MMU – August 10, 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 first section of my Statement of Faith. This month, I'm focusing on the second section of my Statement of Faith:

> *I believe in Jesus, the Word made flesh, the model for how we are to be in relationship with God and with others. Jesus demonstrated God's love for humankind through his death and resurrection, reconciling humankind and making all things new. Our response to the love which God expended through the salvific action of Jesus is to give of ourselves to and for God and others. Being in Christ means dying to oneself. And being raised with Christ means being for others and not solely for oneself. I believe that Jesus will come again at the final judgment to restore creation to full rightness with God; until that time, the Holy Spirit has been sent to us as our Advocate and Comforter.*

As I've written before, I spent a lot of time in church when I was growing up. I've known about and have known Jesus my entire life. When I was adopted, my parents lived in Hawthorne, CA, and I was dedicated, not baptized, at the Disciples of Christ church they attended. We attended that church until I was almost three. Most of that time, I was in the church nursery on Sunday mornings, but by the time I was two, I was allowed to sit quietly in church with my parents. Of course, I don't remember much about the church, but I remember one thing: it was a picture hanging in the sanctuary of Jesus knocking on a door. The image was painted by Warner Sallman in 1940 and is titled "Christ at Heart's Door." I also remember asking my father about the picture and his telling me that it was Jesus knocking at the door of someone's heart, asking to be let in. That troubled me, because at that time, I didn't understand why people didn't love Jesus or let them into their hearts.

The section of my Statement of Faith that focuses on Jesus goes beyond the simple act of letting him into my heart to be saved. It points out that Jesus' saving act was for the whole world and for all time and will culminate in the final restoration with a new heaven and a new earth. It is not a matter of letting Jesus in, but of recognizing Jesus through those around us and reflecting Jesus in our words and deeds, and being grafted into the community of faith.

Rather than focusing on the individual in relation to Christ, I see Jesus' life and teachings as a gift for all humankind to accept. For me, Jesus is not gently tapping at the door of our hearts, hoping to get in, but rather spreading his word and teachings through his disciples so people can become part of the community of faith. Like the Apostle Paul, instead of seeing Christ in me, I see myself as being in Christ with others. It is a difference that compels me to continually learn and act based upon Jesus' teachings in word and creation.

In my statement, I talk about dying to oneself, which I see as a letting go of selfish intent and desires for worldly goods to participate in the Kingdom of God where everyone has enough. This kingdom is both now and not yet; we see glimpses of it when we follow Jesus' teaching and care for the people and God's creation. Unfortunately, we all fail to set aside our selfishness; therefore, we need Jesus' teachings and the Holy Spirit to sustain us in our discipleship and comfort us as we deal with the difficulties of this world. To help us, Jesus sent the Holy Spirit to dwell with us and give us the strength to carry on.

My understanding of Jesus has changed over the years. He was introduced to me as meek and mild, loving and comforting. In reading his work and words, I now see him as a radical who challenged the authorities of his time, especially those who separated people from society through purity laws or through economic and social means. I see Jesus as the one who seeks the poor and lost and restores them to community. And, because my views of Jesus have changed, my understanding of others has changed as well. I no longer see marginalized people as creating or being problems to be solved, but as my siblings who need the love and compassion of the community of Christ followers.

Getting to know Jesus is a lifelong journey. It requires an open heart and a desire to learn from his teachings. The more I open my heart to Jesus and his teachings, the more I understand what God requires of me and the more I open my heart to others. So, Jesus doesn't stand at the door and knock; he is already here inside the church with us, and we are one in him. The Revelation passage the painting was based on was about Jesus standing at the door of a church, seeking anyone who would repent and let him back in. Let's not be that church, but rather the church that shows the love of Christ to the world. Jesus, the Word of God, asks us to listen, understand, and take his word into our hearts. Once we do, we will be changed forever.