

Statement of Faith

As I continue to wrestle with the questions “Who are you, God?” and “Who am I, God?” like my spiritual ancestors Jacob and Francis, I present this statement as a snapshot of a faith that is always reforming and evolving.

In the beginning was our Triune God, traditionally named as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. These three Persons of one Being are in eternal relationship to and for one another and demonstrate for humanity the life-giving ways intended for all creation. God is life itself, the ground of being, goodness, grace, love, and mercy. God is all-powerful yet mysteriously self-limiting and vulnerable in the ways God is revealed. The beauty, immensity, and diversity of creation highlights the patience and presence of the One whose steadfast love endures forever; a love which believes all things, hopes all things, and endures all things, a love that will never let us go.

In the fullness of time, the eternal Christ became fully human and dwelled among us. This God-man is known to us as Jesus of Nazareth. In his earthly life and ministry he shows us a dynamic God-centered life grounded in love of God, other, and self. He knew the pain and joy of being fully human and lived in constant awareness and responsiveness to the movements and invitations of God in his midst. A faithful Jew, he shows us the fulfillment of the Law of Moses through inclusivity and radical dependence on God’s mercy. Because Jesus trusted in the power of love with and for the other rather than the power of control over the other, various secular and religious groups within the community felt threatened by him. This ultimately led to his betrayal, arrest, torture, and criminal’s death on a cross. Through the ordeal he remained faithful to his Father’s ways and forgave the perpetrators and bystanders for their ignorance, enabling, and participation. Death did not have the final word, God has the final word and that is life. Christ is raised from the dead and his followers participate in the same Spirit which animates all of life.

The Holy Spirit is indeed the giver of life, available to us, working within each of us, blessing the space between us, empowering us to will and to act in accordance with the good intentions of our Triune God. We recognize the Spirit’s presence by the fruit our words and works produce, bringing about the reign of Christ in ways that are both subtle and strong. Community is where we live out our faith by the power of the Holy Spirit and our church community practices the sacraments of Baptism and the Lord’s Supper for the blessing and building up of the community. We are claimed as God’s children in the waters of Baptism, cleansed of sin and pronounced beloved, thus assuring our core identity as belonging to God. The Lord’s Supper is a frequent reminder and seal of our faith that we are the body and blood of Christ, nourished by God’s grace, and blessed to be a blessing to the world. At the font and table, the Spirit equips us to be the loving hands and feet, eyes and ears of Christ in the world where we care for the imprisoned, impoverished, and oppressed to the glory of God. As we carry out that ministry to “the least of these,” we encounter the Christ in surprising, inspiring ways and I humbly acknowledge the Spirit blows where she wills and can be reflected in all things yet contained by no thing.

Personal Information Form Questions

1. *Describe a moment in your recent ministry that you recognize as one of success and fulfillment.*

At the end of 2019 I was asked to work with Christ Presbyterian Church (CPC) as part of an Administrative Commission. It was a difficult and painful time for the congregation as the pastor first reduced his hours from full-time to part-time then eventually left, the organist resigned, and the church ultimately closed. On the surface that would seem neither successful nor fulfilling yet it highlights the connectional nature of our church in that a group of folks came to walk alongside CPC to help them discern how and where God was leading their legacy. Trusting relationships were built, each person brought tremendous giftedness to the benefit of the community, and there was a clear sense of the Holy Spirit guiding us through this darkest valley. CPC Elders were faithful to their calling and truth was spoken in love many times. The work culminated in the church's 150-year celebration, which would also be its last worship service. It included a remembrance of baptism involving the cherished baptismal font sculpted in the likeness of a young member who tragically lost his life and celebration of the Lord's Supper. CPC donated the building and land to a local youth ministry to continue the mission of God through that place. The baptismal font was moved to another local church which had ties to that same family. For me it was fulfilling to behold the ways God works in and through community - we had what we needed when we needed it and each person brought diligence and love to the work.

2. *Describe the ministry setting to which you believe God is calling you.*

The first word that comes to mind when I consider this question is "collaboration." I believe God is calling me to a place of service where I bring my gifts and experience alongside each person in their own giftedness and experience to work together for the ministry and mission to which God is calling the community. This quality can be held in a variety of settings - small churches, large churches, educational institutions, health care facilities, etc. I am eager to work with a group of people who are actively seeking God's presence and calling in their midst in order to join in the work of nurturing and cultivating the seeds of faith being sown by the Sower. For years I have served outside the bounds of the Presbytery and I am now feeling called to return to the PC(USA). In doing so, I do not leave my ecumenical experience or relationships behind, but anticipate integrating them and fostering them in new ways within this new context. We have many things in common with our ecumenical partners and can learn from and support one another as we navigate through this time of transition in our churches.

3. *What areas of growth have you identified in yourself?*

Two long-term growing edges for me are becoming a loving, nonjudgmental presence and facilitating difficult conversations. Any actualized growth in those areas is first and foremost by the grace of God. Prayer practices reveal to me the many aspects of life that are alive within me

and others yet help me realize God likewise knows and has infinite compassion for and understanding of all those things. I delved into spiritual formation through Oasis Ministries and earned a certificate in Spiritual Direction. That work opened my heart and mind to experience life in the Spirit more deeply. Over the years I have learned various tools that help with the tasks of self-differentiation and honest, open conversation including Nonviolent Communication and Circles of Trust. Emotions can be powerful and intimidating yet they can also be instructive as they indicate a person's or group's needs that are either being met or not met in a given situation. Helping people (myself included!) name the need behind the feeling has been tremendously helpful in integrating heart and mind in conflicts, facilitating respectful conversation and eventually leading to a Spirit-led resolution.

4. *Describe a time when you have led change.*

When I was serving as Director of Chaplaincy at the local hospital, I served not only in the hospital and rehabilitation facility, but also within in the context of hospice services for off-site patients. Though I enjoyed the variety of settings and patient/family interactions, I soon recognized the hospice patients would be better served by a dedicated chaplain. I worked with Human Resources and the Director of Home Health and Hospice to create a part-time position, recruit for that position, and help train the successful candidate. I don't recall any resistance to this proposal so I either layed out the rationale adequately or it was so obviously a beneficial idea that it was an "easy sell." I do recall the initial part-time chaplain was not in the position long because they encountered some difficulty with the documentation requirements yet overall I am proud of the implementation of that idea and hope it served the patients and their families well.