

**Statement of Faith** (*Deborah Church Worley, December 2018*)

I believe that **God** is Creator of all that ever was, is, and will be; and exists outside of (i.e., God is not limited by time or space) *and* within (i.e., God is intimately connected with all that God has made) all of that; and that all God makes is *Good*--maybe not from our limited and generally self-oriented perspective (pleasurable or comfortable), but from an eternal perspective (moving toward fullness of being for all things). I believe God is always calling God's creation toward healing and abundance.

I believe that **Jesus** was born, lived and died within a specific historical context, claiming his identity as God's Beloved, God's Chosen One--the Christ--and living his life unwaveringly committed to preaching, teaching, and in all ways manifesting the good news of the Reality of God, regardless of whether that message (and consequently, he) was accepted, questioned, rejected, or despised. It was his soul-deep commitment to this Truth that got him killed, so threatened were those in power by the Gospel message he preached; it was the Truth of this Gospel message that raised him from the dead, claiming once and for all the victory of powerless love over loveless power; and it's this Truth that offers Life to all who claim it.

I believe that **the Holy Spirit** is the Presence of God within us, individually and communally, the voice of God that speaks within our hearts and minds and guides us to move with courage and conviction toward an ever deeper understanding of the Scriptures and an ever greater embodiment of our faith.

I believe that **the Church** is a community where we who want to live more fully into our faith as followers of Jesus and his way, can gather. It's meant to be, I believe, a place of teaching and learning, exploring and growing, certainty and doubt, encouragement and challenge, confession and forgiveness, acceptance and love. It's meant to be, I believe, a place where we come to be nourished--by song, Scripture, Sacrament, ritual, prayer, and fellowship--so that we might go forth to offer nourishment to others; a place where we come to re-center ourselves in the Reality of God so that we might carry that into the world around us.

As participants in *a* church, we become part of *the* Church, made up of all who have gone before us in this endeavor, giving their best efforts to understand, live out and pass on the Faith.

The beauty of it all is that somehow, the existence of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, the Good News of the Reality of God, is ultimately not dependent on us. We in the church can help it or hinder it; make it more or less appealing; promote or pervert the message...but the Reality of God and all that that means will live on, finding ways to take root and flourish and offer Life, until Christ comes again in God's full Glory, and the Spirit of God fills the earth! "The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it." (John 1:5) May God grant us all wisdom and courage to *help* that light shine ever brighter!