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*God’s existence derives from himself (Isaiah 48:12; Acts 17:24–25), and he is set apart from all his creatures (Psalm 113:4–6; 1 Timothy 6:16). He is pure spirit (Deuteronomy 4:15; John 4:24), having no body or unstable emotions (Numbers 23:19; Psalm 33:11; Malachi 3:6; James 1:17). God is infinite in his being and perfections: changeless, eternal, almighty, most holy, all-knowing, most wise and free (Malachi 3:6; James 1:17; Psalm 90:2; Revelation 1:4; Isaiah 6:5; Revelation 1:8; Isaiah 6:3; Revelation 4:8; Psalm 139:1–6; Romans 11:33–34; Daniel 4:35; Romans 11:35–36; Ephesians 1:11b). He is most loving, gracious, merciful, compassionate and forgiving (Exodus 34:6–7; Psalm 103:8–10); he rewards those who seek him (Jeremiah 29:13; Hebrews 11:6), but hates sin and is perfectly just in the punishment thereof (Nehemiah 9:32–33; Psalm 5:4–6; Habakkuk 1:13; Revelation 16:5–6; 19:11).*

(Sola 5 Confession 1.2)

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Gretta Vosper pastors West Hill United Church, a congregation in the United Church of Canada denomination. Three years ago, she declared herself to be an atheist. Two-thirds of her congregation left, and denominational leaders sought to remove her from her position arguing that, since her theology no longer aligned with the denomination’s official statement of faith, she could no longer affirm her ordination vows. A legal battle ensued and, toward the end of 2018, a joint statement between the church and the denomination declared that the “Toronto Conference, the Rev. Gretta Vosper, and West Hill United Church have settled all outstanding issues between them.” While the details of the settlement are confidential, Vosper remains pastor at West Hill United Church and the denomination assures all concerned parties that “this doesn’t alter in any way the belief of The United Church of Canada in God.”

How important is it for a pastor—or any Christian—to affirm belief in God? Why? \_\_\_\_\_

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For those who have been Christian for some time, it seems obvious that **God’s existence derives from himself** and that **he is set apart from all his creatures**. Why is it important as South African Christians for us to affirm this basic truth? \_\_\_\_\_

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**God is pure spirit, having no body or unstable emotions**. While the Bible consistently affirms God as having emotion (love, anger, pity, sorrow, etc.), these are not **unstable emotions**. What does it mean that God has no **unstable emotions**? Why is this an important truth to understand and affirm? \_\_\_\_\_

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**God is infinite in his being and perfections: changeless, eternal, almighty, most holy, all-knowing, most wise and free**. There is a wealth of truth packed into this affirmation. What does it mean that God is **infinite in his being and perfections**? \_\_\_\_\_

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Comment briefly on each of the **perfections** of God listed in this part of the Confession.

**Changeless:** \_\_\_\_\_

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**Eternal:** \_\_\_\_\_

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Almighty: \_\_\_\_\_

Most holy: \_\_\_\_\_

All-knowing: \_\_\_\_\_

Most wise: \_\_\_\_\_

Free: \_\_\_\_\_

The Confession goes on to detail two aspects of who God is in relation to sin: **He is most loving, gracious, merciful, compassionate and forgiving** so that **he rewards those who seek him**, but he at the same time **hates sin and is perfectly just in the punishment thereof**.

Do you find it significant that the proof texts for affirming that God is **most loving, gracious, merciful, compassionate and forgiving** come from the Old Testament? Why is that fact significant? \_\_\_\_\_

In what way does God **reward those who seek him**? How should this encourage us? \_\_\_\_\_

God **hates sin**. What is sin, and why does God hate it? \_\_\_\_\_

Why is it important for us to affirm that God is **perfectly just in the punishment** of sin? \_\_\_\_\_

How does the earlier affirmation that God has **no unstable emotions** help us to trust that he is **perfectly just in the punishment** of sin? \_\_\_\_\_

Practically, how does the truth of God’s unchanging, holy character help you to engage with a world that kicks against God’s authority, claiming that their rejection of his standards must be accepted “as long as my choices don’t harm anyone else”? \_\_\_\_\_