

Christ Reformed Church

CONSTITUTION AND BY-LAWS

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I. PREAMBLE

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

II. STATEMENT OF DOCTRINE

We at Christ Reformed Church regard *Westminster Confession of Faith* as excellent, though not inspired, expressions of the teaching of the Word of God. Because we acknowledge the Word of God written to be the supreme authority in all matters of faith, morals, and order, we adopt this historic document as our doctrinal standard. For the sake of unity, all church officers are required to hold a good faith subscription to this confession.

A. Exceptions

We have adopted the view of the Free Presbyterian Church on the subject of Christian Baptism which is summarized as follows...

"Christ Reformed Church, under Christ the Great King and Head of the Church, Realizing that bitter controversy raging around the mode and proper subjects of the ordinance of Christian baptism has divided the Body of Christ when that Body should have been united in Christian love and Holy Ghost power to stem the onslaughts and hell-inspired assaults of modernism, hereby affirms that each member of Christ Reformed Church shall have liberty to decide for himself which course to adopt on these controverted issues, each member giving due honor in

love to the views held by differing brethren, but none espousing the error of baptismal regeneration."

III. MEMBERSHIP

A. Reception of Members

Members shall be received by the statement of their faith, their letter from another church of like faith, or restoration after discipline upon satisfactory evidence being given of Scriptural repentance and confession to the church. If the applicant is, or has been, a member of another church, special effort will be made to determine the person's standing in that church and his or her reasons for leaving. If a former church raises an objection that the Elders consider valid, the applicant may be denied membership at their discretion.

If another church has disciplined one of its members, and that person subsequently comes to our church, the Elders will decide whether to honor the discipline of the other church after due consultation with the person concerned and after all appropriate information is sought from the disciplining church.

Membership begins when the covenant membership vows have been taken. Our membership vows are:

1. Do you believe the Bible, consisting of the Old and New Testaments, to be the inspired and inerrant Word of God, and its doctrine of salvation through faith in Jesus Christ to be the perfect and only true way for a man to be saved?
2. Do you confess that because of your sinfulness, you abhor and humble yourself before God, and that you trust for salvation, not in yourself, but in the Lord Jesus Christ alone?
3. Do you acknowledge Jesus Christ as your sovereign Lord, and do you promise, in reliance on the grace of God, to serve Him with all that is in you, to forsake the world, to mortify the deeds of the flesh, and to lead a godly life?
4. Will you be a faithful member of this congregation, share in its worship and ministry through your prayers and gifts as you are able, offer your study and service, and so fulfill your calling to be a disciple of Jesus Christ?
5. Will you devote yourself to the church's teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers?
6. Do you agree to submit in the Lord to the government of Christ Reformed Church and, in case you should be found delinquent in doctrine or practice, to heed its discipline?

When these vows are taken, the congregation will respond with "Amen" when they are asked:

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

B. Communicant Members

The Elders of the church recognize, though admitting all persons into membership who meet the qualifications of Section I above, that the head of the household is responsible before God for the spiritual condition of that household. The head of the household therefore makes recommendations to the Elders concerning members of his household with regard to the Lord's Supper. Under the headship of Christ, the administration of church sacraments (or ordinances) remains with the Elders.

C. Non-Communicate Members

Children of member households who have not yet come to the Lord's Table, are recognized by the Elders of the church to be non-communicant members.

D. Business Meetings

Members shall be apprised in writing of business meetings when a vote is to be taken any time prior to the date of the said business meeting.

E. Inactive Members

Unless determined otherwise by the Elders, members absent from four consecutive Lord's Day services are automatically considered 'inactive'. Members who are in the process of transfer are also considered to be 'inactive members'. Inactive members are considered to be members of the church but may not participate in a vote should a vote be called for by the elders.

F. Release of Membership

1. A person's membership in the visible church *ordinarily* terminated in one of three ways:

a. By Physical Death

When a member of the Church is removed from our midst by death, His/her name shall automatically be removed from the membership roll.

b. By Transfer

If requested, the Elders will grant for a departing member in good standing, a letter of transfer to the fellowship of another church. No such letter may be given for a member who is at the time under the corrective discipline of this church; rather, the church requesting a letter shall be notified of the discipline. The Elders may refuse, on a case-by-case basis, to grant a letter of transfer to any church which is, in their judgment, disloyal to "the faith which was once for all delivered unto the saints" or which does not exercise godly care over its members.

Members seeking transfer are to follow the following steps:

- i. Before a member absents themselves from Lord's Day services, a member seeking to leave the church is to request a meeting with the Elders

in which he will state his desire and reasons for leaving.

ii. The Elders will give permission for the member to begin visiting other churches as long as the member is not already under discipline and there are no known issues between them and others in the congregation (i.e. Matt. 18 process).

iii. Between the time that a member is given permission to visit other churches and the time said member joins another church the member is considered an 'inactive member' (See 'D' above).

iv. Members will have 6 months from the time of their meeting with the Elders to have their membership transferred to another church. After this time, at the Elders discretion, the member could be dismissed from membership.

The failure for a member to follow these steps may result in dismissal (see 'd' below).

c. By Excommunication

According to the teaching of Scripture, a congregation must remove from its fellowship and visible membership one who insists on teaching or holding a heretical doctrine or who blatantly and persistently conducts oneself in a manner inconsistent with one's Christian profession (Mt. 18:15-20; 1 Cor. 5:1ff). Excommunication is a last resort, to be used only after all other means of reclaiming the offending party have been exhausted. Its ultimate purpose is to promote the glory of God, to maintain the purity of Christ's church, and to reclaim a wayward person.

The Elders must be in agreement for a member may be brought before the church for excommunication.

d. By Dismissal

Dismissal is the removal of a person from the membership roles of the church without a trial. A member who has been dismissed is considered to be outside of the visible body of Christ and cut off from Holy Communion.

Members under discipline may not be dismissed.

Below are examples of situations where a member may be dismissed from membership:

1. If members fail to follow the appropriate steps for transfer as outlined above (see b).
2. If members join themselves to another church which the Elders judge to be disloyal to "the faith which was once for all delivered unto the saints" or which does not exercise godly care over its members.
3. If a member joins themselves to another church and they refuse to transfer membership.
4. If a member can no longer be located.

Before a member is dismissed from membership, the Elders shall make a public announcement of their intent to dismiss the member. If another member makes an accusation that the member to be dismissed has committed a sin against him, then the dismissal will not go forward so that Matthew 18:15-20 can be followed.

Unanimous agreement among the Elders is necessary before a member may be dismissed from the membership.

IV. SELECTION OF DEACONS AND ELDERS

A. Deacons

1. Calling a Deacon

Deacon candidates are nominated by the Elders, and must be qualified according to the scriptures (1 Timothy 3:8-13). After given a time to prayerfully consider a deacon candidate, a vote will be taken from each head of household in membership.

Upon an approval of at least two thirds majority, the deacon candidate will be ordained by the Elders through laying on of hands and prayer.

Deacons serve life terms or until death or dismissal.

2. Dismissing a Deacon

A deacon may be dismissed from office by the Elders if at any time he fails to meet the qualifications for the office (1 Timothy 3:8-13) or if he communicates to the Elders his desire to be dismissed from office.

B. Elders (Pastors)

1. Calling an Elder

Elder candidates are nominated by the Elders, and must be qualified according to the scriptures (1 Timothy 3:1-7, Titus 1:5-9). After given time to prayerfully consider an Elder candidate for ordination into office, a vote will be taken from each head of household in membership.

Upon an approval of at least two thirds majority, Elder candidates will be presented to the presbytery for examination and ordination.

Elders serve life terms or until death or dismissal.

2. Dismissing an Elder

All authority to dismiss an Elder from office is vested in the local Session (Board of Elders).

V. CHURCH DISCIPLINE

Discipline may be occasioned by any Scriptural cause, including, but not limited to, teaching doctrine contrary to the Word of God as summarized in the Westminster Confession of Faith and this constitution, unrepentant, sinful behavior as described by the Bible, or unwillingness to reconcile with an aggrieved brother or sister. All discipline will be conducted in Christian love for the purpose of complete restoration, with the only reason for excommunication being the refusal to repent (Matt 18:15-17, 1Cor 5:1-4, James 5:19-20).

All disciplinary actions require the approval of all of the Elders.

A. Contrary Teaching

If a member deliberately persists in the propagation of serious doctrinal error contrary to Scripture, or attempts to sow discord among the Body, the Elders will confront the member in love and with patience according to the Word of God (I Cor. 1:10-4:21; Titus 3:10). If, after receiving admonition from the Elders, a member persists in such behavior, the Elders shall report the situation to the church at a specially called meeting.

B. Unrepentant, Sinful Behavior

Some misconduct on the part of a member is so detrimental to the unity, holiness, and testimony of the church that the Lord requires public reproof to be accompanied by the suspension of some or all of the privileges of membership appropriate to the nature and gravity of the offense (Rom. 16:17-20; II Thess. 3:14-15; 1 Corinthians 5). Upon learning of such behavior, the Elders shall confront the member in love and with patience according to the Word of God. If, after receiving admonition from the Elders, a member persists in such behavior, the Elders shall report the situation to the church at a specially called meeting.

C. Formal Disciplinary Meeting

Should the Elders deem it necessary to convene a specially called disciplinary meeting, the Elders shall report their findings and previous disciplinary actions taken. After having presented their findings the offending member, if present, is allowed to speak. If reconciliation is not achieved, a vote is to be taken by the male heads of households for the excommunication (see 3.B.c) of the offending member. If two thirds majority vote in favor of excommunication, the offending member is to be excommunicated.

VI. PROPERTY RIGHTS AND DISSOLUTION

The title to all personal and real property of the church shall be in the name of the corporation. In case of dissension, the title to all church property, real and personal, shall remain with that group abiding by this Constitution and By-laws.

VII. AFFILIATION

Christ Reformed Church is unaffiliated with any particular denomination.

VIII. AMENDMENTS

This Constitution may be amended through unanimous consent of the Elders. Heads of households will be notified in writing or by public announcement of any amendments.

We confess that this constitution is a fallible work of fallible men and, if obedience to Scripture requires it, may be set aside without the process of amendment by the unanimous judgment of the Elders.