

### Spiritual Autobiography

My spiritual journey takes place within the same three feet at the front of First Presbyterian Church of Spring Hill, Tennessee. As a child, my family read the Bible together every single night. We attended church without fail, much like the postman's motto, "Neither rain, nor snow, nor sleet, nor hail..." would keep our family from going to church. At six years old, I thought that being baptized would shine a light on what I felt was "clouded" through my childhood understanding of God. It was difficult for me to comprehend how we constantly went to such a historic building to meet Him, when I had yet to feel like I had truly "met Him" anywhere. Over the years the Lord has shown up to meet me, but for a long time it always stemmed from those three feet.

In 2011, I married my best friend within those same three feet that I was baptized many years before. Being married at a young age is one thing, but choosing to be married in a church carries a tremendous weight. We've been married over a decade now, have two children, and love the life that we've built. However, there have been times that all I could do was lean in and pray for our walk in a Christian marriage. Time and time again, He has shown up in my marriage. To lessen the cloudiness of my understanding to show me more of His character. Through my marriage, I have experienced provision, answered prayers, and "wait til later" prayers. During this season, I have had to learn that God's plans are not mine, and how to lean into prayer.

In 2018, I had to truly lean into "His plans are not my own." That August, I sat through two services for two men of our church that were like uncles to me. The first was a gentleman that fought alcoholism for most of his life. He had been to rehab, returned home, relapsed years later, and eventually passed away at home in his own bed. When he passed he was placed in the same three feet where I had been baptized and married in a beautiful urn. The second, really caused a "cloud for my faith". He was a young man who *suffered* from ALS. Watching him sit in silence as his body deteriorated and question his life choices, make peace with his daughter, walk her down the aisle to her bride, and return to church just eight days before he became unable to travel and went to be with our Lord. For a long time, I struggled to understand why God would bring such suffering in this life. I came to understand at the funeral that sometimes it's merely to bring redemption and healing to the spirit and not the body.

Then in 2020, I experienced another form of spiritual poverty that stemmed from poverty in our community. I am also a high school teacher, who helps with the Jet Pack program for our underserved students. During the school shut-downs in March we had 22 students that received Jet Packs, so I simply started picking up their Jet Packs from The Well in Spring Hill and delivering them to the students' houses. Once I started delivering, there were more and more students that had siblings that weren't getting fed. So I started picking up 40 Jet Packs to feed their siblings. As school started again in August

of 2020 we already understood the need to deliver meals to those that were unable to pick up meals for themselves, so we again partnered with The Well to distribute 250 Galilee Packs (10 shelf stable meals) each week. This was when I more clearly felt the desire to walk alongside the poor in resources.

I first felt my call to ministry there in those three square feet when our pastor was out one Sunday, he asked a CRE to come and hold worship service for our congregation. At that time, I wrote down on my bulletin to “look at the CRE” program. Little did I realize that this was the initiation of God helping me to see more clearly through my baptism, that He would give me a desire to walk alongside those who are poor in flesh.

A major turning point in my faith was a season when my grandmother was moved to a skilled nursing facility. My eyes were opened to how much MORE our church and family members need to be ministered to while they are physically separated from the church family. She craved to take part in the Lord’s Supper, but wasn’t often visited by clergy. Especially during the global pandemic. She often said she missed “Him” during our visits. The need for pastoral care was evident in ways I had never experienced before. At that time, more than anything, I wanted to be able to stand in the gap that was caused by the separation of the physically poor in flesh that caused the spiritually poor in spirit.

When I entered the CRE program in the summer of 2020, I thought I felt confident in my spirituality. It felt like I was just going to sit down at our family’s round table for supper. What I didn’t realize was that this table was going to have a lazy susan in the middle of the table. While I still sat at the table of the Trinity, an open table for the Lord’s Supper, and other ideas. The lazy susan turned. The Lord opened up a whole new understanding of love, grace, and mercy that are extended to everyone. From what seemed like what I was supposed to see as the *church’s mission* was suddenly clarified as what the church was supposed to be doing to discern *God’s mission*, and where the church (the people) fell into place as the hands and feet. I felt like the fog had been pushed back. While the mirror is still dim, I understand that there isn’t a “revelation” here on earth. That one day it will all be clear as a mirror when I can meet Him face-to-face (1 Cor. 13:12).

I can now say that I am grateful for my family, and the intentionality that they brought to my faith. There are others who aren’t as blessed as I have been with a Christian heritage to be proud of. Even when it didn’t make complete sense. It taught me to persevere, through the cloudiness and seek the mission of the Lord. While I am still considering taking the ordination route, I hope to enter the inquirer program during this calendar year and explore that further. However, I do know that my call is to walk alongside the physically poor, spiritually poor, and poor in resources as they also struggle with their unbelief (Mark 9:24).

**Statement of Faith**

**I believe in one Triune God. Being equal in power and glory now and forevermore.**

**I believe in God, the Father.**

1.1 Who is the Maker of Heaven and Earth<sup>1</sup>. In all things He created, He created them and they were good (Genesis 1:31). Only through the fall of man did we cause separation with Him in His direct presence.

1.2 Who is the Alpha and the Omega. Who was the first, and will be the last. Who sent His son in order to be our High Priest, and return us to His eternal presence.

1.3 Who breathed The Word, The Bible, the ultimate authority, Himself (2 Timothy 3:16). In such a belief, it is the privilege of believers to rejoice in the assurance of salvation through the testimony of God's Word, which forbids the use of Christian liberty as an occasion to indulge the flesh (Titus 2:11-15).

1.4 Who loved His earthly children so much that He sent His one and only begotten Son to suffer and die for our sins (John 3:16). Due to man's sinful nature, a divide has been created that could only be reconciled by such a sacrifice, because we fail Him daily, yet He makes us heirs with Christ through His covenant<sup>2</sup>.

**I believe in the Son, our Lord, Jesus Christ.**

2.1 Who is the one, true Son of God. Born of the Virgin Mary. Conceived of the Holy Spirit<sup>3</sup>.

2.2 Who modeled the sacrament of a believer's baptism in order for all that believe in Him to be saved. That believers, once saved, are kept in God's power and redeemed by the blood of Jesus<sup>4</sup>.

2.3 Who came to reveal God to the sinful nature of mankind, and redeem us through His substitutory sacrifice. Whose blood was shed for our sins; He died, was buried, and rose again on the third day. That we should remember Him through the Holy Communion of Saints, as we partake in the sacraments given as the symbols of His body sacrificed for our sins<sup>5</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> The Apostle's Creed (2.1)

<sup>2</sup> A Brief Statement of Faith (10.3, line 48)

<sup>3</sup> The Apostle's Creed (2.2)

<sup>4</sup> The Second Helvetic Confession (5.188)

<sup>5</sup> The Second Helvetic Confession (5.169)

2.4 Who secured our justification that is made sure by His resurrection from the dead. That He is seated at the right hand of God that Father Almighty to be our Advocate and High Priest. Who came to save the least of these (Matthew 25:40) from sins that were reconciled in His death and resurrection. Therefore, by no merit of our own, God has elected us, on the account of Christ, because while we were still sinners, Christ died for us (Romans 5:8).

2.5 Who shall come again to judge both the living and the dead; whose kingdom shall have no end<sup>6</sup> (1Cor. 15:23).

2.6 Who left us the Holy Spirit to be with us forever (John 14:16).

**I believe in the Holy Ghost.**

3.1 Who leads one church universal for all times, scattered through all parts of the world, extended unto all times, not being limited to any time or place<sup>7</sup>.

3.2 Who dwells within us to convict us of our sin (John 16:8-11).

3.3 Who gives individuals help to minister to all, through men and women of all races and creeds, to share the Word of the Lord<sup>8</sup>

3.4 Who speaks on our behalf when we don't know what to say (Romans 8:26).

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<sup>6</sup> The Nicene Creed, Version 1 (1.2)

<sup>7</sup> The Second Helvetic Confession (5.126)

<sup>8</sup> A Brief Statement of Faith (10.4, line 64)

## **Citations**

*Book of Confessions: Study Edition.* Geneva Press, 1999.

## **Appendix**

### **Theology Alignment & Divergement**

#### **Baptism**

I believe in infant baptism. Jesus said, “Let the children come to me and do not hinder them, for to such belongs the kingdom of heaven” (Matthew 9:14)

I believe that all humans are sinners (Romans 3:23), and yet Christ died for us so that the believers in a one time baptism are saved forever. We contribute nothing but sin to our salvation, but the blood of Jesus covered us once and for all.

#### **Communion**

I believe in a sacramental communion, in which the elements are not substituted, but representative elements of the body and blood that were shed for us.

I believe that the Table of the Lord is open to every person of every denomination. It’s not a Presbyterian table, but the Lord’s Table. I believe that even a person that is not baptized may participate, this opens the door to discuss the sacrament of baptism.

#### **Election**

I believe that God sent His one and only son to die for our sins. I believe that Jesus was obedient even to the point of death on a cross, in order to save those who believe in Him (John 3:16).

#### **Unity**

I believe that we must seek unity, in all aspects of our faith. From those relationships in our local churches, to those that have become divided and demand reconciliation within our nation, including, but not limited to: political parties, races, and even religions that do not consider themselves “universal”.

#### **The Church**

I believe the church does not have a mission, but that we are to serve and seek the mission of the Lord. We should be meeting them at the wells, their food pantries, their transition homes (etc.) just as Jesus did.

#### **The Word of God**

I believe that the Word of God is breathed by our Maker, Himself. That it is the ultimate authority. It should be used for exegesis alongside the Holy Spirit before consulting other resources for preaching the Word of our Lord.