

Statement of Faith

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I believe that God is the creator and sustainer of all things. Because God loved the created order, God allowed it to be free; free to enjoy and free to suffer the consequences of its own actions. In the beginning, God willed for that part of the creation made in God's own image to respond freely in love and faithful obedience for the gift of life that God had given it. In the beginning, humanity was free to love and live in harmony with its creator God (*posse non peccare*). But humanity chose, instead, to reject its creator and turn to itself as though humanity was its own god. In so doing, humanity sacrificed its freedom because, in freedom, it had forsaken its God, the author and giver of free and abundant life.

Humanity, by nature created to be free, is now by nature bound. It no longer has the freedom in and of itself to follow after God's will for creation (*non posse non peccare*). But, because God loved wayward humanity, God would not reject it as it had rejected God. Therefore, God acted to heal humanity's broken relationship with God by sending God's son to take upon himself the sin of the world and to reveal to the world God's will that all humanity live in harmony with its creator God once again. In Christ, the past is finished and gone and, even though we still sin, our sin is not counted against us. We are not yet saved in the sense that salvation is an accomplished fact in us but, in Christ, we are marked for salvation and set free from the bond of sin which is eternal separation from God. Through his life, death, and resurrection, Jesus Christ is the key to the fulfillment of our restored relationship with God. As Christians, we await that day when there will be a new heaven and a new earth and sin will be no more (*non posse peccare*) because God and the created order are united in love.

In the meantime, however, I believe that our triune God has established those who faithfully await the eschaton as the Church, and has provided that faithful gathering with the Holy Spirit to nurture and sustain them and to enable them to proclaim God's love to the world. Further, I believe that God has provided the scriptures as inspired testimony of God's plan and purpose for creation. I also believe that, through God's son, Jesus Christ, God gave to the Church the sacraments of baptism and holy communion to be, in the words of Augustine, "signs and seals" of God's freely given grace and love. To each and every member of the community of faith, I believe God bestows special gifts empowering them to be instruments of God's love in the world.

Finally, I believe that the Presbyterian Church (USA) is a part of the Church Universal. In its theology and in its polity, I believe it attempts to make a faithful witness to the love of God in Jesus Christ.