

HOPE IN THE LORD JESUS CHRIST

*Hope in the Lord Jesus Christ*

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The 214th General Assembly (2002)  
of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)  
voted (497-11-5) to affirm  
“Hope in the Lord Jesus Christ,”  
commend it to the church,  
and urge its study throughout the church.

September 27, 2001

Sisters and Brothers in Christ,

May grace and peace be yours in abundance in the knowledge of our God and Savior Jesus Christ. We share with you our joy that almighty God, creator of heaven and earth, also created us; that this same God came to humankind in Jesus Christ to redeem us from sin and create us anew; and that God the Holy Spirit remains with us, leading us to faith and empowering us for new life.

Christians declare their common faith by bearing witness to God's grace in Jesus Christ, expressing their testimony in words and deeds as the time requires. In our time and place, the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) confesses its faith through eleven creeds, confessions, and catechisms in the *Book of Confessions*. The confessions of the church articulate the shared faith of the church:

In these confessional statements the church declares to its members and to the world  
who and what it is,  
what it believes,  
what it resolves to do.

These statements identify the church as a community of people known by its convictions as well as by its actions. They guide the church in its study and interpretation of the Scriptures; they summarize the essence of Christian tradition; they direct the church in maintaining sound doctrines; they equip the church for its work of proclamation [*Book of Order*, G-2.0100].

The comprehensive witness of the *Book of Confessions* is sufficient to lead, instruct, and guide the church. From time to time, however, questions arise in the church that call for careful articulation of a particular aspect of Christian faith, drawing upon the testimony of the confessions in a way that illuminates the unique and authoritative witness of the

Scriptures. Such occasions do not require a new confession, but rather a faithful expression of the consistent teaching of Scripture and the confessions. In this way, we may be helped to reappropriate central affirmations of the faith and to renew our faithful witness in the world.

In recent times, some within the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) have expressed understandings of Jesus Christ that other Presbyterians believe breach the limits of Scripture and the church's confessions. Many Presbyterians have been dissatisfied with responses to the controversy, and some have questioned the clarity of the General Assembly's affirmation of Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord.

The 213th General Assembly (2001) requested the Office of Theology and Worship to help the church better understand the theological richness of the Lordship of Jesus Christ. The Office of Theology and Worship has prepared a concise articulation of the church's historic faith, which also expresses our clear convictions. We invite *all* Presbyterians to join us in reaffirming the faith that has been imparted to us through the testimony of the great cloud of witnesses.

Peace be to the whole community, and love with faith.

#### The Office of Theology and Worship

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# HOPE IN THE LORD JESUS CHRIST

1 We declare to you what was from the beginning,  
2 what we have heard, what we have seen with our  
3 eyes, what we have looked at and touched with our  
4 hands, concerning the word of life—this life was  
5 revealed, and we have seen it and testify to it, and  
6 declare to you the eternal life that was with the  
7 Father and was revealed to us—we declare to you  
8 what we have seen and heard so that you also may  
9 have fellowship with us; and truly our fellowship is  
10 with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ. We  
11 are writing these things so that our joy may be  
12 complete [1 John 1:1–4].

13 “Jesus is Lord!” This foundational declaration is the  
14 earliest Christian confession of faith. The Scriptures  
15 and our confessions expand the basic affirmation,  
16 providing abundant witness to the word of life revealed  
17 in Jesus Christ. “The depth of the riches and wisdom  
18 and knowledge of God” revealed in Christ far exceed  
19 the scope of this brief exposition. We cannot say all  
20 there is to be said, but there is much that we can say,  
21 clearly and confidently.

22 Christian faith is Trinitarian faith. Our understanding  
23 of Jesus Christ is necessarily expressed within our  
24 understanding of “the one triune God, the Holy One of  
25 Israel, whom alone we worship and serve.” From the  
26 Nicene Creed to A Brief Statement of Faith, the church  
27 shapes its confession by the certain knowledge of the  
28 grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the  
29 communion of the Holy Spirit. Throughout the ages,  
30 when praying at the Lord’s Table and the baptismal

31 font, Christians have given thankful praise for God's  
32 work in creation, providence, and covenant history—  
33 followed by thankful recalling of the acts of salvation  
34 in Jesus Christ—and concluding with a call for the  
35 abiding presence of the Holy Spirit. It is the faith  
36 expressed in creed and prayer that we invite all  
37 Presbyterians to speak and live.

38 In Jesus Christ, God was reconciling the world to  
39 himself. Jesus Christ is God with us. He is the  
40 eternal Son of the Father, who became human and  
41 lived among us to fulfill the work of reconciliation.  
42 He is present in the church by the power of the  
43 Holy Spirit to continue and complete his mission.  
44 This work of God, the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit,  
45 is the foundation of all confessional statements  
46 about God, humankind, and the world [The  
47 Confession of 1967, 9.07<sup>1</sup>].

#### WE BELIEVE IN ONE GOD [NICENE CREED 1.1]

48 Our faith is in God who created heaven and earth,  
49 who formed us from dust and breathed us into life,  
50 who made us to live with one another in love. Our  
51 faith in God is far more than generalized belief in an  
52 abstract deity. We trust in God who loved us and  
53 sought us even when we chose sin and death rather  
54 than communion and life. We are loyal to God who  
55 established a covenant with us through Abraham and  
56 Sarah, who revealed the shape of faithful living in the  
57 Law given through Moses, and who called us to  
58 obedience through the cries of the prophets.

59 Be joyful in the LORD, all you lands;  
60 serve the LORD with gladness  
61 and come before God's presence with a song.  
62 Know this: The LORD alone is God;  
63 we belong to the LORD, who made us. [Psalm 100:1–3]



64 God is known to us only through self-disclosure in  
65 words and acts of grace, love, and communion. While  
66 complete knowledge of God remains beyond human  
67 capacity, and human attempts to imagine the divine  
68 nature easily become reflections of our own desires or  
69 fears, God has revealed the truth to us in the One who  
70 is the Truth. God is most fully known to us through  
71 God's free presence with us in Jesus Christ.

72 In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was  
73 with God, and the Word was God. . . . And the Word  
74 became flesh and lived among us, and we have seen  
75 his glory, the glory as of a father's only son, full of  
76 grace and truth. . . . No one has ever seen God. It is  
77 God the only Son, who is close to the Father's heart,  
78 who has made him known [John 1:1, 14, 18].

79 Thus we join with the church throughout the  
80 centuries to affirm that *God was in Christ*. God is not a  
81 mysterious unknown who remains veiled in remote  
82 transcendence. God has come among us in terms we  
83 can understand, in the human one, Jesus of Nazareth.

84 The one sufficient revelation of God is Jesus Christ,  
85 the Word of God incarnate, to whom the Holy Spirit  
86 bears unique and authoritative witness through the  
87 Holy Scriptures, which are received and obeyed as the  
88 word of God written. [The Confession of 1967, 9.27]

## WE BELIEVE IN . . . ONE LORD, JESUS CHRIST [NICENE CREED 1.1–1.2]

89 It pleased God to come to us in Jesus Christ,  
90 Emmanuel, God with us. God did not simply show us a  
91 path to follow, but lived among us as the Way, the  
92 Truth, and the Life. Although we have done nothing to  
93 deserve the free gift of God, in Jesus Christ we receive  
94 new life, know the truth about God and ourselves, and

95 are set upon God's way in the world. Jesus Christ was  
96 and is *the* path, for Jesus Christ was and is:

97 God from God, Light from Light,  
98 true God from true God,  
99 begotten, not made,  
100 one in Being with the Father [Nicene Creed, 1.2]

101 Jesus Christ came to us as one of us, sharing our joy  
102 and sorrow. He proclaimed God's love, healed the sick,  
103 and was a friend of sinners. He continues to reveal  
104 God's gracious love, he is among us now to make us  
105 whole, and he is still the friend of sinners. Jesus Christ  
106 was and is one with us in life; Jesus Christ was and is  
107 one with us in suffering and death. The Lord and  
108 Savior is Christ crucified, in whom God's weakness is  
109 stronger than human strength and God's foolishness is  
110 wiser than human wisdom.

111 He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn  
112 of all creation . . . For in him all the fullness of God  
113 was pleased to dwell, and through him God was  
114 pleased to reconcile to himself all things, whether  
115 on earth or heaven, by making peace through the  
116 blood of his cross [Colossians 1:15, 19–20].

117 The cross of Christ is at the heart of our faith, for it is  
118 through the Lord's death that we receive new life. The  
119 gospel of Christ crucified is a treasure that surpasses  
120 the limits of human language, and so the Bible  
121 displays a wealth of expression that leads us to  
122 thankful knowledge and grateful faith.

123 God's reconciling act in Jesus Christ is a mystery  
124 which the Scriptures describe in various ways. It is  
125 called the sacrifice of a lamb, a shepherd's life  
126 given for his sheep, atonement by a priest; again it  
127 is ransom of a slave, payment of debt, vicarious  
128 satisfaction of a legal penalty, and victory over the

129 powers of evil. These are expressions of a truth  
130 which remains beyond the reach of all theory in the  
131 depths of God's love for humankind. They reveal  
132 the gravity, cost, and sure achievement of God's  
133 reconciling work [The Confession of 1967, 9.09].

134 Jesus Christ is with us in life and death. But death is  
135 not the last word, for God has raised him from the  
136 dead and exalted him above all rule and authority and  
137 power and dominion. The risen Christ is the living Lord  
138 of the cosmos. "In Christ, God was reconciling the  
139 world to himself" [2 Corinthians 5:19]. For the sake of the  
140 world, the Word became flesh, for the sake of the world  
141 Jesus Christ lived among us, was crucified and raised  
142 from the dead. For the sake of the world Christ  
143 ascended to heaven, and for the sake of the world  
144 Christ will come again. All of this is God's good  
145 pleasure set forth in Christ "as a plan for the fullness of  
146 time, to gather up all things in him, things in heaven  
147 and things on earth" [Ephesians 1:10].

148 For we teach and believe that this Jesus Christ our  
149 Lord is the unique and eternal Savior of the  
150 human race, and thus of the whole world, in  
151 whom by faith are saved all who before the law,  
152 under the law, and under the Gospel were saved,  
153 and however many will be saved at the end of the  
154 world [The Second Helvetic Confession, 5.077].

155 Jesus Christ is the only Savior and Lord, and all people  
156 everywhere are called to place their faith, hope, and love  
157 in him. No one is saved by virtue of inherent goodness or  
158 admirable living, for "by grace you have been saved  
159 through faith, and this is not your own doing; it is the  
160 gift of God" [Ephesians 2:8]. No one is saved apart from  
161 God's gracious redemption in Jesus Christ. Yet we do not  
162 presume to limit the sovereign freedom of "God our  
163 Savior, who desires everyone to be saved and to come to

164 the knowledge of the truth” [1 Timothy 2:4]. Thus, we  
165 neither restrict the grace of God to those who profess  
166 explicit faith in Christ nor assume that all people are  
167 saved regardless of faith. Grace, love, and communion  
168 belong to God, and are not ours to determine.

169 Paul, after a beautiful development of his thought,  
170 in Rom. 10:17 at length comes to the conclusion,  
171 “So faith comes from hearing, and hearing from  
172 the Word of God by the preaching of Christ.” At  
173 the same time we recognize that God can  
174 illuminate whom and when he will, even without  
175 the external ministry, for that is in his power [The  
176 Second Helvetic Confession, 5.006, 007].

## WE BELIEVE IN THE HOLY SPIRIT, THE LORD, THE GIVER OF LIFE [NICENE CREED, 1.3]

177 The Holy Spirit unites us to Christ, draws redeemed  
178 people to a shared life of grateful praise, and shapes  
179 our lives in obedience to God’s gracious law. The  
180 Spirit forms diverse people into the one body of  
181 Christ, giving a variety of gifts that enable us to  
182 upbuild the church and serve the world. The Holy  
183 Spirit is God’s abiding presence among us, equipping  
184 us to proclaim the gospel, nurture each other in the  
185 fullness of communion, worship God, know and live  
186 the truth, cultivate justice, and exhibit God’s new  
187 Way in the world.

188 By the indwelling of the Holy Spirit all believers  
189 being vitally united to Christ, who is the Head, are  
190 thus united one to another in the Church, which is  
191 his body. . . . By him the Church will be preserved,  
192 increased, purified, and at last made perfect in the  
193 presence of God [The Westminster Confession of  
194 Faith, 6.054].

195 The power of the Holy Spirit leads the whole  
196 community of faith into holy and joyful living,  
197 enabling each of us to conform our lives more fully to  
198 Christ. Christians are called to live by the Spirit,  
199 forsaking works of the flesh and receiving the fruit of  
200 the Spirit.

201 I appeal to you therefore, brothers and sisters, by  
202 the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a  
203 living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which  
204 is your spiritual worship. Do not be conformed to  
205 the world, but be transformed by the renewing of  
206 your minds, so that you may discern what is the  
207 will of God—what is good and acceptable and  
208 perfect [Romans 12:1–2].

209 Because the church is founded and enlivened by the  
210 presence of Jesus Christ through the Holy Spirit, we can  
211 be confident that it is Christ who works through the  
212 imperfect and sinful fellowship of the church. Even in  
213 our brokenness we testify that we belong solely to Jesus  
214 Christ. In the power of the Holy Spirit, we proclaim  
215 Christ's love, in word and deed, to all the world.

216 The Christian Church is the congregation of the  
217 brethren in which Jesus Christ acts presently as the  
218 Lord in Word and Sacrament through the Holy  
219 Spirit. As the Church of pardoned sinners, it has to  
220 testify in the midst of a sinful world, with its faith  
221 as with its obedience, with its message as with its  
222 order, that it is solely his property, and that it lives  
223 and wants to live solely from his comfort and from  
224 his direction in the expectation of his appearance  
225 [The Theological Declaration of Barmen, 8.17].

## ONE LORD, ONE FAITH

226 Each time we gather at the baptismal font, we rejoice  
227 that God welcomes another person into fellowship with

228 Christ. In one baptism, through the power of the Holy  
229 Spirit, we are united to Jesus Christ in his death and  
230 resurrection. In one baptism we are also united to our  
231 brothers and sisters in faith around the world. The  
232 waters of baptism do not belong to the Presbyterian  
233 church or to any particular church. They belong to God  
234 alone, and as we pass through these waters we are  
235 incorporated into the one body of Christ. It is our new  
236 life in Christ that we Presbyterians are called to  
237 celebrate, deepen, and share with the world. Let us join  
238 together, brothers and sisters, to proclaim the gospel of  
239 God's saving love in Jesus Christ.

240 Beloved, build yourselves up on your most holy  
241 faith; pray in the Holy Spirit; keep yourselves in the  
242 love of God; look forward to the mercy of our Lord  
243 Jesus Christ that leads to eternal life [Jude 20–21].

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#### NOTE

1. Unless otherwise noted, all citations are from the *Book of Confessions*, Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.).

# STUDY GUIDE FOR HOPE IN THE LORD JESUS CHRIST

## INTRODUCTION

### **A few details on “Hope in the Lord Jesus Christ”**

*What is this paper about?* What the church teaches about the nature of Jesus Christ and our salvation.

*What does the paper say?* Humans are utterly dependent on the triune God for their salvation.

*How is Jesus Christ unique?* God has come among us in terms we can understand only in the human one, Jesus of Nazareth.

*Are there any other saviors?* No. Jesus Christ is the Savior.

*Is God free to save whomever God wills, regardless of belief or action?* Of course!

This paper offers no new teaching, only old teaching—very old. The paper does not cover *all* of Christian doctrine, but focuses on salvation and the role of Jesus Christ in our salvation. The paper is suitable for individual or group adult or young adult study. It was not designed for children or youth. One might use this in adult classes, session study, church officer training, new member classes, special, seasonal study, such as a Lenten study. The topic goes to the core of Christian faith: the meaning of salvation and the place of Jesus.

The study guide offers suggestions for four sessions. One can, of course, adjust the study to cover fewer or more sessions. The first session introduces the paper and focuses on the first and last sections, the meaning of salvation and what results from it (the new life in Christ). The other three sessions focus on the Christian understanding of God. The sections of

the paper follow the Trinitarian structure of the earliest creeds: belief in one God; belief in one Lord, Jesus Christ; belief in the Holy Spirit, the Lord and giver of life. This is the Christian understanding of God. The paper thus asserts that whenever Christians think or speak about God, they do so in terms of God's triune self-disclosure.

Materials needed for each participant: a copy of the paper, a Bible, the *Book of Confessions*. The paper is useful not only as a Bible study but also as an introduction to the richness of the *Book of Confessions*.

## SESSION ONE

### SALVATION AND ITS RESULT

1. A person's relationship with Jesus Christ is usually very complex. One *feels* certain ways about Jesus and one *thinks* certain things about him. The paper deals primarily with what the church *thinks* about Jesus Christ. If you want to touch on how people feel about Jesus, try the following exercise.
  - Ask people to name their favorite Jesus hymn or song. Expect everything from "I Come to the Garden Alone," and "What a Friend We Have in Jesus," to "Alas! And Did My Savior Bleed" or "Lord I Lift Your Name on High." Most people's theology is greatly influenced by the songs they sing. Write the song titles on newsprint. Discuss briefly what aspects of Jesus emerge from these favorites. How do these songs communicate salvation in Christ? If you have enough time, group the songs into categories. Note whether some aspects of Jesus' nature are left out.
2. Invite the group to read the first section of the paper, "Hope in the Lord Jesus Christ," (lines 1–47). If time, space, and interest permit, divide the group into three.
  - Have group 1 study lines 1–12.) Why did this early community think that they had touched the word of



life? Why was their joy complete? In what way does this describe or not describe their own congregational life?

- Have group 2 study lines 13–37. What is the significance of calling Jesus “Lord”? How does the way we pray influence what we believe and vice versa? Why is Christian faith “Trinitarian”?
  - Have group 3 study lines 38–47. What is salvation, according to this statement? What does it mean to say that Jesus Christ is God with us? What does it mean to say the Holy Spirit is God with us?
3. After time for discussion in the three groups, let people share their discoveries and questions with the total group.
  4. Have the group read the last section of the paper, “One Lord, One Faith” (lines 226–243)
    - What comes to us as a result of salvation?

## SESSION TWO

### WE BELIEVE IN ONE GOD

1. Invite the group to discuss the following statements: “I believe in gravity” (i.e., that it exists, even though I can’t see it or understand how it works); “I have a friend whom I trust, whose word I can count on”; and, “I am a loyal member of my church.” The goal here is to explore the relationship between belief in facts, trust in a person’s reliability and care, and loyalty to a cause bigger than we are. Belief, trust, and loyalty are all central to faith in God.
  - Read lines 48–63. Relate the categories of “belief,” “trust,” and loyalty to the Judeo–Christian conviction that humans can have a relationship with God.

- Consider the passage from Psalm 100 (lines 59–63) Reflect on the difference it makes in believing in one God or many gods. Reflect on the outcome of believing in God but not being able to trust God. Reflect on the implications of believing in God, but not being loyal to God. Why did the Hebrews come to trust God? Why do we trust in God? What is one's condition if he or she cannot trust God?
2. Read lines 64–78. Consider the ways one comes to know another person. What do we mean when we say, “I work with her every day, but I can’t say that I know her.” What are some of the ways we conceal ourselves from another? How do we reveal our true selves to another? Even if we might infer God’s existence from the order and design of the universe, why does this tell us little about God’s nature and character? How can we find out about that? What is the most important thing about God we need to know, especially in the light of human sin? What does the passage from John 1 (lines 72–78) tell us about the trustworthiness of God’s self-revelation in Christ?
  3. Read lines 79–83. What does it mean to say “God has come among us in terms we can understand, in the human one, Jesus of Nazareth”?
  4. Read lines 84–88. Consider the claim made by the church in each phrase:
    - a. Jesus Christ is the “sufficient” revelation of God.
    - b. Jesus Christ is the Word of God incarnate. The Holy Spirit bears unique and authoritative witness to this.
    - c. The Holy Scriptures are the witness to the claim that Jesus Christ is the incarnate Word.
  5. What might it mean to put one’s complete trust in this person, Jesus Christ?

SESSION THREE  
WE BELIEVE IN ONE LORD,  
JESUS CHRIST

1. Take up again the question of the results of salvation. Ask: What is salvation? What happens to us when we are “saved”? (Often people will mention things like eternal life and heaven.) Note the suggestions on newsprint.
  - Have the group read lines 89–100. Discuss the three things the church teaches we receive in Jesus Christ. Describe the new life. What is the truth about God and ourselves? What is the character of God’s way in the world? Why is there no mention of heaven here?
  - Lines 97–100 from the Nicene Creed state most eloquently what the church teaches about the nature of Jesus Christ. Discuss each of these five phrases inviting people to state what the phrase says to them.
2. The Christian church makes two claims about Jesus Christ: (1) he was fully human, as we are, except without sin; (2) He was fully God, “begotten, not made” (that is, he came from God and was neither a created creature nor some third thing between human and deity.)
  - Read lines 101–110. Consider the implications of Jesus’ full humanity. Why is it important to teach that he was neither (1) a mere human magician; nor (2) a deity who pretended to be human when he hungered, thirst, and suffered?
  - Read lines 111–116. Why does the church teach that our salvation requires that Jesus be fully human and fully divine? These lines expound a great mystery. Discuss what the words “For in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell” might mean and what they do not mean.

3. One of the reasons some of the Greeks and others had difficulty accepting the church's claim that God was in Christ in a special way was the crucifixion. The idea of "God on the cross" was too much for them. Read lines 117–129.
- What are the implications of the Christian image of the suffering God for our understanding of God's character and nature? Discuss each of the images in lines 123–133 (lamb to victory over evil). Consider how they deepen our appreciation of the mystery of the suffering God.
  - Consider the resurrection not from the point of view of a miracle but as a statement about who Jesus Christ is and what God intends for us. What does the verse from Ephesians (lines 145–147), suggest to you about God's long-range intent for all of humanity?
4. Put the following on the newsprint: "Jesus is: a good and admirable person; the teacher who taught us God's way; the finest example of a religious, God-filled person; the savior who reconciled humanity to God." Discuss each of these in the following terms: Suppose you believed only this about Jesus. Would you still be a Christian?
- Read lines 148–168. What does it mean to say that there are no other saviors? Invite the class to name any saviors they can think of, either secular or religious. Discuss the question of whether "inherent goodness or admirable living" can "save" us, "get us into heaven," reconcile us to God. If no one can save himself or herself, and if "In Christ, God was reconciling the WORLD to himself" (2 Corinthians 5:19, emphasis added), what does that say about God's ultimate intentions for ALL of humanity? (See Acts 3:19–21 and 1 Corinthians 15:28). Does this mean God WILL save everyone, eventually? COULD save everyone but might not? Will NOT save everyone? Consider lines 160–168 with regard to God's freedom and sovereign will.

If we understand Jesus Christ as the only savior of the world, how should we relate to people of other faiths?

## SESSION 4

### WE BELIEVE IN THE HOLY SPIRIT, THE LORD, THE GIVER OF LIFE

1. Begin by exploring current understandings of the Holy Spirit in your group. Ask questions like the following, and list replies on the newsprint or chalkboard: When you think of the Holy Spirit, what comes to mind? Describe any experience you have had of the Holy Spirit.
2. Read lines 177–194. These lines elucidate the source of our salvation.
  - Some say that the Presbyterian answer to the question “When were you saved?” is “About two thousand years ago.” Discuss the implication of this response (rather than a response that gives a contemporary date and time).
  - Consider all the things the Holy Spirit does, noting the strong verbs in lines 177–187 (*unites, draws, shapes, forms, gives, enables*). Reflect on how this works itself out in your own experience.
  - To say that “the Holy Spirit unites us to Christ” is to say that this is something we cannot do ourselves. Reflect on the implications of this view. (See lines 228–231) If it is God who is both the source (Holy Spirit) and the means (Jesus Christ) of our salvation, what is our part? (Hint: confession, repentance, acceptance, and gratitude).
  - Discuss the ways in which we tend to exhibit or obscure God’s presence among us as described in lines 182–187.

3. Read lines 201–208. Consider this not in terms of rules but in terms of how we live when we are exhibiting the presence of God (the Holy Spirit) in our lives.
- How do we present our bodies as a “living sacrifice”?
  - We are called to not conform to the world. As Presbyterians we have a tradition of being engaged in popular culture, science, art, politics, etc. How do we avoid in a faithful way being conformed to the world?
  - How do we renew our minds so that we can discern the will of God? What is the place of the Bible in this discernment?
  - How do we show that the same Spirit that was active in the biblical writers is active among and in us?
4. Read lines 209–225. One of the most beloved hymns is “I Come to the Garden Alone.” How do we relate that very personal understanding of a relationship with Jesus Christ with the truth that we come to God in the midst of the Christian community? The truth is, when we get to the garden, we find not only Jesus, but the entire church. When the Holy Spirit unites us to Christ, it is not just Jesus we get but a large, boisterous, sometimes annoying throng: the church, the community of the redeemed, the body of Christ.
- Discuss the implications of this aspect of our salvation.
  - What does it mean to say “Sometimes, in the church, the only thing we have in common is Jesus Christ”?
5. Consider the question of the “Holy Spirit, the Lord, the Giver of Life” active beyond the church in the world. In what ways is the Spirit, that is God, present in non-Christian religions, so-called secular activities, artistic

creations, literature, science, economics, politics? What responsibility do Christians have in discerning God's will in areas other than strictly church or religious concerns?

6. As time permits, invite people to comment on how their view of salvation and the role of Jesus Christ (through the Holy Spirit) has deepened.

*First Presbyterian Church of Glasgow, Kentucky used "Hope in the Lord Jesus Christ" in worship on Christ the King Sunday. David Maude, the pastor, shaped this service around "Hope."*

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## CHRIST THE KING SUNDAY

November 25, 2001

11:00 AM

### THE PRELUDE

### THE CALL TO WORSHIP IN THE LORD JESUS CHRIST

**Leader** In Jesus Christ, God was reconciling the world to himself. Jesus Christ is God with us. He is the eternal Son of the Father, who became human and lived among us to fulfill the work of reconciliation. He is present in the church by the power of the Holy Spirit to continue and complete His mission. This work of God, the Father, Son and Holy Spirit is the foundation of all confessional statements about God, humankind, and the world. (The Confession of 1967. 9.07\*)

**Response** "Jesus is Lord!" This foundational declaration is the earliest Christian confession of faith. The Scriptures and our confessions expand the basic affirmation, providing abundant witness to the world of life revealed in Jesus Christ.

\*THE HYMN "Come, Ye Thankful People, Come" No. 551

### \*THE PRAYER OF CONFESSION (Unison)

O, Gracious God, set us free from a past that we cannot change; open to us a future in which we can be changed; and grant us grace to grow more and more in Your likeness and image; through Jesus Christ, the light of the world.

### \*ASSURANCE AND PARDON

### \*THE GLORIA PATRI

### WELCOME AND CONCERNS OF THE CHURCH

Welcome all worshipers to the Lord's House on this Lord's Day. Members and visitors are requested to sign the fellowship registers.



# THE PASTORAL PRAYER AND THE LORD'S PRAYER

## THE CHILDREN'S MESSAGE

### \*AFFIRMATION (Unison)

The cross of Christ is at the heart of our faith, for it is through the Lord's death that we receive new life. The gospel of Christ crucified is a treasure that surpasses the limits of human language, and so the Bible displays a wealth of expression that leads us to thankful knowledge and grateful faith.

### \*THE HYMN

"Rejoice, Ye Pure in Heart!"

No. 145

### THE LESSONS

Isaiah 53: 1-6

Matthew 16: 13-18

Colossians 1: 15,19-20

### THE SERMON

"Christ the King"

### \*THE CREED: WE BELIEVE IN ONE LORD, JESUS CHRIST

**Leader** It pleased God to come to us in Jesus Christ, Emmanuel, God with us. God did not simply show us a path to follow, but lived among us as the Way, the Truth, and the Life. Although we have done nothing to deserve the free gift of God, in Jesus Christ we receive new life, know the truth about God and ourselves, and are set upon God's way in the world. Jesus Christ was and is the path, for Jesus Christ was and is:

**Response** God from God, Light from Light, true God from true God, begotten, not made, of one Being with the Father (Nicene Creed, 1.2\*)

**Leader** Jesus Christ is with us in life and death. But death is not the last word, for God has raised him from the dead and exalted him above all rule and authority and power and dominion. The risen Christ is the living Lord of the cosmos. In Jesus Christ, "God was reconciling the world to himself" (2 Cor. 5-19). For the sake of the world, the Word became flesh, for the sake of the world Jesus Christ lived among us, was crucified and raised from the dead. For the sake of the world Christ ascended to heaven, and for the sake of the world Christ will come again. All of

this is God's good pleasure set forth in Christ " as a plan for the fullness of time, to gather up all things in him, things in heaven and things on earth" (Eph. 1:10).

**Response** So we teach and believe that this Jesus Christ our Lord is the unique and eternal Savior of the human race, and thus of the whole world, in whom by faith are saved all who before the law, under the law, and under the Gospel were saved, and however many will be saved at the end of the world (The Second Helvetic Confession, 5.006,007\*).

**Leader** Jesus Christ is the only Savior and Lord, and all people everywhere are called to place their faith, hope, and love in Him. No one is saved by virtue of inherent goodness or admirable living, for "by grace you have been saved through faith, and this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God" (Eph.2:8). No one is saved apart from God's gracious redemption in Jesus Christ. Yet we do not presume to limit the sovereign freedom of "God our Savior, who desires everyone to be saved and come to the knowledge of the truth" (1 Tim.2:4). Thus, we neither restrict the grace of God to those who profess explicit faith in Christ nor assume that all people are saved regardless of faith. Grace, love, and communion belong to God, and are not ours to determine.

**Response** Paul, after a beautiful development of this thought, in Rom. 10:17 at length comes to the conclusion, "So faith comes from hearing, and hearing from the Word of God by the preaching of Christ." At the same time we recognize that God can illuminate whom and when He will, even without the external ministry, for that is in His power (The Second Helvetic Confession, 5.006,007\*).

THE OFFERTORY

\*THE DOXOLOGY

\*THE PRAYER OF DEDICATION

\*AFFIRMATION (Unison)

Jesus Christ came to us as one of us, sharing our joy and sorrow. He proclaimed God's love, healed the sick, and was a friend of sinners.

He continues to reveal God's gracious love, He is among us now to make us whole and He is still the friend of sinners. Jesus Christ was and is one with us in life; Jesus Christ was and is one with us in suffering and death. The Lord and Savior is Christ crucified, in whom God's weakness is stronger than human strength and God's foolishness is wiser than human wisdom.

\*THE HYMN      "Lift Up Your Heads, Ye Mighty Gates"      No. 8

\*THE BENEDICTION

\*THE CHORAL BENEDICTION

\*THE POSTLUDE

\*Congregation Standing

