



CLEARCREEK
CH A P E L

Book of Faith and Order

*Truths We Treasure
&
Principles that Govern Us*

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Book of Faith and Order

Clearcreek Chapel

Section 1: Prologue

To display the supreme worth of His glory, God has chosen to save a people and call them out of the world so that they might assemble themselves together in local congregations or churches. Throughout history, these local, gathered communities of the Lord have drawn up confessions of faith summarizing what they believed the Bible to be teaching. They have also drawn up By-laws as a means to function corporately.

Therefore, this gathered church has drawn up this Book of Faith and Order as our Confession, Covenant, and Constitution, organizing ourselves under the name, *Clearcreek Chapel*. We also will refer to ourselves as *The Chapel*.

1. The Truths We Treasure

The Elders have developed *The Truths We Treasure* as the basic statement of doctrine that each member of the church must believe and affirm. It is worded simply so as to be accessible to all, including new Christians, and can be affirmed by all with a clear conscience.

2. The Truths We Teach

The Elders have developed *The Truths We Teach* as a more detailed, confessional statement of doctrine. Affirming and submitting to these truths is required of all teachers, elders, and deacons/deaconesses of the church. This document is not a part of the *Book of Faith and Order*, but is under regular review and development by the Elders who update it as needed.

3. The Constitution that Governs Us

The Elders have developed *The Principles that Govern Us* as our governing principles. These are necessary as we work out how we are to function as a church and community. We have chosen, rather than writing extensive, detailed legislation, to articulate the principles on which our order is based, to write what few applications are necessary to establish order and guide governance, and to maintain what policies are necessary for day-to-day governance. In order to achieve this, the Elders will maintain a *Chapel Ministry Handbook* that is available to the congregation.

Section 2: Faith: The Truths We Treasure

We believe that the Scriptures of the Old and New Testament are verbally inspired of God, inerrant and infallible in the original writings (2 Timothy 3:16; 1 Peter 1:20-21; 1 Corinthians 2:1-16), and are our supreme and final authority in all matters of life and faith (2 Peter 1:1-11). In *The Truths We Treasure* and *The Truths We Teach* we summarize what we believe the Bible teaches. However, the Scriptures themselves are the final rule of faith and order for this congregation and the ultimate authority to which we will appeal (2 Timothy 3:15-17; 2 Peter 1:19-21; Romans 15:4; 1 Thessalonians 2:13; 1 Corinthians 2:13).

The following statements of truth must be affirmed by anyone desiring to become a member of the church.

1. God

We believe in the one true and living God, eternally existing in three Persons: the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. Our God exists to glorify and enjoy Himself forever. He is infinite in being and perfection, a spirit invisible, personal, omnipresent, eternal, dependent on none, unchanging, truthful, trustworthy, almighty, sovereign, omniscient, righteous, holy, good, loving, merciful, long-suffering, and gracious. (Exodus 3:13-14; 34:4-7; Deuteronomy 6:1-9; 1 Kings 8:27; Nehemiah 9:32-33; Job 22:2-3; Psalm 5:4-8; 90:1-2; 95:1-7; 115:1-7; 119:65-68; 145:17-20; Proverbs 16:4; Isaiah 6:1-3; 40:10-31; 46:9-13; Jeremiah 10:10; 23:23-24; Daniel 4:34-35; Malachi 3:6; Matthew 28:16-20; John 1:1-18; 4:21-24; 14:1-11; 15:26-27; Acts 7:2-50; 20:28; Romans 11:33-36; 1 Corinthians 8:5-6; 2 Corinthians 13:14; Galatians 4:4-7; Hebrews 4:12-13; 11:6; Revelation 4:8; 5:11-14)

2. Holy Scriptures

We believe that Almighty God has revealed all that is necessary for life and faith in the sixty-six books of the Holy Scripture, which are the Word of God. All Scripture was given by inspiration by God; that is, it is God-breathed as holy men of old wrote, being borne along by the Holy Spirit. The Scriptures are infallible and inerrant in the original writings and are the final arbiter in all disputes. Its authority is derived from its Author and not from the opinions of men. (Matthew 5:18; 24:35; John 10:35; 16:12-13; 17:17; 1 Corinthians 2:7-14; 1 Thessalonians 2:13; 2 Timothy 3:15-17; Hebrews 4:12; 2 Peter 1:20-21; Revelation 1:1-3; 22:6,18-19)

3. Creation and Federal Headship

We believe that God created the universe from nothing and all that is in it in six literal days, declaring it all very good. We further believe that God made Adam and Eve in His image — perfect, holy, and upright — to exercise dominion over all creation. Adam was appointed representative and head of the human race so that his obedience or disobedience to God's commands were imputed and transmitted to all his offspring. (Genesis 1:1-2:2; Psalm 19:1-6; 90:1-2; Isaiah 40:25-26; John 1:1-3; Romans 1:18-20; 2:14-15; Colossians 1:15-16; Hebrews 1:1-2)

4. Fall and Creation

We believe that Adam fell from his original righteousness into sin and brought upon himself and all his offspring physical and spiritual death, depravity, condemnation, and the state of being sinners. (Genesis 2:15-17; 3:1-24; 6:5-7; Psalm 14:1-3; 51:1-5; Jeremiah

17:9-10; Romans 3:9-20; 5:12-21; 6:15-23; 1 Corinthians 15:20-49; Titus 1:15-16; Ephesians 2:1-3; Colossians 1:21-23; Hebrews 2:14-18)

5. Depravity and Sinfulness

We believe that it is utterly beyond the power of fallen man to love God, to keep His laws, to understand the Gospel, to repent of sin, or to trust in Christ. (Jeremiah 17:9; John 3:3-5; 8:43 Romans 3:9-19; Colossians 1:21-23; Ephesians 2:1-3; Titus 1:15-16)

6. Election

We believe that God, before the foundation of the world, decreed all that comes to pass, but in no way being the author of sin and for His own glory, chose a host of men and women to eternal life as an act of free and sovereign grace. This choice was in no way dependent upon God's foresight of human faith, decision, works, or merit. (Numbers 23:19; Isaiah 46:9-10; Matthew 25:34; Luke 10:17-20; John 6:35-40; 10:22-30; 17:1-26; 19:8-11; Acts 4:27-28; 27:1-44; Romans 9:14-29; 11:1-6; 33-36; Ephesians 1:1-6; 1:3-14; 1 Thessalonians 1:4-6; 2 Thessalonians 2:13-15; 1 Timothy 5:21; Hebrews 6:16-17; James 1:13-15; 1 Peter 1:1-9; 2 Peter 1:10-11; Jude 3-4)

7. Incarnation

We believe that God sent His Son, Jesus Christ into the world, conceived of the virgin Mary by the Holy Spirit, unchangeably sinless, both God and man, born under the Law, to live a perfect life of righteousness on behalf of His people. (Psalm 2:1-12; Isaiah 7:14; 9:6-8; 42:1-4; 52:13-53:12; Matthew 1:18-25; Luke 1:26-33; 1:26-56; John 1:1-18; 17:1-12; Acts 3:22-23; 17:29-31; Romans 3:21-26; 8:1-4, 28-30; Galatians 4:4; Ephesians 1:15-23; 1 Timothy 2:1-6; Hebrews 1:1-4; 2:14-18; 9:11-14; 1 Peter 1:17-20)

8. Redemption

We believe that God's Son died on the cross to effect propitiation, reconciliation, redemption, and atonement for His people. God bore testimony to His acceptance of His Son's completed redemptive work by raising Him from the dead. (Isaiah 53:4-5, 10-12; Matthew 26:36-38; 27:45-46; John 10:14-18; 20:24-31; Romans 1:4)

9. Ascension and Heavenly Ministry

We believe that God's Son ascended to the right hand of His Father and is enthroned in glory, where He intercedes on behalf of His people and rules over all things as sovereign Lord for the praise of His glory. (Acts 1:1-11; 10:39-43; Romans 8:31-39; 1 Corinthians 15:1-8; 2 Corinthians 5:21; Philippians 2:5-11; Hebrews 9:23-28; 10:5-10; 1 Peter 3:18; 2 Peter 3:1-18)

10. Regeneration

We believe that God the Father has poured out the Holy Spirit to work alongside the preached Word. The Spirit of God regenerates the elect sinners, drawing them irresistibly to Himself by giving the gifts of faith in Christ the Savior and repentance towards God. (John 1:12-13; 3:5-8; 10:25-30; Ephesians 2:4-10; James 1:18; 2 Timothy 2:9)

11. Justification

We believe that God calls to Himself the elect in all ages. He justifies them solely on account of the imputed righteousness of Jesus Christ, which they receive through

faith alone. This faith must always be accompanied by works, though these works do not merit salvation in any way. (Romans 3:24; 8:30; 4:5-8; 5:17-19 10:9-13; 1 Corinthians 1:30-31; 2 Corinthians 5:21; Ephesians 1:7; 2:8-10; Philippians 3:8-9)

12. Salvation, Sanctification and Preservation

We believe that those people whom God calls, regenerates, and justifies will believe the gospel, repent of their sins, and acknowledge Jesus Christ as Sovereign Lord. His grace causes them to persevere in holiness by growing in sanctification and the putting off of sin by the Holy Spirit and never finally falling away. (John 10:28-29; Romans 6:14; 7:18,23; 8:13, 28-30; 2 Corinthians 3:18; 7:1; Galatians 5:17; Philippians 1:6; 2 Timothy 2:19; Hebrews 6:17-18; 1 Peter 1:3-9; 22-23; 2 Peter 3:18)

13. Adoption

We believe that all those who have been redeemed receive the adoption as sons and thus all the privileges of a parent and child relationship with God, including being delivered from the slavery of the Old Covenant, having the inner witness of the Spirit who enables them to recognize God as their Father, receiving the glorified body, and being designated to jointly inherit all that has been promised to God's Son. (Psalm 103:13; Proverbs 14:26; Isaiah 54:8-9; John 1:10-13; Romans 8:14-25; 2 Corinthians 6:18; Galatians 4:1-7; Ephesians 1:5; 4:30; Hebrews 12:4-6; Revelation 3:11-13)

14. Ordinances

We believe that baptism by immersion and the Lord's Supper are gospel ordinances belonging only to regenerated believers. The ordinances have no saving merit for they are emblems and types of spiritual realities, not the realities themselves. Baptism is a responsibility of each believer to declare one's allegiance to Christ. (Matthew 3:16-17; 28:18-20; Acts 2:14-41; 8:12-40; 16:25-40; 18:7-8; Romans 6:1-4; 1 Corinthians 10:14-17; 11:26) The Lord's Table is an expression of our communion with Christ and with one another. (Matthew 26:17-30; 1 Corinthians 10:14-21; 11:17-34; Hebrews 9:11-28)

15. Church

We believe that the local church is under the authority of Christ alone who rules through His Word and is governed by a plurality of men called elders who shepherd the church. The communion of saints, however, requires recognition of and fellowship with other churches. (Matthew 20:24-28; Acts 20: 17,28; Ephesians 4:12-14; 1 Peter 5:1-4)

16. Eschatology

We believe that the Lord Jesus Christ shall come again to raise the dead, both the righteous and the unrighteous. The righteous shall enjoy everlasting life with God, and the wicked shall endure everlasting, conscious punishment away from the presence of God's glory. (Genesis 3:17-19; Job 19:25-27; Ecclesiastes 12:1-8; Isaiah 26:19; Daniel 12:1-4; Matthew 25:31-46; John 5:28-29; Luke 16:19-31; 23:32-43; Acts 24:14-16; Romans 9:19-26; 1 Corinthians 15:35-56; 2 Corinthians 5:1-8; Philippians 1:21-26; 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18; 2 Thessalonians 1:5-10; Hebrews 12:22-24; Jude 3-7; Revelation 22:12-21)

Section 3: Order: The Principles that Govern Us

The members of Clearcreek Chapel constitute, establish, and willingly submit themselves to the following articles. This Ohio nonprofit religious organization has its principal offices in the proximity of Springboro, Ohio.

Article 1. Our Shared Mission

By God's grace and through His Word, we will cultivate in the hearts of God's people a passion for the supremacy of the Lord Jesus Christ *magnified* in love for Him and *manifested* in love for one another and multiplied by love for the lost.

Article 2. Our Threefold Purposes

The church exists to glorify God (Ephesians 3:21). The universal church is the redeemed people of God placed into the Body of Christ. The local church is the people of God gathered together in localities: to carry out the Great Commission (Matthew 28:18-20) as the Kingdom of God in this world (Colossians 1:13-14), to meet regularly together in an outward worship that expresses inward and spiritual truths (John 4:23-24; Hebrews 10:19-25; 12:18-29), and to encourage, edify, and build up one another. Therefore, we exist as a church for the following primary purposes:

1. Exaltation: Our *Doxological* Purpose

Exaltation is all that we do in terms of pursuing God in worship. This is the overarching purpose of the church. The church exists to glorify God and to enjoy Him forever.

2. Edification: Our *Discipleship* Purpose

Edification is all that we do to know God better, to please Him in every facet of life, to learn, to believe, to understand and to obey the Scriptures fully, and to love God and one another in each sphere of life as we grow in Christ-likeness.

3. Evangelism: Our *Declarative* Purpose

Evangelism is all that we do to proclaim the gospel to every people group in order to see all of God's elect brought into His Kingdom.

Article 3. Our Shaping Vision

1. Savoring the Supremacy of God

Our vision is to magnify God as the all-satisfying object of the believer's life in worship and service, here and forever.

2. Studying the Word of God

Our vision is to work out both the large picture and the immediate texts in Holy Spirit enabled exposition and application in the public and private ministry of the Word of God.

3. Shaping the People of God

Our vision is to see minds, affections, and wills transformed by the Word of God so that God is magnified by an obeying faith in every sphere of life.

4. Spreading the Gospel of God

Our vision is to proclaim the gospel to all the people groups so that God is glorified in every tribe, language, and people group.

Article 4. Our Church Government

1. The Lord Jesus Christ -- The Head and Chief Shepherd of the Church

We joyfully submit to Christ alone as the Head of His body, the church. We acknowledge Him as our Chief Shepherd. We recognize that He governs His church through the Holy Scriptures as the full and final authority in all matters of faith, church order, and discipline. While we may also seek the assistance and counsel of other churches when special concerns arise; we are neither accountable to, nor under the jurisdiction of, nor under the direct supervision of, any other ecclesiastical body. This congregation may never encourage, support, fellowship, or cooperate with any church or group which permits the presence of apostasy or undermines fundamental tenets of the Gospel by what it teaches or denies (Acts 15:1-35; Ephesians 1:22-23; Colossians 1:18; 2 Timothy 3:12-17; 2 Peter 1:19-21).

2. The Elders -- The Servant-Leaders in the Church

A plurality of elders shall lead this local church according to the Scriptures. These men shall at all times and in all activities stand under the authority of Christ and His Word. The Elders shall collectively and individually oversee, provide for, and encourage the spiritual life, welfare and total ministry of the congregation by equipping the saints for service so that they build up the body of Christ. This will result in believers who are mature, Christ-like, stable in doctrine, and not susceptible to false doctrine. The Elders, as a body, shall exercise authoritative and decisive leadership, but they must do so as servant-leaders and faithful stewards in the community, not as lords and dictators (Matthew 20:24-28; Acts 20: 17,28; Ephesians 4:12-14; 1 Peter 5:1-4).

3. The Deacons/Deaconesses -- The Servant-Ministers in the Church

The church itself is the ministering community (Ephesians 4:12-16). The church identifies the men and women who will be in charge of the day-to-day ministry and

work of the church. They are appointed by the Elders to lead or serve in ministry, serving as Deacons/Deaconesses (Acts 6:1-6) so as to free the Elders for their ministry of the Word.

Article 5. Articles of Faith

1. Scripture Alone as the Final Authority

The Scripture alone is the final and ultimate authority in all matters related to the Christian life. Since God's Word remains the final authority for this community, statements of doctrine contained herein do not bind this congregation in a strict and absolute sense but are confessed together to assist its leaders and members in the event that controversy should arise.

2. Truths Confessed by the Membership

All members of the Chapel shall confess their submission to the central truths of Biblical Christianity as summarized in Section 2: *Faith: The Truths We Treasure*. All members shall demonstrate both a willingness to abide by this *Book of Faith and Order* and a sincere desire to grow in their understanding of the Scriptures and the truths we teach.

3. Truths Confessed by the Ministry Leaders

All teachers, all members of our deaconate, and all missionaries commissioned by and sent out from the Clearcreek Chapel will confess their essential agreement with *The Truths We Teach* and teach in full harmony with it.

4. Truths Taught by the Elders

All elders of the Chapel will wholeheartedly confess their essential agreement with and teach in full harmony with *The Truths We Teach*. This statement has been adopted by the Elders as a brief systematic theology, helping them to develop and communicate a Biblical worldview that grounds the members of the church in the faith so that they will mature spiritually and become better equipped to glorify and serve God (1 Peter 3:15).

Article 6. Membership

1. Definition and Function

All those who have been born of the Holy Spirit and have put their faith in Jesus Christ are immediately placed into the universal church, the body of Christ, of which He is the head (1 Corinthians 12:12-20; Ephesians 1:22). All believers in Christ should join with a local church, thus becoming members of a clearly defined local community of believers (Acts 2:41-47; 14:21-23; Hebrews 10:25).

2. Chapel Covenant

Recognizing our responsibility to obey all the Scriptures and the need to distinguish ourselves from the world as a community of believers, all members shall affirm their commitment to please God in all areas of life by entering into this covenant:

Humbly depending on the Holy Spirit's enabling and aiding us, and affirming *The Truths We Treasure*, WE COVENANT TO GLORIFY GOD by striving:

- To walk in obedience to the Scriptures by loving the Lord God with all our heart, all our souls, and all our minds;
- To walk in harmony with our fellow Christians by loving them as we love ourselves;
- To be faithful in our witnessing, to uphold our testimony, to defend the doctrines of the Word of God, and to expand the Kingdom of God;
- To be faithful in edifying, exhorting, rebuking, discipling, encouraging, praying for, and meeting the needs of the Body of Christ;
- To exercise our spiritual gifts to build up and to serve one another;
- To be submissive to one another in Christian love;
- To regularly attend the services of the church and not forsake the assembling of ourselves together;
- To be submissive to the God-ordained elders as to those who give an account for our souls;
- To give heed to the ministry of the Word;
- To attend the ordinances of the church faithfully, approaching them in a serious, spiritual, and holy attitude;
- To honor the Lord in our finances in all things including regular, proportionate giving to the church;
- To be consistent in our own study of the Word;
- To love our wives as Christ loved the church or to submit to our husbands and to teach and train our children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord;
- To extend the Lordship of Christ into all areas of our lives;
- To abstain from practices harmful to our physical bodies and injurious to our testimony;
- To purpose that if we relocate we will, as soon as possible, unite with another church of like faith, where we can carry out the spirit of this Covenant and the principles of God's Word.

(Proverbs 13:24; 23:13; 29:15; Malachi 3:8-11; Acts 2:42, 47; Romans 8:3-4; 1 Corinthians 15:16:2; 2 Corinthians 5:11-21; 12:13; Ephesians 4:11-14; 5:23-24; 6:1-4; Philippians 1:3-6; Colossians 4:2-4; 2 Timothy 3:16-4:4; Hebrews 10:24, 25; 13:17; James 2:12; 5:13-14; 1 Peter 2:5,9; 3:7; 1 John 2:19).

3. Requirements for Membership

Any person who desires to unite in membership with the Chapel must profess repentance toward God and faith in Jesus Christ as Savior, submit to Him as Lord and Sovereign, be Biblically baptized following this profession, and must not be under Biblically administered church discipline. Having met these requirements, this person shall joyfully enter into this Covenant with this people, expressing willingness to follow the beliefs and practices of this community, and evidencing willingness to submit to its Elders.

4. Admission to Membership

The Elders shall be responsible to receive applicants into membership. This shall include reviewing the application, conducting an interview, and evaluating their standing when coming from another church. Upon determining that the applicants meet the requirements, the Elders shall present them to the church as members.

5. Categories of Membership

Resident Membership is for those active, participating members who comprise the majority of the Chapel. **Associate Membership**, having all the privileges and responsibilities of membership except that of voting, may be extended by the Elders to those who will be absent for an extended period of time, or who are at the Chapel for a short period of time and wish to minister while maintaining membership in their home churches.

6. Congregational Voting Privilege

To be eligible to vote at congregational meetings, one must be a resident member on the day of the vote, at least sixteen (16) years of age, in attendance at the meeting and not have forfeited their voting privilege by being placed on the inactive list or being subject to discipline. The Chapel may permit absentee ballots in exceptional circumstances as requested of and granted by the Elders on a case-by-case basis.

7. Removal from Membership

Membership will end by physical death, transfer of membership to churches holding to Biblical doctrine, or by the process of corrective discipline ending in excommunication. Members, who, for three months are absent willingly from the meetings or the ministries of the Chapel, shall be placed on an inactive list and shall be subject to removal.

8. Corrective Discipline

The Scriptures require us to implement the Biblical steps in discipline. The primary aim of all steps of discipline is the repentance and restoration of the erring member. Failing that, the aim is to protect the purity of the church and the reputation of Christ.

8.A. One-on-One Attempt to Restore

Any member of the Chapel having *factual knowledge* of an erring member's heresy, sin, or refusal to be reconciled must approach that person in private, loving confrontation, and seek his or her restoration (Matthew 18:15; Galatians 6:1-2).

8.B. One or Two Witnesses Attempt to Restore

If, after repeated attempts, the erring member refuses to heed such warnings, then the warning member should return, privately, with one or two witnesses. These witnesses, after self-examination and prayer, should adjudicate the matter and seek to reconcile the parties and/or to restore the erring member (Matthew 18:16, 19-20).

8.C. Members Attempt to Restore

8.C.1. Stage 1 — Report to The Elders

If the witnesses determine that the erring member refuses to heed such warnings, they should report the matter to the Elders, who are responsible to keep watch over the flock (Hebrews 13:17). At this stage, the witnesses along with the Elders, after self-examination and prayer, should adjudicate the matter and seek to reconcile the parties and/or to restore the erring member (Matthew 18:16, 19-20).

8.C.2. Stage 2 — Report to the Membership

If the erring member continues to refuse to heed such warnings, the Elders will report the matter to the members of the Chapel, requiring them to associate with the erring member *only to warn him or her of their error*. During this sobering time, the erring member will be excluded from participation in the Lord's Table and the privileges of membership, according to the guidelines of Scripture (Matthew 18:17; 1 Corinthians 5:9-11; 2 Thessalonians 3:6, 14-15). Further, according to 1 Corinthians 5:1-13, if the sin is public, known to the congregation, and not repented of, the Elders may go immediately to this step when they have found it impossible to implement the informal and private steps first.

8.D. Excommunication

8.D.1. Upon Unrepentance

If, after members of the Chapel have attempted to restore the erring member, he or she still refuses to repent, he or she shall be publicly dismissed from the Chapel, and the congregation will be instructed to treat him or her as an unbeliever on the grounds of his or her unrepentance (Matthew 18:17-18; 1 Corinthians 5:4-5, 13; 1 Timothy 1:18-20). Any church that receives a member under discipline into their number shall be informed of that person's status.

8.D.2. Upon Resignation

If, during any of the steps of corrective discipline, the erring member seeks to resign from the membership of the Chapel, the Elders shall accept the resignation. The Elders shall in such instances report the reasons for the resignation to the members, publicly disclosing any unresolved issues, and instructing the congregation to treat the resigning member as an unbeliever on the grounds of his or her unrepentance (Matthew 18:17 and 1 Corinthians 5:9-11). Any church that receives a member under discipline into their number shall be informed of that person's status.

8.E. Restoration of the Erring Member

8.E.1. At the Informal and Private Level of Discipline

If the erring member repents at the informal and private level of discipline (Section 3:Article 6.8.A and Section 3:Article 6.8.B), or the sin is not known publicly, then repentance, confession, and restoration shall be private (Matthew 18:15-16; Luke 17:3-4; Ephesians 4:32; Colossians 3:13).

8.E.2. Formal and Public Level of Discipline

If the discipline proceeds to the formal level of public disclosure before the congregation, or if the sin of the erring person is public, then the repentance, confession, and restoration must also be formal and before the congregation (2 Corinthians 2:5-11).

8.E.3. Responsibility of Membership

At whatever level restoration occurs, members must forgive the offender upon his or her confession and repentance (Luke 17:3-4; 2 Corinthians 2:5-11; Ephesians 4:32).

Article 7. Ordinances

The Scriptures have commanded only two ordinances in the church, Baptism and the Lord's Table. No ordinance has saving efficacy, and both are commanded of believers as deeply meaningful outward symbols of spiritual realities.

1. The Ordinance of Baptism

Baptism is the ordinance of the church whereby believers publicly confess their allegiance to Christ. We practice baptism only by immersion. Any person who wants to publicly profess faith in Christ or who has not been Biblically baptized may ask for baptism. The Elders, upon ascertaining a credible profession, shall schedule the person to be baptized.

2. The Ordinance of the Lord's Table

The Lord's Table is the ordinance of the church whereby believers, in Christian unity and harmony, look back to remember the Lord's death, look inward in self-examination, look outward in proclaiming the gospel and look forward until the Lord returns as those united in the New Covenant. The Lord's Table shall be scheduled as often as the Elders wish. All believers and only believers present at its serving, shall be invited to participate, being reminded of its Biblical characteristics and waiting on one another for all to be served (Mark 14:22-23; 1 Corinthians 11:23-33).

Article 8. Offices

The Bible establishes two permanent offices in the local church, Elders and Deacons/Deaconesses (Philippians 1:1; 1 Timothy 3:1-13). The governance and oversight of the church is the responsibility of the Elders who are to shepherd or pastor the church. The Deacons/Deaconesses are responsible to serve God in the church and, under the Elders, to lead the ministry teams doing the daily work of the ministry.

1. The Elders

Jesus Christ alone is Lord of the church and her Chief Shepherd (1 Peter 5:4). As the risen Lord, He rules the church from heaven by the Spirit, mediating that rule through the Word of God, the Scriptures (Hebrews 13:20; 1 Peter 5:4).

Jesus Christ has ordained that the church shall be overseen by elders who shall shepherd the church according to His will (Acts 20:28; 1 Peter 5:2). The Elders shall govern the church (1 Timothy 5:17) and the church shall lovingly and prayerfully submit to their authority (Hebrews 13:17).

1.A. Body of Elders

1.A.1. The Plurality of the Elders

The church shall at all times, in God's providence, seek to have a plurality of elders. There shall be no maximum number of elders, the number of which shall be determined by men available who are qualified and who desire to serve (Acts 20:17; Titus 1:5,7).

1.A.2. The Equality and Unanimity of the Elders

The Elders of the Chapel shall constitute a body in which all members shall be equal and shall have one vote. In the spirit of unity in the body, all decisions shall be by unanimous vote of the Elders (Acts 15). Exceptions to the unanimous vote rule include: when an issue needs to be voted on when an elder is incapacitated or the issue would (or could) be construed as a conflict of interest.

From time to time, an item of business may require immediate attention. Matters needing immediate attention may be resolved by not less than 2 elders and shall be reviewed by the entire body at the first opportunity. Electronic means for meeting and voting may be implemented according to guidelines established by the Elders. An elder being removed or disciplined shall be ineligible to vote on decisions regarding himself.

1.B. The Shepherding by the Elders

The Elders are charged by God to shepherd the church (Acts 20:28; 1 Peter 5:1-4) by:

1. Preaching and teaching the Word of God (Colossians 1:28; 1 Timothy 5:17; 2 Timothy 4:1);
2. Establishing the theological and doctrinal purity of the church and guarding the flock of God against error and heresy (Acts 20:28-31);
3. Discipling, counseling, and admonishing believers, confronting sin, and teaching individuals and families as men who will give an account to God (Ezekiel 34; Acts 20:20; Colossians 1:28; 1 Thessalonians 5:12; Hebrews 13:17);
4. Praying for the congregation and the work of God (Acts 6:3-4);
5. Equipping the membership for ministry (Ephesians 4:11-16; 2 Timothy 2:2).

1.C. The Overseeing by the Elders

The Elders are charged by God to oversee the church (Acts 20:28; 1 Timothy 3:1), governing it as a father manages his family (1 Thessalonians 5:12-13; 1 Timothy 3:4-5; 5:17). Therefore, the Elders shall govern the Chapel by:

1. Providing for the public ministry of the Word;
2. Overseeing all the ministries of the Chapel by being ex-officio members of all church ministry teams; designating all ministry teams and their leaders; appointing those identified by the congregation to serve as Deacons and assigning them their responsibilities.
3. Leading in the correction or disciplining of erring members; confronting any member or attendee who may create dissension that impairs the doctrinal or spiritual unity of the church.
4. Reviewing and approving any missionaries or organizations the Chapel will support, financially or otherwise, and providing opportunities for congregational involvement in support, prayer, communication, and fellowship with them.
5. Ensuring that the financial offerings of the Chapel are used with integrity and accountability, preparing a budget, overseeing the disbursement of funds, receiving regular reports from those delegated with this responsibility and making report to the congregation.

1.D. The Qualifications for Elders

Elders shall be men who meet the qualifications of 1 Timothy 3:1-7 and Titus 1:5-9. They must be able to teach, have a desire for the privilege and responsibility of the office, shall not seek the office for the sake of money or power (1 Peter 5:2-3), and are in essential agreement with *The Truths We Teach* statement.

1.E. The Terms of Office for Elders

Elders shall be appointed to an indefinite term of office. The term may be ended by disqualification or resignation. The Elders shall arrange for sabbaticals to be taken as needed. An elder may resign from office for reasons sufficient unto himself after giving proper notice.

1.F. The Appointment of Elders

The Elders shall establish a process to identify, examine and qualify men for the Eldership that culminates in their being publicly appointed to the office. The Elders are responsible to identify those men whom God has given to the church to be an elder. The Elders shall examine the prospective elder to determine Biblical qualifications, fitness for the office, and affirmation of the church's doctrine, distinctives, and Mission and Vision Statement. They shall give the prospective elder opportunity to teach as a way to begin to present the prospective elder to the church (1 Timothy 3:2; 5:22).

The Elders shall present the prospective elder to the church in a Special Congregational Meeting. After the presentation, at least two weeks shall be designated for members of the congregation to have the opportunity to resolve any personal issues with the prospective elder regarding his qualifications by meeting with him privately. If the issues cannot be resolved privately, a meeting shall be arranged with the Elders. The prospective elder shall be present at all such meetings and shall have the opportunity to respond to issues that are presented.

During these same two weeks, the congregation shall be called to a season of prayer and fasting. At the end of the prescribed time the Elders shall meet again with the prospective elder to review all the issues brought forth. Upon agreeing to appoint the prospective elder to the office, the Elders shall set a date on which the prospective elder will be publicly installed into office. They shall give notice during regular worship services at least two weeks before the installation date.

1.G. The Removal of Elders

1.G.1. Reasons for the Removal of an Elder

An elder may be removed from office for the following Biblical reasons:

1. Disqualification under 1 Timothy 3:1-7 and Titus 1:5-9;
2. Not holding to the doctrines clearly taught in the Word (Acts 20:30; 1 John 2:19);
3. Other unrepentant sin. No charge of sin may be received against an elder except by two or more witnesses having factual knowledge of the sin (1 Timothy 5:19-21);
4. Inability to discharge the duties of their office.

1.G.2. Process of Removing of an Elder

The Elders shall receive and consider an accusation that is brought by no less than two members having factual knowledge of the sin or the false teaching. They shall investigate and verify the charges. If the charges are verified and the elder does not repent, then the Elders shall bring the unrepentant elder before the congregation, shall rebuke him publicly, and dismiss him from the Eldership. If necessary, discipline may be administered as outlined in Section 3:Article 6.8 Corrective Discipline on page 9.

1.G.3. Restoration of a Removed Elder

An elder who has previously been dismissed from the Eldership, after an appropriate time, shall be eligible to be identified, examined and re-qualified by the Elders. Care should be taken to preserve the reputation of Christ and the purity of the church in such a restoration to the Eldership.

1.H. The Meetings of the Elders

The Elders shall meet regularly and as often as is necessary to fulfill their responsibilities. Minutes of the meeting shall be kept and filed.

1.I. The Roles among the Elders

Recognizing the different gifts, abilities, and experience each elder brings to the Eldership, the Elders recognize and will fill the following roles on the Eldership.

1.I.1. Chairman of the Elders

This elder is responsible to moderate all meetings of the Elders and special congregational meetings of the Chapel. He shall be responsible to prepare and carry out the agenda for the meetings and to enforce Biblical order and decorum in discussions, debate, and decisions of issues as well as all other responsibilities the Elders deem appropriate.

1.I.2. Vice-Chairman of the Elders

This elder is responsible to assist the Chairman in his duties, to moderate in the absence of the Chairman or when the Chairman is excused due to a conflict of interest as well as all other responsibilities the Elders deem appropriate.

1.I.3. Secretary of the Elders

This elder is responsible to take accurate minutes of the meetings of the Elders. He shall record the minutes, submit them to the Elders for approval, and ensure that they are filed in the permanent records of the church. He shall also ensure that all policies and procedures arising from the decisions by the Elders are compiled in *The Chapel Ministry Handbook*.

1.I.4. Teaching Elders

On the principle of first among equals, the Elders shall have among their number at least one who is gifted and designated as a Teaching Elder. They will be primarily responsible for the doctrine and the public preaching of the Word of God. These elders should be financially supported whenever possible.

1.I.5. Other Roles and Responsibilities

The Elders shall assign ministry oversight responsibilities among themselves according to their gifts, abilities, and experience. The Elders may create other formal roles, assigning each role a specific set of responsibilities and appointing elders to fill those roles, including non-elder staff positions.

1.1.6. Legal Trustees

To meet the legal requirements, the Trustees of Clearcreek Chapel shall be the Chairman, Vice-Chairman, and Secretary of the Elders with their respective titles.

1.J. Financial Support of Vocational Elders

The Chapel family is responsible to provide generous financial support to those men who devote all or large portions of their time and energy to their work as vocational elders (1 Timothy 5:17-18; 1 Corinthians 9:9-11). When considering a vocational elder, the Elders should look among themselves first. Then they may invite men from outside the local congregation to come into its midst and serve in this capacity. The Elders shall establish procedures for (1) the request by an elder for financial support, (2) the consideration of a member or an elder for financial support, and (3) the consideration of a man from outside the church for a vocational elder position. Any man called from outside the congregation to be a vocational elder must be able to conscientiously affirm his essential agreement with the *Book of Faith and Order*. Should he at any time move from this position, he is under obligation to make this fact known to the Elders.

2. Deacons/Deaconesses

The Bible has charged the deacons/deaconesses with the ministry of assisting the Elders and the congregation in the work of the ministry.

2.A. The Functioning of the Deacons/Deaconesses

Deacons/Deaconesses assist the Eldership by assuming responsibility to lead or to serve in those ministries assigned to them by the Elders so that such work will not interfere with the Elders' ministry of the Word and prayer (Acts 6:1-7). They will be accountable to the elder overseeing the ministry area in which they are ministering.

2.B. The Qualifications for Deacons/Deaconesses

Deacons/Deaconesses shall be men or women who meet the qualifications as set forth in Scripture, particularly in 1 Timothy 3:8-13, demonstrate a willingness and ability to serve, and are in essential agreement with *The Truths We Teach* statement.

2.C. The Terms of Office for Deacons/Deaconesses

Deacons/Deaconesses shall be appointed to an indefinite term of office. The term may be ended by disqualification or by resignation. The Elders shall arrange for sabbaticals to be taken as needed. Deacons/Deaconesses may resign from office for reasons sufficient unto themselves after giving proper notice.

2.D. The Selection of Deacons/Deaconesses

The Elders must carefully consider the needs of the church and seek to add qualified people to serve as deacons. The members of the congregation shall

identify those who are qualified and willing to serve, recommending them to the Elders who shall examine them regarding their qualifications. Those who are appointed to serve as deacons shall be publicly installed into office.

2.E. The Removal of Deacons/Deaconesses

2.E.1. Reasons for the Removal

A deacon/deaconess may be removed from office for the following Biblical reasons:

1. Disqualification under 1 Timothy 3:8-13;
2. Not holding to the doctrines clearly taught in the Word (Acts 20:30; 1 John 2:19);
3. Other unrepentant sin;
4. Inability to discharge the duties of their office.

2.E.2. Process of Removal

The Elders shall receive and consider an accusation that is brought by no less than two members having factual knowledge of the sin. They shall investigate and verify the charges. If the charges are verified and the deacon does not repent, then the Elders shall remove the unrepentant deacon from office. If necessary, discipline may be administered as outlined in Section 3:Article 6.8 Corrective Discipline on page 9.

2.E.3. Restoration of One Removed

A deacon/deaconess who has previously been removed from office, after an appropriate time, shall be eligible to be identified, examined and re-qualified by the Elders. Care should be taken to preserve the reputation of Christ and the purity of the church in such a restoration to the office.

Article 9. Stewardship and Finances

1. Financial Oversight

The Elders are responsible for the financial oversight of the church. The Elders shall oversee the development and implementation of an annual budget as a financial guideline. The budget shall be presented to the church for affirmation at the Annual Congregational Meeting. At the Elder's discretion, unbudgeted expenditures may be made.

2. Financial Support

The Chapel shall be supported by free-will offerings and sacrificial giving. Special project fund-raising shall require Eldership approval. The disbursement of all moneys including designated moneys shall be at the discretion of the Elders.

3. Financial Non-indebtedness

It is the intention of the Chapel to finance its growth as God provides and not to incur indebtedness beyond accounts payable.

Article 10. Meetings

1. Regular Worship Meetings

The Elders shall set the frequency and times of the regular meetings of the Chapel, including worship on the Lord's Day and other services as is desirable to best fulfill the Mission, Vision, and Purposes of the Chapel.

2. Congregational Meetings

Major decisions such as those relating to finances, budget, and major capital improvements, as well as other issues affecting the Chapel family as a whole, may be presented to the congregation for affirmation. The Elders, in the spirit of not lording over the church (Acts 6:5; 15:22; 1 Peter 5:1-4), shall openly communicate with the congregation, teaching relevant truths, receiving input, and carefully considering the responses and counsel of the Body. To foster cooperation and unity for the sake of the Kingdom, the Elders will be ever mindful of being servant leaders who set an example (1 Peter 5:1-4) and the congregation of being wisely and lovingly submissive to its leaders (Hebrews 13:7,17).

2.A. Annual Congregational Meeting

The Annual Congregational Meeting of the Chapel shall be held each ministry year at a time set by the Elders for the presentation and adoption of a budget, giving of ministry reports, and any other business scheduled by the Elders.

2.B. Special Congregational Meetings

The Elders may call special congregational meetings to bring before the Chapel family matters needing the support or input of the congregation.

Special Congregational Meetings may also be called by written request to the Elders that states the reasons for the meeting. At least twenty-five percent (25%) of the active resident members of the Chapel in good standing must sign such request. The Elders shall take the concerns expressed under careful and prayerful consideration.

2.C. Congregational Affirmation/Vote

At their discretion, the Elders may ask for a Congregational Affirmation/Vote at any Special Congregational Meeting on an issue before them. Twenty-five percent (25%) of the active resident members in good standing shall constitute a quorum. All members who are in good standing as described in Section 3:Article 6.6 Congregational Voting Privilege are eligible to participate. Affirmation/Vote shall be conducted by a show of hands or by ballot. Ballots are valid only when a member has written his or her name on it. Except when otherwise stated, a two-thirds (2/3) majority of valid votes received are required to pass an issue.

Article 11. Amendment

The Chapel Book of Faith and Order may be amended by a three-fourths (3/4) majority affirmation of the eligible members voting at a duly called Special Congregational Meeting. The proposed amendments must be presented to and approved by the Elders. The proposed changes will be presented in written form at least two Sundays prior to the congregational meeting.

Article 12. Dissolution

1. The Process of Dissolution

Only the Trustees, acting upon the recommendation of the Elders, may recommend the dissolution of this corporation to the congregation. A three-fourths (3/4) majority affirmation of the eligible members shall be required in order to dissolve this corporation.

2. The Responsibilities at Dissolution

In the event of the dissolution of this corporation, all debts are to be satisfied. The official trustees shall ensure that there is no division of assets, and all assets herein are to be distributed to another corporation or corporations with purposes similar to those identified in Section 1: Prologue and in Section 2: A three-fourths (3/4) majority affirmation of the eligible members shall be required in order to decide on the distribution of assets.

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