Some Questions to consider:

- I. What do you believe about Scripture?
- a. What do you believe about divine inspiration?
- b. What do you believe about the Bible's accuracy?
- c. What do you believe about the Bible's purpose?
- d. What do you believe about the Bible's historicity?
- II. What do you believe about God?
- a. What do you believe about His existence/eternality?
- b. What do you believe about His omniscience and omnipotence?
- c. What do you believe about the Trinity?
- d. What are the attributes of God?
- III. What do you believe about Creation?
- a. What do you believe about the Creation account in Genesis?
- IV. What do you believe about Man and Sin?
- a. What do you believe about original sin?
- b. What do you believe is the basis for salvation?
- V. What do you believe about Jesus Christ?
- a. What do you believe about His eternality?
- b. What do you believe about His Incarnation and His Two Natures?
- c. What do you believe about His Death and Resurrection?
- VII. What do you believe about the Church?
- a. What do you believe about the role of the church in a Christian's life?
- b. What do you believe about the role of a Christian in the life of the church?
- VIII. What is your personal faith story?
- IX. What is your role in culture?
- a. How does your faith interact with culture?
- b. How does your faith cause you to serve others around you?
- c. How can you minister in whatever job, college, or place in life you end up in?

Personal faith statements reflect an individual's thoughts about his/her relationship with God, church and Jesus Christ. Writers commonly use phrases beginning with "believe," include anecdotal accounts to describe their faith journeys and cite scriptures. Although usually only one typewritten page or less in length, no standard format exists for statements of personal faith; they are as individual as the people writing them.

Sources of Inspiration

Some people use questions to help them define their beliefs. For example, asking yourself why and when you pray, or how you feel when you don't pray, can clarify your position about communication with God. Others find reading Bible passages helpful, such as New Testament verses that relate actions Jesus took, to reach their own conclusions about who Christ was and what he represents to them. Personal faith statements can develop from favorite Bible verses or the lyrics to a favorite hymn. Discuss why you find them meaningful and relate this to various theological and ecclesiastical topics.

Basic Theology

After contemplating what religion means to you and organizing your thoughts, begin by describing in your own words who God is and what the Trinity signify to you. Touch on your feelings about Christ and his role in your salvation, your interpretation of salvation and grace, and how the Holy Spirit is at work in your life. In addition to discussing the significance the Bible holds foryou, you might include the role of prayer and how you pray. Your statement of personal faith may have one, all-encompassing paragraph covering these theological basics; devote a paragraph to each; combine some and highlight others separately; or use bullet points.

Ecclesiastical Thoughts

Your opinions about the role of the church, the importance of Communion and your responsibilities as a Christian belong in your personal faith statement. Some people provide examples of actions they take or activities in which they participate and relate these to how they help fulfill the church's mission to help those less fortunate and to spread God's word. Those writing a personal faith statement as part of an application to theological school or for a teaching position at a faith-based school would tie their professional callings to what they feel is God's plan for them.

Affirmation of Denominational Beliefs

Members of a congregation facing installation as church officers such as elders or deacons, and young people becoming members through completion of the Confirmation process should profess agreement with their denomination's traditions and beliefs in their personal faith statements. Examples include the denomination's stance on baptism, the Word of God and worship, and any creeds used to define its basic beliefs.

Pray

Of course, when delving into spiritual matters and seeking to accurately represent the word of God, prayer should be a part of the process. In fact, it should be the first thing we do. After all, we are asking for guidance.

Know what you believe

You can't write about what you don't know - though some try. You should know exactly what it is you believe so you can articulate it. Along this line of thought, I would recommend that people learn such terms as Trinity, justification, sanctification, salvation, atonement, etc. Such words are theological as well as biblical. So, it helps to know what words to use. After all, words are the tools of theology.

Decide what areas are important

In order to do this, it helps to know what the essentials of the Christian faith are and are not. For example, the Trinity is an essential doctrine that defines the God of Christianity, but worshiping on Saturday or Sunday is not an essential doctrine since worshiping on either day does not make someone a Christian or not. This is important because the essential doctrines should be clearly defined, and the nonessentials should be approached with grace so that a variety of opinions are allowed.

Use Scripture

Whenever possible, it is best to document your statement of faith with Scriptures. It is the word of God to which we must appeal in order to validate our faith. If your position cannot be found in Scripture, perhaps it should not be included in a statement of faith, unless, however, it is stated that such a position is not explicitly declared in Scripture but as an opinion.

Examples:

Personal Statement of Faith

I am fortunate to have realized my faith in Christ at a very early age, being taught by my parents to look to Christ for my salvation and to Him alone. As a result of my upbringing, memories of my faith are among my earliest; I can remember no marked conversion, though I have certainly seen renewal of faith. I claim today nothing but Christ's righteousness as foundation and His blood as security for my salvation. My faith is the result of God's gracious gift, and arises from no inherent goodness or cleverness of my own. I live only, therefore, by the grace of the one true, sovereign and merciful God, whom I rejoice to call my Father.

As if to illustrate His immense grace and mercy, God drew my heart back to Him after I fell to my wandering priorities while in college. During those years (at Whitman College, a secular liberal arts college) the weakness of my commitment in life to those ideas that I had grasped intellectually while growing up became evident. The "child-like" character of my faith waned as I launched into life on my own. I was committed enough to attend church sporadically during my college years with my wife-to-be (who was at the time just beginning to explore Christianity) and faithfully while at home on breaks, but my walk with God was clouded over by my own sense of self-sufficiency. God is incredibly longsuffering, however. In His patience, He simply waited for me to recall the grace He had granted me in my life and to return to an acceptance of my absolute dependence upon it. I recognized at last, as my wife and I moved on for my graduate studies at Northwestern after we married, how much I had failed in my devotion to Christ while at Whitman. Upon our arrival in Illinois my wife and I became determined to find a church home. We were introduced by friends to a wonderful PCA church and quickly became part of the body there. God blessed us with just what we needed at the time - a solid church in which we could learn, gain maturity and serve, and with good friends and fellowship which fostered each of these things. As a result of God's timely intervention and guidance through these years, my faith grew strong, and perhaps for the first time since junior high school, it truly became a defining characteristic of my daily life. I was revived from dormancy and "bare trust" into fresh realization of God's grace and newness of life. After seven years in Illinois, we moved to Ithaca NY, for my current position. The Lord again provided a good church home for us, New Life Presbyterian Church (PCA). I currently lead one of the church's weekly Bible studies, teach adult Sunday school as needed, and organize the monthly prayer meetings and early Sunday prayer time for the congregation. In the last year of our sojourn in Ithaca, I served the congregation as one of its Ruling Elders.

As I look now at the past decade, I thank God for those who have been a help to us and to me in particular as mentors. Through the friendship and shepherding of our pastors in Illinois and here in Ithaca, I have made the jump from a nominal faith to enthusiastically embrace the Reformed faith. I am strongly convinced today that the system of doctrine embodied in the Westminster standards is a correct summary of Biblical truth. These men have taught me the importance of embracing Christ with both my heart *and* with my mind. One thing I appreciate most from my pastors' guidance through our time together is my growing appreciation for the devotion and efforts of such men as Edwards, Owen, Sibbes and Flavel. As I have grown in my faith and understanding of God's grace,

I have found great encouragement and comfort in the insights of these men. Their dedication and love for God's truth and for God's people is evident in their works. They have been strong prompting for me to devote myself continually to God's Word and to prayer.

STATEMENT OF FAITH by Rev. Herman E. Pride

My personal statement of faith and theological perspective are best stated in the words of the "Brief Statement of Faith" of the 202nd General Assemble, 1990.1 believe in one God and that I belong to Him in life and in death. I believe that in grace, God has given His son Jesus Christ, fully human and fully God, to redeem mankind; I accept Jesus as Lord of my life. 1 also call God, Abba, Father. I believe God is just and merciful; and at His initiative. He has called me to be His. I believe God loves me; that He has personal knowledge of me; and that He has a personal agenda for me. My personal faith also involves my personal responsibility to God to know His will in and for my life. I believe and trust in Jesus Christ and share in His ministry to teach, bless, heal, bind-up the brokenhearted and preach release to the captive. My personal faith is made effective through the Holy Spirit, the third person in the Godhead, working in my life as I believe and trust in God. His Spirit justifies me by grace through faith and sets me free to accept myself and to love God and my neighbor.

Poor example:

My personal statement of faith is from the Bible. My parents have taken me to church all my life and I believe what my church believes. I know I'm supposed to read my Bible and it's an important book. I believe what my teachers and parents have said about faith. There are a lot of other ideas out there but this is what I believe. If someone doesn't believe the same that is their choice. I believe what I believe and that's it.