 1981)

**We believe in the triune God:** Creator, resurrected Christ, the sole Head of the church, and the Holy Spirit, who guides and brings about the creative and redemptive work of God in the world.

**We believe that each person is unique and valuable.** It is the will of God that every person belong to a family of faith where they have a strong sense of being valued and loved.

**We believe that each person is on a spiritual journey** and that each of us is at a different stage of that journey.

**We believe that the persistent search for God produces an authentic relationship with God,** engendering love, strengthening faith, dissolving guilt, and giving life purpose and direction.

**We believe that all of the baptized 'belong body and soul to our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.'** No matter who – no matter what – no matter where we are on life's journey – notwithstanding race, gender identity or expression, sexual orientation, class or creed – we all belong to God and to one worldwide community of faith. All persons baptized – past, present and future – are connected to each other and to God through the sacrament of baptism. We baptize during worship when the community is present because baptism includes the community's promise of 'love, support and care' for the baptized – and we promise that we won't take it back – no matter where your journey leads you.

**We believe that all people of faith are invited to join Christ at Christ's table for the sacrament of Communion.** Just as many grains of wheat are gathered to make one loaf of bread and many grapes are gathered to make one cup of wine, we, the many people of God, are made one in the body of Christ, the church. The breaking of bread and the pouring of wine reminds us of the costliness of Christ's sacrifice and the discipleship to which we are all called. In the breaking of bread, we remember and celebrate Christ's presence among us along with a 'cloud of witnesses' – our ancestors, family and friends who have gone before us. It is a great mystery; we claim it by faith.

**We believe the UCC is called to be a united and uniting church.** "That they may all be one." (John 17:21) "In essentials—unity, in nonessentials—diversity, in all things—charity," These UCC mottos survive because they touch core values deep within us. The UCC has no rigid formulation of doctrine or attachment to creeds or structures. Its overarching creed is love. UCC pastors and teachers are known for their commitment to excellence in theological preparation, interpretation of the scripture and justice advocacy. Even so, love and unity in the midst of our diversity are our greatest assets.

**We believe that God calls us to be servants in the service of others** and to be good stewards of the earth's resources. 'To believe is to care; to care is to do.'

## A comparison of the UCC Statements of Faith (cont'd)

<b>The 1959 Original Version (cont'd)</b>	<b>1976 “Robert V. Moss” Version (cont'd)</b>	<b>The 1981 Version “In the Form of a Doxology” (cont'd)</b>
<p>and resist the powers of evil, to share in Christ's baptism and eat at his table, to join him in his passion and victory. He promises to all who trust him forgiveness of sins and fullness of grace, courage in the struggle for justice and peace, his presence in trial and rejoicing, and eternal life in his kingdom which has no end.</p> <p>Blessing and honor, glory and power be unto him.</p> <p>Amen.</p>	<p>and resist the powers of evil, to share in Christ's baptism and eat at his table, to join him in his passion and victory.</p> <p>God promises to all who trust in the gospel forgiveness of sins and fullness of grace, courage in the struggle for justice and peace, the presence of the Holy Spirit in trial and rejoicing, and eternal life in that kingdom which has no end.</p> <p>Blessing and honor, glory and power be unto God.</p> <p>Amen.</p>	<p>and resist the powers of evil, to share in Christ's baptism and eat at his table, to join him in his passion and victory.</p> <p>You promise to all who trust you forgiveness of sins and fullness of grace, courage in the struggle for justice and peace, your presence in trial and rejoicing, and eternal life in your realm which has no end.</p> <p>Blessing and honor, glory and power be unto you.</p> <p>Amen.</p>

**The Current Version called “What We Believe” (cont’d)**

**We believe that the UCC is called to be a prophetic church.** As in the tradition of the prophets and apostles, God calls the church to speak truth to power, liberate the oppressed, care for the poor and comfort the afflicted.

**We believe in the power of peace,** and work for nonviolent solutions to local, national, and international problems.

**We are a people of possibility.** In the UCC, members, congregations and structures have the breathing room to explore and to hear ... for after all, God is still speaking, ...

## **Conclusion**

The Transition Team evaluated the statements of faith of the UCC and CCCC at three separate meetings. Our goal was to evaluate how each aligns with our Core Values, Mission and Vision as developed by our church family. We did not compare these statements to each other, but reviewed each separately, measuring each statement against First Parish's tenets.

As a result of our discussions and evaluation, the Transition Team found, as set forth in the charts, the following alignments:

CCCC (about 98%)

UCC (about 46%)

We pray that our church family finds this information helpful as we continue to seek God's will for First Parish's future.

Dear Lord, bless First Parish as we strive to discern Your will. Help us to walk in love as we look to make changes that allow us to draw closer to You. Be with us and guide us as we navigate unfamiliar waters. Strengthen us to become all You want us to be. In Jesus name we pray. Amen

## NOTES

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