

*Christ Covenant Church*  
*A mission church of Trinity Church*

*Bylaws*

CHRIST COVENANT CHURCH
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## **Preamble**

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. Convinced that Jesus Christ, the Head of the church, will protect and guide her, we seek to obey Scripture through the following standards for the orderly and scriptural government of our church, Christ Covenant 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 the Statement of Faith.

In submission to Scripture, we confess the purpose of our church is to glorify God through reverent worship, building up our members through preaching the whole counsel of God, observing Christ's sacraments, and proclaiming Christ to the world.

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 (Ps. 133; Eph. 4:3,13).

Christ Covenant Church is being established under these bylaws as a mission church of Trinity Church, Woodinville, WA. For more information about what constitutes a mission church in the CREC, see the CREC Constitution, Art. III.E.2-3.

## **Article I. GOVERNING STATEMENTS**

### **A. STATEMENT OF FAITH**

The following statement of faith is not intended to define our boundaries of fellowship. Some Christians will certainly differ with some of what is set forth here. Such Christians are nevertheless welcome to fellowship together with us. Our basis for fellowship is a biblical confession of the lordship of Jesus Christ, and the absence of a scandalous lifestyle.

This statement of faith does represent the doctrinal understanding of the leadership of Christ Covenant Church and it is our intention that the teaching and preaching at Christ Covenant Church reflect this understanding. Procedural standards for our church government can be found in our Constitution.

#### **1. Creedal Statements (*The Reformed Evangelical Confession*)**

##### *a) The Apostles' Creed (2nd century)*

I/We believe in God the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth. And in Jesus Christ, His only Son, our Lord; who was conceived by the Holy Ghost, born of the virgin, Mary; suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, dead, and buried; He descended into Hades; the third day He rose from the dead; He ascended into Heaven; and sits at the right hand of God the Father Almighty; from thence He shall come to judge the living and the dead. I/We believe in the Holy Ghost; the holy catholic church; the communion of saints; the forgiveness of sins; the resurrection of the body; and the life everlasting. Amen.

##### *b) Nicene Creed; Constantinople (381 AD)*

I/We believe in one God the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth, and of all things visible and invisible. And in one Lord Jesus Christ, the only-begotten Son of God, begotten of the Father before all worlds, God of God, Light of Light, very God of very God, begotten, not made, being of one substance with the Father; by whom all things were made; who, for us men, and for our salvation, came down from Heaven, and was incarnate by the Holy Ghost of the virgin, Mary, and was made man; and was crucified also for us under Pontius Pilate; He suffered and was buried; and the third day He rose again, according to the Scriptures; and ascended into Heaven, and sits on the right hand of the Father; and He shall come again, with glory, to judge both the living and the dead; whose kingdom shall have no end. And I/we believe in the Holy Ghost, the Lord, and Giver of Life, who proceeds from the Father and the Son; who with the Father and the Son together is worshiped and glorified; who spoke by the Prophets. And I/we believe one holy catholic and apostolic Church; I/we acknowledge one baptism for the remission of sins; and I/we look for the resurrection of the dead, and the life of the world to come. Amen.

##### *c) Definition of Chalcedon (451 AD)*

Therefore, following the holy fathers, we all with one accord teach men to acknowledge one and the same Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, at once complete in Godhead and complete in manhood, truly God and truly man, consisting

also of a reasonable soul and body; of one substance with the Father as regards his Godhead, and at the same time of one substance with us as regards his manhood; like us in all respects, apart from sin; as regards his Godhead, begotten of the Father before the ages, but yet as regards his manhood begotten, for us men and for our salvation, of Mary the Virgin, the God-bearer; one and the same Christ, Son, Lord, Only-begotten, recognized in two natures, without confusion, without change, without division, without separation; the distinction of natures being in no way annulled by the union, but rather the characteristics of each nature being preserved and coming together to form one person and subsistence, not as parted or separated into two persons, but one and the same Son and Only-begotten God the Word, Lord Jesus Christ; even as the prophets from earliest times spoke of him, and our Lord Jesus Christ himself taught us, and the creed of the fathers has handed down to us.

*d) A Westminster Creed (A modern selection from the 17th century Shorter Catechism)*

- I believe man's chief end is to glorify God, and to enjoy him forever;
- I believe God is a Spirit, infinite, eternal, and unchangeable in his being, wisdom, power, holiness, justice, goodness, and truth; I believe there is but one true and living God; that there are three persons in the Godhead: the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost; and that these three are one God, the same in substance, equal in power and glory; I believe God has foreordained whatever comes to pass; that God made all things of nothing, by the word of His power, in the space of six days, and all very good; and that God preserves and governs all His creatures and all their actions.
- I believe our first parents, though created in knowledge, righteousness, and holiness, sinned against God, by eating the forbidden fruit; and that their fall brought mankind into an estate of sin and misery; I believe God determined, out of His mere good pleasure, to deliver His elect out of the estate of sin and misery, and to bring them into an estate of salvation by a Redeemer; I believe the only Redeemer of God's elect is the Lord Jesus Christ, who, being the eternal Son of God, became man, and so was, and continues to be, God and man in two distinct natures, and one person, forever; I believe Christ, as our Redeemer, executes the office of a prophet, of a priest, and of a king. I believe Christ as our Redeemer underwent the miseries of this life, the wrath of God, the cursed death of the cross, and burial; He rose again from the dead on the third day, ascended up into heaven, sits at the right hand of God, the Father, and is coming to judge the world at the last day.
- I believe we are made partakers of the redemption purchased by Christ, by the effectual application of it to us by his Holy Spirit; I believe God requires of us faith in Jesus Christ, and repentance unto life to escape the wrath and curse of God due to us for sin; I believe by His free grace we are effectually called, justified, and sanctified, and gathered into the visible church, out of which there is no ordinary possibility of salvation; I believe that we also are given in this life such accompanying benefits as assurance of God's love, peace of

conscience, joy in the Holy Ghost, increase of grace, and perseverance therein to the end; that at death, we are made perfect in holiness, and immediately pass into glory; and our bodies, being still united in Christ, rest in their graves, till the resurrection; and at the resurrection, we shall be raised up in glory, we shall openly be acknowledged and acquitted in the day of judgment, and made perfectly blessed in the full enjoying of God to all eternity.

*e) An Evangelical Statement (Adapted from the National Association of Evangelicals)*

- We believe the Bible to be the only inerrant Word of God. It is our only ultimate and infallible authority for faith and practice.
- We believe that there is one God, eternally existent in three Persons; Father, Son and Holy Spirit. He is omnipotent, that is, He is all-powerful. He is omnipresent, that is, He is present throughout all Creation but not limited by it. He is omniscient, that is, nothing is hidden from His sight. In all things He is limited by nothing other than His own nature and character. We believe the God we serve is holy, righteous, good, severe, loving and full of mercy. He created the heavens and earth, and everything in them, in the space of six ordinary days, and all very good. He is the Creator, Sustainer, and Governor of everything that has been made.
- We believe in the true deity and full humanity of our Lord Jesus Christ, in His virgin birth, in His sinless life, in His miracles, in His vicarious and atoning death through His shed blood, in His bodily resurrection, in His ascension to the right hand of the Father and in His personal return in power and glory.
- We believe in the full deity of the Holy Spirit, acknowledging Him together with the Father and the Son in the works of creation and redemption.
- We believe that because of Adam's sin all mankind is in rebellion against God. For the salvation of such lost and sinful men, regeneration by the Holy Spirit is absolutely necessary.
- We believe that salvation is by grace through faith alone, and that faith without works is dead.
- We believe in the present ministry of the Holy Spirit, by whose indwelling the Christian is enabled to live a godly life.
- We believe in the resurrection of both the saved and lost; those who are saved to the resurrection of life, and those who are lost to the resurrection of damnation. We believe in the spiritual unity of all believers in our Lord Jesus Christ.

*f) Confessional Statement on Sex, Gender, and Marriage*

- We confess that the church is subject to Christ, who is Lord over all. While church members ought to obey civil rulers in temporal things, provided they are not required by those authorities to sin (Mk. 12:13-17; Rom. 13:1-7; 1 Pt. 2:13-17), the church has a divine right to embody her beliefs in her practices and to carry out the mission Christ has entrusted to her without interference or hindrance. The church as an institution shall remain free from state control in faith, doctrine, and practice, and her members should not be forced to act contrary to their consciences, as informed by the Word of God. With these

truths in view, we declare the church's right to reject any attempts on the part of the state to impose on her institutionally or her members individually unbiblical, unnatural definitions of marriage or sexuality.

- God created man male and female in the beginning for this very reason, that they might be joined together in the covenant of marriage as one flesh (Mark 10:5ff). Marriage as a covenant bond between a man and a woman is an institution founded not in cultural convention or convenience, but in God's act of creation (Gen. 2:23-24).
- We resist and reject all attempts to redefine marriage to include same-sex partnerships. Certainly, we desire to serve and love persons with homosexual desires or who engage in homosexual practices. We know we are fellow image bearers and fellow sinners along with them, and we long to show them the compassion of Christ. But we cannot endorse the fulfillment of their desires under any circumstances. Rather, we call on persons with such desires to join us in trusting the Lord Jesus to forgive our sin through his shed blood and transform us by his healing grace.
- We claim the right for our churches and church members (whatever their particular vocation) to refuse to host, officiate, or in any way support same-sex "marriage" ceremonies, not out of animus, but out of love for God, neighbor, and truth. Likewise, we refuse to host, officiate, or support other ceremonies that violate biblical teaching on marriage.
- We reject transgenderism as a perversion of God's good creational order. There are only two sexes, male and female (Gen. 1:26-28). Sex is not fluid, it is binary. We reject the notion that gender is determined by one's feelings, or is detachable from biological and bodily givens. God forms each person genetically as a distinct male or female from the moment of conception. As God is the Creator, and makes each of us either male or female, we cannot unmake and remake ourselves into the opposite sex. Sex is an immutable feature of our identity as creatures; thus, it is impossible for anyone to change his or her sex.
- Gender dysphoria should not be used to create a protected class of persons, in which one's feelings override the facts of biology, or in which the rights, dignity, and privacy of transgender persons override the rights, dignity, and privacy of others. Thus, we claim for our churches and church members (in whatever vocation they serve) the right to reject compliance with any public policies or laws that would require us to deny binary sexes, or to accept claims of gender identity that are contrary to one's God-assigned biology. We reject the legal redefinitions of sex and gender that divorce either of these realities from God-given biology. We claim the right to speak to people according to their God-given sex, rather than reinforcing gender dysphoric confusions by using alternative pronouns. We claim the right to restrict access to intimate facilities (e.g., bathrooms, nursing areas, shelters, etc.), to sex-specific events, etc., strictly according to God-given biological realities. In the case of someone who has already transitioned to the appearance of the opposite sex, the session of the local congregation will determine the wisest and most compassionate course of action.



- All sexual sins can be forgiven through the shed blood of Christ, including the practice of sodomy and transgenderism. But forgiveness can never be separated from confession and repentance; forgiveness can never be separated from denying oneself and taking up the cross daily; forgiveness can never be separated from fighting against sin and pursuing holiness in the power of the Holy Spirit.

## **2. Governments**

### *a) Introduction*

We believe that God has ordained various governments among men. The three basic governments are civil government, church government and family government. All of these governments are dependent on the grace of God, common or special, working in individuals to bring about self-government.

We deny that the authority of these governments should be set against one another. God has ordained them all, and assigned to them differing responsibilities.

### *b) Self-government*

- We believe that a man becomes a Christian when the Holy Spirit regenerates him and causes him to submit, in faith, to the Lord Jesus Christ (Ephesians 1:13). He has become a disciple of Jesus Christ, and seeks to live in submission to His Word. We deny that Christ can be received as Savior, and rejected as Lord (Matthew 7:21).
- We believe that Christians were chosen before the foundation of the world to live holy and blameless lives (Ephesians 1:4). We deny that holiness can be defined by means of any extra-biblical rules or regulations. Legalism is not holiness, but rather another kind of sin. The Christian's only standard of holiness is found in the Old and New Testaments (2 Timothy 3:16).
- We believe that God will complete the work He has begun in each believer. If someone is truly regenerate, then he will not fall away from salvation (Romans 8:29-31). The basis for this is God's faithfulness, not the faithfulness of the believer. We deny that this understanding of God's sustaining faithfulness is in any way a cushion for sin. A life of sin is inconsistent with assurance of salvation (Romans 6:1-4).
- We believe that each Christian has an obligation to regularly and honestly confess his sins before God (1 John 1:9; Proverbs 28:13). In this way, the quality of his relationship with God is maintained and protected. We deny that confession of sin is the foundation of the Christian's relationship to God. Salvation does not depend on confession of sin; the joy of salvation does (Psalms 51:10-13).
- We believe that God commands all men everywhere to repent and believe the gospel, that is, that Christ died on the cross to secure the salvation of all who believe. All unregenerate men therefore have a true obligation to do so (Acts 17:30, 2 Thessalonians 1:8). We deny that unregenerate men are coercively excluded from grace. But because they are dead in their sins, they have no

desire for God's grace (Ephesians 2:1; Romans 8:6-8; 1 Corinthians 2:14). They are therefore responsible for remaining in sin.

- We believe that at regeneration, God creates each Christian a new man, created to grow in love and good works (Ephesians 2:10; 2 Corinthians 5:17). We deny that this new man moves in alongside the old man inherited from Adam. The old man was crucified in Christ (Romans 6:1-11; Galatians 2:20).
- We believe that God has given to each individual various gifts of varying worth (1 Corinthians 12:22-24). Each Christian has an obligation to understand accurately what his gifts are, and to put them to work in the worship of God (Ephesians 4:11-16). We deny that equality in Christ (Colossians 3:10,11) requires the elimination of God-assigned roles and stations (Colossians 3:12-22, Philippians 2:3).

*c) Family Government*

- We believe that God has ordained the husband to be the head of his wife, and that he is answerable to God for the spiritual state of everyone in his household (Ephesians 5:23). We deny that the hierarchy established by God in the family diminishes in any way the worth of women in the sight of God, or their husbands (Galatians 3:28). Righteous men rise up and call their righteous wives blessed (Proverbs 31:28).
- We believe the Biblical design for marriage to be a holy, honorable, monogamous union between a man and a woman for life, founded on fidelity and self sacrifice (Hebrews 13:4, Ephesians 5:31-33). We deny that this Biblical design for marriage can be achieved in a homosexual or lesbian relationship. These are not alternative, acceptable lifestyles to be tolerated, rather they are simply heinous sins to be confessed, repented from and brought under submission to the Bible (1 Cor. 6:9-11, Romans 1:23-32).
- We believe that men are responsible to protect their families, and to provide for them (1 Timothy 5:8), loving their wives as Christ loved the church (Ephesians 5:25). Wives are responsible to minister to their husbands and children (Titus 2:4), to be homemakers, keeping their homes well-managed and clean (Titus 2:5). We deny that reversal of God's assigned roles to husbands and wives can occur without serious damage to the family, and consequently to the society and church (Titus 2:5).
- We believe prosperity is a gift from God (2 Corinthians 9:10-11). We deny that godly living is an automatic means to wealth and prosperity (Hebrews 11:35-38).
- We believe that God blesses in a material way when men honor Him through hard work over a long time, are generous with the blessings God has already given, and provide for their families and dependents (2 Thessalonians 3:7-10). We deny that covetousness and greed can be means to obtain the blessings God bestows (1 Timothy 6:5).
- We believe that Christian parents have an obligation before God to provide their children with a godly understanding of the world in which they are growing up. To this end, Christian education, however administered, is essential (Deuteronomy 6:1-6). We deny that the state or the church has the

obligation to rear our children. That responsibility belongs to the parents (Ephesians 6:4).

- We believe that marriage is ordained by God, and that man has no authority to sever what God has joined together. God hates divorce (Malachi 2:16). Divorce and remarriage must be regulated biblically, not culturally. We deny that compassion for the divorced requires any softening of the biblical teaching on the subject.

*d) Church Government*

- We believe that each local gathering of the visible church is to be governed by a plurality of men called Elders, overseers, or bishops, each of whom must meet the requirements for church leadership (1 Timothy 3:1-7; Titus 1:5-9; 1 Peter 5:1-4). We deny that someone can be called by God to such leadership when his life or family is not in order. Seminary training, long experience, and gifts of leadership or communication are no substitute for obedience (1 Samuel 15:22).
- We believe that each local gathering of the visible church is to be served by a plurality of Deacons, each of whom must meet the requirements for church service (1 Timothy 3:8-13). We deny that such service can be rendered properly when a Deacon's life does not meet the criteria set by Scripture.
- We believe the Bible, both Old and New Testaments, to be the sole authority for faith and practice in the church. The laws of the Old Testament, including the Mosaic code, are normative for Christians today, provided they are understood and applied according to the teaching of the New Testament (Romans 13:8-10). We deny that the grace of God in Christ has changed in any way the definition of right and wrong. Rather, the Spirit works in us to accomplish the righteous requirements of the law (Romans 8:4).
- We believe a great commission has been given to disciple the nations to Christ. The instrument for accomplishing this is the preaching of the gospel prior to the return of Christ (Matthew 28:18-20). We deny that the church should work as though we are living in the last generation (2 Thessalonians 2:1-2).
- We believe the Lord has commanded baptism with water in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit (Matthew 28:19-20). Baptism with water is a sacrament (or ordinance) of the Christian church, and the elders of the church are responsible to ensure that baptisms are administered in a scriptural fashion, and the proper signification of water baptism preserved and maintained. We affirm that water baptism signifies union with Christ in His death, burial and resurrection (Romans 6:3-7), the baptism by the Holy Spirit into the body of Christ (1 Corinthians 12:13), the washing away of sin (Acts 22:16), the washing of regeneration (Titus 3:5), the outpouring of the Holy Spirit (Titus 3:6; Acts 10:44,47), and the circumcision of the heart (Colossians 2:11-12). We deny that water baptism imparts grace by means of water. God imparts grace to His saints to enable them to obey Him (2 Corinthians 9:8), and strengthens them further by grace in that obedience (Hebrews 12:14-15). The faithful observance of water baptism constitutes one part of that obedience, and is therefore a means of grace.

- We believe the Lord's Supper to be a symbol of the body and blood of Christ. Christians should regularly eat at this table, as long as they are not under the discipline of God, or God's people (1 Corinthians 11:23-26). We deny that the Lord's Supper imparts grace by means of the bread and cup. It is, however, a participation in Christ (1 Corinthians 10:14-17), and God blesses faithful participation in the Lord's Supper (1 Corinthians 10:16-17), and disciplines faithlessness in it (1 Corinthians 11:30).
  - We believe water baptism and the Lord's Supper to be external signs of covenantal, historical, internal and spiritual realities. We deny that these sacraments are an automatic means of grace (that is, *ex opere operato*). Grace comes to us through faith alone. All biblical means to build biblical faith are therefore means of blessing and grace – including water baptism and the Lord's Supper.
  - We believe that legitimate modes of water baptism include immersion, pouring, or sprinkling in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit (Romans 6:4; Acts 10:44-48; Hebrews 9:9-10). We deny that the scriptural significance of water baptism can be nullified by the mode of application.
  - We believe the sign gifts that were apparent in the first century church were not given as a normative pattern for subsequent generations (1 Corinthians 13:8-13). We deny that a church must manifest such gifts in order to please God in worship (1 Corinthians 14:20-22).
  - We believe that Christians must fellowship in unity with all true Christians, and that we have no right to judge the hearts of fellow servants. If God has accepted someone, we must willingly do the same. The one exception occurs when a professing Christian is under the biblical discipline of God's people (1 Corinthians 5:9-13). We deny that this fellowship requires joint ministry with those Christians who teach or practice that which is unbiblical. We may believe someone to be a Christian, and yet believe them to be unqualified for leadership. The qualifications for leadership differ from those for fellowship (Romans 14:1-8; 1 Timothy 3:1-7).
- e) *Civil Government*
- We believe that Christians are to live quiet and peaceful lives, in true submission to the civil magistrates ordained by God as His servants (Romans 13:1-7). We deny that this submission is absolute. When civil authorities require something forbidden by God, or forbid something required by God, the duty of Christians is to humbly, respectfully, and submissively disobey (Acts 4:19-20).
  - We believe that Christians are to pray for those authorities that God has placed above them (1 Timothy 2:1-4). We deny that this prayer should be limited to blessings (Psalms 139:19-24).
  - We believe that Christians should be involved in the political process. Christ required His followers to be salt and light in the world, and He did not exclude civil government from that Christian influence (Matthew 5:13-16). We deny that the power of the gospel is to be found in political involvement. We do not believe civil government to be a savior (2 Corinthians 10:3-6), and deny that the church is a political organization.

- We believe that in the prohibition of stealing, God has ordained the institution of private property. We believe that the Christian church should teach against theft in all its forms (Exodus 20:15). We deny that the institution of private property is a human invention. Rather, it is the result of a biblical understanding of God’s ordination of private property. But because man is fallen, the institution of private property, like all God-ordained institutions, has been much abused (Ephesians 5:5).
- We believe that the root cause of political disregard for the institution of private property is envy and covetousness (Matthew 20:1-16). We deny that theft can be sanctified, even if it is done in the name of civil justice (Isaiah 5:20). If the civil magistrate oversteps the boundaries established for him in Scripture one result can be various forms of theft, including oppressive taxation.

## **B. CREC CONSTITUTION**

As a member of the Communion of Reformed Evangelical Churches, Christ Covenant Church accepts all the constitutional requirements that come with this affiliation. The CREC Constitution can be found at [www.crechurches.org](http://www.crechurches.org) and is deemed to be included in this document by this reference.

## **Article II. MEMBERS AND ELECTORS**

### **A. MEMBERS**

#### ***1. Definitions***

The reference to “Member” or “Elector” in these bylaws is a spiritual and theological term that does not have any civil effect for purposes of state law. Consistent with the biblical concept of Member and this section, Members and Electors do not have voting rights.

#### ***2. Membership Process***

Membership is reckoned by a household of one or more people in the same family. A household is eligible for membership 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. 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 “Amen” when they are asked:

“As members of this congregation of Christ, do you receive [this Christian/these Christians] into the covenant fellowship of this local church?”

In special cases, as circumstances warrant, individuals may come under our pastoral care without coming into membership.

As children of member households become more independent, it is the practice of the elders to invite them to reaffirm their membership as their own household. The elders will usually begin this conversation with children of member households after they turn twenty-one.

### ***3. 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.

### ***4. Baptismal Cooperation Agreement***

Families who hold either credobaptist or paedobaptist views are welcome at Christ Covenant Church and will be served by the elders.

### ***5. 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. All family members of Member households who have been baptized and have come to the Lord’s Table are deemed to be communicant Members. All who are baptized are expected to partake of the Lord’s Table, and the parents are charged to carefully and regularly instruct the child in the gospel and in the meaning of the Supper.

## **B. ELECTORS**

Those Members who give input to the Elders on matters submitted to the Members are called Electors. Electors are the heads of Member households. Independent unmarried Members are considered as a household for purposes of communicating with the Elders. The Elders will qualify Electors and hold meetings of the heads of households in order to receive input from the congregation.

**C. DISCIPLINE OF MEMBERS**

***1. Subjects of Discipline***

Members of Christ Covenant Church and non-member professing Christians who regularly attend our fellowship, who meet the criteria of membership according to these Bylaws or are a regularly attending non-member professing Christian, may be disciplined according to the procedures outlined in the following sections (1 Corinthians. 5:12-13).

Members of other churches: If another church has disciplined one of its Members, and that individual seeks fellowship at Christ Covenant Church, then the Elders of Christ Covenant Church will seek to honor the discipline of the other church. This will generally be done after due consultation with the individual concerned and the appropriate information is obtained from the disciplining church. The discipline will be honored unless in the judgment of two-thirds of the Elders there is clear and compelling evidence that the discipline was unbiblical (3 John 9-10).

***2. Informal Discipline***

The Elders of Christ Covenant Church will, through teaching and example, encourage the Members and regular attendees of Christ Covenant Church to discipline one another through the following:

- Exercising self-discipline (Romans 8:13).
- Overlooking the failings of one another in love (1 Peter 4:8).
- Admonishing a brother if he needs to be corrected (Matthew 18:15).
- Taking one or two others as witnesses if the admonition is rejected (Matthew 18:16).
- Bringing the issue to the church through the Elders if it is still rejected (Matthew 18:17).

***3. Censure & Suspension***

The Elders of Christ Covenant Church may employ the various pastoral responses found in Scripture to deal with sinful and ungodly behavior as is fitting particular situations. These include both private and public applications of rebuke (1 Thess. 5:12; 1 Tim. 5:20), warning (2 Thess. 3:14-15; Tit. 3:10), and suspension from the Lord's Supper (1 Cor. 5:4-5, 11, 13).

***4. Rejection***

If in the opinion of the Elders, a Member of Christ Covenant Church or a non-member professing Christian appears to be acting in a contentious or divisive manner toward others, the Elders may reject the person as a teacher as an additional step in the informal discipline process. Such a rejection is not the same as putting someone outside the church but if, as an interim step, the rejection does not produce repentance, the Elders may proceed with formal judicial discipline. Any action taken by the Elders in rejecting someone shall be documented and the Electors shall be notified of the action taken and instructed to avoid the rejected individual. The person rejected will be notified of the action and discouraged from participating in church functions until the matter is resolved (Romans 16:17-19; Titus 3:9-11).

***5. Judicial Discipline***

*a) Formal Judicial Discipline*

When a dispute is brought to the attention of the Elders, they will ascertain whether or not the appropriate steps have been taken to resolve the matter privately. The Elders will also seek to carefully ascertain the facts of the case. As soon as the matter is brought to the Elders' attention, all decisions of substance by the Elders concerning the case must be entered in the minutes.

If in the unanimous judgment of the Elders the individual accused of sin may be guilty, and is unrepentant, then the Elders will schedule a formal judicial session of the Elders. Notification of this meeting may be made to the Electors of the church.

Guidelines for any judicial session or subsequent trial are as follows:

- The one accused will be notified of the dates and times of the sessions.
- The one accused should be granted a reasonable amount of time to prepare a defense if he so desires (2 Corinthians 13:1).
- The Elders beforehand will appoint one of their number as a chairman for the hearing of the evidence.
- All the Elders, unless providentially prevented, will sit in judgment on the evidence.
- All the witnesses shall be placed under the most solemn oath (Deuteronomy 6:13).

After the evidence is presented, the Elders will retire to deliberate on the verdict. The Elders will remember at all times that the biblical standards of evidence are high, and that two or three witnesses are required in order to apply formal church discipline.

*b) Formal Judicial Discipline Resulting From Egregious Sin*

If a Member of the church is involved in an open and scandalous sin, then there is no requirement for individuals privately to confront that person before the church takes formal action (1 Corinthians 5:1-13). Private confrontation in such cases is certainly to be encouraged, but is not necessary before the church can act. In such cases, the Elders may act by immediately scheduling the first formal judicial session.

*c) Discipline*

If a guilty verdict is reached, the Elders will do the following:

- The verdict will be read at the conclusion of the second judicial session.
- The following statement will be read to the congregation of Christ Covenant Church on the subsequent Sunday:

*Church discipline must always be conducted under the headship and the authority of the Lord Jesus Christ. This being the case, we acknowledge that Christ has required His church to conduct such church discipline in order to preserve and protect moral and doctrinal purity. The purpose of our church discipline is to glorify God through obedience, to maintain the purity of Christ's church, and to reclaim the offender if possible.*



*After repeated efforts to exhort and instruct [ ] with regard to [his/her] Christian duty to [ ], the Elders of Christ Covenant Church have determined, after a judicial trial on [date] in accordance with the pattern set forth in Scripture and the procedures of our church constitution, that [ ] is guilty of the [charge/s] brought against [him/her] at that trial. The [charge/s was/were]:*

- 1. Charge [ ]*
- 2. Charge [ ]*
- 3. Charge [ ]*

*It is therefore with grief that the Elders of Christ Covenant Church unanimously pronounce that [ ] is hereby expelled from Christ's church. We declare this day, by the authority of the Lord Jesus Christ, the head of the church, that [ ] is excommunicated in accordance with the requirements of Scripture, and is put outside the body of Christ. [He/she] is delivered to the domain of Satan, and is hereafter to be deemed an unbeliever, thus excluding [him/her] from any hope of salvation, unless [he/she] humbly repents and is converted.*

*It is our prayer that God will use this action we have taken today to glorify His name, and if He is willing, to restore [ ] to fellowship with us.*

- A report of the discipline will be made to the men of the church at the next men's meeting.

If an innocent verdict is reached, the accused party's name will be cleared during the next regularly scheduled church service. If such a verdict suggests deceitfulness on the part of any of the witnesses who testified against the accused, such witness or witnesses will become the subject of an immediate judicial investigation according to the rules set forth in these Bylaws (Deut. 19:15-21).

*d) Penalty*

As a result of the discipline, the one under discipline is to be considered and treated as an unbeliever (Matthew 18:17). To the Members of Christ Covenant Church this means:

- If the person chooses to attend church services, he will usually be allowed to do so, though the Elders may give a formal trespass admonishment if, in their sole discretion, the person subject to discipline presents a physical or spiritual threat to others. In no circumstances will he be allowed to partake of the Lord's Supper. The saints must not fellowship with the individual as though he were a Christian.
- If the circumstances warrant, there is no longer a scriptural prohibition of a Christian taking the individual under discipline to court before a civil magistrate.

- If the one under discipline seeks to find a church that will accept him, then the Elders of Christ Covenant Church will contact that church and supply them with appropriate information and records of the disciplinary action.

*e) Restoration*

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.

### **Article III. OFFICERS**

#### **A. GENERAL**

Christ Covenant Church shall be governed by the Elders.

#### **B. ELDERS**

##### **1. Number**

The Elders shall attempt to maintain at least three Elders at all times, with a maximum being simply the number that God calls to the position.

##### **2. Candidates**

New Elders will be considered from time to time as circumstances warrant. A man may be considered as a potential Elder in several ways. He may aspire to the office himself (1 Timothy 3:1), the Elders may approach him, or the people of the church may suggest his name to the Elders.

##### **3. Qualifications**

Once he becomes a candidate, the Elders will examine the 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 Statement of Faith or Constitution, then he must inform the Elders of it. All candidates must meet the qualifications for the office set down in Scripture (1 Timothy 3:1-7; Titus 1:5-9; 1 Peter 5:2-4).

##### **4. Appointment**

A man may not be considered by the Electors without the unanimous consent of the current Elders. Upon the unanimous decision of the current Elders, a potential Elder may be submitted to the Electors by the current Elders. If any Elector voices an objection to a candidate Elder's ordination, the Elders must carefully weigh the scriptural merit of the objection and meet as necessary with the Electors who raised the objection before ordaining the candidate Elder elect. If there are no objections to the candidate Elder from the Electors, the Elders will consider the candidate Elder elect. In either case, if the Elders deem the candidate qualified, the Elders will ordain him through the laying on of hands and prayer.

##### **5. Term of Service**

An Elder will be appointed for an initial two year term. At the end of a two year term, if he desires to continue serving the congregation, the Elder must be reaffirmed by a unanimous

vote of the Elders. If reaffirmed, the Elders will extend his ordination for an additional five year term. After the subsequent five year term, if the Elder wishes to continue his service and the other Elders are in unanimous agreement as to his continued calling and qualification, he may again be submitted to the Electors. If there are no objections to the candidate from the Electors, the Elders will extend his ordination for life. If any Elector voices an objection to the Elders continued service as an Elder, the Elders must carefully consider the biblical merit of the objection, and meet as necessary with the Electors who raised the objection. In either case, if the remaining Elders deem the candidate qualified, the Elders will extend the Elder's ordination to a life-time term through laying on of hands and prayer.

An Elder will serve his current term unless he resigns or is removed.

*a) Resignation*

If an Elder desires to resign or take a leave of absence, he will present a letter to the Elders. At the first appropriate heads of household meeting, the Elders will notify the Electors of their receipt of the letter. If the desire of the Elder 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.

*b) Removal*

If a Christian believes an Elder may be morally or doctrinally unfit for his office, the scriptural requirement for him is clear: he is to approach that Elder individually first (Matthew 18:15), and then with two or three others (Matthew 18:16). If the problem remains, then the individual, with the two or three witnesses, should come to the other Elders and present the charges (1 Timothy 5:19).

If the charges are unanimously sustained by the other Elders, then that Elder, depending on the gravity of the charges and the response to the correction, will be rebuked in the presence of the congregation (1 Timothy 5:20), or will be removed from the office of Elder (Titus 1:5-9; 1 Timothy 3:1-7), or both.

Provided this church remains a member church in good standing of the Communion of Reformed Evangelical Churches ("CREC"), a grievance against the Elders as a whole may be brought before one of the broader assemblies of the CREC in accordance with its governing documents. It is acknowledged by anyone bringing such a grievance that the sole remedy would be expulsion of this church from the CREC.

**6. Ecclesiastical Responsibilities**

The Elders are collectively responsible to oversee the following:

- Ruling/shepherding (1 Peter 5:1-2).
- Equipping (Ephesians 4:11-12).
- Prayer/fasting (Acts 6:4; 13:1-3).

- Teaching/preaching (1 Timothy 5:17).
- Administering baptism and communion (Matthew 28:19-20; 1 Corinthians 11:23-26).
- Administering church discipline and restoration (1 Corinthians 5:1-5).
- Prayer for the healing of the sick (James 5:14-15).
- Delegating responsibilities to the Deacons, hiring and firing church staff, defining the responsibilities of church staff, and delegating responsibilities to the staff of subordinate ministries. This includes the approval of the budget.

Individual Elders are responsible for those duties delegated to them by the Session of Elders, and recorded in the minutes, with due regard to their gifts and desires. Elders with such a charge will serve willingly, and without domineering in the discharge of their assigned duties, whether pastoral or administrative (1 Peter 5:1-3). There is no distinction of rank within the body of Elders.

### ***7. Ecclesiastical Meetings***

The Elders will attempt to meet regularly to carry out the ecclesiastical responsibilities of the Elders as detailed above.

#### *a) Quorum*

One-half of the Elders shall constitute a quorum.

#### *b) Special Meetings*

Special meetings of the Elders shall be held upon the call of one-third of the Elders. The notice of the meeting may be verbal or in the form of a record and should generally be given at least 48 hours before the proposed meeting, though this time period may be shortened if, in the discretion of the party calling the meeting, it is an emergency. Notice of any meeting of the Elders may be waived in a record by any Elder at any time or by an Elder's presence at the meeting, except where the Elder attends the meeting with the express purpose of objecting to the transaction of any business because the meeting is not lawfully called or convened. Neither the business to be transacted at, nor the purpose of any regular or special meeting of the Elders or any committee designated by the Elders need be specified in the notice or waiver of notices of such meeting unless required by these Bylaws.

#### *c) Voting*

Each Elder shall be entitled to cast one vote at any election or on any subject before any meeting of the Elders. Actions of the Elders are deemed to have been approved when passed by two-thirds of the Elders present.

#### *d) Participation by Telephone*

Elders may participate in a meeting of the Elders by means of a conference telephone or similar communications equipment by means of which all persons participating in the meeting can hear each other at the same time. Participation by such means shall constitute presence in person at a meeting.

#### *e) Action Without a Meeting*

Any action required or permitted to be taken at a meeting of the Elders may be taken without a meeting if a consent, in the form of a record, setting forth the action to be taken is executed by all of the Elders. Any such consent shall be inserted in the minute book as if it were the minutes of an Elder meeting.

*f) Moderator*

The Elders will appoint one of their number to moderate the meetings of the Elders, and one to record the minutes of the meetings. The moderator will not be an Elder whose principal duties include teaching the church on Sunday.

**8. Compensation**

Elders shall not be compensated for their service as Elders, but those Elders who also serve as employees shall be compensated by the church (1 Timothy 5:17-18).

**9. Loans**

The church shall make no loans to its Elders. The Elders who vote for or assent to the making of a loan to an Elder, and any officer or officers participating in the making of such loan, shall be jointly and severally liable to the church for the amount of such loan until the repayment thereof.

**C. DEACONS**

**1. Number**

There is no minimum or maximum number of Deacons.

**2. Candidates**

A man may be considered as a potential Deacon in several ways. He may aspire to the office himself, the Elders or Deacons may approach him, or the people of the church may suggest his name to the Elders.

**3. Qualifications**

The Elders will examine the 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 Statement of Faith or Bylaws, then he must inform the Elders of it. All candidates must meet the qualifications for the office set down in Scripture (1 Timothy 3:8-13).

**4. Testing**

The Deacons will include the candidate in their work in order to prove his fitness for the office (1 Timothy 3:10). When the candidate has shown, in the two-thirds judgment of the Deacons, his fitness for office, the Deacons will make a recommendation to the Elders to consider a candidate as a Deacon.

**5. Appointment**

Deacons will be appointed by the Elders. A man may not be considered by the Electors without the two-thirds consent of the current Elders. If in the two-thirds judgment of the Elders, the candidate receives the clear and obvious support of the church, the Elders will ordain the new Deacon to the ministry through the laying on of hands and prayer (Acts 6:6).

**6. Term**

A Deacon will be appointed for an initial two year term. At the end of a two year term, if he desires to continue serving the congregation, the Deacon must be reaffirmed by a two-thirds vote of the Elders. Once reaffirmed, the Deacon will serve for life, unless he resigns or is removed.

*a) Resignation*

If a Deacon desires to resign or take a leave of absence, he will present a letter to the Elders. At the first appropriate heads of household meeting, the Elders will notify the Electors of their receipt of the letter. If the desire of the 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.

*b) Removal*

If someone believes a Deacon may be morally or doctrinally unfit for his office, the scriptural requirement for him is clear: he is to approach that Deacon individually first (Matthew 18:15), and then with two or three others (Matthew 18:16). If the problem remains, then the individual, with the two or three witnesses, should come to the Elders and present the charges. If the charges are unanimously sustained by the Elders, then that Deacon, depending on the gravity of the charges and his response to the correction, may be corrected, or removed from the office of Deacon (1 Timothy 3:8-13).

**7. Ecclesiastical Responsibilities**

Under the general oversight of the Elders, the Deacons will manage the financial, physical, social, and benevolent functions of the church (Acts 6:2-4). Such responsibilities include: preparing and administering the annual budget to be approved by the Elders, building maintenance, fellowship meals, administration of subordinate ministries, and office support.

Individual Deacons are responsible for those duties assigned to them by the Deacons, and recorded in the minutes, with due regard to their gifts and desires. There is no distinction of rank among the Deacons.

**8. Ecclesiastical Meetings**

All usual business of the Deacons will be conducted at their regular meeting, or at a special meeting called for a particular purpose. The Deacons will appoint one of their number to moderate the meetings of the Deacons, and one to record the minutes of the meetings. The Deacons will be prepared to give a general report of their work at each of the monthly men's meetings, they will provide a quarterly financial report to the church, and they will give an annual report to the Elders with proposals for the upcoming year.

**Article IV. DENOMINATIONAL AFFILIATIONS**

By unanimous vote of the Elders on November 6, 1997, Christ Covenant Church became a member of the Communion of Reformed Evangelical Churches. We hereby amplify the stated intention of this communion as found in the preamble to its constitution which "...is not intended as a *separation from* other orthodox believers who confess the name of Christ, but rather as a *gathering within* that broader church, in order to work together effectively for reformation."

Withdrawal from the Communion of Reformed Evangelical Churches may only occur by unanimous vote of the Elders of Christ Covenant Church. As a member of the Communion of Reformed Evangelical Churches, Christ Covenant Church accepts all the constitutional requirements that come with this affiliation. The CREC Constitution can be found at [www.crechurches.org](http://www.crechurches.org) and is deemed to be included in this document by this reference.

**Article V. AMENDMENTS**

These Bylaws may be amended by a three quarters vote of the Elders present at any meeting of the Elders, provided that the Elders were notified before the meeting that an amendment or amendments would be considered at the meeting and which shall ordinarily only occur after consultation with the Electors of the church.

