

Discovering CVC

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OUR HISTORY



In the summer of 1986, studies conducted by the North American Mission Board showed that the Brecksville/Broadview Heights Community was an ideal location to begin a new church. Out of the approximate 100,000 people who live within a five mile radius of CVC's present location, only 20,000 people could be accommodated in the sanctuaries of the many churches already in existence in this area, therefore, leaving the remaining 80,000 people unchurched.

Humble Beginnings

1986

- ❖ September: Church planters, Rick and Maryanne Duncan, arrive in Broadview Heights to join with another couple as the founding members of CVC. The new church was sponsored by Far Hill Church in Dayton, Ohio. Canvassing neighborhoods door-to-door was a huge part of determining how to reach out to the people of this area.
- ❖ Very small group Bible studies begin in several homes in Broadview Heights, Brecksville, and Sagamore Hills. This was the developing phase of how our public worship would look.
- ❖ Operating Budget: \$26,000

1987

- ❖ First public worship service! Held on Easter Sunday at DePaul School after mailing out 13,000 invitations – 66 persons present. Folding chairs were set up in gymnasium. CVC offices and storage of all equipment located in closet at the school.
- ❖ October: Celebration Sunday! Follows a 13,000 home telemarketing campaign – 124 present.

1988

- ❖ Attendance is averaging more than 100 every Sunday by September.

1990

- ❖ CVC constitutes as a self-governing, not-for-profit congregation. Worship attendance is averaging over 200. We rent office space at Clippity Clop in Brecksville.

1991

- ❖ Sunday worship location is moved to Brecksville-Broadview Heights Middle School (formerly the High School) and the labor intensive “church in a truck” begins. For the record—church is canceled only once because of a truck breakdown. Average: 325 in attendance.
- ❖ The search is on for property to purchase for the future site of CVC.

1992

- ❖ Worship attendance reaches an average of over 300.
- ❖ After many dead ends in the property search, the team regroup and determines that I-77 and Wallings Road would be the ideal location for our church. Miraculously, four separate homeowners agreed individually to sell five parcels to us, and the congregation votes to purchase a total of 16.5 acres located on the northeast corner of I-77 and Wallings Rd. extending from Wallings to Sprague Road. Central location, easy access, and more than 66,000 cars passing daily for great exposure.
- ❖ CVC kicks off “Together We Build,” a three year program to raise funds for buying the land. In June 1993, the property purchase was finalized.

1994

- ❖ Averaging 400 in worship attendance.
- ❖ Special guest, Mike Pagel, a former Cleveland Browns player, shared his testimony to a record attendance of 676, in March.

1995

- ❖ CVC pays off mortgage on property at 8th Anniversary Celebration.

1996

- ❖ CVC offices move to 8800 East Pleasant Valley Road in Independence, Ohio.
- ❖ Launch “Building God’s Family” faith promise campaign (a Building Fund commitment campaign).

1997

- ❖ First international missions trip: CVC sends four members as volunteer missionaries to Ghana, West Africa to evangelize and to visit the four national church planters we are supporting.

1998

- ❖ Strategic Planning is set in motion. CVC begins work on a five-year plan that includes clarifying the mission, vision, and values of the church.
- ❖ September: Adopted the clarified mission, vision, and values.
“Helping people grow to be passionate followers of Christ.”

1999

- ❖ CVC sends 23 people to overseas missions projects in Ghana, El Salvador, and Ukraine.
- ❖ CVC purchases an additional 4 acres just east of our property on Wallings Road, bringing our total acres owned to 20.5.

2000

- ❖ In April: “Book of Hope” Campaign. A church-wide effort of giving a contemporary version of the Gospel of John along with an invite to CVC door-to-door to 11,000 households—basically all of Brecksville-Broadview Heights.
- ❖ Construction project hugely underway. The volunteer involvement is incredible!

2001

- ❖ Grand Opening at 5055 E.Wallings Road!! The first service was held in our brand new building with close to 1,000 in attendance in March.
- ❖ April 29: Building Dedication! Reflecting with awe on the past and looking to the future with anticipation, CVC places the capstone over the front doors. It reads “To God Alone Be the Glory.”
- ❖ CVC responds to 9-11. “How Now Shall We Live?”

2002

- ❖ Four services on Easter Sunday were attended by 1,560 people. (In an effort to appeal to all, CVC even tried a traditional service, with Rick Duncan wearing a robe—it did not last long.)
- ❖ Phase II Construction begins: Completion of approximately half of the lower level (10,000 sq. ft. for much needed classroom and office space)
- ❖ Vision and prayer preps a new ministry, Sevenoseven (named from Matt. 7:7), geared to reach ages 18-30+, with culturally relevant surroundings, messages, and music.
- ❖ 1,200 people are coming through the doors of our still fairly new building, with programs, classes, events and Bible studies continually taking place throughout the week.

2003

- ❖ *Sevenoseven ministries launched! We saw 670 people that first service in April and more than 450 on the following week! Suffice it to say, it's a homerun!*
- ❖ Easter Sunday saw over 2,000 people come to our six services, and over 60 people indicating commitments to begin to follow Christ.

2004

- ❖ *In June, Greg Frizzell, author of Returning to Holiness, was here for a two evening “Hunger for Holiness” conference as a wrap up for our Spring Cleaning series that followed along with his book.*
- ❖ *And, NEW! Saturday night services at 5:30 pm.*
- ❖ *CVC seizes the opportunity presented by the movie “The Passion of the Christ” to launch an outreach to the community.*
- ❖ “40 Days of Purpose,” another emphasis, began in September: We were created by God and for God. Our purposes: Worship, Fellowship, Discipleship, Ministry, Missions. Small group involvement was emphasized and more than 1,300 participated, attendees as well as guests outside the church. CVC gave away the *Purpose Driven Life* book to all new visitors.
- ❖ Sevenoseven hosts campus outreaches with incredible results.

2005

- ❖ To focus our vision of “helping people grow to be passionate followers of Christ,” emphasis was put on small group participation where lives are enriched, people transformed and ministry happens. Community group involvement: 56%.
- ❖ Intentional, irresistible environments move people from the “Foyer” to the “Living Room” to the “Kitchen.”
- ❖ Small group concept applied to the Children and Student areas as well.
- ❖ Highlights from the message series: “Worship” with the Q-4 Worship wristbands that served to initiate conversations and remind us that we are to worship the Right God, the Right Way.
- ❖ Coffee shop lounge opened in lower level to accommodate over capacity crowds for worship

- ❖ Additional space needs brought creative solutions and the *Momentum* (defined as: the forward movement a ministry experiences because God's hand of blessing is powerfully working) campaign was initiated to fund those expansion projects. Pledges exceeded the \$3 million goal.
- ❖ September. 60 people baptized in eight days (CVC and Sevenoseven combined). Very significant for NE Ohio.
- ❖ Prayer emphasis continues. Workshops widely attended
- ❖ Disaster Relief Teams organized and activated quickly with financial support from CVC'ers to serve in Slidell, LA after Hurricane Katrina devastated that area.

Incredible Present

2006

- ❖ *Blast!* starting in February, is part of our Children's ministry and will partner with family's to equip and inspire them to help their children grow spiritually.
- ❖ Sprague Road Driveway Dedication on December 17th

OUR AWESOME FUTURE

"Now to Him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine..." Eph. 3:20

OUR VISION & VALUES



1. The CVC Vision:

A church's vision statement keeps the church focused on the purposes God has given to every church. Ours contains common elements found in most church mission statements: honoring God, evangelism, spiritual growth, loving relationships, and practical acts of Christian compassion.

We accomplish our vision by creating environments where people are encouraged and equipped to grow closer to God.

Christian author and national speaker Henry Blackaby says this:
God invites you to be involved with Him in His work. The call to relationship with God is a call to be on mission with God. When you see the Father at work around you, that is your invitation to adjust your life to Him and join Him in that work.

Church vision statements paint a picture of a preferable future. A vision statement helps to clarify the focus of a church and its ministries.

What is the vision statement of Cuyahoga Valley Church?

Helping People Grow to be Passionate Followers of Christ.

Each word in this statement has a great meaning to us...

- i) **Helping** – We will be a church of servants who seek to help each other be all we can be for Christ.
- ii) **People** – We will be a church that focuses on people, not programs. All people matter to God and to us – from the most irreligious, unchurched seeker to the most mature believer.
- iii) **Grow** – We will be a church that encourages personal spiritual growth. We are to be conformed to the image of Jesus Christ.
- iv) **To be** – We will be a church where “who we are” is more important than “what we do.” There is nothing we can do to make God love us more and nothing we can do to make Him love us less.
- v) **Passionate** – We will be a church where people are zealous and committed to God. We will show our devotion to Christ in our

relationships at home, at work, and in our community. Luke-warmness is not pleasing to the Lord; therefore, it is not an option.

vi) Followers – We will be a church where “WWJD – What Would Jesus Do?” is not just a slogan. We will truly seek to be His disciples by following His example and His command.

vii) Of Christ – We will be a Christ-centered and Christ-dependent ministry. In all things, we desire for Him to have preeminence.

This vision statement is used to ensure that each ministry of CVC keeps focused on our vision. For example, those serving in the preschool ministry are “helping preschoolers grow to be passionate followers of Christ.” Those serving in our youth ministry are “helping teens grow to be passionate followers of Christ.” Those serving as greeters are “helping newcomers grow to be passionate followers of Christ.” As each ministry throughout CVC stays focused, we will experience a greater sense of unity as a team of servants.

2. The CVC Mission:

To honor God by reaching new people for Christ and by helping believers grow as His disciples.

This mission arises from the purposes God has given to the New Testament Church.

- a) **Worship** We are to make bringing glory to God our priority. (Romans 11:36, Romans 12:1, 1 Corinthians 6:20)
- b) **Evangelism** We are to reach new people for Christ. (Matthew 4:19, (Matthew 28:19-20, Acts 1:8)
- c) **Edification** We are to help believers grow in the faith. (Colossians 1:28-29, 2 Timothy 2:2, 1 Peter 2:2)
- d) **Love** We are to demonstrate our discipleship by our love to God and to each other. (Matthew 22:36-40, John 13:34-35, 1

John 4:7-8)

- e) **Service** We are to demonstrate our discipleship by following Jesus' command and example in caring for the hurting and the needy. (Matthew 25:31-46, Luke 4:18-19, 1 John 3:17-18)

3. CVC Values:

Every organization has a set of values that defines the way people relate to one another and carry out the mission and the vision. They make the organization unique. They also serve as a set of norms that provide a way for attenders, members, and leaders to help each other grow and work together. Values should create the environment through which the progress and the personality of the organization are expressed. Following each value is a visionary statement that further defines and clarifies the value.

At CVC we value:

- a) **The Word of God.**
We will seek to communicate God's Word creatively. We will communicate the eternal, infallible, and unchanging Word of God utilizing printed materials, music, the arts, and media, as well as the spoken Word. Our church will be relevant to the cultural and spiritual needs of people while remaining doctrinally pure. Our desire is that we not just be hearers of the Word, but doers. *"But prove yourselves doers of the world, and not merely hearers who decide themselves."* James 1:22
- b) **Unity with liberty.**
In the *essential* beliefs- unity
In the *non-essentials*- liberty
In *all* our beliefs- love
- c) **Generosity**
Life is not just about me. Life is about living for God and others. A generous Christian gives of their time, their talents, and their treasure to serve God and to be a blessing to others.
- d) **Glocal ministry.**
We will seek to be an Acts 1:8 church – a missional church reaching and serving people locally, regionally, nationally, and globally.

WHAT WE BELIEVE



1. About **God.**

There is only one God and He created all things. He is infinitely perfect and eternally exists in three persons, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. (Deuteronomy 6:4, Genesis 1,2, Psalm 145:3, Psalm 5:4, John 1:1, Psalm 90:2, Acts 5:3-4).

2. About **Jesus Christ.**

Jesus Christ is fully God and fully man. He was born of a virgin, lived a sinless life, performed authentic miracles, died in the place of sinners to pay for their sin, rose bodily from the grave, and works as mediator in heaven. (Matthew 28:18-20, John 1:1, John 1:14, Isaiah 9:6, 2 Corinthians 5:21, 1 Peter 2:21, Matthew 28:6, 1 John 2:1)

3. About the **Holy Spirit.**

The Holy Spirit is co-equal with the Father and Son of God. He brings salvation to the believer. He lives in every Christian from the moment of salvation, providing the power for the believer to live a godly life. (John 3:3, Romans 8:9,10, 1 Corinthians 6:19)

4. About the **Bible.**

The Bible is God's Word to us. It is the inspired, infallible, and authoritative Word of God without error in its original writings.

- a) **Inspired** – The Holy Scripture was given to us by God through human writers. (2 Timothy 3:16, 2 Peter 1:21)
- b) **Infallible** – The Holy Scripture is not misleading and is a sure, safe, and reliable rule and guide in all matters.
- c) **Inerrant** – The Holy Scripture is free from all falsehood or mistakes and is entirely true and trustworthy in all its assertions. (Proverbs 30:5, Matthew 4:4, Deuteronomy 8:3, Matthew 5:17,18)

5. About **human beings.**

Although people were created in the image of God and have tremendous potential for good, all of us are marred by an attitude of disobedience toward God called "sin." The sin brings physical death and separation from God. All people are born with a sinful nature, and even when they grow old enough to know better, operate out of their sinful nature in thought, word, and deed. (Genesis 1:27, 2:17, Romans 6:23, 5:12-14, 3:23, 3:10)

6. About salvation.

The sinless life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ provide the only basis for the salvation of all who believe. Only those who receive Jesus Christ as Lord, exercising repentance and faith, are children of God. (1 Corinthians 15:3-6, John 14:6, Acts 4:12, 20:21-22, John 1:12)

7. About our future.

Jesus will return bodily to the earth to complete our salvation and establish His kingdom. All the dead will experience a bodily resurrection, the believer to eternal life with the Lord and the unbeliever to judgment and eternal (1 Thessalonians 4:13-18, 1 John 3:2, Daniel 12:2, Revelation 7:14)

We also affirm the “Baptist Faith and Message” (1963) and the “Second London Confession” (1689). Please call the office (440) 746-0404 to ask for a copy if you are interested in reading either of these.

THE BRIDGE OF LIFE



1. Step 1 - God's Purpose: Peace and Life

God loves you and wants you to experience peace and life – abundant and eternal.

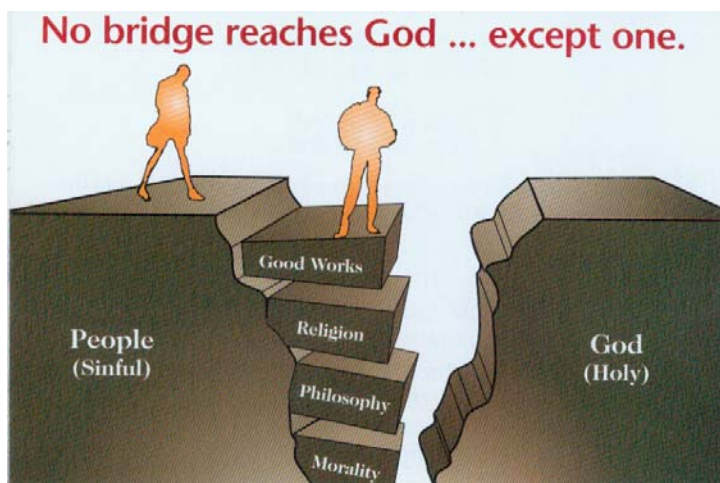
The Bible says...

We can have peace and life with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.

“For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.” John 3:16

“I have come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly.” John 10:10

Why don't most people have this peace and abundant life that God planned for us to have?



2. Step 2 – The Problem: Our Separation

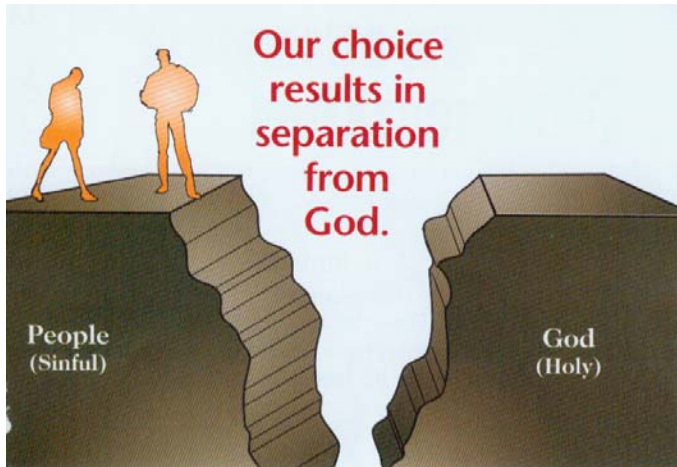
God created us in His own image to have an abundant life. He did not make us as robots to automatically love and obey Him. God gave us a will and freedom of choice.

We chose to disobey God and go our own willful way. We still make this choice today. This results in separation from God.

The Bible says...

“For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.” Romans 3:23

“For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.” Romans 6:23



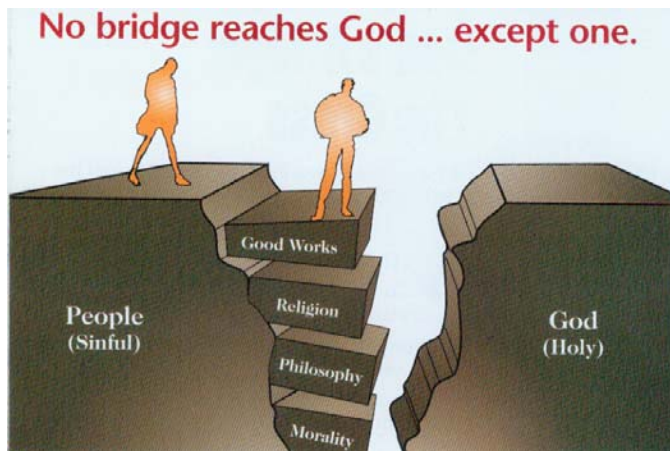
3. Our Attempts to Reach God

People have tried in many ways to bridge this gap between themselves and God...

The Bible says...

“There is a way that seems right to a man, but in the end it leads to death.” Proverbs 14:12

“But your iniquities have separated you from your God; your sins have hidden his face from you, so that he will not hear.” Isaiah 59:2



4. Step 3 - God's Bridge: The Cross

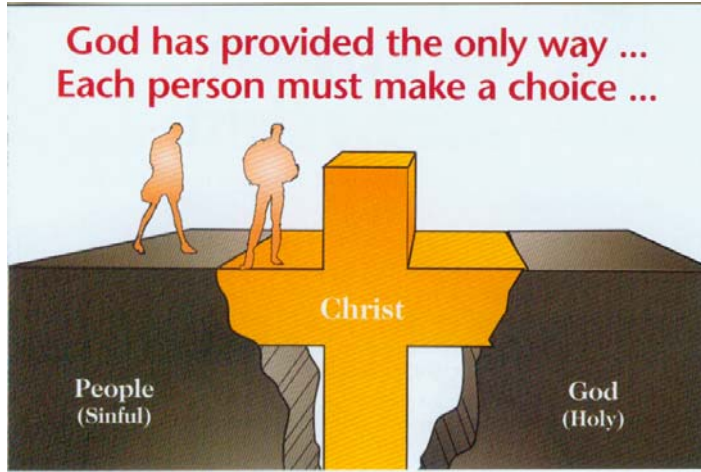
Jesus Christ died on the cross and rose from the grave. He paid the penalty for our sin and bridged the gap between God and people.

The Bible says...

“For there is one God and one mediator between God and men, the man of Christ Jesus.” 1 Timothy 2:5

“For Christ died for sins once and for all, the righteous for the unrighteous, to bring you to God.” 1 Peter 3:18

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



5. Step 4 - Our Response: Receive Christ

We must trust Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior and receive Him by personal invitation.

The Bible says...

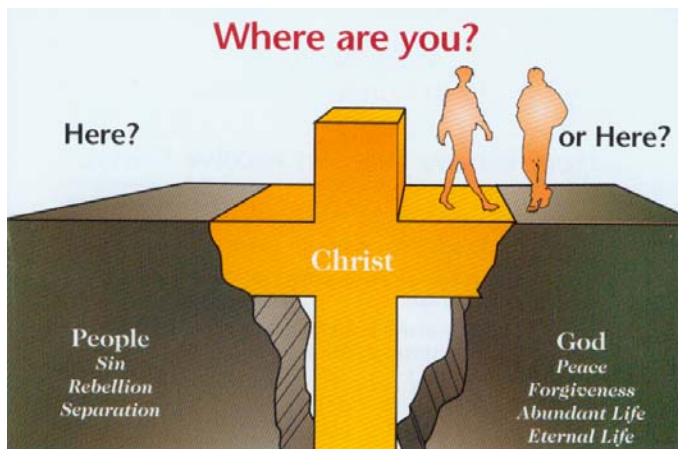
“Here I am! I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in and eat with him, and he with me.”

Revelation 3:20

“Yet to all who received him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God.” John 1:12

“That if you confess with your mouth, ‘Jesus is Lord,’ and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved.”

Romans 10:9



6. Will You Receive Jesus Christ Right Now?

Here is how you can receive Christ:

- a) Admit your need. (I am a sinner.)
- b) Be willing to turn from your sins (repent).
- c) Believe that Jesus Christ died for you on the cross and rose from the grave.
- d) Through prayer, invite Jesus Christ to come in and control your life through the Holy Spirit. (Receive Him as Lord and Savior.)

How to Pray:

Dear Lord Jesus,

I know that I am a sinner, and I ask for Your forgiveness. I believe You died for my sins and rose from the dead. I turn from my sins and invite You to come into my heart and life. I want to trust and follow You as my Lord and Savior.

In Your Name, Amen.

Date

Signature

7. God's Assurance: His Word

If you prayed this prayer, the Bible says...

"Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved." Romans 10:13

Did you sincerely ask Jesus Christ to come into your life? Where is He right now? What has He given you?

"For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith – and this not from yourselves, it is a gift of God – not by works, so that no one can boast." Ephesians 2:8-9

The Bible Says...

"He who has the Son has life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have life. I write these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God so that you may know that you have eternal life." 1 John 5:12-13

Receiving Christ, we are born into God's family through the supernatural work of the Holy Spirit who indwells every believer. This is called regeneration, or the "new birth."

8. This is just the Beginning of a Wonderful New Life in Christ. To Deepen this Relationship You Should:

- a) Read your Bible every day to know Christ better. If you do not have one, please go to the information table in the foyer and receive a Bible free, as our gift to you.
 - b) Talk to God in prayer every day.
 - c) Tell others about Christ.
 - d) Worship, fellowship, and serve with other Christians.
 - e) *Sign up to take “Fresh Start.” Fresh Start is a class that helps you deepen your relationship with Christ, and helps you grow daily in your Christian walk.
 - f) *Join a Community Group and grow with other Christians.
- * Contact the church office for more information.

(source: Steps to Peace with God, Billy Graham Evangelistic Association)

WHAT THE BIBLE TEACHES ABOUT THE LORD'S SUPPER



What we believe the Bible teaches about the Lord's Supper. Jesus never asked us to remember His birth. He did ask us to remember His death and His resurrection.

He gave the church two visible symbols as reminders: Baptism and The Lord's Supper.

1. What is the Lord's Supper?

"For I received from the Lord that which I also delivered to you, that the Lord Jesus, in the night in which He was betrayed, took bread, and when He had given thanks, He broke it and said, "This is my body, which is for you, do this in remembrance of Me." In the same way, He took the cup also after supper, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in My blood, do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of Me." For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until He comes." 1 Corinthians 11:23-26

- a) It is a **simple** act not a big ritual. (vs. 23)
- b) It is a **reminder**. (vs 24)
- c) It is a **symbol**. (vs 25)
- d) It is a **statement** of Faith. (vs 26)

2. Who should partake of it?

- a) **Only believers.**

"For anyone who eats and drinks without recognizing the body of the Lord eats and drinks judgment to himself." 1 Corinthians 11:29

- b) **Only believers who have examined their own hearts.**

"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 the 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. That is why many among you are weak and sick, and number of you have

fallen asleep. But if we judged ourselves, we would not come under judgment.” 1 Corinthians 11:27-31

3. How should I prepare myself for the Lord’s Supper?

a) Self examination.

“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 the blood of the Lord.” 1 Corinthians 11:27

b) Confession of sin.

“If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.” 1 John 1:9

c) Recommitment.

“Therefore I urge you, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service of worship.” Romans 12:1

d) Restoring relationships.

“Therefore, if you are presenting your offering at the altar, and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your offering there before the altar and go; first be reconciled to your brother, and then come present your offering.” Matthew 5:23-24

4. When and how often should we observe the Lord’s Supper?

- a) The Bible doesn’t say how often. Normally, CVC has the Lord’s Supper at the following times:
- b) Once quarterly during Services.

WHAT THE BIBLE TEACHES ABOUT BAPTISM



1. Why should I be Baptized?

- a) To follow the **example** set by Christ.
“At that time Jesus came from Nazareth in Galilee and was baptized by John in the Jordan.” Mark 1:19
- b) Because Jesus **commanded** it.
“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
- c) As a **witness** to the world.
“Crispus, the synagogue ruler, and his entire household believed in the Lord; and many of the Corinthians who heard him believed and were baptized.” Acts 18:8

2. What is the meaning of Baptism?

- a) It **pictures** Christ’s death, burial and resurrection.
“Or don’t you know that all of us were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into 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. If we have been united with him like this in his death, we will certainly also be united with him in his resurrection. For we know that our old self was crucified with him so that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves to sin.” Romans 6:3-6
- b) It **identifies** us with Jesus.

3. How should we be Baptized?

We believe it is by **immersion**. The New Testament was written in Greek. The Greek word for baptism is baptizo. It means to **immerse** or **plunge**.

4. Why do we believe the Bible clearly indicated this mode of baptism?

a) **Jesus was baptized that way.**

“As soon as Jesus was baptized, he went up out of the water. At that moment, heaven was opened, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and lighting on him.” Matthew 3:16

b) **The Ethiopian eunuch was baptized that way.**

“And he gave orders to stop the chariot. Then both Philip and the eunuch went down into the water and Philip baptized him. When they came up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord suddenly took Philip away, and the eunuch did not see him again, but went on his way rejoicing.” Acts 8:38-39

i) **The founders of the other denominations agree that baptism was originally by immersion.**

(1) **Martin Luther...** *“I would have those who are to be baptized to be entirely immersed, as the word imports and the mystery signifies.”* Luther founded the **Lutheran** church

(2) **John Calvin...** *“The word “baptize” signifies to immerse. It is certain that immersion was the practice of the ancient church.”* Calvin founded the **Presbyterian** church.

(3) **John Wesley...** *“Buried with Him, alludes to baptizing by immersion according to the custom of the first church.”* Wesley founded the **Methodist** church.

5. When should I be baptized?

After receiving Christ as my Savior.

“Those who accepted His message were baptized, and about three thousand were added to their number that day.” Acts 2:41

“But when they believed Philip as he preached the good news of the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women. Simon himself believed and was baptized. And he followed Philip everywhere, astonished by the great signs and miracles he saw.” Acts 8:12-13

6. **Baptism is for every person who trusts Jesus Christ as Savior.**

7. **Baptism is a symbol in many ways similar to a wedding ring.**

What is the purpose of a wedding ring? A wedding ring is a **symbol** that lets other people know that you are married. In the same way, baptism is a **symbol** that lets other people know that you are a Christian. If a married person were to take their wedding ring **off**, they would still be married. If a Christian has not yet followed the Lord in believer's baptism, they are still a Christian. If you were to **give** a wedding ring to a small child, it does not make him married. Baptism does not **save** a person or **make** them a Christian. It only has meaning **after** a person has received Christ as their Savior.

OUR AFFILIATIONS



1. The Southern Baptist Convention (SBC)

When CVC began, one church and three groups of churches gave our church financial support to help us get started:

- a) Far Hills Baptist Church: a church of 1,500 in Dayton that sponsored us from 1986-1991.
- b) The Greater Cleveland Baptist Association: 40+ churches that fellowship together and work together to reach Greater Cleveland for Christ.
- c) The State Convention of Baptists in Ohio: 600+ churches that fellowship together with the goal of evangelizing our state.
- d) The North American Mission Board of the Southern Baptist Convention: over 42,000 churches that cooperate together in a world-wide effort of missions.

These 4 groups gave our church over \$100,000 in support to help us get started, with no strings attached! They have also invested in our daughter churches. We now wholeheartedly support these 4 groups in helping start many other new churches.

2. Our Autonomy

Why not just be an independent church? We are an independent church! Every SBC church is completely independent. There is no denominational control or hierarchy, as there is in most other denominations. Each church is self-governed and determines its own affairs. For example:

- a) Every SBC church chooses its own **Pastor**.
- b) Every SBC church owns its own **buildings** and **assets**.
- c) Every SBC church determines its own **programs**.

3. Our Name

Why doesn't CVC use a denominational label in the name? Because of events that have occurred in the past 40 years, such as Vietnam, Watergate and numerous other scandals, many people have a general mistrust of institutions. This anti-institutionalism expresses itself in a preference for churches that are independent.

Denominations are sometimes stereotyped as being too concerned with self-preservation and irrelevant to today's needs and problems. Denominational labels mean very little to and often conjure up negative stereotypes with many people. People today are likely to choose a church because it meets their needs today, not because of denominational loyalty.

We believe we can be loyal to Southern Baptist Convention's historic faith, mission, and goals without using the SBC label.

A few years ago, unchurched people in Dayton were asked what came to mind when they heard the terms "Baptist." Among their responses were these words: **strict, scary**, loud, **pushy**, dogmatic and **out-of-date**. It doesn't make sense to use a denominational label that is an obvious turn-off to many people. We want to promote Christ, not our denominational affiliation.

4. The Advantages of Affiliating

- a) It allows us to identify with other Christians around the world who are known for their commitment to Christ, to the Bible, and to world evangelization. Unlike other groups, the SBC has no man-made creed. The Bible is our only authority.
- b) It allows our church to participate in the largest missionary organization in the world. Through the SBC "Cooperative Program" we help support over 7,500 missionaries in 104 countries around the world.
 - i) **That's why we are part of the Southern Baptist Convention. Some fast facts about the SBC...**
 - (1) It is the **largest association of evangelical** churches in Ohio and in America. About one out of every 10 churches in America is affiliated with the SBC (over 42,000 churches encompassing over 45,000 congregations. The harvest yields nearly 1,700 new work and 420,000 souls baptized each year!

- (2) It is one of the **most diverse** association of churches. Since its organization in 1845 in Augusta, Georgia, the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) has grown to over 16 million members who worship in more than 42,000 churches in the United States. Southern Baptists sponsor about 5,000 home missionaries serving the United States, Canada, Guam, and the Caribbean, as well as sponsoring more than 5,000 foreign missionaries in 153 nations of the world. SBC churches include every race, nationality, and ethnic group. Each Sunday, services are held in over 100 languages in the U.S. One out of every three African-Americans in the U.S. is a Southern Baptist. In Cuyahoga County, our association includes a variety of language and ethnic churches – Polish, Hispanic, Korean, Hungarian, Ukrainian, Arabic, Deaf, as well as African–American and Anglo. The SBC is the most ethnically diverse denomination in the world.
- (3) It is one of **fast growing** groups. The SBC baptizes over 1,000 new Christians a day in the U.S. and begins nearly 5 new churches a day!
- (4) The SBC is one of the **most passionate** groups about missions and evangelism. The SBC has the largest domestic and foreign missions agencies in the world. The International Mission Board (IMB) in Richmond, Virginia and the North American Mission Board (NAMB) in Atlanta, Georgia are two SBC agencies that we enthusiastically support. The IBM has over 5,000 field workers on assignment. They are joined by nearly 34,000 volunteers to bring the saving message of the Gospel to nearly 2,000 different people groups around the world. IBM workers and their Baptist partners overseas reported a record 451,301 baptisms and 6,525 new churches worldwide. It's exciting to be a part of that vision.

FINDING A HEALTHY CHURCH

As Cuyahoga Valley Church gets ready to launch Church of the Hills, we anticipate questions about the kind of church we are seeking to start. Stated simply, we want to start a God-honoring, healthy church. For many years in CVC's membership classes, we have included material designed to help people evaluate the health of a church. What follows is a list of characteristics that not only defines a healthy church, but that also defines the kind of church that Church of the Hills intends to be.

Perhaps you've moved and are unfamiliar with the area. Or you could be a new follower of Christ in need of a place to worship. Or maybe God is leading you to join a new church plant to reach some new people for Christ. Whatever your situation, we want to help you distinguish a healthy church from one that's not.

Churches come in a variety of shapes and sizes, each with its own personality and style of ministry. Some are contemporary while others are traditional. Some appeal to baby boomers while others appeal to post-moderns. The best church for you is one that meets your needs while giving you the opportunity to meet the needs of others. We encourage you to ask God to lead you in your search. He desires your worship, especially as part of His body, and He will direct you to the right church for you.

1. A healthy church glorifies God.

Scripture says, "Whatever you do, do all to the glory of God" (1 Corinthians 10:31b). To glorify God means to draw attention to His greatness. The local church is the focal point of God's plan for displaying His glory to the nations. This is the primary purpose of the church and of individual Christians.

Ask yourself, "Do I sense that the leaders of this church really are seeking to glorify God? Or are they somehow wanting to get attention for themselves? Is the worship of God in spirit and in truth a top priority for this church?"

2. A healthy church is Bible-based and Christ-centered.

The early church emphasized Christ-centered biblical teaching. Teaching should explain what Scripture says in a particular passage, carefully explaining its meaning and applying it to the people. Solid, consistent teaching from God's Word helps us grow to be like Jesus in several ways. It matures and stabilizes our faith in times of testing. It increases our ability to detect and confront error. It gives us wisdom. Solid teaching should also be coupled with compassionate application. A Bible-based church produces people who are not just hearers of the

word, but also doers who live like Christ and who have a commitment to know God as He has revealed Himself in Scripture.

Ask yourself, “Do I see the leaders of this church challenging people to learn the Word of God and to live out the Word of God in practical ways? Are they giving people practical opportunities to apply the Word – to love the Lord, serve each other, and be a blessing to the world?”

3. A healthy church is led by accountable servant leaders.

Jesus said, “Whoever wishes to become great among you shall be your servant” (Mark 10:43). In a healthy church, the staff and leaders should serve in a context of loving, supportive accountability to God and each other. Since the best predictor of future performance is past behavior, it’s important to find others who have already served on a team with the leaders and to ask them questions about the leaders’ approach to ministry.

Ask yourself, “Do the leaders of this church have good track records as servant leaders? Does the structure of the church insure that the leaders are accountable spiritually and financially? Do I sense that the leaders are passionate about serving others rather than being served?”

4. A healthy church helps people grow.

God gives leaders to the church to prepare God’s people for works of service so they will “grow up in every way” (Ephesians 4:15). Healthy churches provide various tools and so people in differing stages of the Christian life can grow. New believers, maturing Christians, as well as passionate followers all find positive encouragement to keep growing in Christ.

Ask yourself, “Does the church have a passion for helping people grow to spiritual maturity? Do the people sense that their leaders are growing in their walk with Christ? Are personal spiritual growth plans encouraged?”

5. The healthy church exudes warmth.

Not only was the early church caught up in worship, individual devotion to the Lord, and instruction from the Word, but “they were continually devoting themselves... to fellowship” (Acts 2:42). They cared for one another. Members of the church should reflect a true commitment to the life of the church through attendance, giving, prayer and service. The leaders must be concerned not only with growing numbers, but with growing members.

Ask yourself, “Do the leaders of this church encourage people to be in authentic community with one another? Do the leaders and people in this church really care about each other? Do they have a plan to help attenders get connected with others believers? Are the leaders themselves connected to others in their church body?”

6. A healthy church reaches out to others.

First-century Christians took their concern a step further and shared what they knew about Jesus with others. When they ventured beyond their walls, lives were changed: “And the Lord was adding to their number day by day those who were being saved” (Acts 2:47). A healthy church helps people appropriately express their faith where they live or work.

Ask yourself, “Does this church have a genuine passion to fulfill the Great Commission? Do the leaders and people care about making more and better disciples? Will I be challenged to reach my circle of influence for Christ? Is compassionate service to others in need a part of the ministry of this church and is it exemplified?”

7. A healthy church has a contagious style.

Like a magnet, a church with a contagious style draws people to its doors. Four features comprise this style: 1) It is biblical in content. Messages are based on the Word of God, not on the opinions or interest of the leaders. 2) It is authentic in nature. This is a church that believes what it says. 3) It is gracious in attitude. The church sees itself as a family, not as a corporation. 4) It is relevant in approach. This church shows how God’s Word applies to today’s needs, issues, and concerns.

Ask yourself, “Do the people of this church freely invite others into the church family and fellowship? Would I want to invite my friends, neighbors, and co-workers to visit my church and to join our fellowship?”

8. A healthy church reproduces itself

In nature, all healthy organisms reproduce themselves. The same is true for the church. CVC was started twenty years ago as a church plant sponsored by a church in Dayton, Ohio with missions as a part of its DNA. It is that same DNA that CVC is seeking to pass on to Church of the Hills.

Ask yourself, “Does this church care about building the Kingdom of God beyond its own direct ministry? Does the church have a plan to reproduce itself? Are mission dollars being set aside to be used for evangelism that results in the establishment of new churches?”

Whenever you find a church that glorifies God, is Bible-based and Christ-centered, is led by accountable servant leaders, helps people grow, exudes warmth, reaches out to others, has a contagious style, and reproduces itself, you have found a healthy church. Remember, the best

church for you is one that meets your needs while giving you the opportunity to meet the needs of others. May your search result in a renewed commitment to the Lord as you join a truly healthy body of believers.

The material in this article was written and edited by the leaders of CVC and Church of the Hills and inspired by the brochure entitled "How to Recognize A Healthy Church" by Chuck Swindoll.