

CHURCH CONSTITUTION

FIRST CHRISTIAN CHURCH (DISCIPLES OF CHRIST)

ALLEN, TEXAS

ARTICLE I – NAME AND LOCATION

SECTION A: ADOPTION

We, the members of First Christian Church of Allen, Texas, an autonomous, self-governing Congregation of Christ followers affiliated with the denomination known as the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) and committed to the historic principles of the Stone-Campbell Restoration Movement hereby adopt this Constitution as revised October 2022, and according to the Articles of Incorporation dated September 14, 1964, and recorded by the Secretary of the State of Texas for the regulation of the affairs of the Corporation.

SECTION B: MISSION

The First Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) of Allen, Texas was founded on the belief that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the Living God (Matthew 16:13-19). We believe that God's ultimate truth is revealed to us in the Incarnation of Jesus Christ (Matthew 1:18-23; John 1:14). Moreover, it is in Jesus Christ that we celebrate God's gift of salvation today.

As a community of faith, we believe that we have been blessed to be a blessing. So now, it is our mission to share God's gift of salvation with others as we pray, "Lord send people to us, and send us to people." We will carry out this mission through the faithful witness of Christian example and the proclamation of the Good News that God is the God of Hope and Salvation, the message of truth taught and exemplified by Jesus Christ.

As a measure of our faithfulness to God and to the Great Commission of Jesus Christ (Matthew 28:18-20), we make a covenant to God and to one another to:

- Follow Jesus Christ and live as faithful witnesses of his gospel story.
- Teach the Word of God as found in Holy Scripture to the best of our understanding so that we might encourage and enrich the spiritual journey of others.
- Administer the sacraments of Baptism and the Lord's Supper to celebrate the ongoing experience of God's grace and the forgiveness of sins.
- Share the compassion of Jesus Christ with others as we respond to their physical, spiritual, and emotional needs.

- Pursue a meaningful relationship with God in our church family as we not only engage in worship and fellowship but also learn to be faithful stewards of our time, talents, and tithes.

ARTICLE II – MEMBERSHIP

SECTION A: ELIGIBILITY

Membership of First Christian Church shall consist of the following:

1. Those who are now presently members of the Congregation.
2. Those who unite with the Congregation by transfer of membership—reaffirming their faith and commitment to Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior.
3. Those who confess their faith through baptism and personal commitment to Jesus Christ.

SECTION B: PARTICIPATION AND TERMINATION

1. *Participating* members are those who demonstrate engagement and involvement in the life of the Congregation.
2. *Inactive* members are those who do not demonstrate engagement and involvement in the life of the Congregation for any consecutive twelve month period.
3. *Congregational voting privileges* shall be given to all *participating* members. Any *participating* member unable to attend a Congregational Meeting may vote by written proxy.
4. *Termination of membership* will occur because of death, transfer, or request of a member. Elders may terminate membership of an *inactive* member after three years of inactive status.

ARTICLE III – THE CHURCH BOARD

SECTION A: MEMBERSHIP

1. **Voting Members**
 - a. Elders
 - b. Deacons
 - c. Trustees
 - d. Officers (See Article IV)
 - e. Elders Emeritus (See Section B, 2)
2. **Ex-Officio Members (non-voting)**

- a. Ministerial Staff
- b. Team Leaders of Ministry Teams

SECTION B: QUALIFICATIONS

All Members of the Church Board should demonstrate a living faith as followers of Jesus Christ. As Members of the Church Board, individuals should exhibit a willing spirit and eager desire to serve in the following ways as members of First Christian Church:

1. **General**
 - a. Regular engagement, involvement, and participation in the services and activities of the Church.
 - b. Regular contributions to the financial support of the Church to the best of one's ability.
 - c. Conduct of one's life should be in such a manner deserving of the leadership responsibility.
 - d. Promote good will, ministry support, and Christian fellowship within the life of the Church family.

2. **Specific for Voting Members**
 - a. *Elders* – An active member of First Christian Church who has served at least one year as a Deacon.
 - b. *Deacons* – An active member of First Christian Church for at least six months.
 - c. *Trustees* – An active member of First Christian Church for at least one year who is not serving as an Elder, Deacon, or Church Officer.
 - d. *Officers* – An active member of First Christian Church (see Article IV, Section C).
 - e. *Elder Emeritus* – An Elder Emeritus is an individual who has exhibited a life of exemplary Christian service. Nominations for Elder Emeritus are made to the Elders, and then, if recommended, the nominations are forwarded to the Church Board for approval.

SECTION C: ELIGIBILITY OF VOTING CHURCH BOARD MEMBERS

1. A person may not be re-elected to a previously held position until they have been off the Board for one year.
2. Upon completion of a term as Elder, a person must be off the Church Board for one year.
3. Any individual filling an unexpired term on the Church Board for a period of eighteen months or less will be eligible as a nominee for a new three-year term.

SECTION D: NUMBER OF VOTING CHURCH BOARD MEMBERS

1. *Elders*: Up to six for the first fifty participating members, and one for each additional twenty-five participating members.
2. *Deacons*: Up to ten for the first fifty participating members, and up to five for each additional twenty-five participating members.
3. *Trustees*: Three

SECTION E: TERMS OF VOTING CHURCH BOARD MEMBERS

1. *Elders*: One third elected each year for a term of three years.
2. *Deacons*: One third elected each year for a term of three years.
3. *Trustees*: One elected each year for a term of three years.
4. *Officers*: One year, subject to re-election. Not to exceed two consecutive terms (See Article IV, Section B)
5. *Elder Emeritus*: Elder Emeritus is a permanent honorary distinction.

SECTION F: DUTIES OF VOTING CHURCH BOARD MEMBERS

1. **Elders**
 - a. Promote the growth and welfare of the Church by being active in church life and worship participation.
 - b. Provide spiritual oversight and ministry support to the members.
 - c. Be available to minister to families in times of sickness and bereavement.
2. **Deacons**
 - a. Work in partnership with the Elders in promoting the growth and welfare of the Church by being active in the business of church life.
 - b. Serve in various ways to facilitate worship services in an orderly fashion (e.g., preparing communion and serving as a greeter).
 - c. Be available to minister to families in times of sickness and bereavement.
3. **Trustees**
 - a. Oversee the legal obligations of the church, the safekeeping of all legal documents in the Church Office, and ensure all requirements for the Congregation's financial matters are responsibly met.

- b. Hold the church property on behalf of the congregation. In addition, they will assure that no property is sold or purchased without an approving vote of at least 75% of *participating* members at a Congregational Meeting called to consider the matter.
 - c. Will work with the Church Treasurer / Church Administrator to insure that all withholding deductions related to employees are paid in full and properly reported at the end of each year (e.g., FICA, Employment Insurance, Income Tax, and Pension contributions).
- 4. **Officers** (see Article IV, Section D)
 - 5. **Elders Emeritus** – Be a source of encouragement and inspiration in the life of the Congregation.

SECTION G: RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE CHURCH BOARD

- 1. **General:** Conduct all business affairs of the Church, subject to the overall authority of the Congregation.
- 2. **Specific:**
 - a. Attend Church Board meetings regularly.
 - b. Approve an annual Church Budget upon recommendation from the Stewardship Team, and then to recommend the Church Budget to the Congregation for approval (see Article VIII).
 - c. Approve unbudgeted expenditures and disposition of items submitted by the Stewardship Team (other than real property).
 - d. Present to the Congregation, upon recommendation of the Personnel Team, the calling of Ministerial Staff.
 - e. Approve the addition or elimination of other Staff Positions as recommended by the Personnel Team.
 - f. Delegate to various Ministry Teams those duties which are subject to review by the Church Board.
 - g. Remove any Member of the Church Board for just cause.

SECTION H: MEETINGS OF THE CHURCH BOARD

- 1. See Church By-Laws, Article I.

SECTION I: PROCEDURE FOR ANNUAL ELECTION OF VOTING MEMBERS OF THE CHURCH BOARD

- 1. A **Nominating Team** to serve one year will be composed of two Deacons whose terms do not expire at the end of the current year, and three Members of the Congregation who are not voting members of the Church Board. Members of the

Nominating Team shall be appointed by a majority vote of the Elders by the third week of September. The Chair of the Elders will announce the names of the Nominating Team to the Congregation by the last Sunday of September and the names of the Nominating Team Members shall be recorded in the minutes of the Church Board at its next meeting.

2. Members of the Congregation, including members of the Nominating Team, may submit nominees to the Nominating Team for Church Board Members no later than the last Sunday in October. The Nominating Team will then consider the nominations and list their preferences for each open position by eligible nominees and shall rank, in order of preference, the remaining nominees as alternates for the open positions.
3. The list of one nominee per open position will be provided, in writing, to the Elders at their November meeting for verification of the qualifications and eligibility of the nominees. The list of remaining alternates will be held by the Nominating Team.
4. At the **Annual Meeting of the Congregation** on the first Sunday of December, the Chair of the Church Board will present to the Congregation a written ballot listing the nominees for all open positions. Nominees will be approved for Church Board Positions by a two-thirds vote of the Congregation.
5. In the event any nominee does not receive the approval of a two-thirds vote of the Congregation, the Nominating Team will provide to the Chair of the Board the name of the first alternate for any position not filled. And then, a similar written ballot will be presented to the Congregation for vote on the following Sunday.
6. When necessary, the Nominating Team shall also make recommendations for the filling of any vacancies on the Church Board. If the unexpired term is for less than one year, the recommendations will be made to the Church Board and the vacancies may be filled by majority vote of the Church Board. If the unexpired term is for one year or more, the vacancy shall be filled by the Congregation in the manner prescribed for a regular election on such timetable as the Chair of the Board sets.

SECTION J: INSTALLATION

1. Installation of the new voting Members of the Church Board shall take place by the third Sunday of January of each new calendar year.

ARTICLE IV – OFFICERS OF THE CHURCH BOARD

SECTION A: POSITIONS

1. Chair
2. Vice-Chair
3. Secretary
4. Treasurer
5. Financial Secretary

SECTION B: TERMS

One year, subject to re-election. Not to exceed two consecutive terms.

SECTION C: QUALIFICATIONS

1. The Chair and Vice-Chair must have been an Elder or Deacon for at least one year, and be a current member of the Church Board.
2. The Secretary shall have been an active Member of the Congregation for at least six months.
3. The Treasurer and Financial Secretary shall have been an active Member of the Congregation for at least one year.
4. A Church Board Officer should have leadership skills and/or technical ability for the particular Office. They should also be willing to serve in the capacity to which they are elected.

SECTION D: DUTIES

1. **Chair**
 - a. Preside over meetings of the Church Board.
 - b. Preside over meetings of the Congregation.
 - c. Be available to serve as an ex-officio member of all Ministry Teams.
 - d. Oversee the appointment of special Ministry Teams when/if needed, along with Church Board approval.
 - e. Act as representative in cooperation with the Trustees to buy and sell Real Property at the direction of the Church Board and approval of the Congregation.

2. **Vice-Chair**
 - a. Assist the Chair
 - b. Assume the duties of the Chair when necessary.
 - c. Be available to serve as an ex-officio member of all Ministry Teams.
 - d. Work with the Chair in overseeing the appointment of any special Ministry Teams.

3. **Secretary**
 - a. Take minutes and record attendance of all meetings of the Church Board.
 - b. Take minutes of all meetings of the Congregation.

4. **Treasurer**
 - a. Work with the Church Administrator in overseeing the financial health and well-being of the Church.
 - b. Be available to count and record the Sunday Contribution along with another member of the Church Board.
 - c. Present Financial Reports at Church Board meetings.
 - d. Serve as a member of the Stewardship Team.
 - e. If necessary, be available to make bank deposits.

5. **Financial Secretary**
 - a. Work with the Church Administrator in keeping contribution records of all Church members.
 - b. Be available to count and record the Sunday Contribution along with another member of the Church Board.
 - c. Assist the Church Administrator in sending out annual “Giving Statements.”
 - d. Serve as a member of the Stewardship Team.
 - e. If necessary, be available to make bank deposits.

<i>ARTICLE V – MINISTERS</i>

SECTION A: DUTIES AND QUALIFICATIONS

1. Each Minister called to serve the Church is expected to perform the duties and fulfill the responsibilities of their particular ministry as spelled out in their “Memorandum of Understanding” (MOU).
2. Each Minister should be conversant with the Church Constitution and By-Laws in order to facilitate orderly procedures in the life and work of the Congregation.
3. Each Minister shall be an ex-officio member of all Ministry Teams.
4. The Senior Minister shall act as Administrator for all Staff Members.

SECTION B: SELECTION OF MINISTERS

1. In seeking to call a new Minister, the Congregation may network through the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) Denomination as well as any helpful resource and/or personal contact necessary in order to secure the services of a new Minister who is both ordained by God, and who is compatible with the values and beliefs of First Christian Church of Allen.
2. The *Personnel Team* for the current year shall serve as a *Search Team*. The *Search Team* shall be responsible for recommending any prospective Minister to the Church Board. The original *Search Team* shall serve until the vacant position is filled.
3. The Church Board shall accept recommendations from the *Search Team*. And then, any prospective candidate must be approved by at least a two-thirds majority vote during a meeting of the Church Board. If the candidate is approved by the Church Board, then the Church Board shall recommend the prospective Minister to the Congregation for approval.
4. The Congregation shall consider the recommendations of the Church Board during a Congregational Meeting. The recommendation of any prospective candidate for call must be approved by at least a two-thirds majority vote of *participating members* (Article II, Section B).

SECTION C: MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING

1. The *Search Team* shall meet with the Minister in order to compose a “Memorandum of Understanding.” The MOU should include the following items:
 - a. Duties, Responsibilities, and Expectations of the Minister
 - b. Financial Considerations along with other Benefits agreed upon to be provided by the Congregation:
 - 1) Compensation (Salary and Housing Allowance)
 - 2) Health Insurance
 - 3) Disability Insurance
 - 4) Retirement Contributions
 - 5) Paid Time Off (PTO)
 - 6) Continuing Education / Ministry Support (e.g., conferences, workshops)
 - 7) Vehicle / Travel Expenses
 - 8) Ministry Expense Provisions (books, ministry tools, etc.)
 - 9) Consideration for Moving / Relocation Expenses
2. Any additional items that surface in discussions between the Minister and the *Search Team* shall be presented to the Church Board. Any additional item must be approved by at least a two-thirds majority vote during a meeting of the Church

- Board.
3. The “Memorandum of Understanding” should be signed by the Chair of the *Personnel Team*, and the Minister.
 4. The original copy of the “Memorandum of Understanding” should be filed in the Church Office. A copy of the original shall be provided to the Minister.
 5. The “Memorandum of Understanding” should be reviewed on an annual basis.

SECTION D: TERM OF MINISTRY

1. The employment agreement is “at will” meaning that either party can terminate the work agreement at any time for any reason.
2. If either party wants to end / terminate the work agreement, then there should be ninety days written notice. For the Minister, the ninety days would involve ninety days of regular service. For the Congregation, the ninety days shall require ninety days of full compensation.
3. Termination Procedure:
 - a. The *Personnel Team* shall meet with the Minister.
 - b. If no resolution appears possible, then the *Personnel Team* shall refer its conclusions to the Church Board for action.
 - c. If a majority of Church Board Members vote for termination of the Minister, the Chair of the Board will then call for a Congregational Meeting.
 - d. The termination of the Minister must be approved by a majority vote of *participating members* (Article II, Section B).

ARTICLE VI – THE PERSONNEL TEAM

SECTION A: MEMBERSHIP

1. The *Personnel Team* shall be composed of the following persons:
 - a. Vice-Chair of the Church Board
 - b. Chair of the Elders
 - c. Chair of the Deacons
 - d. Two members at large from the Congregation (non-voting Board members)
2. The Vice-Chair of the Church Board, the Chair of the Elders, and the Chair of the Deacons shall appoint the two members at large.
3. The *Personnel Team* shall select its own Chair.

SECTION B: DUTIES

1. The *Personnel Team* shall act for the Congregation and Church Board in the selection of candidates for all Ministry or Staff positions.
2. The *Personnel Team* shall also act for the Congregation and Church Board in the dismissal of anyone from a Ministry or Staff position.
3. The *Personnel Team* shall compose a written job description, i.e., a “Memorandum of Understanding” for each Minister and Staff Employee. Signed copies of the work agreement should be provided to each employee and also filed in the Church Office.
4. The *Personnel Team* will be available to meet with a Minister or Staff Employee to advocate, to advise, or to counsel.
5. The *Personnel Team* shall complete an Annual Review with each employee. Among the primary concerns to be addressed in the Annual Review are matters related to Performance, as well as Compensation and Benefits. Signed copies of the Annual Review should be provided to each employee, and also filed in the Church Office.
6. The *Personnel Team* shall make recommendations to the *Stewardship Team* for any changes or adjustments in Compensation and Benefits for each Employee. The proposed changes or adjustments should be presented to the *Stewardship Team* by November 1st of each year.

ARTICLE VII – MEETINGS OF THE CONGREGATION

SECTION A: ANNUAL MEETING

The *Annual Meeting of the Congregation* shall be held on the first Sunday of December each year. The primary agenda should include the following two items:

1. To elect Church Board members. Church Board Members are approved by a two-thirds vote of the Members voting.
2. To approve a General Budget. Approval of the General Budget shall be by a majority vote of the Members voting.

SECTION B: CALLED MEETINGS

Special Congregational Meetings may be called as necessary.

SECTION C: NOTICE OF MEETINGS

Notice of all Congregational Meetings shall be communicated to the Congregation with at least two weeks notice. The purpose of the meeting shall be stated.

ARTICLE VIII – ADMINISTRATION OF CHURCH POLICY AND PROGRESS

SECTION A: CHURCH YEAR

1. The *Church Calendar Year* shall begin January 1st.
2. The *Church Fiscal Year* shall begin January 1st.

SECTION B: OFFICE HOLDERS

Members of the Congregation are encouraged to hold only one major office. No person should hold more than two major offices or duties of the Church. The major offices or duties are:

1. Chair of the Church Board.
2. Vice-Chair of the Church Board.
3. Secretary of the Church Board.
4. Treasurer of the Church Board.
5. Financial Secretary of the Church Board.
6. Chairs of Ministry Teams.

SECTION C: ORDER OF MEETINGS

All Business Meetings of the Congregation shall be governed by “Robert’s Rules of Order” (See By-Laws, Article I, B for the “order”).

SECTION D: MINISTRY TEAMS

The duties and responsibilities of the Ministry Teams shall be outlined in the By-Laws (Article II), in response to all Congregational needs as determined by the Church Board.

ARTICLE IX – AMENDMENT OF CONSTITUTION

1. A proposed Amendment shall be recommended to the Congregation after the Church Board approves the proposed Amendment by a two-thirds majority vote.

2. After approval by the Church Board, the proposed Amendment should be communicated to the Congregation for at least one month before scheduling a Congregational Meeting.
3. This Church Constitution may be amended by two-thirds majority vote of the Members during a Congregational Meeting.

<i>ARTICLE X – FISCAL RESPONSIBILITY</i>

1. All assets of the Congregation must be used to the performance of its stated “Mission” (Article I, Section B). No part of these assets may accrue to the benefit of any private person, or persons, in the event of the ending of this Congregation.
2. If, for a period of one year, there are not enough members to hold services and/or elect Church Board Members, then remaining representatives of the Congregation will consult with an Attorney, Accountant (regarding final State and Federal filings), and/or other Professional Advisors who have experience with Texas State Laws related to the dissolution of tax-exempt organizations.
3. The representatives of the Congregation will then draft a “Plan of Dissolution” describing how First Christian Church will address any remaining liabilities, and then, intends to distribute its remaining assets.
 - a. By Texas Law, the Church can only distribute money and property after all debts have been paid.
 - b. By Texas Law, the Church, as a dissolving 501(c)(3) organization, must distribute its remaining assets for tax-exempt purposes. In practice, this means distributing all assets to one or more other 501(c)(3) organizations.
 - c. By Texas Law, no individual may appoint themselves as a Custodian over any existing funds or assets.
4. All remaining assets shall be distributed to one or more 501(c)(3) organizations that reflect the values and beliefs of First Christian Church. In distributing assets, priority shall be given to starting a new church that not only reflects the values and beliefs of First Christian Church but will continue the life and legacy of First Christian Church of Allen.

ARTICLE XI – MANDATORY REVIEW OF CHURCH CONSTITUTION AND BY-LAWS

1. Beginning in 2020, and for each succeeding ten-year period, a Church Constitution & By-Laws Review Ministry Team will examine the Church Governing Documents for updates, changes, or additions.
2. This Ministry Team will be composed of the following persons: Chair of the Board, Vice-Chair of the Board, Chair of the Elders, Chair of the Deacons, and two members at large from the Congregation.
3. The Senior Minister and any other Ministry Staff are expected to advise and provide counsel to this Ministry Team for the review process.