



Articles of Incorporation and Bylaws of Circle of Faith

PREAMBLE

We declare and establish these articles of incorporation to preserve and secure the principles of our faith, and to govern our church in an orderly manner. This articles shall preserve the liberties of each individual member of this church and the freedom of the action of this body in relation to other churches.

Article I Name of Corporation

This body shall be known as Circle of Faith, Inc.

Article II Corporate Purpose

Section 1: General Purpose

Circle of Faith is a fellowship of believers who follow the example of the life and teaching of Jesus, and who join ourselves together for the purpose of honoring the Triune God with our worship, for exercising our gifts for the good of our families and community, and for teaching and supporting God's people as they live the Christian life.

Section 2: Specific Purpose- Covenant of Relationship

Being called into existence by God, redeemed by the work of Christ Jesus, and daily empowered by the ministry of the Holy Spirit, we, the people of Circle of Faith do promise and covenant to be a welcoming, affirming, diverse, progressive, nonjudgmental community of faith. Living Blessed in faith, hope and love we honor these commitments in this statement of mission:

We are a people of faith, rooting ourselves and our community in the ancient Scriptures and in daily communion with God and each other. We promise to believe the best about each other – forgiving freely, listening with curiosity, and disagreeing without division. We promise to be ever attentive to the movement of the Spirit, discerning God's call in community and remembering that God often speaks to us in unexpected ways.

We are a people of hope, attaching ourselves to the unwavering optimism that comes from the knowledge that God's kingdom is coming and is already among us. We affirm that God's kingdom is a society of radical justice, with kindness, mercy, economic and personal agency, and inclusion for all. We promise to be a model of transformative and beloved community, with people of every race, class, gender, sexuality, and age finding a place in our leadership, membership, and circle of care.

We are a people of love, offering not simply tolerance, but abundant and extravagant love. We affirm that God's love is unconditional and sufficient; we will never be diminished by showing love. We promise to love people who are difficult to love, to forgive people as many times as they need, and to use accountability as a tool of reconciliation rather than condemnation.

In recognition that the Sermon on the Mount – the ethical teaching of Jesus – is the central and guiding teaching for the daily action of Christians, we state our core values after the pattern of the Beatitudes – those attributes which Jesus said were blessed by God:

- We are poor in Spirit, remembering that every good gift comes from God.
- We mourn, remembering that we cannot be comforted without naming that which is broken.
- We are humble, remembering that we are only a small part of something greater.
- We hunger and thirst for justice, remembering that the only true satisfaction is to do the will of God.
- We are merciful, remembering that we are all in daily need of mercy.
- We are pure in heart, remembering that hypocrisy is the surest destroyer of our relationship with God and each other.
- We work for peace, remembering that God's peace is found not in the absence of conflict, but in the presence of justice.
- We will persist in setback and persecution, remembering that the prophets before us were also persecuted.

We are a church in the Baptist tradition, believing that the freedom of conscience gives rise to authentic faith, sustainable community, and equitable society. We speak of these freedoms in four ways:

1. Soul Freedom: we believe that every person is given agency by God to make choices in their spiritual lives, and that those choices. In our commitment to this freedom, we recognize that our pastors join us on the journey as guides and
2. Bible Freedom: because we are ultimately accountable to God for the choices in our spiritual lives, no interpretation of the Scripture is binding on another believer. Rather, we recognize the freedom of each person to study and interpret the Scriptures for themselves. In commitment to this freedom, we recognize that our church will have theological diversity without division; we will not force agreement.
3. Church Freedom: we recognize no ecclesiastical authority over our church, but rather assert the freedom of our local faith community to listen to the Holy Spirit and follow in the way that we believe that God is calling us. In commitment to this freedom, we will work cooperatively with ABCUSA, CBF, and the Alliance of Baptists, but those groups will not have control over the mission and ministry of our faith community.
4. Religious Freedom: we believe that these freedoms can only truly be exercised within a society where every person has the right to pray and worship – or not – as they choose. In commitment to this freedom, we will partner with those in the interfaith community to create a societal framework that promotes liberty and justice for all.

May God keep us from falling as we walk together in this covenant and deliver us into the presence of Christ with great joy at the coming of the kingdom.

Section 3: POLITY AND RELATIONSHIPS

The church shall be governed by its members as defined in Article III. Membership. The church is subject to no other ecclesiastical body, but it recognizes the obligations of mutual counsel and cooperation common among Cooperative Baptist and Alliance of Baptists Churches. Insofar as is practical, this church will cooperate with and support financially the Cooperative Baptist

Fellowship, The Alliance of Baptists, the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship of Florida, and their individual and collective mission efforts.

Circle of Faith shall not participate in prohibited legislative or campaign activity as described under IRS 501(c)3 rules.

Article III. MEMBERSHIP

Section 1. Membership

A member of this church shall be a person professing faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, giving evidence of a changed heart, having been baptized in the Christian faith and accepting the faith and practice held by the church. Any person indicating a sincere desire to follow Christ and to share our fellowship may upon recommendation of the Pastor and by vote of the church be received into fellowship.

Section 2. Exceptional Membership

An individual actively participating in the worship and ministry life of the church who indicates a sincere desire to share our fellowship but chooses not to be baptized in the Christian faith, may upon recommendation of the Pastor and by vote of the church be received into fellowship. Membership is immediate for purposes of beginning waiting periods for leadership or sensitive service, but all new members must be ratified by the Leadership Team at their next regular meeting.

Section 3. Associate Membership

Circle of Faith practices non-exclusive membership, and welcomes members who also wish to maintain affiliation with other Christian churches.

Section 4. Active/Inactive Membership.

A member of the church is considered to be an active member if that person has attended any worship service of the church(virtual or in-person), given financial support to the church, or participated in any ministry of the church during the previous twelve months. A member of the church is considered to be an inactive member if that person has not attended any worship service of the church(virtual or in-person), given financial support or participated in any ministry of the church during the previous twelve months.

Section 5. Friends

Any person wanting recognition as supporting the ministry and mission of the church but not wishing to join in Membership.

Section 6. Entering the Membership

New members shall be received each January and at other times as pastorally appropriate through the public commitment to the annual covenant of membership. Membership requests shall be approved by the Leadership Team.

Section 7. Privileges and Responsibilities of Membership

Every member is entitled to participate in all programs and ministries of the church, to vote on all questions submitted to the church in any meeting of the church, provided the member is present (in-person or virtually), and to hold elective offices and positions of leadership in the church according to the eligibility identified in the Bylaws and/or policies of the church. All active members including exceptional and associate members of the church may vote on matters presented to the church except that on matters pertaining to the purchase, sale or mortgage of property where the voting age is also to be of legal age as defined by the statutes of the State of Florida.

Section 8. Leaving the Membership

Membership in the church may be terminated in any of these ways: transfer of membership by letter to another church; personal request to be dismissed; death; and dismissal by vote of the leadership team.

In the rare instance that an individual's behavior or action contradicts the values, polity and ethics of the church, every effort will be made by the Pastor(s) and Leadership Team to resolve the behavior or habit that is breaking relationship between the church and the individual. If it becomes necessary for the church to take action to dismiss a member, a two-thirds majority of the leadership team present and voting is required to dismiss a person from membership. The church may restore to membership any person previously dismissed, upon request of the dismissed person and by a majority of the leadership team present and voting.

Section 9. Non-voting Membership

All children are encouraged to become members at the age of decision. Immediate family of members who are not themselves voting members shall be considered non-voting members of the church.

Article IV Dissolution and Disposal of Assets

Circle of Faith, Inc. may be dissolved at a special business meeting called for that purpose. This meeting must be called by two thirds of the leadership team, and must be called by public announcement in a regular worship service two weeks in advance. The motion can only be approved by two-thirds of the congregation present and voting at the meeting.

In the case of the dissolution of Circle of Faith, Inc, all assets shall be gifted to the Alliance of Baptists or other non-profit organization designated by the leadership team.

Article V CHURCH OFFICERS

The Officers of this Church shall be: Lead Pastor, Associate Pastors, Leadership Team Members (See Article VIII), Clerk, and Directors of the Corporation. At least 51% of the director seats shall be filled by members from the Alliance of Baptists. The Lead Pastor or their designee shall moderate all meetings of the leadership team and congregation.

Section 1 Lead Pastor

Our Lead Pastor is called by God to oversee the staff and ministries of the church, to provide biblical teaching, and to lead the leadership team in seeking to fulfill our vision and mission. The Lead Pastor is to guide and direct associate pastors and other church staff, delegating as appropriate to the gifts and passions of various staff members. In consultation with the leadership team, the Lead Pastor may recommend associate pastors to the church and employ other staff.

When the church is without a lead pastor, the leadership team shall serve as search committee. An associate pastor shall always be called as the interim lead pastor unless there is no associate pastor available and willing to serve. All associate pastors may be considered for the role of lead pastor. Any associate pastor who is identified as a candidate for the lead pastor role will no longer serve on the search committee. The search committee shall prayerfully and carefully select one candidate to present to the church in view of a call, and in a special business conference a three-fourths majority of the members present and voting in favor of the recommendation from the search committee shall constitute a call as lead pastor. They shall then serve as lead pastor until they resign, retire, or are dismissed.

Our pastors deserve our support. No public accusation may be brought against them without first trying to reconcile differences with them privately. If the differences are serious and persist, they may be brought before the leadership team, who may decide how to resolve them, up to and including removal from office. Removing a pastor requires only a majority vote.

Section 2 Associate Pastors

Our associate pastors are called by God to serve along with and under the direction of our lead pastor in shepherding and leading the fellowship. They are added to our pastoral team to provide giftedness in specific areas of ministry, but they are to have a heart for the entire church as we all seek to follow Christ. Duly ordained Associate Pastors serve on the leadership team of the church.

Section 3 Other Ministerial Staff

Other ministers may be called to serve on the staff but not to serve on the leadership team of the church.

Section 4 Lay Leaders

In their ministry role as servant-leaders, lay leaders free the pastors for increased Bible study and prayer, the spiritual preparation they need to preach the gospel. The lay leaders promote church harmony by engaging in the ministries of reconciliation and care. They provide for the welfare of members, meeting needs that may escape the attention of the pastors, and they strengthen the personal ministry of the church by actively participating in witnessing and disciple-making, leading through genuine service to the people of God.

Lay Leaders are nominated by the leadership team and affirmed by the congregation.

Section 5 Directors of the Corporation

The three Directors of Circle of Faith, Inc., shall be nominated by the leadership team and affirmed by the congregation to serve for an indefinite period. The Directors shall follow the direction of the church. They have the power to execute documents on behalf of the corporation to buy, sell, encumber, deed, or dispose of any real property only upon the direction of a two-thirds majority vote of the members of the church present and voting at a regular or special business conference that has been properly called as provided in Article VIII. The clerk of the church shall be the custodian of corporate records and the corporate seal, and the lead pastor shall be the registered agent of the corporation. The Directors of the Corporation may also serve on the leadership team, including as pastoral staff.

Section 6 Clerk

The clerk is nominated by leadership team and affirmed by the church each church year. A book of records of all the actions of the church is maintained in the church office.

Section 7 Treasurer

The treasurer and assistant treasurer are nominated by the leadership team and affirmed by the church each church year. The treasurer is responsible for receiving and disbursing church funds. Checks are to be co-signed, routinely by the treasurer and clerk. The leadership team may periodically name other check signers as necessary.

Article VI CHURCH STAFF

Section 1 Pastoral Staff

The lead pastor and associate pastors are the pastoral staff, and the lead pastor is the leader of both the pastoral staff and other church staff, as detailed in various sections of these bylaws.

Section 2 Other Staff

The lead pastor and leadership team may hire additional non-pastoral staff as necessary.

Section 3 Personnel Manual

The lead pastor and the leadership team shall maintain a personnel manual to govern the details of the relationship between all personnel and the church.

Article VII CHURCH MINISTRY AND MISSIONS ORGANIZATIONS

The church year is January 1 through December 31. The church shall organize and operate in any way it desires to accomplish the purpose of the church stated in Article II of the Articles of Incorporation.

Article VIII The Leadership Team and Their Functions

The leadership team of Circle of Faith are the lay leaders and ordained pastors of the church. Leaders are qualified by their commitment to the church and to following Jesus with their lives; the leadership team functions in the role of elders as seen in New Testament churches. Leadership Team Members should be spiritually mature, showing good and consistent evidence of the fruit of the Spirit in their personal lives and the life of the church. Persons with administrative or business skill may be engaged by the leadership team in the service of the church, but such skills do not qualify one to serve on the leadership team of Circle of Faith. The leadership team is open to all qualified persons who are members in good standing of Circle of Faith; no person shall be disqualified from the leadership team because of their age, race, sex, gender, sexual orientation, or marital status.

The leadership team may also present candidates for ordination to the office of pastor to the church. Candidates should only be presented to the church if they have shown consistent vocational calling to the office of pastor and have undertaken sufficient training toward that end. The church may then affirm these candidates in a special called business conference.

Section 1 Nominating

The leadership team seeks out and nominates qualified persons to serve in all of the church organizations. They are assisted by organization directors in their areas of ministry.

Section 2 Administrative

The leadership team assist and advise the lead pastor on all personnel matters, making recommendations as needed to create or modify personnel positions, policies, or remuneration. They serve with the lead pastor in searches for associate pastors and consult with the lead pastor in employment of all other approved staff positions. The Lead Pastor, Associate Pastors, and all other members of the leadership team shall recuse themselves from voting on all personnel matters that constitute a conflict of interest, especially those matters which involve their own or a family members work evaluation or remuneration.

Section 3 Stewardship

The leadership team provide stewardship education and promotion, review church financial reports, make adjustments within established guidelines, coordinate recommendations to the church when funds are needed beyond the budget, and with the lead pastor recommend an

annual budget and maintain financial policies, including methods for counting and depositing offerings. They assist the treasurer in reporting to the church, coordinate special emphases on mission giving with local church support, and educate and encourage members to consider deferred giving via wills and trusts.

Section 4 Other Committees

The leadership team may, from time to time, appoint and form committees to report upon or oversee various areas of the life and ministry of the church. These committees may be time-limited or standing, and serve at the pleasure of the leadership team.

Article IX CHURCH ORDINANCES AND PRACTICE

Section 1 Baptism

The church may receive for baptism any person who has received Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior by personal faith, who professes him publicly with a commitment to follow Christ as Lord. Baptism shall be by immersion in water, or in limited cases, by pouring. The pastor(s) or any that the lead pastor approves shall administer baptism as an act of worship during any worship service of the church.

Section 2 Communion

The church shall observe communion as a regular part of worship. It is to be a time in which participants rededicate themselves as they proclaim our Lord's death with the joyful anticipation of his coming again. The pastor(s), or any that the lead pastor approves shall lead the church in observing communion.

Section 3 Marriage

The pastor(s) of Circle of Faith shall, from time to time, conduct marriages. Circle of Faith puts no hinderances on the consciences of its pastor(s) as to which marriages they should and should not conduct, but leave that decision to the discernment of the individual pastor(s). Couples being married by the pastor(s) of Circle of Faith should undergo premarital counseling, either with their officiating pastor or another qualified professional.

Section 4 Funerals

The pastor(s) of Circle of Faith shall provide funeral services to all members of Circle of Faith and their immediate families. All other funeral services will be left to the discretion of the pastor(s).

Article X WORSHIP SERVICES

The church shall meet each Sunday, and other times determined by the church, to worship the Lord God. These regular services will include prayer, praise, preaching, instruction, and other offerings of worship, all offered in a manner consistent with the purpose of the church. All worship services of the church will be under the direction of the pastors.

Article XI BUSINESS CONFERENCES AND VOTING

Section 1 Regular Business Conference

A regular business conference shall be held in November of each year to approve the budget and additions to the leadership team for the coming year. This conference shall be announced, with the proposed budget and those nominated to the leadership team published, two weeks in advance during a regular worship service.

Section 2 Special Business Conference

A special business conferences may be called by the lead pastor or the leadership team. The purpose of any called special business conferences must be stated plainly, with at least a one week notice, announced in Sunday morning worship

Section 3 Quorum

A quorum shall consist of those members in attendance at either a regular or a special conference, provided only that the conference has been properly scheduled or called.

Section 4 Voting Privileges

Any member who is in good standing and present in a properly scheduled or called business conference is eligible to vote. There is no provision for either absentee voting or proxy voting.

Section 5 Parliamentary Rules

The most recent revision of Robert's Rules of Order shall be used as a guide for parliamentary procedure, with emphasis being placed on the Leadership of the Holy Spirit. All meetings shall be moderated by the lead pastor or their designee.

Article XII CHURCH POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

The lead pastor and the leadership team will maintain a church manual of policies and procedures. All activities of the church body or conducted on church property will be governed by these policies and procedures.

Article XIII CHURCH FINANCES

Section 1 Budget

The leadership team shall recommend a comprehensive annual budget to the church for approval two weeks before the annual conference in November. Any amendments to the budget may be adopted at regular or special business conferences. Membership in the church involves a financial obligation to support the church and its causes with tithes and offerings.

Section 2 Financial Accounting

All funds received by the church shall be properly recorded in the books of the church by the financial secretary. The pastor, treasurer, and leadership team shall oversee a system of accounting that will adequately provide for the handling of all funds. All undesignated gifts shall be received and disbursed through the budget. Circle of Faith only receives designated gifts through special offerings approved by the leadership team (example: missions offering). The total giving and all church spending records are available to any member who has made a financial contribution during the current church year. Individual giving records are only available to the giver, the leadership team, and any financial officer designated by the leadership team.

Section 3 Fiscal Year

The church fiscal year is January-December.

Article XIV AMENDMENTS

The Constitution and Bylaws may be amended by a two-thirds majority of the members present and voting at any regular business conference, or at a meeting specifically called for that purpose, provided the proposed change has been laid before the church in writing not less than two weeks before the time of the proposed action.