



A Note from Our Pastor



Dear friend,

On behalf of the congregation of the Capitol Hill Baptist Church, welcome to our membership matters class. It’s my hope that over the next six sessions, we will be able to introduce you to our church and to what the Bible says about the responsibility every Christian has to bring glory to God through their life with other Christians in a local church. This commitment to a local church—what we call membership—is the focus of this class. And, as the title of the class suggests, membership matters.

As you get to know us as a church, I trust that you will begin to see some of the opportunities and challenges that our setting and our history have brought to us. We cannot be sure what life in the future will bring for us as a church any more than we know what tomorrow will bring for us as individuals. We are nonetheless delighted at the spiritual health God has cultivated here and are thankful that He continues to bring committed believers into our fold. It is a blessing to serve God in the mission field of Capitol Hill with these brothers and sisters of all ages, backgrounds, and occupations.

Whether it is Capitol Hill Baptist, or someplace else, my prayer is that God would show you where to commit yourself to His people in His service.

Blessings in Christ

Mark Dever
Senior Pastor
Capitol Hill Baptist Church

Table of Contents

Class #1: Statement of Faith	2
Class #2: Church Covenant.....	7
Class #3: Why Join a Church?.....	11
Class #4: What is the History of the Church?.....	13
Class #5: Missions and Outreach	17
Class #6: Life Together	19

Class #1: Statement of Faith

Overview Chart

Most simply, our statement says that CHBC is a Christian, Evangelical, Baptist, Congregational church. The statement was first published by a committee of the Baptist Convention and was named the New Hampshire Confession 1833. The confession was reissued with minor changes in 1853 by J. Newton Brown of the American Baptist Publication Society. It is one of the most widely used Baptist statements of faith in America. We use the 1853 statement and have modified Article XV "Of the Christian Sabbath."

Our statement of faith is divided into eighteen articles, which speak to the fact that we can be called by each of these names. The Christian articles simply show what Christians have always believed, in other words, issues that there has traditionally been little dispute over in Christendom. The evangelical category highlights the critical issues related to the gospel that were recovered during the Reformation. The Baptist and Congregational categories highlight the distinctive features of CHBC.

Article	Historically Christian	Evangelical	Congregational	Baptist
I. Of the Scriptures		√		
II. Of the True God	√			
III. Of the Fall of Man	√			
IV. Of the Way of Salvation	√			
V. Of Justification		√		
VI. Of the Freeness of Salvation	√			
VII. Of Grace in Regeneration	√			
VIII. Of Repentance and Faith		√		
IX. Of God's Purpose of Grace		√		
X. Of Sanctification		√		
XI. Of the Perseverance of Saints		√		
XII. Of the Harmony of the Law & Gospel	√			
XIII. Of a Gospel Church			√	
XIV(a) Of Baptism & the Lord's Supper				√
XIV(b) Of Baptism & the Lord's Supper	√			
XV. Of the Christian Sabbath	√			
XVI. Of Civil Government	√			
XVII. Of the Righteous and the Wicked		√		
XVIII. Of the World to Come	√			

Capitol Hill Baptist Church Statement of Faith

I. Of The Scriptures

We believe that the Holy Bible was written by men divinely inspired, and is a perfect treasure of heavenly instruction; that it has God for its author, salvation for its end, and truth without any mixture of error for its matter; that it reveals the principles by which God will judge us; and therefore is, and shall remain to the end of the world, the true center of Christian union, and the supreme standard by which all human conduct, creeds, and opinions should be tried.

II. Of The True God

We believe that there is one, and only one, living and true God, an infinite, intelligent Spirit, whose name is JEHOVAH, the Maker and Supreme Ruler of heaven and earth; inexpressibly glorious in holiness, and worthy of all possible honor, confidence, and love; that in the unity of the Godhead there are three persons, the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost; equal in every divine perfection, and executing distinct but harmonious offices in the great work of redemption.

III. Of The Fall Of Man

We believe that Man was created in holiness, under the law of his Maker; but by voluntary transgression fell from that holy and happy state; in consequence of which all mankind are now sinners, not by constraint but choice; being by nature utterly void of that holiness required by the law of God, positively inclined to evil; and therefore under just condemnation to eternal ruin, without defense or excuse.

IV. Of The Way Of Salvation

We believe that the salvation of sinners is wholly of grace; through the mediatorial offices of the Son of God; who by the appointment of the Father, freely took upon him our nature, yet without sin; honored the divine law by his personal obedience, and by his death made a full atonement for our sins; that having risen from the dead he is now enthroned in heaven; and uniting in his wonderful person the tenderest sympathies with divine perfections, he is every way qualified to be a suitable, a compassionate, and an all sufficient Saviour.

V. Of Justification

We believe that the great Gospel blessing which Christ secures to such as believe in Him is Justification; that Justification includes the pardon of sin, and the promise of eternal life on principles of righteousness; that it is bestowed, not in consideration of any works of righteousness which we have done, but solely through faith in the Redeemer's blood; by virtue of which faith His perfect righteousness is freely imputed to us of God; that it brings us into a state of most blessed peace and favor with God, and secures every other blessing needful for time and eternity.

VI. Of The Freeness Of Salvation

We believe that the blessings of salvation are made free to all by the gospel; that it is the immediate duty of all to accept them by cordial, penitent, and obedient faith; and that nothing prevents the salvation of the greatest sinner on earth, but his own inherent depravity and voluntary rejection of the gospel; which rejection involves him in an aggravated condemnation.

VII. Of Grace In Regeneration

We believe that, in order to be saved, sinners must be regenerated, or born again; that regeneration consists in giving a holy disposition to the mind; that it is effected in a manner above our comprehension by the power of the Holy Spirit, in connection with divine truth, so as to secure our voluntary obedience to the gospel; and that its proper evidence appears in the holy fruits of repentance, and faith, and newness of life.

VIII. Of Repentance And Faith

We believe that Repentance and Faith are sacred duties, and also inseparable graces, wrought in our souls by the regenerating Spirit of God; whereby being deeply convinced of our guilt, danger and helplessness, and of the way of salvation by Christ, we turn to God with unfeigned contrition, confession, and supplication for mercy; at the same time heartily receiving the Lord Jesus Christ as our Prophet, Priest and King, and relying on Him alone as the only and all sufficient Savior.

IX. Of God's Purpose Of Grace

We believe that Election is the eternal purpose of God, according to which He graciously regenerates, sanctifies, and saves sinners; that being perfectly consistent with the free agency of man, it comprehends all the means in connection with the end; that it is a most glorious display of God's sovereign goodness, being infinitely free, wise, holy and unchangeable; that it utterly excludes boasting, and promotes humility, love, prayer, praise, trust in God, and active imitation of his free mercy; that it encourages the use of means in the highest degree; that it may be ascertained by its effects in all who truly believe the Gospel; that it is the foundation of Christian assurance; and that to ascertain it with regard to ourselves demands and deserves the utmost diligence.

X. Of Sanctification

We believe that Sanctification is the process by which, according to the will of God, we are made partakers of his holiness; that it is a progressive work; that it is begun in regeneration; and that it is carried on in the hearts of believers by the presence and power of the Holy Spirit, the Sealer and Comforter, in the continual use of the appointed means, - especially, the word of God, self-examination, self-denial, watchfulness and prayer.

XI. Of The Perseverance Of Saints

We believe that such only are real believers as endure unto the end; that their persevering attachment to Christ is the grand mark which distinguishes them from superficial professors; that a special Providence watches over their welfare; and they are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation.

XII. Of The Harmony Of The Law And The Gospel

We believe that the Law of God is the eternal and unchangeable rule of His moral government; that it is holy, just, and good; and that the inability which the Scriptures ascribe to fallen men to fulfill its precepts, arises entirely from their love of sin: to deliver them from which, and to restore them through a Mediator to unfeigned obedience to the holy Law, is one great end of the Gospel, and of the Means of Grace connected with the establishment of the visible church.

XIII. Of A Gospel Church

We believe that a visible church of Christ is a congregation of baptized believers, associated by covenant in the faith and fellowship of the Gospel; observing the ordinances of Christ; governed by His laws; and exercising the gifts, rights, and privileges invested in them by His word; that its only scriptural officers are Bishops or Pastors, and Deacons, whose qualifications, claims, and duties are defined in the Epistles to Timothy and Titus.

XIV. Of Baptism And The Lord's Supper

We believe that Christian Baptism is the immersion in water of a believer, into the name of the Father, and Son, and Holy Ghost; to show forth in a solemn and beautiful emblem, our faith in the crucified, buried, and risen Savior, with its effect, in our death to sin and resurrection to a new life; that it is pre-requisite to the privileges of a church relation; and to the Lord's Supper, in which the members of the church by the sacred use of bread and wine, are to commemorate together the dying love of Christ; preceded always by solemn self-examination.

XV. Of The Christian Sabbath

We believe that the first day of the week is the Lord's Day, or Christian Sabbath; and is to be kept sacred to religious purposes by the devout observance of all the means of grace, both private and public; and by preparation for that rest that remaineth for the people of God.

XVI. Of Civil Government

We believe that Civil Government is of Divine appointment, for the interests and good order of human society; and that magistrates are to be prayed for, conscientiously honored, and obeyed; except only in things opposed to the will of our Lord Jesus Christ, who is the only Lord of the conscience, and the Prince of the kings of the earth.

XVII. Of The Righteous And The Wicked

We believe that there is a radical and essential difference between the righteous and the wicked; that such only as through faith are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and sanctified by the Spirit of our God, are truly righteous in His esteem; while all such as continue in impenitence and unbelief are in His sight wicked, and under the curse; and this distinction holds among men both in and after death.

XVIII. Of The World To Come

We believe that the end of the world is approaching; that at the last day Christ will descend from heaven, and raise the dead from the grave to final retribution; that a solemn separation will then take place; that the wicked will be adjudged to endless punishment, and the righteous to endless joy; and that this judgment will fix forever the final state of men in heaven or hell, on principles of righteousness.

The Baptism of Children at Capitol Hill Baptist Church

Capitol Hill Baptist Church Elders, 2004

We, the elders of the Capitol Hill Baptist Church, after prayerful searching of the Scriptures and discussion conclude that, while Scripture is quite clear that believers only are to be baptized, the age at which a believer is to be baptized is not directly addressed in Scripture. We do not understand the simple imperative command to be baptized to settle the issue, nor do we understand the imperative to be baptized to forbid raising questions about the appropriateness of a baptismal candidate's maturity. We do understand that the consideration of an appropriate age for a believer to be baptized is a matter not of simple obedience on an issue clearly settled by Scripture, but rather is a matter of Christian wisdom and prudence on an issue not directly addressed by Scripture. Though the baptisms in the New Testament seem largely to have occurred soon after the initial conversion, all of the individuals we can read of are both adults and coming from a non-Christian context. Both of these factors would tend to lend credibility to a conversion. The credibility of the conversion is the prime consideration, with the effect upon the individual candidate and the church community being legitimate secondary concerns.

We believe that the normal age of baptism should be when the credibility of one's conversion becomes naturally evident to the church community. This would normally be when the child has matured, and is beginning to live more self-consciously as an individual, making their own choices, having left the God-given, intended child-like dependence on their parents for the God-given, intended mature wisdom which marks one who has felt the tug of the world, the flesh and the devil, but has decided, despite these allurements, to follow Christ. While it is difficult to set a certain number of years which are required for baptism, it is appropriate to consider the candidate's maturity. The kind of maturity that we feel it is wise to expect is the maturity which would allow that son or daughter to deal directly with the church as a whole, and not, fundamentally, to be under their parents' authority. As they assume adult responsibilities (sometime in late high school with driving, employment, non-Christian friends, voting, legality of marriage), then part of this, we would think, would be to declare publicly their allegiance to Christ by baptism.

With the consent and encouragement of Christian parents who are members, we will carefully consider requests for baptism before a child has left the home, but would urge the parents to caution at this point. Of course children can be converted. We pray that none of our children ever know any lengthy period of conscious rebellion against God. The question raised by baptism is the ability of others to be fairly confident of that conversion. The malleable nature of children (which changeableness God especially intends for the time when they are living as dependents in the home, being trained in all the basics of life and faith) is a gift from God and is to be used to bring them to maturity. It should also give us caution in assuming the permanence of desires, dreams, affections and decisions of children. Nevertheless, should the young person desire to pursue baptism and membership in the normal course set out by the church, we will examine them on a case-by-case basis, with the involvement of the parents.

In the event of young persons from non-Christian families coming to the church for an extended period of time, professing faith and giving evidence of the reality thereof, requests for baptism and membership would be considered without the involvement of the parents. While all the previous comments on the nature of

immaturity still pertain, the fact that such a young person would be doing so despite indifference, or even opposition from their parents would or could be evidence for the reality of their conversion.

Nothing in this statement should be construed as casting doubt about the legitimacy of the baptism of any among us, regardless of how young they were when they were baptized. Because they have continued in the faith into their adult years we assume the legitimacy of their initial profession made at baptism. The question we are concerned with here is looking forward, not backward. To put it another way, we are raising the question about how many people have been baptized at this church in the past as younger people and children who went on to give no evidence of ever having been savingly converted, and what damage was done to them, and to the witness of the gospel through the church's premature baptism of them. It is our judgment that while there is some danger of discouragement on the part of those children who do give some good evidence of being converted and yet are not baptized and welcomed into communicant membership in the church, through good teaching in the home, and through the loving inclusion of the families in the church as we currently do, that danger is small. There is, however, we believe, a greater danger of deception on the part of many who could be wrongly baptized at an age in which people are more liable to make decisions which are sincere, but ill-founded and too often short-lived.

Two other notes in conclusion. First, we realize that this issue is an issue of great emotion for some, and we in no way are trying to lead anyone to disobey their conscience on this matter; we simply are trying to inform and educate our consciences from the Scriptural necessity of a credible profession of faith for baptism. Second, while it is not generally known among American evangelicals today, the practice of baptizing pre-teenage children is of recent development (largely early 20th century) and of limited geography (largely limited to the United States, and places where American evangelicals have exercised great influence). Baptists in the past were known for waiting to baptize until the believers were adults. Baptist Christians around the world are still much more cautious than modern American Christians, often waiting in Europe, Africa and Asia to baptize until children are grown and are in their 20's.

Class #2: Church Covenant

Study Guide

Background

Hebrews 10:23-24

²³ Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for he who promised is faithful.²⁴ And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, ²⁵ not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near.

The Christian life is fundamentally relational in nature.

Relationships require commitment to flourish.

Our Church Covenant is the commitment we make to one another within our church.

The Introduction

The Commitments

The Benediction

Capitol Hill Baptist Church Covenant

Numbered Edition

1 Having, as we trust, been brought by Divine Grace to repent and believe in the Lord Jesus Christ
2 and to give up ourselves to Him, and having been baptized upon our profession of faith, in the
3 name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, we do now, relying on His gracious
4 aid, solemnly and joyfully renew our covenant with each other.

5

6 We will work and pray for the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.

7

8 We will walk together in brotherly love, as becomes the members of a Christian Church,
9 exercise an affectionate care and watchfulness over each other and faithfully admonish and
10 entreat one another as occasion may require.

11

12 We will not forsake the assembling of ourselves together, nor neglect to pray for ourselves and
13 others.

14

15 We will endeavor to bring up such as may at any time be under our care, in the nurture and
16 admonition of the Lord, and by a pure and loving example to seek the salvation of our family
17 and friends.

18

19 We will rejoice at each other's happiness and endeavor with tenderness and sympathy to bear
20 each other's burdens and sorrows.

21

22 We will seek, by Divine aid, to live carefully in the world, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts,
23 and remembering that, as we have been voluntarily buried by baptism and raised again from
24 the symbolic grave, so there is on us a special obligation now to lead a new and holy life.

25

26 We will work together for the continuance of a faithful evangelical ministry in this church, as we
27 sustain its worship, ordinances, discipline, and doctrines. We will contribute cheerfully and
28 regularly to the support of the ministry, the expenses of the church, the relief of the poor, and
29 the spread of the Gospel through all nations.

30

31 We will, when we move from this place, as soon as possible, unite with some other church
32 where we can carry out the spirit of this covenant and the principles of God's Word.

33

34 May the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit
35 be with us all. Amen.

How Much Should We Give?

Jamie Dunlop

In the Old Testament, God commanded his people to pay ten percent of their income to support the Levites—the religious teachers of the day. And there was not just one tithe but three, averaging roughly 23% of their annual income—in addition to the temple tax and voluntary offerings. Today, we have received so much more blessing in Christ than those Old Testament saints could ever have imagined. Giving for the Christian is a wonderful opportunity to take the temporal money that God has given us and invest it in returns that are eternal. It is an opportunity to loose the chains that money can wrap around our hearts by making it clear that God is sufficient, and though he may use my money, I don't ultimately need it. But to really understand how much we should give, we need to carefully examine what the Scriptures say about giving.

Giving in the New Testament

Many Christians assume that their responsibility starts and ends with a gift of 10% to a favorite charity—though few do even this. But this is far from an accurate picture of Biblical giving. 10% of our income may well be a good starting point. After all, Abraham tithed to the high priest Melchizedek hundreds of years before the tithe was required the law that was eventually fulfilled in Christ. And Jesus nowhere tells us *not* to tithe. But it's notable that in all the instructions to the churches in the New Testament, the tithe is absent. Instead, we see Paul instructing each Christian to give “in keeping with his income” (1 Cor. 16:2, NIV)—in other words, give as much as he is able. And he writes to the churches in Galatia, “Let the one who is taught the word share all good things with the one who teaches.” (Gal. 6:6). *All* good things—not just 10% of what God has given us.

And yet it's clear that there *are* a few things we do with our money that are more important than giving to the church. If one were to give so much that he was unable to provide for his family's basic needs, the apostle Paul would say “he has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever.” (1 Tim. 5:8)

Ultimately, money is but one of many stewardships God has given to us. So along with our time and our abilities and our relationships, we should take our money and make “the best use of the time” (Eph. 5:16) for the glory of God. Start at giving 10% of your income (or less if Biblical constraints such as 1 Tim. 5:16 so require) and see every dollar as an opportunity to bring glory to God. Would your next dollar better serve God if given to the church, or used to hire a babysitter so you can disciple a younger Christian? Would your next dollar better serve God if given to the church or used to take your family on vacation to enjoy God's good gift of creation (1 Tim. 6:17) and build into those relationships (Eph. 6:4). These are the kind of questions you'll need to answer as you determine how much to give. If you have no income, your goal should be to give of what you *do* have (money, time, relationships, etc.) so that the first day you have an income it is second-nature to give some of it as well.

Some Practical Considerations

1. *Give to your local church first.* A good application of Galatians 6:6 (cited above) is that since your local church is your primary source of teaching, it should be the primary recipient of your giving.
2. *Give regularly and deliberately.* Paul told the Corinthians to set aside money on the first day of every week (1 Cor. 16:2). Giving to the church should not be a spontaneous decision. Instead (ideally with your budget in hand), carefully consider how much giving will enable the best use of your money.
3. *Give sacrificially and cheerfully.* God loves a cheerful giver (2 Cor. 9:7) and he calls all of us to take up our cross and follow him (Luke 9:23). So use your giving to make possible a life lived in sacrificial obedience, knowing that whatever you give up pales in comparison to what you are receiving in Christ.
4. *Seek wise counsel.* We should not give to impress others (Matt. 6:2). And yet we are foolish to make decisions about money alone (Prov. 15:22, 1 Tim. 6:10). Be transparent with at least someone at your church about your whole life—including how much and where you give.

Church Discipline and the Love of God

Jonathan Leeman

Do the words “church discipline” seem like they don’t belong together, like “painful friendship” or “conditional grace”? In fact, church discipline builds healthy churches and vibrant gospel witnesses.

What Is Church Discipline?

Broadly, church discipline is one part of the discipleship process. As in many areas of life, Christian discipleship involves both instruction and discipline, just like soccer practice or math class.

Narrowly, church discipline is correcting sin. It begins with private warnings. It ends, when necessary, with removing someone from church membership and participation in the Lord’s Table. The person will generally be free to attend public gatherings, but he or she is no longer a member. The church will no longer publicly affirm the person’s profession of faith.

A number of sins might call for loving warnings in private. But formal public discipline typically occurs only in cases of sin that meet three further criteria. A sin must be outward—it can be seen or heard (unlike, say, pride). It must be serious—serious enough to discredit the person’s verbal profession to be following Jesus. And it must be unrepentant—the person has typically been confronted but refuses to let go of the sin.

Is Discipline Biblical?

Church discipline first shows up in Matthew 18, where Jesus says concerning the person in unrepentant sin, “If he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church. And if he refuses to listen even to the church, let him be to you as a Gentile and a tax collector” (v. 17). That is, treat him as outside the covenant community. The person has proven uncorrectable. His life does not match his Christian profession.

Another well-known passage on discipline, 1 Corinthians 5, helps us see the purpose of discipline. First, discipline exposes. Sin, like cancer, loves to hide. Discipline exposes the cancer so that it might be cut out (see 1 Cor. 5:2). Second, discipline warns. A church does not enact God’s judgment through discipline. Rather, it stages a small play that pictures the great judgment to come (v. 5). Third, discipline saves. Churches pursue it when they see a member taking the path toward death, and none of their arm-waving causes him or her to stop. It’s the device of last resort (v. 5). Fourth, discipline protects. Just as cancer spreads from cell to another, so sin quickly spreads from one person to another (v. 6). Fifth, discipline preserves the church’s witness. Strange to say, it serves non-Christians because it keeps churches distinct and attractive (see v. 1). After all, churches are to be salt and light. “But if salt has lost its taste...” Jesus said, “It is no longer good for anything except to be thrown out and trampled under people’s feet” (Matt. 5:13).

Is Discipline Really Loving?

Church discipline at its core is about love. The Lord disciplines those he loves (Heb. 12:6). The same is true for us.

The problem is, many people today have a sentimentalized view of love: love as being made to feel special. Or a romanticized view of love: love as being allowed to express yourself without correction. Or a consumeristic view: love as finding the perfect fit. In the popular mind, love has little to do with truth and holiness and authority.

But that’s not love in the Bible. Love in the Bible is holy. It makes demands. It yields obedience. It doesn’t delight in evil but rejoices in the truth (1 Cor. 13:6). Jesus tells us that if we keep his commandments, we will abide in his love (John 15:10). And John says that if we keep God’s word, God’s love will be perfected in us (1 John 2:5). How do church members help one another abide in Christ’s love and show the world what God’s love is like? Through helping one another obey and keep his word. Through instruction and discipline.

Class #3: Why Join a Church?

Study Guide

Background

The Purpose of the Church in the Book of Ephesians

Context

- Chapter 1: beautiful description of our salvation.
- Chapter 2, part 1: how we're saved (Ephesians 2:4)
- Chapter 2, part 2 through chapter 3: primary implication of our salvation (Ephesians 3:6)

Why did God do all this?

"...so that through the church the manifold wisdom of God might now be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly places. This was according to the eternal purpose that he has realized in Christ Jesus our Lord." – Ephesians 3:10-11

"A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another: just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another. By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another." – John 13:34-35

A Biblical Case for Church Membership

How does the Bible call Christians to relate within the local church?

Love One Another

- 1 Peter 2:17 "Love the brotherhood."
- Galatians 6:10 "So then, as we have opportunity, let us do good to everyone, and especially to those who are of the household of faith."
- Romans 15:1 "We who are strong have an obligation to bear with the failings of the weak, and not to please ourselves."
- Romans 12:13, 15-16 "Contribute to the needs of the saints and seek to show hospitality . . . Rejoice with those who rejoice, weep with those who weep. Live in harmony with one another."

Encourage One Another

- 1 Thessalonians 5:11 "encourage one another and build one another up"
- Hebrews 10:24-25 "consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near."

Guard One Another

- Hebrews 12:15-16 "See to it that no one fails to obtain the grace of God; that no "root of bitterness" springs up and causes trouble, and by it many become defiled; that no one is sexually immoral or unholy. . ."

- 1 Corinthians 5:1-5 “It is actually reported that there is sexual immorality among you, and of a kind that is not tolerated even among pagans, for a man has his father's wife. And you are arrogant! Ought you not rather to mourn? Let him who has done this be removed from among you. For though absent in body, I am present in spirit; and as if present, I have already pronounced judgment on the one who did such a thing. When you are assembled in the name of the Lord Jesus and my spirit is present, with the power of our Lord Jesus, you are to deliver this man to Satan for the destruction of the flesh, so that his spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord.”

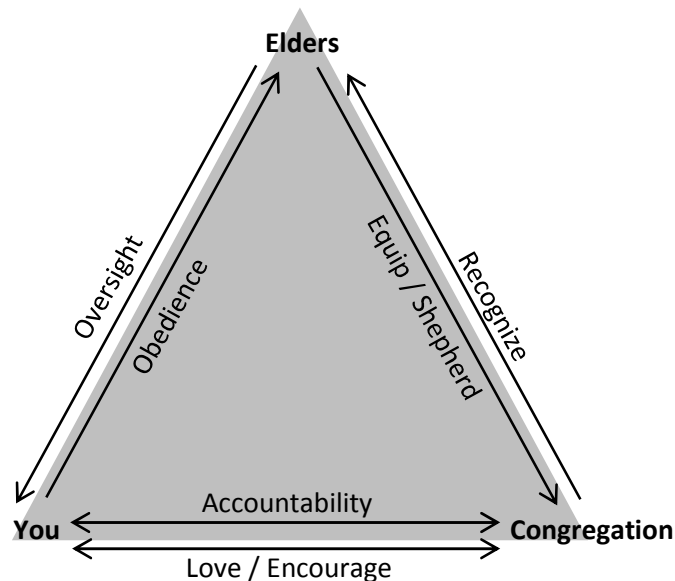
Obey Your Leaders

- Hebrews 13:17 “Obey your leaders and submit to them, for they are keeping watch over your souls, as those who will have to give an account. Let them do this with joy and not with groaning, for that would be of no advantage to you.”
- Implications for church members
- Implications for church leaders

Putting it All Together

Putting these commands into practice requires three characteristics of our relationships in a local church:

1. Relationships that are *committed*.
2. Relationships with a *defined group* of people.
3. Relationships that give permission to speak hard words into your life.



Breadth and Depth of Commitment

- *Depth* (meaningful membership)
- *Breadth* (loving those who are different from you)

Class #4: What is the History of the Church?

Study Guide

Background

Why is the history of all churches a helpful introduction to the history of this church?

The Early Church

- Two great struggles: doctrinal error, persecution.
- Constantine (became emperor of Rome in 311).
 - Edict of Milan (313) made Christianity the official religion of the Roman Empire.
- The Great Schism (1054): East breaks with West.

The Reformation

- Luther (born 1483).
 - Long struggle with how he could be accepted by God.
 - Romans 1:17.
 - Proposes to debate teaching by the church that was contrary to Scripture.
 - Tried before the Diet of Worms (1521) and convicted of heresy.
- Other Reformers all over Europe (Zwingli, Calvin, Bucer, Cranmer, and more).

Baptists

- Early Protestants composed of three groups:
 - Lutherans, Anabaptists.
 - Reformed churches (where Baptists come from).
- Late 17th century and early 18th century: nearly all Baptists share a Reformed understanding of the faith.
- 18th century: Baptist churches grow quickly in America.
- Late 19th century: rise of theological liberalism.
 - Almost every Protestant denomination splits.
 - Fundamentalist response: to withdraw.
 - Neo-evangelical response: to engage culture while defending the Bible.

Capitol Hill Baptist Church

- Late 1860s: prayer meeting at 2nd & A NE turns into Sunday School association at 6th & A NE.
- 1878: church formally organizes as the Metropolitan Baptist Church.
- Late 19th century: years of instability but growth.
- Early 20th century: years of stability under Pastor John Ball.
- Late 20th century: years of decline.
- 1994: Mark Dever becomes our most recent pastor (leads to a plurality of elders in 1998).
- Last few years: building is full, so we are focused on revitalizing other local churches.

Church History Timeline

An Overview of CHBC's Theological Heritage

Key Events

313 Edict of Milan -----

1054 Great Schism -----

1521 Diet of Worms -----

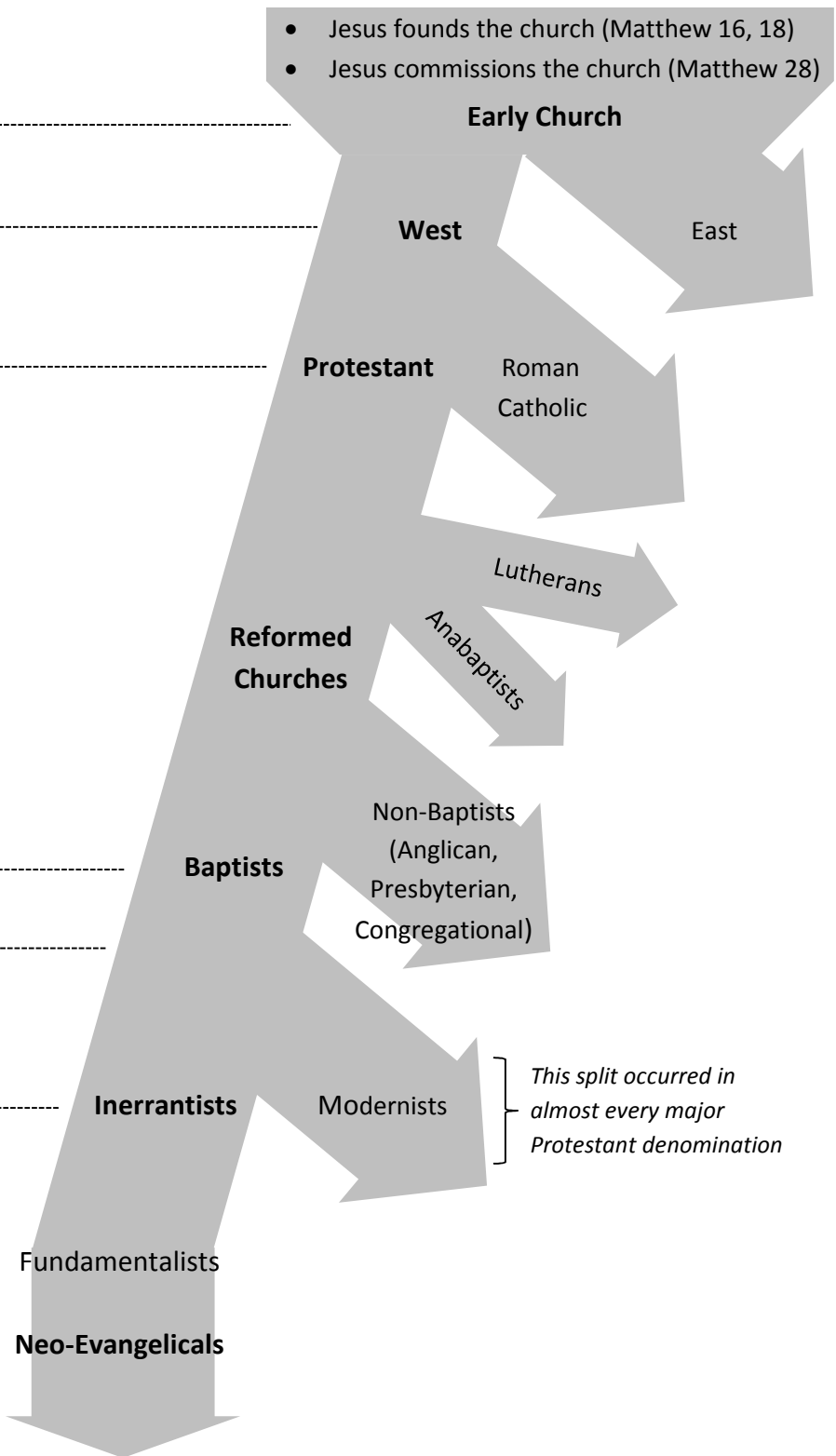
1545-1563 Council of Trent

1609 First Baptists emerge -----

1638 First Baptist church in America -----

Early 20th Century: Biblical inerrancy controversy -----

- Jesus founds the church (Matthew 16, 18)
- Jesus commissions the church (Matthew 28)



Capitol Hill Baptist Church
(Founded 1878)

A Brief History of Capitol Hill Baptist Church

Bruce Keisling, December 1997, updated 2004

In the late 1860's, Mrs. Celestia A. Ferris began receiving people for prayer meetings in her home on A Street between Second and Third Streets. Mrs. Ferris' home and others near her were the meeting places for this prayer group in the small but expanding neighborhood just east of the Capitol. The group continued to meet for prayer, but it also recognized the need for a Sunday school for idle neighborhood children. At that time, the Baptists on the hill were "not pleasantly located for attending church" because the nearest Baptist churches were south in the Navy Yard or Calvary Baptist on Eighth Street, NW. So in 1871, the Metropolitan Baptist Association was incorporated and began meeting for Sunday school in a building on the corner of Seventh and A Streets, NE. In 1872 the corner lot on Sixth and A was purchased and plans were made to build a chapel.

Mrs. Ferris apparently was again a driving force in the work to get a new building erected on the site. One account relates how she instructed the children in the Sunday school to pick up some bricks they saw on the street from all the construction in the neighborhood and put them on the lot. "Some of the enterprising children visited a brickyard and asked the owner for a load of brick for the chapel. The load was cheerfully given, which resulted in all brickyards being visited by the Sunday School children, and all made similar contributions." A small chapel was built by the members themselves from those bricks.

By 1878, the group had decided to formally organize a church and brought a request with that intent to a meeting of delegates from the Baptist churches of the city on January 28. The group adjourned that night before settling the matter, but reassembled on February 4 and passed the following resolution:

Resolved, That we tender to the brethren and sisters composing the Metropolitan Association an expression of our fraternal sympathy in their efforts to establish a Gospel church in this section of the city; and reposing confidence in their discretion, wisdom and piety, we recommit to them the matter of organizing said church and the time such organization shall be made.

On Wednesday evening of February 27, 1878, the church was organized with 31 constituent members who signed the covenant which hangs now in the West Hall. "Prayer was offered, and all united in singing 'Blest be the Tie that Binds.'"

Although the congregation grew, changes in leadership together with financial and membership uncertainties often forced the congregation to act in faith. Metropolitan Baptist Church grew at a steadily increasing rate from 31 members in 1878 to 244 by 1892. The growth paralleled the community's fortunes and this relationship has been a significant determiner of the church's membership. The first pastor of the church was Stephen H. Mirick (1877-78), and he was followed in fairly rapid succession by five other men until 1903 when John Compton Ball assumed the pastorate.

Taking a step back, the ability of the church to provide for its pastors was limited by its size and the pressing demand for payments on loans for the property and a newly erected building in 1888. There were also differences of opinion within the congregation regarding borrowing funds for additional property and land. Church finances were especially of concern in election years since most were employed in the government and the "spoils system" was at play until the Federal Civil Service Act in 1883. Yet in spite of the obstacles, they persevered. In 1884, the church experienced various difficulties, but Francis McLean wrote in the Trustee's report that the church was "lessened in numbers and without a pastor, but we have faith, and out of faith proceedeth action."

With God's help and the perseverance of those saints, a young Englishman John Compton Ball came to become pastor of the church in 1903. It was during his leadership that the church grew numerically to over 3,000 and the current church building was constructed. Prosperity and growth came to Metropolitan under Dr. Ball's tenure of 41 years, and it is his portrait that hangs at the entrance of the sanctuary where he regularly preached. When he had first arrived, the church was overcrowded and so the old buildings were razed and a new structure

was built and dedicated in 1911. As of 2003, a few of our current members still remember Dr. Ball and his ministry in the church.

The history of the gathering of believers on Capitol Hill is closely tied though to the life of this city. Two World Wars and the Great Depression expanded the government bureaucracy, and the people who worked in those offices were church going people. Metropolitan was perfectly located to receive the growing numbers of people in the city and membership grew quickly. With increased membership, the life and death struggles over funding ceased, and the congregation avidly supported the large Sunday school, the women's Missionary Union, the Baptist Young People's Union, the choir and many other ministries. Like the city which erupted from a sleepy Southern town to a thriving metropolis, the church also expanded into a thriving community. The membership peaked at a total of 3,577 members. The resources of the church enabled it to maintain strong commitments to foreign mission work and saw a number of its own young people commit to service for Christ.

Dr. Ball was a faithful preacher of the gospel of Jesus Christ here at home and maintained the commitment of this congregation to the authority of Scripture and its teachings in an era when many churches were softening this position. Dr. K. Owen White, also English by birth, followed Dr. Ball as pastor and faithfully proclaimed the Word. Subsequent pastors have also been committed to preaching the truths of scripture, and this congregation has been staunchly supportive. The Articles of Faith adopted at the church's organization in 1878 remain unchanged as the congregation's expression of faith as contained the Bible.

In 1951, the top three floors of the education building were added. Through the 1950's parking needs grew and plans were considered for a new sanctuary on East Capitol Street. The church began slowly acquiring property around the block to allow for future expansion. However, the church was again paralleling the life of the city, and families were migrating out to the new suburbs surrounding Washington. While many members drove back into the city for church, many more became part of new congregations in the suburbs. A gradual decline in membership began which accelerated sharply with the riots in the city in the late 1960's. Problems related to race and the church's demolition of residential buildings confronted the church internally and in its standing with her neighbors. The church was viewed by many in the community as a white, commuter, unconcerned neighbor.

Early in 1967, the name of the church was changed from Metropolitan Baptist Church to Capitol Hill Metropolitan Baptist Church to avoid confusion with a church of the same name on R Street, NW. The pastorate was also changing with regularity from 1950 and Dr. White's term, to J. Walter Carpenter, Walter A. Pegg, R.B. Culbreth, John R. Stuckey, and C. Wade Freeman, Jr. through the end of the 1970's. From 1980-1988, Walt Tomme, Jr. served as pastor, and Harry Kilbride came in 1990 for two years of ministry. Many difficulties troubled the congregation through these years which are recalled with sadness, but also the assurance that God has been at work. The words of Francis McLean in 1884 again aptly describe the situation and the response of those who through God's leading remained faithful to Him and this work during those years:

"Lessened in numbers and without a pastor, but we have faith, and out of faith proceedeth action. Let the careful, thoughtful, prayerful will of the majority, with God's help guiding and overruling and guarding, always determine what is best, and we shall be safe."

In September of 1994 our current pastor Mark E. Dever and his family came to begin with us yet another new era in God's work on Capitol Hill. We have again changed the name of the church to the Capitol Hill Baptist Church, but the commitment to work for the Kingdom of God and His Son Jesus Christ remain the same as that prayed for in the home of Celestia A. Ferris. Time like an ever rolling stream rolls swiftly on, and the past reveals to us God's goodness and guidance. We can rely on God to guide, guard and determine what is best so that we too may serve Him faithfully in this place on Capitol Hill.

Class #5: Missions and Outreach

Study Guide

Background

Matthew 28:18-20: *“And Jesus came and said to them, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.”*

Personal Evangelism

- Personal evangelism is relational in nature.
- But the church should also be involved.
 - By making the gospel clear during our services.
 - By equipping you to share the gospel.
 - By bearing witness to the gospel through our love for each other.

Global Evangelism / International Missions

- Sending
 - At least 15% of our budget goes to international missions (half through the IMB).
 - Other things we do to support missionaries.
- Going
 - Short term: childcare trips, Scripture distribution trips.
 - Long-term: missionaries are *sent* by local churches.

Caring For Other Churches

- Support for seminarians.
- Training pastors through our internship program.
- 9Marks Ministries.
- Our partnership with the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC).
 - What does it mean to be Southern Baptist?
 - Where did the SBC come from?

Meet the Southern Baptist Convention

The entities of the SBC:

- International Mission Board (Richmond, VA) – The IMB sends missionaries overseas.
- Seminaries – These institutions provide pastoral and theological training for Southern Baptist churches.
 - Golden Gate Baptist Theological Seminary (Mill Valley, CA)
 - Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary (Kansas City, MO)
 - New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminar (New Orleans, LA)
 - Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary (Wake Forest, NC)
 - The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary (Louisville, KY)
 - Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary (Fort Worth, TX)
- North American Mission Board (Alpharetta, GA)–NAMB assists church planting domestically.
- Ethics and Religious Liberty Commission (Nashville, TN)–The ERLC is the public policy arm of the SBC.
- LifeWay Christian Resources (Nashville, TN)–Publishes Christian resources for individuals and churches.
- Guidestone Financial Resources (Dallas, TX)–Provides financial services to pastors and churches.
- Southern Baptist Convention Executive Committee (Nashville, TN)–Coordinates SBC activities.

Frequently Asked Questions (taken from www.sbc.net):

What is the Southern Baptist Convention?

The SBC is a parachurch organization created by Baptist churches to coordinate and support international missions and pastoral training. The term "Southern Baptist Convention" refers to both the denomination and its annual meeting.

How does a church affiliate with the SBC?

In order for a church to affiliate with the SBC, it must "be in friendly cooperation with the Convention and sympathetic with its purposes and work, and be "a bona fide contributor to the Convention's work during the fiscal year preceding" (Article III, Southern Baptist Convention Constitution).

What is the Cooperative Program?

The Cooperative Program is the unified method of supporting SBC mission causes. It coordinates the giving of individuals, churches, and state conventions to the SBC, and the distribution of that money to the various entities of the convention.

What is the SBC's stance on the autonomy of the local church?

We recognize that in the New Testament there was no centralized ecclesiastical authority over the churches that forced the churches into any form of compliance. There was encouragement, exhortation, and admonition, but there was never enforcement. We strongly adhere to that principle. Jesus Christ is the head of the local church - we are not. Each church is responsible before God for the policies it sets and decisions it makes.

What is the significance of resolutions passed by the SBC for the local church?

The Southern Baptist Convention makes official statements regarding specific issues by means of resolutions passed at our annual gatherings each June. Southern Baptist polity views these resolutions as expressions of opinions or concern which are representative of the messengers attending the meeting, but are not binding upon any individual church or successive Conventions.

How are SBC entities governed?

Trustees from each of the states are appointed by a committee to serve on trustee boards for each of the entities. In God's providence, because of the lack of cooperating Southern Baptist churches in the District, CHBC has had the opportunity to have our members sit on trustee boards for several entities of the convention.

Class #6: Life Together

Study Guide

Background: Acts 2:42-47. Supporting the life of this first church: Regular Gatherings, Intentional Relationships, Biblical Leadership, and Prayer.

Regular Gatherings

1. Core Seminars
2. Sunday Morning Service*
3. Sunday Evening Service*
4. Members' Meetings
5. Wednesday Night Bible Study
For Children (birth through high school)

Intentional Relationships

CHBC as a relationship-based church rather than a program-driven church

Three ways to cultivate intentional relationships:

1. Hospitality.
2. Discipling.
3. Small groups.

Biblical Leadership

Elders

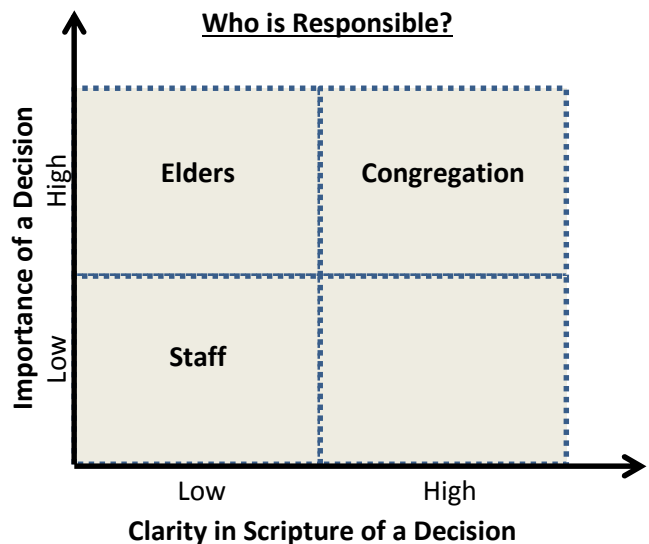
- Plurality of elders.
- What do they do?
- How do we recognize elders?
- Voting "no" on an elder candidate.

Deacons

- Primary responsibility: unity.
- Secondly: administration.
- Women as deacons.

Officers and staff

Prayer



* Members are expected to be at these meetings (and encouraged to attend others as they are able).

Capitol Hill Baptist Church Elders

Mark Dever



Married to Connie
Two grown children
Lives on Capitol Hill
Senior Pastor
First joined CHBC in 1994

Sam Lam



Married to Jennifer, has 2 kids
Works in international development
First joined CHBC in 2000

Andy Johnson



Married to Rebecca, has 3 kids
Lives on Capitol Hill
Associate Pastor (special attention to
missions, discipling, small groups)
First joined CHBC in 1997

Philip Leeman



Married to Molly, has 3 kids
Lives in Cheverly, MD
First joined CHBC in 1999

Deepak Reju



Married to Sarah, has 4 kids
Lives on Capitol Hill
Associate Pastor (special attention to
counseling, families)
First joined CHBC in 1992

Dave Russell



Married to Carrie, has 4 kids
Lives on Capitol Hill
Works for Campus Outreach DC
First joined CHBC in 2010

Jamie Dunlop



Married to Joan, has 3 kids
Lives on Capitol Hill
Associate Pastor (special attention to Core
Seminars, administration)
First joined CHBC in 1999

Ryan Townsend



Married to Tara Beth, has 5 kids
Lives on Capitol Hill
Works for 9Marks
First joined CHBC in 1998

Brad Wheeler



Married to Erin, has 4 kids
Lives on Capitol Hill
Associate Pastor (special attention to
interns, church partnerships)
First joined CHBC in 2000

Greg Spraul



Married to Beth, has 2 kids
Lives in Cheverly, MD
Works for the EPA
First joined CHBC in 2001

Zach Schlegel



Married to Katie, has 2 kids
Lives on Capitol Hill
Assistant Pastor
First joined CHBC in 2010

Klon Kitchen



Married to Tracy, has 4 kids
Lives in Cheverly, MD
Instructor at National Defense
University
First joined CHBC in 2003

Bill Behrens



Married to Carreen, has 4 kids
Lives on Capitol Hill
Works in Government Relations for GE
First joined CHBC in 1997

David Sutton



Married to Shannon, has 3 kids
Lives in Fairfax Station, VA
Works for the Air Force
First joined CHBC in 2001

Steve Boyer



Married to Donna, has 2 kids
Lives in SW DC
Works as an Accountant for the Salvation
Army
First joined CHBC in 1997

Sebastian Traeger



Married to Nikki, has 3 kids
Lives on Capitol Hill
Works for an IT start up
First joined CHBC in 1997

Jonathan Leeman



Married to Shannon, has 3 kids
Lives in Cheverly, MD
Works for 9Marks
First joined CHBC in 2006

Luke Murry



Married to Erin, has 2 kids
Lives in Cheverly, MD
Works for Congress
First joined CHBC in 2008

Nick Roark



Married to Allison, has 3 kids
Lives on Capitol Hill
Works for CHBC as Pastoral Assistant
First joined CHBC in 2012

Jeremy McClain



Lives in SE DC
Works for DayBreak Ministries
First joined CHBC in 2010

Worshipping God Together through Song

Matt Merker

One of the greatest privileges we have as a congregation is to praise God together in song. Because music is such a powerful vehicle for glorifying God and encouraging one another, our desire is to approach worship through song with deliberate thought and care. Here are five main considerations that give shape to our use of music in the services of CHBC.

1. We strive to exalt biblical truth in music that leads to an appropriate emotional response. Colossians 3:16 says, “Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom, singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, with thankfulness in your hearts to God.” God created music as a medium that stirs great emotion in the human heart. Our goal is to harness this power responsibly by using music to highlight and celebrate biblical truth. We recognize that music can make people feel certain emotions *regardless* of the lyrics’ message, so we’re careful both to pick songs that have profound biblical content and to avoid over-emotionalizing our music. The emotion in worship should be a response to the truth of who God is and what he has done.

2. We strive to cultivate rich congregational singing. When John views God’s throne room in Revelation 5-7, the whole gathered congregation joins their voices together to praise the Lamb. Our goal is for singing to be a participatory experience, not an observational experience. Paul tells the Ephesians to address “one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs” (Eph. 5:19), which reminds us that although our worship through song is primarily God-oriented, it also has a secondary purpose of encouraging one another. For this reason, we print the music for many of our songs to make the melodies (and harmonies) easier to learn, we have plain rather than overwhelming musical instrumentation, and we avoid performances and “special music” in our services.

3. We strive to use a simple musical style that promotes unity. Our prayer is that CHBC would be a community of faith that includes people from all backgrounds and cultures, united in our trust in Jesus Christ. When it comes to worshipping God, the style of music we use is extremely unimportant in a theological sense. Therefore, our hope is that by using a simple style with minimal arrangement and instrumentation, a diverse group of people with varying musical tastes would be able to sing together and enjoy unity around the lyrical content of the songs. The musical style may not be everyone’s favorite, but that means worship through song is an opportunity for all of us to sacrifice our personal preferences for the sake of the whole congregation.

4. We strive to appreciate God-honoring music from all eras. In our services, our aim is to incorporate not the “best of the ‘80s, ‘90s, and today,” but the best from all of the periods of Christian history from which we have music – including today. Singing edifying hymns from long ago is one way that we appreciate the witness of our brothers and sisters from past centuries who have persevered in the faith.

5. We strive to reflect the full spectrum of the Christian experience in our music. Our goal is to sing music that captures the whole array of the Christian life – from the sorrow we have over our sin to the joy of our redemption in Christ, and from the happy expectancy of heaven to the pain of trials and persecution. We see this variety of expression conveyed wonderfully throughout the Psalms. Some of the slower, minor key songs we sing at CHBC may be new to you, but we pray that these hymns would become helpful companions to you during times of suffering, as they have for so many of us.

Getting Connected at Capitol Hill Baptist Church

Andy Johnson

Getting Connected: A Joy and a Challenge

One of the singular joys and significant challenges of joining a new local church is figuring out how to feel connected to the congregation. Most of us don't want to just have our names on a members list; we want to belong, to be a part, to feel that we contribute. That's what we hope to help you with in this short article, to help you understand better how to get connected to the congregation of Capitol Hill Baptist Church (CHBC). But we are aware that doing that at CHBC may be different than the experiences or avenues at some other churches.

In many churches you might try to get connected by signing up for a particular committee of interest, like the "missions committee" or the "facilities committee." In others you might quickly join and serve in a particular ministry like the "youth department" or the "music ministry." In still others you might sign up right away for a support group or be placed into a small group that's really more like a church within a church. While we certainly have ample opportunities to volunteer at serve at CHBC, and we do have small groups available to interested members, none of these is the primary way that we encourage members to connect to the larger life of this local church. It's not that such approaches are necessarily wrong, but we do think they may be less than the Biblical ideal. We don't want your primary point of identification with CHBC to be what you do for us or your limiting yourself to a group of people pretty much just like yourself. Rather, we want your connection to CHBC to be defined most clearly by how you know and love, and are known and loved by, all sorts of people in the congregation. We want you to have relationships that are different than the way the world loves. We want you to be part of the family, not just volunteer help. But while that may sound nice and friendly, it's admittedly pretty vague. So what does it actually look like to get connected to the members of CHBC?

Love as the Visible Mark of a Christian

Well, at its most basic, we hope that your connections to CHBC looks as much as possible like the kind of love that we see described among God's people in the bible. There we read of Christians loving people who are very different than themselves and inconveniencing themselves primarily because they have a shared love for Christ (I Thessalonians 2:7-9). There we read about the kind of connection that comes from sharing our lives together, helping one another and spending time together with the deliberate aim of encouraging one another in the faith. (I Thessalonians 2:7-9). Our hope is that you will connect to CHBC through the kind of visible love that the Apostle John describes as normal among believers (1 John 3:23).

Jesus himself talked about how the joy of deliberate, mutual love would mark those whom he has known and saved. In the fifteenth chapter of John's gospel, Jesus says –

"As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Abide in my love. If you keep my commandments, you will abide in my love, just as I have kept my Father's commandments and abide in his love. These things I have spoken to you, that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be full. This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you." (John 15:9-12)

Getting Connected at CHBC (Continued)

And later in his first letter, the Apostle John reminds his readers of Christ's teaching, saying –

By this we know love, that he laid down his life for us, and we ought to lay down our lives for the brothers. But if anyone has the world's goods and sees his brother in need, yet closes his heart against him, how does God's love abide in him? Little children, let us not love in word or talk but in deed and in truth. By this we shall know that we are of the truth and reassure our heart before him; for whenever our heart condemns us, God is greater than our heart, and he knows everything. (1 John 3:16-20)

One thing is certainly clear from these passages – Christians are visibly marked as those who love Christ based in large part on the way that they love one another. Yes, it is wonderful for us to serve in many more institutional ways, and personal repentance and an individual faith in Christ are a must if we are to see God, but how does that internal reality then show itself? Scripture says it shows itself perhaps most clearly by our love for specific other Christians – the other members of our local church, mainly. That's how Scripture says “we know that we belong to the truth.” And that is the joy we want for members of CHBC.

Some Practical Ideas of How to Love Others

But we also realize that this kind of unstructured approach can seem really daunting to many people. It's so much easier to just sign up for something. We get that. So let me suggest a few ways that you can begin to build these kinds of encouraging relationships at CHBC.

Stay around after services

One very simple first step is to just stay around after the conclusion of our morning and evening services. We hope that the refreshments we serve won't merely be seen as a reward for making it through an hour-long sermon. We want them to encourage members to stay around and talk, to speak to visitors and to people they don't know, and to make initial connections with other members, too. Certainly this can be awkward at times. But please stay around anyway; make an effort to talk to others you don't know. Many members have met life-long friends in just this way.

Join a small group

Another helpful step may be to join a CHBC small group. We don't require joining a small group as some churches do but we do try to make it an easy and welcoming option. Groups meet at various times and locations around the DC metro area. We offer gender-specific men's or women's small groups and also mixed groups that include unmarried and married members and often their children. Staff in the CHBC office will be glad to talk with you about a group that might work well for your schedule and location. Just call and ask to talk to one of the pastoral assistants about joining a small group. But as helpful as they may be, we don't intend for small groups to be relational cul-de-sacs that define and, frankly, end your integration into the wider congregation at CHBC. We want small groups to be a welcoming first-step to help you continue on to broader and deeper relationships within the congregation. Still, we all have to start somewhere and many people find these groups an encouraging and manageable starting point.

Offer and accept hospitality

Throughout the bible one of the things that regularly marks God's people is their love for others, or hospitality. Admittedly some folks may feel awkward about being the one to invite people over, or out, when you are new. But we've tried to build a culture at CHBC where hospitality is normal. So we hope that members will reach out to new members, but we also hope that new members will step up and invite longer-term members and other new members over for a meal or out for an activity from the very early days of their membership. Living these kinds of open lives together is a big part of how we create and sustain the hospitable culture of a gospel community.

Initiate or accept a discipling relationship

Almost certainly the best way to connect at CHBC is to initiate or accept an offer to establish an intentional discipling relationship. If you decide to pursue membership at CHBC, you'll receive at your membership interview an article entitled "Encouraging Discipling Relationships Among the Members of Capitol Hill Baptist Church." We'd encourage you to read that article to understand more about what we mean when we talk about discipling and about building a "culture of discipling" at CHBC. But in brief, let me just say that one of the clearest ways that the love we read about earlier in John 15 is made visible is when we intentionally set out to do one another spiritual good in discipling relationships. It's fun to have friendships based on shared interests or hobbies or experiences. But it is wonderfully glorifying to God to have friendships based most fundamentally on a desire to encourage one another in the hope of the gospel. The kind of relationships where we intentionally set out to study Scripture, or to read a good Christian book, or to talk about this week's sermon all with the aim of encouraging one another to hope and trust more in God. As a new member of the church you don't need to sign up for anything or get anyone's permission you approach another member (of your gender, please) to establish a discipling relationship. But if you want some help in thinking through getting started, the Discipling Core Seminar class or our annual Discipling Workshop may help. And you can always contact the CHBC staff to find out about these events or to just get a little help figuring out how to get started.

A wonderful display of God's glory

Whatever route you take, we want to encourage you to look for ways, in keeping with your personality, to establish meaningful relationships with other members of CHBC. Certainly you can talk with various Deacons about ways to eventually volunteer and serve, but don't make that the first thing you do. First, look for ways to just get to know other members of CHBC and to let them get to know you. Take the first few months of your membership to spend your energy on some of the ideas I just suggested. We feel strongly about this because we value each member of our congregation simply as a brother or sister in Christ, not just for the ways they can serve. But, you know, you will really kind of serve us best by doing what we've talked about in this article . . . by building the relationships that give and receive encouragement. That's fundamental to what it means for us to be the body of Christ in this local church. And that's how the world will know that we are Jesus' disciples, by the way we love one another (John 13:35). We look forward to the part God may have for you to play in bringing that glorious reality into even sharper view at Capitol Hill Baptist Church.