

## Statement of Faith

I believe in the triune God who is the Creator and Sustainer of all. God formed a good and perfect creation out of the formless void and in this creation we see the majesty and mystery of God. This good and eternal God then created humanity in God's own image. Sin entered the world through humanity's disobedience, thereby creating a rift between God and humanity. Through humanity's sin, all of creation fell. In the fall we not only see God's attributes of holiness, justice and righteousness displayed, we also see God's love and mercy in the continual pursuit of humanity through covenant. All of these attributes of God are most clearly seen in the second member of the Trinity Jesus the Christ, whom God sent to bridge the gap and put humanity back in right standing with the almighty Creator.

I believe in Jesus Christ, the Son of God and the Redeemer of all creation who is one with and equal to God. Jesus was fully human and fully God. Through Jesus' life we see the love of God expressed as he preached, as he taught and as he healed the sick and brought hope to the downtrodden. In his life Jesus was tempted in every way yet he did not sin. I believe Jesus became the mediator between God and humanity and fulfilled the roles of prophet, priest and king. As prophet, Jesus spoke about his coming death and resurrection (Matt 16:21-28, Mark 8:31-9:1, and Luke 9:21-22). He also revealed God's will for our salvation and prophesied about the coming judgment (Matt 25:31-46). As priest Jesus Christ offered his life, willingly, as the perfect sacrifice, satisfying the wrath of God toward sin while also providing for the forgiveness of sins through his death on the cross (Heb 9:11-14). Also, as priest, Christ Jesus lives to intercede for us (Rom 8:34). As a king the resurrected Jesus now reigns victoriously over sin and death and he will come again to judge the living and the dead. He will return again victoriously, establishing a reign and a kingdom that will have no end (Rev 19).

I believe in the Holy Spirit, the Sustainer, who is one with God the Creator and the Redeemer, equal in power and glory. The Holy Spirit is the Lord the giver of life. The Holy Spirit regenerates, transforms, and sanctifies the followers of Jesus Christ, while giving us strength, comfort, guidance and peace through all the stages of life. As the Holy Spirit works in our lives the Spirit produces fruit (Gal 5:22-23) and gives each of us spiritual gifts to build up the body of Christ (I Cor. 12:1-11 and Rom 12:4-8). The Holy Spirit also illuminates the reading and hearing of the Word of God.

I believe the Holy Scriptures to be inspired by God. The canonical scriptures of the Old and New Testaments are the authoritative Word of God. They are useful for instruction, correction, and training in righteousness (2 Tim 3:16). The scriptures reveal the nature, identity and attributes of God.

I believe the Church is the body of Christ and Jesus is its head. The Church includes all believers, past, present and future who have been regenerated and redeemed by Christ Jesus. The Church has been commissioned by Christ Jesus to reach people throughout the world with the good news of the gospel. Its work is to make disciples, baptize people, work for justice and peace in society and observe all that Jesus commands us to do (Matt 28:18-20). To carry out its commission Jesus equips the Church, through the power of the Holy Spirit, to preach, teach, worship, pray, and celebrate the sacraments of baptism and the Lord's Supper.

I believe in two sacraments: Baptism and the Lord's Supper. These sacraments serve as visible reminders of the grace of God. In Baptism we are reminded that our sins have been washed away by the blood of Jesus through the power of the Holy Spirit. In this sacrament a believer is adopted into the family of God by the power of the Holy Spirit, signifying that the believer now belongs – body and soul, in life and in death – to Jesus Christ.

In the Lord's Supper all believers are made one with Jesus through the Holy Spirit and our souls are nourished unto everlasting life. In this sacred meal we are reminded of the body of Christ that was broken for us and his blood that was shed to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. In this meal we are reconciled both to God and to one another and we are empowered to go into our world to proclaim the good news and to be about the work that we have been called as the church.

## Faith Journey

My life has been one that has been both blessed and influenced by a tremendous religious heritage. Though I have always been either a member or attendee of a church within the Ohio Valley Presbytery I have still been blessed to experience a wide variety of worship styles within the Christian tradition. I was born into the Presbyterian Church to a father who has been a minister of Word and Sacrament for 38 years and counting. On my mother's side I am a seventh generation Presbyterian and therefore I come by this faith tradition naturally.

Like many children of the church I grew up without fully engaging my faith. I went through the motions so to speak, attending church regularly, (as if I had a choice), praying and even reading the Bible off and on, but I had developed a belief system that was void of relationship. Yet the older I got the more my faith began to grow and deepen into a personal relationship with Jesus. This spiritual growth can be attributed to a number of influences in my life. One of which is my parents who provided a powerful spiritual foundation from which to grow on. Secondly, I began attending a private Catholic School in sixth grade and was required to attend mass twice a week. Along with that experience we devoted a small portion of our school day to devotions. In this time we discussed various matters of the faith that were particularly relevant to 11 and 12 year olds. A third major influence to my spiritual development took place when I transferred to a nondenominational Christian school operated by a Charismatic Southern Baptist Church. I attended this school from seventh grade on. It was during this time that my faith began to grow and flourish. For the first time I found myself in an environment with people my own age who were tremendously passionate about their faith in God. My experience here got me thinking about my own lack luster walk of faith, so I began praying more and reading my Bible more and I even started attending a small group at my home church without my parents. Slowly, I was beginning to take ownership of my faith.

My relationship with Jesus continued to grow throughout high school and during my junior year, at the age of 17, I sensed a call to the ministry. This was something I did not particular want at this point in my life. Even though growing up as a "PK" was a wonderful experience for me, ordained ministry was not something I desired for myself. I had other plans and dreams I wanted to pursue. Yet as I moved through my senior year I became more and more convinced that God was calling me into the ministry. Because of this I began thinking differently about college. I knew ministry was where God was leading me and I did not see much need in getting a degree in some field other than theology. Wanting to stay close to home I decided to attend Boyce College of the Bible on the campus of Southern Seminary in Louisville, KY. As a commuter I was never able to graft myself into campus life. This plus some of my theological differences with this Southern Baptist institution led not only to dissatisfaction with the college but also some questions about entering the ministry. I was not enjoying the books, the curriculum, the discussions or even the chapel services at this college. I thought if I was truly called into the ministry then I should have enjoyed these all of these things.

During my second year at this Bible College I received an invitation to visit Oral Roberts University in Tulsa, Oklahoma. After spending a weekend there on campus, attending chapel and class and experiencing dorm life I did not enjoy the experience but I had a deep conviction that this was where God was calling me. Grudgingly, I went through the application process, fully expecting something in this process to fall through, allowing me to stay at home where I was not happy but albeit comfortable. To my surprise everything worked out and that August I made the over 600 mile trip to Oral Roberts University to finish my bachelor's degree. The first three months were especially challenging for me as this was the first time I had been away from home and I was continuing to wrestle with my Call and the reason for me being at this school.

God's purpose in leading me to this university soon became apparent. During this time I was able to grow up and mature both spiritually and as a man in ways that I would not have if I was still living at home. I also developed some deep friendships that will last a life time, the most important of which is my wife. At Oral Roberts I began to participate in various ministry opportunities like foreign missions and community outreach. These were new experiences to me and they were tremendously formative as I continued to wrestle with my Call. During the summers my roommate and I came home to Indiana and we ran a day camp for underprivileged children who lived near the church. By the second summer we were seeing 40 to 50 kids a day come through our doors. All of these experiences were a window into what ministry as a vocation would be like, and for the first time I began to realize that ministry was not only overwhelmingly fulfilling but it could be fun. Gradually I was developing a peace with my call.

I stayed in Oklahoma upon graduating and I began working on my Master's of Divinity at Oral Roberts part time while I worked various other jobs. One of those jobs I had at this time was a youth director at a nondenominational church just outside of Tulsa. It was through this experience that I began to learn to enjoy preaching and leading worship. We had a youth service every Sunday night and I was able to participate in the Sunday morning services as well, even preaching on occasions. This was only the third time I had preached outside of my home church but the experience of preparing a message every week for the youth was tremendous in helping me to develop my ability as a preacher. During this time I also received an alternative teaching certificate and I began teaching sixth grade social studies in a local public school in addition to coaching eighth grade basketball. This too helped develop my ability to teach and speak in public.

All of these experiences helped me to grow into my call and to realize that there was nothing I enjoyed more than the work of the ministry. I had not only found peace in my call but I was excited about where God might lead me next. After transferring to Louisville Presbyterian Theological Seminary to finish my master's of divinity I found myself looking ahead to the future with great anticipation and excitement as I continue this journey of faith. I now find myself humbled and honored that God would place such a Call on my life and open this potential door to love and serve the congregation and community of Lexington, Indiana. I am both humbled and in awe of how God has led my life and directed my steps. It is now, with great reverence and humility that I move forward into whatever ministry God has planned for my life.