

We Believe...

Rockland and numerous other Christian churches make the statement, **“In the essentials, Unity; in the non-essentials, Diversity; in all things, Love.”** This statement begs the question, “What are the Essentials?” **At Rockland, we embrace Christianity as Absolute Truth revealed by God through his inspired written Word and in history, particularly in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ.** We define the essentials as the basic tenets that are clear, indisputable, and necessary to Christian faith. The non-essentials are issues of Christian doctrine that are subject to interpretation, which are debated by dedicated students and disciples of the Word of God.

The Essentials

The infallible Word of God, the sixty-six books of the Old and New Testaments, is a complete and unified witness to God's redemptive acts, culminating in the incarnation of the Living Word, the Lord Jesus Christ. **The Bible, uniquely and fully inspired by the Holy Spirit, is the supreme and final authority on all matters to which it speaks.** It is self-attesting, and being Truth, requires our unreserved submission in all areas of life. In a pluralistic age that affirms religious and moral relativism, the Living Word of God stands out as Absolute Truth, which transcends all human imagination and rationalization. [2 Timothy 3:16-17; Isaiah 55:8-11; Romans 1:16-17; Psalms 119:9-11,105; 2 Timothy 2:15]

On this sure foundation we affirm these additional Essentials of our faith:

- 1. There is one God**, the sovereign Creator and Sustainer of all things, infinitely perfect and eternally existing in three Persons: **Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.** To God be all honor, glory, and praise forever! [Revelation 1:8; Exodus 20:2-3; Ephesians 4:4-6; Deuteronomy 6: 4-5; Acts 17:24-28; 2 Corinthians 13:14]
- 2. Jesus Christ, the Son of God**, became flesh through His miraculous conception by the Holy Spirit and His virgin birth. He who is true God became true man, united in one Person forever. **He died on the cross as a sacrifice for our sins, just as foretold in the Scriptures.** Two days later He rose bodily from the dead. He ascended into heaven, where **He is now our personal Lord and Mediator.** [Fulfillment: John 1:1-14, 3:16, 4:23-26, 6:35-59, 14:6-11, 20:26b-31, Colossians 2:9-10; Matthew 1:18-25; Luke 1:26-38; 1 Corinthians 1:18-31; Matthew 26:63-64; Philippians 2:5-11. As prophesied: Isaiah 7:14, 9:6; 53:1-12; Psalms 22:1-31]
- 3. Being estranged from God and condemned by sinfulness, our salvation is wholly dependent upon the gift of God's free grace through Christ's sacrificial death, not our good deeds.** All humans have an intrinsic goodness in that we are created in God's image, and as such, we have moral capacity and free will to make real moral choices. That image is tarnished, however, by our predisposition to sin, which is ultimately rooted in self-centeredness and rejection of God and his perfect will. God credits His righteousness to those who put their faith in Jesus Christ alone for their salvation, and thereby justifies them in His sight. **Those who invite Jesus Christ into their hearts as their personal Lord and Savior are born of the Holy Spirit, become children of God, and become heirs of eternal life. Christians acknowledge that Jesus Christ's sacrificial death is the sole basis for their salvation, through which sinful human nature is redeemed into the perfection demanded by a loving, holy, and righteous God.** [Psalms 14:1-3; Isaiah 64:5-7; Proverbs 16:25; Romans 3:10-26, 6:23; John 14:6; 1 Timothy 1:15-16; Ephesians 2:1-9; Titus 3:3-7; Matthew 5:48; Acts 4:10-12; Psalms 51:16-17; Revelation 3:20; Philippians 1:21; John 10:10b]
- 4. The Holy Spirit is fully God and fully personal. The Spirit's primary purpose is to bear witness to Jesus Christ.** Not only was the Holy Spirit active in the processes of creation and revelation, but He shares in sustaining the universe. In particular, the Spirit instructs and guides us into all truth, convicts us of our sin, draws us into personal relationship with Christ Jesus, and makes us more Christ-like as we allow Him to dwell in our hearts. The Spirit empowers us and imparts spiritual gifts to us so that we might serve God and His people more effectively. **Jesus described the Holy Spirit as our personal Counselor and Comforter.** [John 14:16-17,26, 16:6-15; Acts 2:38-39; Galatians 4:6-7; Ephesians 1:13-14; 1 Corinthians 3:16; Romans 8:26-27; 1 Corinthians 12:1-11]

5. The true Church is composed of all persons who, through saving faith in Jesus Christ and the sanctifying work of the Holy Spirit, are united together in “the Body of Christ.” **The Church finds its visible, yet imperfect, expression in local congregations** where the Word of God is preached in its purity and the sacraments are administered in their integrity, where scriptural discipline is practiced, and where loving fellowship and genuine care are maintained. **Jesus stated that his true followers would be known by their love for one another, and He called them to be God’s light in the world.** [Romans 12:4-5; Ephesians 4:11-16; Hebrews 10:22-25; Acts 20:28; John 13:34-35; 1 Corinthians 13:1-13, Matthew 5:13-16]

6. **Just as He ascended into heaven, Jesus Christ will come again to the earth - personally, visibly, and bodily - to judge the living and the dead, and to consummate history and the eternal plan of God.** [Acts 1:10; Matthew 16:27; Revelation 22:12-13; Acts 3:19-21; 2 Thessalonians 1:6-10; Revelation 22:20]

7. **The Lord Jesus Christ commands all believers to proclaim the Gospel throughout the world and to make disciples of all nations.** Obedience to this “Great Commission” requires total commitment to "Him who loved us and gave Himself for us." He calls us to a life of self-denying love and service. [Luke 4:16-21; Matthew 9:35-38, 10:6-9; Romans 10:14-15; 2 Timothy 4:1-5; Matthew 28:18-20; Acts 1:8; 1 Peter 3:15-16; Isaiah 61:1-3]

Our Response

Our mission as a church is to proclaim the gospel of Jesus Christ through worship and praise within a community of faith; through teaching; through reaching out to others in word and deed; through loving and supporting one another; through bringing people to Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord; so that together we will grow in the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit.

We encourage you to study the scriptures cited above. We pray that they will strengthen your faith with deeper understanding and appreciation of God’s Truth. Please contact us if we can further assist you in your walk with Jesus Christ.

So then, just as you received Christ Jesus as Lord, continue to live in him, rooted and built up in him, strengthened in the faith as you were taught, and overflowing with thankfulness. See to it that no one takes you captive through hollow and deceptive philosophy, which depends on human tradition and the basic principles of this world rather than on Christ. For in Christ all the fullness of the Deity lives in bodily form, and you have been given fullness in Christ, who is the head over every power and authority. Colossians 2:6-10 (NIV)

For further study, we suggest reading [Christian Basics](#) by John R. W. Stott.

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