
CHRIST THE ANCHOR CHURCH CONSTITUTION

PREAMBLE

In submission to Holy Scripture, we confess the church exists to worship the Lord through word and sacrament, proclaim the gospel to a lost world, and establish a community of mutual submission in which every believer can practice spiritual disciplines and exercise their gifts in order to fulfill our biblical mission to grow into the fullness of following Christ through proclaiming the good news and making disciples, ministering God's reconciliation to the world, and living fruitfully, tangibly loving our neighbors in word and deed, confidently expecting the God of peace to crush Satan under our feet (Matt. 28:18-20, Gen. 1:28, Mar. 12:30-31, Rom. 16:20). To this end we establish the following constitution for Christ the Anchor Church. This constitution may be amended by a three-fourths majority of the elders after presenting the proposed amendment to the congregation for feedback on three successive Sundays.

STATEMENT OF FAITH

Our various creeds and confessions express an important part of who we are as a church. We confess and believe together with our fathers in the faith and our brothers throughout the world. We are baptized into their company as members of the same body, the Church of our Lord Jesus Christ, and with them we eat of a common loaf and drink from a common cup. Their creed is our creed, even as their life is our life—one Lord, one faith, and one baptism. The elders of Christ the Anchor Church therefore subscribe to these creeds and confessions, holding them to be a faithful witness to what the Scriptures teach and a means of identifying with the broader Church.

With this in mind when this constitution refers to the Christ the Anchor Church Statement of Faith it is referring to the Book of Confessions which consists of creeds, confessions, and memorials. The ancient creeds (the Apostles' Creed, the Nicene Creed, The Definition of Chalcedon) clarify the faith once delivered to all the saints and ordinarily define the boundaries of our cooperation and fellowship. The confessions express our history: we gratefully acknowledge our heritage in the English Reformation as expressed in the Book of Common Prayer and the Thirty-Nine Articles of Religion, and our elders subscribe to the Thirty-Nine Articles with appropriate exceptions. The memorials apply the timeless truths of the Christian faith to significant struggles and temptations that face the faithful Christian today, and express our shared understanding of what it means to walk with God in the present moment.

CHURCH MEMBERSHIP AND PASTORAL CARE

Individuals are eligible for membership in Christ the Anchor Church if they have made a profession of faith and been lawfully baptized in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit (Matt. 28:19), and they live in our geographical area. The elders oversee a membership list.

Christ requires that all His people obey those who rule over them in the church (Heb. 13:7, 17), and of the elders that they "take heed to all the flock" and shepherd the church. Every Christian should know who rules over him and will give an account for him, and every elder should know who is under his care.

As shepherds in Christ's flock, elders will maintain a list of people for whom they have a spiritual responsibility. That list includes, but is not limited to, all members and regular attenders of the church. The elders of the church recognize their shepherding responsibility toward all regular attenders of the

church. As someone begins to regularly attend the church, the elders will instruct them in the character of the church they're joining and the duties of membership in it.

All regular attenders, who enjoy the benefits of life in the church community, also assume the duties associated with being part of the community. All regular attenders are considered under the care of the elders and subject to the discipline of the church. Members are responsible to honor their father and mother, conduct themselves chastely, maintain their marriages as an accurate image of Christ and the Church, raise their children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord, and in all other biblically required ways conduct their lives in a manner worthy of Christ.

SELECTION OF ELDERS

A prospect for elder may be identified by the elders, by the members of the congregation, or may volunteer himself. Once a man is presented for consideration, the elders will examine him for the office of elder with regard to his giftedness for teaching, his doctrine and his manner of life. If the nominee has any disagreement or mental reservation about any portion of the church's Book of Confessions or this Constitution, he must inform the elders of it. All prospects for elder must meet the qualifications for the office set down in Scripture (1 Tim.3:1-7; Tit. 1:5-9; 1 Pet. 5:2-4; 1 Tim. 3:8-13).

After passing the preliminary examination by the elders, the candidate will be presented to the church body, together with relevant biblical passages addressing qualifications, on three successive Sundays. The congregation will be invited to offer feedback and solemnly charged that if they know of anything which might be disqualifying, they must bring it to the elders' attention for investigation. For any feedback thus brought, the elders must carefully weigh the scriptural merit of the objection and meet as necessary with the parishioner and others to determine the facts of the case.

After consideration of the congregation's feedback, the elders will vote on the candidate. Nominations are approved with a three-fourths majority of the elders.

If these conditions are met, the elders will ordain the elder elect through the laying on of hands and prayer.

Once ordained, the elder serves indefinitely, subject to a review of his service every five years. At the conclusion of the review, the remaining elders may recommend a sabbatical, continuance, or termination of service.

SELECTION OF DEACONS

A prospect for deacon may be identified by the elders, by members of the congregation, or may volunteer themselves. Once identified as candidates for the office of deacon, they should be presented to the church and opportunity given for any concerns to be raised concerning their nomination. After undergoing a succinct season of training for the office of deacon, the elders by a three-fourths majority may approve the nominee as a deacon. The elders will ordain him through laying on of hands and prayer (Acts 6:6).

Once ordained, the deacon serves indefinitely, subject to a review of his service every five years. At the conclusion of the review, the elders may recommend a sabbatical, continuance, or termination of service.

DUTIES OF ELDERS

Under Christ, the authority of the local church is the board of elders. The elders are collectively responsible for ruling/shepherding (1 Pet. 5:1-2); equipping (Eph. 4:11-12); prayer/fasting (Acts 6:4; 13:1-3); teaching/preaching (1 Tim. 5:17); administering baptism and the Lord's Table (Matt. 28:19-20; 1 Cor. 11:23-26); administering church discipline and restoration (1 Cor. 5:1-5), and visiting the sick (Jas. 5:14-15).

The elders are ultimately responsible for the handling of all property held by the church (Ac. 6:1-4). If the elders consider purchasing land or a building, the potential purchase will be presented to the church body on three successive Sundays. The congregation will be invited to provide feedback on the wisdom of the purchase. After considering the congregation's feedback, the elders are free to vote on the purchase. Property purchase must be approved by a three-fourths majority of the elders.

DUTIES OF DEACONS

Under the general oversight of the elders, the deacons manage and implement the physical, social, and benevolent functions of the church (Acts 6:2-4). Such responsibilities include addressing the physical needs of the church and seeking ways for the church to serve the needy of our surrounding community.

We recognize the presence of deacons and deaconesses, with separate qualifications, in the New Testament church (Rom. 16:1, 1 Tim. 3:8-13), and we recognize their separate duties appropriate to their gender roles (1 Tim. 2:12-15).

RESIGNATION OF ELDERS OF DEACONS

If an elder or deacon desires to resign or take a leave of absence, he will notify the elders. At the first appropriate church-wide meeting, the elders will notify the membership of the church. If the desire of the elder or deacon concerned is unchanged by the following elders meeting, the elders will accept the resignation, or approve the leave of absence. If the resignation is sought for reasons of moral or doctrinal irregularity, the resignation will not be a substitute for any appropriate biblical discipline. Leaves of absence will not be granted as a form of discipline.

REMOVAL OF ELDERS AND DEACONS

If a church officer believes himself to be qualified to continue in office, but two or three believers hold that he is disqualified, these two or three witnesses should request a special session of the elder board where they would be allowed to present their case (1 Tim. 5:19) and the officer would be given an opportunity to respond. If the disinterested elders decide that the case has merit, with a three-fourths majority, that church officer, depending on the gravity of the charges and his response to the correction, may be rebuked in the presence of the members (1 Tim. 5:20), or removed from the office of elder or deacon (as the case may be) (1 Tim. 3:1-7; Tit. 1:5-9), or both.

CHURCH DISCIPLINE

The ordinary course of discipline is informal. Members are encouraged to self-discipline, overlooking the failings of others in love (1 Pet. 4:8), and encouraging other members to covenant faithfulness (Matt. 18:15, Jam. 5:19-20).

Formal church discipline is applied and removed through the formal action and a three-fourths majority of the elders. Except in cases of scandal requiring immediate action, the pattern of church discipline will generally begin with a one-on-one conversation, followed by a private admonishment by two or three (Matt. 18:16). If the matter is not resolved at that point, it will come before the elders. When the elders determine that a hearing is necessary, they will follow the specific procedures as further outlined in the Protocols.

The purpose of all church discipline is to restore the sinning believer safely to the fellowship of the Body. In the event that it becomes necessary to remove a believer from fellowship, the goal is still to restore that believer to our fellowship, as further outlined in the Protocols.