

## Statement of Faith

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I believe in a **creating God**, the one Jesus called Abba, God beyond us, beyond all that is. The Creator made people and the world and called them good. Each of us is made in the image and likeness of God and each of us is a face of God in the world to be tenderly treasured. We were created to live in loving relationships with God and each other, to live responsibly and in harmony with the rest of God's creatures and with the earth. However, we live in a world where relationships are not always good and beautiful. Sin indicates a violation of relationships, resulting in a state of alienation from God, one another, and ourselves. While we ourselves have fallen short of God's intention and blurred God's gracious image, in such times we ask for forgiveness, we trust in God's mercy, and we rededicate ourselves to the vision of redemption upon which our faith is founded.

I believe in a **redeeming God**, Jesus Christ, God among us, the God who became flesh and dwelled among us. In merciful response to our sin, God became incarnate in Jesus Christ—fully human, fully divine. Throughout his life Jesus proclaimed God's love and demonstrated how to live in response to this good news. Jesus came into the world bearing a message of reconciliation, inviting us to discard our divisions and find new unity in a new society. Each of us has opportunities every day to share the love of Christ with someone else—within our family and friendships, within a community, within the church.

I believe in a **sustaining God**, the Holy Spirit, the God who is within us, the God intimately present in our lives. The indwelling God is a living, breathing, moving, energizing presence of boundless love and compassion. The Spirit binds us to one another and directs us toward the reconciling work of God.

I believe the Spirit was at work in the lives of those who first recorded the story of God's people. **Scripture** is the historical narrative and poetry that is the unique and authoritative witness to Jesus Christ. Analysis, interpretation, and application of Scripture are both privilege and responsibility. I envision the sermon as shared story where a place is made for each of our stories to make contact with and to be integrated into the stories of the Bible and of other people. Faithful preaching connects the human story with The Story.

I believe the context of pastoral ministry is the ordinary. **Pastoral care** involves being attentive to, immersed in, and appreciative of the everyday texture of people's lives. The pastor's role in the spiritual nurture of the congregation guides my practice of ministry. By connecting my own questions, struggles, doubts, fears, and experiences in what faith is about I enter with others into the search for truth and meaning. By telling my own stories of faith I encourage others to share their own struggles and experiences of faith.

I believe the **church** is a baptized community called to respond to God's grace by distributing the necessities of life to others. The church's mission is to help create a community of reconciliation and the realm of God on earth as mandated by Jesus Christ. We are drawn together in the love of God and sent forth to be reconcilers to a world that is broken and oppressed by prejudices and injustice.

I believe the **sacraments**, the celebrations of the church, are visible signs of invisible grace. In **baptism**, children of believers and adult believers are brought into the nurture and community of the church. Baptism is God's blessing, a conferring of Christian identity, and entry into a covenant community. Baptized children are raised in the knowledge of Christ, that they may come to a decision of faith in maturity. Baptism acknowledges our intention to live as God's people and to be active members in Christ's body, the community of faith. Baptism calls us to care for others. In **communion** we are joined with the church universal through all ages as we experience the presence of Christ in the symbols of bread and wine. The Eucharist celebration recalls Christ's sacrifice, the wonder and promise of Christ's resurrection for our salvation and for the redemption of all humanity, and Christ's continuing presence. Believers are nurtured and empowered by communion with Christ and his body, the church. Communion shared within our faith community reminds us that in all of life, the Christ is with us to bring hope and healing to God's world.