

Journey of Faith

Reformed and ever reforming is the most concise way to name my faith. I was born into a Dutch Reformed family in the Midwest and was baptized shortly thereafter at Third Reformed Church in Pella, Iowa. My father later left farming to follow God's call into full-time vocational ministry, serving as Senior Minister for three congregations. Therefore, faith was a central part of our family's identity. However, I was never one to take things at face value and always strove to dig deeper, think critically, and ask difficult—what I now know were deconstructive type—questions. Therefore, my faith while *Reformed*, has continued to *reform* as I followed my own vocational calling into ministry, furthered my education, and gained lived and ministry experience. Throughout my years of ministry—whether in academic, parish, or clinical settings—I have come to realize that the impetus of this reforming is God's presence showing up in places and in ways that challenge my assumptions and expectations—expanding my horizons and solidifying my sense of prevenient grace. Through this process, my faith has deepened and refined, and I've come to see evidence of God's liberating love and call to be agents of justice in the world. In short, I've become a pastoral theologian, or one who does theology pastorally.

Tenents of Faith

God, consisting of three persons—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit (The Holy Trinity)— is a perfect, perichoretic unity. God created the world “ex nihilo” and formed woman and man in God's own image and likeness (Imago Dei) to be in relationship with God and one another. All of creation was originally good; however, tempted by Satan, humanity rebelled against God and became separated from God and unable to return to God. All have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God.

God's remedy for the situation of estrangement was Jesus Christ, humanity's redeemer, Lord, and Savior. Christ, born of the virgin Mary and fully God and fully human, took on the sin of the world and by his substitutionary atonement reconciled humanity to God. This was accomplished through Christ's suffering, death, and resurrection on the third day, where he ascended into heaven and is seated at the right hand of the Father.

Before Christ left this earth, he promised a helper, the “Paraclete” (Holy Spirit), would come in power and sustain and guide us. The Holy Spirit dwells in each believer, renews our hearts and minds, and persuades us to repent from our sin and confess Jesus Christ as Lord. The Spirit also intercedes on our behalf and reassures us of our divine pardon, justified by faith alone through Christ, and reminds us of our eternal life in Christ Jesus.

God has revealed Godself through creation and through God's Word, Holy Scripture. Scripture is the inspired, authoritative, and trustworthy Word of God recorded in the books of the Old and New Testament. These books record God's self-revelation and offer guidance to living faithfully. They are to be interpreted according to their historical context and purpose.

God graciously adopts us and extends his covenant to us, welcoming us into the heavenly family. As sons and daughters of God we are to represent and re-present Christ to the world, loving our neighbor as ourselves. The Holy Spirit empowers believers and partners with us to do this work through various gifts and graces.

God created one catholic (unified) and apostolic Church to be God's hands and feet in the world and to bear witness to the Kingdom of God (God's rule and reign now and in the age to come). The Church brings people together in fellowship as the Body of Christ. The Church is to worship God, obey God's commands, spread the Gospel message, make disciples of all nations, celebrate the sacraments, work for justice, and relieve human distress and need.

God's redemptive purpose will be fulfilled in the second coming of Christ, when God makes all things new. The dead will rise, the final judgment will occur, and God's eternal and glorious kingdom will be ushered into its fullness.