Rev. Ken Labbé – Statement of Faith 2024

I received the call into ministry reading Spurgeon when I was only 17. While I had always known the Lord, my commitment to following Jesus was tested in my teen years through a few significant events. At this point I was spending a good deal of time alone in my home church during the week playing music and reading in the library, when one evening, I read those prophetic words, “A man doesn’t go into the ministry because he *wants* to, but because he *cannot* do anything else.” From that moment, though I pursued other careers, I knew I was meant to serve the Lord. This call has been a heavy burden that I’ve struggled to carry; the personal cost of it has been immense. But at various points along the journey, always when I needed it most, God has granted me supernatural encouragement, most often by theological insight.

My childhood influences were as broad as my church experience, so I’d say at the point of my call to ministry, I had a very widely evangelical understanding of theology. I attended Catechism class at church, but didn’t make a profession of faith for some reason at that time, so my introduction to Reformed theology really took place at Redeemer College under Gene Haas and Al Wolters. While I appreciated Calvinism as a system, I wasn’t entirely sold on it. When I started at the Missionary Alliance seminary, I did profess my faith in a Reformed Church, mostly for pragmatic reasons so I could do my internship there, but I was forced to defend my church’s theological tradition in what turned out to be a quite oppositional environment at school. Through the RCA’s summer intensive program for students at non-RCA seminaries, I learned how to answer the questions properly, and was ordained in 2008 a very uncertain reformed pastor.

Nevertheless, there were some aspects of reformational theology that I had come to cling to. First was human depravity, because I knew for myself that no matter how hard I tried, I did not have the capacity to stop sinning. Coming from a Roman Catholic childhood, I knew I desperately needed the hope of an endless supply of grace that wasn’t dependent on my own merit. Second, when my father announced his cancer diagnosis, I so badly needed the comfort of a sovereign God who was also near. I came to terms with predestination in that time, and discovered significant peace in his providence, too. When I settled into my first solo position, I finally began to struggle with the nuts and bolts of atonement, the order of salvation, and the value of good works.

It was actually a CRC pastor, who mentored me for a number of years after my father died, that set me straight. He had me read Michael Horton’s theology textbook from cover to cover, and it finally all made sense to me. The Reformed system that I fought against so hard turned out to be the one that tied together all the loose ends. As Van Til put it, Calvinism is simply another word for biblical theology. I began reading again, and rediscovered the transformative gospel of Jesus on every page of Scripture, and saw the beauty and glory of his work in every aspect of my life. Those years were the foundation that carried me through the dark valley ahead.

I never doubted my trust in Jesus, nor my call to ministry. After Christina’s cancer, we intended to start a bivocational church plant, and that’s the primary reason we left Kingsville. It didn’t work out as we imagined, but God knew what he was doing, healing our souls with friendship, giving us new experiences that would help us connect with a different kind of people, and leading us gently back into the church. My time in the trade has shaped my pastoral care and preaching in ways I never imagined it could, and it’s given me an influence I didn’t know I could have, especially with men.

I remain joyfully and wholeheartedly committed to Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior. He is all I want and need in this life and the next. I insist that it is he who came to me in the prison of my sin, that with no help from me whatsoever, he broke my chains and set me free to serve him. I believe that he took all my sin in his own flesh and died on the cross as my substitute in order to make me right with the Father. I realize I must respond to him with daily repentance, faith, and obedience, all of which is gradually becoming more instinctive and even natural to me. I trust now more than ever that he is guiding and guarding at every step of my journey homeward, and that one day soon I will take his hand and rest eternally in his presence.