

Statement of Faith and Practice
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I believe that God is love.

I believe in God as creator, redeemer and sustainer in the form of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. God's creation is good and God's grace is perfect and precious. It is in the person of Christ, Lord and Savior, somehow fully human and fully divine, that God knows us all in our suffering, loving, joy and sorrow.

We are created in the image of God in that we are created as a community, reflecting the Trinity, as men and women and children in all kinds of relationships, and, most importantly, in the image of the love upon which this community in Christ is founded. The knowledge of God comes through the Word in Scripture. The transformational power of the Word is miraculous and strong due to its truth and the ability of that truth to be witnessed to and applied to human life throughout history and our understanding of the context.

By God's grace we are justified. Through our faith in the Word and the work of the Holy Spirit in bringing us to an awareness of the community in Christ, we can surrender to God and be sanctified. This act of surrender is the seat of our emancipation. I believe that human freedom exists when our will aligns perfectly with God's will for us. Christian freedom is couched only in the paradox of complete and utter giving over of oneself to God. The fruits of Christian freedom are self-knowledge and the continued in-breaking of God's realm into the world as we struggle with transformed hearts to love God and to love our neighbors as we love ourselves.

I believe that my faith changes as my understanding changes - "I believe, help my unbelief". Increased knowledge and experience add color and texture to my beliefs. Spiritual practices, such as prayer and Bible study, add depth and mystery. The celebration of the sacraments of baptism and the Lord's Supper continually reaffirms to us God's promises and covenant. To be engrafted into the body of Christ through baptism and reminded of Christ's ongoing work of redemption in communion acknowledges Christ's living presence within his Church. All of these practices are important in the development of the heart and spirit and mind in coming to embrace and discover a personal theology and vocation. This growth is dependent upon the Church for nurture, guidance and authority.

I have a need, as a Christian, to share my vocation, my faith, my love and my fears with others in discipling relationships - those in which we learn to see the face of Christ in each other. I have a need to offer prayer and praise and tears of joy and sorrow in solidarity with others. The Church, as a collective manifestation of individual faith, is called to listen for the whispers and cries of the Spirit. It is the Spirit which pulls us all into a community that can work towards the realization of God's realm - a world that protects the weak and cares for those who need healing and fosters the kind of love that allows people to become who God created them to be.

I believe that it is only through our mutual interpretation of the Word and Spirit that we can accomplish the work for which Christ died. This work is helped greatly by the Presbyterian system of order and governance. We are indeed one, and our connectional nature is expressed and manifested in our polity. Through the various parts of the denominational structure, we can also continually review and question the work and witness of the Church throughout history to make certain that it is conforming to the Gospel as well as we can discern - even if this makes us uncomfortable. When sin is uncovered, we need to confess, repent and make reparations for this sin, both individually and corporately.

Our faith calls us to open our eyes and use our voices to express doubt, too. We can do this because of the incredible gift of faith that comes with our surrender to God. This faith is firm and certain because it is faith in a God who loves us so much that there is nothing we can do to make God love us any more or any less. There is no place for us to go that is so low that Christ can not raise us up. There is no silence that the Spirit can not fill with an irresistible call.

I trust in my Redeemer.