

1.

Membership Matters

Main idea: The Church is a family– a family in which we all commit to doing life together, each pushing ahead for the common good of all. God places us in the family and God calls us to fulfill our responsibilities and roles in His family with great honor and diligence. We are not called to “go” to Church; we are called to “be” the Church.

The Church is a community of individuals with diverse backgrounds, personalities, philosophies, ideas and visions; united by a relationship with Christ. But, this is not “church” the way our society defines it. We are a family.¹ A family with members of all ages, the majority of whom are in their twenties & early thirties.² A family with members who are students and software designers and retail clerks and parents and construction workers. A family with members who watch sports and skateboard and who do cross-stitch and who play in punk rock bands and who read mystery novels. A family with members who have an intimate relationship with God, others who desire to know Him better and still others who don't know Him at all. A family with members who gather on Sundays and throughout the week to worship God, to pray, to learn, and for some, to just hang out. We are, essentially, a family created by God for His glory.

When anyone enters a relationship with God by grace from, and faith in, the person and work of Jesus Christ, they are entering two covenants. The first is to journey to

¹The biggest metaphor used in the book of 1 Timothy, for instance, is that of a family. Paul even suggests that those who are not leading in their families– and living out the faith in their families– will not make good leaders in the church– because the church is just a bigger family! If they can't manage a small group (i.e. a spouse and kids), how could they help lead many other adults and many other kids?

²An important note here: Just as human families grow to encompass all generations, so, too, must the Church, the Family of God. We do need to help create a place that encourages spiritual fathers and mothers– and grandparents– to help raise the next generation of Christ followers. In other words, we do not need to stay exclusively young– we need to become more complex.

God for the rest of their lives and love Him fully (i.e. follow Christ). The second is to journey with His children in the community of the local church. That is, you become part of that family, the Church.

Your participation in a church is an official recognition of this.³ The purpose of our covenant is to...

- ***Join the Spirit in forming an authentic community that reflects the relationship between the Father, Son, & Spirit.*** As we are created in God's image, and God is relational (the Trinity is relational), we, too, are relational beings. It is part of what we reflect of God. This carries over into several spiritual/human institutions: The Church has, historically, seen marriage as emblematic of the relational Trinity– with the man loving the woman as Christ loves the Church, with the women acting as the helper and companion (the same words used of the Holy Spirit), and God the Father above them. In the Church, men are to lead their families. And, select men are to lead the church (a big family of families) as spiritual fathers. They are to serve as Christ serves, leading by serving. It is interesting that, here, the Scriptures, too, speak of three distinct roles in the Scripture: Elders/pastors, deacons, and members. Does this relationship and partnership in some way mirror the Trinity? Do the pastors act as spiritual fathers, whereas the deacons (the term means *servant*) model the servant nature of Christ? Do the members, empowered to do ministry by the Holy Spirit, represent that dynamic force of God in this world? Or, might the pastors serve as Christ, by leading through serving... and the members come alongside them, as the Holy Spirit comes alongside a believer, to fuel the mission of the church... while God the Father is above all...? Certainly there is much to consider here as to why the Scriptures break down in this way... and what we might learn from that.

³We believe that the Head of the church is Jesus Christ. The church is both universal and local. It is universal in the sense that it is composed of "positional members". Scripture is full of references to the once-and-for-all relationship we have with Christ, which happens the instant we give our life to Christ and decide to follow Him. At that moment, we become a "positional member" in the body of Christ. "Positional Membership" is eternal and unchanging.

The church is local in the sense that it is composed of "participating members." The Bible urges "positional members" to continue in their spiritual growth journey before becoming "participating members" in a specific local church. During the course of a lifetime a person may be a "participating member" of several different local churches while maintaining a permanent "positional membership" in the Body of Christ. We cannot see the invisible bond of "positional membership" in the Body of Christ, but we can identify those who are the "participating members" here at CCC.

- ***To clarify the ongoing blessings & responsibilities of each member.*** The tension here is that we want to look and see what God has done– and celebrate it. These are the blessings of God. But, we also want to live lives of worship in the present– living a life of worship is our pleasure– and responsibility– before God.
- ***To encourage consistency, accountability, and loving unity within the church family.*** “Membership” in a local church is not a right that we have– but a responsibility that we are privileged into. It is far more than putting your name on a role. It is choosing to “do life” together. We will talk more about unity and walking together in love in two upcoming chapters.
- ***To accomplish God’s call for our church family.*** One pastor has likened this concept in several of his writings to a “divine fingerprint.” Just as my fingerprint looks different than yours– and everyone else’s– so, too, does the call that God places on particular churches.⁴ The ministries we do may be the result of where we are, specific events in the area... all circumstances under His sovereignty. When you come into a new church, then, you are not to expect it be just like the one you came from. Every local Body must discern the unique, specific call that God has placed upon it. So, the question is not, “How did they do it where you came from?” Or, “How did they do it when we were growing up?” Rather, “How does God want us to do it right now?” To do so, we do not lean on tradition, although we stand upon it and wish to learn from it (We seek continuity with the past, not conformity to it). Nor do we appeal to cultural relevance, although we do want to be relevant. Rather, we strive to root and ground what we do in Scripture.

Our covenant together does not imply that you (or the leaders) will never fall short of these goals, but that the desire of your heart is to fulfill each of these responsibilities to the best of your (and our) ability. We trust that your commitment will be a personal blessing in your own journey to Christ, as well as a blessing to those around you.

Is church membership Biblical?

Sometimes, people wonder if “church membership” is, indeed, Biblical– or if it’s just something that we created in our western world that’s full of clubs and private

⁴This analogy is often credited to Bill Hybels of Willowcreek Community Church in the Chicago area.

memberships.⁵ A cursory look at Scripture shows us several things, however:

- A numerical record was kept (Acts 2:37-47).
- Records were kept of widows (1 Timothy 5:3-16).
- Leaders were chosen from among the Body (Acts 6:1-6).⁶
- Discipline was carried out, such that there was knowledge as to who was an “insider” and who was not (Matthew 18:15-20, 1 Corinthians 5, Galatians 6:1).
- Elders will be held accountable for the members (Hebrews 13:17, Ezekiel 3:18-19).⁷
- There was an awareness of who was a church member (Romans 16:1-6).

Not only was there an awareness of who was a church member, but they had the idea that God has placed those church members there— they were there by His sovereign design! 1 Corinthians 12:18 says, “In fact, God has arranged the parts in the Body, every one of them, just as he wanted them to be.” This is an important concept, for living in community with others is difficult. The closer you get, the more flaws you see— and they see. And, many times, the only thing that will keep you close is remembering that it is God, not you, that has brought you to your church.

⁵Again, the distinction is that with a church you are joining a family— and partnering to forge ahead with them. You are not joining an institution. You are committed to doing life with other people— and that is a profound difference.

⁶As you will see in the process we have chosen to implement in raising new leaders to the forefront at CCC, we believe this is how God has led us, as well. This gives the Body time to test and approve the leaders before they are placed into position, it insures that the new leaders know the mission and vision of the church as well as possible, and they come into the position on the same page with what God is already doing in our midst. We feel that God will send the leaders we need, just when we need them. And, we have seen this happen over and over, time and time again.

⁷As we will see, elders/ pastors (the two terms are synonymous in Scripture) will be held accountable for the people in their congregation. They will be held accountable for the decisions they make, for the pastoring they do, for how they lead and direct and govern the affairs of the church. At the same time, members, according to the Bible, will be held accountable for how well they, too, follow the leadership of the pastors. As we will see, this is not an authoritarian leadership, but a servant model.

There is much helpful information on this subject in the section of this book on elder and deacon qualifications. Other good resources are John Bevere’s *Under Cover* and Watchman Nee’s *Spiritual Authority*.

Psalm 92:13 says, “Those who are planted in the house of the Lord shall flourish in the courts of our God.” Make note that it says those who are planted make progress in their faith. Just as transplanting a garden-variety house plant every few weeks is damaging to the root system and overall health of the plant, so, too, is transplanting followers of Jesus. Physical– and spiritual– root systems need time to flourish and grow.

Often, when we uproot ourselves because of trial and tribulation, it is, possibly, that those trials would have grown us, would have toughened our roots– and that we would have entered a strong season in which God would have grown us. All of this to say, we should take heart not to ignore– or act blindly– towards our own character flaws. And, we should realize that God does use other people to help refine us. And, He will use us to help refine them. That is why He brings us together– not only for ministry to our world, but to sharpen and strengthen one another. And we are all here by His design.

What are the responsibilities of the pastors?

And, the pastors⁸ of the church seemed to have known who they were shepherding⁹, as well (see Hebrews 13:17). As in Scripture, the leaders of CCC, with the help of the Holy Spirit, covenant the following:

- ***We commit ourselves to lovingly caring for you and seeking your growth in Christ*** (Hebrews 13:17; 1 Thessalonians. 5:12). The long process we have for installing elders/ pastors in the church assures that they are not “in” for the title, or in order to be able to simply make decisions and push a certain agenda. They are performing their duties from an overflow of love for Jesus Christ and a love for His church, His people. You will notice, too, that we have involved wives in this process (as well as in monthly, informal meetings with all the pastors and their wives), because they have an important role in the shepherding process of our church. They, too, are seen as leaders– even if they are not officially pastors/ elders. And, their husbands would not be able to do the work they do were their wives not supportive– and helpful. More on this in the sections on structure and qualifications for pastors and elders.

⁸An important distinction to make is that we see these “names” and “positions” as “roles” and not “titles.” More on this distinction in the chapter on the leadership structure.

⁹“An essential part of this metaphor is the inseparable relationship between the sheep and the shepherd. Because sheep are defenseless, an unguarded flock is in danger. So there must always be shepherds to keep watch over the flock. Throughout Scripture, a shepherdless flock is deplored and lamented (Numbers 27:17; 1 Kings 22:17; Zechariah 10:2; Matthew 9:36)” (Strauch, *Biblical Eldership: An Urgent Call*, p146).

- ***We covenant to provide teaching and counsel from the Scriptures*** (Galatians 6:6; I Timothy 5:17-18).¹⁰ Here, let me mention the idea that preaching and teaching is a two-way street. The teacher/ preacher has a responsibility to be prepared, studied-up, and prayed-through– as do the people. What comes out on Sundays (or Midweek) is a dynamic interplay between what’s been going on in our lives with God during the past few days. This is one of the reasons we’re striving to provide study guides for upcoming series through books of the Bible.
- ***We commit that this teaching will span the whole counsel of God’s Word*** (Acts 20:27-28). In general, we will look towards preaching verse-by-verse through a New Testament book, then an Old Testament book, then back to the New... etc... This insures that we avoid pet doctrines and easy topics, and we work through this whole counsel of God. This forces us to face issues we would never face, otherwise (partly because we might avoid them, partly because we would never even think of addressing them). In a real way, this provides a balance to insuring we teach what we need to teach, as opposed to only what we want to teach.
- ***We commit to helping you in times of need*** (Acts 2:42-47, 4:32-35, James 2:14-17). This would include all ways– not just spiritually, but financially, emotionally, etc.
- ***We covenant that your elders and deacons will meet the criteria assigned to them in the Scriptures*** (I Timothy 3:1-13 & 5:17-22, Titus 1:5-9, I Peter 5:1-4), and that we will communicate and seek to live by a church structure that helps rather than hinders ministry, and that brings freedom rather than restriction.¹¹
- ***We covenant to pray for you regularly, particularly when you are sick*** (James 5:14). Currently, everyone in the church is prayed for each week by a pastor– and we exchange lists regularly. Many times, one of them will be in touch with you via phone or email or written letter as they pray for you. You will see a far more pro-active elder/ pastoral team than you have seen historically, we hope, for an group of elders should be shepherding in nature and not a “board.”

¹⁰A good resource here is Jim Shaddix’s *The Passion-Driven Sermon*.

¹¹ For more on the church’s organizational structure see the subsequent chapter concerning this topic, as well as the CCC bylaws.

- ***We covenant to be on guard against false teachers in the world in which we live*** (Acts 20:28-31). We will keep alert to things that happen in our world which need to be addressed, such as the release of *The Davinci Code* or other heretical books-- or movies such as *Stigmata*, *Devil's Advocate*, *The Matrix*, etc., which deal with faith issues.. And, we will seek to make corrections with false teachers unknowingly arise in the church. 1 Timothy 1:3-5 makes the assertion that you make these corrections not to be controversial but because you love people.
- ***We covenant to exercise church discipline when necessary*** (Matthew 18:15-20; I Corinthians 5; Galatians 6:1).
- ***We covenant to help you become equipped to serve Christ*** (Ephesians 4:11-13).¹²
- ***We covenant to seek God's will for our church community to the best of our ability as we study the Scriptures and follow the Spirit*** (Acts 20:28, I Peter 5:1-5).¹³ Note: pastors/ elders are "overseers" of the church... they are not "representatives" of the people in the way that Congressmen represent us. All of the pastors "work" and labor for all of the people and seek the best for all of the church. Some people erroneously hold the view that one pastor is theirs, while another represents others, etc... Pastors in a church do not lead "special interest groups" or cliches (or, at least, they shouldn't). Rather, they oversee the direction of the entire church... together.

The pastors are aware that we do not lead in a vacuum, or from a high removed office. As you read through the structure you will see that much progress will be made not only in the pastors

¹²A helpful resource here is the chart at the conclusion of the chapter on church structure, which details how pastors, deacons, and members work together to accomplish our God-given mission.

¹³*What should you do if you perceive that we are leading in an unBiblical way-- or that something in the membership book should be change to more accurately reflect what the Scripture say?* You should search the Scriptures, and seek out the elders, even set up a time to attend one of the meetings and point out what you feel needs to be changed. At this time, you should be able to show Scriptural (not cultural or traditional) reasons why you feel something needs to be changed. We are open to change-- and realize that this could, at some point, happen. That is why we have created processes from the beginning to pull ourselves back to the Bible should we find a "blindspot" in something we are doing. Your help would be much appreciated in these matters.

meetings but in the leadership team/ deacon meetings. Also, the pastors regularly meet with the wives of pastors to get a better understanding of the bigger picture. The point is, the pastors bear the Biblical responsibility of leading– and are held accountable for doing so. But, as God speaks through His Body, it makes sense that we would gather with other leaders who, too, have the spiritual pulse of what God is doing, even if they do not have the office of being a pastor.

In a real sense, the Bible calls the elders “stewards” of the church (managers). So, there is a responsibility to make sure that we are stewarding/ managing the gifts and abilities God places in our church. We should strive to release people into leadership, into ministry, etc.

- ***We covenant to set an example and join you in fulfilling the duties of church members, and to seek to live as Godly examples*** (1 Corinthians 11:1, Philippians 3:17, 1 Timothy 4:12). The Bible continually speaks of the “flock among you,” when addressing the elders (see 1 Peter 5:2, Acts 20:27f., for example). Indeed, the ancient shepherd did not drive his sheep from there rear, but walked in front of them and called them to follow.

Throughout his first letter, Peter emphasizes the importance of humility and submission– among the leaders (see, for instance, 1 Peter 2:13-3:12 and 1 Peter 5:5). If the pastors/elders are petty tyrants who lord their spiritual authority and position over the church, others will follow their example, abusing and infighting with one another to gain power and recognition. If the pastors, on the other hand, are examples of uncompromising fidelity to the Scriptures, loyal to each other, peaceful with all people, others tend to follow their example.

Throughout his writings, Paul seems very confident that others could imitate him as a “model Christian.” This does not mean that pastors are perfect, but, rather, that we should seek to live exemplary lives– to help show others not only through our words but through our actions how the life of following Jesus should be lived. We will strive to do all that we are asking of you (see 1 Corinthians 11:1, for instance).

Part of the duties here would include following the leadership of the other elders. Scripture places a plurality of leadership in place– for the protection of the church at large, as well as for the protection of the individual leaders. There is a check-and-balance system put in place, so that no one leader can shoot the church off in an unhealthy direction that leans more towards personal bias rather than God. Part of the duty of the pastors is to present unified leadership (even when there is disagreement

on issues).

- ***Fulfill the duties in the job/ ministry descriptions in which we have, with the help of the other pastors, described our roles and goals.***¹⁴ More about the roles of pastors/ elders (again, the two terms are used synonymously in Scripture and in this booklet) will be shared in depth during the chapter on the CCC church structure. Very quickly, though, read this in mind with the idea that the elders are not a church board, nor are they assistants to the pastor. They are pastors themselves. And, at CCC we have, as the early church seems to have had from a read of Scripture, both paid pastors and unpaid pastors (we refer to the paid pastors as “staff” for convenience, but they have no higher authority than the other pastors).

Currently, we are working on job descriptions for each of the pastors & deacon/ ministry team leaders. These descriptions are not mean to limit or impose restrictions on what ministry can be done; rather, in general terms, they will state what does what and where to go when you need something. They will be a tool, in other words, to help push us all ahead together.

Having a written description(s) will alleviate confusion, misunderstanding, and help clarify where we're headed– and make sure we do the right things instead of secondary things. Alexander Strauch reminds us, too, that “No group of elders is perfect. All elders [read: pastors] have weaknesses, and each believer has a unique perspective on how elders should operate. As a result, there is always some degree of tension between leaders and followers. Even the best elders are inevitably accused of pride, wrong judgment, doing too much or too little, moving too slowly or too quickly, changing too much or not enough, and being too harsh or too passive.”¹⁵ Again, Having a written description(s) will alleviate confusion, misunderstanding, and help clarify where we're headed– and make sure we do the right things instead of secondary things.

What are the responsibilities of the members?

One primary idea that we see in the Bible is that being part of a church is not only a “right” that you have, it is a responsibility that brings many privileges with it. Too many people in America have a “church shopping/ cafeteria” approach to the

¹⁴ Again, as of the first printing of this material the various pastor and deacon job descriptions were not yet written. But, that is in process and they will be attached to the appendix of this book when ready. This will allow everyone to very clearly see where various lines of responsibility rest.

¹⁵ *Biblical Eldership: An Urgent Call*, p171.

Church, which only serves to weaken it.¹⁶

Another helpful resource here is Alexander Strauch's *Biblical Eldership: An Urgent Call to Restore Biblical Church Leadership*. This 300-page book is basically digested into a 45-page work by a similar title by the same author, *Biblical Eldership: Restoring the Eldership to its Rightful Place in the Church*. These books state the church's position on elders/ pastors fairly well, and either one would be a great reference for you (and we do have them on hand, too). In the longer version of the book¹⁷, Strauch enumerates several pastoral responsibilities (where they are given specific instructions in Scripture as to how to lead the church), as well as specific directives that are given to the church in how they should follow the lead of those pastors. Here is a brief overview (you will note many similarities between the CCC covenant and this work, as both are taken directly from the Bible). It is not meant to be all-inclusive, but, rather, to give you a Biblical overview/ frame of reference:

To the church: Those who are sick should call the elders to pray for them (James 5:14). The Ephesian church is told to financially support the elders who labor and "preaching and teaching" (1 Timothy 5:17-18). The local church is to protect elders from false accusation, discipline those who sin, and restore the fallen (1 Timothy 5:19-22). The church is told the proper qualifications of pastors (1 Timothy 3:1-7, Titus 1:5-9). Paul states, to the church, that anyone wanting to be an elder/ pastor desires a noble work (1 Timothy 3:1). The church is to examine the prospective elders as to their qualifications (1 Timothy 3:10; 5:24-25). The young men of the church are to submit to the elders (1 Peter 5:5). The church is to obey and submit to the elders (Hebrews 13:7). The church is told that the elders are the household stewards, leaders, instructors, and teachers of the local church (Titus 1:7, 1 Thessalonians 5:12, Titus 1:9). The church is told to acknowledge, love, and live at peace with its elders (1 Thessalonians 5:12-13).

To the elders: Pray and anoint the sick with oil (James 5:14). Shepherd and oversee the congregation (1 Peter 5:1-2). Guard against being too authoritative (1 Peter 5:3). Persevere and you will receive "the unfading crown of glory" (1 Peter 5:4). Be clothed in humility (1 Peter 5:5). Remember that the Holy Spirit placed you in the church as overseers to pastor the church of God (Acts 20:28). Guard against false teachers (Acts 20:28). Be alert to the threat of unhealthy, false doctrine (Acts 20:31). Work hard, help the needy, be generous, act like Jesus (Acts 20:35). Live at peace with the congregation (1 Thessalonians 5:13).

In good conscience, those who feel God leading them to be part of the church family should be able to affirm:

- ***I am a Christian who has been saved from my sins by the grace of Jesus Christ.*** I have been baptized to give testimony

¹⁶You will be disappointed with our church if you have the idea that you can come to consume goods and services without getting involved in helping produce ministry and missions.

¹⁷See pages 106-108 of that book.

of my identification with the body of Christ & obedience to the Scriptures.¹⁸

- ***I have read and understood the CCC doctrinal statement and agree to not be divisive to its teaching.*** I also understand the importance of the church leadership and will be diligent to preserve unity and peace (Hebrews 13:7, 17; Ephesians 4:1-3).¹⁹
- ***I will endeavor to maintain a close relationship with the Lord through regular personal Bible reading, prayer, fellowship and practice of the other spiritual disciplines.*** My journey in Christ will be evident through my regular participation in the corporate worship services, and involvement in a small group or class (Psalm 119:97, 105; Acts 2:42-47; Hebrews 10:23-25). Simply put, it's about more than attending on Sunday for a large group worship meeting. If that's all you're wanting to do, you won't make a good church member— or, really, not even a good Christian. Sure, there are exceptions— people have work schedules that prevent them from attending Bible studies, etc. And, this must be considered. The idea, though, is that there should be a priority— and a passion— to your relationship with God and your brothers and sisters in Christ.

¹⁸For more information on baptism, see the subsequent chapter. Very briefly, we teach and practice immersion by believers (after you become a Christian, not when you are an infant). However, we do see the Biblical reasoning others who differ from us use to reach their conclusions. We have decided not to make this a divisive issue. Quite simply, if you have been baptized in another tradition and mark that as your baptism, we, too, honor that baptism as your public confession of faith. And, to clarify, we do not see it as a second-rate or lesser confession of faith.

Baptism is not a “primary” theological issue, as we will see in the chapter on beliefs. Rather, it is a secondary issue. This does not mean that it is unimportant or insignificant. Rather, it means we need to hold it in the proper perspective.

¹⁹You may not agree with every issue in our doctrine. For example, you may feel that women can be pastors (whereas we feel that is the only restriction given to women in the New Testament church and that they can serve in any other office and perform any duty); you may feel that open-ness theology is correct (that God is not all knowing or all-powerful, whereas we feel that He is— on both accounts); you may have a different understanding of spiritual gifts than we have (we touch this briefly in the section on doctrine). Having different views is OK.

But, we do have core beliefs that we teach. And, although you are welcome to discuss and dialogue about areas of disagreement (secondary issues), you need to be able to acknowledge the CCC doctrinal statement and not act divisively towards it (primary theological issues). The section on beliefs in this booklet details which issues are core issues that are non-negotiable.

- ***I will strive to properly manage the resources God has given me, including my time, body, gifts and talents, attitudes, finances and possessions*** (Ephesians 5:15-18; Romans 12:1-2; Ephesians 4:1-16; Galatians 5:22-26; Proverbs 3:9-10). This includes regular giving of my tithes and offerings through CCC that is sacrificial and cheerful (2 Corinthians 8&9), as well as ministering as part of the CCC family.²⁰

Biblically, tithe means “tenth.” So a tithe is a tenth of everything that God gives you (In a truly Biblical sense, this would include your paycheck, money you make from stocks and bonds, money made from the sale of hard assets such as real estate, etc.). Many people refer to “tithe” to mean that they put money into the offering plate, bucket, box, etc. But, it is not a tithe unless it is a tenth of what you make. The Bible states that the tithe is the starting point for Christians– and we are to strive to rise above it.

An offering, then, is something that is “offered” over a tithe. Whereas the “tithe” belongs to God– and to withhold it is to steal from God (see Malachi 3:8, for one of many examples), an offering is a freewill gift that is given over a tithe. Whereas we should all begin with a tithe, we should all look towards offering more to God in worship, as well.

This point means that you *will* tithe. You are committing to doing that. And, as you will see in a moment, we even want you to join a ministry team that helps determine how those tithes are spent (ministry team leaders help create the budget for their areas, which, in turn, affects the budget of the entire church– and the missions team and stewardship team have significant roles regularly in the financial matters of CCC).

- ***I commit myself to the CCC church family and agree to aid in fulfilling its missional purpose to both be and bring the gospel to Birmingham.*** I recognize that this will be accomplished by pursuing CCC’s mission/vision statement and core values. There is a subsequent chapter on the church’s core values. The core values are really like guard rails which insure that we stay on task. The point of including this commitment here is that we want you to know– and understand– what CCC is like before committing to join. We probably won’t be changing

²⁰ Interestingly enough, we budget our church’s spending plan the same way: We give a tithe (a tenth) of every dollar that comes to CCC. The missions team helps determine where much of that goes– and some of it goes to organizations and mission groups that helped start our church, so that they can help start others, now. That is our tithe, our tenth.

In addition, we give offerings. We tithe from undesignated gifts that come in, and we do offerings from designated monies. A look at the budget will help clarify this to you.

who we are. Much changes on the surface, but the core of the church will remain the same. If you don't like it now, you probably won't like it later. Putting a mission and vision statement out, as well as core values, lets everyone know what we're about from the beginning.

- ***I commit to using the spiritual gift(s) God has given me for the building up of the church, both at CCC and universally*** (1 Peter 4:10-11; Romans 12:1-8, 1Corinthians 12:7-31). Very briefly, our position is that all spiritual gifts are still in operation today– even the “miraculous” ones (they are all miraculous, however, but when people say this they are usually referring to the more controversial gifts like healing, tongues, prophesy, etc.). Not every Christian will receive every gift– and there are no benchmark gifts that display a greater status or a level of spiritual maturity. To see how spiritually mature one is you should look for the fruit of the Spirit and not the gifts of the Spirit.

This means, too, that you will seek to join a ministry team to help carry out the mission of CCC. Sure, this might not be something you can do on day one– you may need to look around and find your specific niche. And, there may be seasons (i.e. pregnancy, and the birth of a new child, or death of a parent, for instance) when you need to take breaks. Such is the nature of life and the Biblical obligations to our families which supercede ministry, even.

But, the idea is that everyone here is a minister. CCC is elder directed and led, deacon organized, and member fueled. Anyone from membership, as you will see, can become a deacon and/or elder upon meeting the Biblical qualifications.²¹

- ***I covenant to practice the humility and sacrificial attitude of Christ by considering the needs of others*** (Philippians 2:1-11), not gossiping (Proverbs 16:28, Matthew 18: 15-17), and seeking spiritual friendships (Proverbs 17:17).²²
- ***I covenant to follow the biblical procedures of church discipline, and submit myself to discipline if the need***

²¹You should see the chapter on the CCC structure for more on this.

²²See the chapter in this book on living with the agenda– and attitude– of Christ.

should ever arise (Matthew 18:15-17, Galatians 6:1-5).²³ This means that when I have a problem with someone, I will go directly to them, rather than spreading gossip and chatter about them, or venting to others.²⁴ This also, means, practically, that when I have a question about an elder or other leader, I will take it to them. The only exception to this would be if I feel that I cannot go to the leader in question, for whatever reason, I will take my concern directly to the chair of the elders, who will act as my voice.²⁵

- ***I covenant to have friendly Christian relationships with brothers and sisters in Christ from other churches, but I will not function in leadership or as a member in another church family*** (Hebrews 13:17). Much is required of leaders— and members— and, quite simply, it would be difficult to do this well in more than one place.
- ***I covenant to submit to the authority of the Scriptures as the final arbiter on all issues*** (Psalm 119, 2 Timothy 3:16-17).

²³Biblically, this works both ways— if you are offended by someone, you should go to them first (Matthew 5:21-24). And, if they have offended you, you should go first (Matthew 18:15f). In other words, we should always be willing to submit our rights to be “right” in order to protect the unity of the Body.

John Bevere writes, “How often do we take offenses to everyone else before we go to the one who sinned against us, as Jesus told us to do! We do this because we have not dealt with our own hearts. We feel justified as we tell everyone our side of the story. It strengthens our cause and comforts us when others agree with how badly we have been treated. There is only selfishness in this type of behavior” (*The Bait of Satan*, p161).

²⁴This is an easy mistake— trap of the devil! You must guard against venting to others, processing out loud, sharing gossip under the guise of a prayer request, getting someone to help you work through something... The Biblical process is to go directly to the person with which you have the problem. If you cannot do that for whatever reason, you should take your concern to the chair of the elders— only.

²⁵One of the most divisive sins in a church is gossip and chatter— and it has done more damage in the Body of Christ than sex and drugs combined. Practically speaking, this aspect of the membership covenant means that we will not tolerate this behavior. In a real way, other sins are overt (open) and obvious— and they can be repented of, healed, and dealt with. Gossip and chatter are different. As they are more covert (hidden), they tend to settle under the surface and keep bubbling trouble.

A practical question: *How do I know if something is gossip/ chatter?* Quite simply, if it builds unity in the Body of Christ, it is not— it is acceptable. If it breeds division, it is considered gossip. If it changes someone’s view of someone else for the good, it is acceptable. If it changes someone’s view for the bad (or perpetuates a bad view), it is considered chatter.

The Bible is the authority at CCC. Everything we do, we pray, is saturated in the Scriptures— and not just as a stale claim to Christian orthodoxy, but as a real attempt to live what the Scriptures say we should live— and of taking the black and white on the printed pages and allowing them to stand up in living color, making our lives testimonies (and our church a testimony) that the world around us can see. Again, we are moving in continuity with tradition, but not in conformity to it. We are seeking make the Gospel relevant to culture, as well, but not give in to it.

You should be able to affirm: God enabling me, I will strive to consider my commitment to this Membership Covenant on a regular basis. I understand that it is an evaluative tool, as well as an affirmation of my continuing conviction and purpose. This is not a contact, *but a covenant*, and is the goals by which we will seek to live in community. My responsibility will be to notify the CCC leadership (pastors/elders) if at any time I can no longer commit to this covenant,²⁶ or if I have any questions, comments, or concerns regarding CCC.²⁷

This does not mean that you go off the church roles after a year— or that we will have an annual “membership drive.” Rather, this means that each January as we are talking about our mission and vision during our worship services (that is the chosen time to remind everyone and refocus with the New Year) you will, too, look at how you are doing. Membership is not a static “I’ve joined” type of thing... Rather, it is a group of Christ-followers pushing forwards together, striving to become better parents and spouses and leaders and learners... and to create a better place to worship and to minister to our world.

More than just membership

Rather than looking at membership as simply “membership,” we’ve decided to take a new approach with CCC— one that we think is really very old and Biblical. We

²⁶Remember, the Bible does not say, “God has set the members of the church in the Body as *they please*...” It says, “God has set the members of the Body in the Church as *He pleased*...” (1 Corinthians 12:18). If God has called you here, you need to endure. And, if the time comes for you to leave, Isaiah 55:12 should be the model: “For you shall go out with joy, and *be led out with peace*.” John Bevere suggests, “Most do not leave this way. They think churches are like cafeterias; they can pick and choose what they like! They feel the freedom to stay as long as there are no problems. But this does not agree at all with what the Bible teaches. You are not the one who chooses where to go to church. God does!” (*The Bait of Satan*, p49).

²⁷This is an important point right here. If you have a question about something in the church, please ask. And, please ask one of the pastors. We will certainly be glad to assist you in whatever way we can— and, this makes certain that you get accurate information. *Most of the time, we will be able to provide you something in print. This will insure that you receive accurate information.*

prefer to use the idea of a family covenant— because that’s what the Church is, children of God— children born of God (John 1). The church is a family.

Because the church is a large family, we want to think covenantally, not contractually. When you make a contract, one party is released from their obligations when the other fails to perform theirs. In a covenant, however, neither party is released. If one party messes up, the other forgives. And vice versa. This is why the Bible speaks of marriage as being a covenant rather than the contract our society has made it out to be. Covenant relationships imply forgiveness and endurance— whereas contractual ones do not.

Again, one of the biggest metaphors used of the church in the New Testament is that of a family. Paul writes to Timothy, telling him “I write to you that you may know how one ought to conduct himself in the household of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and support of truth” (see 1 Timothy 3:14-15). And, “As in any successful household, but especially God’s, proper structure, responsible behavior, discipline, and love are required. An unruly, dysfunctional household ruins the lives of its members and is an offense to the community. God’s household should enrich and protect its members and be an inviting testimony of the Gospel’s truth to the unbelieving world.”²⁸

In our day and age, people often ask “Did you go to church?” Or, “Do you go to church?” That would have been a ludicrous idea to a first century Christian, for “church” wasn’t something they did once a week and then checked-off the list of things to do (any more than you “go” to the family, or “do” the family). Rather, they were the church.²⁹ And we are the Church— and we are the Family of God.³⁰

It’s important that we grasp this concept, first, because the church family is the group of people that you journey through life with. That means there are ups and there are downs. That means there is unity and accountability, rather than an occasional acquaintance and awkwardness. That means there are fun times and hard times when you still have to eat at the dinner table together. Yet, it’s important

²⁸ Strauch, *Biblical Eldership: An Urgent Call...* p185.

²⁹ These Christians would not have thought of “church” in terms of a *right*, either (i.e. you don’t have a right to join this church, they would say). Rather, they saw membership as a *responsibility*. Sure, being around brought rights and freedoms, but, it brought responsibility and obligation— for their leaders (and others in the congregation) were going to be held accountable by God for how they did life together.

³⁰ Erwin McManus writes, “Whenever we receive new members at Mosaic [the church he pastors], we remind them that receiving them into our community is our commitment to inviting them to change who we are, that we may become who God desires us to be” (*An Unstoppable Force*, p173). This is certainly the intended pattern at CCC: All of our leaders emerge from within the Body, new ministries are started by those in the Body, new ideas come from within the Body... future changes are implemented by people in the Body.

that we link together, as hard as it sometimes is, for we are on a journey to know and do the will of God– that is, to know Him and to make Him known. And in that journey we need not travel alone.

Amazingly enough, in the Bible we see no example of a lone-ranger Christian. In fact, they are *always* connected to churches. This is, perhaps, one of the weak parts of American Christianity– we have made it such an individualistic thing that we have lost our true sense of Biblical community.

So can you join CCC? And, if so, how?

In order to join CCC and become a member you need to attend the membership class which works through most of this material. This will help you get your bearings and understand who we are and where we are headed– as well as let you know how to get involved and help create what God is doing here.³¹

³¹ Anyone is welcome to attend the membership class without obligation or pressure. You do not have to become a member because you attended the class. However, if you want to be a member of the church, you do need to attend the class.

Those who have become members @ CCC before this material was published are “grand fathered” in, without taking the class– and have no new requirements. Much of what we have been doing and how we have been organizing ministry is indicative of and reflected in this structure. And the mission statement and core values remain the same. They are encouraged to attend the class, however, to re-familiarize themselves with what we are about. (Incidentally, most of the people who became members before this was published are all highly involved in ministry and many helped write this.)