

I believe in the one sovereign and triune God, Holy One of Israel.

Out of God's deep desire for relationship I believe God is revealed to us in the three persons of the trinity, Father, Son and Holy Spirit. This triune God is distinct in three persons yet one in essence, one God who creates, redeems and sustains.

God the Father, the Almighty, created the world and all that is in it and proclaimed it good. God comes to humanity to be in covenant relationship with all creation and to set all things into proper order. In our relationship humanity turned to worldly powers of sin and evil, away from God our Creator and away from relationship with one another. Even in our turning away, God continues to seek relationship and acts with justice and faithfulness to restore creation and our relationship, redeeming us and our state and that of the world.

I believe in Jesus Christ, God's only son, fully human, fully God. Jesus was born a Jew, in Palestine under Roman rule to an unwed virgin. He lived, preached and taught what life lived in full relationship with God and creation meant by healing the sick, being a friend to the friendless, living among outcasts and sinners, and leading a blameless life.

Jesus was tried and sentenced for blasphemy and sedition, condemned to a violent and unjust death on a cross. God, who was fully present in Jesus' suffering and death to the depths of human anguish, raised Jesus from the dead, justified his sinless life, destroyed the power of sin and death, and through the Resurrection gave us life eternal. Jesus appeared to many friends and followers as the Risen One, the Christ, and will come again to restore our communion with God forever. In his life, death, and resurrection, Jesus is the proclamation of God's covenant relationship with humankind and the reconciling and redeeming of the world.

I believe in the Holy Spirit who gives us life, is everywhere, and is always present. Revealed in power at Pentecost, the Spirit gives us faith and compels us to believe. The Holy Spirit is active and alive in the world, working through the world and through the Church. The Spirit empowers us to work for justice and to live faithfully, always unveiling true and right relationship with God.

The Holy Spirit gives us the Scriptures as witness to Jesus Christ, the one Word of God. Written by fallible human hands, Scripture continually inspires us as we seek to grow closer to God and one another. The Bible calls us to obedience and faithful living, showing us our true and right relationship with God and creation. Scripture equips us to respond to the world where God is at work, and to places where we are called to be faithful.

Through the Spirit, as instituted by Christ, I believe in the sacraments of Baptism and the Lord's Supper. These acts are celebrations and witnesses to actions of Jesus, signs and seals of covenant relationship with God; they bring us into community and help us claim our identity.

Living active faith continues our understanding of God, and of our relationship with God and one another while bringing us yet closer to our intended relationship with our Creator and all of Creation. Faith requires us to live our lives in meaningful ways as followers of Christ, knowing that nothing can separate us from the Triune God. We wait expectantly for our destiny in our right relationship with God, humanity and all Creation, for the coming of the New Creation even in our midst here and now.

Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit, now and forever, Amen!

Faith Journey
Rick Upchurch

I am a Kentucky native. I was born and raised in Frankfort, I graduated from Western Kentucky University in Bowling Green and have lived in Louisville the past twenty years.

It is my family that has nurtured my faith the most. My family has been members of Frankfort's First Presbyterian Church for over six generations. Faith has been an important part of my life from very early on. My mom taught me the power of prayer by tucking me in every night since I was very little, leading me in "Now I lay me down to sleep." Church involvement has always been a big part of my life. We weren't just Sunday Christians, although we went to church every Sunday. I remember one Sunday morning while getting ready for church I asked my mom why we had to go to church. She stopped me and said, "We don't *have* to go to church, we go because we *want* to go."

My family taught by example. My uncle would mow the grass for the church, my mom and aunt have both served as deacons and as elders. My grandmother taught Sunday School for over 20 years. My mother would take me to Circle meetings with her when I was a child. When I was old enough, I used to help my mom usher. I knew everyone in our church and they knew me. I literally grew up in the church. I began to take part in other areas of the church. One Sunday I asked if I could be an acolyte and I remember the associate pastor asking why I wanted to and I said I had never done it before and wanted to see what it was like. He just smiled and gave me the thumbs up sign. I played hand bells, sang in the chancel choir and I taught Sunday school. I was ordained a deacon in high school. I found that I have a deep love for worship. I took positions of leadership in youth group planning and leading youth Sunday services. My community of faith was a place of service and involvement.

In high school I really struggled with my faith. My closest friends were Baptist. They had their Bibles, I had my Book of Confessions. Through this I realized that I have a deep love for the Presbyterian Church. In many ways I feel like Jeremiah, that God knew me from before the womb. My faith is communal and familial, and my spirituality of place is ingrained.

I remember experiencing a call to ministry at a Montreat Youth Conference when I was fourteen. I came face to face with the reality of something that was larger than me. That something was God. I experienced God in such a powerful way that I wanted to share that feeling and experience with as many people as I could.

When it was time to go to college I looked for a place where my faith could continue to grow and be nurtured. I looked at many Presbyterian colleges before actually feeling called to WKU. My aunt had sent me information about Western and it felt right. When I got there I was excited to find a Presbyterian church only a few blocks from campus. I went to worship there the first Sunday of Advent and found a place. I was sad however to find little to no campus presence. God's hand moved and an opportunity opened for me to serve as a college intern for youth and campus ministry. Again I found a loving supportive faith community in which I could grow and discern my gifts and skills for ministry.

I majored in theatre out of a deep passion for humanity and the arts. Theatre taught me many things about human life. I found many correlations to the church as well. I learned about working together with a close-knit community for a common goal and the art of collaboration.

God has placed a vision in me of a church and a people that are longing to know their Creator in such a powerful and meaningful way. I have such a deep love for people, for humanity and humankind. I feel God's call to love and serve these people in their hopes and dreams, in their hurts and fears. I believe all of this makes up who I am because of Whose I am and because of the place and people from which I come.