

- CONSTITUTION -

ARTICLE I: NAME

The name of this church is The Church of the Covenant, a nonprofit corporation organized under the laws of the State of Ohio, hereinafter referred to as this church. This church is a particular congregation of the Presbyterian Church in America.

ARTICLE II: STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

In reliance upon strength from God, we do solemnly promise and covenant that we will worship and fellowship together as THE CHURCH OF THE COVENANT, Cincinnati, Ohio, upon the principles of the Holy Scripture and the doctrinal and governmental standards of the Presbyterian Church in America, and that we will endeavor to maintain the peace, purity, and harmony of this church.

Recognizing the importance of the life of the Church to the cause of our Lord Jesus Christ, we seek to be an assembly of believers that will be both a center for vital and Biblical Christianity and a demonstration of the love of Christ in the hearts of His people.

We believe the basic purpose of the Church to be reconciliation and restoration of relationships (Eph. 1:9-10; Colossians 1:20) -- people being reconciled and restored to a right relationship with their Creator God, with others, and with the creation. These relationships are reconciled and restored through the finished work of redemption in Jesus Christ. God has ordained and established the Church of the Lord Jesus Christ to be the instrument through which He accomplishes this purpose.

To carry out this task the church is to function in three basic areas of: 1) worship and proclamation of the living Triune God; 2) growth together in grace through discipleship and fellowship; and 3) outreach in word and deed to all of life. We propose to center the activities of our church around these functions. Because God has given each believer gifts, we believe that it is important that each member of a local church be active in exercising his or her gifts for the good of the Body of Christ.

While sharing in the general purpose and function of the Church, our particular ministry in the Body of Christ will focus in the following areas:

1. biblical, joyful worship of the living God through Jesus Christ in the power of the Holy Spirit, to direct and motivate all the church's life and its holistic outreach to people in the immediate area and throughout the world;
2. bold preaching and teaching of the inerrant Word of God as expressed in historic Christianity and the Reformed Faith;
3. demonstration of the reality of the "communion of the saints" as set forth in the New Testament Church as we grow together in grace and discipleship under the Lord Jesus Christ and His Word and in prayer;
4. effective outreach in the name of Jesus Christ as Lord of life and Savior from sin to all areas of life in God's Kingdom including family, education, business, government, and other institutions as well as addressing the major issues in society today.

To this end, we pledge ourselves to be responsible members of this community; participating in the worship, prayer and outreach life of the church, exercising our gifts and bearing one another's burdens, as God gives us strength.

ARTICLE III: DOCTRINE

The Church of the Covenant is reformed in theology and presbyterian in government. As a particular church in the Presbyterian Church in America, we are committed to the Westminster Confession of Faith and Catechisms as our doctrinal standards.

ARTICLE IV: GOVERNMENT

This church recognizes Jesus Christ, the One revealed in the infallible and inerrant written Word of God, as the only preeminent Head of His Church. It accepts no civil authority in ecclesiastical matters, and holds to the presbyterian form of government.

This government shall be divided into two branches, to be known as the Congregation and the Corporation. The Congregation shall deal with all matters relating to the ministry and life of the church. The Corporation shall deal with matters of a legal and temporal nature. Membership in the Corporation shall be granted to all communing members of the Congregation who are eligible under the laws of the State of Ohio. The affairs of the Corporation shall be administered by a board of trustees, who shall be elected from among the members of the Corporation. The board of trustees shall have no authority other than that delegated to it by the Corporation.

ARTICLE V: MEMBERSHIP

The membership of this church shall be composed of communing members and non-communing members as defined in the PCA Book of Church Order and as received into membership by the session according to the procedures specified in the PCA Book of Church Order. Members shall be removed from the membership roll of this church by the session according to the procedures specified in the PCA Book of Church Order.

No Inactive roll shall be established.

ARTICLE VI: OFFICERS

The officers of this church shall be elders and deacons. The officers of the Corporation shall be consistent with the requirements of the State of Ohio.

ARTICLE VII: DENOMINATIONAL RELATIONSHIP

This church shall be a particular church of the Presbyterian Church in America. This church can withdraw from that denomination only in the manner prescribed for amending the Constitution of this church. In the

event of a withdrawal, the title to all church property shall be retained by the Corporation (as defined in ARTICLE IV of this document). The Book of Church Order of the Presbyterian Church in America shall be the primary governing document of this church. Nothing in this constitution shall be construed as being in opposition to the Book of Church Order.

ARTICLE VIII: AMENDMENTS

Constitutional amendments may be proposed in either one of two ways:

1. by a majority vote of the Session; or
2. by a petition to the Clerk of Session signed by one-fourth of the communing members of the church.

A meeting of the congregation must be called, the proposed amendment being set forth verbatim in the call. Passage requires a three-fourths majority voting in favor of the amendment, of those voting members present at a properly constituted meeting.

- BY-LAWS -

ARTICLE I: THE CONGREGATION

Section 1. The Classes of membership of this church shall be communing and non-communing members, as defined in Article V of the Constitution. Individual members shall be expected to participate faithfully in the activities of this church.

Section 2. The responsibilities of the Congregation of this church include:

- A. The call or dismissal of a Teaching Elder as pastor, subject to the approval of Presbytery;
- B. election of Ruling Elders and Deacons;
- C. regular review and evaluation of the total ministry of this church;
- D. regular review of the total ministry of the denomination;
- E. all other matters not delegated to the Session of this church by these By-laws or the Book of Church Order.

Section 3. The meetings of the Congregation shall be governed by the following rules:

- A. The Moderator of all congregational meetings shall be the Pastor of this church or as otherwise provided for in the Book of Church Order of the PCA.

B. One Stated meeting shall be held each year, in the month of November, the exact date to be determined by the Session. Officers of the church shall be nominated during the month of June, and shall be elected at the annual Stated Meeting.

C. All meetings of the Congregation shall be called by the Session by an oral announcement from the pulpit on the two (2) consecutive Sundays prior to the meeting. No business shall be transacted at any meeting except what is stated in the announcement of the meeting.

D. Additional meetings of the Congregation shall be called by Session when requested in writing to do so by one fourth of the communing members of the Congregation. Session may call special congregational meetings at its discretion. The agenda for special meetings must be stated in the call.

E. A quorum for any meeting shall consist of 40% of the communing members residing in the Greater Cincinnati area.

F. All business shall be conducted by majority vote, except as otherwise specifically provided in these By-laws.

G. All communing members shall be entitled to vote at congregational meetings.

H. In the conduct of business, the latest edition of Robert's Rules of Order shall be used to decide any parliamentary questions not covered by the Constitution, By-Laws, or Book of Church Order.

I. Congregational meetings of this church may be resolved into corporation meetings when corporate matters are to be considered, with the provision that only corporation members be permitted to vote, and that the chairman of the trustees preside at the corporate meeting.

Section 4. Various areas of the work of this church shall be accomplished by standing committees of the Congregation under the supervision of the Session or the Diaconate. The Session shall appoint committee chairmen annually and give opportunity for the Congregation to select the committees on which they wish to serve. The Pastor is an "ex-officio" member of all committees. Committees shall regularly report to the Session the actions they have taken. Committees shall be responsible for duties and activities starting January 1, of each year, and continuing through December 31. The tenure of members of committees may be extended beyond these dates by Session. Session, conferring with committee chairmen, shall make assignments to particular committees as needs arise.

A. Session shall organize and supervise committees involved with the basic functions as outlined in the Constitution, of worship, proclamation, outreach, discipleship and growth in grace. (Such may include committees of worship, adult and youth education and activities, small groups, fellowship, evangelism, hospitality, etc.)

B. The Deacons shall organize and supervise committees involved with mercy ministries, caring for and maintaining the physical properties, and finances. (Such may include committees on building and grounds, internal and external mercy needs, and financial affairs.)

Section 5. From time to time, temporary committees maybe appointed by the Session, to accomplish specific functions.

Section 6. The Women in the Church (W.I.C.) is organized under the Session in accordance with its own constitution and promotes fellowship, growth, and outreach among and through the women in the church.

ARTICLE II: PASTOR

The Pastor of this church shall be a Teaching Elder, called by the Congregation, received by the Presbytery, and duly installed. The qualifications for elders (both teaching and ruling) are outlined in Scripture, especially in I Timothy 3:1-7 and Titus 1:5-9. The Teaching Elder or Pastor shall be responsible, along with the Ruling elders, for the spiritual oversight of the Congregation, and in that exercise, he shall give himself primarily to faithfully preaching and teaching the Word of God; diligently praying for the fruit of the ministry of the Word in the lives of believers and others; encouraging and overseeing the vital nurturing and discipling in grace and truth of each member and family of the Congregation; training the officers of this church; and, by personal example, leading the Congregation in evangelism.

ARTICLE III: CALLING A PASTOR

Section 1. The pulpit committee shall consist of five members and shall be formed and used in the selection of each Pastor of this church. The committee members shall be elected from the Congregation at a congregational meeting called for this purpose.

Section 2. The responsibilities of the pulpit committee are as follows:

A. The committee shall adopt a minimum and maximum set of terms for basic salary, expenses and other allowances, vacation time, etc., which shall receive approval from the Session before the terms are discussed with any candidate. The committee also shall adopt and receive approval from the Session for a budget, or guide for expenditures, for the work of the committee.

B. The committee shall prepare a list of several possible candidates. Each one on the list is to receive identical, brief, descriptive statements of this church. The statement is to include the Statement of Purpose (Article II of the Constitution), current membership, current attendance at stated meetings, a brief history of this church, the data of pulpit vacancy and an estimate of the growth potential. The committee is to send with each statement a request for the individual to respond with a biographical and professional resume, a personal theological statement, and a list of three references. Each possible candidate contacted by the committee must be informed of the committee's ultimate decision.

C. The Committee shall contact the references submitted by each candidate and request information about preaching ability, pastoral ability, basic Christian character and any other pertinent facts.

D. The committee should then invite possible candidates to preach as guest speakers and to be interviewed by the committee. The committee may hear and interview possible candidates at their own churches.

E. The committee shall prepare a list of incisive questions to ask to assist then in evaluating each man. The same list shall be used for each candidate.

F. When the pulpit committee has decided on the candidate, it will make arrangements for the candidate to spend at least three days, including a Sunday, with the Congregation. The schedule should allow the maximum number of members of the Congregation to meet the candidate.

G. Only one candidate at a time shall be considered and voted upon by the Congregation.

Section 3. A candidate shall not be called to serve this Congregation except by a congregational meeting called for the purpose of voting on a candidate. Prior to any vote, the Congregation shall be advised of the basic terms of the call. The vote on the candidate must carry by a two-thirds majority in order to extend a call.

Section 4. When a call has been extended by a congregational vote, the call, in proper form, shall be presented to Presbytery by duly appointed commissioners. Upon approval of the call and acceptance of the candidate by Presbytery, the pulpit committee shall be dissolved.

ARTICLE IV: TERMINATION OF PASTOR'S SERVICES

Section 1. The Pastor of this church shall serve until his services are terminated by resignation or by request of the Congregation. The Pastor shall give a minimum of thirty days notice before resigning.

Section 2. Procedures of dismissal:

A. In the case of admitted immorality or heresy, the Pastor shall not fulfill any of the duties or responsibilities of the office of Teaching Elder from the time the admission is received by the Session. Session shall report the admission promptly to the Presbytery for their action.

B. In cases where in accusation of immorality or heresy needs to be proven, the Session shall request Presbytery to assist them in adherence to the Rules of Discipline of the Book of Church Order.

C. In circumstances having nothing to do with immorality or heresy, such as incompetence or incompatibility in performance of duties or large scale disaffection among the Congregation, the Pastor should be advised of the problem, and specific efforts should be made to remedy the situation. At this point, counsel should be sought from Presbytery. If reasonable efforts have failed, a petition to call a congregational meeting for voting to terminate the services of the Pastor could be received. In the event of such a petition, the Session shall ask a member of Presbytery to moderate the meeting. A simple majority vote is needed to terminate a Pastor. Proper steps then must be taken to have Presbytery dissolve the pastoral relation.

ARTICLE V: THE SESSION

Section 1. The Session of this church shall consist of the Teaching Elder(s) together with the installed Ruling Elders.

Section 2. The qualifications for the Ruling Elders are outlined in Scripture, especially in I Timothy 3:1-7 and Titus 1:5-9.

Section 3. The Session is responsible for the spiritual oversight of the Congregation. While there are many administrative tasks that must be handled by the Session, its primary function is a spiritual one. It is to minister the Word of God, counsel, lead by example, disciple and nurture, rebuke and exhort.

Section 4. The number of Ruling Elders serving on the Session shall be a maximum of nine (9) in "classes" of three (3) each.

Section 5. Terms of active service on Session for Ruling Elders shall be for three years. Installed Ruling Elders may be re-elected to one succeeding term, after which a minimum one-year inactive period must ensue before subsequent re-election. (This procedure shall be implemented with the election of the Class of 1997. Elected Ruling Elders in the Classes of 1994, 1995 and 1996 will be eligible for election for one more three-year term at the end of their present terms.)

Section 6. Regular meetings shall be once a month. Special meetings may be called at any time by the Pastor or upon request of two installed Ruling Elders.

Section 7. Session shall appoint the maximum number of Ruling Elder delegates permitted to represent the Congregation at each Presbytery meeting and at General Assembly. The church shall underwrite the expenses incurred by the Teaching Elder and Ruling Elder delegates in their attendance at church courts. The church also shall underwrite the reasonable expenses of the Teaching Elder and Ruling Elders in performance of Presbytery or General Assembly committee work.

ARTICLE VI: THE DIACONATE

Section 1. The Deacons shall be organized as a board, of which the Pastor shall be an advisory member.

Section 2. The qualifications of the Deacons are outlined in Scripture, especially in I Timothy 3:8-13.

Section 3. The office of Deacon is an office of service in ministry to those in need or in distress. The Deacons are to lead the Congregation in the ministry of mercy and to train others to assist them. In addition to ministering to the sick, shut-ins, needy and friendless, the Deacons are responsible for developing the grace of liberality in the Congregation, the care over the gifts and property of this church, and administering the budget. The Deacons function under the supervision of the Session and work closely with the Elders on matters of common interest.

Section 4. The tenure of the Deacons shall be the same as for the Ruling Elders. The requirements for their meetings also shall be the same. The number of Deacons serving on the Board of Deacons shall be determined by the Congregation.

Section 5. The Deacons shall lead by example in this work, and they also may enlist the help of other members of the Congregation.

ARTICLE VII: THE TRUSTEES

Section 1. The trustees are responsible, as agents of the corporation, to maintain and preserve all properties of this church which are held in trust for this church by the corporation.

Section 2. The trustees shall elect a chairman, a vice chairman, and secretary from among themselves, and shall hold a meeting at least once a year.

Section 3. The powers and duties of such trustees must not infringe upon the powers and duties of the Session or the Board of Deacons.

ARTICLE VIII: THE CORPORATION

Section 1. The responsibilities of the corporation are:

- A. decisions regarding the purchase or sale of all real properties;
- B. determination of plans and costs of all new building programs;
- C. decisions regarding all major changes in existing buildings;
- D. holding legal title to all properties of this church.

Section 2. Procedures for calling corporation meetings, and the quorum for such meetings, shall be the same as for congregational meetings. The chairman of the trustees shall preside.

ARTICLE IX: NOMINATION, ELECTION AND INSTALLATION OF OFFICERS

Section 1. The only elective offices in this church shall be those of Elder and Deacon. (The officers of the corporation are provided for in Article VII.)

Section 2. Nominees for Ruling Elder(s) and Deacon(s) may be any men who are communing members of the Congregation with the following qualifications:

- A. They shall be men of God who already manifest those qualities found in I Timothy and Titus.
- B. They shall be men who are well acquainted with God's Word and who are in the practice of teaching and defending it.
- C. They shall be men who administer Christian discipline in their homes.

D. They shall be men who demonstrate their willingness and ability to serve their brothers and sisters in Christ.

E. They shall give indication of being willing to take the time necessary to do the work involved in the office.

Section 3: Nominations shall be made in writing to the Session during the month of June. Any communing member of the Congregation can make a nomination. The Session shall publish a list of those nominees who have accepted nomination by the third Sunday in October.

Section 4. Each nominee shall attend an extensive training program conducted by the Pastor and/or Session.

Section 5. The Session will have the responsibilities of examining every nominee, including those nominated for re-election, ascertaining his qualification, and certifying to the Congregation only those they deem qualified. Officers cannot be elected unless examined and approved by the Session.

Section 6. At the time of the election, each nominee shall be voted upon by the Congregation, and must receive the favorable vote of at least 51% of the members present to remain a nominee.

Section 7. If there are an equal or lesser number of nominees than positions to be filled, those men remaining as nominees shall be deemed elected. If there are more nominees than positions to be filled, there shall be a subsequent vote on the remaining nominees, with those receiving the highest number of favorable votes being elected.

Section 8. The officers shall be elected at the annual stated meeting in November. The elected officers shall be ordained/installed at a Sunday service between election and the end of the calendar year.

Section 9. All balloting shall be done by written secret ballot.

ARTICLE X: BUDGET AND HANDLING OF FUNDS

Section 1. At their first meeting following the November Congregational Meeting, the Board of Deacons shall appoint (or re-appoint) a Financial Secretary and a Treasurer. The Financial Secretary shall be responsible for receiving the offerings and maintaining confidential financial records. The Treasurer shall be responsible for disbursing funds in accordance with the budget, maintaining the financial and banking records, and making periodic reports to the Session, the Deaconate and such other committees as specified by the Deacons.

Section 2. The annual budget shall be prepared by the Deacons or a committee under their supervision, reviewed by the Session, then submitted to the Congregation for its review and input at the November stated congregational meeting. Draft copies of the budget shall be presented to the Congregation prior to the congregational meeting. After the congregational meeting, the Session shall consider the Congregational input before approving and adopting the final budget. The Board of Deacons, or their appointed committee, shall administer the budget as approved and adopted by Session.

Section 3. The provisions of the budget shall be considered guidelines for the financial activity of the church. The committees have a high degree of discretion with respect to their allocated budget. Committee spending above the total budgeted level must receive the approvals of the Deacons and Session, but each committee has the freedom to adjust line items within its own budget.

Section 4. Special appeals shall be permitted only by unanimous approval of the Session.

ARTICLE XI: AMENDMENTS

The By-laws of this church may be amended by two-thirds vote of the communing Members present at any duly-constituted meeting of the Congregation.