

STATEMENT OF FAITH  
Patricia McClurg

Jesus Christ, the light of the world: that is my faith and the hope I find in the time that is and the time that is yet to be.

The one true and living God was and is made known to us in Jesus Christ who stands at the center of the biblical record of the Lord's movement in history with the people of God. By the power of God's Word and Spirit, the universe is. Through the advent of Jesus among us we become a part of God's redemptive history and are witnesses of the coming of God's promised and present rule. Through Jesus Christ we see God most clearly and we see also what humanity is called to be. In the presence of the Holy Spirit we experience God's own presence. The Spirit is one with the Father and the Son. The story of God among us is still unfolding; by grace and in faith we make it our own story.

My personal engagement in that story came not by way of Presbyterian Scottish ancestry as the family name might imply (and as noble a route as that might have been). My earliest Sunday school and church experiences in assorted protestant-type local congregations were not good ones and by the time I reached the age of nine I had developed my own understanding of the existence and nature of God summarized as follows: in the world there is no real evidence of God's existence and among the people of the church the evidence is that the God they think exists is a gloomy and oppressive sort. As for me, I wanted no part of church.

But then one sunny Sunday afternoon some people calling themselves Presbyterians slipped up on me in an unguarded moment. They talked me into coming to just one youth fellowship meeting. Some fun, some neat young people and some adults caring about me were a part of that gathering. So I put those Presbyterians on probation. Then I began to hear and experience some good news. That's when the power of the Word of God as revealed in scripture came alive for me, so much so that I read the whole book, even Leviticus. Jesus, like everyone of us and yet like no one of us, seemed to reach out to all sorts of people in ways that were hope filled, unique and life giving. Jesus knew pain. He struggled and suffered. In the midst of the worst of times he continued to love the people he met. At one with God the Creator and the Holy Spirit, Jesus the Christ loved me and set me on the road to caring about all of the people of God's creation.

In my baptism at First Presbyterian Church in Orange, Texas, I felt the Spirit confirming God's promise to cleanse us from sin, give us newness of life and embrace us as children of God's gracious covenant. Still today as I participate in the Lord's Supper I remember the commitment I made as a new member of the community of believers and I again lay claim to the assurances of the good news we know in Christ Jesus. I remember his life and death. I remember the risen Christ, once more among his disciples, going unrecognized until he broke bread with them. My hope and my strength are renewed.

As servants of God our call is to bring ourselves and the world more closely into conformity with God's purpose for all creation. The church's allegiance to the just and loving reign of the sovereign God is the basis for our work of evangelism, nurture and social responsibility. Our confidence in the life and mission of the church comes from knowing Christ as the head and foundation of the church. As a part of our obedient response to the gospel, we seek to order our corporate and individual lives in the strong and winsome spirit and purpose of the Lord of life and church.

## BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

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A wandering roughneck oilfield worker was my father and a household manager was my mother. I had a dog named Spot and a younger sister named Susan. During the earliest years of my life we were nomads, wandering up and down the Gulf Coast of Texas and Louisiana, laboring under the auspices of the Sun Oil Company. On the job my father wore a hard hat, steel toed shoes and overalls. Before his work was done he had learned how to do everything that was required on and around a drilling rig. Then he became a superintendent of wells on Lake Maracaibo in Venezuela. As my sister and I were growing up my mother made our clothes, watched over us like a hawk and pinched every penny. My parents had a mission. It was to give us a life better than theirs. They would find a way to send us to college - and then much more.

My parents were not church members or attenders. Then dropped me off at Sunday school classes of various brand names until I was nine years old. They quit doing that when I asked to be excused from religious stuff. My parents resumed dropping me off on Sundays when I hooked up with the First Presbyterian Church in Orange, Texas at the age of thirteen. At Christmas in 1954 one of the presents from my mother was that radical new book called the Revised Standard Version of the Bible. Both my parents were proud of my membership in the church and proud again later when I made church work my vocation.

By the time I was seventeen being a Christian and being a part of the Presbyterian Church was at the core of my life. I was not and am not naive about the frailties and failures of the church in general and the Presbyterian Church in particular. But I am acutely conscious of the fact that the church has given me an incredible number of very special opportunities. I will be forever indebted. I have met amazing and wonderful people and seen God at work across the earth. That has enriched my life and strengthened my faith beyond measure.

The opportunities I have been given for learning and service have been remarkable. Presbyterian schools: Austin College, Presbyterian School of Christian Education, Austin Seminary. Presbyterian full time work: Director of Christian Education in Newport News, VA; Assistant Pastor in Beaumont, TX; Associate Pastor in Pasadena, TX; Associate Executive in the Synod of Red River (now the Sun); Administrative Director of the Mission Board of the Presbyterian Church US (Atlanta); Mission Associate in Elizabeth Presbytery (New Jersey); Presbytery Executive in New Castle Presbytery (Delaware and the Eastern Shore of Maryland). I have loved every job I have had.

I am particularly grateful for the opportunity I had to serve the Mission Board in Atlanta. I worked with wonderfully talented people, both paid and volunteers. They made me proud to be a Presbyterian and I was especially heartened by the time I spent witnessing God at work in our mission fields around the world. Those international experiences opened up the doors of the ecumenical church to me. I was privileged to attend gatherings of the World Council of Churches. I will forever treasure that, especially those worship services. I was able to serve the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the USA as its president. In 1989 that Council, reminiscent of my mother in 1954, presented me with the first all-put-together copy of the New Revised Standard Version of the Bible.

Morning by morning new mercies I see. I give thanks to God.