

THE CONSTITUTION & BY-LAWS OF COVENANT COMMUNITY CHURCH OF CHILLICOTHE, IL

Adopted by CCC in July 2025

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PREAMBLE:

“And they devoted themselves to the apostles teaching and the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers.”

Acts 2:42

In the church of God all things are to be done decently and in order. This pertains to the government of the church as much as to the corporate worship. Therefore, we seek to obey Scripture through the following standards for the orderly and Scriptural government of our church. These standards do not supplant Scripture but rather are an expression of Biblical church government under God. While Biblical, these standards are primarily procedural; the doctrinal position of the church may be found in Article III.

Our intention is to submit to all those principles regarding church order which are clearly required by Scripture, or required by deductions from Scripture which can be understood through good and necessary consequence. For the rest, we desire to operate in terms of a sanctified Christian prudence, with all things done in good order and Biblical decency. At all times, we seek to submit to the Scriptures and to reflect the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.

We, the members of Covenant Community Church, do establish the following articles to which we voluntarily submit ourselves by way of covenant.

ARTICLE I: NAME

The name of this local church shall be Covenant Community Church.

ARTICLE II: PURPOSE

Section 1. Summarized Purpose

Covenant Community Church exists to glorify God by proclaiming Jesus Christ as Lord and preparing his people to worship Him forever.

Section 2. Expanded Purpose

Our purpose is...

A. To glorify God by providing a place for the corporate worship of God in praise, prayer, and in proclaiming the sixty-six (66) books of the Holy Bible as God's complete revelation to man.

B. To glorify and proclaim the holy triune God of the Bible, the eternal, immutable, infinite, omnipotent, omnipresent, omniscient Creator and sovereign LORD. There is only one true and living God, who subsists in three persons: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. We proclaim God the Father, unbegotten. We proclaim God the Son, eternally begotten, who united himself with a human body and soul in the Lord Jesus Christ, and thus is the only Savior of sinners. We proclaim the Holy Spirit, eternally proceeding from the Father and the Son.

C. To glorify God by building up, strengthening, confirming and equipping in the faith those who are saved.

D. To glorify God by earnestly endeavoring to win others to Christ through biblical New Testament evangelism, missions and church planting, bidding sinners, as did our forefathers, to “Come to Jesus Christ.”

E. To glorify God by calling for holiness of life by turning from sin and worldliness; to warn against “another gospel”; to expose and condemn the errors of anything which is contrary to sound doctrine and practice.

F. To glorify God by being exemplary citizens and obeying the laws of this land and its civil authorities insofar as they are not contrary to the Word of God, the Holy Bible. While we will “render unto Caesar the things that are Caesar's,” we will “render unto God the things that are God's” (Matthew 22:21) by remaining separate from the government and state. This church shall also remain independent of any denominational control.

ARTICLE III: CONFESSION OF FAITH

The Holy Bible is the final authority in all matters of faith and practice. We subscribe to the 2ND London Baptist Confession of Faith of 1689 as a faithful expression of that system of doctrine taught in the Bible. We do not hold this Confession of Faith to be above or equal to the Holy Scriptures. Rather we embrace it as an assistant in controversy, a confirmation in faith, and an instrument of edification and instruction. This Confession provides every member with a compact systematic theology, and by means of the scriptural proofs, each one can be ready to give a reason for the hope that is in him. See also Article 5, Section 7.

ARTICLE IV: CHURCH COVENANT

Section 1. Introduction of our Covenantal Commitment

We, Covenant Community Church, have been saved by grace alone through faith alone in Jesus Christ alone. Each of us were drawn to Christ by the power of God and now stand righteous in His sight through the righteousness of Christ that has been imputed to us. Our salvation is all of grace, and, having been led as we believe, by the Holy Spirit of God, to receive the Lord Jesus Christ as our Savior, and on the profession of our faith, having been baptized in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, we do now in the presence of God and of this assembly most sincerely and joyfully enter into covenant with one another as one body in Christ. We know this covenant we enter is for our own good (as individuals and as a body) and though we may neglect to keep it at times we pledge to bear fruit in keeping with repentance when we fail, we undertake to keep our gaze fixed upon Christ each day, and we promise to trust in Christ's righteousness alone for our salvation knowing God has promised to continue to sanctify us until He glorifies us.

Section 2. Duties Towards the Church as an Institution

We engage, therefore, by the aid of the Holy Spirit, to walk together in Christian love; to strive for the advancement of this church, in knowledge, holiness, and comfort; to promote its health and spirituality; to not forsake the assembly; to sustain its worship, ordinances, discipline and doctrines; to give it a sacred preeminence over all institutions of human origin; to contribute cheerfully and regularly to the support of the ministry, the expense of the church, the relief of the poor, and the spreading of the gospel through all nations.

Section 3. Duties Towards the Elders

We engage to respect and love our shepherds, to pray for them fervently and regularly, to submit to them in the scriptural exercise of their biblical authority, to minister to their needs, and to manifest a tender regard for their reputation.

Section 4. Duties Towards Fellow Church Members

We engage to watch over one another in brotherly love and humility; to remember each other in prayer; to aid each other in sickness and in distress; to cultivate Christian sympathy in feeling and courtesy in speech; to be slow to take offense, but always ready for reconciliation, and mindful of the rules of our Savior to secure it without delay.

Section 5. Duties of Personal Piety

We engage to maintain family worship and private devotion; to raise our children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord; to seek the salvation of our kindred and acquaintances; to walk cautiously in the world, to be just in our dealings, faithful in our engagements, and exemplary in our behavior; to avoid all gossiping, backbiting, and anger that harms the church body; to avoid violating any biblical standards of personal holiness, and disputing with our brethren over doubtful things; to be set for the defense of the gospel and zealous in our efforts to win the lost for Christ.

Section 6. Duty to Continue in a Church for Life

We lastly engage that, when we remove from this place, we shall, as soon as possible, unite with some other church of like evangelical faith where we can carry out the spirit of this covenant and the principles of God's Word.

Member (print): _____ (sign): _____ Date: _____

ARTICLE V: CHURCH MEMBERSHIP

Section 1. Membership Eligibility

Any person who professes repentance toward God and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ who has been baptized upon profession of their faith shall be eligible for membership.

Section 2. Membership Requests

Requests for membership shall be made to the elders. Any person who meets the above-mentioned requirements shall:

A. Complete an application form for membership, including a brief testimony of their faith in Christ.

B. Take a membership class, which will be offered periodically, on an as-needed basis. The elders may make exceptions to this for applicants desiring a transfer from a church of like faith and practice.

C. Read and agree to our Confession of Faith as the doctrinal standard of this church's government (see section 7 below), and read and agree to the Constitution as the practical standard of this church's government.

D. Interview with an elder(s) to review the previous steps and ensure the applicant is ready to proceed.

When these steps are complete, the elders shall announce the applicant's desire to join this church and distribute their written testimony to the congregation. It shall then be the responsibility of the membership to become acquainted with the applicant in order to be prepared to consent (by three-fourths vote) with the elder's recommendation on the appointed Lord's Day. If there are potential concerns about a prospective member they should be made known to the elders prior to the appointed meeting.

Section 3. Membership Admittance

When the elders are satisfied that the applicant has met the above requirements for membership, the applicant shall be presented to the congregation at a regular Sunday meeting (either morning corporate worship or an evening QFM), and shall be asked publicly (either in the baptismal if they haven't been baptized yet, or in front of the congregation if they have been previously baptized), in the presence of God and the congregation, the following questions:

A. Do you confess before God and this local expression of the Church, Jesus Christ to be Lord of your life?

B. Have you received Jesus Christ and His righteousness by grace alone through faith alone?

C. Is it your desire to publicly commit yourself to Jesus Christ and His body here this morning?

If each answer is affirmative, the congregation shall receive the applicant into membership by three-fourths majority from the voting members present either after Baptism in the service or at the next QFM. By answering the above questions in the affirmative, and by signing the church covenant detailed in Article IV, the applicant covenants to be subject to the government and discipline of this church, under the Lord Jesus Christ and His infallible Word.

Section 4. Membership (Associate)

Any person who is a member in good standing in a church of like faith and practice can become an associate member. Eligible candidates include students, military personnel, and businesspeople who are temporarily transferred into our area. Other candidates may be determined by the elders. Candidates must provide a letter of recommendation and approval from their home Church. They shall be subject to the government and discipline of this church. As associate members they shall possess all the rights and privileges of membership, except that they will not be able to vote when such a congregational duty is called for. Once they leave this geographical area, their associate membership is dissolved. No formal resignation will be required.

Section 5. Membership Age Requirement

There is no formal age requirement for membership added to the eligibility of a candidate (see section 1 above). However, all members sixteen years of age or older in good standing are those eligible to vote in congregational decisions.

Section 6. Membership Attendance

Members are not to forsake the gathering of themselves together for corporate worship on the Lord's Day¹ unless when providentially hindered. Moreover, attention should be given and reasonable efforts made toward the additional gatherings of the church (especially gatherings that include a vote).

Section 7. Membership Subscription

Although not every person will fully understand or agree with every word in the Confession (2LBCF), it is to be generally received by all who come into membership and not publicly

¹ Heb 10:23-25

contradicted or opposed. Any member finding that he or she is unable to subscribe to the Confession or Constitution of this church must inform the elders. The elders will confer with the member to see what the problem may be and will then take proper scriptural action. Even though there may be personal disagreement with certain chapters or paragraphs, it must be acknowledged that the teaching of the church will endeavor to persuade them towards the Confessional position in order to dwell in richer unity.

Section 8. Membership Required for Serving in Certain Ministries

Although membership is not required to attend gatherings (even regularly) or be engaged in the life and ministry of this church, membership is required for serving as an elder, deacon, Sunday school teacher, gifted-brother, music leader, or in any other ministry area the elders deem it wise to require. The elders may make certain exceptions if situations permit.

Section 9. Membership Removal

Because the form of the church is the mutual covenanting together of its members, voluntarily giving themselves up to the Lord and to one another, a person's removal from membership must also be through the mutual consent of the body. There are a variety of reasons for the elders to seek the agreement of the brethren for an individual's removal (death, commendation/transfer, dissolution, exclusion, excommunication). However, church members cannot remove themselves by resigning from the church and from one another as they please, nor should they seek their removal from membership without weighty cause. They ought to live and dwell together, for Christ commands that they should not forsake the assembling of themselves together.² Such departure harms the body, just as the pulling of stones and pieces of timber from the building, or members torn from the natural body, tend to the destruction of the whole. The appropriate *reasons* and *procedures* for membership removal are outlined as follows:

A. Death

Reason/procedure: A person is automatically removed from the membership of the church when he or she dies.

B. Commendation/Transfer

Reason: A person in good standing is removed from the membership of the church by means of formal commendation to another church when such a one is free from scandalous sin, avoids causing disunity through their manner of departure, and seeks membership in another church.

Procedure:

- When a member leaves, it is always desirable that they leave for commendable reasons, in a commendable way, to a commendable church, so that they may be

² Heb 10:23-25; Eph 4:1-3.

dismissed into their membership with a letter of commendation and without reservation.³ A letter of commendation benefits the party for whom it is written, that he may be received among the saints in the new church.

- Those who are received into the body by a vote of consent should not depart from the body without a vote of consent. Therefore, a member seeking dismissal by commendation must achieve the common consent of the elders with the brethren by way of vote. It is therefore the duty of such a one, before a request for dismissal be granted, to consult with the church by means of the elders about the reasons and circumstances for their desire to be removed. In this way they may have the church's commendation, and therefore be encouraged, or otherwise consider refraining from leaving.
- If the reasons and circumstances for a member's departure are clearly sinful, the church must not consent to their request for dismissal; in so doing the church would not be acting in faith and would be partaking with him in his sin. If the case is doubtful, but not clearly sinful, and yet the person is fixed on leaving and will not be persuaded otherwise, it seems best to leave the matter unto God and, for the peace and edification of the church, and what possibility of commendation remains, to let him to leave without further proceedings.
- Just and scriptural reasons for why a member might seek his own dismissal from the membership of the church may include:
 - 1) If a person cannot continue without partaking in sin due to matters of conscience.
 - 2) If a person is being persecuted, just as Paul had to depart from the disciples at Damascus.⁴
 - 3) If a person is unable to find sufficient employment and an opportunity has opened elsewhere to supply that need.
 - 4) Moreover, whereas the principal end of all particular churches is edification, there may be many just and sufficient reasons why a person may remove himself from the communion of one church unto that of another. And of these reasons he himself is judge, for it is incumbent upon each member to take care of his own edification. The matter needs to be taken very seriously, however, as leaving a church is no light matter for the individual or the body as a whole.

³ 2 Cor 3:1.

⁴ Acts 9:23-25.

- The church cannot dismiss one of its members into the world, except in cases of exclusion and excommunication. To release a member into the world is to make him a non-member of any church and to put him under the temptation of continuing as such, whereby he would lie dangerously open to the temptations of the evil one, being devoid of all church watch and care, which has induced the fall of many from their profession. Therefore, to be dismissed with commendation requires that the person seeking dismissal be commended into the membership of another church, to which a letter of commendation and dismissal shall be sent, so that they may receive him in faith and not be corrupted by receiving deceivers and false brethren. Until the member being dismissed is actually received into another church, he does not cease to be a member of this church.⁵
- If a member be providentially called away for a time, letters of commendation should be sent to the church wherein they shall temporarily attend, (the inverse of Section 4. above) and shall be sufficient for communion with that church in the ordinances and in their watch and care, just as Phoebe, a servant of the church at Cenckrea, had letters written for her to the church of Rome that she might be received.⁶

C. Dissolvment of Associate Membership

Reason/procedure: A person is automatically dissolved from their associate membership of the church when he is finished with his “temporary assignment”, and they are immediately entrusted back to the care of his home church. Communication between the two churches will vary from case to case and unity is to be pursued and honor given regarding both churches and their constituting documents.

D. Exclusion

Reason: A person is removed from the membership of the church by means of exclusion when he has, by his own actions, willfully deserted and schismatically separated himself from the communion of the church, contrary to all rule and order, and has therefore broken all bonds of love, despite being warned in love. Because the act of exclusion by the church is the just and necessary consequence of the person rending himself from the communion of the church in a sinful manner, it necessarily and self-evidently carries with it the formality of an excommunication. Such a person who cuts himself off from his standing in the church thereby destroys the credibility of his profession of faith (2LBCF 26.2) and is thus removed by means of discipline, becoming, by reason of his own actions, a *self-excommunicant*.⁷

⁵ Luke 15.4

⁶ Rom 16:1.

⁷ Jude 19; Rom 16:17; 1 Cor 1:10; Heb 10:22-25; 12:15.

Procedure: Exclusion is considered a *mixed excommunication*, insofar as it formally consists of the person's own actions, in willfully and destructively deserting and schismatically separating himself from the communion of the church, and the church's just and consequent act in excluding him and casting him out of the church. Therefore, with the consent of the brethren (by three-fourths vote), the elders shall declare that such a person is excluded, having self-evidently cut himself off from the communion of the church. He is now judged and regarded a non-member, so that he may no longer commune with the church in the special ordinances of the gospel until due satisfaction of his repentance is given by him, an end to which the covenanted body ought to pray for.

E. Excommunication

Reason: As the last step in the discipline process, a person is sorrowfully removed from the membership of the church by means of excommunication when he 1) teaches or insists on holding to false and heretical doctrine, 2) persistently conducts himself in a manner inconsistent with his Christian profession, or 3) persists in disturbing the unity or peace of the church. A member may be excommunicated for either public offenses and scandalous sins or for more private offenses that he shamelessly persisted in after due admonishments to bring him to repentance.⁸ Such a person is cut off from his standing in the church, destroys the credibility of his profession of faith, and is thereby mournfully removed by means of discipline as an excommunicant (2LBCF 26.2).⁹

Procedure: The elders shall recommend to the congregation, at a regular or specially called business meeting of the church, that the offender be excommunicated according to the rule of Christ in the Scripture,¹⁰ by an action of the whole church,¹¹ the brethren acting in agreement (by three-fourths vote) with the elders whereupon the elders shall declare that such a person is excommunicated and is now judged a non-member, so that he may no longer communicate with the church in the special ordinances of the gospel until due satisfaction of his repentance is given by him, an end to which the covenanted body ought to pray for.

ARTICLE VI: CHURCH DISCIPLINE

Section 1. Formative Discipline

Every disciple of Christ must be under His discipline (His instruction and correction), which is administered to each one through the church.¹² Mutual submission to one another and to the elders whom the Lord has set over his church will, by his appointment and grace, result

⁸ Matt 18:15-20; Jude 22-23.

⁹ 1 Cor 5; Matt 18:15-18.

¹⁰ Matt 18:17; 1 Cor 5:13.

¹¹ The 'whole church' refers to the church 'organic,' that is, the brethren and the elders together.

¹² 1 Cor 12:12-27.

in the sanctification of each member individually and of the whole body collectively.¹³ There are occasions, however, when failure in the application of this formative discipline makes the application of corrective discipline necessary.

Section 2. Corrective Discipline

In all matters of corrective church discipline, when members become aware of the offense and the disciplinary action being brought against the unrepentant member, the members are expected, without exception, to hold the knowledge with integrity, avoiding gossip and the defamation of character.¹⁴ Church disciplinary matters are internal affairs and must not be paraded before the world lest we should be guilty of giving what is holy to dogs and casting pearls before swine.¹⁵ The church in this respect (as well as in others) is to be “a garden enclosed, a spring shut up, a fountain sealed.”¹⁶ Nevertheless, this care for integrity of knowledge does not release the church from its legal responsibility to report criminal activity to the civil magistrate.

Corrective discipline aims at the glory of God in the church, the restoration and reformation of an erring member,¹⁷ the purity of the church,¹⁸ the further edification of the church in mourning for sin and fearing God,¹⁹ and the conviction of the world under sin before a righteous God.²⁰ Corrective discipline becomes necessary when heretical doctrine or disorderly or scandalous conduct appears among the members of the church. Whenever possible, efforts must be made to gain your brother, attempting to resolve difficulty, correct error, and remove offense through counsel and admonition.²¹ When admonition is not heeded, one of the following means of corrective discipline may need to be applied.

A. Suspension with Admonition

- Any conduct on the part of a member which disturbs the peace of the church or prejudices its testimony may require that the offending brother or sister be prohibited from participating in the special ordinances of the church for a time. Suspensions shall be administered with a due public admonition; that is a faithful endeavor to convict a person of his fault as to matter of fact and circumstance, as well as his duty, charging it upon his conscience in the name of the Lord Jesus with all wisdom, authority, and meekness.²² While a member is under such discipline, he

¹³ Eph 5:21; 1 Pet 5:5.

¹⁴ Eph 4:31-32; Jas 4:11.

¹⁵ Matt 7:1-6.

¹⁶ Song 4:12.

¹⁷ 2 Cor 2:5-8.

¹⁸ 1 Cor 5:6-8.

¹⁹ Matt 5:4; Deut 19:20; Acts 5:11; 2 Cor 7:11; 1 Tim 5:20.

²⁰ Matt 5:13-16; Acts 5:13; 1 Pet 2:11-12.

²¹ Gal 6:1; Jas 5:19-20; Matt 18:15-17.

²² Gal 6:1; 2 Tim 2:25-26; Titus 2:15.

shall be treated by the congregation according to the directions given in 2 Thessalonians 3:6-15. Although such a person is considered to be walking disorderly, he must still be regarded as a member and not as one cut off from the church. In all cases of suspension, the offending member shall be dealt with through the further proceedings of the church either by being cast out of the membership through further discipline or restored to the church through repentance. The intention of suspension is never to leave one in a state of suspension but rather to see it joyfully end in either in restoration or sadly end in excommunication. The church shall wholly and happily forgive and publicly receive back into full communion those who humbly submit to the imposed discipline and bear fruits worthy of repentance.

- If a member has sinned publicly, even when he shows hopeful signs of repentance, including submission to the admonition of the elders and brethren, it may still be necessary to suspend him for a time from some of the privileges of membership lest reproach be brought upon the church, lest others be emboldened to sin, and lest the offender himself fail to test his own soul and realize the gravity of his offense.
- If a member is accused of sin or absences himself from the congregation, obstinately refusing to meet with the elders that the matter may be investigated, he shall be suspended from the membership and such suspension shall continue until dealt with in the further proceedings of the church.

B. Excommunication

- In all such cases wherein a member is accused of 1) teaching or insisting on holding to false and heretical doctrine 2) persistently conducting himself in a manner inconsistent with his Christian profession, or 3) persisting in disturbing the unity or peace of the church, after appropriate efforts have been made to bring him to repentance, the elders shall recommend that the offending member be excommunicated.²³ In order to fulfill the scriptural requirements for a majority²⁴ and to protect the privileges and liberties of the minority, in accordance with the light of nature and Christian prudence (2LBCF 1.6), a three-fourths majority of the members present and voting shall be required in order for the sentence of excommunication to be pronounced.
- The Lord Jesus Christ promises to be present with and to speak through His gathered church,²⁵ gathering in His name, with His presence and power to hear, to judge, and to speak according to the mind of Christ concerning an erring member and his membership in the visible kingdom of God. The judgment that is rendered is

²³ Matt 18:17; 1 Cor 5:13.

²⁴ 2 Cor 2:6.

²⁵ Matt 18:15-20; 1 Cor 5:4.

an act of the Lord Jesus Christ, exercising His power through the whole church, the brethren acting in agreement with the elders.

- The elders shall communicate to the brethren the nature of the person's sin and impenitence, according to matter of fact and circumstance, in order to consider not whether we think or feel that he be a Christian, which only God knows with certainty, but whether the person's present sinful conduct and/or confession be inconsistent with a Christian profession, which may be known and measured according to the rule of Christ in his Word.²⁶
- The judgment of excommunication is an act whereby the erring member is cast out of the visible kingdom of Christ, totally separated from the privileges of the church and delivered over to the visible kingdom of Satan. He is bound in the guilt of the sin that destroyed the credibility of his profession, such that the guilt of his conscience is not to be loosed by any, nor may the credibility of his profession be reaffirmed and restored by any, except by the further proceeding of the church in which he was excommunicated (so long as it was performed biblically), by reason of his repentance and restoration. This also may be known and measured according to the rule of Christ in his Word.²⁷ Until such repentance is made evident to the church, what is bound on earth remains bound in heaven; for the sake of conscience, his and ours, he is to be regarded and related to as a heathen and a tax collector.²⁸ Unto the end that he sincerely desire to be loosed from the guilt of his conscience and have the credibility and confidence of his own Christian profession restored, perhaps God in heaven may grant him repentance unto life (2LBCF 15.2),²⁹ an end to which the covenanted body ought to pray for.

Section 3. Restoration

The goal and desire in any discipline case ought to be restoration. It is the duty of the church to forgive and restore to full communion a disciplined person who gives evidence of his repentance and reformation.³⁰ This shall be done on the recommendation of the elders and with the agreement of the brethren, either by announcement, in cases of suspension, or by vote (three-fourths) of the members in cases of excommunication and exclusion. In all such cases, a reconciled and restored member should be received with meekness, removing all discouragement,³¹ with compassion, using all means of consolation,³² with

²⁶ Matt 7:15-20; 18:6-7; 31-34; John 15:2, 6; 1 Cor 5:11-13.

²⁷ 2 Cor 7.

²⁸ This phrase, found in Matthew 18:17, contains two interrelated aspects. First, the offender is likened to a heathen, which signifies that the person is outside the community of God's blessing and grace. Second, the offender is likened to a tax collector, which signifies that the person is untrustworthy and, therefore, is of such character that he is potentially harmful to the body of the church.

²⁹ Matt 16:19; 18:17-18; 1 Cor 5:5; 1 Tim 1:20; 2 Tim 2:25; Acts 11:18.

³⁰ 2 Cor 2:6-8.

³¹ Gal 6:1.

³² 2 Cor 2:7.

charity, restoring the bonds of love,³³ and with joy, praising God and rejoicing that the ordinance of Christ has achieved its intended end.³⁴

Section 4. Protection

While this church has no authority to exercise discipline over non-members, it does have the right and responsibility to protect its members from those who would disrupt its peace and the purity of its life and doctrine.³⁵ If and when such persons should trouble this church, the elders shall name them, identify their errors, and warn the members not to associate with them.³⁶

ARTICLE VII: CHURCH ORDINANCES

There are two sacraments of special significance which our Lord has commanded us to observe, namely, Baptism and the Lord's Supper.³⁷ These are most holy ordinances and should be observed with solemnity and dignity.³⁸

Section 1. Baptism

Baptism is the initiatory ordinance by which a new believer enters the visible church upon a credible profession of faith and therefore should only be observed once.³⁹

Believers are baptized into Christ and His body,⁴⁰ therefore it is inappropriate to baptize someone who isn't in the process of becoming a church member or is convictionally against church membership as baptism and church membership go together.⁴¹

Section 2. Lord's Supper

The Lord's Supper has been given to the church for the spiritual nourishment and edification of its members and therefore it may be observed by all members of good standing in a particular visible church; it should be celebrated frequently, even weekly if possible, as the church assembles on the first day of the week, the Lord's Day.⁴²

Members in good standing of CCC, members in good standing from other Bible-believing/gospel preaching local churches, and those in the process of joining the membership of CCC are welcomed to the Table so long as they have a credible profession of faith and have been baptized.

³³ 2 Cor 2:8; Col 3:14.

³⁴ Matt 18:13.

³⁵ Titus 1:9-11.

³⁶ Matt 7:6; Rom 16:17.

³⁷ Matt 28:18-20; 1 Cor 11:23-26.

³⁸ 1 Pet 3:21; 1 Cor 11:27-34.

³⁹ Matt 3:6; Mark 16:16; Acts 2:38, 41; 8:12; 18:8; 1 Pet 3:21.

⁴⁰ 1 Cor 12:13

⁴¹ Acts 2:41

⁴² 1 Cor 11:26; Acts 2:42; 20:7; Matt 18:20.

ARTICLE VIII: CHURCH OFFICERS

Section 1. Two Offices

Jesus Christ alone is head of the Church, and He governs His church through officers whom He appoints and who are endowed by His Spirit with the gifts and graces needed to accomplish their work.⁴³ Officers in the church are of two kinds, elders (also called “bishops” and “pastors”) and deacons.⁴⁴ It is the duty of the church to seek to discover among its members (with prayer and fasting) those to whom Christ the Lord has imparted the necessary gifts and graces pertaining to these offices and, after formally recognizing them by congregational vote, to set them apart.⁴⁵

Section 2. Elders

The Scripture indicates that a plurality of elders in the local church is ideal.⁴⁶ Elders are also called “bishops” (meaning overseers) because they are charged with the oversight of the assembly and “pastors and teachers” because they are given to the church “for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of ministering, for the building up of the body of Christ.”⁴⁷

A. Elder Qualifications

Any man holding the office of elder must possess the necessary gifts and graces clearly set forth in Scripture, especially in 1 Timothy 3:1-7 and Titus 1:5-9. Any man thus called to this office must be able to affirm his agreement with the Confession and the Constitution of this church. Should he at any time move from this position, he is under spiritual and moral obligation to make this fact known to the church.⁴⁸

B. Elder Authority

The authority belonging to the office of elder is given immediately by Christ, who is the Head of the church.⁴⁹ While this particular authority is not granted to the brethren, and is reserved wholly to the elders by way of office, all authority in the church is ministerial, consisting in an authoritative declaration and application of the Word of Christ unto the souls of men.⁵⁰ The sole end of all ministerial authority in the church is the edification of itself in love.⁵¹ The Lord Jesus Christ has granted to the elders of this church the authority for the peculiar administration of ordinances and the execution of certain duties (2LBCF

⁴³ Eph 4:7, 11.

⁴⁴ Phil 1:1.

⁴⁵ Acts 6:1-7; 14:23

⁴⁶ Acts 14:23.

⁴⁷ Acts 20:17, 28; 1 Pet 5:1; Eph 4:11-12.

⁴⁸ 1 Tim 4:16.

⁴⁹ Acts 20:28.

⁵⁰ 2 Cor 4:5.

⁵¹ Rom 15:1-3; 2 Cor 10:8; 13:10; Eph 4:14-15.

26.8): to exercise the keys in the preaching of the Word and in the administration of the sacraments;⁵² to call the church to assemble together;⁵³ to examine potential members and officers;⁵⁴ to ordain officers whom the brethren have chosen;⁵⁵ to open and close the door of speech in church meetings;⁵⁶ to receive accusations, prepare matters beforehand, and declare God's mind in handling offenses and pronouncing censures before the church;⁵⁷ to bless the people with a benediction;⁵⁸ to minister privately to the saints;⁵⁹ to oversee the diaconal needs of the church;⁶⁰ and to represent this church in associational matters.⁶¹

C. Elder Responsibilities

Elders are responsible for the oversight of the church including, but not limited to, the following: the church's doctrine, worship, order, discipline, finances, outreach, and the spiritual welfare of its members. Although they are equal in office, and while every elder should be able to teach, some may be more engaged in formal and public teaching while others may be more engaged in private teaching and admonishing or in the governance of the church.⁶² In light of the fact that the responsibilities of this office are numerous and grave, it is highly desirable that at least one elder should fully devote his time to the work of the ministry and the oversight of the church.

D. Elder Support

The church is responsible to give adequate financial support to these elders that especially labor in the Word and doctrine.⁶³

E. Elder Assistance

The elders have the right to appoint all committees and directors of church activities at their discretion for the orderly functioning of the church. These in turn shall be responsible to the elders.⁶⁴ Moreover, although the preaching of the word belongs to the elders of the church by way of office, it is not so peculiarly confined to them, so that others also gifted and fitted by the Holy Spirit, being tested and approved by the church, may and ought to participate in it as able. These men that are recognized as "gifted brothers" do not hold any office in the church or possess any authority by way of office, but do exercise their gifts

⁵² Matt 16:18-19; Mark 6:7-13; Luke 9:1-6; Acts 2:42; 20:28; 2 Tim 4:2.

⁵³ Acts 6:2; 14:27.

⁵⁴ Acts 9:27; 1 Tim 3:1-13; Titus 1:5-9; Rev 2:2.

⁵⁵ Acts 6:6; 14:23; 1 Tim 4:14.

⁵⁶ Acts 15:12-13.

⁵⁷ Acts 9:26-27; 21:18-23a; 1 Cor 5:3; 1 Tim 5:20; 2 Tim 4:2; Titus 1:10-11; 2:15.

⁵⁸ Num 6:22-27; Heb 7:7.

⁵⁹ Mark 1:29; 4:10, 34; Acts 20:20; 8:14-17; 9:32-43.

⁶⁰ 1 Cor 16:1-2.

⁶¹ Acts 15:2-3.

⁶² 1 Tim 5:17; Heb 13:17.

⁶³ Matt 10:10; Luke 10:7; 1 Cor 9:14; 1 Tim 5:17-18.

⁶⁴ 1 Cor 14:40.

under the direction, guidance, and authority of the elders (2LBCF 26.11).⁶⁵ The elders, in agreement with the brethren (by three-fourths vote), may recognize a gifted-brother during a corporate Sunday gathering and have the gifted brother take the appropriate vows in their hearing.

F. Calling

The church should endeavor to discover from among its members and then formally recognize all the men (and only such men) whom the Holy Spirit has endowed with the requisite gifts and graces to be set over the church. It is also free to call qualified men from outside the local congregation to come into its midst and serve in this office. When a man has been judged fit and called to this office, the church will have the confidence that it has recognized an overseer whom the Holy Spirit has set over it. Neither the number of elders nor the length of their term of office can be fixed by the church.

G. Discipline

While elders are overseers of the flock, they are also members of the same flock. Therefore, each elder is under the oversight of his fellow elders and is subject to the same discipline, as are all the members of the church according to the manner of Christ's rule in 1 Timothy 5.⁶⁶

Section 3. Deacons

A. Responsibilities

Deacons are men called forth by the church in order to serve tables, the table of the poor, the Lord's table, and the minister's table.⁶⁷ In cooperation with and in subjection to the elders, the deacons are to be entrusted with the outward and material resources of the church, out of which they are to assist those members who are in need, prepare the bread and cup for the Lord's table, and provide for the pastors of the church in such a way that enables them to devote themselves to prayer, to the Word, and to hospitality. Moreover, they should see to it that all the members of the church do contribute towards these needs from out of their own resources and according to their ability, so that all of the needs of body may be met and none be neglected.⁶⁸ By the faithful discharge of this office, a deacon shall obtain a good standing and great boldness in the faith.⁶⁹

B. Qualifications

Any man holding the office of deacon must possess the necessary gifts and graces clearly set forth in Scripture, especially in Acts 6:3 and 1 Timothy 3:8-13. Any man thus called to this office must be able to affirm his agreement with the Confession and the Constitution

⁶⁵ Rom 12:3-8; 1 Pet 4:10-11.

⁶⁶ 1 Tim 5:1, 19-20.

⁶⁷ Acts 6:1-4.

⁶⁸ 1 Cor 16:2; 2 Cor 9:7; 1 Tim 6:17-19.

⁶⁹ 1 Tim 3:13.

of this church. Should he at any time move from this position, he is under spiritual and moral obligation to make this fact known to the church.⁷⁰

C. Calling

The church should endeavor to discover from among its members and then formally recognize all the men (and only such men) whom the Holy Spirit has endowed with the requisite gifts and graces to be called as a deacon. When a man has been judged fit and called to this office, the church will have the confidence that it has recognized a servant whom the Holy Spirit has given to it. Neither the number of deacons nor the length of their term of office can be fixed by the church.⁷¹

Section 4. Appointment & Removal of Officers

A. Responsibility

No man may take the honor of a church office upon himself, only those that are called by Christ, being gifted and fitted by His Spirit.⁷² The whole church has the privilege and responsibility to choose and call its own officers in recognition and confirmation of being gifted and fitted by Christ. The whole church also has the liberty to remove its officers.⁷³

B. Gravity

The calling of an officer is of such gravity that it should be accompanied by much prayerful waiting on God for guidance, a careful examination of the relevant passages of Scripture, and a dispassionate evaluation of each man formally recommended to a particular office. Every member of the church has an interest and responsibility in seeking the mind of Christ in these matters pertaining to the order and government of the church.

C. Recommendation by the Elders

The elders may ask the congregation's help in seeking out qualified men for these offices. The elders alone may at any time during the year formally recommend a candidate to either office and call a special congregational business meeting for their consideration. If there be no elders in the church to bring the recommendation(s), the brethren, at any properly convened congregational meeting, have the liberty to determine the best means to search for and elect a qualified man to the office of elder. In this case, the church should also seek counsel from churches with whom it associates. In no case may a man be formally recommended to either office without his knowledge and prior consent.⁷⁴

D. Election by the Brethren

⁷⁰ 1 Tim 4:16.

⁷¹ Acts 6:1-7.

⁷² Heb 5:4.

⁷³ Acts 20:29-31; 3 John 10.

⁷⁴ Acts 1:23; 6:1-4; 14:23.

After a period of examination, when the time comes to consider a formal recommendation during a QFM of the church, the candidate for office and any members of his immediate family who are present shall be requested to leave the room while his qualifications are openly discussed by the entire congregation in the fear of God and in the light of the Scripture. After that a vote shall be taken (2LBCF 26.9).⁷⁵ Ideally, the vote of the congregation will in such matters be unanimous, but if unanimity is not realized, no less than three-fourths majority of the members present and voting shall be required for the election of any officer.

E. Installation and Ordination

Following the election of an officer, he shall be publicly installed in his office at a regular worship service by the prayer and fasting of the whole church and the laying on of hands of the existing elders (2LBCF 26.9).⁷⁶ If there be no existing elders, ordained ministers of other churches, with whom this church formally associates, may and ought to be invited to participate in the laying on of hands.

F. Removal without Prejudice

An officer may step down from his office without prejudice if for just and weighty reasons he finds he is no longer able to discharge the duties of it and he obtains the concurrence of the elders together with the brethren (by three-fourths vote). An officer may also be removed without prejudice if he obtains the church's dismissal by commendation.

G. Removal under Corrective Discipline

An elder or deacon that is placed under suspension shall be suspended from the duties pertaining to his office until the matter of his discipline is resolved. If the matter of discipline is resolved in his excommunication, he shall thereby be automatically removed from office. If the matter of discipline is resolved in his restoration to full communion, he may resume his duties without prejudice, unless the elders believe he has disqualified himself from office and is subsequently removed from office with the concurrence of three-fourths majority of the members present and voting. Should it become necessary to remove a paid elder, his compensation may continue for a time at the discretion of the church.

ARTICLE IX: CHURCH ASSOCIATIONS

Section 1. Membership

One special type of fellowship and cooperation with other churches is formal membership in an association of churches. When it is thought to be desirable, and upon the

⁷⁵ Acts 1:23; 6:2-6; 14:23; 15:22, 25, 28.

⁷⁶ Acts 6:6; 13:3; 1 Tim 4:14; 5:22.

recommendation of the elders and concurrence with the brethren (by three-fourths vote), this church may join itself to an association(s) of churches.⁷⁷

Section 2. Purpose

The purposes in joining an association of churches are: mutual edification, cooperative efforts in spreading the gospel, accountability, providing an avenue whereby grievances may be addressed, and reciprocal counsel. No association shall have any authority or power over this church.

Section 3. Representatives

Delegates to such associations shall be chosen by the eldership of the church with the elders taking the general oversight of all delegates and business matters.

Any positions to be held by the delegates shall reflect the views of the church, as led by the eldership, and be constantly maintained in any prospective voting.

ARTICLE X: QUARTERLY FAMILY MEETINGS (QFM)

Section 1. Frequency & Purpose

In addition to weekly gatherings on the Lord's Day (Sunday) for corporate worship, the church will endeavor to hold four business meetings throughout each year, one at the end of each quarter (typically March, June, September, December). These meetings will be conducted as a service on the Lord's Day and the specific dates are to be decided by the elders. The purpose of these meetings will be to give an accounting for and a review of the previous year, fulfill our state's nonprofit corporation requirements, address our current financial situation, set goals for the coming months, hear testimony from new members, conduct business matters that call for a vote, allow for questioning/engagement from the congregation, and any other matters like these the elders deem wise and necessary.

Section 2. Special Meetings

In the case of unusual circumstances, a church meeting may be called by the elders with a one-week notice. In such cases, the elders will make every reasonable attempt to notify all members of such a meeting. All members should make reasonable efforts to be present.

Section 3. Chairmanship

Any elder shall preside at all business meetings. In the event that there are no elders, a designated deacon may preside.

ARTICLE XI: FINANCES

Section 1. Giving

⁷⁷ Acts 15:22; II Corinthians 8:19

All church funds shall be raised only by direct freewill offerings. It shall be the duty of every member to give in a systematic manner, whether in-person or online.

Section 2. Specific Ministries

Ministries within the church may raise funds by other means only when approved by the elders.

Section 3. Auditing

An internal audit by a member within the church (who is not an officer or treasurer) shall be asked to review the financial records of the church no less than once every three years.

Section 4. Fiscal Year

The fiscal year of the church shall begin on May 1st and end on April 30th of the following year. All facets of the church shall correspond to that of the church's fiscal year.

Section 5. Budget

The proposed budget from the elders will be presented at the first QFM of each year (typically in March). The elders will seek concurrence (by three-fourths vote) from the membership regarding the proposed budget.

Section 6. Budget Reports

Budget reports will be sent periodically throughout the year via email to the entire membership in addition to being on the agenda at each QFM. The elders are responsible for oversight of the budget but may choose to delegate particular operations to individuals, such as a treasurer, as Article VIII.E allows.

ARTICLE XII: CHURCH ADMINISTRATION

Section 1. Quorum

At least twenty qualified voting members are required to reach quorum. This quorum is required in all official church meetings where congregational voting is called upon.

Section 2. Voting Majority

A vote is considered approved so long as at least three-fourths of the qualified members vote in favor. All voting matters require a three-fourths majority unless otherwise signified.

Section 3. Voting Procedure & Logistics

The procedure for congregational decisions that call for a vote is to be determined by the elders and may vary from case to case. For instance, the elders may determine if verbal affirmation or private ballots are most appropriate, whether to vote during corporate worship or at a QFM, and any other logistical matters that may arise.

Section 4. The Responsibility of Unity and Peace

Assuming a vote passes (irrespective of the particular vote), any member who voted in opposition to the three-fourths majority is expected to conduct themselves with integrity always looking to celebrate the unity of the church and joyfully submit to her governance.⁷⁸

ARTICLE XIII: MARRIAGE & SEXUAL IMMORALITY

We believe that God has created marriage to be exclusively the union of one man and one woman, and it is the duty of every member to abstain from sexual activity that is not exclusively within that union. We believe that any form of homosexuality, lesbianism, bisexuality, bestiality, incest, fornication, adultery, and pornography are sinful perversions of God's gift of sex. We believe that God disapproves of and forbids any attempt or intent to alter one's gender by any means. The church and her members will only recognize marriages between a biological man and a biological woman. Further, the officers and staff of the church shall only participate in the solemnization of marriages between one biological man and one biological woman. Likewise, the facilities and property of the church shall only be used for activities and events that accord with our Confession of Faith and our Constitution.⁷⁹

ARTICLE XIV: INCORPORATION IN THE STATE OF ILLINOIS

In order to "render unto Caesar the things that are Caesar's," it is necessary that this church be incorporated under the laws of the State of Illinois. All matters related to our corporate identity before the state shall be expressed in this document.

ARTICLE XV: AMENDMENT

This constitution may be amended or revised at any quarterly family meeting (QFM), by the vote of three-fourths majority of the qualified voting members, provided public notice has been given one month previous to the meeting.

ARTICLE XVI: DISSOLUTION

No donor, member, officer of the church, or private individual shall be entitled to share in the distribution of any assets of the church upon dissolution.

In the event of dissolution, all assets of the church shall be distributed for one or more exempt purposes within the meaning of Internal Revenue Code 501(c)(3), or the

⁷⁸ 2 Cor 13:11

⁷⁹ Gen 2:24; 26:8-10; Lev 18:1-30; Rom 1:26-29; 1 Cor 5:1; 1 Cor 6:9; 1 Thess 4:1-8; Heb 13:4.

corresponding section of any future federal tax code, provided such tax code does not conflict with Article II or Article XIII of this Constitution. These assets should be given to another institution or church of like faith and practice, one that subscribes to the London Baptist Confession of Faith of 1689 or similar theological conviction.