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(Revised July 2021)

Introduction

This class is designed to assist you as you decide whether CBC is the place for you and your family. The choice of a church is a serious matter that must be made prayerfully. It should also be a decision based on adequate information about the church. It is our prayer that the Lord will grant you wisdom in your decision. We have no illusions that ours is the only church; there are many that are faithfully carrying out the Lord's work. But we do believe we have established a God-honoring church that provides a way for each member of your family to grow and serve. We hope that this class will be profitable to you as you undertake this important decision.

The *History* of Community Bible Church

Our Pastor

Pastor Ken Brown was raised in a Christian home, the son of a pastor. However, he did not come to personal faith in Christ until shortly after graduation from a Christian high school, Inter-City Baptist in Allen Park. It was there that he met (though never talked to!) his future bride, Kimberly Crawford, also the product of a thoroughly Christian upbringing. Ken and Kim were married in 1985.

While attending a local university and serving in his local church, Ken committed to pursue formal training for vocational ministry. Upon graduation from college (B.A. in Computer Science from Wayne State), he began attending Detroit Baptist Theological Seminary. In 1985, Ken and Kim joined Huron Baptist Church in Flat Rock where they served for sixteen years, the last nine of which on the pastoral staff. Pastor Ken graduated from DBTS in 1995 and is currently enrolled in the doctoral program at Westminster Theological Seminary.

Our Heritage

Although Community is a relatively new church "plant," its roots are very deep. This is because the practice of churches planting churches has its origin in the New Testament itself. Church history in general, and Baptist history in particular, are filled with examples of church planting efforts. CBC owes its beginning to vision of Huron Baptist Church and its pastor, Steven Thomas, as well as the cooperative effort of several Baptist churches that have joined together to support the cause of planting new congregations.

In July of 2000, the congregation of Huron Baptist Church voted unanimously to commission Pastor Brown and three additional families to start a new work in Huron Township. After a year of intense preparation and planning, **Community Baptist Church** was launched on September 9, 2001. Here's a sampling of the wide support for CBC and its leadership:

*We are very pleased to be a supporting church in this exciting endeavor. I believe it will serve as a model for church planters for years to come...*Pastor Mike Harding, First Baptist Church, Troy

*During our sixteen years of laboring together, I have observed Pastor Ken Brown to be a man of integrity as well as a gifted and challenging teacher of the Word of God. I am confident that God has prepared him to effectively lead this new work...*Pastor Steven Thomas, Huron Baptist Church, Flat Rock

*I enthusiastically endorse the Ekklesia Consortium and its project in Huron Township, MI. I have met with Pastor Brown and believe his direction and philosophy to be just what is needed in today's culture...*Joseph Miller, Church Development Consultant, Discovering Life Ministries

*I count my former student, Ken Brown, as a friend and comrade in the ministry. I can think of no one better suited to establish a God-honoring church...*Dr. Robert McCabe, Detroit Baptist Theological Seminary

Name Change

Over the years, Pastor Ken has been very concerned with the image of the Baptist name in negative news and the impact that might have on attracting guests to our church. The Leadership Team discussed and approved a recommendation to change the name of our church to Community Bible Church. The name change was officially approved by the congregation on January 6, 2013.

Community Bible Church adheres to beliefs that have been traditionally described as Baptist. We are proud to be associated with the historical Baptist distinctives (see page 4), and the many faithful Baptist churches, both past and present, that have effectively represented the Christian faith, both locally and throughout the world. However, since Baptist churches are self-governing, there is no denominational hierarchy that can prevent misuse of the name. Unfortunately, the “Baptist” label has been adopted by many churches that teach aberrant doctrine (e.g., the King James Bible is the only inspired Bible in the English language), insist on extra-biblical practices as scriptural requirements (e.g., women prohibited from wearing slacks), or engage in highly offensive and unchristian behavior (e.g., protests at military funerals).

So, while we are ashamed of the teaching and behavior of many “Baptist” churches, we are in no way ashamed of our Baptist beliefs. There is nothing inherent in Baptist doctrine that leads to these false teachings and practices. But because these (and other) errors have become so widespread, and have had a negative impact on so many, we felt it necessary to distance ourselves from those who have abused and co-opted our name.

The *Vision* of Community Bible Church

Our vision is what we're going to *be* by God's grace. Our mission is what we're going to *do* by God's grace. Since "being precedes doing," it is important that we have a grasp of our vision, that is, what we seek to be, before discussing what we do.

The vision of CBC is to be a *healthy* community of faith.

What exactly does a healthy church look like? Surveys of healthy churches have consistently identified "vital signs" that all have in common. They are:

- Gospel-Driven
- Vision Motivated
- Authentic Worship
- Effective Preaching
- Servant Leadership
- Dynamic Discipleship
- Intercessory Prayer

These are discussed in detail in Lesson Two.

The *Mission* of Community Bible Church

Mission (or purpose) describes what we *do* as a result of what we *are*.

The mission of Community Bible Church is to help people *learn* about God, *love* Him and others, and *live* for His purpose.

Our theme verse is Colossians 1:28:

He is the one we proclaim, admonishing and teaching everyone with all wisdom, so that we may present everyone fully mature in Christ.

In order to reach "everyone" in our sphere of influence, CBC is structured to reach and teach. That is, to reach unbelievers and teach believers. Our intentional structure and numerous ministries are discussed in Lessons One and Three respectively.

All things being equal, healthy churches grow. If by God's grace we are the kind of church we ought to be, then numerical growth will follow. When it does, it is our desire to perpetuate the disciple-making process by planting other churches both at home and abroad. This requires that we train leaders now who will be prepared to lead the new works. It also has a generational aspect in order to carry on the Lord's work in the years to come. (see 2 Tim 2:2)

The *Beliefs* of Community Bible Church

Community Bible Church adheres to beliefs that have been traditionally described as Baptist. We are proud to be associated with the historic Baptist distinctives as depicted by the following acrostic:

Biblical authority — The Word of God is our sole source of faith and practice. (2 Tim 3:16)

Autonomy of the local church — the local church is responsible for its own government and direction. (1 Tim 2:5)

Priesthood of the believer — Each believer has access to God and needs no mediator other than Christ. (1 Tim 2:5)

Two offices in the local church — Pastor and deacon are the only biblical offices. (1 Tim 3:1–13)

Individual Soul Liberty — Faith is a private matter and can neither be bestowed nor coerced. (Gal 2:3–5)

Saved church membership — Only true believers qualify for church membership. (Acts 2:47)

Two Ordinances of the local church — Baptism and the Lord's Supper are our only ordinances. (Matt 28:19, 20; 1 Cor 11:23–24)

Separation — The Bible teaches the separation of church and state, and separation from worldly practices and religious apostasy. (Matt 22:21; Rom 12:1, 2; Rom 16:17–18)

The entire CBC *Statement of Faith* (along with our bylaws) is included in Appendix A.

Lesson One: An Intentional Church

I. Our Mindset Is Intentional

Most of us have an idea of what we think a church should be. For a few, their idea of a church has come by conscious adoption of a paradigm for ministry. However, for most, our ideas have been unconsciously absorbed from our experience. In either case, one's view may or may not comport with what Scripture tells us about the life of the Church. Therefore, it is necessary for us to go back to the foundation, the Word of God, to ensure that the kind of church we seek to build is one that will please God.

One major obstacle to effectiveness for many churches is inefficient structures for ministry. And what is it that keeps many churches from changing ineffective structures for more effective ones? Tradition! It has been correctly observed that the seven last words of a dying church are, "We have always done it that way." When people get tied to particular forms of ministry rather than the functions those forms are designed to carry out, then the church's growth will be stunted.

Function Versus Form¹

As one surveys the New Testament, he finds that it is filled with directives regarding the functions we are to perform, but it is short on specifics regarding the forms necessary to carry them out. For instance, the Bible tells us in Hebrews 10:25 that we are "not to give up meeting together...but let us encourage one another." While it tells us *what* we are to do (meet regularly, encourage), it does not tell us *how* we are to do it. So, for instance, we are not told when to meet, or how often, or where, or what the order of service should be, etc. We are given illustrations of these in the New Testament, but it is impossible to derive universal forms to carry out these functions. In fact, with regard to forms in the New Testament, we find that:

- Functions are most often given without any form specified
- The forms that are given are often partial and incomplete. For instance, in Acts 5:42 we are told that the apostles "taught" (function) from "house to house" (form). We are not told whether they taught in every house or just some; whether they taught both believers and unbelievers; whether they were inside or outside the house; whether neighbors were invited, etc.
- The forms for the same function often vary from one context to another. For instance, in Acts 5:42 we're told that the apostles, in addition to teaching from house to house, also taught in the Temple courts.

Given the above observations, one cannot absolutize forms because they are:

- (1) Often not described
- (2) Often incomplete
- (3) Always changing

¹These observations regarding form and function taken from Gene Getz, *Sharpening the Focus of the Church* (Scripture Press Publications, 1984), pp. 94–107.

Yet, changing the forms of ministry is often very difficult. It has been observed that change is so difficult that it only occurs when there is a crisis. That is, we must be forced to change. For the church, the crisis ought to come from confrontation with the objectives given in the Word of God. If we are failing to carry out the objectives Christ gave His Church, it ought to create a crisis that makes us open to change!

While forms cannot be absolutized, the functions that we are to perform are very clear in the Word of God. Jesus gave the two overarching functions of the Church in the Great Commission, evangelism, and edification:

Therefore go and make disciples (evangelism) of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them (edification) to obey everything I have commanded you. (Matt 28:19–20)

The Book of Acts gives us a description of the activities of the early church in edifying and evangelizing:

They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. Everyone was filled with awe at the many wonders and signs performed by the apostles. All the believers were together and had everything in common. They sold property and possessions to give to anyone who had need. Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved. (Acts 2:42–47)

This passage succinctly describes functions that are mentioned many times in the New Testament, and thereby gives us a model for the three kinds of experiences a healthy church will be structured to achieve:²

- Learning experiences with the Word of God (“the apostles’ teaching”)
- Relational experiences with other believers (“fellowship,” including the elements of praying, eating, sharing, and praising)
- Witnessing experiences with the world (“enjoying the favor of all the people”)

II. Our Structure Is Intentional.

A healthy church will be structured (i.e., develop forms) to facilitate learning, loving (relationships), and living for God’s purpose (reaching others). A failure to balance these three functions is the product of an unhealthy church.

Our mission statement says,

The mission of Community Bible Church is to help people learn about God, love Him and others, and live for His purpose.

Achieving the objectives of learning, loving, and living requires that we structure our ministry accordingly. That is, we need to create forms that help us carry out these functions.

²For a full description of these activities, see Getz, *The Measure of a Church* (Regal Books, 2001), pp. 211–223.

It all begins by helping people learn about God, particularly those who do not know Him. We have intentionally structured our ministry in order to reach and assimilate folks into our church by establishing a forum to address the unchurched.

A. A forum for addressing the unchurched

We believe it is crucial to have an intentional and regular time in which to address unbelievers. There was a time when the Sunday evening service was an evangelistic. However, for most of our churches the Sunday evening service ceased to be evangelistic long ago. Further, many of our churches have not found a replacement. Willow Creek developed the "Seeker Service" to address this need, but has done so at the wrong time (in effect, replacing worship) and in the wrong way (marketing, entertainment, etc.).³ This section will make the case for having a regular time in our structure to address unbelievers, without the compromise of the Willow Creek model.

B. The biblical pattern

G. A. Pritchard observes:

We see in the Scriptures that Jesus regularly taught many people who were not yet his disciples. A good deal of his ministry was public teaching on hillsides and at street corners....

Likewise the apostle Paul regularly interacted with nonbelieving Jews and Greeks in whatever public forum was available. Acts 17:17 records that Paul "reasoned in the synagogue with the Jews and the God-fearing Greeks, as well as in the marketplace day by day with those who happened to be there." In Ephesus, Paul had daily discussions in a public lecture hall for two years with the effect that "all the Jews and Greeks who lived in the province of Asia heard the word of the Lord." Paul used a variety of public settings to proclaim and explain the gospel to his audiences.⁴

C. The historical precedent

Pritchard continues:

We see throughout church history the same willingness to use a variety of public settings to communicate the gospel. George Whitfield and John Wesley initiated open-air preaching in the eighteenth century as a useful public forum to communicate the gospel. Many individuals criticized them for this shocking method of preaching outside of churches. As Wesley explains, "I submitted to be more vile, and proclaimed in the highways the glad tidings of salvation." This innovation proved to be very fruitful as tens of thousands came to hear and respond to the Gospel.⁵

³For a devastating critique of the Willow Creek model, see G.A. Pritchard, *Willow Creek Seeker Services* (Baker, 1996), pp. 187–287.

⁴Ibid., p. 188. See Acts 14:1; 17:1–3; 18:4, 28; and 19:8–10.

⁵Ibid. p. 188.

D. *Discovering God* — A contemporary model

Having a regular time to communicate with unbelievers is a good idea. However, the worship service is the wrong time to do it because worship is for believers (unbelievers, by definition, cannot worship!). Given that, in our culture, most are inclined to consider spiritual matters on Sunday morning, we thought it wise to offer a service on Sunday morning, separate from worship, at which we could address unbelievers. The result is the *Discovering God* hour.

1. *Discovering God* begins at 11:00 a.m., contemporaneous with Sunday School.
2. The setting is a classroom atmosphere.
3. The presentation is “guest sensitive”:
 - a. Care is taken to communicate in language the unchurched can understand.
 - b. The unchurched are invited to come informally.
 - c. No offering is taken.
 - d. There is no music.
 - e. Topics are chosen to address the unchurched (a list is provided in Lesson Three).

III. Our Schedule Is Intentional

Often, we recognize the need to be intentional about outreach, but fail to see the need to be strategic regarding assimilation.

A. We work within the “Church Year”

1. Fall is “back to church” time
2. January is a new beginning
3. Spring begins on Easter!
4. Summer is useless

B. We schedule events strategically

Since our objective is to reach the unreached and move them along in spiritual growth, then it makes sense to order our church calendar in a fashion that facilitates this progress.

1. Introductory “move in” events
 - New *Discovering God* series
 - Baptism Dinner
 - Outreach Concert
 - Evangelistic *Community Group*
 - Easter Celebration
 - Mother/Daughter Tea
 - Introducing CBC
 - Men's Golf Outing
 - Sportsmen's Dinner
 - Carnival
 - Ladies Christmas Social

2. Neighborly “settle in” events
 - Picnics, hayride, backyard fellowships, etc.
 - *Newcomer's Orientation*
3. Family “fit in” events
 - Sunday School and *Community Groups*
 - *Community Institute*
 - *Leadership Institute*
 - Ladies Overnighter
 - Family Meetings
 - Men's Retreat
 - Ministry Fair

Lesson Two: A Healthy Church

This is the second of four lessons designed to provide an overview of our ministry and the rationale behind it. Last week we saw that CBC seeks to be an *intentional* church. This week we'll see that we strive to be a *healthy* church, and next week a *growing* church.

I. Health Produces Growth

Our objective ought to be church health, not church growth. A vital or healthy church is marked by spiritual vitality, functional effectiveness, and statistical growth in its life and ministry. Acts 6:1–7 provides a paradigm for this principle. Therefore, we will seek to be a healthy church and expect to grow as a result.

II. The Vital Signs of a Healthy Church:⁶

A. Gospel-Driven

The gospel of salvation by grace is the foundation, the formation, and the stimulation for a healthy church. It is the glorious message that God's grace has overcome our sin through the life, death, burial, and resurrection of His Son, our Savior, Jesus Christ.

B. Vision Motivated

Our vision is what we're going to *be* by God's grace. Our mission is what we're going to *do* by God's grace. Since "being precedes doing" it is important that we have a grasp of our vision, that is, what we seek to be, before discussing what we do.

The vision of CBC is to be a *healthy* community of faith.

Mission (or purpose) describes what we *do* as a result of what we *are*.

The mission of Community Bible Church is to help people *learn* about God, *love* Him and others, and *live* for His purpose.

C. Authentic Worship

Principles of worship:

- Worship must be God-centered.
- Worship is Word-centered.
- Worship must be regulated.
- Worship is sacred.
- Worship is corporate.
- Worship must be holistic.

⁶The following is adapted from *Embers to a Flame: A Conference on Church Revitalization*. For information, see www.emberstoafame.org.

Practices of worship:

- We will seek to extol and emulate the character of God in Word and deed.
- We will seek to accurately communicate and apply the Word of God.
- We will utilize the “regulative principle” in developing the components of worship.
- We will seek to be “Guest Sensitive.”
- We will seek to engage the whole person in worship.

D. Effective Preaching

A sermon without application is simply a lecture. People may applaud our delivery, diligent study, erudition, etc., but if they fail to appropriate the truth in their daily living then we’ve failed in our objective. Our purpose is to *communicate* the Truth.

The famous passage in the Bible regarding Scripture itself is found in 2 Timothy 3:16–17:

All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the servant of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.

Note that the *purpose* of Scripture is NOT doctrine! Rather, doctrine serves the purposes of Scripture namely, *so that* [purpose clause] *the servant of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.*

E. Servant Leadership

Perhaps the clearest job description for a pastor is found in Ephesians 4:11–12:

*So Christ himself gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the pastors and teachers,¹² to **equip** his people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up.*

The word translated *equip* in verse 12 is used three ways in the NT:

- *Restore* from brokenness and sin (Gal 6:1)
- *Provide* what is needed in faith (1 Thess 3:10) and obedience (Heb 13:21)
- *Train* (Luke 6:40) by example and teaching (2 Tim 3:17)

Note: While certainly not involving less than preaching, pastoral leadership involves more than preaching. To be better preachers we must concentrate on being better pastors. (cf. Paul’s example in Thessalonica and Ephesus in 1 Thess 2:6–9 and Acts 20:17–21, 34–38, respectively)

F. Dynamic Discipleship

An effective discipleship strategy is based on the assumption that all believers are disciples and therefore must be engaged in the discipleship process. It will provide a *comprehensive* curriculum as well as a *relational* environment in which to learn. The curriculum should include both *foundational* knowledge (evangelism, baptism, Bible study, prayer, service) and *systematic* learning permeated by a biblical *worldview*.

Our discipleship philosophy is built on two basic assumptions: (1) Discipleship must be intentional (2) Discipleship must be systematic.

With regard to the intentional nature of discipleship, it has been observed that all too often growth in the Christian walk is considered optional. A new convert *may* catch on to the basics of Christianity such as witness, prayer, study, and service, but this is considered optional. Churches that accept this class system within the congregation often take a passive, non-directive approach. We believe that it is our God-given responsibility to communicate to all believers the *expectation* that they grow in grace.

Discipleship must not only be intentional, but systematic. That is, rather than taking a haphazard approach, we lay out a logical system that carries one step-by-step through the growth process. The fully trained disciple will, in a relatively short period, be able to reproduce himself by winning and discipling others.

The result of our commitment to intentional and systematic learning is the development of a track through which all newcomers are encouraged to participate. The CBC Spiritual Growth Process is illustrated on page 17.

The *relational* context by which the principles of the Christian walk are modeled and mentored is best provided in small group settings.

G. Intercessory Prayer

Why has God chosen prayer as the means by which to accomplish His will? It is because prayer is perfectly suited to maximizing God's glory. When we express our dependence on God, we glorify Him. When we acknowledge that answered prayer in our lives and ministry is only due to His gracious hand, we glorify Him. One author has said that to glorify God means to "intentionally show Him off."

In John 15:7–8 we see the direct connection of all this to our mission:

If you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. ⁸This is to my Father's glory, that you bear much fruit, showing yourselves to be my disciples.

Literally, verse 8 says "by this is my father glorified." It connects back to verse 7 and forward to verse 8. That is, God is glorified in that (1) we ask and (2) He supplies because thereby we are shown to be needy and He all sufficient. And the thing for which we ask is "fruit." It is the Father's will that we bear fruit!⁷

⁷John Piper sermon. Available at <https://www.desiringgod.org/messages/ask-whatever-you-wish>.

Lesson Three: A Growing Church

We have seen that CBC strives to be intentional in its ministry structure. As seen in Lesson One, our purpose is to *help people learn about God, love Him and others, and live for His purpose*. Therefore, the various ministries we offer exist to accomplish these biblical objectives.

This lesson will survey some of the opportunities offered at Community in these three areas.

I. CBC Offers Opportunities to Help You Learn about God.

The Bible is foundational to our ministry. As indicated in our motto, *The Family of God...Built on the Word of God...To the Glory of God*, our church is built upon the Bible, and we seek to build individual lives on God's Word as well. Here are some of the opportunities to learn about God from Scripture at CBC:

A. *Discovering God* Hour — 11:00 a.m. on Sunday

Each Sunday at 11:00 a.m. we offer age-graded classes for infant through adult:

Our children's curriculum is thoroughly God-centered and parent-inclusive. While our teachers endeavor to make class enjoyable for the kids, our primary objective is to teach truth about God that results in salvation and devotion.

The High Impact ministry for teens focuses on the development of a biblical worldview. Subjects such as apologetics, origins, ethics, etc., are taught and discussed in order to integrate the truth with everyday life.

Discovering God offers biblical teaching on topics of interest to believers and pre-believers alike such as:

- *What's the Difference?* — An examination of the differences between world religions and denominations
- *You Mean the Bible Teaches That?* — An examination of the Bible's teaching on ethical issues
- *Why You Can Trust the Bible* — The origin and uniqueness of the Bible
- *Meant to Last* — An examination of the Bible's teaching on marriage
- *Parenting with Purpose* — An examination of the Bible's teaching on parenting
- *Big Bang or Big God?* — An examination of the Bible's teaching on origins, as contrasted with the prevailing scientific view.
- *What's the World Coming To?* — An examination of the Bible's teaching on end times events
- *Money Matters* — What the Bible says about finances
- *From Self Help to God's Help* — The Bible's teaching on why we do what we do and how we change
- *How to Find Meaning in a Meaningless World* — a look at the importance of meaning in life and how it can only be found in Jesus Christ and His Word.

In addition to the regular adult sessions each Sunday, we periodically offer breakout classes for targeted demographic groups such as young adults, young married couples, etc.⁸

B. *Growth Partners* — one-on-one

The *Growth Partners* ministry involves the daily study of a portion of the Bible, weekly memorization of Bible verses and the weekly study of a resource that gives you insights to the biblical profile of maturity for a man or woman of God.

For the duration of the ministry, the partners meet weekly to pray, discuss the reading assignments and review the memory verses. This time is also an opportunity to share the daily events and concerns of their lives in a confidential setting.

C. *Community Institute* — 7:00 p.m. on Wednesday⁹

Community Institute is CBC's version of a Bible institute, offering courses in biblical basics, surveys of Bible books, as well as historical and practical theology. *Community Institute* allows each CBCer an avenue for lifelong learning as a means of spiritual growth. *How to Get the Most Out of Your Bible* and *Master Plan for Life* are the foundational courses for *Community Institute*. *How to Get the Most Out of Your Bible* is a two-semester course that provides an overview of the Bible's message and instruction on how to interpret and apply Scripture. *Master Plan for Life* is a two-semester course that provides an overview of the great themes of the Bible: God, Scripture, Creation, Sin, Salvation, the Church, and the Second Coming.

Community Institute Summer School offers modules on topics such as purity/modesty, personal ministry, and life development.

D. Worship — 9:30 a.m. Sunday

Sound doctrine is learned during worship through songs that teach biblical truth as well as expository preaching.

II. CBC Offers Opportunities to Help You Love God and Others.

The most often used metaphor for the church in Scripture is a family. Our name, Community, was chosen in part to reflect this truth, and our ministry structure is designed to offer venues in which the "one another" commands of the Bible can be carried out, and the love by which "all men will know that you are my disciples" (John 13:35) can be

⁸For instance, the *Crossroads* group focuses on topics of particular significance to the young adult community such as vocation, dating, sex, culture, etc. Likewise, the *Partners with Purpose* course is offered periodically to teach young married couples scriptural content regarding oneness, communication, finances, parenting, gender roles, etc.

⁹While the adults are learning in *Community Institute*, we also offer ministries for kids and teens. Community Kids Midweek is a Christ-centered ministry for kids K-5th that is designed to teach the truths of the Bible in a structured yet fun environment. High Impact teens meet to discuss and apply the teaching received on Sundays.

fostered.

- A. Our weekly worship hour (9:30 a.m.) is a time to express our love for God in song and in response to His self-disclosure in His Word.¹⁰
- B. *Community Groups* meet in homes on Sunday evenings for refreshments, teaching/discussion, and prayer. CG offers a relational opportunity that simply cannot be gained in other settings.
- C. *Café Community* is our weekly refreshment/fellowship time that allows interaction among CBCers but also with those who are guests at our Sunday services.
- D. *Community Life* is CBC's calendar of events designed to strengthen our relationships. Our full calendar includes numerous picnics and dinners as well as family outings such as sporting events, hayrides, ice skating, etc.

III. CBC Offers Opportunities to Help You Live for God's Purpose.

Those who have been touched by the Gospel have the privilege and responsibility to reach others with its life-changing message. To that end, CBC offers opportunities and training designed to encourage an evangelistic mindset and lifestyle.

A. Witnessing opportunities

- Baptism — the public testimony of one's new-found faith is an early and excellent opportunity to give witness to the power of the Gospel. Our baptism celebrations encourage candidates to invite friends and family to observe the Gospel symbolized in baptism, as well by word and example.
- *Discovering God* promotional material – CBCers are provided material to handout and email to invite contacts to upcoming *Discovering God* series.
- Evangelistic *Community Groups* are CGs that meet for a defined period for the express purpose of offering in the Gospel message in a systematic fashion and relaxed setting.
- Evangelistic and outreach events, such as the Living Last Supper, Easter Egg Hunt, Enchanted Trails, Community Carnival, and Sportsman's Dinner, encourage CBCers to participate and invite pre-believers.

B. Training

- *Master Plan for Life* includes a lesson devoted to instruction on personal evangelism.
- *Seeking God and Finding Him* and *Living Proof* are offered periodically for focused attention on the message and method of sharing the Gospel.

¹⁰Worship is included under both *learning* and *loving* because it involves both *revelation*—from the Bible in our teaching and singing—and *response*—our expression of love for, and commitment to, God.

- The *Get a Life* seminar examines the Bible's teaching regarding purpose, the fact that God has uniquely designed us to participate in His purpose and offers exercises to help us discover our divine design.

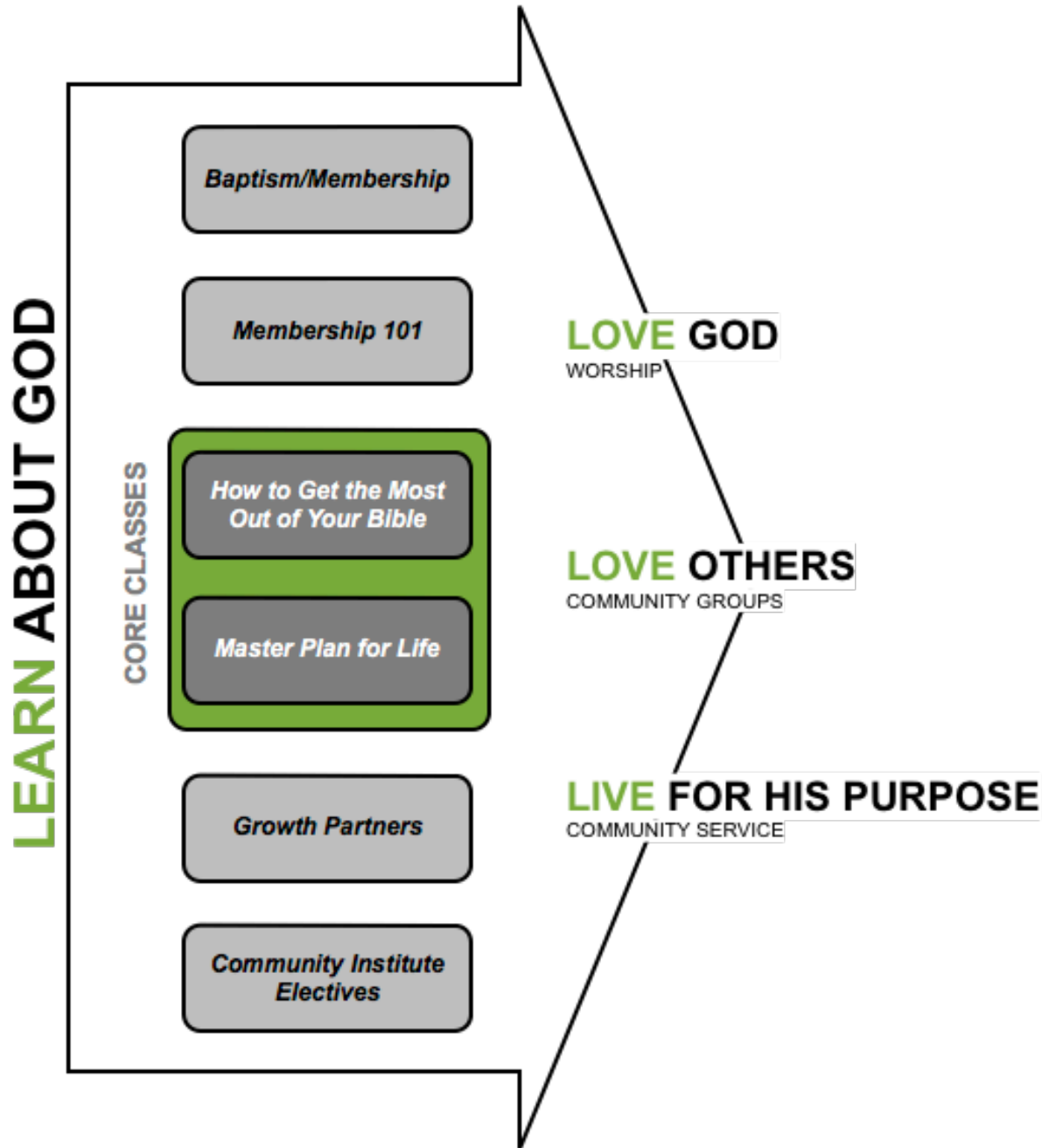
C. Support Ministries and Service Opportunities.

In order for the “frontline” ministries for learning, loving, and living to operate effectively there are numerous support services that must be carried out. In addition, CBC's structure allows for unlimited supplemental ministries to take place at times throughout the week.

- *Leadership Institute* is CBC's monthly ministry for men who desire to be leaders in God's church.
- *Community Service* seeks to place members in a proper ministry “fit” in either our learning, relational, evangelistic ministries, or in any of the following support services:
 - Administration
 - Assimilation
 - Communication
 - Facilities
 - Finance
 - Hospitality
 - Missions
 - Prayer
 - Usher
 - Welcome

Spiritual Growth Process

The mission of CBC is to help people *learn* about God, *love* Him and others, and *live* for His purpose.



Lesson Four: A Committed Church

The following Commitments and Church Covenant are designed to help the members of our church relate to one another in a way that honors God and promotes authentic relationships. These Commitments cover important relational issues, such as peacemaking and reconciliation, marriage and divorce, protecting children from harm, counseling, confidentiality, and mutual accountability.

These Commitments are intended to help us build a strong community of faith. By *community*, we mean a group of people who have voluntarily joined together to encourage and support one another as we worship God, grow in our understanding of his love for us, and seek to tell others about the salvation and peace they, too, can find through faith in Jesus Christ.

We know that true community isn't easy to achieve. Each of us brings our own expectations and agendas into the church. This diversity usually leads to rich discussions and creative ministries; but sometimes it can lead to conflict. As James 4:1–2a warns, “What causes fights and quarrels among you? Don't they come from your desires that battle within you? You desire but do not have....”

That certainly describes us! At times, no matter how hard we try to build a close community of faith, our desires and expectations still clash. That's where these Commitments come in. They pull together key principles from God's Word and serve as our relational guidelines. These Commitments accomplish several important purposes:

- They remind us of our mutual commitment to work together to pursue unity, maintain friendships, preserve marriages, and build relationships that reflect the love of Christ.
- They help to prevent surprises, disappointed expectations, confusion and conflict by describing how we expect to relate to one another within the church.
- They provide a clear track for us to run on when conflict threatens to divide us, and they remind us how to move quickly toward reconciliation.
- They establish guidelines for how our leaders will counsel others, guard confidential information, and protect our children from harm.
- They define and limit the spiritual authority of church leaders and thereby insure that all members are treated fairly.¹¹
- Finally, they reduce our church's exposure to legal liability by clearly establishing our relational practices and by affirming our mutual commitment to resolve conflict biblically.¹²

¹¹When we use the term “leader” in these Commitments, we are referring to CBC's Leadership Team, comprised of the pastors and deacons of our church.

¹²See www.PeacemakerChurch.net for information on how these Commitments can help to prevent conflict and

As you read our Relational Commitments, we encourage you to study the Bible passages that are cited next to particular provisions. We want you to be confident that these Commitments are based solidly on the Word of God. If your study does not answer all of your questions and concerns, please do not hesitate to approach our leaders, who will be happy to talk with you about these principles.

We encourage you to expressly embrace these Commitments and formally join our church by going through our membership class, acknowledging your faith in Christ, and signing the Church Covenant on page 39. (See page 34 for more information about church membership.)

If you are not yet ready to become a member, you and your family are certainly welcome to attend our services, find fellowship in a small group, and seek assistance from our leaders. However, it is our firm belief that God wants all believers to be formally united with a Bible-teaching church in which one can live out the commitments outlined in this document. Therefore, once you've had a reasonable time to evaluate our church, we'll encourage you to make a decision about membership.

As followers of Christ, we will do all we can to encourage you to grow in faith and godliness and to live a disciplined life that honors our Lord Jesus Christ and enhances the witness of His church.

The Leadership Team of Community Baptist Church

Adopted on June 29, 2010.¹³

reduce exposure to legal liability in our church.

¹³These Relational Commitments are adapted from *The Peacemaker Church*. Used by permission of Peacemaker® Ministries.

A Tale of Two Families

Two boys, John and Luke, lost their mother at a young age. When they were in their teens, their father was reported to have died when his plane crashed into the ocean. The boys had no other relatives, so two neighboring families took them in.

The Friendly family did all they could to make John feel welcome in their home. They gave him his own bedroom, provided his meals, and encouraged him to join in family activities. Not wanting him to feel any pressure, they did not explain to him any of the family rules. Instead, they hoped that he would notice how their other children behaved and decide on his own to act the same way.

Not knowing exactly what was expected of him, John frequently disappointed the family by violating unspoken rules. Feeling judged and unconnected to the family, he became increasingly independent. He came and went at any hour, played loud music, and spent long hours in his room with a variety of girls. When Mr. Friendly finally tried to talk with him about his behavior, John said, "I'm not your son, so you have no right to tell me how to live my life. I like having a bedroom and meals whenever I decide to be here, but I'll still do whatever seems right to me."

Tensions continued to build, and finally Mr. Friendly asked John to leave. Fortunately for John, there was another Friendly family in town, and they were happy to take him in. But there the cycle started all over again.

John's brother had an entirely different experience. Luke was taken in by the Loving family. They wanted him to feel welcome, so they gave him a room, provided meals, and encouraged him to join in family activities. But they also wanted to avoid misunderstandings and conflict. So shortly after Luke arrived, Mr. Loving explained the family rules to Luke, so he would know how to get along with the rest of the family. He said, "Even though you are not my son, I will be glad to look out for you the best I can. But as long as you are in my home, I also will expect you to behave as my other children do."

Like any normal teenager, Luke sometimes broke the rules. When he did, Mr. Loving sat down with him, pointed out what he'd done wrong, and held him accountable to the same standards he had established for his other children. Luke sometimes resented this discipline, but he eventually realized it was always done in love, and it kept him out of a lot of trouble.

After a few months, Mr. Loving approached Luke and said, "Since you are living here like part of the family, we would like to make it official. If you feel this is where you'd like to stay, we'd like to adopt you and make you our son."

Luke gladly accepted and formally committed himself to the family. In doing so, he changed from being an orphan who merely resided in the home to being a son who willingly accepted and enjoyed all of the same responsibilities and privileges of his new brothers and sisters.

Suppose that John and Luke's father is rescued from an island two years later. When he is reunited with his sons and hears what has happened to them, which family will he thank the

most? The Friendly family, who were kind enough to give John a place to hang out, but could not bring themselves to give him any boundaries? Or the Loving family, who welcomed Luke in, held him accountable to the same rules as the rest of the family, and invited him to be a son?

The answer is obvious. And there is a real Father who one day will evaluate the way we care for the people who come into our church family. Therefore, we are glad to welcome people and give them a place to worship, grow and serve. But being “friendly” is not good enough. We want to be loving, as God defines loving (Heb 12:5–6; 10:24). Therefore, we will encourage and expect everyone who regularly attends our church to become a member and live out the biblical principles that are summarized in these Relational Commitments.

And when people have lived like part of our family for a while, we will encourage them to “make it official.” Living like an orphan, with its illusion of independence and self-determination, may seem appealing to some. But it cannot compare to the security, privileges, and sense of belonging that come from joining a biblical church and living as truly committed brothers and sisters in the family of God.

Commitment to Peacemaking and Reconciliation

Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God (Matt 5:9)

Our church is committed to building a “culture of peace” that reflects God’s peace and the power of the gospel of Christ in our lives. As we stand in the light of the cross, we realize that bitterness, unforgiveness and broken relationships are not appropriate for the people whom God has reconciled to himself through the sacrifice of his only Son (John 13:34–35; Eph 4:29–32; Col 3:12–14).

Therefore, we look to the Scriptures and the Holy Spirit for guidance on how we can respond to conflict in a way that will honor God, promote justice, reconcile relationships, and preserve our witness for Christ. As God gives us his wisdom and grace, we are committed to actively teaching and encouraging one another to live out the following principles of peacemaking and reconciliation:

Personal Peacemaking

Whenever we are faced with conflict, our primary goal will be to glorify God with our thoughts, words, and actions (1 Cor 10:31).

- We will try to get the “logs” out of our own eyes before focusing on what others may have done wrong (Matt 7:3–5).
- We will seek to overlook minor offenses (Prov 19:11).
- We will refrain from all gossip, backbiting and slander (Eph 4:29). If we have a problem with others, we will talk *to* them, not *about* them.
- We will make “charitable judgments” toward one another by believing the best about each other until we have facts that prove otherwise (1 Cor 13:7).
- If an offense is too serious to overlook, or if we think someone may have something against us, we will go promptly to seek reconciliation (Matt 5:23–24; 18:15).
- When we offer a word of correction to others, we will do so graciously and gently, with the goal of serving and restoring them, rather than beating them down (Prov 12:18; Eph 4:29; Gal 6:1).
- When someone tries to correct us, we will ask God to help us resist prideful defensiveness and to welcome correction with humility (Ps 141:5; Prov 15:32).
- When others repent, we will ask God to give us grace to forgive them as he has forgiven us (Eph 4:32).
- When we discuss or negotiate substantive issues, we will look out for others’ interests as well as our own (Phil 2:3–4).

Assisted Peacemaking

When two of us cannot resolve a conflict privately, we will seek the mediation of wise people in our church and listen humbly to their counsel (Matt 18:16; Phil 4:2–3). If our dispute is with a church leader, we will look to other leaders for assistance.

- When informal mediation does not resolve a dispute, we will seek formal assistance from our church leaders or people they appoint, and we will submit to their counsel and correction.

- When we have a business or civil legal dispute with another Christian or with the church, we will make every reasonable effort to resolve the conflict within the body of Christ through biblical mediation or arbitration, rather than going to civil court (1 Cor 6:1–8). If the other party attends another church, our leaders will offer to cooperate with the leaders of that church to resolve the matter. However, if the matter cannot be settled internally, we will consider submitting it to professional Christian mediation and, if necessary, legally binding arbitration.¹⁴ This recommendation applies only to *civil* matters and does *not* serve to shield *criminal* offenses from criminal referral and prosecution by the appropriate authorities.
- If a person seeks to transfer to our church and has an unresolved conflict with someone in his former church, we will require and assist him to make every reasonable effort to be reconciled to the other person before joining our church (Matt 5:23–24; Rom 12:18).
- When a conflict involves matters of doctrine or church discipline, we will submit to the procedures set forth in our *Commitment to Accountability and Church Discipline* on page 29.

Above all, we pray that our ministry of peacemaking will bring praise to our Lord Jesus Christ and lead others to know his infinite love and peace.¹⁵

¹⁴One resource for Christian mediation and legally binding arbitration is the Institute for Christian Conciliation. See www.peacemaker.net.

¹⁵Adapted from *The Peacemaker: A Biblical Guide to Resolving Personal Conflict*, by Ken Sande (Baker Books, 3rd ed., 2004).

Commitment to Preserving Marriages

So they are no longer two but one flesh. Therefore, what God has joined together, let no one separate (Matt 19:6)

God designed marriage to reflect the beauty and permanence of Christ's loving relationship with his bride, the church (Eph 5:22–33; Rev 19:7). Therefore, he established marriage to be a life-long, exclusive relationship between one man and one woman (Matt 19:4–6). God also designed it to provide mutual companionship through life's joys and difficulties, to create stability for raising and nurturing children, and to give strength and cohesiveness to society in general.

In our society, marriages fail under a wide range of circumstances. Many people have gone through a divorce before having a relationship with Christ, and others have experienced divorce through no desire or decision of their own. Still others may have divorced because of their own wrongful choices but have since experienced the repentance and forgiveness offered through our Lord Jesus. We want all of you to know that you are welcome in our church.

Because our church recognizes both the divine origin of marriage and the devastating effects of divorce, we are deeply committed to preserving marriages and preventing divorce. Toward this end, we will devote a significant portion of our preaching and teaching ministry to strengthening marriages and families. We require and provide thorough premarital counseling to ensure that couples enter into marriage advisedly and are well prepared for its many challenges.

We also encourage couples to nurture their marriages by participating in weekly fellowship groups in which people can grow together in their love for God and for one another (Heb 10:24–25). As relationships deepen within these groups, we expect husbands to spur each other on in loving and cherishing their wives, and wives to encourage one another in respecting and loving their husbands (Eph 5:33).

Our leaders are committed to providing counsel and support to couples who face marital difficulties. We will discourage couples from using divorce as a way to run away from issues that instead can be resolved through Spirit-guided counseling, repentance, forgiveness and ongoing discipleship.

We recognize, however, that there are times when God permits a believer to seek a divorce without sinning against God or a spouse. We believe divorce is explicitly permitted when (1) the other spouse has been sexually involved with a person outside the marriage (Matt 5:31–32) or (2) when a spouse abandons a marriage (1 Cor 7:12–16). In addition, we recognize situations for which separation may be required (e.g., physical abuse) and which, if not rectified may, in effect, constitute abandonment.

Even though divorce is *permissible* in such situations, it is not *required*. God patiently bears with our sins, repeatedly calls us to repentance, and freely forgives us when we turn back to him (Ps 103:8–12; Isa 55:7). When divorce becomes an option, an offended spouse can imitate God's love by offering a straying spouse these same evidences of grace (Eph 5:1–2). This may involve patiently bearing neglect or lovingly confronting serious sin (Col 3:12–14; Gal 6:1). In some situations, love may require asking the church to initiate formal discipline

to rescue a spouse and a marriage from the devastating effects of unrepentant sin (Matt 18:12–20).

Just as church leaders are involved in beginning a marriage, they should be involved when it ends. Therefore, when someone is considering divorce, he or she is expected to bring the situation to our leaders and cooperate with them as they determine whether grounds exist, promote repentance and reconciliation, and exhaust redemptive discipline, if appropriate.

Separated spouses who have filed for divorce should consider themselves married until the day a civil court issues a divorce decree. Thus, they should refrain from dating or any other activity that is inconsistent with being married.

We are always interested in helping divorced people restore their previous marriage if that is possible and appropriate. We will support a decision to pursue a subsequent marriage to a different person only when we have determined that it is biblically valid and that every reasonable effort has been made to seek and grant forgiveness of the sins that contributed to a previous divorce.

We rejoice that divorce never diminishes God's free offer of love, grace and forgiveness. He cherishes and loves every person who has been unwillingly divorced, as does our church. God graciously extends this same love to those who have wrongly left their marriages. That love moves him (and us) to call them to repentance, to encourage and aid reconciliation when possible, and to gladly restore those who have done all they can to rebuild broken relationships.

Commitment to Protecting Our Children

The prudent see danger and take refuge (Prov 27:12a)

Children are a blessing from God, and he calls the church to support parents in their responsibility to train children in the discipline and instruction of the Lord. Therefore, the church should be a safe and blessed place for children, where they can grow, play, form friendships, and learn to experience and share the love of Christ.

Since sin affects every person and organization in the world, however, it is possible that children could be harmed even during church activities. We cannot guarantee that such things will never happen within our fellowship, but we are committed to taking every reasonable precaution to protect our children from foreseeable harm. This commitment includes, but is not limited to, the following steps:

- We do not allow anyone to work regularly with our youth (children or teenagers) unless he or she has taken our *Child Protection Training* course.
- We do not allow anyone to work regularly with our youth (children or teenagers), unless he or she has regularly attended our church for at least six months and is a formal member.
- We require all of our youth workers to complete a detailed application and screening process.
- We require that, whenever practicable, youth workers serve in teams of two or more and be visible to other workers.
- We will seek to keep our children safe from sex offenders. If a registered child sex offender is identified as an attender at CBC services or events, we will immediately put into effect the church's *Conditions for Church Involvement of Known Sex Offenders*—see Appendix E.

If a child is harmed in our church, we will take immediate steps to inform the parents, to accept responsibility for our role in the situation, and to hold offending youth workers fully responsible for their actions. We will also evaluate our practices and procedures, considering changes that might reduce the likelihood of such harm to children in the future.

Commitment to Biblical Counseling

I myself am convinced, my brothers and sisters, that you yourselves are full of goodness, filled with knowledge and competent to instruct one another (Rom 15:14)

All Christians struggle with sin and the effect it has on our lives and our relationships. Whenever believers are unable to overcome sinful attitudes or behaviors through personal efforts, God calls them to seek assistance from other believers, and when needed from church leaders, who have the responsibility of providing pastoral counseling and oversight (see Rom 15:14; Gal 6:1–2; 2 Tim 4:1–2; Heb 13:17; James 5:16). Therefore, this church encourages and enjoins its people to seek counsel from and confess sins to each other and to our leaders.

We believe that the Bible provides thorough guidance and instruction for faith and life (2 Tim 3:16–17). Therefore, our counseling is based on scriptural principles rather than those of secular psychology or psychiatry. Unless they specifically state otherwise, none of those who counsel in this church are trained or licensed as psychotherapists or mental health professionals, nor should they be expected to follow the methods of such specialists.

God calls our leaders to set an example for us “in speech, in life, in love, and in faith and purity”(1 Tim 4:12). Therefore, we expect them to treat counselees with every respect and courtesy, and to avoid even the appearance of impropriety or impurity during counseling (Eph 5:3). We also expect counselees to promptly report to the leadership team any conduct that fails to meet this standard.

To prevent our leaders from being placed in situations that might compromise their pastoral commitments, we, the members of this church, agree that we will not try to compel them to testify in any legal proceeding or otherwise divulge any confidential information they receive through pastoral counseling or ministry (Prov 11:13, 25:9).

There are occasions when our leaders do not have sufficient time to meet with every person who asks for counseling. At such times we expect our leaders to give first priority to people who have formally joined the church (Gal 6:10), and to serve those who only attend the church by referring them to another source of godly counsel.

Commitment to Confidentiality

A gossip betrays a confidence, but a trustworthy person keeps a secret (Prov 11:13)

The Bible teaches that Christians should carefully guard any personal and private information that others reveal to them. Protecting confidences is a sign of Christian love and respect (Matt 7:12). It also discourages harmful gossip (Prov 26:20), invites confession (Prov 11:13), and thus encourages people to seek needed counseling. Since these goals are essential to the ministry of the gospel and the work of the local church, all members are expected to refrain from gossip and to respect the confidences of others. In particular, our leaders will carefully protect all information that they receive through pastoral counseling, subject to the following guidelines.

Although confidentiality is to be respected as much as possible, there are times when it is appropriate to reveal certain information to others. In particular, when our leaders believe it is biblically necessary, they may disclose confidential information to appropriate people in the following circumstances:

- when a leader is uncertain of how to counsel a person about a particular problem and needs to seek advice from other leaders in our church or, if the person attends another church, from the leaders of that church (Prov 11:14).
- when the person who disclosed the information, or any other person, is in imminent danger of serious harm unless others intervene (Prov 24:11–12).
- when a person refuses to repent of sin and it becomes necessary to promote repentance through accountability and redemptive church discipline (Matt 18:15–20).
- when a person refuses to repent of sin and seeks to circumvent redemptive church discipline by attending another assembly which is unaware of the process begun at our church.
- when leaders are required by law to report suspected abuse (Rom 13:1).

Commitment to Accountability and Church Discipline

And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds (Heb 10:24)

Like all of our Relational Commitments, the principles and practices described below apply to all members.

I. Accountability and Discipline Are Signs of God's Love

God has established the church to reflect his character, wisdom and glory in the midst of a fallen world (Eph 3:10–11). He loves his church so much that he sent his Son to die for her (Eph 5:25). His ultimate purpose for his church is to present her as a gift to his Son; thus Scripture refers to the church as the “bride” of Christ (Rev 19:7). For this reason the Father, Son and Holy Spirit are continually working to purify the church and bring her to maturity (Eph 5:25–27).

This does not mean that God expects the church to be made up of perfectly pure people. He knows that the best of churches are still companies of sinners who wrestle daily with remaining sin (1 John 1:8; Phil 3:12). Therefore, it would be unbiblical for us to expect church members to live perfectly. What we can do, however, is confess our common struggle with sin and our mutual need for God's mercy and grace. We also can spur one another on toward maturity by encouraging and holding each other accountable to love, seek after, and obey God with all of our hearts, souls, minds and strength, and to love others as we love ourselves (Mark 12:30–31; Heb 10:24–25).

The Bible sometimes refers to this process of mutual encouragement and accountability as “discipline.” The Bible never presents church discipline as being negative, legalistic or harsh, as modern society does. True discipline originates from God himself and is always presented as a sign of genuine love. “The Lord disciplines those he loves” (Heb 12:6). “Blessed is the man you discipline, O LORD, the man you teach from your law” (Ps 94:12). “Those whom I love I rebuke and discipline” (Rev 3:19).

God's discipline in the church, like the discipline in a good family, is intended to be primarily positive, instructive and encouraging. This process, which is sometimes referred to as “formative discipline,” involves preaching, teaching, prayer, personal Bible study, small group fellowship and countless other enjoyable activities that challenge and encourage us to love and serve God more wholeheartedly.

On rare occasions God's discipline, like the discipline in a family with growing children, also may have a corrective purpose. When we forget or disobey what God has taught us, he corrects us. One way he does this is to call the church to seek after us and lead us back onto the right track. This process, which is sometimes called “corrective” or “restorative” discipline, is likened in Scripture to a shepherd seeking after a lost sheep.

If a man has a hundred sheep, and one of them wanders away, will he not leave the ninety-nine on the hills and go to look for the one that wandered off? And if he finds it, truly I tell you, he is happier about that one sheep than about the ninety-nine that did not wander off (Matt 18:12–13).

Thus, restorative or corrective discipline is never to be done in a harsh, vengeful or self-righteous manner. It is always to be carried out in humility and love, with the goals of restoring someone to a close walk with Christ (Matt 18:15; Gal 6:1), protecting others from harm (1 Cor 5:6), and showing respect for the honor and glory of God's name (1 Pet 2:12).

Biblical discipline is similar to the discipline we value in other aspects of life. We admire parents who consistently teach their children how to behave properly and lovingly discipline them when they disobey. We value music teachers who bring out the best in their students by teaching them proper technique and consistently pointing out their errors so they can play a piece properly. And we applaud athletic coaches who diligently teach their players to do what is right and correct them when they fumble, so that the team works well together and can compete for the championship.

The same principles apply to the family of God. We, too, need to be taught what is right and to be lovingly corrected when we do something contrary to what God teaches us in his Word. Therefore, we as a church are committed to help one another obey God's command to be "self-controlled, upright, holy and disciplined" (Titus 1:8).

The leaders of our church recognize that God has called them to an even higher level of accountability regarding their faith and conduct (James 3:1; 1 Tim 5:19–20). Therefore, they are committed to listening humbly to loving correction from each other or from any member in our church, and, if necessary, to submitting themselves to the corrective discipline of our body.

II. Most Corrective Discipline Is Private, Personal and Informal

God gives every believer grace to be self-disciplined. "For God did not give us a spirit of timidity, but a spirit of power, of love and of self-discipline" (2 Tim 1:7). Thus discipline always begins as a personal matter and usually remains that way, as each of us studies God's Word, seeks him in prayer, and draws on his grace to identify and change sinful habits and grow in godliness.

But sometimes we are blind to our sins or so tangled in them that we cannot get free on our own. This is why the Bible says, "Brothers, if someone is caught in a sin, you who are spiritual should restore him gently" (Gal 6:1). In obedience to this command, we are committed to giving and receiving loving correction within our church whenever a sin (whether in word, behavior or doctrine) seems too serious to overlook (Prov 19:11).

If repeated private conversations do not lead another person to repentance, Jesus commands that we ask other brothers or sisters to get involved. "If he will not listen, take one or two others along" (Matt 18:16). If informal conversations with these people fail to resolve the matter, then we may seek the involvement of more influential people, such as a small group leader, Sunday school teacher or church leader. If even these efforts fail to bring a brother or sister to repentance, and if the issue is too serious to overlook, we will move into what may be called "formal discipline."

III. Formal Discipline May Involve the Entire Church

If an individual persistently refuses to listen to personal and informal correction to turn from speech or behavior that the Bible defines as sin, Jesus commands us to “tell it to the church” (Matt 18:17a). This first involves informing one or more church leaders about the situation. If the offense is not likely to cause imminent harm to others, our leaders may approach the individual privately to personally establish the facts and encourage repentance of any sin they discover. The individual will be given every reasonable opportunity to explain and defend his or her actions. If the individual recognizes his sin and repents, the matter usually ends there, unless a confession to additional people is needed.

If an offense is likely to harm others or lead them into sin, or cause division or disruption, our leaders may accelerate the entire disciplinary process and move promptly to protect the church (Rom 16:17; 1 Cor 5:1–13; Titus 3:10–11).

As the disciplinary process progresses, our leaders may impose a variety of sanctions to encourage repentance, including but not limited to private and public admonition, withholding of the Lord’s Supper, removal from office, withdrawal of normal fellowship, and, as a last resort, removal from membership (Matt 5:23–24; 2 Thess 3:6–15; Matt 18:17).

If the straying individual does not repent in response to private appeals from our leaders, they may inform others in the church who may be able to influence that individual or be willing to pray for him or her, or people who might be harmed or affected by that person’s behavior.¹⁶

This step may include close friends, a small group, a Sunday school class, or the entire congregation if our leaders deem it to be appropriate (Matt 18:17, 1 Tim 5:20).¹⁷

If, after a reasonable period of time, the individual still refuses to change, then our leaders may bring the situation before the congregation, with the recommendation that the individual be removed from membership and normal fellowship. If the congregation

¹⁶For example, it is not uncommon for a person to attend a church, develop relationships of trust, persuade people to give him money to invest, and then fail to return the money as promised. Senior citizens are particularly vulnerable to these schemes, and many people have lost much of what they had saved for retirement. When such sinful men are discovered, they usually leave a church, but continue to prey on members who have not heard about their schemes. If our leaders found such a man in our church, they would call him to repent and confess his wrongs. If he refused, they would bring him under formal discipline, and also warn the congregation not to trust him with their money.

¹⁷If our leaders inform our entire congregation about a disciplinary situation, they have discretion whether to divulge the individual’s name. This decision usually will depend on a variety of factors, such as: how widely known the situation already is; whether there might be people in the congregation who could persuade the individual to repent; or whether the congregation needs to be on guard against potential harm he might cause (see previous footnote). Even if our leaders decide it is not necessary to identify an individual specifically, they may still inform the congregation of the general situation and the disciplinary steps they have followed. This general information can help to enlist wide prayer support, let the congregation know that our leaders are obeying the Lord’s command to seek after those who stray, and warn people who may be flirting with secret sin that they, too, may face discipline if they do not turn back to God.

supports that recommendation, we will treat the individual as an unbeliever. This means that we will no longer treat him as a fellow Christian. Instead of having casual, relaxed fellowship with the individual, we will look for opportunities to lovingly bring the gospel to him, remind him of God's holiness and mercy, and call him to repent and put his faith in Christ (Matt 18:17; 1 Cor 5:5; 1 Tim 1:20).

We realize that our natural human response to correction often is to hide or run away from accountability (Gen 3:8–10). To avoid falling into this age-old trap and to strengthen our church's ability to rescue us if we are caught in sin, we agree not to run away from this church to avoid corrective discipline. We affirm that membership is transferred, not resigned, as it is God's expectation that we be in recognized fellowship with His Church. Therefore, termination of membership is never a unilateral, individual decision. Just as the act of joining requires the consent of the church body, so too does the termination of the member-church relationship. A letter of transfer will be granted to another church on behalf of any member in good standing, in accordance with the procedures set forth in our bylaws which state: "Any person in good and regular standing, who desires to transfer their membership to another church of like faith and practice shall be granted a letter...to the Church being joined. All requests for...transfer and termination of membership shall first be acted upon by the Pastors and the Deacons, who will then submit their recommendation to the church for action."¹⁸ Therefore, a request for resignation while discipline is pending will not be given effect until the church has fulfilled its God-given responsibilities to encourage our repentance and restoration, and to bring the disciplinary process to an orderly conclusion, as described in these Commitments (Matt 18:12–14; Gal 6:1; Heb 13:17).

If an individual leaves the church while discipline is in effect or is being considered, and our leaders learn that he or she is attending another church, they may inform that church of the situation and ask its leaders to encourage the individual to repent and be reconciled to the Lord and to any people he or she has offended. This action is intended both to help the individual find freedom from his sin and to warn the other church about the harm that he or she might do to their members¹⁹ (see Matt 18:12–14; Rom 16:17; 1 Cor 5:1–13; 3 John 1:9–10).

Loving restoration always stands at the heart of the disciplinary process. If an individual repents, and our leaders confirm his or her sincerity, we will rejoice together and gladly imitate God's forgiveness by restoring the person to fellowship within the body (see Matt 18:13; Luke 15:3–7, 11–32; 2 Cor 2:5–11; Col 3:12–14).

People who have been excluded from another church will not be allowed to partake of the ordinances in our church, to become members, or to participate in the regular fellowship of our church until they have repented of their sins and made a reasonable effort to be

¹⁸Article V, Section I, subsection C and Section II, subsection A.

¹⁹For example, if we confronted a man in our church for seducing young women, or for acting inappropriately around little children, or for sowing gossip and division, and he left and started attending another church, we would consider it our duty to urge the leaders of that church to counsel with him and to protect their people from his harmful behavior.

reconciled, or our leaders have determined that the discipline of the former church was not biblically appropriate.

As we pursue the blessings of accountability and church discipline, we will hold fast to the promise of Scripture: “God disciplines us for our good, that we may share in his holiness. No discipline seems pleasant at the time, but painful. Later on, however, it produces a harvest of righteousness and peace for those who have been trained by it” (Heb. 12:10–11).

We Invite You to Become a Member of Our Church

Becoming a member of a church can be a life-changing decision. The preaching, teaching, fellowship, opportunities to use your gifts, and mutual accountability that you experience in a church can dramatically change your relationship with the Lord and with the people he places in your life.

By joining our church, you will demonstrate in a concrete way your desire to unite with us to advance Christ's mission. Membership also will allow you to enjoy ministry opportunities and privileges that are not available to people who only attend our church, including the following:

- You may *participate and vote in congregational meetings*, where we seek to discern and plan how to follow God's vision for our church.
- You will be eligible to *minister to the children and youth* in our church (after completing our standard screening process).
- You can seek *more opportunities to use your spiritual gifts*, including those of teaching, serving and leading within the body.
- If you need counseling or support from our leaders when their time is limited, *your request for assistance will take precedence* over requests from people who have not joined the church.

We encourage you to prayerfully consider membership at CBC!

Conclusion: What Do I Do Next?

First, make a decision to join *a* family of believers. For some, this is a difficult step. There are many reasons for this, but a common objection often voiced by well-intended people is, “Why bother joining? Isn’t membership just a man-made device? Where is membership in the Bible?” If this is an issue for you, see Appendix B.

Having decided to join *a* family of believers, prayerfully consider whether God would have you join *this* church family. If you believe God would have you commit to serve Him at CBC, there are four qualifications:

1. A church member must be a believer.
2. A church member must be baptized by immersion.
3. A church member must be supportive of our Statement of Faith.
4. A church member must consent to our Church Covenant including our Relational Commitments as explained in Lesson Four of this Orientation.

Steps to Membership

1. If you’d like to join our church family, see Pastor Ken to set a time to meet and discuss the process, transfer (see Appendix C), baptism, etc.
2. Fill out the Membership Application, which is found on page 37.
3. Sign the Church Covenant, which is found on page 39.
4. Meet with the CBC Leadership Team to give verbal testimony of your salvation, answer any questions regarding your application, and turn in your signed Church Covenant.

The Responsibilities of Membership

The responsibilities of membership fall into two broad categories:

1. A church member is responsible to agree to and fulfill the obligations of the church covenant.

A covenant is a binding agreement. The members of this church have covenanted together to accomplish the purposes of the church.

2. A church member is responsible to serve in the local church.

Our church, like most, has more areas of service than we have servants. Some areas of service require training; some do not. No one will be asked to do a task that they are not equipped to perform. But, there are ministries for *everyone*.

Membership Application

We're delighted that you've expressed interest in joining CBC. Membership is reserved for those who have come to Christ, because they believe what the Bible says about (1) who He is, (2) what He has done for us, and (3) what we need to do in response. To ensure that those who are admitted into membership understand these important matters and are committed to them, we conduct a brief interview in person, covering the questions we ask you to answer below.

After filling out this application, please fold and return to the Information Center. We will then set up a brief membership interview. The other requirement for membership is to have completed the four-week Newcomer's Orientation. You'll be given opportunity at the end of this form to indicate whether you've taken that class yet.

Who do you believe Jesus is? _____

What has Jesus done for us? _____

Is there anything you can do to earn eternal life? _____

Does baptism help you get to heaven? _____

Have you been baptized by total immersion? Y / N

What are you trusting for forgiveness of sin? _____

Have you had a specific time when you prayed to receive Christ as Savior? If so, briefly describe the circumstances—things like when you heard the Gospel, where you were, what you did, etc. (use reverse side for additional space if necessary)

Does Jesus have the right to complete authority over your life and are you willing to follow Him the rest of your life? _____

Have you taken the Newcomer's Orientation? Y / N

Name _____

Email _____ Phone _____

Church Covenant

By the Members of Community Bible Church Our Commitments to One Another in the Sight of God

Having been led by the Holy Spirit to receive the Lord Jesus Christ as our Savior, and on the public confession of our faith, having been immersed in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy spirit, we do now in the presence of God and this assembly joyfully enter into covenant with one another, as one body in Christ.

1. We purpose, therefore, by the aid of the Holy Spirit, to walk together in Christian love; to strive for the advancement of this church in knowledge, holiness and comfort; to promote its property and spirituality; to attend its services regularly; to sustain its worship, ordinances, discipline and doctrines; to give it a sacred preeminence over all institutions of human origin; to give faithfully of time and talent in its activities; to contribute cheerfully and regularly, as God has prepared us, to the support of the ministry, the expenses of the church, the relief of the poor, and the spread of the gospel throughout all nations.
2. We also purpose to maintain family and private devotions; to train our children according to the Word of God; to seek the salvation of our kindred and acquaintances; to walk circumspectly in the world; to be just in our dealings, faithful in our engagements, and exemplary in our conduct; to avoid all gossip, backbiting and unrighteous anger; to abstain from all forms of activity which dishonor our Lord Jesus Christ, our Savior; and to give Him preeminence in all things.
3. We further purpose to encourage one another in the blessed hope of our Lord's return; to watch over one another in brotherly love; to remember each other in prayer; to aid each other in sickness and distress; to cultivate Christian sympathy in feeling and courtesy in speech; to be slow to take offense, but always ready for reconciliation, and, mindful of the rules of our Savior, to seek it without delay.
4. We moreover purpose that when we remove from this place we will as soon as possible unite with some other church of like faith and order where we can carry out the spirit of this covenant and the principles of God's Word. If there is no such church, we shall seek, with the Lord's help to establish one.
5. We acknowledge that we have read the Relational Commitments of this church and agree to live by them.

Signature

Printed Name

CBC Leader Signature

Date

Date

CBC Staff Directory

Senior Pastor

Ken and Kim Brown

30255 Dover
Flat Rock, MI 48134

(734) 379-2337 (H)
(313) 362-7300 (W)
(734) 652-9072 (M – Ken)
(734) 658-7232 (M – Kim)

kb@cbctrenton.com

Associate Pastor

**Community Service
Family Life**

Larry and Julie Castle

26049 Cheryl
Brownstown, MI 48134

(313) 737-8495 (M – Larry)
(313) 737-9358 (M – Julie)

larrycastle@cbctrenton.com

Deacons

Pete Bellich, Chairman

John Roberts, Trustee

Jon Weaver, Trustee

Mark Hunter

Glenn Crock

Billy Cochran, Pastoral Intern

Appendix A

STATEMENT OF FAITH

Section I — The Scriptures

We believe the Holy Scriptures to be the very Word of God: the product of the breath of God and thus verbally inspired in all parts, and therefore wholly without error as originally given by God, complete in sixty-six books of the Bible, altogether infallible, and sufficient in themselves as our only rule of faith and practice, the only standard by which all human conduct, creeds and opinions should be tried. 2 Tim 3:16; 2 Pet 1:19–21

Section II — The Trinity

We believe in The One Triune God: Who is personal, spirit, and sovereign; perfect, infinite, and eternal in His Being, holiness, love, wisdom, and power; separate from and above the world as its Creator, yet present everywhere in the world as sustainer; self-existing and self-revealing in three distinct persons—the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, each of whom is to be honored equally as true God. Mark 12:29; Deut 33:27; Ps 104; John 5:23, 26

Section III — God, the Father

We believe in God the Father, perfect in holiness, infinite in wisdom, measureless in power, that He loves the world and concerns Himself mercifully in the affairs of men, that He hears and answers prayer, and that He saves from sin and the second death all who come to Him through Jesus Christ. It is our supreme purpose to glorify Him through worshipful obedience. 1 Cor 8:6, Matt 6:26; Matt 7:11; John 15:8; John 20:17

Section IV — Jesus Christ

We believe in the Lord Jesus Christ: the Second Person of the Triune God; that, without any essential change in His divine person, He became man by the miracle of the virgin birth, thus to continue forever as both true God and man; that as man, He was tested as we are, yet without sin; that as the perfect Lamb of God He gave Himself in death upon the cross, bearing there the sin of the world, and suffering its full penalty of divine wrath in our stead; that He rose again from the dead and was glorified in the same body in which He suffered and died; that as our High Priest He ascended into heaven, there to appear before the face of God and to continue as our Advocate and Intercessor. John 1:1; Matt 1:23; Col 2:9; Heb 4:15; Gal 3:13; John 20:25–28; Rom 8:34; 1 John 2:1

Section V — The Holy Spirit

We believe in the Holy Spirit: Who is the Third Person of the Triune God, that divine agent in nature, revelation, and redemption; that He convicts the world of sin, restrains evil, regenerates those who believe, and indwells, seals, empowers, guides, teaches, and sanctifies all who become the children of God through Christ; that He enables individual members of the body of Christ to be used in the church; that the gifts of tongues and healing were given to some early Christians as a sign to unbelieving Israel, confirming God's Word to that nation, but are not applicable today. Acts 5:3, 4; 1 Cor 2:10; John 16:8–11; 1 Cor 6:11–19; 1 Cor 14:21, 22

Section VI — Creation and the Fall of Man

We believe in the Creation and the Fall of Man: that he was the direct creation of God, not in any sense the product of animal ancestry, but made in the divine image; that God wonderfully and immutable creates each person as male or female: that God gave marriage exclusively as a union between one man and one woman; that by personal disobedience to the revealed will of God humanity sinned and thus brought physical and spiritual death to the entire race, who are universally sinful both in nature and practice, alienated from the life and family of God, and have no possible means of recovery of salvation within themselves. Gen 1:26–27; 3:1–24; Rom 5:12; Eph 4:18; Rom 1:18

Section VII — Salvation

We believe in Salvation by Grace through Faith: that salvation is the free gift of God, neither merited nor secured in part or in whole by any virtue or work of man, but received only by personal faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, in whom all believers have as present possessions the gift of eternal life, a perfect righteousness, sonship in the family of God, deliverance and security from all condemnation, every spiritual resource needed for life and godliness, and the divine guarantee that they shall never perish. Rom 3:24; Titus 3:5; John 3:16; John 10:27–29; 1 John 5:13; 2 Pet 1:3

Section VIII — Eternal Security

We believe in the eternal security of the true believer in Jesus Christ. Since salvation is by grace, it is impossible for any believer to lose his salvation. We believe that their persevering attachment to Christ is the grand mark which distinguishes them from superficial professors; that a special Providence watches over their welfare; and that they are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation. John 10:27–29; Eph 1:13–14; 1 Pet 1:3–5; Rom 8:35–39

Section IX — Satan

We believe in the existence of Satan: who originally was created a perfect and holy being, but through pride and unlawful ambition rebelled against God, thus becoming completely corrupt in character, the adversary of God and His people, leader of all evil angels and spirits, the deceiver and god of this world; that his powers are supernaturally great, but limited by the purposes of God who overrules all his wicked devices for good; that he was defeated at the cross, making certain his final doom. Ezek 28:13–17; Isa 14:12–15; John 8:44; Rev 12:9–11; Matt 12:24–26; John 16:11; Eph 6:12–18

Section X — The Church

We believe in the One True Church: the body and bride of the Lord Jesus Christ, which He began to build on the day of Pentecost, and will complete at His second coming, and into which all true believers of the present age are placed; that the members of this spiritual body should assemble themselves together in local churches, which consist of baptized believers associated by a covenant of faith for worship, evangelism, prayer, fellowship, teaching, united testimony, and the observance of the two New Testament ordinances, namely baptism by immersion as a public testimony of faith, and the Lord's Supper as a commemoration of the death of Christ. Eph 4:4; Acts 2:41–47; 1 Cor 12:12–13; Heb 1:25; Matt 28:19; Acts 8:26–39; 1 Cor 11:23–28

Section XI — The Second Coming of Christ

We believe in the Second Coming of Christ: that His return will be personal, visible, premillennial, and glorious—a blessed hope, the time being unrevealed, yet always imminent; that when He comes, He will first remove His church from the earth by resurrection and translation, then pour out God's righteous judgments on the unbelieving world, afterward descend with His church and establish His glorious Kingdom over all nations for a thousand years, at the close of which He will raise the unrighteous dead for their final judgment. Titus 2:11–13; 1 Thess 4:16–18; Rev 20:11–15

Section XII — Future Life

We believe in Future Life, Bodily Resurrection, and Eternal Judgment; that the spirit of believers at death go to be with Christ in heaven where they abide in joyful fellowship with Him until their bodies are raised from the grave, changed into the likeness of His glorious body, at which time their works shall be brought before the Judgment Seat of Christ for determination of reward; that the spirits of the unrighteous at death go into Hades where they are kept under punishment until the final day of judgment, at which time their bodies shall be resurrected and they shall be judged and condemned at the Great White Throne, and they shall be cast into the Lake of Fire, the place of final and everlasting punishment. Phil 1:21–23; 1 Cor 15:35–58; 2 Pet 2:9; Luke 16:19–31; Rev 20:11–15

Section XIII — Righteous Living

We believe in Righteous Living and Good Works: not as procuring salvation in any sense, but as its proper evidence or fruit; and therefore as Christians we should keep the Word of God, seek the things which are above, walk as He walked, be careful to maintain good works, and especially accept as our solemn responsibility and privilege the taking of the Gospel to a lost world. Eph 2:8–10; John 14:23; Col 3:1; 1 John 2:6; Acts 1:8

Section XIV — Separation

We believe in Separation from the world: that since we are citizens of Heaven, as the children of God we should walk in separation from this present world, having no fellowship with its evil ways, abstaining from worldly amusements and unclean habits which defile mind and body, or any other practice that would violate the Christian conscience of this church. 2 Cor 6:14–16; 1 Thess 5:22; Eph 5:3–11; Col 3:11

We believe in Separation from Apostasy: that since many organizations and ministries carry the name “Christian,” but in reality contradict the clear Word of God, we purpose to remain separated from all forms of ecclesiastical activity that contradict or compromise the Word of God. 2 Cor 6:14–18; Rom 16:17; 1 Tim 6:3–5; 2 Thess 3:6

We believe in the separation of church and state: that governmental authorities are the divine appointment of the establishment of peace and order in society, and the punishment of evil doers; that they are to be prayed for, honored, and obeyed except in things contrary to God's Word. Rom 13:17; Matt 22:21; Acts 5:20, 29

Section XV — Conclusion

These articles of faith do not exhaust the content of our creed, which is the whole Word of God. They are not intended as a limit to the Word of God. We do believe that in so far as these articles extend, they are a true presentation of sound doctrine as taught in the Scriptures, and therefore binding upon us as Christian believers.

BYLAWS

ARTICLE I — NAME AND LOCATION

The name of this church shall be “Community Bible Church.” The church administrative office is located at 3700 Benson Street, Trenton, Michigan 48183.

ARTICLE II — MISSION

The mission of Community Bible Church is to help people *learn* about God, *love* Him and others, and *live* for His purpose.

ARTICLE III — AUTONOMY

Community Bible church shall be and remain as an independent and autonomous Bible Church. However, it may participate in membership and activity with organizations of like doctrine and policy for the extension and preservation of the Gospel as long as said organization or activity does not infringe upon the independence of this church.

In the event that this church should make a decision to dissolve, provision shall be made by vote of the church, previous to the dissolution of the corporation, to assign all the assets to one or more independent Baptist, non-profit organizations, such as churches, schools, missions, or associations. None of the assets shall be given to any individual.

ARTICLE IV — STATEMENT OF FAITH

See above.

ARTICLE V — MEMBERSHIP

Section I — Requirements

A. New Membership — a person must:

1. Give a satisfactory testimony of having been born again
2. Accept the Statement of Faith
3. Be baptized by immersion or have been baptized by immersion through the ministry of an evangelical church or come by letter from a church of like faith and practice
4. Read and sign the CBC Membership Covenant

B. Provisional Membership

Those meeting the requirements for membership but, under 18 years of age, will be considered provisional members. At age 18, a provisional member can become a “full member” (hereafter, “member”) by following the procedure outlined in Section II of this Article.

C. Transfer and Termination of Membership

Any person in good and regular standing, who desires to transfer their membership to another church of like faith and practice shall be granted a letter under the procedure outlined in Section II of this Article, to the Church being joined.

Section II — Procedure

- A. All requests for membership or restoration to membership, or transfer and termination of membership shall first be acted upon by the Pastors and the Deacons, who will then submit their recommendation to the church for action. Recommendations for membership will be based on the qualifications in Section I.A of this Article, as well as any other factors that the Pastors and Deacons deem applicable to the well-being of the church. All letters are to be granted to a local church, not to the individual.
- B. The church shall vote on all recommendations.
 - 1. A unanimous vote shall be required for approval.
 - 2. One dissenting vote in the church shall constitute a review of all pertinent facts by the Pastors and the Deacons.
 - 3. Should the Pastors and the Deacons make the same recommendation to the church, the two-thirds vote of all present and voting shall constitute a favorable vote.

ARTICLE VI — DISCIPLINE

Section I — The Basis of Discipline

In all matters of discipline, the church must adhere faithfully to the principles and order found in Matthew 18:15–17 and Galatians 6:1, and all differences between members must be settled by these principles. 1 Cor 5: 2 Cor 2:4–8; 1 Tim 5:20.

Section II — The Procedure for Discipline.

A. Dereliction

In cases where a member fails to attend the regular services of the church for a period of one month without due cause, the Pastors and/or Deacons are responsible to make contact if at all possible. If the member remains inactive for another month following this initial contact, they shall be placed on inactive file, thus forfeiting the privilege of participation in business meetings until such time as they interview with the Pastors and Deacons. Depending on the nature of the offense, the Pastors and Deacons shall have the option of prescribing a probationary period in which faithful attendance is demonstrated. In the event that the member remains inactive for a total period of six months, their name shall be dropped from the church membership, requiring a unanimous church vote for reinstatement (See Article V, Sec. II, B).

B. Defection

In cases where a member rejects any element of the Articles of Faith, or sows discord among the brethren, or whose conduct damages the name of Christ and the testimony

of the church, the Pastors and/or Deacons are responsible to make contact if at all possible to resolve the situation. If counseling proves fruitless, another Pastor or Deacon should be included in a further call. If the situation remains unchanged, the Deacons will recommend to the church that the name be dropped from the church membership. A letter will be sent to the person notifying them of the proposed action. Any member upon request may appeal his case to the Deacons.

ARTICLE VII — CORPORATE OFFICERS

Section I — Their Election and Duties

A. Identification of Officers

The officers of the Corporation shall be Senior Pastor, Associate Pastor(s), and Deacons.

B. Election of Officers

The process for election of Senior Pastor, Associate Pastor(s), and Deacons, is described in Sections II and III of this article.

Section II — Senior Pastor and Associate Pastor(s)

A. Election of Senior Pastor

A Pastor shall be a regularly ordained Baptist minister, or the church must call an ordination council. He is to be elected by a three-fourths vote of members present at a special business meeting following the evening service, one week after he has candidated. The number of times he can be asked to speak before officially candidating will be left to the discretion of the pulpit committee.

B. Duties of the Senior Pastor

The Senior Pastor shall perform the duties usually incumbent upon his office as the responsible head and leader of the church. He shall be zealous in his efforts to maintain the purity and doctrine of the church, to edify the saints and to win the unsaved. He is responsible for the supervision of all the departments of the church, and is a member ex-officio of all committees. The Pastor shall act as moderator of all church business meetings unless otherwise directed by this constitution or ordered by vote of the church.

C. Qualifications of the Senior Pastor

The Pastor shall be a man called of God to full-time Christian work, who shall be in agreement with the Articles of Faith of this church and in harmony with its purpose and covenant. He shall meet the requirements of 1 Tim 3:1–7 and Titus 1:5–9.

D. Term of Office

The Pastor shall continue in his office until he resigns, or his resignation is requested by the church. The Pastor shall give a minimum of thirty days' notice before termination of this service. His resignation shall be given in writing to the Deacons. The Pastor's resignation may be requested by the membership at a special business

meeting called for that purpose, provided that announcement has been given for two Sundays, and that a majority of the Deacons request the special meeting. A majority vote of the congregation shall decide the question.

E. Salary and Vacation

The Pastor's salary and vacation are to be reviewed annually by the Deacons with their recommendations presented to the church for approval. In the event the membership abruptly terminates the Pastor's services, the salary involved shall continue for 30 days.

F. Election of Associate Pastor(s)

The Senior Pastor holds the privilege to select whomever he wills to fill other pastoral positions. Each selectee will then be submitted to the deacons for their approval. Upon the deacons' approval the selectee is presented to the congregation for final ratification.

G. Duties of Associate Pastor(s)

The duties of Associate Pastor(s) are primarily the same as those of the Senior Pastor. The relationship between the Senior Pastor and Associate Pastor(s) is to be one of mutual cooperation – a partnership. However, it is to be noted that although their duties are reciprocal the Senior Pastor is to be viewed as the senior partner of the pastoral staff.

Section III — Deacons

A. Election of Deacons

The number of deacons shall be as needed to fulfill the duties outlined in subsection C of this Section, as determined by the Pastors and Deacons. The total number of deacons shall not be less than three.

The Deacons shall meet after each annual election and elect a Chairman and a Secretary. The Chairman of the Deacons shall serve as vice-moderator of the church.

The process for election of deacons shall be as follows:

1. Nominees will be solicited from the congregation.
2. The Pastor(s) will review the list for qualifications.
3. Qualified candidates will be contacted regarding their desire to serve.
4. Those qualified candidates who desire to serve, and who receive the highest number of nominations, will be deemed elected to office.

B. Term of Office

Each Deacon shall serve a minimum three-year term of office. There will be no limit as to the number of terms a deacon may be elected. Of course, the Deacon may choose not to serve longer than three years if he wishes. Any Deacon desiring to resign from office must tender his resignation in writing to the Deacons. Also, the

Pastor(s) may request the resignation of a deacon at any time with sufficient cause. In the event of a vacancy, the office may be filled at any quarterly business meeting, and the Deacon elected shall serve the balance of the vacated term.

C. Duties of the Deacons

1. The Deacons are to assist the Pastor(s) in the general supervision of the spiritual work and welfare of the church. They shall be expected to minister to their assigned families, to visit the sick and sorrowing, investigate delinquents, and endeavor to remedy any spiritual weakness in the church.
2. They shall assist in the administration of the ordinances.
3. It shall be the duty of the Deacons together with the Pastor to meet and examine all candidates for church membership and make recommendations to the church of the same. They shall review the membership rolls of the church each year and be responsible for recommendations to the church in matters of dismissal, discipline and transfer of letters.
4. The Deacons shall have the authority to authorize necessary expenditures, not to exceed the amount approved by the church.
5. In absence of a Pastor they shall constitute the Pulpit Committee. It shall be their duty to secure possible candidates for the pastorate and to arrange an opportunity for the church to hear them preach. They shall properly investigate each candidate's qualifications, doctrinal beliefs and practices, and report thereon to the congregation. The report of the Deacons shall have the force of a recommendation. Only one candidate shall be presented at a time for the acceptance or rejection of the church.
6. It shall be their responsibility to receive and dispense at their own discretion, in advisement with the Pastor(s), the Benevolence Fund. The ministry of mercy performed by this fund shall be kept confidential.

D. Qualifications of Deacons

Deacons shall be expected to meet the requirements of Acts 6:1–7 and 1 Tim 3:8–13. The Deacons shall be men who are in full agreement with the Articles of Faith and the Church Covenant. In addition, they shall be men who have proven themselves faithful as exemplified by regular attendance at all services possible, financial support as capable, and willingness to serve unselfishly to meet the needs of others.

Training for prospective deacons will be under the direction of the Senior Pastor and satisfactory completion of such may be used in the evaluation process of Section III.A.2 and 3 of this article.

E. Trustees

1. The Deacons shall appoint to serve as Trustees three (3) of their own members.
2. Duties of the Trustees.
 - a. The Trustees will have the authority to act as the legal representatives of the

Corporation.

- b. They shall see that all the necessary insurance on persons and/or property is in force and that all state and local regulations are complied with.
- c. They shall prepare an annual budget, under the direction of the Pastor, covering general expenses, missionary giving, building commitments, educational and music expenses, and present the same for adoption by the church at the annual meeting.

Section IV — Clerk

The Church Clerk shall be appointed by the Senior Pastor for an indefinite term of service. It shall be the duty of the clerk to keep an accurate record of the proceedings of the church, to take custody of the church records, to keep a record of the church membership, to issue letters of admission, transfer, and dismissal, to preserve a true history of the church, and to perform all other duties incumbent upon this office. All records are the property of the church.

Section V — Treasurer

The Treasurer shall be appointed by the Senior Pastor and Deacons for an indefinite term of service. It shall be the responsibility of the Treasurer to keep an accurate record of all receipts and disbursements and to furnish the Pastor and the Trustees with monthly financial statements, and to furnish the congregation with quarterly and annual reports. He shall receive all church monies and deposit the same in a local bank. He shall be responsible for overseeing the financial operation of the church. As standard procedure, he shall be a co-signer for all checks which require two signatures.

Section VI — Financial Secretary

The Financial Secretary shall be appointed by the Senior Pastor and Deacons for an indefinite term of service. He shall be responsible for the accurate recording of all receipts and personal contributions and see to it that receipts are issued to contributors at the end of each calendar year.

Section VII — Christian Education Director

The Christian Education Director shall be appointed by the Senior Pastor for an indefinite term of service. He shall be responsible for the supervision of the various divisions of the Bible School under the direction of the Pastor. He shall be an ex-officio member of all Christian Education organizations and committees.

Article VIII — Committees, Their Selection and Duties

All committees other than those provided for within these bylaws shall be ad hoc, elected or appointed to fill a temporary need and dissolve when the task is accomplished. Any committee, having five or less members, shall have no more than one member from a household elected or appointed to that committee.

Article IX — Auxiliary Organizations

Section I

All groups and organizations within the church shall be subject to the membership of the church, unless otherwise noted in the constitution. They shall make no rules or regulations contrary to this constitution. All officers of such groups or organizations must be members of the church. No meetings or other activities may be held when they conflict with any regular or special services of the church.

Section II

Any new group or organization within the church must be approved by the Pastor(s) and Deacons.

Article X — Meetings of the Church

Section I — Church Services

The Church shall meet every Lord's Day for worship and instruction. The ordinance of the Lord's Supper shall be observed no less than four times per year.

Section II — Business Meetings

- A. The quarterly business meetings shall be held within six weeks after the end of the preceding quarter.
- B. The Annual Business meeting shall be held in the fourth quarter, coordinated with the timing of the quarterly business meeting. The church year shall end December 31st of each year.
- C. Special business meetings may be called by the Pastor(s) and/or Deacons, providing that notice of the same be read at the public services on the Lord's Day preceding such meetings, stating the nature of the business to be acted upon. No other business shall be acted upon at such special business meetings.
- D. The agenda for all business meetings will be under the supervision of the Pastors and Deacons and no new or additional business will be brought up from the floor.

Section III — Quorum

Twenty percent of the active voting membership shall constitute a quorum for the transaction of business

Section IV — Voting

- A. All active members of the church of at least 18 years of age shall be entitled to vote on all church business and the election of officers.
- B. Election of officers, matters of policy, and any other items as the church shall deem necessary, shall be voted upon by ballot.
- C. Robert's Rules of Order shall be the standard of parliamentary proceedings in all business meetings, with the exception that no business in addition to the agenda approved by the Pastors and Deacons will be brought up from the floor.

Article XI — Church Staff

Section I

When and as needed, full or part time employees may be engaged by the church. These employees include: Office Staff, Musicians, etc. Such workers shall constitute a church staff and shall not be considered as officers of the church.

Section II

Candidates for any church staff positions shall be interviewed by the Pastor(s) and Deacons with a view to determine their educational and spiritual qualifications. The Deacons, upon a favorable investigation, shall present a recommendation including salary, vacation, etc. to the membership for their approval. Upon this approval, all personnel shall be hired by the Senior Pastor. The Senior Pastor also has the authority to discharge any staff member after consultation with the Deacons.

Section III

All full or part time staff members shall be under the direct supervision of the Senior Pastor. Resignations of staff members are to be presented in writing, with thirty days notice, to the Senior Pastor. Should the church desire to terminate the services of a staff member, this may be done by a majority vote of the Deacons, with pastoral approval, and a thirty-day notice to the employee.

Section IV

The salary, vacation, etc. of staff members shall be reviewed annually by the Deacons. Any change deemed necessary shall be recommended to the church for their approval. The Deacons shall have the responsibility of setting the salary and conditions of employment for custodial and secretarial personnel.

Article XII — Amendments

Section I

These Bylaws may be amended at any regular or special business meeting of the church by a two-thirds vote of active members present and voting, providing written notice of the proposed change is posted on the bulletin board and read in the public services for two weeks prior to the business meeting.

Section II

These Bylaws of the Church will remain in effect unless and until amended by the procedure in Section I of this Article. These Bylaws are hereby adopted, October 27, 2002.

Appendix B

WHY JOIN A CHURCH?

Sometimes well-meaning people object to church membership based on the assumption that it's not taught in Scripture and is therefore a man-made imposition. This mistaken notion arises from two factors that are present in our day that did not exist during the first century: multiplication and mobility. By multiplication we mean the increase in individual churches in a given geographic area. In the time of the NT, there was most often only one church in a city. Therefore, there was no need to identify with a specific church since it was "the only game in town." Upon baptism, one became a member of *the* church.

In addition, even if in a given locality there was more than one church, lack of mobility did not allow one to go from one to another. The practice of "church hopping" was completely unknown in the first century.

In NT times there was no such thing as an "unchurched Christian." When one was baptized, he was united with the particular local church in his area (see Acts 2:41). The modern practice of church membership is, likewise, nothing more than commitment to serve in a *particular* local church. "Membership" is but a synonym for *commitment* to a local church.

Please note: Without such commitment it is impossible to obey the numerous NT commands with regard to "one another" in the NT (these are all given in the context of the local church). Further, the biblical injunction regarding church discipline (i.e., the removal of a professing believer from the church) assumes that one has previously joined—otherwise, from what is he removed?

The following article outlines the biblical principles that necessitate membership in a Bible-believing and teaching local church:

Appendix B

WHY JOIN A CHURCH? (continued)²⁰

*Scripture makes abundantly clear that we are
to be members of a local church.*

Kenneth Kantzer

BIBLICAL INDICATIONS OF CHURCH MEMBERSHIP IN NEW TESTAMENT TIMES

We encounter the word *church* throughout the New Testament. In the great majority of instances, the term refers to a specific local church like that in Rome or Corinth. Sometimes when we read of the church the reference is to what's often called the church universal, that is, all Christians everywhere. But when you read "church" in the Bible, it almost always means "local church."

At the very least, the local church was the fellowship of the followers of Jesus Christ in a particular area. We know that they met together, worshiped together, prayed together etc., as the born-again family of God. But did people actually join this fellowship in some official way, or was it a mutually-assumed and less formal association?

The New Testament church practice of keeping a list of widows makes sense in the context of membership

We know that churches in the days of the Apostle Paul made and maintained at least one type of list. "No widow may be put on the list of widows," Paul instructs Timothy, "unless she is over sixty, has been faithful to her husband," etc. (1 Tim 5:9). As easily as the churches had lists of widows, they could have had lists of members. There would be no difference except for length for a church to keep a widows' list and a membership list.

The instructions for church discipline make sense only in the context of membership

In Matthew 18:15–17, Jesus gave us instructions on how the church should respond when someone within the church persists in living like an unbeliever. We read of a specific case of this in 1 Corinthians 5 and how the Apostle Paul, writing under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, instructed the Christians in the church at Corinth to handle it. In verses 11–13 Paul says, "...you must not associate with anyone who calls himself a brother but is sexually immoral or greedy, an idolater or a slanderer, a drunkard or a swindler. With such a man do not even eat. What business is it of mine to judge those outside the church? Are you not to judge those inside? God will judge those outside. 'Expel the wicked man from among you.'" There was a sexually immoral man in this church. Was Paul simply telling them not to let this man come to church with them because he was acting like an unbeliever instead of a Christian? No, he couldn't have meant that, for we know from other places in this letter (cf. 14:24–25) that unbelievers were welcome to attend church meetings. Even when they obeyed Paul's instructions to "Expel the wicked man from among you" and considered the man an unbeliever, they would have allowed (even welcomed) him to come and sit under the preaching of God's Word like any other person in town. So in what sense would they have "expelled" this man?

²⁰Taken from *Spiritual Disciplines Within The Church* by Donald S. Whitney, Moody Press, 1996. Used with permission.

The best way of explaining how they would have expelled this man is to understand that they removed him from the membership of the church and generally stopped associating with him outside the church meetings.

Notice that Paul refers to those who are “inside” and to those who are “outside.” Outside of what? As we’ve noted, anyone could attend their meetings. This kind of language can only refer to a definite church membership of converted people. For what authority does a group have to remove someone who is already “outside” and not a member of the group? You can’t fire someone who doesn’t work for you. You can’t vote in your country to remove a government official elected by another country. You can’t appeal to a court to discipline someone who isn’t within its jurisdiction. In the same way, you can’t formally discipline someone who is in an informal relationship with you; you have no authority to do so. These people in Corinth had voluntarily committed themselves to a formal relationship and they knew who were official members of the church and who were “outside.”

Church discipline must be done by the “church” (Matt 18:17) and occur “when you are gathered together” (1 Cor 5:4). Who is to gather together? How do you know who the “church” is? How do you determine who does and does not have the right to speak and vote on such matters? Does the person subject to discipline have the liberty to bring in his extended family or coworkers who have never been to the church, or even people off the street, and expect them to be given an equal say with those who have been faithful to the church for years? No? Why not? Do you exclude them from involvement because they’ve never been part of the church? Then what about the person who attended once five years ago? Or those who came at Easter and Christmas last year? Or those who regularly watch the church services on television or listen to them on the radio, and perhaps even send money, but never enter the building? Or those from distant cities who visit several times each year because of family members in the church? Obviously, Biblical church discipline must be limited to a specific group and that must mean the church members.

The meaning of “the whole church” in 1 Corinthians 14:23 makes sense only in the context of membership

The earthly founder of the church at Corinth, the Apostle Paul, wrote to this new body of Christians about their many difficulties, including how to bring order to their public worship. He began 1 Corinthians 14:23 with, “If the whole church comes together...” Who did he have in mind when he referred to “the whole church”? The only realistic answer is “the church members.” That’s why one commentator, working with the original language of this text, translates it “If then the whole church assembles together and all *its members*” [emphasis mine] and notes “(the last two words are not in the Greek but are naturally to be understood).”²¹

Imagine the leaders of the Corinthian Christians walking into the gathering of the church for worship one Sunday. Would they have known by looking, or would they have had some way of deciding, whether “the whole church” was there? Surely they would have known who was supposed to be present in a churchwide meeting and who was missing. But how else could they have known when “the whole church” was “together” without knowing who was a member and who wasn’t? This implies a verifiable membership.

²¹C. K. Barrett, *A Commentary on the First Epistle to the Corinthians* (New York: Harper & Row, 1968), p. 324.

The instructions for pastoral oversight and spiritual leadership make sense only in the context of membership

“Here is a trustworthy saying;” said Paul to Timothy, “If anyone sets his heart on being an overseer, he desires a noble task” (1 Tim 3:1). In other places the New Testament also an “overseer” as a pastor or elder (Acts 20:17, 28; Phil 1:1; Titus 1:5–7). But what or whom does he oversee? How can he provide spiritual oversight if he doesn’t know exactly those for whom he is responsible? A distinguishable, mutually-understood membership is required for him to fulfill his charge.

Down in verse 5 it says of an overseer, “If anyone does not know how to manage his own family, how can he take care of God’s church? The local church is compared to a family. Is anyone a casual member of a family? No, membership in a family is a very definite thing.... “Keep watch over yourselves,” Paul instructed the elders of the church of Ephesus, “and all the flock” (Acts 20:28). How could they fulfill their responsibility as undershepherds to “all” the flock unless they knew who was part of “the flock” and who was not? These leaders of a growing church in a large city needed some means of identification of those for whom they were to “keep watch.” A simple membership list is the logical solution.

In Hebrews 13:17 is a word addressed to those under such overseers: “Obey your leaders and submit to their authority. They keep watch over you as men who must give an account. Obey them so that their work will be a joy, not a burden, for that would be of no advantage to you.” For whom will the leaders of a church give an account-everyone who comes in and out of their church services? No, it has to be a limited group of people-the members of the church-for whom they will be answerable. Otherwise, how can church leaders be responsible for someone until they know he or she is committed to their care? The Bible’s instructions for pastoral oversight and spiritual leadership can best be obeyed when there is a well-defined church membership.

The metaphors used to describe local churches (flock, temple, body, household) make sense only in the context of membership

The New Testament uses several metaphors to describe churches. Some of these metaphors describe the church of Christ collectively throughout the world. While all of them could potentially apply to the local church also, at least [three] of these metaphors-flock, body, and household-are definitely used to refer to individual churches (in Acts 20:28; 1 Cor 12:27, and 1 Tim 3:15). And each metaphor is best understood in a setting of specific church membership.

A flock of sheep isn’t a random collection of ewes, rams, and lambs. Shepherds know their flocks. They know which sheep are theirs to care for and which are not. Sheep belong to specific flocks. This is also the way it should be for God’s spiritual sheep....The same analogy is true for a human body. Your body isn’t a casual collection of loosely related parts. You don’t keep your fingers in your pocket until you need them. They are joined. They are members of the body. The local body of Christ should be like this also-those joined to Christ, who are members of His body-should express that relationship through a visible membership. And in a household, a family, you’re either a member or you’re not. So if you are part of the family of God, show it by joining a local expression of God’s family.

British pastor Eric Lane sees additional significance in [these]...metaphors:

God has given us [several] pictures of the church, not one. This is not just to emphasize and prove the point by repetition, but also to say...different things about what it means to be a member of a church.... To be part of a body means to belong to a living, functioning, serving, witnessing community. To be a sheep in the flock means belonging to a community dependent on him for food, protection, and direction. To be a member of a family is to belong to a community bound by a common fatherhood. Put together you have the main functions of an individual Christian. Evidently we are meant to fulfill these not on our own but together in the church. Now can you see the answer to the question why you should join a church?²²

We've just seen five Biblical indications that New Testament churches had membership lists of some sort. They knew who was a member and who was not. When people became followers of Jesus, or when followers of Jesus moved to another town, they formally identified themselves with a local church-they joined it. "In the New Testament there is no such person as a Christian who is not a church member," writes Douglas G. Millar. Conversion was described as "the Lord adding to the church" (Acts 2:47). There was no spiritual drifting."²³

Perhaps you are persuaded that the churches in the days of the New Testament had membership lists and that people joined the churches instead of "drifting." Are there other Biblical reasons why Christians should be members of a church today? Here are some . . .

BIBLICAL REASONS FOR JOINING A CHURCH

You prove that you're not ashamed to identify with Christ or His people

Jesus said (in Mark 8:38) that if anyone is ashamed to identify himself with Him on earth then He will not identify Himself with that person when he or she stands before God in the Judgment. Joining a church is one of the plainest ways of saying you're not ashamed to identify yourself with Jesus and with His people. Jesus certainly made a formal commitment to identify Himself with His people when He left Heaven to come to earth and die as a man. Can, then, one for whom Christ died be reluctant to identify himself formally with the others for whom Christ died? California pastor John MacArthur explains and asks further, "You have been joined together with Christ.... You bear His name. Are you ashamed to belong? Are you ashamed to bear that identification with other believers of like precious faith?... Shouldn't you be willing outwardly to identify with the visible, gathered members of that group to which you eternally belong?"²⁴

When you join a church you make it clear whose side you're on. You're telling the family of God that you're part of the family too, and that you don't want to be considered on the "outside" (1 Cor 5:12-13) any longer.

You stop being an independent Christian and place yourself under the discipline and protection of other Christians

In Matthew 18:15-17, Jesus set up an accountability system. When a professing believer starts living like an unbeliever, those in the church who know about it are to confront him

²²G. Eric Lane, *I Want to Be A Church Member* (Bryntirion, Wales: Evangelical Press of Wales, 1992), p. 21.

²³Douglas G. Millar, *Should I Join A Church?* *Banner of Truth*, Issue 62, Nov 1968, p. 21.

²⁴John F. MacArthur, Jr., *Commitment to the Church*, Tape GC 80-130 (Panorama City, CA: Grace to You), 1994.

about his sin. First, one is to go to this person, and then, if he will not listen, the one is to bring one or two others along for a second conversation. The goal is to restore him back to full fellowship with the Lord and his fellow believers. If he persistently and unrepentantly refuses to return to the Lord, the final step is to report the matter to the church. Then everyone in the church has the chance to win the person back. And if he continues in his sin, the church is to withdraw fellowship from him as the final means of showing him his need to repent.

If you aren't part of the church, they have no authority over you and cannot do what Jesus said to do. Unless you join the church, your independence places you outside the way Jesus wants things to happen. Incidentally, when Jesus says in verse 17 to bring this matter "to the church," how do you know who should be notified (and who should not be) unless there is a formally recognized membership?

Related to this idea of spiritual authority, recall Hebrews 13:17, the passage we examined which tells us to obey the leaders of the church and submit to them because they keep watch over our souls. The leaders of the church are to "watch over" you by providing spiritual protection for you and caring about your growth in Christ. You place yourself outside that spiritual watchcare unless you join a local church.

You participate in a stronger, more unified effort of God's people to obey Christ's command to reach others

The last thing Jesus said before returning to Heaven is known to Christians today as the Great Commission. It's found in Matthew 28:19–20 where Jesus told His disciples (and us), "Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age."

I've met a few people who weren't interested in church membership but who were zealously witnessing to others about Christ and trying to make disciples for Him. Since they do so well what relatively few Christians do at all (i.e., share their faith), why emphasize church membership to them? They need to see that joining a church is like putting one candle with many others. They will give off more light collectively than the one lone candle ever could, and together they will have a greater penetration into the world's darkness.

And as your local church reaches across the country and around the world in direct and indirect support of missionary work, you can participate in ways of reaching the world for Christ that you could have never dreamed otherwise.

In contrast, consider the potential negative impact on your efforts to talk about Jesus if you don't join His earthly body. John MacArthur says we should ask ourselves, "How wonderful can Christ be if we're not even committed to being associated with His church?"²⁵ How believable is our testimony of the goodness and greatness of Christ if we don't want to identify openly with Christ's family?

You have a greater opportunity to use your spiritual gift "for the profit of all"

"There are different kinds of gifts, but the same Spirit" Paul writes in 1 Corinthians 12:4. He continues in verse 11, "All these are the work of one and the same Spirit, and he gives them to each one, just as he determines." For what purpose does God gift each Christian?

²⁵Ibid.

The answer is in verse 7: "Now to each one the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good." God gifts you individually so that you will use your gift "for the common good" of others. You have a greater opportunity to do that when you use your gift in and through local church membership.

Yes, you can use your spiritual gift for the good of God's people without joining a church. But in a lot of churches, many of the ministry opportunities are available for church members only. That's because the church wants to know that you stand with her doctrinally and support her ministry goals before you're asked to minister in certain positions.

You openly demonstrate the reality of the body of Christ

"Now you are the body of Christ," Paul wrote to the church at Corinth, "and each one of you is a part of it" (1 Cor 12:27). But how can we see the body of Christ? When you join a church, you make it visible. You give a living demonstration of the spiritual reality of the body of Christ. You show that even though you are an individual, you are a part of the body, you are joined together with others. You take the body of Christ out of the realm of the theoretical and give it a meaning that people can see.

As pastor and author Ben Patterson puts it, "To join a particular part of the body of Christ is not to bring something into existence that was not there before. It is simply to make actual what is spiritual, to prove that the spiritual is real."²⁶

You participate in a more balanced ministry than you can otherwise experience

In Ephesians 4:11–16 we read of the Lord giving gifted men such as evangelists and pastor-teachers to the church. We're taught that each part-every member-of the church body has a job to do for the body to function properly and grow. It's a picture of wholeness and balance. We need this God-ordained mutual ministry to be what God intends.

Further, God has designed us so that we can't get this well-rounded ministry on our own. No one develops the proper spiritual symmetry just by listening to Christian radio, watching Christian television, or reading Christian books. You can't get this kind of maturity merely by participating in a group Bible study. Unless you're an active part of a local church, your Christian life and ministry will be imbalanced.

You demonstrate your commitment, not to "spiritual hitchhiking," but to "the proper working of each individual part" in the visible body of Christ

Some time ago in the magazine of the Moody Bible Institute in Chicago, a writer made an interesting observation about the hitchhiker. He wants a free ride. He assumes no responsibility for the money needed to buy the car, the gas to run it, or the cost of maintenance. He expects a comfortable ride and adequate safety. He assumes the driver has insurance covering him in case of an accident. He thinks little of asking the driver to take him to a certain place even though it may involve extra miles or inconvenience.

Think about the "spiritual hitchhiker" who has settled all his major questions about the matters and has definitely decided where he wants to attend church, but now wants all the benefits and privileges of that church's ministry without taking any responsibility for it. His attitude is all take and no give. He wants no accountability, just a free ride.

This is not meant to discourage those who are attending a church to find answers about Jesus Christ and are still uncertain about their eternal destiny. If that describes you, your first

²⁶Ben Patterson, "Why Join A Church?", Leadership, Fall Quarter, 1984, p. 80.

priority is to come to Christ rather than to come for church membership.

Neither is this intended to deter those who are sincerely and actively seeking God's will in a decision about a church home. Sometimes that decision cannot be made quickly. A wise person evaluates a church carefully before joining its membership.

A "spiritual hitchhiker," however, has no real intention of joining the church, at least not soon. He only wants to enjoy its advantages without any obligation on his part. He wants convenience without commitment, to be served rather than to serve. But every true Christian is to be committed to "the proper working of each individual part" (Eph 4:16, NASB) in a local church. When you join a church, you're saying you believe in taking your "individual part" and that you don't want to be a "spiritual hitchhiker."

You "exhort" new believers to the same "good works" of commitment to the local body of Christ

In the familiar passage on church commitment, Hebrews 10:24–25 says, "Let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds. Let us not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but let us encourage one another—and all the more as you see the Day approaching." Notice the command to "consider how we may spur one another" that is associated here with church involvement. Bear in mind the message you give to other believers, especially new believers, if you do not join a church. What are you modeling to new believers when you remain uncommitted to the local church? Do they see your example and learn that the church isn't important enough to join? Do they get the message that the Kingdom of God is not worth such an investment of yourself? Do they interpret your actions as saying that the work of God does not deserve a full commitment?

On the other hand, joining a church is one way of "spurring one another" as this passage puts it, "to love and good deeds." When you do join the local church you provide a positive example that says, "This is worth being a part of and I recommend it to you."

You encourage a ministry when you consider it faithful and join it

Suppose John loves Mary and sees no one else but her for ten years. Every time they are together he tells her that he loves her, but never proposes to her. Finally, after a decade she has enough nerve to ask him, "John, why haven't you wanted to marry me?"

If he says, "I'm just trying to make sure," how do you think she would feel? Of course, she's glad he says he loves her, and she's thankful for all he does for her, and she's pleased that he doesn't see anyone else, but in spite of all that, she's going to be somewhat discouraged because he doesn't love her enough to decisively commit himself to her.

The people and pastor of a church are glad whenever you attend. But if you keep coming and never join, they may begin to wonder what Mary wondered about John, despite how happy you seem to be with the church and how many wonderful things you say about it. So there is a sense in which your attendance and involvement can actually discourage the church and its leaders if, after a reasonable time, you do not join it.

Conversely, the church is encouraged (Heb 10:25), and its leadership is encouraged, when you indicate by joining the church that you love it and think it is a Biblically faithful ministry worthy of your commitment.

BIBLICAL RESPONSES TO THIS MESSAGE

Now that you've read these things about church membership, what should you do?

Turn from living for yourself and follow Christ, the Head of the church

Membership in a local church does not mean that you are part of the body of Christ. Without Christ, church membership means nothing. Hell is filled with people who were church members. Before you respond to the challenge of church membership, you must make sure you know Jesus Christ, who is "head over everything for the church" (Eph 1:22). Your greatest need in life is not to be on the membership roll of a church; it is to be made right with God by the One who died for the church, who created the church, who loves the church, and who is returning someday for His true church.

What should you do? The Bible says you should repent and believe in the Gospel (Mark 1:15), i.e., the message about the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. To repent and believe in this way involves turning from living for yourself and turning in faith to Jesus Christ. Recognize that your sin has separated you from God (Isa 59:2; Rom 3:23). You've repeatedly broken God's laws and this excludes you from His family and from eternity with Him. Come to Christ, however, and He can make you right with God. Believe that His death can cleanse you from all guilt before God and provide you with all the righteousness God requires. This is infinitely more important than church membership.

Present yourself to the church for baptism as a symbol of identification with Christ and His church

[Shortly] after Jesus had ascended back to Heaven, the Holy Spirit of God descended upon the believers who were gathered in Jerusalem. Filled with the Holy Spirit, Peter preached that morning to the crowd that had gathered because of the Jewish Feast of Pentecost. About three thousand people turned from their sin and believed that the crucified and risen Jesus was their Messiah and God. Then, according to Acts 2:41, "those who accepted his message were baptized." If you have received (i.e., believed) the word about Jesus Christ, you should be baptized.

Baptism is a church ordinance commanded by Christ (Matt 28:19). If you have trusted Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord, you should present yourself to a local church as a candidate for baptism. By this means you will openly identify yourself as a follower of Christ and a member of His body.

Present yourself for membership in a local, New Testament church if you've been scripturally baptized and your membership is elsewhere

Have you come to Christ and been baptized? Then you should formally identify yourself with the people of Christ where you live. If you have moved, or for some other reason have membership in a church you no longer attend, you should unite with the believers of a biblically-based, Christ-centered church where you can participate faithfully. (See Acts 18:27 and Rom 16:1–2 for a New Testament example of Christians who identified with and served with a local congregation even when they were in a place which might not have been their permanent residence.)

When I was in college I faithfully attended a local church. After about a year I realized that my membership needed to be in that church, not the one back home that I grew up in but now rarely visited. So I presented myself for membership in the church where I was

worshiping regularly. Today I encourage students to become members of a church in their college town, because that's where they are most of the time. If they are home for the summer, I suggest that, if practical, they move their membership back to their hometown church for those three months. There are two good reasons for doing this. One, there's no guarantee that their plans won't change and that they won't be back either at their school or at that particular church in the fall. Two, this develops a healthy pattern of thinking "Join a church here" whenever they relocate. This habit will serve them well when they graduate and move away from college to who-knows-where, not to mention each of the several times they are likely to move in the coming decades.

Reaffirm the commitment implied in your present church membership

If you are presently a member of the local church you attend, you should exercise your spiritual gifts in and through that church (see Rom 12:5–6a). Membership implies commitment and activity. All the living parts of the body of Christ should be working and fulfilling their God-intended function.

Think about this: a member of a human body, such as a heart or kidney, cannot exist apart from the body, except by some temporary and artificial sustenance. But this isn't what it's designed for. In this sheer existence the organ doesn't fulfill its function in the body. It isn't nourished in the way God intended through the body, but subsists only through some synthetic way that provides mere maintenance but doesn't stimulate growth or development.

In the same way, a true member of Christ's body is not designed to operate independently or outside the body. An authentic part of Christ's spiritual body cannot be content while separated from the rest of His earthly body. That's because he or she is made for interdependence, not independence.

As wonderful and sophisticated as the heart is, it was never made to be just a heart, but a part of a body. It has no value to the body outside the body. And the heart itself can't thrive outside the body. As incredible and wonderful as you are, Christian, you were never made just to be an individual Christian, but a part of body. As every organ and every cell is God-created to be an active member of the human body, so every true Christian is God-created to be a active member of a local body of Christ.

Are you a true Christian? Are you an actively and biblically involved member of a local body of Christ? "Belonging to the church," says John MacArthur, "is at the very heart of Christianity."²⁷

Church membership involves many responsibilities, but we must never lose sight of the great privilege that it really is. "We must grasp once again," said Martyn Lloyd-Jones of London in the mid-twentieth century, "the idea of church membership as being the membership of the body of Christ and as the biggest honor which can come a man's way in this world."²⁸

²⁷MacArthur tape GC 80–130.

²⁸D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones, *Knowing the Times* (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth Trust, 1989), p. 30.

Appendix C

CBC TRANSFER POLICY

Community Bible Church (hereafter, “CBC”) is committed to pursuing a biblical and efficient manner of addressing the issues arising as a result of church transfers. Our desire is to respect the autonomy and authority of every Bible-believing church, to encourage the genuine spiritual growth of every church member, and to promote a biblical approach to church membership and conflict resolution.

Experience has taught us that too often individuals and families transfer from one church to another due to personal whims, an unteachable spirit, resistance to local church authority and accountability, to flee biblical admonition or church discipline, or because there exists some perceived (but not real) doctrinal disagreement. We realize that there are legitimate reasons to leave one church for another. Unfortunately, many transfers do not genuinely fall into any of those acceptable categories. Many people transfer for unbiblical reasons and this dishonors the Lord. Therefore, we have adopted the following Transfer Policy to minimize the likelihood that CBC will become a “safe haven” for people who leave churches for unbiblical reasons and thus rob Christ of His deserving glory. Furthermore, since we have found that Satan often uses illegitimate transfers to cause havoc in the receiving church, this policy will also serve to maintain CBC’s unity and purity.

Transfer Qualifications

All things being equal, we believe there are three circumstances under which a transfer is biblically warranted:

- Relocation
- Doctrinal or philosophical deviation — if a church departs from faithfully teaching and practicing biblical doctrine, an obedient believer has the responsibility to find a church that is faithful to the Word of God.
- Mutual Consent — the transfer occurs with the blessing of the leadership. That is, the individual and his church’s leadership agree that it may be in the best interest of the individual or the larger Body for a transfer to occur. Such agreement may be for a number of reasons. For instance, it may be agreed that the abilities of the transferee can be better used in another church of like faith and practice. So, an individual may transfer from a church with an abundance of human resources to a church in need of assistance. Or, the parties may agree that the individual’s spiritual growth will be better advanced in another ministry. Such mutual consent should only be given in order to advance the Cause of Christ; never to simply avoid biblical conflict resolution. Although there may be times when, despite the desires of the leadership, CBC will accept a transfer, this would occur only in rare circumstances and as a last resort.

Each potential transferee will be asked to justify the transfer based on the above criteria. CBC’s leadership will contact the transferee’s leadership for verification.

Transfer Procedure

Individuals seeking transfer to CBC may need to seek clarification and reconciliation with the leadership of their previous church. Good faith attempts must be made to resolve any disagreement among all parties. The leadership of CBC will contact the leadership of the previous church in order to make sure that: (1) the transfer is for legitimate reasons, (2) any biblical offences have been reconciled, (3) all of the transferee's responsibilities to the previous church have been met and, (4) the transferee has closed the pastor-member relationship in a spirit of meekness, humility, and respect.

Transfer Questions

The following questions will serve to help determine whether the proposed transfer is proper:

- Why did you leave your previous church?
- What biblical passages support your decision to leave?
- Does CBC have a different doctrinal position than the church you are leaving?
- Have you approached your former church's leadership regarding your reasons for leaving? If not, why not?
- What was the leadership's response regarding your reasons for leaving?
- Are there reasons other than those stated that influenced your decision to leave?
- Are you aware of any broken relationships from either prior to your departure or as a result of your departure, which have not been mended?
- Were you involved in any type of gossip or slander during your preparation to leave your previous church?
- Have you been involved in any since that time?
- How will you respond to CBC's leaders when an issue arises with which you disagree?
- Do you have a problem with CBC's leaders contacting your former church's leadership?
- Would you have a problem if a meeting were set up involving yourself (and spouse), the pastor of CBC, and your former pastor? If so, why?

Appendix D

CHURCH COVENANT

Having been led by the Holy Spirit to receive the Lord Jesus Christ as our Savior, and on the public confession of our faith, having been immersed in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy spirit, we do now in the presence of God and this assembly joyfully enter into covenant with one another, as one body in Christ.

We purpose, therefore, by the aid of the Holy Spirit, to walk together in Christian love; to strive for the advancement of this church in knowledge, holiness and comfort; to promote its property and spirituality; to attend its services regularly; to sustain its worship, ordinances, discipline and doctrines; to give it a sacred preeminence over all institutions of human origin; to give faithfully of time and talent in its activities; to contribute cheerfully and regularly, as God has prepared us, to the support of the ministry, the expense of the church, the relief of the poor, and the spread of the gospel throughout all nations.

We also purpose to maintain family and private devotions; to train our children according to the Word of God; to seek the salvation of our kindred and acquaintances; to walk circumspectly in the world; to be just in our dealings, faithful in our engagements, and exemplary in our conduct; to avoid all gossip, backbiting and unrighteous anger; to abstain from all forms of activity which dishonor our Lord Jesus Christ, our Savior; and to give Him preeminence in all things.

We further purpose to encourage one another in the blessed hope of our Lord's return; to watch over one another in brotherly love; to remember each other in prayer; to aid each other in sickness and distress; to cultivate Christian sympathy in feeling and courtesy in speech; to be slow to take offense, but always ready for reconciliation, and, mindful of the rules of our Savior, to seek it without delay.

We moreover purpose that when we remove from this place we will as soon as possible unite with some other church of like faith and order where we can carry out the spirit of this covenant and the principles of God's Word. If there is no such church, we shall seek, with the Lord's help to establish one.

We agree to live by the Relational Commitments of Community Bible Church.

Appendix E

CONDITIONS FOR CHURCH INVOLVEMENT OF KNOWN SEX OFFENDERS

The gospel of Jesus Christ has inherent redemptive and life-changing power. Acting upon that conviction and upon the certainty that Jesus Christ wants all people received into His church, we are providing protective discipleship guidelines for sexual offenders who desire to repent from their sin and to participate in Community Bible Church (hereafter, "CBC").

In Christ there is complete forgiveness for sin. The Lord provides the church as core to a person's process of winning greater freedom from sin and living in a way that pleases Him. Even so, there are sexual offenses that can cause great fear in the church and, if the offenses are repeated, can cause immeasurable pain to the church and damage to the gospel ministry.

CBC's Leadership Team carries the unique and crucial burden of ensuring that the church honors and seeks the Lord's heart and mind (Isaiah 57:11; Jeremiah 10:21), that leaders protect the church (Acts 20:28), and guide the church to pursue purity (Ephesians 5:26-27).

With these concerns and convictions in mind, the Leadership Team of CBC is placing specific conditions on involvement of a repentant sexual offender while participating in CBC's services and events as well as interacting with the people of CBC. The Leadership Team is implementing these conditions to properly meet the responsibilities described above.

Four core values drive this policy:

1. The church is to be protected.
2. Each person is to receive spiritual care and discipleship, and repentant offenders are included in that value.
3. Forgiveness is offered to all.
4. Trust is earned.

A criminally convicted or otherwise admitted sexual offender may participate in the ministries and programs and in relationships at CBC, but only at the discernment and direction of the CBC Leadership Team.

The following conditions and processes will be enforced:

1. The Leadership Team will meet with the person to discern whether the person has repented and has received salvation through Christ.
2. The Leadership Team will discern whether the person has yielded fruit of genuine repentance.
3. The individual will meet with and reveal the circumstances of the past sin with the Leadership Team of CBC.

4. The identity of the individual will be made known to the Security Team and, if applicable (i.e., the offense involved children), to the Children's Ministry personnel.
5. The congregation will be informed that a sex offender is attending and that our policy has been implemented. Also, the identity of the offender will be made available to any member upon request.
6. The individual will authorize the CBC Leadership Team to discuss the individual's offenses with a probation/parole officer or counselor.
7. The Leadership Team will determine the programs and ministries in which the person will be allowed to participate.
8. The person will be required to accept a companion of whom the Leadership Team approves and who will accompany the person while participating in CBC worship services and any other church events and activities and relationships.
9. The person will not participate in any CBC worship service or activity or relationship unless a Leadership Team-approved individual accompanies the person.
10. The person will have no contact and will not associate with a minor at any time or at any location, including a CBC worship service or activity.
11. The person will not linger in areas that are primarily occupied by children or youth.
12. The person will sign, date, and receive a copy of this policy.
13. If the person fails to humbly, completely, and faithfully comply with this policy, the Leadership Team will revoke the person's opportunity to participate at CBC and remove the person from the congregation.