

PROLOGUE

PRO 1

RELIGION: CHRISTIAN

We, the Faith Community of Ray Of Hope Church, believe Christianity is the revelation of God in Christ Jesus, and is the religion of God in Christ set forth in the Scriptures. Christ Jesus is foretold in the Hebrew Testament (formerly known as the "Old Testament") and, presented in the Christian Testament (formerly known as the "New Testament"). Christ Jesus is proclaimed by the Christian Church in every age and every land. The Proclamation of the Gospel of Christ Jesus is our sole purpose, making us exclusively Christian.

PRO 2

A CHRISTIAN CHURCH, AN ASSEMBLY OF CHRISTIAN BELIEVERS

Ray Of Hope Church is built on the one and only foundation a Christian Church (which is the local assembly of believers in Jesus) can be built upon as clearly stated in the Holy Scriptures.

1 Cor 3:11 For no one can lay any foundation other than the one that has been laid; that foundation is Jesus Christ.

We are not claiming to create a new Church, a new religion or a new denomination. The foundation of the Christian Church, the Home of God, and Eternal Community of God's People, is laid by God, and we are taking our place as spiritual stones, being built into the Church Triumphant.

1 Pet 2:5 like living stones, let yourselves be built into a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.

1 Pet 2:6 For it stands in scripture: "See, I am laying in Zion a stone, a cornerstone chosen and precious; and whoever believes in him will not be put to shame."

1 Pet 2:7 To you then who believe, he is precious; but for those who do not believe, "The stone that the builders rejected has become the very head of the corner,"

PRO 3

WE MEET IN THE NAME OF JESUS: NO DENOMINATIONAL AFFILIATION

Ray Of Hope Church is not an organization, but it is a living organism, the Body Of Christ, or it does not exist. Ray Of Hope Church is Christ-centered in all of its teachings, and therefore does not ascribe to the dogmas, teachings, or practices of any singular contemporary denomination, or para-church organization of the Christian Church. Rather, we maintain an autonomous freedom to draw from the two millennia of immense riches known in all denominations of Christianity. The Holy Spirit has bestowed unique charisms to individuals and groups of reformers throughout the story of the Church. Experience has shown that often entire denominations have developed around a new gift from the Holy Spirit that was intended for the entire Body Of Christ, the Church Universal. Often, when these new charisms became locked into a denominational



34 system, they were never shared or made available to the rest of the Church. Ray Of Hope Church actively
35 studies the entire story of the Church seeking to draw out these gifts and bring them together into our
36 experience of Christianity. Our goal is to “hold that faith which has been believed everywhere, always, and
37 by all.”¹ Ray Of Hope is an “independent” local Church. This does not mean we stand alone, as though in
38 pride or arrogance, rather we seek to share an interdependence with other assemblies and fellowships of
39 believers who are also centered on Christ Jesus, and who endeavor equally as hard as we do to bring the
40 Gospel to all people.

PRO 4

**WE PARTICIPATE IN THE ONE, HOLY, APOSTOLIC,
UNIVERSAL/CATHOLIC, BIBLE-BASED, CHRISTIAN CHURCH**

41
42 Our Doctrine, practice, and teaching is firmly grounded in the one and only true Church, the universal
43 Body Of Christ, that Jesus personally established for this age. Our teaching goal is to unapologetically set
44 forth in an undisguised way the apostolic testimony to Christ in its classic consensual form. The
45 experience, and recorded story of the church has suggested that much of what has endured as “sound
46 teaching,” was revealed, understood, and set down in writing by the fifth century. This period from 33-
47 400 AD is known as the “early Church.” Therefore, we look to the historical early Church documents for
48 guidance on how to be a simple, Christ-centered Assembly of Believers, In His Name. We agree with
49 Thomas C. Oden when he says: “the further one ‘progresses’ from ancient apostolic testimony to God’s word
50 the more hopeless becomes the human condition.” (Handbook of Evang..., pg. 404)

PRO 5

BIBLICAL CHURCH

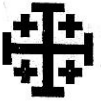
51
52 We revere, the Holy Scriptures as the incomparable textual center of orthodoxy. (Handbook, page 405)
53 The Doctrines, practices, and teachings of Ray Of Hope Church are built first, upon the Holy Scriptures,
54 and are thereafter aligned with the historic Creeds of the Christian Faith; explicitly the Apostle’s Creed,
55 and the Nicene Creed, and then upon other teachings from the “early Church.”⁴ Therefore, our Doctrine,
56 Teaching, Polity, and Practice is Biblical, Apostolic, and historically orthodox.

PRO 6

THEOLOGICAL METHOD OF RAY OF HOPE CHURCH

57 The theological method of inquiry at Ray Of Hope Church is systematic theology. The systematic theological
58 method seeks to bring together in connected order and sequential arrangement the organic whole of
59 Christian teaching, looking for the internal cohesion of the entire church’s witness, examining facts from
60 any and every source concerning God and God’s works as celebrated and shared in all times and places by the
61 faithful community. Using the systematic biblical method of theology, we seek the truths that can be known
62 by the Believer.

63



64 Some will recognize this method of theological study as the Vincentian Method, which is the defining of
65 theology by searching for ancient ecumenical consensus. This method was first clearly formulated as a
66 method by Vincent of Lerins in the fifth century. His famous statement has become a guidepost in this
67 method: "*quod semper, quod ubique, quod ab omnibus creditum sum*" ("what has been believed always,
68 everywhere, and by all").

PRO 7 CHRIST JESUS IS SUPREME HEAD OF RAY OF HOPE CHURCH

69 We embrace our calling and commitment to witness to Christ's resurrected and living presence as Supreme
70 Head of the Church, and the Holy Spirit as the power of the Church. Confessing the truth of Christ as Head
71 of the Church, we seek and endorse the peace and unity of the Church He desires.

PRO 8 WE ENDORSE CHRIST'S VISION OF ONE BODY

72 Our witness, therefore, engenders an unceasing love for the unity of the Christian community and seeks to
73 draw Christ's Community together in a single, cohesive hymn of faith, a single intelligible baptism, a
74 single Table of the Lord, that bread that is offered in a single loaf, celebrated and shared by all who confess
75 faith in Christ Jesus.

**PRO 9 AT ONCE PROTESTANT, EVANGELICAL, CATHOLIC, PENTECOSTAL,
CHARISMATIC, TRADITIONAL, CONTEMPORARY**


76 We believe whatever strand of the Christian spectrum (liberal or conservative, Catholic or Protestant,
77 pious or rational, East or West) a person may be coming to us from, they will recognize the best of their
78 own recent traditions as already at home in Ray Of Hope's presentation of classical Christianity.

PRO 10 RAY OF HOPE IS CALLED TO A SOCIAL MINISTRY

79 Hopefully, we will enjoy a trustable faith, with challenging social ministry implications that can be lived
80 in the contemporary world and enjoyed in active and contemplative ministry.

PRO 11 OUR ULTIMATE MISSION STATEMENT

81 The goal of our ministry is ultimately and primarily known in the great commission of Matthew 28:18-
82 20. The goal of our teaching ministry is to equip the believer with the necessary tools and familiarity with
83 Scripture to help them know and love God and one another with a zeal for the work of the Holy Spirit. For
84 on these two Commandments, of loving God and Neighbor, our Community, or Fellowship, our shared Life in
85 Christ is summarized as Jesus taught in Matthew 22:36-40.

 **ARTICLE 1 INSPIRATION OF HOLY SCRIPTURE**

86 We believe that the original autographs (the manuscripts that were signed by the original authors) 2 of
87 the Holy Scripture, both the Hebrew Testament and the Christian Testament, are inerrantly inspired of
88 God, that is "in spiro" or breathed into by God. Therefore the Bible participates in the supernatural and

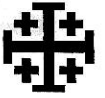


89 perfect qualities of God. Consequently, the Bible contains God's Truth without error and thence provides
90 God's people with an infallible authority in all matters of Faith and Doctrine. 2, 2a
91 2 Timothy 3:16-17; Psalm 119:89, 105; 2Peter 1:19-21; Hebrews 4:12; John 20:30-31; Acts
92 17:11; Isaiah 51:15-16; Jeremiah 1:9
93 Of Hope Church does not claim that Biblical inspiration and infallible authority necessarily always applies
94 in every matter of dogma, local teaching, or practice. This will be explained in greater detail below.
95
96 Ray Of Hope publicly acknowledges the fact that the Universal Church has none of the original writings
97 (autographs) of Holy Scriptures. Our English translations are therefore dependent on translators, and
98 translation traditions that have sometimes been influenced by denominational and political agendas, even
99 sometimes dictated by those who financially supported the work or "authorized" it. Admitting various
100 levels of textual corruption due to translations does exist, our position on the "Inspiration Of Holy
101 Scriptures" makes no claim to cover the preservation of the accuracy of the translated biblical
102 transcripts. Inerrancy is claimed for the original manuscripts only as they came from the hands of their
103 authors. At the center of our position on Inerrancy and Inspiration is the conviction that God did not, could
104 not, and would not, convey the body of Truth that the Church is dependent upon, through an error-filled
105 document. Therefore, we assert that copyist's errors do not invalidate the Inspired Inerrancy of the Bible.
106 Ray Of Hope Church endorses and supports the continuing efforts of scholars who labor to purify our
107 English translations, making them more accurate to the most ancient extant Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek
108 texts of Holy Scriptures. We do acknowledge the unfortunate reality that some English translations in fact
109 do perpetuate errors in the translation, even sometimes intentionally, when compared to extant Hebrew,
110 Aramaic and Greek manuscripts. Ray Of Hope Church is committed to exposing all known and proved errors
111 in English translations of Scriptures, and we do not ascribe any authority to mistranslated texts for
112 guidance in faith, doctrine, teaching, or practice, even when mistranslations are held in "affection" and/or
113 "Sacred Tradition" even by the majority of profession Christendom. We believe God's Word is Truth, and
114 that the Truth alone will set all Christians free. John 8:32, John 14:16, John 16:13, John 17:17-19.
115

1.1


THE WORD OF GOD IS TO BE STUDIED AND KNOWN BY THE PEOPLE

116 We are told to study the Word Of God by the biblical text itself. In the last 100 years, 2Tim 2:15 has been
117 used as a banner verse for Scripture study. The King James Version (KJV) translated the Greek word
118 "spoudazo" (English phoneticization) as "study." Recent translations, such as the NRSV have moved away
119 from the optional selection of "study," in favor of other options. This may be an unfortunate reaction to
120 some over emphasis on Bible Study by some. However, to "study" or "be diligent" or "do your best" in
121 the regard to the Word Of God is all equally clear. Therefore, Ray Of Hope takes seriously the task of
122 teaching the Scriptures. 2Timothy 2:15; Colossians 3:16; Psalm 1:8; 19:7-11; 119.; Joshua 1:8;
123 2Timothy 3:16-17; Nehemiah 8:8;




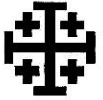
124
 125 NRSV 2 Tim 2:15 Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved by him, a worker who has no
 126 need to be ashamed, rightly explaining the word of truth.
 127 KJV: 2 Tim 2:15 Study to show thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed,
 128 rightly dividing the word of truth.
 129
 130 4704. spoudazo, spoo-dad'-zo; from G4710; to use speed, i.e. to make effort, be prompt or earnest:--do
 131 (give) diligence, be diligent (forward), endeavor, labor, study.
 132
 133 "Blessed are those who hear the Word Of God, and live it out!" Luke 11:28; Romans 2:13; Jams 1:22-25.
 134
 135 Further, we reject the false teaching that the Bible is "too difficult" for the common person to understand,
 136 and should only be left to the clergy to read. The Scripture makes it perfectly clear that God did not write
 137 the Word to keep it from the understanding of the People Of God. We ask what kind of God would make a
 138 people dependent on God's own Word for life ("We do not live on bread alone, but by every word that
 139 proceeds from the mouth of God..") and then give that word in a written style that the people could not
 140 understand? This would not be done by a loving God! Deuteronomy 29:29; 30: 11-14; Joshua 1:8
 141 We depend on the teaching ministry of the Holy Spirit to guide us in our study of the Word Of God, as
 42 promised in 1John 2:27, and John 16:13.

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 ARTICLE 2	A WORKING DEFINITION OF DOCTRINE AND DOGMA
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144 Ray Of Hope Church defines a Doctrine as an unchangeable truth that is essential to the Christian Faith.
 145 Dogmas, on the contrary, are defined as those ideas and developed principles that carry authority in the
 146 Faith Community because they are based upon an opinion or idea that is put forth by whomever is given the
 147 task to make such decisions and pronouncements. Teachings and practices come under the category of
 148 dogmatics. We define a teaching as a local, global, or even historic dogmatic idea or custom that may be
 149 based on Scripture, or may be based on an historical development in theology, moral ethics, church polity,
 150 etc. We define practices as the dogmatic and agreed upon applications, lived expression(s) of believed
 151 doctrine, and/or adapted policies and teachings of the Faith Community, such as areas of ministry or
 152 worship customs. Dogma: that is, teachings and practices may change, and do change, but they are never
 153 allowed to be in conflict with the inspired Doctrines of the Christian Faith.
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 ARTICLE 3	DOCTRINE BASED IN SCRIPTURE
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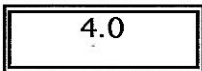
155 We hold as a conviction that all Doctrines taught in the Faith Community of Ray Of Hope Church must
156 conform to the Holy Scriptures.

157 1 Timothy 4:13-16; 2 Timothy 2:15, 3:15, 4:2-5; Titus 2:1; 2 John 7 - 11; Jude 3-4.



We believe in One God Almighty

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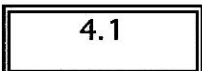


THE PERSON OF GOD

159 God, who alone was revealed by Jesus as the "Holy Father," whom we claim as our Eternal Parent
160 possessing all the attributes of motherhood and fatherhood combined.

161 John 17:11, 6:27; James 1:17; John 5:21; 2Corinthians 13:14;

162



THE TRINITY OF GOD

163 We believe in the tri-unity of God known as the Trinity. The One Triune God is one in being and eternally
164 existent in three persons, distinct and equal in all their attributes with three distinct ministries:

165 Matthew 28:19; John 10:30, 38; Matthew 3:16; 2Corinthians 13:14; Ephesians 2:14; 4:4-6; 5:18-20;
166 1Peter 1:2; Jude 20-21; John 14:16-17, 26; 15:26; 16:7-15

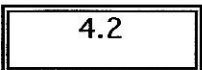
167 We see a pattern of their ministry as being "from" the Father (1 Corinthians 8:6), "through" the Son
168 (John 3:17), "by" the Holy Spirit (Ephesians 3:5), and "to" the Father (Ephesians 2:18).

169

170 The Trinity minister together. John 5:17, 19; 10:28-30

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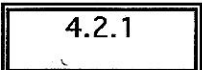
172 In the New Testament the unity of the three persons as One God is firmly taught. Mark 12:29-30; Romans
173 3:30



maker of heaven and earth, of all that is, seen and unseen

174 We believe that the Trinity of God alone is Creator.

175 Genesis 1:1; John 1:1-3; Acts 17:24-28; Colossians 1:16-17; Hebrews 1:2, 11:3; Revelation 4:11.



WOMEN AND MEN FORMED IN GOD'S IMAGE

176 We believe women and men are equally formed in the image of God, our Creator. (Genesis 1:26 - 27, 2:7)

177 This is especially expressed in the Christian Testament:

178 Gal 3:28 There is no longer Jew or Greek, there is no longer slave or free, there is no longer male and
179 female; for all of you are one in Christ Jesus.

180 Women and men are promised equal power gifts of the Holy Spirit in the Church Age:

181 Acts 2:4 All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other languages, as the Spirit
182 gave them ability.