

**PROPOSED CATECHISM FOR
CUMBERLAND PRESBYTERIAN CONFESSION OF FAITH**
(Committee draft, 5/21/02)

1. Who is God?
God is the one living, active Creator of all that is, seen and unseen.
2. Who are we?
We are a part of God's creation, made in God's own image.
3. How do we know God?
God reveals himself to us as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.
4. Is God male or female?
No. God does not have a body. Therefore, God is neither male nor female.
5. What is God like?
 - **God is strong and wise.**
 - **God does what is good and right.**
 - **God speaks the truth.**
 - **God surrounds us always and everywhere.**
 - **God lives forever.**
 - **God never changes.****Above all, God is love.**
6. How do we know God is love?
We know God is love because God gave the Son for us. Everyone who trusts the Son belongs to God's family, and will not perish, but will live with God now and forever.
7. What does it mean to perish?
To perish is to be separated from God forever, to be denied the joy, peace, and purpose that come from living with God.
8. Does God want people to perish?
No. It is not God's desire that anyone should perish.
9. How do we learn about God's love?
We learn about God's love from the Bible; through God's people, the church; in the events of nature and history; and in many other ways; but most clearly through Jesus Christ.
10. What is the Bible?
The Bible is the written record of God's mighty acts.
11. What are some of God's mighty acts in the Bible?
The Bible tells that, through grace, God
 - **created the world and everything in it**
 - **called a special people to be servants in the world**
 - **judges sinful humanity**
 - **became a human being in Jesus Christ to save the world**
 - **continues to love and care for creation throughout time**
 - **promises at last to bring believers into God's eternal presence.**

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12. What is grace?

Grace is God's decision to create us, to care for us, and to claim us as children even though we do not deserve it. God gives all people the freedom to respond to God's grace.

13. How should we respond to God's grace?

The proper response to grace is to admit our need for God, to trust God and obey God's will, and to give thanks for all the wonderful things God has done and is doing.

14. How do we respond to God's grace?

All people rebel against God's grace. We try to live as if we do not need God. We ignore who the loving God wants us to be.

15. What do we call our attempt to live without God?

Our attempt to live without God is called sin.

16. What happens as the result of sin?

Our relationships with God and others become broken. We get trapped in hurtful words, attitudes, and actions, and we cannot free ourselves.

17. Does God stop loving us when we sin?

No. God does not reject us even when we sin.

18. How does God deal with our sin?

God calls us back from our broken relationships. God judges us and forgives us.

19. How does God judge us?

God forces us to face our sin--the harm we do to God, one another, and ourselves.

20. How does God forgive us?

God starts over with us. God renews the relationship with us, not counting our sins against us.

21. What do we call our relationship to God?

We call our relationship to God a covenant. God began the covenant long ago, has renewed it many times throughout the centuries, and has fulfilled it in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Still today, God upholds this covenant of grace.

22. What does God promise to do in the covenant?

God promises to bless us and to make us a blessing to all the peoples of the earth. We become a blessing as God uses us to share the knowledge and promises of God with others.

23. What do we promise to do in the covenant?

We promise to trust and obey God.

24. What has God given us to help us keep the covenant?

One of God's gifts to us in keeping the covenant is the Ten Commandments.

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25. How do the Ten Commandments help us?

The Ten Commandments tell us how to love and obey God.

- **You shall worship no other gods.**
- **You shall not make any idols to worship.**
- **You shall not use God's name in a disrespectful way.**
- **Keep the Sabbath day holy as a time to rest and to worship God.**

The Ten Commandments also tell us how to love and respect each other.

- **Honor your father and mother.**
- **You shall not murder.**
- **You shall not commit adultery.**
- **You shall not steal.**
- **You shall not lie about your neighbor.**
- **You shall not envy what other people have.**

26. Have people through the ages kept the covenant?

They have not, and neither do we.

27. What did God do about our disobedience?

In Jesus Christ, God renewed the covenant of grace so that all the world might know God's love.

28. What does the name Jesus mean?

The name Jesus means Savior.

29. What does the title Christ mean?

The title Christ means the Messiah, the anointed one chosen by God.

30. Was Jesus like other human beings?

**Yes and no. He was fully human and also fully God.
He was tempted as we are, but he did not sin.**

31. How did Jesus show God's love for us while he lived on earth?

- **He called people to turn from sin.**
- **He prayed for others.**
- **He healed the sick.**
- **He fed the hungry.**
- **He forgave sinners.**
- **He welcomed all people.**
- **He taught about God's grace.**

32. What happened to Jesus at the end of his life?

Jesus was killed for human sin. People crucified him on a cross.

33. What does the cross tell us about ourselves?

The cross tells us that our rebellion against God is serious.

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34. What does the cross tell us about God?
The cross tells us that God’s grace is greater than our sin. Human beings intended the cross for evil, but God used it for good.
35. How did God turn the cross into something good?
God used the death and resurrection of Jesus as the means by which sins are forgiven, once and for all people everywhere.
36. Did God make Jesus suffer and die on the cross?
No. Jesus was willing to die for our sake.
37. What happened after Jesus’ death?
On the third day after being crucified, Jesus was raised from the dead. He appeared first to women at the tomb, and then to many other witnesses, including his closest disciples.
38. Why do we call Jesus “Lord”?
We call him Lord because he rules over all and makes sure that nothing will ever separate us from God’s love.
39. In what other way do we know God?
We also know God as Holy Spirit.
40. On what day did the Holy Spirit come on the first followers of Jesus?
On the day of Pentecost. At Pentecost, the disciples received power from the Holy Spirit to share God’s love with all people.
41. Where is the Spirit now?
The Spirit is everywhere, working to help people know the love of God in Jesus Christ.
42. What does the Spirit do?
The Spirit calls all people to trust in Jesus Christ and to live in the covenant of grace.
43. How does the Spirit speak to people?
The Spirit speaks to people through the Bible, the church, the witness of believers, and in ways beyond human understanding.
44. What does it mean “to be saved”?
“To be saved” means to live in the covenant of grace, to accept Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior, and to promise, with the help of the Spirit, to follow God’s will. Whoever is willing to be saved may be saved, but not without the help of the Spirit.
45. What are some of the words we use to describe the gift of salvation?
We may use these words and phrases to describe the gift of salvation: repentance, confession, saving faith, justification, regeneration, adoption, sanctification, growth in grace, preservation of believers, and Christian assurance.

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46. What does repentance mean?
Repentance means to turn away from words, attitudes, and actions that hurt God and others and to turn toward God. Repentance also means to say, “I’m sorry.”
47. What does confession mean?
Confession means admitting our sin and asking God to forgive us. We also seek to repair the harm we have done to others as much as we can.
48. What does saving faith mean?
Saving faith means trusting in God’s grace for our salvation instead of trusting in our own efforts.
49. What does justification mean?
Justification means God acts to restore a relationship with us, even though we are sinners.
50. What does regeneration mean?
Regeneration means to be made new in the sight of God. Other words for regeneration are recreated, born again, or born from above.
51. What does adoption mean?
Adoption means being accepted into God’s family, sinful people though we are.
52. What does sanctification mean?
Sanctification means being set apart. God does not make us better than or more important than other people. Instead, God helps us become people who love God and whose actions reflect that love.
53. How does growth in grace occur?
We grow in grace and knowledge of Jesus Christ as we worship God, study the Bible, interact with other believers, and serve those in need. God calls us to grow in grace as long as we live.
54. What is the church’s teaching about the preservation of believers?
The preservation of believers reminds us that God is always faithful, even though we are not. God will fulfill the covenant of grace and bring us to eternal life.
55. What is Christian assurance?
Christian assurance is the confidence we gain that God will not leave or forsake us, in life or in death. As we live the Christian life, our assurance deepens.
56. What are the people called who are saved by the Spirit?
They are called by the name of Jesus Christ--Christians. Christians make up the church, the people from every time and every place who put their trust in Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior.
57. What is the purpose of the church?
The purpose of the church is to worship God and to share God’s love with the world.

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58. What does the church do in worship?

The church gathers in the presence of the living God to celebrate God's wonderful deeds.

59. What actions are included in Christian worship?

- **singing praise to God**
- **confessing our sin and receiving God's forgiveness**
- **reading from the Bible**
- **proclaiming the good news of Jesus Christ**
- **listening for God's word to us**
- **celebrating the sacraments**
- **praying for ourselves and others**
- **committing ourselves to God--our time, talent, and money**
- **receiving God's blessing**

60. What does God do in worship?

In worship, God nourishes and strengthens the church through the preaching of the Word and the celebration of the sacraments.

61. What are the sacraments?

The sacraments are signs of God's covenant of grace with us. God not only tells us that we are loved; through the sacraments, God shows us that we are loved.

62. What sacraments do we celebrate?

We celebrate two sacraments: baptism and the Lord's supper.

63. What does baptism signify?

In baptism, God claims us as God's own people. In the act of baptism, water is a sign that our sins are forgiven and that we have received the outpouring of the Holy Spirit.

64. Do we have to be baptized in order to be saved?

No. God shows us through baptism that we belong to God's family. Therefore, baptism is a gift that believers gladly receive for themselves and their children.

65. What happens in the Lord's supper?

As we eat the bread and drink from the cup, we are united with Jesus Christ in his death and resurrection, with one another, and with Christians of every generation. Christ meets us at the communion table and gives us strength to be his faithful followers.

66. Who is invited to the Lord's supper?

Christ welcomes all who are part of the covenant community and are committed to the Christian life to eat this meal.

67. How do the sacraments strengthen the church?

The sacraments strengthen the church to share the love of Jesus Christ with all people, including those outside the church.

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68. How do we share the love of God in Jesus Christ?

We share the love of God in Jesus Christ by telling others the good news about Jesus and by helping those who suffer and are oppressed.

69. Why do we care about people outside the church?

We care for people outside the church because they were created in God's image and because Christ gave his life for all of us.

70. Do we expect the church to grow in numbers?

Yes. As we share the good news of Jesus Christ, others come to believe in him and want to become a part of God's covenant family. We do all we can to welcome new believers as our brothers and sisters in Christ.

71. How do Christians relate to the world?

Christians are responsible to live out their faith at home and in the world by creatively using their skills and energies in every relationship. Christians are also called to be good stewards of the earth's resources for the good of all.

72. Do we face conflict as we seek to live faithful lives?

Yes. God calls us to be loving and just in all our relationships, to stand up especially for those who are weak and oppressed. This witness often puts us in conflict with those who do not seek the will of God.

73. What prayer did Jesus give to those who attempt to be his witnesses?

**The Lord's Prayer:
Our Father in Heaven,
Hallowed be your name,
Your kingdom come,
Your will be done,
On earth as in heaven.
Give us today our daily bread.
Forgive us our sins
As we forgive those
Who sin against us.
Save us from the time of trial,
And deliver us from evil.
For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours
Now and forever. Amen.**

74. Why do we start the prayer with "Our Father in heaven"?

Because Jesus taught us that God is even better than the best parents on earth. When we pray, God comes to us from beyond this world to listen earnestly to our prayers.

75. What do we mean by "hallowed be your name"?

We are saying that God's name is holy and asking that people everywhere will come to honor God and not misuse God's name.

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76. Why do we ask “your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as in heaven”?
We expect God to transform this earth into a place where God’s love rules, just as in heaven. We yield our wills to God’s will so that we can be instruments of God’s love.
77. What are we saying when we pray “give us today our daily bread”?
We are acknowledging that God alone provides what we need to live, and that everything we receive daily is a gift from God.
78. How do we understand the phrase “forgive our sins, as we forgive those who sin against us”?
Knowing God’s grace for sinners, we admit what we have done wrong, trusting that God will forgive us. Likewise, we ask for strength to forgive those who have hurt us.
79. What do we mean when we pray “save us from the time of trial and deliver us from evil”?
We ask God’s help to keep us free from destructive words, attitudes, and actions; and if we should be threatened by people or powers, we ask God to deliver us from harm.
80. What are we doing when we pray “for the kingdom and the power and the glory are yours now and forever”?
We are celebrating that the God of grace is stronger than evil. Although God’s will sometimes appears to be defeated, the kingdoms of this world shall become the kingdom of Christ and he shall reign forever and ever.
81. Why do we end the prayer with “amen”?
Amen means “so be it!” It comes at the end of our prayer because we are confident that God keeps promises, and that nothing will separate us from the love of God, which endures forever.