

COVENANT CLASS



All Souls Church of Boulder: An Intersection of
Christ, Community, and City

Christ

We are regular people who are being transformed day by day by the good news (gospel) and grace of Christ. We strive to create meaningful opportunities to worship the living God and to grow in our relationships with Him, not just on Sunday mornings, but as we go throughout our week. Our focus on the gospel continually reminds us of our deepest need for a Savior and the power of God's redemptive love for us.

Community

We believe that gospel transformation of our lives happens as we journey together in community. As a people who are in community with God, we desire to build community with each other through meaningful relationships. It is in messy community fueled by grace that we can best face life, sharing in each other's joys and sorrows. We are a community who welcomes everyone; you do not have to believe as we do to belong, and we hope this is a safe place to ask questions, explore faith, and be authentic.

City

We love our city. We believe that each of us has an opportunity, in our neighborhoods and in our work, to be part of God's redemptive work in the world. We desire to be a community that is sensitive and responsive to people and their spiritual, physical, emotional, intellectual, and relational needs.

CHRIST

Worship and Christian Beliefs

VALUES:

TRUTH: We believe truth is accessible and is something for which all people yearn. We long to know if there is a God and, if so, how we can know him in a personal way. In a world where many believe truth is relative, we believe God is true and has revealed himself in his Word and in his son, Jesus. The desire of All Souls Church of Boulder is to develop a community that welcomes all to come and explore the claims of Jesus and discover who he is.

AUTHENTICITY: All people long for authenticity. We want other people to be authentic with us and, at our core, long to be authentic with others. In other words, we want to know and be known. It is in Jesus that we find the real freedom to do this. In the Gospel (the good news of Jesus Christ) we realize how much we have been loved and accepted by God, and we are then free to be authentic with him. When we have an authentic relationship with God, through Jesus, we find the freedom to be authentic with each other.

WORSHIP

We are created to worship. Look around; it is evident that we will worship anything. However, we are made to worship God. We desire to be a community who worships God and welcomes the people of Boulder to worship him with us. However, worship is not something that should occur only on Sunday. We believe that all of life is to be lived as an act of worship to God.

HOSPITALITY

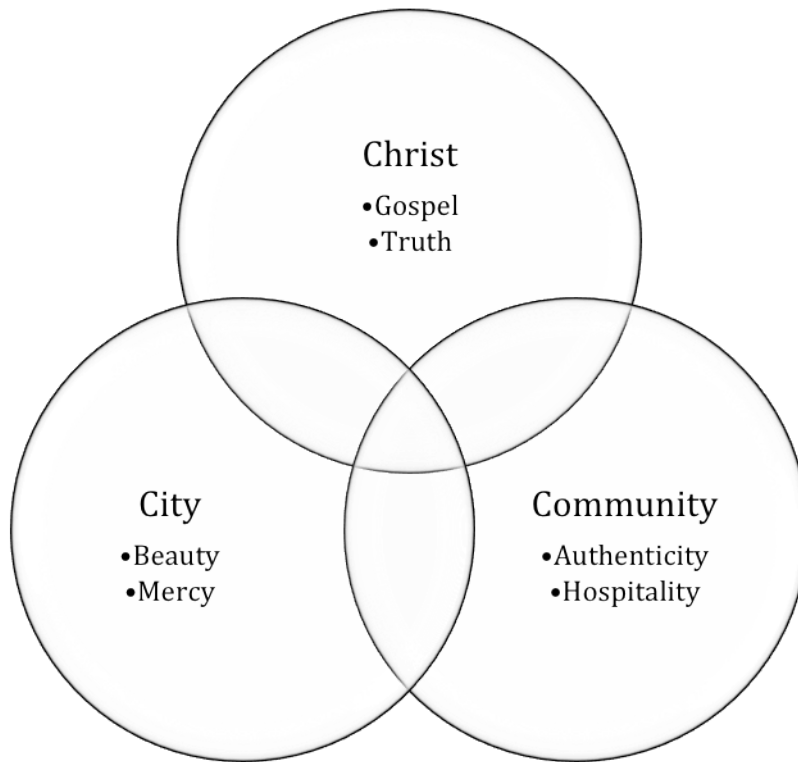
As a people who are in community with God, we desire to create environments of hospitality within our community and in our city. We are a community fueled by grace that means we can best face life sharing in each other's joys and sorrows. We will not be a club or closed community. Rather, we will be a community who is known for its hospitality. You do not have to believe as we do to be accepted by our community and be considered our friend.

BEAUTY

We have a beautiful world in which to live, work, and play. However, in a world that is well acquainted with sadness, fear, loneliness, and hatred, it is sometimes hard to find or recognize beauty. But, by the grace of God, our eyes are opened to see beauty and its potential in places of significant brokenness, pain, and suffering. We want to be a community that both celebrates beauty and longs for it where it "seems" to not exist.

MERCY:

When we experience the mercy of God it should move us to show mercy to others. Boulder is blessed with wealth, but there are those who live in and around Boulder who are struggling, for various reasons, and who need a hand. We desire to be a community that is sensitive to the needs of people, both spiritual and physical. We want to be a community who is rich in mercy, expressed, not only in words, but in deeds.



WORSHIP AT ALL SOULS

The chief task of the church is worship. The English word “worship” comes from the old English “worth-ship.” Worship is seeing the worth of God and giving God what he is worth.

1. There is a hearing from God, seeing anew what he is worth. The gospel is read, heard, and proclaimed in a variety of ways.
2. There is a giving to God, giving him what he is worth. We give him our sins (confession), our substance (offering), our praise (singing, other responses), our needs (prayers of the people). We give him our problems (completely trusting him), our devotion (recognizing and repudiating our idols), our thanks (eschewing self-pity).

In the words of Jonathan Edwards, worship is setting the “affections” on God. Your affections are not merely your emotions, but your motives, the things that drive you, which you truly treasure. Because we were created for worship, when we do not worship God, we worship other—finite—things; we set our hearts on relationships, careers, money, accomplishments, approval, comfort, power. We set our affections on idols, deriving our meaning and sense of self-worth from them. When we worship God we pull our affections off these things and set them on God.

Worship is...
 the quickening of the conscience by the holiness of God
 the feeding of the mind by the truth of God
 the purging of the imagination by the beauty of God
 the opening of the heart to the love of God
 the devotion of the will to the purpose of God
 — Archbishop William Temple

DISTINCTIVES OF WORSHIP AT ALL SOULS

WORSHIP THAT IS BOTH TRADITIONAL AND DYNAMIC.

We attempt to combine and appreciation for the richness of the church's liturgical heritage with a vibrancy that is refreshing—especially to those who may have been away from the church for some time. We avoid both uncomfortable novelty and stuffy formality.

WORSHIP THAT IS BOTH GOD-CENTERED AND COMPREHENSIBLE TO EVERYONE.

We attempt to combine a transcendent focus on Jesus Christ with a welcoming attitude toward those who are spiritually skeptical or curious. We design our services expecting non-Christians to be present, believing that the experience of God's presence in our midst will lead many to embrace Christ. We avoid services that either devolve into entertainment or which are simply "preaching to the choir." Everything that happens will be explained in terms that are comprehensible to non-Christians. Tougher doctrines and harder teachings are not shied away from; rather, we explain and present them. This is different from a "seeker sensitive" approach that shields non-Christians from some of the more difficult teachings or a "seeker-repugnant" approach that fails to sensitively explain anything.

WORSHIP THAT SPEAKS TO THE MIND AND TO THE HEART.

We attempt to provide services that are both deep and practical, both intellectually challenging and emotionally satisfying. We avoid both barren intellectualism and manipulative emotionalism. Our worship is centered both in weekly proclamation of the word and in weekly celebration of the Eucharist.

THE FORMATIVE NATURE OF WORSHIP

HOW CAN YOU BEST ENGAGE IN WORSHIP?

MAKE ATTENDING WORSHIP YOUR TOP PRIORITY.

Corporate worship is the center of the Christian life; make sure it's the center of yours.

IN YOUR WORSHIP, PUT FIRST THINGS FIRST.

We don't primarily attend worship in order to receive from God but to give to God—to give him our praise and adoration.

COME TO WORSHIP EXPECTING GOD TO WORK IN YOUR LIFE.

This doesn't mean working yourself into some emotional state, but rather coming to church expecting God to do "spiritual surgery" in your life—expecting him to teach you, to transform and remake you.

COME TO WORSHIP EXPECTING GOD TO WORK IN THE LIVES OF YOUR FRIENDS.

The critical event in the life of this church is when someone says "Now that's what my friends need to hear," and then brings those friends to All Souls. We remember what it is like not to be a Christian, and we treat questions with respect, answering them with integrity.

KEY QUESTIONS:

- **What do you worship?**
- **How are you being formed?**

CHRISTIAN BELIEFS: ALL SOULS DISTINCTIVES

All Souls embraces the Historic Christian Faith, or what is also called the catholic faith. Since we are a Protestant church, you have already realized that this is not a reference to the Roman Catholic church. Rather, we are using the term in its original sense, which means “according to the whole” or “universal.”

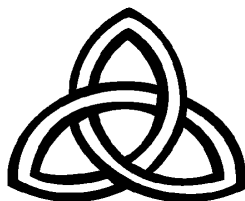
By stating that we are committed to the catholic faith, we are stating that we wholeheartedly embrace those essential convictions which have been believed by the church throughout history and which are confessed in the ecumenical creeds of the early church, especially the Apostles’ and Nicene Creeds. These are the three basic convictions of the catholic tradition:

- The Trinity** There is one God, who eternally exists in a communion of three persons—the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.
- The Incarnation** The Second Person of the Holy Trinity—God the Son—became a man in the person of Jesus Christ. Jesus is both fully God and fully human.
- The Atonement** Jesus Christ died on the cross and was raised from the dead for the salvation of his people.

"Catholic" is a term that recognizes our fundamental unity with all true Christians, and our mutual longing to see greater unity within the body of Christ.

All Souls is a Protestant Church. This is a way of identifying ourselves with what is common to the historic Protestant Reformation, of identifying ourselves as both "Gospel people" and “Bible people” As Gospel people we proclaim and teach that salvation is only by God’s grace alone and is received by faith in Christ alone. As Bible people, we believe that the Scriptures are inspired (God is their ultimate source) and infallible (completely trustworthy), and are the ultimate authority for our beliefs and our lifestyles. We believe in the historicity of the biblical miracles and live in joyful expectation of Christ’s Second Coming.

All Souls is a Reformed Church. We trace our theological roots to the Reformation, a movement for church renewal and reform that took place within the churches of Western Christendom in the Sixteenth Century. The Reformed churches emphasized the importance of preaching in worship, the sovereignty of God in creation and redemption, the priesthood of all believers, and the centrality of the gospel in the life of the church. As a Reformed Church, we believe that the sacraments of baptism and communion not only represent God’s grace, but also seal and apply that grace to our lives. As Reformed Christians, we are committed to living out the implications of God’s radical grace in every area of our lives, and believe that ALL of life, at home, at work, at play, is to be lived to the glory of God.



Reformed Churches have a distinct way of talking about God's grace in salvation. Five distinctions can be made: 1) the human condition; 2) the initiative of God; 3) the work of Christ, the Son; 4) the ministry of the Holy Spirit; 5) and the Promise of the Gospel.

- 1. The Human Condition:** Because of the fall, we are more sinful than we could ever imagine (Jeremiah 17:9). Not only have we been credited with Adam's sin (Romans 5:12-19), but we are also responsible for our own sin. In our fallen state, and without God's saving help, we are spiritually unable to choose to love and obey God (Romans 3:9-20, 8:5-8). We are all in this same boat – desperately in need of God's grace.
- 2. The Initiative of God, the Father:** Because of our inherent brokenness and sin, we need our God to pursue **us**, which he certainly does. Why does he do this? Because, while we are more sinful than we could ever imagine, we are also more loved than we could ever dream! By his grace, God takes the initiative in establishing relationship with us, reaches down, captures our heart, and invites us into a love relationship with himself (John 6:37-39, II Thessalonians 2:13-14).
- 3. The Work of Jesus, the Son:** God didn't just come up with the idea of salvation. He actually provided the way **of** salvation through Jesus Christ. (John 10:14-15, Ephesians 5:25-27). On the cross of Jesus Christ we see the benediction of God to all who would believe: "My child, I love you and have forgiven you." (I John 4:10, Romans 5:10, Galatians 3:13). In other words, the cross was not just an act of goodwill; it was a fully effective act of redemption.
- 4. The Ministry of the Holy Spirit:** Through the Holy Spirit's ministry God transforms our lives. How? By **convincing** us of our sin and misery, enlightening our minds in the knowledge of Christ, and by capturing our hearts with the love and mercy of God (Ezekiel 36:25-27). The Spirit of God opens our eyes to the beauty of Jesus Christ. (John 6:44-45, Philippians 2:13).
- 5. The Promise of the Gospel:** He who began a good work in you will be faithful to complete it (Phil. 1:6). In other **words**, the One who has captured your heart will never leave you or forsake you. Through the Gospel of Jesus Christ, God has promised his love for you — and he will keep that promise. He will never let you go. How do I know He has embraced me? I have embraced Him. (1 Corinthians 1:8-9).

More information on Reformed beliefs can be found by reading the historic Reformed confessions:

The Heidelberg Catechism www.rca.org/aboutus/beliefs/heidelberg

The Belgic Confession www.rca.org/aboutus/beliefs/belgic

The Belhart confession www.rca.org/aboutus/beliefs/belhart



COMMUNITY

CHURCH COMMUNITY, COVENANT, & GOVERNANCE

DISTINCTIONS OF COMMUNITY AT ALL SOULS (READ ROMANS 12)

STRUCTURAL AND ORGANIC – Everyone wants to be part of a community that feels organic, natural, and innovative. But tension exists because organic culture is only possible from intentional culture and structures. All Souls longs to build authentic community with this tension, so we have structures like Community Groups and practices like Passing of the Peace. But the life and culture of the community rests within the willingness of the people to seek out authentic relationships in all environments, manifested by inviting new people for dinner, creating your own events, and sharing and listening to each other's stories.

HOSPITABLE AND DEEP – Most of us have been part of a community that is very open to everyone, yet it struggles to engage in deeper conversations and care — everything seems to be superficial. Others of us have been part of a community that is very deep, and yet extremely exclusive. Both environments are needed to complement each other, so at All Souls this looks like always inviting and gathering “others” with an intentional focus on those who do not believe, or feel like they could never belong to a church community. It also looks like creating space where we “show up” and engage deeply with each other, asking tough questions, resolving conflict, blessing each other, being both authentic and honest. Jesus had a unique way of inviting the outsider, and also living life deeply with a few. One without the other creates an imbalance in our lives.

BROKEN AND BLESSED – Being in true Christian community is messy! We all are sinners and saints, blessed by God yet completely broken, saved and yet in the process of being sanctified. Our relationships within community will represent these two realities. Most of the time the good news of Christ is found within the mess of doing life together, being family with others who are very different than we, and exploring the contradictions within ourselves. This community will let you down. We all will let each other down at some point. But the power of the gospel is such that it empowers us to build forgiving, redemptive, and eternal relationships within the community of the Father, Son, and Spirit.

HOW CAN YOU BEST ENGAGE IN COMMUNITY?

- **Share your story and hear others**
- **Commit and create**
- **Invite and multiply**
- **Relate and disciple**

KEY QUESTIONS:

- **What's your story?**
- **Where are you co-creating?**

CITY

The Mission of God

THE GREAT COMMISSION - MATTHEW 28: 17-20

MISSION

God is a missionary God; mission is the activity of God to redeem His creation. The source of this mission is God's love for the world. His long path of redeeming work culminates in sending Jesus. Jesus revealed and accomplished the kingdom and sent the Spirit so that His people might share in the salvation of the kingdom. The mission of God has created the church: it is the locus and place of God's redeeming work. The missio Dei has also taken the church up into its work as an instrument. The church is sent in the power of the Spirit to continue the kingdom mission of Jesus: 'As the Father has sent me, I am sending you' (John 20:21). There is no participation in Christ's redemption without participation in His mission. The mission of God is one of sending: the Father sends the Son to make known the Kingdom of God in the power of the Spirit; the Son sends the Spirit to continue His work of renewal; the Son also sends the church to continue his mission in the power of the same Spirit. This sending defines, not one task of the church, but its very nature and being. We are a people sent to witness to the good news of the kingdom. - Michael Goheen

DISTINCTIONS OF MISSIONAL ENGAGEMENT AT ALL SOULS

It is of the very essence of the church that it is for that place, for that section of the world for which it has been made responsible. And the "for" has to be defined christologically. In other words, the Church is for that place in a sense that is determined by the sense in which Christ is for the world. - Leslie Newbigin

INDIVIDUAL AND CORPORATE: Both in our individual and corporate presence we seek to participate in God's mission to our city and the world. As individuals we hope to understand our work, home and recreational lives as natural locations for God's redemption of His creation to occur. And we expect to participate in that redemption. As a unified group we seek to affirm and support organizations and work that make efforts for the good of all creation, knowing that God's redemptive work is not limited to the church.

WITNESS AND ACTION: We seek to bear witness to the fully reconciled and redeemed world that is the result of God's mission. In this effort we hope to tell the full story of the Gospel, sharing its freedom, grace and love publicly and personally through our whole lives. We also seek to participate in God's redemption and reconciliation. In this effort we hope to act faithfully through acts of justice, mercy, generosity, kindness and beauty.

AFFIRM AND CHALLENGE OUR PLACE: As we inhabit our place, we proactively look for aspects of culture that affirm God's mission of redemption and reconciliation. These cultural expressions, though not explicitly Christian, become common ground for common good and are both celebrated and cultivated. We also think critically about our place and culture to see how and where they are antithetical to God's mission. In those areas we seek to be a presence of good, rejecting distortions from sin and standing in tension with culture.

HOW CAN YOU BEST ENGAGE IN MISSION?

IN OUR COMMUNITY: All Souls will always seek to provide ways that our community can take action to support and bless our city. Gatherings like our City Conversations, Wine and Art party, Faith and Work conversations, as well as our organized service opportunities (Day of Caring, BCC etc.), are important ways to engage in mission together as one body.

IN YOUR PARTICULARITY: All Souls strongly values your presence in our city. We hope that you see your public life as a meaningful part of God's mission, and seek to bear witness to his ultimate reconciliation of all things through it. We believe that aspiring towards professional excellence, creative expression, gracious parenting, caring friendship and critical thinking are all ways you as a person partner with God in mission. All Souls values that participation and sees in it the fulfillment of our vocation as a church.

KEY QUESTIONS:

- **Who's your neighbor?**
- **Where are you joining in God's mission?**

COVENANT

COVENANT & GOVERNANCE

COVENANT IN THE CHURCH COMMUNITY

To be in covenant with the church is to make a public promises to follow Jesus Christ, to support the church, and to live a lifestyle of accountability and community.

In the Bible this is called “making a covenant.” Every believer is part of the church as organism (the Spiritual Body of Christ), but only by a public promise can you be part of the church as organization, as gathered.

Membership in a church is not like membership in a social club or other organizations. Most organizations see their members as consumers, the ones whom the organization serves. The Church of Jesus Christ is a completely different community – membership means ministry and service, means going from being a consumer to becoming a provider of God’s love and care to others. At All Souls, we take seriously that we are a church, not for ourselves, but for others.

BENEFITS OF COVENANT

Of course, many of the benefits of a vital congregation are available to anyone who becomes involved, whether they are members or not. But there is a rationale for formal membership:

1. Members have the benefit of accountability to spiritual leaders. Every believer must “obey your leaders and submit to them, for they are keeping watch over your souls” (Hebrews 13:17). This command assumes that you have a covenant with certain spiritual leaders. They are responsible for you and you to them.

Some people may say, “I am accountable only to God.” Ultimately, only God has authority over you. But the doctrine of sin should sober us about making ourselves the sole judges over our own hearts: “The heart is deceitful above all things and beyond cure. Who can understand it?” (Jeremiah 17:9). Hebrews 3:13 says we need others to exhort us “daily” lest we become hardened by sin.

2. Members have the benefit of shaping the ministry of the congregation. It is members that choose the officers who lead the church. In our form of government, officers are elected by “the people.” Formal membership entitles you to voting rights at All Souls. While congregational meetings are open to anyone who wishes to attend, only members may pass resolutions, vote for changes to the by-laws or nominate and elect the officers.

- 3.



FORMAL COVENANT COMMITMENTS

All Souls is a covenant member congregation of the Reformed Church in America (RCA), the oldest Protestant denomination in the United States (www.rca.org/aboutus).

Covenant at All Souls means that you have committed yourself to a family of believers with whom you have agreed to participate as fully as you are able in the life, ministry and government of our church. Therefore, All Souls members must affirm the following commitments as vows to the Lord:

COMMITMENT TO FOLLOW JESUS

You must commit to a life of turning away from sin and turning towards Jesus Christ in faith and repentance. Do you renounce sin and the power of evil in your life and in the world?

I renounce them.

Who is your Lord and Savior?

Jesus Christ is my Lord and Savior.

COMMITMENT TO SUPPORT THE CHURCH

You must commit to regular involvement in the life and ministry of the congregation, supporting the church generously through your time, your unique abilities, and your financial resources (time, talent, treasure). Will you be a faithful member of this congregation, and, through worship and service, seek to advance God's purposes here and throughout the world?

I will, and I ask God to help me.

COMMITMENT TO A LIFESTYLE OF ACCOUNTABILITY AND COMMUNITY

You must commit to being held accountable by the church's leaders and by your fellow members to a life of Christian discipleship. You must commit to care for your fellow members and seek to be an encourager and peacemaker.

Do you promise to accept the spiritual guidance of the church, to walk in a spirit of Christian love with this congregation, and to seek those things that make for unity, purity, and peace?

I do.

COMMITMENT TO THE HISTORIC CHRISTIAN FAITH

*You must affirm the Historic Christian Faith as expressed in the Apostles' Creed.
(www.rca.org/aboutus/beliefs/apostles.html)*

I believe in God, the Father almighty, creator of heaven and earth.

I believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord.

He was conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit and born of the Virgin Mary.

He suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died, and was buried.

He descended to the dead. On the third day he rose again.

He ascended into heaven, and is seated at the right hand of the Father.

He will come again to judge the living and the dead.

***I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy catholic Church, the communion of saints,
the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting. Amen.***

EXPECTATIONS OF ACTIVE COVENANT

How do you grow into active covenant at All Souls, fleshing out your promise to “support the Church”? What does God intend for his people to do as a part of his Church? We encourage all of our members to live out their covenant in the context of Scripture’s expectation for their life as a Christian. There is a proper balance between active involvement and over-commitment. Our ministry activity should not become a barrier to living a God-honoring life. Your Christian walk ought to, therefore, be lived out in the following specific, practical ways:

1. *Daily walk with God (being an active disciple of Christ):* Regular, daily use of the “means of grace” — Bible reading and prayer—for your own spiritual growth. (Mark 1:35)
2. *Weekly worship with the people of God:* Worship even when you are away from your home congregation. (Hebrews 10:24-25)
3. *A Community Group:* Community Groups are the main way that pastoral care occurs at All Souls. For your own spiritual growth, as well as the growth of others, you need to belong to a group. (Ephesians 4:15-16)
4. *Ministry involvement:* Each member is expected to use whatever gifts and skills they have been given to serve one another. (1 Peter 4:10-11)
5. *Stewardship of finances through tithes and gifts:* (Malachi 3:8-10; I Corinthians 16:1-2)
6. *Bring and include new people:* Let the gospel overflow from your life into the lives of those around you — at home, at work, in your circle of friends. Help those you bring to All Souls to be able to connect into the life of the church. (Acts 2:41-47)
7. *Celebrants:* All members can help serve communion. You will be instructed shortly after becoming a member about training and scheduling.

WHAT IF I CHOOSE NOT TO BECOME A FORMAL MEMBER?

If you decide to stay involved with All Souls without being in covenant, there will be no effort to pressure you into joining. Do not join unless you are ready and wanting to make the commitment.

GOVERNANCE IN THE REFORMED CHURCH IN AMERICA

FROM OUR REFORMED CHURCH BY DR. HOWARD G. HAGEMAN

Elders: The men and women elected to be Elders at All Souls work directly with the senior pastor to ensure All Souls is achieving the mission of the church. They also ensure that financial management has integrity and that the budget is focused on the mission as expressed in the strategic plan. Elders protect and promote the vision of All Souls, represent the interests of the congregation to the senior pastor, and serve as board members of the organization. Elders conduct membership interviews, and participate in the pastoral care of our members.

Deacons: The women and men elected to be deacons at All Souls serve the church behind the scenes, confidentially helping our people in crisis periods of their lives. Deacons serve the social, emotional, physical, financial, and spiritual needs of the congregation. They provide financial assistance for rent, food, counseling and medical assistance, utilities, and other expenses. Much of their time is spent in prayer with and for those they serve, building one to one relationships with them, encouraging and counseling them with basic life skills. People seek out the deacons for spiritual and practical help. Often the practical help offered is financial, made possible by your contributions to the Deacon Fund. This fund is separate from the operating budget of All Souls, and goes directly to assist members of the congregation who find themselves in need

Consistory: In each individual congregation, the three offices of minister of Word and sacrament, elder, and deacon are brought together in the consistory. As the liturgy claims, by gathering the three offices, "the consistory continues the full ministry of Christ in our day." This gathering of officers is the governing body of the local congregation and is chosen periodically from the membership of the congregation. It has charge of all the spiritual and temporal affairs of the church. The minister is always the president of the consistory. Normally, it meets as one body to plan and guide the various matters relating to the welfare of the congregation, since it is often very difficult to separate many matters which arise into temporal or spiritual categories.

Consistory is, however, divided into two orders. One order is that of the elders: elders are not ministers, but, to quote from a very old Reformed document, they are the "hands and eyes" of the minister in each congregation. Their duty is to assist the ministers in the guidance of the spiritual life of the congregation. Thus, for such matters as the admission of new members or the administering of spiritual discipline, the elders meet as a separate body with the minister. At all other times, they meet with the whole body of consistory.

The other order in Consistory is that of the deacons. The special charge of the deacons was originally the care of the benevolences of the church, both in the parish and beyond its bounds. Today they fulfill their responsibilities through serving the poor, sharing mercy and working for justice.

The Classis: A number of churches in a particular area are gathered together to form the classis. This word, interestingly enough, is the old Latin word for "fleet." When one remembers that in early times the congregation was often compared to a ship, the simile becomes a meaningful one. The Classis is composed of at least one minister and one elder from each church within its bounds. They have equal voice and vote in all its deliberations.

Under the jurisdiction of this body come such matters as the approving of calls made by individual churches to ministers, the dismissing of ministers, and all other matters relating to the work and welfare of the church within the bounds of this area. It acts as a kind of collective episcopate, authority being entrusted not to one person, but to a representative group, half ministers and half elders.

Regional Synod: This body is the next largest in our Reformed Church series of courts. It is "regional" because its jurisdiction is limited to a particular area, as contrasted with General Synod, which is the body that represents the entire church. There are, at present, eight of these synods within our Reformed Church in America. Usually they meet once a year and are made up of an equal number of ministerial and elder delegates from each classis. They have the supervision of the work of the church in their area as their responsibility, especially in the larger sense of planning and program. They do not deal directly with the affairs of individual congregations, unless an appeal has been made to them over the judgment of a classis.

General Synod: The highest court in our Reformed Church is General Synod. It is, as the name implies, a body representative of the entire church. It meets annually and is made up, once again, of delegations of an equal number of ministers and elders from each classis, though the size of the delegation varies in accordance with the size of the classis. While the meeting of General Synod is concerned with the business of the whole church—its missionary and educational endeavors, as well as the planning of the program of the whole church and the state of religion within it—it is always something more than a business meeting. It is a time of inspiration and dedication as well, for the meaning and extent of the work of the church is presented here in its full sweep, with its full commitments and responsibilities.

The presidents of General Synod, as of regional synods and classes as well, hold their office for a year only, and are chosen anew each time by the delegates. In this way, the honor and the responsibility, especially of the office of president of General Synod, is shared year after year by those who have proven their leadership in the work of the church.