**Church Bylaws**

First Church of Christ

1437 Tyrone Pike

Philipsburg, PA 16866

**ARTICLE 1 – PREAMBLE**

We, the members of the Philipsburg First Church of Christ, a body governed by the Lord Jesus Christ through His Spirit and the New Testament Scriptures, to promote the work of the church in the Spirit of Christ and thus advance His kingdom, do hereby adopt the contents of these bylaws by congregational vote on October 22, 2017.

**ARTICLE 2 – IDENTITY**

**SECTION 2.01 – NAME**

The name of this congregation shall be **First Church of Christ** (henceforth, known as “**FCOC**” in this document).

**SECTION 2.02 – LOCATION**

The meeting place of FCOC is located in Rush Township, Centre County, at 1437 Tyrone Pike, Philipsburg, PA 16866.

**SECTION 2.03 – PURPOSE**

This congregation 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 the corresponding provision of any future United States Revenue Law), including, but not limited to, for such purposes, the establishing and maintaining of religious worship, the building of churches, parsonages, schools, chapels, radio stations, television stations, rescue missions, print shops, daycare centers, and camps; the evangelizing of the unsaved by the proclaiming of the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ; the education of believers in a manner consistent with the requirements of Holy Scripture, both in Sunday and weekdays schools of Christian education; and the maintaining of missionary activities in the United States and any foreign country.

**SECTION 2.04 – MEMBERSHIP**

The membership of FCOC shall consist of those persons who have expressed a desire to become members and have been welcomed by the Elders and Senior Pastor to do so. They shall be those who possess sufficient understanding to comply and have complied with the terms of the New Covenant as revealed in the New Testament Scriptures, namely:

1. Belief or faith (Mark 16:16; Acts 16:31);
2. Repentance (Luke 13:13; Acts 2:28; Acts 17:30);
3. Confession (Matthew 10:32; Romans 10:9-10); and
4. Water baptism (i.e. immersion) in the name of Jesus Christ (Acts 2:38; Romans 6:1-4; Galatians 3:27)

Persons who want to become members of FCOC and have complied with these terms of the New Covenant elsewhere shall be welcomed here as members upon their written or verbal statement confirming their compliance with the terms of the New Covenant.

Persons who have been removed from membership due to disciplinary action may have their membership restored by majority vote of the congregation after they have publicly confessed before FCOC members the sin or sins involved and have demonstrated genuine repentance to the Elders and Senior Pastor.

**SECTION 2.05 – BRANCH OFFICES**

The Board may at any time, establish branch or subordinate offices at any place or places where FCOC is qualified to operate.

**ARTICLE 3 – GOVERNMENT**

**SECTION 3.01 – JESUS CHRIST**

FCOC recognizes Jesus Christ to be “the Head over everything for the church” (Ephesians 1:22-23; Ephesians 5:23). He is the “foundation” and “cornerstone” upon which the church is built and has ultimate authority (1 Corinthians 3:11; Ephesians 2:19-20; Matthew 28:18; Colossians 1:15-20).

**SECTION 3.02 – THE BIBLE**

FCOC recognizes the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments to contain God’s Word and, therefore, considers them to be the authoritative direction of Jesus Christ. The New Testament Scriptures are given priority in matters of practice and doctrine as they are the fulfillment of the Old Testament Scriptures.

**SECTION 3.03 – CONGREGATIONAL AUTONOMY AND AUTHORITY**

FCOC is self-governing, with no outside organizational authority. All business matters affecting FCOC shall be conducted by the members of FCOC where simple majority rules (unless otherwise stated in this document). Matters which are revealed in the Scriptures are not subject for vote; these must be believed and obeyed.

**SECTION 3.04 – OFFICERS**

All officers must be members of FCOC and must have been so for at least one (1) year prior to becoming an officer.

1. **DESIGNATION OF CORPORATE OFFICERS**

As an accommodation to legal relationships outside the church, the pastor shall serve as president of the corporation; the church secretary shall serve as secretary of the corporation; the church treasurer shall serve as treasurer of the corporation; and the chairman of the Board shall serve as vice president of the corporation. The Board of the church (comprised of the Elders, Trustees, Deacons, and Deaconesses) shall serve as the Board of the corporation.

1. **ELDERS AND SENIOR PASTOR**
	1. Qualifications: The qualifications for Elders and Senior Pastor shall follow 1 Timothy 3:1-13 & 5:17-22 as well as Titus 1:5-9.
	2. Responsibilities and Duties: The responsibilities and duties of the Eldership are revealed in the Scriptures.
2. Duties relating to themselves:
	* + 1. to be obedient and responsive to Jesus as His disciples;
			2. to continually learn and mature under Him;
			3. to manifest the ways of Jesus in their personal lives.
		1. Duties relating to the church under their care:
3. feed the flock (Acts 20:28) by teaching members the content and significance of God’s Word as found in the Scriptures;
4. oversee the spiritual growth of members;
5. take the lead in resolving discipline problems (1 Thessalonians 5:12-13; Hebrews 13:17; 1 Timothy 3:4-5);
6. care for the sick (James 5:14-15);
7. rule well (1 Timothy 5:1).
	1. Scriptural Decriptions of Elders/Pastors
		1. *Presbuteros –* The Greek word for “presbyter”, which means “elder”, “older one”, or “one who is spiritually mature”. Note, however, that no qualifying age for this role is mentioned in the Scriptures (Acts 14:23; 1 Timothy 4:14);
		2. *Episkopos* – The Greek word for “bishop”, which means “one in charge”, “superintendent”, or “one who oversees” (1 Timothy 3:1-2);
		3. *Poimen* – The Greek word for “pastor” or “shepherd”, which means “one to whom the care of others has been committed” (1 Peter 5:1-4; Ephesians 4:11; Acts 20:28). Jesus is understood to be the “Chief Shepherd” under whose authority the church’s Elders and pastors serve (1 Peter 5:4).
		4. The above terms are used interchangeably throughout the New Testament Scriptures to refer to the same office. A plurality of Elder leadership is shown to be the norm in the earliest churches and is, therefore, to be the model of leadership at FCOC.
	2. Number and Term
		1. There shall be at least three (3) Elders;
		2. Term of office shall be for two (2) years and fixed so that all terms do not expire at the same time.
	3. All appointments for public worship and Bible study and the arrangements thereof, including time and place, shall be under the control of the Elders and Senior Pastor.
	4. Within their jurisdiction, the Elders shall act as a group, and, within their group, majority rules.
8. **SENIOR PASTOR**
	1. Ordination

The Senior Pastor of FCOC must be ordained within the Church of Christ or Christian Churches of the Restoration Movement. If any pastor, senior or otherwise, has not been so ordained at the time of his hire by FCOC, he shall be ordained by FCOC within a reasonable time period (as determined by the Elders) after being hired.

* 1. Selection
		1. The Elders of FCOC shall be the Pulpit Committee and will conduct all the business required to secure a candidate for the Senior Pastor of FCOC. At their discretion, the Elders may invite others to serve on the Pulpit Committee with them;
		2. During the search for a Senior Pastor, the Pulpit Committee will be responsible to provide for the pulpit supply;
		3. The Pulpit Committee shall present any qualified candidate to the congregation, and that candidate shall deliver a sermon during a morning worship service;
		4. Before the members vote on the candidate, an opportunity will be given to the members to ask questions of and receive answers from the candidate;
		5. At the earliest convenience after sections (c.) and (d.) above are satisfied, the candidate shall be voted on by the congregation before any other candidate is considered;
		6. The announcement of the meeting to vote on the candidate must be made during morning worship services for two (2) Sundays before the voting date(s);
		7. The voting shall be by paper ballot, and the candidate shall be hired if the voting membership approves by a majority of 75%;
		8. Upon discussion of the vote with the candidate and his acceptance of the vote in favor, the candidate shall be the Senior Pastor of FCOC;
	2. Term of Office
		1. The term of the Senior Pastor shall be for an indefinite period and may be terminated by either the Senior Pastor or FCOC upon sixty (60) days written notice (or less if agreed upon in writing by both parties). If the action to terminate the Senior Pastor’s term is initiated by FCOC, such a decision can only be made at a properly called special members meeting in which a majority vote of 75% in favor of termination is required;
		2. FCOC may terminate the Senior Pastor’s term of service immediately and without sixty (60) days’ notice if he is deemed by the membership to be guilty of gross violation of the Statement of Faith. Such a decision shall be made by the membership in a duly called special meeting of the members in which a simple majority rules
	3. Duties and Powers
		1. The Senior Pastor shall preach and teach the Gospel of Jesus Christ and shall be at liberty to preach and teach the whole counsel of God from the Old and New Testaments Scriptures as the Lord leads him;
		2. He shall supervise the teaching ministries of FCOC and tenderly watch over the spiritual interests of its members in conjunction with the Elders;
		3. He shall extend the right hand of fellowship to all new members on behalf of FCOC and perform other such duties as generally appertain to such a position;
		4. The Senior Pastor, while free to choose the means and methods by which he exercises the ministry that God has given him, is subject to the oversight of the Elders in matters of doctrine, character, and conduct;
		5. All appointments for public worship and Bible study and the arrangements thereof, including time and place, shall be under the control of the Senior Pastor and the Elders.
1. **DEACONS**
	1. Qualifications – Qualifications for the Deacons shall follow 1 Timothy 3:8-13.
	2. Duties – Deacons will faithfully perform their designated ministries as determined by the Elders and Senior Pastor and work under their direction.
	3. Number and Term – No set number of deacons is required. Term of office shall be for two (2) years and fixed so that all terms do not expire at the same time.
	4. Within their jurisdiction, the Deacons shall act as a group, and within their group majority rules.
2. **DEACONESSES**
	1. Qualifications – Qualifications for Deaconesses shall follow 1 Timothy 3:11.
	2. Duties – Deaconesses will faithfully perform their delegated ministries as determined by the Elders and Senior Pastor and work under their direction.
	3. Within their jurisdiction, the Deaconesses shall act as a group, and within their group majority rules.
3. **TRUSTEES**
	1. The Trustees represent FCOC in all legal business between FCOC and federal, state, and local governments. The Trustees also oversee all contracts, insurance, and banking business conducted by FCOC.
	2. The Trustees shall be appointed annually for the following year by the Chairman of the Board at the December Board meeting, with approval of the Board.
	3. No set number of Trustees is required.
	4. The Trustees shall only engage in legal or financial business under the direction of the Board.
4. **CHURCH BOARD**
	1. The Board shall consist of all elected Elders, Deacons, Deaconesses, and all appointed Trustees. As a collectively gathered body, the Board shall transact the regular business of FCOC under the authority of FCOC’s members. Within the Board, majority rules, except in those cases specified in this document.
	2. Meetings – The Board shall meet the first Monday of the month at 7:00pm, except when the First Monday is a holiday or is the first day of the month. In such cases, the Board shall meet the second Monday of the month at 7:00pm, or earlier if deemed necessary by the Chairman of the Board.
	3. Organization – The Board shall reorganize annually at the January meeting by electing a Chairman, Vice Chairman, and Recording Secretary for the current fiscal year.
	4. Elders, Deacons, Deaconesses, and Trustees shall elect a Chairperson of their respective groups in December of each year to serve during the following fiscal year.
	5. Quorum – At the annual December meeting, a quorum for the following fiscal year shall be set by the Board.
	6. Interested Parties – Any member of the Board who is an interested party in any matter being considered by the Board must recuse himself or herself from any discussion and vote relating to that matter. An interested person is:
		1. any person who would potentially be compensated by FCOC, or whose employment by FCOC would be affected, as a result of the Board’s decision regarding a matter;
		2. any spouse, brother, sister, descendant, ancestor, brother-in-law, sister-in-law, mother-in-law, or father-in-law of someone who would potentially be compensated by FCOC, or whose employment to FCOC would be affected as a result of such a decision;
	7. Special Board Meetings
		1. Authority to Call – Special Board meetings shall be called at the discretion of the Elders, Chairman of the Board, or any two members of the Board.
		2. Notice Required - Notice of the time and place of special meetings shall be given to each member of the board by one of the following methods:
			1. by personal delivery, either verbal or written notice;
			2. by first class mail, postage paid;
			3. by telephone communication, either directly to the member of the board or to person at a member of the board’s office who would reasonably be expected to communicate such notice promptly to the member of the board; or
			4. by email or text.

All such notices shall be sent to the member of the board’s physical and/or e-mail address or telephone number as shown on the record of the corporation.

* + 1. Time Requirements - Notices sent by first class mail shall be deposited into a US mailbox at least four (4) days before the time set for the meeting. Notices given by personal notice, telephone, email, or text shall be given prior to the day that is set for the meeting.
		2. Notice Requirements - The notice shall state the time and the place of the meeting. However, it need not specify the purpose of the meeting or the place of the meeting, if it is to be held at the principal location of FCOC.
		3. Waiver of Notice – The transaction of any meeting of the Board, however called or noticed or wherever held, shall be as valid as though taken at a meeting duly held after regular call and notice if, (i) a quorum is present, and (ii) either before or after the meeting, each of the members of the board not present signs a written waiver of notice, a consent to holding the meeting, or an approval of the minutes. The waiver of notice or consent need not specify the purpose of the meeting. All waivers, consents, and approvals shall be filed with the corporate records or made a part of the minutes of the meeting. Notice of a meeting shall also be deemed given to any member of the board who attends the meeting without protesting before or at its commencement about the lack of adequate notice.
1. **SUNDAY SCHOOL AND YOUTH GROUP**

Sunday School, Youth Group, Sunday School Board and/or Sunday School Coordinator, and all youth activities are under the authority and supervision of the Elders and Senior Pastor. Officers, Sunday School Teachers, the Sunday School Coordinator, and Youth Leaders must be members of FCOC.

1. **SECRETARY**

The minister of records shall:

i. Certify and keep at the office of the church, the original bylaws or a copy, including all amendments or alterations to the bylaws.

ii. Keep at the place where the bylaws or a copy are kept a record of the proceedings of meetings of the board, with the time and place of holding, the notice of meeting given, and the names of those present at the meetings.

iii. Sign, certify, or attest documents as may be required by law.

iv. See that all notices are duly given in accordance with the provisions of these bylaws. (In case of the absence of disability of the secretary, or his or her refusal or neglect to act, notice may be given and served by the pastor or by the chairman of the board.)

v. Be custodian of the records of the church, including the membership roll, baptisms, and certificates of ordination, licenses, and commissions.

vi. See that the reports, statements, certificates, and all other documents and records required by law are properly kept and filed.

vii. Exhibit at all reasonable times to proper persons on terms provided by law the bylaws and minutes of proceedings of the board or the minutes of the meetings of the church members.

viii. Keep all records at the office of the church and deliver them to any successor upon leaving office.

ix. Serve as the secretary of the corporation.

1. **TREASURER**

The minister of finance shall:

 i. Be responsible for all funds of the corporation, ensure the deposit of all funds in the name of the church in banks, trust companies, or other depositories as shall be selected by the board.

ii. Receive and ensure receipts are given to donors for all contributions, gifts, and donations to the church.

 iii. Disburse, or cause to be disbursed, the funds of the church as may be directed by the Elders, Senior Pastor, the Board, or the budget adopted by the members of the church at the annual members meeting, taking proper vouchers for the disbursements.

 iv. Keep and maintain adequate and correct accounts of the church’s properties and business transactions including account of its assets, liabilities, receipts, disbursements, and capital.

 v. Make all expenditures of the church (except miscellaneous petty cash disbursements) by check or credit card.

 vi. When and as requested, render to the Elders, Senior Pastor and/or the Board accounts of all his or her transactions as Treasurer and of the financial condition of the church.

 vii. Present a written report of itemized disbursements at the regular monthly church board meeting and make a general report for the year at the annual members’ meeting.

 viii. Keep all church financial records at the office of the church and deliver them to any successor upon leaving office. A copy of the financial records for the current and previous two years may be kept at the personal residence of the Treasurer for the purpose of convenience.

 ix. Serve as Treasurer of the corporation.

**ARTICLE 4 – STATEMENT OF FAITH**

**SECTION 4.01 – STATEMENT OF FAITH**

 The following describe some of the Scriptural beliefs of this church and its members.

**A.** **The Holy Scriptures.**  We believe the Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments to be the inspired Word of God and that they are the final authority for faith and life for the church body and each member within it. The sixty-six (66) books of the Old and New Testaments are complete and are the divine revelation of God to mankind. The Scriptures shall be interpreted according to their normal grammatical-historical meaning, with consideration for their particular genres. All disputes regarding issues of interpretation and meaning shall be settled for FCOC by the Elders and Senior Pastor. There shall be no exclusive translation of the Bible used by FCOC; the translations used regularly for teaching and preaching will be according to the discretion of the Elders and Senior Pastor. **[Deuteronomy 11:18; John 1:1; Matthew 4:4]**

**B.** **The Godhead.** We believe in the triune God, eternally existing and revealed in three persons – Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Each is one with the others in power, purpose, and glory. Each is responsible, in concert with the others, for creation, redemption and re-creation. **[John 10:30; Ephesians 4:4b]**

**C.** **The Person and Work of God the Father.**

1. We believe that God the Father is the Holy and Almighty Sovereign over all of creation, and that by His Word all things were created. **[Genesis 1:1; John 1:1]**

2. We believe that God chose, from before the creation of the world, the timing and method of His work of redeeming the world and reconciling mankind and creation to Himself. **[Isaiah 44:6; Ephesians 1:4]**

3. We believe that He is the loving giver of all good things that we have received, chief of which are Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit.

 **[Colossians 1:15-17; James 1:17; Acts 14:7]**

**D.** **The Person and Work of Jesus Christ.**

1. We believe that the Lord Jesus Christ, the only begotten Son of God, became a man without ceasing to be divine in his nature, having been conceived by the Holy Spirit and born of the virgin Mary, in order that He might reveal God and redeem sinful men. **[Matthew 1:23; Luke 1:35]**

2. We believe that the Lord Jesus Christ accomplished our redemption through His death on the cross as a representative, vicarious, substitutionary

 sacrifice; and our eternal life is made sure by His literal, physical and eternal resurrection from the dead. **[1 Corinthians 1:30; 2 Corinthians 5:18; Hebrews 9:15]**

3. We believe that the Lord Jesus Christ ascended to Heaven and is now exalted at the right hand of God where, as our High Priest, He fulfills the ministry of Representative, Intercessor, and Advocate to the Father.

 **[Luke 24:50; Isaiah 9:6; Acts 7:55; Hebrews 4:14; 1 John 2:1]**

4. We believe that Jesus has been chosen by God to be the exclusive mediator between God and mankind, and that mankind can only be reconciled to God through Him. **[1 Timothy 2:5; Hebrews 9:15; Romans 5:10; Acts 4:12; John 14:6]**

5. We believe that he will return physically and visibly to earth at a future time that is unknown by us. **[Matthew 24:36; Mark 13:32; 1 Thessalonians 4:16]**

**E.** **The Person and Work of the Holy Spirit.**

1. We believe that the Holy Spirit is a person who convicts the world of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment; and, that He is the Supernatural Agent in regeneration, baptizing all believers into the body of Christ, indwelling and sealing them as a guarantee of what is to come.

 **[Acts 1:2, 8; Romans 15:13; 1 Corinthians 2:4]]**

2. We believe that He is the divine Teacher who assists believers to understand and appropriate the Scriptures and that it is the privilege and duty of all the saved to be filled with the Spirit and to submit to His leading.

 **[John 16:3; 1 Corinthians 2:10]**

3. We believe that God is sovereign in bestowal of spiritual gifts to every believer. God uniquely uses evangelists, pastors, and teachers to equip believers in the assembly in order that those believers can do the work of the ministry. **[2 Corinthians 5:5; Ephesians 4:7-13; Hebrews 2:4]**

**F.** **The Sinfulness of Man.** We believe that humanity was created in the image and likeness of God, but that, beginning with Adam’s sin, the human race fell into rebellion against God. As a consequence of each person’s rebellion, he/she has become alienated from God. People are unable to restore themselves to a right relationship with God or save themselves from the temporary and eternal consequences of their sins. **[Romans 5:12-14]**

**G. Salvation.** We believe that salvation, which is eternal life, is the gift of God offered and given to mankind by grace and received by personal faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, whose precious blood was shed on Calvary for the forgiveness of our sins, and who was raised from death the third day by the power of God. We believe that all sins, except blasphemy against the Holy Spirit, are forgivable.

**[Matthew 1:21; John 3:14-18; Acts 4:12]**

**H.** **The Church.**

1. We believe that the local church is to be comprised, in membership, solely of those who follow Jesus Christ as Lord and trust in Him alone for their salvation. **[Ephesians 2:20-21]**

2. We believe that the establishment and continuance of local churches is clearly taught and defined in the New Testament Scriptures. **[1 Timothy 3:15]**

3. We believe in the autonomy of the local church free of any external authority or control in matters of instruction and practice of the teachings of God in Christ.

4. We recognize water baptism (i.e. immersion) and the Lord’s Supper as the Scriptural ordinances of obedience for the church until the Lord’s physical return. **[Matthew 26:26-28; Matthew 28:19; Acts 2:42]**

**I.** **The Eternal State.**

1. We believe that the spirits of people are not annihilated at or after death, but that they exist forever. **[Matthew 25:46]**

2. We believe in the bodily resurrection of all people, the saved to eternal life, and the unsaved to condemnation and everlasting exclusion from God’s kingdom (the “second death”). **[1 Corinthians 15:51-52; Revelation 21:1-8]**

**J.** **The Person and Work of Satan.** We believe that Satan is a person in rebellion against God, the open and declared enemy of God and Man, that he is the Tempter, the Father of Lies, the accuser of God’s people, the ruler of the wicked world system, and that he was crippled by Christ’s work on the cross and shall be utterly defeated by Christ when He comes. **[Matthew 4:13; Matthew 16:23; John 8:44; Zechariah 3:1; John 14:30; 1 John 5:19; Hebrews 2:14; Romans 16:20]**

**K.** **Creation.** We believe that all things in the material and immaterial universe have been designed and created by God and not simply the result of natural forces or processes. We acknowledge the occurrence of micro-evolution within species (physical changes or adaptations passed on through genetics) in the natural world, but we reject the scientific theory of macro-evolution (the development of one specie into another through genetic mutations).

**[Genesis 1:1-31]**

**L.** **Human Sexuality.**

1. We believe that God has commanded that no intimate sexual activity be engaged in outside of a marriage between one man and one woman. We believe that any form of homosexuality, lesbianism, bisexuality, bestiality, incest, fornication, adultery, and pornography are sinful perversions of God’s gift of sex. We believe that God disapproves of and forbids any attempt to alter one’s gender by surgery or appearance.

 **[1 Corinthians 7:2; Leviticus 18:6,22-23; 1 Corinthians 6:9; Matthew 5:27-30]**

2. We believe that the only marriage that conforms to the intention of God is the joining of one naturally-born man and one naturally-born woman in exclusive covenant. **[Genesis 2:18-24]**

**M.** **Family Relationships.**

1. We believe that men and women are spiritually equal in position before God but that God has ordained distinct and separate spiritual functions for men and women in the home and the church. The husband is to be the leader of the home and men are to be the leaders (pastors and elders) of the church.

2. We believe that God has ordained the family as the foundational institution of human society. The husband is to love his wife as Christ loves the church, through sacrificial love and courageous leadership. The wife is to submit herself to the Scriptural leadership of her husband as the church submits to the headship of Christ (except when the husband would lead his wife to disobey Christ Himself). Children are a heritage from the Lord and are to submit to, honor and obey their parents in everything (except when the parents would lead their children to disobey Christ Himself). Parents are to be the primary disciplers of their children and, as such, are responsible for teaching their children spiritual and moral values and leading them, through consistent lifestyle example and appropriate discipline, including Scriptural corporal correction. **[Ephesians 5:21-6:4; Colossians 3:18-21; Deuteronomy 6:6-9]**

**N.** **Divorce and Remarriage.**

1. We believe that God disapproves of and forbids divorce except in the case of marital unfaithfulness, and intends marriage to last until one of the spouses dies. Remarriage after divorce is considered adultery except in the case of marital unfaithfulness. **[Malachi 2:6; Matthew 5:31-32; Matthew 19:1-9]**
2. We also believe that those who have been remarried after being divorced for a reason other than marital unfaithfulness, and have since repented, being committed to submit to God's design for marriage, are forgiven by God. Affirming God's grace and forgiveness towards them, the church shall not consider them to be adulterers. Such persons are eligible for and welcomed into membership, volunteer service, and leadership within the church.

**[2 Corinthians 5:17; 1 Corinthians 15-9 (the example of Paul)]**

**O.** **Abortion.** We believe that human life begins at conception and that the unborn child is a living human being. Abortion constitutes the unjustified and unexcused taking of unborn human life. Abortion is murder. We believe the mother *and* child are precious and important creations of God and must each be cared for with the desire to preserve and promote life.

**[Psalm 139:13; Isaiah 49:1; Galatians 1:15]**

**P.** **Euthanasia.** We believe that the purposeful and intentional ending of a person's life, whether by introducing harmful substances or procedures to that end, or by withholding basic needs from the person to that end, constitutes a murder contrary to the will of God. Discontinuing medical procedures that are extraordinary or disproportionate to the expected outcome can be a legitimate refusal of over-zealous treatment. **[Mark 3:4]**

**Q.** **Love.** We believe that love is the supreme law of God which sums up and encompasses all other commands and expectations for mankind. We believe that we should demonstrate love for others, not only toward fellow disciples of Jesus, but also toward those who do not follow Him, who oppose us, and those who engage in sinful actions. We are to deal with those who oppose us graciously, gently, patiently, and humbly. God forbids the stirring up of strife, the taking of revenge, or the threat or use of violence as a means of resolving personal conflict or obtaining personal justice. Although God commands us to abhor sinful actions, we are to love and pray for any person who engages in such sinful actions. **[Matthew 22:36-40; Matthew 5:43-48; Luke 17:3; Romans 12:19]**

**R.** **Lawsuits Among Believers.** We believe that Christians who are members of this church are prohibited from bringing civil lawsuits against this church or its members to resolve personal disputes. We believe the church possesses all the resources necessary to resolve personal disputes between members.

**[1 Corinthians 6:1-8; Matthew 5:23-26]**

**S.** **Missions.** We believe that Jesus has given His church a great commission to make disciples of all people groups by proclaiming His gospel, baptizing into the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching to obey everything that He commanded. As a part of the worldwide body of Christ, we make it a priority to use our resources to promote the furtherance of the true gospel of Christ at home and abroad. We believe that the furtherance of the gospel involves attention to and provision for both the physical and spiritual needs of people. **[Matthew 28:18-20; Philippians 1:4-6; Philippians 4:18; 2 Corinthians 8:1-8]**

**T.** **Giving.** We believe that every Christian, as a steward of that portion of God’s wealth entrusted to him or her, is called to financially support his or her local church. We believe that God has called all followers of Christ to be generous with their resources, sacrificially and cheerfully giving to support the church, the relief of those in need, and the spread of the Gospel. We believe that it is proper and fitting for those who reap spiritual benefits from the church’s ministries to offer material benefits to the church so that the work may be supported. **[1 Corinthians 9:7-14; Proverbs 22:9; 1 Timothy 6:18; Galatians 2:9-10]**

**SECTION 4.02 – AUTHORITY OF STATEMENT OF FAITH**

The Statement of Faith does not exhaust the extent of our faith. The Bible itself is the sole and final source of all that we believe. We do believe, however, that the foregoing Statement of Faith accurately represents the teaching of the Bible. All teachings of FCOC shall be in complete agreement with this the Statement of Faith.

**ARTICLE 5 – AFFILIATION**

**SECTION 5.01 - SELF GOVERNMENT**

FCOC shall continue as a local, self-governing religious body, and shall not be made or become subject to any outside ecclesiastical authority, jurisdiction or direction by any person, missionary society, organizations (local, state, or national) or any outside board whatsoever.

**SECTION 5.02 – SUPPORT**

FCOC will generally support and promote only such missionary, educational, and benevolent work as proclaim the Gospel of Jesus Christ as revealed in Scriptures. At the discretion of the Elders and Senior Pastor, FCOC may offer support for work accomplished by non-Christian persons or groups if that work is deemed by the Elders and Senior Pastor to be consistent with the Gospel work and mission of FCOC.

**ARTICLE 6 – NON-PARTISAN ACTIVITIES**

This Corporation has been formed under Pennsylvania non-profit corporation law for the purposes described above, and it shall be nonprofit and nonpartisan. No substantial part of the activities of the corporation shall consist of the publication or dissemination of materials with the purpose of attempting to influence legislation, and the corporation shall not participate or intervene in any political campaign on behalf of any candidate for public office or for or against any cause or measure being submitted to the people for a vote.

The Corporation shall not, except in an insubstantial degree, engage in any activities or exercise any powers that are not in furtherance of the purpose described above.

**ARTICLE 7 – DEDICATION OF ASSETS**

The properties and assets of FCOC are irrevocably dedicated to charitable purposes. No part of the net earnings, properties, or assets of this corporation, on dissolution or otherwise, shall inure to the benefit of any private person or individual, or any member or Board member of FCOC. On liquidation or dissolution, all properties or assets and obligations shall be distributed and paid over to a nonprofit fund, foundation or corporation as approved by a simple majority of the membership at a duly called meeting of members.

**ARTICLE 8 – MEMBERSHIP**

**SECTION 8.01 – QUALIFICATIONS FOR MEMBERSHIP**

Members of FCOC shall be those who meet the requirements described in *Section 2.04* of this document.

**SECTION 8.02 – VOTING OF MEMBERSHIP**

A. Only members, at least eighteen (18) years of age, who are physically present at a duly-called meeting of FCOC members shall be entitled to vote. There shall be no proxy or absentee voting. The eligible membership of FCOC has certain limited areas to exercise a vote. Members may not vote to initiate any church action; rather, the vote of a member is to approve or deny actions as presented in annual or special members meetings.

B. This congregation functions not as a pure democracy, but as a body under the headship of the Lord Jesus Christ and the direction of the Elders and Senior Pastor, who lead on His behalf. Determinations of the internal affairs of FCOC are ecclesiastical matters and shall be determined exclusively by the FCOC’s own rules and procedures.

C. Membership in FCOC does not afford the members with any property, contractual, or civil rights based on principles of democratic government. Although the general public is invited to all of FCOC’s worship services, FCOC’s property remains private property. The Elders and Senior Pastor have the authority to suspend or revoke the right of any person, including a member, to enter or remain on church property. If, after being notified of such a suspension or revocation, the person enters or remains on church property, the person may, at the discretion of the Elders and Senior Pastor, be treated as a trespasser.

D. A member may inspect or copy FCOC’s prepared financial statements and the minutes of the proceedings of its meetings and of board meetings, provided he or she shall have made a written request upon FCOC and FCOC has received the written request at least five (5) business days before the requested inspection date.

1. A member may not, under any circumstances, inspect or copy any record relating to individual contributions to FCOC, the list of names and addresses of members (unless listed in the church directory), or the accounting books and financial records of the FCOC.

2. FCOC may impose a reasonable charge, covering the costs of labor and material, for copies of any documents provided to the member before releasing the copies to the member.

**SECTION 8.03 – DISCIPLINE OF A MEMBER**

A. There shall be a discipline committee consisting of the Elders and Senior Pastor. These men shall have sole authority in determining heretical deviations from the Statement of Faith and violations of a member’s commitment to FCOC. If an Elder or the Senior Pastor is the subject of a disciplinary matter, he shall not sit as a member of the discipline committee. The Elders and Senior Pastor 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 or she is to go alone to the offending party and seek to restore his brother or sister. Before he or she goes, the member should first examine himself or herself. When he or she goes, the member should go with a spirit of humility and have the goal of restoration.

C. If reconciliation is not reached, one or two other members are 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 FCOC 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 FCOC that they, after self-examination, make an effort to go to the offending member and seek that member’s restoration.

E. If the matter is still unresolved after the steps outlined in *Subsections (B), (C), and (D)* have been taken, such members who refuse to repent and be restored are to be removed from the membership of FCOC 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 FCOC 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 FCOC membership, all contact with him or her from that point forward (except by family members) must be for the sake of restoration.

H. 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 8.04 – TRANSFER OF MEMBERSHIP**

Members not under the disciplinary process of *Section 6.03* may request that letters of transfer be sent to another church.

**SECTION 8.05 – TERMINATION OF MEMBERSHIP**

In addition to the termination of membership according to the process described in *Section 8.03* above, an individual’s FCOC membership may be terminated for the following reasons:

A. No member of this church may hold membership in another church. The membership of any individual member shall automatically terminate if the member unites in membership with another church.

B. The membership of any individual member shall automatically terminate without notice if the member files a lawsuit in violation of *Section 3.01 (R).*

C. The membership of any individual member shall automatically terminate upon the member’s death, and cannot, therefore, be passed to another in an estate.

C. No provision contained in this section shall be subject to or governed by the procedures regarding discipline of members set forth in *Section 8.03.*

D. A member may resign at any time, but no letter of transfer or written statement of good standing will be issued upon such resignation, except at the discretion of the Elders and Senior Pastor.

**ARTICLE 9 – MEMBERS MEETINGS**

**SECTION 9.01 – FISCAL YEAR**

The fiscal year for FCOC shall coincide with the calendar year, January 1 to December 31.

**SECTION 9.02 – ANNUAL MEMBERS MEETING**

The annual members meeting shall be held the first Sunday of December following the morning worship service.

1. PRESIDING OFFICER: The Chairman of the Board shall preside at the meeting.
2. QUORUM: The quorum for the meeting shall be met if the Elders consent that enough members are present to properly conduct the meeting.
3. VOTING: All FCOC members who have been in good standing for at least one (1) year and are at least eighteen (18) years of age are eligible to vote. Majority vote rules, except in specific cases described in this document.
4. BUSINESS: Business to be conducted at the annual meeting is as follows:
	1. Election of Officers:
		1. A Nominating Committee composed of three (3) members of the Board (one Elder, one Deacon, and one Deaconess) whose terms do not expire at the end of the current fiscal year, shall be appointed by the Chairman of the Board at the September Board meeting, with approval of the Board.
		2. The Sunday following the appointment of the Nominating Committee, the names of those on the committee shall be printed in the church bulletin.
		3. Members may submit their nominations in writing to any member of the Nominating Committee no later than the second Sunday of October. All nominees must give their consent prior to having their names submitted for nomination.
		4. The Nominating Committee shall submit all names of the nominees in writing to the Elders and Senior Pastor for consideration.
		5. All approved nominees’ names shall be printed in the church bulletin the third (3rd) and fourth (4th) Sundays in November.
		6. Voting shall be by paper ballot, and all individual candidates receiving seventy-five percent (75%) affirmative votes are elected to their respective office.
		7. The ordination and installation service shall be held annually the first Sunday in January during the morning worship service to properly install all officers. All new officers shall begin their duties upon their installation.
	2. Budget
		1. A Budget Committee composed of three (3) members of the Board (one Elder, One Deacon, and one Deaconess) shall be appointed by the Chairman of the Board at the September Board meeting, with approval of the Board;
		2. The Budget Committee shall present a proposed budget to the Board, and the Board shall, if necessary, discuss and change the proposed budget before voting to approve it;
		3. Eligible members shall vote on the proposed budget at the annual members meeting for the forthcoming fiscal year. By the majority vote in favor, the congregation can accept the budget as presented or change part or whole as desired.

**SECTION 9.03 – SPECIAL MEMBERS MEETINGS**

A. **Authority to call**. A special meeting of the members may be called at any time by any of the following: The Elders, the Chairman of the Board, the whole Board (as approved by a majority vote of the Board), or by a minimum of 20% of the members.

B. **Meeting called by members.** If a special meeting is called by members (who are entitled to vote) other than the Elders, the Chairman of the Board, or the whole Board, the request shall be submitted by such members in writing, and shall specify the general nature of the business proposed to be transacted, and shall be delivered personally or sent by registered mail, facsimile transmission, or email, to the Chairman of the Board, an Elder, or the Senior Pastor. The officer receiving the request shall cause notice to be promptly given to the members entitled to vote that a meeting will be held and the date for such meeting, which date shall be not less than fourteen (14) nor more than forty-five (45) days following the receipt of the request. If the notice is not given within seven (7) days after the receipt of the request, the persons requesting the meeting may give the notice. Nothing contained in this subsection shall be construed as limiting, fixing or affecting the time when a meeting of members may be held when the meeting is called by action of the Board.

C. **Notice of Special Agenda Items.** If action is proposed to be taken at any meeting for the approval of any of the following proposals, the notice shall also state the general nature of the proposal. Member action on such items is invalid unless a written waiver of notice states the general nature of the proposal(s)

(i) Removing a member of the Board, officer, or employee

(ii) Amending the articles of incorporation

(iv) Voluntarily dissolving the corporation

D. **Quorum.** A number equal to 30% of the general members eligible to vote shall constitute a quorum for the transaction of business at any special meeting of the members.

E. **Voting.**

(i) Persons entitled to vote at any meeting of the members, shall be members as of the date that notice of the meeting is given.

(ii) If a quorum is present, the affirmative vote of a simple majority of the members represented at the meeting, entitled to vote and voting on the matter (except in those cases in which a greater majority is required according to this document) shall be the act of the members, unless the vote of a greater number of voting by classes is required by Pennsylvania law.

**ARTICLE 10 – EMPLOYMENT**

**SECTION 10.01 – EMPLOYMENT AND WAGES**

The procedures governing the employment and wages paid to the staff of FCOC shall be as follows:

1. ELDER AUTHORITY: All employees of FCOC will be under the direct supervision of the Elders. The Elders shall be responsible for each employee’s job description with approval being granted by the Board. Excluding the Senior Pastor, all job openings at FCOC shall be posted, and applications for employment shall be received by the Elders. In a timely manner, the Elders will make their recommendations to the Board as to whom they believe to be the best candidate for the position.
2. BOARD AUTHORITY: The authority in all such matters for the Secretary, Treasurer, and Janitor shall reside with the Board.
3. MEMBERSHIP AUTHORITY: At the annual meeting, the congregation shall have the final say in annual salaries, benefit considerations, and all other budget matters. By the majority vote in favor, the congregation can accept the budget as presented or change part or whole as desired.

**ARTICLE 11 – POLICIES**

**SECTION 11.01 – USE OF CHURCH PROPERTY**

Policies regarding the use of any church property (buildings, ground, vehicles, machinery, etc.) shall be formulated by the Board as it deems necessary. When such policies are formulated, they shall be made available in FCOC’s office.

**SECTION 11.02 – IDEAS**

Any individual member or group of members of FCOC that has an idea, suggestion, or plan which they think would benefit FCOC should present it to the Elders and/or Senior Pastor.

**SECTION 11.03 – COMPLAINTS AND GRIEVANCES**

Any individual or group of members of FCOC who has a complaint should arrange to meet with the Elders. If the grievance cannot be resolved by the Elders, the Elders shall appoint a nonbiased committee to review the situation and present its recommendation(s) for resolution to the Elders.

**SECTION 11.04 – CALENDAR**

January 1 – December 31: Fiscal Year

January: Installation and Ordination Service on first Sunday

January Board meeting: Board reorganizes

September Board meeting: Nominating Committee appointed and

Budget Committee appointed

November Board meeting: Proposed budget reviewed by Board

December: Annual Members meeting on first Sunday

December Board meeting: Officer groups reorganized for the following

fiscal year and Board quorum decided for following fiscal year

**ARTICLE 12 – MINISTRY OF EDUCATION**

**SECTION 12.01 - PURPOSE**

FCOC believes that it is to provide the members and their children with an education, which is based upon and consistent with Biblical teachings. FCOC believes that the home and church are responsible before God for providing a Christian education. To this end, FCOC shall engage in ministries in education in keeping with the following dictates.

**SECTION 12.02 – CHURCH PARTICIPATION**

All educational programs or courses of instruction formulated and offered by FCOC shall be primarily for the benefit of its members; however, the Elders and/or Senior Pastor may permit non-members to participate in church educational programs or courses at their discretion.

**SECTION 12.03 –STAFF MEMBERSHIP**

 All instructors, teachers, and administrators shall be members of this church. This provision shall not apply to visiting missionaries, evangelists, or preachers engaged for the purpose of delivering sermons, conducting revivals, or other special meetings on a temporary basis.

**SECTION 12.04 – STATEMENT OF FAITH ACCORD**

All educational programs or courses of instruction shall be taught and presented in full accord with the Statement of Faith of FCOC. FCOC shall not hire, appoint, or retain any employee or volunteer for its educational programs who fails to adhere to or promotes what is contrary to the Statement of Faith.

**SECTION 12.05 - UNITY**

All educational programs or courses of instruction shall be conducted as an integral and inseparable ministry of FCOC.

**SECTION 12.06 - TEACHING**

All educational programs or courses of instruction shall be conducted consistent with the teaching of the inerrant Word of God. Any assertion or belief which conflicts with a Biblical truth is a deception and distortion of the truth which will be disclaimed as false. It is the responsibility of every instructor or teacher to present the inerrant Word of God as the sole infallible source of knowledge and wisdom.

**SECTION 12.07 – CHRISTIAN WALK**

All administrators, instructors, and teachers shall continue or adopt a lifestyle consistent with the precepts which they teach, whether in or out of the classroom.

**ARTICLE 13– ORDINATION**

**SECTION 13.01 – ORDINATION QUALIFICATIONS**

Any male member of this church or its mission churches, who gives evidence of a genuine call of God into the work of the ministry and possesses the qualifications stated in 1 Timothy 3:1-7 and Titus 1:6-9, may be ordained by FCOC for the work of elder or pastor, whether that work be at FCOC or any other Christian congregation.

**SECTION 13.02 – ORDINATION PROCEDURE**

A. Upon a conference with the Elders and Senior Pastor, and after they have approved the candidate for ordination, the Elders or Senior Pastor shall call a council to examine and pass on the qualification of the candidate. The ordination council shall consist of ordained ministers of like faith invited to participate in the examination of the candidate.

B. If the candidate is found worthy of ordination by the council, the ordination council may ordain the candidate on behalf of FCOC.

C. The Elders and/or Senior Pastor shall arrange for the ordination service.

**ARTICLE 14 – INDEMNIFICATION**

**SECTION 14.01 – ACTIONS SUBJECT TO INDEMNIFICATION**

FCOC may indemnify any person who was or is a party or is threatened to be made a party to any threatened, pending or completed action, suit, or proceeding, whether civil, criminal, administrative, or investigative, including all appeals (other than an action by or in the right of FCOC) by reason of the fact that the person is or was a pastor, officer, employee, or agent of FCOC, against expenses, including attorneys’ fees, judgments, fines, and amounts paid in settlement actually and reasonably incurred by him in connection with the action, suit, or proceeding; and if that person acted in good faith and in a manner he reasonably believed to be in or not opposed to the best interests of FCOC and, with respect to any criminal action or proceeding, had no reasonable cause to believe his conduct was unlawful. The termination of any action, suit, or proceeding by judgment, order, settlement, conviction, or on a plea of nolo contendere or its equivalent, shall not, of itself, create a presumption that the person did not act in good faith and in a manner that he reasonably believed to be in or not opposed to the best interests of FCOC and, with respect to any criminal action or proceeding, had no reasonable cause to

believe that his or her conduct was unlawful.

**SECTION 14.02- EXPENSES SUBJECT TO INDEMNIFICATION**

To the extent that a pastor, member of the board, officer, employee, or agent has been successful on the merits or otherwise in defense of any action, suit, or proceeding referred to in this Article, or in defense of any claim, issue, or matter in that action, suit, or proceeding, he or she may be indemnified against expenses, including attorneys’ fees, actually and reasonably incurred by him or her in connection with the action, suit, or proceeding.

**SECTION 14.03 – LIMITATIONS OF INDEMNIFICATION**

Any indemnification made under this Article, may be made by FCOC only as authorized in the specific case on a determination that indemnification of the pastor, member of the board, officer, employee, or agent is proper in the circumstances because he has met the applicable standard of conduct set forth in Section 14.01. The determination shall be made (a) by a majority vote of a quorum consisting of the pastor and who were not and are not parties to or threatened with the action, suit, or proceeding; (b) if the described quorum is not obtainable or if a majority vote of a quorum of disinterested members of the board so directs, by independent legal counsel in a written opinion; or (c) by a majority vote of the members of FCOC.

**SECTION 14.04 – TIMING OF INDEMNIFICATION**

Expenses of each person seeking indemnification under this Article, may be paid by FCOC as they are incurred, in advance of the final disposition of the action, suit, or proceeding, as authorized by the Board in the specific case, on receipt of an undertaking by or on behalf of the pastor, member of the board, officer, employee, or agent to repay the amount if it is ultimately determined that he or she is not qualified to be indemnified by FCOC.

**SECTION 14.05 – EXTENT OF INDEMNIFICATION**

The indemnification provided by this Article shall be deemed to be discretionary unless otherwise required as a matter of law or under any agreement or provided by insurance purchased by FCOC, both as to action of each person seeking indemnification under this Article in his official capacity and as to action in another capacity while holding that office, and may continue as to a person who has ceased to be a pastor, member of the board, officer, employee, or agent and may inure to the benefit of the heirs, executors, and administrators of that person.

**SECTION 14.06 - INSURANCE**

FCOC may purchase and maintain insurance on behalf of any person who is or was an officer, employee, or agent of FCOC against any liability asserted against him and incurred by him in that capacity, or arising out of his status in that capacity, whether or not FCOC would have the power to indemnify him against liability under the provisions of this Article.

**ARTICLE 15 – COMMITTEES**

**SECTION 15.01 – STANDING COMMITTEES**

The Chairman of the Board shall appoint standing committees and designate a chairperson for each standing committee and, except when otherwise specifically provided in these bylaws, shall determine the membership of each standing committee.

**SECTION 15.02 – SPECIAL COMMITTEES**

The Board may create special committees to provide the Board with advice and information regarding matters submitted to the committee by the Board for consideration. The committee shall have no authority to act on behalf of FCOC. The chairperson and members of the committee shall be approved by a majority vote of the Board and shall serve solely at the pleasure of the Board. The special committee shall be subject to the control and direction of the Board at all times.

**ARTICLE 16 – DESIGNATED CONTRIBUTIONS**

The Board, in the exercise of its religious, educational, and charitable purposes, may establish various funds to accomplish specific goals. Contributors may designate their contributions to established funds, but all designations shall be deemed advisory and non-binding rather than mandatory in nature. All contributions made to specific funds or otherwise designated shall remain subject to the exclusive control and discretion of the Board. No fiduciary obligation shall be created by any designated contribution made to FCOC other than to use the contribution for the general furtherance of any of the purposes stated in Section 2.03.

**ARTICLE 17 – CONSTRUCTION AND DEFINITIONS**

Unless the context requires otherwise, the general provisions, rules of construction, and definitions in the Pennsylvania nonprofit corporation law shall govern the construction of these bylaws.

**ARTICLE 18 – AMENDMENTS**

These bylaws may be revised or amended by a two-thirds majority vote of the members present and voting at any annual meeting of the members, or special meeting, provided that said revision or amendment has been submitted in writing and announced from the pulpit at least fourteen (14) days before the vote is taken. If the Board proposes a revision of or amendment to these bylaws to the members, it shall only do so after a two-thirds majority of the Board votes in favor of doing so.

**ADOPTION**

These bylaws were adopted by a two-thirds majority vote of the members present and voting at a duly called meeting of FCOC members in which a quorum was present.

These bylaws supersede any other bylaws of First Church Of Christ.

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Date FCOC Secretary