

# First Christian Church Bylaws

These by-laws were adopted by the congregation of First Christian Church of Fort Smith, AR, on this 18th day of the month July in the year 2010.

## I. PRESIDING OFFICERS OF THE CONGREGATION

### A. ELECTION AND TERM OF OFFICE

1. The chairperson of the general board shall appoint a nominating committee consisting of an elder, a deacon and one other member of the general board to select and present a slate of nominees for the officers of the congregation. An elder shall act as the committee chairperson and the minister(s) shall serve as ex officio member(s).
2. The general board at its June meeting shall elect for terms of one (1) year the following officers:
  - a. chairperson of the congregation, who also shall serve as chairperson of the general board,
  - b. vice-chairperson of the congregation, who also shall serve as vice-chairperson of the general board,
  - c. secretary of the congregation, who also shall serve as secretary of the general board,
  - d. treasurer of the congregation, who also shall serve as treasurer of the general board,
  - e. historian of the congregation, who shall keep a record of the congregation's history.
3. Officers of the congregation may serve in the same office for no more than two (2) consecutive years.

### B. QUALIFICATIONS

1. Officers of the congregation/general board must be members of the general board.
2. Officers must be active in the congregation's life and give evidence of seeking to grow in their own understanding and practice of the Christian life. Such evidence would include the following:
  - a. conducting one's life in light of the teachings of Jesus Christ,

- b. promoting good will and Christian fellowship in the congregation and community,
- c. attending worship services and stated meetings of the congregation,
- d. making regular financial contributions to the support of the congregation and its administrative ministries,
- e. being willing to fulfill assignments on behalf of the congregation,
- f. demonstrating skills or evident potential in carrying out responsibilities of the particular office.

### **C. RESPONSIBILITIES**

1. The chairperson shall preside at all stated and called meetings of the congregation, general board and perform such other duties normally associated with the office of chairperson, shall appoint persons to fill any unexpired term on the general board in consultation with the ministers and approval of the general board and serve as an ex officio member of all administrative ministries and committees.
2. The vice-chairperson shall serve to support the chairperson, preside in his/her absence at meetings of the congregation or general board, perform such other duties normally associated with the office of vice-chairperson, chair the budget committee and preside at the cabinet meeting in the ministers' absence.
3. The secretary shall keep accurate minutes of all meetings of the congregation and the general board and provide for these minutes to be reviewed and approved by their respective bodies.
4. The treasurer shall receive all income of the congregation, 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 income and expenditures, make regular written reports to the general board and provide for an annual audit of both income and expenditures for action by the general board and the congregation.
5. The historian shall gather and preserve data pertaining to the history, life and work of the church, making available for publication any historical materials authorized by the church.

## **II. GENERAL BOARD**

### **A. MEMBERSHIP**

1. Membership of the general board shall be composed of the elders, deacons, and trustees beginning with their third consecutive year of service for a period of one year. Board membership will also include the chairs of the elders and the deacons. Officers of the congregation shall also serve on the general board including chairperson, vice-chairperson, secretary, treasurer and historian. Ministry chairs and presidents of constituency groups also serve on the general board. All members of the board may serve concurrently as a third year member, officer, elder chair, deacon chair, ministry chair, or president of a constituency group(s) with only one vote per person.
  - Officers of the congregation may serve in the same office for no more than two (2) consecutive years (as outlined in section I-A-3) but can retain board membership if elected to new office.
  - Chairperson of a ministry shall not hold the position of chairperson of the same ministry for more than two consecutive years (as outlined in section V-A-3) but can retain board membership if elected as chair of a new ministry.
  - The terms of membership for chair of elders and chair of deacons will remain with their respective groups with no limit to board membership.
  - The terms of membership for presidents of constituency groups will remain with the constituency group with no limit to board membership.
  - If a deacon or elder is appointed or elected for an unexpired term, the replacement deacon or elder will assume the status of 1st, 2nd, or 3rd year as if they were the person being replaced.
2. The minister(s) of the congregation shall serve as ex officio member(s) without vote of the general board.

### **B. ELECTION AND TERM OF OFFICE**

1. Officers of the congregation shall serve on the general board by virtue of office held and for their current term of office.
2. One-third of the elders, deacons and trustees (which shall number not more than 5, 15, and 1 respectively) shall be elected by the congregation each year. Elders and trustees shall serve a term of three (3) years. Five (5) deacon positions may be designated for a one (1) year term with the remaining deacons selected to serve a three (3) year term. After serving three consecutive years they shall be ineligible for a new term until one (1) year has elapsed.
3. The presidents of constituency groups shall be voting members of the board by virtue of office and for their current terms of office.

### **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. All business shall be conducted within the fiscal year beginning July 1 and ending June 30.
2. In keeping with the traditions of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), ultimate authority 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. The general board shall concern itself with policy rather than administrative matters, taking into full account the responsibility of the congregation to the total nurture, witness and mission of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) and the needs of the immediate community in which the members of the congregation live.
4. All business meetings of the general board shall be governed by Robert's Rules of Order (Revised) and shall observe the following order of business:
  - a. meeting called to order by presiding officer,
  - b. devotions and prayer,
  - c. reading and approval of minutes of previous meeting,
  - d. report of treasurer and approval of report,
  - e. reports of administrative ministries,
  - f. regular and special committee reports,
  - g. associate minister's report,
  - h. action on recommendations growing out of reports,
  - i. consideration of unfinished business carried over from previous meeting,
  - j. new business and program suggestions for future activities,
  - k. adjournment,
  - l. pastor's inspirational moment and benediction.
5. Two thirds (2/3) members of the general board shall constitute a quorum. If a current member of the board is unable to attend a board meeting, the member can appoint a replacement from the group they represent to be present with a proxy vote. A proxy must bring written authorization from the absent board member in order to represent that board member. A copy of an electronic communication from the absent board

member will suffice for this written authorization.

#### **D. RESPONSIBILITIES**

1. The general board shall conduct its affairs in harmony with the constitution and the bylaws of the congregation.
2. The general board shall be responsible for conducting the business affairs of the congregation and providing for the planning, coordinating, resourcing, evaluating and implementing of the work and activities of the congregation.
3. The general board shall establish administrative ministries of the congregation and administer the programs of the church. The ministries shall include: Worship, Christian Education, Church Growth, Membership, World Outreach, Stewardship, Property and Community Outreach.
4. The general board shall establish, when necessary, a pulpit committee for the purpose of securing a minister for the congregation. Membership and responsibilities of the pulpit committee shall be as described in Bylaws III, B-1.
5. The general board shall establish a personnel committee to develop job descriptions for the staff and revise them when appropriate; act as a sounding board for staff, congregation and ministerial relations; oversee staff benefits and prepare the administrative budget and recommend to the general board policies and practices regulating the church staff. The personnel committee shall consist of the chairperson of the general board and three (3) members selected by the elders in consultation with the senior minister and confirmed by the board. Members shall serve for three (3) years and the terms of the members will be staggered. After serving one (1) term on the personnel committee an individual shall be ineligible for appointment for one (1) year. If a new chairperson of the board is already a member of the committee, the elders shall appoint a person to serve for one (1) year. Personnel committee members may serve concurrently as members of other administrative ministries and committees. Committee members shall elect their own chairperson.
6. The general board shall establish a budget committee to receive and consolidate financial requests from each ministry and the personnel committee and to prepare and present a proposed annual budget to the general board for approval at the June meeting. The vice-chairperson of the general board shall serve as chairperson and the membership shall consist of the chairpersons of each administrative ministry, the minister(s), chairperson of the personnel committee and the officers of the congregation/general board.
7. The general board shall establish other committees as needed to conduct its work.
8. The general board shall receive regular written reports from its ministries and from other organizations within the congregation. It shall act upon such reports with

approval, disapproval, modification or referral back to the respective ministry or other organization.

9. The general board shall receive the proposed annual budget of the congregation from the budget committee and recommend its approval or approval with amendments. Subsequent over-expenditure or requests for additional funds from organizations within the congregation shall be approved or disapproved by the general board.
10. The general board shall recommend to the congregation the calling of minister(s).

### **III. MINISTER(S)**

#### **A. RESPONSIBILITIES**

1. The senior minister shall be the spiritual leader and chief administrator of the congregation. Proclaiming the gospel of Jesus Christ shall be the first objective of the senior minister, while leading the congregation to grow and develop in its spiritual life through participation in the ministries of the church. The senior minister shall, in cooperation with the chairperson of the general board, lead the life and work of the congregation in compliance with the constitution and bylaws, and with the policies and procedures established by the general board.
2. The associate minister, under the supervision of the senior minister, shall be active in the total ministry of the church and share duties on the basis of workload, abilities and special training.
3. The ministers shall give special attention to the selection and training of the congregation's leaders.
4. The ministers shall be ex-officio members of general board, cabinet, ministries and committees, except for the personnel committee.

#### **B. SELECTION**

1. The minister(s) shall be chosen by the congregation as hereinafter described:
  - a. A representative committee of seven (7) members, four (4) selected from the general board and three (3) from the congregation, shall be appointed by the general board chairperson and approved by the general board to serve as the pulpit committee.
  - b. The pulpit committee shall utilize the services of the congregation's executive regional minister for information and counsel concerning prospective candidates.
  - c. The pulpit committee shall consult only one prospective minister at a time; however, information may be secured on several persons in a given period.

- d. The pulpit committee shall recommend a prospective minister to the general board.
- e. The general board, at a stated or called meeting, may approve the recommendation of the pulpit committee by at least two-thirds majority of those present and voting. Upon approval, the general board shall recommend employment of the prospective minister to the congregation.
- f. 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.
- g. Upon approval of the congregation, a call shall be extended to the prospective minister by the general board, on behalf of the congregation.

### **C. TERMS OF EMPLOYMENT**

- 1. An agreement of employment setting forth the salary to be paid to the minister and other conditions of the call shall be provided to the minister, with a copy filed in the church office and with the regional office.
- 2. The term of ministry shall be for an indefinite period and may be terminated upon 60 days' notice by either party.

### **D. RESIGNATION**

- 1. Voluntary resignation of a minister shall be submitted to the general board in writing, after consultation with the chairperson of the general board and the elders.
- 2. Prior to action being requested of the general board, any involuntary resignation of a minister shall be dealt with confidentially among the minister, the chairperson, the elders and the regional executive minister.
- 3. The general board shall approve the resignation, voluntary or involuntary, of a minister by at least a two-thirds majority of members present and voting, and recommend approval to the congregation.
- 4. The congregation, in a regular or called meeting, shall take final action in approving or disapproving the resignation, voluntary or involuntary, of a minister by at least two-thirds majority of the congregation present and voting.

## **IV. ELDERS, DEACONS, TRUSTEES, EMERITUS MEMBERS**

### **A. ELECTION AND TERM OF OFFICE**

1. The general board chairperson shall appoint the chairperson of the nominating committee. The committee shall be composed of the members of the general board retiring at the end of the fiscal year in which the elections are held. It shall meet at least five weeks prior to the annual elections. The slate of nominees shall be published at least one (1) week prior to the annual election and presented at the congregational annual meeting. Nominations may be made from the floor by any member, provided that the nominee has consented to serve if elected. The presiding officer shall direct the members present to add any such nominee to the slate presented by the nominating committee. Any ballot on which the name of such nominee does not appear shall be considered an illegal ballot. The nominee for each position who receives the greatest number of votes cast by written ballot of those present and voting shall be declared elected.

## **B. QUALIFICATIONS**

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

## **C. RESPONSIBILITIES**

1. **ELDERS:** Elders primarily shall be responsible for the spiritual life and development of the congregation, preside at the Lord's Table, assist and share with the minister(s) in the conduct of their pastoral and priestly functions and provide supportive counsel for the minister(s) regarding the spiritual life and development of the congregation.
2. **DEACONS:** Deacons shall be responsible for the maintenance and growth of the congregation. They shall prepare and serve the Lord's supper; counsel, assist and share with the church staff in the conduct of the congregation's business affairs; participate in calling on congregation members and prospects; be especially concerned with the financial stewardship, property management, membership development, and outreach activities of the church. **JUNIOR DEACONS:** All senior high youth who are active members of the church are eligible to become junior deacons. They must attend a minimum of four (4) training sessions taught by the ministers, elders and deacons. Junior deacons will serve one (1) year terms.
3. **TRUSTEES:** Trustees shall perform the same general duties as the elders and shall work with the members of the general board in promoting growth and welfare of the church. In addition, they shall act as the legal agents of the church in all business matters, under the direction of the general board and subject to the approval of the church. They shall hold legal title to all church property and handle all business actions related therein, supervise all endowment and trust funds and perform such duties as are required by the laws of Arkansas.
4. **EMERITUS MEMBERS:** Members emeritus shall be elected by the congregation to lifetime positions of honor in recognition of their past service. They shall be known as elder emeritus, deacon emeritus, or minister emeritus. There shall be no limit on the



number of emeritus members.

#### **D. ORGANIZATION**

1. Elders, deacons and trustees shall be organized into separate groups, subsidiary to the general board.
2. The purpose of these groups shall be to orient and indoctrinate their respective members, organize and schedule members to fulfill duties assigned, provide special opportunities for spiritual enrichment and growth to their respective members, to evaluate periodically the duties and performance of the group and make appropriate recommendations and reports to the general board.
3. Immediately following the general board's first meeting of the church year, these groups shall meet separately to elect a chairperson and vice-chairperson. Additional group meetings shall be called as required by the respective chairperson, vice-chairperson or minister(s).

#### **V. ADMINISTRATIVE MINISTRIES**

**A. MEMBERSHIP:** The membership of the administrative ministries shall be selected in the following manner:

1. The elected officers of the congregation/general board and the minister(s) shall constitute a committee to select the respective chairperson for each administrative ministry.
2. This committee shall then act with the respective chairpersons in the selection of members of each ministry.
3. Chairpersons of all ministries shall be selected from the membership of the elders, deacons and trustees and shall not hold the position of chairperson of the same ministry for more than two consecutive years.

#### **B. RESPONSIBILITIES**

1. The administration of the church's programs and activities shall be carried on by and through designated administrative ministries. Each ministry shall organize and hold regular monthly meetings as needed for planning of its duties and performing the tasks assigned, shall keep its expenditures within the approved budget limit, prepare and submit to the budget committee a full and complete budget for the ensuing year, present written reports at general board meetings and insure a representative attends each cabinet meeting.

2. The duties of the administrative ministries shall be as follows:

- a. The Worship Ministry (WM) shall lead the congregation in its expression of worship and in the enrichment of personal devotional life. It shall be responsible for the public worship of the congregation, its pulpit and communion supply, the administering of all aspects of worship, such as baptism, music, ushering and greeting, acolytes, operation of the sanctuary audio equipment, flowers, banners and all worship services.
- b. The Christian Education Ministry (CEM) shall be responsible for planning and administering the total educational program of the congregation, including the church school, youth activities, library administration, weekday educational programs, leadership education training, distribution of church literature, and fostering of the Christian home.
- c. The Church Growth Ministry (CGM) shall plan and direct a complete and continuing program of evangelism and church growth.
- d. The Membership Ministry (MM) shall maintain close contact with the entire congregation so that each member may function effectively in the life of the church. It shall be active in the pastoral care of the membership; it shall provide a program for the social life of the congregation; it shall foster an atmosphere of welcome for all who attend church functions; and shall be responsible for orienting new members in the life and fellowship of the congregation.
- e. The World Outreach Ministry (WOM) shall create and foster a world vision within the church and lead in planning, educating and administering the world outreach programs of the congregation; it shall recommend the church annual world outreach budget and enlist support for homeland and overseas ministries; promote interdenominational activities, assemblies and conferences.
- f. The Community Outreach Ministry (COM) shall foster the outreach programs of the congregation within the local community; it shall encourage interest in and concern for community needs and social issues; it shall promote inter-denominational activities including sports programs and projects of social action.
- g. The Stewardship Ministry (STM) shall foster within the congregation an understanding of Christian stewardship and direct the financial program of the church. It shall oversee all church fund raising activities authorized by the general board.
- h. The Property Ministry (PM) shall have general care and supervision of all church property and shall make regulations concerning the management and use of it consistent with the general policies of the general board; it shall be responsible for the maintenance of all church property and equipment; it shall study the needs and make recommendations to the general board for the improvement of the church property; it shall keep the property adequately insured against loss or damage, and provide current

property inventory records to be kept in a safe place.

## **VI. CABINET**

### **A. MEMBERSHIP AND MEETINGS**

1. The cabinet shall consist of the chairperson, vice-chairperson, secretary, treasurer, and historian of the congregation, the minister(s), the chairpersons of the administrative ministries, the presidents of each constituency group. The senior minister shall serve as chairperson of the cabinet.
2. The cabinet shall meet monthly as needed and the minister(s) shall call meetings as may be necessary.

### **B. RESPONSIBILITIES**

The cabinet shall consider and coordinate the activities and programs of the congregation and review the procedures of implementing such activities and programs as determined by the general board.

## **VII. POLICY GOVERNING EMPLOYMENT AND RELEASE OF STAFF**

The senior minister, with approval of the personnel committee, shall hire and release staff consistent with budgetary allocations, performance and staff requirements. Each administrative ministry shall recommend employment or release of staff members in its specific area of responsibility. All employment or release of staff members shall be reported to the general board at its next meeting.

## **VIII. POLICY FOR MEMORIALS AND NAMED FUNDS**

- A. The duly elected trustees shall make distribution in their sole discretion, from monies contributed to this congregation for memorials and named funds.
- B. “Memorial” donors are those persons who have honored someone they have loved through a lifetime gift, gift by will or memorial of not to exceed in value the sum of \$1500.
- C. “Named Fund” donors are those persons who have honored someone they have loved through a lifetime gift, gift by will, or memorial exceeding in value the sum of \$1500.

- D. A lifetime gift, gift by will, or memorial contributed by a member or friend of this congregation without naming a specific purpose for which it is to be used (undesignated fund) shall become a part of the permanent endowment fund.
- E. Distributions from the permanent endowment fund shall be used for any purpose designated by the general board of this congregation.
- F. The trustees are authorized and empowered to exercise all rights and powers concerning securities which may be contributed to this congregation as may be exercised lawfully by any person owning similar property in his or her own right.
- G. A trustee shall not be liable for losses which are not attributable to his or her own dishonesty or willful breach of trust.
- H. At the meeting of this congregation's general board next preceding the last regular meeting in any fiscal year, the trustees shall render a statement of the assets and liabilities of the trust estate along with an accounting of transactions and income during the fiscal year to date.

## **IX. AMENDMENTS**

These bylaws may be amended, upon a majority vote of the general board present and voting recommending amendment(s) to the congregation and by a majority vote of the congregation present and voting in stated or special meeting, provided the proposed amendment(s) has been circulated to the congregation by mail or read before the congregation at a regular worship service two weeks prior to the meeting of the congregation at which the amendment(s) is to be considered.