

Lynn Barger Elliott

## Statement of Faith

I place my hope in a God who created, recreates and sustains Life. In the flight of a blue heron, the fleeting blossom of an hibiscus, the delicate design of ecosystems and galaxies, I glimpse God's magnificent artistry. In a parent displacing a family in search of a safer life, the regenerated nerves of a stroke survivor who I visit in the hospital, and the joy of watching my children run on a lacrosse field, I marvel at the courage, vitality, and joy of human life created in the image of God.

I place my hope in Jesus the Christ, fully God and fully human, who models how we are to love God and our neighbor as ourselves. In His death, we are shown the extremes to which human beings will go to destroy God's presence in their very midst. When Jesus walked out of the tomb, we were assured death is not the ending of life, but rather that there is no place we can go, and nothing we can do, that God cannot restore us to new life.

I place my hope in the Holy Spirit who Jesus called the teacher, comforter and guide to truth. As we open our spirit to the Holy Spirit, we move in sync with all that is holy in our world. We can be stirred to an awareness of our own calling and inspired to proclaim the gospel: the good news of the reality, teachings and promises of Jesus Christ. Through shouts and whispers, the Spirit unites believers in a vision of peace and justice for all.

I place my hope in the Church as the place where all are welcomed to train and to prepare to become the body of Christ - the heart that feels the pain of the marginalized, the ears that discern the stories of hope in an often hopeless world, the hands that extend peace to the anxious, the feet that stand firmly before those who propagate injustice, and the mouths that teach the laws and parables of God.

I place my hope in the sacraments that ask us to walk in Jesus' footsteps as we are baptized and to begin our journey towards righteousness as we find our place around the Passover table alongside the disciples. As infants are baptized, we affirm the belief we belong to God long before we have the capacity to grasp or act on this truth. As we pass the cup and the bread, we are reminded to make a place for all whom Jesus extended his touch and compassion: the stranger and the sinner, the broken and the afflicted, the powerful and the powerless.

I place my hope in scripture which chronicles the power of God's recreating love, the call of living our lives for Christ, and the revelation of the movements of the Spirit in our world.

As I seek to serve Jesus Christ and the Church, I place my hope in His promise to extend gifts and abilities to all who follow Him and to receive my faults in grace, so that I may love the Lord with all my heart, with all my soul and with all my mind...and to love my neighbor as myself.

Mark Barger Elliott

## Statement of Faith

I believe God created the universe and intended it to exist in harmony and peace. Planets observed through a telescope, atoms measured through a microscope, mountains climbed at sunset and the rustle of trees in autumn, all testify to the majesty and wonder of God. Made in God's image, human beings are called to learn how to love their Creator and their neighbor as themselves.

God's intended harmony and peace for all creation was broken by humanity's desire to rebel against God's plan and to seek pleasure instead of service, advantage rather than sacrifice, and grievance over forgiveness. This rebellion is called sin and yet, amazingly, God responds to our misguided actions with mercy and an offer to reconcile through repentance. This gift is called grace and through it we are granted the opportunity to respond with faith, gratitude, and to live as disciples of Jesus Christ.

I believe that God revealed God's self to the world in the actions, words and touch of Jesus Christ. Fully God, fully human, Jesus is a living example of God's steadfast love towards all of creation from lilies in the field to the most marginalized in society. On the cross, Christ died and bore our sins. In the resurrection, Christ released us from the power of sin and death. Through our acceptance of Christ's divinity, we become a new creation invited to live an abundant life.

I believe in the Holy Spirit, the giver and renewer of life. The Spirit empowers us to work with God in restoring creation in both word and deed. The Spirit enables us to pray, to interpret the scriptures as well as proclaim the good news of Jesus Christ. The Spirit comforts us in our failures, restores us when we are weary, and guides us in the work of reconciliation. I trust in one triune God whom I worship and serve in my life and ministry.

I believe in the authority of scripture, the revealed word of God, inspired by the Holy Spirit, yet bearing the fingerprints of human authors. Through our study of the Old and New Testaments we engage with a living Word that offers guidance and instruction in how to lead our lives.

I believe in an inclusive, united church, which worships, serves and proclaims Jesus Christ. The mission of the church is to be God's instrument in the world, praying for and enabling reconciliation and healing. The church administers the sacraments, signs and seals of God's promises to us. In baptism we are initiated into the family of God and reminded how God continually reaches out to us even before we are conscious of God's presence. By sharing in communion, we remember and give thanks for the life and sacrifice of Jesus Christ and are nurtured and strengthened in our journey of faith. Today, we boldly proclaim "Christ is Lord" and pray, "Come, Lord Jesus." When Christ returns, the Kingdom of God will be made visible and we will participate in a new heaven and a new earth.