

Statement of Faith

Rev. Casey Carbone

~Throughout my life and ministry, I've come to embrace what the early church figure John Chrysostom would call the "Sacrament of Neighbor," which is the belief that our love of neighbor reflects our love of God. I believe that the relational aspect of our faith calls us to a spirit of understanding, reconciliation and calls us to move beyond our comfort zone to invite to the table of God all who would desire a place of welcome.

~I believe that the Holy Spirit builds upon this sense of welcome by urging us to go and expand our definition of neighbor. As Gustavo Gutiérrez writes in his book *A Theology of Liberation*, "The neighbor, as has been said, is not the one whom I find in my path, but rather the one in whose path I place myself, the one whom I approach and actively seek." (113). Thus, as Jesus sought out the disciples and worked to establish transformational relationships, we too are called by Christ to continue in a ministry. A ministry founded on a sacred trust that builds up, not tears down, claims ownership instead of pinning blame, and a sacred trust that is reflective of the multifaceted nature of God.

~The world is yearning for the type of authentic relationship that calls love its foundation. However, we know that there are many times throughout history when such love was held back from our neighbors, from ourselves, and from God. In the desecration of the created world, the imprisonment of our hurting and innocent siblings, and the exploitation of souls, we are shown that there is still much work to be done in confessing our waywardness and transgressions. Yet, in exposing these faults, we remember that God continues to call faithful witnesses in every time and place to be voices that speak out, bring healing and justice, and continue to extend the table Christ has prepared.

~At the table Christ has set, we find welcome and the base for a restorative community. And at the table, we also see the never-ending font filled with waters of grace that evoke the promises God made as we were sealed in the love of God that remains steadfast. God does not stop urging us to participate in the collaborative work of redemption and restoration. I believe that our shared ministry in our church governing bodies, local congregations, and personal lives are enlivened and enriched when we come together to support one another and focus our spiritual gifts on navigating the life-way of God. The triune God, who first modeled for us what it means to live in a right relationship with one another and creation, dwells among us and speaks to us. God speaks in tongues of fire and quiet whispers, inspiring us to dive deeper into relationships we've built with one another, creation, and with the Holy One.