

CONSTITUTION

CHRIST CHURCH , NORTH CAROLINA

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PREAMBLE

In submission to Scripture, we confess the purpose of our church is to glorify God through reverent worship, proclaiming Christ to sinners, and building up our members through preaching the whole counsel of God and observing Christ's sacraments. To these ends, we establish the following constitution, seeking to avoid any forms that might encourage the unbelieving fragmentations so conducive to the modern mind.

Members and Electors

Membership is normally reckoned by household. A household in our geographical region is eligible when the head of that household has been lawfully baptized in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit (Matt. 28:19) and does not contradict his profession through his manner of life (Matt. 7:22-23). Membership begins when the covenant membership vows have been taken (Philemon 2; Heb. 13:7, 17). The elders oversee a membership list, which must include names, baptisms, and communicant status. As circumstances require, individuals may join the church. Our membership vows are:

“Do you acknowledge yourself to be a sinner in need of salvation by Christ, and do you believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, receiving and resting upon Him alone as He is offered in the gospel?” “Have you been baptized in accordance with His Word?” “Do you swear in the name of God, in humble reliance upon the grace of the Holy Spirit, to live in a way that becomes followers of Christ?” “Do you swear in the name of God to support the ministry of this church in its worship and work, submitting to its government and discipline, while pursuing its purity and peace?”

When the vows are presented to the head of a household, he will also be asked if he speaks on behalf of his household. When these vows are taken, the congregation will respond with “*A men*” when they are asked:

“As a congregation of Christ, do you receive [this Christian/these Christians] into the covenant fellowship of this local church together with you, renewing your membership vows as you do so?”

Individuals may be received into non-voting membership. In special cases, individuals may come under our pastoral care without coming into full membership.

Release or Transfer of Membership

If any member requests to be released to the care of another Christian church, the elders will normally release him with a blessing. If any member requests to be released because of disciplinary proceedings against him or someone in his household, the elders will delay acting on the request until the disciplinary matter is resolved. If members move from our geographical area, they are charged to find a new church home within six months. This time may be extended at the elders' discretion. After this time is expired, they are released from membership.

Communicant Members

Under the headship of Christ, the responsibility for administering the sacraments remains with the elders, who nevertheless respect the pastoral responsibilities of the head of each household. Members of households who have not been baptized are recognized by the elders to be non-communicant members of member households. Members of households who have been baptized and have come to the Lord's Table are communicant members of member households. When an un-baptized child comes to faith in the Lord, the parents will notify the elders to arrange for a baptism, after which the child will come to the Lord's Table. Any baptized child may partake of the Lord's Table, provided the parents instruct the child at each observation of the Supper, and the child can heed the instruction.

Electors

Those members who vote in church elections are called electors. Electors are the heads of member households. Independent unmarried members are considered as a household for purposes of voting. Electors may vote in the elections of elders and deacons. The elders will qualify electors. Three weeks prior to any church election, a ballot will be provided. Elections will be conducted at appropriate times set by the elders. The congregation will hold a monthly meeting of heads of member households, either church-wide or at the parish level, where the elders and deacons may receive input from the heads of households.

Selection of Elders and Deacons

The elders will examine any potential candidate with regard to his doctrine and manner of life. If the candidate has any disagreement or mental reservation about any portion of the church's Confession of Faith or this constitution, he must inform the elders of it. All candidates must meet the qualifications for the office set down in Scripture (1 Tim. 3:1-7; Tit. 1:5-9; 1 Pet. 5:2-4; 1 Tim. 3:8-13). Nominations are approved with unanimous consent of the elders.

Once nominated, the candidate for ruling elder or teacher will work through a short course of training on eldership under the oversight of the minister. His name will then be placed on a ballot sent to all electors. Each ballot will provide the option of voting *yes*, *no* or *abstain*. If the candidate receives the unanimous support of the church (Phil. 2:1-4), the elders will ordain him through laying on hands and prayer. The requirement for congregational unanimity may only be set aside by the

unanimous consent of the elders, and only if they have determined that the objections are unscriptural or unwarranted.

Once nominated, the candidate for deacon will be included by the deacons in their work in order to prove his fitness for office (1 Tim. 3:10). When in their unanimous judgment, the candidate has shown this, the deacons will make a recommendation to the elders to place his name on the ballot. If, in the unanimous judgment of the elders, the candidate receives the clear and obvious support of the church as represented, the elders will ordain him through laying on of hands and prayer (Acts 6:6).

When ordained, the elder or deacon will vow:

“As God is my witness, I solemnly vow that I will serve this church faithfully as a servant of Christ, and will maintain godly order in my life and my household as the Word of God requires.”

Once ordained, the elder or deacon will serve for life, unless he resigns or is removed.

Duties of Church Officers

Duties of Elders

Under Christ, the authority of the local church is the board of elders or presbyters in session. The elders are collectively responsible for ruling/shepherding (1 Pet. 5:1-2); equipping (Eph. 4:11-12); prayer/fasting (Acts 6:4; 13:1-3); teaching/preaching (1 Tim. 5:17); administering baptism and the Lord's Table (Matt. 28:19-20; 1 Cor. 11:23-26); administering church discipline and restoration (1 Cor. 5:1-5), and visiting the sick (Jas. 5:14-15).

The elders are responsible to delegate responsibilities to the deacons, hire and fire church staff, define responsibilities for church staff, delegate responsibilities to the staff of subordinate ministries, and approve the annual budget. The elders also commission or license ministerial students, and oversee the course of their training for the eldership. Under the guidance and oversight of the elders, such men may perform all the various ministerial functions of elders, participation in the rule of the church excepted.

Elder business will be conducted at the weekly meeting or at special meetings called for the purpose. The elders will rotate the responsibility of chairing meetings, and will appoint a secretary to record minutes. Individual elders are responsible for those duties delegated to them by the elders in session, as recorded in the minutes, with due regard to their gifts, abilities, and desires.

The session contains three distinct callings or offices. The first is called to a pastoral ministry of the Word, and called by us a *minister* or *pastor* (Eph. 4:11-12; 1 Pet. 5:2-4; 1 Tim. 5:17). A second is called to a didactic ministry of the Word, called by us a *teacher* or *doctor* (1 Cor. 12:28 ; James 3:1). A third is called to government and rule according to the Word, called by us a *ruler* or *ruling elder* (1 Tim. 5:17 ; 1 Thess. 5:12 -13; Heb. 13:7,17; Rom. 12:8; 1 Cor. 12:28), which function is shared by all elders. Each elder will have his calling and office acknowledged by the elders in session. In all meetings of the session of presbyters, each elder has one vote.

Elders whose assigned duties preclude them from providing for their families in the ordinary way will be compensated by the church (1 Tim. 5:17 -18).

Duties of Deacons

Under the general oversight of the elders, the deacons manage the financial, physical, social, and benevolent functions of the church (Acts 6:2-4). Such responsibilities include preparing and administering the annual budget, building maintenance, deacon's fund, fellowship meals, administrative review of subordinate ministries, preparation of communion elements, and office support.

The business of the deacons will be conducted at their regular meeting, or at special meetings called for that purpose. The deacons will appoint a moderator for their meetings. The deacons will give a general report of their work at each heads of household meeting, provide a quarterly financial report to the church, and an annual report to the elders with proposals for the coming year.

Individual deacons are responsible for those duties assigned to them by the deacons, as recorded in the minutes, with due regard to their gifts and desires.

Resignation of Elders or Deacons

If an elder or deacon desires to resign or take a leave of absence, he will present a letter to the elders. At the first appropriate monthly household meeting, the elders will notify the men of the church of their receipt of the letter. If the desire of the elder or deacon concerned is unchanged by the following heads of households meeting, the elders will issue a statement accepting the resignation, or approving the leave of absence. If the resignation is sought for reasons of moral or doctrinal irregularity, the resignation will not be a substitute for any appropriate biblical discipline. Leaves of absence will not be granted as a form of discipline.

Removal of Elders and Deacons

If an elder believes himself to be fit for office, but two or three believers hold that he is unfit, these two or three witnesses should request a special session of the elder board where they would be allowed to present their case (1 Tim. 5:19). If the elders unanimously decide that the case has merit, that elder, depending on the gravity of the charges and his response to the correction, will be rebuked in the presence of the heads of households (1 Tim. 5:20), or will be removed from the office of elder (1 Tim. 3:1-7; Tit. 1:5-9), or both.

Church Discipline

The ordinary course of discipline is informal. Members are encouraged to self-discipline, overlooking the failings of others in love (1 Pet. 4:8), and encouraging other members to covenant faithfulness (Matt. 18:15).

Formal church discipline is applied through the formal action and unanimous judgment of the elders. Except in cases of scandal requiring immediate action, the pattern of church discipline will generally include formal private admonishment by two or three (Matt. 18:16), formal public admonishment and suspension from the Supper (2 Thess. 3:14-15), and a formal hearing which may result in excommunication (Matt. 18:17).

Any communicant member of a member household may be disciplined by the church. Un-baptized members of member households are subject to pastoral admonishment from the church, but not excommunication. Christians who attend church regularly, but are non-members, are subject to pastoral admonishment from the church, but not excommunication. If another church has disciplined one of its members, and that person subsequently comes to our church, the elders will decide whether to honor the discipline of the other church after due consultation with the person

concerned and after all appropriate information is sought from the disciplining church.

The elders shall establish the specific procedures for all formal discipline on a case-by-case basis, as appropriate to the circumstances and individuals involved. However, at minimum these procedures should include a clear and timely warning of the individual that he is in the process of formal discipline, two or three visits or communications involving two or three witnesses, and clear records and/or minutes of the entire proceedings kept by the elders.

When the elders determine that a hearing is necessary, they will establish the specific procedures for each trial on a case-by-case basis, as appropriate to the circumstances and individuals involved. However, at minimum these procedures should include informing the accused in writing of the specific charges, the time, place, and date of the trial, and ample time for the accused to prepare a defense.

The heads of households meeting will be informed of the hearing at the first opportunity. At the hearing, one of the elders will present a solemn charge from the Scriptures on the responsibilities of those present, the evidence against the accused will be presented, and the accused will have time to make a reasonable defense, including the right to question any witnesses.

At a separate meeting of the elders, a vote will be taken on each of the charges. The elders will declare their verdict to the congregation on an appointed Lord's day, following an appropriate exhortation. The accused will be given a written copy of the verdict.

The elders will establish an official file containing all the records pertaining to the hearing, including all pertinent correspondence, transcripts, and minutes. If he requests it, the accused will be given one copy of this file at the expense of the church. Any appeals to presbytery will be conducted in accordance with the Constitution of the Confederation of Reformed Evangelicals.

Excommunication will end when in the unanimous opinion of the elders the one under discipline has repented. A confession of this repentance will be read to the congregation on the Lord's Day, and the elders shall formally announce the end of the discipline and restoration of fellowship.

Subordinate Ministries

The elders may unanimously delegate to an individual or board the executive authority of any subordinate ministry established by the elders. This executive responsibility continues at the pleasure of the elders. In order to dismiss such an individual, or remove someone from such a board, a two-thirds vote of the elders is required. Separation of a subordinate ministry from Christ Church may be authorized by a unanimous vote of the elders. All formal actions concerning subordinate ministries will be entered in the minutes of the elders' meetings.

Incorporation

As a church of the Lord Jesus Christ, Christ Church is not constituted or incorporated by anyone other than the Lord Jesus Christ, the only head of the church. Christ Church maintains its status as an unincorporated church as a matter of conscience. As a church of the Lord Jesus Christ, Christ Church accepts the various burdens and entanglements of civil regulation and taxation under protest. Christ Church has constituted herself, under the authority and headship of the Lord Jesus Christ, as an association of natural persons, and recognized as such by the laws of the State of Idaho .

Affiliation

Christ Church , North Carolina is a daughter church (a mission work) of Christ Church , Moscow , Idaho .

Amendments

The Christ Church Confession of Faith and Constitution may be amended through unanimous consent of the elders when there is a first presentation of the proposed change at the heads of households meeting, a written copy of the proposed change is made available to the congregation at church, and the elders seek due consultation with the heads of households of the church at a subsequent monthly heads of households meeting.

We confess that this constitution is a fallible work of fallible men and, if obedience to Scripture requires it, may be set aside without the process of amendment by the unanimous judgment of the elders. Under such circumstances, the heads of households will be informed, and the constitution amended at the first opportunity.