

Statement of Faith
Rev. Margaret Crowl
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I believe in one God, traditionally named in three persons as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. God created the world and all that is in it. Humankind, male and female, was created in God's own image to be in loving fellowship with God. There also exists in the universe a force we call evil. God gave humankind free will to choose good or evil. As a human race, we have constantly rebelled against God, sought our own way, and rejected God's perfect love and grace. That rebellion brought about a condition of separation of God which is sometimes called sin.

The history of our faith, up until the present day, has been the story of God's many attempts to bring us back into fellowship in spite of our continuing rebellion. Throughout history, God called leaders, prophets, judges, and kings, who guided and governed the people. God gave them commandments and laws to help them worship and live peaceably with each other. Accounts of God's mighty acts, important events, words of worship and praise, as well as stories and parables were passed orally from generation to generation, and later written down. These accounts are recorded for us in the Bible, in the Old and New Testaments. We say that the Bible is God's inspired Word, which it is. However, I believe that the Bible also reflects the humanity, time, and culture of those who wrote down the words. Understanding of the Bible is enabled both by tools of modern scholarship and the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. Within the Reformed tradition of the Christian faith, reading and proclaiming God's Word claim a central place in our worship.

Even during ancient times, people believed that God would send a Messiah who would repair the separation and bring people back into fellowship with God. I believe that the Messiah came to Earth as God's Incarnate Son, Jesus Christ, also called Emmanuel, God With Us. Jesus was both fully human and fully divine. As he began his ministry, he was baptized by John in the Jordon River. Jesus formed a group of disciples, taught them new ways of understanding the old laws, and performed acts of justice, kindness, and mercy. As his teachings brought him an increasing number of followers, they also brought him into conflict with the leaders of that time. He was betrayed to the authorities by one of his own followers. As Jesus knew he was about to be put to death, he shared a Last Supper with his disciples. He gave them bread and wine, and told them that these elements were to remind them of his body and blood that would be broken and shed for them. He commanded them to remember him whenever they ate bread and drank wine.

After a sham trial, Jesus was put to death by crucifixion. Christians traditionally believe that Christ's death was necessary to satisfy God's judgment against human sins; that Jesus took upon himself the punishment we deserved. I believe more strongly that

Christ's death was necessary to prove God's love for us. Nothing short of this, no teaching or action, could have convinced us that God truly loves us and is with us in times of human suffering.

Three days after he died, Jesus was raised from the dead and began making appearances to his followers. Christians today celebrate Easter as the day Christ rose from the dead. Although some believe that the resurrection is only a spiritual or existential event, I believe that it is a physical reality that happened as it is described in various Biblical accounts. Although we cannot ever fully understand its mystery, I believe that Jesus' death and resurrection was the ultimate victory of good over evil. Although it did not erase evil in the world, it made it possible for us to know that nothing can ever separate us from God's love in Jesus Christ. I believe in eternal life. God promised that all who believe in Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord will ultimately be united in God's House. It is a central tenant of our Reformed faith that we are saved by God's grace which we receive through faith. However, I also believe that faith without works is dead, and that we are called to be doers of the word and not only hearers.

After Jesus' death and resurrection, the Holy Spirit came forth in a new and powerful way. Jesus original disciples and followers and new believers were brought together to form the Church. They followed his teachings, spread the word, and brought others into fellowship. The church, then and now, observes the two Sacraments that Jesus gave, Baptism and The Lord's Supper. I was baptized at age thirteen when I was also confirmed. While I have always considered it a blessing that I can remember my baptism, I also believe that baptism is appropriate for children of Christian parents who intend to raise their child in the life of the church. The whole church shares responsibility for the baptized child's Christian nurture. The entire church family, including baptized children, and Christians of any church or denomination, come together at the Lord's Table to remember his sacrifice for us.

The church continues to call people to have faith in Jesus Christ, to become disciples, to share his Good News, and to continue his works of justice, love, and mercy in the world. The traditional creed says that Christ will come again to judge the quick and the dead. Jesus himself said he did not know the day or the hour. Therefore, we are called to watch and be ready. We are also called, both as individual believers and collectively through the church, to continue to preach the Word, and work for peace, justice, and reconciliation in the world.