

BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION

Rev. Mary Jean Bird

I grew up with my faith being nurtured by First Presbyterian Church in North Bend, Oregon. Although my parents' attendance was sporadic, a family friend was faithful in providing transportation. I attended Sunday School and Vacation Bible School from the age of three. I still remember my first day of Sunday School. I remember having a speaking part in the Christmas program before I could read. I can truly say that I have never known a time in my life when I did not consider myself a Christian.

By fourth grade, I walked to church and spent a week every summer at camp. I was active in youth group throughout Middle and High School. I attended camp each summer, as a camper and/or counselor and helped with VBS, Sunday School, and other programs that nurtured young children. It was at Camp Myrtlewood that I sat on a rock in the middle of the creek and asked Jesus Christ to be my Lord and Savior. My best friend and I were baptized in that same creek several years later. Don't worry! It was decent and in order. Shortly thereafter, I became a Deacon and member of the nominating committee.

I attended Lewis & Clark College and joined a Presbyterian student fellowship group where I met my best friends. We are still very close. After graduation I joined Valley Community Presbyterian Church in Portland, Oregon. I joined a young adult group, helped in the youth house, and served on the Worship and the Arts committee, and as a Deacon.

In college, I developed sporadic pain and weakness in my right wrist. I finished college and a second bachelor's degree and began my first career as a Medical Technologist. The pain and weakness progressed and eventually migrated to my hips and legs. At times I was nearly incapacitated. Years of doctor visits, therapy, and medication yielded a diagnosis of Fibromyalgia. I developed depression and feared that my career was doomed. Although I never lost sight of God, I stopped going to church. I was just too exhausted.

A friend from the young adult group suggested that I bring my young nephews to Sunday School. To make a long story shorter, I found myself teaching a session of three-year-old Sunday School with the new Associate Pastor.

A few weeks later I received a telephone call from Pastor Steve. He said, "It has come to my attention that you are someone the children of Valley should get to know better. Would you consider sharing your considerable gifts for Christian education with them?"

I told him about my illness and challenges just making it through a work day. He promised to pray for me and I began helping with the LOGOS Midweek program. A year later, I was feeling much better. Although I had never sung in a choir let alone directed one, I felt a strong call to be the Music and Worship Co-Director. I asked my nephews what they thought about the idea. Immediately and in unison they said, "You should be the pastor." I told them that job was taken.

While writing the script for the musical the children presented that spring, I began to feel the tug toward a different kind of ministry. I thought it was the most ridiculous idea I had ever heard, but I talked with Valley's pastors and other leaders in the church. They all affirmed that I was a pastoral candidate. After much prayer and trepidation, I visited seminaries and become the LOGOS director to try out the role of a ministry leader.

To make another long story shorter, the hospital where I worked made me an offer I couldn't refuse. If I would go to school to train for a career in any field other than medical technology, they would pay my entire salary and benefits for two years. I graduated from the Dual Degree (MDiv/MACE) program at Union-PSCE and was ordained in 2000.

I served John Knox Presbyterian Church in Keizer, Oregon as a solo pastor for nearly three years. My next call was as an Associate Pastor with primary responsibility for children's ministry and adult Christian education at First Presbyterian Church in Plymouth, MI.

STATEMENT OF FAITH

Rev. Mary Jean Bird

I believe in one Almighty, Eternal triune God. God reveals Godself to humanity in three persons: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. These three persons are co-existent and co-eternal.

I believe God the Father Almighty created the heavens and the earth. From nothing God created all that is, seen and unseen, and all that will be. The Creator still cares for all creation and is the source of all knowledge. I believe that I belong to God. Everything I have, everything I am is a gift from God. God has gifted me to use my gifts in service to God, humanity, and all of creation.

I believe Jesus Christ is God's only Son and Savior of humankind. I believe Jesus Christ, although he was with God came to earth to live, to die, and to be resurrected for the salvation of humankind. Jesus taught, preached, cared for the needs of, and sometimes mightily upset people. He was tried and convicted of blasphemy and sentenced to death on a cross, one of the cruelest forms of torture and death. He was laid in a tomb, but death was not God's final word. Three days later Christ overcame the power of sin and death by rising from the dead. He appeared to his disciples and others, continuing their preparation to spread the love of God to all ends of the earth. Christ promised to be with them until the end of the age and promised a Paraclete or Helper to inspire and guide them along the way.

I believe the Holy Spirit swept over the waters of creation, raised dry bones in the desert, inspired God's priests and prophets throughout time, birthed the church at Pentecost, and continues to guide men and women today.

I believe God, through the Holy Spirit, birthed the church to become a welcoming community of faith in which all people in all generations worship, study, pray, and enjoy fellowship together. There is a clear vision of the church as the body of Christ working in the world to transform lives and society and restore creation. All persons are challenged to live lives inspired by the Holy Spirit and consistent with the teachings and ministry of Jesus Christ twenty-four hours a day and seven days a week. It is readily apparent that those lives arise from the promises shown by Christ's life, death, and resurrection, and that service to others is a grateful response to God's freely given gift of salvation by grace through faith in Christ.

I believe God gave humanity the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments to be the guide for our lives. Though written by human hands in particular times and places, the Bible is the authoritative witness to God's relationship with humanity through the ages and God's Word to all persons. The church is the place where God's people become intimately acquainted with God's Word through reading, studying and hearing God's Word proclaimed. Inspired by the Holy Spirit and guided by prayer we form a deeper relationship with God through daily study and meditation.

The Sacraments unite persons even more closely to God and the church. The waters of Baptism wash away the powers of sin and death and welcome us into the community of faith, whether by our personal public profession of faith or by the promises of our parents and faith community to help us develop the capacity to confirm that profession ourselves. When I witness or participate in a Baptism, I remember by own and give God thanks. Communion nourishes us spiritually in the presence of God and the faith community. Through The Lord's Supper we remember the sacrifice Christ made for us and look forward to the time when we will feast in the presence of God and all the faithful of every time and place. We are fortified to go out into the world for the mission God has called us to complete.