

Mat Taylor's Statement of Faith

I believe in you, O God. You are the creator of the universe and all that lies beyond the visible realm. Out of the purest love, you have made all that is. You have created humanity in your image, male and female you have created us. Though we are composed of dust and water, you fill us with the fire of your own divine breath and shower us with your grace and love.

But, rejecting your gentle admonishments, we ate from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil and aspired to become like you and the heavenly beings. Our sin and disobedience proved catastrophic. Estranged from you and one another, we now face alone the full weight and horror of our own mortality. We have been cast forever from the innocence of the Garden. Yet you have never abandoned us. Despite our sin and separation from you, you continually bless us with your presence and the light of your truth.

In the days of Noah, you redeemed creation through the waters of the flood, giving righteousness a fresh beginning. In the days of Abraham, you promised to build a nation through which all humanity would be blessed. In the days of Moses, you came to the one "drawn from the water" in the indefatigable fire of the burning bush. You declared your divine name and rescued your people—the people who wrestle with God—from slavery in Egypt. You gave them your commandments and established your covenant with them forever. Israel became a light to all the nations. Despite all this, however, sin still crouched at the door of the human heart. Disobedience and death continued to oppress all of humanity.

Thus, out of the purest and deepest love imaginable, you sent your Son into the world to redeem us from our own destruction. Your Son was born of a woman in a holy birth. He was truly made of mortal flesh—he hungered, wept, and bled. Yet in him "the fullness of your being was pleased to dwell." As the divinely inspired Scriptures declare: "Your Son, though in the form of God, did not regard equality with you as something to be exploited, but he emptied himself, taking on the form of a slave." In the person of the Son, you taught the world a new ethic of radical compassion. You proclaimed that we must love our enemies, give to all in need, and practice humility. Tragically, your Son was betrayed by the very world he was sent to save. In deep obedience to your Spirit, he suffered death, defeat, and shame upon the cross. But early on the morning of the third day, a group of women followers discovered his tomb empty and heard the angel proclaim, "He is not here. He is risen!" Now we stand two thousand years later to boldly proclaim that "the victim of sin became victor and won the victory over sin and death for all humanity!"

By the gift of your Son, we are saved through faith in him. Yet, apart from the grace of your Anointed, there is only sin and death and judgment. Only through

the gift of the Christ is humanity freed from the bondage of sin and redeemed from the darkness of the grave, for Jesus is the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world.

By the work of your Holy Spirit, you call men and women to be born anew in the waters of baptism. Through baptism, we are made one with your Son and given new life in him. Your Spirit gathers us into the church, which is the body of Christ on earth, and through fellowship, the breaking of bread, and the prayers, your Holy Spirit nourishes and equips us for discipleship and every good deed. As your servants, we worship you as the Triune God, whose name forever is Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. We look forward to the return of your Son and the resurrection to eternal life promised to us, yet we encounter you today in the testimony of the Scriptures, in the Holy Eucharist, and in our common life together. In the new birth you have offered us through the gift of your Son, we are called to a transformed life—a life of radical compassion, true holiness, and loving discipleship.

Thank you, Lord, for your boundless generosity and amazing grace. In Christ Jesus, you have freed me from every oppression and have redeemed me from the penalty of my own folly and sin. Amen.