

# **Constitution and Bylaws for Christ Church of Morgantown**

*Established December 2007. Amended June 2011.*

## **PREAMBLE:**

In the church of God all things are to be done decently and in order. This pertains to the government of the church and congregational development as much as to Biblically prescribed corporate worship. Convinced that Jesus Christ—the Head of the church—will protect and guide her, we seek to obey Scripture through the following standards for the orderly and Scriptural government of this congregation, here designated as Christ Church of Morgantown (CCOM). These standards are not an attempt to supplant Scripture, but rather are our expression of how we understand the duty to practice Biblical church government under God. While drawn from Scripture these standards are primarily procedural. We, the members of CCOM, do hereby establish and submit ourselves to the following bylaws as a means to govern the affairs of this church.

## **ARTICLE I. Name:**

This church body shall be known as Christ Church of Morgantown (CCOM), of Morgantown, West Virginia.

## **ARTICLE II. Aims, Standards and Objectives:**

- A. CCOM recognizes the Scriptures of the Old and New Testament as the primary standard and unchallengeable authority and supreme judge to which all religious controversies or creeds, as well as all opinions and regulations of men, must be subordinate. CCOM, standing within the distinct religious history of the Reformed churches of the Protestant Reformation, recognizes the Three Forms of Unity as its secondary standard of doctrine and life.
- B. Should any conflict arise between these bylaws and any of the above standards (or between the above standards themselves), the controlling authority for resolution of the conflict shall be, in this order: a) Scriptures; b) the Three Forms of Unity and c) these bylaws. The Elders shall adjudicate and resolve alleged conflicts (or controversies pertaining to such allegations) and shall always be the first court of adjudication before any recourse is made to other courts.
- C. The purpose of CCOM is to glorify God through obedience to His Word in worship, submission to His Word in all areas of human life and endeavor, discipleship of believers and their households, faithful observance of the sacraments of baptism and the Lord's Supper, preaching of the whole counsel of God, and proclamation of God's grace to sinners.
- D. CCOM is a member church in the Confederation of Reformed Evangelical Churches (the CREC). The constitution of the CREC and all supporting documents are to be considered as being completely incorporated in this document, and shall be binding as appropriate on all church officers and members.
- E. Should there be any differences or exceptions between this document and the Constitution of the Confederation of Reformed Evangelical Churches they will be so stated in this document.

## **ARTICLE III. Membership at Christ Church of Morgantown:**

- A. Purpose of Membership

# Constitution and Bylaws for Christ Church of Morgantown

*Established December 2007. Amended June 2011.*

The organization of membership outlined below is designed solely for the purpose of maintaining Scriptural and accountable local church government (Heb. 13:17), such that our affairs are conducted in decency and order (1 Cor. 14:40). In no way is our practice of membership to be construed in such a way as to disrupt our Christian unity and fellowship with true saints who attend church elsewhere (Gal. 3:28; 1 Cor. 3:1-4).

## B. Household Membership

1. Membership in this local church will be normally reckoned by household. A household will be eligible for membership when the head of that household (husband or single head) meets the following criteria.

- a. He (or she--hereinafter only the masculine pronoun will be used) professes faith in the Lord Jesus Christ (Rom. 10:9-10) and repents of his sin (Jer. 25:5, Ezek 18:30, Mk 1:5);
- b. He does not contradict his profession through his manner of life (Matt. 7:22-23; 1 Cor. 5:13);
- c. He has been baptized in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit (Matt. 28:19);
- d. He considers his permanent residence to be less than one hour's drive of our church's meeting location which will allow faithful attendance without undue or unsustainable burden (Eph. 1:1);
- e. He willingly submits himself by vows to the government and discipline of this church (Heb. 13:7,17);
- f. He willingly commits himself and his family (physically, financially and spiritually) to supporting the worship and work of CCOM.

2. The elders in session may admit eligible households and/or individuals into membership in CCOM based upon hearing and assessing the testimony of the head of the household and/or the individual(s) seeking membership in CCOM. Since the elders, as mere men cannot read hearts (Jer 17:9,10), they are to require the candidate's profession of faith to be clearly articulated and credible as measured by the Gospel in order to be admissible. Admission into membership also requires that the candidate be—or show that they have been—properly baptized by a Christian church. There is, however, no testimony necessary for infants and children of covenant households. Those seeking membership who make a credible profession of faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, but who have not been baptized in a Christian church may be accepted into membership only after being baptized. Letters of transfer from another Christian church will be accepted, but will not mitigate the requirement to meet with the elders in session for their faith to be professed and examined for credibility as measured by the Gospel.

3. The elders will maintain a membership list, with a household listed in the manner indicated below. This membership list will be kept separate from the church directory of addresses and phone numbers.

- a. When a head of household is accepted into the membership of this church, his household will be listed with him. Communicant members of the church in each household will be documented, thus:

*Fred Abbott and his household (His wife Miriam, and children, John and Susan)*

- b. A woman without a husband may serve as a head of a household, thus:

*Lydia Benson and her household (Children, Sandra and Jessica)*

- c. If an individual satisfies the criteria listed above, but has no family, or member/s of his

# Constitution and Bylaws for Christ Church of Morgantown

*Established December 2007. Amended June 2011.*

family refuse to believe, then he will be accepted as an individual member of this church. The elders will list his membership in the following manner:

*John Carston*

4. The elders of the church recognize, through admitting the head of the household into such membership, that he carries the primary responsibility before God for knowing and shaping the spiritual condition of that household. Recognizing that role does not transfer the authority and use of the keys of the kingdom from the elders into the hands of heads of households—but does make it incumbent upon the heads of households to make recommendations to the elders concerning members of his household on such matters as baptism, the Lord’s Supper, and church discipline. According to Scripture and under the headship of Christ, the administration of church ordinances and discipline remains with the elders. In such administration, the elders are to consider carefully the spiritual responsibility of the head of the household.

## C. Necessity of Baptism for Membership

1. Because water baptism is required of those seeking membership, the following guidelines will apply. When someone is brought to faith and makes profession of that faith in Christ, he should be immediately instructed on the subject of baptism, and subsequently baptized if he was not properly baptized previously.

2. When an unbaptized Christian comes to this church, he will be instructed on his responsibility to be baptized at the first opportunity, and subsequently baptized. He will not be admitted into membership in this congregation until he is baptized.

3. When a baptized Christian moves to this church, the elders must verify and acknowledge his baptism as Christian baptism in receiving him into the membership of this church. If the baptism was administered by an apostate church, or a non-Christian sect or cult, as officially declared by the elders of the church in session, the individual will be instructed on his responsibility to be properly baptized. This is not rebaptism. At the first opportunity following proper instruction on baptism and upon his readiness to receive this sign and seal of the covenant of grace, he will subsequently be baptized. As an act of an ecclesiastical government, a valid baptism does not depend upon the personal integrity of the elder administering the baptism, or the doctrinal and moral integrity of the administering church. Nevertheless, if the doctrinal and moral corruption of that church are so far advanced as to require our elders to consider that church to be not a Christian church at all, then the baptisms administered by such a church will not be recognized as valid. But given the complexity of all such issues, the elders shall determine each situation on a case-by-case basis.

4. Infants and children who are not baptized are still considered members if the head of household is admitted into membership at Christ Church. However, they do not have access to the Lord’s Supper until they are baptized.

## D. Membership Covenant

a. Do you believe yourself to be a sinner in the sight of God, justly deserving His displeasure, and without hope except in His sovereign mercy?

b. Do you believe in the Lord Jesus Christ as the Son of God and Savior of sinners, and do you receive and rest upon Him alone for salvation as He is offered to you in the Gospel?

c. Do you believe in the statement of faith found in the Apostles’ Creed ?

d. Do you here and now vow, in humble reliance upon the grace of the Holy Spirit, that you will strive to live all of your life in the way that is fitting for a follower of Christ and which

# Constitution and Bylaws for Christ Church of Morgantown

*Established December 2007. Amended June 2011.*

brings glory to Him?

e. Do you vow to support this Church in its worship and work to the best of your ability? (note that support is far more than the tithe, but understand that the tithe—the tenth—is obliged to the storehouse (the Church) and is expected and not designatable. Any offering to this church over and above the tithe may be designated to specific needs with permission from the session.)

f. Do you vow to submit yourself to the government and discipline of this Church, and to strive earnestly for its purity and peace?

g. Do you vow to refrain from the sin of gossip (James 3:10) and grumbling (Phil 2:14) and boldly strive to be at peace and in fellowship with all of your brethren at all times to the best of your ability?

h. The names of members shall be removed from the rolls of the church only by order of the elders on the basis of death, transfer to another church, or discipline.

## **E. Expectations of Members:**

1. Members of CCOM shall devote themselves to both the private and public means of grace including the regular attendance at Lord's Day worship services and fellowship meetings as well as the showing of hospitality to the saints.
2. Members of CCOM shall devote themselves to the service of their fellow Christians and church members, sharing both material and spiritual blessings with one another, as the Spirit leads and according to their ability.
3. Members of CCOM shall, in obedience to the Word of God and as a token of God's gift to us, give cheerfully and regularly to the ministry and labor of this church.
4. Members of CCOM shall conduct themselves with godly attitude, speech and conduct toward their fellow church members, being slow to take offense and ready to resolve conflicts according to the instruction of Scripture (Cf. Matt. 5:23-24; 18:15-20).
5. Members of CCOM shall recognize, respect, and submit to the elders of CCOM in obedience to Hebrews 13:17.

## **ARTICLE IV. The Calling and Conduct of Congregational Meetings:**

A. All meetings shall be conducted following the guidelines of *Robert's Rules of Order*.

B. Scheduling and Notice of Meetings:

1. Congregational meetings shall be at the call of the elders of the church or by written request of one-fourth of the communicant male heads of households.
2. Public notice of any such meetings shall be made at worship services on the two Sundays preceding the meeting or by circular letter posted ten days in advance of the meeting.
3. Special and Head of Household Meetings:

# **Constitution and Bylaws for Christ Church of Morgantown**

*Established December 2007. Amended June 2011.*

b. The elders shall call special meetings of the members of the congregation when they deem it best to do so or upon written request by one-fourth of the communicant male heads of households. At specially called meetings no business shall be conducted except that which is stated in the notice of the meeting.

c. CCOM shall hold regular head of households meetings which will be the normal channel through which the elders and deacons receive information and input from the church and report to the church. A head of household agreed upon by the other heads of households shall keep minutes from these meetings which will be available for future reference.

#### **4. Quorum and Voting in Meetings:**

a. Only heads of households who are communicant members and who have been approved by the elders shall be entitled to vote at its congregational meetings.

b. A majority of the heads of households shall constitute a minimum quorum for the transacting of business at a duly called meeting of the members of the congregation. For example, if there are five households and if the heads of three are present, then a quorum exists.

c. Legitimate motions made at a meeting of the members of the congregation shall pass by a simple majority of the heads of households present, unless otherwise stipulated in these bylaws. For example, if there are five households present and if the heads of three households vote for the motion, then the motion passes.

d. Eligible voters who are present but abstain from voting shall not be counted for the purposes of determining voting percentages.

e. The election of elders and deacons shall always be by signed ballot.

f. Voting by proxy on the election of church officers shall be permitted only by special approval of the elders based on the determination of legitimate need (e.g., illness, job, etc.). The person giving the proxy must be a member and a head of household, and the proxy must be given to an elder.

g. The elders shall appoint a secretary at all meetings over which they preside. This secretary shall take minutes of the meeting, which shall be approved at the next similar meeting. All minutes of both congregational and head of household meetings shall be available to all voting members of CCOM.

#### **ARTICLE V. Prerogatives of the Members in Congregational Meetings:**

A. The business which may be transacted by the communicant membership of the congregation at its duly called meetings shall include and not be limited to the following:

# **Constitution and Bylaws for Christ Church of Morgantown**

*Established December 2007. Amended June 2011.*

1. Reviewing the yearly report of all financial transactions by the elders and offering non-binding advice to them in matters pertaining to the budget, purchases, and/or sale of church property.
2. Taking action to nominate men to serve as elders (pastors, teachers, or evangelists), or deacons for the congregation, and upon approval of the qualification of such candidate(s) by the elders, the member heads of households of the congregation may proceed to vote upon them.
3. Taking action to remove an officer or officers from their position(s) in the congregation either by:
  - a. Voting to have an elder or deacon divested of his office; such a vote must pass by more than a three-fourths majority of those voting, and it may be taken only after having been petitioned by one-fourth of the communicant member heads of households of the congregation, announced in the call of a congregational meeting, and the challenged officer(s) has (have) been given opportunity to defend his (their) continuance in the office; or
  - b. Voting to request and/or concur with the resignation of an elder or deacon from his ministerial charge in the congregation.
4. If a majority of the elders are exhibiting a scandalous lifestyle and seeking through collusion to avoid accountability for that lifestyle, member heads of households may petition the CREC to appoint a commission of elders from other churches to examine those elders as to their fitness for office. Further, the congregation may request that the CREC appoint session members pro-tem if necessary.
5. If the member heads of households vote to remove elders with the result that there is no longer a plurality of elders as required by this document in Article VII, appeal must be made to the Presiding Minister of the overseeing CREC Presbytery for pastoral oversight.
6. Approving the clerk's minutes of a prior congregational meeting.
7. From time to time, the elders or the deacons may call for a poll (a non-binding vote) of all voting members, or all communicant members, or some special portion of the membership (e.g., the youth, the men, or the women), in order to gain input from them concerning a particular matter.
8. Membership in any formal association with other churches in addition to the Confederation of Reformed Evangelical Churches shall require a two-thirds majority vote of the heads of households and the approval of the elders.

## **ARTICLE VI. Church Discipline:**

One of the marks of a true church of Jesus Christ is that it maintains discipline. The purpose of church discipline is, through biblical means, to prevent, restrain, or even to remove any evil that may threaten the church and to promote and encourage that which is good and glorifying to God.

# **Constitution and Bylaws for Christ Church of Morgantown**

*Established December 2007. Amended June 2011.*

Church discipline, in all its forms—preventative, formative, corrective, and final—is the line of demarcation between the church and the world; without it, we cannot distinguish between the two.

A. Preventative Discipline: This aspect of church discipline guards the entrance into the church and seeks to prevent unbelievers from becoming a part of the local assembly (Cf. Acts 9:26-27). The church is established for the feeding and care of believers and their households.

1. The elders will examine and determine those who are eligible for baptism and church membership.
2. The elders will examine those who have been baptized and professed faith to qualify them for membership.

B. Formative Discipline: Once a person has become a member of the church, he immediately comes under the primary work of the church, which is formative discipline.

1. This aspect of church discipline is the means whereby church members are instructed and trained in the Christian faith by:
  - a. both public and private means;
  - b. through both formal and informal methods;
  - c. with the goal of presenting every person mature in Christ (Col. 1:28-29);
  - d. through private counsel, instruction, rebuke, and admonition; and
  - e. through the public ministry of the Word.
2. This is the routine work of the local church (Eph. 4:11-16).
3. It is under this formative discipline of the local church where disciples
  - a. are given more of the Word of God by which they are built up in the faith (Acts 20:28);
  - b. are to be sanctified and cleansed by the washing of water and the Word (Eph. 5:25-27);
  - c. are to be helped to grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior (II Tim. 4:1-2);
  - d. are rebuked and reprovved and called back to the path of righteousness (II Tim. 4:1-2);
  - e. are stimulated to love and good works (Heb. 10:24);
  - f. are taught to observe the commands of God (Matt. 28:19);
  - g. are equipped for the work of service (Eph. 4:12);

# Constitution and Bylaws for Christ Church of Morgantown

*Established December 2007. Amended June 2011.*

h. are equipped for every good work (II Tim. 3:17);

i. and where they become workmen who need not be ashamed because they can rightly divide the word of truth (II Tim. 2:15).

C. Corrective Discipline: A third aspect of church discipline is corrective discipline whereby the church applies lawful (i.e., biblical and constitutional) pressure to a wayward member

1. By means of:

a. informal action (e.g., counsel, reproof, rebuke)

b. formal action (e.g., public rebuke, censure or barring from the Lord's Table for a season cf. II Thess. 3:14-15) in the hope that the wayward member would be restored to a place of conformity to Christ's rule (Gal. 6:1).

2. Corrective discipline is to be applied by the elders, as they deem appropriate for the case, in those situations where formative discipline has failed to accomplish its purposes.

a. The elders must perform this duty with love and humility for the good of the wayward member, the good of the local church in general, and for the sake of Christ's glory (Cf. Matt. 18:15-20).

3. With children of member households, the elders will exercise disciplinary authority, if necessary, in the following ways.

a. If a baptized child growing up in a covenant home has not been partaking of the Lord's Supper and refuses, over a period of years, to profess faith in the Lord and come to the table, the elders will increase pastoral help to the head of that household. If the child leaves the household without having made such a profession of faith, then the elders will solemnly warn the newly independent child of the spiritual hazards in breaking the covenant through rejecting a Biblical upbringing and his baptism, and urge him to repent and believe. If the warning is not heeded, and the call to repent not answered properly, then the elders will solemnly declare the child to be a "covenant breaker" and will refuse the child's name from the list of member households. His name will then be placed on a special priority list so the elders can pray and fast regularly for this endangered soul until he repents or dies.

b. If a baptized child growing up in a covenant home has been partaking of the Lord's Supper, and subsequently demonstrates a rebellious spirit, and/or rejects the faith, the elders will offer pastoral help to the head of the household as appropriate, and will instruct him to have his child refrain from taking the Lord's Supper. If the child leaves the household in this state of rebellion, then the elders will solemnly warn the newly independent child of the spiritual hazards in breaking the covenant through rejecting a Biblical upbringing and his baptism. If there is no subsequent repentance the elders will remove the child's name from the list of member households, will formally initiate the process of church discipline, and the child will be excommunicated. His name will then be placed on a special priority list so the elders can pray and fast regularly for this endangered soul until he repents or dies.

c. In the case of formal discipline of a child in a member household, the elders should address their concerns to the head of household until the child leaves the home. The child

# Constitution and Bylaws for Christ Church of Morgantown

*Established December 2007. Amended June 2011.*

still is primarily under the care of that head. However, the elders may, if the child's behavior is scandalous, refuse him the table.

D. Final Discipline: (excommunication), A final aspect of church discipline, which is the church's responsibility to perform, is the removal of a member by judicial action (Matt. 18:17).

1. In the exceptional cases where this discipline becomes necessary,
  - a. A church member who persistently refuses to yield to the formative and corrective discipline of the church is declared, by judicial action of the elders, to be excommunicated, which means they are no longer members of this church and are considered to be unbelievers.
2. Final discipline decisions may be formally appealed by making a written request to the elders for a court of appeals:
  - a. Once requested, this appeal is irrevocable and the court's decision in the particular matter and at this particular time is final.
  - b. The appellate court shall be composed of a minimum of three men chosen by the appropriate CREC Presbytery or moderator.
3. Final church discipline has as its goal the elimination of the unrepentant person from the church (I Cor. 5:9-13), with the hope of restoring the spiritual life of one who has fallen into habitual sin (I Cor. 5:5).
4. Likewise, the church must be faithful to forgive and receive back anyone who repents (Matt. 18:21-22), and grant full restoration in the church upon such repentance (II Cor. 2:6-8).
5. The procedure to be followed depends upon the nature of the offense; however, the following procedure shall be followed in most cases, unless otherwise directed by the elders (in cases of extraordinary circumstances):
  - a. The directions of Matt. 18:15-16 shall be followed in their proper order.
  - b. If restoration of fellowship is not accomplished by these means, then formal charges shall be filed with or by the elders (Matt. 18:17-18).
  - c. All formal charges shall be stated in terms of God's law (the Bible) and shall be supported by citing which portions of God's law have been violated.
  - d. After a fair and impartial hearing of all witnesses accessible and all facts ascertainable, the elders shall make a judicial ruling in the case by unanimous decision.
  - e. Any decision by the elders to discipline a member, whether to formally correct or to excommunicate, shall be announced to the congregation.

## **ARTICLE VII. Church Offices:**

# Constitution and Bylaws for Christ Church of Morgantown

*Established December 2007. Amended June 2011.*

## A. Number of Officers

1. The congregation shall always (so far as it is possible) provide for itself a minimum of two elders. If at least two elders are not actively serving the church, appeal must be made by the congregation to the Presiding Minister of the Augustine CREC Presbytery for pastoral oversight. Decisions made by the Presiding Minister or the Augustine Presbytery shall be binding on the church unless overridden by a 3/4 vote of the heads of household.

## 2. Terms of Office.

a. Upon election, ordination and installation, the officers shall hold office for their lifetimes, unless removed from such office as stipulated below.

b. Officers shall surrender or be removed from their office(s) under any of the following conditions:

(1). Resignation of an office by an elder in which the congregation and elders concur;

(2). When there is request by a member head of household of the congregation in good standing that an elder, teaching or ruling, be dismissed from his service, the elders shall search to see if there is cause for such a dismissal and if it deems that there is enough cause to call a congregational meeting to vote on the matter, more than a three-fourths vote of member heads of households present shall be necessary to dismiss the elder. The elder shall remain an elder but without service on the session until such time as he is returned to the session by a majority vote of the congregation.

(3). Excommunication from membership in the congregation by judicial action.

## B. Ordination of Officers

### 1. Doctrine of Ordination

a. Those who have been recognized by the church to have been called and equipped by God to hold office in the church are to be ordained by the elders.

b. Ordination is the authoritative admission of one called to an office in the church, accompanied with examination, prayer and the laying on of hands.

c. Only males shall be admitted to ordination and church office (I Timothy 2:12).

d. As every ecclesiastical office, according to the Scriptures, is a special charge, no man shall be ordained unless it be to the performance of a definite work.

e. The officers requiring ordination are:

(1). Elder, teaching (pastor) and ruling with installation required.

# **Constitution and Bylaws for Christ Church of Morgantown**

*Established December 2007. Amended June 2011.*

- (2). Deacon, and ordination to service with installation required
  - (3). Evangelist (missionary)
2. Trainees for the Gospel Ministry
- a. Men, who show promise and interest in the work of the ministry, shall present themselves to the elders for examination and consideration to be placed under the care and training of the elders.
  - b. Upon receiving the elders' approval, the trainee shall be presented to the congregation of CCOM and recognized as one who has placed himself under the guidance and training of the elders.
3. Candidates for Church Office (elder or deacon)
- a. Men, who show promise and interest in the offices of the church, shall present themselves to the elders or be nominated by the heads of households for examination and consideration to be placed in nomination for church office.
  - b. Upon receiving the elders' approval, the candidate shall be presented to the member heads of households of CCOM for vote according to the procedure outlined below.
4. The Ordination and Installation of Officers
- a. Elders:
    - (1). A candidate for ordination to the office of elder shall be examined and approved by the elders concerning:
      - (a). His walk with Christ, especially his personal character and family management (based on the qualifications set out in I Tim. 3:1-7 and Titus 1:6-9); and
      - (b). His knowledge of Bible content, theology, the sacraments, church history, and the principles and rules of the government and discipline of the church.
    - (2). If a candidate is denied approval by the elders:
      - (a). A list of deficiencies or areas of concern, stated in biblical terms, shall be provided for the candidate.
      - (b). A proposed course of action for remedying these concerns shall also be provided for the candidate.
    - (3). Approved candidates for elder shall be voted on by the voting heads of households of the congregation

# Constitution and Bylaws for Christ Church of Morgantown

*Established December 2007. Amended June 2011.*

(4). Once the candidate has been approved by the elders and elected by the voting member heads of households of the congregation, a day of ordination shall be set by the elders, wherein they shall establish an appropriate order for that service.

## b. Deacons

(1). The elders should set before the congregation the biblical requirements for the office of deacon as found in Acts 6:1-6 and I Tim. 3:8-13.

(2). The member heads of households shall then nominate from among the communicant men of the church candidates who meet the qualifications for the office of deacon.

(3). Candidates for deacon must be approved by a majority of the elders.

(4). The member heads of households shall then vote upon the nominated and approved candidate.

(5). Upon the election of a deacon to office, the elders shall set a time for the formal ordination of that man and shall establish an appropriate order for that service.

(6). If a candidate is denied approval by the elders:

(a). A list of deficiencies or areas of concern, stated in biblical terms, shall be provided for the candidate.

(b). A proposed course of action for remedying these concerns shall also be provided for the candidate.

c. Evangelist (Missionary): The ordination of an evangelist (missionary) shall follow a similar order as that of the office of elder.

## C. Powers and Duties of the Officers

### 1. Elders:

a. Under Christ, the highest authority in the local church is the board of elders in session. Though there are various gifts and strengths among different elders, all share the same rank, authority, and obligation to holiness of life without distinction. Nevertheless, the church acknowledges the variety of gifts and callings God gives to men, and recognizes that some of the elders, though equal in rank and authority, are especially gifted and called to preach the Word, and to teach right doctrine (1 Tim. 5:17-18); and they are to make that labor their priority. This church recognizes two distinct callings or offices related to the session of elders for the local church. The names used for these callings are descriptive only, and not titular or honorific (Matt. 23:8-10).

(1). The first is called to a pastoral ministry of the Word, and termed “teaching elder, minister, or pastor” (Eph. 4:11-12; 1 Pet. 5:2-4).

# **Constitution and Bylaws for Christ Church of Morgantown**

*Established December 2007. Amended June 2011.*

- (2). The second is called to government and rule according to the Word, termed “a ruler or ruling elder” (1 Tim. 5:17; 1 Thess. 5:12-13; Heb. 13:7,17; Rom. 12:8; 1 Cor. 12:28). The ruling elders principally function in the government of the church, though they should have the ability to teach (1 Tim 3:2). The teachers share this rule, and are also responsible for teaching and instruction from the Word. The elders share in the rule of the church, and in addition are principally responsible for the proclamation of the Word on the Lord’s Day, as well as the general oversight of baptism and the Lord’s Supper.
- b. The authority and duties of the elders shall, in general, be those entailed in pursuing or securing the aims and objectives of the church. (Cf. ARTICLE II.)
- c. The authority and duties of the elders specifically include but are not limited to: maintaining the government of the congregation, adding and removing names from the membership rolls of the church, overseeing all matters concerning the conduct of public worship, administering the sacraments, promoting the spiritual growth of church members, resolving questions of doctrine and discipline reasonably proposed to the elders, acting upon complaints addressed to the elders, exercising moral discipline over members (by sitting in judgment of charges of offense, obtaining evidence and applying discipline), arranging and supervising the evangelistic and educational projects of the church, and overseeing the work of the deacons and all other organizations within the church (including specialized ministries of the congregation).
- d. The elders may establish or remove specialized ministries within the congregation, as well as boards to manage such operations, which are dedicated to a select line of service within the church under the authority of the elders.
- e. The elders shall be accountable to the congregation for their actions and policies.

## **2. Deacons**

- a. The responsibilities of the deacons shall be those duties delegated by the elders of CCOM.
- b. Under the general oversight of the elders, the deacons are to demonstrate good works and mercy that God might receive the glory (Matthew 5:16). They are to manage the financial, physical, social, and benevolent functions of the church (Acts 6:2-4). Such responsibilities include: preparing and working with the session toward approval of the budget; administering that budget; maintenance of buildings; arranging fellowship meals; administration of subordinate ministries; office support; administering the deacon’s fund; visiting, praying with, and/or meeting the needs of the sick and sorrowing; and encouraging church members to engage in similar service.
- c. Deacons shall review salaries and benefits of church employees who are not officers annually and make recommendations to the session for any needed adjustments.
- d. 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

# **Constitution and Bylaws for Christ Church of Morgantown**

*Established December 2007. Amended June 2011.*

number to moderate the meetings of the deacons. The deacons will be prepared to give a general report of their work at each of the head of household meetings, provide a quarterly financial report to the church, and present an annual report to the elders with proposals for the upcoming year.

## **E. Financial Support of Officers**

1. The elders shall regularly review the General Fund to determine the amount required to meet all monthly obligations. Monthly obligations are defined as teaching elder salary and benefits, benevolence, missions support, supplies for the weekly corporate worship, and all contractual expenses, which may consist of but not be limited to rent or mortgage payments and utilities.
2. At the end of each month, the elders shall calculate 90% of the General Fund balance outstanding after all monthly obligations. The elders shall assess the needs of the church officers in conducting their church duties, and shall assign a portion of that number to each officer in accordance with their needs.
3. The remaining 10% of the General Fund balance, plus any amount from the 90% that is not designated by the elders for distribution, shall remain in the General Fund as a reserve against future monthly obligations, future support of the church officers, and other activities as directed by the elders.

## **ARTICLE VIII. The Sacraments:**

A. Ministers of the Word should ordinarily lead in the administration of the Sacraments, but it is permissible for the sacraments to be administered with the oversight of any elder, lawfully ordained.

### **B. Baptism:**

1. When unbaptized persons apply for admission into the communing membership of the church, they shall, ordinarily, make a public profession of their faith, in the presence of the congregation, and thereupon be baptized.
2. The form of baptism, whether by immersion, sprinkling, or pouring (being an issue of form rather than substance), shall be left as a matter of conscience for the individual believer or the head of the household and by agreement with the elders.

### **C. The Administration of the Lord's Supper:**

1. The Communion, or Lord's Supper, is to be observed weekly, the stated times to be determined by the elders, as it may be judged most beneficial for edification.
2. The Lord's Supper is for all the Lord's people. We practice "covenant communion," that is, we encourage all baptized Christians (not censured under church discipline) to partake of the Lord's Table and so commune with Christ in His body. The Supper should be received by all baptized covenant members who are able to partake of the bread and drink the wine. We deny

# **Constitution and Bylaws for Christ Church of Morgantown**

*Established December 2007. Amended June 2011.*

that an artificial standard of age or mental capacity is consistent with the Biblical basis for partaking of the Supper.

3. Elders administering the Lord's Supper shall instruct or make notification to those present concerning who is qualified to partake of the Lord's Supper, pointing out that those who under any church discipline or who are non-communicant members are not admitted to the Lord's Supper. Likewise, they must admonish all professing believers to examine themselves, to discern the Lord's body, and to partake of the Supper in a worthy manner.

## **ARTICLE IX. Amendments:**

A. These bylaws may be amended or altered by a three-fourths affirmative vote of those member head of households present at a regularly called congregational meeting, but only provided that:

1. the purpose to amend or alter the bylaws has been previously announced in the call for the meeting; and
2. the specific wording of any proposed amendment has been available for inspection to the member heads of households of the church for ten days preceding the meeting.

B. The above restrictions, having been observed, shall not forbid member heads of households present at a duly called congregational meeting from perfecting or reformulating, in terms of the specific issue or subject matter stated in them, those amendments which have been previously proposed and announced. Previously proposed amendments which have been altered at the duly called meeting of the member heads of households of the congregation may be voted upon at that same meeting.

C. A constitutional review committee shall be appointed by the elders every five years, in calendar years divisible by 5, in order to review the constitution and make recommendations for possible changes to the congregation.

## **ARTICLE X. Incorporation**

A. CCOM has constituted herself, under the authority and headship of the Lord Jesus Christ, as an association of natural persons, and recognized as such by the laws of the State of West Virginia.

B. CCOM maintains its status as un-incorporated with Federal, State or Local governments as a matter of conscience, believing that we are assembled under the authority of Christ alone.

## **ARTICLE XI. Dissolution**

In the event that CCOM should dissolve for any reason, all debt and like obligations shall first be satisfied, and all remaining assets will be distributed to another church within the Confederation of Reformed Evangelical Churches (a religious denomination) as the elders shall determine, to be used exclusively for charitable, religious and/or educational purposes.