

2 God is the creator and Sustainer of all life; the One who holds all things together and is making
3 all things new (Col. 1:17; Rev. 21:5). God is holy and other and yet present in creation and with
4 us as Parent. God is present with us in the person and work of Jesus and in the indwelling of the
5 Holy Spirit. God provides the outline and direction of my life and is present to me in Scripture,
6 the work and worship of the church, other people, and in nature.

7 Jesus is God with us, full of grace and truth (John 1:14). He is our teacher and model for
8 how to live, demonstrated perhaps most strongly in his presence with the “least of these”
9 (Matthew 25:40). In Jesus’ life, death, and resurrection, we find rescue, redemption, and a call
10 into a way of life and being in the world as we are formed in his image. I am drawn over and
11 over to the picture of Jesus in Scripture, especially as recorded in the Gospel of Mark, and to the
12 picture of Christ in Colossians 1 and Ephesians 1.

13 The Holy Spirit is our comforter and advocate (John 14:26); the one who makes God,
14 God’s word, and the work of Christ come alive in us. The Spirit empowers and equips us in our
15 calling and transformation. The Spirit is at work in us individually and in the church, leading us
16 toward unity and service. I call on and believe I hear from the Holy Spirit in prayer, especially
17 for wisdom and direction; in interactions with others, both in what to say and what I hear from
18 them; and for inspiration for teaching and preaching.

19 God is present above, in, and amongst us in each part of the Trinity, drawing all things to
20 Godself. We were created in God’s image, an image that has become marred. God is at work
21 drawing us back into this image - individually and in all of creation. It is our call as the church to
22 participate in this reconciling work (Colossians 1:21-23). The culminating chapter of the gospel
23 is not merely “we all die and go to heaven”, but, rather, that of God bringing all things together

24 in Christ (Eph. 1:9-10) in a restored heaven and earth. This is only possible in God; yet God has
25 God has invited us to partner – as very junior partners indeed! – in this plan.

26 The church is called to be the community through which the Triune God is worshiped
27 and through which God acts in the world. The church is “gifted” (literally, “graced”) by the
28 Spirit to speak and act in God’s image and name toward each other and in the world. All of this
29 is to be done with love as our primary motivation and means (1 Cor. 12:1-13:8). The church is
30 the way in which worldly powers and systems are to be reformed and confronted (a major theme
31 of Ephesians; see 6:10-20 in particular). Each congregation is a microcosm, a small part of this:
32 just as we as individuals make up different parts of the body of Christ, so too our congregations.
33 As the church acts from our unity and diversity, in the neighborhoods where God has placed us,
34 we participate in God’s work of reconciliation. This begins in the worship, formation, and
35 community we engage in within the church and flows outward in acts of mission, service, and
36 justice.

37 In worship we are formed by and through word and sacrament. God’s Word is
38 proclaimed from the pulpit, in readings, in Bible studies, and in Christian Education. We lift up
39 prayers and music to praise and to call on God for help, forgiveness, and restoration. In the
40 diversity of worship elements and the diversity of those gathered and leading, we not only
41 proclaim but also display the image of God.

42 All of worship should bring us into connection with God and others. The sacraments are
43 particular signs of God’s grace shown to us (Belhar 10. 3, 1 Cor. 10:17; W-1.02). In receiving
44 and participating in them, we are reminded that God’s gifts toward and presence with us have
45 always preceded anything we do “for” God. In baptism, that is seen in our usual practice of
46 baptizing infants. Baptism symbolizes the beginning of our faith journey. It is individual, serving

47 as a sign of God's desire and purpose for each of us to trust in and follow God and God's
48 purpose for our lives. Baptism is also corporate, as families bring children to the congregation
49 and the congregation commits to nurture them in faith. While we are baptized only once, we
50 remember our baptismal vows each time we participate in the Lord's Supper.

51 In the Lord's Supper, we remember God's commitment to our redemption and renewal.
52 As we regularly reenact Jesus' words and actions on our behalf, we experience once again God's
53 presence with us and commitment to us. We are reminded again of the sins of the world that led
54 to Jesus' death and are ever present in us and our world today. As we come together to the table,
55 we are being honest and transparent with each other that all of us are sinners in need of
56 forgiveness. We are nourished with bread and cup as a reminder of God's sustaining presence,
57 working in and through us for the sake of the world today.

58 Both sacraments have an important communal component. By doing them in corporate
59 worship, we are reminded of our commitment to each other: to care for each other in body and
60 spirit, to equip each other in faith development, to engage in honest and accountable
61 relationships. They thus become signs not only of God's work on our behalf, but of our
62 commitment to each other as the church, called to image God in the world.

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