

# BOOK OF FAITH AND ORDER

REVISED APRIL 9, 2019



# MISSION STATEMENT



"CornerstonePiqua exists to proclaim the excellences of Jesus Christ through gospel-centered preaching, Christ-exalting worship, Christ-forming discipleship, and Christlike service in Piqua Ohio, Miami County, and the world until Christ is all and in all."

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>BYLAWS</b>	<b>5</b>
NAME .....	5
MISSION STATEMENT .....	5
OFFICES .....	5
NONPROFIT STATUS .....	5
PURPOSES .....	5
POWERS AND RESTRICTIONS .....	5
AFFILIATIONS .....	6
MEETINGS .....	6
GOVERNMENT .....	7
VALUES .....	7
<b>ARTICLE I: TRUTHS WE CONFESS TO</b>	<b>8</b>
1.1 The Bible .....	8
1.2 God .....	8
1.3 Jesus Christ .....	8
1.4 Holy Spirit .....	8
1.5 Man .....	8
1.6 Salvation .....	8
1.7 The Church .....	8
<b>ARTICLE II: TEACHINGS WE COMMIT TO</b>	<b>9</b>
2.1 The Inerrancy of the Bible .....	9
2.2 The Authority of the Bible .....	9
2.3 The Sufficiency of the Bible .....	9
2.4 The Sufficiency of God .....	9
2.5 The Sovereignty of God .....	9
2.6 God's Glory As the End of All Things .....	9
2.7 The Fall of Man .....	10
2.8 The Eternal Decree of God .....	10
2.9 Christ, the Mediator .....	10
2.10 Effectual Calling .....	10
2.11 Justification .....	10
2.12 Sanctification .....	11

2.13 Perseverance of the Saints .....	11
2.14 Assurance of Salvation .....	11
2.15 Good Works.....	11
2.16 Empowered by the Holy Spirit .....	11
2.17 Continuation of the Gifts of the Spirit.....	12
2.18 Marriage and Sexuality.....	12
2.19 Gender Complementarity.....	12
2.20 The Local Church .....	12
2.22 The Ordinances of the Church .....	12
2.23 The State of the Dead.....	13
2.24 The Return of Christ .....	13
2.25 The Last Judgment .....	13

**ARTICLE III: PURPOSES WE CARRY OUT**

**14**

3.1 The Head of the Church .....	14
3.2 Elders .....	14
3.3 Responsibilities of Elders .....	14
3.4 Unity of the Elders.....	14
3.5 Elders’ Sabbatical.....	15
3.6 Elders’ Dismissal.....	15
3.7 Deacons.....	15
3.8 Membership.....	15
3.9 Responsibility of the Members.....	15
3.10 Church Discipline.....	16
3.11 Termination of Membership .....	16
3.12 Voting Responsibilities of Members.....	16
3.13 Missions.....	16
3.14 Church Planting.....	17
3.15 Justice.....	17
3.16 Ministry Partnerships & Networks .....	17

## **BYLAWS**

### **NAME**

The name of this corporation is Cornerstone Piqua. This corporation will be further referenced in these Bylaws as "CornerstonePiqua" and the "Church".

### **MISSION STATEMENT**

CornerstonePiqua exists to proclaim the excellencies of Jesus Christ through gospel-centered preaching, Christ-exalting worship, Christ-forming discipleship, and Christlike service in Piqua Ohio, Miami County, and the world until Christ is all and in all.

### **OFFICES**

The office for business transactions of CornerstonePiqua is located at 8440 N King Arthur Dr in Piqua Ohio, 45356. The office is located in Miami County.

### **NONPROFIT STATUS**

CornerstonePiqua is a nonprofit organization under the laws of the state of Ohio. Federal tax exemption is granted under Internal Revenue Code 501(c)(3).

### **PURPOSES**

The Church is organized and shall be operated exclusively for religious, charitable and educational purposes within the meaning of Section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code of 1986, as amended. Notwithstanding the foregoing, the Church's purposes also include the limited participation of the Church in any other activities, including taxable activities, but only to the extent the activities would be permitted by a tax-exempt organization. More particularly, but without limitation, the purposes of this Church are:

- (a) to promote the Christian religion by any appropriate form of expression, within any available medium, and in any location, through the Church's combined or separate formation, of a church, ministry, school, or charitable institution, without limitation;
- (b) to ordain, employ and discharge ordained ministers of the gospel, and others, to conduct and carry on divine services at the place of worship of the Church, and elsewhere;
- (c) to collect and disburse any and all necessary funds for the maintenance of said Church and the accomplishment of its purpose within the State of Ohio and elsewhere;
- (d) to make distributions to organizations that qualify as exempt organizations under Section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 as amended; and
- (e) to promote, encourage, and foster any other similar religious, charitable and educational activities; to accept, hold, invest, reinvest and administer any gifts, legacies, bequests, devises, funds and property of any sort or nature, and to use, expend, or donate the income or principal thereof for, and to devote the same to, the foregoing purposes of the Church; and to do any and all lawful acts and things which may be necessary, useful, suitable, or proper for the furtherance of accomplishment of the purposes of this Church; provided, however, no act may be performed which would violate Section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code of 1986, as it now exists or as it may hereafter be amended.

### **POWERS AND RESTRICTIONS**

Except as otherwise provided in these Bylaws and in order to carry out the above-stated purposes, the Church shall have all those powers set forth in the Code, as it now exists or as it may hereafter be amended. Moreover, the Church shall have all implied powers necessary and proper to carry out its express powers. The powers of the Church to promote the purposes set out above are limited and restricted in the following manner:

The Church shall not pay dividends and no part of the net earnings of the Church shall inure to the benefit of or be distributable to its organizers, officers or other private persons, except that the Church shall be authorized and empowered to make payments and distributions (including reasonable compensation for services rendered to or for the Church) in furtherance of its purposes as set forth in these Bylaws. No substantial part of the activities of the Church shall be the carrying on of propaganda, or otherwise attempting to influence legislation, and the Church shall not participate in, or intervene in (including the publication or distribution of statements) any political campaign on behalf of any candidate for public office. Notwithstanding any other provisions of the Initial Articles of Incorporation or these Bylaws, the Church shall not carry on any other activities not permitted to be carried on by (i) a corporation exempt from Federal Income Tax under Section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code of 1986, as amended, or corresponding provisions of any subsequent federal tax laws, or (ii) a corporation, contributions to which are deductible under Section 170(c)(2) of the Internal Revenue Code of 1986, as amended, or corresponding provisions of any subsequent federal tax laws.

In the event this Church is in any one year a "private foundation" as defined by Section 509(a) of the Internal Revenue Code of 1986, as amended, or corresponding provisions of any subsequent federal tax laws, it shall be required to distribute its income for such taxable year at such time and in such manner as not to subject the foundation to taxation under Section 4942 of the Internal Revenue Code of 1986, as amended, or corresponding provisions of any subsequent federal tax laws; and further shall be prohibited from: (a) any act of "self dealing" as defined in Section 4941(d) of the Internal Revenue Code of 1986, as amended, or corresponding provisions of any subsequent federal tax laws; (b) retaining any "excess business holdings" as defined by Section 4943(c) of the Internal Revenue Code of 1986, as amended, or corresponding provisions of any subsequent federal tax laws;

(c) making any investments in such manner as to subject the foundation to taxation under Section 4944 of the Internal Revenue Code of 1986, as amended, or corresponding provisions of any subsequent federal tax laws; or (d) making taxable expenditures as defined in Section 4945(d) of the Internal Revenue Code of 1986, as amended, or corresponding provisions of any subsequent federal tax laws.

The Church shall not accept any gift or grant if the gift or grant contains major conditions which would restrict or violate any of the Church's religious, charitable, or educational purposes or if the gift or grant would require serving a private as opposed to a public interest.

## **AFFILIATIONS**

The Church is autonomous and maintains the right to govern its own affairs, independent of denominational control. Recognizing, however, the benefits of cooperation with other churches in the fulfillment of its purposes, the Church may voluntarily affiliate with other churches and conventions by a passing vote of the Elders.

## **MEETINGS**

### **A. Public Worship**

Meetings for public worship shall be held at such times and places as shall be provided under the direction of the Elders. The Elders have the authority to call business meetings and special meetings as needed.

### **B. Membership Gatherings**

The Elders shall call a gathering of the members no less than 2 times per year for reception of new members, release of former members, matters of mutual encouragement, decision making, church discipline, and any other reason deemed important by the Elders. Attendance at these gatherings is encouraged.

Unless extenuating circumstances prevent it, members shall be notified no less than two weeks prior to a gathering.

## **GOVERNMENT**

A plurality of elders shall govern this church. A fuller description of this church governance is outlined in articles 3.2-3.6 of this document.

## **VALUES**

The values of this organization are essential for its mission. These values create the necessary context required to promote effective decision making. Thus, whenever the leadership constructs long range goals, short term objectives, and implementation strategies, it must do so in a manner consistent with these values. The values are listed below:

### **A. Biblical Authority**

CornerstonePiqua commits itself to conforming to the full authority of the Scriptures which alone are sufficient for life and godliness. It seeks to submit itself to the proclamation of the whole counsel of God, to the regular exposition of biblical passages, and to the truths it proclaims.

### **B. Genuine Worship**

CornerstonePiqua commits itself to exalting the matchless reputation of God through worship that is in accordance with biblical teaching. The essential elements of this worship are the reading of Scripture, preaching and teaching the Bible, reverent observance of the ordinances, participation in common prayer, and singing to God's glory.

### **C. Ethical Integrity**

CornerstonePiqua commits itself to developing a ministry characterized by ethical integrity as evidenced through honest

communication, mutual accountability, and responsible stewardship. Its membership desires genuine relationships that characterize all of its life.

### **D. Evangelistic Fervor**

CornerstonePiqua commits itself to fulfilling the "Great Commission" by equipping its members for personal evangelism, supporting and praying for missions at home and abroad, and praying for spiritual revival.

### **E. Ministry Training**

CornerstonePiqua commits itself to equipping its members for the work of Christian ministry through education in the Scriptures. This training is intended to enable members to serve and edify fellow believers through the employment of their spiritual gifts in discipling relationships.

### **F. Community Atmosphere**

CornerstonePiqua commits itself to develop a community atmosphere characterized by mutual love and prayer for one another. The members encourage one another to bear each other's burdens, to serve and strengthen individuals and family units by demonstrating Christ's love through hospitality to all.

### **F. Cultural Engagement**

CornerstonePiqua commits itself to shaping its members to a counter-cultural society formed by God's Word and Spirit for the common good. We seek to sacrificially serve our neighbors and enemies, working for the physical and spiritual good of those outside our church. We work for our neighbor's peace, security, and well-being, loving them in word and deed.

# STATEMENT OF FAITH

The statement of faith for CornerstonePiqua is divided into three articles: (1) truths we confess to; (2) teachings we commit to; and (3) purposes we carry out. Truths we Confess is the gospel explained. Teachings we Commit is the gospel expounded. And, Purposes We Carry-Out is the gospel applied.

## ARTICLE I: TRUTHS WE CONFESS TO

The truths we confess are considered our theological foundation. They are, we believe, the essence of the gospel and therefore minimum requirements for Christian orthodoxy. While members are not required to fully articulate these truths, agreement with each is required for membership. Disagreement on these truths is grounds for church discipline and removal from church membership.

### 1.1 The Bible

We believe the Scripture is God's Word. We believe it is verbally inspired, inerrant, infallible, totally sufficient and trustworthy, and the sole authority for the church. (2Timothy 3:16; 2Peter 1:21; 1Thessalonians 2:13; Hebrews 6:18; Titus 1:2)

### 1.2 God

We believe in one God, eternally existing in three equally divine Persons: the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, who know, love, and glorify one another. (Deuteronomy 4:35, 39; 6:4; Ephesians 4:6; John 1:1, 3; 1Corinthians 8:6; 2Corinthians 3:17)

### 1.3 Jesus Christ

We believe the Lord Jesus Christ is fully God and fully man. We believe he was conceived by the Holy Spirit and born of the Virgin Mary. He is the second member of the Godhead, equal with the Father in essence and subordinate to Him in purpose. He lived

without sin and is altogether pleasing to the Father. He voluntarily fulfilled God's redemptive plan, being crucified, buried, and raised on the third day, and ascended into Heaven where He sits at the right hand of the Father as the everlasting Lord of Glory. He will come back again to judge mankind. (John 1:1,14; 10:30; Luke 1:35; Isaiah 7:14; Colossians 2:9; Hebrews 1:3; 4:15; 1Peter 2:22; 1John 3:5)

### 1.4 Holy Spirit

We believe the Holy Spirit is the third person of the Godhead. He is referred to as the Spirit of God, the Spirit of Christ, and the Spirit of the Lord. The Holy Spirit convicts of sin and convinces of the gospel of Christ. He regenerates believers, sanctifies them, imparts spiritual gifts to them, provides assurance of salvation, and intercedes in prayer for them. (Acts 1:8; 2Thessalonians 2:13; 1Peter 1:2; 1Corinthians 12:4, 11; 1John 3:24; Ephesians 1:13-14; Romans 8:27)

### 1.5 Man

We believe man was created in the image of God, but through Adam's sin, have inherited a sinful nature and have been alienated from God. (Genesis 1:27; Romans 5:12; Ephesians 2:3; Colossians 1:21)

### 1.6 Salvation

We believe salvation is the gift of God brought to man, received by personal faith in the substitutional atonement of Jesus Christ on the cross. (Ephesians 2:8; 2Corinthians 9:15; Romans 8:32; 2Corinthians 5:21; 1Peter 2:24)

### 1.7 The Church

We believe the church is the body of Christ, consisting of born again believers living in community together for the glory of Jesus Christ. (Romans 12:5; Colossians 1:18; Ephesians 1:3-11, 22-23; 4:12)

## **ARTICLE II: TEACHINGS WE COMMIT TO**

The following expands our position on our theological foundations. We believe them to be important and edifying to the body of Christ, but recognize differing convictions. For those called to teach and preach in our church, we require full agreement on these matters.

### **2.1 The Inerrancy of the Bible**

The Bible, consisting of the sixty-six books of the Old and New Testament, is the verbally inspired Word of God. It is without error in the original manuscripts. (2 Timothy 3:16; 2 Peter 1:21; 2 Peter 3:16; 1 Corinthians 14:37; 1 Corinthians 2:13; John 14:26; Proverbs 30:5; Numbers 23:19; Psalm 12:6; Hebrews 6:18; Matthew 24:35; John 17:17; Romans 1:18-32)

### **2.2 The Authority of the Bible**

Scripture is self-authenticating. Its authority does not depend on the testimony of human beings or of any church, but entirely on God Himself. God's intentions, revealed in the Bible, are the supreme and final authority in testing all claims about what is true and what is right. In matters not addressed by the Bible, what is true and right is assessed by criteria consistent with the teachings of Scripture. (1Thessalonians 2:13; 1John 5:9-12; 2Peter 2:20-21)

### **2.3 The Sufficiency of the Bible**

Through Creation and man's conscience God has revealed His power and divine nature to all, such that no man is without excuse. Yet, these general forms of revelation are not sufficient to convey the knowledge of God and his will that is necessary for salvation. Because of His mercy and grace, God has revealed Himself and His will and all that is necessary for salvation in the sixty-six books of the Bible. The special revelation of God appears in its entirety in the Scripture, which contains all things necessary for God's glory, the salvation of sinners, and the prescriptions for life and

godliness. These matters are either expressly declared in Scripture or may be deduced from Scripture. Nothing may be added, whether by new revelations or by traditions of men. (2Timothy 3:12-17; Galatians 1:6-9; 1Corinthians 2:6-16; Revelation 22:18-21)

### **2.4 The Sufficiency of God**

God is self-sufficient and therefore does not need anything from His creatures. He does not derive glory from them, but is infinitely glorious of His own accord. God is the source of all being, all good, the origin, and end of all things. (Job 22:2-3; Psalm 95:1-7; 119:65-68; 145:17-20; Isaiah 40:10-31; Daniel 4:34-35; Acts 7:2-50; Romans 11:33-36; Colossians 1:17; Hebrews 4:12-13; ; James 1:17; Revelation 5:11-14)

### **2.5 The Sovereignty of God**

God is sovereign over all things and there is nothing outside His control. In order to display the full extent of His glory, He freely and unalterably decreed from eternity all that should happen, according to His own wise and holy will. God upholds and governs all things, from the movement of galaxies to sub-atomic particles, even the hearts and wills of man. He does so in such a way that does not violate the wills of His creatures, nor make Him the author of evil. He is not jointly responsible with humans for sin, and thus condemns all justly. (Numbers 23:19; Isaiah 46:9-10; Job 9:7; Proverbs 16:9, 33; 20:24; John 19:8-11; Acts 4:27-28; 27:1-44; Romans 9:14-29; Ephesians 1:3-14; Hebrews 6:16-17; James 1:13-15; Revelation 17:16-17)

### **2.6 God's Glory As the End of All Things**

All that God does He does for Himself and for His glory. God is supremely joyful in the fellowship of the Trinity, each Person beholding and expressing His eternal and unsurpassed delight in the all-satisfying perfections of the triune God. The purpose of the

church is to live for and to declare the glory of God in all things. (Proverbs 8:27-30 ; 1 Timothy 1:11; Matthew 12:18 ; 25:23; John 15:11; John 17:26; 1Corinthians 10:31; Colossians 3:17; 1Peter 4:11; Colossians 1:16)

## **2.7 The Fall of Man**

Although God created humans morally upright, our first parents lost their righteousness and forfeited their standing with God when they sinned against Him. Since Adam represented all mankind, his sin brought the imputation of guilt upon all of his offspring, and consequently his offspring are born in sin and corrupted in all faculties of his whole being. Humans are slaves to iniquity, unable to delight in God, and unable to overcome their own preference for self-rule. (Genesis 2:15-17; 3:1-24; 6:5-7; Psalm 14:1-3; Jeremiah 17:9-10; Romans 3:9-20; 5:12-21; 8:7-8; 1Corinthians 2:14; Titus 1:15-16)

## **2.8 The Eternal Decree of God**

By His decree, and for the demonstration of His glorious grace, God has predestined human beings to eternal life through Jesus Christ. His election to salvation is out of His good pleasure, an unconditional act of free grace, given through His Son Jesus Christ before the world began. Others, whom He has left to perish in their sins, show the terrors of His justice. (Matthew 25:34; Romans 9:22-24; 11:5-8; Ephesians 1:3-14; 2Thessalonians 2:13-15; 1Timothy 5:21; 2 Timothy 1:9; Jude 3-4)

## **2.9 Christ, the Mediator**

In the fullness of time, God sent forth His eternal Son, Jesus Christ, commissioned to be the mediator between God and man. He came as prophet, priest, and king to redeem those whom the Father gave Him before time began. By His perfect obedience and fulfillment of God's law, Jesus Christ demonstrated that He was qualified to save sinners by His sacrifice on the cross. He endured the punishment due for the sins of His people. Though without sin,

He endured the common infirmities and temptations of human life. (Psalm 2:1-12; Isaiah 42:1-4; 52:13-53:12; Luke 1:26-33; John 17:6-12; Acts 3:22-23; 17:29-31; Romans 8:28-30; Ephesians 1:15-23; Hebrews 1:1-4; 1 Peter 1:17-20; Hebrews 4:15)

## **2.10 Effectual Calling**

God convinces His elect of their spiritual misery and lost condition and persuades them to embrace Christ. Until sinners receive spiritual life they are dead in trespasses and sins, hostile to God, morally unable to submit to God, and incapable of discerning the truth of the Scripture. The power to respond to God's call comes from God alone and is not from anything foreseen in man, nor from any power or agency in the creature. For the elect, the Spirit overcomes man's resistance to the gospel, awakens the dead, frees them from their bondage to sin, removes blindness, and manifests Christ in such a compelling way that He is irresistibly beautiful. Through this work of regeneration, the Spirit enables men to choose God, repent of sin, and perform what is truly good and pleasing to God. (Ezekiel 36:26-27; Acts 26:15-18; John 5:25; Romans 8:30; Ephesians 1:15-23; 2:1-10; 2 Thessalonians 2:13-15; 2Timothy 1:9; 1 Peter 2:9-10)

## **2.11 Justification**

In a free act of glorious grace, God justifies the elect by faith alone, apart from any merit in them. God imputes Christ's own righteousness to them, declaring them righteous and acceptable in his presence. The basis for this declaration is the merits of Christ alone. Through the instrument of God-wrought faith, believers are united to Christ, whose satisfaction for sin and righteousness is the grounds for acceptance with God. (Titus 3:5-7; Romans 3:23-28; 4:4-5; 5:1; Ephesians 1:19-20; 2:5,8; Galatians 2:16; 3:24; Philippians 3:8-9; 2 Corinthians 5:21)

## 2.12 Sanctification

God enables the elect to progressively die to sin and live to righteousness. In the lives of the saints, the Holy Spirit produces love of Christ that leads to sanctification. Believers will continue in a progressive growth toward holiness that will not be completed until eternity. Faith that does not yield the fruits of good works is not true faith. While justification is an act of God by imputation, sanctification is an act of God by impartation. Thus, through faith, God's divine power enables a transformation of a soul's deepest desires, taking on the likeness of Christ, creating a hatred of sin, and a desire for God-honoring holiness. (John 17:3-19; Acts 20:32; Romans 6:5-14; Galatians 5:22-24; Ephesians 3:14-19; Colossians 1:9-14; 1 Thessalonians 5:23-24; Hebrews 12:14)

## 2.13 Perseverance of the Saints

All who are justified will persevere in faith and never surrender to the enemy of their souls. This is the immutable decree of God the Father in election, obtained by the blood of Christ and secured by His resurrection, and guaranteed by God's Holy Spirit. Divine providence watches over their welfare and the power of God keeps them through faith unto salvation. The assurance of salvation empowers, encourages, and inspires vigilance against the forces arrayed against it. When Christians sin, they incur God's displeasure, grieve his Holy Spirit, diminish their comforts, experience accusations of conscience, and impair their witness. Yet, because they are saints, they will renew their repentance and through faith persevere in Christ to the end of their lives. (Psalm 37:23-29; John 8:31-32; 10:25-30; Hebrews 3:14; 1 John 2:18-19; Romans 5:9-11; 8:28-30; 9:10-16; Hebrews 6:13-20; 1 John 3:9-10; John 10:27-30; Philippians 1:6; 1 Thessalonians 5:23-24; 1 Corinthians 15:10; 1 John 1:5-10; Ephesians 4:29-32)

## 2.14 Assurance of Salvation

Those who are truly believers in Jesus Christ, who love Him sincerely, endeavoring to treasure Him above all, may have

assurance of His salvation in this life. This certainty is not based upon a subjective impression, but upon the promises of God's grace in Christ and the evidences of that grace in their life. It is the duty of all who claim saving faith to be diligent in making their calling and election sure by attending to God's various means of grace and by consistently examining themselves in the light of God's truth revealed in His word. This will lead God's elect to an increase of love of God, thankfulness for His mercy, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit. (Romans 5:1-5; 6:1-2; 8:15-17; 14:16-18; Hebrews 6:11-20; Titus 2:11-14; 2 Peter 1:3-11; 1 John 3:1-3)

## 2.15 Good Works

The desire and ability to do good works does not arise from human nature but from impartation of saving grace. Good works are the fruits and evidences of genuine, living faith. By means of such works believers demonstrate their gratitude, strengthen their assurance of salvation, and improve their Christian witness. They glorify God, who has made them new creatures in Christ. Although the works of believers are never perfect, God accepts them and rewards them because they are performed in faith and express love for him. (Psalm 116:12-14; Matthew 5:13-16; John 15:1-8; Ephesians 2:8-10; Philippians 2:12-13; Hebrews 6:11-12; James 2:14-26; Matthew 25:14-30; 25:31-46)

## 2.16 Empowered by the Holy Spirit

Believers are filled with the Holy Spirit at the moment of conversion. (Baptism in the Spirit is a metaphor that describes our experience of being immersed into the Holy Spirit at conversion.) Subsequent to conversion, God may be pleased to move upon His people empowering them for joyful and fruitful service of the gospel, power to overcome sin, and boldness for Christian witness. The evidence of the Spirit's indwelling presence is a believer's testimony to God's glory in word and deed. (Matthew 3:11; Mark 1:8; Luke 3:16; John 1:33; Acts 1:5; 2:1-11; 10:44-48; 19:1-7; 1 Corinthians 12:12-13; Ephesians 1:13; 5:18-21)

## **2.17 Continuation of the Gifts of the Spirit**

The ministry of the Spirit in signs and wonders continues to be as broad, tangible, and powerful among believers today as it was in the early church. All the biblical gifts of the Spirit continue to be distributed by the Spirit today. These gifts are divine provisions central to spiritual growth and effective ministry. These gifts are to be eagerly desired, faithfully developed, and lovingly exercised according to biblical guidelines and for the mutual upbuilding of the church. (John 14:12; Acts 2:14-21; 4:29-30; Romans 12:3-8; 1 Corinthians 12:7-11; 12:28-31; 14:1-33; Galatians 3:1-5).

## **2.18 Marriage and Sexuality**

Marriage involves the covenant union of one man and one woman in permanent sacred fidelity. Sexual intimacy is only properly exercised and pursued within the confines of marital relationship. Sexual immorality, defined as any sexual activity outside of the boundaries of the sacred marital relationship between one man and one woman, is clearly and expressly prohibited by the Lord. All forms of sexual immorality, including adultery, fornication, homosexual behavior, bisexual conduct, bestiality, incest, pornography or even lustful intent toward such, is sinful. Since the body is a creation of God, gender is biologically determined and associated gender norms are to be observed appropriate to biblical standards. (Genesis 2:24; Matthew 15:19; 19:1-9; Mark 10:1-12; 1 Corinthians 6:9-11; 1 Thessalonians 4:3; Hebrews 13:4)

## **2.19 Gender Complementarity**

Men and women are created by God equal in essence, dignity, and value. Men and women serve complimentary roles and responsibilities in the home and in the church. God ordains that they assume distinctive roles which reflect the loving relationship between Christ and the church, the husband exercising headship in a way that displays the caring, sacrificial love of Christ, and the wife submitting to her husband in a way that models the love of the church for her Lord. In the ministry of the church, both men

and women are encouraged to serve in the ministry of the people of God. The distinctive role of church leadership is given to qualified men. (Genesis 1:27-30; Ephesians 5:22-33; 1 Timothy 2:11-12; 3:1-13; Titus 1:5-9; 1 Peter 3:1-7)

## **2.20 The Local Church**

The universal church of Jesus Christ, consisting of all believers everywhere, finds its expression in the local church. The local church is a unified community of Christians who organize under godly leadership, gather regularly for preaching, worship and prayer, observe the biblical ordinances of baptism and communion, and hold one another accountable to obedience to the faith through church discipline. Members of the local church are empowered by the Holy Spirit to fulfill the Great Commission. All believers in Christ have a solemn obligation to join a local church that proclaims biblical Christianity and to support its ministry and submit to its authority. They are duty-bound to pray for the prosperity of the ministry of all faithful churches and to assist other believers by the exercise of their spiritual gifts, whatever those gifts may be. (Matthew 28:19; John 17:6-25; Romans 12:6-8; 1 Corinthians 5:7-13; 11:23-26; 12:4-7; 14:26; Galatians 6:1; Ephesians 4:11-12; 6:18; 2 Timothy 4:1-2; Ephesians 5:18-20; Colossians 3:15-16; 2 Thessalonians 3:14-15; James 5:19-20)

## **2.22 The Ordinances of the Church**

The Lord gave two perpetual ordinances to His church: baptism and communion. The ordinances are outward, visible signs of an inner, spiritual grace.

Baptism is the church's act of affirming a believer's union with Christ by immersing them in water, and a believer's public act of committing themselves to Christ and His people, thereby marking them off from the world. Faith in Jesus Christ and repentance for sin are prerequisites for Baptism. It signifies

believers' fellowship with Christ in his death and resurrection and their being grafted into Christ; it portrays to them the remission of their sins because of Christ's sacrifice on their behalf. Believers are to be immersed in water in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

Communion, or the Lord's Supper, is a church's act of communing with Christ and each other, commemorating Christ's death by partaking in bread and wine, and a believers act of receiving Christ's benefits and renewing his commitment to Christ and His people, thereby making the church one body and marking it off from the world. All who desire to receive the Lord's Supper must examine themselves, so that they express proper reverence for the Lord and his sacrament, lest they sin against his body and blood and bring judgment upon themselves. The Supper is the gift of Christ for his own people, so unbelievers, and Christians who live with the knowledge of unconfessed sin must refrain from participating. (Matthew 26:17-30; 28:18-20; 3:16-17; Acts 2:14-41; 8:12-40; 16:25-40; 18:7-8; Romans 6:1-4; 2Corinthians 10:14-17; 11:17-34)

### **2.23 The State of the Dead**

After physical death human bodies return to dust, but spirits return to God who gave them. The souls of the redeemed are perfected in holiness and received into paradise, where they dwell with Christ and await the resurrection of their bodies. The souls of lost sinners are confined to hell, where they endure just punishment while they await final judgment at the return of Christ to earth. (Genesis 3:17-19; Ecclesiastes 12:1-8; Luke 16:19-31; 23:32-43; 2Corinthians 5:1-8; Philippians 1:21-26; Hebrews 12:22-24; Jude 3-7)

### **2.24 The Return of Christ**

Jesus Christ will return to earth in the same manner He ascended into Heaven. At His return, Christians on earth will not die but will

be changed into the likeness of their Savior. The dead in Christ will arise bodily from their graves to receive a blessed immortality, as their souls reunite with their bodies to enjoy full salvation with Christ for eternity. God has kept the time of Christ's return secret, and his Word forbids speculation about it. Believers are to watch and ever be prepared to meet their returning Savior, no matter how soon or how distant his advent will be. (Job 19:25-27; Isaiah 26:19; Daniel 12:1-4; Mark 13:32-37; Luke 12:35-40; Acts 1:11; 1Corinthians 15:35-56; 1Thessalonians 4:13-18; 2Timothy 4:1-8; Revelation 22:12-21.)

### **2.25 The Last Judgment**

God has appointed a day in which he will judge humanity in righteousness by Jesus Christ, to whom the Father has given all authority to judge. At that time apostate angels and all human beings who have lived upon the earth will appear before the Lord to account for their thoughts, words, and deeds, there to receive his awards in accordance with what they have done while on earth, whether good or evil. God's purpose in judgment is to display the glory of his mercy in the eternal salvation of his elect, and to show the glory of his justice in the damnation of the lost. In that day the saved, justified through faith alone in Christ alone, will inherit everlasting life and blessed immortality to enjoy in the presence of their Lord. Those who do not know God and have not obeyed the gospel of Christ will suffer exclusion from the divine mercy forever and will receive the punishment due to their sins. (Ecclesiastes 12:13-14; Matthew 12:36-37; 25:31-46; John 5:19-30; Acts 17:29-31; Romans 9:19-26; 14:9-12; 2Corinthians 5:6-10; 2Thessalonians 1:5-10; Jude 3-7; Revelation 22:12-21)

## ARTICLE III: PURPOSES WE CARRY OUT

The purposes we carry out are the theological principles set forth in Articles I & II applied through the membership and leadership of the church. Article III guides the careful application of our convictions into the ministry of the gospel through our membership. They are our methodological convictions. We require full adherence to these methodologies for ministry partnership.

### 3.1 The Head of the Church

Christ alone is the Head of his body, the church. As the Chief Shepherd, He leads through qualified undershepherds, elders. This local assembly may seek the assistance and counsel of other churches when special concerns arise; however, it is neither accountable to nor under the direct supervision of, any other ecclesiastical body. (Ephesians 1:22-23; Colossians 1:18; II Timothy 3:12-17; 1Peter 5:1-4; II Peter 1:19-21; Acts 15:1-35)

### 3.2 Elders

A plurality of elders shall lead this local church. Elders (*known in Scripture as pastors, shepherds, overseers*) shall at all times and in all activities stand under the authority of Christ and His Word. They shall exercise authoritative and decisive leadership, but they must do so as servant-leaders and faithful stewards of the community, not as lords and dictators. It is the responsibility of the whole church to recognize qualified men in whom Christ has imparted the necessary gifts of leading His church. Elders are appointed by elders and affirmed by the congregation.

While this church recognizes the need for vocational and bi-vocational elders, each elder has equal governing authority. The responsibilities of this office are numerous and the church desires at least one elder to devote his full-time to pastoral ministry and

oversight of the church. (Acts 20:28-30; 1Timothy 3:1-7; Titus 1:5-9; 1Peter 5:1-4; Matthew 20:24-28)

### 3.3 Responsibilities of Elders

Elders are entrusted by Christ to shepherd and oversee the flock of God. This is accomplished directly and indirectly through:

- the ministry of the Word, in preaching and teaching;
- establishing, protecting, and maintaining the doctrinal purity of the church;
- setting an example of Christlikeness;
- reproving, rebuking, exhorting, admonishing, and encouraging members of the church;
- regularly praying for the members of the church;
- guarding against false teachers and false teaching;
- humbly and lovingly lead the church to exercise discipline when necessary for the glory of God and the good of the church;
- examining and recommending potential new members to the congregation;
- ensuring the resources of the church are stewarded wisely for the glory of Christ and prudent application of the church's mission, presenting the church with an annual budget;
- hiring, supervising, and dismissing church staff;
- conducting weekly worship services, ensuring the proper administration of the ordinances;
- ensuring the ministries of the church align with the vision and mission of the church;
- mobilizing the church for world missions;
- identifying, equipping, and appointing additional qualified elders to shepherd the church.

### 3.4 Unity of the Elders

In making decisions for the church, elders must keep with the New Testament spirit of unity. When the elders cannot arrive at unity on a matter, further prayer and consideration of the issue must be sought. When the elders cannot arrive at unanimity, a majority

vote will decide. (Romans 15:6; Philippians 1:27; 2:2; I Corinthians 1:10)

### **3.5 Elders' Sabbatical**

Elders are appointed for life. However, bi-vocational elders should serve no more than six years before taking a sabbatical. The length of the sabbatical will be determined by the elders, but shall not exceed one year. This practice is designed to give these men time to rest for soul care and balance in their life as ministers.

### **3.6 Elders' Dismissal**

Elders are members of the flock of God. As such, they are themselves under the oversight of their fellow elders. An elder can become disqualified from pastoral ministry arising from a disqualifying sin by the factual knowledge of two or three witnesses. After the matter has been verified, the elders shall disclose these facts to the church, remove the erring elder from office, and call for his repentance. When there is repentance, the congregation should seek to reconcile him to the congregation.

Additionally, an elder may resign from office for reasons other than disqualification. The process of reinstatement will be determined by the elders in relation to the circumstances, his qualification, and desire to serve again. (1Timothy 5:19)

### **3.7 Deacons**

The church shall recognize qualified men and women whom God has gifted to serve as deacons. Deacons assist the eldership by assuming responsibility for those tasks which may interfere with the elder's ministry of the Word and prayer. Deacons and deaconesses shall care for the temporal needs of members and attend to the accommodations for public worship.

Deacons and deaconesses will be appointed by the congregation to serve three year terms and may only be elected to other terms

after one year. The number of deacons will be determined by the elders and will change with the size and scope of the need of the church. (1Timothy 3: 8-13; Acts 6: 1-7)

### **3.8 Membership**

CornerstonePiqua consists of covenant members. To qualify for membership in this church, a person must be a believer in Jesus Christ who gives evidence of regeneration, who has been baptized, in obedience to Christ, following his or her regeneration, and who wholeheartedly believes in the Christian faith as revealed in the Bible. Each member must agree to submit to the teaching of scripture as expressed in the Statement of Faith Article I: Truths We Confess and must promise to keep the commitments expressed in the Membership Covenant. The elders shall be responsible for determining each person's qualification for membership. In making this determination, they may rely on a person's profession of faith, or such other evidence as the elders deem appropriate. To be admitted into church membership, applicants shall be recommended by the elders for admission and affirmed by the members at any regular or special gathering of the members. At the point of admission into membership at CornerstonePiqua applicants will be relinquished from membership at another church.

### **3.9 Responsibility of the Members**

In accord with the duties enumerated in the Membership Covenant, each member shall be privileged and expected to participate in and contribute to the ministry and life of the church, consistent with God's leading and with the gifts, time, and material resources each has received from God. These responsibilities include:

- reception of new members and releasing of existing members (see section 3.11);
- choosing of deacons and deaconesses (see section 3.7);
- affirming the annual budget.

### **3.10 Church Discipline**

Any member consistently neglectful of his or her duties or guilty of conduct by which the name of our Lord Jesus Christ may be dishonored, and so opposing the welfare of the church, shall be subject to the admonition of the elders and the discipline of the church, according to the instructions of our Lord in Matthew 18:15-17 and the example of scripture. Church discipline, then, should ordinarily be contemplated after individual private admonition has failed.

Church discipline can include admonition by the elders or congregation, suspension from communion for a definite period, removal from office, and excommunication. The purpose of such discipline should be:

- for the repentance, reconciliation, and spiritual growth of the individual being disciplined;
- for the instruction in righteousness and good of other Christians, as an example to them;
- for the purity of the church as a whole;
- for the good of our corporate witness to non-Christians;
- for the glory of God by reflecting His holy character. (Matthew 18:15-17; 2Thessalonians 3:14-15; 1Timothy 5:19-20; 1Corinthians 5:4-5)

### **3.11 Termination of Membership**

The church shall recognize the termination of a person's membership following his or her death, and may do so after he or she has voluntarily resigned or joined with another church. Membership may also be terminated as an act of church discipline (at the recommendation of the elders) upon the vote of at least two-thirds of the members present at any regular or special gathering of the members. The church shall have authority to refuse a member's voluntary resignation or transfer of membership to another church, either for the purpose of

proceeding with a process of church discipline, or for any other biblical reason.

### **3.12 Voting Responsibilities of Members**

The congregation shall vote on matters of:

- church discipline (see section 3.11);
- any loan that results in cumulative indebtedness exceeding twenty percent of the current, annual operating budget;
- merger or dissolution of the Church;
- any proposed change to the Book of Faith and Order that would reduce or revoke, a right granted to the Members in the current Book;
- other actions deemed major and extraordinary by the elders.

All matters meeting or exceeding a two-thirds vote will pass. The time, place and nature of upcoming votes will be communicated to the Church at least fourteen (14) days in advance. Members shall have an opportunity to submit questions, comments and concerns, which will be considered by the elders on a case-by-case basis. Voting shall take place at any regular or special gathering of the members. Only members shall be permitted to vote on any matter under this section. Voting results shall be communicated to the members not later than thirty (30) days following such vote.

### **3.13 Missions**

It is the missional calling of the local church to proclaim the excellencies of Christ through sending Spirit-filled believers into the world, both locally and abroad. The church should actively seek to equip and encourage members of all ages to engage in local and global mission initiatives. Elders should equip and affirm those discerning God's call to global missions with training and resources.

The church shall support with finances and other resources those missionaries from other organizations who adhere to our

Statement of Faith. Any theological or methodological disagreement may be grounds to terminate our support.

### **3.14 Church Planting**

God's mission is accomplished through His people making disciples and gathering them into healthy, gospel-centered churches to be equipped to make disciples. Where there are no gospel-centered churches, we seek to start them. Where there are gospel-deficient churches, we seek to revitalize them. It is a priority at CornerstonePiqua to find ways to plant healthy churches and revitalize unhealthy churches in whatever ways the Lord enables. To this end the elders actively seek to equip qualified elders to plant and/or revitalize churches.

### **3.15 Justice**

God created both soul and body, and the resurrection of Jesus shows he is going to redeem both the spiritual and the material. Therefore, we must be concerned for the salvation of souls and for the relief of poverty, hunger, and injustice. The gospel replaces superiority toward the poor with mercy and compassion. We work for the eternal and common good. We love our neighbors sacrificially whether they believe as we do or not. Justice ministries in this church understand a person's spiritual state is far more important than his/her material well being. We remember that Jesus fed the 5000, many of whom walked away from Him.

### **3.16 Ministry Partnerships & Networks**

We happily recognize much good for God's glory and delight in Christ can come through partnerships with other churches, networks, and parachurch organizations. In choosing in which partnerships to participate, the elders will investigate matters of theological and methodological unity and disparity. Accordingly, they will decide what level of engagement is wise.