



**The Constitution and Bylaws of
Bethel Bear Creek Reformed Church
2022 Edition**

Synopsis of Amendments Included in The Constitution and Bylaws of Bethel Bear Creek Reformed Church, 2022 Edition

The 2022 edition of The Constitution and Bylaws of Bethel Bear Creek Reformed Church supersedes the 2011 edition. The previous edition, including amendments and revocations, is filed in the History Room for reference purposes only.

All amendments since 2011 have been incorporated into the text at the appropriate places. Some additional changes to the previous amendments may occur in this finished product. The finished product is separate and distinct under its own cover, making for ready reference.

The membership assented to the following: that the name of the church be changed from Bethel (Bear Creek) United Church of Christ to “Bethel Bear Creek Reformed Church” at the Congregational Meeting on February 28, 2016. With much review and consideration by the congregation and consistory, the congregation voted to decent from the United Church of Christ effective March 1, 2016).

The membership assented to the following amendments at the Congregational Meeting on July 24, 2016:

- Trust Indenture, Paragraph 3 was amended to remove “or”, add “or interest drawings annuities”, and “, or guaranteed by The North Carolina Life & Health Insurance Guaranty Association” to read:

“The Trustees shall deposit all of the present cemetery funds, and additions to the principal thereof, in an interest drawing account, in interest bearing certificates, **or interest drawing annuities**, in the First Union National Bank of Mount Pleasant, North Carolina, or in any other interest drawing institution, or in either of them, of their successors, provided, they, the funds, are insured by the Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation, **or guaranteed by The North Carolina Life & Health Insurance Guaranty Association.**”

- Trust Indenture, Paragraph 11 was amended to add “or institution” and “or guaranteed by The North Carolina Life & Health Insurance Guaranty Association” to read:

“This is a codicillary paragraph - an added provision: In consideration of the improbable circumstance that the church should, in the future, be slated for dissolution and become extinct, the succeeding actions shall be accomplished with all possible haste, consecutively. Said fund shall be inventoried by the then serving Trustees in office; every indebtedness shall be satisfied, if any; and a resulting clear asset money figure shall be ascertained. Then, with all practicable speed, the Trustees shall place an unencumbered sum IN TRUST with the First Union National Bank, Mount Pleasant, North Carolina, or its successor, or with

some other bank, or institution, provided it is insured by the Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation or guaranteed by The North Carolina Life & Health Insurance Guaranty Association, with the direction that the interest income shall be used and applied toward the continued upkeep of the said cemetery by contractual arrangement. It would be inopportune to attempt specific arrangements for such functions at this time because of unknown and nebulous circumstances in the future. We can only trust and have faith that reputable persons in the community will rally at the proper time to follow through with this weighty and sacred task, especially since it will be, indubitably, well-funded.

- Warranted Endowment, Paragraph 3 was amended to add “and/or the Cemetery Fund” to read:

“3. The purpose of this Endowment Fund shall be to augment with interest only therefrom the General Fund and/or the Cemetery Fund of Bethel (Bear Creek) United Church of Christ, and no other, for so long as said church exists.”

- Warranted Endowment, Paragraph 4 was amended to remove “or” and add “or interest drawing annuities”, and “or guaranteed by The North Carolina Life & Health Insurance Guaranty Association” to read:

“4. The Warrantors shall deposit the initial pledge monies, and subsequent contributions, in an interest drawing account, in interest bearing certificates, or interest drawings annuities, in the Northwestern Bank of Concord, North Carolina, or in any other interest drawing institution, or in either of them, or their successors, provided they, the funds, are insured by the Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation, or guaranteed by The North Carolina Life & Health Insurance Guaranty Association. The principal of said fund, and additions thereto, shall in no instance be removed from said account(s), except for possible transfer to another account. The interest alone shall be transferred into the General Fund of said church whenever it becomes available; or, as of the end of each calendar year. In the event no interest income is received during a calendar year, as can happen in the case of long-term Certificates of Deposit, this fact shall be noted in the annual Financial Statement for said fund as required by paragraph 7 below.”

The membership assented to the following amendments at the Congregational Meeting on October 22, 2017:

- Bylaws, Article II, Paragraph 15 was amended to read “four elders” instead of “six elders” and read “four deacons” instead of “six deacons”. Additionally, the following was added to the sentence “for an active membership of 99 and fewer; one pastor, six elders, and six deacons for an active membership of 100 and over” to read:

“The Consistory shall constitute the executive body of this organization. Its composition: one pastor, four elders, and four deacons for an active membership of 99 and fewer; one pastor, six elders, and six deacons for an active membership of 100 and over.”

The membership assented to this 2022 edition of the Constitution and Bylaws which was adopted after much review and consideration by the Consistory and congregation at the Congregational Meeting on November 6, 2022.

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The Constitution of Bethel Bear Creek Reformed Church

*Paragraph
Number*

Preamble

1. The United Church of Christ was formed on June 25, 1957, merging the Evangelical and Reformed Churches and the Congregational Christian Churches of the United States in order to express more unitedly the oneness of Christ, to make more effective a common witness for Him, and to serve His kingdom over a wider range in the world. With this action, Bethel (Bear Creek) Evangelical and Reformed Church became Bethel (Bear Creek) United Church of Christ. In keeping with recognizing the Bible as the basis for our beliefs and serving God the church voted to disaffiliate from the United Church of Christ on March 1, 2016, and become an Independent Church, Bethel Bear Creek Reformed Church.
2. Belief Statements:
 - a. We believe there is one God, eternally existing in three persons: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.
 - b. We believe the Holy Bible to be the inspired, the only infallible, authoritative Word of God and our guide for Christian life and faith.
 - c. We believe in the deity of our Lord Jesus Christ.
 - d. We believe there is only one way to heaven and that is through Jesus Christ.
 - e. We believe Salvation is by grace, a gift from God, apart from works.
 - f. We believe Salvation requires repentance, turning from one's own way to God's Way.
 - g. We believe God promises forgiveness of sins and fullness of grace of all who trust him.
 - h. We believe the Biblical principle of the sanctity of life for the unborn.
 - i. We believe the God-ordained union of man and a woman.
 - j. We believe that we are sent by Christ into the world to spread the good news of the Gospel and to bring every person into a life of faith, discipleship, and submission to the Lordship of Jesus Christ.

Article I. Name

3. The name of this church shall be Bethel Bear Creek Reformed Church.

Article II. Purpose and Mission

4. The purpose and mission of Bethel Bear Creek Reformed Church are:
 - a. Purpose: To reach and influence our community by being a Bible-based church and by showing our love of Jesus Christ and each other.
 - b. Mission: Bethel Bear Creek Reformed Church is a family of believers, serving God through Jesus Christ.

Article III. Affiliation

5. This congregation shall be an independent organization and shall be governed by the Constitution and Bylaws of this Church where they apply, many pertinent portions of which are delineated in this document.

Article IV. Membership

6. Membership in this congregation shall be open to any person who desires to lead a Christian life; who has been baptized in any Christian church; who professes faith in Jesus Christ as their Savior and Lord; and who obligates himself/herself to attend divine worship services regularly, to commune regularly, and to contribute financially to the support of the church.

Article V. Meetings

7. The congregation shall hold two annual meetings of members and such other meetings as are provided for in the Bylaws.

Article VI. Quorum

8. Twenty (20) members shall constitute a quorum. (For the definition of a member, see paragraph 40a and 42 as provided for in the Bylaws.)

Article VII. Administration

9. The roles of the congregation in administration of this Constitution are as follows:
 - a. **Congregational Meetings.** The supreme legislative and administrative powers of the congregation are vested in the congregation itself assembled in meeting, duly and legally called, as provided for in the Bylaws.
 - b. **Congregational Prerogative.** It shall be the prerogative of the congregation assembled to decide questions relating to the acquisition and disposal of property, to building projects, to extensive repairs to church facilities, to the call of a pastor, to the dissolution of a pastoral relationship (unless initiated by the pastor), to the direction of the work of the congregation, and to all other major matters that may arise.

Article VIII. Amendments

10. Proposed amendments to this Constitution shall be presented in writing at any regularly called meeting of the congregation or to the Consistory. By a two-thirds (2/3) affirmative vote of the members present at a subsequent regular meeting, a two week notice thereof having been given by an announcement during Sunday School or Sunday Worship Service, such proposals may be adopted.

Bylaws of Bethel Bear Creek Reformed Church

Preamble

- 11.** These Bylaws, consistent with the foregoing Constitution, define the operating processes and regulate the methods employed in legislating organizational procedures and in administering the workings of the church as a whole.

Article I. Government

- 12.** The governing body of this Congregation shall consist of all members. A quorum is sufficient to govern (see paragraph 8).

Article II. Consistory

- 13.** The Consistory shall constitute the executive body of this organization. Its composition shall be: one pastor staff, three installed elders, and three installed deacons for an average of less than 59 members and fewer at any Sunday worship service; one pastor staff, four installed elders and four installed deacons for an average of 60 to 99 members at any Sunday worship service; one pastor staff, six installed elders and six installed deacons for an average of 100 and over members at any Sunday worship service.
- 14.** The Consistory shall organize itself annually, selecting a President, a Vice-President, a Secretary, and an Assistant Secretary from among its number. The Treasurer, not limited to any specific tenure, may be chosen by the Consistory from the membership at large. The Treasurer will designate an Assistant Treasurer as an assistant and be approved by Consistory.
- 15.** Elders and deacons shall be appointed by Consistory and affirmed by the congregations at the annual October congregational meeting. Elders and Deacons shall serve for a two-year term. They may succeed themselves once. Thereafter, they are ineligible to serve on consistory for 12 months.
- 16.** Fifty-one percent (51%) of Consistory persons present shall constitute a quorum.
- 17.** Each year consistory shall appoint the appropriate number of elders and deacons to fill vacancies in accordance with membership total (see paragraph 13) and to replace any that have served the 4 years maximum. Two (2) weeks prior to the congregational meeting, Consistory shall present appointees to the congregation. If there are any reasons why the appointees shall not be affirmed, members of the congregation must bring these reasons to a consistory member prior to the congregational meeting.

18. When appointed for the first time, elders shall be publicly ordained and installed; thereafter, they shall simply be installed. Deacons shall be installed at each appointment.
19. Consistory vacancies, when they occur, shall be filled by the Consistory itself for unexpired terms.
20. The Consistory shall conduct the business of the church. This shall include, but not be limited to, formulating a yearly expense budget with follow-up action to meet it, determining the worthiness of benevolent causes and the church's degree of participation, reviewing the church's financial records annually for adequacy and correctness, keeping a complete and accurate record of its proceedings, being custodian of all congregational records, preparing an annual report to be presented to the membership of the church at its February Congregational Meeting, recording the annual Congregational Meetings and any called Congregational Meetings
21. The Consistory shall approve all non-routine bills before payment. Except for unusual expenses, the Treasurer has the authority to pay bills without question.
22. The Consistory may authorize the payment of extraordinary expenses, but when the amount exceeds \$5,000.00, congregational approval is a requisite.
23. The Consistory shall appoint such committees as it deems appropriate for the accomplishment of its work.
24. The Consistory shall meet at least once every month for the transaction of such business as may properly come before it. Special meetings, subject to the call of the President or Pastor, may be held.
25. **Elders.** Elders are members of the church appointed by consistory and affirmed by the congregation and ordained for service in their office. The following are responsibilities and qualification's for assisting the Pastor in the spiritual affairs of the church.

a. **Qualifications (1 Timothy 3:1-7):**

- Above Reproach
- Faithful in Marriage
- Sober-minded
- Self-controlled
- Respectable
- Hospitable
- Able to teach - the major distinction between elders and deacons.
- Titus 1:9 – “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”.

- Not a drunkard
- Not violent but gentle
- Not quarrelsome
- Not a lover of money
- Must manage his own household well
- Not a recent convert
- Well thought of by outsiders
- Will have served as a deacon of the church

b. Responsibilities:

- To, along with the aid of members, appoint elders and deacons according to the criteria assigned to them in Scripture (1 Tim. 3:1-13; Titus 1:5-9; 1 Peter 5:1-4)
- To prayerfully seek God’s will for our church community and steward her resources to the best of our ability based on the Scriptures and following the Spirit, alongside the deacons (Acts 20:28; 1 Peter 5:1-4)
- To oversee the growth of members as disciples of Christ and give an account for their growth in grace, truth, and love, including welcoming new members through the membership process and confirmation (Matt. 28:16-20; Eph. 4:15-16; James 5:14; Hebrews 13:17)
- To provide teaching and counsel from the whole Scripture (Acts 20:27-28; 1 Timothy 4:16; 2 Timothy 4:1-5; Titus 2:1)
- To equip the members of the church for the work of ministry, including future elders and deacons (Eph. 4:11-16; 2 Tim 2:2)
- To be on guard against false teachers and teachings (Matt. 7:15; John 10:12-13; Acts 20:28-31; 1 Tim 1:3-7; 1 John 4:1)
- To lovingly oversee the exercise of discipline, when necessary, for the glory of God, the good of the one disciplined, and the health of the church as a whole (Matt. 18:15-20; 1 For. 5; Gal. 6:1; James 5:19-20)
- To set an example and join members in fulfilling the obligations of church membership (Acts 20:28; Phil 3:17; 1 Tim 4:12; Titus 2:7-8; 1 Peter 5:3)
- Serve as Spiritual Council. See article IV.

26. Deacons. Deacons are members of the church affirmed by the congregation and installed for service in their office. They shall aid in raising the funds necessary for the support of the church in its various activities, foster the principles of stewardship, and dispense gratuities and charities as available.

a. Qualifications (1 Timothy 3: 8-13):

- Dignified
- Not double-tongued
- Not addicted to much wine

- Not greedy for dishonest gain
- Must hold the mystery of faith with a clear conscience
- Tested first, before serving as deacons, to prove themselves blameless
- Not slanderers
- Sober-minded
- Faithful in all things
- Manage their own households well

b. Responsibilities:

- Assist the Elders by addressing the practical needs of members as well as administrative needs of the church i.e., visiting homebound members and serving on the Budget and Finance Committee (Acts 6:1-7)
- Aid in raising any necessary funds for the support of the church in its various activities.
- Prepare a Budget Proposal and distribute to Consistory for approval.
- Serve as the Benevolence Committee in order to dispense gratuities and charities as available and in correlation with the set guidelines and under the auspice of the Pastor and President of Consistory.
- Assist the Elders with welcoming new members through the membership class.
- Promote and protect the unity of the church through support of and communication with the Elders.

Article III. Trustees

- 27. Trustees.** The Consistory shall appoint four persons from the membership to constitute a Board of Trustees. The Board shall assume responsibility for caring for and exercising control over the property of the church as a sacred trust, whether real or personal. In addition, Trustees shall stand in trust for the Bethel Bear Creek Reformed Church Cemetery Fund; (See Appendix A hereto.) They shall also uphold the Cemetery rules and regulations as set forth in the church policy manual.

Article IV. Spiritual Council

- 28.** The Spiritual Council shall consist of the pastor and the church elders. It shall provide the elements for the Lord's Supper and be responsible for their distribution. It shall have original jurisdiction in matters of discipline, except in the case of the pastor. It shall admit members into full communion and exclude those who err in faith or offend in morals. Upon request, it shall admit new members and issue letters of transfer to members in good standing. (See paragraph 44 for additional responsibilities.)

29. The pastor shall be the president of the Spiritual Council. When a majority of the members are present, a quorum is constituted.

Article V. Committee on Church and Ministry

30. The Committee on Church and Ministry shall be a committee of the Congregation. The Committee on Church and Ministry shall normally be comprised of not less than three nor more than five members. The Pastor is an ex officio member of this committee.
31. The members of the Committee on Church and Ministry shall be appointed by the consistory and shall include at a minimum one elder. They shall be appointed by the Consistory.
32. The Committee on Church and Ministry shall be responsible for the following enumeration of duties:
- a. To cultivate and maintain a wholesome and effective relationship between pastor and congregation.
 - b. To encourage Pastoral Care in spiritual, emotional, and physical health.
 - c. To be prayer intercessors for the Pastor, his family, church leaders, and the Congregation.
 - d. To urge the pastor to avail himself/herself of in-service training opportunities, such as pursuing additional professional knowledge, graduate study, seminars, workshops, study-visits to other parishes, and retreats.
 - e. To review quarterly the priorities of Bethel Bear Creek Reformed Church concerning effectiveness of mutual pastoral and lay ministry.
 - f. To review the adequacy of the Pastoral Compensation package prior to the adoption of the church budget, scheduled for the 4th Sunday in October during a congregational meeting.
 - g. To review Church Expectations and pastoral responsibilities annually in an effort to evaluate their previous year as well as to plan for the upcoming year.
 - h. To give attention and direction to young people who show special promise for, and interest in, possible full-time Christian service.
 - i. To seek, in coordination with the pastor, the development of lay ministries in evangelism, fellowship, and community action.

- j. To share with the Pastor the responsibility of completing an annual report for the Church Directory.
- k. To follow up with the Pastor about the responsibility of completing an annual report for the Church Directory.
- l. To act as a committee on pastoral vacancy and supply (ministers, lay persons) when the need arises, with the provision that when seeking a new pastor, the committee membership be augmented (added to) by appointments made by the Consistory.

Article VI. Pastor

- 33.** The congregation shall elect as a pastor only a minister who has been recommended or approved by the Church and Ministry Committee and who has been presented to Consistory.
- 34.** The Consistory shall nominate one candidate at a time for the pastorate to be voted on by the congregation. Voting shall be by written ballot for or against the one contender. An affirmative vote shall be two-thirds (2/3) of members present for vote. The pastoral candidates resume shall be presented to the church two (2) weeks prior to the candidates trial sermon. No later than one week after the candidates trial sermon the congregation shall vote on the candidate. The pastoral candidate is to be contacted later that day to affirm his decline or acceptance by the congregation.
- 35.** The change of a pastor shall be in accordance with Bethel Bear Creek Reformed Church Letter of Call as signed by the church leadership and the pastor.
- 36.** It shall be the duty of the pastor to set a good example for the congregation; to conduct services on Sundays, Holy Days, and at such other times as the congregation may desire; to direct the work of religious education; to administer the Holy Sacraments; to officiate over baptismal rites; to perform infant or other dedications; to perform marriages; to conduct funerals; to visit the sick; to comfort the distressed; and to discharge such other duties as properly belong to the pastor of Bethel Bear Creek Reformed Church. The pastor shall make an annual report in writing to the congregation.
- 37.** The pastor shall be an ex officio member, by virtue of position, of all organizations of the church.

Article VII. Congregational Meetings

- 38.** Two annual congregational meetings shall be held regularly, one on the second Sunday of each February. On this occasion, annual reports in final written form for the preceding year from the pastor, Consistory, officers of the church, and all organizations shall be considered for adequacy, correctness, and approval. The second congregational meeting shall be held on the fourth Sunday of October for the purpose of approving the proposed budget and the affirmation of elders and deacons.
- 39.** Special meetings of the congregation may be called by the Consistory or by petition to the Consistory signed by not less than one-fourth of the members. It shall be incumbent upon the Consistory to call a special meeting within two weeks from receipt of such petition, with notice thereof being promptly and publicly announced to the congregation.

Article VIII. Members

- 40.** Qualifications of a member:
 - a. Baptized persons received into full communion with the church, by profession of faith, or by letter of transfer shall be members.
 - b. Persons making a profession of faith as a new believer, shall be instructed in the Christian way of life and in the standards and doctrine of the church prior to their Baptism.
- 41.** Members of the church shall affirm and sign the membership covenant in the churches policy manual and live sober, righteous, and godly lives, and shall labor faithfully to bring others to Christ in accordance with biblical standards. They shall take an active part in the life and work of the church; to include regular attendance at divine worship services, devout participation in the taking of the Holy Sacraments, diligent observance of private devotions, liberal financial and moral support toward the maintenance of the church and its benevolent undertakings, showing regard for church established law and authority, evidencing untiring zeal in bringing the un-churched under its influence, and a sincere endeavor to apply the teachings of Jesus to all human relationships. The spiritual council may use discretion in addressing a member that may be falling short of the above.
- 42.** All members, not having erred in faith, offended in morals, neglected in church support and duty, are entitled to voice, vote, and consideration for office.
- 43.** All members are entitled to a full share in the fellowship and spiritual blessings of the church; and to the services of the pastor, officials, and other workers; as well as to the sympathy and support of all fellow members.

44. **Forfeiture of Membership.** If a member of the congregation shall neglect to partake of the Holy Communion, refuse to contribute to the support of the church, and/or continually absent himself/herself from the public worship for one year, such member shall come under the review of the Spiritual Council. After review, the spiritual council shall consider dismissal from the church. Such dismissal shall result in a forfeiture of all entitlements, including the right to free burial in the Church Cemetery at the discretion of the trustees and cemetery policy.
45. If any member shall unite with another congregation without a letter of release or transfer, the Spiritual Council shall remove his/her name from the Church Register. Such removal of his/her name from the Church Register shall result in the forfeiture of all entitlements, including the right to free burial in the Church Cemetery at the discretion of the trustees and cemetery policy.

Article IX. Property

46. The property of the congregation, both real and personal, and all legacies for the Cemetery Fund shall be under the care and keeping of the Trustees, or those designated by them. They shall hold the property as a sacred trust for the congregation, keeping the church edifice and parsonage in proper repair and adapted for such uses as the congregation desires and approves.

Article X. Organizations and Committees

47. All church organizations and committees are subordinate to the Consistory and shall report to the congregation in writing annually.

Article XI. Discipline

48. Discipline, in cases of conduct deemed un-Christian, lies in the hands of the Spiritual Council, including the disciplining of the pastor. The alternative to disciplining the pastor is termination of the pastoral relationship as per the Church Letter of Call signed by the church leadership and the pastor or by recommendation.

Article XII. Rules of Order

49. Robert's Rules of Order shall be the parliamentary authority for all matters of procedure not specifically covered by these Bylaws. (A copy of Robert's Rules of Order, a voluminous document, is on file in the Concord/Cabarrus County Library or available online at its official website, www.robertsrules.com)

Article XIII. Church Fiscal Year

50. The church fiscal year shall run annually from 1 January through 31 December.

Article XIV. Amendments

52. Proposed amendments to these Bylaws shall be submitted in writing at any regularly called meeting of the congregation or to the Consistory. By a two-thirds (2/3) affirmative vote of the members present at a subsequent regular or special congregational meeting, a two (2) week notice thereof having been given by an announcement during Sunday School or Sunday Worship Service such proposed amendments may be adopted.