

Church Constitution

PREAMBLE

Of the Church

In submission to Scripture, we confess the purpose of Ruler of Kings Church (RKC) is to glorify God through reverent worship, proclaiming Christ to sinners, and building up our members through preaching the whole counsel of God and observing Christ's sacraments. Because we believe that churches are to be connected with one another through representative presbyters (elders) for the purpose of shepherding, oversight, accountability, and discipline, our affiliation is with the Communion of Reformed Evangelical Churches (CREC).

Doctrinal Standards

The Church of the Lord Jesus Christ has a duty to preserve the faith "once for all delivered to the saints" (Jude 1:3) as well as to preach the whole counsel of God (2 Tim 4:1,2). Throughout history God's people have sought to accomplish this by writing creeds and statements of faith to summarize the most essential elements of biblical doctrine.

When this constitution refers to the RKC Statement of Faith it is referring to the book of confessions which consists of: the Apostles' Creed, the Nicene Creed, The Definition of Chalcedon, and the Westminster Confession of Faith. These confessions are to be used as specified in the Book of Confessions. As a member of the CREC, RKC has adopted Articles I through XII of the CREC Constitution.

MEMBERSHIP AND ELECTORS

Household Membership

Membership in the community of our church will be normally reckoned by household. A household will be eligible when the head of that household:

- a. professes faith in the Lord Jesus Christ (Rom. 10:9-10);
- b. does not unrepentantly contradict that profession through manner of life (Matt. 7:22-23);
- c. has been lawfully baptized in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit (Matt. 28:19);
- d. has residence in our geographical region (Eph. 1:1);
- e. submits to the government of this church (Philemon 2; Heb. 13:7,17).

Membership begins when covenant membership vows have been taken (Philemon 2; Heb. 13:7,17), or when the Session receives a member by transfer. The received member will take public membership vows. The Session (of elders and pastors) maintains records of the membership of the congregation, including baptismal records. As circumstances warrant, individuals from non-member households may join the church.

Independent unmarried members are considered a household for purposes of voting. Individuals may also come under our pastoral care without coming into formal membership as denoted by an action of the Session. As children of member households transition to adulthood, the Session will inquire about each person's membership commitment and apply the policies of membership (below) to each young adult in an annual review of the status of member households. This determination will take into consideration factors such as church attendance, financial independence, spiritual maturity and marital status. The result of this

review will be to continue to consider them as members of the household, release them from our care, or reckon them as individual members.

Release or Transfer of Membership

If any member requests to be released to the care of another Christian church, the Session will release him with a blessing. If members cease regular attendance in order to seek a new church home, or relocate from our geographical area, they are charged to transfer their membership. If no request of membership transfer is made within six months of a member's regular worship attendance, they will be dismissed from membership at the Session's discretion. Members of this church who shall willfully, consistently absent themselves from Lord's Day worship may be subject to the steps of church discipline or be dishonorably erased from membership in the Church at the discretion of the Session.

Communicant Members

The Eucharist is for all the Lord's covenant people. Hence, we practice "open communion" as defined in the following way: We encourage all baptized Christians (not censured under church discipline) to celebrate the feast of the Eucharist and so commune with Christ in His body. The Eucharist is integral to the act of confession, repentance, renewal, and abiding in Christ. Moreover, it is our conviction that the Eucharist should be received by all baptized covenant members who are able to physically eat and drink the elements, including young children being raised in the discipline and admonition of the Lord. Under the headship of Christ, the responsibility for administering the sacraments remains with the Session. The Session shall defer to the view of the head of each household regarding the appropriate age for baptized children to partake of the Eucharist.

Electors

In church elections, voting is done by household. Those households eligible to vote will be called elector households. Moreover, electors also are recognized and heard at a regular heads of households meeting (usually quarterly). For voting purposes, an elector household is defined as a household where the head of that household is a member in good standing. Independent unmarried members are also considered elector households for purposes of voting. Elector households may vote in the elections of elders and deacons. The elders will qualify elector households. Three weeks prior to any church election, a ballot will be provided. Elections will be conducted at appropriate times set by the elders.

SELECTION OF CHURCH OFFICERS

Session Leadership

Christ is the head of the Church (Eph. 5:23) and according to His Word, the form of local congregational government is a plurality of qualified men exercising leadership in the local congregation of believers (1 Pet. 5:1; Phil. 1:1). The office designated for ruling and shepherding the church is the office of elder or presbyter, some of whom are called as elders (1 Tim. 5:17; Tit. 1:5-9). Therefore, under Christ, the ordained authority within the local church is the presbyters or elders in Session. (For a description of the Presbytery's authority over the local church, see the Constitution of the Communion of Reformed Evangelical Churches.)

The session contains two distinct callings or offices. The first is called to a didactic ministry of the Word, called by us a teaching elder (Eph. 4:11-12; 1 Pet. 5:2-4; 1 Tim. 5:17, 1 Cor. 12:28; James 3:1). The second is called to government and rule according to the Word, called by us a ruling elder, whose function is shared by all elders (1 Tim. 5:17; 1 Thess. 5:12-13; Heb. 13:7, 17; Rom. 12:8; 1 Cor. 12:28). Each elder will have his

calling and office acknowledged by the elders in session. In all meetings of the session of presbyters, each elder has one vote.

Elders

Elections will be held from time to time as circumstances warrant. A man may be considered as a potential elder in several ways. He may aspire to the office himself (1 Tim. 3:1), the elders may approach him, or the people of the church may suggest his name to the elders. Once he becomes a candidate, the elders will examine the candidate with regard to his doctrine and manner of life. If the candidate has any disagreement or mental reservation about any portion of the church's Confession of Faith or Constitution, then he must inform the elders of it. All candidates must meet the qualifications for the office set down in Scripture (1 Tim. 3:1-7; Tit. 1:5-9; 1 Pet. 5:2-4).

A man may not be placed on the ballot without the unanimous consent of the current elders. Once on the ballot, the electors of the church have the option of voting either "yes" or "no."

If the candidate receives the unanimous support of the church as represented (Phil. 2:1-4), the elders will ordain the new elder to the ministry of eldership through the laying on of hands and prayer.

The requirement for unanimity may be set aside only through the unanimous consent of the elders, and that only after the elders have carefully considered any objections in the light of Scripture. The elders will set aside such objections if it is clear the objections are unscriptural or unwarranted. However, refusal to overturn these objections does not constitute agreement with the objections on the part of the elders.

If the objections are overturned, then one of the elders will meet with those who objected to discuss the elders' decision.

If a candidate for office is not elected, then one of the elders will meet with him within one week to discuss the election and answer any questions the candidate might have.

Once installed, the elder will serve for life, unless he resigns or is removed.

Deacons

Once nominated, a candidate for deacon will be included by the deacons in their work in order to prove his fitness for office (1 Tim. 3:10).

When in their judgment, the candidate has demonstrated this, the deacons will make a recommendation, after a four-fifths majority vote, to the elders to place his name on the ballot. If, in the judgment of the elders, the candidate receives the clear and obvious support of the church as represented, the elders will ordain him through laying on of hands and prayer (Acts 6:6).

When ordained, deacon will vow:

"As God is my witness, I solemnly vow that I will serve this church faithfully as a servant of Christ, and will maintain godly order in my life and my household as the Word of God requires."

DUTIES OF CHURCH OFFICERS

Elders

Under Christ, the authority of the local church is the board of elders or presbyters in session. The elders are collectively responsible to oversee the following:

- a. Ruling/shepherding (1 Pet. 5:1-2).
- b. Equipping (Eph. 4:11-12).
- c. Prayer/fasting (Acts 6:4; 13:1-3).
- d. Administering baptism and the Lord's Table (Matt. 28:19-20; 1 Cor. 11:23-26).
- e. Administering church discipline and restoration (1 Cor. 5:1-5).
- f. Visiting the sick (Jas. 5:14-15).
- g. Delegating responsibilities to the deacons, hiring and firing church staff, defining the responsibilities of church staff, delegating responsibilities to the staff of subordinate ministries, and approving the annual budget.
- h. Commissioning or licensing ministerial students, and overseeing the course of their training for the eldership. Under the guidance and oversight of the board of elders, such commissioned individuals will have the opportunity to perform all the various ministerial functions of elders, participation in the rule of the church being the only exception.

Teaching elders have the additional responsibility of teaching/preaching (1 Tim. 5:17).

Elder business will be conducted at the weekly meeting or at special meetings called for the purpose. In order to establish a quorum for regular business, at least half of the active elders must be present; for votes requiring a four-fifths majority, at least three-quarters of the active elders must be present in order for quorum to be established. The elders will rotate the responsibility of chairing meetings, and will appoint a secretary to record minutes. Individual elders are responsible for those duties delegated to them by the elders in session, as recorded in the minutes, with due regard to their gifts, abilities, and desires.

Elders whose assigned duties preclude them from providing for their families in the ordinary way will be compensated by the church (1 Tim. 5:17-18).

Deacons

Under the general oversight of the elders, the deacons manage the financial, physical, social, and benevolent functions of the church (Acts 6:2-4). Such responsibilities include preparing and administering the annual budget, building maintenance, deacon's fund, fellowship meals, administrative review of subordinate ministries, preparation of communion elements, and office support.

The business of the deacons will be conducted at their regular meeting, or at special meetings called for that purpose. The deacons will appoint a moderator for their meetings. The deacons will give a general report of

their work at each heads of household meeting, provide a quarterly financial report to the church, and an annual report to the elders with proposals for the coming year.

Individual deacons are responsible for those duties assigned to them by the deacons, as recorded in the minutes, with due regard to their gifts and desires.

Administering the Deacons' Fund

The Deacons' Fund is available to members of RKC to meet pressing needs.

- a. In the benevolent functions of the church, the deacons are responsible to maintain the biblical standard of money, charity, work, and related issues (Gal. 6:10; 2 Thess. 3:4-16; Eph. 4:28; 1 Tim. 5:3-4, 8; Is. 10:1-4).
- b. When a need is made known through the elders, deacons, or members of the church, the deacons will examine the scope and urgency of the need and present it to the elders. Upon approval by the elders, the family or individual will be placed on the Deacons' Fund until the need is met or they are removed for other reasons.
- c. Upon being placed on the list for the Deacons' Fund, the head of the household will be asked to submit an acceptable household budget to the deacons within thirty days. A deacon or elder will be assigned to review the family budget and give counsel and financial advice as necessary.
- d. If able, the head of the household is required to work at a full-time job.
- e. The household will be discouraged from receiving public assistance in the form of food stamps or direct welfare payments, not including medical reimbursements or assistance.
- f. In case of one-time needs exceeding \$1000, the deacons will seek elder approval for the expenditure at the next regular elder meeting. If the need cannot be met from the Deacons' Fund, the deacons may seek elder approval to move funds from general savings to meet the need. A household budget will not be required for one-time needs paid in full from the Deacons' Fund. However, a budget will be requested by the deacons if the family stays on the list for the Deacons' Fund after that particular need is met.
- g. Families supported by the Deacons' Fund will be visited by a deacon at least once a month to ensure their financial needs are being met. Budget counseling will be provided by the deacons when necessary. If there are spiritual matters which need attention, the deacons will notify the elders. The deacons will report regularly to the elders on the status of families remaining on the list for the Deacons' Fund more than three months.
- h. Indigent giving will be decided by the deacons on a case-by-case basis. As a general rule the deacons will not disburse money to indigents, but will purchase items necessary to meet basic needs in such areas as food, clothing, shelter, and travel.

Christian Education Fund

The Christian Education Fund is a special category of the Deacons' Fund.

- a. Monies from the fund will be available to help qualified families with expenses associated with providing a biblical education for their dependent children, whether for homeschooling, tutorial

services, or a private Christian school. The fund will be supplied as an item in the annual budget and through designated gifts.

- b. In ordinary situations, the family concerned will be asked to show its commitment to Christian education through providing as much for their children's education as their budget will allow. In extraordinary situations, the entire cost may be borne by the fund.
- c. Whenever possible, payments will be made directly to the school, tutorial service, textbook supplier, etc.
- d. Recipients of the Christian Education Fund must qualify fully for the Deacons' Fund.
- e. In addition to Deacons' Fund criteria, the following standards also apply. The elders must have reason to believe that, due to personal or financial constraints, the children are likely to receive non-Christian or substandard Christian education. The family will receive consistent pastoral counseling for the duration of support from the fund, consistent with the circumstances. The deacons will verify that the fund is not being used to pay tuition in such a way as to receive a tax write-off.
- f. Recipients must be reapproved in July for the following school year. After a family has received support for one school year, the deacons will assign a member to review the family's household budget and help them set up a plan to assume the entire cost of their children's education.

Resignation of Elders or Deacons

If an elder or deacon desires to resign or take a leave of absence, he will present a letter to the elders. At the first appropriate monthly household meeting, the elders will notify the men of the church of their receipt of the letter. If the desire of the elder or deacon concerned is unchanged by the following full session meeting, the elders will issue a statement accepting the resignation, or approving the leave of absence. If the resignation is sought for reasons of moral or doctrinal irregularity, the resignation will not be a substitute for any appropriate biblical discipline. Leaves of absence will not be granted as a form of discipline.

REMOVAL OF CHURCH OFFICERS

If a church officer believes himself to be qualified to continue in office, but two or three believers hold that he is disqualified, these two or three witnesses should request a special session of the elder board where they would be allowed to present their case (1 Tim. 5:19). If the elders decide that the case has merit, with a four-fifths majority, that church officer, depending on the gravity of the charges and his response to the correction, will be rebuked in the presence of the heads of households (1 Tim. 5:20), or will be removed from the office of elder or deacon (as the case may be) (1 Tim. 3:1-7; Tit. 1:5-9), or both.

While RKC encourages her pastor(s) toward a long-term view of the ministry, in the providence of God, changes in a pastor's call to a particular church arise for both righteous and sinful reasons. In cases involving moral failures requiring disciplinary proceedings, the disciplinary process for the removal of a pastor is the same as for other officers. For cases that do not involve moral failures or disciplinary proceedings (e.g., Acts 15:33-41, Romans 15:22-33, 1 Corinthians 16:5-12), the procedure for terminating the call of a pastor, thereby dismissing him from service at RKC, is as follows: If a pastor desires to terminate his call, he shall duly inform the session of his desire. In the case of an involuntary termination of his call, a pastor may be recommended for dismissal from service at RKC by a four-fifths majority vote of the session (excluding said pastor). In such a case, the pastor may have recourse to the electors by calling for a vote to either sustain his

call as pastor or not (with an option to abstain). If the electors sustain his call by a two-thirds majority vote, the other elders must afterwards either concede to his call or refer the matter to the Communion of Reformed Evangelical Churches for binding arbitration.

CHURCH DISCIPLINE

The ordinary course of discipline is informal. Members are encouraged to self-discipline, overlooking the failings of others in love (1 Pet. 4:8), and encouraging other members to covenant faithfulness (Matt. 18:15).

Formal church discipline is applied through the formal action and a four-fifths majority of the elders. Except in cases of scandal requiring immediate action, the pattern of church discipline will generally include formal private admonishment by two or three (Matt. 18:16), formal public admonishment and suspension from the Supper (2 Thess. 3:14- 15), and a formal hearing which may result in excommunication (Matt. 18:17).

Any communicant member may be disciplined by the church. Un-baptized members of member households are subject to pastoral admonishment from the church, but not excommunication. Christians who attend church regularly, but are non-members, are subject to pastoral admonishment from the church, but not excommunication. If another church has disciplined one of its members, and that person subsequently comes to our church, the elders will decide whether to honor the discipline of the other church after due consultation with the person concerned and after all appropriate information is sought from the disciplining church.

The elders shall establish the specific procedures for all formal discipline on a case-by-case basis, as appropriate to the circumstances and individuals involved. However, at minimum these procedures should include a clear and timely warning of the individual that he is in the process of formal discipline, two or three visits or communications involving two or three witnesses, and clear records and/or minutes of the entire proceedings kept by the elders.

When the elders determine that a hearing is necessary, they will establish the specific procedures for each trial on a case-by-case basis, as appropriate to the circumstances and individuals involved. However, at minimum these procedures should include informing the accused in writing of the specific charges, the time, place, and date of the trial, and ample time for the accused to prepare a defense.

The heads of households meeting will be informed of the hearing at the first opportunity. At the hearing, one of the elders will present a solemn charge from the Scriptures on the responsibilities of those present, the evidence against the accused will be presented, and the accused will have time to make a reasonable defense, including the right to question any witnesses.

At a separate meeting of the elders, a vote will be taken on each of the charges. A four-fifths majority is required for a guilty verdict. A final vote of excommunication should be taken. A four-fifths majority is required for excommunication. If the vote fails to get a four-fifths majority, the party should be returned to full fellowship. The elders will declare their verdict to the congregation on an appointed Lord's day, following an appropriate exhortation. The accused will be given a written copy of the verdict. The elders will establish an official file containing all the records pertaining to the hearing, including all pertinent correspondence, transcripts, and minutes. If he requests it, the accused will be given one copy of this file at the expense of the church. Any appeals to presbytery will be conducted in accordance with the Constitution of the CREC.

Excommunication will end when in the opinion, decided by a four-fifths majority, of the elders the one under discipline has repented. A confession of this repentance will be read to the congregation on the Lord's Day, and the elders shall formally announce the end of the discipline and restoration of fellowship.

SUBORDINATE MINISTRIES

The elders may unanimously delegate to an individual or board the executive authority of any subordinate ministry established by the elders. This executive responsibility continues at the pleasure of the elders. In order to dismiss such an individual, or remove someone from such a board, a two-thirds vote of the elders is required. Separation of a subordinate ministry from RKC may be authorized by a unanimous vote of the elders. All formal actions concerning subordinate ministries will be entered in the minutes of the elders' meetings.

AMENDMENTS

The RKC Confession of Faith and Constitution may be amended through a four-fifths majority vote of the elders. The proposed change will be made available to the congregation, and after the elders have sought due consultation with the heads of households of the church at a heads of households meeting, the amendment may be confirmed at the next full session meeting of the elders.

We confess that this constitution is a fallible work of fallible men and may be set aside (with the Statement of Faith excepted) without the process of amendment by the judgment of the elders, decided by a four-fifths majority vote. However, if obedience to Scripture requires it, such exceptions should be presented to the heads of households as amendments to this constitution.

DISSOLUTION OF THE CONGREGATION

Upon dissolution of the congregation of RKC, the assets of the church shall be distributed to other churches in the Communion of Reformed Evangelical Churches.

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Amendments and Changes: This Constitution was duly received and unanimously approved in June 2024.