

# CONSTITUTION AND BY-LAWS

*of*



# **Constitution**

*Adopted February 23, 2008*

*Amended November 28, 2009*

# **By-Laws**

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## CONSTITUTION

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# CONSTITUTION

## 1. Preamble

- 1.1 The Bible admonishes all believers to "Let all things be done decently and in order." (I Cor. 14:40) Every Organizational Body must have certain rules and regulations, which serve as the basis from which order and decency proceed. We look to accomplish this through this Constitution and the following By-laws.

## 2. Name and Affiliations

- 2.1 The name shall be "**GOSPEL FELLOWSHIP CHAPEL**", also known as **GFC**, (here-after referred to as "The church")
- 2.2 We believe that local churches can best promote the cause of Jesus Christ by cooperating with other like-minded churches and/or denominational organization of like-faith, local or otherwise. **GOSPEL FELLOWSHIP CHAPEL** is affiliated with the Evangelical Mennonite Mission Conference (EMMC), and may cooperate with other interdenominational fellowships on a voluntary independent basis. However, we look to Jesus Christ alone as the head of the church. (Acts 15:36,41; 16:5; 1Corinthians 16:1; Galatians 1:1-3; Revelations 1:4.10,11)

## 3. Mission/Purpose Statement

- 3.1 Our mission statement is:  
"To Know, To Grow, To Show – God’s Glory”.

## 4. Aim

The aim of our church is seen from expanding upon our mission/purpose statement.

- 4.1 To Know God’s Glory. It is only when we know the Father’s son, Jesus Christ that we can know the glory of God. This is our first and most desired purpose.

Through a personal rebirth by the Spirit of Christ, and according to the Holy Scripture, that we may know Him and that He knows us.

This is realized by way of a new heart, totally converted and in love with Jesus Christ. In a relationship of communion and prayer with Him, we give ourselves in service to our Master. Knowing Jesus Christ in spirit and through the preaching and teaching of the Word of God.

- 4.2 To Grow in God's Glory. It is our desire that we grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To be ever more conformed to His likeness. Growing in holiness and to show ourselves approved by God. All for His glory and honor.

Aiming to study and search the Scriptures diligently. Submit ourselves to one another in fellowship, discipleship, and accountability. To appropriate His will and promises into our daily living. To humble ourselves before Jesus Christ, submit ourselves in discipline, and recognize only Christ as our supreme example. To grow in His grace and mercy in our shortcomings, with loving fellowship seeking wisdom and strength from our loving Savior.

- 4.3 To Show God's Glory. God's glory can be seen in the newest babe in Christ. When God chooses the vilest creature, takes his heart of stone and gives him a new heart of flesh. Changing him from one who hated God to one who now loves Him and hates the very sins he once loved. In an instant, showing the glory of God through the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. To strive for maturity in the Word of God and in Christ. To give an answer for the hope that is within us, in a disciplined and joyful life that is reflective of knowing Jesus Christ and growing in Christ. Enduring to the very end.

To live in Christ, we can not help but speak and live the things that we have seen, heard and experienced. It is also our hope and aim, that we reflect the glory of God in Jesus Christ, in the fact that first...He is worthy, and second... that we may show Christ to the world in such a way that it will cause others to want to know Him. Through godly Christ-exulting conduct, service to

one another, outreach, evangelism, preaching, and suffering for the gospel of Jesus Christ, it is our desire that we show God's glory.

## **5. Doctrinal Statements of Faith**

### **5.1 The Doctrine of the Bible:**

- a) We believe in the Verbal, Plenary Inspiration of the Bible, both Old and New Testaments, which, being Inerrant and Infallible in the original is the supreme and final authority in ALL matters of faith, Christian life and conduct. (2 Timothy 3:16; 2 Peter 1:20,21; Mark 13:31; John 8:31,32; 20:31; Act 20:32)

### **5.2 The Doctrine of the Trinity:**

- a) We believe that there is one living and true God, eternally existing in three persons; that these are equal in every divine perfection, and that they execute distinct but harmonious offices in the work of creation, providence and redemption. He manifests Himself as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. (Genesis 1:1,26; John 1:1,3; Matthew 28:19; John 4:24; Romans 1:19,20; Ephesians 4:5,6)

### **5.3 The Doctrine of God the Father:**

- a) We believe that God is ONE [Infinite, invisible, without body, parts, or passions, immutable, immense, eternal, incomprehensible, almighty, most wise, most holy, most free, most absolute, working all things according to the counsel of His own immutable and most righteous will, for His own glory; most loving, gracious, merciful, longsuffering, abundant in goodness and truth, forgiving iniquity, transgression, and sin, and withal most just and terrible in His judgments; hating all sin, and who will by no means clear the guilty].
- b) God is Eternal and Self-Existing. [God has all life, glory, goodness, blessedness, in and of Himself; and is alone in and unto Himself all sufficient, not standing in need of any creatures which He has made, not deriving any glory from them, but only manifesting His own glory, in, by, unto, and upon them: He is the alone fountain of all

being, of whom, through whom, and to whom, are all things; and has most sovereign dominion over them, to do by them, for them, or upon them, whatsoever Himself pleases. In His sight all things are open and manifest; His knowledge is infinite, infallible, and independent upon the creature, so as nothing is to Him contingent or uncertain. He is most holy in all His counsels, in all His works, and in all His commands. To Him is due from angels and men, and every other creature, whatsoever worship service, or obedience, He is pleased to require of them].

- c) God is the Creator of ALL things but He Himself is not created or evolved. (Luke 10:21,22; Matthew 23:9; John 3:16; 6:27; Romans 1:7; 2 Timothy 1:1,2; 2:5,6; 2 Peter 1:3; Revelation 1:6)

#### **5.4 The Doctrine of Christ:**

- a) Jesus the Christ was, and is, God Incarnate. Knowing Christ is knowing the Father.
- b) He was both Human and Divine.
- c) He was Conceived of the Holy Spirit and Born of the Virgin Mary.
- d) He Died to Atonement for the sins of mankind. Those that turn to Him and repent, believe in Him as the only true Savior and Lord; They are forgiven, justified, presented as righteous before the Father, and given eternal life in the family of God. But He will bring judgment and condemnation to those who will not believe and repent.
- e) Christ, the Son of God took upon Himself the wrath of His Father that will fall on sinful mankind. Except for those for whom Christ absorbed this wrath.
- f) He arose bodily from the Grave.
- g) He Ascended Bodily into Heaven and now intercedes with the Father on behalf of the Believer. [It pleased God, in His eternal purpose, to choose and ordain the Lord Jesus, His only begotten Son, to be the Mediator between God and man; the Prophet, Priest and King; the Head and Savior of His Church; the Heir of all things; and judge of the world; unto whom He did from all eternity give a people to be His seed, and to be by Him in time redeemed, called, justified, sanctified, and glorified].

- h) His Personal Bodily return is imminent [a fact].  
 (Matthew 1:18-25; Luke 1:26-38; John 1:1; 20:28; Romans 9:5; 8:46; 2 Corinthians 5:21; 1 Peter 2:21-23; John 20:30, 31; Matthew 20:28; Ephesians 1:4; Acts 1:11; Romans 5:6-8; 6:9,10; Hebrews 7:25; Hebrews 9:28; 1 Timothy 3:16)

### **5.5 The Doctrine of the Holy Spirit:**

- a) The Holy Spirit is God.
- b) The Holy Spirit works in the World to:
  - i. Convict the world of sin, righteousness and judgment.
  - ii. Regenerate the repentant sinner.
  - iii. Indwell the Believer.
  - iv. Seal the Believer for God.
  - v. Fill (control) the Believer.
  - vi. Enlighten.
  - vii. Empower the saved to serve Christ and the Church.  
 (John 14:16,17,26; 15:26,27; John 16:9-14; Romans 8:9; 1 Corinthians 3:16; 6:19; Galatians 5:22-26)

### **5.6 The Doctrine of Man:**

- a) Mankind was directly created by a unique act of God in His image, free of sin, with a moral responsibility towards God to bring glory to his Creator. To live in fellowship with God.
- b) All mankind is born with a sin nature since the fall (sin) of Adam.
- c) Mankind is not only a sinner by nature but also by choice, loving darkness rather than light. God has declared him as such.
- d) Each person is an independent, living being with an eternal soul. (Genesis 2:7,15,16,17,25; 3:1,9; Psalm 14:1,3; Isaiah 43:7; Jeremiah 17:9; John 2:36; Romans 3:9,18,23; 5:10,12; 6:23; 1 Corinthians 2:14; Ephesians 2:1,3; Colossians 1:16; 1 Timothy 2:13,14; Hebrews 10:26; James 3:9; 1 John 1:8; Revelations 4:11)

### **5.7 The Doctrine of Sin:**

- a) Evil (sin) originated with the fall of Lucifer.
- b) There are fallen angels (demons) which seek to influence men against God.
- c) Satan is anti-God and anti-man. He seeks the destruction of both

- d) Satan has introduced sin into the human race. Coming forth from the heart of man. (Genesis 3:6; 6:5; 1 King 8:46; Psalm 51:5; Jeremiah 17:9; Matthew 12:30-37; 15:19,29; Mark 7:20-23; Romans 1:18-3:23; 7:7-25; 8:5-8; 14:23; Galatians 5:16-21; Ephesians 2:1-3; 4:17-19; Hebrew 3:12; James 2:10,11; 1 John 3:4; 5:17)

### **5.8 The Doctrine of Salvation:**

- a) The shed blood of Christ, His death, resurrection and ascension constitute the ONLY ground for man's Salvation.
- b) Genuine faith in Jesus as the Christ (which includes repentance from sin) is the ONLY means of man's Salvation.
- c) Positional Sanctification: At the moment of true faith a person is sanctified, eternally, (set apart in the eyes of God as being holy).
- d) Progressive sanctification: There is a progression in the believer's experience and appropriation of holiness. This begins only at the time of salvation when a repentant sinner is regenerated by the power of the Holy Spirit, and continues in demonstrated "fruit-bearing" sanctification throughout one's Christian life.
- e) Assurance and Perseverance: The believer in Christ is given the assurance that he possesses Eternal Life and that he is kept in that state by the power of God. The same God that has the power to save sinful man also has the power to keep him saved, and so will persevere to the end. (Genesis. 1:26; 5:2; Genesis 3; Genesis 2:17; 3:19; Psalm 51:7; Proverbs 28:13; Eccl. 2:11; Jeremiah 17:9; John 1:12,13; 3:14,16; 5:24,30; 6:37,40,44; 7:13; 8:12; 10:26; Acts 20:32; Romans 3:19; 5:19; 8:1; 9:22; 1 Corinthians 5:21; 2 Corinthians 5:17; Galatians 5:16,25; Ephesians 1:4,7,11; 2:8,10; Philippians 3:12; Colossians 2:14; 2 Thessalonians 1:9; 2:10-13; Titus 3:4,7; James 1:14; 4:8; 1 Peter 1:1,2,18,19; 1 John 1:9; Rev. 19:3,20; 20:10; 14,15; 21:18;)

### **5.9 The Doctrine of the Church:**

- a) The Universal Church (the Body or Bride of Christ) is composed of all those saved from Pentecost to the Second Coming of our Lord and are placed in this Church

by the Baptism of the Holy Spirit at the time of Conversion.

- b) The Universal Church in every age is manifested by the Local Church. (Ephesians 2:19-22; Acts 1:8; Ephesians 5:19-21; Acts 2:42; Hebrews 10:23-25)
- c) We believe That God calls all believers to reach the lost with the gospel of Jesus Christ, drawing men unto Christ towards belief and repentance. Thereby being added to the body – the Church.

### **5.10 The Doctrine of Discipleship:**

- a) A child of God is to be a Disciple of Christ and as such is a visible sign of one's faith. We therefore hold to the practice of:
  - i. Submission to the Lord, each other, and authority.
  - ii. Hope in the Coming of Christ and the Resurrection.
  - iii. Integrity in our walk and word.
  - iv. Purity in Conduct. (Matthew 18:5,14,15,22; 28:19,20; Acts 5:1,11; 1 Corinthians 5:1,13; 2 Thessalonians 3:6,15; 1 Timothy 1:19,20; 2 Timothy 2:2; Titus 1:10,16)

### **5.11 The Doctrine of the Ordinances:**

- a) [Water or Believers] Baptism: The believer in Christ is to be baptized after faith in Christ has occurred. Baptism is to be administered upon a personal declaration of faith and is as such a public testimony of one's commitment to Christ. Baptism has NO saving merit.
- b) Communion: Believers are to observe the Lord's Supper as a Memorial of His sacrificial death, and as a witness to His Second Coming. (Matthew 28:18-20; Romans 6:3-5; 1 Corinthians 11:23-26)

### **5.12 The Doctrine of Marriage:**

- a) Marriage is a life-long, monogamous covenant between a man and a woman, which is ordained of God for mutual companionship and the parenting of children. (Genesis 1:27,28; 2:18-24; 24:58,60; Proverbs 5:15-19; Jeremiah 7:34; Malachi 2:14,15; Matthew 19:5,6; John 2:1-11; Romans 7:2,3; 1 Corinthians 7:2,9; Ephesians 5:21-33; 1 Timothy 5:14; Hebrews 13:4)

### **5.13 The Doctrine of Future Things:**

- a) Jesus Christ will come [Second Coming] as they saw Him leave to take the saints to be with Him for all eternity; unbelievers will be cast into eternal Hell [Absolute Separation from God].
- b) There is NO time of waiting between the death of the body and ascension of the soul into the presence of God. "To be absent from the body is to be present with the Lord."
- c) The Believers are resurrected to Eternal Bliss and the Unbelievers to Eternal Judgment
- d) God will judge the Nations. (Matthew 16:27; Mark 14:62; John 14:3; Acts 1:11; Phil. 3:20; 1 Thessalonians 4:15; 2 Timothy 4:1; Titus 2:13; 1 Corinthians 4:5; 1 Corinthians 15; 2 Corinthians 5:1-11; 2 Thessalonians 1:7-10; Revelation 20:4-6,11-15)

## **6. Church Membership**

### **6.1 Definition**

Any person shall be eligible for membership who professes repentance towards God and faith in our Lord Jesus (Acts 2:38, 8:12), who manifests a life transformed by the power of our Lord Jesus (2 Corinthians 5:17), who has been baptized upon profession of his/her faith (Acts 2:41), and who expresses substantial agreement with the Confession, Constitution, and By-laws of this church (1 Corinthians 1:10). However, the church reserves the right as to who it finally accepts into its membership (Acts 9:26-27).

### **6.2 Privileges and Responsibilities**

Membership in the church shall include the following:

- (a) Maintenance of a godly lifestyle, which must include personal and family devotions (Daniel 6:10, Genesis 18:19), separation from worldliness (James 4:4), and conscientiousness in the expression of one's Christian liberty (Romans 15:1-23).
- (b) Attendance at church services, congregational, business, and special meetings called upon by the elders (Acts 2:42, Hebrews 10:24-25).
- (c) Laboring to extend God's kingdom through the ministries of the church, according to their gifts, graces and calling (1 Corinthians 15:58, Ephesians 4:7-16).
- (d) Financially supporting the work of the Lord by systematic and proportionate giving to the church. This shall be through

- Tithing and freewill offerings (Malachi 3:8-10, 2 Corinthians 9:6-15).
- (e) Seeking the welfare of all other members (Hebrews 3:12-13) by cultivating their acquaintance with them, praying for them (Ephesians 6:18), responding to their practical and spiritual needs (James 2:14-16, 1 Thessalonians 5:14-15), and refraining from all gossip and evil speaking about them (Proverbs 16:28).
  - (f) Submitting to the elders as they discharge their duties of teaching and oversight, and co-operating with the deacons as they administer the ordinary and outward affairs of the church (Hebrews 13:17).

### 6.3 Termination

Membership in the church shall be terminated by:

**a) Death:**

When a member of the church is removed from our midst by death his name shall be removed from membership.

**b) Transfer:**

When it is so requested, the elders may grant to a departing member in good standing a letter of commendation to the fellowship of another church (Acts 18:27), and consequently that member will be removed from membership. No such letter may be given to a member who is at the time under corrective discipline of the church. The elders may refuse to grant a letter of commendation to any church which is in their judgment disloyal to "the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints" (Jude 3) or which does not exercise godly care over its members.

**c) Dismissal:**

Where the above two situations do not apply, and the member is not under corrective discipline, a member may be removed from membership by dismissal. Dismissal will apply when a member resigns or ceases to maintain vital contact (e.g. chronic absenteeism or neglect of duty) with the church, as long as this does not warrant corrective discipline (1 John 2:19).

**d) Excommunication:**

Any member who teaches or insists on holding false and heretical doctrine, who blatantly and impenitently conducts himself in a manner inconsistent with his Christian profession, or who persists in disturbing the unity and peace of the church or in defiling its purity will be excommunicated, and consequently

that member will be removed from membership (Matthew 18:15-20, 1 Corinthians 5:1-13).

Termination of membership removes all rights and privileges of membership in the church.

## **7.0 Ordinances**

7.1 There are only two ordinances (sometimes called "sacraments") commanded in Scripture; namely, Baptism and the Lord's Supper (Matthew 28:19, 1 Corinthians 11:26). To believers who properly participate in them, these two are means of grace and powerful aids to their faith.

7.2 Believing that baptism in water is the God-ordained symbolic and physical representation of what has already happened to the believer in the Spirit, being buried, dead to sin, and raised again into a new life in Christ Jesus. This also becomes a door of entrance into the visible community of the people of God. We shall only baptize by immersion and into "the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit" (Matthew 28:19). Believers whose baptism is marked by serious irregularities that is inconsistent with a regenerate converted child of God, that physical baptism will not be recognized as there is no sign of a Spiritual baptism (Acts 19:1-5).

7.3 All believers in good standing are welcome to partake of the Lord's Supper, (1 Corinthians 10:16-18).

## **8.0 COVENANT**

8.1 We agree to worship only the one true and living God - Father, Son and Holy Spirit - who has revealed Himself to us in the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments. We will declare His glory to the nations. We will have no other gods before Him (Exodus 20:3).

8.2 We agree to worship God in his appointed way and to exclude from our worship anything that He has not appointed (Exodus 20:4-6).

8.3 We agree not to use the name of our God emptily or to take it upon ourselves carelessly, but to walk in the paths of righteousness for His own name's sake (Exodus 20:7).

- 8.4 We agree to honor the Lord's Day in celebration of His resurrection. To keep it holy (That is – separate and distinct from the other 6 days. As the day is distinct, so should our activities be). Unless restrained by necessity, we will remember works of mercy, piety, and to positively sanctify the day by special exercises of public and private worship (Exodus 20:8-11).
- 8.5 We agree to honor and obey, within the bounds of Scripture, all our superiors, whether in family, church, state, or business; and, if we be superiors, to deal reasonably and lovingly with our subordinates and thus to teach them by word and example to fear God and keep his commandments (Exodus 20:12).
- 8.6 We agree to avoid whatever tends to destroy us or our neighbors and to engage vigorously in all lawful endeavors to preserve our own lives and the lives of others, especially by ready reconciliation and faithful exhortation in the church (Exodus 20:13).
- 8.7 We agree to possess our bodies in holiness as vessels joined to Christ and indwelt by the Holy Spirit, not yielding to temptations of impure thoughts, speech, and action (Exodus 20:14).
- 8.8 We agree to be diligent in our vocations, that we may provide for our own households, avoid theft of time, money or goods, and have enough to give to him who has need (Exodus 20:15).
- 8.9 We agree to earnestly promote truth among men and to avoid anything that would prejudice the truth or injure our neighbor's good name (Exodus 20:16).
- 8.10 We agree to be fully content with our own condition in life, to rejoice in the advancement of our neighbor, and to avoid envying him or coveting anything that is his (Exodus 20:17).

## **9.0 DISCIPLINE**

### **9.1 Formative discipline:**

The church will reform and discipline itself continually by the diligent application of the word (Revelation 2,3), by mutual care and exhortation of the members (Ephesians 4:7-16), by the orderly utilization of the gifts Christ has bestowed upon each member (Romans 12:3-8), and by the watchfulness of the elders over the flock (Hebrews 13:17).

## 9.2 Corrective discipline

The church will apply corrective discipline when a member stubbornly holds on to heretical doctrines or conducts himself in a disorderly, immoral or scandalous manner. This will be done for the purpose of, among other things, restoring the offender, maintaining the health and purity of the church, and upholding the honor of God (Galatians 6:1, James 5:19-20, 1 Corinthians 5:6-8).

### **(a) Offences liable for corrective discipline**

These are stubborn private offences (Matthew 18:15-17), divisive teaching or behavior (Titus 3:10), disorderly behavior (2 Thessalonians 3:6-15), scandalous sin (1 Corinthians 5:1-13), and contempt of church discipline (Matthew 18:17). When a member comes under church discipline, their position and privileges will be immediately suspended.

### **(b) Means of corrective discipline**

These are public reproof or censure (1 Timothy 5:20), dissociation (Romans 16:17-20), and excommunication (1 Corinthians 5:1-5).

### **(c) Procedure for corrective discipline:**

As a general rule and whenever feasible, effort must be made to resolve difficulties, correct error, and remove offence through counsel and admonition before formal corrective discipline is taken (Matthew 18:15-16, Titus 3:10). Where this fails to bear the desired fruit, the elders shall determine as to which means of corrective discipline shall be applied (1 Corinthians 5:3). All the members of the church will be obligated to submit to and enforce the corrective discipline (1 Corinthians 5:4).

### **(d) Restoration from corrective discipline:**

In the case where a member has been excommunicated, and gives satisfactory evidence of his repentance, the church shall forgive and restore such a person to full membership (2 Corinthians 2:6-8).

## 10.0 OFFICERS

### 10.1 Headship

The church's head, the Lord Jesus Christ, governs the church through officers whom he appoints (Acts 20:28), who are endowed by his Spirit with the gifts and graces needed to accomplish their work (Ephesians 4:7-13).

## 10.2 Types

The church shall have only two kinds of officers; namely, elders and deacons (Philippians 1:1).

## 10.3 Appointment

The existing elders of the church shall determine the need for extra elders and deacons in the church, present to the church the necessary qualifications for persons to be appointed into these offices, and request the church for nominations. After careful evaluation on whether these qualification are met, the Council of Elders will:

- a) (For elder) Set the name(s) of the men chosen by the Council for the office of Elder before the membership for consideration and affirmation. Giving the church membership opportunity to express it's mind by giving feedback of any opposition or any information not known or considered by the Council of Elders in the individual(s) presented.
- b) (For deacon) Set the remaining names of the nominated men or women for the office of Deacon for consideration and affirmation. Giving the church membership opportunity to express its mind by giving feedback of either approval or opposition in the individuals presented. In the case of a Deacon, it will be by a formal vote by majority.

If affirmation is gained, the elders shall confirm the persons thus chosen and set them apart for office by prayer and the laying on of hands (Acts 1:15-26, 6:1-6, 14:23, Titus 1:5). The Council of Elders reserve the right to appoint any persons thus nominated to any office in the church (1 Timothy 5:22).

## 10.4 Discipline and Removal

Church officers are subject not only to the same rules of discipline as the other members but in addition are subject to removal from office if they are no longer qualified for their office or capable of fulfilling its functions or if their behavior is disorderly or scandalous, thereby bringing reproach to Christ and the church and setting a bad example before the brethren (1 Timothy 5:19-21, Titus 1:7).

## 10.5 Qualifications

The general qualifications for those chosen to fill the offices of elder or deacon are clearly set forth in Scripture (Acts 6:3, 1 Timothy 3:1-13 and Titus 1:5-9). Anyone called to this office must be able to conscientiously affirm an agreement with our Confession of Faith, Constitution, and By-laws of the church (Titus 1:9). Should he at any time move from this position, he is

under spiritual and moral obligation to make this fact known to the church.

## 10.6 Elders:

### **(a) Functions:**

The duty of the elders is that of overseeing the work of God in the local Church (Titus 1:7). The elders shall be equal in authority but may be specialized in function. These duties include:

- (1) The preaching and teaching of God's word, both publicly and privately. This is to be done side-by-side with prayer (Acts 6:2-4, 1 Timothy 5:17).
- (2) The governing and management of the church (1 Timothy 3:4).
- (3) Equipping the members for the ministry, work, and mandate of Jesus Christ – the Great Commission. Sharing the gospel and making disciples of all nations.
- (4) The spiritual care of individual members (Hebrews 13:17).
- (5) The formative and corrective discipline of the church (Matthew 16:19).
- (6) The provision of role-models by the example of their godly lives (1 Peter 5:3).

### **(b) Authority:**

The rule of elders only goes as far as authoritatively declaring and implementing in the church the faith and practice stipulated in the Scriptures (1 Corinthians 14:36-38, 1 Timothy 3:14-15, 4:11). Because of the authority invested into this office, only males qualify for this office (1 Timothy 2:12).

### **(c) Remuneration:**

Some elders will be maintained in material necessities as to disentangle them from the cares of another vocation according to their gifts, and the needs and capability of the church. This will be especially the case with "the pastor", i.e. the elder whose work is preaching and teaching (1 Timothy 5:17-18, 1 Corinthians 9:14).

## 10.7 Deacons

### **(a) Functions**

Deacons are responsible to administer the ordinary business, secular affairs and benevolent concerns of the church as directed by the elders, so that the elders may devote themselves directly to spiritual matters and to the Word of God (Acts 6:3-4). Deacons shall assist in the care

of the membership. They shall also advise and be ready to assist the Elders in any service that will support and promote the ministries of the church.

**(b) Remuneration:**

A deacon may be maintained by financial support where the needs of the church requires such an extent of service and/or ministry. Such a Vocational Deacon would then receive remuneration as approved by the membership.

## **11.0 TRUSTEES**

11.1 While Scripture does not recognize any office of trustees in the church, it is prudent for the purpose of "rendering unto Caesar the things that are Caesar's" (Matthew 22:21) that the church appoints trustees to handle matters related to property as demanded by the law of the land.

## **12.0 CO-OPERATION WITH OTHER CHURCHES**

12.1 The church acknowledges no ecclesiastical authority outside its membership other than our Lord Jesus Christ, who is the Head of the church (Ephesians 5:23) and who directs the affair of the church through elders chosen and ordained according to Holy Scripture (Acts 14:21-23). The elders themselves at all times and in all their activities stand under the authority of Holy Scripture (Acts 16:4, 1 Corinthians 7:17).

12.2 The church will co-operate with other like-minded churches in matters of evangelism and missions, and other matters of mutual interest and concern (2 Corinthians 8:18-24). The church may also seek the assistance and Counsel of other churches (1 Corinthians 16:1-2). However, no decision made by any individual, church or group of churches shall at any time be binding on this church.

12.3 All affiliations and cooperation with any conference or groups is voluntary and may be terminated at any time, at the sole discretion of the church.

## **13.0 FINANCES**

- 13.1 The finances of the church, including those of all the ministries, will be under the oversight of the elders (Acts 11:27-30). Though the use, disbursements, or handling of these funds may be delegated to members of the church (Acts 6:1-6)
  
- 13.2 The normal means of raising the necessary funds for the work of the Lord Jesus Christ will be through the tithes and offerings of the members (1Corinthians 9:13-14, 16:1-2).

# BY-LAWS

## 1.0 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 The by-laws of the church are procedural rules to enable the church to efficiently implement the church constitution. They are not directly taught in Scripture but are an administrative convenience based upon the light of nature.
- 1.2 If at any time, one of the regulations of these by-laws is found to be in violation of the terms of the constitution then that regulation shall cease to be valid until it is appropriately amended.
- 1.3 Whereas it is hoped that the constitution will remain unchanged as long as it reflects the teaching of Scripture on its various points, the by-laws may be changed from time to time as the church finds more efficient and convenient methods of implementing the constitution.

## 2.0 MEMBERSHIP

### 2.1 Joining of Membership

Any person wishing to join the church shall make application to the Council of Elders. One or more of the elders of the church shall interview the applicant and shall report to the eldership, who will, if satisfied with the report, recommend that the applicant be publicly introduced to the church and after that be asked to testify at a meeting. His testimony should include how he got converted and why he is seeking membership with the church. Then the church will be given two weeks in which to make submissions to the elders, especially if they have objections to the application. Where no negative submissions are received, the applicant will be publicly welcomed into membership on the next Lord's day. Where such submissions are received, the elders will withhold the application until all investigations are completed and disposed of according to the fruit of the investigations.

### 2.2 Regular Membership

All who are received into the membership of the church and do not come under its corrective discipline shall be considered as regular members in good standing. They will be entitled to all the privileges and be obligated to all the responsibilities of membership. Persons who become baptized become Members

at the same time, but are not eligible to vote until they are 16 years old.

It is both, the desire of the church, and the clear teaching of Scripture that every member in the body of Christ serve one another. An assessment of the member's interests and gifts may be advised to identify an appropriate area where the member can serve in the church. Every member should be part of one or more of the ministries in the church.

### **2.3 Associate Membership**

Regular members who move away from our area and who cannot find another local church with which they can conscientiously unite will, at their request, be retained as associate members of this church. Such persons must maintain regular communication with the elders and support the church's ministries using means not hindered by distance (e.g. tithing) in order to maintain their associate membership. However, they will not be allowed to be church officers. In the mean time, they will be urged to diligently seek a nearby church with which they can unite.

### **2.4 Resignation from Membership**

Members will be entitled to resign from membership at any time as long as they put their resignation in writing to the Council of Elders stating the reasons for their decision to resign. This resignation will only take effect if there are no disciplinary issues outstanding and approval by the Council of Elders is given.

### **2.5 Removal from Membership**

Towards the Annual Business Meeting, the membership list shall be updated for the purpose of maintaining a membership that is true to its responsibilities. The individuals leading committees, groups, and various ministries, along with their reports, will submit a list of the members who are actively participating in these ministries. Members who have not been actively involved in the ministries of the church will be seen by the elders to understand the reason for inactivity. The meeting will be to admonish or to encourage the member towards service in an area he/she is able to minister in the body. If appropriate, the elders shall allow for a period to see this improvement. But where this does not produce the desired fruit, where there is a display of clear and willful negligence, or a lack of desire to minister to the church family, the name shall be proposed for removal from membership at the Annual Business or Financial Meeting.

In the case of a prolonged absence without good reason, effort will be made to send a letter prior to removal, in order to communicate the decision and/or to encourage an opportunity for reestablishing church attendance and fellowship.

### **3.0 Meetings**

#### **3.1 Weekly Meetings**

- (a) The church shall hold services on the Lord's day where worship shall be conducted and where the preaching of God's word shall be heard primarily for the salvation of sinners and the sanctification of saints.
- (b) The church shall also hold midweek Bible studies and prayer meetings. Additional group meetings may be formed at church or in the homes of members according to residential areas. These home groups may also be utilized for outreach into the community and for mutual care of the members.
- (c) The Council of Elders shall be kept informed of all meetings and group studies. Of the teachings, the progress, and the attendance of these meetings.

#### **3.2 Quarterly Ministerial Meeting**

The officers of the church (elders, deacons) will meet quarterly for fellowship and have discussions regarding the ministries of the church. This will be a time of sharing, refreshing and encouragement. This may be done at the church building, one of the homes, or a retreat. Others who are involved in a church ministry and whose presence would be beneficial at the meeting may be invited to the Ministerial Meeting by the Council of Elders. One of these meetings may be in conjunction or in place of the monthly Elders and Deacons meeting.

#### **3.3 Business Meetings**

##### ***a) Annual Business Meeting:***

The Annual Business Meeting of the church shall be held in November of each year. At such Annual Business Meetings, the Church Officers shall submit updated reports on the activities and membership involvement during the preceding year, a financial statement, and reports on matters affecting the church's spiritual and social welfare. Vacant and/or new positions will be filled at this point. The Council of Elders will present names of nominees prior to the meeting. The nominees will stand for affirmation by the membership at the meeting. These individuals will resume their positions as of January 1<sup>st</sup>.

Some members may be removed from the membership list at this time.

**Annual Financial Meeting:**

The Annual Financial Meeting of the church shall be held in February of each year. At such Annual Financial Meetings, all Church Officers shall submit detailed financial reports from the preceding year and a proposed budget to the Treasurer one month prior to the meeting. A new budget for the year will be proposed and voted on by the membership.

Some members may be removed from the membership list at this time.

**Ordinary General Meeting:**

Ordinary General Meetings of the church will be called as often as the business of the church requires and shall be convened by notice given by the Council of Elders through at least one pulpit announcement on Sunday. An Ordinary General Meeting may also be called upon by the elders if requested in writing by one-fourth of the members, provided they are given the proposed agenda for such a meeting.

**(c) Arriving at Decisions:** At any of the above meetings, suggestions may be given for the guidance of Church Officers and members. Unanimity of heart and mind under God shall be sought, but where this is not realized or by request a vote may be taken (Particularly regarding financial matters, where support and commitment from the membership is needed). In case of a vote, a simple majority will carry the decision unless otherwise stated. Every member will be entitled to vote when brought to this stage. Any resolution passed at such a meeting (by vote or otherwise) shall be binding on the church and its Officers.

**(d) Quorum:** The regular members present at any properly convened members meeting shall constitute a quorum for the transaction of business.

**(e) Chairmanship:** As a general rule, the chairman of the board of elders shall preside at all members meetings. In the case of his absence or inability to chair, the elders shall appoint another of their number to preside.

## 4.0 ORDINANCES

- 4.1 The Lord's Supper will be served at least four times a year as a Remembrance of the Lord's sacrificial death. The Lord's Supper may be observed:
- (a) At any worship service (morning or evening) or at a meeting.
  - (b) At the residence of a sick church member to enable that member to observe the Lord's Supper with a few saints.
- 4.2 Baptism services shall be conducted as and when individuals who want to be baptized request for it. Such individuals are to be screened by the Council of Elders (to ensure as far as is humanly possible that they are converted) and educated about the meaning of baptism before they are baptized. Upon being convinced of true conversion, the individual will then be Baptized by immersion.

## 5.0 MINISTRIES

- 5.1 All the church's efforts in carrying out the Great Commission shall be organized into departments called "ministries", and all members will be obligated to participate in one or more of these ministries according to their abilities.
- These 'Ministries' will take various forms and will be for the glory of God the Father and Jesus Christ our Lord, for the furtherance of His kingdom. In areas of missions and evangelism, both home and abroad. As well as for discipleship, training, teaching, and the care of the church members. And then, also for the outreach of the community in need.
- 5.2 Each ministry will be under the oversight of the Council of Elders, and will be expected to give regular reports to the elders as and when required to do so. Maximum liberty shall be given to each ministry to develop according to the vision of its constituent members, but the elders will ensure that this is kept within the bounds of the overall vision of the church. The Council of Elders, in consultation with interested or affected members, will also determine whether a ministry ought to start, or close, or modify, or even postpone its activity as they see fit for the better ordering of the church.
- 5.3 Each ministry will be expected to have a leader who will spearhead its efforts according to its approved policy. This leader may be an elder, deacon, or the group may be asked to

choose a leader from among themselves. All leadership requests and appointments shall be submitted to the Council of Elders for confirmation. The persons appointed will only commence functioning after eldership confirmation. The Council of Elders shall have the right to ask a leader to step down if he is negligent or incompetent or divisive. The Council of Elders must also approve resource persons (such as speakers) who are not members of the church before being allowed to work with any ministry.

- 5.4 Each ministry shall keep a regular account of its financial transactions and membership involvement. The finances of each ministry shall be organized as budgeted at the Annual Financial Meeting, or otherwise set out under 6.4 and 6.5 of the by-laws.
- 5.5 All ministry minutes and correspondence shall be copied to the Council of Elders. Copies of these will also be kept in good order in ministry files.
- 5.6 A ministry will only last as long as there are members in the church with the burden and ability to carry out its objectives. Where this ceases to be the case, the files of the ministry will be handed in to the elders for safe keeping until such a time that the Lord raises up members in the church to carry out that ministry's objectives.

## **6.0 FINANCES**

- 6.1 The elders shall ensure that one of them or a deacon (or where that is not possible, someone else who is capable) is appointed as Treasurer to keep the books of the church's finances. This person is to properly account for all the church's money. Others may be added to assist the Treasurer in accomplishing the duties set forth.
- 6.2 Monthly financial reports shall be made available to the elders, while quarterly and audited annual financial statements shall be made available to the members by the person appointed to handle the accounts.
- 6.3 All individuals, groups, and committees must operate within the budget that was approved by the membership at the Annual Financial Meeting for the course of the year. All are encouraged as much as able to remain and finish under budget. In the event that any individual, group, or committee has reached the end of it's approved budget.

All expenses beyond the pre-approved budgeted amount will need the approval of the Council of Elders, and possibly also by the membership. Otherwise, see next section 6.4 and 6.5 of these By-laws.

6.4 Ministries in the church shall be encouraged to sustain their operations as far as possible by raising their own funds. However, any method thus conceived must not conflict with the spirit and teaching of the Bible and must receive approval from the Council of Elders before it is implemented.

6.5 Each ministry shall submit their monthly and quarterly returns to the person appointed by the Council of Elders to handle the church's finances. From time to time, each ministry's books will be subject to inspection and the Council of Elders shall be kept informed of the status of ministry accounts.

## **7.0 OFFICERS**

### **7.1 Procedure for calling an elder (including a pastor):**

- (a) The church shall set aside times for prayer and fasting exclusively for the purpose of seeking God's guidance as to the right man to function as an elder (or a pastor) in its midst. The Council of Elders shall be composed of at least five members. There will be no set term for the office of Elder. Although, unless an elder resigns or is terminated, upon holding this office for a period of five years – this man will be strongly encouraged to take a period of time agreed upon by the Elders for rest and refreshing.
- (b) The elders shall set before the church the qualifications necessary for the person who is to occupy this position. (In the case of a pastor, emphasis will be made on his preaching/teaching gifts and his doctrinal soundness). The members shall be asked to submit names of individuals they deem to be thus qualified. (In the case of a pastor, these names may be from within or outside the church) (1 Timothy 3:1-7; Titus 1:6-9; 1 Peter 5:1-4)
- (c) The elders shall screen these names according to the qualifications they gave the members. Where they deem it fit to repeat the sounding out process, they may do so until they are satisfied. All the necessary information about the person shall

be obtained for the purpose of arriving at the most suitable man for the work. This may also necessitate a meeting between the existing Council of Elders and the prospective candidate.

- (d) Once it has been decided to recommend a name (in the case of a pastor, only one name shall be recommended at any one time) to the church, the recommended name shall be made known to the members at least 14 days prior to the date at which the members will be required to make their mind known on the person. During this period the members will be asked to be in earnest prayer and to bring any information that may be useful to the elders for the purpose of commending or disqualifying the prospective candidate for the work.
- (e) Non-vocational elders – after prayer, careful considering, and evaluating the mind of the membership as brought forward, it will be the existing Council of Elders that will choose the man to fill this position. However, in the case of a Vocational Elder (paid elder or pastor) – a formal vote will be conducted by secret ballot, and will need to be at least two-thirds for it to be carried through as a decision by the church.
- (f) There shall be at least twice as many Lay Elders as Vocational Elders in the Council. The Council of Elders shall organize itself however it determines to best achieve the mission of the church. The Council will meet once per month at the time and place of their choosing. The Council will annually select its Chairman and Vice-Chairman from among its Lay Elders.
- (g) Pastoring Elder: The convictions of the pastor should be given serious considerations by the leadership and by the membership of the church. Upon his calling as the “under-shepherd” of the sheep, to him has been given both a wonderful and a terrible burden for the flock of Jesus Christ.

## **7.2 Procedure for calling deacons:**

- (a) The church shall be much in prayer for the purpose of seeking God's guidance as to the right persons (man or woman) to occupy the office of deacon. The number of deacons shall be determined by the needs of the ministry and the call and qualification of men and women in the church. The normal term of office for a deacon will be three years.

- (b) The Council of Elders shall set before the church the qualifications necessary for the persons who are to occupy this position and the specific functions they expect those persons to fulfill. The members shall submit names of individuals they deem to be thus qualified (1 Timothy 3:8-13; Titus 2:3-5).
- (c) The elders shall seek to discover from this process the individuals that the church members are inclining to for the purpose of serving them in the office of deacon. Where they deem it fit to repeat the sounding out process, they may do so until a level of consistency is achieved and they are satisfied.
- (d) Once it has been decided to recommend certain names to the church, the recommended names shall be made known to the members at least 14 days prior to the date at which the members will be required to make their mind known on the persons by a formal vote, usually at the Annual Business Meeting. During this period the members will be asked to be in earnest prayer and to bring any information that may be useful to the Council of Elders for the purpose of commending or disqualifying the prospective candidates.
- (e) The formal vote will be by secret ballot, and will need to be by a majority vote. In a situations where the vote is for a Vocational Deacon (staff paid by the membership in serving the church), a two-thirds vote by the membership will be required for it to be carried through as a decision by the church.
- (f) In the event that a Deacon resigns or is removed from their position within the first year of being voted in, the person receiving the second greatest votes will be asked to resume the position for the remaining term, providing the qualifications are still met. If it is greater than a year, the position will be brought up for nomination and vote at the next Annual Meeting.

### **7.3 Installation**

- a) All church officers thus chosen, and/or elected at the usual Annual Business Meeting, will begin their office on January 1. There may be times when an office requires to be filled during the course of the year. In either case, they will not begin to function until they are publicly installed into their office at a regular worship service by the laying on of the hands of the existing Council of Elders.

- b) In the event where an immediate or temporary office requires to be filled. The Council of Elders reserves the right to place a person of their choosing into this office. Until the proper procedure and/or installation can be administered for an ongoing position. Temporary committees, groups, or ministries will conclude at the completion of the work requested by the Council of Elders.

#### **7.4 Evaluation and Termination**

The members shall express and discuss their evaluation of each of their officers during oversight meetings with elders. The fruit of these discussions will be made known to the individual officers specifically during oversight meetings.

- (a) Where it becomes apparent to the Council of Elders that an officer is unable to meet the qualifications and demands of his office, the elders will ask him to step down and he will have no choice in the matter.
- (b) An officer may also step down from his office without prejudice if for good and valid reasons he finds he is no longer able to discharge the duties of his office.
- (c) The members reserve the right to evaluate any or all of the officers. In the event where an officer's habits, attitude, or teaching is determined not meeting the qualification of that office and it is believed the person should not continue in office. All reasons and concerns need to be expressly communicated verbally and in writing to the Council of Elders. And at the written request of one-fourth of the membership, the person will be removed from office until a further investigation by the Council of Elders and/or to such a group or committee delegated by the Council of Elders can be accomplished.

#### **7.5 Chairman**

The elders and deacons shall choose one of their number to be their chairman in their respective courts. They shall also select a vice-chairman, to serve as chairman in the chairman's absence.

## **8.0 CO-OPERATION WITH OTHER CHURCHES**

8.1 The church may join itself to an association of churches upon the recommendation of the Council of Elders and a two-thirds vote by the members at any Meeting. Withdrawal from such an association would only be effected by the same procedure.

## **9.0 TRUSTEES**

9.1 The church shall have five trustees. Any two of them may act on behalf of all the trustees. Trustees may be removed or appointed by a majority of two thirds of the members present at any Business, Financial, or General Meeting, and may be chosen from among the church officers (elders, deacon) or from the membership at large. Confirmation by the Council of Elders is necessary before they begin to function.

9.2 Each trustee shall serve for a term of three years, and will be subject for confirmation or replacement at the end of this period.

9.3 The trustees shall perform such legal and business transactions as are specifically demanded from them by the laws of the country. In the discharge of their duties they shall act only as directed by the Council of Elders.

## **10.0 PROPERTY**

10.1 All property, which the church may acquire, whether moveable or immovable, shall be held and administered solely for the furtherance of its objectives and the propagation of its principles.

10.2 Any purchase or lease of immovable property on behalf of the church shall be effected upon the authority of a resolution of the church passed at a Business, Financial, or General Meeting. The recommendation or intent shall be included in the meeting agenda and communicated to the membership prior to the meeting. Any sale, donation, exchange or mortgage or other alienation or encumbrance of the whole or any part of the immovable property of the church shall be effected upon authority of a resolution of the church passed at any of these meetings.

10.3 The church shall have the power to buy, sell, let or hire, exchange, transfer, receive as donation, immovable property and shall further have power to borrow money on the security of immovable property and to pass mortgage bonds on the same,

but this shall only be effected after a resolution of the church passed at an Annual or called membership Meeting. The church shall also receive by way of donation or otherwise, moveable property and invest its funds in Government or Municipal stock, mortgage bonds, or fixed deposit or otherwise, in Banks, Building Societies or like organizations. In this latter case, only the authorization of the Council of Elders shall be necessary.

10.4 The proceeds derived from sale or other disposal of any property of the church shall be applied and devoted in such manner as the church (or in the event of the church having ceased to exist, the trustees) may deem best fitted to further its objectives and the propagation of its principles.

10.5 May God spare us from division in the church. Should such a division occur within Gospel Fellowship Chapel; the property of the church shall belong to the group of such division as represents the largest portion of the church membership. Providing however, the group is loyal to Scripture and to this constitution; otherwise it shall go the group remaining loyal the this constitution though it may not be the largest group in the division.

10.6 In the event of the church at any time ceasing all together to exist, all property or rights to property owned by it shall be vested in the trustees who shall hold and administer the property so as to further the objects and propagate the principles of the church (see section 11).

10.7 All immovable property acquired by the church shall be the separate property of the church but registered in the name of the Trustees who shall be designated in the Title Deeds of such property as "The Registered Trustees of the Gospel Fellowship Chapel." The said name shall be engraved on the common seal which shall be kept in the control of the trustees and shall only be affixed to any document by resolution of the trustees and in the presence of any two of them, and those two shall sign their names as attesting witness of any such affixing. Each and every use of the common seal shall be reported to the Council of Elders for ratification.

## **11.0 DISSOLUTION OF THE CHURCH**

11.1 The church may at any time be dissolved by resolution of a majority of two thirds of the members present and entitled to vote at an Annual Business or Financial Meeting of the church. In the event of such a resolution being passed, the Council of Elders or the trustees (in the event that there are no elders) shall take the necessary steps to wind up the affairs of the church.

11.2 No donor, member, officer of the church, or private individual shall be entitled to share in the distribution of any assets of the church upon dissolution. The assets shall be given only to another church of like faith and practice.

## **12.0 MODIFICATION OF CONSTITUTION**

12.1 This Constitution with its by-laws may only be modified after one month's notice has been given of the proposal. Any such changes must be carried by a two-thirds majority at any membership meeting.

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