

## **The Constitution of Christ Reformed Church**

**Ratified by the Congregation of Christ Reformed Church on 4/12/2015**

### **Preamble**

We the members of Christ Reformed Church, Lawrenceville, Georgia, do ordain and establish the following articles, to which we voluntarily submit ourselves:

### **Article I**

#### **Name**

The name of this church shall be CHRIST REFORMED CHURCH of Lawrenceville, Georgia.

### **Article II**

#### **Purpose**

The purpose of this church is to glorify the God of the Scriptures in promoting His worship, edifying saints, and evangelizing sinners. To this end we are committed to proclaiming the whole counsel of God especially His glorious gospel of grace in Jesus Christ throughout the world and to defending the "faith once delivered unto the saints" (Jude 3).

### **Article III**

#### **Articles of Faith**

We do hereby adopt as a reasonable expression of our faith the 1689 London Confession of Faith. This confession of faith gives a concise statement of biblical doctrine. In no way is it equal to the infallible authority of the Word of God. Nevertheless, it is an assistance to us in controversy, a confirmation in faith, and a means of edification in righteousness. In this Confession the members of our church will have a body of divinity in small compass and by means of Scriptural proofs will be ready to give a reason for the hope that is in them (I Peter 3:15).

### **Article IV**

#### **Members**

##### **SECTION 1. REQUIREMENTS FOR MEMBERSHIP**

Any person who professes repentance toward God and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ, who has been baptized upon profession of his faith, and who expresses substantial agreement with the doctrines, aims, and government of this church, shall be eligible for membership. If the applicant has been a member of another evangelical church, a letter of inquiry into his or her standing with that church will be sent before final acceptance is made.

A. CONFESION OF FAITH—Any person who meets the above mentioned requirements shall request membership to one of the Elders. The Elders shall then fix a time and place for meeting with the applicant who shall attend and be questioned as to his or her basic Christian experience, doctrinal beliefs, and seriousness of intention to wholeheartedly support the ministry of this church.

B. BY LETTER—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 Christ Reformed 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.

## **SECTION 2. FORMS OF MEMBERSHIP**

A. REGULAR—All who are received into the membership of the church on the above mentioned conditions shall be considered members in good standing until such status is changed by one of the conditions set forth in Article IV, Section 4.

B. ASSOCIATE—The membership status of invalids, Christian workers, and others whose relationship to the church involves exceptional circumstances, shall be determined in each case by the Elders, subject to the approval of the congregation.

C. INACTIVE—Members become Inactive in one of two ways. 1) Members who fail to attend church for 4 consecutive Lord's Days without the approval of the Elders are automatically moved to Inactive status or 2) Members who are in the process of transferring to another church home and have completed the exit interview (Section 4.b) are Inactive Members.

Inactive members remain under the ecclesiastical authority of the church but may not vote in congregational meetings.

Inactive members may be reinstated into active membership by the unanimous consent of the Elders.

## **SECTION 3. PROCEDURE IN RECEIVING NEW MEMBERS**

The names of persons applying for church membership will be announced to the congregation one week in advance to allow time for any objections against the membership of such persons to be shared privately with the Pastor or Elders. When the Elders are satisfied that an applicant has met the requirements for membership, they shall then present the applicant to the congregation at a regular Sunday Service.

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?"

#### **SECTION 4. TERMINATION OF MEMBERSHIP**

A person's membership in the visible church ordinarily terminates in one of four 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**

When a member in good standing wishes to transfer their membership to another church, the Elders will send a letter of standing to the new church home. No such letter may be given for a member who is at the time under the corrective discipline of the 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".

Members seeking transfer are to follow the following steps:

1. Before members absent themselves from Lord's Day services, members seeking to leave the church are to request a meeting with the Elders in which they will state their desire and reasons for leaving.
2. The Elders will acknowledge the decision of the member to begin visiting other churches as long as the member is not under discipline and there are no known issues between them and others in the congregation (cf. Matt. 18:15-20).
3. Between the time that a member indicates their intention to begin to visit other churches and the time said member joins another church, the member is considered an 'inactive member' (See Section 2.C).
4. During the time that members are looking for a new church home, the Elders will attempt to remain in contact by telephone or email to see how things are going in their search for a new church home.

The failure for a member to follow these steps may result in dismissal from membership. Furthermore, if after 6 months, the member has not transferred his or her membership to another church home, the Elders, on behalf of the congregation, may dismiss them from membership.

##### **C. By Dismissal**

Dismissal is the removal of a person from the membership roles of the church. A member who has been dismissed is disqualified from partaking in the Lord's Supper until such a time as they shall be received by the Elders.

Members under censure 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 above).
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".
3. If a member has not transferred their membership within six months of their exit interview (See B.1 above).
4. If a member can no longer be located.

Dismissal is performed by the Elders on behalf of the congregation. Unanimous agreement among the Elders is necessary before a member may be dismissed from the membership.

#### d. 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 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 the Elders are in agreement that 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.

In addition to the member being removed from membership in the church, all other members of the church agree to cut off all fellowship with former members who have been excommunicated (Rom. 16:17-18; Tit. 3:10-11).

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

### **SECTION 5. EXPECTATION OF MEMBERS**

**A. MEANS OF GRACE**—Members shall be encouraged and exhorted to participate in all public and private means of grace, such as regular attendance at the services of the church, daily systematic reading of the Bible, and private and family prayers.

**B. GOVERNMENT OF THE HOME**—The church expects its members to follow the Scriptures in home government. Therefore godliness in the home shall have high priority in every life. The home holds a central attention in God's Law and is the object of frequent exhortations in the New Testament. Men are expected to govern their homes with gentleness but firmness. Wives must be subject to their husbands in everything. Parents must train up their children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord (Eph. 6:4), by holy example, catechizing, consistent education, and discipline (including corporal punishment). Children must reverently obey their parents (Eph. 6:1). These primary responsibilities, prayerfully executed, will honor the name of Christ in the community and strengthen the cause of Christ in generations to come.

**C. MISSIONS AND WITNESSING**—It is the duty of every Christian and of every church of Christ to seek to extend the gospel to the ends of the earth. Missionary efforts are a natural consequence of regeneration (Psalm 51:10-14). "Preach the Gospel" is a frequently repeated command of Christ. It is the duty of every child of God to witness by life and word. Personal efforts at witnessing for Christ are expected of every member. Beyond this we are committed to common efforts for sending the Gospel to the ends of the earth.

**D. PRINCIPLES OF GIVING**—We also assert our conviction that Christians are to support the work of the Lord by offerings made to the local church. Proportionate giving is a distinct and positive command in scripture (Malachi 3:8-11). Hence we pledge ourselves to systematic contribution for the support of this church with a proportion of our income, according to the principle in I Corinthians 16:2.

**E. CHRISTIAN LIBERTY**—We shall require of each other in our daily walk and conversation loyal obedience

to all those moral precepts established in the Word of God (Hebrews 10:24-25). However, where God has not prohibited certain practices in His Word, the Christian has liberty to participate in them. The following principles must always guide the Christian's exercise of liberty:

1. Fear of God—As the servant of Christ, all actions must be moved by a motive of love to God, and all objects must be used for His glory. The term "liberty" is often used as a cloak for malicious self-indulgence, which is sin. (I Cor. 10:31; I Tim. 4:4, 5; I Peter 2:15, 16)
2. Love of Brethren—Though no man may dictate to the Christian's conscience, the welfare of fellow-saints must always deeply affect his decisions. In a spirit of serving the brethren, he must do that which he judges will edify them and prevent their stumbling (Gal. 5:13; I Cor. 10:23; I Cor. 8:9).
3. Compassion for Sinners—Use of liberty must always be regulated by its effect upon sinners, and that behavior chosen which is likely to win some (I Cor. 9:19-22).
4. Watchfulness over the Soul—Though free in conscience to use all of God's creation, carefulness in practice is demanded because of remaining lusts. Where the Christian judges himself weak through lust, he must abstain in order to persevere. (I Cor. 9:23-27)

## **Article V**

### **Church Discipline**

The discipline of the church shall be exercised according to the following principles:

#### **SECTION 1. FORMATIVE DISCIPLINE**

The sanctifying influence of formative discipline should be well understood. Every member will then be satisfied with his place, and we shall all grow in grace and knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. By such observance can the church build up its members and use the talents of both old and young. All who have been redeemed should live for Him and the church and not for themselves.

#### **SECTION 2. CORRECTIVE DISCIPLINE**

Corrective discipline implies disorderly conduct or heretical doctrine that is opposed to the church's life and faith. Reasonable efforts shall be made to clear up difficulties and remove offenses before further action is taken. Corrective discipline has for its aim the glory of God, the welfare and purity of the church, and the spiritual growth of the offender. The two forms of formal corrective discipline are censure and excommunication.

##### **A—CENSURE**

A censure is the public recognition of discipline. This may include barring from the Lord's Supper for a time as well as other 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 imposed by the elders of the church and require unanimous agreement among the elders. The terms and conditions of censures must be read publically before the church by one of the elders.

##### **B—EXCOMMUNICATION FROM CHURCH MEMBERSHIP**

Procedure for excommunication shall be in the following manner. Once the Elders are in agreement that all reasonable measures to bring the offending party to repentance have been exhausted, the Elders shall make a recommendation to the congregation for excommunication at a congregational meeting. The congregation shall have the right to excommunicate by a 2/3 vote.

## **SECTION 5. RESTORATION TO CHURCH MEMBERSHIP**

The right to exclude or excommunicate persons or the withdrawal of fellowship (II Thess. 3:6) is in harmony with the teaching of the New Testament (Matt. 18:16-17). The Apostolic church also had a right to restore those persons who gave satisfactory evidence of being penitent (II Cor. 2:6-8). When the Elders determine true repentance has been accomplished by the offending party, the congregation shall have the right to remove the ruling of excommunication and restore the penitent member to full membership by a 2/3 vote.

### **Article VI**

#### **Sacraments**

##### **SECTION 1.**

The sacraments of the New Testament are baptism and the Lord's Supper.

##### **A—BAPTISM**

Baptism is an holy ordinance, wherein the washing with water in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, signifies our ingrafting into Christ and partaking of the benefits of the covenant of grace, and our engagement to be the Lord's. (Question 100, Keach's Catechism)

##### **B—THE LORD'S SUPPER**

The Lord's Supper is a holy ordinance, wherein, by giving and receiving bread and wine, according to Christ's appointment, His death is showed forth, and the worthy receivers are, not after a corporeal and carnal manner, but by faith, made partakers of His body and blood, with all His benefits, to their spiritual nourishment, and growth in grace. (Question 107, Keach's Catechism)

##### **SECTION 2.**

Those eligible to commune at the Lord's Table are faithful believers who are members in good standing of a church that is faithful to the gospel. No one may be invited to the Table without the approval of the Elders.

##### **SECTION 3.**

As a church we practice baptism of believers by immersion and, in accordance with the direction of Scripture, require submission to this ordinance as a prerequisite for church membership. Any person professing repentance toward God and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ, and whose life makes that profession credible, desiring to be baptized shall make application to the Elders. The Eldership will then meet with the applicant who shall be examined concerning his or her Christian experience and understanding of the significance of the ordinance of baptism.

Anyone baptized will become a member of the church and will be required to take the membership vows.

### **Article VII**

#### **Office Bearers**

##### **SECTION 1. GENERAL STATEMENT**

Jesus Christ alone is the Head of His Church. However, as Head, He has ordained that individual churches should be blessed with the spiritual rule and ministry of special office bearers. Therefore, it is the duty of the church to seek to discover those to whom Christ the Lord has imparted the necessary gifts for office

bearing, and having formally recognized such by common suffrage, to set them apart by united prayer and to submit to their rule and ministry. Christ has ordained that the administration of local churches is to be by elders and deacons.

All elders and deacons must fully subscribe to the 1689 London Baptist Confession of Faith and Constitution of this church. Should an elder or deacon at any time move from this position, he is under spiritual and moral obligation to make this known to the Elders.

## **SECTION 2. ELDERSHIP**

### **A—PASTORS**

(1) Among the Elders are those whom we call Pastors. These are 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. (2) A Pastor, being by Scriptural terminology a teaching and ruling Elder, must evidence the personal, domestic, and ministerial qualifications for this office as set forth in I Timothy 3:1-7 and in Titus 1:5-9. (3) The Pastor shall seek to discharge all the functions of his office as set forth in the Scriptures and in keeping with the exercise of his own distinctive gifts of ministry. In conjunction with the Elder(s), he shall have general oversight of all the church and its ministry and functions. (4) The church will regularly have only one pastor with as many associate and/or assistant pastors as the Elders determine necessary.

### **B—ELDERS**

(1) Elders are responsible for the spiritual ministrations of the church, the implementation of church discipline, and watching over the souls of the members as those who must give account to God for this responsibility. They shall exercise the oversight of the church in all its ministries and functions. (2) Anyone desiring the office of an Elder must evidence the personal, domestic, and ministerial qualifications as set forth in I Timothy 3:1-7 and in Titus 1:5-9. (3) Elders must seek to discharge their duties as set forth in the Scriptures, particularly such passages as Acts 20:17, 28ff, I Peter 5:1-4, and Hebrews 13:17. (4) While every Elder bears spiritual rule (and must be "apt to teach"), some will be more engaged in formal and public teaching, while others will be more exclusively engaged in the details of ruling. (See I Timothy 5:17) Elders are subject to each other, none having superior authority.

## **SECTION 3. DEACONS**

A. Deacons are responsible for the business and secular affairs of the church, which are to be administered with spiritual grace and in cooperation with and subjection to the Eldership. They are to minister mercy toward those in physical need, especially within the church. They are to maintain the church premises.

B. Deacons must evidence the qualifications of the office as set forth in I Timothy 3:8-13.

## **SECTION 4. APPOINTMENT AND REMOVAL OF OFFICE BEARERS**

A. The appointment of Elders and Deacons for office 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, and by approval of the church observing the possession of those gifts and graces required by Scripture for the office concerned. The existing Elders shall recognize those who are already functioning in the use of their gifts and bring such before the church for recognition. All candidates must be a member of the church for a period of at least one year before being placed in nomination.

B. The recognition of office bearers is a matter of such importance that it should never be dealt with without much prayerful waiting upon God and an honest perusal of the relevant passages of Scripture and a frank evaluation of those who are being considered as potential office bearers. Each member of the

congregation has a spiritual responsibility to be intelligently informed regarding the above mentioned matters. It should be the desire of the congregation to come to one mind regarding those office bearers to whom they must submit in the Lord, but should such unanimity not be fully realized, no less than a 2/3 majority of the members present and voting shall be required for the election of an office bearer. After the names of potential office bearers have been set before the congregation, the potential office bearers will be asked to leave the presence of the congregation during which time the Scriptural qualifications for the given office will be read to the congregation and any items respecting those qualifications shall be freely discussed. Subsequent to a full and free discussion oriented to the relevant Scriptural passages in I Timothy 3 and in Titus 1, a written ballot shall be taken. The vote will then stand as it is first given in the written ballot.

C. Following the final recognition of an office bearer, there shall be a portion of a regular worship service set aside, at which time the office bearer(s) shall be formally set apart for his responsibilities by the prayer of the whole church and the laying on of the hands of any existing Eldership.

D. An office bearer may only be removed from office should he neglect his duty, be guilty of sinful behavior, fall into error, or hold views contrary to our confession and constitution. The Elders are to lead in the matter with great caution, firmness and impartiality. The removal of an officer due to negligence or sin is ultimately determined by the congregation in a 2/3 majority vote.

E. An office bearer unable to fulfill his commitments should relinquish his duties or take a leave of absence from his office. Office bearers requesting a leave of absence must provide the reasons for and the timeframe of their leave. While on a leave of absence, an officer relinquishes all authority and responsibilities of office. Leave of absences must be approved by the Elders.

G. If at any time an officer shall make application to be released from his office, he shall do so in writing to the Elders. Upon receiving notice of resignation, the Elders shall inform the church in a specially called business meeting.

## **Article VIII**

### **Official Board**

#### **SECTION 1. FUNCTION**

The governing of the church and the conducting of its business, the management and control of its property, real and personal, and the general supervision of its work shall, under the direction of the Holy Spirit, be vested in the Official Board.

#### **SECTION 2. MEMBERS**

The Official Board shall consist of the Elder(s), and Deacon(s). The Pastor shall act as chairman. The Board shall choose one of its number to act as Recording Secretary.

#### **SECTION 3. MEETINGS**

The Board shall meet at least once a quarter to discuss and act upon the general business of the church.



## **Article IX**

### **Congregational Meetings**

#### **SECTION 1. GENERAL STATEMENT**

All Members should regard their presence at a duly called congregational meeting with the same seriousness with which they would regard their attendance at a stated service of worship. The Lord is present in power at the gathering together of the church, and therefore all meetings should be carried out in a spirit of worship and unity. Every church meeting shall begin and end with prayer.

#### **SECTION 2. NOTICE OF MEETINGS**

Notice of all congregational meetings shall be given at regular worship services on the two successive Sundays immediately prior to the meetings. In an emergency, a meeting may be called on shorter notice by notifying each member of the time, place, and purpose of the congregational meeting. A member will be considered "notified" when reached by telephone (either in person or via voicemail) or notified by email. Congregational meetings in which there is no business to be transacted by vote may be called at the discretion of the Elders without previous notice.

#### **SECTION 3. NUMBER OF MEETINGS**

Congregational meetings shall be held when needed for the reception of reports and the transaction of such other business as may properly be brought before the congregation. A congregational meeting shall be held as soon as possible after the close of each calendar year and shall be called the Annual Congregational Meeting. The adoption of a budget shall take place at the Annual Congregational Meeting.

#### **SECTION 4. METHOD OF CALLING MEETINGS**

It shall be the right and responsibility of the Elders to call all congregational meetings. The Elders shall arrange the details of all congregational meetings and see that all possible preparation for their successful conduct is made. Nothing shall be brought before the church at church meetings except through the Eldership.

#### **SECTION 5. QUORUM FOR TRANSACTION OF BUSINESS**

The voting members present at any constitutionally called congregational meeting shall be considered a quorum for the transaction of business. It should be our goal to prayerfully discern the mind of God so that in all matters of church business it may be said of us, as was said of that church business meeting recorded in Acts 6, "that this thing pleased the whole multitude." However, in such situations where unanimity is not realized, no less than a 2/3 majority of those voting is required for a motion to carry.

#### **SECTION 6. VOTING ELIGIBILITY**

Voting is to be done by the male heads of households in each family. In cases where there is no male head of household present (as is the case with singles, single mothers, women married to non-members, and wives whose husbands are not present), the woman who represents her house may vote. Members must also be 20 years old or older to vote (Numbers 1:3). Non-members who may be present at congregational meetings by special invitation have no speaking or voting privileges and must remain silent on all matters unless invited by the Elders and agreed to by the congregation to speak on certain matters.

## **Article X**

### **Dissolution**

In case of dissolution of the church organization, the property and all assets shall be sold. From the proceeds, first all current and long-term promise: obligations of the church shall be paid. Secondly, all remaining funds shall be directed by the Official Board (see Article VIII) to such one or more Christian organizations qualified under Section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code. This church shall be considered dissolved if so decided by a 2/3 majority vote at a congregational meeting (see Article IX).

## **Article XI**

### **Amendments**

Amendments to this Constitution may be made by the elders and adopted by a 2/3 majority vote of the congregation at any regular congregational meeting or special meeting called for this purpose, provided in either case that such amendment shall be distributed in written form to the membership at least two weeks prior to such meeting. An opportunity shall be given for questions and discussion of the proposed amendments in a congregational meeting at least one week prior to the vote.