

Faith Statement
Katelyn Gordon Cooke

I believe in the Triune God –

Father, Son, and Holy Spirit;
Creator, Redeemer, and Sustainer;

who are three persons of one essence, simultaneously distinct and inseparable.

I believe in God the Creator,

who formed the heavens and the earth,
who knit me together in my mother's womb.

I believe in God the Redeemer, Jesus Christ,

who is fully human and fully divine, one person of two natures.

A Jewish preacher, teacher, and healer, who proclaimed God's love and justice,

Jesus was crucified, dead, and buried.

On the third day, he rose from the dead.

His resurrection frees us from the bondage of sin and death
and makes us righteous in the eyes of God.

I believe in God the Sustainer, the Holy Spirit,

who binds us to Christ,

who offers us the gift of faith and life in Christ.

In the self-giving love and communion of the Trinity,

we are shown how to live in relationship with God and with each other.

I believe grace is God's free gift to us,

given to us not because of anything we have done or not done
but because of God's radical love for us.

I believe the Scriptures are the Living Word of God –

testimony to God's presence with and love for God's people.

Through the spectacles of Scripture, we come to know God and ourselves most fully.

I believe the church is the body of Christ,

the people of God, the community of faith

who are called together to worship God

and to bear witness to God's love and God's grace to the world.

At baptism, we are made members of the body of Christ.

We are forgiven of our sins,

participate in the death and resurrection of Christ,

and are united to Christ.

At the Lord's Supper, we remember Christ's life, death, and resurrection.

With the community of faith and the communion of the saints

we give thanks for God's love, grace, and mercy toward us,

and we look forward to Christ's coming again.

I believe that it is my only comfort,

in life and in death,

that I am not my own but am loved and chosen by God.

Journey of Faith **Katelyn Gordon Cooke**

In a time and culture where we are drawn to the big and flashy, my faith journey may seem unremarkable. I was baptized as an infant at Kirk of Kildaire Presbyterian Church in Cary, North Carolina. Since then I've worshipped and worked at several other churches, but the Kirk is the only church of which I've ever been a member. I grew up going to Sunday School, youth group, and Vacation Bible School there, and it was at the Kirk that I was ordained as an elder in high school and as a Minister of Word and Sacrament.

Throughout college, I had a fledgling sense of call to ministry, though I wasn't able to articulate it as such at the time. I'm grateful for the people along the way who helped name what they saw in me and encouraged me to explore what God was doing in my life. In an uncharacteristic move, I applied to Columbia Theological Seminary without having stepped foot on the campus or spending any time in Atlanta. During the months leading up to the start of seminary, I felt like I was in an inner tube and God was the river. I had agency in the situation, but there was something (Someone) bigger at work moving things along.

My faith can lean toward the intellectual, and I loved seminary. It was a formative time for me, and I found myself working hard to have the right answers for exams and to discern my calling. Sometimes those desires complemented each other; other times they seemed at odds. I had a deep sense that I was where God wanted me, but I also questioned whether I was qualified for ministry. Internships at Trinity Presbyterian and Decatur Presbyterian and a unit of Clinical Pastoral Education at Metro State Women's Prison gave me opportunities to discover my gifts for ministry and to live out what I was learning in seminary classes. Thank goodness for patient and trusted mentors and for safe spaces to try on the role of minister. Thank goodness too for communities who've had very different life experiences than I have who challenged me to consider that God might be bigger than I had imagined.

Since seminary, I've had the privilege of serving two congregations, both in Charlotte, NC, and I've had experiences of deep joy and fulfillment and of real heartbreak in both churches. It still amazes me that it's my *job* to read and discuss Scripture, tend relationships, pray with people, and serve others.

I am both excited about and slightly daunted by the call to ministry in this time in our world. So much is in transition, and those of us in leadership in the church are being asked to trust the leading of the Spirit beyond ourselves and what we've grown accustomed in recent generations. My prayer is that God will help me see past my own presumptions of what's right and wrong and be open to the new things the Spirit is doing in these days. One of my favorite writers, Richard Rohr, claims that "God is in love with the future," and it's my hope to have my heart set in that direction with God as well.

When it comes to call and where I am to serve, my experience is that God makes it abundantly clear, and this has been true for my new call to serve as co-pastor with Andy at Covenant Presbyterian in Augusta. It will be a new adventure for both of us, and I am looking forward to what God has in store for us in this new chapter of ministry.