

Jane Doty MacKenzie
Statement of Personal Faith

God is the creator of all: azure-blue sky, star-studded nights, thunderous waves, dappled fish, tall grass bending in the wind, winged bird, forest mammal, and humans, in all their diversity. All humans are wonderfully made in the image of God and are intimately known by God. Our worship is the humbling awareness of God's holiness amidst our humanity. We are transformed whenever and wherever we encounter the presence of the triune God in the ordinary events of our lives.

Jesus Christ is God's revelation of God's own self: God walking, talking, and eating in human form. In Jesus' life, he embodied the steadfast love of God for all, challenging religious and social boundaries, and uplifting those who live life on the margins. Through Jesus' obedience in death and his resurrection, we are offered the gift of reconciliation to God, new life, and hope that transcends death.

The Holy Spirit is God in and among us. The Spirit intercedes for us when we have no words, sustains us, and comforts us in times of grief. The Spirit guides and leads as a companion on our spiritual journey. Through the Spirit all believers are bound together in Christ.

Sin separates us from God. This has been traditionally understood as an act in disobedience to God's commands or a transgression against others, often marked by guilt. But sin is also evident in the shame we experience when we have failed to be less than who God designed us to be, when we try to hide from God, and even when we try to hide from ourselves. We are already forgiven through the grace of Christ. When we confess our sin, we lay claim to that grace. Reconciliation is only possible when there is both forgiveness and repentance. We let go of our past, so we can step into the future.

The sacraments of baptism and the Lord's Supper are signs and seals of our initiation into and sustenance by God's grace. Through the water of baptism, we are cleansed of sin; are initiated into the life, death and resurrection of Jesus; and receive a new identity in the family of God. Jesus took the bread, blessed it, broke it, and gave it to the crowds and to his disciples. Whenever we celebrate the Lord's Supper, Jesus is present in the power of the Holy Spirit, continuing to nourish the community of faith just as he did when he took the form of humanity, blessed those he encountered, was willing to be broken on our behalf, and gave his life so that we might be reconciled to God.

The Scriptures are the unique, inspired witness to the love of God for us in Jesus Christ and provide a narrative of God's relationship with humanity throughout history. In Scripture, we find God's self-revelation: the source of our being, a light for our path, and meaning for our lives.

In his parables, Jesus taught of the kingdom of God as both now and not yet. We live within this tension, in a broken world where pain, suffering, hostility, and grief remind us that we are in a liminal space. At the same time, we can live with joy and gratitude for the gifts which are already ours and with hope for the time when the fullness of God's kingdom will be realized. "Whatever the ultimate future of humanity and the cosmos may hold, God's action in the end will be fully congruent with what God has done in the history of the covenant decisively confirmed for the world in Jesus Christ."ⁱ The final consummation of all of God's work in creation is, ultimately, an act of redemptive love.

The church is the body of Christ, comprised of all who claim Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior. As the community of believers, we are called to bear witness to God's grace and love, in our words and in our actions, as we seek to mirror the life of Christ and call others to discipleship. Jesus' ministry was one of inclusion. In our contemporary context, the ministry of the church is vitally needed to work towards the reconciliation of all people to God and to each other. Above all, God loves. That is the gospel which the church is called to proclaim: good news that will lead to the flourishing of all creation and all people.

ⁱ Migliore, Daniel L. *Faith Seeking Understanding: An Introduction to Christian Theology*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2014.