

Foreword: On Planning, Biblically

“Unless the LORD builds the house, those who build it labor in vain.” (Psalm 127:1a)

“The heart of man plans his way, but the LORD establishes his steps.” (Proverbs 16:9)

“Come now, you who say, ‘Today or tomorrow we will go into such and such a town and spend a year there and trade and make a profit’— yet you do not know what tomorrow will bring. What is your life? For you are a mist that appears for a little time and then vanishes. Instead you ought to say, ‘If the Lord wills, we will live and do this or that.’ As it is, you boast in your arrogance. All such boasting is evil. So whoever knows the right thing to do and fails to do it, for him it is sin.” (James 4:13–17)

By God’s grace, Christ Church was founded on the truth that it is not we who build the church. He must do it, and we merely labor with him. He builds through our labors — but God himself is certainly the master builder and architect. And if he’s not the one building this church family, then we don’t want any part of it. Nothing done in our own strength will last (1 Corinthians 3:9–15).

As rational creatures made in God’s image, we are invited to make our plans. But with humility, and not arrogance. Open-handed, not close-fisted. We must plan our way; but we must trust in the Lord to establish our steps (Proverbs 16:9).

So we make these plans prayerfully and humbly. If the Lord desires to adjust our plans and establish our steps in another direction, we gladly receive that!

For all the plans, hopes, and dreams that follow in this document, please consider them less of a *blueprint* for “what we will build,” and more of a *path*. Because we must set out in *some* direction, we are setting out in *this* direction. And we are trusting the Lord that he has led us true so far, and will straighten the path ahead of us if we continue in humble reliance on him.

“Trust in the LORD with all your heart, and do not lean on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make straight your paths.” (Proverbs 3:5–6)

— The Elders of Christ Church, October 2025

The Calling of Christ Church

Christ Church is called to be a place where the *weary and hungry* are **welcomed, nourished** with Christ, and **equipped** to share God's love with those they love.

The Weary & Hungry

Jesus' mission is to the burdened, the broken, and the spiritually bankrupt. We can find the Lord in two places: high and lifted up, and also way down low, with the broken-hearted (Isaiah 57:15). Jesus frames his ministry by reading from the Isaiah scroll — a prophecy that announces his mission to come to the downcast and enslaved, to bring hope and freedom (Luke 4:18–19). Jesus pronounces his particular blessing on the poor in spirit (Matthew 5:2). And in Matthew 11:28–30, it's the weary and heavy laden who are invited to come partake of his rest.

Jesus' invitation is particularly to the hungry — those who have tasted what the world has to offer, and are left unsatisfied. Those who hunger and thirst for righteousness. Mary praises God by singing, “he has filled the hungry with good things, and the rich he has sent away empty” (Luke 1:53). Jesus echoed this truth when he said, “Blessed are you who are hungry now, for you shall be satisfied” (Luke 6:21). Hunger and humility are sisters; they both say, “I need something from outside of me.”

We are called to bring the comforts of Christ to those who are weary *and* hungry.

Welcome

To welcome the hungry and the poor in spirit we ought to cultivate a culture of hospitality, and places of hospitality. To be welcomed into a family who is unpretentious, non-critical, and whose words and deeds are full of grace — that is to be truly welcome.

“Welcome one another as Christ has welcomed you, for the glory of God.”
(Romans 15:7)

Nourish

The burdened, broken, and spiritually bankrupt need rich and nourishing food, not fast food. We believe that deep discipleship is more nourishing than always skimming the surface. Christ alone can satisfy us, heal us, and give us rest; so we strive to dive deeply into the Bible together, so that we might learn of him from every page, love him with everything we've got, and commune with him for the satisfaction of our souls.

As we say, “We trust the Bible, and we’re not afraid of the Bible,” we’re able to admit together that perhaps God is not afraid of us; that he’s not worried we’ll sully his good name or make him look bad.

We are committed to deep theology and close reading of Scripture, because we need the whole Christ for all our weariness.

“Come, everyone who thirsts, come to the waters; and he who has no money, come, buy and eat! Come, buy wine and milk without money and without price. Why do you spend your money for that which is not bread, and your labor for that which does not satisfy? Listen diligently to me, and eat what is good, and delight yourselves in rich food. Incline your ear, and come to me; hear, that your soul may live...” (Isaiah 55:1–3a)

Equip

The Bible teaches us that the word ministries of the church (preaching, teaching, etc.) were given as gifts by Christ for the purpose of “equipping the saints for the work of ministry” (Ephesians 4:12). Our heart is not just to welcome and nourish the poor in spirit, but also to equip them for ministry to the people and places they love.

We all should be moving toward maturity in Christ more and more (Ephesians 4:13). How can we recognize a mature follower of Jesus?

1. **Gospel Love:** They are easy to read, because of the love of Christ that they display in every aspect of their lives as they push against isolation and press into community. (Ephesians 4:15–16, 32)
2. **Gospel Truth:** They are hard to deceive, because they are anchored in the truth and know what they believe. (Ephesians 4:11–14, 18–21)
3. **Gospel Contentment:** They are hard to shake, because even when suffering and hardship comes, they can experience the grace of God in a community of love and truth. (Ephesians 4:11–13, 32)
4. **Gospel Humility:** They are hard to accuse, because they’re so quick to humbly repent of their sins and pursue obedience to Christ. (Ephesians 4:22–25)

We seek to be, and equip people to be:

- People who are whole-heartedly participating in church community (instead of spiritually isolating themselves).
- People who are letting their minds be shaped by Scripture (instead of being carried along in the current of society).
- People who are practicing repentance and being renewed by the Spirit (instead of blessing or hiding their sins and spiritually withering).
- People who are letting the grace of God in Christ inform and shape how they pray, speak, work, love, and relate to others (instead of Sunday-only ‘churchianity’).

Our Purpose & Calling

Treasuring and sharing Christ, to see many neighbors adopted into the family of God.

How does our vision — to be a place where the weary and hungry are welcomed, fed, and equipped — fit into our purpose of treasuring and sharing Christ? **Our Calling describes *how* we live out our Purpose.**

We exist to treasure and share Christ, and we do that by being a place where the weary and hungry are welcomed, nourished, and equipped.

- When we **welcome** the weary, we display the heart of Christ whom we treasure — the one who welcomes sinners and blesses the poor in spirit.
- When we **nourish** the hungry with the riches of his word, we are sharing Christ himself, the Bread of Life.
- When we **equip** people to serve others, we extend that same treasuring and sharing outward, so that the nourished and equipped might share God's love with the people they love.

Christ Church's "outreach and growth strategy" is simple, and we pray that it is humble and faith-filled: we intend to so welcome, nourish, and equip the saints that are already entrusted to our care that they *want to* and are *able to* share the love of God with the people they love.

The goal of this approach is not to grow Christ Church; the goal is to see many weary and hungry souls brought into the kingdom of heaven and rooted in a local healthy church. If that is Christ Church, we will thank God for them and care for them well — by welcoming, feeding, and equipping them.

The Calling & The Plan

We want our hopes and vision for the future of Christ Church to be shaped by what we believe Christ is calling us to. Therefore, each aspect of this long-term vision is meant to help us flourish as we seek to welcome, nourish, and equip the weary and hungry.

As of 2025, here is our high-level assessment of Christ Church:

We are a regional church. Knowing that many people drive from a distance to attend church means we need to carefully develop mid-week, home-based ministries for their ongoing discipleship and community.

Better structures for Leader Development would allow us to prevent leaders from burnout and would participate in equipping other saints for the work of ministry.

Predictable rhythms of discipleship ministries would help us nourish and equip the saints in a more hospitable and sustainable way.

A hospitable long-term home would relieve many volunteers and staff from a weekly, demanding work, freeing them up to engage in more people-forward ministries. It would also help address the chaotic and hurried nature of a Sunday morning, creating a more comfortable environment and culture for welcoming the weary and hungry.

Implementing a savings plan will help us move toward the goal of getting into a long-term church building.

By God's grace, in **10 years**:

1. Fully-developed discipleship ministries for all ages and stages (kids, youth, college, singles, families, elderly).
 - **This will require additional pastoral staff.**
We envision three full-time pastors, at least, with specific shepherding roles for various stages of life (e.g. a family pastor, a youth pastor, etc.).
 - **This will require additional administrative staff.**
Perhaps the equivalent of three full-time administrators and/or directors.
 - **This will require a congregation large enough to financially support these staff roles and ministries.**
300–400 regular attenders seems the likely place where this is feasible.
2. Shifting from a Regional church to a Community church.
 - **This will require a long-term building that we own.**
We are currently a Regional church, with members driving up to 45 minutes each Sunday. To shift toward a Community church means being rooted in a community and building trust and familiarity there, over time.
3. Healthy, integrated partnerships with local churches and ministries that align with our calling.
 - **This includes efforts to plant healthy churches in and for other communities.**
To accomplish this, the congregation must be large enough to financially support a church planter (see #1 above).

By God's grace, in **5 years**:

1. \$500,000 in savings, to begin building or purchasing a long-term church building.
2. A core team developed, prayerfully expecting the Lord to send a church planter, and ready to begin ministry in another community (likely Cheatham County/Ashland City).
3. Three additional full-time staff positions filled:
 - A kids' ministry director or pastor
 - An organizational director
 - A families/youth pastor

By God's grace, in **3 years**:

1. \$300,000 in savings.

2. A full mid-week Youth Group.
3. One Elder for every twenty people in the church (with three in the training pipeline).
4. Hire one full-time staff member (likely an organizational director, but will be dictated by the most urgency and importance at the time).
5. Three additional Deacons (a total of eight).
6. Increase our Benevolence fund to 10% of the internal giving budget.
7. Begin family and parenting discipleship ministries.
8. All of our crucial ministries and staffing positions are fully funded from internal giving.

By God's grace, in **the next year** we intend ...

1. To build and implement a Deacon training pipeline.
2. To build and implement an Elder training pipeline.
3. To allocate 5% of our internal giving budget to our Benevolence fund.
4. To create a 20% margin in our budget, with the 20% of our internal giving going into savings (toward the 3- and 5-year goals above).
5. To create structures for and implement Team Leads for Sunday ministries.
6. To create pathways for connections and next steps for newcomers.
7. To structurally and financially plan for Leadership Development as a subset of each ministry.
8. To establish clear rhythms for each discipleship ministry: how often events happen, when Groups take breaks and re-launch, etc.
9. To plan out all discipleship ministry content and curricula to be aligned to our calling (i.e. is it primarily for welcoming, nourishing, or equipping?).