



Linwood
COMMUNITY CHURCH

Linwood, NJ

CONSTITUTION

And Statement of Faith

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CONSTITUTION
of the
Linwood Community Church
Linwood, NJ

Preamble

We, the members of Linwood Community Church, in an orderly manner, do hereby establish the following principles by which we mutually agree to be governed in the affairs of our church. We, the members of Linwood Community Church, having placed our faith solely in the Lord Jesus Christ for salvation and having been baptized following our salvation, hereby adopt the following constitution. This constitution is neither a substitute for nor a supplement to the Word of God. It is simply an application of what we believe are the teachings and principles of the Bible as applied to the people of Linwood Community Church. It is a guide to aid in the application of biblical principles to church polity. The Word of God shall be the first and final authority on all church matters, and any issue whereon this constitution is silent shall be governed by the clear statement of the Word of God.

Article I. Organization

Section 1.01 Name

The legal name of this organization shall be the **Linwood Community Church**.

Section 1.02 Purpose & Mission

A. **Purpose:** The church is an assembly of baptized believers who have covenanted together to be and do what the scriptures call the church to in nature and function: to glorify God by making and maturing disciples of King Jesus. We do this by demonstrating and declaring the Gospel to the lost, living in a Biblically faithful Gospel community, and reproducing ourselves through discipleship efforts.

B. **Mission Statement:**

In obedience to our Lord's command, we will make disciples of Jesus Christ who are: Exalting Him in worship, Edifying one another in love toward maturity, Exercising their gifts in fruit-bearing ministries, and Evangelizing the lost world around us, all to the glory of God!

Section 1.03 Church Covenant

Having been brought as we trust, by divine grace, to accept the Lord Jesus Christ as our Savior and to give ourselves wholly to Him and having been baptized upon our profession of faith in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, we do now solemnly and joyfully covenant with God and with one another.

We will walk together in Christian love; we will love one another, watch for one another's welfare, and bear one another's burdens, that we will remember one another in prayer both, comforting one another in sickness and distress, being slow to take offense, and striving for immediate reconciliation.

We will not forsake the assembling of ourselves together but will regularly attend services of worship unless providentially hindered; we will cheerfully give, as the Lord prospers us to support the church, the spread of the gospel throughout the whole world, and the relief of the poor. We will subscribe to the doctrines of the church and its ordinances and discipline and pray and labor together for the salvation of souls.

We will seek to maintain private and family devotions, nor neglect the religious education of our children and those under our care for the service of Christ. We will seek the salvation of our kindred and acquaintances. We will walk, in the newness of life, by God's Grace, circumspectly in the world: being just in our dealings, faithful in our engagements, and exemplary in our deportment.

We moreover engage that when we move from this place, we will, as soon as possible, unite with some other church where we can carry out the spirit of this covenant and the principles of God's word.

Article II. Statement of Faith

Section 2.01 Statement of Faith

Throughout the Church age, from the Apostles to today, Christians have sought to articulate their beliefs in definitive statements. The Bible, however, as the Word of God, is to be the final and only authority in all matters of faith and practice. The following Articles of Faith express the basic doctrines of the Bible that we as a church believe and teach. Where this statement is silent, we generally refer to and adhere to the historical orthodox Christian confessions.

- A. **THE SCRIPTURES** – We believe that the Bible, both Old and New Testaments, is the verbal and plenary, inspired Word of God and is inerrant and infallible in the original manuscripts. The scriptures are the sufficient authority for faith and practice. They are not to be added to or subtracted from. (*Exod. 24:4; 2 Sam. 23:1-2; Isa. 1:2, 10; John 17:17; II Timothy 3:16, 17; II Peter 1:19-21; Revelation 22:18, 19*)
- B. **THEOLOGY PROPER** – We believe there is only one living and true God eternally existing in three distinct, co-equal, co-eternal persons – Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, the same in substance: perfect in holiness, boundless in love, infinite in wisdom, and measureless in power. We believe God is the originator, the “first cause,” of all things physical and spiritual (including time itself). We believe God exercises sovereign control over all aspects of creation through providence. (*Job 36:26; Ps. 90:2,4; John 8:58; Gen. 1:1; Deut. 6:14; Mark 12:29; Mt. 3:16,17; 28:19,20; John 10:30; John 1:12; II Cor. 13:14; Eph. 4:4-6*)
- C. **THE LORD JESUS CHRIST** – We believe that Jesus Christ is the eternally existing Son of God, begotten by the Holy Spirit and born of the Virgin Mary, is truly God and truly man. He took upon Himself a human body and a human nature, yet without sin. We believe in His substitutionary death on the cross as a sacrifice, making atonement for our sins. We believe in His bodily resurrection and ascension into heaven, where He intercedes for believers as High Priest and advocate. (*Luke 1:35; Ro. 3:25; John 3:16; I Cor. 15:3,4; Acts 1:3,9*).
- D. **THE HOLY SPIRIT** – We believe in the deity and personality of the Holy Spirit; that He convicts the world of sin, righteousness, and judgment; that He is the Agent of the new birth; that He baptizes all believers at the time of conversion thereby placing them into the Body of Christ, which is the Church; indwelling and sanctifying them, sealing and securing them unto the day of redemption; that He endures with power, guides teaches and helps believers; that it is commanded to all the saved to be filled with the Spirit (*John 16:7-11; Ro. 8; Eph. 1:13,14; 5:18; I Cor. 12:13*).
- E. **ANTHROPOLOGY** – We believe that mankind was created by God and in the image of God. God created mankind as male and female, both image-bearers of God’s likeness. Mankind (with Adam as federal head) fell through sin and brought physical and spiritual death upon all of Creation. Humans inherit a sin nature (original sin), affecting mind, will, and emotion by birth and by choice (total depravity), and are unable to save themselves from this state. That fallen condition results in man's spiritual separation from God in time and eternity. (*Gen. 1:26-27; Ps. 51:5; Isa. 59:2; Jer. 17:9; John 3:3; Rom. 3:10-23, 5:12; I Cor. 15:21-22; Rev. 20:11-15*).

- F. **SALVATION** – We believe that salvation is entirely the work of God, given by grace through faith alone in the death, burial, and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ. All who personally receive Jesus Christ as Savior are immediately regenerated and indwelt by the Holy Spirit. As born-again children of God, each believer possesses the imputation of a new nature, freedom from the power and judgment of sin, and is given a guarantee of eternal life. (*John 1:12, 3:1-7; 1 Cor. 15:1-4; 2 Cor. 5:17; Gal. 2:20; Eph. 2:8-9; Titus 3:5*). We believe regeneration and justification are momentary acts, while sanctification is a progressive work of God in which the sinner cooperates. (*John 3:16-18; 5:24; 10:27-30; Ro. 1:16,17; 3:24-26; 10:9; Eph. 2:8-10; Titus 3:5; Hebrews 9:11-15*).
- G. **THE CHURCH** – We believe that all true believers, upon trusting Christ as Savior, are baptized by the Holy Spirit into the Body of Christ, which is The Church, described in Scripture as the People of God, Body of Christ, and Temple of the Holy Spirit, is a living organism of unified true believers who are dependent upon one another in function. A proper biblical view of Christ and the Gospel is essential in determining a true church from a false church. The Church is related to the Kingdom of God, but the Church itself is not the Kingdom of God. The local church is the atmosphere in which the memorial service of the Lord's Supper serves as a reminder and fellowship for the body of Christ. All believers are given spiritual gifts for the use of glorifying God through ministry to others, resulting in evangelism, edification, and ultimately the unity of the body. Those gifts are primarily exercised in the context of a local assembly. We believe that congregational church government, under the oversight of a pastoral/elder team assisted by deacons(es), best emulates the example of the New Testament polity. We believe immersion is the normative mode of baptism as a public testimony of an individual's faith in Christ (credobaptism). Each individual assembly is responsible for governing its own affairs through an administration that is a combination of the consensus of the congregation and the elected leadership. The congregation is the final court of appeal in church discipline (*Matt. 18; 1 Cor. 5-6; 2 Cor. 2*), doctrinal issues (*Acts 15:3-4, 22-23; 1 John 4:1*), accountability of funds (*1 Cor. 16:3*), and missionary endeavors (*Acts 13*). We believe there are two offices (Pastor/Elder and Deacon) in the New Testament that are to be normative for churches throughout the Church Age. The scriptural ordinances of the church are baptism and the Lord's Supper (*Acts 2:41-47; Ro. 12:4,5; 1 Cor. 12:12-27; Eph. 1:20-24; Col. 1:18*).

H. **FUTURE THINGS** God has chosen to reveal in His Word many things about the future. End-times teaching is meant to encourage and comfort those dealing with the death of a loved one (*1 Thess. 4:18*), provide joy in the midst of affliction (for believers) (*2 Cor. 4:17*), promote holy living (*2 Pet. 3:11*), and anticipate the ultimate fulfillment of redemption (*Rom. 8:23*). We believe the end of the world is approaching. We believe in the personal and imminent return of the Lord Jesus for His redeemed ones; and in His subsequent return to earth, with His saints, to establish His Millennial Kingdom (*Zech. 14:4-11; Daniel 7-9; Acts 1:11; I Thess. 4:13-18; Rev. 19:11-16*).

Should the Lord tarry His coming, death is a future reality for every member of the human race (*Heb. 9:27*). We believe in the bodily resurrection of all men, the saved to eternal life; and the unsaved to judgment and everlasting punishment. (*Matt. 25:46; John 5:28, 11:25,26*). We believe that the souls of the redeemed are at death, absent from the body and present with the Lord, where in conscious bliss they await the first resurrection, when spirit, soul and body are reunited to be glorified forever with the Lord. (*Luke 23:45; Rev. 20:4-6; Phil. 1:23*). We believe that the souls of unbelievers shall appear at the Great White Throne Judgment, and shall be cast into the Lake of Fire (*Luke 16:19-26; Mt. 25:41-46; II Thess. 1:7-9; Rev. 20:11-15*).

We also recognize that there are a variety of acceptable, orthodox eschatological positions among doctrinally faithful believers and that charity should be extended toward various viewpoints.

Section 2.02 Positions on Contemporary Issues

- A. **SANCTITY OF HUMAN LIFE** – We believe in the sanctity of human life traceable to the “breath of life” breathed into Adam in the Garden of Eden. We believe that life begins at conception and that abortion and euthanasia are therefore the unscrupulous ending of human life forbidden by God in the scriptures. We further believe there is a significant distinction to be made between the sacredness of human life created in the “image of God” and animal life instituted by God for man’s welfare. The image of God in man also implies a dignity to all human life regardless of age or ability. Thus, we are categorically opposed to abortion and euthanasia. (*Job 1:21, 12:10, & 27:3; Genesis 1:26-28 & 2:7; Ruth 4:13; Proverbs 6:17b; 2Kings 8:12*)
- B. **MARRIAGE** – We believe in the holy covenant of marriage. After creating male and female, God created marriage for them (*Gen. 2:18-25*). Marriage is a covenant in which a man and woman leave their parents and form a lifelong monogamous bond for the purposes of: picturing the relationship of Christ and His Church (*Eph. 5:22-33*), companionship (*Gen 2:20*), procreation (*Gen 1:28; Mal. 2:15*), pleasure (*Prov. 5:18-20; Heb. 13:4*), and a deterrent from temptation (*I Cor. 7:2, 9*). Thus, marriage is a permanent covenant broken only by death and specific scriptural exceptions such as unrepentant adultery (*Mt 19:9*). Furthermore, all expressions of sexuality outside of the bonds of marriage are deemed sinful sexual immorality. These include, but are not limited to, acts and lifestyles such as homosexuality, bestiality, prostitution, polygamy, polyandry, and polyamory. (*Hebrews 13:4; Genesis 1:28 & 2:18; Matthew 19:1-6; Romans 1:26-28*) We further believe that those practicing such acts should be treated with love, respect and presented the life-changing news of the Gospel. Church membership is available to all those who repent of their sin and believe the Gospel (*1 Cor. 6:11*).
- C. **GENDER ROLES**– We believe God deliberately created the equal yet distinct genders of male and female. Both genders, as image-bearers of God, share equal personhood and worth, with equal access to God (*I Cor. 11:11-12; Gal. 3:27-28; I Pet. 3:7*). The New Testament intensifies the equality between genders with equal baptism (*Matt. 28:19; Acts 2:41*) and reception of spiritual gifts (*Acts 2:17-18; I Cor. 12:7; I Pet. 4:10*). We believe that though equal in person and worth, God created complimentary (complementarian) roles for each gender functionally (*Gen. 2:18; I Cor. 11:9; Eph. 5:22-28*). We believe that one’s gender is chosen by God and is part of one’s personhood. Thus, we oppose the transgender ideology and lifestyle. We further believe that those practicing such acts should be treated with love, respect and presented the life-changing news of the Gospel. Church membership is available to all those who repent of their sin and believe the Gospel (*1 Cor. 6:11*).

D. **RACE RELATIONS**– We believe the entire human race, as created by God, finds its ancestry in Adam and Eve and shares a common blood, genetic source, and dignity as image bearers of God. Common ancestry renders all humans members of the same Adamic Race. This human brotherhood denounces all forms of racism as denials of an individual's oneness in Adam. Furthermore, racism and segregation among believers are a denial of our oneness in Christ and in Christ's Church.

Article III. Church Associations

Section 3.01 Autonomy & Interdependence

We believe in the autonomy of the local church, which means each local church is self-governing, self-supporting, and self-propagating. The New Testament pattern pictures churches caring for their own members (*Acts 6*), commissioning their own leaders (*Acts 13*), and disciplining their own members (*Matt. 18; 1 Cor. 5*). While we believe churches were independent in the New Testament, we also believe they function with interdependence within the broader body of Christ. Therefore, this church may participate in fellowship and activity with other local churches or organizations as it chooses. Partner organizations should be of like faith and practice that hold to the inerrancy of scripture and core doctrines of the Gospel and be in accord with the spirit of this constitution and by-laws.

Section 3.02 Relationships within the church and with other churches

We believe that members of local churches should strive for unity. The Scriptures highly emphasize the **unity of the church**. Jesus' goal was for the Church to be one (*Jn. 10:16, 17:21*). The unity of the Church is possible because of the spiritual unity which exists among true believers (*Eph. 4:4-6*). The universal (invisible) nature of the Church fosters unity because believers are "*called to be saints together with all those who in every place call upon the name of our Lord Jesus Christ*" (*1 Cor. 1:2*). Paul appealed to the churches in Corinth and Philippi to be united and of the same mind in unity (*1 Cor. 1:10,13; Phil. 2:2*) he further tells the Ephesian church to be eager to maintain unity (*Eph. 4:3*) and notes that a primary purpose of the gifts are to attain unity of faith (*Eph. 4:12-13*). The unity of the Church is a strong witness to unbelievers (*Jn. 17:23*). In addition, the New Testament gives strong warnings against those who would cause divisions within the Church (*Rom 16:17-18*).

The unity of the Church is enriched through the diversity of spiritual gifts (*Eph. 4:1-6*). The Bible's teaching on the unity of the Church and the universal (invisible) nature of the Body of Christ naturally leads to the cooperation of local churches with one another. Local assemblies in the New Testament worked together for mercy ministries,

encouragement, evangelism, and teaching. We believe that local churches should form partnerships in the Gospel with other local churches as well as with “para-church” organizations.

Section 3.03 Biblical Separation

We believe the Scriptures teach that Biblical Separation is necessary (*Rom. 16:17-18*) in order to maintain spiritual unity. Faithful churches, according to Scripture, must separate from false teachers (*Gal. 1:8-9; 2 Jn. 9-11*) and from brothers who are not following the traditional teaching of the Apostles (*2 Thess. 3:6*). Contending for the faith involves identification with groups faithful to the Biblical truth and a refusal to be identified (for a spiritual endeavor) with any teacher, church, or organization that denies a fundamental of the faith with reference to the Bible, Christ, and Salvation.

We also believe that believers should live lives of personal separation from sinful and worldly practices and abstain from religious apostasy. Believers should live in such a manner as not to bring reproach upon the Savior and adorn the Gospel. (*II Cor. 6:14-17; 7:1; Ro. 12:1,2; James 4:4*).

Article IV. Membership

Section 4.01 Qualifications for Membership

Membership is open to anyone who has repented of their sins and placed their faith in Jesus Christ alone, regardless of their gender, ethnicity, marital or divorce status, past sins, or cultural background (*1 Corinthians 6:11*).

Any individual may be a covenant member of Linwood Community Church if they are a regenerate believer in the Gospel of Jesus Christ, have been baptized, desire to join this fellowship, and are in general agreement with the constitution and statement of faith.

Section 4.02 Basis of Membership (Receiving members)

- A. By profession: Upon profession of faith and following the Lord in believer's baptism, and by acceptance of our Statement of Faith and Constitution.
- B. By transfer: Upon transfer via a letter, from another church of like faith and practice, and acceptance of our Statement of Faith and Constitution.
- C. By restoration: Those whose membership has become inactive or dropped due to lack of attendance or other reasons may be restored with open arms. Disciplined members may be gladly and joyfully restored to membership if they have repented of the sin in question. This is done based upon the recommendation of the elders and the approval of the membership.
- D. By Pastoral call: Pastors (Elders) and immediate family who are baptized believers become members upon accepting the call to this church and acceptance of our doctrinal statement.

Section 4.03 Procedures for Membership

Any person seeking membership who has professed faith in the Lord Jesus Christ (personally believed and received Jesus as Lord and Savior, John 1:12; 3:16) and made that profession public by baptism should present themselves for membership to an Elder. Candidates for membership will have a membership interview with an elder and/or deacon and, upon the recommendation of the elders, be presented to the congregation for approval and given the right hand of fellowship at any regular church service or Member's Meeting.

Section 4.04 Privileges of Membership

- A. Members benefit from the spiritual instruction, care, accountability, and benevolence aid of the church.
- B. The privileges of membership include the right to vote when the member reaches the age of 16.
- C. Offices of the church are open to appointed and qualified members.

Section 4.05 Commitments and Expectations of Membership

- A. Membership is a commitment to the Lord of the church, Jesus Christ, and to the members of the church as fellow Christians.
- B. We are committing to not neglect worship and fellowship on those occasion the church is called together as a whole, unless hindered by God's providence.
- C. We are committing ourselves to prayer both individually and corporately for each other and for the extension of God's kingdom.
- D. We are committed to serve our fellow believers and to serving with them, employing the gifts God has given us for their blessing and for the sake of others.
- E. Members are expected to attend services regularly (*Hebrews 10:25*), attend the Lord's Table in particular, fellowship when the church is called together as a whole, as well as member's meetings unless providentially hindered.
- F. Members are expected to support the church in its worship and work to the best of their abilities through prayer individually and corporately, serving, and giving (*1 Cor. 16:2; 2 Cor. 9:1-5; Gal 6:6*).
- G. Members are expected to build relationships within the body, get involved in the lives of other members, and seek to practice the "one another" passages of the New Testament (*Rom 12:5; 1 Cor. 12:12-26; Eph. 4:15-16*).
- H. Members are expected to submit to the church's leadership unless the leadership is in violation of scripture (*Heb. 13:17; 1 Thess. 5:12-13*).
- I. Members are expected to serve as God gives them the opportunity to exercise their spiritual gifts in the context of the local church (*1 Cor. 12*).

Section 4.06 Termination of Membership

- A. Death

- B. Transfer – A member leaving this church may be granted a letter of transfer to join another church of like faith and practice.
1. Members in good standing who desire to unite with another church of like faith shall receive a letter of transfer.
 2. Members desiring to unite with a church whose beliefs are outside the bounds of orthodox Christianity will receive a letter of dismissal.
- C. Withdrawal – A member may withdraw his membership from this church upon a written request to the Elders. Membership may not be withdrawn during a church discipline process.
- D. Inactive/Not in Good Standing – Those members who, for a period of **six months**, do not attend the regular services of the church, except for understandable circumstances, shall be moved to an “inactive member/not in good standing” status. If they have not been restored to active membership after twelve months, they relinquish their membership and the church withdraws its affirmation of them as members. Inactive members may not vote, hold an office, or serve in a leadership capacity until they are restored to active membership.
- E. Discipline – The procedure of disciplining an erring member applies to Pastors/Elders, Deacons, officers, and any other member. The goal of discipline is to correct a member in a loving, orderly, yet firm manner with the goal of restoring the erring one back to fellowship and usefulness (*Galatians 6:1*).

Excommunication and termination of membership are the final and remorseful action toward those in unrepentant sin. In all cases of disorderly conduct, heretical doctrine, spiritual apathy, failure to follow the church covenant, and unrepentant sin, the following policies and procedures will be followed to exclude or terminate membership.

1. Differences between individuals or sins not generally known should be handled according to the process outlined in Matthew 18:15-17; that is, one to one; then, two by two; finally, church to one. The elders will make recommendations in handling the situation. Anyone bringing a matter into the public or before the church having not followed scriptural procedure shall be subject to rebuke.
2. Matters of formal accusation against a member include:

- a. Public sins or sins known to the church or general public that are indeed scriptural sins.
 - b. Holding and persistently propagating false doctrine.
 - c. Failure to allow or seek to be reconciled to another member.
 - d. Those who are rebellious and divisive, non-submissive to the church authorities, and seek to influence others in such a manner (*Titus 3:10; 2 Thess. 3:6*).
3. When dealing with discipline matters, the Elders may temporarily place the individual in the Inactive/Not in Good Standing Status of membership.
 4. If restoration is unsuccessful, based upon the recommendation of the elders, the congregation will withdraw affirmation of the person as a member. Termination of membership of one under discipline will take place by congregational approval following the recommendation of the elders. (*Matthew 18:17*)

Article V. Government

Section 5.01 Polity

Under the authority of Jesus Christ and the Word of God, the final authority in this church is the congregation. This church is therefore governed by elder-led congregationalism, a congregational polity that is led by pastors/elders who are assisted by deacons and deaconesses.

Congregational polity entails that the church is autonomous in regard to its own affairs and that the congregation is the final court of appeal in church discipline (*Matt. 18; 1 Cor. 5-6; 2 Cor. 2*), doctrinal issues (*Acts 15:3-4, 22-23; 1 John 4:1*), accountability of funds (*1 Cor. 16:3*), and missionary endeavors (*Acts 13*).

Section 5.02 Offices

- F. The offices of this church shall be the Biblical offices of Pastor/Elder and Deacon/Deaconess. Other auxiliary offices and committees may be established by the Elders as necessary.
- G. The Pastors/Elders and deacons(es). All elected officers of the church shall be members in good standing, agree with the doctrinal statement and by-laws, and meet the qualifications for officers before they can be nominated for office.

Section 5.03 Pastor/Elders – Pastoral Team

- A. The qualifications of a pastor/elder are those given in I Timothy 3:1-7 and Titus 1:5-9. While both men and women are equally gifted for service in the church, we believe, based on scripture, that only men are qualified for the office of pastor/elder. The titles of pastor, elder & overseer/bishop are used interchangeably in the bible.
- B. The Pastors/Elders shall be charged with oversight and the spiritual care, shepherding, and direction of the church. The duties of the elders shall be those given in scripture, which are teaching, leading, praying, example, and shepherding. They should be devoted to the study and teaching of the scriptures, devoted to prayer, leading ministry and direction, being Christ-like examples, and caring for the flock, which includes praying for the sick and visiting the congregation. (*1 Timothy 5:17; James 5:14*)
- C. Under the delegated authority of the congregation, the pastors shall have oversight of the affairs of the church. This includes executive oversight of the scheduling and events. Subject to the will of the congregation, the elders shall oversee the ministry and resources of the church.
- D. The pastoral/elder body may be composed of both pastoral staff (staff pastors) as well as lay elders (non-staff pastors).
- E. The elders/pastors shall annually elect from among themselves a chairman and secretary who shall be charged with facilitating and keeping minutes of their meetings. When not the lead pastor, the Chairman will work with the lead pastor to create meeting agendas. No individual may hold the same office for more than three consecutive years.
- F. Any three or more church members with reason to believe that an elder or pastor should be dismissed should express such concern with the elders and, if need be, to the congregation. Accusations or questions regarding an elder's qualification, teaching, and conduct should be handled by following 1 Timothy 5:19-20.

G. If after following Mathew 18 and 1 Timothy 5:19 without a positive response and/or an elder/pastor is deemed to no longer be qualified to serve as pastor/elder, he may be dismissed by $\frac{3}{4}$ vote of the church at a regularly called meeting.

H. Senior Pastor – Pastoral Team Leader

1. The senior pastor shall be an elder. The congregation recognizes its Lead/Sr. Pastor among the elders as a "*first among equals*" and primary pastor-teacher (Eph 4:11). He is equal with other elders yet serves as a leader among them and presiding elder. He is especially entrusted with the stewardship of ensuring that the vision and direction of ministries are in keeping with the vision, core values, and doctrinal standards of the church. Additionally, he bears special responsibility for the mentoring and development of current and future elders (Ephesians 4:11-12, 2 Tim 2:2, Titus 1:5-16).
2. He shall have the responsibility to supervise and evaluate the staff. This responsibility may be delegated to another staff member on a case-by-case basis.
3. He is responsible for the oversight of public services, preaching services, administration of ordinances, overall teaching ministry, and corporate prayer meetings. He shall serve as an ex-officio member of all committees, boards, and teams.
4. If at any time his personal life, belief, preaching, or teaching does not accord with the doctrinal standards of this church at any time, his services as a pastor shall be terminated immediately following a membership meeting called by the elders two weeks in advance and agreed to by a three-quarters vote of the members present.
5. As a staff pastor, the senior pastor is called to an indefinite term so long as his character and doctrine continue to meet the biblical qualifications to be an elder. The Lead pastor shall give the church 30 days' notice of resignation.

6. In the absence or incapacity of the senior pastor, the elders shall assume responsibility for his duties, any of which can be delegated.

I. Staff Pastors – Pastoral Team Members

1. Staff pastors shall be elected following the pulpit committee in section (5.11) The qualifications, term of office, and official call shall be the same as those of the lead pastor. Staff pastors shall be elders.
2. Staff pastors are called to an indefinite term so long as their character and doctrine continue to meet the biblical qualifications to be an elder. The pastoral staff oversees the day-to-day operations of the church.
3. Each staff pastor shall be allotted the required sabbatical time from the personnel committee to be used as needed with the approval of the elder body. Sabbatical time is not considered as regular vacation time.

Salaries and benefits shall be reviewed annually or as necessary, by the personnel committee and other officers. Their recommendations may be brought before the membership at the next business meeting or included in the next year's proposed budget. Upon approval, any adjustment in budget will become effective by a vote of the membership.

4. The duties of staff pastors shall be determined by the pastoral body with counsel and recommendation from the lead pastor.

The relationship between staff pastors to the lead pastor is that of an associate or assistant, depending on the position. Unless otherwise designated, associate and assistant pastors will report to the senior/lead pastor.

J. Lay elders/pastors – Nonvocational Pastoral Team Members.

The church may recognize men from within the congregation as lay elders/non-staff pastors.

1. Lay elders must meet the same scriptural qualifications for all pastors in I Timothy 3:1-7 and Titus 1:5-9.
2. Lay elders shall have been a member of this church for more than one year before being considered for this office, preferably having previously served in the office of deacon.
3. They must agree with the doctrinal commitments of the church and be philosophically like-minded and compatible with the current elder body.
4. Lay pastors are elected by congregational vote. The process begins with a suggested nomination from the congregation or a current member of the pastoral team. Candidates are reviewed and evaluated by the current pastoral/elder body with the council of the deacons and then affirmed by a two-thirds vote by the congregation.

5. The term of office for a lay elder shall be three years. They may serve two consecutive terms followed by a mandatory 1-year sabbatical. Terms may be renewed upon the consent of the pastoral body and congregational approval.
6. Lay elders may serve up to four terms, at the end of which (if not already ordained) they must pursue ordination before being eligible to serve another term.

Section 5.04 Deacons and Deaconesses

- A. Deacons and Deaconesses are servant leaders within the church. The duties of the Deacons/Deaconesses are to serve the church and assist the elders as needed. Deacons/Deaconesses exercise care of the membership, preserve the unity of the church, and ensure that the physical needs are met (*Acts 6*).
- B. We believe that if the biblical role of the elder is in place and deacons are not functioning in an elder capacity, then scripture allows for female deacons. 1 Timothy 3:11 "*Women, likewise*" refers to those women who serve as deacons or deaconesses. Phoebe's designation as a servant/deaconess in the church and her key role is an example of such a role (*Romans 16:1*).
- A. Deacons and Deaconesses shall assist the pastors/elders with visitation, baptism candidates, and preparation and distribution of the elements of the Lord's Supper.
- B. Their responsibilities may vary from assisting baptism candidates, visitation of shut-ins, member care, and assisting with funerals and weddings, baby showers, or similar ministries to leading hospitality ministries and serving on subcommittees.
- C. The character qualifications of the Deacon/Deaconesses are those found in I Timothy 3:8-13. Membership in this church must be for one year before being considered for this office. To hold this office, one must be at least 18 years of age.
- D. The Deacons/Deaconesses act as the ministers of mercy by overseeing the benevolence ministry of the church. They administer the benevolence funds.
- E. Deacons/Deaconesses are elected by congregational vote. The process begins with a suggested nomination from the congregation or current member of the leadership team. Candidates are confirmed by the current leadership and then confirmed by congregational vote (*Acts 6*).
- F. The term of office for a deacon and deaconess shall be three years. They may serve two consecutive terms followed by a mandatory 1-year sabbatical before serving another term. If extenuating circumstances require, a deacon can be renewed for one more year by a majority vote of the elders and confirmation by the membership.
- G. The number of deacons(es) shall be determined by the elders and upon approval of the membership.

- H. Should a deacon(es) not be able to complete their term of office due to resignation, health, moving, failure to meet the biblical qualifications or death, the elders/pastors may nominate a replacement to fill the unexpired term.

Section 5.05 Financial Officers

- A. Financial Officers include the church treasurer, assistant treasurer, financial secretary, benevolence treasurer, and missionary treasurer. They shall be members in good standing for at least one year of membership. They shall meet the character qualities of a deacon/deaconess and shall serve as deacon/deaconess of finance.
- B. The financial officers shall be nominated by the elders and approved by the membership. The pastors/elders may remove or replace a treasurer when deemed necessary by them and upon approval by the membership.
- C. Treasurer Duties: The duties of the Treasurer are to oversee the disbursement of all funds of the church as authorized.
1. The Treasurer is to ensure a careful record of all church finances and to submit reports regularly to the leadership team and the congregation at congregational meetings.
 2. As a delegated office from the congregation and the church leadership, the treasurer shall adhere to the approved church budget under the leadership of the elders and deacons.
 3. The treasurer shall not disperse non-budgeted funds without approval from the elders and congregational approval when applicable.
- D. The duties of the Assistant Treasurer shall be determined by the Treasurer.
- E. The Treasurer and Assistant Treasurer shall have the authority to sign checks.
- F. The Financial Secretary's duties include overseeing the reception, counting, depositing, and recording of contributions as well as the organization of financial associates (counters).
1. Ensure offering to count and deposit is done with accountability and following best practices. At least two individuals are counting offering funds.
 2. Manage counters/financial associates.

- 3. Financial Associates. At least four (4) shall be nominated by the finance committee and approved by the elders for a one-year term. They may serve two consecutive terms.
- G. Missionary Treasurer: The Missionary Treasurer shall be responsible for the distribution and administration of the missionary funds.
 - 1. As a delegated office from the congregation and the leadership, the missionary treasurer should adhere to the approved church budget for missions and the missionary gifts approved by the missions committee and elders.
 - 2. The missionary treasurer shall make regular financial reports to the missions committee and finance committee as well as an annual report to the congregation.
- H. The term of office for a Treasurer, Assistant Treasurer, Missionary Treasurer, and Financial Secretary shall be three years. If nominated again and upon receiving a satisfactory performance review by the elders, one may serve a second term. One may not serve more than two consecutive terms, at the end of which they may not serve again as a financial officer for a period of one year.
- I. The Treasurer and Assistant Treasurer shall make regular reports available to the elders.
- J. The Financial Officers serve as ex-officio members of the Financial Stewardship Committee.

Section 5.06 Corporate Officers

- A. For the purpose of compliance with state non-profit laws, the elected elders of Linwood Community Church act as the legal officers of the corporation. This board will have the authority (delegated by the congregation) to sign all official documents connected with legal transactions and any documents required by local, state, or federal governments. The corporate officers shall be appointed by the elders from among the elders and deacons. The legal officers should be reviewed every three years to ensure they are all current elders or deacons.
- B. The number of legal officers shall be in accordance with the laws of the State of New Jersey. If needed, deacons will be added as legal officers.

- C. Legal officers shall be responsible for adhering to all rules and regulations concerning legal matters pertaining to the church, which involves federal, state, and local governments.

Article VI. **Committees & Teams**

- D. To effectively and efficiently fulfill the mission of the church, committees and teams may be established and suspended as deemed necessary by the elders. These teams are categorized as Serve Teams (Standing Committees) and Ministry Teams.
- E. The elders may assign deacons and elders to functional roles in their sphere of service or oversight.
- F. Ministry Teams
 - 1. Ministry teams work together to accomplish a particular function in keeping with the mission of the church.
 - 2. The elders may appoint Ministry Team Leaders or directors as well as determine their terms of service.
- G. Serve Teams (Standing & Ad Hoc Committees)
 - 1. Committee Members are comprised of deacons/deaconesses appointed to said committees by the elders. Unless otherwise designated, deacons and deaconesses will nominate members to be appointed to said committees by the elders (*Acts 6*). The elders may also appoint elders to serve on a committee.
 - 2. Committees shall, by majority vote, elect a chair and secretary at the beginning of their term or formation. No individual may hold the same office role for over three consecutive years.
 - 3. Standing Committees serve a permanent function that is either administrative or ministry in nature. Ad-hoc committees shall dissolve after their function is completed.
 - 4. Standing committees (serve teams) include Building & Grounds, Missions, Benevolence, Member Care, Financial Stewardship, Personnel, Meals & Events.
 - 5. Ad Hoc committees may include the Pulpit committee, Building Committee, special project committees, etc.

- H. Committees and teams should seek to facilitate and encourage congregational participation in various areas of ministry whenever possible.
- A. If needed, upon the approval of the elders, a member who is not a deacon/deaconess may be appointed to a committee for a one-year term only.
- B. The Elders may create a committee or task force for a temporary purpose.

Section 6.01 Member Care Committee

Comprised of deacons, deaconesses, and elders. This service team facilitates the care of members. This includes cards, calling, coordinating visitation, following up on prolonged absences, and similar care. The committee should facilitate and encourage the congregation to provide care and meals for members in need. Particular care should be given to the mentoring and assimilation of new members into the life of the church.

Section 6.02 Benevolence Committee

The benevolence committee is comprised of at deacons and/or deaconesses, and/or elders as appointed with the benevolence treasurer being a member. They are responsible for distributing the benevolence funds in accordance with benevolence guidelines that have been approved by the elders. The benevolence committee should seek to involve all the deacons and deaconesses in this work but bear special responsibility for the ministry of mercy themselves.

Section 6.03 Meals and Events

The Meals and Events committee is a serve team that assists and coordinates special events throughout the church family. These include churchwide fellowship meals, weddings, funerals, baby showers, and other special events.

The Meals and Events committee should seek to involve and encourage congregational participation whenever possible.

Section 6.04 Building & Grounds Committee

- C. The building and grounds committee is a serve team that oversees the maintenance, care, and development of the physical campus of the church and any other church properties.
- D. The committee shall coordinate projects consistent with the direction set forth by the elders.
- E. The committee shall coordinate with the housekeeping staff regarding routine cleaning and maintenance.
- F. The committee shall seek to involve volunteers and schedule church work parties as needed.

Section 6.05 Missions Committee

- A. The missions committee is a serve team that exists to promote and oversee the missions outreach and disbursement of missions funds. The missions committee shall keep the congregation informed of the ministries of our missionaries and mission agencies.
- B. The missions committee shall review annually the church's mission support and make recommendations to the elders.
- C. The missions committee shall aid in the planning of events and activities to promote worldwide missions in the church body.
- D. The missions committee shall assist the pastors in organizing mission events (such as a conference) and short-term mission trips as needed.
- E. The missions committee shall recommend to the elders any candidates for mission giving. The addition of missionaries or an increase in support shall be presented to the congregation for approval.
- F. Special missionary gifts and emergency situations may be handled by the missions committee with the amount limited to \$10,000 annually before going to the congregation for approval.

Section 6.06 Financial Stewardship Committee

The financial stewardship committee is a serve team whose function is to promote stewardship, work with ministry staff to prepare an annual budget, and ensure accountability and compliance with the church's finances and processes.

- G. The stewardship/budget Committee will consist of the financial officers, church treasurer, assistant church treasurer, missions treasurer, and financial secretary. The elders may also select two elders and two additional deacons or deaconesses to serve on this committee.
- H. The stewardship committee is responsible for working with ministerial staff to formulate and propose an annual budget to the elders no later than 45 days prior to the Annual Business Meeting. They should do this by comparison of previous years' expenses with input from the ministerial staff.
- I. The Finance Committee is to ensure that an annual audit is conducted on the church's books.
- J. The Finance Committee is to give accountability for receiving and calculating funds.

Section 6.07 Pulpit Committee

- A. In the absence of a senior/lead pastor, a pulpit committee (also named pastoral search committee) shall be formed. A pulpit committee may also be formed for the acquisition and hiring of staff/associate pastors.
- B. The Pulpit Committee is an Ad Hoc committee and will dissolve immediately after the installation of the pastor.
- C. The Pulpit Committee shall be composed of a minimum of five (5), with seven (7) being the ideal number. The members of the committee shall be composed of the other pastors/elders and deacons(es) and other members upon the approval of the membership of the church. Individuals who are members in good standing and mature in their Christian walk may also be selected to serve on the committee.
- D. The committee shall elect a chairman and secretary from its members at their first meeting.
- E. Men shall be invited to preach who are in accord with the doctrine of this church. Only one candidate at a time may be brought before the membership for their consideration. An official call shall be extended to the candidate upon three-fourths of the members present voting in his favor.

Section 6.08 Personnel Committee

When the church has paid staff, the Elders may appoint a Personnel Committee to offer support and accountability for paid church staff.

- A. The Personnel Committee shall consist of a deacon, a deaconess, an elder, and the lead pastor. They should be those with high integrity, awareness of Human Resource practices, and a knowledge of church staffing best practices. If desired or needed, the elders may appoint two members from the congregation for a one-year term.
- B. They shall review compensation and benefits annually or as needed. A standing cost-of-living increase should be in place for all church employees annually, and if not feasible, presented to the congregation for approval.
- C. Their recommendations may be brought before the elders for approval and included in the next year's budget. Substantial mid-year budget adjustments should be presented to the congregation in a member's meeting for approval.
- D. They shall create salary and benefits packages and present the financial figures to the elders and the finance committee to be included in the annual budget.
- E. They shall review standards and recommendations to ensure LCC is in compliance with employment standards and best practices among churches.

Section 6.09 Removal of Officers

- F. We believe that those in leadership positions in this church have been given a great privilege and also a greater responsibility to protect the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore, we require that all officers and teachers be faithful in attendance to the services of the church when possible; be faithful in support of the Pastors and leaders; and be faithful in support of the programs of the church with offerings, testimony, and attitudes (*Romans 12:1,2; Ephesians 4:1-3; I Timothy 4:12-16; James 3:1*).
- G. Any officer not performing the duties of his/her office or whose life is found not to be consistent with the Word of God may be removed following the guidelines in the articles on discipline.

Section 6.10 Church Staff

In order to meet the needs of the congregation and operate efficiently, the pastor(s) are at liberty to fill positions, salaried and unsalaried, with personnel who are equipped for the task and meet the spiritual qualifications. These positions may include interns, music ministers, directors, administrative assistants, custodial staff, and other staff positions. It is expected that the pastor(s) will make a wise and prayerful decision after seeking the counsel of the elders and deacons and in the best interest of the church. Salaried personnel may be hired only after the funds for that position are in the budget or by special congregational approval. The lead pastor is entrusted with the

responsibility of overseeing the staff. This includes the dismissal of staff members who violate the conduct required of the officers of the church or who are remiss in their duties. Unless otherwise noted, staff members report to the lead pastor.

Article VII. Meetings and Elections

Section 7.01 Worship Services

The church shall meet regularly on the Lord's Day for worship (*John 20:1,19, 26; 1 Corinthians 16:2; Revelation 1:10*). The church may also meet at other times for prayer and Bible study. While scripture does not dictate it explicitly, we believe that it is prudent that the Lord's Supper shall be observed frequently.

Section 7.02 Members Meetings

The church shall hold regular meetings of the membership in which congregational business is conducted. Regular meetings are held bi-annually or quarterly, one of which is an annual business meeting.

The elders shall select from among their body one to serve as moderator in congregational business meetings and one member to serve as clerk. No one individual can serve as a moderator for more than three consecutive years. In the absence of a moderator, the lead pastor will preside as moderator pro-temp. The moderator shall preside using standard parliamentary procedures.

Section 7.03 Fiscal Year

The Fiscal Year of Linwood Community Church shall be from January 1 through December 31 of each calendar year. The annual business meeting shall be the first regular meeting of the year.

Section 7.04 Special Meetings

Special meetings may be called by the Pastors/Elders or the Deacons (when the church is without a Senior Pastor), or at the written request of ten members in good standing presented to the Pastors and Deacons with the agenda item disclosed.

Section 7.05 Election of Officers

The election of officers shall be held during the annual business meeting. The election of officers shall be by ballot vote. New officers shall assume their duties immediately.

- H. Nominations for officers are accepted from the congregation and then screened and approved by the elders.
- I. It shall be the responsibility of the elders to oversee the screening and filling of officer positions and terms for the church.
- J. Approved nominations will be presented to the congregation for approval in writing at least two Sundays prior to the annual congregational meeting. No nominations will be received from the floor.
- K. Nominations from the membership are subject to the review and approval of the Elders.
- L. Nominations will not be made public until after approval by the elders since the individual may not desire to serve or be biblically qualified.

Section 7.06 Voting

- M. A quorum of at least 25% of voting members present is required for a vote to be binding.
- N. Members must be 16 years of age and in good standing to vote.
- O. A simple majority shall be necessary to carry out action except where otherwise stated in this constitution.
- P. A vote by show of hands is binding. Matters of more importance shall be decided by ballot.

Article VIII. Finances & Physical Property

Section 8.01 Operating Expenses

Church operations shall be financed primarily by free will offerings.

Section 8.02 Budget

The church shall adopt a balanced church budget each year. The budget shall be submitted to the membership for approval at the annual meeting.

Section 8.03 Missions Giving

The budget shall have at least one-tenth of the regular budgeted income to be given to the missionary cause.

Section 8.04 Expenditures

- A. Normal budgeted expenditures need not be brought before the membership for approval.
- B. From time to time, it may be necessary to allow for “non-budgeted” expenditures outside of the approved annual budget. Non-budgeted expenditures shall be defined as any expenditure that cannot be reasonably included in any of the amounts or categories of the approved budget and/or any expenditure that would exceed the Church’s budget for the specified budget category said expense would be accounted for.
- C. Approval of non-budgeted expenditures will be outlined as follows:
- D. Any non-budgeted expenditure up to 3 % of the approved annual budget shall be approved by the Elders.
- E. Any non-budgeted expenditure exceeding 7% of the annual budget shall be approved by congregational vote.
- F. Additionally, should the annual aggregate amounts of related non-budgeted expenditures exceed or be anticipated to exceed 7% of the total budget, any additional non-budgeted expenditure must be voted on by the congregation.

Section 8.05 Use of property

Any organization or individuals apart from this church must receive permission from the elders or deacons to use church properties and equipment.

Uses of the property for functions inconsistent with the beliefs of the church shall not be allowed.

Section 8.06 Ownership of property

Property is held in the legal name of Linwood Community Church. Officers shall not sell, lease, or give away deeded property without congregational approval. Neither shall they mortgage or encumber property debt without congregational approval.

Section 8.07 Benevolence Funds

The benevolence committee is responsible for the accountability and distribution of benevolence funds (*Acts 6*).

Article IX. Ordinations

Section 9.01 Qualifications

Such men who possess the scriptural qualifications for ordination, upon recommendation by the pastors/elders and vote of the membership, may be considered as candidates for ordination. The senior pastor shall call a council of no less than four ordained ministers of like faith and practice. Upon examination by the council of the candidate concerning his salvation, family and personal character qualifications, call to the ministry, doctrinal beliefs, and their two-thirds or more majority decision, the candidate may then be ordained into the Gospel Ministry.

Article X. Integrated Auxiliaries

Integrated auxiliary organizations may be created to supplement and support the purpose, mission, and ministry of Linwood Community Church. Auxiliary organizations should not distract or conflict with the primary objectives of a New Testament local church. Auxiliary organizations must have the approval of the church leadership team for major decisions and ministry philosophy.

Article XI. Crisis & Disaster

During an unusual emergency such as a pandemic or disaster, the Pastors/Elders and Deacons will work together to make decisions in leading the church.

Article XII. Amendments

This constitution may be amended at any regular meeting by a two-thirds vote, provided two weeks' notice has been given with the proposed amendment stated.

Article XIII. Dissolution

In the event this church becomes incapable or unwilling to carry out its purpose, the church may be dissolved or merged with another assembly of like faith and practice. This shall be done by a two-thirds majority vote of the voting members present at a meeting called for the consideration of dissolution. In the event of dissolution, the title to all remaining assets of the church, after salaries and debts are paid, shall pass to (a) non-profit organization(s). Recipient organizations must hold to the inerrancy of the Bible and the Gospel of King Jesus. Those recipient organizations shall be chosen by the current leadership and approved by the remaining members. No remuneration or assets will go to any of the members or officers of this church.

Article XIV. **Final Authority**

It is understood that we regard this Constitution to be our attempt at setting forth principles whereby things may be done decently and in order in the House of God. Nevertheless, we do not regard this document to be an end in itself. The inerrant Scriptures are now and are always to be our final authority in all matters of faith and conduct.

Adopted August 30, 2026