

Our
World
Belongs to
God

a contemporary testimony

Our
World
Belongs to
God

a contemporary testimony



Grand Rapids, Michigan

Acknowledgments

This revised version of *Our World Belongs to God* was approved by the 2008 Synod of the Christian Reformed Church in North America.

Our World Belongs to God: A Contemporary Testimony. Revised 2008. © 2008 by Faith Alive Christian Resources, 2850 Kalamazoo Ave. SE, Grand Rapids, MI 49560. All rights reserved. Printed in the United States of America.

We welcome your comments. Call us at 1-800-333-8300 or e-mail us at editors@faithaliveresources.org.

ISBN 978-1-59255-467-6

10987654321

Preface

The CRC is a confessional church. We base our faith, teaching, and preaching on the solid, biblical, and Reformed confessions of the 16th century: the Belgic confession, the Canons of Dort, and the Heidelberg Catechism.

While these historic confessions anchor the church's faith, they fail to take into account the changes in church, society, technology, and politics that confront us in the 350 years since the confessions were written. In order to restate the church's faith in today's language and address the pressing new issues of the twentieth century, Synod 1986 approved *Our World Belongs to God: A Contemporary Testimony*.

It was called a *testimony* rather than a *confession* in order to distinguish it from the historic confessions of the sixteenth century and to preserve their central place. As the original preface states, "A testimony contains what a church finds essential to confess at this time. It is more temporary than a confession...." There was also the stated hope that, over time, this testimony might gain confessional status.

After twenty years the *Contemporary Testimony* has won wide usage throughout the CRC for personal study, teaching, and in worship. In 2005 synod asked the Board of Trustees of the CRCNA to appoint a committee to write an updated version of *Our World Belongs to God*. It reasoned that "given the changes in our world that have taken place since [1986], along with the fact that *Our World Belongs to God: A Contemporary Testimony* does not function at the level of a confession but has served instead as a dynamic statement of faith, it must periodically be reviewed and perhaps revised if it is to speak contemporaneously."

A committee was appointed, and began to work on updating the *Contemporary Testimony*. We sought church-wide participation in the process and were deeply gratified that hundreds of individuals, church councils, and Calvin Theological Seminary faculty responded. Many of their comments and suggestions are reflected in the final document. Synod approved this revised version in 2008.

All the members of the revision committee loved the narrative structure and poetic language of the original document and worked hard to maintain that narrative structure and the poetic but accessible language. At the same time, we discovered ways to refine and focus certain sections, while adding material that

reflected the emerging issues confronting the twenty-first century church.

We are content to maintain this document as a testimony rather than raise it to confessional status. That implies that periodically the church will take it up again to make sure it speaks to the church of tomorrow.

We conclude with the words of the original committee: "It is our prayer that this testimony may help you live by faith in God's world, and that some of these words may assist you in giving reason for the hope that you have through our Lord Jesus Christ."

The 1986 Committee:

Dr. Gordon Spykman, chair †
Dr. Richard Mouw
Rev. Morris Greidanus, reporter
Rev. Baastian Nederlof
Dr. Robert Recker, secretary †
Dr. George Vandervelde †
Dr. Lawrence Den Besten †
Ms. Aileen Van Ginkel

The 2008 Committee

Rev. Morris Greidanus, chair
Dr. George Vandervelde † (died January 2007)
Rev. Clayton Libolt, reporter
Dr. Michael Goheen (joined February 2007)
Rev. Sheila Holmes
Rev. Leonard J. Vander Zee
Rev. Elizabeth Vander Haagen

† denotes deceased

Our World Belongs to God

A Contemporary Testimony

(Adopted by Synod 2008)

Preamble

1. As followers of Jesus Christ,
living in this world—
which some seek to control,
and others view with despair—
we declare with joy and trust:
Our world belongs to God!

For God's ownership of all things, see Psalm 24:1 (quoted in 1 Cor. 10:26); Job 41:11; and Deuteronomy 10:14. That this is also "our world"—given to the human race to keep and care for—is one of the themes of the creation stories in Genesis 1 and 2.

2. From the beginning,
through all the crises of our times,
until the kingdom fully comes,
God keeps covenant forever:
Our world belongs to God!
God is King: let the earth be glad!
Christ is victor: his rule has begun!
The Spirit is at work: creation is renewed!
Hallelujah! Praise the Lord!

For God's faithfulness see, among many passages, Psalm 89; 117; 145; Romans 8:31-39; and Hebrews 10:23. For the victory of God in Christ and the rule of Christ, see 1 Corinthians 15:54-57; Philippians 2:9-11; and Revelation 1:13-18. For the Spirit's work renewing creation, see Genesis 1 and Romans 8.