

APPENDIX

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WORSHIP, CONNECT, SERVE NEXT STEPS

STEP 1: WORSHIP

Practice 1: Be fully present with the church every single Sunday.

Choose your worship service and enthusiastically commit to it weekly. Order your life around worship with the church like you do other healthy, life-giving endeavors. Approach Sunday worship as you would showing up to work on Monday morning, watching every episode of your favorite TV series, or prioritizing a weekly date night. We show up weekly together not because we *have to*, but because it represents something (and Someone) that we *treasure*. We will naturally, and always, dedicate our best and most focused time, energy, and resources to the things we treasure most.

Part of being “fully present” with the church includes being fully committed to contribute to the worship and work of the church through planned, regular, and sustained giving of our financial resources to the church. For some, faithful giving will be a relatively small amount (like the widow’s mite). For others, faithful giving will be in the thousands, tens of thousands, or even hundreds of thousands. Generosity is not only part of how the mission of the church is accomplished. It is also essential for our own health and flourishing. God, *who needs nothing from us*, tells us to cultivate regular patterns of generosity because he *loves us* and wants what is best *for us*.

Will a man rob God? Yet you are robbing me. But you say, ‘How have we robbed you?’ In your tithes and contributions. You are cursed with a curse, for you are robbing me, the whole nation of you. Bring the full tithe into the storehouse, that there may be food in my house. And thereby put me to the test, says the LORD of hosts, if I will not open the windows of heaven for you and pour down for you a blessing until there is no more need. (Malachi 3:8-10)

Now concerning the collection for the saints...on the first day of every week, each of you is to put something aside and store it up, as he may prosper. (1 Corinthians 16:1-2)

Practice 2: Be fully present with Jesus every single day.

Find an ideal time that works for you to spend time in Scripture and prayer each day. If you miss a day here and there, don’t let it turn into a reason for guilt. Just treat it like you would treat eating dinner with family, or a regular appointment with a close friend, by simply getting back on track the next day. Remember, God wants to be with you, build you up, and form you into his likeness through these daily means of grace.

In the CPC101 book, several options were offered to help you get started with regular Bible reading. Regarding prayer, we recommend starting with a good “how to” book like *A Praying Life* by Paul Miller or *Prayer* by Timothy Keller.

STEP 2: CONNECT

Practice 3: Take every opportunity to gather with your group.

In Acts 2:42, we read about the formation of the first Christian church two things are specifically mentioned which form the foundation of the “Connect” portion of our membership pathway—those two things are fellowship and teaching.

At Christ Presbyterian, you can participate in Christian community by joining a Connect Group, a Learning Group, or both. Connect Groups tend to major in fellowship and minor in teaching, whereas Learning Groups tend to major in teaching and minor in fellowship.

Connect Groups: There are numerous types of Connect Groups composed of all kinds of people. Most are smaller gatherings of 8 to 16 people who meet in homes, restaurants, at the church, or other accessible locations. Some are organized by neighborhood, others by life stage, and others by shared interest. Connect Groups are encouraged to meet weekly or *at least* twice a month and engage in a church-produced small group curriculum or sermon-based discussion during the gathering. In addition to these materials, Connect Groups engage with and share life together (Acts 2:42).

To obtain more information about connect groups, email connect@christpres.org.

Learning Groups: There are numerous Learning Groups at the various Christ Presbyterian Church campuses, all of which are designed to aid in increasing biblical literacy or aid in the understanding of everything through a biblical mindset. Subjects range from Bible basics to more in-depth studies of different books of the Bible. All Learning Groups allow people to share in their learnings, spurring one another along in the flourishing of their faith.

To obtain information about Learning Groups, email connect@christpres.org.

Practice 4: Befriend and bring in people who don't have a church.

As you *invest in* your church, we also encourage you to invite your friends and neighbors to church. As we've already seen, we will invest in what we most care about, and we will order our lives around what brings us joy. When we experience this joy, we naturally want others to experience it as well. Just like our favorite restaurants and music, we want others to take up what we invest in. Whether we bring them to a Sunday service or Connect, Learning, or City Group, we want people to love what we love.

Inviting people to church should be a natural byproduct of having a meaningful relationship with them. And as we invite, we need to remember we are inviting them before we are asking them to invest. We want to demonstrate care for our friends by welcoming their questions and giving them freedom to go at their own pace. Invite your friends to explore our church in both their relationship to their Lord and others. Any invitation should be a natural extension of your relationship to them and the church, rather than pressure or an obligation.

STEP 3: SERVE

Practice 5: Strengthen the church by serving and giving.

Serving the Church: The apostle Paul tells us "For just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, we are one body, so it is with Christ" (1 Corinthians 1:12). How does the Church work? It functions as a body which means there are many opportunities to serve as a part of the whole. No matter what type of person you are, no matter your background or current place in life, there is a place for you to serve at Christ Presbyterian.

If you're interested in joining a Service Group at Christ Presbyterian Church, email serve@christpres.org.

Giving to the Church: Give in a way that is in proportion with your income, intentional, consistent, joyful, and in response to what Christ has given you.

Practice 6: Enhance flourishing by serving your work, your world, and people in need.

Serving your Work: (see nifw.org for more).

“What is the Christian understanding of work? . . . [It] is that work is not, primarily, a thing one does to live, but the thing one lives to do. It is, or it should be, the full expression of the worker’s faculties . . . the medium in which he offers himself to God.”

—Tim Keller and Katherine Alsdorf, *Every Good Endeavor*

When we hear the word “serve,” we immediately think of serving at church or serving those in need. But have you considered that your work can be the primary place you can serve God and neighbor on a daily, if not hourly basis? Whether you are a banker, a janitor, a songwriter, a community volunteer, or a parent, all work is a way to worship God and through that, love people, places and things to life.

What does serving your work look like?

“Work is as much a human need as food, beauty, rest, friendship, prayer, and sexuality; it is not simply medicine, but food for our soul. Without meaningful work we sense significant inner loss and emptiness.”

—Tim Keller and Katherine Alsdorf, *Every Good Endeavor*

Serving your work means understanding work as part of God’s plan to redeem the world. Many in the Western world see work as a necessary means to the perceived greater good of leisure. We see this view on retirement brochures, in songs like “Everybody’s Working for the Weekend,” and in sayings like “TGIF.”

But God created work before the fall, which means that work is not a necessary evil, but a necessary good. Work is a part of life that God created for our flourishing, and for service to the community around us.

All good work becomes a way to take chaos and bring structure, just like God in the creation account in Genesis. Unloading a dishwasher, writing a melody, negotiating a contract, running financial models, serving on a manufacturing line—all bring structure out of chaos and in all we can aim for God to declare it good. Each and every industry has some element of God’s goodness reflected in it. Art shows his creativity, business shows his ingenuity, education shows his wisdom, finance shows his desire to re-allocate resources, etc.

Yet, work is also impacted by the fall. We all feel it. People are broken, systems are broken, the whole world is broken. And thus, work is broken. Being broken, the workplace can function as a factory for our false idols. Long for appreciation? Where better than at work? Long for security? What more than a paycheck?

Work also cultivates broken systems. We see systems go awry when greed distorts capitalism, turning it into an avenue to feed our own selfishness, versus using it as an avenue for loving our neighbor as ourselves.

But believers have the opportunity to work in concert with God in any vocation to bring flourishing to our world. No matter what our work is, there are opportunities to not only enhance God’s imprint on the industry, but also to love people, places, and things to life right where we are. How are you loving people, places and things to life in your work?

CPC has developed an entire organization, The Nashville Institute for Faith and Work, to help you learn more about how your work and faith can support each other. Subscribe to the NIFW mailing list at NIFW.org and engage their social media @nashfaithwork.

“The Gospel frees us from the relentless pressure of having to prove ourselves and secure our identity through work, for we are already proven and secure. It also frees us from a condescending attitude toward less sophisticated labor and from envy over more exalted work. All work now becomes a way to love the God who saved us freely; and by extension, a way to love our neighbor.”

—Tim Keller and Katherine Alsdorf, *Every Good Endeavor*

Serving your World: This is another way of encouraging us to commit ourselves to “good neighboring.”

Life in the world Monday through Saturday should reflect the aroma of our Sunday worship. As carriers of heaven’s DNA and the scent of Jesus in his world, we want to reflect his grace, truth, and beauty in all of the places where we live, work, and play. Two very practical ways this can be done include:

1. **Opening our homes.** The biblical practice of hospitality has the effect of turning strangers into friends, and friends into family. Because feasting is such a dominant theme in the Bible, because Jesus’ first miracle was providing a “second round” of wine at a wedding feast, and because Jesus is constantly showing up at parties and dinners in the Gospels (Matthew’s house, Simon’s house, etc.), and because history will end with a grand wedding feast, our homes and lives should seek to communicate to others, “Welcome.”
2. **Surprising our neighbors with unexpected gestures of love.** We want to be intentional and creative, looking for opportunities to be the “first responders” wherever opportunities exist to extend the kindness, love, support, and hope of Jesus to people who are hurting, lonely and alone, and feeling ashamed. As your church family, please let us know how we can partner with you to love those with whom you live, work and play.

Serving people in need: (for more information, see “City Groups” at christpres.org).

While service encompasses a wide spectrum of opportunity, it’s important to remember that a disciple of Christ not only serves the people gathered within the walls of the church, but is also called to function as a people who are scattered about the world, loving people, places and things to life.

In other words, it’s our job as disciples of Christ to love our neighbors to the exclusion of no one. We should love and serve the world around us.

If you have interest in joining one of our City Groups, send an email to serve@christpres.org and we’ll find a service opportunity for you to join today.

CHURCH MEMBERSHIP AS AN ACT OF WORSHIP

BY RUSS RAMSEY

DETASSELING

Growing up in the farmland of Indiana, there was one summer job kids could count on—a job which paid an outrageous wage to a 13-year-old—eight dollars per hour. Though the work was hard, the job was simple. You'd show up at 6:00am with a sack lunch and a gallon of water. Then you and a dozen other bleary-eyed kids dreaming of new drum-sets, dirt bikes, or stereos would climb up into the baskets of this spider-like tractor that would take you through miles of cornfields. Your job was to pull the top, the tassel, off each stalk in your row.

It was called detasseling, and apparently it was important. Almost every kid I knew growing up held this summer job at least once. And almost every kid I knew had no idea why they were pulling those tassels off. To this day I'm still not altogether sure—something to do with there being boy corn and girl corn.

There are many things we do in life which we would be hard pressed to explain—like why we set out cranberry sauce on Thanksgiving or shake hands with our right hand and not the left. Likewise, there are also many things we **don't** do even though we should because we don't really understand why they are important. Over the course of my time in ministry, joining the membership roll of a local church appears to be one of these things. Why do churches like our have a formal membership process and membership vows? It is a fair question.

Let's take a few moments to address the question of church membership. My objective is to present a **Biblical rationale** for the importance of membership in the local church while contending for the **Biblical purpose** of living as publicly identified members of a local body of believers—considering this an **act of worship** before God.

The goal here is certainly not to shame anyone who is not on the membership roll of this or any other Bible-believing local congregation. Many churches these days don't have a formal membership process. My hope is that the Lord would use his Word to challenge us all, members or not, to better understand the life of intentional, committed fellowship God calls every believer to in his Word. To get at this discussion, we turn to what I suspect is a familiar verse to many, and one that not only encourages ongoing, committed fellowship, but sheds valuable light on the wisdom of knowing and being known by one another over the course of your life as a follower of Christ.

"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 10:24-25

LET US CONSIDER

Meeting together and church membership are not necessarily the same thing. So I do not think this text gives us a "chapter and verse" command requiring membership in the local church. In fact, I'll even go so far as to say I have not found a chapter and verse in the Bible commanding Christians to include their names on the membership roll of a local church. So why are we looking to today's text to build a case for church membership? Because of what it does command—that we would **consider** how to stir one another up toward love and good works.

What does it mean to consider? It means to think something through, to study, to understand, and to come up with ideas. Our text tells us to consider how to help each other remain intentionally faithful to Christ, spurring one another on in service to the Lord.

A key principle for the church in this text is that Christians are not here on this earth simply to whittle away the years keeping our noses clean until Christ comes back. We have an ongoing call to love well and serve the Lord with all we have and are. Included in this is the call to consider how we might help our brothers and sisters in Christ do this too.

One of the ways I believe we can do this is by being as intentionally and publicly committed to a local congregation of believers as possible. And one way congregations in the Presbyterian Church in America do this is through formal church membership. Now, I would not insist that the PCA's process for church membership is the only valid way to join a church. We do not believe that unless you are a member of a PCA church, your faith is suspect. Nor do we believe church membership vows are required for entry into God's Kingdom.

So why do we have them at our church? Because we, along with many other faithful leaders in the church who have gathered regularly over the years to consider how to stir one another on toward love and good works, believe church membership is a wise application of Scripture's call to committed, accountable fellowship as members of the church of Jesus Christ. Church membership is the application of a series of Biblical principles—an application arrived at through prayerful, careful consideration of how we might live as faithful followers of Christ. Let's see it.

A BIBLICAL RATIONALE

Our text presumes meeting together is important—so much so that not meeting together is a form of neglect. To neglect is to not give to something or someone the attention they need. I point this out to establish that the author of Hebrews bases his call to meet together on the presumption that meeting together is normal and not meeting together is abnormal—even neglect.

Still, that doesn't prove the case for church membership, does it? We can meet together as brothers and sisters in the Lord without having to fill out a membership card, right? And the answer is, of course that's right. The fellowship of the saints is a wonderful thing. When we hear of someone in, say, China, coming to Christ, it is right for our hearts to swell with joy as we consider them nothing less than our brother or sister in Christ, though we'll likely never meet them this side of heaven.

Together we're part of the Church Universal—all God's children from every tongue, tribe, and people across the span of every generation. If you are a Christian, your name is recorded in the Lamb's Book of Life (Phil 4:3)—the membership roll of Heaven. And we're wrong to regard the "Book of Life" as a euphemism for some generic mass of believers because the Gospel impact of the "Book of Life" is the reminder that God has no generic followers. He knows each of our names, (Isa 43:1) the number of our days, (Ps 139:16) even the hairs on our heads. (Mt 10:30) Heaven has no social security numbers, only names.

Still, the Christian life is not one of simply waiting idly for heaven when we will join that great cloud of witnesses. Under the umbrella of the Church Universal, we also have the Church Local—particular congregations of believers meeting together for worship. In our text, that author of Hebrews challenges his readers to recognize that we have misunderstood the Church Universal if we have rejected the Church Local. We are called to be meeting together even now, encouraging one another.

I know there are many Christians who, for a variety of reasons, have struggled to commit to a particular local church. I understand this can be a lengthy process. But it still should be a process that sooner rather than later leads you to connect and commit to a local congregation.

Some, like us kids up in the detasseling machine, would benefit from a better understanding of why we do what we do. So let's look at church membership through the testimony of Scripture. Consider the following five arguments for church membership today from God's Word.

1. **Believers in the Old Testament were divided and counted according to their clans.** From the establishment of Israel, God's people were children of Abraham, but also members of one of the twelve tribes. No believer in the Old Testament was without specific local accountability, leadership, and opportunity to serve. Local churches function like clans.
2. **Believers are called by Scripture to meet together, (Heb 10: 24-25) and they are told they belong to each other.** "As each of us has one body with many members, and these members do not all have the same function, ⁵ so in Christ we who are many form one body, and **each member belongs to all the others.** ¹⁰ Be devoted to one another in brotherly love. Honor each other above yourselves." (Rom 12:4-10) If we're commanded to meet together and serve one another in devoted love, membership is an articulation of service and devotion to a particular body.
3. **Jesus designed the church to serve as a "spiritual court" of accountability in the lives of believers.** Talking about believers confronting each other's sins, Jesus says, "If he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church; and if he refuses to listen even to the church, treat him as you would a pagan or tax collector." (Mt 18:15-17) Jesus intends for the church to function as a court of authority, so, by definition, the members of the church are under that authority. Jesus doesn't suggest the church should hold authority over her members, he presumes it does. Membership is a believers' way of publicly yielding to the Church as a Spiritual court over them, as Jesus describes.
4. **Christians have a responsibility to be under the authority of overseers, willfully submitted to spiritual oversight, care and, when necessary, discipline.** To leaders, Scripture says, "Be shepherds of God's flock that is under your care, serving as overseers." (1 Pet 5:2, 1 Tim 3:1-6) To congregations, Scripture says, "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." (Heb 13:17) God formally calls particular people to serve as overseers of particular churches. If God calls particular people to oversee particular churches, and if he also calls believers to submit to such leaders, then God calls believers to formally associate with particular churches.
5. **Accountability and oversight are for our good, and we shouldn't wait until we're in need of correction or rebuke to publicly invite it.** As sinful people, we are all prone to wander. The problem is that often when we are in the most need of rescue, that is the time we are least likely to want it. With church membership, people call the church to be a spiritual court over them while they are thinking rationally, not while they are blinded by sin. The church member says, in their membership vows, "I need my church to hold me accountable. Please don't let me get away with profaning the name of my God or hurting his church to which I belong. Come after me." Our church will pursue church discipline when needed, but only with those who have, by their vows, asked us to.

Any time someone takes a vow, they relinquish a part of their autonomy, saying "My life is not my own. Others can depend on me to keep my vow or challenge me if I fail." With church membership, we pledge our lives to fidelity to God's Word while at the same time asking those around us to help, correct, encourage, and stir us up—which is what our text today calls us to. Consider then that church membership is a way to spur one another on toward love and good works. And if it is, then consider also that church membership is very much an act of worship.

A BRIEF AND UNTECHNICAL STATEMENT OF THE REFORMED FAITH

BY B. B. WARFIELD, 1851-1921

1. I believe that my one aim in life and death should be to glorify God and enjoy him forever; and that God teaches me how to glorify him in his holy Word, that is, the Bible, which he had given by the infallible inspiration of this Holy Spirit in order that I may certainly know what I am to believe concerning him and what duty he requires of me.
2. I believe that God is a Spirit, infinite, eternal and incomparable in all that he is; one God but three persons, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, my Creator, my Redeemer, and my Sanctifier; in whose power and wisdom, righteousness, goodness and truth I may safely put my trust.
3. I believe that the heavens and the earth, and all that in them is, are the work of God's hands; and that all that he has made he directs and governs in all their actions; so that they fulfill the end for which they were created, and I who trust in him shall not be put to shame but may rest securely in the protection of his almighty love.
4. I believe that God created man after his own image, in knowledge, righteousness and holiness, and entered into a covenant of life with him upon the sole condition of the obedience that was his due: so that it was by willfully sinning against God that man fell into the sin and misery in which I have been born.
5. I believe, that, being fallen in Adam, my first father, I am by nature a child of wrath, under the condemnation of God and corrupted in body and soul, prone to evil and liable to eternal death; from which dreadful state I cannot be delivered save through the unmerited grace of God my Savior.
6. I believe that God has not left the world to perish in its sin, but out of the great love wherewith he has loved it, has from all eternity graciously chosen unto himself a multitude which no man can number, to deliver them out of their sin and misery, and of them to build up again in the world his kingdom of righteousness: in which kingdom I may be assured I have my part, if I hold fast to Christ the Lord.
7. I believe that God has redeemed his people unto himself through Jesus Christ our Lord; who, though he was and ever continues to be the eternal Son of God, yet was born of a woman, born under the law, that he might redeem them that are under the law: I believe that he bore the penalty due to my sins in his own body on the tree, and fulfilled in his own person the obedience I owe to the righteousness of God, and now presents me to his Father as his purchased possession, to the praise of the glory of his grace forever: wherefore renouncing all merit of my own, I put all my trust only in the blood and righteousness of Jesus Christ my redeemer.
8. I believe that Jesus Christ my redeemer, who died for my offences was raised again for my justification, and ascended into the heavens, where he sits at the right hand of the Father Almighty, continually making intercession for his people, and governing the whole world as head over all things for his Church: so that I need fear no evil and may surely know that nothing can snatch me out of his hands and nothing can separate me from his love.

9. I believe that the redemption wrought by the Lord Jesus Christ is effectually applied to all his people by the Holy Spirit, who works faith in me and thereby unites me to Christ, renews me in the whole man after the image of God, and enables me more and more to die unto sin and to live unto righteousness; until, this gracious work having been completed in me, I shall be received into glory: in which great hope abiding, I must ever strive to perfect holiness in the fear of God.
10. I believe that God requires of me, under the Gospel, first of all, that, out of a true sense of my sin and misery and apprehension of his mercy in Christ, I should turn with grief and hatred away from sin and receive and rest upon Jesus Christ alone for salvation; that, so being united to him, I may receive pardon for my sins and be accepted as righteous in God's sight only for the righteousness of Christ imputed to me and received by faith alone; and thus and thus only do I believe I may be received into the number and have a right to all the privileges of the sons of God.
11. I believe that, having been pardoned and accepted for Christ's sake, it is further required of me that I walk in the Spirit whom he has purchased for me, and by whom love is shed abroad in my heart; fulfilling the obedience I owe to Christ my King; faithfully performing all the duties laid upon me by the holy law of God my heavenly Father; and ever reflecting in my life and conduct, the perfect example that has been set me by Christ Jesus my Leader, who has died for me and granted to me his Holy Spirit just that I may do the good works which God has afore prepared that I should walk in them.
12. I believe that God has established his Church in the world and endowed it with the ministry of the Word and the holy ordinances of Baptism, the Lord's Supper and Prayer; in order that through these as means, the riches of his grace in the Gospel may be made known to the world, and, by the blessing of Christ and the working of his Spirit in them that by faith receive them, the benefits of redemption may be communicated to his people: wherefore also it is required of me that I attend on these means of grace with diligence, preparation, and prayer, so that through them I may be instructed and strengthened in faith, and in holiness of life and in love; and that I use my best endeavors to carry this Gospel and convey these means of grace to the whole world.
13. I believe that as Jesus Christ has once come in grace, so also is he to come a second time in glory, to judge the world in righteousness and assign to each his eternal award: and I believe that if I die in Christ, my soul shall be at death made perfect in holiness and go home to the Lord; and when he shall return to his majesty I shall be raised in glory and made perfectly blessed in the full enjoyment of God to all eternity: encouraged by which blessed hope it is required of me willingly to take my part in suffering hardship here as a good soldier of Christ Jesus, being assured that if I die with him I shall also live with him, if I endure, I shall also reign with him.

And to him, my Redeemer,
with the Father,
and the Holy Spirit,
Three Persons, one God,
be glory forever, world without end,
Amen, and Amen.

WHAT IS THE COVENANT OF GRACE?

BY DANIEL HYDE FROM LIGONIER.ORG

Reformed Christians speak of Scripture as the unfolding drama of God's covenant of grace. We do this because the apostle Paul speaks of the Israelites, saying, "To them belong . . . the covenants" (Romans 9:5). The Bible is a covenantal story, and one that Paul, again, describes as "the covenants of promise" (Ephesians. 2:12).

The essence of the covenant of grace is the same throughout the Old and New Testaments—God saves sinners by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone. But its historical administration has varied by time and place. For example, the covenant of grace widened from the Old Testament to the New Testament, as it was administered first with small families (e.g., the families of Noah and Abram), then with the nation of Israel, but now with the church, which is made up of people "from every tribe and language and people and nation" (Revelation 5:9). Also, it was administered in the Old Testament through what the New Testament authors describe as "types" and "shadows" (Hebrews 8:5; 10:1), such as sacrifices, the priesthood, and the temple, all of which pointed to their reality, Jesus Christ (e.g., Colossians 2:17).

The Reformed creeds and confessions express the continuity of God's covenant of grace despite its many historical variations. For instance, the Heidelberg Catechism says: "... God himself first revealed [it] in Paradise, [and] afterwards [it was] proclaimed by the holy Patriarchs and Prophets, and foreshadowed by the sacrifices and other ceremonies of the law, and finally fulfilled in his well-beloved Son" (Q&A 19). This means the Bible is one story of the Gospel, which God has spoken "in many times and in many ways" (Hebrews 1:1), whether in Paradise to Adam; during the days of the patriarchs, such as Noah, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and Moses; through the ministry of the prophets, such as Isaiah, Jeremiah, Hosea, and Joel; or through the ceremonies of the Levitical sacrifices. All of this came to fruition in Jesus Christ.

Likewise, while recognizing the variations in the administration of the covenant of grace between the Old and New Testaments, the Westminster Confession of Faith affirms the continuity of the covenant in the promise of Christ and his fulfillment of it:

This covenant was differently administered in the time of the law and in the time of the Gospel: under the law it was administered by promises, prophecies, sacrifices, circumcision, the paschal lamb, and other types and ordinances delivered to the people of the Jews, all fore-signifying Christ to come, which were for that time sufficient and efficacious, through the operation of the Spirit, to instruct and build up the elect in faith in the promised Messiah, by whom they had full remission of sins, and eternal salvation; and is called the Old Testament.

Under the Gospel, when Christ the substance was exhibited, the ordinances in which this covenant is dispensed are the preaching of the word and the administration of the sacraments of Baptism and the Lord's Supper; which, though fewer in number, and administered with more simplicity and less outward glory, yet in them, it is held forth in more fullness, evidence, and spiritual efficacy, to all nations, both Jews and Gentiles; and is called the New Testament. There are not, therefore, two covenants of grace differing in substance, but one and the same under various dispensations. (7.5-6)

When our Lord Jesus Christ was born, lived, died, and was raised from the grave, the covenant of grace reached its zenith in what the Bible calls "the new covenant" (Jeremiah 31:31; Luke 22:20; 1 Corinthians 11:25; 2 Corinthians 3:6; Hebrews. 8:8, 13; 9:15; 12:24). Under the covenant of grace, Christ accomplished what Adam failed to do in the covenant of works, so we receive grace:

Man's work faileth, Christ's availeth;

He is all our righteousness;

He, our Savior, has forever

Set us free from dire distress.

Through his merit we inherit

Light and peace and happiness.

WHAT DO WE BELIEVE ABOUT BAPTISM?

BY CHRIST PRES STAFF

Baptism is a sacrament—a practice instituted by Jesus—for the New Testament Church. When we administer baptism to someone, the church officially and solemnly admits them into the church body as a member. Baptism is the sign and seal of God's covenant of grace to his people in the church—his promise to us that he saves and is faithful to them. We believe baptism is a continuation of circumcision—the sign and seal of God's covenant of grace in the Old Testament.

Baptism is also a sign of the believer's engrafting into Christ, that is, their rebirth, which is an acknowledgment of the remission of sins, and their yielding to God through Jesus Christ to walk in newness of life.

As Jesus directed in Matthew 28:19-20, we should practice baptism until he comes back and makes all things new again.

The minister administers baptism by sprinkling or pouring water over the individual, baptizing them in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

Baptism is not only for those who profess faith in and obedience to Christ but is also for the infants and children of one or both believing parents. Because it is a declaration of God's faithfulness to his church, we believe baptism should never be neglected or put off. However, we also believe baptism is not inseparably connected with God's grace and salvation. One can be saved without baptism; on the other hand, everyone who is baptized is not automatically saved.

Finally, baptism's effectiveness is not dependent upon the moment it occurs. But when we practice baptism, we tangibly experience the grace promised, embodied, and conferred by the Holy Spirit to everyone to whom that grace is given, according to the purpose of God's own will and in his appointed time, whenever that may occur in their lifetime. Therefore, we believe if a Christian church has already baptized you, Christ Presbyterian Church (or any other church!) does not need to baptize you again. Baptism signifies God's faithfulness and promises to you, even if you were unaware of them at the time of your baptism.