

Church of the Redeemer

Fairhope, AL

CONSTITUTION AND BYLAWS

The Constitution and Bylaws were approved and adopted on September 5, 2022.

Preamble

In the Church of God all things are to be done decently and in order. This pertains to the government of the Church as much as to the corporate worship of the Church. Convinced that Jesus Christ, the Head of the Church, will protect and guide us, we seek to obey Scripture through the following standards for the orderly and scriptural government of Church of the Redeemer in Fairhope, AL. These standards do not supplant Scripture, but rather are an expression of our understanding of Biblical Church government under God. While seeking to be Biblical in structure, we make no claim that every detail found here is expressly taught by Scripture. These standards are primarily procedural; the doctrinal position of the Church may be found in our confession of faith and the Westminster Confession of Faith of 1646.

The following is our mission statement:

Church of the Redeemer seeks to be used by God to call believers to weekly corporate worship, confession, consecration, communion, and commissioning to advance the gospel of Jesus Christ in households, throughout the region of Mobile Bay's Eastern Shore, and around the world.

Article I. Name

The name of this Christian fellowship of believers shall be Church of the Redeemer.

Article II. Church Confessions and Statement of Faith

A) Confessions

Church of the Redeemer will strive to believe, preach, and teach doctrine that accord with the Holy Word of God. The Bible is our final authority. Insofar as historical creeds and confessions of faith reflect true Biblical teaching, we embrace the following: the Apostle's Creed, the Nicene Creed, and the Westminster Confession of Faith of 1646.

1. We expect agreement from members on the Creeds of the Church

2. The Westminster Confession of Faith (1646) is a specific Reformational document and reasonable exceptions are allowable. Those who take exception to this document need to make these exceptions known before joining Church of the Redeemer as members.
3. Reasonable acceptations to the Westminster Confession of Faith are allowable for members, deacons, elders, and ministers.
4. Reasonable acceptations include, but are not limited to the following:
 - a. Chapter 21: Paragraph 8
We believe that along with “exercises of... worship” and “duties of necessity and mercy” we have a responsibility to rest our bodies on the Lord’s Day. We do not believe that the intention of Scripture is to exclude recreation necessarily and especially in the context of the fellowship of God’s people. Believers can be members at Church of the Redeemer and have differing convictions about their behavior on the Lord’s Day and the particular applications of the fourth commandment.
 - b. Chapter 24: Paragraph 6
Delete the last sentence, which reads, “The man may not marry any of his wife’s kindred nearer in blood than he may of his own, nor the woman of her husband’s kindred nearer in blood than of her own.”
 - c. Chapter 25: Paragraph 6
We believe that the Pope of Rome is anti-Christian, we do not believe that he is the Antichrist or the Beast of Revelation, etc.
 - d. Chapter 28: Paragraph 3
We believe there is one right and true meaning and mode of baptism as God is the author and ultimate judge of all truth. However, we acknowledge that biblically based convictions held by Godly and Christ-like individuals do not align in this important sacrament. We pray that the Holy Spirit will lead us to a unified understanding of His Word amongst our church family. Until then, we allow members to participate in baptism from a pedobaptist conviction of the meaning (sign of the covenant) and mode (pouring or sprinkling of water) or a credobaptist conviction of the meaning (sign of faith profession) and mode (submersion under water).
 - e. Chapter 28: Paragraph 4
Church of the Redeemer is a church composed of both pedobaptist and credobaptist families. Orthodox Christian views on baptism that differ with the Session’s shall not hinder families from joining Redeemer and shall be performed

as requested by the family, or individual, after being reviewed and approved by the Session and Minister(s).

5. The Session shall hear, review, and determine the orthodoxy of additional acceptations to the Confession expressed by members and/or individuals seeking to hold an office in the church.

B) Statement of Faith

Church of the Redeemer accepts these eight articles as our Statement of Faith and essential truths with which all members must agree:

1. The Scriptures

We believe that the Holy Bible is God's inspired, inerrant revelation to man and is the only certain, sufficient, and infallible rule from which we draw all saving knowledge. All of our creeds, confessions, and Church documents are tried by His Word.

2. God

We believe that there is one true God. He eternally exists in three persons, and in the unity of the Godhead there are the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, who are equal in every divine perfection, and who execute distinct but harmonious offices in the great work of redemption. From all eternity God decrees all that shall come to pass, yet so without sinning or violating the will and responsibility of man.

3. The Fall of Man

We believe that Man was created in holiness, under and capable of fulfilling the law of his Creator, but by voluntary transgression fell from that state. As natural heirs of our first parents, we are under the federal headship of Adam and share in his guilt. All men are inherently sinful and eventually become actual transgressors of the law of God. In this state all men deserve the just punishment due their sin: death.

4. The Person and Work of Christ

We believe that sinners are relieved of their sin debt only through the mediatorial offices of the Son of God, the Lord Jesus Christ, who is Prophet, Priest, and King. He freely took upon himself our nature, yet without sin or diminishing of His deity. He perfectly obeyed the law of God and by His death made a full atonement for sin. He is risen from the dead and now sits at the right hand of the Father interceding for us.

5. The Way of Salvation

We believe salvation is dependent on the gracious and ever-present work of the Triune God: regeneration is a work of grace wrought on our hearts by the Holy Spirit enabling us to understand the word of God and believe; faith is saving belief on Jesus Christ and all His works; coupled with faith, repentance is the inevitable response of a person who has been regenerated and is now able to see his sin. Repentance involves a godly sorrow and a turning from sin. Justification is based upon the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ who imputes his righteousness to sinners and unites them to Himself by grace. All this is by faith alone.

6. The Christian Life

We believe that sanctification is the process by which the elect are made partakers of God's holiness and progress toward His perfection. Sanctification is begun in regeneration and is carried on in the hearts of believers by the presence and power of the Holy Spirit. Believers participate in sanctification by attending to the word of God, and by practicing self-examination, self-denial, watchfulness, and prayer. All true saints of God will persevere to the end and will one day be raised up in the power of the One who keeps them secure.

7. A Gospel Church

We believe that the Lord Jesus is the Head of the Church, which is composed of all covenant members. God has declared that all members of his body are to congregate together in local assemblies for regular worship on the Lord's Day. All true Churches of God observe the two sacraments commanded by our Lord and Savior: Baptism and the Lord's Supper. Baptism with water in the name of the Father, of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit is a sign and seal of the covenant of grace or his engrafting into Christ to walk in newness of life. The Lord's Supper is a memorial of Christ and His death through sacred use of bread and wine and is to be observed by the Church until the end of the world. Redeemer recognizes three offices in the local Church: Ministers, Ruling Elders, and Deacons.

8. Last Things

We believe that it is appointed for men once to die and after that the judgment. On the last day Christ will return and will raise the dead bodily, both the unrighteous and the righteous. All will be judged by Christ and shall receive according to their deeds: those who die in their sin will go into everlasting punishment and those united to of Christ will enter into everlasting life.

Article III. Church Covenant

God has graciously entered into a covenant relation with His people (Jeremiah 31:31-34; 32:40; 2 Corinthians 6:14-7:1; Hebrews 8:7-13; 10:16-17; 13:20-21). Jesus Christ is the Mediator of the New Covenant (Hebrews 8:6). His blood is the blood of the New Covenant, which infallibly secures all the benefits of the covenant for all of God's people (Matthew 1:21-23; 26:26-28; Hebrews 13:20-21). God has in this New Covenant made us members one of another (Romans 12:4-5; 1 Corinthians 12:12-27; Ephesians 4:25). Therefore, we are to view our lives as being in covenant with God, and as believers, in covenant with one another. In this relationship, we have covenant responsibilities to each other as well as to God.

As a basis for fellowship and covenantal commitment among our members, we agree on the following Church covenant, which is to be reaffirmed periodically:

By the grace of God, we have been led to repent of our sin and believe in Jesus Christ as our Lord and Savior. We have confessed our faith and been baptized in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Now, therefore, in the presence of God and by His grace, we joyfully and solemnly enter into a covenant with the members of Church of the Redeemer.

- We commit to walk together in Christian love through the power of the Holy Spirit and to strive for the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.
- We purpose to watch over one another in brotherly love, to remember one another in prayer, to help one another in sickness and distress, and to cultivate Christian compassion and courtesy.
- We commit to sustain the Church's worship, discipline, doctrine, and sacraments which are Baptism and the Lord's Supper.
- We will reject all heretical beliefs and practices, using Scripture as our final authority.
- We will strive by God's grace and power to live as Christ in the world; and denying ungodliness and worldly lusts we will seek to fulfill our calling to lead a holy life and to be salt and light.
- We will both submit to the Church's discipline upon ourselves and lovingly assume our responsibility to participate in the discipline of other members, as taught in Scripture.
- We resolve to practice personal and family worship, to raise our children in the training and admonition of the Lord, and to seek the salvation of our family, friends, and neighbors, and of all the world.

- We will contribute cheerfully and regularly to this Church for its general ministry and expenses, the relief of the poor, the cause of reformation and revival, and the spread of the Gospel throughout all nations.
- We commit to seek and spread a passion for the supremacy of God in all things by the power of the Holy Spirit for the glory of Jesus Christ.

Article IV. Church Membership

A) Basis for Membership

Membership in our local expression of Christ’s Church is constituted by a profession of faith, sealed in baptism. Baptism is the rite of initiation into the covenant of grace and the visible Church; the one baptized maintains good standing in the Church by walking in faith, by the grace of God. Membership at Redeemer is “catholic,” open to Christ’s disciples of both sexes, all races, and ages. While baptism marks out membership in the visible Church, professing believers, including children, ordinarily enter the membership of Redeemer, as a local body, when they have approval of the session.

We use the word “member” in the following ways: 1) to describe a believer united in heart to Christ and His people. He is so united by being a member of His mystical body, and, as a picture and expression of this, he is a member of a local body of believers, which is a physical representation of the mystical, spiritual body. (1 Corinthians 12; Hebrews 10:24-25; 1 John 3:14-16; Ephesians 4:12-16); 2) to indicate the soul over which the elders are placed by Christ and for whom the pastors will give an account in the day of judgment. (Acts 20:28; Hebrews 13:17); 3) to indicate one who has entered into a relationship of mutual covenant accountability with each other and with those who are office bearers (Acts 20:28; 1 Corinthians 5:4-13; Hebrews 3:12-14; 1 Peter 5:1-5).

The session will maintain a membership list, with the members of each household listed in a clear manner, including names, dates of birth, baptism status, and profession of faith status. This membership list will be maintained by the session and is not to be confused with the Church directory of addresses and phone numbers.

B) Requirements for Membership

Any adult shall be eligible for membership in this Church, who 1) credibly professes repentance toward God and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ; 2) has been baptized; 3) evidences a life transformed by the power of Christ, making him or her a new creation; 4) agrees entirely with the Church Statement of Faith (see Article II, section B); 5) expresses substantial agreement with the Church Confession and Constitution; and 6) commits to the Church Covenant, intending to

support its ministry, worship, and discipline (Acts 5:14; 20:21; Romans 10:9-10; 1 Corinthians 14:40; 2 Corinthians 5:17; Ephesians 4:4-5; Hebrews 13:7, 17). Baptized children of members shall be raised as covenant children, professing repentance and faith, and walking in the same with good works toward the Lord, His Bride, and the world. Membership for children of members begins when those children are baptized. Non-baptized children are part of the life of the Church but may not partake of the sacraments until they are baptized.

C) Procedures for Membership

Any Christian who believes he or she meets the requirements for membership and who desires to unite with Church of the Redeemer will go through the following procedures in order to become a member of the Church:

1. Candidates will indicate their desire to join the Church.
2. A member of the session will visit with candidates to examine the orthodoxy of all candidates for membership and to see that their lives do not contradict their professions. This could take place with a visit in the home or by appointment at a mutually agreed time.
3. Candidates complete the *Petition for Church Membership* and including their testimony of Christian faith. If a family desires to join, only one petition is required, indicating which family members desire to be considered for membership.
4. Read and agree entirely with the Church Statement of Faith, and express substantial agreement with the Church Constitution and Confession, and commit to the Church Covenant.
5. Complete the prospective members' class or read the prospective members' study materials, as directed by the session.
6. When the *Petition for Church Membership* is received, the testimony (or testimonies for a family wishing to join) will be reviewed and vetted by the session. The session may postpone the reception of a person (or persons) into membership until proper investigation can be made concerning objections which, in their judgment, are sufficiently serious to warrant such a delay. Valid objections would include serious doctrinal errors or conspicuous areas in a member's life that do not match up with his or her profession of faith.
7. Be formally presented to the Church body before a Lord's Day worship service for affirmation as a member (or members) of the Church.

If the candidate is or has been a member of another Church, special effort will be made to determine the person's standing in that Church and the reason(s) for leaving (Acts 15:1-2 with

24-25). If a former Church raises an objection which the session considers valid, the candidate may be denied membership at the discretion of the session.

If the candidate is a member of a CREC Church, any of the above, with exception of the formal presentation to the Church, may be modified at the session's discretion.

D) Types of Membership

1. Regular Members: All who are received into the membership of the Church according to the procedures set forth in section C of this Article; who continue in regular attendance at the stated meetings of the Church; and who do not come under the corrective disciplines of the Church as set forth in Article VI, section B, shall be considered regular members in good standing and entitled to all the rights and privileges of membership in the Church (Acts 2:37-47). Ordinarily membership at Redeemer is maintained until the member is released to another Christian Church.
2. Representative Members: All heads of household who are Regular Members will also be considered Representative Members who represent their families when the elders poll the congregation, as outlined in Article VII, or when the congregation votes for Church officers, as outlined in Article V. For a family where both husband and wife are members the husband is head of household. Singles, single parents, and widows who are members are heads of household. A woman who is a member and is married to an unbeliever or to a non-member believer is, for polling and voting purposes, head of household. A Representative member may designate another adult in the family to represent the family at regular meetings and during polls of the congregation.

E) Release or Transfer of Membership

1. If a Church member in good standing requests to be released to the care of another Christian Church, the session will grant the request, and release them with a blessing.
2. If a Church member requests to be released because of disciplinary proceedings against the individual or anyone in the household, the session will deny the request until the disciplinary matter is resolved (see Article VI, Section 2 for Church discipline procedures).
3. Regular members who request to be released to the care of another Christian Church will normally receive the blessing of the Session (Article IV.E.1). A member in this situation will not be allowed to vote in any congregational meeting of the Church for obvious practical reasons. They are charged to find a new church

home within six months. This time may be extended at the Sessions' discretion. If they have not joined themselves to a new Church within six months or if they have not requested Membership transfer, in accordance with paragraph D.1, the Session will release them from membership with a letter of admonition.

4. Regular members who providentially must move away from our area and who cannot find another local Church with which they can conscientiously unite will, at their request, be retained as Members of this Church, for a period not to exceed one year. If they have not joined themselves to a new Church within one year of moving or if they have not requested Membership transfer, in accordance with paragraph D.1, the Session will release them from membership with a letter of admonition. Such persons must maintain regular communication with the Church in order to maintain their membership in it. Nevertheless, they are urged to seek diligently a Church with which they can unite elsewhere. A member in this situation will not be allowed to vote in any congregational meeting of the Church for obvious practical reasons.
5. This Church will not continue Church membership on an indefinite basis for members who do not participate in the Church's worship and fellowship. Members who do not participate in worship for four consecutive Sundays, unless physically or providentially hindered, and have not responded to contact by the session are neglecting the covenant relationship as outlined above and will be subject to the Church discipline process outlined in Article VI.

Article V. Church Officers

Jesus Christ alone is the Head of the Church and He governs His Church through office-bearers whom He appoints and who are endowed by His Spirit with the gifts and graces needed to accomplish their work. Because Christ appoints Church officers, they have authority, but Christ limits their authority in the Scriptures. There are three offices in the Church: Minister/Pastor, Ruling Elder, and Deacon. Ministers alone may administer the sacraments, or as a rule, preach the Word. Elders may preach if appointed/commissioned by the session to do so. There are exceptional provisions granted to the elder to administer at the Lord's Table in the absence of an ordained minister. The Elder is a voting member in the Session. He is called upon to oversee the social and spiritual life of the community as "chief laymen." Deacons are authoritative servants who function under the oversight of the Session. The Deacons exist to protect the Pastor(s) from being distracted from prayer, the ministry of the Word of God, and the oversight of the flock of Christ by giving themselves over to ministry within the body. They address the practical matters of benevolence, care of widows, and physical relief from the effects of sin. While the Ministers

and Elders are a ruling body of men, the Deacons are men who are not a ruling body (Acts 20:28; Ephesians 4:11-12; Colossians 1:18; Philippians 1:1; 1 Tim. 3:1-13; 1 Peter 5:2-4).

It is the duty of the Church to seek and discover among her members those to whom Christ the Lord has imparted the necessary gifts for office bearing, and then to submit to their authority. Church officers are not exempt from Church discipline, but conversely, their office requires of them a more rigorous standard of conduct than regular members (James 3:1).

A) Ordination

Ordination is a rite which includes the laying on of hands and prayer, to set a man apart to a particular office and function within the Church. Insofar as ordination confers office in the Church, with attendant privileges and responsibilities, it is an act of God, not merely the human officiants. Insofar as ordination represents the will and desire of the people to delegate its powers to gifted and recognized men, it is an act of the Church. Ordination is effective by the grace of Christ and the work of the Holy Spirit, in accord with Biblical teaching. The practice of ordination is important to good order within the life of the Church.

Any man who is to be ordained must affirm that he is inwardly called of God to the office and must also have an outward call to office extended to him through the Church. With regard to ordination, we uphold these principles:

No man ought to take upon himself any ecclesiastical office without a lawful calling. A man should only be ordained if he has a call to a particular work or service in a local body or mission field. Only qualified, examined, and elected men have been duly called to office, and only such are to be ordained.

Ordination is always to be continued in the Church, but officers are only to be ordained into a particular office one time. If a man has already been ordained to office in another local Church, he is to be installed, rather than re-ordained, in the new Church that has called him.

Ordination is the solemn setting apart of a person to some public Church office. Ordination is a ritual of the Church through which the Spirit confers all the privileges and obligations of the office to which the man has been called. A man is ordained into a particular office, whether Minister of Word and Sacrament, ruling elder, or deacon. No man should be ordained to the same office more than once, but if he is called and elected to a new office, he should be ordained into the new office.

B) Qualifications

All candidates must meet the qualifications for the office set down in Scripture (1 Timothy 3:1-7;

Titus 1:5-9; 1 Peter 5:2-4). A man may become an officer only after being a member of Church of the Redeemer for at least two years. This requirement (and this requirement alone) may be set aside in a specific case by the unanimous consent of the session.

The Church of Jesus Christ inherited a form of government from old covenant Israel.

While this pattern has been transformed and adapted to the new covenant situation, the precedents and principles of the old covenant system are still relevant and instructive as a model for Church polity. The Church, as the New Israel, is to fulfill Israel's calling in history, through Christ. Analogies between old covenant and new covenant positions look roughly like this:

Old Covenant Prophets and Priests = New Covenant Ministers of Word and Sacrament

Elders of the people/gate, judges, kings/shepherds = Ruling Elders

Levites, assistants/apprentices = Deacons

The ministry of the priests, as well as apostles and prophets are carried on in the work of the Ministers of Word and Sacrament. However, these ministers do not claim prophetic or apostolic inspiration; instead, they build upon the foundation that has already been laid once and for all in the apostolic era (Eph. 2:20). Ministers of Word and Sacrament fulfill the priestly role, as the primary liturgical and sacramental officers of the Church; and the prophetic role, as they declare and apply God's Word to the congregation and the world, and they lead the people in intercessory prayer before the throne of grace. In their governing role, they work with the other elders.

Elders of the people, or ruling elders, are not, properly speaking, liturgical or teaching officers, their work is to build up and strengthen the community, providing wise oversight and direction. As "chief laymen," they are responsible for maintaining good order and justice in the community, acting as judges, peace-keepers, and counselors. Along with the Ministers of Word and Sacrament, they oversee the formal Church discipline process.

Deacons have the most flexible job description, as the Session (Pastors and Ruling Elders) determine what they are to do in a given situation. They are to Ministers of Word and Sacrament what Levites were to the priests; or what Joshua was to Moses; or what Elisha was to Elijah; or what Gehazi was to Elisha; or what Baruch was to Jeremiah; etc. They are assistants to elders, and may be apprentices-in-training, as well. Deacons may function as specialists in almost any area of Church life – mercy ministry, teaching, music, stewardship, administration, liturgical

assistance, etc. But the diaconal office is not one of authority or governance in the Church. Deacons may be permanent or may transition into eldership when called. In general, they do those things that allow the elders to focus more directly on the ministries given to them as members of the Church session; thus, we find in the biblical record, new covenant deacons are especially called upon to care for those in need (Acts 6:1-6). This mercy ministry function is the central assigned task of the diaconate at Church of the Redeemer, though the session may direct the diaconate or individual deacons to engage in other works as well, in accord with the nature of the office as described below. Deacons can be gifted and used in a wide variety of ways in the life of the Church. All candidates for the office of deacon must meet the qualifications for the office set down in Scripture (1 Timothy 3:8-13). A man may become a deacon only after being a member of the Church for at least two years. This requirement (and this requirement alone) may be set aside by the unanimous consent of the Session.

C) Selection of Ministers (Pastors)

The pastor is an ordinary and perpetual officer in the Church (Eph. 4: 11; 1 Tim. 3:1-7; Tit. 1:5-9). The pastorate is especially the new covenant counterpart to the old covenant priesthood, even as each local congregation is a miniature fulfillment of the typology of the old covenant temple. The pastor is the primary servant-priest among and towards the royal priesthood of the whole congregation, with the goal of presenting the people in Christ as an acceptable offering to the Father, sanctified by the Holy Spirit (Rom. 15:16). It especially belongs to the pastoral office:

1. To pray for and with his flock, as the mouth of the people unto God; to pray publicly for the people, especially in gathered worship; to pray privately for and with the people, especially for the sick; and to pray for the lost;
2. To oversee the planning and leading of the Lord's Day liturgy, as the priests of the Old Covenant led the people in worship at the tabernacle and temple;
3. To read, preach, and teach the Scriptures publicly, as the mouth of God to people, even as the priests in the Jewish Church were trusted with the public reading and exposition of the Word;
4. To study the Scriptures diligently, in order to feed the flock divine truth, as he preaches, teaches, convinces, reproves, exhorts, and comforts from the Word;
5. To train the people to live as a royal priesthood, offering Spiritual sacrifices in all of life, and especially in gathered worship;
6. To administer the Sacraments publicly;
7. To declare the assurance of the Lord to a repentant people, after they have confessed their sins;
8. To bless the people from God, declaring a benediction, as the priests did under the Old Covenant;

9. To encourage husbands and fathers to be faithful in loving their wives as Christ loves the Church and in raising their children in the fear and admonition of the Lord; to encourage wives and mothers to be diligent and faithful by caring for their families with joy and contentment; to encourage singles to pursue purity and service in accord with their vocations; and to encourage children to grow towards maturity in the grace and knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ;
10. To take care of the poor, in conjunction with the other officers;
11. To pray for and anoint the sick with oil in the name of the Lord, when called upon;
12. To represent the Chief Shepherd, Jesus Christ, in lovingly caring for and disciplining the flock in conjunction with the elders;
13. To authorize and depute a ruling elder or deacon to administer the Lord's Supper in his absence;
14. To lead the session as moderator and overseer;
15. To represent the local congregation as a permanent delegate to all higher assemblies of the Church;

As need and resources dictate, Church of the Redeemer may call a man to serve as a pastoral assistant. The assistant may be compensated depending on the financial resources available. The assistant is to be called by the session and after examination by the session and presbytery, ordained and/or installed according to the principles of the Constitution. An assistant does not have a vote on the session, and may not serve as a delegate to a higher court, but he does have full power to minister the Word and the Sacraments. An Associate Pastor is called in the same manner, except his call also requires the election of the congregation by a four-fifths vote. An Associate Pastor/Minister does have full power to minister the Word and Sacraments. He becomes a member of the session and may be a delegate to a higher court. Job responsibilities for assistants and associates are to be determined by the session, under the oversight and leadership of the pastor.

Should the Church ever be without a pastor, it should strive to secure one without delay (Matt. 9:36). The elders should seek out suitable nominees as necessary; the elders may form a pastoral search committee from members of the congregation to help in the work of identifying and recommending suitable candidates, if desirable. The elders will examine a nominee with regard to his doctrine, manner of life, and confessional adherence. In addition to the qualifications, pastoral candidates must meet the biblical criteria for shepherds (2 Samuel 12:1ff, Ps. 23, John 10:11-16, etc.). Following this process, the elders may approve the nominee as a candidate to be placed on a ballot. The electors will be asked whether or not a call to the pastorate should be extended to him. If the candidate is approved by four-fifths vote in an election, the elders will extend a provisional call to him to be pastor. His call to be pastor is finalized only after the

Church of the Redeemer Session examines and makes recommendation for ordination or installation. Following examination, he may be ordained (if necessary) and installed as pastor.

D) Removal of Ministers

While Church of the Redeemer encourages her pastor(s) toward a long-term view of ministry at Redeemer, in the plans of God, changes in a pastor's call to a particular Church arise for both righteous and sinful reasons. In cases involving moral failures requiring disciplinary proceedings, the disciplinary process for the removal of a pastor is the same as for other officers (described above). For cases that do not involve moral failures or disciplinary proceedings (e.g., Acts 15:33-41, Rom. 15:22-33, 1 Cor. 16:5-12), the procedure for terminating the call of a pastor, thereby dismissing him from service at Church of the Redeemer, is as follows: The pastor may submit his resignation to the session. If the session accepts his resignation, he is relieved of his pastoral call to Church of the Redeemer. If the session does not accept his resignation, he may tender it again at the next session meeting, or after at least one month has passed, in which case it must be accepted. The session may ask for the resignation of the pastor for Biblical departures that do not constitute heresy or moral failure, if there is unanimous consent (less the pastor in question) within the session. Mediation should be requested by the pastor or the session if there is any contention with the request and every effort made to resolve difficulties between the session and its pastor without damage to the pastor, the Church or the Gospel of Jesus Christ. If there are fewer than four members of the session, elders from a similar church will be consulted extensively, and there will be mediation requested to preserve the peace of the Church.

If Church of the Redeemer is suddenly (death, removal, resignation, etc.) without a pastor, it should seek the aid of a similar local church so that a regular ministry of the Word and celebration of the Sacraments may continue. No man not ordained to be a Minister of Word and Sacrament may take upon himself the task of preaching apart from the permission of the session or the task of regularly administering the Sacraments apart from the permission and appointment of the session. It is crucial that the offices and order of the Church be maintained even in times of transition.

E) Selection of Elders

Elections will be held from time to time as circumstances warrant. A man may be considered as a potential elder in several ways. He may aspire to the office himself (1 Timothy 3:1), the Session may approach him, or the people of the Church may suggest his name to the Session. Once he becomes a candidate, the Session (primarily the Minister) will examine the candidate with regard to his doctrine and manner of life. If the candidate has any disagreement or mental reservation about any portion of the Church's Confession of Faith or Constitution, then he must inform the

Session of it. All candidates must meet the qualifications for the office set down in Scripture (1 Timothy 3:1-7; Titus 1:5-9; 1 Peter 5:2-4).

A man may not be placed on the ballot without the unanimous consent of the current Session. Once on the ballot, the Representative Members of the Church have the option of voting either “yes” or “no.”

If the candidate receives the support of four-fifths of the Church as represented, the Session will ordain the new elder to the ministry of Eldership through the laying on of hands and prayer.

If a candidate for office is not elected, then a member of the Session will meet with him within one week to discuss the election and answer any questions the candidate might have.

A newly elected and ordained elder will be considered an elder-in-training for the first six months of his service. During this training period, for purposes of transition and orientation, the newly elected elder will function as an elder but will not formally vote in matters of the Sessional body.

F) Duties and Responsibilities of Elders

As there were in Old Covenant Israel elders of the people joined with the priests and Levites in the government of the Jewish Church, so Christ has instituted governors in the New Covenant Church, commonly called ruling elders (2 Chron. 19:8; Rom. 12:8; 1 Cor. 12:28). These men are “elders of the gate,” or “elders of the people,” called upon to oversee the social and spiritual life of the community as “chief laymen.” They are to be wise and God-fearing men, fit for leadership. Ruling elders are especially gifted in governing, though they may have other gifts as well. Governing the Church as a ruling elder is a matter of serving and caring for the people, setting before them a godly example in vocational and familial life, counseling and encouraging them, and engaging in discipline as needed. It is imperative that ruling elders know the people of the congregation well and command their trust and respect. Ruling elders differ from other elders (the Ministers of Word and Sacrament) and typically have daily vocations outside the Church; and they usually do not receive remuneration from the Church for their services. However, on the session, they rule jointly with the other elders and have the same formal authority. They may serve as representatives of the at council meetings with other churches.

It especially belongs to the office of ruling elder:

1. To serve on the session, and thus rule the people;

2. To advise Ministers of Word and Sacraments in their special work and represent the congregation on the session;
3. To oversee the doctrine and practice of the flock;
4. To set an example of godliness in all things;
5. To act as peacekeepers and judges in cases of dispute;
6. To pray with and for the people, especially in time of illness; and to anoint the sick with oil when requested, along with the Ministers of Word and Sacrament;
7. To counsel and nurture the members of the congregation towards godliness, encouraging and correcting them as needed;
8. To assist the pastor in leading the liturgy when needed or appropriate;
9. To assist in the distribution of the Lord's Supper and the collection of tithes and offerings;
10. To execute Church discipline when and as situations require it;
11. To join with the deacons in caring for the poor and needy.

Ruling elders labor beside Ministers of the Word and Sacraments in lovingly shepherding and discipling the people. In times of necessity or in the absence of an officer ordained to administer the Sacraments, the pastor or unanimous vote of the Session may appoint a ruling elder to administer the Sacraments.

G) Conduct of Session Meetings

All usual business of the Session will be conducted at their regular meetings or at special meetings called for a particular purpose. The Session will appoint one of their number to moderate the meetings, and one to record the minutes of the meetings. Decisions shall be reached, after prayerful consideration, by unanimous vote in the spirit of humility with each officer regarding one another as more important than himself.

H) Removal of Elders

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

If the charges are doctrinal or moral in nature, and if the Session unanimously decides that the question merits an investigation, then they will follow the procedures for discipline outlined in Article VI.

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

I) Selection of Deacons

Elections will be held from time to time as circumstances warrant. A man may be considered as a potential deacon in several ways. He may aspire to the office himself, a minister, elder, or deacon may approach him, or individuals in the Church may suggest his name to the Session or deacons. Once he becomes a candidate, the Session (primarily the minister) will examine him concerning his doctrine and manner of life. If approved by the session the deacons will then include the candidate in their work in order to prove his fitness for the office (1 Timothy 3:10). When the candidate has shown, in the unanimous judgment of the deacons, his fitness for office, the deacons will make a recommendation to the Session to place his name on the ballot. The Session will examine the candidate again with regard to his suitability for the diaconate. If the candidate has any disagreement or mental reservation about any portion of the Church's Confession of Faith or Constitution, then he must inform the Session of it. All candidates must meet the qualifications for the office set down in Scripture (1 Timothy 3:8-13).

A man may not be placed on the ballot without the unanimous consent of the current Session. Once on the ballot, the Representative Members have the option of voting either "yes" or "no." If, in the unanimous judgment of the Session, the candidate receives the clear and obvious support of the church as represented, the Session will ordain the new deacon to the ministry through the laying on of hands and prayer (Acts 6:6).

If a candidate for office is not elected, then a member of the Session will meet with him within one week to discuss the election and answer any questions the candidate might have.

A newly selected and ordained deacon will be considered a deacon-in-training for the first six months of his service. During this training period, for purposes of transition and orientation, the newly selected deacon will function as a deacon but will not formally vote in matters of deacon decision-making.

J) Duties and Responsibilities of Deacons

Under the general oversight of the Session, the deacons will manage the physical, social, and benevolent functions of the Church, with the attending financial responsibilities of each (Acts 6:2-4). This includes, but is not limited to, ministering to widows, assisting the Minister (s) with

the Lord's Table, disbursing benevolence funds, overseeing of building maintenance, and serving the various physical needs of the congregation as they arise.

K) Conduct of Deacons' Meetings

All usual business of the deacons will be conducted at their regular meeting, or at a special meeting called for a particular purpose. The deacons will appoint one of their number to moderate the meetings of the deacons. The deacons will be prepared to give a general report of their work quarterly, and they will give an annual report to the Session with proposals for the upcoming year.

L) Removal of Deacons

If one of the saints believes a deacon may be morally or doctrinally unfit for his office, the scriptural requirement for him is clear: he is to approach that deacon individually first (Matthew 18:15), and then with one or two others (Matthew 18:16). If the problem remains, then the individual, with the two or three witnesses, should come to the Session and present the charges.

If the charges are doctrinal or moral in nature, and if the Session unanimously decides that the question merits an investigation, then they will follow the procedures for discipline outlined in Article VI.

If the charges are unanimously sustained by the Session, then that deacon, depending on the gravity of the charges and his response to the correction, may be corrected or removed from the office of deacon (1 Timothy 3:8-13).

M) Resignation of Elders and Deacons

If an elder or deacon desire to resign his office or take a leave of absence, he will present a letter expressing this desire and explaining his reasons to the Session. The Session will notify the Church in a special meeting with the Representative Members of their receipt of the letter. If the desire of the elder or deacon concerned is unchanged by the following Representative meeting, then the Session will read a statement to the Representatives accepting the resignation, or approving the leave of absence.

If the resignation is sought for reasons of moral turpitude or heretical beliefs, then the Session must exercise biblical discipline prior to, or in conjunction with, any consideration of the letter of resignation.

N) Terms of Office for Elders and Deacons

Once installed, elders and deacons will serve for life, unless they resign or are removed. The

Church should endeavor to recognize all the men whom the Holy Spirit has given the requisite gifts and graces, and the number of elders or deacons will not be fixed. These may all continue in office as long as they remain qualified, able, and willing to serve. Also, the Church will not fix the length of their term of office.

Article VI. Discipline

A) Types of Discipline

Informal or Formative Church Discipline: Informal or formative discipline is applied by an individual or multiple members of the Church without the formal action of the elders or the Church as a body. The session will, through teaching and example, encourage the members of the congregation to discipline themselves and one another through the following practices:

1. Self-discipline: Exercising self-control or applying self-correction;
2. Overlooking the minor failings of others in love (1 Peter 4:8);
3. Informal admonishment: Encouraging one another to faithfulness and warning others in love to guard their hearts and minds against specific temptations and sins (Matthew 18:15).
4. Formal or Corrective Church Discipline: If informal discipline does not result in satisfactory correction, then those who are aware of the need for discipline are expected to call the matter to the attention of the session. In the case of open and scandalous sin, there is no requirement to attempt private resolution of the matter, and it should be brought to the session without delay. Formal or corrective discipline will be pursued only after scriptural prerequisites have been satisfied and the session has made sufficient inquiry. In extraordinary situations, the session has the authority to take immediate disciplinary action if the honor of Christ or the purity or unity of the Church are directly threatened by a failure to act. Formal Church discipline is applied through the formal action and unanimous judgment of the session. Formal discipline generally entails the following actions under the authority and oversight of the session:
 5. Formal Private Admonishment: When a brother or sister is in sin and remains unrepentant, rejecting informal admonition, one or two members of the Church, appointed by the session, will formally admonish them in private, pleading earnestly for their repentance and solemnly warning them of the dire spiritual consequences and judgment that may follow if they fail to repent (Matthew 18:16).
 6. Formal Public Admonishment: In some cases, considering the gravity and scandalous nature of the sin, the session may decide to admonish and warn the

brother or sister publicly so that they may be ashamed and repent (2 Thessalonians 3:14-15).

7. Excommunication: When all other informal and formal measures and admonishments have failed to bring about the desired repentance, or in extraordinary situations where the honor of Christ or the purity or unity of the Church demand immediate action, the session must proceed to formally charge the brother or sister of specific, willful, and unrepentant violations of God's Law. The session will bring these charges before the entire congregation, and the entire congregation will act in obedience to the Scriptures to excommunicate the unrepentant individual. Excommunication means being excluded from the Lord's Table and being regarded as an unbeliever.
8. Suspension: In some cases, considering the gravity or scandalous character of the sin, the session may decide to suspend the brother from positions of responsibility or leadership, so that they may be ashamed and repent (2 Thessalonians 3:14-15)

B) Subjects and Nature of Discipline

1. Members: All Church members, by uniting with Church of the Redeemer and committing to the Church Covenant, agree to both give and receive Church discipline as it is needed. This applies to children who are members as well, although the session will seek to work with the child's parents as possible, taking into account the age and circumstances of the child
2. Non-members: Professing Christians who attend the Church regularly, but who are not members, may be rebuked, but not excommunicated.
3. Professing Christians under discipline by other Churches: If another Church has disciplined one of its members, and that person subsequently comes to Redeemer, then the session will decide whether to honor the discipline of the other Church after due consultation with the person concerned and after all appropriate information is obtained from the disciplining Church.
4. Professing Christians excommunicated by other Churches: If another Church has excommunicated one of its members, and that person subsequently comes to Redeemer seeking membership, then the session will honor the other Church's excommunication until that person has been restored to fellowship with the disciplining Church. Excommunications from recognized cults will not be honored. Excommunications from non-Protestant Churches will be examined by the session with an eye to its validity.
5. Restoration: Excommunication shall be ended when, in the unanimous opinion of the session, the one under discipline has been restored through repentance. The session will read a confession by the individual under discipline to the

congregation on the Lord's Day, and the session will announce the end of the disciplinary action to the Church.

Article VII. Congregational Meetings

A) Annual Meeting

Each fall the Church will meet as a congregation to discuss the state of the Church, hear from the session on the financial condition of the Church, hear updates on ministries, elect Church officers, and make other necessary decisions, including major financial decisions. Members who want a petition to be brought before the Church should notify the session at least four weeks prior to the annual meeting. Any petition brought before the congregation must be approved by a majority of the session. The session must give at least three weeks' notice to the congregation of the meeting.

B) Special Called Congregational Meetings

At times the session may call special congregational meetings for specified purposes. A minimum of seven days notice will be given for any special called meeting at which official Church business is to be conducted. However, in the case of an emergency, a meeting may be called on shorter notice by notifying each regular member by email or verbal contact indicating the time, place, and purpose of the meeting.

C) Congregational Polls

From time to time the session will seek to discern the will of the congregation in a matter that affects the life of the congregation, such major financial decisions, schedule and meeting place, Church-wide ministry issues, etc. This will be accomplished through congregational polls. When the congregation is polled, the session will present the issue at hand, and all Representative Members (see Article IV, section D, paragraph 2) will respond with "yes" or "no." The poll will be advisory in nature and not binding upon the session. All Representative Members present at a meeting called in accordance with this article will be considered a quorum. It is the Church's desire for the session and the congregation to be in accord in all decision-making, especially when matters that greatly affect the congregation are in view. If the session and the congregation are at odds, as evidenced by a congregational poll, the session will re-visit the issue with prayer and discussion, heavily weighing the congregation's voice in that process.

D) Major Financial Decisions

In the case of a major financial decision, the session will at the annual meeting or special congregational meeting discern the will of the congregation by polling the Representative Members (see Article IV, section D, paragraph 2). The decisions include but are not limited to,

adding Church staff, purchasing property, or buying expensive equipment. The poll will be advisory in nature and not binding upon the session.

Article VIII. Amendments

The Confession of Faith and Constitution may be amended at any time through unanimous consent of the session, when the following conditions have been first fulfilled:

A written copy or an electronic file of the proposed change or changes is made available to the congregation at least two weeks before the congregational meeting.

The Session will be available to answer questions from regular members regarding the proposed changes before the congregational meeting.