

# Hope in Christ Church

## Statement of Faith

### We Believe:

**SCRIPTURE:** *The Bible is the inspired and inerrant Word of God.*

*The Bible is the ultimate, complete and eternal source of knowledge about God and the definitive guide for our daily lives.*

**GOD:** *There is only one God, existing in three distinct persons: the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. God is self-existent, eternal, unchanging, omnipotent, omniscient, omnipresent, holy, righteous and loving. God created the universe from nothing and He is the sovereign ruler over His creation.*

**MAN:** *Man is a physical and spiritual being (composed of spirit, soul and body), who was created in God's image. However, because of sin, man has lost his fellowship with God and is destined to die.*

**GRACE:** *Grace is the unmerited, undeserved love of God manifested in Jesus Christ. Jesus, who is fully God and fully man, was sent by God the Father to save mankind from slavery to sin. Jesus was born of a virgin, lived a perfect life, suffered and died as an atoning sacrifice for all sins, physically rose from the dead and will one day return to deliver His followers and judge the world. Faith in Jesus Christ is the only means by which mankind can escape judgement, separation from God and eternal damnation.*

**CHURCH:** *The Church is ordained by God, headed by Jesus Christ and composed of all true believers from Pentecost to the Rapture. The Church is also referred to as the "Bride" or the "Body" of Christ. Members of the Church organize local churches for worship, for fellowship, for the administration of the sacraments (primarily baptism & the Lord's supper), for spiritual growth and support and for evangelizing the world.*

We took two approaches to this introductory study:

1. First, having finished a study entitled "Christianity, Cults & Religions" the previous week, I chose to include a table from that study: "Common Characteristics of Cults" (see below). I believed it would be helpful in support of both that study and this study to compare and contrast the general traits of cultic religions with those of the Christian (Biblical) faith. After reading through the table, I encouraged the class members to consider how these beliefs were similar to and/or different from the principles in the HICC "Statement of Faith".
2. Next, as we read each statement for the five categories (Scripture, God, Man, Grace, Church), I then asked the participants "Do you **believe** the statement?" I followed the question by explaining that the Greek word for "believe" (*pisteuō*) is not limited to "intellectual assent", but means much more: "trust with an implication of resulting actions based on that trust". In other words, a Christian's sincere belief is a commitment to live out Biblical principles.

# Christianity, Cults & Religions

## *Definitions, Discernment and Defending the Faith*

### Common Characteristics of Cults

- a. Most Cults start by an individual who claims to have had a new and correct revelation of truth.
- b. To the Cults, God does not exist, is in everything (pantheism) or is aloof & unapproachable.
- c. Every Cult teaches a focus on self-centeredness, putting the total responsibility on the "works" of the individual follower to determine the circumstances in and the end result of their life.
- d. Cults tend to either (1) claim sin, heaven and hell either do not exist or only exist in the mind, and thus proclaim "universalism" or a sense of "freedom" to do whatever followers want to do, or (2) govern their supporters through fear by creating a rigid set of rules that are required to be followed or the individual will face dreadful consequences (death, damned to hell, etc).
- e. Some Cults claim to profess "love", but the only purpose of love is to produce self-satisfaction.
- f. Most Cults claim to believe in some of the Biblical text, principles and/or characters (Jesus).
- g. In spite of the irrefutable fact that civilized mankind will only live on Earth a few tens of thousands of years, many Cults assert that people have numerous (some claim as many as millions of) chances (reincarnations) to perform the correct life activities in order to reach a higher level of life.