

DISCOVER YOUR CHURCH

Pre-reading packet and class notes



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Introduction

Hi! Welcome to Discover Your Church. We're pleased that you have chosen to find out more about Centre Street Church (CSC). This course is the basic introduction to our church family. In order to keep the class time focused, the following materials are included in the pre-reading section of this packet for you to go through ahead of time.

Please read (or view) all the materials in “Section 1 – Pre-Reading” before attending the class. The class will cover the material in “Section 2 – Class Notes”.

Please bring this booklet with you to the class so that you can refer to questions you may have from the pre-reading section and take notes during the video and discussion times. Everyone who has completed this Discover Your Church class will have an opportunity to meet and talk with our Senior Pastor – Dr. Henry Schorr. You may also want to bring this booklet with you to that meeting in case you have specific questions for Pastor Henry that have come out of the class material and discussion. The date and time of this evening meeting will be communicated at the end of the class.

The Discover Your Church class material is an important part of the preparation for becoming a member of CSC. It is intended to help you know the history of CSC – what the significant events are in our church history that have shaped us, how we have had to depend on and experience God, and where we sense God leading us into the future together. We trust that you will pray about church membership seriously because we would love to have you strengthen your relationship with our church family in this way.

DISCOVER YOUR CHURCH



Table of Contents

SECTION 1— PRE-READING (Please read/view before attending the class.)

- 1. Our Salvation***— view “Our Salvation” DVD included in this packet or read pages 3-8
 - I. How to become a part of God’s forever family
 - II. Your growth in Christ

 - 2. Our Beliefs***— read pages 9-14
 - I. Guiding principles
 - II. Statement of faith

 - 3. Our Directional Statements***— read pages 15-19
 - I. Commitment to prayer
 - II. Directional statements
 - a. Core values
 - b. Biblical purpose
 - c. Vision
 - d. Mission
 - e. Seven-step strategy
 - f. Six E’s

 - 4. Why Membership Matters***— read pages 21-22
-

SECTION 2— CLASS NOTES

- I. What is “church”?***— pages 25

 - II. Our History: The CSC Story***— pages 26-27

 - III. Five Important Questions***— pages 28-35
 1. What is the church?
 2. Why church membership?
 3. What does the church want for its members and need from them?
 4. How does Centre Street Church work?
 5. How do I become a member?

 - IV. Reflection and Response*** — pages 36
-

DISCOVER YOUR CHURCH



Section I – Pre-Reading

DISCOVER YOUR CHURCH



Our Salvation (read text below or view DVD in this packet)

I. HOW TO BECOME A PART OF GOD'S FOREVER FAMILY

Two Important and Rarely Asked Questions:

1. If you were to die tonight, do you believe you would go to live eternally with God in heaven?
2. If God were to ask you, "Why should I let you into heaven?", what would you say to Him?

PAUSE: Reflect on these two questions and then record your answers above.

The Bible teaches us how we can prepare for the next life. It reveals four basic truths we need to understand.

1. God is Gracious

*God has our best interest at heart in all things.

"Oh, that their hearts would be inclined to fear me and keep my commands always, so that it might go well with them and their children forever." (Deuteronomy 5:29)

*God loves us.

"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)

*God wants us to have a full life!

"The thief [Satan] comes only to steal, kill and destroy. I have come that you may have LIFE and have it to the full." (John 10:10)

*Jesus came to give us a life of peace!

"Peace comes to me when I have a deep settled confidence that all is well between God and me and if I were to die tonight, I would live forever with Him in heaven."

DISCOVER YOUR CHURCH

*Jesus came to give us a life of joy!

“Joy comes to me when I have a deep settled confidence that God is in control of the details of my life and has my best interest at heart in all things, even when circumstances in my life seem to convey the opposite message.”

*Jesus came to give us a life of true fulfillment!

“True fulfillment comes to me when I have a deep settled confidence that if I love others the way God loves me, I will impact others for eternity and nothing will bring greater fulfillment in life than that!”

Most people aren't experiencing the full life because of:

2. Man Has a Problem

*We desire to be our own boss.

*We tend to ignore God's principles for living.

*The Bible calls this attitude ‘sin.’

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

“All of us, like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to his own way.” (Isaiah 53:6)

*Some people believe they do not have a sin problem at all.

“If we say that we never sin, we are only fooling ourselves and refuse to accept the truth.” (I John 1:8)

“The wages [cost] of sin is death.” (Romans 6:23)

This refers to two things:

- a) Physical Death (we will all die one day)
- b) Spiritual Death (separation from God)

***Only God can fill that void within, which brings us to:**

3. God's Solution

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

“For it is by grace you have been saved through faith, this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God, not by works, so that no one can boast.” (Ephesians 2:8-9)

“The life is in the blood.” (Leviticus 17:11)

DISCOVER YOUR CHURCH

“He ordained that without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness of sins.”
(Hebrews 9:22)

Jesus said, “I am the way, the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.” (John 14:6)

4. I Must Respond

Review how you responded to the two questions at the beginning of this session.

How Can You Receive Eternal Life?

1. Admit that God has not had first place in your life, that you are a sinner and ask Him to forgive your sins.

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

2. Believe that Jesus died to pay for your sins, that He rose again and is alive and as real as the person sitting next to you.

“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)

3. Receive God's free gift of salvation by faith. Jump into the free net of grace He provides. Don't try to earn it through your own effort.

“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)

*To receive Jesus is to make a conscious decision to put your life totally into His hands. It is to trust Him not only for eternal life but also the full life He offers you in this life.

*You can invite Christ into your life through a prayer of commitment if you:

- Admit you are a sinner.
- That Christ is a reality.
- That He died for our sins.
- That you want to be forgiven of your sins and regrets.
- That you want to spend forever with the Lord in heaven when you die.
- That you want to live your life on earth full of God's peace, joy and fulfillment

DISCOVER YOUR CHURCH

You can pray this prayer right now:

Heavenly Father, I thank you for creating me and loving me, even when I've ignored you and gone my own way. I realize I need you in my life and I'm so sorry for my sins. I ask that you forgive me of my pride, self-reliance and sinful thoughts and acts. Thank you for your love and grace and reminding me that my relationship with you is not restored by anything I have done or can do but on the basis of what you have already done for me through your son Jesus on the cross. Please come into my life now and cleanse me from my sin and make me a new person inside and out. I accept your gift of salvation and commit myself to following you as Lord. Please help me to grow now as a Christian and become all you want me to be through the fellowship and support of your church. I pray this in Jesus name. Amen.

2 Corinthians 5:17 says that you are a new creation - the old has gone, the new has come.

I John 5:11 & 12 says, "And this is the testimony - God HAS given us eternal life and this life is in His Son. He who has the Son (which you now have by faith), HAS LIFE (eternal life). He who has not the Son, 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 you have eternal life."

In closing:

1. Make sure you tell someone.
2. Get Involved.

II. YOUR GROWTH IN CHRIST:

A. THE IMPORTANCE OF BEING BAPTIZED

1. WHAT IS THE MEANING OF BAPTISM?

Believer's Baptism is a step of OBEDIENCE for the believer. Through baptism, he or she is saying to the Lord and to the world, "I'm a disciple of Jesus Christ. I intend to follow my Lord in obedience and faithfulness."

- a. It illustrates Christ's **BURIAL** and **RESURRECTION**.

"Christ died for our sins...He was buried...and He rose again." (I Corinthians 15: 3-4)

"For when you were baptized, you were buried with Christ, and in baptism you were raised with Christ." (Colossians 2:12)

- b. It illustrates my new **LIFE** as a Christian.

"When someone becomes a Christian he becomes a brand new person inside. The old life has passed away and a new life has begun." (2 Corinthians 5:17)

“He saved us not because of righteous things we had done but because of His mercy.”
(Titus 3:5)

2. WHY SHOULD I BE BAPTIZED?

- a. To follow the **EXAMPLE** set by Jesus Christ.

“At that time Jesus came from Nazareth and was baptized by John in the river.”
(Mark 1:9)

- b. Because Jesus **COMMANDS** It.

Jesus said, “Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you.”

In baptism, we are openly expressing that we have repented from sin, our faith in Jesus Christ as our Savior and our deep desire to follow Him as Lord.

3. WHY BE BAPTIZED BY IMMERSION?

- a. Because Jesus was baptized that way.

As soon as Jesus was baptized, He went up out of the water.”

- b. The word ‘Baptize’ means to “dip under” water.
- c. It best symbolizes a burial and resurrection.

4. WHEN SHOULD YOU BE BAPTIZED?

As soon as you have believed in Christ.

“Those who accepted his message were baptized...that day.” (Acts 2:41)

5. CAN MY FAMILY BE BAPTIZED TOGETHER?

- a. If the family member understands the meaning of Baptism
- b. If each family member has personally placed his/her trust in Christ for salvation

6. IF I WANT TO BE BAPTIZED WHAT IS THE NEXT STEP?

Pick up a “Meaning of Baptism” booklet (self-study class on baptism) and a Baptism Application from the Information Centre or from the church website, or talk to a church leader and let them know that you want to get baptized.

B. THE MEANING OF THE LORD'S SUPPER (I Corinthians 11:17-34)

1. The **PERVERSION**: (v. 17-22)

2. The **PURPOSE**: (v. 23-26).

a. **Look Back** for the purpose of remembering and giving thanks.

- i. Remember **that** Christ died.
- ii. Remember **why** Christ died.
- iii. Remember **how** Christ.

b. **Look Ahead** to rejoice for the time when He the Lord will return once again.

*“For whenever you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until He comes.” (v.26)

*“We shall see Him and be like Him.” (I John 3:2)

3. The **PREPARATION**: (v. 27-32)

a. **Look Within** asking the Lord to examine your heart.

b. **Look Around** giving thanks for the members of the body of Christ and ensuring you are at peace with everyone.

Therefore the Lord's Supper:

- serves to create unity between people
- demonstrates purity within people

Our Beliefs

I. GUIDING PRINCIPLES

1. In essential beliefs, we have Unity (Ephesians 4:4-6)
2. In non-essential beliefs, we have Liberty (Romans 14:4, 12, 22)
3. In all our beliefs, we show Charity (I Corinthians 13:2)

II. STATEMENT OF FAITH

1. ABOUT GOD

We believe in the one true, living and holy God, who alone is the Creator, Sustainer and Ruler of all things visible and invisible. God exists eternally as a trinity of three persons – Father, Son and Holy Spirit. They are distinct but inseparable, eternally one in essence and power.

Genesis 1:1-2; Isaiah 44:6-8; John 1:1-3,14; I Corinthians 2:9-12; Colossians 1:15-16, 2:9; Hebrews 1:3

Some Practical Applications:

*Knowing God is our highest priority.

*God wants to have a relationship with us and see us grow in our faith throughout our lifetime.

2. ABOUT JESUS CHRIST

We believe in Jesus Christ, who is truly God and truly man and in whom the divine and human natures are inseparably united. He is the eternal Son of God who was conceived by the Holy Spirit and born of the virgin Mary as Jesus of Nazareth. He came to reveal God to people and announce the coming of God's Kingdom. Having lived a sinless life of perfect obedience to the Father, He died on the cross to pay the penalty for each person's sin, rose from the dead and ascended into heaven. In doing so, He provided the only way for people to be rescued from sin and to experience forgiveness and fullness of life, both now and for eternity. He is the only Mediator between God and people.

Matthew 1:18-25, 4:17, 23; Luke 23-24; John 1:1-18, 6:37-47, 10:10; John 14:6; I Corinthians 15:3-8; Hebrews 4:14-15, 9:14-15; Ephesians 4:11-16

Some Practical Applications:

*Any message that does not centre on Jesus Christ, including His full humanity and divinity as well as His forgiveness for all sin, is not the Gospel.

*Because our salvation was secured by a perfect sacrifice of a perfect person, we live knowing that we are totally and unconditionally forgiven from sin now, rather than hoping we will be forgiven at some future point; we are secure in the grace of God through Jesus Christ.

* Knowing that Jesus will return some day, we hold on loosely to the things of this world, counting on the new heaven and earth to be our permanent home.

3. ABOUT THE HOLY SPIRIT

We believe in the Holy Spirit, who is fully God and one with the Father and the Son and who works in people to make them aware of their need for freedom from sin and a relationship with God through Jesus Christ. The Holy Spirit enters and lives in every person who trusts and follows Jesus Christ. He makes them spiritually alive through Christ and gives them understanding of spiritual truth, guidance in doing what is right, and power to be the person God created them to be and to accomplish God's purposes for their lives. The Holy Spirit also gives all Christ-followers special abilities (spiritual gifts) to use for God's glory and the service of others.

John 3:5-8, 16:7-14; Romans 8:5-17, 26-27; I Corinthians 2:10-12, 12:4-11; Ephesians 3:16-21; Galatians 5:22-25; Ephesians 6:10-18

Some Practical Applications:

*As saved people, we are continually striving to be more like the One who saved us. We are not content just to be forgiven; we want to exemplify Christ-like behavior in every area of our lives.

*The Christian life is more than just 'being good', we need the Holy Spirit to bear His fruit in us. Therefore, we must daily yield our lives to the Holy Spirit in moment-by-moment surrender.

*When we share Christ with others, we are aware that only God can change a heart, and therefore we depend on the Holy Spirit's activity through our limited understanding of what will reach the person.

*Because the Holy Spirit is resident in us, we will listen for His promptings, anticipating that He wants to direct us and will do so if we are open to Him.

4. ABOUT THE BIBLE

We believe that the Bible, consisting of the 66 books of the Old and New Testaments, is the authoritative Word of God. It was written by human authors under the inspiration and supernatural guidance of the Holy Spirit and contains no error in all that it teaches. It is the supreme source of truth for Christian beliefs and teaches Christ-followers how to grow in relationship with God and others and live a holy and fulfilling life.

Psalms 119:105; Matthew 4:4; John 17:17; II Timothy 3:16-17; Hebrews 4:12; II Peter 1:20-21

Some Practical Applications:

*We endeavour to regularly read and study the Bible, privately and publicly, to understand its message.

*We reject claims that any human or ecclesiastical intermediary is necessary for us to know and relate to God. We have His Word, and we are each individually responsible to learn what it says.

*All aspects of our life and conduct must be submitted to what the Bible teaches about that area. We must obey what we discover God has commanded.

*Messages given by pastors of our church must provide teaching supported by Scripture.

*We do not accept doctrines, no matter what is claimed as their source, if they do not square with what the Bible says. Supposed 'modern prophets', 'new revelation', or any message, even if apparently given miraculously, must be tested by the Bible.

5. ABOUT PEOPLE

We believe that all people are created in the image of God, to be like Him in character, and are made for truthful and loving relationship with Him and one another. People are the pinnacle of God's earthly creation and the ones to whom He has given stewardship of all He has made. All people are marred by a sinful nature which is expressed as an attitude of self-centeredness and disobedience toward the will of God. Sin alienates people from God and one another and causes much destructiveness and pain in the world. Sin reveals people's desperate need for God. Without His intervention people are unable to become all that God originally created them to be. God loves all people and has made provision for their restoration and wholeness.

Genesis 1:27-30; Psalm 139:1-16, 23-24; Romans 1:18-21; 8:5-8; Ephesians 2:1-3; John 3:16

6. ABOUT SALVATION

We believe that God is merciful and freely extends His grace to all people. Through Christ's sacrificial death on the cross and resurrection to life, God has provided the way for people to be restored to a perfect relationship with Him. All people who respond to God's mercy and grace by repenting of their sins and self-centeredness, putting their faith in Jesus Christ as their Savior, and committing themselves to follow Him as their Lord receive complete forgiveness and are made spiritually alive through Christ. Although good works cannot remove anyone's sin, every person who experiences God's forgiveness will begin to live a God-pleasing life and do good works as evidence of their new life in Christ.

John 3:16-21; Acts 2:22-42; Romans 5:1-2, 6-11, 6:19-23; II Corinthians 5:14-6:2; Ephesians 2:8-10; James 2:14-26

7. ABOUT HOLY LIVING

We believe that God calls every follower of Christ to live a holy life in total dependence on Him and His power. This involves making a specific decision to respond to God's grace by fully surrendering one's life to Him, continually being filled with the Holy Spirit and fully dedicated to doing God's will, and learning to live in constant communication with Christ. As Christians confess their sins, receive forgiveness, trust in Christ and obey God's will, they will increasingly reflect the character of Jesus and receive His power for holy living and effective service.

Acts 1:8; Acts 2:1-21; Romans 8:1-4, 9-14, 12:1-2; Galatians 5:16-26; Ephesians 4:21-24; I Thessalonians 5:23-24

Some Practical Applications – about people, salvation and holy living:

*We live secure in the knowledge that the Christian life we live is a 'thank you' to God for the salvation He has fully and completely provided. We neither think our obedience 'enhances' His provision for us (as if we could add something to the death of Christ) nor treat His grace in a cavalier way (as an excuse to live sinfully).

*Knowing we are all sinful, we will never naively assume we're immune to temptation or evil. Though confident of being rescued from the penalty of sin, we prudently conduct our lives mindful of sin's ongoing potential to misdirect and destroy us. We believe the Holy Spirit, who is living in us, will guide us in growing in spiritual strength and maturity, and our role is to listen, trust and obey as He leads us.

8. ABOUT THE CHURCH

We believe that the Church consists of all people who have put their trust in Jesus Christ as their Savior and Lord. Jesus created the Church to reflect His character and extend His heart and hands to a broken world. The Church gathers together in local communities to love and worship God in a spirit of unity, to help the spiritually lost enter into a relationship with Jesus, to encourage and equip one another to maturity in Christ, and to advance God's Kingdom of righteousness, peace and joy in the world.

Matthew 16:18; Ephesians 1:22-23, 2:19-22, 3:8-11, 14-21; 4:1-16; Colossians 1:18-23; Romans 14:17

Some Practical Applications:

*Every gathering of believers is a gathering of the church; every small group (or cell church) is in fact the church meeting in its smallest unit.

*Small group leaders function as 'shepherds' of their 'flock'. All leaders are connected to one another through the small group/small church infrastructure, and ultimately, the pastors can provide watch care, through those leaders, for the entire church.

*All believers must have opportunities to learn about and develop their spiritual gifts. We structure our ministries to implement this value so that everyone can participate in some aspect of the church based on the passion and giftedness God has given to them.

*Disunity hurts the body of Christ and His cause. We guard our unity and diligently seek to honestly confront and work through differences in God-honouring ways that both respect the individual (made in God's image) and preserve the oneness in Christ we need to manifest.

9. ABOUT THE SACRAMENTS

We believe that the sacraments of Baptism and Communion are pledges and symbols of God's selfless love for us and of our commitment to following Jesus Christ. Baptism is an expression of having turned from our selfish nature to live a new life in Christ. Communion is a symbol of Christ's love and provision for us through His sacrificial death. These sacraments are reminders of Jesus' love and grace, His presence with us, His unity that binds us together and His promise to return and take us to be with Him forever.

Baptism - Matthew 3:13-17, 28:19-20; Acts 2:38-42; Romans 6:1-7

Lord's Supper - Luke 22:14-20; I Corinthians 11:23-26

10. ABOUT ETERNITY

We believe that people were created by God to live forever and will be bodily resurrected after death. Those who have followed Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord will live eternally with God in heaven, while those who have not put their faith in Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord will spend eternity in hell, separated from God's presence. At a time of God's choosing, Jesus Christ will return to earth in great power and splendor. He will come as the perfect Judge who knows every person's heart and rewards each person according to how they lived their life. He will create a new heaven and earth, and with His followers, establish the full reign of God's Kingdom for all eternity.

Matthew 25:31-46; John 14:1-4; Acts 1:9-10; I Corinthians 15:50-57; I Thessalonians 4:13-17; Revelation 20:11-15, 21:1-22:5

Some Practical Applications:

*We reject the teaching of reincarnation. We must make good choices with the one life we have and urge others not to count on some later incarnation to work out their problems.

*Knowing that our eternity is infinitely longer and more significant than our 70 or so years on earth, we order our lives here so that they take into account this eternal perspective. We choose our activities and priorities based on God's pleasure and wisdom; God's perspective and approval supersedes every other consideration and is always in our best interest.

*The message of the Gospel brings life to those who would perish eternally without Christ. We therefore seek to 'love others to Jesus' in a sensitive, caring and God-directed way.

*As we relate to people throughout life, we see them as the 'eternal beings' that they are and accord them due respect. We have never related to an 'average person'; everyone matters to God and deserves to be treated lovingly.

DISCOVER YOUR CHURCH

Our Directional Statements

The following information reflects the direction we believe God is calling our church to go. We are passionate about these statements and are careful to guard against being distracted from them. These statements have been developed through a process of careful thinking, analysis and focused prayer.

I. COMMITMENT TO PRAYER

A strong prayer base is the essential element to the achievement of our Directional Statements.

We envision a church where prayer is held up as the highest calling of the Christian, not just in our services but in the very life of the church.

Prayer is the key to developing leaders of the Kingdom. God changes hearts, inspires hearts and raises up leaders/workers for His kingdom work in response to our prayers. Jesus said, “The harvest is plentiful but the workers are few. Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field.” (Matthew 9:37)

The Lord also opens people's eyes and hearts to the good news in response to prayer.

We envision a church where prayer is central to everything that happens, where individuals and small groups of people are praying for each other, for their neighbours, communities, schools, local, provincial and federal politicians, the police force, etc., letting them know they are being prayed for and believing God to open their hearts to the truth.

II. DIRECTIONAL STATEMENTS

A. Core values (what we believe is most important)

The following core value statements define our distinctiveness as a congregation and unify our efforts as a body of believers.

We value **people** because people matter to God and need to know Him.

We value *the corporate worship experience* as being vital to the celebration of God's presence among us.

DISCOVER YOUR CHURCH

We value *scriptural preaching and teaching* communicated with grace toward the transformation of lives.

We value the *practice of prayer*.

We value *cell groups* as being strategic to the building of a Biblically functioning community.

We value the *unity of loving relationships* permeating every aspect of church life.

We value a *discipling process*, which moves people to become fully mature followers of Christ.

We value the *empowerment of people* to do the work of ministry with a servant heart according to their giftedness.

We value *servant-leadership* given by Spirit-filled people.

We value *giving our best to God* because this honours God and inspires people.

B. Biblical purpose (what God calls the church to be and do)

The Biblical purpose for the church is to glorify God through exalting Him, edifying one another and equipping believers for effective ministry and outreach.

C. Vision (what we're becoming)

Our vision is to be a Biblically functioning community of fully devoted followers of Christ committed to accomplishing God's redemptive purpose in the world.

D. Mission (what we're doing to achieve our vision)

Centre Street Church exists to introduce people to Jesus and to help them become fully devoted followers of Jesus.

E. Seven-step strategy

A strategy is the way we believe God is leading our church to reach our mission. Specifically, think about Bob your next-door neighbor. How will you reach him for Christ, establish him in the faith and equip him to one-day reach out in love to his neighbor Sam? Our church is committed to the following strategy:

STEP ONE: WE CARE

We believe the key to reaching our lost world is found in developing relationships with those not yet part of the 'forever family of God'. People will not care how much we know until they know how much we care. (And so we care for Bob).

STEP TWO: WE SHARE

We believe the greatest expression of caring is 'sharing' the good news of Jesus Christ. Therefore, we are committed to providing regular evangelism training courses--thus preparing people to give an answer for the hope they have within. (And so at the appropriate time, we share with Bob our love for Jesus).

STEP THREE: WE BUILD BRIDGES

Many people in our world distrust the church or see the church as irrelevant. Consequently, we believe we must seek to find ways to 'bridge the gap'--so that people can trust and identify with the church as being relevant to their lives. We do this through monthly 'seeker friendly services', banquets, active-parenting, personal growth electives and seminars, musicals, sharing relevant Christian books and sermon tapes etc. (And so we invite Bob to such an event--exposing him to the larger church body--and the gospel).

STEP FOUR: WE WORSHIP

We believe that as the Lord blesses our efforts (in steps one to three above) people will come to know Christ as their personal Saviour. The next important step in their spiritual pilgrimage is to worship God, both corporately and privately. (And so we now encourage Bob to join us regularly for worship).

STEP FIVE: WE SUPPORT

We believe that a small group experience is vital to one's spiritual development. Small groups serve to provide encouragement, guidance, and accountability and therefore spiritual growth. We are committed to training leaders of small groups so that everyone can be in a small church. (And so we invite Bob to be a part of our small group).

STEP SIX: WE DISCIPLE

We believe every Christian need to find his or her place in the church and what it means to be a Christian in the world. Accordingly, we are committed to establishing people in the faith, assessing their spiritual gifts, abilities and talents, equipping them, and unleashing them to be all that God intends for them to be in the church and in the world (including home and foreign missions). (And so we involve Bob in one-to-one discipleship--preferably with someone in his small group/church).

STEP SEVEN: WE MINISTER

We believe a Christian is saved to serve and not to sit. We are committed to challenging everyone with the Biblical command to be stewards of their time, talent and treasure to the glory of God. (And so we encourage Bob to begin praying for and 'caring for' his or her neighbour--and the whole process starts over again at Step One).

F. The 6 E's of a Fully Devoted Follower of Christ (what we are becoming)

Embracing Christian Growth

Christ followers understand and have individually received Christ's saving grace. They have abandoned all attempts to earn God's favour through accomplishments of their own and find security only through putting their faith in Christ's sacrificial death on their behalf.



With the help of a spiritual mentor, they have gone through the 'basics of discipleship'. In obedience to God's command, they have been baptized.

Christ followers know the grace of God that saved them is only the beginning of His work in them. They gratefully respond by actively pursuing a lifelong process of spiritual growth in Christ, seeking to know Him and love Him with all of their heart and to be conformed to His image. To this end, they consistently nurture their spiritual development through various spiritual disciplines including prayer and Bible study. They also desire to be obedient to God's Word and to live Godly lives--confronting personal sin and engaging the Holy Spirit's power in turning from sin.

In order to keep growing spiritually, Christ followers enter into an accountability relationship with at least one other individual.

Exalting the Lord

Christ followers recognize that we do not belong to ourselves, having been purchased by the death of Jesus Christ; and that He alone is Lord. Enthroned with all authority, He is the head of the Church and is worthy of our praise and worship.



For this reason they give priority to attending the corporate gatherings of the church for the purpose of praise and worship, teaching and participation in the sacraments. Since Christ established the church, they respect the church and its leaders, the mission of the church and seek to protect the unity of the church.

Experiencing Biblical Community

Christ followers honour God's call to participate in community in order to grow in Christlikeness, to express and receive love, and to carry out the ministry of the church. Toward this end, they are connected relationally to a small group of believers. (Acts 2: 46) They also seek to have a gracious, loving, others-centred, servant spirit in their interactions with others both in the church and outside the church.



Exercising Good Stewardship

Christ followers realize that all that we are and have is a gift from God and that He has called us not only to be 'stewards' (managers) of these resources but to cheerfully share them for the benefit of all human kind.



In light of this, they desire to increasingly submit their time and money to His Lordship and display a spirit of generosity by giving regularly, sacrificially, proportionally and cheerfully to the cause of Christ's church.

Since the Holy Spirit uniquely gifts Christ followers, they seek to discover and develop those God-given gifts and to use them to serve God in their homes, their church and their world.

They also desire to continue learning how they can be more godly and function more competently and effectively in the various roles they have in life---ie: spouse, parent, friend, employee, citizen, small group leader, Sunday school teacher, etc.

Evangelizing the Lost

Christ followers make 'loving others to Jesus' a high priority in their lives. Together with other believers, they prayerfully seek to introduce people to Jesus in their sphere of influence by genuinely caring for them, sharing their love for the Lord and inviting them to 'come and see'.



Extending the Kingdom

Christ followers realize the church has been commissioned by Christ to extend His truth and ministry of compassion at home and around the world. They act as a conscience to the world by demonstrating the love and righteousness of God both in word and sacrificial deed to those in need—including the disadvantaged and poor.



DISCOVER YOUR CHURCH

Why Membership Matters

1. The concept of membership is Biblical

Ephesians 2:19 says, “You are a member of God's very own family and you belong in God's household with every other Christian.” (L.B.)

2. Christ established the church

Matthew 16:18: “I will build my church and the gates of Hell will not prevail against it.”

When you become a Christian two things take place:

1. Christ comes to live in you.
“Do you not realize that Jesus Christ is IN you?” (I Corinthians 13:5)
2. You come to live in Christ.
“We are all baptized by one Spirit into one body.” (I Corinthians 12:13)

The implication therefore is that being a true Christian means that you ARE part of His body, the church. If you reject the church, you are essentially rejecting Christ. He gives you no choice. Being an active member of the body of Christ, or the church, is an essential part of what it means to be a true follower of Christ.

“Now you are a part of the body of Christ, and each one of you is a part of it.” (I Corinthians 12:27)

The Bible talks about being a member of Christ's body.

1. Positional membership.
“The body is a unit, though it is made up of many parts; and though all its parts are many, they form one body. So it is with Christ. For we are all baptized by one Spirit into one body...” (I Corinthians 12:12 – 13)
2. Participating members of a local church.

There are over 50 instructions in the New Testament you cannot obey unless you belong to a specific local church fellowship, including instructions like: love one another, admonish one another, accept one another, honor one another, forgive one another, submit to each other, serve one another.

Following Christ includes belonging, not just believing.

I CORINTHIANS 5

“What business is it of mine to judge those outside the church? Are you not to judge those inside? God will judge those outside!” (I Corinthians 5:12-13)

Church membership is a statement of commitment. “I want it known that I'm in. I'm no longer a spectator-I'm a player. I'm getting out of the bleachers and into the action!”

As you contemplate church membership ask yourself, which church:

- 1) Best helps me meet God in worship
- 2) Best provides me with opportunities to minister in my giftedness
- 3) Has a vision that captivates my passion and inspires me to invest my time, talent and treasure in achieving its God-given faith goals.
- 4) Do I feel good about inviting others to attend [not in terms of entertainment-but in terms of really meeting God and hearing clearly from the Word of the Lord]?
- 5) Do I sense the love and care of God's people and do I have opportunity to be in community with others?

3. Membership is important to the leaders of the church as they seek to fulfil their God-given task of shepherding

Hebrews 13:17 reads, “Obey your leaders and submit to their authority. They will keep watch over you as men who need to give account.” I Peter 5:2 says, “Be shepherds of God's flock that is under your care serving as overseers, not because you must, but because you are walking as God wants you to be...”

For church leaders it is important that we identify those who truly comprise the flock of Centre Street Church:

- 1) The core that can be counted on to build and sustain the ministries of the church.
- 2) Those whose care and spiritual growth they are responsible for.
- 3) Those who are asking to be held accountable.
- 4) Those who are in agreement with the church's vision, foundational and directional statements.
- 5) Those (who according to Galatians 6) should receive priority in the allocation of financial help.

4. Membership keeps us legal

“For the Lord's sake, accept all authority, the king as head of state, and the officials he has appointed.” (I Peter 2:13)

FIVE THINGS UNITE US:

1. Our Salvation (which is what God has done for us)
2. Our Statement of Faith (which is what we believe)
3. Our Directional Statements (which describes where we are going)
4. Our Structure (which describes how decisions are made)
5. Our Statement of Commitment (which describes our commitment as members to one another)

Section 2 – Class Notes

DISCOVER YOUR CHURCH

What is “church”?

1. Opening Question

Talk with 2-3 others and ask the question “What does ‘church’ mean to you?”. After a few minutes, share with the whole group what you heard from those you talked with.

2. Biblical Response

Here are just a couple passages regarding what the Bible says in response to this question:

- Ephesians 2:19-22
- I Peter 2:9-10

How do these verses describe the church?

How does this make you feel?

3. Summary

Based on this brief study, we can see that Centre Street Church is an organization, yes, but more importantly it is a community of people committed to one another and to following Christ together. Although we’re going to spend a fair bit of time looking at the organizational aspect of CSC in this class, we always need to remember that the organizational structure of our church is not the focus. It is the scaffolding, and therefore plays a very important role, but it is us, the people, who are the building itself that God is building, a place in which He wants to live by His Spirit.

The church is people who are growing in God’s love and truth, who are learning to love and serve one another and who are following Christ together and allowing Him to build us, shape us, empower us and lead us to be active in His Kingdom work in this world.

Our History: The CSC Story

The DVD we're going to watch was recorded in August 2007 when Pastor Henry talked with the staff in preparation for another ministry year about the history of Centre Street Church. This is not intended to be an informational video alone, but a means of discovering how the hand of God has been at work in our church in the past and how He has shaped us to be the church we are today. You can take notes during the video or wait until the end when we will review the material together.

Centre Street Church: Three Eras

1. The Era of _____ (1958-1985)

Centre Street Church followed three strategies in this era. The strategies are:

- a.) Build the _____ and they will come.
- b.) Engage in special _____ (revival) meetings.
- c.) Humble ourselves in _____.

2. The Era of _____ (1986-2006)

Centre Street Church sought to live by three values. Those values were:

- a.) Love for _____.
- b.) Love for _____.
- c.) Love for others _____ the church.

Our mission: To introduce people to Jesus and help them become fully devoted followers of Jesus.

The 7 Step Strategy

In living out these values we adopted the 7 Step Strategy as a way of reaching people for Christ. The value and activity that is intended to start this strategy and pervade every step of it as well is that of prayer. We begin by praying that God would bring people into our lives with whom we can share grace and truth and the love of Christ. Then we prayerfully follow His lead as we go through the rest of the steps.

Step 1 – We Care ... _____

Step 2 – We Share ... _____

Step 3 – We Build Bridges ... _____

Step 4 – We Worship ... _____

Step 5 – We Disciple ... _____

Step 6 – We Support ... _____

Step 7 – We Minister ... _____

NOTE: See pages 16-17 in Section I – Pre-Reading for a detailed description of each of the 7 steps.

3. The Era of _____ (2007 -)

This era will be marked by Centre Street Church responding to the leading of the Holy Spirit as to where we are to invest our time, money and abilities as a church and as individuals. In this era it is the intent of our leadership that we will be increasingly generous as a church and as individuals.

Five Important Questions

IMPORTANT QUESTION #1 ... What is the church?

We want to build on the foundation that we discussed at the beginning of the class when we looked at what “church” is. Here are three perspectives of what the church is:

- Church as a _____.

Original word for church in the Greek language is “ecclesia” which means:

Called _____ ones – Romans 12:1-2

Called _____ ones – many verses in the Bible

There are 50 “one another” directives in the New Testament, such as: love one another, pray for one another, forgive one another, etc.

Called _____ ones – Matthew 28:19-20

- Church as a _____ entity.
- Church as a _____ body.

Centre Street Church is a local church body that seeks to have “Christ at the Centre” of who we are and all that we do. What does this mean? Why does it matter? If Christ is at the centre then:

- The _____ of Christ is emerging in you.
- _____ Christ is of first importance to you.
- Experiencing Biblical _____ is vital to your health.
- The _____ of Christ is compelling.

DISCOVER YOUR CHURCH

- Supporting his _____ is an act of stewardship.
- The _____ of Christ becomes your standard.

In all of this, it is a powerful encouragement to remember that Jesus said, “I will build my church and the gates of hell will not prevail against it” (Matthew 16:18). When we take our cues from the Master Designer of the church, Christ Himself, we can be assured that He will build His church and accomplish His purposes for us and through us.

Discussion

Take a few minutes to discuss any questions that come up as a group.

IMPORTANT QUESTION #2 ... Why church membership?

Four reasons why church membership is important:

1. Membership is a _____ concept (Ephesians 2:19).
 - Christ established the church (Matthew 16:18).
 - We are members of Christ’s body (1 Corinthians 12:12-13).
2. Membership is _____ and expresses our commitment to one another (Hebrews 10:23-25; Ephesians 4:1-3).
 - We need to give and receive love and support with others (Ephesians 4:1-3).
 - We need to look out for one another and keep each other accountable to trust and obey and grow in Christ (Galatians 6:1-2, 10; Matthew 18:15-20).
 - We are all sheep and need shepherds to serve and lead us (I Peter 5:2-3).
3. Membership enables us to be _____ by focusing on the ministry God has called us to pursue as a local church (Ephesians 4:11-16).
 - The growth of the church depends on each member of the body doing their part (Acts 2:42-47; 6:1-7).
4. Membership keeps us _____ (I Peter 2:13-17).
 - We need to submit to those in authority by following the laws for charitable organizations, appointing godly leaders and holding them accountable. This is part of our witness for Christ in the world (I Timothy 2:1-4; 3:1ff, 14-15).

NOTE: For further study see pages 21-22 in Section I – Pre-Reading.

Discussion

Take a few minutes to discuss any questions that come up as a group.

IMPORTANT QUESTION #3 ...

What does the church want for its members and need from them?

What does Centre Street Church want for you?

1. Salvation – Sanctification – Spirit-filled Life
 - Salvation (John 3:16; 1:12)
 - Sanctification (Romans 8 and 12:1; I Thessalonians 5:23-24)
 - Spirit-filled life (Romans 8; Galatians 5:22-25)

2. Spiritual maturity ... the 6 Evidences of being a fully devoted follower of Christ:
 - Embracing Christian _____.
 - Exalting the _____.
 - Experiencing Biblical _____.
 - Exercising Good _____.
 - Evangelizing the _____.
 - Extending the _____.

NOTE: For deeper learning see pages 18-19 in Section I – Pre-Reading

What does Centre Street Church want from you?

1. Take and keep the vows contained in the Membership Covenant:
 - I will _____ the unity of my church.
 - I will _____ the responsibility of my church.
 - I will _____ the ministry of my church.
 - I will _____ the testimony of my church.
 - I will _____ to be a fully devoted follower of Christ.

2. State your commitment to the church's Statement of Faith and Bylaws
Our Statement of Faith and Bylaws are quite similar to what other evangelical churches in Canada adhere to, but it is still important for all prospective members to read these documents and know what they say. To find out more, visit www.emcc.ca and www.cschurch.ca – click “About CSC” and then “Membership”, and look for the Letters Patent (includes Statement of Faith) and Bylaw links at the bottom of the page.

Discussion

Take a few minutes to discuss any questions that come up as a group.

IMPORTANT QUESTION #4 ... How does Centre Street Church work?

1. Global Strategic Directional Plan – 2020 Focus

We use strategic planning to keep us laser-focused on the mission that God has for us as a local church. The following are the Guiding Principles that we believe God is calling us to follow in order to become the church He wants us to be.

Guiding Principle #1: Pursue _____

1. We will move from the church taking responsibility for causing individual spiritual growth to happen to helping people take responsibility for their own growth through practicing spiritual habits.
2. We will move from the church carrying the responsibility for the ‘discipling’ of children to equipping parents to disciple their children.
3. We will move from measuring the spiritual health of our church by the number of people attending church to the number of people experiencing God in the community through the sharing of good news and the doing of good deeds.

Guiding Principle #2: Pursue _____

1. We will move from talking about small groups as a program of the church to talking about small groups as communities that create belonging, spiritual growth and mission.
2. We will move our groups from the idea that discipleship is something the church does collectively to calling individuals to personally disciple others, one at a time.
3. We will move from only building relationships with those inside the church to building more relationships with those outside the church.

Guiding Principle #3: Pursue _____

1. We will move from a classroom based approach to spiritual development to experiential learning pathways.
2. We will move from groups being formed on the basis of ‘study’ to groups being formed on the basis of opportunity to be ‘missional’.
3. We will move from celebrating the ministries of the church to celebrating the stories of people doing the work of ministry.

Guiding Principle #4: Pursue _____

1. We will move from sporadically calling our people to give generously to regularly reminding our people to live a lifestyle of generosity.
2. We will move from being a church that increasingly needs more people resources internally to a church that increasingly releases people to serve outside the church.
3. We will steadily move from using our resources for ‘non-missional ministries’ to increasingly using more of our resources for externally focused causes in our community, our nation and our world.

Guiding Principle #5: Pursue _____

1. We will help our people to move from living life as the world calls us to live to helping our people live their lives with a Biblical worldview.
2. We will help our people move from living a more complicated spiritual life to one that is purposefully measured by growth in the five Guiding Principles.
3. We will move from being a ‘strategic planning’ church to being more of a church that follows God as He builds His church ‘organically’.

2. Prayer

One of our Core Values is the practice of prayer. Prayer is the foundation for how we function as a church body – this is how we started, and this is how we will continue.

NOTE: For deeper learning see page 15 in Section I – Pre-Reading.

3. Leadership Structure and Culture

Centre Street Church is not an independent church. We belong to a denomination called the Evangelical Missionary Church of Canada (EMCC). Our church is made up of people from a wide variety of church backgrounds and denominations. We love the fact that we can worship and grow and serve together at CSC, but we are also grateful for the accountability and support that we receive through being part of a group of churches in Canada called the EMCC.

CSC is staff-led and board-governed church. The Board of Governors (known in many churches as the Board of Elders) are elected by the membership and appointed to a 4-year term of service, up to a maximum of 2 terms before they need to take a break. The Board of Governors works closely with our Senior Pastor – Pastor Henry – concerning the vision and direction of the church and the development of key policies to ensure we go in the right direction. The Senior Pastor and his Executive Leadership Team are responsible to implement the vision, mission and policies and to oversee the people (both staff and lay leaders) who are working towards it together.

DISCOVER YOUR CHURCH

a. Structure

- Staff Organizational Chart (see handout)
- We are learning how to be “one church, many locations”. We currently have 5 campuses:
 - Central Campus – located in our main building at 3900 – 2nd St NE
 - Northwest Campus – meets in Crowfoot theatres
 - Bridgeland Campus – located in Bridgeland at 235 – 8A St NE (used to be called Salem Evangelical Church ... the church that started CSC in 1958)
 - Airdrie Campus – meets in Koinonia Christian School in Airdrie
 - South Campus – meets in Chapel at St. Mary’s University (south Calgary)
 - Go to www.cschurch.ca and choose a campus location to find out more

b. Culture: Three Priorities

- Values and Objectives
 - Staff Team Values: cohesiveness, accountability, selfless service, trust, empowerment and mission
 - Objectives: every ministry area develops and implements a Strategic Ministry Plan that is prayer-based and fits in with our Mission and our 2020 Vision (the five Guiding Principles)
- Accountability
 - Lines of accountability: The Staff are accountable to the Executive Leadership Team (ExLT), the ExLT to the Senior Pastor, the Senior Pastor to the Board of Governors, the Board to the Membership, and the Membership to the EMCC denomination.
 - Strategic Ministry Plans are reviewed every year and developed for the next year
 - Ministry Health Reports collected regularly from all ministry teams
 - Life Change Stories collected to communicate personal and ministry impact
- Operational Excellence
 - Characteristics of being a “city-sized” church: We are no longer a small boat, but a large ship, and that definitely impacts the way we experience and do ministry.
 - Change is the norm.
 - Crowd management is a constant.
 - Calendars are relentless.
 - Collisions happen.
 - Calls to “change course” are regular.
 - Our cause never changes.
 - Organizational Effectiveness: We are constantly striving to become more efficient and effective as an organization so that we can become who God is calling us to be and accomplish the mission He has given us to do. This means paying constant attention to issues such as communication, accountability, resource-allocation, team health and development, leadership development and many other areas.

Discussion

Take a few minutes to discuss any questions that come up as a group.

IMPORTANT QUESTION #5 ...

How do I become a member of Centre Street Church?

Beginning Your New Life In Christ (Discipleship)

1. Salvation

If you have prayed to receive Jesus into your life as a result of this class, we would love for you to let us know through the Response Card or the Evaluation sheet. We will then have someone contact you to discuss ways you can grow in your relationship with Jesus and become a fully mature follower of Jesus Christ.

2. Baptism

We would encourage you to be baptized as an expression of your faith in Jesus and in obedience to His command. If you have not yet been baptized, you can pick up a Baptism Application and a “Meaning of Baptism” study booklet from the Information Centre. Once you turn that in that application, a leader will be in touch with you to arrange for a discussion about baptism and plan for your baptism.

3. Growing as a New Christian

If you are new in your faith, we would love to introduce you to some others who can walk alongside you as you discover what it means to follow Jesus in your daily life. There are several ministries at CSC that are designed for this purpose, such as Alpha, 1-1 Discipleship and Why Believe. To find out more, see the church website and look for “Spiritual Development”.

Becoming a Member

At the end of this class you will receive two forms: a Membership Application form (gathers some basic information about you), and a Membership Commitment form (where you can commit yourself to membership at CSC). If you have already filled out the application form, then you only need to complete the commitment form. Please read the documents referred to in the commitment form, be sure to sign and date the two pages at the back, and drop it in the box at the Information Centre in the Atrium or return it to the church office. Once we receive these two forms from you, then we know you are officially requesting to become a member at CSC. A ministry leader may contact you to arrange for a brief membership interview, and then the Board will discuss approval of new members at one of its next meetings. This process may take a while, but you will know that the membership process is finished when you receive your Membership Certificate in the mail – a 1-page reminder of your membership covenant.

Responses to two frequently asked questions:

- Baptism as a member of God’s family is a pre-requisite to becoming a member of the local expression of God’s family at Centre Street Church. You do not necessarily have to have been baptized at CSC.
- Everyone who wants to become a member must complete the Membership Commitment form, including those who want to transfer their membership to CSC from another church.

Getting Involved in the CSC Family

We want to help people go beyond just the weekend services and become engaged in our church family in the ways that are most helpful for them and for those they will serve. The following are a number of key ways you can get more involved in the CSC community:

1. Welcome to CSC Orientation Evening

This is a general orientation for people who are new to the church. It is usually on the last Tuesday night of the month for 1 1/2 hours. The first half is an introduction to the vision and direction of the church and 4 key ways to get connected, and the last half is a tour throughout the Central Campus building and a brief introduction to the wide variety of ministries that are available for people of all ages and stages in life. Check your bulletin for the date/time of the next orientation if you are interested.

2. Learning and Growth Opportunities

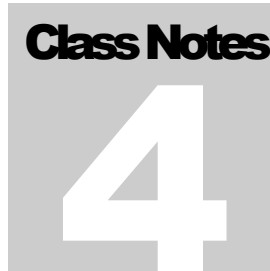
When the right people are doing the right things, in the right places, and with the right heart, we believe they will find a high level of fulfillment and bear incredible fruit for the glory of God. This is our desire for you! We have three Learning and Growth weekends and many other times throughout the year that we offer a wide variety of classes designed to help people at all stages of their journey to grow spiritually. Our desire is to help people grow personally, in their love for Jesus and in their relationship with others, as well as to be equipped with practical training and skills to serve God. More information is available on our website, at the Information Centre and in our latest Learning and Growth catalogue.

3. Community Groups

We believe that participation in a community group is vital to your spiritual health and one of the best ways to give and receive the love of Jesus with one another, and to be on mission together. We want every person who is part of the CSC family to be part of a community group of some kind, whether a group for adults (men and women), men, women, singles, young adults, youth, children, or other specialized groups of people. You can find out more by contacting the appropriate ministry area or going to the church website, looking under “Community”, and clicking on “Find a Group”.

D. Question and Answer Reception

Lastly, after each Discover Your Church class we arrange a time for the class participants to meet with Pastor Henry in order to give you an opportunity to interact with him and hear more from him personally about our vision and direction as a church, as well as ask him any questions that you may have for him. You can sign up for the next Reception time at the end of this class.



Reflection and Response

Now that you know more about Centre Street Church and what it means to be a member here, how does God want you to respond?

1. To baptism and membership

Is it time to be baptized, if you haven't already been baptized as a follower of Jesus Christ? Is it time to join a local church and commit yourself to others in the body of Christ at Centre Street Church? What is still holding you back from one or both of these steps?

2. To relationship and spiritual growth

Is God leading you to join a small group, or an accountability group? Does He want you to carve out more time to be intentional about developing a deeper spiritual friendship with one or two others? What is keeping you from pursuing God and relationship with others more?

3. To service and engaging in God's mission more

Do you know what God's call on your life is, and how He designed you to be involved in serving others? What is He calling you to next at this stage in your life – to let go of and stop doing, and to pick up and start doing?

Write down your thoughts here and perhaps turn it into a prayer of commitment. Take a minute to talk to God about it and determine what your response is going to be.

Thank you for participating in this Discover Your Church class. Be sure you fill out an Evaluation sheet and a Response sheet and turn those in before you leave the class, and sign up for the next Reception time with Pastor Henry.

The next step in becoming a member is to fill out the Membership Commitment form and turn it into the church office. If you have any questions about applying for membership, please contact Eunice Emilson at eunice.emilson@cschurch.ca or 403-520-1210.