

CONSTITUTION OF CHRIST CHURCH TWIN CITIES

ADOPTED SEPTEMBER, 2008

AMENDED JANUARY, 2011

AMENDED OCTOBER, 2017

AMENDED DECEMBER, 2020

Preamble

We, the members of Christ Church Twin Cities, do hereby establish and submit ourselves to the following Constitution as the governing document over the affairs of this local assembly of the Christian Church.

Article I. Name

The name of this congregation shall be Christ Church Twin Cities, hereafter referred to as Christ Church.

Article II. Standards of Faith and Practice

1. Christ Church is a congregation of Christian believers who have assembled for the following purposes, in keeping with the commands of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ:
 - a. To worship and serve the Lord Jesus Christ as we are commanded in the Scriptures.
 - b. To proclaim the Gospel of Jesus Christ fully and faithfully in our worship and public witness.
 - c. To participate in the Great Commission, given by Christ to His Church, to make disciples of all the nations.
 - d. To strive to live our lives in accordance with God's command to love Him with our whole heart, and our neighbors as ourselves.
 - e. To promote the spirit of unity and the bond of peace among Christians and Christian churches, and labor together with them toward our common purposes in Christ.
 - f. To stand for God's truth in the public sphere, declaring that God's rule extends to the entirety of His creation.
2. Christ Church acknowledges the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments as the supreme authority in all matters of faith and doctrine. Therefore, we uphold the standard of sola scriptura as articulated by the reformers of the 16th- and 17th-century Protestant Church.
3. Christ Church stands in the distinct religious history of the Reformed churches of the Protestant Reformation. Accordingly, we also uphold the doctrines of sola fide, sola gratia, solus Christus, and soli Deo gloria, holding that eternal salvation comes by faith alone through grace alone granted by Christ alone for the glory of God alone.
4. As inheritors of that Reformed history, we recognize as our primary creeds and confessional standard of doctrine and life:
 - a. The Apostles' Creed
 - b. The Nicene Creed
 - c. The Athanasian Creed
 - d. The Definition of Chalcedon

- e. The Westminster Confession of Faith (1647) and Catechism (1648).
- 5. We also recognize and utilize the following secondary standards, though we defer to our primary standards in any perceived or real disagreement between these standards:
 - a. The Three Forms of Unity:
 - i. The Belgic Confession (1561).
 - ii. The Heidelberg Catechism (1563).
 - iii. The Canons of Dort (1619).
 - b. The Chicago Statement on Biblical Inerrancy (1969).

Article III. Organization and Governance

1. As in all matters of doctrine and practice, Christ Church seeks to govern itself according to the precepts, patterns, and principles found in the Bible. This means that while we recognize the authority of leadership, we first acknowledge its responsibilities. Those responsibilities are primarily to:
 - a. Uphold biblical standards in the worship and work of the church.
 - b. Love, teach, and serve as faithful under-shepherds the believers who join our covenant community.
 - c. Offer protection, support, correction, encouragement, counsel, and reproof to members of the congregation as such needs arise.
2. Christ Church is a member congregation of the Communion of Reformed Evangelical Churches (CREC). As such, Christ Church submits to the governing authority of the CREC as defined in its Constitution.
3. Christ Church participates in Tyndale Presbytery of the CREC, and is subject to its oversight as defined in the Constitution of the CREC. As such, any member of Christ Church may appeal to Tyndale Presbytery should legitimate need arise.
4. Locally, Christ Church is governed by a Session consisting of teaching elders and ruling elders, to which members agree to obey and submit.
5. The elders of the church, whether teaching or ruling, shall constitute the Session and also shall serve as the Directors of the Corporation for the purposes of transacting business.
6. Unless otherwise specified in the Christ Church Constitution, the Session and congregation utilizes the parliamentary procedures of Robert's Rules of Order in their official meetings and actions.
7. Christ Church operates as a Presbyterian congregation. Specifically, this means we maintain a representative form of church government.
 - a. Ruling elders are selected from the membership of the church, approved by the Session, and ordained to their office publicly during a regular worship service.
 - b. Ruling elders must be confirmed to their office by a three-fourths vote of the full roster of member households who are eligible to vote at the time of appointment.
 - c. Ruling elders are appointed initially for a two-year term.
 - d. After the initial two-year term, ruling elders may be appointed to a five-year second term or to a lifetime term. Extended appointments must be confirmed to their office by a three-fourths vote of the full roster of member households who are eligible to vote at the time of the extension.

- i. Ruling elders are appointed by a three-fourths vote of the existing Session.
 - ii. Ruling elders may be removed by a three-fourths vote of the Session. A ruling elder subject to a removal vote does not have a vote in the question.
 - iii. Ruling elders may resign their office at any time. Voluntary departures are not subject to a vote by the remaining members of the Session.
 - e. Qualifications of ruling elders include:
 - i. Meeting the biblical requirements for leadership in the Church.
 - ii. Being members in good standing of Christ Church.
 - f. Responsibilities of ruling elders include:
 - i. Overseeing the conduct of regular worship services.
 - ii. Laboring with the pastor in shepherding the congregation.
 - iii. Conducting the business affairs of the church, including managing church finances.
 - iv. Overseeing the deacons in the performance of their duties.
- 8. Teaching elders may come from the congregation or from another local church, but in all cases must meet the following requirements:
 - a. Unless previously ordained, they must be examined and recommended by a committee of Tyndale Presbytery.
 - b. They must be appointed by a three-fourths vote of the Session, and confirmed to their office by a three-fourths vote of the full roster of member households who are eligible to vote at the time of appointment.
 - c. They serve at the pleasure of the Session, and may be removed at any time by a three-fourths vote of the Session. A teaching elder subject to a removal vote does not have a vote in the question. However, a teaching elder so removed has the right of appeal to Tyndale Presbytery. In such cases, the Presbytery ruling shall be final.
 - d. A teaching elder may be appointed for a specific period of time as determined by the Session, or to an open-ended appointment by mutual agreement of the Session and the teaching elder.
 - e. A teaching elder may resign his position at any time. Teaching elder resignations are not subject to a vote of the Session.
- 9. One teaching elder will normally hold the additional title of senior pastor.
 - a. The senior pastor is the primary minister of worship and the gospel in the church, and carries the primary responsibility of shepherding the congregation.
 - b. The Session may also designate other teaching elders as a pastor, for instance, a pastor of missions, assistant pastor, etc.
 - c. The designation of pastor may be granted or removed by a two-thirds vote of the Session. A session member who is being voted on for this designation is not eligible to vote in this matter. Therefore the number of session votes possible when computing a two-thirds vote will be reduced by one to exclude the one ineligible to vote.
 - d. A teaching elder may resign a position as pastor and remain as a teaching elder, by a two-thirds vote of the Session. The teaching elder in question does have a vote in the question.
- 10. Christ Church provides a third congregational office, deacon, which is not part of the governing Session, but which carries important responsibilities within the congregation.

- a. As with ruling elders, deacons are selected from the membership of the church, approved by the Session, and ordained to their office publicly during a regular worship service.
 - b. The deacon's qualifications and responsibilities are summarized in Acts 6:1–6 and 1 Timothy 3:1–18.
 - c. The deacon's responsibilities include, but are not limited to:
 - i. Showing compassion and mercy toward saints and strangers who are in need or distress.
 - ii. Collecting and disbursing funds for the relief of the needy.
 - iii. Visiting, praying with, and meeting the physical and spiritual needs of the sick and grieving.
 - iv. Organizing and encouraging church members to engage in such services to others.
 - v. Carrying out the plans for hospitality, service, and outreach established by the Session.
 - vi. Caring for the property, grounds, and buildings owned or used by the congregation.
 - d. Deacons are appointed for two-year terms with three-fourths vote of the Session. There is no limit to the number of terms a deacon may serve.
 - e. Deacon appointments must be confirmed by a three-fourths vote of the full roster of member households who are eligible to vote at the time of appointment.
 - f. Deacons may be removed by a three-fourths vote of the Session.
 - g. Deacons may resign their office at any time.
11. Elders and deacons annually affirm the Constitution:
- a. Every year, all elders and deacons shall each read the Constitution as well as the primary Standards of Faith and Practice (as specified in Article II), and affirm in writing their continued agreement with these documents before the Session.
 - b. Any personal disagreement or concern with the Constitution or the primary Standards of Faith and Practice to Session must be reported in writing and presented before the Session. Failure to affirm the Constitution or the primary Standards of Faith and Practice may be grounds for removal from office.
 - c. The Session shall report to the members of Christ Church once the annual affirmation has been conducted.

Article IV. Membership

- 1. Membership in Christ Church consists of households, defined as:
 - a. Father, mother, and children living together in the same physical household, including children living temporarily in other circumstances, but subject to the authority of their parents.
 - b. Mother and children living in the same physical household, absent a father by reason of death, divorce, abandonment, or unbelief. The same provision applies to single fathers.
 - c. Single individuals living independently, including widows and otherwise unmarried men and women. This provision applies to children of members who establish themselves as independent households.

- d. Single men and women attending college are considered members of their parents' household unless their parents and the Session agree to different arrangements.
 - e. Each household is represented by the head of household in matters requiring a vote of the membership.
 - i. The head of household is generally the husband or father.
 - ii. Where the husband or father is absent as specified in paragraph b. above, the mother serves as head of household.
 - iii. Single individuals living independently, whether male or female, are recognized as heads of household.
2. Households become members of Christ Church by:
 - a. Petitioning the Session for membership.
 - b. Testifying to their personal faith in Jesus Christ alone as their Lord and Savior.
 - c. Declaring their agreement with the governing documents of the church.
 - d. Affirming membership vows before the congregation at a regular worship service.
 - e. Signing the Christ Church membership vows
 3. Members of Christ Church carry the following responsibilities:
 - a. Participating in the regular worship, fellowship, and external ministry of the church.
 - b. Praying for and encouraging Christ Church officers, especially the pastors.
 - c. Supporting the church financially through tithes and offerings, or seeking an exception from the Session based on their particular circumstances.
 - d. Holding one another accountable for their conduct and attitude as brothers in Christ, in keeping with the pattern of Matthew 18.
 - e. Upholding one another in prayer and service, particularly those experiencing difficult circumstances and challenges.
 4. Members participate in the governance of Christ Church by:
 - a. Recommending men for leadership positions in the church.
 - b. Approving revisions to the Christ Church Constitution.
 - c. Confirming appointments to the offices of ruling elder, teaching elder, and deacon, as specified in Article III.
 5. Heads of household are eligible to vote by:
 - a. Being in good standing (i.e., not under church discipline)
 - b. Having attended Sunday worship at least 50% the prior two months
 6. Conditions for receiving new members into the church:
 - a. New converts to the Christian faith must be examined by the Session for their profession of faith and understanding of the implications of following Christ. Upon approval of the Session, the new converts will be baptized, and affirm membership vows before the congregation, whereupon they will be received into membership.
 - b. Persons applying for membership who are coming from other Christian churches may transfer their membership, provided they are leaving their former church in good standing, meaning not under discipline. The Session will confirm the status with the former church, and request a letter of transfer.

- c. Persons applying for membership without a formal transfer may be received into membership according to their particular circumstances. In such cases, the Session will investigate the circumstances, and reach a decision based on its findings.
 - d. A non-member who marries a member of Christ Church will be required to take membership vows individually in accordance with their status as defined in paragraphs a., b., or c. above.
 - e. Children of members who establish themselves as independent households will be required to affirm membership vows individually to qualify as member households.
 - f. While Christ Church holds to the practices of paedobaptism and paedocommunion, members are not required to affirm these practices to remain in good standing.
7. Once membership is established at Christ Church, a person shall remain a member and under the oversight, rule, and care of the Christ Church Session unless removed by order of the Session due to death, moral discipline, proper transfer of membership to another church, or upon approved request for release.
- a. Unless an extension is requested of and approved by the Session, members seeking to join another church will be given 6 months to become a member of a new church.
 - b. Those members seeking a new church home must remain in contact with the Session and give a monthly update on their progress and the spiritual state of their household.

Article V. Sacraments

1. Christ Church acknowledges two sacraments bequeathed to the Church in the Scriptures: Baptism and the Lord's Supper.
2. Sacraments are signs and seals of God's Covenant of Grace.
 - a. Baptism is the sign and seal of an individual's admission into the Covenant. It is administered to new converts to the Christian faith, as well as to the children of believers.
 - b. The Lord's Supper is the continuing sign and seal of membership in the Covenant. It is administered to believers in good standing, either members of Christ Church or of other faithful Christian churches, as part of our weekly worship service. All baptized Christians, including young children, are eligible to participate in the Lord's Supper.

Article VI. Marriage, Sexuality, Gender, and Life

1. As in all other matters governing the faith and life of Christ Church, our views of marriage, sexuality, gender, and life are informed and commanded by the scriptures of the Old and New Testaments. Accordingly, we believe that:
 - a. God wonderfully and immutably creates each person as male or female. These two distinct, complementary genders together reflect the image and nature of God (Gen 1:26, 27). Therefore, rejection of one's biological sex is a rejection of the image of God within that person.
 - b. The term "marriage" has only one acceptable meaning in the Christian Church: the uniting of one man and one woman in a single, exclusive union (Gen 2:18–25). We believe that God intends sexual intimacy to occur only between a man and a woman who are married to each

other (1 Cor 6:18, 7:2–5; Heb 13:4). We believe that God has commanded that no intimate sexual activity be engaged in outside of a marriage between a man and a woman.

- c. Any form of sexual immorality—including adultery, fornication, homosexual or bisexual behavior, pedophilia, bestiality, incest, polygamy, and use of pornography—is sinful and offensive to God (Lev. 18; Matt 15:18–20; 1 Cor 6:9, 10; Gal. 5:19–21).
 - d. In order to preserve the function and integrity of Christ Church as the local Body of Christ, and to provide a biblical role model to the Christ Church members, as well as to the larger community in which Christ Church resides, it is imperative that all persons employed by Christ Church in any capacity, or who serve as volunteers, agree to abide by this provision of our Constitution (Matt 5:16; Phil 2:14–16; 1 Thess 5:22). Further, all persons seeking membership in Christ Church shall affirm their agreement with this article as part of their membership vows.
 - e. God offers redemption and restoration to all who confess and forsake their sins, seeking His mercy and forgiveness through Jesus Christ (Acts 3:19–21; Rom 10:9, 10; 1 Cor 6:9–11). Accordingly, it is our duty to admonish those engaging in any sin, including sexual sin, and call them to repentance (Matt 9:13; Mark 2:17). We do so while affording to every person compassion, love, kindness, respect, and dignity (Mark 12:28–31; Luke 6:31). We repudiate all ungodly behavior or attitudes directed toward any individual engaged in any unbiblical sexual activity. We stand ready to receive them as brothers and sisters in the household of Christ upon their sincere repentance and repudiation of their sin.
2. In addition to our affirmation of God’s plan for marriage and sexuality, we affirm biblical revelation on the value of human life. Accordingly, we believe:
 - a. That all human life is sacred and created by God in His image. Human life is of inestimable worth in all its dimensions, including pre-born babies, the aged, the physically or mentally challenged, and every other state or condition from conception through natural death.
 - b. That we are, therefore, called to defend, protect, and value all human life. This respect for life requires us to reject all forms of elective abortion, while offering love, compassion, and support to those experiencing difficult pregnancies, or having undergone an abortion in the past (Ps 139).

Article VII. Amendments

1. Amendments to this Constitution may be proposed by Christ Church officers, or by members of the congregation presenting proposed amendments to the Session.
2. Procedure for amending the Constitution shall be:
 - a. Approval of the amendment by three-fourths vote of the Session.
 - b. A first and second reading at two consecutive heads of household meetings, with review and comment from the congregation.
 - c. Confirmation by a three-fourths vote of the heads of household in a meeting subsequent to the second reading.