

INTRODUCTION

A SHORT HISTORY OF CEC IN 2 CHAPTERS

I

Although Covenant Evangelical Church (CEC) held its first public worship service on October 1, 1993, the roots of the church were planted over 160 years earlier.

The First Parish of Barre, founded in 1778, was the only church in town for Barre's first 50 years. Its first covenant was one that any evangelical Christian, even today, would affirm. But by 1827, some of the members of First Parish had concluded that the teachings of their church no longer endorsed the Biblical principles of the original covenant.

This small group called for an ecclesiastical council, comprised of several other churches, in hopes of coming to some kind of resolution. But the council concluded that the theological differences between this group and the First Parish were irreconcilable. So with the blessing of the council, that determined little band of 32—all lay people—left First Parish to form what they called the Evangelical Congregational Church of Barre (ECCB).

The first published documents we have from ECCB (circa 1845) contain a statement of faith, and a covenant. The statement of faith, laying out the theological beliefs upon which the church would be based, contains over 300 Scripture references supporting the 12 statements. The covenant is equally fierce in its Biblical clarity and conviction. In its infancy, this was a church that knew what it believed, and why.

The Bible teaches, and history confirms, that churches, whenever or wherever they are found, have a natural tendency to drift away from their original moorings. This happened with ECCB. Slowly but nonetheless perceptively over time, the zeal and purity of the first generation's founding faith began to wane as successive generations came onto the scene. A historical study of the revisions of both the statement of faith and the covenant of ECCB shows how this happened over the first century of the church's existence. In the early 1950's ECCB dropped the "E" from its name, becoming Barre Congregational Church (BCC).

During the 1980's, BCC was re-introduced to its forgotten heritage and history. The church was called to reaffirm, uphold, embrace, and proclaim the faith expressed so clearly in its own founding documents. Because BCC as a community eventually chose not to do so, some then elected to leave BCC, take the covenant with them, and form CEC.

INTRODUCTION

II

From among those first members of CEC, a steering committee was chosen. This committee was entrusted with the task of determining what God's vision and purpose for this new church—if indeed that was what it was to be—might be. It was immediately and unanimously recognized that the original covenant and statement of faith from ECCB would become the foundation for this new enterprise. After several month's work, the Steering Committee crafted the current Mission Statement for CEC. All three of these documents were formally affirmed by the church on its 2nd anniversary.

The other major development was in the government of the church. It was determined that elders, according to Scripture, were necessary to pastor the congregation and administer the affairs of the church [1 Peter 5.1-3]. As it is unclear from Scripture exactly how elders are to be elected, CEC combined two of the more traditional methods: the pastor decided, and the congregation decided. Each church participant was to pray for 2 weeks, asking God whom He was calling to this office of elder. The 4 men with the most affirmations became the new elders. By God's mercy, these were the same 4 men preferred by the pastor. They were dedicated to the work during a Sunday worship service.

After almost 3 years of service, 2 vacancies developed. They were not immediately replaced. One year later, the remaining elders began asking God to raise up new elders. Eventually, two men were approached and agreed to become interns. After several months of training, they were formally affirmed as full elders during Sunday worship.

SUMMARY

CEC exists today for one reason: God is faithful. When an individual, a couple, or a group enters into covenant with the Lord, the Lord honors it, and remembers it; He expects us to do so, as well. With humility, yet with complete confidence in the grace of God, we of CEC endeavor to hold forth—as did our spiritual forbears—the simple, clear, joyous, unashamed, and undiluted proclamation of the whole gospel of Jesus Christ as revealed to us in the Word of God. This is our vision, our passion, and our purpose.

Mindful of our past mistakes, aware of our present shortcomings, our confidence only in the Lord, we invite you to join us as we journey into the future work the Lord has prepared beforehand for us to do [Eph 2.10]. To God be the glory.

ARTICLE I

CEC CONFESSION OF FAITH

1. We believe there is only one Living and True God. He is the Creator, the Sustainer, and the King of the Universe. He is infinite and perfect in power, wisdom, justice, goodness and Truth. He exists in three Persons - Father, Son, and Holy Spirit - equal in essence, power, and glory.
2. We believe that the Scriptures of the Old and New Testament are inspired by God and without error. The Bible is therefore the only perfect guide for Christian faith and practice.
3. We believe Man (male and female) was created good and upright in the sight of God. Yet voluntarily and of our own free will, we chose to sin through disobedience and thereby fell under the penalty of death, and our relationship with God was severed.
4. We believe that, as a result of Adam's disobedience, all his descendants are by nature entirely destitute of holiness. Though capable of moral action, we are all born in rebellion against God, under his righteous and just condemnation.
5. We believe that the Lord Jesus Christ, by his suffering and death, has made atonement for the sin of the world. He is the only Mediator between God and Man and the only Redeemer of Sinners. All who are saved are wholly and completely indebted to His Grace and Mercy alone.
6. We believe that only through rebirth by the Holy Spirit, and a living faith in Christ, is anyone justified and saved before God.
7. We believe that the invitations of the Gospel are such that whosoever will may come and take of the water of life freely. Yet the wickedness of the human heart is such that none will come to Christ except the Holy Spirit draw them.
8. We believe that true Christians will not finally perish, but will persevere through faith unto salvation. This will be according to the eternal purpose of grace by which we were chosen in Christ from before the foundation of the world.
9. We believe that there will be a general resurrection of the bodies both of the saved and the lost; that all must appear before the judgment seat of Christ to receive a just and final accounting for the deeds done while in the body; that at this day of judgment, the state of all will be unchangeably fixed; that the torment of the wicked and the joy of the righteous will never end.
10. We believe that everyone born of the Spirit is a member of Christ's Church, and that all such are called by God to live out His life within the context of commitment to a local congregation of the saints.
11. We believe that baptism and the Lord's Supper are God's ordinances.

ARTICLE I

SCRIPTURAL FOUNDATIONS FOR THE CEC STATEMENT OF FAITH

[Originally compiled by ECCB]

- 1]. Deut. 6:4. Isa. 45:5,6,21,22. Mark 12:29. Neh. 9:6. Acts 4:24. Heb. 3:3.
Rev. 4:11. Ps. 36:6. 22:28. 103:19. Rev. 19:6. Dan. 4:35. Rev. 11:17.
Ps. 147:5. 139:1—12. Rom 11:33. Ps. 18:14. Matt. 16:27. Rom. 2:2—11.
Ps. 65:11; Isa. 6:3. James 1:17. Ex. 34:6. Heb. 6:18. Matt. 28:19.
Isa. 7:14.
Matt. 1:23. Isa. 9:6. Heb. 1:3,8. Ps. 45:6. John 5:17,18,21, 22,23.
John 10:15,30,31,33. John 20:28. 1Tim. 3:16. 1 John 5:20. Rom. 9:5.
Phil. 2:6,7,10,11. Rev. 1:8. 2 Chron. 6:30. John 2:24,25. John 5:21. Matt.
28:18. Gal. 2:3,9. Luke 24:52. Heb. 1:6. Matt. 4:10. John 20:28,29. John
1:1,3,14.
Gal. 1:15,16,17. John 1:3,10. Heb. 1:2; 3:4. Gen. 1:2. Job 26:13; 33:4.
Isa. 48:16. Acts 5:3,4; 20:28. 1 Cor. 2:10,11; 12:8—12. Acts 1:16. Heb. 3:7;
9:14.
Matt. 12:31,32. John 6:63. 1 Tim. 6:13.
- 2]. 2 Tim. 3:16. 2 Pet. 1:20, 21. Isa. 8:20. Luke 24:25; 16:31. John 5:47.
Acts 17:11. Matt. 4:4. Ps. 19:7,8. Ps. 119:9. Jer. 8:9. Matt 22:29. John
5:39.
John 6:63. Mark 7:7. Gal. 1:8,9. Rev. 22:18,19.
- 3]. Gen. 1:26,27,31. Eccl. 7:29. Gen. 2:17; 3:19. Rom. 5:12—14.
- 4]. Gen. 6:5. Job 15:14. Rom. 5:12,19. Ps. 14:1—3. Jer. 17:9. Mark
7:20—23. Jer. 17:11,12. Ezek. 18:30—32. John 5:40. Rom 8:7. Rom. 5:18;
3:19. 2 Cor. 5:14.
- 5]. Isa. 53:4—6. 1 Cor. 15:3. Matt. 20:28; 26:28. Rom. 5:6—8. Gal. 3:13.
1 Tim. 2:5,6. Heb. 2:9; 9:12—14, 22, 28; 10:10—12. 1 Peter 3:18. Rev. 1:5;
5:9.
Acts 4:12. 1 Cor. 3:11. Isa. 28:16. Eph. 2:5,8,9. Rom. 5:20,21. 1 Pet. 1:3.
2 Tim. 1:9,10. Rom. 3:23—25. Tit. 3:5—7.
- 6]. John 3:3—8. Gal. 6:15. Tit. 3:5. John 6:40, 3:18, 36. Acts. 10:43.
Heb. 4:2,6,11; 3:19. Rom. 1:16; 3:26; 10:4. Mark 16:16. Heb. 2:2,3.
- 7]. Isa. 55:1—3. Ezek. 33:11. Matt. 22:2—5. Luke 14:16—18. Matt. 11:28.
John 5:35—37; 7:37; 4:10,14. 2 Pet.. 3:9. John 10:10. Rev. 21:6; 22:17.

ARTICLE I

Ps. 51:2,6,7,10—13. John 5:40. John 1:13; 3:5,6. Tit. 3:5,6. 1 Cor. 6:11. John 6:44.

8]. Ps. 37:23,24. Job 17:9. Prov. 2:8; 4:18. John 6:39 and 10:27—29 ;17:12. Rom. 8:38,39. Phil 1.6. Acts 13:48. Rom. 8:28—30. Eph. 1:4,5. 2 Thes. 2:13.
1 Pet. 1:2—5.

9]. Job 19:26. Dan. 12:2. Matt. 22:29—33. John 5:28,29; 11:23—25. Acts 17:18,31,32; 24:15; 26:8. 1 Cor. 15:4—8,20,21, 25—38,51,52. Ps. 96:13. Eccl. 11:9; 12:14. Matt. 12:36; 16:27; 25:31—34. John 5:22,27—29. Acts 10:42, 17:31. Rom. 2:5—11; 14:10—12. 2 Cor. 5:10. 2 Pet. 3:7. Rev. 20:12,13; 22:12. Prov. 10:24,25. Isa. 66:22—24. Luke 16:23—26. Rev. 22:11. Dan. 12:2,3.
Matt. 3:7,10,12; 13:30, 40—43. Matt. 47—50. Mark 9:42—49. John 3:13—16. Matt. 12:32. Matt. 18:8; 25:30—46. 2 Thes. 1:6—9. Rev. 21:4,8.

10]. Ps. 50:14-15. 1 Cor. 1:2. 2 Tim. 3:5. Matt. 16:18; 18:15—17. Rom. 8.5 —17; Rom 12.4-5; Rom. 16:17. 1 Cor 5:11—13. 2 Thess. 3:6,14. 1 Tim. 6:3-5. Tit. 3:10. 2 John 10,11. 1 Cor. 12.7, 27; Col. 3.1-17.

11]. Matt. 28:19. Luke 22:17—20. 1 Cor. 11:23—26. 2 Cor. 6:14,15. 1 Cor. 5:11—13. Acts 2:38,39. Acts 16:14,15,33. 1 Cor. 1:16. Matt. 19:13,14. 1 Cor. 7:14.

ARTICLE II

COVENANT EVANGELICAL CHURCH COVENANT

Adopted October 1, 1995

In the presence of God,
we hereby affirm and renew our covenant with Him. [2 Chron.34-31-32]

We confess the Father Almighty as our Creator and Sustainer; [Ge1.27;Heb1.3]
Jesus Christ as our Savior and Lord; [Rom 10.9]
and the Holy Spirit as our Sanctifier and Guide. [Jn 16.13; Ro 15.16]

This Yahweh is our God, [Ex 3.14; Jn 8.58]
and through the sanctifying blood of His Son our Lord Jesus Christ,
we give ourselves to be His People. [1 Thess 5.23]

We trust only and wholly in His sovereign grace and almighty power. [Pr3.5-6]

*

We promise that from this point forward
we will work to keep His commandments,
following Him in all things and in all ways. [Mt 22.37-38]

We promise to walk with His disciples—wherever they are found—
in truth and love. [John 13.34-35; 15.12-13; Eph 4.15]

We promise to deny ourselves,
and take up our crosses daily,
and follow Jesus Christ wherever He may lead us. [Luke 9.23]

We renounce, deny, and defy;
Satan,
our own lusts, desires, and sinfulness,
and any and every other false idol and god
which competes with our total allegiance and absolute loyalty
to Jesus Christ. [Dt. 5.7]

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ARTICLE II

We covenant before God with one another
to be a church of Jesus Christ. [1 Pet 2.9-10]

We pledge to live together in Christian community
in obedience to the Spirit of the gospel,
and to promote the peace, nurture and purity of His body
through worship,
mutual love and edification,
and personal evangelism. [Eph 4.1-5]

We promise to use the gifts God has given to each one of us
for the building up of the common good,
to the glory of God. [1 Cor 12.7; 1 Peter 4.10]

*

We are servants of God. [Lk 17.10]

We have made these vows to Him,
and we cannot go back. [Ps 116.14; Eccl 5.4; Mt 5.37]

This confession of faith, and this covenant,
will hold us while we live,
will follow us to the Judgment Throne of God,
and remain with us forever. [Mt. 5.37; 12.36-37]

*

We are not our own,
but we were bought with a price,
even the precious blood of Jesus Christ. [1 Cor 6.19-20; 1 Peter 1.18-19]

We are no longer strangers and foreigners,
but fellow citizens with the saints of the household of God,
built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets,
Jesus Christ himself being the chief cornerstone. [Eph 2.19-22]

Now unto Him who is able to keep us from falling,
and to present us faultless before the presence of His glory
with exceeding joy,
to the only wise God our Savior,
be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and forever.

Amen. [Jude 24-25]

ARTICLE III

CEC MISSION STATEMENT

Our mission is to become faithful servants of Jesus Christ through worship, loving one another, and seeking the lost.

WORSHIP (Matthew. 22.37-38)

All people give their greatest devotion, loyalty, and service to some thing or some one. Without Christ, this ultimate worship inevitably goes to our selves - the dedication of our lives to satisfying our own needs, fulfilling our own desires, and obeying our own inclinations (Isaiah 53.6). This irresistible obsession with Self manifests itself in a multitude of ways, none of which brings glory to God. It is the essence of what the Bible calls sin.

We accomplish our mission by renouncing, denying, and defying every false god which competes for our highest allegiance and deepest affection. Through a decision of the will, in the power of the Holy Spirit, by the grace of God, we choose Jesus Christ as our ultimate loyalty - He alone to receive our greatest love and joyful obedience, and to be the sole object of our life's worship.

We give ourselves to this life-long task, corporately renewing our commitment to this purpose each time we gather together to worship Him, yet seeking to express our devotion to Jesus in every aspect of our daily lives (Romans 12.1-2).

In short, our mission is to place Jesus Christ first in our lives - and keep Him there.

Our allegiance to Christ will declare itself in two foci -- inside and outside the Church:

LOVING ONE ANOTHER (John 13.34-35)

This is the internal manifestation (within the Church) of our obedience to the Great Commandment. Because Jesus Christ Himself is our highest loyalty, we must also dedicate ourselves to following His principle command to His people. This church is His own body. Therefore through love, encouragement, nurture, and faithfulness in the ways of the Lord, we "build one another up in love" (Eph. 4.14-16).

No one can be faithful to Jesus Christ, giving Him first place in our lives, and neglect to learn to love the family of God. Peace, joy, reconciliation, forgiveness, mutual edification and encouragement, gentle correction and rebuke in the Truth - such things are always God's will for His people. We give ourselves to loving one another according to the principles and prescriptions so clearly laid out for us in Scripture.

ARTICLE III

SEEKING THE LOST (Mt. 28.28-30; Acts 1.8).

This is the external (outside the Church) expression of pledging our primary allegiance to Jesus Christ. The Lord came to seek out and save His own who were (are) lost in the world (Luke 19.10). He did this by calling all people to repentance - to turn from their false idols and their devotion to Self to serve the one true and living God in freedom, power, love and joy. He entrusted us with this same ministry of proclaiming the good news of God's kingdom come in the person of it's King - the Lord Jesus Christ. It is a ministry of salvation through reconciliation (2 Cor 5.18ff) as well as a judgment of unbelief (John 3.18). We cannot be faithful servants of Jesus Christ if we do not give ourselves to this work.

ARTICLE IV

RESPONSIBILITIES OF ACTIVE CHURCH MEMBERS

"Unity in things necessary; liberty in things unnecessary; charity in everything."
Richard Baxter [1615-1691]

As reflected in our name, we are a covenant community. All members believe themselves called by God to be committed to CEC. Thus, as members of this church our first responsibility is to hold ourselves—and one another—accountable to the principles of our covenant.

It is understood from Scripture [1 Cor 4.6: *...Do not go beyond what is written...*" and Romans 14.1: *Accept him whose faith is weak, **without passing judgment on disputable matters.***] that only matters either explicitly forbidden or specifically commanded by Scripture apply to our agreement of mutual accountability.

As members of CEC, we agree to:

- Faithfully attend worship services and business meetings as the Lord enables.

Heb 10.24-25: And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds. ²⁵ Let us not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but let us encourage one another--and all the more as you see the Day approaching.

- Regularly support the ministry and work of this church through tithes and offerings as the Lord leads.

2 Cor 8.5,12; 9.7: ...they gave themselves first to the Lord and then to us in keeping with God's will...For if the willingness is there, the gift is acceptable according to what one has, not according to what he does not have...Each man should give what he has decided in his heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver.

- Seek to be involved in service to the Lord based upon the spiritual gifts and the natural abilities the Lord has granted to each one of us.

Mark 10.43-45: Instead, whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, ⁴⁴ and whoever wants to be first must be slave of all. For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many."

ARTICLE IV

1 Cor 12.7: *Now to each one the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good.*

1 Pet 4.10: *Each one should use whatever gift he has received to serve others, faithfully administering God's grace in its various forms.*

- Walk before the world in such a way as to bring no reproach to Christ.

Mt 5.16: *In the same way, let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven.*

1 Thess 5.22: *Avoid every kind of evil.*

- Grant appropriate respect, honor, and trust to the leadership of the church.

1 Tim 5.17-20: *The elders who direct the affairs of the church well are worthy of double honor, especially those whose work is preaching and teaching. For the Scripture says, "Do not muzzle the ox while it is treading out the grain," and "The worker deserves his wages." Do not entertain an accusation against an elder unless it is brought by two or three witnesses. Those who sin are to be rebuked publicly, so that the others may take warning.*

1 Thess. 5.12-13: *Now we ask you, brothers, to respect those who work hard among you, who are over you in the Lord and who admonish you. Hold them in the highest regard in love because of their work. Live in peace with each other.*

Heb. 13.17: *Obey your leaders and submit to their authority. They keep watch over you as men who must give an account. Obey them so that their work will be a joy, not a burden, for that would be of no advantage to you.*

ARTICLE V

Biblical Conflict Resolution and Church Discipline

Interpersonal conflicts, though an inevitable part of life, are morally neutral in and of themselves. What we do with them determines whether the effects serve to promote, or discredit, the cause of Christ. Scripture clearly lays out the procedures we are to follow, and we submit ourselves to them.

First: Whenever there is an interpersonal conflict, pray according to Mt 5.23-24. *Therefore, if you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother has something against you, ²⁴ leave your gift there in front of the altar. First go and be reconciled to your brother; then come and offer your gift.*

Have you taken responsibility for yourself, and made this effort?

Second: Having done that, then pray according to Mt 7.3-5: *Why do you look at the speck of sawdust in your brother's eye and pay no attention to the plank in your own eye? ⁴ How can you say to your brother, 'Let me take the speck out of your eye,' when all the time there is a plank in your own eye? ⁵ You hypocrite, first take the plank out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to remove the speck from your brother's eye.*

Is your plank out?

Third: If, after passing these first two tests, the conflict remains, look to Mt 18.15-17: *If your brother sins against you, go and show him his fault, just between the two of you. If he listens to you, you have won your brother over. ¹⁶ But if he will not listen, take one or two others along, so that 'every matter may be established by the testimony of two or three witnesses.' ¹⁷ If he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church; and if he refuses to listen even to the church, treat him as you would a pagan or a tax collector.*

1. *If...against you...*

- If. Has a sin been committed?
- Has it been against you?

2. *Go...show him his fault, just between the two of you...*

- Directly contact the person.
- No one else is to be involved.

If he listens, rejoice together.

3 . *But if he will not listen...*

ARTICLE V

- *Take one or two others along.* Not a mob.
- Again, it must be personal and direct. *Talking to 1 or 2 others about it* is not what Jesus says to do. He says they must go with you.
- This is to confirm Biblical teaching going back 1400 years before Jesus.

4. *If he refuses to listen to them...*[he has already refused to listen to you]

- Tell it to the church.

In CEC, this means the elders, in accordance with our by-laws.

The elders may then bring the matter to the church for action, again in accordance with by-laws.

5. *Treat him as a pagan or tax-collector...*

- Active membership of offender is withdrawn.
- All possible effort is made on the part of the entire congregation to promote restoration, love, service for the offender, calls to repentance, and the promise of hope in the gospel, for this is how we are to treat pagans.

ARTICLE VI

CEC MEMBERSHIP

Romans 12.4-5: Just as each of us has one body with many members, and these members do not all have the same function, so in Christ we who are many form one body, and each member belongs to all the others.

Section 1: Requirements

Requirements for church membership shall be as follows:

- a. A public confession of personal trust in Jesus Christ for salvation.

Romans 10.9,12: That if you confess with your mouth, "Jesus is Lord," and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved...For there is no difference between Jew and Gentile--the same Lord is Lord of all and richly blesses all who call on him, for, "Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved."

- b. Baptism.

Mt 28.19: Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit...

Acts 2.38: Peter replied, "Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit."

- c. Willingness to abide by all Articles contained herein.

Section 2: Admission

Membership in CEC may be acquired upon the recommendation of the Board of Elders and the affirmation of the current membership at any public worship or business meeting of the church.

Section 3: Status

- a. Active Members shall include all who have been received into membership who have not been dismissed [Art.VI, sect.5, a] or placed on the inactive roll.

- b. Inactive Members are those who have been absent from the life of the church for a period of four months without communication to the Board of Elders. Persons on the inactive roll shall have no rights of membership, but may be restored to Active status by action of the Board of Elders and the church.

ARTICLE VI

Section 4: *Conflict and Discipline*

- a.** As God's people in covenant with Him and with one another, we voluntarily submit ourselves to the discipline of this church.
- b.** In cases of conflict between members, Scripture shall be the guideline. Consult Article V.
- c.** The Pastor and Board of Elders shall be responsible for upholding church discipline. They shall seek to communicate with members violating their covenant and endeavor to restore them to the path of fellowship. Failing to receive sufficient evidence of repentance and reformation, they shall—without further elaboration—notify the church of such a member, along with recommendation of action to be taken.

Section 5: *Termination of Membership*

- a.** Any member desiring to sever his/her membership from CEC shall be dismissed upon request by the Board of Elders.
- b.** Any Active Member may request a letter of transfer or recommendation to any other Christian church. Such action shall be approved by the Board of Elders and reported to the church at the next church business meeting.

Section 6: *Restoration of Active Membership*

Members of CEC from whom fellowship has been terminated—for whatever reason—may be restored upon recommendation of the Board of Elders.

ARTICLE VII

ELDERS

Section 1: *Role and Function of Elders*

This congregation shall delegate its administrative function and authority to a team of Elders.

Section 2: *Qualification and Election of Elders*

An Elder shall be an Active member, at least 27 years of age, who meets the standards and qualifications set forth in 1 Timothy 3.1-7 and Titus 1.6-9.

Members believing they may be called to the office of Elder, or seeking to recommend another member as a potential Elder, shall do so by bringing the names of candidates to the current Elders. The Elders shall then, if in agreement after prayer and consideration, bring the name to a public meeting of the church. Nomination shall be by a 3/4 majority of active members. Newly nominated Elders shall then submit to a six-month trial internship under the supervision of the Pastor and Elders. If after this period the Pastor, Elders and nominee(s) unanimously affirm his calling, the nominee shall then be brought before the congregation and formally committed to the office.

Section 3: *Term of Elders*

An Elder is elected annually by a 3/4 affirmation of the congregation. His office may be terminated at any time by resignation, a 3/4 vote of the Board of Elders, a 3/4 vote of the congregation at any meeting, or by being deleted from the status of active membership.

Section 4: *Duties of Elders*

The Board of Elders shall be responsible for the overall program and business of the church, including any auxiliary and /or mission organizations. The Board shall not be less than four in number, and will always include the Pastor. They, with the Pastor, shall be the spiritual overseers of the total work of the Church. Elders' duties fall into five basic categories:

ARTICLE VII

- 1.** To serve [Eph 4.11-13; 1 Peter 5.2-3]. Elders are to be servant-leaders, shepherding God's people in the spirit of humility—not promoting their own interests, but the interests of Christ; not lording it over those whom God has entrusted to them, but being examples of faith, hope, and love. They are to dedicate themselves to “...*preparing God's people for works of service.*”
- 2.** To “oversee”, “administrate” and “rule” as shepherds of Christ's flock [I Tim. 3:4 & 5; 5:17; John 21:16; Heb. 13:17; I Pet. 5:2]. Therefore, every ministry, mission, committee, officer, subsidiary officer and activity of the Church must consult with the Elders for their direction, approval and help [see #1]. Response will be given and plans prayerfully made in light of God's Word.
- 3.** To guard the Church from doctrinal perversion and error [Titus 1:9 & 10; John 10:12; Mt. 9:36]. It is therefore the responsibility of the Elders to ensure the doctrinal soundness of all offices, organizations and teachings within the Church.
- 4.** To “*feed the Church of God*” [Acts 20:28; John 21:15-17]. It is the responsibility of the Pastor and Elders to feed the Church the divine Truth of God's Word, both milk and meat, as revealed in the Scriptures and quickened in individual hearts by the Holy Spirit. Therefore, the major emphasis of their ministry should be on prayer and the ministry of the Word of God (Acts 6.2-4). The decision, counsel and direction of the Elders should be given only after careful study of God's Word to ascertain the appropriate application of God's Truth to a given situation. It is, therefore, the authority of the Elders and Pastor as a Board to ensure that all Bible studies, Sunday School classes, youth groups, and any other ministries of the church are faithfully feeding people the truth of God's Word.
- 5.** To anoint the sick with oil in the name of the Lord and to pray over them. [James 5:14-16]. This is to be done at the request of the afflicted person and in faith following the direction of the Holy Spirit.

ARTICLE VIII

STEWARDSHIP COMMITTEE

Matthew 25.14,19: "Again, it will be like a man going on a journey, who called his servants and entrusted his property to them...After a long time the master of those servants returned and settled accounts with them..."

The task of the Stewardship Committee is to be in charge of the fiscal affairs of the Church so the Pastor and Elders can devote themselves to prayer and the ministry of the Word [Acts 6:2-4].

The Stewardship Committee should therefore, as they carry out their responsibilities listed below, cooperate with and be under the supervision of the Pastor and Elders:

- Care of the property of the Church and management of business affairs;
- Authorizing the Church Treasurer to pay bills of the Church;
- Supervising the raising of funds by the tithes and free-will offerings of the people;
- Making provision for adequate financial records;
- Signing contracts as authorized by the Church;
- Reporting to the membership regularly the actions taken by the Stewardship Committee.
- Serve as a Budget Committee and submit a budget to the Elders and membership at the beginning of each fiscal year.
- Hiring support staff as needed, in consultation with the Pastor and Elders.

The Stewardship Committee shall not borrow money in the name of the Church or pledge any of its real property without vote of the Church as herein provided.

The Stewardship Committee shall meet regularly, but no less frequently than quarterly. The Stewardship Committee shall periodically meet with the Board of Elders as appropriate.

ARTICLE IX

Meetings

Section 1: *Meeting of Public Worship*

Public services of worship shall be maintained on the Lord's Day and at such times and in such manner as may best accomplish the mission of the church. Such meetings shall be under the general supervision of the Pastor and Board of Elders.

Section 2: *Annual Meeting*

The fiscal year of the church shall be from January 1 – December 31. The annual meeting of the church shall be held no later than the last day of the month of January. Any items to be included on the agenda, other than official board or committee reports, must be submitted to the Board of Elders by a minimum of seven named members no later than December 1. Any item not included cannot be voted on at this meeting. All annual reports of officers, the Board of Elders, staff and specially appointed committees shall be presented at this meeting, and officers and elders for the next term elected and/or reaffirmed. Twenty-five per cent of the active roll of membership (but not less than 20 people) shall constitute a quorum, but a lesser number may adjourn to a given date.

Section 3: *Special Meetings*

Special meetings to act on financial or operational business matters of the church shall be called by the Pastor and Board of Elders, or a minimum of ten members of the Church. The call shall specify the object of the meeting. Meetings for discussion pertaining to purely spiritual matters may be called by the Pastor or Elders at the close of any public worship meetings of the church.

Section 4: *Notice of Annual or Special Meeting*

Notice of the Annual or special meetings of the church shall be called from the pulpit on two successive Sundays previous to the date set for such meetings.

ARTICLE IX

Section 5: *Voting*

All matters pertaining to the budget, the purchase, sale, or mortgaging of property, shall be voted only by Active members in good standing who are twenty one years of age or older. On all other matters, Active members seventeen years of age or older are entitled to vote. Any members removed from Active membership through mutual consent with the Elders, discipline, or absenting themselves from active church involvement for a period of six months, automatically forfeit their voting privileges.

Section 6: *Balloting*

In all elections a written ballot shall be used. All other voting shall be by show of hands.

Section 7: *Participation*

Unsolicited participation beyond silent, prayerful observation in annual or special meetings of the church shall be the privilege of Active members only. Upon the majority vote of the members present, any annual or special meeting of the Church may be declared a membership only meeting, thus excluding all inactive and non-members from the meeting.

ARTICLE X

AMENDMENTS

Any of these by-laws may be amended upon unanimous recommendation of the Board of Elders with a 75% vote of the Active Members at a duly called church meeting. Suggested amendments may be proposed to the Board of Elders in writing by any Active Member at any time. Notice of a proposed amendment must be announced from the pulpit for at least 4 weeks prior to the meeting at which the amendment will be considered.

ARTICLE XI

Calling of Pastoral Staff

When the need arises, the Board of Elders shall elect a Leadership Search Committee, representative of the Elders and the congregation. It shall be the responsibility of this Search Committee to secure a qualified candidate for the position required. The Committee must be unanimous in its choice. The Board of Elders, in consultation with the Stewardship Committee, shall work out the terms of a call to present to the candidate, and shall present both the candidate and the terms of the call before the congregation for their approval, by a 3/4 majority, at a duly called meeting of the church.

ARTICLE XII

New Missions and Ministries

Any new missions, ministries, or works that desire the support, oversight, and blessing of this church must submit a proposal in writing to the Board of Elders. If, after prayer and due consideration, the Elders agree that the ministry should have the support of the church, they will then consult with the Stewardship Committee regarding any financial arrangements or commitments. The congregation will then be informed of the recommendation, and their prayer and consideration solicited. Representatives of the ministry work will then be committed unto the Lord at a regular worship service.

ARTICLE XIII

Service in the Ministries, Committees, Projects and Work of CEC

John 13.14-17: "You call me 'Teacher' and 'Lord,' and rightly so, for that is what I am. Now that I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also should wash one another's feet. I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you. I tell you the truth, no servant is greater than his master, nor is a messenger greater than the one who sent him. Now that you know these things, you will be blessed if you do them.

Mark 10.45: For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.

All Christians, without exception, are called to be servants. Thus, CEC seeks to encourage and nurture a servant lifestyle in all believers associated with this church. Non-members who meet the criteria delineated in Article VI, Section 1, "a" and "b", are welcome to serve the Lord in our midst, in any capacity, with the prior approval of the Elders.

All Scripture references in this document are NIV [used with permission] unless otherwise noted.

All italicized Times New Romans pt.12 references in this document are NIV.

ARTICLE XIII