

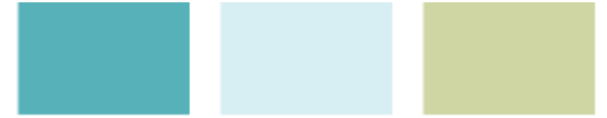
February 24, 2013



Discovering CVC:

Investing through Membership

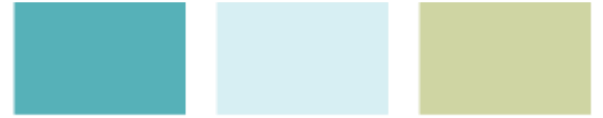





Discovering CVC: Investing through Membership

Table of Contents

Section	Page	Section	Page
Welcome	4	Part 2	
Part 1		Doctrine of Salvation	32
Why Membership?	6	The Bridge to Life	34
Our Affiliations	8	CVC's Position Concerning Baptism	40
Statement of Faith	11	CVC's Position Concerning The Lord's Supper	45
Essential Beliefs	12	Guidelines For Writing Your Story (Testimony)	47
Restoration	14	Appendix	
The Mission of CVC	16	How To Grow Spiritually	50
Passions	17	Books for Spiritual Growth	55
Strategy	23	CVC and Spiritual Gifts	56
Fruit Of New Life	26	Spiritual Gifts Inventory	57
Response	29	What The Bible Teaches About Divorce and Remarriage	58
		Finding A Healthy Church	61
		Responsibilities and Privileges of Membership	64
		Steps Toward Becoming A Member	65



Welcome

We are glad that you are considering becoming an investor at CVC through membership.

In the fall of 2011, I went on a personal retreat to seek the Lord about our vision as a church. I had one of those “God-moments.” I was sitting in a chair, looking out the window at Lake Erie, praying and reading Scripture when God led me to Isaiah 61. One word kept coming to my mind – one word that captured and summarized the concept of what God was speaking here through the prophet Isaiah to God’s people. That word is “Restoration.”

We have a God who loves restoration – taking what is broken and restoring it to its original condition or even to an improved state.

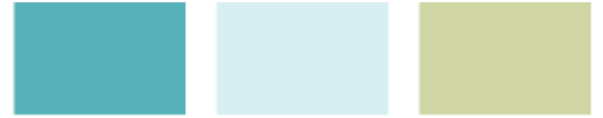
In 2012, the leadership at CVC worked through a process that enabled us to ask questions many churches never ask. “What is the unique mission God has given Cuyahoga Valley Church that makes us different from 10,000 other churches?” “What are our distinctive passions that define how we will accomplish our mission?” “What is our strategy?” “How will we know when we are successful?” “Where is God taking us?”

As we worked to answer these questions, the theme of restoration continued to resonate with our elders, staff, and leadership.

We believe that God has called us to mobilize believers through a process of restoration to bring hope to broken-hearted people.

In the following pages, we invite you to explore God’s unique vision for CVC. Who knows? God may be leading you to join us in our divinely appointed calling. May God bring His restoration to you and through you as you seek to follow His leading in your life.

Chad Allen
Lead Pastor



Discovering CVC: Investing through Membership

Part 1



Why Membership?

“So we, though many, are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another”.
Romans 12:5

What makes us a church is not that we have a building or that a group of people gather together once a week for a service. What makes us a church is the fact that we are followers of Christ who are in caring community together. People can belong to our fellowship and know they are connected.

Cuyahoga Valley Church is an exciting place. We always have people coming through our doors to be part of our services. **But the church is much more than an event.** Although the word “membership” is never used in the Bible, the word “member” is used. Membership is implicit through out the Scriptures.

The Bible gives several word pictures that help to make the point.

1. The church is a family.

Families are an important part of the fabric of our society. A family illustrates the essence of commitment - people generationally linked together - inseparable and loyal. Family commitment assures a safe place for the proper nurturing of its members. It's the focus of warmth and the catalyst for growth. But there are only two ways to get into a family - to be born into one OR to make a commitment to one.

Ephesians 2:19

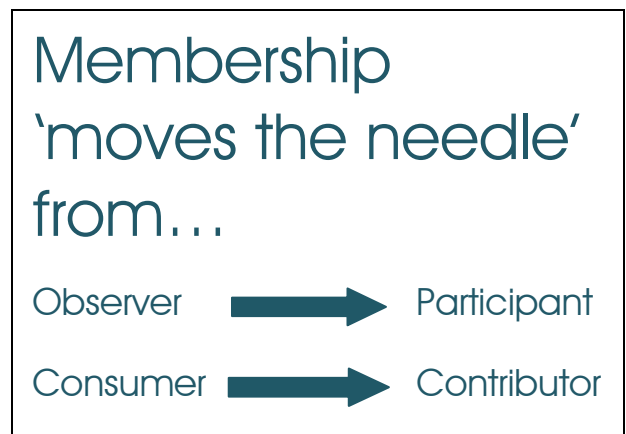
2. The church is a body.

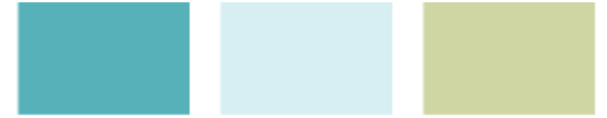
The Bible illustrates the connectedness of members of the church by referring to them as members of a body. Jesus is the head and the church is the body. It's easy to see that the body only functions properly when each member takes its role seriously.

Romans 12:4

3. The church is a bride.

The Bible teaches us that Jesus is the bridegroom and that the church is His bride. Collectively, we make up the bride of Christ. *Ephesians 5:25-27*





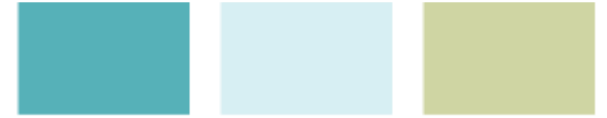
4. **Therefore, we must connect and commit.**

God has called Pastors to “shepherd the flock”. Therefore, it is important for us to be able to identify who is in the “flock.” This allows us to know whom it is that we can count upon and whom it is that we need to shepherd. In a church that values people inviting and including others, that is important!

CVC, by its very design, attracts the uncommitted - seekers, observers, guests. We hope that this will always be the case. But at some point it is important to identify those who truly comprise the “flock” at CVC - the core that can be counted on to build and sustain the ministries of the church. These are also the “family members” who should receive priority in the allocation of finite church resources (See Galatians 6:10).

Every team must have a roster. Every school must have an enrollment. Every army has an enlistment. Membership identifies our family.

We believe that commitment is at the core of our faith and our community. Therefore, membership at CVC is not a simple intellectual decision, it is a challenge to move forward with Christ. It is a challenge to grow in the fruit of new life! Membership is a public affirmation of a commitment to Christ and to a specific local body.



Our Affiliations

Great Commission Baptists (GCB)

When CVC began, one church and three groups of churches gave our church financial support to help us get started:

- 1) Far Hills Baptist Church: a church of 1,500 in Dayton that sponsored us from 1986-1991.
- 2) The Cleveland Hope Association: 40+ churches that fellowship together and work together to reach Greater Cleveland for Christ.
- 3) The State Convention of Baptists in Ohio: 700+ churches that fellowship together with the goal of evangelizing our state.
- 4) The North American Mission Board: 45,000+ churches that cooperate together in a world-wide effort of missions.

These 4 groups gave our church over \$100,000 in support to help us get started - with no strings attached! They have also invested in our daughter churches. Because of our gratitude, we now wholeheartedly support our denomination's work in helping start many other new churches.

Since its organization in 1845 in Augusta, Georgia, Great Commission Baptists (GCB) have grown to over 16 million members who worship in more than 45,000 churches in the United States. GCB sponsors about 5,000 missionaries serving the United States and its territories, Canada, and the Caribbean, as well as sponsoring more than 5,000 foreign missionaries in 153 nations of the world.

In 2012, the Messengers of the Southern Baptist Convention, the nation's largest Protestant denomination approved the use of "Great Commission Baptists" as an alternative name believing it would help the denomination expand its reach. The word "Southern" has been seen by church planters and missionaries as a hindrance to evangelistic efforts, especially by those doing missions in areas outside the American South and in ministry with people of different ethnic identities. So, CVC gladly welcomes the Great Commission Baptist designation.

The denomination works through 1,175 local associations and 42 state conventions. Great Commission Baptists share a common bond of basic Biblical beliefs and a commitment to proclaim the Gospel of Jesus Christ to the entire world.

Great Commission Baptists make up the largest association of Christian churches in Ohio and in America. It is the most diverse association of churches. GCB churches include every race, nationality, and ethnic group. Each Sunday, services are held in over 100 languages in the U.S. Great Commission Baptists are one of the most ethnically diverse denominations in the world. The diversity is growing. In 1990 5% of GCB



congregations were non-white. In 2012, the proportion of GCB congregations that were of other ethnic groups (African American, Latino and Asian) had increased to 20%.

GCB churches are boldly committed to missions and evangelism. Great Commission Baptists have the largest domestic and foreign missions agencies in the world. The International Mission Board (IMB) in Richmond, Virginia and the North American Mission Board (NAMB) in Atlanta, Georgia are two GCB agencies that we enthusiastically support.

When CVC does mission work at home and overseas, we seek to work with GCB affiliated churches and agencies whenever possible. We gladly participate with Great Commission Baptists and desire to advance the kingdom of Christ through working with other GCB churches and organizations.

Our Autonomy

Why not just be an independent church? We are an independent church! Every Great Commission Church (GCB) church is completely independent. There is no denominational control or hierarchy, as there is in most other denominations. Each church is self-governed and determines its own affairs. For example:

- Every GCB church chooses its own **Pastor**.
- Every GCB church owns its own **buildings** and **assets**.
- Every GCB church determines its own **programs**.

Our Name

Why doesn't CVC use a denominational label in the name? Because of events that have occurred in the past 50 years, such as Vietnam, Watergate and numerous other scandals, many people have a general mistrust of institutions. This anti-institutionalism expresses itself in a preference for churches that are independent.

Denominations are sometimes stereotyped as being too concerned with self-preservation and irrelevant to today's needs and problems. Denominational labels mean very little to and often conjure up negative stereotypes with many people. People today are likely to choose a church because it meets their needs today, not because of denominational loyalty.

We believe we can be loyal to the Great Commission Baptist's historic faith, mission, and goals without using the GCB label.



A few years ago, unchurched people in Dayton, Ohio were asked what came to mind when they heard the terms “Baptist.” Among their responses were these words: strict, scary, loud, pushy, dogmatic and out-of-date. It doesn’t make sense to use a denominational label that is an obvious turn-off to many people. We want to promote Christ, not our denominational affiliation.

The Advantages of Affiliating

It allows us to identify with other Christians around the world who are known for their commitment to Christ, to the Bible, and to world evangelization. Unlike other groups, the GCB has no man-made creed. The Bible is our only authority.

It allows our church to participate in the largest missionary organization in the world. Through the GCB “Cooperative Program” we help support over 10,000 missionaries in 153 countries around the world.



Statement of Faith

The Bible is the inspired, infallible, and authoritative Word of God, without error in its original writings.

There is only one God, Creator of all things, infinitely perfect and eternally existing in three persons: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

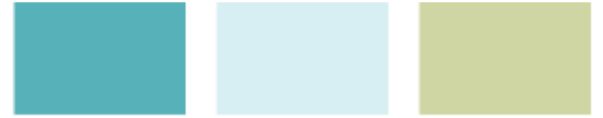
The Lord Jesus Christ is fully divine and fully human. He was born of a virgin, lived a sinless life, performed authentic miracles, died in the place of sinners to pay for their sins, rose bodily from the grave, and works as mediator in heaven.

Spiritual life given by the Holy Spirit is absolutely necessary for the salvation of man. His ministry includes indwelling the believer enabling him to live a godly life.

Although man was created in the image of God, he sinned causing physical death and separation from God. All human beings are born with a sinful nature, and those who reach moral responsibility exercise their sinful nature in thought, word, and deed.

The sinless life, substitutionary death, and bodily resurrection of Jesus Christ provide the only basis for the salvation of all who believe. Those who receive Jesus Christ as their only Lord and Savior, exercising repentance and faith, are children of God.

The Lord Jesus Christ will return bodily to the earth to complete our salvation and establish His kingdom. All of the dead will experience a bodily resurrection, the believer to eternal joy with the Lord and the unbeliever to judgment and eternal punishment.



Essential Beliefs

1. **About God.**

There is only one, Creator of all things, infinitely perfect and eternally existing in three Persons: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. (Deuteronomy 6:4, Genesis 1,2, Psalm 145:3, John 1:1, Psalm 90:2).

2. **About Jesus Christ.**

The Lord Jesus Christ is fully divine and fully man. He was born of a virgin, lived a sinless life, performed authentic miracles, died in the place of sinners to pay for their sins, rose bodily from the grave, and works as mediator in heaven.

(Matthew 28:18-20, John 1:1, John 1:14, Isaiah 9:6, 2 Corinthians 5:21, 1 Peter 2:21, Matthew 28:6, 1 John 2:1)

3. **About the Holy Spirit.**

Spiritual life given by the Holy Spirit is absolutely necessary for the salvation of man. His ministry includes indwelling the believer, enabling him to live a godly life.

(John 3:5-7, Romans 8:9-11, 1 Corinthians 6:19)

4. **About the Bible.**

The Bible is the inspired, infallible, and authoritative Word of God without error in its original writings.

Inspired – The Holy Scripture was given to us by God through human writers.

(2 Timothy 3:16, 2 Peter 1:21)

Infallible – The Holy Scripture is not misleading and is a sure, safe, and reliable rule and guide in all matters. (Proverbs 30:5)



Inerrant – The Holy Scripture is free from all falsehood or mistakes and is entirely true and trustworthy in all its assertions. (Matthew 4:4, Deuteronomy 8:3, Matthew 5:17,18)

5. **About Man.**

Although man was created in the image of God, he sinned, causing physical death and separation from God. All human beings are born with a sinful nature, and those who reach moral responsibility exercise their sinful nature in thought, word, and deed. (Genesis 1:27, 2:17, Romans 6:23, 5:12-14, 3:23, 3:10)

6. **About Salvation.**

The sinless life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ provide the only basis for the salvation of all who believe. Only those who receive Jesus Christ as Lord, exercising repentance and faith, are children of God. (1 Corinthians 15:3-6, John 14:6, Acts 4:12, John 1:12)

7. **About our Future.**

Jesus will return bodily to the earth to complete our salvation and establish His kingdom. All the dead will experience a bodily resurrection, the believer to eternal life with the Lord and the unbeliever to judgment and eternal punishment. (1 Thessalonians 4:13-18, 1 John 3:2, Daniel 12:2, Revelation 7:14)

We also affirm the “Baptist Faith and Message” (1963) and the “Second London Confession” (1689). Please call the office 440.746.0404 to ask for a copy if you are interested in reading either of these.

Restoration

Rubbish. Scrap. Junk. Worthless. We have so many words to communicate "this has no value..."

What you might find tossed behind a dumpster at an industrial park, lying to rot in a field behind a landscaping company, or piled up in an old barn can be renewed. And that reflects the truth of what we believe God does - reclaiming the old, repairing the broken, and rebuilding the worn-out.

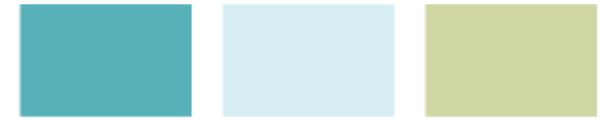
He takes what this world finds worthless, gives it new life, and makes it beautiful. Bryan Karas

We love restoration! We're impressed when something broken or damaged is restored. Think about how much joy we find in the restoration of classic cars, antique furniture, or hardwood floors. We enjoy seeing old homes that have been restored.

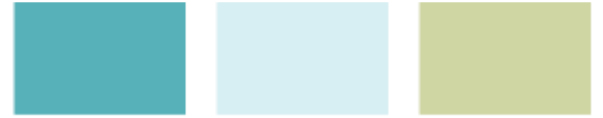
We've been hard-wired by God to love restoration because we are created in the image of God – the One who loves to restore what is broken.

And this is good news because we all experience brokenness. Broken dreams. Broken relationships. Broken careers. Broken communities. Broken lives. NE Ohio is filled with defeated, depressed, and discouraged people who have experienced economic ruin, relational devastation, and spiritual emptiness.

Sadly, some people are walking around damaged but don't know it or won't admit it. The house looks manicured, but the family is a wreck. The job is secure, but the mind is a mess. The degrees are on the wall, but they are trying to fill the God-shaped hole in their heart with the misfits that the world offers. They are living in denial of their brokenness.



...to grant to those who mourn in Zion—to give them a beautiful headdress instead of ashes, the oil of gladness instead of mourning, the garment of praise instead of a faint spirit; that they may be called oaks of righteousness, the planting of the LORD, that he may be glorified. ⁴ They shall build up the ancient ruins; they shall raise up the former devastations; they shall repair the ruined cities, the devastations of many generations.
Isaiah 61:3,4



But hope is available for everyone. Restoration is a promise of newness, of a fresh start, of a new life. Hope is available for you!

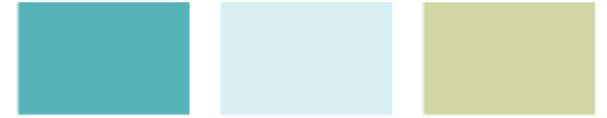
In Luke 4, Jesus claimed to be the fulfillment of the Isaiah 61 prophecy – that He was the One sent to proclaim “*the year of the Lord’s favor.*” The year of the Lord’s favor is the year of Jubilee – a practice God gave His Old Testament people. Every 50 years the people celebrated a year where all debts were cancelled, land was returned to the original owners, and slaves were set free. Everyone was given a fresh start, a re-set, a NEW LIFE!

Jesus is the fulfillment of this prophecy! He is the Messiah. This kingdom of restoration is made available by Him and through Him. On the cross Jesus paid the price for our freedom. Through the resurrection, Jesus made a way for us to know new life. By sending His Spirit, Jesus gives us the power to live new every day. And through His church, He is still proclaiming the year of the Lord’s favor – a fresh start, a re-set, a season of newness!

If we have trusted Christ as our Savior, we are living now in a spiritual “Year of Jubilee.” We have been set free from bondage. Our spiritual debt to the Lord has been paid. What is broken in us, Jesus can fix!

If you feel broken in some way, then CVC is the place for you. Un-broken people need not apply! But broken people can find a family to celebrate, a place to serve, and a ministry to lead.

“If anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come”
(2 Corinthians 5:17).



The Mission of CVC

Since our inception as a church, we have always focused on connecting people to Christ. Now, we have an even more clear understanding of our mission. What are we ultimately passionate about doing?

“Inviting people to new life in Christ.”

Each word in our mission statement is important.

“**Inviting.**” We don’t brow-beat or beg. We invite. Everyone wants to be invited to something great. So, we gladly invite.

“**People.**” Jesus is for everyone. Those who know they are broken and those who don’t. Outsiders and insiders. Neighbors and co-workers. Young and old. Rich and Poor. Suburban and urban. Red, yellow, black, and white. We are “people” people.

“**To.**” We aren’t inviting people “from” something as we are inviting people “to” something because we want to know for what we are “for” rather than what we are “against.”

“**New life.**” So much truth is packed into this little phrase: Hope for the hopeless, joy for the discouraged, strength for the weary, faith for the fearful, and restoration for the broken.

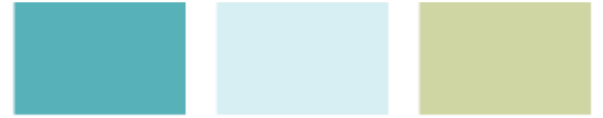
“**In Christ.**” We realize that we have nothing to offer. But we know Someone who does. It’s the Lord Jesus Christ. He is our only hope. We exist to help those outside the church experience the restoration that Jesus has come to give us.

We are passionate about our mission. This mission encourages us to “be the church” 24/7/365.

The call to membership and leadership at CVC is a call to faithfully hold out an invitation for everyone to live new every day.

What about you?
Is God calling you to join us in
living out the mission?

Everyone.
Live new.
Every day.



Passions

Think of a river. We've all been by rivers to fish, hike, or swim. A river might look like a simple, little, meandering river, but underneath the surface, no matter how smooth, there's a current. And that current can be stronger than people think. Other times we see whitewater, a very obvious current. But regardless, there's always a current in a river.

When we get into a river, the current carries us, especially when it's deep, fast, and strong.

Our passions are like a river current that carries us. Every person has passions – an underlying current – that defines us, moves us, and shapes us. At CVC, we want our current to be what we see written in the word of God and illustrated in the life of Christ. Our prayer is that our passions will run deep, fast, and strong.

So, what's the current, what are our passions? When people think of CVC, they might just think of a group of people. But what's the current underneath? What is the CVC way? How do we roll?

Sometimes, these passions are called "values." We have identified 6 things we are passionate about. The 6 passions define the way we relate to one another and carry out our mission. They capture our uniqueness. They define how we serve together. These 6 passions help to define the personality of CVC.



Living Truth

The Bible is not a dusty and archaic relic that is irrelevant to our modern lives. God's Word is living and God's Word is truth. God's living truth pierces our hearts, teaches us and guides us. Our passion for God's living truth is demonstrated by our being able to consistently and spontaneously share what God is currently teaching us through His Word. When it comes to the Bible, we seek to learn it, pray it, sing it, live it, and share it. The Bible is foundational, authoritative, and applicable for all we do in our personal lives, in our families, in our LifeGroups, and in corporate worship. We creatively communicate and apply the eternal, infallible, and unchanging Word of God utilizing spoken word, printed materials, music, the arts, and media. We long to see the power of the living truth evident in the lives of all who make CVC their church home.

Hebrews 4:12; James 1:22; 2 Timothy 3:16-17; John 6:68; John 14:21; John 17:17; Isaiah 40:8; Isaiah 55:10-11; Jeremiah 15:16

God Dependence

Our human nature drives us to be self-sufficient. The largest obstacle to us experiencing new life in Christ is ourselves. We need to be dependent on God and not on anybody or anything else, including ourselves. Our passion for God dependence is demonstrated by an observable and real trust in God, primarily evidenced by consistent and spontaneous prayer.

When a problem is to be solved or a decision is to be made, we go to God first rather than making a decision and then asking Him to bless what we already decided to do on our own. We acknowledge that apart from Christ we can accomplish nothing. Our lives, our families, and our ministries are fueled by prayer. If we trust in humans, we get what humans can do; but if we trust in God, we will get what God can do.

Being God dependent means that our pride bows to humility; our worry yields to trust; and our stress is overcome by joy. We experience peace in the face of turbulence and the unknown. As Jesus comes through for us in ways that defy human explanation, all credit, praise and glory go to God, in both the good and difficult times.

John 15:4-5; Philippians 4:6-7; 2 Chronicles 20:12; Isaiah 40:31; Psalm 118:8; Psalm 127:1; James 1:5; 1 Thessalonians 5:17



Caring Community

Most people have experienced being part of a group, club or team, but not everyone has experienced a true caring community. Our passion for caring community is demonstrated by our desire that every believer at CVC lives in authentic community that is rooted in Christ and grounded in love.

Believers at CVC connect face-to-face and life-on-life in small groups called LifeGroups. The goal of these small groups are to cultivate deep and meaningful relationships that are centered around God's Word, prayer, spiritual growth, genuine care and a heart to serve Christ. We believe that growth happens best when we are in community, not in isolation. God did not design us to do life alone. We remember the classic illustration: If you take one log out of a fireplace where the fire is burning brightly, it goes out pretty quickly. But if you put it back in the fireplace with the other logs, they all help each other burn together brightly. This is why we are intentional about building small communities of people who will learn together, care for one another, pray for each other and serve together.

Our desire is that loving relationships permeate every aspect of church life at CVC. We believe that spiritual friendships are vital for healthy spiritual development and maturity. When we face life's problems, we have a caring group of people around us supporting us, praying for us, encouraging us, visiting us, and challenging us toward growth, maturity and new life in Christ.

Hebrews 10:24-25; John 13:34-35; Acts 2:42-47; Philippians 2:3-4; 1 Thessalonians 2:8; Colossians 3:16; Matthew 22:37-40; 1 John 3:16-18

Linked Generations

Some churches are laser-focused on reaching one particular generation. Not CVC. We are committed to intergenerational connectedness in our relationships, families, ministries, and discipleship. We consciously evaluate how many generations are present at our gatherings. We want to see a cross section of all generations at CVC. We value the creativity, relevance, and energy of our youth as much as we value the wisdom, stability, and experience of our elders. If we aren't intentional about linking the generations, we will experience a natural



drift toward preferences that will divide our church, stunt our growth, shorten our longevity, and dilute our effectiveness.

Our passion for Linked Generations is demonstrated by cultivating mentoring relationships through both upward and downward investments in each others' lives as well as striving for intergenerational presence in all of our ministry venues. The younger generations crave the wisdom of their elders and are hungry for mentors in their lives. Teens are influencing children. Young adults are impacting teens. Older adults are investing in younger adults. As we follow Christ, we grab the hand of someone who's a generation above who will pour into our lives and we grab the hands of the generation below, pouring into them. We believe this discipleship dynamic must be developed at home first and then ripple out into other life relationships.

If someone were able to take a picture of Jesus teaching a crowd from the gospels, it would be intergenerational. We would see moms holding babies, dads holding hands with little kids, young singles, middle-aged people, grandparents and older folks with frail bodies. Generations would gather together to listen to and serve Jesus. Why should the church look any different today?

Deuteronomy 6:6-7; Psalm 78:4-7; Psalm 71:18; Ephesians 3:20-21; Psalm 145:4; Luke 1:50; Titus 2:1-8; Isaiah 61:4

Equipped Leadership

Jesus invited His disciples into a three year intensive internship to become spiritual leaders. That's the model He's given for us to follow. If you are a follower of Christ, you have signed up, not for a three year internship, but for a life-long internship to be an equipped, spiritual leader.

Many people have a misunderstanding that the church staff exclusively does all the heavy lifting when it comes to spiritual leadership. But the Bible teaches that the role of the staff is to equip every believer to minister in some leadership capacity. The CVC staff has embraced



our responsibility to train you to fulfill the ministry God created you for in your home, relationships, workplace, community and world.

CVC has been and is still is a church that identifies, equips, mobilizes, releases and encourages people toward leadership. Our desire is for everyone to serve God and others by leveraging their influence and God-given spiritual gifts for the kingdom of Jesus Christ. We want to convert the untapped leadership potential that exists in every attender and member of CVC into an army of capable, humble and passionate servant leaders. Our passion for equipped leadership is demonstrated by our intentional and relational efforts to equip leaders through LifeGroups, huddles, and training events.

Ephesians 4:11-12; 2 Timothy 2:2; Colossians 1:28-29; 1 Peter 4:10-11; Exodus 18:21; Proverbs 9:9; Proverbs 27:17; Luke 6:39-40

Missional Living

We follow Jesus, the One who came to this planet as a missionary. He left heaven and clothed Himself in human flesh. Why? To have an impact on people who were outsiders, who didn't know about God's love, grace, mercy and forgiveness. As the Father sent Jesus, so Jesus sends us. We all have relationships with people who are far from God. We have a missionary mandate to reach them for Christ.

Our passion for missional living at CVC is demonstrated by our dedication to be missionaries cleverly disguised as (fill in the blank- teachers, sales associates, carpenters, homemakers, coaches, nurses, lawyers, electricians, doctors, painters, etc). We are people that see ourselves as God's agents of restoration in the relationships and community around us. We take missional ownership for reaching those in our circle of influence. We cry out to God, "This is my neighborhood, my floor at work, my worksite, my city to reach for Christ."

We reject the temptation to be nice, neutral, normal people. Instead, we are radical and revolutionary about living on mission for Christ. We want to actually change the world and restore the broken. That's why we focus on building bridges of friendship to reach our family



members, our neighbors, and our communities. That's why we practice servant evangelism by doing good deeds to create good will so we can share the good news. That's why we pray, "God, I want to be used by You in some conversation. Open the door for me to speak to someone about Christ and give me the courage to walk through it." That's why we use our resources to serve, bless and reach out to those who don't know Christ.

Lost people matter to God, and therefore, they matter to us. We want the life God has given us to be abundantly fruitful for His kingdom. We want to not only go to heaven, but take as many people with us as we possibly can.

John 20:21; Matthew 28:18-20; Acts 1:8, Luke 10:2; 1 Peter 3:15; Matthew 5:16; 1 Corinthians 9:19-23; 2 Corinthians 5:17-21

Living Truth
God Dependence
Caring Community
Linked Generations
Equipped Leadership
Missional Living

How will these passions inspire you,
motivate you, lead you, and guide you?

Strategy

A clear and simple strategy is an essential ingredient to successfully accomplish the mission. CVC's strategy for fulfilling the mission and living out the passions has three components.

Worship ■ Group ■ Serve

These 3 components describe the environments we want every believer to experience. It's the pathway for assimilation into the life and fabric of CVC.

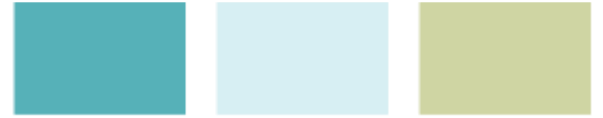
We seek to keep our strategy simple. Study greatness in any field and you will find a less-is-more strategy. We resist the pull toward excess programming because it tempts us to bow before the tyranny of more. We believe we can make more and better disciples with less activity.

We know we can only do a few things with A+ quality. That's why we are focused on 3 components: worship, groups, and service.

Worship: Our weekend services provide opportunities for us to join with other believers to glorify Christ, the One who restores the broken. Worship involves honoring God from our hearts as we...

- pray publicly and privately during services
- joyfully sing praises to God
- attentively listen to the teaching of God's Word
- hear and share stories of how God has given us new life in Christ
- celebrate with artists (drama, media, and music) who are using their gifts





In worship, we experience God and our lives are transformed. As we gather with others who are also seeking God, His power to restore is unleashed in amazing ways. God does abundantly beyond all that we can imagine.

Group: It is common for people to attend Sunday worship services regularly for many years and never experience real growth in their walk with Christ. At CVC, we are convinced that true Christian growth happens best in a small group environment called a LifeGroup where people are encouraging each other and accountable to each other on an ongoing basis. It's enjoying others who enjoy Jesus!

The New Testament teaches that we must care for each other. We care through the full range of the “one another” ministries. For example, we are told to:

Comfort one another	1 Thessalonians 4:18
Encourage one another	1 Thessalonians 5:11
Pray for one another	James 5:16
Offer hospitality to one another	1 Peter 4:9
Admonish one another	Colossians 3:16
Care for one another	1 Corinthians 12:25
Serve one another	Galatians 5:13

The best place for these kinds of relationships to be built is in the context of a LifeGroup where we experience true Christian fellowship. We can impress people from a distance; but we impact them up close.

Serve: We believe there's more to the call of God than just going to church services or small groups. God is also constantly calling us to serve hurting, lonely, and needy people both inside and outside the church.



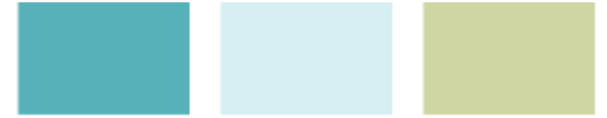
All around us, we see the effects of the fall. Broken lives. Addictive behaviors. Wrecked marriages. Abusive relationships. Oppression. Injustice. Job uncertainty. Foreclosures. It's into things. He calls us to join Him in restoring the brokenness.

Too often, God's people withdraw from the culture and hang out in holy huddles without ever truly engaging the brokenness in our world. That's not true at CVC. We provide encouragement, opportunities, and equipping so that every CVCer can truly show God's love by serving others in our everyday lives. We expect every believer to develop a dynamic vision for serving the broken people around us. We seek to serve in ways that so that we actually begin to see Jesus restore lives, families, and communities.

CVC's strategy – worship, groups, serve – isn't a three-step formula for spiritual success. This is a strategy that is designed to help us experience God together as He brings new life and restores the broken. Each environment is critical for spiritual growth.

In what ways are you embracing our strategy?

“They [shall] be called oaks of righteousness, the planting of the LORD, that he may be glorified. They shall build up the ancient ruins; they shall raise up the former devastations; they shall repair the ruined cities, the devastations of many generations.”
(Isaiah 61:3b-4)



Fruit of New Life

Are we really accessing the new life in Christ that God has made available for us? How will we know when we are successful in accomplishing our mission?

At CVC, we don't just assume that if we provide enough events, information, and programs then our people will grow. Often, Christians are caught in the routine of "just doing church" and they wonder why. We can be sucked into a cycle of church activity only to find that it doesn't make a significant difference in our lives.

To avoid this, we have worked hard to develop a clear and measurable definition of spiritual success. We've identified in practical terms what God expects of us.

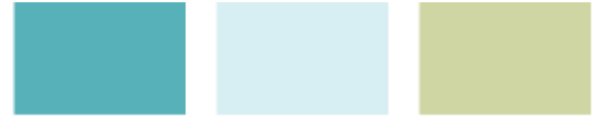
We believe that the fruit of our new life in Christ will be evident in 6 areas of growth as a disciple: Beloved Child, Self-Feeder, Servant, Investor, Discipler, and Missionary.

We refuse to settle for something less than the biblical standard for discipleship. We refuse to "dumb down" Christianity.

We believe discipleship is more than just head knowledge. We are focused on helping CVCers become spiritually mature. We expectantly anticipate that we will see clear evidence of God's work to transform the lives of our people. As we "invite people to new life in Christ," lives will be restored and the fruit of new life will be evident.

Beloved Child

Rather than living with guilt, fear, and doubt, as Beloved Children, we have the confidence and assurance that comes from having God as our Father. We live in light of God's grace – forgiven, adopted, and accepted. We have assurance of our salvation. Peace, contentment, and joy characterize our lives rather than worry and anxiety. We know that our worth is not based on our religious performance but on the love, grace, and acceptance of Christ. For this



reason, we delight in spending time with our Father in a Quiet Time that includes time in the Word of God and in prayer. Knowing that we are unconditionally loved by God means that we can freely give love to family members and others without expecting anything in return.

Self-Feeder

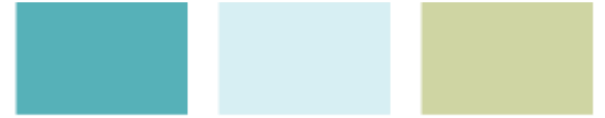
When we grow in maturity, we aren't dependent on others for spiritual nourishment. As self-feeders, we learn how to read the Bible and pray as a part of our daily lives. We attend church services expectantly and experience intimacy with God as a result. We can identify times when God has spoken to us through His Word. We learn to value scripture memory. We have developed doctrinal purity and a biblical worldview as we gain a greater knowledge of God's Word. We develop personal spiritual growth plans that reflect a commitment to lifelong learning. We reflect on life biblically and learn to see life's circumstances through God's eyes.

Servant

As followers of Christ, we develop a desire to serve rather than be served. We understand what the Bible says about spiritual gifts and we, therefore, use our gifts to serve in the life of the church. We see people through the eyes of Jesus and go out of our way to show love to others in everyday life. We understand the importance of being filled with the Holy Spirit and depend on God's Spirit rather than self-effort for accomplishing goals. We seek to abide in Christ for fruitful service. As a result, we find a sense of purpose in life because we have learned to meet the needs of others.

Investor

As we grow in Christ, we recognize that what we treasure is a reflection of our heart. We grow in our desire to be givers, not takers. We overcome a consumer mentality and grow in an eternal perspective. We learn to be good stewards of our time, our talent, and our treasure. We steward our bodies through healthy habits – exercise, rest, recreation, and eating in moderation. We hold loosely onto material things and give away possession to help others. We financially support the ministry of the church cheerfully and expectantly. We take



risks that require faith. Our desire is to expand God’s kingdom through our personal investment of time, talent, and treasure.

Discipler

Jesus longs for His followers to have an impact on others. Since we have experienced growth in our new life in Christ, we long to see other believers experience that growth, too. We connect with a LifeGroup that challenges, teaches, exhorts, and encourages. We learn how to build authentic relationships with people. We experience spiritual friendships for the purpose of mentoring and accountability. We seek to lead others spiritually – to reproduce our relationship with Christ in the lives of those who are less mature. We can confidently say, “Imitate me as I imitate Christ.”

Missionary

We recognize that as the Father sent Jesus into the world, so He is sending us. We know how to maintain friendships with those who are far from God so we can share Christ with them. We regularly find volunteer opportunities to serve the last and the least locally, regionally, and globally. We are always ready to share the story of how Jesus has restored our lives. We pray for those who are without Christ. We know how to defend our faith and how to engage in spiritual warfare. We see ourselves as “missionaries cleverly disguised...” We can communicate our faith with cultural and racial sensitivity. We lead people to put their faith in Jesus as Lord and Savior. **Because we are so serious about mobilizing CVCers to be on mission globally, we will distribute U.S. passport applications during this class.**

Beloved Child

Self Feeder

Servant

Investor

Discipler

Missionary

Do these describe the
Fruit Of New Life you are experiencing?



Response

How is God calling you to be a part of Cuyahoga Valley Church?

Perfect people need not apply! God isn't looking for our ability, just our availability. As someone once said, "The church is not to be a haven for saints; it's to be a hospital for sinners." CVC is a safe place for people with broken lives to come together to experience God's restoration – His forgiveness for our failures, His grace to put the pieces back together, and His love to take the message out to others who need His restoring power in their lives, too.

What greater mission can you possibly invest your life in? What is nobler, what is loftier, what is a higher purpose in life, than devoting yourself to establishing and developing a community of faith where restoration really happens?

We are praying that CVC will be a countercultural, revolutionary community of faith that begs to be reckoned with. We are telling people right in the midst of fouled-up lives that there's a gift of restoration that Christ purchased with His death on the cross and which He is freely offering to anyone who'll receive it in repentance and faith.

The result of our efforts to restore is destined to endure in heaven forever. Nothing on this planet is more important, more strategic, and more urgently needed than the local church. Stale churches that do business as usual won't change lives. But churches where believers bear the fruit of new life are the healing centers through which Jesus Christ can restore a world that is broken.



So, let's go out to surprise a broken and bewildered world with the most unexpected, outlandish, irrational, and ultimately life-changing message of all: You can have new life in Christ. If ever there was a time in history when the work of the true church was desperately needed, it is now.

Thanks for considering partnering with us at CVC as we seek to bring new life to this world.

...inviting
people
to new
life in
Christ.

CUYAHOGA
VALLEY
CHURCH...



Discovering CVC:

Investing through Membership

Part 2



Doctrine of Salvation

God's Initiative in our Salvation

Election

God's choosing individuals before the foundation of the world to be recipients of His saving grace solely because it seemed good in His sight. (John 6:37-40, 44, 65; 15:16,19; Ephesians 1:4-6, 11; Romans 8:28-30).

Redemption

God's work to deliver men from sin's dominion and curse through the Savior, Jesus Christ, who perfectly satisfied the demands of the law, establishing His right to release men from sin's captivity, and brought about the release by His substitutionary death on the cross. (Ephesians 1:7-8; 1 Peter 1:18-19).

Calling

God's effectually inviting men to repent and receive, by faith, the salvation provided by Christ. (1 Peter 2:9; 1 Timothy 1:9; 1 Thessalonians 2:13-14).

Regeneration

God's changing the heart of men enabling them to respond to His grace in repentance and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

1. Regeneration is necessary because in the natural state, man is dead in his trespasses and sins (Ephesians 2:1) and because of the nature of the unregenerated heart (Jeremiah 17:9).
2. Regeneration is necessary for salvation (John 3:3).
3. The agent of regeneration is the Word (1 Peter 1:23).
4. The means of regeneration is the Word (1 Peter 1:23).
5. The proof of regeneration is a new life (1 John 2:29; 1 Corinthians 5:17).



Our Response to God's Initiative

Repentance

A saving grace by which a sinner, out of a true grief and hatred of his sin and an understanding of the mercy of God in Christ, turns from the sin and turns to God with a purpose to live a life of obedience. (Luke 13:3; Acts 2:37-38; Acts 3:19).

Faith in Christ

A saving grace by which one receives and rests on Jesus Christ alone for salvation. (John 1:12; Ephesians 2:8-9).

Commitment to Christ as Lord

A saving grace which accompanies repentance and faith enabling one to crown Jesus as Master, Ruler, King and Authority over his life. (Acts 16:31, Acts 20:20,21; Acts 2:36; Romans 10:9).

Our Benefits Resulting from God's Grace

Justification – Our Salvation from the Penalty of Sin

An act of God's free grace by which He pardons all our sins and accepts us as righteous in His sight, because of the righteousness of Christ given to us. This being received only by faith. (Romans 3:24-25; 4:6-8; 2 Corinthians 5:19-21; Galatians 2:16).

Sanctification – Our Salvation from the Power of Sin

A work of God's grace by which we are renewed in our inner being according to the image of God so that we are enabled to more and more die unto sin and live unto righteousness. (2 Thessalonians 2:13; Ephesians 4:23-24; Romans 6:4,6).

Glorification – Our Salvation from the Presence of Sin

A work of God's grace by which believers at the end of their earthly lives are brought into the very presence of the Lord and are perfectly conformed into the image of Jesus Christ. (1 Thessalonians 4:16-17; 1 John 3:2; Philippians 1:21).



The Bridge of Life

Step 1 - God's Purpose: Peace and Life

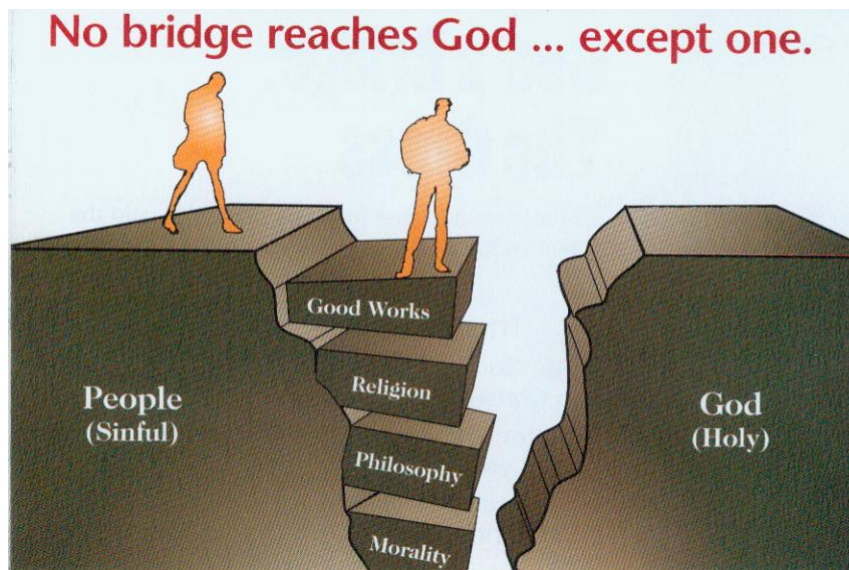
God loves you and wants you to experience peace and life – abundant and eternal.

The Bible says...

We can have peace and life with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. *“For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.”* John 3:16

“I have come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly.” John 10:10

Why don't most people have this peace and abundant life that God planned for us to have?



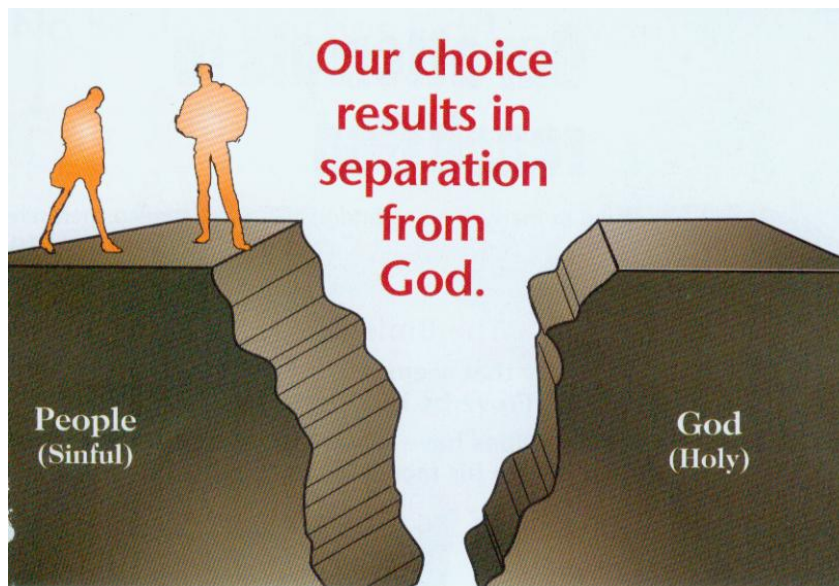


Step 2 – The Problem: Our Separation

God created us in His own image to have an abundant life. He did not make us as robots to automatically love and obey Him. God gave us a will and freedom of choice.

We chose to disobey God and go our own willful way. We still make this choice today. This results in separation from God.

The Bible says... *“For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God (Romans 3:23) and “For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord” (Romans 6:23).*



Our Attempts to Reach God

People have tried in many ways to bridge this gap between themselves and God...

The Bible says... *“There is a way that seems right to a man, but in the end it leads to death” (Proverbs 14:12). And “But your iniquities have separated you from your God; your sins have hidden his face from you, so that he will not hear” (Isaiah 59:2).*



Step 3 - God's Bridge: The Cross

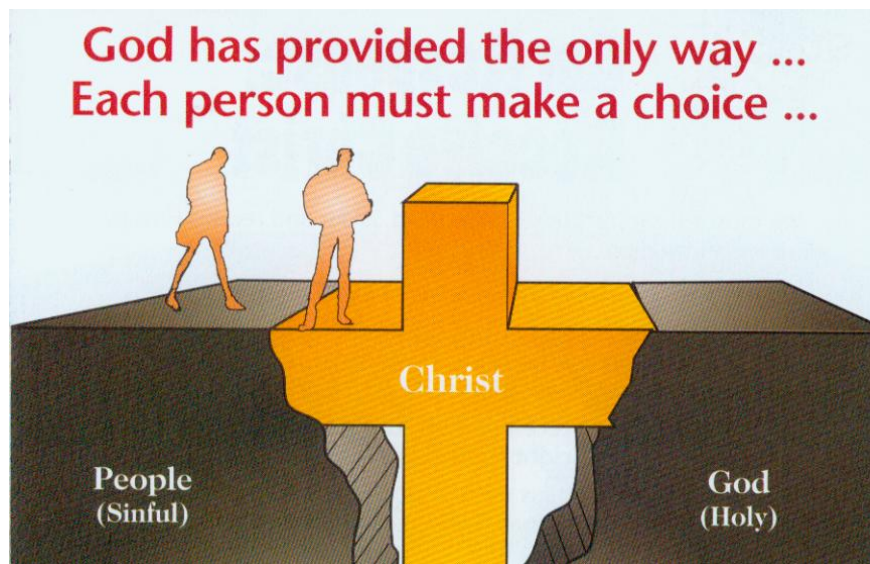
Jesus Christ died on the cross and rose from the grave. He paid the penalty for our sin and bridged the gap between God and people.

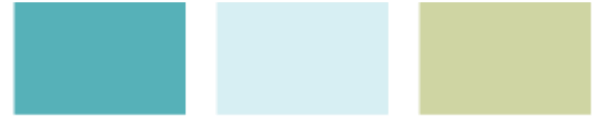
The Bible says...

"For there is one God and one mediator between God and men, the man of Christ Jesus" (1 Timothy 2:5).

"For Christ died for sins once and for all, the righteous for the unrighteous, to bring you to God." 1 Peter 3:18

"But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us." Romans 5:8





Step 4 - Our Response: Receive Christ

We must trust Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior and receive Him by personal invitation.

The Bible says...

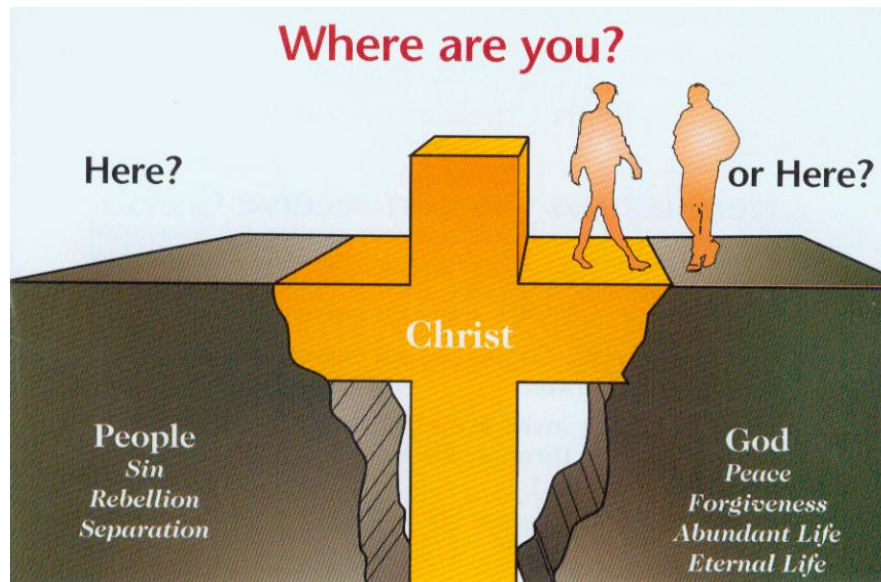
“Here I am! I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in and eat with him, and he with me.”

Revelation 3:20

“Yet to all who received him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God.” John 1:12

“That if you confess with your mouth, ‘Jesus is Lord,’ and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved.”

Romans 10:9





Step 5: Will You Receive Jesus Christ Right Now? Here is how you can receive Christ:

- **Confess.** Admit your need. (I am a sinner.)
- **Repent.** Be willing to turn from your sins.
- **Believe** that Jesus Christ died for you on the cross and rose from the grave.
- **Receive.** Through prayer, invite Jesus Christ to come in and control your life through the Holy Spirit. (Receive Him as Lord and Savior.)

For he says, "In a favorable time I listened to you, and in a day of salvation I have helped you." Behold, now is the favorable time; behold, now is the day of salvation.

2 Corinthians 6:2

How to Pray:

Dear Lord Jesus, I know that I am a sinner, and I ask for Your forgiveness. I believe You died for my sins and rose from the dead. I turn from my sins and invite You to come into my heart and life. I want to trust and follow You as my Lord and Savior. In Your Name, Amen.

Date _____ Signature _____

Step 6: God’s Assurance: His Word. If you prayed this prayer, the Bible says...

“Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.” Romans 10:13

I give them eternal life, and they will never perish, and no one will snatch them out of my hand.

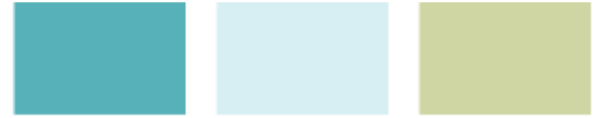
John 10:28

Did you sincerely ask Jesus Christ to come into your life? Where is He right now? What has He given you?

“For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith – and this not from yourselves, it is a gift of God – not by works, so that no one can boast.” Ephesians 2:8-9

The Bible Says... *“He who has the Son has life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have life. I write these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God so that you may know that you have eternal life.”* 1 John 5:12-13

Receiving Christ, we are born into God’s family through the supernatural work of the Holy Spirit who indwells every believer. This is called regeneration, or the “new birth.”



This is just the beginning of a new life in Christ. To deepen this relationship:

- Read your Bible every day to know Christ better. If you do not have one, please go to the information table in the CVC foyer and receive a Bible free, as our gift to you. The Book of John is a great book to start with. Then we encourage you to follow along with the CVC Bible Reading Plan. (Available on-line at www.cvconline.org or at the CVC Information Desk.)
- Talk to God in prayer every day.
- Share with others about your decision.
- Go public with your new faith through baptism.
- Worship, join a LifeGroup*, and serve with other Christians.

*CVC's 'Group Connect' LifeGroup brochure will be distributed during this class. It is also available on-line at www.cvconline.org and at the CVC Information Desk.

Additional resources:

- "My Heart, Christ's Home" (Available at CVC's Information Desk.)
- CVC Fruit Of New Life Assessment and Resource Companion Guide (Available on-line at www.cvconline.org or at the CVC Information Desk.)

(Source of "Bridge To Life": *Steps to Peace with God*, Billy Graham Evangelistic Association)

CVC's Position Concerning Baptism

"A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another. By this all men will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another."

Baptism is about “going public” as a follower of Jesus.


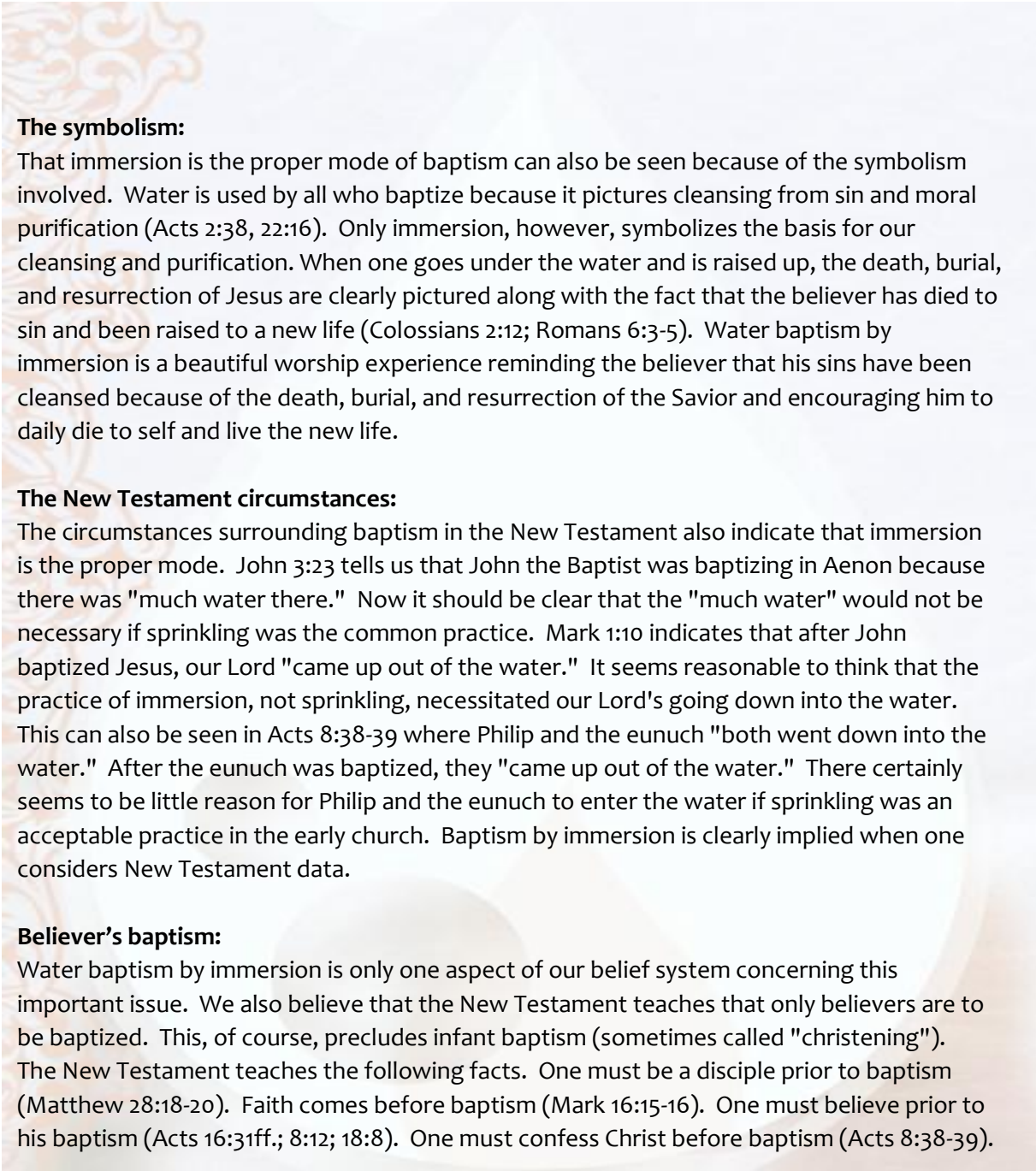
We also remember Jesus' prayer in John 17:21 where He asks the Father to grant unity among His followers so that the world might believe. It seems clear to us that the aim of all Christians should be to promote love and unity between all who have put their faith and trust in Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior. We seek to express our position concerning baptism, therefore, with the hope that our love for others will be seen and with the desire to promote understanding among believers rather than to create division.

We feel that our unity as believers should be based on absolute truth as revealed in the Bible, not on fallible reason, convenience, or tradition. God has spoken through His Word. It is final and absolute because He is final and absolute. The following paragraphs express in outline form what we believe the Bible teaches concerning baptism.

The meaning of the word:

Before one can adequately understand the Biblical teaching of baptism, he must understand the meaning of the word. It is unfortunate that the word was transliterated from the Greek into the English rather than translated. Without question the Greek word, *baptizo*, means to immerse, dip, or plunge. This can be seen in every major Greek lexicon. It is also significant that many who have practiced sprinkling admit that *baptizo* signifies to immerse. The early church, which certainly knew the meaning of the word, practiced immersion. We believe, therefore, that the definition of the word demands that water baptism by immersion be recognized as the proper mode.





The symbolism:


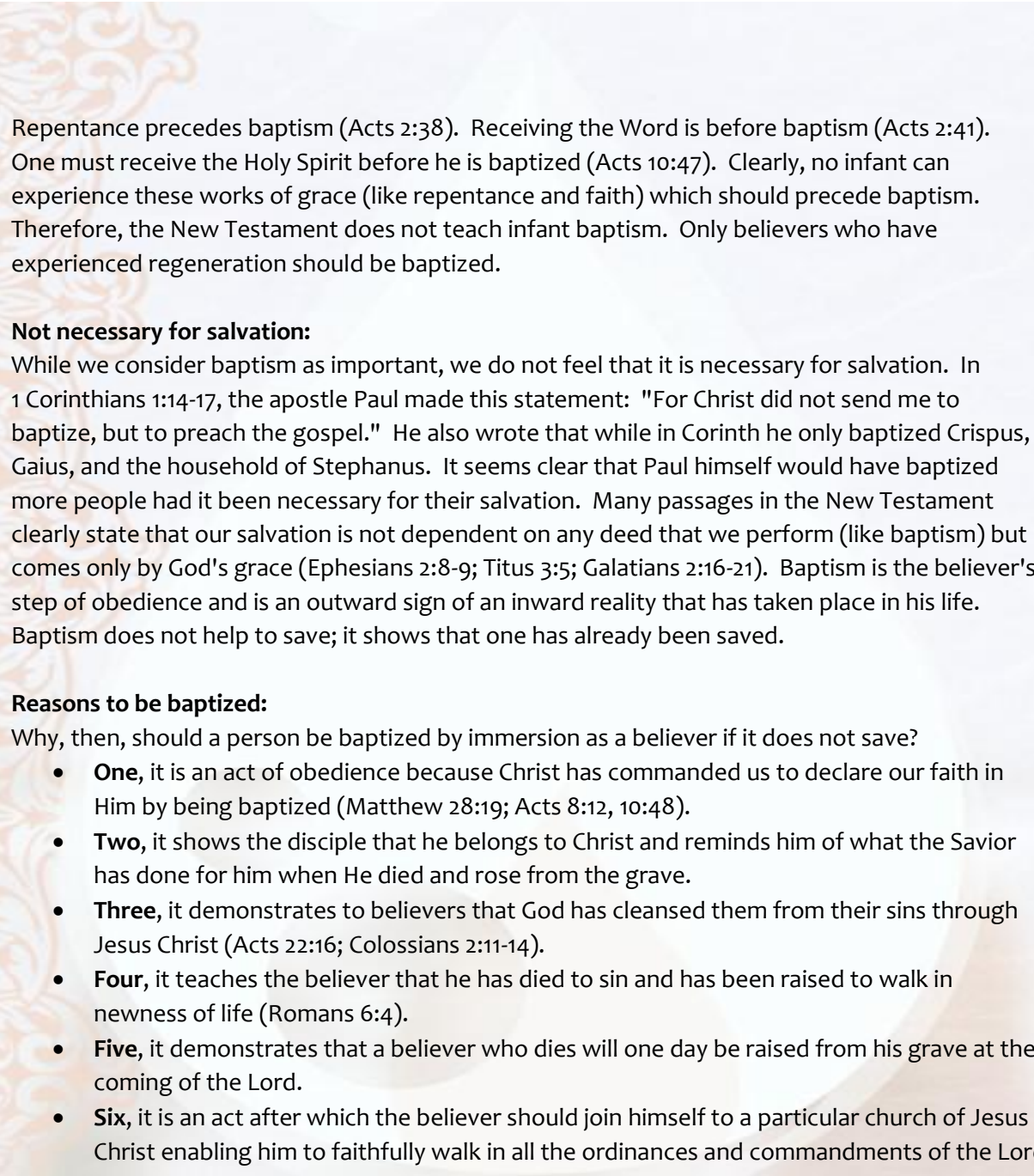
That immersion is the proper mode of baptism can also be seen because of the symbolism involved. Water is used by all who baptize because it pictures cleansing from sin and moral purification (Acts 2:38, 22:16). Only immersion, however, symbolizes the basis for our cleansing and purification. When one goes under the water and is raised up, the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus are clearly pictured along with the fact that the believer has died to sin and been raised to a new life (Colossians 2:12; Romans 6:3-5). Water baptism by immersion is a beautiful worship experience reminding the believer that his sins have been cleansed because of the death, burial, and resurrection of the Savior and encouraging him to daily die to self and live the new life.

The New Testament circumstances:

The circumstances surrounding baptism in the New Testament also indicate that immersion is the proper mode. John 3:23 tells us that John the Baptist was baptizing in Aenon because there was "much water there." Now it should be clear that the "much water" would not be necessary if sprinkling was the common practice. Mark 1:10 indicates that after John baptized Jesus, our Lord "came up out of the water." It seems reasonable to think that the practice of immersion, not sprinkling, necessitated our Lord's going down into the water. This can also be seen in Acts 8:38-39 where Philip and the eunuch "both went down into the water." After the eunuch was baptized, they "came up out of the water." There certainly seems to be little reason for Philip and the eunuch to enter the water if sprinkling was an acceptable practice in the early church. Baptism by immersion is clearly implied when one considers New Testament data.

Believer's baptism:

Water baptism by immersion is only one aspect of our belief system concerning this important issue. We also believe that the New Testament teaches that only believers are to be baptized. This, of course, precludes infant baptism (sometimes called "christening"). The New Testament teaches the following facts. One must be a disciple prior to baptism (Matthew 28:18-20). Faith comes before baptism (Mark 16:15-16). One must believe prior to his baptism (Acts 16:31ff.; 8:12; 18:8). One must confess Christ before baptism (Acts 8:38-39).



Repentance precedes baptism (Acts 2:38). Receiving the Word is before baptism (Acts 2:41). One must receive the Holy Spirit before he is baptized (Acts 10:47). Clearly, no infant can experience these works of grace (like repentance and faith) which should precede baptism. Therefore, the New Testament does not teach infant baptism. Only believers who have experienced regeneration should be baptized.

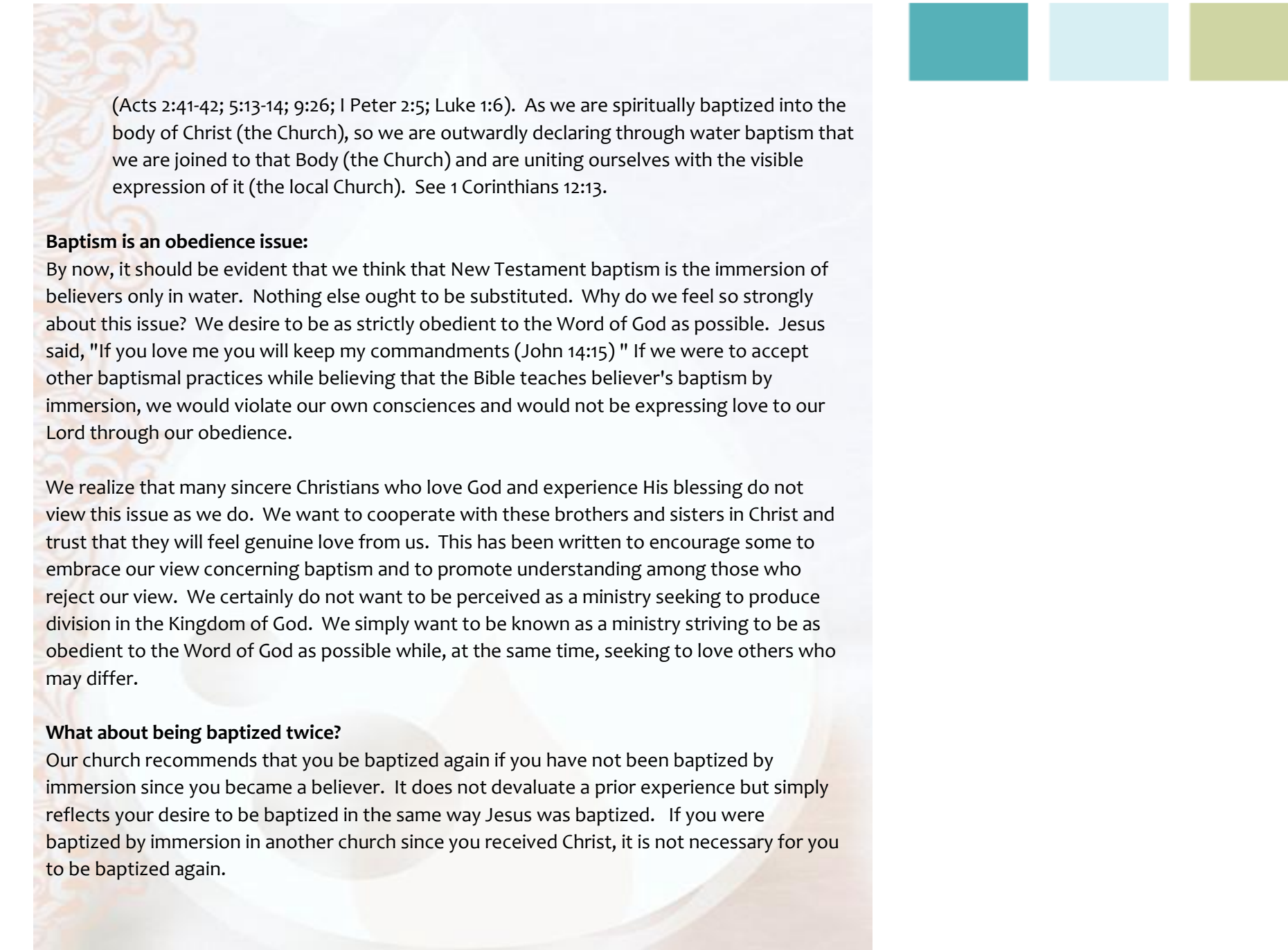
Not necessary for salvation:

While we consider baptism as important, we do not feel that it is necessary for salvation. In 1 Corinthians 1:14-17, the apostle Paul made this statement: "For Christ did not send me to baptize, but to preach the gospel." He also wrote that while in Corinth he only baptized Crispus, Gaius, and the household of Stephanus. It seems clear that Paul himself would have baptized more people had it been necessary for their salvation. Many passages in the New Testament clearly state that our salvation is not dependent on any deed that we perform (like baptism) but comes only by God's grace (Ephesians 2:8-9; Titus 3:5; Galatians 2:16-21). Baptism is the believer's step of obedience and is an outward sign of an inward reality that has taken place in his life. Baptism does not help to save; it shows that one has already been saved.

Reasons to be baptized:

Why, then, should a person be baptized by immersion as a believer if it does not save?

- **One**, it is an act of obedience because Christ has commanded us to declare our faith in Him by being baptized (Matthew 28:19; Acts 8:12, 10:48).
- **Two**, it shows the disciple that he belongs to Christ and reminds him of what the Savior has done for him when He died and rose from the grave.
- **Three**, it demonstrates to believers that God has cleansed them from their sins through Jesus Christ (Acts 22:16; Colossians 2:11-14).
- **Four**, it teaches the believer that he has died to sin and has been raised to walk in newness of life (Romans 6:4).
- **Five**, it demonstrates that a believer who dies will one day be raised from his grave at the coming of the Lord.
- **Six**, it is an act after which the believer should join himself to a particular church of Jesus Christ enabling him to faithfully walk in all the ordinances and commandments of the Lord



(Acts 2:41-42; 5:13-14; 9:26; I Peter 2:5; Luke 1:6). As we are spiritually baptized into the body of Christ (the Church), so we are outwardly declaring through water baptism that we are joined to that Body (the Church) and are uniting ourselves with the visible expression of it (the local Church). See 1 Corinthians 12:13.

Baptism is an obedience issue:

By now, it should be evident that we think that New Testament baptism is the immersion of believers only in water. Nothing else ought to be substituted. Why do we feel so strongly about this issue? We desire to be as strictly obedient to the Word of God as possible. Jesus said, "If you love me you will keep my commandments (John 14:15) " If we were to accept other baptismal practices while believing that the Bible teaches believer's baptism by immersion, we would violate our own consciences and would not be expressing love to our Lord through our obedience.

We realize that many sincere Christians who love God and experience His blessing do not view this issue as we do. We want to cooperate with these brothers and sisters in Christ and trust that they will feel genuine love from us. This has been written to encourage some to embrace our view concerning baptism and to promote understanding among those who reject our view. We certainly do not want to be perceived as a ministry seeking to produce division in the Kingdom of God. We simply want to be known as a ministry striving to be as obedient to the Word of God as possible while, at the same time, seeking to love others who may differ.

What about being baptized twice?

Our church recommends that you be baptized again if you have not been baptized by immersion since you became a believer. It does not devalue a prior experience but simply reflects your desire to be baptized in the same way Jesus was baptized. If you were baptized by immersion in another church since you received Christ, it is not necessary for you to be baptized again.

Can my family be baptized together?

Yes! If each family member fully understands the meaning of baptism, and each one has personally placed his/her trust in Christ for salvation, we encourage families to be baptized at the same time. It is a wonderful expression of commitment.

Will I have to say anything?

Those being baptized are asked to share briefly how Christ has changed their life. We encourage and will help each candidate for baptism to write out a 700 word story (see pages 47-48). In this way, each person baptized will be able to tell his or her story in such a way that anyone in the congregation will be drawn to have a life-changing experience with Christ.

If you confess with your mouth, “*Jesus is Lord*”, and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. Romans 10:9

When are we to be baptized?

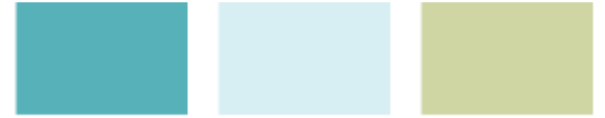
As soon as you have believed! You shouldn't delay.

“Those who accepted his message were baptized... that day!” Acts 2:41

Who do I contact to sign up for baptism?

Indicate your desire to be baptized on the Care Card attached to the weekend worship guide or give us a call at the church office (440.746.0404). We will contact you prior to the next baptismal service.

Additional Resource: CVC Booklet titled “*Watermark*”, available by request during this membership class or at CVC's Information Desk.





CVC'S Position Concerning The Lord's Supper

"This is my body given for you; do this in remembrance of me." Luke 22:19

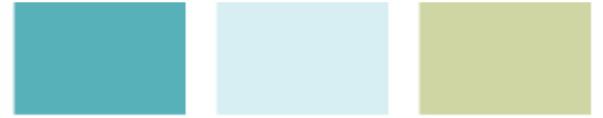
1. What is it?

The Lord's Supper was instituted by our Lord Jesus Christ on the night before His crucifixion as a symbolic representation of the believer's participation in the benefits of His death, (Matthew 26:17-30; Mark 14:12-26; Luke 22:7-23). Jesus observed the Passover, and was crucified at the time of the Passover, (Matthew 26:2, John 18:28). He is called "Our Passover", (1 Corinthians 5:7). After His crucifixion, The Lord's Supper clearly took place on the Passover, The Lord's Supper was instituted BY Jesus, FOR His church, UNTIL He comes, IN ORDER THAT we might be properly reminded of His death and return. (1 Corinthians 11:26).

2. Who Partakes of the Supper?

One, it is for born-again believers only, (John 3:3, Acts 2:41-42). We invite all to participate with us in the observance of the Lord's Supper who have experienced saving faith in Jesus Christ.

We do not believe that saving grace comes to an individual through the Supper, but that participation in the Supper is a sign that one has already received saving grace. Saving grace is experienced when a person recognizes that his sin has made a separation between him and God and that he is deserving of God's wrath and judgment, (Romans 6:23; Exodus 34:7). We also must recognize that God expressed His love for sinners by sending Christ to die on the cross to pay the penalty for our sin, (John 3:16; 1 Peter 2:24). Our responsibility is then to repent of sin and trust Christ alone for salvation and crown Him as Lord of our lives, (Luke 13:3, Acts 16:31). We can then begin to see changes in our lives in the areas of attitudes and actions (1 Corinthians 5:17). We invite all who have repented of sin, trusted Christ as Lord as Savior and experienced a changed life to observe the Supper. Two, it is for Christians who examine themselves, confessing all known sin so as not to partake of the supper in an unworthy manner (1 Corinthians 11:27, 28).



3. What does it mean today?

The ordinance is primarily summed up in command of Christ, “this do in remembrance of Me.” (Luke 22:19). It is an act of symbolic obedience whereby members of the Church, through partaking of the bread and the fruit of the vine, memorialize the death of our Lord Jesus Christ, and anticipate His Second Coming. Jesus not only died, He was raised from the dead to come again, and the Lord’s Supper points to both of these glorious events. The Supper is to be received with great reverence, gratitude, devotion, and worship.

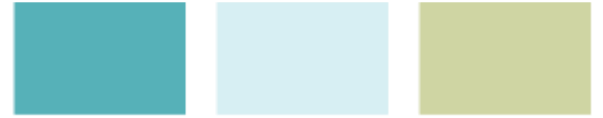
4. When and how often should we observe the Lord’s Supper?

The Bible doesn’t say how often. Normally, CVC celebrates the Lord’s Supper as follows:

- Monthly opportunities for the Lord’s Supper take place either at the Saturday UpClose service (5:30pm) or during the full weekend (Saturday PM; Sunday AM). It is also celebrated during each Good Friday service.

5. Is it appropriate to take the Lord Supper as an individual or within a LifeGroup setting?

Yes. The condition of our heart and the ordinance to remember the death and impending return of Jesus are the important factors. Individuals, families, LifeGroups are all encouraged to take opportunity to observe the Lord’s Supper.



Guidelines for Writing Your Story (Testimony)

What to Do: Ask God to give you wisdom.

- Make your story sound conversational, not academic or formal. Be warm and personal.
- Keep to a 3-4 minute limit. (That's about 650-700 words.)

What Not to Do:

- Avoid statements that reflect negatively on any church organization or individual.
- Avoid religious-sounding words, denominations, or church names.
- Avoid speaking / writing in a preachy manner. Say, "I" and "me," not "you."
- Avoid using vague terms like "joyful," "peaceful," or "changed" without explaining them.
- Avoid using religious terms like "saved," "sin," or "convicted" without explaining them.
- Avoid communicating that all your struggles and problems have now ended.

Writing Style:

- Begin with an attention-getting sentence or incident.
- Be positive, accurate and specific – sharing a few key details will help arouse interest.
- Simplify – reduce the "clutter." Mention a limited number of people and details.
- Use Bible verses directly related to your experience. But do not use the references. For example, say, "One of Jesus' disciples said..." rather than writing "1 John 5:11-13 says..." Write things just as you would share with someone one-on-one.

Before Christ: Who were you before you met Jesus? Describe what your 'old life' was like.

What were one or two of your unsatisfied deep inner needs before you came to know Jesus?

What were your attitudes, needs, and problems before you received Christ?

Use an example from your personal life here. Did your security come from money, your relationships, etc?

What unsatisfactory solutions did you use to attempt to meet those deep inner needs?



Receiving Christ: What caused you to start following Jesus?

This part of your story tells how God's work begins to become evident in you. Describe the circumstances that caused you to consider Christ as the solution to your deep inner needs. When and how did you first hear about and truly understand the story about Jesus?

State specifically the steps you took to become a follower of Jesus. Share truths about the gospel – that you realized you have disobeyed God, that you realized that you did not deserve His forgiveness, that you realized Christ died to forgive you, and that you realized your need to receive Jesus to be forgiven and to be changed forever.

What happened when you received Christ? How and why did your attitudes and actions begin to change?

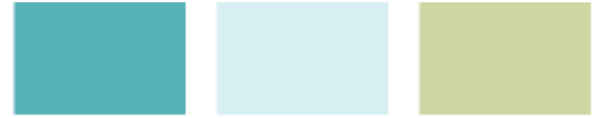
After receiving Christ: Who are you now? Describe what your new life in Christ looks like.

When giving a personal testimony, many people concentrate on the sin they had before they received Christ. However, an effective testimony focuses not on our sin, but on the work of the Holy Spirit in us so that Jesus Christ takes center stage.

State how Jesus filled or is filling your deep inner needs. What has happened since you received Christ? How has your life changed? When did you notice that change? How are you motivated differently now? *If there is a particular verse that applies, this would be a good place to use it.*

If you received Christ at an early age...

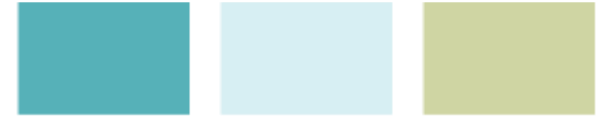
You can use a slightly different approach to writing your story. 1) **Before:** State the deep inner needs you see the people around you trying to fill. Describe how you see people unsuccessfully trying to satisfy those needs. 2) **How:** Explain how Jesus has helped you avoid some of the struggles many people face. Refer back to your conversion experience and state how you trusted Christ as a child. Make sure you briefly include truths about the gospel. 3) **After:** Illustrate how Christ has met or is meeting your deep inner needs. Remember not to communicate that all your struggles and problems have now ended. End your story by sharing how Jesus is still changing your life.



Discovering CVC:

Investing through Membership

Appendix



How to Grow Spiritually

“I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.” Romans 12:1, 2

The last thing we want to do as a church is to load people up with a bunch of religious activity that will do nothing but add to the frustration and guilt in our lives. What we want to do is to encourage people to be involved in the classic disciplines - the activities, experiences, and relationships - that have been used by God down through the centuries to change believers to actually become more like Jesus. What we want to see is transformation. Look at the word “transformed” in the preceding verses. In the original it’s *metamorphoo*. We learned the word in grade school. Metamorphosis. A caterpillar “morphs” into a butterfly.

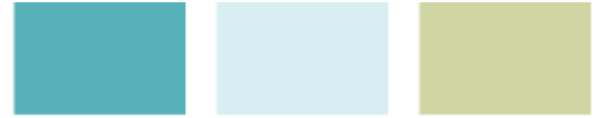
That’s what God intends for us. We are to change, to morph, to **exhibit the fruit of new life!** Staying the same isn’t an option. Don’t you want your life to be different at the end of this year than it is today? An angry mom becomes more patient. A lazy student becomes more disciplined. A sour dad becomes more joyful. An impatient single person becomes more at peace. *New life in Christ becomes a daily reality!*

How our union with Christ helps us grow

Consider Romans 6:4-7: *“We have been buried with Him through baptism into death, so that as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life. For if we have become united with Him in the likeness of His death, certainly we shall also be in the likeness of His resurrection, knowing this, that our old self was crucified with Him, in order that our body of sin might be done away with, so that we would no longer be slaves to sin; for he who has died is freed from sin.”*

We must understand who we are because of our union with Christ and then live in faith in light of our union with Him. We fail to grow and fall into sin when we forget what has happened to us in our union with Christ. Our problem is that we don't understand the reality of what happened to us when we trusted Christ. The rule, the reign, the control of sin was broken at the cross. Whether we know it or feel it, it's still true. We must not forget it. We value far too lightly what has really happened to us. We were in the domain of darkness and now we are in the light. It is an utter transformation. We must have this knowledge of the facts, meditate on these truths, and then step out in faith to live out what we really are in Christ.

Think about the men and women who pay \$2,000 to role play at a fantasy baseball camp. Watch them for a while and you will notice that they are imposters. They run slow, throw weakly, and struggle to hit the ball out of the infield. They are pretending to be major league



players. But a couple of weeks later, the real pro players come to camp. Watch them for a while and you will see that they are the “real deal.” They run fast, throw hard, and hit the ball 400 feet. The difference? They are “doing what they are.”

God, in His grace through our union with Christ, has made us “major leaguers.” Whether we realize it or not, we are the “real deal.” We need to remember who we are and start to “do what we are.”

Think about what God says is true about our identity in Christ:

10 truths about us after becoming “new” in Christ.

1. Hebrews 10:15-17 - Your sins were forgiven, never to be held against you.
2. Romans 8:11 - The Holy Spirit lives in you.
3. John 3:1-8 - You have been born again.
4. 1 John 5:11, 12 - You were given eternal life.
5. 2 Corinthians 5:17 - You were made into a new creation.
6. 2 Corinthians 5:18 - You were reconciled to God.
7. Romans 5:1 - You are no longer at war with God.
8. Colossians 1:13, 14 - You are redeemed from the enemy’s authority.
9. Colossians 1: 13, 14 - You were brought into the kingdom of God.
10. What God says about the new you is what you must choose to believe about yourself. It is making the choice to “live new”!

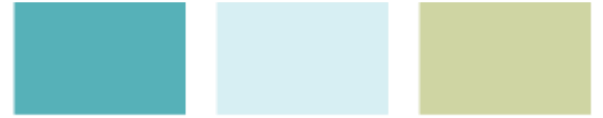
“New life brings new identity. Being a Christian is not just a matter of getting something; it's a matter of being someone... Being born again transformed you into someone who didn't exist before. What you receive as a Christian isn't the point; it's who you are.”

(Neil Anderson, *Victory Over The Darkness*, p. 43)

Why “trying hard” to grow won’t work.

While most of us have good intentions to actually be the kind of person who lives out the fruit of new life disciplines, we find ourselves unable to turn our intentions into actions. Many Christians try really hard to practice the disciplines of the Christian life. But trying hard will cause us to end up in two God-dishonoring places.

Those who are “successful” in living disciplined lives through self-effort will often become like the Pharisees in the Bible - looking “holy” on the outside, but having hearts that are filled with spiritual pride. The disciplines can become duty and drudgery.



Those who are “unsuccessful” in doing the growth disciplines will often become discouraged and want to either give up the faith or just go through the motions, settling for a sub-par spirituality.

Either way, we don’t end up becoming more like Jesus. So, we must approach the growth disciplines in a way that treats them not as more “laws” to obey, but as a means to grace.

How to view spiritual growth disciplines:

Growth for the Christian is like boarding a boat to go from point A (where we’re not very much like Christ) to point B (where we’re conformed to the image of Jesus). We can take one of three approaches.

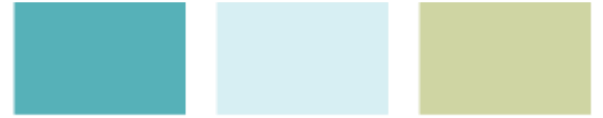
Growth could be like being on a rowboat. You leave the dock with high hopes and lots of energy. You make some good progress for a while. But before too long, you run out of energy. And you start to drift - a long way from point B.

Or growth could be like being on a speedboat. (That’s for the type A’s among us!) You fill the gas tank and leave the dock with the pedal to the metal. You’re moving pretty fast. But it’s a lot further from point A to point B than you thought. You get further than the guy in the rowboat, but you end up in the same predicament - out of gas, drifting.

God’s kind of growth is like being on a sailboat. Oh, you are responsible to hoist the sails. But you’re not depending on your own energy to make progress. Instead, you catch the wind. God moves you. Sometimes, the wind doesn’t blow as hard as you’d like. But when you keep the sails up and the rudder right, eventually, you’ll come to point B.

Practicing the fruit of new life disciplines is hoisting the sails. That’s our part. Philippians 2:12, 13 reminds us of our responsibility while demonstrating that it is God who really produces our growth: *“Work out your salvation with fear and trembling; for it is God who is at work in you, both to will and to work for His good pleasure.”*

Nobody on earth can direct the wind. It acts with complete independence. No one can make God blow His winds of growth across our lives. It’s His sovereign decision. That’s why we must cry out to God for His mercy and grace, “Please, God, blow Your winds of growth across my life. In faith, I am hoisting the sails. Now, please, in Your time and in Your way, move me.” This is a great lesson for people who have been brought up to believe that they can change themselves by self-effort, by keeping the rules of religion.



Growth is an issue of faith.

Every true Christian has realized that we must trust Jesus, not our own efforts, for our salvation. We are trusting Christ alone to save us *from the penalty of sin when we die*. But too many believers fail to trust Christ alone to save us *from the power of sin while we live*. We try to live the Christian life in our own effort. We try hard to be more loving, more joyful, more at peace, and more obedient. But we fail. The reason is because God never designed us to change ourselves from the “outside in.” He longs for us to live a God-dependent life so *He* can change us from the “inside out.”

We are not only justified by faith, we are also sanctified by faith. Colossians 2:6 says, “*As you have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in Him.*” We received Christ by grace through faith (Ephesians 2:8, 9). Now, we must continue to grow in our Christian life by grace through faith. It’s not self-effort. It’s not trying really hard. It’s not “turning over a new leaf.”

A key verse for us to remember is John 15:5. Jesus said, “*I am the vine, you are the branches; he who abides in Me and I in him, he bears much fruit, for apart from Me you can do nothing.*” We grow not by “trying” but by abiding, remaining in contact with the One who causes our growth. We must trust Him to fulfill Philippians 1:6 for us, “*For I am confident of this very thing, that He who began a good work in you will perfect it until the day of Christ Jesus.*”

While “formula” prayers can never be a substitute for prayers from the heart, sometimes a written prayer is helpful to teach us truths. The following is an example of the kind of prayer that people who want to grow could offer to the Lord:

Dear Lord Jesus,

I am tired of my lack of growth. I do not have it in me, that is, in my flesh, to grow. I am helpless. Without You, I wouldn’t even want to grow. I wouldn’t even desire to use my gifts, be in relationships, reach out to others, or worship You.

I desire something better. I believe that You will set me free from the things that keep me from real growth. Right now, I surrender myself to You. I’m Yours today. I’m trusting You to live through me so I will go where You want me to go, do what You want me to do, be what You want me to be, say what You want me to say, serve where You want me to serve, give what You want me to give, and act how You want me to act.

Jesus, You have given to me a new heart - a heart that wants to grow and produce the fruit of new life in You. I have a new identity because of my union with Jesus. I am trusting You to not only save me when I die but also to save me while I live. You are my life. I am complete in Christ. I have everything I need for life and godliness. You will give me victory and growth by Your Spirit’s power. I’m counting on You, not me for my victory. I believe that you will fulfill all your promises and will work in me.

So here I go, Lord, to live this day moment by moment in Jesus’ name, Amen.



When growth becomes “dutiful drudgery.”

Remember how Romans 12:1 begins? “Therefore I urge you, brethren, **by the mercies of God**, to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice.”

God is merciful. It’s incredible. So, we “hoist the sails” (we practice the spiritual disciplines) out of gratitude for His past mercies and in anticipation of His future mercies. This is what keeps our “hoisting the sails” a delight rather than a duty. It’s why we can live the Christian life with joy.

Suppose you give to your spouse some flowers. “Why do you do this?” he/she asks. “It’s my duty,” you say. Does that honor him/her? Is that the best motivation? No. Let’s try again.

You give him/her the flowers. “Why do you do this?” he/she asks. “It’s my delight,” you say. “You’ve been so good to me over the years and I just know you will be good to me in the future. You are such a loving person.” Now he/she’s honored. You’ve been motivated out of gratitude for the many things he/she has done for you over the years.

The bouquet we give to God is a life filled with the spiritual disciplines. And we do it because of a delight in His mercies. This keeps our service from being “dutiful drudgery” and turns it into something that is our pleasure, our delight. God is honored with that kind of service. As John Piper says, “God is most glorified in us when we are most satisfied in Him.”

God’s mercies precede our changing. His winds power our growth. Growth - our transformation, our morphing, our becoming like Christ, our sanctification - begins and continues in God. We get the joy of experiencing personal growth and He gets the glory. Maybe that’s why one of the greatest portions of God’s Word that deals with growth (Romans 12:1, 2) is preceded by these words in Romans 11:36: “*For from Him and to Him and through Him are all things. To Him be glory forever and ever. Amen.*”



Books for Spiritual Growth

Theology

Knowing God by J.I. Packer
The Holiness of God by R.C. Sproul
The Pleasures of God by John Piper
Desiring God by John Piper
Know Why You Believe by Paul Little
Systematic Theology by Wayne Grudem
The Reason for God by Tim Keller

Devotional

Pilgrim's Progress by John Bunyan
The Pursuit of God by A.W. Tozer
The Calvary Road by Roy Hession
Spiritual Depression by Martyn Lloyd-Jones
Morning and Evening by Charles Spurgeon

Discipleship

Spiritual Disciplines for the Christian Life by Donald Whitney
The Master Plan of Evangelism by Robert E. Coleman
The Valley of Vision:
A Collection of Puritan Prayers & Devotions by Arthur Bennett
Returning to Holiness by Greg Frizzell
Radical by David Platt
Crazy Love by Francis Chan

Leadership

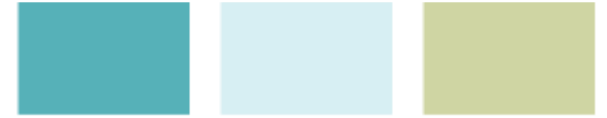
The Making of a Leader by Robert Clinton
Spiritual Leadership by J. Oswald Sanders
The Christian Ministry by Charles Bridges
Halftime by Bob Buford

Biography

George Muller of Bristol by Arthur T. Pierson
Shadow of the Almighty by Elizabeth Elliot
Jonathan Edwards by Ian Murray
Hudson Taylor's Spiritual Secret by Dr. and Mrs. Howard Taylor

Skills for Ministry

Bold Love by Dan Allender
30 Days to Confident Leadership by Bob Biehl
7 Practices of Effective Ministry by Andy Stanley



CVC and Spiritual Gifts

We do not believe, as some Christians do, that the public expression of the gifts of miracles, tongues, interpretation, and healing have ceased for today's church. However, we are not a church where the expression of these gifts is emphasized. Some people at CVC have experienced this gift of tongues and use the gift in their personal devotions. And that's OK.

But we know that God has raised up this church to reach new people for Christ through culturally relevant and creative communication of Bible truth. We have been and are being effective in sharing Jesus with irreligious people. So we have to stay sensitive to the fact that the public expression of gifts like tongues and interpretation often turn off the unchurched who show up.

1 Corinthians 14:23 makes the point: *"If the whole church assembles together and all speak in tongues, and ungifted men or unbelievers enter, will they not say that you are mad?"*

At CVC, God has called us to create an environment in worship that insures that unsaved people will not focus on our methods of worship, be turned off, and subsequently lose sight of the Savior Himself.

Regarding tongues, Billy Graham gives sound Biblical advice in his book on the Holy Spirit. "Seek not; forbid not." This comes from two main passages.

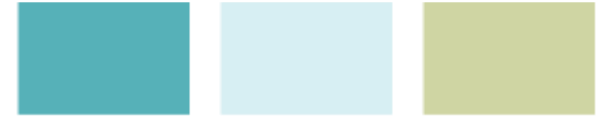
"Forbid not." 1 Corinthians 14:39 says, *"Do not forbid to speak in tongues."* The churches who teach that the gifts of miracles, tongues, interpretation, and healing are either psychological hoaxes or Satanic counterfeits may actually be violating this command. "Forbid not". But that's just half of the equation.

"Seek not." Churches that teach that this baptism of the Holy Spirit always results in speaking in tongues are just wrong.

1 Corinthians 12:29-31 asks a series of questions:

All are not apostles, are they? All are not prophets, are they? All are not teachers, are they? All are not workers of miracles, are they? All do not have the gift of healings, do they? All do not speak with tongues, do they? All do not interpret, do they?
But earnestly desire the greater gifts.

It is wrong for someone who has not been given the gift of tongues to feel that he is somehow a "second rate" Christian or to earnestly covet this gift if God has not seen fit to give it to him. It's also wrong for someone who has this gift to try to compel others to have it or to teach that everyone must experience it. It's not the high point of Christian maturity. Millions of spiritually mature Christians have never spoken in tongues and many who have spoken in tongues are not spiritually mature. May we at CVC never permit controversy concerning the gifts of the Spirit to bring division to this body of Christ!



Spiritual Gifts Inventory

At CVC, we define spiritual gift this way:

A supernatural ability activated and empowered by the Holy Spirit that enables a believer to build up the body of Christ in a unique way.

Your spiritual gift(s) is a manifestation (exhibited, expressed, comes to light) of the Holy Spirit in you as a follower of Jesus. Everyone who has entered into relationship with Jesus Christ has a gift (or gifts) that God has equipped you with. So what are your spiritual gifts?

These can be identified through taking a spiritual gifts inventory, and many of these inventories are available. The one that CVC recommends may be found at <http://www.eleventalents.com>. Below is a sampling of questions from this site to give you an idea of the types of questions/statements the inventory has.

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- | | |
|--|--|
| 1. ___ I like to organize people, tasks, and events. | 7. ___ I consistently look for opportunities to build relationships with non-Christians. |
| 2. ___ I can readily distinguish between spiritual truth and error, good and evil. | 8. ___ I enjoy reassuring and strengthening those who are discouraged. |
| 3. ___ I enjoy spending time nurturing and caring for others. | 9. ___ I give more than a tithe so that kingdom work can be accomplished. |
| 4. ___ I am able to communicate God's Word effectively. | 10. ___ I willingly take on a variety of odd jobs around the church to meet the needs of others. |
| 5. ___ I am often sought out by others for advice about spiritual or personal matters. | 11. ___ I am committed, and schedule blocks of time for reading and studying scripture, to understand biblical truth fully and accurately. |
| 6. ___ I am careful, thorough, and skilled at managing details. | 12. ___ I enjoy helping people sometimes regarded as undeserving or beyond help. |
-

Taking a spiritual gift assessment will help you learn or be reminded of your spiritual gifting.

So we encourage you: **seek out** your gift(s) then **serve in** your gift(s)!



What the Bible teaches about Divorce & Remarriage

The subject of divorce and remarriage is one that often causes people to react emotionally. Some are confused while others are ready to stand up and fight to defend their positions and views. It can indeed become an emotional subject. Actually, it is a confusing subject because there are a variety of conclusions people have come to and a variety of situations people find themselves in while trying to apply the Word of God to these different situations.

At the same time, there can be disagreement and different opinions over this issue. We cannot wish it away or pretend that it doesn't sometimes occur. We are faced with a need to take a stand and, in some way to regulate it. In fact, we believe God was faced with the same dilemma when he instructed Moses to allow the Israelites to divorce under certain circumstances (Matthew 19:3-9 and Deuteronomy 24:1-4). God was faced with the reality of man's sin in relation to marriage.

God's original plan was one man and one woman for life. Two individuals were to become one flesh. They were to love, cherish, submit, and be committed to each other until one of them died. However, because of man's sinful nature, God recognized the reality of divorce (Leviticus 21:7, 14 and Jeremiah 3:8) and regulated when it could and could not occur. God hates divorce (Malachi 2:16) because it is contrary to His original plan and is a result of man's sinfulness. We too, therefore, should hate divorce. Divorce is not something we should aspire to or desire. God never requires it; He allows it only under certain circumstances. When are divorce and remarriage allowed by God and when are they wrong and not allowed? This is the important question each of us must wrestle with and come to biblical conclusions and convictions. Many respected Bible believing people have come to different and opposite conclusions while studying the same verse! Who is right, and who is wrong?

We at Cuyahoga Valley Church believe God allows divorce and remarriage to occur in two specific situations. If a particular situation does not fall into either of these categories, then God does not allow it and the elders and the church cannot support or permit it either.

Situation # 1 – Adultery

The first situation is found in Matthew 19:3-12. Verse 9 is commonly called the exception clause.

“And I say to you. Whoever divorces his wife, except it be for immorality, and marries another woman, commits adultery and whoever marries her who is divorced commits adultery.” Matthew 19:9



There are three basic conclusions others have come to concerning the meaning of this verse.

1. The first view is that since the book of Matthew was written primarily to the Jews, the exception clause only applies to them.
2. The second view is that the word immorality should be understood from a Jewish perspective and that the word immorality applied to the betrothal or engagement period as in the case when Joseph was planning to divorce Mary his espoused wife (Matthew 1:18-20).
3. The third view is that the Greek word immorality (*porneia*) refers to sexual immorality in general including but not limited to incest, sodomy, harlotry, perversion, and sexual intercourse.

We believe the third view is correct. As we have studied the word immorality (*porneia*) there is only one conclusion that we can come to: this word refers to unlawful sexual behavior in general. God allows divorce and remarriage in this situation.

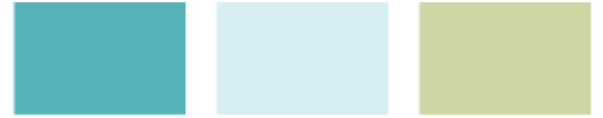
Before we go any further we say this: Just because unfaithfulness does occur in a marriage does not mean that the faithful spouse must seek divorce. Hopefully they would be willing to forgive the unfaithful one and seek to restore the marriage. The unfaithful spouse must repent of his/her sin and recommit themselves to God and their marriage. The faithful spouse should also examine their own life to see what changes need to be made in their life as well. Divorce should never be desired or preferred. It should be a last resort after the unfaithful spouse has had time to demonstrate fruit of repentance. If the unfaithful spouse continues in his/her sinful lifestyle and refuses by their actions to be faithful to that spouse, then and only then should the faithful spouse consider seeking divorce.

Situation # 2 – Abandonment

The other situation in which we believe God allows divorce is found in I Corinthians 7:12-16. The situation here is concerning mixed marriages in which a Christian is married to an unbeliever. More than likely, this is a situation in which both were unsaved at the time of the marriage and then one became a Christian or in which the couple is unequally yoked (one a Christian and one not a Christian).

Paul handles this situation differently than he does the one in verses 10 and 11 in which both are Christians. If both spouses are Christians he says they should not leave their spouse. However, if they do leave then he says they have only two choices or alternatives: remain unmarried for the rest of their lives or else be reconciled to their spouse.

Now, back to the situation in which one is a Christian and one is not. What should the Christian do if the unsaved spouse decides to leave and end the marriage? While they should have a desire to reconcile and to restore their marriage, they should not beg their unbelieving spouse to stay, contest the divorce, or compromise their convictions to win them back. The Scripture does not teach or imply this.



“But if the unbelieving depart, let him depart. A brother or a sister is not under bondage in such cases. But God has called us to peace.”

(1 Corinthians 7:15) They should permit them leave. God says He has called them to peace. The frustrations of being unequally yoked have ended in this case. God has called them to peace and they are no longer under bondage.

The word “bondage” comes from the root Greek word *deo* that means to bind or be in bonds. *Doulos*, the noun form of this word, is translated slave or servant. The form used here is *doulao*, which means to be held subject to or to enslave. In Romans 7:2 this same word is used pertaining to the death of a spouse.

“For the woman who has an husband is bound by the law to her husband so long as he lives. But if the husband dies, she is released from the law of her husband.” Romans 7:2

Under normal circumstances, a wife is bound (the same word is used in 1 Corinthians 7:15) to her husband until he dies. Then she is loosed (no longer bound) to him and she is free to marry another. In other words, in 1 Corinthians 7:15 the word “bondage” means that the Christian who is married to an unsaved spouse who leaves and desires to end the marriage is no longer bound to the unsaved spouse who leaves. They have been loosed and they are free to marry another, but only in the Lord. The bond of marriage has been broken.

Again, this should not be desired or encouraged. The unsaved may be under conviction because of their exposure to the Gospel through the godly behavior and the loving witness of their Christian spouse. No matter how difficult things may become, the Christian spouse should never openly or secretly hope nor encourage their unsaved spouse to leave.

Our conviction is if divorce occurs for either or both the reasons just mentioned (and it can be substantiated and verified), then God allows remarriage. We believe God’s Word is clear. When divorce is allowed, remarriage is allowed. When divorce is not allowed, remarriage is not allowed.

Cuyahoga Valley Church will be faithful to the Scriptures. When God’s Word does not permit divorce, then we will not permit it. When God’s Word does permit it then we will lovingly permit those involved to put their lives back together and go on living for Christ.



Finding a Healthy Church

As a church that supports church plant, considers campuses, and encourages other biblical church, CVC has included material designed to help people evaluate the health of a church. What follows is a list of characteristics that define a healthy church. (The material in this article was written and edited by the leaders of CVC and inspired by the brochure entitled “How to Recognize A Healthy Church” by Chuck Swindoll.)

Perhaps you’ve moved and are unfamiliar with the area. Or you could be a new follower of Christ in need of a place to worship. Or maybe God is leading you to join a new church plant to reach some new people for Christ. Whatever your situation, we want to help you distinguish a healthy church from one that’s not.

Churches come in a variety of shapes and sizes, each with its own personality and style of ministry. Some are contemporary while others are traditional. Some appeal to baby boomers while others appeal to post-moderns. The best church for you is one that meets your needs while giving you the opportunity to meet the needs of others. We encourage you to ask God to lead you in your search. He desires your worship, especially as part of His body, and He will direct you to the right church for you.

1. A healthy church glorifies God.

Scripture says, “Whatever you do, do all to the glory of God” (1 Corinthians 10:31b). To glorify God means to draw attention to His greatness. The local church is the focal point of God's plan for displaying His glory to the nations. This is the primary purpose of the church and of individual Christians.

Ask yourself, “Do I sense that the leaders of this church really are seeking to glorify God? Or are they somehow wanting to get attention for themselves? Is the worship of God in spirit and in truth a top priority for this church?”

2. A healthy church is Bible-based and Christ-centered.

The early church emphasized Christ-centered biblical teaching. Teaching should explain what Scripture says in a particular passage, carefully explaining its meaning and applying it to the people. Solid, consistent teaching from God’s Word helps us grow to be like Jesus in several ways. It matures and stabilizes our faith in times of testing. It increases our ability to detect and confront error. It gives us wisdom. Solid teaching should also be coupled with compassionate application. A Bible-based church produces people who



are not just hearers of the word, but also doers who live like Christ and who have a commitment to know God as He has revealed Himself in Scripture.

Ask yourself, “Do I see the leaders of this church challenging people to learn the Word of God and to live out the Word of God in practical ways? Are they giving people practical opportunities to apply the Word – to love the Lord, serve each other, and be a blessing to the world?”

3. A healthy church is led by authentic, genuine servant leaders who exercise integrity.

Jesus said, “Whoever wishes to become great among you shall be your servant” (Mark 10:43). In a healthy church, the staff and leaders should serve in a context of loving, supportive accountability to God and each other. Since the best predictor of future performance is past behavior, it’s important to find others who have already served on a team with the leaders and to ask them questions about the leaders’ approach to ministry.

Ask yourself, “Do the leaders of this church have good track records as servant leaders? Does the structure of the church insure that the leaders are accountable spiritually and financially? Do I sense that the leaders are passionate about serving others rather than being served?”

4. A healthy church helps people grow.

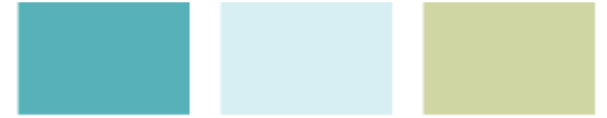
God gives leaders to the church to prepare God’s people for works of service so they will “grow up in every way” (Ephesians 4:15). Healthy churches provide various tools and so people in differing stages of the Christian life can grow. New believers, maturing Christians, as well as passionate followers all find positive encouragement to keep growing in Christ.

Ask yourself, “Does the church have a passion for helping people grow to spiritual maturity? Do the people sense that their leaders are growing in their walk with Christ? Are personal spiritual growth plans encouraged?”

5. The healthy church exudes warmth.

Not only was the early church caught up in worship, individual devotion to the Lord, and instruction from the Word, but “they were continually devoting themselves... to fellowship” (Acts 2:42). They cared for one another. Members of the church should reflect a true commitment to the life of the church through attendance, giving, prayer and service. The leaders must be concerned not only with growing numbers, but with growing members.

Ask yourself, “Do the leaders of this church encourage people to be in authentic community with one another? Do the leaders and people in this church really care about each other? Do they have a plan to help attenders get connected with others believers? Are the leaders themselves connected to others in their church body?”



6. A healthy church reaches out to others.

First-century Christians took their concern a step further and shared what they knew about Jesus with others. When they ventured beyond their walls, lives were changed: “And the Lord was adding to their number day by day those who were being saved” (Acts 2:47). A healthy church helps people appropriately express their faith where they live or work.

Ask yourself, “Does this church have a genuine passion to fulfill the Great Commission? Do the leaders and people care about making more and better disciples? Will I be challenged to reach my circle of influence for Christ? Is compassionate service to others in need a part of the ministry of this church and is it exemplified?”

7. A healthy church has a contagious style.

Like a magnet, a church with a contagious style draws people to its doors. Four features comprise this style:

- 1) It is biblical in content. Messages are based on the Word of God, not on the opinions or interest of the leaders.
- 2) It is authentic in nature. This is a church that believes what it says.
- 3) It is gracious in attitude. The church sees itself as a family, not as a corporation.
- 4) It is relevant in approach. This church shows how God’s Word applies to today’s needs, issues, and concerns.

Ask yourself, “Do the people of this church freely invite others into the church family and fellowship? Would I want to invite my friends, neighbors, and co-workers to visit my church and to join our fellowship?”

8. A healthy church reproduces itself

In nature, all healthy organisms reproduce themselves. The same is true for the church. CVC was started twenty years ago as a church plant sponsored by a church in Dayton, Ohio with missions as a part of its DNA. It is that same DNA that CVC is seeking to pass on to Church of the Hills.

Ask yourself, “Does this church care about building the Kingdom of God beyond its own direct ministry? Does the church have a plan to reproduce itself? Are mission dollars being set aside to be used for evangelism that results in the establishment of new churches?”

Whenever you find a church that glorifies God, is Bible-based and Christ-centered, is led by accountable servant leaders, helps people grow, exudes warmth, reaches out to others, has a contagious style, and reproduces itself, you have found a healthy church. Remember, the best church for you is one that meets your needs while giving you the opportunity to meet the needs of others. May your search result in a renewed commitment to the Lord as you join a truly healthy body of believers.



Responsibilities and Privileges of Membership

1. Responsibilities

To put it simply, the main responsibility of every member of CVC is to participate in the life of the church by seeking to follow Christ by growing in the fruit of new life. In short, the responsibility of every participating member of CVC is to seek to be a growing Christian.

The church ought to be a safe place for people with messed-up lives to come together to experience God's forgiveness for our failures, His grace to put the pieces back together, and His love to take the message out to others who need His power in their lives, too.

2. Privileges

- Being a member means that you now have the right to influence the key decisions of the church, most importantly the selection of elder candidates and their election.
- Members also receive priority for facility usage and staff members' time (such as weddings, funerals, benevolence needs, personal support in your area of ministry, etc.).
- From time to time, meetings or other functions are held which are for "members only." These events are usually called to either inform the core of the church of a major concern or to gather input from the church family. Therefore, they are limited only to those who are participating at all levels of the grow commitments.
- Virtually all key levels of leadership positions in the church require membership as a prerequisite. The primary reason, however, to be a member is not to gain a personal advantage, but to identify ourselves with the characteristics or marks of biblical maturity and unity.



Steps Toward Becoming A Member

We who are in Christ are technically already full members of the body of Christ. We have an invisible, unbreakable bond that links us to Christ and to each other. But participating membership is about making the invisible, visible; the abstract concrete.

1. Investigate.

During this step, a prospective member learns about becoming a member. By attending our membership class, you have an opportunity to find out more about CVC, to understand our philosophy, our direction, and our beliefs, and then prayerfully consider if God is leading you to join this local fellowship of believers.

2. Invest.

A prospective member responds to the material studied during the investigation stage. He or she fills out the member application forms, which includes his or her story about coming to faith in Christ, and makes the membership commitments. The prospective member returns these forms to the church office and will be contacted for an interview to review forms, and answer any questions or reservations before joining CVC.

3. Affirm.

Prospective members return the provided forms in this membership packet to our church office. This step includes a personal interview, usually with a staff member or an elder. Key membership issues are discussed and any concerns or unusual circumstances are covered. The interviewer then affirms the prospective member or refers remaining uncertainties to be resolved by the staff as a group or by the elders as a group. Keep in mind that we are not looking for “perfect Christians” (whatever that is!). The purpose is to confirm your commitment to Christ, to CVC, and to a lifelong process of personal, spiritual growth.

4. Celebration

We want the rest of our church family to celebrate with our newest members! This is done in several ways, including publicizing their names in our weekend program, including their picture in a slide presentation that is seen between weekend services, maybe even an occasional video piece.