

Constitution and By – Laws

“The Community Church of East Gloucester, Massachusetts”

(revised August 2006)

Article 1 – Name

The name of this corporation (church) shall be “The Community Church of East Gloucester, MA”.

Article 2 – Objectives

Mission Statement for Community Church

Community Church acknowledges and participates in the broad mission of every church, which is reflected in the Great Commission (Matthew 28:18-20) to make disciples by going into the world, baptizing, and teaching. Our church is unique, however, in how we accomplish the broader mission of the Church.

The mission of Community Church is to cultivate Christian community.

“Cultivate” is a biblical concept found in the teachings of Jesus and the Apostle Paul. Cultivation emphasizes the Christian life as a process involving effort, nurturing, providence, growth, harvesting, and reproduction.

“Christian” is defined and clearly articulated in our Doctrinal Statement. It reminds us that we share a common set of beliefs with millions of Christians worldwide, including: the deity of Jesus Christ; the Bible as the word of God and foundation for all matters of faith and practice; the person and work of the Holy Spirit; relevant, expository, and biblical preaching; and the importance of public worship, evangelism, missions, and prayer.

“Community” is our unique approach to cultivating Christians. Community is defined by our distinctives (core values): grace, equipping, participation, collaboration, and sending. In a Christian community, grace governs all relationships, believers are equipped for life and ministry, members participate in ministry, leaders work collaboratively, and disciples live lives of purpose, seeing themselves as being sent into the world to make a redemptive impact.

Doctrinal Statement For Community Church

As a church we accept these areas of doctrinal teaching on which, historically, there has been general agreement among all true Christians. However, because of our conviction that we are part of a larger body of believers, we desire to allow for freedom of conviction on other doctrinal matters, provided that any

interpretation is based upon the Bible alone, and that no such interpretation shall become an issue that hinders the ministry to which God has called us.

We believe the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments to be the inspired and only infallible and authoritative Word of God, and that it is the supreme and final authority in all matters on which it speaks. (2 Tim. 3:15,16; 1 Peter 2:2)

We believe there is one God, eternally existing in three persons: God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit (Duet. 6:4; Matt. 28:19; Mark 12:29; John 5:17-30)

We believe in the deity of the Lord Jesus Christ and in His complete and perfect humanity. We believe in the virgin birth, in His sinless life and His miracles, in His vicarious and atoning death through His shed blood, in His bodily resurrection, in His ascension to the right hand of the Father, and in His personal, future return to Earth in power and glory to rule over the nations. (Isaiah 7:14; Acts 2:22; 1 Cor. 15:3,4; Acts 1:9-11)

We believe that man and woman were created good and upright in the image of God, but that they voluntarily sinned by disobeying God and thereby were alienated from God, and incurred both physical and spiritual death. That historic fall brought all mankind under divine condemnation. Because of the fall, each person's nature is corrupted, and they are thus totally unable to please God. (Gen. 1:26,27; Rom. 5:12-19)

We believe that regeneration and renewal by the Holy Spirit is absolutely essential to salvation, and His indwelling presence necessary for the living of a Godly Christian life; and that it is only by grace, through faith in Jesus Christ that people can be saved. The salvation of all who believe is wholly a work of God's free grace and is not the work, in whole or in part, of human works or goodness or religious ceremony. God imputes His righteousness to those who put their faith in Christ alone for their salvation, and thereby justified them in His sight. (Luke 24:37; Rom. 3:16; 10:13-15; Eph. 2:8-9; Titus 2:11; 3:5-7)

We believe in the Holy Spirit as a person, separate and distinct from and co-equal in the triune Godhead with the Father and the Son. He is sent to dwell within the heart of each child of God, to comfort and to lead into all truth. (Luke 24:49; Acts 1:4,8; 2:4; 10:44-46; 15:8,9)

We believe in the victorious reign and future personal return of Jesus Christ, who will judge all people with justice and mercy, giving over the unrepentant to judgment and condemnation but receiving the redeemed into eternal life. (Matt. 25:26; Mark 9:34-38; Rev. 19:20; 20:11-15; 21:8)

We believe that Jesus Christ is the Head of the Church, His Body, which is composed of all people, living and dead, who have been joined to Him through

saving faith. God admonishes His people to assemble together regularly for worship, for participation in ordinances, for edification through the Scriptures and for mutual encouragement. (Eph. 1:22,23; 2:22; Heb. 12:23)

We believe that Christians are to be baptized; and to partake in the Lord's Supper on a regular basis. (Matt. 29:19; Acts 2:38; 1 Cor. 11:23-26; Matt. 26:20-29)

Community Church's Church Covenant

As brothers and sisters with the common bond of Jesus Christ as our Lord and Savior, we enter into covenant with one another to partner in the mission of spreading a passion for Jesus Christ in this body, in Gloucester, and in the world.

We believe that a passion for Jesus Christ is spread, as He is exalted. Therefore, we will strive to faithfully gather together with the purpose of exalting His name. Recognizing that God takes great delight in authentic worship, we will strive to praise God with our hearts, minds, and voices. Believing that the proclamation of God's Word brings spiritual nourishment and life transformation, we will strive both to listen and to surrender our lives to God's truth. We also acknowledge that God has commanded us to give of our finances as an offering of worship to Him. We will therefore, consistently exalt His name by supporting the ministry at this church. Finally, we believe that our very lives have been created with the purpose of worshipping God. Therefore, we will strive to reflect His glory through our character. Though we are still sinners that often fall short of God's standards, we will strive to align our actions, speech, and lifestyles with God's standards in Scripture. It will be our ultimate aim that our character would reflect that of Christ Jesus.

We also believe that a passion for Jesus Christ is spread as the body of Christ is equipped. Therefore as individuals within this body, we will strive to be involved in opportunities offered in this church that support us in growing towards maturity in Christ. In addition to this, we recognize that our personal relationship with Christ is cultivated through prayer and study of His Word. We will seek to incorporate these areas into a consistent part of our lives. We realize that part of God's plan to equip us involves the gift of true, Biblical fellowship. This involves sharpening each other for the mission of the Kingdom of God. We will seek to make this a priority by having intentional fellowship time, by showing the love and mercy of Christ to each other and by developing discipleship relationships. We also recognize that God has given each of us spiritual gifts for the purpose of using them to build up the body of Christ. We therefore covenant to use the areas that God has gifted us in as means to equip our fellow brothers and sisters within this church, that we, as one body, may spread a passion for Christ amidst each other.

We also believe that a passion for Jesus Christ is spread as we communicate the love of Christ to the lost. We understand that a body that worships together in Christian unity is one of the greatest evangelistic messages that an unbelieving world will ever see. We will therefore seek to show the love of Christ to one another and to live in true unity. We also recognize, as the community of believers, that we have been called to be “salt and light” within this world and that Christ has commissioned all of us to make disciples of all nations. We will, therefore, strive to engage in evangelism, in Christian acts of love and mercy, and in disciple making, in Gloucester, in the various contexts that God places us in, and in the world.

Finally, as brothers and sisters united under the head of this church, Jesus Christ, we joyfully proclaim, “Now to Him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to His power that is at work within us, to Him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever! Amen.”

Ephesians 3:20-21

Article 3 – Church Membership

The objectives of this church are outlined in the Mission statement, the Doctrinal statement, and the Church Covenant, which are detailed in Article 2, to which each member must subscribe on an annual basis.

Reception of Members

Members become such by:

1. Filling out an application (which states desire for membership and adherence to the statements in Article 2)
2. Membership application is submitted to and reviewed by the Board of Elders.
3. A prospective member may meet with one Elder or the Board of Elders as desired, or as deemed necessary by the board.
4. The Board of Elders will then vote on the Membership application.

REQUIREMENT FOR MEMBERSHIP: The Board of Elders may consider any person for membership who professes faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, gives evidence of a changed heart, lives out their lives with good Christian character, and adopts the views set forth in the mission statement, the doctrinal statement and the church covenant.

Associate Membership

The purpose of associate membership is to give an opportunity to individuals who have been baptized and profess faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, to actively

participate at Community Church, without giving up their home church membership.

Associate members have all of the same privileges and responsibilities of membership as stated in the By-Laws.

Dismission of Members

Any member in good standing, may, at their own request, be granted a letter of transfer and be recommended to another church of the same faith. Such a letter shall be sent to the receiving church and notification be given to the applicant that the letter has been sent.

Any member may be released from membership by notifying the Pastor or the Elder Board of such.

Absentees

Members absenting themselves for two (2) consecutive years without communicating in any way with the church shall be considered absentees of the church. The Elder board may remove the names of any absentee from the membership role after efforts to reactivate them, by a vote of the Board of Elders.

Church Discipline

If any member becomes an offense to the church and its head, the Lord Jesus Christ, by reason of immoral or unchristian conduct or practices, they should be restored gently by someone who is spiritually mature in the church. If a member or a Christian within the church were to sin against another Christian, they should work it out between the two of them. If members cannot work out their differences in Christian love, or if a member continues to be unrepentant in their sin, then the matter should be brought before two or three witnesses who are mature in their faith. If the matter continues without any repentance, then it should be brought before the Elder Board. The goal of this process is to help a person who is involved in behavior that is contrary to the Bible to change their behavior and be restored to Christian fellowship. If a person refuses to change it may be necessary to have their membership removed by the church. This would be done upon the recommendation of the Board of Elders after the person has been given due notice and if the elders have been unsuccessful in having the person change their conduct and/or practice by making a confession of their sin and showing signs of true repentance. The recommendation to terminate membership must be sustained by a three-fourths ($\frac{3}{4}$) vote of the members present and voting at the called church meeting. Notice of a meeting for this purpose will be at least seven (7) days. If the member holds an elected or appointed office, they shall not attend any meetings during the period of time that the Elders are conducting their review of the matter.

The Board of Elders is responsible for the church discipline. They shall determine what action, if any, will be recommended to the church. (Matthew 18:15-17; Galatians 6:1)

Restoration of Members

Any members who have been dismissed or terminated shall be restored to membership on confession of error and on giving satisfactory evidence of repentance to the Board of Elders and by the vote of the church.

Article 4 – Meetings

Annual Meeting

The fiscal year of the church shall be from January 1 to December 31. The annual meeting of the church shall be held during the month of January at a date and time of the Elder's discretion. An announcement of this meeting along with a general description of items to be acted on will be announced on the two (2) consecutive Sundays previous to the day the meeting will be held.

All annual reports of church officers, boards and committees, including ad hoc, shall be presented in writing and distributed to eligible voting members of the church no later than the Sunday previous to the day the meeting will be held.

Special Meetings

Special meetings shall be called by the clerk or the Board of Elders in the manner provided for calling the annual meeting, upon the request of the Board of Elders, the Deaconate, or the written request of five (5) eligible voting members of the church. The call shall be specific as to the purpose of the meeting.

A meeting of the church may be called, without previous written notice by the clerk or the Board of Elders, to be held at the close of any public worship service of the church to act on routine matters, such as recommendations from boards and committees, of a routine nature.

Voting

Only members may participate in voting, but all attendees (whether they are members or not) may speak on any issue. Only active members are eligible to vote.

For a member to be considered “active”, they must attend services of the church (Sunday morning worship, prayer and praise midweek, and special services), on a regular basis, at least twenty-six (26) times during the fiscal year. They must be a regular contributor to the financial support of the church. If a member cannot meet this requirement because circumstances beyond their control, they can make a written request to the Board of Elders that this requirement be waved. It is understood that the Board of Elders decision will be final.

The church Clerk, under the direction of the Board of Elders, will keep a list of eligible voters. The Clerk will present a current list of eligible voters to the moderator before the annual meeting and at other times, as requested.

The Clerk will keep a separate list of members, who are unable to attend meetings because of health, on a current basis. Absentee ballots are not allowed.

Balloting

The secret ballot will be used for all elections. The procedure for voting on other matters will be determined by the eligible voters in attendance.

Article 5 – Nominating Procedure

The Elders will recommend to the church a nominating committee and a Pulpit committee on an “as needed” basis from their own members and/or church members at large. The Elders may establish other committees, standing and ad hoc.

Each year, no later than the second (2nd) Sunday of December, a Nominating Form will be distributed to each eligible member for the purpose of making nominations for any office and/or committee, except for the office of Pastor. The deadline for the return of the form will be no sooner than the fourth (4th) Sunday of December. Nominations will not be allowed from the floor.

The nominations process as outlined in the By-Laws will be adhered to once nominations have been received from the eligible membership.

The recommendation of the Pastor and/or the Elders, and the vote of the church will confirm the nomination. For a man to be considered to be an Elder, he shall be interviewed by the Pastor and/or the Elders who are responsible to ascertain if he meets the requirements of the office as outlined in the By-Laws. They will make the nomination to the church.

Article 6 – Officers, Boards, and Committees

Requirements

Officers, board members, and committee members shall be members in good standing of Community Church and meet all other requirements of the church By-Laws.

Officers

The officers of the church shall be the Pastor, chair of the Elders, chair of the Deaconate, Moderator, and Clerk.

Boards

The boards of the church shall be the Elders and the Deaconate (deacons and deaconesses).

Committees

The standing committees of the church will be set up at the discretion of the Deacon and Elder Boards and could include, but are not limited to the following: the Property Committee, the Missions Committee, the Education Committee, the Fellowship and Congregational Care Ministry, the Nominating Committee, and the Audit Committee. Standing Committees will be responsible to the board as shown in the organizational chart.

Vacant Offices

In case of vacancy in any office, a special meeting may be held at any time to fill said vacancy for the unexpired term.

Removal of Officers, Board, and Committee members

The church may vote at the annual meeting or at the special meeting called for the purpose of acting upon resignation, or for someone to be removed from service because of not meeting their responsibilities or for proven misconduct.

Call of Pastor

The Board of Elders shall recommend the Pastor, but a Pulpit Committee will be recommended to the church for approval by the Elders to assist them in the search process. A candidate for Pastor shall receive at least three-fourths (3/4) of the votes of the eligible voting members present and voting to constitute a call. The voting shall be taken by secret ballot. A quorum of at least one third (1/3) of the eligible voting members is required for an official Pastoral call.

Dismission of Pastor

Upon recommendation of the Board of Elders, the Pastor may be dismissed by a vote of three-fourths (3/4) of the vote of the eligible voting members present and shall be by secret ballot. Such action shall be taken may be taken at the annual meeting or a special meeting called for that purpose. A quorum of one-third (1/3) of the eligible voting members is required for an official dismissal.

Resignation of the Pastor

A Pastor who decides to resign is required to give a minimum thirty (30) day notice.

Pastor and Elders

The offices of Pastor and Elder are to be undertaken only after considerable self-examination, prayer and study of the following scripture:

- 1 Timothy 3:1-7
- Titus 1:6-9
- James 5:14
- 1 Peter 5:1-4

Just as the Pastor should know that it is the will of God to minister to a particular body of Christ, any man who is to be considered for the office of Elder should know that it is the will of God as well. The responsibilities of Elder are not to be taken lightly. Therefore, it is imperative that one who accepts the nomination be sure that he has considered very carefully all of the aspects of the office (qualifications, responsibilities, and commitment time).

The Pastor is an Elder by virtue of his office. As the congregation grows, there could be other Elders that are paid based on their position and responsibilities. Other Elders will be elected by the congregation and will serve for one year. There shall be a minimum of three (3) Elders including the Pastor. The minimum is to be adhered to only if there are qualified candidates. The maximum of Elders will be determined by the Board of Elders and approved by the church when deemed necessary.

The Elders will appoint one of their members to be Moderator of the church. If no current Elder wishes to serve as Moderator, a past Elder or a member of the Deacon Board may be appointed.

Qualifications

An Elder should have an attitude of desire and willingness to consistently strive for the following qualifications:

- To be a positive spiritual example to those of “like precious faith”
- Be able to verbalize the “reason for the hope that you have” (1 Peter 3:15) by personal testimony of faith in Jesus Christ
- Be knowledgeable in the Scriptures in order to have the knowledge of truth
- Be steadfast in faith on a daily basis
- Be able to do things in an orderly manner
- Be mature in faith (not a recent convert)
- Be sober (not given to drinking in excess)
- Be of good reputation, judicial temperament, not self-willed, patient, gentle, vigilant, watchful, and a lover of justice

- Be a man of prayer for the unsaved and for the redeemed to make Jesus Christ Lord of their lives
- Be willing to work on allowing the Holy Spirit to do his work in him under the full Lordship of Christ in order that he
- Be willing to attend the services of the church on a regular basis
- Be willing and to practice a minimum in giving of tithing and give, at least, 50% of his tithe to the support of this church's operating budget and an offering to the mission budget.

The Deaconate (Deacons and Deaconesses)

One should consider serving as a Deacon or Deaconess with a great deal of seriousness and self-examination to be sure that they believe that this is the will of God for them at this time in their Christian life and walk. Deacons will be elected by the congregation and will serve one (1) year. The number will be determined by the availability of qualified members. If the Deaconate has an even number of members and there is a tie vote, then the matter will be referred to the Elders to break the tie.

The Pastor and the chairman of the Elder Board are Deacons by virtue of their office. An Elder can serve as a Deacon but must be nominated and voted on by the church.

The chair of the Deaconate will act as the Chief Executive Officer of the corporation, unless otherwise directed by the Elders and/or the church. He will be responsible to submit a written annual report to the church on behalf of the Deaconate. The Elder Board shall appoint the chairman of the Deacon Board from the list of Deacon Board members which have been elected by the congregation.

The Deaconate will be responsible to appoint the Clerk from among their members and the following church officers either from their own members or the church at-large:

- Collector and assistants
- Treasurer

Qualifications

When one is considering and being considered for the office of Deacon or Deaconess, they should have an attitude, desire, and willingness to consistently strive to meet the following qualifications:

- Be of good reputation, serious, honest, generous (not greedy for money), and not given to excessive drinking
- Be earnest, whole-hearted, followers of Christ, who is the source of their faith
- Be a mature Christian, who has been tested and proven blameless

- Be one who manages their household well and if married, have a joint commitment with their spouse relative to their home and household of faith
- Be seriously desirous of being full of the Holy Spirit and wisdom which will be confirmed by their lifestyle (“by their fruit you will recognize them” Mat. 7:20)
- Be willing and able to attend the services of the church on a regular basis
- Be willing and able to practice tithing and give a minimum of 50% of their tithe to support this church’s operating and mission budgets

Article 7 – Duties of Boards, Officers, and Committees

Pastors and Elders

The Elders shall be responsible for the **spiritual affairs** of the church which include:

- Worship
- Preaching and teaching
- Christian Education (Sunday School, etc.)
- Youth Ministry
- Missions
- Evangelism
- Membership
- Visitation
- Counseling
- Oversee the Deaconate

The Elders are responsible for the congregation and for each other. The Following church officers are responsible to the Elders:

- Pastor
- Youth Minister and assistant(s)
- Ministerial assistants
- Music personnel (organist, choir director, etc.)

The Elders will make personnel recommendations to the congregation as needs arise and will work with the Deaconate relative to the budget and funding requests.

The Pastor, as a full time Elder, will be responsible to carry out the ministry in the church as outlined in the job description for the pastor. The pastor’s job description shall be put together by the elder board and reviewed on a regular basis by the elder board.

The Pastor, as an Elder, will use his natural and spiritual gifts in cooperation with the other Elder’s natural and spiritual gifts, in meeting the needs of the congregation and one another.

The Elders shall endeavor to be “one” to the glory of God under the direction of the Holy Spirit to fulfill all their responsibilities, according to their individual gifts. Both Pastor and Elders will submit a written annual report to the church. The Elders will review the performance of the ministerial staff and each other annually.

The Deacons

The Deaconate will be responsible for the **ministry affairs** of the church which include:

- Fiscal matters
- Missions Committee
- Ministry to the poor and needy
- Ministry of service and hospitality
- Legal matters
- Property
- Fellowship and Congregational Care Ministries
- Annual audit

If there are areas of responsibilities that do not fall within these major areas, the Elders will determine who will handle the matter. In addition to the corporate responsibilities, members of the Deaconate are to be willing and able to assist the Elders, as requested. The Deaconate will be responsible to the Elders and each other. They will submit a written, annual report to the church.

The Deaconate shall have charge of the property of the church and shall carefully manage its finances. They shall present an operating budget for the ensuing year at the annual meeting and will administer the approved budget. The Deaconate will be responsible to keep the Elders and the congregation apprised of the cash flow and current expenses.

The Deaconate will make recommendations to the Elders and the church on non-ministerial staff. They will supervise all contracts for repairs, alterations, and improvements to the physical plant.

The chair of the Deaconate, the Clerk, and the Treasurer will represent the cooperation (church) in legal proceedings, will sign all official papers, and will perform such other duties as may legally be requested of them, except in rare cases that, for whatever reason, the Board of Elders determines otherwise.

The chair of the Deaconate will act as the Chief Executive Officer of the corporation, unless other wise directed by the Elders and/or the church. He will be responsible to submit a written annual report to the church on behalf of the Deaconate.

Clerk and Assistant Clerks

It is the duty of the Clerk to keep accurate minutes of the proceedings of all business meetings of the church, write letters of dismissal and transfers, keep a

register of members, and keep a list of eligible voters. The Clerk is responsible to tally the votes for all secret ballots at any business meeting. At least one other member of either the Elder or Deacon board should verify the tally.

The Clerk will present the minutes of meetings to the Board of Elders and the Deaconate to determine accuracy. The Clerk will present copies of all minutes for printing in the annual report.

Treasurer and Assistant Treasurer

The Treasurer is responsible to the Deaconate and will perform the duties and the responsibilities of the office according to accepted accounting policies and practices. The duties of the Treasurer are:

- To be the chief fiscal and budget officer of the corporation
- To arrange for banking services
- To keep accurate and detailed records of deposits and disbursements (except for the Pastor and Elder's Discretionary fund)
- To make recommendations relative to insurance coverage for liability and property
- To advise the Deaconate on appropriate payment for services rendered and for non ministerial employees

The Treasurer will supervise and/or prepare a proposed budget for the fiscal year, based on the requests received from the ministerial staff, boards and committees, to present to the Deaconate for approval in a timely manner. This report will be presented to the church at the annual meeting.

The Treasurer will complete an internal audit, at least on a quarterly basis, of the income to make sure that the deposits agree with the collectors reports.

The assistant Treasurer will assist the Treasurer as requested and conduct the duties of the office of Treasurer when requested by the Deaconate.

Collector and Assistant Collectors

The Collector is responsible for recording income received by the church and making sure monies are deposited into the correct bank account. The Collector will record the giving of those who use envelopes and/or checks on a weekly basis. The Collector will provide to members confirmation of their donations, for tax purposes, upon request.

The Collector will prepare a weekly schedule for assistants to assist in counting the weekly offering following the church service. If the Collector is absent, two assistants will do the counting. They will be responsible to see that the money is delivered to the collector or deposited. If at such time there happens not to be two collectors to count, a member of the Deaconate (other than the Treasurer or assistant) or an Elder (other than the Pastor) may assist.

Article 8 – Ministerial Staff

The Ministerial Staff is responsible to the Board of Elders, under the supervision of the Pastor. Members of the ministerial staff will include the Pastor, Youth Minister and assistant(s), and supervised ministry student(s).

Article 8 – By-Laws and Amendments

These By-Laws shall supersede all By-Laws and rules for organization and government of the Community Church of East Gloucester, which currently stand on record. These By-Laws may be amended at any annual meeting or special meeting called for that purpose by receiving two thirds of the vote of the eligible members present and voting.

Proposed changes to the By-Laws must be presented to the eligible voting members of the church at least two weeks prior to the date of the called meeting. The changes must be in writing. An announcement of this meeting along with a general description of items to be acted on will be announced during two consecutive Sundays previous to the day the meeting will be held. No major changes to the By-Laws that were not part of the written changes submitted previous to the meeting may be acted upon. (Minor changes would be those that involve changes in spelling and grammar, or changes that help clarify the meaning or intent of any proposed change.)