

Rev. Meghan Vail – Statement of Faith

I believe in an ever-faithful God, who is the Creator, Redeemer and Sustainer of all. God's grace precedes me and is the assurance of my salvation. It is a gift and not something that can be earned. The language that I have to speak about and comprehend God is constrained by the limits of human language and concepts. At best, I can speak analogically when talking about God. God is like a loving parent whose embrace comforts and soothes. God is like a gifted artist who has painted a portrait before the colors have adorned the canvas.

I believe in Jesus Christ, the only Son of God, whose very life embodied compassion for marginalized and oppressed people. A model for right relationship, Christ is the way of reconciliation to God. Taking our sins upon Himself in the crucifixion, Christ's resurrection liberates us from sin. Christ shapes the mission of the Church, which is revealed through the proclamation of Scripture. I believe in the Holy Spirit, who moves within us to urge us to faithfulness and creativity in our service to the Church and to the world. The Spirit is God's mysterious presence with and within us, moving us to respond to the grace of God. The Spirit moves within individuals and within the corporate Church, calling all to share their gifts. Through the Spirit, we serve the Kingdom of God through lives of personal integrity, dynamic faithfulness, and mercy.

I believe Scripture is the inspired and revealed Word of God. Scripture is the secondary source of authority for the Church after Christ Himself. Those who proclaim the Word are called to responsible interpretation of the Good News, honoring the essential tenets of the faith while engaging critically with the text as a historical and cultural document. I believe that authentic encounters with the revealed Word of God are transformative, compelling God's people to resist spiritual complacency and to strengthen their commitment to a life of faith guided by revelation.

I embrace Baptism as a sign of identity with Christ, a participation in the death and resurrection of Jesus, and a manifestation of God's covenant with the Church. Baptism is a faithful response to the call to membership in the Church. I embrace The Lord's Supper as a memory and celebration of the sacrifice made by Christ on our behalf. The very act of participating in the Lord's Supper is a sign of communion with the risen Christ.

I believe that the Triune life of God is a model of God's intention for the Church. The Church is called to strive for unity because the Church is one in Jesus Christ, who is present in Spirit and in the Word. The people of the Church strive for lives that are worthy of the Gospel; we witness to and participate in the transformative work of God in the world in ways that are appropriate to the needs of our time. We practice and preach love, and we practice and preach justice. We are partners in the ministry of Jesus Christ, working for reconciliation with God and one another

Rev. Meghan Vail Biographical Sketch

I've often jokingly said to my colleagues in ministry, "I don't know what denomination I'm worshipping with until I've heard The Lord's Prayer prayed." Until my early twenties, I was raised in, served, and worshiped with the Roman Catholic Church. After several active years in Catholic Campus Ministry in college, I moved to Miami, Florida, where I discovered both a church home and early inklings of ministry leadership as a Women's Emmaus Ministries retreat leader. When I moved to Austin in 2008 to attend UT-Austin for a master's program, I was a volunteer Christian Educator at the University Catholic Center. As I graduated from UT-Austin in 2011 with masters degrees in Latin American Studies and Public Policy, I realized that this longing I had to serve God and the Church in a more direct manner was greater than any professional home I had found in public affairs. Around the same time, a position as the Business Manager and Finance Officer of the University Catholic Center became available, and the then-director called me to offer me the position. I told him, "You know I don't have a business degree, yes?" He replied, "you love God and you love this place. I know you can learn this job."

Looking back, 2011 through 2015 were my most formative early years of ministry formation as I discerned a call to ordained ministry alongside friends and colleagues. Although I worked full-time managing contracts, HR, property, and finances for the UCC, I found the greatest joy in talking with and counseling students about matters of life and faith. I also discovered my preaching voice in the most unexpected manner. When the Catholic Diocese of Central Texas gathered the priests together for a convention or diocesan meeting, my colleagues invited me to offer reflections on the Gospel during communion services. I was a fledgling preacher, no doubt about it, but the Spirit was present and working through me, and after these services, I had wonderful conversations with students and the resident community about Scripture and the impact of a woman's voice and lens on their learnings.

While I worked full-time at the Catholic Center, I enrolled at the Episcopal Seminary of the Southwest in Austin to pursue an MA in Chaplaincy and Pastoral Care. For those four years, I worked full-time during the day and went to school at night. My friends and professors there accompanied me as I reflected on the seed that had been planted through my campus ministry leadership. They encouraged me to attend to that growing sense that God was inviting me to full-time pastoral ministry. As I prayed and listened to this call over several years, I responded by faithfully showing up in my ministry and remaining open to where the Spirit was leading me. Several Sundays each month, I began to serve as a regular volunteer at the Austin State Supported Living Center, where I eventually worked as a chaplain intern. In this community of individuals experiencing intellectual, developmental, and cognitive disabilities, I was mentored by an experienced chaplain, and the women and men who resided at the Supported Living Center ministered to me, often by their presence and with their music. They helped me to cultivate a ministry skill set that wasn't defined by traditional worship or counseling and that was founded in compassion and non-verbal communication.

Having been formatively changed by these ministry experiences, I began to search for a new denominational home. I was drawn to the PC(USA) before I even began to worship in Presbyterian churches. I researched the form of government and appreciated that the denomination was constitutionally guided not only by the faithful throughout history, but also by the lay movement of the Spirit in the present, with discernment shared by what I knew at the time as "lay" individuals and pastors alike. I appreciated the public witness of the denomination on critical social justice issues. I was at home, theologically, with the Reformed thought I was introduced to in systematic theology classes at

the Episcopal Seminary in Austin, and even recognized the Presbyterian understandings of the Lord's Supper were more aligned with my own understanding than Catholic understandings. When I began to worship with Presbyterian congregations in Austin, I was profoundly moved by the preaching. In a sense, the Presbyterian Church (USA) and I chose each other.

Within a year of formally joining the PC(USA), I enrolled at Austin Presbyterian Theological Seminary. I continued to participate in ministries in the community that had been a part of my Austin outreach before seminary. After graduating with my MDiv, I worked part-time as a chaplain at Heart Hospital of Austin until moving to Logan in 2018 to accept a call as Associate Pastor with First Presbyterian Church of Logan, Utah. It has been a great joy and privilege to serve God's people with this faithful community for almost four years. I look forward to serving and serving alongside the faithful of coastal Carolina Presbytery and the CPC, Pinehurst community in 2022.