

The Ridge Christian Fellowship Constitution

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The Ridge Christian Fellowship Constitution

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PREAMBLE

The Body of Christ known as The Ridge Christian Fellowship, hereafter referred to as The Ridge, abides by the following constitution.

I. PURPOSE

Our purpose, within the larger context of the Body of Christ, is to grow, strengthen and help mature the local Body of Christ through evangelism, teaching and active Christian relationship.

In following The Great Commission outlined by our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ (Matthew 28:19-20), we adhere to the “disciples making disciples” model for growing the Body of Christ.

II. MISSION

Our Mission is to express our love to God and His love to others by extending refuge, healing, and forgiveness and by actively equipping people to become mature and faithful followers of Christ.

III. VISION

Our vision is to establish and maintain a culture where God is glorified by:

- 1) Worshipping Him in Spirit and Truth;
- 2) Growing in and by His revealed Word;
- 3) Serving others in His Name;
- 4) Sharing the Gospel of Jesus Christ;
- 5) Biblically strengthening households;
- 6) and Participating in and extending the transformation, healing, and renewal of His people;

As evidenced by growth in knowing, living and being conformed to the image of Christ.

In practice, our vision is to see people saved, equipped, and then sent into Christian service, and in so doing, love God and others.

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IV. VALUES

The Ridge values transparency and accountability toward God and toward each other as fellow believers in Christ (2 Tim 2:15; 1 Pet 2:1; 1 Tim 1:5; Jas 5:16; Eph 4:15).

The Ridge values sincere worship of the Holy Trinity--Father, Son and Holy Spirit. God desires passionate worship in corporate worship services and in lives lived in joyful obedience throughout the week (Ps. 100; Heb. 10:25; Mt. 22:37).

The Ridge values an attitude and a desire to serve our Savior, Jesus Christ, through personal devotion and service to others in His name. We are the Body of Christ (Rom. 12:5; 1 Co. 12:12, 27) and each of us has gifts of God in us for the good of others (1 Co.12:7). Furthermore the New Testament makes it clear that our attitude is to be like Jesus', one of servant hood (Phil. 2:1-7).

The Ridge values connection with each other within the Body of Christ. Living out the "one another" verses of scripture (Jn. 13:14, 34-35; 15:12, 17; Rom. 12:10, 16; 14:13; 15:7; 16:16; 1 Cor. 11:33; 2 Cor. 13:12; Gal. 5:13; 6:2; Eph. 4:2, 32; 5:19, 21; Col. 3:13, 16; 1 Thess. 3:12; 4:9, 18, 5:11, 15; Heb. 3:13; 10:24-25; Jam. 5:16; 1 Pet. 1:22; 4:8-10; 5:5, 14; 1 Jn. 1:7; 3:11, 23; 4:7-12) requires us to live life connected in an intimate fellowship with other Christians, and to share personal accountability with each other toward honor to God.

V. AFFILIATIONS

The Ridge places a high value on working with others for the sake of the gospel. We are a local body of Christ, independent of any specific denomination. However, we eagerly partner with others to fulfill His mission.

VI. CHURCH GOVERNMENT

Jesus is the leader of The Ridge. Our structure is only to help us follow Him.

We value how Jesus expresses Himself through every member of His body. To execute this we are an elder-led, congregationally governed church. The congregation grants to the elders the responsibility and authority to lead the church. The congregation trusts, submits to and supports the elders as they follow Christ (Hebrews 13:17). Limitations to the powers and authority of the elders are listed in [Article XI, SECTION 4](#) of this constitution.

The elders are accountable to God, to each other and to the congregation in all matters executed on behalf of the church and in personal conduct.

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VII. CHARTER PASTORAL LEADERSHIP

For the purposes of beginning the existence of The Ridge Christian Fellowship, it is necessary that pastoral leadership be securely in place.

Pastor Jeremiah York is called as the Teaching Pastor of The Ridge Christian Fellowship.

Pastor John Kinder is called as the Worship Pastor of The Ridge Christian Fellowship.

These callings are automatically affirmed by the Christian Body known as The Ridge Christian Fellowship.

VIII. CHARTER MEMBERSHIP

Charter membership to The Ridge is granted to the families coming together for the purpose of forming The Ridge as a new church start-up. Every effort will be made to establish charter membership with six months from the first official church service.

IX. MEMBERSHIP

1. BENEFITS

The blessings of being connected in a Body of Christ are abundant. Jesus reveals Himself in a special way in and through His church. Participating in it allows persons to experience God in themselves and others. Community, support, encouragement, acceptance, counsel, evangelism and many other needs are met by His presence in the Body.

At The Ridge we want everyone to feel connected in the Body. Through our ministry and leadership teams, we provide opportunities for spiritually connecting in ministry. Our church leadership is also available and accessible to help make this happen. We strive to support individual needs for encouraging and enabling spiritual growth in Christ.

2. RESPONSIBILITIES

At the fundamental level, congregational membership to The Ridge requires a personal relationship with Jesus Christ in conjunction with a public profession of faith in Jesus as Lord and Savior and a commitment to serve Him.

Following this, congregational members agree to actively uphold the church values described in [Article IV](#) of this constitution, and are able to participate as voting members to church meetings as described in [Article XIV](#) of this constitution.

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In addition to the areas of ministry covered in the church values, there exists a financial commitment in membership to worship God by generously participating in the financial realities of church ministry.

3. QUALIFICATIONS

Persons desiring membership at The Ridge must:

- 1) Be a born-again believer in love with Jesus Christ their Savior.
- 2) Stand for and commit to grow in the Beliefs, Practices and Virtues of Christian maturity.
- 3) Abide by the church constitution.

4. ACCEPTANCE

Persons completing these requirements and expressing their desire for membership will be presented to the congregation for affirmation.

5. TERMINATION

Membership may be terminated by the member or by the Elder Board.

X. PROVISIONAL ELDERS

An initial Elder Board shall be selected by the charter pastoral leadership to aid in making decisions and in executing necessary steps associated with starting up The Ridge Christian Fellowship.

The tenure of this provisional board of elders shall be in effect until a special meeting of The Ridge is scheduled and conducted that contains as one of the agenda items a purpose for duly affirming the first Board of Elders.

This event may occur at any time it seems appropriate to the congregational membership but shall occur no later than six (6) months from the first officially held church worship service of The Ridge.

XI. ELDERS

1. ELDER DESCRIPTION

An elder's highest priorities are: 1) to love, listen to, seek and follow God, and 2) to love, listen to, seek and serve people. One cannot lead effectively without both of these elements.

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An elder leads as an individual (Rom. 12:8), but collectively the elders form a spiritually ordained body responsible for governing / shepherding (1 Peter 5:1-4); equipping (Eph. 4:11-12); praying (Acts 6:4); teaching / preaching (1 Tim. 5:17); administering church discipline (1 Cor. 5:1-5); ministering to the hurt, sick and struggling (James 5:14-15); and generally directing the church (Acts 20:28).

On the church Elder Board every member has equal rank and voice. Together, members have the responsibility of hearing, confirming and implementing God's will for the church. Pastoral teaching staff, however, is recognized as the primary leader in matters relating to preaching and teaching. This in no way limits the ability of other Elder Board members to raise questions regarding church doctrine and to pursue resolutions when such questions do exist.

The elders lead in unity, discerning God's will as a group. This unity is under constant harassment by principalities and spiritual forces of evil, so it must be pursued, prayed for and encouraged by the entire church body. When consensus does not occur, a majority can cautiously adopt a plan. However, this course should be taken only after great energies are spent in prayer and encouragement.

2. ELDER QUALIFICATIONS

Elders are men endeavoring to exhibit godly character who:

- 1) meet the Biblical qualifications for Pastors/Elders as found in the New Testament (1 Timothy 3:1-7; Titus 1:6-9; 1 Peter 5:1-3).
- 2) are church members who over time have displayed godly character and leadership at The Ridge.

3. ELDER DUTIES

General Duties of the Elder Board:

- 1) to maintain an honest devotional life for themselves, their households and the church;
- 2) to actively engage in the values of the church regarding ministry: participate in worship, serve the body, and connect with other church members;
- 3) to publicly promote the vision of the church--this includes casting the vision, exciting the people in it and supporting it;
- 4) to have a caring interest in all the people of The Ridge, cultivating healthy relationships through ministry;
- 5) to have a caring interest in the community, seeking ways to spread God's love to non-Christians;

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- 6) to maintain an evaluation of ongoing ministries and new ministry opportunities consistent with the mission of The Ridge;
- 7) to provide support and spiritual guidance to ministry leaders, specifically overseeing and encouraging at least one ministry;
- 8) to participate in church discipline;
- 9) to appoint and oversee leadership within the church;
- 10) and to set and maintain church policies and constitution.

The lay-member elders shall oversee the development and maintenance of job descriptions for each pastoral staff position and shall annually oversee the evaluation of each person on the pastoral staff.

An elder shall recuse himself on matters of discipline concerning him, or in matters regarding his own compensation and/or benefits.

4. LIMITATIONS OF ELDER POWERS

Except as specifically mentioned below, the elders shall be vested with the authority to make decisions for the benefit of the smooth running of church business without the need to bring each and every matter before the congregational membership for church approval.

- 1) Authority to affirm and remove elders from the board is vested with the congregational membership.
- 2) The elders shall search, research and affirm the qualifications of the paid pastoral staff and make recommendation to the congregational membership regarding all matters of employment and termination from employment of all paid pastoral positions. The congregational membership shall accept or reject said recommendations from the elders by popular vote as defined by [Article XIV](#) of this constitution.
- 3) In addition to affirming elders and employment recommendations for paid pastoral staff, the congregational membership shall vote on changes to this constitution, provisional and annual budgets, and the buying and selling of real estate property.

5. REDRESS OF ELDER ACTIONS AND DECISIONS

In the event a decision is made, or an action is taken, by the Elder Board that becomes disagreeable to members of the church body, the church body shall have the ability to register such disagreements or points of dissatisfaction with the expectation that they will be fully resolved.

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The Elder Board shall continually carry a mandate to lead in such manner as to successfully represent the church body in all matters of church business. All matters of redress shall be accomplished with humility, in Christian love and with the desire to hold and maintain church unity. To this end, the following redress process shall be followed to secure resolution of all issues.

- 1) A church member (or members if the issue is held by more than one member) that have a concern shall alert any one or more of the members of the Elder Board that a concern exists.
- 2) The elder (or elders) that have received notification of the issue shall arrange for an ad hoc meeting between all members of the Elder Board and the member(s) that have brought forth a concern.
- 3) The Elder Board shall hear the concern of the member(s) with a heart to resolve the issue. It is incumbent upon the Elder Board to clearly communicate the intent of and reasons for any action or decision taken, and to hear and understand the concern(s) being expressed.
- 4) If the issue turns out to just be a misunderstanding, the matter will then be considered resolved.
- 5) If, after hearing the concern(s) of the member(s), the Elder Board determines it has made a mistake, the Board shall take swift action to correct their mistake. Any progress in force relating to the concern or issue shall be halted. And the Elder Board shall cause an announcement to be made both orally and in writing to the church body alerting all of the Elder Board's decision to reverse a prior action or decision. The matter will then be considered resolved.
- 6) If, after hearing the concern(s) of the member(s), the Elder Board determines it has not made a mistake, and the member(s) bringing forth the concern still feel in disagreement with the action or decision of the Elder Board, the Board shall inquire of the member(s) bringing the concern(s) whether a desire exists to bring the matter to a church vote.
 - a. If there is not a desire to bring the matter forth to a church vote, the matter shall be considered resolved.
 - b. If there is a desire to bring the matter forth to a church vote, the Elder Board shall take swift action to call and conduct as early as practicable a special business meeting as set forth in Article XIV, SECTION 1 of this constitution. During the special business meeting the church member(s) bringing forth the concern shall have the floor first to put forth and describe their concern along with their supporting reasons. The Elder Board shall then clearly communicate the intent of and reasons for any action or decision taken relating to the expressed concern, and have an open heart

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to hear and understand concerns expressed by the church body as the matter is discussed.

- i. If, after further discussion about the matter with the church body, the Elder Board determines it has made a mistake, the Board shall take swift action to correct their mistake. Any progress in force relating to the concern or issue shall be halted. And the Elder Board shall cause an announcement to be made both orally and in writing to the church body alerting all of the Elder Board's decision to reverse a prior action or decision. The matter will then be considered resolved.
- ii. If, after further discussion about the matter with the church body, the Elder Board determines it has not made a mistake, and it becomes apparent that further discussion will have no further effect other than to prolong resolution, the Elder Board shall cause a vote to be conducted in accordance with Article XIV, SECTION 1 of this constitution. The church member votes shall be immediately counted by a joint committee of the Elder Board and the church member(s) bringing forth the concern. The outcome of the vote shall be considered binding. Any action that becomes necessary for the Elder Board to take shall be committed to within the public forum and shall be swiftly attended to following the special business meeting. The matter will then be considered resolved.

In all matters of human disagreement within the church body, everyone is reminded that the end goal of all disputes is agreement, restoration and unity.

Notwithstanding this process for redress of decisions and actions of the Elder Board, it is hoped that this process would not be employed for light and transient causes.

6. TERMS OF OFFICE

The minimum number of lay-member elders shall be three (3). The number of lay-member elders shall exceed the number of salaried Pastors/Elders by at least one (1).

The maximum number of Elder Board members shall not exceed nine (9). Every effort shall be made to adequately represent all major pastoral roles on the Elder Board. This may require employing a rotation technique through the board.

Each lay-member elder shall serve a three (3) year term. Upon completion of that term, he shall be eligible for reaffirmation to serve a second three-year term. After serving a second three-year term, the lay-member elder will take a minimum one (1) year sabbatical and must then be reaffirmed by the congregation prior to rejoining the Elder Board.

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7. CALLING OF LAY-MEMBER ELDERS

Candidates for lay-member elder shall be nominated by the Elder Board and affirmed by popular vote as defined by [Article XIV](#) of this constitution.

Elder affirmation may take place at any business meeting, providing the agenda is announced weekly for at least four (4) weeks prior to the meeting. If an elder is not affirmed by the congregation, the vote serves as an immediate termination of his office.

8. CALLING PASTORS

Upon a pastor vacancy the Elder Board will nominate a Pastoral Search Committee, consisting of elders and members. This committee will seek out qualified individuals and will make a recommendation to the congregation. The recommendation will include a job description and a salary package. Upon affirmation, in accordance with [Article XIV](#) of this constitution, the new pastor and his family are automatically members of the church.

9. CALLING ADDITIONAL STAFF

The Elder Board will call additional staff to the church, when needed, and will make decisions regarding compensation packages, if any. Financial details impacting the church budget shall be previously disclosed to the congregational membership at either scheduled or special church meetings.

10. ARBITRATION AND CHURCH DISCIPLINE

Church discipline shall follow the Biblical pattern outlined clearly in Matthew 18:15-18.

- 1) If an issue arises between one or more Elder Board member(s), the affected elder(s) shall recuse themselves, and the remaining Elder Board will seek the counsel of the church leadership for assistance in problem-solving and mediation.
- 2) Upon completion of the above procedure and when adequate reason still exists to seek discipline, the Elder Board may call a special business meeting of The Ridge to recommend discipline of the elder.
- 3) If an issue needing discipline involves a paid church employee, progressive discipline--consisting of written reprimand, timed suspension without pay, and then, finally, termination—is an option available for use.
- 4) All matters of progressive discipline shall be made known to the congregational membership via a special church meeting.
- 5) If termination from employment is recommended for a member of the paid pastoral staff, the elders shall make recommendation to the congregational

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membership at a special meeting, and the congregational membership shall either affirm or reject the recommendation in accordance with [ARTICLE XI SECTION 4](#) and [ARTICLE XIV SECTION 1](#) of this constitution.

11. ELDER TERMINATION

Elders may resign their position, with the highest consideration to church health.

A resignation should be given in writing at least two months prior to leaving unless waived by mutual consent of the other elders.

If a resignation occurs, the Elder Board will present notice to the church.

Elder character and conduct is extremely important to the health of the church.

In the event a member of the Elder Board is found to have exhibited behavior unbecoming of the character and conduct of an elder, it shall be possible for the church body to take action to effect the removal of the elder in question from the Elder Board.

It is preferred that such an elder would voluntarily resign his position. If the elder in question refuses to voluntarily resign, then it is incumbent upon the other members of the Elder Board to enforce the solemnity of the elder office and formally call for the termination of the elder in question from his office.

Involuntary termination of an elder from his office may take place at any business meeting and affirmed by popular vote as defined by [Article XIV](#) of this constitution.

When a salaried pastor is terminated or resigns from his position, the elders will consider the circumstances and care for his family by providing an appropriate severance package. This severance package automatically becomes part of the church budget without the need for a congregational vote.

XII.LEADERSHIP

A church functions in God's design when all of its members use their gifts to serve (Romans 12:3-8; 1 Corinthians 12; and Ephesians 4:1-16). In this light, The Ridge helps people discover and develop their spiritual gifts to function in ministry. The elders will develop leaders and positions as ministry requires.

1. QUALIFICATIONS

Leaders operating within The Ridge are members who:

- 1) must be a man/woman who meets the Scriptural qualifications for their service (Titus 2:1-11);

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- 2) must be able to demonstrate, through evidence of Christian maturity and ministry, that he/she has been born again (John 3:3; 2 Corinthians 5:17; Romans 10:9; Galatians 5:22; Eph. 4:11-13);
- 3) must work in unity with and submission to the Elder Board and other church officials in leading the church to fulfill its purpose and vision in the Lord;
- 4) and must be in agreement with the constitution of The Ridge.

2. EMPOWERMENT

To enable these leaders to lead, the elders will:

- 1) Outline the responsibilities of each leader.
- 2) Offer prayer, training and discipleship to see them succeed.
- 3) Help them develop goals, plans and a workable budget for their ministry.
- 4) Empower them to minister.

3. COMMITTEES

Special committees will at times be called by the elders to accomplish specific purposes for definable periods of time. The only mandatory committee is the Pastoral Search Committee.

4. BODY INVOLVEMENT

The Elder Board desires and needs input from the Body to aid in hearing God's voice and discerning what God is doing at The Ridge. To this end the board may create forums, councils or other opportunities for the whole of the Body to participate in the process of following God.

5. ACCOUNTABILITY

Leaders are held to a higher standard. All leadership, including elders, will mutually submit to each other and consider the effects of their words and actions before their own feelings. They will pursue unity, crucify a judgmental or critical spirit, and inspire and encourage the direction of the church. They will give the benefit of doubt to other leaders and will graciously accept a general consensus, even if they originally held different views.

6. DIRECTORS

Below the structure of pastoral headship, authority and responsibility shall be delegated and vested with persons who meet the requirements for leadership to serve as Directors

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over portions of the ministry of The Ridge. Identification of the need for these roles shall be made by unanimous decision of the church board.

XIII.FINANCES

1. FINANCES AND ACCOUNTING

The Ridge Christian Fellowship is a nonprofit organization. No expenditures shall be made or business conducted which would threaten the nonprofit status of the church. Necessary steps shall be taken to ensure the recognition of the church as a nonprofit organization by local, state, and federal governmental agencies.

- 1) Income and Expense statements will be provided to any member upon request.
- 2) An Annual Financial Report will be presented to the membership prior to the annual business meeting.

Notwithstanding the intent of this article to remain accountable to lawful governmental authorities and to distinguish ourselves from non-church related organizations such as political entities and for-profit businesses, The Ridge Christian Fellowship is first and foremost accountable to God and to the principles laid out in the Holy Scriptures that describe and govern our faith.

Therefore, the Ridge does not exist for the express purpose of being a non-profit organization. The Ridge exists to be an extension of ministry of the love of God for people and to be agents of that love and of the salvation God has for people through faith in the finished work of our Lord Jesus Christ. Such ministry must have its uncompromising basis in the biblical precepts laid out in the Holy Bible. To conduct ourselves contrary to the biblical precepts in the name of the One that ordains those biblical precepts would, in our opinion, negate the effective basis for which this ministry is based.

To this end, no compromise to the Holy Word of God and to the principles and precepts clearly laid out in the Holy Word of God shall be allowed or enabled for the express purpose to remain a non-profit organization in the eyes of the state. The Ridge Christian Fellowship is in its constitution and establishment first and foremost accountable to God and His Word and Truth, and will remain as such regardless of the consequences that may arise from the change of social norms enabled by a secular government.

2. BUDGET POLICY

The Elder Board will prepare and propose an annual budget at the annual business meeting.

All leaders may spend budgeted monies that fall under their leadership.

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Over-budget expenditures must be approved by the Elder Board. If approval is not sought before spending, the individual may be responsible for the debt.

Giving in excess of the budget, as determined quarterly, may be used for ministries of the church at the discretion of the Elder Board. Use of these excess funds for ministry will be communicated to the congregation for their edification.

XIV. MEETINGS

1. BUSINESS MEETINGS

We view business meetings as a part of worship and encourage all members to participate in the process.

The church shall meet annually in November unless otherwise scheduled. The fiscal year of the church shall begin January 1st and end December 31st.

Special business meetings of the church may be called at any time by the Elder Board, by an approved request to the Elder Board or, if a request is not approved, by any five households of members. Those calling the meeting will ensure that the meeting will be facilitated in an orderly manner.

All business meetings, and the agendas of these meetings, must be announced at least two (2) weeks prior to the date scheduled (four weeks for elder affirmation).

A recording secretary shall be appointed by the Elder Board to record the minutes of each business meeting. These minutes shall be available to the membership within two (2) weeks of the meeting and shall be present at all subsequent business meetings.

New business may be discussed, but voting will take place only on agenda topics, and then only after a spirit of unity is sought and a motion has been made and seconded. Orderly discussion will be generously allowed before the actual vote; the motion may evolve within the discussion (often this is how we collectively hear God's voice). Discussion will be structured to encourage broad participation. Final decisions should result in unity, but not necessarily uniformity. Congregational business meetings will be conducted in the spirit of the New Testament principle of deferring to one another in Christian love. All decisions must be made as follows:

- 1) Annual Budget – seventy (70) percent majority vote.
- 2) Buying or selling real estate property, or incurring debt – seventy (70) percent majority vote.
- 3) Changing the constitution – seventy (70) percent majority vote.
- 4) Affirming an elder – eighty (80) percent majority vote.

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- 5) Calling a pastor – eighty (80) percent majority vote.
- 6) Terminating the employment of a pastor – eighty (80) percent majority vote.
- 7) Redress of Elder Decisions – eighty (80) percent majority vote.
- 7) Terminating an elder from his office – eighty (80) percent majority vote.

Written ballots will be used for the annual meeting. Members not able to attend the meeting may obtain from the elders an absentee ballot 5 days prior to the meeting. All ballots must be collected by the elders by the time of the meeting, and votes will be counted before the meeting concludes.

Notwithstanding the required percentages for voting expressed in Article IV, Section 1 of this constitution, an item being voted on that passes by a narrow margin may still be further evaluated for whether or not the motion is God's will for the Ridge. The heart of leadership shall be to transact business with the approval of the Holy Spirit. If any voting item narrowly passes, though it technically passes because it meets the minimum standards for voting documented in this constitution, church leadership may rather consider that more prayer and discussion is needed prior to acting to ensure the church body is being led by the Holy Spirit in unity.

2. VOTING

Eligible voters must be:

- 1) Members of the church.
- 2) Eighteen (18) years of age or older.
- 3) Mentally able to function in this capacity.

XV.LICENSING AND ORDINATION

The Ridge Christian Fellowship shall have the power to license and ordain into affirmed and approved Christian ministry those persons who exhibit their qualifications through education and spiritual conduct and who have a clear evidence of God's calling on their life.

XVI.CONSTITUTION

This constitution is a man-made document and, while beneficial for order, always remains subject to the leading of Holy Spirit and the governance of God's Word. Because this constitution is man-made, it will be reviewed periodically with the expectation that they may need regular updating.

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XVII.AMENDMENTS

Amendments to this constitution will from time to time occur and will be chronicled within this article for historical purposes.