

THE CONSTITUTION OF
FAITH COMMUNITY CHURCH

The Constitution of Faith Community Church of O'Neill

ARTICLE I. Statement of Faith

A. God

We believe in one God, eternally existent in three persons, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit (Isaiah 43:10-11; Matthew 28:19; Luke 3:22; 2 Corinthians 13:14; Ephesians 4:4-6).

B. Christ

We believe that the Lord Jesus Christ was both fully human and fully divine. He is the Second Person of the Trinity, God the Son. The Scriptures declare:

1. His virgin birth (Matthew 1:23; Luke 1:27-35).
2. His sinless life (Hebrews 7:26; 1 Peter 2:22; Hebrews 4:15).
3. His miracles (Acts 2:22; John 2:6-11; 3:2; 4:49-51; 5:5-9; 9:1-8; 11:40-44).
4. His substitutionary work on the cross (2 Corinthians 5:21; 1 Peter 3:18).
5. His bodily resurrection from the dead (Matthew 28:6; Luke 24:39; 1 Corinthians 15:3-8).
6. His exaltation to the right hand of God (Acts 2:32-33; Philippians 2:9-11; Hebrews 1:3).
7. His bodily, personal return for His church (Acts 1:9-11; 1 Thessalonians 4:13-17; 1 John 3:2-3).

C. Holy Spirit

We believe in the present ministry of the Holy Spirit who indwells and empowers the believer to live a life of victory. With the filling of the Holy Spirit comes a deepened reverence for God, an overflowing fullness of the Spirit, a greater commitment to God and dedication to His work, and a more active love for Christ, for His word, and for the lost (John 7:37-39; 14:26; 15:26; Acts 1:8).

D. Bible

We believe in the Bible, including both the Old and New Testaments, as the inspired Word of God, the infallible, authoritative rule of faith and conduct (2 Timothy 3:15-17; Proverbs 30:5-6; 2 Peter 1:20-21).

E. Man

We believe that man was created in the image of God, that he sinned and thereby incurred not only physical death, but also spiritual death, which is separation from God. We believe that Adam's sin is imputed to the whole race of mankind and that all human beings are born with a sinful nature. Therefore, those who reach the state of moral responsibility, become sinners before God in thought, word, and deed. Apart from Christ, man shall be forever separated from God (Genesis 1:26-27; Romans 5:12; 3:23; 6:23).

F. Salvation

We believe that the Lord Jesus Christ died for our sins, according to the Scriptures, as a representative and substitutionary sacrifice; therefore, all who believe on Him are justified on the ground of His shed blood (1 Corinthians 15:3-4; Ephesians 1:7; Hebrews 9:22). Salvation is by grace through faith, not of works, and all who receive Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior are born again of the Holy Spirit, an heir of God to the assurance of eternal life (Ephesians 2:8-9; John 3:3-7; John 1:12; 1John 5:11-13). The inward evidence of salvation is the direct witness of the Holy Spirit (Romans 8:16). The outward evidence to all men is a life of righteousness and true holiness (Ephesians 4:24; Titus 2:12; James 2:17; 1 John 3:9-10).

G. Resurrection

We believe in the resurrection of both the saved and the lost: the saved to eternal life with Christ and the lost to eternal punishment (John 5:28-29; John 14:1-3; 1 Thessalonians 4:15-18; Luke 16:22-28; 2 Thessalonians 1:6-10; Revelation 20:11-15).

ARTICLE II. Doctrinal Statement

A. Divine Healing

We believe in private and public prayers for the sick in an appropriate context. We believe that God's healing comes through His direct intervention, through natural bodily processes, and through physicians and medical science. Believers are admonished to pray for healing, but they are also to seek the will of God (James 5:13-16; 1 John 5:14).

B. Church

We believe that the Church is the body of Christ. Each believer, born of the Spirit, is an integral part of the Church (Ephesians 1:22-23; 1 Corinthians 12:12-18). Since God's purpose concerning man is to seek and to save the lost, to be worshiped by man, and to build a body of believers in the image of His Son, the primary reasons for existence of a Church are to be:

1. An agency for God for evangelizing the world (Acts 1:8; Matthew 28:19-20).
2. A corporate body in which people may worship God (Hebrews 10:24-25)
3. A channel of God's purpose to build a body of saints being perfected in the image of His son (Ephesians 4:11-16).

C. Marriage, Gender and Sexuality

We believe that every person must be afforded compassion, love, kindness, respect and dignity. Hateful and harassing behavior or attitudes directed toward any individual are to be repudiated and are not in accord with Scripture nor the doctrines of this church.

We believe that God wonderfully and immutably creates each person as male or female. These two distinct, complementary genders together reflect the image and nature of God (Genesis 1:27). Rejection of one's biological gender is a rejection of the image of God within that person.

We believe that the term "marriage" has only one meaning, and that is a marriage sanctioned by God which joins one man and one woman in a single exclusive union, as delineated in Scripture and that the essence of a Christian wedding is the worship of God, in bringing a man and woman together to enjoy what He has made. We believe that God intends sexual intimacy to only occur between a man and a woman who are married to each other (Hebrews 13:4; Genesis 2:24). We believe that God has commanded that no intimate sexual activity be engaged in, outside of a marriage between a man and a woman (Galatians 5:19-21).

We believe that any form of sexual immorality (including adultery, fornication, homosexuality, lesbianism, bisexual conduct, bestiality, incest, pornography, and attempting to change one's biological sex, or otherwise acting upon any disagreement with one's biological sex) is sinful and offensive to God (Romans 1:24-32).

We believe that in order to preserve the function and integrity of the church as the local Body of Christ, and to provide a biblical model to the church members and the community, it is imperative that all persons employed by the church in any capacity, or who serve as volunteers, should abide by and agree to this Statement on Marriage, Gender, and Sexuality, and conduct themselves accordingly.

We believe that God offers redemption and restoration to all who confess and forsake their sin, seeking His mercy and forgiveness through Jesus Christ.

ARTICLE III. Government

The Lord Jesus Christ is acknowledged as the Supreme Head of the Church, and the Word of God is recognized as the standard which governs the practices of the Church. Since the New Testament assigns to Elders the responsibility to oversee the local assembly (Acts 20:17, 28; 1 Peter 5:1-3; 1 Timothy 5:17-20; Acts 14:23; Titus 1:5; James 5:14), the government of this church shall be designated as Elder Serve with Congregational Affirmation. This means that the Elders shall comprise the guiding body of the church and shall have the authority to act in behalf of the church. All matters of the church shall be under the jurisdiction of the Elders. Whenever major issues are under consideration (including the purchase of real estate, expansion of the physical plant, and selection of Elders, Deacons, and pastoral staff), the Elders shall seek input and affirmation from the local fellowship on said issue, prayerfully and carefully considering before the Lord all congregational opinion before making a final determination. Congregational input in other decisions shall be sought at the judicious discretion of the Elders.

A. Church Officers

1. Elders

- a. **Duties**— The central focus of the Elders shall be to devote themselves to prayer and to the ministry of the Word, and their duties shall include the following:
 1. To equip the saints for the work of the ministry.
 2. To shepherd the church without compulsion nor for sordid gain, taking care not to misuse the authority allotted to them.
 3. To be examples to the church in speech, conduct, love, faith, and purity.
 4. To guide and protect the purity of life and doctrine in the church, providing for the discipline of erring members when such is deemed necessary.
 5. To establish policies and determine practices for the church.
- b. **Qualifications**— There shall be the following criteria for Elders:
 1. They must conform to the moral and spiritual qualifications found in 1 Timothy 3:1-7 and Titus 1:5-9.
 2. They must be in agreement with the Statement of Faith and Doctrinal Statement.
 3. Prospective candidates must be believers and have faithfully attended Faith Community Church for at least two years, having demonstrated the ability to serve in the shepherding ministry of the church, in accordance with 1 Timothy 5:22.
- c. **Number**— There shall be no prescribed number of Elders.

- d. **Selection**-The Prayer and Search Committee will identify men who they believe meet the qualifications of an Elder (1 Peter 5:2; Acts 20:28; 1 Timothy 3:1). Upon the Elders' prayerful consideration and unanimous consensus, the prospective candidate will be contacted personally, concerning his qualifications as an Elder. If the candidate desires to pursue this ministry further, his family will be asked to evaluate his qualifications as an elder. If the candidate passes both evaluations satisfactorily, according to the Prayer and Search Committee, he will be presented before the congregation for their consideration. A minimum period of two weeks shall be allotted for this consideration. If in the unanimous opinion of the Elders the candidate(s) has been substantially affirmed by the congregation, he shall be appointed as an Elder (Acts 14:23; Titus 1:5).
- e. **Reconfirmation**-There will be a yearly reconfirmation of each Elder by the congregation at the Annual Meeting. If no accusations are raised to an Elder, he will be considered reconfirmed. If an accusation is raised to an Elder, the Senior Pastor (and perhaps the Chairman of the Board) will follow the procedure of 1 Timothy 5:19-20, and then reply to the individual who made the accusation, and if necessary, to the congregation within 31 days of their findings. If the matter is not cleared, it will then be placed before the congregation, and a 70% vote will remove the Elder.
- f. **Termination**-An Elder shall be removed from office upon any of the following:
1. Death
 2. Resignation
 3. Disqualification: Grounds for disqualification include a failure to fulfill the responsibilities of an Elder as designated by the Elders or a failure to live in harmony with the standards, either moral or doctrinal, expressed by this Constitution under the sections entitled Statement of Faith and Qualifications for Elders. If it is determined by the Elders that an Elder has become spiritually or doctrinally disqualified, or if he fails to heed the admonition of the Elders, he shall be removed from office by a unanimous vote of the remaining Elders. All of the Elders may be disqualified by a 70% vote of the Congregation at a special meeting for this purpose. The date and purpose shall be announced two weeks prior to the meeting.

- g. **Meetings**– The Chairman of the Elders (and any other officers deemed necessary) shall be selected by the unanimous consensus of the Elders. Regular meetings shall be held at such time, place, and frequency as the Elders may determine. Special meetings of the Elders may be called by any officer. An Elder may be placed on inactive status, for reasons such as disability or extended absence, upon the unanimous consensus of the remaining Elders. A minimum two-thirds representation of the active Elders shall be necessary to constitute a quorum at any given meeting.

2. Deacons

- a. **Duties**– The Deacons shall not function as a separate board, but rather each Deacon shall serve under the general oversight of the Elders and shall relate functionally to a particular Elder (or Elders), assisting him in his area of responsibility. The duties of the deacons shall include the following:
 1. To aid the Elders in the management of the church.
 2. To assist in administering the ordinances (see Article V).
 3. To supervise the general operations and maintenance of the church buildings and property.
 4. To perform any other responsibility as delegated and specified by the Elders.
- b. **Qualifications**-There shall be the following criteria for Deacons:
 1. They must conform to the moral and spiritual qualifications found in 1 Timothy 3:8-13.
 2. They must be in agreement with the Statement of Faith and Doctrinal Statement.
 3. Prospective candidates must be believers and have faithfully attended Faith Community Church for one year and must be actively serving the church in some capacity in accordance with 1 Timothy 3:10.
- c. **Number**-There shall be no prescribed number of Deacons.
- d. **Selection**-The Elders shall seek input from the local fellowship in identifying candidates. After prayerful deliberation by the Elders and upon their unanimous consensus, the prospective candidate(s) shall be presented before the congregation for their consideration. A minimum period of two weeks shall be allotted for this consideration. If in the unanimous opinion of the Elders the candidate has been substantially affirmed by the congregation, he shall be appointed as Deacon.

- e. **Termination-** A deacon shall be removed from office upon any of the following:

1. Death
2. Resignation
3. Disqualification: Grounds for disqualification include a failure to fulfill the responsibilities of a Deacon as designated by the Elders or a failure to live in harmony with the standards, either moral or doctrinal, expressed by this Constitution under the sections entitled Statement of Faith and Qualifications for Deacons.

If it is determined by the Elders that a Deacon has become spiritually or doctrinally disqualified, or if he fails to heed the admonition of the Elders, he shall be removed from the office by a unanimous vote of the Elders.

B. Supportive Staff

1. Pastoral Staff

- a. **Qualifications-** All members of the pastoral staff shall be in agreement with Article I and in agreement with the philosophy of ministry as held by the Elders. The main preaching pastor shall function as an Elder and thus must meet the first two qualifications for an Elder as specified. Other staff members will be expected to attend Elder meetings, but may not be appointed as Elders. The purpose of this is to ensure that staff do not outnumber lay Elders, and to minimize potential conflict between the staff.
- b. **Selection-** In the event of a vacancy in the pastoral staff of the church, or the need arises for additional pastoral staff, the Elders shall act as the interviewing agency. After prayerful deliberation by the Elders and upon their unanimous consensus, a prospective candidate for the pastoral staff shall be presented to the congregation for their consideration. A minimum period of two weeks shall be allotted for this consideration. No additional candidate may be presented to the congregation until a final decision has been made on the existing candidate. If, in the unanimous opinion of the Elders, the candidate has been substantially affirmed by the congregation, he shall be appointed to the vacancy for an indefinite period of time.
- c. **Duties-** Pastoral staff responsibilities, salaries, and benefits shall be as specified by the Elders. When salary determinations are made by the Elders, no individual may vote on or be allowed to determine his own salary. The pastoral staff shall function under the supervision of the Elders.
- d. **Number-** The size of the pastoral staff shall be as judiciously determined by the Elders.

- e. **Termination**— A member of the pastoral staff shall be removed from his position upon any of the following:
1. Death
 2. Resignation: It shall be the prerogative of any member of the pastoral staff to dissolve his relationship with the church upon giving three months notice of such intention. This period may be shortened if mutually agreed upon by the staff member and the Elders.
 3. Disqualification: Grounds for disqualification include a failure to fulfill the responsibilities of the position as designated by the Elders or a failure to live in harmony with the moral and doctrinal standards expressed by this Constitution.

If it is determined by the Elders that a staff member has become spiritually or doctrinally disqualified, or if he fails to heed the admonition of the Elders, he shall be dismissed by a unanimous vote of the remaining Elders.

2. **Other Church Staff**

The Elders shall have the authority to employ or terminate secretarial and other staff as is deemed necessary. Such staff shall be responsible to the Elders unless otherwise designated.

- C. **Committees**—The Elders may designate committees for such purpose and duration as deemed appropriate.

ARTICLE IV. Membership

A. **Procedure**

Anyone who has professed faith in Jesus Christ as Savior and attends this fellowship will be considered a member of Faith Community Church. The member, by their attendance, accepts the privilege of local church affiliation and submits themselves to the Elders' leadership and loving discipline. They shall accept the responsibility of exercising their gifts of the Spirit for the benefit of the body.

B. **Responsibilities**

Individuals shall be exhorted:

1. To walk in a manner worthy of the Lord Jesus Christ (Ephesians 4:1-3; Colossians 1:10-12; 1 Peter 1:14-16).
2. To be doers of the Word, not merely hearers who delude themselves (James 1:22-25; Matthew 7:24).
3. To exercise their spiritual gifts and minister to others in the fellowship (1 Peter 4:10-11; Romans 12:6-13; 14:19; 1 Corinthians 12:7; Ephesians 4:12, 16, 32; Galatians 6:1-2).
4. To be submissive to the leadership and authority of the Elders (Hebrews 13:17; 1 Thessalonians 5:12-13; 1 Peter 5:5; 1 Corinthians 1:10).

C. Discipline

In order to maintain the purity and peace of the church, the Scripture requires the confrontation and discipline of brothers and sisters in Christ in the congregation who practice deliberate and active error, whether doctrinal or moral (Matthew 18:15-20; 1 Corinthians 5:1-13; 2 Thessalonians 3:6-15; Titus 1:10-11, 13-14; Romans 16:17; Acts 20:28-31). It should be emphasized that whenever Biblical confrontation is practiced, love should be the central motivation, and restoration of the erring member the sole purpose. The following Procedure shall be followed:

1. It is the duty of the individual who has first-hand knowledge of the sin or doctrinal error to make reasonable attempts to privately admonish the one in error and to encourage him/her to practice the truth (Matthew 18:15; Luke 17:3), doing so with a spirit of gentleness and humility (Galatians 6:1).
2. If private reproof fails, one or two additional members shall accompany the original member to offer spiritual counsel and be witnesses (Matthew 18:16). If the offender repents of the sin, (has a change of mind and behavior), the matter is dropped. If the offender refuses to repent, the witnesses stand as evidence of his/her unwillingness to change.
3. If reasonable attempts toward confrontation and correction have failed, the matter shall be submitted to the Elders. The offender shall be notified of the charges, and of the date of their consideration by the Elders, and shall be given the opportunity to respond. If, in the unanimous opinion of the Elders (1) the charges are verified, and (2) the individual does not show evidence of repentance, the Elders may pursue any of the following: inform those who might be harmed or affected by that person's behavior; request prayer for the offending member by the Church; ask the church body to encourage the offender to reconcile with God, and avoid casual, relaxed fellowship with the offender; ask the offender to refrain from Communion until the matter is resolved; remove him/her from ministry or office. During this time the offender is lovingly encouraged to change their mind about the sin and reconcile with the Body of Christ.
4. Eventually, if the matter is not reconciled to the satisfaction of the Elders, the offender shall be publicly dismissed from attendance and fellowship with this assembly (Matthew 18:17; 1 Corinthians 5:11-13; 1 Timothy 5:20; Romans 16:17; 2 Thessalonians 3:6, 14-15; Galatians 6:1; Hebrews 13:17). A unanimous vote of the Elders is necessary to carry out this fourth step of loving discipline.
5. All members have the right to appeal to the Elders and present their case any time during and up to 6 months after the disciplinary process. A written request to any elder is required for a hearing before the Board of Elders.
6. Dismissal from the church shall always be practiced with a view toward restoration (2 Corinthians 2:6-8). When, in the unanimous opinion of the Elders the disciplined party shows evidence of repentance, he/she shall be publicly restored to fellowship by the Elders, demonstrating the forgiveness and love of Christ (2 Corinthians 2:7-8).

D. Withdrawal of Membership

Membership may be withdrawn at any time by simply notifying the church in writing of such intent. If a letter of recommendation for another church is needed, we will give that, provided that such withdrawal is during a time when the member is in good standing with the Church. Good standing of a member is lost when:

1. A known and unrepentant sin continues to be practiced by the member.
2. The member is teaching doctrines contrary to the church's Statement of Faith. Anyone accused of teaching false doctrine may appeal to the Elders to present their view. The Elders have ultimate authority in deciding whether a teaching is in error.
3. The member is exhibiting a divisive spirit in the church.

If a member is under church discipline and desires to leave, they may do so with the understanding that the Elders may carry out the discipline and let the church know what has happened. The Elders may also, at their discretion, choose to inform other churches of the circumstances surrounding the person's withdrawal from Faith Community Church.

ARTICLE V. Ordinances

A. Believer's Baptism

Water baptism is understood as the outward testimony of an inward spiritual transformation. It will be administered only to those who give satisfactory testimony of their personal faith in Jesus Christ as Savior. The church shall practice believer's baptism by immersion, pouring, or sprinkling depending upon the believer's choice (Acts 2:38,41; Matthew 3:16-17).

B. Communion

The Lord's Supper is understood to be a commemoration of His death—the elements being used as emblems of His body and blood to be observed until His return. It shall be open to all self-examined believers, regardless of church affiliation. It shall be observed on such occasions as the Elders shall deem desirable (1 Corinthians 11:23-26; Matthew 26:26-30).

ARTICLE VI. Facilities Use Policy

This policy shall govern the use of any and all assets or property that is subject to the control of Faith Community Church (FCC), whether real property, personal property, intangible property, or property or asset of any kind whatsoever.

The property of FCC shall be reserved for uses consistent with our Constitution, By-laws, Statement of Faith, and Purpose Statement, which are directly related to our ministry functions. Such uses specifically include:

- Biblical Christian Worship
- Fellowship
- Evangelism
- Ministry to our Community

Preference will be extended to requests from our members for certain limited, private, or family-related events.

While this policy does not exclude the use of our property and assets by outside persons or groups who agree with our beliefs, values, and goals, it does specifically prohibit uses that could be construed as being in conflict with our beliefs, values, and goals. Such uses by any individual or group include:

- Commercial “For Profit” activities
- Activities which conflict with our statements on Biblical Marriage, Gender, and Sexuality
- Activities which promote non-biblical or anti-Biblical values

In every case, rental, free gratis, or donation-based, use of the property of FCC shall be subject to review and approval by the Elders on an individual basis. The Elders may delegate this authority.

ARTICLE VII. Amendments

This constitution can be amended only by the unanimous consensus of the Elders. In addition, provision shall be made for any proposed amendment to be put before the congregation for affirmation. If, in the unanimous opinion of the Elders, the proposal has been substantially affirmed, the amendment shall be considered ratified.