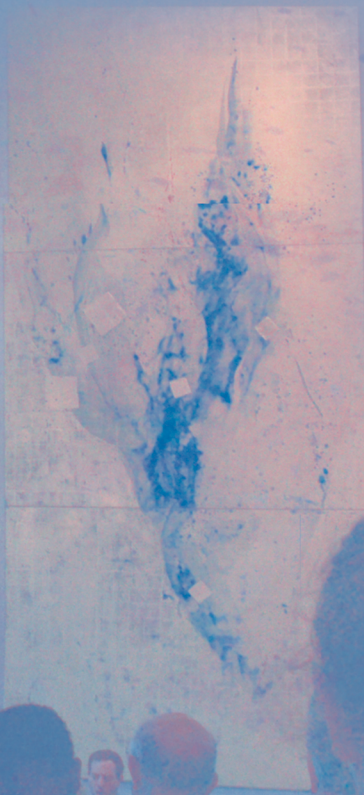




MEMBERSHIP HANDBOOK

TO CHRIST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH NEW HAVEN



Welcome to CPC!

We talk about it all the time, but lest you haven't heard us say it yet, we want this to be a safe place to be real in terms of your own journey in faith. We know and expect that each of our journeys will include real doubts and real struggles. But we also know that we can be real with God and each other because grace is real— grace that wants us to ultimately focus not on our moral performance in order to gain acceptance, but on Christ's wherein it is promised "where sin abounds, grace abounds all the more" (Romans 5:20). At CPC, our greatest ambition is to bring you to Jesus, so that Christ might be given first place in everything (Colossians 1:18)!

About the issue of "church" itself, we know that more and more people today seriously doubt the credibility and even relevancy of the organized church (and perhaps sadly for some good reasons). But you will want to know that at Christ Presbyterian Church we have dared to believe again in the church—not the church as in the infallible agent of salvation (reserved for Christ alone acting through the Holy Spirit), but as the divinely designed location of Christ's presence by the Holy Spirit unto salvation. We believe that the church IS the ascended ministry of Christ being "fleshed out" in the midst of us today. We get this idea from Christ himself speaking through the scriptures when he taught how "the church, which is the body of Christ, is the fullness of Christ who fills all in all" (Ephesians 1:22-23). More than a source of the gospel, more even than a credentialing board to preserve the gospel, we believe the church is the very real, albeit mediated, presence of Christ on earth as He is in heaven (Matthew 16:19) in so far as the church is designed and organized upon the foundation of the apostolic teachings with Christ as the cornerstone (Ephesians 2:19ff).

In order for you to discover more of Christ fleshed out at CPC, we hope this Membership Handbook will be of some assistance. It is divided into three parts. Part One is an introduction to Christ Presbyterian Church New Haven, Part Two address the ways a person can participate in the life of Christ at CPC, and Part Three discusses becoming a member.

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Part One
An Introduction to CPC

Total Christ Spirituality

You will see it all throughout our literature and printed on our bulletin covers—"that Christ might come to be first in everything" (Colossians 1:18-19). Yes, our name Christ Presbyterian Church really means that we want this to be all about Christ—his work, not ours, as the basis of our relationship to God and one another, and his glory, not ours or any popular leader, as the object of our ultimate affection and respect. But it needs to go beyond even this! It is our desire to experience total Christ not just one or another brand of Christ which would focus on one or another aspect of Christ's ministry in our lives.

The term "Total Christ" originates from the 5th century pastor-theologian St. Augustine, when describing the relationship of Christ's incarnational ministry (past) to his ongoing ascension ministry (present) as "the Word was made flesh, and dwelled among us; to that flesh is joined the church, and there is made total Christ, both head and body" (John 1:14 and Ephesian 5:1:21-23, 2:19ff). Employing the Chalcedonian formula of "distinct but never separate" of christology to ecclesiology, Augustine further explained:

"Then let us rejoice and give thanks that we are made not only Christians, but Christ. Do you understand, brothers, and apprehend the grace of God upon us? Marvel, be glad, we are made Christ. For if he is the head, we are the members: the whole man is he and we . . . The fullness of Christ, then, is head and members. Head and members, what is that? Christ and the Church!" (St. Augustine, *Homilies on the Gospel of John*)

Acknowledging and even celebrating the mystery in all of this, it is our intention to reunite these spiritualities that in modern history tend to be separated — what could be described as a "covenant" theology (gospel centered) and a "temple" theology (church centered) of salvation and the gospel. If one stresses the regulative and declarative nature of mission, the other stresses the participational and presence nature of mission — both informed by grace and both at the same time!

A Total Christ vision believes that a church cannot separate being gospel-centered from being missional any more than Christ's head (Word) can be separated from Christ's body

Total Christ Spirituality

(temple)! Such churches seek to mediate Christ's vivifying presence as our Prophet (through confessional teaching), Priest (through sacramental worship), and King (through communal formation). In so doing, a Total Christ vision will want to reunite what has too often been presented as an "either-or" (dichotomized) vision for ministry and mission in recent church history.

Our search then is the search for Christ wherein it can be hopefully said that he is a "head over all things to the church, which is his body, the fullness of him who fills all in all" (Ephesians.1:22-23, also 2:19ff). In search of a holistic and healthy Christian life and church, the five marks of a "Total Christ" spirituality are as follows:

Gospel-centered: We believe that the Gospel is not only the ABC's but the A to Z's of the Christian life in at least two ways. First, it is not only our ticket to heaven based on grace through faith, it is the way God sets us free to live the more transformed life. Second, the Gospel is not just about the "inward" person concerning our spiritual needs, but also the "outward" person concerned with our emotional, physical, vocational, etc. needs. The Gospel therefore is a holistic commitment to empowerment aimed at spiritual conversion and discipleship in reliance upon Christ together with micro-enterprise ventures and family/personal Christian counseling. (Romans 1:17, Ephesians 2:1-10)!

What to look for:

- The experience of Christian assurance of God's favor based on God's grace in Christ.
- People who are identity oriented as adopted sons/daughters vs. performance oriented as slaves/workers.
- Transparency in willingness to confess *real* sins.
- A different approach to suffering and trials as related to God's training vs. God's punishment.

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- A new motivation for service that is internal and gratitude based vs. external and duty based.
- More and more set free from self-promotion, self-defending, self-justifying, blame-shifting approach to life.
- Law loving as it is the basis for personal and communal flourishing now that we are no longer law relying as the basis of being accepted by God.
- Sabbath enjoying in trustful contentment upon God's gracious provisions in Christ.

Sacramental: We desire an emphasis on sacramental spirituality wherein Christ our Priest is "fleshed out" in a carefully designed four movement worship service that follows the four movements of the gospel and culminates every week in a participation in eucharistic communion with Christ as "fleshed out" in cultural styles specific to each local community (1 Corinthians 10:14-17, Hebrews 12:22-24, Revelation 4-5)!

What to look for:

- An awareness of divine presence and a temple spirituality in worship.
- Worship that is characterized by the full range of emotions fitting an encounter with the living God (yearning, wonder, joyfulness, sadness, resoluteness, humbleness, etc.).
- An assurance of divine presence that results in a culture of anticipation and expectancy in worship and life.
- The sacramental mystery of local presence that transforms the meaning of menial, local, social-cultural mannerisms by Christ's mediated presence.
- A church that can distinguish the word based elements in worship from the socio-cultural based forms that the elements must assume in order to transact God's living presence.
- A church that practices a four-movement, temple-style worship service that does the gospel in Christ's presence vs. the revival style service that gets a person to Christ and the gospel.

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Confessional: Whereas the Scripture is our only rule of faith and practice, we want to read and interpret the scripture with the consensus of the church that is passed down from every age and place through the use of “confessions”. Our consensus is reflected in the Westminster Confession of Faith, which is consistent with other familiar creeds such as the Apostles' and Nicene creeds. We strive to apply our beliefs to all of life and in so doing relate to Dorothy Sayers’ famous saying “the dogma is the drama!”

What to look for:

- A culture of humble submission to scripture revealed in a willingness to biblically regulated worship and practice.
- A high regard for the Christian scriptures as the only rule of faith and practice wherein the church, acting corporately, is careful to declare nothing save the whole counsel of God’s Word (not more, not less) as discerned by good and necessary inference.
- A high regard for the scriptures in preaching that is expositional and Christ-centered, careful to discern the original intent by preaching right doctrines/practices from right texts.
- A humble regard for the church vs. the individual as “the pillar and bulwark of the truth” such as to read the Bible communally vs. individualistically including the use of historic creeds and confessions.
- A church that is careful to consistently teach and apply biblical theology as the friend of Christian renewal and sanctification.
- A culture of humble submission to scripture that is less prone to be blown about by every wind of faddish doctrine and philosophy of ministry.

Communal: We want to emphasize a local-oriented ministry where community really matters. This community formation occurs where Christ our King is fleshed out through life on life “one anothering” and holistic empowerment under the shepherding care of Christ’s under-shepherds and servant leaders. (John 13:34, Galatians 6:2, 1 Peter 5:1-5)!

Total Christ Spirituality

What to look for:

- A communal, rather than individual, approach to everything – such as to change the way we think about our possessions, time, decisions, ethics – everything in relation to one-anothering!
- A community that shares its burdens with one another.
- A community that values the Christian village in child raising.
- A communal consciousness that feels the relation of the part to the whole, both in flourishing as each member flourishes and in suffering as one member suffers.
- A missional method that focuses less on the individual evangelist and more on the communal evangelist as a strategy for reaching those not yet Christians.
- Intentional shepherding and life on life (vs. just curriculum on life) discipleship.

Missional: More than a source of mission, the carefully designed, apostolically-organized, church is the locus of mission and the very life giving and mediated presence of Christ. Just the church being the church with the whole world present is God's missionary strategy to the world (John 1:14, 20:21)! This makes our approach to evangelism and discipleship participatory and not simply declarative.

What to look for:

- And emphasis upon participational apologetics vs. just declarative apologetics.
- Non-Christians participating in the life of the church and worship.
- Worship that both, and at the same time, is a participation in the mystery of Christ's transcendent otherness yet is accessed through the incarnate presence of Christ with local mannerisms.
- A willingness to suffer all things for the sake of the "elect" – both unchurched and churched – no false dichotomies.
- A confidence in the outward means of grace as a missionary strategy to our world (preaching, sacraments, community, prayers).
- A church that assumes a missionary mentality both locally and globally.

Our Basic Ministry Commitments

Our Basic Ministry Commitments

Christ Presbyterian Church, New Haven is a member of the Presbyterian Church in America (PCA). As one of many communions in the church universal, the PCA may be distinguished by its affirmation of what has been described as the "Reformed system of faith" as reflected in the Westminster Confession of Faith. The PCA is characterized by its emphasis on both personal revival and theological reformation. Without revival, reformation can become "dead orthodoxy." Without reformation, revival can result in shallow experientialism and misinformed zeal. By promoting reformation and revival, we seek to carry out the Great Commission with Biblical integrity and personal authenticity unto the glory of God.

1. We are committed to the Old and New Testament Scriptures as our only rule of faith and practice. While believing that God powerfully manifest his infinite glory in a general way through creation, our Christian faith and practice is grounded in God's works of redemption in history as explained to us through the divinely appointed means of inspired Scripture. We believe that all things necessary for salvation are sufficiently revealed to us by the Holy Spirit speaking through the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments. We believe also that all special revelation has ceased until the next and final redemptive act of God in history when Christ will return to judge the living and the dead. It is, therefore, our ambition to teach the whole counsel of God's word, not adding to, or subtracting from, anything contained within it, recognizing no other source for divine revelation, whether by ecclesiastical traditions or private revelations.

Why should I care? To liberate all of us from oppressive, human-made opinions and guard the gracious gospel against manipulation and self-serving abuses.

2. We are committed to the teachings of grace as they are summarized in the historic Westminster Confession of Faith. Whereas the Holy Scriptures is our only rule of faith and practice, our Church unity is predicated upon a consensus about what the

Our Basic Ministry Commitments

Scriptures principally teach. Our consensus is reflected in the 350-year--old Westminster Confession of Faith. In summary, it affirms that God is no less sovereign in our salvation than He is sovereign in our creation to the praise of God's glorious grace! This means that we are accepted by God, from beginning to end, not by our own works or attempts at being approved by God, but by faith alone in the perfect and all sufficient work of Christ on our behalf, faith itself being the free gift of God! While many people join our church without knowing or affirming all the teachings contained in the Westminster Confession of Faith, our church, when acting and speaking corporately, seeks to be in accord with the Westminster Standards.

Why should I care? To affirm the sovereignty of grace, to connect us to wise men and women who have gone before us, and to prevent as much as possible our historical and cultural blind-spots.

3. We are committed to God-centered worship designed after a covenantal pattern that is in the mediated presence of Christ through word and sacrament. In every period of redemptive history, God has chosen to mediate his saving presence among his people as regulated through the divine institutions of word, sacrament and prayers. Today, through the sacraments of the Lord's Supper and Christian Baptism, together with the preaching of God's word and corporate prayers (both sung and unsung), God has promised to be with us until the end of the age. Our worship is set to the pattern of covenant initiation and renewal including the weekly participation of the Lord's supper. Our music and style of worship is "blended" to reflect the vernacular context of those God has brought to our city. Our desire is for our worship to be as God-centered as our theology, communicating the truth and grace of God to the nations. We welcome all believers together with those who are searching.

Why should I care? Not only is it biblical, but it keeps us grounded in the gospel every week, secured upon Christ's redemption accomplished. Our worship embodies the gospel as we experience God's presence.

Our Basic Ministry Commitments

4. We are committed to being a multi-cultural church and church planting movement.

We believe that the church, the household of God, is an essential element of the gospel into which people of every tribe and nation are welcomed. While affirming that every follower of Christ is called to be a witness to the truth and grace of God revealed in Jesus Christ in both word and deed, we also believe that true evangelism is best accomplished through church planting. It is therefore our ambition to be not only a growing church, but also a growing church planting movement. While holding to a time-honored understanding of faith, we are strategically progressive. Our aim is to plant churches that reach the different cultures in our city, New England and the world.

Why should I care? Because no one culture is closer to God than another, you don't have to become American (or Western, or whatever!) to become Christian, and the corporate witness of the gospel is the best testament to its power!

5. We are committed to a high view of Christian calling as reflected in the vocational spheres of family, church, and public service. We believe that God has placed into our lives the boundaries of our habitation that reflect his own sovereign design to accomplish his work in the world. His work extends into the spheres of family, church and civil vocations. We desire to help people find a balance that is unique to their individual callings which reflects a high view of vocation and calling in these three spheres of service. While believing that the Christian Scriptures does not address all things pertaining to life in this world, we do affirm that we should take "every thought captive to the obedience of Christ" and that the Christian worldview is applicable and relevant to all spheres of life. Our ultimate commitment is to the restoration of "calling" that we might more and more glorify God and enjoy Him forever!

Why should I care? Because God didn't make us just one way or with one part of ourselves, but made ALL of us, and he deserves it all to be offered as a thank offering.

Our City Mission

Mission Anabaino (MA) is mission “I am ascending” (the meaning of the Greek word “anabaino” which is used in John 20:17). It seeks to fulfill the “greater things” in relation to Christ’s great expectations regarding his ascension ministry today (John 14:12). In practical terms, **it is to participate in the real and personal advent of Christ through church planting and the ecumenically oriented rediscovery of missional ecclesiology.** More than a philosophy of ministry, Mission Anabaino is a theological vision rooted in the simplicity and purity of devotion to Christ and his continued salvific presence today applied to mission!

Our Strategy

Our strategy simply stated is 10-10-10, that is to plant ten congregations locally and ten church planting movements globally, in ten years. Locally, we have begun planting congregations in the greater New Haven area that reflect the different voices and locations of our diverse city. Until a Total Christ vision of the gospel is made geographically and/or culturally accessible to each citizen, we will not be finished planting. Globally, in conjunction with our growing MA community and affiliate network we have begun church planting movements around the world that can themselves continue church planting. Currently, our multiple congregations are already a reflection of one church organically united in beliefs, mission, and a cooperative strategy expressed in a kind of symphonic multiplicity of cultural voices and instruments. We are considering many additional opportunities such as in global center cities, college towns and other major world contexts around the globe.

A Brief History of CPC

In anticipation of his impending departure, Christ issued a promise to his disciples: “I will build my church” (Matthew 16). The narrative of church planting in Acts confirms this promise when, over and over again, by God’s power and wisdom the church is born despite human impotence and failed strategic planning (Acts 16, for instance). In summary of the apostolic ministry, it is reported that “the churches throughout all Judea, Galilee, and Samaria had peace and were edified” (Acts 9:31) and the apostles rediscovered many times God’s promise: “My grace is sufficient for you, for power is made perfect in weakness” (2 Corinthians 12:9). Such was church planting then, no less so than church planting now — for beginning in 1991, an unplanned and seemingly serendipitous series of events culminated in the planting of Christ Presbyterian Church of New Haven.

It all began in the summer of 1991 when three young families in and around New Haven and a graduate student at Yale scheduled a ferry ride from Bridgeport, CT to Port Jefferson, NY. Their purpose was to meet up with several church planters and pastors from the Presbyterian Church in America (PCA) to discuss the possibility of planting a PCA church in New Haven. Rev. Graham was due in town on the same weekend, having no knowledge of this group or of their plans, to look for temporary housing for him and his family in order to complete a graduate degree at Yale. Hoping to find a good church, he contacted what was at the time a name passed on to him as a possible good reference for locating a church to attend for a year. Albeit unexpected and unplanned, Rev. Graham accepted an invitation to take a boat ride across the Long Island Sound with the above families, thinking it a worthwhile “sight-seeing” trip, and a chance to get to know some like-minded Christians in the area. By the end of the trip, Rev. Graham agreed to lead a Bible study in New Haven during his studies at Yale.

During the ’91-’92 academic year, a Bible study met every Thursday evening in the Westville area of New Haven and consisted of around eight to ten people. As the year progressed, the group began to discern a vision for a church in New Haven that would blend together a gospel-oriented and reformed faith with a progressive strategy and

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accessible message of grace, suitable to the times. There was the growing conviction that New Haven needed both a thoughtful expression of the classic faith together with a compassionate embodiment of the gospel, wherein people with serious questions regarding the Christian faith could discover Christ in a seeker-friendly church that remained open and hospitable to people in all stages of their spiritual journey. There was also a growing conviction that Christ's commission to make disciples in Matthew 28 was best accomplished through church planting, wherein the full gospel is realized by Christ's presence to save as mediated through the word, sacraments and fellowship of a church patterned after the apostolic teachings.

In the spring of '92, the vision to plant a gospel-driven and Presbyterian church in New Haven was mounting within the group. However, the Grahams were already in the last stages of candidating for a pastorate in their hometown of Atlanta, Georgia. And yet again, "the human mind plans the way, but the Lord directs the steps"(Proverbs 16:9). For, while preaching a sermon on the Great Commission before a congregation and pastoral search committee in Atlanta, Rev. Graham could not escape the haunting dilemma of pursuing a pastorate in the Bible belt while no evangelical Presbyterian presence existed in center city New Haven. And then it happened! Within minutes of preaching that sermon, a Yale graduate, who just happened to be in the congregation at the time, made his way to Rev. Graham and challenged him to consider planting a church like the one just described from Scripture IN NEW HAVEN! Well, the rest is history! Upon Rev. Graham's return, the core group in New Haven agreed to ask the Presbytery to appoint him as church planter in New Haven, and to call the new church Christ Presbyterian, with the ambition that "Christ might come to have first place in everything" as "Head of the church" (Colossians 1:18).

After spending the summer raising the needed funds to cover a total annual budget of \$73,000, Rev. Graham was commissioned in October of 1992 by the Northeast Presbytery of the PCA to be the church planter in New Haven. Soon afterward, on October 11, 1992, at 9:30 am, the "mission" stage of church planting was initiated with a first worship service held at the Amity Regional Junior High in Orange, CT in a small, windowless choir room! The sermon text that morning was Matthew 28, wherein

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Christ's love for sinners is proclaimed, and his strategy through church planting is affirmed. In attendance were 28 people, children and adults combined. As a "mission church," there were no elders during this time. The first sermon series was in Ephesians, weekly communion was practiced, and Sunday school was provided for both adults (sermon discussion) and children (using the CRC curriculum) of all ages. During the same period, Rev. Graham led a mid-week class in theology and ministry training, for all Sunday school teachers and potential officers of the church. Within the first three to four months, the congregation grew to about 22 adult members and 26 children.

After completing a sermon series in the book of Jonah with an emphasis upon God's love for "the city," the congregation agreed to establish a Study Center and church office in downtown New Haven. On August 1, 1994, Christ Presbyterian Church rented the basement level office at 383 Orange St., New Haven. The study center consisted of a library, a meeting room, the pastor's study, an office for seminarian and part-time assistant to the pastor George Levesque, and one additional room used by the children as a playroom. On August 28, 1994, the Sunday worship service was relocated to the Neighborhood Music School at 100 Audubon St. On November 6, 1994, at 4:00 pm, there was a special service of organization during which church planter/evangelist Preston Graham, Jr. was installed as the pastor, and Cliff Bogue, Robert Hawkes and George Levesque were ordained as ruling elders. Also during this time, family groups were established and located in Orange, and two in Westville (one of which would later relocate to the Branford/ Guilford region).

By God's grace, the 1994-1995 year was characterized by many wonderful evidences of spiritual growth. Between the months of September 1994 and August 1995, there were seven professions of faith together with many signs of growing spiritual maturity in the members. Of particular importance was a growing commitment to family worship in families. By the end of August 1995, the membership had grown to 77 and the weekly worship attendance was averaging 140. In the following year, plans were laid with Yale Divinity student and CPC intern Mel Sensenig toward planting a CPC daughter church in downtown Providence, RI. The church was initiated by Rev. Sensenig in 1997.

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As the church grew and its commitment to New Haven increased, on September 5, 1997, Christ Presbyterian Church purchased 135 Whitney Avenue with its 1850 Gothic Revival cottage for the price of \$400,000. Designed by architect Jackson Downing and featured in his *The Architecture of Country House* (1850) under the design title “A Symmetrical Cottage Design # 7,” the house was described as combining “the beautiful with the good.” The design was commissioned by Esra Reid, president of the Bank of New Haven, for his aging parents. In 1922, the cottage was sold to its second owner, Father Riggs, the first Catholic chaplain at Yale and founder of St. Thomas Moore Chapel. In 1958, the cottage was sold to Dr. Jack McGrail and converted to a dentist’s office and drug store (in the basement), later to be converted into law offices for rent. Christ Presbyterian Church, in 1997, became only the fourth owner and initiated a major restoration project on the cottage, including the restoration of the original design of the rooms—all of which was largely accomplished by the hardworking members of the church. Also starting in the summer of 1998, the church began worshipping in the Marquand Chapel at the Yale Divinity School. In 1999, the church hired Tom Morrison as associate pastor of college ministry to assist in ministry with Yale students especially. And in 2000, the church hired a part-time Music and Worship Arts coordinator, Dan Kellogg, toward developing greater participation and excellence in sacred music. Also during this time, as momentum and enthusiasm grew, so too did the desire for a permanent worship facility. As the congregation had grown to approximately 200 people, the church established an ambitious three-part strategy to:

- 1) Establish a Reformed University Ministry at Yale, an affiliated ministry with the PCA denomination committed to Christian discipleship from a gospel- driven and reformed perspective.
- 2) Establish Hope For New Haven, a separate faith-based, non-profit subsidiary organization of CPC that is a collaborative project with other like-minded churches in New Haven for the purpose of bringing the hope of Christ to the outward needs of people in our city, even as this will enable God’s people to have an authentic witness to the hope of Christ in relation to their inward needs as well.

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- 3) Initiate a \$3.5 million building project to renovate the basement of the existing study center for additional programming space, and to design and build a multi-story facility of about 10,000 sq. feet to house a worship facility, a day care facility and additional classroom space upstairs.

In April of 2001, after two years of legal, political, financial and architectural preparations, there was ground breaking at 135 Whitney Avenue! But as summarized on March 17, 2000, by the Rev. Graham to a skeptical city planning commission, the worth of the project was located in the worth of a valued tradition, albeit a tradition not permanently represented in New Haven. With God's power evidenced in human weakness, including a miraculous and unexpected gift of \$850,000 at a moment when the project seemed all but lost for financial reasons, the building project was granted a temporary certificate of occupancy by the city in April of 2002, just in time for the first worship service to be conducted on Easter Sunday, albeit with concrete floors and unpainted walls exposed. However mundane at the time, with the ministry of word, sacraments and fellowship, the space was consecrated as a New Covenant temple of God wherein it is said of the New Covenant church that "Christ fills all in all" (Eph. 2).

Since the year 2002, the Lord has blessed CPC with many signs of spiritual rejuvenation, as the life-transforming power of the gospel has been a more prominent focus of the preaching and ministry at CPC. The Lord greatly blessed the congregation with a renewed vision for "one-anothering" as expressed through a re-constituted Servant Leader Board.

In the spring of 2003, God raised up many more small group facilitators, and the church initiated a strategic plan of seeing many more "mini churches" formed throughout greater New Haven, providing the first line of discipleship, mercy, one-anothering and worship as an embodiment of CPC throughout the week.

The great 18th century Congregationalist pastor, scholar and revivalist Jonathan Edwards once wrote to a friend that "the Presbyterian way has ever appeared to me most agreeable to the word of God and the reason and nature of things." At the time of

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his writing, I suspect that Edwards would never have imagined a gospel-driven “Presbyterianism” in downtown New Haven. Such was the dream that was begun on October 11, 1992, at 9:30 am, when Christ Presbyterian Mission Church was born — a new church seeking to continue the reformed tradition of the apostolic faith in greater New Haven. To be sure, we use the same Westminster Shorter Catechism used by Edwards and printed in New Haven in 1786, yet, we seek to express the same faith in a progressive and socially relevant way that fits the 21st century. Indeed, Christ Presbyterian Church worships in downtown New Haven and reaches into the surrounding cities as a continuing tradition making history in greater New Haven, but more importantly as a continuing manifestation of Christ’s promise some 2000 years ago: “I will build my church!”

Part Two
Experiencing Community at CPC

Getting Involved at CPC

The biblical term for involvement is the word fellowship. By fellowship, I do not mean social gatherings per se, although it can include this. Rather, I mean the way we experience God's presence through participating together in the gospel as a church in meaningful ways. Another word we use for this is "one-anothering."

For instance, the word "fellowship" is used by Paul to describe the sacred ritual of the Lord's Supper, which is enjoyed every week in our corporate worship at CPC. "The cup of blessing that we bless, is it not a fellowship in the blood of Christ? The bread that we break, is it not a fellowship in the body of Christ?" (1 Corinthians 10:16ff) In the words of the author of Hebrews, clearly the most important way to get involved at CPC is "not to forsake the assembly together as is the habit of some." The formal and corporate worship of God each Sunday is crucial to growing in the grace and truth of the gospel. God meets us and sustains us in the gospel through the ministry of word, sacraments, prayers and one-anothering. As the Hebrews author seemed to know, it may be true that we might not always appreciate or comprehend the value of this corporate fellowship with God. Perhaps it is like a person who is starving — the longer they are without food, the less they know they need it! Make no mistake about it, corporate worship is essential to our relationship with God and our full participation in the gospel.

Another way the word "fellowship" is used in the Bible is in 2 Cor. 8 concerning the offering of our gifts and services one to another in the service of the gospel. Paul describes believers as literally "begging us earnestly for the privilege of sharing in the service to the saints." Along these lines, the Bible describes the church using the metaphor of a human body. With an "organic" conception of the body of Christ, Paul in Romans 12 explains how one part of the body cannot say to the other part, "I have no need of you," even as no one can say, "you have no need of me." And so, the exhortation by Paul is "having gifts that differ... let us use them" (Romans 12:6). We encourage every person at CPC to find some service(s) in the church wherein the grace of the gospel can be experienced through "one-anothering" both in word and in deed.

Getting Involved at CPC

So important is this that the main focus of the Servant Leader Board at CPC is to “foster the authentic expression of the communion of saints at CPC.”

There are many teams available to serve on and opportunities to participate at CPC offered throughout the year. Make sure to fill out a *Ministry Connection* booklet so that you can find the right fit.

Life Groups

cpcnewhaven.org/life-groups

"God has so composed the body, giving greater honor to the part that lacked it, that there may be no division in the body, but that the members may have the same care for one another. If one member suffers, all suffer together; if one member is honored, all rejoice together." – 1 Corinthians 12:24-26

God's people are the hands and feet of Christ. We cannot experience God and grow spiritually in a truly gospel-centered and biblical way if we are living in isolation. Neither can we say we are flourishing if our brother or sister in Christ is suffering. Bound together with covenant communion, God brings us into new relationships where sacrifice is freedom and giving to others is where we find life.

Life Groups are our way of doing church in the small with all sorts of people engaged in prayer, teaching, fellowship and care. They are the vehicle that we use to help its participants continue to experience Christ outside of our worship gatherings and to impart the pastoral care that Christ provides through the love of His people. Thus, the worship, teaching, fellowship, and care for one another supply a more intimate and hands-on encounter with the living Christ.

Each Life Group has an elder assigned to it who is responsible for praying for each of the group's members individually. This is part of our Shepherd Leadership at CPC, which consist of CPC elders and Women Leader Board members who have a robust understanding of the biblical nature and design of the church, the extent and limits of its authorized power, and training in spiritual shepherding.

School of Discipleship

cpcnewhaven.org/school-of-discipleship

We believe that Christian discipleship is a holistic endeavor, involving a whole life transformation that impacts every aspect of our lives. At the very center of any school of discipleship is Christ in the gospel, wherein the life of God is given to all who believe in him. The gospel is the free gift of God's grace possessed by faith in Christ alone. It is the discovery of being set free from the fear of divine and human condemnation, even as this transforms our relationships, our work, and our worship. The gospel is nothing less than the "power of God unto salvation."

Any school of discipleship will involve at least three components—word, worship, and fellowship. The emphasis at CPC is in the two contexts where all three come together—in formal worship on Sundays and in the informal context of family groups that are located throughout the downtown and greater New Haven regions. It pertains to the teaching and training aspects of the "word" component especially, so as to complement the preaching at CPC, that we envision a School of Discipleship.

CPC's School of Discipleship offers four areas of study over a four or five year period. These classes represent a balanced spiritual diet for every disciple of Christ at every step of his or her journey. Core classes will be offered more regularly and cover the essentials of each area. We are constantly creating new electives, which supplement the core and address important topics.

The School of Discipleship Diploma Program is a way to keep track of the training you have received. It is intended to encourage those who make it through, as well as to qualify leaders at CPC. We also recognize that many members spend only a few years in New Haven. The diploma can also help show other churches the type of classes and training you have had here.

Many of the classes offered through the School of Discipleship may also be read independently online at cpcnewhaven.org and are a great resource for personal study.

Children's Discipleship

cpcnewhaven.org/children

In an attempt to assist our covenant families in raising their children in the grace of the gospel, we have developed a thoughtful and comprehensive approach towards providing your children with deep and enduring roots in the Christian faith. Our philosophy emphasizes close parent/church cooperation. As a result, our strategy for "making disciples" seeks to be primarily relational rather than programmatic. Our curriculum represents both a deductive and inductive approach to education that is intended to give our children a lasting and full knowledge of the Christian faith. Our goal, then, is to help our children become faithful disciples of Christ, well prepared to live and defend the Gospel into the 21st century.

By the time a child leaves their home, they will have been trained in:

- A comprehensive study of the Bible in all its various periods
- A systematic study and review of the essential teachings of the classic/evangelical Christian faith
- A precious collection of classic hymns to assist in private and public worship
- A practical and personal knowledge of Christ as experienced within the loving community of a Christ-centered church
- Deductive Bible Study: Children meet for a short assembly time prior to Sunday School for review of the Westminster Shorter Catechisms and learning hymns often used in worship
- Inductive Bible Study: Each Sunday School class studies the Scripture using lessons and curricula most suited to each age

"For to you is the promise, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call unto him. And I will establish my covenant between me and thee and thy seed after thee throughout their generations for an everlasting covenant, to be a God unto thee and to thy seed after thee. Believe on the Lord Jesus, and thou shalt be saved, thou and thy house." Excerpts from Acts 2:39; Gen. 17:7; Acts 16:31 Compiled in BCO 65.5 pertaining to the promises of God to Covenant Parents

Children's Discipleship

A Parental Confession at Child's Baptism:

1. *Do you acknowledge your child's need of the cleansing blood of Jesus Christ, and the renewing grace of the Holy Spirit?*
2. *Do you claim God's covenant promises in (his) behalf, and do you look in faith to the Lord Jesus Christ for (his) salvation, as you do for your own?*
3. *Do you now unreservedly consecrate your child to God, and promise, in humble reliance upon divine grace, that you will endeavor to set before (him/her) a godly example, that you will pray with and for (him/her), that you will teach (him/her) the doctrines of our holy religion, and that you will strive, by all the means of God's appointment, to bring (him/her) up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord?*

The Vows Of Covenant Parenting (BCO 65.5)

The Four Pillars of Child Discipleship:

1. The Importance of a *Home* and *Church* Cooperative:

- BCO 28-1. The spiritual nurture, instruction and training of the children of the church are committed by God *primarily* to their parents. They are responsible to the church for the faithful discharge of their obligations. It is a principal duty of the church to promote true religion in the home. True discipleship involves learning the Word of God under the guidance of the Holy Spirit both at home and in the church. Without learning there is no growth and without growth there is no discipline and without discipline there is sin and iniquity (1 Timothy 4:7).
- BCO 28-3. The church should maintain constant and sympathetic relations with the children. It also should encourage them, on coming to years of discretion, to make confession of the Lord Jesus Christ and to enter upon all privileges of full church membership. If they are wayward they should be cherished by the church and every means used to reclaim them.

2. The Importance of Experiencing the *Gospel* in Family Relations:

- The gospel is as much "caught" as "taught." There is a culture to the gospel that makes it safe to be morally flawed without digressing to moral licentiousness,

Children's Discipleship

where forgiveness and grace are the norm rather than the exception. The culture of the Gospel will show itself when we “speak the truth” to one another about the gospel in love—which is to be one another’s greatest human advocate *for* grace. The culture of the gospel will both cherish family “rules” in order to protect family identity and patterns of family interaction, but without a rigid and/or legalistic practice of these rules. The culture of the gospel relative to parenting covenant children will assume in them Christ’s Spirit by baptism, albeit awaiting and nurturing them to discern a personal and self-aware faith as an emerging adult.

3. The Importance of *Family Worship* (not to be confused with Christian Education - Instruction):

- There is perhaps no more single “program” that will nurture faith than for the whole family to practice that faith in the worship of God together. Family worship is not education or Bible School. It is not even primarily an exercise of parenting children, at least not directly. It is a time when we are all as children of God, remembering Him and cherishing His gracious gifts to us both in creation and redemption. Good family worship is simple, brief and God centered. It will include 1) singing a hymn or two (preferably one that will transcend age), 2) reading of a passage of scripture with minimal comment other than to get the gist of what we are to remember about God and our salvation, and 3) a season of corporate prayer (Adoration, Confession, Thanksgiving and Supplication(intercession)—“ACTS”).

4. The Importance of Catechism Training:

- Catechism is simple question/answer summaries of what the Bible principally teaches according to the consensus of the church over the ages. We use the *Westminster Shorter Catechism*, specially written to instruct children in the faith, albeit in the 17th century. Notwithstanding some difficult and/or outdated language, we feel that it is important that our children grow up to not only learn the teachings of the Christian faith, but also to do this with the confidence that comes from sharing in the same faith, even with the same language, that was

Children's Discipleship

shared in by the greater Christian family over a 2000 year history. While words like “justification” and “effectual calling,” are not often heard today, they are words none the less that served to anchor the hopes and convictions of our spiritual mothers and fathers, even as to allow us to participate in a living conversation with them. To be sure, our young children may not understand the concepts completely, or hardly at all in some cases. But don't be mistaken into thinking that nothing is happening. Quite the contrary, by catechism instruction the church/parent is placing important categories into the child's memory, categories (or files of facts) that will become the basis of distinguishing and understanding things taught in sermons, Sunday School instruction, and the various “waves” of catechism review and instruction that will be repeated throughout our curriculum (see below for three distinct “waves” or stages of catechism instruction that are roughly patterned after the classical categories of “grammar, dialectic and rhetorical” stages of learning-- wherein each stage is vital to the others).

5. Children's School of Discipleship at CPC:

- A Sunday School curriculum and other age specific discipleship opportunities through the Church are available online at cpcnewhaven.org/children or on the children's table in the foyer.

For further readings see the following booklets produced by CPC:

- *“A Baptism That Saves”* by Preston Graham
- *“Together in God's Presence: Children and Families Together in Corporate Worship”* by Preston Graham

CPC Online

cpcnewhaven.org

We encourage you to visit our website whenever you need anything or are curious to learn more. Here is a brief walk-through of what you'll find.

Our Team: cpcnewhaven.org/our-team | Looking for someone? Want to know who is responsible for which ministries and teams? Here is a list of our ministry leaders and easy access to their email addresses. You'll see our Staff, Shepherd Leaders, Servant Leaders, and Sunday School Teachers.

Calendar: cpcnewhaven.org/calendar | Find all of our current and upcoming events here, along with timeframes, descriptions, and locations. You'll see all of our outreach opportunities and church-wide events listed here, as well as some team and board meetings.

Forms and Handbooks: cpcnewhaven.org/forms-and-handbooks | Here you'll find access to all of our forms and handbooks that teams and leaders need at CPC. Of special note are Reimbursement Forms and our Leadership Handbook. The Leadership Handbook contains all of the policies that we hold at CPC regarding mercy, finance, operations, Life Groups, leadership, and more. Please reference it if you ever have a question about how things work.

Church Community Builder: cpcnewhaven.org | To access our online community, go to the bottom left hand corner of the homepage of our website and click "Community Log-In (CCB)." If you do not already have log-in credentials, email admin@cpcnewhaven.org. Inside of CCB you'll be able to search for people's contact information, participate in groups that you belong to, respond to serving requests, and view the directory.

Social Media: CPC is on Facebook as "Christ Presbyterian Church New Haven" and on Instagram as "cpcnewhaven." Follow us for updates, photos, and events. This is also a great way to share the activities of the church with those you'd like to invite.

Part Three

Membership at CPC

The Reception of New Members

The Reception of New Members

The first step toward pursuing membership is to schedule a personal meeting with one of the pastors. The purpose of the meeting is to establish a pastoral relationship. It is a time for the pastor to get to know you personally and to introduce you to the beliefs, practices and goals of the church in a relaxed and personal way. You will also have the opportunity to ask any questions you might have about the church, Christian faith and practice, etc.

After your private meeting with a pastor, you will be invited to meet with the elders of the church to be examined in your confession of faith. Again, the concern of the elders is to exercise the “keys of the kingdom” (Matthew 16:19) only insofar as to discern in you a credible profession of faith in Christ. It is not a theology exam or an exam concerning your knowledge of our tradition. An interview usually takes about 15-20 minutes.

After this you will be invited to join the church in a formal way by taking vows in front of the congregation.

Membership Vows

Throughout history, special relationships have been set apart by the taking of vows. What exactly is a vow? A vow is a “confession” regarding the meaning of one’s participation in a given institution. Therefore, vows are ordinarily limited to initiation ceremonies. And according to the Bible, there are three such institutions that enjoy a divine sanction--the church, the state and the family. For instance, vows are used to initiate a judicial proceeding or even citizenship in the civil sphere. Vows are used to initiate a family relationship between a husband and wife in the family sphere. And, for those who believe that the church is a third institution set apart by God, vows are used to initiate a church relationship, or perhaps one’s service in an office of the church. And would it surprise you that every one of the above examples can be located in the Bible? We will review briefly the biblical rationale that relates to the taking of vows in the church sphere.

Clearly, the Psalms speak of “vows” as part of the corporate worship of God (Psalm 22:25, 61:5, 116:14, etc.). According then to Christ, “Whoever confesses me before men, him I will also confess before my Father who is in heaven” (Matthew 10:32). This is an amazing statement, more so because the idea “on earth as it is in heaven” is repeated later pertaining to Christ’s instituting the visible church. It is in this context that the “keys” are a reference to the use of government on earth to mediate Christ’s government as he is seated in heaven (Mt. 16:15-19). In comparison then to Mt. 18, the language of “binding and loosing” in that passage is clearly related to the exercise of government pertaining to membership rites and privileges in the temple context of Christ’s day.

According to the apostle Paul, one becomes a Christian when “you confess with your lips that Jesus is Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead” (Rom. 10:9). Who are we “confessing” to with our lips and in what context? Related to this, what else could it mean for the elders to “watch over the flock of God” if not a flock that can be defined by some “initiation” ceremony in relation to the exchange of vows? Or, in the words of Hebrews, what else could it mean to “obey your leaders and submit to

Membership Vows

them, for they are keeping watch over your souls and will give an account,” apart from some willing and voluntary way to form an association that is predicated upon the taking of vows one to another? (see 1 Peter 5, Hebrews 13:17). And when the church is exhorted to “remove such a one” from “the assembly” as the ultimate, albeit tragic, expression of church discipline, what else could it mean except that the person was joined to the assembly by some confession that is later deemed broken? (1 Corinthians 5:3-5). Or, when we are exhorted to support one another even through our financial means, how could such benefits be distributed except that it means something to bind one’s self to another through the authenticating protections of an initiation ceremony? (2 Corinthians 8).

And so, for these abbreviated reasons, we believe that church membership as a good thing. It sets people apart into a special relationship with each other, where the terms are clear and where loyalties for the mutual benefit of all are expressed and preserved. Membership is simply a way to say: “I confess my faith in solidarity with you so as to enjoy the mutual support of one another until, for whatever reason, someone is led elsewhere.”

It needs to be stated clearly that we believe it is the birthright of every Christian to belong to the household of God—the visible church. For this reason, we believe that membership at CPC ought to be as wide as the gospel is wide. Whereas we are obviously one denomination, admission to membership mirrors our interdenominational understanding of the “one holy catholic church” that is also expressed at the communion table each week. In other words, a person seeking membership at CPC will not need to confess anything distinctively Presbyterian to join. Rather, it is enough that a person can confess that Jesus is Lord and relate this to a basic understanding of the Christian faith and a willingness to live in submission to the church insofar as the church is in submission to the Scripture.

For this reason, membership vows at CPC represent what any sincere Christian could say, regardless of certain denomination-specific beliefs. They are:

Membership Vows

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?
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?

Do these vows represent YOUR faith and commitment?

Member Responsibilities

Membership Responsibilities

1. Regular Attendance

All members are expected to be faithful and regular in their participation in Lord's Day worship unless providentially hindered; we believe this to be a duty, not an option. With regard to other church activities (such as Sunday school, small groups, and men's and women's groups), members are strongly encouraged to take advantage of such opportunities in an effort to grow in God's grace and build up the body of Christ. (Acts 2:42; Hebrews 10:24-25).

2. Service

Every member of this church has been placed here by God, not only to receive ministry, but also to render service to the body of Christ. Therefore it is important for every member, with the help and guidance of the Church, to diligently search for opportunities to serve in the body of Christ. (Ephesians 4:7,16; Romans 12:4-8; 1 Corinthians 12:7).

3. Promotion of Edification and Peace

We are many members but one body, and thus we should all strive for the health and peace of that body (1 Corinthians 12:12-27; Ephesians 4:4, 11-16). Members therefore ought actively to cultivate relationships with one another so that they may be better able to pray for one another; to love, comfort and encourage one another; to bear with one another and forgive whatever grievances they may have against one another; and to help one another materially as occasion may require. Members ought to be careful to season their speech with grace such that the body of Christ is built up in peace. If one member notices another in sin, that member ought to follow the instructions of Matthew 18:15-20, namely to go to that person in private having said nothing to anyone else. If this fails, take another member, preferably an elder, to talk with the person. This failing, the issue ought to be brought to the attention of the session of elders (representing the whole church) for further instruction and discipline.

Member Responsibilities

4. Systematic and Proportionate Financial Support

It is clearly taught in Scripture that it is the duty and privilege of all Christians to support financially the work of the Kingdom of God. Members should be committed to regular, proportional, significant, and sacrificial giving to the Lord's work. No precise amount or percentage has been prescribed under the New Covenant. We should all be seeking to grow in the grace of giving and to demonstrate our commitment to Christ and his Kingdom in this most tangible and measurable way. (1 Corinthians 16:1-4; 2 Corinthians 8 and 9). A short paper on the biblical explanation of *New Testament Giving* is available by request.

5. Support of and Submission to Leadership

All who join this Church are expected to support and submit to the authority of the elders of the Church. Supporting the elders involves respecting them (1 Thessalonians 5:12-13); praying for them and their shepherding labors (Ephesians 6:18-20); and not entertaining false accusations against them (1 Timothy 5:19). Submitting to the elders entails heeding their teaching of and counsel from the Scriptures as those appointed to watch over the souls of Christ's flock (Acts 20:28, Colossians 1:28; 1 Timothy 3:5; Hebrews 13:17; 1 Peter 5:1-4).

6. Prayer

Members ought to pray regularly for the church – namely that Christ may be glorified through the making of the disciples by the preaching, teaching and administration of the sacraments.

Member Responsibilities

Other Resources

Special Topics Booklets by Rev. Dr. Preston Graham Jr. Published by CPC

The Marriage Calling

A Baptism that Saves

Women in Ministry

Together in God's Presence: Children & Families in Corporate Worship

Basic Questions

In Search of Divine Presence

Total Christ Explored

Websites

Christ Presbyterian Church New Haven: www.cpcnewhaven.org

Mission Anabaino: www.anabaino.org

PCA Denomination: www.pcanet.org

Recommended Reading

On our website you'll find a list of resources including a list of recommended books and reference websites under the "Discipleship" tab.

CPC Library

Check our website for an inventory of all titles offered in our library, located in the balcony above the sanctuary.

CPC Bookstore

Books are also available for purchase in our bookstore in the Fellowship Hall.

Calendar

For updated postings on activities, visit cpcnewhaven.org/calendar.

THE MISSION OF CHRIST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

We are a church that is ambitious for the glory of God by
Growing in the truth and grace of Jesus Christ,
Acting as a faithful witness in the greater New Haven community and world,
Trusting in the grace and power of the Holy Spirit.

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