

**EAST FREETOWN CONGREGATIONAL CHRISTIAN CHURCH
CONSITUTION BY-LAWS**

Preamble:

1. We desire to be known simply and only as Christians.
2. We believe in God the Father, the Holy Spirit, and in Jesus Christ the Son of God as the head of the church.
3. We hold the Bible as the sufficient rule of faith and practice.
4. We believe that a desire to be Christlike is a condition of fellowship.
5. We believe that individual interpretation of the Scriptures and liberty of a pure conscience in its application are the privilege and duty of all.
6. We plead for the union of all followers of Christ.

Article I. Name

The name of this church shall be the East Freetown Congregational Christian Church.

Article II. Purpose

The purpose of this church is to build up the kingdom of God and to make His will dominant in the lives of all people.

Article III. Polity

The government of the church is vested in the body of believers who compose it. It is subject to the control of no other ecclesiastical body, but it recognizes and sustains the obligational mutual counsel and cooperation which are common among Congregational Christians.

Article IV. Affirmation of Faith

We believe in God the Father, infinite in wisdom, goodness, and love; in Jesus Christ His Son, our Lord and Savior, Who for us and our salvation lived and dies and rose again; and in the Holy Spirit, Who teaches, comforts, and inspires the souls of all people.

Article V. Covenant

Thankful for God's everlasting mercy and for His great gift of salvation through Jesus Christ or Lord, we covenant and agree together to see, to know, and to do His Holy Will, and to promote triumph of our Savior's Kingdom over the world.

Heartily believing that the Scriptures were given by the inspiration of God, and that they are profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, and for the instruction in righteousness, and also that Christian freedom requires that they be interpreted by individual judgment, we covenant together to accept the Bible as our supreme standard of faith and duty, and to recognize as Christians and worthy of our fellowship, all who devoutly love the Lord Jesus Christ and sustain life of Christian piety as taught by the Word of God.

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Anxiously desiring that all differences which separate Christ's people may be removed, and that there may be one flock and one Shepherd, we covenant together to lay aside all distinctive and party names, and taking our title from the great Head of the Church, to be known simply as Christians.

Furthermore, realizing that the success of each church depends upon the consecration of its individual membership, we covenant together to attend the services of the church, to contribute according to our means to its support, to labor together to maintain its peace and harmony, and in every way promote its temporal and spiritual welfare; looking for our reward to the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding and to the Crown of rejoicing laid up for all who love God's appearing.

Article VI. Membership

1. Reception: Any person desiring to unite with the church shall contact the Minister or a Deacon. The person must be a baptized believer, attend a new member class, accept the church's Covenant, Constitution, and By-laws, and make a confession of faith in Jesus Christ. The Minister and Board of Deacons will make a recommendation for membership at Sunday worship service, and the person shall be received during a subsequent Sunday worship service.

2. Membership: There shall be three forms of membership:
 - a. Active – member conforming to the Spirit of the Covenant
 - b. Associate – any member under eighteen years of age who has not been confirmed
 - c. Inactive – a member not conforming to the Covenant or not in communication with the church for a period of two years may, upon recommendation by the Board of Deacons and a vote of the membership at the Annual meeting, be placed on the inactive membership roll. After an additional two year period, such a person may, upon recommendation of the Board of Deacons and a vote of the membership at the Annual Meeting, be retired from the church rolls.
An inactive member following their return to active relationship with the church shall, upon recommendation from the Board of Deacons and the Minister, be returned to active membership.

3. Transfer: Any member in good standing may, upon request, have a letter of transfer sent to another church by contacting the chairperson of the Board of Deacons or the Minister. Any member who wishes to terminate membership may do so with notification to the chairperson of the Board of Deacons or the Minister

4. Rights of Membership: Active members shall have the right to hold office in the church and to vote on all matters before the church, provided they are eighteen years of age or older or have been confirmed and joined the church.

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Article VII. The Minister

Duties:

- The Minister shall have in his charge the spiritual welfare and education of the church. He shall preach the Gospel, administer the sacraments, conduct the services of public worship, seek new members, and cooperate with the various boards and committees, of which he shall be a member ex-officio. The Minister shall hold no office with the exception of Moderator, if so elected.
- The Finance Committee shall negotiate with the Minister the annual contract. The provisions of the contract shall be subject to approval at an annual meeting or a special church meeting.

Termination: The Minister's contract may be terminated at any time upon at least a sixty day notice given to the Board of Deacons by the Minister, or given to the Minister by a majority vote of voting members present at a special church meeting called for the purpose. The sixty day notice may be extended or diminished by mutual agreement.

Article VIII. Offices of the Church

1. Moderator

Term: One year

Duties:

- To preside at all annual or special meetings of the church

2. Assistant Moderator

Term: One year

Duties:

- To preside at all annual or special meetings of the church when the Moderator is absent.
To assist the Moderator as required

3. Clerk

Term: One year

Duties:

- To keep the records and the minutes of the Executive Board and annual meetings and special meetings of the church
- To be responsible for any notices that need to be published concerning meetings
- To keep a register with names and addresses of church members with date of reception and current membership status
- To record all marriages, baptisms, and funerals performed by a minister representing the church
- To have annual reports available of the congregation at least one week prior to the annual meeting

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4. Assistant Clerk

Term: One year

Duties:

- To perform the duties of the Clerk as required

5. Treasurer

Term: One year

Duties:

- To receive, hold, and disburse all monies of the church with approval of the Board of Trustees
- To keep a true and accurate account of all disbursements and receipts, make reports thereof at special, annual and Executive Board meetings
- To serve on the Finance Committee
- To collect the offering after each service, and count it together with a member of the Board of Trustees
- To inform the Finance Committee if any board or committee is near expending their budgeted funds

6. Assistant Treasurer

Term: One year

Duties:

- To perform the duties of the Treasurer as required

7. Auditor(s)

Term: One year

Duties:

- To audit all accounts and report to the church at the annual meeting

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8. Board of Deacons

The Board of Deacons shall consist of six active church members

Term: Three years

Duties:

- To annually elect their own chairperson and clerk
- To maintain the membership list of the church, recommend and accept new members, vote letters of transfer, and make an annual review of membership status
- The chairperson is to notify the church Clerk of any changes in membership
- To assist the Minister in the worship services, administering the sacraments, and caring for the congregation
- To give the right hand of fellowship to new members
- To constitute a committee on pastoral supply
- To appoint 1 Deacon to the Finance Committee
- To hold monthly meetings
- To submit a written report of the activities to the annual meeting
- To bring sunshine and cheer when needed
- To arrange and supplement the minister's vacations
- To call on the sick, bereaved, and troubled

9. Communion Steward

Term: One year

Duties:

- To provide and prepare for the communion services

10. Board of Trustees

The Board shall consist of six active church members

Term: Three years

Duties:

- To annually elect their own chairperson and clerk
- To appoint one Trustee to serve on the Finance Committee
- To hold monthly meetings. Half the membership shall constitute a quorum
- To approve and authorize the Treasurer to pay all proper bills against the church
- To have custody of all church properties, permanent and invested funds, and have general oversight of all monies and appropriated funds
- To delegate members as signatories as needed
- To hold all properties of the East Freetown Congregational Christian Church
- To give a written report of their activities to the annual meeting
- To assist the Treasurer in counting the weekly offering
- To have the authority to spend monies budgeted for maintenance
- The Board of Trustees shall not have the right to buy, sell, rent, or mortgage any real or personal property without the vote of the church

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11. Board of Christian Education

The Board shall consist of five active church members and the Superintendent of Sunday School

Term: Three years

Duties:

- To annually elect their own chairperson and clerk
- To hold monthly meetings
- To appoint one member to the Finance Committee
- Shall approve the content of all Christian education programs of the church
- Shall recruit and appoint all personnel necessary to carry out the Christian education programs of the church
- To submit a written report of their activities to the annual meeting

12. Superintendent of Sunday School

Term: One year

Elected at annual meeting to begin serving in June of that year.

Article IX. Executive Board and Committees of the Church

1. Executive Board

The Executive Board shall consist of the offices of the church, one representative from each church committee, three members elected from the church membership at annual meeting, and one representative (church member) from each church affiliated organization.

Nine Executive Board members shall constitute a quorum

Duties:

- To improve communication among and act in an advisory capacity to various boards, committees, and groups within the church, and have general oversight of all church affairs
- To elect a chairperson annually
- To hold meetings bi-monthly. Dates for these meetings, and such other meetings deemed necessary, shall be set by the Executive Board chair or, in the absence of the chairperson, the Moderator
- The chairperson shall serve on the Finance Committee
- To approve expenses for emergency repairs at the request of the Board of Trustees
- Shall have the authority to vote to spend monies not appropriated at the last annual meeting, only after review by the Finance Committee
- Shall have the authority to vote to fill vacancies which may arise of elected church officers or committee members. Such votes of the Executive Board will enable those so elected to serve with full authority until the next annual meeting

2. Missions

Shall cooperate with the Minister and Treasurer in carrying forward a program of mission activity and education.

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3. Flower
Shall provide flowers, greens, or plants for church services
4. Social
Shall arrange for social gatherings and shall promote Christian fellowship among members and friends of the church.
5. Nominating
Shall consist of at least six members who prepare a slate of nominees to fill office and committee vacancies, to be presented at the annual meeting.
They shall encourage members who desire to hold office to submit their names to the committee by December 1st.
The right of any active church member to make nominations from the floor shall always be recognized.
6. Historian
Shall record significant events of the church. The chairperson shall be responsible for the safekeeping of the church treasures.
7. Music
Shall provide music for the church service and opportunities for members to share their musical abilities.
Shall have oversight of all musical activities for the church.
8. Finance
Shall consist of the chairperson of the Executive Board, Treasurer, and one member from each board.
Shall negotiate the Minister's contract.
Shall prepare the budget for approval at the annual meeting.
Shall review requests from any board, committee, or individual for any non-budgeted funds.
Shall meet quarterly or as determined by the Committee.
9. Fund-raising
Shall consist of at least three members.
Shall provide a program of fund-raising and / or stewardship to help meet the budget.
10. All Committees
 - a. Be elected
 - b. Elect their own chairperson
 - c. Submit a written, annual report
 - d. Appoint a representative to the Executive Board

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Article X. Conflicts of Interest

Any member of a board or committee who has a personal or financial interest in an issue to be discussed or voted upon shall disclose that personal or financial interest to the board or committee. Such member shall not vote on the issue. A majority of the board or committee may vote to require that such member recuse him/herself from attendance at the meeting while such issue is discussed.

Article XI. Church Affiliated Organizations

Any organization seeking church affiliation shall be presented for approval at an annual or special meeting. The Clerk shall keep a record of the name and date of approval of all such organizations. All such organizations shall appoint a representative to the Executive Board, and shall submit a report for presentation at the annual meeting.

Article XII. Meetings

The annual meeting of the church shall be held on the fourth Saturday of January, when all church business and election of officers will take place.

Each Board, Officer, Committee, and Organization shall submit a written report to the church Clerk for presentation at the annual meeting by January 7th, with the exception of the Treasurer and Auditor, whose reports are due no later than January 15th.

The meeting may be postponed for good cause, as determined by the Minister, Chairperson of the Executive Board, and the Moderator. Postponed meetings shall be held the Saturday following.

Special meetings shall be called by the Clerk upon direction of the Minister, or upon written petition of five active adult members. Notice of such a meeting shall be given to membership from the pulpit and sent by first class mail to each active church member at least two weeks preceding the meeting. The purpose of the special meeting shall be clearly stated. Twenty active voting members shall constitute a quorum, and Robert's Rules of Order shall be followed at meetings of the Church.

Article XIII. Amendments

The Constitution By-laws may be amended by a two-thirds vote of the voting members present at the annual or special meeting, provided that a notice of such amendment is made in writing, given to the church Clerk, and sent to each active church member at least one month before the annual or special meeting. These By-laws are to be reviewed at least every ten years.