



THE INCLUSIVE SACRAMENTAL CHURCH OF CHRIST

Statement of Principles¹

The Inclusive Sacramental Church of Christ (the Church) exists to forward the work of her Master, Jesus Christ, in the world and to feed His flock.

The Church's outlook is both inclusive of all persons and sacramental in nature. It combines traditional forms of Christian worship, their stately ritual, deep mysticism, and abiding witness to the reality of sacramental grace, with the widest measure of intellectual liberty and respect for the individual conscience.

Being inclusive, the Church makes no distinctions between persons based on race, gender, sexual orientation, or any other grounds. Being Sacramental it upholds and administers the Seven Sacraments to all who approach them with due reverence. These are gifts of Grace, as instituted by Christ.

The Inclusive Sacramental Church of Christ is based on a re-organisation of the Australian Province of The Liberal Catholic Church International. The Church aims to express an authentic Australian spirituality that is egalitarian and respectful of individual freedoms.

The Liberal Catholic Church itself came into existence as the result of a complete re-organisation in 1915-1916 of the Old Catholic movement in Great Britain. This Church derived its Orders from the Mother-see of the Old Catholic movement, the ancient arch-episcopal See of Utrecht in Holland. For well over a century, the Liberal Catholic Movement has carefully preserved this succession of Holy Orders.

¹ First composed in 1916, the "Statement of Principles" has undergone various revisions in the different branches of the Liberal Catholic movement. In keeping with the vision of inclusiveness, gender neutral language has been used here wherever possible.

The Living Christ:

The Church believes that the vitality of a church gains in proportion as its members increasingly draw their central inspiration from an intense faith in the Living Christ.

The Church accepts in the plain and the literal sense the marvellous promise of Jesus Christ when on earth: "And behold, I am with you all through the days that are coming, until the Consummation of the world" (Matthew 28:20), or again "Where two or three are gathered together in my name, I am there in the midst of them" (Matthew 18: 20).

It regards these promises as validating all Christian worship, of whatever kind, so long as it be earnest and true. But it further holds that, while the promise of the Presence with individual believers is thus effective, our Lord also appointed certain rites or Sacraments (called "Mysteries" in the Eastern Church) for the greater helping of His people, to be handed down in His Church as special channels of His power and blessing.

The Sacraments:

The Church recognises seven Sacraments: Baptism, Confirmation, the Holy Eucharist, Absolution, Holy Unction, Holy Matrimony, Holy Orders. Through these "means of grace" He is ever present with His Church, giving to His people the wonderful privilege of fellowship and Communion with Him, guiding and protecting them at every stage from the cradle to the grave.

Doctrine:

Besides perpetuating these sacramental rites, Christ's immediate followers handed down in His Church a body of doctrine and certain principles of ethics. Some of these original teachings of Christ have been lost, and some have been obscured by the accretions of the ages. What remains is a priceless heritage to be guarded with loving care and reverence.

The Church regards the Holy Scriptures, the Creeds, and the Traditions of the Church as the means by which this teaching of Christ has been handed down to His followers. It regards them as fundamental, true, and sufficient as a basis of right understanding and right conduct.

As well as our own Statements of Belief, The Nicene, the Apostles', and the Athanasian Creeds are authorised for use in the Liturgy of the Church.

Liturgy:

The Liturgy of the Church is in the vernacular. Throughout, the endeavour has been to place no statement on the lips of the congregation which cannot be honestly and sincerely meant. The fear of God's wrath, the attitudes of abject self-abasement, together with the haunting fear of eternal hell, have been expunged from the ritual. We see these ideas as derogatory alike to the idea of a Loving Father and to mankind created in His own image.

The Scriptures:

The Church teaches that the Scriptures are inspired in a general sense only. It considers that they contain much that is truly the product of divine inspiration, but that with things literally true are mingled other aspects to be either allegorically or spiritually understood.

Mysticism and Modern Thought:

The Church seeks to bring into alliance with its worship all that is true and good in modern thought. "Where there is no vision, the people perish" (Proverbs 29: 18).

Spiritual truths are at all times capable of discovery and of re-discovery. The traditional path of Purification, Illumination, and Union is still open to the seeker's treading. Those who approach by this path may hope to attain the spiritual insight that is the aim of every earnest Christian.

The Church, as a modern Christian Church, maintains that religion should keep pace with human growth and enlightenment, and holds that the Church of today has been handed down a very precious heritage from Christ Himself.

Freedom of Thought:

Membership in most Christian Churches rests on the acceptance of a common belief. This Church permits to its members entire freedom in the interpretation of Creeds, Scriptures and Traditions, and of the Liturgy. It asks only that where differences in interpretation occur, they be courteously expressed. The Church holds strongly that belief should be the result of individual study or intuition, not its antecedent. A truth is not a truth for an individual, nor is a Revelation a revelation, until that person sees such to be true for him or her-self.

As individuals grow spiritually, so will they grow into the perception of truth. No mere lip service or superficial assent of the mind can take the place of this growth, and to ask anything less than this is a sacrilege. Christ surely meant His religion to be one of love and freedom, one which would help people in their different stages of spiritual growth. He did not prescribe formulae whose literal acceptance should be a condition of salvation. The consequence of being unable to recognise a truth is simply to lose the help that the knowledge of such truth would give.

The Church considers, therefore, that it acts in accordance with the spirit of its Master in welcoming those who are still seeking their own truths. As a working basis for fellowship, it asks of its members not the profession of a common belief; rather their willingness to worship corporately through a common ritual.

It tries to help them discover truths for themselves by providing them with opportunities for spiritual growth. It asks of them no more than sincerity of purpose, purity of motive, tolerance, breadth of mind, courtesy of expression, willingness to work, and a common pursuit of high ideals – confident, above all, that the power of the Blessed Sacrament of Christ's love may well be trusted to work God's own true purpose in their souls.

The Clergy and Laity:

The distinctive contribution of the Church to Christian thought is this wide freedom, together with the traditional Sacraments which it administers, the validity of which it closely guards. The Church welcomes all and any who are seeking the Ancient truths, either as visitors or to its membership.

To ensure their efficacy to the worshipper, the administration of all sacramental rites is guarded with the most zealous care. It has preserved an Episcopal succession that is valid, as understood throughout the whole of those Churches in Christendom that retain the Apostolic Succession as a tenet of their faith.

The clergy of the Church, in common with the priesthood of other Churches, hold Christ's commission to teach (Matthew 28: 18-20), but claim no authority over the individual conscience. Stress is laid upon their function as ministers of the Divine Sacraments, stewards of the "Mysteries of God", ready to place themselves in all ways reasonable at the disposal of those who ask for their help, and as they have all freely received, so shall they freely give.

Candidates are admitted to the Church by Baptism or (if that has been previously duly performed) then by Confirmation. If the candidate has received both Baptism and Confirmation, a simple form of admission is used, in which a blessing is invoked on the religious aspirations of the person.

Relation to Other Churches:

The whole of Christ's Church consists of "the blessed company of all faithful people". This Church seeks to work in amity with all other Christian denominations. It has no wish to proselytise and welcomes all to regular and full participation in its services, without asking or expecting them to leave their own church. On the other hand, if members of other churches are attracted by the distinctive features of its work, they are invited to join.

Healing:

Special attention is given to spiritual healing, although it is not claimed that the power to heal is conferred at Ordination. The revivifying power of the Holy Spirit, together with the grace of Absolution, the Sacred Oil for the Sick, and the Sacrament of Holy Communion are means of grace immeasurable.

Ethics:

The Church believes that as a system of ethics, philosophy, and worship, Christianity was intended chiefly to help mankind grow into the love of Christ, and in so doing, to solve the many difficulties that beset the way of human fellowship, that fellowship which is the cornerstone of a truly religious life. The Church strives to inspire its members with a love for humanity and their desire to serve their fellows.

Confession:

Auricular confession is entirely optional and is not required as a preliminary to the reception of Holy Communion. The Church offers the Sacrament of Absolution following confession whether by the auricular method or in public services. Such Absolution, the Church believes, brings a person once more into harmony with God.

Celibacy:

The Church neither enjoins nor forbids the marriage of its clergy.

Finance:

No fee may be exacted for the administering of any of the Sacraments or for any other spiritual work.

Politics:

The Church does not, as a Body, enter into day-to-day civil politics; however, it does not preclude its members from exercising their lawful civil rights to speak and to engage, as long as it is understood that such is done as an individual and not on behalf of the Church..