



CTV's DNA

Church in the Vineyard

Affiliated with the Evangelical Free Church of America

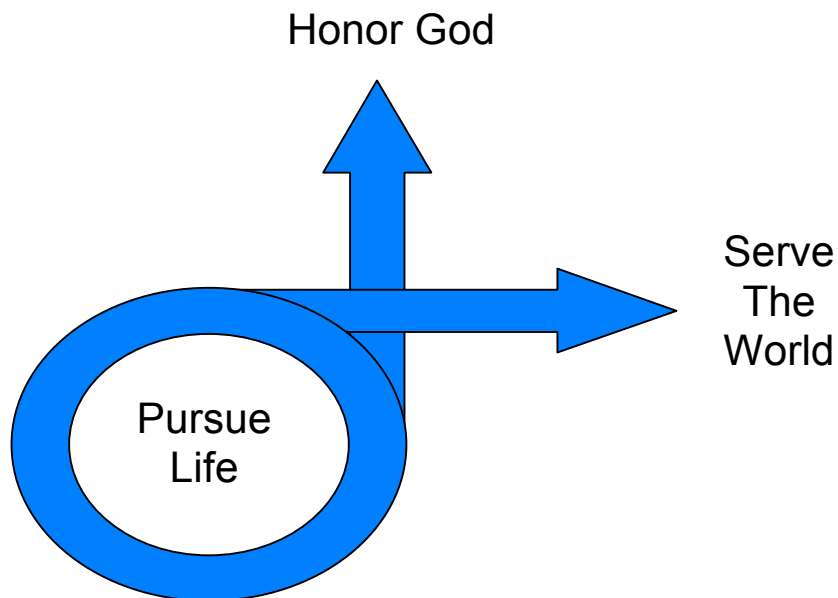
Our Philosophy of Ministry

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Our Mission:

To bring joy and honor to God by

- Growing as a community where all are invited to pursue and experience the fullness of life found only in Jesus Christ
- Serving our neighbors and the world in a way that demonstrates the love of God and draws them to a life-changing relationship with Him.

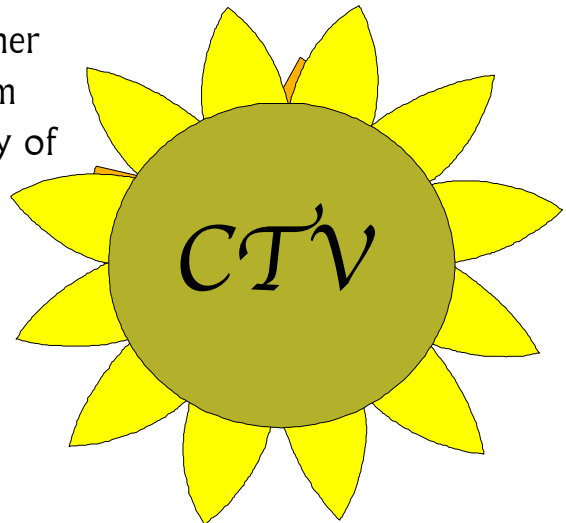


We look for six signs of life to guide us on our journey towards the fullness of life in Christ and measure our progress: Rooted in *Grace*, Structured for *Growth*, Connected in *Group*, Serving with our *Gifts, Giving* our Resources, and *Going* on Mission.

Our Culture:

Is defined by three pictures: the *flower*, the *centered set*, and the *wagon wheel*.

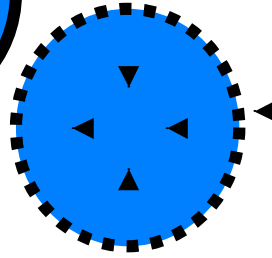
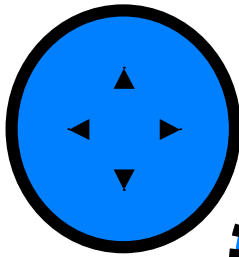
1. The flower shows that we respect other Christian traditions and we draw from them, but we don't fit neatly into any of them. We find that some folks love this eclectic approach and others find that, overtime, they are more comfortable in a clearly-defined tradition.



One implication of the flower is that we can honor elements of traditions as far ranging as Roman Catholic and Charismatic Protestant, Presbyterian and Baptist, and yet we do not completely reproduce the unique specific threads of Christian heritage. Part of what makes the flower word is an understanding that while we honor the traditions that connect with us, we do not crusade to make CTV any one of these pedals but honor the leadership in maintaining the balance.

2. The **centered set versus** the bounded set shows that we welcome all who want to move towards Christ and what He offers. We are more passionate about a person's posture towards Christ

BOUNDED SET



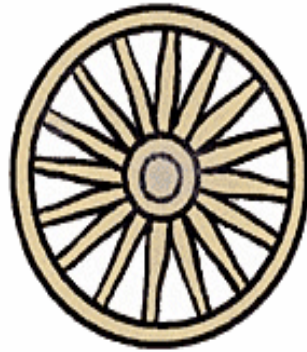
CENTERED SET

than where they stand regarding the boundary. We still have mile markers on the journey of faith that are important. Our way of moving folks towards those boundary crossings is generally one of invitation and inclusion. The Christians who are most comfortable here are

those that are fixated on Jesus and where he's going, exuding his grace more than policing who is in or out.

3. **The Pie and the Wagon Wheel:**

At CTV, we are passionate about creating an atmosphere where outsiders feel welcomed, where



OR



those who are not connected to Christ begin a relationship with him. But we are also passionate about where that relationship leads.

The wagon wheel represents an integrated or Christ-centered view of life where Jesus is the hub and, rooted in his love, we follow his agenda in every area of our lives (the spokes of the wheel). So work and family and school and finances and ministry and personal spiritual life are ALL areas where we seek His leading and follow his will.

The wagon wheel is contrasted with the pie. In the pie view of life, God is a slice of our priorities—maybe larger or small depending on our level of religious enthusiasm—and the rest of our life is largely unconnected to our spiritual side. When Jesus recruited “followers,” when Jesus criticized the hypocrisy of the religious community of his day, he was clearly pushing for the wagon wheel and steering us away from the pie.

Our Beliefs:

- ***About God.*** God is the loving Creator of all that exists, both seen and unseen. God is eternal and completely good, knowing all things, having all power and majesty. God exists as the Trinity, in three persons, yet one God: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. God passionately desires relationship with us and towards this end, continually invites us into a relationship of faith, friendship, learning, and service. [See Genesis 1:1, Matthew 28:19, John 14:6-9, 15-17 and 16:7-15, 2 Corinthians 13:14, 1 John 4:9-10]
- ***About Jesus Christ.*** God expressed Himself in human form through Jesus Christ, the Son of God, born of the Virgin Mary. He lived a sinless life, was crucified for the sins of us all, was buried, rose again from the dead and ascended to heaven. [See Matthew 22:36-40, John 14:1-3, Acts 10:42-43, 1 Corinthians 15:3-8, Colossians 1:13-23, 2:8-14, 1 Thessalonians 4:16-1, Hebrews 1:1-3]
- ***About the Holy Spirit.*** The Holy Spirit—sent from God to live inside all who believe in Jesus Christ—teaches, comforts, and empowers us, giving each follower diverse gifts, fostering unity, interdependence, productivity, Christ-like character, and love among Christians. [See John 14:26 and 16:7-1, Romans 5:5 and 8, 1 Corinthians 12-14, Galatians 5:16-25, Ephesians 3:16, 4:3-4, 5:18]
- ***About the Bible.*** We believe that God speaks to us in the Bible, and that it is our privilege to seek to understand God's message and apply it responsibly to our lives. The Bible is our standard in all we say and do. We believe that God's unchangeable Biblical message should be presented in relevant and contemporary ways, free of religious jargon and understandable to the people of our community.

[See Joshua 1:7-8, Psalm 19:7-11, 119:9-16, Matthew 5:17-19, Acts 17:11, 2 Timothy 2:15, 3:14-17, Hebrew 4:12, 2 Peter 1:16-21, 3:14-18,]

- ***About Salvation.*** All people are created with dignity and value in the image of God to live in a vital relationship with God. Through our sin (failing to live by God's moral standards), however, we break our intended relationship with God and we experience the destructive consequences of that broken relationship—spiritually and socially—in this life and beyond. In steps God. He sent His Son, Jesus Christ, to rescue us from consequences and to restore our broken relationships with Him and others, through Christ's death on the cross, a perfect act of redemption for each of us. Salvation comes to people on the basis of God's grace through their faith in Jesus alone. They receive the free gift of forgiveness and are spiritually reborn through repenting of their sin and embracing Jesus as their Savior (sin payment) and Lord (leader of their lives). Good works and a holy life, although solely unable to save anyone is the natural product of repentant and believing people. [See John 3:16, 5:24, Romans 3:9-28, 6:23, 10:9-10, Ephesians 2:1-10, Titus 3:3-8, James 2:14-26, 1 Peter 2:24, 3:18]

Other Distinctives:

In addition to our core beliefs, as we have journeyed together over our 16 year history, we have clarified our sense of how God is calling us to act on a variety of issues.

1. ***Women in Ministry***—We affirm that women can serve along side of men in leadership and teaching positions. Limitations on women in these roles found in a few New Testament texts were driven by cultural assumptions of the time and specific needs in those churches, not by timeless biblical principles.
2. ***Charismatic Gifts***—We affirm that all of the gifts ascribed to God's Spirit are potentially useful for today. We do not affirm the notion that only those who have these gifts have God's Spirit or ideas such as every Christian will speak in tongues. Every true Christian has God's Spirit, whether or not God chooses to give them the charismatic gifts. To this point, these gifts have not played a prominent role in the life of Church in the Vineyard.

3. **Baptism**—We practice baptism of believers by immersing them in water. We do not practice infant baptism. We do not require baptism for church membership, but believe it is a significant way to publicly declare one’s faith in Jesus. We expect leaders at CTV to have expressed their faith through some form of Christian baptism.

4. **Homosexuality**—While we do not approve of homophobia or hate crimes against those of a same-sex orientation, we believe that, like other forms of sexual expression outside of a marriage commitment, homosexuality is a sin. We welcome everyone, no matter what their background or orientation, to join us on the journey of exploring life in Christ. We believe individuals with this lifestyle will find their patterns of behavior challenged in a relationship with Jesus.

5. **Divorce**—Divorce is a concession that is not part of God’s design for marriage [See Matthew 19]. There are certain situations where divorce is advisable. There are others when it is clearly against God’s will. Having been previously divorced will not exclude anyone from leadership at CTV. Cases where current members or leaders become involved in a divorce situation will be processed with compassionate scrutiny.

Our Strategy:

Our Strategy is to move people from the outside community into transformational environments that allow the Holy Spirit to draw them into the deeper life that God wants us to experience.

We facilitate movement:

From:	To:
Far	Near
Bound	Free
Anonymous	Intimate
Disconnected	Integrated
Consuming	Offering
Dependent	Responsible

The goal of every team is to provide or support an environment where the signs of life are promoted and where movement is encouraged.

Our Values:

Values are principles and qualities that guide our decisions, plan, and actions while implementing our strategy.

"In everything we do, we will..."

"If we don't do it this way, we won't do it."

1. ***Faith-Driven:*** Everything we do will require us to count on the direction and power of God. We'll be good stewards, but take God-sized risks.
2. ***Aligned:*** Everything we do will connect and contribute to the mission and strategy of CTV.
3. ***Excellent:*** We will do the best we can with the resources we have. We will always look for ways to improve what we do, but not demand perfection.
4. ***Relevant:*** Everything we do will be appealing, engaging, and helpful to reach people where they are.
5. ***Relational:*** We will encourage relationships in everything we do, moving from friendly large groups to intimate small groups.
6. ***Promote Responsibility:*** We will equip people to make their own decisions on their journey of faith without pressure or manipulation. We will foster personal initiative for our spiritual growth.

Our Dream:

Behind our Mission: Behind our mission is a vision or dream.

Where do Dreams begin? A situation, a song, a hurt, a memory, a story; something sparks in us a picture of what could be. And sometimes this "*could be*" becomes a "*should be*," even a "*must be*," a dream that must come true. Church in the Vineyard comes from a dream like that.

Our sense of Dream at Church in the Vineyard fits the last definition. It is a picture of the future that must be. And while we don't think of ourselves as the only church or faith community God will use or bless, we are passionate about the vision He's given us. We are convinced it is what is best for us and many others. This picture holds out fresh opportunity and possibilities as we unpack the life Jesus offers.

We Dream of church being a place where outsiders feel welcomed.

We dream that every person who experiences us—through our people and our corporate gatherings—will experience an authentic encounter with the welcoming God, the God who loves them where and as they are. We want to winsomely carry with us the God of the Scriptures, the God who can speak to them in words they can relate to and understand, the God who shows them He is for them.

As this part of our vision becomes reality, we expect to hear more and more stories of outsiders feeling accepted, of outsiders starting a fresh journey with God through some connection with CTV.

We Dream of church being a place where insiders are transformed.

We long for every person who travels with us through our groups and programs to be changed—flooded with the love and grace and power of God in such a way that the way they think and live and love becomes more and more free, more and more like Christ.

As this part of our vision becomes reality, we expect to hear more and more stories of life change. We expect to be seeing those changes first hand.

We Dream of church being a place where everyone passionately pursues the promise of Jesus.

Jesus said He came to give real and eternal life—a better life than we have ever dreamed. We want to experience as much of this life as possible—creating a variety of experiences, teachings, relationships, and serving opportunities to receive this life from God through Christ and share it with others.

As this Dream becomes reality, we see God smiling and the world around us changing even as we are smiling and changing. We expect to see obvious signs of God's blessing. We expect to hear stories from the community and the world beyond of how our people have made a difference on Jesus' behalf.

Pursuing the Dream Together: The vision God has for us is beyond any one of us or a small group of us. It is something that He calls us to pursue together with open hearts and open hands.

- We pursue the dream as we live with an open heart, a heart that is open and active in pursuing the life that God wants to grow in us through teaching, learning, sharing, being self-aware, and owning the responsibility to grow in our respective relationships with God.
- We pursue the dream as we live with open hands, sharing our time and treasures in support of the mission of our church. Each of us has been given a unique collection of resources and abilities to contribute to the dream.

The History of Our Dream:

Dreams and Time...

The evolution of our vision is one way to look at the history of CTV. It reflects our roots and brings a sense of our future direction. The dreams and visions that gave birth to our church can be traced back to the 1980's and the first dream.

The First Dream...

In the late 1980's, a group of people formed a church in New London, Pennsylvania called Grace Community Fellowship. Their dream was to build a church in the Southern Chester County area that was driven by a dedication to the Scriptures—that God's Word would guide what we believe and how we live—and a devotion to the idea of grace—that we relate to God on the basis of what He does for us and gives us in His Son, Jesus, not on the basis of how we perform for Him.

Though the church went through hard times, eventually dwindling to just a few people by 1994, they provided a small network of relationships and a location that fostered the birth of Church in the Vineyard. Their dream lives on, foundational to the guiding dream of Church in the Vineyard.

The Guiding Dream...

The essential guiding dream for Church in the Vineyard is that church can be different and that it must be accessible to all and life changing. In many ways this dream began in the heart of our senior pastor, Chip Roper.

During the same late 1980's mentioned above, Chip, then a young man, was writing music and leading a band—trying to use this medium to present the Christian journey to his fellow high school students. The engagement, relevance, creativity, and down-to-earth quality of the words spoken during concerts shaped a dream of what church should be.

At the beginning of the 1990's, Chip hit a wall in his life. Having been consumed with making his mark on the world and driven to move into

the adult world with the ability to make a lot of money, Chip was ruining his relationships and living with the constant nagging of an empty soul. This led him to a place of seeking God for himself—no riding on the faith of his parents or childhood church. Through consistent prayer asking God to show Himself real and meditation on John's Gospel, Chip's faith was reborn, with a focus on knowing God in personal relationship.

Chip's experience, founded on the realities of grace and scripture from the first dream, led to a two-part dream for church.

Dream Part 1: Church that welcomes the outsider...

Church should be a place where the outsider—the person who does not believe—feels welcome and spoken to. Jesus demonstrated an amazing ability to reach into the world of each individual He encountered and touch him/her and speak to him/her where they were. Church must be a place where the living Jesus connects with real people in the real world of today. It is not to be a closed religious club, or a mutual spiritual admiration society. Instead, it must humbly wrestle with and speak to the issues of the day. We dream of a church where outsiders consistently feel welcome. Yet our church dream is not just about outsiders.

Dream Part 2: Church that transforms the insider...

Church should be a place that transforms the insider—the person who does believe. The elements of church community life—learning, serving, relating, giving—should bring God's supernatural change to people's lives. Sometimes good intentioned church cultures can drift from Jesus and become focused on repeating or guarding rituals and ideas, where the unspoken but real mission of the church is to preserve liturgy or pass on and repeat information. Our dream is to be a community where God is released to bring positive change to the lives of those who believe—they are made different as He leads and guides them, so they can be difference makers in the circles and world in which they travel.

Sometimes we sum up our dream with the following statement—a *fresh and creative expression of the historic Christian faith*. Our dream is to combine the revelation and insights of the past with a living, relevant, ongoing relationship with God in the present. Respectful of elements from every Christian tradition, we see our current place and path in the center of the Christian family.

As we move towards the future defined by this dream, we've found fresh words to keep in view. This leads us to part 3 of the dream.

Dream Part 3: Church that chases the promise...

In one of His many teaching moments, Jesus articulated His purpose as follows:

A thief is only there to steal and kill and destroy. I came so they can have real and eternal life, more and better life than they ever dreamed of. [John 10:10 The Message]

In 2005, we felt led to build our sense of mission or purpose around chasing the promise of these words. Church should be a community on a mission to chase this promise, to experience as much of the Jesus life as is possible on this side of eternity, to create a culture where we share this life with and for each other and the world around us.

The Pursuit of the Dream...

Church in the Vineyard has been pursuing our dream since 1994. Over the years this pursuit has meant many things.

We've tried a lot of different things to reach out—from Sunday services designed specifically for seekers to special outreach events, like dessert theatres and coffee houses. We've had booths at fairs and entered parades, done all sorts of things to invite others to join us on our journey as a community. For 7 years, we focused on a monthly program for children and parents to enjoy together called Kidstuf and enhanced the ease with which people can invite folks to church on the weekend.

We've also tried a lot of different things to bring transformation— Sunday services, classes, small groups, seminars, mentoring, spiritual direction, and missions trips.

Our facility has played a role in our pursuit of the dream. Our original building was the bankrupt winery formerly known as Brandywine Vineyards. It was from this location, surrounded by grapevines, set back in a hollow, that we derived our name. Small and needing constant repair, the Vineyard building still provided a great place for our church to start.

As we outgrew our birthplace, we moved around, becoming a vagabond church between 2002-2005. We held services in our original building, at the Avon Grove Charter School, at the Southern Chester County YMCA, at Parson's Park, at Avon Grove Intermediate School, and at New London Presbyterian Church.

On Christmas Eve in 2005, our wanderings were over as we moved into a brand new and spacious facility in Jennersville. We are currently using all of the 12,500 square feet of the finished space in our new building, looking forward to a day when we finish the remaining 7,500 square feet.

The Struggle to Realize the Dream...

Over all these years, it's been a struggle to realize this dream. As Jesus said, there are thieves out there who come to steal, kill, and destroy. Forces inside and outside each of us come against the dream of life in Jesus for all. It is costly—personally, financially, emotionally; and in terms of our time investment—costly to pursue the dream. Yet we embrace this cost because nothing worthwhile comes without a price. Through the struggle, God shapes and changes us, refines our vision and forms our hearts to more closely resemble His.

The Future of the Dream...

The CTV dream is a dream of great hope and possibility for each person who is touched by our people or who visits and travels with us as part of our community. We follow our dream into the future by embracing a dual emphasis.

- *Depth:* To share the dream we must experience its reality. So we will focus our energy on equipping each other to experience the fullness of life in Christ. Focused teaching, encouraging and challenging communities, equipping workshops, experiential learning opportunities—these will be central to releasing travelers to experience and lead others into life.
- *Breadth:* To share the dream with our surrounding community, we must continue to grow a diverse menu of opportunities and connection points. Growing depth will lead to growing dreams among our members which will lead to even more ways to share the dream of life found only in Christ.

Pursuing the Dream Together...

Jesus offers us a kind of life that we can find nowhere else. But each of us needs a safe and vibrant place to explore this life. We are guarded or self-sufficient, skeptical or hurting. Even as we look for life in people, experiences, possessions, and experiences that don't deliver, we are still wary of any group that makes such grand claims.

Yet despite our wariness, hope still lives in us. All of us hope for a community where we can journey, an accepting community with integrity and humility and relevance to our lives. To pursue this dream together, we form a community that gives life to us even as we give ourselves to the rhythms of the community. A community is defined as making a difference within our church walls as well as beyond them into the world around us. This is our dream at CTV and we are pursuing it together.