

# Fruitland Christian Reformed Church

*"where faith comes to life"*



# BEARING GOOD FRUIT

**"Understanding Our Vision and Values"**

**June 2007**  
(version 1.1)

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# WELCOME

Welcome to the Fruitland Christian Reformed Church (CRC) “Bearing Good Fruit” ministry purpose document! According to John 15:8, the joy of Jesus is that His followers “bear fruit.” As a local gathering of people who are called by Jesus Christ and who seek to “bear good fruit”, we believe a document like this one is vital in order to keep *in focus* the purpose and values that God has for our church community. The apostle Paul once wrote:

" I appeal to you, dear brothers and sisters, by the authority of our Lord Jesus Christ, to live in harmony with each other. Let there be no divisions in the church. Rather, be of one mind, united in thought and purpose." (1 Corinthians 1:10, NLT)

This document is one that we’ve put together to help us be of “one mind” as we live out the calling that Jesus Christ has for us as His followers in the Church—of Stoney Creek, of Greater Hamilton, of Canada, of the world.

The vision contained in this document is a “living vision.” It’s a vision that flows out of a dynamic group of believers living in a particular context, who, under the guidance of the Bible, and God’s Spirit, seek to glorify God and serve His Kingdom in all aspects of our daily lives. Consequently, it is not a perfect vision; it’s always in process. It is however, a vision that is intended, by God’s grace, to keep us moving in the same direction *together*.

It’s also a vision that acknowledges God has gathered us into a broader community of faith that has a particular “accent” and history. Our vision flows out of a Reformed tradition of Christianity that expresses the Christian faith in ongoing conversation with historic creeds and confessions.

## About the CRC

The Christian Reformed Church is a denomination that has about 300,000 members in 1,000 congregations across the United States and Canada. Visit us at [www.crcna.org](http://www.crcna.org)

### Where to find us

Our congregations can be found in cities and towns from British Columbia to Nova Scotia, from California to New Jersey. We have central offices in Grand Rapids, Michigan, and in Burlington, Ontario. We broadcast in radio and television from our studios in the Chicago area and our programs of Christian outreach, relief and development circle the globe.

### We call ourselves

**Christian** because we belong to Jesus Christ and want to be his followers. We recognize as fellow-Christians all people who accept the teachings of the Bible as summarized in the Apostle's Creed.

**Reformed** because we're part of that historic branch of the Christian church that follows the teachings of 16th-century reformer John Calvin, who struggled to return Christianity to its biblical roots.

**Church** because God has called us to be a fellowship of his people in the world.

We often call ourselves "the CRC" for short.

# OUR ‘MISSION’ - Why do we exist?

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As God’s people here in Stoney Creek, we believe that God’s calling on our lives is to be *sent*. We are a *sent* people—sent by God into the world to embody the ongoing ministry of Jesus Christ, thereby, extending God’s Kingdom in our world.

God’s Kingdom? Yes! To understand and “see” God’s Kingdom the Bible teaches us that you must know Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ is alive! The Bible teaches us that all authority in heaven and on earth has been given to Him (Matthew 28: 18). He is on the throne of history and is at work accomplishing His purposes for the world that He loves. God the Father has given His Son Jesus Christ the authority to lead and be Lord over this world. Jesus has sent His Spirit to unite with Christ-followers from every “tribe, tongue and nation” to embody and extend the Kingdom of God—an invisible kingdom made visible through God’s people as they live their lives in step with God’s Word, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit.

Our calling is to display in all our daily living the glorious work of God to rescue a world that groans under the oppression of *sin*. Everyone can see that things are not the way they are supposed to be in our world. The “dis-ease” of poverty, injustice, greed, warfare, brokenness are all around us, and, if we are truthful with ourselves, we know this “dis-ease” has touched us and our relationships too. The hope-filled message of the Bible is that God, through Jesus Christ, has come to make it right! He is rescuing the world and redeeming it—setting things right—establishing His justice, mercy and love. This is the Bible’s “good news”—the Gospel. This is God’s mission. That is our ‘mission.’

We are therefore, a ‘missional’ people—a called people, a sent people, a people with purpose.

We embody this mission—we live into and out of this mission—by continually exalting Jesus Christ, in a community of love, that embraces the world.

## What is the Gospel?

We believe that the Gospel (literally, the “good news” revealed in the Bible) is more than simply having one’s sins forgiven through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Also, it is more than finding new life in Christ through the sent Holy Spirit. It is more than experiencing the power of the Holy Spirit in one’s life. James Brownson has written it is more than knowing strength in the midst of weakness, courage in the face of suffering, comfort, peace, and the capacity to face death unafraid.\* Indeed, it most certainly includes all of these life changing gifts of God, but it is more.

The Gospel can be summarized in this way: God’s great love for the world He has made, His power to conquer evil, rebuild what is broken, reconcile what is divided, and heal what is diseased, has been most clearly announced and inaugurated through the life, death, resurrection, and ascension of His Son Jesus Christ. Through Jesus Christ and His sent Holy Spirit, God is saving the world. That is indeed, GOOD NEWS. This Gospel is not just something we receive; it is something we are called to participate in! St. Peter says it well in 1 Peter 2:9, “You are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God’s own people, in order that you may proclaim the mighty acts of him who called you out of darkness into his marvellous light.”

Therefore, the Gospel is both a *gift* and a *task*. We have new life through the Gospel (gift), but the Gospel also lives through the life and witness of the church (task).

[\\*http://www.gocn.org/news104.htm#Brownson:%20What%20is%20the%20Gospel...](http://www.gocn.org/news104.htm#Brownson:%20What%20is%20the%20Gospel...)

Our **MISSION** Statement is this:

“We are a community of people who live their lives:  
Exalting Jesus Christ,  
Encouraging One Another, and  
Embracing God’s World.”

This **MISSION** statement can be described with three movements:

We **REACH UP** in all aspects of our life to WORSHIP the Lord Jesus Christ.

We **REACH IN** to each other through genuine Biblical FELLOWSHIP.

We **REACH OUT** to the world through Holy Spirit empowered SERVICE.

There are three key Bible verses that teach us that our mission includes these three movements of reaching up, reaching in, and reaching out.

### Reaching Up

"Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.' The second is this: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.' There is no commandment greater than these.'" (Mark 12:30-31)

### Reaching In

"They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. Everyone was filled with awe, and many wonders and miraculous signs were done by the apostles. All the believers were together and had everything in common. Selling their possessions and goods, they gave to anyone as he had need. Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved." (Acts 2:42-47)

### Reaching Out

"Then Jesus came to them and said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.'" (Matthew 28:18-20)

# Our *VISION* – What will we see?

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## Preamble

We call ourselves “missional” because our calling is to embody the mission of Jesus Christ. We believe all of life is missional, because all of life falls under the Lordship of Jesus Christ—raising our families, educating our children, carrying out our daily work, enjoying our leisure, pursuing the arts—every aspect of life is touched by this mission.

What follows is a “picture” of our mission as a Fruitland CRC church community—we call it our “vision.” Picture is a good word because in a very real sense the church is called to be a “picture” of the Gospel. The apostle Paul calls individuals in the church “living letters”; letters from Christ that the world “reads”. The world is invited to “read” the church—to watch her life and witness—for as God graciously acts in and through His church, the world sees and hears the message of Jesus Christ. Therefore, our vision describes what we will see as we live out our mission.

Does this document describe a complete picture, a perfect picture? No. It is a picture that we are drawing at this time in our history, and in this particular context. It identifies things that we feel are particularly important and it tries to capture what we believe God is speaking to us through His Word and Spirit primarily, and through our historical tradition secondarily.

David J. Bosch, someone who has written extensively about the Church’s mission, once wrote this: “In the context of the secularized, post-Christian West our witness will be credible only if it flows from a local, worshiping community.” Another person, like Bosch, who also wrote on this subject, Leslie Newbiggin writes, “the only hermeneutic (explanation or interpretation) of the gospel is a congregation of men and women who believe it and live by it.”



In all of the core values that give shape to our vision we hope you will see a “picture” of how we as a local church community are striving to live out the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

## Our *VISION* Statement

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### Five Spheres of Ministry Centered in Christ

It’s time to “paint” the picture, cast the vision, give some concrete expression to what our ‘missional’ nature looks like. In order to do that we will break down the life of the church into five areas—we call them spheres—tied together with the concept of *incarnation*. The five areas explain how we seek to *incarnate* the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

The illustration captures the five spheres and shows that they all intersect and overlap with one another. This means that some of the

values we have identified for ourselves may fall into more than one sphere. Together however, the spheres are intended to

#### **Incarnation?**

The Christian church teaches that Jesus Christ is God-incarnate; God-made-flesh; 100% God and 100% humanity in one person. The church received this teaching from the Bible. The Gospel of John says that Jesus Christ is the Word of God made flesh, and that the Word is God. Jesus, therefore, is God-incarnate. Jesus shows us God, because He is God.

As a church we seek to “incarnate” the life and ministry of Jesus. His Word and Spirit lives in the hearts of His people, and through our corporate life and witness we seek to “incarnate” the life and ministry of Jesus.

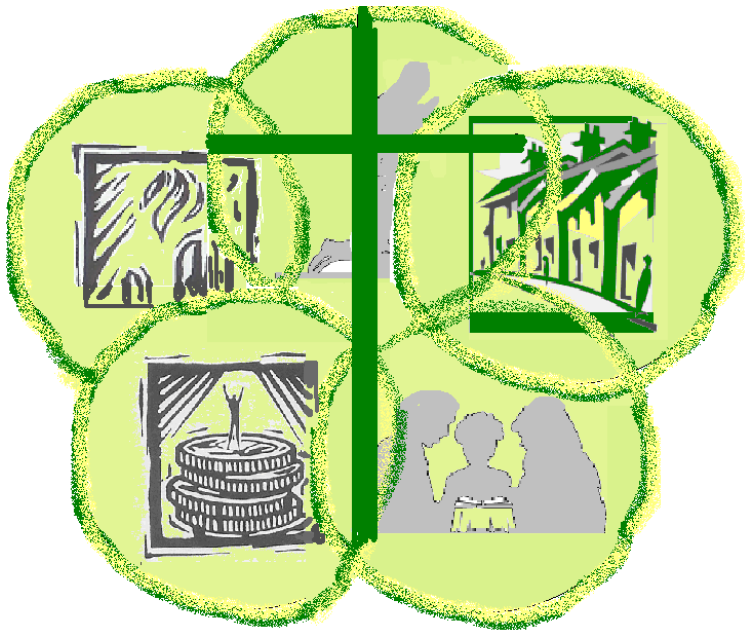
embody the life and witness of Jesus Christ. And that is depicted with the cross. Jesus Christ stands at the centre of who we are and what we do.

This is our **VISION** statement:

“We will see a community of people who: practice Christ-like spirituality; live in Christ-like community; live as Christ-like neighbours; see themselves as Christ-like stewards; and identify themselves as Christ’s disciples.”

Our five spheres of Christian expression are:

- 1) Christ-like spirituality
- 2) Christ-like community
- 3) Christ-like neighbours
- 4) Christ-like stewards
- 5) Christ’s disciples



# 1. Christ-like Spirituality

The Bible teaches us that every person is “spiritual.” That is how God created us. We are spiritual beings. However, true spiritual life only comes from God. All other spiritual expressions and experiences apart from the God of the Bible are at best mere shadows or at worst, counterfeits.



## CORE VALUE

We are passionate about nurturing and experiencing vibrant and mature spiritual expression. We strive to be a church that is ‘on fire’; a church that lives committed lives and practices its faith with joy and passion.

Spiritual expression and growth comes in many forms. All five spheres include some means of spiritual development. Two of the most foundational are described within this sphere.

## 1.1 Inspiring Worship

We acknowledge that God invites us to worship him in all of life (Rom.12: 1,2), not just on Sundays (the Lord’s Day). However, the gathering of the community for worship on the Lord’s Day is a vital centering activity of church life. Our communal worship is Word centered and Spirit inspired.

## CORE VALUE

We gather each Lord’s Day to assemble before the Lord for worship in joyful awe.

1. Biblically based teaching and preaching is central to our congregational health. The reading of Scripture and its proclamation centres our worship in God's Word.
2. Worship services are dialogical and participatory in character. Through readings, prayers, singing, and offerings the congregation engages in a holy conversation with God by listening to God's Word and responding in praise and dedication.
3. Our worship is profoundly Trinitarian in character. Father, Son and Holy Spirit are praised, prayed to, called upon, and adored in ways that acknowledge the fullness of God's being and work.
4. Our worship is attentive to the Christian calendar in order to acknowledge and celebrate God's redemptive purpose within time and history.
5. The sacraments of baptism and Lord's Supper are present in our worship for through them God bends to our human senses in order to make His salvation present and real in our lives.
6. Music and singing are an important part of worship. Often in the Bible we read of song leaders and musicians being appointed to lead God's people. We strive to plan a worship style that is "blended" in nature, employing a wide variety of hymnody, psalmody, instrumentation, and artistic and musical talent that draws from the broad Christian tradition as well as more contemporary expressions of worship.

## 1.2 “House of Prayer” congregation

Quoting the prophet Isaiah, Jesus decreed that God’s temple was to be a “house of prayer.” It is clear from the apostle Paul’s letters that the Spirit filled community of God—the church—is the temple of the Holy Spirit. As God’s temple we are called to be a house of prayer.

We believe that prayer is “the most important part of the thankfulness that God requires of us.” Also, we believe that “God gives his grace and Holy Spirit only to those who pray continually and groan inwardly, asking God for these gifts and thanking him for them.” (cf. Heidelberg Catechism Q&A 116.)



To pray, motivate, and teach others to pray, and to provide prayer opportunities for our church’s members, inspired by the Holy Spirit.

1. Prayer is a way of life. As a community we seek to “pray continually” (1 Thess. 5:17) so that all of life before God is in communion with Him.
2. God has chosen to partner with His people through prayer. We commit to depending completely on God’s wisdom and seeking His will, by under girding all ministry and program activity, and all new initiatives, with intentional and concerted prayer.
3. Through the preaching and teaching ministry of the church we will provide regular opportunities for ongoing instruction and practice in prayer i.e. sermon series, prayer retreats, workshops, small group studies.
4. Each Lord’s Day we seek to uphold the weekly worship services in concerted times of prayer before / during / after the services.

5. We meet on a regular basis (monthly / weekly) to gather as a congregation for worship-based prayer to glorify God and be led by His Spirit to intercede for each other, our community and our world.
6. In prayer we continually call upon God to grow in us both the ‘fruit of the Spirit’ (Galatians 5:22-23) and the ‘gifts of the Spirit’ (1 Corinthians 12:7) as together they contribute to our maturing in Christ.
7. The pastor of our church is committed to growing in prayer and leading our congregation to be more fully built up into a “house of prayer.”
8. Under the authority of Council, through the leadership of a Prayer Ministry Coordinator, the Prayer Ministry Team will provide overall leadership in the prayer ministry and activities at Fruitland.

## 2. Christ-like Community

Christian spirituality, although deeply personal, is always lived out in community. God created us for community. In the Bible, God’s people were always called to live in community. We are the “body of Christ” and each member plays a special role in the life of the body.

The Bible teaches us that the “the eye cannot say to the hand, ‘I don’t need you!’” (1 Cor. 12:21) because every part of the body is indispensable. In other words, *we need each other* because that is how we are made. For this reason we strive to develop and nurture genuine Christian community.



## CORE VALUE

We seek to build genuine Christian community in which people are connected first to God through prayer and worship, to others through loving relationships and sacrificial service, and to themselves through ongoing spiritual growth and maturity.

1. Our primary communal desire is for the well-being of the body, not for our own individual needs.
2. We seek to embody a community of grace and forgiveness where loving fellowship is not merely an emotion experienced for the moment but is a way of life.
3. Thanksgiving, joy, and an abiding contentment in Christ and all His benefits characterize our community of faith.
4. We seek to be sensitive to the social, psychological, and spiritual distress that impairments, limited health, and abuse often bring, and desire to walk with those so affected, relieving needs, recognizing gifts, and sharing pain.
5. We are committed to the inclusion of others, across barriers of race, gender, social status, and level of knowledge of and commitment to the faith. We seek to break down any barriers that cliques, dress “codes,” language, and “in jokes” may erect.
6. In order to “maintain the unity of the faith in the bond of peace” (Ephesians 4:3) we strive to be a community where ongoing discussion and debates sharpen and build up without bitterness and rancour.

Christian community is experienced and nurtured in many ways. Again, all five spheres include some expression of

Christian community. However, two foundational building blocks of Christian community at Fruitland are described within this sphere.

## 2.1 Wholistic Small Groups

### CORE VALUE

To build small group *communities* where people feel they belong and are accepted, where they can grow deeper in relationship with God and other people, and where they can respond in love and compassion to others in the church and broader community.

1. A small group (usually 8 - 12 people in size) is a place where people can grow in their understanding of Scripture and its application to their daily lives.
2. Small groups are holistic when they seek to address the teachings of Scripture to daily life and provide a place where people can learn to serve others—both in and outside the group—with their spiritual gifts.
3. Small groups are a “safe” place where people can express their deepest thoughts, concerns and beliefs in an environment of mutual caring and encouragement that is interwoven with prayer.
4. Small groups can be formed around a variety of topics, interests, and needs. (i.e. hobbies, recovery groups, support groups, Bible study, prayer, etc.)



## 2.2 Lay Pastoral Care Ministry

### CORE VALUE

As an ongoing expression of God's care and love to all our members, we will raise up, train, and commission lay pastoral care workers to offer the ministry of presence to others in the congregation.

1. Pastoral care is expressing the love of Christ by caring for one another in a *committed* relationship; to encourage each other, to share joys, weaknesses and strengths in our Christian journey.
2. Pastoral care workers have a desire to be channels for the flow of God's love to others, including a willingness to give of themselves. This includes a willingness to listen, be available, offer integrity, confidentiality, and prayer.
3. Under the leadership of the Pastoral Care Ministry coordinator and the pastor, lay pastoral care workers are connected to one or more members of the congregation who have particular needs or circumstances that would benefit from the ministry of *presence* through an intentional and committed pastoral care relationship.

# 3. Christ-like Neighbours



The call of God’s people from the very beginning has been that they were blessed by God so that they in turn could be a blessing to the world. The call first takes shape in Genesis 12, where God blesses Abraham and his offspring, so that the ‘nation’ of Abraham’s descendents would be a blessing to the ‘nations’ of the world.

This call to be a blessing, or to use other images that Jesus gives us in Matthew 5, to be *salt* and *light*, impels us to live out a passionate concern for our neighbourhood. In Luke 10:30-37 we learn who our neighbours are and what it means to love our neighbour as we love ourselves.

In the life of Jesus, whom we are committed to follow, we see him building relationship with those *outside* the accepted church community of the day. He reached into lives of outsiders and outcasts, showing to them the unconditional love of God.

## CORE VALUE

We seek to embody the Gospel of Jesus Christ by coming alongside our neighbours—both locally and globally—in word and deed. We carry this out as we build relationships and offer the love and hope of the Gospel in practical ways that serve the needs of the neighbours God has placed in our midst.

1. We seek to live out the story of Jesus in our own community and abroad. This means we strive to do what Jesus said to do, to go where Jesus said to go, and to embrace those for whom he died.

2. We are aware of the tendencies among Christians to see their neighbours as “projects” and we reject that motivation. Rather, Christ calls us to live *with* our neighbours, coming alongside them in love with Christ’s embodied presence.
3. We are intentional about living *with* our local neighbours. We strive to understand the various needs and ministry opportunities in our community and make every effort to prayerfully and practically minister into those needs as God’s Spirit directs and guides us.
4. In the Bible, loving our neighbours is intimately connected with the command to “do justice” (Micah 6:8). In obedience to this command we seek to: articulate a Biblical direction and basis for Christians to be involved in social justice concerns; raise awareness regarding social justice matters; empower our members to respond to social justice concerns locally, provincially, nationally and internationally.
5. Our love for our neighbours includes our love for the broader Christian community. We are committed to forging relationships with other congregations in our community so that our united witness can testify to the unity that Jesus prays for his church (John 17: 20-23).

### 3.1 Called to Proclamation and Witness

The final command of Jesus in Matthew’s Gospel is to “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 command you.” (Matthew 28:19). In Acts 1:8, Jesus says to his disciples, “you shall be my witnesses.” Hearing these

words of Jesus moves us to share the good news of His Kingdom with others.

**CORE  
VALUE**

We are passionately committed to proclaiming the good news to the unchurched, to gathering them into the fellowship of believers, and to disciplining them into the truth of God's Word.

1. We are committed to “sowing the seeds of the Gospel” and with prayerful eagerness and expectancy we look forward to God making them grow. To this end we actively participate in the work of God to grow his church.
2. As a community that expectantly looks forward to God growing his church we are committed to supporting and planting new churches both locally and abroad.
3. We commit to offering opportunities for unchurched people to hear about and explore the teachings of the Bible and the lifestyle of the Christian faith. (These kind of opportunities include programs like: Vacation Bible School, Coffeebreak, and The Alpha Course.)
4. We actively encourage our members, both younger and older, to discern God's call to participate in both shorter and/or longer term mission projects.
5. We are committed to supporting “missionary” families as they serve in the areas of global missions, local church planting, and relief / development work.

# 4. Christ-like Stewards

In



the very beginning of the Bible’s story, humankind is commanded to care for the world that God has made. As we proceed through the Scriptural story, we see that this call to care results from a call to be God’s stewards. Our world belongs to God (Psalm 24:1) and we are entrusted with resources to care over every

aspect of our world under the authority of, or on behalf of, God Himself. As stewards we use our time, our talents, our treasures, and even the ‘trees’—nature itself—to serve the purposes and plans of God as he reveals them to us in the Bible. We are not owners, but stewards entrusted by God with resources to use for His glory. Our stewardship is radical because every aspect of our daily living is an offering and a service to God.

This understanding of stewardship sees all of God’s people as ministers who participate in a shared ministry of caring and restoring.

## CORE VALUE

As members of a faith community, we strive to serve together in a spirit of mutuality as partners. We work cooperatively to discover, develop, and support the gifts of each person and, as responsible stewards, to participate in God’s ongoing creative and restoring activity in our communities and the world.

1. Stewardship is most basically about *surrendering*. All of who we are is a gift from God, and all of who I am is meant to be surrendered back to God. All of who we are

- includes our time, our talents, our possessions, our emotions, our experiences, our spiritual gifts—everything.
2. Our call to be stewards affects all of life. It includes family and friends, workplace, marketplace, local neighbourhoods, and global communities.
  3. Biblical stewards live with the vision of gradually bringing to light God’s vision for our life and for our world.
  4. We are a “firstfruits” congregation. All of our possessions are entrusted to us by God. In order to express our dependence on God and not on our possessions, we live out the Biblical command to set aside the first 1/10<sup>th</sup> of our income for service in the church and its ministries. By doing so we give God our firstfruits. The Bible calls this our “tithe.”

## 5. Christ’s Disciples

Jesus commands the church to make disciples by “baptizing...and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you” (Matthew 28:19). A disciple is one who responds in faith to the gracious call of Jesus Christ. Being a disciple is a lifelong process of dying to self while coming alive in Jesus Christ (see Luke 9:23-24 and Colossian 3: 5, 9-10).



There is a costliness to discipleship. Jesus urges us to “take up our cross.” Dying to self-lordship, denying the desires of our sinful nature, being moulded more fully into Christ-

likeness involves submission, sacrifice and surrender to God and His purposes.

But since Jesus is the “way” to life, since he has promised to give “abundant life” to all who follow him, there is also a “costliness” to non-discipleship. Nondiscipleship results in loosing out on the fullness of “abundant life” that Christ offers. Nondiscipleship costs abiding peace, a life penetrated throughout by love, faith that sees everything in the light of God’s overriding governance for good, hopefulness that stands firm in the most discouraging of circumstances, power to do what is right and withstand the forces of evil.

Transformational discipleship recognizes both the radical nature of committing to follow Jesus and also the life-long process of becoming more like Christ in our thinking, our willing, our doing; in all our living.

Being a disciple of Jesus involves the ongoing process of investing all that we are and have for Jesus and His Gospel; by saying to Him, “here is my home, my checkbook, my talents and gifts, my brain, my heart, my hands, my feet, my mouth; here—it’s all yours! Use it for your Glory and to further your purpose on earth.”

**CORE  
VALUE**

We seek to form disciples of Jesus Christ by teaching and training them to serve him in every area of life in God’s world and God’s Kingdom. In ways that address minds, hearts, and hands, as disciples we endeavour to embody and proclaim the great drama of God and his salvation.

1. Our discipling activity is anchored in the wonderful gift of God’s revelation to us, the Bible, and uses the riches of the whole

- Christian tradition, including the church's historic creeds and confessions.
2. The goal of discipleship is not mere head knowledge, but an obedient life in which members of the church eagerly seek to live by the shape of God's Kingdom, and develop and exercise the manifold gifts of the Spirit in the church and in the world.
  3. Discipleship begins as soon as the baptismal waters draw people into union with Christ and continues until we see Christ when he returns and beyond.
  4. Discipleship takes place in the mutually upbuilding context of home, church, and Christian day schools so that Christ's Lordship over all of life can be taught and applied.
  5. Discipleship involves walking in step with the Spirit. God's Spirit comes alongside each believer, to equip and empower them to carry out God's purpose. Disciples must learn to open themselves more fully to the presence of God's Spirit in order to align their hearts and minds and actions more completely to God's.
  6. Disciples continually call upon God to grow in them both the 'fruit of the Spirit' (Galatians 5:22-23) and the 'gifts of the Spirit' (1 Corinthians 12:7) which lead to godly maturity.
  7. We believe that as a disciple of Christ, every member is a minister. God calls each believer to minister or serve in His Kingdom.
  8. Periodically God calls a disciple to provide leadership to His people in some area of service and ministry. Leaders must exemplify in their own lives the characteristics of the Good Shepherd, Jesus Christ (John 10). We seek to intentionally identify, raise up, and train new leaders.



9. As disciples of Jesus, we practice mutual discipling. This involves humility, accountability, and a willingness to—always in love—admonish each other. God is holy, and so his church is holy.
10. Since discipleship is a life-long process we commit to ongoing adult education and instruction in the faith through active participation in various educational opportunities. These may include small-group study opportunities, adult education courses, and special sermon / teaching series’.

Within this sphere of Christian witness, we acknowledge a special commitment to nurture and disciple our younger members.

## 5.1 Children’s Ministry

Jesus once said, “Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these.” (Matthew 19:14). For this reason we acknowledge that children also are part of God’s covenant family and we must lead and instruct them in the ways of the Lord.

Just as Jesus placed his hands on little children and blessed them we too are called to bless them with instruction and mentoring that grows them up to know and love Jesus Christ.



As children have a special place in the heart of God and therefore are full members in the life of the church, we are committed to provide them instruction that is both *taught* and *caught* which, enables them to grow in knowing and loving Jesus Christ.

1. In a weekly church school program for children, we nurture their faith using a program that opens up the story of Scripture and encourages leaders and children alike to live into that story with their own lives.
2. Children are important members in the body of Christ. We strive to ensure that they feel included in our corporate worship as well as have opportunities to worship in settings that are more sensitive to their particular needs and abilities (i.e Church school).
3. Through ministries like Cadets for young boys and GEMS for young girls we seek to provide contexts where Christian instruction *and* gender sensitive mentoring can take place.
4. God loves and cares for all his children. He has entrusted us with the responsibility to do all that is reasonably possible to protect them and provide them with a safe place to belong and be nurtured. We commit to ensuring that the witness and ministry of the church be experienced as a sanctuary of care and belonging.

## 5.2 Youth Ministry



**We are committed to discipling our teens into a deepening relationship with Jesus Christ.**

1. We commit to providing a wholistic youth ministry that involves the key elements of fellowship, service, education and worship.
2. We seek to help our youth grow in their faith through relationship with Christian leaders

who have a love for God and a heart for youth, in a setting where teens can support, encourage, and enjoy each other in vibrant community.

3. We will nurture a faith in our youth that includes an expressed passion to serve God and the broader community.
4. We will provide our youth with learning experiences that deepen their understanding of God's Word and the teaching of our Reformed tradition.
5. We will develop meaningful worship experiences that glorify God, involve youth, and equip them for committed discipleship.

# Closing Comments

Thanks for taking the time to read this document. It's intended to provide some basic groundwork in order that as a Fruitland church community we can unite around a common vision and purpose. As stated at the outset, this is a "living document" and is thus never carved in stone. As a congregation we must continually listen to God's Spirit as we seek to be obedient to God's Word.

# Acknowledgements

Some of the language and ideas used in this document are the result of an interaction with a variety of sources and are acknowledged below.

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