

Ellen Campbell Gardner Statement of Faith

In life and in death I belong to God. I believe that from before the beginning of time God predestined and purposed my life. That knowledge gives each day, hour and minute of my life meaning and shape. I believe that God created all things, even me, to fit God's purpose.

In and through Scripture, the true Word of God, God speaks, through events in the past, through prophets, kings, psalmist, Jesus Christ and his apostles, even through common people. Remarkably, even today, God is still speaking to us in the Word of God by God's Spirit. Scripture's authority is sufficient in and of its self; it does not gain authority and truth or lose it by human opinion or preference. Scripture then is the surest guide to knowing God and as a result, knowing ourselves. Scripture is the surest means of living in harmony with God's will for our lives.

I believe in the Trinity, God the Father/Creator, God the Son/Redeemer and God the Holy Spirit/Sustainer. In these I can know who God is. As the Creator, all things seen and unseen were made. God created all time, substance and life, weaving them into the beauty that is this world. Yet sadly, in the course of time, all God created as good, experienced a fall from its created order. Sin and separation from God, our heavenly Father, was the result of this fall and all of creation has experienced the pain of sin's curse.

Yet God would not allow this alienation to stand. Philippians chapter two tells us that Jesus Christ, "Thou he was in the form of God, did not regard equality with God as something to be exploited, but emptied himself, taking on the form of a slave, being born in human likeness.... He humbled himself and became obedient to the point of death- even death on a cross." I believe that it is through this act of unsurpassed, obedient love that I, and all of creation, are cleansed and made holy, united with our Creator once more.

I am overwhelmed by Christ's act of loving obedience to His Father, that while I was yet dead to sin, Christ died for me. Yet it is his resurrection, and his triumph over death, forever, that now I stand redeemed. I cannot earn my salvation. It is an act of grace, signaling that sin and death have lost their threat. The words of the hymn, Amazing Grace describe my hope. "When we've been there ten thousand years, bright shining as the Sun, we've no less days to sing God's praise than when we first begun."

Redeemed, and now united with our heavenly Father, through Christ's ascension, all of creation, in time, is being restored to its true nature. It is for the purpose of living and sharing this unfolding reality that Christ's believers, His Church, have been called and purposed. Joining members of the Church from all times and place his people are sustained and empowered by the Holy Spirit bringing the love and living message of Jesus Christ everywhere and to everyone they meet. To make that possible, the Sustainer, the Holy Spirit, fills each Christian with Christ's power to love the lovable and unlovable, to have faith when "rational thinking" tells us not to, and hope when there is no reason for hope.

Christ instituted two sacraments as signs and seals of our union with God. These sacraments are Baptism and Lord's Supper. Baptism is our adoption into the family of God. It is in this event that the Holy Spirit pronounces over her cleansing waters that we are holy and acceptable, engrafted as God's children in whom God is well pleased. Lord's Supper is the joyous feast of the people of God. It unites across time and space all believers who have gone before, live today and are yet unborn. In the Supper we gather and are nourished spiritually unto life eternal so that Christ lives in us and we live in him. Receiving him then, by true faith, he becomes our life and lifts us up, into communion with God our Father, making true what we should justly only dare to believe, that truly in life and in death we belong to God.