

Statement of faith

(nota bene: My inquirer's then candidate's statements of faith are my starting point here. I develop those statements further, suggesting how my faith is constant and growing.)

I hold faith in God, the Creator of all life. God is, at once, both father and mother, a celestial parent who brings all life into being. God separates night from day, land from sea, mountains from valleys, and God births all creatures and created things into being. God breathes and the whole cosmos - including *homo sapiens* - come to life, from dust! All this and more is accomplished by the awesome creative power of God, our Maker. This God's creative power resembles that of a shepherd who forges a flock out of individual sheep, a community where troubles recede and holy love blossoms. This God waters the pastures of life providing nourishment and comfort even and especially to "the little ones." So I believe in God, the Shepherd.

I put trust in Jesus Christ, the Redeemer of all life. Jesus is, at once, both human and divine. Or, moving beyond anthropomorphism, Jesus is at once of this world and another world. Jesus offers salvation and redemption to all God's creation. Pointing to the lilies of the field (Lk. 12:27), Jesus proclaims the reality of redemption already received in glorious form. By faith the world is saved from sin, from powers and principalities, from evil within and without. By faith Jesus Christ redeems, day by day, again and again granting deliverance from fires of death, storms of destruction, and pits of contention and despair. This trust I hold in Christ who was crucified and is resurrected, who bears our burdens, heals our brokenness, and redeems us toward reconciliation, forgiveness, and renewal. Thus I believe in God, the Lamb.

I place belief in the Holy Spirit, the Sustainer of all life. The Holy Spirit is, at once, both a comfort and a threat. Like Mary's encounter with the angel Gabriel, we are both frightened and inspired by holy visitations. In dreams, in prayer and reflection, in the living of our daily lives with all the community of saints, the Holy Spirit comes and indeed is present with us now. To complete the trinity of God the shepherd and God the lamb, I express belief in God the Gatekeeper of the sheepfold, the protecting presence that allows life to blossom freely in our bodies, in the body of Christ, and in the world. Without this encircling barrier, death comes; and yet by its delimiting power life eternal reigns. Indeed, I fervently believe in God, the Gatekeeper.

I draw this Trinitarian faith from Holy Scripture (John 10), for I believe all worship and Christian ministry is grounded in God's Word, incarnate in Jesus Christ and revealed in Holy Scripture. God's Word, incarnate and revealed, holds unique authority in Christian life and orders our corporate life, including our sacraments: baptism and communion. Given by Christ, the sacraments mark our belonging to Christ's body and our spiritual adoption by God into the church universal. While divisions in the church are real, I believe they are not what Christ intends. Christ, the head of the Church, bids us to be one. While our human unity is incomplete and provisional, I believe the sacraments make visible a measure of the invisible and unrealized unity that we taste at the Lord's Table and experience in the redeeming and renewing waters of baptism.

Brief Biography

I was born and raised in Brewster, New York where my father was a pastor. I was baptized, confirmed, and ordained an elder at his church, Brewster Presbyterian. In my mid-twenties I moved to New York City and joined the First Presbyterian Church of Brooklyn. There I was commissioned to serve as a mission volunteer in then Zaire, now Congo (DRC). I lived in Africa for 2+ years, after which time I moved to Louisville, KY.

I lived and worked in Louisville for four years, 1999 – 2003, the longest place I'd lived as an adult since college graduation. I worked in various positions at the Worldwide Ministries Division of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), and I joined Crescent Hill Presbyterian Church (CHPC). My spouse Rebecca and I were married in June 2001 at CHPC, the same church under whose care I've been during my seminary studies.

I earned my M.Div. from San Francisco Theological Seminary (SFTS) in 2007. I decided to attend SFTS for many reasons, three of which merit mention. One, I wanted to study with Rev. Dr. Philip Wickeri, my mentor in missiology and SFTS' professor of mission and evangelism. Two, I was drawn to SFTS' 4-year M.Div. program with its one year full-time internship. I did my pastoral internship at Knox Presbyterian Church under the supervision of Rev. Sue Fleenor. Third and finally, I chose SFTS because it allowed me – a younger brother of two older sisters – to live near my closest sister Liz, her husband, and their children, our three nieces and one nephew.

Rebecca and I returned to Louisville in June 2007, in part for family reasons and in part so that Rebecca could begin her M.Div. studies at Louisville Presbyterian Theological Seminary. Rebecca's only brother lives in metro Louisville with his spouse and 2-year old daughter. This, and the fact that Rebecca grew up in Louisville, is the main family reason why we returned to the River City. Lord willing, we hope to remain in the metro Louisville area for years to come.

Beyond my M.Div., I have a B.A. in Religious Studies from Yale University ('91) and an M.S.W. from Hunter College School of Social Work ('95).