

THE BYLAWS OF THE DISCIPLES FELLOWSHIP

ARTICLE 1 — PURPOSE AND MISSION

SECTION 1.1 - NAME

This body of believers shall be known as The Disciples Fellowship.

SECTION 1.2 - PURPOSE

This body is organized as a church exclusively for charitable, religious, and educational purposes within the meaning of Section 501 (c) (3) of the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 (or corresponding provision of any future United States Revenue Law), including, but not limited to, for such purposes, the evangelizing of the unsaved by the proclaiming of the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ; the educating of believers in a manner consistent with the requirements of Holy Scripture; and the maintaining of missionary activities in the United States and any foreign country.

SECTION 1.3 - MISSION

The Disciples Fellowship exists to glorify God by making disciples—of ourselves and others. All activities, events, missions, and resources are measured and allocated exclusively for the purpose of making disciples.

SECTION 1.4 - STATEMENT OF FAITH

STATEMENT OF FAITH **The Disciples Fellowship**

The Scriptures hold final and ultimate authority in all areas of faith and practice. The following Statement of Faith represents a summary of the teachings of Scripture.

1. **The Tri-une God.** We believe in one God, eternally existing in three equally divine Persons: the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, who know, love, and glorify one another. This one true and living God is infinitely perfect both in his love and in his holiness. He is the Creator of all things, visible and invisible, and is therefore worthy to receive all glory and adoration. Immortal and eternal, he perfectly and exhaustively knows the end from the beginning, sustains and sovereignly rules over all things, and providentially brings about his eternal good purposes to redeem a people for himself and restore his fallen creation, to the praise of his glorious grace.

2. **Revelation** God has graciously disclosed his existence and power in the created order, and has supremely revealed himself to fallen human beings in the person of his Son, the incarnate Word. Moreover, this God is a speaking God who by his Spirit has graciously disclosed himself in human words: we believe that God has inspired the words preserved in the Scriptures, the sixty-six books of the Old and New Testaments, which are both record and means of his saving work in the world. These writings alone constitute the verbally inspired Word of God, which is utterly authoritative and without error in the original writings, complete in its revelation of his will for salvation, sufficient for all that God requires us to believe and do, and final in its authority over every domain of knowledge to which it speaks. We confess that both our finitude and our sinfulness preclude the possibility of knowing God's truth exhaustively, but we affirm that, enlightened by the Spirit of God, we can know God's revealed truth truly. The Bible is to be believed, as God's instruction, in all that it teaches; obeyed, as God's command, in all that it requires; and trusted, as God's pledge, in all that it promises. As God's people hear, believe, and do the Word, they are equipped as disciples of Christ and witnesses to the gospel.
3. **Creation of Humanity** We believe that God created human beings, male and female, in his own image. Adam and Eve belonged to the created order that God himself declared to be very good, serving as God's agents to care for, manage, and govern creation, living in holy and devoted fellowship with their Maker. Men and women, equally made in the image of God, enjoy equal access to God by faith in Christ Jesus and are both called to move beyond passive self-indulgence to significant private and public engagement in family, church, and civic life. Adam and Eve were made to complement each other in a one-flesh union that establishes the only normative pattern of sexual relations for men and women, such that marriage ultimately serves as a type of the union between Christ and his church. In God's wise purposes, men and women are not simply interchangeable, but rather they complement each other in mutually enriching ways. God ordains that they assume distinctive roles which reflect the loving relationship between Christ and the church, the husband exercising headship in a way that displays the caring, sacrificial love of Christ, and the wife submitting to her husband in a way that models the love of the church for her Lord. In the ministry of the church, both men and women are encouraged to serve Christ and to be developed to their full potential in the manifold ministries of the people of God. The distinctive leadership role within the church given to qualified men is grounded in creation, fall, and redemption and must not be sidelined by appeals to cultural developments. We further assert that any attempt on the part of man or woman to identify themselves as having a gender different from that in which God created them is living in rejection of the created order.
4. **The Fall** We believe that Adam, made in the image of God, distorted that image and forfeited his original blessedness—for himself and all his progeny—by falling into sin through Satan's temptation. As a result, all human beings are alienated from God, corrupted in every aspect of their being (e.g., physically, mentally, volitionally, emotionally, spiritually) and condemned finally and irrevocably to death—apart from God's own gracious

intervention. The supreme need of all human beings is to be reconciled to the God under whose just and holy wrath we stand; the only hope of all human beings is the undeserved love of this same God, who alone can rescue us and restore us to himself.

5. **The Plan of God** We believe that from all eternity God determined in grace to save a great multitude of guilty sinners from every tribe and language and people and nation, and to this end foreknew them and chose them to His Glory. We believe that God justifies and sanctifies those who by grace have faith in Jesus, and that he will one day glorify them—all to the praise of his glorious grace. In love God commands and implores all people to repent and believe, having set his saving love on those he has chosen and having ordained Christ to be their Redeemer.
6. **The Gospel** We believe that the gospel is the good news of Jesus Christ—God’s very wisdom. Utter folly to the world, even though it is the power of God to those who are being saved, this good news is christological, centering on the cross and resurrection: the gospel is not proclaimed if Christ is not proclaimed, and the authentic Christ has not been proclaimed if his death and resurrection are not central (the message is: "Christ died for our sins . . . [and] was raised"). This good news is biblical (his death and resurrection are according to the Scriptures), theological and salvific (Christ died for our sins, to reconcile us to God), historical (if the saving events did not happen, our faith is worthless, we are still in our sins, and we are to be pitied more than all others), apostolic (the message was entrusted to and transmitted by the apostles, who were witnesses of these saving events), and intensely personal (where it is received, believed, and held firmly, individual persons are saved).
7. **The Redemption of Christ** We believe that, moved by love and in obedience to his Father, the eternal Son became human: the Word became flesh, fully God and fully human being, one Person in two natures. The man Jesus, the promised Messiah of Israel, was conceived through the miraculous agency of the Holy Spirit, and was born of the virgin Mary. He perfectly obeyed his heavenly Father, lived a sinless life, performed miraculous signs, was crucified under Pontius Pilate, died, arose bodily from the dead on the third day, and ascended into heaven. As the mediatorial King, he is seated at the right hand of God the Father, exercising in heaven and on earth all of God’s sovereignty, and is our High Priest and righteous Advocate. We believe that by his incarnation, life, death, resurrection, and ascension, Jesus Christ acted as our representative and substitute. He did this so that in him we might become the righteousness of God: on the cross he canceled sin, propitiated God, and, by bearing the full penalty of our sins, reconciled to God all those who believe. By his resurrection Christ Jesus was vindicated by his Father, broke the power of death and defeated Satan who once had power over it, and brought everlasting life to all his people; by his ascension he has been forever exalted as Lord and has prepared a place for us to be with him. We believe that salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name given under heaven by which we must be saved. Because God chose the lowly things of this world, the despised things, the things that are not, to nullify the things that are, no human being

can ever boast before him—Christ Jesus has become for us wisdom from God—that is, our righteousness, holiness, and redemption.

8. **The Justification of Sinners** We believe that Christ, by his obedience and death, fully discharged the debt of all those who are justified. By his sacrifice, he bore in our stead the punishment due us for our sins, making a proper, real, and full satisfaction to God's justice on our behalf. By his perfect obedience he satisfied the just demands of God on our behalf, since by faith alone that perfect obedience is credited to all who trust in Christ alone for their acceptance with God. Inasmuch as Christ was given by the Father for us, and his obedience and punishment were accepted in place of our own, freely and not for anything in us, this justification is solely of free grace, in order that both the exact justice and the rich grace of God might be glorified in the justification of sinners. We believe that a zeal for personal and public obedience flows from this free justification.
9. **The Power of the Holy Spirit** We believe that this salvation, attested in all Scripture and secured by Jesus Christ, is applied to his people by the Holy Spirit. Sent by the Father and the Son, the Holy Spirit glorifies the Lord Jesus Christ, and, as the other Paraclete, is present with and in believers. He convicts the world of sin, righteousness, and judgment, and by his powerful and mysterious work regenerates spiritually dead sinners, awakening them to repentance and faith, and in him they are baptized into union with the Lord Jesus; such that, according to the Scriptures, they are justified before God by grace alone through faith alone in Jesus Christ alone to God's Glory alone. By the Spirit's agency, believers are renewed, sanctified, and adopted into God's family; they participate in the divine nature and receive his sovereignly distributed gifts. The Holy Spirit is himself the down payment of the promised inheritance, and in this age indwells, guides, instructs, equips, revives, and empowers believers for Christ-like living and service.
10. **The Kingdom of God** We believe that those who have been saved by the grace of God through union with Christ by faith and through regeneration by the Holy Spirit enter the kingdom of God and delight in the blessings of the new covenant: the forgiveness of sins, the inward transformation that awakens a desire to glorify, trust, and obey God, and the prospect of the glory yet to be revealed. Good works constitute indispensable evidence of saving grace. Living as salt in a world that is decaying and light in a world that is dark, believers should neither withdraw into seclusion from the world, nor become indistinguishable from it: rather, we are to do good to the city, for all the glory and honor of the nations is to be offered up to the living God. Recognizing whose created order this is, and because we are citizens of God's kingdom, we are to love our neighbors as ourselves, doing good to all, especially to those who belong to the household of God. The kingdom of God, already present but not fully realized, is the exercise of God's sovereignty in the world toward the eventual redemption of all creation. The kingdom of God is an invasive power that plunders Satan's dark kingdom and regenerates and renovates through repentance and faith the lives of individuals rescued from that kingdom. It therefore inevitably establishes a new community of human life together under God.

11. **God's New People** We believe that God's new covenant people have already come to the heavenly Jerusalem; they are already seated with Christ in the heavenlies. This universal church is manifest in local churches of which Christ is the only Head; thus each "local church" is, in fact, the church, the household of God, the assembly of the living God, and the pillar and foundation of the truth. The church is the body of Christ, the apple of his eye, graven on his hands, and he has pledged himself to her forever. The church is distinguished by her gospel message, her sacred ordinances, her discipline, her great mission, and, above all, by her love for God, and by her members' love for one another and for the world. Crucially, this gospel we cherish has both personal and corporate dimensions, neither of which may properly be overlooked. Christ Jesus is our peace: he has not only brought about peace with God, but also peace between alienated peoples. His purpose was to create in himself one new humanity, thus making peace, and in one body to reconcile both Jew and Gentile to God through the cross, by which he put to death their hostility. The church serves as a sign of God's future new world when its members live for the service of one another and their neighbors, rather than for self-focus. The church is the corporate dwelling place of God's Spirit, and the continuing witness to God in the world.
12. **Baptism and the Lord's Supper** We believe that baptism and the Lord's Supper are ordained by the Lord Jesus himself. The former is connected with entrance into the new covenant community, the latter with ongoing covenant renewal. Together they are simultaneously God's pledge to us, divinely ordained means of grace, our public vows of submission to the once crucified and now resurrected Christ, and anticipations of his return and of the consummation of all things. The baptismal waters can only be entered by a professing believer in Jesus Christ, who—upon understanding his/her sinful condition, and the redemption purchased by Jesus Christ on the cross—trusts fully in his salvific grace. Baptism should not be administered to those who, due to a young age, are unable to understand the basic implications of the act of baptism. Believer's Baptism by immersion, unless prevented by health or physical circumstances, is considered a prerequisite to membership in our body and to the participation in the Supper.
13. **The Restoration of All Things** We believe in the personal, glorious, and bodily return of our Lord Jesus Christ with his holy angels, when he will exercise his role as final Judge, and his kingdom will be consummated. We believe in the bodily resurrection of both the just and the unjust—the unjust to judgment and eternal conscious punishment in hell, as our Lord himself taught, and the just to eternal blessedness in the presence of him who sits on the throne and of the Lamb, in the new heaven and the new earth, the home of righteousness. On that day the church will be presented faultless before God by the obedience, suffering and triumph of Christ, all sin purged and its wretched effects forever banished. God will be all in all and his people will be enthralled by the immediacy of his ineffable holiness, and everything will be to the praise of his glorious grace.

ARTICLE 2 – MEMBERSHIP

SECTION 2.1—AUTHORITY OF STATEMENT OF FAITH

Scripture is the final authoritative guide to our beliefs. The Statement of Faith accurately summarizes much of Scripture. All members of The Disciples Fellowship affirm the inerrancy and authority of Scripture, and the summary of Scripture's teaching represented in the Statement of Faith. All literature, teaching material, and other media used in the church shall be in agreement with the Statement of Faith.

SECTION 2.2— MEMBERSHIP COVENANT

The Covenant of The Disciples Fellowship is an affirmation of our commitment to one another and to the Church of Jesus Christ. Upon membership, each member will affirm the Covenant. Additionally, all members will reaffirm the Covenant annually.

Having, as we trust, been brought by divine grace to repent and believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and to give up ourselves to him, and having been baptized upon our profession of faith, in the name of the Father and of the Son and the Holy Spirit, we do now, relying on His gracious aid, solemnly and joyfully enter/renew our covenant with each other.

We will work and pray for the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.

We will walk together in brotherly love, as becomes the members of a Christian Church, exercise an affectionate care and watchfulness over each other and faithfully admonish and entreat one another as occasion may require.

We will not forsake the assembling of ourselves together, nor neglect to pray for ourselves and others.

We will endeavor to bring up such as may at any time be under our care, in the nurture and admonition of the Lord, and by a pure and loving example to seek the salvation of our family and friends.

We will rejoice at each others' happiness and endeavor with tenderness and sympathy to bear each other's burdens and sorrows.

We will seek, by Divine aid, to live carefully in the world, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, and remembering that, as we have been voluntarily buried by baptism and raised again from the symbolic grave, so there is on us a special obligation now to lead a new and holy life.

We will work together for the continuance of a faithful evangelical ministry in this church, as we sustain its worship, ordinances, discipline, and doctrines. We will contribute cheerfully and regularly to the support of the ministry, the expenses of the church, the relief of the poor, and the spread of the Gospel through all nations.

We will, when we move from this place, as soon as possible, unite with some other church where we can carry out the spirit of this covenant and the principles of God's Word.

May the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with us all. Amen.

SECTION 2.3 – QUALIFICATIONS FOR MEMBERSHIP

Membership shall be extended to all who have had and whose lives evidence a genuine experience of regeneration through faith in and acceptance of the Lord Jesus Christ as personal Savior; who renounce sin; who endeavor to live a consecrated life wholly unto the Lord; who fully subscribe to the Statement of Faith contained herein; who enter into the church covenant contained herein; who agree to submit to the authority of the church and its leaders as set forth herein; completion of a signed membership covenant and with any one of the following conditions:

- (A)** By baptism (immersion) as a true believer in Christ Jesus as personal Savior;
- (B)** By letter of transfer from another Bible-believing church of like faith and practice, or other written statement of good standing from the prior church if the applicant has been baptized by immersion subsequent to a profession of faith;
- (C)** By testimony of faith, having been baptized by immersion.

SECTION 2.4 – DUTIES OF A MEMBER

Upon becoming a member, each member agrees to love, honor, and pray for the church and each member; to support the church financially; to provide a positive witness to Jesus Christ; to support and pray for the Pastor, Elders, and Deacons; to recognize the spiritual authority of church leadership; and to provide a positive witness to Jesus Christ through a lifestyle consistent with the teachings of Scripture and the practices of this church.

SECTION 2.5 – PRIVILEGES OF MEMBERSHIP

- (A)** Members at least sixteen years of age who are physically present at a duly called meeting of the church are entitled to vote. There shall be no proxy or absentee voting.

- (B) Members who are not subjected to matters of church discipline are entitled to receive the Lord's Supper at such times that the church observes the Supper.

SECTION 2.6 – DISCIPLINE OF A MEMBER

- (A) There shall be a discipline committee consisting of the Elders. These men shall have sole authority in determining heretical deviations from the Statement of Faith and violations of the church covenant. If an Elder is the subject of a disciplinary matter, he shall not sit as a member of the discipline committee. The Elders shall be entitled to the same steps as other church members and be subject to the same discipline.
- (B) Members are expected to demonstrate special loyalty and concern for one another. When a member becomes aware of an offense of such magnitude that it hinders spiritual growth and testimony, he/she is to go alone to the offending party and seek to restore his brother/sister. Before he/she goes, he/she should first examine himself. When he/she goes, he/she should go with a spirit of humility and have the goal of restoration.
- (C) If reconciliation is not reached, a second member, an elder is to accompany the one seeking to resolve the matter. This second step should also be preceded by self-examination and exercised in a spirit of humility with the goal of restoration.
- (D) If the matter is still unresolved after the steps outlined in subsections (B) and (C) have been taken, the discipline committee, as the church representatives biblically responsible for putting down murmuring, shall hear the matter. If the matter is not resolved during the hearing before the discipline committee, the committee shall recommend to the members of the church that they, after self-examination, make an effort personally to go to the offending member and seek the member's restoration.
- (E) If the matter is still unresolved after the steps outlined in subsection (B), (C), and (D) have been taken, such members who refuse to repent and be restored are to be removed from the membership of the church upon a majority vote of the membership present at a meeting called for the purpose of considering disciplinary action.
- (F) No matter may be heard by the discipline committee or the church unless the steps outlined in subsections (B) and (C) have been taken, except in the case of a public offense.
- (G) If an unrepentant offending party is removed from the church membership, all contact with him from that point forward (except by family members) must be for the sake of restoration.
- (H) Members undergoing a disciplinary process may not resign membership.

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- (I) The procedures provided in this section are based on Matt. 18:15-20; Rom. 16:17-18; 1 Cor. 5:1-13; 2 Cor. 2:1-11; Gal. 6:1; 1 Thess. 5:14; 2 Thess. 3:6, 10-15; 1 Tim. 5:19-20; and Titus 3:10-11.

SECTION 2.7 – TRANSFER OF MEMBERSHIP

Members, not under the disciplinary process of Section 3.04, may request that letters of transfer be sent to another church.

SECTION 2.8 – CONTINUATION OF MEMBERSHIP

- (A) The Disciples Fellowship will reaffirm members annually. Members are reaffirmed through their affirmation of the Covenant. Membership will not be renewed for those members choosing not to reaffirm the Covenant.
- (B) No member of The Disciples Fellowship may hold membership in another church. If any member unites in membership with another church, that person is automatically terminated without notice from membership in The Disciples Fellowship.

ARTICLE 3 – LEADERSHIP

SECTION 3.1 – PASTOR

The Disciples Fellowship recognizes the distinct calling and position of the pastor. The pastor is the spiritual shepherd of the body. Though he serves in a plurality of Elder leadership (see Section 3.2), he also provides overall spiritual leadership to the church. His primary duty is to teach and preach the Scriptures (2 Tim. 4:2) for the purpose of equipping the body to do the work of ministry (Eph. 4:11-12).

SECTION 3.2 – ELDERS

Elders are appointed by the elders (Tit. 1:5) to fulfill the role of spiritual leadership. While no human is perfect, the Scriptures outline the general character qualifications for Elders (1 Tim. 3:1-7, Tit. 1:6-9). All of these character qualifications are elsewhere prescribed for all believers *except* the requirements to be mature in the faith (1 Tim. 3:6) and to be “able to teach” (2 Tim 2:24-25, Tit. 1:9). We take this to mean that the role of Elder is to provide spiritual leadership for the body (Acts 6:2). As such, the office of Elder is limited by Scripture to males (1 Tim. 2:12).

The Disciples Fellowship will be led by a plurality of Elders (Acts 14:23, 20:17; Phil 1:1; 1. Tim 5:7; Jas. 5:14). These Elders are entrusted by the church to provide leadership and spiritual discernment in a Christ-like manner. The role of Elder is defined by *spiritual care of the body* (Acts 20:28), including but not limited to matters of church discipline (Heb. 13:17).

The Pastor is also an Elder. Should the pastor fail to meet the requirements of Elder, he is necessarily disqualified from the pastorate.

SECTION 3.3 – DEACONS

Deacons are recommended to the body by the Elders, and approved by the membership (Acts 6:5-6) to fulfill the role of service leadership. Just as the first deacons were appointed to meet the physical needs of the body (Acts 6:1-7), so also do the Deacons of the Disciples Fellowship lead in service first to members and secondly to our community. While no human is perfect, the Scriptures outline general character qualifications for Deacons (1 Tim. 3:8-13).

Deacons will lead in the areas including, but not limited to, management of church assets, benevolence ministries, and community service.

SECTION 3.4 – FINANCIAL SECRETARIES

Elders shall recommend (2) individuals for the office of Financial Secretaries. These individuals shall be approved by a majority vote of the members. Their duties shall include all matters related to the handling and management of monetary funds, including, but not necessarily limited to; deposits, bill payment, and the preparation of annual reports on receipts and expenditures. The division of duties between themselves shall be left to their own judgment. The term of Financial Secretaries shall be one year, and may be extended in accordance with (a) the willingness of the Financial Secretaries to continue, and (b) the continued approval of the Elders and the body.

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SECTION 4 – BUSINESS MEETINGS

SECTION 4.1 – ANNUAL MEETING

The membership of the Disciples Fellowship will convene at least once annually, at such time and place designated by the Elders. Church business matters may be advanced according to *Roberts Rules of Order* with the presence of a quorum of not less than 30% of membership. Meetings will be moderated by an Elder.

SECTION 4.2 – ADDITIONAL MEETINGS

Additional meetings may be convened as deemed necessary by the Elders.

SECTION 5 – AMMENDMENTS

Amendments may be made to these Bylaws through 2/3 majority vote by the membership. Proposed changes must announced one month prior to membership vote.