

Presbytery of St. Augustine  
New Minister Member Information

John Helgeson - Interim Pastor - Perry

Julie Jensen - Associate Pastor - First Fernandina

Patricia McElroy - Baptist Health

Robert Greer - Honorably Retired

Jeff Beebe - Interim Pastor - Trinity

Deb Henning - Stated Supply - First Crescent City

Statement of Faith by Rev. Dr. John F. Helgeson

As Scripture is the inspired word of God in which I function, for me Colossians 1:15 forward is basic. Jesus is the image of the invisible God. In him all creation began and exists. God reconciles us through the death of Jesus on the cross. Or as the Gospel of John begins, "In the beginning was the Word and the Word was God." That Word was and is Jesus. Thus, Jesus is fully human, except for sin, and fully divine. He became one with us, lived with us, and taught us the way before dying for us and being raised for us and is now interceding for us.

I believe in the Trinity, one God in three persons. God created all that is, including me. God loves us so much that Jesus was sent into the world to forgive sins. And the Holy Spirit is now part of every Christian's life, keeping us and leading us in the faith we need in Jesus Christ. Jesus founded the church, and the Holy Spirit leads Christians in the church. By the church we are taught about Christ and live as Christians. In the church we receive the sacraments of baptism and the Lord's Supper. Through baptism we are claimed by God in Jesus Christ. By the Lord's Supper we encounter the risen Lord spiritually and are maintained in the faith.

I am convinced we all need the Lord. I believe in the grace of God, so that we are forgiven our sins and we can then live Christian lives and change the world to the Lord. Ultimately, this grace makes it possible for us to come to the Lord eternally.

## Journey of Faith by Rev. Dr. John F. Helgeson

I grew up in the Presbyterian Church, as my father was Presbyterian. I was confirmed in the First Presbyterian Church of Asheville, NC. During the time I was in Asheville, my parents divorced and I was mostly raised by my mother. I went to church often by myself, occasionally with my sisters, and I can honestly say that First Church was my saving grace. The people cared for me, were there for me, and helped me during the difficult years after my parents' divorce. I owe the church for what they did for me. I went to a Billy Graham associate's service, in which I felt called to commit myself to the Lord. I was active in the church throughout my youth, went to Montreat regularly, and as a college student was involved in the Presbyterian campus ministry.

I planned to be a lawyer, but after a year at law school I walked into my pastor's office and told him I could not be a lawyer. He asked me if I would consider the ministry. He had tried over the years to ask me to consider it, but I had previously always refused to even consider the possibility. Now I was at least open, but this was the summer before school would start, and so I threw conditions on God. Find me a seminary that will take me and take me this fall. Find a way to pay this, as I am broke. And finally, make it possible for me to get back my housing money to go to law school in the fall, which I had already sent. My pastor contacted a number of seminaries, and Union of Virginia said they would talk to me, if I came up. We went there, and they took a close look at my college credentials, and said because of my high grades and other factors, they would make a place for me that fall. I asked how I was going to pay for this. Dating myself, this was before computers became all-encompassing. I was asked again what church I belonged to, and they said there was something about that church. They did a lot of paper research, and found out that there was a scholarship for students from my church and it covered everything, plus providing some spending money. I got nervous, but I decided to take a chance and was there for the fall term. I wrote to the law school about what was happening, and I quickly got a reply that the only way housing money was returned was if they sold out all the housing units. Oh, and they had not done that in ten years. I figured I had an out, until several weeks later, I received another letter from the law school housing and was told that for the first time in ten years the housing had sold out, and thus my money was returned and it was enclosed. That is why I went into the ministry.

I have found that call verified numerous times in my ministry. There were times I really wondered if God wanted me in the ministry, and every time something would happen to show I was indeed called to ministry. Things would work out in ways I could not have predicted, and I have been and remain a minister. I did not set out to be an interim minister either, but again events came together in such a way that I have now served as an interim minister in a number of presbyteries and have even written a book on interim ministry, *Freedom and Interim Ministry: 12 Freedoms of the Interim*, which is being used by interims and churches. Indeed, Perry's interim search committee read my book and was impressed by it and referred to it as one of the reasons they called me.

I am a great believer in signs. There were other churches that were interested in me as their interim minister, but every step of the way I was about to ask Perry about something and they were already working on it or they had anticipated my request. It was more than coincidence, it was a sign of God working in both of us, and that is how I have seen my ministry in my interim positions. I go where the God signs show me to go, the power of the Holy Spirit living in Jesus Christ made real for me.

Before I settled in Asheville, NC, I was a Navy brat and lived in naval bases across the US and on the island of Trinidad. We moved a lot, and I am still a nomad, which is what interims can be at times. I started my ministry in PA, and while there I met my wife and now mother to our three daughters, while attending a presbytery meeting. Who says presbyteries don't make a difference in a person's life! I have served churches elsewhere in PA, plus NY, NJ, OH, MI, IL and now in OK. Interestingly, your stated clerk contacted my former stated clerk in IL to see if she knew of any interim ministers willing to come to St. Augustine Presbytery. My former stated clerk immediately suggested my name and emailed me to follow up, which I did, and that is how I found out about Perry. God moves in mysterious ways, and I have seen it in presbyteries many times. I believe in the Presbyterian system, and I know God works through it to make things happen as God wants them to happen.

God moves in the world, and God moves in my life. God is with me in all I do and everywhere I have been. Each interim church I have served is because God led me there, and if you contact each of the churches I have served as an interim, you will find positive remembrances and appreciation. I regularly hear that God brought me to the right place at

the right time. God moves in people, and God has led me in my interim career. I have worked with presbyteries in every interim position I have served. Most recently, I chaired the Committee on Ministry of Indian Nations Presbytery, while an interim. I hope St. Augustine Presbytery will allow me to serve appropriately somewhere. I realize you are undergoing transformation, and I have been involved in that process in a number of presbyteries in various functions. I believe that while I am an interim minister to a church, I am also an interim pastor to the presbytery. I have gifts, talents, and knowledge able to help a presbytery be the presbytery it needs to be.

I am looking forward to serving the Perry church and helping it to be the church of Jesus Christ it is meant to be. I am the cheerleader for the church. I am the enabler for the church to understand itself and make it possible for the church to move forward. There are time I will be the one working for changes they want and need, not changes I impose. Everything has to come from their understanding and what they see happening. I want to work with them, so that they will be ready to move forward. I will be their pastor. I will care for those who are sick, hospitalized, in nursing homes, and elsewhere facing difficult times. I will baptize, marry, and conduct funerals. I will visit them, and help them to know themselves and help them to know what I can offer them. I will preach, I will teach, I will moderate, I will serve.

Many times an interim has the freedom to help a church that the installed pastor does not have. I will use that freedom to work with the church and allow it to explore the possibilities open to it. There may be experimentation, there may be evaluations, there may be surveys, there may be all types of tools used to ensure a church fully and honestly understands itself. I will do what needs to be done to help the church be the church it is called to be. I do not impose on the church, I take each church's identity and history and traditions seriously. Yet, I seek to allow the church the freedom to see where the past needs to be superseded.

I spend time in prayer. I pray for the church. I become part of the community of the church. I work with Scriptures to preach what needs to be heard by the people. I teach about Scriptures, through regular Bible studies. I am committed to the Presbyterian way, and I work to ensure the church is being Presbyterian. I am committed to involving the

church in the life of the denomination and the presbytery, specifically. I will be a Presbyterian USA pastor in all that I do and say.

After a long pastorate, a church needs a breather to reflect on where it has been and how it can accommodate a new future. I will work to provide that potential for the Perry church. Yet, I will be sensitive to the previous pastor, and I am committed to working with him in appropriate matters. I believe in this church, and I believe God believes in this church. I am here to help them hear that message and to live on that message.

If you have any questions, please feel free to ask me. If there are any typos in this report, I apologize as I am doing this while on the road, visiting in Perry. May everything be done decently and in order, and God bless you in your ministry.

JOHN F. HELGESON

Yours in Christ,

John F. Helgeson  
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**Statement Of Faith**  
**Rev. Julie Ann Jensen**

“In life and in death, we belong to God. Through the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit, we trust in the one triune God, the Holy one of Israel, whom alone we worship and serve.”

We worship and serve the Triune God who created everything from nothing, whose spirit hovered over the waters and called forth land and life. We worship and serve the God who sent rulers and prophets to speak God’s word even when we did not listen and continues to act in our lives and in the world. We are called to live our lives as a reflection of God.

“In the beginning was the Word and the Word was with God and the Word was God.” The Word was Jesus Christ, fully human, and fully divine who called us to repent and believe in the Gospel. In his life, Jesus Christ taught us how to live. He ate with sinners and outcasts, healed the sick, proclaimed release to the captives, and called us to make disciples. While God created the world to be good, we do not always act in accordance with that creation. We sin. We fail. We make mistakes. Through his death on the cross, Jesus redeemed a broken world. God gave us the gift of salvation in Christ, a gift we cannot do anything to earn. We are called to live our lives as an offering in response to the salvation received in Christ, not out of guilt or obligation, but in gratitude and love.

The church was born through the rushing winds of the Spirit at Pentecost and those winds still stir. The Holy Spirit guides and nurtures us, and when we are unable to speak or pray, intercedes on our behalf. Our creativity, inspiration, imagination and talents are gifts of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit acts to transform our lives and empower us for service. At the font we profess ancient words and feel the water of baptism necessary for both physical and spiritual life. We outwardly mark God’s claim on us, and are washed in the waters of Baptism in order that we might live new life in Christ. For infants, we claim the promises of God until they can claim them for themselves. For adults, the promises of God are claimed as they are baptized in the waters of the font.

We gather around the bread and cup to be nourished for service, recall the saving death and resurrection of Christ, give thanks, and be restored. We gather in joy as we experience a foretaste of the heavenly banquet and to share a meal as a community - just as Christ and his disciples did. We gather around a common table with the saints of every time and place to receive nourishment to go out and serve the world. The table is a place of community and welcome. We joyfully anticipate the day when Christ returns and the Kingdom of God is fully present. The Holy Spirit empowers us to go out and proclaim the Gospel, serve the world, and work to seek justice and peace.

### **Journey of Faith**

#### **Rev. Julie Ann Jensen**

One of my earliest memories is of the sunlight coming through the stained glass windows and hitting the pews in my grandparent's Baptist church in Portland, Oregon. It was part of the family tradition that when you were at Grandma and Grandpa's house on Friday you went to help him clean the church. My grandfather was a Deacon, and I fondly remember them attending Prayer Meetings, Bible Studies, Vacation Bible School, and potlucks. This was the congregation where I remember playing with the toys in the nursery, sticking Jesus and the disciples to the blue flannel board, and singing a solo for the first time.

My family moved a lot when I was a child. My father worked for the Department of State, and so we moved in and out of the DC area several times during my childhood. We lived overseas, and eventually came back for good. What I remember about faith formation during this time was that we always said grace before meals and, no matter where we were, we went to church. Sometimes that meant we went to the only church where English was spoken. When we returned to the states permanently, we continued to worship in non-denominational settings, when we went. My parents separated and divorced and we did not get to church as often. I still remember the magic of a Christmas Eve service sitting in the pews with my mother and sister as we passed the candlelight to one another.

When my parents remarried, they both remarried Roman Catholics. My step-mother's family was Greek Orthodox. During middle school, we went to Mass and it was there I remember finally reciting the Lord's Prayer and Apostle's Creed for the first time by heart. I liked the liturgy and felt fed by it. But I also felt sometimes like we just said the same words week after week.

When we moved to Beaufort, SC, my mother's goal for us was to find a church we could attend as a family. We attended the Catholic Church, but it was not a good fit for us. A classmate of mine invited me to attend church with her. I arrived at her house to find that church was actually in her house! It was a small Pentecostal congregation that exposed me to speaking in tongues and, as I described it later "everything you encounter in a holy roller church but the snakes." As my questions about faith grew, the response kept coming back "you will understand it all when you are baptized" (which I was not). This did not sit well with me, and as I wondered more and more, I became less comfortable with this worship style. We still had not found a family church. Another friend of mine invited me to attend church with her. I was leery, until we drove by one day and she pointed out the actual building, and the construction that was happening as well.

I began attending Sea Island Presbyterian Church and my family came as well. In my heart, this is my "home church". It is where I was baptized at the age of 16, and where I came home to for many years. I felt at home here – the familiarity of the



liturgy, yet also the newness of the words each week. I joined the youth group and the chimes choir. This congregation sent me off to college and it was while at The University of South Carolina that I began to discern my call to ministry.

PSA (The Presbyterian Student Association, now called UKirk at USC) was formative for me. Every time the doors were open, I was there. I attended as a student, and volunteered for anything they campus ministers would let me do. I served as intern for a year, and it was during that time both campus ministers I worked with while I was there asked if I had ever considered ministry. I laughed. But as I graduated, deciding I did not feel called to Law School, I began to wonder. I did not like my "real" job, but was fed by my volunteering at UKirk and my part time work as a youth director. I decided to take the plunge, and visited and applied to seminary.

God continued to be at work during my seminary career. It was my summer internship advisor who reminded me that it was OK if I was called to work in the church, but not to seminary. Perhaps, she suggested, the call was through seminary to serve as an ordained minister. Those words carried me through my last two years. I discovered the connection that comes from living in community, and felt the power of support the week my grandfather died and I sobbed through the chapel service, looking at stained glass windows and wooden pews that reminded me of the ones we had cleaned together. I felt the presence of God in friends and faculty as I moved through my last semester.

One lesson that I learn and relearn is the one about God's timing not being ours. It took me almost a year to find my first call (due to the timing of candidacy and retaking an ordination exam). I was in that call for 3 ½ years. I left the south and went to NJ. I served a congregation that needed an interim, not a first call pastor. In that experience I had to rely on God more fully than I had before. My faith was sometimes dry, and I spent a lot of time questioning and listening. Looking back, this first call gave me many of the skills I would need for Transitional ministry later on.

My second call, in Cartersville, GA was one where I was stretched and grew immensely. I served as an associate, but also was Head of Staff for a summer during sabbatical. I honed my pastoral care and mission skills, and worked in a larger congregation. Spiritually, I felt nourished and fed others from a place of being fed. While there were challenges (every congregation has challenges), I felt I was following God's call and where God was leading me.

My most recent faith challenge came in the 15 months between leaving the Cartersville congregation and beginning an interim in NY state. In that time, I felt as though I was sojourning in the wilderness. I had to reexamine my call to be an ordained minister from every angle. I waited tables at a tex-mex restaurant to pay some of the bills. It was while there that I realized that the call God had given me to serve the church had changed. It was a call to serve the people of God. I was big sister/unofficial chaplain to a group of servers who, for the most part were un-churched or wary of the

institution of church. Yes, sitting at tables rolling silverware, filling baskets with chips, or making drinks at the bar, they trusted me with their stories and to hold their deepest hopes and fears close. I blessed a motorcycle, prayed a pre-op prayer in the bar and argued about theology with the host at the host stand. I still, for some, serve as their chaplain and pray for them, even though most of us have moved on.

My journey is not over. I believe this next call is an answer to prayer. To be closer to home. To be in a functional congregation. To work with a stellar Head of Staff. To use the gifts God has given me to my fullest. To continue to seek God and follow Her where She leads me to serve. What I do know is that God keeps God's promises and is faithful. God will not forsake me, even when I don't believe it. Sometimes when I stand to say the Apostles Creed, I have a hard time believing the words are true, and I give thanks for those who say them on my behalf. Other times, I know with certainty that I am saying them for those who struggle on that particular day. My journey of faith is one that has led me places I never thought I would go, and continues to take me on new adventures.

## Terms of Call - Jensen

## A. Personal Compensation

1. Annual Salary	21,500.00
2. Housing Allowance	31,000.00
3. Utilities	
4. Medical supplement	
5. Optional SECA tax reimb	
6. Deferrred Income	4,000.00
7. Other Income	
Total effective salary	56,500.00

## B. Expenses

10. Professional expenses	
a. Auto expense .535/mile	2,300.00
b. book allowance	1,500.00
c. other expenses	2,000.00
11. Continuing education	4,000.00
12. Cell Phone	1,200.00
Total expenses	11,000.00

## C. Required additional benefits

13. Major medical (25.5%)	13,842.50
14. Pension (12%)	6,780.00
15. SECA tax reimbursement	4,322.25
16. Dental	900.00
Total Benefits	25,844.75

Cash Cost 93,344.75

Vacation 4 weeks

Study Leave 2 weeks

Note: Absences to serve Presbyterian Disaster

Assistance of up to 3 weeks per year will not accrue  
against vacation or study leave time

A Personal Statement of Faith  
Patricia A. McElroy

I believe in the one triune God. The Trinitarian persons, as a loving and self-giving community of being, each live and dwell in the other. Thus, while the three persons of the Trinity are distinct and unique they are inseparable. In their uniqueness, God the Father is called the creator, Jesus Christ the redeemer and the Holy Spirit the sustainer.

I believe that God created the universe and all that dwells in it. Human beings, created in the likeness of God, are to glorify God in loving obedience. God the creator is ever present and through God's providence God's creation, including my own life, is upheld. Because God created all human beings in God's likeness, I approach all those with whom I come in contact with deep humility and respect. Every day I am aware that the call to glorify God includes the call to love and care for my neighbor, all of God's creation and myself.

Nonetheless, we turn from God, breaching our relationship with God and our relationships with each other. In an immeasurable act of love, God revealed God's self in this world in the perfect being of Jesus, born of Mary, who preached good news to the poor, broke bread with outcasts, forgave the sinful and healed the sick. Jesus, being fully human and fully divine, embodied in perfection how humanity is to glorify God and to relate to all of God's creation. In the face of the depth of human sin, Jesus was unjustly crucified and died on the cross. On the cross, Jesus suffered the depths of human pain, atoned for our sins and restored the right relationship between God and humanity. Victorious over sin and death, Jesus in body and spirit rose from the dead to live and reign with God, eternally. It is my faith in the risen savior that provides me with the assurance of God's forgiveness and the promise of my eternal life with God.

I believe that our justification and faith derive from the grace of God and do not relate to any effort or good works on the part of an individual. Indeed, it is the Holy Spirit who creates and upholds my faith. The Holy Spirit dwells within me, stirs my heart in prayer, convicts me of my sins, leads me to repentance and obedience and unites me to Christ. The presence of the Holy Spirit is the comfort and the source of courage in my life reminding me daily of God's providential care for all of creation.

I believe that the Church, established by the Holy Spirit, is a community wherein the body of Christ is actualized in the world today. The Church, the people of God, gather for worship and hear the Word of God read, listen to the Word of God preached and receive the Word of God enacted in the sacraments. Scripture, written by human beings under divine inspiration, bears authoritative witness to the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ and describes God's salvific intervention in the world. Scripture, as well as preaching of the Word, has instructed me in my life, provided comfort in times of strife, guidance in times of need, and certainty in times of confusion.

I believe that through grace our participation in the sacraments unites us to Christ and we become publicly identified as the corporate people of God. In the waters of Holy Baptism, we participate in the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, dying to the sin that separates us from God and rising to the new life in Christ. By my baptism I was sealed to Christ's ministry, welcomed into the Church community and summoned to a life of repentance, faithfulness and discipleship. In the sacrament of Holy Communion I am in communion with Christ and with the community of believers in all places. During Holy Communion I give thanks for the grace of God in my life, remember Christ's life, death and resurrection and look forward in faithful anticipation to the fulfillment of the Kingdom when Christ comes again in glory.

I believe that the Church, as the body of Christ, is neither insular nor inactive. The Church is called to service in the ministry of Jesus Christ. The Church, through corporate worship, serves as a sign of the new reality in Jesus Christ and goes into the world addressing injustice by proclaiming the good news in Jesus Christ, healing wounds, providing care, comfort and hope to the sick, the oppressed, the poor and the neglected. Indeed, as the body of Christ and trusting in God alone, the Church is in the service of God and humanity committing itself to the relief of human suffering. Each day I look forward with great joy to my continued service to the mission of the Church.

## Faith Journey

I was raised in a conservative upper middle class family in the suburbs of Philadelphia in the 1960s and 1970s and am the youngest of four children. As a child and in my teenage years I attended church on a regular basis with my family. I was active in youth groups and sang in the church choir. I found comfort in learning about Jesus and developing a relationship to God. During my college years, however, I drifted from the church. I returned to my home church, however, once I graduated from college. Yet, it was after I graduated from law school when I was confronted with a profound challenge to my faith when my brother and father died. The story is a difficult one.

A few years into my law practice my oldest brother Bob died suddenly and was shortly followed by my father's death—anger, disbelief, and rage toward God and clergy was my response. I swiftly and with purpose turned my back on God and the church. Thus, without any attempt to reconcile, accept help or heal I put my head down, pushed forward and pursued my career in the law. At the time, I thought that this was survival. It wasn't. When I could no longer bear the pain and isolation and with the encouragement of close friends I sought counseling from a psychotherapist and my pastor.

As I struggled with God, I began to learn that there is an underbelly to the concepts of independence, power and control: the inability to seek help and to let go of what I thought I controlled—while I was a person of faith the idea of truly leaning on God's grace and mercy was simply foreign to me. Allowing myself to heal through an intimate spiritual connection to one beyond and greater than myself was not possible until I allowed myself to be vulnerable before God. Feeling vulnerable before God required trust in God. Learning to trust in God required me to be vulnerable before those from whom I sought help, which in turn required me to trust in those people. I was blessed with a warm and loving pastor and therapist who gave my spirit voice, heard me and helped me find my own path back to God. This life lesson in vulnerability and trust has been invaluable as I've gone through my ministry. It has given me insight into understanding the process by which trust develops—a process that takes time, patience and a gentle guide. Significantly, I also learned the depth of healing that exists within the church community, the body of Christ.

The church community also helped me address the shame and guilt that my purposeful turning away from God caused me. I had to learn how to accept God's forgiveness in my heart. It was through my pastor's counseling, the embrace of my church community and prayer that brought me to the realization that I was, indeed, forgiven. The healing power of community was a lesson that I will never forget. Finally, I cannot speak of the progression of my faith without speaking of my career in the law and my relationship with my clients. Upon graduating from law school I worked for a large Philadelphia law firm doing corporate litigation where I found the work intellectually stimulating, yet, I was unfulfilled. As a result, I decided to change jobs to work at a litigation firm that specializes in representing individuals whose lives had been tragically altered by catastrophic injury. The firm, where I worked, is widely recognized for the quality of its lawyers as well as its leadership in ethics in the legal profession. The work itself did not vary drastically from what I had done professionally in the past. I researched and wrote

about the complex legal issues that arose in my cases. I consulted with experts. I deposed witnesses, argued motions, and tried cases in court.

My clients, however, were drastically different. They included: brain-damaged children and adults, misdiagnosed cancer victims, burn victims, quadriplegics, paraplegics, families who had lost parents and children and others who faced significant health and financial difficulty. In order effectively to prepare their cases I had to know them intimately. They laid their lives before me and welcomed me into their homes. They told me the trials, tribulations and joys of their lives. I interviewed their husbands, wives, significant others, parents, brothers, sisters, aunts, uncles, friends and neighbors. I consulted with their physicians, employers and clergy. I reviewed their medical records and income tax returns. I appreciated daily what a privilege it was to know my clients on such an intimate level. But to what end? How was I helping my clients? The litigation process demands blame not forgiveness. It fosters pain not healing. I watched my clients suffer through this process and I recognized that my actions as their lawyer served to prolong and accentuate their pain. They could not forgive the doctor who may have made a terrible mistake or the driver of a truck who rendered their child quadriplegic. They could not forgive themselves. I could see it in their eyes and feel it in their hearts. Time and again I found that even the substantial amounts of money that we recovered for them failed to provide them peace or the ability to heal.

The recognition that the people I could help legally and financially were still catastrophically injured emotionally and spiritually underscored the void I felt growing in my life. As I stood in the midst of the void, the question of the meaning of my life relentlessly began to haunt me. Once again, I turned to my pastor and sought counseling from a therapist. I prayed. I took time away from work to think. What was I doing with my life? How was I to serve God? After much contemplation, I felt called to the ordained ministry. While I knew my clients intimately, I could not sit with them to bear witness to their suffering in a way that was healing. As a result, I decided to leave the practice of law to attend Yale Divinity School and to begin my walk toward ordination. In divinity school, I enjoyed the intellectual stimulation of engaging my studies, especially systematic theology. I enjoyed my work in the parish: teaching, preaching and providing pastoral care. The day I was ordained remains one of the most sacred and beautiful days of my life.

After I graduated from divinity school I found a different kind of spiritual home in Clinical Pastoral Education. In CPE theology sprang alive for me, theology was no longer the stuff of mere books and cerebral intellectualism. It required me to think and to feel and to BE. It allowed me to be who I am as a pastor and as a person. In CPE I found myself becoming whole: body, mind and spirit. It has been and continues to be a wonderful journey stepping into myself and walking with God from pastor, CPE supervisor and now into the executive role at Baptist Health.

## Personal Theological Statement Robert K. Greer

God is the source and Sovereign of all that is. As Creator of all things, all things exist for God's praise and purpose. Humankind, man and woman imago Dei, lives under God's government and is commissioned to be stewards of creation, but sadly we have refused to acknowledge dependence on God and God's claim on all creation. Although much of humankind has rejected God's sovereignty and defied God's authority, God does not choose to abandon us to damnation, but acts to reclaim creation through love and by working in and with us.

God in Christ comes to us with a saving disclosure of love. The act of revealing God's self to defiant creatures is an act of condescension and humiliation, which occurs out of respect for our freedom to respond and for our uniqueness in Creation. God's Word comes in the form of a person so as to be communicable to the most contumacious of creation's creatures. This divine communiqué announces: the debt we owe has been paid in full; now, accept the bill as being paid; and enjoy your new status of friendship and partner with God.

How scandalous it is to believe that God would go so far to reclaim the likes of us. We, who exist for God's purpose and praise, discover God acting for us and for our wholeness.

Christ the Word and human language of God, announces God's love and concern for the lost. Scripture testifies to this saving act of love and forgiveness and to God's participation in history. Since the Spirit of God and Christ has affected Scripture's formation and has revealed the truth of God's action, the word has proven to be reliable to those who choose to follow it and therefore it is authoritative.

God continues to demonstrate divine love (*agape*) through the life and service of the church, the new creation. The church continues its Lord and Savior's incarnation. The church's worship is the Christian's response to the love one comes to know in Christ. It is a response of gratitude that makes us adore and praise God and seek to know and do God's purpose. Worship proclaims and reveals God as our Friend. It provides us with a daily opportunity to be renewed and transformed in to the image of God.

The sacraments are the graceful gifts God gives us to set us on the way of grace and to nurture us continually in that way. This way is living as a neighbor to all, serving as faithful stewards of creation, working as agents of *shalom* in the world. God's agenda becomes our agenda. Social, economic and political involvement in the world is not something Christians decide to do; it is something we are impelled to do. God's grace frees us **for** faithful action.

As a servant of Christ and the church, I am called to discern God's presence and action among us as Scripture illustrates. As God partners with the church and with me, I am compelled to model and help others live out the partnering connection that is God's will for all creation.



## **My Spiritual Journey**

### **Robert Kenton Greer**

I cannot recall a time when I was not aware of what John Baillie describes as God's "mysterious companionship." My spiritual journey is a growing awareness and appreciation of God's care and providing grace.

I grew up in a Christian home and as a child and youth was very active in my small rural/suburban church's program. By most standards our family was considered poor.

At the age of 17 I decided I wanted to be a Presbyterian minister even though college was something beyond our family's economic status and reach. Somehow I was able to graduate from college and seminary with distinction and debt free! While in seminary, I was active in the civil rights movement and in 1964 worked in the Presbyterian Church's Delta Project in Mississippi. Through these experiences I grew in my appreciation of God in Christ who is always with us and present especially in the lives of the poor and oppressed. I grew in understanding that the church is indeed Christ's continued incarnation in the world and to be faithful to its savior the church must be ever ready to speak truth to power, to advocate for the poor, needy and oppressed, to indentify its self as their friend and compatriot and to put service above self.

Fifty years ago I had the great privilege and joy to marry Anne Elizabeth Bell, who has been my constant counselor, helpmate and benefactor. Anne's career was with Bell Telephone, Bell Atlantic and Verizon where she rose to the ranks of upper management.

In Northumberland Presbytery she served in various capacities including Moderator and President of Council. In Wellsboro she worked as director of the community art and cultural center and together we were able to co-opt other churches to work as partners for community betterment.

As an inner city pastor we were often faced with social and financial challenges, but through God's providing grace and by fostering cooperative efforts we were able to develop a wide range of solutions for helping the disabled, integrating the public schools, welcoming and acculturating thousands of Southeast Asian refugees, developing food pantries and a foodbank, creating Philadelphia's largest community garden's project, fostering spiritual care, direction and fellowship for scores of fellow believers, and training more than fifty seminarians in the art of parish ministry. Through the cooperation of churches of various denominations and settings, we were able to foster in Wellsboro a joint ministry for the area's mutual benefit.

Such experiences confirmed my growing appreciation of God's mysterious companionship and God's intension for humanity, created in God's image, to be generous to those in need and to be prepared to receive with gratitude God's bountiful goodness.

## Bio Information

### The Rev. Dr. Robert Kenton Greer

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Ordained 7/25/65

Licensed by the Diocese of PA to serve  
as minister in charge 4/7/71

Family: Married to Anne Elizabeth Bell; son Garth (Amanda) and grandchildren Jack and Haley; daughter Hilary - Episcopal priest.

Education: BA - Westminster College, New Wilmington, PA

M Div. - Pittsburgh Theological Seminary

Graduate work at Princeton Theological Seminary

D Min. - McCormick Theological Seminary

Spiritual Director/Counselor Training - Shalem Institute/Alban Institute

Work and Accomplishments: In Seminary very involved with civil rights work in Washington DC,, Hattiesburg, MS, Selma, AL, Pittsburgh, PA

1965-1967 - Ass't Minister of Aspinwall United Presbyterian Church

1967-1993 - Pastor of Calvary United Presbyterian Church

1971-1993 - Pastor of Calvary Presbyterian & St. Paul Episcopal Church, Federated.

I founded the South Philadelphia Ecumenical Parish - Lutheran, Presbyterian, Episcopal and UCC with United Methodist and Roman Catholics loosely associated. Founded work training and recreation programs for mentally disabled persons (PEP). Founded Common Ground - a community gardens program. Established Philadelphia's Foodbank. Served as Teaching Pastor for Princeton Theological Seminary for 55 students. Southeast Asian resettlement work/cross cultural evangelism. Worship and Sacraments Com. Chair, New Day Dawning Evangelism Counselor. Spirituality Director/Counselor.

1993-2007 - Pastor of First Presbyterian Church of Wellsboro, PA Founded work training and recreation programs for the mentally disabled (PIP). Actively worked to Reorganize Presbytery's Camping and Conference Center and programs; Committee to reorganize the Presbytery. COM, Trained and experienced Alpha leader/instructor.

Three times served Wellsboro School District's Strategic Planning Commission, Co-founder of Endless Mountain Music Festival, Soldiers and Sailors Hospital Ethics Committee, Wellsboro Chamber of Commerce.

Retired 2008 - Southern New England Presbytery. Did supply work for First Congregational Church, Bristol, RI, served as a stewardship counselor.

## Statement of Faith - Jeffrey William Beebe

I believe in God because my life makes sense (although, I do admit that there have been those times when discerning God's call on my life proved to be a bit challenging). I believe that my life makes sense because so many of the significant individuals, places, events and experiences seem to fit together so tightly. I believe that this is by design, as a result of God's providence. I believe in Jesus because He gave us an example, not just how life ought to be lived, but how Jesus, the visible expression of the invisible God, freely gave of Himself for me, offering to take away my sin, and I accept that. As one washed in the waters of Baptism this Good News is to be shared with others. I believe in the Holy Spirit because when I stop and think about God, I most often get a sense that God is with me and that God is near me reminding me that in and through the Holy Spirit that the Church is both equipped and empowered for ministry. I believe that same triune God is at work in the Church, not just the Presbyterian Church, but the Church Universal, wherever and however the Church may be found. And that through the Church, my faith and the faith of other believers is strengthened and non-believers may come to know Jesus Christ in a personal way. I believe that same triune God meets you where you are, accepts you as you are, and by grace guides you into becoming who and what you were created to be. I believe this to be true because of the Bible - God's living Word for us today and every day, witnessed through our Confessions, and revealed to us breaking of the Bread and sharing of the Cup.

I believe that The Church's responsibility of "making disciples" is the primary theological issue facing the Church today. Our role in making disciples begins in the Baptismal Vows and extends to the ends of the earth as the Church is sent forth in mission. The Church's task is to make disciples who are authentically walking with Christ and who are fully engaged in faithful practices of discipleship (worship, fellowship, study, service and witness). Theologically, to know Christ and to make him known is the task to which the Church is called. I believe that as the Church grounds herself in faithful practices of discipleship the Church models Christ's life. The Church is better able to see in the way Christ would see, hear in the way Christ would hear, and is better able to understand in the way Christ would understand. Understood theologically, I believe that the Church exists to make disciples, so that, they would be Christ's presence in the world. In and through the Church, empowered by the Holy Spirit, disciples are able to live, and move, and have their being, so that, they too would go and make disciples.

## Journey of Faith - Jeffrey William Beebe

My faith journey is one that has never taken me far from the nurture and guidance of the Church. My work in the Church, my personal statement of faith, and my philosophy of ministry have been greatly influenced by the Church. My work prior to, during, and since seminary has focused primarily on adolescents and their relationship to the larger Church. That work has undoubtedly been shaped by the Church. As a youth, the Church provided me with a framework by which I was able to build a solid foundation. That faith foundation was strengthened through my college years in and through some faithful partnerships between Young Life and the Church.

My sense of call has led me to lead ministries which are focused on making disciples and where each member of the faith community matters. Having been born and raised, baptized, guided and nurtured, confirmed, supported and trained in the Presbyterian Church I have sought to be part of communities of faith which are grounded in tradition, yet acutely aware of God's continuing activity in and through that faith community.

In and through my doctorate work I was able to formulate what I believe I had been faithfully engaged in through my calling to ministry and a life of discipleship. I came to better understand that being a disciple of Jesus Christ is first and foremost to be centered in worship and guided by Scripture. Centered in worship, believers are able to engage in faithful practices of discipleship (worship, fellowship, study, service and witness), coming to experience both ministries of gathering and ministries of sending. Together, I believe that these ministries continue to provide the theological framework I have needed, need now, and will continue to need in able to engage in relational ministry as the Holy Spirit leads.

I seek to know and understand to who God desires me to be and to what God calls me to do each and every day as I seek to be a faithful disciple, called to serve in and through the Church.

Rev. Debra Shevlin Henning  
Statement of Faith  
May 2017

I believe that all of life belongs to God. There is no part of human life or of creation that is not of urgent concern to God. God has always been and continues to be involved in creation and history. From my belief in God's sovereignty come three convictions that govern my life. First, that God takes better care of us than we are able to take of ourselves. Second, there is no telling what God will do in my life, in the life of the church or in the world, but that God's activity can be counted upon to be for the benefit of creation. Third, I believe that it is God's grace that has brought me safe this far, and it is God's grace that will lead me home.

I believe that Jesus Christ came into the world to rescue sinners, to redeem the least, the lost, the last and the powerless. I believe that Jesus is God's Word in human form. In Christ we can see what God is like. Jesus loved all kinds of people; he was compassionate and endlessly forgiving, committed to the truth and passionate about justice. Jesus identified with all persons, confronted them with who they were and who he was and called them to new life. In his death, he completed his identification with humanity. In his resurrection he offers new life to all humankind. Christ continues to work in the world in this way. Christ has called the church into existence for these same purposes, and calls us to live in the joyous reality of God's grace and love.

I believe that the Holy Spirit is God acting in the world today. I believe that it is by the power of the Spirit that God speaks, transforms lives and communities and institutions. The Spirit speaks and acts through a variety of ways; through the scripture, through people, through the events that happen to us, through creations, (through lions and tigers and golden retrievers) through art and music, through science, probably through our dreams, as well as in ways I cannot begin to imagine.

I believe that the scriptures are our guide for faith and life. By the power of the Spirit, these ancient documents speak God's Word to us today. They speak a Word of salvation, a Word of challenge, a Word of love, a Word of judgment, a Word of grace, a Word of reproach, a Word of Hope, a Word that tells us how to live for Jesus Christ; for others and for the world, a Word about how to live a life of trust in God's providence. I love the scriptures. I am continually astounded by what I read, as well as how texts so familiar that we can recite them without thinking, can suddenly speak a new and transforming word.

I believe the church is the body of Christ in the world. I also believe it is a human institution, with wounds and flaws and scars. I think our task is to view the life and actions of the church through the lense of the third chapter of the Book of Order. It would be appropriate to ask "Does this action/statement/policy reflect that the church is a provisional demonstration of what God intends for humanity? In my lifetime the

Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) and its processors denominations have had moments when they have been God's prophetic voice in the world. There have been times when the church has lost its way; when it has focused on its own existence, rather than living for the world. Clearly, our church is having some difficult times in these days. Nevertheless, it is still Christ's church and Jesus Christ does not forsake those he has called to be his own.

Finally, I believe in wonder. Most of the time when I look at the world around me and my life and the lives of those I love and the lives of those around me, I marvel at what God has done and continues to do. I cannot wait to see what God will do next. And I know that even in the worst of times, God is with us, and with me, and will finally redeem those times and all time.

Faith Journey  
Debra Shevlin Henning  
May 2017

I am a child of the covenant. My family's life centered around the church. I have been a Presbyterian all my life. I do not remember a time when I was not a Christian. I understood from a very young age that the singing of the hymns in church praised God and lifted me up. I always knew that Jesus loves me, and that Jesus Christ is Lord.

I had six surgeries before I was five years old to correct a club foot. In those days, what is now considered same day surgery kept people in the hospital for a week. It was very frightening for a little girl, so I prayed constantly that God would take care of me. My experience then, and since has been that God did indeed take care of me; that God takes better care of me than I am able to take of myself.

My parents had a deep concern for social justice. They took part in civil rights marches in the sixties. In the seventies, their Bible study group created a drug counseling program in the small town where we lived, that was initially housed in the church. The program has expanded since then into a faith based counseling center, working with kids and families. My three brothers and I have always known that we are expected to care about issues of justice.

I went to College at the College of Wooster in Ohio, where I majored in music and speech. During the summers I was a counselor at the Presbyterian Conference Center in Holmes, New York, working with kids from eight years old through high school. It was there that the glimmerings of a call to ministry began to form, although I did not recognize it. But I loved it. I loved working with kids. I loved the challenge of teaching how to apply what we believe to this concentrated experience of community.

After I graduated, I went to graduate school to Georgetown to study language and linguistics. I left after a semester. It became clear that was not the direction for my life. I moved back to Long Island with no clear idea of what I was going to do. A job fell in to my life as a youth director in a Presbyterian Church on Long Island. I loved it. Shortly after that my father died suddenly of a

heart attack. It was the worst thing that ever happened to me (although I do understand that it happened to him.) It was my faith, and the people in the church that enabled me to get through that. It was maybe the first time my beliefs in a gracious God were tested. I found that everything I believed held me together, along with the loving care of church members I had known all my life.

I began to think that I could be a minister and work with kids if I wouldn't ever have to preach. The idea of preaching was very scary. Then I started thinking that I could probably learn to do that competently in order to do what I believed God was calling me to do.

Princeton Theological Seminary was a hundred miles from my home. So I drove down there one day, and met with the admissions director, who enabled me to articulate what I had not yet formulated. I applied and was accepted and started seminary the following fall. I knew one clergywoman who had struggled very hard to find a call. My mother was instrumental in getting approval for her ordination. There was not much support for women going into ministry in the late seventies, although we were the second wave of women. I am extremely grateful for those early clergywomen, who were all brilliant and strong and determined. I know very well that their struggles enabled me and my contemporaries to follow our calling. We stand on the shoulders of giants. In seminary, I developed a love for the scripture, and found that the Bible formed me and transformed me.

My first call was to Russellville, Arkansas, as an associate pastor to work with kids. I loved working with the youth groups and the adults and immersed myself in my work. My responsibilities included preaching once a month. To my surprise, it turned out that I was good at it. I discovered that I was most alive in the whole process of studying, and reflecting on the passage of the day, and making the connections that would bring these ancient texts to life in the twentieth century. I was invited to join a lectionary study group, and those men became mentors and colleagues and friends. I am still grateful to them.

After a short time as an associate in Maryville, Tennessee, I was called to be pastor of three rural churches in northeast Louisiana. In those churches I found incredible faithful people who loved me and taught me more about how



to live a Christian life than I gave them about anything. There I developed a rhythm for studying and writing and pastoral care. I married someone who was very supportive of me. I loved my life there. There were difficulties- Louisiana was/is extremely racially segregated. I had to learn how to balance my northeastern liberal upbringing with the realities of racism in the rural south.

My next call was to a midsize congregation in Little Rock. Grace Presbyterian Church was organized in the early sixties and was very active in the issues of desegregating the Little Rock schools. That church understood that its ministry was to the community as well as to its members. After learning about and studying and experiencing the labyrinth, we built one. I find that the walking meditation of the labyrinth is transformative.

While I was in Little Rock, I got a divorce. And again, the church got me through that very difficult time.

I married my husband Steve a few years later. Steve raised lions and tigers. I have always loved animals, but from him and from the big cats I learned in a new way how all life matters to God. It was an amazing experience.

I was the pastor of the Ormond Beach Presbyterian Church for a couple of years. After I left there, I have worked with Steve as a graphic designer. We moved to Pierson and after a year or so going to the local Methodist church, I began attending First Church, Crescent City. It is a small church. Worship was very nourishing, however; the pastor was a good preacher. I began to sing in the choir and playing the hand bell choir. Occasionally, I filled the pulpit. It was good to part of a congregation. When I broke my hip, they were wonderful to me.

When they invited me to work with them I was honored to accept. I find that I am alive in a new way as I once again enter into the rhythm of church life, studying, preaching, praying with the people, and working with the life of the congregation. I am very grateful that God has called me to serve there.

I know that I am extremely blessed. My family has always loved and supported me. The church has nurtured me. I received a privileged education.

I have served churches of faithful, loving people. In the dark and painful times in my life, the Lord has held me together.

I want to live a life of joy, of gratitude, of hearing and speaking the truth. I want to glorify and enjoy God. I want to enable people to recognize grace in their lives. I hope I manifest the fruits of the Spirit; love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control. I find that my relationship to Jesus Christ is strengthened and that I am transformed by the study of the bible.

I have been married for nineteen years to Steve Henning. We have two Old English Sheepdogs, and a St. Bernard. I am the youngest of four kids and the only girl. I love the Lord, I love the church, I love my family and my friends. I am committed to the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.).