

Membership at Christ Community Church, PCA (Presbyterian Church in America)

Session 1

Introduction

Thank you for considering membership at Christ Community Church! We hope this process—*2-3 sessions over coffee or meals to be scheduled based on availability and an interview with 2 of our elders*—helps you get to know us as a local church and us get to know you better as a follower of Christ. The process is relational and offers plenty of opportunities to get your questions answered and concerns addressed before making any commitments to membership. **Taking public vows before God in covenant commitment to membership in a local church is a serious matter that we neither want to rush nor take lightly.** As **Proverbs 20:25** teaches us, “It is a snare to say rashly, “It is holy,” and to reflect only after making vows.”

We confess that we are not going to live up to your expectations despite our best efforts. As a church, we are going to fail you in a host of ways despite our best intentions. All of your needs will NEVER be met here. This is a messy place where we often struggle with hypocrisy, self-righteousness, doubt, fear, anger, love, compassion, etc. Conflict and difficulty will occur; however, if you are willing to join us, then you will discover a family of brothers and sisters in Christ who willingly offer each other the help necessary to be faithful and glorify God in a very broken and fallen world.¹

¹ This paragraph originates with Steve Brown who makes similar comments whenever he welcomes people or invites people to church.

Before We Get Started...

If you are transferring your membership from another church or were a regular attendee for 6 months or longer, we will need to contact your pastor and/or the elders or leaders to ensure that you left well and were in good standing as much as it depended on you with the church before we complete this process. If you are leaving that church under difficult circumstances or under church discipline (which happens at times and does not automatically disqualify you from membership), we still require you to do everything you can to leave that church well and at peace before you begin this process. We will need to confirm this with your previous church if possible. We are willing to walk with you through this process to help bring resolution and glory to God. Ultimately, it is the session's discretion as to whether it would be wise and edifying for you and CCC to pursue membership at this time.¹

Questions for Session 1:

1. *If you could change 1 or 2 things about Christ Community Church, what would they be and why? Can you live with them not ever changing?*
2. *Were you a member or regular attendee for 6 months or longer of another local church? What was your reason for leaving? Did you leave well as much as it depended on you? Do you have any issues with us contacting the previous church's leadership?*
3. *What does it mean to you to be a member of a local church?* We just want to know what you understand about church membership so don't worry getting the right answer!
4. *Why is it important to you to become a member of Christ Community Church? How have you grown spiritually in the time that you have been here?* Tell us about your connections and what excites you at CCC.

Notes and Questions:

¹ See the **Book of Church Order**, II. Preliminary Principles, 2., in the Preface

First Things First: Is Membership in a Local Church Biblical?

Let's start with the question: "*Is membership in a local church biblical?*" This is not a bad question, but the more direct and applicable question is "*Does the bible clearly command membership in a local church?*" The answer in short is "*No, the bible does not explicitly command that believers should join a local church, nor does it prescribe what the membership process should look like.*" The next best question is "*Didn't I become a member of the universal church when I confessed my need for Christ alone through faith alone by grace alone?*" The answer is a resounding "**YES!**" This, then, begs the most pertinent question of all: "*Why then do we have local church membership?*" I am glad you asked!

While the Bible does not directly command believers to join a local church or prescribe what the membership process should look like, many passages clearly show participation in and submission to a local church. The birth of the church proper begins in **Acts 2** with newly-baptized believers from Pentecost devoting "themselves to the apostles' teaching and the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers" which also included "selling their possessions and belongings and distributing the proceeds to all, as any had need" and "day by day, attending the temple together." From this example, we infer that participation in a local expression of faith should include:

1. A confession of faith in Christ alone through faith alone by God's grace alone and baptism in response¹
2. Devotion to biblical teaching (or the apostles' teaching) which includes the Old Testament as it pointed forward to Christ and the New Testament as it reveals Christ and points forward to his return²
3. Regular fellowship to hear the Bible taught, partake of the Lord's Supper, pray, and attend to each other's needs³

Throughout the book of Acts, we read about individual churches, with local leadership in various towns such as Jerusalem, Antioch, and Ephesus. The church at Jerusalem in **Acts 6** encountered a problem

¹ This does not prove that baptism is for believers only in response to salvation. The church is just beginning with its first generation in a similar fashion to the formation of Israel in which the first generation experienced circumcision at their current age while the following generations were circumcised on the 8th day. In the same way, Peter declares in **Acts 2:38-39** that this promise signified in baptism is for both the first generation of adults and for subsequent generations of children.

² See also **Luke 24:27, 2 Timothy 3:14-17, Hebrews 1:1-2, 2 Peter 1:16-21**

³ See also **Ephesians 4:1-16, Galatians 6:1-10, Hebrews 10:23-25, 1 John 3:16-18**

that required a new leadership position. The diaconate (or deacons) was formed to address physical needs within the church so that the apostles could devote themselves to the ministry of prayer and the word. The position had set qualifications indicating that it was not temporary and would be an ongoing part of the local church. In **Acts 13**, the local leadership of the church at Antioch set Paul and Barnabas apart as missionaries to send them out to preach the gospel and plant other churches as needed. They return in **Acts 14:27** to share with the local church all that God was doing among the Gentiles, indicating submission to their local leadership as a governing authority. Paul meets with the elders at the church in Ephesus in **Acts 20** to challenge them to protect their local flock from the wolves who come bearing the teeth of false doctrine. These passages show local expressions with local leadership to whom the local flocks submitted in accord with the apostles' teaching. From these passages, we infer:

1. There are local expressions of the church¹
2. These local expressions have their own leadership with unique qualifications and responsibilities (elders and deacons)²
3. An account of the needy was kept³
4. Missionaries are to be commissioned by and report to the local sending church
5. The local flock submits to the local leadership as they obey the teaching of Scripture to protect them through discipleship and discipline⁴

Paul's letters to the Corinthians provide many insights regarding local church membership. In the first 6 chapters of **1 Corinthians**, Paul addresses several problems within the church at Corinth. This presupposes an existing set of beliefs and practices, consistent with the apostles' teaching, to which local believers were expected to adhere. **1 Corinthians 5** reveals that the local leaders have the authority to discipline and remove those who are unrepentant in their violation of these accepted beliefs and practices from the regular fellowship of the saints. He also clarifies in **2 Corinthians 2:5-11** the local leadership should lovingly pursue the one excommunicated to reconcile and restore to fellowship if possible.

1 Corinthians 12 and **Romans 12** discuss the use of spiritual gifts through the analogy of the human body with its differing parts working together for the good of the whole. Paul in **1 Corinthians 14** speaks of the gifts being used in a local worship service. The believers vowed to do things decently and in order to edify all present. This means that there had to be an organized local gathering of believers that would

¹ See also the various letters of Paul to the various local churches at Rome, Corinth, Galatia, Ephesus, Philippi, Colosse, and Thessalonica as well as **Revelation 1-3: The Seven Churches**

² See also **1 Timothy 3, Titus 1, 1 Peter 5:2**

³ See also **1 Timothy 5:3-16**

⁴ See also **1 Timothy 5:17-20, Hebrews 13:17**

engage in worship which revered the Lord and respected those attending who do not understand the gospel of Christ. These local believers had to willingly submit to Paul's apostolic authority and commit to his teaching for the good of the whole and the glory of God as well as the local leadership in administering this authority. From these passages, we infer:

1. Fidelity and submission to beliefs and behaviors related to the apostles' teaching are expected.¹
2. Violation of these beliefs and behaviors warrants discipline from local leaders with repentant submission being the means of reconciliation to fellowship with the local church. Unrepentant rebellion leads to excommunication with periodic engagement from local leaders until reconciliation occurs.²
3. Every believer has gifts and a role to play in the local body as determined by the Holy Spirit.¹
4. Some gifts are to be used in local worship that is to be done decently and in order so that the gospel is clear and edifying to all present for the glory of God.

All of these passages combined portray the local church in the first century and help us understand what it should look like now. These passages clearly show the necessity for local leadership who meet set qualifications. The responsibilities of these leaders are to care for the local flock through the ministry of the Word, the practice of the Lord's Supper and baptism, the provision of a decent and ordered worship service, the care and provision for physical needs, and the practice of discipline when someone conflicts with the apostles' teaching. Believers' responsibilities include participating in a local church by sitting under the teaching of the Word for the purpose of being equipped, using their spiritual gifts where appropriate, giving their resources to meet others' needs and those who lead them in the ministry of the Word, submitting to the local leadership as it is consistent with the Word, and committing to regular gathering for worship. These responsibilities are necessary parts of the ordinary Christian life that God has called us all to lead. We cannot expect to grow into Christian maturity if we neglect the worship of the church.

These things require significant consideration and commitment from both the leader and the members of the flock locally. In fact, this resembles a marriage relationship in which significant consideration and commitment are required of both spouses to make the marriage work to the glory of God. Just as the marriage covenant helps both parties remain committed to one another during difficult times, so do the membership covenant and vows help the church and its members stay committed to one another when times get hard.

¹ See also **John 15:1-17**

² See also **Matthew 18:15-17**, **1 Timothy 5:20**, and **Titus 3:10-11**

Think about how difficult all of these things are within our culture which struggles with authority, commitment, consumerism, radical individualism, institutional distrust, etc. Given these realities, we think having a process whereby you can consider these concerns (and a few others) in an environment where you can ask questions and wrestle with your conscience and convictions before you commit to being a member of a local church is very important. This is the purpose of CCC's membership process. We also think that you should be able to make public vows of commitment to both Christ and the local church as evidence of considering and then committing to this local church to the glory of God. *The Westminster Confession of Faith*, Chapter 22, paragraphs 3, 6, and 7 helpfully illustrate our understanding of oaths and vows:

3. Whosoever takes an oath ought duly to consider the weightiness of so solemn an act, and therein to avouch nothing but what he is fully persuaded is the truth: neither may any man bind himself by oath to any thing but what is good and just, and what he believes so to be, and what he is able and resolved to perform. Yet it is a sin to refuse an oath touching any thing that is good and just, being imposed by lawful authority.

6. It is not to be made to any creature, but to God alone: and that it may be accepted, it is to be made voluntarily, out of faith, and conscience of duty, in way of thankfulness for mercy received, or for the obtaining of what we want, whereby we more strictly bind ourselves to necessary duties: or, to other things, so far and so long as they may fitly conduce thereunto.

7. No man may vow to do any thing forbidden in the Word of God, or what would hinder any duty therein commanded, or which is not in his own power, and for the performance whereof he has no promise of ability from God. In which respects, popish monastical vows of perpetual single life, professed poverty, and regular obedience, are so far from being degrees of higher perfection, that they are superstitious and sinful snares, in which no Christian may entangle himself.

These sections clearly show that our vows are made before and to God and are bound by His word alone and not by the traditions or commands of men outside of or in contradiction to His word. Remembering this is really important as the leadership and circumstances of the church may change, but our vows before God to that local body should remain firm unless He calls us elsewhere to glorify Him.

We do not desire to boost our numbers or have a bunch of names on a roll with no commitment to the communion of saints. We genuinely want you to flourish in worship and the work of the ministry where the Lord has called you to live, work, serve, and play. Please take this process seriously, giving it the necessary time for study and prayer.

¹ See 1 Peter 4:10-11

Questions for Session 1:

1. *What is your experience with church membership? How many churches have you been a member of?*
2. *Is church membership biblical?*
3. *What is your view of taking a public vow before God?*

Notes and Questions:

Membership at CCC: An Overview

According to the Book of Church Order in the Preface under II. Preliminary Principles, each local church can decide the terms of membership. The section reads: *2. In perfect consistency with the above principle, every Christian Church, or union or association of particular churches, is entitled to declare the terms of admission into its communion and the qualifications of its ministers and members, as well as the whole system of its internal government which Christ has appointed. In the exercise of this right it may, notwithstanding, err in making the terms of communion either too lax or too narrow; yet even in this case, it does not infringe upon the liberty or the rights of others, but only makes an improper use of its own.*

We do not desire to complicate membership; however, we want to be discerning and not cheapen membership as well as trying to protect you and the church from potential problems that could have been addressed before vows are taken. In order to join Christ Community Church, one must confess and adhere to the essentials of the Christian faith which include:

- 1. The Holy Scriptures are true, authoritative, and sufficient for salvation as they reveal the person and work of Jesus Christ.¹*
- 2. The Trinity² is one God who is sovereign over all things³ in three persons, the God the Father⁴, Jesus Christ the Son⁵ and the Holy Spirit⁶, each functioning within their role in the economy of redemption and equal in power and glory.*
- 3. Humanity was created by God to be His image bearers⁷ but descended into sin and misery justly deserving eternal death in judgment because of Adam's sin rendering all unable to do anything to please God unto salvation apart from union with Christ.⁸*
- 4. Jesus Christ was born of a virgin, lived in full humanity perfectly while also being God, gave His life on the cross, rose again on the third day, ascended to the right hand of the Father where He intercedes for the saints, and awaits His return to judge the wicked and make all things new.⁹*
- 5. Salvation is by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone and is sealed in the Holy Spirit.¹⁰*

¹ Psalm 19:7-11, 2 Timothy 3:16-17, 2 Peter 1:20-21; *WCF* 1; *WSC* Q. 2, 3, 88, 89; The Chicago Statement of Inerrancy (Appendix A)

² Genesis 1:26, Psalm 45:6-7, 110:1, Matthew 3:13-17, 28:17-20, 1 Corinthians 12:4-6; *WCF* 2; *WSC* Q. 6; The Apostles' Creed

³ Deuteronomy 6:4, Isaiah 45:5-6, John 17:3, Romans 5:12-21, 8:28-39, 1 Corinthians 8:4-6; *WCF* 3-5; *WSC* Q. 4-12, 20

⁴ Romans 8:15, Galatians 3:23-29, Ephesians 1:3-10

⁵ John 1:14-18, 3:16-21, Romans 6:1-11; *WCF* 8; *WSC* Q. 21-28

⁶ John 14:15-31, 16:4-15, 1 Corinthians 12:1-11; *WSC* Q. 29-30

⁷ Genesis 1:26-31; *WCF* 4; *WSC* Q. 9-10

⁸ Psalm 51:3-5, Romans 3:9-31, Ephesians 2:1-3, 1 John 1:10; *WCF* 6; *WSC* Q. 14-19, 82-84

⁹ Matthew 1:18-25, Mark 15, Luke 24, John 1:1-18, Acts 1:6-11, Hebrews 2:5-18, 4:15, Revelation 21-22; *WCF* 8; *WSC* Q. 21-28

¹⁰ John 14:6-7, Ephesians 2:1-10, Colossians 1:15-23; *WCF* 14-15; *WSC* Q. 85-87

6. *Salvation is evidenced by life in and the fruit of the Holy Spirit which is reflected in loving the Lord your God with all of your heart, soul, and mind (worship) and your neighbor as yourself (mission) as expressed in and through the community of a local church*¹

These essential doctrinal truths (or the apostles' teaching) defined the first church in *Acts 2:42*. These essential doctrinal truths continue to define the church today. While a host of theological and cultural issues merit of our discernment and attention, we emphasize majoring on the majors and minoring on the minors. The above doctrinal essentials are the majors. We believe that in the essentials there must be unity; in the non- essentials, there must be liberty; and in all things, charitability, and humility. We will examine each of these throughout the membership process so don't be overwhelmed by the footnotes. The references are to help you in case you have any questions.

We want you to understand our commitments so that you will be able to work with and support those who hold them if you become a member.² If you have particular concerns with fundamental aspects of our church like music style, preaching, children's ministry, or a cultural position that will detrimentally affect your worship and growth in Christ, then we encourage you **not to join** our church and continue to seek the Lord's guidance as to where you can worship in Spirit and truth and use your gifts to His glory. *We genuinely desire that you would be able to flourish in union with Christ as a result of your church membership whether at Christ Community or at some other Bible-based, God-glorifying church.*

¹ Matthew 28:16-20, Luke 10:25-37, John 14:12-14, 15:1-17, Romans 6:1-14, 8:1-11, Galatians 5:16-26; *WCF* 13, 25, 26; *WSC Q.* 35-36

² Affirming Reformed convictions is necessary for those who wish to hold an ordained office in the church.

Take a moment to review the five membership questions below, and consider how you would answer each as you begin the membership process. We will return to these along the way and at the end of the process.

Membership Questions

To become a member in any PCA church, you will be asked these five membership vows:

Vows Concerning the Trinity:

- 1. Do you acknowledge yourself to be a sinner in the sight of God, justly deserving his displeasure, and without hope, except through his sovereign mercy?*
- 2. Do you believe in the Lord Jesus Christ as the Son of God, and savior of sinners, and do you receive and trust him alone for salvation as he is offered in the gospel?*
- 3. Do you now resolve and promise, in humble reliance upon the grace of the Holy Spirit, that you will endeavor to live as becomes a follower of Christ?*

Vows Concerning the Church:

- 4. Do you promise to support the church in its worship and work to the best of your ability?*
- 5. Do you submit yourself to the government and discipline of the church, and promise to strive for its purity and peace?*

Questions for Session 1:

- 1. What is your view of God's Word? The Trinity? Creation? The Fall? The Person and Work of Jesus? Salvation? The Christian Life?*
- 2. Are there any doctrinal, theological, and/or biblical issues that are not listed that you think are essential?*

Notes and Questions:

Critical Concept: The Gospel (The Good News)

The Gospel contains the essentials of the Christian faith that must be believed to be a member at Christ Community. Unfortunately, this word has been thrown around so much and used so variably that misunderstanding occurs. We need to make sure that our definitions of “gospel” and “Christian” match, given that these terms are critical to becoming a member of our church.

Let’s start with the bad news. Scripture teaches that our first parents, the historical Adam and Eve, abused the freedom of their own wills by eating the forbidden fruit from the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil. This act cast us all, as their children, into an estate of sin and misery. This original sin left us radically depraved with our whole nature corrupted so that we don’t want to nor are able to be in relationship with the Holy God. However, God, in His grace and mercy, did not leave His children in this condition that leads to eternal death. This begins the good news of the gospel! God chose to provide a means of salvation in the person and work of His Son Jesus.

Before we explain the good news (the literal translation of the word “gospel”), let’s look at what the Gospel is NOT. The Gospel is NOT merely a legal or business transaction, a rescue plan, something that we do, the movement from rebel to righteous, related to a single historical moment in time, or the work of Jesus apart from God or the Spirit. Even the oft quoted “Jesus saves sinners” as short hand for the gospel is limited and doesn’t communicate the Gospel’s full beauty. While each of these has elements of truth, they are not the whole truth.

The Gospel is the power of God for the total salvation of everyone who believes- as written in **Romans 1:16**. More fully, God the Creator has acted according to His will to deliver us, His created sons and daughters, from our sins and restore us to Him. He did this by sending His Son, Jesus Christ, who gave his life on the cross for the sins of his people satisfying His wrath toward sin. Jesus was then raised from the dead to grant us newness of life in the resurrection, ascended to heaven where he continues to intercede for us, and will return again to make all things new and glorious. In summary, you are not being saved FROM God, but you are being saved TO God! He has pursued you in Christ so that you may dwell in and be blessed by His presence for all of eternity!

We enter this beautiful, unfolding, mysterious process by the effectual call of the Holy Spirit that leads

us to submit to Jesus Christ as Savior.¹ This leads to justification and adoption by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone. Justification according to *WSC Q. 33* “is an act of God’s free grace, wherein He pardons all our sins and accepts us as righteous in His sight only for the righteousness of Christ imputed to us and received by faith alone.”² *WSC Q. 34* describes adoption as “an act of God’s free grace, whereby we are received into the number and have a right to all the privileges of the sons of God.”³ This grace and faith in the power and guidance of the Holy Spirit are also critical to the process of sanctification. According to *WSC Q. 35*, “sanctification is the work of God’s free grace, whereby we are renewed in the whole man after the image of God and are enabled more and more to die unto sin, and live unto righteousness.”⁴ It is critical to keep in view that salvation is not only about what you don’t do but is more about what you do or how you now live in freedom in Christ.⁵ Jesus came to grant God’s children life more abundant!⁶ This glorious salvation includes past, present, and future realities (justification/adoption, sanctification, and glorification). The Gospel brings us all the way home to dwell with and enjoy God for eternity and assures us of God’s love, giving us peace and joy as the Holy Spirit guides us in grace and perseverance.⁷ This is not just good news; it is GREAT news!

While God’s plan of salvation is according to His redemptive will as governed by His sovereignty and providence, humanity is still responsible. The Bible does not present us with an "either/or" proposition regarding the sovereignty of God and the responsibility of man in salvation. It teaches "both/and." God is sovereign in our salvation. It is His work. He receives all the glory. Christians are called His "chosen" or "elect." He must draw us to Himself, and He preserves us when we trust Him. Yet, we are also responsible before God for our actions and rebellion. We must turn to Christ, trust Him, follow Him, and persevere through the means of grace that He has provided.

Because humanity is made in God’s image and given the Great Commandment (“Love the Lord your God...and love your neighbor as yourself...”) and the Great Commission (“Go therefore and make disciples of all nations...”), God rightly judges our rebellion to our image-bearing and calling. God will bring all things to consummation at the Final Judgment, taking His own to be with Him forever and casting all others into hell forever, thus removing all barriers to His children dwelling with Him in uninhibited glory in the new heavens and the new earth.⁸ At long last, God’s children will be able to worship in unfettered and unveiled glory!

¹ John 6:44-45, Acts 26:18, 2 Timothy 1:9; *WSC Q. 31*

² Romans 5:1-11

³ Romans 8:12-17

⁴ Romans 6, 8:1-11

⁵ Galatians 5

⁶ John 10:7-11

⁷ *WSC Q. 37*

⁸ 1 Corinthians 15:24-28; Revelation 20:11-15; Revelation 21:1-8

The Gospel in Trinitarian Key

This table summarizes the distinctions concerning the past, present, and future realities in the Gospel, the roles of each member of the Trinity, and your responses as a result:

The Gospel	God the Father	Jesus the Son	The Holy Spirit	You
<p>Past: <u>Justification / Adoption</u></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Creator -Bestows electing grace according to His will -Sends Jesus the Son to be the mediator of redemption -Adopts us as heirs to all the heavenly gifts and promises 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Participates in Creation -Lived a perfect life -Bears the sins of the elect past, present, and future and satisfies God's associated wrath -Rises from the dead and justifies the elect 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Participates in Creation -Effectually convicts and calls the elect to repent and receive Christ as Savior -Indwells the elect as evidence of justification 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Surrender in faith to Christ as Savior knowing that you are helpless to justify yourself because of your sin inherited from Adam and Eve
<p>Present: <u>Sanctification</u></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -In His sovereignty and faithfulness, continues to work all things for His glory and our truest good -Grants what we need to glorify Him 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Applies the resurrection to us so that we may walk in newness of life -Intercedes on our behalf from His ascended position at the right hand of the Father 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Serves as the Helper to convict, guide, teach, reveal gifts, and produce fruit in our lives so as to transform us into Christ's image 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Love the Lord your God with all of your heart, soul, and mind through worship and obedience -Love your neighbor as you love yourself
<p>Future: <u>Glorification</u></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Sends Jesus Christ in the Last Advent to judge and deliver -Dwells at long last with His children without any barrier 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Returns to make all things new in judgment and deliverance 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Reveals at long last the sons and daughters of glory 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Eternal worship and joy of and in the Father without hindrance

Life in Christ: Your Story

Given that a profession of faith in Christ alone, by faith alone, by God's grace alone is the most important qualification for membership, we want to make sure that we are talking about the same thing. While one can state many ways to follow Christ, here is a simple summary:

The ABCD's of Being a Christian

- 1. There is something to *Admit*.** Christians, empowered by the Holy Spirit, admit that they are weaker, guiltier, and more sinful than they would have ever dared admit by their own strength. Though we were created for relationship with God, our sinful natures and choices separate us from Him. Fundamentally, our lives are self-centered rather than God-centered, rendering us helpless to break this pattern without God's power.
- 2. There is something to *Believe*.** Christians believe that God loves us so much that he sent his only Son, Jesus Christ, to earth to become a man and die on the cross as our *substitute* to atone for our sins and satisfy God's wrath. As a result of His perfection and lack of guilt, Jesus was raised from the dead in order to offer us newness of life and the ability to flourish. We also believe that Jesus is seated at the right hand of the Father, making intercession for us and directing the Holy Spirit to help us as we journey between the now and the not yet. We believe that one day Jesus will return to reveal the sons and daughters of glory and restore all of Creation so that we can dwell with God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit for eternity in the new heavens and earth.
- 3. There is something to *Consider*.** Christians are not naïve and recognize that following Christ will be costly. Being a Christian involves acknowledging Jesus' authority and lordship in every area of life, welcoming His work to change us from the inside out, and rejoicing to spend time with Him and with followers in the life of the church. This can be a messy and painful process though the results are glorious beyond our imaginations!
- 4. There is something to *Do*.** Christians who have received Christ as Savior and Lord and consciously turn from sin, self-centeredness, and self-righteousness (the Bible calls this turning *repentance*). They trust in Jesus alone for forgiveness and acceptance by God (the Bible calls this trusting *faith*). This repentance and faith result in our becoming ambassadors of reconciliation who confess and profess this hope that is within us in the varying contexts of our lives where the Lord has sovereignly placed us. Our lives should bear tangible fruit because of being granted deliverance from sin and death and given resurrection power in newness of life. Our salvation grants us the ability to be obedient to God's Word which is pleasing to Him. This is NOT legalism. Legalism is the belief that our works can save us. Obedience is a grateful response to our salvation.

LOOKING AT MY SPIRITUAL JOURNEY

Please check below which statements best describe where you are in your spiritual pilgrimage:

- I am confident of my relationship with Christ, having already trusted Him as Lord and Savior.
- I am not confident of my relationship with Christ, although in the past I think I have sought to trust Him as Lord and Savior.
- I have never trusted Christ as my Lord and Savior but am presently investigating such a relationship.
- To the best of my knowledge, I have recently prayed to trust Christ as my Lord and Savior.

If you were to join Christ Community Church, by which means would you join?

- I have not joined a church since recently receiving Christ (within the last year), and I am joining Christ Community Church by profession of my faith in Christ.
- I am a member in good standing of another church, and I wish to join Christ Community Church by transferring my membership.
- I am a member under discipline or have not left another church well and will need to work on the reconciliation process with the help of the leadership of Christ Community Church before transferring my membership.
- Neither of the first three statements are true of me, and I would like to join Christ Community Church by reaffirming my faith in Christ.

Please indicate your status regarding baptism:

- I have never been baptized.
- I was baptized as an infant.
- I was baptized as a child/youth.
- I was baptized as an adult.

Questions for Session 1:

1. *Explain your understanding of the gospel. Who has most influenced your understanding?* Share what you have understood it to be even if it is incomplete.
2. *What is your story of becoming a Christian?* We recognize that some have prodigal-like stories that have distinct moments and others have known they were Christians for most, if not all, of their lives with no exciting moments of revelation. Either way, you should be able to profess knowledge of your own sinful state which separates you from God and from which you cannot save yourself. You should also be able to profess faith alone in Christ alone as Savior by God's grace alone.
3. *How does the gospel affect your life? Do you struggle regularly with particular problems that we could help you with?*
4. *How have you grown spiritually over the last 3-6 months? What has been most beneficial to that growth?*
5. *Explain your view of life in the new heavens and the new earth?.*
6. *Explain your view of final judgment and hell.*

Notes and Questions:

CCC's Story and Commitments

Session 2

Christ Community Church was started in **October 2000** by people who thought the northwest Atlanta metro area needed a new church—a church that would be known for its love for God and its neighbors. As a result, we are a church driven not by mere programs or activities but by an overarching sense of purpose—a purpose centered on the *Gospel*, the good news of God's salvation in Jesus Christ. We launched our first public worship service at Lewis Elementary School in Kennesaw on **September 16, 2001** and in **2005** moved to Bullard Elementary. In **May 2006**, God provided a great opportunity for a new location in the Kennesaw Community Center. In **August 2008**, God enabled CCC to purchase eight acres of prime property on N. Main Street in Kennesaw across from Kennesaw Elementary and Swift-Cantrell Park. We continue to seek God's direction as to how to best use this property for His glory. Also, after 13 years of faithful ministry to CCC, Lead Pastor Mike Glass resigned effective **December 15, 2013**. Cameron Barham was called and began as pastor **September 2014**. We look forward to how God will use our church for His glory in Cobb County and beyond.

CCC is a member of the **Presbyterian Church in America (PCA)** (www.pcanet.org) which means that we submit to Jesus Christ as King and Head of the Church, God's Word as revealed in the Old and New Testaments, the doctrinal standards as set forth in the **Westminster Confession of Faith (WCF)**, the **Larger Catechism (WLC)**, and **Shorter Catechism (WSC)**, and governance and worship as defined by the **Book of Church Order (BCO)** as they are in accord with God's Word. In short, we are **Reformed** in doctrine and theology and committed to God's Word as the only rule to direct us how we may glorify and enjoy Him. We are locally members of the **Northwest Georgia Presbytery (NWGP)** (www.nwgp.org) and regularly support other local churches in a variety of ways and attend Presbytery meetings three times a year as part of our connection to the wider church. *You don't have to agree with every Presbyterian distinctive to be a member of our church; however, we want to make sure that you are aware of our distinctives!*

CCC's Governance and Leadership

We believe the Presbyterian form of government biblically expresses church polity in both the OT and NT. In **Exodus 18**, Jethro, Moses' father-in-law, advises him to elect qualified men to representatively serve and govern God's people. Paul calls for a plurality of elders to be elected wherever churches are planted (see **Acts 14:23** and **Titus 1:5**). The goal is for leaders to share the burden of serving and leading God's people and to provide checks and balances to prevent abuses of power. Ultimately, the elders submit to Jesus Christ, the Church's true head, who will hold them accountable for how they led their flocks.¹ As a member, you are to also ultimately submit to Jesus Christ as the true head of the church. *The Westminster Confession of Faith*, Chapter 20, paragraph 2 enhances our understanding of a healthy balance concerning submission:

2. God alone is Lord of the conscience, and has left it free from the doctrines and commandments of men, which are, in any thing, contrary to His Word; or beside it, if matters of faith, or worship. So that, to believe such doctrines, or to obey such commands, out of conscience, is to betray true liberty of conscience: and the requiring of an implicit faith, and an absolute and blind obedience, is to destroy liberty of conscience, and reason also.

You are never expected to submit where it is contrary to God's Word; however, this presupposes that you are versed in the Scriptures. One of the greatest antidotes for submitting to poisonous leadership is

¹ Acts 20:28, Ephesians 1:20-23; Colossians 1:18, Hebrews 13:17, 1 Peter 5:1-4

to have a thriving devotional life and to take every opportunity to flourish in the means of grace like the Bereans of **Acts 17:11**. We want you to help us as leaders to be accountable to God's Word.

Another distinctive of the Presbyterian form of church government is that it is connectional. This means that our church expresses its connection to the wider body of Christ through a graded series of church courts. Not only does this provide our church leadership with a series of checks and balances, it also gives us concrete opportunities to pray for and support the mission of the church in places beyond our local area. As part of the overall checks and balances, there are 3 courts within the PCA. The first court of appeal for a local issue or concern is the session. If they fail to respond appropriately, then one may appeal to the Presbytery. If that fails, then the General Assembly can be appealed to as a final recourse. The Presbyterian Church's courts in summary are:

Session -The policy elders of a local church (meets monthly).

Presbytery -A representative number of elders from churches of a designated geographical area (meets quarterly).

General Assembly -A representative number of elders from the churches of the entire U.S. and Canada (meets annually).

Members agree to submit to these 3 courts and their associated rulings: the leadership of Christ Community Church (Session), our regional (Northwest Georgia Presbytery), and national governing bodies (General Assembly).

CCC is led by a session of elders who are men qualified according to **1 Timothy 3** and **Titus 1** and are trained and ordained to provide servant leadership and theological oversight through the following duties according to **BCO 8-3**:

- 1. Watch over the flock diligently to protect from corruption of doctrine or morals*
- 2. Exercise government and discipline*
- 3. Visit the flock, especially the sick*
- 4. Instruct the ignorant, comfort the mourners, and guard and nourish the children of the Church*
- 5. Serve as an example in zeal for evangelism and making of disciples*
- 6. All private Christian duties are to be discharged as an official duty*
- 7. Pray for and with the flock seeking the fruit of the preached Word*

The elders also promote and lead CCC's vision and ensure that CCC's ministry is pursued with passion, integrity, and truth.

As a function of shepherding the flock, elders are charged to serve as instruments of grace and guidance. This sometimes requires the process of church discipline.¹ When a person strays from Jesus and embraces a lifestyle of **unrepentant sin**, the elders are to go to that person with the goal of helping the individual be **restored to spiritual vitality**. This begins with prayer, always requires patience, sometimes involves pleading and exhortation, and may result in restrictions being placed on the person's spiritual privileges if there is no repentance. Unless the end result requires the knowledge of the congregation, privacy is of utmost importance. The general principle here is to treat private sins privately and public sins publically.

The levels of censure progress as follows if the one being disciplined refuses to repent and be reconciled:

- Admonishment- an official exhortation to repentance from the Word
- Suspension from the Lord's Supper
- Excommunication– removal from the membership of the church
- Removal from office for elders or deacons (defrocking)

Keep in mind that the goal is **restoration of relationships**—with God and/or other believers—through repentance, forgiveness, and restitution (when appropriate). In this way, the glory of God and peace and the purity of the church are maintained.

CCC also has a board of deacons consisting of men qualified according to **1 Timothy 3**, who are trained and ordained to serve the Church's practical ministry of the church through the following duties in **BCO 9-2**:

- 1. Minister to those in need, to the sick, to the friendless, and to any who may be in distress*
- 2. Develop the grace of liberality (or generous giving) in the members of the Church, to develop effective methods of collecting the gifts of the people, and distribute those gifts as require*
- 3. Care for the property of the congregation including the upkeep of the physical structures*

¹ Church discipline is detailed in the *BCO, Part II- The Rules of Discipline*.

Elders at CCC

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Questions for Session 1:

- 1. What is your experience with Reformed Theology? Presbyterianism? PCA? Do you have any concerns with any of these?*
- 2. What has been your experience with church government? Which one are you most comfortable with?*
- 3. Do you have any problems with any of the current leaders or staff members? If so, how can we help with restoration?*
- 4. Are you willing to submit to the current leaders to care for you and your family in accord with God's word and glory?*

Notes and Questions:

Our Vision and Values

Your interest in church membership shows that you concur with our vision and what we value and are considering how to use your gifts to build up and edify the kingdom through our local body. We desire to be an **Ephesians 4** church that equips “*the saints for the work of the ministry, for building up the body of Christ, until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ, so that we may no longer be children, tossed to and fro by the waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by human cunning, by craftiness in deceitful schemes.*” Our hope is that the more you learn about our vision, values, history, beliefs, and ministry, the more you will use your gifts and resources to the glory of God.

Our Vision (*What are we trying to accomplish?*)

To participate in the gospel to change hearts, lives, and community by multiplying and equipping disciples in Northwest Atlanta and beyond.

Our vision is simple yet clear. We truly believe that the power of the gospel is *the* instrument used by God to change a person’s heart to desire and follow Him. Once God changes a heart, the changed life will eventually follow. The changed life in Christ will inevitably impact the contexts and culture in which that person lives.

We believe this gospel-driven change is best cultivated in the context of relationships with other believers who are growing spiritually. We desire that every Christian at CCC develops a vision for personal ministry towards those in their various spheres of influence. Life-on-life ministry is a major priority in our church though it can be messy and a struggle. Every member of CCC should invest themselves in others’ lives to see God’s heart for redemption and reconciliation become tangible reality.

Our Values (*What is most important to us as we accomplish our vision?*):

- Trinitarian Worship
- Word and Sacrament Formed
- Gospel Centrality
- Prayerful Dependence
- Generosity in All Things
- Missional Focus
- Priesthood of All Believers
- Authentic and Confessional Community
- Sabbath Rhythm

Our Expanded Values

1. Trinitarian Worship (John 16:12-15; WCF 2; The Apostles Creed)

We believe every believer's first calling is to worship Almighty God in all His fullness and beauty. This includes the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit who are all the same in substance and equal in power and glory. Each person of the Trinity uniquely functions within the economy of redemption and should be regularly recognized and celebrated. We desire faithful, Trinitarian worship according to God's Word- worship that recognizes the work of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit where appropriate.

2. Word and Sacrament Formed (Matthew 28:18-20; WCF 1, 27-29)

We believe absolute truth exists and that it is best communicated through the ordinary means of grace provided by God. We believe in the inspiration and inerrancy of Scripture.¹ The Bible is the written Word of God, without error and of infallible and divine authority in all matters of faith and life.² Given that the whole Bible is one redemptive story,³ we believe in covenant theology.⁴ Covenant theology views all of Scripture as an unfolding covenant relationship between God and His people based on His grace. Thus, unity and continuity exist between Israel of the Old Testament and the Church of the New Testament. One covenant of grace is expressed in two administrations (Old and New). One people of God consists of both Old Testament and New Testament believers.⁵

Our teaching and times of equipping will be based on and informed by the exposition of God's Word. This will include the OT and NT as we preach through books of the Bible or engage in exegetical topical series. We also encourage regular Bible reading, meditation, memorization, and active obedience in personal devotion, family worship, and discipleship in various forms.⁶ You have no idea how your lack of personal devotion, family worship, and discipleship may deprive you of wisdom or appropriate preparation for some future event. We regularly pray for **Ephesians 3:14-21** and **Colossians 1:9-14** to be a growing reality in the lives of our members as they experience life more abundant in Christ.

The sacraments (the Lord's Supper and baptism as ordered by Jesus) are critical aspects of our covenant theology.⁷ These are the word made visible and evidence God's covenant working and promises to His people. The Lord's Supper replaced the Passover,⁸ and baptism replaces circumcision¹ in the New Covenant.

¹ See Appendix A: **The Chicago Statement of Biblical Inerrancy**

² **2 Timothy 3:16; 2 Peter 1:20-21**

³ See Appendix B: **The Redemptive Story**

⁴ See *Far as the Curse is Found* by Michael D. Williams for a readable resource on this topic

⁵ **Galatians 6:15; John 15:1-6; Acts 15:15-18; Romans 8:23-28; 11:17-20; Galatians 3:5-6, 13-18; 1 Peter 2:9**

⁶ See Appendix C and D for help with personal devotions and Bible reading plans.

⁷ **Luke 24:14-23; Matthew 28:18-20**

⁸ **Mark 14:12-25; 1 Corinthians 5:7**

The Lord's Supper (or Communion) is a sign and seal of the redemptive benefits of Christ's death past, present, and future.² The common elements of bread and juice³ represent the broken body and shed blood of Christ in the New Covenant as prescribed by Jesus himself at his last Passover. We believe that when we partake of the elements in a worthy manner that "inwardly by faith, really and indeed, yet not carnally and corporally, but spiritually, receive, and feed upon, Christ crucified, and all benefits of His death..."⁴ This means that our faith is nourished spiritually by the person and work of Christ through the power of the Holy Spirit as part of our sanctification. Just as bread and juice strengthen and refresh us physically, so Christ's body and blood strengthen and refresh us spiritually. We do not believe that the elements become or are surrounded by the real body of Christ.⁵

Only those who profess Christ as savior as evidenced in obedience to baptism that are not under church discipline, not harboring unforgiveness in their heart, or not engaged in unrepentant sin can partake of the table.⁶ Wrestling with doubt, struggling to overcome sin where your spirit is willing but your flesh is weak, and being in the reconciliation process or praying for reconciliation does NOT keep you from the table. In fact, you need your faith to be nourished by what the elements signify and seal to keep up the good fight.

We should take time to prepare our hearts and minds for this sacrament.¹ To aid in this preparation, we send out a devotional letter the week of communion. This is why we do not practice paedocommunion (or infant communion) since they are unable to examine themselves as instructed. Admission to and participation in the table requires the cognitive ability to examine oneself in light of faith and several other issues. Question 97 of the *Westminster Shorter Catechism* is instructive on how to prepare:

Q. 97. What is required to the worthy receiving of the Lord's supper?

A. It is required of them that would worthily partake of the Lord's supper, that they examine themselves of their knowledge to discern the Lord's body, of their faith to feed on him, of their repentance, love, and new obedience; lest coming unworthily, they eat and drink judgment to themselves.

¹ Colossians 2:11-12

² See *What is the Lord's Supper?* by Richard D. Phillips for a brief introduction to the Lord's supper; see *Given For You: Reclaiming Calvin's Doctrine of the Lord's Supper* by Keith A. Mathison for an advanced understanding.

³ We do not currently offer wine out of sensitivity for those among us who wrestle with addiction to alcohol.

⁴ *WSC 24.7*

⁵ The view of the Catholic Church is that the elements actually become the body and blood of Christ (transubstantiation). The view of the Lutheran Church is that the body and blood of Christ are all around the elements and are ingested (consubstantiation).

⁶ *Matthew 5:23-24; 1 Corinthians 5:11-13; 1 Corinthians 11:17-34*

We currently practice the Lord's Supper monthly so as to regularly participate in this means of grace. Some churches do it more often (weekly) and others less often (quarterly, yearly). Frequency is up to the local session's discretion.

Baptism is "the solemn admission of the party baptized into the visible church"² and a sign and seal of "our ingrafting into Christ, and partaking of the benefits of the covenant of grace, and our engagement to be the Lord's."³ In baptism, we celebrate God's faithfulness to keep His promises to save His children by faith alone, in Christ alone, through His grace alone. This sacrament is about what God has done, is doing, and will do in faithfulness; it is not about our faithfulness or anything that we do. We practice both infant and believer's baptism as the historical church did for most of its first four centuries.⁴ We do not require anyone to be re-baptized if you were baptized in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit and your conscience is comfortable with your baptism.⁵ Believers are baptized following an interview with the session to establish your testimony as a sinner, saved by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone and a basic understanding of this sacrament. Infants can be baptized if one of their parents is a member in good standing of CCC.

Infant baptism is located in the context of covenant theology.⁶ Immediately following Pentecost, when Peter was preaching his first sermon in **Acts 2**, he answers the question as to whether the children were to be included in the promise of the new administration. Peter says that, "The promise is for you and for your children."⁷ Since the New Covenant is a "better" covenant than the old, since no Scriptures of the New Covenant introduce the teaching that children should not receive the sign of the covenant, and since baptism is clearly the sign that replaces circumcision, we conclude that children should not be denied this great privilege. We think that children have a right to the privileges and benefits of God's kingdom, the Church, once they are baptized. However, we understand that this same child must put his or her trust in Christ as Lord and Savior before the eternal benefits can be embraced.⁸ Baptism recognizes God's working in the life of this child before he or she knows or can comprehend what is

¹ **1 Corinthians 11:17-34**

² **WCF 28.1**

³ **WSC Q. 94**

⁴ We do not make an actual distinction between "infant" and "believer's" baptism as if they were communicating something different. Both communicate the same truth concerning the faithfulness of God to His promises and that salvation is by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone.

⁵ All other mainline denominations (Catholic, Methodist, and Baptist) baptize in the name of the Father, Son, and Spirit. Mormons and Jehovah's Witnesses do not which would require Trinitarian baptism.

⁶ See *Why Do We Baptize Infants?* by Bryan Chapell for a brief introduction to baptism; see *Word, Water, and Spirit* by J.V. Fesko for an advanced understanding.

⁷ **Acts 2:39**

⁸ **Genesis 17:7, 10; Acts 2:39; Acts 16:31; Galatians 3:26-29; Colossians 2:11-12**

happening. It should be a significant grace to be born to Christian parents who faithfully teach and live the Gospel.

We practice sprinkling as our primary mode of baptism. Though sprinkling is not the only valid mode of baptism, it has a longer covenantal history than the other modes. The Greek word "baptizo" (can be translated "immersed") is often used in Scriptures to refer to sprinkling or pouring. **Hebrews 9:10** uses the word "baptizo" to refer to various washings. **Hebrews 9:13, 19, 21** describe three such Old Testament washings. Each of these washings was done by means of sprinkling or pouring. To be safe, we attest that the mode of baptism is not so clear in Scripture as to make it a major doctrinal issue or issue of division. Christ Community Church uses sprinkling as its expression of the covenant sign but recognizes that Scripture supports each of the modes of baptism.

Baptism is also to be prepared for by every believer who witnesses the sacrament. *Westminster Larger Catechism Q. 167* refers to the need for our baptism to be improved throughout our lives. Again, we provide a devotion letter the week of a scheduled baptism to aid you in this process.

3. Gospel Centrality (Romans 1:16-17 with 1:18-8:39 as further explanation)

We want every believer's grasp of the Gospel to avoid the attractive but dangerous traps of legalism, liberalism, moralism, and pragmatism on one side and cheap grace on the other. While our works cannot save us (legalism), we are granted the ability in the Spirit to be obedient to the glory of God (contra cheap grace). The gospel is not just for the unconverted; it is also for God's sons and daughters who daily need its power and truth. Central to all that we do is God's desire to have His children reconciled to Him so that He can be present with them to enjoy and be enjoyed forever. This should be our desire as well.

4. Prayerful Dependence (Philippians 4:4-9; WSC Q. 98-107)

We long for Christ Community Church to be a house of prayer. We desire to evidence our dependence upon our Abba Father by going to Him as our first and ongoing resort with our prayers of any and all kinds. We want to be quick to pray for and with one another given that Jesus has prepared the way for us to come boldly before the throne of grace to receive what we need from our Father who loves to give good things to His children. This can occur privately, publicly, or corporately and can also include fasting of some kind as led by the Spirit. To this end, we provide Prayer/Praise Cards in the bulletin every week which we pray for at the office. In addition, we have Prayer Teams in the back following every sermon to pray for those who seek prayer and monthly Prayer Gatherings for Men and Women. During special seasons in the life of the church, we will call for congregational fasts and times of prayer.

5. Generosity in All Things (2 Corinthians 8:1-15)

Given God's generosity to us in Creation and through the redemptive work of Jesus Christ and gift of the Holy Spirit, we should be characterized by generosity as sons and daughters created in His image. We want to experience the blessings that come from giving generously of our time, talents, and treasure for God's glory. We strive to steward your generous offerings in all areas for building up the body of Christ. We want to be known as a generous church that is willing to give whatever is necessary for the good of the Kingdom of God. To this end, we seek to be transparent with our expenses and finances sending out regular updates on a monthly and quarterly basis and providing the budget on a yearly basis.

6. Missional Focus (1 Thessalonians 1:1-10)

Christ Community Church passionately wants to address non-believers with intelligence, warmth, and respect. We long to see human flourishing in all aspects of life, given that we were uniquely created by the Triune God and crowned with honor and glory according to **Psalm 8**. He was created with dignity in that he was made in God's image and created in humility in that his aim is to glorify God.¹ Believing that mankind bears the image of God leads us to believe in the sanctity of all human life. This influences our desire to see all humans flourish in God's image which is best displayed through redemption and progressive transformation in the image of Christ. This flourishing begins with a humble confession of the Creator-creature distinction submitting to God's sovereignty and will for our lives. We apply these truths to unborn children, orphans, those with special physical and mental needs, those struggling with gender and sexual identities, widows, the rich, the poor, the aged, the infirm, and any other human classification.

As a result of this diverse application, we strive to be creatively evangelistic in every dimension. We must always remember what it is like not to believe. We will not privatize our faith but help Christians work with excellence and kingdom distinctiveness so as to be able to engage the culture. We encourage Christians to engage our culture and not to retreat from it or simply create an alternative Christian subculture.

Because hospitality is a critical aspect to our engagement, our church will not have a host of programs and activities that consume your focus, energy, and time. We want you to have the time and space to engage your family and the contexts in which you live, work, serve, and play as ambassadors of reconciliation. The two areas of greatest potential missional engagement are your neighborhood and your vocation. As a result, we try to help our members creatively apply the Gospel in and through their roles as neighbors and workers. We desire our church to grow as a result of our members' missional living that welcomes those who are not currently a part of a church to become a part of CCC.

¹ Genesis 1:26; Psalm 8; Colossians 3:17

7. Priesthood of All Believers (1 Peter 2:9-12; WCF 16)

We don't want to be a consumer-driven church that is inwardly focused. The church doesn't exist to offer a smorgasbord of opportunities based on consumers' wants and needs. Rather, the church exists to equip the saints for the work of the ministry and to see the Gospel go forth among those who don't currently believe. We want to be an outwardly focused church that serves as a vessel for flourishing and reconciliation in the communities in which we live, work, serve, and play. We believe every Christian is called to serve and minister in the power of the Holy Spirit as a result of the gifts that they have been given. We seek to equip the saints to do kingdom work and fulfill their callings through their giftedness. Our leadership seeks to "give away" ministry and not to hoard it. We desire to see our members using their gifts and serving as vessels for God's glory.

8. Authentic and Confessional Community (James 5:13-20; WCF 26)

We believe every person was created to live in community and be connected to others with purpose, freedom, and assurance in life's important issues. We are real people searching for real answers together. A major part of this reality is that we are confessional with one another in terms of our doubts, struggles, failures, joys, growth, and successes. We strive for our church to be a safe place to both wrestle and rejoice. As a result, we have to be serious about avoiding gossip and confronting it when it happens. This also means that we are quick to seek forgiveness among each other as issues will invariably arise as they do in all families. **Matthew 18** is a critical text that helps us to keep short accounts with one another and to pursue true reconciliation with only the parties that are involved in the given issue.

9. Sabbath Rhythm (Mark 2:27-28; WCF 21.7-8; WSC Q. 58-62)

The Sabbath was the first day given to Adam and Eve as a gracious gift from the Creator God who called them first to rest and to enjoy all that He had made. We will be given the eternal Sabbath in which to worship and enjoy God forever.¹ Our redemptive history is bookended by the Sabbath: it inaugurated humanity's first day and will consummate its last. It should, as a result, shape and define humanity in life between the now and the not yet. The other 6 days of our week should be oriented around our engagement of the Sabbath. This requires preparation and planning.

We desire for everyone in our church to have a Sabbath rhythm and practice in which we rest from our straining and striving and enjoy the Lord's goodness to His people. On this day, we remember by looking back on all that God has done and look forward to God's covenant faithfulness and goodness to us His children in various practices of gratitude. The Lord's Day is the best option for this rhythm; however, we realize that for some another day is preferable.

¹ Hebrews 4:9-10

Questions for Session 2:

1. *How do our vision and motto resonate with you?*
2. *What are your views on the Lord's Supper? Baptism?*
4. *Do you struggle with legalism, liberalism, moralism, or pragmatism?*
5. *Describe your prayer life.*
6. *Describe some ways in which you are generous. Do you give joyfully and generously to the church?*
7. *How are you missional where you live, work, serve, and play? Are you hospitable? How does your vocation affect your missionality?*
8. *What gifts, abilities, and passions do you have that you would like to use in your various contexts that are consistent with our mission, motto, and values?*
9. *Are you currently participating in community or discipleship where you can be authentic and honest about your struggles?*
10. *Do you currently practice a Sabbath? If so, when? What does it look like?*
11. *Are there any areas in which you would benefit from focused discipleship and equipping to better serve God's mission?*

Notes and Questions:

CCC: A Worshipping Community

Session 3

Our Worship

The Church's chief task is worship. Given that our "chief end is to glorify God, and enjoy him forever,"¹ what *is* worship? Tim Keller defines worship as *seeing the worth of God and giving God what he is worth*. This means that worship is NOT foremost about you and how it makes you feel. It is not judged on what you got out of it emotionally. Worship is primarily about God's glory and pleasure with what we gather to do in His name according to His Word. We have to remember that according to *BCO 47-2*, "God is present in public worship not only by virtue of Divine omnipresence but, much more intimately, as the faithful covenant Savior."¹ In every service, God speaks and His people have the opportunity to respond in reverence and awe.

The aim of public worship is "the perfecting of the saints and the addition to its membership of such as are being saved- all to the glory of God" while also teaching us how "to serve God all the days of the week in (our) every activity, remembering, whether (we) eat or drink, or whatever (we) do, to do all to

¹ *WSCQ*. 1

the glory of God.”² In short, our worship serves as part of the equipping of the saints for the work of the ministry where you live, work, serve, and play. This means that regular attendance to and preparation for worship are critical to your maturation as a Christian.

Given the gravity of worship, we want to be careful not to be casual or flippant about our approach. You should have noticed that we are informal in many respects; however, we are not irreverent. Our time of worship should spark a reverence and awe that focuses our attention on the Triune God and His Word. This idea is captured well in *BCO 47-6*:

From its beginning to its end a service of public worship should be characterized by the simplicity which is an evidence of sincerity and by that beauty and dignity which are a manifestation of holiness.

For these reasons, we have structured our corporate worship according to the regulative principle which is “the acceptable way of worshipping the true God is instituted by Himself, and so limited the imaginations and devices of men, or the suggestions of Satan, under any visible representation, or any other way not prescribed in the Holy Scripture.”³ While the Bible does not clearly prescribe fixed forms for public worship, we do know that the Word was prayed, read, sung, and preached. This is why our worship services are saturated with God’s Word and our liturgical elements are located in Scripture. This is also why we don’t try to get too creative and have a lot of other elements or forms or over-contextualize. We have to remember that worship is a counter-cultural act with its own context. We also desire for every aspect of the service including the lighting, volume of the music, and musical style to compliment and facilitate the participation in and receiving of God’s Word. The Word is truly “profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work.”⁴

Our music seeks to facilitate audience participation while also stimulating the heart and mind. We choose a range of psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs that can be sung relatively easily for the purpose of worship. In choosing songs, we try to ensure that their content is Biblical and consistent with our doctrinal convictions as well as conveying the main idea of the service. In choosing instrumentation, we seek to be tasteful and not distracting. The main goal is to glorify God together in worship.

¹ Matthew 18:20

² BCO 47-3

³ WCF 21.1

⁴ 2 Timothy 3:16-17

Our Liturgy: The Shape of Our Worship: The Basics

- **Prelude:** Instrumental to cue our people that we are starting the service.
- **Welcome and Announcements (Romans 15:5-7)**
- **Call to Worship (Psalm 95:1-7; Hebrews 12:28-29):** A passage is read to orient our hearts and minds to worship the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.
- **Congregational Confession:** Depending on the sermon series, we will participate in reading a historic confession or prayer together to humbly connect with the historic church.
- **Prayer of Invocation (Psalm 105:1-6):** In this prayer, we thank the Lord for His presence with us.
- **Songs of Preparation and Praise (Psalm 100:1-5):** These songs lift our hearts and minds to God.
- **Confession of Sin (1 John 1:9):** During this time, we confess as a congregation that we are sinful in comparison to a holy God and in eternal need of a Savior.
- **Assurance of Pardon (1 John 1:9):** These words are healing, encouraging reminders from Scripture of our union with Christ through faith alone by grace alone.
- **Song of Comfort (Psalm 32:1-11):** This song reminds us of the person and work of Christ who purchased our forgiveness and restored us to our Abba Father.
- **Offering of Tithes and Gifts (2 Corinthians 8-9):** Here we recognize God as the Abundant Provider, and we give cheerfully to the work of the Church in order to glorify God and love our neighbors near and far.
- **Song of Reflection:** This song prepares us for the sermon.
- **Family Additions (Psalm 61):** Those who are joining our church take their membership vows before the congregation.
- **Pastoral Prayer for the Children and the Gathered Saints (Psalm 127:3-5; Matthew 19:13-15):** This prayer recognizes the blessing and deposit that have been granted to the Church to be overseen with great care to provide for the future of the Church.
- **Sermon (2 Timothy 3:16-17; Hebrews 4:12-13):** During this time, we exegete the Word of God for encouragement, edification, maturation, conviction, and healing as the Spirit leads.
- **Sacrament: Lord's Supper and Baptism:** Practiced on a regular basis.
- **Song Response (Ephesians 5:19; Colossians 3:16):** This song grants us a time of praise and response to the Biblical truths that were preached.
- **Benediction (Numbers 6:22-27):** This priestly blessing serves to empower and encourage our people as they depart to their various missions and callings to apply the Word prayed, read, sung, and preached in the service.
- **Personal Prayer (Colossians 1:3-14):** A group is available to pray with and for you as needed.

Our Liturgy: The Shape of Our Worship:

Elements	Trinity	Redemptive History	Call/Response
Call to Worship	God the Father	Creation	God calls us to attend to worship
Congregational Confession			Our affirmative response to God
Prayer of Invocation			Our recognition of God's faithful presence
Song of Preparation and Praise			Our praise for God's faithful presence
Confession of Sin	Jesus the Son	Fall	Our recognition of our sinful condition
Assurance of Pardon		Redemption	The Word's assurance of redemption in Christ
Song of Comfort			Our praise for Christ's redemption accomplished and applied
Tithes and Offerings	The Holy Spirit		Our tangible commitment to the work of the Church
Family Additions			Our commitment to the life of the Church
Song of Reflection			Our preparation to receive God's Word
Pastoral Prayer			Our confession of dependence upon the Holy Spirit to illuminate our hearts and minds
Sermon			God's call to apply His word and our salvation in the world
Sacrament			God's Word made visible to nourish and improve our faith
Song of Response			Our commitment to live out what we have heard
Benediction	God the Father	Reconciliation	God's promised blessing from Scripture

Making the Most of Worship at Christ Community Church¹

Preparing for worship at Christ Community takes some time and thoughtful planning by the participant. The quality and result of our time in worship are not solely results of what those who lead the service do. These are also significantly impacted by what you do to prepare and participate. Your regular commitment to attend and be a part of worship is critical to your growth and maturation as a Christian.

1. Corporate worship grows out of personal worship. Therefore, the most fundamental preparation for Sunday worship is that which flows from presenting yourself as a living sacrifice to God² and having a broken and contrite heart³ as a result of your personal, family, and communal devotions and service in word and deed throughout the week. We provide materials for each sermon series and in preparation for the observance of the sacraments as well as a variety of discipleship and service opportunities to aid in this process.
2. A person's heart must be expectant and receptive to hear the Spirit of God. Spend a brief time alone with the Lord before coming to church.⁴ Reflect on and remember God's faithfulness bless His people when they gather to hear His word.
3. Being late (which sometimes cannot be helped) detracts from the worship experience's full impact. However, if you consistently miss a particular portion of the service you are communicating that certain elements of worship are unimportant. Wrap up conversations, and plan to be in a seat at least 2-3 minutes before the worship service begins so as to avoid shifting the focus to you as you come in searching for a seat.
4. God is in our presence when we gather for worship; He constitutes us as a worshipping assembly. Come, conscious and aware that God is present with us and expect Him to meet you and speak through His word in the power of the Holy Spirit.
5. Worship centers around the Word read, prayed, sung, preached, and heard, for the Word is God's living voice speaking His will to us. Listen carefully to the Word presented throughout the service, and participate with the other saints gathered where appropriate, seeking to have both your heart and mind engaged. Each service is intentionally designed to communicate one main idea. This means that every element contributes so be focused and process each element for your own edification and maturation.

¹ These suggestions are adapted from Skip Ryan, Park Cities Presbyterian Church, Texas

² **Romans 12:1-2**

³ **Psalm 51:1-10**

⁴ **Psalm 5:3; 27:3-4**

6. Be aware and avoid calling attention to yourself by engaging in distracting practices which would affect others being engaged in heart and mind. Turn your phone off, and put it away. Make every effort to stay in the service. Reserve your commentary for after the service.
7. We do not come to worship primarily for what we can “get out of it.” We come for what God “gets out of it.” Though worship should be pleasing and enjoyable, do not expect to be entertained. Expect to offer and give your worship to God. Avoid banal flattery and senseless critique following the service. Seek instead to celebrate how God was glorified by how His word challenged and edified you.

Questions for Session 3:

1. *How does the shape of our worship resonate with and minister to you?*
2. *Are there any elements of worship that are missing that you are passionate about or any elements present that you don't think should be?*
3. *What do you do to regularly prepare for worship?*
4. *What are you more concerned with after worship is over: how you responded or whether God was glorified and pleased?*

Notes and Questions:

Our Community

CCC seeks to be both a healthy home and a relational mission. In order to tend to the needs of our own members and visitors, CCC has developed many ministries to those within the congregational body.

Sunday Morning Worship

Our Sunday morning worship requires a host of volunteers in order for it to all come together. We need people to help with set-up, media, greeting, ushering, music, and children's ministry. While most of these needs do not require specialized gifts, they do require commitment and concern for doing it well. Serving on Sunday morning is a great way to get to know other people and to connect with CCC.

Children's Ministry

Christ Community places a high priority on discipling our covenant children through various ministries. CCC provides free childcare for worship each week (infants – 2nd grade) and some church-wide functions (infants – 5th grade). We have a Sunday School class for 3rd-5th grade boys and one for girls in the same grade range at 9:30 am.

We also offer nursery for infants to crawlers, a toddler class, and a 3-4 year old class every Sunday morning during the worship service. Children age 5 through 2nd grade are dismissed for the latter portion of our worship service to participate in "Praise City," an age appropriate time of worship with kid-sized worship elements and biblical teaching according to a curriculum. All other children above this age are encouraged to sit with their parents in worship. We offer children's bulletins to use during the worship service.

Student Ministry

Christ Community Church also has a number of families with middle and high school students. We currently have a youth gathering on Sunday nights that is designed to encourage and equip them spiritually. We desire to grow this ministry to reach the youth both in our church and in the community.

Equipping Times

This includes periodic Sunday School hour classes, seminars, and small group studies throughout the week that are focused on a specific topic for a short period of time. The goal is to equip our people in a particular area for the work of the ministry. Keep an out eye out for these in the Weekly Email Update, bulletin, Facebook page, and web site.

Men's and Women's Ministries

Focused ministry to the women and men of Christ Community allows members to grow in their relationship with Christ, deepen their fellowship with believers, reach out to others with the gospel, and receive encouragement and instruction on issues faced by their gender within the church and society.

Men's Ministries

We have a monthly men's prayer gathering before the service. Each fall, the men take a retreat to hear the truth of the gospel and consider what God's desires are for their lives in the workplace and at home. This allows the men in our community to deepen friendships with other men and establish new relationships in our community of faith. Other fellowship events are held throughout the year.

Women's Ministries

We have a monthly women's prayer gathering before the service. Each spring, the women take a retreat to hear the truth of the gospel and consider God's desires for their lives in the workplace and at home. This allows the women in our community to deepen friendships with other women and establish new relationships in our community of faith. Other fellowship events are held throughout the year.

Men's and Women's Discipleship

Discipleship serves as another vehicle for weekly gathering for our men and women. Various studies are going on at various times around our area, and these are great ways to meet new people, build deeper friendships, and spend time in God's Word together. Let us know what you are looking for in terms of content and time, and we will get you connected or form something to disciple you.

Small Groups

We are in the process of organizing several small groups within our church family. Small groups meet once-weekly in a host-family's home in order to build relationships, encourage each other to reflect upon and apply what the Lord is teaching our church during Sunday worship, and to pray for and serve each other in practical, concrete ways. Participation in a small group ministry is not required in order to be a member in good standing at Christ Community Church, but it is provided and encouraged as one practical way in which we can live out our relational mission and respond in obedience to Jesus' call that become faithful disciples, and disciple-makers, for His glory.

Shepherding Groups

Every member is assigned to a Shepherding Group which consists of an elder, a deacon, and their wives. These groups are designed to be proactive in terms of building community and relationships. They are also a means of keeping up with what is going on in your lives for the purpose of prayer, celebration, and proper triage when situations arise. Given that we are a plurality of elders and deacons, remember that when you are talking to one elder or deacon that you are essentially talking with all of them. This

protects you and the leaders from being isolated and potentially divided. You will still be cared for by the whole of our leadership at CCC and receive assistance from those who are best gifted to address your need. You are still encouraged to get to know the other leaders and their families.

Counseling Ministries

Christ Community ministers to those with spiritual, emotional, and relational needs through several means:

- **Pastoral Counseling**—The elders are available to meet on a one-time or short-term basis with those needing pastoral care and covering. Please contact the church office for assistance.
- **Marriage Preparation**—CCC is committed to help couples confirm their decision about marriage and help them prepare for marriage before the stress of planning a wedding. In order to be married by a CCC pastor, the following process is required: initial interview with the pastor, taking some marriage preparation inventories and reviewing them with pastor, meeting with a mentor couple, and studying through training materials.
- **Professional Counseling**—CCC believes that short-term counseling by professional Christian counselors is sometimes needed (family, marital, etc.). This is done by meeting with the pastor and allowing him to provide helpful feedback and a few trusted referrals. Some financial assistance may be available to members who express a need and will be kept confidential.

Our Vision for Outreach

We seek opportunities to reach those who are currently unchurched, dechurched, or uninterested in church. Below are some of the ways in which we seek to engage in outreach.

Bridge Events

Bridge events are gatherings that welcome and assist people seeking spiritual truth towards the community of faith. They are not designed to be the “landing pad” for the fellowship of believers but the “launching pad” for reaching out to those in our sphere of relationships. Bridge events are designed to engage visitors with the body of Christ. Different kinds of Bridge events promoted at CCC include things like Ladies’ or Men’s Night Out, Christmas caroling, Fall festival, cultural connections such as concerts and art openings, play groups for moms, or seminars and classes on topics such as parenting, financial/budget training.

The following characterize a Bridge Event:

- Outreach and service oriented
- Welcoming fellowship for visitors and members
- Gospel-centered teaching (if appropriate for particular event)
- Good leadership and organization

- Attended by both believers and non-believers
- Bridge to engagement with our body at CCC

Church Planting

The best way to see the Great Commission fulfilled (*Matthew 28:18-20*) is to plant new churches. CCC desires to be a “church planting church.” We currently support Riverside Community Church in Cartersville and Mountain City Church in Jasper. Partnering with other like-minded churches in our presbytery allows us to multiply our limited resources to produce great kingdom fruit.

Reformed University Fellowship at Kennesaw State University

Our proximity to Kennesaw State University (with over 20,000 students) is an excellent opportunity for our congregation. We desire a campus ministry that not only reaches students but also ministers to faculty and seeks to reach school administrators for Christ. Influencing every succeeding generation is exciting as we plan to reach students on this campus and serve them as a church home away from home. RUF began in the fall of 2006 with a full-time ordained campus minister equipping students in their spiritual journeys and helping them reach out to their friends on campus.

Local Missions

Our people are involved in a variety of purposeful mission opportunities locally. These include serving at the Extension, MUST Ministries, Cobb Pregnancy Center, Out of Darkness, Young Life, volunteering at local schools, and so on. As a church, we choose not to focus narrowly in this area given that our members have a variety of gifts, passions, and relationships. We do not need to reinvent what others are already hard at work doing in these various contexts. Instead, we prefer to bless and serve with those who currently serve. Our role is to equip the saints for the work of these local ministries and make you aware of where you might be called to serve.

Foreign Missions: Faith Promise

CCC’s leadership also desires to see the gospel preached among other nations and to support those who serve in this capacity. As a result, we seek to be deeply and directly involved with the missionaries we support. We support our missionaries through Faith Promise. This is an annual commitment each February that our members’ make to give specifically to missions. This helps us to keep a unique focus on missions. We report regularly on how we are doing with our promised pledges. Short-term mission trips for adults or whole families to serve alongside the missionaries we support are part of this vision. We focus on missions each February when we make our annual pledges through Faith Promise Giving. We currently support mission teams in Bangkok, Thailand; Chile; and Southeast Asia. We hope to be able to add missionaries periodically based on our members’ generosity.

How do new ministries get started?

We value when people passionately desire to meet a particular ministry need or to reach a people group with the gospel. An individual person or group of people can also propose a ministry plan to the CCC elders for consideration.

Questions for Session 3:

- 1. To what aspect of Sunday morning's service would you be interested in contributing?*
- 2. What types of outreach ministries have you been a part of or participated in?*
- 3. Where would you like to serve locally?*

Notes and Questions:

Take the time to review the Membership Questions again and prayerfully consider your commitments to each of the questions. Be prepared to discuss this in this last session. Also, prayerfully consider the Membership Covenant and sign it if in agreement.

Membership Questions

1. **Membership Question 1:** *Do you acknowledge yourself to be a sinner in the sight of God, justly deserving His displeasure and without hope except through His sovereign mercy?*
2. **Membership Question 2:** *Do you believe in the Lord Jesus Christ as the Son of God and Savior of sinners, and do you receive and rest upon Him alone for salvation as He is offered in the gospel?*
3. **Membership Question 3:** *Do you resolve and promise, in humble reliance upon the grace of the Holy Spirit, that you will endeavor to live as becomes a follower of Christ?*
4. **Membership Question 4:** *Do you promise to support the church in its worship and work to the best of your ability?*
5. **Membership Question 5:** *Do you submit yourself to the government and discipline of the church and promise to strive for its purity and peace?*

Christ Community Church's Membership Covenant

(Member's Copy to keep for Personal Records)

Being convinced that I have been spiritually born into a relationship with God by means of faith in Christ and repentance from sin, and being in agreement with Christ Community Church's vision, values, and standards, I feel led by God to become a part of this local assembly of believers. I hereby voluntarily place myself under the spiritual leadership of the elders of this church.

In doing so, I am saying the following:

- I have made a credible profession of faith in Christ.*
- I will seek to grow as a follower of Christ.*
- I will support the worship and work of this church.*
- I will follow the government and discipline of this church.*
- I will protect the peace and purity of this church.*

I understand that the above commitments cannot be maintained without relying on the Holy Spirit to work in my life and without personal and specific commitments. Having completed the Explorer's Class, I agree with and do set the following as standards of biblical maturity toward which I will strive.

In order to grow as a believer I will endeavor to:

- Spend regular time alone with God in prayer and the Scriptures.
- Obey the teachings of Scripture and submit to its authority.
- Be an active listener in worship seeking to apply the truths presented in my life.
- Regularly participate in communion as it is available.
- Regularly fellowship with other believers.

In order to support the worship and work of my church, I will endeavor to:

- Attend Sunday worship faithfully and regularly.
- Avoid drawing undue attention to myself.
- Participate in some form of discipleship to learn and grow.
- Give a tithe or more of my income.
- Discover and use my spiritual gifts.
- Willingly serve in one of the areas of need.
- Pray for CCC's growth, health, and leadership.
- Share my faith with others as God gives the opportunity.
- Invite the unchurched into my life and church family.
- Warmly welcome and engage those who visit on Sunday morning.

In order to follow the government and discipline of this church.

- Pray for and listen to the wisdom and counsel of my elders.
- Seek to build a relationship of trust and love with my elders.
- Open myself to gracious biblical instruction / correction from my elders.

In order to protect the peace and purity of my church I will endeavor to:

- Act in love toward other members.
- Refuse to gossip or to encourage gossip.
- Seek out biblical reconciliation with any CCC member in case of conflict.

Signature

Date

Children and Youth Membership at CCC

Christ Community Church provides parents with the exciting opportunity and the information necessary to prepare their children for church membership. We believe, based on *Deuteronomy 6:6ff*, that God intends for Christian parents, not the church, to have this responsibility. The church's job is to aid in this process. We offer a communicant's manual, *This Do in Remembrance of Me*, for you to use to prepare your child to be admitted to the Lord's Table. Contact Cameron at cameron@christcommunitycobb.org to receive an electronic copy of the manual.

a. What age can a child join Christ Community Church?

Ordinarily, the earliest a child will seek membership is when they are in 3rd grade. However, if a parent thinks they would like for their child to begin earlier, get the communicant's manual and get started! The process here is for the parent(s) to take the child through the material at home.

After completing the material, the child is eligible to be admitted to the Lord's Table in full membership. The child and at least one parent will meet with two elders, who will ask some basic membership questions regarding the child's faith in Christ. The child will also share how they came to embrace Christ as their Savior. If the child is not ready to join in the estimation of the either the elders or parent(s), then a private dialogue between the parent(s) and the elders would take place discussing a postponement until the child is spiritually prepared to join the church.

b. What happens after the child member joins?

Once the child joins, he or she is considered a non-voting child member. They may participate in communion as a communing member of Christ Community Church. The only membership benefit they cannot participate in is voting. They must have completed the Youth Exploring Membership and have reached the age of 18 to receive that membership privilege.

c. What if my child has not been baptized?

If the child has not been baptized as an infant, they need to be baptized upon joining. Though they are joining as a child member, they will be baptized in the same manner as an adult in the worship service.

d. What if my child (up through eighth grade) was a member of another church before coming to CCC?

The parent needs to assist their child in filling out an application for membership at CCC. Then, that child will join their parents for the membership interview and give their profession of faith for membership transfer. Because he was a member of another church before coming to CCC, the child is eligible to take communion even before he or she completes the membership process.

e. If my child has never joined a church, is he or she eligible to take communion at CCC?

We desire that the child either go through the communicant's manual and be interviewed by the elders before they participate in the sacrament of communion.

For Those Who Desire to Baptize Their Child

What is the age span for infant baptism?

There is no definitive age span. This is based on the child's ability to comprehend the basic truths of the Gospel. The session will determine if the child would be appropriate for infant baptism or would be better served by being baptized after a profession of faith and going through the membership process.

What if I want to have my child baptized as an infant?

- First, you will need to have completed the membership process as parent(s). Only members of CCC may have the privilege of receiving covenant baptism. A new member may concurrently pursue baptism for their child and have their child baptized soon after joining the church. Also, any parent seeking baptism along with their child may schedule both for the same service.
- Second, you will need to contact the church office to receive a packet of materials on baptism.
- Third, you will need to fill out the baptism application and return these to the church office. These must be completed before you may schedule your child's baptism.
- After completing the application, you will need to contact the church office to schedule your child for baptism. At least one of the parents must be a member of CCC for your child to be baptized. *Since baptism dates must be integrated as part of the worship service, baptism should be scheduled at least a few weeks in advance.*

After the Exploring Membership is over...

1. What if I'm ready to join CCC?

Review and pray concerning your decision about becoming a CCC member. It is important that you consider this commitment prayerfully before the Lord.

Complete membership paperwork. This includes the Membership Profile and Questionnaire and signing the Membership Covenant (keep one copy for yourself). Completed paperwork should be emailed or handed in to the church office.

Meet with the elders for a New Member Interview. Prospective members meet with the pastor / elders who did not participate in your Exploring Membership for about 45-60 minutes so that our other elders can get to know you better, hear how you came to be a Christian and what God is doing in your life, and answer any questions you might have about the church. The pastor or an elder will ask you to assent to the five membership questions / vows.

Reception by the Congregation. New members will be received during the next possible worship service that works for your family and the church. The church body as a whole recognizes new members by printing their names in the bulletin and asking them to make a public affirmation of their membership vows. Also, if someone desires to be baptized, they will be asked to do so in a Sunday worship service.

2. What if I am not ready to join Christ Community Church?

- a. We strongly encourage you to persevere. Continue to study and pursue membership. For the greater unity of believers, share any concerns that you have about membership at CCC with the elder(s) that oversaw the Exploring Membership process with you.
- b. Take what time you need in the process. Do not make your vow hastily or under compulsion.

3. When would the Elders suspend membership?

- a. If a person cannot answer "yes" to the membership questions, then the Elders will explore with the person their rationale or concerns. If for instance, they say "no" to the question, "Do you promise to serve Christ in His Church by supporting and participating in its worship and work to the best of your ability?," the Elders will explore the individual's struggles. The leadership desires that every person feels confident and excited about the vision and ministry of their own church.
- b. If a person doesn't really understand the basic truths of the Christian faith, the Elders may recommend that the person receive further instruction in the basics of the Christian faith and then meet with them again before joining the church.
- c. If a person has unresolved issues at their former church or a history of conflict at their previous church(es) including CCC, then the Elders will investigate the possibility of reconciliation and repentance.

How to Leave the Church Well

“If you subtract any one member, you have not simply reduced the family in number; you have inflicted an injury on its structure.”

C.S. Lewis, “Membership” in *The Weight of Glory*

- a. **YOU WILL LEAVE CCC SOME DAY.** You will either die or Jesus will come back and call us home or your job will transfer you or you will move or you will be called by God to go elsewhere or you will get frustrated with something or someone and not be able to continue in unity or.... Our desire is that you be able to leave well to the glory of God regardless of why.
- b. If God is calling you to leave our church, then you should be able to let the Session know so that we can pray for you and say goodbye before the church. This allows for a blessed and celebrated parting as we understand that God’s kingdom is greater than one local church, and He sovereignly moves His people about as He sees fit. You should also have informed any ministry leaders that you were serving under so that arrangements can be made to cover your area of service.
- c. If you are leaving because of conflict, then you should practice and/or receive **Matthew 18**. You should start by seeking to reconcile with the person with which you have conflict. Avoid gossip or the giving of a bad report about someone else. You can seek wise counsel from the Session if needed. You should be willing to receive the person that comes to you seeking reconciliation. Repent where warranted. This does not mean that there are no consequences or that you may not need to worship and serve somewhere else; however, it does mean that you seek peace and restoration for the glory of God as much as it depends on you.
- d. If you are leaving because you can no longer thrive and flourish given the worship or ministry style and philosophy, then be sure to let someone on the Session know. This is best done in person if possible so that clarifying questions can be asked and you can be prayed with. We understand that sometimes churches and its members grow apart for any number of reasons. We can still part on good terms for the glory of God and grow from the experience.

Appendix A:

The Chicago Statement on Biblical Inerrancy

“The following Statement affirms the inerrancy of Scripture afresh, making clear our understanding of it and warning against its denial. We are persuaded that to deny it is to set aside the witness of Jesus Christ and of the Holy Spirit and to refuse that submission to the claims of God’s own Word which marks true Christian faith. We see it as our timely duty to make this affirmation in the face of current lapses from the truth of inerrancy among our fellow Christians and misunderstanding of this doctrine in the world at large.”

--from the Preface of the Chicago Statement on Biblical Inerrancy

Articles of Affirmation and Denial

AUTHORITY

WE AFFIRM that the Holy Scriptures are to be received as the authoritative Word of God.
WE DENY that the Scriptures receive their authority from the Church, tradition, or any other human source.

Article I

WE AFFIRM that the Scriptures are the supreme written norm by which God binds the conscience, and that the authority of the Church is subordinate to that of Scripture.
WE DENY that Church creeds, councils, or declarations have authority greater than or equal to the authority of the Bible.

Article II

REVELATION

WE AFFIRM that the written Word in its entirety is revelation given by God.
WE DENY that the Bible is merely a witness to revelation, or only becomes revelation in encounter, or depends on the responses of men for its validity.

Article III

WE AFFIRM that God’s revelation in the Holy Scriptures was progressive.
WE DENY that later revelation, which may fulfill earlier revelation, ever corrects or contradicts it.
We further deny that any normative revelation has been given since the completion of the New Testament writings.

Article V

LANGUAGE

WE AFFIRM that God who made mankind in His image has used language as a means of revelation.
WE DENY that human language is so limited by our creatureliness that it is rendered inadequate as a vehicle for divine revelation. We further deny that the corruption of human culture and language through sin has thwarted God’s work of inspiration.

Article IV

WE AFFIRM that the whole of Scripture and all its parts, down to the very words of the original, were given by divine inspiration.
WE DENY that the inspiration of Scripture can rightly be affirmed of the whole without the parts, or of some parts but not the whole.

Article VI

INSPIRATION

WE AFFIRM that inspiration was the work in which God by His Spirit, through human writers, gave us His Word. The origin of Scripture is divine. The mode of divine inspiration remains largely a mystery to us.

WE DENY that inspiration can be reduced to human insight or to heightened states of consciousness of any kind.

Article VII

HUMAN AUTHORS

WE AFFIRM that God in His Work of inspiration utilized the distinctive personalities and literary styles of the writers whom He had chosen and prepared.

WE DENY that God, in causing these writers to use the very words that He chose, overrode their personalities.

Article VIII

INERRANT

WE AFFIRM that inspiration, though not conferring omniscience, guaranteed true and trustworthy utterance on all matters of which the Biblical authors were moved to speak and write.

WE DENY that the finitude or fallenness of these writers, by necessity or otherwise, introduced distortion or falsehood into God's Word.

Article IX

WE AFFIRM that Scripture in its entirety is inerrant, being free from all falsehood, fraud, or deceit.

WE DENY that Biblical infallibility and inerrancy are limited to spiritual, religious, or redemptive themes, exclusive of assertions in the fields of history and science. We further deny that scientific hypotheses about earth history may properly be used to overturn the teaching of Scripture on creation and the flood.

Article XII

AUTOGRAPHS

WE AFFIRM that inspiration, strictly speaking, applies only to the autographic text of Scripture, which in the providence of God can be ascertained from available manuscripts with great accuracy.

We further affirm that copies and translations of Scripture are the Word of God to the extent that they faithfully represent the original.

WE DENY that any essential element of the Christian faith is affected by the absence of the autographs. We further deny that this absence renders the assertion of Biblical inerrancy invalid or irrelevant.

Article X

INFALLIBLE

WE AFFIRM that Scripture, having been given by divine inspiration, is infallible, so that, far from misleading us, it is true and reliable in all the matters it addresses.

WE DENY that it is possible for the Bible to be at the same time infallible and errant in its assertions. Infallibility and inerrancy may be distinguished, but not separated.

Article XI

TRUTH

WE AFFIRM that propriety of using inerrancy as a theological term with reference to the complete truthfulness of Scripture.

WE DENY that it is proper to evaluate Scripture according to standards of truth and error that are alien to its usage or purpose. We further deny that inerrancy is negated by Biblical phenomena such as a lack of modern technical precision, irregularities of grammar or spelling, observational descriptions of nature, the reporting of falsehoods, the use of hyperbole and round numbers, the

topical arrangement of material, variant selections of material in parallel accounts, or the use of free citations.

Article XIII

INTERNAL CONSISTENCY

WE AFFIRM the unity and internal consistency of Scripture.

WE DENY that alleged errors and discrepancies that have not yet been resolved vitiate the truth claims of the Bible.

Article XIV

ACCOMODATION

WE AFFIRM that the doctrine of inerrancy is grounded in the teaching of the Bible about inspiration.

WE DENY that Jesus' teaching about Scripture may be dismissed by appeals to accommodation or to any natural limitation of His humanity.

Article XV

THE CHURCH

WE AFFIRM that the doctrine of inerrancy has been integral to the Church's faith throughout its history.

WE DENY that inerrancy is a doctrine invented by Scholastic Protestantism or is a reactionary position postulated in response to negative higher criticism.

Article XVI

HOLY SPIRIT

WE AFFIRM that the Holy Spirit bears witness to the Scriptures, assuring believers of the truthfulness of God's written Word.

WE DENY that this witness of the Holy Spirit operates in isolation from or against Scripture.

Article XVII

INTERPRETATION

WE AFFIRM that the text of Scripture is to be interpreted by grammatico-historical exegesis, taking account of its literary forms and devices, and that Scripture is to interpret Scripture.

WE DENY the legitimacy of any treatment of the text or quest for sources lying behind it that leads to relativizing, dehistoricizing, or discounting its teaching, or rejecting its claims to authorship.

Article XVIII

CHRISTIAN LIFE

WE AFFIRM that a confession of the full authority, infallibility, and inerrancy of Scripture is vital to a sound understanding of the whole of the Christian faith. We further affirm that such confession should lead to increasing conformity to the image of Christ.

WE DENY that such confession is necessary for salvation. However, we further deny that inerrancy can be rejected without grave consequences, both to the individual and to the Church.

Article XXI

ICBI's Council:

Gleason L. Archer

James H. Boice

Edmund P. Clowney

Norman L. Geisler

John H. Gerstner

Jay H. Grimstead

Harold W. Heshner

Donald E. Hohe

A. Wetherall Johnson

Kenneth S. Kantzer

James I. Packer

Robert D. Preus

Earl D. Redmacher

Francis A. Schaeffer

R. C. Sproul

Appendix B:

The Redemption Story

The Redemptive Story is God's plan to dwell with His children without corruption or barrier for eternity that begins with Creation and is fulfilled in final Reconciliation when all things will be made new and the sons and daughters of glory will be revealed.

Creation: *What is my identity? Where do I come from? What should the world be like? Where do I find my sense of belonging, significance, and/or security?*

Fall: *What is the problem? Why are things and people not the way they are supposed to be? Who is to blame?*

Redemption: *What is the solution? Who/What is the savior? How will life get better? How will I change?*

Reconciliation: *What is my hope? How am I / is this world ever going to be as it should be? How is this hope/reconciliation going to come to fruition?*

The Genesis 3 Distortion of the Story:

Creation: We can be gods who rule our own lives

Fall: God is holding us back with His rules

Redemption: We can be set free through disobedience

Reconciliation: We will become gods who know the difference between good and evil

The Redemptive Story Rightly Applied:

Creation: We find freedom in obedience to and in the presence of God

Fall: We reject God's rule in our lives and try to take control only to unleash chaos

Redemption: God provides the means of redemption in the work of the Holy Spirit and in the person and work of Jesus Christ even though we had become His enemies

Reconciliation: God will grant us an even greater freedom as we dwell in His presence for an eternity without corruption or barrier

Appendix C:

Personal Worship

An Introduction to Personal Devotions

For some of you, the very idea of a daily pattern of spiritual disciplines may seem not only odd, but overwhelmingly daunting. Here are some simple guidelines in order to help you develop this particular holy habit. But one word of advice up front: Don't be discouraged! Many long-time, mature Christians still struggle with these. Know that God is at work in your life in spite of your weaknesses, and then march on!

1. Make regular, daily time with God a priority. Consider it a daily basic. If you can, spend 10 minutes per day as you begin. Don't try and do more. Over time you will begin to see that 10 minutes grows into 20, 30, or more minutes worshipping God.
2. Try to be as consistent as possible regarding the time and place. Consider making an appointment with Jesus every day to grow in your relationship with Him.
3. Should you have your personal devotions in the mornings? It does seem to be best for most people, and if you're new at this, that's the best place to start. However, find what time works best for you.
4. You will need some structure to your personal prayer time. Again, find what works best for you. Here are a few examples:
 - a. Organize your prayer around the acrostic *ACTS* (*A*doration, *C*onfession, *T*hanksgiving, & *S*upplication).
 - b. Use the Lord's Prayer and personally *expound* on each line.
 - c. Use a prayer book of some type. (Talk to your pastor, ministry leader, or other maturing Christian for recommendations.)
 - d. It is good to have a prayer list; otherwise, you'll *forget* what you need to pray for. Having lists of things you pray for once a week is also a good idea. ("I pray for this ministry each Thursday.")
5. In your Bible study, don't read too much or too little for what you need right now. Again, talk to your pastor or ministry leader for Bible reading plans.
6. Consider singing hymns or praise songs to the Lord along with a CD / tape or without music. Consider using the Sunday worship bulletin song sheets as guides.
7. Don't forget to *meditate* on and *memorize* Scripture. Read Psalm 119 to see the great benefits of hiding God's word in your heart.
8. What about fasting? It's biblical! Jesus even presumes His disciples will fast just as He assumed they would pray. Talk with the pastor or other Christian leader for some direction in this area.
9. Keeping a journal can be a true source of joy and encouragement as you look back on what the Lord has done in your life, what he has taught you, and how He has answered your prayers.
10. Get regularly involved in a small group with fellow Christians to encourage you to be consistent and hold you accountable for your spiritual disciplines!

Appendix D: Bible Reading Plans

Given that God reveals Himself through His Word (our Bible), we must read through the Scriptures in full in order to know what there is to know about Him. This is not an easy proposition. It helps to do this in community or as part of family devotionals. There are a number of ways to go about reading through the Bible. As you mature spiritually, you should try different plans to challenge yourself.

One Year Plan: www.mcheyne.info/calendar.pdf

Two Year Plan: <http://www.thegospelcoalition.org/article/two-year-bible-reading-plan>

Three Year Plan:

[http://storage.cloversites.com/crossroadschurch1/documents/3yrGddTour af cms.pdf](http://storage.cloversites.com/crossroadschurch1/documents/3yrGddTour_af cms.pdf)