

Statement of Faith — Rev. Mary Ann Banning

I believe that God is the Creator of all of the universe -- from its swirling galaxies, dark matter, and gaseous clouds down to the most infinitesimally tiny charged particles. They interact and form and reform matter according to God's intention. God reaches out to human beings to draw us into relationship with the Divine. God's extravagant love seeks us out and invites us to covenant with God and with one another as faith communities. However, human sin sets up barriers between God and creature which God continually seeks to overcome.

I believe that Jesus Christ is God incarnate in a human being, born of a human mother and loved by a human father. God's extravagant love found a way to break into our reality, offering people an opportunity to respond through faith to God's gracious initiative. Through his life and teachings, Jesus walked with us, suffered and rejoiced with us, and was ultimately faithful to God's will by surrendering to arrest, trial, crucifixion, and death. God resurrected Jesus from the dead, after which the risen Christ ate and conversed with his disciples before he sent them out into the world to preach, teach, and make disciples. The resurrected Christ offers all believers the promise of everlasting life, and the hope and joy inherent in being a part of God's ongoing new creation here on earth.

In the sacrament of baptism we die with Christ, leaving behind our former selves, and rise with him into the brilliance of God's light which marks the beginning of a new way of life as followers and disciples. We are baptized into a Christian community of believers who support, encourage, and challenge us as we grow in faith. The faith community remembers and celebrates the presence of Christ in our midst at the Lord's table during communion. In this sacrament, the communion elements become the sign and symbol of Christ's body and blood, shed for all for the forgiveness of human sins.

I believe that the Holy Spirit blows through our world, enervating and transforming, redirecting, reassuring, comforting, and challenging according to God's will in Christ. It is a powerful force for growth and renewal in the individual lives of believers, in the church, and in all of God's Creation. The Holy Spirit moves within worship, gracing preaching, singing, praying, and the sacraments with God's amazing love and saving grace.

Scripture invites into the world of psalms, narratives, gospels and epistles where God's extravagant love and grace come to life and guide our lives. Filled with the fruits of the Spirit, God's people move out into the world beyond the doors of Christ's church in service and mission. Encouraged and guided by the Spirit, believers find the words to speak of their faith with others, and the confidence to live their faith publicly in humble and effective ways.