

**STATEMENT OF FAITH**  
**The Rev. Robert C. Foltz-Morrison**

*For it is through faith that you are a child of God in union with Christ Jesus.  
For you were baptized into union with Christ and so have taken upon yourselves  
the qualities of Christ. Galatians 3.26-27*

I believe in one eternal God whose creative power brought life into existence. God's purpose for humanity is to live in harmony with God, our neighbors, and the created order. We are free to pursue that harmony or destroy it. The Scriptures of the Old and New Testament describe God, responses of human beings to God, redemptive acts of God to heal and renew, and visions of a future with God. These Scriptures guide my faith and living.

I believe Jesus of Nazareth incarnates God in human form--Word made flesh. Jesus shows us what human life born of God can do and be. Yet taking upon himself the evil of the world in his death, accomplishes a breadth of reconciliation with God none of us is capable of doing. In raising Jesus from death to life, God confirms the validity of his message and his mission. Christ invites us into the community of his followers who manifest his qualities in our lives. Though we are not spared the experience of suffering, evil, and death, we are given the hope of life eternally lived in God's presence. Nothing—not even death—can separate us from the love of God in the Savior in whom we place our trust.

I believe the Holy Spirit makes real what God has done and Christ embodies. The Spirit speaks through Scripture and songs of faith, in prayers and praise to God, amid the cries of the world and within compassionate and just responses. With diverse gifts, the Spirit empowers people to serve God's purposes, breaking down the divisive barriers among races, genders, peoples, and nations, creating communion with God and humanity.

I believe baptism is a sign that we are marked as God's own forever. The act of baptism confirms God's promises that we are participants in Christ's death and resurrection. Even when we are faithless, God remains faithful. The waters of our baptism help us to visualize the healing grace of God as we appropriate our baptism to the entirety of our lives. The Spirit of God given to us and the church prod us toward deeper maturity of faith, hope, and love.

I believe communion around the table of Jesus Christ encourages us to hunger and thirst for the gifts of God. God has blessed us beyond our deserving. The bread and cup Jesus held, and of which we partake, are signs of God's redemption hope. They symbolize the extent to which Christ loves the world and gives his life for it. The presence of the risen Christ at the table encourages us to depend upon his life to sustain ours. His invitation calls us to examine who is welcome in God's realm.

I believe the mission of the church is to engage people with the God in whom we believe. The church celebrates the mighty acts of God. The church invites people into relationship with Christ and his followers. The church supports and gives voice to those who are weak and suffering. The church calls for the world to demonstrate God's love and mercy, justice and peace. The church follows the example of Christ even at risk of its own life. *Ecclesia reformata, semper reformanda secundum verbum Dei.*

I believe my calling as a Presbyterian minister is to embody and extend the grace of Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit to persons, practices, and policies within the world over which God is sovereign.

## **Some Biographical Notes Robert Foltz-Morrison**

My call to Christian ministry first came from the encouragement of a pastor while I was a high school student living in the Panama Canal Zone (now, the Republic of Panama). Though I had been baptized in a Presbyterian Church in New Jersey where I was born and attended another in Miami, Florida where we lived for four years, there were no Presbyterian churches in Panama. My early Christian self-identity has largely been shaped through my participation in an inter-denominational Union church our family attended Sunday morning and a non-denominational Bible church my friends attended Sunday evening.

I returned to the United States to attend Davidson College (NC), remaining active in a campus Christian fellowship and a friendly Methodist church. Following graduation, I chose then to come under care of Mecklenburg Presbytery while I served a PC,US (southern stream) church in Charlotte as a youth minister for a year before entering Princeton Theological Seminary. My first call came in a UPC,USA (northern stream) church in the Bronx. A year later the two streams merged as the PC (USA). I married another Princeton seminarian and she, also, began her ministry in the New York City metro area.

Eleven years and two children later, my second call took all of us to a suburb of Minneapolis as an associate pastor, then to St. Paul, MN as an interim associate pastor in a large church. As the interim ended, the Presbytery of Elizabeth inquired whether I would like to come to New Jersey as its executive presbyter--a ministry path I had expressed interest on my Personal Information Form. A conversation led to a call and another eleven years serving 50 congregations with 14,000 members and all the administrative joys and challenges of a leading a middle governing body into the 21<sup>st</sup> century and a new post-911 era.

With my young adult sons in college, I chose to return two years ago to serving a single congregation as an interim pastor in a typical Presbyterian congregation with enormous challenges. I came to re-appreciate the resiliency required of local communities of faith and their leaders.

As a life-long learner that decided to head to Hartford Seminary to pursue further studies a few years ago, I hope to complete my Doctor of Ministry this year with a project that has been focused on peer learning among pastors the past year.

I look forward to the mission God has called me to here and the partners with whom I will serve in ministry.

Drew Paton  
02.16.11

### **Statement of Faith:**

At the core of my personal faith and my commitment to ministry lies the conviction that God loves and values each human being individually, uniquely, unconditionally, and totally, in spite of sin and without regard for merit. In the kingdom of God all people are defined first and foremost by God's love for them as expressed in the life, death and resurrection of our Lord, Jesus Christ. God's salvific love, revealed to us and made manifest in Jesus Christ and experienced by us in faith, can neither be earned nor caused to be revoked. The value, dignity and sacredness of human life are established for all time in Christ by God's fierce and irrevocable love for us. Grace is granted to us, as Calvin wrote, out of "the wellspring of God's free mercy."<sup>1</sup>

I believe in one Triune God, who created this vast and beautiful universe and all that it contains and called it good. Human beings, like all of creation, were made good by God but not perfect. God entrusted us with free will.<sup>2</sup> We are free to choose goodness and that which leads to life but also free to commit sin – to refuse God's love for us. We stray from God and from God's purpose and obscure or deny our deepest, truest essence which God called and still calls good. Our persistent, innate tendency towards sin estranges us from God, ourselves, and one another, but there is hope because God seeks always to reconcile with us. Christ gave his life on the cross for all of us and sought in life and death to reconcile us with God and one another.<sup>3</sup> Though we remain estranged in one sense because of our inevitable sin and though we experience this estrangement as real, we are assured by the apostle Paul that (paradoxically) nothing in this world or in the next can ever truly "separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord," and by the psalmist that whether we "ascend to heaven" or make our beds in Sheol, God is there with us.<sup>4</sup> God promises that we will never be left alone and because of God's action in Christ, sin, suffering, and death will never have the last word for us. The last word is one of hope and new life and it belongs to God. It is our task as Christians to share this word with the world in whatever ways we can – preaching the gospel everywhere we go (and even using words when necessary).<sup>5</sup>

Our knowledge about God and God's purpose is based in scripture, which is the "unique and authoritative witness to Jesus Christ in the Church universal"<sup>6</sup> and which holds the Word of God; and in the life and ministry of Jesus Christ, the living Word, who is head of the church. The life and mission of the church is structured around and in response to the Word, as we understand it by faith and reason, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, which goes ahead of us into the world, moves alongside us, and follows behind us.

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<sup>1</sup> Institutes III.xxi.1

<sup>2</sup> Galatians 5:13

<sup>3</sup> Romans 5:6-9, 1 John 2:2, 1 Timothy 2:6

<sup>4</sup> Romans 8:35-39, Psalm 139

<sup>5</sup> Attributed (perhaps incorrectly) to St. Francis of Assisi

<sup>6</sup> BOO W-4.4003

Though no longer with us in body the resurrected Christ continues to reign and watch over us. The church is called into existence by God in Christ and guided by the Holy Spirit to proclaim the good news, to serve God's people, to give full expression to diversity, to seek tirelessly the flourishing of humanity and the health and wholeness of the world, to worship and give thanks to God, to preserve the truth, to promote social, political and economic righteousness, and to witness to the kingdom of God which is already and not yet, which is still coming and which is already breaking through.<sup>7</sup>

Our two sacraments, Baptism and the Lord's Supper, are outward signs of the inward reality of God's grace which sustains us as we endeavor to fulfill these responsibilities. Through baptism we are sealed in God's promise of grace, welcomed into the body of Christ and "marked for service."<sup>8</sup> When we partake of the Lord's Supper we remember the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ and are nourished and empowered to follow him.

I believe that it is our primary charge and paramount aim to love and serve God and I believe that this is best done by diligently serving and courageously loving one another.<sup>9</sup> We have many diverse gifts - all of them valuable, each of them required. Each of us is called to something and we all need each other. We are bound together by our interdependence, by "the presence and power of the Holy Spirit," and by our acceptance of God's loving grace.<sup>10</sup> The kingdom of God is realized in part through the realization and living out of this relationship.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> BOO G-1.0200

<sup>8</sup> BOO W - 1.3033 (2)

<sup>9</sup> Matthew 25:34-40

<sup>10</sup> BOO G-3.0103

<sup>11</sup> I Corinthians 12

**Drew Paton** grew up in Irvington, NY, a small suburb of New York City on the banks of the Hudson River. He studied theatre at SUNY Albany and then completed his B.A. in that field at Hunter College in Manhattan, but something else was tugging at his heart. Shortly after graduating Paton accepted a job as Program Coordinator for Bridges to Community and moved to Nicaragua. There he led numerous service-learning immersion trips and collaborated with impoverished communities and volunteer groups from the U.S. to implement sustainable programs to address dire poverty. After two transformational and deeply moving years in Nicaragua he returned to NYC and enrolled in the MDiv program at Union Theological Seminary. Paton completed his divinity degree and became a candidate for ordination in the PCUSA in 2009. He now serves as Pastoral Associate at Jan Hus Presbyterian Church on Manhattan's Upper East Side. In his role there he ministers to the homeless members of the community, responding to their spiritual, emotional and material needs and advocating on their behalf for shelter, healthcare, job-training and other services. Throughout his time at Jan Hus and especially when the church was without a pastor he has frequently been called upon to preach, plan and lead worship, conduct bible studies, and provide pastoral care. He is presently seeking his first formal call in the Presbyterian Church USA.