

Caroline Barnett Statement of Faith

I believe God is sublime: full of beauty and energy and intensity that, at times, is difficult to imagine. God, who hovered above the formless waters, created the universe—the stars, the earth, all of creation of which we are a small part. God is powerful, but unlike any conception of power and strength this world tends to recognize. It is not a power found in hardline stances that define who is right and who is wrong. But instead it is a power that comes from a flexible love and generosity that I, prone to selfishness and stinginess, cannot always comprehend.

Which is why I believe Jesus to be incarnate. God took all that mystery and power, and put it in a baby of a girl no one would take seriously as if to say, *I want you to understand*. And yet, the world didn't always understand, and instead turned toward hate, fearing Jesus, arresting him, crucifying him—killing Jesus. But Jesus, more powerful than fear, rose from the dead, as if to say, *I want you to understand what it means to love*.

Which is why I believe the Holy Spirit to be messy. When the sublime mystery of God shows up in our human, cracked, and off-kilter world, we encounter a messy grace. It's a grace that reminds us our worth is not tied up in achievements or failings, power grabs or self-flagellation. Instead, our worth has already been decided by a God of the universe, a son, friend, and teacher, and a spirit of mercy that have seen the depths of pain and still choose love.

I believe that the Church is a place where we, the flawed beings that we are, can participate in God's love and work in the world. Life in community is difficult, and yet, it is in this mess that we find ourselves grasping for the divine—the kingdom of God in the here and now. And though the kingdom of God may feel elusive at times, our participation in the sacraments—baptism and communion—reminds us of God's claim on all of us, and God's expansive love that sustains us all. When the world makes us weary, we approach font and table together in search of nourishment and invigoration. And it is when we are with others, participating in a communal and sacramental life, that God's love for this world is no longer an interesting concept, but a way of being that shakes us to our bones.