



Christ's Church
ALBANY



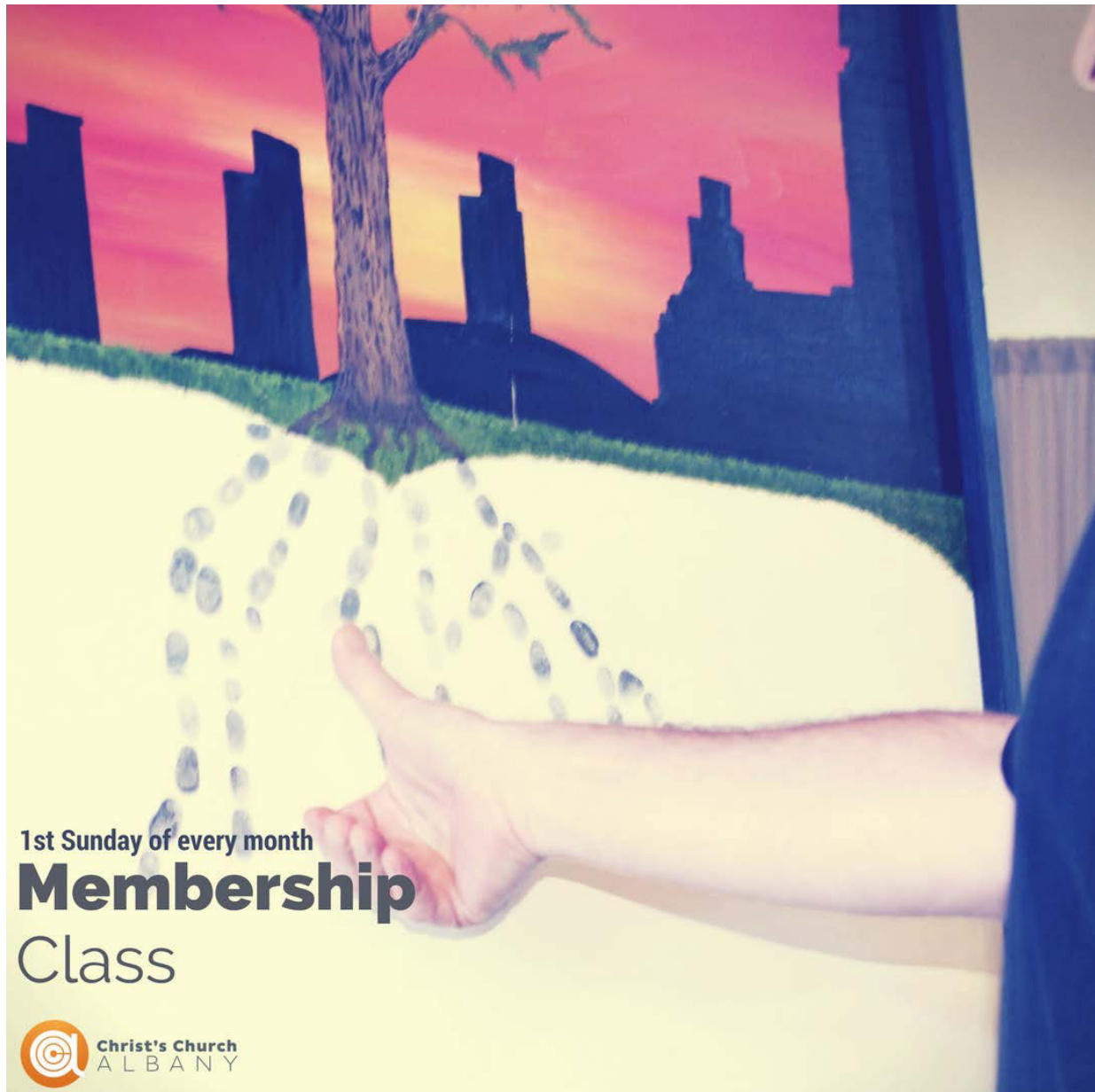
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1st Sunday of every month

Membership Class



Christ's Church
ALBANY

A GROUP OF PEOPLE WHO RADICALLY LOVE JESUS, EACH OTHER, AND THE WORLD.



Christ's Church
ALBANY

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BECOMING PART OF THE “WE” AT CHRIST’S CHURCH ALBANY

At Christ’s Church, “church” isn’t a building or a service—it’s a community of people.



The Greek word for church, *ekklesia*, simply means “a gathering of people.” There are all kinds of gatherings of people in Albany – baseball leagues, neighborhood associations, karate clubs, and countless other groups of people who gather around a common activity, belief, or passion are all technically churches.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS:

- What groups do you know of in Albany?
- What do the groups you mentioned above believe, value, and do?

WHAT THIS CLASS COVERS

This class will give you insight into what **WE** at Christ's Church Albany believe, value, and do by, helping you decide if you want to join us on this journey of faith.

Two Key Things to Know:

1 Order Matters:

This is a class about becoming a member of Christ's Church, but church membership is not the primary goal. The goal is becoming a disciple of King Jesus. Then... church is a group where WE rally around this King and his Kingdom way of life. This is not about something you join, this is something WE are.

2 Ask Questions:

We're all "in process." Following Jesus is a lifelong journey where doubts and questions are part of growing. Your doubts and questions are welcome here as we learn together what it means to be part of this "WE."

WE ARE **CHRIST'S CHURCH ALBANY**

Our church is organized around 3 big ideas that are seen in our name:

- 1 **CHRIST**
- 2 **CHURCH**
- 3 **ALBANY**



1 **CHRIST**

Christ is not a name, it is a title. When WE say Jesus **Christ**, WE are making a proclamation that Jesus is the Christ, the King of the World.

Our church, and our lives are focused on the idea that life to the full/eternal life is possible now and forever, when we choose to believe in Jesus as our King and God.

John 20: 31, John 3: 16.



2 **CHURCH**

Church is a group of people following Jesus as King together. WE choose to love One Another as Christ taught and demonstrated.

John 15: 9 – 17



3 **ALBANY**

The Capital Region of New York is our home. It is where we live, work, and play. Jesus loves Albany and wants to see His kingdom flourish in every way. WE join Jesus by loving and serving Albany.

Acts 1: 8





JESUS IS THE **CHRIST** / KING: WE HAVE AN **APOSTROPHE**

The apostrophe in “Christ’s” means that we belong to Jesus, living under His rule as King of kings and Lord of lords.

Christ: “Christ” isn’t just a name; it’s a title. By calling Himself the Christ, Jesus proclaimed Himself as the King, Messiah, Son of God, and Lord over all. **This presents us with the most important question:** Who do we believe Jesus is? Is He just a moral teacher, or is He the true King? This choice shapes our values and life purpose.

Here is how C.S. Lewis posed this choice:

“I am trying here to prevent anyone from saying the really foolish thing that people often say about Him: ‘I’m ready to accept Jesus as a great moral teacher, but I don’t accept his claim to be God.’ That is the one thing we must not say. A man who was merely a man and said the sort of things Jesus said would not be a great moral teacher. He would either be a lunatic—on the level with the man who says he is a poached egg—or else he would be the Devil of Hell. You must make your choice. Either this man was, and is, the Son of God, or else a madman or something worse. You can shut him up for a fool, spit at him and kill him as a demon, or you can fall at his feet and call him Lord and God. But let us not come with any patronizing nonsense about his being a great human teacher. He has not left that open to us. He did not intend to.”

WHAT IS THE GOSPEL?

The word gospel (Greek: euangelion) means “good news.” In Jesus’ time, it wasn’t a religious term; many leaders, like Caesar and Alexander the Great, had their own “gospels.”

Today, many things still claim to offer “good news” or paths to a better life—be it the American Dream, political ideologies, or self-help trends.

What they all have in common is a promise of **the good LIFE!**

- Believe this, and you will have life!
- Buy this, and you will have life!
- Achieve this, and you will have life!

REFLECTION QUESTIONS:

- What other “gospels” have you heard of or even followed?
- Did they succeed in delivering the good life?

Some of these paths might work to a degree, many end in unfulfilled promises. But we believe that above all, Jesus is the true source of life and fulfillment.

- “I have come that they may have **life**, and have it to the full.” (*John 10:10*)
- “For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have **eternal life**.” (*John 3:16*)

WHAT IS **LIFE** (ACCORDING TO GOD)?

*I have come that they may have **life**, and have it to the full.*
– Jesus (John 10:10)

What Life is Not:

Before we discuss what “Life” means in the Bible, it’s helpful to clarify what it isn’t.

Often, the “Good Life” is associated with:

- **Wealth**
- **Safety**
- **Comfort**
- **Status**

REFLECTION QUESTIONS:

- Have you known someone with wealth, safety, or comfort who wasn’t experiencing a “good life”?
- Have you known someone enduring hardship yet seemed to experience real “good life”?

The gospel of Jesus offers a “life to the full”—a transformative, eternal life that often defies cultural definitions of success or comfort. In the Bible, those who are poor, persecuted, or suffering often discover a deeper, counterintuitive joy and vitality. This shows that the life Jesus offers is far greater than the world’s version of the “Good Life.”

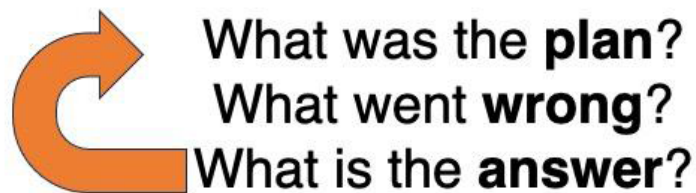
WHAT IS THE BIBLE'S GOOD LIFE?

*I have come that they may have **life**, and have it to the full.*
– Jesus (John 10:10)

Let's start at **the beginning** of the Bible, God creates the heavens and the earth, calling it "very good" (Genesis 1:31). This creation was filled with shalom—a Hebrew word meaning peace, completeness, and right relationships. God's design is for us to flourish in:

- **Relationship with God:** Made in His image, trusting and walking with Him. (Ps 8)
- **Relationship with Others:** Created for community, depending on one another without shame. (Gen 2: 18)
- **Relationship with Creation:** Expanding, ruling, and caring for the earth. (Gen 1: 28)
- **Our Purpose and Identity:** Blessed to co-rule and fulfill God's plans. (Gen 2: 15)
- **Rest:** Embracing Sabbath, delight, and worship. (Gen 2: 2 &3)

The Bible is the story of this shalom being broken by sin and how God works to restore it through Jesus.



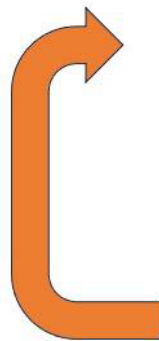
Watch this video about God's big plan for the world:



WHAT WENT WRONG?

Jesus came to solve a problem. Jesus is a rescuing king. But what do we need to be rescued from?

Sometimes the story of the Bible or salvation can be explained like this:



What was the plan?

- We were created to be perfect and go to heaven

What went **wrong**?

- We sinned, and now we are going to hell.

What is the answer?

- Jesus died to forgive our sins so we can still go to heaven.

This explanation hits on some truth, but in general the story is just WAY bigger than that!



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Bigger

THE BIG QUESTION: CAN WE TRUST GOD?

Now the serpent was more crafty than any of the wild animals the LORD God had made. He said to the woman, “Did God *really* say, ‘You must not eat from any tree in the garden’?” – Genesis 3:1

Trust lies at the heart of God’s plan for us, yet it’s not always easy. While God invites us to flourish through His ways, competing voices often pull us in other directions.

Think of it like The Price is Right—contestants hear a mix of opinions from the crowd. **Who should they trust?** Similarly, God’s word offers guidance toward real life, but it’s up to us to choose whom we listen to. This choice has deep consequences: **Do we trust God, or not?**



WHAT DO YOU CALL NOT TRUSTING GOD?

SIN

Sin means “missing the mark” (*khata’* in Hebrew). Originally, it wasn’t a religious term but referred to failure or missing a goal. In the Christian sense, **sin is anything that falls short of God’s purpose for a life of peace (shalom).**

Our choice to trust in God or not has real consequences. One leads to **life** and the other to **death**.

Life, sometimes called **eternal life**, is experiencing life under God’s rule—transformative, abundant, and eternal. It’s about heaven entering us, not just us entering heaven, bringing a quality of life so fulfilling that we desire it eternally. It’s the original plan of shalom.

In the Bible this reality of life is called:

- | | |
|-------------------------|------------------------|
| ● Heaven | ● Abundant life |
| ● Kingdom of God | ● Salvation |
| ● Life | ● New Creation |
| ● Eternal life | ● Light |

In contrast, **death** is the opposite: a life not aligned with God’s presence, leading to brokenness. It’s about hell getting into us—a life so deprived of wholeness that it feels unbearable. It’s anti-shalom.

In the Bible this reality of death is called:

- | | |
|-----------------------|--------------------|
| ● Hell | ● Death |
| ● Wrath of God | ● Perishing |
| ● Judgement | ● Darkness |

Jesus loves us, and his mission is to save us from death and bring us into life with Him, now and forever.

Case Study: Zacchaeus

In Luke 19, we meet Zacchaeus, a tax collector. In ancient Jewish society, tax collectors were seen as corrupt, greedy, and traitorous. Employed by Rome, they collected taxes from fellow Jews for the occupying empire. Many overcharged to keep extra profit, reinforcing their reputation as morally compromised and disloyal.

Read Luke 19:1–10.

What was Zacchaeus trusting in?

Perhaps it was Rome, money, or power, but he was not trusting in God.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS:

- What consequences might Zacchaeus have faced because of who or what he trusted to live his life?
- When Jesus declares, “Today salvation has come to this house,” what do you think salvation meant for Zacchaeus that day?
- How would you describe his journey from death to life?

SEPARATION FROM GOD

Our choices of who to trust go beyond if our life outcomes are good or bad. It is possible to live morally without truly having eternal life. Real Life is found in relationship with God.

*“Now this is eternal **life**: that they know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent.” – John 17:3*

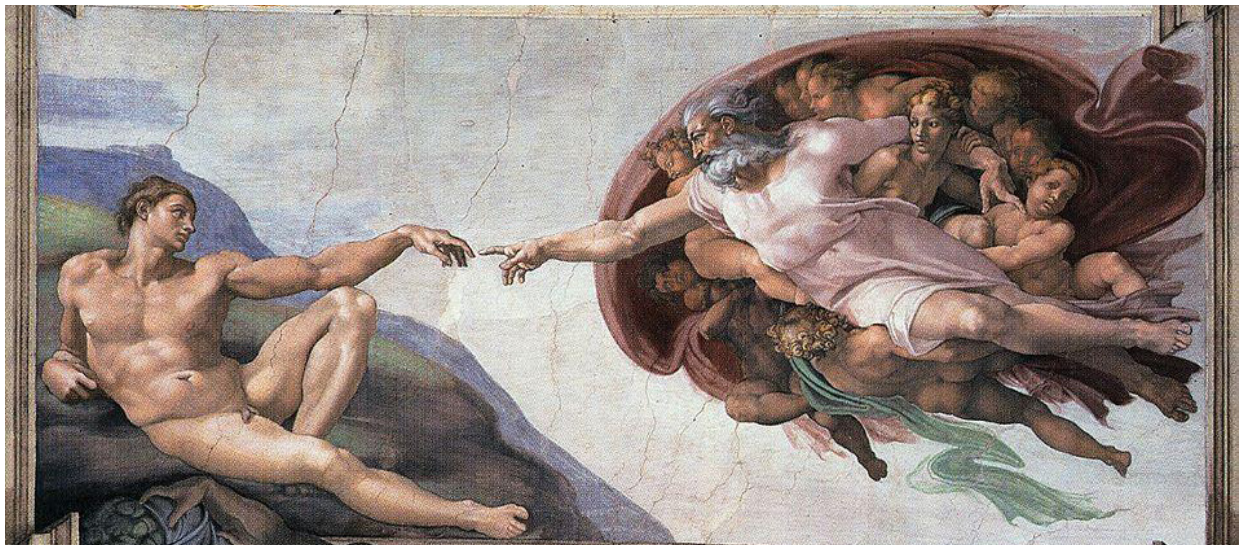
What is Separation from God?

You may have seen the fiery canyon illustration, showing a chasm of sin that separates humans from God. This image is partially true but often misunderstood—especially regarding God’s attitude. It’s not that God avoids sinners; throughout the Bible, God continually seeks out sinners, partners with them, and invites them to eternal life. Jesus made this clear by spending time with “sinners” like Zacchaeus, even dining with them.

God lets us choose.

Our problem is not that God separates Himself from us, but that we separate ourselves from Him.

Michelangelo’s *Creation of Adam* beautifully captures this: God stretches out to connect with man, while man only half-heartedly reaches back. We can ignore God’s voice, break His commands, harm others, and choose idols over Him. This self-imposed distance keeps us from eternal life, from living in the shalom—peace and wholeness—God offers.



***Through all of this, God never stops pursuing or loving us.
The question is, will we notice and respond?***

Case Study: The Two Sons

Read Luke 15:11–32.

How did the younger son separate himself from his father?

How did the older son choose to separate himself from his father?

Both sons missed out on their father's love and joy but experienced the father's compassion as he welcomed them back.

*"But while he was still a long way off, his father saw him and was filled with compassion for him; he ran to his son, threw his arms around him and kissed him."
(Luke 15:20)*

*"The older brother became angry and refused to go in. So his father went out and pleaded with him."
(Luke 15:28)*

*"For I am convinced that neither death nor life...will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord."
(Romans 8:38–39)*

*(Adapted): "Neither failure, poor church attendance, nor doubts can separate us from the love of God."
– Michael Yaconelli*

WHAT IS THE SOLUTION?

The gospel is the solution to death, hell (on earth and beyond), sin, and our self-imposed separation from God.

The solution is Jesus!

The gospel is the complete story of Jesus:

- In His **incarnation**, we see God's desire to be with us.
- In His **teachings**, we understand what to obey.
- In His **miracles**, we see the curse of death and sickness reversed.
- In His **example**, we learn how to live.
- In His **relationships**, we learn how to treat others.
- In His **death**, we see ultimate forgiveness, victory, and sacrifice.
- In His **resurrection**, we see life and victory over death.
- In His **ascension**, we see His authority.
- In His **Spirit**, we have power and daily guidance.

The solution is belief in Jesus.

If distrust separates us from God, then the way back is through belief. This is the purpose of knowing Jesus's story.

"Jesus performed many other signs in the presence of his disciples, which are not recorded in this book. But these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name."
(John 20:30–31)

The emphasis on the cross and resurrection.

While each part of the gospel of Jesus has huge implications for our lives and world, there are two parts of the story that the gospel writers and apostle place extra significance. These are the death and resurrection of Jesus.

Both of these events have wide meaning and impact.

In Jesus death we see:

- **Substitution for Sin:** Jesus absorbs humanity's sins, offering Himself as the ultimate sacrifice to reconcile us with God (1 John 4: 10).
- **Forgiveness and Grace:** Through His sacrifice, Jesus extended forgiveness, showing that God's grace overcomes sin (Ephesians 1:7).
- **Cleansing of our conscience:** God cleansed our consciences from acts that lead to death, so that we may serve the living God. (Hebrews 9: 14)
- **Victory over Death:** Jesus defeated the power of death, offering eternal life to believers (1 Corinthians 15:54-57).
- **Fulfillment of Prophecies:** Jesus fulfilled Old Testament prophecies about the Messiah and the suffering servant (Acts 17: 2 -3).
- **Demonstration of God's Love:** The cross is a clear revelation of God's unconditional love for humanity (Romans 5:8).
- **Establishment of a New Covenant:** His blood inaugurated a new of covenant of love with humanity (1 Corinthians 11: 25).
- **Defeat of Evil Powers:** Jesus disarmed spiritual forces, showing authority over all realms (Colossians 2:15).
- **Model of Sacrificial Love:** Jesus demonstrated selfless love, inviting us to live sacrificially (John 15:13).
- **Reconciliation and Peace:** Jesus' death removed the barrier of sin, allowing us to be reconciled with God, creation, and others (Colossians 1:20).

Jesus' resurrection: Is the foundation for ALL of our beliefs

As the apostle Paul said:

If Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile; you are still in your sins. Then those also who have fallen asleep in Christ are lost. If only for this life we have hope in Christ, we are of all people most to be pitied.

– 1 Corinthians 15: 17 – 19

The resurrection was the proof and motivation for Christians placing their belief in Jesus as truly God, Lord, Messiah, and Christ.

He has given proof of this to everyone by raising him from the dead.

– Acts 17: 31

As N.T Wright says:

*When Jesus of Nazareth died the horrible death of crucifixion at the hands of the Roman army, nobody thought him a hero. His movement was over. Nothing had changed. This was the sort of thing that Rome did best. Caesar was on his throne. Death, as usual, had the last word. **But** His resurrection completely changed everything. It kickstarted a movement that couldn't be stopped. Jesus' victory over death turned hopeless followers into bold witnesses, igniting a movement that spread across the world, proclaiming that life, not death, would have the last word.*

Let's look at some of the key claims of Jesus in our core beliefs.

CORE BELIEFS

What Does It Mean to Believe?

We don't agree on everything, and that's okay. However, there are six core beliefs that form the foundation of everything we do and teach at CCA, all informed by the claims of Jesus.

Jesus is King:

He provides the clearest picture/understanding of God that we will ever have, because He is God who was incarnated among us. We believe that Jesus is both human and divine. Jesus is God's only Son, was born of a virgin, lived a sinless life, voluntarily died on the cross for our sins, and was bodily raised from the dead. He ascended into heaven and now sits at the right hand of the Father and acts as a mediator on our behalf, inviting us to follow him to bring about his kingdom on earth as it is in heaven. Who we are, what we do, everything else we believe, and who we want to become is fully rooted in our faith in Christ; He is at the center of everything. (John 1:1-18; Acts 2:22-41; Colossians 1: 15 - 23; Philippians 2:1-11)

God is love.

We believe that there is one true God, the Creator and sustainer of the universe, who eternally exists in three persons, Father, Son and Holy Spirit. God's love extends grace, never compromises justice, and is displayed in full in Jesus. (Matthew 28:19; John 1:1,14; John 14:26; 1 John 4: 7 - 21, 1 Peter 1:2)

The Holy Spirit is Jesus speaking:

Jesus speaks to us through the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is equal with the Father and the Son of God. The Holy Spirit provides us power to overcome sin, insight into God's Word, and personal direction in life. The Holy Spirit gives us the power and motivation to pursue spiritual maturity in Christ. Through the Holy Spirit we are given spiritual gifts to serve God and people. (Luke 11:13; John 16:12 - 14; Acts 1:8; Romans 8:11)

The Bible points us towards Jesus:

The Bible is given to provide instruction for what we should believe and how we should live our lives. We believe that the Bible is accurate and reliable, was written under direct inspiration from God, and is useful for all Christians. Every part of the Bible is about Jesus and should be read and applied through that lens. (John 5: 39; Luke 24: 7; 2 Timothy 3:16; 2 Peter 1:19-21)

Salvation:

Everyone's central purpose for existence is to have a close and personal relationship with God and others and to rule and reign with King Jesus. As humans we defy God, choosing to go our own independent way, and separate ourselves from Him. This world has pain and suffering because human beings have sinned and are estranged from God, from each other, from ourselves, and from creation. We are in need of God's forgiveness, grace, and Way.

We believe God does not intend for sin and suffering to have the last word but is at work to redeem and reconcile what He has made."

We all can be forgiven by God and have a close, personal relationship with Him by believing that Jesus is King and God's son, repenting of our sin, confessing our faith in Jesus' power to save us. In obedience following Jesus' teachings to partner with him as ambassadors to bring his kingdom to earth. There is no salvation from sin apart from Jesus. (John 3:16; 2 Corinthians 5; Acts 2:38; Romans 3:23, 10:9; 1 John 1:9)

Church:

The community through which God wants to bring love, healing, and growth to the human race, to which He invites everyone who is willing to follow Jesus to join. (Matthew 18:18–20, John 1:12–13, Acts 1:8, Galatians 3:28, 1 Peter 2:9; 2 Corinthians 5)

HOW DO WE PUT OUR BELIEF IN KING JESUS?

The Goal: A decision of a lifetime.

To follow Jesus as King, we can think of faith in two ways:

- 1 Bounded Set:**
Faith is about crossing a line, marked by practices like baptism, prayer of salvation, sacraments, etc., to show who is “in” or “out.”
- 2 Centered Set:**
Here, Jesus is the center. Instead of focusing on boundaries, the question is whether we are moving toward Jesus and His teachings. It’s about continual growth in relationship with Him.

Moving Toward the Center

In a centered approach the goal is **discipleship**, a journey of drawing closer to Jesus our entire lives. So to become Christian, means we must reorient ourselves toward a new center—Jesus.

When Jesus spoke again to the people, he said, “I am the light of the world. Whoever **follows me** will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life.”
(John 8: 12)

ARE YOU POINTED TOWARD JESUS?

Each journey looks different, but common milestones include:

- **Awakening to God:** Realizing God's presence all around us. (Romans 1:20, Acts 17:24–28)
- **Exploring Jesus:** Discovering that Jesus is more than a teacher; He is fully God and the rightful King. This belief forms the foundation of our faith. What did Jesus claim? (see our Core Beliefs)
- **Choosing to Follow Him:** This entails deciding not to follow anyone else as our ultimate Lord and King. This process is often referred to as believing and repenting. Confession is admitting that our previous actions, inactions, and beliefs have been wrong. Repentance means intentionally choosing to go in a new direction.
- **Asking for Forgiveness:** We have all sinned and missed the mark of God's original good plan. We have chosen to listen to other voices and not trust God, causing harm to ourselves, our relationships, our work, and creating separation from God. The story of Jesus tells us that He, as God, can forgive sins, and He demonstrated this to the fullest extent through His death on the cross.
- **We are Baptized:** We publicly symbolize this decision through the act of baptism, followed by a weekly remembrance through communion.
- **We Spend Time with Jesus:** We become like the people we spend time with. As we spend time being with Jesus, we become more like Him. We want to take our spiritual formation seriously. Rather than being shaped by the world around us, we intentionally seek to be formed by the teachings of Jesus through the Scriptures, relationships within a community seeking Jesus together, and by incorporating the practices of Jesus (or spiritual disciplines) into our lives. All of this is empowered by the Holy Spirit.

HOW DO WE SPEND OUR LIVES WITH GOD?

Spiritual Practices:

"Remain in me, as I also remain in you. No branch can bear fruit by itself; it must remain in the vine. Neither can you bear fruit unless you remain in me." – John 15:4

Throughout church history, various spiritual practices have been used as tools to focus our lives around Jesus. These include:

- | | |
|-----------------|--------------|
| ● Prayer | ● Simplicity |
| ● Bible reading | ● Study |
| ● Fasting | ● Service |
| ● Celebration | ● Gratitude |
| ● Sabbath | ● Generosity |

The Daily Office or Quiet Time

One key practice is called the Daily Office. This is a set time each day to be with Jesus, listen to His words, ask, and confess.

To learn more about these practices and apply them to your life, we encourage the following resources:

- ***Practicing The Way*** by John Mark Comer
- ***The Spirit of the Disciplines*** by Dallas Willard
- ***How to Have a Quiet Time*** – 24-7 Prayer (PDF Guide)
- ***Quiet Time & Prayer*** – Lectio 365
- ***Study*** – The Bible Project

LISTENING AND OBEYING

A life of discipleship with Jesus reveals His rule and will for our lives. Jesus has a good and loving plan for your life, and His plan is often countercultural and sacrificial. Jesus asks us not simply to listen to Him but to put His words and ways into practice.

“Therefore everyone who hears these words of mine and puts them into practice is like a wise man who built his house on the rock. The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house; yet it did not fall, because it had its foundation on the rock. But everyone who hears these words of mine and does not put them into practice is like a foolish man who built his house on sand. The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell with a great crash.”

– Matthew 7:24–27

The way of Jesus affects every area of our lives, but three of the most common areas Jesus addresses are:

- **People:** Jesus asks us to love, serve, and forgive others in the same way He does.
- **Money:** Jesus asks us to be generous with our money and not to pursue wealth.
- **Time:** Jesus demonstrates a life of simplicity, limits, boundaries, and rest. He also expands our vision from our current lives to eternity.

WE ARE GENEROUS BEYOND REASON

"When it comes to our financial resources Jesus calls us to be as generous as possible. We believe that what we have is more given than earned, and we want to pass it on.

In everything I did, I showed you that by this kind of hard work we must help the weak, remembering the words the Lord Jesus himself said: 'It is more blessed to give than to receive.' "

Acts 20: 35

Our Plan for Generosity:

Give First:

"Bring the best of the **first fruits** of your soil to the house of the Lord your God." – Exodus 34: 26

Give a Percentage:

"Bring the whole **tithe** into the storehouse [Tithe = 10%]" – Malachi 3: 10

Give To:

Christ's Church Albany to help everyone to know, attend, and experience life change with Jesus, each other, and the world.

- A tenth of the land's produce, whether grain from the ground or fruit from the trees, is GOD's. It is holy to GOD. Bring it to the temple.

Help the poor and the oppressed.

- "At the end of every three years, bring all the tithes of that year's produce and store it in your towns, so that the Levites (who have no allotment or inheritance of their own) and the foreigners, the fatherless and the widows who live in your towns may come and eat and be satisfied, and so that the Lord your God may bless you in all the work of your hands." – Deuteronomy 14: 28-29

Promote life, joy, and friendship.

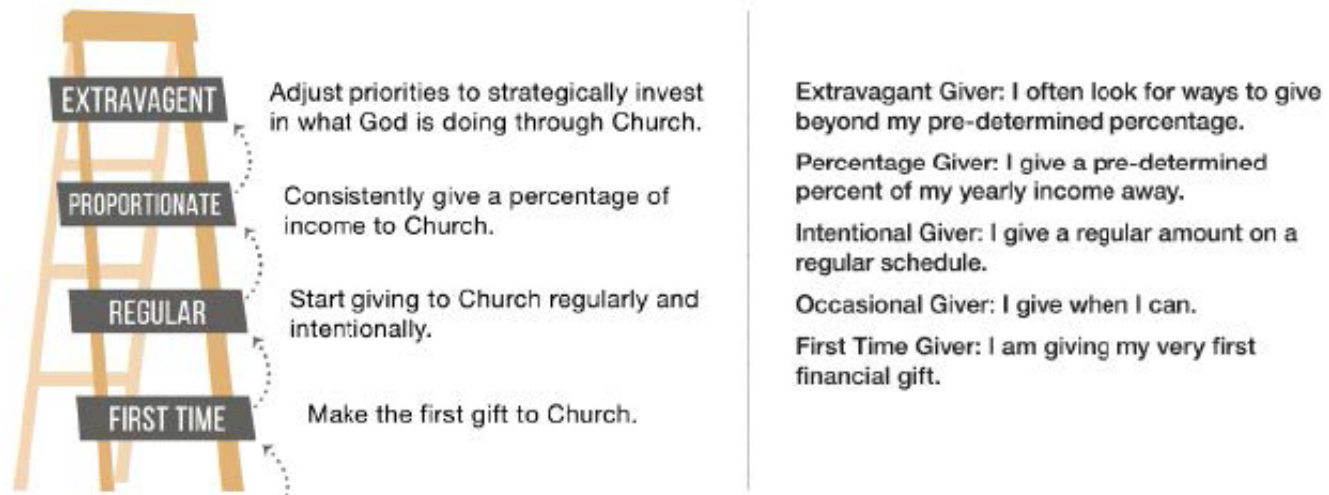
- "Make an offering of ten percent, a tithe, of all the produce which grows in your fields year after year. Bring this into the Presence of GOD, your God, at the place he designates for worship and there eat the tithe from your grain, wine, and oil and the firstborn from your herds and flocks." – Deuteronomy 14: 22-23

Share:

We view our “stuff” (houses, cars, decks, food, etc.) as tools to love those around us.

- *“Command them to do good, to be rich in good deeds, and to be generous and willing to share.” – 1 Timothy 6: 18*

WILL YOU TAKE THE NEXT STEP?





Christ's Church
ALBANY

CHURCH IS A GROUP OF PEOPLE COMMITTED TO LOVING EACH OTHER AS JESUS LOVES US.

We are a group of individuals who are making the decision to follow Jesus as our Lord and King. What is King Jesus' primary command? Love one another.

"A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this, everyone will know that you are my disciples if you love one another." – John 13:34-35

"Let no debt remain outstanding, except the continuing debt to love one another, for whoever loves others has fulfilled the law. The commandments, 'You shall not commit adultery,' 'You shall not murder,' 'You shall not steal,' 'You shall not covet,' and whatever other command there may be, are summed up in this one command: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.' Love does no harm to a neighbor. Therefore, love is the fulfillment of the law." – Romans 13:8-10

This is a central part of God's plan of shalom. We Are Created for Community!

We need each other. The Christian life cannot be lived in isolation. We carry each other's burdens and joys, suffering and celebrating together. We share our time, talents, and treasures for the common good.

The Lord God said, "It is **not good** for the man to be **alone**. I will make a **helper** suitable for him."

- Genesis 2: 18

~~American Dream: Independence~~
Christian Dream: Dependence

CHARACTERISTICS OF LOVING EACH OTHER

Celebrating – Together in the Good

Celebration is worship and thanks rolled into one. God is too good not to throw a party! Whether through nature, His written word, or changed lives, He has done so much that our lives ought to sing and celebrate Him continually. Our celebration is all the richer when done together:

- We sing together.
- We play and rest.
- We eat and dance.
- We host parties and practice hospitality.
- We encourage and express gratitude.

Suffering – Together in the Bad

Suffering together means being there for one another in times of need. Whether it's as big as crisis intervention or as small as cooking a meal, no one makes it through this life without a helping hand. It is the heart of Jesus for the church to come together in times of need. Even when life isn't falling apart, a little encouragement goes a long way:

- We pray for each other.
- We share our pain.
- We cry with each other.

Sacrificing – Where Individuality and Togetherness Meet

Sacrificing means giving the best of who you are to make the church body the best it can be. As an individual before God, you have a unique and indispensable mix of time, talents, and treasures. As part of a church, we contribute our individual uniqueness for communal greatness. Committing to one another fulfills God's mission for the church. Sacrificing together changes you as much as it changes the next person:

- We help meet each other's needs
- We use our time and talents to serve the church family.
- We give our time and money.

JESUS' KINGDOM IS MULTIGENERATIONAL AND DIVERSE

One of the hallmarks of Christian community is racial inclusion and diversity. We want to foster and welcome community with people of different:

- | | |
|---------------|--------------------|
| ● Ages | ● Backgrounds |
| ● Wages | ● Social standings |
| ● Skin colors | ● Health |
| ● Politics | ● Etc. |

As the sign says on our bounce house, we want to be a church for Everyone!



This kind of diversity is not always easy. Our biases, prejudices, and selfishness can make community difficult. This is not a surprise to Jesus; part of His salvation message is to break down the walls that divide us and for us to be an example of a new kind of family.

Ephesians 2:15-19

"His purpose was to create in himself one new humanity out of the two, thus making peace, and in one body to reconcile both of them to God through the cross, by which he put to death their hostility. He came and preached peace to you who were far away and peace to those who were near. For through him, we both have access to the Father by one Spirit."

CHILDREN AND TEENS MATTER

We believe children and teens matter deeply and are an important part of our church family!

Jesus prioritized children, urging us to welcome and protect them (Matthew 19:13-14, Mark 9:36-37, Luke 17:1-2).

CCKIDS Sunday Environment

Explore Faith: CCKIDS provides children with a fun, age-appropriate setting to connect with Jesus. Through Bible stories, crafts, games, and worship, kids experience Jesus' love in ways that resonate with them.

Friendships Matter: In CCKIDS, children form friendships that foster community and belonging. Activities encourage connection, helping kids build a supportive network on their faith journey.

Guiding Relationships: Our teachers serve as caring mentors, creating a safe space for kids to ask questions and explore faith.

CCA Teens: Building Fun, Relationships, and Discipleship

Our Teen Ministry meets on the first and third Thursdays, offering middle and high school students a dynamic environment to explore discipleship in a community built on trust and fun.

Why Relationships Matter: Relationships are foundational to discipleship. Teens build friendships and connect in a supportive atmosphere where they feel encouraged and valued.

Each gathering includes interactive games, discussions, and activities that promote friendship and spiritual growth.

Join Us! All middle and high school students are welcome! Join us for fun, connection, and an inspiring journey in discipleship.

HABITS AND TOOLS FOR LOVING ONE ANOTHER

Building meaningful relationships doesn't happen by chance; it requires intentionality and effort. Here are our key tools for fostering connections under the guidance of Jesus.

Sunday Service

Our weekly Sunday services are one of the best times to all be together as a whole church family. These gatherings are essential for us to:

- **Celebrate Communion:** Engage in this sacred tradition, remembering the sacrifice of Jesus and the unity it brings us.
- **Worship Together:** Lift our voices in song, expressing our love and gratitude to God.
- **Learn and Grow:** Dive into biblical teachings that challenge and inspire us to live out our faith.
- **Connect and Encourage:** Build relationships, support one another, and strengthen our community.

As a church family member we encourage you to:

- **Attend Services Regularly:** Make Sunday worship a priority in your life to deepen your connection with God and others.
- **Arrive Early and Stay Late:** Take the time to intentionally engage with fellow church members, fostering new friendships and strengthening existing ones.
- **Volunteer Your Gifts:** Share your unique talents and passions by joining one of our service teams, such as CCKIDS, music, café, or A/V. Use the volunteer form at the end of this packet to get involved.

Together, we can cultivate a vibrant community rooted in love and discipleship, reflecting the heart of Jesus in all we do.

INTENTIONAL DISCIPLESHIP RELATIONSHIPS

These relationships allow us to share questions, apply our faith to daily life, and support one another through accountability, joy, disappointments, and victories.

What Are the Keys to an Intentional Disciple-Making Relationship?

Meet Regularly

Deep, meaningful relationships don't just happen; they flourish through consistent time and effort together. We encourage groups to meet regularly—some weekly, some monthly, and most twice a month. We recommend maintaining this rhythm for at least one year, after which you can evaluate the next steps together. Beyond regular meetings, consider additional ways to share life together:

- **Communication:** Keep in touch through emails, texts, and phone calls.
- **Meals:** Enjoy family dinners, grab coffee, or share lunch together.
- **Fun Activities:** Go to movies, take bike rides, host game nights, or gather around a campfire.

Help Each Other Grow

This is more than just friendship; the goal is to help each other move forward in loving Jesus, one another, and the world.

- **Pray for Each Other:** Lift one another up in prayer.
- **Celebrate Together:** Rejoice in each other's victories.
- **Share Struggles:** Be honest about challenges.
- **Challenge Each Other:** Encourage one another to grow spiritually.
- **Stay Accountable:** Help each other apply the teachings we receive as a church. Each season, CCA has a church-wide focus series that includes Sunday teachings and resources, allowing groups to explore and apply these lessons in their lives.
- **Listen for God:** Groups provide a space to discuss, evaluate, and act on what God is speaking to each of us individually.

Share Openly

These relationships thrive on openness and vulnerability. They offer a safe space to share feelings, opinions, questions, doubts, successes, and failures. These are the people who know the real you. Building this level of trust requires both giving and earning over time, grounded in confidentiality and respect.

Care and Support Each Other

These relationships are built on mutual care. They are the people we pray for, turn to for help, and support in meeting practical needs.

TIPS AND VALUES OF INTENTIONAL DISCIPLESHIP RELATIONSHIPS

- **Buy-In:** Community is about mutual commitment. Everyone should prioritize meeting, growing, and sharing together. Showing up is half the battle; growth occurs when everyone is dedicated to being present as often as possible.
- **Scheduling:** Life can be hectic, and if we wait for the perfect time to build relationships, we might be waiting a long time. Intentional Disciple-Making Relationships thrive on a scheduled and consistent meeting time. Love must be reflected both in our hearts and on our calendars.
- **Keep It Small:** Be realistic about how many people you can genuinely commit to this level of relationship. A group of around eight is often ideal, with smaller groups often being more effective.
- **Keep It Small:** Be realistic about how many people you can genuinely commit to this level of relationship. A group of around eight is often ideal, with smaller groups often being more effective.
- **Focus on Application:** While we work through various topics at CCA, each series will include Sunday teachings and accompanying resources like books, videos, or studies. These tools support our growth in loving Jesus, each other, and the world. It's essential to remember that the primary goal isn't just study; it's about applying these truths to our lives. Intentional Disciple-Making Relationships provide the best environment to discuss, discover next steps, and hold one another accountable.

Make Intentional Disciple-Making Relationships a Part of Your Real Life

We all have limited time and energy, so consider how these vital relationships fit into your life.

- **Do you need to opt out of some activities to create time?**
- **Where can a group meeting naturally fit into your routine?**
 - During lunch breaks?
 - During kids' practices?
 - After Sunday services?
 - While walking dogs?
 - While running or walking?
- **What location works best for your group?**
 - In your neighborhood?
 - Near your workplace?

Be creative and strategic about how these relationships can thrive within your schedule and daily rhythms. Together, we can build a community centered around Jesus and each other, transforming our lives and the world around us.



GOD LOVES OUR CITY AND THE WHOLE WORLD

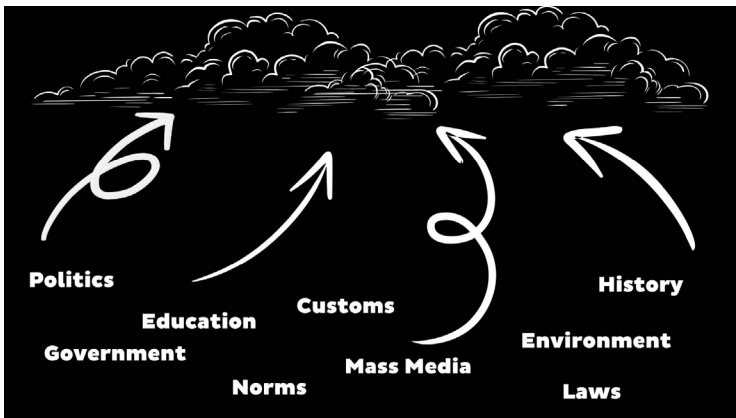
God loves our city and desires for His Kingdom to reign in Albany and throughout the world. His primary plan is for us to live as people sent on mission, working for justice, evangelism, and the shalom of our communities and the globe for the sake of the Kingdom.

Jesus taught about the Kingdom of God (or Kingdom of Heaven) more than any other topic. According to His teachings, Jesus wants us to pray for, deeply desire, and dedicate ourselves to seeing the Kingdom as He described it become visible and active in our daily lives here on earth (Matthew 6:9-13). The purpose, goal, and result of the Kingdom is life—not church-centered metrics or outcomes. It is about life. Jesus said, “I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full” (John 10:10).

We seek to offer ourselves as a gift to our neighborhood, city, and the world. We believe that every Christian is called to “full-time ministry”—serving Christ in every sphere of life. We are also committed to serving the poor and marginalized both locally and globally.

OUR POSTURE TOWARD THE WORLD

What posture should we take to the world around us? By posture here, I mean the combination of what we BELIEVE and what we DO (our actions). Warning right up front, VAST generalizations coming your way. But it's a helpful ILLUSTRATION to help us frame the conversation.



The world or culture is all around us. Here it's represented by this cloud – tons of things are feeding into the 'system' of our culture or our world. Things like politics, education, history, the environment we live in, our governments, mass media, norms, etc. This culture affects us (in our picture here, it's just like the water cycle – whatever gets put INTO the culture, comes OUT and impacts all of us, including the people in our church.

There are a few approaches, or ways of thinking about our engagement with the world that gathered groups tend to fall into one of three options. This is true for community groups, political groups, and even/especially RELIGIOUS groups.

Approach 1:

World is basically good – no notes no changes needed – religious groups who utilize this way of thinking build a kind of bucket to collect it – just let it all in – maybe adapt the good news to what's coming in.





Approach 2:

World is basically bad – nothing good for us here – ‘this world is not my home, I’m just a passing through...’ – religious groups who think this way build an air tight facility, very careful about ‘who’s in’ – who’s out –

Approach 3:

The Middle option – some good, some bad – need to discern and separate – build a screened porch – let some in but not all – religious groups who try to live this out – recognize it’s MUCH HARDER – and have to constantly be thinking about what filter we’re using to decide between the good, the yet to be redeemed – to help us view the world with Jesus’ eyes.



As I said – it’s an oversimplification, but an illustration that helps. But – Why does all this matter? Because how we interact with the space we live says something about what we believe about God. And how we treat the space around us communicates volumes to others about **what GOD thinks** about the world he’s placed us in.



Here at CCA we strive for this middle way – we recognize that the world is like any garden: there are some good things growing that we didn’t plant, there are some things we need to weed and take out, but ultimately our posture is this: **God LOVES the world and invites us to join him in its cultivation and tending.**

WE LIVE THE BLESS RHYTHMS

Our primary way of seeing God's Kingdom grow is by intentionally living out these rhythms of daily life.

Important Note: This is not a sales technique. These are not linear steps; it is not loving to treat people as projects or to impose beliefs upon them. Instead, these are tangible ways to love those around us. If people wonder why we live this way, we are glad to give credit to our King.

1 Be in Prayer: We pray for the people around us. We pray for God's Kingdom to come. Praying lines us up with God's heart for our community, it de-centers us to put the focus on what God is doing, and how we might join in. "God, may Your Kingdom come and Your will be done. Where are You already at work in my community? How can I join You? How can I BLESS someone today?"

2 Listen: We adopt a posture of humility and curiosity, making time to listen to others. Active listening is a skill that can be learned and have a deep impact. In your interactions today, approach others as a learner. Set aside your assumptions and practice being fully present. We listen both to the person in front of us, and to God's invitations in the interaction.

3 Eat: Food symbolizes joy, hospitality, and love. We look for ways to share our table with others, whether through meals, drinks, or activities that bring us joy. Jesus "came eating and drinking," and throughout the New Testament, His followers are encouraged to practice hospitality.

It doesn't only have to be food – it could be around a board game, or camp fire, or puzzle or sports. Tap into things that bring you joy and help you connect with others, and then invite people to join you as you do it.

4 Serve: We serve because Jesus came to serve us (Mark 10:45 For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve ...) What needs or pains do you see around you? Is there a tangible way you can help?

5 Story: We are people of story. We have heard and believed the story of Jesus, transforming our habits and priorities. We naturally share stories of things we care about (books, cooking, friends, family, etc.). Stories about what Jesus is doing in our lives can come up as well as we get to know people and share with them about things that matter to us.

WE LOVE AND SERVE ALBANY AND THE WHOLE WORLD

Church Albany. Our hope is that through these initiatives, both in large groups and small gatherings, we can bless our local community, help bring the Kingdom of God to our city as it is in Heaven, and work toward the shalom of the place we call home, while also extending our love and service to the entire world.

For members of Christ's Church Albany, Love Albany and Serve Albany offer opportunities to practice the BLESS rhythms (Begin with Prayer, Listen, Eat, Serve, Story) in deeper engagement with our neighborhoods and workplaces, as well as in global outreach. Even if you cannot volunteer at large-scale events, we aim to train, resource, and equip you to embody these values in your everyday life.

Love Albany and Serve Albany are two things at the same time:

- 1 **A local mission branch of Christ's Church Albany**
- 2 **A posture of approaching our community engagement as a group and individuals**

As a local mission branch, **Love Albany** provides events, equipment, and resources to make Albany, NY a more neighborly and fun place to live.

We **Love Albany** through larger events – Egg Hunt, Movie Nights, etc. When we host these events as a church, we need volunteers to make it happen! We also **Love Albany** by loaning equipment to other community groups to help their events generate more neighborliness and fun in our city. Assistance is always welcome for setup, running, and teardown during community events.



However, **Loving Albany** isn't limited to large-scale events; it is also a posture of approaching our community engagement.

The equipment we own and maintain is your equipment – Whether you're hosting a block party, organizing a PTA event, or simply inviting friends over for a BBQ— these are great tools to bring people together and create space where relationships can grow, and the love of Jesus can be shared.

At its core – this posture is the living out of our belief that Jesus is already at work. It means we can live our life, getting to know neighbors and school mates, and work colleagues, we can join sports teams, and book clubs, and attend meetings we're invited to knowing **Jesus is already at work, and we can partner with him there.**

We can invite our neighbor for a smores cookout, or attend their dinner party, and Jesus has gone before us. When thinking about how to **Love Albany**, consider this question: How can you make your street, neighborhood, school, or community a more welcoming and enjoyable place to be?



Similarly, **Serve Albany** is both a local missions branch, and a posture we all adopt.

As a local missions branch, **Serve Albany** fosters collaboration between nonprofits, community leaders, and volunteers seeking the shalom of Albany, NY, and extending that mission globally.

The Hebrew word “שָׁלוֹם” (Shalom) encompasses much more than just “peace.” While it includes the absence of war or violence, it also signifies wellbeing, wholeness, security, rest, goodness, abundance, and prosperity.

Serve Albany aims to unite those who seek to bring these ideals to life within the neighborhoods and systems of Albany, NY, and across the globe.

We **Serve Albany** by hosting monthly gatherings of nonprofit and community leaders to create space for conversation, collaboration, and networking. Organizations often work in isolation, thinking they must handle everything alone. In reality, we can achieve more and do better when we Serve together.

We also **Serve Albany** in our posture to connecting with our neighborhoods and communities. We serve by following Jesus into the local places we already find ourselves.

Is there an infrastructure issue in your area that you could help address by connecting with your neighbors? Can you work with other parents to tackle local school issues? It might be as simple as organizing a neighborhood cleanup or attending your local community association meeting to find ways to participate and partner. Consider also how you might extend your service to global initiatives, supporting partners who are working for justice, peace, and care for the marginalized.

When considering how to **Serve Albany**, ask yourself: How can you collaborate with the people, systems, and networks you’re already part of to move toward the shalom of your neighborhood and the world?

ANCHOR SCRIPTURE FOR LOVE AND SERVE ALBANY

Jeremiah 29:5–7 states:

5 “Build homes and plan to stay. Plant gardens and eat the food they produce.

6 Marry and have children. Then find spouses for them so that you may have many grandchildren. Multiply! Do not dwindle away!

7 And work for the peace and prosperity of the city where I sent you into exile. Pray to the Lord for it, for its welfare will determine your welfare.”

We Love and Serve Albany and the world not just because it benefits the community, but because God says it is for OUR good—to shape and mold us to be like Jesus. Our care for others is not just for their sake but also for our own discipleship.

Love Albany and Serve Albany are grounded in whole-life discipleship, recognizing that all aspects of our lives serve as tools for discipleship, including family, relationships, parenting, work, and community involvement. As you seek to Love and Serve, the key discipleship question is: What is God trying to teach me through this?

We are called and invited to invest in the world, care for it, and seek the shalom of our city and the entire world—not only because the world needs it but because it is the primary way God chooses to disciple us into His image.

As we engage in Loving and Serving Albany and beyond, whether in large or small ways and in various group sizes, we follow the BLESS rhythms and allow God to continue transforming us:

- We begin with prayer.
- We listen to how others are experiencing the world.
- We share meals together.
- We serve those around us.
- We share what God is doing in our lives.

LEADERSHIP AND OVERSIGHT

Staff

Christ's Church currently has four paid staff members; One full-time and three part-time.

- **Lead Pastor:** Jonathan Hentrich – jonathan@christchurchalbany.org
- **Children's Ministry Director:** Jessica Baggott – jessica@christchurchalbany.org
- **Children's Ministry Director:** Alicyn Ferguson – alicyn@christchurchalbany.org
- **Executive Director Love and Serve Albany:** Heather Ardrey – heather@christchurchalbany.org

Elders

Elders serve as the lead spiritual leaders and examples in our church.

- Leslie Deroo – lesliederoo@gmail.com
- Jenna Lehr – jennafromcca@gmail.com

Trustees

Our Trustees serve under the elders to oversee the assets, budget, and infrastructure of Christ's Church Albany.

- Jason Kampschaefer – jason.kampschaefer@gmail.com
- John Mackowiak – johnmackowiakjr@gmail.com

Organization

Christ's Church Albany is a registered church with the State of New York and is a recognized 501(c)3.

FINANCIAL

Offerings

Financial gifts are made to the Christ's Church Albany during weekly services, online giving, and by mail. These finances go to pay for everything Christ's Church Albany does including community events, staff payroll, insurance, rent, equipment, and more. Ten percent of all offerings are given to causes outside of Albany.

Giving

Giving can be done multiple ways, and all gifts are tax deductible. Giving options include:

- As a part of Sunday Services.
- Online: Secure gifts can be given from your bank account or credit card at: www.christschurchalbany.org/#/generosity
- By mail: Gifts can be mailed to Christ's Church Albany, 911 Central Ave #267, Albany NY 12206.
- Gifts of stock, real estate, or other non-cash gifts will be handled on a case-by-case basis.

Budgeting

The church budget is set by a collaboration of staff members and leaders. The Elder Team approves the budget. The Trustee Team monitors individual expenses. A copy of the budget can be presented upon request.

RESPONSE SHEET

Name: _____ Date of Birth: _____

Address: _____

Phone: (H): _____ (W): _____ (C): _____

Email: _____

Jesus

What step are you currently at?

- ☐ Not Exploring
- ☐ Exploring
- ☐ Follower and Believer

Have you been baptized since you committed your life to Christ?

- ☐ Yes.... When & Where? _____
- ☐ I would like to be baptized.
- ☐ I am not ready to make this decision.

Are you practicing Generosity?

- ☐ I would like to become a First Time Giver.
- ☐ I would like to become a Percentage Giver.
- ☐ I would like to become an Occasional Giver.
- ☐ I would like to become an Extravagant Giver.
- ☐ I would like to become an Intentional Giver.

What other next steps is God calling you to?

- ☐ _____
- ☐ _____
- ☐ _____

Loving Each Other

Do you have a person (s) who are actively helping you grow? Who?

- ☐ _____
- ☐ _____

How would you like to connect with an Intentional Discipleship Group?

- ☐ I would like to join a Group.
- ☐ I would like to start my own Group.
- ☐ I am already in a Group with _____

How would you like to connect with ministry teams?

- ☐ I would like to serve with this ministry team: _____
- ☐ I am already serving with this ministry team(s): _____
- ☐ I would like to discover my spiritual gifts and then find the best fit.

Loving The World

Is God calling you to a next step by Living out BLESS? How could we help?

- ☐ _____
- ☐ _____

Is God calling you to a next step through:

- ☐ Serve Albany
- ☐ Love Albany
- ☐ Other: _____

How can we help? _____



I prayerfully and intentionally choose to be a family member of Christ's Church Albany.

As a family member of Christ's Church Albany, I will seek to wholeheartedly live out the following beliefs and help other family members do the same with my time, talent, and resources.

- **Jesus is King;** He provides the clearest picture/understanding of God that we will ever have, because He is God who was incarnated among us. We believe that Jesus is both human and divine. Jesus is God's only Son, was born of a virgin, lived a sinless life, voluntarily died on the cross for our sins, and was bodily raised from the dead. He ascended into heaven and now sits at the right hand of the Father and acts as a mediator on our behalf, inviting us to follow him to bring about his kingdom on earth as it is in heaven. Who we are, what we do, everything else we believe, and who we want to become is fully rooted in our faith in Christ; He is at the center of everything. (John 1:1-18; Acts 2:22-41; Colossians 1: 15 - 23; Philippians 2:1-11)
- **God is love.** We believe that there is one true God, the Creator and sustainer of the universe, who eternally exists in three persons, Father, Son and Holy Spirit. God's love extends grace, never compromises justice, and is displayed in full in Jesus. (Matthew 28:19; John 1:1,14; John 14:26; 1 John 4: 7 - 21, 1 Peter 1:2)
- **Jesus speaks to us through the Holy Spirit.** The Holy Spirit is equal with the Father and the Son of God. The Holy Spirit provides us power to overcome sin, insight into God's Word, and personal direction in life. The Holy Spirit gives us the power and motivation to pursue spiritual maturity in Christ. Through the Holy Spirit we are given spiritual gifts to serve God and people. (Luke 11:13; John 16:12 - 14; Acts 1:8; Romans 8:11)
- **We believe the Bible is God's inspired Word** and is given to provide instruction for what we should believe and how we should live our lives. We believe that the Bible is accurate and reliable, was written under direct inspiration from God, and is useful for all Christians. Every part of the Bible is about Jesus and should be read and applied through that lens. (John 5: 39; 2 Timothy 3:16; 2 Peter 1:19-21)
- **Salvation:** We believe that a human being's central purpose for existence is to have a close and personal relationship with God and others. As humans we defy God, choosing to go our own independent way, and because of this are separated from Him and are in need of God's forgiveness and grace. We believe this world has pain and suffering because human beings have sinned and are fallen, so we are estranged from God, from each other, from ourselves, and from creation. We believe God does not intend for sin and suffering to have the last word but is at work to redeem and reconcile what He has made. We all can be forgiven by God and have a close, personal relationship with Him by believing that Jesus is God's son, repenting of our sin, and confessing our faith in Jesus' power to save us. In obedience we follow Jesus' teachings to partner with him as ambassadors to bring his kingdom to earth. There is no salvation from sin apart from Jesus. (John 3:16; 2 Corinthians 5; Acts 2:38; Romans 3:23, 10:9; 1 John 1:9)
- **We believe the Church** is the community through which God wants to bring love, healing, and growth to the human race, to which He invites everyone who is willing to follow Jesus to join. (Matthew 18:18-20, John 1:12-13, Acts 1:8, Galatians 3:28, 1 Peter 2:9; 2 Corinthians 5)

Signed: _____

Date: _____

Name (please print): _____

☐ I have been a Family Member, I am still all in