



Burke
COMMUNITY CHURCH



DISCOVER MEMBERSHIP

Welcome to Discover Membership

We're glad you've chosen to find out more about Burke Community Church (BCC). *Discover Membership* serves as an introduction to our leadership, vision, strategy, and church family. Since we have members from many different church backgrounds, *Discover Membership* will help clarify who BCC is and what we believe God has called us to. BCC is different from a club or society that you might join. Our desire is to be a family on a mission as Paul talked about in Ephesians 2:19: "Consequently, you are no longer foreigners and aliens, but fellow citizens with God's people and members of God's household." Thanks for joining us as you consider whether or not to join this family of believers.

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What is Membership?

What does it mean to be a member of Burke Community Church? The difference between *attendee* and *member* can be summed up in one word: commitment. At BCC, we recognize the need for a formal membership. We ask regular attendees to commit to membership for four reasons:

A Biblical Reason: Christ is committed to the church.

Christ loved the church and He gave his life for it (Ephesians 5:25).

A Cultural Reason: It is an antidote to our society.

We live in an age where very few want to be committed to anything—a job, a marriage, our country. This attitude has produced a generation of “church shoppers and hoppers.” Membership swims against the current of America’s “consumer religion.” An unselfish decision, commitment always builds character.

A Practical Reason: It defines who can be counted on.

Every sports team must have a roster. Every school must have an enrollment. Every business has a payroll. Every army has an enlistment. Even our country takes a census and requires voter registration. Church membership identifies our family.

A Personal Reason: It produces spiritual growth.

The New Testament places a major emphasis on the need for Christians to be accountable to each other for spiritual growth. We cannot be accountable when we’re not committed to any specific church family.

Next Steps

If you have attended the *Discover Membership* class, then you are able to move forward to becoming a member. We don’t want you to be uninformed and unequipped to make a decision about becoming a member.

Once we receive your membership application, we will coordinate a private visit with an elder. Our goal is to allow you the opportunity to meet our leadership. As a member, we want to make sure you have a direct connection to the “top” of our organization. Our servant leaders are a great and safe place to ask any questions we did not cover or where you desire more clarity. These men lead our church and take that privilege and responsibility very seriously. Your time with them will be a blessing.

Where We've Been

The History of Burke Community Church

Burke Community Church [BCC] began in an adult Sunday school class of a Presbyterian church in Springfield, Virginia. The class members felt that the true nature of Christianity was becoming dimmed in their current church setting. So they established a new church under the leadership of Mike Winship, their teacher and an ordained minister.

On July 27, 1975, 57 people held the first BCC service in Burke Elementary School at the intersection of Burke Lake and Lee Chapel Roads. The congregation grew and attracted members from a variety of Christian denominations. On September 28, 1975, an overwhelming majority of the congregation voted to become an unaffiliated, non-denominational community church. A month later, 83 members signed the charter commitment of BCC, with Mike Winship serving as the first Senior Pastor. The emphasis of this new church was to worship God, learn to follow Him, and serve others by witnessing of the Lord Jesus Christ. The newly formed BCC featured Bible-centered teachings for all levels in Sunday school classes, as well as weekly study groups which met in homes.

BCC soon outgrew Burke Elementary School, and we moved to the more spacious Cardinal Forest Elementary School. The fledgling church bought 4 to 5 acres of property in 1978 and began planning for the building. The church continued to grow, making another necessary move to Lake Braddock Secondary School in June of 1978. During the next six years, we worked together to set up and tear down equipment every Sunday. Everyone had a job, and everyone used his or her gifts. We learned how to operate as a church family and work together as the Body of Christ. On October 1, 1984, Paul Hansen and his family came to us from the Terrace Shores Evangelical Free Church of Green Lake, Wisconsin to be the second Senior Pastor at BCC.

As time passed, it became obvious that we should move out of the county school facilities and into our own building. The 4 to 5 acre property owned by BCC would not accommodate the growth we were experiencing. After careful and prayerful consideration, we bought our current facilities and moved to our new location on Old Keene Mill Road in September of 1986. Since 1986, the church facility has grown alongside the church body. The education wing was completed in 2000. On May 1, 2002, Jack Elwood began serving as the third Senior Pastor. The church continued to grow, and we completed the students' and children's auditoriums and additional classrooms through the Making Room for More building campaign.

In October of 2007, Jack accepted a call to Steamboat Springs, Colorado. Our current Senior Pastor, Marty Baker arrived from Stockton, California on November 1, 2008.

As we look forward, we have the unique privilege of looking back on a rich heritage based on a clear sense of vision. We also look to the future with eager expectation because of the mission God has given us to know Christ and make Him known.

What Is Our Mission Statement?

Our Mission Statement: A church's mission statement expresses what a church hopes to accomplish and defines its key ministry objectives. After much prayer and guidance from the Holy Spirit, we believe our vision at BCC has been defined in this simple, easily memorized phrase:

To know Christ and to make Him known

The first half of this equation, derived from the Great Commandment, deals with the believer's responsibility to God (*discipleship*). The second half of this equation, derived from the Great Commission, deals with the believer's responsibility to non-believers (*evangelism*).

The Great Commandment: *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. All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments" (Matthew 22:36-40).*

The Great Commission: *[Jesus said,] "Therefore, go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age" (Matthew 28:19-20).*

As a church, we are constantly and passionately committed to fulfilling these mandates of Jesus Christ. How do we realize this lofty, God-honoring vision? Our process is simple. God has given us His presence and His power in order for us to join Him to accomplish His mission.

We achieve our mission by actively engaging in three different aspects of walking with God: Gather, Grow and Go. The next section of the book will describe what we mean by those terms. Simply stated we gather for worship, we grow in study and community, and we go as we serve our neighbors and the world.

Where Are We Going?

By Pastor Marty Baker

Did you ever see *The Blues Brothers* movie with Dan Aykroyd and John Belushi? It's an American classic, and it has some classic, never-to-be-forgotten lines. One I'll never forget is this:

We're on a mission from God.

Mission is a crystallizing thing, isn't it? With a crystallized mission, troops are victorious in battle, a football team wins the Super Bowl, a once struggling company moves from the red to the black, an out of work professional sees the importance of attaining a second Master's degree to head in a new, profitable direction, a troubled couple learns what they need to do to guide their marriage to health and wholeness.

Mission isn't just a key life pursuit. It's the main pursuit. He who has it accomplishes much. He who lacks it lives, but doesn't live life to the fullest as God designed.

We, as shepherds and leaders of BCC, understand the importance and relevancy of mission, especially when it is divinely articulated and mandated. We are not content to just be a church providing a plethora of ministry venues for you to tap into, like we are some kind of spiritual smorgasbord or something.

We aren't here to plan programs for the sake of programs, nor are we desirous of filling the church calendar to keep all of us busy for God. Far from it. We, conversely, are working hard at building a church around mission, at crafting a ministry which knows what it is about, where it is going, and how it plans on getting there.

Bill Curry, who used to be the center for the Miami Dolphins under the leadership of Coach Don Shula, said these words we readily identify with as spiritual coaches:

"Coach Shula could turn the tiniest spark of a player's desire to contribute into a flame. I know, because he did it with me" (The Ten Men You Meet In The Huddle: 196).

We want to lead like that. We want to so know our mission that we can effectively and enjoyably fan the flame of faith in your life so you will join us in realizing our mission.

How do we go about realizing this worthy goal? By pulling out the old chalk board, as it were, and having a chalk-talk to make sure we are all on the same page, that we all collectively know what we are trying to achieve prior to the return of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

We are glad you are here. Perhaps you've been on the team for a while, or perhaps you have just been recently added in a free agent draft. Either way, we can all benefit with a restatement of the passionate mission which pulsates within this local church. Restatement is good. Why? Older players tend to get enmeshed in all the small details of the functioning of a growing church. Old players also lose brain cells quicker than newer, younger ones; hence a little repetition is warranted. Newer players who've just joined us may like what they see and sense; however, they are probably clueless as to why we do what we do.

So today we invite you to pull up a chair and focus your eyes on the chalk board as we get up close and personal with our God-given mission, and how we see it being implemented and achieved by this local team of believers.

Our Mission Articulation

Church mission should be something each of you knows well. I'm sure you are familiar with the mission statements of many secular businesses because you are constantly exposed to it in a variety of ways. They typically hit you in the form of a pithy motto:

- Adidas: Impossible Is Nothing
- Apple Computer: Think Different
- Microsoft: Where Do You Want To Go Today?
- Nokia: Connecting People
- Toyota: Moving Forward

Sound familiar? How about giving me the company if I give you the motto?

- It Does A Body Good ... Milk Board
- We Bring Good Things To Life ... GE
- Leave The Driving To Us ... Greyhound
- The Art Of Performance ... Jaguar
- We Try Harder ... Avis
- Good To The Last Drop ... Maxwell House

I'm sure there is more intricate wording behind these memorable mission statements; however, as they are presented to the employees and the public they are couched in a form anyone can get at the first pass. This is so important because it lets everyone know right up front what you are about, and what drives you. We are glad that our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, left His Church with a mission statement like this, one we can't forget, one we can easily share with others, and one which keeps us on track with what He wants us to always stay focused on as His team members.

What Is Our Mission?

I'm sure you've heard it before from other churches you've attended, and I'm confident you've seen it in some Christian para-church organizations. You should see it because, from our perspective, it represents our Lord's final game plan for all of us. Here it is:

To Know Christ and To Make Him Known

Where did it come from? Christ's last words before His glorious ascension into heaven serve as the basis for this statement:

"All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. ¹⁹Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, ²⁰teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age" (Matthew 28).

At the core of this command is the call to "make disciples" on a perpetual basis. In addition to this, we are summoned by the Lord to evangelize the world with the good news of His victory over sin and death, coupled with His ability to give forgiveness and eternal life to all those who chose to follow Him in faith. This is what we are about. This is what drives us. This is what impassions us. This is what goes into everything we plan ministry-wise. Making disciples for Jesus Christ and reaching non-Christians for Him is our main goal. Yes, we are on a mission from God and that mission is, and always will be, zeroed in on maintaining a perfect balance between discipleship and evangelism.

All of this, of course, leads to a logical question: Just what is a disciple?

- They are a person in love with Jesus more than anything and anyone else.
- They are a person who strives, more often than not, to conform their life to His holy life.
- They are a person who is an avid, loyal, consumed student of Jesus.
- They are a person who is ready and willing to make hard personal sacrifices for the advancement of the gospel.
- They are the person who governs their life by the Word of God, not what they feel is true or culturally importance and acceptable.
- They are the person who isn't afraid of saying what needs saying in a decadent culture.
- They are the person who understands and practices the spiritual disciplines like prayer, confession, meditation and Bible study.

- They are a person who daily attempts to make their holy position before God (1 Corinthians 1:30) match their daily, pragmatic walk (Galatians 5:16; Ephesians 2:10; Colossians 2:6).

A disciple is a person who is being transformed, in every facet of their life, into the likeness of Jesus Christ. Paul puts it this way:

“But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as from the Lord, the Spirit” (2 Corinthians 3:18).

I guess, in light of all of this, the question needs to be asked: “Do these words describe you? Are you a disciple? Does your life illustrate you are sold out to Him?” I hope so because we want you to be prepared to meet Him when He appears. To that end we are purposefully building a church which uses biblical information to lead to spiritual transformation. Exciting.

In addition to building and growing disciples, we are all about evangelism, about using a variety of means to publish and broadcast the gospel the Lord has entrusted to our care, and about training each of you to be a viable, powerful evangelist in our Christless, everything-is-truth, decadent culture.

In a sermon series I did back in 2009 we studied the book of Acts. We named this study *Road Trip*, and during it we focused heavily on evangelism because of the evangelistic thrust of the early Church. Whether it was Peter on the Temple Mount, or Paul on trial before a Roman governor, sharing their faith with anybody and everybody consumed these ancient saints and that is why the Church grew. Why did they do this? Because they knew the mission Christ had left to them, a mission He stated right before His glorious ascension into heaven:

“but you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be My witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the remotest part of the earth” (Acts 1:8).

‘Witnesses’ is just another word for evangelists, which are what we are supposed to be. And we have our work cut out for us. According to one national study on healthy verses non-healthy churches, they concluded that “any healthy church should be reaching at least one person with the gospel every two weeks” (Thom Rainer, *Breakout Churches*: 20). My question, therefore, to you is simple: What are you doing in your personal and public life to help us become a healthier church? There is a whole lost world out there which needs a saving faith in Jesus, coupled with loving, caring life-long mentoring in what it means to follow hard after Him.

Believe me. Everything we do around here is measured against our mission. We aren't going to involve ourselves in things which do not promote and advance this mission. We are going to purposefully and strategically build a local church on just two Christ-mandated concepts: help saints mature in Christ by means of discipleship and never miss an opportunity to share the good news of the gospel with non-Christians.

Yes, our mission couldn't be clearer. God wants us all to be disciples and evangelists. Everything else on top of that is gravy. Ostensibly, the question we must now entertain is this: How do we plan on making sure we fulfill our mission I'm glad you asked. The answer is as simple as the question: We purposefully build this ministry around three, short, and memorable strategic words: *Gather, Grow, and Go.*

What Is Our Mission Method?

Evangelism and discipleship start as we ...

Gather

For us, this important word speaks of our desire to meet corporately for worship of the living God. We do this because we love Him and because it is His command. Many verses from the Bible illustrate these truths.

David, who had a vibrant life of worship, calls us in the Psalter to join in the worship of God:

⁶Come, let us worship and bow down, Let us kneel before the LORD our Maker. ⁷For He is our God, And we are the people of His pasture and the sheep of His hand. Today, if you would hear His voice, do not harden your hearts as a Meribah, as in the day of Massah in the wilderness (Psalm 95).

Do you see the corporate nature of the command in the phrase "let us"? Those who love God love to approach Him together. This same thought is echoed in Psalm 132:7:

"Let us go into His dwelling place; Let us worship at His footstool."

Again, you can't help but seeing how worshippers are called to come together in a specified place to worship. Worship is exactly what the New Testament saints did when the Lord formed the Church:

⁴²They were continually devoting themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. ⁴³Everyone kept feeling a sense of awe; and many wonders and signs were taking place through the apostles (Acts 2).

This is just another way of saying they were in corporate worship together, just like Word of God commands all of us:

*²⁴and let us consider how to stimulate one another to love and good deeds,
²⁵not forsaking our own assembling together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another; and all the more as you see the day drawing near (Hebrews 10).*

Show me a healthy, vibrant, growing, maturing church, and I'll show you one which places a premium value on corporate worship. We believe we are that kind of church and we intend on keeping that status as devoted disciples.

What are some of our goals where worship is concerned? Here's a sampling of a few of them:

To usher you weekly, and corporately, into the unseen presence of the living God. Throughout the Scriptures, God calls us, His creation, to worship Him above all things and above all else. When God proposed to save Israel from Egyptian bondage, which became a fantastic word picture of our salvation from the bondage of sin, His words to Moses are most instructive about His intended goal for this operation:

"Therefore, come now, and I will send you to Pharaoh, so that you may bring My people, the sons of Israel, out of Egypt. But Moses said to God, 'Who am I, that I should go to Pharaoh, and that I should bring the sons of Israel out of Egypt?' And He said, 'Certainly I will be with you, and this shall be the sign to you that it is I who have sent you: when you have brought the people out of Egypt, you shall worship God at this mountain'" (Exodus 3:10-12).

Ah, there is it. God desired to bring His redeemed people, His followers to a special mountain in the Sinai desert so they could collectively worship Him there. Later He had His people build a portable worship center called a tabernacle (Exodus 25-40), and under King Solomon they constructed a permanent Temple in Jerusalem. In both worship settings God specifically designed His priests to carry out a well ordered, highly organized, sensory and auditory worship service on a perpetual basis. Their goal?

To get God's people into God's presence as they came to worship.

In the New Testament times nothing has changed. God still wants maturing disciples to come before Him in a corporate environment, and for us that all occurs on Sunday mornings. We will use everything at our disposal to realize this goal from the types of songs we sing, to the prayers we pray, to videos we'll interweave throughout the service. And as we commit ourselves to these ventures, the Lord will show up in the most amazing, awe-inspiring ways, ways you'll sense but not be able to readily describe to someone else.

A second goal for gathering the saints together is this ...

To help you learn how the Scriptures, and the spiritual principles they reveal, are relevant to your daily life so you can grow up in the faith. As we see it, the service is first and foremost for believers. During this time we don't just worship the Lord, we place ourselves under the teaching of His Word, seeking to learn from it so its timeless truths can impact us and change us into His holy likeness. Once more, the emphasis is upon the idea of life transformation, as the Scriptures teach us:

"like newborn babies, long for the pure milk of the word, so that by it you may grow in respect to salvation, if you have tasted the kindness of the Lord" (1 Peter 2:2,3).

Just as a baby is transformed physically by drinking milk, believers are transformed spiritually by drinking of the milk of the Word of God as they read from it, study it, and hear it taught. Paul describes the power of the Word of God as well:

"All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; so that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work" (2 Timothy 3:16,17).

Again, you can't miss how the inspired Word from God has the ability to fashion you into a holy, godly person. No other book on earth can do this. Thus, we will be known as a church which teaches this book. Sometimes the series will be topical, sometimes our study will be textual where we will cover an entire book, but in the final analysis they will all be biblically based. They will also be structured and delivered to show you how the life-giving principles from God are pertinent and applicable to your life. By the use of personal analogies, DVD movie clips, *YouTube* clips, drama, stage props, historical illustrations, modern quotes, and so forth, we will seek to make the Word not just relevant to you, but challenging so you can grow up in Jesus.

A third goal is a logical outcropping of the last one...

We desire to challenge all those who do not follow Christ to place their faith in His ability to save them from His coming judgment and to give them an amazing life here and in the hereafter. Granted, we will not work Jesus's life-giving gospel into every message, because the text in question may not warrant it; however, you can rest assured that when appropriate we will showcase the power and life transformative power of His gospel for sinful creatures who turn to Him in faith. At times, we will even provide an altar call, or a time at the close of a message where non-Christ followers can come forward and place their faith in Him as their personal Savior. When we give one of these, please be in prayer for those who are making a decision to be born into God's eternal family (John 3). Also, make it a point to go up to the person in question to let them know you'll be praying for them. Body life is so important for these new believers in Jesus. So make sure you do your part.

Gathering for worship is, well, just the highlight of a believer's week, isn't it? As many have said before: Sunday's public worship should just be a culmination of a believer's private worship. How true. You should come expectant because God will show up and speak. You should come with a spirit of confession, knowing there are areas where you need to work on in your life. You should come with a focused purpose of getting to know others and seeing how they are going. You should come to learn how to conform your life to His perfect life. You should come, period, because it is just what Jesus ordered for vibrant, committed, growing followers.

I don't know about you, but I am personally humbled by what the Lord has done in and through this church as we've gathered for worship. He has blessed us spiritually with changed lives. I can't forget the young woman who came up to me several years ago and said, "Pastor Marty, I am an atheist and I just wanted to let you know I don't believe half of what you teach." Over the next year she didn't miss too many services, nor did she miss too many opportunities to debate me concerning questions which naturally arose from the morning message; however, in the end, she came face to face with the living Savior and Lord who died for her sin and rose from the grave. So, what did she do? She bowed before Him in faith and today she gathers among us as a sister in Christ. Simply amazing.

God has given us a wonderful church family. I thank Him for that. It was worth leaving friends and family in California in November of 2008 to come and invest my life here with you for His kingdom. I now look, with great anticipation, for Him to do some amazing things in the years ahead. How exciting it is to be with you right now, watching His Spirit work among us. Worship Him who is, indeed, worthy of great praise and adoration.

A second way we seek to pragmatically realize the mission our Master has given us is summed up in this word ...

Grow

Jesus saves us from our sins in order to conform us to His holy image as we submit to His leading and teaching. I remember when I first encountered this important spiritual-life truth as a new believer. My pastor gave me, along with other new converts, a packet of verses to memorize and one of those texts came from the apostle Paul:

¹⁷Therefore if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creature; the old things passed away; behold, new things have come (2 Corinthians 5).

This is awesome news, is it not? Before you came to Christ in faith you were dead in your sins and you lived according to the lusts and desires of the old, godless man. After you came to faith in Christ, you were now made spiritually alive so you could live a life according to the new man God, in His holiness, wants you to be. But before we get too excited about the personal ramifications of Paul's words here, let's analyze the text a little further.

Being "in Christ" grammatically speaks of being within the sphere of Christ. Philipp Hughes opens up the meaning of this crucial prepositional phrase with this comment:

The expression "in Christ" sums up as briefly and as profoundly as possible the inexhaustible significance of man's redemption. It speaks of security in Him who has Himself borne in his own body the judgment of God against our sin; it speaks of acceptance in Him with whom alone God is well pleased; it speaks of assurance for the future in Him who is the Resurrection and the Life; it speaks of the inheritance of glory in Him who, as the only-begotten Son, is the sole heir of God; it speaks of participation in the divine nature in Him who is the everlasting Word; it speaks of knowing the truth, and being free in that truth, in Him who Himself is the Truth. All this, and very much more than can ever be expressed in human language, is meant by being "in Christ." (Emphasis added. As quoted in Kent Hughes, 2 Corinthians: Power in Weakness. Wheaton: Crossway Books, 2006: 182)

The day you trust Christ as your personal Savior and Lord is the day you become "in Christ," never to become "out of Christ" again in your lifetime. Membership in His family is the eternal consequence of personal faith, and as a family member the power of the living Christ is made available to you for godly living. So, I must ask you, "Are you 'in Christ'?" The day you verbally ask Jesus to be your Savior and Lord is the day you experience the wonder of this statement.

Note carefully what happens after that moment of redemptive, saving faith: “the old things,” your old sinful life is passed away and now you are no longer enslaved to the old sinful man, but are equipped (by the Spirit) to become the new man who will, by default, experience God’s power to become a saint in ever since of the word. Translated, old sinful attitudes will be traded for new godly attitudes. Old temptations will be defeated by new empowerment. Old immoral actions will be sidelined by new moral and God-honoring actions. Yes, because you are a new person in Christ at the moment of conversion you are now placed on a daily course of becoming a new person by growing up in Him by means of your obedience to His Word and way.

Theologically, scholars call what Paul speaks about here in 2 Corinthians 5:17 positional and practical sanctification or holiness. At the moment of faith, the sinner is forgiven their sin and given the positional holiness only Jesus, the perfect sacrifice, could provide to them. We are placed “in Christ” because we are holy because of perfect work of Christ on the cross in our behalf.

Many other biblical texts support this concept of positional holiness. Here’s another to think about:

³⁰But by His doing you are in Christ Jesus, who became to us wisdom from God, and righteousness and sanctification, and redemption... (1 Corinthians 1).

Once more, we encounter that key prepositional phrase “in Christ,” but here its meaning is opened up even more. Paul informs us how our childlike faith in the person and redemptive work of Jesus positionally gives us God’s righteousness, His sanctification or holiness, and His redemption. What love and grace. God takes your sin, your spiritual ugliness, your godless mistakes, and replaces it with a high and lofty position you could never secure.

All of this assumes, of course, that the believer’s practical life will be daily impacted by their unique and lofty position in Jesus. Put another way, because your old sinful man has been replaced by the new spiritual man, positionally speaking, you will naturally desire to match your practical walk with that position, or you will move onto maturity.

You cannot read the New Testament and not encounter repeated calls and commands for us to spiritually grow up by yielding all of our hearts and minds to the transformative power of the Spirit of God. Here are just a few of some of those key texts we should all know well and seek to follow and implement in our lives.

Once more, we defer to the Apostle Paul:

¹⁸But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as from the Lord, the Spirit (2 Corinthians 3).

Remember when ol' man Moses came near to God (Exodus 34:35). What happened to him? When he came down the holy mount his face reflected the shining, brilliant glory of the living God. The same is true of us as we draw near to God, as we spend time in His presence ... privately and publicly, as we are with others who are developing an intimate relationship with Him: we are transformed, meaning we move from one state of holiness to a brighter state.

All of this moves me to ask some important questions. How are you doing? Look around you. Know anyone who has the glory of God around them? Seen anyone in your walk with Jesus who has moved from one level of spiritual brightness to another? I'm sure you have. Yet, the most important thing we can, and should, constantly ask ourselves is this: "Is my life reflecting, more and more, the Savior I serve?"

Now, back to the text at hand.

Greek grammar helps us here. The word for transform is in the passive voice and it is a present tense verb. What does this mean? Everything. The passive nature of the verbal idea means the subject, viz., you, the believer, are being acted on, and the present tense denotes you are perpetually being acted on. By whom? By God as you submit more and more of your life to His teachings, principles, and commands. How exciting. We are in a state of moving from one level of glory/maturity to another. Where are you on that spectrum?

Additionally, I must point out the rich meaning of the word Paul employs to describe the process of growing up in Jesus. It's called transformation and it comes from the Greek word metamorphosis. Sound familiar? It should. What does this word mean? It denotes changing the basic nature of something, to alter its core structure into something altogether different. If your children are into The Transformers, or if you've seen The Hulk change from one form to another, then you have a good handle on what this word means. And if you are not into movies, then just think of how a butterfly starts out as an ugly, slow-moving worm. Each of these changes is, indeed, a radical metamorphosis, and this is exactly what positional holiness is all about: It's about being constantly and radically changed into a deeper and more devoted follower of Jesus Christ.

Are you growing? What is the proof? Everything we do will be geared toward helping you mature and develop in the faith. We are not committed to just making you smarter Christians. No, we are committed to making you Christians who are smart in the Word and who, in turn, live to apply that Word to their lives in the most practical fashion so they will look more and more like Jesus Christ as the years go by.

Another tremendous passage about practical holiness is tucked away in Romans 6:

¹⁴For sin shall not be master over you, for you are not under law but under grace. ¹⁵What then? Shall we sin because we are not under law but under grace? May it never be! ¹⁶Do you not know that when you present yourselves to someone as slaves for obedience, you are slaves of the one whom you obey, either of sin resulting in death, or of obedience resulting in righteousness? ¹⁷But thanks be to God that though you were slaves of sin, you became obedient from the heart to that form of teaching to which you were committed, ¹⁸and having been freed from sin, you became slaves of righteousness.

As a follower of Christ, you now have the choice of pursuing the things of God or falling back into your old ways. Prior to faith in Jesus, you simply lived life based on the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life. Now, however, you have the ability to live a life free from your old sinful chains.

Robert Mounce, author of *The New American Commentary: 2 Corinthians*, skillfully describes the import of Paul's words here to the saints in Rome:

6:15 At the beginning of the chapter we encountered the question, Shall we go on sinning so that grace may increase? (v. 1). Now we meet a second and similar rhetorical question, Shall we sin because we are under grace rather than law? The first draws from 5:20 the mistaken inference that since law was added to increase the trespass, we ought to continue sinning so as to make grace increase all the more. The second mistakenly assumes that if we are not under law it does not really matter if we sin. The answer to both questions is a resounding, "By no means!" Grace does not free us to do anything we want. It does not provide the opportunity to live apart from all restrictions. Freedom is not the exercise of unlimited spontaneity. It means to be set free from the bondage of sin in order to live in a way that reflects the nature and character of God. The rhetorical question probably arose among Jews who felt that to be released from the jurisdiction of law would encourage the removal of all moral restraint. The answer to that fearful expectation is, By no means! 6:16–17 People obviously are the slaves of the one to whom they offer themselves to obey (v. 17). Paul set forth two masters: one is sin, and the other is obedience [to God]. There is no possibility of living without an allegiance to one or the other.

“There is no absolute independence for man,” writes J. Denney; “our nature requires us to serve some master.” Unbelievers may think they are free and would have to give up that freedom should they accept Christ. Such is not the case.

They are servants of sin right now. In coming to Christ they simply exchange one master for another. Servitude to sin is replaced with servitude to God. The master we obey is clear evidence of whose slaves we really are. There is no room for compromise. As Jesus taught, “No one can serve two masters” (Matt 6:24). We also are reminded of Joshua’s challenge to the Israelites at Shechem, “Choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve” (Joshua 24:15).

There is a dramatic difference in the outcomes of choosing one or the other of these masters. To choose sin as a master leads to death. To choose obedience to God as master leads to righteousness (v. 16). The contrast in v. 16 is between sin and obedience. From this we may rightly infer that the essence of sin is disobedience. Sin is not simply something that we can’t help doing but something we choose to do in direct violation of it is not something that is excusable due to extenuating circumstances. The righteousness to which obedience leads is the righteousness of personal growth in spiritual maturity.

That last sentence is so important. As we chose righteousness, as we submit to the voice of God through the Word, as we seek to make appreciable life changes because of what we’ve learned in a sermon or a Bible study, we move onward and upward to Christian maturity ... and that is what life is all about.

Moving toward spiritual maturity is also what our church is all about, and rightly so, for it is just another expression of what it means to make disciples from all the nations. Ostensibly, then, you can expect everything we do to be tied to this quest. Whether it is challenging you to be part of a home group, or being an active part of some facet of our thriving women’s program, we will purposefully be calling and challenging you to grow up in Christ. We are not here to make you a smarter saint but a godlier one. We are not here to entertain you in a morning worship service, but to introduce you to the presence of the living God so you can worship Him with others, and so you can hear the Word of God so you will know what your Lord wants from you that day. We don’t plan outings, retreats, or service opportunities just so you can get to know others, as important as that is, but so you can get more information on how to shape your life to reflect that of Jesus.

Yes, if you are serious about spiritual maturity then you are in the right place with the right group of people. We love Christ, first and foremost, and we collectively and individually are building a church known for its Christlikeness. Sure, we are not perfect. No church is. We have weaknesses, and we trip and fall. We, however, are not content with being static, but dynamic with our faith by pursuing holiness.

A third concept we focus on to make sure we are fulfilling our Lord's Great Commission is one simple, monosyllabic word:

Go

What does it mean to "go"? For us, it points to two concepts.

One, going from Matthew 28:19 speaks of our responsibility to share our faith with those who don't know the Savior. Think of an artesian well for a moment. My Uncle Buck (that's really his name) took me out to see one on a trip my family took to South Carolina one summer. In the middle of this well-watered, green field bubbled the freshest, cleanest water I've ever tasted, and it, by its nature and positioning, couldn't help but just bubble to the surface, bringing life wherever its streams carried it. In many respects, this is a metaphor, a picture of our lives. When we've tasted and know that the Lord is good (Psalm 34:8), when we know the power of the cross in our own lives, when we know the value of having the Spirit of God working in and through our lives, in spectacular, refreshing ways, we can't help but let the value of the faith bubble over from our lives to those we come in contact with.

Isn't this how Jesus lived? Indeed. To read through the gospels is to see him setting the example of bringing the life-giving water of the gospel to spiritually dry, parched souls. Think about His purposefully and strategic encounter with the Samaritan woman at a well one day:

⁵So He came to a city of Samaria, called Sychar, near the parcel of ground that Jacob gave to his son Joseph; ⁶and Jacob's well was there. Jesus therefore, being wearied from His journey, was sitting thus by the well. It was about the sixth hour. ⁷There came a woman of Samaria to draw water. Jesus said to her, "Give Me a drink." ⁸For His disciples had gone away into the city to buy food. ⁹The Samaritan woman therefore said to Him, "How is it that You, being a Jew, ask me for a drink since I am a Samaritan woman?" (For Jews have no dealings with Samaritans.) ¹⁰Jesus answered and said to her, "If you knew the gift of God, and who it is who says to you, 'Give Me a drink,' you would have asked Him, and He would have given you living water." ¹¹She said to Him, "Sir, You have nothing to draw with and the well is deep; where then do You get that living water?" ¹²"You are not greater than our father Jacob, are You, who gave us the well, and drank of it himself, and his sons, and his cattle?" ¹³Jesus answered and said to her, "Everyone who drinks of this water shall thirst again; ¹⁴but whoever drinks of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall become in him a well of water springing up to eternal life." ¹⁵The woman said to Him, "Sir, give me this water, so I will not be thirsty, nor come all the way here to draw." ¹⁶He said to her, "Go, call your husband, and come here."

¹⁷The woman answered and said, "I have no husband." Jesus said to her, "You have well said, 'I have no husband!'; ¹⁸for you have had five husbands, and the one whom you now have is not your husband; this you have said truly." ¹⁹The woman said to Him, "Sir, I perceive that You are a prophet. ²⁰"Our fathers worshiped in this mountain, and you people say that in Jerusalem is the place where men ought to worship." ²¹Jesus said to her, "Woman, believe Me, an hour is coming when neither in this mountain, nor in Jerusalem, shall you worship the Father. ²²"You worship that which you do not know; we worship that which we know, for salvation is from the Jews. ²³"But an hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshipers shall worship the Father in spirit and truth; for such people the Father seeks to be His worshipers. ²⁴"God is spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth." ²⁵The woman said to Him, "I know that Messiah is coming (He who is called Christ); when that One comes, He will declare all things to us." ²⁶Jesus said to her, "I who speak to you am He" (John 4).

See how the gospel just bubbled out of the life of Jesus? See how it spilled over into the life of a woman with a sordid, sinful spiritual past? See how easily and naturally Christ poured the water of life into the sandy soil of her spiritually destitute life? He has given us a great model to guide us in our quest to fulfill the great commission, and this encounter at the beginning of the gospel of John is most instructive. In fact, I'd dare say it is so instructive, so important we need to slow down a bit and study it more carefully.

From my study of this passage, I clearly see six sound principles we can identify and emulate to make sure we are successful with Christ's gospel. Drop down through the verses with me and you'll see them, too. Each one of these biblical concepts will give us some much needed and timely insight into how to go and then lead someone into God's kingdom by our witness, coupled with the power of the Spirit.

Evangelism Concept #1: Live Near the Lost (v. 6)

What could be simpler? If you want to reach non-Christians for Jesus, friend, you've got to know non-Christians, be where they are, do some of the things they do, hang out with them, make sure you bump into them more than once a month. Note: It is not enough to talk about them, take classes to know how to share with them, to read books on what makes them tick. Sooner or later, if you want to be spiritually effective, you've got to let your life purposefully intersect with theirs. Yes, I said, purposefully. It must be part of your life-plan.

Take your lead from Jesus. We talked in our last study how he could have by-passed the wicked soil of Samaria like a good Jewish Rabbi of His time would have by crossing east over the Jordan River and heading due north to His destination. But He didn't. He chose to purposefully go where no ceremonially clean Jew would dare go ... through Samaria, that nation of cultist who watered down the law of Moses, and who blasphemed the most holy Jewish faith. And he didn't just go through Samaria; He parked Himself at a location where He knew He was bound to bump into a Samaritan. Jesus went looking for contact. What courage. Do you have what He had? Take stock of your evangelism model for a moment. What do you do to assure you'll run into really godless people? Here's another question: Where will you find them? The sky is the limit, isn't it? They'll be part of Pop Werner Football, Little League, soccer, or your local swim team. They'll be the fourth guy you add to your golfing team next time you play Twin Lakes golf course. They'll be the group bowling next to you. They just might be the waitress who brings you some food to snack on. They will be members of the PTA, Women's Club, Lion's Club, Kiwanis, etc. Get the picture? Folks who don't know Christ as Savior are everywhere, but you must be somewhere near their location to rub shoulders with them. Are you working at it?

The house across the street from me foreclosed in 2013. One day a man drove up in a truck, parked, and then walked over to talk to me in my driveway.

"Hi, my name is Ted and I just wanted to let you know I just bought that house on auction and I'm going to flip it. But you can rest assured I will make it look really good." He talked a little more and then started stumbling over his words. At that point he said, "Hey, man, I'm sorry it was a rough night of drinkin' last night."

I replied, "That's OK, I'll forgive you because I am a Christian and a pastor."

He gulped hard, smiled, and then laughed before he walked away and got to work. That started a talking relationship, and it also caused him, unbeknownst to me, to tell his plumbing contractor, Bill, I was a pastor.

Over the next few weeks, I started talking to Bill across the street. Nothing heavy duty. Just some questions about what he was doing and what kind of materials he used. One day when I went home for lunch, I headed back out to my car, which was parked on the street by my mailbox.

Standing there with my Mac in my hands, along with some books, and a drink, I was struggling to pop my trunk when I heard Bill say across the street, "Hi, Marty. Ted told me the other day that you were a pastor. Is that true?"

"Yes, it's true," I replied.

Walking over to me, he then said, “Well, that’s great. You are just the guy I need to talk to. You see, I wasn’t raised in a religious home, and I don’t really know anything about God, but the older I have gotten I just know there is something more to my life than making money by flipping homes.

My problem, however, is I don’t know what questions to ask to find the answer to my problem, and I realize my problem is probably religious. Could you help me?”

At that point, you don’t say things like, “Uh, let me think about it,” or “Could we talk later ‘cause I’m busy.” No. I dropped everything and began to talk to him about the problem of sin and the provision for sinners through the person and work of Jesus Christ. I’d say within twenty minutes he bowed his head in the street and prayed to trust Jesus as his personal Savior and Lord. Talk about low hanging fruit! Talk about a thirsty soul! And to think his spiritual need was met because I was faithful to plant myself near him.

Let me give you a challenge, you who hold tight-fisted to your love of isolation: Pray this prayer today, “Lord, show me where I can personally plant myself this week so I can make some spiritual contact for you.”

Evangelism Concept #2: Receive The “Rejects” (John 4:7, 16-17)

Jesus did, at times, attempt to win people of status, but His primary method for evangelism was to go after folks who we’d classify as the down-and-outers, the social misfits. In fact, He was so friendly toward the seedy people of life; the overly pious of His day looked down their long noses and said on one occasion:

*“The Son of Man has come eating and drinking; and you say, ‘Behold, a gluttonous man, and a drunkard, a friend of tax-gatherers and sinners’”
(Luke 7:34).*

The religious types of Christ’s day wouldn’t dare contaminate themselves with the likes of Jewish people with leprosy, prostitutes, tax collectors, let alone a Samaritan woman with a sordid, salacious past. Christ thought and did otherwise. He lovingly embraced those society discarded as useless, worthless people for God’s kingdom, and it was through His unconditional for them He was enabled to win an audience.

What about you? Who are the rejects you veer around or away from? A man with enough tattoos to tell a story? A young man with a long history of trouble with the law? A girl who loves all the week-end parties? The whiskered man with the proverbial “I need help?” sign in front of his chest? The shut-in who can’t get to church even if she wanted to? A guy who talks too much? A woman who really does have a past? A divorcee? A person of another ethnic group? A girl who didn’t make a team cut? A truly ugly person? An emotionally unbalanced individual? An illegal immigrant?

I’d dare say we’d all be more powerful in the hands of Jesus if we’d all purposefully set out to reach out to the societal rejects because they are the ones who tend to know they need Him in a big way. The majority of the others are tied up with their stock portfolios, boats, clubs, and sports activities. No doubt we can and should reach out to them, but we learn from Christ in this passage who is usually more open to Him.

Taylor Field is a man who emulates Christ’s method. In 1986, he took his young wife and lovely little children and moved them to New York’s Lower East side where he took over the East Seventh Baptist Church. He might as well have moved to downtown Bogotá. Drug dealers were more plentiful than mailboxes, addicts roamed the streets, beggars lived anywhere and everywhere, toothless people were so pervasive it could keep thousands of dentists busy for millennia, and one local thug, named Luis, basically ran the entire economy of this area, providing drug jobs and security. Obviously, it wasn’t like taking a pastorate in La Jolla or Pacific Palisades. But this is where Christ called Taylor, so he willingly went, choosing to sit by this well for a while.

He said the first time he had a prayer meeting at the church, which he eventually changed its name to Graffiti ... and you can guess why ... fifteen people showed up. They looked more like escapees from a local asylum, but they were who God sent him. When he asked them to pause for quiet meditation, one man misunderstood him and said jubilantly, “It’s medication time!” Still, the pastor forged ahead.

Many years later, countless people, whom the world had thrown away, are now saints and eternal members of the kingdom of God because of the Christlike love of one man and his wife. He not only went where they were, he purposefully pursued those most in higher society chooses to drive past. Do you really love the down-and-outers? Do you love the lost no matter who they are? Jesus did and does. If you want your evangelism quiver full of souls at the end of this exciting spiritual journey, then you know what you must do. No, don’t pull up stakes and move to New York. Your New York may be closer than you think.

Evangelism Concept #3: Launch from the Language (John 4:7, 10)

By this I mean, use common, everyday words, which have a spiritual counter-part or lead-in, to direct any given conversation toward God and the concepts of sin and salvation. This is exactly what Jesus did here, and on many other occasions. Listen and learn, won't you?

First, Jesus appears to ask for a drink of physical water:

⁷"There came a woman of Samaria to draw water. Jesus said to her, 'Give Me a drink.'"

The Samaritan woman obviously thought He was speaking about physical water because she said:

⁹"How is it that You, being a Jew, ask me for a drink since I am a Samaritan woman?" (For Jews have no dealings with Samaritans.)

With Christ's next comment, it is quite clear He has taken the concept of drinking water to a whole new level:

¹⁰"Jesus answered and said to her, 'If you knew the gift of God, and who it is who says to you, 'Give Me a drink,' you would have asked Him, and He would have given you living water.'"

Quite obviously He's speaking about water that's not at the bottom of Jacob's well, but water from a different sphere altogether. According to verse 11, the woman was still stuck on the idea of literal water; much like Nicodemus was stuck on the concept of physical birth while Jesus was speaking about spiritual birth. In verses 13 through 14 our Lord ups the ante by revealing that the water He offers is capable of granting a thirsty soul eternal life:

¹³Jesus answered and said to her, 'Everyone who drinks of this water shall thirst again; ¹⁴but whoever drinks of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall become in him a well of water springing up to eternal life.'

Once more, He has taken an ordinary object of everyday life, i.e., water, and has impregnated it with wondrous meaning in order to guide the sinner's thinking toward salvation. Point is, you and I can and should do the same at every opportunity which comes our way. How can you go about using language in this fashion? Well, just let your imagination run wild. Better yet, ask the Spirit of God to help you at the beginning of each day to have some creative juices and He will.

Just in case you need a jump start, I hope you don't mind if I give you a few ideas of how to turn any conversation toward a discussion of eternal truths. To the friend who has asked you to help him work on his car you can somewhere along the line say when he keeps grabbing the wrong socket size, "Isn't that just like man's search for spiritual truth. He tries one size after another, but what the world has to offer never seems to fit. Have you ever felt that way?" I bet with that comment he'll come out from under the car.

- To the eye doctor who's dropping various lenses in the machine to help you find the right prescription you could say, "You have a wonderful job. Not only do you get to meet many new people each day, you get the pleasure of helping those who can't help themselves see. Your job reminds me of what Christ does for mankind."
- To the plumber who's working on the pipes in your kitchen, you could say, "It amazes me how nice the sink looks but how disgusting the pipes underneath can be once you open them up. Wouldn't you say that's a snapshot of man's spiritual being?" Again, I'll bet he'll come out from under the sink on this one, or at least bump his head.
- To the neighbor who comes over to your house wondering why you don't have any weeds in your beds, you could say, "Well, George, I use a pre-emergence called Amaze, and it inhibits the growth of weeds seeds which are resident in the soil around here. If you use this product you'll get wonderful results." He'll probably thank you for your help, but before he turns and walks back to his house, why not put out this probing question: "Say, George, have you ever given thought to the fact that your yard and my yard might just be a picture of the two types of spiritual lives? Would you be interested in some pre-emergence which get rids more than just weeds?"

I could go on, but that would take the fun out of it. Listen to me, what Jesus did, you can do too. Just start paying attention to what people are saying and then look for innovative ways to put a bridle in the mouth of the discussion and lead it to where you want it to go. You'll be shocked at the results, believe me. Too often, I fear, we let fantastic opportunities slip through our fingers like fine grains of sand. Let us collectively work to close those fingers so we can reach that person at the well of life like Jesus did.

Evangelism Concept #4: Preview the Promise (John 4:13-14)

By this I mean make sure you, like our Lord, tell the spiritually parched non-Christian just what this awesome water of God will do in their life. Jesus emphatically tells her that she should receive the water He's offering it will become a virtual geyser of eternal life giving water to her soul. He didn't just say, "Here, try this new spiritual elixir I've got here. It just may cure your spiritual ills." He wasn't politically correct either. We know this because He didn't say, "Here, dear, try some of the water I've got to offer you, it is just one of plethora of religious waters you can drink from in today's world." No. He offered her eternal life solely through the spiritual water He was offering.

This is what makes Christianity so different from the religions of the world. It guarantees you eternal, fresh, flowing life the moment you believe in the source of the headwaters, Jesus Christ. All other religions, from Hinduism to Islam can only give you a weak promise of life before God based upon your small faith plus a whole lot of performance to the god or gods in question.

Promises of never-ending life permeate the gospel story:

²⁷My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me; ²⁸ and I give eternal life to them, and they shall never perish; and no one shall snatch them out of My hand" (John 10:27-28).

"Truly, truly, I say to you, he who believes has eternal life" (John 6:47).

Note, Jesus didn't say, "You might have eternal life," or "You might get lucky and live forever." No. He said, "He who believes has eternal life." What greater message can you give mortals who are stalked by death each day, who are constantly reminded of their own finiteness? If you will but give this promise, it will open up a well of water in their life which will meet their deepest needs while giving them inexorable hope. Are you ready to share the promise?

Evangelism Concept #5: Prove THE Point (John 4:16-19).

In this exchange Jesus moves to demonstrate that He's not just any Jewish Rabbi, He's THE Rabbi, even God himself. He does it by expressing His omniscience. Bear in mind, she didn't tell him she was currently living with a man outside of marriage and that she had been divorced five times. He told her what He already knew about her underscoring His divinity. No doubt, it was this revelation which moved her later to make a faith decision to follow Jesus.

Remember what she joyously proclaimed as she ran into Sychar a new woman, “Come, see a man who told me all the things that I have done; this is not the Christ, is it?” (v. 29). She was well on her way to cognitively and emotionally embracing the fact of Christ’s true identity.

Makes you ask, “How do we prove His identity in our day and time?” I’ll share with you a story which gives you an excellent answer. Of the sixty exact prophecies of Christ foretold in the Old Testament, it would be mathematically impossible for a man to fulfill just eight of the sixty. Peter Stoner, in his book *Science Speaks*, definitively demonstrates that for one man to fulfill eight of the ancient prophecies would be 1 in 10 to the 17th power, or 1 in 100,000,000,000,000,000. For one man to fulfill 48 would be 1 in 10 to the 157th power. You can add the zeroes if you like for affect.

For a man to fulfill eight prophecies it would be equivalent to burying the state of Texas in silver dollars three feet deep, choosing one coin, placing a dot on it, and then throwing it arbitrarily somewhere in the state. Then, ask one man to reach down and pick up that one particular coin without missing. The bottom line is, it could NEVER be done, regardless of chance and how much time you gave the individual. This is why mathematicians have concluded that anything past the 50th power is improbable of ever occurring.

Who, then, is Jesus? He alone is God. Crunching the ancient prophetic numbers more than proves the point. So, the next time you use conversation to guide the thirsty soul to the well of life, make sure you give them adequate reasons for believing in Jesus as the Lord of heaven and earth. Prove the point. You have plenty of proof.

Evangelism Concept #6: Focus the Foggy (John 4:20-24).

Christ has made great headway with this woman, but still she’s not quite sure about Him. She knows He acts like a prophet because He knows things only a prophet who walks with God knows. However, there is still a gray fog around her thinking. Remember, she was raised in the false theology of Samaria, probably her whole life. All she has ever known is the fact that they accepted the first five books of Moses, while rejecting all of the rest, that Abraham has supposedly tried to sacrifice Isaac on Mount Gerizim, that Melchizedek, the great “eternal” high priest, had supposedly appeared to Abraham on Mount Gerizim, that Moses had built an altar and sacrificed to God on Mount Gerizim when the Israelites entered the promised land, that obedience to the law was the requirement for eternal life. She grew up being told that the place to worship God was Mount Gerizim, that the place was just as important as the person.

Yes, she was steeped in a false religious system that had conveniently adjusted history to suit their man-centered thinking. She had been given a kernel of truth, but the rest of the cob was eaten through and through with false teaching. Abraham didn't attempt to sacrifice Isaac on Mount Gerizim and Moses never built an altar on Mount Gerizim, but rather on Mount Ebal (Deuteronomy 27:4). These were religious lies meant to deceive and keep people drinking from the well of error.

Enter Jesus. In verse 21, He clears the fog away by telling her the time is coming when the place you tap into God won't matter. In verse 22, He hits her false thinking head-on by telling her she is dead wrong in thinking that her belief system will save her soul, when salvation can only come through the Jewish faith based in its proper teachings about sin and sacrifice. In verse 23 through 24 He clears the last bit of fog away by telling her that since God is spirit and truth He can be worshiped by anyone, anywhere, at any time. Why, He can even be accessed at a dirty old well at high noon on a very hot day.

Again, what do we learn from His effective method for leading the lost into the kingdom? We learn that we must be prepared to say what needs to be said. We must be willingly to loving point out that there is salvation in no other belief system but that of Christianity. We must be willing to tell the Muslim that adherence to the five great pillars will not save a man. We must be willing to tell the person who believes that it doesn't matter what you believe religiously as long as you believe in something, that their "faith" will not save them.

Listening to nine miners, who were rescued in from a mine collapse in Pennsylvania in 2002, I was struck by one part of the conversation as they were interviewed on ABC's *Dateline*.

One young man said, "When the water started rising to our necks, I asked everyone that since I had never been baptized, I wondered if I would go to heaven."

Another tough-looking, seasoned miner said at that point he spoke up and said, "I told him, and 'My belief is that if you are a good person and have lived a good life that you will most certainly go to heaven.'"

Had you been the lone Christian in that dark, dank, dismal hole 240 feet down facing the jaws of death, would you have said something? Would you have piped up with a ray of truth? Christ would have, and did, and that's why He single-handedly led so many people into the kingdom. He wasn't afraid to tell them they erred by attempting to worship God in their own way. Nor was He afraid to tell them how to properly know and walk with God. Can we do any less?

What do we learn from this? We learn that the Lord shows us the importance of telling people who He is. He was not just a good man, a great rabbi from the past, or a mythological concoction of the Jewish Christians. No. He was/is the one and only living God who came to earth to save us from our sins. How can *that* message not bubble up from your life? Better yet, how can it not just gush forth?

Here at BCC we are, well, just full of the water of life. And there are many who have joined us simply because we have been individually and corporately faithful to allow that life-giving water to flow out of our lives into their spiritually parched lives. You are sitting in this class because you, too, know how amazing this water is for your own soul. We are glad you are with us to help us bring the gospel water to our city, our nation, and our world. We also want to make some commitments to you.

For one, we will make sure this water, this gospel is showcased at every level of our church on a continual basis. Your children will learn about it through the Bible stories they'll study, your teens will hear about it from our leaders when they gather, our Men's and Women's ministries will openly talk about it, and we'll build it into our worship services so that those who are spiritually thirsty will find the one "drink," Jesus, which/who can, and will, satisfy the soul.

For another, we will do our part in training and giving you the tools to know how to effectively share your faith, coupled with how to defend it. Whether it is a class designed to teach you how to contagiously be Christ's witness, or apologetic concepts which will be purposefully woven into a given sermon, we will do our best to equip you to reap a great harvest of souls for the Lord.

A second concept we glean from the "go" motif has to do with service.

Concerning this, Mark 10:45 teaches us well:

"For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many" (Mark 10:45).

What Christ-follower could ever forget these profound words?

Christ's illustration here is from the greater to the lesser, you and me. Simply put: Since He, the Lord of glory and King of Kings, became a humble servant to others, we, as His disciples, must follow in His footsteps. The logical outcome is clear:

- Disciples are selfless, not selfish.
- Disciples are givers, not getters.
- Disciples are open handed, not white-knuckled
- Disciples are here to serve others, not to be served by others.
- Disciples are concerned about inter-dependence, not independence.

- Disciples sit and serve; they don't sit and soak on Sundays.
- Disciples aren't consumed with who they are at work, but who they are as saints.
- Disciples don't fight for the top, but for the bottom.
- Disciples don't have to be constantly asked to serve, they serve by nature.
- Disciples do what has to be done, even if it's not pleasant, or won't bring them time in the limelight. They are content with obscurity.

Ostensibly, the question has to be posed. Where are you serving right now? And don't forget that service should occur inside and outside the church. Where will you go and be the hands and feet of Christ? Where will you go to help alleviate needs? Where will you show up to use your gifts to advance the health of this local body of Christ?

As you know, our church is growing and because of this, coupled with our size, we need to be a church where God's people don't just "Sit & Soak," but where they "Sit, Soak In, & Serve." Show me a serving church and I'll show you a contagious church. Show me a church where Christ-followers are actively getting plugged into meeting the various needs of the church and I'll show you a church giving God the glory. Show me a church where service is not a by-word but the key-word, and I'll show you a church which runs smoothly and effectively, allowing it, by definition, to accomplish its divinely appointed mission.

So what about it? Where are you going to serve? Where will you allow God to use you? Where can you step in and alleviate a ministry need? Who can you come alongside of for support and encouragement? Believe me, there are numerous places where you just might be needed.

Here are a few:

- Serving as a deacon or deaconess to meet practical needs of our body.
- Serving as an usher or a greeter for worship.
- Serving on our coffee team for worship.
- Serving in some capacity in our children's program which needs around 240 servants in order to function well.
- Serving on a men's or women's ministry team.
- Serving on our parking team, making sure people get in and out of the lot safely and quickly.
- Serving by making meals our deacon team can freeze to give to people & families among us experiencing tough times.
- Serving as a teacher of an adult Sunday school class.
- Serving in our children's department during our Sunday evening service.
- Serving Well ... I'll let you fill in the rest of the blank.

It's true. A servant is not greater than his master. Jesus, our master, has set the pace for how we are to go forth. It's called servant hood. I'm glad you are more than ready to join Him.

May the Great Commission never be called the Great Omission among us as a church. Jesus has told us what we are to be about until His glorious return: discipleship and evangelism. We keep things simple around here because Christ made them simple. We might be busily doing many things as a local church, but you can always rest assured we are always concerned that what we are doing is deeply and perpetually committed to realizing these two divine challenges.

And just how will we go about making disciples and reaching the lost? By focusing on three key, concise concepts. You should know them by now. Say them with me: We are called to ... Gather, Grow, and Go. Time is a wastin', as my family would say down south, so let's get to work while it is still day. Jesus is coming soon. Let's make Him proud of our performance.

Making sure we nail these ministry essentials is so crucial, especially in our present cultural church environment. With only 41 percent of American's baby boomers (those folks born between 1947 and 1964) attending church on a given Sunday, and with that number decreasing every year (it used to be 51% for those born before 1946 and it is now 34% of the busters born ... those people born 1965 to 1976; Rainer, *Surprising Insights From The Unchurched*: 33), we must be a church which gathers, grows, and goes. Some churches are great at gathering, but not going; therefore, they don't grow. We must not ever fall into that trap, but must be committed to these three proven concepts for turning non-Christ followers into ardent, lifelong disciples of the Master.

Additionally, according to a recent study by Thom Rainer, "More than two-thirds of young churchgoing adults in America drop out of church between the ages of eighteen and twenty two" (Rainer, *Essential Church*: 2). Why do they drop out? Here are their top ten reasons:

1. Simply wanted a break from church.
2. Church members seemed judgmental or hypocritical.
3. Moved to college and stopped attending church.
4. Work responsibilities prevented me from attending.
5. Moved too far away from the church to continue attending.
6. Became too busy though still wanted to attend.
7. Didn't feel connected to the people in my church.
8. Disagreed with the church's stance on political or social issues.
9. Chose to spend more time with friends outside the church.
10. Was only going to church to please others.

See what I mean about the important of making sure the Gather, Grow, and Go concepts are realized among us? They will be the glue which will grow up another generation who are in love with Jesus Christ and who would never think, for one moment, of not being with His people corporately for spiritual growth and support. We have much work to do, don't we? Well, we are at work, and we are encouraged you are here to stand with us in this all-important endeavour at such a critical time in our nation's history.

What Are Our Values?

Granted, we value the Great Commission because this represents our Lord's final words to us, and it also constitutes the perpetual mission of His Church. We, therefore, place great emphasis upon these words.

On a more personal local church level, there are things which we value, things which set us apart, things which make us distinct. From our perspective, there are twelve items which populate this important list, and these are not just the things which make us different as a church, but they are what typically draw people, like you, to us. Here's that list:

- **Prayer.** I can safely say, after spending my entire life in the local church, that this is the prayingest (if that is a word) church I've ever been in. This is a church which takes Paul's prayer mandate in Ephesians 6:18 seriously. We have prayer teams on Friday nights, prayer teams before and during worship services, a large prayer ministry for various needs, special lengthy prayer venues during the year, prayer on the spot when you need it (who hasn't seen two people praying somewhere on the campus while surrounded by lots of people?), prayer given by key deacons and deaconess for those in the hospital, and so on. Yes, we firmly believe we can do nothing except through prayer and approaching God's throne. Will you join us?
- **Caring, Loving Relationships.** The New Testament Church grew because they loved each other, meaning they helped meet real life needs. Just study the book of Acts and you'll see what I mean (Acts 2:42ff). A teaching church without caring, loving relationships is a cold, unfriendly, lifeless place. On the contrary, a church, like ours, which is committed to truly reaching out and showing concern and meeting needs is a place where the Spirit of God is sensed and where joy is present. The bigger we become the more important it is for us to be deeply committed to this biblical value. As you come on board with us, we have to ask, "Whose need(s) will you meet? Whose load will you lighten?"

- **Local & Global Outreach.** Through our missions team, coupled, at times, with the leadership of pastoral staff, we purposefully plan to reach the lost in locally, nationally, and globally through our various efforts and missionaries. Currently, thirteen percent of our budget goes toward funding these evangelistic efforts. Locally, we stand arm and arm with groups like the Sanctity of Life Ministries, the Officers Christian Fellowship, Young Life, plus a host of others. Nationally, we support Cru leaders like Randy Newman as he reaches out to professors at George Mason University and Bob Harmin as he seeks to take the gospel into prisons. Globally, we focus primarily on taking the gospel to the Muslim world, and it is amazing how God has sovereignly blessed our pursuits.
- **Building Strong Families.** Whether you are a single mom, or you've been married for thirty years, we are passionate about creating a church program where godliness, holiness, and strength are built into your family relationships. The family is under attack in our day, so we make sure those families are equipped with stand strong and true for Christ. For those families who need help getting healthy but don't have the financial means to realize this goal, we stand ready to assist. For those couples desirous of learning how to grow a stable and exciting marriage, we offer classes based on the Love and Respect series. These are just some of the things we do to breathe life into our families.
- **Christ-Like Service.** We are a serving church, a group of people who don't waste time reaching out to meet needs, be what they may. When hundreds of chairs need to be set up for worship, volunteers step in and get the job done. When a young military mother has a life crisis while her husband is in a battlefield theater, people will show up to watch her children to give her some breathing room. When a car is needed because someone has a short-term issue with theirs, someone steps forward with a loaner. Yes, when there are needs inside and outside the church you will quickly see self-less servants showing up to meet those needs without drawing undo attention to themselves. As you join us, remember that God is calling you to be looking for places where you might serve or for people who might need His loving touch.
- **In-Depth, Practical Teaching.** In another study by church growth expert Thom Rainer, he discovered by polling formerly unchurched people that a staggering 91% of them felt strongly that powerful, clear, uncompromising Bible teaching and doctrine were the primary factors of why they chose to attend church! (Rainer, *Surprising Insights from the Unchurched*: 45-46). Jaw dropping, isn't it? We take our cue from stats like this, plus the leading and teaching of the Spirit of God to make certain Bible teaching is ... and remains ... one of our key values. Along these lines, Paul reminds us that

there is the milk and the meat of the Word (1 Corinthians 3:2), stressing how some Bible teaching should be geared for the newer believers while other teaching should stretch the thinking of the older saints. We strive for this balance, seeking to explain the Scriptures in a lively, creative fashion for the newer saints, while also going into more intricate discussions to enable more mature Christians to grow in their understanding of the Word and how it should interface with their lives and culture. And, as with any Bible study, we are serious at asking, “What does the text mean to me?” When you leave study with us, you should know exactly what God wants from you so you can grow in Him.

- ***Expository Bible Teaching.*** While a lot of churches are concerned with four to six week sermon series, we are concerned with understanding the Word of God by studying entire Bible books. Sure, we will get into topical series every now and then, but even those will be expositional and exegetical in nature. As we see it, there is just nothing better than moving (slowly) through a given Bible book or passage to teach people what it says and how this message relates to life. In-depth, practical teaching. In another study by church growth expert Thom Rainer, he discovered by polling formerly unchurched people that a staggering 91% of them felt strongly that powerful, clear, uncompromising Bible teaching and doctrine were the primary factors of why they chose to attend church! (Rainer, *Surprising Insights from the Unchurched*: 45-46). Jaw dropping, isn't it? We take our cue from stats like this, plus the leading and teaching of the Spirit of God to make certain Bible teaching is ... and remains ... one of our key values. Along these lines, Paul reminds us that there is the milk and the meat of the Word (1 Corinthians 3:2), stressing how some Bible teaching should be geared for the newer believers while other teaching should stretch the thinking of the older saints. We strive for this balance, seeking to explain the Scriptures in a lively, creative fashion for the newer saints, while also going into more intricate discussions to enable more mature Christians to grow in their understanding of the Word and how it should interface with their lives and culture. And, as with any Bible study, we are serious at asking, “What does the text mean to me?” When you leave study with us, you should know exactly what God wants from you so you can grow in Him.
- ***Authenticity & Accountability.*** BCC is a contagious church because at its core we have folks who evidence these two godly ... and culturally forgotten traits. We are real, open, and honest with each other because that's just how growing Christians behave, that's how they treat each other, and that's the biblical model. Check out the words of Paul to the new Thessalonian Jewish converts, converts who had heard Paul teach for three weeks before Law-loving Jews ran him out of town. After he found out how

they were doing from Timothy, he wrote them his first letter, sprinkling it with words of openness and honesty:

For you yourselves know, brethren, that our coming to you was not in vain, ²but after we had already suffered and been mistreated in Philippi, as you know, we had the boldness in our God to speak to you the gospel of God amid much opposition. ³For our exhortation does not come from error or impurity or by way of deceit; ⁴but just as we have been approved by God to be entrusted with the gospel, so we speak, not as pleasing men, but God who examines our hearts. ⁵For we never came with flattering speech, as you know, nor with a pretext for greed--God is witness--⁶nor did we seek glory from men, either from you or from others, even though as apostles of Christ we might have asserted our authority. ⁷But we proved to be gentle among you, as a nursing mother tenderly cares for her own children. ⁸Having so fond an affection for you, we were well-pleased to impart to you not only the gospel of God but also our own lives, because you had become very dear to us. ⁹For you recall, brethren, our labor and hardship, how working night and day so as not to be a burden to any of you, we proclaimed to you the gospel of God. ¹⁰You are witnesses, and so is God, how devoutly and uprightly and blamelessly we behaved toward you believers; ¹¹just as you know how we were exhorting and encouraging and imploring each one of you as a father would his own children, ¹²so that you would walk in a manner worthy of the God who calls you into His own kingdom and glory (1 Thessalonians 2).

Angry Jews were saying all kind of mean-spirited things about Paul to discredit him and his gospel message, so here he opens his heart and shares about his true motivations. Can you sense the transparency, the vulnerability, and the candidness? One of the reasons Paul was so effective for God is because he wasn't fake and phony, but real, real about himself, and real about sin and the truth of the Word of God. Look, when you encounter someone like Paul, you know they walk with God, that they are someone you just have to know, and that you can be open with them about your life, and that, in turn, will truly care for you. Here at BCC we strive, individually and corporately, to live out this significant spiritual trait. Will you? When you practice the Christlike trait of authenticity realize that accountability typically and logically follows thereafter. How could it not? By sharing your life openly and honestly with another saint, by letting them know your successes and your failures, and by letting them know your dreams and your fears you place yourself in a relationship where the other person will naturally and lovingly begin to hold you accountable to gain victory over the troublesome, sinful areas and actions which are brought to light. Again, this is a Christ-like trait as well, one we find modeled by many

New Testament saints. We also find it is a command we are called to implement in our lives:

“Let us consider how to stimulate one another to love and good deeds” (Hebrews 10:25).

“Therefore, confess your sins to one another, and pray for one another ...” (James 5:16).

Of course, all of this can only occur when there is accountability between believers, and when there is spiritual growth and maturity, the very things disciples are called to pursue. As you join us, then, know we commit to grow with you by means of authenticity and accountability. We will be looking for the same commitment from you as well for this is what the Christian walk is all about.

- ***Reaching the Poor and Needy.***

The entry on “the poor” in the Collins Thesaurus of the Bible puts this BCC value in biblical perspective:

- a. God helps the poor

The Lord maintains justice for the poor (Psalms 140:12); he lifts up the poor from the dust (1 Samuel 2:8); God saves the poor (Job 5:15); God stands at the right hand of the needy to save him (Psalms 109:31); God lifts the poor from the dust (Psalms 113:7); God provided for the poor (Psalms 68:10); God saves the poor man by his poverty (Job 36:15); the cry of the poor came to God (Job 34:28); he raises the needy out of affliction (Psalms 107:41); the Lord gives light to both the poor and the oppressor (Proverbs 29:13).

- b. People helping the poor

Turn from your iniquities by showing mercy to the poor (Daniel 4:27); if you lend to the poor, do not charge interest (Exodus 22:25); return the poor man’s pledge by sunset (Deuteronomy 24:12–13); support a poor man (Leviticus 25:35); let your land lie fallow that the poor may eat (Exod. 23:11); leave gleanings for the poor and alien (Leviticus 19:10; Leviticus 23:22; Deuteronomy 24:19–21); do not be stingy with the poor (Deuteronomy 15:7–8); sell your possessions and give to the poor (Matthew 19:21); sell all you have and give to the poor (Mark 10:21); when you give a feast, invite the poor (Luke 14:13); bring in the poor (Luke 14:21); send portions to those who have nothing (Nehemiah 8:10; Nehemiah 8:12); we should continue to remember the poor (Galatians 2:10); why was this perfume not sold and given to the poor? (John 12:5); they thought Jesus was telling Judas to give something to the poor (John

13:29); visit orphans and widows in their affliction (Jas. 1:27); bring the homeless poor into your house (Isaiah 58:7); if he keeps his hand from [harming] the poor (Ezek. 18:17); do not deny justice to the poor (Exod. 23:6); may he defend the cause of the poor (Psalms 72:4); the Levite, alien, orphan and widow will eat the tithe (Deuteronomy 14:28–9; Deuteronomy 26:12–13); whenever you wish you can do good to the poor (Mark 14:7).

c. Those helping the poor

She stretches out her hand to the poor (Proverbs 31:20); I was a father to the poor (Job 29:16); was not my soul grieved for the poor? (Job 30:25); half of my possessions I give to the poor (Luke 19:8); they sold their possessions and shared with any who had need (Acts 2:45); I delivered the poor (Job 29:12–13); he delivers the needy (Psalms 72:12–14); he gives to the poor (Psalms 112:9; 2 Corinthians 9:9); the righteous knows the rights of the poor (Proverbs 29:7); the firstborn of the poor will eat (Isaiah 14:30); the poor have good news preached to them (Matthew 11:5; Luke 7:22); anointed to preach the gospel to the poor (Luke 4:18).

Both testaments teach us either through maxim or model that we, as saints, need to evidence God’s love and compassion towards the less fortunate among us. Such is the heart of God. Such is portrayed in the life of Jesus as He walked among us. Such is reflected in the life of great saints like Paul, Peter, and James.

It is one thing to be a Bible teaching church, but quite another to put that teaching into selfless, sometimes costly action, especially where the destitute are concerned. We are this kind of church because it is the essence of spirituality and discipleship. Whether it is doing our part to help the homeless who live in the woods near Potomac Mills (this ministry is called the 25th Project), or providing benevolent monies to the financially hurting among us or who happen to come in off the street for assistance, we desire to meet the needs of the helpless and the hurting. As you come alongside us to realize this ministry value we know you’ll not just feel good inside, but you’ll know you are doing exactly what the Lord has called you do to prior to His glorious return (Matthew 25:31ff).

- ***Vibrant, Spirit-Filled Worship.*** Ever been in a worship service when you just knew that God was present? Isn’t that an awesome, memorable experience? When you experience this you don’t just know it, you want more of it. How does it occur? That’s God’s business, but we can work hard at setting the environment so He feels comfortable “showing up.” Our worship teams pray toward this end. Our worship leader chooses songs,

sometimes they are choruses and at other times they are old, familiar hymns, which draw us into God's holy presence. Our lives can also be so connected to God during the week that it's just natural for us to sense His presence as we seek to glorify Him and His great name. You as a worshipper are encouraged to pray along with us for God's presence to descend upon us as we worship Him corporately each week. This is all so important because there is just nothing like connecting with Him as you worship, and there is nothing like showing Him how much you adore and love Him as you actively participate in a given service. What growing Christian wouldn't want more of this?

- ***Apologetic Training for All.*** Learning how to defend the faith, learning how to take the faith on the offense without being offensive so our culture is positively impacted with the person and work of Jesus is a driving factor here at BCC. Yes, we take seriously Peter's charge to us as believers:

"... but sanctify Christ as Lord in your hearts, always being ready to make a defense to everyone who asks you to give an account for the hope that is in you, yet with gentleness and reverence" (1 Peter 3:15).

Our culture is in a state of moral, spiritual decay, and darkness is descending at an alarming rate in all sectors where once Judeo-Christian values were valued and showcased. To slow the spiritual slide into the abyss, the Church must be the Church. Dr. Martyn Lloyd-Jones understood this in his day and that's why he wrote these words, words which are still applicable:

"The business of the Church, and the business of preaching---and she alone can do this --- is to isolate the radical problems and to deal with them in a radical manner. This is specialist work, it is the peculiar task of the Church. The Church is not one of a number of agencies, she is not in competition with the cults, she is not in competition with other religions, and she is not in competition with the psychologists or any other agency, political or social or whatever it may chance to be. The Church is a special and a specialist institution and this is a work that she alone can perform" (Lloyd-Jones, *Preaching & Preachers*, 43).

Christ has called each of us to be salt and light to our world (Matthew 5:13-16), and to do that effectively we must be trained in the techniques of apologetics. Here at BCC we will provide that much needed training. Sometimes it will be available in a classroom setting, while at other times it will be woven carefully into a morning sermon, but regardless of how it is offered just know it will be part of all we do here because so much is at stake, spiritually speaking.

- **Unity.** Jesus prayed for our unity in His High Priestly Prayer before His crucifixion:

“¹⁹For their sakes I sanctify Myself, that they themselves also may be sanctified in truth. ²⁰“I do not ask on behalf of these alone, but for those also who believe in Me through their word; ²¹that they may all be one; even as You, Father, are in Me and I in You, that they also may be in Us, so that the world may believe that You sent Me” (John 17).

Since He prayed for us to be unified, we must do our part in protecting unity. How do we go about that? We don't pass on gossip; we don't assume the worse about people when, not if, we hear negative remarks; we lovingly and quickly confront those who would fracture our coveted unity; we resolve personal disputes with others in a godly, humble fashion; we confess our sins to each other; we actually restore those who have hurt us and seek forgiveness; we follow where leaders are leading ... realizing they have much more information about a given situation, goal, etc., than we do ... just to name a few important methods.

Unity is so important because of a variety of factors: it keeps us from being distracted from the primary matters God has called us to; it creates peace in the body and peace, by default, breathes life and joy among God's people; it enables us to follow the Spirit's leading quickly; it makes the local church a safe place to be in a culture known, all too often, as combative and dysfunctional; and it brings us to a state of maturity because maturation happens as we hear and obey the commands of Scripture (Ephesians 4:3; James 1:22).

So there you have it: a detailed list of what we value. Granted, there are other things which we see as important in order to build a God-honoring church; however, at our core these are concepts we see as utterly primary. By formally joining us as a member, you are saying, “You can count on me to share and support not just your ministry vision, and to be actively engaged at living out these significant and highly biblical values.”

As I've said before, I'll say it again: I'm glad you are here. Christ is coming soon and there is much work to do before His magnificent arrival (1 Thessalonians 4:13-18). Your gifting and personal presence is going to build us into an even greater ministry, and we, in turn, will do our part in helping you become the person Jesus wants you to be. Together we shall not only cut deep into Satan's kingdom, but we will purposefully and strategically give God all the glory.

gather grow go

gather

We begin to Gather - By worshipping with other believers on Sunday morning.

grow

We Grow - Where we connect and build relationships with others in life groups and we participate in various studies that equip us to know Christ.

go

We Go - To serve in our church and our community. To share Christ with our neighborhood, our nation, and our world.

Gather

We “gather” together as believers in Christ engaging with God and with each other in song, prayer, and hearing the preaching of God’s Word. Someone new to our church first typically engages our church family during this time of worship. In the creative, comfortable worship environment we are establishing, people are instructed and inspired by our journey with God and others. During the Sunday morning hour, the church models the actions we are to live as “living sacrifices” (Romans 12:1) which is our very worship.

What Is Worship?

The worship of God is a vast subject that has been defined in various ways. Worship is...

- The overflow of a grateful heart, under a sense of Divine favor.
- The outpouring of a soul at rest in the presence of God.
- The occupation of the heart, not with its needs, or even with its blessings, but with God himself.
- The upspring of a heart that has known the Father as a Giver, the Son as Savior, and the Holy Spirit as the indwelling Guest.
(Gibbs, A. P., *Worship*. Kansas City: Walterick Publishers).

At BCC, we are invited to personally encounter the living, transcendent, creative, loving and redeeming God Who takes pleasure in the worship of His people. As we gather, we encounter the God who is in the business of changing lives, and we are compelled to respond to Him passionately with every fiber of our being.

God’s desire is that we give Him our worship. Worship far transcends simply music or all that goes into a Sunday service at BCC. Our worship is actually our lives. God wants to be at the forefront of everything we do and who we are. He is looking to encounter true worshippers, those who will worship Him with their whole hearts, minds, souls, and strength. As we gather, we are invited to encounter God—and respond with our lives.

Worship is a tremendous opportunity and one we should never enter into lightly. As we gather for corporate worship, we should first enter into a time of prayer for ourselves before the beginning of the worship service, seeking the Lord’s forgiveness of personal sins so we will be spiritually fit for the time. This is how the Old Testament saints were counseled by the Lord to enter His presence (Leviticus 1-7).

At BCC, we realize we are participants, not spectators, in the worship time. We gather together not for entertainment but to engage in worship of our Creator and Savior. We focus on Christ and sing as joyously as we can to Him. At BCC, we want our worship to be:

- **Authentic** (Psalm 51:6)

Who we are on the outside should match who we are on the inside. We are real.

- **Dependent** (Psalm 145:14-19)

We are learning to totally rely on God, Who takes great pleasure in each of us. We realize that only He can satisfy all our needs.

- **Creative** (Genesis 1:1, 26)

The creative God Who created everything in the universe has made us in His image. We strive to express His love and grace in new and fresh ways, so that He may be glorified and our Savior Jesus Christ will be made known to our world.

- **Passionate** (Mark 12:30)

Because our worship is a response to God's love toward us, we should worship Him with every fiber of our being.

Worshipping God means keeping in our mind's eye a graphic picture of us standing before the very throne of God Almighty, giving Him our praise and adoration. We maintain silence when there are times of silence, and we train our children who are old enough to be in worship to respect God and those around them who are trying to praise Him. Worship is a high and holy privilege which we should never enter into lightly. The Bible gives us some great snapshots of what it's like to be in the Lord's ominous and magnificent presence, through men like Moses (Exodus 3), Isaiah (Isaiah. 6), or Ezekiel (Ezekiel 1- 2).

Our Sunday worship is tied intrinsically to three things (Singing, Teaching, and Giving):

Singing

During our corporate times of worship, we seek to glorify God through singing a variety of contemporary worship songs mixed with some traditional hymns. We value sound doctrine in the lyrics of our songs, and strive to choose ones that are theologically accurate as well as easy to sing.

At BCC, our worshippers are encouraged to participate through clapping and the raising of hands and some choose to do so (Psalm 141:2). We incorporate modern technology such as projectors and LED lighting to enhance our worship experiences, helping foster an environment where everyone can passionately and sincerely respond to God for all He has revealed Himself to be.

Teaching

The purpose of the sermon is to teach us how to think biblically so we can live for Christ. The main goal of the sermon is to move the sinner to the cross and the saint to greater holiness and spiritual maturity. Concerning this latter goal, the apostle Paul says:

And He gave some as apostles, and some as prophets, and some as evangelists, and some as pastors and teachers, for the equipping of the saints for the work of service, to the building up of the body of Christ; until we all attain to the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a mature man, to the measure of the stature which belongs to the fullness of Christ. As a result, we are no longer to be children, tossed here and there by waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, by craftiness in deceitful scheming; but speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in all aspects into Him who is the head, even Christ, from whom the whole body, being fitted and held together by what every joint supplies, according to the proper working of each individual part, causes the growth of the body for the building up of itself in love (Ephesians 4:11-16).

As the phrase “grow up” alludes to, the goal of all teaching and preaching, whether it occurs in a small or large group setting, is to grow us up to maturity in Christ. This growth can only occur when we are daily obedient to what we hear in God’s Word. Mere Biblical knowledge can make people proud (1 Corinthians 8:1). Biblical knowledge followed by obedience makes God proud (John 10:2-27). Understanding the Word of God was an important objective of the New Testament church and a key imperative in the Lord’s Great Commission to the Church:

*Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and **teaching** them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age (Matthew 28:19-20).*

Many churches in America today are watering down the Word of God, replacing it with light, fluffy teaching. The doctrine of sin and eternal punishment are downplayed, and more emphasis is given to psychological topics like “How to Win over Depression”, “How to Battle Fatigue”, “How to Overcome Worry”, and so on. By making God’s Word more palatable, these churches grow big congregations by tickling people’s ears and telling them what they want to hear; however, this method is not what God wants His church to be using. God’s teachers and leaders spoke both the negative and positive side of God’s revelation.

Men like Moses, Abraham, Daniel, Joshua, Micah, Jeremiah, Peter, Paul, and John were not afraid to say, “Thus says the Lord!” BCC’s biblical teaching’s purpose isn’t to make us feel warm and cozy, but to help us understand who Christ is and what it means to serve and live for Him. This mandate involves sound, consistent, honest teaching of the whole Bible.

The Apostle Paul advises us about the Christian behavior needed for our time in history:

I solemnly charge you in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who is to judge the living and the dead, and by His appearing and His kingdom: preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort, with great patience and instruction. [Here's the reason for being devoted to teaching. For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but wanting to have their ears tickled, they will accumulate for themselves teachers in accordance to their own desires, and will turn away their ears from the truth, and will turn aside to myths. But you, be sober in all things, endure hardship, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry (2 Timothy 4:1-5).

We are witnessing this preference for compromised truth more and more today. We will benefit, therefore, from strengthening our resolve to be known as a church and a people devoted to teaching God's inspired Word. Paul encouraged Timothy with words we should heed today:

"Be diligent to present yourself approved to God as a workman who does not need to be ashamed, handling accurately the word of truth" (2 Timothy 2:15).

We are only able to victoriously deal with sin and grow in Christ by studying the Bible (Hebrews 4:11-12).

Giving

Giving speaks of the believer's responsibility to release, as the Lord leads, what he has been given to help this local ministry. During the worship hour, we pass a basket to provide an opportunity to give back what He has given or entrusted to us. Whether you place money or a check in the basket or give online or by text, this moment in our service allows us to worship God as our Provider. For God alone is the sole and sovereign owner of all things. All creation and all this encompasses are His (Deuteronomy 10:14). The physical body and life of the Christian belong to Him (1 Corinthians 6:19-2). The Christian is a steward of what God has given: life (Romans 12:1), time (John 9:4), and our talents and abilities (1 Peter 4:10). Everything we are and have comes from Him. So on Sundays we set aside time to reflect on the truth and place our responses on the connection card or reflect on our monetary gift we have given.

This time of giving is also a celebration of what He has entrusted and our gratitude from Him. Therefore, God expects His sovereign ownership to be cheerfully acknowledged by presenting our life's gifts to Him (2 Corinthians 9:7). Giving is a unique form of worship just like singing and listening to the preaching of the Word of God (Colossians 3:17).

Grow

Once followers of Christ regularly participate in “gathering” with us in worship, we encourage participation in “growing with us”. Here we challenge people to build deeper and more meaningful relationships within the church. We want to empower each other to have the best relationships possible. Therefore our call to relate to one another is summarized by love:

“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.’ All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments” (Matthew 22:37-40).

Life Groups

Followers of Christ need each other in our fragmented society. We are not created to live in isolation. It is a punishment around the world to be placed in isolation. In order to live the abundant life which Christ desires for us to live, we must engage with other Christians. Therefore, we encourage all followers of Christ to engage in life groups. Each life group consists of 8 to 16 people and who meet in a members’ home each week with breaks during the holidays. We regularly hold *Discover Community* classes throughout the year to encourage new life groups to form. If you haven’t had the opportunity to join a life group yet, please visit www.burkecommunity.com/discover/.

In light of the limited time available, life groups begin informally and ease into deeper topics. The essential task of group members is to ask each other what God is doing in and through them each week. Often we overlook God’s hand in our lives, and our life group helps us see the bigger picture. As God’s “workmanship” (Ephesians 2:10), we each are at work in God’s mission. In life groups, we encourage one another to see God’s mission in the midst of all the work. In each meeting, we encourage:

- The group to pray about where group members are serving, inside and outside of the church.
- Each group member to be in prayer for three others, who are in close proximity either to the individual or the group, who do not trust in Christ.
- Each group to “adopt” a missionary, thereby supporting one of the church-sponsored people who are reaching others the group cannot normally reach.

Each group chooses the Bible study they will pursue together, although we recommend that studies not exceed 12 meetings. The study portion should be a place where deeper discussions about spiritual truths and realities connect pragmatically to life. It should not, however, be the primary place for followers of Christ to study God’s Word. Other Grow areas are available specifically for Bible study. Our goal is to have members of our life groups encouraging each other to

participate in each part of Growing at BCC. In this way, the life group helps each member focus on the whole of BCC's discipleship focus: worship, fellowship, study, service, and witness.

Why is it important to invest in each other's lives in fellowship? In his book *Building Up One Another*, Gene Getz lays out the different scriptural responsibilities believers have toward each other. These commands call for perpetual, daily activity. When we exhibit these lofty traits in our lives and in our church, the world will take note and come to Christ. Christ will also bless us greatly for following His Word.

- Be devoted to one another (Romans 12:10).
- Honor one another (Romans 12:10).
- Be of the same mind (Romans 15:5).
- Accept one another (Romans 15:7).
- Admonish one another (Romans 15:14).
- Greet one another, or be friendly! (Romans 16:3-6, 16).
- Serve one another (Galatians 5:13).
- Bear one another's burdens (Galatians 6:2).
- Bearing with one another (Ephesians 4:2).
- Submit to one another (Ephesians 5:21).
- Encourage one another (1 Thessalonians 5:11).

While these "one anothers" illustrate our responsibility to each other, different actions will tear down instead of build up the unity and effectiveness of the local church. Cancerous sins which should not be allowed in our body include bragging (Proverbs 27:2); complaining [which is a real problem in churches!] (Philippians 4:11-12); careless talking (Proverbs 13:3); slander and gossip (James 4:11); jealousy (Proverbs 6:34); and anger (James 1:19-20). On the front burner of our minds should always be this thought: *What is my motive for doing what I am doing in church or for saying what I am going to say about the people at church?* Remember that the Lord will judge our motives at His judgment seat (1 Corinthians 3:11-23; 2 Corinthians 5:10).

Our sole goal is expressed by one pithy and powerful statement in Ephesians 4:3:

"...being diligent to preserve the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace."

Think of all the issues which potentially divide us: Should Christians always have church before noon? Should Christian women have long or short hair and wear make-up or not? Should we pass a collection plate each Sunday? Should we have communion every Sunday? Can a Christian be godly even though he/she smokes? Is it all right for a Christian to drink alcohol every now and then? Can a divorced person be an elder? Should a divorced person lead a junior high Sunday school class? The potential issues causing division are endless. No wonder Paul calls us to strive for unity at all costs! He knew that various issues would seek to undermine our unity.

Concerning church unity, we should always be asking ourselves, *“Is what I am doing or saying building up or blowing up the unity of this local church?”* Our attitudes as well our actions can disrupt and destroy the church’s unity if we don’t allow the power of the Holy Spirit to control them (Ephesians 5:18).

1. *Why Should I Join a Life Group?*

We’re created for community. Senator John McCain, who spent many years as a prisoner of war in a Vietnam prison cell, tells us how important community is in his book *Faith of My Fathers*:

“I was overwhelmed by the compulsion to talk nonstop, face-to-face with my obliging new cellmate. I ran my mouth ceaselessly for four days ... One of the more amusing spectacles in prison is the sight of two men, both just released from solitary, talking their heads off simultaneously, neither one listening to the other, both absolutely enraptured by the sound of their voices” (Faith of My Fathers, p. 209).

Being with people is utterly important for each of us because that is how God created us. The Bible validates this conclusion over and over again:

- God Exists in a Community.
- Plural Pronouns Describe God:

“Then God said, ‘Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; and let them rule over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky and over the cattle and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth.’ God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them” (Genesis 1:26-27).

- God’s Name Is Plural:

“In the beginning God (Elohim) created the heavens and the earth. The earth was formless and void, and darkness was over the surface of the deep, and the Spirit of God was moving over the surface of the waters” (Genesis 1:1-2).

- The Trinity Was Present at Christ's Baptism:

"After being baptized, Jesus came up immediately from the water; and behold, the heavens were opened, and He saw the Spirit of God descending as a dove and lighting on Him, and behold, a voice out of the heavens said, 'This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well-pleased'" (Matthew 3:16-17).

Since God exists in community, His people MUST exist in community. We are individuals, but we must be part of each other's lives in a most intimate, relational fashion. To do so is to bear the image of God to our decadent, needy world. To do so is to be in God's perfect will for how He has created us. We are created in God's community bearing image. To compromise community in the church, therefore, is to compromise our essence as created persons.

- Jesus Expressed Community in His Daily Life:

"Jesus withdrew to the sea with His disciples; and a great multitude from Galilee followed; and also from Judea, and from Jerusalem, and from Idumea, and beyond the Jordan, and the vicinity of Tyre and Sidon, a great number of people heard of all that He was doing and came to Him. And He told His disciples that a boat should stand ready for Him because of the crowd, so that they would not crowd Him; for He had healed many, with the result that all those who had afflictions pressed around Him in order to touch Him. Whenever the unclean spirits saw Him, they would fall down before Him and shout, 'You are the Son of God!' And He earnestly warned them not to tell who He was. And He went up on the mountain and summoned those whom He Himself wanted, and they came to Him. And He appointed twelve, so that they would be with Him and that He could send them out to preach ..." (Mark 3:7-10).

For Jesus, community was experienced through small group relationships. This community is where He loved to be. He met the needs of the crowd, but He spent the majority of His time with His small group of hand-picked men. Jesus transformed a small group who transformed the world. Jesus also fulfilled the divine pattern for how we are made as humans.

- Jesus Expressed Community in His Prayers:

"I ask on their behalf; I do not ask on behalf of the world, but of those whom You have given Me; for they are Yours; and all things that are Mine are Yours, and Yours are Mine; and I have been glorified in them. I am no longer in the world; and yet they themselves are in the world, and I come to You. Holy Father, keep them in Your name, the name which You have given Me, that they may be one even as We are" (John 17:9-11).

Christ's prayer focused on His small group, then the rest of the disciples, and then us. His deepest passion and hope for them and for us was that we would experience an intimate relational oneness—something akin to that which exists in the Trinity. Christ knew that if the small community of disciples were truly transformed by their small group and lived in godly, holy unity with each other; they would mature in Christ and reach their world. Since Christ's final prayer for us was for us to be part of an intimate, unified small group of saints, desirous of growing to look like Him, then how can we keep from fulfilling this most holy prayer? How can we not be part of a small group?

- God Created Us to Be Interdependent:

God said to Adam, *"It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a help suitable for him..."* (Genesis 2:18ff). Marriage is the first small group, created because man desperately needed it. The evidence abounds that God wants us to be part of a small, intimate, spiritually oriented group.

2. *What's the Value of Being in a Life Group?*

- Welding

Within a small group setting it is much easier for our lives to be welded to other lives. In a small group setting, instead of being alone, or being welded to all the wrong people, we are closely associated with a person or persons who really care about us and want the best for us. Solomon addressed this concept thousands of years ago:

"Two are better than one because they have a good return for their labor. For if either of them falls, the one will lift up his companion. But woe to the one who falls when there is not another to lift him up" (Ecclesiastes 4:9-10).

Scripture proves to us again and again that two are, indeed, better than one. David had Jonathan, Elijah had Elisha, Naomi had Ruth, and Paul had Timothy. Who do we have?

- Wisdom

Solomon was wise, saying many things which just make sense:

"Without consultation, plans are frustrated. But with many counselors they succeed" (Proverbs 15:22).

The word “many” needs heavy emphasis here. A small, godly group is an excellent source of “many counselors.” Who do we turn to when we have key, pivotal life questions: a group of people who love the world, the flesh, and the Devil; or a group of people who love and honor God?

- Warning

We have a problem, but we don’t remember well what we should remember. James touches upon this truth in the first chapter of his letter:

“For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man who looks at his natural face in a mirror; for once he has looked at himself and gone away, he has immediately forgotten what kind of person he was. But one who looks intently at the perfect law, the law of liberty, and abides by it, not having become a forgetful hearer but an effectual doer, this man will be blessed in what he does” (James 1:23-25).

A small group can serve as an early warning radar in our lives. We’ve all made some unbelievable bad life choices, choices we could have bypassed if we were part of a solid small group. Small group members, out of love for us, will tell us what we need to hear so our lives can be protected as you fly from destination to destination. We all need this input in our lives.

- Welcome

There is just something about being accepted by a small group of people, of being loved unconditionally, of being welcomed for who we are, how we look, what we drive or don’t drive, where we work or don’t work, and how God has made us. This acceptance doesn’t happen readily in the secular world. Non-Christian groups, while friendly, tend to be surface and shallow. A Christian small group is just the opposite: it is deep like the ocean. When we walk in, we know that everyone in the group is under the mandate from the Lord to welcome us, no matter what. Here’s how Jesus puts it:

“This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. Greater love has no one than this, that someone lay down his life for his friends” (John 15:12-13).

Koinonia is a Greek word that has been around the Church since its inception. Acts 2:44-45 tells us what the word means:

“All the believers were together and had everything in common (koina—a root word related to koinonia). Selling their possessions and goods, they gave to anyone as he had need.”

Koinonia speaks of selfless sharing, caring, and open generosity. It doesn't speak of the old hippie concept of communalism, where everyone was supposed to live together in harmony with no private possessions. *Koinonia* speaks of the action the Christian takes to build and maintain relationships with other Christians by meeting their needs—whether emotional, physical, or spiritual—with no strings attached (1 Corinthians 1:9; 2 Corinthians 8:4, 9:13, 13:13).

When the Philippian church dispatched Epaphroditus with a gift to help Paul in his ministry, they were practicing *koinonia*—or lovingly relating to the apostle. Paul speaks of their sacrificial gift at the close of his letter to them:

“But I have received everything in full, and have an abundance; I am amply supplied, having received from Epaphroditus what you have sent, a fragrant aroma, an acceptable sacrifice, well-pleasing to God” (Philippians 4:18).

The church saw a need and did what they could to alleviate the need. What a beautiful picture of *koinonia*.

As members of BCC, we need to work hard daily at being *koinonia*-minded Christians, of stepping out and meeting the needs of those people around us, especially the saints of God. When we see someone touched by our help, there is nothing better because when we are Christ to them, we are being responsible for building up and strengthening this local body of Christ.

BCC relates to people by ministering to them in practical ways. Speaking about this type of living, Jesus says:

“A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another, even as I have loved you, that you also have love for one another” (John 13:34).

Growing is where we love one another in life groups and become equipped through study as well. BCC provides four ministries for encouraging spiritual growth through Bible study: equipping core classes, men's ministry, women's ministry, and adult Bible studies.

Discipleship

A disciple is more than someone who has accepted Christ, it is someone who is committed to living their life like Jesus. BCC is committed to helping our church become fully devoted followers of Jesus Christ through offering Life Groups, Youth, Men, and Women's Ministries, but also through Adult Education classes. Some of the Discipleship adult classes offered on Sunday mornings on a rotating basis include:

- Discovering Discipleship
- Discovering Spiritual Gifts
- How to Read the Bible Like a Seminary Professor
- Life on Mission
- In-depth studies of a book of the Bible every semester

Men's Ministry

BCC's Men's Ministry meets weekly with Basecamp on Tuesday mornings at 6:00 a.m. and Ironworks Wednesday evenings at 7:00 p.m. The Men's Ministry also provides different connection events such as monthly breakfasts on Saturdays, golf tournaments, and an annual retreat to name a few.

Women's Ministry

BCC's Women's Ministry offers two times during the week for Bible Study. *Breakaway* meets weekly on Tuesday mornings from 9:30AM to noon. *Breakaway's* normal format includes a 30-minute corporal worship session followed by six to eight different medium-sized classes. *WOW*, Women of the Word, meets Wednesday nights at 7:00PM for a study and discussion. The women's ministry provides different connection opportunities such as the Christmas Tea, Writer's Group, Working Women, Held Together Knitting Group, an annual retreat, and other fun events throughout the year.

Discover Jesus

Discover Jesus is BCC's eight-week class for seekers and new believers. Open to anyone, this class is a place where anyone can come and ask questions and learn more about Jesus, be they new to faith, have walked away from God and looking to come back, and even those questioning whether God even exists. If you are interested in attending, or if you would like to attend with a friend or family member, you can find out more at www.burkecommunity.com/discover/.

Go

Each member of BCC is also encouraged to “go”. As followers of Christ we are to follow His example of service. In Mark 10:45, Jesus says He “did not come to be served but to serve, and to give His life as a ransom for many.” Therefore, we encourage everyone at BCC to serve in some capacity. At the end of *Discover Membership*, each staff member explains the different areas where members can serve our various ministries within the church. We also encourage BCC members to serve outside the local church. There are many different areas in the community where we can volunteer our time. We are a light to our local area as we serve in our neighborhoods and communities.

Each of us should be faithful to use our spiritual gifts in the church:

Now to each one the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good. To another is given through the Spirit the message of wisdom, to another the message of knowledge by means of the same Spirit, to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healing by that one Spirit, to another miraculous powers, to another prophecy, to another distinguishing between spirits, to another speaking in different kinds of tongues, and to still another the interpretation of tongues. All these are the work of one and the same Spirit, and He gives them to each one, just as He determines (1 Corinthians 12:7-11).

Everyone possesses at least one spiritual gift. A spiritual gift is not a talent like playing the piano or being able to work on computers. A spiritual gift is sovereignly given to us by the Spirit of God when we come to the Lord Jesus in faith (Ephesians 4:11f). We are responsible to use our gifts in this church body to God’s glory.

We should roll up our sleeves and ask, “Where can I serve?” Much ministry in the local church goes undone because saints choose to sit back in disobedience and let others serve them. Gifts are given to be used to build up the church and spread the Gospel of Jesus Christ. When you become a member of this fellowship, be in prayer for how God would desire to use you. Fill out the *Go Form* (see the appendix) so we can know where God might be leading you. You are an important team member, so look for where you are skilled at serving on the team and we will see about getting you into the line-up. The New Testament is clear that saints are to be servants both inside and outside of the church:

“Whoever wishes to be first among you shall be your slave; just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many” (Matthew 20:27-28).

“Who then is the faithful and sensible slave whom his master put in charge of his household to give them their food at the proper time? Blessed is that slave whom his master finds so doing when he comes. Truly I say to you that he will put him in charge of all his possessions. But if that evil slave says in his heart, ‘My master is not coming for a long time,’ and begins to beat his fellow slaves and eat and drink with drunkards, the master of that slave will come on a day when he does not expect him and at an hour which he does not know, and will cut him in pieces and assign him a place with the hypocrites; in that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth” (Matthew 24:45-51).

“Now after a long time the master of those slaves came and settled accounts with them. The one who had received the five talents came up and brought five more talents, saying, ‘Master, you entrusted five talents to me. See, I have gained five more talents.’ His master said to him, ‘Well done, good and faithful slave. You were faithful with a few things, I will put you in charge of many things; enter into the joy of your master’” (Matthew 25:19-21).

Of these verses, Matthew 20:27-28 lies at the heart of the New Testament because if Jesus was anything, He was a servant of servants, one main reason we are still talking about Him 2,000 years later:

“Have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus, who, although He existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied Himself, taking the form of a bond-servant, and being made in the likeness of men. Being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross” (Philippians 2:5-8).

Christianity is, therefore, a fight for the bottom, not the top. It’s about serving, not being served. It’s about selflessness, not selfishness—just the opposite of what our world thinks is important.

Being a servant should always be on the front burner of our minds as we invest our lives at BCC in the things which matter most. Pragmatically, what does a servant do?

A servant:

- Looks for opportunities to help those who have needs.
- Relishes in the thought of doing something others deem menial.
- Doesn’t enjoy watching others serve while they sit.
- Focuses conversations on others, not themselves.
- Doesn’t draw attention to themselves.
- Doesn’t let the negative behavior of others keep them from serving.

- Praises other servants instead of critiquing and criticizing them.
- Gives anonymously and sacrificially to needs (Matthew 6:3).
- Maintains a life of absolute honesty (2 Corinthians 4:1-2).
- Steps in and works without being asked (2 Corinthians 8:3-4).
- is bigger than any offense (Psalms 119:65)
- Harbors no judgmental attitude (Matthew 7:1-5).
- Constantly looking for ways they can live, act, and speak like Jesus.

Are you a servant? One day your Lord will ask you to give account of how your life answered this question. Live so as to be proud to appear before Him (1 Corinthians 3:10-14). Inside and outside of BCC, you'll be given ample opportunities to fulfill this important calling of God upon your life. Seize those opportunities to His glory.

We are called not just to **Go** to serve others but also to **Go** share the good news of Jesus Christ. We want to make Christ known by proclaiming His good news. Christ's last instructions to His disciples were for them to be witnesses as they are equipped by the Spirit: *"But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be My witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth"* (Acts 1:8). In life groups, we are encouraged to pray for opportunities to share the love of Christ with those we know who are around us. BCC has different large group events to help us share the gospel with those we are praying for in our life groups.

At BCC, we begins with our present relationships, just like the New Testament believers in the Jerusalem church maintained their vibrant witness for Jesus Christ in the public eye:

"Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts" (Acts 2:46a).

This meeting at the temple could be understood in two ways: (1) the saints met in the temple courtyard (Acts 5:12), or (2) they actually participated in the daily worship held at the temple (Acts 3:1). It is hard to swallow the idea that the Jewish believers participated in sacrificial worship when The Sacrifice had already been applied to their lives. In both interpretations, the saints of the early New Testament church went public with their faith because this action was and still is the final command the Lord wished for His followers to carry out:

"But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be My witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth" (Acts 1:8).

As the New Testament believers were faithful to share their faith in Jesus, “the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved” (Acts 2:47). People were being saved daily. So often in today’s church, people get saved on a quarterly or yearly basis. God’s people aren’t typically being faithful to be lights where we are and we aren’t consumed with sharing the life-giving gospel of Jesus Christ.

BCC members want to break that mold by becoming obedient to the Lord’s command to share His gospel wherever we are. A church can have great teaching from the pulpit, in classrooms, and in life groups, and have good fellowship in church gatherings, but if it is lackluster in its commitment to witnessing, it will become a dead and disobedient fellowship. We therefore want to emphasize the need to evangelize.

Many churches grow because they get transfers from others churches, which is good but by no means the best model for growth. The New Testament church grew because people were saved and this MUST be our same mind-set. New Christians add joy and excitement to the church, reminding us what it was like to first be in love with Jesus. Their zeal to proclaim His salvation is usually a fire which spreads to other souls.

How can we go about becoming a viable witness for Jesus? We can let people know just how much Jesus means to us and what He has done for us and our lives. Even when we are just learning how to share the gospel of Jesus Christ, many people will open up and respond to Jesus’ love. We can create many opportunities to share our faith when we:

- Pray for a lost person by name.
- Invite non-Christians to join us for everything, including going to a movie or dinner. We can make them a part of our lives by putting them on our schedule.
- Look for viable opportunities to show Christian love to them.
- Send the church web site link to non-Christians. The BCC website contains enough information to introduce them to Jesus.
- Send them a link of a sermon we liked.
- Invite them to get their children plugged into children’s activities such as musicals and Vacation Bible School.
- Are available when they are hurting or are experiencing a life tragedy. The old adage is true: *People don’t care about what you know until they know how much you care.*

The bottom line is the sky is the limit on how we can include the lost in our lives. We can be creative and imaginative, discovering what is important to them and going after them in that area. If we are faithful to build a bridge to them, many of them will eventually come to know Christ as their Savior.

At BCC, we support others who are doing God's mission outside our normal sphere of influence in part through our Outreach Ministry.

The Outreach Ministry at Burke Community Church engages people beyond our walls at both the local and global level. Through Go Local, our local outreach ministry, we both partner with ministries serving the needs of our community in a variety of ways, and run programs started within the church to serve specific populations. Through Go Global, our global outreach ministry, we partner with ministries and missionaries around our nation and the world to bring the hope of the gospel to unbelievers. In all of this, we strive to inspire church members to Follow God's Lead by providing opportunities to engage our world as well as our own neighborhoods. How can you as a BCC member get involved in Outreach? You can:

- Ask to be added to our BCC Outreach Newsletter to stay informed about our efforts to engage the world for Christ and learn about opportunities to serve.
- Take part in one of our trips to further the work of our ministry partners through the Short-Term Missions Ministry.
- Serve with one of our local partners in a voluntary capacity, or take part in one of the many initiatives we have throughout the year to provide support to these partners.
- Attend our annual GO Conference, or any of the other equipping opportunities we provide throughout the year.
- Give monetary donations to a missionary, supported partner or one of our Short-Term Mission Trips.
- Volunteer to help our BCC Outreach Staff with various and ongoing projects

In addition to mobilizing our own for Christ, BCC provides financial and prayer support to more than 40 ministries and missionaries on five continents. In addition to the United States, we support missionaries in Africa, East Asia, South America, Europe and Japan.

We encourage you to visit the Outreach page on the BCC website (www.burkecommunity.com/outreach) and also visit our Outreach Staff at the church.

What We Believe

The Good News

If you were to ask your friends how to get to Heaven, you would probably receive as many answers as the number of friends you have. Someone would probably suggest that you should keep the Golden Rule; someone else might say that you need to live up to the Ten Commandments; others might advise that you should pray, or give to the church and the poor, or that you should "just do the best you can." But when you are dealing with something as important as eternal life and Heaven, you need more than just the opinions of friends. You need the truth of God's Word!

Here's a question we need to deal with right at the outset of this important journey. *Who is good enough to get to heaven?*

God's Word, in the first place, is very realistic. It teaches that no one can gain entrance into Heaven by good works or even religious practices. The Bible reveals our true condition:

"As it is written, There is none righteous, no, not one... For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God" (Romans 3:10, 23).

Our personal experience also teaches us that we all have broken God's laws and have not even "done the best we can do." Can you relate? Admit it. There is not one day where you don't do something which you know you shouldn't be doing. That one misdeed is called sin in the Bible, and all it takes is one of them to cause you to fall short of ever reaching God's presence on your own performance.

All of this leads, logically, to another core question: *What is our real spiritual condition before God?*

Again, the Biblical diagnosis for our condition cannot be missed. We, by nature, are described as being

"Dead in trespasses and sins;" (Ephesians 2:1) and as "having not life." (Ephesians 4:18).

Just as a body without physical life is declared physically dead, so any person separated from the life of God is described in the Bible as spiritually dead. Separated from God, dead in our trespasses and sins, we cannot hope to enter Heaven. We need new lives, cleansed from sin and its penalty.

We need to be restored to fellowship with God as you might guess, this leads to the question of all questions: How can we, who are spiritually dead, be restored to fellowship with a holy God? Thankfully, the Bible gives us the much needed answer: We must be born into a new life - we must be born again. Think of it this way. When you are physically born you are born dead because you are related to the sin of Adam in the Garden of Eden (Romans 5:12-21). Paul puts our condition this way:

"Therefore, just as through one man sin entered into the world, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men, because all sinned" (Romans 5:12).

No one ever born can possibly escape the fact he is born a sinner, and then everyone is spiritually dead and lifeless before God. That's the bad news. The good news, however, is that Jesus Christ came to die for all of our sins and rise victorious over death on the third day so we might have the opportunity to be born spiritually.

This wonderful theme is carefully woven through the inspired pages of the Bible. Listen to what Jesus says about this while He walked the earth:

"I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly" (John 10:10).

"For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life. For God did not send the Son into the world to judge the world, but that the world might be saved through Him" (John 3:16-17).

Amazing, isn't it? He died so you might live. He came down so you might be able to go up. He lived a holy life so you could have a holy life. He conquered death so you might enjoy eternal life. And what's even more amazing is He laid His life down for us while we were His devout enemies. Paul hits upon this in his letter to the Romans:

"But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us" (Romans 5:8).

You could take out the word "us" and put your name in there, couldn't you? Christ died for me. Humbling, isn't it? On that cruel cross Jesus was crucified for my sin, for your sin. He was our substitute. His resurrection three days later served, then, to crush forever the power and sting of death brought about by sin. Now that He lives, He offers eternal life and forgiveness to all of those who will come to Him in faith. Jesus puts it this way:

“Truly, truly, I say to you, he who hears My word, and believes Him who sent Me, has eternal life, and does not come into judgment, but has passed out of death into life” (John 5:24).

You’ve just heard His word on the matter of salvation. Question now is do you believe He is the Savior? Better yet, are you ready to ask Him, by faith, to be your Savior? How do you do this? How do you enter His family? How do you secure His eternal forgiveness and pass from death to life? No one has stated it better than the Apostle Paul:

“for whoever will call upon the name of the Lord will be saved” (Romans 10:13).

Underline that phrase “will be.” When you ask the Lord to save you, to be your Savior, He will fulfill His word to you. He won’t wait a week to think about it, either. No. He will save you the moment you call out to Him. If you haven’t done this yet, wouldn’t you say right now is a good time to get your spiritual life squared away once and for all? He’s waiting to hear from you.

Your part is to ask God to save you - His part is to save you from the punishment of sin and take you to Heaven when you die. If you will do your part, He promises to do His part. You can bow your head right now and sincerely ask Christ to forgive you and save your soul.

What We Believe

Jesus instructed His disciples to remember His death and resurrection. He gave the Church two visible symbols (called “ordinances”) as reminders. These two ordinances are baptism and communion (sometimes called “the Lord’s Supper”).

Baptism

Baptism is the public testimony illustrating the private work Christ does in our hearts at salvation. It is the outward demonstration of the inward transformation. Baptism doesn’t save us; it is merely a way for us to symbolically walk with Jesus through His death, burial, and resurrection:

Don’t you know that all of us who were baptized into Christ were baptized into His death? We were therefore buried with Him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life (Romans 6:3-4).

1. Why Should You Get Baptized?

To show obedience to the Lord’s command.

*“Go therefore and **make disciples** of all the nations, **baptizing** them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, **teaching** them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age” (Matthew 28:19-20).*

2. Who Should Get Baptized?

Anyone who has trusted Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior and is thereby saved. As you can see from these references, once the person(s) believed in Jesus as their personal Savior they were baptized.

So then, those who had received his word were baptized; and that day there were added about three thousand souls (Acts 2:41).

But when they believed Philip preaching the good news about the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, they were being baptized, men and women alike (Acts 8:12).

And he took them that very hour of the night and washed their wounds, and immediately he was baptized, he and all his household. And he brought them into his house and set food before them, and rejoiced greatly, having believed in God with his whole household (Acts 16:33-34).

3. When Should One Get Baptized?

Some, for various life reasons, get baptized months or even years after their conversion. This is all right, but it isn't the most biblical position. Read through the New Testament and you'll readily discover that people were baptized immediately after they were saved (Acts 2:41; 8:12-16; 9:18; 16:33). Why did the early saints head quickly into the baptismal waters? For one, they didn't want to waste any time showing the world who they were spiritually. For another, they wanted to be obedient to our Lord's final command (Matthew 28:19-20; Acts 1:8).

4. What Does The Word Baptize Mean?

The Greek words (Note: The New Testament was originally written in Greek) for baptize are "baptizo" and "baptisma." Our word "baptism" is a transliteration of this word, not a translation. Nowhere in the New Testament is this word ever used of sprinkling. Without exception it always denotes immersion in water. Greek has words for pouring, i.e., "cheno" and sprinkling; i.e., "raino," yet these words are never used for baptism nor are their meanings part of the background of baptize. Baptism always suggests that a person is about to get completely wet by going under water. Again, the New Testament usage supports this conclusion.

"But an angel of the Lord spoke to Philip saying, 'Arise and go south to the road that descends from Jerusalem to Gaza. (This is a desert road.) And he arose and went; and behold, there was an Ethiopian eunuch, a court official of Candace, queen of the Ethiopians, who was in charge of all her treasure; and he had come to Jerusalem to worship. And he was returning and sitting in his chariot, and was reading the prophet Isaiah. And the Spirit said to Philip, 'Go up and join this chariot.' And when Philip had run up, he heard him reading Isaiah the prophet, and said, 'Do you understand what you are reading?' And he said, 'Well, how could I, unless someone guides me?' And he invited Philip to come up and sit with him (Acts 8:26-38).

Now the passage of Scripture which he was reading was this: 'HE WAS LED AS A SHEEP TO SLAUGHTER; AND AS A LAMB BEFORE ITS SHEARER IS SILENT, SO HE DOES NOT OPEN HIS MOUTH. IN HUMILIATION HIS JUDGMENT WAS TAKEN AWAY; WHO SHALL RELATE HIS GENERATION? FOR HIS LIFE IS REMOVED FROM THE EARTH.' And the eunuch answered Philip and said, 'Please tell me, of whom does the prophet say this? Of himself, or of someone else?' And Philip opened his mouth, and beginning from this Scripture he preached Jesus to him. And as they went along the road they came to some water; and the eunuch said, 'Look! Water! What prevents me from being baptized?' And Philip said, 'If you believe with all your heart, you may.' And he answered and said, 'I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God. And he ordered the chariot to stop; and they both went down into the water, Philip as well as the eunuch; and he baptized him" (Acts 8:32-38).

What should you do if you were sprinkled? If Jesus is now your Savior by your profession of faith in Him, then I encourage you to consider following Christ's example of baptism as a testimony of your faith in Him as a believer.

5. What Is The Purpose Of Baptism?

First, to show outwardly what has happened to you inwardly.

“What shall we say then? Are we to continue in sin that grace might increase? May it never be! How shall we who died to sin still live in it? Or do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus have been baptized into His death? Therefore we have been buried with Him through baptism into death, in order that as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life. For if we have become united with Him in the likeness of His death, certainly we shall be also in the likeness of His resurrection, knowing this, that our old self was crucified with Him, that our body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves to sin; for he who has died is freed from sin” (Romans 6:1-10).

The imagery is beautiful. As you go under the water you identify with the death of Christ, or His burial. When you rise out of the water you identify with His resurrection to new life. Your old life, which was dominated by enslavement to sin, is now “left behind” in the baptismal waters, and you are now equipped, by the Spirit's presence in your life, to walk in obedience before the Lord Jesus.

Second, baptism shows you are desirous of being identified as a disciple of Jesus Christ. Initially, baptism was drawn from the Jewish model of our Lord's Day. When a new convert to Judaism was baptized, he showed through this act that he was now going to be accountable to grow in his knowledge and obedience to the Law and Word of God. This same emphasis now permeates the New Testament model. You, therefore, are stating before God and men that your life will now be radically different from what it was before. Old sins which easily beset you, old habits that brought shame and sadness to Him, will now be ones you'll seek victory over. Your time will now be committed to serving Him and knowing Him. What you read, where you go, what you watch with your eyes, who your friends are, how you talk, and what you think will now be brought under the scrutiny of the Word of God, all in your quest to live like a disciple of Jesus.

6. Does Baptism Save?

Some claim that one must evidence faith in Jesus plus be baptized in order to be saved. Such is not the biblical model as we shall see:

The Bible's View of Salvation.

- Clearly, the New Testament teaches us unequivocally that salvation is by faith alone and nothing more (John 1:12; 3:16; 3:36; 5:24; 6:40; 11:25; Acts 10:43; 13:39; 16:30-31; Romans 3:22, 28; 4:3, 5; 10:9-13; 1 Corinthians 1:21; Galatians 2:16; 3:26; Ephesians 2:8-10). To add baptism to the means of salvation is to add something totally foreign to the plan and purpose of God.
- The cross is always central to salvation, never baptism (Galatians 2:21) “. . . if righteousness came by the law then Christ died in vain.”
- Works righteousness never saves as Paul says in Titus 3:5; “Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost.”
- The blood, not baptism, is what deals effectively and totally with man's sin: “The blood of Jesus Christ, His son, cleanses us from all sin . . .” (1 John 1:7).
- People were saved in the New Testament apart from baptism as we see in Luke 23:43 and Acts 10:47.

7. Those Thorny Passages

“He who has believed and has been baptized shall be saved; but he who has disbelieved shall be condemned” (Mark 16:16).

Note this verse says nothing about a person who is not baptized being condemned. The condemned person is the one who doesn't have saving faith. Lack of baptism doesn't send you to hell, and having it doesn't grant you heaven. Baptism naturally follows belief in Jesus as a person's Sin-bearer; however, if one isn't baptized we aren't to conclude they aren't saved. If this were so then the verse would have read: “He who has believed and has been baptized shall be saved; but he who has disbelieved *and has failed to be baptized* (italics mine) shall be condemned.”

“Repent, and let each of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit” (Acts 2:38).

Regarding this verse, I would offer these salient points for you to consider:

Acts 2:38 has long been a theological battleground. Why so? Listen to what it says and you'll readily see what I mean. Responding to the question of post-Pentecost Jews who were at a loss for how to be saved since they had obviously made a mistake in crucifying the Messiah who was and is now resurrected, Peter shouted for all to hear:

“Repent, and let each of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit” (Acts 2:38).

Do you see the linkage here between repentance and baptism? The linkage is represented by the little word “and.” Furthermore, the preposition “for” after the word “Christ,” is taken as expressing “purpose or result,” which, are viable grammatical options. Thus, taking the preposition as purpose the emphasis would be, “Repent and be baptized for the purpose of obtaining forgiveness.” Reading the preposition as “result” would lead to this proposition, “Repent and be baptized with the result that you will acquire forgiveness.” Based upon this reasoning, you can see how some have come to believe the New Testament teaches that salvation comes to those who have faith (which is tantamount to repentance) in Jesus and are faithful to be baptized.

Further, grammar alone doesn't prove the point that baptism is equated with repentance and baptism. As I said, it is true that you can grammatically take the preposition “for” as denoting purpose and result. Every student of Greek (which is the language of the New Testament) knows this. Every student of Greek also knows that these are not the only two options for this key preposition. Bauer, Arndt, and Gingrich's *A Greek Lexicon of the New*

Testament and Other Early Christian Literature, reveals there are not two, but seven different ways this preposition “for”, i.e., eis, can be translated. How does one know which translation nuance is the best? Context and the theology of the Bible must decide. Put differently, the translation cannot go against what is taught in the given context. Further, the translation cannot stand diametrically opposed to sound doctrine taught elsewhere in the Bible at large.

What are some other grammatical options for this important little preposition? It is quite logical and appropriate to translate it as “on account of.” When you do this, the entire verse takes on a new meaning, by showing that repentance (i.e., saving faith) and baptism don't collectively secure salvation. Repentance is given on account of the forgiveness you'll acquire, and baptism is participated in on account of the forgiveness you now enjoy. You could also just as easily translate “for” as “on the basis of,” and in so doing you arrive at the same theological results. *Thus, grammatically, it is tenuous at best to build an entire doctrine upon how you translate the preposition “for.”*

In addition, grammatically you can demonstrate there is room for understanding the phrase about repentance as being parenthetical. How so? Repent is plural in Greek, the phrase “and let each of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ” is singular, and the phrase “for the forgiveness of your sins” is, once again, plural. We speak like this all of the time, don’t we? We’ll say things like, “Take a left here, and make sure you go slowly because of the groceries in the trunk, and we’ll get to where we are going.” Biblical writers also spoke parenthetically, and the sooner we realize this, the better off we’ll be when we get to interpreting! (For other parentheses in Scripture see Hebrews 2:9 and 2 Peter 1:19).

To this thought I would add this. The punctuation of your Bible, which is based upon the Greek text, is not inspired. Those commas are placed in there by Greek grammarians who, by consensus believe their choice is the best lexical, grammatical choice. Pick up any Greek text and you’ll see at the bottom of the page, as in Bruce Metzger’s UBS Greek text, what is called a punctuation apparatus. Scholars, translators, and students use this to seek to arrive at the best possible translation. Suffice it to say, grammar can just as readily lead us to believe that repentance and baptism are not both necessary for salvation as some would have us believe.

What’s the upshot of all of this? Those texts which seem to suggest that faith and baptism are necessary for salvation must be interpreted in light of what the multitude of verses in the New Testament say about salvation by faith alone. To teach otherwise is to teach a different gospel (Galatians), which is forbidden. Baptism has never saved one soul and never will. Salvation comes by way of faith in Jesus.

8. What about Infant Baptism?

Some baptize infants, usually by sprinkling. There is not one reference in the New Testament where infants are baptized. True, there are household baptisms, as in Acts 16, yet even passages like this fail to mention infants. Their presence has to be assumed. Further, the Philippian jailer’s household didn’t include children, but people old enough to believe (Acts 16:34). Infants should not be baptized because they aren’t cognizant of their sin, nor are they capable of seeing their need of the Savior, both which are needed before one can be baptized as a believer.

Communion (The Lord’s Supper)

Communion, or the Lord’s Supper, is a memorial of Jesus’ sacrifice on the cross as a substitute for us.

...and when He had given thanks, He broke the bread and said, “This is My body, which is for you; do this in remembrance of Me” (1 Corinthians 11:24).

Communion is a celebration of our new relationship with God, as His sons and daughters forgiven of our sins and declared righteous in His sight through the new covenant of Jesus' blood shed on the Cross for us:

In the same way, after supper He took the cup, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in My blood; do this, whenever you drink it, in remembrance of Me" (1 Corinthians 11:25).

Communion is a proclamation of the price Jesus paid for our sins when He died on the Cross for us:

For whenever you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until He comes (1 Corinthians 11:26).

How Do I Prepare Myself for Communion?

- Before observing communion, I need to examine my heart:

Therefore, whoever eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty of sinning against the body and blood of the Lord. A man ought to examine himself before he eats of the bread and drinks of the cup. For anyone who eats and drinks without recognizing the body of the Lord eats and drinks judgment on himself (1 Corinthians 11:27-29).

- I confess my sins to God:

If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness (1 John 1:9).

- I right any broken relationships that I can.

Therefore, if you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift there in front of the altar. First go and be reconciled to your brother; then come and offer your gift (Matthew 5:23-24).

What We Believe

Our Statement of Faith

In essential beliefs, we pursue unity.

There is one body and one Spirit...there is one Lord, one faith, one baptism, and one God and Father of us all... (Ephesians 4:4).

In nonessential beliefs, we embrace liberty.

Accept him whose faith is weak, without passing judgment on disputable matters... Who are you to judge someone else's servant? To his own master he stands or falls. So then each of us will give an account of himself to God... So whatever you believe about these things keep between yourself and God (Romans 14:1, 4, 12, 22).

In all our beliefs, we practice charity (love).

If I have the gift of prophecy and can fathom all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have a faith that can move mountains, but have not love, I am nothing (1 Corinthians 13:2).

The Essentials

At BCC, we accept, and hold as the essentials of our faith, those areas of doctrinal teaching on which, historically, there has been general agreement among all true Christians. Because of the unique, open nature of a community church, we desire to allow for freedom of belief on other doctrinal matters, provided that any interpretation is based upon the Bible alone, and that no such interpretation shall become an issue which hinders the ministry to which God has called us. The following represents what we believe to be the essentials of our faith. Among the members of this Body, there should be total agreement on these essentials.

Who We Are

The Big “C” and the Little “c”

What Is “The Church”?

The Church is a living organism comprised of all people everywhere who have trusted Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord. The local church is a group of people who seek to bring glory to Christ through how they live, love, learn, labor, lead, and follow in their communities and neighborhoods. The Church is a place where God’s people are ruled by God through the Word and the Holy Spirit. It is not concerned with programs, but with people and it is present wherever God’s people are assembled.

The Church is the earthly manifestation of the family of God (Ephesians 2:19, 3:15), God being the Father, and all family members having been adopted into the family by the new birth upon acceptance of Jesus Christ as personal Savior. This family is a living organism (1 Corinthians 12:12-27) knit and joined together by the Spirit of God which is its life and power. The Church is the earthly dwelling place of God and its purpose is to bring praise and glory to Him.

BCC is more than just the buildings and offices we see. It is much more than the programs and money we possess. It is a living part of all believers everywhere who have come to Jesus Christ in saving faith.

Many biblical metaphors are employed in Scripture which adequately describe the Lord’s Church: Family (Ephesians 2:19, 3:15), Bride (Revelations 21:9), Vine (Isaiah 60:21), Temple (1 Timothy 3:15), Building (1 Corinthians 3:9), Kingdom (Matthew 16:18-19), and Flock (1 Peter 5:2). Perhaps the most insightful designation:

“The body is a unit, though it is made up of many parts; and though all its parts are many, they form one body. So it is with Christ. For we were all baptized by one Spirit into one body whether Jews or Greeks, slave or free and we were all given the one Spirit to drink” (Ephesians 1:22-23).

This concept of the Church as a body is echoed throughout the New Testament:

For we are members of His body (Ephesians 5:30).

And let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to which also you are called in one body; and be thankful (Colossians 3:15).

Now the body is not made up of one part but many (1 Corinthians 12:14).

Just as a real body has a definite structure, so too does the body of Christ—the Church:

- Christ is the head of the Church.
- Believers are all members of the Body.
- Each believer is an organ in the Body.
- Positionally all believers are equal.
- Practically each member functions differently.

BCC is indeed a church, but those within BCC who are believers in the Lord Jesus Christ are also part of the Church—the Body of Christ.

Who We Are Christian Stewards

A Christian Steward is a person who is ENTRUSTED with a life REDEEMED by Christ.

In the Old Testament, God prescribed two ways for His people to give: (1) required giving, and (2) freewill giving. In Pre-Mosaic times, required giving was 20 percent of an individual's income, designed to help run the theocratic government of Israel (Genesis 41:34). Freewill giving was strictly voluntary. The action of Abram and Jacob in giving God 10 percent was simply an arbitrary choice and not a biblical mandate. God wanted His people to give freely to Him because they loved Him.

In Mosaic times, God still called for required and freewill giving. Required giving amounted to about 25 percent of an individual's income when we take into account the three tithe mandates (Leviticus 27:30-33; Deuteronomy 12:6-7; 14:28). This amount doesn't include the Temple tax (Nehemiah 10:33), nor the care of the disadvantaged (Leviticus 19:9-14). In Mosaic times, freewill giving was voluntary, designed to express the worshiper's love for the Lord by giving Him the best of his earnings (Leviticus 22):

The LORD said to Moses, "Tell the Israelites to bring Me an offering. You are to receive the offering for Me from each man who heart prompts him to give" (Exodus 25:1-2).

God was concerned not with the amount that was given, but with the attitude of the heart.

In the New Testament, nothing changed. Required giving is still present in passages where Jesus told the people to obey the Lord—and ultimately God (Romans 13:1-6)—and pay their taxes (Matthew 17:2, 22:15-22). Required giving in the Old Testament was taxation designed to support the established government, and required giving in the New Testament followed suit.

In the New Testament, we also see the concept of freewill giving unto the Lord. The Old Testament concept of an established tithe is foreign to the New Testament. In fact, the original word for *tithe* occurs only in passages referring to the Old Testament economy (cf. Matthew 23:23; Luke 11:42, 18:12; Hebrews 7:5-9). In our day, the Lord wants each of us to give to Him freely. Some argue that the tithe is ten percent of our gross income, but that thought is foreign to the New Testament.

When we look at the New Testament, we see several principles which guide our freewill giving to the Lord:

- Liberal giving breeds liberal blessings (2 Corinthians 9:6).
- Sacrifice should characterize our giving (Mark 12:41-44).
- When we determine a set amount to give, remember that the Lord is our example in giving of Himself (2 Corinthians 8:9).
- Spiritual responsibility, which is given to us by God, comes as we properly administer our earthly possessions (Luke 16:11).
- God measures our giving not based upon the amount we have given, but upon the amount we have given in proportion to what we possess (2 Corinthians 8 - 9).
- When we see a need in the church body, we should do what we can to meet it (2 Corinthians 8-9; Acts 11).
- Giving should be a planned event (1 Corinthians 16:1-2).
- Our attitude in giving should always be one of cheer (2 Corinthians 9:7).

Do we support the Lord's work? As we will support His work, He will go before us in amazing ways, making the crooked paths straight.

Our Church Budget

We can expect three things from BCC:

1. Individual gifts will be confidential.

We believe giving is between an individual and the Lord. Therefore, we take pains to ensure confidentiality. The elders and staff do not know what anyone gives.

2. **There is accountability.** There are no secret or hidden funds. No one person makes final budget and spending decisions. Every check written requires two signatures for approval. At least two individuals count offerings. We are audited by an outside organization each year.

3. **There is responsibility.**

We strive to be good stewards of all the resources God gives us. Each ministry is committed to spend within its budget, and ministry leaders are held accountable by the elders to do so. However, we desire to be sensitive to doors of opportunity the Lord opens to us and must at times respond to unexpected expenses. Therefore, there are times when church leadership will approve additional spending with the goal of remaining within our proposed church budget.

(See Handout – Budget)

Giving at Burke Community Church

- **General Fund** contributions support all ministries of BCC to include missions. This is often a priority of focus for our church family and helps to address the broadest needs of the church.

Currently, there are 3 other funds to consider when giving. These are restricted funds and cannot be earmarked for a specific person or ministry event. Over time these funds may change or close once the fund purpose has been met.

- **Building Fund** contributions directly support Principal payments for the mortgage.
- **Benevolence Fund** contributions assist with financial needs of individuals and families in the church and our community.
- **Scholarship Fund** contributions support life-changing events like camps, retreats, and conferences making them accessible to those who cannot afford them on their own.

Quick Ways to Give

(One-time or recurring donation by EFT or Credit Card)



Church App:

Download the Burke Community Church app. From the main screen, bottom right corner, select the 3 dots/More, next select “Give,” and follow the prompts.

Online:

www.burkecommunity.com/give

Select "Give a One-Time or Recurring Gift with PushPay." Follow the prompts. You may also log onto your account in the upper right-hand corner of this page.

Other Ways to Give**Sunday:**

You may give by cash or check during any of our Sunday services. Please make checks payable to Burke Community Church. Note any designation other than General Fund (see above) on the memo line of your check. Cash donations should be enclosed in an envelope with donor's name, address, gift amount, and designation if not for the General Fund.

Mail:

Option 1: Send a check by mail to Burke Community Church, 9900 Old Keene Mill Road, Burke, VA 22015. Checks should be made payable to Burke Community Church. Please note "General" or one of the funds above on the memo line of your check. PLEASE DO NOT SEND CASH BY MAIL.

Option 2: Set up Burke Community Church as a "Bill Pay" vendor through your bank website for a one-time or recurring gift. Be sure to designate "General Fund" or one of the above-mentioned funds in the account field at set up.

Stock:

There are great tax advantages to gifting stock. If you would like to know more, please contact the Finance Office.

If you have questions or need additional assistance, contact the Finance Office by emailing **give@burkecommunity.com** or calling 703-250-3960.

Who We Are

Our Church Model

God has appointed elders to oversee His Church (Acts 20:28; 1 Timothy 5:17; Hebrews 13:7, 17; 1 Peter 5:1-4). The leadership authority of the Church is specified in the BCC Constitution:

The Council of Elders of the church is constituted by a minimum of six (6) elected elders and the Senior Pastor. All elders serve on the Council of Elders as co-equals. .The Council of Elders shall exercise government and discipline, and take the oversight of the spiritual interest of the church by feeding, shepherding, and leading the flock, as described in the Holy Scriptures. To accomplish these responsibilities, the Council of Elders is granted authority to exercise other powers not expressly delegated elsewhere in these by-laws.

If we are a strong, powerful, effective church, then we will be one that supports, follows, and defends our God-ordained leaders. These leaders have our best interests at heart, and they are responsible before God to nurture and mature us in the faith and to reach the lost for Him. Their job is, therefore, a high and holy one, and they take it very seriously because so much is at stake. Hence, when we support them, we make the ministry road easier, freeing our leaders to fulfill their calling.

How should we respond to the leaders within the local church?

- Submit to their God-given authority (Hebrews 13:7, 17). To follow these shepherds is to follow The Great Shepherd: they are His earthly representatives (1 Peter 5:1-4).
- Respect their leadership among us (1 Thessalonians 5:12).
- Pray for them (Ephesians 6:18-20). Why? They are in the front lines of spiritual warfare.
- Don't speak evil of them (Acts 23:5). They are innocent until proven guilty.
- Work with them, not against them (Hebrews 13:17).
- Exhort them (Hebrews 3:13).
- Share with them (Galatians 6:6). Tell them how their work is impacting our lives. A little encouragement goes a long way.

Who Is the Chief?

The Chief Is Not the pastor, elders, deacons, committees, or church members who give a considerable amount of money to the church.

The Chief Is Jesus Christ, our living Lord and Savior! Concerning this designation, Scripture is quite clear: *“And [Jesus] is the head of the body, the church; He is the beginning and the firstborn from among the dead, so that in everything he might have the supremacy” (Colossians 1:18).*

How Do We Know What the Chief Wants?

Jesus Christ gives clear and precise direction and purpose to His Body, the Church, through the inspired and inerrant Word of God. Regarding the primacy of the Word in the individual and corporate life of believers, Paul concludes in 2 Timothy 3:16 and 17:

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

Teaching and reading the Scriptures is, therefore, of paramount importance for the local church, for it is through this teaching and reading that the church knows how to best minister to Christ’s glory.

How Do We Operate?

The Role of the Pastor-Teacher (Ephesians 4:11)

The primary role of the pastor-teacher elder is to feed the flock of God by teaching them through precept and example. As Paul told the pastor-teacher Timothy:

Until I come, devote yourself to the public reading of Scripture, to preaching and to teaching. Do not neglect your gift, which was given you through a prophetic message when the body of elders laid their hands on you. Be diligent in these matters: give yourself wholly to them, so that everyone may see your progress. Watch your life and doctrine closely. Persevere in them, because if you do, you will save both yourself and your hearers (1 Timothy 4:13-16).

The pastor-teacher is not to spend the majority of his time in administration tasks, counseling, or in calling. Other believers who possess these gifts are to step forward and employ those gifts so that the church body is working effectively. The pastor-teacher will certainly involve himself in the practical shepherding of the flock, but that is not to be his primary purpose. He is called first and foremost to study the Word so that he can be faithful to equip the saints for ministry (Ephesians 4:11-13). The pastor-teacher is not the head of the local church either. He is merely one of

the elders who is responsible for the spiritual feeding, nurturing, and protection of the flock. In addition, the pastor is not a detective. If we have a special need, please let him know so he can be with and pray for you.

Elders

Elders are the key men of the church who have been selected by the flock to care for that flock not because of their professional abilities or financial standing, but because of their level of spiritual maturity. Paul tells us clearly what that level of spirituality needs to be:

Here is a trustworthy saying: If anyone sets his heart on being an overseer, he desires a noble task. Now the overseer must be above reproach, the husband of but one wife, temperate, self-controlled, respectable, hospitable, able to teach, not given to drunkenness, not violent but gentle, not quarrelsome, not a lover of money. He must manage his own family well and see that his children obey him with proper respect. (If anyone does not know how to manage his own family, how can he take care of God's church?) He must not be a recent convert, or he may become conceited and fall under the same judgment as the devil. He must also have a good reputation with outsiders, so that he will not fall into disgrace and into the devil's trap (1 Timothy 3:1-7).

The elders are responsible to rule the church by precepts and example (Hebrews 13:7, 17). The way they live is what makes their precepts believable. Elders are responsible for the spiritual life and direction of the church. They are also responsible to work together as a team. When items are voted on which affect the church, the elders must all be in agreement (1 Corinthians 1:10). Further, based upon Acts 20:28-35, the elders are to be cognizant of five key duties: (1) to keep in fellowship with Jesus; (2) to teach the milk and meat of the Word; (3) to protect the flock from false teachers; (4) to pray and pore over God's Word; and (5) to be free from self-interests.

BCC is an elder-led church. This leadership model means that the bulk of authority in the church, outside of Christ, rests upon their shoulders. They, not the congregation, make appropriate decisions which affect the life of the church.

Deacons and Deaconesses

According to scriptural texts like Acts 6:2-4 and 1 Timothy 3:8-11, the church should contain deacons and deaconesses. These servants are directly responsible for carrying out the practical service wishes of the body. They are also responsible for meeting the practical needs of people within the body, such as coordinating meals for a grieving family, monies for those in tight circumstances, etc.

The Congregation

The BCC congregation is comprised of people who place themselves under the authority umbrella of the elder team. The congregation is responsible for communicating with the elder board. The BCC congregation votes on the annual budget; calling of the senior pastor; the purchase of land or buildings; the appointment of deacons and elders; and changes in the church's constitution, by-laws, or statement of faith.

Christ has established the structure of the local church by building it into the fabric of the New Testament church. Things like prayer, sound teaching, employment of spiritual gifts, and dedication make this structure work to the glory of our Lord. Perhaps the one key ingredient is submission:

Obey your leaders and submit to their authority. They keep watch over you as men who must give account. Obey them so that their work will be a joy, not a burden, for that would be of no advantage to you (Hebrews 13:17).

The elders are to be submissive to the Lord's authority and servants to the church members (John 13:1-20), and the congregation is to be submissive to the authority God has entrusted to the elders.

We should *not* submit to a leader when he is leading against scriptural truths, or when he is living or leading in an unethical fashion. Other than these circumstances, we should follow our leaders where God is leading them. To follow them is to be obedient to the Word and follow Christ who is the true Leader and Shepherd.

myBCC

Burke Community Church's Online Community

What are the tools to help me stay connected and “in the know” at Burke Community Church?

1. The Church Website: burkecommunity.com

- Detailed event information and registration
- Sermon archive
- General information about church departments and programs
- Contact us (burkecommunity.com/contact)

Note: burkecommunity.com is primarily designed for people checking out our church. While it still has a few helpful features for people who attend our church, the following tools are more designed with congregants in mind.

2. MyBCC (Church Database):

MyBCC is the digital database that the church uses for many behind the scenes administrative purposes (scheduling events, managing registrations, organizing groups, scheduling volunteers, etc.). For you, it is a place to manage your information, communication, and group participation.

- Customize your profile (who you are and how we contact you)
- Customize your privacy settings (who in the church can see your information)
- Communicate with groups you are in and join new groups
- Customize your communication preferences
- And more!

Learn more about logging in and using MyBCC at: burkecommunity.com/mybcc

3. Church App – quick and easy engagement!

- Media, events, and news feed on your home screen
- Small group communication through the “My Groups” feature
- Quick check-in for Sunday morning programs (birth-6th grade)
- Easy mobile giving
- Personalized push notifications
- And more!

To download search “Burke Community Church” in your app store. Learn more about the Church App at: burkecommunity.com/app

4. Email Groups (MailChimp)

Get the latest church information direct to your inbox by signing up for any of our email groups at burkecommunity.com/email

- Weekly Bulletin (*recommended* features upcoming events and opportunities)
- Kids Ministry (2x week)
- Student Ministries (monthly)
- Women's Ministry (monthly), Men's Ministry (monthly)
- Missions & Outreach (monthly)

Note: Your profile in MyBCC is connected to the Church App and your Email Group subscriptions. For this reason you need to use the same, single email address for all church communication. At any time you may update to a new preferred email in MyBCC, the Church App, or through your Email Group (MailChimp). Please note that if you unsubscribe from anything, you unsubscribe from all church communications. To avoid this, please change your communication preferences instead of unsubscribing. If you have questions or technical issues, please contact us at:

communications@burkecommunity.com

5. Follow Us on Social Media



@burkecommunity



@burkecommunity



@burkecommunitychurch



burkecommunity.com/spotify

Appendix Resources

The
CONSTITUTION
Of
BURKE COMMUNITY CHURCH



9900 Old Keene Mill Rd. Burke, VA 22015
703-425-0205
www.burkecommunity.com

Adopted January 20, 2019

**THE CONSTITUTION OF
BURKE COMMUNITY CHURCH**

Adopted January 20, 2019

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BURKE COMMUNITY CHURCH STATEMENT OF FAITH

Adopted January 20, 2019

PREAMBLE: The teaching of Burke Community Church is based on the Holy Scriptures. This statement of faith reflects those doctrines that the elders and congregation consider essential to understanding, teaching, and practicing God's Word.

1. GOD

God has revealed Himself to be the living and true God. There is one God who is the Creator and Preserver of all things. He is one, existing eternally in the three Persons of the Trinity--Father, Son, and Holy Spirit--who are of one essence and co-equal (Deut. 6:4-5; Matt. 28:19-20; 2 Cor. 13:14; Rev. 1:4-5).

A) GOD THE FATHER

God the Father works all things according to His own purpose (Acts 17:24-28). He is sovereign over all (Ex. 15:18; Ps. 97:1-5; Is. 6:1). His creative purpose and redemptive plan cannot be thwarted (Gen. 50:20; Prov. 19:21; Jn. 6:44; Acts 2:23).

B) GOD THE SON

Jesus Christ is God (Jn. 8:58, 20:28), the eternally pre-existent Son and living Word (John 1:1), who became incarnate through His miraculous conception by the Holy Spirit and His virgin birth (Matt. 1:18-24; Lk. 2:26-38). He is perfect Deity and true humanity united in one person (Phil. 2:5-11). Both natures are whole, perfect and distinct. He was tempted in all ways yet lived a sinless life (Heb. 4:15). He was obedient to God the Father, even unto death (Phil. 2:8). He voluntarily atoned for sinners by dying on the Cross as their substitute and shedding His blood for the forgiveness of their sins (Rom. 3:22-26). He thus revealed the divine love and upheld divine justice, removing our guilt and reconciling us to God (Rom. 8:1-4). On the third day in the tomb, He rose from the dead in the same body, though glorified, in which He lived and died (Lk. 24:31, 36; Phil. 3:21; Heb. 7:16, 24). He ascended bodily into heaven (Acts 1:6-11) and sits at the right hand of God the Father (Col. 3:1; Heb. 1:3), where He, the only mediator between God and man (1 Tim. 2:5), continually makes intercession for believers (Rom. 8:34; Heb. 7:25). He will come again to complete His saving work and to complete God's redemptive purpose (Jn. 14:3; 1 Thess. 4:16-18; Phil. 1:6).

C) GOD THE HOLY SPIRIT

The Holy Spirit reveals and glorifies Christ (Jn. 16:7-15) and applies the saving work of Christ to men (Eph. 1:17-18; Jn. 3:5-8; Rom. 8:14; 2 Cor. 3:18). He convicts the world of sin, truth, righteousness, and judgment (Jn. 16:8). He draws sinners to Christ (Jn. 6:44), imparts new life to them (Jn. 3:5-8), continually indwells them (Gal. 4:6-7) from the

moment of spiritual birth in order to conform them ultimately to the image and likeness of Christ (2 Cor. 3:17-18), and seals them until the day of redemption (Eph. 1:13-14). His fullness, power, and control are appropriated in the believer's life by faith (Eph. 2:8, 9). The Holy Spirit alone administers spiritual gifts to the Church for the common good of all believers (1 Cor. 12:7).

2. THE BIBLE

The basis of our beliefs is the Bible, God's written Word, which includes and is limited to the 39 books of the Old Testament and the 27 books of the New Testament. It was uniquely, verbally, and fully inspired by the Holy Spirit, and it was written free from error in the original manuscripts. It is the supreme and final authority in all matters on which it speaks. It is the only infallible rule in faith and practice. All doctrinal statements must be measured against the full counsel of God in Holy Scripture (Josh. 1:8; Ps. 119; Jn. 17:17; 2 Tim. 3:15-17).

3. MANKIND

People were created in the image and likeness of God (Gen. 1:26-27) to know, glorify, worship, and enjoy Him forever. Tempted by Satan, mankind willfully disobeyed God and sinned (2 Cor. 11:3, 14). Thus, people were alienated from their perfect Creator and plunged into a state of sin and separation from God (Rom. 3:9-20; 5:12-19). That historic fall brought all people under the sentence of eternal condemnation and death (Rom. 5:16, 18). Man's nature is corrupt (Titus 1:15), and he is thus, apart from the grace of God through faith, totally unable to please God (Rom. 8:8), have fellowship with Him, or even enter into His presence (Ps. 5:4; Prov. 28:9; Is. 1:15). Everyone is in need of salvation (Rom. 6:23) through the substitutionary death of Jesus Christ as full payment for his sin and renewal by the Holy Spirit.

4. SIN

Sin is disobeying God and attempting to live and to meet our needs independently of Him (Rom. 3:10-26, 5:12-19; 1 Jn. 1:8-10).

5. REDEMPTION/SALVATION

Human salvation is wholly a work of God's free grace and is not the work, in whole or in part, of human merit or goodness or religious ceremony (Eph. 2:8-9; Titus 3:5-7). We believe Jesus died upon the cross as a sinless substitute for sinners of all ages and times (Rom. 3:21-28, 5:17-19; Jn. 3:16). Without the shedding of blood, there is no forgiveness of sin (Heb. 9:22). Therefore, His death perfectly satisfies the demands of God's holy justice and appeases His holy wrath (Rom. 5:10; Col. 1:20-22).

All who receive, by faith, the resurrected Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord are spiritually born into permanent relationship with God by the indwelling Holy Spirit (Eph. 1:13-14). Thus, God imputes His righteousness to those who put their faith solely in the substitutionary death of Christ for their salvation (Rom. 4:11, 22-24). As a result of this faith, the redeemed sinner receives eternal life and is now freed from the penalty (Rom. 8:1) and power (1 Cor. 15:50; 1 Pet. 4:11) of sin and, in heaven, from the very presence of sin (Rev. 21:1-4). Redemption does not, however, promise that we will escape the earthly consequences of past, present, or future

sinful acts (Heb. 12:6, 10; Deut. 8:5; Ps. 94:10). Neither is one's station in life, physical circumstances, financial status, etc., necessarily indicative of the state of one's heart before or after salvation. God may grant physical health and material prosperity to some, but this is because of His specific grace alone in accordance with His sovereign purpose and plan (Phil. 4:10-13).

6. ETERNAL LIFE

Eternal life is a relationship that begins at the moment of salvation and continues forever. Eternal life is knowing the one true and living God and Jesus Christ whom He sent (Jn. 17:3; 1 Jn. 5:11-13).

The great end, which Christianity sets before us, is the joy of eternal life in the knowledge and presence of the eternal God (1 Cor. 2:9; Phil. 3:30-21). Whoever rejects the Son will not see life, for God's wrath remains on him (Jn. 3:36; Rom. 8:6-8).

When the Holy Spirit indwells the new believer at the moment of salvation, He imparts this eternal life to the believer (1 Cor. 1:21-22).

Although all die physically, God will ultimately resurrect all believers in glorified bodies that are incorruptible, without sin, decay, illness, pain, or death—finally perfected for eternal life (1 Cor. 15:35-57; Rev. 21:3-4).

7. ASSURANCE OF SALVATION

Since human salvation is wholly a work of God's grace and is not the work, in whole or in part, of human merit or goodness or religious ceremony, salvation rests securely with God.

All who are born again of the Spirit can be assured of their salvation from the very moment at which they trust Christ as their Savior and Lord. Nothing can separate us from the love of God (Rom. 8:38-39). This assurance is not based upon any kind of human merit or feelings, but on the promise of God and the testimony of the Holy Spirit to the believer through His Word. Further, when a person is born of the Spirit of God, he is a new creation (2 Cor. 5:17). He now desires to please God. This new inclination, the intent of the heart, is called repentance and is evidence of a changed life (Jn. 10:25-30; Rom. 5:1-5, 8:1, 28-39; 1 Jn. 2:19, 5:13). Therefore, the three-fold witness of salvation—the witness of Scripture, the witness of the indwelling Holy Spirit, and the witness of a changed life—is God's assurance that the believer is a child of God.

8. SANCTIFICATION

From the moment of salvation, every believer is being conformed to the likeness of Jesus Christ by the Holy Spirit (2 Cor. 3:18; 5:17). This process is called sanctification. God's promise is that He is faithful to complete this process that He began in us (Phil. 1:6).

God created us in Christ Jesus to do good works which He prepared in advance for us to do so that people will see our good works and praise our Father in Heaven (Eph. 2:10). The Holy Spirit is the active agent in fulfilling these good works (John 15:5); the responsibility of the believer is to obey (1 Sam. 15:22).

Unrighteousness, such as sexual immorality, greed, adultery, homosexuality, or drunkenness is not acceptable in the holy life God desires for His followers. However, through repentance, obedience to the Word of God, and empowering of the Holy Spirit, the believer is able to grow in holiness and actively participate in the life of the church, becoming more and more like the Lord Jesus Christ. (1 Cor. 6:9-11)

9. CHRIST'S RETURN

Jesus Christ will come again to the earth—personally, visibly, and bodily—to consummate history and fulfill the eternal plan of God the Father. No man knows the day and time of Jesus' return, but the fact of His return is certain. The Scriptures declare that when Jesus returns to the earth in glory, every eye will behold Him, every knee will bow, and every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father. Christians are to be about the Father's business and are to maintain an attitude of expectancy (Acts 1:11; Heb. 9:28; Mk. 8:38; 2 Thess. 1:10; Rev. 1:7; Jn. 5:28-29; Rom. 8:17-21).

10. JUDGMENT

There will be a day when everyone who has lived must stand before the Judgment Seat of Christ (Rom. 14:10; 2 Cor. 5:10; Heb. 9:27).

Christians—all who confess Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord—have already been judged at the Cross and have passed from death to life, from condemnation to salvation (Rom. 8:1). Their names will be in the Lamb's Book of Life (Rev. 3:5, 13:8, 20:12, 21:27), and they will be ushered into God's presence forever. Their works, however, will be judged and each Christian will receive what is due him for the things done while in the body (Matt. 5:12, 10:41-42, 16:27; Eph. 6:8; Col. 3:24).

Non-believers—anyone whose name is not found written in the Book of Life—will be thrown into the lake of fire, which is the second death, being punished with everlasting destruction and shut out from the presence of the Lord and the majesty of His power (Heb. 10:27; 2 Pet. 2:4, 9, 3:7).

11. THE CHURCH

Jesus Christ is the Head of the Church, His Body (Eph. 2:19-22, 4:11-13). The Church is not a building or an institution; rather it is composed of all people who have received salvation. Christ's people are to assemble together regularly to devote themselves to worship, teaching, fellowship, breaking of bread, and prayer (Acts 2:42). The Lord Jesus Christ commanded His Church to proclaim the Gospel throughout the world and to disciple men of every nation, baptizing them in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, teaching them to obey all He has commanded. The church is to reflect the love of Christ through its service to others (Matt. 28:16-20).

Two ordinances have been entrusted to the Church: baptism and communion. They are not, however, to be regarded as means of salvation.

12. MARRIAGE AND SEXUALITY

We believe that marriage unites one man and one woman in a lifetime commitment to each other (Gen. 2:23-24; Matt. 19:4-6). Marriage provides for intimate companionship, pure sexual expression (Gen. 2:25; Eph. 5:31-33), procreation, and reflects the relationship of Christ and the Church (Gen. 1:28; Prov. 5:15-19; 1 Cor. 7:1-5).

We believe that God has commanded that sexual activity be engaged exclusively inside the marriage covenant between one man and one woman. We believe that any other sexual activity that deviates from God's purpose for a man and a woman is sin (Gen. 1:27, 2:24, 19:5-13, 26:8-9; Deut. 22:5; Lev. 18:1-30; Rom. 1:26-29; 1 Cor. 5:1; 6:9; 6:19; 1 Thess. 4:1-8; Heb. 13:4).

We believe that sexuality and gender are fixed by God at birth and are not fluid, resulting in each person being a unique creation by God's perfect intention (Ps 139:13-16). In addition, we believe all are welcome in the body of believers, recognizing that we all have sinned (Rom. 3:23). Further, grace, mercy, and victory are available to all who struggle in these and other areas of sin, when they choose to repent of their sin and walk in obedience with Christ.

BURKE COMMUNITY CHURCH BYLAWS

Revised January 20, 2019

A. ARTICLE I: NAME

The name of this organization is Burke Community Church (hereinafter also referred to as "BCC" or the "church").

B. ARTICLE II: PURPOSE AND POWERS

This church is organized for the purpose of conducting the ecclesiastical and corporate affairs of a local church in accordance with the "Constitution of Burke Community Church," hereinafter referred to as the Constitution. Corporately, the powers of the church shall include the right to acquire personal and real property by purchase, gift, bequest, or device and to hold, sell, lease, convey, mortgage, or otherwise encumber same.

C. ARTICLE III: THE CONGREGATION

SECTION 1: COMPOSITION

The congregation is composed of members who have united on profession of faith, together with their children, and friends and agreed to live together with a common faith and purpose.

SECTION 2: MEMBERS

Members shall be received by the Council of Elders after reaching the age of eighteen upon giving assurance of their faith in Jesus Christ and their willingness to abide by the governing documents (signed member's covenant) and serve Him through this church. Members express their faith by participating in the life of the church; by exercising their spiritual gifts; by attending church services regularly; by giving of their time, talents, and treasure; by yielding honor, encouragement, and obedience to elders; and by participating in congregational meetings.

SECTION 3: FRIENDS

The church, being primarily a fellowship of the saints with Christ the Head, welcomes the fellowship and service of non-members in all areas with the exception that non-members shall not lead a BCC-sponsored ministry; hold elected office; or vote at congregational meetings. While serving in a temporary teaching role at BCC, friends agree to conform to the BCC Statement of Faith.

SECTION 4: ROLL OF MEMBERS

A roll of members' names shall be maintained by the Council of Elders through the church office. The roll shall indicate active or inactive status as determined by the Council of Elders.

A member shall be considered inactive by the Council of Elders if he or she has been absent from all services for one year (provided he or she is not hindered by sickness or disability), showing no interest and giving no response to contacts from the Council of Elders. Names shall be added to the roll when persons have been accepted into membership by the Council of Elders. Names shall remain on the roll until death, removal at the member's request, or removal by the Council of Elders.

SECTION 5: VOTING IN CONGREGATIONAL MEETINGS

Voting is limited to active members. Membership rolls shall be reviewed at least ten (10) days prior to a congregational meeting at which elections are scheduled to determine those eligible to vote in said elections. Absentee ballots may be requested and are acceptable if they have been completed, signed, and delivered to the Clerk of the Council of Elders prior to the meeting. Proxy ballots will not be acceptable in any case. Simple majority vote shall decide all congregational questions except as specified in these Bylaws.

SECTION 6: GENERAL POWERS

The general powers of the congregation shall be:

- a) To authorize the buying, selling, receiving or giving real or other property and any related indebtedness – two-thirds (2/3) majority.
- b) To elect its elders and the nominating and search committees.
- c) To call its senior pastor – three-fourths (3/4) majority.
- d) To approve the annual ministry plan (including its associated budget) and any ten (10%) percent or greater redistribution of ministry funds during the fiscal year.
- e) To make changes to the church Statement of Faith – three-fourths (3/4) majority.
- f) To make changes to the Bylaws – two-thirds (2/3) majority.
- g) To merge or dissolve the church – two-thirds (2/3) majority.
- h) To sell all or substantially all of the church's assets – two-thirds (2/3) majority.
- i) To approve any other major event or decision as proposed by the Council of Elders – simple majority unless otherwise stated.

Majorities required to exercise these general powers of the congregation will be majorities of members both present and voting at properly called congregational meetings, as set forth in these Bylaws.

D. ARTICLE IV: CHURCH DISCIPLINE

SECTION 1: AGREEMENT

Members upon joining the church agree to work and worship together in harmony, settling conflicts within the fellowship according to Scripture. In accordance with Article XIV of these Bylaws, members agree not to pursue legal action against or sue in civil court, the pastors, officers, church staff or other members in connection with the performance of their official duties.

SECTION 2: PROCEDURE

Christians are admonished not to "continue to sin" but to confess and forsake sinful acts and attitudes. In the event of persistent, unrepented sin, it may become necessary to correct sinning church members. The ultimate goal of any disciplinary action is to restore the Christian to full fellowship with God and the church.

- a) All church discipline shall be conducted with love, in privacy. Only after unsuccessful private attempts, according to the Scriptures, shall offenses be referred to the Council of Elders and exclusion from church office or membership be considered.
- b) In the event of unrepented sin or unresolved differences between individual members, reconciliation and repentance shall be sought in private. Should such attempts fail, the matter shall be referred to the Council of Elders who shall carefully investigate the allegations. If necessary, after efforts to promote restoration and reconciliation, the Council of Elders shall effect final disposition of the case, which may include dismissal from any leadership position, role, office, and/or membership, if required.
- c) Elders as leaders are subject to stricter standards of discipline. In the event of unrepented sin and the failure of attempts to resolve the matter in private or within the Council of Elders, the Council shall consider public correction as an example, according to the Scriptures. (1 Tim. 5:17-20)
- d) If a member is disciplined by the Council of Elders, it may be announced to the congregation to carry out the Biblical admonitions to bring about repentance and restoration.

SECTION 3: REINSTATEMENT

If the dismissed member repents, and if possible, makes restitution, he will be restored to the body by the Council of Elders.

E. ARTICLE V: VOCATIONAL PASTORS

SECTION 1: QUALIFICATIONS

- a) Pastors, by virtue of their office, shall be voting members of Burke Community Church. They shall be men totally committed to Jesus Christ as Lord, filled with the Holy Spirit, with a burden for world evangelism, and be committed to the discipleship of Christians to maturity in Jesus Christ. They shall be personally active in winning the lost, binding up the broken-hearted, able to teach the Word accurately and effectively and to counsel believers spiritually. Most of all, they must be men of God, aspiring to holiness of attitude and life, who can lead Burke Community Church to fulfill its calling and to maintain its unity in the bond of peace.
- b) Associate pastors called to functional areas of ministry, by virtue of their offices, shall be members of Burke Community Church. They shall be totally committed to Jesus Christ as Lord, filled with the Holy Spirit, with a burden for evangelism, and be committed to the discipleship of Christians to maturity in Jesus Christ. They shall be people of God aspiring to holiness of attitude and life. Gifts, training, and experience, appropriate to the functional areas to which they are called shall qualify them.
- c) The Senior Pastor is an elder and serves on the Council of Elders.

SECTION 2: DUTIES

- a) The Senior Pastor, in concert with the Council of Elders and other vocational pastors, shall teach the congregation biblical truths, exercise watchful and responsible care over the total ministry, shepherd the flock, provide spiritual leadership, train the elders and other pastoral staff to share pastoral and support duties, and disciple, direct, and monitor the ministries of the other pastors.
- b) The Senior Pastor shall report directly to the Council of Elders; all other pastors and associate pastors shall report to the Senior Pastor or his pastoral designee.
- c) The Senior Pastor shall lead the church staff (see Article IX) in developing an annual ministry plan that addresses ministry objectives, an integrated calendar of major events for the year, and an integrated budget to support the plan. The Senior Pastor shall ensure ministry teams are invited to submit their recommendations for the ministry plan. After receiving approval from the Council of Elders, the Senior Pastor shall present the ministry plan to the members for approval.
- d) Major sections of the ministry plan shall address equipping the saints for ministry, the multiplication of the ministry, and the current nerves of need in the community.
- e) Once annually, but not later than the first Sunday in February, the Senior Pastor shall devote his sermon to "The State of Burke Community Church."
- f) Associate pastors called to functional areas of ministry shall have those areas of ministry defined by the Council of Elders. Their ministries shall be reviewed annually by the Senior Pastor or his designee with a view toward adjusting assignments in light of their needs and gifts and the needs of the ministries of Burke Community Church. The Senior Pastor or his designee shall report the results of his annual review to the Council of Elders.

SECTION 3: CALL OF VOCATIONAL PASTORS AND ASSOCIATE PASTORS

- a) For Senior Pastor, the Council of Elders shall announce the need for a search committee and the date for a meeting to be held in three weeks to address this issue. During the next two weeks the Council of Elders shall receive names in nomination for this search committee. One week before the meeting, the Council of Elders shall prayerfully choose a list of members to be on this search committee. The membership shall ratify or reject the list by their vote at the meeting.
- b) The Search Committee shall prayerfully investigate prospects for Senior Pastor, using the guidelines stated in Article V, Section 1, and direction from the Council of Elders. They shall submit the names of one or more qualified persons to the Council of Elders.
- c) The Council of Elders shall consider the committee's recommendation, and in coordination with the search committee, shall conduct any additional investigation or interviews deemed necessary, and shall recommend a single candidate to the congregation.
- d) At a duly called congregational meeting, an affirmative vote of three-fourths (3/4) of those members present and voting shall constitute a call for the Senior Pastor. The Search Committee shall inform the candidate of the voting results as soon as possible.
- e) For pastors other than the Senior Pastor, the Council of Elders shall be the final hiring authority and set, conduct or delegate any investigation or interviews deemed necessary in support of the hiring process.

SECTION 4: TERMINATION

- a) Vocational pastors or associate pastors may resign from Burke Community Church by giving written notice of intent to resign to the Clerk of the Council of Elders at least sixty (60) days in advance.
- b) If any two (2) members have a grievance against a pastor, those members must present their grievances to the Council of Elders. Any vocational pastor or associate pastor may be dismissed for immoral or egregiously improper behavior after appropriate investigation by a unanimous vote of the Council of Elders, at a duly called meeting of the Council wherein the purpose of the meeting is stated and after opportunity is given to the vocational pastor/associate pastor to explain his position in relation to the cause for dismissal. In the case of termination of a pastor who is also an elder, a unanimous vote of the other elders is sufficient.

F. ARTICLE VI: THE COUNCIL OF ELDERS (SERVING AS BOARD OF DIRECTORS)

SECTION 1: GENERAL POWERS

The corporate powers of the church shall be exercised by or under the authority of the Board of Directors, hereinafter referred to in these Bylaws as the "Council of Elders" or "elders." The Council of Elders shall exercise government and discipline and take the oversight of the spiritual interest of the church by feeding, shepherding, and leading the flock, as described in the Holy Scriptures. The powers, business and property of the church shall be exercised, conducted and controlled by the Council of Elders for the purposes of overseeing the legal, business, financial and administrative affairs of the church with consensus agreement. If, in the course of the decision-making processes, the Council of Elders cannot unanimously agree, then the decisions will be made by majority vote of the elders present and voting at that meeting. The Senior Pastor, who shall be recognized as the authority to oversee the spiritual affairs of the church, shall be the tie breaking vote if that case ever arises.

SECTION 2: COMPOSITION

The Council of Elders of the church is constituted by the Senior Pastor and a minimum of six (6) elected serving elders. The authorized number of serving elders shall be such number as may from time to time be authorized by the Council of Elders, provided that such number shall not be less than six (6). No less than fifty (50%) percent of the Council of Elders shall be laymen from the congregation and not related to paid staff. All elders serve on the Council of Elders as co-equals. The Council of Elders may recommend a staff pastor to be approved by the congregation as an elder. The Elder Nominating Committee shall review the recommended pastor as it does all other elder candidates.

SECTION 3: OFFICERS

The officers of the Council of Elders shall be the Chairman, the Clerk and such other officers as the Council of Elders may from time to time appoint or elect. The Senior Pastor shall serve as the Chairman and facilitate the meeting, unless he delegates to the Board to appoint a Chairman from among the lay Board members. The Clerk shall be selected annually from among the lay members of the Council by the Council of Elders.

SECTION 4: MEETINGS

- a) Regular meetings of the Council of Elders will be held at least once each month. A two-thirds (2/3) vote of the Council of Elders attending any meeting will be sufficient to postpone the next scheduled meeting of the Council of Elders, but an alternative date for the meeting must also be approved.
- b) Special meetings of the Council of Elders may be called by the Senior Pastor, or in his absence, by the Clerk of the Council of Elders, or upon request of any two elders.
- c) A quorum of half of the serving elders shall be required for the transaction of business in any meeting of the Council of Elders. A majority vote of the elders attending a meeting shall decide all questions unless otherwise stated in these Bylaws or the Council of Elders agrees to require unanimity.
- d) All meetings of the Council of Elders shall be open to observation by any active member of the church; the only exception being executive meetings specifically closed by two-thirds (2/3) vote of Elders attending to discuss sensitive matters.
- e) Any active member or designated representative of any organization of the church can petition the Council of Elders for the purpose of appearing before the Council of Elders on any matter by scheduling such an appearance through the Clerk.
- f) Any action required or permitted to be taken by the Council of Elders may be taken without a meeting, if all of the elders, individually or collectively, consent in writing to the action. Such action by written consent shall have the same force and effect as a unanimous vote of the elders. Such written consent or consents shall be filed with the minutes of the proceedings of the Council of Elders.
- g) Members of the Council of Elders or of any ministry team thereof may participate in a meeting of the Council or ministry team by means of a conference telephone or similar communications equipment whereby all persons participating in the meeting can hear each other. Participation by such means shall constitute presence in person at such meeting. When such a meeting is conducted by means of a conference telephone or similar communications equipment, a written record shall be made of the action taken at such meeting, noting participation of those who were present by means of such communications equipment.
- h) The Clerk shall duly record any actions taken by the Council of Elders in the minutes. Except for Executive Sessions, the minutes of Council of Elders' meetings shall be available to any member of the congregation at a time and location announced to the congregation. The Senior Pastor will hold minutes of Executive Sessions. In addition, the Clerk shall notify all persons specifically affected by Council of Elders action in a timely manner.

SECTION 5: SPECIFIC DUTIES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Without prejudice to the general powers outlined above, and subject to the same limitations, the Council of Elders shall have the following responsibilities and authorities:

- a) To maintain oversight over all areas of ministry. It is responsible for approving the spiritual direction of the church. The church staff shall submit annually a ministry plan to the Council of Elders who is accountable to the membership and before God to seek and to provide the direction for the ministries of BCC. The Council of Elders shall recommend a final ministry plan to the congregation for their approval at the fall congregational meeting.
- b) To shepherd the congregation, maintaining an active counseling role, participating in

- laying on of hands for prayer, and providing spiritual assistance to the members of BCC.
- c) To establish governing principles, policies and determining practices for the church, including the creation and maintenance of policies and procedure manuals, which shall contain all controlling policies and procedures governing any and all aspects of the church's affairs, including, but not limited to, ministry team descriptions and policies regarding the handling of funds, use of facilities, and employment policies and practices.
 - d) To recommend the borrowing of money and incurring indebtedness on behalf of the church and the cause to be executed and delivered for the church's purpose and in the church's name, promissory notes, and other evidence of debt and securities.
 - e) To oversee legal, business, financial and administrative affairs of the church.
 - f) To act as a counsel for the Senior Pastor.
 - g) To review the state of ministries of BCC and annually evaluate the performance of the Senior Pastor.
 - h) To anoint with oil for healing (James 5:14).
 - i) To exercise other powers and duties as needed for orderly administration of the church.

The Council of Elders may delegate some of its authorities and duties to individual elders, pastors, church staff, deacons, ministry teams and others as long as the delegation does not breach its fiduciary duties to the church. The Council of Elders may also invite ministry team leaders to be non-voting attendees to Council meetings whenever projects or programs in which their ministry team may be involved are to be considered.

SECTION 6: CRITICAL MINISTRY FUNCTIONS

To be a church, certain ministry functions are necessary. Without them, we would not be a church. The Council of Elders will ensure that the following ministry functions are always operational at Burke Community Church:

- a) Worshipping God.
- b) Equipping the saints for the work of the ministry.
- c) Outreach to Burke, Fairfax County, and the uttermost parts of the earth.
- d) Caring for the internal needs of our church body.

SECTION 7: TRANSACTIONS WITH INTERESTED PARTIES

A contract or other transaction between the church and one or more of its elders, pastors, officers, deacons, or family members thereof (hereinafter "Interested Party"), or between the church and any other entity, of which one or more of the church or its elders, pastors, officers, or deacons are also Interested Parties, or in which entity is an Interested Party has a financial interest – shall be voidable at the sole election of the church unless all of the following provisions are satisfied:

- a) The church entered into the transaction for its own benefit;
- b) The transaction was fair and reasonable as to the church, or was in furtherance of its exempt purposes at the time the church entered into the transaction;
- c) Prior to consummating the transaction, or any part, the Council of Elders authorized or approved the transaction, in good faith, by a vote of a majority of the elders then in office, without counting the vote of the interested elders, and with knowledge of the

material facts concerning the transaction and the Interested Parties' interest in the transaction; and

- d) Prior to authorizing or approving the transaction, the Council of Elders, in good faith, determined after reasonable investigation and consideration, that either the church could not have obtained a more advantageous arrangement, with reasonable effort under the circumstances, or the transaction was in furtherance of the church's tax-exempt purposes.

Common or interested elders shall not be counted in determining the presence of a quorum at a meeting of the Council of Elders (or a ministry team thereof) which authorizes, approves, or ratifies such contract or transaction. The Council of Elders may adopt additional conflicts of interest policies, in addition to the above, that shall provide for full disclosure of material conflicting interests by elders, officers, deacons, or employees. These policies shall permit the Council of Elders to determine whether the contemplated transaction may be authorized as just, fair and reasonable to the church. Notwithstanding the above, no loan shall be made by the church to any of its elders, officers, pastors, deacons, or members.

SECTION 8: NO COMPENSATION

No salary or compensation shall be paid to any member of the Council of Elders in his capacity as an elder, but nothing herein shall be construed to preclude any elder from serving the church in any other capacity and receiving reasonable compensation. Moreover, an elder may receive reasonable reimbursement for travel and other approved expenses upon request and written documentation.

G. ARTICLE VII: ELECTIONS OF ELDERS

SECTION 1: ELIGIBILITY

All elders shall be mature, active, male members, of proven faith in Jesus Christ, and both desirous and apt to teach, shepherd, lead, and oversee the flock (1 Tim. 3:2-7).

SECTION 2: TERMS

- a) Terms of elected elders shall be three years.
- b) To establish continuity and a smooth transition within the Council of Elders, approximately one-third (1/3) of the elders shall be up for election or re-election each year.
- c) Elected elders shall be installed on the first Sunday of the month following their election.
- d) No elder shall serve more than two consecutive terms without a one-year break in service.

SECTION 3: NOMINATIONS

A nominating committee, consisting of active members, shall be elected annually by the congregation at the regular November meeting. No member of this committee shall be an elected officer of the church. The committee shall convene quickly to organize and elect a chairman, consider written advice from the Council of Elders, and begin prayerfully to consider the current and future leadership needs of the Body. The committee shall submit, after informing the Council of Elders, a slate of nominees to the congregation not less than two Sundays prior to an election. Recommendations from the congregation with the approval of

the individual may be made by notification to the Nominating Committee, or directly to the Clerk of the Council of Elders at least eight weeks prior to the election.

SECTION 4: ELECTIONS

Elections of elders shall be determined by secret ballot and a majority of the votes cast in favor shall elect unless otherwise ordered by the congregation.

SECTION 5: VACANCIES

Vacancies shall be filled by congregational election in May and November. The Council of Elders may, at its discretion, fill by appointment one vacancy by a former elder of the church for a period not to exceed six months.

SECTION 6: RESIGNATION AND REMOVAL

Any elder may at any time deliver a written notice of intent to resign to the Senior Pastor, which shall be effective upon acceptance by the Council of Elders. Other than the Senior Pastor, whose removal is provided above, any elder may be removed at any time with or without cause when, in the sole judgment and discretion of the Council of Elders, by a three-fourths (3/4) majority of the elders that such individual should no longer serve on the Council of Elders. In the event any elder is so removed, a new elder may be selected in accordance with this Article for the remainder of the term.

H. ARTICLE VIII: DEACONS

SECTION 1: DEACON COMMISSION

A Deacon Commission is established for the express purpose of meeting practical needs in the body and to free up elders for teaching and shepherding the flock (Acts 6) and will have duties and responsibilities as assigned by the Council or Elders.

SECTION 2: APPOINTMENT OF DEACONS

Members of the Deacon Commission are appointed by the Council of Elders, after being tested by the Council in accordance with I Timothy 3 and Titus 1.

SECTION 3: TERMS OF OFFICE

The Council of Elders shall designate terms for the office of Deacon and provide oversight to the Deacon Commission.

SECTION 4: RESIGNATION AND REMOVAL

Any Deacon may at any time deliver a written notice to the Senior Pastor of intent to resign which will be effective upon acceptance by the Council of Elders. Any Deacon may be removed at any time with or without cause when, in the sole judgment and discretion of the Council of Elders, it is determined by two-thirds (2/3) vote of the elders that such individual

should no longer serve as a Deacon. In the event any Deacon is so removed, a new Deacon may be selected by the Council of Elders for the remainder of that term.

I. ARTICLE IX: MINISTRY TEAMS AND COMMITTEES

SECTION 1: STANDING AND SPECIAL MINISTRY TEAMS AND COMMITTEES

The Council of Elders may establish ministry teams (Standing and Special) and other church committees as needed to assist them in the performance of their responsibilities. These ministry teams shall function under the oversight of the Council of Elders but shall continue to pursue their delegated responsibilities as defined by the church and those tasks specifically delegated to them by the Council of Elders. A special ministry team may not exist beyond the duration of one year without reauthorization by the Council of Elders.

SECTION 2: LEADERSHIP OF MINISTRY TEAMS AND COMMITTEES

- a) A member of Burke Community Church who has a passion and a gift to conduct the specific ministry shall lead ministry teams.
- b) Ministry team leaders are expected to support the church vision and statement of faith.
- c) Ministry team leaders will be evaluated by pastoral staff before being commissioned by the Council of Elders as responsible for their area of ministry.

SECTION 3: COMPOSITION OF MINISTRY TEAMS AND COMMITTEES

Unless otherwise stated in the BCC Policy and Operations Manual, ministry teams are composed of the members and friends of Burke Community Church who together assume responsibility for a ministry area. Membership is open and encouraged to any member or friend of the church who shall actively participate. The minimum size of a ministry team is two.

SECTION 4: OPERATION OF MINISTRY TEAMS AND COMMITTEES

Ministry teams shall address all substantive matters as an entity in convened meetings. Executive actions of a ministry team leader may be made only in extreme emergency when no other ministry team action is possible.

SECTION 5: MINISTRY TEAM AND COMMITTEE COORDINATION

Unless otherwise stated in the BCC Policy and Operations Manual:

- a) Each ministry activity of the church will be under the purview of a ministry team. Assignment of any activity to a ministry team is the responsibility of a pastor or his designated representative.
- b) A pastor or his designee, to integrate the efforts of all ministry teams, shall coordinate ministry team activities.
- c) Any church member may forward ministry team reports without modification to the Council of Elders with the optional comments or recommendation of any member of the church staff or with comments.

J. ARTICLE X: THE ROLE OF THE CHURCH STAFF

SECTION 1: COMPOSITION AND GENERAL POWERS

The church staff shall consist of all vocational pastors and associate pastors, and other church office personnel. The church staff, under the jurisdiction of the Council of Elders, shall have the responsibility for planning and coordinating the ministries of the church. The church staff shall prepare and recommend the annual ministry plan (including its associated budget); oversee the care of church facilities, property, and equipment; and monitor the financial performance of the church. The Senior Pastor is responsible for equipping the congregation to conduct ministries of the church.

SECTION 2: LEADERSHIP OF THE CHURCH STAFF

The Senior Pastor shall lead the church staff.

SECTION 3: OPERATION OF THE CHURCH OFFICE

The Senior Pastor, or his designee, shall establish standard operating procedures to ensure that the church staff operates in an efficient and effective manner. The church office will serve as the central point for all matters concerning the operation of Burke Community Church. Issues or concerns should be submitted to the church staff for resolution. The office staff will either take action to remedy the situation or pass the situation on to a ministry team with instructions to either 1) act to resolve the situation, or 2) study the issue and make a recommendation to the church staff or Council of Elders, as deemed appropriate by the Senior Pastor.

- a) Issues involving the Senior Pastor will be addressed to him first and if his resolution is not acceptable to the member raising the issue, the issue may then be referred to the Council of Elders for action.
- b) The church staff is responsible for the planning and formulation of the Burke Community Church Ministry Plan, which shall include the church budget. The ministry plan shall be submitted to the Council of Elders for review six (6) weeks prior to the annual church business meeting. The Council of Elders shall provide planning and formulation guidance for preparation of the plan. Once the congregation approves the plan the church staff is responsible to oversee and execute the annual program within the constraint of the approved plan. Funds may be reprogrammed within the ministry areas defined in the ministry plan as necessary to meet changing needs of the congregation. Reprogramming of funds between ministry budget areas as identified in the ministry plan shall be subject to the restriction that no ministry area may be either decreased or increased by more than ten percent (10%) during the church's fiscal year without the express approval of the congregation. Employees' salaries, allowances, and other paid benefits may not be reprogrammed for any reason. Under no circumstances shall funds be reprogrammed to retroactively cover an unauthorized expense without the express consent of the Council of Elders.

SECTION 4: DISPOSING OF TANGIBLE GIFTS

The Council of Elders shall designate a senior staff member, other than the Sr. Pastor, to administer the liquidation of tangible gifts donated to the church. These gifts include but are

not limited to real estate, automobiles, stocks, coins, etc. The designated staff member is authorized to sign documents on behalf of the church and is responsible for the timely disposal of donated items with consultation from the Council of Elders as deemed necessary.

K. ARTICLE XI: CONGREGATIONAL MEETINGS

SECTION 1: SEMI-ANNUAL MEETINGS

Unless otherwise ordered by the Council of Elders for cause, the semi-annual meetings of the congregation shall be held during May and November at such time and place as designated by the Council of Elders. At such meetings, the congregation shall be competent, without special provision or notice, to transact any business of the church (whether corporate or ecclesiastical) properly coming before it, including, but not limited to, the election of officers, the adoption of the annual ministry plan with its associated budget in November, and receiving of reports of all committees, ministry teams, staff, and the Council of Elders.

SECTION 2: SPECIAL MEETINGS

Special meetings of the congregation may be called by the Council of Elders at any time, including during the absence of the Senior Pastor, or shall be called when petitioned to do so in writing by not less than one-fourth (1/4) of the members entitled to vote at such meetings. No business shall be transacted at any special meeting except that business clearly stated in the notice calling the meeting.

SECTION 3: QUORUM

A quorum of one-fourth (1/4) of the active members over eighteen years of age shall be required for the transaction of business at all meetings of the congregation, semi-annual or special, except that a lesser number may adjourn the meeting to a specific time. If quorum is not met, then another meeting shall be called with proper notice given. At the second meeting on the same subject(s), quorum is satisfied by the number of active members over eighteen years of age present at the start of the meeting.

SECTION 4: ADJOURNED MEETINGS

A semi-annual or special meeting of the congregation may be adjourned as the circumstances may require and without further notice to a specific time.

SECTION 5: NOTICES

Notices of all the meetings, semi-annual or special, shall be given to the congregation by public notice from the pulpit on two successive Sundays next preceding the day of the meeting; and may be given in such additional manner, if any, as may be ordered by the Council of Elders. The agenda for such meetings shall be publicized at least one week in advance, in like manner.

SECTION 6: CHAIRMAN AND CLERK

An elder shall act as chairman for all congregational meetings. The Clerk of the Council of

Elders, or a designee appointed by the Council of Elders, will serve as the recording secretary of the congregational meetings.

SECTION 7: RULES OF ORDER

Other than specified in these Bylaws, the meetings of the congregation shall be conducted in accordance with the most current version of "Robert's Rules of Order." The Clerk of the Council of Elders shall appoint a parliamentarian for each meeting.

L. ARTICLE XII: CORPORATE OFFICERS

SECTION 1: OFFICERS, IN GENERAL

The officers of the church corporation shall be the Senior Pastor/President, the secretary (Clerk), the treasurer, and any other officers as the Council of Elders may deem necessary from time to time. An Officer may hold more than one office at a time, except for that of Senior Pastor/President and Secretary.

SECTION 2: ELECTION AND TERM

Except for the Senior Pastor/President, all officers shall be appointed by the Council of Elders for a one-year term but may be reelected without limitation or until their successor is elected and qualified.

SECTION 3: SENIOR PASTOR/PRESIDENT

The Senior Pastor shall simultaneously serve as the president of the corporation, with all the powers and responsibilities attributed to a chief executive officer and which the Council of Elders sets unless he delegates to another pastor, elder, deacon, or staff member.

SECTION 4: SECRETARY

The Clerk of the Council of Elders shall serve as the corporate secretary. The secretary shall record and preserve the minutes of all meetings of the Council of Elders and the church. The secretary shall be charged with the duty of giving proper notice to the church and elders of the respective Council and congregational meetings. Unless otherwise delegated, the secretary shall also maintain an up-to-date church roll of members and prepare and forward membership letters.

SECTION 5: TREASURER

The treasurer shall be appointed by the Council of Elders from among the membership and shall be responsible for overseeing the financial operations of the church and shall make financial reports to the Council of Elders. The treasurer shall ensure that a financial report is made available for members at the semi-annual congregational meeting and such other congregational meetings wherein a financial report is deemed necessary. A copy of the financial reports shall likewise be made available to the congregation on a semiannual basis. Proper records and books concerning incoming and outgoing funds shall be kept and such

records and books shall be available for auditing or inspection by the Council of Elders and those they designate. The treasurer may be removed at any time with or without cause when, in the sole judgment and discretion of the Council of Elders, it is determined by two-thirds (2/3) vote of the elders that such individual should no longer serve as treasurer. In the event the treasurer is so removed, a new treasurer will be selected by the Council of Elders for the remainder of that term.

M. ARTICLE XIII: CHURCH POLICY AND OPERATIONS MANUAL

SECTION 1: DEVELOPMENT OF THE POLICY AND OPERATIONS MANUAL

The development of a church policy and operation manual shall be overseen by the Council of Elders or its designee with professional consultation and review. This manual shall include all church policies, procedures, job descriptions, and organization charts depicting lines of responsibility in the administration of the church.

SECTION 2: COMPILATION AND MAINTENANCE OF THE MANUAL

The Council of Elders or its designees shall be responsible for compiling and maintaining a policies and procedures manual for the day-to-day administrative functions of the church not covered in the Constitution and Bylaws. The Manual shall be kept in the church office and made available for review by any member of the church. Any suggested changes shall be presented to the Council of Elders or its designee for review and consideration.

N. ARTICLE XIV: SETTLEMENT OF DISPUTES WITHIN OR AGAINST THE CHURCH

In any dispute arising between or among church members, the dispute may be resolved by the Council of Elders (or a duly appointed ministry team) by mediation following scriptural example. If resolution is not reached, legally binding Christian arbitration will be employed by the elders or individuals selected by the elders using a neutral arbitration service. These principles of mediation and arbitration also apply to any dispute between a member and the church. All employees of the church shall sign policies or contracts with the Christian arbitration service clause in it. All contractors and vendors of the church should be asked to sign policies or contracts with the Christian arbitration service clause in it.

A decision shall be reached after prayerful consideration, in a spirit of humility, with each Arbitrator seeking that which most glorifies God and regarding one another before himself.

Judgment upon an arbitration decision may be entered in any court otherwise having jurisdiction. Jurisdiction and venue shall be the county and state where the church is located, and Virginia law shall apply to dispute. Members, pastors, staff or third-party vendors/contractors shall understand that these methods shall be the sole remedy for any controversy or claim arising against the church and expressly waive their right to file a lawsuit in any civil court against one another or the church for such disputes, except to enforce an arbitration decision. In that case, judgment upon an arbitration award may be entered by any court having competent jurisdiction, in conformity with the laws of the Commonwealth of Virginia. Notwithstanding this above provision, to protect the church and its members and under its risk policy procedures, the church is required to maintain liability

insurance. Therefore, this conflict provision is conditioned upon agreement by the church's insurers that, in light of the particular facts and circumstances surrounding the disputed matter, this provision, and the process it establishes will not diminish any insurance coverage maintained by the church.

O. ARTICLE XV: FINANCIAL POLICIES

SECTION 1: FISCAL YEAR

The fiscal year shall be the calendar year. However, the Council of Elders, in consultation with the necessary ministry teams, shall have the power to fix, and from time to time to change, the fiscal year of the church. Accurate records shall be kept by all organizations of the church and report made on the fiscal year basis. All funds handled by any and all organizations shall be reported to the Council of Elders.

SECTION 2: REVIEW OF FINANCIAL STATEMENTS AND RECORDS

An outside Certified Public Accounting firm shall be engaged to conduct a compilation, in accordance with Statements on Standards for Accounting and Review Services issued by the American Institute of Certified Public Accountants, annually, for two consecutive years of each three years. In the third year, an outside CPA firm will be engaged to conduct an audit or an internal control consulting engagement. The completed reports shall then be presented to the Council of Elders no later than August 1 of each year.

SECTION 3: ACCOUNTING PROCEDURES

All funds received for any and all purposes shall pass through the hands of the church Treasurer, or the treasurer's designee, and be properly recorded on the books of the church. A system of accounting for handling of all funds shall be the responsibility of the Council of Elders, or its designee.

SECTION 4: DEPOSITS

The Council of Elders or its designee shall select banks, trust companies, or other depositories in which all funds of the church not otherwise employed shall, from time to time, be deposited to the credit of the church.

SECTION 5: CHECKS

All checks or demands for money and notes of the church shall be signed by such officer or officers or such other persons as the Council of Elders may from time to time designate. Any check over the amount of five thousand dollars (\$5000.00) shall require two authorized signatures from two disinterested elders or officers.

SECTION 6: CONTRACTS

The Senior Pastor/President can sign contracts to bind the church once approved by the Council of Elders or according to its procedures. However, the Council of Elders may authorize any officer or officers, agent or agents of the church, in addition to those officers so

authorized by these Bylaws, to enter into any contract or execute and deliver any instrument in the name of or on behalf of the church, including real estate transactions once proper approval has been sought and obtained. Such authority may be general or confined to specific instances. All contracts for major services or expenditures should be reviewed by a competent attorney.

SECTION 7: ENDOWMENTS

The Council of Elders may establish on behalf of the Church any endowments for the general purposes or for any special purposes of the church.

SECTION 8: DESIGNATED CONTRIBUTIONS

The church may accept any designated contributions, grant, bequest, or devise consistent with its general tax exemption purposes, as set forth in the Articles of Incorporation. As so limited, donor designated contributions will be accepted for special funds, purposes, or uses as approved by the Council of Elders, and such designations generally will be honored. However, the church reserves all rights, title, and interest in and to and control of such contributions, as well as full discretion as to the ultimate expenditure or distribution thereof in connection with any funds (including designated contributions) to assure that such funds will be used to carry out the church's tax-exempt purposes.

SECTION 9: BENEVOLENCE FUND

The Council of Elders or its designee shall establish procedures to receive and disburse all funds allocated to them in a Benevolence Fund. It will be the duty of the Council of Elders, or its designee, to determine needs of congregants or others in the community as they arise. The Council of Elders, or its designee, shall examine the need of the recipients of these designated funds.

SECTION 10: PARTNERSHIPS, JOINT VENTURES, LLCs, AND AUXILIARY CORPORATIONS

The Council of Elders may authorize in writing any officer(s) or agent(s) of the church to enter into any partnerships or joint ventures or create auxiliary corporations or limited liability companies (LLCs) that the Council of Elders determines shall advance the religious purposes and goals of the church as described herein and not violate the church's tax-exempt status.

SECTION 11: PURCHASE OR SALE OF REAL PROPERTY AND BORROWING OF MONEY

Neither officers nor agents of the church may purchase or sell real or personal property on behalf of the church unless authorized by the Council of Elders and in cases of real property, the Members according to these Bylaws. Any borrowing of money must be approved by the Council of Elders and the Members according to these Bylaws.

P. ARTICLE XVI: INDEMNIFICATION

Any person made or threatened to be made a party to any action or proceeding, whether civil or criminal by reason of the fact that he or his testator is or was an elder, deacon, officer, employee or agent of the church, may be indemnified by the church, and the church may advance his related expenses, to the full extent permitted by law. The church may purchase and maintain insurance to indemnify: (a) itself for any obligation which it incurs as a result of the indemnification specified above; and (b) its elders, deacons, and officers.

Q. ARTICLE XVII: AMENDMENTS TO THIS CONSTITUTION

SECTION 1: STATEMENT OF FAITH


The Statement of Faith may be amended, altered or revised by a three-fourths (3/4) majority vote of the members present and voting at a duly called congregational meeting if recommended by the Council of Elders. A month's notice of such meeting shall briefly describe the substance and purpose of the proposed change.

SECTION 2: BYLAWS

These Bylaws may be amended, altered, revised, or repealed by a two-thirds (2/3) vote of the qualified voters present at a congregational meeting, semi-annual or special if recommended by the Council of Elders. A two week notice of such a meeting shall briefly describe the substance and purpose of the proposed change.

R. CERTIFICATION

I, the undersigned Clerk of Burke Community Church do hereby certify that the above Constitution (Statement of Faith and Bylaws) were adopted on January 20, 2019 by the members at a duly called meeting and that this Constitution (Statement of Faith and Bylaws) are current and in operation as of that time.



Clerk of Council

7 February 2019
Date