



STARTING POINT

**Discover Membership with the
Christian Church of Litchfield**



Christian Church of Litchfield
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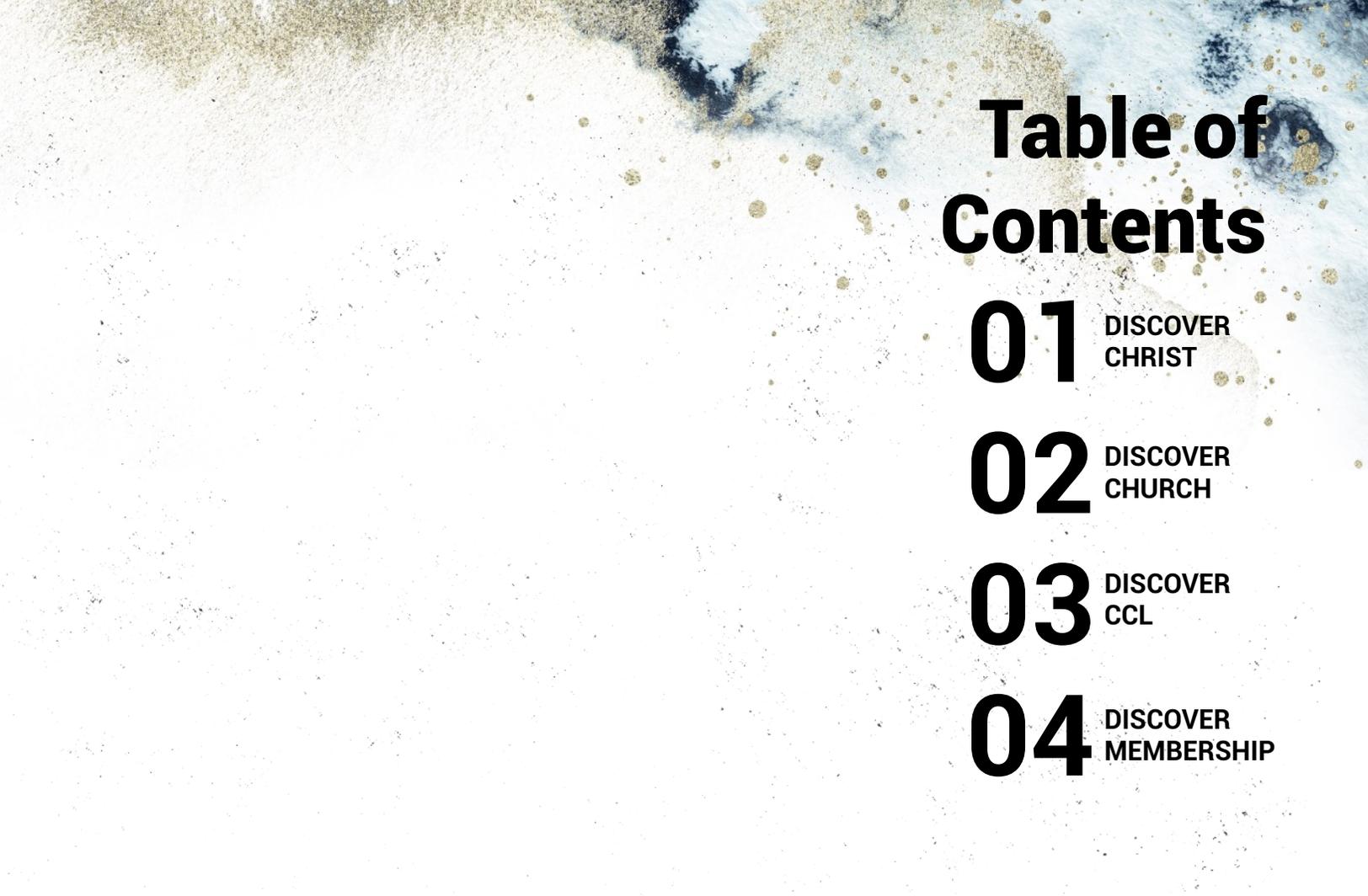


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For just as each of us has one body with many members, and these members do not all have the same function, so in Christ we, though many, form one body, and each member belongs to all the others. We have different gifts, according to the grace given to each of us. If your gift is prophesying, then prophesy in accordance with your faith; if it is serving, then serve; if it is teaching, then teach; if it is to encourage, then give encouragement; if it is giving, then give generously; if it is to lead, do it diligently; if it is to show mercy, do it cheerfully.

Romans 12:4-8

The Gospel: The Bad News

The word “gospel” simply means “good news.” In order for there to be good news, there first has to be some bad news. The bad news is the devastating reality of sin.

Sin separates us from God.

Your iniquities have made a separation between you and your God, and your sins have hidden his face from you so that he does not hear.

Isaiah 59:2 (ESV)

For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.

Romans 3:23 (ESV)

We are spiritually dead.

And you were dead in the trespasses and sins in which you once walked, following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience— among whom we all once lived in the passions of our flesh, carrying out the desires of the body and the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, like the rest of mankind.

Ephesians 2:1-3 (ESV)

We are slaves to a nature opposed to God and His will and way for our life.

Jesus replied, ‘Very truly I tell you, everyone who sins is a slave to sin.’

John 8:34

Because of sin, physical death and its effects entered into the World.

The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full. **John 10:10**

The Gospel: The Good News

Even while we were in sin God loved us!

But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us. **Romans 5:8**

Because of His love for us, God designed a plan to rescue and redeem us.

Even before he made the world, God loved us and chose us in Christ to be holy and without fault in his eyes. God decided in advance to adopt us into his own family by bringing us to himself through Jesus Christ. This is what he wanted to do, and it gave him great pleasure. **Ephesians 1:4-5 (NLT)**

When Jesus died on the cross, He took our sin upon Himself. This is called "Substitutionary Atonement." Basically, it means that Jesus died in our place, paying the penalty for our sin.

He himself bore our sins" in his body on the cross, so that we might die to sins and live for righteousness; "by his wounds you have been healed. **1 Peter 2:24**

God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God. **2 Corinthians 5:21**

In Jesus, God's gift to us is not only life with Him in eternity, but a life in this present world that experiences forgiveness, purpose, and fullness.

For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Romans 6:23 (ESV)

The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full. **John 10:10**

What's a Christian?

The term "Christian" simply means "Christ's one" or "of Christ." The question then becomes, "How do I come to belong to Christ?" In the Bible, Jesus Himself and the earliest Christian leaders (called the Apostles) taught people to do these basic things in order to be considered "of Christ."

How Do We Respond?

Believe

Believe that Jesus is God's Son who died to pay for your sins, that He rose from the dead, and is alive today. The biblical term for this is "faith." (John 3:16; 2 Corinthians 15:2-4; Ephesians 2:8-9)

For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life. **John 3:16 (ESV)**

It is important to note that "faith" is not merely intellectual agreement with facts. Instead it is an understanding that leads to action. What are the initial actions of "enacting" or "living out" this belief?

Confess

Confess that Jesus is your Savior and Lord (Master/Leader). The Bible calls this "confession."

If you confess with your mouth, 'Jesus is Lord' and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. **Romans 10:9**

Repent

Re-direct your life, all parts of your life, to the Lordship of Jesus. (Romans 10:9; Matthew 10:32-33)

Change your hearts and lives and be baptized, each one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. **Acts 2:38 (NCV)**

Baptize

Unite with Jesus Christ by being baptized.

Why should I get baptized?

To follow the example of Jesus (Mark 1:9).

To demonstrate your faith in Jesus (Acts 2:41).

To follow the command of Jesus (Matt 28:19-20).

What does it mean to repent?

Repentance simply means to "change your mind and turn around." After coming to belief in Jesus, you need to change your mind about who is in control of your life. You must give control of your life to God.

What is the Church?

The word “Church” in Greek is *ekklesia*, which means “assembly” or “the called out ones.” The idea behind this is that the church is the people who have been called out from the world to belong to God and follow Jesus. The church then, is primarily an identity of the followers of Jesus, and not a function people perform or building they gather inside of.



What's the Mission?

Love God and love others.

Jesus replied, 'Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: Love your neighbor as yourself.'

Matthew 22:37-38

Make Disciples.

Then Jesus came to them and said, 'All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. 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.' **Matthew 28:18-20**

What's the Purpose of the Church?

Evangelism: Sharing the good news of Jesus Christ with others. (Acts 2:42-47)

Discipleship: Helping others grow in their faith and love through the teaching of Jesus. (Acts 2:42)

Worship: Praising God together in communion, prayer, singing, and preaching. (Acts 2:42, 47)

Ministry: Serving to meet the needs of others inside and outside the church. (Acts 2:44-45)

Fellowship: Regularly sharing life with other Christians. (Acts 2:42, 46)

The Stages of Discipleship

Lost

Luke 19:10
John 1:12
John 3:16

Believer

2 Peter 3:18
Matt 16:24
John 10:27

Worker

Mark 1:17
Matt 9:37-38
Acts 1:8

Disciple-Maker

John 15:5
Matt 28:19-20
John 17:18

What Does It Mean To Be a Church?

The church is a body, not a business; an organism, not an organization.

And He is the head of the body, the church... **Colossians 1:18** (1 Peter 2:5)

The church is a family, meaning we stress relationships rather than rules.

Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, especially to those who belong to the family of believers.

Galatians 6:10

Do not speak angrily to an older man, but plead with him as if he were your father. Treat younger men like brothers, older women like mothers, and younger women like sisters. Always treat them in a pure way. **1 Timothy 5:1-2 (NCV)**

The church is a fellowship, therefore, unity and harmony are top priorities.

They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. **Acts 2:42**

Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace. **Ephesians 4:3**

The church is a flock, therefore it is cared for and led by shepherds.

Again Jesus said, 'Simon son of John do you love me?' He answered, 'Yes, Lord, you know that I love you.' Jesus said, 'Take care of my sheep.'

John 21:16 (NCV)

How Is the Church Organized?

Jesus is the Chief Shepherd

And when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the crown of glory that will never fade away.

1 Peter 5:4 (1 Peter 2:25; Hebrews 13:20)

Elders are the under-shepherds

Paul and Barnabas also appointed elders in every church. With prayer and fasting, they turned the elders over to the care of the Lord, in whom they had put their trust.

Acts 14:23 (NLT) (Acts 15:2; 20:28; Titus 1:5; 1 Timothy 5:17)

New Testament Leadership

In the Greek New Testament there are five terms describing the primary church leaders under the Chief Shepherd.

Shepherds; ποιμήν (*poimen*)

One who tends flocks, or herds, a shepherd, herdsman; metaphorically a pastor, superintendent, guardian.

Elders; πρεσβύτερος (*presbyteros*)

Ranked as superior in age, leader in a congregational setting of Christ followers

Overseers; επισκοπος (*episcopus*)

One who engages in oversight, overseer, supervisor, with focus on role of guardian in a caring mode.

Pastor-teachers; ποιμήν διδάσκαλος (*Poimenas-didaskalos*)

A shepherd, superintendent who gives himself to the role of teaching, instructing.

Deacons; διάκονος (*Diakonos*)

Servant, minister, a person who renders service and help to others; a trusted officer who helps and serves in the local church.

History

The Restoration Movement

The Restoration Movement is an independent, non-denominational church movement that has a rich heritage with over 5,500 other congregations in the United States and more than 12,000 congregations worldwide known simply as the “Christian Churches/ Churches of Christ.” This family of churches originated from a movement begun in the early 19th Century that became known as the Stone-Campbell Reformation (or the American Restoration Movement). The leaders of this movement sought to unify Christians under the authority of the Bible so that the world could be won to Christ.

Christian Church of Litchfield

The Christian Church of Litchfield (CCL) began in 1973 when a small group of Christians planted the Christian Church of Litchfield. The church gathered for worship in homes, parks, and restaurants until it purchased property on the Lake Road. The heartbeat of CCL from its inception is to be a New Testament church that makes disciples of all nations.

GOD

There is one, holy God who eternally exists in three persons – Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. God created all things visible and invisible. God is perfect in wisdom, power, and love, knowing all things past, present, and future, and his sovereign plan of redemption was set in place before the foundation of the world.

(Gen 1:1-2, Dt. 6:4, Heb 11:3, Eph 1:9-10; Rev 13:8)

JESUS

Jesus Christ is God's only begotten Son, born of a virgin, fully divine and fully human, and our Savior and Lord. Jesus, who was without sin, died in our place as a substitutionary sacrifice for our sins, receiving our judgement for sin, and reconciling to God all who trust in him. Jesus was bodily resurrected in victory over sin and death. He ascended to the right hand of the Father where he presently reigns as our king, high priest, and advocate until his glorious return.

(John 3:16, Col 1:15; 2:9-15; 1 Cor 15:3-8, 20-28; 2 Cor 5:18-21; Heb 4:14-15)

HOLY SPIRIT

The Holy Spirit is fully divine and active in the church and the world. The Holy Spirit draws all people to Christ by illuminating the gospel and convicting of sin. The Holy Spirit lives in the life of a believer to transform, guide, assure, and empower living a faithful (fruitful) Christian life.

(John 16:8-11; Acts 2:38; 2 Cor 3:17-18; Gal 3:2)

HUMANITY

God creates all humans, male and female, in his image, and therefore all people have intrinsic value and purpose. By the sin of the first man and woman (Adam and Eve), death entered the world. All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, alienated from God and without hope apart from Jesus Christ.

(Gen 1:26-27; Gen 3; Rom 3:23; Eph 2:1-3)

SALVATION

Salvation is only found in Christ and is offered to all by grace through faith. One receives salvation by putting faith in Christ, repenting of sin, and confessing Christ as Lord and Savior. The Bible commands every believer to be baptized by immersion.

(Rom 3:23; 5:1-2; 10:9, Acts 2:38, Gal 3:26-29; Eph 2:4-10, Col 2:11-13, 1 Peter 3:21)

THE CHURCH

We believe the church of Jesus Christ, founded on the Day of Pentecost, consists of all Christians everywhere, and is organized into local assemblies called churches. The Church is the body of Christ on earth, with Christ as the head. God's Church is comprised of a priesthood of believers, serving as ministers of the gospel according to the gifts which God has given them. God has given Elders to oversee, shepherd, guard, and equip the church for the ministry of the Great Commandment and the Great Commission.

(Matt 16:13-20, 28:18-20; Acts 2:14-47; Eph 3:10; 4:11-13; Col 1:18; 1 Pet 2:9-10)

MARRIAGE

We believe the Bible teaches that God established marriage in the beginning as a lifelong, exclusive relationship between one man and one woman; that He has reserved sexual intimacy as an expression of love and commitment between married couples; and that any intimate expression of sexuality outside of the Biblical marriage is sin.

(Gen 2:23-25; Ex 20:14, 17, 22:19; Lev 18:1-20, 22-23; 20:11-21; Matt 19:4-6, 9; Rom 1:18-31; 1 Cor 6:9-10, 15-20; Heb 13:4, 1 Tim 1:8-11; Jude 7)

THE END TIMES

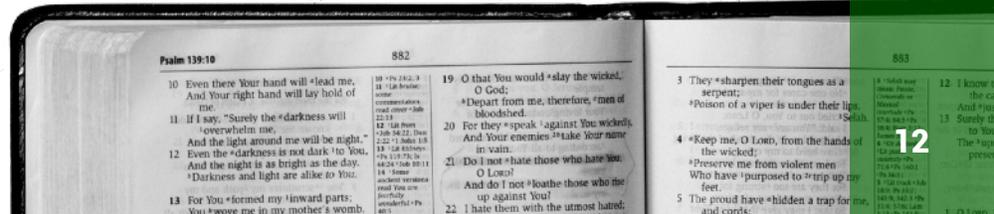
Christ will visibly return to restore creation and judge the world. There will be a bodily resurrection for the believers to eternal life with God (heaven) and for the unbelievers to eternal judgment (hell). Sin and the effects of sin will be eradicated as believers live in fellowship with God forever in a restored creation.

(Acts 1:11; 2 Thess 1:5-12; 1 Thess 4:13-18; Rev 20:11-15, 21:1-8)

THE BIBLE

We believe that God inspired the original writings of Scripture and those original writings are infallible in all that they affirm. The Bible is the final authority in all matters of faith and practice.

(Mark 12:36; John 14:26; 16:12-15; Acts 1:16; 1 Cor 2:12-13; 2 Tim 3:14-16; 2 Peter 1:20-21)



CHURCH MEMBERSHIP

I am ready to join

- A baptized believer
- In agreement with church's *Beliefs*
- In agreement with the *Community Covenant*

My Next Steps

- I need to accept Christ (COME)
- I need to join a Life Group or Bible Study (CONNECT)
- I need to serve in a Ministry (GROW)
- I need to share Christ with others (GO)

COMMUNITY COVENANT

I will be a functioning church member

It's not membership as in a civic organization or a country club. It's the kind of membership given to us in 1 Corinthians 12: "Now you are the body of Christ, and individual members of it" (1 Cor. 12:27). Because I am a member of the body of Christ, I must be a functioning member, whether I am an "eye," an "ear," or a "hand." As a functioning member, I will give. I will serve. I will minister. I will evangelize. I will study. I will seek to be a blessing to others. I will remember that, "if one member suffers, all the members suffer with it; if one member is honored, all the members rejoice with it" (1 Cor. 12:26).

I will be a unifying church member

I will seek to be a source of unity in my church. I know there are no perfect pastors, staff, or other church members. But neither am I. I will not be a source of gossip or dissension. When conflicts arise I will commit to unity by resolving conflict Biblically (Matt 18:15-17). One of the greatest contributions I can make is to do all I can in God's power to help keep the church in unity for the sake of the gospel (Rom 14:19; Eph 4:29; 1 Peter 1:22; Heb 13:17).

I will not let my church be about my preferences and desires

I will not let my church be about my preferences and desires. That is self-serving. I am a member in this church to serve others and to serve Christ. My Savior went to a cross for me. I can deal with any inconveniences and matters that just aren't my preference or style.

I will pray for my church and its leaders

I will pray for my church and the leadership every day. I understand that the pastor's work is never ending. His days are filled with numerous demands that bring emotional highs and lows. He must deal with critics. He must be a good husband and father. Because my pastor cannot do all things in his own power, I will pray for his strength and wisdom daily.

I will lead my family to be a healthy church member

I will lead my family to be good members of this church as well. We will pray together for our church. We will worship together in our church. We will serve together in our church. And we will ask Christ to help us fall deeper in love with this church because He gave His life for her.

I will treasure church membership as a gift.

This membership is a gift. When I received the free gift of salvation through Jesus Christ, I became a part of the body of Christ. I soon thereafter identified with a local body and was baptized. And now I am humbled and honored to serve and to love others in our church. I pray that I will never take my membership for granted, but see it as a gift and an opportunity to serve others and to be a part of something so much greater than any one person or member.

* Adapted from Rainer, Thom. *I am a Church Member*, Nashville: B&H Publishing Group, 2013.

Now you are the body of Christ, and each one of you is a part of it. 1 Corinthians 12:27

For just 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, though many, form one body, and each member belongs to all the others. Romans 12:4-5

So Christ himself gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the pastors and teachers, to equip his people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up fullness of Christ. Ephesians 4:11-12

