

STATEMENT OF FAITH

Thomas L. Wylie

I believe in the Triune God, Creator, Redeemer and Sustainer, known to humanity as God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. This omnipotent, omniscient God created all people in the divine image and blessed us with an eternal covenant of grace, which is God's unmerited favor and love.

God has a perfect plan for each human life, but because of their sins, all people have, "by their fall, lost communion with God..." Through grace, however, God offers mercy to all, "to deliver them out...of sin...[and] to bring them into...salvation by a Redeemer." (Westminster Shorter Catechism, A.19, 20) God's Son, Jesus Christ is that Redeemer who calls all people to repent of their sins, be justified before God, and sanctified into his image. (Rom. 8:30, 1 Cor. 6:11) I believe that, through Jesus' death by crucifixion and his resurrection from the dead, all who believe in him as Lord and Savior are redeemed of their sins. God's redeemed people constitute the Church, whom Jesus calls to join his mission of service to the world, through proclamation of the Gospel—the Good News of Jesus, through acts of compassion, works of justice and peace, and care of God's creation. (Book of Order, W-5.0301)

The Bible, God's authoritative Word, contains the story of God's love for all people, to teach us how to follow him. (2 Tim. 3:16-17) In the Word, Jesus identifies God as our heavenly Father, not as gender identification; "God is a Spirit and does not have a body..." (Westminster Children's Catechism, A.9) Jesus calls God "Father" as an example for all people—especially men—of what fathers should aspire to be.

The Sacrament of Baptism is the sign and seal of God's covenantal grace. In Jesus' own baptism, he identified with sinners, but God claimed Jesus as his beloved Son, anointing him with the Holy Spirit for ministry. Jesus commissioned his followers to make disciples of all nations, baptizing and teaching them to obey his commands. Circumcision was the sign of God's covenant with the people of Israel; Jesus transformed this rite into the Sacrament of Baptism, a sign of God's covenant with his people, the Church of the Lord Jesus Christ. Through Baptism we are made one with Christ, one with the Church of every time and place, and sanctified by the Holy Spirit to serve others in the world. (Book of Order, W-3.0402)

The Sacrament of the Lord's Supper is the sign and seal of communion with the crucified and risen Christ. Calling them his body and blood, signs of the new covenant, Jesus shared bread and wine with his followers, commanding them to remember him by keeping this feast. It represents God's gift of grace; God's means of grace; God's call to respond to that grace. Here, Christ is present, nourishing those who partake in righteousness and discipleship, as the Holy Spirit renews the Church's identity, sending us out to mission in the world. (Book of Order, W-3.0409)

The Holy Spirit prompts God's redeemed people—the Church—to be a blessing to the world, following Jesus' example by extending God's grace to all people; bringing good news to the oppressed; binding up the brokenhearted; proclaiming liberty and the year of the Lord's favor. (Isaiah 61:1) I believe that those who believe in Jesus Christ as their Savior, after their physical bodies die, will live forever with God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit in heaven. (John 3:16) I rejoice in this hope, as a redeemed believer in Jesus Christ as my Lord and Savior, and as a part of God's Church in the world.