

# Bylaws of First Church of Christ Painesville, Ohio

## PREAMBLE

Whereas the New Testament is the only perfect constitution for the Church, we accept it as our rule of faith and practice. We acknowledge no creed, confession, or articles of faith other than the Word of God as recorded by the apostles and prophets of Church.

These Bylaws exist as the recorded application of New Testament teachings for the administration of this congregation. If in any aspect these Bylaws are found to be contrary to the Christian Scriptures as determined by the Elders, scripture shall supersede. (See Article X for the review and amendment process.)

The Trustees shall ensure the implementation and compliance of these Bylaws.

### Article I Name

The name of this congregation, as incorporated, shall be "First Church of Christ, Painesville, Ohio." Hereinafter it is called "Congregation."

### Article II Membership

Section 1 Membership in the Congregation shall consist of persons who have obeyed the Scriptural teaching on becoming a Christian.

- a) Having heard the Scriptural testimony of Christ
- b) Believed such testimony to be true
- c) Believed without reservation that Jesus Christ is the only begotten Son of the living God
- d) Repented of sin
- e) Confessed His name before witnesses
- f) Been buried with Him by immersion for the remission of sin
- g) Received the gift of the Holy Spirit
- h) Have accepted membership in this Congregation, as long as they abide by the teachings of Christ as presented in the New Testament

Members are expected to be actively involved in the Congregation. Active involvement shall include attendance at least once in a six month time frame and/or those who submit offering.

Section 2 Voting members shall be an active member as defined in Section 1 above who are 18 years of age or older, and have been members of the Congregation for at least six months.

Article III Elders

The Elders, who are the servant and shepherd leaders of the Congregation, are individuals who serve with His spiritual authority, and are accountable to Jesus, the head of the Church.

Section 1 The Elders are responsible for overseeing the Congregation and their spiritual growth. They shall provide leadership of the Congregation to glorify God. Some ways to achieve this include, but are not limited to:

- a) Worship
- b) Bible study
- c) Teaching of the Word
- d) Evangelistic outreach
- e) Christian service
- f) Leading all congregational meetings
- g) Oversight of all ministry teams
- h) Other activities which are consistent with the will of God

Section 2 The Elders shall be members of the Congregation who exhibit the scriptural qualities for Elder found in the New Testament. (See 1 Timothy 3:1-7; Titus 1:5-11.) The body of Elders will hold each other accountable to scriptural standards.

Section 3 Annually, the Congregation will be given the opportunity to nominate candidate(s) to be set apart as Elders.

The selection process is as follows:

- a) Members of the congregation are to submit nominations to the Elders. Any voting member of the Congregation may present names of candidates for Elder by submitting the names in writing over his/her own signature
- b) The Elders will review the nominations for scriptural qualifications. All candidates will be notified of the Elders decision regarding their nomination
- c) Qualified candidates who accept nomination are to notify the Elders of that decision
- d) The Elders will send a questionnaire for self-evaluation to the candidates for completion. The questionnaire is to be returned to the Elders for review
- e) Candidates will then have an interview with the Elders to review the questionnaire
- f) Candidates who have received final Elder approval will have their names submitted to the congregation. Any member of the Congregation may submit a signed objection, based on scriptural reasons, to the Elders on or before the established date. The Elders will investigate to determine if the objection is valid.

- g) The objection and any resulting actions will be kept confidential among the Elders, the nominee, and the person making the objection
- h) Unless previously ordained, candidates who have successfully completed the Elder selection process will be ordained in front of the congregation

Section 4 Elders will serve a three-year term and may serve two consecutive terms before they must take a sabbatical year. An exception to the sabbatical year may be made in the event that the Elders determine that an insufficient number of qualified candidates are available. To keep terms staggered, the Elders may designate some terms to be for two years. Service as an Elder for new candidates will begin upon ordination by the Congregation. The term for those candidates who have previously served as an Elder will begin once the other candidates have been ordained. All terms shall begin by the first Sunday in June.

Section 5 The Elders shall select their own officers. The chairman, or his designee, shall preside at all meetings of the Elders. The Elders shall appoint a secretary from their number to keep accurate minutes of Elders meetings and Congregational meetings, and shall cause accurate records of the membership to be kept, including the status of any member as a voting or non-voting member.

Section 6 Each Elder shall have one vote on any business coming before the Elders. A quorum for a meeting of the Elders shall consist of greater than fifty percent of the total number of Elders.

Section 7 If during the term of an Elder, there is cause to believe that an Elder may not be fit to perform the duties of the position, a member of the Congregation may submit a signed objection, based on scriptural reasons, to the Elders. The signed objection shall include the reason, signature, and date. The Elders will investigate to determine if the signed objection is valid.

#### Article IV Ministers

Section 1 Ministers shall be called by the Elders to preach and teach New Testament Christianity, and perform other duties as assigned by the Elders.

The selection process is as follows:

- a) A search team will be selected by the Elders
- b) The search team will provide recommendations to the Elders for qualified candidates
- c) The Elders will evaluate the recommendations and interview those qualified candidates
- d) The Elders will present the candidate they have called to the congregation for affirmation

- e) A Candidate who has received final Elder approval will have their names submitted to the congregation. Any member of the Congregation may submit a signed objection to the Elders on or before the established date. The Elders will investigate to determine if the objection is valid. The objection and any resulting actions will be kept confidential among the Elders, and the person making the objection
- f) Once approved and terms are negotiated, the candidate will be offered the position of Minister

Section 2 A Minister shall be employed for as long as the individual feels led by God to serve, and as long as the individual performs their duties to the satisfaction of the Elders. The Elders shall enter into a written contract with the Minister by setting forth the terms and conditions of employment.

Section 3 Each Minister shall have one vote on any business coming before the Elders.

Article V Deacons and Deaconesses

The New Testament describes Deacons and Deaconesses as those who have been set apart to represent Christ and the local congregation through service in a specific area of ministry. The number of Deacons and Deaconesses will be as many as are qualified and necessary to fulfill the ministry needs of the Congregation.

Section 1 The Elders will appoint qualified individuals to serve as leaders of those ministries with the exception of the Trustees (See Article VI, Section 2). The Elders shall appoint the position of Deacon / Deaconess Coordinator. All ministries of the Congregation shall be chaired by a Deacon or Deaconess (See Article IX) whom should chair only one ministry team at a time. If the need arises an Elder can serve as a Ministry Team Leader. The Elders will review the scriptural qualities and areas of giftedness of each candidate.

Section 2 Deacons and Deaconesses will represent Christ and the Congregation in a specific area of ministry for as long as:

- a) That ministry need is present
- b) The Deacon or Deaconess desires to fulfill that ministry
- c) The performance of that ministry meets the standards set for that ministry team

Article VI Trustees

In accordance with the Ohio Revised Code (ORC) Section 1702, the Trustees will serve as the legal representatives for the Congregation. They shall be responsible to protect the financial and physical assets of the church. In the event that the Congregation should dissolve and cease to exist, the settling of affairs and the disposition of assets would be conducted by the Trustees.

Section 1 Trustees shall consist of nine voting members. The nine voting members shall consist of the following:

- a) Two Trustees shall be Elders, as chosen by the Elders
- b) One Trustee shall be the Treasurer of the church
- c) One Trustee shall be the Deacon/Deaconess Coordinator
- d) One Trustee shall be either the Deacon/Deaconess of the Finance Ministry Team, or one who has been designated by a majority of the total membership of the Finance Ministry Team
- e) One Trustee shall be either the Deacon/Deaconess of the Missions Ministry Team, or one who has been designated by a majority of the total membership of the Missions Ministry Team
- f) Three Trustees shall be nominated in writing by a voting member of the congregation and elected by majority vote of the Congregation or any Special Congregational meeting called in accordance with the Bylaws, for a two-year term
- g) In the event that an elected Trustee should resign, or otherwise vacate their position, the Elders shall at their option appoint a church member, as a Trustee to serve the balance of the term, or leave the position vacant until the next regular annual election of Trustees by the Congregation

Section 2 The Trustees shall:

- a) Select a chairman who will complete the Deacon/Deaconess selection process
- b) Select their officers and monthly meeting time.
- c) The Chairman shall not include: Treasurer, Church Accountant, and the Financial Secretaries because of a potential conflict of interest in reporting duties.
- d) Document all meetings and motions, whether in person or electronic, so that content will be recorded
- e) Select a Statutory Agent per O.R.C. 1702.06. This shall be reviewed annually
- f) Have the right to appoint any church member to Special Project Teams with at least one Trustee or Elder serving as a representative of the Trustees or Elders on the Special Project Team
- g) Be responsible for ensuring that a biannual internal financial audit is completed by the end of the second quarter of the following year according to the audit plan.
  - i. The audit plan shall be reviewed and approved by the Finance Ministry Team and Trustees prior to the start of the annual audit.

- ii. An internal financial audit team shall be established. The audit team shall consist of no less than 3 members. The members shall not include: Treasurer, Church Accountant, and Financial Secretaries; however, these people are expected to cooperate with the audit team as requested.
- iii. Upon completion, a copy of the final financial audit report shall be provided to the Elders, Trustees, and Financial Ministry Team. The report shall be made available to the congregation upon request.
- iv. If, at any time, a 2/3rds vote of the Trustees and/or Elders feel that an audit should be done sooner than biannually, an audit will be initiated.

Section 3 Each Trustee shall have one vote on any business coming before the Trustees. A quorum for a meeting of Trustees shall consist of no less than five voting Trustees and a minimum of five votes of acceptance to gain approval on any Trustee actions. In an emergency, voting may take place in person, or by electronic communication.

Article VII Treasurer, Church Accountant and Financial Secretaries

Section 1 The Trustees, with the approval by the Elders, shall appoint a qualified Treasurer, a Church Accountant, and Financial Secretaries (and their substitutes) for the Congregation (paid employee or volunteer, as determined by the Trustees and Elders). Service in these positions will continue as long as:

- a) The person desires to fulfill that position
- b) The performance of that person meets the standards set for that position
- c) The duties are performed to the satisfaction of the Trustees

If one of the persons in the above stated positions desires to resign, a 90 day notice is requested, unless otherwise required in the employee contract. Upon receiving notice of resignation from the individual, the Trustees shall begin the process of appointing a replacement. This will serve to insure an orderly transfer of support activities for the position.

Section 2 The Treasurer shall perform the following duties. These duties shall include, but are not limited to, the following:

- a) Perform background checks on all members of the Financial Team.
- b) Ensure proper action is taken to receive and disburse all funds
- c) Have full access to all church financial records
- d) Work with the Finance Ministry Team on existing internal controls, financial policies of the church, and preparation of the annual budget

- e) Make an annual report to the members of the Congregation at the Annual Budget Approval Meeting of the Congregation
- f) May be bonded at the discretion of the Trustees
- g) Ensure that the Church Accountant, with input from the Financial Secretaries, shall submit monthly financial operating reports to the Elders, Trustees, Treasurer, and Ministry Teams, and provide supporting financial documents (such as statements of deposit) that are necessary to support the internal financial reports

Section 3 The Church Accountant shall perform the following duties that shall include, but not be limited to, the following:

- a) Maintain and document financial activities using church provided software
- b) Prepare and distribute payments to vendors, staff, and others as approved
- c) Prepare and distribute monthly financial reports to the Elders, Finance Ministry Team, Trustees, other ministry teams and for public display
- d) May be bonded at the discretion of the Trustees

Section 4 The Financial Secretaries shall perform the following duties. These duties shall include, but not limited to, the following:

- a) Count all receipts
- b) Maintain and document receipts by individual, and record in church provided software
- c) Deposit funds in the appropriate depository institution
- d) Make weekly reports available to the Elders, Trustees, and Church Accountant
- e) May be bonded at the discretion of the Trustees

There shall always be two Financial Secretaries, or approved substitutes, present during the money counting process.

## Article VIII Congregational Business Meetings

### Section 1 Annual Budget Approval Meeting

The Annual Budget Approval Meeting of the Congregation shall be held in the church building on an appointed Sunday in November of each year. If necessary, the Elders will select an alternative time and/or place.

Notice of the Annual Budget Approval Meeting of the Congregation shall be made by an announcement from the pulpit by the chairman of the Elders, or his designee, on the Sunday prior to the appointed meeting date. Additional written notice, including time, place, and purpose, or agenda of the annual meeting, will be given in the church newsletter or other mailed correspondence.

Section 2 Special Business Meetings

Special business meetings of the Congregation may be called:

1. By a majority vote of the Elders
2. By a petition. The petition shall
  - a. State the purpose for the meeting
  - b. Be signed by not fewer than fifty voting members of the Congregation and presented to the chairman of the Elders
    - i. Within fourteen days of receipt of such petition, the chairman of the Elders shall issue a call for the special business meeting to occur within thirty days after receipt of the petition.
    - ii. Written notice of special business meetings of the Congregation shall be given in letter or postcard form, mailed postpaid to the last known address of each voting member or family of the Congregation at least fourteen days prior to the special meeting. This notice shall state the time, place, and purpose or agenda of the special business meeting.

Section 3: The Elders shall be responsible for leading all congregational meetings. A quorum for an annual or special business meeting of the Congregation shall consist of fifty percent of the active voting membership. A verification of membership shall be taken by the Elders prior to the start of the business meeting. A 75% affirmative vote is required to take action.

Article IX Ministries

Section 1 The following shall be standing ministries of this Congregation: Trustees, Christian Education, Outreach, Finance, Membership, Missions, Prayer, and Worship.

Section 2 The Elders may establish other standing or ad hoc ministries when the need arises, or eliminate ministries.

Article X Bylaw Review and Amendments

Section 1 Biennially, the Elders shall appoint a committee, of up to 7 members, to review the Bylaws. Members shall include:

- a) An Elder representative
- b) A Trustee representative
- c) The Deacon/Deaconess Coordinator
- d) The Treasurer or the Church Accountant
- e) Others as selected by the Elders



- Section 2 After the Bylaw committee has reviewed and updated the Bylaw document, recommendations will be forwarded to:
- a) The Elders and Trustees for review, comment, and approval. Comments are to be returned to the Bylaw committee within 60 days
  - b) The Bylaw committee will consider all comments and incorporate approved changes into the document
  - c) The document will then be forwarded by the Bylaw Committee Coordinator to an attorney for legal review
  - d) The Trustees and Elders will meet to review the suggested changes from the attorney and perform a final review
  - e) The Bylaw committee will incorporate the Trustee and Elder approved changes into the document
  - f) The finished document, along with a list of changes and justification for those changes, will be submitted to the Elders for sending to the congregation for the vote
- Section 3 Amendments to the Bylaws may be made at a special business meeting of the Congregation. (See Article XIII, Section 2)
- a) A quorum for this meeting shall consist of fifty percent of the active voting membership of the Congregation
  - b) An affirmative vote of at least 75% of the voting members present and voting at such business meeting is necessary for adoption and subsequent changes to the Bylaws
- Section 4 The formal date of approval of By-Laws and/or Amendments shall become effective upon ratification by the Congregation and shall be implemented within 90 days of this date.
- Article XI Sale of Property and Capital Expenditure Requirements
- Section 1 The sale of existing First Church of Christ assets, or purchase of new assets, which have a “fair market value” of over \$100,000 shall be governed by this Article.
- Section 2 The following reviews and approvals shall be required to execute any transaction or related financial debt relating to Article XI, Section 1.
- a) Review is required by all nine Trustees, and approval is by a two-thirds vote (six minimum)
  - b) Review is required by all Elders, and approval is by a two-thirds vote

- c) Approval by the congregation at a Special Business Meeting called in accordance with the Bylaws. A quorum for this meeting is a minimum of 50% of the active voting membership of the congregation. A 75% affirmative vote is required to take action.
- d) The Trustees shall ensure that all approvals, as stated above, have been received before execution of any contract associated with Article XI, Section 1

Document control

By Law Changes – January 2018 Approved by – Elder/Trustee/Bylaw  
Chairpersons

Chairperson of the Elder:

Chairperson of the Trustees:

Chairperson of the Bylaw Committee:

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Chy Best".