MMU – September 14, 2026

Note from Lisa – How I am

Today is the second Monday of the month, and I'm sharing how my faith shapes me. Last month, I focused on the second section of my Statement of Faith. This month, I'm focusing on the third and final section of my Statement of Faith: I

> *I believe that we are called to be the church, one community united by the love of God, to celebrate God, to respect creation, to love and serve others, and to seek justice and resist evil. With the church through the ages, we speak of God as one and three – Creator, Redeemer, and Sustainer. I believe that the church is called to be a witness to God through the proclamation of the gospel message as it is revealed through the Christ, preaching the Word of God as inspired by the Holy Spirit, participating with the church through the ages in practicing the sacraments, the visible signs of the promise of God; and striving to glimpses of the Kin_dom of God as we serve the world.*

This portion of my Statement of Faith focuses on the work of the Holy Spirit. I believe it is the Holy Spirit who inspires us and encourages us as followers of Christ. As children of God, we gather together as the church to worship God and support one another. It is the Spirit that translates our meager attempts at worship into heavenly language. And it is the Holy Spirit who helps us form bonds with one another. For me, we cannot have church without the Spirit, and we cannot be disciples of Christ without the Spirit. The illustration of our connection to the Spirit is located in one of my favorite verses in the New Testament, in my favorite Chapter in Romans, Chapter 8. Verse 26 reads, "Likewise the Spirit helps us in our weakness, for we do not know how to pray as we ought, but that very Spirit intercedes with sighs too deep for words." (NRSV Anglicized). This chapter on life in the Spirit reminds us that those who belong to Christ have the Spirit dwelling within us. And it is that same Spirit who confirms that we are children of God and helps us understand our relationship with God.

When I was growing up, going to church was not optional. We were a community that cared for one another and supported one another. Like a family, we had our disagreements, but we worked together as one community. We did our best to serve those in need, to seek justice for those who were persecuted, and to help one another resist evil. It saddens me that people today don't have room in their lives for church. Without the church, you cannot understand your relationship with God. That is why individualized faith, with no connection to community, is only partial faith. The community helps correct us and supports us as we grow in faith.

At church, I was aware that baptism was very important, but not in the same way it was important to my Catholic friends. My brother had been baptized as an infant, but because I was two years old when he was baptized and my parents joined the church, I was not allowed to be baptized and had to wait until confirmation. For years, I wanted to be baptized. Finally, when I was 11 years old, I was allowed to join the confirmation class and was baptized on the day I was confirmed. This acknowledgment of my connection to the church and the church's connection to me was a moment I will never forget.

Because we attended a new church start, some of the rules were loosely kept. One of those was limiting communion to adults. Somehow, my brother and I were allowed to participate in communion as long as we promised not to slurp the juice from the little cups passed down the aisle. I don't know if it was loose theology or Elders too busy to focus on who was taking communion as it was passed down the pew, but I don't remember when I didn't eat the bread and drink from the cup. Even though I might not have understood everything about communion, I understood that it was important and that it provided a significant connection to Jesus. Now, if you were paying attention, you might note that I was allowed to participate in communion as a child at a time when children were not allowed at the table, and I was allowed to take communion even though I had not been baptized. If my situation had been on a polity exam, the correct answer would have been to remind the parents that children were not allowed to take communion because they didn't understand what it meant, and that unbaptized children or adults were to be excluded from the table. Yet, it was the fact that I was welcome in the community and at the table that secured my sense of belonging to Christ and affirmed my call to ministry. God does work in mysterious ways.

Finally, you will note that I did not use standard trinitarian language in my statement of faith. I am not opposed to "Father, Son, and Holy Ghost"; I use this traditional trinitarian language in baptism. But I understand that there are a variety of ways to talk about God. And the one I'm most comfortable with is the one that reminds me of how God created and continues to create, how Jesus redeems and saves, and how the Spirit sustains and nourishes us. I also use the term Kin_dom here because of its emphasis on relationship with others. And, in a section on the work of the church and our relationship with one another, it fits. I also use the term "Kingdom of God" because it is traditional and what Jesus used. But when I use the term Kingdom of God, I remind myself and others that Jesus spoke of a kingdom unlike the kingdoms on earth. God's kingdom, according to Jesus, is a place of relationship, reconciliation, and love, not a kingdom of conquering and war.

The church has shaped my faith in God. The church taught my understanding of Jesus. And it is the Holy Spirit who has opened my heart and understanding of what it means to be part of the church. May we continue to be blessed by God in all we are and all we do.