

CONSTITUTION & BY-LAWS OF FIRST CHRISTIAN CHURCH
of Bristol, Virginia
Adopted: November 24, 2013
Revised February 2022

PREAMBLE

We, the members of the First Christian Church, a congregationally governed body, in order to promote the work of the Church in the spirit of Christ and thus advance His kingdom, do hereby adopt this constitution.

ARTICLE I. NAME AND PURPOSE

The name of this organization shall be First Christian Church of Bristol, Virginia. This Church, voluntarily and of its own right, free will, and accord, is an independent Christian Church.

The purpose of this Church shall be the proclamation of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, the administration of the ordinances of the New Testament, the spiritual growth of its members, and the spread of the Gospel of Jesus Christ throughout the world to advance the Kingdom of God. **(Matthew 28:18-20; Luke 24:46-48; Acts 1:8)**

This Church is duly incorporated under the laws of the State of Virginia under the corporate name of First Christian Church of the City of Bristol, Virginia.

ARTICLE II. MEMBERSHIP

Section A. Active Membership

The membership of this Church shall consist of any person professing faith in Jesus Christ as personal Lord and Savior, who is in accord with the faith and practices held by this Church, and who assents to its Affirmation of Faith. **(Romans 10:9-10)**

Any person professing faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, giving evidence of a change of heart, testimony of a Christian life, and a baptism experience after having come to faith, may be received into this Church.

Members are expected to be faithful in all spiritual duties essential to the Christian life, to attend habitually the services of this Church, to give regularly to its support and benevolences, and to share in its organized work.

Voting privileges shall be accorded to all active members 18 years of age and older.

Section B. Inactive Membership

Once a year the membership roll shall be studied by the Membership Ministry and those members who have not attended regularly and consistently shall be declared inactive.

Persons who have been declared inactive shall not be counted or reported as active members, may not have part in Church business meetings, and may not hold office.

Section C: Resignation and Dismissal of Members

If a member wishes to resign from the Church, it is recommended they either submit a letter or make a verbal resignation to the Pastor, an Elder(s), or Chairman of the Board.

Any member engaged in unchristian behavior will be addressed by the Elders according to **Matthew 18:15-18**. Based on the recommendation of Elders and approval of the Board, a person (s) may be dismissed from membership of this Church.

Section D: Restoration of Membership

Members who have resigned may have their membership restored to active status by notifying the Pastor, Elder(s), or Chairman of the Board.

Dismissed members can be restored to active membership by expressing repentance and reformation by letter or verbal request upon recommendation of the Elders and approval by the Board.

ARTICLE III. OFFICERS

Section A. Officers

The following officers shall be elected by the Church at its annual business meeting for a term as designated for each, or until such time as a successor is elected and assumes office:

1. Chairman: for a term of one year, not to exceed 2 consecutive terms.
2. Vice-Chairman: for a term of one year, not to exceed 2 consecutive terms.
3. Secretary: for a term of one year, not to exceed 2 consecutive terms.
4. Assistant Secretary: for a term of one year, not to exceed 2 consecutive terms.
5. Treasurer: for a term of one year.
6. Assistant Treasurer: for a term of one year.
7. Honorary Officers: those who because of infirmities or advanced age, and whose service and consecration to the Church merits the honor, may be retired from active responsibility as Elder, Deacon and/ or Deaconess Emeritus as an ex-officio member.

The following officers shall also be elected by the Church at its annual business meeting for a term as designated for each, or until such time as a successor is appointed and assumes office:

1. Elders: not to exceed 9 in number, one-third of whom shall be elected each year for a term of three years.
2. Deacons: not to exceed 18 in number, one-third of whom shall be elected each year for a term of three years.
3. Deaconesses: not to exceed 12 in number, one-third of whom shall be elected each year for a term of three years.
4. At Large Board member: not to exceed 1 in number, whom shall be elected each year for a term of one year and not to exceed two consecutive terms.

Section B. Junior Officers

A Junior Deacon/Deaconess (minimum of age 16) may be nominated by the Deacon/Deaconess chair and appointed by Board approval with no voting privileges for a term of one year.

Section C. Duties of Officers

1. The Chairman of the Board shall:
 - Call and preside at all Board meetings and Business Meetings of the Congregation according to Roberts' Rules of Order.
 - Serve as Chairman of the General Board.
 - Serve as ex-officio member of all ministries and/or special committees.
 - Present an annual report for the annual business meeting.
2. The Vice-Chairman shall:
 - Call and preside at all Board meetings and Business meetings of the Church in the absence of the Chairman.
 - Perform other duties as may be assigned by the Board in the absence of the Chairman.
3. The Secretary shall:
 - Keep a record of all Board and congregational meetings.
 - Perform such other duties as may be assigned by the Board.
4. The Assistant-Secretary shall:
 - Keep minutes of all Board and congregational meetings in the absence of the Secretary.
 - Perform other duties as may be assigned in the absence of the Secretary.
5. The Treasurer shall:
 - Receive and make a record of all funds and deposit them in the proper Church accounts.
 - Keep an individual account record of each contributor.

- Send out statements as directed by the General Board.
 - Disburse all funds to the Church according to the authority designated by the General Board.
 - Serve as a member of the Stewardship Ministry.
 - Present a financial report at each regular meeting of the General Board.
 - Present an annual financial report at the annual business meeting.
6. The Assistant-Treasurer shall work in conjunction with the Treasurer in properly recording, depositing, and reporting the aforementioned items to the General Board and the congregation.
7. The Elders, according to **I Timothy 3:7**, in cooperation with the Church ministries, shall:
- Promote the growth and welfare of the Church.
 - Encourage by example and word the missionary, evangelistic, educational and stewardship responsibilities of the Church.
 - Bless and administer the Lord's Supper to the congregation.
 - Participate in visitation programs of the Church.
 - Give thoughtful consideration to the policies of the Church that will enable it to fulfill its mission.
 - Anoint and pray for the sick upon request according to **James 5:14**.
 - Perform such other duties as may be assigned by the General Board.
8. The Deacons in cooperation with the Church ministries shall:
- Cooperate with the Elders in promoting the growth and welfare of the Church.
 - Assist in greeting and ushering of the congregation.
 - Distribute the Lord's Supper and receive the offerings.
 - Provide assistance in the business affairs and program activities of the Church.
 - Perform such other duties as may be assigned by the Board.
 - Nominate and mentor Junior Deacon(s).
9. The Deaconesses, in cooperation with the Church ministries, shall:
- Perform the same general duties as the Deacons and cooperate with them in promoting the growth and welfare of the Church.
 - Take responsibility for the preparation and care of the communion elements.
 - Minister to families in times of sickness or bereavement.
 - Provide assistance in the program activities of the Church.
 - Perform such other duties as may be assigned by the Board.
 - Nominate and mentor Junior Deaconess(es).
10. The Chairman of the Elders, Deacons, and Deaconesses shall submit monthly and annual reports as requested by the Board.

Section D. Election of Officers

1. A Nominating Committee shall:
 - Be composed of two members of the General Board whose terms do not expire at the end of the current year, and three members of the congregation who are not members of the Board.
 - Be nominated by the Chairman of the Board in cooperation with the Minister.
 - Be approved by the General Board and announced to the congregation at least 2 months prior to the Annual Business Meeting.
2. All suggestions from the congregation for nomination of Church Officers shall be presented to the Nominating Committee at least 5 weeks prior to the annual meeting.
3. The Nominating Committee shall:
 - Consider qualifications of nominees.
 - Secure consent from nominees for each vacancy.
 - Prepare a ballot for Board approval consisting of one or more nominees for each vacancy in the best judgment of the committee.
4. The Chairman of the Nominating Committee shall report its nominations to the congregation at the annual business meeting.
5. All nominees who receive a majority of the votes cast by written ballot of those present and voting shall be declared elected.
6. Vacancies in any office of the Church shall be filled for the unexpired term by nomination of the Chairman of the General Board in consultation with the Minister and approval by the General Board.

Section E. The General Board

1. The General Board shall consist of:
 - (6) elected officers of the Church
 - (9) Elders
 - (1) Deacon Chair
 - (1) Deaconess Chair
 - (1) Chairman of all Ministries
 - (1) At Large Board member
 - (1) Senior Minister, or minister if only one minister
2. The General Board shall:
 - Consider and approve general policies and procedures.
 - Transact business of the Church.
 - Direct the administration of the programs and ministries of the Church.
 - Hire and dismiss all employees upon a majority vote of the General Board present.

- Approve written Employment Agreements with all new employees and review and update job descriptions for all employees and volunteers.
 - Make recommendations for the purchase or disposal of real estate property at the Annual or Special Meeting of the Church, requiring a two-thirds majority vote of those present for approval.
 - Perform its duties according to the authority granted in this constitution or designated to it by the Church.
3. An Executive committee of the General Board shall:
- Be composed of the Chairman, Vice-Chairman, Secretary and Treasurer of the General Board, Chairman of the Elders, and Chairman of the Stewardship and Finance Ministry.
 - Meet at the discretion of the Chairman to consider Church business issues which develop between Board meetings for the purpose of making a recommendation to the General Board regarding action to be taken.
 - Consider personnel issues and make recommendations regarding personnel action and changes to personnel policies and employee benefits.
 - Negotiate resolution to other issues not requiring Board action.

ARTICLE IV. THE MINISTER

Section A. Qualifications and Duties of the Minister

1. According to the Word of God, the qualifications and duties of the Minister shall be:
 - A husband of one wife.
 - Vigilant, sober, blameless.
 - Ruler of his own house.
 - Not greedy, not self-willed, slow to anger, not given to monetary gain.
 - A lover of hospitality, just, holy and temperate.
 - Holding fast the faithful word as he hath been taught that he may be able by sound doctrine both to exhort and to convince the gainsayers according to **Titus 1 7-9, Timothy 3:1-7.**
2. The Minister of the Church shall perform the duties usually pertaining to that office in accordance with an employment agreement duly agreed upon by the General Board and the Minister.
 - As a spiritual administrator of the Church, he shall be a member of the General Board with voting privileges and an ex-officio member of all organized groups, auxiliaries, committees and ministries.

Section B. Selection of the Minister

The Church shall choose the Minister according to the following procedures:

1. A Pulpit Committee shall be nominated and approved by the General Board.

- The Pulpit Committee shall consist of three Board members and two members of the congregation.
 - The Pulpit Committee shall be responsible for interviewing and recommending a prospective Minister to the General Board.
2. The General Board shall consider the recommendation of the pulpit committee, and if, approved:
 - Recommend the prospective Minister to the Church.
 - It shall be the policy of the Church to consider only one prospective Minister at a time.
 3. Before a call may be extended, the prospective Minister must be approved by a two-thirds majority of the congregation present and voting at a regular or special business meeting of the Church.
 4. The term of the Minister shall be for an indefinite period.
 - The Minister may terminate his employment giving 60 days written notice.
 - The General Board may accept less than 60 days notice from the Minister.
 - The General Board may terminate the Minister giving 60 days notice, unless for cause as described in the employment agreement, with a two-thirds vote of the General Board.
 - An employment agreement setting forth the salary and benefits to be paid and other conditions of the call shall be made in duplicate, one copy for the Minister and one for the Church.

ARTICLE V. MEETINGS

Section A. Church Meetings

The Church shall hold:

1. An annual business meeting of the congregation within (60) days prior to the close of the Church year, for the purpose of electing officers, approving the budget, and transacting any other business of the congregation.
2. Special meetings of the congregation which may be called by the Chairman or Vice Chairman upon request of the General Board or written petition of 10% or more active members of the Church.

Section B. Notice of Meetings

Notice of all regular or special business meetings of the congregation shall be given at a regular Sunday service of the Church at least one week in advance of the meeting.

Section C. Rules of Order

Roberts' Rules of Order shall govern all business meetings of the Church and the General Board.

ARTICLE VI. BYLAWS

Section A: Church Year

The Church year shall begin on January 1.

Section B: The General Board

The General Board shall:

1. Hold its regular monthly meetings on a date designated by the General Board.
2. Hold special meetings as called by the Chairman or in his absence the Vice-Chairman or upon request of 5 or more members of the General Board.
3. Consider a majority of the members of the General Board as constituting a quorum.
4. Observe the following order of business:
 - Meeting called to order by presiding officer.
 - Pastor's inspirational moment.
 - Devotion or prayer.
 - Remarks from Church members who have asked to address the Board.
 - Reading and approval of minutes of the General Board.
 - Report of Treasurer and approval of financial reports.
 - Report of the ministries.
 - Report of the special committees.
 - Approval of reports as submitted.
 - Consideration of unfinished business carried over from previous meetings.
 - New business and program suggestions for future activities.
 - Minister's comments and benediction.

Section C: Board Meetings

Unless closed by action of the Board to discuss personnel or property issues, meetings of the General Board shall be open to all Church members with a brief opportunity at the beginning of each Board meeting for any Church member to address the Board about any Church issue.

Section D: Ministries

Ministries function as standing committees of the Board. The task of administering the programs of the Church shall be delegated to the following ministries:

1. Worship
2. Children and Youth Christian Education

3. Adult Christian Education
4. Stewardship and Finance Property
5. Property Ministry
6. Community and World Evangelism
7. Membership/Christian Life
8. Special Ministries

Section E: Ministry Teams

Ministry Teams are to be selected and approved in the following manner:

1. The Chairman of the Board, Vice-Chairman, Secretary and Minister shall constitute a special committee to nominate ministry Chairmen.
2. The General Board shall approve all ministry Chairmen.
3. The Chairman of the Board, Vice-Chairman, Secretary, Minister and the respective Chairman of the Ministry shall work together to select the members for each ministry.
4. The Chairmen and members of each ministry shall be selected on the basis of qualification for the task.
5. The Chairmen of the ministries shall become a member of the General Board for the term of their Ministry Chairmanship.

Section F: Ministry Organization

Each ministry shall be organized to conduct the business for which it is responsible.

1. Meet regularly to conduct business.
2. Plan programs which shall be presented to the General Board for approval.
3. Ministry members serve a one-year term; not limited to one year.
4. Special committee members serve until the mission is complete.
5. Submit a proposed budget to the Stewardship Ministry to be approved and submitted to the General Board.

Section G: Ministry Purpose and Duties

The purpose and duties of the ministries shall be as follows:

1. Worship Ministry:
 - It shall be the purpose of this ministry to provide a genuine experience of worship.

- The ministry shall ensure that adequate supplies are available for its work, including bulletins, choir and baptismal robes, communion requirements, music, hymn books, etc.
 - This ministry must work closely with the Minister(s) to keep the worship experience meaningful and effective.
2. Children and Youth Christian Education Ministry:
- It shall be the purpose of this ministry to develop an effective program of religious education for the youth of the Church.
 - It shall be responsible for planning and administering the youth programs of the Church including Sunday School, youth activities, and mid-week educational projects.
 - It shall be responsible for planning and conducting Vacation Bible School.
 - This ministry shall have oversight for the operation of the nursery.
3. Adult Christian Education Ministry:
- It shall be the purpose of this ministry to develop an effective adult program of religious education and discipleship.
 - It shall also be responsible for the Church library.
4. Stewardship and Finance Ministry:
- It shall be the purpose of this ministry to develop within the membership an understanding of Christian stewardship and to direct the financial program of the Church so that financial needs are met.
 - This ministry shall be responsible for promoting stewardship obligation and promoting stewardship education.
 - Develop and submit the annual budget to the General Board for approval.
 - Review the financial position of the Church quarterly, ensuring accurate records, and encouraging endowments for future Church development.
 - The ministry shall be responsible for reviewing and maintaining adequate insurance for buildings, property, and general liability.
5. Property Ministry:
- This ministry is responsible for maintaining all property and equipment.
 - This ministry shall assess current needs and make recommendations for improvements.
 - This ministry shall recommend annual property maintenance and upkeep.
6. Community and World Evangelism Ministry:
- This ministry is charged with creating and fostering a world vision for this church.
 - This ministry is responsible for planning and promoting a program of mission education and enlisting support for missionary causes.
7. Membership/Christian Life Ministry:
- This ministry is charged with the responsibility of encouraging each member to have a meaningful experience in the life of the Church.
 - Maintain attendance records and membership list (active/inactive).

- Follow-up communication with extended absentee members.
- Maintain a current directory (phone, email, etc).
- Supply welcome packets for visitors.
- Supply new member packets for those who join the Church (letter, Constitution and Bylaws, Church directory, and an interest survey).
- Coordinate recognitions for Mother's Day, Father's Day, High School and College graduation.
- Send cards and flowers for shut-ins, illnesses, funerals, and births.

8. Special Ministries:

- When needed to administer the work of the Church, the Chairman shall appoint, with the approval of the General Board, such special ministries and committees as may be needed. These ministries and committees shall perform duties assigned and shall continue for such a time as designated.
- The Chairman of the Board shall recommend the establishment of Special Ministries or Committees and shall recommend the Chairman and members of all Special Ministries.
- The General Board shall approve the appointment of all Special Committees and shall establish their duties and time frame for existence.

ARTICLE VII. CHURCH BUDGET

The General Fund shall include all funds received by the Church for general operations, including Sunday School offerings and all gifts designated for line items in the Church budget.

Separate accounts may be established for special projects, including the Building Fund.

ARTICLE VIII. AMENDMENTS

This Constitution and Bylaws may be amended at any business meeting of the Church by a two-thirds vote of the members present and voting on the amendment. Any proposed amendments to the Constitution must be provided in writing to the members of the Church at least two weeks in advance of the business meeting. Or, the proposed amendment or amendments must be read at a regular Sunday service at least two weeks before the business meeting.

ARTICLE IX. DISSOLUTION

In the event of the dissolution of the church, or the winding up of its affairs or other liquidation of its assets, the church's property shall not be conveyed or distributed to any organization or organizations created or operated for profit, or to any individual for less than fair market value for such property and all assets remaining after the payment of the church's debts shall be conveyed to such organization or organizations under Section 501 (c) 3 of the Internal Revenue Code of 1954 (or the corresponding provision

of any future United States Internal Revenue Law), as the Board shall determine, or to the federal, state or local government exclusively for public purpose.

Editorial Note: Two editorial changes were made to this document on 2-1-22 to clarify the respective sections:

- Article III Officers, Section E: The General Board: The following was added to the list of positions serving as Board members: (1) Senior Minister, or minister if only one minister. Article IV The Minister Section A2 states: He shall be a member of the General Board . . . This statement was added to easily reference all members of the Board.
- Article VI By-Laws Section G: The following paragraph was deleted: This section was omitted from other Ministry Teams and inadvertently left here - The ministry shall submit a proposed budget to provide for their work during the year and shall spend within the approved budget.