

# CHRIST CHURCH ITHACA

## CONSTITUTION AND BYLAWS

Business Address: 319 Elm St., Groton, NY 13073

Bylaws Adopted: May 23, 2006. Amended: April 17, 2012, June 23, 2014, April 17, 2016, October 29, 2017, Last modified August 6, 2020 in preparation for acceptance into the Communion of Reformed Evangelical Churches—Constitution was added to Bylaws.

### PREAMBLE:

WHEREAS, it is the expressed purpose of God, our Heavenly Father, to call out of the world a people who shall constitute the Body or Church of our Lord Jesus Christ, built and established upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being in the Chief Cornerstone; and,

WHEREAS, God having ordained that this Universal Church should find its expression in and through local churches, enjoining them to assemble together for worship, fellowship, counsel, and instruction in the Word of God, and for the work of the ministry, and for the exercise of those spiritual gifts and offices provided for in the New Testament, therefore be it

RESOLVED, That we do constitute a particular Bible believing church. This constitution and bylaws to supplement the Articles of Incorporation and to supersede any and all other church constitutions, and other rules of the church order previously adopted.

## CONSTITUTION

### ARTICLE I. NAME

The name of this Church shall be CHRIST CHURCH ITHACA

### ARTICLE II. PURPOSE

Section 1. To establish and maintain a place of worship of Almighty God, our Heavenly Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ, His only begotten Son, through the Holy Spirit, and for the promotion of Christian fellowship and edification.

Section 2. To be God's instrument in the gathering in of His Elect through the preaching of the gospel.

Section 3. To be salt and light in the unbelieving world.

### ARTICLE III. PREROGATIVES

Section 1. This Church shall have the right to govern itself according to the standards of the Holy Scriptures, "endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace... til we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ." (Ephesians 4:3, 13). We affirm and proclaim that all authority in heaven and on earth has been given unto Jesus Christ! Glory be to the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, Amen! This document is neither sacred nor holy but gives guidance for our existing session and describes our procedures.

Section 2. To have a membership which is determined by the session, and to discipline its members according to the Scriptures.

Section 3. To choose or call its pastoral leadership, elect, license and ordain its elders and deacons and transact all other business pertaining to its life and conduct as a church.

Section 4. To establish and maintain such departments and institutions as may be deemed necessary for the propagation of the Gospel and for the work of the church.

Section 5. To purchase or acquire by gift, bequest, or other-wise either directly or as trustee, and to own, hold in trust, use, sell subject to the securing of a court order, convey, mortgage, lease, which is limited to five years by State statute, or otherwise dispose of any real estate or chattels as may be necessary for the furtherance of its purposes, all in accordance with its constitution and bylaws.

#### ARTICLE IV. STATEMENT OF FAITH

Sources of Authority: Christ Church Ithaca recognizes the 66 canonical books of the Old and New Testaments as inspired by the Holy Spirit, infallible, and inerrant in the original writings. The Old and New Testaments are the supreme and final authority for life, faith, and practice.

The subordinate standards which we uphold are the Book of Church Order (BOCO) of the Federation of Reformed Churches <https://www.federationorc.org>, the Three Forms of Unity (The Belgic Confession, The Heidelberg Catechism, and The Canons of Dordt), Articles I-XIII of the CREC Constitution: [https://crechurches.org/documents/governance/CREC\\_Governing\\_Docs\\_2022.pdf](https://crechurches.org/documents/governance/CREC_Governing_Docs_2022.pdf). The FORC BOCO takes precedence in any areas of disagreement with the Three Forms of Unity or the CREC Constitution. We choose the Three Forms of Unity because of its pastoral tone, its history in Reformed thinking, and its excellence as a guide in our teaching. However, we also recognize the Westminster Confession and Catechisms and may consult them in our doctrinal deliberations.

#### ARTICLE V. SACRAMENTS

The Sacraments of the church are: (1) Baptism in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit and (2) the Lord's Supper (Matthew 28:19; Acts 2:38; 1 Corinthians 11:23-25).

#### ARTICLE VI. OFFICERS

Section 1. Church Government: A session of elders shall govern the church. Elders shall be male members of the church who are at least (30) years old. Only those men judged by the church to fulfill the requirements for elders described in 1 Timothy 3 and Titus 1 shall be elected elders. Qualified men may be elected as elders at any called or stated congregational meeting by a  $\frac{3}{4}$  vote and assume office upon election. Elders serve for life unless they retire, transfer to another local church, resign, or are removed through formal church discipline. The congregation in like manner may elect Deacons. They must be male members at least twenty (20) years old who meet the qualifications described in 1 Timothy 3. The quorum for the session of elders and board of deacons (if one exists) shall be determined by the session. Elders may oversee the administration of the sacraments.

Section 2. The session may invite elders of other recognized reformed bodies to preach and administer the sacraments, and may invite other men whom the session deems qualified to exhort and assist in leading worship.

#### ARTICLE VII. MEMBERSHIP

Individuals shall be eligible for membership in this church according to the bylaws as herein set forth below.

#### ARTICLE VIII. MEETINGS

Congregational or Corporate Meetings: There shall be an annual Corporate and Congregational meeting sometime in late April where a report of expenditures for the previous year and a budget for the next

fiscal year shall be presented. The time and place shall be announced by a member of the session before Sunday worship at least two-weeks in advance. For corporate business all communing members in good and regular standing who are present and at least eighteen (18) years of age are entitled to vote. Corporate business includes, but is not limited to sale, purchase, or transfer of property, and changes to the by-laws. For ecclesiastical business all communing members in good and regular standing who are present and at least twenty (20) years of age are entitled to vote. Additional corporate and /or congregational meetings may be called by the session and announced in the same manner. The session shall always call a corporate meeting when requested by 25% of the communing members at least eighteen (18) years old, and likewise, a congregational meeting when requested by 25% of the communing members at least twenty (20) years old. The request must be in writing. The quorum for all corporate and/or congregational meetings shall be at least 25% of the eligible voting members.

## ARTICLE IX. FINANCES

The church shall be financed according to the scriptural method by the tithes and offerings of the members and friends of the church. (Malachi 3:10; Hebrews 7:4-9).

Fiscal Year: The fiscal year of the church shall be from April 1 through March 31 of the following year.

## ARTICLE X. PROPERTY

Section 1. All property shall be taken, held, sold, transferred or conveyed in the name of the church in accordance with New York State law, according to the Articles of Incorporation.

Section 2. No real property of the church shall be sold, leased, mortgaged or otherwise acquired without the same having been authorized by at least a two-thirds majority vote of the members present at a regular business meeting or special business meeting of the church which has been duly called for the consideration of the proposal.

Section 3. The Elders and Treasurers shall certify in such conveyance, lease, or mortgage that the same has been duly authorized by the vote of the membership. Such certificates shall be held to be conclusive evidence thereof.

## ARTICLE XI. AMENDMENTS

Amendments to this constitution may be made by a two-thirds vote of the membership of the church who are in attendance at any regular or special corporate meeting called for that purpose, provided that due notice of such proposed change shall have been made at all services on at least two Sundays preceding the time for such meeting.

## BYLAWS

### ARTICLE I. MEMBERSHIP

Section 1. Church Membership: The session shall approve applicants for membership based on the requirements of holy scripture and remove members through either transfer to another evangelical Christian church, death, or excommunication. If either one or both parents of a child are members, the child is a member by reason of God's covenant (Genesis 17; Acts 2:36-42). The parent or parents should promptly present the child for baptism. Members who move away from the area shall be given a reasonable amount of time to transfer their membership. That time, usually within 6 months, to be determined by the session. Members of any Trinitarian Christian church in good standing who are baptized in the triune name of God are invited to participate in communion. Worshipers who are not members of any Christian church, but have been duly baptized in the triune name of God, may participate in communion upon the approval of the elders present. New believers who are baptized may partake of communion on that same day.

Section 2 . Members are expected to participate in the weekly congregational worship to remain in good standing.

Section 3. Church Discipline: Church discipline shall be carried out when necessary by the session according to Biblical principles, especially Numbers 16; Deuteronomy 19:15-21; Matthew 18:15-20, 1 Corinthians 5; Galatians 2:11-21 & Galatians 6. Discipline may consist of discipleship, admonishment, and excommunication. Elders and deacons may be suspended or deposed from office. No member shall be excommunicated without an opportunity for a formal hearing before the session. Likewise, no elder or deacon shall be suspended or deposed from office without an opportunity for a formal hearing before the session. The session shall explain in writing with supporting evidence any discipline imposed after a formal hearing, and attempt to deliver or mail it to the member disciplined.

## ARTICLE II. DUTIES OF ELDERS AND DEACONS

Section 1. . The Elders: The elders shall provide for all the worship services of the church and shall arrange for all other meetings. No person shall be invited to speak or preach in the church without approval of the session. They shall be responsible for the maintenance and cleanliness of the church property and delegation of work.

Marriage may be performed for a male and female couple when at least one of them has been a member of Christ Church Ithaca for at least three months time, and the other is a member in good standing of a local church received by the session.

Other examples of duties are burial of the dead and visitations.

Section 2. The Deacons: The deacons are officers of the church who assist the elders in the shepherding of the members of the congregation. The duties shall include but not be limited to: assisting the elders within the Church, ministering to the physical and material needs of the body, and performing other duties as assigned by the elders. We consider deacons to be potential future elders in training.

## ARTICLE V. FINANCES

Section 1. The session shall determine all salaries and allowances and shall have general oversight in all financial matters. All records shall be available for review by members in the presence of an elder.

Section 2. The elders shall be given regular and adequate financial support, the amount and manner of which shall be determined by the session.

Section 3. All offerings shall be counted by two persons authorized by the session. One of whom shall deposit all funds in a fiduciary institution authorized by the church in the church's name.

Section 4. Trustees of the Corporation: the session shall serve as the trustees if there are three or more elders. If there are less than three elders, deacons shall be called to serve as trustees. If there are not at least three elders and deacons combined, trustees shall be elected from the congregation to serve for three years.