

# **BY-LAWS**

Last Revised May 21, 2023

## **ARTICLE I: Membership**

### **Section 1: GENERAL PROCEDURE**

All actions regarding membership, either of admission or dismissal, shall be by vote of the Church upon recommendation of the Council of Elders. The congregation, at any of the quarterly meetings of the Church, may, without special notice, act upon the reception of members or upon transfer of members to other churches. Prior to recommending a potential member, the Council of Elders will ensure the potential member has been actively attending for at least three months (will be based on the date the potential member lists on their application) and has completed the membership class.

### **Section 2: ADMISSION BY EXPERIENCE OR RESTORATION**

All applicants for membership other than by baptism or by letter of transfer, that is by Christian experience if previously baptized, or by restoration, shall be received into the church in the same way as those by baptism, except the ordinance shall not be administered.

### **Section 3: INSTRUCTION TO NEW MEMBERS**

New members shall pledge themselves to fulfill their stewardship obligations as to worship, service, and giving, when they make public profession of faith and join the church.

### **Section 4: DISMISSAL OF MEMBERS**

- A. Members in good standing who have fulfilled their obligations to the Church, or satisfactorily arranged the same with the Elders, and who desire to unite with a church of another denomination, shall receive a certificate of character and be dismissed.
- B. Members who move from this city shall supply the Church with their new address and apply for a letter of dismissal within one year provided there be a church of the same faith and order in the place to which they move. If necessary, it shall be the duty of the Council of Elders to remind such members of their duties in this respect. In case there is no such church in the place, or there are circumstances which render it inadvisable to change membership, the member shall report to the Church as often as once a year at least, in person or by letter and by contribution. All non-resident members who do not so report shall be subject to dismissal by the Church after appropriate efforts have been made to contact the member and remind them of their duties.

## **ARTICLE II: Church Government**

### **Section 1: GENERAL STATEMENT**

- A. Officers – The Officers of the Church shall be a Council of Elders and the Deacons. Officers shall be called to office by vote of the membership of the Church as provided for in Article II, Section 2 and Section 3 of these By-Laws. All officers of the Church shall be members of the Church in good and regular standing. The Council of Elders shall be composed of men only, the Deacons may be composed of both men and/or women. Except as provided in paragraphs (b) and (c) below, the Council of Elders and the Deacons are the only bodies and positions created by these By-Laws.
- B. Treasurer and Financial Secretary – The Church, upon nomination by the Council of Elders shall elect at the annual meeting, members to the positions of Treasurer and Financial Secretary. The functions of Treasurer and Financial Secretary shall not be performed by one member. Elders shall provide a written description of duties to the Treasurer and Financial Secretary.
- C. Committees and Appointees – The Council of Elders has the authority to create committees and positions to which it may delegate any specified aspect of its responsibility. The Council of Elders has the authority to dissolve any committee or position which it created. The Council of Elders also has the authority to appoint Elders, Deacons, or other members of the Church to serve as members of such committees and to act as its agents in such positions. The Deacons may nominate candidates for any committee or position, with appointment by the Council of Elders. The Council of Elders may delegate to the Deacons the authority to appoint Deacons or other members of the Church to serve as members of such committees and as agents of the Council of Elders in such positions. Every committee shall have a chairperson, responsible for the overall operation of the committee, who shall be appointed by the Council of Elders. The Council of Elders may delegate the responsibility for selecting the chairperson to the Deacons or to the committee. (For example, such committees and positions may include a Missions Committee and a Christian Education Committee, among others.)

### **Section 2: VOCATIONAL PASTORS AND MINISTERS**

- A. Definition – Vocational Pastors are the ordained Elders of the church, who in response to God's call, have devoted their vocational lives to the ministry of the Word and prayer in the service of the church of Christ. Vocational Ministers are the non-ordained ministers of the church who, in response to God's call, serve the church of Christ as their primary vocation. Both Vocational Pastors and Vocational Ministers are supported financially by the church in return for their vocational labors.
- B. Duties – In addition to the duties of their office as described in Sections 4 and 5 below, Vocational Pastors and Ministers shall perform the duties determined by the Council of Elders and approved by the congregation. The duties shall be in writing at the time of the call to service, and substantial changes shall be approved by the church. The church's call of a Vocational Pastor is a call to the Eldership of the church. Therefore Vocational Pastors shall be members of the Council of Elders and have all the Biblical qualifications

of an Elder. Vocational Ministers are not necessarily called to the Eldership, but as assisting partners in the ministry. Vocational Ministers may, when appropriate, be called by the church to the Council of Elders.

- C. Vocational Call by the Church – The members shall call Vocational Pastors and Ministers (1) by ballot upon recommendation of the Council of Elders and (2) by at least a two-thirds majority of those members voting at the meeting with at least fifty percent (50%) of the membership of the Church present. Oral notice of any such meeting, stating its object, shall be given from the pulpit on the next two successive Sundays preceding the meeting. Notice shall also be given by mail to the resident membership at least two weeks before the meeting. Vocational Pastors and Ministers shall stand for reaffirmation not later than the third annual meeting following their call or previous reaffirmation. Reaffirmation of a Vocational Pastor or Minister shall be by two-thirds vote of those members present and voting at the meeting.
- D. Termination of Vocational Call by the Church
  1. By resignation – The question of terminating the vocational call of a Vocational Pastor or Minister shall be considered at any time by the church upon the presentation of the Pastor's or Minister's resignation.
  2. Grievance – Where a grievance exists against a Pastor or Minister, either due to his preaching or teaching contrary to the beliefs of the Church as set forth in Article II of its Constitution or to alleged conduct on his part unfitting an Elder or Deacon, such grievance may be brought before the Council of Elders by any two members in good standing. The Pastor or Minister will be immediately placed on paid leave status and shall not be a party to the proceedings with the exception of providing testimony. While on paid leave status, the Pastor or Minister will not be allowed to perform any of their regular duties. If the Council, after thorough investigation and consideration, believes the grievance to be true and substantial, then the vocational call of the Pastor or Minister may be terminated at any business meeting upon the recommendation of the Council of Elders when supported by closed ballot of a majority of those members of the Church present and voting with at least fifty percent (50%) of the membership of the church present at such meeting. Oral notice of any such meeting, stating its object, shall be given from the pulpit on two successive Sundays immediately preceding the meeting. Notice shall also be given by mail to the resident membership at least two weeks before the meeting.
  3. Lack of reaffirmation – If a Vocational Pastor or Minister fails to be reaffirmed to the office of Elder or Deacon as provided in paragraph (c) above, a special business meeting shall be called to consider the question of terminating the vocational call with that Pastor or Minister. The vocational call shall be terminated only if supported by closed ballot of a majority of those members of the Church present and voting with at least fifty percent (50%) of the membership of the church present. Public notice of any such meeting, stating its object, shall be given on two successive Sundays immediately preceding the meeting. Notice shall also be given by mail to the membership at least two weeks before the meeting. Removal from office and termination of the vocational call by this means shall not be considered disciplinary action.

### Section 3: LAY OFFICERS

- A. Definition – Lay officers are the non-Vocational Elders and Deacons of the Church.
- B. Duties – Lay Elders and Deacons shall have the duties of their offices as described in Sections 4 and 5 below.
- C. Calling – The Council of Elders shall recognize, interview, and investigate candidates for lay Elder and Deacon. The Council shall provide for individual members of the Church either to nominate candidates or to present themselves to the Council as candidates for office and for the Council's further investigation. In no instances shall any individual be considered a nominee for the office without the nominee's consent. In those cases where the Council of Elders concludes that a nominee is not qualified for office they shall so inform the nominee stating the reasons for this conclusion.

The Council of Elders shall present a ballot of candidates for calling or reaffirmation as Elders or Deacons to the congregation at the annual meeting. The Council of Elders may also nominate candidates for election to office at any quarterly or special meeting, provided that the written ballot of nominees is available for review in the church office at least two weeks in advance of the meeting - and is announced publicly to the church by mail to its members and in the Sunday morning worship at least two weeks in advance of the meeting.

Lay Elders and Deacons shall be called by the Church for a normal term of three years. They shall stand for reaffirmation not later than the third annual meeting of the church following their call or previous reaffirmation. Calling or reaffirmation of a lay Elder or Deacons shall be by two-thirds vote of those members present and voting at the meeting.

#### D. Removal

- 1. Resignation – An officer may resign his office at any time if he finds he is no longer able to discharge the duties of the office.
- 2. Grievance – Where a grievance exists against an officer of the Church either due to the adherence to and propagation of beliefs contrary to the beliefs of the Church as set forth in Article II, Sections 1 and 2 of its Constitution or to alleged conduct on his part unfitting an Elder or Deacon, such grievance may be brought before the Council of Elders by any two members in good standing. The lay officer will be immediately placed on leave status and shall not be a party to the proceedings with the exception of providing testimony. While on leave status, the lay officer will not be allowed to perform any of their regular duties. If the Council, after thorough investigation and consideration, believes the grievance to be true and substantial, then the officer may be removed from office upon the recommendation of the Council of Elders when supported by closed ballot of a majority of those members of the Church present and voting at any annual, quarterly, or special meeting with at least fifty percent (50%) of the membership of the church present at such meeting. Oral notice of any such meeting, stating its object, shall be given from the pulpit on two successive Sundays immediately

preceding the meeting. Notice shall also be given by mail to the resident membership at least two weeks before the meeting.

3. Lack of reaffirmation – If a Lay Elder or Deacon stands for reaffirmation and fails to be reaffirmed, the Elder or Deacon shall be removed from office. Removal from office by this means shall not be considered disciplinary action.

#### Section 4: COUNCIL OF ELDERS

- A. Composition, Term, and Calling – The Council of Elders shall be composed of men only, both Lay Elders and Vocational Elders. The Council of Elders shall be determined by the needs of the ministry and by the call and qualification of men in the church. There shall be at least as many Lay Elders as Vocational Elders. Each Elder shall be called by the membership of the Church to a term of three years. That call and any reaffirmation(s) shall be conducted as provided in Article II, Sections 2 and 3 of these By-Laws.
- B. Qualifications – Elders and nominees for Elder shall be qualified for the office as specified in the Bible. Relevant texts include I Timothy 3:1-7, Titus 1:6-9 and I Peter 5:1-4.
- C. Responsibilities – The fundamental responsibility of the Elders is to devote themselves to prayer and the Word. The Elders are responsible for governing the Church, teaching the Word and tending the flock of God in this Church. The responsibilities of the Elders shall include: examining prospective members, overseeing the process of Church discipline, examining prospective candidates for office, scheduling and providing a moderator for business meetings, providing for reporting and recording of official Church business, overseeing the work of the Deacons and appointed church agents and committees, conducting worship services, administering the ordinances of the Gospel, equipping the membership of the Church for the work of the ministry, teaching the whole counsel of God both formally and informally, correcting error, overseeing, coordinating and promoting the ministries of the Church, and mobilizing the Church for world mission.
- D. Organization – The Council of Elders shall organize itself however it determines to be best to achieve the mission of the Church. The Elders shall be equal in authority but may be specialized in function. The Elders must meet at least once per month. Meetings of the Elders may be held at any location and may be conducted by means of electronic communication through which the Elders may simultaneously hear each other. Unless the Council provides otherwise, meetings of the Council may be held immediately upon notice. A quorum for meetings of the Elders is defined as at least one-half of the Lay Elders plus at least one-half of the Vocational Elders, except for matters on which only Lay Elders are entitled to vote in which case a majority of the Lay Elders shall constitute a quorum. The Council shall annually select its Chairman and Vice-Chairman from among its Lay Elders.

#### Section 5: DEACONS

- A. Composition, Term, and Calling –The number of Deacons shall be determined by the needs of the ministry and by the call and qualification of men in the church. Each Deacon

shall be called by the membership of the Church to a normal term of three years. The call and any reaffirmation shall be conducted as provided in Article II, Sections 2 and 3 of these By-Laws.

- B. Qualifications – Deacons and nominees for Deacon shall be qualified for the office as specified in the Bible. Relevant texts include I Timothy 3:8-12.
- C. Responsibilities – The Deacons shall advise and be ready to assist the Elders in any service that shall support and promote the ministry of the Word, new and existing ministries of the Church, and the care for the members of the congregation. Their responsibilities may include:
  - 1. administering a fund to assist the poor and needy and otherwise providing aid in times of crisis or distress;
  - 2. the greeting and welcoming ministries of the church;
  - 3. assisting in administering the ordinances of the Gospel;
  - 4. assisting at fellowship gatherings of the church;
  - 5. caring for and maintaining the Church properties;
  - 6. administering the business affairs of the Church that pertain to its material assets.
- D. Organization – The Deacons shall organize themselves however they determine to be best to achieve the mission of the church. The Elders or the Deacons may designate any specific Deacon or group of Deacons to specialize in some particular Deaconal function. Meetings of the Deacons, or subcommittees thereof shall be held as needed to best fulfill the responsibilities of the Deacons.

### **ARTICLE III: Church Employees**

In addition to Vocational Pastors and Ministers, the church may employ additional personnel. The moneys for such personnel must be approved by the congregation at a properly called business meeting. The Council of Elders shall be responsible for determining the duties of and hiring such personnel.

#### **Section 1: IN GENERAL**

No method of raising funds shall be entertained which is in conflict with the Scriptural ideals of the Church.

All funds donated for missions by the societies and organizations of the Church shall pass through the Church Finance Secretary and the Treasurer in order that due record may be made and credit given to the Church. The Deacons shall provide assistants for the Financial Secretary in accounting for funds donated.

## Section 2: CONTRIBUTIONS

It is understood that membership in this church involves financial obligations to support the Church and its causes with regular and proportionate giving. Each member shall be encouraged in Scriptural giving, with tithing as the ideal minimum. Special offerings may be sought by the Church, or by any of its organizations, with the approval of the Council of Elders. This shall not preclude individuals from making special offerings or designated gifts (limited to those designated funds approved by the Congregation and the Council of Elders) at any time as the Spirit of God may move them.

## Section 3: FINANCIAL PLANNING

The financial planning of the Church shall be carried out through the medium of annual budgets for carrying out of the various programs of its work. Annual budgets shall be voted on by the congregation upon recommendation of the Council of Elders, or, if authorized by the Council, the Deacons or other committee. In order to be approved, the budget must be approved by at least a two thirds majority of those present at the annual meeting with at least fifty percent (50%) of the members present. Matters involving staff compensation shall be the responsibility of the lay members of the Council of Elders. The Council of Elders may delegate this responsibility provided such delegation is to lay Deacons or other lay members of the Church.

## Section 4: ACCOUNTS

Financial receipts from all sources shall be accounted for by the Finance Secretary according to the purposes for which contributions are designated. The Treasurer of the Church shall disburse these funds promptly according to the financial program of the Church as detailed in the Budgets or other authorized designations. All moneys for missions shall be remitted in accordance with the Mission Budget of the Church or otherwise designated, preferably each month and not less than each quarter.

## Section 5: INDEBTEDNESS

No note or contract exceeding 1% of the total annual budget whereby the credit of the Church is pledged shall be made except by recommendation of the Council of Elders and approved by the Church.

## Section 6: AUTHORITY TO BIND THE CHURCH

The Chairman and Vice Chairman of the Council of Elders are the only officers who have authority, in accordance with these By-Laws, the Church Constitution, and any applicable laws, to execute legal documents relating to real estate, church property, and church finances.

## **ARTICLE IV: Meetings**

## Section 1: FOR WORSHIP

Public services shall be held on the Lord's Day. The Lord's Supper shall be celebrated on the first Sunday of each month or at such other times as the Council of Elders may determine. Other religious services may be appointed as the advancement of the work of the Church may require.

## Section 2: FOR BUSINESS

- A. The Annual Meeting – The annual meeting shall be held some time during the last month of the fiscal year of the Church for the purpose of calling and reaffirming the officers, reviewing proposed budgets, and other business. Officers called at the annual meeting shall assume their duties at the beginning of the new fiscal year.
- B. Quarterly Meetings – Quarterly meetings of the Church shall be held within each quarter of the fiscal year.
- C. Special Meetings – The Council of Elders or any ten members in good standing, may call for a special meeting. Notice of the meeting shall be given from the pulpit or by other notification, the particular object of such meeting being clearly stated in the notice. In the calling of special meetings for purposes where an interval after advance notice is required by provision in these By-Laws or according to law, such provisions shall be observed. Notice shall be given at least two weeks in advance for meetings on specially important matters not otherwise provided for.
- D. Quorum – Any number of members shall constitute a quorum at any ordinary meeting of the Church. At meetings dealing with particular matters stipulated in these By-Laws, the quorums prescribed shall apply.
- E. Rules Governing Business Meetings – Robert's Rules of Order shall be recognized as the general pattern for the conduct of the business meetings of the Church. Seeking the Lord's wisdom and blessing through thankful prayer shall be a part of every meeting.
- F. Notice Provisions – Unless specifically defined in other sections of these By-Laws or the Constitution, "resident membership" means those members who reside within 75 miles driving distance from the church building, "notice ... in writing" means a written announcement sent by regular U.S. mail (required for those members who do not have a computer or email), social media, or email, and "notice ... from the pulpit" means an oral announcement at each of the Sunday morning services.

## **ARTICLE V: Organization of Members for Ministry**

Members of this church shall have the liberty to participate in and organize themselves for ministry, provided that such participation and organization does not conflict with Article II of the Constitution. Any such organization may seek church sanction from the Council of Elders as an official ministry of Providence Reformed Church. Such sanction shall be granted provided that 1) the object, purpose, belief and conduct of the organization and its members is consistent with



Article II of the Constitution, and 2) the primary officers of the organization are members of the church or other regular attenders of the church who have been approved under guidelines established by the Council of Elders. Sanction by the Council of Elders does not necessarily imply support of the organization by the church with personnel, finances, or facilities. Such support may be requested as provided by the leadership of the church.

## **ARTICLE VI: Discipline**

Church discipline shall be carried out by the Council of Elders in accord with the Constitution and By-Laws.

## **ARTICLE VII: Amendments**

Amendments to these By-Laws may be introduced through written motion at any quarterly meeting. Amendments shall not be acted on until the following quarterly or annual meeting, at which time an affirmative vote of the majority of the membership of the Church, or a two-thirds majority of those members present at the meeting and voting shall be required for acceptance; provided, however, that at least fifty percent (50%) of the membership of the Church be present at such meeting, and that notice of the proposed change or amendment be given from the pulpit on at least two Sundays and in writing to the resident membership at least two weeks before the meeting when the vote will be held.

## **ARTICLE VIII: On Marriage and Sexuality**

### **SECTION 1: Marriage**

Marriage is a biblical institution established by God as clearly described in the Scriptures. This Church recognizes that marriage is the uniting of one man and one woman in covenant commitment for a lifetime. Accordingly, this Church, its pastors, staff and members will not participate in or perform same sex unions, same sex marriages, polygamous marriages, or any other such marriages or unions the elders understand to be forbidden by Scripture and its principles; nor shall the church's property or resources be used for such purposes.

### **SECTION 2: Human Sexuality**

The Bible teaches that legitimate sexual relations are exercised solely within marriage. Hence, this Church opposes all forms of sexual immorality, sexual activity occurring between any individuals not biblically married to each other. This church affirms God-honoring sexual expression within marriage. This church also affirms celibacy for those who are unmarried.

### SECTION 3: Christian Kindness

We believe that God offers redemption and restoration to all who confess and forsake their sin, seeking His mercy and forgiveness through Jesus Christ. 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 the Scripture nor the doctrines of the church. However, we deny that a call to repent and to live in accord with Scriptural mandates regarding marriage and sexuality is in any way hateful or harassing.