

Membership

TO COMMUNITY
ALLIANCE CHURCH



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COMMUNITY ALLIANCE CHURCH

VISION/ PURPOSE STATEMENT:

People Being Transformed by faith in Christ, growing in wisdom, & intentional in relationships & service.

GREAT COMMISSION:

“Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.”
(Jesus in Matthew 28:19-20)

DISCIPLES ARE PEOPLE:

- who have committed their lives to God
- who are maturing in Christ
- who are dependent on His Spirit
- who are connected to people
- who genuinely care for others

OUR VALUES:

- Integrity and truth
- Compassion
- Family
- Innovation/Excellence
- Equipping/Enabling
- Community
- Loyalty to the mission and the message of the C&MA

INTRODUCTION

Every follower of Jesus Christ knows that in order to grow spiritually into Christlikeness, we must be in a growing relationship with God.

In order to become like Jesus we need, not only God, but also the body of Christ; known as the church in today's world.

Belonging to a church is being part of a community of believers growing into Christlikeness and less about membership in an organization.

This study course is designed to assist followers of Jesus everywhere to focus on the essential things and to join with a local body of believers in a commitment to becoming like Jesus.

In New Testament times, church membership was simple. There was just one church, although it met in many locations. People who chose to follow Jesus repented of their sins and publicly confessed the fact by being baptized. They were then a part of the church.

As the church developed during the first century, three types of gatherings were common:

- Public meetings for evangelism and teaching – open to everyone
- Meetings for the instruction of new or potential members
- Church meetings for members only

People had a clear understanding of their relationship to the church depending on their “membership” status.

Today, with multiple church denominations and independent churches, each viewing the church from different perspectives, membership is more complex. But there are good reasons, both biblical and practical, for belonging to a church.

For those of you considering becoming a member of a local Christian and Missionary Alliance church, we hope this manual will help you evaluate yourself and your church, and then make a wise decision about belonging.

PART OF THE FAMILY

“All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore, go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you.” ~ Matthew 28:18-19 NIV

In His last days on earth Jesus made a point of clearly communicating to His followers their reason for existence on earth. He knew their significance as people would not be found in their jobs, families, or roles in society, but in following Him, becoming like Him, and assisting others to follow Him.

Every human being was created with a desire for significance and purpose in life. Jesus knew that the only true and lasting purpose for life is in following Him and helping others to follow Him. In much of the 20th century, becoming a follower of Jesus has been replaced with getting to know “about” Jesus. There are many people in the church today who know “about” Jesus, but don’t “know” Jesus. Those who truly “know” Him have made a commitment to follow Jesus that is reflected in how they live their lives.

Becoming a follower of Jesus means that we commit our whole being and life to Him. The Bible puts it this way: “To all who received (Jesus), to those who believed in His name, He gave the right to become children of God” (John 1:12). Those who receive Jesus are choosing to turn from their sins and, by faith claim Jesus’ full forgiveness and become a part of His family.

After we have done these things, appropriating Jesus’ forgiveness, we are given new life. We are no longer spiritually dead. We refer to it as regeneration. In reality, this is the point where we are freed from our past sin as we begin to follow Jesus.

BEING A DISCIPLE

Being a growing disciple of Jesus is another evidence that we are believers, but it is also a great privilege. In knowing Christ, we find a new significance for all of life. Two commandments of Christ seem to give focus to this process of becoming like Christ. The first one is called the Great Commission and the second one is the Great Commandment.

The Great Commission lends significance to our lives as Jesus makes it clear that we are to be committed to “making disciples (followers of Jesus)” as the clear purpose for life. Jesus is calling all His disciples to be making followers of Jesus as we go about our daily work.

The Great Commandment is a practical guideline for living as a Christian disciple. A Christian disciple is one who is actively following God and living out his commitment to Jesus Christ. As disciples, we must root our lives in what Jesus called the two greatest commandments: to love God with all of our heart, soul, mind and strength and to love our neighbors as ourselves (**Mark 12:28-31**). With these great everyday principles of life motivating us, we can live a life of continual growth in Christ. A believer in Christ is one who is growing into Christlikeness and who is following Christ both in his passion to know God and in his commitment to reaching lost ones and bringing them to maturity in Christ.

Assisting believers in fulfilling the Great Commission

Peter’s goal as he preached to the crowds on the Day of Pentecost (**Acts 2:14-36**) was to win the lost. The results were astounding. Not only were 3,000 people added to the gathered believers, but their ranks increased daily as the newly converted joined the fellowship. This is the norm for the church. Rather than just attracting believers from other churches, the church’s task is to bring lost ones to Jesus and into His church to grow.

The church is Christ’s visible representative on earth. As the members lived in Christ, Christ’s priorities were manifest in them, they became intentional in their relationships with the lost and the lost around them knew God was present in their midst (**John 17:23**).

The result? As the church intentionally lived Christ and shared Christ, many came to know Jesus as Savior and Lord. They were then added to the church.

Church members’ homes, neighborhoods and places of work were intentional places of contact with lost people and natural places to speak of the good news of Jesus Christ. As we go about our daily routine, we become intentional in living out Jesus’ call to make followers (disciples) and thus fulfill His everyday Great Commission and become salt and light to a world in need of Jesus.

• Building Believers Through the Word

The apostles’ teaching, so important to the early church, is now found in the New Testament. Sound teaching of the Word of God is essential for effective personal and corporate development. Every believer should be committed to being rounded in Scripture. A church that is strong in God’s Word will have that Word central in its children’s ministries, its adult ministries, in its preaching, in home Bible studies and throughout the total church ministry.

• **Building Believers Through Community**

Today there is a renewed emphasis on community. The true church of Jesus Christ has always been strong on fellowship. God's love "poured out...into our hearts by the Holy Spirit, whom He has given us" (**Romans 5:5**), inspires our love for one another. Jesus said the world would know our love for God by our love for one another (**John 17:23**).

The Greek word *koinonia*, frequently translated "fellowship," finds its meaning in accountable love for fellow believers. We share each other's joys, we bear each other's burdens, we hold one another accountable for our spiritual growth in Christ.

• **Building Believers Through Worship**

Corporate worship results when individual worshipers come together for that express purpose. We offer praise and thanksgiving not only for what God has done, but for who He is. Corporate worship lifts us into God's presence. True worship leads the person into an encounter with God. In such encounters, God's ministry to us results in our spiritual growth.

• **Building Believers Through Prayer**

Prayer is communication with God. No relationship lasts very long apart from communication. The New Testament church knew that communication with God was an essential foundation for building the believers' lives. Having a mid-week prayer meeting is not the mark of a praying church. A praying church is one that fully understands the power of personal and corporate communication with God.

• **Building Believers Through Ordinances**

The Lord's Supper (communion) and baptism are the two ordinances Jesus left for us to follow regularly. Our Alliance church observes both of them.

Communion

We have already referred to the communion service under the topic of worship. Communion as we practice it is about remembering Christ's sacrifice for us. Communion is an act of worship. We follow the pattern set forth by Paul in (**1 Corinthians 11:17-32**). There he deals with some abuses of the ordinance and gives instructions for its proper observance.

Since the founding of the New Testament church, the Lord's Supper has been a practice of the church. It is a corporate act of worship to be done, as Jesus instructed, "in remembrance of me" (**Corinthians 11:24-25**). Thus, it is a service of remembering. It unites us with the past, with Jesus' broken body and shed blood as He died on the cross to pay for our sins. It calls to mind the present fellowship made possible by His resurrected life. It is also a service of hope as we look forward to Jesus' glorious return.

Baptism

Water baptism was established by Christ Himself for the benefit of His soon-to-be-born church. In the New Testament church, water baptism followed conversion. Baptism is not optional; it is Christ's command. It strengthens the believer and sets at the beginning of his or her life in Christ a pattern of obedience. It is a normal step in the process of discipleship and maturity in Christ.

In the Alliance, we baptize by immersion. This seems to have been the method of New Testament times. Certainly it best symbolizes our burial with Christ and the new life of the resurrected Christ spoken of by Paul in Romans 6:4. It depicts what has occurred in salvation: we are now "dead to sin but alive to God in Christ Jesus" (**Romans 6:11**).

If you have not yet been baptized, we will discuss with you an upcoming opportunity to take this step of obedience and testimony. We will also be prepared to answer in the class session or privately any questions you may have.

• Building Believers Through Practices

In addition to the previous two ordinances, Alliance churches dedicate believers' children and anoint with oil those who are sick.

The practice of dedicating children grows out of Hannah's dedication of Samuel (1 **Samuel 1:24-28**) and Mary and Joseph's dedication of Jesus (**Luke 2:22-39**). Before the gathered membership, parents publicly dedicate their child to God and His purposes and declare their intention to rear their child "in the training and instruction of the Lord" (**Ephesians 6:4**). The other church members, in turn, commit themselves to the parents to be an encouragement to them in their desires to raise their children as a follower of Christ. As Christ's body the church shares a concern for all its members.

Anointing with oil is a practice for which we find clear biblical instruction. "Is any one of you sick? He should call the elders of the church to pray over him and anoint him with oil in the name of the Lord. And the prayer offered in faith will make the sick person well; the Lord will raise him up. If he has sinned, he will be forgiven. Therefore confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous man is powerful and effective" (**James 5:14-16**).

PART OF THE BIG PICTURE

They preached the good news in that city and won a large number of disciples. Then they returned to Lystra, Iconium, and Antioch, strengthening the disciples and encouraging them to remain true to the faith. (Acts 14:21-22)

In the first century, many local churches were begun in cities like Colossae, Ephesus, Philippi and, of course, in Jerusalem. All who believed and received Jesus Christ became members of this church universal. They tended to cluster together in geographical localities to form local churches. These churches were committed to winning the lost, building believers through God's Word, prayer, fellowship and worship, equipping believers to be workers in God's harvest, multiplying leaders, and sending called ones to plant and establish Christ's church worldwide. We see the first century church doing what Jesus established in His ministry with His followers in the gospels.

Over a period of time, the local churches established relationships with other local churches. Before the end of the first century, fellowships of churches began to emerge.

Today there are several hundred denominations united by the personality of a leader (Lutheran, Mennonite), historical experience (Episcopal, Methodist), doctrinal views (Adventists, Baptists) or preferences in church government (Presbyterian, Congregational). We know that the body of Christ is not about denominations; however, there can be great advantage to belonging to a denomination in our culture today.

This local church where you worship is part of the worldwide Christian and Missionary Alliance.

We are **Christian** because we believe and follow Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord. We are **Missionary** because we are committed to reaching lost people with the good news of Jesus Christ. And we are an **Alliance** of people committed to a mission.

The Christian and Missionary Alliance.

Brief History of the Alliance

All of this began more than 120 years ago when Albert B. Simpson, a Presbyterian minister from Canada, was moved by God to reach the masses of unsaved people he saw about him and throughout the world.

In 1882, he plunged into a ministry among New York's masses. His Gospel Tabernacle became a center for evangelism and physical healing. He also launched an illustrated magazine promoting Christian life and missions which later became today's *Alife*. To publish his magazine and his sermons, he began in 1883 the Christian Alliance Publishing Company. That same year he founded his Missionary Training College, the first North American Bible College, to prepare young men and women for missionary service. It is now Nyack (New York) College.

The International Missionary Alliance came into being in 1887. A second organization, the Christian Alliance, was founded as well to promote what Simpson called "deeper life" teaching. By deeper life, Simpson meant the filling of the Holy Spirit as the Christian makes a total surrender to God. Ten years later in 1897, these two organizations merged to become The Christian and Missionary Alliance.

It was not Simpson's intention to begin a new denomination. His objective was an interdenominational fellowship to promote foreign missions and deeper life teaching. After the turn of the century, liberal trends in the mainline denominations caused many Bible-believing Christians to leave their churches and group together in congregations loyal to the word of God. Many of these affiliated with The Christian and Missionary Alliance. In 1912, these congregations became Alliance churches.

The Alliance Today

Today, the Alliance is still first and foremost an alliance of people committed to worldwide evangelization. It concentrates on evangelism and church planting. Those it sends forth as ministers and missionaries must be strong in their faith, filled with the Spirit of God and motivated to reach people who are without Christ. No two Alliance churches are exactly the same, for they minister uniquely in diverse communities. Despite that diversity, they are united in their purpose to communicate God's love to a lost world.

What We Believe

As you would expect, Jesus Christ is central to Alliance belief and teaching. He is Savior, Sanctifier, Healer and Coming King. The Alliance emphasizes the need for a genuine spiritual conversion to Christ, a Spirit-filled life and dedicated, effective service. In 1965 the Alliance adopted a formal doctrinal statement, but it simply reinforced the scriptural truths Alliance people had held from the beginning.

The Alliance Statement of Faith

Jesus Christ is adequate to meet the needs of the whole person. That, in essence, is the Alliance message. We exalt Jesus as the living supreme revelation of divine love, the sacrificial Lamb of God who alone provides eternal salvation, the One sufficient for every need of body and soul, the only hope for a lost world, the Coming King of Kings and Lord of Lords. What follows is the formal Statement of Faith of the Christian and Missionary Alliance.

STATEMENT OF FAITH

What The Alliance believes about God, how He relates to us, and how we relate to Him is foundational in its teachings. The Alliance wholeheartedly serves God and the people of His world, based soundly on the Bible. We live and die by these words and believe they bring the only life worth living—one wholly committed to the King Jesus.

There is one God, who is infinitely perfect, existing eternally in three persons: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. (*Deuteronomy 6:4, Matthew 5:48, Matthew 28:19*)

Jesus Christ is the true God and the true man. He was conceived by the Holy Spirit and born of the virgin Mary. He died upon the cross, the Just for the unjust, as a substitutionary sacrifice, and all who believe in Him are justified on the ground of His shed blood. He arose from the dead according to the Scriptures. He is now at the right hand of Majesty on high as our great High Priest. He will come again to establish His kingdom, righteousness and peace (*Philippians 2:6-11, Luke 1:34-38, 1 Peter 3:18, Hebrews 2:9, Romans 5:9, Acts 2:23-24, Hebrews 8:1, Matthew 26:64*)

The Holy Spirit is a divine person, sent to indwell, guide, teach, empower the believer, and the world of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment. (*John 14:15-18, John 16:13; Acts 1:8, John 16:7-11*)

The Old and New Testaments, inerrant as originally given, were verbally inspired by God and are a complete revelation of His will for the salvation of men. They constitute the divine and only rule of Christian faith and practice. (*2 Peter 1:20-21; 2 Timothy 3:15-16*)

Man was originally created in the image and likeness of God: he fell through disobedience, incurring thereby both physical and spiritual death. All men are born with a sinful nature, are separated from the life of God, and can be saved only through the atoning work of the Lord Jesus Christ. The portion of the unrepentant and unbelieving is existence forever in conscious torment; and that of the believer, in everlasting joy and bliss. (*Genesis 1:27, Romans 3:23, 1 Corinthians 15:20-23, Revelation 21:8, Revelation 21:1-4*)

Salvation has been provided through Jesus Christ for all men; and those who repent and believe in Him are born again of the Holy Spirit, receive the gift of eternal life, and become the children of God. (*Titus 3:4-7*)

It is the will of God that each believer should be filled with the Holy Spirit and be sanctified wholly, being separated from sin and the world and fully dedicated to the will of God, thereby receiving power for holy living and effective service. This is both a crisis and a progressive experience wrought in the life of the believer subsequent to conversion. (*1 Thessalonians 5:23, Acts 1:8, Romans 6:1-14*)

Provision is made in the redemptive work of the Lord Jesus Christ for the healing of the mortal body. Prayer for the sick and anointing with oil are taught in the Scriptures and are privileges for the Church in this present age. (*Matthew 8:16-17, James 5:13-16*)

The Church consists of all those who believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, are redeemed through His blood, and are born again of the Holy Spirit. Christ is the Head of the Body, the Church, which has been commissioned by Him to go into all the world as a witness, preaching the gospel to all nations. The local church is a body of believers in Christ who are joined together for the worship of God, for edification through the Word of God, for prayer, fellowship, the proclamation of the gospel, and observance of the ordinances of Baptism and the Lord's Supper. (*Ephesians 1:22-23, Matthew 28:19-20, Acts 2:41-47*)

There shall be a bodily resurrection of the just and of the unjust; for the former, a resurrection unto life; for the latter, a resurrection unto judgment. (*1 Corinthians 15:20-23, John 5:28-29*)

The second coming of the Lord Jesus Christ is imminent and will be personal, visible, and premillennial. This is the believer's blessed hope and is a vital truth which is an incentive to holy living and faithful service. (*Luke 21:27, Titus 2:11-14*)

WHAT WE BELIEVE ABOUT MISSIONS

Together as a Christ-centered, Acts 1:8 family, we will Love, Proclaim, Reach, and Launch.

WE WILL LOVE

The essence of our calling is summed up in a single word: Love. In a world that has romanticized and sexualized love, the church has a beautiful opportunity to show the love of God Himself. Yet, each local church must ask, "Have we confused being 'nice' or 'neighborly' for being truly loving? Do the people of our community see us as a loving people? Are we dependent upon the Spirit to live His loving fruit through us?"

Matt. 22:34–40; Luke 6:27–36; John 13:34–35, 15:9–17; Rom. 5:5–8, 13:8–10; Gal. 5:6, 13–14, 22; Eph. 3:14–19

WE WILL PROCLAIM

We celebrate that our God is a speaking God who has revealed Himself to us. The Bible is our inspired text, which He will never contradict. We are commissioned to proclaim His message in word and deed. We will "not be ashamed of the gospel" but serve as "Christ's ambassadors." And so we ask ourselves, "Are we students of the Scripture? Do our sermons and life messages arise from the Word? Do we have a listening ear for His voice? Are our words and lives proclaiming His truth? Do we both 'show' and 'tell' the truth?"

Acts 1:8; Rom. 1:16; 2 Cor. 2:17, 4:5, 13; 5:11–21; 1 Tim. 4:15–16; 2 Tim. 3:14–4:6; 1 Peter 2:10–12

WE WILL REACH

While He who is "not willing that any should perish" calls us to take His loving message to everyone, the Alliance family is being called in particular to prayerfully seek to reach:

People on the Move: The world's population is shifting and nations are coming to our neighborhoods. Is our church fully participating in this unprecedented opportunity to share the gospel?

People Overlooked: Has our church been guilty of seeing children, the disabled, the senior adult, or anyone as less important than everyone else?

People Lacking Access: As 4,075 peoples are still to be reached, have we joined the Alliance family in taking seriously our assignment to participate in bringing the gospel to them?

Matt. 24:12–14; Mark 10:13–16; Acts 17:24–28; Rom. 10:6–15; 1 Cor. 9:19–23; Rev. 5:9–10; 7:9–10

WE WILL LAUNCH

To accomplish the call God has given to us, we must see the entire body of Christ mobilized for Kingdom service. May God allow us to launch new waves of godly people as full participants in Christ's service: evangelizing, church planting, generously giving, boldly praying, joyfully creating... So, as a church, we would do well to ask ourselves, "Does our congregation know their spiritual gifting? Have we found meaningful ways to serve Christ through our gifts? What hindrances do people encounter when wanting to be more engaged in Kingdom service? What can our church do to open the door to service more widely?"

Matt. 9:35–38; Luke 19:11–27; John 4:34–38; Rom. 12:1–8; Eph. 2:8–10, 4:1–16; 1 Cor. 12; 1 Peter 2:4–5, 9

THE FOUR ALLIANCE SYMBOLS



The Statement of Faith is further expansion of what has become known as “the Fourfold Gospel.” The figures in the Alliance logo symbolize the sufficiency of Christ.

We desire to know Jesus Christ as Savior, Sanctifier, Healer, and Coming King and to complete His Great Commission.



Savior

The **Cross** stands for salvation through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, God’s Son.



Sanctifier

The **laver**, a vessel containing water for ceremonial washing, stands for sanctification and the daily cleansing from sin through the activity of the indwelling Holy Spirit.



Healer

The **pitcher** stands for divine life and healing in the obedience to God’s word.



Coming King

The **crown** stands for the Coming King, who will return for those who know Him as Savior and Lord.

REQUIREMENTS & EXPECTATIONS

If after reading all the material you decide to join CAC, let me give you the next steps and some expectations.

We expect that you will:

1. Live a Biblical lifestyle
2. Be a regular attender
3. You will support our ministries
(1 Corinthians 16:1-2, 2 Corinthians 9:6-14, 2 Corinthians 8:13-15)
4. Use your gifts to serve in the church & in the community
5. Get connected to a Life Group, Bible study or ministry team.

Fill out the membership application

Once completed, it will be given to one of our Elders who will then contact you for an interview. They will need to hear your story and make sure that you have a clear understanding of your personal relationship with Jesus as your Savior.



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