

**Melodie Long****Statement of Faith:**

To affirm my faith in words is humbling, knowing that all language is inadequate to express relationship with God. I believe in the God who crafted creation in all its wonderful complexity with the breath of living grace. I believe in the God who called forth the vast expanse of the starry heavens and the surprises of the oceans' dark depths. I believe in the God who forms and shapes humanity as partners and co-creators in all life. All that God has done, is, and will be finds its center in the deep desire for relationship with all creation. The dance of God reaching out in loving grace with our own hunger to find our place in God is the core of my faith. How do I as an individual, how do we as God's partners in faith, find our way to God's own heart?

Through the stories of the people of God as revealed to us in the Scriptures, God becomes known to us as One of hopeful promise inviting us to join the eternal journey to oneness with God and with one another. Through the complexities of the texts with all its history and rich nuances of language and culture, I have learned that God is more than a history lesson, that belief is more than expression of words, that faith is only real when it takes the form of action.

With the comforting and challenging knowledge that relationship with God is always more than what I can contain, I can humbly take my place alongside all humanity in this holy quest to find God and let God's love live in and through me. Though I stumble, though I fall, though I try to ignore the call, God's grace continues to beckon me, holding me and believing that I can be more than I am.

In the person of Jesus of Nazareth, I can see that this new life is indeed possible. When the Word became flesh and lived among us, when God entered the messy reality of living, it is then the covenant came to life. While I hold on to the mystery of resurrection, it is Jesus' life that holds my heart. God dared to become one of us and embraced the full experience of humanity so that we might all know what it means to live as God's own. Yet faith is never a one-on-one experience, for we can only fully know God when we intertwine our lives with one another and with a greater purpose beyond ourselves. When the Spirit breathed over the early clouds of creation, the Church as the Body of God began to emerge from the chaos offering us the only home in which we can truly find ourselves. The Church is beyond our denominational organizations with their rules and hierarchies to be the way by which God's love, grace, justice, and peace become reality in this broken and glorious world. Yes, we are part of the Church and often even important tools of it, but God's Church is so much more. It is wherever God's presence becomes known. With the firm and certain knowledge of that faith planted deep in my soul, I can then dare live in joyful and grateful humility as one whom God cherishes, as part of God's beautiful and wondrous creation.