

Welcome to Discovering Church Membership

The booklet in your hands is an introduction to Christ Community Church — its beliefs, ministry and goals. It's part of a membership class where the information will be shared and discussed around the table. We're happy about your interest in CCC, and we pray that God will bless you as you discover the meaning of "membership" in his church.

You might be new to CCC. You might be new to the Christian Reformed denomination (of which CCC is a member). Or maybe you're new to church altogether — except for the odd wedding, you weren't inside one until a while ago. Whatever the case, you want to know more, and we're happy to tell you more. And, of course, if there are questions we haven't answered in this booklet, please ask. Remember, in a CCC membership class, there's no such thing as a dumb question — except the ones you don't dare to ask.

"...you are fellow citizens with God's people and members of God's household, built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the chief cornerstone."

(Ephesians 2:19-20)

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101



Church “Membership”

When? Why? How?





101. Church “Membership”

People go to church for different reasons. Some learned the habit as children and it stuck. For others it began with an invitation — they came with a friend, then it grew into something more personal, and more lasting. For most people going to church includes a feeling that life needs “something more” — more than money and things. Churchgoers know that we need better help with our problems, better goals for our lives and better values to live by. And although churches are far from perfect, they do address those needs.

Christ Community might be your first experience of church. Or maybe you’ve come through other churches on your way here. In any case, we welcome you to this new adventure in your life.



Membership: When? Why? How?

When? Church membership begins with Jesus. The church wouldn't exist without him. His life, death and resurrection are the central story of the Bible. He is our peace. He gives us hope. He teaches us the ways of love. Church membership grows out of a relationship with him.

There's no standard way of getting into a relationship with Jesus.

It might begin with a crisis. When life is hollow, broken and all wrong, Jesus calls your name. He forgives you for the past. Your life goes in a new direction.

The apostle Paul is an example. He was converted on the road to Damascus. Within days his life was totally changed. Nothing was ever the same again.

But we can also come to know Jesus gradually, over time. This often happens under the influence of others—parents, grandparents, teachers and friends. In this case faith grows from small beginnings into strength and maturity.

Timothy, the young pastor in Ephesus, a protégé of Paul, is an example. His faith grew under the direction of his mother and grandmother until it was a grown-up faith.

Paul's Conversion Acts 9:1-19

Saul was...breathing out murderous threats against the Lord's disciples. He went to the high priest and asked him for letters to the synagogues in Damascus, so that if he found any there who belonged to the Way..., he might take them as prisoners... As he neared Damascus on his journey, a light from heaven flashed around him. He fell to the ground and heard a voice say to him, "Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?"

"Who are you, Lord?" Saul asked. "I am Jesus, who you are persecuting," he replied...

Saul got up from the ground, but when he opened his eyes he could see nothing. So they led him by the hand into Damascus. For three days he was blind, and did not eat or drink anything...

Then Ananias came to the house and entered it. Placing his hands on Saul, he said, "Brother Saul, the Lord Jesus...has sent me to you so that you may see again and be filled with the Holy Spirit." Immediately, something like scales fell from Saul's eyes, and he could see again. He got up and was baptized and...regained his strength.

Why? A relationship with Jesus is obviously wonderful, and very important. But what about the church? Do we really need it? Isn't Jesus enough all by himself? Can't I work out my relationship with him on my own?

Actually, no. The Bible gives good reasons for joining the church. The most simple reason is that Jesus created it and wants us to be part of it. The New Testament calls the church "the body of Christ." Followers of Jesus are called "members" — body parts — of the church. This "body" is meant to be the hands and voice of Jesus — to bring forgiveness, peace and hope into the world. The church matters to Jesus, so it matters to us.

As members of the church we:

- Worship together
- Pray together and support each other
- Learn together
- Hold each other accountable
- Share the good news with our community
- _____
- _____
- _____

Matthew 16:18

"You are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of hell will not overcome it..."

Romans 12:4-5

"Just as each of us has one body with many members, and these members do not all have the same function, so in Christ we who are many form one body, and each member belongs to all the others..."

How? In the Christian Church formal membership begins with a baptism, a ceremonial washing that takes place during Sunday worship.

Baptism shows that we need to be washed – internally. We need to be washed of our wrongs, our guilt. In other words, we need to be forgiven.

Baptism also shows that we need a new beginning. The Bible tells how baptism unites us with Jesus in his death and resurrection. Jesus died on the cross as The Sinner and on Easter morning he rose from the dead. We need to follow that pattern — we need to die to our old selves and allow a new self to rise up.

At Christ Community Church we baptize *believers and their children*. If you have never been baptized, you will be received into this church through baptism. If you have been baptized before in another church, we will honour that.

The baptism of children is based on the Bible’s teaching about faith, family and the promises of God.

Many years before Jesus, God called Abraham to be the founder of a new community, a new family of believers. His children were included in that family (the “covenant”). The ritual of circumcision proved the point. Male members of the household, including boys eight days old, were circumcised (Genesis 17:9-14).

Children of the covenant learned about the promises of God in their natural home environment. Parents were expected to teach their children and children were expected to “grow into faith.”

Baptism is a Washing
1 Corinthians 6:11

“You were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of God.”

Baptism is a Dying and a Rising
Romans 6:4

“We were...buried with him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ raised from the dead..., we too might live a new life.”

Jesus & the Children
Mark 10:14

“Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these.”

When the Christian church was born, the requirement of circumcision was discontinued. New Christians do not have to be circumcised. They are baptized. But the pattern of enfolding whole families continues. The Bible tells how converts to Christianity would often be baptized with all their “households.”

And Jesus? He loved children, welcomed them into his arms, blessed them, and said that his kingdom belongs them. Grownups, he said, have to imitate children.

Of course, a baby doesn’t understand the meaning of baptism. That’s why parents who present their children for baptism make solemn commitments to teach them the way of salvation through Christ. We trust that, as children grow, they will embrace the promises of God. We trust that because we know the power of God’s promises. They have the capacity to generate faith, hope and love.

Baptism is not magic, not for grown-ups, not for babies. It doesn’t give magic protection against sin, selfishness, hypocrisy, temper tantrums and childhood diseases. Baptism is God’s sign and promise that he will wash away our guilt and give us a new beginning. We have to grow into the meaning of baptism from the day it happens and for the rest of our lives.

**Lydia’s “Household”
Acts 16:14-15**

“The Lord opened [Lydia’s] heart to respond to Paul’s message [and] she and the members of her household were baptized.”

**A Jailer’s “Household”
Acts 16:31-33**

“[Paul and Silas] said, ‘Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved—you are your household.’ Then they spoke the word of the Lord to him and to all the others in his house. At that hour of the night the jailer took them and washed their wounds; then immediately he and all his family were baptized.”

Profession of Faith

Profession of Faith means that you publicly accept the promises God made in your baptism. You accept Jesus. You accept his forgiveness. You accept him as your teacher and guide. You commit yourself to the church and its ministry. And you do that on Sunday in front of the church.

(If you are baptized as an adult, it's a bit different. Your baptism and profession of faith will be one and the same thing.)

This membership class will prepare you to make public profession of faith. It explains the basics of Christianity, and of Christ Community Church and its ministry. A follow up course called *Deeper Roots* goes deeper into Christian faith and practice.

**Timothy's Confession
1 Timothy 6:12**

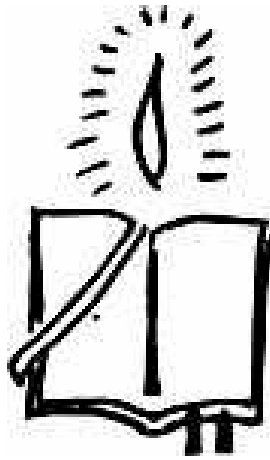
"Fight the good fight of the faith. Take hold of the eternal life to which you were called when you made your good confession in the presence of many witnesses."

**Keeping the Faith
Hebrews 3:1**

"Fix your thoughts on Jesus, the apostle and high priest, whom we confess."

Hebrews 10:23

"Let us hold unswervingly to the hope we profess, for he who promised is faithful."



**Our Beliefs
(Part 1)**



102: Our Beliefs (Part 1)

All people have beliefs. Some believe that country music is wonderful. Others believe in UFOs and astrology. Some believe that money makes you happy. Some believe that people are basically good. Others believe that life is pointless and people are out to get you.

Most beliefs come from somewhere. You learn a lot of them at home when you're growing up. You pick up other beliefs at school and still others on the playground behind the school. Some of them are worth believing, and others will turn out to be wrong.

The Bible

Christian beliefs come from the Bible. The Bible is a collection of inspired writings that tell about God and his world. It tells about God's chosen people — Israel. It tells Jesus. It tells about the church that gathers in his name. It includes collections of poetry and wise sayings and prophetic speeches. It tells about your place in the world and about the life God wants you to live.

When we say that the Bible is *inspired*, we mean that it's not just a human production. God's Spirit moved its authors to write what they did. And the same Spirit now helps us to understand its message.

You can trust the Bible. It tells you the truth. It gives you guidance when you need to answer hard questions or face hard times.

The Bible is one of your basic tools for church membership. If you don't have a copy, you should obtain one. If you're unsure about translations, please

The Bible: Where to Get Started

The Ten Commandments.....	Exodus 20
The Shepherd's Psalm.....	Psalm 23
The Beatitudes.....	Matthew 5:1-12
The Lord's Prayer.....	Matthew 6:9-13
God's Care for Us.....	Matthew 6:25-34
When You Feel Guilty.....	Psalm 51
	Luke 15:11-24
When You Feel Alone.....	Psalm 139
	Romans 8:31-39
When You're Tired.....	Psalm 145:8-21
	Isaiah 40:28-31
When Someone Dies.....	John 14:1-7
	2 Corinthians 5:1-10
Christmas.....	Luke 2:1-20
The Meaning of Christmas.....	John 1:1-18
Why Jesus Suffered.....	Isaiah 53
What Easter Means.....	1 Corinthians 15
The Christian Life.....	Romans 12
	Colossians 3:1-17
True Love.....	1 Corinthians 13
Staying Humble.....	Philippians 2:1-11
Staying Positive.....	Philippians 4:4-9

Creeds and Confessions

As part of the Christian Reformed family of churches, Christ Community Church accepts three *ecumenical creeds* (the Apostles' Creed, the Nicene Creed and the Athanasian Creed) and three *Reformed confessions*. These are summary statements of the Bible's message. They don't replace the Bible. Instead, they give us a digest of its most important teaching. And sometimes they clarify disputed issues.

The Apostles' Creed

The *Apostles' Creed* is our shortest creed. It summarizes the message of the apostles, the first Christian missionaries.

The Heidelberg Catechism

The Catechism is the best known of the Reformed Confessions. The name *Catechism* refers to its Q&A teaching method. It was written in 1563 in *Heidelberg* (now in Germany) by a young theologian, Zacharius Ursinus, 28, and an even younger pastor, Caspar Olevianus, 26. They gave it a deeply personal tone that has won respect and appreciation since its publication. It has been translated into many European, African and Asian languages.

The Catechism explains the Christian basics: the Apostles' Creed, Ten Commandments, Lord's Prayer, baptism and the Lord's Supper.

The Apostles' Creed

I believe in God,
the Father almighty,
creator of heaven and earth.

I believe in Jesus Christ,
his only Son,
our Lord,
who was
conceived by the Holy Spirit
and born of the virgin Mary.
He suffered under Pontius Pilate,
was crucified, died,
and was buried;
he descended to hell.

The third day
he rose again from the dead.
He ascended to heaven
and is seated at the right hand
of God the Father almighty.
From there he will come to
judge the living and the dead.

I believe in the Holy Spirit,
the holy catholic church,
the communion of saints,
the forgiveness of sins,
the resurrection of the body,
and the life everlasting.

The Catechism, QA 1

What is your only comfort in life and in death?

That I am not my own,
but belong — body and soul — in life and in death —
to my faithful Savior Jesus Christ.

He has fully paid for all my sins with his precious blood,
and has set me free from the tyranny of the devil.

He also watches over me in such a way
that not a hair can fall from my head
without the will of my Father in heaven:
in fact, all things must work together for my salvation.

Because I belong to him,
Christ, by his Holy Spirit,
assures me of eternal life
and makes me wholeheartedly willing and ready
from now on to live for him.

The Belgic Confession

The Belgic Confession was written in 1561 by Guido de Brès. He prepared it for the Spanish King Phillip to explain and defend the Protestant faith. De Brès died as a martyr in 1567, but his confession endures as a clear statement of Christian beliefs.

The Confession has 37 articles that answer questions like – *Who is God? How do we know God? Who is Jesus? How are sinners saved? What is the church for?* Etc.

Belgic Confession, Articles 1 & 2

We all believe in our hearts and confess with our mouths that there is a single and simple spiritual being, whom we call God — eternal, incomprehensible, invisible, unchangeable, infinite, almighty; completely wise, just, and good, and the overflowing source of all good.

We know him by two means:
First, by the creation, preservation and government of the universe...

Second, he makes himself known to us more openly by his holy and divine Word...

The Canons of Dordt

The word *canon* means “established rule; principle.” The Canons of Dordt are doctrinal principles defined by a Dutch church assembly — the Synod of Dordt — in 1618-19. The Synod prepared them to settle a controversy relating to the doctrine of *predestination*.

Many people get the chills when they think of predestination. Isn't it cold — and plain wrong — for God to *predestine* people to *reject* him and then *condemn* them for doing what they were *predestined* to do?

But that's a straw man. If we understand predestination in a more positive way, it gives deep assurance. The good news of the Bible is that God controls our salvation totally. And it's not a weak, take-it-or-leave-it salvation. It will conquer our flaws, our selfishness, our indecision. God will not be denied. When he makes up his mind to save you, you can only surrender to his irresistible love.

In its conclusion, the Canons reject false interpretations of predestination. Predestination, it says, does not mean that God is “the author of sin, unjust, a tyrant, and a hypocrite.” It does not mean that a chosen few can sit easy (and be “carnally self-assured”) because “nothing endangers the salvation of the chosen.” When God has his hand on you, you don't sit easy.

The Synod also urged Christian leaders “to deal with this teaching in a godly and reverent manner...with a view to the glory of God's name, holiness of life, and the comfort of anxious souls.”

T.U.L.I.P.

The Five Main Points of the Canons of Dordt

T - Total Depravity

(Sin affects everyone, everything)

U - Unconditional Election

(Salvation is rooted in God's choice, not our achievements)

L - Limited Atonement

(Jesus died for the chosen)

I - Irresistible Grace

(God's work in you is irresistible)

P – Perseverance of the Saints

(Once God saves you, you can't get out of it anymore)

Our World Belongs to God

Recently the Christian Reformed Church felt the need for a new statement of faith. Although the faith hasn't changed, the questions have. And so we have *Our World Belongs to God: A Contemporary Testimony* (1986).

Our World Belongs to God tells the biblical story in four parts:

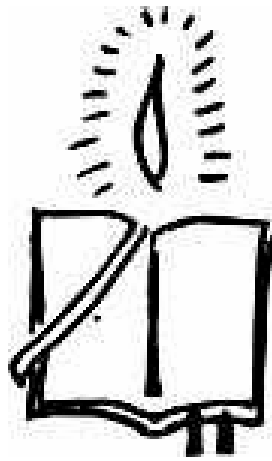
- 1) Creation
- 2) the Fall into Sin
- 3) Redemption
- 4) the New Creation

And it tells this story against the backdrop of current world views and issues.

The Testimony makes the important point that God saves more than individual believers. He saves a *world*. Our souls need to be saved. So does culture. So do technology, work, the family, the environment, politics — all of life. This world is God's creation. He intends to restore it and make it whole. All of it. And your life and work are included.

1. As followers of Jesus Christ, living in this world – which some seek to control, but which others view with despair – we declare with joy and trust: Our world belongs to God!
17. All spheres of life— marriage and family, work and worship, school and state, our play and art— bear the wounds of our rebellion. Sin is present everywhere— in pride of race, in arrogance of nations, in abuse of the weak and helpless, in disregard for water, air, and soil... We have become victims of our own sin.
24. God remembered his promise to reconcile the world to himself; he has come among us in Jesus Christ, the eternal Word made flesh...
31. Jesus stays with us in the Spirit, who renews our hearts, moves us to faith, leads us in the truth, stands by us in our need, and makes our obedience fresh and vibrant.
45. The rule of Jesus Christ covers the whole world. To follow this Lord is to serve him everywhere, without fitting in, as light in the darkness, as salt in a spoiling world.
56. Our hope for a new earth is not tied to what humans can do, for we believe that one day every challenge to God's rule and every resistance to his will shall be crushed. Then his kingdom shall come fully, and our Lord shall rule forever.





**Our Beliefs
(Part 2)**



102: Our Beliefs (Part 2)

All people have beliefs. But some beliefs matter more than others. I might believe that the Vancouver Canucks will win the next Stanley Cup. That belief is misguided but not especially harmful. Other people believe in the Vancouver Canucks too (a few anyway), and they hold down jobs, take care of their children and live normal lives. In the big scheme of things, the Stanley Cup doesn't matter very much.

Other beliefs do matter. Some of them matter a lot. I might believe, for instance, that this world is an amazing creation. If that's true, then I should take good care of it. I might believe that every person has dignity regardless of race or social class. Then I have to show respect to every person. Beliefs like this will affect my attitudes, my relationships, my work — everything.

Christian beliefs belong to the very important category. They give us a world view. They form our values. They help us understand difficult things like suffering and violence. They also define the purpose of our lives. They can help us when we fail. And, when we experience loss, or stand at a graveside, they give us perspective.

In this class, we will explore seven foundational Christian beliefs.

1. "God Created the World"
2. "Sin Entered the World"
3. "God's Son Came into the World"
4. "Jesus Died for Our Sins"
5. "Jesus Arose from the Dead"
6. "Jesus Sent the Spirit into the Church"
7. "Jesus Sends His Church into the World"

1. “God Created the World”
 (...and his fingerprints are everywhere)

Our world is not just a big accident. It’s not a pile of material that accidentally came together and accidentally formed stars and planets, with a planet that happened to support simple forms of life that accidentally developed into higher forms of life and eventually into people like you.

Christian faith begins with a sense of *wonder* – this world is a Creator’s masterpiece. Our small blue planet has spring flowers and fall colours, the sunrise and the sunset, newborn babies and the joy of human love. And the fingerprints of God are all over it.

God’s creativity is very obvious in people. Each of us is made in God’s image and likeness. I reflect something of the God who “*knit me together in my mother’s womb*” (Psalm 139:13). So do you.

God made us to be “stewards” of his creation. On the rivers and oceans, in the forests and fields, in shops and offices and homes, we are his agents, caring for his world. We are all earth-keepers.

Genesis 1:1

In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.

Psalms 19:1

The heavens declare the glory of God; the skies proclaim the work of his hands.

Genesis 1:27

God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them.

**Belgic Confession, art. 1
 (How We Know God)**

We know [God] by two means:

First, by the creation, preservation and government of the universe, since that universe is before our eyes like a beautiful book in which all creatures, great and small, are as letters to make us ponder the invisible things of God...

Second, he makes himself known to us more openly by his holy and divine Word, as much as we need in this life, for his glory and for the salvation of his own.

2. “Sin Entered the World” (Something’s wrong here)

Christian faith has a sense of wonder — we live in a beautiful world. But Christian faith is also realistic. The world can be cruel, violent, often hungry, often sad. Something’s wrong here.

It’s also obvious that people — including me and you — can be egotistical, cruel and plain sinful. We sin in profound ways and in petty ways.

People can create beautiful art and wonderful music. They can also commit genocide. People can show amazing love for others. They can also be very selfish.

The light of God is in everyone, and so is the worm of evil.

Christian people learn to say two things that are both true even though they sound contradictory.

On one hand we say, *“I praise you, Lord, because I am fearfully and wonderfully made”* (Psalm 139:14).

But we also have to say, *“God, have mercy on me, a sinner”* (Luke 18:13).

Genesis 3:1-7

Now the serpent was more crafty than any of the wild animals the Lord God had made. He said to the woman, “Did God really say, ‘You must not eat from any tree in the garden?’”

The woman said to the serpent, “We may eat of the trees in the garden, but God did say, ‘You must not eat fruit from the tree...in the middle of the garden, and you must not touch it, or you will die.

“You will surely not die,” the serpent said. “For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.”

When the woman saw that the fruit of the tree was good for food and pleasing to the eye, and also desirable for gaining wisdom, she took some and ate it. She also gave some to her husband...and he ate it. Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they realized that they were naked; so they sewed fig leaves together and made coverings for themselves.

Romans 5:12,15

...sin entered the world through one man, and death through sin, and in this way death came to all men, because all sin... Many died by the trespass of one man.

3. “God’s Son Came into the World” (...because no one else would do)

At **Christmas** time Christians say that “Jesus is the reason for the season.” It’s true. Actually, he’s the reason for more than just Christmas. He’s the reason for a whole religion. There would be no Christianity and no churches without him (a good amount of western culture would disappear too). Jesus matters.

Jesus was more than a wise teacher who could draw big crowds. He was, and is, the Son of God. With the Father and the Spirit, he is One God. In the events of his life – his teaching and healing, his love for the sinner, outcast, poor and forgotten – he showed us the character of God.

At Christmas time we celebrate the *incarnation*. The Son of God became a baby in Bethlehem, a boy in the town of Nazareth, a teacher and healer in the villages of 1st century Palestine. He shared our joy and pain, love and laughter. He was like us in all things except for sin.

Incarnation

John 1:1,14,18

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning...

The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the One and Only who came from the Father, full of grace and truth...

No one has ever seen God, but God the One and Only, who is at the Father’s side, has made him known.

Philippians 2:6-8

[Although Jesus was] in very nature God, [he] did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, but made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness [and] humbled himself and became obedient to death, even death on a cross!”

Hebrews 1:1-3

In the past God spoke to our forefathers through the prophets at many times in various ways, but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed heir of all things, and through whom he made the universe. The Son is the radiance of God’s glory and the exact representation of his being...

4. “Jesus died for Our Sins”
 (His punishment is my peace)

If you read through the Bible, you’ll discover that God is passionate about two things — justice and love. He wants things to be holy, right and fair — that’s justice. And he loves people totally.

Justice and love are in tension. Justice means that guilt has to be punished. People can’t be selfish and cruel and get away with it. But love means that God wants to forgive. He wants to bring his lost sons and daughters back home.

How can both happen? How can God show love while respecting the demands of justice?

On **Good Friday**, we see how. On Good Friday we remember the suffering of Jesus — he was arrested, tried, condemned and executed.

It was no accident. Jesus’ death was an *atoning* death. He died as our *substitute*. He answered the demand of justice. He answered that demand because he loved us.

Atonement

Isaiah 53:3-7

He was despised and rejected by men, a man of sorrows and familiar with suffering...

Surely he took up our infirmities and carried our sorrows...

He was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was upon him, and by his wounds we are healed.

We all, like sheep, have gone astray, each one has turned to his own way; and the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all.

Mark 10:45

The Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.

Romans 5:8

God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

1 John 2:24

This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins.

5. “Jesus Arose from the Dead” (...and heaven has already started!)

Jesus died on a Friday. The next Sunday his grave was empty, and his followers saw him again. He was alive!

But...he was different. Really different. He wasn't alive like you and I are alive. He wasn't going to live just another twenty or thirty years and then die again, this time for good. Jesus was alive the way people will be alive in heaven.

The resurrection is the greatest miracle of the Bible. The early church talked about it all the time. Jesus, they said, conquered death itself!

We celebrate the resurrection of Jesus on **Easter**. That day, even more than Christmas, is the highlight of the Christian year. It means that heaven has already started!

Christ has risen! And he's only the first. Everyone who belongs to him will be raised from the dead like he was — when he comes again.

At the end of the Bible Jesus says, “Yes, I am coming soon!” It's going to day of wonders.

Resurrection

Luke 24:1-6

On the first day of the week, very early in the morning, the women took the spices they had prepared and went to the tomb. They found the stone rolled away from the tomb, but when they entered, they did not find the body of the Lord Jesus... Suddenly two men in clothes that gleamed like lightening stood beside them... The men said, “Why do you look for the living among the dead? He is not here. He has risen!”

Acts 13:30-31, 43

God raised him from the dead, and for many days he was seen by those who had traveled with him from Galilee to Jerusalem. They are now his witnesses... God raised him from the dead, never to decay...

1 Corinthians 15:20-21, 23

Christ has indeed been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep. For since death came through a man, the resurrection of the dead comes also through a man... But each in his own turn: Christ, the firstfruits; then, when he comes, those who belong to him.

6. “Jesus Sent the Spirit into the Church”

During his ministry Jesus healed the sick, shared meals with outcasts and showed us the beginnings of a new world. And he did it all in person. Then he went away — he ascended into heaven (Acts 1:9-11). But his work continues. It continues through people touched by the Holy Spirit.

Spirit originally meant “breath” or “wind.” You can’t see the wind but you know it’s there from the way it cools your face and bends the trees. The *Holy Spirit* is “God’s wind.” We know he’s there from the effect he has.

The Spirit —

- helps me believe in Jesus.
- gives me peace with God and others and myself.
- lets the “fruit of the Spirit” grow in me. These are personal qualities that demonstrate the mind and heart of Jesus.
- gives me the “gifts of the Spirit.” These are special abilities that help us do Jesus’ work. Everyone who follows him receives a gift.
- sends the church into the nations to tell the good news about Jesus.

On **Pentecost** Sunday we celebrate the work of the Holy Spirit.

John 14:16; 15:26

“[Jesus said,] *I will ask the Father and he will give you another Counselor to be with you forever – the Spirit of truth... When the Counselor comes..., the Spirit of truth who goes out from the Father, he will testify about me.*”

Acts 2:1-4

“*When the day of Pentecost came, they were all together in one place. Suddenly a sound like the blowing of a violent wind came from heaven and filled the whole house where they were sitting. They saw what seemed to be tongues of fire that separated and came to rest on each of them. All were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit enabled them.*”

Galatians 5:22

“*The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control.*”

I Peter 4:10

“*Each of you should use whatever gift he has received, faithfully administering God’s grace in its various forms.*”

7. “Jesus Sends His Church into the World” (the hands and arms and voice of Jesus)

Christians believe in the church. Not that it’s perfect. Not that it’s above criticism. Actually, the church has made big mistakes in the past. (You can make a lot in two thousand years.)

Still Christians believe in the church. It’s the place where we meet God in worship, where we bring prayer and praise, where we form friendships with other Christian people, where we work together for a better world.

The New Testament often compares the church to a body, “the body of Christ.” It is a body with many parts – many “members.” Each member is unique, and each one has an important role to play in the life of the whole.

Altogether this body – this church – acts as the hands and arms and voice of Jesus. It tells about his love, and it brings his love to a hungry world.



1 Peter 2:9-10

You are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light. Once you were not a people, but now you are the people of God...

1 Corinthians 12:27

Now you are the body of Christ, and each one of you is a part of it.

1 Corinthians 12:12-13

The body is a unit, though it is made up of many parts; and though all its parts are many, they form one body. So it is with Christ. For we are all baptized by one Spirit into one body...

Ephesians 2:19-21

You are no longer foreigners and aliens, but fellow citizens with God’s people and members of God’s household, built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the chief cornerstone. In him the whole building is joined together and rises to become a holy temple in the Lord. And in him you too are being built together to become a dwelling in which God lives by his Spirit.

The Catechism, QA 54, 55

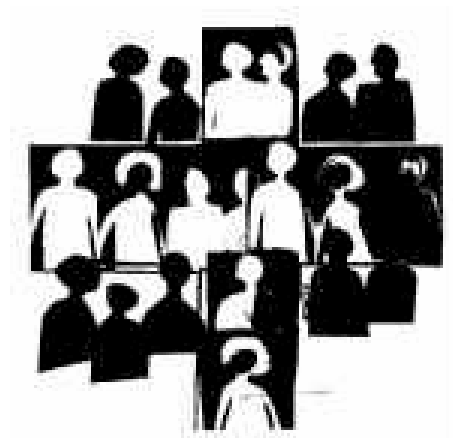
**What do you believe concerning
“the holy catholic church”?**

I believe that the Son of God
through his Spirit and Word,
out of the entire human race,
from the beginning of the world to its end,
gathers protects and preserves for himself
a community chosen for eternal life and united in true faith.
And of this community I am and always will be a member.

**What do you understand by
“the communion of the saints”?**

First, that believers one and all,
as members of this community,
share in Christ and in all his treasures and gifts.
Second, that each member should consider it a duty
to use these gifts readily and cheerfully
for the service and enrichment of the other members.





Reaching Up
Reaching Out
Reaching In

Our Concept of Ministry



103: Reaching Up, Reaching Out, Reaching In (Our Concept of Ministry)

Christ Community Church was formally organized in 1985. From the beginning it has used a "concept of ministry" to guide its ministry. The original concept was drafted and approved by the membership at the time of organization. It has been revised from time to time, but the original vision and goals are still relevant.

The concept of ministry grows out of the Great Commission, given by Jesus just before his ascension. It can be summarized this way.

The Great Commission

Jesus said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go, therefore, 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. And surely I am with you always to the end of the age."

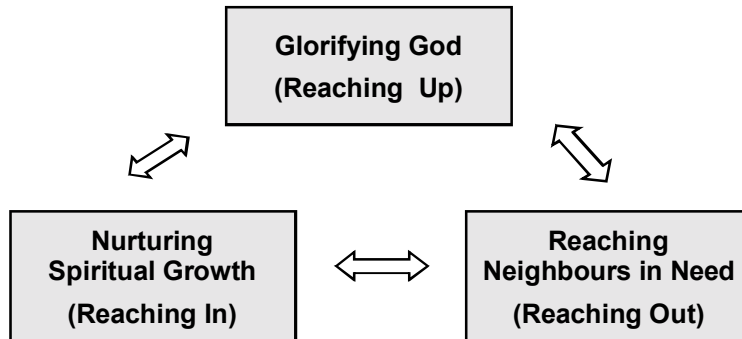
Matthew 28:18-20

In Christ Community Church:

- We will glorify God
- We will grow in faith, hope & love
- We will reach out to neighbours

We reach in three directions:

- Upward • Inward • Outward •



Reaching Up: We Glorify God in Worship

Worship sets the church apart. Other organizations can give you a social network. Others provide services to people in need. The church’s unique activity is worship. We bring praise the One who made us and loves us and saves us in Christ. We pray. We hear a message from the Bible. You can’t do that anywhere else.

At Christ Community Church you’ll notice an emphasis on “the ministry on the Word.” Every service includes a Bible-based message. And while the grownups listen to that, the children are invited to Kid’s Life to hear Bible stories and lessons in words they understand.

Our services also include the Christian sacraments of *baptism* and the *Lord’s Supper* — they link us to the very beginnings of Christianity.

Worship, by definition, is about God. We praise *God*. We pray to *God*. We offer our gifts to *God*. Worship is not like a concert performance with an audience of thousands. There is an audience on Sunday morning, and it’s “an audience of one” — God.

At the same time, we believe, worship should be rooted in the lives of those who gather. *Our* worship should reflect *us*. While we respect traditions of worship that formed over many years, we want to worship in ways that are meaningful for people in our city in our time.

At CCC we encourage the use of many gifts in worship. Musicians, singers, service leaders – each one plays a part. If you have gifts

Come and Worship

Psalm 96:1, 3, 9

Sing to the Lord a new song; sing to the Lord, all the earth... Declare his glory among the nations, his marvelous deeds among all peoples... Worship the Lord in the splendour of his holiness.

Romans 12:1

I urge you..., in view of God’s mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God – this is your spiritual act of worship.

Colossians 3:16

Let the word of Christ dwell in your richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom and as you sing psalms, hymns and spiritual songs with gratitude in your

Reaching In: We Nurture New Life in Christ

We are all people in process — people on a journey. Your life is going *somewhere*. You're either drifting there or you've found purpose in life and made a commitment to it.

At Christ Community Church we invite you onto the inward journey. We invite you to grow in your knowledge of God and his purpose for you.

The ministries at CCC can help you. These include classes and/or small groups for children, youth and adults. The CCC directory has a complete listing. Each week the church bulletin has up-to-date information.

At CCC we want to be a caring community that reflects something of Jesus. Through the ministry of pastoral care elders, through small groups and informal relationships, we learn to weep with those who weep and rejoice with those who rejoice.

We understand that people are not all the same. We have different gifts, different life stories, different hopes and fears. We welcome those differences. We believe that God creates the variety. And trust that he'll use each of us for his work.

We are imperfect people. The journey to a new creation is slow and sometimes halting. We don't pretend to answer every need and heal every hurt. But we follow the One who can answer our needs and heal our hurts. And we believe that the journey is easier when we walk together.

The Body

1 Corinthians 12:27

You are the body of Christ and each one of you is a member of it."

Romans 12:4-6

Just as each of us has one body with many members, and these members do not all have the same function, so in Christ we who are many form one body, and each member belongs to all the others. We have different gifts, according to the grace given us.

Ephesians 4:11-13

It was [Jesus] who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers, to prepare God's people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ.

Reaching Out:
We Reach Out to Our Neighbours

The church isn't only about us, our families and our friends. There's a world outside. Sometimes it's a world of hurt, a poor world — materially poor or poor in spirit. It might be a confused world, and sometimes it's a world of indifference.

If Canada was once a "Christian nation," it's not one any more. Canada is *multicultural* now. And at the same time it's much more *secular*. For Christian churches today, the mission field is *here*. If we believe that Jesus is "the way, the truth and the life," then we have to let everybody know.

Our Mission

1 Peter 2:9

You are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light.

1 Peter 3:15

Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have... Do this with gentleness and respect...

The middle initial of CCC stands for "Community." It's there on purpose. We want to be a community where everybody knows your name. We also want to reach out to the Victoria community.

We believe that reaching out is not the work of a handful of specialists. We won't leave the work only to the pastor and one or two over-worked souls. We are committed to being an place where our community can discover Jesus and the friendship of his church.





Our Commitments





Before we get to that...

In Protestant Christianity there has been some reluctance about listing *requirements* for membership. If you are a member of a Christian church, you obviously have to believe in Jesus, and obviously you have to be committed to his body, the church. But we've have been reluctant to draw up a checklist of required actions and habits.

It's good to be careful. We belong to Christ and his church because of him, not us. You are loved unconditionally. You are forgiven and accepted by "sheer grace." The Holy Spirit is God's gift, not a reward for being more "spiritual" than everybody else. Checklists have a way of complicating a love that is supposed to be simple.

At the same time, though, it seems wise to mention some things that will deepen our relationship to God and help us to grow in our trust in him and our knowledge about him. Here, then, are some ways to grow in faith, hope and love.

1. Worship

Going to church is obviously the most visible thing Christians do. It's also one of the most important. Sunday worship acknowledges that God is worthy of our praise. Our Sunday prayers acknowledge that we depend on his care. We hear the message of the Bible because this is true wisdom. We spend time with Christian brothers and sisters because we are the family of God together. Church is not "doing time." It's the way we maintain our spiritual health.

Going to Church

Hebrews 10:25

Let us not give up meeting together..., but let us encourage one another.

Acts 20:7

On the first day of the week we came together to break bread.

Ephesians 5:19

Speak to one another with psalms, hymns and spiritual songs. Sing and make music in your heart to the Lord, always giving thanks to God the Father for everything, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.

2. Personal and Family Worship

While church on Sunday is very helpful for building faith, it's also healthy to have personal time for reflection and prayer. And, as much as possible, create family times of Bible reading and prayer.

Ephesians 6:18

Pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of requests.

1 Thessalonians 5:17

Pray continually.

Deuteronomy 6:6-7

These commandments that I give you today are to be upon your hearts. Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road and when you lie down and when you get up...

3. A Personal Service Project

Consider volunteer service in a church program or through more personal, one-to-one contact. It's also possible to use your gifts for projects in the community. St. Francis said that "in giving we receive." A service project can make that promise come true.

Galatians 5:9-10

Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up. Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, especially to those who belong to the family of believers.

4. Supporting the Church Financially

You will not be billed for your membership in Christ Community Church. The church is supported through voluntary giving.

All our work and programs depend on members' gifts. The biblical ideal is that we give according to the abundance we've received.

1 Corinthians 16:1

Now about the collection for God's people... On the first day of every week, each one of you should set aside a sum of money in keeping with his income...

For your information, the budget of our church is divided into four major categories. Two parts represent a third each of the annual budget, and the other two parts represent a sixth each.

1/3: Building, Grounds, Maintenance
(mortgage, insurance, cleaning, etc)

1/3: Staff

1/6: Christ Community ministries
(children's ministries, teaching ministries, Alpha, etc.)

1/6: Christian Reformed Ministries

These include:

Regional Ministries (the Vancouver Harbour ministry, a chaplaincy at University of Northern B.C., a new church development in Richmond, etc.)

Denominational Ministries (World Missions, Home Missions, Calvin Seminary, CRC television ministry, etc.)

5. Supporting the Church Spiritually

The church needs members who will support its ministry and mission. Here are ways to do that.

- Acting in love toward other members
- Praying for other members
- Inviting others to attend
- Praying for others who need Christ
- Supporting the leaders
- Praying for the leaders
- Participating in a ministry
- Praying for a ministry

Colossians 4:2-3
Devote yourselves to prayer... And pray for us, that God may open a door for our message, so that we may proclaim the mystery of Christ.

- _____
- _____
- _____

And a Thought...

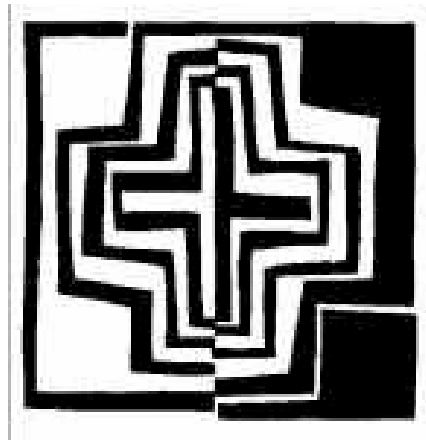
Christ Community Church is human institution. It's made of ordinary people. We have good days and bad days. We have wonderful gifts and irritating habits. The church is meant to help you, but it can also hurt you. Sometimes you'll love it to pieces and sometimes the place will drive you crazy. We're sorry. Honest.

The church is also God's institution. It's "the body of Christ." It's all about him. It's Jesus who makes the church more than a social club. His forgiveness renews us. His Spirit empowers us. His example guides us. He is the "treasure" in our "jars of clay." So keep your eyes on him.

2 Corinthians 4:5-7
For we do not preach ourselves, but Jesus Christ as Lord, and ourselves as your servants for Jesus' sake. For God, who said, "Let light shine out of darkness," made his light shine in our hearts to give us the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ.
But we have this treasure in jars of clay to show that this all-surpassing power is from God and not from us.



Appendix:



Our Concept of Ministry





Appendix

The CCC Concept of Ministry

Our Mandate

As followers of Christ, we have been commissioned by him in Matthew 28: *“All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go, therefore, 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. As surely I will be with you always, to the very end of the age.”*

Our Goals

A. Glorifying God (Reaching Up)

Redeemed by God’s grace through Christ, our very lives have become a joyful and submissive response to his love. We seek to serve God always and everywhere. In various ways, therefore, the Sunday worship service is to be conducive to a meaningful worship experience – glorifying to God and edifying for his people. We seek to attain this in the following ways:

1. by requiring that preaching be focused on Christ as he is revealed to us in Scripture. Issues should be dealt with from the perspective, “Thus says the Lord.” The Christ-centered sermon is to equip the congregation for a closer walk with God.
2. by celebrating the sacraments in a way that reveals their joyful and meaningful character.
3. by encouraging individual expressions of our love for Christ by sharing personal needs and joys. This encouragement is to take place in an atmosphere of love, trust and acceptance of personal differences in preferred style of worship.
4. by encouraging the participation of believers of all ages in the worship service through Scripture reading, prayer, children’s messages, special music or drama, collection of offerings and delivery of sermons according to individual gifts.
5. by balancing structure and spontaneity in our worship services. The desire for structure should not outweigh our God-given need to be creative and spontaneous.
6. By providing a special environment (children’s services) for children.

B. Fostering Personal & Spiritual Congregational Growth in Faith and Spirit (Reaching In)

In addition to Sunday worship services, we seek to foster personal and congregational growth in the following ways:

1. by recognizing that as a body made up of many parts so we, as a congregation, have been blessed with a variety of talents. We recognize the value of differences and seek to make use of each other's gifts.
2. by providing instruction in the Christian faith through a comprehensive, family-oriented education program aimed at the needs of new Christians and those more familiar with the faith.
3. by ensuring that spiritual, psychological, emotional and physical needs of those worshipping among us are met through a program of pastoral care. The pastor, elders and deacons share equally in the responsibility of providing pastoral care. The congregation's spiritual well-being is also closely linked to the practice of sharing one another's burdens.
4. by being sensitive to the needs of others and creating an atmosphere where all who worship with us will feel welcome and accepted. Each Sunday greeters will be in charge of welcoming visitors to our services. Time for fellowship will be provided after each morning service. On a regular basis other recreational or social activities will be scheduled. Small groups are to encourage closer relationships that are not possible in a larger group.
5. by promoting Bible study through small and/or large groups for all ages.
6. by producing informative weekly bulletins.
7. by praying for each other. Prayer is our avenue of communication with God, our Father, and is a vital part of our Christian life. Faithful prayer builds up God's purposes and tears down Satan's work. We in CCC resolve to pray regularly in personal devotions, household meetings and larger assemblies of the church. Church leaders should be the object of our prayers, since they need God's guidance for their sensitive work. As we pray, we are convinced that God will answer because "the Lord is near to all who call on him, to all who call on him in truth" (Psalm 145:18).

C. Reaching Out to Our Neighbours (Reaching Out)

We understand the word “neighbours” to have three meanings:

- our geographical neighbours (in the area in which our church building is located)
- those with whom we have one-to-one contact at work or in the area of our homes
- those with needs in our community (local, provincial, national and international)

We reach out to our neighbours through announcing and expanding the rule of God over every enterprise and all institutions so that God may be glorified in the hearts of people everywhere and in all their works. We do this in several ways:

1. through one-on-one contact with our neighbours.
2. through support of outreach programs.
3. through the promotion/advertising of programs and special events using the media and door-to-door techniques.
4. through the way organization of worship services.
5. through the establishment of an atmosphere of acceptance and close fellowship
6. through education in evangelism.
7. through the establishment and maintenance of a pastoral and administrative office.
8. through outreach to our neighbours in money, time and energy.
9. through prayer support.

