

WHAT IS ESSENTIAL TO OUR FAITH - NON-NEGOTIABLE THEOLOGY

1. We believe that the first fundamental, and this totally non-negotiable, is that point in our 'belief system' that says, Jesus is the one and only begotten Son of God. Jesus is The Son. God is the Father. We believe they are in total harmony with one another, being part of one another. Jesus is the regent-king, head of the church, and advocate for mankind before God. He is friend, saviour, Lord, and is the all powerful, and all righteous master that we serve. He is what we preach, and He is the one to whom we bow our lives in all of the matters of life. He is the principle topic of every book and every verse of the New Testament. We are "Christ-tians", after all, dedicated with all fealty.

2. We believe that there is only one God, and that He is the all powerful, the all intelligent, supreme being, -'He is The Father. He is Yahweh-Jehovah-Elohim-Adonai. He is the Creator and the Designer, the Friend and the Hope. He is the Judge. While He sees all things and knows all things, He is not some giant policeman in the sky. He is much greater than that, for He is God, The Father, the one who loves us, forgives us, and wants the very best for us. Thus, He is not hiding behind some bush to catch us in a wrong, just so He can punish us. He is not the kind of parent who would be eager to trip us up or confuse us. He is constantly involved in, and caring about, our daily lives. He is clear, always speaking so every one can know exactly what He wants and expects.

3. We believe that God, has revealed himself to mankind through the "inspiration and revelation" work of the Holy Spirit. We believe that the Holy Spirit has many roles as a full member of the God-head. Among other things, He is the one who guides, comforts, assists, and preserves the church, in a way that is defined by what God wants for that church.

4. We believe that the whole general act of the preservation of God's published will is guided through the words of the inerrant bible, and only by the words of that bible. This is one of the major works of The Spirit. We believe in the simple form of Christianity and thus we do not use, or seek, any extra sources or extra-biblical authorities. We believe that the Christian needs to consult the bible, and God directly, for all guidance. We believe that the message of the bible is clear, understandable and capable of being duplicated by who ever takes the time to simply read God's word. The work of "preservation" which The Holy Spirit does is thus an on-going work of the Spirit in relationship to the preserving of the pure and unchanged word of God, Keeping it that way for time. It is an on-going process, necessary to the on-going of the church as God wants it to go, and is thus ageless. The Holy Spirit is also The Comforter, the Helper, in the affairs and conflicts of life. We believe that He can work separate and apart from The Word, but never against the word. We do not believe it is necessary for salvation to have experienced any miracles. While we believe that The Spirit indwells every Christian, we do not believe The Spirit over-rides the will of the individual.

5. We believe that God loves all of mankind and because of His deep love for His creation, we believe that God wishes for all of mankind to simply be saved from the justly deserved eternal punishment that, we, the sinner have brought on our own selves by the choices we have made as independent choosing people. We do not believe in inherited sin. We believe that God wants a full relationship with all of His creatures, but the individual man's choice to follow a sinful path blocks that from happening. Thus we believe that Jesus was requested to come to earth and to serve as the only possible atoning sacrifice by dying on the cross at Calvary, to restore the relationship that was destroyed by our rebellious sin choices. We believe that this plan was what God had prepared to eventuate from before the creation of the world. God's way is the only way of salvation. God knew this from the beginning. God/s gift of salvation is the bestowed on those who are informed and who make the conscious choice to follow God and God's plan. We do not believe in 'unconditional election'.

6. Thus, we believe that Jesus did come to the earth, that He was born miraculously of a virgin, and that He lived a totally sin free life while He was here on this earth. Furthermore, we believe that Jesus chose to give His life as a payment for man's sin debt, so all who would choose to follow Him could be made completely free of the burden of their sin, as well as the consequential eternal punishment that that their sin justly brings. (We believe that sin is very-very bad and deserves its capital sentence of eternal death. We believe that each individual member of mankind deserves to die eternally, and physically, for the rebellion he has chosen to practice, a choice he made for himself, and the subsequent positioning of himself as a rebel authority to God-Jesus-The Holy Spirit.but God, and the free will sacrifice of Jesus, has paid the price for that person who seeks God, and God's way, no matter what the name on the door is. This is where God's divine and total love, shared with those who will follow Jesus comes in to play.) There is no other way to pay the sin debt other than the perfect, sin-less, blood of Jesus, shed at Calvary. We believe that if there could have been another way, God would have chosen that alternative.

7. Now because the church believes that God has revealed the one and only, fully specific and totally effective, plan by which mankind can have their sin burden totally removed, we further believe that the full plan of God is what we should follow. We believe that this plan that has been 'in effect' since the day of Jesus' crucifixion, covering all of mankind, and particularly those who have personally chosen to serve God, totally. Peter preached on this very topic

of salvation as the first sermon of the new era and that says a lot about what we should be focused on today.

8. We see this plan requiring that we hear about Jesus, and then developing through our hearing about Jesus and His Way, we believe one should come to a point where we truly, and fully, believe that Jesus is indeed, The Saviour - The Son of God, We believe that this whole encounter with Jesus is to continue to develop into an ever fuller, total faith filled all encompassing submission, ...to all that Jesus taught, on all subjects, but In particular on the subject of love for God and mankind and the ideas surrounding the church. This plan then demands that we be willing to embrace a lifestyle of constant 'Christ-likeness', always repenting of our sins and one that then continually confesses that Jesus is the Son of God who gives us our salvation freely, promoting our daily living of the whole Christian lifestyle and resisting any other "life-guidance formats" to the listening world.

9. Lastly, we understand the plan of salvation's final initial step to be the granting of the free gift of God's salvation which is applied to a person who complies with these first conditions of hearing, believing, repentance, confession, and then completes the conversion application, as soon as possible, by appealing for the granting of the gift of salvation which has been placed in a sort of 'waiting account' for that individual applicant and when they make the choice for God, through the full immersion in water, baptism. At that point, the seeker is showing himself willing to submit to all that God commands. When the applicant, the sinner allows himself, or herself, to be baptised (fully immersed) in water, for the remission of sins it is like when Naaman washed in the river Jordan seven times to receive the cleansing of his disease of leprosy.

NOTICE #1: We believe that baptism is thus a spiritual burial, a ceremonial event and a demonstration of faith. Salvation actually occurred back at the cross, when Jesus died and is being held in account until the appeal is made. (Baptism is thus the final act on /my part of this appeal process' done for the initial cleansing of my soul before God, -a cleansing that I can not do for myself, no matter how hard I try. It is the same as when Noah finally entered the ark and closed the door. Noah did not actually save himself, but his obedience by the arduous building of the ark, the collection of the animals, by his continual preaching, and finally by his closing of the doors and his willingness to trust God through out the whole experience, did save him and his family. It was God who saved him, because of his trust and his obedience. Noah's "work" then did an enormous amount of good, specifically because it endorsed God as the supreme sovereign, and God's plan, in the most total manner possible. But in the end, Noah and his family, were saved through fully obedient faith in God to save, just as we are today.) (Naaman's case is the same, really.)

(NOTICE #2: Our beliefs concerning the plan of salvation are more complicated than a mere "hear-believe-repent-confess-be baptised" set of 'conditions to be met as they are often presented. We believe that the salvation process requires my daily, life-long, participation in the full Christian life. It is not a "once-done-and-all-is good-no-matter-what-of-thing-I-do-from-this-conversion-point-forward" The 'soul salvation process' is a daily, dynamic, enterprise where I have to grow, serve, and surrender my will, as a daily part of my life, in addition to being active in daily acts of service to my fellow Christians and neighbours.... I am to wait on God, and God's family as a waiter waits on a table at a restaurant, -- continuously, humbly and energetically, yet primarily unseen, letting the vision's focus remain constantly fixed on Jesus.)

10. We believe that it is essential that the local church family meet together, on the first day of the week, with other Christians for worship. This meeting will need to have a moment of memorial celebration in the Lord's Supper and a pointed remembrance of Jesus atoning work. This collective time of worship and fellowship with the other saints is a time that is to be dedicated to a declaration of the supreme value that Jesus has in my own life. Worship is always a definition and enthronement of God's value to me. It is never a rote exercise with certain things that must be done to get our 'ticket punched' for the coming week.

11. We believe that the Christian faith needs to be understood as a "family experience" where fellowship and rededication in the Lord's Supper needs to be augmented by weekly acts of "out reaching fellowship" and the "encouragement of other Christians". We believe that it should be an on-going declaration of the love that all Christians should have for one another. Christianity is, as far as it is possible, a community type of lifestyle where everyone is helping all of the rest of the family to go to heaven. Christian is never to be understood as monastic, or as a heritage from the world. We are to reach out to the world, just as we reach inward to each other, constantly.

12. We believe that in all of the life moments of the church, the primary focal point is to be defined by and around Jesus, and His revealed way. Jesus' way is what the Holy Spirit communicated to us in the vast majority of the scriptures. It is a message that is understandable, identifiable, and duplicatable by everyone. There is no need to seek a super-spiritual enlightenment on the top of some mountain, for God does not hide Himself at all, from any seeker. He, and His way, is open to all who seek Him. Jesus is not some big spiritual mystery, then, He is simply The Lord, the Son of God, who loves mankind.

13. We believe that anything that opposes the obvious and clear essential points of New Testament Christianity is wrong and rebellious to God, as well as they are rebellious to Jesus. We believe that anyone who alters, or opposes, "the way" consciously, or unconsciously, is not just merely wrong in his thinking, but very possibly

advocating the religious misconceptions and procedures that produces one form or another of an anti-Christ type of thinking. Our whole thinking process is thus important to us because it defines the outcome and the structure of our Christian life-style. It needs constant and frequent examination, and thus we esteem highly our corporate and private study times. We strengthen our whole faith experience through reflection, study and discussions with other Christians.

14. We strongly believe in grace. We know that not all of the church will think 100% alike, all of the time, on all matters, and we do not expect this to happen. But if what we come to think is just an "opinion" upon which disagreement occurs, we believe that we have the right to our opinions. If it is a direct matter of conflict with scripture, then this is where we believe that we have to return to the bible to get our bearings. If the area of dispute is a gray area, then we believe in being studious and loving, letting all voices be heard in the ensuing discussions, and then striving to come to a general position that all can agree on and still love and fellowship one another in the fullest manner possible.

15. We do believe in revealing power of consistent thought. Consistency and compliance are goals for which we wish to strive. We know that if our thoughts and actions do stand up to the inevitable tests scrutiny and criticism, that if the whole of our lives and lifestyle are able to fundamentally support all positions taken by the word of God, then this is seen by us as a very good thing. But, and this is sad, but, this consistency with the revealed word of God is very crucial to us. We want to be seen doing and loving as Jesus did and as He taught.

16. We do believe that all of our speech and life styles should hold up to the rigorous application of scripture. We believe that there is both a congregational and a public perception process that is always going on. We see this as a good thing, fostering, as it should, both more intimate fellowship and closer compliance with God's word.

17. We do believe, subject to the tests and advice of scripture, that there are boundaries which can be inadvertently crossed by even the most 'right-focused' person, for we are still just human beings after all. In such a situation the discipline and training process that we should follow needs to be guided by the word of God, most seriously and solemnly, coupled with all of the patience, love and grace on our part that can be mustered.

18. We believe there is a devil. We believe the devil is the enemy of God and is opposed to all things godly and all of God's children. We believe he is active even yet today, and yet we firmly believe that Jesus will soundly defeat him in every contest. Consequently, we believe that there is definite rights and wrongs, and if allowed to develop, these can become sin, yet again, in the life of the Christian. If unattended to, these can cause the Christian to lose his faith and his salvation.

19. We believe that anyone who speaks in a manner which alters or subverts the clear gospel message is wrong and that we need to first go and talk with that person, as any concerned brother would do, to reestablish spiritual equilibrium. In talking to that person we must talk with them in all love, listen carefully to what they say. It may very well be that they are preaching from some sort of an 'antichrist based' theology, either consciously or unconsciously, and this still needs an approach that is both loving and God directed. This is for the greater benefit and spiritual health of that one soul, and for the souls around that person. Thus we believe that we need to be able to give a defence for the 'faith' that lies within us and that we are active in doing so to the outside world and to the inside world. This is the fundamental work of a Shepard, after all, -watching after the sheep. There is a sense in which we are all shepherds, watching out for one another. However we also believe in a group of men, called elders / shepherds who specifically watch out for the spiritual health of the congregation.

20. We further believe the word of God stands as the supreme authority to which we need to turn in all matters. Should any of the things that must be rejected and vocally opposed, because of an obvious conflict with scripture in our thinking, comes to light, then we must be willing to reorganise our thinking, as Paul helped the Corinthian congregation to do, letting the bible be our guide. While we believe that any mere appearance of evil is demented and is devilish, we also recognise the need to be gentle, patient, and constant in our approach to those who struggle with competing ideas, ever using the patience and example of Jesus as our guide. We must still believe that fundamentally, all sin is demented, just as all things selfish are demented, and all deviation from clear scripture is distorted and devilish. Paul exhorted the Galatians in this regard in Galatians 1: covering up evil ideas with good sounding words is wrong.

THUS, THE FIRST SUMMARY "...WE HOLD THESE POINTS TO BE ESSENTIAL AND NON-NEGOTIABLE..."

1. Jesus is the son of God and the centrepiece of all New Testament thinking.
2. God is the supreme lord of the universe, the absolute sovereign in all things.
3. The Holy Spirit is the comforter, the inspiring spirit, and the preserver of the way.
4. God wants all men to be saved, and has from before the creation of the world.
5. Salvation is only by the by the blood of Jesus on the cross are we saved.
6. There is a specific plan by which man can access the 'salvation account'. When this plan has been completed by an individual, God will add that person to the church, no matter what name is on the door.

7. The church exists to keep the fire of truth ever aflame and burning.
8. The church is the family of God on earth, existing to help people get to heaven.
9. The church is built on the teachings of Jesus and no one else.
10. Anything that is not of Jesus and the apostolic teachings is opinion and open to conjecture.
11. God has spoken in the clear, so all mankind can understand. He does not speak in riddles or in closed arenas, using mystics. God wants all of mankind to find Him.
12. Evil exists, and the church needs to be a voice against evil and misconceptions.
13. Evil is the work of the Devil and we do believe that he exists and that he and his minions are active yet today.
14. We believe in grace. Everyone sins, even the best of Christians, and God has provided an answer for those who are His children to any misdirections / sins.
15. Consistency in thought is essential to balanced Christianity.
16. We are a people of the book. It is the primary guide for Christians.
17. We believe there are rules and boundaries for the Christian.
18. We believe in the existence of the devil. He is working yet today to thwart the Church.
19. We believe that following the devil is wrong. We believe that any distortion of the will of God is wrong.
20. We believe the bible is the inerrant word of God, totally inspired and perfectly preserved for the church.

THE REALLY HARD PART IS FOUND IN REACHING AGREEMENT ON ALL OF THE OTHER LITTLE PARTS THAT MAKE UP THE TOTAL. "DOCTRINE" PICTURE.

A. THE LORD'S SUPPER

Because we are, first and foremost, a Christocentric people, who totally belong to God, following the leadership of Jesus as the ultimate authority, we naturally begin our second tier of considerations with the Lord's Supper, the Communion: -we begin each week with this element of worship where we remember Him. We choose to do this every week because we want to be as close to Jesus as possible, all of the time.
....so then....

1. We understand the Lord's Supper, the Communion, to be a memorial and not a sacrament where one punches a Christians ticket' so as to receive another week of grace allotment, so to speak. We take time to sit down and remember Him as He requested the disciples to do right before His betrayal. We do so, following the first century's church's pattern of celebrating the Lord's Supper as seen in the Corinthian letter as closely as possible.
2. Furthermore, we believe that the Lord's Supper is but one of a series of commanded events that should be found in every week's worship.
3. The purpose of the Supper is to remember The Lord Jesus and His death.
4. It is to include unleavened bread, representing the change of law codes, from a works oriented system to the grace oriented plan. It is also to include wine as a further symbol in the remembrance of Jesus only this time focused on the total washing clean of the Christian's sin....spotless. It is the solemn act of remembering Him.
5. It is thus a memorial feast built around a celebration of the life, death, and burial of Jesus, as well as a proclamation and a declaration of our loyalty and absolute dedication to Jesus, and to the church He established above all other demands that may be placed upon us in this life. We prepare for the coming week on this disciplined moment of remembrance.
6. Often done at the same time as the communion, is the collection. Technically, the collection is a separate thing, whereby we further demonstrate our on-going discipline and commitment to Jesus, to God, and to the church. It too is made in an atmosphere of remembrance where train ourselves in commitment, service and love.
7. The Communion / Lord's Supper needs to be a solemn, humble and honest display of my current heart condition to God, to myself, and to the church. Together, all of the elements of the Communion come united as an act of disciplined devotion. Further, we must realise that the communion and the contribution are but one joint act of communication between the two parties who have this intimate spiritual relationship.
8. We try and use the same emblems that were used in the first century church when we partake of the supper. Therefore we use unleavened bread and at least the fruit of the vine, if not real wine. We do this to do things in the closest way to the practices of the first century church.
9. It is not required to have the Supper brought to you if you are sick, but it is okay if it is done so.
10. NOTE: Ceremony and tradition are, potentially, good things to help define our life-style's boundaries, but only if "proper and fully cognisant remembrance" is made, directing the mind back to the initiating event, like gathering at

the Shrine of Remembrance every year on 11/11 to remember those of all of the wars and what they have done for us today. However, we believe that ceremony and tradition are not the end of things, in their own right. They direct us to think, to reflect, and to reorganise ourselves towards a better life through our desire to live a life in faithful obedience to Jesus' way. Ceremony and tradition have got to be grounded in real faith, from a real heart, for the real purpose of servicing an ever maintained allegiance and diligence to our Lord. The Lord's Supper requires, then, 'proper remembrance of who we are, of whose we are, and of what we are about, returning our minds to what we owe to Jesus for His saving of us.....thus we use the Lord's Supper to help us always remember that we do not, nor that we can not, save ourselves. We need Him!!!!

11. We have the communion every week, on the first day of the week. This is done to replicate, as best as we can, the first century model, and to place maximum importance on the mission that Jesus came here to do, at Calvary. [NOTE: Our best evidence for this is extra-biblical, found in the writings of Justin Martyr.]

12. We place great store status on the idea of giving our all, in all things, and this moment of communion is but one of them.

B. THE MISSION OF THE NEW TESTAMENT CHURCH?

1. The first mission of the church is to serve The Lord in all truth, truthfulness and righteousness, and all of the various acts of service which we are able to be involved in, are to be done for Him and in further recognition of Him as the supreme Lord. This declares Him to be, publicly, the absolute sovereign in our lives, and in all matters and in all the events of my life. We believe that we are one family, united together by Jesus, and thus we are to be a loving reflection of God, our Father, to everyone in the family, always taking our cue on how to live the Christian life from the totally selflessly serving life of Jesus. Just as Jesus was open to all of mankind, we too should set aside all prejudice and preconceived notions about people. We believe that there is to be no elitism in the real church, for the Christocentric church is ever dedicated to Jesus and Him crucified, loving all mankind as He did. It could be readily said then, that the church's first mission is to love The Lord with all of our heart, mind and soul, and to love our neighbour in a like manner.

2. The second totally defining mission of the church is to spread the good news, the life changing good news. We believe that Jesus did come to earth, and that He did effect the salvation that man has needed since the fall from Edenic grace, and that He did this for every man who so choose to make Him the absolute ruler of his life. The message of the church should then be, "Jesus came and He has brought salvation and cleansing to everyone who will follow Him. come to Jesus!" This mission is to be undertaken collectively by the whole church and also by every individual in an individual manner as far as it is possible. People come to what all of the group are excitedly talking about, and movements die when only a few voices are heard.

3. The church is not to withhold this message of salvation from any race, or from any person, for God wants the church to be the 'called out' and thus the herald of the Kingdom in every language, in every corner, and in every culture of the entire world. The church is to be about constantly speaking out for Jesus and His Way. (Please consider what the actual meaning of the greek word "ekklesia" means in this type of context, eternally.)

4. Tied directly to the evangelistic side of the church's mission is the second side of evangelism, love and concern for all mankind in a preparation sort of way. The church is to reach out to those people who are already inside the church, further training them in the Way, always encouraging them, mentoring them, and preparing them to reach out to the whole of the masses, and not to any one elite group over another. (As James said, anytime we show favouritism to one group over another, we are really denying 'the faith' and thus dismissing the real mission of the faith-filled church. Elitism is just one form of several 'anti-christ mindsets that are found in all limited audience focusing.) Thus the mission of the church is to be ever drawing circles that takes people in and that does not arbitrarily push people out.

5. The church's mission is also to be benevolent, both as a group and as individuals. This is not a passive choice that we can make if we want to so individually respond to the communities needs around us. Rather we believe that a real Christian spirit of benevolence is a pro-active, commanded, response that comes from our collective love and devotion to the mission of the church and to the Lord to whom we owe all of our absolute fealty and dedication. We believe that the fundamental love of a heart that has been trained by Jesus and His various examples of compassion and caring for the people around Him, is a heart that better understands Jesus, the friend of the down-trodden.

.....We believe that Christian love demands that the church be very much a 'people focused mission' group. If we are closed to any segment of society, to any particular need of that society, -in any way-, we are communicating a non-christlike persona and thus denying one of the fundamentals of the faith, loving one another and loving our neighbour, in an ipso facto way.

6. If the local congregation is more concerned about the saving of face in the community than it is in basic evangelism, then the real question of the church's mission comes into play. James told us that the basics of the true religion, the basic focus of the true Christian mind-heart is to be found in the visiting of the widows and orphans in their hour of distress. There is no greater point of distress than that found in having to carry the burden of sin by ourselves, on our own consciousnesses every week, not knowing about the saving blood of Jesus. Thus the evangelistic spirit, and responsible evangelistic efforts need to be made by all members whenever possible. This is the ultimate goal of all benevolence, and all other works of the church.

7. We believe strongly that the church is to be a people who are always guided by a 'thus says the Lord', just as The Lord was so guided. We strive to be a people who are Christocentric and never self oriented or defined by some philosophy of man's invention. However, we know that we can often train our eyes to see through one form of filter or another unwittingly and thus we run the risk of distorting the faith. We thus seek to re-examine, and to re-think all matters in an atmosphere as free from philosophical filters as possible, to better help us avoid the pratfalls of distortion. Good honest questions are vital to a healthy faith, and we fear none that comes from the world's point of view.

C. THE WORSHIP OF THE NEW TESTAMENT CHURCH

1. Because we believe that the Church should fundamentally be Christocentric in all of its faith modules, it naturally follows that the worship of the church needs to be fully Christocentric as well. This is not to say that we believe in the devaluing of God or the Holy Spirit, or any specific doctrinal points, but rather because over 95% of the New Testament is devoted to Jesus, then our focus should follow a similar level of focus. Anyone who is more doctrinal in thought, will eventually make some doctrinal point the focus, allowing it to define the boundaries of our fellowship, and even promoting it to a station of equality, or possibly superiority, to Jesus.

2. Our general obedience to the revealed word of God is a crucial display of our total allegiance to the whole of the Godhead, and thus to our Christianity. We want to do that which pleases Jesus, whenever and wherever He has requested our attendance and work, -even if it does not please ourselves. This is the realised servant mentality that places the Christian under Jesus The Lord, as a 'doulos' / diakonos, -servant. We serve Him and not the other way around. (To make Jesus "our servant" in either how we express ourselves in prayer, and or in how we comport ourselves in any way publicly, is to deny Jesus' absolute divinity and His supreme authority, and that is totally contradictory to all of the New Testament.)

3. The definition of 'worship' that we use is one of 'value designation' and 'value declaration'. Worship is the living, the holding in awe, of that which is so valuable as to demand all of our special attention, all of our special care and all of our special love, lived at all times.

4. Worship is divided into two distinctly different parts, 'proskuneo' and 'latreuo'. One is the day-to-day bowing down to Jesus as the ultimate authority in our daily lives and the subsequent living of those days with a sense of stupendous joy at having been lifted up from the muck and mire of the sin pit that we put ourselves in when we choose to rebel against Him in the first place. This daily, moment-to-moment, practical side of worship, shows our on-going sense of value in belonging to Jesus and serving as His workman daily. We want to show honour to His name and memory. We want to let the joy of our salvation find a fresh voice every minute of the day. Thus this is the most frequent avenue of worship and it is fully compliant, as we see it, with the fundamental nature of all worship being to show the value with which we place on our relationship with our sovereign Lord.

5. The second side of worship is where we most often spend the majority of our thoughts on this subject. This is the formal side of worship, done through our obeisance. While some have advocated that worship requires five specific acts, it is much more complex than any mere five steps. The problem is, is that with a "five step" approach we are tempted to produce a mentality where once done these five acts, and therefore constituted our duty of weekly 'worship' we are then on our time and are not as closely bound to the dictates of full christianity as we should be..This diminishes our Christianity and can easily down grade our goals of personal spirituality.

6. The recognised elements, attributes of the formal side of worship, the big five, are the communion, prayer, contribution, preaching / teaching and singing. Some would include 'a period of meditation' and some would include 'praise' in this list, but the first five on the list are normally planned for in every public worship service, as they should be, with a constant reminder that our devotion to God is an every day thing. (cf Hosea 6:6)

7. We also believe in the value of including the public reading of scripture as a distinct part of the worship, always seeking to edify and encourage the members in every possible manner. (There is no problem with these added points, in any sense, it does take the total number of parts of the formal worship well past the level of the fundamental big five.)

8. We strive to have all of these various attributes in our formal worship services, always. We do so, under the guidance and direction of the men of the congregation and include the general voice of all of the members in the basic decision making process on how to arrange them. So then, everyone has a voice in what is decided to be done, but just as the men are to take the lead in the families developing spirituality, we believe they should also do it in the larger church family.

9. We believe in encouraging everyone in the congregation to share in the fulfilling of our individual gifts and roles as well as bringing something to the worship service that will edify and encourage the others.

10. We believe that there are some specific duties that God has requested of the men and some of the women, and even some for the children and the slaves, but all are to be considered totally equal before God, yet charged with different roles in the maintenance of the dignity and devotion of the whole Christian family unit. This is especially true in the arena of the general worship where every one is a part of the one single organism, the church, as it stands and declares itself in regards to the value of God in our lives. (In the first century church, slave sat beside master and master sat beside slave, and yet both were equal before God, with all due respect considered in regards to other conventional rankings. The same is true of men and women. Roles may be different, but equality and value are the same between all members.)

11. The role of musical instruments in the act of singing in worship is a point that concerns some people. We use an acapella concept for worship where no musical instruments are involved, other than the human voice. In this way all are potentially involved, should they choose to do so. We believe in the usage of the acapella format because it is the one that best reflects what we know about the First Century Church's practices. [==> Note: It is possible that Ephesians 5:19 and Colossians 3:16 have a modicum of connection to the music question, but the context of both of these verses is actually directed else where and thus they are a bit difficult to use outside of their immediate context.] Music is to benefit the Christian, and it must be seen in its beneficent role first. While the purpose behind the singing of songs is something that God has not really explained, there is an obvious purpose behind it. God works from purpose and plan; He does not just do things as a whim. Upon the full purpose of singing in worship, we can only speculate.

12. The role of the church treasury, and other such matters where we have no direct statements, we believe are left open to the decisions of the congregation. There are several areas in "church" where we do not have any word, pro or con. In such situations where we are not specifically commanded or specifically prohibited, we believe we are free to make our own choices as a congregation. In considering these points, we must be aware of our conservative-liberal presuppositions and how they affect our thinking, and then seek to be as objective as possible, setting aside anything that does not bear up under investigation.