

Biography: Andrew Florio

More often than not when meeting someone for the first time, early in the conversation, they ask me: “when did you know that you wanted to be a minister?” So I thought this would be a perfect place to start an introduction (the answer to this question could fill a book, so for now I am going to give you the abbreviated version). When I was fourteen I had major surgery to repair a problem at the base of my spine. My recovery was long and slow, and I was forced to spend the better part of three months in bed resting. During my recovery I started to spend more time in the Word. For the first time I really slowed down and not only read, but prayed through the text as well. I began to feel better spiritually first, and I discovered that along with the comfort I found in Christ I had more questions about God than ever before. As my health improved I became more involved in my home church; seeking answers to my questions of faith through both study and participation in our local ministry. In time I found my niche working in a local soup kitchen, and by the time I was fifteen I knew I wanted to be a minister. However, at this point in my life I wasn’t sure what form my ministry would take on.

My undergraduate education really helped me discern the nature of my call. On the one hand I had my academic work, my studies were focused mainly on biblical exegesis from the Greek text, Christian ethics, and systematic theology, and on the other hand I had my field education experiences. For my first field education placement I spent a month in Central America working with an orphanage. The focus of the mission trip was to help rebuild the orphanage during the day and lead worship and bible study at night. To live among the poorest of the poor, to share their faith as they praised and worshiped God in the midst of children dying of disease and a thousand other horrors that would shatter your heart; it was there in the jungle of Nicaragua that I truly learned about faith. My Time in Nicaragua had a profound effect on me, and it reframed how I approached and understood the Gospel. Shortly after returning from Nicaragua I began my second field education assignment as the director of youth ministries for a local church. Being able to place my academic and mission work in the life of the church helped me solidify my call to parish ministry.

Seminary was truly a wonderful experience for me in that I was able to explore my academic interests, as well as gain some wonderful practical experience from hands on ministry. I concentrated my studies in three areas: pastoral theology, Greek and Hebrew exegesis, and patristic theology (the theological formation of the early church). I ended up writing my senior thesis on the influences of middle and neo-Platonism in patristic theology. However, in order to balance my academic work and give it a practical application I served as the pastoral intern for a church in Philadelphia and in a second placement as a hospital chaplain. Again the combination of the practical experience and the academic work helped me gain a better understanding of my call and most importantly of the many ways God’s love is expressed through ministry.

On a more personal note: I am married too a truly wonderful woman! Sarah is a resident physician at the Greenville Memorial Hospital and huge blessing in my life. We were married in the Setauket Presbyterian Church on September 13th 2008.

Statement of Faith: Andrew Florio

I believe in one Triune God: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. These three persons constitute the Godhead, yet they are one true and everlasting God; the same in substance, equal in power and glory (cf. Matthew 3:16-17, 28:19; II Cor. 13:14). Affirming the classical Nicene teaching: I believe that God is one in essence, distinguished in three persons. I believe that the reign of the Triune God is the rule of sovereign love. To speak of God as Triune is to understand that the Godhead is creative, sacrificial, and empowering love; for the glory of the Triune God, as revealed throughout the whole of scripture, consists in sharing life with others.

I believe in and accept Jesus Christ as my Lord and Savior. I believe that Jesus Christ, God's only Son, who is fully human and fully divine; came into the world to reconcile humankind to God, and to teach humankind how to live lives that honor God. Christ's work of atonement on the cross is God's own gift of costly love, mediating God's forgiveness. In the incarnation of the Word God enters into solidarity with humankind, and in freely taking up the cross, God in Christ, makes grace a reality for all people. I believe that Christ's full physical and bodily resurrection broke the fetters of sin and death, making eternal life in Christ a reality for believers. Thus, because of the grace Christ showed and continues to extend to humankind, I have full confidence in the love and promises of God.

I believe that the Holy Spirit is a very real presence in this world. It is the Holy Spirit who unites humankind to Christ. The Spirit bridges the gap of space and time so that the Christ attested to in scripture is not a distant memory, but a very real and powerful presence in this world. The Holy Spirit works to not only unite humankind with Christ, but the Spirit works to create bonds of fellowship and love throughout the human family. These communal bonds formed by the Holy Spirit are not just between friends or the like minded; rather the glory of God is seen in the bonds of love created between former strangers and one time enemies via the work of the Holy Spirit. It is God's Holy Spirit who draws humankind into solidarity with one another in Christ (cf. Gal. 3:28). I believe God's Holy Spirit is the giver and re-newer of life. It is by faith alone, through the power of the Holy Spirit, that humankind is justified. Receiving God's free grace, via the work of the Holy Spirit, believers are given the strength to witness to the Good News of Jesus Christ, to campaign for social justice, and empowered to show compassion to the poor and the oppressed. I believe we meet God through the Holy Spirit when the Word of God is read and preached properly, the sacraments rightly administered, and that it is the Holy Spirit who calls all to love and serve God. As I strive to follow and to serve Christ, I believe that God's Holy Spirit has been present with me: strengthening and maturing my faith; helping me find hope in Christ amid the darkness of this world, and above all continually teaching me how to fully love God and humankind.

I believe that scripture is the Word of God written and that it witnesses to God's self-revelation to humankind. I believe that scripture derives its authority from God alone. Therefore, the scriptures of both the Old and New Testaments teach all that is necessary for one's salvation, maturity of faith, and conduct in this world. I also believe that scripture is to be experienced through study and prayer, by the aid of the Holy Spirit, as a source of renewal, comfort, freedom, and joy in Jesus Christ.

I believe that the two sacraments instituted by Christ, Baptism and the Lord's Supper, are visible signs of God's grace and the new covenant in Jesus Christ; sealed and applied to believers. When the sacraments

are rightly administered they are a powerful witness to the forgiving and renewing love of God in Jesus Christ, and by the power and presence of the Holy Spirit believers are energized in faith, hope, and love. I believe that Baptism is the sign and seal of incorporation into Jesus Christ, where we participate in Jesus' life, death, and resurrection. Baptism signals one's death to an old way of life and one's rising to a new life in Christ that begins a journey of faith and discipleship that lasts a lifetime. I believe that the Lord's Supper is the sign and seal of eating and drinking in communion with Jesus Christ. I believe that the sacrament of the Lord's Supper fosters the growth and nourishment of the Christian life as believers experience the real presence of Christ; received by faith through the work and power of the Holy Spirit. I believe that as we participate in the Eucharistic meal, through the Holy Spirit, believers are sustained by Christ's unconditional love, empowered by the memory of Christ's life, death, and resurrection, and sealed in God's covenant of grace.

I believe that the Church of Jesus Christ is called to be a witness in this world to the love, grace, and promises of God. I believe that the church is called to carry out a strong yet compassionate witness to the Lordship of Jesus Christ; proclaiming Christ as the only way to salvation and helping lead others to repentance, new lives of discipleship, and acceptance of Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior. I believe that the church is to be a witness to the coming reign of God, and as such I believe that the church is called to not only preach and teach the Good News of Jesus Christ, but it is also called to enter into solidarity with the poor and the oppressed caring for their physical and spiritual needs (cf. Matthew 25:31-40).

I believe in the sovereignty of God over all else. Injustice, violence, and evil are present in this world, yet God is not the author of these things. Rather, God demonstrates God's own sovereignty over evil by bringing good out of negative situations (cf. Romans 9:16-18, 28). I believe that the sovereignty of God must always be viewed through the lens of God's revelation in Jesus Christ. Thus, understanding God as the One who desires to live in community and who loves in freedom. Therefore, I believe that God's sovereignty is a comfort to believers and allows us to live in the confidence of God.

I believe in the hope that God offers to this world, in the promise of eternal life in Christ, in the final triumph of God over the forces of sin and evil, and in the full redemption of humankind (cf. Rev. 21:4, 22:2; Isa. 9:6-7). I believe that the hope God offers humankind is liberating and comforting, but that it is also a call to all who share the human experience to find their ultimate joy and fulfillment in loving and serving God.

At the heart of the Christian existence is the experience of God's free grace. Thus, it is my firm belief that because of Christ's redeeming work on the cross, the free grace that God has extended to humankind, and the work of the Holy Spirit; that God's love for humankind is so deep that nothing, not sin nor death, will ever separate humankind from God- Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. All glory, honor, and praise belong to God. Amen.