

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

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 membership process 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.

Christ Community Church's Membership Covenant

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.

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, *This Do in Remembrance of Me*, 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 require that the child go through the communicant's manual (or some equivalent) 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 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.*

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 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 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

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