



CHRIST'S  
COVENANT CHURCH

**CONSTITUTION**

**AND**

**ARTICLES OF FAITH**

\*\*\*Revised 2/4/03\*\*\*

## **CONSTITUTION**

### **PREAMBLE**

We, the members of Christ's Covenant Church (Sovereign Grace Baptist), do ordain and establish the following articles to which we voluntarily submit ourselves.

### **Article I**

Name

The name of this church shall be Christ's Covenant Church, Inc.

### **Article II**

Purpose: Christ's Covenant Church Exists ...

- (1) To worship as a body of believers in the Lord Jesus Christ as a local church;
- (2) To assemble together regularly for the following purposes:
  - a. To proclaim, administer and to promote adherence to the law of Christ as revealed in the entirety of the Scriptures.
  - b. To edify and exhort the people of Christ by prayer, praise, and the presenting and expounding of the Holy Scriptures.
- (3) To exercise the functions which Christ has ordained for the edification and government of His people, for the propagation of the faith, and for evangelization of the world.

### **Article III**

Articles of Faith

We hold as an excellent summary of the doctrines believed among us the London Confession of Faith of 1689. We accept this confession, not as an authoritative rule or code of faith by which we are to be bound, but as an assistance to us in controversy and as a means of edification in righteousness. In this confession the members of our church will have a brief systematic theology, which with the Scriptural proofs may aid them in giving reason for the hope that lies within them (1 Peter 3:15).

### **Article IV**

Membership

Section 1. Expectations for Membership

To be eligible for membership, a person must demonstrate repentance toward God and the fruits thereof (Acts 26:20), as well as faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ, producing godly works. He must be baptized after exercising faith in Christ, and must profess agreement with the purpose of the church (as stated in Article II).

Church members must be in submission to the ordained rule of the church to which they belong (Hebrews 13:17). Anyone who cannot rationally and freely submit to a church's government should not belong to that church.

Anyone who is in basic disagreement with the constitution, purpose, and confessions of the church could not be consistently submissive to the church's teaching ministry. Therefore, to admit such a person to membership in this church may be unwise (Ephesians 4:3) and unscriptural.

Mastery of church confession is not required of any new disciple before he is admitted to church membership. Such a requirement would violate the order of Matthew 28:19, 20, which instructs us to disciple, baptize, and then to teach the baptized disciple to observe all things whatsoever Christ has commanded. It is necessary, however, that any disciple applying for membership manifests a willingness to be taught and an agreement with what he already knows concerning the church's doctrine and government.

It is assumed that the one who seeks membership shall be committed to supporting the stated meetings and programs of this church, willing to exercise his gift or gifts in the context of the body of Christ for the edification of the church of Jesus Christ, and who is also determined to become more and more disciplined in the things of God and more and more conformed to the moral character of Jesus Christ.

## Section 2. Forms of Membership

### (1) Voting

Voting members shall have all rights of membership including the right to vote. All who are received into the voting membership of the church on the above-mentioned conditions shall be considered members in good standing until such status is changed by failure to meet these expectations, coming under church discipline, or presenting a request for dismissal from membership.

### (2) Non-Voting

Non-voting members shall have all rights of regular members, except the right to vote on church matters.

- a. Those who expect to be in this area temporarily, and wish to maintain membership in their home church, but wish to join our fellowship, may apply for non-voting membership under the same conditions as those for the regular member. They will have all rights and privileges of regular members, including the right to express their opinions in church business, except they may not vote in church matters.
- b. Those who expect to be out of our area for a season due to such obligations as service with the armed forces, but who wish to be considered as non-voting members during the time of their absence must remain under the oversight of our church may.
- c. Non-voting members shall include members under 18 years of age.

## Section 3. Admission

### (1) Application Procedure

Any person desiring to become a member of the church must submit a written testimony to the elders explaining his understanding and experience of the gospel of Christ. The only exceptions to this would be determined by the elders in the case of extraordinary circumstances.

### (2) Relations With Other Churches

If the applicant is or has been a member of another church, special effort will be made to determine the person's standing in that church and his reasons for leaving. At the discretion of the elders, a letter of inquiry concerning the person's standing may be sent to that church before his acceptance as a member in this church is determined.

### (3) Procedure of Final Acceptance

Upon receipt of the written testimony the elders or the applicant may request a preliminary meeting. At this time any problems or reservations of either the applicant or the elders may be raised and dealt with in private. If the elders agree to recommend the applicant to the congregation the testimony will be posted for all the membership to examine, and any questions may be raised to the applicant in private prior to the acceptance vote. If any serious objections are brought to the elders another meeting with the applicant may be called. Upon final recommendation of the elders the congregation will consider the applicant for membership at the next stated meeting. Acceptance requires a two-thirds majority vote of those members present and voting.

## Section 4. Termination of Membership

### (1) By Physical Death

When a member of the church is removed from the church by death, his name shall automatically be removed from the membership roll.

### (2) By Request

When a member seeks membership in another assembly he may request that his name be removed from the membership roll of Christ's Covenant Church. He may also ask for a letter of recommendation to his new assembly.

### (3) By Excommunication

Members may be removed from the membership of the church as a result of church discipline as set forth in Article V.

### (4) By Non-attendance

The church members may vote to remove from membership by a two-thirds vote any person who has not been attending any stated meetings of the church for six months but has failed to request removal from membership. This action shall not be a form of discipline, but is intended to keep the rolls free of individuals who have moved or no longer attend but have failed to resign. If addresses are known, such persons will be contacted prior to this action and notified after it has taken place.

## Section 5. Voting Rights of the Membership

### (1) Age Requirements

The voting rule shall be one vote per member 18 years of age and older, although families do have liberty for their women not to vote, or parents to restrict from voting children 18 and over but still at home.

### (2) Exceptions

Voting rights shall be withheld from members not in good standing (those under discipline) and those who are classified as non-voting members.

## Section 6. Expectations of Members

Although it is understood that no one will attain perfection in this life, all members are expected to pursue growth in the following areas:

(1) Attendance at Church Meetings

Members of Christ's Covenant Church are encouraged to attend the stated meetings of the church (worship, social, and business) unless providentially hindered.

(2) Personal and Family Worship

The Scriptures require the members to make use of the various other means of grace which are available to them, such as the regular daily reading of the Bible, regular private and family worship, and the gathering of the church for worship and fellowship.

(3) Giving

We assert our conviction that proportionate giving is a distinct and positive command in the Scripture Malachi 3:8-11; 2 Corinthians 8 & 9, and pledge ourselves to systematic contribution for the support of Christ's Covenant Church of such proportion of our income as we believe God requires of us, according to the principle laid down in 1 Corinthians 16:2.

(4) Family Life

The Scriptures require the members to obey its teachings with respect of family life and government. The husband is the God-appointed head of the family and must rule his household with gentleness, love, wisdom, and firmness (Ephesians 5:25ff; 1 Timothy 3:3,5). The wife must be in scriptural submission to her husband in all things (Ephesians 5:22-24; 1 Peter 3:1). The husband and wife must nurture their children in the chastening and admonition of the Lord (Ephesians 6:2). This includes setting a godly example before them, consistently instructing them from the Scriptures (Deuteronomy 6:4-9), and administering corporal chastening to them when needed (Proverbs 13:24; 22:15; 29:15; Hebrews 12:7).

(5) Advancing the Gospel

It is the duty of every Christian individually and as a member of a local church to labor for the extension of the kingdom of God both at home and to the ends of the earth. Therefore, every member of this church is expected to prayerfully recognize and seize every opportunity to bear witness to his faith in Christ both by consistent Christian conduct and the testimony of his lips.

(6) Moral Obedience and Christian Liberty

Each member of the church is required to render in his daily life loyal obedience to all the moral precepts of God's Word (Romans 8:3,4; 1 Corinthians 9:20,21; James 2:12). If God has not condemned or forbidden a practice in His Word, a Christian is at liberty to participate in it. The exercise of Christian liberty, however, must at all times be governed by an earnest desire to walk in the fear of God and glorify Him in all things (1 Peter 1:17; 1 Corinthians 10:31), a loving regard for the conscience of the weaker brethren (1 Corinthians 8:9; Romans 15:1-3), a compassion for the lost (1 Corinthians 9:19-22), and a zealous regard for the health of one's own soul (Romans 13:14; 1 Peter 2:16).

(7) Submission to Authority and Oversight of the Church

All who come into the membership of Christ's Covenant Church are expected to recognize and submit to the authority of the elders of the church in regard to Scriptural matters (1 Corinthians 16:15,16; 1 Thessalonians 5:12,13; Hebrews 13:17).

(8) Meeting Needs of One Another

We who have been joined to Christ by faith and are members of this church are also united to one another (Romans 12:5). With this privileged relationship come particular responsibilities. We must maintain mutual transparency and honesty (Ephesians 4:25). We must rejoice in each other's honor and bear one another's sorrows (1 Corinthians 12:26). We must mutually oversee each other, faithfully admonish and encourage one another, and avoid all backbiting and gossip (Matthew 18:15ff; 1 Thessalonians 5:14,15; Hebrews 3:12,13; 10:24,25). Also, we must, when necessary, help meet the material needs of our brethren (Galatians 6:10; James 2:14-16; 1 John 3:16-18).

## **Article V**

### Discipline

The discipline of the church shall be exercised according to the following principles:

#### Section 1. Formative Discipline

The sanctifying influence of formative discipline as taught in 1 Corinthians 12:12-27 should be well understood. Every member will then be satisfied with his place, and we shall all grow in grace and the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. By doing this, the church can build up its members and use the talents of both young and old. All who have been redeemed should live for Him and His church and not for themselves.

#### Section 2. Corrective Discipline

Corrective discipline implies disorderly conduct or heretical doctrine that is opposed to the church's life and faith. Reasonable efforts shall be made to clear up difficulties and remove offenses before any action is taken by the whole body. No offense shall be brought before the church until the instructions of Christ have first been followed (Matthew 5:23,24; 18:15-17). Corrective discipline has for its aim the glory of God, the welfare and purity of the church, and the spiritual growth of the offender.

#### Section 3. Excommunication from Church Membership

The procedure for excommunication shall be as follows: If the accused person has not repented after the first and second steps of Matthew 18:15-17, the matter will be brought before the whole body after the eldership has been informed and consulted on the matter. Elders may not prevent a matter from being brought before the whole assembly, and may in fact be the subject of such discipline themselves (1 Timothy 5:19-20). The congregation shall have the right to excommunicate a member by two-thirds vote of the membership present and voting at a specially called or a regularly called business meeting.

#### Section 4. Restoration to Church Membership

The right to exclude or excommunicate persons or the withdrawal of fellowship (2 Thessalonians 3:6) is in harmony with the teaching of the New Testament (Matthew 18:16,17). The church also has a right to restore those persons who give satisfactory evidence of being penitent (2 Corinthians 2:6-8). The object of the discipline having been accomplished, the congregation shall have the right to restore the penitent member of full membership by a two-thirds vote of the members present and voting.

## **Article VI**

### Ordinances

#### Section 1. General Statement

There are two ordinances of special significance which our Lord has commanded us to observe, namely, baptism and the Lord's Supper. Neither of them has saving merit, nor is any grace imparted to the recipient through the water of baptism or the bread and the cup of the Supper. These ordinances are not means of "special grace," but they are special "means of grace" and powerful aids to the faith of the believers who participate in them.

## Section 2. Baptism

Only confessed disciples of our Lord Jesus Christ are proper candidates for baptism, and all such persons should be baptized and joined to a local church (Acts 2:38,41,47; 5:13,14). Believing that baptism is the God-ordained sign of one's personal union with Christ in His death, burial, and resurrection, and the door of entrance into the visible community of the people of God, we shall baptize believers by immersion "into the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit" (Matthew 28:19).

## Section 3. The Lord's Supper

Whereas baptism is the initiatory ordinance by which one enters the visible church and should be observed only once by each believer, the Lord's Supper should be celebrated frequently by the assembled church (1 Corinthians 11:26). While this is a most holy ordinance and should be observed with solemnity and dignity, the bread and the cup of the Supper are and remain only symbols of the broken Body and the shed Blood of our Lord Jesus Christ.

# **Article VII**

## Office Bearers

### Section 1. General Statement

Jesus Christ alone is the Head of His church (Colossians 1:18). He has ordained that individual churches should be governed through office bearers whom He appoints and who are endowed by His Spirit with the gifts and graces needed to accomplish their work. Therefore, it is the duty of the whole church to seek continually to discover those to whom Christ the Lord has imparted the necessary gifts for office bearing. Christ has ordained that local churches are to be administered by elders and deacons (Philippians 1:1; 1 Timothy 3:13).

### Section 2. Eldership

Those who have been called of God to rule and teach in the church are called elders, pastors, or overseers. These are three interchangeable names designating one and the same office in a New Testament church (Acts 20:17,28; Ephesians 4:11,12; Titus 1:5,7).

Anyone desiring the office of an elder must evidence to God's people the personal, domestic, and ministerial qualifications as set forth in 1 Timothy 3:1-7 and Titus 1:5-9.

Elders must seek to discharge their duties as set forth in the Scriptures, particularly such passages as Acts 20:17,28ff; 1 Peter 5:1-4; and Hebrews 13:17.

Whereas elders are overseers of the flock, they are themselves members of the flock. Therefore, each elder is under the oversight of his fellow elders and is subject to the same discipline as are all the members of the church.

Every elder (pastor) has equal rule in the church though gifts possessed and functions performed will vary from elder to elder. Elders will be maintained in material necessities and disentangled from the cares of

another vocation according to their gifts, the needs and capability of the church under the providential direction of Christ her Head (1 Timothy 5:17ff).

Anyone called to this office must be able to conscientiously affirm his agreement with the Confessions of Faith and the Church Constitution. If he should at any time move from this position, he is under spiritual and moral obligation to immediately make this fact known to the church members in an orderly manner.

### Section 3. Deacons

#### (1) Responsibilities

Deacons are responsible for the ministry of mercy and the business and material affairs of the church, which are to be administered with spiritual grace. The church treasurer shall be appointed from among the deacons and shall serve as a member of the board of directors of the church.

#### (2) Qualifications

Deacons must evidence the qualifications of the office as set forth in 1 Timothy 3:8-13.

#### (3) Relation to Elder Board

The diaconate shall be responsible for the care of the physical needs of the church, so that the elders may devote themselves without distraction to the more spiritual matters (Acts 6:3,4). They shall fulfill the duties of their office in cooperation with and in submission to the elders.

#### (4) Organization

The diaconate shall organize itself as is most fitting and useful for the carrying out of its work.

### Section 4. Appointment of Office Bearers

#### (1) Responsibilities of the Church

The recognition of elders and deacons for office within the local church is the responsibility of the local church under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. The Lord's appointment is recognized both by the inward conviction of the individual involved, and by the approval of the church after observing the possession of those gifts and graces required by Scripture for the office concerned.

#### (2) Procedure for Recognition of Office Bearers

The recognition of office bearers is a matter of such importance that it should never be dealt with without much prayerful waiting upon God, an honest perusal of the relevant passages of Scripture and a frank evaluation of those who are being considered as potential office bearers. Each member of the congregation has a spiritual responsibility to be intelligently informed regarding the above-mentioned matters. It should be the desire of the congregation to come to one mind regarding those office bearers to whom they must submit in the Lord, but should such unanimity not be fully realized, no less than a three-fourths vote of a 50% quorum of the members present and voting shall be required for the election of an office bearer. After the names of potential office bearers have been set before the congregation the Scriptural qualifications for the given office will be freely discussed. Subsequent to passages in 1 Timothy 3 and in Titus 1, a written ballot shall be taken. The vote will then stand according to the results of the first written ballot.

#### (3) Installation

Following the final recognition of an office bearer, there shall be either a portion of a regular worship service or a whole service set aside, at which time the office bearer(s) shall be formally set apart for his responsibilities by the prayer of the whole church and the laying on of the hands of any existing eldership.

#### Section 5. Elders and deacons

Elders shall be considered ordained to office for life, and deacons shall be elected for a two-year term of service, except:

- a. They may be reconsidered for removal from office if they fall into heresy or some sin by which they no longer meet the qualifications of 1 Timothy 3 and Titus 1 for their office. In such case an elder or deacon may be brought up for reevaluation either by one of the elders of the church or upon the written request of two or three members of the church.
- b. If an elder or deacon for any reason should request removal from an active role in his office.

### **Article VIII**

#### Corporation Officers

In order to "render unto Caesar the things that are Caesar's," this church has been incorporated under the laws of the State of Indiana, and shall be governed according to law pursuant to Articles of Inc. and By-Laws:

- (1) President

The president of the corporation shall be chosen by the elders from among themselves.

- (2) Vice-President

The vice-president shall be chosen by the elders from among themselves.

- (3) Treasurer

The treasurer of the corporation shall be the church treasurer.

- (4) Secretary

The secretary of the corporation shall be the church secretary.

- (5) Duties

The above-named officers shall perform such legal and business transactions as are particularly designated to them by the laws of the State of Indiana, together with such other duties as are imposed upon them from time to time by the Board of Directors. In the discharge of their duties they shall act only at the direction of the elders, the diaconate, or the body of the church.

- (6) Corporate Board of Directors

The corporate Board of Directors shall be elected from among the recognized elders and deacons of the church.

### **Article IX**

## Organizations and Committees

All organizations within the church shall be an integral part of the church and always subject to the will of the church, its rules, and leadership. All major officers of such organizations shall be members of the church.

### (1) Organizations

All organizations shall be subject to the oversight of the eldership in relation to purpose, nature, leadership, curriculum and conduct. Examples of such organizations are Sunday School, youth ministries, Bible studies, and other such ministries as may develop in the church.

### (2) Committees

The elders shall constitute a nominating committee that shall place before the church all necessary nominations for office required at any time.

Other committees may be formed to help carry out the work of the ministr(y)ies of the church as needed.

## Article X

### Meetings

#### Section 1. Worship Meetings

The church shall gather together for worship on the Lord's Day and meetings for worship and prayer shall be held during the week.

The Lord's Supper shall be observed as often as deemed appropriate by the elders. Additional meetings may be held at any time upon approval of the elders.

#### Section 2. Business meetings

The annual meeting of members shall be held the first Saturday of February of each year. Notice of the time and place of the meeting shall be announced publicly on at least the two Sundays immediately preceding the meeting, and notice shall be mailed or distributed to each member. Meetings will be chaired by the president or vice-president. The fiscal year is January 1 to December 31 of each year. The annual meeting of the Board of Directors shall follow the annual membership meeting within one month.

Special meetings may be called by the president or elders as deemed necessary. Also they may be scheduled when two or three members submit a written request for a special meeting. Special meetings also require two weeks public notice.

Quorum for all business meetings shall be 50% of the membership of the church.

Because the church is one body in Christ, unanimity of heart and mind shall at all times be sought and prayed for (Acts 6:5), but when unanimity is not realized, at least a two-thirds majority of members present and voting shall be required to make a resolution valid.

## Article XI

### Amendments

This constitution may be amended at any business meeting provided that the proposed amendment has been distributed in writing to the members at least two Sundays immediately preceding the action, and that at least three-fourths of the members present and voting have voted in favor of the amendment.