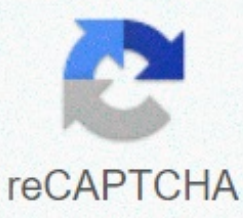




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## Author's purpose and tone worksheets

... Design Pics/Design Pics/Getty Images Personal beliefs reflect a person's thoughts on his relationship with God, Church and Jesus Christ. Writers often use phrases that begin with faith, inserting anecdotal accounts to describe their journeys of faith, and citing scripture passages. Although usually only a typewritten page or less long, there is no standard format for statements of personal faith; they are as individual as the people who write them. 1 Sources of Inspiration Some people use questions to help them define their beliefs. For example, if you ask yourself why and when you pray, or how you feel when you don't pray, you can clarify your position to communicate with God. Others find reading biblical passages helpful, such as the new Testament verses that tell of actions Jesus took to draw their own conclusions about who Christ was and what He represents to them. Personal statements of faith can evolve from favorite Bible verses or lyrics to a favorite song. Discuss why you think it makes sense and refer to various theological and ecclesiastical topics. 2 Basic theology After you have thought about what religion means to you and organize your thoughts, start by describing in your own words who God is and what the Trinity means to you. Touch your feelings about Christ and His role in your salvation, your interpretation of salvation and grace, and how the Holy Ghost is at work in your life. In addition to discussing the meaning that the Bible has for you, you can also consider the role of prayer and how to pray. Your personal declaration of faith may have a comprehensive paragraph covering these theological foundations; dedicate to each paragraph; combine some and mark others separately; or use bullets. 3 Ecclesial thoughts Your opinion on the role of the Church, the importance of communion and your responsibility as a Christian are part of your personal statement of faith. Some people give examples of actions they take or activities they participate in, and refer to how they help fulfill the Church's mission of helping the less fortunate, and spreading God's Word. Anyone who writes a personal declaration of faith as part of an application to a theological school or for an apprenticeship at a faith school would bind his professional vocations to what he considers to be God's plan. 4 Affirming confessional beliefs Members of a congregation who are committed to installation as church officers such as elders or deacons and young people who become members through the DenerGang of Confirmation should agree in their personal statements of faith. Examples of this are the denomination's attitude to baptism, the word of God and worship, as well as to all the creeds used to define their basic beliefs. I just made a draft (see below) of my fourth personal statement statement I do this to meet the requirements of the Peace River Presbytery so that they can receive me as a member. It's a Presbyterian thing. For a non-Presbyterian leader, preparing such a document may sound like torture. But after 40 years in the service of the churches as pastors, I appreciate the importance of doing this. After all, ministers preach to the people. Week after week, we write down and proclaim what the most important truths should be. It should come as no surprise to readers that much can fail with the responsibility that goes with the sermon. The minister reads a captivating book or sees a rousing film; the ideas from business administration, psychology or politics flow into the head of the minister; and effortlessly we slip from the representation of the biblical text into the creeps into the sermon a little of Dr. Phil or Richard Spencer. It is important that the servant believes in God, knows why Christ came, or has an idea of what the Church's mission is. Moreover, no one but the pawns monitors what the minister does week after week. Years of weekly teaching and preaching can pass without further education or verification of the preacher's personal faith and creed. On the other hand, we presbytery asks each other to write a statement about our personal creed, usually at a time when we change churches. Such scriptures usually take up one page and consist of narrowly worded sentences about the highlights of the Christian faith – the Trinity, the Church, the sacraments, the Bible, the nature of Christ, human nature, sin, mission, and the last things. The examination As soon as the declaration is written, a church nomination group or a presbytery committee will have a half-hour conversation with the author of the statement. These are commonly referred to as investigations. These can be tense – especially if the author of the statement is not compliant or creative in his beliefs. The first time I wrote a declaration of faith was in my last year of seminary. It takes months for the seminary students to draft under the coaching of their sponsor presbytery, so that the Declaration of Faith does not become a 5-alarm career wrecker. The purpose of the Declaration of Faith is to involve candidates and experienced church leaders in another inquiry about the suitability of an incoming pastor to be relaxed in a congregation. Other statements My second declaration of faith was lengthy, which I wrote for my doctoral thesis. There was no pressure here because no one hired me. The purpose of writing down this statement of faith was for me, to become aware of what I believed. I wrote my third declaration of faith to gain membership in the Presbytery of Greater Atlanta. I had to pull this document in a flood of activities. First of all, the Greater Atlanta Presbytery's need for a Statement came as a surprise to me. I received a call from a presbytery representative and learned that Atlanta's audit committee needed a finished declaration of faith by the end of the day. This onslaught was to meet the deadline for a meeting of the entire presbytery. In desperation, I fished out the old statement that I had used for the doctoral program thirteen years earlier. It was far too long. I haven't even read it carefully. I hastily hacked whole paragraphs out and sent them by e-mail. This year, in 2003, when I moved to LaGrange, Georgia, the Greater Atlanta Presbytery was a highly functioning and fast-moving place under Ed Albright's leadership. Atlanta is the largest presbytery of the Presbyterian Church and, in a way, the gravitational center of the denomination. I learned something new about the former South Presbyterian Church. Atlanta had a whole, blue-legged committee of lay elders, ministers, and seminary professors to investigate the new ministers. Remarkably, the well-known theologian Shirley Guthrie, who had literally written the textbook used by seminary students entitled Christian Doctrine, also served on this committee. I should defend an expired, hacked declaration of faith to this company in order to be accepted into presbytery membership. As the participants milled around minutes before our call, I noticed Dr. Guthrie standing at the conference table, arms acting as pillars holding his body up and scouring my testimony. He moaned as he read. He growled to himself. Then he audibly muttered to no one in particular: That's great – that's how I would write such a statement. When I heard this, I was inspired by an intoxicating sense of relief as the formal meeting began. I answered all the questions with my arm draped around the empty chair next to me, without fear of saying that I didn't know anything or that sometimes I didn't cough religiously to Orthodoxy. During the hour, there was a lot of laughter when the examiners admitted that they didn't know some things themselves. I was admitted to the Greater Atlanta Presbytery. Tips for statements of faith Over the past four decades, I have usually been the one who read someone else's statement and asked the questions. I have learned a few things that should be included in this article in case a reader is working with his own statement of faith. When you present a statement of faith to a committee in a process that is important to them, you do not try to be creative. Do not try to be the first to consider the nature of Christianity in, say, the language of a 6-year-old, or in completely contemporary idiom. I have seen such efforts and they prolong the conversation of those who agree with you. Always address these topics: Father, Son, Holy Spirit, Church, Church, Mission, Evil, Last Things, Scripture, Redemption. Omissions are noticed. You don't want to be in a public conversation about your declaration of faith and let someone say, Why did you omit the cross of Jesus? The order you present these topics will greatly affect how it turns out. You need to clarify what comes first. Creation? God? Spirit? It's not as easy as you think before you try to work out the whole picture. If they are under the pressure of an investigation, especially in front of an entire presbytery, remember that questioners will use the conversation to show or address their own pet problems. Sometimes questions are ridiculously specific to the personal obsession of the questioner of the moment. Don't panic if you have no idea what answer they want to hear. Instead, counter with your own question for clarification. Counter again if you need to. At some point, the end of the question simply gives you the answer. Douglas DeCelle Christ the Key Christian life begins for me and for all humanity, if we follow Jesus' invitation to follow, learn and remain forever in his company. The life that Jesus lived and continues to live in The Palestine of the first century is overflowing with revelation, not only by the character of God, but also by the nature and purpose of human life. Jesus Christ is the lens through which the followers see God's purpose for all that God has created. The original disciples of Jesus were the first to recognize that their Master embodied the presence and character of the God of their nation, Israel. When Jesus was risen from the dead, the disciples realized that the teachings of Jesus were certified by God and that a new phase of God's dominion had indeed begun. Ultimately, the followers of Jesus, then and now, began to recognize their Lord as God, as the God of Israel, in their presence. In Jesus we see that God is good, true and beautiful and is the only sovereign who, if just and life-giving, is. But Jesus was also a man. The example of Jesus living with the Father and the Spirit, both in service to others and in intimacy, reveals God's form for the life of every human being. What we see in the way of life of Jesus, the confrontation with evil, the return from the tomb and the constant

domination, is the breathtaking first example of the kind of existence that all human beings can live as bearers of the image and desast of God. God, the Spirit Church of Jesus has built and left behind a community of followers in the world. The presence of Jesus with these followers continued and continues today through the Holy Spirit—God's spiritual non-physical presence. Here, too, Jesus' program of traveling with his church and teaching it describes the form of the disciples' community today and through history. The work of Jesus to proclaim the dominion of God, to call disciples, to call, all peoples, and the confrontation with evil continues in the Church. There is a feeling that the spirit-strengthened communion of disciples can be equated with the presence of Christ in the world. Scripture After the civil service of Jesus in Palestine, his followers wrote a series of books and letters about him and the new life he gave them. When these documents circulated in the old disciple communities, a separate group of them was recognized as particularly inspired and inspiring. These scriptures—the New Testament—impressed generations of Christians in many places as unique witty vehicles to convey God's character and will. A similar process was underway with Israel's writings, which were also seen as useful in the Christian community, comparable to the New Testament. The resulting collection of scriptures—our Bible—is uniquely reliable to this day when it comes to communicating God's Word to all who encounter him through the guidance of the Spirit. Sacraments As in communion and the Bible, I experience with the whole Church the presence of Christ in the sacraments of Baptism and the Lord's Sacrament. These are actions within the adoring community that remind the disciples of new intimacy with the life, death, resurrection of Jesus and bring them into new intimacy. For example, when Jesus descended to the earth and was lifted up again into the presence of the Father, the baptized man reappears in the water and reappears as a sign of that person's attachment to Christ. Likewise, the broken bread and the poured wine remind of the broken body of Jesus and bleed in his crucifixion. Through the Spirit of Christ, these deeds have been experienced time and again by the Church in order to carry His presence with greater intensity into the communion that is refreshed and strengthened by it. God the Father, create The stage on which Christ, His discipleship and all humanity live out their existence is the world. God—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—created the world. Making the world was a monumental act of love, and the resulting work is full of God's goodness, truth, and beauty. God's presence, guidance and preservation of creation is essential for its design. The goodness and beauty of the world goes on exuberantly and testifies to the splendor of the God who brought it to life. We can deduce from God's love and care of what He has done that nothing, nor anyone whom God has created, is delivered to evil, ugliness, or untruth. And by God's providence, which has yet to be understood, the new life flowing through the life, sacrifice, and resurrection of Jesus Christ is surrounded by everything. Is. Evil in creation and human incitement has broken out, in contrast to God and God's rightful dominion over what God has done. The rebellion at its core is a struggle who governs. It is a struggle over what values are valued, who will have power, who will be praised, and who will be enriched. The struggle is insidious and ensnars me, along with others and even groups of people, in a destructive opposition to God and all the good that comes from God. The civil service of Jesus took place in the midst of this struggle. Jesus was recognized as one with God by the power that stands in the way of God, and as a result Jesus was captured and murdered. As with all that Jesus does, his death was transformed by the Spirit into something good and beautiful. First, Jesus rose from the dead and forgave his disciples who were guilty of his death. Then, over time, the drama of the execution of Jesus, the return from the tomb and the resumption of heavenly rule has been understood by his followers as a glorious new phase of God's triumph. I and all disciples experience this triumph personally in the reconciling and renewing power that the sacrifice of Jesus and the ascension from the dead hold for me. The core message of the Kingdom of Jesus was that God's dominion existed and was and would remain in creation. The deep struggle, including the spiritual struggle, by dark forces over God and his longing for his creation will eventually end in their defeat. God's goodness, truth, and beauty will assume their rightful place, presiding over all that God has made, including all peoples. Somehow, through God's wisdom and guidance, all peoples, creatures, and everything are integrated into the communion of Christ's followers and enjoy eternal communion and joy with him. This depiction of Christ, which can be found in Istanbul's Hagia Sophia, is particularly appropriate to the above declaration of faith. This mosaic of Christ is a famous example of the iconographic style that emphasizes both its divine and human character. Photo: Myrabella / Wikimedia Commons, via Wikimedia CommonsPlease follow and like us:

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