

Brief Guide Statement Revision on the Nature of God:

[We believe ...] In the one true God, the Creator and Lord of all things, who lives eternally as the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, each distinct and fully divine.

This brief guide provides a concise rationale for the details of the proposed statement on the nature of God. Note that, in employing human language to speak of God, our terms are analogical at best, even as we strive for accuracy. We are not so much “defining God” as attempting to draw useful boundaries between speaking truly and speaking falsely of God, in service of the greater calling to worship him in spirit and in truth. This statement is intended to affirm orthodox Christian doctrine in line with the historic confession of the Christian church, while being sensitive to ACOP history.

In the one true God – By eliminating “the eternal existence,” we affirm belief “in God” directly rather than belief “in the ... existence.” Grammatically, the latter seems to limit our belief to the intellectual aspect, while the proposed statement allows for spiritual and relational nuances. By affirming “one ... God,” we adhere uncompromisingly to the biblical and traditional affirmation of monotheism against the error of tritheism or polytheism.

True – While non-Christians may speak of other “gods” or multiple “gods,” we affirm in keeping with the principle of monotheism that there is only one *true* God and all other “gods” are false.

- We have chosen to omit such modifiers as “holy,” “powerful,” etc. Including such modifiers in the opening subject—e.g. “one holy God”—compromises the statement by leaving open the possibility that there may be other “gods” in existence who are not “holy,” for instance.
- Although we could have added a sentence stating divine attributes, we chose to keep the statement as simple as possible in keeping with previous ACOP statements.

Creator and Lord of all things – This identifies God’s unique position in reference to the whole of reality. He is the *source, rightful authority, and sovereign ruler* of all that is. This further affirms monotheism in contrast to the precarious and divided rulership of the gods in polytheistic worldviews.

Who lives – Describing God as one who “lives” adheres more closely to biblical language than the term “exists,” while also including the latter meaning. God is the living one and the source of all life.

Eternally – This designates God’s unbounded nature with respect to time and grammatically points back to “lives” and forward to the Trinity, specifying both as eternal.

As the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit – This connects back to “lives eternally,” showing that these three are not simply different ways God has revealed Himself over time, but reflect how God has always been and how He relates within His own being.

Each distinct – The affirmation means, at minimum, that these three are not interchangeable. E.g., while we can say that “the Father sent the Son,” we cannot say that “the Son sent the Father,” or that “the Spirit poured out the Father,” etc. Without using the sometimes-problematic term “persons,” it nevertheless affirms that the Father, the Son, and the Spirit are distinct and not manifestations of one and the same person. It also avoids the term “separate” because the three live in perfect union as one God, without separation. This distinction of persons stands with the initial “one true God” phrase, guarding against both modalism and tritheism.

And fully divine – This affirms that the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit are each fully God, not less than one another, but sharing equally in the one true God.