

## **Faith Journey** **Cindy Kohlmann**

Some of my earliest memories center around being at church, singing in the children's choir, and learning the stories of our faith. To be fair, my clearest memories are of my brother and I skipping Sunday school and playing on the swings, pushing ourselves higher and higher while we sang together. I think those sensations of soaring through the air and singing at the top of my lungs marked my faith in deep and profound ways.

It was my faith that saw me through very difficult times, as a teenager when I wondered if life was worth living and as an adult when I struggled in an abusive relationship. The gift of knowing that the God I know and seek to love is not threatened by my questions and doubts, and will walk with me even when I have no idea where the path is leading, has sustained me in countless ways.

The call to be a pastor came as a shock, and a not especially welcome one, disrupting my grand plans to make it big on Broadway. I had to wrestle with my understanding of Timothy and the admonition not to allow women to speak or have authority over men, and I had to release my sense of my life being mine to govern. During orientation at the beginning of seminary, we were told "If you can be happy doing anything else in the world, you should go and do it," and I knew that I was in the right place, even if it wasn't the place I had intended to choose.

God has worked like that throughout my life, interrupting my plans and redirecting my steps, which is why I'm now finding myself on the verge of joining New Castle Presbytery as Connectional Presbyterian. This wasn't my plan, but evidently it was God's, which I'm thrilled to have discovered. I didn't expect to be a pastor, then I didn't expect to be a presbyter. I didn't expect to be co-moderator of the General Assembly, and I didn't expect to be discerning a new call in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic. God continues to surprise me, and call me into deeper faithfulness and wider possibilities.

This page of reflection mirrors my journey in some ways, swinging back and forth between memory and certainty, soaring with the joy of knowing that I am where God intends me to be, even as I'm not where I thought I'd be. Through it all, the shining light of God's love can be traced, the Spirit's sparks make the path, and Jesus continues to beckon with outstretched arm. With joy, hope, and peace, I continue to follow.

## Statement of Faith Cindy Kohlmann

Almighty, everlasting, infinite, glorious, majestic  
And yet...  
Ever-present, stooping down, intimate, abiding  
Three-in-One, One-in-Three, dancing and sharing and giving and receiving,  
Pattern for the universe, for life, for us.

For us, created out of stardust and mud, holy thumbprint, earthly grounding  
Image of Creator / Redeemer / Sustainer woven through bone and sinew  
Woven with fire and breath, divine blood in the weft  
And yet...  
Torn, hole-y instead of whole, stretched out of shape,  
Human lives spilling sinful desires through rents in our divine fabric  
Instead of holy light and love.

So the Master Weaver sent One with healing hands,  
Strength and hope in fingertips reaching out to find the torn places  
Offering love and mercy, forgiveness and restoration  
And yet...  
It was too much.  
We couldn't bear leaving behind what was familiar and confining for  
Kindom possibility and abundance beyond ourselves.

In the face of hope, we chose fear.  
In the place of restoration, we chose division.  
In the place of love, we chose violence.  
And yet...  
Three-in-One continued to choose us.  
Through resurrection, through Spirit-driven new birth, through forgiveness.

And so the church was born, the Body of Christ knit together,  
Where the table is big enough for all, the weaving incorporating every living thread  
Where the water is a bridge to a new creation, dying to ourselves, rising to Light  
Where Word is followed and shared so that the Kindom may indeed come.

Now, as always, as before, we are called through table, water, and Word:  
Establish justice. Believe in divine abundance. Love actually every neighbor.  
Choose peace. Shine light. Bear hope. Be courageous. Follow me.