

# FIRST CHURCH OF GOD, ALMA, MICHIGAN

## BY-LAWS

Adopted November 17, 2002-----Last Revised December 2, 2012

### **Article I - Name and Identification**

The name of this corporation shall be the "First Church of God", located at 200 West Superior Street, Alma, Michigan 48801. This local, autonomous church body is voluntarily associated with a larger group of churches known as the "Church of God". In this voluntary association, the local body seeks to co-operate with the educational, missions, evangelistic, administrative and doctrinal emphases of the General Assembly of the Church of God, Anderson, Indiana.

### **Article II - Purpose**

- Section 1. We believe the Bible teaches that God desires for all people to become aware of His presence in their lives. We believe this personal contact God wants to have with us has been undermined by sin and He provided a way for this barrier to be removed. That way is trust in Jesus Christ, believing His death on the cross, the shedding of His blood was the sacrifice necessary to destroy the barrier of sin that separates humanity from God. This faith commitment is called salvation and it is through such a commitment that one becomes a member of the Church – the Body of Christ. (Colossians 1:15-20)
- Section 2. Therefore, we believe the fellowship purpose of the church is to encourage one another to know the full measure of God's presence in our lives so we can clearly demonstrate who Jesus Christ is to an unbelieving world (Ephesians 1:15-23, 4:11-16).
- Section 3. As we venture together in our spiritual pilgrimage, we believe the Word of God gives clear direction as to what we are to encourage each other to become. Jesus calls us to be His disciples (Luke 9:23-25). A Christian is a disciplined follower of Jesus Christ. We believe it is essential that we covenant to be faithful to be accountable to each other to grow as disciples.
- Section 4. This discipleship commitment focuses on three goals. One, there should be growing evidence of the fruit of the Spirit in our lives (John 3:34-35, Galatians 5:22-25). Without the character qualities of Christ, there is nothing the church can do to effectively present Jesus to an unbelieving world. Two, every Christian should discover their spiritual gift(s) (Romans 12:3-8, 1 Corinthians 12:7-13, and Ephesians 4:8-16). Through the gifts of grace, the church is built up as each person does their part to serve in the body. Three, those desiring to be a part of this fellowship should covenant to live in agreement with the goals for accomplishing our purpose. Such a covenant bond will foster oneness of purpose and we believe it is through such unity that our witness will have its greatest impact in the world (John 17:20-23).

### **Article III – Making Covenant to be Responsible to the Local Church Fellowship**

- Section 1. We believe the local church is the institution God has ordained for Christians to carry out their commitment to be faithful to the challenge of discipleship. Therefore, those desiring to commit themselves to Christian discipleship through the avenue of this local fellowship are asked to participate in a series of information sessions designed to explain our ministry direction and what it means to be a participating member of this church. The purposes of the sessions are to:
- a. Clarify the biblical teaching on salvation and what that means in regard to membership in the church.
  - b. Clarify the biblical teaching on discipleship commitment and the ways it can be pursued in our fellowship.

- c. Clarify the historical significance of the Church of God Reformation Movement and what it means to our present-day discipleship walk.
- d. Help people discover their spiritual gift(s) and to encourage them to seek avenues of ministry in the life of the church, discovering the joy of giving and serving.
- e. Explain the biblical principle of covenant and to give opportunity for there to be public commitment to this local church fellowship.

Section 2. We believe membership in the church is through a salvation experience. Yet, we believe there needs to be a commitment on the part of people affiliating with the local church to be covenantally faithful to its purpose and goals. Therefore, those 18 years of age or older desiring to participate in the decision-making process in this church – through our Annual Business Meeting or special business sessions – are given such privilege by going through the process described in Section 1 of this article.

Section 3. A policy statement in regard to grievance procedure: When people come together in relationships, it is inevitable that there will be disagreements, conflict, and offenses. A frequent, common factor contributing to disunity in the church is talking about an issue to other parties without following the procedure given in scripture. This leads to idle talk and gossip. Some primary scriptures giving instructions in this area are: Matthew 5:21-24, 18:15-35, Ephesians – chapter 4, and James 1:26. Every person making a covenant commitment to be faithful to the challenge of discipleship, through commitment to this local fellowship, is expected to adhere to the following policy statement:

In respect for the dignity of each other as brothers and sisters in Christ, any person compelled to register a grievance should:

- 1. Refrain from talking to another person about the situation.
- 2. Pray and discern if the situation is a grievance issue.
- 3. Follow the principles of scripture stated above, approaching only the person who is the source of such grievance. (The only exception to this would be to seek counsel from an elder to help clarify the scriptural procedure.)

It is the goal through teaching, training, and modeling for idle talk to be eliminated. The failure to adhere to this policy could involve to the fullest extent the consequences described in Matthew 18.

#### **Article IV – Church Council**

Section 1. The Church Council will be made up of the chairpersons of the Finance Committee, Buildings and Grounds Committee, Christian Education Committee, Mission Committee, His Place Committee, Hospitality Committee, Youth Ministry Committee, Worship Ministry Committee, up to four persons chosen at large from the congregation and all the members of the Board of Elders. When a chairperson cannot attend a Church Council meeting, they are responsible to send a representative from their respective committee. Such person will serve in the meeting with full representation responsibilities. Except for the Board of Elders, the representatives from the other committees will be Church Council voting members. The Board of Elders serve on the Church Council in an advisory capacity and do not vote. It takes four voting members and the presence of two elders to constitute a quorum.

Section 2. Other appointments can be made to the Church Council upon recommendation by the Board of Elders and approval of the Church Council. This can happen when a committee is formed to administrate a particular ministry function in the life of the church. As with the Board of Elders, these representatives will be non-voting members, and yet,

for the purpose of ministry coordination, will serve to give input and direction to the process of ministry direction in the church.

- Section 3. The Church Council is to serve as a Board of Directors for the church. They shall meet regularly (at least once a month) in order to provide an effective means of coordinating the implementation of the ministry goals of the church, encouraging each committee to fulfill their responsibilities.
- Section 4. The Church Council will be chosen through a ratification process at the Annual Business Meeting. The congregation will have the opportunity to ratify the chairpersons of each committee, the persons at large from the congregation, and the Board of Elders.
- Section 5. The Chairperson and Vice-Chairperson will be chosen from among the voting members of the Council and will serve as the officers of the business meetings and the corporation.
- Section 6. Irrespective of Church Council membership, the Church Council will appoint a Recording Secretary.
- Section 7. The Church Council will serve as a nominating committee to present to the church at the Annual Business Meeting names of individuals to be ratified to leadership which include: Chairpersons to committees, Congregational Representatives to the Church Council and members of the Board of Elders. Chairpersons to committees and Congregational Representatives to the Church Council will serve a three-year term. Elders will serve a four-year term. In the case of a Chairperson, Congregational Church Council Representative or an Elder not being able to fulfill their term in office, the Church Council can make an appointment to that vacancy until the following Annual Business Meeting.
- Section 8. Positions of leadership on each committee, beyond the congregation ratifying the chairpersons, will be filled by a process of chairpersons recruiting committee members based upon being sensitive to a person's spiritual gift(s) and ministry interests. Before the chairperson of a committee recruits persons for committee service, the names of the candidate(s) should be brought to the Church Council for review and approval. Before a person consents to serve on a committee, as they are approached by a chairperson, they are required to attend a training session designed to clarify their responsibility as a member of the particular committee. This training session will be conducted by the Senior Pastor or someone trained to communicate the particular responsibilities of such committee position. The size of a committee may fluctuate numerically because positions will be filled based upon the Church Council's evaluation of those who will be reliable and responsible to the task of serving on a committee. Guidelines for the minimum and maximum number for making up a committee will be specifically set.
- Section 9. In the event of a pastoral vacancy or new pastoral position having to be filled, the Church Council will oversee the search process. Its recommendations of names shall be voted upon by the church in a regular or special business meeting. Only one candidate at a time is to be voted upon by the church and the vote must carry by a three-fourths majority.
- Section 10. There are two standing committees in the church to which the Church Council is responsible to make appointments.
- a. By-Laws Revision Committee – a group appointed to periodically evaluate and review the By-Laws for revisions. All By-Law Changes must go through this committee before presentation to the congregation.
  - b. Memorial Committee – consisting of three members to receive monies and/or gifts to be used for a designated purpose in the church.

## **Article V – Board of Elders**

- Section 1. The Board of Elders shall be composed of the full-time pastoral staff and at least four members of the congregation. Those persons who serve as Elders from the congregation will be ratified by the congregation at the Annual Business Meeting.
- Section 2. This board shall elect from its own members a Chairperson.
- Section 3. The purpose of the Board of Elders is to focus on the mission of the congregation and challenge the congregation to stay true to that mission. The Board of Elders will (a) continually study, pray and work to define and clarify the purposes for which the congregation exists, (b) give counsel for ministry direction in the life of the congregation, (c) encourage the congregation to celebrate God's provision as she is faithful to her mission, (d) identify and name those assumptions and practices of the congregation that are not true to her mission and values, and (e) respond to those assumptions and practices that are not true to its mission and values. They will serve as members on the Church Council in an advisory capacity, seeking to help the Council work toward the biblical imperatives of living and proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom.

## **Article VI – Mission Committee**

- Section 1. This committee will be responsible for scheduling mission speakers throughout the year. It also will set financial goals and disburse the finances that come in. The committee will also be responsible for meeting the local relief needs in situations in our congregation and local community.
- Section 2. Beyond the ratified Chairperson, this committee shall elect from its own members the Vice-Chairperson, Secretary, and Treasurer. Including the Chairperson, this committee will be made up of no less than five people and no more than nine.

## **Article VII-A – Finance Committee**

- Section 1. The duties of the Finance Committee shall be to manage the financial affairs of the Church. They will work with the Church Council to prepare a proposed operating budget for congregational approval at the Annual Business Meeting. This budget shall be posted one week prior to the Annual Business Meeting.
- Section 2. Beyond the ratified Chairperson, this committee shall elect from its own members a Vice-Chairperson. Including the Chairperson, this committee will be made up of no less than three and no more than five people. The Treasurer of the church may or may not be a member of this committee.

## **Article VII-B – Building and Grounds Committee**

- Section 1. The duties of the Building and Grounds Committee shall be to manage and maintain the real properties of the church. This includes overseeing the hourly workers of the church: custodians, secretary, and part-time staff.
- Section 2. Beyond the ratified Chairperson, this committee shall elect from its own members a Vice-Chairperson. Including the Chairperson, this committee will be made up of no less than five people and no more than nine.

## **Article VIII – Christian Education Committee**

- Section 1. The purpose of this ministry is to challenge every person in our fellowship to make a Christian commitment and mature in their faith. The primary responsibilities of this committee include:

- a. Studying, planning and promoting all phases of Christian Education in the church – Church School, Vacation Bible School and extracurricular educational opportunities.
- b. Recruiting, training and placing teachers and assistants in the appropriate educational setting.
- c. Providing encouragement and resources to teachers, enabling them to be effective in their tasks.

Section 2. Beyond the ratified Chairperson, this committee shall elect from its own members the Vice-Chairperson and Secretary. Including the Chairperson, this committee will be made up of no less than five people and no more than nine.

**Article IX – His Place Committee**

Section 1. His Place ministries seek to present Jesus Christ in a unique setting through recreation, education, fellowship and prayer. The responsibilities of this ministry team are:

- a. To discern what, and how to present, programs that address needs in the community and church fellowship.
- b. To give direction to each ministry by recruiting, training and praying for workers who commit themselves to the ministry.
- c. To be knowledgeable and actively involved in the ministries of His Place.

Section 2. Beyond the ratified Chairperson, this committee shall elect from its own members the Vice-Chairperson and Secretary. Including the Chairperson this Committee will be made up of no less than five people and no more than nine.

**Article X – Hospitality Committee**

Section 1. This ministry exists as a source of encouragement to the church fellowship by providing hospitality for fellowship events, for those going through bereavement and to assist those in need during a time of illness. Primary responsibilities in this area are:

- a. Send flowers to those hospitalized.
- b. To express sympathy when church families lose loved ones.
- c. To coordinate, as needed, home delivered meals for families during a time of crisis.
- d. To coordinate meals and refreshments needed during all church fellowship events (this includes funeral luncheons for families connected with the church).

Section 2. Beyond the ratified Chairperson, this committee shall elect from its own members the Vice-Chairperson and Secretary. Including the Chairperson, this committee will be made up of no less than five people.

**Article XI – Youth Ministry Committee**

Section 1. The responsibilities of this committee are to plan and coordinate Jr. & Sr. High ministry in accordance with the Youth Ministry philosophy established by the committee in cooperation with the Church Council.

Section 2. Beyond the ratified Chairperson, this committee shall elect from its own members the Vice-Chairperson and Secretary. Including the Chairperson, this committee will be made up of no less than five people and no more than nine.

## **Article XII – Worship Ministry Committee**

- Section 1. This committee (Worship Arts Ministry Team) exists for the purpose of advancing worship and the worship arts in the pursuit to bring glory to God. This purpose will be advanced through:
1. Coordinating a music and worship ministry which seeks to serve all ages with a variety of styles and approaches.
  2. Planning for special worship and fellowship events.
  3. Discovering individuals in the congregation with gifts in worship arts and helping them to find their place of ministry.
  4. Supporting and administering the work of worship ministries with the Worship Pastor.
  5. Evaluating the worship ministry to continually strive for integrity and excellence.
- Section 2. Beyond the ratified Chairperson, this committee shall elect from its own members the Vice-Chairperson and Secretary. Including the Chairperson, this committee will be made up of no less than five people and no more than nine.

## **Article XIII – Annual Business Meeting and Special Business Sessions**

- Section 1. The Chairperson of the Church Council will make the congregation aware of their privilege to participate on three consecutive Sundays prior to the Annual Business Meeting and as soon as possible for other business meetings.
- Section 2. All Committee Chairpersons, Church Council Congregational Representatives, and Elders shall be ratified for their terms at the Annual Business Meeting of the Church.
- Section 3. The church business year shall start September first and end August thirty-first. The Annual Business Meeting of the church shall be held at the church prior to the beginning of the new year, at such a date and hour as shall be decided by the Church Council.
- Section 4. Each committee or other ministry group(s) shall submit a report during the Annual Business Session. Such a report is to include ministry goal projections for the coming year and should be guided by the principles of the ministry direction stated in Article II. These reports are to be reviewed by the Church Council prior to the Annual Business session.
- Section 5. A special business meeting of the church may be called at any time by the Chairperson.
- a. Upon written request of five members of this church (each from a different family) stating the purpose for which they desire the meeting to be called, the Chairperson shall call a special business meeting of the church.
  - b. For any special meeting of the church to be held, the Chairperson shall give at least fourteen days notice, figured from the time he has been given the written request, or the time when a special meeting has been determined to be necessary. Such notice shall state the object of calling the special business meeting and give the date and place for holding same.
  - c. The Chairperson may be exempt from the fourteen day notice in case of an emergency.
- Section 6. At each business meeting, every person participating will be asked to sign a statement affirming their covenant commitment to the local church. This statement, in keeping with the purpose statement of Article II and the intent of Article III, shall be as follows:

My participation in this business session is based upon my desire to be faithful to support this local church body as we seek to know and implement God's Will.

In conjunction with Article III, Section 2., any person who becomes inactive in the church, after having made the commitment to unite with this fellowship, should not expect to participate in the business sessions of the church.

Section 7. Absentee Ballot

In the event a member finds it impossible to attend a business meeting due to an unavoidable reason, this person may cast an absentee ballot. Any absentee ballot must be signed and placed in a sealed envelope and given to the Secretary of the Corporation before the business meeting.

Section 8. On a two year basis, for the purpose of positive evaluation concerning the ministry direction of the church, the congregation will be given the opportunity to register a vote of confidence at the Annual Business Meeting. This vote of confidence will be given relative to the following statement:

As a participating, concerned, and supportive member of this church, I affirm the ministry direction the leadership of this church is pursuing.

At this time, each voting member will be encouraged to give written expression as to matters of concern they may have and the Church Council will take these suggestions and the outcome of the vote of confidence and deal appropriately with concerns it raises.

**Article XIV – Order of Business – Congregational Meetings**

Section 1. All business transactions of the congregational business meetings of the church shall be carried by a two-thirds majority vote except as provided for in these By-Laws.

Section 2. Sixty voting members present shall constitute a quorum at all business meetings of the church.

Section 3. The order of business at the Annual Business Meeting of the church shall be as follows:

1. Prayer
2. Reading of Article III, Sections 1. & 2.
3. Reading of Article XIII, Section 6.
4. Reading of Article XIV, Section 2.
5. Reading of minutes of the last meeting
6. Report of Officers
7. Reports of Boards and Committees
8. Unfinished business
9. Ratification of Officers
10. Original resolutions and New Business
11. Adjournment

**Article XV – Distribution of By-Laws and Amendments**

Section 1. The Secretary shall cause that these By-Laws be printed or typewritten and a copy shall be made available for each church family.

Section 2. These By-Laws may be amended, altered, or changed by a two-thirds vote of the entire membership of the church present at any regular or special business meeting of the church.

Section 3. A copy of the proposed amendment, alteration, or change, and notice that action will be taken thereon, shall be read publicly at least fourteen days prior to such regular or special meeting.

**Article XVI – Statement of Adoption**

Be it known: That these By-laws are duly and officially adopted by the First Church of God, 200 West Superior Street, Alma, Michigan on November 17, 2002. Amendments have been approved on November 16, 2003 and November 13, 2005. From November 13, 2005 forward, this instrument becomes effective and all By-Laws previously adopted by this corporation are hereby rendered null and void.

First Church of God  
Alma, Michigan

Chairperson of the Church Council \_\_\_\_\_

Vice-Chairperson of the Church Council \_\_\_\_\_

Secretary of the Church Council \_\_\_\_\_