

Cobblestone Community Church

Constitution and Bylaws

Revised – December 6, 2015

CONSTITUTION

Article I – Name

The name of this church shall be Cobblestone Community Church, an Ohio corporation for nonprofit, in Butler County.

Article II – Affiliation

Cobblestone Community Church is an independent congregation and is not joined to any denomination or synod.

Article III – Purpose

The purpose of Cobblestone Community Church is to glorify God. Our mission is to love people into life-changing encounters with God.

Article IV – Statement of Faith

We believe:

1. That the Bible, comprising the sixty-six books of the Old and New Testaments, is the inspired Word of God. It is without error in the original writings and is the final authority for faith and life. (Matthew 5:18; 2 Timothy 3:16-17; 2 Peter 1:20-21)
2. In one God, infinitely perfect in love, justice, holiness and wisdom, Creator of all things and existing in three persons, the Father, Son, and the Holy Spirit. (Deuteronomy 6:4; Matthew 28:19; John 15:26; 2 Corinthians 13:14)
3. In Jesus Christ, wholly God and man, conceived of the Holy Spirit and born of the virgin Mary. He died on the cross as a sacrifice for our sins, was buried, and rose from the dead. He ascended into heaven and is seated at the right hand of the Father. He is the mediator between God and man and will return to earth to judge all men and establish His kingdom. (John 1:1-5; Luke 1:35; Romans 3:24-25, 5:8; Philippians 2:6-11; 2 Corinthians 5:18-19; 1 John 4:10)

4. In the Holy Spirit, who is present in the world to reveal and glorify Christ, to make men and women aware of their sins, and to impart new life to all who place their faith in Christ alone. He indwells believers from the moment of spiritual birth, instructs them, and empowers them to live lives that are pleasing to God. He also imparts a spiritual gift or gifts to every believer. (John 16:5-13; Romans 8:9; Acts 1:8; 1 Corinthians 12:4-7)
5. That human beings were created in the image of God but chose to sin by disobeying God and in that condition are alienated from God. Therefore, all human beings are born with a corrupted nature, completely unable to recover from their sin and estrangement from God except by a personal faith in Jesus Christ. (Genesis 1:26-27, 3:6-7; Isaiah 53:6, 59:2; Romans 3:22-23; 5:12-17)
6. That people can receive forgiveness and freedom from the punishment their sins deserve, spiritual rebirth, and eternal life not by human effort nor by self improvement but only by the grace of God through the sacrificial death of Jesus Christ and the power of His resurrection. Those who turn from their sin, place their trust in Christ alone, and receive Him into their hearts and lives become children of God. (Romans 6:23, 8:1; Ephesians 1:7, 2:8-10; Titus 3:5-7; John 1:12)
7. That the true Church is composed of all persons who through saving faith in Jesus Christ have been regenerated by the Holy Spirit and that only those who are thus united together as members of the universal Church shall be eligible for membership in the local church. We observe water baptism and the Lord's Supper, but do not regard either of these as a means of salvation. (Ephesians 2:19-22; 1 Corinthians 12:27; Ephesians 4:4-14; Matthew 28:19-20; Luke 22:19-20; Ephesians 2:8-10)
8. In the personal, visible, and imminent return of our Lord Jesus Christ to this earth, and the consummation of His Kingdom, and in the bodily resurrection of the dead: of the unbeliever to judgment and everlasting conscious punishment, and of the believer to everlasting blessedness and joy with the Lord. (Acts 1:11; Revelation 22:12; 1 Corinthians 15:51-59; 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18; 2 Thessalonians 1:7-10; Revelation 20:11-21:8)

Article V – Membership

Cobblestone Community Church shall receive as members those applicants who publicly profess faith in Jesus Christ alone as their personal Savior and Lord and whose lives are evidence of a consistent biblical Christian walk. All applicants must accept and adhere to the church's *Statement of Faith* and meet all the prerequisites for admission to membership, as stated in the Bylaws.

Article VI – Church Government

- A. Congregation – The congregation, consisting of all voting members of the church, shall be called upon at least annually to affirm current members of the Board of Elders and to ratify the adoption of an annual budget. The congregation shall be called upon as needed to nominate potential candidates for the Board of Elders; to affirm any new elders; to affirm the calling of new pastoral staff; to ratify any changes to the Constitution and/or Bylaws; to consider any other matters specified in the Bylaws.
- B. Board of Elders – The affairs of the church shall be managed by the Board of Elders. This board will set the policies of the church for implementation by any lower boards, committees, officers, or staff members and may review, revise, or reverse the decisions of such boards, committees, officers, or staff members as it deems appropriate.
- C. Deacons – Areas of service that may inhibit the elders from carrying out their biblical duties shall be attended to by the Deacons, who serve under the direction and authority of the Board of Elders.
- D. Trustees – To satisfy the requirements of Ohio law, there shall be at least three trustees who will fulfill the duties of that office as described in the Ohio Revised Code. The trustees shall serve under the direction and authority of the Board of Elders.
- E. Staff – There shall be three general categories of Staff: 1) Pastoral Staff, who bear primary responsibility for preaching and teaching, and who are members of the Board of Elders; 2) Ministry Staff, who oversee and have direct involvement in their particular ministries in the church; and 3) Support Staff, who oversee and have direct involvement in the administrative, clerical, and/or physical facility matters of the church.

Article VII – Fiscal Year and Annual Meeting

- A. Fiscal Year – The church fiscal year shall be January 1 through December 31.
- B. The Annual Business Meeting of the congregation shall be held in the fourth quarter of the year. At this meeting the congregation shall be called upon to ratify the budget for the coming year and any other matters established by the Board of Elders.

Article VIII – Property Rights

Cobblestone Community Church shall have power to buy, own, and sell real property in its own name. If a division occurs in the church, the name and all property shall be retained by those adhering to the constitution. If the church ceases to function and its organization is dissolved, the property and assets shall be donated to a Christian church or churches, and/or to nonprofit corporation(s), as selected by a majority of the remaining voting membership.

Article IX – Amendments

Amendments to this constitution may be proposed at any time by the Board of Elders. These said proposed amendments shall have been presented in written form and discussed at a meeting of the Cobblestone Board of Elders not later than the third month prior to the time of the vote to

adopt them. The congregation shall be called upon to ratify the proposed amendments. Article IV and this last sentence of Article IX cannot be repealed or revised.

BYLAWS

Preamble

The purpose of these bylaws is to define as clearly as possible what Cobblestone Community Church is, and to give direction and guidelines that will ensure its smooth functioning and the accomplishment of its mission, for the glory of God and the extension of his Kingdom.

Bylaw I: Membership

A. Admission of Members

1. Any person 18 years of age or older is eligible for voting membership at Cobblestone Community Church after meeting the qualifications for membership.
2. Qualifications for membership shall consist of:
 - a) A personal commitment of faith in Jesus Christ for salvation.
 - b) Three months of regular church attendance, during which time the prospective member gives evidence of a consistent biblical Christian walk.
 - c) Completion of Membership Classes. Classes will be held periodically to teach on the church's:
 1. Vision, purpose, and philosophy of ministry
 2. Statement of Faith
 3. Principles of leadership and structure of government
 4. Membership Covenant
 5. Service opportunities
 - d) Personal Interview. Following attendance at membership classes and an expressed desire to become a member (made evident by a person's completion of an "Application for Membership"), such individuals shall meet with an elder or appointed leader to verbalize their past profession of faith in Jesus Christ, the progress being made in their relationship with Christ in the present, and their desire to be committed to Cobblestone as a local body of believers.
 - e) Signed "Membership Application." Each Member shall sign a statement of commitment, known as the Membership Application, which will be an instrument to affirm one's desire for partnership in the ministry of Cobblestone Community Church, and to serve as a formal record of one's membership.

- f) Corporate Affirmation. Each new member shall be corporately affirmed by the membership of Cobblestone by being publicly welcomed during a meeting of the congregation.

B. Meetings of the Membership

1. The voting members of Cobblestone shall be called upon at least annually to consider the pertinent matters described in Article VI, paragraph A of the Constitution, any other matters described in these Bylaws, and/or matters put forth by the Board of Elders.
 - a) In any given meeting of the members, fifty percent of the total number of members shall constitute a quorum. The vote of a simple majority of the members, whether present at the meeting or voting by official absentee ballot, shall constitute an act of the membership.
 - b) Affirmation as distinct from Ratification – In keeping with the biblical mandate requiring the church’s elders to bear primary responsibility for leadership, some matters of the church will seek “affirmation” from the membership, while other matters will require “ratification” by the membership.
 1. Affirmation: The congregation will be asked for written and/or verbal input on an action of the Board of Elders. Majority approval will be considered confirmation of the action. Lack of majority approval will require the Board of Elders to again prayerfully seek the Holy Spirit’s guidance, possibly resulting in a change of the action, but will not require the Board of Elders to abandon the action.
 2. Ratification: The congregation will be presented with a proposed action to be taken. By the standards established in paragraph (a) above, the congregation will approve or disapprove the proposed action. The Board of Elders will be required to act according to the approval or disapproval.
 - c) Special meetings – The process for calling a special meeting of the membership may be initiated by any voting member. Upon meeting with the Board of Elders, the initiating member will state the purpose for calling the meeting. The request for a special meeting will be listed as an open-floor item on the agenda of a subsequent regularly scheduled meeting of the Board of Elders, not to exceed thirty (30) days from the original request, for the purpose of determining whether a special membership meeting is appropriate and necessary. If, through the prayerful consideration of the Board of Elders, a special meeting is deemed necessary, such meeting will be promptly scheduled and publicized via Cobblestone’s usual and customary avenues of communication.

C. Church Discipline of Members

1. All members of this fellowship are expected to continue to meet the membership requirements stated in Bylaw I.A.2. It is right, and in harmony with the Scriptures, to exercise church discipline towards any person who knowingly holds and promotes false doctrine, lives in defiance of biblical morals, is disorderly, or disturbs the unity and peace of Cobblestone Community Church.

2. Should any member exhibit one or more of the characteristics listed above, the procedure set forth in Matthew 18:15-16 shall be followed for the sole purpose of leading the erring individual to repentance and, ultimately, to full restoration. This shall be done in a spirit of humility and gentleness (Galatians 6:1) as well as loving honesty (Ephesians 4:25). Anyone who does not repent and does not give evidence of repentance shall be counseled by the pastoral staff and elders after the manner indicated by Scripture (Matthew 18:17 and 1 Corinthians 5), which may include removal from the membership and fellowship of the church.
3. If, after these steps of reproof are taken, there is no sincere repentance, one of the pastors, with at least one member of the Board of Elders, shall confront, counsel, and pray with the person. Should there still be no evidence of repentance, the person shall be removed from the membership and fellowship of this church (Matthew 18:17; 1 Corinthians 5:11; 2 Thessalonians 3:14-15).

D. Termination of Membership

1. Any member may voluntarily withdraw his or her membership by written notice to the church office or Board of Elders.
2. Any member who indicates a lack of interest in the ministry of the church for a period of one year and who does not respond to written inquiry from the church shall have his or her membership terminated by the elders. The Board of Elders will give special consideration for extenuating circumstances. A membership review will be performed annually in an effort to contact members and update the membership roles of the church.
3. Any member who no longer meets the qualifications in Bylaw I.A.2.d. and refuses to respond appropriately to discipline as outlined in Bylaw I.B. shall have his or her membership terminated. Such termination shall be decided by the Board of Elders after due consideration. Any person whose membership has been terminated in this manner may, upon recommendation by the Board of Elders, be restored to membership upon evidence of repentance.
4. Any member whose voting privilege is terminated shall be informed by any reasonable means of communication that results in acknowledgement from the former member, up to and including a letter sent by certified mail, return receipt requested.
5. Any exceptions to the above procedures require the approval of the Board of Elders.

E. Membership Requirements for Positions of Responsibility

1. Church membership shall be required for all church officers, leaders, directors, trustees, or any other position of significant responsibility within the church or its organizations.
2. Exceptions to such membership requirement for positions of responsibility will be made only with the approval of the Board of Elders.

Bylaw II: Government

A. Foundational Principles

1. **Jesus Christ is the Head of the church.** He is the true source of all the church is and does, and His glory is to be the objective of every act, function, and motive of the body, both individually and corporately.

And he is the head of the body, the church – Colossians 1:18a. (See also Ephesians 1:22-23; Colossians 2:19.)

2. **The body of Christ receives its direction from the Word of God.** The Bible reflects and contains His thoughts, His commands, His counsel, and His purpose for the church and for every believer.

All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness – 2Timothy 3:16.

3. **The Holy Spirit is the Source of the church's power.** A primary role of the Spirit is to indwell individual believers to conform them to Christ's image as they yield themselves to Him, to the result that the corporate body of believers accurately reflects Christ's character and adequately represents His purposes.

“But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth” – Acts 1:8. (See also Romans 8:9-11; Galatians 5:16.)

B. Leadership

1. Board of Elders.

So I exhort the elders among you, as a fellow elder and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, as well as a partaker in the glory that is going to be revealed: shepherd the flock of God that is among you, exercising oversight, not under compulsion, but willingly, as God would have you; not for shameful gain, but eagerly; not domineering over those in your charge, but being examples to the flock – 1Peter 5:1-3.

Although there is actual equality between all members of the Body of Christ, for the purpose of order, God's Word clearly teaches that the leadership and oversight of a local church is to be fulfilled by a plurality of godly, qualified and called men. Therefore, we shall utilize a representative form of government, allowing the ultimate authority and responsibility for oversight of the ministry and shepherding of the body to be accomplished by the ministry of a Board of Elders, composed of qualified elders, which is assisted by committees composed of the elders and qualified deacons (Philippians 1:1).

- a) **Biblical Role of Elders:** The elders are the spiritual leaders of this local community of God's people, providing pastoral oversight for the people and biblical direction for the ministry. The elders are a group of men who are subject to and accountable to

God and to each other. They are accountable to the church body by the congregation ensuring that God's Word is obeyed (see "Role of the Congregation"). Some elders, by nature of their gifts and calling, need to exercise their gifts and calling in a full-time capacity (1 Timothy 5:17; see also "Pastoral Staff"). The elders' responsibilities are as follows:

1. **Leadership of the Ministry:** Through their example of service and godliness, while avoiding the use of their position to demonstrate dictatorial or selfish attitudes, the elders are responsible for providing the proper vision and influence concerning the church's character, conduct and direction (1 Peter 5:2-3).
2. **Shepherding of the Flock:** Although the privilege and responsibility of serving, loving, and caring for each other belongs to everyone within the church, the elders are to be the primary role models for the pastoral care of the flock God has entrusted to their oversight. As they are taking responsibility and exercising initiative in this task, it will involve the provision of:
 - (a) Guidance, providing direction for the congregation through all major decisions and giving wise counsel regarding the spiritual lives of the flock (Acts 20:28).
 - (b) Protection, refuting false doctrine and teaching and guarding against destructive factions (Titus 1:9, Acts 20:28-31).
 - (c) Encouragement for the believers in the congregation as they grow in their walks with Christ (1 Thessalonians 4:1).
 - (d) Comfort, bearing the sorrows, grief and pain of God's people (1 Thessalonians 2:11-12, Galatians 6:2).
 - (e) Care for the physical needs of individuals in the congregation (1 Timothy 3:5, Acts 20:35).
3. **Teaching and Exhortation:** Elders are to ensure that the people are properly fed through accurate and applicable biblical instruction and, therefore, are equipped for the work of the ministry. They shall also serve as the final authority on church doctrinal positions and policies (1 Timothy 3:2, Titus 1:9, Ephesians 4:12).
4. **Management of the Church:** Although the details of administration are not their primary role, the elders are to serve as the ultimate administrative authority in the ministry. The elders, collectively, shall be the directors of the church. This management includes the oversight of church policies and of the administration of church affairs. It also includes the right to approve all ministries as well as to oversee the appointment of all committees and officers within the church. The elders shall serve as the final authority on matters of interpretation concerning the church's governing documents. They are to "rule well" (1 Tim 3:5; 5:17).
5. **Admonishment and Discipline:** Elders are to ensure that confrontation regarding ongoing sin or unruliness is carried out in a gentle, biblical manner (1 Thessalonians 5:12; 2 Timothy 2:25).

6. Prayer: Elders are to pray for the physical and spiritual well-being of the congregation and they are also to model lives of active faith and vibrant prayer (James 5:14; Acts 6:4).
- b) Characteristics of the Board of Elders' Ministry: The elders' ministry to the body must be characterized by:
1. Joyful eagerness – 1Peter 5:2
 2. Willing initiative – 1Peter 5:2; 1Timothy 3:1
 3. Servanthood – 1Peter 5:2
 4. Leadership – 1Thessalonians 5:12
 5. Diligence – 1Thessalonians 5:12; Romans 12:8
 6. Courage to Admonish – 1Thessalonians 5:12
 7. Humility – 1Peter 5:3, 5
 8. Gentleness – 1Peter 5:3; 2Timothy 2:25
 9. Patience – 2Timothy 2:24
 10. Openness and Receptivity – 1Peter 5:3
 11. Wisdom – Ephesians 5:15
 12. Faith – Hebrews 11:6; Acts 6:5
 13. Sense of Stewardship – Hebrews 13:17
- c) Biblical Qualifications of Elders

The saying is trustworthy: If anyone aspires to the office of overseer, he desires a noble task. ² Therefore an overseer must be above reproach, the husband of one wife, sober-minded, self-controlled, respectable, hospitable, able to teach, ³ not a drunkard, not violent but gentle, not quarrelsome, not a lover of money. ⁴ He must manage his own household well, with all dignity keeping his children submissive, ⁵ for if someone does not know how to manage his own household, how will he care for God's church? ⁶ He must not be a recent convert, or he may become puffed up with conceit and fall into the condemnation of the devil. ⁷ Moreover, he must be well thought of by outsiders, so that he may not fall into disgrace, into a snare of the devil – 1Timothy 3:1-7, ESV.

This is why I left you in Crete, so that you might put what remained into order, and appoint elders in every town as I directed you— ⁶ if anyone is above reproach, the husband of one wife, and his children are believers and not open to the charge of debauchery or insubordination. ⁷ For an overseer, as God's steward, must be above reproach. He must not be arrogant or quick-tempered or a drunkard or violent or greedy for gain, ⁸ but hospitable, a lover of good, self-controlled, upright, holy, and disciplined. ⁹ He must hold firm to the trustworthy word as taught, so that he may be

able to give instruction in sound doctrine and also to rebuke those who contradict it – Titus 1:5-9, ESV.

The role of biblical eldership can only be fulfilled with the presence of biblically qualified leadership. Therefore, it is imperative that the elders be chosen for their spiritual maturity and giftedness and consistency in giving evidence of their adherence to the biblical qualifications. An individual must be acknowledged as meeting these biblical qualifications for the office of elder in order to be inducted and he must continue to reflect these qualities in order to remain in office. Therefore, their qualifications, taken from the above passages of Scripture, are as follows:

1. Above reproach – Elders must be blameless, presenting no patterns of scriptural disobedience or grounds for accusation.
2. Husband of one wife – Elders, if married, must be devoted spouses.
3. Temperate – Elders must be self-controlled, enslaved to nothing, free from excesses.
4. Sober-minded and Self-controlled – Elders must be sober, sensible, wise, balanced in judgment; not given to quick, superficial decisions based on immature thinking.
5. Respectable – Elders must demonstrate a well ordered life and good behavior.
6. Hospitable – Elders must be unselfish with their personal resources; they must be willing to share their time, energy, and blessings with others.
7. Able to teach – Elders must be able to communicate the truth of God and exhort with sound doctrine in a non-argumentative way (see also 2Timothy 2:24; 4:2).
8. Not a drunkard – Elders must be free from addictions and must be willing to limit their liberty for the sake of others.
9. Not violent but gentle – Elders must be gentle and characterized by forbearance and tenderness, not having a quick temper.
10. Not quarrelsome – Elders must not be given to quarreling or selfish argumentation.
11. Not a lover of money – Elders must not be stingy, greedy, or out for sordid gain; they should not be preoccupied with amassing material things, but rather should be a model of sacrificial, cheerful giving.
12. Manages his household well – Elders must have a well ordered household, a healthy family life, and well behaved children (pertaining to those children still under the elder's authority).
13. Not a new convert – Elders must not be new believers; they must have been Christians for long enough to demonstrate the reality of their conversion and the depth of their spirituality. (Elsewhere, our Bylaws require an elder to have been a

regular attendee of Cobblestone for at least two years, and a member for at least one year.)

14. Well thought of by outsiders – Elders must be well respected by unbelievers and must be free from hypocrisy.
15. Not arrogant – Elders must not be stubborn, insensitive, or prone to force opinions on others; they must be more interested in service than self-pleasure.
16. Not quick-tempered – Elders must be able to exercise self-control and patience in difficult situations.
17. Lover of good – Elders must desire the will of God in every decision.
18. Upright – Elders must be just and impartial; their judgments must be based on scriptural principles.
19. Holy and disciplined – Elders must be reverent, continually desiring to be separated from sin and living a holy life; they must be devoted to prayer, the study of Scripture, and the guarding of their own spiritual walk.
20. Holding firm to the trustworthy word as taught – Elders must be stable in the faith, and faithful; obedient to the Word of God; continually seeking to be controlled by the Holy Spirit; able to give instruction in sound doctrine and rebuke those who contradict it.

d) Selection of Elders

1. God's Word gives evidence of the first elders being appointed by the founders of the church. These examples imply that the existing spiritual leadership of a church is intimately involved in the process of selecting elders to ensure selection based on spiritual rather than superficial qualifications. Beyond these examples there are no specific guidelines given regarding the selection process. It would appear, therefore, that freedom is given to the individual church to develop a process that will best serve its own special needs and situations.
2. In this ministry, appointment by the governing body under the Holy Spirit's direction – rather than election by the congregation – shall be the basis for selecting elders (Acts 14:23; 20:28; Titus 1:5). However, there is obviously a need for balance between the new elders being selected by the existing Board of Elders and being affirmed by the people. The church members' recognition and counsel regarding the candidates' labor and character are absolutely essential; hence the congregation is to hold the Board of Elders accountable regarding the new elders' satisfaction of the biblical qualifications and their showing evidence of being the Holy Spirit's appointees to the office of elder.
3. Therefore, the following procedure allows for the church body-at-large to be instrumental in the nomination of potential elders at the beginning of the process and to be necessary in the affirmation of the appointed elders at the conclusion of the selection process. It is to be noted that this entire process must be done

prayerfully and carefully, not in haste or in a flippant manner (see 1 Timothy 5:22).

4. In the fall of each year, the elders currently serving shall determine the number of positions, if any, to be filled that year on the Board of Elders. If they determine that additional elders are needed, they shall continue with the process for elder selection.
 5. The congregation shall be reminded of the biblical teaching regarding the role and qualifications for elders. With the biblical qualifications in mind, members of the congregation will be given 30 days to prayerfully submit the names of church members for consideration as elders (nominees). Nominees shall have been regular attendees of Cobblestone for at least two years, and members in good standing for at least one year. Men whose names are submitted shall be so informed, and they shall be urged to engage in prayerful self-appraisal and personal evaluation in light of the scriptural qualifications. Any person may withdraw his name at that point if he does not aspire to the office of elder (see 1 Timothy 3:1) or if he does not believe he adequately meets the qualifications.
 6. The elders shall review the nominees and make final selections. Approval shall be unanimous, or by no more than one dissenting vote among the elders, with the full Board voting. Nominees not selected at this point shall also be given reason by the elders for why they were not selected.
 7. The name(s) of the prospective elder(s) shall be brought before the members of the church, who will be given 30 days to show reason why any of the prospective elders would not be qualified to serve. Consistent with Cobblestone's desire to have the congregation thoroughly involved in the selection of elders, any member with such potential reason must express his or her concern to the Board of Elders, who will then be compelled to investigate. Consistent with 1 Timothy 5:19, the charge must be established on the evidence of two or three witnesses. If the charge is valid, and constitutes disqualification according to the relevant Scripture passages, the prospective elder will no longer be considered for the office in the present selection cycle.
 8. After the 30-day period, the prospective elders will be presented to the members of the church for a service of corporate affirmation and dedication. Such a service shall occur every year (most probably in the month of January), whether to affirm new elders or to reaffirm the service and ministry of existing elders (along with the same for the deacons).
 9. Note: In the event of vacancy or special need at any time, the Board of Elders may refer to previous nominees to make a selection, or may reinitiate the entire selection process, as they deem necessary.
- e) Elders' Term of Service

1. Because Scripture indicates no fixed term for elders, no specific fixed term for office is recommended in these Bylaws. Instead, each elder, on appointment, shall be asked for a one-year commitment, subject to review, recommitment, and reaffirmation by church members each subsequent year.
 2. During the period of annual review, the elders shall individually and mutually evaluate one another's continued service as an elder, again considering the biblical qualifications as well as any personal factors that might affect their service and perhaps indicate a need for a sabbatical. An individual's service as an elder may be discontinued by his own decision or by the unanimous decision of the other elders.
 3. Those elders renewing their commitment would again be presented to the members of the congregation for affirmation and dedication in January of each year.
- f) Number of Elders
1. The number of elders which shall constitute the whole Board of Elders shall be not less than five (5); the maximum number shall be established according to the needs of the church, as determined by the Board of Elders.
- g) Meetings of the Elders
1. The Board of Elders shall meet at least once per month for its appropriate purposes. Unless otherwise required in these Bylaws, a quorum will consist of two thirds of the members in office, and an action of the Board will be initiated by a simple majority of the voting members in attendance.
 - a. In voting on any given matter before of the Board of Elders, pastoral staff representation shall not exceed fifty percent. If the number of pastoral staff members present would constitute a majority, they must collectively appoint representatives who would constitute less than fifty percent of the total number of Board members present.
 - b. Pastoral staff members shall not vote on matters concerning their own salaries and/or benefits, or those of other pastoral staff members.
 2. For the efficient operation of meetings, the Board of Elders shall appoint a Chairman (to facilitate meetings), a Vice-Chairman (to serve in the Chairman's absence), and a Secretary (primarily, to produce minutes) from among its members. The Chairman may designate a Secretary who is not a member of the Board.
- h) Sabbatical Leave
1. If an elder needs to take a leave of absence from the Board of Elders, he may do so with the majority consent of the Board, the length of such leave having been agreed upon by the elder and the rest of the Board.
- i) Discipline and Dismissal of Elders

1. Accusations against any one of the elders shall be considered by the Board of Elders only if supported by the written testimony of two or more witnesses (1 Timothy 5:19). If it is determined that the elder has erred in doctrine or conduct, the Board of Elders shall admonish the offending elder (1 Timothy 5:20-21), for the purpose of restoration (Galatians 6:1). If the offending elder persists in sin or refuses to repent of or retract such doctrine or conduct, he may be dismissed (1 Timothy 5:20-22, 24) by unanimous vote of the Board of Elders, with the offending elder not voting.

- j) Committees of the Board of Elders
 1. While continuing to acknowledge the scriptural mandate indicating that the elders bear the ultimate responsibility for the care of the church, the Board of Elders may create one or more Committees to assist the elders. The members of each Committee will be appointed by and serve under the direction of the Board of Elders.
 2. The elders may participate in the ministry of each Committee by attending its meetings and participating in discussions and decision making. The Board of Elders shall appoint either an elder or a deacon to be chairperson of each committee, depending on that committee's area of ministry.
 3. Responsibilities of the Committees – Always functioning under and subject to the authority and direction of the Board of Elders, the Committees shall:
 - (a) Assist the Board of Elders by providing a wider base of input and help as a qualified and representative forum
 - (b) Free the elders from being unnecessarily preoccupied with the day-to-day operational aspects of the ministry
 - (c) As necessary, further delineation of responsibilities shall be determined by the Board of Elders with input from the members of the Committees.

2. Deacons.

Now in these days when the disciples were increasing in number, a complaint by the Hellenists arose against the Hebrews because their widows were being neglected in the daily distribution. And the twelve summoned the full number of the disciples and said, "It is not right that we should give up preaching the word of God to serve tables. Therefore, brothers, pick out from among you seven men of good repute, full of the Spirit and of wisdom, whom we will appoint to this duty. But we will devote ourselves to prayer and to the ministry of the word." And what they said pleased the whole gathering, and they chose Stephen, a man full of faith and of the Holy Spirit, and Philip, and Prochorus, and

Nicanor, and Timon, and Parmenas, and Nicolaus, a proselyte of Antioch. These they set before the apostles, and they prayed and laid their hands on them – Acts 6:1-6.

a) Biblical Role of Deacons

Deacons are a group of godly and qualified men and women who serve in partnership with and under the direction and authority of the Board of Elders in their task of leading the church, undertaking those areas of service necessary for the church's continued health that would otherwise prohibit the elders from meeting their biblical responsibilities. No specific, ongoing roles for deacons are mentioned in Scripture, probably because the nature of their ministry of service implies change, depending on the particular situations and needs of a given church at various times. Moreover, the term "deacon," derived from the Greek *diakonos*, which is the ordinary word for describing one who serves, covers a very broad range of service in the church.

b) Biblical Qualifications of Deacons

Deacons likewise must be men of dignity, not double-tongued, or addicted to much wine or fond of sordid gain,⁹ but holding to the mystery of the faith with a clear conscience.¹⁰ These men must also first be tested; then let them serve as deacons if they are beyond reproach.¹¹ Women must likewise be dignified, not malicious gossips, but temperate, faithful in all things.¹² Deacons must be husbands of only one wife, and good managers of their children and their own households.¹³ For those who have served well as deacons obtain for themselves a high standing and great confidence in the faith that is in Christ Jesus – 1 Timothy 3:8-13, NASB.

The biblical role of deacon can only be fulfilled by biblically qualified leadership. Therefore, it is imperative that deacons be chosen for their spiritual maturity and adherence to the scriptural qualifications. An individual must be acknowledged as meeting the biblical qualifications for the office of deacon in order to be inducted and he or she must continue to reflect these qualities in order to remain in the office. Therefore, their qualifications, taken from the above passage of Scripture, are as follows:

- 1) Individuals of dignity – Deacons must be mature, of sound mind and character, yielded to the Holy Spirit.
- 2) Not double-tongued – Deacons must demonstrate verbal consistency; they must not be prone to saying one thing to one person and something else to another.
- 3) Not addicted to wine – Deacons must be free from addictions, and must be willing to limit their liberty for the sake of others.

- 4) Not fond of sordid gain – Deacons must be purely motivated in their service.
 - 5) Holding to the mystery of the faith with clear conscience – Deacons must have sound knowledge of Christian truths and a lifestyle in accord with them; they must not be easily swayed from the truth.
 - 6) Beyond reproach – Deacons must display a lifestyle free from patterns of disobedience to Scripture.
 - 7) First tested – Deacons must have proven over time that they are faithful and that their walk is credible. (Elsewhere, our Bylaws require a deacon to have been a regular attendee of Cobblestone for at least fifteen months, and a member for at least one year.)
 - 8) Regarding women who are deacons: As with men who are deacons, women must be dignified (mature, of sound mind and character, yielded to the Holy Spirit); must not be malicious gossips (not given to slanderous conversation or to making false accusations); must be temperate (self-controlled, enslaved to nothing, free from excesses); and must be faithful in all things (diligent in service, not easily swayed from the truth).
 - 9) Husband of one wife – Deacons who are men, if married, must be devoted husbands.
 - 10) Manages the household well – Deacons must have well ordered households, a healthy family life, and well behaved children (pertaining to those children still under the authority of the deacon).
- c) Selection of Deacons
1. Providing the means for the selection and review of deacons shall be the responsibility of the Board of Elders. In keeping with what can be discerned as the spirit and intent of the example given in Acts 6:1-6, the selection process will involve three steps:
 - 1) When a need arises to appoint a deacon over a particular area of the church's ministry, the Board of Elders will present and describe the need to the congregation by way of Cobblestone's usual and customary means of communication, and launch a search among the congregation for a viable candidate.
 - 2) The congregation shall be reminded of the biblical teaching regarding the role and qualifications for deacons. With those in mind, members of the congregation will be given 21 days to prayerfully submit the names of church members for consideration as deacons (nominees). Nominees shall have been regular attendees of Cobblestone for at least fifteen months, and members in good standing for at least one year. Those whose names are submitted shall be so informed, and they shall be urged to engage in prayerful self-appraisal and personal evaluation in light of the scriptural qualifications. Any nominee who

doesn't feel qualified and led by the Lord to serve in the capacity described may decline the nomination at any time.

- 3) Having received the recommendation of the congregation, the Board of Elders will interview the nominee(s) to confirm that he or she is qualified, and in the case of multiple nominees, select, with the Lord's guidance, the one best suited for the service. Once all requirements are met, the Board of Elders will approve and commission the new deacon for service. Notice of approval and prayer of commissioning shall take place in a public worship service.
2. Deacons who are currently serving shall be presented to the congregation annually for affirmation. Deacons who must leave an area of service may do so at any time, with notice to the Board of Elders.

d) Discipline and Dismissal of Deacons

1. Accusations against any deacon shall be considered by the Board of Elders, as the representative of the church, only if supported by the written testimony of two or more witnesses (Matthew 18:16-17). If it is determined that the accused deacon has erred in doctrine or conduct, the Board of Elders shall admonish the offending deacon, for the purpose of restoration (Galatians 6:1). If the offending deacon persists in sin or refuses to repent of or retract such doctrine or conduct, the Board of Elders may dismiss the deacon by unanimous vote.

3. Trustees.

In accordance with Ohio law, there shall be no less than three (3) designated Trustees, who will carry out their duties as defined in the Ohio Revised Code. Selection of Trustees shall be the responsibility of the Board of Elders. Trustees must meet the qualifications for deacons as described in 1Timothy 3:8-13, and will serve under the direction and authority of the Board of Elders.

4. Congregation

We ask you, brothers, to respect those who labor among you and are over you in the Lord and admonish you,¹³ and to esteem them very highly in love because of their work. Be at peace among yourselves (1Thessalonians 5:12-13).

... complete my joy by being of the same mind, having the same love, being in full accord and of one mind (Philippians 2:2). (See also, Hebrews 13:17; Ephesians 4:11-12; 1Peter 2:9.)

God's Word teaches that within the membership of a local church there is equality of status but not of role: all believers are to be participating ministers in the life of the

fellowship, but not all believers lead. Therefore we have a representative form of government that follows the biblical pattern in which the responsibility of leadership is in the hands of a few and ministry is to be in the hands of many.

Though New Testament principles of church government are contrary to many contemporary democratic ideas, they certainly do not imply that the congregation-at-large is to be passive or uninvolved, even in the decision making of the church. In fact, the leadership shall resolve to not be satisfied with passivity among the congregation.

Even though the elders are the ultimate authority in the life of the church under God, they are not to be authoritarian in their ministry to the body. They are to be humble servant-leaders within the body, seeking the counsel and mind of those they are leading. Hence, there is to be reciprocity of communication between the leadership and the body: the leadership not being hesitant to seek the congregation's counsel when needed (through both formal and informal means), and the congregation not hesitating to come directly to the leadership with ideas, suggestions, or concerns. In the life and government of Cobblestone Community Church, all are to have a voice in assuring that God's Word is being obeyed.

5. Staff

a) General considerations

- 1) No staff position may be filled without a complete job description, approved by the Board of Elders.
- 2) Paid staff positions to be filled are subject to the availability of funds budgeted for personnel.

b) Pastoral Staff

*Let the elders who rule well be considered worthy of double honor, especially those who labor in preaching and teaching.*¹⁸ *For the Scripture says, "You shall not muzzle an ox when it treads out the grain," and, "The laborer deserves his wages" (1Timothy 5:17-18).*

- 1) Description – Some elders, by nature of their abilities and God's direction for them, and according to the needs and God's direction for the church's ministry, will exercise their gifts and calling in a part-time or full-time vocational capacity as part of our pastoral staff. In the likely event that Cobblestone has more than one member on the pastoral staff, the Board of Elders will strive to use Spirit-led discernment in assigning primary roles and responsibilities for each member, in order to best glorify God and edify the church with each member's gifts. Pastoral

staff members should not be responsible for ministering in areas unrelated to their primary roles or areas of giftedness.

- 2) Qualifications – Members of the pastoral staff must meet the qualifications for an elder, as presented in 1 Timothy 3:1-7 and Titus 1:5-9. They must also be able to articulate and demonstrate God’s call on their lives to serve in a vocational capacity in the church.
- 3) Roles and Responsibilities – As with all elders, pastoral staff shall be directly accountable to the Board of Elders, and their ministry shall be in concert with the other elders. Their roles and responsibilities are as follows:
 - (a) Shepherding – They shall serve and shepherd the flock God has entrusted to their care by ensuring that the spiritual dimension of the church is properly guarded and its spiritual direction is properly guided, on both a corporate and individual level.
 - (b) Teaching – They shall communicate and convey the truths of Christianity by proclaiming and explaining God’s Word and purposes in a relevant, applicable, and Spirit-led manner as well as through being an example to the congregation by living a godly life consistent with the Scriptures. Pastoral staff will at times call on other gifted elders to teach the church.
 - (c) Leading – In the manner of a servant, they will exercise Spirit-led influence on the church’s ministry, the end results being that Christ is glorified and the church’s mission is accomplished. This leadership role shall include overseeing the Ministry and Support Staff.
 - (d) Vision – They shall continually communicate, clarify, and uphold the vision that God has entrusted to Cobblestone Community Church.
- 4) Selection – In the event of a vacancy on the pastoral staff, or should the Board of Elders see the need to add new pastoral staff, the Board of Elders shall be responsible for conducting a search to fill the position. The Board of Elders may establish committees and/or subcommittees to assist in the search for a candidate.
 - (a) Upon the unanimous approval and recommendation of the full Board of Elders, the candidate will be presented to the congregation for affirmation.
 - (b) The candidate shall have been named, and the date, time, and place of meeting announced, at least thirty (30) days in advance of the presentation.
 - (c) During the period established in paragraph (b) above, the Board of Elders will provide to the congregation no less than two open forums for the discussion of the candidate, the times and locations of which will be announced at least two weeks in advance by way of Cobblestone’s usual and customary means of communication.
 - (d) Following the events described in paragraphs (a) through (c) above, final approval of the candidate shall be by unanimous vote of the Board of Elders.

- 5) Resignation or Removal – Pastoral staff members will serve in office indefinitely, unless their service is ended by resignation or removal. Pastoral staff may tender a resignation to the Board of Elders at any time. Pastoral staff may be removed by a two-thirds majority vote of the Board of Elders, with the full Board voting.
- c) Ministry Staff
- 1) Description – Ministry staff members oversee and have direct involvement in particular areas of the church’s ministry, and serve in a part-time or full-time vocational capacity.
 - 2) Qualifications – Ministry staff members must meet the qualifications given in 1Timothy 3:8-13 and give evidence of gifts, abilities, and/or credentials that qualify them for their particular area of ministry. In addition to an obvious love for and commitment to Jesus Christ and the display of a consistent godly walk, ministry staff members must have a specific commitment to Cobblestone’s vision and ministry, and shall be in full accordance with the Cobblestone Community Church *Statement of Faith*.
 - 3) Selection – The Board of Elders may establish committees and/or subcommittees to assist in the work of identifying qualified candidates for ministry staff positions. Ministry staff members are to be appointed by the Board of Elders by either unanimous approval or no more than one dissenting vote.
 - 4) Resignation or Removal – Ministry staff members will serve in office indefinitely, unless their service is ended by resignation or removal. Ministry staff may tender a resignation to the Board of Elders at any time. Ministry staff may be removed by a two-thirds majority vote of the Board of Elders, with the full Board voting.
- d) Support Staff
1. Description – Support staff members oversee and have direct involvement in particular areas of the church’s ministry, including but not limited to administrative, clerical, and/or physical facilities areas, and serve in a part-time or full-time vocational capacity.
 2. Qualifications – Support staff members must give evidence of gifts, abilities, and/or credentials that qualify them for their particular area of ministry. In addition to an obvious love for and commitment to Jesus Christ and the display of a consistent godly walk, support staff members must have a specific commitment to Cobblestone’s vision and ministry, and shall be in full accordance with the Cobblestone Community Church *Statement of Faith*. At the discretion of the Board of Elders, certain members of the support staff will be required to meet the scriptural qualifications of 1Timothy 3:8-13 because of the nature of the work involved.
 3. Selection – The pastoral staff shall identify and interview potential candidates, and may establish committees to assist in the work of identifying qualified candidates for support staff positions. Recommendations will be made to the

Board of Elders. Support staff members are to be appointed by the Board of Elders by a two-thirds majority vote.

4. Resignation or Removal – Support staff members will serve in office indefinitely, unless their service is ended by resignation or removal. Support staff may tender a resignation to the Board of Elders at any time. Support staff may be removed by a majority vote of the Board of Elders.

Bylaw III: Fiscal and Legal Matters

A. Contracts

1. The Board of Elders may authorize any officer or officers, agent or agents, to enter into any contract or execute and deliver any instrument in the name of and on behalf of the church. Such authority may be general or confined to specific instances. Such delegation shall be in writing.

B. Checks and Drafts

1. All checks, drafts, or orders for the payment of money, notes, or other evidences of indebtedness issued in the name of the church shall be signed by such officer or officers, agent or agents and in such manner as shall be determined by the Board of Elders.

C. Deposits

1. All funds of the church shall be deposited from time to time to the credit of the church in such banks, trust companies, or other depositories as the Board of Elders may select.

D. Gifts

1. The Board of Elders may accept on behalf of the church any contribution, gift, bequest, or device for the general purposes or specified purpose of the church.

E. Books and Records

1. Cobblestone Community Church shall keep correct and complete books and records of accounts and shall also keep minutes of the proceedings of its Board of Elders. All books and records of Cobblestone Community Church may be inspected by any voting member of the congregation upon request at any reasonable time, with reasonable advance notice.

F. Audits

1. The financial books and records of Cobblestone Community Church shall be audited internally at least once every three years until the annual budget, excluding mortgage payments, exceeds \$500,000, at which time professional external audits shall be performed every three years.

Bylaw IV: Amendments

a. Proposal

1. Amendments and revisions to these Bylaws may be proposed at any time by the Board of Elders. These said proposed amendments shall have been presented in written form and discussed at a meeting of the Cobblestone Board of Elders not later than the third month prior to the time of the vote to adopt them. The congregation shall be called upon to ratify the proposed amendments and/or revisions. Recommendations for revisions or amendments to these Bylaws may also be made by any member of the congregation to the Board of Elders.
 2. Recommendations shall be referred to the congregation for a vote of ratification only after approval by a majority of the full Board of Elders.
- b. Vote of Ratification
1. Approved recommendations shall be submitted to the members in writing not less than two weeks prior to a vote of ratification; notice of the impending vote shall also be published in Cobblestone Community Church's usual and customary avenues of communication at least two weeks prior to the vote.
 2. The final vote will be taken at a subsequent membership meeting. Changes shall be adopted by a two-thirds majority vote of a simple-majority quorum of the congregation by secret ballot.
- c. Implementation
1. Once passed, the revised Bylaws will go into effect immediately, and copies will be made available to members of the congregation.