

The Preamble of the U.S. Constitution—the document’s famous first fifty-two words— introduces everything that is to follow in the Constitution’s seven articles and twenty-seven amendments. It proclaims who is adopting this Constitution, why it is being adopted—the purposes behind the enactment of America’s charter of government. And it describes what is being adopted: “this Constitution”—a single authoritative written text to serve as fundamental law of the land. Written constitutionalism was a distinctively American innovation, and one that the framing generation considered the new nation’s greatest contribution to the science of government.

The word “preamble,” while accurate, does not quite capture the full importance of this provision. “Preamble” might be taken—we think wrongly—to imply that these words are merely an opening rhetorical flourish or frill without meaningful effect. To be sure, “preamble” usefully conveys the idea that this provision does not itself confer or delineate powers of government or rights of citizens. Those are set forth in the substantive articles and amendments that follow in the main body of the Constitution’s text. It was well understood at the time of enactment that preambles in legal documents were not themselves substantive provisions and thus should not be read to contradict, expand, or contract the document’s substantive terms.

But that does not mean the Constitution’s Preamble lacks its own legal force. Quite the contrary, it is the provision of the document that declares the enactment of the provisions that follow. Indeed, the Preamble has sometimes been termed the “Enacting Clause” of the Constitution, in that it declares the fact of adoption of the Constitution (once sufficient states had ratified it): “We the People of the United States . . . do ordain and establish this Constitution for the United States of America.”

Importantly, the Preamble declares who is enacting this Constitution—the people of “the United States.” The document is the collective enactment of all U.S. citizens. The Constitution is “owned” (so to speak) by the people, not by the government or any branch thereof. We the People are the stewards of the U.S. Constitution and remain ultimately responsible for its continued existence and its faithful interpretation

The other purposes for adopting the Constitution, recited by the Preamble—embody the aspirations that We the People have for our Constitution, and that were expected to flow from the substantive provisions that follow. The stated goal is to create a government that will meet the needs of the people.

Taken from <https://constitutioncenter.org>

November 10, 2019

Preamble to the Constitution of the USA

Signed in convention September 17, 1787. Ratified June 21, 1788

We the People of the United States, in Order to form a more perfect Union, establish Justice, insure domestic Tranquility, provide for the common defence, promote the general Welfare, and secure the Blessings of Liberty to ourselves and our Posterity, do ordain and establish this Constitution

The Brief Statement of Faith

A statement of faith adopted by the Presbyterian Church (USA) in 1991 as part of its Book of Confessions.

In life and in death we belong to God.
Through the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ,
the love of God,
and the communion of the Holy Spirit,
we trust in the one triune God, the Holy One of Israel,
whom alone we worship and serve.

We trust in Jesus Christ,
Fully human, fully God.
Jesus proclaimed the reign of God:
preaching good news to the poor
and release to the captives,
teaching by word and deed
and blessing the children,
healing the sick
and binding up the brokenhearted,
eating with outcasts,
forgiving sinners,
and calling all to repent and believe the gospel.
Unjustly condemned for blasphemy and sedition,
Jesus was crucified,
suffering the depths of human pain
and giving his life for the sins of the world.
God raised this Jesus from the dead,
vindicating his sinless life,
breaking the power of sin and evil,
delivering us from death to life eternal.

We trust in God,
whom Jesus called Abba, Father.

In sovereign love God created the world good
and makes everyone equally in God's image
male and female, of every race and people,
to live as one community.
But we rebel against God; we hide from our Creator.
Ignoring God's commandments,
we violate the image of God in others and ourselves,
accept lies as truth,
exploit neighbor and nature,
and threaten death to the planet entrusted to our care.
We deserve God's condemnation.
Yet God acts with justice and mercy to redeem creation.
In everlasting love,
the God of Abraham and Sarah chose a covenant people
to bless all families of the earth.
Hearing their cry,
God delivered the children of Israel
from the house of bondage.
Loving us still, God makes us heirs with Christ of the covenant.
Like a mother who will not forsake her nursing child,
like a father who runs to welcome the prodigal home,
God is faithful still.

We trust in God the Holy Spirit,
everywhere the giver and renewer of life.
The Spirit justifies us by grace through faith,
sets us free to accept ourselves and to love God and neighbor,
and binds us together with all believers
in the one body of Christ, the Church.
The same Spirit who inspired the prophets and apostles
rules our faith and life in Christ through Scripture,
engages us through the Word proclaimed,
claims us in the waters of baptism,
feeds us with the bread of life and the cup of salvation,
and calls women and men to all ministries of the church.
In a broken and fearful world
the Spirit gives us courage
to pray without ceasing,
to witness among all peoples to Christ as Lord and Savior,
to unmask idolatries in Church and culture,
to hear the voices of peoples long silenced,
and to work with others for justice, freedom, and peace.
In gratitude to God, empowered by the Spirit,
we strive to serve Christ in our daily tasks
and to live holy and joyful lives,

The Brief Statement of Faith

<https://www.presbyterianmission.org/what-we-believe/brief-statement-of-faith/>

PREFACE: In 1983 the two largest Presbyterian churches in the United States reunited. The "Plan for Reunion" called for the preparation of a brief statement of the Reformed faith for possible inclusion in The Book of Confessions. This statement is therefore not intended to stand alone, apart from the other confessions of our church. It does not pretend to be a complete list of all our beliefs, nor does it explain any of them in detail. It is designed to be confessed by the whole congregation in the setting of public worship, and it may also serve pastors and teachers as an aid to Christian instruction. It celebrates our rediscovery that for all our undoubted diversity, we are bound together by a common faith and a common task.

The faith we confess unites us with the one, universal church. The most important beliefs of Presbyterians are those we share with other Christians and especially with other evangelical Christians who look to the Protestant Reformation as a renewal of the gospel of Jesus Christ. Diversity remains. But we are thankful that in our time the many churches are learning to accept, and even to affirm, diversity without divisiveness, since the whole counsel of God is more than the wisdom of any individual or any one tradition. The Spirit of Truth gives new light to the churches when they are willing to become pupils together of the Word of God. This statement therefore intends to confess the catholic faith.

even as we watch for God's new heaven and new earth,
praying, "Come, Lord Jesus!"

With believers in every time and place,
we rejoice that nothing in life or in death
can separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.
Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit. Amen.

QUESTIONS FOR THE PRACTICE OF EXAMEN & CONTEMPLATION

- **What word, phrase or image grabs your attention?**
- **How does that word intersect with your life as a Christian?; as an American?; our life together?**
- **What does it reveal to you about the purposes for which we live, gather and cooperate?**
- **What might it illuminate for you in terms of your personal priorities?; our mission as a community of faith?**
- **How does this lectio divina influence or shape you in this time of uncertainty, anxiety, polarization and waiting for the elections a year from now?**
- **What invitation to do you hear in this word for you / us?**

Space for doodles, thoughts, or prayer images....

Lectio Divina: what it is and how to practice it..

Christian meditation was clearly part of the practice of the “Desert Ammas & Abbas” who fled the newly institutionalized church to the deserts of Egypt and Arabia in the 4th century. This tradition stood behind Benedict of Nursia who in the 6th century founded the order we call the Benedictines. The monks’ day was divided into three parts: four hours of “spiritual reading and prayer,” six hours of manual labor, and four hours chanting the psalms. This spiritual reading could include various materials like the lives of the saints, but was focused on the scriptures. It was meant to create an intimate communion God win the here and now. It is this spiritual reading and prayer that comes to us as Lectio Divina. It’s a movement of the mind and heart, done in a four-part process.

Preparation: Move into silence and pray silently offering yourself to God for God’s purposes and asking that the Holy Spirit be your guide.

1st Movement: Listening to the reading with the intent of hearting the word as a whole, sinking into it.

BRIEF SILENCE

2nd Movement: Listening with the intent of paying attention to what stands out, catches my attention, perhaps a word, a phrase.

SILENCE

3rd Movement: Listening again to the passage and paying attention to what emerges, perhaps an image or memory.

SILENCE

4th Movement: “Chewing on” what has emerged for me from the scripture. I pay attention to my thoughts, memories, bodily sensation, emotional responses as I ponder with God what God might be calling to my attention through what I’ve noticed. If nothing has emerged, I might ask God if I am resisting something or fearful of something that might emerge.

SILENCE

5th Movement: Offering back to God in prayer what has come up or been generated in this pondering and wondering how I am to take what has emerged into the world.

SILENCE

6th Movement: Simply being present to and resting in the Presence of God, as much as is possible for me. Rather than active meditation, this is an attempt to simply be, much like the resting in God of centering prayer.

Finally, we take what we have encountered in ourselves and from our time of holy pondering out into the world to practice what we have discovered. Spiritual Director Lisa Myers names the movements of this prayer as: Preparation, Perception, Pondering, Prayer, Presence, Practice.