

## **Rev. Carol Howard Merritt • Statement of Faith**

We begin with an itch. We endeavor to describe God, yet we never quite scratch the surface of who God is. As we rub, the irritation grows. Like children, we can't leave it alone. Our souls cannot rest until they find rest in God. We dig in our nails, trying to get beneath the skin to the source, to the origin, to the root, but we fail. The more we long for revelation, the more we discover how much is hidden. So we utter our faith like toddlers, moving our mouths over syllables, verbalizing what our intellect cannot comprehend. As a church, we join in a vast conversation of faith and doubt, picking up the words in mid-sentence, trying out our weak voices among the symphony that sings of the Trinity—God our Creator, God our Liberator, and God our Sustainer.

As I walk along the marsh, I'm reminded that in God, our Creator, we live and move. God is the ground of our being and the source of all life. We exist in the mind of God, as a painting lives in the thoughts of an artist. The splendor of the world displays God's great imagination, as the trees stretch out their hands and the stones shout out in natural wonder. God gathers the petals of the wild rose and each blade of grass stands in the glory of its maker.

Moving along the beach, the nourishing beauty of our great Creator surrounds me. Looking down, the seashells litter the shore, and I'm amazed how God uses a thousand textures and employs an unlimited palette. With the same care, God forms us from dusty earth, loving us with the intensity of one who gives birth. God makes us, holds us, and delights in us. God cradles us with a grace from which we cannot escape.

When the sun goes down, the light is not quickly extinguished, but sets in breathtaking radiance, a fantastic spectacle reminding me of this lavish life we have been given. God, our Liberator, comes so that we might have life more abundantly. Jesus is the Son of God, fully divine and fully human. When Jesus walks, divine history and human history intersect.

Jesus was born into a humble family, surrounded by scandal. He grew into a man who had compassion on the crowds. He upheld the oppressed, fed the hungry, and welcomed the offender. While teaching difficult words, Jesus overturned the powers that structure our lives. Jesus brought wholeness, while shattering taboos: he reached out for the withered hand, searched tree limbs for his dinner companions, and healed the bleeding woman. His words and actions teach us how to be fully human. Jesus was arrested. He suffered the depths of human pain as he was brutally rejected, tortured and executed. On the third day, Jesus was brought from death to life. The stories of Jesus that we whisper from one generation to the next embolden us to become untangled from the bounds of sin, walk in footsteps of Christ, and work for love, justice and peace.

As the cool evening wind gusts from the sea, I'm reminded of God, our Sustainer, who blows upon us and fills us with vitality. The Spirit gives birth to us, and when we pray, the Spirit gives utterance to our groaning. Enlightening our minds as we search the Scriptures, the Spirit allows us to hear God's word and emboldens us to proclaim God's love. Working in and among us, the Spirit gathers us into the life and ministry of the church.

Looking at the vast beauty surrounding me, I begin to understand that God is love, and there is no height, nor depth, nor anything else in all of creation that will separate us from that love we share in God our Creator, our Liberator, and our Sustainer.