



CHRIST

PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

CONNECT

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WELCOME

Introduction

Welcome to Christ Presbyterian Church Connect. We are glad you are here.

This seminar is designed to introduce you to our church in a broad and general fashion. It will also answer some common questions about what it means to be a believer in Jesus, to be a part of a Presbyterian Church (Presbyterian Church in America) in the Reformed Tradition, and to be a member of this church in particular. You will learn about our central beliefs, our philosophy of ministry, and our organization. We will also explore how you can best take advantage of, and become involved in, the multitude of opportunities that come with being a part of our community.

Most likely, the Connect seminar will not answer every one of your questions. Feel free to ask questions or direct remaining questions to any of the ministry staff or leadership. God has brought you here for a purpose; we want to help you discover and fulfill that purpose.



OUR STORY

- **1994** Christ Presbyterian Church (CPC) had its roots in a prayer group.
- **1995** Scott Bridges came to be the organizing pastor.
- **1996** Services began at the Carrillo Recreation Center.
- **2003** The church took residence in its current location.
- **2008** Scott Bridges left to serve a church in Maryland. Shortly thereafter a search committee was established.
- **2010** After a detailed and prayerful process led the committee to our current pastor, Kyle Wells.

SECTION 1

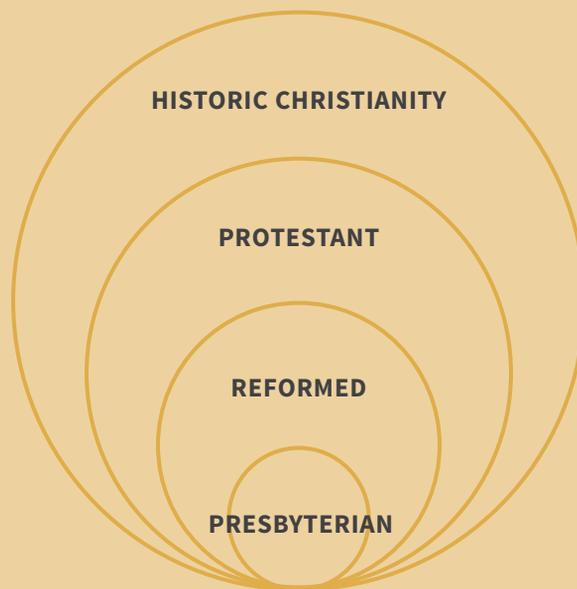
BELIEFS



What doctrinal commitments make CPC distinctively what it is?

CPC stands with all Christian churches by affirming the Ecumenical Creeds, and with the Protestant and Reformed traditions by affirming the teachings of the Westminster Confession of Faith, our denomination's doctrinal standards.

THREE CIRCLES OF DOCTRINAL COMMITMENTS



At CPC, we seek to remain faithful to our theological traditions, and rooted in the story of the early church and Reformation. At the same time, we are passionately committed to unity with all genuine believers.

A Historic Christian Church



First and foremost, we are a *christian* church, holding to the historic christian faith as it is expressed in the Bible and summarized in Church's creeds.

APOSTLES CREED

I believe in God, the Father Almighty, the Maker of heaven and earth, and in Jesus Christ, His only Son, our Lord: Who was conceived by the Holy Ghost, born of the virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, dead, and buried; He descended into the dead. The third day He arose again from the dead; He ascended into heaven, and sitteth on the right hand of God the Father Almighty; from thence he shall come to judge the quick and the dead. I believe in the Holy Ghost; the holy catholic church; the communion of saints; the forgiveness of sins; the resurrection of the body; and the life everlasting. Amen.

NICENE CREED

I believe in one God, the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth, and of all things visible and invisible.

BELIEFS—A HISTORIC CHRISTIAN CHURCH

And in one Lord Jesus Christ, the only-begotten Son of God, begotten of the Father before all worlds; God of God, Light of Light, very God of very God; begotten, not made, being of one substance with the Father, by whom all things were made. Who, for us and for our salvation, came down from heaven, and was incarnate by the Holy Spirit of the virgin Mary, and was made man; and was crucified also for us under Pontius Pilate; He suffered and was buried; and the third day He rose again, according to the Scriptures; and ascended into heaven, and sits at the right hand of the Father; and He shall come again, with glory, to judge the living and the dead; whose kingdom shall have no end.

And I believe in the Holy Ghost, the Lord and Giver of Life; who proceeds from the Father and the Son; who with the Father and the Son together is worshipped and glorified; who spoke by the prophets.

And I believe in one holy catholic and apostolic Church. I acknowledge one baptism for the remission of sins; and I look for the resurrection of the dead, and the life of the world to come. Amen.

CHALCEDONIAN CREED

We, then, following the holy Fathers, all with one consent, teach men to confess one and the same Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, the same perfect in Godhead and also perfect in manhood; truly God and truly man, of a reasonable [rational] soul and body; consubstantial [co-essential] with the Father according to the Godhead, and consubstantial with us according to the Manhood; in all things like unto us, without sin; begotten before all ages of the Father according to the Godhead, and in these latter days, for us and for our salvation, born of the Virgin Mary, the Mother of God, according to the Manhood; one and the same Christ, Son, Lord, only begotten, to be acknowledged in two natures, inconfusedly, unchangeably, indivisibly, inseparably; the distinction of natures being by no means taken away by the union, but rather the property of each nature being preserved, and concurring in one Person and one Subsistence, not parted or divided into two persons, but one and the same Son, and only begotten, God the Word, the Lord Jesus Christ; as the prophets from the beginning [have declared] concerning Him, and the Lord Jesus Christ Himself has taught us, and the Creed of the holy Fathers has handed down to us.

BELIEFS—A HISTORIC CHRISTIAN CHURCH

WE PUT OUR TRUST IN JESUS (ADAPTED FROM TIM KELLER)

First Membership Promise: Do you acknowledge yourself to be a sinner in the sight of God, justly deserving his displeasure, and without hope save in his sovereign mercy?

- *Acknowledging your rebellion:* We are all sinners. This means we have chosen (and reaffirm daily) to reject God. Our own joy and happiness is our highest priority. Rather than worship God – that for which we were built – we cling to idols, centering our lives on things which promise to give us meaning: success, relationships, influence, love, comfort, etc.
- *Acknowledging your spiritual bondage:* People were created to worship, to live for, God. If we don't live for God, we will live for something. But to live for anything besides God leads to breakdown, bondage, and a loss of meaning. As we worship anything other than God, we end up defining ourselves on the basis of our relationship to whatever we live for—success, race, morality, comfort. But to live for them is to be controlled by them because to lose them is to lose all.
- *Acknowledging God's displeasure:* God is perfect love and perfect justice. His active concern is for our joy and well-being. God loves and seeks the good even of people who are his enemies. But it is precisely because God is good and loving that he cannot tolerate evil. God loves the world so much that cannot ignore wrongdoing or suspend justice for those who violate his creation and rebel against his loving authority.

Second Membership Promise: 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?

- *Acknowledge Jesus as God:* Jesus Christ is God come to earth (see Creeds).
- *Acknowledge Jesus as Savior:* Jesus lived a perfect life, loving God and fulfilling all human obligation. He lived the life you should have lived. Then, instead of receiving His deserved reward (eternal life), Jesus gave his life as a sacrifice for sins, taking your deserved punishment and death.

BELIEFS—A HISTORIC CHRISTIAN CHURCH



- *Trust in His work alone:* Faith is transferring your trust from your own person and works to the person and work of Jesus. When we believe in him (1) our sins are cancelled by his death, and (2) his perfect and eternal life is transferred to us. God accepts and regards us as if we had done all Jesus has done. If you think, “God owes me something because of who I am and the things I have done,” you are still on the outside and Christianity will simply not make sense to you.

**The only doctrinal requirement for membership in our church is that you hold to the historic Christian faith and you put your trust in Jesus alone for salvation.*

A Protestant Church



Second, we are a protestant church, which is another way of saying we are an evangelical church in the historic sense of the word. This means that we confess the truths reclaimed and held dear during the protestant reformation.

Principles of the Protestant Reformation

SCRIPTURE ALONE

The Bible is the revelation of the very words of God (2 Tim 3:16; 2 Pet 1:16–21), given as our final standard for life. Traditions that conflict with Scripture have no authority (Matt 15:6). Furthermore, the Bible’s central teachings are clear enough for anyone to follow Christ (2 Tim 3:16–17).

GRACE ALONE

Salvation comes by divine grace. Grace means that salvation is given without regard to worth, and cannot be earned or deserved. I can be saved only by Jesus Christ’s atoning death on the cross and his resurrection to eternal life on my behalf. Even though we are guilty of having disobeyed God and are still inclined to all evil, nevertheless, God, without any merit of our own but only because of his unconditional love, saves us.

FAITH ALONE

To be justified is to be put into a right relationship with God, to be made acceptable in God’s sight. We believe this is possible by Christ’s death and resurrection alone for us. Hence our acceptability before God comes not through any worth intrinsic to us. We look outside of ourselves trusting in Jesus Christ, who provides our worth. This is faith: receiving and resting upon Jesus alone for salvation as he is offered to us in the gospel.

CHRIST ALONE

Christ is the only mediator between God and humanity, and everything necessary for salvation can be found only in him.

GLORY TO GOD ALONE

God created us, male and female, in his own image to know him, love him, live with him, and to glorify him. Since we were created by God and for God, our joy is found in living for God’s glory.

A Reformed Church



We are a church in the Reformed tradition.

REFORMED CHURCHES HAVE SEVERAL KEY COMMITMENTS:

- the importance of Union with Christ
- the priority of God’s grace in our lives
- the reality of God’s sovereign rule over the world
- the centrality of God’s covenant which unifies God’s story and people

The Importance of Union with Christ

Union with Christ is at the heart of the Christian message. John Murray calls it “the central truth of the whole doctrine of salvation.” Paul writes, “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places” (Eph 1:3). John Calvin said it is “in Christ” that we partake “not only of all [Christ’s] benefits but also of himself.” He goes on “as long as Christ remains outside of you, all that He has done and suffered for the human race remains of no value to you.”

UNION WITH CHRIST MEANS THAT YOU ARE “IN CHRIST”

So completely, so thoroughly, does Christ represent those who are in him that whatever is true of Jesus is now true of you in the eye’s of God. Union with Christ has an objective, external, even legal aspect to it (Rom 6:3–8; Gal 2:19; Eph 2:4–5; Col 2:11–3:3)

UNION WITH CHRIST MEANS CHRIST IS IN YOU

Christ is “in you” by his Spirit (Rom 8:9–11). Union with Christ has a subjective, internal, experiential side to it. It is relational, vital, dynamic. “I am the vine. You are the branches,” Jesus says. It’s a metaphor, but it’s not just a metaphor. It points to a reality greater than words (Jn 14:16, 20; 15:4).

UNION WITH CHRIST GIVES YOU A NEW IDENTITY

As Lewis Swedes wrote in his book *Union with Christ*, “To be a Christian is to have a completely new self-understanding. As a Christian, your self- understanding is found outside of you.” This is why the Apostle Paul writes: “I have been crucified with Christ; It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me” (Gal 2:20).

UNION WITH CHRIST GIVES YOU A NEW EXISTENCE AND POWER

In Christ we are dead to sin and alive to God (Rom 6:11). Outside of Christ, we can do nothing (Jn 15:5); we have no life “in us” (Jn 6:53). In Christ, we can do all things through Christ who gives us strength (Phil 4:13). In him we are made alive (Col 2:13).

UNION WITH CHRIST GIVES YOU A NEW COMMUNITY

When we are united to Christ, we are united to his body and become part of his body (1 Cor 6:15). And this union inevitably connects us with everyone else who is in union with Christ (1 Cor 10:17; Gal 3:28). Together we make up his body (1 Cor 12:27).

BELIEFS—A REFORMED CHURCH

RESOURCES:

J. Todd Billings Calvin, *Participation, and the Gift: The Activity of Believers in Union with Christ* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007). [Advanced]

Robert Letham, *Union with Christ: In Scripture, History, and Theology* (Phillipsburg: P & R, 2011) [intermediate]

Rankin Wilbourne, *Union with Christ: The Way to Know and Enjoy God* (Colorado Springs: David C. Cook, 2016). [Beginner]

Kyle Wells, “Union with Christ and the Christian Life”:
www.cpcsb.org/resources/classesstudies/ [lectures]

The Priority of God’s Grace

Given the reality that outside of a union with Christ we can do nothing, Reformed churches stress that salvation comes not through any amount of self-effort or self-enlightenment, but originates entirely from God. In creation and in redemption, God’s grace comes first and is prior to any good thing. This is true not only when it comes to our initiation into the Christian life, but also our continuation in the Christian life, and any transformation we experience.

WHY AM I A CHRISTIAN...

GIVEN THE TOTAL INABILITY OF SOMEONE OUTSIDE CHRIST?

- Our hearts are sick and deceitful (Jer 17:9).
- We are not just sick with sin – we are dead in it (Eph 2:1–2).
- No one naturally loves or obeys God (Rom 3:10–20; 8:7; 1 Cor 2:14).
- We are completely under Sin’s mastery (Rom 7:5–7; 11–20; Gen 6:5).

WHY AM I A CHRISTIAN...?

BECAUSE GOD CHOSE YOU.

- God chooses whom he will save (Eph 1:3–6; Rom 8:29; Jn 15:16).
- His decision is not based on anything in us (Rom 9:11–13; Deut 7:6–7).
- He doesn't foresee good people because there are no good people (Rom 3:10, 20).
- If election were based on us, no one would ever be elect (Deut 9:6; 1 Cor 1:27; Rom 9:23).
- Why did God choose you and me? It was for his own glory, pleasure, and because he loved us (Eph 1:1–14; Rom 9; Deut 7:8).

WHY AM I A CHRISTIAN...?

BECAUSE CHRIST DIED FOR YOU, PERSONALLY.

- Christ's atonement is personal. He died for his church (Eph 5:25–27). He "laid down his life for his sheep" (Jn 10:15, 26–29).
- He came to give his life for "all the Father had given him" (Jn 6:39; 10:29; 17:2, 24), and promised to raise all of them up on the last day (Jn 6:39–40).

WHY AM I A CHRISTIAN...?

BECAUSE WHEN YOU WERE SPIRITUALLY DEAD, GOD MADE YOU ALIVE.

- Our only hope is for Christ to draw us to himself (Jn 6:44, 63–64).
- Just as God created the world out of nothing by calling it into being, so he calls us into life out of death (2 Cor 4:5–6).
- The ability to repent and have faith is a gift (Jn 6:29; Rom 10:17; 2 Tim 2:25; Acts 11:18; Eph 2:8–9).
- We must be born again to see or enter the kingdom (Jn 3:3–5), and that new birth comes from God (Jn 1:12–13).

BELIEFS—A REFORMED CHURCH

- God’s grace is the only reason one person is a Christian and another is not. “For who makes you different than anyone else? What do you have that you did not receive” (1 Cor 4:7)?

WHY AM I A CHRISTIAN...?

BECAUSE GOD HAS PROMISED TO MAKE YOU LIKE HIS SON AND HE WILL NOT LET YOU GO.

- God begins our salvation and promises to complete it (Phil 1:6; Jn 10:27–30).
- While our growth is a matter of cooperation with God’s Spirit (Gal 5:16–6:10; Rom 6:11–14; 12:1–2; 13:12–14; Eph 6:10–18), God is the ultimate source of our growth (1 Thess 5:23–24; Eph 2:9; Phil 2:12–13).

RESOURCES:

Michael Horton, *For Calvinism* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2011)

Robert A. Peterson and Michael D. Williams, *Why I am not an Arminian* (Downers Grove: IVP, 2004)

The Reality of God’s Rule

Reformed believers stress that God is sovereign, meaning God is King and in absolute control over everything: over creation and over every sphere of life, even over human salvation. He is both transcendent (holy and wholly distinct from creation) and immanent (intimately involved in guiding and governing creation). Human history is thus given purpose and direction, both on a macro level (the scope of history) and a micro level (our individual stories).

GOD RULES OVER...

- the natural world (Job 38–40; Ps 65:9–11; 104:10–40; 135:5–7; 147:15–18; Acts 14:17), even seemingly “random” events (Pr 16:33) and tiny details (Matt 5:45; 6:26–30; 10:29–31).
- the events of human history (Ps 33:10–11; Dan 2:21; 4:34–35; Acts 17:26)
- individual lives (Jer 1:5; 1 Sam 2:6–7; Ps 37:23; 139:4–6), decisions (Pr 16:1, 9; 19:21; Gen 45:5–8; 50:20; Jer 10:23; Isa 44:28, 45:1; Jdg 7:22; Dan 1:9; Acts 2:23; 4:28), and dispositions (Ex 4:21; Rom 9:17).
- basically everything (Rom 11:36; Pr 16:4; Eph 1:11).



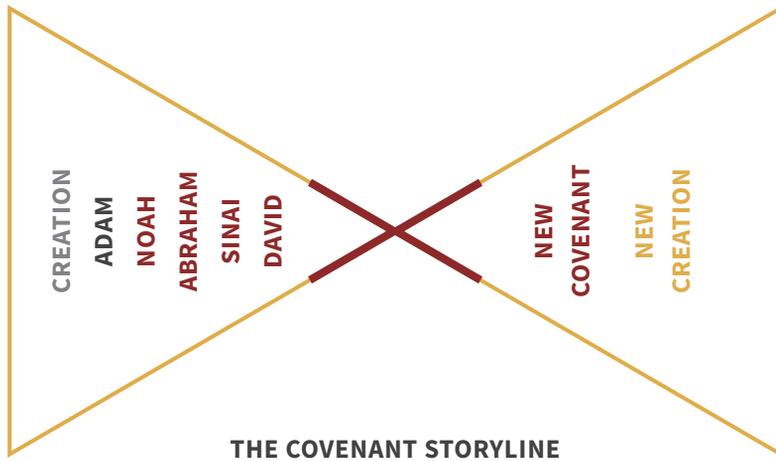
The Biblical writers find their comfort continually in the assurance that it is the righteous, holy, faithful, loving God in whose hands rest the determination of the sequence of events and all their issues. — B.B. Warfield



The Centrality of God’s Covenant

God’s covenant is a major theme which unifies his story and people. God made covenants with Adam (Gen 3:15; Rom 16:20); Noah (Gen 9:1–17); Abraham (Gen 12:1–3); Israel (Ex 19:1–3; Deut 4:13); and David (2 Sam 7:8–16). He also promised a new and eternal covenant (Jer 31:31–34; Ezek 36:26–27; Lk 22:20; 2 Cor 3:3–6). But these covenants are not separate and unrelated from one another. Rather they tell us the story of God’s one plan of salvation, culminating in Christ (Gal 3:7–9; Acts 3:25).

BELIEFS—A REFORMED CHURCH



UNITY IN THE BIBLICAL STORY:

CREATION » FALL » REDEMPTION » CONSUMMATION

How should we read the Bible and make sense of the various themes? The Bible presents the unfolding drama of redemption; the story of God’s voluntary condescension to relate to beings he created. Bible calls this relationship a covenant. As Michael Horton says: “We were not just created and then given a covenant; we were created as covenant creatures – partners not in deity, but in the drama that was to unfold in history.” That drama began in Eden and continues today, heading toward the end when God’s reign will be made manifest throughout the whole earth. Reformed churches stress the continuity of this story and the consistency of God’s promise and unconditioned grace to provide a Redeemer for his people.

UNITY IN GOD’S PLAN OF SALVATION

Old Testament and New Testament believers are saved in the same way—through the gracious act of God accomplished in the death and resurrection of the Messiah (Gal 3:7–9; Rom 4:1–25).

UNITY IN GOD’S PEOPLE

The Reformed tradition emphasizes that the “basic unit” of God’s dealing with humanity is not as individuals but as a people. The abundance of God’s creative love yields the creation of a community, not a collection of individuals. God also saves a people. There is a people-centric economy of salvation (rather than a person-centric picture). The “you” of God’s dealings is primarily an “us”, bound by covenant. In this way, the gospel is social. We see this unity in congregations (Deut 29:10–12; Joel 2:16; Josh 8:33–35; Rom 12:4–5); in nuclear families (Gen 7:1, 17:7, 20:17–18; Ex 20:5; Jer 32:18, 36:30; Hos 4:6; Lev 22:10–11; Num 18:8–13; 12–13; Deut 12:6–7; 14:26; Acts 16:15, 31–34, 18:8; 1 Cor 1:16; 1 Cor 7:14); and in God’s people in the Old and New Testaments (Rom 11:17–18; Gal 3:29; 6:16; Eph 2:11–16; 1 Cor 10:1–5).

RESOURCES:

Craig G. Bartholomew and Michael W. Goheen, *The Drama of Scripture: Finding Our Place in the Biblical Story* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2004).

Michael D. Williams, *Far as the Curse is Found: The Covenant Story of Redemption*. (Phillipsburg: P & R, 2005).

Albert M. Wolters, *Creation Regained: Biblical Basics for a Reformational Worldview* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1985).

The Sacraments

WHAT IS A SACRAMENT?

The word sacrament is based on the Latin word *sacramentum*, which has to do with an oath or a bond. Using Scripture as a guide, the reformers limited the number of sacraments to two: baptism and the Lord’s Supper. These are both symbols of God covenant, which were instituted by Christ

BELIEFS—A REFORMED CHURCH



(Matt 28:19– 20; 1 Cor 11:23) and directly represent Christ and his benefits to the entire community of believers. They are visible signs and seals of God’s promise, which God uses to relate his grace to us by the power of the Holy Spirit.

BAPTISM

What is Baptism? Baptism is a sign and seal of our union with Christ (Rom 6:3–7; Col 2:11–12; Gal 3:27), through which union we have cleansing and forgiveness of sins (Acts 22:16; 1 Cor 6:11; Eph 5:25–27), regeneration and new life (Titus 3:5), the indwelling of the Holy Spirit (1 Cor 12:13). It is the sign of initiation into the Christian life. Since one is baptized into the community of God (1 Cor 12:13), baptism is ordinarily performed in the context of a congregation of God’s people.

Who is to be Baptized? The Bible teaches us to baptize all those who profess faith in Jesus Christ, as well as their children (Acts 16:15; 33–34, 1 Cor 1:16; cf. Gen 17:12; Col 2:11–12; Acts 2:38–39; 1 Cor 7:14).

What happens in Baptism? The water of baptism does not itself impart salvation; it is possible to receive the sign of baptism without being saved (1 Cor 10:1–12; Rom 2:28–29). In his own time God does work alongside the sign, however, to impart all that the sign represents to those who believe (Rom 6:3–4; Gal 3:27; 1 Cor 12:13; 1 Pet 3:21; Acts 22:16).

THE LORD'S SUPPER

What is the Lord's Supper? The Lord's Supper, also known as Communion or the Eucharist, is a meal which is a sign and seal of the death of Christ on the cross and our union with him (1 Cor 11:23–32; Matt 26:26–29; Luke 22:20; 1 Cor 10:14–22; 1 Cor 11:23–32). As baptism is the sign and seal of our initiation into Christ and the Christian life, so the Lord's Supper is a means by which Christ continually nourishes, strengthens, and comforts us.

What happens during the Lord's Supper? Following Jesus' example and instruction, when the church celebrates the Lord's Supper we receive gifts of bread and wine; we give thanks to God; we break the bread and pour the wine; we share the food and drink with each other (Lk 22:19–20; Matt 26:26–29; 1 Cor 11:23–26). In these simple actions believers experience a profound mystery: Christ himself is present and his life is made ours (1 Cor 10:16). While it is possible to partake of the table without partaking of the grace it represents, by faith we believe that we are joined to Christ and through Christ to each other (1 Cor 10:17). Through the power of the Holy Spirit, Christ is present with us at the table, we are nourished by him, and there we receive all his benefits (see Jn 6:32–58). Thus we come rejoicing, giving joyful thanks for what God has done and is doing in our lives and in the world, and looking forward with anticipation to the coming reign of God.

RESOURCES

Leonard J. Vander Zee, *Christ, Baptism, and the Lord's Supper: Recovering the Sacraments for Evangelical Worship* (Downers Grove: IVP, 2004)

Keith A. Mathison, *Given For You: Reclaiming Calvin's Doctrine of the Lord's Supper* (Philadelphia: P & R, 2002)

John Murray, *Christian Baptism* (Philadelphia: The Committee on Christian Education, Orthodox Presbyterian Church, 1952)

A Presbyterian Church



Presbyterian refers to a particular form of Church government, which is based upon certain principles.

FIRST, PRESBYTERIANS ARE COMMITTED TO THE VITAL IMPORTANCE OF A VISIBLE, INSTITUTIONAL CHURCH.

When the New Testament refers to “the church”, it refers to a concrete gathering of Christians (1 Cor 11:18), organized in an institutional structure with its own recognized leaders (Phil 1:1). Thus one can have a standing (i.e., membership) in the Church (1 Cor 6:4) and be put out of the church (3 Jn 1:10). This institutional structure is so important that Presbyterians confess that outside of the visible church “there is no ordinary possibility of salvation” (Westminster Confession of Faith, 25.2). The church has authority from Christ (Matt 16:17–19; 18:15–20; Jn 20:22–23) and is the pillar and buttress of the truth (1 Tim 3:15). The Church is therefore central to God’s program to save the world. So Ephesians says that it is through the church that God’s manifold wisdom is being displayed (Eph 3:10) and that Jesus reigns for the sake of the church (Eph 1:22).

BELIEFS—A PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH



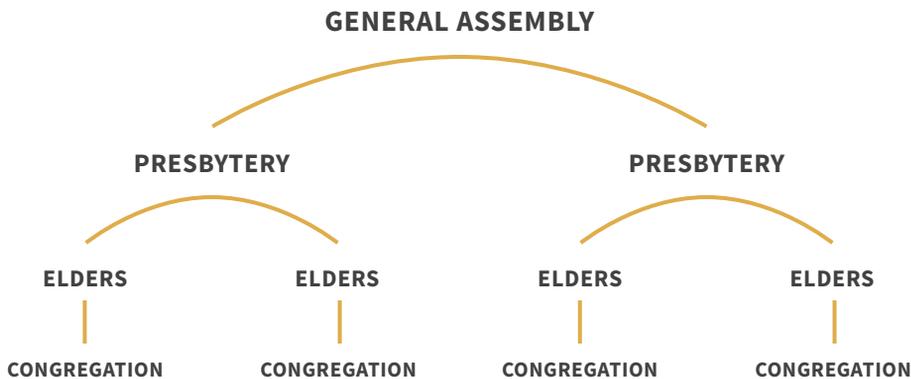
But as it is now our purpose to discourse of the visible Church, let us learn, for her single title of Mother, how useful, nay, how necessary the knowledge of her is, since there is no other means of entering into life unless she conceive us in the womb and give us birth, unless she nourish us at her breasts, and, in short, keep us under her charge and government, until, divested of mortal flesh, we become like the angels... Moreover, beyond the pale of the Church, no forgiveness of sins, no salvation, can be hoped for. —John Calvin

SECOND, PRESBYTERIANS ARE COMMITTED TO BEING FORMALLY AND VISIBLY CONNECTED WITH OTHER CHURCHES.

In Jesus' final prayer to his father, he asked that his disciples be united "so that the world may believe that you have sent me" (Jn 17:20-21). But for our unity to effect the world, it has to be visible to the world. It is for this reason that when an early church faced a problem, they gathered together with representative leaders from all the other churches to deal with it (Acts 15). We seek to do this by being part of a denomination.

Our denomination, the Presbyterian Church in America (PCA), is the second largest Presbyterian church body and the largest conservative Reformed denomination in the United States. The PCA's motto is "Faithful to the Scriptures, True to the Reformed Tradition, Obedient to the great commission of Jesus Christ." Our shared beliefs can be found in the Westminster Confession of Faith, the Westminster Shorter Catechism, and the Westminster Larger Catechism. PCA churches voluntarily submit to the Book of Church Order (BCO) so that we might maintain unity, peace, and order. It is vitally important that these secondary documents are considered to be subordinate to the Bible, which alone is the inspired Word of God.

BELIEFS—A PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH



Church government is exercised at three levels: the Session, which governs the local church; the Presbytery, a regional governing body; and the General Assembly, the highest court of the denomination. The PCA is committed to a principle of voluntary association and all PCA congregations own their own property.

FINALLY, PRESBYTERIANS ARE COMMITTED TO BEING GOVERNED BY ELDERS.

Unlike a congregationalist form of government, which believes that all members govern the church, we believe that Jesus governs his church through elders (Tit 1:5; 1 Tim 3:1–7; Acts 20:28; 1 Pet 5:1–5), who are called by God and whose calling is confirmed through the congregation. The elders who are installed to govern a particular church make up a Session. Representatives from church Sessions, along with Pastors, come together regionally to work as the Presbytery, and nationally to work as the General Assembly.

RESOURCES:

Sean Michael Lucas, *On Being Presbyterian: Our Beliefs, Practices, and Stories* (Phillipsburg: P & R, 2006)

Sean Michael Lucas, *For a Continuing Church: The Roots of the Presbyterian Church in America* (Phillipsburg: P & R, 2015)

Leadership and Organizational Structure at CPC

While all presbyterian churches are committed to being governed by elders, there is still great flexibility in how any individual church structures its leadership, roles, and responsibilities. Here is what you need to know about our structure.

ELDERS

The office of elder is a unique calling. Elders have been gifted, trained, tested, and qualified for distinct tasks. A pastor is an elder who is specifically called to communicate God's presence through preaching the gospel, administering the sacraments, and giving benedictions. Both Pastors and Ruling Elders together are called to the tasks of shepherding and governing the church. They set the course for the church and, as such, are accountable for its health and well-functioning (Heb 13:17, 1 Pet 5:1–4, 1 Tim 5:17). As shepherds, they are to care for and nurture the flock of God. As governors, they rule on matters of doctrine and on determining the validity of a person's profession of faith in light of Scripture. In other words, they admit members, dismiss members, and exercise church discipline. This is known as exercising the "keys to the kingdom" (see Matt 16:17–19; Jn 20:21).

**You can find more about the biblical importance of discipline and why we practice it in our Appendix on Church Discipline, pp. 61–63.*

DEACONS

The office of deacon is an office of service and ministry directed especially at the physical and material needs of the congregation. Deacons oversee ministries of mercy and develop grace and liberality in the membership. They are responsible for the care and maintenance of church property. And they also manage the church finances.

BELIEFS—A PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

Deacons often work behind the scenes, confidentially helping our members with their social, emotional, physical, financial, and spiritual needs during times of crisis. While much of their time is spent in prayer with and for members, building relationships with them, encouraging and counseling them with budget and basic life skills, they also offer practical help. This help has included financial assistance for rent, food, utilities, counseling and medical assistance, and other expenses, all made possible by your contributions to the Deacon Fund—a fund separate from our operating budget and going directly to assist the needs of members in our congregation.

LAYWOMEN AND LAYMEN

While our denomination believes that the offices of the church are open only to men (1 Tim 2:12; cf. 1 Tim 3:2–5; Eph 5:22–33), we believe that each Christian in our congregation has been given a manifestation of the Spirit, has been called and gifted by God, and is to work toward the community’s good and God’s glory (1 Cor 12:4–11). Each member has been ordained to the common office by virtue of her or his baptism. Therefore, we want to encourage women and men in our congregation to exercise their gifts in various capacities as servant-leaders: e.g. hospitality, ministries of mission and mercy, worship, children, community group leaders.

STAFF AND MINISTRY LEADERS

Our staff runs the day to day operations of the church, with the help of our various volunteer, ministry leaders. This group strategizes to implement our vision, values, and commitments at a programmatic level, under the ultimate supervision of the Session (group of elders actively serving on the governing board).

SECTION 2

**CORE VALUES AND
COMMITMENTS**



Core Values

Core Values are those driving assumptions that control how we approach ministry. Our goal is that every ministry at CPC is done in light of and in line with these values. They answer the question “why”—why we do what we do—and give shape to the “how”. We evaluate every ministry by asking how well they reflect these core values.

The Gospel Changes Everything

SUMMARY:

Christ's gospel, the good news about his life, death, resurrection, ascension and reigning Lordship, can transform any person, community, institution or place.

EXPLANATION:

In three simple points, the Gospel is:

- Jesus was the promised Messianic King and Son of God come to earth as a servant, in human form, to establish God's Reign. (Rom 1:3–4; Phil 2:4–13; Mark 1:1).
- By his death and resurrection, Jesus cancelled our sin and secured our standing before God by grace, not by our works (Rom 4:3–5:1; 8:1; 1 Cor 15:3–57; Mark 10:45).
- On the cross Jesus broke the power of sin and evil over us (Col 2:13–15; Rom 6:3–7:6; Mark 1:14–2:10) and at his return he will complete what he began by renewing the entire creation (Rom 8:18–21; Matt 19:28).

SOME IMPLICATIONS:

The Gospel Changes Individual Lives.

- By showing people God's uncompromising holiness, the gospel convicts people of sin, their rebellion against God, and utter separation from him (Isa 6:1–7; Rom 1:18; 3:19–20; Jn 16:8). At the same time, by showing people God's infinite love for sinners, the gospel gives people a desire to turn from sin and to find ultimate meaning and satisfaction in living for God (Jn 3:16; I Jn 4:7–9).
- Religion can make nice people; the gospel makes new people. Religion reforms you on the outside; the gospel transforms you from the inside out (Lk 7:36–50; 18:10–14).

CORE VALUES AND COMMITMENTS—CORE VALUES

TRUTH, GRACE AND THE EFFECTS OF HEARING THE GOSPEL			
	Legalist, Moralist, Religious <i>Truth without grace</i>	Liberal, Hedonist, Irreligious <i>Grace without truth</i>	Christian <i>Truth with grace</i>
God's Acceptance	We must obey the truth in order to be accepted by God	We are accepted by God regardless of what we do	We are unconditionally accepted by God
Sin	Repent of sins (actions)	There's no such thing as sin; so no need to repent	Both sins and best deeds are ways of avoiding Jesus as savior
Repentance	Sorry for sins, but sins are simply the failure to live up to standards by which they are saving themselves.	No repentance at all; at most sorry for the bad consequences of their sins	Repentance is turning from self-justification to reliance on Jesus' record for a relationship
The effect of hearing the gospel	Without a knowledge of Christ's completely satisfying life and death, the knowledge of sin crushes us or moves us to deny and repress it	Without a knowledge of our extreme sin, the payment of the gospel seems trivial and does not electrify or transform us	Sin's overwhelming load has been taken by the One who could bear it; we are freed to respond in love. This truth transforms the Christian's life

Adapted from Tim Keller

CORE VALUES AND COMMITMENTS—CORE VALUES

- The gospel is not just for entering the Christian faith, but is necessary to continue the Christian faith (Gal 3:1–3; Col 1:6).
- Being “in Christ” gives individuals a new past, a new future, a new Father, and a new family; thus, a whole new identity (Rom 6:1–11).
- Having “Christ in us” by the Spirit, individuals possess a new wisdom, love, power, motivation, and mindset (Rom 8:2–15).
- The Gospel gives us an entirely new approach to God. We now see that both our sins and our best deeds have all really been ways of rejecting Jesus (Lk 15:11–32).

The Gospel Renews Communities.

- Jesus’ work establishes a new community by reconciling people from all different backgrounds (Gal 3:28; Eph 2:14–17).
- The gospel is good news about “the Kingdom of God”, his reign over every aspect of life (Matt 4:23; 9:35; Rom 1:1–4).

The Gospel Transforms Creation and Culture.

- If sin is a misdirection that affects everything (Gal 3:22), and if grace is God’s answer to that problem (1 Jn 3:8), then no aspect of life should be excluded from Christ’s redemption (Col 1:20; Eph 1:10; Rom 8:19–21).

God is on a Mission

SUMMARY:

The whole “Bible renders to us the story of God’s mission” and the essence of God’s mission is “to extend his reign through the gospel of Jesus Christ.”

—Christopher Wright

CORE VALUES AND COMMITMENTS—CORE VALUES

EXPLANATION:

- All mission starts with the mission of the triune God (Jn 20:21; Lk 24:49; Rom 8:3; Gal 4:4, 6). The Father sends the Son, who in turn sends the Spirit.
- The essence of God’s mission is to extend his loving, just, and peaceful reign through the gospel of Jesus Christ (Hab 2:14).
- God has called the church to participate in his mission by bearing witness to what God has done and is doing to save the world (Jn 20:21; Acts 1:8). Thus it not so much that God has a mission for his church, but that God has a church for his mission (Gen 12:1–3; Ex 19:6; 1 Pet 2:9–12; Matt 6:10). Mission was not made for the church; the church was made for God’s mission.
- God’s mission progresses “through God’s people in their engagement with God’s world for the sake of the whole of God’s creation” (Christopher Wright; Rom 16:20).
- The primary resources which God gives the Church for mission are his Spirit and Word (Acts 1:8; 4:31; 6:7; 12:24; 19:20).

SOME IMPLICATIONS:

- Since it is the Bible that renders to us the mission of God, and the Bible which equips us for our mission, our mission is rooted unalterably in God’s authoritative Word. We preach it, teach it, root our identity in it, and seek to live it out in our time (Act 2:42; 1 Tim 4:13; Heb 4:12).
- Since God has been purposing and accomplishing his mission from eternity and will for eternity, we have confidence that God is always at work (Jn 5:17; Matt 16:18; Acts 28:31), and will not be thwarted in advancing his Kingdom.
- Since the Church exists for God’s mission, it must constantly seek to reevaluate itself as to whether or not its emphasis, organization, and activity effectively position it to partner with God in mission.

CORE VALUES AND COMMITMENTS—CORE VALUES

- Since Jesus provides the model for missionary encounter, in the same manner as our savior the church must constantly be marked by crucifixion (2 Cor 1:5, 4:10–12; Phil 2:5–12; Col 1:24; Gal 6:17) and continually seek ways to contextualize the gospel without compromising its truth (Jn 20:21).

Creation is Good

SUMMARY:

Everything God created, as God's creation, remains very good (1 Tim 4:4–5).

EXPLANATION:

God created a very good world (Gen 1:9, 32). And even though it is now under the curse, as God's creation the world remains good (Ps 19:1–6; 24:1–2; Ps 139:14), and we are to care for, develop, and enjoy it (Gen 1:28; 2:15).

SOME IMPLICATIONS:

- We unapologetically enjoy God's creation (Gen 1:29–30; Ps 104:14–15; Ecc 9:7–10), believing that apart from sin all things are to be embraced, studied, marveled at, meditated upon, and enjoyed for God's glory and our pleasure (Jm 1:17). Whether we are raising children, playing music, enjoying food, appreciating art, laughing at a joke, having sex within marriage, whatever it may be, we seek God's glory (1 Cor 10:31).
- Quality and aesthetics matter in all things. Whether it's the music we hear and sing in our meetings, our web-design, the materials on which we print our bulletins, even down to the food we offer for hospitality, excellence and creativity are our goals. We desire to offer God the best of our creativity, energy, and skill that we might reflect his character.

Core Commitments

Commitments are those things which we emphasize in ministry, believing that as we devote ourselves to these things, we will fulfill our purpose of bringing glory to God by being a sign of and witness to what God has accomplished, is accomplishing, and will accomplish through Jesus Christ and by the Spirit.

CORE VALUES AND COMMITMENTS—CORE COMMITMENTS



Worship

Throughout the Bible, the distinguishing mark of God's people is that they know the living God to be present with them (Deut 4:6–7; 2 Cor 3:7–17). And while God is always with his people, it is in worship that this truth is most acutely experienced and revealed (Lev 9:5–6; Jn 2:21–24; 1 Cor 14:24; Heb 12:22–29). Therefore, our services of worship hold primary place for what we do as a church. This meeting is the hub around which all our other ministries and gatherings revolve, the source in and out of which they flow. Our purpose is to help people, believers and unbelievers (1Cor 14:24–25), meet God and commune with him through Christ and by the Spirit.

OUR WORSHIP AIMS TO BE...

Centered on God (Jn 4:24; Ex 34:14)

Directed by Scripture (Deut 12:32; Lev 10:1–3; 2 Sam 6)

Shaped by the Gospel (Lev 9; Isa 6:1–8)

Connected to the Church Universal (Heb 12:22)

Comprehensible to the Worshiper (1 Cor 14:22–25)

Corporate (Rom 12:1–3)

Community

One of the most compelling promises God gives is: “I will be their God, and they will be my people” (Lev 26:12; Jer 31:33; Ezek 37:27; Zech 2:11). A central theme which runs throughout the Bible is that God is creating a people for himself. In fact...

GOD IS ETERNALLY IN COMMUNITY

From the first pages of the Bible we see hints that God himself exists eternally in community. And God said, “Let us make man in our image” (Gen 1:26). Those hints are expanded and enlarged throughout Scripture until the New Testament’s full revelation of God as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit (Matt 28:28).

GOD CREATES US FOR COMMUNITY

The God who exists eternally in loving community created a community in his image (Gen 1:27). God’s image was both singular and plural. And when God speaks the world into being, he sings: “It was good.” And yet in chapter 2, we hear this sharp note of dissonance: “And it is not good that the man should be alone” (v18). At the very least this calls us to the covenant of marriage, but as we see throughout the rest of the story, it calls us to much more.

GOD RELATES WITH US IN COMMUNITY

From the first chapters of the Bible, every time God chooses a person, calls a person, covenants with a person, it is always for the sake of a larger community (Gen 6; 12; 17; see also Rom 5:12–21).

GOD RESCUES US IN COMMUNITY

The biblical paradigm for rescue comes from the story of the Exodus. There God rescued an entire people and said to them: “You (plural) shall be my treasured possession among all peoples, for all the earth is mine; and you shall be to me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation” (Ex 19:5). God doesn’t rescue a bunch of

CORE VALUES AND COMMITMENTS—CORE COMMITMENTS

individuals with whom he relates to separately; God rescues a community who live with each other and with God (Eph 5:23–30).

GOD TEACHES US IN COMMUNITY

The original declaration of the Ten Commandments was not Moses reading from the tablets. In Exodus 20 we see that God spoke directly to the people of Israel from Mount Sinai: “You (plural) have seen for yourselves that I have talked to you from heaven” (Ex 20:22). In Deuteronomy 6, we see the Law was to be passed on by parents to their children. The great majority of the New Testament writings were not addressed to individuals, but to entire communities. They were meant to be read as communities, interpreted in communities, and embodied by communities. As God shapes his people, as he teaches them, he does it primarily as a community.

GOD CALLS US TO WORSHIP HIM AS A COMMUNITY

All of the celebrations, all of the sacrifices, in the Old Testament were done in the presence of community, whether the community as a whole, or a smaller subsection of it. New Testament worship, though bloodless, depicts a similar sacrifice in worship: “Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God’s mercy to offer your bodies (plural) as a living sacrifice (singular), holy and acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service (liturgy)” (Rom 12:1). The corporate body of the church is what is depicted as the living sacrifice, not the lives of individual Christians. We offer ourselves to God as a community.

GOD DISCIPLINES US IN COMMUNITY

From the Exodus itself right through the fall of the kingdoms of Israel and Judah, we see that the sin of people within a community affects the community at large. More than that, God’s discipline of his people’s sin is often community-wide. At first we don’t see this as good news. We often conflate discipline and judgment. But God’s discipline is always restorative. “Come let us return to the Lord; for he has torn us, that he may heal us; he has struck us down, and He will bind us up” (Hos 6:1).

CORE VALUES AND COMMITMENTS—CORE COMMITMENTS

GOD COMES TO US IN COMMUNITY

John introduces Jesus as the eternal Word, the Word who comes and dwells with us (Jn 1:14). Us. As in plural. Jesus was continually surrounded by people. More importantly, in his disciples, he formed a new community around himself (Mk 3:13–18). When he left, he left behind no text, no testimony except the community he shaped.

GOD INDWELLS US AS A COMMUNITY

“Do you not know,” Paul writes, “that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, whom you have from God?” (1 Cor 6:19) The “you” in this passage, as well as in most of the New Testament, is plural. In the Old Testament the temple was the unique dwelling place of God. Though “heaven and the highest heaven cannot contain [God]” (1 Kings 8:22), God’s presence was with His people in a special way in the temple. Paul makes the outrageous claim that God’s people, corporately, are now the unique place of God’s presence on the earth.

GOD GROWS US IN COMMUNITY

The New Testament is filled with commands to “one another”: love (Jn 13:34–35); serve one another (Gal 5:13); welcome one another (Rom 15:7); strengthen one another (Rom 14:19); encourage one another (Heb 3:13; 10:24–25); forgive one another (Eph 4:32; Col 3:13); submit to one another (Eph 5:21; 1 Pet 5:5); confess sins to one another (Jm 5:16); sing to one another (Eph 5:19); carry one another’s burdens (Gal 6:2). But to “one-another”, you need another. Community is the setting in which the effects of our rescue are worked out in our everyday lives.

GOD WILL LIVE WITH US FOREVER IN COMMUNITY

“Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man. He will dwell with them, and they will be his people, and God himself will be with them as their God. He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore” (Rev 21:3–4). When everything is restored, when everything is made perfect, when everything is set right, we will live together as a community with God. He will dwell with us, and we will be his people.

Mission

God desires and purposes to be known throughout his entire creation (Is 11:9; Hab 2:14). He has not only saved us from something (our sin), he has saved us for something: to participate in his mission to restore the creation, which happens when people know the world's rightful and gracious Lord. God's people have been blessed to be a blessing (Gen 12:2–3), called to call, elected for the world's sake (Ex 19:4–6; 1 Pet 2:9–11). CPC exists here in Santa Barbara as a witness to God's saving acts so that he might be known and worshipped as the world's Creator, Sustainer, and Redeemer. This makes us:

KINGDOM-MINDED:

As a church, we are both a model and agent of God's Kingdom and a witness to its unique priorities— loving and serving one another, ministering to the poor, upholding justice, being generous with our resources, being a light in the darkness, serving God with our heart, soul, mind and strength.

PRAYER-ORIENTED:

- Knowing that all our efforts in mission are vain unless they are rooted in and aligned with the mission of God, we are committed to be a community that prays regularly—corporately and individually.
- As we come to know the loving heart of our heavenly Father, we pray in anticipation that God will answer our prayers. While he does not always answer them in the way we expect, we trust that he is answering them in the ways that we need.

OUTWARD-LOOKING:

- Jesus makes us a people for others such that non-Christians are welcomed and respected, with all their questions, objections, struggles, and doubts.

CORE VALUES AND COMMITMENTS—CORE COMMITMENTS

- Non-Christians are not only welcome, but expected to be in our midst. We therefore strive for comprehensibility at all times, especially in worship services.
- We realize that unbelievers will be “looking on and listening in” wherever we are as a body or as individuals. Barring a few special places, there are no “in house” moments.
- The gospel makes us a community where Christians say, “This is the place to bring my non-Christian friends. This is what they need to hear and how they need to hear it. I can be sure that they will be intelligently and respectfully engaged with the truth of the gospel.”
- We embrace the call to love our neighbors in every-day life.

CITY-POSITIVE:

We desire to be a faithfully present witness to the gospel of Jesus Christ in Santa Barbara and are therefore committed to the flourishing of every aspect of the historical district—personal, familial, and civic (Jer 29:7). In the end we are not so much looking for Santa Barbara to have a better church, but for CPC to cultivate a better Santa Barbara.

Renewal

God’s goal is to restore, to renew, to regenerate, his beautiful yet broken creation back to his original intention. In the Bible, that intention is called “shalom”. Shalom, as C. Plantinga defines it, is “the webbing together of God, humans, and all creation in justice, fulfillment, and delight. It means far more than mere peace of mind or a cease-fire between enemies. In the Bible, shalom means universal flourishing, wholeness, and delight. Shalom is the way things ought to be.” In our worship-gatherings, community interactions, and missional engagement, we set our sights on the experience of God’s shalom, the renewal that only his Spirit can bring through the gospel.

SECTION 3

PRACTICES

*Ways to Move Deeper
into our Communal Life*



Growing

“

“I am in the pain of childbirth until Christ is formed in you...”

“Those whom God foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his son...”

“All of us, with unveiled faces, seeing the glory of the Lord as though reflected in a mirror, are being transformed into the same image...”

Christian spiritual formation is the engagement of the whole person into the continuing process of being progressively formed, conformed, and transformed into the image of Jesus Christ (Gal 4:19, Rom 8:29, 2 Cor 3:18). Everyone receives spiritual formation as everyone is in the process of becoming something. The question is: What is a person becoming and is that process leading to good or ill? As a church, we take a conscious, intentional hand in a disciple’s developmental process as they are impacted by the gospel under the direction of the Holy Spirit.

BECAUSE CHRISTIAN MATURITY IS HOLISTIC MATURITY, IT WILL INVOLVE:

The Mind: we want to engage people, at whatever point in their pilgrimage, with the truth of Scripture, so that they are steadily increasing in their knowledge of, confidence in, and practice of the Christian faith.

The Heart: as important as the mind is, the core of a person is her heart and we will not be transformed “into his likeness” by mere information alone. We must also cultivate personal and corporate growth inwardly after the character of Christ. Our willing and desiring needs renewal. We must therefore seek to form whole persons after the image of Christ, and this will inevitably involve...

The Hands: developing the whole person after the image of Christ will involve apprenticeship, especially in certain practical disciplines (prayer, fasting, meditation, memorization, solitude, silence, fellowship, etc). Only in this way will people be equipped for the quality of Christian service required to address the world’s needs.

Grow through the Gospel

All growth ultimately happens through the gospel of grace. It is the gospel which is the power of God for salvation for everyone who believes (Rom 1:16). It is the grace of God which trains us to live godly lives (Titus 2:11–12). No matter what form of activity we are giving ourselves over to, it is the substance of the gospel working in and through those forms that changes us.

Grow through Worship

The anchor and center of discipleship at CPC is our Sunday worship gatherings. Since the object (or objects) of people’s worship define them psychologically, sociologically, and spiritually, the things we worship shape the way we think, feel, behave, and relate. Worship is the most formative thing any individual does. Through our Sunday services, we are reoriented toward God and nourished through the liturgy of Word and Sacrament. There, the gospel challenges the religious, the irreligious, the mature Christian, and the new Christian all at the same time. There we are renewed in covenant with God.

Grow through Community Groups

Community Groups are mid-sized gatherings meeting in individual apartments and homes during the week. Although the Bible does not command us to organize a Community-Group ministry, it does assume significant community life within the church. Corporate gatherings (and individual times) of worship, however, are not enough for one to fully understand, live out, or grow in the Christian faith. Christianity can only be experienced in and through community.

The purpose of individual groups is to develop a primary Christian community where Jesus Christ is experienced in his presence and power, and where lives are transformed by the gospel through ministering to one another. In Community Groups, the gifts of all believers are exercised on behalf of others for Christ's kingdom. We believe that it is impossible for any pastoral staff to give people all the care they need, but care is primarily done through believers ministering the gospel to other believers. Thus Community Groups are the primary place for pastoral care at CPC and we hope that a great majority of CPC members and attendees will be involved in them.

A VISION FOR COMMUNITY GROUPS: WHAT DO WE HOPE COMMUNITY GROUPS WILL LOOK LIKE?

When we look at Jesus' life and ministry, we see that there were three dimensions to it.

- **Up:** First, he had a deep connection with his Father (Lk 6:12) and a sensitivity to the Spirit (Lk 4:1).
- **In:** Second, Jesus shows constant investment and attentiveness to developing deep and meaningful relationships with his disciples (Lk 6:13).
- **Out:** Third, Jesus continually faced outward, entering the brokenness of our world to bring transformation. He attracted the crowds (6:17–19), and he also sent his disciples into the world (Lk 9:1–6; 10:1–2).



Any healthy ministry should have these three dimensions as well. Community Groups should be upward focused, fostering a deep sense of connection with God through prayer and application of his word. They should be inward focused, showing attention and care to one another's needs. They should be outward focused, attracting those who do not know God and moving out into the city to bring the transforming power of the gospel to bear on it.

THE COMPONENTS OF A COMMUNITY GROUP: WHAT HAPPENS AT A COMMUNITY GROUP?

While each Community Group varies somewhat according to the needs and makeup of the group, they should all contain the following elements:

- **Worship:** Praising God for who he is and what he has done.
- **Life Application:** Applying how God meets us in worship through his Word to everyday life.
- **Community:** Building supportive, mutually accountable relationships.
- **Prayer:** Listening to and sharing intimately with God. Interceding for others as we participate in God's work in the world.

PRACTICES—GROWING

- **Mission:** Impacting our society through Serve Santa Barbara initiatives and sharing the gospel with others.

A Community Group is much more than any one of these five elements. Each element will not necessarily occur every week and it is inevitable that each group will do some elements better than others. But having each element prevents community groups from becoming a mere social gathering or a pure Bible study.

Grow through Mission and Service

Jesus called us to make disciples, not simply converts (Matt 28:19). A disciple is an apprentice of Jesus who is continually and actively engaged in learning how to live by the grace of God under his rule and authority. That word apprentice is important. An apprentice doesn't primarily learn in a classroom, but through hands-on training. Likewise, the Christian life is not primarily learned in a classroom, but through following Jesus into this broken world in mission and service. In order to know Christianity, one must live Christianity. Thus, as a church, we seek to provide opportunities for service so that people can grow up in Christ.

Our life in community creates alignment of purpose through which we serve both the church and the world. As more of our deep spiritual, emotional, psychological, and social needs are met by the gospel as it is lived out in community, God's grace begins to overflow from our hearts into actions of service, mercy, and a desire to communicate the gospel to those who do not yet know God. We begin to look for ways to make and renew culture and its institutions so that they honor God's design. Recognizing that many of these things cannot be accomplished individually, we also appreciate the need to move out in mission with others, as a community.

Serving

Because we are a church with a strong desire to impact Santa Barbara, we desire each individual to use their own unique gifts in service (1 Cor 12:4–11; 1 Pet. 4:10). Gifts are part of God’s bigger plan to demonstrate his redemption of the world through the church. Therefore, we encourage men and women in our congregation to exercise their gifts in various ways, to become actively involved in our church and in the needs of our city and world. Here are some of the more common ways people serve:

Vocation Opportunities

First and foremost, we want to emphasize serving God in the various places he has called you to live and work. Close to 60 percent of our waking hours are spent at work. And yet even though most of us spend most of our time at work, work is seldom addressed in the church. We don’t want that to be the case. Wendell Berry once said, “The significance and ultimately the quality of the work we do is determined by our understanding of the story in which we are taking part.” At CPC, we believe that we are part of a great redemptive story. And we encourage every member of our community to see their work—whether it is paid or unpaid, full-time or part-time, the butcher, the baker, the candlestick-maker—we want them to see it all as a part of serving God by contributing to his kingdom.



Sunday Service Opportunities

Greeting: Distribute worship guides, welcome brochures, provide general church information, and a warm welcome to everyone coming to CPC. This ministry is ideal for those who enjoy meeting new people and making visitors feel at home.

Usher: Serve the congregation by finding available seating. This role is for the person with a ready smile and a graciously assertive personality.

Children's Ministry: Teach or care for the children in the Nursery and/or Children's Worship. This is a good fit for people with teaching and/or nurturing gifts. (Must have been a regular attender for 6 months and complete an application).

Service Participants: Includes singing, playing an instrument, reading Scripture, and praying. These people must commit to preparing responsibility and be able to maintain an engaging presence as they use their gifts to facilitate the worship of God. (Must be approved and have training to join).

Audio Visual: There are three areas of need requiring different skills. 1) 'Pro-Presenter' (slides) during worship - this is ideal for the person who is focused and not easily distracted. 2) Lighting - this is for a person with an artistic eye. 3) Video recording - for someone willing to learn how to use a video camera, recording, and uploading tools.

Pre Service Prayer: Pray for the worship service and congregation on Sunday mornings. This person sees that God ministers to us in our service of worship and desires for him to 'show up'.

Hospitality: Prepare the communion elements with great care and attention. Help set up/clean up, and serve weekly refreshments. This is for the person who finds delight in serving others as they develop relationships around food.

Security: Keep a watchful and caring eye on the congregation, the children, and the environment before, during, and after worship. This is for the sensing, attentive person, able to step in if needed in a quiet, gracious, yet firm manner. (Must have been a regular attender for 6 months and complete an application)



Other Service Opportunities

Community Group Leader: Enter a discernment and training process to determine whether or not leading a Community Group is right for you.

Community Group Host: Host a weekly Community Group in your home. This person enjoys people, is welcoming, warm, and willing to share the material resources God has given them.

Hospitality and Social Events: build community by overseeing a large church event, a small thank you meal, or being willing to cook for an event. Overseeing events requires administrative skill, and the ability to communicate with, motivate, and appreciate those helping. Cooking is an ideal role for those who appreciate how to love people through an appreciation of God's creation.

AS YOU TRY TO DISCERN THESE THINGS, WE ENCOURAGE YOU TO BE IN CONSULTATION WITH OUR ELDERS, STAFF, AND YOUR COMMUNITY GROUP.

Serve Santa Barbara: participate in God's mission to the poor, immigrant, fatherless. We regularly partner with other organizations to be the hands and feet of Jesus.

Global Outreach Team: facilitate our relationship with missionaries and ministries around the world, and educate our congregation about God's world mission. People on this team are passionate about God's work in all the world and enjoy building relationships with missionaries serving outside of the United States.

Youth: teach and lead middle and high school students. (Must have been a regular attender for 6 months and complete an application). People on this team understand the value of these formative years and want to see God solidify youth in a life-long commitment to following Jesus.

PRACTICES—SERVING

Congregational Care: assist the Deacons in caring for the practical needs of our congregation, such as providing meals during illness, transportation, or visiting those in need. This is ideal for the person with a flexible schedule, is empathetic, and enjoys behind the scenes service.

Jail Ministry: minister to those in the Santa Barbara County Jail. (Must complete an application and be approved by the jail chaplain). This person has a passion for sharing the good news of Jesus Christ to those in crisis, and who is convinced that this good news can change anyone.

Arts Team: organize and set up CPC's participation in 1st Thursdays and other art-related events. Ideal for the person who is energetic, and can follow set-up instructions as well as those with an art and/or art history background.

Where should I serve?

Every Christian has talents, spiritual gifts, personality traits, background experiences, and passions that contribute uniquely to the life of our church. We encourage you to explore your spiritual gifts and the special works that God has designed for you.

The best fit is something that blends your affinity (desire), ability (gifts), and opportunity (need).



Giving

Why talk about Money?

Money is given a significant amount of attention in the Bible. In fact, Jesus spent nearly one-quarter of his teaching on the power that money has over our lives. Jesus taught that money blinds and enslaves us. It is a competing god, pulling us from love of the one true God (Matt 6:24). And it flows easily to whatever we get meaning from in life (Lk 12:34).

Jesus taught that in order to be free from money, we should 1) live simply and avoid excess (Lk 12:33), 2) build our hope and trust in God's love for us (Matt 6:26), and 3) recognize that God still owns all our wealth and possessions (1 Chr 29:14). Anything we have we are given to steward. A wise steward uses an owner's money for what pleases the owner. We use God's wealth in ways that build his kingdom and share our wealth with others. Just as Christ poured himself out for our sakes, so we care for one another out of thankfulness (2 Cor 8:9). Our use of money is a model of grace and love; we share with all in need, especially other Christians (Gal 6:10).

Biblical Principles of Generosity: How should we think about Giving?

GIVING MUST BE IN SIGNIFICANT PROPORTIONS

- The guideline of the tithe: In the Old Testament, believers were required to give a tenth of their income to the support of the ministry and the needs of the poor. The New Testament only once specifically mentions the tithe (Lk 11:42), explaining that since we are far more blessed and indebted to God than Old Testament believers, we are to be more generous, not less. Thus the tithe (10%) annual gift of income is a kind of minimum guideline for giving.
- The guideline of sacrifice: Paul says about the Macedonians, “they gave as much as they were able and even beyond their ability” (2 Cor 8:3). That means they gave until it meant a sacrifice in their lifestyle.
- The guideline of responsibility: Christians are also to give “according to their ability” (Acts 11:29). There are seasons to economic life. And there are economic responsibilities to our families and to our debts. In many cases, good planning over time will be necessary to move our giving into Biblical proportions without renegeing on legal and personal financial obligations.

GIVING MUST BE A JOYFUL RESPONSE TO GOD’S GRACE

Paul asked for money this way: “I am not commanding you, but I want to test the sincerity of your love. For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, he became poor, so that through his poverty you might become rich” (2 Cor 8:8–9). Paul says that the difference between moralists (those who think God accepts them for their good works) and Christians (those who know they are sinners saved only by grace) is that a Christian wants to give as generously as he or she has received.

GIVING MUST BE SYSTEMATIC AND THOUGHTFUL

Paul directed the Corinthians to set aside a portion of their wealth each week until he could come and take it to famine victims in Jerusalem (1 Cor 8:10–11). Usually, spontaneous and unplanned giving, while perhaps joyful (principle 2), is not proportionate (principle 1). The actual tally of completely spontaneous giving usually shows little sacrifice involved. We must plan. We must allow the church to help with reminders and directions. A way to plan:

- Evaluate your own heart with regard to money. What do you most enjoy spending money on? What percentage of your income is going to God’s causes (church, Christian ministries) and to people in need (outside your family)? How close is it to 10% of your income? Read Matt 6:19–34; 1 Tim 6:6–10; 2 Cor 8:1–15; 9:6–15. Do you need to adjust your giving in light of eternal values?
- Evaluate the use of your non-liquid resources: home, time, abilities, etc. Do you have a regular plan of giving?
- Prayerfully distribute the money among Christian causes as you see fit. Remember – the more you trust God with your material treasure, the more he will entrust you with his spiritual treasure (Lk 16:9–12; 2 Cor 9:10–12). A rule of thumb for tithing: \$20 per week for each \$10,000 in annual income. Follow these three steps (families, do these together): 1) Decide what percentage of your income you will give to the Lord’s work this year. 2) Ask two questions: Is this a sacrificial figure? Also, is it a responsible figure? 3) Set aside the Lord’s portion first whenever the money is received. It is his, not yours.

Joining

What does membership in a church community mean?

The New Testament is saturated with examples of people committing to and identifying with particular local churches (1 Cor 14:23, 6:4; Acts 5:13; Phil 1:1; Rom 16:1; 16:3–4; Rev 3:4). Today, we call this membership. To be a member of a church is to make a public promise to live according to God’s Word and to support the work of that local church. The church community also promises to support and care for its members. In the Bible this is called a covenant: an agreement in which both parties make commitments to one another.

Why Church membership? The Biblical rationale.

You may wonder why the Bible would have us commit to a local church in a formal way. There are various reasons for this. Here we will just name a few.

First, membership shows that you are not ashamed to identify with Christ or His people (Mark 8:38). To become a member is to make our unity in Christ visible to the world (Jn 17:20–21).

Second, membership in a local church makes the instructions for pastoral oversight and accountability possible. Pastors/overseers/shepherds were to care for “all the flock” who were given to them (Acts 20:28, cf. 1 Tim 3, Phil 1:1,

PRACTICES—JOINING



Titus 1). And every believer is called to “obey your leaders and submit to them, for they are keeping watch over your souls” (Heb 13:17). But how do leaders know which Christians they are responsible to care for? And how do individual believers know which body of leaders they are to submit to? Well, the answer is that specific leaders were associated with specific Churches and Christians (Phil 1:1; Rom 16:1). And the individuals who met in those churches were identifiable (Rom 16:3–4; 1 Cor 16:19). It is for this reason that the early church kept lists of people; for example, widows were enrolled (1 Tim 5:9); Matthias...was numbered with the eleven apostles (Acts 1:26). Since leaders were accountable for the souls of the flock under their care (Heb 13:17), they must have had some listing of which believers they were committed to care for.

This brings us to a third reason: The instructions for church discipline would be impossible without membership. Matthew 18:15–17, 1 Corinthians 5, and 3 John 1:10 all talk about putting a person out of the church (“remove” in NASB, “expel” in NIV) and treating him like an unbeliever (see appendix on church discipline). Since unbelievers were welcome at worship, removal must have indicated a distinct formal association. To be put out of the church, one has to have a standing in the Church (1 Cor 6:4), or put differently, to be a church member.

PRACTICES—JOINING

Finally, membership makes congregational elections possible. Acts 6:2 even says the “full number” of believers came together in a business meeting to discuss how to care better for widows. Officers are then elected by the members of the congregation. In order to know who is authorized to vote on a church matter, one must know which Christians have committed themselves to that particular community.

How do I become a member?

STEP 1: TAKE THE CONNECT CLASS

Your first step is to attend CPC Connect. Attendance at the seminar does not obligate you in any way towards membership – you may simply find out more about our vision, goals and position on certain Christian doctrines.

STEP 2: COMPLETE AND SUBMIT THE MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION FORM

If you have completed the seminar and are interested in joining the church, you will be asked to fill out a Membership Application Form. The form will be sent to you electronically. Hard copies are made available upon request.

STEP 3: TELL YOUR STORY OF FAITH TO A COUPLE OF ELDERS

Once you submit your form, our administrator will contact you about scheduling a time with a couple of our elders. Generally, this meeting takes place before or after our worship service, but it can be scheduled at other times as well.

This is your opportunity to interact with church leaders and to make sure you are comfortable with your decision to join CPC. It gives our leaders a chance to get to know you, to hear your experience in coming to know God in Christ, and what is happening in your life now. It also gives you an opportunity to ask any questions you might have—about the church, its position on certain issues, or how it operates.

PRACTICES—JOINING

You will discuss with the elders the public promises you will affirm in front of the congregation to make sure you are clear about what you are promising and to determine whether you can make these promises. The promises are explained in the Appendix on Membership Promises, pp. 59–60.

STEP 4: APPROVAL

After the meeting, the elders will connect with our Session to officially enter you into our Church. All that remains is your public acknowledgment before the congregation.

STEP 5: PUBLIC VOWS

You will be contacted to confirm a date when you can make your public promises. When the time is called, you will go forward and affirm the promises after they are read.

STEP 6: BAPTISM

If you have never been baptized, and are making your first public profession of faith, you will be baptized during the worship service. Let the church leader know during your meeting and we will schedule your baptism. The baptism will take place after you have affirmed the promises of membership.

SECTION 4

APPENDICES

Appendix on Membership Promises

When people stand up in front of the church to enter membership, they answer 5 questions. These questions are our membership vows (promises). To help you think through what people promise when they come into membership, here are some additional questions for you to think through.

REFERENCES—MEMBERSHIP PROMISES

DOCTRINAL PROMISES: You promise to believe the gospel.

1. Do you acknowledge yourself to be a sinner in God's sight, justly deserving his displeasure, and without hope except through his sovereign mercy?

- Do you believe it's important to see yourself as "justly deserving God's displeasure"? Why or why not? What difference does it make to view yourself as such?

2. Do you believe in the Lord Jesus 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?

- What is the significance of the word "alone" in the phrase "do you receive and rest upon him alone?" Why is that important to one's understanding of salvation?
- Why is "resting" on Jesus Christ an appropriate way to describe how we are to trust in Christ for our salvation? How is that done in daily life, and how is it practically experienced in your life?

CHARACTER PROMISE: You promise to seek to grow into the likeness of Christ, not through proud self-reliance, but through constant repentance and reliance on the Holy Spirit.

3. Do you now resolve and promise, in humble reliance upon the grace of the Holy Spirit, to endeavor to live as becomes a follower of Christ?

- What do you think this question is asking of you?
- In terms of your membership, it is not important to us whether you are struggling with a particular sin or sins – although we want to be of help if you are, because we all struggle and need help.
- What is important is whether you (1) lack Biblical convictions about what God expects from his people in terms of obedience and disobedience or (2) have Biblical convictions about the conducts God disapproves of, but have given in to those areas and have ceased fighting against them.

REFERENCES—MEMBERSHIP PROMISES

- With that in mind, are there currently any areas of your life in which you are accommodating sin and not fighting against it?
- For married couples: What is your understanding of what the Bible teaches concerning the permanence of marriage and when divorce is permissible? We believe the covenant made in marriage is permanent, and that divorce is permissible only after desertion or after a fundamental breaking of that covenant by one partner by means of adultery. Do you have convictions other than that?
- For singles: What is your understanding of what the Bible teaches about living a sexually pure life? We believe sex is a gift from God by which we declare to a spouse that we are committed completely and exclusively to them. On that basis we believe sex outside marriage is wrong, and that living with someone with whom you are romantically involved and yet to whom you are not married is unwise. Can you give your assent to those beliefs?
- The phrase “in humble reliance upon the Holy Spirit” implies availing ourselves of the means God has given to grow us. These include church attendance, participation in the sacraments, regular Bible reading and prayer, and fellowship. What does your current participation in these things look like? What obstacles do you face in availing yourself of them?
- Being in a community group is not the only means through which to have significant fellowship, but it is an excellent way to do so. Are you currently involved in a community group, or do you have plans to get involved in one? If not, where are you getting your interaction with other believers?

COMMUNITY PROMISE: You promise to commit to regular involvement in the life and ministry of the congregation.

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

- To review: Members are expected to walk with God daily; to worship with the people of God each week; to be involved in the life of the community in some way; to serve; to be good stewards of their talents and finances.

REFERENCES—MEMBERSHIP PROMISES

- Outside of Sunday worship, how are you now, and how will you in the future, be involved in the church's ministry? Are there any areas of service in which you are involved outside the church?
- What do you believe to be the Christian's Biblical responsibility regarding the use of wealth? Do you view the tithe (10% of income) as the Christian baseline of giving to God's work?

ACCOUNTABILITY PROMISE: You hold yourself accountable to the leadership and one another to live up to the above promises and you seek to be a Biblical peacemaker in your relationships.

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

- What do you believe you are doing when you make this promise? What is your understanding of church discipline? Are you willing to help your brothers and sisters in Christ by lovingly practicing Biblical discipline with them? Are you willing to quench divisiveness in your own life and in the lives of others?

Appendix on Church Discipline

From the Membership Vows: Do you submit yourself to the government and discipline of the Church, and promise to strive for its purity and peace?

When parents lovingly nurture a child, the large majority of that nurture is affirming. But, for the welfare of the child, some nurture needs to come in the form of correction. And even other times, this correction needs a formal structure—like a time-out. “Nurture” is like that in the church to.

It is important to remember that when we talk about church discipline, “discipline” is a derivative of disciple. Discipline is an aspect of nurture. It is the exercise of authority given to the Church by the Lord Jesus Christ to instruct and guide its members and to promote its purity and welfare.

Why Exercise Discipline?

Our need for discipline and willingness to submit to it arises out of the dual realization that on the one hand, we want to live a life in which God delights so that we can meet Christ at his return unashamed, and on the other, that we have a natural tendency to be self-deceived and blind to the sin in our own lives (1 Jn 1:8–10). We need accountability and believe that God commanded his church to exercise discipline as a manifestation of his love (Prov 3:12; Heb 12:6; Matt 16:16–19; 18:18–19; 1 Cor 5:12–13). Someone has described church discipline this way: “Sin is temporary insanity. And we are all prone to it. While you’re sane, you’re giving permission to be rescued when you’re insane.”

Discipline helps us see when we are living lives that are contrary to our profession of faith in Jesus . It keeps us from deceiving ourselves into thinking that we are okay when we are not okay. Discipline is also means of helping members to lead God-pleasing lives as they respond to conflict (1 Cor 6:1–8).

What types of Discipline are there?

Reconciliation and church discipline run along a continuum moving from informal to formal forms. This continuum can be seen in Jesus’ instruction in Matthew 18:15–17:

“If your brother sins against you, go and show him his fault, just between the two of you. If he listens to you, you have won your brother over. But if he will not listen, take one or two others along, so that ‘every matter may be established by the testimony of two or three witnesses.’ If he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church; and if he refuses to listen even to the church, treat him as you would a pagan or a tax collector.”

REFERENCES—CHURCH DISCIPLINE

GENERAL (INFORMAL) DISCIPLINE

This includes self-examination, sitting under the teaching of the Scriptures, and general interaction among believers. Believers who are involved in conflicts with one another are encouraged not to work through the civil courts. Instead they are encouraged to work through the system of informal and formal discipline (1 Cor 6:1–8).

JUDICIAL (FORMAL) DISCIPLINE

This is done according to a formal biblical process and is carried out only by the elders. The stages of formal discipline are: Admonition, Suspension from the Sacraments, Deposition from office, and Excommunication.

When and for what does discipline occur?

Discipline occurs only with regard to the specific commands of Scripture. Church officers cannot bind the conscience where Scripture has not bound it. They cannot say, “You must be in a small group,” but they can say, “You must break off this adulterous affair.” Moreover, discipline occurs only against a person who has refused to repent of his or her sin. Discipline is never engaged in merely for a particular sin, but for refusal to turn from a particular sin.

Elders and members of a church ought to take the call to exercise discipline seriously and in sober recognition of their own sin (Gal 6:1). Its purposes are to maintain the honor and glory of God (Rom 2:23–24); to maintain and promote the purity of Christ’s Church (1 Cor 5:6–7); and always to restore the fallen individual to a life of godliness (Gal 6:1). Though sometimes we are called to discipline, it is something which should sadden us. To take delight in it is contrary to the teaching of Scripture. And we engage in it aware that, even in its harshest forms, its purpose is the healing of the offender (1 Cor 5:5; 1 Tim 1:20).



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