

TRI-CITY COVENANT CHURCH CONSTITUTION

The original Constitution was set forth and adopted by members of the Tri-City Covenant Church (TCCC). (Formerly Tri-City Bible Baptist Church) of Somersworth, New Hampshire, and has been subsequently revised and amended. This present Constitution was submitted by the Board of Elders and duly ratified by the Church Congregation on November 20, 2016 in accordance with Article IX, and it supersedes any and all previous church constitutions.

ARTICLE I NAME, DEFINITION, PURPOSE, AND ASSOCIATIONS

- A. Name: The name of this organization shall be TRI-CITY COVENANT CHURCH.

- B Definition: The Tri-City Covenant Church is a body of Christian believers under the headship of Jesus Christ ruled by the Board of Elders. All ministries of the Church shall be under the authority of the Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments, and they shall operate in adherence to this Constitution, the Church By-Laws, and the Westminster Confession of Faith as amended by the Board of Elders.

- C. Purposes
 - 1. To glorify God.
 - 2. To worship and serve the triune God, as He is revealed in Scripture, both individually as a priesthood of believers and corporately as a body.
 - 3. To edify true believers in the Lord Jesus Christ through the sacraments of Baptism and Holy Communion; through preaching the Word of God; through teaching the Westminster Confession of Faith; and through fellowship and other Biblical means, thus preparing them for true worship and equipping them for true service to God and for the taking of dominion over the earth in His Name.
 - 4. To fulfill the Great Commission as stated in Matthew 28:18-20.

- D. Association: All associations with other ecclesiastical bodies shall be for the advancement of the purposes stated above, and shall not require any compromise concerning the fundamental doctrines of the Christian faith as articulated in the Westminster Confession of Faith

- E. Additional Provisions
 - 1. Said Corporation is organized exclusively for charitable, religious, and educational purposes within the meaning of Section 501(c) (3) of the Internal Revenue Code of 1986, including for such purposes, the establishment and maintaining of religious worship, the building and maintaining of churches, parsonages, schools, hospitals,

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chapels, and such other religious, educational, or other charitable institutions as may be appropriate in accordance with said charitable, educational, and religious purposes, and further including the maintaining of missionary and evangelistic activities in the United States and in any foreign country.

2. No part of the net earnings of the Corporation shall inure to the benefit of or be distributable to its members, trustees, officers, or other private persons, except that the Corporation shall be authorized and empowered to pay reasonable compensation for the services rendered and to make payments and distributions in furtherance of the purposes set forth in Article I hereof. No substantial part of the activities of the Corporation shall be the carrying on of propaganda or otherwise attempting to influence legislation. The Corporation shall not participate in, or intervene in (including the publishing or distribution of statements) any political campaign on behalf of any candidate for public office. Notwithstanding any other provisions of these articles, the Corporation shall not carry on any other activities not permitted to be carried on (a) by an organization exempt from federal income tax under Section 501(c) (3) of the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 (or the corresponding provision of any future United States Internal Revenue Law) or (b) by an organization, contributions to which are deductible under Section 170 (c) (2) of the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 (or corresponding provision of any future United States Internal Revenue Law).

3. On the dissolution of the Corporation the Board of Trustees shall, after paying or making provision for payment of all the liabilities of the Corporation, dispose of all the assets of the Corporation exclusively for the purposes of the corporation in such manner, or to such organization or organizations organized and operated exclusively for charitable, educational, religious, or scientific purposes as shall at the time qualify as an exempt organization or organizations under Section 501(c) (3) or the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 (or the corresponding provision of any future United States Internal Revenue Law), as the Board of Trustees shall determine. Any of such assets not so disposed of shall be disposed of by the Court of Common pleas of the county in which the principal office of the Corporation is then located, exclusively for such purposes or to such organizations, as said Court organized shall determine which are organized and operated exclusively for such purposes.

**ARTICLE II
MEMBERSHIP**

A. Receiving of the new members

1. By Baptism: All persons baptized by one of the authorized elders of the Tri-City Covenant Church during regular services or church authorized special services immediately become members of the local church body. If the newly baptized person are twelve years of age or older, they must also take the covenantal Oath of Membership.

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2. By Letter of Transfer and by Oath of Membership
3. By Statement of Christian Faith and by Oath of Membership.

B. Membership Duties and Responsibilities

1. Diligently adhere to the covenantal Oath of Membership which will be taken by new members upon joining the church and which will be renewed annually by all church members.
2. Manifest an increasing conformity to Biblical Law in accordance with Matthew 5:17-19.
3. Faithfully attend the regularly scheduled church worship services in accordance with Hebrews 10:25.
4. Tithe and give additional offerings with a cheerful and liberal attitude in accordance with II Corinthians 9:7.
5. Actively love one another, and maintain a commitment to a spirit of unity within the church by privately seeking rectification of any and all disputes between church members in accordance with Matthew 18:16-17
6. Maintain a respectful attitude towards God's appointed church hierarchy in accordance with Hebrews 13:7 and 17.

C. Discipline of Church Members

1. The objective of all church discipline shall be the effecting of repentance and restoration.
2. Members who are in violation of their covenantal Oath of Membership shall be subject to exclusion from the sacrament of Holy Communion in accordance with the judgment of the Board of Elders.
3. Other lesser disciplinary judgments may be rendered by the Board of Elders to effect repentance and restoration.
4. Guidelines in all cases of church discipline shall be revealed Biblical law for both defining offenses and rendering judgment

D. Termination of Membership

1. By transfer to another church.
2. By excommunication due to error in doctrine or conduct requiring church discipline as determined by the Board of Elders in accordance with Matthew 18:15:20.

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E. Reinstatement of Membership: disciplined members must accomplish in full any prescribed restitution and exhibit repentance for previous violations of their covenantal Oath of Membership and thereby gain two thirds approval for reinstatement from the Board of Elders.

**ARTICLE III
COVENANTAL OATH OF MEMBERSHIP**

In accordance with Article II, B, 1 of this constitution, new members will be required to take the covenantal Oath of Membership upon joining the church, and current members twelve years of age and older will be required to renew this oath annually. The following is a rendering of the covenantal Oath of Membership in its full liturgical form:

OPENING CHARGE (Pastor)

Beloved in the Lord Jesus Christ, in your Baptism you received the sign and seal of your union with Christ, and were solemnly engaged to be the Lord's. God in His goodness has brought you to Tri-City Covenant Church, and you now desire to acknowledge before God and His Church the covenant then made on your behalf, to profess your faith in the Lord Jesus, to consecrate yourselves to Him, and thereby to bind yourselves anew to His service, and to His Church in Somersworth, New Hampshire.

Our Lord Jesus Christ hath said, Whosoever shall confess Me before men, him will I confess also before my Father which is in heaven.

QUESTION #1

Do you confess your faith in God the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth and in Jesus Christ His only Son our Lord, and do you promise with the aid of the Holy Spirit to be Christ's faithful disciple to your life's end?

Answer: I do

QUESTION #2

Do you confirm the vows taken for you in Baptism and with a humble and contrite heart put your whole trust in the mercy of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord?

Answer: I do

QUESTION #3

Do you promise to study the peace, unity, and purity of the Church by upholding the standards of the Law of God, as summarized in the Ten Commandments?

Answer: I do

QUESTIONS #4

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Do you promise to make diligent use of the means of grace, to share faithfully in the weekly worship of the church, to give of the tithe, which is your reasonable service unto the Lord, and to give your whole heart to the service of Christ and His Kingdom throughout the world?

Answer: I do.

QUESTION #5

Do you promise subjection to your brethren in the Lord?

Answer: I do

PRAYER (Pastor)

Almighty and eternal God, strengthen this Thy servant, we beseech thee, with the Holy Spirit the Comforter, and daily increase in him (her) Thy manifold gifts of grace: the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the Lord; and keep him (her) in the mercy unto life eternal; through Jesus Christ our Lord. AMEN

LAYING ON OF HANDS (Pastor)

Defend, O Lord, this Thy servant with thy heavenly grace; that he (she) may continue Thine for ever: and daily increase in the Holy Spirit more and more, until he (she) come unto Thine everlasting kingdom.

The God of all grace, who hath called you to His eternal glory, confirm you to the end, that you may be blameless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ. AMEN.

FINAL CHARGE (Pastor)

Forasmuch as you have affirmed your baptismal vows before the Lord and in the presence of His Body, and as a fully vested member of His holy family possessing all privileges and immunities incidental thereto, go forth into the world in peace: be of good courage; hold fast that which is good; render to no man evil for evil; strengthen the faint hearted; support the weak; heal the afflicted; honor all men; love and serve the Lord, rejoicing in the power of the Spirit.

**ARTICLE IV
ELDERS**

A. Definition and Term of Office

1. The governing body of this organization shall be known as the Board of Elders.

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2. The elders shall be annually elected and confirmed for a term of one year.
- B. Qualifications: Each member of the board of Elders must be a member in good standing of this church and possess the qualifications described in I Timothy 3:1-7 and Titus 1:6-9.
- C. Duties of the Board of Elders shall include, but not be limited to, the following:
1. Shepherding the congregation.
 2. Exercising oversight of the church property.
 3. Maintaining the sacraments and membership roles.
 4. Selecting the church pastor
 5. Serving as the Board of Trustees for the church Corporation
 6. Providing general oversight of the TCCA School Board
 7. Other duties as specified in the church By-Laws.
- D. Officers of the Board of Elders
1. Chairman: The Chairman or his designated appointee shall preside at all board and congregational meetings which are to be conducted according to Scriptural principles such as set forth in Philippians 2:2-8.
 2. Vice-chairman: The Vice-Chairman shall assume all of the above duties of Chairman in the absence of the latter.
 3. Secretary: The Secretary shall maintain the minutes of all the meetings of the Board of Elders and all congregational meetings as well as the church By-Laws.
 3. Treasurer: The Treasurer shall be responsible for all monies collected by the church.
- E. The above officers, with the exception of the Chairman, will be elected by the Board of Elders each January in accordance with the church By-Laws.
- F. Pastor

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1. The church pastor shall be an elder of the church elected by the Board of Elders in accordance with the church By-Laws to serve in a permanent relationship of primary shepherding of the church congregation.
2. The church pastor shall serve as the Chairman of the Board of Elders and president of the church Corporation.

**ARTICLE V
DEACONS**

- A. Definition and Term of Office
 1. The deacons are officers of the church who assist the elders in the shepherding of the member of the congregation.
 2. The deacons shall be annually elected and confirmed for a term of one year.
- B. Qualifications: Each deacon must be a member in good standing of this church and possess the qualifications described in I Timothy 3:8-13
- C. Duties of the deacons shall include, but not be limited to, the following:
 1. Assist the elders in the special oversight of widows and orphans within the church.
 2. Perform other duties as assigned by the elders.

**ARTICLE VI
ELDER AND DEACON SELECTION**

- A. The nomination, ratification, and installation of the elders and deacons of this church enumerated in Articles IV and V of this Constitution shall be accomplished each year.
- B. Nominations for church elders and deacons will be made by head-of-householdⁱ members in good standing as determined by majority vote of the Board of Elders.
- C. Ratification
 1. The Board of Elders shall evaluate the nominees for church office and then recommend nominees to the congregation.
 2. The head-of-household members in good standing shall then vote by completing

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ratification ballots to ratify the nominees.

3. A majority vote of the returned ratification ballots will be required to ratify any nominees.
- D. Installation: The newly elected officers will be presented to the church congregation each year for their formal installation and the taking of their respective oath of office specified in the church By-Laws.

**ARTICLE VII
TRI-CITY CHRISTIAN ACADEMY**

- A. The Tri-City Christian Academy Mission Statement shall be as follows:

"To advance the dual propositions that Jesus the Christ is Lord over every area of life and thought and that man's chief end is to 'glorify God and enjoy Him forever,' Tri-City Christian Academy strives to instruct students in academic achievement and in Christian character maturation, as these aspirations are derived and articulated from the Word and Sacrament ministries of the Church Universal."

- B. All of the above objectives shall be accomplished with the Tri-City Christian Academy functioning wholly and completely as an integral ministry of Tri-City Covenant Church.
- C. The Tri-City Christian Academy School Board shall provide governance for Tri-City Christian Academy under the general oversight of the Tri-City Covenant Church Board of Elders and shall appoint an administrator to operate the school in accordance with the school's Mission Statement, its policies, this Constitution, and the Church By-Laws.
- D. Tri-City Christian Academy shall be non-discriminatory in its admissions policy with no student admissions restrictions given on the basis of race, sex, national origin, physical handicap or religious creed

**ARTICLE VIII
BY-LAWS**

- A. Definition: The By-Laws of the Tri-City Covenant Church shall consist of the total set of rules adopted and amended as required by the Board of Elders concerning the operation of the church and all its ministries.
- B. Purpose: The purpose of these By-Laws shall be to implement the governing directives of the church Constitution and to direct and coordinate the activities of church ministries.
- C. Maintenance: The Secretary of the Board of Elders shall be responsible for the

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maintenance of these By-Laws in the same manner that he is responsible for the maintenance of all church meeting minutes. Once each year, these By-Laws shall be reviewed and indexed to provide a ready and convenient reference for decision making.

**ARTICLE IX
AMENDMENTS**

- A. Amendments to the Constitution may be adopted only at the duly called church business meeting.
- B. Proposed constitutional changes may originate from any head-of-household member in good standing.
- C. Written notice of any proposed constitutional changes shall be provided to each head of household member in good standing of the congregation of least forty-five days prior to the above church business meeting. The proposed changes shall also be posted within the church building for the same time period.
- D. Quorum
 - 1. A quorum at any meeting to approve proposed constitutional changes shall consist of a simple majority of the head of household members in good standing as determined by majority vote of the Board of Elders.
 - 2. A Two-thirds majority of the above heads of households present will be required to ratify any constitutional changes

**ARTICLE X
CREC CONSTITUTION AND BY-LAWS**

In October 2008, Tri-City Covenant Church was accepted into the Communion of Reformed and Evangelical Churches (CREC). In accordance with CREC requirements, the CREC Constitution and By-Laws then became part of the TCCC Constitution (Article X).

CREC Article I. Authority of Scripture

- A. The Scriptures are always the ultimate and inerrant court of appeal (Ps. 18:30; 119:89; Matt. 4:4; John 16:12-15; Rom. 3:1-2; 1 Thess. 2:13; 2 Tim. 3:16-17; 2 Pet. 1:20-21). Because this is a constitutional document, a certain emphasis must be placed on creeds and confessions in what follows (Acts 15:1-31; 16:4-5; 1 Tim. 1:20; 2 Tim. 2:17-18; John 1:14; 1 John 4:2-3; 2 John 7). However, in no way is it our intention to set such confessions of faith above or alongside the Scriptures. Our expectation is that all our churches will routinely teach and preach the whole counsel of God as expressed in

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Scripture (Acts 20:27; Matt. 4:4), and in all matters of doctrinal discussion and debate, an appeal to Scripture will always be the first resort. In accordance with our creedal and confessional standards, we acknowledge the pre-eminence of Scripture.

- B.** Our intention is to submit to all those principles regarding church order, which are clearly required by Scripture, or required by deductions from Scripture, which can be understood through good and necessary consequence. For the rest, we desire to operate in terms of a sanctified Christian prudence, with all things done in good order and biblical decency. We make no claim that every detail of our confederated order is found in Scripture. At all times, we seek to reflect the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace (Ps. 133; Eph. 4:3, 13).

CREC Article II. The Offices

- A.** The CREC takes no constitutional position on the validity of 2-, 3- or 4 -office view of church minister.
- B.** Within the CREC each elder must be a member of the church, which he serves. This requirement may be waived on a case-by-case basis by a unanimous vote of the presbytery.
- C.** Each congregation must be committed in principle and practice to government by a plurality of elders (Acts 14:23; 20:17, 28; Jas. 5:14), often called a board, a council, a consistory, or a session. Congregations without a plurality of elders must have accountability with another established CREC church.
- D.** Each congregation will be served as possible by a plurality of deacons (Acts 6:5-7; 1 Tim. 3:8-13).
- E.** The CREC affirms the need for spiritually-disciplined, well-educated pastors, qualified in their households, grounded in rigorous and wise handling of the Scriptures, and exhibiting a thorough understanding of the biblical world and life view (1 Tim. 3:1-7; Tit. 1:5-9).
- F.** Any candidate for pastor, minister, or teacher regardless of his level of formal education, will be examined before ordination (See Article IX.C). The candidate will be examined by a local session of elders with regard to his manner of life, knowledge of Scripture, and doctrinal understanding. The presbytery will also examine him with regard to his manner of life, knowledge of Scripture, and doctrinal understanding. The presbytery may or may not recommend his ordination to the session of the local congregation. The local session is not judicially bound by the recommendation of presbytery. If a local session does not abide by the presbytery recommendation, then the presbytery may or may not initiate proceedings according to Article IV.P.

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- G.** If a minister or teacher has already been ordained within the CREC, he may not be required by presbytery or council to undergo another presbyterial examination. Such an examination may occur if both the calling church and the candidate agree to it. If a man has been ordained outside the CREC, the local congregation may seek the wisdom of the presbytery in the examination of his ministerial credentials, or the presbytery may also request the examination of the candidate.
- H.** Any institutions and processes of ministerial education and training that are formally associated with the CREC must be under the authority and supervision of a local session of elders in a local CREC church (2 Tim. 2:1-2).

CREC Article III. Local Congregations

- A.** We hold the local congregation has primacy in the structure of biblical church government (Heb. 13:7, 17) without denying the important blessings and obligations which come from broader connections and fellowship.
- B.** Each church will adopt into its statement of faith the *Apostle's Creed*, the *Nicene Creed*, and the *Definition of Chalcedon* in the form found in the *Reformed Evangelical Confession* below (1 Tim. 6:12). Forms of the following creeds which have been modernized for spelling and usage are acceptable. Forms which have been altered with regard to doctrinal content are not.
- C.** Each church will adopt into its statement of faith at least one of the following:
 - Westminster Confession of Faith (1647)
 - American Westminster Confession of Faith (1788)
 - Three Forms of Unity: a) Belgic Confession (1561); b) Heidelberg Catechism; c) Canons of Dort (1619)
 - The London Baptist Confession of Faith (1689)
 - The Savoy Declaration (1658)
 - The Reformed Evangelical Confession (see Article X)
- D.** Before a congregation can be accepted into CREC membership it must have its own constitution, been in existence for at least two years, have at least two elders, and have enough support from members to meet all regular expenses. Congregations seeking membership with the CREC which do not meet these criteria must come under the care of an existing CREC church and will be characterized as mission churches. Mission churches may have non-voting delegations at presbytery and church council meetings. When such a mission church comes to meet the criteria for a particularized church, they may be accepted into voting membership of the CREC by a two-thirds vote of presbytery.

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E. Elders of CREC member churches must declare their honest subscription to the confessions adopted by their church. A candidate church must declare any exceptions to its confessional standards prior to becoming a CREC member (Ex. 20:16; Col. 3:9). If a member church modifies its confessional standards in any way, including amendments and exceptions, the church must notify presbytery immediately. If presbytery determines that the modification places the church at odds with CREC standards, it may initiate proceedings according to Article IV.O.

F. All members in good standing in a local CREC congregation must be received by any other CREC church regardless of confessional differences between the churches. All CREC churches will handle problems arising from differences in how membership is reckoned from church to church (e.g. individual vs. household) with all charity and good faith, seeking to include one another's members.

In the transfer of members from one CREC church to another, differences arising from issues such as membership, paedobaptism and paedocommunion, must be handled with pastoral sensitivity. Receiving churches do not have to adopt or practice such variations, but they should do all within their power to accommodate them.

G. Controversies within a local congregation regarding matters arising from differences between our various confessions will not be adjudicated beyond the local church level. All churches agree to work cheerfully and carefully in their study of doctrinal differences, and to strive for like-mindedness with one another (Rom. 12:16; 1 Cor. 1:10; Phil. 3:16).

H. The worship and work of each local congregation is ultimately to be governed by the teaching and godly examples supplied throughout all Scripture.

I. After sending at least one candidate delegation to a stated meeting of presbytery, churches may be admitted to membership in a presbytery through a two thirds vote of the presbytery at its next stated meeting. The presbytery shall normally examine the pastor-elder delegation, especially with regard to their confessional status, sound doctrine, submission to CREC authority, and desire to uphold other CREC churches with all peace and love. They may remove themselves by whatever means their respective constitutions allow. When a church joins the CREC, this entire document through Article X must be adopted into that church's constitutional documents, according to the constitutional processes and standards of that church. The membership of the local church in the CREC is finalized at that point, and not before. New members shall make vows to the faithfulness and commitment to the churches and standards of the CREC. Likewise, current members should pledge to uphold the new church in prayer and love.

J. In making a motion to seat a candidate church, a sponsoring church needs to be prepared to answer questions concerning the general health of that church and the likelihood of that church being able to embrace the CREC constitution when considered for full

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membership. The church which makes the motion to seat the candidate church must be the church which moves to receive the church into full membership when that issue comes before presbytery. The church which moves to receive the church into membership must be prepared to answer questions related to the doctrinal integrity of the church's confession, and the moral, spiritual, and covenantal health of the families of the officers.

- K.** The candidacy of a church will not be allowed to extend beyond the third presbytery meeting from which that church was first seated—that is, two years after their first seating as a candidate church - unless a two-thirds vote by presbytery to override and extend the status beyond two years occurs.
- L.** When a church joins the CREC, the existing ordination of all its officers is thereby accepted, and does not necessitate a formal examination as with other candidates. Nevertheless, observations and questions concerning current pastoral and elder qualifications may occur in the discussion of that church's potential admission.

CREC Article IV. The Broader Assemblies

- A.** There are two broader assemblies in the CREC: the Presbytery and the Church Council. A minimum of two local churches is necessary to establish a presbytery (another term in common use is *classis*). Geographical boundaries of presbyteries may overlap, but in considering this presbyteries are urged to remember the law of Christ (Matt. 7:12; 3 John 9). A minimum of two presbyteries are necessary to form the council (Acts 16:4). New presbyteries may form only with the approval of council.
- B.** Each congregation in a presbytery will send two elders as voting representatives to each meeting of presbytery – ordinarily, one of whom is serving in the capacity of pastor if such exists in the local church.
- C.** The various presbyteries will each send an equal number of delegates to council, not including the moderator of council among the number sent from his presbytery. Each council shall determine the number of delegates that will represent the presbyteries to the subsequent council; the number will be so determined as to create a council of between ten and eighteen delegates in all, not including the moderator of council. If there are more than nine presbyteries, each presbytery will be represented at council with two delegates.
- D.** The presbytery will have a stated annual meeting. If three quarters of the churches submit a written request to the moderator, an *ad hoc* presbytery meeting will be called. The decision to call for an *ad hoc* meeting of the presbytery cannot be made at presbytery.
- E.** The council will have a stated meeting every three years. In the year that the council meets, presbyteries must have their annual meeting at the same place and time. If three quarters of the presbyteries submit a written request to the moderator of the council, an *ad*

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hoc council meeting can be called. The decision to call for an ad hoc meeting of the council cannot be made at council. The requirement that presbyteries convene at the same place and time as council does not apply to *ad hoc* meetings of council.

- F.** Broader assemblies will elect a moderator from among the assembled delegates when that office is vacant. The moderator will be elected at the end of the assembly meeting. The moderator will chair the following meetings, and will be the assembly's moderator, representative and spokesman for the next three years (Rev. 2:1; Acts 19:10, 20:28). The moderator will be the spokesman for the assembly upon his election. All nominations for the position of moderator must be pre-posted on the agenda. The assembly will also elect a moderator *pro tempore*, to serve in cases of the moderator's absence, or to fill out the term of the moderator if the office of the moderator becomes vacant.
- G.** At votes of the broader assemblies, each delegate has one vote. The moderator may not vote, and so in those cases when a church has only one vote because one of their delegates has been elected moderator, the church may put forth a new delegate to take the place of the moderator. If the church cannot put forth a replacement, the remaining delegate has two votes.
- H.** No moderator may serve two consecutive terms as moderator (1 Peter 5:1-4). Each moderator must be concurrently serving as a member of the local session. If a moderator ceases to serve in such a local office, then his term as moderator ceases at that time. Before his term is completed, a moderator may resign his position, or may be removed by a three-fourths vote of the assembly.
- I.** As representative of that assembly, the moderator may encourage and spiritually strengthen the sessions of elders within his broader assembly. The moderator also has the authority to meet with the moderators of other broader assemblies to encourage them or to be encouraged, as well as to inquire about the spiritual and doctrinal health of the churches within the other assemblies. This should in no way be interpreted as a judicial or prelatical authority. The moderator has the authority to call an *ad hoc* meeting of an assembly, with the issues related to the stated reasons for calling the meeting being the only agenda items.
- J.** A visiting delegation of a church, forming church, or interested group may be seated at the discretion of the moderator. Such seating is not part of the process of joining the CREC. Visiting delegations may not participate in the debates of the assembly.
- K.** The voting status of new member churches shall begin the next presbytery meeting following their acceptance into membership. The delegates can still make motions but cannot vote.

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- L.** After a fair and open judicial hearing at presbytery, a congregation may be removed from membership in the presbytery by a two-thirds vote of the presbytery. Upon such occasions, the removed congregation retains the full right of appeal to council.
- M.** Issues relating to the local congregation which may lawfully be brought before the broader assemblies are specified in this section. All matters not itemized here must be adjudicated and resolved at the level of the local church. Before any appeal is made, a matter must be first addressed at the local church level. Appeal may be made (1) when the session of elders is accused by two or more of the church members of participating in or tolerating grievous dishonesty in subscription to the doctrinal or constitutional standards of the local church; or, (2) when the session of elders is accused by two or more of the church members of gross misbehavior. In any case where at least two witnesses are from the same household, three witnesses are required to hear the case. The broader assemblies must refuse to hear frivolous or unconstitutional appeals. Appeals to council do not necessarily have to first be heard by presbytery. However, council may choose to remand the case to presbytery.
- N.** When an appeal comes to presbytery, a simple majority at presbytery is necessary to decide the issue; the decision of presbytery shall be considered settled and binding unless and until it is proved by a council to be in conflict with the Scriptures or the Constitution of the CREC. The matter may be appealed further to the council by the appellant. The council must refuse to hear frivolous or unconstitutional appeals. A simple majority at council is necessary to decide the issue; the decision of council shall be considered settled and binding unless and until it is proved by a future council to be in conflict with the Scriptures or the Constitution of the CREC. Decisions of council can be appealed to a future council, though the future council is not obligated to receive such an appeal.
- O.** The decisions of the assemblies with regard to the local congregation are spiritually authoritative, but practically advisory. If the elders of a particular congregation choose to refuse the instruction of the broader church, they may do so without deprivation of property. However, if their disregard of godly counsel is particularly egregious, they may be removed from membership in the CREC, in accordance with Section M and O.

If a complaint against a member session is brought by someone who is not a member of a CREC church, the CREC, in presbytery, Church council, or through its appropriate moderator, can agree to hear the case if all of the following conditions have been met. (1) The moderator has a letter from the accused session in question declining to hear the case, or a letter advising him that the case was heard and rejected. (2) The moderator has a letter from the government of the church where the complainant is a member saying that the church affirms the truth of the Apostles' Creed, and agrees to hold the complainant accountable if the decision goes against him. If the complainant is an independent church, the moderator must have a letter of commitment from that church expressing their willingness to give due weight, respect and consideration to the decision of the CREC,

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and agreeing not to pursue the matter beyond the CREC decision. (3) The charges as framed have two or three available and accountable witnesses listed for each specified complaint. (4) The complainant has not overtly discredited himself in his manner of bringing the charges.

- P.** The assemblies may form no standing committees or boards. Every committee must be *ad hoc* and automatically dissolve when it completes its assigned task, or submits its assigned report to the assembly. Assigned tasks may not be open-ended, allowing for *de facto* standing committees.
- Q.** A simple majority of an assembly may seat candidate and fraternal delegations. Such delegations are encouraged to come as observers and friends, or as prospective members of the CREC. Such delegations may not vote, although they may address the assembly at the invitation of the moderator. They may not participate in debate without unanimous consent of the assembled delegates.
- R.** Assemblies may from time to time address issues not included in the historic creeds and confessions by means of overtures, memorials (see Article IX), or confessional statements.
- S.** The broader assemblies shall keep a Book of Procedures that details particular methods for carrying out the various constitutionally-sanctioned tasks of an assembly. The broader assemblies are informed by the Book of Procedures, but not bound to it. Should an assembly act in exception to the Book of Procedures, the exception must be acknowledged and explained in the minutes. The Book of Procedures may be altered or amended at any time by a simple majority of an assembly. The various presbyteries may modify their respective Books of Procedures between meetings of council. Each meeting of council will review these various modifications and determine one uniform Book of Procedures for use by all the presbyteries. Presbyteries may then approve further modifications for their own use, to be followed in turn by conciliar review. Maintenance and publication of a current Book of Procedures is the responsibility of the moderator.
- T.** No broader assembly may own property. All property within the CREC will be owned by the local congregations. General costs associated with hosting a broader assembly will be borne by the host church of the broader assembly. Specific costs (e.g. food and travel) will be borne by the delegates or sending churches.
- U.** All retirement or pension plans for CREC ministers, teachers, missionaries, etc. will be under the authority, management and oversight of the local churches, and will not be the responsibility of the broader assemblies.
- V.** The moderator of the church council shall bear the responsibility for maintaining a true and accurate copy of the CREC's constitution reflecting all amendments and additions

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thereto. The moderator will bear the responsibility for making the constitution available by means of electronic publishing.

CREC Article V. Meeting Protocols

- A. Broader assemblies act properly when either (a) in a duly constituted meeting, the measure is moved, seconded, carried by the appropriate number of votes, entered in the minutes, and approved in the minutes; or (b) the act is declared in writing by the moderator and then included in the moderator's written report to the next duly constituted meeting of the broader assembly. At the meeting, the relevant portion of the moderator's report must be received by the broader assembly through the process described above.
- B. Motions to amend the agendas of an assembly in session require a unanimous vote.
- C. Full minutes of all the assembly proceedings will be kept. The public minutes and records of the assembly will be published on a public electronic page maintained by the church of the moderator, with the moderator responsible for its contents. Minutes of confidential proceedings will be distributed in hard copy to all the member churches in the presbytery. The costs associated with this process will be borne by the church of the moderator. Minutes must be posted within two weeks of their approval.
- D. The minutes of the broader assemblies will be approved after the moderator has circulated a draft following the adjournment of the assembly, and has allowed reasonable opportunity for revision. The minutes require a two-thirds majority to be approved, and lack of response from a delegate will be considered an affirmative vote. The moderator will oversee this process of finalizing assembly minutes within sixty days.
- E. The quorum for the broader assemblies will be two thirds of the voting delegates.
[Motions to amend the agenda at the meeting require a unanimous vote.]

Setting time limits for floor debate or to calling for the question requires a three quarters majority. The broader assemblies have the authority to call for an executive session at their discretion by a simple majority vote.

CREC Article VI. Missions

- A. All supported international or domestic CREC missionaries will not be sent by the presbyteries or church council, but rather by the local church. As appropriate, the other churches in the presbytery can offer encouragement and financial support, but the accountability of the missionaries will only be to the congregation, which is the sending body. As circumstances warrant, missionaries may seek a transfer of the sending authority from one local church to another, with the details to be worked out between the missionary and the elders of the respective congregations involved.

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CREC Article VII. Confessional Standards and Revision

- A. The CREC holds as its foundational confession of faith the *Apostles Creed*, the *Nicene Creed*, and the *Definition of Chalcedon*. These confessions are included in Article X of this document.
- B. The CREC holds generally to the system of doctrine reflected in the great creeds, catechisms, and confessions of the Reformation, and consequently requires all confederated churches to hold to at least one of the particular statements listed in Article III.C.
- C. Revisions to any portion of these confessions of faith must have a first reading at a stated meeting of the church council, and may then be brought to a vote at the subsequent stated meeting. Three quarters of the presbyteries are required to propose revisions to this confession of faith. Such proposed revisions will be placed on a list of potential revisions maintained by the moderator, to await consideration at the appointed time.
- D. Three quarters of the presbyteries may remove proposed revisions to the confession of faith at any time prior to the council when they are to be voted on. A proposed change in the confession requires a three quarters majority in order to pass. This process of revision applies only to the confessional statements, and not to other portions of this constitution.
- E. If a church's standing in the CREC is potentially affected by the process of confessional revision, that church has five years within which to make their first appeal to presbytery.

CREC Article VIII. Amendments

- A. This constitution of the CREC, excluding the article containing the confessions of faith, may be amended at any time by a three quarters majority at any regularly scheduled meeting of the church council.

CREC Article IX. Memorials

Memorials state the position of the CREC on issues on which a confessional statement has not yet been made. Memorials are contained in the Book of Memorials and are incorporated by reference into this Constitution. A candidate or mission church must declare any exceptions or reservations to the memorials prior to its becoming a CREC member. Member churches must immediately notify the broader assembly of any changes to their position on the memorials. If presbytery determines that the exceptions or reservations place the church at odds with CREC standards, it may initiate proceedings according to Article IV. O. The process for adopting a memorial must involve a careful striving for like-mindedness. This deliberate process will help

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us guard against various fads and winds of doctrine (Eph. 4:14). Any new memorial must be approved as a draft at a stated council and adopted at a subsequent stated council.

CREC Article X: Reformed Evangelical Confessions

CREEDAL STATEMENTS (THE REFORMED EVANGELICAL CONFESSION)

A. The Apostles' Creed (2nd century)

I believe in God the Father Almighty; Maker of heaven and earth, and in Jesus Christ, his only begotten Son, our Lord. He was conceived by the Holy Ghost and born of the virgin, Mary. He suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died, and was buried. He descended into Hades. On the third day He rose again from the dead, ascended into Heaven, and sits at the right hand of God the Father Almighty; from thence He will come to judge the living and the dead. I believe in the Holy Ghost, the holy catholic Church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting. Amen.

B. Nicene Creed; Constantinople (381 AD)

I believe in one God, the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth, and of all things visible and invisible; and in one Lord Jesus Christ, the only begotten Son of God, begotten of His Father before all worlds, God of God, Light of Light, very God of very God, begotten, not made, being of one substance with the Father; by whom all things were made; who for us men and for our salvation came down from Heaven, and was incarnate by the Holy Ghost of the virgin, Mary, and was made man; and was crucified also for us under Pontius Pilate; He suffered and was buried; and the third day He rose again according to the Scriptures, and ascended into Heaven, and sits on the right hand of the Father; and He shall come again, with glory, to judge both the living and the dead; whose kingdom shall have no end. And I believe in the Holy Ghost, the Lord, and Giver of Life, who proceeds from the Father and the Son; who with the Father and the Son together is worshiped and glorified; who spoke by the Prophets. And I believe one holy catholic and apostolic Church; acknowledge one baptism for the remission of sins; and I look for the resurrection of the dead, and the life of the world to come. Amen.

C. Definition of Chalcedon (451 AD)

Following, then, the holy fathers, we unite in teaching all men to confess the one and same Son, our Lord Jesus Christ. This selfsame one is perfect both in deity and in humanity; truly God and truly man, with a rational soul and a body; consubstantial with the Father according to His deity, and consubstantial with us according to the humanity; like us in all respects, sin only excepted. Before the ages He was begotten of the Father, according to the deity, and in these last days, for us and for our salvation, He was born of Mary the virgin, who is God-bearer according to His humanity; one and the same Christ,

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Son, Lord, only-begotten, to be acknowledge in two natures; without confusing them, without interchanging them, without dividing them, and without separating them; the distinction of natures by no means taken away by the union, but the properties of each nature being preserved, and concurring in one Person and one subsistence; not parted or divided into two persons, but one and the same only-begotten Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, as from the beginning the prophets have declared concerning Him, and the Lord Jesus Christ Himself has taught us, and the symbol of the fathers has handed down to us.

D. A Westminster Creed

(A modern selection from the 17th century Shorter Catechism) I believe man's chief end is to glorify God, and to enjoy him forever; I believe God is a Spirit, infinite, eternal, and unchangeable in his being, wisdom, power, holiness, justice, goodness, and truth; I believe there is but one true and living God; that there are three persons in the Godhead: the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost; and that these three are one God, the same in substance, equal in power and glory; I believe God has foreordained whatever comes to pass; that God made all things of nothing, by the word of His power, in the space of six days, and all very good; and that God preserves and governs all His creatures and all their actions. I believe our first parents, though created in knowledge, righteousness, and holiness, sinned against God, by eating the forbidden fruit; and that their fall brought mankind into an estate of sin and misery; I believe God determined, out of His mere good pleasure, to deliver His elect out of the estate of sin and misery, and to bring them into an estate of salvation by a Redeemer; I believe the only Redeemer of God's elect is the Lord Jesus Christ, who, being the eternal Son of God, became man, and so was, and continues to be, God and man in two distinct natures, and one person, forever; I believe Christ, as our Redeemer, executes the office of a prophet, of a priest, and of a king. I believe Christ as our Redeemer underwent the miseries of this life, the wrath of God, the cursed death of the cross, and burial; He rose again from the dead on the third day, ascended up into heaven, sits at the right hand of God, the Father, and is coming to judge the world at the last day. I believe we are made partakers of the redemption purchased by Christ, by the effectual application of it to us by his Holy Spirit; I believe God requires of us faith in Jesus Christ, and repentance unto life to escape the wrath and curse of God due to us for sin; I believe by His free grace we are effectually called, justified, and sanctified, and gathered into the visible church, out of which there is no ordinary possibility of salvation; I believe that we also are given in this life such accompanying benefits as assurance of God's love, peace of conscience, joy in the Holy Ghost, increase of grace, and perseverance therein to the end; that at death, we are made perfect in holiness, and immediately pass into glory; and our bodies, being still united in Christ, rest in their graves, till the resurrection; and at the resurrection, we shall be raised up in glory, we shall openly be acknowledged and acquitted in the day of judgment, and made perfectly blessed in the full enjoying of God to all eternity.

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E. An Evangelical Statement

(Adapted from the National Association of Evangelicals) We *believe* the Bible to be the only inerrant Word of God. It is our only ultimate and infallible authority for faith and practice. We *believe* that there is one God, eternally existent in three Persons; Father, Son and Holy Spirit. He is omnipotent, that is, He is all-powerful. He is omnipresent, that is, He is present throughout all Creation but not limited by it. He is omniscient, that is, nothing is hidden from His sight. In all things He is limited by nothing other than His own nature and character. We *believe* the God we serve is holy, righteous, good, severe, loving and full of mercy. He created the heavens and earth, and everything in them, in the space of six ordinary days, and all very good. He is the Creator, Sustainer, and Governor of everything that has been made. We *believe* in the true deity and full humanity of our Lord Jesus Christ, in His virgin birth, in His sinless life, in His miracles, in His vicarious and atoning death through His shed blood, in His bodily resurrection, in His ascension to the right hand of the Father and in His personal return in power and glory. We *believe* in the full deity of the Holy Spirit, acknowledging Him together with the Father and the Son in the works of creation and redemption. We *believe* that because of Adam's sin all mankind is in rebellion against God. For the salvation of such lost and sinful men, regeneration by the Holy Spirit is absolutely necessary. We *believe* that salvation is by grace through faith alone, and that faith without works is dead. We *believe* in the present ministry of the Holy Spirit, by whose indwelling the Christian is enabled to live a godly life. We *believe* in the resurrection of both the saved and lost; those who are saved to the resurrection of life, and those who are lost to the resurrection of damnation. We believe in the spiritual unity of all believers in our Lord Jesus Christ. □ □ Ratified November 6, 1997 Amended in Presbytery January 30, 1998 Amended in Presbytery November 12, 1998 Amended in Presbytery September 30, 1999 Amended in Ad Hoc Teleconference December 3, 1999 Amended in Presbytery September 28, 2000 Amended in Presbytery October 19, 2001 Amended in Presbytery October 18, 2002 Amended in Presbytery October 16, 2003 Amended in Presbytery October 14, 2004 Amended in Presbytery October 13, 2005 Amended in Church Council October 14, 2005

ⁱ “Heads of Household” are husband and wife pairs (when applicable) working together in unison.

“*And they twain shall be one flesh.*”

(Genesis 2:24; Matthew 19:5, 6; Mark 10:8; I Corinthians 6:16; and Ephesians 5:31)