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## **Preamble**

We, the members of Redeemer Covenant Church, in submission to the Scriptures under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, have recognized the need to constitute ourselves in conformity to God's will for His Church. Therefore, we ordain and establish the following articles and voluntarily submit to this constitution as our governing document. It is to be interpreted at all times with full consideration of the character and glory of the Lord Jesus Christ as revealed in the Holy Bible and articulated in the standards set forth in the doctrinal statement and covenant of this church.

## **Article I: Name**

Section I: The name of this church is Redeemer Covenant Church.

Section II: Status and Definitions

1. We are a non-profit religious corporation operating in the state of Ohio and in accordance to its laws.
2. The words "church," "congregation," and "assembly" in this Constitution shall refer to a local church (e.g. Redeemer Covenant Church), and is determined by context; whereas, the word "Church" shall refer to the universal Church; the entire Body and Bride of Christ.

## **Article II: Mission**

Our mission is to glorify God through Bible-centered fellowship and worship in spirit and truth; by making maturing disciples through evangelism and teaching sound doctrine; and by dedicating ourselves to others with compassionate service and hospitality.

## **Article III: Membership**

Section I: Qualifications and Requirements for Membership

Any person who professes repentance<sup>1</sup> toward God and faith<sup>2</sup> toward our Lord Jesus Christ who has been baptized<sup>3</sup> in obedience to Him upon confession of faith who gives legitimate evidence<sup>4</sup> of regeneration<sup>5</sup> and who publicly expresses substantial agreement with the doctrines, aims, and government<sup>6</sup> of this church and promises to keep the commitments expressed in the church covenant shall be eligible for membership.

1 Luke 5:32; Acts 11:18; Rom. 2:4; 2 Cor. 7:10

2 Matt. 10:32; Acts 16:31; Rom. 1:17; 3:21–22, 27–28; 4:16; 5:1–2; 10:9; 1 Cor. 12:3b; Gal. 2:16; 3:11, 22; Eph. 2:8; Phil. 3:9; Col. 2:12; 2 Thess. 2:13; Heb. 11:1–40; 1 Pet. 1:9

3 Matt. 28:18–20; Acts 2:38, 41; 8:12, 36–38; 10:47–48; Rom. 6:3–5; Eph. 4:4–5; Col. 2:12

4 Matt. 7:16–18; 12:33

5 John 3:3, 5–8; 15:4–6; 1 Pet. 3–5

6 1 Cor. 16:16; 1 Thess. 5:12; Heb. 13:7, 17

## Section II: Duties and Privileges of Members

1. DUTIES—Members shall be encouraged and exhorted to participate in all public and private means of grace, including (but not limited to) regular attendance at the services of the church<sup>1</sup>, participating in the Lord’s Supper<sup>2</sup>, daily Bible reading and/or study<sup>3</sup>, and private and corporate prayer<sup>4</sup>. The church also expects its members to support the work of the Lord by offering both time and resources (including, but not limited to monetary gifts) to the building up of the church<sup>5</sup>. Furthermore, members are to pursue godliness<sup>6</sup> and conformity to the Scriptures with regard to family government and worship<sup>7</sup> and exercising love towards neighbor<sup>8</sup> by proclaiming the gospel to them<sup>9</sup> and serving them in a variety of ways<sup>10</sup>. Lastly, members should recognize and submit to the Scriptural authority given to leaders and officers in the church<sup>11</sup>.
2. PRIVILEGES—Only those who are members in good standing of Redeemer Covenant Church shall be entitled to serve in the ministries and offices of the congregation; non-members who regularly attend the church may be permitted to assist members in the ministries with the approval of the Elders.
3. LIBERTY—Members shall mutually require, in daily word and deed, obedience to the moral precepts of God’s Word<sup>12</sup>. However, where God has not prohibited certain practices in the Holy Scriptures, the Christian has liberty to participate in them<sup>13</sup>. In exercising Christian liberty, members should always take into consideration the fear of the Lord, the love of the brethren, compassion for sinners, and a watchfulness over the soul as principles of conduct that guide their decisions<sup>14</sup>.

1 Acts 2:42; Heb. 10:23–25

2 Luke 22:17–20; 1 Cor. 11:23–26

3 Josh. 1:8; Rom. 15:4; Col. 3:16; 2 Tim. 2:15; 3:16

4 Acts 2:42; Matt. 6:6–7; Rom. 12:10–13; Eph. 6:18; Phil. 4:6–7; Col. 4:2; 1 Thess. 5:16–18; 1 Tim. 2:1–2, 8; 5:16; Jude 1:20–21

5 Rom. 12:4–8, 13; 15:26–27; Eph. 4:11–13; 1 Cor. 9:3–14; 12:1–31; 16:1; 1 Pet. 4:10–11

6 1 Tim. 4:7–8; 6:11–12; **Tit. 2:12; 2 Pet. 1:2–11**

7 Ex. 20:12; Deut. 6:1–9, 20; Prov. 13:24; 22:15; 23:13–14; 29:15; Eph. 5:22–6:4; Col. 3:18–21; 1 Pet. 3:1–7

8 Matt. 5:43–44; 22:39; Rom. 13:9c; Gal. 5:14; James 2:8

9 Mark 16:15; Gal. 6:6; 2 Tim. 4:2; 1 Pet. 3:15; Jude 1:3

10 **Prov. 19:17; Isa. 58:6–7; Matt. 25:34–40; Heb. 13:2; James 1:27**

11 1 Cor. 16:16; 1 Thess. 5:12; Heb. 13:7, 17

12 **Ex. 20:1–17; John 3:36; 15:10; Rom. 6:16; 12:1; 1 Pet. 1:14; 1 John 2:3–4; 3:22–24**

13 Rom. 14:1–13; Col. 2:16–17; 1 Tim. 4:4–5

14 1 Cor. 8:8–13; 9:19–27; 10:23, 31; Gal. 5:13; Heb. 10:24–25; 1 Pet. 2:15–16

## Section III: Application for Membership

1. All requests for membership shall be made to a Pastor, Elder, or Deacon. Upon making such a request, the person shall be given an application for membership, along with a copy of the doctrinal statement, church covenant and constitution. A Pastor or Elder shall meet with the applicant for an interview following the receipt of the application.
2. To be admitted into church membership as expressed in Article III, Section I of this constitution, applicants shall be recommended by the Elders for admission and accepted by affirmation of the members at any regular or special meeting of the church, and shall at that point relinquish their membership in any other local church. The persons applying for church membership will be announced to the congregation one week in advance to allow time for any objections made privately to the Pastor or Elders.
3. If the applicant has been a member of another evangelical Protestant church, a letter of inquiry into his or her standing with that church will be sent before final acceptance is made.

## Section IV: Denial of Membership

Upon meeting with an applicant for church membership, the Elders review and determine that the applicant does not meet the necessary qualifications for membership, membership shall be denied.

## Section V: Termination of Membership

Membership in the visible [local] church is ordinarily terminated in the following ways:

1. PHYSICAL DEATH—When a member of the Church is called home to be with the Lord Jesus Christ<sup>1</sup>, his/her name shall be *automatically* removed from the membership roll.
2. TRANSFER—When a member in good standing is interested in transferring membership to another church, they must request a meeting with the Elders in order to state their desires and reasons for leaving. In the event of mutual agreement in following through with a transfer, the Elders will conduct an exit interview and send a letter of standing to the new church home if one has been identified. If the members are still in the process of searching for a new church home, they will be automatically become “inactive” members (see Article III, Section X). The Elders will attempt to remain in contact with inactive members seeking a new church home in order to assist them and encourage them in their search. No such letter will be given for a member who is at the time under the corrective discipline of the church; rather, the Elders shall send a notice of disciplinary action to the new church. The Elders are under no obligation to send a letter of standing to a church that is unanimously considered to be disloyal to the Christian faith.
3. DISMISSAL—A member may be dismissed from membership if they fail to follow the appropriate steps for transfer or join a church which the Elders unanimously judge to be disloyal to historic Christianity (see Article III, Section V). A member will automatically be dismissed, under deliberation of the Elders, if they cannot be located after numerous attempts over an extended period of time.
4. EXCOMMUNICATION—According to the teaching of Scripture, a church shall remove from its fellowship and visible membership (upon recommendation by the Elders), one who insists on teaching or adhering to heretical doctrine, blatantly and persistently conducts oneself in a manner inconsistent with their profession, or persistently and divisively disturbs the unity and peace of the church (see Article III, Section VII). Excommunication is a last resort, to be used only after the Elders are in unanimous agreement that all other means of reclaiming and restoring the offending party have been exhausted according to biblical church discipline<sup>2</sup>. In the event that excommunication occurs, all remaining members of the church must agree to cut off all fellowship with the member or members excommunicated<sup>3</sup>. The purpose of excommunication is to promote God’s glory, maintain the purity of the Bride of Christ, and to reclaim a wayward person.

1 Ps. 116:15; 2 Cor. 5:8

2 Matt. 18:15–17

3 1 Cor. 5:9–13; Rom. 16:17

## Section VI: Formative Discipline of Members

Every disciple of Jesus Christ must submit to His authority and be under His instruction and/or correction<sup>1</sup>. This is administered to each one of His followers through the church. Formative church discipline is set forth through the teaching of God's Word, the example of godly Christian living, and the mutual submission and service to the multitude of members of the body of Christ. Formative discipline is a means of sanctification in the lives of individuals and the church collectively and has as its goal the instruction of disciples, the transformation of their lives, and their edification in love<sup>2</sup>.

- 1 Eph. 1:22–23; 5:23; Col. 1:18; 1 Pet. 5:6–7; Prov. 1:7; 15:33; Rom. 15:4; Job. 5:17; Prov. 3:11–12 2 Tim. 3:16–17; Rev. 3:19  
2 Rom. 15:4; 1 Cor. 10:11; 14:20; Eph. 6:4; 1 Thess. 4:1; 1 Tim. 1:5; Rom. 12:2; Eph. 4:1–3, 14–24; 1 Pet. 4:7–9

The Scriptures teach that it is the responsibility of believers to perform certain duties toward one another. These obligations are:

1. Love each other rather than being hypocritical or offensive (John 13:34–35; Rom. 12:9; 13:8–10).
2. Labor to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace (Eph. 4:3).
3. Seek the edification and spiritual maturity of the body (1 Cor. 14:12–26; Eph. 4:12, 29; 2:21–22).
4. Watch over and protect one another (Phil. 2:3–4).
5. Pray with and for one another (Jam. 5:16).
6. Gather for worship and service, rather than neglecting the assembly (Heb. 10:25; Acts 2:42).
7. Contend for the faith and purity of doctrine (Ps. 93:5; Zech. 14:2; 1 Cor. 14:33–40; 11:2; Jude 3).

## Section VII: Corrective Discipline of Members

There are, unfortunately, situations in which the failure of applying formative discipline makes corrective discipline necessary. Any member consistently neglectful of his or her duties or guilty of behavior by which the name of our Lord Jesus Christ may be dishonored, and so opposing the welfare of the church, shall be subject to the admonition, reproof, or rebuke of the Elders<sup>1</sup> and the corrective discipline of the church, according to Scripture. Corrective discipline becomes necessary when heretical doctrine and/or disorderly or scandalous conduct is exhibited in the church<sup>2</sup>. It cannot be stressed enough that the purpose of church discipline is the restoration of the offending party to the fellowship of the church.

- 1 1 Tim. 5:1–2; 2 Tim. 2:25–26; 4:2; Tit. 2:11–15; Luke 17:3; 1 Tim. 5:20; Tit. 1:13  
2 Matt. 18:15–18; Rom. 16:17–18; 1 Cor. 5:9–13; 2 Thess. 3:6, 14; 1 Tim. 1:3–5; 6:3–5; Tit. 3:10–11; 2 Pet. 2:1–3; 2 John 1:7–11

1. RESTRICTION—Any conduct on the part of a member which disturbs or damages the peace and/or testimony of the church may require that the offending party be excluded by action of the Elders from participating in certain activities of the church according to the gravity of the offense. This restriction shall be publicly announced to the congregation by the Elders and shall remain in force until the barred member gives profession and evidence of true repentance and change of conduct<sup>1</sup>. If the offender shows hopeful signs of repentance, including submission to the admonition of the Elders, it may still be necessary to exclude him or her for a time from some privileges of membership lest reproach be brought upon the church or others be emboldened to sin<sup>2</sup>. Those who humbly submit to the imposed discipline shall afterwards be wholly forgiven and publicly received back into the full fellowship of the church. Restoration of such a member to full fellowship will also be publicly announced to the congregation by Elders.

2. **CENSURE**—A censure is the public recognition of discipline. This may mean the implementation of certain stipulations designed to protect and aid the offending saint as well as provide an objective basis for the church to discern true repentance. Censures are enacted by the Elders of the church and require unanimous agreement among the Elders. In the event of a censure, the terms and conditions of censures must be read publically before the church by one of the Elders.
3. **COUNCIL OF APPEAL**—Any matter which threatens to cause dissension and injury to the welfare of the church, whether it be amongst the officers, or between the congregation and the officers, must be called to the attention of the Elders. If the Elders fail to resolve the difficulty so as to allay dissension, any such matter may be taken to a Council of Appeal. This Council shall be formed at the request of the Elders or by a two-thirds vote of the members present and voting at a duly called congregational meeting. The Council shall consist of the Elders and/or Deacons and an equal number of other members in good standing to be chosen by the congregation. If a member of the Council is unable to attend a meeting after the judicial process has begun, he may thereafter sit and hear the case but will be disqualified to vote on the final issue of the case. The congregation shall also appoint a chairman to preside at the meeting where testimony is given. The resolution of any matter shall require a two-thirds vote of a Council of Appeal. When a final decision of the Council of Appeal is announced to the congregation, that decision is final and the case is closed.
4. **EXCOMMUNICATION**—Excommunication is the strongest statement and final act of corrective church discipline. It shall be enacted with the fullest conformity to Scriptural precedent (see Article III, Section V, Paragraph 4). The ultimate goal of excommunication is the restoration of the offender to full membership and unity in the fellowship.
5. **RESTORATION**—It is the duty of the church to forgive and restore to membership those persons who give satisfactory evidence of penitence and repentance<sup>3</sup>. The Elders may review the status of those who have been excommunicated or suspended to judge whether the aims of the discipline have been accomplished.

1 2 Cor. 7:9; 2 Tim. 2:25; Luke 15:7

2 2 Pet. 3:17

3 2 Cor. 2:6–8; 7:9; Eph. 4:32; Gal. 6:1; 2 Pet. 3:9

We seek to conform our disciplinary procedures to the biblical principles of Matthew 18:15–18:

1. It is the duty of any member of this church who has knowledge of an erring member's heresy or misconduct to warn and correct the erring member in private, seeking his or her repentance and restoration (v. 15)
2. If the erring member does not heed this warning, the warning member shall again go to the erring member accompanied by one or two other members as witnesses to warn and correct, seeking repentance and restoration (v. 16).
3. If the erring member still refuses to heed the warning, the matter shall be brought to the attention of the Elders, who, upon careful and prayerful investigation, shall publicly announce it to the church and encourage the congregation to pray for repentance and restoration of the erring member (v. 17).
4. If the erring member refuses to heed the warnings of the Elders and the church, he or she shall be dismissed from the church and treated as an unbeliever. There shall be no appeal of the discipline process or the dismissal to any court. The congregation shall be encouraged to pray for the repentance and restoration of the erring member. It is clearly understood that the discipline process will continue to conclusion even if the erring member leaves the church or otherwise seeks to withdraw from membership (v. 18).

## Section VIII: Conflict Resolution

Conflict in the church can often cause division and/or harm relationships<sup>1</sup>, but in most cases it can and should be a redemptive opportunity that can be used to glorify God<sup>2</sup>. In the midst of interpersonal conflict, it is important to pursue peace, justice, and a mutually agreeable solution<sup>3</sup>. While an appropriate biblical response to conflict will typically be resolved privately<sup>4</sup> in some cases more people may have to be involved. Believers in the Lord Jesus Christ should seek the unity of the church and welfare of one another through the forgiveness and overlooking of minor offenses, and by negotiation, mediation, arbitration, and accountability<sup>6</sup>. As recipients of grace, it is characteristic of Christians to extend grace to one another without reliance on secular courts<sup>7</sup>. The church shall encourage the use of biblical principles to resolve disputes between itself and those outside the church, whether individuals or corporate entities. In the case of criminal matters, we have the responsibility to report such activity to the civil authorities<sup>8</sup>.

- 1 James 4:1-2
- 2 **James 1:2-4, 12**
- 3 1 Thess. 5:13b-15; Phil 2:4
- 4 Matt. 5:23-24; 18:15
- 5 Matt. 18:16-17
- 6 1 Pet. 4:8; Luke 17:3; Col. 3:13; Prov. 19:11; Gal. 6:1
- 7 **Rom. 12:18**; Matt. 5:25-26; 1 Cor. 6:1-8
- 8 Rom. 13:1-5

## Section IX: Meetings

Special meetings of church members may be called at any time by the Senior Pastor or Elders. Notice shall be given from the pulpit at least fourteen (14) days prior to the meeting and shall also be published in the regular church bulletin ~~on the~~ [for those two consecutive] Lord's Day[s] ~~immediately preceding the meeting.~~

1. ANNUAL CONGREGATIONAL MEETING—The church shall meet once a year for a special congregational meeting. The purpose of these annual meetings is to report and discuss finances and budgetary concerns, to elect and install church officers (see Article IV, Section III), and to provide information about the various ministries of the church.

## Section X: Types of Membership

1. REGULAR—All who are received into the membership of Redeemer Covenant Church according to the prerequisites (see Article III, Section I) and application procedures (see Article III, Section III), who fully recognize their duties (see Article III, Section II) and continue in regular attendance at stated worship services and meetings of the church, and who do not come under the corrective discipline of the church (see Article III, Section VII), shall be considered regular members in good standing and entitled to the rights and privileges of membership in the church unless their status has been changed by the conditions set forth above (see Article III, Sections V and VII). The membership status of persons with disabilities, the Elderly, missionaries, and others whose relationship to the church involves certain exceptions due to an inability to attend church services regularly, shall be determined in each case by the Eldership, subject to the approval of the congregation.

2. ASSOCIATE—Students and others temporarily residing in the local vicinity of the church who are members of an evangelical Protestant church may apply for associate membership. A letter of commendation will be sought from the applicant’s home church. Qualifications are identical to those for full membership as set out above, except that home church membership shall be retained. When absent from the area for extended periods of time, associate members will be temporarily excused from the responsibility of attending church services. While they are encouraged to attend and participate in members’ meetings, they will not be eligible to hold office in the church.
3. INACTIVE—Members become inactive by failing to attend church services for a prolonged period of time (to be determined in each case by the Elders) without announcement<sup>1</sup>, or by pursuing a transfer to another church home after completing an exit interview. Inactive members remain under the authority of the church, but may not have representation in congregational meetings nor be eligible for holding an office. Inactive members may be moved back to regular membership after meeting with the Elders and upon approval by the congregation.

<sup>1</sup> Heb. 10:24–26

## Section XI: Incorporation and Associations

This church is incorporated under the laws of the State of Ohio, so that it may own, provide and/or maintain a place of worship (including suitable real estate and buildings), receive, hold and disburse gifts, bequests and funds, and/or do all and sundry things necessary or incident to carry on such purpose.

1. CORPORATE MEMBERS—The corporation shall have no members. Any action which would otherwise require approval by a majority of all members shall only require approval of the Eldership. This does not limit the right of the corporation to refer to persons associated with the corporation as “church members” even though such persons are not members of the corporation, and no such reference in or outside of this constitution shall constitute anyone being a member, within the definitions of Title 17 in the State of Ohio Revised Code.
2. ASSOCIATIONS—The church reserves the right to associate with other like-minded churches and/or institutions in worship, fellowship, consultation, or cooperation. Upon recommendation of the officers, such affiliations may be entered by a vote of the congregation. Withdrawal from associations may be made effectual by the same procedure.

## Article IV: Oversight

### Section I: Authority and Polity

1. AUTHORITY—The Lord Jesus Christ is the Head of His Church<sup>1</sup>. His will as expressed in the Holy Scriptures, both Old and New Testaments, is the sole authority in matters of faith and practice<sup>2</sup>.
2. POLITY—We are an independent congregationalist church that is subject to no other ecclesiastical body<sup>3</sup>. Any voluntary associations with other bodies shall not infringe upon the rights of this church and its members.

<sup>1</sup> Col. 1:18; Eph. 1:22; 4:15; 5:23

<sup>2</sup> Is. 8:20; Ps. 19:7–11; Ps. 1:1–3; Rom. 15:4; Heb. 1:1–2; 2 Pet. 1:19–21; 2 Tim. 3:15b–17

<sup>3</sup> Acts 2:44–47; 5:11–14; 6:1–6; 9:31; 13:1; 15:41; Rom. 16:1, 5; 1 Cor. 16:19

## Section II: Summary of Church Offices

Jesus has ordained that individual churches should be blessed with the spiritual rule and ministry of specially appointed office bearers<sup>1</sup>. He governs the church through Spirit-empowered men whom He appoints and sets apart, endowing them with gifts and graces in order to accomplish His work<sup>2</sup>. It is the duty of the church to seek and discover those to whom the Lord Jesus Christ has imparted the necessary giftedness and qualifications for holding office.

- 1 John 21:17; Acts 11:30; 14:21–23; 15:2–6, 22–23; 16:4; 20:26–28; Phil. 1:1; 1 Tim. 3:1–13; 5:17, 21–22; Tit. 1:5–9; 1 Pet. 5:1–5  
2 1 Cor. 12:28; Eph. 4:4–13; 1 Pet. 4:10–11; Rom. 12:3–8

## Section III: Appointment of Church Officers

The appointment of Elders and Deacons within the local church is the responsibility of the local church under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. The Lord's appointment is recognized both by the inward conviction of the individual involved<sup>1</sup>, and by approval of the church observing the possession of those gifts and graces required by Scripture for the office concerned<sup>2</sup>.

Each member of the congregation has a spiritual responsibility to be informed about matters of oversight. It should be the desire of the congregation to be of one mind with regard to the nomination and appointment of office bearers.

- 1 1 Tim. 3:1; 1 Pet. 5:2; Acts 20:28  
2 1 Thess. 5:12; 1 Tim. 3:10; 2 Tim. 2:2; Acts 6:3

## Section IV: Tenure of Church Officers

The offices of Elder and Deacon do not carry with them a time restriction. We see no evidence in Scripture of them as temporary offices that are limited by terms. He who is called to be an Elder or Deacon in the church remains one for his entire life, unless he is removed due to disqualification or resignation. While Deacons may eventually become Elders, there is no scriptural precedent that indicates this is a necessary order or progression.

## Section V: Support of Church Officers

It is the duty of every member to respect the God-appointed officers of the church. The duties of church members towards their Elders and Deacons, as well as other ministers and teachers, are:

1. To pray for them; for their personal holiness, for their preaching and teaching preparation, and for divine utterance to unfold the whole counsel of the Scripture (Rom. 15:30; Eph. 6:18–20; Heb. 13:18).
2. To obey and submit to them in whatever admonition according to the sound interpretation of the Word of God (1 Cor. 16:16; 1 Thess. 5:12; Heb. 13:17).
3. To follow their example as warranted and expected by the Holy Scriptures (1 Cor. 4:16; 11:1; Phil. 3:17; Heb. 13:7).
4. To support and stand by them in trials and afflictions and to defend them in all good causes (Prov. 31:9; Luke 22:28–30; Rom. 12:15; 1 Cor. 12:26; Gal. 6:1–2).
5. To avoid slander and the exploiting their personal infirmities, acknowledging the advancement of the Gospel depends much on their good reputation (Ex. 22:28; Lev. 19:16; Ps. 15:2–4; Prov. 10:18; Eph. 4:31; Col. 3:8; 1 Pet. 2:1).

## Article V: Elders

### Section I: Elders

The Scriptures indicate that under normal circumstances there shall be a plurality of overseers in the church<sup>1</sup>. Subject to the will of the congregation, these men are called “bishops,” “Pastors,” or “Elders” because they are charged with the oversight of the ministry and resources of the church<sup>2</sup>. These men shall be received as gifts of Christ to His Church and set apart as Elders<sup>2</sup>.

- 1 1 Pet. 5:1–3; Tit. 1:5; Acts 14:23; Acts 20:17; Tim. 5:17; Acts 11:30; 15:2, 4; 16:4; Phil. 1:1  
2 Eph. 4:11–13; Tit. 1:5; 1 Cor. 12:7–11

### Section II: Senior Pastor

The Senior Pastor shall be recognized by the church as particularly gifted and called to the full-time vocational ministry of Pastor-Teacher, which includes shepherding and preaching. He shall be set apart for prayer and the study of the Word, and should, as far as is possible, be adequately maintained in material necessities, so as to be disentangled from the cares of a secular calling<sup>1</sup>.

The Senior Pastor shall seek to discharge all the functions of his office as set forth in the Scriptures (see Article V, Section V) and in keeping with the exercise of his own distinctive gifts of ministry. He shall preach on the Lord’s Day<sup>2</sup>, administer the ordinances/sacraments of baptism and the Lord’s Supper<sup>3</sup>, and perform such other duties as usually pertain to that office, or as set forth in the constitution.

In the absence or incapacity of the Senior Pastor, the Elders shall assume the responsibility for his duties. If necessary, they may delegate some of the responsibility after much prayerful consideration.

- 1 1 Cor. 9:9–10; 1 Tim. 5:17  
2 1 Cor. 16:2; Acts 20:7; Rev. 1:10  
3 Acts 2:38, 41; 8:12; 1 Cor. 11:27–34

### Section III: Associate Pastor

The church may call additional Pastors whose relationship to the Senior Pastor is that of associate. As is the case with the Senior Pastor, Associate Pastors must be recognized by the church as gifted men who are called to the ministry of Pastor-Teacher, either part-time or full-time. An Associate Pastor will also be set apart for prayer and the study of the Word, and should also be supported financially to the extent his services are needed <sup>1</sup> He will assist the Senior Pastor in the regular duties and shall be responsible for any other duties which pertain to the office of Pastor (see Article V, Section II).

In the absence or incapacity of the Senior Pastor for defined periods of time (such as sabbatical or illness), the Associate Pastor(s) shall assume the responsibility for his duties under the oversight of the Elders.

- 1 1 Cor. 9:9–10; 1 Tim. 5:17

### Section IV: Qualifications and Requirements for Eldership

An Elder shall be blameless as a steward of God and not a new convert. These men, if married, are to be the husband of one wife and rule their households well. They are to be patient, temperate, sober-minded, vigilant, prudent, orderly, respectable, and hospitable. Elders must not be violent or contentious, not given to wine, not covetous nor greedy. They should be forbearing and gentle, just and fair, holy and devout, self-controlled, and have a good reputation with outsiders<sup>1</sup>.

While Elders are responsible for shepherding the flock, so they also shall be members and conscientiously affirm an agreement with the statement of faith, constitution, and covenant of the church. Moreover, they must affirm the teaching standards set forth by the Eldership in order to become an Elder. The doctrinal standards for church membership are not as detailed as those of the Eldership. In order to safeguard the flock from erroneous or even false teaching, the standards for oversight may even involve secondary or tertiary theological issues. If an Elder changes his perspectives on those standards at any time, he is under spiritual and moral obligation to make this fact known to the church.

<sup>1</sup> 1 Tim. 3:1-7; Tit. 1:6-9

## Section V: Duties and Privileges of Elders

The Elders shall be responsible for conducting worship services, including the administration of baptism and the Lord's Supper. They are to equip the saints for the work of ministry, mobilize the church for evangelism and missions, encourage and contend for sound doctrine and practice, and admonish and correct error. ~~They may also be responsible for performing marriage ceremonies and officiating at funerals in accordance with the laws of God and the State.~~ {stated below}

While every Elder should be right and able to teach, some may be more engaged in shepherding/Pastoring (counseling and admonition) or governing (administrative duties) than formal and public teaching or preaching. The Elders are further to ensure that all who minister the Word to the congregation (including those who are not Elders or Elders from another church), share the fundamental convictions as expressed in the church's doctrinal statement.

The Elders will have particular responsibility in examining and instructing prospective church members and overseeing the process of church discipline (see Article III), examining and recommending all prospective candidates for office (see Articles IV through VII), and overseeing the work of the Deacons and other officers (see Articles VI and VII) and ministries of the church (see Article VIII). They may also establish ministry positions or committees to assist them in fulfilling responsibilities.

Elders have primary responsibility for the employment, supervision, and evaluation of staff members. They may also propose funding for staff positions (excluding a vocational Pastor's direct influence upon his own position). Church members must give approval of candidates for paid Pastoral staff members. The scope and approval of job descriptions for any staff position shall reside in the hands of those with hiring authority for that position.

Other responsibilities of Elders may be performing marriage ceremonies and funerals, hospital and hospice visitations, filling the pulpit in other churches and ministries, open-air preaching, or participating in civil prayer meetings.

## Section VI: Calling, Selection, and Ordination of Elders

Elders are providentially responsible for the spiritual ministry of the church, the implementation of discipline, and the oversight of the souls of church members. This service is of great importance and prospective overseers should consider the call with great sobriety as they will have to give an account to God for their ministry<sup>1</sup>.

**VOCATIONAL PASTORS**—If and when the Senior or Associate pastorate of this church becomes vacant, it shall be the duty of the Elders to prayerfully consider the fulfillment of lasting duties ad interim, and to recommend for vocational office one who possesses the requirements set forth in Article V, Section IV. Ideally, the candidate for such office will be a church member in good standing who is already exercising his gifts. In the event the Elders must select someone who is not a member, a search committee will be formed to locate a prospective candidate. The Elders should seek recommendations and involvement from the general membership in the nomination process. The search committee, comprised of an equal number of Elders and laypersons selected by the congregation, shall communicate progress with the congregation regularly and at reasonable intervals. A candidate shall provide a personal doctrinal statement, preach a minimum of two Sundays and participate in a church-wide meet and greet in order to give the congregation an opportunity to examine him.

When the Elders intend to present a Senior or Associate Pastor, they shall notify the congregation from the pulpit at least fourteen (14) days in advance and also publish a notification in the regular church bulletin on the Lord's Day immediately following the announcement. Members are encouraged to submit questions, comments, and/or suggestions concerning the individual being considered. Submissions should be in writing on the provided form and given to an Elder at least three business days before the leadership intends to appoint the individual as Pastor.

The Elders shall then call a meeting, which will be announced from the pulpit at least fourteen (14) days in advance, mailed to each member, and published in the regular church bulletin leading up to the meeting. The candidate will be presented to the congregation by the Elders for affirmation upon a 3/4 majority decision. After the Senior or Associate Pastor has been duly appointed a written call shall be tendered to him, signed by the Elders. This document shall include the church constitution and covenant along with a financial agreement.

**LAY ELDERS**—The existing Pastor or Elder(s) shall recognize and consider for Eldership those who are already functioning in the use of their gifts; and call a council to examine the qualifications of such candidates. All prospective officers must be a member of the church for a period of at least one year before being placed in nomination. The council, during a period of internship, shall look into the soundness of a candidate's conversion, the godliness of his walk, the soundness of his doctrine, the type(s) and degree of his giftedness, and the extent of his training. Afterward, the Elders shall bring the candidate before the church for recognition, appointment, and ordination to service (see Article III, Section IX). This shall be done at a regular worship service by the prayer of the entire congregation and the laying on of hands by the existing Elders<sup>2</sup>.

1 Heb. 13:17

2 Acts 6:6; 1 Tim. 5:22; 4:14; 2 Tim. 1:6;

An Elder is permitted to resign if he is unable to fulfill his commitments due to declining health, familial responsibilities, relocation, or any other unspecified issue to be judged by the other Elders as a case-by-case situation. An Elder who is unable to accomplish his pastoral tasks should relinquish his duties or take a leave of absence from his office until he is able to satisfy the requirements. A request for a leave of absence shall include the reasons for and timeframe of the absence and must be agreed upon by 2/3 of the church at a congregational meeting. While on leave, the officer relinquishes all authority and responsibilities of Eldership.

An Elder may be removed from office if he neglect his duty, be guilty of habitual sinful behavior and/or criminal activity, apostatize or fall into error, or hold to theological and/or ministerial views contrary to the doctrinal standards of the Eldership (see Article V, Section IV). When an Elder is removed from office due to disqualification and refuses to repent, the termination of office shall be accompanied by a public rebuke, and notice shall be made before the congregation at a regular worship service<sup>1</sup>.

In the case of the Senior or Associate Pastor(s), the same standards apply as with the Lay Elders. However, full-time vocational Elders who have been employed for at least five (5) years may have the opportunity to take a paid sabbatical leave for a period of up to three (3) months. In order for our Pastors to thrive in ministry and for the sake of the church's well-being, we believe that voluntary time away for education or training, spiritual refreshment, and/or the avoidance of burnout is suitable for vocational Elders. Sabbatical leave must be applied for in writing and shall include a clear statement of purpose, the specific timeframe and location of absence, and the intended benefits of the Pastor's and church's ministry. The Elder on sabbatical will receive his normal salary, but must provide demonstrable fruit of his leave (e.g. a book, a degree, or a written summary of activities) upon his return. Ministry expenses (e.g. travel, tuition, materials, etc.) will be determined by the Elders on a case by case basis. There must be a five (5) year interval between sabbaticals and sufficient funds must be determined and acknowledged by both the Treasurer and Elders. Such leave is not cumulative.

1 1 Tim. 5:20

## Section VIII: Meetings

**MONTHLY ELDER MEETING**—Each month, the Elders shall meet with one another for prayer and to discuss various ministry-related issues. Among such concerns are administrative details, liturgy, teaching schedules, curriculum, benevolence, and financial matters. A Deacon shall also be present at the Elders meeting in order to report pertinent information to the Elders and to represent and inform the other Deacons. Elders' meetings are held for the oversight of the ministry of the church, however, for the sake of transparency, members are welcome to attend as observers. In the event that highly sensitive or private information is discussed, the Elders reserve the right to withhold such information.

**ELDER RETREATS/CONFERENCES**—The Elders shall occasionally meet together for prayer retreats and/or ministry conferences in order to build relationships with one another and be equipped and encouraged for the work of the ministry of the church. In the case of traveling expenses or conference admission, the Senior Pastor and/or Elders shall utilize any funds provided in the church's budget upon discussion and affirmation with the Treasurer and the rest of the congregation.

## Article VI: Deacons

## Section I: Deacons

There are also those in church leadership who are responsible for the business and secular affairs of the church and operate under the supervision of the Elders. These men shall be received as gifts of Christ to His Church and set apart as Deacons. Deacons are called such because they have the special duty to serve the church.

## Section II: Qualifications and Requirements for Deaconship

The Deacons shall be tested and found to be above reproach—men of dignity, those who hold to the mystery of faith with a clear conscience. They are to rule their households well, and if married, their wives shall be dignified, not malicious gossips, but temperate and faithful in all things. Deacons shall not be double-tongued, not addicted to much wine, and not fond of sordid gain<sup>1</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> 1 Tim. 3:8–13

## Section III: Duties and Privileges of Deacons

Deacons shall assist and support the Elders, care for the temporal needs of church members, attend to the accommodations for public worship, and encourage those who are able to help others. The Deacons shall be responsible for a benevolence fund and report on its use to the Elders by request. Total receipts and disbursements shall be reported to the Treasurer, and the rest of the congregation shall be made aware only of the financial details at the annual congregational meeting (see Article III, Section IX). With the agreement and oversight of the Elders, the Deacons may establish unpaid administrative positions or committees of members to assist them in fulfilling their responsibilities in the church. Non-members who specialize in a particular field may also be permitted to serve under the direction of the Deacons for the purposes of administrative consultation.

The Deacons shall not encumber, transfer, sell, or purchase any real estate or resources for the church except by the express consent of the Elders and authorization by the church.

## Section IV: Calling, Ordination, and Selection of Deacons

The church shall recognize men who are particularly gifted in service and set them apart as Deacons. All persons interested in diaconal ministry must be a member of the church for a period of at least one year before being placed in nomination. The Elders shall look into the legitimacy of a candidate's conversion, the godliness of his walk, the soundness of his doctrine, and the type(s) and degree of his giftedness. Upon testing and approval, the Elders shall bring the candidate before the church for recognition, appointment, and ordination to service (see Article III, Section IX). This shall be done at a regular worship service by the prayer of the entire congregation and the laying on of hands by the Elders<sup>1</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> Acts 6:6; 1 Tim. 5:22; 4:14; 2 Tim. 1:6;

## Section V: Resignation and Removal of Deacons

A Deacon is permitted to resign if he is unable to fulfill his commitments due to declining health, familial responsibilities, relocation, or any other unspecified issue to be judged by the Elders as a case-by-case situation. Any Deacon who is unable to accomplish his duties should relinquish his office or take a leave of absence from his leadership role until he is able to satisfy the requirements. A request for a leave of absence shall include the reasons for and timeframe of the absence and must be agreed upon by the Elders and 2/3 of the church at a congregational meeting. While on leave, the officer relinquishes all authority and responsibilities of the diaconate.

A Deacon may be removed from office if he neglect his duty, be guilty of habitual sinful behavior and/or criminal activity, apostatize or fall into error, or hold to theological and/or ministerial views contrary to the doctrinal standards of the church (see Appendix A).

## Section VI: Meetings

MONTHLY DEACON MEETING—Each month, the Deacons shall meet with one another for prayer and to discuss various ministry-related issues. Among such concerns are benevolence, administrative details, scheduling, and financial matters. The Deacon's meetings shall normally be held with the Senior Pastor in attendance, however, if he is unable to attend, the Deacons shall be debriefed and a written record shall be supplied to him.

## Article VII: Other Offices

### Section I: Board of Trustees

The board of trustees shall consist of at least three officers of the corporation who shall perform such legal and business transactions as are designated to them by Chapter 1702 (non-profit corporation law) of the State of Ohio Revised Code. In the discharge of their duties, they shall act only at the direction of the Elders and Deacons of the church.

### Section II: Appointment

The officers of the corporation shall be chosen by and shall serve at the petition of the Elders upon individual consent. Each officer shall hold his office until he shall resign or become disqualified to serve, or until his successor be appointed and installed. At the discretion of the Elders, the corporation may also appoint other subordinate officers as necessary.

### Section III: Vacancy or Inability to Act

VACANCY—A vacancy of office by death, resignation, removal, disqualification, or any other reason shall be temporarily filled by a remaining board member until the Elders appoint a new officer. INABILITY TO ACT—In the case of absence or inability to act with regard to corporate officers or those authorized to serve in place of a corporate officer, the Elders may delegate the powers or responsibilities of such officer to any other officer or member by appointment (see Article VII, Sections II and III).

## Article VIII: Ministries, Councils, and Committees

The church shall have a number of ministries, including but not limited to those of family ministry, outreach and evangelism, missions, library ministry, and a mercy and benevolence committee. Any councils or committees that are formed shall be done so under the express oversight and approval of the Elders.

## **Article IX: Assets and Property**

All checks, drafts, demands for money, notes, and written contracts of the corporation shall be signed by such officers or agents as have been assigned by the board of trustees.

The church shall have the ability and opportunity to acquire, either by gift or purchase, any property as is permitted by the laws of the State of Ohio and is deemed necessary by the Elders for the functioning of the church. We shall have the power to dispose of such property by mortgage, bill of sale, deed, or otherwise. All property shall be held in the name of the church.

If the church is divided, all property and assets are to be held in trust by those who abide by this constitution for the continued operation and function of the church. In the case of a dissolution of the church, the property and all assets shall be sold. All current and long-term promissory obligations shall be paid immediately, with the remaining funds being disbursed to one or more missionaries or Christian organizations agreed upon by the congregation.

## **Article X: Indemnification**

If a legal claim or criminal allegation is made against a person because he or she is or was an officer, employee, or agent of the church, Covenant Community Church shall offer indemnification against charges and costs sustained in defending against the claim if the Elders conclude that the person acted in good faith with the care and in the manner of a prudent person behaving with reasonable cause and in the best interest of the church. This indemnification shall include costs for attorney fees and shall occur as the expenses are incurred and in advance of the final disposition of the action, suit, or proceeding. This indemnification shall be available to any corporate and/or church officer or staff member made or thereafter to be made a part of any action, suit, or proceeding; or were corporate and/or church officers or staff members at the time of the event(s) alleged in any such action, suit, or proceeding.

If a majority of the Elders is not available for a determination of indemnification due to the number of Elders seeking indemnification, the required determination may be made by the membership or by special counsel selected by the membership.

## **Article XI: Provisions and Amendments**

The constitution, doctrinal statement, or other church documents may be amended at any meeting by a 3/4 majority affirmation of those in attendance, provided that the text of such amendment and the basis for its consideration have been approved by the Elders and announced and explained from the pulpit at least fourteen (14) days in advance of the meeting, and provided to all members in writing at least seven (7) days prior. Any revisions to documents shall be made available to all church members by the Elders or Deacons.

## **Appendix A: Doctrinal Statement**

## **The Bible**

We believe the Bible to be the inspired, the only infallible, authoritative Word of God. We believe that God's Word in its entirety is given to His Church in the 66 books of the Old and New Testaments and that it is the only rule and is completely sufficient for all of life and faith. (Matt. 4:4; 2 Tim. 3:16)

## **The Godhead**

We believe that there is one God, eternally existent in three persons, Father, Son and Holy Spirit—the same in substance and equal in power and glory. (Deut. 6:4; Isa. 45:5; Gen. 1:2; Ps. 2; John 1:1, 10:30, 14:16–20)

## **Jesus**

We believe in the deity of the Lord Jesus Christ, in the conception of His body by the Holy Spirit and His birth by the virgin Mary, in His sinless life, in His miracles, in His death in our place and for our sins, in His bodily resurrection, in His ascension to the right hand of the Father, and in His personal and physical return in power and glory which will bring about the consummation of all things. (John 1:1; Matt. 1:18–20; Heb. 4:15; Acts 2:22; 1 Tim. 1:15; 1 Cor. 15:20; John 16:16; Acts 1:9; Rev. 1:7)

## **The Holy Spirit**

We believe in the power and presence of the Holy Spirit, that He personally dwells within and guides those who are true believers, and empowers them for service, giving to them various gifts and producing within their lives the fruits of Christian character. We believe that the Holy Spirit, at the moment they are regenerated, simultaneously baptizes each believer into Christ and comes to dwell within the believer. The filling of the Holy Spirit should be a continuous and repeated action. (John 14:16–17; Phil. 2:13; 1 Cor. 12:13; Gal. 5:22–23; Col. 2:12–13; Eph. 5:18)

## **Man**

We believe that the first man, Adam, was created directly by God and not by any process of evolution; particularly not by any process that involves death (such as natural selection which is taught as the basis of Darwinism). We believe that he was created in the image and likeness of God, possessing personality and holiness, and that he was a free moral agent possessing the power of choice, and that the purpose of his existence was to glorify God. We believe that due to man's will being marred by the Fall he is now in need of regeneration by the Holy Spirit in order to make the choice to trust in Christ for salvation. His will is free and yet bound by its fallen nature to choose what its nature dictates. (Gen. 1:26–27, 2:7; Eph. 4:24; Jer. 13:23, Ezek. 36:25–27; Eph. 2:1–3; John 3:7–8)

## **Salvation**

We believe that salvation is by grace, that is, it is an undeserved kindness that God gives to His people. We believe that salvation is through faith, that is, that man has absolutely no merit in his salvation but when the Spirit of God impresses upon man's conscience the weight of his sin and the holiness of his Creator, man recognizes God's right to punish him and comes under the true conviction of his sin, and then falls upon the mercy of God that is in Christ and rests in the promise of God to redeem those who put their trust in Him. (Eph. 2:8–9; John 16:7–8; Rom. 7:13–14; Acts 2:37–38; Eph. 3:16–19; Rom. 10:13)

We believe that God regenerates and justifies the sinner and that repentance and sanctification always flow out of true faith. **Justification** is a *judicial act absolving from punishment and restoring to divine favor*. **Regeneration** is *the impartation of divine life effecting a change in the believer's nature*. By the operation of the Holy Spirit through the Word, we are given a disposition to obey God. The Holy Spirit who performs this also witnesses to this experience. (Rom. 3:21–30; Eph. 2:4–6; **Rom. 8:11–16**; Eph. 4:1; Colossians 3:1–5; John 3:6)

## **Sanctification**

We believe sanctification is the work of grace begun by the Holy Spirit at the moment of regeneration and continues progressively until physical death. We believe it is not instantaneous nor is it a separate work after salvation—not a second work of grace. We believe the old nature is not eradicated until after death, but that we must constantly guard against its influence in our lives. (Rom. 8:29; Eph. 4:13; Col. 3:10; Rom. 12:2; Rom. 7)

## **The Church**

We believe in the oneness of the church of Christ, composed of all Spirit-regenerated believers, and that these believers both living and dead, shall be caught up together at His second coming. We believe that the One Church or **Universal Church** should be recognized by all believers as the Body of Christ, regardless of doctrinal differences (*in Essentials—Unity, In Non-Essentials—Liberty, In all things—Charity*). However, we also believe that among the **Visible Church**, which is comprised of all who profess faith in Christ, that there exists the **Invisible Church** or those who have been truly Born Again. We cannot always tell from outward profession, those who are truly saved but we know that “the Lord knows those who are His.”

We believe that the **Universal Church** is made up of many **Local Churches** where the ministry of the Word and the Sacraments must be present and that individual members must pledge their committed support and fellowship in the mission and ministry of that local body. The **Local Church** is also the place for discipline and accountability of individual Christians who are committed to that ministry and through it to one another.

### **Baptism and the Lord’s Supper**

We believe the Christian sacraments are outward rites appointed by Christ to be administered in each church, not as means to salvation, but as visible signs of the facts and realities of salvation. (Luke 22:19; 1 Cor. 11:23–25; Matt. 28:19; Rom. 6:3; Col. 2:11–12)

We believe in water baptism as Christ has commanded as a part of His “Great Commission” to the New Testament Church and that it is to be administered to believers only. We believe that immersion is the way described in the New Testament as the mode of baptism. (**Matt. 28:18–20**; Acts 2:38, 8:36–38)

The Lord's Supper is an ordinance instituted by Christ, for observance by His followers until He returns. It consists in partaking of the consecrated emblems of bread and wine, and symbolizes the death and suffering of Christ for the remission of our sins and our continual dependence upon Him for our sustenance. The Lord's Table should be open to all that are in right relationship with God, regardless of denomination. (1 Cor. 11:28)

We believe both ordinances are *means of grace* given to the Church by God and are only effective from obedience in faith. God strengthens and encourages His people through them. As Charles Hodge explains, “*The means of grace are not intended to include every means by which God may edify Christians, but are the ordinary channels he has ordained for this purpose and are communicated to Christians supernaturally by the Holy Spirit.*”

### **Last Things**

We believe in the literal, physical return of the Lord Jesus Christ at the end of the age when He will bring all of His people, living and dead, to Himself. He will judge the unbelieving world and consummate His work of Redemption and the establishment of His eternal kingdom, including the creation of the New Heavens and New Earth. Upon the return of Christ every person who ever lived will stand before Him in judgment and the just (those who have trusted in Christ) will live forever in the presence of God with no more sickness, sorrow, suffering or shame. At that time, the bodies of the righteous dead will be raised and the living believers will be changed so that both will have literal, spiritual and immortal bodies like Christ's own glorious body. The unjust (those who have not believed) will be cast into the lake of fire where their conscious torment and separation from the Presence and glory of the Lord will be eternal. (1 Thess. 4:16–17; Matt. 25:31–46; **Rev. 20:11–15**; 1 Cor. 15:51–54; 2 Thess. 1:9)

### **Marriage**

We believe that marriage is a sacred institution ordained of God in the time of man's innocence and that it is the mutual union of one man and one woman. It is morally binding so long as both shall live, and that therefore it cannot be dissolved by a decree of a civil tribunal, except on evidence that one party is guilty of adultery or in the case of desertion by an unbelieving spouse. In the case of either situation the innocent party is free from further matrimonial obligations and justly entitled to marry again, but the guilty party has no such right. We deny the right of marriage to both parties who have been divorced for causes other than adultery or abandonment (Gen. 2:18–25; Eph. 5:22–33; **Heb. 13:4**; Matt. 5:32; 1 Cor. 7:15)

## **Appendix B: Church Covenant**