



**EMMANUEL REFORMED
CHURCH**
MOSCOW, IDAHO

Constitution

Adopted from Trinity Reformed Church - October 2023

PREAMBLE

In submission to Scripture, we confess the purpose of our church is to glorify God through reverent worship, proclaiming Christ to sinners, and building up our members through preaching the whole counsel of God and observing Christ's sacraments. To these ends, we establish the following constitution, seeking to avoid any forms that might encourage the unbelieving fragmentations so conducive to the modern mind.

MEMBERSHIP

Individuals are eligible for membership in Emmanuel Reformed Church if they have been lawfully baptized in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit (Matt. 28:19), and they live in our geographical area. Individuals become members upon taking covenant membership vows (Philemon 2; Heb. 13:7, 17). Children of members become members when they are baptized, and shall reaffirm covenant membership vows as they mature - ordinarily in their mid-teenage years (e.g. Luke 4:16-30). When a new household comes into membership, all the members of the household become members individually. When a non-member marries a member of Emmanuel Reformed Church, the spouse becomes a member upon taking covenant membership vows. The elders oversee a membership list, which must include names, baptisms, and communicant status.

The covenant membership vows are as follows:

- "Do you (and your household) acknowledge yourself (-ves) to be (a) sinner(s) in need of salvation by Christ, and do you believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, receiving and resting upon Him alone as He is offered in the gospel?"
- "Have you (and your household) been baptized in accordance with His Word?"

- “Do you swear in the name of God, in humble reliance upon the grace of the Holy Spirit, to live in a way that becomes followers of Christ?”
- “Do you swear in the name of God to support the ministry of this church in its worship and work, submitting to its government and discipline, while pursuing its purity and peace?”

In the administration of covenant membership vows, a pastor (or officiant) asks the aspiring members the questions above. When individuals come into membership as a household, the pastor (or officiant) will direct these questions to the head of household, who answers on behalf of the household. He will then elicit responses from each mature member of that household. He will then charge the new member(s) and congregation regarding their responsibilities and privileges in the local Body of Christ. Following this reminder, the officiant will address the congregation, stating,

- “And to the congregation, I call on you to welcome this new member (household) into our fellowship with open arms, and I charge you to receive them as your own brother(s) (and/or) sister(s), to pray for them, to encourage them in the faith, to bless them with warm hospitality, to comfort them in sorrows and trials, and to guard their lives and reputations as your very own.
- If you promise and covenant to do so, then welcome them now and renew your own membership vows with a hearty “Amen.”

Individuals may formally come under the pastoral care of Emmanuel Reformed Church without becoming members. In these situations the session of Emmanuel Reformed Church will cooperate with the church where such individuals retain membership.

RELEASE OR TRANSFER OF MEMBERSHIP

If any member requests to be released to the care of another Christian church, the elders will normally release him with a blessing. If any member requests to be released when there are disciplinary proceedings against him or someone in his household, the elders may delay acting on the request until the disciplinary matter is resolved. If members move from our geographical area, the elders will charge them to find a new church home within six months. The elders may extend this time at their discretion. After this time expires, the elders will release them from membership. Upon release of membership and as circumstances warrant, the elders may send a letter of pastoral encouragement, admonition, rebuke or censure to the former church member, or a fraternal letter of commendation, concern or warning to the church where the former member now attends.

COMMUNICANT MEMBERS

Individuals are eligible for the Lord's Supper at Emmanuel Reformed Church if they have been lawfully baptized in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit (Matt 28:19). Under the headship of Christ, the responsibility for administering the sacraments remains with the elders. The elders exercise this responsibility for children with due respect for the pastoral responsibilities of parents.

ELECTION OF PASTORS, ELDERS, AND DEACONS

In church elections, voting is conducted by household, with each household casting one vote. Households eligible to vote are those in which the head of that household is a member in good standing. Independent unmarried members are considered households for purposes of voting. Elector households may vote in the elections of elders and deacons. The elders will qualify elector households.

The elders will examine nominees for church office with regard to their doctrine and manner of life. A nominee must notify the elders if he has any disagreement

or mental reservation about any portion of the church's Confession of Faith or this constitution. He must also meet the qualifications for the office set down in Scripture (1 Tim. 3:1-7; Tit. 1:5-9; 1 Pet. 5:2-4; 1 Tim. 3:8-13). Nominees are approved for candidacy by unanimous consent of the elders.

A candidate for elder will work through a short course of training on eldership under the oversight of a current elder (ordinarily a minister or teaching elder). The elders may then present the candidate for election.

A candidate for deacon will serve among the deacons for a trial period in order to prove his fitness for office (1 Tim. 3:10). The elders may then present the candidate for election.

The elders must present candidates and distribute ballots to households at least three weeks prior to an election. If, after carefully weighing the electors' input, the elders determine that the candidate has the clear and obvious support of the church (Phil. 2:1-4), the elders will ordain him through laying on of hands and prayer (Acts 6:6; 1 Timothy 4:14, 5:22; 2 Timothy 1:6).

When ordained, the deacon will vow:

1. "DO you believe the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments to be the Word of God, the only infallible rule of faith and practice?"
2. "DO you sincerely receive and adopt the doctrinal standards of this church, being set forth in our Book of Confessions, as your own confession of faith, and as a faithful statement of the doctrine taught in the Scriptures?"
3. "If at any time you find yourself out of accord with any point in our Book of Confessions, WILL you, on your own initiative, make known to your Session the change which has taken place in your views since the assumption of these vows?"

4. "WILL you be diligent, with God's help, to frame and fashion yourself and your household, according to the Doctrine of Christ; and to make both yourself and your household wholesome examples and patterns to the flock of Christ?"
5. "DO you approve of the form of government and discipline of this church, in conformity with the general principles of biblical polity?"
6. "DO you accept the office of deacon in this church, and promise faithfully to perform all the duties thereof, and to endeavor by the grace of God to adorn the profession of the Gospel in your life, and to set a worthy example before the church of which God has made you an officer?"
7. "DO you promise subjection to your brethren in the Lord?"
8. "DO you promise to strive for the purity, peace, unity and edification of the church?"

Following these vows, the officiant will address the congregation, stating,

- "And to the congregation, I call on you to receive this deacon in the Lord. Receive his service and follow his example, that he may serve with joy and not with grief.
- If you promise and covenant to do so, then receive him now and renew your own membership vows with a hearty "Amen."

When ordained, the deacon will be charged:

- "{Name}, you have received of the Lord Jesus to serve his church as a deacon, according to the word of the Apostles, that the elders and pastors may give themselves to the ministry of word and prayer. You are called to work with the pastors and elders as heralds of Christ's kingdom. You are to proclaim the gospel in word and deed, to serve

the community in which we live, bringing to the Church the needs and hopes of all the people. You are to work with your fellow members in searching out the poor and weak, the sick and lonely and those who are oppressed and powerless, reaching into the forgotten corners of the world that the love of God may be made visible. As a deacon, you are to assist in the pastoral ministry of the Church and in leading God's people in worship. You are to read the Word and bring the needs of the world before the Church in intercession. You are to labor to lead the lost to faith and bring them to baptism. You are called to assist in administering the sacraments, to distribute communion, and to minister to the sick and housebound. Therefore, we charge you before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and the dead at His appearing and His kingdom; lead the people of God in true religion, which the apostle James says is to visit orphans and widows in their trouble, and to keep oneself unspotted from the world. Be watchful in all things, endure afflictions, be servant unto all, that in losing your life you may indeed find it. Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life, whereunto you are also called; for those who have served well as deacons obtain for themselves a good standing and great boldness in the faith which is in Christ Jesus."

A. VOWS TO BE TAKEN BY ALL ELDERS:

When ordained, the elder will affirm the following vows:

1. WILL you shepherd the flock of God committed to your charge, as one who must give account, taking the oversight thereof, not by constraint but willingly, not for filthy lucre but of a ready mind, neither as being lords over God's heritage, but being examples to the flock?
2. DO you believe the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments to be the Word of God, the only infallible rule of faith and practice?

3. DO you sincerely receive and adopt the doctrinal standards of this church, being set forth in our Book of Confessions, as your own confession of faith, and as a faithful statement of the doctrine taught in the Scriptures?
4. If at any time you find yourself out of accord with any point in our Book of Confessions, WILL you, on your own initiative, make known to your Session the change which has taken place in your views since the assumption of these vows?
5. WILL you be diligent, with God's help, to frame and fashion yourself and your household, according to the Doctrine of Christ; and to make both yourself and your household wholesome examples and patterns to the flock of Christ?
6. DO you approve of the form of government and discipline of this church, in conformity with the general principles of biblical polity?
7. DO you promise subjection to your brethren in the Lord, unto whom is committed the charge and government over you; following with a glad mind and will their godly admonitions, and submitting yourselves to their godly judgments?

Following the administration of Ruling Elder vows, the officiant will address the congregation, stating,

- And to the congregation, I call on you to receive this elder in the Lord. Heed his instruction and follow his example, as he must give an account for you, that he may do so with joy and not with grief.
- If you promise and covenant to do so, then receive him now and renew your own membership vows with a hearty "Amen."

B. ADDITIONAL VOWS TO BE TAKEN BY TEACHING ELDERS:

1. WILL you instruct the people committed to your charge; and to teach nothing as necessary to eternal salvation, but that which may be concluded and proved by the Scripture?
2. WILL you be diligent to read and exercise yourself in the Holy Scriptures, and call upon God by prayer for the true understanding of the same; so that you may be able by them to teach and exhort with wholesome Doctrine, and to withstand and convince the gainsayers?
3. ARE you ready, with all faithful diligence, to banish and drive away from the Church all erroneous and strange doctrine contrary to God's Word, and teach others to the same?
4. DO you promise to be zealous and faithful in maintaining the truths of the Gospel and the purity and peace and unity of the Church, whatever persecution or opposition may arise unto you on that account?

Following the administration of Teaching Elder vows, the officiant will address the congregation, stating,

- And to the congregation, I call on you to receive this teacher in the Lord, and through his ministry receive the Word of God with gladness. Heed his instruction and follow his example, as he must give an account for you, that he may do so with joy and not with grief.
- If you promise and covenant to do so, then receive him now and renew your own membership vows with a hearty "Amen."

C. ADDITIONAL VOWS TO BE TAKEN BY MINISTERS OF THE WORD AND SACRAMENT

1. WILL you give your faithful diligence always so to minister the Doctrine and Sacraments, and the Discipline of Christ, as the Lord hath

commanded, and as this Church hath received the same, so that you may shepherd the people committed to your Cure and Charge with all diligence, leading them to keep and observe the same?

2. WILL you be ready, with all faithful diligence, to use both public and private admonitions and exhortations, as well to the sick as to the whole, within your Cure and Charge, as need shall require, and occasion shall be given?

Following the administration of Minister vows, the officiant will address the congregation, stating,

- Now to the congregation, I charge you to receive this minister in the Lord, and through his ministry receive the Word of God with gladness. Let the feet of those that teach the Gospel of Peace be beautiful and pleasant to you. Heed his instruction and follow his example, as he must give an account for you, that he may do so with joy and not with grief.
- If you promise and covenant to do so, then welcome him now and renew your own membership vows with a hearty "Amen."

Once ordained, the elder or deacon will serve for life, unless he resigns or is removed.

Should the church ever be without a minister it should secure one without delay (Mt. 9:36). The elders must seek out suitable nominees as necessary. The elders will examine a nominee with regard to his doctrine, manner of life, and confessional adherence. In addition to the qualifications for elder, ministers must meet the biblical criteria for shepherd (2 Samuel 12:1ff., Ps. 23, John 10:11-16, etc.). Therefore the nominee must also preach before the congregation and submit to a public interview before the heads of households. Following this process, the elders by unanimous vote may approve the nominee as a candidate to be placed on a ballot. The electors will be asked whether or not a call to the

pastorate should be extended to him; the ballot will include an option to abstain. If the candidate is approved by election, the elders will extend a provisional call to him to be pastor. His call to be pastor is finalized only after he is duly approved by the Communion of Reformed Evangelical Churches. Following CREC approval, he may be ordained (if necessary) and installed as a pastor.

DUTIES OF ELDERS

Under Christ, the authority of the local church is the board of elders or presbyters in session. The elders are collectively responsible for ruling/shepherding (1 Pet. 5:1-2); equipping (Eph. 4:11-12); prayer/fasting (Acts 6:4; 13:1-3); teaching/preaching (1 Tim. 5:17); administering baptism and the Lord's Table (Matt. 28:19-20; 1 Cor. 11:23-26); administering church discipline and restoration (1 Cor. 5:1-5), and visiting the sick (Jas. 5:14-15).

The elders are responsible to delegate responsibilities to the deacons, hire and fire church staff, define responsibilities for church staff, delegate responsibilities to the staff of subordinate ministries, and approve the annual budget. The elders also commission or license ministerial students, and oversee the course of their training for the eldership. Under the guidance and oversight of the elders, such men may perform all the various ministerial functions of elders, participation in the rule of the church excepted.

Elder business will be conducted at the weekly meeting or at special meetings called for the purpose. The elders will rotate the responsibility of chairing meetings, and will appoint a secretary to record minutes. Individual elders are responsible for those duties delegated to them by the elders in session, as recorded in the minutes, with due regard to their gifts, abilities, and desires.

The session contains three distinct callings or offices. The first is called to a pastoral ministry of the Word, and called by us a minister or pastor (Eph. 4:11-12; 1 Pet. 5:2-4; 1 Tim. 5:17). A second is called to a didactic ministry of the Word, called by us a teacher or doctor (1 Cor. 12:28; James 3:1). A third is called to

government and rule according to the Word, called by us a ruler or ruling elder (1 Tim. 5:17; 1 Thess. 5:12-13; Heb. 13:7,17; Rom. 12:8; 1 Cor. 12:28), which function is shared by all elders. Each elder will have his calling and office acknowledged by the elders in session. In all meetings of the session of presbyters, each elder has one vote.

Elders whose assigned duties preclude them from providing for their families in the ordinary way will be compensated by the church (1 Tim. 5:17-18).

DUTIES OF DEACONS

Under the general oversight of the elders, the deacons are responsible to manage the financial, physical, social, and benevolent functions of the church. The deacons also assist the elders in worship, pastoral care, evangelism and church administration (Acts 6:2-4).

The business of the deacons will be conducted at their regular meeting, or at special meetings called for that purpose. The deacons will appoint a moderator for their meetings. The deacons will give a general report of their work at each heads of household meeting, provide a quarterly financial report to the church, and an annual report to the elders with proposals for the coming year.

Individual deacons are responsible for those duties assigned to them by the deacons, as recorded in the minutes, with due regard to their gifts and desires.

RESIGNATION OF ELDERS OR DEACONS

If an elder or deacon desires to resign or take a leave of absence, he will present a letter to the elders. At the first appropriate household meeting, the elders will notify the men of the church of their receipt of the letter. If the desire of the elder or deacon concerned is unchanged by the following heads of households meeting, the elders will issue a statement accepting the resignation, or approving the leave of absence. If the resignation is sought for reasons of moral or doctrinal irregularity, the resignation will not be a substitute for any

appropriate biblical discipline. Leaves of absence will not be granted as a form of discipline.

REMOVAL OF ELDERS AND DEACONS

If an elder believes himself to be qualified to continue in office, but two or three believers hold that he is disqualified, these two or three witnesses should request a special session of the elder board where they would be allowed to present their case (1 Tim. 5:19). If the elders unanimously decide that the case has merit, that elder, depending on the gravity of the charges and his response to the correction, will be rebuked in the presence of the heads of households (1 Tim. 5:20), or will be removed from the office of elder (1 Tim. 3:1-7; Tit. 1:5-9), or both.

While Emmanuel Reformed Church encourages her pastor(s) toward a long-term view of the ministry, in the providence of God, changes in a pastor's call to a particular church arise for both righteous and sinful reasons. In cases involving moral failures requiring disciplinary proceedings, the disciplinary process for the removal of a pastor is the same as for other officers. For cases that do not involve moral failures or disciplinary proceedings (e.g., Acts 15:33-41, Romans 15:22-33, 1 Corinthians 16:5-12), the procedure for terminating the call of a pastor, thereby dismissing him from service at Emmanuel Reformed Church, is as follows: If a pastor desires to terminate his call, he shall duly inform the session of his desire. In the case of an involuntary termination of his call, a pastor may be recommended for dismissal from service at Emmanuel Reformed Church by a unanimous vote of the session (excluding said pastor). In such a case, the pastor may have recourse to the electors by calling for a vote to either sustain his call as pastor or not (with an option to abstain). If the electors sustain his call by a two-thirds majority vote, the other elders must afterwards either concede to his call or refer the matter to the Communion of Reformed Evangelical Churches for binding arbitration.

CHURCH DISCIPLINE

The ordinary course of discipline is informal. Members are encouraged to self-discipline, overlooking the failings of others in love (1 Pet. 4:8), and encouraging other members to covenant faithfulness (Matt. 18:15).

Formal church discipline is applied through the formal action and unanimous judgment of the elders. Except in cases of scandal requiring immediate action, the pattern of church discipline will generally include formal private admonishment by two or three (Matt. 18:16), formal public admonishment and suspension from the Supper (2 Thess. 3:14-15), and a formal hearing which may result in excommunication (Matt. 18:17).

Any member may be disciplined by the church. Un-baptized children of members are subject to pastoral admonishment from the church, but not excommunication. Christians who attend church regularly, but are non-members, are subject to pastoral admonishment from the church, but not excommunication. If another church has disciplined one of its members, and that person subsequently comes to our church, the elders will ordinarily honor the discipline of the other church after due consultation with the person concerned and after all appropriate information is sought from the disciplining church.

The elders shall establish the specific procedures for all formal discipline on a case-by-case basis, as appropriate to the circumstances and individuals involved. However, at minimum these procedures should include a clear and timely warning of the individual that he is in the process of formal discipline, two or three visits or communications involving two or three witnesses, and clear records and/or minutes of the entire proceedings kept by the elders.

When the elders determine that a hearing is necessary, they will establish the specific procedures for each trial on a case-by-case basis, as appropriate to the circumstances and individuals involved. However, at minimum these procedures

should include informing the accused in writing of the specific charges, the time, place, and date of the trial, and ample time for the accused to prepare a defense.

The heads of households meeting will be informed of the hearing at the first opportunity. At the hearing, one of the elders will present a solemn charge from the Scriptures on the responsibilities of those present, the evidence against the accused will be presented, and the accused will have time to make a reasonable defense, including the right to question any witnesses.

At a separate meeting of the elders, a vote will be taken on each of the charges. The elders will declare their verdict to the congregation on an appointed Lord's Day, following an appropriate exhortation. The accused will be given a written copy of the verdict.

The elders will establish an official file containing all the records pertaining to the hearing, including all pertinent correspondence, transcripts, and minutes. If he requests it, the accused will be given one copy of this file at the expense of the church. Any appeals to presbytery will be conducted in accordance with the Constitution of the Communion of Reformed Evangelical Churches.

Excommunication will end when in the unanimous opinion of the elders the one under discipline has repented. A confession of this repentance will be read to the congregation on the Lord's Day, and the elders shall formally announce the end of the discipline and restoration of fellowship.

SUBORDINATE MINISTRIES

The elders may unanimously delegate to an individual or board the executive authority of any subordinate ministry established by the elders. This executive responsibility continues at the pleasure of the elders. In order to dismiss such an individual, or remove someone from such a board, a two-thirds vote of the elders is required. Separation of a subordinate ministry from Emmanuel Reformed Church may be authorized by a unanimous vote of the elders. All

formal actions concerning subordinate ministries will be entered in the minutes of the elders' meetings.

INCORPORATION

As a church of the Lord Jesus Christ, Emmanuel Reformed Church is not constituted or incorporated by anyone other than the Lord Jesus Christ, the only head of the church. Emmanuel Reformed Church maintains its status as an unincorporated church as a matter of conscience. As a church of the Lord Jesus Christ, Emmanuel Reformed Church accepts the various burdens and entanglements of civil regulation and taxation under protest. Emmanuel Reformed Church has constituted herself, under the authority and headship of the Lord Jesus Christ, as an association of natural persons, and recognized as such by the laws of the State of Idaho.

CREEDS AND CONFESSIONS

Emmanuel Reformed Church follows the practice of the historic, universal church by adopting creeds and confessions of faith. We do so in order to offer a public witness of the faith, to distinguish true doctrine from falsehood, to instruct future generations, and to maintain order within the household of God. By doing so we do not make any permanent law which God had not made before, nor do we form new articles for our belief; we do not give the Word of God authority, much less to make it to be his Word, nor even to make a true interpretation--for the church holds no authority over the Word of God. The Word of God is the only infallible rule of faith and practice.

Therefore, Emmanuel Reformed Church adopts the historic creeds and confessions which are set forth in its Book of Confessions as formal and abiding standards of the church's teaching and governance. In addition, Emmanuel Reformed Church may from time to time adopt occasional statements as the church deems it useful. Such occasional statements reflect the church's position

at the time they were adopted, but they carry no formal or abiding authority in the church's teaching and governance.

AFFILIATION

Emmanuel Reformed Church is a mission church of Trinity Reformed Church of the Communion of Reformed Evangelical Churches (CREC), and accepts all the constitutional requirements that come with affiliation with Trinity Reformed Church and the CREC.

AMENDMENTS

The Emmanuel Reformed Church Confession of Faith and Constitution may be amended through unanimous consent of the elders when there is a first presentation of the proposed change at the heads of households meeting, a written copy of the proposed change is made available to the congregation at church, and the elders seek due consultation with the heads of households of the church at a subsequent heads of households meeting.

We confess that this constitution is a fallible work of fallible men and, if obedience to Scripture requires it, may be set aside without the process of amendment by the unanimous judgment of the elders. Under such circumstances, the heads of households will be informed, and the constitution amended at the first opportunity.