

## Mark Piedmonte - Statement of Faith - 2020

I trust God, the Creator of Heaven and Earth and everything in-between; God the Father who pursues me even when I've wasted His generosity; God the mother who never forsakes me and provides for my every need. Despite my sin in thought, word and deed, God is still with me. I trust this because I have felt God's presence in the beautiful experience of being a deeply flawed, yet deeply loved human being.

I trust Jesus, God-With-Us. He has always been with me: in picture Bibles and paintings in the homes of my Irish and Italian grandparents; in Baptism, Holy Communion, Confirmation and Catholic school religion classes; in wayward college days and finding purpose in social services; in marriage and raising a family; in leading me into the PCUSA, seminary education, and ordained ministry. Jesus meets me in my humanity. In joy and sorrow, success and failure, at the birth of my sons and the death of my mother. Jesus teaches me a better way of being human. I trust Him fully, because Jesus knows exactly what it's like to be human.

I trust, too, in Jesus's divinity and in His selfless obedient act of grace: His giving of His body to be broken and his blood to be shed in an act of injustice for the forgiveness of sin. I trust, too, that Jesus's death was not the end but that He rose from the dead. In His Resurrection, a vision of hope was born; hope for eternal life that begins now in a re-created world in which justice, freedom and peace among all people is the end goal.

I trust, too, that the Church has much work to do. Bringing the Kingdom of Heaven to its full completion requires our daily action. I firmly hold that faith without works is dead. Our works are not our means of salvation, but our works are imperative as our response to God's grace. And I trust that the Church has what it takes. The Church is in a time of reformation and discernment. We wonder: How do we keep moving forward with declining numbers, declining budgets, and declining interest from a secular culture?

I trust the answer: Feed the hungry, give drink to the thirsty, clothe the naked, visit the prisoner, welcome the stranger, show hospitality to the refugee, give selflessly of ourselves for the good of the other and open our eyes to the beauty of God's image in all people. We must learn to trust one another within our Christian churches and across multifaith lines, serving the Creator whose love binds us and bids us to love our neighbors and enemies alike.

I trust the Holy Spirit abiding in us and speaking to us in Scripture, forever revealing God's word for God's beloved children. I trust in the Spirit's saving presence in the waters of Baptism and in Holy Communion. I trust the Spirit to pray in us with sighs too deep for words when faith is shaken and the work of the Church is a heavy burden. I trust the Spirit to give the Church new energy and purpose for the greater things we are called to do until Christ returns making all things new.

And I trust that this is all very good news.