

The Constitution of the Central Baptist Church of Jamestown, Rhode Island



Revised March 2010

**THE CONSTITUTION OF THE
CENTRAL BAPTIST CHURCH OF JAMESTOWN, RHODE ISLAND**
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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Subject	Page
Article I: Name	1
Article II: Purpose.....	1
Article III: Affiliations.....	1
Article IV: Membership.....	1
Section 1: Membership Requirements	1
Section 2: Associate Relationship.....	1
Section 3: Termination of Membership or Associate Relationship	2
Section 4: Responsibilities of Members.....	2
Article V: Organizational Structure	2
Section 1: Overview	2
Section 2: Length of Term	2
Article VI: Pastor	3
Section 1: Duties and Responsibilities.....	3
Article VII: Executive Committee	3
Section 1: Composition.....	3
Section 2: Frequency of Meetings.....	3
Section 3: Duties	3
Article VIII: Boards	4
Section 1: Duties of the Board of Deacons (Diaconate)	4
Section 2: Duties of the Board of Trustees	4
Section 3: Duties of the Board of Christian Education	5
Article IX: Moderator and Church Clerk.....	5
Section 1: Duties of the Moderator	5
Section 2: Duties of the Church Clerk	6
Article X: Standing Committees.....	6
Section 1: Nominating Committee.....	6
Section 2: Pastoral and Staff Relations Committee	6
Section 3: Endowment Committee	7
Article XI: Auxiliary Organizations	8
Article XII: Congregational Meetings	8
Section 1: Devotional Meetings	8
Section 2: Instructional Meetings.....	8
Section 3: Business Meetings	8
Article XIII: Calling a Pastor.....	9
Section 1: Search Committee	9
Section 2: Congregational Consideration	9
Article XIV: Termination of the Pastor	10
Section 1: Voluntary Resignation	10
Section 2: Dismissal.....	10
Article XV: Rules of Order.....	10
Article XVI: Amendments.....	10

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(Revised March 2010)

ARTICLE I: NAME

1. This church shall be known as the Central Baptist Church of Jamestown, Rhode Island.

ARTICLE II: PURPOSE

1. The purpose of this church shall be to further the Gospel of Jesus Christ by: offering an opportunity for the public worship of God, maintaining a ministry of teaching, promoting human understanding, bearing witness in the social crises of the day, supporting a wider mission program in cooperation with other churches, and in general proclaiming the Christian faith in word and act.

ARTICLE III: AFFILIATIONS

1. This church recognizes the responsibility it has of cooperating with other religious bodies having the same general objectives. It shall, therefore: be affiliated with the American Baptist Churches of Rhode Island (ABCORI) and the American Baptist Churches in the U.S.A. (ABCUSA), cooperate with the Rhode Island State Council of Churches, and be a member of the Jamestown Ecumenical Council.

ARTICLE IV: MEMBERSHIP

Section 1: Membership Requirements

1. A person who desires to become a member of this church shall make a request to the Diaconate for membership. They may become a member by satisfying one of the requirements below. Membership shall become effective upon recommendation of the Diaconate and a welcome and affirmation by the congregation during a worship service.

- a. After baptism by immersion, or by sprinkling if poor health makes it necessary.
- b. By letter of transfer from another Christian congregation.
- c. By statement of experience, denoting completion of rites of initiation in another church, if membership records are unavailable.

Section 2: Associate Relationship

1. A person who chooses not to establish membership, but desires to maintain an ongoing relationship with this church may become an associate by making a request to the Diaconate for an associate relationship. An associate relationship shall become effective upon recommendation of the Diaconate and a welcome and affirmation by the congregation during a worship service.
2. Examples of a person who might choose to become an associate include, but are not limited to: someone who wishes to maintain their primary membership elsewhere or someone who attends seasonally.

Section 3: Termination of Membership or Associate Relationship

1. Membership in and associate relationship with this church may be terminated upon approval of the Diaconate in any of the following ways:
 - a. By Death: A member or associate shall be removed from the appropriate list.
 - b. By Letter: Any member desiring to join another church may request a letter of transfer from the Church Clerk, and such letter shall be issued by the Church Clerk.
 - c. By Request: If a member or associate wishes to withdraw from this church, a written request, signed by the applicant, shall be received and, upon approval, said person's name shall be removed from the appropriate list.

Section 4: Responsibilities of Members

1. Members are expected to be faithful in all spiritual affairs essential to the Christian life, to participate in the activities of this church, to give regularly for its support and its mission, and to share in its organized work and worship.

ARTICLE V: ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE

Section 1: Overview

1. The government of this church shall be responsible to the congregation for all its decisions and actions. It shall be comprised of: the Pastor, the Moderator, the Church Clerk, an Executive Committee, the Board of Christian Education, the Board of Deacons (Diaconate), the Board of Trustees, and various standing committees.
2. Each board shall consist of six persons of whom five shall be members and/or associates.
3. The government, and all others who represent this church, shall act in accordance with the American Baptist Churches of Rhode Island Sexual Abuse/Harassment Policy and Procedures.

Section 2: Length of Term

1. The length of term of the Pastor shall be open.
2. The length of term of an individual on the Executive Committee will be determined by that individual's tenure as Moderator, Church Clerk, or board member, since its membership will be drawn from those ranks.
3. The length of term of the Moderator and the Church Clerk will be two years. At the end of this term, an officer will be eligible for reelection to a second term. Upon completion of two consecutive two-year terms in the same capacity, an officer will not be eligible for reappointment in that capacity for a period of one year.
4. The length of term of board members will be three years. Upon completion of that term, a board member will not be eligible for reappointment in that capacity for a period of one year. Should a board member be unable to serve a complete three-year term, a replacement would be elected to serve the remaining portion of that term.

5. The Moderator, Church Clerk, board members, and standing committee members will assume their duties upon election at the church Annual Meeting. No one shall be a member of two boards at the same time.

ARTICLE VI: PASTOR

Section 1: Duties and Responsibilities

1. Be the spiritual and administrative leader of the church.
2. In designing worship, seek to weave together continuity and creativity, intellect and emotion, in a pattern that reflects thematic integrity. In preaching, endeavor to proclaim the Christian Gospel in such a way that it both illumines the personal journey of faith and gives perspective on the issues of the day.
3. In pastoral work, bring the resources of the Christian faith to the people. Be available as counselor in time of need.
4. In an administrative capacity, have general supervision over the total program of the church and shall lead the church in developing an effective program and a fellowship of genuine Christian concern. Be a member, ex-officio, of all boards, committees, and auxiliary organizations of the church.
5. Execute his/her duties in accordance with the Covenant and Code of Ethics for Professional Church Leaders of the American Baptist Churches in the U.S.A.
6. Submit an Annual Report for presentation at the Annual Meeting.

ARTICLE VII: EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

Section 1: Composition

1. A five-member Executive Committee shall be composed of the Moderator, Church Clerk, and the Chair (or a person designated by the Chair) of each board; the Pastor shall be ex-officio. The Moderator shall serve as Chair of the Executive Committee, and the Church Clerk will serve as Secretary.

Section 2: Frequency of Meetings

1. The Executive Committee shall meet at least four times a year. It may meet more frequently, as determined by the Moderator and/or the Pastor.

Section 3: Duties

1. Set, develop, and review overall church policy, including the determination of congregational priorities.
2. Assess congregational goals, and engage in long-range planning.
3. Coordinate board/committee function and church activities.
4. Resolve any question of jurisdiction regarding board/committee function and church activities.

5. Oversee and evaluate the church's ecumenical relationship and activities.
6. Appoint a Church Historian/Librarian.
7. Review the church Constitution every five years.

ARTICLE VIII: BOARDS

Section 1: Duties of the Board of Deacons (Diaconate)

1. Assist the Pastor in his/her work.
2. Consider all requests for church membership and associate relationships and make recommendations to the congregation. Maintain lists of members and associates of the church; the lists are to be kept by the Church Clerk. Review these lists biennially.
3. Make preparation for observances of the ordinances. Arrange for and assist with worship leadership in the Pastor's absence.
4. Manage the disbursement of the Diaconate share of the Benevolence Offering.
5. In consultation with the Pastor, appoint the Flower Committee and the Music Committee.
6. Appoint a Memorial Committee to determine, in consultation with the family, how best to use and recognize memorial gifts received.
7. Appoint a Congregational Life Committee, including at least one Deacon, whose responsibilities include attracting and welcoming visitors; nurturing and integrating new members; and providing opportunities to develop the church's sense of community.
8. Appoint a Congregational Care Committee, including at least one Deacon, whose responsibilities include coordinating and expanding the various ways in which care is provided for people within the church family.
9. Appoint a Congregational Outreach Committee, including at least one Deacon, whose responsibilities include identifying and designing ways for the church to reach out in service and mission locally, regionally, nationally, and globally.
10. Submit an Annual Report for presentation at the Annual Meeting.

Section 2: Duties of the Board of Trustees

1. Hold in trust all property of the church, and take appropriate measures to ensure its protection, management, and upkeep.
2. Prepare an operating budget for approval by the church. Be responsible for securing and disbursing all funds required to finance the budget adopted by the congregation. The board shall not obligate the church for an unbudgeted expenditure exceeding one and one-half percent (1.5%) of the projected total income as listed in the last approved budget without first obtaining specific approval of the church membership.

3. Arrange for the investment, monitoring, and control of the capital funds of the church, other than those in the Endowment Fund.
4. Oversee the work of the Endowment Committee, answering any questions and reviewing their choice of investment vehicles.
5. Be responsible for the employment of, and maintenance of job descriptions for, personnel for the positions of Organist/Choir Director, General Treasurer, Financial Secretary, Administrative Assistant, Custodian, Groundskeeper, and for such other services as may be required. Compensation for such positions will be made part of the church budget.
6. Appoint an Auditing Committee to examine the financial records of the General Treasurer; its findings are to be made a part of the Annual Report presented at the Annual Meeting.
7. Appoint a Stewardship Committee, which shall provide an informative program of stewardship education throughout the year. In addition, the committee shall be empowered to conduct an annual stewardship campaign to solicit the financial support of church members, associates, and others. The committee will provide assistance to the board during the preparation of the church budget.
8. Submit an Annual Report for presentation at the Annual Meeting.

Section 3: Duties of the Board of Christian Education

1. Have overall responsibility for education programs serving the adults, youth, and children of the church.
2. May appoint a Coordinator of the Sunday School, whose tasks will be to recruit teachers, arrange for teacher training and support, order curriculum, and provide for space and supply needs.
3. Appoint a Worship Childcare Coordinator, whose tasks will be to recruit nursery workers and volunteers, order curriculum, and provide for space and supply needs.
4. Submit an Annual Report for presentation at the Annual Meeting.

ARTICLE IX: MODERATOR AND CHURCH CLERK

Section 1: Duties of the Moderator

1. Preside over all official meetings of the church.
2. Serve as Chair of the Executive Committee.
3. Serve as the official source of meeting conduct as prescribed in Robert's Rules of Order.
4. Be authorized legally to represent the church and sign all church-approved contracts.
5. Submit an Annual Report for presentation at the Annual Meeting.

Section 2: Duties of the Church Clerk

1. Record minutes of all business and special meetings of the church and serve as Secretary of the Executive Committee.
2. Record all family dedications, baptisms, marriages, and deaths within the congregation.
3. Maintain a record of all members and associates of the church, as determined by the Diaconate.
4. Upon request, issue or seek Letters of Transfer.
5. Conduct any official correspondence not performed by the Administrative Assistant. Preserve and file in the church office all letters, reports, and other documents pertaining to the office of Church Clerk.
6. Assist in the preparation of ABCORI/ABCUSA reports and other inquiries pertinent to the records of the Church Clerk.
7. Present a summary of activities for inclusion in the church's Annual Report.

ARTICLE X: STANDING COMMITTEES

Section 1: Nominating Committee

1. Membership and Terms
 - a. Shall consist of three church members and/or associates, serving for one two-year term, with no consecutive term.
2. Duties
 - a. Solicit the names of qualified individuals from a variety of sources, and prepare the official list of nominees to fill all vacancies, including any vacancies on the Nominating Committee itself, to be voted on at the Annual Meeting. Strive for equal gender representation on all boards and committees and in other positions.
 - b. Appoint a person to fill any vacancy between regular elections.
 - c. Annually nominate members to serve as Official Delegates to the American Baptist Churches of Rhode Island and/or to other organizations authorized by the American Baptist Churches in the U.S.A.
 - d. When making nominations for the Pastoral and Staff Relations Committee, select from recommendations submitted jointly by the Board of Deacons and by the Pastor.

Section 2: Pastoral and Staff Relations Committee

1. Membership and Terms
 - a. The Pastoral and Staff Relations Committee shall consist of four persons. At the end of this term, they will be eligible for reelection to a second term. Upon completion of two consecutive two-year terms in the same capacity, a member will not be eligible for reappointment in that capacity for a period of one year.

2. Duties

- a. Provide a communication link between the Pastor, other staff, and the congregation.
- b. Seek to understand the roles of ministry.
- c. Help the congregation and the Pastor deal with conflict.
- d. Counsel with the Pastor regarding continuing education.
- e. Monitor the evaluation process of Pastor and staff.
- f. Review compensation packages annually, and make recommendations to the Board of Trustees regarding those portions of the church budget.
- g. Review employment contracts as needed and forward recommendations to the Executive Committee for consideration and signature on the congregation's behalf.
- h. Assist in start-up and termination procedures for employees.
- i. Submit an Annual Report for presentation at the Annual Meeting.

Section 3: Endowment Committee

1. Membership and Terms

- a. The Endowment Committee shall consist of five members and/or associates nominated by the Nominating Committee for election at the Annual Meeting.
- b. Each member shall serve a two-year term. At the end of this term, they will be eligible for reelection to a second term. Upon completion of two consecutive two-year terms in the same capacity, a member will not be eligible for reappointment in that capacity for a period of one year.

2. Duties

- a. Administer, as a trust for the benefit of the church, the Endowment Fund, the purpose of which is to provide an opportunity for members, associates, and others to make gifts and bequests that shall provide enduring and continuing benefits to the mission of the church from income derived from permanent capital investment.
- b. Encourage members, associates, and others in making life gifts and bequests to further the ministry of the church.
- c. Report to the Board of Trustees any changes in the choice of investment vehicles.
- d. Refer to the Board of Trustees questions as to whether acceptance of a gift, or specifications for its use, would run counter to the customs and purposes of the church.
- e. Select an investment advisor in making investment decisions.
- f. Maintain in proper form and make available for inspection by church members, records with respect to each gift.

- g. Conduct the business of the Endowment Committee in accordance with the Rules and Regulations of the Endowment Fund as adopted by the church at a duly constituted business meeting.
- h. Submit an Annual Report for presentation at the Annual Meeting.

ARTICLE XI: AUXILIARY ORGANIZATIONS

1. The church shall sponsor such organizations as may be necessary for the welfare of the church and the fulfillment of its spiritual and social obligations. All auxiliary organizations within the church shall be under the advice and control of the church and should make full reports in writing of their work to the church at the Annual Meeting. Each organization shall appoint and elect its own officers and committees.

2. No new auxiliary organization shall organize, meet, or be recognized by the church until it has received the approval of the Executive Committee.

ARTICLE XII: CONGREGATIONAL MEETINGS

Section 1: Devotional Meetings

1. The church shall meet each Sunday for worship and fellowship.
2. The Lord's Supper will be observed during the first worship service of each month and at such other times as the Diaconate may deem appropriate.

Section 2: Instructional Meetings

1. The church shall meet regularly for Christian instruction (the study of the Bible and Christian faith) at times determined by the Board of Christian Education.

Section 3: Business Meetings

1. General
 - a. Voting rights at church business meetings shall be extended to members and associates of the church.
 - b. Twenty-five members and/or associates shall constitute a quorum for the transaction of business.
 - c. A request for a proxy vote may be made of the Church Clerk by a member or associate prior to the business and/or special meeting at which the vote will be taken.
 - d. A written ballot on any question shall be taken at the request of ten percent of the members and/or associates present and voting.

2. Annual Meeting

- a. The church year, as well as the fiscal year, of this church shall be May 1 through April 30.
- b. The church Annual Meeting shall be held on the first Sunday in May.
- c. An Annual Report shall be submitted for consideration and shall include reports from the following: the Pastor, the Moderator, the Church Clerk, the Board of Deacons, the Board of Christian Education, the Board of Trustees, the Pastoral and Staff Relations Committee, the General Treasurer, the Financial Secretary, the Auditors, and all auxiliary organizations.
- d. The Nominating Committee shall submit a list of nominees to fill all vacancies, including any vacancies on the Nominating Committee itself, to be voted on by members and/or associates.

3. Special Meetings

- a. Special meetings may be called at any time by the Moderator, the Chair of any board, or a quorum of church members and/or associates, provided two weeks' notice has been given to the church membership through written notice in the bulletin and a verbal announcement during the worship service on two consecutive Sundays prior to the meeting.
- b. Only the stated purpose can be considered and voted upon at the special meeting. At any of the regular meetings of worship, however, the church may, without notice, act upon the reception of members and/or associates and upon the appointment of delegates to councils, associations, and conventions, but not upon ordinary business.

ARTICLE XIII: CALLING A PASTOR

Section 1: Search Committee

1. When it is necessary to call a Pastor, the Executive Committee shall nominate a representative Search Committee of five members to be approved by the congregation. It shall be the duty of said committee to take the necessary steps to secure a Pastor.

2. The committee shall investigate the merits of every candidate under consideration with regard to personal character, education, ministerial record, and preaching ability, in determining fitness for said pastorate. When a suitable candidate is found, the committee shall make a recommendation to the church membership for consideration.

Section 2: Congregational Consideration

1. All members and associates shall be notified two weeks in advance of a candidate's appearance, which will include participation in a worship service.

2. A business meeting shall be held following the service for the purpose of considering said candidate. A vote of two-thirds of the members and/or associates present shall be necessary to extend a call.

ARTICLE XIV: TERMINATION OF THE PASTOR

Section 1: Voluntary Resignation

1. In the event of a voluntary resignation, unless otherwise stated in the pastoral contract, the Pastor shall notify the Executive Committee at least ninety days in advance of the effective date whenever possible.

Section 2: Dismissal

1. A Pastor may be dismissed from the pastorate of this church only at a special meeting of the church called for such purpose and attended by at least a quorum. A dismissal requires a vote by written ballot of at least two-thirds of the members and/or associates present and voting.

2. Unless otherwise stated in the pastoral contract, the term of office may be ended upon ninety days written notice on the part of the church. The church shall have the option of terminating the office earlier and paying for the balance of ninety days.

ARTICLE XV: RULES OF ORDER

1. The rules contained in Robert's Rules of Order shall govern the business proceedings of this church in all cases where they are not covered by this constitution.

ARTICLE XVI: AMENDMENTS

1. This constitution may be amended at any regular or called business meeting of the church by a two-thirds vote of those members and/or associates present, provided a quorum is present and that notice of such amendment stating the proposed change has been given the church membership at least two weeks previous.