

THE BY-LAWS OF
FIRST CHRISTIAN CHURCH
LAWRENCE, KANSAS

I. Purpose

First Christian Church exists to make disciples of Jesus.

II. Strategy

To make disciples of Jesus, First Christian's ministries are committed to teaching disciples to obey everything that Jesus commanded (Matt. 28:19), expressed by **Gather, Grow, Go**. We **Gather** to worship and care for our community; we **Grow** to be like Jesus; we **Go** to share the gospel and serve the world. Either or both of the following metrics measure success: (1) baptisms showing conversion (Matt. 28:20) and (2) participation in the various ministries.

III. Statement of Faith

We believe that God, the Creator and Sustainer of the universe, eternally exists in three persons, Father, Son and Holy Spirit. We believe that He revealed Himself through Jesus Christ the Son of God; that Jesus died on the cross for our sins; that by His death Jesus demonstrated God's love and mercy towards us and provided the sole means by which any can be reconciled to Him. That this reconciliation is accomplished by grace through faith alone and not as a result of any effort of our own. We believe that by Christ's resurrection God demonstrated His power over death; that this power is now at work in us through the Holy Spirit; and that each believer is uniquely gifted by the Spirit for the purpose of making disciples of all nations.

We accept the entire Bible as God's revelation to us, as authoritative in determining what we believe and how we are to live our lives. We acknowledge its testimony that Jesus Christ is Lord over all Creation and Savior of all who voluntarily place themselves under His Lordship. As the fullness of God revealed to us in the flesh, Jesus Christ is the focus of our faith and the source of our unity, uniting us in our common commitment to Him as Lord. As a local community of believers, we acknowledge our unity with other communities of faith worldwide which acknowledge Jesus Christ as Lord.

IV. Church Affiliation

The First Christian Church of Lawrence, Kansas is a member of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in Kansas (hold "Ctrl" and click [here](#) for more) and is pledged to work in harmony with our Denomination. However, the government of First Christian Church is vested in the body of believers who compose it. Persons duly received by the members will constitute membership. This church is not subject to the control of any other ecclesiastical body, but it recognizes and sustains the obligations of mutual counsel and cooperation which are common among the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ).

V. Church Year

The church year begins on January 1 of each year to coincide with the fiscal year.

VI. Qualifications for Elected Leadership

Elected leadership in the church includes certain members of the Elder Board, the Trustee Board, and the Personnel Board. Elected leaders are required to be members of the Church as defined by the current By-Laws and Constitution. Specific requirements for the leaders can be found in each section below.

VII. Membership

The membership retains unto itself the exclusive right of self-government of the spiritual and temporal life of this church.

A. CANDIDACY

Any person may offer themselves as a candidate for membership in this church. Such candidates will be presented to the church at any regular church service for membership in any of the following ways:

1. By profession of faith (conversion).
2. By baptism by immersion.
3. By promise of a letter of recommendation from another church.
4. By personal statement, which is accepted by the church, that the person comes from another church and was baptized as a believer, trusting in the grace of God alone for salvation. Acceptance of a candidate for membership would be contingent upon recommendation by the pastor or by another group as designated by the church.
5. By restoration upon a statement of prior conversion experience and baptism when membership has lapsed, terminated, been lost, or when no letter is otherwise obtainable.

B. RIGHTS OF MEMBERS

Every member of the church is entitled to vote at elections and on questions submitted to the church at a regular or special business meeting, provided the member is present. Every member of the church may participate in the ordinances of the church as administered by the church (except where noted in the current By-Laws).

C. TERMINATION OF MEMBERSHIP

Membership will be terminated in the following ways:

1. Death
2. Granting a letter to another church
3. Erasure (upon request in writing or proof of membership in a church of another denomination)
4. Exclusion by action of this church, or, after contact or attempt to contact member, at the discretion of the Business Administrator/Office Administrator.

D. DISCIPLINE

It will be the practice of this church to emphasize to its members that reasonable measures will be taken to assist any troubled member. The Pastor, other members of the church Staff, and Elders are available for counsel and guidance. The attitude of members toward one another will be guided by a concern for redemption rather than punishment.

Should some serious condition exist, which would cause a member to become a liability to the general welfare of the church, every reasonable measure should be taken by the pastor and the Elders to resolve the problem. Such proceedings will be confidential and pervaded by a spirit of Christian kindness and forbearance. Should it be determined that the welfare of the church will be best served by the exclusion of a member, the church may exclude such member by a majority vote of the Elders.

Any person whose membership has been terminated for any reason, which has made it necessary for the church to exclude that person, may upon that person's request be restored to membership by a vote of the Elders upon evidence of that person's repentance and reformation.

E. MEMBERSHIP COVENANT

This covenant represents a goal that the Church Body should strive to attain:

Therefore, having been led, as I believe, by the Spirit of God to receive the Lord Jesus Christ as my Savior and Lord, and on the profession of my faith, having been baptized in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, I do now, in the presence of God and this assembly, most solemnly and joyfully enter into covenant with one another as one body in Christ.

Members of FCC strive:

- To share the gospel with non-Christians on a regular basis;
- To be actively, regularly involved in the various ministries of First Christian, proactively using my spiritual gifts for the Body (e.g., Rom. 12; 1 Cor. 12);
- To advance the health and success of First Christian Church (e.g., Rom. 14:19; 15:2; 1 Thess. 5:11);
- To live a life of holiness, abstaining from sin (e.g., Eph. 1:4; 1 Thess. 5:23; 1 Pet. 1:16; 2:5);
- To be a “generous giver, sharing with others” (1 Tim. 6:18 NET), especially via the ministries of First Christian (1 Tim. 6:18);
- To remain “devoted to one another with mutual love, showing eagerness in honoring one another” (Rom. 12:9-10); so as to “live in harmony with others,” by “not being conceited” (Rom. 12:16);
- To not gossip, malign, or damage the reputation of any other person (cf. 2 Cor. 12:20; Gal. 5:15, 19-20); but, instead, if a person has sinned against me, I will only follow Jesus’s instructions to attempt to “regain my brother/sister” (Matt. 18:15-22);
- To commit to growing in my discipleship: i.e., I will do whatever it takes to be more like Jesus (e.g., personal devotional life, prayers, worship, service, evangelism, being disciplined by others, *et al.*)

VIII. Church Officers, Staff, and Organizational Structure

Three Boards govern first Christian: Elder Board (spiritual), Trustee Board (finance/facilities), and the Personnel Board (human resources/legal). The Staff are to implement the Strategy under the leadership of the Elder Board.

The Three Bodies of Governance of FCC



ELECTION OF BOARD MEMBERS

Non-staff persons are suggested by anyone in the congregation to the Board of choice. Each Board winnows the possible suggestions, and gives its final list of candidates to the Personnel Board, which presents the lists to the church at each church meeting (in the Fall) for congregational vote.

Each Board member is asked to serve a two-year term, and may continue to serve an additional two consecutive years with annual approval of the congregation. Any Board member can be re-elected after one year of not serving on the same Board. A non-Staff member can be removed from a Board at any time by majority vote of the Board. Each Board is responsible for electing its own Chair and Vice-Chair. In the case that a member of a Board leaves, the respective Board can choose a replacement until the Fall meeting where all nominees will be voted upon by the congregation.

The following explains the primary function of each organization:

A. PERSONNEL BOARD (Human Resources/Legal Leadership)

The Personnel Board provides the Human Resources and Legal representation for the Church. This Board consists of the Chair or Vice-Chair of the Elder Board (spiritual), the Chair or Vice-Chair of the Trustee Board (financial), non-Staff person with legal experience/expertise who is chosen by the Personnel Board (legal), and the Business Administrator (HR). They would meet on an *ad hoc* basis. The Personnel Board hires or dismisses Executive Staff for a majority vote of members present. The Personnel Board will recommend the hiring or dismissal of the Senior Pastor to the congregation for a majority vote of the members present. When the Senior Pastor position is available, they select a Senior Pastor Search Team of five people (which presents its final candidate for consideration to the church for a vote). The Chair of the Personnel Board will act as Moderator at Church meetings.

Duties would include, but are not limited to, the following: reviews job descriptions for legality; handles lawsuits or other legal actions; develops and maintains personnel and administrative policies and procedures; mediates disputes that may occur within the Staff; addresses any personnel issues that are not addressed by the person's immediate supervisor; performs the annual Senior Pastor review; approves change to the by-laws; proposes changes to the to the constitution.

B. TRUSTEE BOARD (Financial/Facilities Leadership)

The Trustees are the stewards of the finances and facilities of the Church. *The Trustee Board is responsible for making sure the various ministries and church entities are remaining fiscally responsible to the annual budget, and to the maintenance, betterment, and security of the facilities of the church.* Concerning the various ministries, the Staff in each ministry area has full discretion to spend their budgeted amount. Concerning the facilities, the Trustee Board has full discretion to spend monies necessary and available for the maintenance and betterment of the facilities. This Board should consist of four to six people and the Business Administrator. Trustees will recommend incurrence of long term debt, or the sale or purchase of property, to the congregation for a majority vote of members present only after written notice of the proposed action has been distributed at a regular worship service at least two weeks before the vote is taken. Certain Trustees will have a specific role as determined by the Trustee Board, such as:

- The Chair of the Trustee Board, as corporate chair, signs legal documents and represents the Trustee Board in financial and legal matters in meetings of the congregation and the Elder Board.
- The Business Administrator signs checks, maintains corporate records, provides financial reports as needed, and drafts the unified budget for approval by the Trustee Board.
- The designated Facilities Coordinator oversees the use, maintenance and repairs of the building and equipment.
- The designated Security Coordinator oversees the maintenance and operation of the facility security and fire protection systems.
- The designated Treasurer signs the checks, reviews and signs the Pastor's expense report and works closely with the Business Administrator.

Duties would include, but are not limited to, the following: develop a workable annual budget for the approved ministries after the Staff have made proposals; develop the annual church budget and conduct the annual stewardship campaign to support the budget; improve or repair facilities; maintain proper insurance coverage; manage endowment and trust funds.

C. ELDER BOARD (Spiritual Leadership)

Elders are the spiritual shepherds of the church. *The Elder Board is responsible for making certain the Mission and Strategy of First Christian is being accomplished in the various ministries.* This Board may consist of five to eight Elders, and the Senior Pastor. All members have voting rights. The board may decide to choose an elder emeritus without voting rights.

If the Senior Pastor resigns or is dismissed, the Elders are responsible for supplying a preacher until the Pastor Search Team finds another Senior Pastor.

Elder duties would include, but are not limited to, the following: prays for the needs and people of the church; sets an example to others in the Church in making disciples; actively evangelizes; leads or participates in Discipleship Groups and other ministries; receives monthly reports from the various ministries to see how they might support/encourage/challenge them; decides *which* ministries take place; mediates disputes within the congregation (according to Matt. 18:15-22); decides which Causes the church would be involved with and/or support financially; decides theological stances the Church adopts; etc..

Elder Qualifications

Including, but not limited to, the following:

- Must be a baptized disciple of Jesus, and meet the qualifications (both skills and character traits) outlined in the New Testament (e.g., see Acts 20:17; 28-31; I Timothy 3:2-7; 5:17; Titus 1:6-9; I Peter 5:1-2; James 5:14).
- Must be fully committed to, and actively participating in, the Mission and Strategy of First Christian.
- Must have been a member of First Christian for at least one year.
- Must have volunteered in a significant capacity in a ministry, preferably in a leadership or mentoring role.
- Must be recommended for consideration by a Staff member, a member of a Board or a member of the congregation.
- Must have the flexibility and availability to serve in the Elder role. The time commitment required can be delineated as: a monthly evening meeting; a retreat one weekend per year; approximately four-to-six hours per month for review of Elder board materials, policies, correspondence, and meeting preparation; and other time requirements when needs arise.
- Must be able to keep confidential information.

STAFF

The Staff are responsible for implementing the Strategy of the Church in their respective ministry areas. While Staff recruit, train, and nurture as many servants as possible for their ministry areas, Executive Staff (= those who supervise the ministry area) maintain final jurisdiction on strategic details of the respective ministry area. The Supervisor of the particular ministry, with the input of the Senior Pastor, composes necessary job descriptions (with the approval of the Personnel Board), recommends for hiring or dismissal to the Personnel Board, evaluates, and recommends pay raises to Trustee Board. Remunerations, salaries, and financial packages are negotiated between the potential employee and Supervisor with the input of the Chair of the Trustees. The Senior Pastor serves as the supervisor for Executive Staff (e.g., Worship Pastor, Care and Connections Pastor, et al.).

Duties would include, but are not limited to, the following: recruits and trains necessary servants from among the Church; makes and implements plans to accomplish the Strategy in the respective ministry; suggests the annual budget to the Trustees, and utilizes the budget within the constraints given; designs logos, signage, and marketing for the ministries; decorates the stage, room, or space necessary for the ministry; chooses where and how marketing and sign-ups occur; chooses which curriculum to use or create when teaching; chooses which camps to attend; etc..

The following is a list of each Executive-level Staff (see job descriptions):

EXECUTIVE STAFF

- a. **Senior Pastor:** This person is the spiritual leader of First Christian Church. The Senior Pastor, along with the Elders, decides the overall Mission and Strategy of the Church, and oversees the various ministries of the church in implementing the Mission and Strategy. The Senior Pastor is also the preacher.
- b. **Worship Pastor:** This person is the leader and coordinator for the music ministries of First Christian Church. This person selects and supervises the various musicians in each service. This person works with the input of the Senior Pastor to plan and implement the worship services, making certain the musical, media, and audio-visual needs are fulfilled by the necessary servants. This position can be split into two positions, Traditional Worship Pastor and Modern Worship Pastor.
- c. **Care and Connections Pastor:** This person is the leader and coordinator of the Care and Connections ministries of First Christian Church. This person implements programs that connects members and church guests to each other across the Church. This person assists in physical and emotional needs (e.g., coordinating funeral dinners, meals for families with new babies or those recently released from the hospital, short-term transportation, and shut-in visitation). This person supervises the various Care ministries that are needed (e.g., Divorce Care, Grief Share, *et al.*). This person also advises those who seek membership and seeks to connect them to the various DGroups and ministries available. This person helps coordinates church-wide events (e.g., Fifth-Sunday meals).
- d. **Adult Discipleship Pastor:** This person is the leader and coordinator of the adult Discipleship Groups ministry. This person works with the input of the Senior Pastor and Elders to make certain the DGroups are teaching orthodox theology according to the statement of faith given in the By-Laws. This person starts new groups, trains leaders, and monitors the health of the small group ministries available at the Church.
- e. **Children's Pastor:** This person is the chief teacher and facilitator of the Children's Ministry. This person recruits and trains teachers and servants to serve in the Children's Ministry. This person plans events for the children that would give the opportunity to receive the gospel and become baptized, and/or allow for learning the teaching of Jesus. This person plans parenting events that equip parents to disciple their own children with confidence.
- f. **Youth and College Pastor:** This person recruits and trains teachers and servants to serve in the Youth Ministry and College Ministry, along with being the chief teacher and facilitator of the Youth and College Ministries. This person plans events for the youth and college that gives the opportunity to receive the gospel and become baptized, and/or allow for learning the teaching of Jesus.
- g. **The Giving Tree Director:** This person is the leader and administrator of The Giving Tree Preschool. This person hires and evaluates the GT teachers and Staff, oversees the budget, and plans appropriate marketing and events that coincide as much as possible with the other events of the Children's Ministry.

- h. **Evangelism and Outreach Pastor:** This person is the leader and administrator of the Evangelism and Outreach ministries at the Church. This person provides training and equips the Church's members in personal evangelism, plans public evangelism events that incorporate the entire Church, and keeps the Church abreast of events in the lives of the missionaries the Church supports. This person also oversees the various Outreach ministries of the Church, recruiting and training servants to lead and serve where necessary (e.g., LI.N.K., Family Promise).
- i. **Business Administrator:** This person is the administrator of the day-to-day financial decisions of the church. This person works closely with the Executive Staff in maintaining a fiscally-responsible budget, maintains accounting records, and prepares financial reports. This person works as an integral member of the Trustee Board in financial decisions that affect the Church.

IX. Policies

The various Executive Staff, with the input of the Senior Pastor, develop ministry-specific policies. The following are policies that affect the procedures of the Church:

Communion

Church members in good standing may serve as Communion Presider for Sunday services.

Marriage

Policies concerning marriages that take place on the grounds of First Christian Church are provided in the Marriage Packet, which is distributed to all those who are interested (kept by the Front Office). Our facilities will not be used for same-sex marriages based on our understanding of the biblical definition of marriage as being between one man and one woman.

Baptism

Baptism for the forgiveness of sins will be administered to those who confess and repent of their sins, and place their complete trust in Jesus Christ (c.f., Acts 2:38). Any disciple of Jesus can perform a baptism. Immersion is the preferred mode of baptism when physically able.

X. Amendments

The Bylaws will be reviewed every three years. A majority of votes cast by the representative Board may amend these By-Laws in their particular area, pending approval by the Personnel Board. Any changes to the By-Laws will be communicated to the congregation in print.