

**CONSTITUTION,  
BY-LAWS, &  
DOCTRINAL STATEMENT  
OF THE  
EAST SMETHPORT  
UNITED CHRISTIAN CHURCH**

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# CONSTITUTION, BY-LAWS, & DOCTRINAL STATEMENT OF THE EAST SMETHPORT UNITED CHRISTIAN CHURCH

## Section I NAME AND ADDRESS

- A. NAME: East Smethport United Christian Church
- B. ADDRESS: P.O. Box 95  
18399 Route 6,  
East Smethport Pa 16730

## Section II DOCTRINAL STATEMENT

### A. GOD AND THE HOLY TRINITY

We believe in the only true God, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost: that these three are one-equal essence.

### B. CREATION

We believe that this triune God created the heavens, the earth, and all that is visible and invisible; That He sustains, protects, and governs these to the glory of His name.

### C. JESUS CHRIST

We believe in Jesus Christ; That He became incarnate by the power of the Holy Ghost and was born of the Virgin Mary; That He is Savior and Mediator of the human race.

We believe that Jesus suffered and died on the cross for us, was buried, arose on the third day, ascended into Heaven, and sits on the right hand of the Father to intercede for the living, and by Him we shall be judged.

### D. THE HOLY GHOST

We believe in the Holy Ghost; That He is equal in being with the Father and the Son; That He convicts the world of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment; That He comforts the faithful and guides them in truth.

### E. THE HOLY SCRIPTURES

We believe the Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments to be the verbally inspired Word of God, the final authority for faith and life, inerrant in the original writings, infallible and God-breathed.

### F. THE CHURCH

We believe the church, which is both the body and bride of Christ, is the spiritual organization made up of all born again believers.

## **G. SACRAMENTS**

We believe that the sacraments, Baptism and the Lord's Supper, are to be observed in the church, and should be practiced by all Christians.

Baptism signifies entrance into the household of faith, and is a symbol of repentance and cleansing from sin, a representation of the new birth in Christ Jesus and a mark of Christian discipleship, and is to be administered to those who receive Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord. Children, who have accepted Christ as their personal Savior are heirs of the kingdom of God and acceptable for Christian Baptism. The promise of God is "Unto you and your children." Children of believing parents through baptism become a special responsibility of the church. Every adult person being baptized, and the parents of the child to be baptized should have the privilege of choosing the mode of Baptism, namely sprinkling, pouring, or immersion. A service of dedication will be provided by the Pastor for those parents of young or infant children that have not yet comprehended God's grace and salvation. These children will be dedicated to the Lord for His blessings and guidance throughout their lives. The parents and church will vow their support in bringing such children to the knowledge of salvation in Christ Jesus.

The Lord's Supper is a representation of our redemption, a memorial of the sufferings and death of Christ, and a token of love and union which Christians have with Christ and with one another. Those who rightly, worthily, and in faith eat the broken bread and drink the blessed cup, which represent the body and blood of Christ, should do so in a spiritual manner until He comes.

## **H. THE TOTAL DEPRAVITY OF MAN**

We believe that man was created in the image of God, but that in Adam's sin the race fell, inherited a sinful nature, and became alienated from God; And that man is totally depraved, and of himself, is utterly unable to remedy his lost condition.

## **I. OF SALVATION**

We believe that salvation is the gift of God brought to man by grace and received by personal faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, whose blood was shed on Calvary for the forgiveness of our sins and for our justification and regeneration.

**J. ENTIRE SANCTIFICATION**

1. Entire Sanctification is the work of the Holy Spirit by which the child of God is cleansed from all inbred sin through faith in Jesus Christ.

It is subsequent to regeneration and is wrought instantaneously by faith when the believer consecrates himself a living sacrifice, holy, and acceptable unto God.

2. The evidence of this gracious work is love out of a pure heart, with all the soul, mind and strength and to love our neighbors as ourselves.

3. A clear distinction must be made between consecration and entire sanctification. Consecration is that more or less gradual process of devoting oneself to God, by the help of the Holy Spirit, that comes to a completion at a point in time. Total consecration of necessity precedes and prepares the way for that act of faith which brings God's instantaneous sanctifying work to the soul.

4. We believe this gracious work does not deliver us from infirmities, ignorance and mistakes common to man, nor from the possibilities of further sin. The Christian must continue to guard against the temptation to spiritual pride and seek to gain victory over this and every temptation to sin.

**K. THE CHRISTIAN SABBATH**

We believe that the Christian Sabbath is divinely appointed; That it is commemorative of our Lord's resurrection from the grave,; That it is essential to the welfare of our nation, and that it should be reverently observed as a day of Holy rest and worship.

**L. THE ETERNAL STATE**

We believe in the bodily resurrection of all men, the saved to eternal life, and the unsaved to judgment and everlasting punishment.

**M. SPEAKING IN TONGUES**

Regarding speaking in tongues, that is, the expression of an unknown language as an utterance or prayer language, our position is best summarized by the words, "Seek Not, Forbid Not."

On the one hand, in group worship, we do not seek the gift because, as the apostle Paul explains, we ought to seek in first priority those gifts which are understandable and edify the church.

On the other hand, we do not forbid the gift, acknowledging as Paul states, both its potential to bless the individual and the Church through interpretation, and its role as a sign to unbelievers.

Therefore, we encourage believers to seek more so those gifts which excel to the edifying of the Church, and do not energetically promote the gift of speaking in an unknown tongue. However, if speaking in tongues in a public service occurs we will follow Paul's instructions which includes a call for interpretation that all may be edified and blessed. If none is made we will ask the individual, as Paul instructs, to speak to themselves or God, and return to worship.

(Approved: January 3, 1990)  
(Amended and Approved August 24, 2005)

### **Section III CHURCH ORGANIZATION**

#### **A. THE CHURCH**

A church is a community of true believers among whom the Word of God is preached, and the ordinances and means of grace are duly administered, for the maintenance of worship, edification of believers, and evangelizing of the world.

#### **B. NOMINATING COMMITTEE**

A nominating committee of three (3) or more members shall be appointed each October, unless there are volunteers, by the Church Council to nominate officers, laborers, and leaders for the annual election, which is to be held each December on the first Wednesday of the month.

#### **C. ELECTIONS**

1. All officers and leaders shall be active members of the Church for a minimum of one year and at least age 18. Elder/Trustees must be at least age 21. They shall be elected annually, excepting the Elder/Trustee Board which is elected to three (3) year terms.
2. At times when need arises, a member who has not yet fulfilled one year of membership, but demonstrated faithfulness to the Church, may be carefully considered for appointment or election to a position of leadership or service in the Church.
3. In such cases, for the position of Elder/Trustee, a unanimous vote of the Elder/Trustee Board and three-fourths (3/4) vote of the Church Council of Administration shall be needed for approval of the nominee.
4. For all other positions, a majority vote of both the Elder/Trustee Board and the Church Council of Administration shall be sufficient for the nominee's approval.
5. The term of service for one so elected or appointed shall be determined at the time of their final approval.

6. Sunday School teachers shall be elected by the church council in August.
7. Both election meetings shall be announced two (2) Sundays in advance.

(Amended and Approved March 5, 2003)

**D. CHURCH COUNCIL OF ADMINISTRATION**

The Church Council of Administration is the body of members that meet each month or annually for the Administration of Church affairs.

**1. MEETING**

- a. There shall be a Church Council composed of the active members of the church, to which all organizations, ministries, officers, and leaders are to report.
- b. The Church Council shall have power to amend the constitution by a two-thirds (2/3) vote upon any recommendation submitted by the Elder/Trustee Board. They will also have power to vote on recommended changes in the Constitution and By-Laws by the Pastor Parish Board.
- c. It shall hear monthly and annual reports concerning the finances, work, present status, and future program of the church from its ministries, organizations, officers, and leaders. It shall also transact such other business as the Council Meeting may be called upon to do.
- d. This council shall annually elect church officers and ministry leaders, and elect any for which no other provision has been made. The members present at the Council Meeting shall constitute a quorum for the transaction of business. (Non-members are invited to sit in and interact at both monthly and annual meetings but without voting privileges)

**2. CHAIRING**

- a. The church Council shall be chaired by the Pastor. In the event the Pastor is absent or cannot chair the council, the Vice-Chairman of Administration (which is typically the President of the Elder/Trustee Board) or Assistant Vice-Chairman of Administration would chair the Meetings.
- b. If a Pastoral Leadership problem develops in the church, a Special Council Meeting may place the Vice-Chairman of Administration in the Chairman's seat for a three month term of office, during which the Pastor-Parish Board shall attempt to bring a settlement of all leadership problems in a Christ-like, spiritual manner.

- c. This term of office shall begin only after:
  - 1.) The Elder/Trustees have met and voted to call a special council meeting for this purpose.
  - 2.) The motion made in that special council meeting to place the Vice-Chairman of Administration or the Assistant Vice-Chairman of Administration in control passes by a three-quarter majority vote.

**E. SPECIAL COUNCIL MEETING**

**1. CALLING A MEETING**

A meeting shall be held at the call of the Elder/Trustee Board, or by request of the Church Council to the Elder/Trustee Board.

**2. ANNOUNCING A MEETING**

a. Public announcement of this meeting shall be made at the worship services on two (2) Sundays preceding such meeting.

b. It may also be called by mail to all members of record, at least five days before the date of the meeting, and the reasons for said meeting announced therein.

**3. CHAIRING**

a. The Pastor shall chair such meetings.

b. The Vice-Chairman of Administration or Assistant Vice-Chairman of Administration shall preside in the absence of the Pastor or at the request of a three-fourth majority vote of the Council.

**4. MINUTES**

The Secretary of the Church Council of Administration shall serve as its secretary and keep accurate minutes.

**5. QUORUM**

The members present at any properly announced special council meeting shall constitute a quorum for the transaction of business.

**F. TRUSTEES**

1. There shall be a Board of five (5) Elder/Trustees elected for three (3) year terms in a staggered or offsetting fashion so as to prevent all terms expiring at once, and thus providing for continuity of leadership.

2. These shall have authority over church monies, properties, activities, administration of church business and anything appertaining to the general welfare of the church ad interim each monthly or annual meeting, where the Boards decisions and actions shall be reviewed and/or approved.

3. These shall elect the following officers at the first meeting of each calendar year: Chairman, Vice-Chairman, and Secretary.

## **G. ACCOUNTING AND FINANCE**

1. The Church will use a centralized accounting system to manage its finances. This system will be maintained on the Church premises with access limited to those individuals who are responsible for managing the finances of the Church. All transactions will be assigned to their respective ministry and recorded using the Cash basis of accounting.
2. The Church Council must approve the opening or closing of all bank accounts. Church funds can only be deposited into accounts that are insured by the FDIC. An individual who does not have the authority to withdraw or transfer funds from these accounts will review the reconcilements on a regular basis. Two individuals must verify all receipts, including gifts and offerings before they are deposited. Contributions given for a specific purpose (restricted funds) will not be used for any other purpose without the expressed written permission of the donor. All ministry expenses will be paid from one checking account and one or more Petty Cash Funds. A Petty Cash Fund will be assigned to specific ministries based upon need as determined by the Board of Elders. A paid invoice or other supporting documentation that shows the date, amount, payee, transaction description and ministry must support expense reimbursements and disbursements from Petty Cash Funds. Ministry funds that are not needed to cover short term operating expenses will be maintained in one or more interest-bearing accounts to maximize earnings.
3. The Church Council will elect a Treasurer and two Assistant Treasurers from the Church membership. These individuals will be responsible for managing the finances of the Church and its ministries with oversight from the Board of Elders. Their responsibilities will include:
  - a. Paying the bills for all ministries and maintaining the paid invoice files.
  - b. Accounting for gifts, offerings and other receipts in a confidential manner.
  - c. Entering paid bills, receipts and other transactions into the accounting system.
  - d. Maintaining payroll records, preparing and filing payroll returns.
  - e. Preparing financial reports for Council Meetings and for Church ministries.
  - f. Providing a "Statement Giving" to contributors upon request.
  - g. Cash management – reconciling bank accounts, making deposits, transferring funds between accounts.



- n. Any other function related to managing Church finances as determined by the Board of Elders.
4. No part of the net earnings of the Church shall expressly benefit or be distributable to its members, trustees, officers, or other private persons, except that the Church shall be authorized and empowered to pay reasonable compensation for services rendered and to make payments and distributions in furtherance of the purposes set forth in Article Three of the "Articles of Incorporation". The Church shall not carry on any activities not permitted to be carried on by a corporation exempt from federal income tax under section 501(c)3 of the Internal Revenue Code.
5. Upon the dissolution of the Church, assets shall be distributed for one or more exempt purposes within the meaning of section 501(c)3 of the Internal Revenue Code or corresponding section of any future federal tax code, or shall be distributed to the federal government, or to a state or local government, for a public purpose.

(Amended and Approved March 1, 2006)

**H. PASTOR PARISH COMMITTEE**

The committee shall consist of the Elder/Trustee Board, plus two (2) representatives elected at the annual Church Council Meeting. The Chairman of this committee shall be the Chairman of the Elder/Trustee Board. An annual board meeting will be held the third (3<sup>rd</sup>) Wednesday of April each year, and at any other time the committee feels it is necessary to survey the relationship between the Pastor and the congregation.

**I. LAY LEADER / ASSISTANT LAY LEADER**

The Lay Leader and Assistant Lay Leader shall be laymen who are elected from among the members for a term of one year by the Church Council. A vacancy occurring in either office may be filled by the Church Council for the unexpired term. The Lay Leader shall be a diligent student of the Bible and acquaint himself with, believe in, and live according to the Bible, and the doctrines and Constitution of the church.

He shall be a Christian in ideals, experience, and practice. His character and motives shall be above reproach. In the absence of, or at the request of the minister, he shall conduct the regular prayer or mid-week services, and other aspects of teaching.

- J. VICE & ASST. VICE-CHAIRMAN of ADMINISTRATION**  
 He shall preside over the monthly, annual, or special council meetings in the absence of the Pastor or at his request. Chairing these meetings may also be necessary in accordance with previously stated situations in Section III, Subsection D, Point 2, Subpoints a, b, & c, or Section III, Subsection E, Point 3, Subpoints a & b.  
 They shall be members of the Elder/Trustee/Pastor-Parish Committee.
- K. AGENCIES**  
 To assist in doing its work of Evangelism, Christian Education, Missions, and Service, the Church shall organize and maintain such agencies as the Sunday School, Boys' and Girls' Fellowship, Youth Fellowship, Missionary Society and Brotherhood. The Church Council shall organize such other agencies and committees as might be needed.
- L. COMMISSION ON CHRISTIAN EDUCATION**  
 There shall be a commission on Christian Education. The purpose of the Board of Christian Education shall be to foster and guide, under the direction of the Church Council, those agencies which lead to an experience of Christ, and the development of well-rounded Christian character through Christian Education.  
 Its membership shall consist of the Pastor as director or his duly elected designate, the Sunday School Superintendent as co-director, Lay Leader, Sunday School Teachers, and Librarian who are elected by the Church Council annually. Also the board shall oversee the books taken into the S.S. Memorial Library, reading, approving, and processing them properly.
- M. SPECIAL DAYS AND ACTIVITIES COMMITTEE**  
 This shall be made up of Children's Director, Primary and Intermediate Teachers responsible for such days as Promotion, Daily Vacation Bible School, Rally Day, Easter and Christmas Programs, etc.
- N. MINISTER**
- 1. SELECTING A PASTOR**  
 The Pastor-Parish Committee shall schedule up to three (3) candidates for interviews and candidating.  
 These candidates shall preach on a Sunday Morning Worship Service, and if possible, Sunday evening also. The Pastor-Parish Committee shall meet with each candidate to discuss his beliefs, and views concerning the pastorate.  
 After all candidates have preached and met with the Pastor-Parish Committee, the Pastor-Parish Committee shall recommend any or all of those candidates.

A Pastor shall be approved by a majority vote of the active members in good standing either by authorized proxy or present at any duly decreed congregational meeting. No Pastor shall be called unless he passes strict Biblical muster and completely subscribes to the Articles of Faith of this church.

**2. DUTIES**

Duties shall be to conduct regular worship services, Work with all agencies in the church for the spiritual enrichment of the church. He shall have the spiritual oversight of the church, the teaching and ministering of the Word, shall lead in the observance of the ordinances and act as Chairman of church council and other boards. He shall administer Communion at least quarterly.

**3. TERMINATION OF OFFICE**

The Pastor, upon resignation, shall give thirty (30) days written notice before the termination of his services. By a majority vote of the members present at any monthly, annual or special congregational council meeting, the Pastor's services may be terminated, providing a thirty (30) day written notice is given by the secretary of the council to the Pastor.

Any Pastor dismissed from this church shall receive his full salary for the thirty (30) days aforesaid.

**4. ACCOUNTABILITY**

The Pastor shall not leave the pulpit and get a supply without the consent of the Elder/Trustee Board.

The Pastor shall annually receive a vacation of at least two weeks with full pay. Any other absences from the pulpit must be granted by permission of the Elder/Trustee Board.

The salary of the Pastor shall be fixed by the congregation at the time the Pastor is called, and at other times on the recommendation of the Elder/Trustee Board. It may also be regulated at other times by a vote of the congregation at a regular or specially called congregational council meeting. The Pastor shall be amenable to the Elder/Trustee Board.

## Section IV

### **MEMBERSHIP (Hebrews 10: 23-25)**

#### **A. MEMBERSHIP**

The membership of this church shall consist of all persons who have been received on Profession of Faith, or by Letter of Transfer from other recognized Evangelical churches.

#### **B. ADMISSION TO CHURCH**

Because church membership is a sacred fellowship involving high privileges and solemn obligations, and because uniting with the church is one of the important events in life, applicants seeking admission shall be carefully interviewed by the Pastor and the significance and duties involved made clear.

The Pastor shall then secure approval from the Pastor-Parish Committee and the Church Council for their membership.

All applicants shall be twelve (12) years of age or older.

#### **C. DUTIES OF MEMBERSHIP**

1. It is the duty of members to honor, esteem, and love their Pastor and family, to pray for them fervently, daily, to submit to him in the spiritual exercise of his official authority, to attend constantly upon his ministrations, to manifest tender regard for his reputation, and to contribute toward his support in proportion to their ability.
2. It is the duty of each member to cultivate and cherish brotherly love for all other members of the church and to show love by using all proper measures to promote their spiritual benefit and prosperity.
3. Toward those who are not members of the church, it is the duty of members to be exact in fulfilling obligations and performing promises; and as opportunity may enable, to commend the Gospel of Christ unto them.

#### **D. CHURCH MEMBERSHIP RECORD BOOK**

The church shall have a Church Membership Record Book. The Elder/Trustee board shall be the custodians of this record book. The Pastor shall enter therein the names of the members of the church in the order of their admission, together with such other information as is necessary to complete the record.

He shall see that every name is properly entered, and that no member is recorded as having terminated or lost his membership, except by transfer, withdrawal, removal without certificate, death, or disciplinary procedure.

This membership record shall be corrected annually. There will be an active and inactive record kept of all members.