



christian churches together

christianchurchestogether@gmail.com

614-530-0481

40 fox pt.

ada, mi 49301

christianchurchestogether.org

Christian Churches Together Statement of Vision, Mission, and Process Approved January 2020

Vision, Mission and Process of CCT: A vision is the preferred outcome. It is where a group wants to go. A mission is how the group will achieve the preferred outcome, or in other words, how they will get to where they want to go. And, a process is the detailed method a group will use for their mission. With those definitions in mind, the following will guide all CCT does:

Vision Statement:

Christian Churches Together enables churches and national Christian organizations to grow closer together in Christ in order to strengthen our Christian witness in the world.

Mission Statement (revised statement approved 2022):

Christian Churches Together brings together the diversity of Christian churches and organizations in the U.S. to foster loving relationships, cultivate theological learning, and discern, through consensus, how we bear witness to the reconciling power of Jesus.

The CCT Process:

Based on these vision and mission statements, a process for organizing the ministry of CCT is essential. This process was designed with the hope it will be applicable both to the national CCT and to local expressions that may come into existence. This process will be a “work in progress,” and it will assume several things:

1. We are always calling ourselves to humility before Christ and each other. This reminder, in the form of both worship and proclamation, must be built into the beginning of every gathering, and woven throughout our time together.
2. We are continually looking for new groups of Christians to include in the ministry, with a special emphasis of including more young adults. We will set the goal of having 20% of attendance at forums being persons under age 35 by the time of the 2026 Forum. This

will require intentional conversations with the leadership of all faith communions and Christian organizations.

3. This spirit of inclusion also extends to other ecumenical groups, organizations and regional councils within the United States. Therefore, CCT will keep in mind how we can reach out to those groups and partner with them in whatever we do. Conversations will be held and specific invitations issued. The hope is the CCT process will be replicated across the country in regional and/or state ecumenical councils and associations.
4. CCT will make decisions by consensus. Emphasis will be placed on building relationships and understanding, and we know disagreements will happen. Only when there is consensus will joint action be taken. Members are encouraged, however, to take action within their own faith communions and within created coalitions.
5. It is important CCT work on the “religious literacy” of Christians in the US, and therefore the concept of receptive ecumenism, through which we learn from each other about theologies, histories and organizations, will always be held as foundational. To that end there will be an annual inclusion of “experts” on the designated topic at hand. This means inviting well-known persons from within our Family Groups, who are on the right, center and left of the topic or issue. They will be invited to help with Bible study, theology and dialogue. This is important, because knowledge of specific issues is not necessarily the forte of persons who ecumenically represent faith communions and Christian organizations. The tools these experts would bring will be essential to the conversations.
6. It is possible bylaw changes may be necessary as we implement this new process. When that is the case, the Bylaws Committee will work on these changes and bring them for discussion to a Forum, so consensus around them can be built. In the interim, we will begin to live into the changes described and allow for some flexibility.

The CCT Process will have three components that parallel the three guiding principles:

1. Loving Relationships

a. There are five Family Groups: Roman Catholic, Orthodox, Historic African American, Historic Mainline Protestant, and Pentecostal/Evangelical. Each Family Group has a President, chosen by its Family Group, that may have up to a three-year term. These Presidents make up the **Executive Team** and are charged with:

- Making necessary business decisions between Steering Committee meetings
- Giving the Steering Committee annual suggestions for Forum topics
- Serving as the Personnel Team
- Meet quarterly either in person or via video conference
- Meetings include: recollection of the vision and mission, a call to humility, worship, fellowship, theological education, and the conducting of necessary business. Two of their meetings will be connected to the Steering Committee meetings.

Others, beyond these Family Groups, are welcome to participate in CCT Forums as well, without being a part of Family Groups. Organizational representatives are welcome to connect with the Family Group of their choice.

b. **A Steering Committee** consists of up to 23 people, consisting of:

- Three persons named by each Family Group for 3-year terms (total 15 persons),
- Four representatives named by leaders from National Christian Organizations and Regional Councils of Churches for 3-year terms,
- Four additional “at large” persons named by the Steering Committee in order to balance age, racial, theological, and location. CCT will set as a goal for itself to have 20% of the board be under the age of 35 within 6 years. The at-large persons are selected at the first meeting of every year as necessary.

c. The Steering Committee meets three times a year, in the spring, the winter (after the new year), and at the Forum in the fall. At every Steering Committee meeting the agenda includes: a recollection of the vision and mission, a call to humility, worship, fellowship, sharing, theological education, and the conducting of necessary business.

1. Every Steering Committee member who accepts the invitation to join the Committee commits to:
 - Giving personally to the annual budget. If any member cannot afford a financial gift, then that member can volunteer to help with administrative assignments as determined by the Executive Director.
 - Participating in three annual Steering Committee meetings
 - Serving on one of the teams of the Steering Committee (see below)
2. The following Teams will be created from members of the Steering Committee:
 - **The Executive Team** (see section a above) – This is made up of the five Family Group Presidents, chosen at the Forum. These persons also agree to serve on the Steering Committee and to serve as the **Personnel Team**. They are responsible for the annual evaluations (including organizational and staff evaluations, and related personnel matters), for generating ideas for annual Forums, and for informing and motivating their Families.
 - **The Finance Team** – This is made up of members of the Steering Committee, and others with financial expertise who are recommended and approved by the Steering Committee. They are responsible for generating an annual financial plan and budget, for following up with members about their annual contributions, and for setting the amount given by each member.
 - **The Bylaws Team** – This is made up of members of the Steering Committee, and others with legal expertise who are recommended and approved by the Steering Committee. They are responsible for an annual review of the bylaws and for suggesting any necessary updates to the Forum.
3. An **Executive Director** is paid from contributions given by those involved in CCT. He or she invites, administrates, organizes, communicates, cares for the relationships and holds the vision in front of all involved. The Executive Director is tasked with carrying

out this vision, mission and process on behalf of CCT and will be evaluated on this basis annually by the Personnel Team.

d. CCT is acutely aware of the polarized time in which we live and the need for engaging in civil and spiritual discourse across lines of difference and commonality among people of faith, and for us especially among Christians. Because this is a common goal among a number of ecumenical bodies in the United States, CCT will partner with those bodies whenever our objectives are similar. We will also invite engagement among these bodies through annual Forums, and specific leaders from these bodies will be invited to participate. This will allow for reduction of duplication, increased sharing of resources, and important relationship-building.

2. Learning Theologically

1. A Forum (formerly called a Convocation) is held every year. Suggestions for the topic of the Forum are generated by the Executive Team and selected by the Steering Committee, after consultation with other US ecumenical bodies. A topic is chosen that is both relevant to all involved in CCT and timely to the culture. The Forum is designed for conversations among delegations of official representatives of all faith communions and national organizations associated with CCT. It is also designed to be an open event, so an invitation will be extended to interested faith communions and Christian organizations, as well as all other ecumenical networks, local and national ecumenical institutions. The purpose of the Forum is to gain a deeper understanding of the topic from the perspectives of all the Family Groups.
2. A time when responses to the topic may be given. These responses, known as “Calls to Action,” can only happen for the full group if consensus on the topic is achieved. Otherwise, individuals or smaller groups within the Forum can enter into Calls of Action. These will be explained further in “Leading Actions.”
3. Finally, the Forum is a time to re-visit the previous year’s topic to creatively share with each other what was learned and what was done.
4. Guidelines for topics selected include:
 - i. Topics must be approved by the Executive Team.
 - ii. Topics must be narrowed down and named by the Steering Committee.
 - iii. Topics must fit into our principles of loving, learning and leading.
 - iv. Topics adopted by CCT must not be in opposition to any member’s theology.
 - v. Topics and any resulting Calls to Action are focused nationally.
 - vi. Any exceptions to the above guidelines must be approved by the Steering Committee.
5. The format of the Forum every year includes:
 - i. A recalling of our vision and mission
 - ii. A call to humility
 - iii. Sharing of faith stories
 - iv. Worship
 - v. Bible study around the topic
 - vi. Theological reflection around the topic

vii. Dialogue

viii. Calls to Action, that will be carried out in a manner aligned with any interested attendees' missional concerns. It may also include some sort of response and follow-up to the topic from the previous year, as described above in 2.c.

3. Leading Actions

1. Leading is always toward the goal of visible unity among Christians in the USA. Leadership includes: welcoming, sharing faith stories, worshiping, planning, and engaging in the CCT process.
2. The Executive Committee discerns the general idea for the annual topic (or offers several choices). The Steering Committee narrows it down and decides on a specific topic. The Forum discerns and, when possible, creates a Call to Action. If there is not consensus, Calls to Action can happen among individuals or small groups separate from CCT as a way forward to continue working on the topic. They can be uniquely designed for each topic, and can include:
 - i. A statement on the topic signed by interested individuals,
 - ii. Returning to our faith communions to study how we are already working on this topic to consider a deeper or renewed engagement,
 - iii. Bestowing an award for excellence in ministry in the area,
 - iv. A project, involving leadership of one of our national organizations,
 - v. The decision to collectively take no action, as consensus on the issue has not been reached.
3. Those interested in responding to the Call to Action will be given the space to gather toward the end of the Forum. They share the Call to Action with all Family Groups, involved faith communions, national organizations, and local and national ecumenical institutions. The hope is as many as are able will join into the Call to Action or will duplicate something similar in their context. This will allow the greatest number of Christians across the country to be engaging in the same topic at the same time.
4. Those interested in leading a response to the Call to Action will create **Coordinating Task Forces** and will carry out leadership of the plan. Coordinating Task Forces will be ad hoc, voluntary groups. Any person from any involved faith communion or organization can be a part of them. A system for accountability of these Coordinating Task Forces will be created annually, so they can report back into the Steering Committee within the year.

Suggested Timeline for the Process

These three guiding principles will be put together in a process that chronologically flows on an annual basis. In general, the process will follow the following outline. Every time any subgroup of CCT meets, a part of the agenda will be reserved for worship, sharing, a call to humility, and a recollection of our mission, vision, and process statements contained in this document.

Executive Committee meeting 1 – The group meets as early in the year as possible. New Family group representatives are selected from names generated at the most recent Forum, and any follow-up from the Forum is conducted. Audit plans and/or any other necessary business are also conducted.

Steering Committee meeting 1 – The group meets as early in the year as possible, directly following the Executive Committee meeting. Decisions are made about who (and how) to invite as experts from each Family Group on the selected topic. New at-large persons are selected. New Family Group representatives are welcomed. The annual financial plan is approved. Time is given for the Teams (Executive, Financial, Bylaws) to meet as necessary.

Executive Committee meeting 2 – This group meets in the late summer. Business is conducted as needed in preparation for the Forum. Topics for the following year's forum are generated in order to share with the Steering Committee. The process for creating an annual financial plan for the following year is begun.

Steering Committee meeting 2 – This group meets in the late summer, directly following the Executive Committee meeting. Final details for the current year's Forum are discerned, and the topic for the following year's forum is selected. If necessary, the Call to Action is discussed and any needed follow-up is disseminated among all the Steering Committee members. Input into the annual evaluation process is given, and any other necessary business is conducted. Time is given for the Teams to meet.

The Forum – The Forum is held in the fall of the year. The CCT Process is followed with representatives of all faith communions and national organizations involved in CCT. Sharing in some form about the previous year's chosen topic continues. The chosen topic for the current year is lifted up, with each Family Group participating. If consensus is reached about the current year's topic, then a Call to Action is created and offered. If there is no consensus, then those interested are formed into a Coordinating Task Force (or Task Forces). Directly following the Forum Executive Committee meeting 3 takes place, at which time the Forum is evaluated (with input from their Families), the annual evaluation process (for both the Steering Committee and the Executive Director) is begun and the financial plan for the following year is approved.

Executive Committee meeting 4 – Business is conducted, and the annual evaluation process is completed.

This final document was offered to the participants of the 2019 convocation in Montgomery, Alabama. Consensus was achieved. With this document, CCT is able to articulate our vision, mission, and process. We will conduct our ministry with more intentionality, evaluation, and purpose. An amount of time will be needed to put new processes into practice. The Executive Team and the Steering Committee will guide those processes, beginning in January 2020.