

**THE CONSTITUTION AND BYLAWS OF
THE ORTHODOX CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH IN LANESVILLE¹**

ARTICLE I. NAME

This church is incorporated under the laws of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts with the name "Orthodox Congregational Church, in Lanesville, Gloucester, Massachusetts." It is also sometimes called "The Orthodox Congregational Church in Lanesville" or "The Lanesville Congregational Church."

ARTICLE II. LOCATION

The principal place of worship of this church and the principal office of this corporation are located on Washington Street in the Lanesville section of the City of Gloucester, Massachusetts.

ARTICLE III. STATEMENT OF FAITH

The statement of faith by which this church was organized and which it still confesses is presented in Appendix A.

ARTICLE IV. GOVERNMENT

Section 1. Principles

The government of this church is invested in the congregation of Members who compose it, and is not subject to the control of any other ecclesiastical body. Nevertheless, this church recognizes the obligations and privileges of mutual counsel and cooperation with all other churches truly and without reservation recognizing Jesus Christ as Redeemer and Lord. See also Article XI.

Section 2. Denominational Affiliation

In keeping with the principles stated above, this church maintains an active membership in the Conservative Congregational Christian Conference.

ARTICLE V. MEMBERSHIP

Section 1. Qualifications for Membership

The Elders shall recommend a candidate to the congregation for Membership if and only if the candidate gives satisfactory evidence of having put his trust in Jesus Christ as his Lord and personal Savior; is in substantial agreement with the statement of faith presented in Appendix A; has received Christian baptism; pledges to support this church, as God enables him, by his

¹ As adopted 1/1976 and amended 1/1982, 1/1983, 1/1985, 10/1987, 10/1991, 10/1993, 10/1996 and 10/2017.

active participation, prayers, and offerings; and has passed his seventeenth birthday. A candidate from another church must present a satisfactory letter of dismissal or transfer of membership from his previous church.

The procedure for becoming a Member is set forth in the Bylaws, Article I.

Section 2. Associate Membership

- a. Children of a Member or an Associate Member are received into Associate Membership of this church by means of the Ordinance of Baptism.
- b. Young persons under the age of seventeen who make a confession of faith and accept Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior may request the Ordinance of Baptism and the privilege of Associate Membership.
- c. Children who have been baptized, whose parent or parents are received into Membership in this church, shall be received into Associate Membership in this church.
- d. Associate Membership for children as provided above shall remain valid only until such children reach their twenty-first birthday. Children who have passed their seventeenth birthday may apply for Membership in accordance with Section 1 above.
- e. Persons living temporarily in the area who are members of another church, but who wish to have fellowship with this church during such period, may apply for Associate Membership. Such persons shall meet the requirement of Section 1 above, and the procedure shall be as provided in the Bylaws, Article I, except that no letter from the candidate's home church will be required.
- f. The Elders shall oversee the procedures for acceptance into Associate Membership as indicated above and shall have the authority to terminate the Associate Membership of any member by a majority vote either on the ground that the member has moved from the area, or on the ground that the member no longer appears to have a meaningful interest in this church.
- g. Persons granted Associate Membership shall be entitled to all the rights and privileges of this church except the right to vote, to hold elective office, or to be elected to a board. They may, however, be elected or appointed to any committees, implying the right to vote in those committees.

Section 3. Membership in Absentia

Members or Associate Members who move away from the area but who wish to retain their membership may do so by requesting the Elders in writing for the status of Member or Associate Member in Absentia.

Section 4. Annual Pledge of Commitment

Annually the Elders shall make inquiry of all Members. Associate Members (except children under seventeen years of age), Members in Absentia and Associate Members in Absentia concerning their continued faith in Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior, and continued interest in supporting this church. Such inquiries shall be sent by first class mail to the address on record and shall include a self-addressed card or envelope and letter for reply.

Should such a member choose not to respond to the annual inquiry, or should the member fail to respond for whatever cause, apart from ill health, after two successive annual inquiries, his membership shall be terminated, but only after due notice, and after faithful efforts have been made to bring the member to amendment in accordance with the law of Christ (Matthew 18:15–17).

Section 5. Voluntary Termination of Membership

Members of any status may have their membership terminated by written request to the Elders stating the reason for the desired termination. If the reason for termination is to join another church, the Elders shall supply a letter describing the membership status of the person and his standing in the church.

When termination of membership is granted by the Elders, notice of the fact shall be given at a Lord's Day Morning Worship Service.

Section 6. Dismissal for Cause

Should a member become an offense to the church by reason of immoral or unchristian conduct, or by a public statement that he is no longer in substantial accord with the statement of faith of this church as set forth in Appendix A, the congregation, on recommendation of the Elders may censure such member, suspend him, or terminate his membership by a two-thirds vote at a duly called meeting; but only after due notice and a hearing, and after faithful efforts have been made to bring the member to amendment in accordance with the law of Christ (Matthew 18: 15–17).

The Membership of no person shall be terminated for cause at the meeting in which the recommendation for such action is first made and without giving the person the opportunity for a full hearing after being notified of the intended action.

Section 7. Duties and Rights of Membership

Members and Associate Members are expected to be faithful in all spiritual duties essential to the Christian life, to exercise their Spiritual gifts for the edification of the church, "as good stewards of God's varied grace" (1 Peter 4:10f.), to attend regularly the services of this church as they are able (Hebrews 10:25), and to give regularly for its support and charities.

Only Members have the right to vote in the transactions of the church or to hold elective office or to be elected to a church board.

The ownership of all assets of the Corporation, of whatever kind, shall be considered to be equally proportioned among only the Members on the date any such division is considered or effected.

ARTICLE VI. ELECTED OFFICERS

The officers of this church to be elected by the congregation shall be a Moderator, a Clerk, a Treasurer, and an Assistant Treasurer. Only Members may serve as elected officers of this church.

The officers shall be elected by ballot at the Annual Meeting and shall serve for one year and until their successors are chosen and qualified. In case a vacancy occurs in any office a replacement may be elected at a special meeting of the congregation, the notice for which shall include mention of the proposed election.

The duties of each of the elected officers are described in the Bylaws, Article II.

ARTICLE VII. CHURCH BOARDS AND COMMITTEES

Section I. Election

Members of the following boards and committees, except the Pastors and Associate Pastors, shall be elected by the congregation at the Annual Meeting: Board of Elders, Board of Deacons, and The Committee on Christian Missions.

Members of boards shall be Members of this church and shall be elected for terms of up to three years (to allow for staggering of terms) and following two successive terms shall be ineligible for re-election for one year.

Members of elected committees shall be either Members or Associate Members of this church, provided that a majority of any committee are Members. Members of such committees shall be elected for one year terms and following six successive terms shall be ineligible for re-election for one year.

No person shall be nominated for re-election to a board or committee who has failed to attend half or more of its properly scheduled meetings during the previous year without a justifiable cause.

In case a vacancy occurs on any board or elected committee, a replacement may be elected at a special meeting of the congregation, the notice for which includes mention of the proposed election.

Members of the Committee on Christian Missions may be appointed between Annual Meetings upon recommendation of the majority of elected members of that Committee and approval by majorities of the Board of Elders and Board of Deacons.

Election, or appointment, to a Committee for a term of less than one year shall be counted as a term of a full year in determining eligibility for re-election.

Section 2. Board of Elders

a. Pastors

Included among the Elders are the Pastors. (cf. 1 Peter 5:2f.). Pastors are designated in the Scriptures by various names which emphasize the varying responsibilities entrusted to them. Only in Ephesians 4: 11 are they called pastors (or shepherds) as those who are responsible for feeding the flock of God with spiritual food. Because the means of this feeding is primarily teaching, in the same verse, and elsewhere (cf. 1 Timothy 3:2) they are called teachers. As those who exercises oversight of the flock of God, they are called bishops, or overseers (cf. Titus 1 :5-9). And as those who are to be temperate, worthy of respect, wise, prudent, examples to the flock, and leaders over the household of God, they are termed elders, or presbyters (cf. Titus 2:2, but regarding age, cf. 1 Timothy 4: 12).

Pastors are to be chosen and called by the church in accordance with the Bylaws, Article III, whenever a vacancy occurs.

The duties of a Pastor are to become a member of the church as soon as possible, to exercise oversight of the spiritual life of the church and particularly to teach the Word, exhorting the brethren and refuting those who contradict it (cf. Titus 1 :9), and to administer the sacraments.

A Pastor, in addition to being an Elder, shall be a member ex officio of all boards and committees elected by the congregation. He may call a meeting of the congregation at any time when it may seem advisable. A Pastor may have his membership terminated for cause or for the well-being of the church. The procedure shall be as described under Article V, Section 6 above. Upon termination of his membership, a Pastor shall resign the pulpit forthwith.

In the event that there is no Pastor, or if the sole Pastor should be incapacitated and unable to serve, the Chairman of the Board of Elders shall assume such duties of a Pastor as may be appropriate. Should the Chairman be unable or unwilling to serve, then another Elder elected by the Board of Elders shall serve in lieu of the Chairman.

b. Associate Pastors

From time to time the Elders may sense the need to call a less experienced person to join the staff in a position with the title Associate Pastor. A person called to serve in this role must embody all the Biblical requirements for Pastors as described above, and may also be called on to fulfill all the duties of a Pastor as described above, including administering the sacraments.

An Associate Pastor is not a member ex officio of boards and committees elected by the congregation.

c. Ruling Elders

The Scriptures teach that there is to be a plurality of elders in the local church (e.g. Acts 14:23, 20:17; Titus 1:5; James 5:14). Furthermore, such a passage as I Timothy 5:17, “let the elders who rule well be considered worthy of double honor, especially those who labor in preaching and teaching,” indicates that there is to be a distinction between those elders whose responsibility includes teaching (that is, “pastors”) and those elders who simply rule. Hereafter where appropriate this latter group will be distinguished by the term “ruling Elders” so that the Board of Elders is made up of the Pastors together with the ruling Elders.

The Board of Elders shall consist of at least four Members, not including the Pastors or any Life Elders.

Suggestive qualifications for Elders are set forth in Appendix B.

The duty of the Elders is to be responsible for the spiritual well-being of the church (cf. 1 Peter 5 :2f.). In particular, they shall exercise oversight of all the services of this church. They shall be responsible for the selection of any guest preachers, the form of worship services, and the proper administration both of church discipline and of the sacraments. As a special responsibility, the Elders shall be available for prayer (James 5:14), the laying on of hands (1 Timothy 4:14), and the anointing with oil (James 5:14) in ministering to the sick, in the commissioning of the brethren to various ministries (1 Timothy 4:14), and on such other occasions as are deemed appropriate.

Section 3. Board of Deacons

The Scriptures suggest that in addition to elders in the local church, where needed there are also to be deacons (cf. Philippians 1:1 and 1 Timothy 3:8–13). To judge from Acts 6:1–6 the office of deacon arose in the early church in order to free the leaders of the church at Jerusalem to devote themselves to their spiritual responsibilities—and so the Diaconate is to be responsible more for the material well-being of the church (though perhaps not too sharp a distinction between spiritual and material should be drawn in the light of Acts 11 :30).

The Board of Deacons, also called more simply “the Diaconate”, shall consist of at least six Members, excluding any Life Deacons, and among whom shall be at least one ruling Elder. Pastors and the Treasurer are ex officio members of the Diaconate.

Suggestive qualifications for the Diaconate are set forth in Appendix C.

The duty of the Diaconate in this church is to be responsible for the physical well-being of the church, that is, to minister and care for the physical needs of the brethren and to oversee the

use of and maintain, or improve as needed, all properties of the church. The Diaconate shall have charge, under the direction of the church, of its financial and business affairs and will authorize and direct the Treasurer as to the payment of moneys under their control accordingly.

Special responsibilities of the Diaconate include:

- a. responsibility for expressions of hospitality to the brethren and to any special guests (including needed accommodations, coffee hours, and so on);
- b. assist Elders in the preparation and serving of the Lord's Supper;
- c. collect tithes and offerings, appointing and supervising any ushers or greeters as desired;
- d. have custody and oversight of the disbursement of funds set apart for the relief of the poor;
- e. visit and minister to the prisoners, the sick, the infirm, and any other afflicted brethren;
- f. care for the property of the church and so to appoint or hire a sexton as needed.

Section 4. Elected Committees

The number of members, the qualifications, and the duties of The Committee on Christian Missions shall be found in the Bylaws, Article IV.

The number of members; the qualifications, and the duties of the Nominating Committee shall be found in the Bylaws, Article V.

Section 5. Appointed Committees

The Elders, the Diaconate, or any elected committee may from time to time appoint ad hoc committees as needed. Members may be either Members or Associate Members and their appointments shall be only up to a year's length. No person shall be appointed for more than six successive terms.

Section 6. Life Elders and Deacons

Any Member who has passed his sixty-fifth birthday and has served at least twelve years as an Elder or Deacon, shall be eligible for election as a Life Elder or Deacon as appropriate.

The procedure for nomination and election are set forth in the Bylaws Article VI.

Election shall be for life. Life Elders and Deacons may at their option participate in the activities of the respective boards except that they may not be elected to be Chairman of such board.

Section 7. Operating Rules for Boards and Committees

Operating Rules for boards and committees are set forth in the Bylaws Article VII.

ARTICLE VIII. SUPERINTENDENT OF THE CHURCH SCHOOL

The Superintendent of the Church School shall be appointed by a Pastor, as deemed appropriate, and have general oversight and direction of the Church School, appoint teachers, appoint a Treasurer for the Church School, and make a report at the Annual Meeting of the church.

ARTICLE IX. MEETINGS

Section 1. Public Worship Services

Public services for worship shall be held stately on the Lord's Day, and at any other times a Pastor or the Board of Elders deem advisable.

Section 2. The Annual Meeting

The Annual Meeting of the congregation shall be held on the next to last Sunday of October in each year. Notice of the meeting, prepared by the Clerk, shall be read publicly at the Morning Worship Service on the two Lord's Days immediately preceding the meeting.

A quorum shall consist of fifteen Members which shall be competent to transact business. Should there fail to be a quorum, the Moderator shall designate an alternative date, prior to Advent, for the Annual Meeting. Notice of this rescheduled Annual Meeting shall be read by the Clerk at the Morning Worship Service on the Lord's Day immediately preceding the meeting.

An agenda for the meeting is set forth in the Bylaws, Article VIII.

Section 3. Special Business Meeting

Special business meetings may be called by the Clerk upon written request of a Pastor or upon written request of any five Members specifying the object of the meeting, which notice shall be read at the Lord's Day Morning Worship Service immediately preceding the proposed meeting.

A quorum shall consist of fifteen Members which shall be competent to transact business.

ARTICLE X. THE SACRAMENTS

The Lord's Supper shall ordinarily be celebrated on the first Lord's Day in each month, and at such other times as the Elders deem appropriate.

The church's policy with respect to the proper meaning and recipients for the sacraments of baptism and Lord's Supper is set forth in Appendix D.

ARTICLE XI. RECOURSE TO ADMONITION AND ARBITRATION FROM SISTER CHURCHES

Following the scriptural (Acts 15) and wise counsel of historic Reformed Congregationalism (as set forth in “The Cambridge Platform of 1648”), we agree that in the event of any irresolvable conflict which may threaten to undermine the peace of Christ’s church here at Lanesville, we will seek the counsel of sister churches of like faith in a duly called synod (vicinage council) comprised of elders or appointed representatives of said sister churches. And we agree to receive any admonition and to be bound by any judgment from such a synod designed to bring peace to our fellowship which is within the limits of authority specified by our church, but not in violation of our church’s Constitution and Bylaws nor in contradiction of the explicit testimony of Scripture.

Such a synod may be called by a simple majority vote of Members at a duly called congregational meeting (Article IX, Sections 2 and 3). All Members are to be directly notified at least two weeks in advance of the congregational meeting indicating the nature of the appeal to be made.

At the congregational meeting the following matters are to be decided by simple majority votes:

- a. The specific appeal to be made to the synod.
- b. The precise limits of authority to be conferred on the synod.
- c. The particular sister churches of like faith to be invited to comprise the synod.

In the event that at said congregational meeting the request to call a synod fails to receive a majority vote, then any group of Members, comprising not less than one-third of the total number of Members, may present a written and signed petition to the Elders covering items a., b. and c. above with adequate supporting information. Based on such a petition, the Elders may, at their discretion, proceed to call such a synod. Otherwise the Elders must call a Special Business Meeting in the manner provided in Article IX, Section 3 to again consider the calling of a synod, and if at such a meeting the vote for a synod again fails to obtain a majority, and if following said meeting at least one-third of the Members support in writing the original petition, the Elders shall then proceed forthwith to call such a synod.

A quorum at the synod will consist of representatives from two thirds of the churches invited to participate. Assigning one vote to each church represented, such a quorum will be competent to transact any business within the precise limits of authority prescribed.

For general matters of controversy it will be adequate to define “like faith” as those brethren who profess Evangelical faith, that is, those brethren who would adhere to the great Ecumenical creeds of the early church along with confessing a belief in the inerrancy of Scripture and the necessity of regeneration (this would be true, in general, for any churches

adhering to the Statement of Faith of the National Association of Evangelicals, the Lausanne Covenant, or the Statement of Faith of the Conservative Congregational Christian Conference).

For matters of doctrinal controversy, “like faith” will more narrowly be restricted to those brethren who are also in substantial agreement with our own church’s Statement of Faith. (This would be true, in general, for any churches adhering to the historic confessions of Reformed faith, such as the Savoy Declaration of Faith, the Westminster Standards, the Heidelberg Catechism, the Belgic Confession, or the Canons of Dort.)

In general, sister churches of like faith ought to be sought first among the churches of Cape Ann and also among churches in the Conservative Congregational Christian Conference in our proximity—in other words, among those churches with whom we enjoy a measure of ongoing fellowship and mutual esteem.

ARTICLE XII. AMENDMENTS

This Constitution, including its appendices, may be amended at an Annual Meeting or at a special meeting of the church by a two-thirds vote of the Members present. A clear statement of the proposed amendments shall be posted on the church bulletin board at least seven days before the meeting, and earlier if practicable. Mention of such posting shall be included in the call of the meeting read at the Lord’s Day service prior to the meeting.

The Bylaws may be amended by a vote of a joint meeting of the Elders and Diaconate subject to review and possible veto by a majority vote of the congregation at the Annual Meeting or at a special business meeting. The procedure for amending the Bylaws is set forth in the Bylaws, Article IX.

APPENDIX A: STATEMENT OF FAITH

The following statement of faith was affirmed and adopted by this church on the day of her organization, August 25, 1830, and herein unchanged is reaffirmed.

I.

We believe that there is but one God, the Creator, Preserver, and Moral Governor of the Universe; a Being of infinite power, knowledge, wisdom, justice, goodness, and truth; the self-existent, independent, and immutable fountain of good.

II.

We believe that the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments were given by inspiration of God; that they are profitable for doctrine, for correction, for reproof, and for instruction in righteousness; and that they are our only rule of doctrinal belief and religious practice.

III.

We believe that the mode of the divine existence is such as lays a foundation for a distinction into three persons: the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost; and that these three are one in essence, and equal in power and glory.

IV.

We believe that God has made all things for Himself; that known unto Him are all His works from the beginning; and that He governs all things according to the counsel of His own will.

V.

We believe that the divine law and the principles and administration of the divine government are perfectly holy, just, and good; and that all rational beings are bound to approve of them as such.

VI.

We believe that God, at first, created man in His own image, in a state of rectitude and holiness; and that he fell from that state by transgressing the divine command in the article of forbidden fruit.

VII.

We believe that, in consequence of the apostasy, the heart of man, in his natural state, is destitute of holiness and in a state of positive disaffection with the law, character, and government of God; and that all men previous to regeneration are dead in trespasses and sins.

VIII.

We believe that Christ, the Son of God, has by His obedience, sufferings, and death, made atonement for sin; that He is the only Redeemer of sinners; and that all who are saved will be altogether indebted to the grace and mercy of God for their salvation.

IX.

We believe that, although the invitations of the gospel are such that whosoever will may come and take of the water of life freely, the depravity of the human heart is such that no man will come to Christ, except the Father, by the special and efficacious influences of His Spirit, draw him.

X.

We believe that those who embrace the gospel were chosen in Christ before the foundation of the world, that they should be holy and without blame before Him in love; and that they are saved, not by works of righteousness which they have done, but according to the distinguishing mercy of God, through sanctification of the Spirit, and belief of the truth.

XI.

We believe that those who cordially embrace Christ, though they may be left to commit sin, will never be left finally to fall away and perish; but will be kept by the power of God, through faith, unto salvation.

XII.

We believe that watchfulness over the life, holy meditation, a conscientious attention upon public, family, and secret worship, together with the steady practice of righteousness, truth, sincerity, and charity towards man, and of sobriety, chastity, and temperance towards ourselves, are the indispensable duties of every Christian.

XIII.

We believe that there will be a general resurrection of the bodies, both of the just and of the unjust.

XIV.

We believe that all mankind must one day stand before the judgment-seat of Christ, to receive a just and final sentence of retribution according to the deeds done in the body; that, at the day of judgment, the state of all will be unalterably fixed, and that the punishment of the wicked and the happiness of the righteous will be endless.

XV.

We believe that Christ has a visible church in the world, into which none in the sight of God but real believers, and none in the sight of man but visible believers have right of admission.

XVI.

We believe that the sacraments of the New Testament are baptism and the Lord's Supper; that believers in regular church standing only can consistently partake of the Lord's Supper; and that visible believers and their households only can consistently be admitted to the ordinance of baptism.²

² For a further discussion of the sacraments see Appendix D.

APPENDIX B: QUALIFICATIONS FOR ELDERS

The following qualifications are taken from 1 Timothy 3:1–7, Titus 1:6–9, James 5:14, and 1 Peter 5: 1–4. It will be noted that these qualifications are written with reference to men; however, it is to be understood that they apply to women as well, making any appropriate changes. (Note that in Romans 16:1 the masculine term “deacon” is applied to the woman Phoebe. This fact taken together with the principle that in Christ, and hence in the church, there is now no more male and female, constitute the bulk of New Testament warrant for the inclusion of women into both the office of deacon as well as that of elder. These qualifications are to be understood as suggestive and ideal and therefore should be applied with faith in the God who is able to equip for every good work and word tempered with Christian forgiveness and charity toward a prospective candidate.

- a. “Now an overseer must be above reproach,
- b. the husband of but one wife,³
- c. temperate,
- d. self-controlled,
- e. respectable,
- f. hospitable,
- g. able to teach,
- h. not given to much wine,⁴
- i. not violent but gentle,
- j. not quarrelsome,
- k. not a lover of money.
- l. He must manage his own family well and see that his children obey him with proper respect. If anyone does not know how to manage his own family, how can he take care of God’s church?
- m. He must not be a recent convert, or he may become conceited and fall under the same judgment as the devil.
- n. He must also have a good reputation with outsiders, so that he will not fall into disgrace and into the devil’s trap.”

³ That is, monogamous. Also implies faithfulness, see 1 Timothy 5:9.

⁴ That is, not a drunkard.

- o. “An elder must be blameless...
- p. a man whose children believe and are not open to the charge of being wild and disobedient...
- q. not overbearing,
- r. not quick tempered...
- s. not pursuing dishonest gain.
- t. Rather he must be ... one who loves what is good...
- u. upright,
- v. holy,
- w. disciplined.
- x. He must hold firmly to the trustworthy message as it has been taught, so that he can encourage others by sound doctrine and refute those who oppose it.”
- y. He should be able and available to pray for the sick.
- z. “To the elders among you, I appeal as a fellow elder, a witness of Christ’s sufferings and one who will also share in the glory to be revealed: Tend the flock of God that is under your care, serving as overseers—not because you must, but because you are willing, as God wants you to be...”

APPENDIX C: QUALIFICATIONS FOR THE DIACONATE

The following qualifications are taken from Acts 6:3 and 1 Timothy 3:8–13. It will be noted that these qualifications are written with reference to men; however, they are to be understood as applying to women as well, making any appropriate changes (cf. Romans 16:1). These qualifications are suggestive and ideal and therefore are to be applied with faith in the God who equips for every good work and word as well as Christian forgiveness and charity toward a prospective candidate.

- a. They should be “men of good repute,
- b. full of the Spirit,
- c. and of wisdom...”
- d. “Deacons likewise must be worthy of respect,
- e. sincere,
- f. not indulging in much wine,
- g. and not pursuing dishonest gain.
- h. They must keep hold of the deep truths of the faith with a clear conscience.
- i. They must first be tested; and then if there is nothing against them, let them serve as deacons.
- j. In the same way, their wives are to be women worthy of respect, not malicious talkers but temperate and trustworthy in everything.
- k. A deacon must be the husband of but one wife
- l. and must manage his children and his household well.”

APPENDIX D: THE SACRAMENTS

Section 1. The Sacrament of Baptism

Baptism, corresponding especially to circumcision in the Old Testament, is an initiatory oath-sign* ordained and instituted by Christ for His Church.

Being initiatory, baptism is to be administered by the church at its earliest possible opportunity to those who are for the first time either voluntarily (as generally in the case of adults) or involuntarily (as generally in the case of the infants and young children of believers) coming under the covenantal demands of the Lord Jesus Christ. For this reason, baptism marks an individual's entrance into the visible Church of Christ, which properly includes only believers and their households.

Being an oath-sign, baptism symbolically portrays the two radical alternative judgments in which the New Covenant can issue. On the one hand, it portrays our own personal and well deserved judgment as in an eternal deluge (cf. 1 Peter 3:20f.) for "if we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us." Yet as a portrayal of this judgment, baptism is not merely a vivid reminder of our sin, but it is also consequently a solemn invitation, an oath inviting the Lord of the Covenant to execute His righteous judgment against our covenantal faithlessness. Because of this, baptism is for adults an expression of active commitment to the Lord, even as it is for the children of believers an expression of passive consecration.

On the other hand, by God's infinite grace, baptism also portrays a second judgment: the redemptive judgment of Jesus Christ's death upon the cross, the suffering and death which God accepts as the full payment for the sins of all those who unite themselves to Christ by faith, the judgment which our Lord Jesus Himself called, His "baptism" (Mark 10:38). It is this second portrayal of judgment which allows baptism not only to be a fitting symbol of the curse of the Covenant, but also of its blessing, for the blessing of God's elect is the glorious outcome of the accursed death of the Savior.

Because of this understanding of baptism, it is the policy of this church to encourage and to administer baptism to unbaptized adults at their first profession of faith in Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord, signifying entrance into the visible Church of Christ. As an expression of that same entrance, in general newly baptized adults are to be received into the membership of this church in keeping with the policies set forth in Article V of the Constitution and Article I of the Bylaws.

In the case of infants and young children, it is the policy of this church to encourage and administer baptism to a child only when at least one parent (or legal guardian) makes a credible confession of faith and is in fact in a position of authority over the child where he is

both able and earnestly desires to bring the demands of the New Covenant in Christ to bear upon his child. In general, it will also be required that the parent be a member of this church and so be in a position to benefit from the full ministry of this church (including prayer, teaching, encouragement, worship, and so on) in bringing to bear these demands on his child. Accordingly, as an expression of the entrance into the visible Church of Christ signified by baptism, newly baptized children are to be received into the membership of this church in keeping with the policies of Article V, Section 2 of the Constitution.

As those entrusted with the spiritual welfare of this church and to be held responsible for the decent and orderly conduct of its services (cf. 1 Corinthians 14:40), the Elders shall have oversight of the examination and instruction of candidates and the administration of the sacrament of baptism.

Section 2. The Sacrament of Communion

Communion, or the Lord's Supper, corresponding especially to the Passover Meal in the Old Testament (cf. Luke 22:15), is a covenant renewing oath-sign* ordained and instituted by Christ for His Church.⁵

Being covenant renewing, Communion is to be administered by the church only to those who have been baptized and have already come under the covenantal demands of the Lord Jesus Christ—whether voluntarily (as generally in the case of believing adults) or involuntarily (as generally in the case of the children of believing parents). Also, being covenant renewing, Communion is to be administered frequently in keeping with the need of God's people to renew their vows of obedience and love to Christ and love to the brethren.

Being an oath-sign, the partaking of Communion symbolically portrays the two radical alternative judgments in which the New Covenant can issue. On the one hand, it portrays our own personal and well deserved judgment of divine abandonment as so much food into the mouths of our enemies (even as the Passover Meal was an emphatic reminder of the well-deserved, though avoided judgment of Israel's first born) for "if we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not is us." Yet as a portrayal of this judgment, Communion is not merely a vivid reminder of our sin, but it is also consequently a solemn invitation, an oath inviting the Lord of the Covenant to execute His righteous judgment against our covenantal faithlessness (cf. 1 Corinthians 11 :27-32). Because of this, Communion is for adults an expression of a renewed active commitment to the Lord, even as it is for the children of believers an expression of renewed passive consecration.

⁵ Put most simply, an "oath-sign" is a symbolic, as opposed to a spoken, oath. Perhaps the best known "secular" oath-sign is when a child "crosses his heart" as a way of showing the judgment he invites upon himself—namely death—should his word prove false. The meaning of baptism and Communion as oath-signs is discussed above.

On the other hand, by God's infinite grace, Communion also portrays a second judgment: the redemptive judgment of Jesus Christ's death upon the cross, the suffering and death which God accepts as the full payment for the sins of all those who unite themselves to Christ by faith—indeed “Christ, our paschal lamb has been sacrificed” (1 Corinthians 5:7). It is this second portrayal of judgment which allows Communion not only to be a fitting symbol of the curse of the Covenant but also of its blessing, for the blessing of God's elect is the glorious outcome of the accursed death of the Savior. In particular, as a symbol of blessing the Communion meal especially emphasizes that joyful fellowship of peace which we have in Christ both with God and with the brethren, even as it foreshadows that day when we will at last “sit at table with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the Kingdom of Heaven” (Matthew 8: 11), with Christ at the head.

In keeping with this understanding of Communion it is the policy of this church, after a call to self-examination (1 Corinthians 11:28), to encourage and to invite to table any and all baptized believers, regardless of church membership, provided that the church has not explicitly excommunicated the professing believer in obedience to 1 Corinthians 5: 11.

In the case of young children, it is the policy of this church in imitation of the Passover (Exodus 12) to invite believing parents at their discretion to personally administer Communion to their baptized children and when appropriate to instruct their children in its proper meaning and use, and to encourage them in holy self-examination. It is to be understood that Paul's insistence upon self-examination ought not to be construed as excluding the very young from the Lord's Table any more than did the similar insistence of Isaiah (chapter 1) exclude the very young of Israel from the Passover.

Children who have not made a public confession of faith, as is required, for example, in becoming a Member of the church, will not be served Communion when they are not accompanied by their believing parent(s).

As those entrusted with the spiritual welfare of this church and to be held responsible for the decent and orderly conduct of its services (cf. 1 Corinthians 14:40), the Elders shall have oversight of the administration of the sacrament of Communion.

BYLAWS

ARTICLE I. PROCEDURE FOR ADMISSION TO MEMBERSHIP

A candidate for admission to membership in this church, except as hereinafter provided, shall first attend a membership class and then be examined by a Pastor, or if there is no Pastor at the time by an Elder. Upon recommendation by a Pastor, or Elder as appropriate, the candidate shall then be examined by the Board of Elders.

If upon examination the Elders decide to recommend the candidate for admission, his name shall be read from the pulpit at two successive Lord's Day services and simultaneously his name and address shall be posted on the church bulletin board. If no adverse report concerning the candidate is received by an Elder within five days following the second reading, then the candidate shall be eligible to be received into membership and given the right hand of fellowship at the next or a subsequent Communion service.

In the event that an adverse report is received as provided above, the matter shall be considered by a meeting of the Elders and resolved by a majority vote of those present. Before a candidate is denied membership because of an adverse report he shall be appraised of this report and given an opportunity to appear before the Elders in person.

Candidates recommended for membership shall have been baptized before being received into membership. If a candidate has received a valid baptism either as an infant or as an adult, he shall not be required to be re-baptized. If a candidate has not been baptized, he shall be baptized either before or as a part of the service during which he is received into membership.

ARTICLE II. DUTIES OF ELECTED OFFICES

Section 1. Moderator

The Moderator shall preside over all business meetings of the congregation including the Annual Meeting.

Section 2. Clerk

The Clerk shall keep a complete record of the transactions at all business meetings of the church, which shall be read for approval at the next following special meeting or regular business meeting. He shall keep a register of the church members, noting their status, with the date of their reception, termination, or death, and a record of all baptisms. He shall keep on file all correspondence, all official reports, and keep all other valuable papers of the church. The Clerk shall be sworn as required by the laws of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts.

Section 3. Treasurer

The Treasurer shall receive and hold all funds of the church, except offerings and gifts designated for the Committee on Christian Missions, the Church School, Young People's Societies, and any other organization affiliated with the church which has the permission of the congregation to receive offerings and gifts in their own behalf and to elect treasurers to handle such funds. He shall forward the amounts collected for special objects and pay out the remainder upon the order of the church, or of any person or committee or board authorized by the church, and all checks drawn by him shall be in the name of the church. He shall make an annual written report of his receipts and expenditures, and present the same at the Annual Meeting of the congregation.

Section 4. Assistant Treasurer

The Assistant Treasurer shall assist the Treasurer in his duties. He shall have full authority to transact the business of the church in the absence of the Treasurer. The Treasurer shall be deemed absent upon receipt of notice by the Assistant Treasurer giving the period of such absence, or if the Treasurer is absent without notice from his regular address for a period of one week and his whereabouts is unknown.

ARTICLE III. SELECTION OF PASTORS AND ASSOCIATE PASTORS

Section 1. Pastors

When a vacancy occurs, or is anticipated, in the office of Pastor, the Elders shall immediately appoint a Pastoral Selection Committee consisting of three or more Members.

It shall be the first duty of the above committee to hold a meeting of the congregation to consider the qualifications which they should seek in a new Pastor.

The Committee should next make a canvass of available candidates and examine their qualifications. If feasible the Committee, or chosen representatives, should visit the promising candidates in their present pastorates. Where a candidate does not have a pastorate, and a visit to Gloucester is feasible for him, he should be invited to visit the Selection Committee. When it appears desirable the Committee, if approved by the Elders, may invite such candidate to occupy the pulpit on a convenient Lord's Day. Upon completion of their canvass, the Committee should report their findings to a joint meeting of the Elders, Diaconate, and elected officers and make recommendation of their choice or choices.

The above joint meeting shall by majority vote of those present decide which if any of the candidates recommended should be invited to come and teach and meet the congregation, or to direct that further search should be made for a Pastor. The Selection Committee at the direction of the Elders shall extend such invitation or invitations and be responsible for any necessary arrangements.

In general, it is recommended that no more than one candidate at a time be presented to the congregation for consideration. As soon as feasible after the candidate, or candidates as appropriate, has appeared before the congregation, a special meeting of the congregation shall be held and a vote taken whether or not to call a candidate to the church.

Should the first candidate called decline then another candidate should be called or searched for and called until an acceptance is obtained.

During the interim between Pastors, the Elders may engage an available pastor, seminary student, or layman to conduct the services. Such person should not be a candidate for a call as Pastor and should be called "Interim Speaker".

Section 2. Associate Pastors

When the Elders sense the need to call an Associate Pastor, a candidate may be recommended to the congregation by a two-thirds majority vote of the Joint Boards of Elders and Deacons.

In general, it is recommended that no more than one candidate at a time be presented to the congregation for consideration. As soon as feasible after the candidate, or candidates as appropriate, has appeared before the congregation, a special meeting of the congregation shall be held and a vote taken whether or not to call a candidate to the church.

Should the first candidate called decline then another candidate should be called or searched for and called until an acceptance is obtained.

ARTICLE IV. THE COMMITTEE ON CHRISTIAN MISSIONS

The Committee on Christian Missions shall consist of five or more members which shall include at least one ruling Elder, one member of the Diaconate, and one Pastor, ex officio. All meetings of the Committee shall be open to all Members and Associate Members of the church.

The Committee on Christian Missions shall have charge of all funds collected or given to the church for home or foreign missions, and for Christian education. They shall determine which missions and programs shall be supported, inform the church regularly of the progress of these works, and provide missionary conferences and programs to acquaint the church with the needs of the mission field.

In selecting projects or persons for support, preference shall be given to those whose principal concern is to spread the Gospel of Jesus Christ, whereas works of charity which are deemed worthy of our support are to be referred to the Diaconate for separate funding.

The Committee on Christian Missions, working with the Elders, shall also have primary oversight of the formal evangelistic ministry of our church. It will be their responsibility to

evaluate, encourage and organize, as needed, intentional evangelistic efforts within and beyond our local community.

ARTICLE V. THE NOMINATING COMMITTEE

The Nominating Committee shall consist of the Elders, the Moderator, the Chairman of the Board of Deacons. and the Chairman of the Committee on Christian Missions. They shall meet prior to the Annual Meeting to nominate persons for election at the Annual Meeting.

In the event there is a vacancy of any elective office or in the membership of any board or committee named in the Constitution, Article VII, Section 1, a Pastor may convene the Nominating Committee in a special meeting to select a nominee to stand for special election to fill such vacancy.

The work of the Nominating Committee shall not be such as to abridge the right of any Member of the church to make additional nominations at the Annual Meeting or at a special meeting.

ARTICLE VI. PROCEDURE FOR ELECTING LIFE ELDERS AND DEACONS

Any five Members may nominate any eligible person for Life Elder or Deacon. Election shall be by ballot at the Annual Meeting immediately following nomination. Such nomination shall be submitted to the Moderator at least one week prior to the Annual Meeting and direct that the meeting be polled by ballot. An affirmative vote by two-thirds of the members present shall be required for election.

ARTICLE VII. OPERATING RULES FOR BOARDS AND COMMITTEES

All boards and committees shall organize each year following the Annual Meeting and shall elect a Chairman and a Clerk in addition to such other officers as may be desirable and appropriate.

The Chairman shall preside at meetings and serve as an executive officer. In the absence of the Chairman, a Chairman Pro Tempore shall be elected and shall preside and serve as executive officer. The Clerk shall keep a written record of all business transacted at the meetings. If a Treasurer is elected by any board or committee, he shall seek the advice of the Church Treasurer regarding the keeping of records, disbursement of funds and the depository of unexpended funds.

All boards and committees shall hold a minimum of four regular meetings each year, except the Elders and Diaconate which shall meet at least bimonthly.

A quorum for any board or committee shall be half of its members excluding Life and ex officio members. Any business may be conducted on the basis of a majority vote of the members present so long as there is a quorum.

All boards and committees shall present a brief written report at the Annual Meeting.

ARTICLE VIII. CONDUCT OF ANNUAL MEETING

The Annual Meeting of the congregation shall be opened by prayer and the Moderator shall preside. Should the Moderator be unable to preside, the Chairman of the Board of Elders shall preside and conduct the nomination and election of a new Moderator, after which the Elder shall retire and the new Moderator assume the duty of the presiding officer.

At this meeting the annual reports of the Pastors, elected officers, elected boards and committees, the Superintendent of the Church School, if one has been appointed, and recognized organizations within the church shall be presented. Also such other business as may properly come before the meeting shall be transacted. The final order of business shall be the report of the Nominating Committee, receipt of nominations from the floor, and election by ballot.

ARTICLE IX. MEMORIAL FUND

Section 1. Establishment and Purpose

To provide a depository for certain gifts and legacies to the Church, the Treasurer shall establish and administer a dedicated account titled "The Memorial Fund of the Orthodox Congregational Church in Lanesville." Monies placed in this account, except as hereinafter provided, are to be used to finance, in whole or in part as applicable, capital improvements to the church building, appurtenances, or furnishings.

Section 2. Additions

Gifts and legacies designated to the Memorial Fund, or if undesignated (but not including offerings received in the collection plate at a worship or other service) and in the opinion of the Treasurer are deemed to have been given for memorial purposes, shall be received by the Treasurer who shall deposit them in the Memorial Fund Account upon receipt. Such undesignated gifts and legacies, if of a value of \$100 or more, shall then be referred by the Treasurer to the Diaconate, who shall then decide if such belong in the Memorial Fund. If the Diaconate rules against the Treasurer's decision, the Treasurer shall promptly transfer the money to the account directed by the Diaconate.

Gifts and legacies in addition to being designated to the Memorial Fund, may be further designated for a special project compatible with the purposes of that Fund. The monies received for such gifts and legacies shall be reserved for the designated purposes. Such

restriction may be removed at any time upon receipt of authorization in writing from the donor or, in the case of the decease or disablement of the donor, by the majority vote of a duly constituted meeting of the congregation.

Section 3. Records and Acknowledgments

The Treasurer shall maintain an appropriate record in chronological order of all gifts and legacies deposited in the Memorial Fund. This record shall include the amount, any designated purpose for the gift or legacy, the name of the donor, and the name or names of those persons in whose memory it is being given. In the case of gifts and legacies with additional restrictions, the address of the donor, or of his or her heirs, shall be recorded as appropriate.

The Treasurer or Assistant Treasurer shall give a written acknowledgment to gift donors.

The Treasurer, each year at the Annual Meeting, shall report for the Memorial Fund for the previous year: the total additions from gifts and legacies, interest, and other income.

All matters of policy related to the Memorial Fund shall be referred to the Diaconate.

Section 4. Depository

All monies in the Memorial Fund shall be held in appropriate, separate, interest bearing accounts in reputable banks located in Gloucester or Rockport, or in such other monetary vehicles as are deemed prudent by the Diaconate.

Section 5. Income

All interest or other income accruing to monies in the Memorial Fund shall be added to the account and become part of the principal. Where certain funds in the account are reserved for designated projects, their principal amounts shall be increased by appropriate prorated portions of said income.

Section 6. Expenditures

From time to time the Diaconate shall consider the needs for capital improvements to the church building, appurtenances, or furnishings. They shall also consider the amount of money available in the Memorial Fund account which legally could be used to finance such improvements, in whole or in part, and, if appropriate, present a suitable recommendation at an Annual Meeting or Special Business Meeting of the Church membership. An affirmative vote by simple majority shall be required for adoption of the recommendation.

If, in the opinion of the Diaconate, the Church edifice or general operations are in jeopardy, and funds are not available elsewhere, the Diaconate may recommend to the church members that an appropriation for such repairs be made from the Memorial Fund Account. Under these conditions all restrictions on the use of monies in the Memorial Fund Account shall be considered to be waived. Procedure for such action on the recommendation shall be as outlined in the previous paragraph, except that an affirmative vote of two thirds of the church

members present at the meeting and voting shall be required for adoption of such recommendation.

In the event that the Church Organization shall be voluntarily dissolved, all monies then remaining in the Memorial Fund Account shall be distributed in the following manner and sequence:

- a. Pay off any unsatisfied just or legal debt of the church for which there are no other funds reasonably or appropriately available.
- b. Donate the residue as a gift to any Christian organization whose objectives and activities are compatible with the Constitution and Bylaws of which this Article is a part.

ARTICLE X. AMENDMENT OF BYLAWS

The Bylaws may be amended by a majority vote of a joint meeting of the Elders and the Diaconate called for the purpose, provided that a majority of each board is present. A clear statement in writing of the proposed amendment shall be presented at a meeting of each board, or in lieu thereof a copy of the proposed amendment may be given to each board member. The Chairmen of both boards shall arrange the joint meeting at a mutually convenient time, appoint a Moderator, and propose the agenda. If the amendment is adopted it shall be posted forthwith upon the church bulletin board.

If five Members wish to oppose the amendment of the Bylaws, they may petition for a special business meeting as provided in the Constitution, Article IX, Section 3. The vote of the special meeting concerning the amendment shall be final, and another amendment proposing the same or an equivalent change may not be considered for a period of twelve months.