

Statement of Faith

Michael W. Garrett

I believe the Christian faith tells the truest story of this world. It is best seen as a play with four acts, the last yet to be finished: Creation, Fall, Redemption, and Re-creation.

I believe in the Trinitarian God, who in love created all that is, declaring it good. We were created to shepherd God's world, delight in its abundance, and live in relationship with a God whose image is stamped on every aspect of our being. For reasons beyond our comprehension but resident in our hearts, men and women violated this relationship, falling into a fundamental pride called sin which separates us from God. This separation has left us in conflict not only with our God, but with God's creation, and each other. The good image of God in us has not been destroyed, but has been defaced. We are often good by God's grace, often guilty by our own hand, and often hurt by the guilty hands of others.

At the same time, the story of our fall is the beginning of our redemption. The God who created us has a missionary heart and from the earliest times – especially through Abraham, the patriarchs and matriarchs, and the covenant people Israel – has sought to redeem the world and its peoples. God's mighty acts in history, prophetic Word, and promise of a new heaven and a new earth reveal God's intent and goal. In the fullness of time God the Father spoke redemption in a new and definitive way through the sending of God the Son. (Hebrews 1:1-2) Through Jesus the Son the missionary heart of God is revealed in the Word made flesh. Jesus came to us announcing the coming of the Kingdom of God, inviting men and women to repent and believe, and enter into the salvation of God in this world and the world to come.

I affirm Jesus Christ as the unique Son of God, fully God and fully human. The Scriptures of the Old and New Testament find their center in him and are fully authoritative and inspired in their witness. Jesus lived for us that we may learn the way of disciples. Jesus died for us on the cross that the power of sin in creation and our lives may be broken. Jesus rose for us, his resurrected body validating God's power to forgive and redeem this world. In the risen Christ the outlines of our final hope appear. Not a disembodied life in an immaterial heaven, but a new body fully able to love and serve the Lord in a new heaven and new earth.

The final unfinished act, re-creation, begins with the missionary Son sending God the Holy Spirit to be resident in our lives and be the agent of God's transforming power in the world. Through the Spirit, men and women are called to the church to become a community of faith, discipleship, and worship. In the power of the Pentecost Spirit we too are called to do the mission of Jesus Christ in the world, not in our strength, but in his. In power of the Spirit we hope in the day glimpsed by the Apostle John in which he saw a new heaven and a new earth. One over which God's benediction will be spoken, "Behold I am making everything new!" (Rev. 21:5)

Dr. Michael W. Garrett

Biographical Sketch

I grew up in Richmond, Virginia with my mother, father, and sister. My introduction to the church was in junior high school through an invitation to the local Presbyterian church youth group, delivered by the cute girl at the end of the block. I was confirmed and baptized not long after that, and have continued in relationship with Presbyterian Church since that time.

I was also nurtured in the faith through parachurch ministries in my high school and college years such as Young Life and Intervarsity Christian Fellowship. The practices of discipleship I learned through these organizations have deeply influenced my model of ministry in the decades since.

My sense of call to pastoral ministry emerged at the end of my college years. A combination of personal experiences, encouragement from friends, and conversation with several pastors led me to apply to seminary. I graduated from Union Theological Seminary in Virginia in 1987 with an M.Div.

My wife, Marcia and I met during the post- college and early seminary years and were married in 1984. Marcia was a real estate agent for a number of years and is now pursuing a new direction. We have two children. Our oldest is Tricia who is getting a graduate counseling degree and is married to a Presbyterian pastor who recently began his first call near Long Island, New York. Our younger son Baxter lives in Orlando, works in the entertainment division of Walt Disney World, and is moving through a college a bit at a time.

I was ordained as an Associate Pastor in 1987 and began my called ministry at the First Presbyterian Church of Danville, VA. Approximately 5 years later I knew I wished to do a ministry more aligned with outreach and was called as Associate Pastor to the North Avenue Presbyterian Church in Atlanta, GA. Much to everyone's shock, the Senior Pastor died a year and half after my arrival because of a long battle with cancer. I was named the Acting Head of Staff and became the primary preacher in this urban church of about 900 members. After I held this position for more than two years the church called a new Senior Pastor. Within a year it became clear that the time had come for me to pursue another call.

In 1998 I became the Senior Pastor at Corona Presbyterian Church, an urban congregation of 300 members in Denver, Colorado. I served there for 7 years. Corona was a difficult congregation to lead and both my wife and I wished for our children to grow up closer to family on the east coast. In 2004 the Westminster Presbyterian Church, a 600 member congregation, called me to become their Senior Pastor. I have recently completed ten years of ministry at Westminster.

Key moments in my growth as pastor include receiving in 2002 a D.Min. in Missional Theology through Columbia Theological Seminary. I also received the Lilly Endowment Clergy Renewal Grant in 2012 which allowed me to experience and study ancient and living Celtic Christianity in Ireland and its unique melding of both deep spiritual formation and robust mission outreach among non-Christian peoples. In 2012 I completed 25 years of ordained ministry.

Once again I sense the time has come to pursue a new call. I've never assumed pastoral ministry was a lifetime calling but each time the door has opened to another place of congregational leadership and service. It is this journey that brings me to where I am today.