

Statement of Faith: Jonathan Bowling

The great preacher George Buttrick summed up the gospel by saying, “The most wonderful thing has happened!” Jesus Christ has come to humanity and revealed in word, deed, and in his very being that despite our worst efforts to reject God, God has not rejected us.

God is the creator of all things whose image we bear both male and female. We are created to live in community with one another and in loving relationship with God, but in a mysterious way that often seems like an inheritable disease, human beings choose to hurt one another and reject God. God called the family of Abraham and Sarah who responded in faith and became a blessing to all humanity. Afterward God elected the descendants of Jacob and all those joined to them by delivering them from Egypt and giving the Law through Moses at Sinai. Israel's story is the human story of obedience and sin, wholeness and brokenness—a watery chaos out of which God is still able to call order and life and do a new thing.

In the fullness of time, Jesus Christ was born of Mary, fully human, fully God. He was a poor member of a marginal people living under Roman domination, and yet in him the fullness of God dwelt. He announced: “The Kingdom of God has come near, repent and believe the good news!” With this message he traveled around Galilee teaching, healing, casting out evil, and bringing people from death to life. Because Jesus’ greater authority was a threat to their authority, the religious leaders of his day plotted to kill him. He was executed with the cooperation of Herod, Pilate, and the complicit crowd. We are all guilty of his death. But God has taken a tool of torture and humiliation and bent its meaning back on itself so far that death itself has broken and resurrection life has become possible. The cross stands at the center of history showing the depths of God’s love for us and the immeasurable lengths God is willing to go to save us.

When Jesus was still with his disciples, he told them he would not leave them orphaned but would send the Spirit, the Comforter, who would remind them of everything he had taught them. This Spirit proceeds from both Father and Son and is the source of all inspiration and of our empowerment for ministry. Through the Spirit, God claims us in the waters of baptism and feeds us at the table of communion. The Spirit is present with us and leads us in the way we should go.

God calls us into worshipping communities where we praise the Triune God for all of the love and faithfulness we have received. We extend the invitation to others to hear this story, to experience the risen Christ in our midst, and to join his ongoing work to feed the hungry, clothe the naked, welcome the stranger, visit the sick and the prisoner, and grow into the image of Christ as the Spirit renews us from the inside out. This is the story out of which we will live until, at last, Christ comes again in glory and God establishes a new heaven and a new earth.

Biographical Sketch, Jonathan Bowling

Church participation and belief in God stretch back farther than my earliest memories. My parents and older brother were my first influences and examples. We read scripture together and celebrated the seasons of the church year in our home, especially Advent, Christmas, and Easter.

I began to take responsibility for my faith in high school. I attended youth group at a Baptist church down the street from our home, because my congregation had only one youth aside from myself and my brother. During this time I was blessed to be able to serve on the youth council of Flint River Presbytery. Here I got my first taste of ministry work, and I loved it. We led retreats and events for our peers, served as Jr. Counselors for summer camp, served in local mission with Habitat for Humanity, and went on mission trips to Mobile, AL, and Washington, D.C.

After high school I attended Presbyterian College where my faith community was the Westminster Fellowship (WF) campus ministry. I felt completely at home with this group of students following my youth group and youth council experiences. In WF we were responsible for the content of the program itself – weekly programs, retreats, service projects, etc. – under the supervision of the campus chaplain.

During my senior year of college I reflected on my life so far, and I discovered that I had consistently been drawn to ministry among the different groups through whom God had touched my life. In serving with these groups – youth group, youth council, Westminster Fellowship – I felt fulfilled and at home. This realization was the first strong tug of God's call to ministry. But I still wanted to try out church service to make sure this was indeed God's call. Through contacts at PC I was able to find a summer internship with Purity Presbyterian Church in Chester, SC. That internship led to another with the campus ministry program at Winthrop University. I served for two years at Winthrop's Wesley Newman Westminster (WNW) campus ministry. In WNW Methodist, Roman Catholic, and Presbyterian students met and served Christ together. During that time I also served for a year as a youth minister with Oakland Avenue Presbyterian Church. These ministerial experiences solidified both my commitment to ecumenical ministry and my resolve to pursue seminary education.

I graduated from San Francisco Theological Seminary in 2005 and have served Greenville Presbyterian Church in Donalds, SC, since the beginning of Advent 2005. I am grateful to the congregation for all that they have taught me as a first-call pastor and for all of the shared ministry we have done over our years together. I have also been blessed to be a part of Trinity Presbytery where I have enjoyed serving in various capacities, especially with the Outdoor Ministries Division. Over the last two years I have been in an active call search and it is exciting to bring that time of discernment to a close. I look forward to serving Carolina Beach Presbyterian as a Teaching Elder.

d. Will you fulfill your ministry in obedience to Jesus Christ, under the authority of Scripture, and be continually guided by our confessions?

The structure of authority in the church is first that it is built upon Christ who is the cornerstone (Acts 4:11, Ps. 118:22). Christ is head of the church, he is God's self-revelation. To be a disciple is more about becoming like the teacher rather than assimilating information from the teacher. Therefore we are called as disciples to strive to become more like Christ and to pattern our lives and relationships in ways that echo his compassion, sacrifice, service, and radical obedience to God. All interpretation of Scripture must pass the test of being reconciled to what is revealed in the life, death, resurrection, ascension, and continued presence of Christ in the church by the Holy Spirit. The Scriptures witness to Christ; the Confessions are our understanding of what Scripture leads us to be, believe, and do; and our polity is an outgrowth of the Confessions. Our Confessions are the church's attempt throughout history to interpret Scripture faithfully under Christ. Although we are not bound to perpetuate past attitudes such as the animosity against Roman Catholicism, nor past errors such as denying women the right to full participation in the leadership of the church, we do continue to call upon the Confessions as the faithful and obedient labor of the church to discern the will of God as revealed in Scripture. To be guided by the confessions means to teach them, to use their wisdom and insight in worship and study, and to call upon them as a resource when confronting Scriptural interpretation and urgent issues of our own day.

e. Will you be governed by our church's polity, and will you abide by its discipline.

We express our faith in Jesus Christ by ordering our practices and structures so that they are an extension of the faith and values we find in Scripture. Church leaders agree at their ordination that, although God alone is Lord of the conscience, those entering ordained service to the church agree to exercise their consciences within certain bounds. Those bounds are set forth in the Book of Confessions and the Book of Order. Where officers feel the constitution needs to be revised to be brought into greater conformity to the Word of God, they make overtures to amend it. Even as they do so, they will not call into question the faith or integrity of those with whom they disagree, nor malign the church itself. Our process for discerning the will of Christ begins, proceeds, and ends with prayer in reliance on the Holy Spirit. We gather the best, most accurate information we can find, lay it before the church's Teaching and Ruling Elders, consult Scripture and the Confessions, engage in discussion among a diversity of people, and seek Christ's will for the church together. Then each leader votes according to what he/she believes to be Christ's will. We trust that although councils may err, this is the process that is best suited for discernment on major issues facing the church. Should officers continue to have significant conflicts of conscience and the church decline to amend the constitution in the ways they offer, those officers are called upon either to live with those conflicts of conscience — for the church is never perfect — or to resign their office in a way that does not disrupt the life of the church and seek to serve in another context.

Presbytery of Coastal Carolina
Committee on Ministry
Code of Pastoral Ethics

I, the undersigned, certify by this statement that I have received a copy of the *Code of Ethics* adopted by the Presbytery of Coastal Carolina on June 11, 2015, that I have read the document, that I am aware of the standards of the Presbytery, and that I will make a sincere, good faith effort to abide with both the spirit and the letter of this *Code of Ethics*.

Name: Jonathan Bowling
Please print


Signature

3-30-2016
Date

Please complete and return this signature page to the
Presbytery Office, 807 W. King Street, Elizabethtown, NC 28337
or by Fax (910) 862-3524

Presbytery of Coastal Carolina

**Acknowledgement of Receipt of
Sexual Misconduct Policy**

I hereby acknowledge that I have this day received a copy of the Sexual Misconduct Policy of the Presbytery of Coastal Carolina, approved October 5, 2002 and amended October 2, 2004, that I have read the policy, understand its meaning, and agree to conduct myself in accordance with the Policy.

Jonathan Bowling
Printed Name

Jonathan Bowling
Signature

3-30-2016
Date