

Shannon Smythe  
Faith Statement

I believe that God is the giver of all good gifts. I confess the great mystery of our faith is that this God is one God in three modes of being—historically named by the Church as Father, Son, and Spirit. In the triune God there is but one essence and one will, yet in each person there is a distinctive contribution, as they act as one to create, save, and bring the world to its end.

In all of the abundant fullness in God's trinitarian life, God freely wishes to replicate to every degree possible this fullness of life, light, and love in all that is not God. But, met by human refusal to receive from God's hands in God's own time, creatures separate themselves and others from this wondrous life-giving fount of divine goodness. Met by the refusal of humans to minister God's gift-giving to others, the program of God's gift-giving becomes a struggle and a fight to bring the graced reign of God into a realm marked by sin and death.

The good news is that the God who created us in God's image, whose intentions for us are that we would be dependent on God through being united to God and participating in God's life, this God has perfected God's relationship with us through Jesus in the Spirit's power. In the incarnation, God becomes human and the effect of Jesus' perfect relationship with God is perfect humanity. This empowers all of Jesus' life, ministry, death, and resurrection. The cross of Jesus saves because in it sin and death are assumed by the Word, which cannot be conquered by them. Christ is victorious over sin and death, and God raises Jesus to new life.

The calling of a Christian is to participate, in the power of the Spirit, by faith, love, and hope, in the new humanity present in Jesus. The Spirit brings newness of life, reconciliation within the church, and courage for liberation and co-suffering with Christ in his work in the world. Now we live "in the time between the times"—after Jesus' life, death, and resurrection and before his final return. In this time, God goes ahead of us into the dark corners of the world, patiently making time and space for all to be saved and fighting all the remaining battles against the powers of sin and death.

As a community of faith, we are called to a new way of living in the world: living for others, in humility and self-giving love, and modeling a grace-filled community no longer defined by the systems of power and domination but defined instead by the fruits and gifts of the Spirit, which are poured out without regard for worldly divisions, and by the upside-down values of God's kingdom.

Through God's gifts of baptism and the Lord's Supper, Christ's body is nurtured in faith for spirit-empowered participation in the cross and resurrection of Jesus, which is the dawning of the new creation. I believe that our cruciform Christian witness is anchored by secure confidence in God's triumph at the ultimate End, the Last Day when God's reign is established in its eternal and victorious completeness.