

CONSTITUTION OF REDEEMING GRACE CHURCH



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(Seventh revision – September 8, 2024)

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A. NAME/PURPOSE

1. The name of this church is Redeeming Grace Church (RGC), a Vermont not-for-profit corporation.
2. Implications of the name
 - a. We are a church. We are a body of true believers in Jesus Christ who have been saved by him on the basis of the one and only gospel as it is found in the Holy Scriptures. We bear all the historic marks of the true church: the Word (i.e. the gospel rightly taught) the sacraments (i.e. the Lord's Table and Baptism, rightly administered) and discipline (i.e. a holy, orderly congregation rightly governed as prescribed by the Word of God.)
 - b. We exist because of God's redeeming grace, which implies that God alone initiates and effects salvation, that he seeks out and reclaims sinners, all by his grace and all through faith. We desire that an atmosphere of grace permeate every aspect of RGC's life.

B. VISION

1. RGC exists to pursue the vision of proclaiming the grace of Jesus Christ that sets sinners free to serve the Living God with whole-hearted joy.
2. This vision requires three areas of emphasis in our endeavors:
 - a. Proclamation
Jesus Christ is our passion, and we believe the good news of his life, death and resurrection is the only hope for rescuing rebels against God and restoring them to life, joy, peace, sanity and purpose. We are confident that Jesus is the theme of the entire Bible, committed to building all our ministry on his gospel, and convinced that proclaiming Him is the only way to see sinners brought from death to life.
 - b. Transformation
Changed lives are our vision, and we believe that grace makes a difference. We are persuaded that the gospel changes every true believer, making us each hate and forsake our own sin and love our Savior and His church. Christ's gospel is a model for living, so we work through love to develop each person into a bold, joyful follower of Jesus, who loves others more than self. All the while we seek to show grace, kindness and forgiveness to other sinners because that is what our Lord has done for us.
 - c. Multiplication
We are eager to see gospel-driven churches planted and revitalized here and abroad. We believe that the command of Jesus to preach the gospel everywhere applies to us all, and so we engage in life-on-life witness with family, friends, neighbors, and co-workers. We are committed to tireless work and sacrificial giving so that as many as possible may come under the sound of the gospel. Our local focus is church planting and revitalization in New England; our global focus is primarily to promote the growth of healthy, gospel-preaching local churches.

3. Every ministry of RGC shall have as its basis the furtherance of this vision. No ministry shall be engaged unless it is determined that we expect it to promote the vision, nor sustained if it fails to demonstrate its fruitfulness in these priorities.

C. DOCTRINAL STANDARDS

1. Statement of faith

Together with the Church in all ages,

We believe in one God the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth, and of all things visible and invisible.

And in one Lord Jesus Christ, the only-begotten Son of God, begotten of the Father before all worlds; God of God, Light of Light, very God of very God; begotten, not made, being of one substance with the Father, by whom all things were made; who, for us men and for our salvation, came down from heaven, and was incarnate by the Holy Spirit of the virgin Mary, and was made man; and was crucified also for us under Pontius Pilate; he suffered and was buried; and the third day he rose again, according to the Scriptures; and ascended into heaven, and sits on the right hand of the Father; and he shall come again, with glory, to judge the living and the dead; whose kingdom shall have no end.

And we believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord and Giver of Life; who proceeds from the Father and the Son; who with the Father and the Son together is worshiped and glorified; who spoke by the prophets.

And we believe in one Holy Universal and Apostolic Church. We acknowledge one Baptism for the remission of sins, and we look for the resurrection of the dead, and the life of the world to come. (The Nicene Creed)

Furthermore,

We subscribe to the following statement of faith, which is based largely on the New Hampshire Confession of Faith 1853, as the fundamental doctrinal standard of Redeeming Grace Church.

a. Of the Scriptures

We believe that the Holy Bible, specifically the 39 books of the Old Testament and the 27 books of the New Testament, is the written word of God; that it was written by men divinely inspired, and is a perfect treasure of heavenly instruction; that it has God for its author, salvation for its end, and truth without any mixture of error for its matter; that it reveals the principles by which God will judge us; and therefore is, and shall remain to the end of the world, the true center of Christian union, and the supreme standard by which all human conduct, creeds, and opinions should be tried.

b. Of the True God

We believe that there is one, and only one, living and true God, an infinite, intelligent Spirit, whose name is YAHWEH, the Maker and Supreme Ruler of Heaven and Earth; inexpressibly glorious in holiness, and worthy of all possible honor, confidence, and love; that in the unity of the Godhead there are three persons, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit; equal in every

divine perfection, and executing distinct but harmonious offices in the great work of redemption.

c. Of Providence

We believe that God, from eternity, decrees or permits all things that come to pass, and perpetually upholds, directs and governs all creatures and all events; yet so as not in any way to be the author or approver of sin nor to destroy the free agency and responsibility of intelligent creatures.

d. Of the Fall of Man

We believe that God created man in his own image, and originally free from sin; but through the temptation of Satan, man voluntarily transgressed the command of God, and fell from his original holiness and righteousness; in consequence of which all mankind are now sinners, having inherited a nature corrupt and wholly opposed to God and his law, and are under just condemnation to eternal ruin, without defense or excuse.

e. Of the Way of Salvation

We believe that the salvation of sinners is wholly of grace, and is accomplished through Jesus Christ, the only begotten Son of God; who is the divinely appointed Mediator between God and man; who without sin took upon himself human nature and perfectly fulfilled the divine law; who by his death upon the cross made a full atonement for the sins of his people; and who rose from the dead and ascended to his Father, at whose right hand he now sits enthroned, ever living to make intercession for his people. He is the only Mediator, the Prophet, Priest, and King of the Church, and is therefore in every way qualified to be a suitable, a compassionate, and an all-sufficient Savior.

f. Of Justification

We believe that the great gospel blessing which Christ secures to those who believe in him is justification; that justification is God's gracious and full acquittal of sinners wherein he removes our guilt and reconciles us to himself; that it is bestowed through faith alone in Jesus Christ, not in consideration of anything wrought in us or done by us, but solely on account of his substitutionary death on the cross, and on the basis of his perfect righteousness, which is freely imputed to us by God; and that it brings us into a state of most blessed peace and favor with God, and secures every other blessing needful for time and eternity.

g. Of the Freeness of Salvation

We believe that the blessings of salvation are made free to all by the gospel; that it is the immediate duty of all to accept them by a cordial, penitent, and obedient faith; and that nothing prevents the salvation of the greatest sinner on earth but his own inherent depravity and voluntary rejection of the gospel; which rejection involves him in an aggravated condemnation.

h. Of Grace in Regeneration

We believe that, in order to be saved, sinners must be regenerated, or born again; that regeneration consists in giving a holy disposition to the mind; that it is effected in a manner above our comprehension by the power of the Holy Spirit, in connection with divine truth, so as to secure our voluntary obedience to the gospel; and that its proper evidence appears in the holy fruits of repentance, and faith, and newness of life.

i. Of Repentance and Faith

We believe that repentance and faith are sacred duties, and also inseparable graces, wrought in our souls by the regenerating Spirit of God; whereby being deeply convinced of our guilt, danger, and helplessness, and of the way of salvation by Christ, we turn to God with unfeigned

contrition, confession, and supplication for mercy; at the same time heartily receiving the Lord Jesus Christ as our Prophet, Priest, and King, and relying on him alone as the only and all-sufficient Savior.

j. Of God's Purpose of Grace

We believe that election is the eternal purpose of God, according to which he graciously regenerates, sanctifies, and saves sinners; that being perfectly consistent with the free agency of man, it comprehends all the means in connection with the end; that it is a most glorious display of God's sovereign goodness, being infinitely free, wise, holy, and unchangeable; that it utterly excludes boasting, and promotes humility, love, prayer, praise, trust in God, and active imitation of his free mercy; that it encourages the use of means in the highest degree; that it may be ascertained by its effects in all who truly believe the gospel; that it is the foundation of Christian assurance; and that to ascertain it with regard to ourselves demands and deserves the utmost diligence.

k. Of Sanctification

We believe that sanctification is the process by which, according to the will of God, we are made partakers of his holiness; that it is a progressive work; that it is begun in regeneration; and that it is carried on in the hearts of believers by the presence and power of the Holy Spirit, the Sealer and Comforter, in the continual use of the appointed means—especially the Word of God, self-examination, self-denial, watchfulness, prayer, and devotion to the local church.

l. Of the Perseverance of Saints

We believe that such only are real believers as endure unto the end; that their persevering attachment to Christ is the grand mark which distinguishes them from superficial professors; that a special Providence watches over their welfare; and they are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation.

m. Of a Gospel Church

We believe that Christians are to associate themselves into particular churches, according to Christ's commandment; that a visible church of Christ is a congregation of baptized believers, bound together by covenant in the faith and fellowship of the gospel, and exercising the various gifts given them by the Holy Spirit for the building up of the church; that its primary duties are the reading and preaching of God's Word, the right administration of Christ's ordinances, and the faithful exercise of discipline over its members; and that its only scriptural officers are elders or pastors, and deacons, whose qualifications and duties are defined in the Epistles to Timothy and Titus.

n. Of Baptism

We believe that baptism is an ordinance of the Lord Jesus Christ, obligatory upon every believer, wherein he is baptized in water in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit; that it is to be done by immersion to show forth in a solemn and beautiful emblem our faith in the crucified, buried, and risen Savior, and our death to sin and resurrection to a new life; that its only proper subjects are those who do actually profess repentance toward God, and faith in and obedience to the Lord Jesus; and that it is pre-requisite to the privileges of church membership, and to the Lord's Supper.

o. Of the Lord's Supper

We believe that the Lord's Supper is an ordinance of the Lord Jesus Christ, to be observed by his churches until the end of the world; that it is to be observed by the eating of bread and the drinking of the cup; and that it is in no sense a sacrifice, but is designed to

commemorate his death, to confirm the faith and other graces of Christians, and to be a bond, pledge, and renewal of their communion with him, and of their church fellowship.

p. Of the Lord's Day

We believe that the first day of the week is the Lord's Day; and it is to be kept sacred to religious purposes, by the regular assembling of ourselves for public worship, by the devout observance of the means of grace, both private and public; and by preparation for the rest that remains for the people of God.

q. Of the Nature of Mankind and the Family

We believe that God has ordained the family as the foundational institution of human society. It is composed of persons related to one another by marriage, blood, or adoption.

We believe that God's great and glorious purpose was to make man in his own image, to reflect his glory and goodness. And in his wisdom, he created man male and female. These two distinct but complementary sexes together reflect the image and likeness of God.

We believe that God wonderfully and immutably creates each person biologically male or female. We may not (and have no right to) reject the biological sex with which we were created, for this is a rejection of God's personal, merciful, and wonderful design for us.

We believe that marriage is the uniting of one man and one woman in covenant commitment for a lifetime. It is God's unique gift to reveal the union between Christ and his church and to provide for the man and the woman in marriage the framework for intimate companionship, the sole channel of sexual expression according to biblical standards, and the means for procreation of the human race.

We believe that the husband and wife are of equal worth before God, since both are created in God's image. The marriage relationship models the way God relates to his covenant people. A husband is to love his wife as Christ loved the church. He has the God-given responsibility to provide for, to protect, and to lead his family. A wife is to submit herself graciously to the servant leadership of her husband even as the church willingly submits to the headship of Christ. She, being in the image of God as is her husband and thus equal to him, has the God-given responsibility to respect her husband and to serve as his helper.

We believe that children, from the moment of conception, are a blessing and heritage from the Lord. Parents are to demonstrate to their children God's pattern for marriage. Parents are to teach their children the gospel of Jesus Christ, the worldview and values that flow from the gospel, and the obedience of faith that is the fruit of the gospel. Parents are also to lead them, through consistent lifestyle example and loving discipline, to make choices based on biblical truth. Children are to honor and obey their parents.

r. Of Civil Government

We believe that civil government is of divine appointment, for the interests and good order of human society; and that magistrates are to be prayed for, conscientiously honored, and obeyed, except only in things opposed to the will of our Lord Jesus Christ, who is the Prince of the kings of the earth.

s. Of the Righteous and the Wicked

We believe that there is a radical and essential difference between the righteous and the wicked; that such only as through faith are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and sanctified by the Spirit of our God, are truly righteous in his esteem; while all such as continue in impenitence

and unbelief are in his sight wicked, and under the curse; and this distinction holds among men both in and after death.

t. Of the Resurrection and the World to Come

We believe that death is not the end; that though the bodies of men after death return to dust, their spirits live on, the righteous departing immediately to be with the Lord, and the wicked to be reserved under darkness to the judgment. We believe that the end of the world is approaching; that at the last day Christ will descend from heaven and raise the dead, both righteous and wicked, from the grave to final retribution; that a solemn separation will then take place which will fix forever the final state of men in heaven or hell, the wicked being adjudged to everlasting conscious punishment, and the righteous to everlasting life and joy.

2. Redeeming Grace Church Distinctives

RGC finds itself closely aligned theologically with the historic Reformed statements of doctrine, appreciative of insights contained in such confessions as the *Westminster Standards*, *The Heidelberg Catechism*, *The Canons of Dort*, and with the 1646 edition of *The First London Confession of Faith*, with its strong Baptist definition of the church and its unashamed declaration of the sovereignty of God in salvation. We do not view any such confession as a formal standard for the church, but value the way confessions help articulate our understanding of the historic Christian faith.

D. GOVERNMENT

1. Philosophy of Government

Redeeming Grace Church believes that there are essentially two offices prescribed by Scripture, that of elder (i.e. bishop, overseer, presbyter) and that of deacon. The office of elder is an essential office, while the office of deacon is a desirable office. We believe that the church is to be managed by elders and that appropriate authority has been vested in them (as a group, not individually) by God to carry out their responsibilities (1 Timothy 5:17; Hebrews 13:17). This authority is not a license for domineering over the flock (1 Peter 5:1-4; Matthew 20:26-28), but like a husband, the elders are to lead with self-giving love, being examples to the flock. Deacons are harder to define biblically, but their role seems to be assisting the elders (Acts 6:1-6), so that the elders can more fully devote themselves to the ministry of the Word and to prayer.

Further, Redeeming Grace Church shall be ordered according to the principles of elder-led congregationalism, which holds that the congregation is the final authority in the approval of members, the exercise of church discipline, approval of the annual budget, and the establishment of the doctrinal standards of Redeeming Grace Church. How the congregation exercises its authority in these matters is discussed in section F on Membership. In all other matters, the elders have the final authority to manage and oversee the church as they deem best, always drawing deeply from congregational input as is both wise and loving in regard to leadership.

2. Logistics of Government

a. Qualifications for Officers

1) Elder

The qualifications for being an elder, aside from being a member of RGC, are listed in 1 Timothy 3:1-6 and Titus 1:6-9. We believe that elders must be men and may be single or married. Practically, though no restrictions are placed on number or duration of service, we believe that an odd number (except one) best facilitates wise management. Although other terms are biblical, we will use the term “elder.”

2) Deacon

The qualifications for being a deacon, aside from being a member of RGC, are listed in 1 Timothy 3:7-13. Again, as to interpretive tensions, we believe that deacons may be men or women, and single or married. The term “deacon” will be used regardless of sex, in accordance with the Scripture.

3) Pastor (Full-Time Elder)

Based on Ephesians 4:7, we believe that pastor/teacher is a gift, not an office. However, we believe that it is advantageous to have a full-time elder, who works especially hard at preaching and teaching. As such, he should be paid a fair wage, since the laborer is worthy of his wages (1 Timothy 5:17,18).

b. Selection of Officers

1) Recommendation Process

Anyone in the church may recommend someone to be an elder or deacon at any time. Simply notify one of the elders of someone (including yourself) whom you feel is qualified and aspiring to serve. Recommendations will be given to the elders in a private manner and not publicly. If the elders determine that either the elder or deacon board needs to be expanded, they will seek recommendations from the congregation.

2) Evaluation Process

The elders will give due consideration to any recommendation received. If the elders decide to move forward with the candidate, the candidate will be presented to the members, who will have the opportunity to provide the elders feedback concerning the candidate (the time period to offer feedback will be no less than two weeks). Based upon feedback received, the elders may choose to not move forward with the candidate to the final step in the process (the determination process).

3) Determination Process

After the membership has been given time to consider the candidate and provide the elders feedback, the membership will vote on the candidate at the next scheduled members' meeting. A simple majority vote of the members present is required in order to install the candidate as an elder or deacon.

E. AFFILIATION AND PARTNERSHIPS

1. Nature of Affiliation

RGC shall remain free to affiliate, engage in partnerships with, and support other churches, organizations, missions, denominations, ministries and individuals as shall seem best to its leadership to effectively pursue the vision of the church.

Reciprocally, RGC shall remain free to disassociate and disengage from such partnerships should it seem that such a course best serves the vision. Priority shall be given to those partnerships which most directly promote the vision.

2. Denominational Affiliation

RGC is an independent congregation that is in friendly cooperation with Converge Northeast (formerly the Northeast Baptist Conference) of Converge Worldwide (formerly the Baptist General Conference).

3. Conflict Resolution

a. Conditions requiring conflict resolution

In the Baptist tradition, the local church has always been viewed as autonomous. However, in the event of a conflict which, in the judgment of the elders, cannot be resolved on the local church level, RGC must solicit the intervention of a designated network of churches (e.g. a denomination or association). At all times, the elders must ensure that some network of churches is so designated. The designated network of churches may be changed at the elders' recommendation by majority vote at a congregational meeting.

b. Conduct of the conflict resolution process

RGC will request that the leadership of the designated network form a conflict resolution board comprised of a minimum of three pastors of local churches in the network. The decision of this board will be binding on RGC.

F. MEMBERSHIP

1. Qualifications for Membership

All who have joined themselves to Jesus Christ through faith and repentance are members of the universal Church of Jesus Christ. All who are members of the universal Church are members of Redeeming Grace Church upon agreement with this Constitution, and upon assuming the commitments contained in the membership covenant of Redeeming Grace Church.

2. Responsibilities of Membership

a. The members of Redeeming Grace Church shall have the responsibility and authority to approve members, exercise church discipline, approve the annual budget, and establish the doctrinal standards of Redeeming Grace Church.

b. Decisions on the aforementioned matters will take place at regularly scheduled members' meetings, including the annual meeting.

c. A simple majority (50% plus one) of the membership is required to be physically present at a members' meeting in order to constitute a quorum and conduct business. Voting by proxy or absentee ballot shall not be permitted.

- d. Once a quorum is gathered and a members' meeting has commenced, business may be conducted until the meeting is adjourned, even if the number of members present drops below the quorum.
 - e. The following matters shall be approved by a simple majority of the members who are gathered at a members' meeting: bringing in new members, selection of an elder or deacon, church discipline, and the annual budget.
 - f. The following matters shall be approved by a supermajority of three-quarters of the members who are gathered at a members' meeting: any changes to RGC's doctrinal standards or constitution.
 - g. Members' meetings may be called as requested by the elders, or at the written request, submitted to the elders, of one-third of the membership. In the event of a written request from the members, the elders shall call a meeting to be held within one month of their receipt of the request.
 - h. RGC will have one congregational meeting toward the beginning of each year. The purpose of this meeting will be to discuss the budget for the upcoming year and conduct any other business which affects the church.
 - i. Any member may submit amendment proposals to the elders in writing. Proposed amendments will be considered at a members' meeting only after prior review and approval by the elders.
3. Procedures for Membership
- In order to become a member of RGC, one must:
- a. Contact or be contacted by an elder regarding membership
 - b. Be instructed on membership criteria and be interviewed by two elders (jointly or separately)
 - c. Commit to the church body by publicly agreeing to our church covenant
 - d. Be approved for membership by a congregational vote, upon the recommendation of the elders
4. Termination of Membership
- a. Membership may be terminated by simply notifying the elder board in writing, realizing that the elders reserve the right to inquire about the reasons for termination.
 - b. Membership will automatically terminate for geographical relocation with some possible exceptions (such as short-term work, missionary service, schooling, etc.).
 - c. Membership will also be terminated for excommunication until repentance has been evidenced. (Note: Membership may not be terminated by someone with whom church discipline or a church discipline investigation has been initiated.)

G. LOVE

The Scriptures are clear that love for the brethren is the litmus test for true saving faith (Matthew 25:31-46, John 13:34-35, Romans 13:8-10, 1 Corinthians 13:1-13, Ephesians 5:1-2, the entire books of 1 and 2 John). Obviously, though true believers are marked by a fervent love for one another, such love will never be absent of conflict while we remain in this flesh. In all conflicts, the first and basic duty is to forgive our brothers (Ephesians 4:32), and God has outlined clear guidelines in the Scriptures for healthy resolution. In pursuing church discipline, the priority is

on maintaining the purity of the church, with a strong desire to see the restoration of the estranged brother or sister.

1. Procedures for Reconciliation

- a) It is the responsibility of the offending party to initiate reconciliation according to Matthew 5:23,24 as soon as he becomes aware that a brother has something against him.
- b) It is also the responsibility of the offended party to initiate reconciliation according to Matthew 18:15-17. The steps in Matthew 18, which appear to give procedure to the truths in 1 Corinthians 6:1-8 are:
 - 1) When one member of RGC is offended by the sin of another member, the one offended is to go privately and reprove the offender with the goal of effecting his repentance (Matthew 18:15).
 - 2) If the offender does not repent, the one offended is to take one or two members as witnesses to confirm the facts. Upon confirmation, the one offended, along with the witnesses, are to continue to call the offender to repentance (Matthew 18:16).
 - 3) Again, assuming non-repentance and after elder approval, the one offended and the entire church must take up the matter per Matthew 18:17 and 1 Corinthians 6:1-3. If the offender is unwilling to listen to the church, the one offended and the entire church is justified to treat him as an unbeliever. To put it in the terms of 1 Corinthians 5:1-13 (c.f. Deuteronomy 17:2-7) and 2 Thessalonians 3:14-15, treating the unrepentant so-called brother as an unbeliever means to excommunicate him, to disassociate from him, and practically results in membership retraction, prohibition from the Lord's Supper, prohibition of attendance at all church functions, and cessation of contact, even including eating a meal together (1 Corinthians 5:11), though some contact in order to admonish him to repentance is permissible (2 Thessalonians 3:15). Under some circumstances, the elders may determine that the excommunicated member may attend Sunday morning worship. This radical step of removing the wicked man from the church is in accordance with love, which "does not rejoice in unrighteousness, but rejoices in the truth" (1 Corinthians 13:6).
- c) If, in the view of the elders, the excommunicated person repents, then the church will enthusiastically restore the person to full membership in accordance with 2 Corinthians 2:5-11.

2. Procedures for Discipline

a) For Members

It should be noted that some church discipline scenarios may not begin via the Matthew 18 process and in those cases, the following steps should be followed:

- 1) When the elders become aware of immorality (1 Corinthians 5:9-11 sense) within the body, they will notify the accused of the initiation of a church discipline investigation.
- 2) If the investigation confirms the charge and the accused is unrepentant, the matter will be brought before the entire church (see step 1b3 in this section). Should the accused remain unrepentant, excommunication per step 1b3 should be enacted.
- 3) If he repents, the church will receive him back per step 1c in the previous section.

b) For Elders

If anyone seeks to make a formal accusation against any of the elders or pastoral staff, the thrust of 1 Timothy 5:19-20 will be followed. This means that an accusation will not be received except from two or three witnesses. In addition, the accusation will be communicated to an elder-chosen mini-board of no less than two and no more than four elders. If deemed necessary, the elders will invite the accusers to testify before the whole board, but regardless, the accusation will be fully reported to the whole board. If the accusation is substantive and true, the elder, at the least, will be rebuked in the presence of the entire congregation. (Other disciplinary steps will be taken if deemed appropriate by the elders.)

H MISCELLANEOUS

1. Ministry Initiation

a. Members are heartily encouraged to initiate ministries in and out of the church, especially taking the initiative to serve one another (1 John 3) or to minister to unbelievers (Matthew 28:18-20). It is hoped that a member would seek appropriate counsel during the idea phase.

b. If the ministry initiative is ...

- 1). Beyond the regular ministries and activities of the church *and*
- 2). Involves other RGC members *and*
- 3). Is larger than family-on-family *and*
- 4). Is an ongoing activity

then the elders must review the proposal to ensure it is in keeping with the ministry of RGC.

c. It should be understood that there may be occasions in which an initiative is worthwhile in every respect, but the initiative does not match with the vision of the church or the RGC congregation may lack the resources to carry it out.

2. Personnel Decisions

When hiring full-time pastoral staff (ex: lead or associate pastors) the elders will coordinate the process, involving the congregation significantly. The congregation will vote on hiring the above-referenced staff at a regularly scheduled business meeting. The vote requires a simple majority of the members present.

When hiring all other staff, the elders will coordinate the process and are free to hire the staff at their discretion, involving the congregation significantly. The elders will also be responsible for releasing any paid church staff. Congregational input will be strongly solicited in cases where appropriate.

3. Officer Appointment

In keeping with the incorporation requirements for the State of Vermont, the elders will appoint a church president, vice-president, secretary and treasurer from among the elders and/or deacons.

4. Property Disposition

In the event of a church division, any RGC-owned property will remain in the possession of the group that submits to the conflict resolution board decision per the Conflict Resolution section of the Constitution.

5. Financial Management

The treasurer will be responsible for the finances of the church, including the collection of revenues and settlement of expenses. However, if possible, the bookkeeping function, including the disbursement of funds, shall be separated from the physical handling of the assets, including the collection and receipt of funds.

No paid pastoral staff shall hold the office of treasurer or deposits coordinator or have access to the books.

6. Elder Protocol

- a. When the elders convene, a quorum will be defined as at least a majority (50% plus one) of the standing elder board (not including those on sabbatical).
- b. A quorum must be present in order for the elders to conduct business. Decision-making requires a simple majority of the elders present, unless an issue is deemed “critical.”
- c. In the case where an issue is deemed “critical” (by a simple majority vote), the critical issue requires a supermajority of three-quarters of the standing elder board. Critical issues include new elder and deacon nominations and selections, church discipline issues, denominational affiliation decisions, and other very significant matters deemed such on a case-by-case basis.

7. Non-Addressed Items

In the interpretation of this Constitution and in all matters not addressed by this constitution but which affect RGC, the elders will have final authority.