

The background of the slide features a dark teal color with a faint, light-colored architectural blueprint overlaid. The blueprint shows various lines, rectangles, and some numbers like '580' and '7'. A pen and a ruler are also visible, suggesting a theme of construction or building.

# Building Together

**Membership at Christ's Church**

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An introduction to who we are, what we believe, and how we're building together

# Why Church Membership?

When he saves us, Jesus unites us to God and to all those who have been united to God. Salvation is being brought into a community that transcends time, place, and demographic. At the same time, the community of Jesus is also local and embodied. Jesus died for an embodied community, he is reigning over and blessing an embodied community, and he will return for an embodied community. Therefore the Christian life must be truly lived and fully enjoyed within an embodied community. Church membership is a commitment to do life and ministry together with a local, embodied community of believers and to fully enjoy God together. We would love to walk hand-in-hand with you as we follow Jesus together.

## Christ's Church DNA

Christ's Church's DNA makes us who we are and drives everything we do. While we readily pursue progress in how we live out our DNA, our DNA will never change. Our ultimate aim is to live out our DNA in more and better ways that are faithful to Jesus, serve those around us, and fit each season of church life.

### **Why Are We Here?**

We exist as a local expression of the family of God, on mission with God.

### **What Do We Do?**

Our mission is to love and obey Jesus and help others do the same.

### **How Do We Live?**

We live with these five core values:

1. We enthusiastically embrace Jesus as our Lord and our Life.
2. We walk with an unwavering commitment to the word of God.
3. We look for God's manifest presence by the Spirit in the Church.
4. We're pleased to live as a family formed by God.
5. We gladly give ourselves to Jesus' mission of bringing God's Good News to neighborhoods and nations.



# Our Core Values

## 1. We enthusiastically embrace Jesus as our Lord and our Life.

- *The Reign of Christ:* Jesus is the promised King who rules the world with truth and grace. Jesus has authority over nature, sickness, and spiritual forces. He is Lord of the living and the dead. His rule, the Kingdom of God, should be clearly visible in the church. It should be celebrated and enthusiastically proclaimed.
- *Inclusion and Identity in Christ:* The church must understand and enjoy the benefits of being united with Jesus. This is the source of our identity. We do not receive the benefits of Jesus' death and resurrection as commodities purchased and handed to us. We never possess them in ourselves. They are ours as we are in him.
- *The Grace of God in Christ Jesus:* Grace is approval, favor, goodwill, kindness, and blessing. The grace of God is salvation and freedom from condemnation. The grace of God is divine generosity. We want to understand, enjoy, and apply all the benefits of the grace of God, which is ours in Christ Jesus.
- *Suffering and Persecution:* Jesus and his original apostles found value in suffering and persecution. There is unity with Jesus in suffering and persecution. Healthy churches find value in resistance, suffering, and persecution.

## 2. We walk with an unwavering commitment to God's word.

- *The Word of God:* Jesus was the Word of God before time. The Bible is the infallible Word of God in print. The Bible is about Jesus. The Bible is approved and commended by Jesus. The Bible is authoritative because it is an expression of the authority of King Jesus.

## 3. We look for God's manifest presence by the Spirit in the Church.

- *A Dwelling Place for God:* God is building a house for his name. Jesus is building a temple not made with human hands. We are living stones being built into a dwelling place for God. God is present in the church by the Holy Spirit. The church is sacred. It is appropriate and good for the church to be wonderfully and recurrently filled with the Holy Spirit.
- *Worship & Prayer:* Worship is the eternal occupation of the church. There can never be too much of it! In every church, God's presence should be prized. God should be enthusiastically worshipped with genuine freedom. Every church should seek increasing communion with God in prayer and express increasing dependence on God in prayer.
- *Anointed Leaders:* Leaders are called of God, given by Jesus to the church, marked by his Spirit, recognized by their gifts, approved by their character, and appointed to their work.

## 4. We're pleased to live as a family formed by God.

- *The Family of God:* Those who come to God through Jesus are born again as sons and daughters of God. Jesus told us that the relationships in our spiritual family take precedence over the biological family. We must recognize the value of spiritual fathers, mothers, sisters, and brothers. We want to live as a family demonstrating affection and sacrificial care for each other.
- *One New Man:* Jesus is the second Adam, the beginning of a New Creation. He is the head of the new race, head of the church, a people of God's very own. Tribal divisions are superseded. Hostility is removed. Redeemed diversity is valued and celebrated. Things once seen as cause for division are now celebrated as beautiful.

## 5. We gladly give ourselves to Jesus' mission of bringing God's Good News to neighborhoods and nations.

- *The Global Mission of God:* Jesus commissioned his church to proclaim the Good News about Jesus to all the nations of the world. Churches should be making the gospel of forgiveness of sins, freedom, healing, and restoration through Jesus known in their own communities and should invest in the global expansion of the Kingdom of God.
- *Remembering the Poor:* We want to be a church that is good news to the poor in our region. We want to fully include and honor the economically disadvantaged. We want to advocate for the oppressed and strengthen the weak.



# Our Distinctive Positions

There are convictions that the elders, pastors, and leaders of Christ's Church hold and teach that may distinguish us from other churches. These are of varying degrees of importance. We hold strong convictions about some matters concerning which we would not see agreement as necessary for membership or partnership. The headings below may be helpful in thinking about these.

## Three Tiers of Belief

*1st Tier Issues: It's more important to be RIGHT than to be TOGETHER.*

The items on our Confessional Statement are 1st Tier Issues. They are either direct statements from Scripture or represent both the obvious implications of the text and the general agreement of the church over the past two thousand years.

*2nd Tier Issues: It's more important to be TOGETHER than to be RIGHT, but it may be uncomfortable.*

Some of these are controversial. We believe that Christians who love God and honor his Word may disagree about them. But we want to be open and forthright regarding our positions on these issues. We expect the members of Christ's Church to guard the unity of the church. And we ask members to refrain from teaching or promoting within our church positions in opposition to those held by the elders.

Examples of 2nd Tier Issues include the following:

- We believe in the abiding presence of the Spirit within all believers. This presence sets us apart unto God, and guides, strengthens, and teaches us. We also believe and teach that there is a tangible experience of God's empowering presence available to all believers. We encourage the recurring fullness of the Spirit. We may refer to the experience of the Spirit as a baptism in the Holy Spirit. We commend this as something beyond the abiding presence of the Spirit.
- We believe and teach that all the gifts of the Spirit mentioned in the Scriptures and manifested in the early church are presently available. We believe and teach that the proper employment of these gifts is essential to the growth and maturity of the Body of Christ, the church.
- We believe and teach that there is a distinct leadership role for husbands and fathers in the family and for male elders in the church.

We have created position papers regarding some of these issues.

*3rd Tier Issues: It's more important to be TOGETHER than to be RIGHT and it shouldn't be uncomfortable.*

While these things may be important, disagreement about them should not cause grave concern.

Examples of 3rd Tier Issues might include the following:

- Details regarding the time and circumstances of Jesus' second coming
- The age of the earth



# Our Confessional Statement

All are welcome to participate in meetings at Christ's Church, even those still working to understand and agree with the Bible's teaching on some elements of this statement. We expect that members will affirm and live in a manner consistent with this statement.

## The Nature of God

There is only one God, who created all things, and who has revealed himself to mankind. ([Deut. 6:4](#); [Isaiah 45:5-6](#); [46:9-10](#); [John 17:3](#); [1 Cor. 8:4-6](#); [Gal. 3:20](#); [1 Tim. 2:5](#))

The one God eternally exists in three persons. The Father is God, the Son is God, and the Holy Spirit is God. ([Psalm 45:6-7](#); [110](#); [Matt. 3:13-17](#); [28:17-20](#); [John 5:18-47](#); [14:8-17](#); [20:28](#); [Acts 5:3-4](#); [1 Cor. 12:4-6](#); [13:14](#); [Phil. 2:5-11](#); [Col. 1:15-23](#); [Titus 2:11-14](#); [1 Peter 1:2](#); [Jude 20-21](#))

## Jesus and Salvation

All people, except for Jesus, are sinners by nature and choice. The deserved penalty for sin is physical and spiritual death. ([Gen. 2:15-17](#); [3:19](#); [6:5](#); [Psalm 51:5](#); [Jer. 17:9](#); [Romans 3:23](#); [5:8-21](#); [6:23](#); [7:18](#); [Eph. 2:1-3](#); [James 1:14-15](#))

Jesus, the eternal Son of God who took on flesh and was born of a virgin, is both fully God and fully human. He is sinless and faultless. ([Matt. 1:20](#); [Luke 2:30-35](#); [John 1:1-4](#); [3:16](#); [5:18-47](#); [Phil. 2:5-11](#); [Col. 1:15-20](#); [Heb. 1:1-3](#))

Jesus died as our substitute to pay the penalty for our sin. ([John 1:29](#); [10:1-18](#); [Romans 5:8](#); [1 Cor. 15:1-4](#); [2 Cor. 5:21](#); [Gal. 1:3-5](#); [1 Peter 3:18](#))

Jesus physically rose from the dead, ascended into heaven, and will one day return. ([Matt. 28](#); [Mark 16:1-8](#); [Luke 24](#); [John 14:3](#); [20:21](#); [Acts 1:10-11](#); [1 Cor. 15:12-34](#); [1 Thes. 4:16](#); [Heb. 9:28](#); [1 John 3:2](#); [Rev. 1:7](#))

Only by trusting in the person and work of Jesus alone can we be reconciled to God, forgiven of our sins, and experience true life and joy. ([John 3:16-21](#); [14:6](#); [Acts 4:12](#); [Romans 3:21-26](#); [Gal. 2:15-21](#); [Eph. 1:3-14](#); [1 Tim. 2:5-6](#))

Jesus reigns in and over his Church, which consists of all who have trusted in him for salvation. ([John 8:31-47](#); [Romans 8:29](#); [10:9-11](#); [1 Cor. 12:12-27](#); [Gal. 3:7-9](#); [Eph. 1:18-23](#); [2:11-22](#); [4:4-16](#); [Col. 3:1-4](#); [1 Tim. 1:17](#); [1 Peter 2:9-10](#))

## The Scriptures

The Scriptures, comprised of the 66 canonical books of the Christian Bible, are God-given, true, and trustworthy. Through them we can know and obey God. They are our ultimate authority in all matters of faith and conduct. ([Deut. 31:24-26](#); [Psalm 19:7-11](#); [Jer. 30:1-4](#); [1 Thess. 2:13](#); [2 Tim. 3:16-17](#); [2 Peter 1:20-21](#); [3:15-16](#))

## Eternity

There will be a future, physical resurrection of the dead and a final judgment. Those who trust in Jesus Christ will be raised to eternal life. Those who have not trusted in Jesus Christ will be condemned to eternal death. ([Matt. 25:31-46](#); [John 5:28-29](#); [Acts 24:15](#); [Romans 2:1-16](#); [Rev. 20:11-15](#))

## Humanity, Gender, and Marriage

Humans were created by God in his image. Therefore, human life is sacred and has dignity and value in all its dimensions and in every stage or condition from conception through natural death. ([Gen. 1:26-27](#); [Lev. 19:32](#); [Psalm 139:13-14](#); [Jer. 1:5](#))

God created humans male and female. Together, these two distinct, complementary genders reflect the image and nature of God. ([Gen. 2:18, 22-23](#); [1 Cor. 11:11-12](#))

Marriage is a holy union designed by God, intended to serve as a picture of the relationship between Christ and his church. Heterosexual, monogamous marriage is the only divinely inspired and approved context for sexual intimacy. ([1 Cor. 11:3](#); [Exodus 20:14](#); [Heb. 13:4](#); [Romans 1:26-27](#))



# Our Seven Commitments for Growth

The author of Hebrews encourages us, “Let us go on to maturity!” (Hebrews 6:1) The apostle Paul reminds the church in Ephesus that they are to be equipped for works of service “for building up the body of Christ, until we all become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ” and “grow up in every way into him who is the head” (Ephesians 4:13, 15) There are specific habits and practices that are essential for disciples. Growing up and maturing as followers of Jesus requires commitments to these. The Seven Commitments for Growth describe things we are committed to doing and hope to do more often, more effectively, and more cheerfully over time.

## 1. Hearing from God, Talking to God

We must learn to feed ourselves. This is how we grow, how we serve one another effectively, and how we impact the world around us for Jesus.

- I am committed to hearing God through consistent Bible reading and times of worship and prayer.

## 2. Building Community

We must build honest, Christ-centered relationships with others. We need a place where we can talk about our joys, our struggles, and our relationship with God – a place where we can know and care for others and be known and cared for by them. We participate in community groups for our own sake, and we help build these groups for the sake of others.

- I am committed to finding accountability and building community through participation in a Christ’s Church community group.
- I recognize and accept that my inability to participate in a community group limits the ability of the elders to effectively care for me.

## 3. Gathering for Worship and Instruction

The whole church gathers consistently on Sunday mornings. We come worshipping, expecting to hear God’s word and experience his presence. We come to celebrate the Lord’s Supper. We are committed to do this for God’s glory, our good, and the good of others.

- I am committed to consistent participation in the Sunday Celebrations.

## 4. Service

Jesus came to serve. He calls us to serve like he did. We serve the church, and we serve the community with others from the church.

- I am committed to serving the church and to serving the community with the church. I hope to become increasingly happy and effective in my service.

## 5. Financial Generosity

We hope to become increasingly generous in every way. This includes giving away money. Giving teaches us faith and proves our conviction that everything belongs to God. It is an appropriate response to the Good News. We give to the church because this is what the Apostles taught the first Christians to do. It is a mark of our commitment to the church and its mission.

- I am committed to supporting Christ’s Church financially and am committed to growing in the grace of giving.

## 6. Right Relationships

The possibility of right relationships with one another was purchased for us at great cost. We are committed to guarding this treasure.

- I will not hold an offense against anyone in the church. If I am not able to overlook an offense, I will talk to the one who offended me. If necessary, I will include others in the process of reconciliation.
- If I become concerned about something I perceive as an area of weakness in the church, I will graciously approach the appropriate leaders with a heart to be helpful. If I am not sure to whom I should talk, I will talk to one of the elders.
- In the case of secondary matters of doctrine where the elders have not required the full agreement of members, I commit to pursue and guard unity within the church. I will not be divisive.
- If at some point I must leave the church, I will leave well and will communicate with the elders.

## 7. Sharing Good News

We are committed to personally seeking ways to bring others to Jesus. We want to invite them into contexts where they can hear good news, feel his love, and see his power on display.

- I am committed to growth in sharing the good news and bringing others to Jesus.





# An Elder Led Church

Christ's Church exists both as a spiritual body and as a legal entity. We are God's people under the headship of Jesus Christ and the leadership of a specific group of elders. The elders have pastoral responsibility for the congregation as a whole and its members individually. Under state and federal law, we are also a corporation. They also form the board of directors for the corporation. So, in addition to their pastoral responsibility, the elders are legally responsible for the decisions and business of the church.

In the Bible, the terms elder, pastor, and overseer are used to refer to the same leaders. Together, these words describe something of their qualifications and their work. When referring to this team, we usually use the word elders. This may be because it seems less subject to confusing ideas and definitions.

Membership at Christ's Church is a commitment to the members and leaders of the local body. One of the fundamental declarations of church membership is, "I want the elders and leaders of this church to feel responsible for me and to care for me. I trust their leadership. I want to partner with them in the progress of the Gospel." Membership does not include voting rights.

When individuals hold positions of doctrine or practice that are different from those of the elders, a mark of their commitment to the elders' leadership would be an openness about those positions and a desire to seek unity of understanding and application. Individuals who have greater confidence in teachers whose doctrines or practices are incompatible with the elders' teaching are poor candidates for membership.

Together, we look to the Bible for instruction regarding the benefits and responsibilities of both the elders and the members under their care. The elders make no claim to perfect understanding or interpretation of the Scriptures. However, in matters of belief, doctrine, practice, policy, and discipline, the positions of Christ's Church are those positions held by our team of elders. The elders are, therefore, responsible for defining the parameters of membership and are free to deny membership to any as they see fit.

The elders are mutually accountable to one another. Regarding the business of the corporation, they are ultimately responsible to the civil authorities. Regarding the leadership and pastoral care of the congregation, they are ultimately responsible to God. While they are sometimes required to vote on decisions as a board of directors for the church's legal protection, it has been their habit to pursue consensus. If they're required to vote on something, they typically do not vote until they reach consensus.

The elders have also invited review and direction from the leaders of the Confluence family of churches and have obligated themselves to attend to their council. These leaders have strong relational authority. They are, however, not ultimately responsible for the congregation and have no governmental authority to override local elders' decisions.

Members who have ongoing concerns regarding the positions, decisions, or actions of the elders individually or as a group are encouraged to communicate with the elders. If at any point, they feel unable to address their concerns directly, they are encouraged to communicate with the leaders of Confluence. A good point of contact would be Bryan Mowrey, who serves the Confluence churches in our region.

## Expectations of Elders

- Meet the qualifications described in 1 Tim. 3:1–7 and Titus 1:6–9
- Be fully engaged and active in the church as fully participating members
- Pray for the church
- Care for, teach, and equip the members individually or in groups
- Provide discipline (or discipleship), both formative and corrective
- Guard the doctrine and the purity of the gospel
- Steward the resources of the church
- Receive the counsel of wise and gifted friends beyond Christ's Church



# Membership at Christ's Church

## Expectations of Members

Members should be able to say...

- I believe that Jesus died in my place and for my sins. I acknowledge him as Lord of my life.
- I have been baptized since coming to faith in Jesus.
- I want to join the church in its mission to love and obey Jesus, and to help others to do the same. I embrace the values that are the DNA of Christ's Church.
- I agree with the Confessional Statement and hope to live a life consistent with the truths expressed there.
- I understand that the elders hold to positions concerning some matters of doctrine that are not included in the Confessional Statement. I understand that full agreement about all of these is not a requirement of membership. In these matters, I commit to pursue and guard unity within the church. I will not be divisive.
- I want to embrace the Seven Commitments for Growth. I am happy to discuss my progress or lack of progress in these areas.

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## Response Card

[You can fill out a digital version of this card here.](#)

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Email: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone #: \_\_\_\_\_

Check any of the boxes below that describe you:

- I like the expectations of members. Count me in.
- I want to find a way (or a new way) to serve and be in community.
- I want the elders of Christ's Church to be my pastors and to feel responsible for me.
- I'm interested, but have questions and need clarification.