

# ***FAITH REFORMED CHURCH BY-LAWS***

Cedar Grove, Wisconsin

(Revised and approved January 17, 2016)

## ARTICLE I - NAME, AFFILIATION, AND PURPOSE

- Sec. 1 The name of this Wisconsin non-profit religious corporation is “Faith Reformed Church of Cedar Grove, Wisconsin.” In these By-laws, Faith Reformed Church of Cedar Grove, Wisconsin, will be referred to as “Congregation.”
- Sec. 2 This Congregation is a subordinate organization of the Reformed Church in America, the Regional Synod of Mid-America, and the Classis of Wisconsin and is bound by their rules of order that pertain to a congregation.
- Sec. 3 The Congregation has the following stated mission and purpose:  
At Faith Reformed Church, we:
- *Worship* God through word, song, fellowship, and prayer.
  - *Educate* people of all ages toward a deeper understanding of God’s Will and eternal purpose.
  - *Grow* in our personal and communal relationship with Jesus Christ.
  - *Serve* others by proclaiming God’s love in word and deed

## ARTICLE II – STATEMENTS OF FAITH

- Sec. 1 The Congregation adheres to the following Doctrinal Standards, the: Apostle’s Creed, Nicene Creed, Athanasian Creed, Heidelberg Catechism, Belgic Confession, and Canons of Dordt.
- Sec. 2 As secondary and supplemental to our Doctrinal Standards, the Congregation affirms the following Doctrinal Statements:

### The Glory of God

God’s chief purpose in all that He wills, thinks, and does is the glory of His name.<sup>1</sup> Moreover, every person, indeed all creation, exists for this same purpose: to glorify God.<sup>2</sup> God is sovereign, such that there is nothing unseen, unknown, or undetermined by God in all of creation, time, or eternity.<sup>3</sup>

### The Authority of Scripture

The Holy Scripture of the Old and New Testaments is the ultimate authority, without error in all that it intends to teach, and altogether sufficient for Christian faith and practice.<sup>4</sup> The Bible reveals universal truths which are true for all people at all times and can be known with certainty and clarity. The authority of Scripture should not be made subject to or equal with other writings or

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<sup>1</sup>Isaiah 48:9-11; Habakkuk 2:14; Romans 11:34-36; Colossians 1:16; Hebrews 2:10

<sup>2</sup>Psalms 86:9; Ecclesiastes 12:13; Isaiah 43:6-7; Revelation 14:6-7

<sup>3</sup>Genesis 50:20; Job 14:5; Psalm 139:1-4, 16; Isaiah 46:10; Daniel 2:21, 4:35; Matthew 10:29-31; Acts 4:27-28, 17:25-27; Romans 8:28; Ephesians 1:11; HC 27, 28; BC 1, 13

<sup>4</sup>Psalms 12:6, 18:30; John 10:35, 17:17; Acts 24:14; Romans 3:1-2; 1 Thessalonians 2:13; 2 Timothy 3:16-17; 2 Peter 1:20-21; BC 3, 4, 5, 6

human experience.<sup>5</sup> As divine revelation, Scripture accurately describes who God is and how He wishes to be addressed, including the Trinitarian language of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.<sup>6</sup>

#### The Gospel of God

Humanity's greatest need is to be reconciled with God.<sup>7</sup> The gospel is compromised when the grace and love of Christ are expressed without the ultimate objective of calling sinners to repentance and faith in Jesus Christ.<sup>8</sup> The appropriate response to sin is one that believes in the power of God to change lives, hopes in the mercy of God to forgive sins, and loves enough to call sinners to confession and transformation.<sup>9</sup> God is inclusive in that He calls all to come to Him in faith and repentance.<sup>10</sup> God is exclusive in that only those who believe in Jesus Christ and seek to keep His commands can be assured of salvation.<sup>11</sup> The gospel is the good news of Jesus' life, death, and resurrection and should not be equated with or reduced to mere good deeds, humanitarian relief, or societal reform.<sup>12</sup>

#### The Uniqueness of Christ

Jesus Christ is unique among the so-called gods of this world. Only in Jesus can we have salvation, fellowship, and a true understanding of God.<sup>13</sup> Jesus Christ died on the cross as a substitutionary sacrifice for sins, and in so doing absorbed God's wrath and eternal judgment upon our sin.<sup>14</sup> We are counted righteous before God based on the imputed righteousness of Christ.<sup>15</sup> Justification is by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone.<sup>16</sup> No one will be saved apart from the atoning sacrifice of Christ.<sup>17</sup> Salvation is received through personal hearing of and conscious believing in the gospel of Jesus Christ.<sup>18</sup> The unrepentant and unbelieving will not be saved, either in this life or after physical death.<sup>19</sup> Apart from Jesus, who is the eternal Son of God incarnate, we cannot see, know, or glorify God as He is.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>5</sup>BC 7

<sup>6</sup>1 Timothy 6:15; Malachi 1:6; Isaiah 54:5; Revelation 21:2; Romans 11:33-36; Matthew 6:9; John 16:7-15; Matthew 28:19; HC 24; BC 8

<sup>7</sup>2 Corinthians 5:18-20

<sup>8</sup>Matthew 28:19-20; BC 29; CD 1.2, 1.3, 2.5

<sup>9</sup>Galatians 6:1; James 5:19-20; 1 Corinthians 13:13

<sup>10</sup>Matthew 11:28-30; John 6:37; CD 1.4, 3/4.8

<sup>11</sup>Matthew 7:13-23; John 3:18, 6:53, 8:24; CD 1.12, 1.13

<sup>12</sup>Isaiah 49:6; 1 Corinthians 15:1-8

<sup>13</sup>Isaiah 45:18; John 1:18, 14:6; Acts 4:12

<sup>14</sup>Isaiah 53:4-5; Romans 3:25; Galatians 3:13; 1 John 2:2; BC 21; CD 2.2, 2.3

<sup>15</sup>2 Corinthians 5:21; Philippians 3:9; BC 22, 23

<sup>16</sup>Romans 3:23-24, 5:1; Galatians 2:16; HC 61; BC 22, 23

<sup>17</sup>John 6:53-58; 1 Timothy 2:5; Hebrews 2:17; 1 John 2:1-2 HC 14, 17, 29, 30

<sup>18</sup>Romans 10:14-15; see CD 1.17 for related counsel

<sup>19</sup>Luke 16:26; John 3:18; Revelation 20:11-15; HC 10; BC 37; CD 1.15

<sup>20</sup>John 1:14; Colossians 1:15-20; BC 26

### The Gift of Sexuality

Marriage is a joyful covenanting between one biological man and one biological woman.<sup>21</sup> All sexual intimacy is divinely designed for and should be expressed solely within the covenant of marriage.<sup>22</sup> Any teaching or practice which blurs gender distinction, such as homosexuality, bisexuality, or trans-sexuality is contrary to Scripture.<sup>23</sup> Same-sex “marriages,” even in committed and consensual relationships, are contrary to Scripture.<sup>24</sup> Ordination to the offices of the church for any person who unrepentantly practices or promotes any form of sexual sin, whether fornication, adultery, homosexuality, or the like is to be prohibited.<sup>25</sup>

### The Dignity of Human Life

All human life is to be treasured as a gift from God.<sup>26</sup> Any practice which demeans human dignity, such as pornography,<sup>27</sup> racism,<sup>28</sup> abuse,<sup>29</sup> exploitation,<sup>30</sup> persecution,<sup>31</sup> abortion,<sup>32</sup> and euthanasia<sup>33</sup> is immoral and unjust.

- Sec. 3 For the purposes of the Congregation, the Board of Elders is the final interpretive authority of the meaning and application of the Bible and our Statements of Faith.

## ARTICLE III – MEMBERSHIP

- Sec. 1 Membership in the Congregation shall be entered into and terminated according to the Book of Church Order of the Reformed Church in America.
- Sec. 2 Discipline of members shall be exercised in accordance with the Book of Church Order of the Reformed Church in America.
- Sec. 3 Voluntary resignation or withdrawal from membership is prohibited once church discipline at the levels of suspension, deposition, or excommunication has been initiated for that member.
- Sec. 4 Persons becoming a member shall be required to sign a statement that they have read and consent to the Congregation’s By-laws.
- Sec. 5 Because of the biblical prohibition on lawsuits between believers within the church (1 Corinthians 6:1-8), all members of the Congregation shall agree to submit to binding arbitration for any legal dispute that arises between members or between members and the Congregation itself.

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<sup>21</sup>The Liturgy: Order of Worship for Christian Marriage

<sup>22</sup>Genesis 2:18-25; 1 Corinthians 7:1-5; Ephesians 5:22-33

<sup>23</sup>Leviticus 18:22, 20:13; 1 Corinthians 6:9-11; 1 Timothy 1:10; Jude 7; HC 87

<sup>24</sup>Matthew 19:5

<sup>25</sup>1 Timothy 5:22; Titus 2:7-8; James 3:1; HC 109

<sup>26</sup>Genesis 1:27; Psalm 8:3-8; BC 14

<sup>27</sup>Matthew 5:27-30; HC 109

<sup>28</sup>Ephesians 2:14-16

<sup>29</sup>Ephesians 5:28-29

<sup>30</sup>Amos 5:10-13; HC 110

<sup>31</sup>Matthew 23:29-36

<sup>32</sup>Psalm 139:13-16

<sup>33</sup>Exodus 20:13; HC 105, 107

## ARTICLE IV – THE CONSISTORY

- Sec. 1 The Consistory shall be the ruling body of the Congregation with all rights, privileges and responsibilities as laid out in the Book of Church Order of the Reformed Church in America.
- Sec. 2 The Consistory shall consist of six Elders and six Deacons. The Consistory shall meet monthly for its regular business meeting.
- Sec. 3 Election:
- a. The Elders and Deacons shall be chosen from the Active-Confessing membership of the Congregation who have attained the age of twenty-one years.
  - b. Elders and Deacons shall be elected from votes by the Active-Confessing membership of the Congregation.
  - c. Members of the Congregation who choose not to be nominated as Elder or Deacon are asked to communicate that desire with the church office by October 1<sup>st</sup> of each year.
  - d. The Consistory shall request the advice of the Congregation during October by sending to all Confessing members a list of those who have not removed themselves from nomination for Elder or Deacon, information outlining the responsibilities of and spiritual gifts necessary for filling these offices, and nominating ballots. The ballots shall be returned by the last Sunday of October and the results tabulated prior to the November Consistory meeting.
  - e. The Consistory will use the nomination ballots to assist them in the preparation of a single slate of nominees by the November Consistory meeting. The Consistory may combine votes received by a single candidate for both offices, and then make a determination about whether the candidate is better suited to serve as Elder or Deacon. The single slate of candidates will be presented to the Congregation for affirmation and election at its Annual Congregational Meeting. The names of the nominees shall be published for two weeks prior to the Annual Congregational Meeting.
  - f. At the annual Congregational Meeting, a vote will be taken and a simple majority of the ballots cast will elect the slate of nominees.
  - g. Absentee ballots for the election of the slate of nominees will be available prior to the Congregational Meeting. Absentee ballots will be counted for the first ballot only. Subsequent voting will be done only by the Confessing members present.
- Sec. 4 Term:
- a. Elders and Deacons shall serve for a term of three years. Any Elder or Deacon completing a three year term must be off for at least one year before being eligible for re-election.
  - b. One-third of the whole number of Elders and Deacons shall be elected annually.
- Sec. 5 Vacancies:
- a. Vacancies in the Consistory may be filled by election at the Annual Congregational Meeting or appointed by the Consistory.

The President may call a special Congregational Meeting to fill vacancies.

- Sec. 6 Approval of the Annual Budget:
- a. The Consistory shall be responsible for approving an annual budget.

#### ARTICLE V – OFFICERS AND DUTIES

- Sec. 1 The officers of the Congregation shall be a President, Vice-President, Clerk, Treasurer, and Chair of the Deacons.
- Sec. 2 The Executive Committee shall consist of the President, Vice-President, Clerk, and Chair of the Deacons. The Executive Committee may act for the Consistory between scheduled Consistory meetings. Any actions taken must be reported to the full Consistory in a timely manner.
- Sec. 3 Election of officers:
- a. Election of the Vice-President and Clerk, if needed for the new year, shall be done at the last regularly scheduled Consistory meeting of the year.
  - b. Election of the Chair of the Deacons, if needed for the new year, shall be done if possible at the Board of Deacon's meeting prior to the last Consistory meeting of the year.
  - c. Newly elected, but not yet installed, and returning Consistory members, only, will have the privilege to vote on the election of officers.
- Sec. 4 All appointments of Consistory members to ministry teams shall be made by the incoming Executive Committee. These appointments shall be made prior to the first meeting of the new term of the Consistory. Ministry teams do not have the authority to act on behalf of the Congregation apart from the responsibilities delegated to them by the Consistory.
- Sec. 5 The Consistory will be served by following teams, made up of members of the Consistory and Congregation:
- a. The Worship Team exists to provide opportunities to celebrate God's presence by magnifying the Lord and exalting God's name: to advise and assist the pastor and other worship leaders in the planning and evaluation of congregational worship services, as well as to consider whether new opportunities for worship need to be offered to the church and community.
  - b. The Discipleship Team exists to help members become disciples who make disciples: to encourage and oversee the life-long process of growing to maturity in the Christian faith and passing it on to others by ensuring that appropriate and attractive growth opportunities are offered for all age groups within the Congregation.
  - c. The Outreach Team exists to advance the gospel within Cedar Grove and neighboring communities through the proclamation of the Word and deeds of mercy: by coordinating advertising and promotion of the church, oversee the church's website and keep it up-to-date, providing guidelines for emergency assistance requests,

supporting other local ministries, assisting the congregation in exploring and engaging in ways to develop relationships with local unchurched residents, and keeping the congregation informed with the Team's activities and supported ministries.

- d. The Mission Team exists to advance the gospel and support disciple-making primarily among least reached and unreached people groups: by maintaining regular communication with, encouraging, and learning from our supported missionaries and mission agencies; educating our congregation about and encouraging participation in mission; and developing a strategy and guidelines for mission support and trips.
- e. The Fellowship Team exists to include members fully within the church, the Body of Christ: to encourage congregational fellowship and care, to provide hospitality ministries to attendees and church functions, and to assimilate new participants and members fully into all aspects of church life.
- f. The Management Team exists to provide the necessary support to carry out the biblical purposes of the church: to oversee the human, physical, and financial resources of the Congregation, employing all church resources in a manner that is consistent with biblical notions of stewardship and care for all of God's possessions given for use in fulfilling the purposes of the Church of Jesus Christ.

Sec. 5

President:

- a. The installed minister shall be the President of the Consistory and the Congregation.
- b. The President shall preside at all meetings except where otherwise provided. The President shall state and explain the business to be transacted, enforce the rules of order, and in general, maintain the decorum and dignity belonging to the Church of Jesus Christ.

Sec. 6

Vice-President:

- a. The Vice-President shall be elected from among the newly-elected and actively serving members of the Board of Elders. The term of office will equal the remaining term on Consistory.
- b. The Vice-President shall preside at meetings in the absence of the President.

Sec. 7

Clerk:

- a. The Clerk shall be elected from among the newly-elected and actively serving members of the Board of Elders. The term of office will equal the remaining term on Consistory.
- b. The Clerk shall keep the minutes of all meetings of the Board of Elders, Consistory, and Congregation.
- c. During a pastoral vacancy the Clerk shall keep the records of the church up-to-date.

Sec. 8

Treasurer:

- a. The Treasurer shall be appointed annually by the Consistory from the Active-Confessing membership of the Congregation. A

thorough review of the treasurer's functions will be conducted not less frequently than every five years.

- b. The Treasurer is to receive and disburse all offerings and monies of the church with the help of the Board of Deacons and as directed by the Consistory.
- c. The Treasurer shall prepare monthly financial reports for the Consistory and for the Congregation. The reports shall include comparisons of actual figures to budgetary figures.
- d. Additional treasurers may be appointed by the Consistory for special needs or functions.
- e. The Consistory will provide for an independent review of the congregation's financial matters on an annual basis.

Sec. 9 Chair of the Deacons:

- a. The Chair of the Deacons shall be elected from among the newly-elected and actively serving members of the Board of Deacons. The term of office will equal the remaining term on Consistory.

#### ARTICLE VI – CONGREGATIONAL MEETINGS

- Sec. 1 All meetings of the Congregation shall be held in the church building unless otherwise designated by the Consistory.
- Sec. 2 Notice and purpose of all meetings shall be given to the Congregation at least two Sundays prior to the meeting.
- Sec. 3 Annual Meeting of the Congregation:
  - a. There shall be one regular meeting of the Congregation each year, to be convened on the first Sunday of December following the morning worship service, or at another convenient date and time established by the Consistory.
  - b. The purpose of the Annual Congregational Meeting shall be the election of Elders and Deacons, discussion of the proposed church budget for the next fiscal year, and the consideration of matters, both spiritual and material, which affect the Congregation.
- Sec. 4 Special Meetings of the Congregation shall be called by:
  - a. The Consistory, the purpose being stated along with the required publication of notice.
  - b. The Vice-President on the written request of twelve Confessing members of the Congregation, the purpose being stated along with the required publication of notice.
- Sec. 5 All meetings of the Congregation shall be opened and closed with prayer.
- Sec. 6 A quorum for the transaction of business at any Congregational Meeting shall be one-third of the Active-Confessing members of the Congregation.
- Sec. 7 Voting Procedures:
  - a. Outgoing Consistory members will be named tellers for the tallying of ballot votes. In their absence the presiding officer shall appoint tellers.
  - b. Absentee votes shall be permitted on stated issues. Such ballots shall be:
    - 1. Available upon request from the Clerk or the church office as soon as public notice of the meeting is made.

2. Sealed in a blank envelope.
3. The name of the person submitting an absentee vote shall be kept.
4. Absentee votes must be returned to the Clerk prior to the meeting.
5. Absentee votes may be counted only on the first ballot.

#### ARTICLE VII -- FACILITIES AND GROUNDS

- Sec. 1 No use of the Congregation's facilities or grounds shall be inconsistent with its Statements of Faith or the purposes of advancing its Purpose and Mission.
- Sec. 2 Individuals or groups, whether members or non-members, who desire to rent the facilities or grounds must agree to sign and comply with the appropriate Church Usage Policy statement and form.

#### ARTICLE VIII – PASTORAL VACANCIES

- Sec. 1 The Search Committee shall be appointed by the Consistory from the Active-Confessing membership, reflecting a representative cross-section of the Congregation.
- Sec. 2 The Search Committee does not have the authority to act on behalf of the Congregation apart from the responsibilities delegated to them by the Consistory.
- Sec. 3 Ministers who are called by the Congregation must meet the qualifications stipulated in the Book of Church Order of the Reformed Church in America and consent to the Congregation's Statements of Faith.
- Sec. 4 Voting procedures will follow those stipulated in the Book of Church Order of the Reformed Church in America.
- Sec. 5 Approval of a call by the Congregation requires an affirmative vote of at least 2/3 of the Active-Confessing members present at the congregational meeting.

#### ARTICLE IX – RELATIONSHIP TO HIGHER JUDICATORIES

- Sec. 1 Elders serving the second year of their Consistory term shall be the delegates to the Classis of Wisconsin for that year, if possible. Otherwise, the Consistory shall appoint alternate delegates from among the other Elders of the Congregation.
- Sec. 2 Deacons serving the second year of their Consistory term may be appointed as non-voting representatives to the Classis of Wisconsin for that year.

#### ARTICLE X – EMPLOYEES AND VOLUNTEERS

- Sec. 1 All employees shall be required to attest by written signature to their acceptance of the Congregation's Statements of Faith, and their commitment to advance the mission of the Congregation.
- Sec. 2 All volunteers shall agree to serve by word and example in a manner consistent with the Congregation's Statements of Faith.
- Sec. 3 All employees and volunteers must consent to having a background check prior to their service.



#### ARTICLE XI – TAX EXEMPTION

- Sec. 1           The Congregation is a 501(c)(3) organization for educational, charitable, and religious purposes.
- Sec. 2           No part of the net income of the church will result in private inurement to members, officers, or any other persons in the Congregation.
- Sec. 3           The Congregation will not engage in IRS-prohibited political activities.
- Sec. 4           The Congregation will not engage in any activities, except to an insubstantial degree, that fall outside the scope of its tax-exempt purposes.

#### ARTICLE XII – IDEMNIFICATION

- Sec. 1           The Congregation shall indemnify any employee, officer, or agent of the Congregation in actions while serving on behalf of the Congregation, if such person(s) acted in good faith and in a manner reasonably believed to be in, or not opposed to, the best interests of the Congregation, and had no reasonable cause to believe that such action(s) was unlawful.

#### ARTICLE XIII – AMENDMENTS

- Sec. 1           These By-laws may be amended by a two-thirds affirmative vote at any regular or special Congregational Meeting.
- Sec. 2           All amendments to the By-laws shall go into effect upon a favorable action at a Congregational Meeting.

Adopted:       December, 1991  
 Amended:     December, 2002  
                   February, 2003  
                   December, 2004  
                   April, 2013  
                   January, 2016