

Membership at Christ Community Church, PCA (Presbyterian Church in America): Part 2

CCC's Vision and Values

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Our Expanded Values

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

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

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

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

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

² **2 Timothy 3:16; 2 Peter 1:20-21**

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

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

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

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

The sacraments (the Lord's Supper and baptism as ordered by Jesus) are critical aspects of our covenant theology.² These are the word made visible and evidence God's covenant working and promises to His people. The Lord's Supper replaced the Passover,³ and baptism replaces circumcision⁴ in the New Covenant.

The Lord's Supper (or Communion) is a sign and seal of the redemptive benefits of Christ's death past, present, and future.⁵ The common elements of bread and juice⁶ represent the broken body and shed blood of Christ in the New Covenant as prescribed by Jesus himself at his last Passover. We believe that when we partake of the elements in a worthy manner that "inwardly by faith, really and indeed, yet not carnally and corporally, but spiritually, receive, and feed upon, Christ crucified, and all benefits of His death..."⁷ This means that our faith is nourished spiritually by the person and work of Christ through the power of the Holy Spirit as part of our sanctification. Just as bread and juice strengthen and refresh us physically, so Christ's body and blood strengthen and refresh us spiritually. We do not believe that the elements become or are surrounded by the real body of Christ.⁸

Only those who profess Christ as savior as evidenced in obedience to baptism that are not under church discipline, not harboring unforgiveness in their heart, or not engaged in unrepentant sin can partake of the table.⁹ Wrestling with doubt, struggling to overcome sin where your spirit is willing but your flesh is weak, and being in the reconciliation process or praying for reconciliation does NOT keep you from the table. In fact, you need your faith to be nourished by what the elements signify and seal to keep up the good fight.

¹ See Appendix C and D for help with personal devotions and Bible reading plans.

² **Luke 24:14-23; Matthew 28:18-20**

³ **Mark 14:12-25; 1 Corinthians 5:7**

⁴ **Colossians 2:11-12**

⁵ See *What is the Lord's Supper?* by Richard D. Phillips for a brief introduction to the Lord's supper; see *Given For You: Reclaiming Calvin's Doctrine of the Lord's Supper* by Keith A. Mathison for an advanced understanding.

⁶ We do not currently offer wine out of sensitivity for those among us who wrestle with addiction to alcohol.

⁷ *WSC 24.7*

⁸ The view of the Catholic Church is that the elements actually become the body and blood of Christ (transubstantiation). The view of the Lutheran Church is that the body and blood of Christ are all around the elements and are ingested (consubstantiation).

⁹ **Matthew 5:23-24; 1 Corinthians 5:11-13; 1 Corinthians 11:17-34**

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

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

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

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

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

Infant baptism is located in the context of covenant theology.⁶ Immediately following Pentecost, when Peter was preaching his first sermon in **Acts 2**, he answers the question as to whether the children were

¹ 1 Corinthians 11:17-34

² WCF 28.1

³ WSC Q. 94

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

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

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

to be included in the promise of the new administration. Peter says that, "The promise is for you and for your children."¹ Since the New Covenant is a "better" covenant than the old, since no Scriptures of the New Covenant introduce the teaching that children should not receive the sign of the covenant, and since baptism is clearly the sign that replaces circumcision, we conclude that children should not be denied this great privilege. We think that children have a right to the privileges and benefits of God's kingdom, the Church, once they are baptized. However, we understand that this same child must put his or her trust in Christ as Lord and Savior before the eternal benefits can be embraced.² Baptism recognizes God's working in the life of this child before he or she knows or can comprehend what is happening. It should be a significant grace to be born to Christian parents who faithfully teach and live the Gospel.

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

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

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

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

¹ Acts 2:39

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Christians to engage our culture and not to retreat from it or simply create an alternative Christian subculture.

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

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

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

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

We believe every person was created to live in community and be connected to others with purpose, freedom, and assurance in life's important issues. We are real people searching for real answers together. A major part of this reality is that we are confessional with one another in terms of our doubts, struggles, failures, joys, growth, and successes. We strive for our church to be a safe place to both wrestle and rejoice. As a result, we have to be serious about avoiding gossip and confronting it when it happens. This also means that we are quick to seek forgiveness among each other as issues will invariably arise as they do in all families. **Matthew 5:21-26** and **18** are critical texts that help us to keep short accounts with one another and to pursue true reconciliation with only the parties that are involved in the given issue.

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

The Sabbath was the first day given to Adam and Eve as a gracious gift from the Creator God who called them first to rest and to enjoy all that He had made. We will be given the eternal Sabbath in which to worship and enjoy God forever.¹ Our redemptive history is bookended by the Sabbath: it

¹ Hebrews 4:9-10

inaugurated humanity's first day and will consummate its last. It should, as a result, shape and define humanity in life between the now and the not yet. The other 6 days of our week should be oriented around our engagement of the Lord's Day Sabbath. This requires preparation and planning.

We desire for everyone in our church to have a Lord's Day Sabbath rhythm and practice in which we rest from our straining and striving and enjoy the Lord's goodness to His people. On this day, we remember by looking back on all that God has done and look forward to God's covenant faithfulness and goodness to us His children in various practices of gratitude of which worship serves as central. God uniquely gathers with His people in worship in the power of the Holy Spirit and proclamation of His Word concerning Christ, thus gathering with the church to hear from God's Word serves as the focal event of the Lord's Day Sabbath.

Questions for Session 2:

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

Notes and Questions:

CCC: A Worshipping Community

Our Worship

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

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

¹ WSC Q. 1

² Matthew 18:20

the glory of God.”¹ In short, our worship serves as part of the equipping of the saints for the work of the ministry where you live, work, serve, and play. This means that regular attendance to and preparation for worship are critical to your maturation as a Christian.

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

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

For these reasons, we have structured our corporate worship according to the regulative principle which is “the acceptable way of worshipping the true God is instituted by Himself, and so limited the imaginations and devices of men, or the suggestions of Satan, under any visible representation, or any other way not prescribed in the Holy Scripture.”² While the Bible does not clearly prescribe fixed forms for public worship, we do know that the Word was prayed, read, sung, and preached. This is why our worship services are saturated with God’s Word and our liturgical elements are located in Scripture. This is also why we don’t try to get too creative and have a lot of other elements or forms or over-contextualize. We have to remember that worship is a counter-cultural act with its own context. We also desire for every aspect of the service including the lighting, volume of the music, and musical style to compliment and facilitate the participation in and receiving of God’s Word. The Word is truly “profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work.”³

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

¹ *BCO 47-3*

² *WCF 21.1*

³ *2 Timothy 3:16-17*

Our Liturgy: The Shape of Our Worship: The Basics

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

Our Liturgy: The Shape of Our Worship:

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

Making the Most of Worship at Christ Community Church¹

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

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

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

² Romans 12:1-2

³ Psalm 51:1-10

⁴ Psalm 5:3; 27:3-4

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

Questions for Session 3:

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

Notes and Questions:

Our Community

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

Sunday Morning Worship

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

Children's Ministry

Christ Community places a high priority on discipling our covenant children through various ministries. CCC provides free childcare for worship each week (infants – 1st grade) and some church-wide functions (infants – 5th grade). We have a Sunday School classes for 2nd-3rd graders and 4th-5th grade boys and one for girls in the same grade range at 9:30 am.

We also offer nursery for infants to crawlers, a toddler class, and a 3-4 year old class every Sunday morning during the worship service. Children ages 4-5 through 1st grade are dismissed for the latter portion of our worship service to participate in "Praise City," an age appropriate time of worship with kid-sized worship elements and biblical teaching according to a curriculum. All other children above this age are encouraged to sit with their parents in worship. We offer children's bulletins to use during the worship service.

Student Ministry

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

Equipping Times

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

Men's and Women's Ministries

Focused ministry to the women and men of Christ Community allows members to grow in their relationship with Christ, deepen their fellowship with believers, reach out to others with the gospel, and

receive encouragement and instruction on issues faced by their gender within the church and society.

Men's Ministries

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

Women's Ministries

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

Men's and Women's Discipleship

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

Small Groups

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

Shepherding Groups

Every member is assigned to a Shepherding Group which consists of an elder, a deacon, and their wives. These groups are designed to be proactive in terms of building community and relationships. They are also a means of keeping up with what is going on in your lives for the purpose of prayer, celebration, and proper triage when situations arise. Given that we are a plurality of elders and deacons, remember that when you are talking to one elder or deacon that you are essentially talking with all of them. This protects you and the leaders from being isolated and potentially divided. You will still be cared for by the whole of our leadership at CCC and receive assistance from those who are best gifted to address

your need. You are still encouraged to get to know the other leaders and their families.

Counseling Ministries

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

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

Our Vision for Outreach

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

Church Planting: Faith Promise

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

Reformed University Fellowship at Kennesaw State University

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

Local Missions

Our people are involved in a variety of purposeful mission opportunities locally. These include serving at the Extension, First Care Women's Clinic, and volunteering in various other contexts. As a church, we choose not to focus narrowly in this area given that our members have a variety of gifts, passions, and relationships. We do not need to reinvent what others are already hard at work doing in these various contexts. Instead, we prefer to bless and serve with those who currently serve. Our role is to equip the saints for the work of these local ministries and make you aware of where you might be called to serve.

Foreign Missions: Faith Promise

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

How do new ministries get started?

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

Questions for Session 3:

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

Notes and Questions:

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

Membership Questions

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

How to Leave the Church Well

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

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

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