



June 17

**CHURCH  
CONSTITUTION**

**2012**

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LAST RATIFIED BY THE  
CONGREGATION ON 06/17/2012

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## Intent Of The Document

The intent of this document is to provide a structure for operation of the church that is flexible enough to meet long-term changing needs as we passionately seek to fulfill our mission as a church.

*And Jesus said to him, "You will love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the great and first commandment. And a second is like it: You will love your neighbor as yourself." Matthew 22:37-38*

*Then Jesus came to them and said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age." Matthew 28:18-20*

## Name

We will call ourselves Chatham Community Church.

## Beliefs

We recognize that while language and culture shift over time, our core beliefs are unchanging. While holding these core beliefs, we anticipate that this statement will be updated to maintain relevance and clarity. Such updates will be initiated by the elders through position papers or by amending the constitution.

In presenting our beliefs, we keep in mind the following three principles:

**In all essential beliefs—we have unity.**

**In all non-essential beliefs—we have liberty.**

**In all our beliefs—we show love.**

Our essential beliefs are as follows:

## About God

There is one God who is infinite, eternal, almighty and perfect in holiness, truth and love. In the mystery and unity of the one God there are three Persons—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—co-existent, co-equal, and co-eternal. The Father is not the Son, the Son is not the Holy Spirit, and the Holy Spirit is not the Father; yet each is truly Deity.

## **About God the Father**

God the Father is Creator of heaven and earth, and He daily sustains all His creation. He rules over all and, together with the Son and the Spirit, is the only Sovereign. His plans and purposes cannot be thwarted. He is faithful to every promise and in His unfathomable grace gave His Son, Jesus Christ, for our redemption. He made all things for His joy and His glory, and He intends for people to live as His children.

## **About God the Son**

Jesus Christ is the Son of God. Eternally existing as God, Jesus became human, fully God and fully man; he was supernaturally conceived by the Holy Spirit, and born of the Virgin Mary. He lived a sinless human life and offered Himself as the perfect sacrifice for the sins of people by dying on a cross. He rose from the dead after three days to demonstrate His power over sin and death. He ascended to Heaven victorious and will return to earth again someday to reign as King of Kings and Lord of Lords.

## **About God the Holy Spirit**

The Holy Spirit is present in the world to make men aware of their need for the Savior, Jesus Christ. The Holy Spirit lives in every believer from the moment of conversion. He provides the Christ-follower with strength for living, understanding of spiritual truth, and guidance in doing what is right. He gives every believer gifts for service and empowers them for ministry. As followers of Jesus, we seek to live with the Spirit's help moment-by-moment as we journey through life.

## **About the Bible**

The Bible is God's self-revelation to His creation. It was written by human authors, under the supernatural guidance and inspiration of the Holy Spirit. It is the supreme source of truth for Christian beliefs and living. The Bible is God-breathed and it is wholly true.

## **About Human Beings**

God made human beings in His image as the pinnacle of His creation. People were created to honor God and to enjoy a relationship with Him, but they rebelled and alienated themselves from God. This rebellion resulted in an inward depravity of all humans that is expressed in sinful attitudes and actions. All of us are marred by sin and are incapable of living out the full humanity for which we were created. Broken and sinful people, whatever their character or achievements, are lost and without hope apart from God's salvation.

## About Salvation

Salvation is God's free gift to us, but we must accept it by faith. We can never make up for our sins by self-improvement or good works. Only by trusting in Jesus Christ alone as God's offer of forgiveness can anyone be saved from sin's penalty. Through Christ's atonement for sin, an individual is reconciled to God as Father, becomes His child, is forgiven of his sin, and is regenerated by the Holy Spirit.

The natural response of faith in Jesus is to turn from our self-ruled life and follow Jesus as Lord. Followers of Jesus are empowered by the Spirit to grow in relationship with Jesus, to become more like Him, and to carry out His ministry. This part of God's work in us is called sanctification. Ultimately, all believers will be glorified with Christ, sharing in His victory over sin and death.

## About the Church

The universal church, the body of Christ, consists of all those who have genuinely believed in Christ for their salvation, regardless of church or denominational affiliation. All members of the universal church are to be a vital and committed part of a local church. We believe that the local church is a gathering of believers in Jesus Christ who are joined together for the purposes of worship, prayer, observance of the ordinances, teaching, care, confession, relationships, training, serving, and evangelism.

The local church should be a witness to the contemporary world. In order to fulfill the mission of evangelism and discipleship of all nations, each local church should creatively adapt its ministry, worship, and teaching to the particular context in which God has placed the church.

## About the Ordinances

Jesus Christ commanded His followers to observe the ordinances of baptism and the Lord's Supper until he returns. Water baptism serves as a public identification with Jesus—a visual and symbolic demonstration of a person's connection to Christ's death, burial and resurrection. It signifies that his former way of life has been put to death and that he is now a new creation of God. The Lord's Supper symbolizes the breaking of Christ's body and the shedding of His blood as a payment for sins. As we celebrate the Lord's Supper with an attitude of faith and self-examination, we publicly remember the death of Christ, receive spiritual nourishment for our souls, and signify our unity with other members of Christ's body. The Lord's Supper is enjoyed by believers repeatedly as a sign of continued participation in the salvation benefits of Christ's death.

## About Eternity

We long for the future, physical, visible, personal, and glorious return of Jesus Christ, the resurrection of the dead and the translation of those alive in Christ, the judgment of the just and the unjust, and the fulfillment of Christ's kingdom in the new heavens and the new earth.

People were created to exist forever. We will either exist eternally with God through forgiveness and salvation in Christ or exist eternally separated from God by sin. Satan with his hosts and all those without Christ will finally be separated from the benevolent presence of God and will endure eternal punishment. Those whose hope is in Christ will live forever in glorified bodies without sorrow or suffering. These will reign with Christ, serving Him and giving Him unending praise and glory. Then the whole earth will worship the God Who makes all things new.

## Membership

### Responsibilities

Anyone who trusts Christ for salvation is a member of God's family. Chatham Community Church is our local expression of God's family. Members of Chatham Community Church commit to seek and worship God together and strive to fulfill God's mission for the church under the guidance of biblically-defined leadership.

*And this is the testimony, that God gave us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. Whoever has the Son has life; whoever does not have the Son of God does not have life. I write these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God that you may know that you have eternal life. 1 John 5: 11-13.*

*For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast. For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them. Ephesians 2:8-10*

*There is one body and one Spirit—just as you were called to the one hope that belongs to your call—one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all. Ephesians 4:4-6*

We welcome all followers of Jesus Christ who covenant with us to be a part of this church family. The Elders will approve a written membership process, which all prospective members must complete. Members must be at least 16 years of age.

Members will be fully engaged in the life and mission of the church as communicated by the church's leadership. Every member is a minister, who is to be equipped and empowered to serve according to his or her gifts. Members will strive to maintain a growing and passionate spiritual life that is lived in the context of honest and authentic relationships with others in the church.

*Equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ, so that we may no longer be children, tossed to and fro by the waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by human cunning, by craftiness in deceitful schemes. Rather, speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ, from whom the whole body, joined and held together by every joint with which it is equipped, when each part is working properly, makes the body grow so that it builds itself up in love. Ephesians 4:12-16*

*They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. Everyone was filled with awe, and many wonders and miraculous signs were done by the apostles. All the believers were together and had everything in common. Selling their possessions and goods they gave to anyone as he had need. Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, praising God and enjoying the favor of all of the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved. Acts 2:42-47*

## **Conduct**

Should a member promote unsound doctrine, have conduct that harms the testimony of the church or engage in ongoing behavior compromising the spiritual health of the member, the elders may follow a process of discipline and restoration, which could lead to the release of that person's membership in the event that the person refuses to be restored to healthy involvement in the church.

*Brothers, if anyone is caught in any transgression, you who are spiritual should restore him in a spirit of gentleness. Keep watch on yourself, lest you too be tempted. Bear one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ. Galatians 6:1-2*

## **Release**

Any member who is absent for one year or more (except for extenuating circumstances) or who decides to become a member of another local church will automatically be deemed to have released their membership.

## Governance

We believe that Jesus Christ is the head of the church. As the church, we are to exalt Jesus as our ultimate leader as we follow His teachings, example and heart in carrying out His mission.

*And Jesus Christ is the head of the body, the church. He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in everything he might be preeminent. Colossians 1:18*

The New Testament establishes the offices of elder and deacon in God's plan for the leadership of the local church.

## Elders

Elders are the spiritual leaders, shepherds and overseers of all aspects of Chatham Community Church.

*So I exhort the elders among you, as a fellow elder and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, as well as a partaker in the glory that is going to be revealed: shepherd the flock of God that is among you, exercising oversight, not under compulsion, but willingly, as God would have you; not for shameful gain, but eagerly; not domineering over those in your charge, but being examples to the flock. And when the chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the unfading crown of glory. 1 Peter 5:1-4*

## Responsibilities

Elders will be able to teach, encourage others in the church's mission, and delegate ministry to key leaders. As overseers for the church, elders function as discerners and guardians of the church.

*Pay careful attention to yourselves and to all the flock, in which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to care for the church of God, which he obtained with his own blood. Acts 20:28*

## Character Requirements

The elders will be mature men, be a model for others of life with Jesus, maintain a good reputation, and display sound judgment. An elder will strive to maintain a growing and healthy spiritual life that is lived in the context of honest and authentic relationships with others in the church.

*The saying is trustworthy: If anyone aspires to the office of overseer, he desires a noble task. Therefore an overseer must be above reproach, the husband of one wife, sober minded,*

*self-controlled, respectable, hospitable, able to teach, not a drunkard, not violent but gentle, not quarrelsome, not a lover of money. He must manage his own household well, with all dignity keeping his children submissive, for if someone does not know how to manage his own household, how will he care for God's church? He must not be a recent convert, or he may become puffed up with conceit and fall into the condemnation of the devil. Moreover, he must be well thought of by outsiders, so that he may not fall into disgrace, into a snare of the devil.*  
*1 Timothy 3:1-7*

*This is why I left you in Crete, so that you might put what remained into order, and appoint elders in every town as I directed you—if anyone is above reproach, the husband of one wife, and his children are believers and not open to the charge of debauchery or insubordination. For an overseer, as God's steward, must be above reproach. He must not be arrogant or quick-tempered or a drunkard or violent or greedy for gain, but hospitable, a lover of good, self-controlled, upright, holy, and disciplined. He must hold firm to the trustworthy word as taught, so that he may be able to give instruction in sound doctrine and also to rebuke those who contradict it.*  
*Titus 1:5-9*

### **Selection and Rotation**

Existing elders will nominate new elders. Members who would like to designate someone for consideration should make the name known to an existing elder. Elder nominees will go through a preparation and watch period before being announced as a proposed elder. The nominee will be announced to the congregation at least thirty days before the affirmation vote. The congregation will be solicited for any biblical reasons why the individual should not become an elder. Anonymous reasons will not be accepted.

*Do not admit a charge against an elder except on the evidence of two or three witnesses. 1 Timothy 5:19*

The elders will create a process for selection of new elders, rotation, and the number of elders. The lead pastor, once affirmed into his office as pastor, will be an elder without rotation. The term for all other elders will be three years. Other church staff may be elders, but no more than fifty percent of the elders may be staff members.

*Let the elders who rule well be considered worthy of double honor, especially those who labor in preaching and teaching. 1 Timothy 5:17*

## Administrative Elder

At the beginning of each calendar year, the elders will choose an administrative elder to serve as the leader of the elder team. The term of the administrative elder will be one year. This role may not be filled by pastoral staff who are also elders. The duties of this role are:

- Provide logistical support for the elder team
- Serve as spokesman and moderator for the elder team as needed
- Provide supervisory support for the lead pastor

Elders serving in this role will model the attitude and behavior of a servant leader as illustrated in the gospel of Mark.

*<sup>42</sup> Jesus called them together and said, "You know that those who are regarded as rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their high officials exercise authority over them. <sup>43</sup> Not so with you. Instead, whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, <sup>44</sup> and whoever wants to be first must be slave of all. <sup>45</sup> For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many." Mark 10:42-45*

## Staff As Elders

Should circumstances create a situation where more than fifty percent of the elders are church staff, then the elders will rectify that situation as soon as possible, providing that adequate time is taken to ensure that well-prepared and called men are raised up as new elder nominees through the normal selection processes for elders.

## Resignation

Elders will review and evaluate themselves each year. Because of circumstances that have arisen in the life of an elder, he may leave his position before the end of his three-year term, but this should only be done after engaging the other elders in honest conversation and seeking their input about this decision. An elder who manages his life well in this way is to be commended.

## Meeting Requirements

Sixty percent of the elders will constitute a quorum for a meeting. Specially called meetings should be scheduled in a reasonable way that allows for maximum participation of elders.

## Removal

Removing an elder or terminating a lead pastor can occur only with a seventy-five percent vote of all the elders, exclusive of the person whose removal is being considered.

## **Lead Pastor Role**

The lead pastor serves in the role of directional leader of the church. Along with his brother elders, he is responsible for collaboratively creating a vision and church direction. Once adopted, he is responsible for working with the church leadership to implement the vision.

The lead pastor is an elder and equal to his brother elders in the biblical responsibilities of that office. Along with his brother elders, he cares for and serves the church as a shepherd of the flock. As such, he should possess an affinity for this church family, a sense of God's call to our mission, and a burden for the lost and broken in our area. The lead pastor will be gifted in teaching and leadership and will display the wisdom and discernment needed to guard and guide the church in effective ministry. And he is responsible for teaching, preaching, and leading the church in the study of scripture. Along with his brother elders, he will follow the Spirit in discerning God's will for the church.

If the need arises for a new lead pastor, the elders will determine the process for selection of a candidate, schedule a congregational meeting, and present the selection process to the congregation for affirmation. Affirmation of the selection process will constitute a simple majority vote of the members attending the congregational meeting.

## **Staff Hiring**

The elders may appoint other staff as required to provide care, teaching, counseling and administration to the congregation. The number and types of staff required will vary from time to time, depending on church growth, financial resources available and discerned need. Except for hiring the lead Pastor, elders may directly hire any and all staff, or they may choose to delegate this responsibility.

## Deacons

### Character Requirements

The elders may appoint some ministry leaders as deacons. Deacons are men and women who are recognized in the church family as models of life with Jesus. Deacons will display sound beliefs, proven character and trusted wisdom.

*Deacons likewise must be dignified, not double-tongued, not addicted to much wine, not greedy for dishonest gain. They must hold the mystery of the faith with a clear conscience. And let them also be tested first; then let them serve as deacons if they prove themselves blameless. Their wives likewise must be dignified, not slanderers, but sober-minded, faithful in all things. Let deacons each be the husband of one wife, managing their children and their own households well. For those who serve well as deacons gain a good standing for themselves and also great confidence in the faith that is in Christ Jesus. 1 Timothy 3:8-13*

### Responsibilities

Deacons are recognized ministry leaders who are devoted to serving specific ministries of the church. The church will seek to equip and empower deacons for ministry as those who help the church to fulfill its mission. Elders will empower Deacons to lead assigned ministries with Deacons collaborating as needed with Elders for encouragement and guidance. Deacons are expected to engage with the Elders, staff, and other ministry leaders in the collaborative leadership of the church.

A deacon will strive to maintain a growing and healthy spiritual life that is lived in the context of honest and authentic relationships with others in the church.

### Selection and Service

The elders will seek the input of the congregation in recognizing potential deacons. Members who would like to designate someone for consideration as a deacon should make the name known to an existing deacon or elder. Potential deacons will go through a preparation and watch period before being appointed as deacons. A deacon will commit to three years of service.

### Removal

When necessary, deacons may be removed by a seventy-five percent vote of the elders in a scheduled meeting.

## Resignation

Because of circumstances that have arisen in the life of a deacon, he or she may leave his or her position, but this should only be done after engaging an elder (or elders) in honest conversation and seeking input about this decision. A deacon who manages his or her life well in this way is to be commended.

*And the twelve summoned the full number of the disciples and said, "It is not right that we should give up preaching the word of God to serve tables. Therefore, brothers, pick out from among you seven men of good repute, full of the Spirit and of wisdom, whom we will appoint to this duty. But we will devote ourselves to prayer and to the ministry of the word." And what they said pleased the whole gathering, and they chose Stephen, a man full of faith and of the Holy Spirit, and Philip, and Prochorus, and Nicanor, and Timon, and Parmenas, and Nicolaus, a proselyte of Antioch. These they set before the apostles, and they prayed and laid their hands on them. And the word of God continued to increase, and the number of the disciples multiplied greatly in Jerusalem, and a great many of the priests became obedient to the faith. And Stephen, full of grace and power, was doing great wonders and signs among the people. Acts 6:2-8*

*I commend to you our sister Phoebe, a deaconess of the church at Cenchreae, that you may welcome her in the Lord in a way worthy of the saints, and help her in whatever she may need from you, for she has been a patron of many and of myself as well.  
Romans 16:1-2*

## Congregational Meetings

### Affirmation Votes

Some decisions of the church require congregational affirmation. The elders will determine the method of voting to be used. The following decisions require congregational affirmation of those members voting in a called congregational meeting as indicated below:

Subject of Vote Percentage	Needed for Affirmation
Selection Of A New Elder	66%
Change Of The Consitution	66%
Annual budget	66%
Incurring debt of more than one-twelfth of the approved annual budget	66%
The hiring of a lead pastor	80%
Lead Pastor Selection Process	Simple Majority

### Meeting Schedule Requirements

The elders will call congregational meetings. Annual meetings will occur within one month before or after the conclusion of the fiscal year. Meetings which involve a congregational decision or affirmation-vote require a twenty day notice to the congregation.

Special informational meetings may be called by the elders as needed with no prior notice.

### Agendas

Church members may recommend to the elders agenda items for a meeting. However, members do not need to wait for a meeting to begin a conversation, and members are encouraged to discuss any matter with an elder.

## **Financial Oversight**

The elders will ensure that adequate internal financial controls are in place to safeguard the church's financial resources and to protect the reputation of Chatham Community Church and its staff.

## **Determination Of Compensation**

No person receiving compensation directly or indirectly from Chatham Community Church will be in a position to determine his or her own salary or benefits.

## **Finance Team**

The elders will establish a team (or teams) for conducting the functions of financial audit, review, reporting and other fiduciary functions as well as assisting in budget creation and financial planning. Maintaining the integrity of the finances is the ultimate mission of this ministry. This team (or teams) will advise the elders and staff in the judicious use and management of the financial resources of Chatham Community Church and its ministries. Taking input and recommendations from this team (or teams), elders act as fiduciaries of all church funds.

## **Expenditures**

When the resources are available, the elders may authorize expenditures up to ten percent above the approved annual budget. Expenditures of more than ten percent above the approved annual budget require congregational approval.

### **Inspection**

Every member will have the right, at any reasonable time, to inspect all books, records, documents of every kind (with the exception of personnel and contribution records) and the physical properties of Chatham Community Church. If necessary to maintain good order, the elders may restrict and limit the number of inspections or establish an orderly manner for such to be conducted. However, in no event will a reasonable inspection of the books and records be denied to a member.

### **Amendments & Dissolution**

This constitution may be amended as stated above. Should the church be dissolved, the elders will direct that all assets be given to an evangelical ministry or other organization that qualifies as a non-profit organization.