

1. Do you trust in Jesus Christ your Savior, acknowledge him Lord of all and Head of the Church, and through him believe in one God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit?

Trusting in Jesus the Christ cuts to the core of what it means to be God's creation. First, humanity is fashioned and formed by God (The Creator known as the Father) out of the spoken Word, who at the very beginning is the person of Jesus Christ, God's son. This is beautifully related in both Old and New Testaments in Genesis and the Gospel of John, and while it is very much a mystery of faith to me, it is essential to understand this belief as a way we can lay witness to the fact that God is not a remote and detached Creator, but one that is ever-relational and always ever-flowing in grace, mercy, and love. Secondly, this also speaks to me of the eternal presence of Jesus, through the person of the Holy Spirit (the movement and presence of the Father and the Son, felt yet unseen), which is the promise he extends toward the church directly and through us we are given the grace to offer it to the world. To me this is the real focus of the Communion of the saints and understanding what it truly means to live a Christ-centered life. We are his imperfect vessels that are truly continuing to be forged by the Holy Spirit as we grow in sharing his presence with the world. And finally this leads me to what Christ has accomplished through his life, death, and resurrection. Jesus not only saves us from the sinfulness and death resulting from a self-focused life, he sets us apart with the mission of revealing his presence (that which has become our best selves) to the world. Thus, heaven may be seen as a consequence of our salvation, but the purpose of our salvation is our unity in God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

9. Will you be a faithful teaching elder, proclaiming the good news in Word and Sacrament, teaching faith and caring for people? Will you be active in the government and discipline, serving in the councils of the church; and in your ministry will you try to show the love and justice of Jesus Christ?

Moving from the first question to the last seems appropriate. I love to share the good news of Christ's presence both in and out of the pulpit. The way this question is phrased is wonderful to me. For as Paul said, "...how are they to call on one they have not believed? And how are they to believe in one of whom they have never heard? And how are they to hear without someone to proclaim him? And how are they to proclaim unless they are sent?" Proclamation to me comes through acquiring the living Word as you seek it out in the written Word, as it becomes revealed in those around you and as you struggle with them to live it out. I have always believed my credibility and authenticity to preach comes out of listening to the voice of God in all the people, sharing in the dance of being loved and loving, through study and prayer in solitude but also in community. From there I have always believed God has some purpose for me in serving the larger church and encouraging the local congregation to seek the same. I have sought roles in mission, education, evangelism (or transformation), and committee on ministry, and have never regretted the time and effort involved. To me this is why I felt a special call to be Presbyterian. The form of connectionalism both within and outside of practicing communities seems to be the best embodiment of Christ's call to us to be a part of him "uniting (gathering up) all things in him, things in heaven and things on earth". So that both in love and justice we ought to seek not only what benefits ourselves, but what seems best to flow out of the grace and mercy of Jesus Christ, so that we may testify toward truth in order to the goodness God intends.