

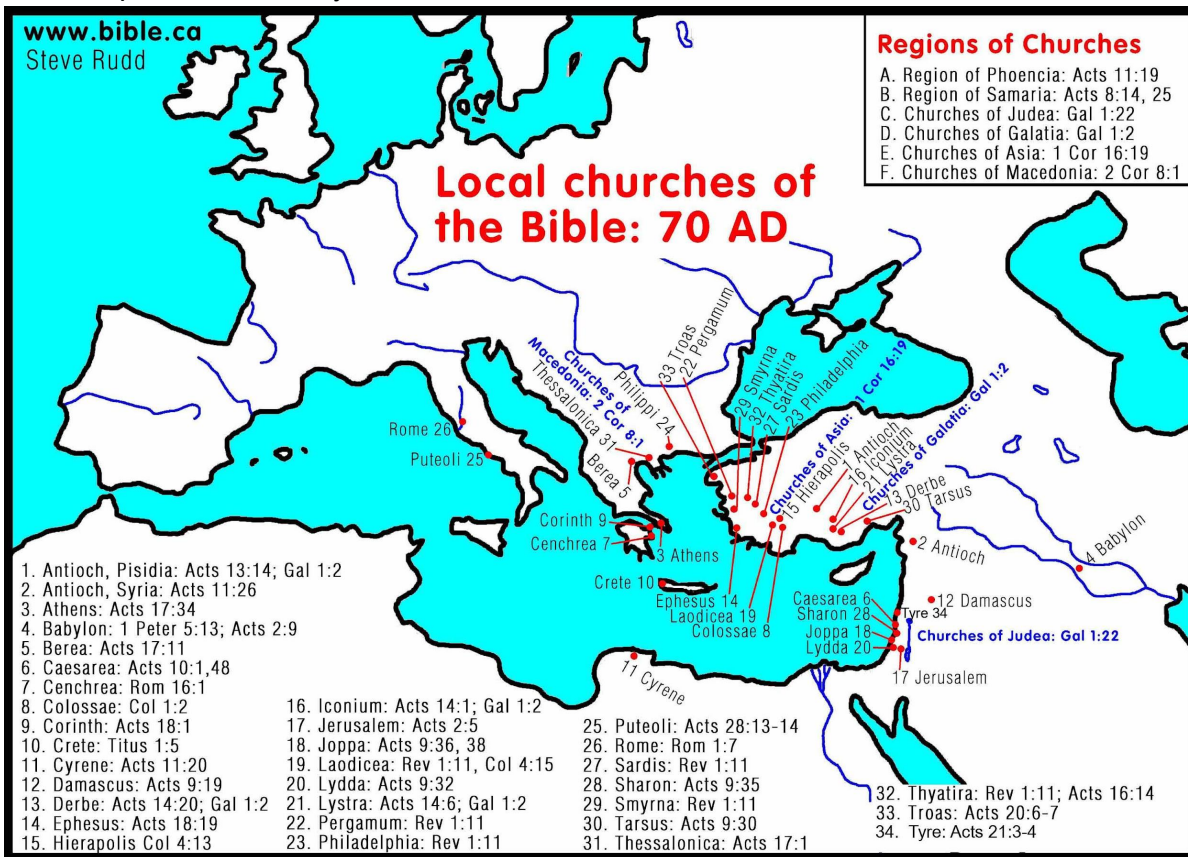
I. Early Church History (Book of Acts)

A. Reasons why the early church spread from just a handful of Jewish believers in the early 30s AD to a large, multi ethnic/national (i.e. Gentile) church in less than 100 years:

1. They had a faith that produced obedience. (1:8)
2. They had a passion that produced unity. (2:42-47)
3. They had a desperation that produced prayer. (2:42, 4:23-31, 8:14-17)
4. They had the Spirit that produced power. (1:8, 2:1-41, 8:14-20, 11:15)

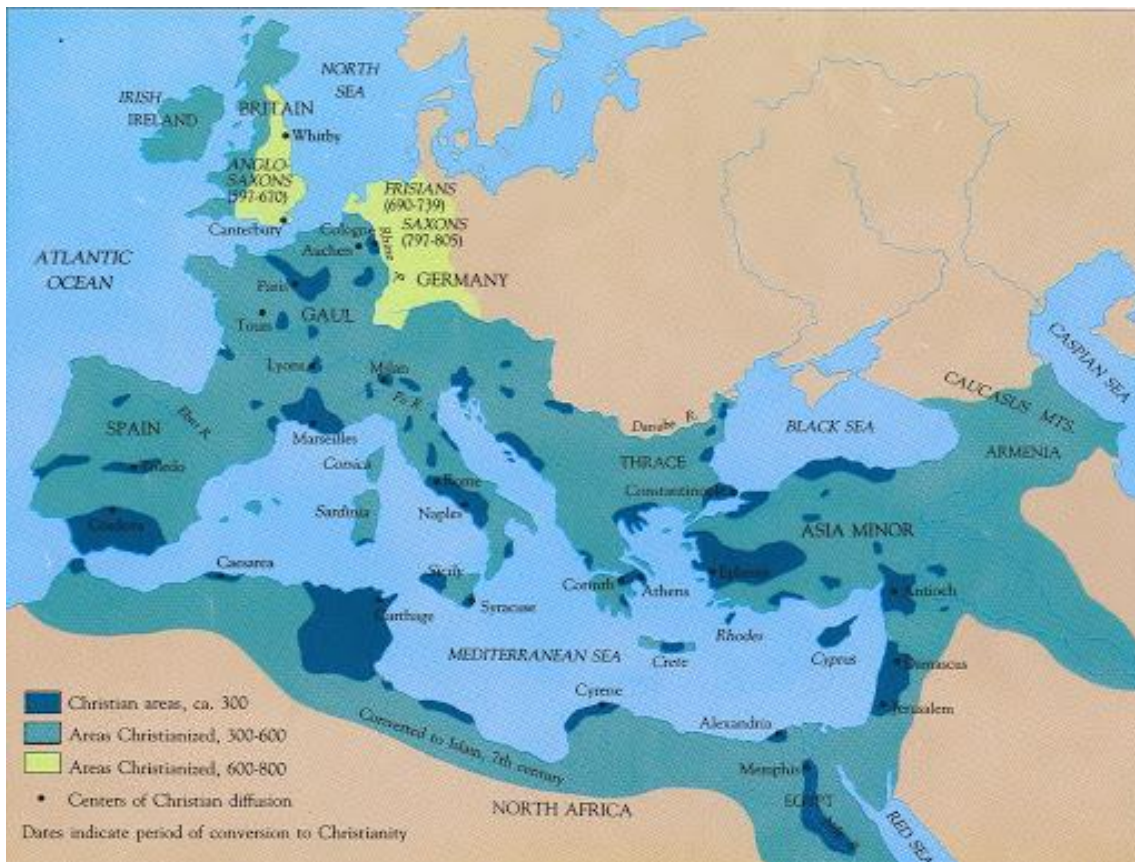
a) “When I read the book of Acts, I see the church as an unstoppable force. The church was powerful and spreading like wildfire. Not because of clever planning, but by a movement of the Spirit. Riots, torture, poverty, or any other type of persecution couldn’t stop it. Isn’t that the type of church movement we all long to be a part of?” Francis Chan, “Forgotten God” [1]

II. Spread of the early church





Church Map at the Time of Jesus ■
 Church Map in the 1st Century ■
 Church Map in the 2nd Century ■



III. Early Church Fathers

A. Apostolic (30-100 a.d.)

1. Main figures (other than NT figures):

a) Clement of Rome

- (1) one of the earliest patristic references to the biblical doctrine of justification through faith alone: "And we, too, being called by His will in Christ Jesus, are not justified by ourselves, nor by our own wisdom, or understanding, or godliness, or works which we have wrought in holiness of heart; but by that faith through which, from the beginning, Almighty God has justified all men; to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen" (1 Clement, 32). [2]

b) Polycarp

- (1) His letter to the Philippian church quotes or paraphrases from many books that would later be recognized as part of the New Testament canon. [3]

2. Heresies combatted

a) Gnosticism - based on two false premises.

- (1) It espouses a dualism regarding spirit and matter, asserting that matter is inherently evil and spirit is good. As a result, anything done in the body, even the grossest sin, has no meaning because real life exists in the spirit realm only.
- (2) Gnostics claimed to possess an elevated knowledge, a "higher truth" known only to a certain few. [4]
- (3) Still present today in New Age Philosophy

b) Docetism - denied the full humanity of Christ. Any seeming presence of a body was merely an illusion. [6]

- (1) Not really practiced today. Instead, denial of the existence of Jesus is more prominent.

c) Marcionism - proclaims that the God of the Old Testament is different than the God presented in the New Testament. [5]

- (1) Not part of a formal movement today but exists in pockets. Any church or person who emphasizes the New Testament over the Old is dangerously close to this heresy.

B. Ante-Nicene (100-325 a.d.)

1. Main Figures

a) Irenaeus

- (1) Wrote the book "Against Heresies" which particularly targeted the movement of Gnosticism.

b) Tertullian

- (1) Was a major opponent of the heresy of Marcionism, and was the first to work out a systematic doctrine of the Trinity. Brought forth the principle of the sufficiency of scripture.

c) Athanasius

- (1) A key figure at the Council of Nicaea. Especially opposed to the theology of Arianism. [7]

2. Heresies combatted

- a) Arianism - the view that Jesus is a finite created being with some divine attributes, but He is not eternal and not divine in and of Himself, though he should still be worshipped since He was above all others who had also been created.

- (1) Modern day practitioners of Arianism include Jehovah's Witnesses and Mormons.

C. Post-Nicene (325-550 a.d.)

1. Main Figures

a) Augustine

- (1) Authored 2 books still read today: "Confessions" and "City of God"
- (2) He heavily influenced later theologians like Thomas Aquinas, Martin Luther, and John Calvin.
- (3) Much of Reformed doctrine, especially in relation to predestination, original sin, the bondage of the will, and efficacious grace, has been attributed to the work of Augustine. [8]

b) Chrysostom

- (1) A prolific speaker (was nicknamed "golden mouth"), his homilies preached high moral standards for Christ followers within the context of sovereign grace.
 - (a) Quote directed at wealthy believers who showed little concern for their less fortunate brethren: "Do you pay such honor to your excrements as to receive them into a silver chamber-pot when another man made in the image of God is perishing in the cold?" [9]

c) Eusebius

- (1) Wrote a history of the church from the birth of Jesus to A.D. 324, one year before the Council of Nicea.

d) Jerome

- (1) Translated the Greek New Testament into the Latin Vulgate. [10]

2. Heresies Combatted

- a) Manichaeism - a synchronistic religion combining Zoroastrianism and Christianity.

- (1) Does not really exist anymore. [11]

b) Pelagianism

- (1) unbiblical teaching that Adam's sin did not affect future generations of humanity. According to Pelagianism, Adam's sin was solely his own, and Adam's descendants did not inherit a sinful nature passed down to them. God creates every human soul directly, and therefore every human soul starts out in innocence, free from sin. We are not basically bad, says the Pelagian heresy; we are basically good.
- (2) He developed this thought to combat those who claimed to be Christians but lived licentiously with the mindset of "I can't help it. It's in my nature to do wrong."
- (3) Pelagius stressed the freedom of the human will, essentially teaching that all sin is the result of a conscious choice of evil over good; everyone has the ability to freely choose to do good all the time.

- (4) Pelagianism survives to this day and shows up in any teaching that says following Christ is primarily a choice we make apart from any supernatural intervention of God's grace.[12]
- c) Apollinarism - taught that Jesus' two natures, human and divine, could not co-exist in the same person.
 - (1) Since Jesus was human, He must have sinned, and a sinful nature could not share the same body with the divine nature.
 - (2) To overcome this "problem" in Jesus, the Logos of God came upon Jesus, replacing His human mind or rational nature with God's and overwhelming the sinfulness inherent in Jesus' humanity.
 - (3) The Logos thus became the divine nature of Christ, as opposed to the human nature of Jesus. Therefore Christ was comprised of a flawed human body and a divine mind.[13]
- d) Nestorianism - this belief emphasized the disunity of the human and divine natures of Christ. Christ essentially exists as two persons sharing one body. His divine and human natures are completely distinct and separate. [14]
 - (1) Apollinarism and Nestorianism don't really exist as a formal movement today but often pops up in some individual's thoughts about Jesus through lack of knowledge or understanding.
- e) Eutychianism - taught that Christ's divine nature was so intermixed with His human nature that He was, in fact, not fully human and not fully divine. This is a denial of the biblical teaching of the hypostatic union, that Christ's two natures are united yet distinct. [15]
 - (1) This thought still exists in some smaller Eastern Orthodox sects.

IV. Early Church Councils

- A. Council of Nicaea, 325: Refuted the heresy of Arianism by declaring Christ one in being with the Father. The Nicene Creed was created as a result.
- B. Council of Constantinople, 381: Affirmed the divinity of the Holy Spirit as the third person of the Trinity and it condemned Apollinarism.
- C. Council of Ephesus, 431: This council defined the doctrine that Christ is one person, not two persons, combatting Nestorianism. Council also has the distinction of being the only ecumenical gathering that made any dogmatic statements about Mary, declaring her to be the Theotokos, or Mother of God. Also repudiated Pelagianism.
- D. Council of Chalcedon, 451: Repudiated Eutychianism (as well as Apollinarism) by clarifying that Christ was one person, but had two natures. [16]

V. The Great Schism (1054)

- A. Reasons
 - 1. Political
 - 2. Language
 - 3. Marriage of priests
 - 4. Filioque
 - 5. Scholasticism vs. Experiential
 - 6. Transubstantiation
 - 7. Unleavened bread in communion

VI. The Crusades (1095-1303)

- A. Children's crusade (1212)

VII. Theologians of the Middle Ages

A. Anselm of Canterbury

1. Developed the satisfaction theory of atonement which holds that Jesus Christ redeemed humanity through making restitution for humankind's disobedience through his own perfect obedience. Luther and Calvin were both influenced by his work.[17]
2. Faith and reason are compatible, not at odds. [23]

B. Bernard of Clairveaux

1. Quoted by Calvin regarding *sola fide* and the doctrine of imputed righteousness. [18]

C. Thomas Aquinas

1. Wrote Summa Theologica, most famous for its five arguments for the existence of God, which are known as the "five ways" . [19]

VIII. Pre-Reformation Reformers

A. Peter Waldo and the Waldensians - preached for strict adherence to the Bible, for simplicity and poverty, and against Catholic dogmas, like the purgatory and transubstantiation which led to conflicts with the Roman Catholic Church. He initiated, and contributed to, a translation of the New Testament into the vernacular French language of the time.

B. John Wycliffe and the Lollards - Wycliffe was an English theologian and professor at the University of Oxford who developed many ideas similar to those later promoted in the Reformation. He rejected papal authority over secular power, translated the Bible into vernacular English, and preached anticlerical and biblically-centred reforms. Wycliffe's teachings were spread by his followers, known as Lollards. [20]

C. Jan Hus and the Hussites - Jan Hus, a Czech Catholic priest and professor who was influenced by John Wycliffe's writings, spoke out against corruption in the Catholic church. He was burned at the stake as a heretic in 1415. [21]

IX. The Reformation

A. Reasons for the Reformation

1. Corruption in the Catholic Church
 - a) Selling of indulgences (forgiveness of sins)
 - b) Selling of religious posts
 - c) Promotion of theological idea of purgatory
 - d) Bad behavior by popes and other leading officials
 - e) Bible only translated into Latin not native languages [24]
2. The Renaissance's emphasis on Christian Humanism.
 - a) Emphasized learning and reasoning
 - b) Emphasized dignity of each person [25]
3. The invention of the printing press.
 - a) Made mass distribution of ideas and biblical translations more readily available.
4. Politics
 - a) Support of reformers (particularly in Germany with Frederic of Saxony's support of Martin Luther) granted princes greater freedom in politics, religion, and economics.

B. Key figures of the Reformation

1. Martin Luther (1483-1546)
 - a) Posted the 95 theses in Wittenburg Germany on October 31, 1517.
 - (1) The Bible not the Pope is the central authority of faith.
 - (2) People are saved by faith not works.
 - (a) Indulgences can not purchase salvation

- (3) The document was translated from Latin into German (without Luther's permission) which then spread like wildfire.
 - b) Emphasized priesthood of all believers
 - (1) Not just about the need for all people to do the work of the church but also emphasized that people did not need a priest to intercede for them with God.
 - c) Called to recant his beliefs at the Diet of Worms (1521) but would not.
 - (1) "Unless I am convinced by the testimony of the Scriptures or by clear reason (for I do not trust either in the pope or in councils alone, since it is well known that they have often erred and contradicted themselves), I am bound by the Scriptures I have quoted and my conscience is captive to the Word of God. I cannot and will not recant anything, since it is neither safe nor right to go against conscience. May God help me. Amen."
 - d) Hiding in exile at Wartburg Castle (1521-22), Luther translated the New Testament from Greek into German. He later completed translating the Old Testament in 1534.
 - e) Luther had for a long time condemned the vows of celibacy required of Catholic priests (but not always adhered to, especially of high ranking clergy) and married Katie in 1525.
 - f) Controversies
 - (1) Support of the nobles atrocities during the Peasants War (1524-25)
 - (2) Soft support of Phillip I bigamy.
 - (3) Antisemitic sentiments
2. John Calvin (1509-1564)
- a) A French theologian who did the majority of his ministry in Geneva Switzerland.
 - b) Best known for:
 - (1) His writings on predestination and the absolute sovereignty of God in salvation.
 - (2) Writing the *Institutes of the Christian Religion*
 - (3) Established in Geneva the closest thing to a Protestant theocracy we've ever seen.
 - (4) Mentored John Knox in his exile.
 - (5) 5 Points of Calvinism Synod of Dort (1618-1619)
 - (a) Total Depravity
 - (b) Unconditional Election
 - (c) Limited Atonement
 - (d) Irresistible Grace
 - (e) Perseverance of the Saints
 - (6) Controversy - The execution of Servetus
3. John Knox (1514-1572)
- a) Leader of the Scottish Reformation which is where the Presbyterian church traces its direct roots.
 - b) A key participant in the writing of the Scots Confession and the Book of Discipline (1560)
 - c) Called by some a Presbyterian with a sword.
 - (1) Preached for violent revolutions at times.
 - (2) Called for Mary, Queen of Scots (who was Catholic) to be executed.

C. Key theological points of the Reformation: The 5 Solas

1. How are we saved? “Sola fide” -- By faith alone, not by church membership or sacrament.
2. How are we forgiven? “Sola gratia” -- By grace alone, instead of through penance and absolution from a priest.
3. What is the ultimate basis of authority for spiritual life? “Sola scriptura” -- By Scripture alone, above the traditions and teachings of the Roman church.
4. Who is the mediator of the Church? “Solus Christus”-- By Christ alone. Instead of two classes, priests (mediators) and lay members, Protestants believe in One Mediator, Jesus, and a single class, “the priesthood of all believers.”
5. What is the purpose of life and the Church? “Soli Deo gloria” – Glory to God alone, not to any organization, leader, or rule

X. The Westminster Assembly (1643-1647)

A. Called before and during the First English Civil War (1642-46)

B. Comprised of Puritans (from the Church of England) and Scottish Presbyterians (non-voting)

C. Key theological tenets:

1. the Bible as the authoritative word of God
2. Reformed doctrine of predestination
3. Reformed doctrine of covenant theology.

D. Key components developed

1. Directory for Public Worship (1644)
2. Confession of Faith (1646)
 - a) The confession is a systematic exposition of Calvinist theology.
 - b) Originally 33 chapters were approved (The PCUS, which the EPC came out of in 1980 added 2 more chapters in the early 1900s).
 - (1) Those 2 additional chapters deal with the Holy Spirit and Missions.
3. Larger Catechism (1647)
 - a) intended to assist ministers in teaching the Reformed faith to their congregations
4. Shorter Catechism (1647)
 - a) intended for use in teaching the faith to children.

XI. The Presbyterian Church in the United States

A. Presbytery of Philadelphia is first presbytery developed in the US (1706)

B. Old Side-New Side Division (1741-1758)

1. Came about due to Controversy over the First Great Awakening.
2. While some see the 2 divided by doctrine, others view it as a difference in methodology.

C. Old School/New School Presbyterian Split (1837-67)

1. Old School believed—the church should be directly ruled in all its ministries by elders connectionally associated through its sessions, presbyteries, synods, and general assembly, with its interpretation of the Word of God governed by a conservative, full subscription, use of the Westminster Standards, and it believed that the church’s ministry is exclusively spiritual and not political. Thus, the Old School had a strong sense of the Word’s warrant for presbyterian church government and it held to the necessity of confessional standards for proper interpretation of the Bible for governing the church rightly in its spiritual ministry.
2. The New School believed—the Presbyterian Church is governed by elders locally and by connectional relationship among its congregations, but other polities, including congregational, are scriptural as well; the Presbyterians should participate in missionary

organizations that are not under direct control of the denomination for more efficient evangelism; the interpretation of the Word of God by the Westminster Confession is of lesser or no importance for church doctrine and practice; and the church's ministry is spiritual, but the spiritual work does not exclude political activism for what the church sees as pervasive sins in society. Thus, the New School had a lesser sense of the uniqueness of presbyterian ecclesiology and a more inclusive idea of denominational ministry; a liberal, or nonexistent, adherence to the confessional standards for doctrine; and an expanded idea of what the spiritual ministry of the church looks like.

3. Both these schools split again in the late 1850s over the issue of slavery
 - a) So you then had a Northern & Southern Old School and a Northern & Southern New School.
 - b) The 4 churches went back to 2 (Northern Presbyterian and Southern Presbyterian) after the Civil War.
4. The Auburn Affirmation (1924)
 - a) The Northern Presbyterian Church had established in 1910, 1916, and 1923 that candidates seeking ordination must hold to the following:
 - (1) Inerrancy of the Scriptures
 - (2) The virgin birth (and the deity of Jesus)
 - (3) The doctrine of substitutionary atonement
 - (4) The bodily resurrection of Jesus
 - (5) The authenticity of Christ's miracles
 - b) The Auburn Affirmation of 1824 sought to dispute this. It concluded:
 - (1) The Bible is not inerrant. The supreme guide of scripture interpretation is the Spirit of God to the individual believer and not ecclesiastical authority. Thus, "liberty of conscience" is elevated.
 - (2) The General Assembly has no power to dictate doctrine to the Presbyteries.
 - (3) The General Assembly's condemnation of those asserting "doctrines contrary to the standards of the Presbyterian Church" circumvented the due process set forth in the Book of Discipline.
 - (4) None of the five essential doctrines should be used as a test of ordination. Alternated "theories" of these doctrines are permissible.
 - (5) Liberty of thought and teaching, within the bounds of evangelical Christianity is necessary.
 - (6) Division is deplored, unity and freedom are commended.
5. Conservative splits from the liberal, mainline denominations before the formation of the EPC.
 - a) OPC (1936) from the Presbyterian Church of America (Northern Presbyterian)
 - b) PCA (1973) from the PCUS (Southern Presbyterian)
6. Formation of the EPC
 - a) Dissatisfied with the growing liberalism of the United Presbyterian Church (Northern churches) and the Presbyterian Church in the United States (Southern churches), more conservative leaders from both churches began to meet in the late 1970s to discuss matters.
 - (1) 2 key church court cases would be the breaking point.
 - (a) In the first, a pastor had his ordination revoked for taking an exception to women's ordination.
 - (b) In the second, a pastor was ordained despite denying the deity of Christ.

- b) Eventually it was decided that pulling out of those denominations and forming a new one would be necessary.
- c) These leaders wanted to form a church that took seriously
 - (1) the words of Scripture
 - (2) the theology of the historic confessions of the faith
 - (3) the evangelical fervor of Presbyterian founders.
- d) the first General Assembly of the Evangelical Presbyterian Church met at Ward Presbyterian Church near Detroit, Michigan.
 - (1) There, the essentials of faith that is part of the constitution of the EPC was developed.

XII. EPC Essentials of the Faith

- A. All Scripture is self-attesting, and being Truth requires our unreserved submission in all areas of life. The infallible Word of God—the 66 books of the Old and New Testaments—is a complete and unified witness to God’s redemptive acts culminating in the incarnation of the Living Word, the Lord Jesus Christ. The Bible, uniquely and fully inspired by the Holy Spirit, is the supreme and final authority on all matters on which it speaks. On this sure foundation, we affirm these additional essentials of our faith.
 - 1. We believe in one God, the sovereign Creator and Sustainer of all things, infinitely perfect and eternally existing in three Persons: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. To Him be all honor, glory, and praise forever!
 - 2. Jesus Christ, the living Word, became flesh through His miraculous conception by the Holy Spirit and His virgin birth. He who is true God became true man united in one Person forever. He died on the cross a sacrifice for our sins according to the Scriptures. On the third day He arose bodily from the dead, ascended into heaven where, at the right hand of the Majesty on High, He now is our High Priest and Mediator.
 - 3. The Holy Spirit has come to glorify Christ and to apply the saving work of Christ to our hearts. He convicts us of sin and draws us to the Savior, indwelling our hearts. He gives new life to us, empowers and imparts gifts to us for service. He instructs and guides us into all truth, and seals us for the day of redemption.
 - 4. Being estranged from God and condemned by our sinfulness, our salvation is wholly dependent upon the work of God’s free grace. God credits His righteousness to those who put their faith in Christ alone for their salvation, and thereby justifies them in His sight. Only such as are born of the Holy Spirit and receive Jesus Christ become children of God and heirs of eternal life.
 - 5. The true Church is composed of all persons who through saving faith in Jesus Christ and the sanctifying work of the Holy Spirit are united together in the body of Christ. The Church finds her visible yet imperfect expression in local congregations where the Word of God is preached in its purity and the sacraments are administered in their integrity, where scriptural discipline is practiced, and where loving fellowship is maintained. For her perfecting she awaits the return of her Lord.
 - 6. Jesus Christ will come again to the earth personally, visibly, and bodily—to judge the living and the dead, and to consummate history and the eternal plan of God. “Even so, come, Lord Jesus” (Revelation 22:20).
 - 7. The Lord Jesus Christ commands all believers to proclaim the gospel throughout the world and to make disciples of all nations. Obedience to the Great Commission requires total commitment to “Him who loved us and gave Himself for us.” He calls us to a life of self-denying love and service. “For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them” (Ephesians 2:10).

The Essentials are set forth in greater detail in the Westminster Confession of Faith.

B. The EPC Motto:

In Essentials ... Unity

In Non-Essentials ... Liberty

In All Things ... Charity

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Laying a Foundation

ESSENTIALS OF OUR FAITH

The Bible

All Scripture is self-attesting and being Truth, requires our unreserved submission in all areas of life. The infallible Word of God, the sixty-six books of the Old and New Testaments, is a complete and unified witness to God's redemptive acts culminating in the incarnation of the Living Word, the Lord Jesus Christ. The Bible, uniquely and fully inspired by the Holy Spirit, is the supreme and final authority on all matters on which it speaks. (Psalm 119:160, II Timothy 3:16-17, II Peter 1:20-21, Revelation 22:18-19)

1. **Self-attesting**

- a. *Definition*
- b. *Why is it important that the Bible is self-attesting?*

2. **Unreserved submission**

- a. *Why "unreserved" submission?*
- b. *How does reserving areas of our lives from submission to the Bible affect us?*
- c. *What does reserving submission say about how we see God?*
- d. *How do we move toward unreserved submission?*

3. **Infallible**

- a. *Why is it important for the Bible to be infallible?*
- b. *If the Bible weren't infallible, would that affect your faith?*

4. **Witness**

- a. *Why is it important that the witness of the Bible is complete?*
- b. *Why is it important that the witness of the Bible is unified?*
- c. *Where in the Bible have you seen God's redemptive acts?*

5. **Inspiration**

- a. *Why is it important that the Bible is inspired by the Holy Spirit?*
- b. *What would it be if it weren't?*

6. **Authority**

- a. *Why is it important that the authority of the Bible is supreme?*
- b. *Why is it important that the authority of the Bible is final?*
- c. *Does the Bible speak on all matters?*

Further Discussion

How does this foundation of the Bible affect your daily lives as a follower of Jesus? Does it have an effect on every area of your life or just some areas? Why is it important to know what the Bible contains? How can you make it a more important part of what you do and who you are?

Laying a Foundation

ESSENTIALS OF OUR FAITH

God

We believe in one God, the sovereign Creator and Sustainer of all things, infinitely perfect and eternally existing in three Persons: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. To Him be all honor, glory and praise forever! (Psalm 139:1-12, I John 5:7)

1. One God

- a. *In a society that is accepting of a variety of gods, why is the foundational belief in one God important to our faith?*
- b. *What would be changed about your faith if there were more than the one true God?*

2. Sovereign

- a. *Definition*
- b. *According to this definition, can God do whatever He wants?*
- c. *If God was not sovereign, how would He be different?*
- d. *What would be some of the repercussions to faith in a god who was not sovereign?*
- e. *As a facet of His sovereignty, why is it important that God is the Sustainer as well as being the Creator of all things?*
- f. *What does this sustaining of all things say to us about God?*

3. Infinite

- a. *Why is God's infinity an essential characteristic?*
- b. *How is our faith strengthened as a result of God's infinite nature?*

4. Eternal

- a. *Describe the contrast between the eternal and the temporal.*
- b. *How does God's eternal nature reinforce His holiness?*

5. Trinity

- a. *Is God's tri-unity evident throughout the Bible? Give some examples.*
- b. *Is the fact that the Godhead is made up of three persons mean we worship three Gods?*
- c. *How are the three persons of the Godhead different from one another? How are they the same?*

6. Majesty

- a. *The majesty of God is to be recognized and celebrated by all of Creation. How do we, as followers of Jesus Christ, offer Him all honor, glory, and praise forever?*
- b. *Does God need us to offer Him all honor, glory, and praise forever?*

Further Discussion

This foundational truth about the nature of God has immense implications for us as His people. How does the knowledge of God and His characteristics help to shape the things we face in life every day? If any one of these things were untrue about God, how would our faith be affected? Is there something new you learned about God in this lesson? How do you see this knowledge, whether new to you or perhaps just reinforced, making an impact in how you live devotionally toward God and relationally toward others?

Laying a Foundation

ESSENTIALS OF OUR FAITH

Jesus

Jesus Christ, the living Word, became flesh through His miraculous conception by the Holy Spirit and His virgin birth. He who is the true God became true man united in one Person forever. He died on the cross a sacrifice for our sins according to the Scriptures. On the third day He arose bodily from the dead, ascended into heaven, where, at the right hand of the Majesty on High, He now is our High Priest and Mediator. (Isaiah 7:14, Matthew 1:23, Luke 1:33-35, John 1:14, John 3:16, John 17:1-5, I Corinthians 15:3-4, Colossians 1:17-20, Colossians 2:9, Hebrews 1:3, Hebrews 7:24-27, Hebrews 12:2)

1. **The Living Word**

- a. *Why do you suppose God chose to use the imagery of verbal communication to show who Jesus is to the world?*
- b. *How does this impact our realization of the truth about Him?*

2. **Incarnation**

- a. *Why is it important that Jesus actually became a man?*
- b. *Why was the virgin birth of Jesus necessary?*
- c. *How does this dispel doubts about Jesus' identity and His ability to save us?*

3. **Dual Nature**

- a. *Is it possible to be 100% of two different things?*
- b. *What is the significance of Jesus' dual nature, and how does it affect us?*

4. **Death and Resurrection**

- a. *We regularly speak of Jesus' suffering and death on our behalf. Why was this necessary?*
- b. *Why is it important that Jesus rose from the dead?*
- c. *Why is it important that there was a bodily resurrection and not just a spiritual one?*

5. **The Exaltation of Christ**

- a. *Is Jesus' exaltation to the right hand of God an essential part of our redemption? Why?*

6. **The Office of Christ**

- a. *As our High Priest, what does Jesus do for us?*
- b. *How does Jesus' fulfillment of the office of Mediator influence our lives?*

Further Discussion

If God is perfectly righteous and perfectly just, how is it that we can know the forgiveness of our sins? Is there any other means to be reconciled to God? How did you first truly hear of Jesus and His sacrifice on your behalf? Have you received the forgiveness that Jesus purchased for you through His suffering, death, and resurrection? If so, how has it changed your life?

Laying a Foundation

ESSENTIALS OF OUR FAITH

The Holy Spirit

The Holy Spirit has come to glorify Christ and to apply the saving work of Christ to our hearts. He convicts us of sin and draws us to the Savior. Indwelling our hearts, He gives new life to us, empowers and imparts gifts to us for service. He instructs and guides us into all truth, and seals us for the day of redemption. (John 14:1-16:15, Romans 8:26-27, I Corinthians 2:11-12, I Corinthians 6:19)

1. **Coming for a purpose – 1**

- a. *Why is it essential that the Holy Spirit glorifies Christ?*
- b. *Isn't there something more important for Him to do than to restate the obvious?*

2. **Coming for a purpose – 2**

- a. *How is the application of the saving work of Christ to our hearts inseparably connected to the glorification of Jesus?*
- b. *How does the Holy Spirit apply Jesus' work to our hearts?*
- c. *Explain how being convicted of our sins and being drawn to Jesus as our Savior function as two sides of the same coin. Why are both necessary?*

3. **Indwelling**

- a. *When we truly receive Christ's forgiveness by means of the Holy Spirit's work, why is it important for Him to indwell our hearts?*
- b. *Once He takes up residence in our hearts, does He ever leave?*
- c. *What does it mean when we don't sense the Spirit's presence?*

4. **Empowerment and Impartation**

- a. *What does it mean to have the Holy Spirit empower us?*
- b. *Why do we need His empowerment?*
- c. *Are spiritual gifts necessary? Why or why not?*
- d. *What are spiritual gifts for?*

5. **Instruction and Guidance**

- a. *How is the Holy Spirit's instruction and guidance different from that of the Old Testament Law?*
- b. *How does the Holy Spirit instruct and guide the followers of Jesus?*

6. **The Seal of Approval**

- a. *Can you name an example of a seal of approval? What does it mean?*
- b. *How is this similar to the sealing work that the Holy Spirit does in the lives of those who follow Christ?*
- c. *What are the implications of being sealed by the Holy Spirit?*

Further Discussion

The doctrine of the Holy Spirit has been a source of controversy in the life of the church over the years. Why do you see this as being true? How would it help you if the doctrine of the Spirit was demystified? Is this possible without simply intellectualizing it? Give some examples of how the Holy Spirit has made a difference in your life in the light of what has been discussed in this lesson. How can you be even more receptive to the work of the Holy Spirit in your life?

Laying a Foundation

ESSENTIALS OF OUR FAITH

Dealing with Sin

Being estranged from God and condemned by our sinfulness, our salvation is wholly dependent upon the work of God's free grace. God credits His righteousness to those who put their faith in Christ alone for their salvation, thereby justifies them in His sight. Only such as are born of the Holy Spirit and receive Jesus Christ become children of God and heirs of eternal life. (Gn 3.1-14, 2 Cor 11.3, Rom 8.30, 3.24, Rom 4.5-8, 2 Cor 5.19,21, Rom 3.22,24-25,27-28, Ti 3.5,7, Eph 1.7, Jer 23.6, 1 Cor 1.30-31, Rom 5.17-19, Acts 10.43-44, Gal 2.16, Phil 3.9, Acts 13.38-39, Eph 2.7-8, Jn 1.12, 6.44-45, Phil 1.29, Jn 1.12, Rom 3.28, 5.1, Jn 3.16,18,36,

1. **The Result of Sin**

- a. *What are some of the direct results of the entrance of sin into the world?*
- b. *What is the logical conclusion of those results?*
- c. *What can we do about it?*

2. **The Blessing of Grace**

- a. *What exactly is grace?*
- b. *How do we receive God's grace?*
- c. *What does the Bible say about our efforts to please God through doing good and the resulting effect on our standing before God?*

3. **Faith**

- a. *Why is faith essential to our salvation?*
- b. *How much faith is necessary for salvation?*

4. **Justification**

- a. *What is justification?*
- b. *Why is justification important?*

5. **Children of God**

- a. *What is the biblical requirement for being a child of God?*
- b. *Is this a different understanding that you had previously known?*
- c. *Why is it important that we recognize this truth?*
- d. *How does this change the way we think about our lives and the lives of those around us?*

Further Discussion

What is your response to the truth that even though you know yourself to be a sinner, God has chosen not only to forgive you, but to justify you, declaring that He sees you as if you never even had a sin-nature? What impact has this had on your life? How has it changed how you live your life? What does it mean to you to be a child of God?

Laying a Foundation

ESSENTIALS OF OUR FAITH

The Church

The true Church is composed of all persons who through saving faith in Jesus Christ and the sanctifying work of the Holy Spirit are united together in the body of Christ. The Church finds her visible, yet imperfect, expression in local congregations where the Word of God is preached in its purity and the sacraments are administered in their integrity; where scriptural discipline is practiced, and where loving fellowship is maintained. For her perfecting, she awaits the return of her Lord. (Matthew 28:19, I Corinthians 11:23-26, I Corinthians 12:1-31, Galatians 6:9-10, Ephesians 2:14-16, Colossians 3:16, Hebrews 10:24-25, James 1:26-27)

1. **The Church**

- a. *What is the difference between the Church and the church building?*
- b. *Why do you suppose there is confusion about this?*
- c. *Why is this important to know as an essential part of following Jesus?*

2. **Becoming Part of the Church**

- a. *What makes us a part of the Church?*
- b. *How does that happen?*
- c. *What about church membership?*

3. **Marks of the Church**

- a. *This “essential” lists the four marks of the true church as 1) the Word preached, 2) the Sacraments administered, 3) scriptural discipline practiced, and 4) fellowship maintained. Why do you think that these are important?*
- b. *What would happen if one or more of these marks of the church was left out?*

4. **Imperfection Becoming Perfect**

- a. *Why is the church described as imperfect?*
- b. *Can the church, or even any individual congregation of the church, ever be perfect?*
- c. *If this is true, should we try to attain perfection? Why?*

5. **Visible versus Invisible**

- a. *What do you suppose is the difference between the visible church and the invisible church?*
- b. *According to the Westminster Confession of Faith, the visible church “consists of everyone in the world who professes the true religion together with their children.” Why are the children of professing believers included as part of the visible church even if they are too young to profess belief themselves?*
- c. *Why is this important?*
- d. *How should that shape the way the church develops its ministry?*
- e. *What about the way parents train their children?*

Further Discussion

If the Church is really the people, then what does that make the church building? It is part of the language of our culture to speak of going to church. In the light of the truth about what the Church is, can a person really go to church? Why? How do we go about being the Church? What part can you play in being the Church?

Laying a Foundation

ESSENTIALS OF OUR FAITH

The Return of Christ

Jesus Christ will come again to the earth—personally, visibly, and bodily—to judge the living and the dead, and to consummate history and the eternal plan of God. “Even so, come, Lord Jesus.” (Rev. 22:20, 1 Cor 6.3, Jude 6, 2 Pt 2.4, 2 Cor 5.10, Eccl 12.14, Rom 2.16, 14.10,12, Mt 12.36-37, 1 Cor 3.13-15, Mt 24.36, 42-44, Mk 13.35-37, Lk 12.35-36,)

1. **Jesus’ Return**

- a. *Why do you think there is so much interest in end-times theology (eschatology)?*
- b. *Why is Jesus returning?*
- c. *In Revelation, Jesus says, “Surely I am coming soon.” What does soon mean?*
- d. *Why is it important to you to know that Jesus is returning to earth?*

2. **Personal Return**

- a. *What does Jesus’ personal return say about the nature of God?*
- b. *What does this aspect of God’s nature mean to followers of Jesus?*

3. **Visible Return**

- a. *The Bible tells us that Jesus’ return will be seen like “lightning that lights up the sky from one side to the other.” Why is this important to His followers?*

4. **Bodily Return**

- a. *Why is a bodily return of Christ important?*
- b. *What does it say about our bodies?*
- c. *Why would this be important to God?*

5. **Judgment**

- a. *What will happen at the judgment seat of Christ?*
- b. *What is your greatest fear regarding the judgment?*
- c. *How can you put your soul at rest in regard to the judgment?*

6. **Completion**

- a. *If God has a perfect plan that will be completed at the end of the age, what does this indicate to us about eternity?*

Further Discussion

Given that Jesus will return to the earth at the end of the age, how does it touch your life? How does the fact that we know “neither the day nor the hour” of Jesus return affect you in the various areas of your day to day life, and why? What advice does the Bible give us in regard to how we are to spend our time until Jesus returns?

Laying a Foundation

ESSENTIALS OF OUR FAITH

The Great Commission

The Lord Jesus Christ commands all believers to proclaim the Gospel throughout the world and to make disciples of all nations. Obedience to the Great Commission requires total commitment to “Him who loved us and gave Himself for us.” He calls us to a life of self-denying love and service. “For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.” (Eph. 2:10, Acts 4.12, Mt 28.19-20, Acts 1.8, Rom 10.13-17, Heb 10.19-25, Gal 3.28, 1 Cor 16.1-2, Mt 9.36-38, Acts 13.2-4, Col 3.16, Rv 22.17, Col 1.28-29, Acts 16.31, 2 Tm 3.15, Jn 5.39, Mt 24.14, 13.38, Jn 17.18, Acts 20.28, 1 Pt 5.2, Jn 21.15-16, 1 Cor 3.9, 11.24, 2 Cor 1.11, Eph 6.18-19, Heb 13.16, Gal 6.6, Mt 10.8, 2 Cor 9.7, 2 Tm 2.15, Rom 12.11, Col 3.23-24, Mt 6.10,13, Rv 11.15, Ezekiel 3:16-21)

1. Proclaiming the Gospel

- a. *What is the Gospel and what does it mean to proclaim it?*
- b. *What is the greatest hindrance to the proclamation of the Gospel in the lives of the followers of Jesus?*
- c. *What is it about this that is a hindrance and how can it be overcome?*

2. Making Disciples

- a. *What is a disciple and how do you make one?*
- b. *Why is making disciples commanded instead of making converts?*

3. Requirements

- a. *Why is total commitment to Christ important to fulfilling the Great Commission?*
- b. *How do you perceive the Church to be walking this out?*

4. Calling

- a. *Have you ever considered yourself to be called of God?*
- b. *Why is self-denial an important facet of the love and service we are called to?*
- c. *How can we fulfill the good works that God prepared for us to do?*

Further Discussion

Have you ever proclaimed the Gospel to anyone? Was it a positive or a negative experience for you? Why? This essential says “the Great Commission requires total commitment” to Christ. What does this total commitment look like and how would you accomplish it in your life? What would fulfilling your calling look like? What can you do to move toward that goal if you aren’t already doing it?

Distinctives of Presbyterianism

A. What is "Presbyterian/Reformed" Theology?

The EPC has made a firm commitment on the doctrinal standards which had been significant in Presbyterianism since 1645, namely the Westminster Confession of Faith and Catechisms. These doctrinal standards express the distinctives of the Reformed tradition. The Westminster Confession defines our Presbyterian distinctives, but also lays out our positions on the basic doctrines of Christianity. It adopts the positions which the church leaders hammered out in the early Church Councils (Nicea, A.D. 325; Constantinople, 381; Ephesus 431; Chalcedon, 451) on the doctrines of the Trinity, deity of Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit. It also states our Protestant positions: that salvation is by grace alone through faith in Christ's completed work of atonement, and that the Scripture alone is the only infallible rule of faith and practice.

B. The Name

The word "presbyterian" finds its roots in ancient koine Greek. "πρεσβύτερος" (presbyteros) is the word for elder (meaning leader in the church).

Reformed theology takes its name from the Protestant Reformation which took place in the sixteenth century.

These are the distinctive scriptural teachings that come out of the reformation. Reformed theology has often been called "Calvinism," after John Calvin who systematically taught these doctrines in his Institutes of the Christian Religion, and "Augustinianism" after Augustine who defended these doctrines in the 4th and 5th centuries.

C. An Important Foundation

Among the distinctive doctrines of the Westminster Standards and of Reformed tradition is the unique authority of the Bible. When ordered to recant his beliefs, under sentence of death, Martin Luther, uttered these words at the Diet of Worms, "Unless I am convinced by Sacred Scripture or by evident reason, I will not recant. My conscience is held captive by the Word of God and to act against conscience is neither right nor safe." The reformers based all of their claims on "sola scriptura," the Scriptures alone. This included the doctrine of their inspiration (2 Tim 3:16-17) which is a special act of the Holy Spirit by which He guided the writers of the books of Scriptures (in their original autographs) so that their words should convey the thoughts God wished conveyed, bear a proper relation to the thoughts of other inspired books, and be kept free from error of fact, of doctrine, and of judgment -- all of which were to be an infallible rule of faith and life. Historically, the concept of infallibility has included the idea of inerrancy and we believe that the Scriptures are both. We believe the Bible to be the Word of God, not just a good book written by spiritual men (1 Thessalonians 2:13).

D. God's Sovereignty in Salvation

God's sovereignty over all things extends to the matter of salvation. The essential tenets of this system have come to be known in the Reformed Church as the 5 points of Calvinism that can be remembered by using the TULIP acrostic. The 5 points were affirmed at the Synod of Dort in 1618 as an answer to the 5 points of Jacob Arminius (1560-1609) which has come to be known as Arminianism.

1. The 5 Points of Calvinism:

a. **Total Depravity** (or Inability) of man.

1. As a result of the Fall, man is completely incapable within himself to reach out towards God. Man is totally at enmity with God, cf. Romans 3:10-23.
2. Every mere man since Adam is born with a sinful nature (Rm 5:12) and sins (Rm 3:23). No man can please God by his actions (Isa. 64:6).
3. No man understands the things of God (1Cor. 2:14). He does not desire to come to God (Jn 1:13; Rm 3:11).
4. He does not have the ability in himself to accept Christ (Jn 6:44, 6:65; Eph 2:1,5).

b. **Unconditional Election** by the grace of God.

1. There is absolutely no condition in any person for which God would save him. As a matter of fact, long before man was created, God chose or predestined some to everlasting life. He did this out of His mere good pleasure, cf. Eph 1:4, 5.
 - a. Left to themselves, all of fallen mankind would choose to reject God; the end result would be that all would end up in hell.
 - b. But God graciously elected (chose) to draw some to himself through the Holy Spirit.
 - c. This election was "unconditional" in that there was nothing in us to merit this election.
 - d. Scripture proofs: Jn 6:37-39; 15:16; Acts 13:48; Rm 8:28-30; 9:11-23; Eph 1:4-5; 2Ths 2:13.

c. **Limited (or Particular) Atonement.**

1. God in His infinite mercy, in order to accomplish the planned redemption, sent His own Son, Jesus Christ, to die as a substitute for the sins of a large but specific number of people (Rm 8:29-30).
 - a. Having thus elected some to eternal life, God sent forth His Son to secure their salvation by His death for their sins.
 - b. Both Calvinists and Arminians agree that the atonement is sufficient to pay for the sins of everyone in the world (it was an infinite payment), and that it is efficient only to those who accept Christ (only their sins will be forgiven that they may be in heaven). Where they differ is on the intent of the atonement. The Arminian says that Christ died to make it possible for all men to be saved, but not guaranteeing that any would actually be saved. The Calvinist states that Christ died to secure (guarantee) the salvation of God's elect (see Gal. 1:4; Mt 1:21; Rm 8:30).
 - c. Scripture proof: Christ died not to merely make salvation possible, but to actually save particular sinners (Mt 1:21; Lk 19:10; Gal 1:4; 1Ti. 1:15). Christ died for a particular group (Mt 1:21; Jn 10:11,15,26-28; Rm 8:32-33; Eph 5:25-27). God's work of salvation is an unbroken chain (Rm 8:29-30; Eph 2:4-10).
 - d. John Owen's argument, *For Whom Did Christ Die?* might be helpful: The Father imposed His wrath due unto, and the Son underwent punishment for, either: 1) All the sins of all men 2) All the sins of some men, or 3) Some of the sins of all men.
 - i. In which case it may be said:

1. 1. That if the last be true, all men have some sins to answer for, and so, none are saved.
2. 2. That if the second be true, then Christ, in their stead suffered for all the sins of all the elect in the whole world, and this is the truth.
3. 3. But if the first be the case, why are not all men free from the punishment due unto their sins? You answer, "Because of unbelief." I ask, Is this unbelief a sin, or is it not? If it be, then Christ suffered the punishment due unto it, or He did not. If He did, why must that hinder them more than their other sins for which He died? If He did not, He did not die for all their sins!"

d. Irresistible (or Efficacious) Grace of God.

1. This is the effectual work of the Holy Spirit moving upon a particular person whom He has called, applying the work of redemption, cf. John 3:5-6.
2. When God does something the result is certain. When the Holy Spirit inwardly calls a person to believe, that person comes to Christ. We should not picture the person coming against his will. The Holy Spirit gives a new heart and so changes and motivates the man's will that he now desires and loves that which he before hated.
3. Shorter Catechism Q#31: What is effectual calling? "Effectual calling is the work of God's Spirit, whereby convincing us of our sin and misery, enlightening our minds in the knowledge of Christ, and renewing our wills, He doth persuade and enable us to embrace Jesus Christ, freely offered to us in the gospel." (Scripture proof: Jn 1:13; 6:37,44,65; 10:16; Rm 8:29-30; Eph 2:8-10; Jm 1:18)

e. Perseverance of the Saints.

1. All who were chosen by God, redeemed by Christ, and given faith by the Spirit are kept in faith such that they persevere to the end. Even though the process of sanctification is not complete in this life, from God's perspective it is as good as accomplished, cf. Rm 8:30, 38, 39, and Phil 1:6.
2. Those whom the Holy Spirit regenerates and brings to faith in Christ, will be kept by Christ (Jude 1; 1Jn 5:18) with the result that they will continue in the true faith and grow in Christ. They will not fall away and be lost. They have eternal life now, and forever.
3. Scriptural proof: Jn. 6:39; 10:28-29; Eph. 1:13-14; Phil. 1:6; I Pt 1:4-6.
 - a. This doctrine is NOT "once saved, always saved". A better way to view this doctrine is to state it in biblical terms. Those who fall away and perish in their sins give evidence that a work of grace has never occurred in their hearts (Heb 3:14) A better cliché would be: "once saved, never the same."

2. Keeping Perspective

- a. The doctrines of grace are very deep doctrines. Many have difficulty in understanding it, some become unsettled by it, and others fight very hard against it. While we must always stand for all that the Bible teaches, we must be sensitive to the theological perspective of others and the leading of the Holy Spirit.

However, it is helpful to realize that much of the opposition to this doctrine is due to our sinful human nature. Even Christians sometimes adopt a humanistic viewpoint on things. We see ourselves, not God, as the center of the universe and we rebel against the idea that we were created for and by Him. Only as we submit to God and His Word can we accept the truth that we are but "clay pots" made by God to use as He desires (Rom. 9:18-24).

When we grasp that, then our praise to God truly becomes overwhelming because we thank Him for all the unmerited riches that He has graciously bestowed on us such undeserving sinners.

This is a tremendous doctrine, but let us remember that both Calvinists and Arminians are God's elect and should extend Christian recognition and fellowship to each other. In our opinion, this area of doctrine should not be used to divide the body of Christ (I Cor. 12:25). [1]

E. Sacraments

1. Baptism

- a. "Baptism is a sacrament of the New Testament, ordained by Jesus Christ, not only for the solemn admission of the party baptized into the visible Church; but also to be unto him a sign and seal of the covenant of grace, of his engrafting into Christ, of regeneration, of remission of sins, and of his giving up unto God, through Jesus Christ, to walk in the newness of life. Which sacrament is, by Christ's own appointment, to be continued in His Church until the end of the world." WCF 28.1
- b. The Meaning of Baptism
 - i. Baptism is the sacrament which pictures and testifies [to others] that we have entered God's covenant of salvation and the true church of Christ (Acts 2:38-41).
 - ii. The water symbolizes the washing away of our sins through the regenerating work of the Holy Spirit (Titus 3:5).
 - iii. The true baptism is spiritual and takes place when the Holy Spirit gives us a new heart and new desires, and cleanses us from sin (Rom. 6:4).
 - iv. The outward water baptism is a public profession and testimony to the salvation and cleansing which the Holy Spirit has done or will do in the heart (Acts 2:41)
- c. The Mode of Baptism
 - i. In Biblical times, spiritual cleansing was always pictured by the ritual of sprinkling or pouring of water or blood upon an object (Lev. 3:8; 14:7; 16:14-16; Num. 8:5-7, Num. 19:11-13, 18-19).
 1. Isaiah used sprinkling to picture the work of Christ in cleansing sin: "Behold, My servant . . . will sprinkle many nations" (Is. 52:13-15).
 2. Peter carried the image of sprinkling on in the New Testament by saying, "who have been chosen according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through the sanctifying work of the Spirit, for obedience to Jesus Christ and sprinkling by his blood... 22 "Now that you have purified your souls" (I Pet. 1:2,22).
 3. While we believe that the Scriptural and proper mode of baptism is sprinkling; yet, we also accept pouring or immersion as valid forms of baptism. The reason is that the Scriptures do not make an issue over the

mode; it is the public profession of one's faith in Christ that is usually emphasized (Mt. 28:19; Acts 2:38,41).

d. The Subjects of Baptism.

- i. Obviously, those professing belief as a youth or adult who have not previously been baptized. Presbyterians also believe in infant baptism.
 1. Infant baptism is the historic Christian practice! In his book *Outlines of Theology*, A.A. Hodge sums it up like this: "the practice of infant baptism is an institution which exists as a fact, and prevails throughout the universal church, with the exception of the modern Baptists, whose origin can be definitely traced to the Anabaptists of Germany, about A.D. 1537.... Then, as proof, he cites Irenaeus (who was born before the death of the apostle John), Justin Martyr (138 A.D.), Tertullian (born 160 A.D.), Cyprian (253 A.D.), and Augustine (born 354 A.D.). Hodge concludes: ...infant baptism has prevailed (a) from the apostolic age, (b) in all sections of the ancient church, uninterruptedly to the present time, (d) in every one of the great historical churches of the Reformation.
 2. Infant baptism is the NT sign and seal of the covenant that traces its roots back to the OT covenant sign of circumcision.
 - a. Gen. 17:10-12, Luke 18:15-16, Acts 16:31, 1 Cor. 7:14, Col, 2:11-12

2. Lord's Supper

- a. "Our Lord Jesus, in the night wherein He was betrayed, instituted the sacrament of His body and blood, called the Lord's Supper, to be observed in His Church, unto the end of the world, for the perpetual remembrance of the sacrifice of Himself in His death; the sealing all benefits thereof unto true believers, their spiritual nourishment and growth in Him, their further engagement in and to all duties which they owe unto Him; and, to be a bond and pledge of their communion with Him, and with each other, as members of His mystical body." WCF 29.1
- b. As baptism relates to circumcision, so the Lord's Supper relates to the Old Testament feast of Passover (Ex 12:11-13). Instead of pointing to the Exodus event, its symbols point to the redemptive work of Christ on the cross.
- c. The Lord's Supper reminds us of His death for us and our deliverance from the punishment we deserve. It is not a sacrifice, but a "sacrificial feast" like Passover, in which the lamb was eaten after the sacrifice had already been made. The sacrifice of Christ has already been made once for all (Heb 9:24-26; 10:10-18).
- d. Our souls are fed and nourished by Christ our Passover Lamb, as we receive Him by faith (I Cor. 5:7). This is a visible picture of Christ, and just as the Christian feeds upon the written Word for spiritual growth in grace, so he should meditate upon Christ's death (frequently and through the Communion) as a means of spiritual growth. The spiritual presence of Christ in the Lord's Supper draws us into intimate fellowship with God and fellow believers as we partake together (I Cor. 10:16-17).

F. Church Government

1. Representative Government - Our form of government is Presbyterian, which is representative government.

2. The two other basic kinds of church government are:
 - a. Episcopal (Bishop) gradation of offices and ranks resulting in a hierarchy (e.g. Roman Catholic, Episcopal)
 - b. Congregational – Independent local congregations (e.g., Congregational, Baptists, Brethren).
3. We believe Presbyterianism best conforms to the biblical data outlined above.
4. Offices within a Presbyterian form of government
 - a. Elders - have the government and spiritual oversight of the Church, including teaching. Responsibilities and qualifications can be found in I Tim. 3:1-7; Titus 1:5-9.
 - b. Deacons - The office of deacon is not one of rule, but rather of sympathy and service, after the example of the Lord Jesus both to the physical and spiritual needs of the people. His responsibilities are listed in Acts 6:1-6 and his qualifications in 1Tm 3:8-13.
5. Courts within the church
 - a. Session - Session of a local church body.
 - b. Presbytery - Elders within a regional area.
 - c. General Assembly - National gathering of elders within the denomination.

G. Questions for membership

Those being received by profession or reaffirmation of faith shall answer the following or like questions before the Session:

1. Do you acknowledge yourselves to be sinners in the sight of God and without hope for your salvation except in His sovereign mercy?
2. Do you believe in the Lord Jesus Christ as the Son of God and the Savior of sinners, and do you receive and depend upon Him alone for your salvation as He is offered in the gospel?
3. Do you now promise and resolve, in humble reliance upon the grace of the Holy Spirit, that you will endeavor to live a life as becomes the followers of Christ?
4. Do you promise to serve Christ in His Church by supporting and participating with this congregation in its service of God and its ministry to others to the best of your ability?
5. Do you submit yourself to the government and discipline of the Evangelical Presbyterian Church and to the spiritual oversight of this Church Session, and do you promise to promote the unity, purity, and peace of the Church? [2]

Works Cited

1. <https://www.oakbrookpca.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/07/OCCFullPageDiscoverBook.pdf>
2. <https://epc.org/wp-content/uploads/Files/4-Resources/5-Downloadable-EPC-Resources/A-ConstitutionDoctrine/BookOfOrder2020-2021.pdf> (page 13 of document)

Hope Presbyterian Church

We proclaim the power of the gospel as we:



Worship

"Exalt the LORD our God, and worship at his holy mountain; for the LORD our God is holy."

Psalm 99:9

Objective 1: Hope desires to foster a vibrant, God-honoring community as we:

- Offer biblically and theologically faithful worship in the Reformed tradition.
- Praise God with one voice, drawing from all generations and cultures, many musical traditions and participants.
- Celebrate the power and work of God in our midst.

Objective 2: Hope encourages our people to honor God by taking up a life of worship as we:

- Practice spiritual disciplines and discover how God is involved in our whole lives.
- Marvel at the growth in grace as God matures his people.

Connect

"We, though many, are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another."

Romans 12:5

Objective 3 Hope seeks to promote a pattern for following Jesus that connects us to God's word and each other as we:

- Promote opportunities to deepen our discipleship at every age and maturity level.
- Create effective systems for training disciples, teachers, leaders, and future missionaries.
- Identify our spiritual gifts for the purpose of service in the body and local community.

Objective 4: Hope aspires to cultivate a thriving covenant community that reflects the variety and diversity of our area as we:

- Offer opportunities for ministry and fellowship that cross every human barrier.
- Develop mentoring relationships for young adults, youth, children, and those new in the faith by connecting them with mature believers.
- Develop relationships with like-minded congregations and ministries in our community.

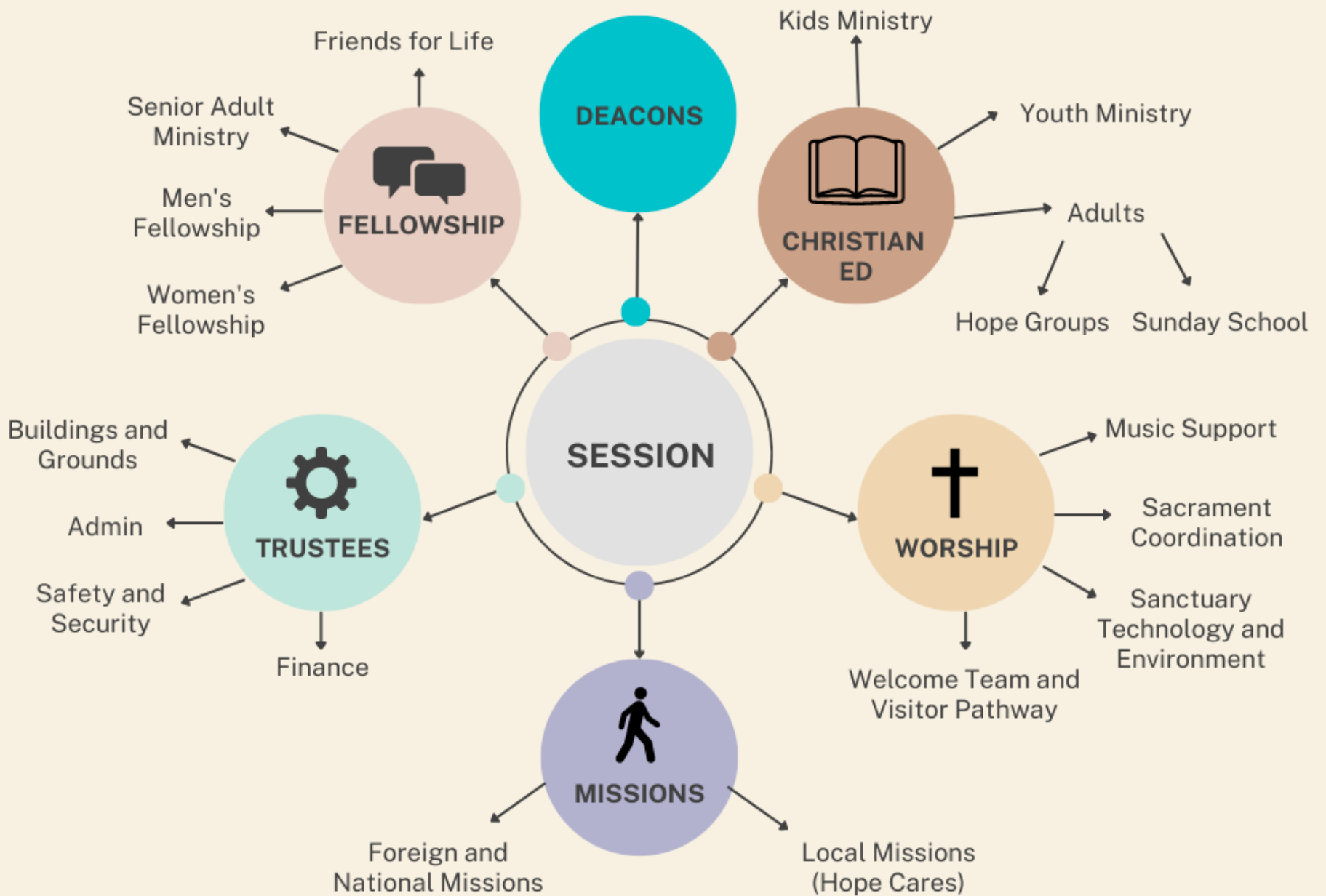
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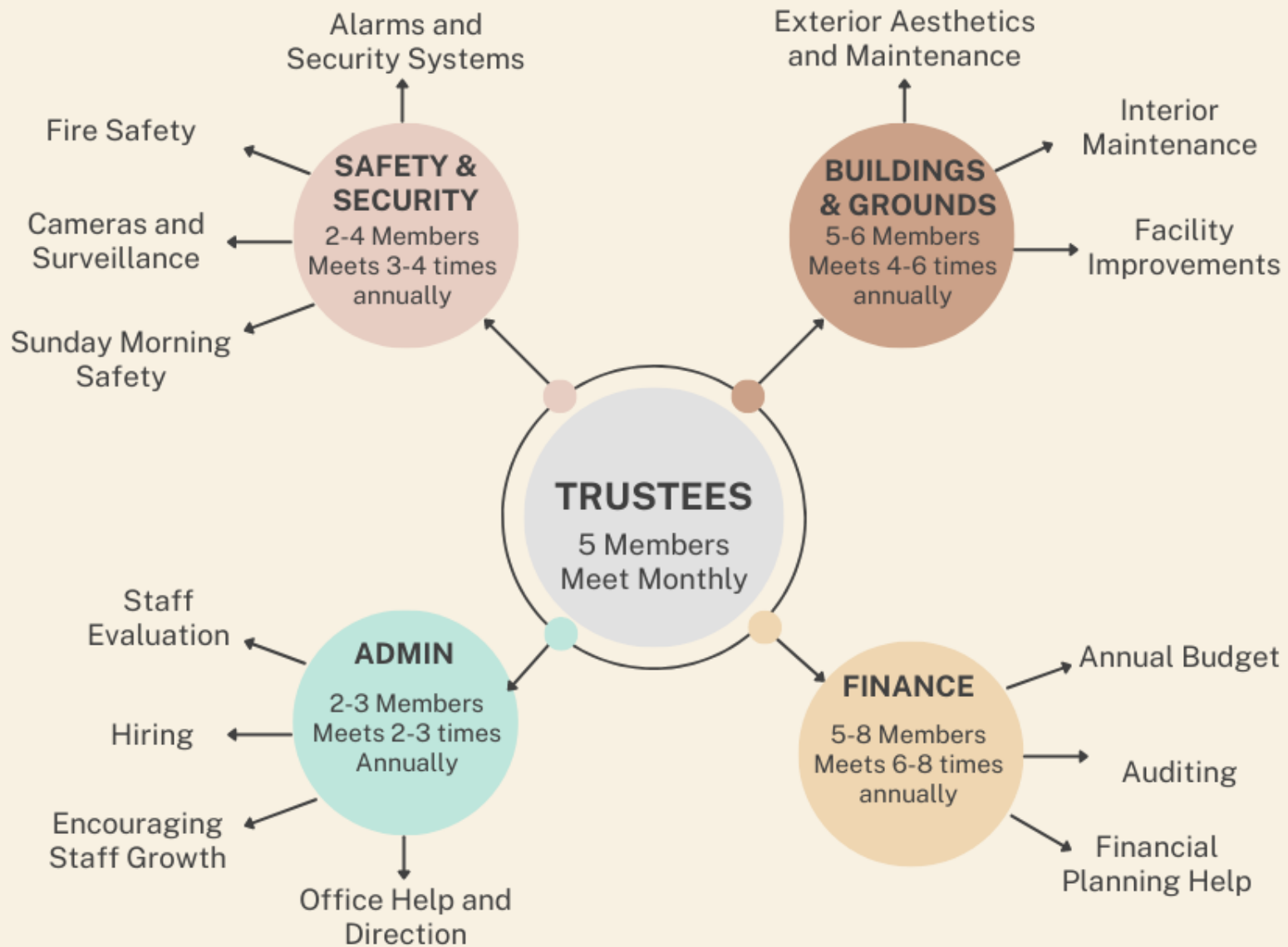
"Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to obey all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always to the end of the age."

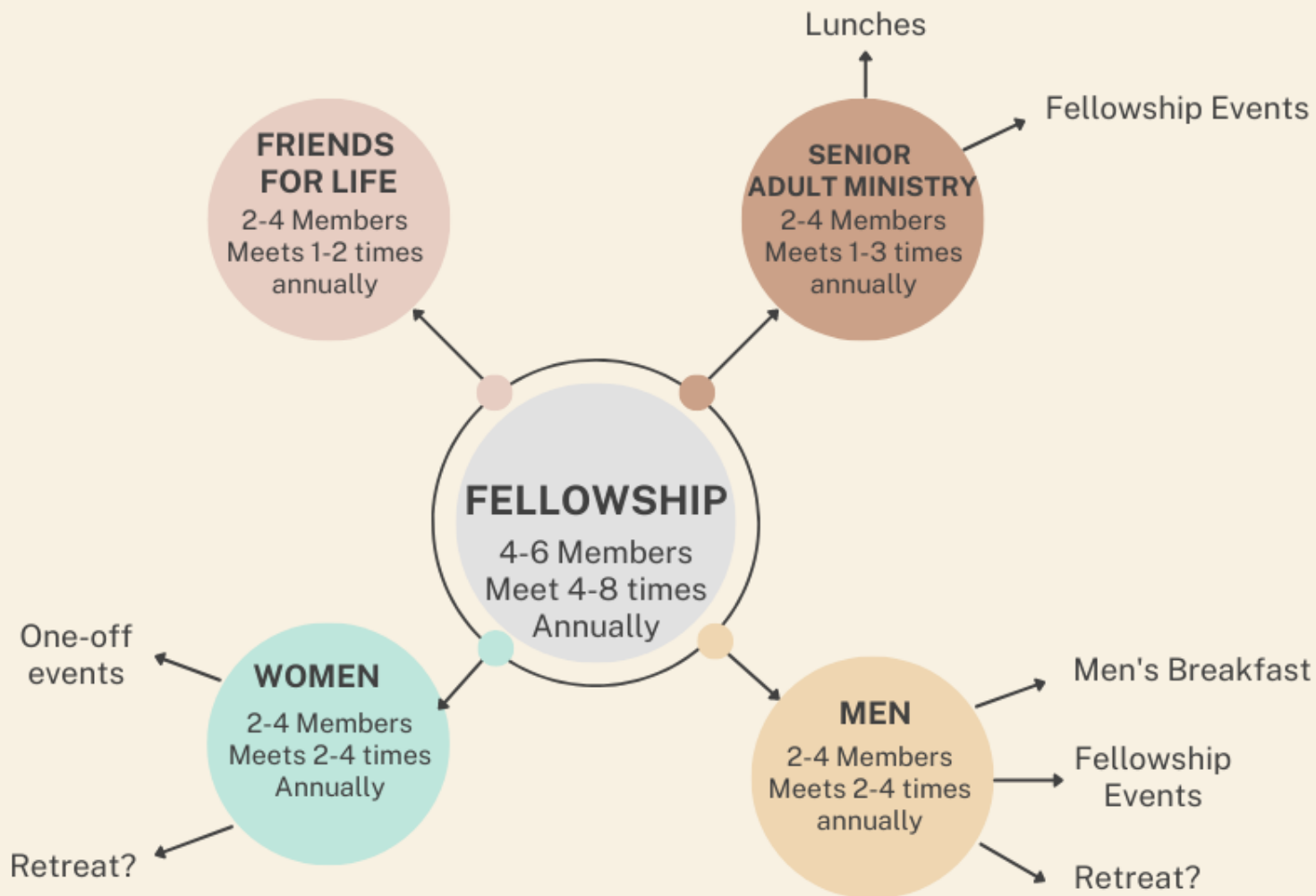
Matthew 28:19-20

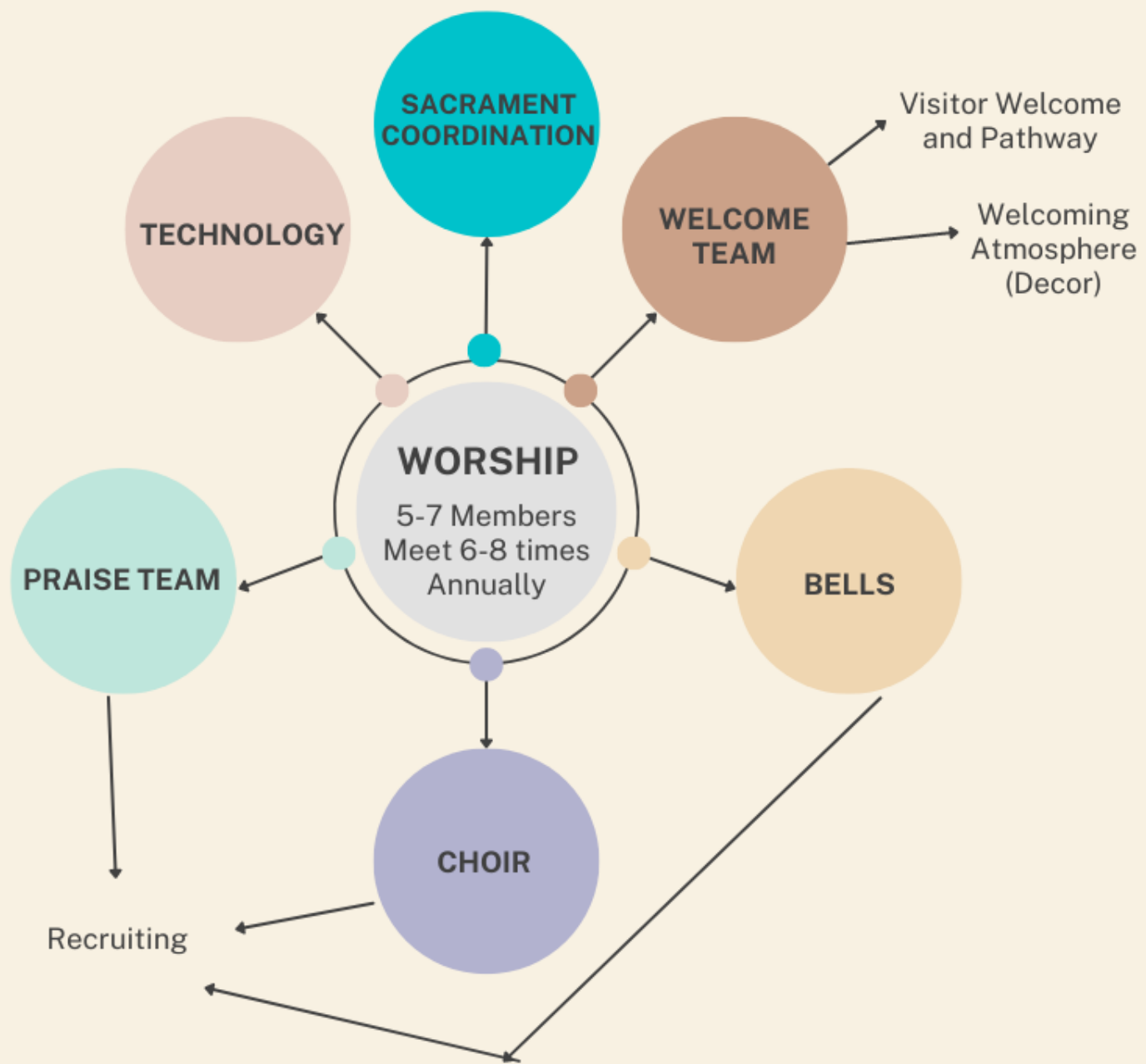
Objective 5: Hope desires to see the gospel at work around us through community relationships that point to Jesus as we:

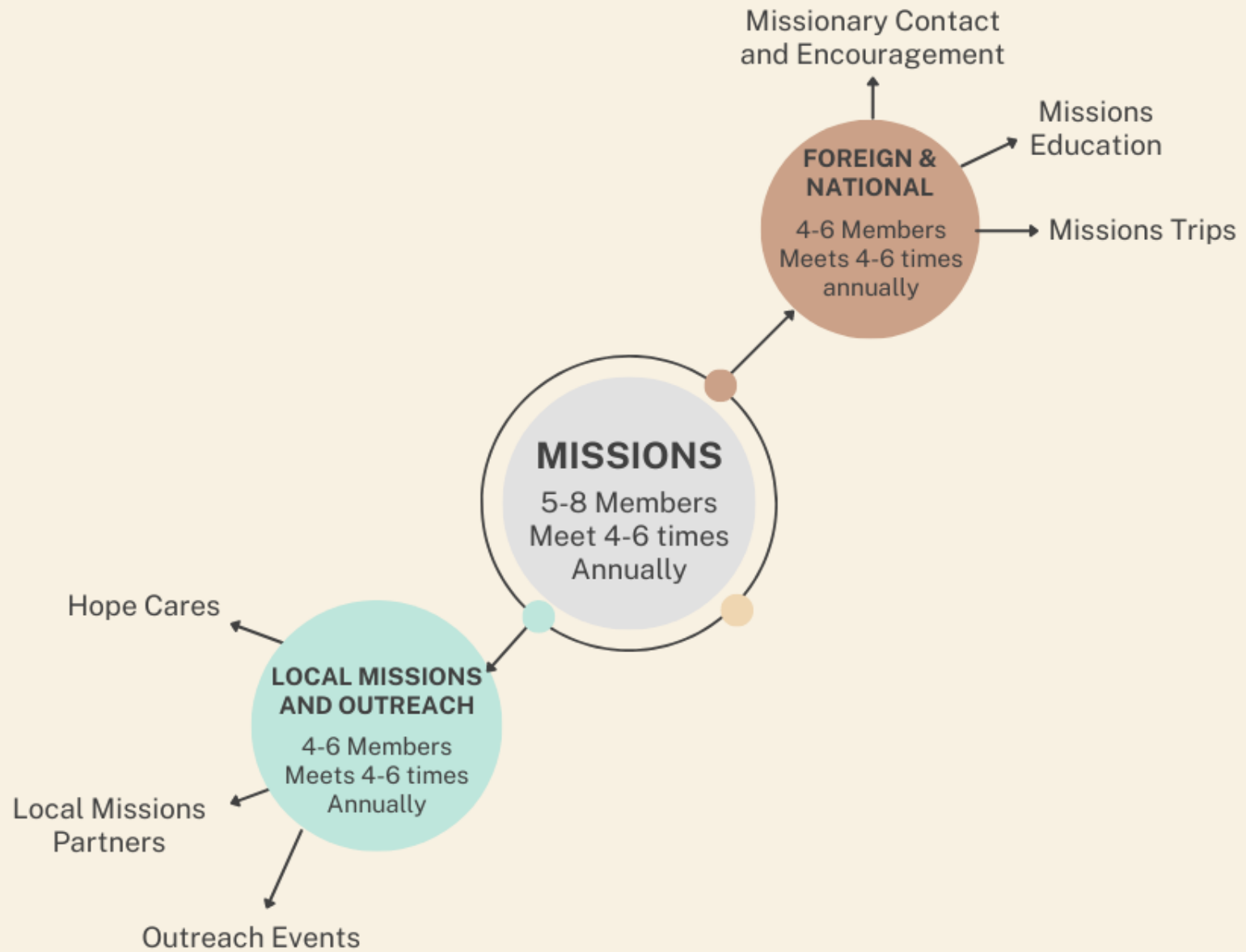
- Develop ministries that boldly express the love of Christ, giving hope to the broken, alienated and lonely.
- Nurture a culture of prayerful confidence that God is present and at work through us.
- Cultivate courageous outreach initiatives according to the gifts and callings of individuals within our church as we listen to the Spirit's leading.
- Provide regular training and resources to help people communicate effectively about their faith in an increasingly complex post-Christian world.
- Promote prayer, participation, and financial generosity toward local, national, and international missions.











Hope Christian Ed Organization

