

Timothy E. Fulop
24 May 2010

Biographical Statement of Timothy E. Fulop

I was born in 1960 in Japan, the son of an American Baptist minister, missionaries and educators, and grew up in a home rich in Christian nurture and thought. At the age of twelve, I made a confession of faith and was baptized. As is often true for those with a Christian upbringing in traditions that emphasize convertive piety, I was troubled that I did not have a dramatic conversion experience. As I studied the teachings of the early Church during college and reflected on the fact that salvation is the result of Christ's work on the cross, effected in the individual by the work of the Holy Spirit, and had nothing to do with human effort, my doubts ceased and I came to see that individual and subjective religious experiences must be grounded in the larger redemptive acts of God.

In 1983, a year after I graduated from college and while my spouse, Jackie, was finishing her undergraduate work at William Jewell, I took on a part-time position as a youth minister at Grace Baptist Church in Kansas City, Missouri. I had a vague sense of a call to ministry at this time, and began to explore this call. I was "licensed for ordination," the preliminary step in the ordination process in the American Baptist Churches/USA which was the tradition in which I was raised. In the fall of 1984, I entered Princeton Theological Seminary as a full-time student with an interest in eventually becoming a professor of theology or church history. During my three years of seminary, I gained valuable ministry experience in field education/supervised ministry and Clinical Pastoral Education. Through these experiences, I gained a more focused sense of a call to ministry that encompassed both parish ministry and teaching. In fact, looking back, I probably received more affirmation from people in the parish than I ever did in the academy.

During my last semester in seminary, the executive minister for the American Baptist Churches of New Jersey encouraged me to continue a part-time position I had that year and be ordained by that church after graduation. I prayerfully considered this but decided against it for several reasons. I was so nervous about entering the doctoral program in religion at Princeton University that I felt I had to concentrate all my energy on my studies. In addition, I was not comfortable with being ordained to a minimal part-time position. Though I understood my call to ministry as including the vocation of teaching in a seminary or church-related college, I was troubled by the thought that ordination and parish ministry might become a fallback position if there were no academic positions; a fear that haunts many graduate students. I was just not ready for ordination.

I did not assume any official position in a church during my doctoral program though I remained active in teaching Sunday School and serving as pulpit supply. With the completion of my studies and the advent of teaching in seminaries (Drew, Harvard and Columbia), I gained a renewed sense of a call to ministry. This became especially

clear while serving as Assistant Dean of Faculty at Columbia Theological Seminary in Decatur, Georgia through conversations with seminary colleagues and my pastor, prayer, and the experience of supplying pulpits and teaching in churches in Georgia. Along with finding my home in the Presbyterian Church/USA, a process that began in 1990 at the Titusville Presbyterian Church in Titusville, New Jersey, I believe that God called me to complete the journey towards ordination that God called me to many years earlier. I was ready to begin the process in the Greater Atlanta Presbytery in the spring of 1998 when I received the call to become Dean of the Faculty at King College, a PC/USA related college and I was advised to postpone the process and begin it later with the Holston Presbytery. I was ordained as Minister of Word and Sacrament by the Holston Presbytery in January 2002. In addition to serving Christ's Church through educational leadership at a Presbyterian institution, I was a regular supply preacher in the Abingdon and Holston Presbyteries, and served as interim minister at the Windsor Avenue Presbyterian Church in Bristol, Tennessee from December 2001 to May 2003. Desiring that we raise our family of four children closer to family in the Midwest, I assumed the position of Dean of the College at Lakeland College; a United Church of Christ related college in Sheboygan, Wisconsin, in June 2003. While in Wisconsin, I regularly supplied pulpits in both UCC and PC/USA churches, and completed a short interim position at Grace UCC Church in Kohler and a longer interim position at First Presbyterian Church of Kiel. I would like to be a similar resource for Heartland Presbytery.

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Statement of Faith of Timothy E. Fulop

I trust in God the sovereign, loving, and just Creator and Redeemer who made the world for God's glory and created humans in the divine image in order to love and worship God. I trust in Jesus Christ, the only begotten Son of God who is fully human and fully God, born of the Virgin Mary, sent to walk among us sharing our humanity, to fully reveal God, to redeem and reconcile humanity and creation to God, and to establish a redemptive community to be salt and light to the world. I trust in the Holy Spirit, the giver and renewer of life, and the one Jesus said would come after him to sustain and comfort us, and to join disciples together in Christ. Together, God whom Jesus called Father, Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit are worshipped as the blessed Trinity, one God in three persons.

I confess the need for the forgiveness of sins that comes through God's gracious gift of Jesus' life, death and resurrection. In the words and works of Christ, we hear and observe God's message of forgiveness, true humanity, reconciliation, justice, and life conquering death. As a result of God's claim and work in us, we are marked and sealed as members of God's covenant family, and, in our salvation, we are commanded to love God and neighbor. We grow in our life in Christ through prayer, devotional study of the Bible, service to others following the example of Jesus, corporate worship and fellowship, and through the Sacraments—Baptism and Communion—which are signs of the presence and power of Jesus Christ in the Church. The Bible, the authoritative and inspired witness to God's work in Christ, is our source of guidance for the Christian life. I believe in the Church as the body of Christ gathered around Word and Sacrament, the living representative of Christ in the world, the community of fellowship and nurture, and the focus of God's mission to the world until the return of Christ and the consummation of redemption.

I subscribe to *The Book of Confessions* of the Presbyterian Church (USA) as faithful witnesses to the truth of Scripture concerning faith, doctrine, church government, and the mission for Christ's Church; to the faith of the one, holy, catholic, and apostolic Church; and to the Reformed Tradition and its affirmation of "the church reformed, always reforming according to the Word of God and the call of the Spirit." I am also greatly appreciative of God's work in the fullness and variety of the Christian tradition—Protestant, Catholic, Orthodox and indigenous churches as the Communion of Saints throughout space and time.