



A Test of Faith

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“The United States confronts a crisis of democracy, and the American church confronts a test of faith.”

This is the first sentence of a [recent statement](#) signed by UCC General Minister and President, Rev. Dr. Karen Georgia Thompson, along with over 200 national faith leaders from across the ecumenical spectrum. The statement was released at the “Test of Faith” conference that was held in Washington, DC last week. At a time when we are increasingly aware of the threats we face as a nation to our daily life and to our democracy (given the rise of authoritarian, Christian Nationalist, and anti-democratic ideology), we must remember the “test” we, as Christians, also now face. As leaders and academics discussed in last week’s conference, the “test” for us is that of theology: how will we stand up to those who seek to twist the basic tenets of our faith, and what will we do to strengthen and protect the very core of Christianity?

Several speakers at the conference shared stories of pastors who are being forced to defend basic theological concepts and scriptural interpretations in their churches, including concepts like Imago Dei, the belief we are ALL made in God’s image and all therefore deserve basic rights, respect, and love. Other pastors have countered assertions that the biblical call to love the “outcast” really applies to those marginalized politically, rather than the poor, the immigrant, LGBTQIA+ siblings, or any whom society has moved to the margins. The statement released by faith leaders at last week’s conference under the heading “Christian Faith & Democracy” seeks to define, from an ecumenical perspective, a basic set of shared values that Christians can affirm and hold on to during these turbulent times. Those common truths include the

concepts of Imago Dei, sin, truth and integrity, loving the stranger and enemy, solidarity and the common good, wealth/poverty, religious pluralism, and peacemaking.

These values and definitions echo much of the United Church of Christ Statement of Faith, an articulation that has held us together as a church for almost seventy years. To be clear, for the UCC, the Statement of Faith is not a litmus test of what it means to be Christian. Rather, it stands as a reminder of our own beliefs, distinct values, and faith tenets that can connect us both to the wider Church as well as to generations past- and those yet to come. The Robert V. Moss version of the statement I have often found particularly moving over the years. It concludes with a powerful affirmation to take “courage in the struggle for peace and justice,” a phrase I have often reminded myself of in moments when encouragement is needed. Today we face just such a moment, a test not only over the future of our nation, and our democracy, but a struggle for our faith values as well. Let us remind ourselves of the beliefs we have articulated over our history and encourage one another as we seek to live out our mission to “Build a Just World for All” in these days.

“Let us hold fast to the confession of our hope without wavering...”
(Hebrews 10:23)

To read and sign on to the “Christian Faith & Democracy” statement visit: <https://faithanddemocracy.net/>.

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