



# COMMUNION FELLOWSHIP

A MISSION CHURCH OF THE CREC

Constitution & Bylaws - December 31, 2017

*(Approved by SPPC Session on 12/23/17 / Ratified by the members of CFC on 12/31/2017)*

## PREAMBLE & PURPOSE

By the grace and providence of God, Communion Fellowship has been established by the Lord Jesus Christ as a local church within the universal church. Communion Fellowship is Protestant, Reformed and Evangelical. As such it is our purpose to glorify God and enjoy Him forever. We seek to do this through reverent and joyful worship, proclaiming the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ, rightly administering the sacraments He has instituted, making disciples of Jesus Christ, and ministering to the poor & afflicted with mercy and grace, as well as manifesting the Kingdom of our Lord Jesus Christ and His holiness and love in our homes, church, community, and world. We believe that the whole counsel of God concerning all things necessary for His own glory, man's salvation, faith, and life, is either expressly set down in Scripture, or by good and necessary consequence may be deduced from Scripture: unto which nothing at any time is to be added, whether by supposed new revelations of the Spirit, or traditions of men. In summary we believe the following:

- ~ Scripture: We believe that the Bible, only, is the true and inspired Word of God.
- ~ Jesus Christ: We believe that God's Son died for our sins and is the only hope & way of salvation.
- ~ Grace: We believe that God has given His grace to us freely, apart from works.
- ~ Faith: We believe that faith is the only way we can receive God's free gift of grace.
- ~ The Glory of God: We believe that God deserves all the glory for His works.

Furthermore, we acknowledge that there are some circumstances concerning the worship of God, and government of the Church, common to human actions and societies, which are to be ordered by the light of nature and Christian prudence, according to the general rules of the Word, which are always to be observed. All things must be done properly, for edification and in an orderly manner. To these ends, we do hereby submit ourselves to the following Constitution as a means to govern the affairs of this church.

## Article I. NAME

This church body shall be known as Communion Fellowship Church (Communion Fellowship). The organization shall be organized as a nonprofit corporation under the laws of the Commonwealth of Virginia.

## Article II. STANDARDS

The Constitution of Communion Fellowship Church is subject to and subordinate to the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments, the inerrant Word of God, and includes the doctrinal standards set forth in the Westminster Confession of Faith, together with the Larger and Shorter Catechisms, all as adopted by the Session with noted exceptions, along with the Apostles' Creed and Nicene Creed.

### Article III. MEMBERSHIP

1. The visible universal church consists of all those persons, in every nation, together with their household, who make profession of saving faith in the Lord Jesus Christ and promise submission to his commandments. In accordance with the teaching of Scripture, the many members of this universal church are to be organized in local and regional churches, confessing a common faith and submitting to a common form of government.
2. An individual or household is eligible for membership at Communion Fellowship Church when that individual or head of household makes a profession of saving faith, obeys and follows Christ in baptism, and is willing to promise submission to the care and oversight of Communion Fellowship Church by taking the vow of membership.
3. All individuals of a member household are eligible for baptism, church membership and subsequently access to the Lord's Table. Household prerogative is granted to the heads of household concerning the timing of baptism for the individuals within their households and are unable to speak for themselves.
4. Any child or individual who is brought by a member head of household who exercises a recognized, primary parental and discipleship responsibility for said child or individual is eligible for baptism, church membership and subsequently access to the Lord's Table. Such parental responsibility should be recognized by others, and not just claimed by the head of household. It should also be primary in the sense that the head of household is the normal decision maker in the care and nurture of the individual. Parental responsibility is often diffused among multiple persons, but the session should ensure that the person bringing an individual for baptism exercises a central and pivotal responsibility in the care of the individual. Anything less compromises both the integrity of the baptismal vows and the household solidarity on which baptism is based. Any head of household who has this kind of primary parental relationship with an individual may bring that individual for baptism on the basis of the promise of God to be God to us and to our household.
5. An individual or head of household desiring membership should request a membership discussion with the session. The purpose of this is to discuss the qualifications, testimonies, expectations, privileges, and responsibilities of covenant membership and leadership. If the prospective members are currently members of another church, inquiry may be made of their standing in that church and reason for leaving. If the previous church raises an objection, membership may be denied. Otherwise prospective members in good standing shall ask the the session to send a request for a letter of transfer from their previous church to be sent to the session of Communion Fellowship.
6. Reception into membership shall take place after the candidacy of the individual or household has been announced during public worship for at least two consecutive Lord's Days in order that the members of the church may have opportunity to acquaint the session with such facts as may appear to be irreconcilable with a credible profession.
7. If in the session's judgment no valid objection exists for one to take the covenant commitment vows, the church will receive the prospective member and his or her household

into membership during a public worship service, upon their profession of faith and the taking of the vow of membership.

8. All baptized members have the access and the privilege of pastoral oversight, instruction, discipleship care, the Lord's Table and government by the church. Household prerogative is granted to the heads of household concerning the timing of admission to the Lord's Table of the baptized children within their households that have not taken the covenant commitment vows.
9. All baptized members 12 years old or older that have taken the covenant commitment vows have the access and the privilege of voting during congregational voting concerning the election of officers or changes to constitutional wording. The discernment of when a child (12 or older) within a household is mature enough to take the covenant commitment vows will be determined by the consensus of the session, the individual and the parent(s) or guardian(s) of the said individual, assuming the parent(s) or guardian(s) are members of Communion Fellowship.
10. The Covenant Commitment Vows are made up of vows expressing a personal profession of faith and a commitment to uphold his or her vow of membership. The vows shall be by assent to these or equivalent questions, along with any brief words of testimony which the session deems appropriate:
  - i) *Do you believe the Bible, consisting of the Old and New Testaments, to be the Word of God, and its doctrine of salvation to be the perfect and only true doctrine of salvation?*
  - ii) *Do you believe in one living and true God, in whom eternally there are three distinct persons—God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit—who are the same in being and equal in power and glory, and that Jesus Christ is God the Son, come in the flesh?*
  - iii) *Do you confess that you are a sinner by nature and deed, and that you repent of your sin, and that you trust for salvation not in yourself but in Jesus Christ alone?*
  - iv) *Do you acknowledge Jesus Christ as your sovereign Lord, and do you promise that, in reliance on the grace of God, you will serve him with all that is in you, forsake the world, resist the devil, put to death your sinful deeds and desires, and lead a godly life of truth and love?*
11. The vow of membership shall be by assent, or by transfer of letter with this or an equivalent question:

*Do you promise to participate faithfully in this church's worship and service, to endeavor to be Christ's disciple while making disciples of Christ, to submit in the Lord to its government, and to heed its discipline, so to proclaim the gospel and manifest His holiness and love?*

[To the congregation:]

*As a Congregation of Christ, do you undertake (renew) the responsibility of assisting this (brother/sister) in (his/her) Christian walk, endeavoring to love, pray, encourage and admonish (him/her) for the sake of the fellowship and calling of the Kingdom?  
Signify by saying: "Amen!"*

12. Any unbaptized individual, who is able to speak for himself or herself, seeking to make a profession of faith and be baptized shall be baptized by an ordained officer of the church and among witnesses in good standing in the church. Ordinarily this should occur during a public worship service and after the profession of faith questions listed in section III.10 have been answered in the affirmative.

13. The baptism vows for covenant household members that are unable to speak for themselves are to be taken by the head of household as follows:

- i) *Do you acknowledge that this child (individual) in your care, though conceived and born a sinner, is a child of the covenant and therefore ought to be baptized?*
- ii) *Do you acknowledge this child's (individual's) need of the cleansing blood of Jesus Christ and the renewing grace of the Holy Spirit?*
- iii) *On (his/her) behalf, do you trust in God's covenant promises, which are proclaimed in the Old and New Testaments, and do you look in faith to the Lord Jesus Christ for (his/her) salvation, as you do for your own?*
- iv) *Are you firmly resolved to disciple (him/her) in humble reliance upon divine grace, that you will endeavor to set before (him/her) a godly example, that you will love (him/her), pray with and for (him/her), that you will call (him/her) to a life of repentance and faith, that you will teach (him/her) the doctrines of our holy religion, that you will include them in the corporate worship of our Lord, and that you will strive, by all the means of God's appointment, to bring (him/her) up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord?*

[To the congregation:]

*As a Congregation of Christ, do you undertake the responsibility of assisting this (brother/sister) in (his/her) Christian walk, endeavoring to love, pray, encourage and admonish (him/her) for the sake of the fellowship and calling of the Kingdom?  
Signify by saying: "Amen!"*

14. Expectations of Members:

The Member(s) shall seek to serve the Kingdom of God foremost in their life, and to submit their gifts and abilities to glorify God and build up the Body of Christ. They shall participate faithfully in this congregation's worship and service by worshiping and fellowshiping together corporately on the Lord's Day. They shall commit to endeavor to be Christ's disciple while making disciples of Christ, being devoted to God's Word, prayer and mercy. They shall

submit in the Lord to this church's government, and agree to heed its discipline, so as to proclaim the gospel and manifest Christ's holiness and love.

15. The session shall keep rolls of the membership of the congregation, of each individual and members of their household, with the dates of their reception. The session shall make its rolls available to review by church members. Births, adoptions or significant changes in the status of guardianship (legal or otherwise) of children shall be recorded, as well as baptisms, censures, restorations, deaths and removals from membership. Membership removals shall be issued by the session by way of transfer, erasure, excommunication, or death.

16. Membership Transfer: If it is clearly evident that a member or member household is unable to maintain and/or fulfill the covenant commitment as expressed in the vows listed above, the member or member household shall request from the session to initiate the process of membership transfer, either due to:

- ~ Needing to move to a different geographical location.
- ~ A change in conviction concerning doctrines and/or practice not essential for salvation and faith.

17. The process of membership transfer is as follows: The member or member household must be in good standing and not under any active inquiry for potential church discipline. He or she will notify the pastor and/or session of the desire to transfer, and will request a meeting or conference call with the pastor and at least one additional member of the consistory to discuss the reasons for transfer. A letter explaining the reasons may be requested of the member or member household if a meeting or conference call is unable to be scheduled. The session will grant transfer of membership once it is confirmed that the reasons are sufficient, and once a letter of a request of transfer is received from the leadership of the new church. The session when then grant a letter of transfer.

18. Erasure: If it is clearly evident that a member or member household is unable to maintain and/or fulfill the covenant commitment as expressed in the vows listed above, the session may remove the member or member household from membership by way of erasure, either due to:

- ~ an absence of a member extending longer than six months during which adequate contact or transfer of membership has not occurred.
- ~ a member or member household desires to join or be a part of a congregation or practice that does not seem to be consistent to the true marks of a church in faithfully preaching the Word, rightly administering the sacraments and endeavoring in discipleship and discipline.
- ~ a baptized member has no expressed intention of professing their faith and taking the covenant commitment vows.

19. The process of erasure is as follows: Once the session is aware that one of the reasons for erasure has occurred, the session shall note and keep minutes of a six month time frame that it seeks to establish communication and/or dialogue with the member or member household in question. If after the six month period no contact and/or resolution could be made, the session shall move forward with removing the member or member household from the membership roll. The session will then send a letter of standing to the member or

member household notifying them of the erasure, and including any pertinent concerns or relevant details of their standing.

20. Excommunication: If it is apparent that a member is not fulfilling his or her covenant commitment as expressed in the vows listed above, due to continual unrepentant sin and/or unrepentance for sin that has been addressed by the session according to Matthew 18 and with the spirit of Galatians 6, the session shall pursue the removal of the member from membership by way of excommunication.

21. The process of excommunication is described in the section on church discipline (Article VI).

## Article IV. CHURCH OFFICERS

### A. Ordination:

1. Ordination is the authoritative admission of one called to an office in the church, accompanied with examination, prayer and the laying on of hands.

*1 Tim. 4:14, 4:22, 2 Tim. 1:6*

2. All ordinations must be in accordance with this constitution and the by-laws of the presbytery.

3. Only men shall be admitted to ordination and church office.

*1 Tim 2:12*

4. The offices requiring ordination are Elder and Deacon.

*1Tim.*

5. Those who have been recognized by the church to have been called and equipped by God to hold office in the church are to be ordained by the session. The session shall keep a record of any exceptions to the secondary standards of the historic reformed church held by candidates for ordination.

*1 Timothy 3:1-13; Titus 1:7-9*

### B. Expectations of Elders:

Elders are men qualified and ordained according to Scripture to be ministers of Word and prayer, by way of pastors, shepherds, evangelists, preachers, teachers, overseers and leaders. They shall prayerfully administer their authority as those called to love and care for the souls of the church. They shall pray for, plan and promote the work of the Word and prayer through the church. They shall lead the corporate worship of the church, preach the Word and administer the sacraments. They shall visit, counsel, and walk with the flock often, praying for and encouraging the sick and distressed, and comforting the bereaved. They shall make, teach and equip disciples for the ministry of the church. They shall study the Word diligently together and be keenly alert to any deviations from the truth of Holy Scripture and shall do their best to protect the flock from false teaching; and in keeping with their ordination vows, they shall seek to maintain the peace and purity of the church.

They shall serve with the diaconate in forming a consistory, assist in making decisions concerning the church budget and property, and assist in forming and overseeing sundry committees to further the work of ministry. They may form and oversee discipleship groups and/or ministry groups. The congregation shall call a Senior Pastor, particularly given to the ministry of Word and prayer, to shepherd the congregation, and to be a moderator of the session. The congregation may also call Associate Pastor(s) for the work of ministry as needed.

#### C. Expectations of Deacons:

Deacons are men qualified and ordained according to Scripture to be ministers of service and mercy. They shall prayerfully administer their authority as those called to care for the souls of the church. They shall minister Christ's mercy and care through shepherding and counseling, and by serving in the relief for the material and/or physical needs of the members of this congregation, and also individuals in the community as the Lord's providence allows. They shall be responsible for the collecting and distributing of tithes, offerings and benevolent care. They shall be responsible to perform acts of comfort and mercy to the weak, burdened, and sick. They shall be responsible for the maintenance of church property and stewardship of church funds. They shall serve with the session in forming a consistory, assist in making decisions concerning the church budget and property, and assist in forming and overseeing sundry committees further in the work of ministry. They shall lead endeavors to equip others in the ministry of service and mercy, and they may form and oversee discipleship groups and/or ministry groups related to diaconal service. The deacons shall elect among themselves a chairman of the deacons to lead, organize, and moderate diaconal business and activity.

#### D. Expectations of the Consistory:

The consistory shall be made up of the elders and the deacons who work together to consider and review the overall condition and health of the congregation and the ministry of the church, and to assure the two offices of leadership communicate and serve cohesively. They will jointly make decisions concerning the church budget and property, and they will establish a system of accountability between the two offices of elder and deacon. The consistory also is noted as the body of leadership convening and leading other matters of oversight noted in this constitution.

#### E. Initiation of Office:

1. Any member of Communion Fellowship, including an officer, may notify the Session of a man they think should be evaluated and trained as a potential officer.
2. Should the nominee accept the nomination, the consistory will evaluate the man for office in the church. As part of this process, the officers will examine him with regard to his doctrine, manner of life, and understanding of the secondary standards of the historic reformed faith as listed in Article II. All candidates must meet the qualifications for office set down in Scripture. The consistory shall provide a written explanation if any candidate is deemed not qualified and/or suitable for office at Communion Fellowship, or a candidate may rescind his name for consideration at any time.

3. If, after this process of evaluation and training, the session believes the man may be called to serve as an officer at Communion Fellowship, they shall convene at least two called congregational meetings to present the candidate for congregational approval.
  - a. In the first meeting, the congregation will be given the opportunity to ask the candidate questions.
  - b. In between the first and second meetings, the Session will seek the godly wisdom, counsel, and input of the congregation regarding the candidate. Any one who believes the candidate fails to meet the biblical qualifications for office shall be required to raise his concerns first with the candidate, before the second meeting. If the concerns are not resolved, both parties will speak with the session about the issue. The session shall bring the issue to resolution.
  - c. In the second meeting clarification will be given regarding any previously asked questions or issues that have arisen, and a vote of the congregation will be taken if a quorum of the congregation voting membership is present (two-thirds). Voting by proxy must be coordinated with the consistory prior to the meeting.

*Acts 6:1-7*
4. If the candidate receives at least a two-thirds affirmative vote of the voting congregation, the session will ordain and/or install the man through the laying on of hands and prayer during a subsequent meeting of the church.

#### F. Ordination/Installation Vows:

- *Do you believe the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments, as originally given, to be the Word of God, the only infallible rule of faith and practice?*
- *Do you sincerely receive and adopt the doctrinal standards set forth in the Westminster Confession of Faith, together with the Larger and Shorter Catechisms, with noted exceptions, along with the Apostles' Creed and Nicene Creed, as setting forth the system of doctrine taught by the Holy Scriptures; and do you further promise that if at any time you find yourself out of accord with any of the fundamentals of this system of doctrine, you will, on your own initiative, make known to your Session the change which has taken place in your views since the assumption and affirmation of this ordination vow?*
- *Do you approve of and submit to the form of government and discipline of this church as articulated in the constitutions for Communion Fellowship Church and the Communion of Reformed Evangelical Churches, and recognize them to be in conformity with the general principles of biblical government?*
- *Do you, \_\_\_\_\_, receive the office of (elder/deacon) in this church, and promise faithfully to perform all the duties thereof and to endeavor by the grace of God to adorn the profession of the Gospel in your life, also to submit yourself, in case you should become delinquent either in doctrine or life, to ecclesiastical discipline, according to the public ordinance of the churches?*
- *Do you promise subjection to your brethren in the Lord?*
- *Do you promise to strive for the purity, peace, unity and edification of the Church?*

[To the congregation:]

- *Do you, the members of this congregation, acknowledge and receive \_\_\_\_\_ as (elder/deacon), and do you promise to yield to them all that honor, encouragement and obedience in the Lord to which their office, according to the Word of God and the constitution of this church, entitles them? Signify by saying: "Amen!"*

#### G. Election and Calling of a Senior Pastor

1. The congregation shall seek to elect and call a senior pastor to lead in the shepherding of the congregation. The consistory or elected steering committee (in the absence of a consistory) shall provide the congregation a candidate for pastor. The election and installation of a pastor shall coincide with the approval and voting process noted in IV.E&F, but with additions and adjustments for the calling of a pastor.
2. The consistory or elected steering committee (in the absence of a consistory) shall publish to the congregation a written covenant agreement articulating the monetary call and support for the pastor.
3. The additional vows for pastor are as follows:
  - *Do you seek the office of pastoral ministry from love to God and a sincere desire to promote His glory in the Gospel of His Son?*
  - *Do you promise to be zealous and faithful in maintaining the truths of the Gospel and the purity and peace and unity of the Church, whatever persecution or opposition may arise unto you on that account?*
  - *Do you engage to be faithful and diligent in the exercise of all your duties as a Christian and a minister of the Gospel, whether personal or relational, private or public; and to endeavor by the grace of God to adorn the profession of the Gospel in your manner of life, and to walk faithfully before the flock of which God shall make you overseer?*
  - *Are you now willing to take the charge of pastor of this church, agreeable to your declaration when accepting their call? And do you, relying upon God for strength, promise to discharge to it the duties of a pastor?*

[To the congregation:]

The congregation is to signify by saying, "Amen!"

- *Do you, the people of this congregation, continue to profess your readiness to receive \_\_\_\_\_, whom you have called to be your pastor?*
- *Do you promise to receive the word of truth from his mouth with meekness and love, and to submit to him in the due exercise of discipline?*

- *Do you promise to encourage him in his labors, and to assist his endeavors for your instruction and spiritual edification?*
- *Do you commit to provide for him while he is your pastor that competent worldly maintenance which you have promised, and to furnish him with whatever you may see needful for the honor of religion and for his comfort among you?*

#### H. Term of Office:

The offices of Elder and Deacon are perpetual in nature. Officers will serve for as long as they desire barring the exceptions of: deposition by formal church discipline, proving destitute of gifts, an incapacitating sickness or infirmity, or a move from locality. However, some men may choose to become inactive in their office through resignation or leave of absence.

*1 Timothy 3:1-13 Titus 1:5-9*

#### I. Resignation from Office or Leave of Absence:

If an Elder or Deacon desires to resign his office or take a leave of absence, he must present a letter to the consistory formally making known his request and explaining his reasons. Acceptance of a resignation or approval of a leave of absence will be granted only for reasons deemed weighty by the consistory.

The consistory may notify the congregation of their receipt of the letter, and may provide for a period of comment by the congregation. They may also call congregational meeting to discuss the matter. If the consistory approves the request, they shall notify the congregation of their actions.

The man authorized for a leave of absence can be reinstated to the full function of the office if re-elected and re-installed according to the provisions of Article IV.E & IV.F of this constitution.

If a resignation or leave of absence is sought for reasons of moral or doctrinal defect or corruption, then the session may exercise formal discipline prior to, and in conjunction with, any consideration of the letter of resignation or leave of absence.

#### J. Removal From Office:

An elder or deacon may be removed from office if his services do not appear to be edifying to the cause of Christ, or if he has violated his ordination vows. If two or more members of the congregation perceive the need for removal of an officer, they shall communicate this to the consistory after they discuss their concern with the officer in question. The consistory shall then give the officer in question the opportunity to present his case for remaining in office. If the majority of the consistory determines the officer is no longer qualified or suitable for office they shall convene at least two called meetings to present the case to the congregation to receive their evaluation of the need for removal.

1. In the first meeting the consistory will present the case to the congregation, and the members of the congregation will be given the opportunity to ask questions to the consistory and the officer in question regarding the perceived need for his removal.

2. Between the first and second meeting the consistory will seek the godly wisdom, counsel, and input of the congregation.
3. In the second meeting clarification will be by the consistory regarding any previously asked questions or issues that have arisen and a vote will be taken if a quorum of the congregation voting membership is present (two-thirds). Voting by proxy must be coordinated with the consistory prior to the meeting.
4. If there is at least a two-thirds vote of the voting congregation for the officer's removal, the officer shall be removed from office.
5. If there is less than a two-thirds vote for the officer's removal, the consistory may choose to proceed with the removal from office if they deem it necessary. If the officer in question desires to remain in office, two or more members may seek to appeal the consistory's decision before presbytery.

#### K. Evaluations and Appeals concerning officers and church ministry

##### 1. Evaluation of Officers

Annually the consistory shall formulate a process to review each officer's service to the congregation and ministry of the church. This evaluation review should not only consider the officer's fruitfulness, weaknesses and strengths in ministry, but assure oversight is being given to the care of the officer's spiritual and physical well being, as well as his family's spiritual and physical well being. The session or diaconate shall provide a written evaluation review report for the congregation, including explanation of any needed steps of future accountability and care.

##### 2. Evaluation of Church Ministry

At least every five years the consistory shall formulate a process to review of the general ministry of the church. This evaluation review should consider the church's ministry fruitfulness, weaknesses and strengths of ministry. The consistory may utilize a committee made up of officers and laity to review the general church ministry, and provide a written report to the congregation. The report is to be discussed during a congregational meeting, and should include Q&A from the congregation, and explanation of any needed steps of future accountability and follow through.

##### 3. Evaluation & Appeals from the Congregation

The officers of the church shall regularly seek feedback from members in their care concerning the members' assessment of the fruitfulness of the overall church ministry and leadership, and the officers shall provide clear response to any concerns. The members of the congregation shall inquire and respond respectfully as those under authority when giving feedback and appeal. Every attempt shall be made to resolve any disagreement or conflict at the same pace of resolution articulated in Matthew 18:15-17. If resolution cannot be found through the process of two or more witnesses appealing to the consistory, then the two or more witnesses may appeal to the Session pro tempore (while under mission church status), and then to the presbytery, according to CREC procedural guidelines.

## Article V. COMMITTEES & GROUPS

### A. Expectations of Committees:

The Consistory may initiate and oversee the formation of sundry committees made up of members of the congregation to assist in the work of ministry by providing review, feedback and/or administration of practical functions of the church. The make up and duration of committees shall be determined on a case-by-case basis. Committees shall only be formed and dissolved by action of the consistory, with the exception of a steering committee in the event the consistory consist of fewer than two elders and/or deacons.

### B. Expectations of the Steering Committee:

If the consistory (excluding *pro tempore* elders) consist of fewer than two elders and/or deacons, including the senior pastor, the congregation shall elect a steering committee of trustees, with and by approval of any presiding session *pro tempore*. Trustees are not appointed to any spiritual office but rather to administration of the practical and financial concerns of the church; the steering committee shall direct the allocation of funds and dutifully pursue the business of the corporation according to the Articles of Incorporation until a permanent consistory of officers is duly elected and installed. The steering committee shall make motion to call a senior pastor to the office on behalf of the congregation, and so administer communication between candidates and the congregation as to expedite the interests of the church.

### C. Expectations of Discipleship and Ministry Groups:

The elders and/or deacons may form discipleship groups and/or ministry groups that shall operate with the general oversight and direction of ordained officers of the church for the furthering of the ministry of the church. Group leaders may be appointed by the session and/or diaconate, and may consist of members of the congregation laity that have been vetted and approved by the session and/or diaconate. Participants of the groups may also include those outside of the membership of the congregation by the approval of the church officer(s) overseeing the group. The formation and oversight of such groups is not to communicate that members of the congregation are limited from personally establishing times of gathering for bible study and discipleship, nor to limit the participation of members' involvement in other ministry groups outside of the general oversight of Communion Fellowship, but it is in the best interest of the ministry of this church to be concerned with the direct formation and oversight of discipleship and ministry groups that fall within its responsibility and calling.

## Article VI. CHURCH DISCIPLINE

### A. Informal Discipline

The ordinary course of discipline is informal. Members are encouraged to self-discipline, overlooking the failings of others in love, and encouraging other members to covenant faithfulness.

### B. Formal Discipline

Any member may be disciplined by the church. Formal church discipline is applied through the formal action and judgment of the session. The pattern of church discipline, except in cases of scandal requiring immediate action, will generally follow: formal private

admonishment, formal public admonishment, suspension from the Supper, a formal hearing, and then possibly excommunication.

#### C. Initial Procedures of Formal Discipline

The session shall establish the specific procedures for all formal discipline on a case-by-case basis, as appropriate to the circumstances and individuals involved. However, at minimum these procedures should include a clear and timely warning to the individual that he or she is in the process of formal discipline, two or more visits or communications involving two or three witnesses, and clearly recorded and/or detailed minutes of the entire proceedings kept by the session, seeking at all times to follow the principles given in Matthew 18:15-17, which pertains to your brother sinning against you, not a situation of heinous sin and flight.

#### D. Trial Procedures

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

The congregation will be informed of the hearing via a meeting called at the first opportunity. At the hearing, one of the elders will present a solemn charge from the Scriptures on the responsibilities of those present, the evidence against the accused will be presented, and the accused will have time to make a reasonable defense, including the right to question any witnesses. If the accused fails to appear, the member will be considered in contempt of the court and the hearing will continue.

At a separate meeting of the session, a vote will be taken on each of the charges. The session will declare its verdict to the congregation on an appointed Lord's Day, following an appropriate exhortation to the congregation. The individual will be given a written copy of the verdict. The session will establish an official file containing all the records pertaining to the hearing, including all pertinent correspondence, transcripts, and minutes. If requested, the accused will be given one copy of this file at the expense of the church. Any appeals to the presbytery will be conducted in accordance with the constitution of the CREC.

#### E. Restoration from Formal Discipline

Formal discipline will end when the opinion of the session is that the one under discipline has repented. If a formal public admonishment has been made, a confession of this repentance will be read or may be reported to the congregation on the Lord's Day, and the session shall formally announce the end of the discipline and restoration of communion and fellowship.

#### F. Appeals

Again, every attempt shall be made to resolve any disagreement or conflict according to Matthew 18:15-17, but if resolution or satisfaction can not be found by the judgement of formal church discipline, then the two or more witnesses may appeal to the Session pro tempore (if under mission church status), and then to the Augustine Presbytery of the CREC, according to CREC procedural guidelines.

## Article VII. PROPERTY

All property shall be held in the name of Communion Fellowship Church. Since the Scriptures affirm that the tithe is to be given to the elders of the church, and since the session oversees the use of all tithe moneys and gifts to the church, upon dissolution of Communion Fellowship Church, its property and resources shall be held jointly by the officers, and administered by the session for the purpose of advancing Christ's kingdom on earth.

## Article VIII. APPROVAL OR MODIFICATION OF THE CONSTITUTION

1. The Consistory or Constitution Committee (in the absence of a Consistory) may present this constitution or amendments to this constitution for approval by the congregation. To approve or modify this constitution there should be at least two called meetings for review.
2. In the first meeting the section(s) of the constitution under question shall be read aloud and the congregation shall be given opportunity to ask questions and provide their input.
3. In between the two meetings, the Consistory or Constitution Committee shall seek the godly wisdom, counsel, and input of the congregation. Any member or prospective member with ongoing concern shall speak to the Consistory or Constitution Committee regarding those concerns at this time.
4. In the second meeting, the section(s) of the constitution under question shall be read aloud and the congregation given opportunity to ask questions and provide their input. The Consistory or Constitution Committee may make final adjustments after hearing the input of the congregation. The Consistory or Constitution Committee shall then submit a proposal for the constitution or amended wording, and the congregation will vote if a quorum of the congregation voting membership is present (two-thirds). Voting by proxy must be coordinated with the consistory prior to the meeting.
5. Formalization and ratification comes only by vote of two-thirds of the of the voting congregation.
6. This constitution must first be reviewed and approved by the sponsor church session to be within the guidelines of the CREC before approval and ratification by the congregation.
7. Upon approval of this constitution by the sponsor church session, the charter individuals and households will meet to vote and ratify this constitution. Votes to ratify will be accepted in person or by proxy of any baptized individuals 18 years old or older per the approval of their current church leadership. The charter individuals that voted and ratified the constitution will then proceed to take the Covenant Commitment Vows together, and will then be recognized as the voting members of Communion Fellowship Church.

## Article IX. AFFILIATION

Upon the initial constituting, Communion Fellowship Church is a mission church sponsored by Saint Peter Presbyterian Church within the Augustine Presbytery of the Communion of Reformed Evangelical Churches (CREC), and according to the guidelines of a mission church within the CREC, and as such, receives the respective governing documents as binding along with the Communion Fellowship Church Constitution. It is currently the desire of Communion Fellowship Church to pursue CREC member church status within the first two years from constituting as a mission church, retaining the right to consider affiliation outside of the CREC if the congregation deems fit and if duly pursued and received.