

Statement of Faith

I believe in God, the creator of all that exists; the source and direction of the universe. God was behind the Big Bang 16.8 billion years ago and will continue after our sun stops shining in about 5 billion more years. The direction of life is one of diversity and harmony as revealed in the evolution of single cell life to the wonder and diversity of life today. Human words and concepts can neither explain nor define God yet, by grace, we can encounter God. God is often welcomed at moments of beauty, wonder or awe. Wonder precedes worship and awe is the source of sound theology.

I trust in Jesus Christ who lived within the confines of human history yet welcomed and embraced the full wonder and grace of God. He is way, truth and life for all who seek God through him. I seek to follow in his way and to share in his vision to follow in the prophetic tradition to do justice, love kindness and walk humbly with God.

I welcome and trust in the Holy Spirit, the living presence of God. The spirit is experienced in many different ways – power, compassion, insight, comfort to name a few. The Spirit is corporately known as the collective subconscious and the spirit within the people of God, including the church. The Spirit often occupies the space between us, not simply the “space” within.

I recognize that the church is a fickle and feeble entity yet the best that we have to discern the ways of God. The church always stands in need of reform. I also know that the church can be dangerously misguided as illustrated by the current American phenomenon of Christian nationalism with its support of misogyny and racism.

I believe in the grace of God and understand that life itself is a gift of grace.

Faith Journey

My faith is a running dialog between personal insight/convictions and the presence of a community of faith. In contrast to a good amount of contemporary North American religiosity, I experience faith as a communal phenomenon. I have felt called and empowered by God yet rarely in individualistic terms (never heard a “voice”) yet quite real in terms of the voice of the spirit within a community of faith. As a youth I drifted from the Presbyterian church yet embraced faith in the form of an evangelical youth group, albeit an unusual one since it introduced me to the anti-war movement and to the forerunner of the Sojourners magazine. In that group I read “The Cost of Discipleship” by Dietrich Bonhoeffer and it was only years later that I discovered that reading Bonhoeffer at 17 was a bit unusual in my suburban, mid-west upbringing.

My journey has always included serious Bible study and an intellectual pursuit to love God with the mind as well as with hands and feet. I am intrigued by the dialog of cosmology and theology and find the sense of wonder and awe within science to be a fine place of mutual discovery. While I value good preaching and have little patience for anti-intellectual pablum from the pulpit, hymn singing is the primary source my encouragement in worship. Psalm laments and spirituals are particularly important to me. (Yes, I find Bob Dylan and Leonard Cohen to be better with lament than most churches!)

The fundamental theme of my faith journey can be captured by the Micah passage to do justice, love kindness and walk humbly with God. Faith, personally and corporately, is intrinsically connected to the work of justice, kindness and peace. I found this in the church (well, portions of the church) and such communities are the key to my experience of faith today.

Personal information:

I am a retired PCUSA pastor of Baltimore Presbytery, having served in parish work from 1977 to 2018, with the last position as Pastor of First Presbyterian in Annapolis MD from 1999 to 2018. I am married to Alison Halsey, also a retired PCUSA pastor, and we have two married sons (Halsey with Jolynn in NYC and Dan with Melissa and four children in Wilmington). In retirement we are active at First and Central Presbyterian Church in Wilmington. In terms of current service outside of the congregation, I am a member of the Clergy for Choice of Planned Parenthood of Delaware and I chair the Board of Directors of the Haiti Reforestation Partnership. Alison and I enjoy hiking, exploring national parks, time at our Chincoteague cottage, travel and life with our children and grandchildren.

Education:

1974 – University of Illinois, B.A., Anthropology

1977 – Princeton Theological Seminary, M. Div. with New Testament emphasis

1995 – Colgate Rochester Divinity School, D. Min. Theology

Congregations:

1977-1985 - Assistant then Associate Pastor, Central Pres., Buffalo NY

1985 – 1999 – Pastor, First Pres., Lockport NY

1999 – 2018 – Pastor, First Pres., Annapolis MD