

Faith Statement

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My favorite theologian, Kris Kristofferson sang it like this: (I get much of my theology from poetry and from country music.) *Life is the question and life is the answer, and God is the reason and love is the way.*

I have faith in God. There are 3 Hebrew letters in God's name, all consonants, and the vowels change with the tense and the context. HVH is the root word for everything that follows. God first said to Moses, *HYH ser HYH* at first – *Ehyeh ser Ehyeh* - *I will be who I will be.* And then: *Tell them YHWH* (I Am) *has sent you.* Columbia University prof. Emanuel Derman writes that *God is riffing on his true name.* Yahweh means *being.* Yahweh is also the name of the *present tense* in Hebrew grammar. Derman writes, *YHWH is the irreducible substance, the ultimate non-metaphor, too, the bottom-level primitive out of which everything else is constructed. Hence, no graven images, no models are possible. You can't ask 'Why?' about YHWH, you can only ask 'How?'* Moses asked for God's name (Ex. 3:13-14), and the answer is: Being. Existence itself. IS-ness. An Encounter with Being itself should probably not result in requirements of doctrine or theological propositions, or even (like Peter) building 3 shrines on a mountain. An encounter with being itself, existence, does not require of you a statement of belief. It demands instead, attention. Awe. Wonder.

I have faith in Jesus Christ. I deliberately avoid the word "believe" because I don't "believe" in most of the heresy that American Christianity and evangelicalism has made of the Christian faith. I'm not interested in belief *about* Jesus. We are not saved by what we believe. Faith is relational, not propositional. I care about faith *in* Jesus Christ as the Word God sent, of whom God has been trying to tell us: "*This way, this truth, this life. Trust me!*" I continue to experience that relationship to God, through him, in the holy community that is the church – in its common life, sacraments, and worship. I think saying that Jesus came solely to die as a sacrifice that we might be saved is pretty much nonsense, and ignores his life, his teaching, and the story we get through scripture. I think he called us, and still does, into a new life and a new way of being that models the Reign of God in our world. I think God is saying of Jesus, "It looks like this, like him and his way."

I have faith that the Holy Spirit will continue to feed and empower not only the church, but the life of the world. I like the Trinitarian model of apprehending God, as it describes a horizontal relationship – not top-down, but God in community with God's own self. That is the model for our life together. I think the Spirit is what drove the Reformers to say "Enough!" and gave Martin Luther King Jr. and other prophets the wisdom and words and stamina to confront injustice and hatred, and gives poets and artists and musicians the muse through which they fill our world with truth and beauty.

The Spirit fuels the church's mission to a broken world. Despite the hyper-religiosity of our society, and perhaps because of it, we are secular in the extreme. We've lost transcendence; that is: history, purpose and God. In the words of Yeats: "The best lack all conviction, while the worst are full of passionate intensity." Consequently the world is has an adversarial spirit, its people driven to postures of certitude or hopelessness. We've lost history. A narcissistic culture acts as if it invented all truth only yesterday, and glories in consumerism and immediate reward - as if now is all there ever was. We've lost purpose. We let Wall Street manage our hopes and Madison Avenue our desires. Both have proven poor substitutes for the wisdom of Galilee and Geneva. Few have some sense that their life and work serve greater purpose. We've lost God. A living faith has been replaced by propositional truth. We need our mojo back.

The hard work of living the world and reshaping it justly is because God is Being itself. Rainer Maria Rilke said is this way: *I find you, Lord, in all things and in all/my fellow creatures, pulsing with your life;/as a tiny seed you sleep in what is small/and in the vast you vastly yield yourself./* Everything is holy. Everything and everyone belongs. God is hidden under every rock and in the feathers of every bird and in you, who are made in the image of God. The whole earth is drenched in sacrament.