

THE NEW CHURCH

THE NEW CHURCH AND THE OLDEST CHURCH

THE NEW CHURCH, LIKE THE OLDEST CHURCH:

Has no virgin birth.

Has no vicious God who wants to torture and keep his children in everlasting agony.

Believes that God has endless purpose and plans and meaning for all his children.

Knows that God loves us beyond all our expectation or understanding.

Considers relationship the most important thing in all the world – between us and God, and between us and each other.

Knows that if we do not love God, we cannot truly love each other.

Knows that everything Jesus came for culminates in the presence and guidance of the Holy Spirit of Jesus Christ.

Understands Jesus as the culmination and fulfillment of the Old Testament, as well as the founder and authority who creates the New Testament.

Believes that Jesus is the Son of God and is God's Messiah, but is not God himself.

Knows that Jesus, not the Bible, is THE WORD of God: Word made flesh – the living Word.

Believes deeply and sincerely in everlasting life.

Trusts the death and resurrection of Jesus and the coming of his Holy Spirit as not only the power and core of all Christian life and awareness, but as a metaphor illuminating every corner of life and every experience we have here.

Sees baptism as the entryway into the Christian life. To begin our Christian Path here, we die to the old life and are raised to a new life in Christ Jesus. We shake off all that holds us back, but only Christ can lift us from the waters of our drowning and into a new life. It begins with our also hearing the Father say to us: "You are my beloved child. In you I am well pleased." (Some of us cheat a little and translate: "In you as I created you to be, and as I will help you to become, I am well pleased.") Apart from "hearing" and receiving this affirmation of love and forgiveness, we have no energy or will to proceed. In any case, we begin by facing our own death – by dying and getting it over with. Otherwise "the world" will forever bribe and frighten us off our new Path.

Believes in Jesus the Christ, and trusts him to be both Lord and Savior.

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THE NEW CHURCH, UNLIKE THE OLDEST CHURCH:

Does not believe that the world is flat or that the earth is God's only real estate.

Believes that the Kingdom of God has endless dimensions, with challenge and purpose for all of us.

Knows that Jesus came to create his church, not to close out the age or the world as we know it.

Knows that while God is always correcting and disciplining us, God never punishes us.

Has nearly endless resources to help us understand the context and meaning of biblical passages, at least for those who wish to use them.

Benefits from over two thousand years of scientific and technological advances and knows that airplanes can fly, lights can turn on, medicine and/or surgery can heal many demons, and people do not have to be blind from cataracts, live under the tyranny of divinely appointed kings, or stay in ignorance or squalor or superstition, though many still choose to do so.

Has respect for all sincere believers of any religion.

Welcomes all people who earnestly seek a deeper relationship with Jesus and wish to participate with us to find it: gay, straight, black, white, rich, poor, healthy, sick, intelligent, or not very. We will always value intention rather than condition or capacity. (The road to hell is not paved with good intentions; it is paved with pretense and false intentions.)

Will not try to "convert the whole world." The world is too big, and the needs are endless. Dilution, loss of focus, and scattered energy are the tools of Satan we are most wary of. So we will look to our own conversion, and under the Spirit's guidance we will try to care deeply about at least six others beyond our own immediate family, hoping each of them will also find and care about *their* six. Though we cannot promise to care deeply about any person who is not part of our covenant community, doubtless the Holy Spirit will lead each one of us to care about some people beyond our covenant boundaries.