

# **Cortland Christian Church Constitution & Bylaws**

## **The Constitution of the Cortland Christian Church**

We, the members of Cortland Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), a congregationally-governed body, in order to promote the work of the church in the spirit of Christ and thus advance His kingdom, do hereby adopt this constitution on this 26<sup>th</sup> day of the month of May in the year of 1974, and revised on April, 2013.

### **Article I – Name**

The name of this congregation shall be Cortland Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) of Cortland, Ohio, affiliated with and an integral part of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) and committed to the historic principles of this body whose local congregations are variously known as Christian Churches, Churches of Christ, or Disciples of Christ. This congregation shall participate in the cooperative life of the brotherhood through the General Assembly of Christian Churches (Disciples of Christ) and their affiliated organizations.

### **Article II – Purpose**

The purpose of this congregation is to proclaim the gospel of Jesus Christ in faithful response to God's will and purposes as revealed through Jesus Christ, to seek in all persons a faith and commitment to Jesus Christ; to serve the community of which it is a part; to bring the gospel message to bear upon society; to serve in Christian stewardship; to sustain and be sustained by the general and regional manifestations of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ); to work cooperatively with Christians in other communions; to seek the oneness of the body of Christ.

### **Article III – Membership**

Membership for this congregation shall consist of the following: those who are now members of the congregation; those who shall unite with it by confession of faith in Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior, giving expression of their faith through baptism and commitment to Him; and those who unite by transfer of membership, thereby reaffirming their faith and commitment to Christ.

Members of this church shall be classified as participating and non-participating, the status of each member to be determined by the membership committee once every 5 years:

- a. Participating Members shall be those who attend worship services, or participate in the activities of the church, or who contribute to the financial support of the church. All participating members are required to abide by the Membership Covenant, (Appendix 1). Violation of the Membership Covenant will be enforced with the Member Discipline Guidelines (Appendix 3).
- b. Non-Participating Members shall be those who do not qualify for participating membership.
- c. Voting privileges shall be accorded to all participating members.
- d. Member Discipline Guidelines (Appendix 3)

## **Article IV – Rights, Privileges & Responsibilities**

The congregation shall manage its affairs under the Lordship of Jesus Christ; own, control and encumber its property; organize and carry out the mission and witness of the congregation establish its budget and financial policies; call its Pastor(s) and other staff; and participate, through voting representatives, in regional and general assemblies of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ).

The congregation shall demonstrate voluntarily its mutual concern for the nurture, mission and witness of the whole church, and, among other responsibilities, it shall proclaim the gospel, administer baptism, celebrate the Lord's Supper; provide for the spiritual nurture of its members; grow in understanding that the church is a universal fellowship; transcend all barriers within the human family such as race and culture; be faithful in Christian stewardship; choose voting representatives to the general and regions assemblies of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ); and seek to realize the oneness of the church of Jesus Christ through cooperation with other churches of the community and with present and emerging ecumenical structures.

The congregation shall sustain its Pastor(s) in faithfulness and honor, and in matters pertaining to the relationships with the Pastor(s) seek counsel from the executive regional Pastor.

The congregation, each year, will individually reaffirm the Membership Covenant (Appendix 1) the month following the annual congregation meeting.

## **Article V – Officers, General Board**

### **Board of Elders, Deacons, Deaconesses, Youth Deacons, Youth Deaconesses, Trustees, & Committees**

#### **Section A. Officers**

The congregation shall elect from its members a President, Vice President, Clerk, Treasurer and Financial Secretaries. These officers shall be elected at the annual meeting of the congregation and shall serve as officers of the congregation, the General Board as set forth in the Bylaws. The above officers together with the Pastor(s) and Chairman of the Elders shall constitute the Executive Committee of the General Board.

#### **Section B. General Board**

The congregation shall have a General Board which shall be responsible to the congregation and have authority to act on behalf of the congregation when it is not in a congregational meeting.

The General Board shall be composed of members as set forth in the Bylaws and for the terms of office therein stated.

The General Board shall be responsible for receiving reports from its Pastor(s), officers and the various organizations within the congregation. It shall establish by its action the program and budget of the congregation, subject to action by the congregation at its annual meeting. It shall be responsible also for conducting all legal business matters of the congregation and carry out such other responsibilities as may be defined in the Bylaws.

Stated meetings of the General Board shall be held at least four times each year. Special meetings of the General Board shall be called by the President of the Board upon request of the Pastor(s) or upon request of twenty percent (20%) of the General Board. Notice of special meetings shall be made by announcement at a Sunday morning worship service or by mail/email/phone at least one week prior to the date of the special called meeting. The purpose, date, time and place of the meeting shall be indicated in each notice.

### **Section C. Boards of Elders, Deacons, Deaconesses, Youth Deacons, Youth Deaconesses and Trustees**

The congregation shall have elders, deacons, deaconesses, trustees, youth deacons and youth deaconesses. Their election, qualifications and responsibilities shall be set forth in the Bylaws.

The congregation shall have Trustees. Their election, qualifications, and responsibilities shall be set forth in the Bylaws. The Trustees shall be responsible for all properties of the congregation. They shall act as legal agent for the congregation and perform all duties required by law. They shall perform other duties as assigned by the congregation and General Board.

## **Article VI – Congregational Meetings**

A congregational meeting shall be held at least annually in the month of November. Notice of all stated or special congregational meetings shall be announced at a regular Sunday morning worship service of the congregation at least two weeks in advance of the meeting and by means of the church newsletter. Purpose, date, time and place of meeting shall be indicated in each notice.

## **Article VII – Amendments**

This constitution may be amended at any congregational meeting by a two-thirds vote of the members present and voting on the amendment, provided the proposed amendment has been read at or following two successive Sunday morning worship services immediately prior to the time the vote is taken.

## **By Laws**

### **I. Officers of the Congregation**

#### **A. Election and Term of Office**

1. The congregation, at its annual meeting, shall elect for terms of two years the following officers, with the exception of Trustees, who will rotate three year terms.
  - a. President of the congregation, who also shall serve as president of the General Board.
  - b. Vice-President of the congregation, who also shall serve as vice-president of the General Board.
  - c. Clerk of the congregation, who also shall serve as clerk of the General Board.
  - d. Treasurer of the congregation, who also shall serve as treasurer of the General Board.

- e. Financial Secretaries of the congregation, who also shall serve as financial secretaries of the General Board.

## **B. Qualifications**

1. Officers must be members of the congregation.
2. Officers must conduct one's life in light of the teachings of Jesus Christ and in accordance with the Membership (Appendix 1) and Leadership Covenants (Appendix 2)

## **C. Responsibilities**

1. The President shall preside at all stated and special called meetings of the congregation and General Board and perform such other duties normally associated with the office of President.
2. The Vice-President shall serve to support the President, preside in his or her absence at meetings of the congregation, General Board and perform such other duties normally associated with the office of Vice-President.
3. The Clerk shall keep accurate minutes of all meetings of the congregation, General Board and provide for these minutes to be reviewed and approved by their respective bodies.
4. The Treasurer shall receive a record of income of the congregation from the Financial Secretaries, pay all accounts of the congregation as authorized by the budget or special action of the General Board when such items are not in the budget, provide accurate records of all expenditures, make regular written reports to the General Board, provide for an annual audit of both income and expenditures for action by the General Board and the Congregation.
5. The Financial Secretaries shall be responsible for receiving all income of the congregation, keeping accurate records of the source and amount of such income, depositing such income in the bank, providing the Treasurer of the congregation with copies of all deposit receipts.

# **II General Board**

## **A. Membership**

1. Membership of the General Board shall be composed of the officers of the congregation, elders, deacons, deaconesses, youth deacons and deaconesses, Sunday school superintendent, chairpersons of standing committees and the chief elected officers of major constituency groups of men, women, youth and Trustees.
2. The Pastor(s) of the congregation shall serve as member(s) ex-officio of the General Board.

## **B. Election and Term of Office**

1. Officers of the congregation shall serve on the General Board by virtue of the office held and for their current term of office. They shall serve the General Board, as well as the congregation, as President, Vice-President, Clerk, Treasurer and Financial Secretaries.

2. One-third of the elders, deacons, deaconesses and trustee's shall be elected by the congregation to membership on the General Board each year for a term of three years.
3. Chairpersons of standing committees established by the General Board and the chief elected officers of major constituency groups of men, women and youth shall be members of the Board by virtue of office and for their current terms of office.
4. All current elders, deacons, deaconesses, youth deacons, youth deaconesses and trustees, Sunday school superintendent shall have membership on the General Board.
5. Honorary officers may be designated by the General Board and are that who, because of infirmities or advanced age, and whose service and consecration to the church merits the honor, may be retired from active responsibility; these to be known respectively as elder emeritus, deacons emeritus or deaconess emeritus.

### **C. Authority**

1. The General Board shall perform its duties according to the authority granted in the constitution or otherwise delegated to it by the congregation.
2. In keeping with the traditions of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), the ultimate authority of the congregation shall rest with the congregation. All organizations within the congregation shall be responsible to and report regularly to the General Board and through it to the congregation.
3. All business meetings of the General Board shall be governed by Robert's Rules of Order (Revised).
4. Ten (10) members of the General Board shall constitute a quorum. A quorum of the General Board shall consist of all members present and voting.

### **D. Responsibilities**

1. The General Board shall conduct its affairs in accordance with the Constitution and Bylaws of the congregation.
2. The General Board shall be responsible for conducting the business affairs of the congregation and providing for the planning, coordination, resourcing, evaluation and implementation of the work and activities of the congregation.
3. The General Board shall establish in addition to the Executive Committee, ministry teams related to the basic characteristics of the congregation as follows: Worship, Evangelism, Membership, Christian Education, World Outreach, Stewardship, Finance, Pastoral Relations and Memorial.
4. The General Board shall establish, when necessary, a Search Committee for the purpose of securing the congregation. Membership and responsibilities of the Pastoral Search Committee shall be described in Bylaws III, B-1.
5. The General Board shall establish other committees as needed for the conduct of its work.

6. The General Board shall receive regular written reports from its committees and from other organizations within the congregation.
7. The General Board shall receive the proposed annual budget of the congregation from the Finance Committee and recommend its approval, or approval with amendment, to the congregation at its annual meeting. Subsequent over-expenditure or requests for additional funds from organizations within the congregation shall be approved or disapproved by the General Board.
8. The General Board shall recommend to the congregation the calling of the Pastor(s).
9. The Executive Committee shall function as a personnel committee and shall propose salaries of support staff to the General Board at its Budget Meeting each year.

### **III Pastor(s)**

#### **A. Responsibilities**

1. Responsibilities shall be as outlined in the most current Pastor job description.

#### **B. Selection**

1. The Pastor(s) shall be chosen by the congregation as hereinafter described:
  - a. A Pastoral Search Committee shall be appointed by the General Board. It shall be composed of the Chairpersons of the elders, deacons, deaconesses, youth deacons, youth deaconesses and trustees and a representative of each major constituency group of men, women and youth of the congregation.
  - b. The Pastoral Search Committee shall utilize the services of the regional office for information and counsel concerning prospective candidates.
  - c. A Search Committee shall recommend a prospective Pastor to the General Board.
  - d. The General Board, at a stated or called meeting, may approve the recommendation of the Pastoral Search Committee by at least a two-thirds majority of those present and voting. Upon approval, the General Board shall recommend calling of the prospective Pastor to the congregation.
  - e. The congregation, in a stated or called meeting, may approve the recommendation of the General Board by at least a two-thirds majority of members present and voting.
  - f. Upon approval of the congregation, a call shall be extended to the prospective Pastor by the General Board, on behalf of the congregation.

#### **C. Terms of Employment**

1. An agreement of employment setting forth the salary and benefits to be paid to the Pastor and other conditions of employment shall be provided to the Pastor, with a copy filed in the church office.

2. The term of ministry shall be for an indefinite period and may be terminated upon sixty (60) days notice of either party.

#### **D. Resignation**

1. Voluntary resignation of the Pastor shall be submitted to the General Board in writing, after consultation with the President and Elders.
2. Involuntary resignation of the Pastor shall be dealt with confidentially between the Pastor, the President, the Elders and the Regional Pastor.
3. The General Board shall approve the resignation, voluntary or involuntary, of the Pastor by at least a two-thirds majority of members present and voting.

### **IV Elders, Deacons, Deaconesses Youth Deacons, Youth Deaconesses & Trustees**

#### **A. Election and Term of Office**

1. The congregation at its annual meeting shall elect for terms of three (3) years the following: elders, deacons, deaconesses and trustees.
2. Youth deacons and deaconesses shall be elected for a term of one year.

#### **B. Qualifications shall follow Leadership Covenant (Appendix 2)**

1. The qualifications for elders, deacons and deaconesses and youth deacons and deaconesses and trustees shall be the same as described for the officers of the congregation in Bylaw 1B.

#### **C. Responsibilities**

1. Elders shall be responsible for the spiritual life and development of the congregation, preside at the Lord's Table, assist and share with the Pastor(s) in the conduct of his or her Pastoral functions and provide supportive counsel for the Pastor(s) regarding the spiritual life and development of the congregation.
2. Deacons and deaconesses shall be responsible for the maintenance and growth of the congregation through its individual members and corporate life in witness in the community and in the world. The deaconesses shall prepare and deacons distribute the communion and receive the offerings. Both deacons and deaconesses shall assist in financial canvasses, visitation projects and preparation of candidates for baptism.
3. Youth deacons and deaconesses shall assist both the deacons and deaconesses in carrying out their duties.
4. Maintenance of all property shall be the responsibility of the Trustees, subject to approval of General Board.

## **VI Nominating Committee**

### **A. Membership**

1. The President of the congregation shall appoint a nominating committee of not more than six members.

### **B. Responsibilities**

1. The Nominating Committee shall nominate all those to be elected by the congregation at its annual meeting; however, nominations to any office may be made from the floor.
2. The Nominating Committee, upon the request of the General Board, shall make nominations to fill vacancies; such nominees to be elected by the General Board.

## **VII Property Maintenance & Insurance**

1. Maintenance of all property and insurance of the congregation, including personal liability insurance, shall be the responsibility of the Executive Committee, subject to approval of the General Board.

## **VIII Amendments**

These Bylaws may be amended, upon a majority vote of the General Board. However, once a motion is made to amend the Bylaws, the vote cannot be taken until a subsequent Board meeting or later as directed by the President of the General Board.

### **Revision History:**

<b>Addition of Trustees</b>	<b>June, 2005</b>
<b>Retyped</b>	<b>February, 2007</b>

<b>Revised and Retyped:</b>	<b>April 1, 2013/alp</b>
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