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Who is God?

We believe that God is the Creator, Sustainer, and Redeemer of the universe and everything that exists in it. There is no one or no thing that created God or existed before Him. God has always been and He will always be because He does not require anything apart from Himself to continue being. No person can say that about themselves, except for God.

We believe that God has always existed and will always exist in a perfect community of three persons, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. The three together are a perfect and unified God. We call this understanding of God, "The Trinity." God is a Trinity. Each person in the Trinity is entirely and perfectly divine, sharing with the other two persons all the attributes of God. Each person is also entirely and perfectly distinct from the other two persons, although their relationship with one another is eternally and closely bound by perfect love. We believe, therefore, in one God who is made up of three persons.

(Genesis 1-3; Exodus 3:10-18, 6:1-13, 15:1-21, Psalm 3, 37, 41, 51, 54, 104, 130; Job 19:23-29, 38:1-42:17; Isaiah 41; Matthew 3:13-17, 28:16-20; Mark 1:9-11; Luke 1:46-56, 3:21-22, 24:13-35; John 1:1-18, 31-34, 5:18-24, 8:12-30, 53-58, 14:1-31, 16:5-15; Acts 2:38-41; Galatians 3:1-14; Philippians 2:1-18; Titus 2:11-15; Revelation 1:8, 22:1-21)

Why is God Relevant for Me?

We believe that God is the only reason anything exists. Without Him you would not exist, the earth would not exist, our solar system would not exist, and our galaxy would not exist. The universe itself would not exist. God created everything, from the smallest particle of dust to the largest star, from the tiniest passing thought to the loftiest idea. It all exists because of God.

We believe that God is everywhere; you cannot escape Him. God did not simply create things and then step back from his creation. No, in fact, everything in the whole universe depends on the presence of God to be sustained. If God were to pull Himself away from something, it would simply cease to exist. None of us can continue living without God's continual sustaining power.

We also believe that God wants to be in relationship with all people. In the same way that the three persons of the Trinity—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—are in perfect community with one another, God wants to be in perfect relationship with you. Unfortunately we all betray God by the things we think, do, and feel. Accordingly, since God is perfect He cannot be in perfect relationship with imperfect people. In order to solve this dilemma, however, God has found a way to redeem each of us so that we might experience this perfect relationship with Him. And, when we are redeemed, God promises to sustain us forever.

God is the Creator, Sustainer, and Redeemer of all things. In a very real sense, therefore, no one or no thing could ever be more relevant. Wouldn't you like to know Him better?

(Genesis 15:1-21; Leviticus 16:1–17:16; John 3:1-21, 20:30-31; Colossians 1:13-29; Hebrews 5:1–14; Romans 3:21-31)

Who is the Father?

We believe that God the Father is the source of the Trinity. Although all three persons in the Trinity—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—have always existed together and never without each other, the source of the Trinity is the Father. Theologians try to articulate this complicated truth by saying that the Son was "begotten" by the Father and that the Holy Spirit "proceeds" from the Father. Neither "begotten" nor "proceeds" intends to communicate the idea of "creation" because no person in the Trinity was ever created. All three of them have always Been and will always Be. The Son and the Holy Spirit, however, are rooted in the Father. It is the Father who always has and always will sustain the Son and Holy Spirit.

In very simple terms, we believe that the Holy Spirit works to reveal the Son and the Son eternally intends to glorify the Father.

(2 Samuel 7:8-17; Psalm 2; Matthew 6:5-15; Mark 14:32-42; John 3:13-21;

Acts 13:16-42; Romans 8:1-25; Galatians 4:1-20; Hebrews 1:1-14; 1 John 7-17)

Why is the Father Relevant for me?

In the same way that God the Father is the source of the Trinity, He is also the source of all of Creation. Although all three persons of the Trinity—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—were equally involved in Creation, the universe and everything created is ultimately rooted in the Father. He is the architect and foundation of all things. All Creation exists to glorify the Father. Within the Trinity each Person intentionally glorifies the Father and the Father shares His glory with the Son and Spirit. When we come to realize this, and just how relevant the Father is for us, we then begin to have renewed purpose in this life and for time everlasting.

(Exodus 20:1-7; Leviticus 26:1-13; Deuteronomy 5:1-15; Isaiah 40; Malachi 1:6-14; John 21:18-25; Acts 11:1-18; Romans 15:1-19)

Who is Jesus?

Jesus was born into a Jewish family from Nazareth over two thousand years ago in Bethlehem, near Jerusalem. He was born at a time when the Roman Empire still exercised vast power over many provinces and territories.

We believe that his mother, Mary, conceived him by the power of the Holy Spirit and not through natural intercourse with Joseph, her betrothed husband. This is important because it qualifies our position that Jesus is both the "Son of Man" and the "Son of God." We believe that he is human insofar as he was born of Mary and that he is God insofar as he is God the Son, who was eternally begotten by God the Father, and conceived in flesh through the Holy Spirit. Our faith, therefore, understands Jesus to be entirely human and entirely divine; two natures bonded perfectly together forever in one person.

We believe that Jesus experienced every stage of human life, growing and learning as all children and youth do. We also believe that he grew in knowledge and wisdom as he aged.

We believe that in Jesus we fully know who God is and what God is like. We believe that because he is God the Son, Jesus is the perfect image of God the Father and that he perfectly expresses God's character to us. Through his teaching, which is recorded in Scripture, we believe that we learn God's good and perfect will for human existence.

We believe that although innocent, Jesus was arrested, convicted, and crucified by Roman officials on the strong urging of the Jewish ruling elite. We believe that, much like a lightning rod absorbs the full electrical force of lightning, Jesus absorbed the full wrath of God the Father on behalf of all sinful human beings by hanging and

dying on the cross.

We believe that Jesus was buried and that on the third day his physical body came back to life. We also believe that he appeared, interacted, and ate food with his disciples and many others in a resurrected body before ascending to Heaven, where he remains alive as a human being and as God, interceding on our behalf to God the Father.

(2 Samuel 7; Psalm 22; Isaiah 50, 53; Matthew 11:25-30, 16:13-20, 17:1-8, 20:17-19, 26:1—28:20; Mark 8:27-38, 9:2-8, 14:12—16:8; Luke 11:29-32, 22:1—24:53; John 1:1-34, 5:18-24, 6:66-71, 8:12-30, 9:35-41, 10:22-38, 12:27—14:15, 18:1—21:25; Hebrews 13:1-14; 2 Peter 1:16-21)

Why is Jesus Relevant for Me?

First, as counter-cultural as this might be, we believe that all of us fall short of the glory of God. In other words, left on our own we are not able to share in God's holiness. As a result of our imperfection, there is a barrier between us and God, who is perfect.

We believe, however, that since God loves us, he was not content to let this barrier remain and for this reason, he became human. In Jesus, God became human, and will forever remain perfectly bonded to humanity, so that we might become like God. As a human being God was able to talk to us face-to-face and show us who he really is. More than that, however, he was able to vicariously absorb the penalty for our imperfection.

We believe that only perfection can co-exist with perfection. Accordingly, we, being imperfect, cannot dwell permanently with the perfect God. The penalty for our imperfection is death and separation from God. However, Jesus, being perfect, endured death on our behalf so that God might transfer this penalty from us to himself. Now, God sees us through the perfect sacrifice of Jesus so that although we remain imperfect, God considers us to be cleansed from our imperfection.

We believe that the death of Jesus was different than the death of any other human being because only Jesus has lived a perfect human life. Therefore, only he is an acceptable sacrifice on our behalf. An imperfect life would not satisfy God's justice, but a perfect one has. Additionally, Jesus was more than human; he is God. God died so that we might live.

We believe that all God asks of us is to recognize our need for him. When we embrace our own inadequacy and ask him to see us through the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus, then God promises to give us new life and to sustain us forever.

We believe that our recognition of our need for Jesus should lead us to praise him with thankful and awe-filled hearts. For without him, we are bound to continue to exist without the fullness of life, only to physically die and be entirely separated from

God forever. When we ask him to give us life, however, he comes to us and fills us with his Holy Spirit as we await our own resurrections into eternal life with him.

(Romans 5:1–7:13; 1 Corinthians 1:18-31; Galatians 3:1-14; Ephesians 1:2-23; Colossians 2:1-17; 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18; Hebrews 3:1-11, 5:1-14; 1 Peter 1:3-25, 2:21-25; 1 John 2:1-24)

Why is the Resurrection Important?

We believe that the resurrection of Jesus is the most important historical and theological event ever. If Jesus did not physically come back to life then our entire faith is in vain and we are still lost in our sin. Faith in the bodily resurrection of Jesus, therefore, is foundational to the Christian life.

On its own, the resurrection of Jesus does not prove that He is God the Son. It is conceivable that God would raise a mere human being back to life. However, the resurrection validates the ministry of Jesus. In other words, the resurrection demonstrates God's "stamp of approval" and compels us to take seriously the message and mission of Jesus. When we investigate this message, we find that Jesus performed works and spoke of Himself in ways that were reserved for God, and God alone. It is for this very reason that the Israelite officials were so disturbed by Jesus' ministry; He clearly claimed to have the authority and power of God.

Now, Jesus had not been the first to make such a claim. Many other false Messiahs had come and gone, their lives ended by being stoned or crucified. We believe that the difference between Jesus and these other men claiming to be the Messiah was that Jesus came back to life, whereas the others did not. If Jesus did not come back to life, then we have no reason to believe that He is the True Messiah. When we affirm that He did, indeed, come back to life, on the other hand, we testify that He is the anticipated True Messiah, God the Son made human.

We believe that the resurrection also inaugurates a new age, where sin and death have been defeated and rendered obsolete. As a result of the resurrection, we can trust that in Jesus humanity is eternally bound to God and as a result we have an assured hope that we too can come into an eternal relationship with God. Just as Jesus has an eternal human body we believe that when we place our trust in Christ, we have an assured hope that we too will have an eternal human body.

(Psalm 16; Matthew 22:23-33, 28; Mark 12:18-27, 16:1-8; Luke 20:27-47, 22:66-71, 24; John 1:1-18, 5:18-47, 10:22-42, 14:7-15, 15:1-11, 20-21; Acts 2:14-36, 13:16-43; Romans 8:1-25; 1 Corinthians 15; Philippians 3; Hebrews 6:1-5, 8-10; 1 Peter 1)

Who is the Spirit?

We believe that the Holy Spirit is God's omniscient Spirit who sustains all things. The Spirit is our Teacher, Comforter, and Mediator. It is impossible to know anything about God unless it has been revealed to us by the Spirit. He teaches us about Christ, revealing His true identity to us, so that we might come to know and worship the Father. He comforts us when we are suffering as a result of our own sin or the sin of others. It is the Spirit who makes the Grace of God known and felt by us. He mediates our relationship with God by empowering us to pray and worship. When we feel the presence of God it is the presence of the Spirit that we are acknowledging.

We believe that the Spirit establishes the Church by intimately dwelling within professing believers and followers of Jesus. The Church, therefore, is a universal community united by One Spirit who dispenses spiritual gifts and vocational calling to each person according to God's purposes. It is the same Spirit who spoke through the Prophets, raised Jesus to life after the crucifixion, and who fills the hearts and lives of people in the Church today.

(Psalm 51; Isaiah 63:7-14; Matthew 3; Mark 1:1-13, 12:35-40, 13:10-11; Luke 2:21-38, 3:1-22, 11:1-13, 12:11-12; John 1:19-34, 14:16-31, 20:19-29; Acts 1:1-8, 2, 7:54-60, 9:1-31, 10:34-48, 13:52, 19:1-10, 28:23-28)

Why is the Spirit Relevant for Me?

We believe that it is the Spirit who initiates every relationship between God and human beings. No one can come to faith in Christ apart from the movement and involvement of the Spirit. He makes the grace, forgiveness, and mercy of God available to us. He enables us to extend grace, forgiveness, and mercy to others who have hurt us. It is the Spirit who makes it possible for us to have faith, hope, and love. The Spirit renews the fullness of life within us so that we might experience joy, peace, and purpose.

We believe that the Spirit facilitates fellowship and community life. It is He who distributes spiritual gifts, such as wisdom, knowledge, faith, healing, performing of miracles, prophecy, discernment of spirits, speaking in tongues, interpretation of tongues, leadership, teaching, evangelism, service, exhortation, showing mercy, and hospitality, among others. He works for the unity of believers and helps each of us to gain in humility, selflessness, and self-control.

Surely, without the Holy Spirit we would be utterly and completely lost. On the other hand, His presence with us makes all things possible.

(Romans 5, 14:17-19, 15; 1 Corinthians 6:12-20, 12:1-14:40; 2 Corinthians 13:9-14; Galatians 5; Ephesians 1, 4; 1 Thessalonians 1, 4:1-12; 2 Timothy 1; Titus 3:1-11; Hebrews 6; 1 Peter 1; Jude 17-25)

What is the Church?

The Church may just be the most misunderstood aspect of Christianity. At the thought of Church, many people immediately envision an old stone or wood building with a steeple, some bells, and a graveyard out back. Others conjure up images of tiny sandwiches and coffee, long drawn out sermons, or liturgical prayers that don't seem to make much sense or offer much relevance. Perhaps most commonly, however, is the association between Church and a single day of the week. An overwhelming majority of people are prone to say that Church is something people do on Sunday morning. Surprisingly, however, none of these ideas about Church come from the Bible. If this is true, then what is the biblical definition of Church?

In most simple terms, we believe that the Church is a group of people, much like Canadians, Italians, or Russians are all examples of groups of people. Canadians, Italians, and Russians all receive their citizenship by the civil sovereign authority of a central government, which grants them certain rights and privileges. In a similar way, each person in the Church receives heavenly citizenship by the full sovereign authority of God, who grants each one the rights and privileges that come with being children of God.

We believe that Jesus is God the Son made human; that he was born, grew, was tortured, crucified and killed; and that on the third day his human body came back to life so that he might ascend into Heaven. We also believe that Jesus, along with God the Father, sent the Holy Spirit to live within any person who believes that Jesus is Lord. Therefore, God not only fills buildings and cosmic spaces, but he also dwells intimately within people. The Church is the collection of all those people who have received the Grace of God and have him living within them.

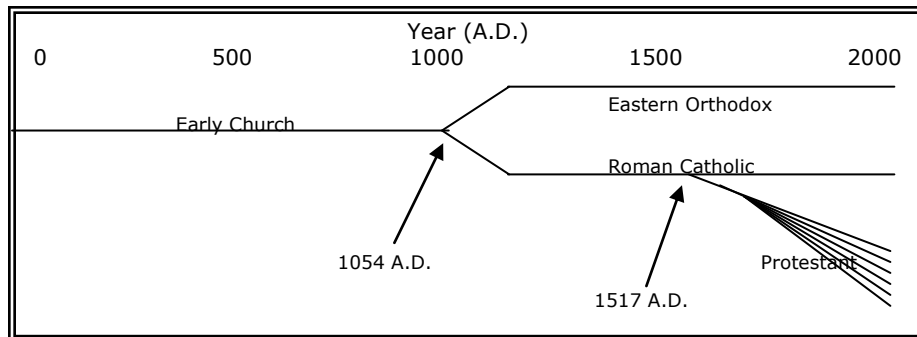
(Matthew 16:13-20; Mark 8:27-29; Luke 9:18-20; John 15:1-11, 16:5-15, Acts 1-4, 11:19-30, 15:1-29, 20:17-38; Romans 16; 1 Corinthians 1:1-17, 10:1-33, Galatians 1; Ephesians 1-5; Colossians 1; James 4; Revelation 21-22)

Why are there Many "churches?"

There really is only one Church. Unfortunately, however, human beings have erroneously divided God's Church into tens of thousands of "sub-churches." This is especially true of the Protestant branch of the Church, which, since 1517 A.D. has established over twenty thousand denominations. However, no single branch or denomination can claim to be *THE* Church of God. The reason for this is simple; people do not have the power or the authority to create the Church. God alone is able to establish his people here on earth by indwelling the hearts and souls of individuals. All who earnestly and authentically profess Jesus to be the crucified and risen Lord belong to the Church and no amount of human interference can change that.

Both legitimate and illegitimate concerns about the theological, political, and

sociological direction of particular Christian communities have caused the Church to be splintered over the last two thousand years. The following is a macro-illustration of the major schisms within the Church:



Jesus' final prayer before he was arrested to be crucified was that the Church be united in heart, mind, and purpose (John 17). We believe, therefore, that the disunity we know and experience in the Church today is a result of human imperfection. We believe that all Christians must confess that our sin has divided the Church and that we fail to adequately represent Jesus to the world. We also hope and believe that because of God's grace and purpose, Jesus' prayer for a united Church will come to pass; that all people who profess Jesus to be their crucified and risen Lord will be gathered together as one people from every tribe, nation, and denomination. God will bring the Church back together in unity to glorify Him.

(Psalm 133; Matthew 7:17-23; John 17; 1 Corinthians 11-14, Ephesians 1-5; Philippians 2; Colossians 3:1-17; Revelation 21-22)

Why is the Church Relevant for Me?

Community is a basic human need and the Church has been called by God to be a community like no other:

The Church is to be a community where natural enemies become friends with deep and selfless love for one another.

The Church is to be a community where people share an vulnerable common life together so that no one is in need or want.

The Church is to be a community where people are encouraged and expected to fulfill their purpose in life by exercising their gifts and talents.

The Church is to be a community where the grace, joy, and peace of God is felt and lived in a concrete and meaningful way each day.

The Church is to be a community where people are not afraid, stressed, or filled with anxiety because of a profound faith and trust in God's leadership in the lives

of all people.

The Church is to be a community where suffering is endured with the support and company of others.

The Church is to be a community where people learn about and worship God together with humility and thanksgiving.

The Church is to be a community that does not retaliate when it is wronged, but rather returns evil with good.

The Church is to be a community of grace and not a community of legalism or judgment.

The Church is to be a community of broken and imperfect people who are poor in spirit, who mourn, who are meek, who hunger and thirst for righteousness, who are merciful, who are pure in heart, who are peacemakers, and who are persecuted because of righteousness.

If you are looking for these things, then the Church is relevant for you.

Because of human imperfection, the Church falls short of these aspirations. The true Church of God, however, are people who increasingly demonstrate these qualities. Look, therefore, for these characteristics and you will find the Church. Join the Church, and not a denomination, and help us to become the community God intended us to be.

(Matthew 5-7; John 15: 12-27; Acts 1-4; Romans 8; 1 Corinthians 12-14; Galatians 4-6; Ephesians 1-5; Colossians 1; 1 John 3)

What is the Bible?

We believe that God *most fully* revealed himself in the person of Jesus Christ. This is an important distinction because it reminds us that we worship God, who revealed himself fully to us with more than printed words in a book. Although we communicate our words by *writing* with ink, God communicated his Word to us by *writing* with human flesh. The Word of God is Jesus, God the Son made human, who came so that we might know God. The Bible is holy and sacred because it is authored by the Holy Spirit, through human agency, in order to inform us about and point us directly to Jesus, who is the living Word of God.

The Bible is a collection of books written over many hundreds of years by many different writers and editors. Written in Hebrew and Greek, with portions written in Aramaic, it is available in almost any language thanks to the hard and diligent work of many translators through the ages. The Bible contains several different genres, which must be read according to their purpose, structure, and context. You can find, for example, the genres of story (narrative), law & ritual, poetry, wisdom, prophesy, apocalyptic, gospel, and epistle (letters); each one offering and affirming a unique way to approach God.

The Bible is divided into two major sections, the Old and New Testaments, each with

additional sub-sections. The Old Testament is the Hebrew Bible used by Jews at the time of Jesus and the New Testament tells the story of the life of Jesus and the beginnings of the Christian Church. We believe that these two Testaments together reveal specifically who God is.

(Matthew 21:33-46, 26:47-56; Mark 12; Luke 4, 24; John 2:13-25; 5:39-47, 19:16-20:18, 20:30-31; Acts 8:25-30, 10:34-48, 17:1-15, 18:23-28, 28:11-38; Romans 1:1-17, 3:1-4:25, 15:1-33, 16:25-27; 1 Corinthians 15; Galatians 3:1-29, 4:21-31; 2 Timothy 3:1-4:8)

Why is the Bible Relevant for Me?

We believe that the Bible is a permanent and reliable record describing people as they experienced God. Accordingly, by reading the Bible we have access to actual past events, emotions, and revelations between God and humanity. In short, we believe the Bible is a witness to God's historical self-disclosure. More than that, however, we believe that when we read Scripture, we are directly interacting with the Holy Spirit, who reveals truth to us through the Bible. For, just as the Holy Spirit divinely inspired the original authors and editors to write, compile, and select the ancient documents now contained in the Bible, we believe that He continues to divinely illuminate these texts so that we might understand their truth and better know God.

The Bible is the only sure guide for a healthy Christian spiritual life. All of our experiences, thoughts, theories, and beliefs must be measured against the Bible. Whenever our thoughts and lives contradict Scripture, we know that we have ventured off track. Of course, there is always the risk that we will subjectively and erroneously interpret the Bible to suit our own needs. Since this is a very real and dangerous situation, it is crucial that we interpret the Bible within a community of faith, where many people can balance the interpretation and hold others accountable for what they propose the Bible is saying.

We believe that God changes lives through the Bible. It is through the Bible that we are able to learn who God is and how he reveals himself in Jesus Christ. It is through the Bible that we become aware of our own imperfection, God's steadfast love and faithfulness, and the sacrifice Jesus made on our behalf. Salvation is revealed to us through the Holy Spirit's use of Scripture in our lives. We believe that the Bible is infallible and inerrant such that we trust the Holy Spirit to use it as a means to speak directly to us. Accordingly, the Bible is the most relevant book in human history and in your life.

(Joshua 1:6-9; Psalm 1, 78, 119; Jeremiah 31:27-40, 36:1-32; Ezekiel 11:14-25; Matthew 7:24-29; John 14:16-26; Romans 15:1-33; 1 Corinthians 2:1-16, 10:1-11; 2 Corinthians 3:1-18; 2 Timothy 3:14-17; James 1:22-27; 2 Peter 1:16-21; 1 John 5:1-12)

How do I Read the Bible?

There is no single right way to read the Bible. Contrary to most books, however, it is not necessary to read it from front to back. It is more helpful to consider the Bible to be a library with many books, rather than a single book with many chapters. Accordingly you can choose to read the books in any order you like. All good libraries have their books organized into sections so that users can easily locate and read books within a particular category. The Bible has been divided many different ways by many different people over many different ages. Here you will find one such sectional division:

OLD TESTAMENT

Genesis
Exodus
Leviticus
Numbers
Deuteronomy*

Formative Stories & Basic Law

*Deuteronomy
Joshua
Judges
Ruth
1&2 Samuel
1&2 Kings
1&2 Chronicles

Early History of Israel Before Exile in Babylon circa 1450 B.C.— 600 B.C.

Ezra
Nehemiah
Esther

Later History of Israel After Exile in Babylon circa 530 B.C.—430 B.C.

Job
Psalms
Proverbs
Ecclesiastes
Song of Songs

Wisdom/Poetry

Isaiah
Jeremiah
Lamentations
Ezekiel
Daniel

Major Prophets Before & During Exile in Babylon

Hosea
Joel
Amos
Obadiah
Jonah
Micah

Minor Prophets Before Exile in Babylon

Nahum
Habakkuk
Zephaniah

Haggai
Zechariah
Malachi

**Minor Prophets
After Exile in Babylon**

NEW TESTAMENT

Matthew
Mark
Luke
John

Gospel (Life of Jesus)

Acts

Early History of Church

Romans
1&2 Corinthians
Galatians
Ephesians
Philippians
Colossians
1&2 Thessalonians
1&2 Timothy
Titus
Philemon

Letters of Paul to Early Churches

Hebrews
James
1&2 Peter
1,2,&3 John
Jude

Pastoral Letters of Apostles

Revelation

Apocalyptic Vision of John

What is Communion (Eucharist)?

On the night that Jesus was betrayed by His disciple, Judas Iscariot, and arrested for claiming to be God, He shared a Passover Meal with His disciples. At that meal, Jesus took bread and, after giving thanks for it, He broke it saying, "This is my body, which is for you. Do this in remembrance of me." In the same way, He also took the cup of wine after supper saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this, every time you drink it, in remembrance of me." This Last Supper, as officiated by Jesus, has served as the basis for Christian worship ever since. When Christians all over the world share in Communion (also known as the Eucharist), they take the bread and the cup just as Jesus had instructed His disciples to do over two thousand years ago.

The elements of Communion—the bread and the wine—are representative of Christ's tortured body and spilled blood on the Cross, which led to His death. In short, Communion refers us to Jesus' sacrifice for the forgiveness of our sins. We believe that His death and resurrection are the fulfillment of the Passover celebration inaugurated when God delivered Israel out of slavery in Egypt. In this fulfillment Jesus becomes the new and better sacrificial lamb, forever redeeming us of our sins.

There are many ways to understand what is happening when Christians share in Communion with one another. Some believe in *transubstantiation*, which means that the bread and wine are transformed, becoming the actual body, soul, blood, and divinity of Christ. Others believe in *consubstantiation*, which means that Christ is somehow mysteriously present in the elements and that when they are consumed the person partaking actually receives spiritual nourishment from God. And still others believe in *symbolism*, which means that the elements serve as reminders of Christ's death and resurrection, but that they remain bread and wine.

We believe that the best interpretation of Communion lies somewhere between symbolism and consubstantiation. On the one hand, Jesus clearly articulated that when we partake in Communion we are to do it in remembrance of Him. Therefore, the ritual of Communion is a consistent symbol that reminds us of what Jesus has done for us. On the other hand, we believe that when we share in Communion we are interacting with God and with each other in a profound and intimate way. Accordingly, we believe that we receive considerable spiritual nourishment from God by obeying Christ's command that we continue to share in Communion with one another.

Although Jesus celebrated the Last Supper with bread and wine, we serve bread and grape juice in order to make Communion easier for anyone who might struggle with alcoholism.

(Exodus 12; Leviticus 16:1-17:16; Psalm 51; Jeremiah 33:1-26; Matthew 26:20-35; Mark 14:1-31; Luke 22:1-23; John 13:1-14:6; 1 Corinthians 10:1-11:34; Hebrews 8:7-10:25)

Why Should I Take Communion?

We believe that the most important reason to share in Communion is because Jesus instituted this meal to commemorate His victory on the Cross. When we take Communion, therefore, we acknowledge and affirm Christ's crucifixion, death, and resurrection as the fulfillment of Old Testament Scripture and our hope for salvation.

We also believe that Communion has united Christians all across the globe for more than two thousand years. Although there are many different interpretations on how we might understand Communion, it remains a powerfully unifying ritual that has been passed on from generation to generation.

Finally, we believe that when we share in Communion with one another we receive spiritual nourishment from God as we await the consummation of all things in Christ's Second Coming.

(Exodus 12; Leviticus 16:1-17:16; Psalm 51; Jeremiah 33:1-26; Matthew 26:20-35; Mark 14:1-31; Luke 22:1-23; John 13:1-14:6; 1 Corinthians 10:1-11:34; Hebrews 8:7-10:39)

Who Can Take Communion?

We believe that any and all who profess Jesus to be their crucified and risen Lord are welcome to share in Communion with us at Philpott. We believe that Communion belongs to the universal Church and not to any single denomination within orthodox Christianity.

(John 3:14-18; 1 Corinthians 11:23-34; Galatians 4:1-31)

What is Baptism?

We believe that once a person comes to a personal faith in Jesus as their crucified and resurrected Christ, they should be baptized by immersion. Baptism has been an important aspect of the life of the Church since its very beginning.

Full immersion baptism involves a public statement of faith, personal testimony, and then full body immersion in a body of water. We have a baptismal tank that is used for most baptisms at Philpott. For special instances, where full immersion is not possible, alternative solutions may be found, such as a sprinkling or pouring of water.

Baptism symbolizes the death and resurrection of Christ. By dying on the cross and being raised to life, Jesus fulfilled the Old Testament Scriptures, offering us eternal salvation. A believer's immersion under water declares his or her death with Christ. When the believer emerges from the water, he or she is symbolically participating in His resurrection, thus entering into new life.

The use of water is significant in many respects. It symbolizes rebirth by reminding us of our natural births from our mothers womb. It also represents the cleansing of our sins as we repent and follow Jesus.

We believe that God, by His own initiative, brings people into salvation by baptizing them with the Holy Spirit. We believe that God's baptism of the Spirit and our obedience to water baptism are not one and the same.

(Exodus 13:17-16:21; Joshua 3:1-6:27; Matthew 3:1-17, 28:16-20; Mark 1:1-13, 10:32-45; Luke 3:1-22; John 1:19-34, 3:1-21; Acts 1:1-8, 2:37-47, 8:4-40, 9:1-19, 10:34-11:18, 16:14-21, 16:31-40, 19:1-10; Romans 6:1-7:13; 1 Corinthians 1:1-17, 10:1-6; Galatians 3:15-29)

Why Should I be Baptized?

We believe that the single most important reason to be baptized is to be obedient to the commands of Christ. He gave His disciples this model for introducing people to the Kingdom of Heaven when he said, "Go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the Name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit."

We also believe that it is important to follow Jesus' example. When he inaugurated His ministry at the age of 30, Jesus was baptized by His cousin, John in the Jordon River. By doing so, Jesus identified with Israel when they were miraculously led through the Red Sea as they fled from Egypt and when they crossed the Jordan River into the Promised land. In being baptized, he also foreshadowed his own death and resurrection through the symbolic act of being immersed and raised out of the water. And finally, in his baptism, Jesus identifies with us and our sin even though He was without sin.

Finally, we believe that baptism has been an important aspect of the life of the Church since its very beginning. Accordingly, by being baptized, a believer is participating in a unifying tradition that has been modeled for thousands of years in all areas of the world. Baptism is an incredible way to actively become a part of God's redemptive story.

(Exodus 13:17-16:21; Joshua 3:1-6:27; Matthew 3:1-17, 28:16-20; Mark 1:1-13, 10:32-45; Luke 3:1-22; John 1:19-34, Acts 1:1-8, 2:37-47, 8:4-40, 9:1-19, 10:34-11:18, 16:14-21, 16:31-40, 19:1-10; Romans 6:1-7:13; 1 Corinthians 1:1-17, 10:1-6; Galatians 3:15-29)

If I was Baptized as an Infant, Do I Need to be Baptized Again?

Historically, the reason for infant baptism has been to cleanse the child from original sin and to welcome that person into a civic community. The first reason has profound theological implications surrounding a sacramental faith, which believes that we can attain the grace of God through the things that we do. In this case, a child receives sin-cleansing grace from God by being baptized.

We do not believe that baptism is sacramental in nature. That is, we do not believe that we, sinful human agents, can muster or negate salvation by any thing that we do, including baptism. Even John the Baptist confessed that he could only baptize with water, whereas it is God who baptizes with the Holy Spirit, bestowing grace and salvation. Infant baptism, performed by human agency with water, therefore, is both unnecessary and unproductive.

Believer's baptism, on the other hand, is a powerful public statement of faith, rich with the symbolism of being buried and raised with Christ. Therefore, we heavily encourage people who have been baptized as infants to be baptized again as an adult, just as Jesus was an adult when He was baptized, in order to take a public stand with Christ and to affirm one's own faith.

(Matthew 3:11-12; Mark 1:8; Luke 3:16; John 1:33; Acts 10:47, 11:16)

What are Sin and Grace?

Sin is a situation of partial-separation from God. Though we are partially separated from God on account of our sin, He continues to sustain our lives and provide for us. God's intention for humanity was that He would be with us in perfect love and harmony. Unfortunately, however, every human that has ever lived—except Jesus—has thought, felt, or acted in such a way as to corrupt this intention. When we think thoughts, feel emotions, or act in opposition to the Will of God, then we are contributing to the situation of sin, which increasingly separates us from God.

In short, sin is moving in any way against the Will of God. When we realize just how easy it is to think, feel, or act against the Will of God, then we begin to understand how lost we are, for no person can be in perfect union with God if there is any sin that divides that person from God. The most difficult reality about sin is that a trace of sin is just as detrimental as an ocean of sin. Although we tend to rank people in a moral hierarchy, God looks at us as being either perfect or imperfect. There are only these two categories and of all human beings in history only Jesus has ever—or will ever—qualify as being perfect. Accordingly, we are all equally in this situation of sin

together.

The good news is that no amount of sin can entirely separate us from God or from His love for us. If we were to be entirely separated from God, then we would cease to exist, for all things require God to be sustained. God has also found a way to cleanse us from sin by sending Jesus to take full responsibility for our corruption upon Himself. Now, when God looks at us, He is able to see us through the perfect sacrifice of His Son on the Cross. Although we continue to act against the Will of God, Jesus has paid the price for our disobedience. In exchange for our sin, we receive God's Grace, which is an undeserved invitation to a full and perfect relationship with Him, just as He originally intended.

(Genesis 2:1-3:24, 6:1-9:29, 12:1-3, 15:1-21, 22:1-24, 35:9-22; Exodus 3:1-4:31, 12:1-16:21, Deuteronomy 5:22-33, 30:1-20; Joshua 3:1-6:27; 2 Samuel 7:1-29; Psalm 9, 13, 14, 18, 21, 22, 23, 51, 98; Isaiah 1:1-31, 59:1-21; Hosea 2:1-23; John 3:1-21; Romans 3:1-8:39; 1 Corinthians 15:50-58; 2 Corinthians 12:9; Ephesians 1:1-2:22; Colossians 1:13-29, 3:1-17; 2 Thessalonians 2:13-17; Hebrews 3:1-6:20, 9:1-12:29; James 2:1-26; 1 Peter 1:1-25; 1 John 2:1-14, 2:25-29, 4:7-5:21, Revelation 5:11-14, 19:1-10, 20:11-22:21)

What is Heaven?

Throughout the Old Testament, Heaven—or the heavens—was simply those parts of creation above the earth. Creation clearly included more than terrestrial things, and therefore, the great unknown in the sky and beyond was known as Heaven.

Heaven was also understood to be an unknown place outside Creation where God's presence and Throne is manifest. It is incomprehensible to say where exactly Heaven is, except that it is an eternal place, whereas everything in Creation is temporal.

Jesus often referred to the Kingdom of Heaven as being present or "at hand." Since Heaven is where God is manifest then, when we understand that Jesus is God-in-the-flesh, Heaven was where Jesus was. We believe, therefore, that Jesus ushered in a new way of understanding Heaven as incarnational. By that we believe that Jesus was the manifest presence of God in the World. In a very real sense, therefore, when Christ came to earth, Heaven came with Him. As the King of Heaven, Jesus presented Heaven as the place where the Will of God is being done. Just as Jesus was God made manifest in the world, the Holy Spirit is God manifest in the world through the Church. We believe the Church, therefore, ought to be Heaven on earth by being the presence of God as we do the Will of God.

We believe there continues to be, however, an aspect of Heaven beyond Creation, where the Throne of God is manifest. We are promised that at the end of all things, God will inaugurate a new Heaven and a new earth, so that all things will be restored to a perfect state and God will dwell intimately with His people. We do not know specifically what this will be like or how it will happen, but we do know that the new Heaven and new earth will be an eternal place where there will be no sin because it will be filled with the presence of God.

(Genesis 1, 26:4; Psalm 8, 11, 33, 57, 102, 103; Ecclesiastes 5:1-9; Isaiah 55:8-

11, 65:17-25, 66:1-2; Daniel 2:44-45, 12:1-3; Matthew 4:12-17, 6:1-15, 7:15-23, 10:7-15; Mark 1:14-15, 11:27-33; Luke 10:1-16, 17-24, 11:14-28, 21:25-38; John 3:1-21, 6:26-40;; Acts 7:54-60, 24:14-16; Romans 10:1-13; Philippians 3, Hebrews 8:1-6, 9:21-28; 1 Peter 1; 2 Peter 3:10-18; Revelation 21:1–22:9)

What is Hell?

There is actually very little written about Hell in the Bible. From Scripture, we do believe, however, that there will come a time when all people will be resurrected and judged by Jesus. Those who are not relieved from their sin and invited to share eternity with God will be completely separated from Him forever. Images of an unquenchable fire, deep abyss, eternal judgment, and second death are all used to describe Hell. We believe the most important aspect of Hell, however, is that it is an irreversible, complete, and final separation from God. There is nothing conceivably worse than Hell, to be separated from God.

(Daniel 12:1-3; Matthew 5:21-30, 10:24-39, 18:7-11, 23:13-36; Mark 9:38-50; Luke 12:1-12, 16:19-31; John 5:25-32; Acts 24:14-16; 2 Peter 2; Jude 4-16; Revelation 19:11–21:9)

How Can I be Saved?

In very simple terms, we believe that our salvation depends on the Grace of God made possible by the life, crucifixion, death, and resurrection of Jesus. Salvation was accomplished for all people when Jesus was crucified and resurrected more than two thousand years ago.

We believe that humanity has consistently disobeyed God, which has resulted in great wickedness and suffering. Since God is holy and just, our disobedience merits His anger and wrath. Unfortunately, however, no one could withstand the wrath of God except for God, Himself, because His anger would completely destroy anything and anyone that might come in its path.

We believe that on the Cross, Jesus absorbed the full evil of humanity, by not retaliating against the human agents that nailed him there, and the complete wrath of God, by becoming the human recipient through which God could unleash His anger. More than that, Jesus was able to fully obey the Will of God throughout His entire life, thus redeeming humanity from our continual disobedience.

Now, in order to receive the Grace of God, be relieved from our sin, and enter into salvation we believe we must place our hope, trust, and dependence on Christ. We must acknowledge that He has accomplished what we cannot. We must have faith in His death and resurrection. We must confess with our lips and our whole lives that He is our Savior.

More than that, however, we believe that we must confess that Jesus is our Lord. Jesus has said that any who claim to love Him will obey His commands. Jesus must become the King whom we obey in both the mundane and grand decisions of life,

even while we acknowledge that we will fail in our endeavor to entirely do so.

We believe that we have been saved, more than two thousand years ago at Calvary, that we are being saved, as we continue to surrender more of our lives to God, and that we will be saved, when we are finally judged upon Christ's return. Throughout this process of salvation we must continue to repent of our sin, turn to God for help, and diminish our sinful natures as Christ increases in us.

(Psalm 9, 13, 14, 18, 21, 22, 23, 51, 98; John 3:1-36, 13:5-20, 13:31-38, 15:1-17; Romans 3:1-8:39; 1 Corinthians 15:50-58; 2 Corinthians 12:9; Ephesians 1:1-2:22; Colossians 1:13-29, 3:1-17; 2 Thessalonians 2:13-17; Hebrews 3:1-6:20, 9:1-12:29; James 2:1-26; 1 Peter 1:1-25; 1 John 2:1-14, 2:25-29, 3:23 4:7-5:21; 2 John 5; Revelation 5:11-14, 19:1-10, 20:11-22:21)

Who is Not Saved?

The temptation to answer this question, "Who is not saved?" is a real and dangerous one. We believe, however, that the Bible is clear that God has reserved the right to judge and that it is completely off-side for us to even entertain the thought to do so.

That said, we can affirm quite boldly that we know where to find grace; in the life, crucifixion, death, and resurrection of Jesus. We do have an assured hope that anyone who professes this to be true will find the Grace of God and enter into eternal life. We know where Grace is, but we do not know conclusively where Grace is not.

We believe that our mandate from God is not to exhaust energy pointing away from the Grace of God, but rather to shine light on it. We are to show people Christ, and Christ crucified, so that they too might enjoy the assured hope that we do. Any witness away from the Cross is futile and a loss of opportunity to speak of the things of God.

Ultimately we believe that it is God who will judge and decide who is not saved. Until that time, we will continue to bear witness to the Grace and love of God made known to us in Christ Jesus.

(Matthew 7:1-6; Luke 6:20-45; Romans 2:1-16, 14:1-23)