

***Christ Covenant Church***  
*A Presbyterian Church of America*  
*New Members and Inquirers Seminar*

---

**I. What Christ Covenant Believes**

**A. We are a Confessional Church**

1. The Westminster Confession of Faith (1647)
  
2. The Larger and Shorter Catechisms (1649)
  
3. The Book of Church Order (PCA, 1973)

**B. We believe the Bible is entirely True**

1. The Scriptures (OT and NT) are the Word of God
  
2. The Scriptures are Authoritative
  
3. The Scriptures are Sufficient

**C. We believe Sin is Radical- Total Depravity**

1. Our Sin is rebellion against God
  
2. Our Sin is in Everything
  
3. Our Sin could be Worse

**D. We believe in the Sovereignty of God- Unconditional Election**

1. God's Sovereignty is unchallenged
  
2. Our Salvation is of the LORD
  
3. God's Sovereignty rules regularly

**E. We believe in the Cross of Christ- Limited Atonement**

1. The Cross is the central message of the Bible

***Christ Covenant Church***  
*A Presbyterian Church of America*  
*New Members and Inquirers Seminar*

---

2. The Cross is the place where righteousness and peace kiss (*Psalm 85:10*)
3. The Cross is the Power of God for the salvation of the people of God!

**F. We believe in Amazing Grace- *Irresistible Grace***

1. God's Grace is Free
2. God's Grace is Irresistible
3. God's Grace is Beautiful

**G. We believe in Assurance- *Perseverance of the Saints***

1. Assurance is the reality of Saving Grace
2. Assurance is enjoyed in our Adoption
3. Assurance is required to pursue Holiness

**H. We believe in Holy Callings**

1. Our Callings are from God
2. Our Callings are for His Glory
3. Our Callings are *Missional*

**II. What Christ Covenant Is**

**A. We are the Church Universal (catholic)**

1. The *Building* of Christ
2. The *Body* of Christ
3. The *Bride* of Christ

***Christ Covenant Church***  
*A Presbyterian Church of America*  
*New Members and Inquirers Seminar*

---

**B. We are a Local Church**

*We are biblically defined in three ways:*

1. The Word (preaching & teaching)
  
2. The Sacraments
  
3. Church Discipline (positive & negative)

**C. We are a Presbyterian Church**

1. Who will lead us in the church?
  
2. How do officers function in the church?
  
3. What are the benefits of being Presbyterian?

**D. We are a Reformed Church**

1. We believe in the Past-*The Reformation*
  
2. We believe essential Doctrine-*The Solas*
  
3. We believe Christianity is Education- *Semper Reformanda (always reforming)*

**E. We are a Communing Church**

1. There are *essentials* and *non-essentials*
  
2. You will take Vows that Matter
  
3. Warning: Our fellowship is Messy!

**III. How Christ Covenant Grows**

**A. We believe Worship is Holy**

1. Our Worship is wholly about God

***Christ Covenant Church***  
*A Presbyterian Church of America*  
*New Members and Inquirers Seminar*

---

2. Our Worship is Other-Worldly

3. Our Worship is for the Ordinary

**B. We believe the Word is the Gospel-** *God's Word is a means of Grace*

1. The Bible is Revelation- *Who God is, who we are*

2. The Bible is Life-Giving- *Everything for Salvation*

3. The Bible is Directional- *Faith and Practice*

**C. We believe the Sacraments are Gifts-** *The Sacraments are a means of Grace*

1. The Sacraments are Baptism and the Lord's Supper

2. The Sacraments are the Gospel Pictured for Us

3. The Sacraments are Signs and Seals of Union with Christ

**D. We believe Prayer is Relational-** *Prayer is a means of Grace*

1. Prayer is before the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit

2. Prayer is a gift from God

3. Prayer is commanded with and for others

**E. We believe Fellowship is Essential**

1. Our Fellowship is Created by the Word and Spirit

2. Our Fellowship is Required in the Bible

***Christ Covenant Church***  
*A Presbyterian Church of America*  
*New Members and Inquirers Seminar*

---

3. Our Fellowship is Sacrificial

#### **IV. Why Christ Covenant Exists in Hernando**

##### **A. We have been Entrusted with the Gospel**

1. You must have Faith
  
2. You must Repent
  
3. Your “heart” is the Matter that Matters

##### **B. We have a Vision, a Focus and a Foundation**

**Our Vision:** Christ Covenant seeks to worship God in Hernando as a *missional community* that is committed to *love, train, and serve* others in Jesus Christ!

**Our Focus:** Christ Covenant *will gather* to worship the God of Scripture, *intentionally* nurture our fellowship in Christ, and *thoughtfully* serve the people of Hernando.

**Our Foundation:**

There are *three core values* which give us hope and shape our vision at Christ Covenant:

- We believe ***the Gospel*** of Christ is the power of God unto new life, which is able to transform any individual, community, and city.
- We believe ***the Church*** is the body of Christ, which is the focused community of God for gathering and sanctifying His people in the world.
- We believe ***the Kingdom*** of Christ is His rule and authority over all heaven and earth, which promises to bring peace (shalom) to all things.

##### **C. You have Unique Gifts to Serve Christ**

1. You must *know* Your Gifts
  
2. You must *use* Your Gifts
  
3. You must “*contextualize*” Your Gifts

##### **D. What is the next step to become a member at Christ Covenant?**

1. Complete membership application
2. Set up a meeting with the Elders (Clint, Bob, and Robert Browning, pastor of CPC)
3. Take Public Vows before the church

***Christ Covenant Church***  
*A Presbyterian Church of America*  
*New Members and Inquirers Seminar*

---

## **V. Further considerations for membership at Christ Covenant**

### **THE BIBLICAL CONCEPT OF CHURCH MEMBERSHIP<sup>1</sup>**

People often ask, “Why do you emphasize membership? Where is that in the Bible?” The answer is simple: while the phrase “church membership” is not used explicitly in the Bible, the concept is presupposed on every page. ***There is no such thing as community without commitment.***

If you decide not to join Christ Covenant, there will be no pressure to join in the future. You may wish to wait and see how our church develops. *Do not join unless you are ready to be committed.* However, we do believe that church membership is a biblical concept and, if Christ Covenant is to be your “home” church, we hope that you will prayerfully consider membership eventually.

To be a member of a church is to make a public promise to live according to biblical teachings and to support the mission and ministry of the local church.

### **The Benefits of Membership**

1. Members have the benefit of *accountability* to the pastors and elders, the spiritual leaders. Hebrews 13:17 teaches us to “obey your leaders and submit to them, for they are keeping watch over your souls.” The command presupposes that you are in a covenantal relationship with certain leaders - how can you keep this command if you are not!? Those who say, “I am accountable only to God,” are not only in disobedience to Scripture, they are placing themselves in great spiritual danger.
2. Members have the benefit of helping shape the ministry of the church. It is members who vote in congregational meetings and elect the officers who guide the direction of the church. And only members are eligible to serve as elders.
3. There are certain other benefits to church membership as well. Ordinarily, only those who are members of Christ Covenant may have their children baptized into the membership of Christ Covenant Church. And only members may lead in certain church ministries, such as Community Groups.

### **Membership & Accountability**

In Presbyterian churches, each local church and each minister is held accountable to the church as a whole—while preserving local autonomy on things such as style and philosophy of ministry. In the same way, while expression of individual gifts is a priority, each individual church member has a relationship of accountability to the church.

---

<sup>1</sup> The material in this section is adapted from Tommy Allen and Craig Higgins, then modified by Jeremy Jones at Redeemer Memphis.

**Christ Covenant Church**  
A Presbyterian Church of America  
*New Members and Inquirers Seminar*

---

1. **General oversight.** As Christians, we are to encourage one another constantly to follow Christ. Moreover, pastors and elders have the authority to inquire into the general lifestyle of believers, to disciple, to encourage, and to admonish. This general oversight is a privilege for which we should all be thankful. (Hebrews 13:17; 1 Thessalonians 5:12-13)
2. **Judicial discipline.** While ministers and elders cannot bind the conscience of believers beyond the teachings of Scripture, they do have genuine authority to lead the people according to biblical standards. For example, they cannot say, “You must be in a community group,” but they can say, “You must break off this adulterous affair.” In those cases where pastoral counsel regarding sin does not result in repentance, the stages of formal church discipline begin. This starts with formal admonition, and then can escalate to suspension from the sacraments and even to removal from membership in the church (excommunication). Discipline is never merely for some particular sin, but is always for *refusal to repent* over a sin. The goal of church discipline is *always* the complete restoration of the offender. (1 Corinthians 5)

One more comment on church discipline and accountability: For many people in our secular society, the idea of *accountability* to the church is quite novel. Yet hundreds of thousands of Christians will testify to the benefits of being a part of a community where people love you enough to be honest with you. If you have questions about this, please speak with a member of the pastoral staff. But remember: One of the great benefits of being a Christian is being a part of the Christian community—knowing that there are fellow believers who love you and are looking out for you.

### **Membership Commitments**

According to the *Book of Church Order* of the Presbyterian Church in America, communing members<sup>2</sup> must give their assent to the following five membership vows:

#### **The Five Membership Vows**

(taken from the Presbyterian Church in America’s *Book of Church Order*)

1. **Do you acknowledge yourself to be a sinner in the sight of God, justly deserving His displeasure, and without hope except through His sovereign mercy?**
2. **Do you believe in the Lord Jesus as the Son of God and Savior of sinners, and do you receive and rest upon Him alone for salvation as He is offered in the Gospel?**
3. **Do you now resolve and promise, in humble reliance upon the grace of the Holy Spirit, that you will endeavor to live as becomes a follower of Christ?**
4. **Do you promise to support the church in its worship and work to the best of your ability?**
5. **Do you submit yourself to the government and discipline of the Church, and do you promise to strive for its purity and peace?**

**The first two questions are asking: “do you personally believe the Christian gospel?”**

---

<sup>2</sup> Communing members are those who have made a public profession of faith and been admitted to Holy Communion. The baptized children of believers are non-communing members of the church until they publicly profess faith in Christ.

***Christ Covenant Church***  
*A Presbyterian Church of America*  
*New Members and Inquirers Seminar*

---

1. ***Do you acknowledge yourself to be a sinner in the sight of God, justly deserving his displeasure and without hope except through his sovereign mercy?***
  - It is important to come to grips with the bad news of our depravity because, without understanding this truth, the good news of the gospel is robbed of its glory.
2. ***Do you believe in the Lord Jesus Christ as the Son of God and Savior of sinners, and do you receive and rest upon him alone for salvation as he is offered in the gospel?***
  - Of course, this membership vow presupposes orthodox Christian belief in the Trinity, the Incarnation, and the Atonement.
  - A key word here is *alone*. It is vital to realize that justification comes through faith *plus nothing*. In no way do we contribute to our salvation.
  - Also key is the word *resting*, conveying the idea that we have repented not only of our sins, but of our righteousness—of our attempts to earn God’s favor through good works. By affirming this vow you are publicly confessing that you are trusting only in Jesus Christ—in his sacrificial death and his glorious resurrection—for your acceptance by God the Father.

**The third question is a promise about Christian character: will you seek to grow as a Christian and pursue obedience to Christ?**

3. ***Do you resolve and promise, in humble reliance upon the grace of the Holy Spirit, that you will endeavor to live as becomes a follower of Christ?***
  - In our culture there is a great deal of confusion about what it means to live the Christian life, especially in the area of sexuality. Therefore, we think it is important to let people know up front what we understand the Bible to teach in this area.
    - ⇒ We believe that sex is a gift from God by which we declare to a spouse that we belong and are committed exclusively to him or her. On that basis we believe that sex outside of heterosexual marriage is wrong.
    - ⇒ For married couples, we believe that the marriage covenant is permanent and that divorce is permissible only after a fundamental breaking of that covenant by adultery or desertion. If you have been married and divorced, please speak to a member of the pastoral staff about this.
  - The issue is not whether you are *struggling* with a particular sin; we all struggle with sin, and we look to the church community to help us in our struggles. The issue is whether or not you hold biblical convictions on these issues and are fighting against known sin.
  - The phrase “in humble reliance on the Holy Spirit” implies that you are using the means of grace, practicing basic spiritual disciplines in order to grow spiritually.

**The fourth question is about your commitment to involvement in the life and work of the Christ Covenant church community.**

4. ***Do you promise to support the church in its worship and work to the best of your ability?***

***Christ Covenant Church***  
*A Presbyterian Church of America*  
*New Members and Inquirers Seminar*

---

- This includes assent to the church’s general vision and philosophy of ministry, including our commitment to the centrality of worship, to Community Groups, to being a church for the unchurched, and to serving the city of Hernando.
- This promise also includes the understanding that Christ Covenant is a Presbyterian church and that, while you may not hold Presbyterian views yourself, you are knowingly and willingly joining a church which holds these distinct views.
- This also includes the responsibility of supporting the church with your time and money, being a good steward of that with which God has entrusted to you, and being involved in the ministry of Christ Covenant.

**The fifth question is about accountability: here you promise to hold yourself accountable to the leadership, to one another, and to the above promises as you seek to be a peacemaker in the church.**

***5. Do you submit yourself to the government and discipline of the church, promising to promote its purity and peace?***

- In this vow, you are agreeing to submit to the leadership of Christ Covenant Presbyterian Church and our regional and national governing bodies.
- *It is important that you understand the ramifications of this.* In the event that you disagree with the leaders of the church, especially in a disciplinary case, you have full recourse to the courts of the church, but by joining Christ Covenant Presbyterian Church you are agreeing not to involve the church in the civil courts.
- You are also committing yourself to a balanced pursuit of purity and peace, of truth and love. This means that you will deal with conflict in biblical ways—in honest, loving, confrontation—and that problems will be brought to the pastors and elders; you are promising to avoid gossip, slander, and all hurtful means of communication.

**Expectations of Members**

What does it mean to be an active member of Christ Covenant Presbyterian Church? How should you flesh out your promise to “support the Church”? What does God intend for his people to do as a part of his church? We hope to see all of our members involved in at least the following areas:

- **Daily walk with God:** Regular, daily use of the “means of grace”—Bible reading and prayer— methodically for your own spiritual growth.
- **Weekly worship with the people of God:** “Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for he who promised is faithful. And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near.” – Hebrews 10:23-25
- **Membership in a Community Group:** Community Groups are the main avenue for engaging in our community at Christ Covenant. For your own spiritual growth as well as

***Christ Covenant Church***  
*A Presbyterian Church of America*  
*New Members and Inquirers Seminar*

---

others', you need to belong to a group: "Rather, speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ, from whom the whole body, joined and held together by every joint with which it is equipped, when each part is working properly, makes the body grow so that it builds itself up in love." –Ephesians 4:11-16

- **Ministry involvement:** "As each has received a gift, use it to serve one another, as good stewards of God's varied grace: whoever speaks, as one who speaks oracles of God; whoever serves, as one who serves by the strength that God supplies—in order that in everything God may be glorified through Jesus Christ. To him belong glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen." –1 Peter 4:10-11.

Use your gifts! Opportunities include:

Children's Church and Nursery  
Sunday Set-Up (room, chairs, communion set-up)  
Book Table, etc.

- **Stewardship of finances through tithes and gifts (more on this later)**
- **Bring and include new people:** Let the gospel overflow from your life into the lives of those around you—at home, at work, in your circle of friends. Help those whom you bring to Christ Covenant to be able to connect into the life of the church.

## **Supporting the Church Financially**

Supporting the worship and work of the church to the best of your ability is one of the membership vows. While this certainly includes much more than money, it does not include less.

Here are three basic biblical teachings on the subject of giving to the work of the kingdom:

### ***1. Giving must be in significant proportions.*** The Bible gives three guidelines:

- **The guideline of the tithe:** In the Old Testament, believers were required to give a tenth of their income to the support of the ministry and the needs of the poor. While the New Testament does not give believers this requirement today, surely we who are blessed more are not encouraged to give less. Thus the tithe (10%) is a kind of minimum guideline for giving.
- **The guideline of giving sacrificially:** The Apostle Paul says of the Macedonians, "they gave according to their means, as I can testify, and beyond their means, of their own free will" (2 Corinthians 8:3). That means they gave until it meant a sacrifice in their lifestyle.
- **The guideline of wisdom:** Christians are to give "according to [their] ability" (Acts 11:29). There are seasons to economic life, and we all have economic responsibilities to our families and to our debts. In many cases, good planning is necessary in order to gradually

**Christ Covenant Church**  
A Presbyterian Church of America  
*New Members and Inquirers Seminar*

---

move our giving into Biblical proportions while still meeting personal and legal financial obligations.

2. ***Giving is a joyful response to God's grace.*** Paul asked for money by saying, “[I] say this not as a command, but to prove by the earnestness of others that your love also is genuine. For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sake he became poor, so that you by his poverty might become rich” (2 Corinthians 8:8-9). What a test! Paul says that the difference between moralists (those who think that God accepts them because of their goodness) and Christians (those who know they are sinners saved purely by grace) is that a Christian wants to give as generously as he or she has received. Put starkly, *we always give effortlessly to those things that give our lives meaning, to our “gods.”*
3. ***Giving must be systematic and thoughtful.*** Paul directed the Corinthians to set aside a portion of their wealth each week until he would come and receive it, in this case for the relief of famine victims in Palestine (see 2 Corinthians 8 again). Giving “spontaneously” might meet point 2 above, but it’s rarely up to point 1. You need a plan, and the church can help with reminders and directions for biblical stewardship.
4. **A Giving Plan:**
  - a. ***Evaluate your own heart with regard to money.*** What do you most enjoy spending money on? What percentage of your income is going 1) to God’s Kingdom (your church, other Christian ministries), and 2) to help those in need (outside your family)? How close is it to 10% of your income? Read Matthew 6:19-34, 1 Timothy 6:6-10, 2 Corinthians 8:1-5; 9:6-15. *Do you need to adjust your giving in light of biblical values, in terms of eternal investments?*
  - b. ***Do you have a regular plan for giving?*** First, decide what percentage of your income you will give to the Lord’s work this year. Then, ask yourself if this is *sacrificial* and, on the other hand, if this is *responsible*. Last, whenever money comes in, set aside the Lord’s portion first, with the understanding that it is his, not yours.
  - c. ***Prayerfully distribute the money among Christian causes.*** We hope your church is your primary avenue of spiritual growth, and giving to your home church will be a first priority. But there are other churches, missionaries, and ministries that are worthy of support as well.
  - d. ***Evaluate your use of “non-liquid” resources.***

## **IV. Helpful Appendices**

### **Appendix A**

**Christ Covenant Church**  
A Presbyterian Church of America  
New Members and Inquirers Seminar

---

## Four Wrong Models of Church/World Relations (Keller).

In this appendix Tim Keller describes four wrong models of the church/world relationship. We have found this helpful in showing people what Christ Covenant will *not* be as a church.

### **#1 Assimilation.**

*“In this model, believers simply give in and adopt the pagan culture’s values and world-view, both internally (in their fundamental values and perspectives) and externally (by learning and adopting the culture’s customs, habits of dress, food, language).”* -Keller. This is the old style immigrant model typical of many liberal churches. Often political and social issues take over the mission of the church and it becomes in the world, for the world, but just like the world.

### **#2 Privatization.**

*“In this model, believers keep the external trappings of Christian faith and practice, but they adopt the more fundamental values and perspectives of the dominant culture. Often this is called ‘privatization’ because one’s faith is kept to Sunday services and externals and does not really shape the way we actually live. This may be called an ‘oreo’ model in which we superficially resemble one culture but internally and actually we are another. For example, believers may not smoke or drink too much or have sex outside of marriage, and may use lots of pious jargon - yet in their core beings they may be as materialistic and individualistic, and status- or image-conscious as the society around. [In one biblical example]...Though formally worshipping the Lord, the idolatrous attitude of the surrounding culture had penetrated them to their core. They sought to manipulate God into giving them prosperity and comfort through limited ‘buy-offs’ of the deity rather than surrender to his grace. ”* - Keller. These are often wealthy, powerful establishment churches (both liberal and conservative) which are in the world, just like the world (in what really matters), and rarely serving the world

### **#3 Militant Ghetto**

*“In this model, believers respond to the unbelieving culture with a sense of superiority and hostility and a very great degree of separation. They feel highly polluted by the very presence of the unbelieving schools, entertainment, arts, and culture and feel they cannot really function in the society without having the cultural power. This is the ‘soldier’ model, in which believers consider themselves hostile visitors, seeking to ‘take back’ the culture through introducing legislation and taking over institutions. Some take a more passive approach and withdraw from any real interaction, just denouncing and bemoaning the moral decay, while others aim to get the cultural power back. [In one biblical example of this, people] are more angry than repentant over their new powerless situation, and cannot envision how they can worship and function outside of the land where they had sovereignty.”* - Keller. This is the model of many evangelical churches involved in the Christian right. This model leads churches to be not in world, not like world (but mirroring it often), and not serving but attacking the world! The mission of the church is hijacked by all sorts of conservative agendas that become dominant, whether political, ethical, or doctrinal.

**Christ Covenant Church**  
A Presbyterian Church of America  
*New Members and Inquirers Seminar*

---

**#4: Ministry Ghetto (Revivalist)**

*“In this model, believers respond not with too much pessimism but too much optimism. They expect a miraculous, sweeping intervention by God which will convert many or most individuals and explosively transform the culture. Therefore, instead of becoming deeply engaged with the society and people around them, working with others as co-citizens to deal with troubles and problems, believers concentrate completely on evangelism and discipleship, building up the church and their own numbers. They often justify this by saying ‘if enough people became Christians, then our other problems would go away.’ In this model, Christians are often pressed to go into ‘full-time ministry’ but not to become play-writes, artists, lawyers, or business people. This ‘revivalist’ (also called ‘pietist’) approach forms a happy parallel alternative culture, with the goal of picking off individual converts and bringing them in. This is a ‘tourist’ model in which the believers are just ‘passing through’...” - Keller. Many evangelical mega-churches, charismatic churches fit this model. They are not in world, not like the world, and only perform limited service to the world.*

**Appendix B**

**The Nature of Saving Faith**

Taken from “The Everlasting Righteousness” by Horatius Bonar (1874)

**Faith relies on Christ, not self.**

For faith is no work, nor merit, nor effort; but the cessation from all these and the acceptance in place of them of what another has done - done completely, and for ever. (74)

Faith adds nothing to the cross, nor to its healing virtue. It owns the fullness and sufficiency and suitability of the work done there, and bids the toiling spirit cease from its labors and enter into rest. Faith does not come to Calvary to do anything. It comes to see the glorious spectacle of all things done...

Faith listens to the ‘it is finished’ of the sin-bearer, and says, ‘Amen.’ Where faith begins, there labor ends - labor I mean, for life and pardon. Faith is rest, not toil. It is the giving up of all the former weary efforts to do or feel something good in order to induce God to love and pardon; and the calm reception of the truth so long rejected: that God is not waiting for any such inducements, but loves and pardons of his own good will, and is showing that good will to any sinner who will come to Him on such a footing, casting away his own poor performances or goodnesses, and relying upon the free love of Him who so loved the world that He gave His only son. (116)

**Weak Faith is not a problem.**

With a weak faith and a fearful heart many a sinner stands before the altar. But it is not the strength of his faith, but the perfection of the sacrifice that saves; and no feebleness of faith, no dimness of eye, no trembling of hand, can change the efficacy [effectiveness] of our burnt

***Christ Covenant Church***  
*A Presbyterian Church of America*  
*New Members and Inquirers Seminar*

---

offering [which is Christ]. The vigor of our faith can add nothing to it, nor can the poverty of it take anything from it. (23)

The quality or quantity of faith is not the main question for the sinner. (25)

The strength or kind of faith required is nowhere stated [in the Bible]. The Holy Spirit has said nothing as to quantity or quality, on which so many dwell, and over which they stumble, remaining all their days in darkness and uncertainty. It is simply in believing - feeble as our faith may be - that we are invested with Christ's righteousness. The simplest, feeblest faith suffices; for it is not the excellence of our act of faith that does anything for us, but the excellence of Him who suffered for sin, the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God. His perfection suffices to cover not only that which is imperfect in our characters and lives, but also that which is imperfect in our faith, when we believe on His name. (73-74)

All faith here is imperfect; and our security is this: that it matter not how poor or weak our faith may be - if it touches the perfect One, all is well. (110)

**Faith is not a 'work.'**

Faith is not our righteousness... (107)

Faith is not our physician; it only brings us to the Physician. It is not even our medicine; it only administers the medicine. Our faith is but our touching Jesus; and what is even this, in reality, but His touching us?

Faith is not our savior. It was not faith that was born at Bethlehem and died on Golgotha for us. It was not faith that loved us and gave itself for us; that bore our sins in its own body on the tree; that died and rose again for our sins. Faith is one thing, the Savior another. Faith is one thing and the cross another. (109-110)

Faith does not work, but accepts a work done ages ago... (112)

Faith is truly a ceasing from work, and not a working; it is not the doing of anything in order to be justified, but the simple reception of the justifying work of Jesus...for the one justifying work of Christ was completed eighteen hundred years ago, and any attempt on our part to repeat or imitate this is vain. The one cross suffices. (176)

**Appendix C**

**A Guide to Justification and Progressive Sanctification in Christ.**

Key verses on Justification:

Isaiah 6.1-7, 53.1-12, 61.10

Zechariah 3.1-5

Matthew 3.13-17, 5.17

***Christ Covenant Church***  
*A Presbyterian Church of America*  
*New Members and Inquirers Seminar*

---

Luke 15.11-31  
Romans 3.9-4.8, 5.1-21, 9.30-10.4  
1 Corinthians 1.30  
2 Corinthians 5.21  
Galatians 2.16, 21, 3.10-13  
Philippians 3.1-9  
Titus 2.3-7  
Hebrews 7.26-27, 9.9-14, 24-28, 10.10-18

Justification is an act of God's free grace, wherein he forgives us of all our sins and accepts us as righteous in his sight, only because of the righteousness of Christ imputed (legally credited) to us, and received by faith alone. -Westminster Shorter Catechism (paraphrased)

Note some aspects of this definition:

- Justification is a one-time "act" of God motivated totally by his grace and love for us.
- The act of justification consists in a 2-fold legal declaration of those in Christ: forgiveness of all our sins and acceptance as totally righteous.
- The sole ground of justification is Christ's atonement and obedient life.
- The means of receiving this gift is "faith alone": actively trusting Christ for salvation from sin. Faith is not a work. Rather, faith looks away from our works to depend on Christ's work. Also, faith always produces good works in response to the gospel of free justification.

THE DIFFERENCES BETWEEN JUSTIFICATION AND PROGRESSIVE SANCTIFICATION.

"by one sacrifice he [Jesus] has made *perfect* forever those who are *being made holy*." - Hebrews 10.14

*Justification* is God declaring sinners in union with Christ forgiven and righteous in his sight - it's God making us "perfect" in his eyes the moment we trust Jesus.

*Progressive Sanctification* is God making sinners in union with Christ more righteous in their being and behavior - it's us "being made holy" by God throughout our earthly life.

Key verses on Progressive Sanctification:

Ezekiel 36.24-27  
Luke 7.36-50  
Romans 6.1-14, 8.1-17, 12.1-2  
1 Corinthians 13  
Galatians 2.20, 3.1-5, 5.13-15, 16-18, 19-26  
Ephesians 2.1-10, 4.29-5.7, 6.17-18  
Colossians 2.6-7  
2 Timothy 3.14-17  
Titus 2.11-14; Hebrews 2.17-18, 4.12, 14-16, 10.19-25, 12.1-3

**Christ Covenant Church**  
A Presbyterian Church of America  
New Members and Inquirers Seminar

---

**Justification**

Deals with sins' *guilt & penalty*

Affects our *status*

Getting *declared* righteous

*Imputed* righteousness of Christ

Is an *ACT* of grace

Happens *ONCE* for all  
at conversion

*Never* changes

Establishes *permanent relationship*

*Passive* Righteousness

**Progressive Sanctification**

Deals with sins' *corrupting power*

Affects our *nature and behavior*

Being *made* righteous

*Imparted* righteousness of Christ

Is a *WORK* of grace

Is progressive, an ongoing *process*  
throughout Christian life.

Changes

Deals with *fluctuating fellowship*

*Active* Righteousness

**Comment:** have you ever distinguished between your justification and your sanctification? Have you ever separated your *status* before God from “how you’re doing spiritually”? If you haven’t, then you’re still “struggling to be free” as a Christian; if you have, then you’re “free to struggle.” When you separate or distinguish between justification and sanctification it changes your life because you understand that *your status before God is not determined by your current level of obedience or disobedience*. In other words, your justification is not dependent on your sanctification. Rather your justification is dependent on Christ alone! When you believe this truth, you understand the grace and love of God in new ways. You are free to rest in God’s grace like never before and deeply experience the freedom and joy of the gospel.

**THE SIMILARITIES BETWEEN JUSTIFICATION AND PROGRESSIVE SANCTIFICATION**

Justification and Sanctification are both:

- Grounded in Christ’s incarnate life, death, resurrection, and ascension.
- Received by grace through faith in Christ alone

**THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN JUSTIFICATION AND PROGRESSIVE SANCTIFICATION.**

Though they are different and must never be confused, justification and sanctification are both aspects of union with Christ; thus, these benefits can never be separated and always go together.

- Justification always goes with sanctification. You can’t be justified and not be being sanctified.

***Christ Covenant Church***  
*A Presbyterian Church of America*  
*New Members and Inquirers Seminar*

---

- Sanctification is always a sign of justification.
- Our ongoing faith in Christ for justification helps drive our sanctification because this faith grasps God's love; sanctification does NOT produce justification!

**EXPERIENCING JUSTIFICATION.**

**David Brainerd's Diary (paraphrased and abridged by Tim Keller)**

When I was about twenty years of age I was engaged more than ever in the duties of religion. I became strict, and watchful over my thoughts, words, and actions; and thought I must be very seriously religious, because I considered entering the ministry. I spent much time every day reading my Bible and praying, and I gave great attention to Sunday sermons. In short, I had a very good outside, and trusted entirely in my religious duties, though I was not then aware of what I was doing wrong.

Though I often confessed to God that I, of course, deserved nothing, yet still I harbored a secret hope of recommending myself to God by all these duties and all this morality. When I prayed affectionately, and felt some melting of my heart in love to him, I hoped God would thereby be moved to care for me. So I thought that through my repenting and praising him and seeking him, I could make good steps toward heaven. When my heart seemed full of love and faith, I felt that God would be affected by that, and would hear my prayers for their sincerity. In other words, I healed myself with my duties. I told myself, "God must accept you, because look at how whole-heartedly you serve and seek him." Now here was the problem. The more I tried love God with all my soul, the more I saw how little I really loved him. The more I sought a soft heart, the more I felt how hard my heart was, and I supposed it must be softened before Christ would accept me. One night I remember in particular, when I was walking alone, and

I had opened such a view of my sin that I feared the ground would cleave asunder under my feet and become my grave. I saw it was impossible for me, after the utmost pains, to answer the demands of God's law. I saw it condemned me for selfish and angry and fearful and envious and lustful thoughts, which I could not possibly prevent.

Then, after a considerable time spent in such distresses, one morning I was alone and I saw that all my contrivances and projects to effect or procure salvation were utterly in vain. I had thought many times that the difficulties were very great, but now I saw them in a different light--that it was totally impossible to do anything toward delivering myself. The tumult that had been in my mind now quieted. I saw that all my prayers and repentances and feelings and obediences had not laid the least obligation upon God to bestow his salvation on me. Then I realized why they were of no avail. When I had been fasting, praying, obeying, I thought I was aiming at the glory of God, but I was doing it all for my own glory--to feel I was worthy. As long as I was doing all this to earn my salvation, I was doing nothing for God, all for me! I realized that all my struggling to become worthy was an exercise in self-worship. I was actually trying to avoid God as saviour, and to be my own saviour. i.e. I was not worshipping him, but using him.

Then, at that time, the true way of salvation opened to my mind. I saw so much of its wisdom and suitableness and excellence that I wondered how I ever was blind to it. I wondered why everyone did not see this way of salvation--not by my own contrivances, but entirely by the

***Christ Covenant Church***  
*A Presbyterian Church of America*  
*New Members and Inquirers Seminar*

---

righteousness of Christ. I felt myself in a new world, and every thing about me appeared with a different aspect from before.

**John Bunyan, from *Grace Abounding to the Chief of Sinners* (paraphrased and Abridged by Tim Keller)**

Every little touch would hurt my tender conscience. But one day, as I was passing through a field, suddenly I thought of a sentence, "your righteousness is in heaven", and with the eyes of faith, I saw Christ sitting at God's right hand. And I suddenly realized--THERE is my righteousness. Wherever I was or whatever I was doing, God could not say, "where is your righteousness?" for it was right before him. I saw that my good frame of heart could not make my righteousness better nor a bad frame of heart make my righteousness worse, for my righteousness was Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, today and forever. Now my chains fell off indeed! I felt delivered from slavery to guilt and fears. I went home rejoicing for the love and grace of God. Now I could look from myself to him, and I realized that all those weak character qualities in my heart were like the pennies that rich men carry in their pocket, when their gold is safe under lock and key. Christ is my treasure, my righteousness. Now Christ was my wisdom, righteousness, holiness, and salvation.

**Richard Lovelace, *Dynamics of Spiritual Life*:**

Only a fraction of the present body of professing Christians are solidly appropriating the justifying work of Christ in their lives. Many have so light an apprehension of God's holiness and of the extent and guilt of their sin that consciously they see little need for justification, although below the surface of their lives they are deeply guilt-ridden and insecure. Many others have a theoretical commitment to this doctrine but in their day-to-day existence they rely on their sanctification for justification...drawing their assurance of acceptance with God from their sincerity, their past experience of conversion, their recent religious performance or the relative infrequency of their conscious, willful disobedience. Few know enough to start each day with a thoroughgoing stand upon Luther's platform: you are accepted, looking outward in faith and claiming the wholly alien righteousness of Christ as the only ground for acceptance, relaxing in that quality of trust which will produce increasing sanctification as faith is active in love and gratitude.

We all automatically gravitate toward the assumption that we are justified by our level of sanctification, and when this posture is adopted it inevitably focuses our attention not on Christ but on the adequacy of our own obedience. We start each day with our personal security resting not on the accepting love of God and the sacrifice of Christ but on our present feelings or recent achievements in the Christian life...Christians that are no longer sure that God loves and accepts them in Jesus, apart from their present spiritual achievements, are subconsciously radically insecure persons...their insecurity shows itself in pride, a fierce defensive assertion of their own righteousness and defensive criticism of others.

**Appendix D**

## **The Reformed Faith: An Introductory Outline<sup>3</sup>**

### **REFORMED & PRESBYTERIAN BELIEFS**

In addition to those beliefs which we hold in common with all Christians and with all evangelical Protestants—we hold certain views which are more distinctive to what is called the *Reformed* tradition. This section is designed to give a basic, cursory introduction to some Presbyterian and Reformed distinctives. We'll start with what is perhaps the most controversial; in fact, many (wrongly!) limit being “Reformed” or “Calvinistic” to one’s view on this issue.

### **The Sovereignty of God in Salvation**

#### **1. The “Five Points of Calvinism”; the TULIP**

- **Total Depravity:** Human beings are dead in sin and unable to come to Christ in and of themselves. (See Jeremiah 17:9; 1 Corinthians 2:14; Ephesians 2:1-3.) Better called *pervasive* depravity.
- **Unconditional Election:** God’s decision to save some people is not motivated by their desirability or goodness; rather, he is motivated solely by his own unconditional love. (See Matthew 11:27; John 15:16; Acts 13:48; 1 Peter 1:1-2; Ephesians 2:8-10; note virtually *all* of Ephesians 1.)
- **Limited Atonement:** Christ death does not merely make salvation *possible*, but it actually *saves* all those for whom he died. (See Matthew 1:21; John 10:11; 1 Peter 2:24.) Better called *particular* atonement.
- **Irresistible Grace:** In those God whom has chosen to save, he will overcome all sinful resistance and pride, changing their hearts so that they will *eagerly* come to Christ for salvation. (See John 1:12-13; John 3:3-8; Acts 16:14; Ephesians 2:1, 5.)
- **Perseverance of the Saints:** Though never totally free from all remaining sin in this life, all those who truly come to Christ will persevere in the Christian life. Salvation cannot be utterly lost. (See John 5:24; 6:35-40; 10:27-30; Romans 8:1; Ephesians 4:30; Jude 24-25.)

#### **2. Some clarifications:**

- We in the Reformed tradition do *not* believe that God forces anyone to accept Christ against his or her will. Rather, God changes our hearts so that we *desire* to trust in him for salvation.
- We certainly do *not* believe that God ever sent anyone to hell who genuinely desired to come to Christ. Rather, a genuine desire to come to Christ is evidence of God’s working in the heart, in consequence of his election of that person to eternal life.
- Nor do we believe that a person, simply because he or she is “chosen,” can live a notoriously ungodly life and yet still go to heaven. While we do not believe that good works contribute to meriting one’s justification, we do believe that a changed life is the

---

<sup>3</sup> This material is adapted from the work of the Rev. Craig R. Higgins.

***Christ Covenant Church***  
*A Presbyterian Church of America*  
*New Members and Inquirers Seminar*

---

necessary *evidence* of God's saving work in the heart. In the words of Martin Luther, "We are saved by faith alone, but never by a faith which is alone."

Our Hope in God's Sovereignty in Salvation

When speaking of TULIP, Charles H. Spurgeon said, "*We look upon them as being five great lamps which help to irradiate the cross, or rather five bright emanations springing from the glorious covenant of our Triune God, and illustrating the great doctrine of Jesus crucified. Against all comers, especially against all lovers of Arminianism, we defend and maintain pure gospel truth.*" Spurgeon also noted, that they (the Five Points) are not to be used as five barbed shafts, which we thrust into the sides of fellow Christians out of unbiblical arrogance.

Humility before God's Sovereignty in Salvation

The Apostle Paul biblical humility when he writes in the letter to the Romans, "*I am telling the truth in Christ, I am not lying, my conscience bearing me witness in the Holy Spirit, 2 that I have great sorrow and unceasing grief in my heart. 3 For I could wish that I myself were accursed, separated from Christ for the sake of my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh, 4 who are Israelites, to whom belongs the adoption as sons and the glory and the covenants and the giving of the Law and the temple service and the promises, 5 whose are the fathers, and from whom is the Christ according to the flesh, who is over all, God blessed forever. Amen.*" -Romans 9:1-4

**The Sacraments**

**1. Holy Baptism**

- Baptism is a sacrament ordained by Jesus Christ for the admission of people into the Church. The Bible calls baptism both a "sign" and a "seal" of the promise God has made to us in the good news of Jesus.
  - Sign & Seal: Baptism is a sign, or picture, of many things. This includes that we are joined to Christ and his body, the church (1 Cor. 12:13), and that we have been connected to his death and resurrection (Romans 6:5)
  - Infant baptism
    - In all of God's covenants with humanity the children of his followers have been *included* in the people of God. There is no indication in the New Testament that this has changed with the coming of Christ. (See Acts 2:38-39.)
    - The sacramental sign and seal of inclusion in God's covenant people in the Old Testament was circumcision. Baptism replaces circumcision in the New Testament (see Colossians 2:11-12); it seems only consistent that it should also be applied to the infant children of believers.
    - Of course, we do not believe that baptism is an automatic guarantee of eternal salvation for anyone, whether infant or adult.

**2. Holy Communion**

- The Real Presence

***Christ Covenant Church***  
*A Presbyterian Church of America*  
*New Members and Inquirers Seminar*

---

- Communion (or the Lord's Supper) is a sacrament ordained by Jesus to be celebrated in his church so that we might remember his sacrifice. Like baptism, not only is it a picture of all that Jesus has done for us, but it is also a way that we as believers are spiritually nourished.
- The Reformed view of the Eucharist: we believe that in the Eucharist, while no physical change takes place in the bread and wine, Christ is truly present through the power of the Holy Spirit, and that those who come in faith grow into deeper union with Christ. Communion is symbolic, but it's not *just* a symbol. (See John 6; 1 Corinthians 10 & 11.)
- Frequency of Communion
  - The biblical witness, along with the earliest historical documents reveal communion to be an integral part of weekly Christian worship.
  - In the Middle Ages, while Mass was "said" at least weekly, the people only received Communion (and then only the bread) annually, usually at Easter. In the Reformation, many leaders—especially John Calvin—tried to restore weekly communion for the entire congregation, which was almost certainly the New Testament practice.
  - At Christ Covenant Church, we seek to honor the biblical and historical pattern by celebrating Holy Communion as a central act of Christian worship.

### **Charismatic Issues**

1. Christ Covenant Presbyterian Church is not a distinctively charismatic church and has not directly been a part of what is often called the "charismatic movement." Our theology is sometimes labeled as *cessationist*.<sup>4</sup>
1. It is our conviction that direct, verbal revelation from God was completed when the New Testament was finished. (See Ephesians 2:20, where the role of apostles and prophets is
2. considered not ongoing but foundational.) To argue that prophecy (in this sense) continues today is to compromise the sufficiency of Holy Scripture.
3. Therefore, while God may give us extraordinary new insights, always based on his Word, it is confusing to label this insight as prophecy. Similarly, while some believers may pray using free vocalization, we don't think that this is what St. Paul called "speaking in tongues."

### **The Lordship of Christ Over All of Life**

1. Reformed Christians have often emphasized the development of a distinctly Christian worldview, a genuinely biblical way of looking at all of reality. (See 1 Corinthians 10:31.) By affirming Christ's lordship over the totality of life, the Reformed tradition has tended to stay away from drawing false dichotomies between the "sacred" and the "secular." For example,

---

<sup>4</sup> See the helpful paper by Very Pothress called "Modern Spiritual Gifts as Analogous to Apostolic Gifts: Affirming Extraordinary Works of the Spirit within Cessationist Theology" available at [http://www.frame-poythress.org/poythress\\_articles/1996Modern.htm](http://www.frame-poythress.org/poythress_articles/1996Modern.htm)

***Christ Covenant Church***  
*A Presbyterian Church of America*  
*New Members and Inquirers Seminar*

---

Reformed folk tend to say that being a minister or missionary is not a “higher” calling than being an artist or an engineer. This is often referred to as the Reformed doctrine of vocation.

2. Another example of this principle would be the Reformed insistence that no man-made religious rules be added to the teachings of Scripture. For example, while the Bible clearly teaches that drunkenness is sinful, it does not forbid the use of alcohol. Consequently, the Reformed tradition has never fully embraced the various movements toward the prohibition of alcohol.

*With further questions, or to schedule an interview for membership please use contact info below:*

***Christ Covenant Church (PCA)***  
71 East Commerce Street, Hernando, MS 38632

Clint Wilcke, pastor phone: 901.907.9575  
Email: [cwilcke@gmail.com](mailto:cwilcke@gmail.com)  
Website: [www.christcovenantms.org](http://www.christcovenantms.org)

Bob Barber, elder  
Phone: 901.268.7566  
Email: [bobbarber@rlbnet.com](mailto:bobbarber@rlbnet.com)

*More Notes:*