

NEW MEMBERS HANDBOOK



Christ Presbyterian Church

A Church of the Presbyterian Church of America

Table of
CONTENTS

Welcome to Christ Presbyterian Church Church.....	3
Qualifications for Membership.....	7
The Bible.....	10
The Triune God.....	15
Salvation.....	19
The Holy Spirit.....	29
Disciple.....	33
The Church.....	37
The Sacraments.....	47
Our Identity and Ministries: Living Out Our Vision, Mission, and Values.....	55
Becoming a Member.....	62

CHRIST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH (CPC)

The Pastor, Elders, and members of Christ Presbyterian Church extend a heartfelt welcome as you begin to investigate CPC. Our deepest desire is for this handbook to be more than just an introduction to our beliefs; it is an invitation to explore your place within our family and to understand the vibrant identity that shapes every aspect of our shared life.

At Christ Presbyterian Church (CPC), our identity is not merely a set of statements, but a living expression of who God has called us to be and what He has empowered us to do in Nashua, NH, and beyond. We are bound together by a profound sense of purpose, beautifully encapsulated in our:

- **Motto: Rooted in Christ, Reflecting His Kingdom.**
 - This motto is our organizing principle, reminding us that our very existence, strength, and fruitfulness come from our inseparable connection to Jesus Christ. It also calls us to intentionally embody and display the values, character, and redemptive work of His Kingdom in every sphere of our lives, both individually and corporately.
- **Mission:** By the power of the Spirit, we make disciples, see lives transformed, and reflect God's redemptive work in the world, in the name of Christ, to the glory of the Father.
 - This is the divine mandate that drives all we do. It articulates our commitment to Spirit-empowered evangelism and spiritual formation, witnessing genuine change in hearts and lives, and actively participating in God's grand narrative of restoring all things through Christ, for the ultimate praise of God the Father.
- **Vision (5-Year): A Worshiping, Sending Family.**
 - In the next five years, we envision ourselves becoming even more deeply a people passionately devoted to Trinitarian Worship and sacrificially committed to Kingdom Discipleship. We aspire to be a family that encounters God profoundly in worship and is then strategically sent out to embody His mission in our community and the world.
- **Vision (10-Year): A Mature, Expanding Family**
 - Ten years from now, we envision CPC as a vibrant, mature church, gathering in our own facility, forming disciples deeply, and sending leaders into new places. Here's what this entails:
 - A thriving community of children, youth, and adults joyfully engaged in the church's mission.
 - A church that is engaged in planting or supporting a new church in a nearby city led by trained leaders from CPC.
 - A space to meet that is welcoming, and designed to meet with God. Worship is marked by joy, reverence, and expectancy. People come longing to encounter the living God.
 - Every member participates in a DNA (Discover, Nurture, Act) group annually, and CPC is known in our region for its deep, joyful discipleship culture.

- CPC Shared Life Communities (SLCs) are gospel outposts throughout the area, regularly including unbelievers and caring for the broken. We're known as a church that sees the lost as family and welcomes those on the margins.
- There are many people who are regularly connected to CPC who are not yet believers, but they are being loved, pursued, and drawn to Christ.
- A church of healing and welcome, where people tangibly experience what it means to be adopted into God's covenant family.
- Prayer and Scripture remain our lifeblood, and CPC has become a model of Word-saturated, Spirit-led ministry. Other churches look to us for encouragement and guidance as we look to Christ.

This handbook is designed to introduce you to the core beliefs of Christ Presbyterian Church and how we strive to live out these convictions daily, in light of our mission, values, and vision. As you engage with each chapter, we invite you to pray earnestly about how God might be calling you to deepen your connection with us and to join in this vital work.

Membership at CPC is a sacred covenant, an organizational expression of profound biblical truths, that calls us to four interconnected commitments:

1. **Holding to a common confession in Jesus Christ:** A shared theological foundation rooted in God's Word.
2. **Participating in community life:** Living out our identity as a family adopted into God's covenant.
3. **Covenanting themselves, including time and resources:** Joyfully contributing to our shared mission and the flourishing of our church family.
4. **Living out a calling to serve the Lord in the church and world:** Actively reflecting God's redemptive work and engaging in Kingdom Discipleship.

The salvation that is ours in Christ introduces the disciple to an interpersonal reality: the church. In the New Testament, to be a disciple is to belong to Christ and be joined to the people of God. In Scripture, there is no such thing as an independent or unaffiliated disciple. We see church membership as an organizational expression of a Biblical truth: "in Christ we who are many form one body, and each member belongs to all the others." (Romans 12:5)

Based upon the description of the early church in Acts 2:42-47, we see church membership at Christ Presbyterian Church encompassing at least four interconnected commitments:

- **We hold to a common confession** in Christ Jesus is our Lord and head of the Church. We learn about and proclaim our faith in weekly corporate worship, Discipleship Hour, DNA Groups, and Shared Life Community meetings.
- **We participate in community life.** We seek to love and be loved in our Shared Life Communities, caring for one another, and speaking the truth of Christ to one another (Eph. 4:11-16).

- **We covenant ourselves, including time and resources.** Worship and Discipleship Hour are the starting point of our commitment to one another. We reaffirm our unity in communion, via stewardship, as well as corporately, in DNA groups and Shared Life Communities.
- **We live out a calling to serve the Lord in the church and in the world.** God has given us the privilege to be involved in His activity, through being and making disciples in our Shared Life Communities, DNA Groups, corporate disciple making opportunities, and individual discipleship opportunities, as well as all other opportunities.

The church is more than shared values and resources; it is the living body of Christ, with a shared mission, shared vision, and a shared life. As the Scripture says, "...you also, like living stones, are being built into a spiritual house" (1 Peter 2:5). The church is a place for giving as well as receiving. Each person in the church is important. We thank you for the gift of your life and your ministry among us. To God be the glory.

Our Story: The History of Christ Presbyterian Church

To understand who Christ Presbyterian Church is today, **'Rooted in Christ, Reflecting His Kingdom'**, it's vital to know our story. We are one of the oldest Presbyterian Church in America (PCA) congregations in northern New England, a testament to God's faithfulness through decades of ministry.

CPC began in the late 1970s, shortly after the PCA was formed in 1973 in Birmingham, Alabama. As an early church in this region, CPC experienced a unique beginning, being governed directly by the PCA General Assembly (GA), a truly rare occurrence. Alongside the GA, First Presbyterian Church in Jackson, MS, also played an important part in the early life and support of CPC. While CPC started strong, it navigated a transitional period in the early 2000s, at which point the church temporarily returned to "mission status."

In 2004, Pastor Jason Wakefield arrived, and under his leadership, CPC was joyfully re-particularized (restored to full church status) in 2009. Pastor Wakefield served as our Teaching Elder until January 2022, when he felt called to dedicate himself full-time to Global Equip, an international mission organization he co-founded in 2011.

Following a period of prayerful discernment, Pastor James Pavlic was nominated by the pulpit committee in November 2022. After preaching before the congregation on December 4th, 2022, he was formally called by the congregation on December 11th. He was then interviewed by the Candidates and Credentials Committee of the Northern New England Presbytery, became a member of Presbytery on January 21st, 2023, and was officially installed as our Lead Pastor on February 19th, 2023.

Throughout its 47-year history, CPC has met at various locations across the Nashua area, including a school cafeteria, a banquet center, a nursing home, a small rented building, and at the Nashua Seventh-day Adventist Church for 24 years. In 2026, CPC is moving to another facility.

Over the decades, the church has been shepherded by a total of 7 pastors. As we approach our 50th year as a mission/particular church, we eagerly look forward to seeing what more God will do at Christ Presbyterian Church, trusting His continued guidance as we live out our Mission and Vision for His glory.

Qualifications

FOR MEMBERSHIP

At Christ Presbyterian Church, the primary qualification for communing membership is a credible profession of saving faith in Jesus Christ. While none of us can fully examine another to know the deepest thoughts of the mind and soul, there is evidence in word and life of a genuine faith in Christ.

To that end, those seeking membership meet with the Pastor and Elders to share a testimony of their faith in Jesus Christ.

Becoming a member is not about proving yourself, but about professing your trust in Christ and being welcomed into His covenant family.

Preparing Your Testimony

Each candidate should prepare a short (3–4 minute) testimony describing their relationship with Jesus Christ.

For those who came to faith gradually:

- Brief introduction
- Early church experience
- How have you come to trust in Christ for salvation?
- How do you know you are a Christian?
- How has Christ changed your life?
- Where do you see continued need for growth?

For those with a more defined conversion:

- Brief introduction
- Life before Christ
- How you came to trust in Christ
- How Christ has changed your life
- Areas of continued growth

You are welcome to use notes and may speak with a pastor or elder beforehand.

Membership Vows

Those seeking to join meet with the elders and are received into membership by the Session. They then take the following vows as a public profession of their faith and commitment to Christ and His church:

1. Do you acknowledge yourselves to be sinners in the sight of God, justly deserving His displeasure, and without hope save [except] in His sovereign mercy?
2. Do you believe in the Lord Jesus Christ as the Son of God, and Savior of sinners, and do you receive and rest upon Him alone for salvation as He is offered in the Gospel?
3. Do you now resolve and promise, in humble reliance upon the grace of the Holy Spirit, that you will endeavor to live as becomes the followers of Christ?
4. Do you promise to support the church in its worship and work to the best of your ability?
5. Do you submit yourselves to the government and discipline of the church, and promise to study its purity and peace?

Baptism

Our constitution also requires that members be baptized.

If you have not been baptized, please speak with a pastor or elder about receiving baptism. Baptism is the sacrament by which God signifies and seals our union with Christ and our inclusion in His visible church, and we would be glad to walk with you through that process.

If you have already been baptized, please be prepared to share the name of the church where you were baptized and an approximate date.

We strongly encourage reading this handbook thoroughly, and would appreciate your willingness to accent to the vows before the congregation.

Our Core Belief

As members of Christ Presbyterian Church, we enter into a sacred covenant with God and with one another. This covenant articulates our mutual commitments, guiding our life together as a family '**Adopted into God's Covenant Family**,' and uniting us in our pursuit of '**Kingdom Discipleship**' and '**Trinitarian Worship**' in accordance with our shared identity.

At the core of our beliefs is a belief in God the Creator, Sustainer, and Redeemer of all. This God is one in essence and three in persons. Therefore, we have a Trinitarian understanding of all things. At the most basic level, we confess and hold to, along with millions of other Christians from the last 1800 years, the most ancient Christian Creed, The Apostle's Creed. This is not the only thing that we believe, but it is what we hold to at the

most fundamental level. The rest of our core beliefs, outlined below, all elaborate on various aspects of this creed.

I believe in God, the Father Almighty, maker of heaven and earth;

And in Jesus Christ his only Son, our Lord; who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, dead, and buried; He descended into hell¹; the third day he rose from the dead; he ascended into heaven, and sitteth at the right hand of God the Father Almighty; from thence he shall come to judge the quick and the dead.

I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy catholic² church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting. Amen.

¹ There are two words of understanding this word. First, that Jesus' body was quite simply buried. Second, that

² The word "catholic" means "relating to the church universal" and was the word used in the original version of the Creed. It does not mean the Roman Catholic Church, but the church, the body of Christ, as a universal fellowship.

THE BIBLE

Do you believe in the Lord Jesus Christ as the Son of God, and Savior of sinners, and do you receive and rest upon Him alone for salvation as He is offered in the Gospel?

DEPENDING ON GOD ALONE

"Grounded in God's Word, Guided by His Spirit, Everything Through Prayer"

- We stand on **the authoritative and sufficient Word of God as the only infallible rule of faith and life**, with the Westminster Standards serving as a faithful summary of its teachings.
- We seek the Holy Spirit's guidance and empowerment **to apply and live out His Word** in every area of life.

WHY DO WE NEED THE BIBLE AT ALL?

Psalm 19 teaches that God has revealed Himself in two ways, through general revelation and special revelation, and these stand together in a complementary relationship.

General revelation shows us that God exists and reveals His eternal power and divine nature (Psalm 19:1-6; Romans 1:18-20). Yet while creation makes God known, it does not show us how to be reconciled to Him. Special revelation tells us how God has made a way for us to fellowship with Him through Jesus Christ (Romans 3:21-26).

Special revelation is necessary (Psalm 19:7-11; 2 Timothy 3:14-17) because God is infinite and transcendent. Though God reveals Himself in creation, we cannot on our own discover how to know Him personally or be restored to Him.

The witness of creation is real, but it is not sufficient to bring us into a saving knowledge of God. If we want to truly know a person, it is not enough to observe their actions. We need them to speak to us. In the same way, God speaks so that we might truly know Him.

He has given us this communication in written form so that His Word would stand as a public, objective, and unchanging standard. Left to ourselves, we would distort or reshape God according to our own desires. But in Scripture, God speaks clearly and reliably.

We do not just need to know that God exists. We need to hear what He has said. The written Word makes His truth known to all people and invites us into real fellowship with Him.

WHAT WE BELIEVE ABOUT THE BIBLE AT CHRIST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

At Christ Presbyterian Church, our conviction that **the Bible is the authoritative and sufficient Word of God** shapes everything we do. This conviction lies at the heart of our core value, *Depending on God Alone*.

We are grounded in God's Word because we believe it is His infallible revelation, given to make Himself known and to guide our lives. The Westminster Standards serve as a faithful summary of these truths and provide a framework for our faith and practice (Westminster Confession of Faith I. Of the Holy Scripture). Our dependence on God begins with receiving and trusting what He has spoken.

As a congregation of the Presbyterian Church in America (PCA), we receive the Westminster Confession of Faith and Larger and Shorter Catechisms as our subordinate doctrinal standards because we believe they faithfully summarize the teaching of Scripture. While Scripture alone is our final and infallible authority, the Westminster Standards help provide theological clarity, unity, and accountability in the life of the church.

Those who take their faith in Christ seriously will want to give careful attention to the whole of Scripture. It becomes a lifelong pursuit to understand what God has said to us as His people and how we are to live before Him.

In addition to hearing the Word preached each week, we must also spend time daily feeding on Scripture. Our high view of the Bible should lead to a growing desire to know God through His Word and to live in joyful, Spirit-dependent obedience to Him.

The Scriptures of the Old and New Testament

Everything the church does must be grounded not in pragmatism, human desire, or personal impressions, but in God's revealed Word. Our authority is found in the 66 books of Holy Scripture alone.

The 66 books of Holy Scripture are as follows:

Old Testament

Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy, Joshua, Judges, Ruth, 1 Samuel, 2 Samuel, 1 Kings, 2 Kings, 1 Chronicles, 2 Chronicles, Ezra, Nehemiah, Esther, Job, Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Solomon, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Lamentations, Ezekiel, Daniel, Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah, Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi.

New Testament

Matthew, Mark, Luke, John, Acts, Romans, 1 Corinthians, 2 Corinthians, Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, 1 Thessalonians, 2 Thessalonians, 1 Timothy, 2 Timothy, Titus, Philemon, Hebrews, James, 1 Peter, 2 Peter, 1 John, 2 John, 3 John, Jude, and Revelation.

The Bible is directly inspired by God

The Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments are inspired by God. The very words of Scripture are true and without error in the original writings. While some claim that only the thoughts or concepts of the Bible are inspired, we believe that every word is inspired (Matthew 5:17–18; Proverbs 30:5–6).

This is often described as **verbal, plenary inspiration**, meaning that *all Scripture is fully and equally inspired* (2 Timothy 3:16–17).

Inspiration is the work of the Holy Spirit, who superintended the human authors so that what they wrote is the very Word of God. In doing so, He did not override their personalities, intelligence, or writing styles. Rather, He worked through them so that God’s complete and coherent message was written with perfect truth and authority.

Inspiration is not the same as dictation, except in certain instances. God used the experiences, thoughts, and expressions of the human authors. Yet what they wrote was exactly what God intended. Therefore, Scripture is rightly called “God-breathed” (θεόπνευστος in 2 Timothy 3:16), and though the authors were fallible men, their writings are without error (2 Peter 1:20–21).

We know that the Bible is the Word of God because of the testimony of Scripture itself and the witness of Jesus Christ. Jesus received the Old Testament as the Word of God (Matthew 4:4; Matthew 22:41–44). If we believe that Jesus is the Son of God, then we must also receive His testimony concerning Scripture. The writers of the New Testament likewise regarded both the Old Testament and their own writings as authoritative (1 Corinthians 2:12–13; 2 Peter 3:15–16).

While this may seem circular, it is better understood as a foundational truth confirmed by the inward work of the Holy Spirit. The same Spirit who inspired the Scriptures also opens our eyes to recognize them as God’s Word (John 16:12–15; Hebrews 4:12). This is not the giving of new revelation, but the illumination of hearts so that we may rightly receive what God has spoken.

THE BIBLE IS INERRANT

We believe that the Bible is without error. The very words of the original writings of the 66 books of Scripture are free from error, not only in matters of faith and practice, but in all that they affirm (Galatians 3:16; Matthew 22:32).

Our confidence in the truthfulness of Scripture rests in the character of God Himself. The Bible is the Word of an all-powerful and all-knowing God who is perfectly true and without error. Therefore, His Word is likewise true and trustworthy (Psalm 12:6; 18:30; 19:7; Proverbs 30:5–6; John 17:17).

THE BIBLE IS INFALLIBLE

The Scriptures in their original writings (Hebrew, some Aramaic, and Greek) are incapable of error (John 10:35; Luke 16:17). Because they are the Word of God, they cannot fail or be mistaken.

While closely related to inerrancy, infallibility emphasizes that Scripture is not only free from error, but that it is impossible for it to err. This is because God Himself is true and cannot lie, and His Word reflects His perfect truthfulness.

THE BIBLE IS OUR FINAL AUTHORITY

The Scriptures are God's special revelation, His communication of truth to humanity. Because they are inspired by God, they are our final authority in all matters of faith and life (2 Timothy 3:16–17).

As the Word of God, the Bible stands above every other authority. It is not shaped by human opinion, cultural trends, or personal experience, but instead judges all things by the truth of God.

At the same time, we recognize that the Bible accurately records statements that are not themselves true. For example, Satan's words to Eve, "You shall not surely die" (Genesis 3:4–5), are recorded in Scripture but are not the voice of God. Therefore, we must interpret Scripture carefully, paying attention to context so that we rightly understand what God Himself is saying.

THE BIBLE IS SUFFICIENT FOR ALL MATTERS OF FAITH AND PRACTICE

We believe that the Bible is sufficient for all matters of faith and life (2 Timothy 3:16–17; 2 Peter 1:3). God has given us in His Word everything we need to know Him, to trust Him, and to live as His people.

Human experience, while real, is limited as a guide for truth. It is changeable, often unclear, and easily shaped by our own desires. For this reason, we do not interpret God's Word through the lens of our experience. Rather, we interpret our experience in the light of God's Word.

Therefore, we come to Scripture not only to learn truth, but to receive from God the wisdom and direction we need for every part of life.

THE BIBLE IS A COVENANT DOCUMENT

It is helpful to understand that the Bible is a covenant document. Throughout Scripture, God relates to His people through covenant, establishing a binding relationship in which He commits Himself to them and calls them to live as His people.

God made covenants with His people in forms that were recognizable in the surrounding culture, yet He filled them with deeper and fuller meaning. In these covenants, God is not merely one party among others, but the sovereign Lord who establishes, defines, and upholds the relationship.

A covenant describes the relationship between God and His people. This is expressed in Scripture in the phrase, "I will be your God, and you will be my people." Through it, God brings His people into a relationship with Himself, giving them promises, defining their identity, and calling them to live in faithful response to Him.

These covenants were often accompanied by written documents that declared the terms of the relationship. The Bible, encompassing both the Old and New Covenants, is the covenant document through which God reveals who He is, who we are, and how we are to live before Him as His people. All of God's covenant promises find their fulfillment in Jesus Christ, through whom we are brought into full fellowship with God. In Him, what was lost in the fall, the presence of God with His people, is fully restored.

Scripture not only establishes this relationship, but also sustains it. In Deuteronomy 31:9–13, Moses commands that the law be read regularly to the people so that they would remember and live in light of God's covenant. While we now have the fullness of Scripture, the principle remains the same. We are to continually return to God's Word so that we might know Him and walk in His ways.

For this reason, we are called to meditate on God's Word daily (Deuteronomy 6:6–7), receiving from Him the truth, direction, and life that we need as His covenant people.

Through this covenant, God does not merely give commands, but brings us into His household as His people.

WHY THIS MATTERS FOR OUR CHURCH

If we do not have something sure to determine what we believe and how we live, then passing fads and cultural pressures will divide us. But God has given us a sure word. When we are anchored in what He has said, we are united, living out our union in Christ together. It's not just about what we think or feel.

This matters in what we preach. We preach God's Word alone, not opinions, cultural agendas, or trends. Our elders lead the church based on what God says in His Word. Our deacons serve and love through the lens of Scripture. In fact, our entire church is framed by the Word, from the pulpit to how we disciple. Even our DNA groups study, apply, and live out God's Word.

Without this sure foundation, we would splinter over opinions. But with it, we are anchored, united, and able to move forward as one, not just being right, but being one in Christ.

QUESTIONS FOR REVIEW, THOUGHT & DISCUSSION

1. What would be the implication for Christianity and for your own life if the Bible were simply an ordinary book and not inspired by God?
2. If someone were to say to you that the Bible can't be trusted, because it is full of errors and outdated information, how would you respond?
3. What opportunities do you have to hear the Word of God? What can you do to be more intentional about applying the Bible to your life after you hear it preached or taught? Are you currently involved in a Shared Life Community, in a DNA Group? Why or why not?
4. Do you have a personal "reading plan" for the Bible? If so, what is it? If not, what can you do to implement one?

THE TRIUNE GOD

Do you acknowledge yourselves to be sinners in the sight of God, justly deserving His displeasure, and without hope save in His sovereign mercy? Do you believe in the Lord Jesus Christ as the Son of God, and Savior of sinners, and do you receive and rest upon Him alone for salvation as He is offered in the Gospel? Do you now resolve and promise, in humble reliance upon the grace of the Holy Spirit, that you will endeavor to live as becomes the followers of Christ?

TRINITARIAN WORSHIP

"Living for the Glory of the Father, through the Son, by the Spirit"

- We live to **the glory of the Father** in all of life.
- We **exalt Christ** as the preeminent Savior, Redeemer, and King of our whole lives.
- We live all of our lives in worship **by the power of the Spirit**.

WHAT DO WE MEAN BY “TRINITY”?

God as “three Persons in One” expresses the distinctive Christian understanding of God, and reflects our view at Christ Presbyterian Church. The Bible speaks of one God, but attributes the characteristics of God to three Persons: Father, Son and Holy Spirit. God the Father created all things and planned the redemption of his people from all eternity (Genesis 3:14–15; Ephesians 1:3–12); God the Son accomplished that redemption on the cross (Romans 3:21–24; Galatians 3:13–14); and God the Spirit applies the benefits of that eternal redemption to all believers (John 3:5–8; Titus 3:4–7).

The doctrine of the Trinity is a way of describing this biblical revelation of the nature of God. It states that God is one in essence, but that he exists in three Persons who are coequal and coeternal. We must note that our English word, “Persons,” falls short as a way to describe God because it can give the impression of three separate individuals; rather, a more accurate view is that God is one being with three personal self-distinctions.

WHY SHOULD WE USE THE WORD “TRINITY”?

We might wonder why we should accept the word “Trinity” as a way to describe God when it isn’t in the Bible. Heretical groups came on the early Church scene and denied either the deity of Christ or that of the Holy Spirit. This drove Christians to search the Scriptures to come up with a formal way to describe the Bible’s teaching on the nature of God, and the doctrine of the “Tri-unity” was the result.

Tertullian, an early Church father, was the first to use the term “Trinity” in 215 AD. Like the word “Trinity,” there are many words such as “omniscient,” “ineffable,” “omnipresent,” “self-existent” and “uncreated,” none of which is found in the Bible, but nevertheless, each of which can be extremely helpful for us in summarizing what the Bible clearly teaches about the character of our amazing God.

We often act as if the concept of the Trinity is something negative since it is difficult for us to grasp; rather, we should view it as something wonderful because it means not only that we have a God who is greater and more mysterious than our imaginings, but also that we have a God who seeks a personal relationship with us through the redemption of the Son and the presence of the Spirit. If God were not a Trinity, he would be the God of Deism or Islam, both impersonal and unknowable. Because he is a Trinity, God himself exists in community: three persons of one essence, who love one another with a perfect love and whose love overflowed in the creation and redemption of humanity. When God created humanity in his image, he created us as relational beings, created to love each other and our Creator.

BIBLICAL EVIDENCE FOR CONCEIVING OF GOD AS A TRINITY

The Bible teaches that we have One God (Deuteronomy 6:4; Isaiah 43:10; 1 Corinthians 8:4–6; Ephesians 4:4–6). At the same time, that One God is revealed progressively throughout Scripture as three Persons:

- God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit are active in Creation (Genesis 1:1–2; Colossians 1:16–17)
- Isaiah prophesies that the one born of the virgin would also be Immanuel, God with us (Isaiah 7:14) and later calls the Messiah “Mighty God” and “Eternal Father” (Isaiah 9:6)
- The NT calls the Father God (John 6:27; 20:17; 1 Corinthians 8:6; Galatians 1:1; Ephesians 4:6; Philippians 2:11; 1 Peter 1:2)
- The NT explicitly declares Jesus Christ to be God (John 1:1; 20:28; Titus 2:13; Hebrews 1:8); it also applies the name Yahweh, the Lord God who created the universe, to Jesus (Philippians 2:8–11; Hebrews 1:10)
- The NT writers recognize the Holy Spirit as God (Acts 5:3–4; 1 Corinthians 2:10–11; 1 Corinthians 6:19; John 3:5–6, 8; Titus 3:5)
- The NT writers speak of the presence and work of the Father, Son, and Spirit in one breath (Matthew 28:19; Mark 1:10–11; Luke 10:21, 2 Corinthians 13:14; 1 Peter 1:2)

Our awe and wonder at the Triune God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, compel us to embrace our core value of **‘Trinitarian Worship.’** We believe our highest calling is to worship God as He has revealed Himself: glorifying the Father in His sovereign love, exalting the Son in His redemptive work, and being empowered by the Spirit in our communion with God and one another. Every aspect of our corporate worship and personal devotion flows from this Trinitarian reality, seeking to honor each person of the Godhead.

HOW SHOULD WE ADDRESS GOD IN PRAYER?

Since God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit are “Persons,” we should speak of them as such (e.g., the Holy Spirit is “He” and not “It”). Though we may certainly address any member of the Trinity in prayer, it may be helpful to follow the guidance of Scripture.

Jesus addressed God as “Father” in his model prayer for his disciples (Matthew 6:9–13), and he told them to pray to the Father in his name once he was no longer on this earth (John 16:22–24). Since we have God’s Spirit dwelling in us, it is by his power that we cry out to God in prayer and seek his will (Romans 8:15–16; 26–27). Thus, in addressing God in prayer it can be helpful to think of praying to God the Father in the name of Jesus and through the power of the Holy Spirit.

JESUS: FULLY GOD AND FULLY MAN

Crucial to our understanding of the Trinity is the Bible’s presentation of Jesus Christ, at and forever after his incarnation, as fully man (Matthew 8:23–24; 21:18; John 11:32–36) and fully God (John 1:1–3; John 10:30; 17:4–5; Titus 2:13), in possession of both divine and human natures, unified in one person. The two natures coexist in union without confusion or change, separation or division. Jesus Christ had to possess both natures in order to be our Lord and Savior.

Because he was fully divine, Jesus is able to be the perfect and eternal sacrifice for the complete atonement of our sins, as well as our permanent high priest, allowing us to be eternally reconciled to God (Hebrews 7:23–28). Because he was fully human, Jesus was able to be our proper substitute on the cross to experience the wrath of God, and he is able to be a comfort and example for our daily living (Hebrews 2:14–18).

Being truly divine, Jesus could not sin, He was impeccable. God’s nature is unchangeably holy (John 5:19, 30), and because Jesus is the eternal Son of God, He was never capable of sinning. Yet as truly human, Jesus was also capable of being tempted in every way that we are, though without sin (Hebrews 4:15). This means His temptations were not less real, but in fact more terrible than ours.

Unlike us, who eventually give in, Jesus resisted every temptation to the end, bearing the full weight of it. Though He did not have sinful desires as we do, He still suffered in temptation through the pressures of the devil, the weakness of human flesh (like hunger, weariness, and sorrow), and the agony of the cross. Because He never yielded, He understands temptation more deeply than any of us ever could. That’s why Hebrews 2:18 brings such comfort: “Because He Himself suffered when He was tempted, He is able to help those who are being tempted.”

HOLY SPIRIT

The Holy Spirit is fully God, equal with the Father and Son, whose primary ministry is to glorify the Lord Jesus Christ; he also convicts unbelievers of their need for Christ and imparts spiritual life through regeneration, the new birth (John 1:12–13; 3:1–15, 34). The Spirit permanently indwells, graciously sanctifies, lovingly leads, and empowers all who are brought to faith in Christ so that they might live in obedience to the inerrant Scriptures (John 14:12; 15:26–27; 16:7–15).

The model for our reliance upon the Spirit and our experience of his indwelling and empowering presence is the Lord Jesus Christ himself who was filled with the Spirit and entirely dependent upon his power for the

performance of miracles, the preaching of the kingdom of God, and all other dimensions of his earthly ministry (Matthew 3:11; 12:28; Luke 4:1, 14; 5:17; 10:21). The Holy Spirit who indwelt and empowered Christ in like manner indwells and empowers us (Acts 2:14-21; 4:29-30; 10:38; Romans 8:9) through spiritual gifts he has bestowed for the work of ministry and the building up of the body of Christ (Romans 12:3-8; 1 Corinthians 12:7-13; 12:28-31; 14:1-33). These spiritual gifts are divine provisions which are central to spiritual growth and effective ministry and are to be eagerly desired, faithfully developed, and lovingly exercised according to biblical guidelines (2 Corinthians 1:21-22; Galatians 3:1-5; Ephesians 1:13-14; 5:18). It is important to note that all spiritual gifts must be exercised in submission to Scripture and for the edification of the church.

WHY THIS MATTERS FOR OUR CHURCH

Trinitarian worship matters because it reflects the very nature of God. God is one essence in three persons, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, who eternally love and glorify one another. Because God is love within Himself, we, His people, are drawn into that eternal love. We worship a God who in His triune nature knows perfect communion.

Thus, as we worship the Triune God, we learn to reflect His love in our own relationships, living as His covenant family. Without the Trinity, we might imagine a God who only begins to love once He creates. But since God has always been triune, love is eternal, and we, in worship and community, mirror that eternal reality.

QUESTIONS FOR REVIEW, THOUGHT & DISCUSSION

1. What would be the implication for Christianity if Jesus had only been an ordinary human being? What would be the implication if Jesus had not really been human, but only God in disguise?
2. Why is the concept of God as Trinity so important to our faith? What would we lose if we deny that God is both one and three? Compare our Trinitarian faith with other religions or systems of beliefs with which you are familiar.
3. In what ways can your understanding of the Trinity instruct and enhance your devotional life? With which person of the Trinity do you most often interact? Why?
4. In what ways do you live out Christian community?

SALVATION

Do you acknowledge yourselves to be sinners in the sight of God, justly deserving His displeasure, and without hope save in His sovereign mercy? Do you believe in the Lord Jesus Christ as the Son of God, and Savior of sinners, and do you receive and rest upon Him alone for salvation as He is offered in the Gospel?

REDEMPTIVE PERSPECTIVE

“Joy Restored, Redeemed by Christ, Hope Renewed”

Our deepest desires—love, purpose, belonging, wholeness, and joy—are distorted by sin, but reflect our longing for God, and are ultimately satisfied in Jesus Christ alone. Hallelujah!

The gospel proclaims that in Christ, God is making all things new, restoring what was lost and bringing healing to the broken.

THE PROBLEM (SIN)

God created the world and mankind good (Genesis 1:31). Yet mankind was created with the ability to obey or disobey God. Therefore, God gave mankind one simple command to test their obedience and devotion to Him. This command threatened death upon disobedience (Genesis 2:16–17). Any disobedience against God is called sin. Sin is best understood as falling short of God's perfect holiness and righteous standard. Essentially, sin is not doing what God commands, or doing what He forbids.

Mankind was tempted by Satan to disobey God. Satan lied and promised that they would become like God on their own terms if they disobeyed Him. Because they did disobey God, they fell under the punishment and curse of God and brought all the world under a curse (Genesis 3:6; Romans 5:12). Thus, evil entered the world through human rebellion, and the curse of God came upon it as judgment because of disobedience.

Because Adam acted as the representative head of humanity, all people are born guilty before God and inherit a corrupted nature (Romans 5:12–19). Mankind and the world are now under the curse of God and no longer perfect. Our relationship with God has been broken, and we have become alienated from Him and from one another. Humanity now has evil thoughts and desires continually arising from within. Our heart, mind, will, and affections have become corrupted (Genesis 6:5–6; Jeremiah 17:9). This is what Christians often call the doctrine of total depravity.

Sin has affected every aspect of our humanity and so twisted us that, apart from God's grace in Christ, we love other things more than we love God. Our minds, bodies, wills, and affections—every part of our humanity has been affected by sin, and of our own accord we cannot escape this predicament. We are dead in our trespasses and sins, and apart from God's miraculous new birth, we are doomed to eternal separation from God.

Therefore, mankind needs to be rescued. This is what the Bible calls salvation.

WHAT IS “SALVATION”?

Salvation is a broad term that expresses God’s provision for the predicament of his people. In the Old Testament this word is used to describe God’s deliverance of his people from their enemies so that they might experience his blessings. This temporal salvation proves to be a visual aid for the spiritual and eternal salvation God’s people are truly in need of.

Our biggest need is to be reconciled to God because our sin (not doing what God commands or doing what he forbids) makes us worthy only to receive his wrath (Romans 6:23). God’s deliverance of Israel out of slavery at the Exodus foreshadows the Second Exodus by which Jesus would defeat the Enemy of our souls and lead his people out of slavery to sin and death and into the inheritance of eternal life with God. The gospel, or “good news,” is that God has finally accomplished salvation for his people through the life, death and resurrection of Christ. Jesus is the second Adam, the representative head who gives all who are united to him his perfect record.

JESUS IS THE FOCAL POINT OF SALVATION HISTORY

The truth of salvation is revealed progressively throughout the Bible. God created us to be in relationship with him, but from very early on, that relationship was broken by sin. God punished Adam and Eve for their sin (eating the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil that God forbade upon pain of death) by sending them out of the Garden of Eden to toil in labor, but he did not punish them eternally as they deserved if they would trust him for their salvation. He promised that a seed of the woman would render a deathblow to Satan and therefore to sin and death, though not before receiving mortal wounds (Genesis 3:15). Furthermore, God clothed them with the skin of a slain animal, which foreshadowed the sacrifice for sin that would be made on their account. The seed of the woman is, of course, Jesus Christ.

God’s forgiveness of all sinners, whether Adam and Eve, every Old Testament believer after that, and us, required the death of Christ. The only way God could forgive sin yet remain true to his holy character was to send Jesus to pay the punishment that all his people who would trust in him, from the beginning to the end of time deserve for their sin (Romans 3:25-26). The redemptive work of Christ, then, is the center of history. God’s people of all time (both OT and NT) have their salvation secured in the same way, by Christ’s sacrifice on the cross. Old Testament believers looked ahead through shadows to that sacrifice while all people after the time of Christ look back on it with clarity.

HOW IS SALVATION APPLIED TO THE BELIEVER?

The Bible speaks of our salvation as something that is past, present and future: we have been saved (Romans 8:24; Ephesians 2:5, 8); we are being saved (1 Corinthians 1:18; 2 Corinthians 2:15; Philippians 2:12–13); we will be saved (Romans 5:10; 13:11; 1 Peter 1:13; Hebrews 1:14). It is helpful to think of salvation as encompassing regeneration, justification, adoption (past), sanctification (present) and glorification (future). The

salvation of our souls includes each of these works of God and more. We must not think of “salvation” simply as the moment that we profess faith in Christ.

Regeneration

Salvation is dependent upon the work of God who must give us new life before we can repent from our sin and exercise faith in Christ. Jesus told Nicodemus, “no one can enter the kingdom of God unless he is born of water and the Spirit. Flesh gives birth to flesh, but the Spirit gives birth to spirit” (John 3:5–6). Jesus describes the kind of change that must happen to a person in order for him or her to enter the kingdom of God, a change that is affected by the Holy Spirit. Because we are in bondage to sin and Satan, we can no more will to be saved than a dead person can will to rise to life or a blind person can will to see (Jeremiah 17:9; John 3:5–6; 6:44; Romans 3:10–12; 1 Corinthians 2:14; Ephesians 2:1–3). We need the work of the Spirit to restore our hearts from the pollution of sin and to give us new inclinations towards God. We then respond to the Spirit’s working in our hearts by exercising faith in Christ. In this way, we receive salvation by God’s grace through faith in Christ (Galatians 3:6–14; Ephesians 2:4–10).

Justification

When we are given new hearts and freely respond to the truth of the gospel in faith, God justifies us. Justification is a judicial act by which God pronounces the sinner righteous, putting him or her in a permanently right relationship with himself (Romans 3:23–24). God declares us “not guilty” by crediting the perfect obedience of Christ to our account (Romans 4:5) so that when we identify with Christ the law is fulfilled perfectly in us (Romans 8:3–4). With justification, an exchange takes place: whereas Jesus took our sin and its punishment upon himself at the cross, we are clothed with his righteousness.

We believe that Jesus will return one day to bring final judgment and that God will judge those who have believed in him on the merits of Christ rather than on their own merits. Those who are judged on the merits of Christ will enter into everlasting life, while those who are judged on their own merits will enter into everlasting hell. We believe that we are saved “by grace through faith” in the Lord Jesus Christ, and that good works are the certain fruit of such faith. We therefore offer ourselves for Christian service as a means of expressing our gratitude to Him, and to extend His cause.

Adoption

Adoption is a unique aspect of God’s grace to His people with profound ramifications. At Christ Presbyterian Church, we see adoption not only as a doctrine to believe but as an identity to live out. It’s at the heart of our shared life together, which is why one of our core values is:

Adopted into God’s Covenant Family: *Welcomed as children, united in love, growing together as a family.*

Adoption should not be confused with regeneration, justification, or sanctification. Each of these blessings is distinct. Regeneration gives spiritual life; justification declares us righteous before God; sanctification makes us more like Christ. But adoption goes further: it changes our status. We are not merely saved sinners, we are beloved sons and daughters of the Father, brought into His household and made co-heirs with Christ.

The apostle Paul describes this breathtaking reality in Romans 8:16–17:

“The Spirit himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, then heirs—heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ...”

This means that we are fully welcomed into God’s family. Our inheritance is both now and not yet:

- **Now**, we experience the Father’s favor in every trial (Rom. 8:28), knowing that nothing can separate us from His love (Rom. 8:39).
- **Forever**, we are promised the riches of God’s grace (Eph. 1:18–21), the communion of the saints (Rev. 21:1–4), and the glory of the new creation (Rev. 21–22).

These truths do not leave us as isolated individuals, but form us into a family, the church. We are brothers and sisters in Christ, bound together not by preference or background, but by covenantal love. This shapes how we live, serve, and worship at CPC. We speak the truth in love, forgive one another, and bear one another’s burdens. We rejoice with those who rejoice and weep with those who weep.

As adopted children of God, we are freed from:

- Slavery to fear (Rom. 8:15)
- The condemning weight of the law (Gal. 4:5–7)
- The bondage of performance-based religion

And we are granted new privileges:

- The joyful freedom of obedience (1 Pet. 2:16)
- Bold access to God in prayer (Heb. 4:16)
- Confidence that even our imperfect obedience is accepted in Christ (Rom. 5:19)
- Loving discipline from our Father that shapes us (Heb. 12:6–11)

These are not abstract ideas. They define how we see ourselves and one another. At CPC, we live as a family of adopted sons and daughters who love because we have been first loved. We worship the Father who welcomed us, walk with the Son who gave Himself for us, and depend on the Spirit who assures us that we are truly God’s children.

Sanctification

Although we have been saved (justification) and already experience many of God's blessings, we still struggle with sin and live in a world where Satan is allowed by God to rule. In a sense, we have one foot in heaven and one on earth. Sanctification is the process by which we are being saved as the Holy Spirit works in us to progressively free us from sin and make us more like Christ. Thus, our salvation not only includes Christ dying for us, but also Christ living in us. Christ lives in us through his Holy Spirit whom he sends to indwell every Christian (Romans 8:3–14). While obedience merits nothing towards our salvation, it is the necessary result of the Spirit's presence in the lives of believers (Romans 6:1–7; James 2:24–26).

The miracle of the New Covenant promised by the OT prophets is not that God would one day lower his holy standards for our lives, but that at last his Spirit would write his law upon our hearts, rather than upon tablets of stone, so that we would love and obey him out of delight and his empowerment (Jeremiah 31:33; cf. Deuteronomy 30:6-8; Ezekiel 36:26f).

As we examine our lives to see the fruit of obedience (Philippians 2:12–13; 1 Peter 1:2–11) we must keep in mind two things. First, obedience is not something we muster up, but something the Spirit produces in us; second, the disciple is not someone who is better than everyone else, but someone who is better than he or she once was.

Glorification

We look forward to the time we will be saved. When Christ comes again our salvation will reach its culmination and we will be glorified with him. This hope is founded on the resurrection of Christ and the fact that the same Spirit who raised him from the dead now dwells in us. The presence of the Holy Spirit is our guarantee that we will follow Jesus, the first-born from the dead, in the resurrection of our own bodies to glory and immortality (Romans 8:11–25; 1 Corinthians 15:40–44; 51–57).

In Romans 8:28-30, Paul describes the progressive parts of our salvation, ending by saying, “those whom he justified he also glorified” (v. 30). Glorification for those in Paul's day and for us is a future event, yet Paul uses the past tense. He does so to stress the surety of our hope, speaking as if it has already happened because it is guaranteed to come about according to God's sovereign plan and work in our lives. As Paul says elsewhere, “I am confident of this, that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus” (Philippians 1:6).

The glorious truth of salvation, God's rescuing work through Christ, transforms our entire outlook, leading us to our core value of a '**Redemptive Perspective.**' We are a people 'Living in Christ's renewal and hope,' understanding that our redemption is not merely a past event, but an ongoing reality that shapes how we view ourselves, our struggles, and the world around us. This perspective allows us to see God's hand at work even amidst brokenness, fueling our hope for ultimate restoration and empowering us to apply the Gospel's redemptive power to every area of life.

GOD’S PLAN OF SALVATION³

A troubled jailer in the first century once asked two Christian leaders, “what must I do to be saved?” (Acts 16:30). This in fact is the most important question that anyone can ask. We are troubled not only by the evils of our world but also by our own faults. We often feel guilty for those words and deeds that our own consciences tell us are wrong. We probably sense that we deserve God’s judgment, not His favor. What can be done—or what has been done—to rescue us from our helpless situation? We begin our answer by offering an overview of God’s plan and His work to bring salvation, followed by a more detailed unpacking of these truths.

An Overview

Creation

God made this world and all that is in it: “In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.... God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them” (Gen. 1:1,27). He created human beings to be like Him and to have unhindered fellowship with Him, and when His work of creation was finished He saw that it was “very good” (Gen. 1:31).

Rebellion

Although the first people God created, Adam and Eve, had complete freedom to live in friendship and trust with Him, they chose to rebel (Gen. 3:1-7). Because God designed that Adam would represent the entire human race, his sin was catastrophic not only for him but for us: “one trespass led to condemnation for all men” (Rom. 5:18). Our fellowship with God was broken. Instead of enjoying His holy pleasure, we instead face His righteous wrath. Through this sin, we all died spiritually (see Rom. 3:1-20; Eph. 2:1-10) and the entire world was affected. God also cursed the world over which humanity had been set to reign as His lieutenants (see Gen. 3:17-19). “The creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of Him who subjected it” (Rom. 8:20). And we all individually sin against God in our own lives: “for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God” (Rom. 3:23).

Redemption

God would have been perfectly just to leave matters there, with all human beings under His holy judgment, but He didn’t. God instead set in motion His plan to save His people from sin and judgment and set free the entire creation from its subjugation to sin and the curse. How? By sending His Son as a true man who would bear the penalty for our sin and die in our place: “Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures” (1 Cor. 15:3).

The best-known verse in the Bible summarizes the required response to this good news: “For God so loved the world, that He gave His only Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life” (John 3:16).

³ <https://pcanet.org/good-news/>

To “believe in” Jesus includes both a wholehearted trust in Him for forgiveness of sins and a decision to forsake one’s sin or to “repent”: All who truly “repent [or turn from their sins] and believe [in Jesus for the forgiveness of their sins]” will be redeemed (Mark 1:15) and restored to a right relationship with God. To “believe in” Jesus also requires relating to, and putting trust in, Jesus as He truly is—not just a man in ancient history but also a living Savior today who knows our hearts and hears our prayers.

Consummation

God not only rescues lost sinners but He restores all of creation. We read in Romans 8:21: “the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to corruption and obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God.” The heavens and the earth will “pass away” and be radically transformed (2 Pet. 3:7-13; Rev. 21:1). We read of the glorious culmination of this in the book of Revelation, where God’s people, the redeemed, are brought into the presence of God to live (Rev. 21:1-22:6). This is life as it should be, literally as it was meant to be.

Filling in the Details

Let’s now stop and review this more carefully and specifically, addressing the questions of God, man, Christ, the response, and the result.

God

The God of the Bible is the one and only true God. He is the greatest of all beings. He depends on no other being for His existence. He exists eternally as one God in three persons—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—a mystery beyond our understanding, but not a contradiction. He plans and acts according to His own good pleasure. He “works all things according to the counsel of His will” (Eph. 1:11). God created the world and acts in it today in accordance with His own perfect, holy, good, and loving plan, in accordance with His own good pleasure.

In the same way that this perfectly good God created everything according to His own purposes, so He has acted to save people who have rebelled against Him. This action, too, is not because of anything external compelling Him, but it is “according to His great mercy” that “He has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead” (1 Pet. 1:3).

Man

People are made in the image of God (Gen. 1:27-28). What does that mean? In part it means that we are privileged to act as God’s representatives, as sub-rulers over God’s creation, subduing the creatures of the earth, reflecting God’s good rule over us. Our authority is derived from God’s (Eph. 3:14—15) and is meant to reflect His own. But beyond function, being in God’s image also means that we are like God in many ways. Like God, we are spiritual and rational beings. Like God, we communicate and establish relationships. Like God, our souls endure eternally.

However, the Bible also teaches that there has been an enduring effect of the sin of Adam and Eve recorded in Genesis 3. Because of that sin, we are born morally fallen. We are naturally turned away from God and toward sin in every area of life. We are not as bad as we possibly could be, but we are at no point as good as we ought to be. We are now all sinners, and we sin in all areas of life (Rom. 3:23). We are corrupted and make the wrong choices. We are not holy, and are in fact inclined to evil; we do not love God, and therefore we are under just condemnation to eternal ruin, without defense or excuse. We are guilty of sinning against God, fallen from His favor, and under the curse of Genesis 3, and the promise of His right and just judgment of us in the future and forever is guaranteed to us (“the wages of sin is death,” Rom. 6:23). This is the state from which we need to be saved.

Jesus Christ

It was, then, when all human beings were desperate and helpless, that God “loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins” (1 John 4:10).

Fully God. The Son of God, who has eternally existed with the Father and the Holy Spirit, and who has eternally possessed all the attributes of God, became a man. He was born as Jesus, son of the virgin Mary. The Son entered this world with a purpose: He came “to give His life as a ransom for many” (Mark 10:45), which means He came to redeem us from sin and guilt. He was not an unwitting or unwilling sacrifice. He, following his Father, chose to love the world in this way. Though now fully human, He was also fully God throughout the time of His life on earth (and remains fully God to this day). Jesus Himself clearly taught His deity in the way He fulfilled prophecy, which was associated with the coming of God Himself (Mark 14:61-62). Jesus forgave sins (Mark 2:5), He accepted worship (John 20:28; Revelation 5), and He taught, “I and the Father are one” (John 10:30).

Fully man. Jesus Christ was also fully man. He was not a deity pretending to be human when He was not. Jesus was fully human (and remains fully human to this day). He was born and lived in submission to His earthly parents. He had a fully human body. He “grew and became strong, filled with wisdom” (Luke 2:40). He learned the carpentry trade (Mark 6:3). He experienced hunger, felt thirst and tiredness, faced temptation, and eventually suffered even death itself Jesus Christ was, and is, fully God and fully man. The eternal Son of God became a man in order to save sinners.

Perfect life. Jesus Christ lived a perfect life. Indeed, all His actions were as they should be. His words were perfect. He said only what the Father commanded. “What I say, therefore, I say as the Father has told me” (John 12:50). He did only what the Father willed (John 5:19; e.g., Luke 22:42). So, the writer to the Hebrews concludes, “we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin” (Heb. 4:15). Jesus lived the life of consistent, wholehearted love to the Father that Adam and Eve and Israel—and all of us—should have lived. He deserved no punishment from God because He was never disobedient.

Teaching. Jesus came to teach God’s truth, especially about Himself (Mark 1:38; 10:45; Luke 20:42; 24:44). He taught the truth about God, about His relationship with God the Father (John 14), about our sin, about what

He had come to do, and about what we must do in response. He explained that the Scriptures of the OT were about Him (Luke 24:44).

Crucifixion. But God sent His Son especially to die for us (Mark 10:45; John 3:16-18). This is how God has shown His love for us (Rom. 5:8; 1 John 4:9-10). Christ gave His life as a ransom for us (Mark 10:45; 1 Tim. 2:6). By His death He paid the penalty for our sin. Jesus Christ's crucifixion was a horrible act of violence by the people who rejected, sentenced, mocked, tortured, and crucified Him. And yet it was also a display of the self-giving love of God, as the Son of God bore the penalty of God's wrath against us for our sin (Deut. 21:23; Isa. 53:5; Rom. 3:25-26; 4:25; 5:19; 8:3; 2 Cor. 5:21; Phil. 2:8; Heb. 9:28).

Resurrection, ascension, return. On the third day after His crucifixion, Jesus was raised from the dead by God. This demonstrated an acceptance of Christ's service in his ministry and specifically showed God's acceptance of His sacrifice for all those who would repent and believe (Rom. 1:4; 4:25). He ascended to heaven and "will come in the same way as you saw Him go into heaven" (Acts 1:11). Christ's return will bring God's plan of salvation to completion.

Response

So if God has done this in Christ, what are we to do to be saved? We must turn to God in Christ, which entails turning back from sin. If we repent of (decide to forsake and turn from) our sin (as best we understand it) and trust in Christ as a living person, we will be saved from God's righteous wrath against our sins. This response of repentance and faith (or trust) can be explained in more detail as follows:

Turn to God. In the OT, God commands people to turn or return to Him, and so be saved (e.g., Isa. 6:10; Jer. 18:8). In the NT, Christ preached that people should turn to God, and Paul summarized his account of his preaching with that phrase: "that they [everyone] should repent and turn to God, performing deeds in keeping with their repentance" (Acts 26:20; cf. Acts 26:18). Thus, as Paul said earlier, he preached "testifying both to Jews and to Greeks of repentance toward God and of faith in our Lord Jesus Christ" (Acts 20:21). To repent means to turn. And the turning that we are called to do in order to be saved is fundamentally a turning to God. James could refer to the Gentiles who "turn to God" (Acts 15:19). To "turn to," in this sense in the Bible, is to orient your life toward someone. As God's people—those who are being saved—we are to play the part of the Prodigal Son who, though conscious of sin, guilt, and folly, flees to the Father (Luke 15:20). Paul at Lystra calls the people to turn to the living God (Acts 14:15). Paul refers to the Galatian Christians as those who had come to "know God" (Gal. 4:9); this is what we do in repentance: we repent to, we turn to God, and henceforth know Him as the God who forgives our sins and accepts us for Christ's sake.

Turn away from sin. Turning to God necessarily implies our turning away from sin. The whole Bible—OT and NT—clearly teaches that to repent is to "acknowledge [God's] name and turn from [our] sins" (1 Kings 8:35; cf. 2 Chron. 7:14; Jer. 36:3; Ezek. 14:6; 18:30; Acts 3:19; 8:22; 26:18; Rev. 2:21-22; 9:20-21; 16:11). We cannot start to pursue God and sin at the same time. First John makes it clear that our basic way of life will either be oriented toward God and his light, or toward the darkness of sin. Christians in this life still sin, but against our

deepest desires and better judgment; our lives are not guided and directed by sin as before. We are no longer enslaved to sin. Though we still struggle with it (Gal. 5:17), God has given us the gift of repentance (Acts 11:18), and we have been freed from sin's dominating power.

Believe and trust. Put another way, our response is to believe and trust God's promises in Christ, and to commit ourselves to Christ, the living Lord, as his disciples. Among Jesus' first words in Mark's Gospel are "repent and believe in the gospel" (Mark 1:15). The obedience that typifies God's people, beginning with repentance, is to result from the faith and trust we have in Him and His Word (e.g., Josh. 22:16; Acts 27:25). Thus, sins are sometimes called "breaking faith with God" (e.g., Ezra 10:2, 10). Having faith in Christ, which seals our union with Him through the Holy Spirit, is the means by which God accounts Christ's righteousness as our own (Rom. 3:21-26; 5:17-21; Gal. 2:16; Eph. 2:8-9; Phil. 3:9). Paul could refer to "salvation through faith in Christ" (2 Tim. 3:15). Frequently this initial repentance and faith can be simply expressed to God Himself in prayer.

Grow in godliness and battle for holiness. Such saving faith is something that we exercise, but even so it is a gift from God. Paul writes, "For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast" (Eph. 2:8-9). At the same time, Paul explained that Christians know an internal battle: "For the desires of the flesh are against the Spirit, and the desires of the Spirit are against the flesh, for these are opposed to each other, to keep you from doing the things you want to do" (Gal. 5:17). God's gift of salvation has been given to Christians, but the evidence of that salvation is lived out in the continual work of God's Spirit. We can deceive ourselves, and so Paul encourages his readers to "Examine yourselves, to see whether you are in the faith. Test yourselves" (2 Cor. 13:5). Peter encourages Christians to grow in godliness and so become more confident of their election (2 Peter 1). We don't create our own salvation by our actions, but we reflect and express it and so grow in our certainty of it. Because we Christians are liable to deceive ourselves, we should give ourselves to the study of God's Word to be instructed and encouraged in our salvation, and to learn what is inconsistent with it. Jesus' descriptions of His followers (see Matthew 5-7), or Paul's list of the fruit of the Spirit's work in us (see Gal. 5:22-23), act as spiritual maps that help us locate ourselves to see if we are on the path of salvation.

Result

God's plan is to save His people from their sins—and to bring His people fully and finally to Himself (Matt. 1:21; 2 Tim. 2:10). Christians experience salvation in this life in both a past and present sense, and we anticipate salvation in a future sense. Christians have been saved from the penalty of our sins; we are currently being saved from the power of sin; and one day, when God's plan of salvation is completed and we are with Christ, we shall be like Him, and we shall be saved even from the very presence of sin. This is God's plan of salvation.

WHY THIS MATTERS FOR OUR CHURCH

Without the gospel: we live in shame, hopelessness, fear, and self-reliance. But because of Jesus: we live in hope, forgiveness, renewal, and joy.

This shapes how we see: ourselves, our suffering, one another, and the world around us. As a church, we want to live as people who believe that God is still redeeming, restoring, and renewing broken sinners through Christ.

QUESTIONS FOR REVIEW, THOUGHT & DISCUSSION

1. Define “Salvation” in your own words. Why do we hold to the exclusivity of Christ (i.e., that Jesus is the only way of salvation)?
2. If someone were to ask you to explain the gospel, what would you say?
3. What evidence of the Holy Spirit’s work can you see in your life since you became a Christian?
4. In what ways can the past, present and future aspects of your salvation encourage you in your daily living?
5. For whose salvation are you currently praying? In what ways are you enabling others to hear about God’s salvation?
6. What are the practical ramifications of being adopted by God?

THE HOLY SPIRIT

Do you now resolve and promise, in humble reliance upon the grace of the Holy Spirit, that you will endeavor to live as becomes the followers of Christ?

DEPENDING ON GOD ALONE

“Grounded in God’s Word, Guided by His Spirit, Everything Through Prayer”

We seek the Holy Spirit’s guidance and empowerment to apply and live out His Word in every area of life.

Because we depend on God alone, prayer is the breath of our lives and is constant in all we do, shaping us individually and as a body.

THE PRIMARY WORK OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

As we saw with the Trinity, God reveals the person of the Holy Spirit progressively throughout Scripture. Wherever he appears, the Holy Spirit creates and inhabits the temple of God. The temple is the place where God dwells and shows forth his glory. The very first “temple” created was the universe, and so the Holy Spirit first appeared at Creation. When the Spirit hovered over the waters (Genesis 1:2), he was creating a natural revelation of the supernatural glory of heaven.

Heaven and earth were established as a holy palace, or a macrocosmic royal residence, of the Creator King. This is why the Psalmist tells us that the heavens declare the glory of God (Psalm 19), and God says, “Heaven is my

throne and the earth is my footstool” (Isaiah 66:1). After creating the universe as his macrocosmic “temple,” God created the Garden of Eden as a microcosmic “temple,” and it was the focal point of God’s presence among people until the Fall.

THE HOLY SPIRIT IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

During the ministry of Moses the people of God built the tabernacle and the Holy Spirit came and filled this temple of God (Exodus 40:34–35), showing that this was the place where God dwelled and showed forth his glory. During the reign of Solomon, a stationary temple was built, and the Spirit of God came and filled the temple in the same way (2 Chronicles 5:11–6:2; 7:1–3). When Israel was exiled for continually breaking God’s law, Solomon’s temple was destroyed. The prophets looked forward to the restoration of God’s people along with a promise of a magnificent temple where the Spirit would come to dwell in an unprecedented way (Ezekiel 39:27–29; 43:1–9), and would be poured into the hearts of all God’s people (Ezekiel 36:26–27; Joel 2:28–29). But when some exiles finally returned to Jerusalem and rebuilt the temple, the Spirit did not inhabit it as before.

THE HOLY SPIRIT IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

The incarnation brought the beginning of the fulfillment of the prophetic hope. At the baptism of Jesus, the Holy Spirit descended to earth and dwelled in Jesus, because Jesus was the temple of God par excellence (Mark 1:9–11). The gospel of John tells us that Jesus dwelled, or literally “tabernacled” among us and embodied the glory of God (John 1:14; see also 2:19). Jesus was the “place” where God dwelled and showed forth his glory; the One in whom God dwelled among his people in a new way.

After his death, resurrection and ascension, Jesus poured out the Spirit upon his followers, fulfilling the promise of the prophets that God would pour out his Spirit in an unprecedented way upon his people (Acts 2:1–21). Just as the Holy Spirit inhabited the temple of God in the Old Testament, he now inhabits the people of God to show that this is the place he dwells and shows forth his glory. This is the creation of the Church: we, both individually and corporately, are the temple of God and the dwelling place of his Spirit (Ephesians 2:19–22; 1 Corinthians 6:19–20).

THE WORK OF THE HOLY SPIRIT IN SALVATION

Since the Holy Spirit creates and inhabits the temple of God, and since we are that temple, the Spirit is the primary mover throughout the process of our salvation. The Holy Spirit regenerates believers so that we may turn from our sin, exercise faith in Christ and receive the gift of salvation (John 3:5–8; Titus 3:5–7). Because the temple of God is a holy place, the Holy Spirit sanctifies us throughout our lives, making us holy (2 Corinthians 3:18; 2 Thessalonians 2:13), conformed to the image of Christ. In order to do this, he leads us into truth, illuminating our minds and hearts to understand God’s Word (John 14:26; 1 John 2:20, 27; Ephesians 1:17–18); and he produces obedience in us (1 Peter 1:1–2). The Holy Spirit is also the primary mover in creating, inhabiting, and building up the corporate temple of God, the Church (Ephesians 2:21–22). He works to bring

about unity in the Church among the individual “pillars” of the “temple” through the manifestation of fruit and gifts.

The fruit of the Spirit

Since all Christians have the Holy Spirit dwelling in them (Romans 8:9–10), all Christians will inevitably bear His fruit. Paul lists the fruit of the Spirit in the context of the freedom we have in Christ, freedom that is meant for serving one another in love rather than indulging in sin (Galatians 5:13–18).

The acts of the sinful nature have to do with broken relationships and disunity in the body of Christ (vv. 19–22), and these acts are the opposite of the fruit of the Spirit. This means that the fruit of the Spirit does not refer merely to subjective characteristics (like “inner peace”), but to attitudes and actions that build relationships and unity in the Church (like “peace with my neighbor”) (vv. 23–26). The extent of the fruit of the Spirit in our lives will be most evident in the way we treat our brothers and sisters, loving one another in the body of Christ.

This is because the fruit of the Spirit is not something we produce independently. Galatians teaches that the Christian life is not about producing fruit for Christ. It’s about Christ producing His life in us by the Spirit. Legalism says, “Try harder to live for God.” The gospel says, “Christ lives in you.” When we forget union with Christ, fruit talk becomes either pressure or pride. But when Christ is the root, fruit is the result, not the goal.

One way to describe what happens when we forget union with Christ is this: we start living like hired workers instead of sons and daughters. A hired worker measures everything by output. Did I do enough? Am I useful? Am I making progress? But a son or daughter works from belonging, not for it.

Galatians is Paul fighting to keep Christians from slipping back into a hired-worker mindset, trying to earn what Christ has already given. Fruit grows best not when we ask, “How am I doing?” but when we rest in, “I belong to Him.” The fruit of the Spirit is Christ’s own life being formed in us. The Spirit’s primary goal is not to make us impressive, but to conform us to the image of the Son.

The gifts of the Spirit

All Christians will also manifest the gifts of the Spirit, though in varying ways. The Greek word *charisma* (“gift”) is related to the word *charis* (“grace”). The gifts of the Spirit are concrete expressions of God’s grace to the Church. Paul speaks of “gifts,” “service,” and “activities” together (1 Corinthians 12:4–11), reminding us that the gifts are not badges of spiritual status but manifestations of Christ’s life in His people. Through union with Christ and the indwelling Spirit, each believer is equipped to contribute to the growth and unity of Christ’s body. The gifts are therefore something we manifest in dependence upon the Spirit, not something we possess as our own. As sons and daughters united to Christ, we do not use our gifts to establish our significance, but to serve one another in love and build up the body of Christ.

Our position at Christ Presbyterian Church differs from many Charismatic traditions regarding certain spiritual gifts, particularly tongues and prophecy. We reject the teaching that speaking in tongues is the necessary or normative evidence of the baptism of the Holy Spirit. Scripture teaches that all believers are baptized by the Spirit into Christ and His body (1 Cor. 12:13), and that the Spirit sovereignly distributes different gifts to different believers for the common good and the building up of the church (1 Cor. 12:7, 11, 29–30). The evidence of the Spirit's presence is not found in the possession of any one gift, but in a life united to Christ, bearing the fruit of the Spirit, and growing in dependence upon the Father through the Son by the Spirit.

It is easy to feel in a church that your presence and participation are irrelevant, but Scripture teaches that each believer has been given a spiritual gift to be used for the common good. Your presence and ministry in and through the church is therefore vital to Christ Presbyterian's ability to be the living temple of God. So, how will you manifest the gifts of the Spirit at Christ Presbyterian?

The Holy Spirit is not merely an abstract concept; He is the active presence of God, leading us into a deeper experience of '**Depending on God Alone.**' As those 'Guided by His Spirit,' we recognize His vital role in regenerating hearts, sanctifying believers, and empowering us for witness and service. Our prayers are 'Spirit-led,' and we rely on His continuous presence to live out our faith and fulfill our Kingdom Discipleship.

QUESTIONS FOR REVIEW, THOUGHT & DISCUSSION

1. How is your understanding of the Person of the Holy Spirit enhanced as you consider the progressive revelation of him through the Old and New Testaments?
2. How does the Holy Spirit's work to convict us of sin and draw us to Christ relate to his primary work of creating and inhabiting God's temple?
3. As you consider your relationships with others in the body of Christ, where do you see the most room for growth in your bearing the fruit of the Spirit?
4. How have you seen the Holy Spirit manifested in your life?
5. How can you develop your spiritual gifts at Christ Presbyterian Church?

Disciple

Do you now resolve and promise, in humble reliance upon the grace of the Holy Spirit, that you will endeavor to live as becomes the followers of Christ? Do you promise to support the Church in its worship and work to the best of your ability?

KINGDOM DISCIPLESHIP

"Proclaiming the Good News, Making disciples, Resting in Christ's reign"

As Christ's visible church under His sovereign reign, we serve as ambassadors of His kingdom and as a foretaste of His eternal rule.

We are called to participate in Jesus' Great Commission, growing as disciples who make disciples.

Our goal is to see His kingdom come and His will be done on earth as it is in heaven while longing for the consummation of His reign when He returns in glory.

WHAT DOES "CHRISTIAN" REALLY MEAN?

The term *Christian* is both ancient and controversial. Today, it carries a wide range of meanings, some deeply spiritual, others cultural, political, or even nominal. People from vastly different worldviews and lifestyles all claim the label. Some who never worship, never read Scripture, and openly reject core doctrines still call themselves "Christian." Entire nations describe themselves as "Christian," yet their histories are filled with division, war, and moral compromise. In our culture, the term is often used so broadly, and sometimes so cynically, that it's hard to know what someone actually believes when they say, "I'm a Christian."

Surprisingly, *Christian* is not a term Jesus or the apostles used to describe themselves. In fact, it only appears three times in the New Testament (Acts 11:26; 26:28; 1 Peter 4:16), and in each case it seems to have been a label given by outsiders, not claimed by the early church. The disciples were first *called* Christians in Antioch (Acts 11:26), likely by Roman or Greek observers who saw this growing movement of people who followed someone named "Christ."

To the Gentile world, the word *Christos* (Greek for "anointed one") would have been unfamiliar. Some likely misunderstood it as *Chrestos*, meaning "good" or "useful." Early Roman writers such as Suetonius and Tacitus either mocked or misunderstood Christians, and the name itself may have been intended as a slur, similar to calling someone a "goody-goody" or a member of a fringe sect.

But rather than being ashamed of the name, early believers embraced it as an honor: "If anyone suffers as a Christian, let him not be ashamed..." (1 Peter 4:16). Over time, the label became a badge of identity, not because it was chosen by the church, but because it pointed to their allegiance to Christ.

Yet today, the word *Christian* can still carry confusion or contempt. In public discourse, it is often used as a political identity, a moral label, or a term of scorn. In this way, the situation isn't so different from the first century.

Given all the confusion surrounding the term *Christian*, it's worth asking: what did Jesus actually call His followers? He didn't command us to go and make "Christians." He commissioned us to make *disciples* (Matthew 28:19). While *Christian* was a name given by outsiders, *disciple* is the name Jesus Himself used. And it carries deep meaning.

To be a disciple isn't just about wearing a religious label, it's about walking a lifelong path: following Jesus, learning from Him, becoming like Him, and helping others do the same. While the term *Christian* has become culturally malleable and often vague, the word *disciple* gives us a clear, biblical picture of what it truly means to belong to Christ.

JESUS CALLS HIS FOLLOWERS - DISCIPLES

"By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another." (John 13:35) The term *disciple* carries deep historical and biblical meaning. While most people today associate the term "Christian" with belief in Jesus, the word *disciple* speaks to something far more personal and transformative. Even non-Christians have heard the word, but in the first-century Jewish world, it signified a respected and radical way of life.

To understand the weight of Jesus' call to "follow me," we need to grasp what discipleship meant in His cultural context.

Historical Background

In first-century Jewish culture, formal education typically began around the age of five or six in a setting called *Bet Sefer* ("House of the Book"). Boys learned to read and began memorizing large portions of the Torah, the first five books of Scripture. Some advanced students continued in *Bet Talmud* ("House of Learning"), studying the prophets, writings, and oral traditions. The most promising might eventually seek to become disciples of a Rabbi.

Becoming a disciple wasn't automatic. A Rabbi would carefully examine a student's ability to recall Scripture, interpret its meaning, and apply it wisely. More than intellectual ability, the Rabbi was asking: *Can this person become like me?* If so, he would invite the student with the words: "Come, follow me."

To be a disciple meant far more than learning facts. It meant living with your Rabbi, imitating his character, adopting his lifestyle, and absorbing his teaching. The goal wasn't just to know what the Rabbi knew, but to become who he was. If the disciple was faithful, he might one day become a Rabbi himself, often around the age of 30.

Jesus' Radical Invitation

Jesus began His public ministry around the age of 30, the age a Rabbi might take on disciples. But His approach was radically different.

He didn't choose the best students or wait for eager applicants to impress Him. He called fishermen and tax collectors, men already working their family trades. That meant they likely hadn't advanced far in the rabbinic system. They weren't "the best of the best." But Jesus, the true and better Rabbi, called them not because of their résumé, but by His grace.

His invitation, "Follow me," flipped the traditional model on its head. He wasn't just inviting them into a religious career; He was calling them into the Kingdom of God, into a life of total transformation.

What Does This Mean For Us?

True followers of Jesus are not merely believers in a set of doctrines, they are *disciples*. Jesus never said, "Go and make Christians." He said, "Go and make disciples" (Matt. 28:19).

To be a disciple is to respond to Jesus' gracious call with obedience and surrender. It is to die to ourselves, take up our cross daily, and follow Him (Luke 9:23). It means learning from Him, loving others like He does, and helping others do the same.

Jesus calls us not to a one-day-a-week faith, but to a life of fellowship, worship, and mission. Discipleship is not a private belief; it's a shared life in Christ with others. We need the church to grow, be challenged, and be equipped. The life of a disciple is a life of community, prayer, sacrifice, and love.

And when Jesus tells us to baptize and teach (Matt. 28:19–20), He's inviting us to form people in His likeness, not just perform religious rituals. Baptism is a covenant sign; it's the beginning of a life marked by grace and obedience. But covenant signs come with both blessings and warnings (cf. Deut. 28). Some are baptized yet never believe. The problem is not with the sign, but with a lack of discipleship. We are not called to create nominal Christians but to raise up faithful disciples.

WHAT THEN IS DISCIPLESHIP?

Discipleship is not destinal, but directional. We can find a good working view of a disciple in Matt. 4:19 and Matt. 28:16. It is one who is increasingly worshipping Jesus in all of life, and one who is being changed by Jesus into His likeness, a new identity. So, discipleship is best defined by: *Leading others to increasingly submit all of life to the empowering presence and Lordship of Jesus Christ.*

So, a disciple is one who:

- Worships Jesus increasingly in all of life.

- Has been/is being changed/transformed by Jesus increasingly in all of life.
- Is obeying Jesus increasingly in all of life.
- Leads others to do the same. True discipleship is growing up in every way into Christ (Eph. 4:15).

HOW IS DISCIPLESHIP DONE?

- **Life on life (visible and accessible)** – living life together in smaller groups where accountability and deep friendship and care can be fostered
- **Life in community (living in Christ's body that has many members)** – living within the family of God as a larger group where non-believers can see disciples truly caring and having concern for others
- **Life on mission (make disciples with others)** – learning how to submit to him in all of life and teaching others to do the same

WHAT WILL IT AFFECT?

Everything: Our relationships. Our work. Our finances. Our leisure. Our material possessions. Our parenting. Our future. Discipleship is not just doing spiritual activities, but being devoted to each other's development in Christ, to see every person within Christ's body grow up into His likeness. It is being committed to one another for the glory of Christ.

Becoming a disciple is fundamentally about embracing our core value of '**Kingdom Discipleship**.' This means actively 'Proclaiming the gospel' to those who do not know Christ, intentionally 'making disciples' through life-on-life, life-in-community, and life-on-mission engagement, and ultimately 'resting in Christ's reign,' trusting His sovereign rule over all things. Our discipleship journey, marked by resources like 'Tree Spirituality' and 'Worshipping Jesus in the Psalms,' equips us to embody Christ-centered exposition and redemptive application, transforming us by the Spirit's power as we engage with the nuances of honor-shame and guilt-innocence.

QUESTIONS FOR REVIEW, THOUGHT & DISCUSSION

1. How comfortable are you of thinking of yourself as a "disciple" of Jesus? Have you ever thought of yourself this way? What does being a disciple mean to you?
2. In general, do you think the followers of Jesus in your community think of themselves as "Christians" or "disciples"? What difference do you see this making?
3. What would change most in your community if those who follow Jesus truly loved one another?
4. The first Christians embraced the words of Jesus with utter seriousness and ended up changing the world. How much potential for the same kind of change do you see in our world today?

THE CHURCH

Do you promise to support the Church in its worship and work to the best of your ability? Do you submit yourselves to the government and discipline of the Church, and promise to study its purity and peace?

ADOPTED INTO GOD'S COVENANT FAMILY

"Welcomed as children, united in love, growing together as a family."

As God's beloved children, we embrace our adoption in Christ. We live out our new identity in a way that extends this love to others, within and outside the body.

As God's redeemed covenant community, we seek to embody the love, humility, and forgiveness of Christ as we live, serve, and worship together as His family.

We are a community of hospitality, mutual encouragement, shared life, and discipleship, where everyone is valued and equipped to serve and grow.

THE NATURE OF THE CHURCH

As we observed in our study of the Holy Spirit, God creates His Church by pouring out his Spirit to inhabit his people, both individually and corporately (Acts 2). By the working of the Spirit, the Church is the body of Christ, made up of individuals who serve one another through diverse gifts and ministries with a view to being built up in unity & love (1 Corinthians 12:12–27; Ephesians 4:11–16). Therefore, to be a Christian is to be in an interdependent relationship with other Christians, reflecting the interdependent relationship of the members of the Trinity. We might say that there are two things that one cannot be alone: married, or a Christian. God has designed it so that we need one another in order to hold unswervingly to our faith, to be encouraged in bearing the fruit and gifts of the Spirit and to have our needs provided for. Because Christians need other Christians to be the Church that God intends, the writer of Hebrews exhorts his readers not to give up their habit of regularly meeting together (Hebrews 10:23–25).

THE MEMBERS OF THE CHURCH

The New Testament teaches that the Church is made up of all who profess faith in Christ and their children, no matter what nationality, gender, or station in life, for the only boundary-marker of the people of God in the New Covenant is the presence of the Spirit (Ephesians 2:11–22; Galatians 3:26–29). We reflect this truth when we recite in the Apostle's Creed: "I believe in...the holy catholic church." The word "catholic" (lower-case "c") does not refer to the Roman Catholic (capital "C") Church, but means "universal." So, when we say that "we believe in the holy catholic church," we affirm that we believe in the universal community of believers; that is, we believe that the church is not something man-made or bound by artificial barriers, or that can be solely claimed

by one certain group or type of people. We also affirm that those who are part of the “catholic” church believe the same truth and share the same ultimate mission in the world, to make disciples.

WHAT IS A/THE CHURCH THEN?

In the Scriptures, God does not speak of the church as an institution or a club, but rather as an assembly or gathering of His people that have been called out by Him. This is why the Scripture uses a formula or phrase from beginning of the Scriptures to the end (Genesis to Revelation), to represent this relationship with Him: “You will be my people and I will be your God.” The word “church” is simply the word we use to express who these people are that God has called from death and rebellion against Him to abundant life in Him and obedience to Him.

“The Church” is all the people who Jesus Christ has purchased through His completed work (His life, death, resurrection, and ascension) that have ever lived and will ever live. We will call this the “Church” with a big “C”, or the universal church. All these people are united to Christ, and through Him are united to one another though they have not yet all met one another (1 Corinthians 12:13). Yet, because we are time and space-bound creatures, we realize we can’t live in relationship with everyone who is united to Christ. Therefore, God’s people who share a locale, and a common vision, mission, purpose, and strategy join together to make disciples. We will refer to these things as their “shared mission.” These people who join together on this shared mission, we will call a “church” or a local church. Thus, we would say that the church is a local, time-bound group of God’s people who have been called by God, united to Christ, and who unite together to live as God’s family in real relationship on a shared mission. We find Jesus speaking of the local assembly or gathering in Matthew 18:17. Jesus also had things to say to individual churches in Revelation chapters 2 and 3.

CHRIST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH IS PROTESTANT

Even though all Christians are part of one universal church, the church has divided into different groups and denominations according to particular theological and organizational beliefs over the centuries. One major division took place in the 16th century with the Protestant Reformation. We get the word “Protestant” from the Protestio of the reformers at the Diet of Speier in 1529 regarding the practices of the Roman Catholic Church. The word means “to witness forth” (pro = “forth”, testio = “witness”), not “protest”.

The first Protestants viewed themselves as those who “witnessed forth” to the truth of Scripture and the beliefs of the early church. The Reformers declared the following five principles to recover the gospel:

- **Sola Scriptura:** Scripture alone is the inerrant and sufficient authority for the Christian and the Church (as opposed to tradition)
- **Sola Gratia:** God bestows salvation to us by his grace alone (as opposed to the idea that we have some abilities or natural endowments to work out our salvation)
- **Sola Fide:** We receive salvation through faith alone (as opposed to works)

- **Solus Christus:** Christ alone accomplishes salvation for the people of God through his substitutionary atonement (as opposed to the mediation of the Church)
- **Soli Deo Gloria:** To God alone be the glory: Salvation is from God alone and has been accomplished for us solely by God for his glory.

Christ Presbyterian Church is a Protestant church identifying with these five reformation principles.

CHRIST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH IS CHRIST-CENTERED AND GOSPEL-CENTERED

At Christ Presbyterian Church, everything we do is centered on Jesus Christ and the gospel of His saving work. We believe that God's eternal purpose is to unite all things in Christ (Ephesians 1:10), that Christ is preeminent in all things (Colossians 1:18), and that all of God's promises find their fulfillment in Him (2 Corinthians 1:20).

The gospel is the good news of what God has done through Jesus Christ to redeem sinners and restore all things to Himself. Jesus Christ, the eternal Son of God, lived the life we failed to live, died the death we deserved to die, rose again in victory over sin and death, and now reigns as Lord. Through faith in Him, we receive forgiveness of sins, adoption into God's family, and the gift of eternal life.

The gospel is not merely the starting point of the Christian life, but the foundation and fuel of our worship, discipleship, mission, fellowship, and hope. It is the power of God for salvation (Romans 1:16) and the unshakable anchor of our identity as God's beloved children (Galatians 3:26–4:7).

At CPC, we affirm:

- The exclusive saving power of Jesus Christ.
- The full authority and trustworthiness of Scripture.
- The necessity of repentance and faith for salvation.
- The call to walk in newness of life by the Spirit.

We are a Christ-centered church that embraces the rich theological heritage of the Protestant Reformation. Our beliefs are rooted in the Westminster Confession of Faith and Catechisms, which express the gospel with clarity, depth, and pastoral wisdom. These confessions remind us that salvation is by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone, to the glory of God alone, as revealed in Scripture alone.

We seek to be a Christ-centered church shaped by five key commitments:

- **Depending on God Alone** – resting in His Word, led by His Spirit, and saturated in prayer.
- **Adopted into God's Covenant Family** – knowing our identity as beloved children in Christ.
- **A Redemptive Perspective** – viewing all of life in light of Christ's resurrection power.
- **Trinitarian Worship** – glorifying the Father, through the Son, by the Spirit.
- **Kingdom Discipleship** – proclaiming the gospel and making disciples in everyday life.

We are not perfect, but we are being transformed by grace. Our hope is not in programs, performance, or popularity, but in Jesus Christ and His gospel. He is the message we proclaim, the Savior in whom we trust, the King whom we follow, and the foundation of our life together.

In all of this, we seek to proclaim Christ, depend upon the Spirit, and live for the glory of the Father.

CHRIST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH IS PRESBYTERIAN

Besides being Protestant and Gospel-Centered, Christ Presbyterian Church is also Presbyterian. But what is it to be Presbyterian? While being Protestant and Gospel-Centered primarily reflect theological distinctions, Presbyterianism reflects both theological and organizational distinctions.

Presbyterian

Presbyterian denominations derive their name from the Greek word *presbuteros*, which means "elder." Presbyterian church governance is common to the Protestant churches that were most closely modeled after the Reformation in Switzerland. In England, Scotland and Ireland, the Reformed churches that adopted a Presbyterian instead of Episcopalian government became known, naturally enough, as the Presbyterian Church. Presbyterianism is a form of church government, practiced by many (although not all) of those Protestant churches (known as Reformed churches), which historically subscribed to the teachings of John Calvin as seen in his *Institutes of the Christian Religion*. Presbyterianism, however, traces its institutional roots in the Scottish Reformation, especially led by John Knox.

American Presbyterianism

Within the United States, Presbyterianism traces its roots to the pioneering ministry of Rev. **Francis Makemie** (1658–1708). Sent by the Irish Presbytery of Laggan in 1682 as a missionary to the American colonies, Makemie responded to a request for ministers from Maryland and Virginia. He is widely regarded as the father of American Presbyterianism and the first to plant churches with a regular and thorough Presbyterian order in the New World.⁴

Over time, as American culture and the broader church landscape changed, various branches of Presbyterianism emerged, often due to differing convictions about the authority of Scripture, the confessions of faith, and the mission of the church. One major division came in 1973, when the Presbyterian Church in America (PCA) was formed. The PCA separated from the Presbyterian Church in the United States (PCUS) over a growing concern to remain faithful to biblical authority, Reformed doctrine, and the spiritual mission of the church.

Today, several Presbyterian denominations exist in North America, each with distinct theological emphases and expressions of ministry. Among them:

⁴ <https://www.tvp-pca.com/wp-content/uploads/2018/04/Brief-History-of-PCA.pdf>, page 3. You can read a more full treatment of the history here.

- **Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) – PCUSA:** The largest Presbyterian denomination in the U.S., the PCUSA has over the past century increasingly abandoned key doctrines of the historic Christian faith. It has denied the inerrancy of Scripture, embraced theological pluralism, and approved practices contrary to biblical teaching. While many faithful believers remain within it, as a denomination it no longer holds consistently to the gospel or to the Reformed confessions.
- **Presbyterian Church in America – PCA:** Formed in 1973 as a faithful remnant out of the PCUS (the Southern branch of mainline Presbyterianism), the PCA remains committed to the authority and inerrancy of Scripture, Reformed theology, and the Great Commission. The PCA affirms the Westminster Standards, practices connectional polity, and seeks to be a church that is "faithful to the Scriptures, true to the Reformed faith, and obedient to the Great Commission."
- **Orthodox Presbyterian Church – OPC:** Founded in 1936, the OPC holds firmly to Reformed doctrine and practice, with an emphasis on doctrinal precision, worship regulated by Scripture, and confessional integrity. It shares much theological affinity with the PCA.
- **Evangelical Presbyterian Church – EPC:** The EPC was formed in 1981 as a more moderate alternative to the PCUSA. While it affirms the authority of Scripture and the essentials of the gospel, it allows a broad range of positions on important theological matters, such as the ordination of women to all offices and differing views on eschatology and charismatic gifts. This latitude gives it wider appeal, but it also leads to less confessional clarity and theological consistency compared to the PCA or OPC.
- **ECO – A Covenant Order of Evangelical Presbyterians:** Founded in 2012 by churches leaving the PCUSA, ECO emphasizes missional vitality, leadership development, and church growth. It seeks to hold to essential evangelical convictions and to reclaim a Reformed identity. However, it allows for significant latitude on issues such as ordination (including women to all offices), polity, and doctrinal standards, and does not formally affirm the Westminster Confession of Faith as its theological standard. While many ECO congregations are sincerely seeking to follow Christ, the denomination's broad doctrinal boundaries present challenges for confessional consistency.

At Christ Presbyterian Church (PCA), we are grateful to be part of a denomination that seeks to uphold the truth and sufficiency of God's Word, the doctrines of grace, and the mission of Christ's church. We do not claim perfection, but we do aim to be a church that lives under the authority of Jesus Christ, proclaimed in His Word, and expressed through confessional and connectional Presbyterian polity.

Presbyterian Church of America

In particular, Christ Presbyterian Church is a member of the Presbyterian Church of America (PCA) in the Northern New England Presbytery.

The distinctiveness of the PCA from other denominations is found organizationally and theologically. Organizationally, these distinctions relate to the structure, leadership, and discipline of the church as found in the PCA's Book of Church Order (BCO). Theologically, these distinctions are found in the Westminster

Standards: Westminster Confession of Faith (WCF), Westminster Larger Catechism (WLC), and Westminster Shorter Catechism (WSC).

Constitution

The Presbyterian Church has long defined its doctrine and practice through the Westminster Standards. Since its founding in 1973, the Presbyterian Church in America (PCA) has made the Westminster Confession of Faith, along with the Larger and Shorter Catechisms, and the Book of Church Order (BCO) constitutionally binding, always subordinate to the inerrant Word of God, the Old and New Testaments.

As the BCO states in the Preface, Part III:

“The Constitution of the Presbyterian Church in America, which is subject to and subordinate to the Scriptures...consists of its doctrinal standards set forth in the Westminster Confession of Faith, together with the Larger and Shorter Catechisms, and the Book of Church Order, comprising the Form of Government, the Rules of Discipline and the Directory for Worship; all as adopted by the Church.”

All officers of the PCA, Teaching Elders, Ruling Elders, and Deacons, are required to sincerely receive and adopt these Standards as containing the system of doctrine taught in the Scriptures. Church members are not required to affirm every point of doctrine, but they do agree to receive the instruction and government of the church as grounded in the Word of God.

Regarding worship, the Directory for the Worship of God, which is part of the BCO, provides a theological and pastoral guide. However, only certain chapters, 56 (Baptism), 57 (Communion), 58 (Public Worship), and 59-3 (Marriage), have been granted full constitutional authority. The rest of the Directory, while important, does not have the force of law and is not obligatory in all its parts.

This allows churches a degree of liberty in the ordering of worship, while still reflecting the theological convictions and practices of the PCA as a Reformed and Presbyterian denomination.

A brief history of the Westminster Standards

In the 17th century, the Covenanter movement emerged in Scotland as a Reformed Presbyterian resistance to King Charles I's efforts to impose Anglican worship and church government. In 1638, through the signing of the National Covenant, the Scots rejected the authority of bishops and the Book of Common Prayer, reaffirming Presbyterian polity and biblical worship under Christ's headship.

In 1643, during the English Civil War, the English Parliament sought the support of the Scottish Covenanters. This led to the Solemn League and Covenant, pledging ecclesiastical unity between England and Scotland. As part of this effort, Parliament convened the Westminster Assembly, a gathering of “godly and learned divines,” primarily Puritan ministers within the Church of England.

Meeting over five years (1643–1648), the Assembly produced the Westminster Confession of Faith, along with the Larger and Shorter Catechisms, a Directory for Public Worship, and Form of Church Government. These documents represent a clear articulation of Reformed theology in the Calvinist tradition.

The Church of Scotland adopted the Westminster Standards in 1647, making them its subordinate standards under Scripture. Although the Church of England never formally adopted them, the Confession and Catechisms have been embraced by many Presbyterian churches worldwide. Adapted versions have also been used by Congregationalists (Savoy Declaration) and Reformed Baptists (1689 London Confession), with key theological distinctions.

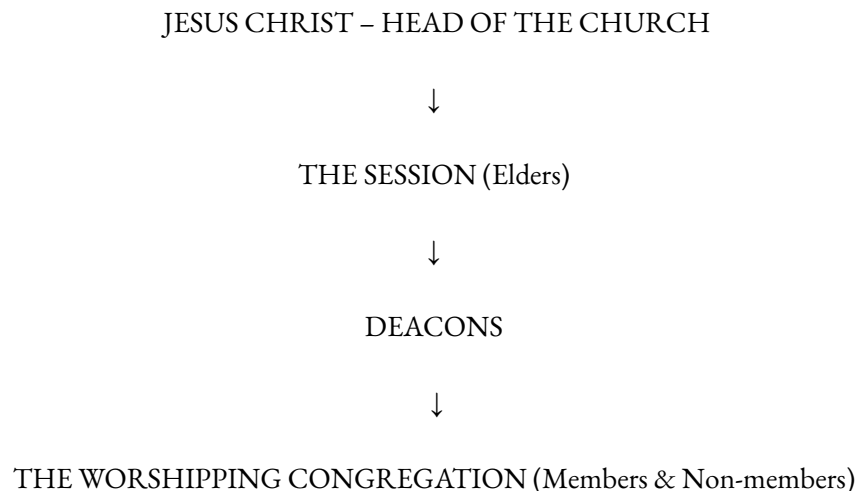
For more than three centuries, the Westminster Confession has served as a foundation for churches that affirm the authority of Scripture, salvation by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone, and the glory of God as the chief end of man.

THE STRUCTURE OF CHRIST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

Presbyterianism is based on the belief that Jesus Christ alone is the King and Head of the Church. From His throne of glory, Christ rules and teaches His Church through His Word and Spirit by the ministry of ordained elders. These men do not act independently but *mediately* exercise Christ's authority, enforcing His Word for the edification and establishment of His Kingdom. In accordance with Scripture, Christ has given each local church a plurality of elders to serve, teach, direct, and be examples (1 Timothy 3; Titus 1; 2 Timothy 2:2).

Because of this, membership is deeply important. It is the members of Christ Presbyterian Church who are called to do the work of ministry and who are responsible for electing elders who will equip them to grow in faith, love, and service (Ephesians 4:11–16).

The overall structure of the church may be illustrated as follows:



The elders

At a high level, elders are responsible for the spiritual welfare of the church and its members. They have oversight of all aspects of the church's ministries and mission. Members of the congregation nominate potential elders. The current Session helps discern the man's biblical qualifications, and, after appropriate training and examination, he is presented to the congregation for election.

The PCA's *Book of Church Order* (BCO) outlines the elder's calling in BCO 8-1:

"This office is one of dignity and usefulness. The man who fills it has in Scripture different titles expressive of his various duties. As he has the oversight of the flock of Christ, he is termed bishop or pastor. As it is his duty to be spiritually fruitful, dignified, and prudent, an example to the flock, and to govern well in the house and Kingdom of Christ, he is termed presbyter or elder. As he expounds the Word, and by sound doctrine both exhorts and convinces the gainsayer, he is termed teacher. These titles do not indicate different grades of office, but all describe one and the same office."

BCO 8-3 further explains:

"It belongs to those in the office of elder, both severally and jointly, to watch diligently over the flock committed to his charge, that no corruption of doctrine or of morals enter therein. They must exercise government and discipline, and take oversight not only of the spiritual interests of the particular church, but also the Church generally when called thereunto. They should visit the people at their homes, especially the sick. They should instruct the ignorant, comfort the mourner, nourish and guard the children of the Church. They should set a worthy example to the flock entrusted to their care by their zeal to evangelize the unconverted, make disciples, and demonstrate hospitality. All those duties which private Christians are bound to discharge by the law of love are especially incumbent upon them by divine vocation, and are to be discharged as official duties. They should pray with and for the people, being careful and diligent in seeking the fruit of the preached Word among the flock."

The deacons

At a high level, deacons are responsible for leading ministries of mercy, service, and stewardship, and they assist the elders in the care and connection of the congregation. Their role reflects the compassion and servanthood of Christ.

BCO 9-1 describes the office of deacon this way:

"The office of deacon is set forth in the Scriptures as ordinary and perpetual in the Church. The office is one of sympathy and service, after the example of the Lord Jesus; it expresses also the communion of saints, especially in their helping one another in time of need."

And BCO 9-2 explains:

“It is the duty of the deacons to minister to those who are in need, to the sick, to the friendless, and to any who may be in distress. It is their duty also to develop the grace of liberality in the members of the church, to devise effective methods of collecting the gifts of the people, and to distribute these gifts among the objects to which they are contributed. They shall have the care of the property of the congregation, both real and personal, and shall keep in proper repair the church edifice and other buildings belonging to the congregation. In matters of special importance affecting the property of the church, they cannot take final action without the approval of the Session and consent of the congregation. In the discharge of their duties the deacons are under the supervision and authority of the Session. In a church in which it is impossible for any reason to secure deacons, the duties of the office shall devolve upon the ruling elders.”

In summary, at Christ Presbyterian Church, we affirm that Christ rules His Church by His Word and Spirit through ordained elders and deacons. As a congregation, we participate joyfully in His mission by submitting to His rule, praying for our leaders, and engaging in the ministry to which we have all been called.

WOMEN IN THE CHURCH

At Christ Presbyterian Church, we joyfully affirm that women are equally made in God’s image, fully adopted in Christ, and essential to the life and health of the church. Throughout Scripture, women play a vital role in God’s redemptive story: from Sarah, Miriam, and Ruth, to Mary, Elizabeth, Lydia, Phoebe, and many others. Jesus Himself honored women, welcomed them as disciples, and appeared first to them after His resurrection. Paul recognized and commended many women as fellow laborers in the gospel.

While the New Testament affirms the equal worth and dignity of women and men (Galatians 3:28), it also teaches that men are called to serve as spiritual overseers in the family and church. The PCA, in accordance with 1 Timothy 2:12–3:7 and Titus 1, understands that the offices of elder and deacon are for qualified men, as determined by Scripture.

At CPC, we affirm this teaching and seek to practice it with clarity, joy, and deep appreciation for the gifts God has given to women. We recognize the example of Phoebe (Romans 16:1–2) and other women who served in meaningful ways. Therefore, we invite qualified women to serve as non-ordained Deacon Assistants, supporting the mercy ministry of the church under the oversight of the diaconate and the Session (BCO 9-7).

We believe women should be encouraged and equipped to use their gifts in all areas not prohibited by Scripture, including prayer, teaching other women, discipling others, evangelizing, showing hospitality, counseling, and serving on ministry teams. We also desire to cultivate women leaders who support and advise our elders, helping CPC reflect the beauty and character of Christ’s body.

In all these things, we aim to honor the Lord by holding fast to His Word, building up the body in love, and encouraging both men and women to flourish in the roles and gifts He has given for the glory of His name.

CONCLUSION

The church, the body of Christ, is designed by God to be a tangible expression of our core value, '**Adopted into God's Covenant Family.**' As those 'Welcomed as children' through Christ, we are 'united in love' by the Holy Spirit, committed to 'growing together as a family' in grace and truth. This profound spiritual adoption forms the basis of our shared life, mutual care, and hospitality, making CPC a place where people tangibly experience belonging and become a redemptive family to one another and the community.

QUESTIONS FOR REVIEW, THOUGHT & DISCUSSION

1. If someone were to approach you and say, "I can be a perfectly good Christian and not go to church," how would you answer?
2. What does it mean to "be the Church"? How have you experienced this at CPC; or, in what ways would you hope to experience this at CPC? Have you experienced a bad church?
3. In your own words, explain what it means to be Protestant? To be Evangelical? To be Presbyterian? Can you whole-heartedly identify yourself with each group? Why or why not?
4. How do we decide which issues are worth dividing over (i.e., breaking fellowship over) and which are not?
5. Have you met any of the elders and deacons of the church? Feel free to chat with them about any questions you might have.

THE SACRAMENTS

Do you promise to support the church in its worship and work to the best of your ability?

TRINITARIAN WORSHIP

"Living for the Glory of the Father, through the Son, by the Spirit"

We come together on the Lord's Day to passionately proclaim our Triune God's greatness as we receive His grace through Word and Sacrament.

WHAT IS A "SACRAMENT"?

The word *sacrament* comes to us through the Latin *sacramentum*, meaning "a sacred oath" or "a consecrated sign." This Latin term was used in Ancient Rome to refer to a soldier's oath of allegiance. Early Christian theologians, particularly Tertullian in the 3rd century, saw a fitting parallel between the soldier's oath and the Christian's initiation into Christ through baptism and the Lord's Supper.

The Latin *sacramentum* was used to translate the Greek word *mysterion*, which appears in the New Testament to describe God's redemptive plan once hidden but now revealed in Christ (e.g., Eph. 3:3–6). Though *mysterion* does not refer to "sacraments" in the NT, the term came to be used for visible rites that pointed to invisible, divine realities.

A sacrament, then, is a visible sign and seal of the righteousness we have by faith (Romans 4:11). It is a visible sign of invisible grace, a tangible reminder and confirmation of God's covenant promises. According to the Westminster Confession of Faith (27.1), sacraments are "holy signs and seals of the covenant of grace," instituted by God to represent Christ and His benefits, and to confirm our union with Him.

At Christ Presbyterian Church, we recognize two sacraments, as do most Protestant churches: baptism and the Lord's Supper. These were both instituted by Jesus Christ (see Matthew 28:18–20; Luke 22:14–20), and are intended for the covenant community, those who belong to Christ and His Church.

We do not consider marriage a sacrament. While it is a holy and God-ordained institution, marriage is a creation ordinance given for all humanity (believers and unbelievers alike), and not a means of grace uniquely instituted by Christ for His Church.

OLD TESTAMENT PARALLELS TO BAPTISM AND THE LORD'S SUPPER

The Old Testament counterpart to baptism is circumcision (Genesis 17:9–14, 23–27; Colossians 2:11–12), and the counterpart to the Lord's Supper is the Passover meal (Exodus 12:1–27; Luke 22:15–20). Circumcision was given as the sign of initiation into the Old Covenant community, while the Passover was a recurring celebration to remember and reaffirm God's covenant faithfulness.

In the New Covenant, baptism serves as the sign of initiation into the covenant community (Matthew 28:19; Galatians 3:26–29), marking our union with Christ and entrance into His body, the Church. The Lord's Supper is the ongoing sign of remembrance, nourishment, and communion, by which believers are spiritually strengthened and continue to participate in the benefits of the covenant (1 Corinthians 11:23–26).

Thus, baptism and the Lord's Supper go hand-in-hand: the former is a once-for-all sign of covenant entrance, and the latter is a recurring means of grace for covenant renewal and communion with Christ and His people.

THE SYMBOLISM OF BAPTISM

It is important to understand the symbolism of baptism in order to grasp its significance. The New Testament tells us that the washing with water symbolizes the washing away of our sin (Acts 22:16; 2:38). Being “under” the water (whether figuratively or literally) symbolizes being dead and buried with Christ (Romans 6:3–7; Colossians 2:11–12); only when we identify with Christ in his death and burial can we share in a spiritual resurrection to newness of life that will be followed one day with our physical resurrection. Even more significant than this is the symbolism of the water itself. In the Old Testament, water often symbolized the judgment of God. For example, at the flood most of humankind was consumed by the waters of God's judgment while Noah and his family passed through; at the crossing of the Red Sea the Egyptians were consumed by the waters of God's judgment while the Israelites passed through. Neither Noah and his family nor the Israelites were any less sinful or deserving of God's judgment than those who were consumed by God's wrath; rather, God showed great mercy to them and saved them by his grace. In 1 Peter 3:20–22, Peter calls the flood a baptism and compares it to the baptism we experience in the Christian community. The water poured out in baptism symbolizes the fact that a person is rightly under the judgment of God and only God by his mercy and grace can bring him through that judgment and save him. This salvation, of course, is through faith in Christ, who is our “ark.”

BAPTISM AT CHRIST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

The Westminster Confession of Faith, Chapter 27.1, says:

“Baptism is a sacrament of the new testament, ordained by Jesus Christ, (Matt. 28:19) not only for the solemn admission of the party baptized into the visible Church; (1 Cor. 12:13) but also to be unto him a sign and seal of the covenant of grace, (Rom. 4:11, Col. 2:11–12) of his ingrafting into Christ, (Gal. 3:27, Rom. 6:5) of regeneration, (Tit. 3:5) of remission of sins, (Mark 1:4) and of his giving up unto God, through Jesus Christ, to walk in newness of life. (Rom. 6:3–4) Which sacrament is, by Christ's own appointment, to be continued in His Church until the end of the world. (Matt. 28:19–20)”

The Meaning of Baptism

It is important to understand the rich biblical symbolism of baptism to grasp its spiritual significance. The New Testament teaches that the washing with water symbolizes the cleansing and forgiveness of our sins through Christ (Acts 22:16; Acts 2:38). The imagery of passing through or going under the water, whether by immersion or signified through pouring, represents our union with Christ in His death and burial (Romans 6:3–7; Colossians 2:11–12). Through this identification, we are raised with Him to newness of life and look forward to the resurrection of the body.

In addition to these themes, the water of baptism also reflects a deeper biblical symbolism: that of God's judgment and salvation by grace. In the Old Testament, water often served as an agent of divine judgment. In the flood, all of humanity was swept away by God's wrath except for Noah and his family, who were saved through the ark. At the Red Sea, the Egyptians were consumed by the waters, while the Israelites passed through by God's mercy. In both cases, those who were saved were not more righteous but were recipients of God's gracious deliverance.

Peter directly connects this imagery to Christian baptism in 1 Peter 3:20–22, calling the flood a type of baptism. The water poured out in baptism reminds us that, apart from Christ, we are under God's righteous judgment. But in Christ, the true ark, we are brought safely through. This salvation comes only by God's mercy and grace, through faith in the One who bore judgment in our place.

Why We Baptize Children

At Christ Presbyterian Church, we baptize both believers and the children of believers. We do this not because we believe baptism saves, but because we believe it is the sign and seal of God's covenant promises. In the Old Testament, God commanded that the children of believers receive the covenant sign of circumcision (Genesis 17), not as a guarantee of salvation but as a mark of belonging. In Colossians 2:11–12, Paul shows that baptism has replaced circumcision as the sign of the covenant in the New Testament. Furthermore, 1 Corinthians 7:14 affirms that the children of believers are “holy,” or set apart.

Therefore, when we baptize a child, we are publicly recognizing that God includes the children of believers in the visible church. Baptism marks them as belonging to the covenant community and places them under the care and nurture of the church. We pray and labor that they will one day personally profess faith in Christ and live as faithful disciples.

Baptism points to the initiative of God's love

God reached out to us when we could not reach out to Him. Baptism is not first about our commitment to God but about His sovereign grace and initiative. This shows the beauty of the gospel: that salvation is by grace through faith, not of works.

What we are saying

When a child is baptized, they are solemnly received into the visible Church. At Christ Presbyterian Church, we practice infant baptism because we believe God includes the children of believers in His covenant promises. Just as in the Old Testament children were given the sign of the covenant (circumcision), so now in the New Covenant they are given the sign of baptism. By baptism, the child is distinguished from the world and marked as belonging to the covenant community, though not yet a communicant member.

They are considered to be set apart to God by the fact that their parents are believers (1 Cor. 7:14). They are non-communing members of the church, meaning they do not partake of the Lord's Supper until they publicly profess their faith in Christ. However, they are considered members of the church whom God has set apart as holy offspring of believing parents.

What we are not saying

We want to be clear that a child is not saved through this outward sign, nor guaranteed to be saved. We are not saying that the inward grace and virtue of baptism is automatically tied to the moment of baptism. Rather, the fruit and power of baptism will be realized when the child owns their baptism through personal faith. They must exercise faith, repentance, and obedience, and make a public profession of Christ, or they will become covenant breakers rather than covenant keepers. We baptize not presuming regeneration, but hoping in God's promises and entrusting our children to His grace.

THE LORD'S SUPPER AT CHRIST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

The Westminster Confession of Faith, Chapter 29.1, says:

“Our Lord Jesus, in the night wherein He was betrayed, instituted the sacrament of His body and blood, called the Lord’s Supper, to be observed in His Church unto the end of the world; for the perpetual remembrance of the sacrifice of Himself in His death, the sealing all benefits thereof unto true believers, their spiritual nourishment and growth in Him, their further engagement in and to all duties which they owe unto Him; and to be a bond and pledge of their communion with Him, and with each other, as members of His mystical body.”

The Meaning of the Lord's Supper

The Lord's Supper is a covenant meal given by Jesus Christ for the spiritual nourishment of His people. It is not a re-sacrificing of Christ, nor a mere symbol. Rather, it is a means of grace in which we spiritually feed upon Christ by faith and commune with Him through the Holy Spirit (1 Corinthians 10:16). In the Supper, Christ is truly present, not physically in the elements, but spiritually and powerfully to the faith of believers.

By this sacrament:

- We remember Christ's once-for-all sacrifice (Luke 22:19–20).
- We proclaim His death until He comes (1 Corinthians 11:26).

- We are assured of God's promises and nourished in grace.
- We are united with Christ and with one another (1 Corinthians 10:17).

What the Supper Signifies

The bread and the cup, though remaining ordinary in substance, are set apart by the Word of God and prayer to represent the body and blood of Christ. They become, by the work of the Spirit, spiritual food for God's people. This meal is not magical, but it is deeply mysterious, a true communion with the risen Christ.

The Lord's Supper visibly preaches the gospel. It reminds us that we are saved by the broken body and shed blood of Jesus, and it renews our commitment to Him in faith, repentance, and obedience. It is a sign of our belonging to Christ and to one another in His body, the Church.

Why We Celebrate Weekly

At Christ Presbyterian Church, we celebrate the Lord's Supper every Sunday. This is not out of ritual, but because we believe weekly communion:

- Centers our worship on Christ's finished work
- Strengthens our faith through visible gospel proclamation
- Nourishes us for our daily walk in dependence on God's grace
- Unites us as a covenant family around Christ's table
- Anticipates the wedding feast of the Lamb at His return

Just as our physical bodies need regular nourishment, so our souls need the regular sustenance that comes through Christ in the Supper.

Who Should Come to the Table

The Lord's Supper is for all who:

- Are baptized and profess faith in Jesus Christ
- Trust in Him alone for salvation
- Are seeking to live in repentance and obedience
- Are members in good standing of a gospel-preaching church

This is not a table for the perfect, but for the penitent. However, Scripture warns against taking the Supper in an unworthy manner (1 Corinthians 11:27–29). Those who are living in unrepentant sin, persisting in unbelief, or not reconciled to the body of Christ should refrain until such a time as they are able to come in faith and peace. Elders are entrusted with the care of the Table, joyfully welcoming believers and lovingly guarding its sacredness.

How We Prepare Ourselves

The Lord's Supper invites us to come with faith and reverence. We prepare our hearts by:

- Examining ourselves (1 Corinthians 11:28)
- Confessing sin and trusting in Christ's grace
- Remembering His death and resurrection
- Renewing our love for God and His people
- Giving thanks for our adoption and identity in Christ

We encourage you to come to the Table not in fear, but in humble joy, trusting that Jesus Himself invites you and nourishes you by His Spirit.

A prayer of preparation: *"Lord Jesus, thank You for giving Yourself for me. As I come to Your Table, forgive my sins, strengthen my faith, and draw me nearer to You. Nourish me with Your grace, and deepen my love for Your people. Amen."*

Why We Use Wine

At Christ Presbyterian Church, we use wine in the Lord's Supper because this is the element Jesus Himself used when He instituted the sacrament (Matthew 26:27–29; Luke 22:20). In the Passover context, "the fruit of the vine" clearly referred to wine. Wine signifies:

- Christ's blood, poured out for our forgiveness
- The joy and celebration of salvation (Psalm 104:15)
- The covenant blessings of the New Testament

This practice is in keeping with the Reformed tradition and the Westminster Confession. That said, we also offer grape juice in the outer ring of the communion tray, clear cups, for those who abstain. Please speak to an elder if you have questions or concerns. Our aim is to maintain faithfulness to Scripture while caring tenderly for all who come.

What We Are Saying

When you partake of the Lord's Supper, you are:

- Publicly professing faith in Christ crucified and risen
- Trusting in His grace alone for salvation
- Committing yourself to His Church and to His mission
- Receiving His promises and rejoicing in His presence

The Supper is not about your performance but about Christ's provision. It reminds you that you belong to Him, not because you are worthy, but because He has made you His own.

What We Are Not Saying

We do not believe the Lord's Supper is a re-sacrifice of Christ. His death was once for all (Hebrews 10:10). Nor do we believe that the elements are transformed into Christ's literal body and blood. Rather, we affirm that Christ is truly present spiritually to the faith of believers. The Supper is not merely a memorial, but a means of grace, effective when received with faith.

Those who partake without faith, or with hardness of heart, do not receive the spiritual benefit, and may even incur judgment (1 Corinthians 11:27–30). But for the believer, it is a source of comfort, strength, and joyful communion with the Lord.

CONCLUSION

The Sacraments of Baptism and the Lord's Supper are visible signs and seals of God's covenant grace, deeply connecting to our '**Adopted into God's Covenant Family**' core value. Baptism marks our initiation into God's family, signifying our union with Christ and His body, the church. The Lord's Supper is a family meal that continually nourishes and strengthens our bond as adopted children, uniting us in love with Christ and with one another, and foreshadowing the great feast in His Kingdom.

QUESTIONS FOR REVIEW, THOUGHT & DISCUSSION

1. What is the symbolism of baptism and why is it important to know?
2. What is the symbolism of the Lord's Supper and why is it important to know?
3. In what ways can you deepen your experience of the Lord's Supper as you reflect on its meaning and significance?
4. As this class nears its end, spend some time thinking about your gifts and how they can be used for the greater benefit of the church and making disciples in the world. Pray about how you may want to get more involved in the church, if you are not already connected.

Our Identity and Ministries: Living Out Our Vision, Mission, and Values

In the previous lessons, we've explored the foundational truths of the Christian faith. Now, as we conclude this manual, we turn our attention specifically to Christ Presbyterian Church: who we are, what drives us, and how we are actively living out God's call in Nashua and beyond. This lesson will bring together all that we've learned through the lens of our unique identity framework.

I. Our Core Identity: Who We Are and What We Do

At CPC, every ministry and effort flows from a clear understanding of our divinely appointed purpose.

A. Our Motto: Grounding Us

Rooted in Christ, Reflecting His Kingdom

Our motto is a concise statement of our being and our calling. To be '**Rooted in Christ**' means that Jesus is the absolute center and source of our life, our doctrine, our worship, and our hope. We draw all strength and sustenance from Him, acknowledging His supremacy in all things. Consequently, we are called to be '**Reflecting His Kingdom.**' This is our active response, to embody and display the values, character, and redemptive work of Christ's reign in every sphere of our lives, individually and corporately. Our lives, individually and corporately, are to be a clear and compelling witness to the presence and power of God's Kingdom.

B. Our Mission: Our Divine Assignment

By the power of the Spirit, we make disciples, see lives transformed, and reflect God's redemptive work in the world, in the name of Christ, to the glory of the Father.

This mission statement is the heartbeat of Christ Presbyterian Church. It guides every decision, every program, and every prayer. Let's break down its essential components:

- **"By the power of the Spirit":** We acknowledge that genuine spiritual growth and outward impact are impossible through human effort alone. We depend entirely on the Holy Spirit's enabling power for all we undertake. This emphasizes our core value of '**Depending on God Alone.**'
- **"we make disciples":** Our primary calling is to lead people to faith in Jesus Christ and then to nurture them into mature, obedient followers who grow in their knowledge, love, and service of God. This is the essence of '**Kingdom Discipleship.**'

- **"see lives transformed":** We long to witness real, tangible change in individuals, from spiritual death to life, from brokenness to wholeness, from despair to hope. This reflects our '**Redemptive Perspective,**' as we trust in Christ's ongoing work of renewal.
- **"and reflect God's redemptive work in the world":** The church is not meant to be insular. We are called to embody and extend God's healing, reconciling, and restoring work into every sphere of society, impacting culture for Christ.
- **"in the name of Christ":** All our efforts are done by His authority, through His power, and for the advancement of His reign.
- **"to the glory of the Father":** Ultimately, everything we do, our worship, our outreach, our discipleship, is for the supreme honor and praise of God the Father, through Christ, in the Spirit. This underscores our commitment to '**Trinitarian Worship.**'

C. Our Core Values: How We Live Our Mission

Our five Core Values are the non-negotiable convictions that define our character and shape our community as we live out our mission. They are not merely statements, but active commitments that influence our decisions, our relationships, and our ministries.

- **1. Depending on God Alone: *"Grounded in God's Word, Guided by His Spirit, Everything Through Prayer."*** - We believe that all true life and ministry flow from an absolute reliance on God.
 - We stand on the authoritative and sufficient Word of God as the only infallible rule of faith and life, with the Westminster Standards serving as a faithful summary of its teachings.
 - We seek the Holy Spirit's guidance and empowerment to apply and live out His Word in every area of life.
 - Because we depend on God alone, prayer is the breath of our lives and is constant in all we do, shaping us individually and as a body.
 - **Scripture References:** Ps. 19:7-11; 119; Is. 55:10-11; 2 Tim. 3:15-17; John 7:17; John 14:21; John 17:17; Psalm 119:105; Gal. 5:16; John 16:13; Dan. 6:10; Phil. 4:6-7; Ps. 65:2; Matt. 6:5-15; 2 Cor. 12:9; Eph. 3:16; 6:18-20; Rom. 12:1; Col. 4:2
 - **Confessional Reference:** WCF 1.6; WCF 13.1; WCF 21.3-4; WCF 16.3; WLC 178-185; WSC 98-107; WCF 1.4-5; WLC 154
- **2. Adopted into God's Covenant Family: *"Welcomed as children, united in love, growing together as a family."*** - At the heart of our community is the profound biblical truth of adoption in Christ.
 - As God's beloved children, we embrace our adoption in Christ. We live out our new identity in a way that extends this love to others, within and outside the body.
 - As God's redeemed covenant community, we seek to embody the love, humility, and forgiveness of Christ as we live, serve, and worship together as His family.
 - We are a community of hospitality, mutual encouragement, shared life, and discipleship, where everyone is valued and equipped to serve and grow.

- **Scripture References:** Jer. 31:31-34; John 1:12-13; Eph. 1:4-5; Rom. 8:15-17; Gal. 4:4-7; Heb. 12:5-11; Ps. 68:5-6; 103:8-14; Romans 8:29; Rev. 7:9-10
- **Confessional References:** WCF 12.1; WLC 74; WCF 20.1; WCF 26.1-2; WLC 135-136; WSC 67-69; WCF 7.4-6; WCF 14.2
- **3. Redemptive Perspective: "Living in Christ's renewal and hope."** - We approach life, ministry, and the world through the lens of Christ's cross and resurrection.
 - Our deepest desires—love, purpose, belonging, wholeness, and joy—are distorted by sin, but reflect our longing for God, and are ultimately satisfied in Jesus Christ alone. Hallelujah!
 - The gospel proclaims that in Christ, God is making all things new, restoring what was lost and bringing healing to the broken.
 - Because of the life, death, resurrection, ascension, and imminent return of Jesus Christ, we live in sure hope for the future and our eternal joy.
 - **Scripture References:** Gen. 12:1-3; Ps. 34:8, 145:19; Ezek. 36:26-27; Gal. 3:16; Rev. 21:5; Col. 1:13-14; Matt. 11:28-30; 2 Cor. 5:17-20; Rom 6:3-4, 8:18-25;
 - **Confessional Reference:** WCF 7.1-6; WCF 11.1-3; WLC 30-32; WSC 20-21; WCF 13.1-3; WCF 32.1
- **4. Trinitarian Worship: "Glorifying the Father, exalting the Son, empowered by the Spirit."** - Our corporate worship is the central act of our community life, driven by our deep reverence for the Triune God.
 - We live to the glory of the Father in all of life.
 - We exalt Christ as the preeminent Savior, Redeemer, and King of our whole lives.
 - We live all of our lives in worship by the power of the Spirit.
 - We come together on the Lord's Day to passionately proclaim our Triune God's greatness as we receive His grace through Word and Sacrament.
 - **Scripture References:** Gen. 1:26-27; Is. 6:3; 1 Cor. 10:31; Col. 1:18; Phil. 2:9-11; John 5:23; Eph. 2:18; 2 Cor. 13:14; 1 John 1:3; Matt. 28:18-20; Rom. 11:36; Ps. 95:1-7; Is. 6:1-8; John 4:23-24; Acts 2:42-47; Matt. 3:16-17; Col. 3:16-17; Heb. 10:24-25; Rev. 4:8-11
 - **Confessional References:** WCF 14.1; WCF 16.1; WCF 21.1-2; WCF 26.1; WLC 1, 154-160; WSC 1, 50-62; WCF 21.3-4; WCF 2.3; WCF 8.1; WCF 10.1; WLC 9-11; WSC 6; WCF 22.5-6; WLC 109
- **5. Kingdom Discipleship: "Proclaiming the gospel, making disciples, and resting in Christ's reign."** - Our commitment is to cultivate mature followers of Christ who actively participate in His mission.
 - As Christ's visible church under His sovereign reign, we serve as ambassadors of His kingdom and as a foretaste of His eternal rule.
 - We are called to participate in Jesus' Great Commission, growing as disciples who make disciples.
 - Our goal is to see His kingdom come and His will be done on earth as it is in heaven while longing for the consummation of His reign when He returns in glory.

- **Scripture References:** Gen. 12:1-3; Is. 49:6; Matt. 28:18-20; 2 Cor. 5:20; Matt. 5:1-7:29; Col. 1:15-20; Eph. 1:22-23
- **Confessional References:** WCF 25.3-4; WCF 28.1-2; WLC 63-66; WSC 88; WCF 8.1; WCF 30.1-2; WLC 191; WSC 26; WCF 13.1-3; WCF 32.1

II. Our Vision: Where We Are Going – Strategic Direction and Growth

Our Mission and Core Values define who we are. Our Vision paints a picture of where God is leading us in the coming years, guiding our strategic planning and efforts.

A. Our 1-Year Vision: Growing in Grace Together

While our 5-Year and 10-Year Visions paint a picture of where God is leading us in the longer term, our 1-Year Vision focuses on our immediate, intentional steps as a church family. This year, we are asking the Lord to help us grow deeply in grace together as a Christ-centered family.

A year from now, we envision the following:

- **Joyful and Reverent Worship:** Our Sunday worship is a joyful and reverent time where people truly sense God's presence. Every element of the service helps us see and savor Jesus together. We will have fully established our updates and adjustments to Sunday Worship order, timing, and practices.
- **Thriving Discipleship Hour:** Our Discipleship Hour is thriving, marked by joyful participation and growing engagement across all generations.
- **Support for Families:** We have a fully-staffed rotation for nursery and children's church so no one is overwhelmed. At least one new family has joined our covenant community.
- **Deepening Discipleship through DNA Groups:** Discipleship is deepening through the newly-established DNA Groups—same-gender groups of three people focused on prayer, mutual encouragement, and spiritual formation in Christ. These groups are beginning to see real transformation, helping us follow Jesus in everyday life. Additionally, each DNA Group member is focused on ministering to three unbelievers outside the church.
- **Leadership Development Taking Root:** Training is underway for men to understand the character and office requirements of elder and deacon, and for women to be equipped to shepherd other women. A new intern is ministering at CPC.
- **Growing Small Groups:** Our Small Groups are growing as places of shared life and mission. They meet bi-weekly and seek to involve neighbors, care for one another, and serve together.
- **Strengthened Prayer Culture:** We have also strengthened our culture of prayer. Weekly prayer groups are active, members are using family devotion guides, and we're learning to pray spontaneously—in small groups, in worship, and in everyday conversations.

In short, our 1-Year Vision is for Christ Presbyterian Church to be growing in depth and unity of life and ministry.

B. Our 5-Year Vision: A Worshiping, Sending Family

Building upon the foundation laid in our 1-Year Vision, our 5-Year Vision describes how Christ Presbyterian Church will be more deeply "Rooted in Grace Together"—joyfully worshiping, actively discipling, and reaching into our city and region. This vision represents significant growth and maturity in our shared life and mission.

Five years from now, we envision the following key differences from our current state:

- **Sustainable Growth:** We will have grown to approximately 80 members, including children, with our rhythms of worship, discipleship, and leadership being sustainable and Spirit-led.
- **Worship that Delights:** Many returning visitors will share that worship at CPC helps them delight in God and see Jesus more clearly, marked by a palpable sense of God's presence.
- **Joyful Children's Participation:** Our children are joyfully participating in the life and ministry of the body, actively engaged in age-appropriate spiritual formation.
- **Culture of Hospitality:** Hospitality before and after worship will have become a key part of our church culture, fostering a welcoming environment for all.
- **Essential DNA Groups:** Most members will be participating in DNA Groups at some point during the year. These groups will no longer be new but will be essential for spiritual formation, encouraging real transformation and personal mission.
- **Thriving Discipleship Hour and Youth Groups:** Discipleship Hour will continue to thrive, and we will have established separate middle and high school Youth Groups that are growing in biblical literacy and gospel-centered friendships.
- **Leadership Multiplication:** Leadership multiplication will be evident, with active elders, deacons, and women's shepherding leaders, and our first intern having completed their training.
- **Small Groups on Mission:** Our Small Groups will be living on mission—inviting others in, praying with neighbors, and serving together. People on the margins of faith will feel welcomed and loved, and we will be seeing new members come through initial engagement with Small Groups.
- **Expanded Community Outreach:** Our Family Promise service will continue, and at least one new ongoing community outreach initiative will have been added, demonstrating our commitment to serving our neighbors.
- **Prayer and Scripture Saturation:** Prayer and Scripture will saturate our life together—we will consistently seek the Spirit's guidance in decisions, ministry, and worship, truly living out our dependence on God alone.

In essence, our 5-Year Vision is for CPC to be a church deeply rooted in God's grace, dynamically living out its mission, and visibly reflecting His Kingdom in our community and beyond.

C. Our 10-Year Vision: Long-Term Impact and Growth

Looking further ahead, our 10-Year Vision describes Christ Presbyterian Church as a vibrant, mature church, gathering in our own facility, forming disciples deeply, and sending leaders into new places. This ambitious vision builds upon our current trajectory and the growth achieved in our 1-Year and 5-Year Visions.

Ten years from now, we envision the following:

- **Significant Church Growth & Thriving Community:** To enable church planting while maintaining a healthy sending church, we will have grown to around **175–200 members**, fostering a thriving community of children, youth, and adults joyfully engaged in the church's mission.
- **Church Planting:** CPC will have planted, or be actively planting, a church in a nearby city led by trained leaders from CPC, reflecting our outward-focused mission and commitment to gospel expansion.
- **Our Own Worship Space:** We will worship in our own dedicated facility—a space that reflects who we are—sacred, welcoming, and designed to facilitate profound encounters with God. Worship will be marked by joy, reverence, and expectancy, with people coming longing to encounter the living God.
- **Deep, Joyful Discipleship Culture:** Every member will participate in a DNA Group annually, and CPC will be known in our region for its deep, joyful discipleship culture, where spiritual formation is a natural and consistent part of every member's life.
- **Small Groups as Gospel Outposts:** Our Small Groups will function as vibrant gospel outposts throughout the area, regularly including unbelievers and actively caring for the broken and marginalized. We will be known as a church that genuinely sees the lost as family and welcomes those on the margins.
- **Reaching the Unchurched:** We will consistently have **20–40 people regularly connected to CPC who are not yet believers**, being loved, pursued, and drawn to Christ through the witness of our community.
- **A Church of Healing and Welcome:** We will be a church of healing and welcome, where people tangibly experience what it means to be "Adopted into God's Covenant Family," finding belonging and restoration.
- **Model of Word-Saturated, Spirit-Led Ministry:** Prayer and Scripture will remain our lifeblood, and CPC will have become a model of Word-saturated, Spirit-led ministry that encourages and guides other churches, looking to us for encouragement and guidance as we look to Christ.

This 10-Year Vision is a testament to our commitment to Christ's Kingdom, seeking to see His will done on earth as it is in heaven, to the glory of God the Father.

III. Our Ministries: Living Out Our Identity Daily

Our various ministries are the practical outworking of our Mission, Core Values, and Vision. They are designed to equip you to live out our shared identity.

- **Corporate Worship:** Our weekly gathering is the central expression of our '**Trinitarian Worship,**' where we meet with God through Word and Sacrament, led by Christ-centered exposition and Spirit-empowered adoration.
- **Small Groups:** These groups are vital expressions of '**Adopted into God's Covenant Family,**' providing intimate fellowship, mutual care, and opportunities for shared mission as gospel outposts in the community, fostering '**Kingdom Discipleship.**'
- **Discipleship & Training:** Through sermons, seminars (like "A Praying Life"), cohort training, and specialized series ("Tree Spirituality," "Worshipping Jesus in the Psalms"), and DNA Groups, we equip members for '**Kingdom Discipleship**' and deepen their '**Depending on God Alone.**'
- **Prayer Ministry:** Integral to our '**Depending on God Alone,**' we prioritize corporate and individual prayer, recognizing it as foundational to all aspects of ministry and church governance.
- **Evangelism & Outreach:** Reflecting our mission to "make disciples" and our '**Redemptive Perspective,**' we actively pursue opportunities to share the Gospel and welcome those on the margins, striving to "reflect God's redemptive work in the world."
- **Mercy & Service:** As a church committed to caring for the afflicted and reflecting Christ's compassion, our acts of mercy are tangible expressions of living out our faith and our '**Redemptive Perspective**' in practical ways.

As you consider membership at Christ Presbyterian Church, we invite you to prayerfully consider how God might call you to use your gifts, time, and resources to participate fully in this vibrant and Spirit-led ministry, joining us in living out our identity for His glory.

1. If someone new to CPC were to ask you what our Vision is, what would you say?
2. Do you think we are living up to our Vision at CPC? Why or why not? What room do you see for improvement? How can you be a part of the solution?
3. Why is the Small Groups Ministry so crucial to our church? Are you part of a small group? Why or why not?
4. In what ways can you be a better steward of your time and resources as a member of CPC? If you are not serving in ministry already, in what area of ministry would you be interested in becoming involved?

BECOMING A MEMBER

Entering into Covenant with God and His Family

Membership at Christ Presbyterian Church is more than simply adding your name to a roster; it is a sacred act of entering into a solemn covenant with God and His Church. It's an intentional commitment to live out your faith within a specific community, aligning your life with our shared Mission, embracing our Core Values, and participating in our Vision.

Every denomination operates under a set of guidelines that govern its affairs. For the Presbyterian Church in America (PCA), we are guided by the *Book of Church Order (BCO)*. This comprehensive document, composed of three parts (Church Government, Discipline, and Worship), outlines the principles and practices that shape our life together. It is from this foundational document that we draw the framework for what it means to become a committed member of CPC.

The Membership Vows: A Solemn Covenant

As you stand before God and His Church, ready to make a public profession of your faith, you will assent to the following declarations and promises. These vows are not taken lightly; they are a profound commitment that establishes your covenant relationship with God and the Christ Presbyterian Church family.

1. **Do you acknowledge yourselves to be sinners in the sight of God, justly deserving His displeasure, and without hope save in His sovereign mercy?**
 - This vow grounds us in humility and reminds us of our universal need for God's grace. It is the starting point of our '**Redemptive Perspective**,' recognizing our spiritual brokenness and God's sovereign initiative in our salvation.
2. **Do you believe in the Lord Jesus Christ as the Son of God, and Savior of sinners, and do you receive and rest upon Him alone for salvation as He is offered in the Gospel?**
 - This is the core of our '**Trinitarian Worship**' and our entire faith. It affirms our complete trust in Jesus Christ alone for our justification and salvation. We receive and rest upon Him, acknowledging His singular authority and sufficiency for all of life and godliness.
3. **Do you now resolve and promise, in humble reliance upon the grace of the Holy Spirit, that you will endeavor to live as becomes the followers of Christ?**
 - This vow speaks to our commitment to '**Kingdom Discipleship**.' It is a promise to pursue a life of holiness and obedience, recognizing that such a life is only possible through the empowering grace of the Holy Spirit, as we continually '**Depend on God Alone**.'
4. **Do you promise to support the Church in its worship and work to the best of your ability?**
 - This commitment directly engages our **Mission**, to "make disciples, see lives transformed, and reflect God's redemptive work." It calls us to actively participate in '**Trinitarian Worship**,' contribute to ministries that further '**Kingdom Discipleship**,' and embody our '**Redemptive**

Perspective' through our time, talents, and resources, all as members of our '**Adopted into God's Covenant Family.**'

5. **Do you submit yourselves to the government and discipline of the Church, and promise to study its purity and peace?**

- This vow highlights our commitment to unity and order within the body who has been '**Adopted into God's Covenant Family.**' It reflects our willingness to live humbly under the spiritual oversight of the elders, to uphold the biblical standards of the church, and to pursue peace and purity within the body of Christ, guided by God's Word as we '**Depend on God Alone.**'

A Serious Commitment Empowered by Grace

These vows represent a serious and joyful commitment to Christ and His body. How can you, as an individual, truly accomplish such profound promises? The answer lies not in self-reliance, but in the empowering presence of the Spirit of Jesus Christ and your faithful engagement with the ordinary means of grace He has provided.

These means are how the Spirit helps us fulfill our commitments and grow in our '**Depending on God Alone**':

- **Devotion to the Word:**

- **WLC Q154:** "The outward and ordinary means whereby Christ communicates to his church the benefits of his mediation, are all his ordinances; especially the Word, sacraments, and prayer; all which are made effectual to the elect for their salvation."
- We are '**Grounded in God's Word**' as we diligently read, study, and meditate on the Bible. It is the living and active voice of God that guides, corrects, and nourishes our souls, empowering us for '**Kingdom Discipleship.**'

- **Commitment to Prayer:**

- **WLC Q178:** "Prayer is an offering up of our desires unto God, in the name of Christ, by the help of his Spirit; with confession of our sins, and thankful acknowledgment of his mercies."
- Prayer is the very breath of our spiritual life, the direct line of communication with our Heavenly Father. We are committed to personal prayer, intercessory prayer for others, and corporate prayer for the church, knowing that '**Everything Through Prayer**' is our reliance on the Spirit, who helps us live out our '**Depending on God Alone.**'

- **Participation in the Sacraments:**

- **WLC Q161:** "The sacraments become effectual means of salvation, not by any power in themselves... but only by the working of the Holy Ghost, and the blessing of Christ, by whom they are instituted."
- **WLC Q165 (Baptism):** "Baptism is a sacrament of the New Testament... to be a sign and seal of ingrafting into himself, of remission of sins by his blood, and regeneration by his Spirit; of adoption... and whereby the parties baptized are solemnly admitted into the visible church..."
- **WLC Q168 (Lord's Supper):** "The Lord's Supper is a sacrament of the New Testament... his death is showed forth; and they that worthily communicate feed upon his body and blood, to

their spiritual nourishment and growth in grace; have their union and communion with him confirmed; testify and renew their thankfulness, and engagement to God, and their mutual love and fellowship each with other, as members of the same mystical body."

- Baptism and the Lord's Supper are visible signs that seal God's promises to us and strengthen our faith. They are vital expressions of our **'Trinitarian Worship'** and our belonging to the **'Adopted into God's Covenant Family.'**

- **Fellowship and Service:**

- **Hebrews 10:25:** "...not forsaking our own assembling together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another; and all the more as you see the day drawing near."
- **Isaiah 58:6-7:** "Is not this the fast that I choose: to loose the bonds of wickedness, to undo the straps of the yoke, to let the oppressed go free, and to break every yoke? Is it not to share your bread with the hungry and bring the homeless poor into your house; when you see the naked, to cover him, and not to hide yourself from your own flesh?"
- Active participation in the life of the church, through fellowship, mutual care, and serving, is essential for spiritual growth. Whether by helping on Sunday mornings, in the nursery, or engaging in various ministries, we live out our calling as **'Adopted into God's Covenant Family'** and fulfill our **'Kingdom Discipleship'** as we encourage one another and demonstrate a **'Redemptive Perspective'** to the world.

Benefits of Membership: More Than Expectations

While membership involves serious commitments, it is far from one-sided. The blessings and benefits of formal membership are profound, designed by God for your spiritual flourishing and integral to our identity as **'Rooted in Christ, Reflecting His Kingdom.'**

- **Accountability & Shepherding of Elders:**

- **Acts 20:28:** "Be on guard for yourselves and for all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood."
- One of the most incredible benefits is the spiritual oversight and shepherding you receive from the Lord through the church's elders. As members, the elders are uniquely responsible to shepherd your souls as undershepherds of Jesus Christ. The very term 'pastor' (from the Latin 'pastor,' meaning shepherd) underscores this protective and guiding role. This shepherding is not limited to one individual; it is a collective responsibility of all the elders, ensuring multiple watchful eyes over your spiritual well-being, reinforcing your **'Depending on God Alone'** through their God-appointed leadership. They are here to protect you from error (the 'wolves') and to guide you in your spiritual walk (the 'sheep').

- **A Loving and Supportive Community:**

- A major advantage of membership is becoming a vital part of a loving and supportive **'Adopted into God's Covenant Family.'** You join with brothers and sisters in Christ who are

committed to caring for one another, speaking the truth in love, and building each other up. This community is united by a shared Mission, shared Vision, shared Values, and a shared life in Christ. This is expressed through the many "one another" commands found in Scripture:

- Accept one another... as Christ accepted you (Romans 15:7)
- Admonish one another (Colossians 3:16)
- Bear with each other (Colossians 3:13)
- Be at peace with one another (Mark 9:50)
- Be devoted to one another in brotherly love (Romans 12:10)
- Be kind and compassionate to one another (Ephesians 4:32)
- Build each other up (1 Thessalonians 5:11)
- Forgive each other (Ephesians 4:32; Colossians 3:13)
- Pray for each other (James 5:16)
- *(Include other 'one another' commands you find most impactful)*
- The fellowship, love, and support of being committed to a local church are immeasurable benefits for your spiritual journey.
- **Participating in the Work of the Church:**
 - As a member, you gain the privilege of actively participating in the governance and direction of the church. This includes the ability to nominate and vote for leaders (elders and deacons), potentially be nominated for leadership yourself, and participate in important church business meetings. This involvement is a tangible expression of your '**Kingdom Discipleship**' and your commitment to the overall Mission and Vision of CPC.
- **Biblical Counseling in Christ:**
 - As a member of this local body, you receive the benefit of accessible biblical counseling when you need guidance or are struggling. When life presents challenges, the pastor and elders are committed to walking alongside you, helping you navigate your situation biblically. We do not prescribe medication or provide medical diagnoses; rather, we prayerfully study God's Word with you, illuminating what it says about your circumstances and guiding you into the freedom and liberty you have in Christ. This demonstrates our commitment to '**Depending on God Alone**' and providing a '**Redemptive Perspective**' in times of need.
- **The Joy of Serving:**
 - While some may initially view serving as a liability, it is, in fact, a profound benefit of membership. God uniquely blesses us as we work together for the advancement of His Kingdom, and serving provides incredible opportunities for personal spiritual growth and the promotion of the gospel. As we serve, we become active participants in fulfilling our Mission, embodying '**Kingdom Discipleship**,' and reflecting Christ's love to the world.

HOW TO BECOME A MEMBER OF CPC: Your Next Steps

The journey to membership at Christ Presbyterian Church is designed to be clear, supportive, and deeply meaningful. Here are the steps:

1. **Thoroughly Read Through This New Member's Manual**
 - This manual is the essential first step towards membership. It provides you with a comprehensive overview of CPC's beliefs, our Cohesive Identity Framework (Motto, Mission, Core Values, Vision), and how we live out our faith. Your reading this demonstrates your earnest desire to understand and align with who we are as a church. While reading this does not obligate you to become a member, it is a prerequisite for moving forward in the process.
2. **Receive Christian Baptism (If Not Yet Baptized)**
 - It is required that you have been baptized in a Christian Church, whether as an infant or a believer. Baptism is the visible sign and seal of God's covenant, marking your ingrafting into Christ and your formal admission into the visible church, a beautiful expression of our **'Adopted into God's Covenant Family.'** If you have not been baptized, we would be honored to discuss this vital sacrament with you and arrange for you to be baptized before proceeding to full membership, as commanded by Jesus in *Matthew 28:19-20*.
3. **Speak with the Pastor**
 - You will want to meet with the pastor after reading this manual and ask any questions you might have. Also, he will ensure that you understand the five membership vows and their significance.
4. **Participate in a Membership Interview**
 - Following the completion of reading this, you will participate in a brief, informal interview (typically 30-45 minutes) with a few of our elders. This meeting is a wonderful opportunity for us to get to know you personally, hear your testimony of faith in Jesus Christ, and understand what God is doing in your life. It also provides a dedicated time for you to ask any remaining questions about the church. During this interview, you will be asked to affirm the five membership vows, publicly declaring your commitment to the life and work of CPC. This conversation deepens your connection with the church's spiritual oversight, reinforcing your **'Depending on God Alone.'**
5. **Public Membership Reception (Optional but Highly Encouraged)**
 - The final step involves your formal reception into membership by the congregation. While not strictly required, we strongly encourage you to be presented before the congregation during a Sunday Morning Worship Service. This public profession of faith and taking of vows is a profound moment of commitment for you and a great encouragement to the entire CPC family. It visibly celebrates your entrance into our **'Adopted into God's Covenant Family'** and your commitment to **'Trinitarian Worship'** and **'Kingdom Discipleship'** alongside us.