

## **Statement of Faith**

### **The Rev. Shannan R. Vance-Ocampo**

I understand my life in Christian faith to be that of pilgrimage. I come to God as one who does not have all the answers, but who is on a continuous journey with the living God in Jesus Christ. I believe that my relationship with God is one that has been present even before my birth, before I was aware of the movement of the Spirit in my life. Therefore, as I describe my statement of faith, I understand that as one who is on an ever-changing pilgrimage, what I state to be my faith will grow over time, as I continue to hear and respond to God's call in my life.

I believe in one God who created our world and all we know. This Triune God chose for us to be God's faithful disciples. As a disciple of the living and creating God I know that God is part of all I say, see, and do.

I believe in Jesus Christ, who came to earth to save us from sin and redeem our world as the living revelation of God incarnate. Jesus lived a human existence as we each do. He was born of a woman, engaged in public ministry with *all* people, and died on the cross to free all people to know and love a grace-filled God who loves and suffers with us. This same Jesus Christ appeared to his followers following his death and resurrection and has returned to be one with God. Christ's resurrection assures us that ours is a God who did not remain on the cross, but who came off the cross, enabling us to know and proclaim a God who is as the name given to Jesus Christ at his birth suggests, "*Emmanuel—God with us.*" Our risen Lord calls upon us to live joyfully, bringing God's Word to all places and people we encounter. With other Christians, I believe that we are called to remember Christ's life, to live as Christ taught us, and to joyfully anticipate his return. We are called to mirror as best we can the life that Jesus lived, serving as his disciples with lives filled with justice, compassion, and forgiveness; teaching and modeling this Christian life by our daily actions.

I believe in the Holy Spirit, who is present with us today. God's Holy Spirit dwells within each of us as we go about our work and lives and sustains us as God's eternal presence in each person. This Spirit has been with God's people in all times and guides and leads us as we work and live in God's name.

I believe that the Scriptures, both the Hebrew Scriptures and the New Testament are the authoritative interpretation of God's work and witness to us. The Scriptures proclaim a God who is always present with and concerned about the welfare of God's people, and teach us how to live in harmony with each other as well as how to responsibly live as partners with God's good Creation.

I believe in one baptism and in the remembrance of Christ's death and resurrection through the taking of bread and cup to be the lived out sacramental experiences of God's presence and action in our lives. Through the act of baptism, we welcome one another into the universal Christian community and recognize publicly God's love and calling in each of our lives. In the taking of the bread and the cup we remember the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ and are called to live and proclaim this holy mystery in our community of faith and world. The sacraments of baptism and communion call all believers to go into God's world and engage in ministry with others both within and outside the church.

As members of Christ's church, we have a mission to both our church and the world. We live on this earth because God chose for us to do so. Living in faithfulness to this gracious gift calls us to live as good stewards of God's Creation, caring for the earth and its inhabitants equally. We see before us many examples of the brokenness of God's beloved Creation, both within and outside the church. This brokenness calls out to the church to engage in ministries of reconciliation where injustice exists. Part of this mission is seeking to minister to those who are sick or oppressed, in advocacy for the poor, and with those who are rendered powerless—the other part is confessing our own complicity in ignoring God's created order. We should continue to be especially concerned about the human barriers of racism, sexism, and classism that divide the body of Christ. We are strengthened for this mission in the church, world, and even to our own selves by the grace and assurance given to us in Jesus Christ and by the power of the Holy Spirit that sustains us for God's ministry today.