

1 **DRAFT – FOR STUDY¹**

2 **Evangelical-Roman Catholic Common Statement of Faith**

3 **Saskatoon, 2014**

4 In recent years, Evangelicals and Roman Catholics in Saskatoon have discovered each other in
5 new and positive ways. This new relationship has developed between pastors and ministers,
6 church leaders and laity from our churches, but has its roots in the close relationships between
7 neighbours, co-workers, and family members who have shared with each other their desire to be
8 faithful disciples. Breaking from the old pattern of distrust and dismissal, we have discovered in
9 each other people of faith who seek to sincerely follow Christ. Like the disciples on the road to
10 Emmaus, we have discovered that Christ is present with us as we walk together, breaking open
11 God’s word and sharing in all that God has been doing.

12 This document represents the fruit of a three-year dialogue between representatives from the
13 Catholic and Evangelical communities, including pastors, priests, and lay persons. We are guided
14 in our work and life together by the prayer of Jesus “that all may be one ... so that the world may
15 believe.” Confident in the continued prayer of Christ for our endeavours, we are bold to confess
16 together our shared faith, to acknowledge our central differences, and to affirm our common
17 mission.

18 **We Confess our Shared Faith**

19 As people of faith guided by the Holy Spirit we confess together our faith in God, who is the
20 Father of all, the source and sustainer of all creation. We confess Jesus Christ as Lord and
21 Saviour, the Son of the living God, born of the Virgin Mary, who by the power of God became
22 flesh, living and dying a fully human existence, the historic Jesus of Nazareth. He is the first
23 born of creation, the first fruit of the new creation; in his life, death, resurrection, and ascension
24 he opens the way to salvation for all creation. We confess the Holy Spirit, the Lord and giver of
25 life, who comes from God the Father and leads us back to God, who inspires us to respond in
26 faith, hope, and love, renewing and transforming us in the image of Christ. We confess the triune
27 God – Father, Son and Holy Spirit – who together are worthy of our worship and praise.

28 We believe that all people are created in God’s own image and likeness, gifted with personhood,
29 endowed with dignity, and called to live in holiness with God and in harmony with all creation.
30 Through human rebellion, sin entered the world, corrupting the divine order, resulting in a
31 disruption of harmony at all levels. God’s eternal plan is to rescue his fallen creation, to call

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32 humanity to repentance, gathering his adopted children into one family, one community, in
33 anticipation of the final restoration of all things in Christ.

34 We believe that God has made known to us the truth of his own being. God speaks to us most
35 clearly through the Word of God incarnate, Jesus Christ, in whom the divine and human natures
36 are united in one person, sent to redeem all of creation. God speaks to us through the patriarchs,
37 prophets, and poets, through the people of Israel called to be a light to the nations, through holy
38 men and women in all times, by the example of those who have given their lives in witness and
39 service. God speaks to us in a unique and authoritative way through the Holy Scriptures, the
40 word of God written by human hands and minds under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. God
41 speaks to us through the Christian community in proclamation of the Gospel and sharing in the
42 holy mysteries of God. In all of this, God's revelation to us is mediated through the Holy Spirit
43 who illumines our hearts and minds.

44 We are humbled by the gift and the mysteries of salvation revealed to us in the passion of our
45 Lord Jesus, who suffered humiliation and death at our own hands, and yet through the power of
46 the Holy Spirit was raised to life by God's love for us. In his life and ministry, Jesus announces
47 the gracious reign of God's kingdom. In his death, Jesus atones for the sins of the world. In his
48 resurrection, Jesus breaks the bonds of sin and death and reveals God's power to transform death
49 into life, darkness into light, despair into hope. In his ascension, Jesus returns to his Father,
50 reveals to us our final end, and continues his unique mediation for his people. In Jesus, we
51 discover the promise of eternal life in God's kingdom and anticipate the renewal of all things at
52 his second coming.

53 We acknowledge our sins and the sinfulness of all humanity. Sin is to turn away from God; to
54 repent is to turn back towards God. Even in our sinfulness, God still loves us, calls us back, and
55 gives us grace to strengthen us in our faithful response. In his mercy, God justifies the repentant
56 sinner by grace on account of faith and gives new life in Christ.

57 We are gathered together by the Holy Spirit into one body in Christ. The church is God's people
58 called together for worship, fellowship, and service. The church is built upon the sure foundation
59 of Christ himself, and built up by the witness of the faithful, most notably the martyrs. In
60 profession of faith and celebration of Christ's mysteries, the church is present as a sign of God's
61 kingdom, a sacred encounter with Christ. Despite its historic divisions, the church of Christ is
62 one through all the ages. As professed by the apostles and the saints it is God's holy people
63 throughout the world, undivided by race, language, or gender. As members of the Body of
64 Christ, the community of disciples, we share in God's mission to the world.

65 We are called by Jesus to follow him as disciples in and through the power of the Holy Spirit.
66 We turn our hearts to God in prayer, giving thanks and praise, expressing grief, seeking pardon,
67 and asking help for every need. We are commanded by Christ to love one another as he loves us,
68 and to lead a life of service to all. He has commissioned us to proclaim the good news of

69 salvation, to baptize all nations in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, to teach all that he
70 has commanded, and to lead all people to salvation through faith in Jesus Christ.

71

72 **We Acknowledge our Central Differences**

73 Professing our common faith together, we Evangelicals and Catholics acknowledge our
74 continuing differences over issues that we consider to be matters of revealed truth and important
75 to our life in Christ.

76 We profess together that the Scriptures are God's word, holy and inspired, trustworthy and true,
77 and authoritative for all time. Yet, we recognize that historical developments have given us some
78 variation in the Old Testament texts; Catholics accept as inspired the apocryphal or
79 deuterocanonical writings, and while some Evangelicals would consider these profitable and
80 useful for instruction most would not see them as inspired. In addition, we differ on how the
81 contemporary church is bound by the authority of the apostolic witness and post-apostolic
82 Tradition. We also differ on how we weigh personal conscience in regard to communal
83 discernment and how we employ the spiritual gifts of teaching and leading given to the church.
84 Whereas Evangelicals affirm God's revelation through Jesus and the canonical Scriptures,
85 Catholics also affirm the authority of communal discernment of doctrine by the church.
86 Ultimately, many of our disagreements are rooted in differing perceptions of how God's
87 authority is expressed within the Christian community.

88 We proclaim together that God's people are gathered to be a community of believers sharing in
89 God's life and mission in the world. However, there are significant differences in our
90 understanding of the essential nature of the church. Evangelicals do not embrace the Catholic
91 emphasis on the historic continuity of the apostolic ministry in the institutions and clerical
92 offices of the church, particularly the ministry of bishops and the papacy. Catholics disagree with
93 the understanding of some Evangelicals that the essential nature of the church is simply a
94 voluntary association of believers. Catholics are reticent about the multiplicity of denominations
95 and diversity of forms of church government among Evangelical churches. The Catholic
96 emphasis on the presence of Christ in the ordained ministry and sacramental order contrasts with
97 the Evangelical understanding of the presence of Christ in the assembly of believers.

98 We confess together our sinfulness, our total dependence upon God's forgiveness, and the
99 centrality of Christ in salvation. Nevertheless, we continue to differ over matters relating to the
100 process of salvation. Evangelicals object to the Catholic doctrines regarding: the role of works in
101 the justified believer; the redemptive value of suffering; and mediation of the church in
102 sacraments, purgatory, and indulgences. It should be noted that recent ecumenical discussions
103 have highlighted Catholic affirmations that good works do not arise apart from God's grace.
104 Catholics remain concerned by the understanding of some Evangelicals regarding: the assurance

105 of salvation; the doctrine of election; and tendencies towards an individualistic approach to
106 salvation.

107 We profess together the risen Christ through the public proclamation of faith in the waters of
108 baptism and participation in the Eucharist. Notwithstanding, differences regarding the Eucharist
109 or Lord's Supper remain one of the most significant points of divergence between our two
110 traditions. Although most Evangelicals celebrate baptism and the Lord's Supper, these are
111 usually understood as ordinances – acts commanded by Christ which witness to a personal
112 conversion and a public proclamation. Catholics can affirm the personal and public dimensions
113 of these ordinances but use the term "sacrament" to reflect that God is the one who acts through
114 physical elements, public signs, and inward faith in order to confer grace. Catholics emphasize
115 the reality of the sacraments as well as their essential role within God's plan of salvation.

116 We affirm together the role of Mary as Mother of God and model of discipleship. However,
117 Catholic devotional language and practices regarding Mary, as well as the saints, have raised
118 concerns for Evangelicals. In response, Catholics point to the ancient teaching that distinguishes
119 between the worship appropriate to God alone and the veneration that may be offered to those
120 who lead us to Christ. Furthermore, Catholics believe that the communion of saints encompasses
121 all Christians of every time and place, with whom there can be a lively sharing in spiritual goods
122 such as prayer, even with those who have gone ahead of us. Prayer seeking the intercession of
123 the saints is understood by Catholics within this broader context. While Evangelicals may
124 wrestle with the practice of devotion to the saints, they do not accept the Marian dogmas of the
125 Immaculate Conception and the Assumption, or any language that might suggest a role as co-
126 mediator.

127 As we address these issues together, we recognize that we may also encounter non-theological
128 sources of division. Cultural and ideological factors can sometimes work their way into our
129 theological expressions and our ecumenical relationships. Sensitivity to these factors will assist
130 our communities to witness to the Gospel of unity. While there are real and important reasons for
131 the divisions between our communities, we hope our work together will illuminate these issues
132 and help us to identify the causes and the extent of our division. It is a powerful witness when
133 Christians can reach across ideological, social, and linguistic lines to work together in Christian
134 mission. Our common witness to a unity that transcends these differences professes a Gospel that
135 encompasses all creation.

136

137 **We affirm our Common Mission**

138 Our two communities share a common conviction about the Christian life: Christ is forming us
139 by the Holy Spirit into a faithful people called together and sent into the world to participate in
140 his life and mission. Although we may have differences about certain aspects of the life of faith,
141 we share convictions about Jesus that ground our call to common witness and mission.

142 Compelled by the love of Christ, we therefore resolve to look for ways to worship and work
143 together.

144 Among the possible areas of cooperation in witness and mission, we list the following:

- 145 • Worship and Prayer. All missional activity is rooted in the worship of God and the
146 mandate of Christ. We will encourage citywide, church-to-church, and leaders-to-leaders
147 initiatives in worship and prayer, particularly in prayer for unity.
- 148 • Fellowship. We will encourage the building of friendships within our communities that
149 manifest the common love we have in Christ.
- 150 • Listening to God's Word. We will promote the study of the Bible together, formation in
151 discipleship, and continuing dialogue.
- 152 • Proclaiming the Gospel. We will foster initiatives in sharing the good news of Jesus
153 Christ and in inviting hearers to a life of faith.
- 154 • Marriage and Family. We will nurture marriage and family life, particularly in the
155 preparation of couples for marriage, enrichment of marriages, support of interchurch
156 families, and pastoral care of those struggling in their marriages.
- 157 • Children and Youth. We will encourage joint initiatives in ministering to children and
158 youth, assisting them to grow into mature and committed Christians, and guiding them
159 into ways of engaging in the life of faith, witness, and service.
- 160 • Social and Ethical Issues. We uphold the dignity and sanctity of human life at all stages.
161 We will work together in addressing the social and ethical concerns of our day, such as
162 poverty and homelessness, abortion and euthanasia, distortions of human sexuality, and
163 other areas of human need and suffering; in all instances witnessing to God's desire that
164 all life be protected, valued, and cherished, and witnessing to the saving love of God in
165 Jesus Christ.
- 166 • Direct outreach to those in need. We will work together to address human needs within
167 our communities: to feed the hungry, clothe the naked, welcome the stranger, and visit
168 the sick and imprisoned.
- 169 • Engagement in the Public Sphere. We share a common conviction that religion has an
170 essential role in a democratic society. We will address questions of public policy from the
171 perspective of Gospel values, witnessing to civil society of the Gospel message of love
172 for each and every person. We will advocate on issues such as economic policy, health
173 and social services, education, peace and warfare, care of creation, criminal justice, new
174 genetic technologies, and religious liberty.

175 We are called together by our common faith in Christ to work, where possible, in a spirit of
176 unity. In the person of Jesus Christ and the power of the Holy Spirit, we find our mission and
177 purpose as human persons called into relationship with each other, with all of creation, and with
178 the life of the holy Trinity.

179

180 Several key people have sowed the seeds of our current relationship. We give thanks for the
181 ministry of Fr. Bernard de Margerie who has worked tirelessly for Christian reconciliation and
182 unity for over 50 years; for the leadership of Eric Stolte, Bill Blackmon, and others who brought
183 the Saskatoon Evangelical Ministers' Fellowship together and gave it a vision of mission for the
184 whole community; and for the prayer ministry of Pastor Ken Rutherford who invited people to
185 pray gathered not only for his healing from cancer but equally for the healing of Christ's body.

186 Giving thanks to God for our common faith, we recommit ourselves to the mission that Christ
187 has given us. Together we will seek to find ways before Christ to reconcile our continuing
188 differences. We pray together that God will bring us to unity so that the world may believe.