



FAITH matters

January 29, 2024

When the Session of St. Andrews invited me to come talk with them about my theological beliefs I jumped at the chance. In my 43 years of attending Session meetings, I could not remember a meeting in which we sat together as the ruling body of a congregation and seriously talked about theology. The Rev. Marjorie Osborn had the brilliant idea that I bring a “Statement of Faith” to discuss with the Session. So, one night after dinner I sat down and wrote the statement below. Think about what you might write for such an occasion

**A BRIEF STATEMENT OF PERSONAL FAITH BY
THE REV. NED W. EDWARDS**

I believe in the trinitarian God: Father, Son and Holy Spirit. The Father/Creator is author and instigator of the Big Bang, thus creating a huge Universe of time, space, material substance and laws governing its development and evolution. Life is the ultimate form of creation.

We live on a small planet that is but a speck in the Universe, but nonetheless, God knows his children on Planet Earth, loves them and has provided for their salvation and eternal life. As human beings, we are limited by our instincts of self-interest and tribal loyalties, our ignorance and fears. We miss God’s mark for achieving the purpose of our lives. We call this “sin” in the church. So we live, die and are saved by the mercy, love and grace of God. We live eternally in the embrace of God’s love. We call this “Heaven,” a great mystery and wonderful hope.

I believe in Jesus of Nazareth, who lived in the first century, taught the truth about God, was executed by the Roman government but was resurrected from death to show us the reality of Eternal Life for all who know his love. This is why we know him as the Messiah (“Christ” in Greek), Savior, Redeemer and Son of God. When asked “What must I do to inherit Eternal Life?” Jesus gave two and only two commandments: “Love the Lord your God with all your heart,

mind and strength; And love your neighbor as yourself.” Therefore, the work of my faith and the work of the Church is to worship and trust God and also to uphold the moral commandment of loving my neighbor by enabling justice and peace at all levels of human society.

I believe in the Holy Spirit, who is active in the hearts and minds of human beings and in faithful communities as creative and motivating energy for peace, justice and the well-being of human kind and the life of the Earth, our planet.

I would further define this trinitarian God as Truth, Love and Spirit. One of my favorite descriptions of God is from the theologian Paul Tillich, who calls God “the Ultimate Reality.”

I believe that the Holy Bible is the human source of the revelation of the nature of our God and his purpose for us and the world. In the words of the Confession of 1967, I believe that “The Scriptures are not a witness among others, but a witness without parallel “to the revelation of Jesus Christ as the word of God incarnate. But the Confession goes on to say some very important things about interpreting the Holy Bible: “The Scriptures, given under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, are nevertheless the words of men, conditioned by the language, thought forms and literary fashions of the places and times in which they were written. They reflect views of life, history and the cosmos which were then current.” This is why I believe strongly that modern truths of science in the areas of cosmology, biology, evolution and medicine must be recognized in Biblical interpretation. This should in no way distract from the authority of Scripture in matters of faith, hope and love.

All language is human and cannot begin to express the reality of the Spirit who is the God of the universe. That is why Scripture can never be understood literally. May God understand and forgive the limitations of our knowledge and language, that we may always grow into the truth that unites us and sets us free.

~Written by Rev. Dr. Ned Edwards

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