

Matt Waters – A Statement of Faith

I believe in an indescribably vast God - a God larger than language allows. This God crafted all the cosmos and the expansive universe, from things yet discovered to the antennae of a lightning bug, from supernovas to freckles. God is the source – of substance, of wisdom, of holiness, of love and of justice¹.

I believe we experience God in three ways: as God the Creator, Jesus the Christ, and through the Spirit that guides us and inspires us in God's ways. These three aspects of God continue to present themselves to us through creation, scriptural teaching, and spiritual leading².

Created in the image of this triune God³, humankind broke covenant through idolatry of self⁴. Since then, we have felt a longing to return home – to return to right relationship with our Creator⁵. God reaches out to us through time⁶. Accounts of this effort are recorded in the direct encounters with the prophets of the Hebrew Scriptures, and in our Gospel accounts of Christ⁷.

Both human and divine, Jesus is God's grand, self-sacrificing gesture to reconcile with humanity⁸. Jesus the Christ, God incarnate, suffers the depths of human pain and death in an act of solidarity and atonement. By this act, all other sacrifices are made obsolete and inconsequential⁹.

Three days after submitting to a humiliating, violent death at the hands of Rome, Jesus demonstrates God's power over life and death by rising from the tomb¹⁰. We commemorate Jesus' sacraments today by observing baptism – a public act of joining the church community, and Communion – a meal of remembrance and a celebration of God's sacrifice and solidarity with humankind¹¹. These acts both recreate physical aspects of Jesus' model for ministry, as well acting as a mysterious "seal" upon our eternal relationship with God¹².

The Body of Christ remains in this world in the form of the Church¹³. This fractured, inconsistent, broken organism is representative of our own fragile, often wrong-headed state as humans¹⁴. It is the Spirit's repeated whispers, made manifest in our shared longing to restore Shalom – that inspires us to work towards God's ends in this world to the extent that we understand them¹⁵.

We are wholly dependent on God's mercy and grace for reconciliation¹⁶. Our own efforts, though we hope they are pleasing to God, are not payment for our past and future transgressions¹⁷, but our reactions to God's love. It is only in God's grace that we may be deemed acceptable and invited to return home¹⁸.

Citation Abbreviations:

- "HC" – Heidelberg Catechism
- "PCUSA BoO" – PCUSA Book of Order
- "PCUSA BSF" – PCUSA Brief Statement of Faith

- “WCF” – Westminster Confession of Faith

NOTE: Citations are intended to demonstrate grounding in Biblical content and/or accepted Reformed tenets as reflected in the PCUSA Constitution. This is not meant to be exhaustive, academic theological treatise.

¹ WCF 2:1, 4:1-2, PCUSA BSF 27-29, Gen 1-2, John 1:1-5

² PCUSA BSF 27-51 (God), 7-26 (Christ), 52-76 (Spirit), Gen 1-2 (God), John 1:29-34 (Christ), John 14:15-17 (Spirit), Acts 2:1-36 (Spirit)

³ WCF 2:1-3

⁴ PCUSA BSF 33-39, Gen 1-3

⁵ PCUSA BSF 49-51, John 14:1-7

⁶ PCUSA BSF 49-51

⁷ WCF 1:1-10, Heb 1:1-2

⁸ WCF 8:4, PCUSA BSF 7-26

⁹ WCF 8:4, PCUSA BSF 21-221 Peter 1:18-19, John 1:7, 2:2

¹⁰ PCUSA BSF 23-26, Matt 28:1-10, Mark 16:1-8, Luke 24:1-12, John 20-1-29

¹¹ WCF 27:3 (Sacraments), WCF 28:1 (Baptism), WCF 29:1-2 (Communion), Luke 3:16 (Baptism), 1 Peter 3:21-22 (Baptism), Acts 10:48 (Baptism), 1 Corinthians 11:23-26 (Communion)

¹² PCUSA BoO W-3.04, “Sacrament”

¹³ WCF 25:1-3

¹⁴ WCF 25:4-6

¹⁵ Romans 8:1-8

¹⁶ HC Question 1

¹⁷ WCF 16:5

¹⁸ WCF 10:2, 14:1