

STATEMENT OF FAITH DARIS S. BULTENA

I believe all attempts to describe, portray, illustrate, explain, capture, or comprehend God ultimately cannot be done in fullness. Language is fallible and imperfect. Words are the beginning place; words are the brush strokes that begin to shape the landscape of the great God story. Indeed, it is more art, imagination, and experience, than it is skill, comprehension, or clarity. Words and language are a vital medium and a starting place in shaping a description of my belief in the one who is the Word.

We read in verses 14 to 19 of the book of Genesis that on the fourth day God created the lights of the sun, moon, and stars. On my fourth day of life, I was carried in my mother's arms to worship the God who created me, redeemed me, and sustains me. In praise, practice, and prayer I have known God and God has been made known to me from the beginning.

With the writer of the first epistle of John, I understand, identify, and define God as love. God is love. God is ultimate, pure, divine, sovereign love. God's love endures beyond the ages. God is eternal and has been revealed to us. My understanding of God's revelation is that we know God in three persons (ways). The Triune God is One (treis hypostaseis, mia ousia). I believe in God; I place my life and my trust in God.

I put my trust in God, whom Jesus called Abba, Father. God is as a parent to us: Father, Mother, Nurturer, Care Giver, Maker. God created all that is. God is almighty and sovereign. God is merciful and compassionate. God's infinite, unmerited love reaches beyond our sin to provide for our reconciliation with God and each other. As is characteristic of a truly loving parent, God's love includes both caresses and corrections, joys and judgments. The characteristics of God are infinite and beyond my capacity to imagine and image. God is omnipotent, omnipresent, and omniscient. God may be likened to many images, yet all our images of God are only a glance "in a mirror dimly" of the wonder and awesomeness of God.

I put my trust in Jesus the Christ, through whom the world was reconciled to God. While continuing full participation in divinity, Jesus Christ was God also made fully human. In this fashion was God revealed to humankind. Through teaching, healing, and preaching, Jesus proclaimed the Kingdom of God. Moved by an infinite love for humanity, Jesus willfully submitted to a death by crucifixion, dying to redeem and reconcile all humanity. Jesus, the lamb slain for salvation, becomes the victor. In Jesus' resurrection lies our hope for victory over death and eternal life with God. Jesus' return will complete the fullness of salvation. Jesus is the Christ of God, the Messiah, the Good Shepherd, the Master, the Lord of all. He is the Lord and Savior of my life. Jesus is Lord! He has been Lord from the beginning. He will be Lord at the end. Even now he is Lord.

I put my trust in the Holy Spirit, who leads us to know, experience, and respond to God. A gift to us from God, the Spirit comforts, sustains, and guides individuals and communities of faith. The Spirit awakens us to the will of God and binds us to believers of all ages as Christ's One Body. The Spirit further affirms and corrects our faith through Scripture, builds us up through participation in the Church, and calls us to live holy and joyful, changed lives. For us the Holy Spirit is the Breath of Life, the Advocate, the Guide, and the Comforter. The Spirit helps us grow in the new life, equips the Christian community, unifies the Church, and frees us to love God and each other.

I firmly believe what is said in the Brief Statement of Faith: "In this broken and fearful world the Spirit gives us courage to pray without ceasing, to witness among all peoples to Christ as Lord and Savior, to unmask idolatries in Church and culture, to hear the voices of peoples long silenced, and to work with others for justice, freedom, and peace."

The Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments are the authoritative Word of God. Guided by the Holy Spirit, within the community of believers, we discover in these Scriptures an account of God's love revealed through Christ for an unworthy humanity. The Scriptures present a plan for faith and practice which are a fitting response to this gracious act of God.

Out of infinite grace, God has chosen us (me!) in Christ even before the foundation of the world. Yet as part of a world which is broken, we are powerless of our own accord to overcome sin or obtain salvation. The Holy Spirit convicts us of sin and through free and abundant grace we are turned toward God. God forgives our transgressions, and righteousness is imputed to us through Christ. Being justified by God's grace, the Holy Spirit moves toward us through sanctification. As we strive to become more like Christ, we attend to the will of God as revealed in Scripture and yield ourselves to God's authority over our lives and all our living.

The Church is the visible Body of Christ in the world. Christ calls the Church into being; Christ gives the Church its faith and life. At the center of the Church, are the rules of faith and love which call us out of our comfort zones into the world. These rules inform our understanding of what it means to teach, preach, pray, praise, and serve, now. We, as the Body of Christ visible, act on Christ's behalf, witnessing to the world. This witness is one of being in the world as a provisional demonstration of God's intention for humanity.

In his ministry among us, Christ was radical in his calling of all people to discipleship. He was inclusive of people without regard to their cultural or religious background. Christ has set for us an example of how the Church is to respond and live today. We are to be the Body of Christ open to all. We are called as salt which is to be full of flavor and light which is to shine. My passion is for helping the Church to grow ever more salty and luminescent. This is about being missional—it is about discovering how God is actively at work in our world and joining God in that

mission. The Spirit empowers us in presenting the living Christ through words, bread, and deeds.

Worship is the central response of our faith. God created us for community and called us into a covenant relationship. Our Lord has promised the presence of God with the people gathered in his name. We respond to God's love with words and action which demonstrate our thanksgiving and praise. As we sing, pray, proclaim, remember, and respond we witness God's love which has been poured out among us.

Through Baptism and the Lord's Supper we demonstrate communally our commitment to God in Jesus Christ. In sign, symbol, and seal these Sacraments bring vigor and affirmation to our faith. In Baptism, we are included in the covenant and family of God, Christ, and the Church. We therein are strengthened by the Spirit and brought into union with Christ and one another as a sign of whose we are and who we are to become. In the Lord's Supper, God communes with us, and is mysteriously present with us. Therein, we share in the remembrance of Christ's sacrifice and victory. In thanksgiving for all God has done, we break bread and share the cup, invoking the Holy Spirit with the whole Church, experiencing a foretaste of the Kingdom.

My beliefs and theological perspectives grow out of prayer and study of God's Word. It is my belief that prayer and study are essential. They lead us into relationship with God and each other. In this relationship we live the prophetic call: "He has told you, O mortal, what is good: and what does the Lord require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God." (Micah 6:8)

God's call upon me is a call to live in faithfulness; I understand myself as a commissioned apostle of our Lord who has been empowered by the Holy Spirit to proclaim the Good News, to be an active presence in the lives of God's sons and daughters, and to be an instrument of reconciliation.

Spirituality runs deep in my life and is the defining hallmark of who I am. I believe all we do is a reflection of our faith journey. My spirituality is not something to be coveted, but a gift to be shared with those whom I serve. My goals are simple ones: I want to grow in my faith, I want to help others grow in theirs, and I want to journey along with them and God as together we live missionally.

With believers in every time and place, we (I) rejoice that nothing in life or in death can separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord. Amen.