

CUYAHOGA VALLEY CHURCH

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VISIONGUIDE



WELCOME

We are glad that you are spending some time reading through our Vision Guide at CVC. Maybe you are just checking us out. Or perhaps you are considering membership or leadership at CVC. Either way, this will help inform you about who we are as a church and what we believe God has called us to do.

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 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

**“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)





RESTORATION

Rubbish. Scrap. Junk. Worthless. We have so many words that communicate “this has no value...”

But: 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.



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.

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!

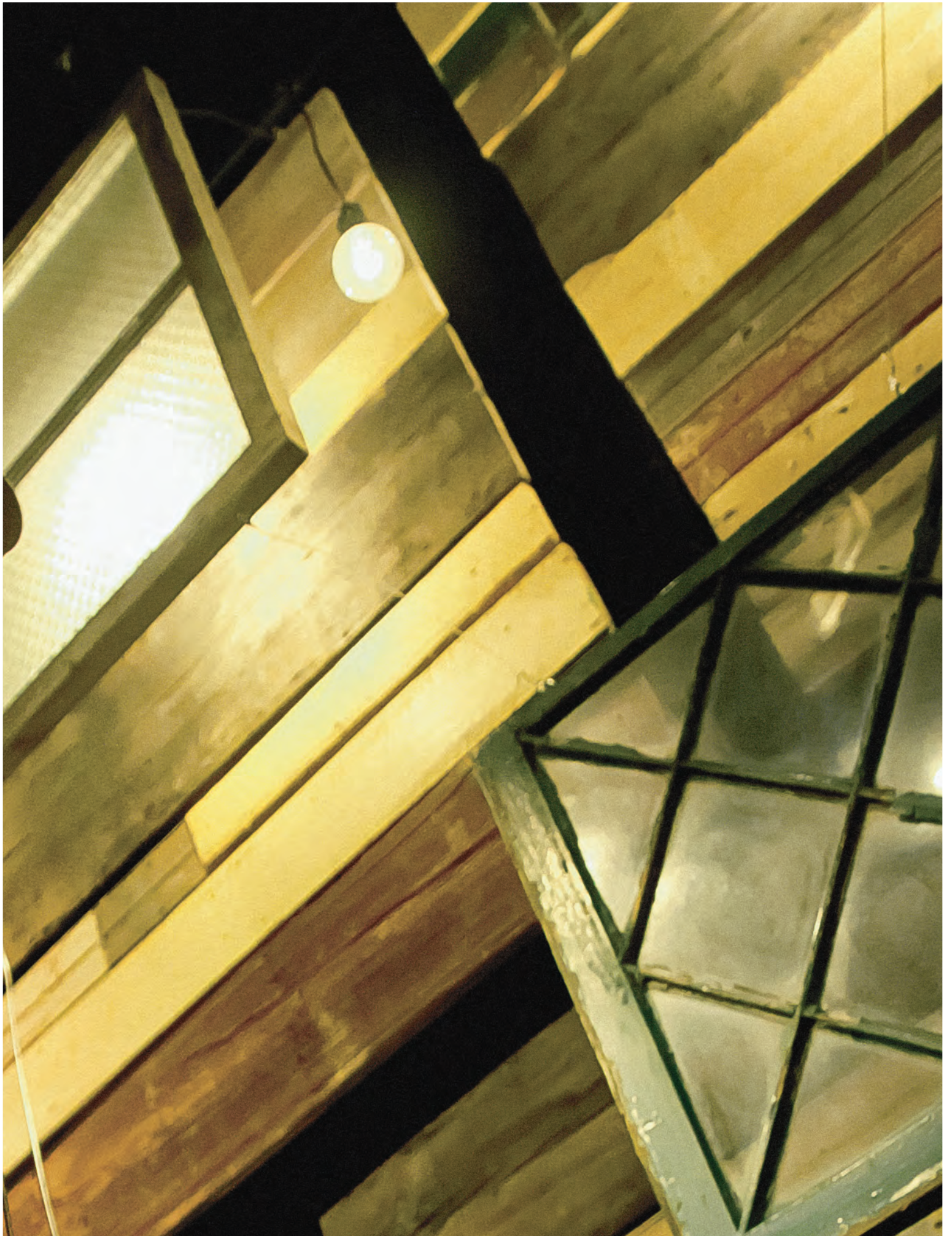
If we have trusted Christ as our Savior, we are living now in a spiritual "Year of Jubilee." We have been set free from bondage. Our spiritual debt to the Lord has been paid. What is broken in us, Jesus can fix!

If you feel broken in some way, then CVC is the place for you. Unbroken 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).







MISSION



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 about inviting people “from” something as much as we are about inviting people “to” something because we want to be known 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 stoked 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 this mission?***

EVERYONE. LIVE NEW. EVERY DAY.





PASSIONS

LIVING TRUTH

GOD DEPENDENCE

CARING COMMUNITY

LINKED GENERATIONS

EQUIPPED LEADERSHIP

MISSIONAL LIVING

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 our 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 values that 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 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; 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.

Apart from Christ we can accomplish nothing. Our lives, our families, and our ministries are fueled by prayer. Because we are God dependent, 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 or the unknown. As God comes through for us in ways that defy human explanation, praise and glory goes 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

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. We believe that growth happens best when we are in community, not in isolation and that spiritual friendships are vital for healthy spiritual development and maturity.

We live this out here at CVC by connecting regularly and face-to-face in small groups called **LifeGroups**. The goal of LifeGroups is to cultivate deep and meaningful relationships that are centered around God's Word, prayer, spiritual growth, genuine care and a heart to serve Christ. When we face life's problems, we have a group of people around us praying for us, encouraging us, visiting us, and challenging us toward growth and maturity.

Hebrews 10:24-25; John 13:34-35; Acts 2:42-27; Philippians 2:3-4; 1 Thessalonians 2:8; Colossians 3:16; Matthew 22:37-40; 1 John 3:16-18

LINKED GENERATIONS

CVC is committed to intergenerational connectedness in our relationships, families, ministries, and discipleship. 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.

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. 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. The CVC staff has embraced our biblical responsibility to train you to fulfill the ministry God created you for in your home, relationships, workplace, community and world.

CVC 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

**LIVING TRUTH.
GOD DEPENDENCE.
CARING COMMUNITY.
LINKED GENERATIONS.
EQUIPPED LEADERSHIP.
MISSIONAL LIVING.**

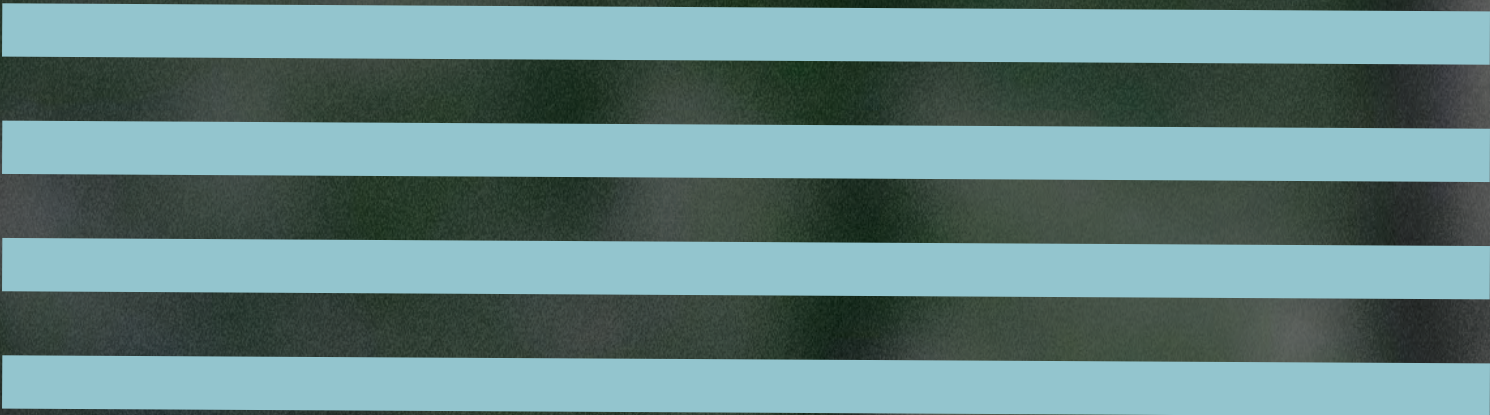
MISSIONAL LIVING

Jesus left heaven and clothed Himself in human flesh to impact people who did not know about God's love, grace and forgiveness. The Father sent Jesus, so Jesus sends us. We follow the ultimate missionary. We all have relationships with people who are far from God and 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, craftsmen, homemakers, coaches, nurses, lawyers, doctors, etc).

We are people that see ourselves as God's agents of restoration in the relationships and community around us. We want to 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 use our time and 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*

**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
GROUPS
SERVICE***

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.



W

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.

G

GROUPS:

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	Romans 15:14
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.

SERVICE:

S

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 these things that 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, service - 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?

BELOVED CHILD

SELF-FEEDER

SERVANT

INVESTOR

DISCIPLER

MISSIONARY

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? Often, Christians are caught in the routine of “just doing church” and they wonder why.

At CVC we are convinced that discipleship doesn't happen best by merely providing activity, events, information and programs. 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 evidence of our growth as a disciple of Jesus will reveal itself in 6 areas which we call the “Fruit of New Life”. The fruit of new life is best understood not by our activity but by our identity, not by what we do, but by who we understand ourselves to be. As I grow in Christ, I will see myself as a: **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





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.



BELOVED CHILD



SELF-FEEDER



SERVANT



INVESTOR



DISCIPLER



MISSIONARY





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.



NOTES



