

We believe:

1. God has communicated to humanity throughout history; the written record is his words *intended* for all people at all times and in every place. This book, known as the Bible, is God's story of who he is, what the world is, who we are, and the ultimate purposes of history. It is the true and reliable story we trust with our lives.

This is that story. . .

2. In the beginning God created the cosmos and called it good. God placed humans in his good creation as his Image Bearers, to reflect his character to all the cosmos. Humans were in right relationship with God as their king, with their own hearts, with one another, and with all creation. God called all of this very good.

Man and woman however, chose to rebel against God and make themselves the center of their lives. This caused a spiritual fracture between them and God, shame invading their hearts, blame contaminating relationships between one another, and creation groaning. The Scriptures call this rebellion against God 'sin'. It is in every one of us and distorts our relationships with our own hearts, with one another, and with all creation.

God, out of his love for his Image Bearers and his creation, did not leave them in this state but commenced his rescue mission and began revealing his Rescue Hero.

3. After many years God called one man, Abraham, and promised that through his descendants the effects of sin would be undone and blessing would take the place of suffering. Through Abraham and Sarah, the people of Israel was born, out of which his Rescue Hero called the Messiah would come.

4. Israel became entrapped and oppressed as slaves in Egypt. God heard the cry of the oppressed Israelites and acted to rescue them. This rescue, called the Exodus, defined the people as holistically rescued by God. Through Moses God brought the people out of slavery. God formed a relationship with them, dwelt among them, taught them to follow his Way, and brought them into a homeland. God did this so that they could be his Rescue Mission People for the world.

5. Over the next millennia, God gave kings to lead and prophets to speak his voice. Israel, while at times faithful to God's Way and mission, ultimately failed. Ten of the tribes were taken into exile by Assyria, two of the tribes later by Babylon. While some of these exiles eventually

returned to their homeland, by the time of the first century there was an acute sense that a spiritual exile continued and the task of rescue was incomplete. Yet, in spite of the failure, those same prophets spoke of a day when God would act to rescue his people and the world through the long awaited Messiah.

6. At just the right time a virgin named Mary from Israel gave birth to Jesus, both the promised Messiah and divine Son of God. Through his life, teachings, conduct and miracles, Jesus modeled dependence on the Holy Spirit and a life wholly reflecting the character of God.

7. Through his God-reflecting life, suffering, and death Jesus willingly took on both the exile of Israel and the exile of all humanity. Through his resurrection, Jesus defeated all the powers that oppose humanity: sin, death, and Satan, confirming his promised victory. For any who surrender from their rebellion against God and trust in Jesus as their rescuer and king, Jesus is the way to a restored relationship with the Creator of all things, with our own hearts, each other, and all creation.

8. After his resurrection, Jesus joined God the Father as the King of the Cosmos. At which time, they gave the Holy Spirit, God's presence, to dwell within any who trust in Jesus. God's Rescue Mission People, which began in Abraham, now continues as the global multi-ethnic, Spirit-empowered community of all Jesus followers called the Church. This is where we find our place in God's story. Together we center our lives on the love of God, grow to reflect God's character, share life, and care for the world by announcing his good news and healing broken places. As the church, we keep our identity centered on God through worship and teaching, baptism and communion.

9. At the end, Jesus will return to make all things well. There will be the final promised resurrection, the judgment of evil, the end of the human rebellion, and the renewed heavens and earth. All those whom Jesus calls his own will spend eternity with him in this restored future. God will heal the relationship between himself and humanity, as well as restore human relationships with each other and with all creation. We actively anticipate this reality with our lives today. Yet, even in this, the end of this story is not the end of the story. For then the hope that was from the beginning will be fully realized: God the Father, the Son, and the Spirit will dwell with, celebrate, explore and go on creating with this healed people, world without end.

Amen