



CONSTITUTION

Preamble

Under the guiding hand of God, a group of individuals banded together in 2007 to plant Downcity Church. The objective was to establish a church in Downcity, Providence that would display to the city the beauty of God's goodness which is known through Jesus. We do hereby organize ourselves in accord with the State of Rhode Island and adopt this constitution as our articles of governance, to be interpreted at all times to reflect the character of and bring glory to Jesus Christ, as revealed in the Holy Bible.

ARTICLE 1. NAME AND IDENTIFICATION

The name of this church shall be Downcity Church. We are a sovereign, autonomous, and non-denominational Christian church.

ARTICLE 2. PURPOSE

The corporation is organized and shall be operated exclusively for religious, charitable, and educational purposes within the meaning of Section 501 (c) (3) of the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 (or the corresponding provision of any future United States Revenue Law).

ARTICLE 3. TESTIMONY OF FAITH

We believe all Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness. It is perfect reviving the soul.¹

By faith we understand that the universe was created by the word of God, so that what is seen was not made out of things that are visible. In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them. And God saw everything that He had made, and it was very good.²

But, sin entered into the world, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men, because all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God. By nature, our hearts were deceitful above all things and were desperately sick. We were disobedient, deceived, enslaved to various lusts and pleasures. We followed the prince of the power of the air, Satan, the spirit who energizes all who disobey. Our guilty deeds had made a separation between us and God, and the wrath of God abided on us.³

¹ 2 Timothy 3:16; Psalm 19:7.

² Hebrews 11:3; Genesis 1:1; Genesis 1:27; Genesis 1:31.

³ Romans 5:12; Romans 3:23; Jeremiah 17:9; Titus 3:3; Ephesians 2:2; Isaiah 59:2; John 3:36.

But God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the Law, so that He might redeem those who are under the Law, that we might receive the adoption as sons. Although Jesus existed in the form of God, He did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped, but made Himself nothing, taking the form of a servant, and was born in the likeness of men. Being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. When He died on the cross, God made Him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him. He was wounded for our transgressions; He was crushed for our iniquities; upon Him was the chastisement that brought us peace. For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life. Indeed, the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.⁴

And there is salvation in no one else; for there is no other name under heaven that has been given among men by which we must be saved. For there is one God, and there is one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus.⁵

Knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the Law but through faith in Christ Jesus, even we have believed in Christ Jesus, so that we may be justified by faith in Christ and not by the works of the Law; since by the works of the Law no flesh will be justified. For if righteousness comes through the Law, then Christ died needlessly. Therefore the Law has become our tutor to lead us to Christ, so that we may be justified by faith. Having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom also we have obtained our introduction by faith into this grace in which we stand; and we exult in hope of the glory of God. Because, if you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. For with the heart one believes and is justified, and with the mouth one confesses and is saved. For everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.⁶

God has given us eternal life, and this life is in His Son. He who has the Son has the life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have the life. There is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set us free from the law of sin and of death. Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away and the new has come. God has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to obtain an inheritance which is imperishable and undefiled and will not fade away, reserved in heaven for us.⁷

We have been sealed with the promised Holy Spirit, who is the guarantee of our inheritance until we acquire possession of it. And, the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in us. Since we have been brought new life by the Holy Spirit, we are learning to live under His control each day, so that we will no longer live enslaved to sin like people who have not received Jesus as Lord and Savior.⁸

Christ has gone to prepare a place for us, and He will come again and receive us to Himself, so that where He is, there we will be also. According to His promise we are looking for new heavens and a new earth, in which righteousness dwells. When the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven with His

⁴ Galatians 4:4, 5; Philippians 2:6-8; 2 Corinthians 5:21; Isaiah 53:5; John 3:16; Romans 6:23.

⁵ Acts 4:12; 1 Timothy 2:5.

⁶ Galatians 2:16; Galatians 2:21; Galatians 3:24; Romans 5:1-2; Romans 10:9-10, 13.

⁷ 1 John 5:12; Romans 8:1, 2; 2 Corinthians 5:17; 1 Peter 1:3-4.

⁸ Ephesians 1:13-14; Romans 8:11; Galatians 5:25; Ephesians 4:17.

mighty angels in flaming fire, He will deal out retribution to those who do not know God and to those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus. These will pay the penalty of eternal destruction, away from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power. When He comes He will be glorified in His church, that is, all who have believed on Him, on that day.⁹

He is the Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end.¹⁰

In summary, we believe:

- The Bible is the only Word of God and is without error.
- God created the universe and it was completely good.
- Sin entered into the world, and death by sin, so death spread to all men, because all have sinned. All men are sinners by nature and in need of salvation.
- Jesus, who was God in human flesh, came to the earth to save mankind from our sin and its penalty taking God's wrath for us in our place when He shed His sinless blood on the cross.
- There is salvation in no one else but Jesus.
- Salvation is by grace through faith in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ as our full atonement and ransom.
- All who turn from their sin and put their faith in Jesus and His finished work on our behalf have eternal life.
- The Holy Spirit, who is God, lives in every believer sealing us for heaven and transforming our lives into Christ-likeness.
- Jesus is coming again, and when He does He will bring eternal judgment on everyone who has rejected His salvation and He will bring all those who have believed on Him to heaven, where we will forever be with the Lord.

ARTICLE 4. CHURCH COVENANT

Having received Jesus as Savior and Lord and been baptized into His church, we long for God's glory to be known in and through us. Therefore, in obedience to His Word and in submission to His Spirit, we covenant with God and each other to:

- Pursue maturity in and conformity to Christ
- Represent Christ and declare His gospel in the world
- Use the strengths God has given each of us to serve the church
- Honor, obey, and submit to the leaders God selects and we ordain
- Give financially as often as and in proportion to how God prospers us
- Focus on the gospel as the source of everything we need for life and godliness
- Make it our habit to gather when the church gathers
- Cherish and preserve the unity of the Holy Spirit among us
- Fervently love another and demonstrate that love by sharing materially with one another in times of need, praying for each other, restoring one another, encouraging one another, regarding one another as more important than ourselves, submitting to one another, accepting one another, counseling one another, and forgiving each other
- Aspire to be holy in all our behavior as God Who has saved us is holy

⁹ John 14:3; 2 Peter 3:13; 2 Thessalonians 1:7-10.

¹⁰ Revelation 21:6.

ARTICLE 5. MEMBERSHIP

The membership of this church shall consist of persons who profess faith in the Lord Jesus Christ as Savior, whose lives evidence spiritual fruit consistent with a genuine experience of regeneration, who have been baptized by immersion following his or her profession of faith in Jesus, who wholeheartedly believe in the Christian faith as revealed in the Holy Scriptures, who enter into the church covenant contained in this constitution, and who have been received into its membership according to the bylaws of this church.

ARTICLE 6. LEADERSHIP AND ORGANIZATION

Section 6.1. Headship of Christ. Downcity Church recognizes Jesus Christ as its true and only Head.

Section 6.2. Statement of Polity. Downcity Church adheres to a polity that is an elder-led, deaconserved, congregationalism.

Section 6.3. Statement of Ecclesial Autonomy. Under the authority of Jesus Christ, the leadership of the Holy Spirit, and the Word of God, the congregation of Downcity Church is the final authority within this local church. Thus, the congregation governs itself with no superior or governing ecclesial bodies.

Section 6.4. Statement of Elder Rule. Within the congregation, this authority is normally exercised through governing elders chosen and ordained according to the precepts of Scripture (Acts 20:17-32; Ephesians 4:11-16; Titus 1:5; etc.). The elders themselves stand under the authority of the Scriptures. Elders shall exercise this calling as part of the board of elders. These men are responsible for governing, teaching the Word to, and shepherding the membership of Downcity Church. The elders shall be equal in authority but may be specialized in function.

Section 6.5. Statement of Deacon Ministry. The deacons of Downcity Church are servants of the church who are called to support, facilitate, and help implement the ministry of the elders. In particular, the deacons shall handle the practical and temporal needs of the church, thereby freeing the elders to focus on spiritual oversight. The deacons shall report directly to the board of elders.

Section 6.6. Statement of Congregational Authority. The vote of the membership of this church at a properly called meeting, as provided in the bylaws, shall be required to effect the following actions:

Accept members into the church, or drop members from the church roll where such authority is stipulated in the bylaws; elect constitutional officers of the church and corporation; discipline members by dismissing them from membership and discipline officers by removing them from office; approve annual budgets of the church and approve any transactions regarding real property; approve the call of vocational elders; accept, reject, or otherwise dispose of any matter submitted to the membership of the church by the board of elders; and adopt, amend, or repeal the constitution or bylaws of this church.

Section 6.7. Church Officers

6.7.1. Biblical Officers. The biblical officers of the church are elder and deacon. The purpose of the biblical officers is to lovingly govern, care for, and equip for ministry the

membership of Downcity Church.

6.7.2. Administrative Officers. The administrative officers of the church are secretary and treasurer.

ARTICLE 7. REVISIONS, ADDITIONS, AND AMENDMENTS

Revisions, additions, or amendments to this constitution may be made only in the following manner: at a regular or special members' meeting; and upon unanimous recommendation of the board of elders; and if notice of the proposed change or addition has been submitted in writing and announced from the pulpit, on at least two (2) Sundays before the vote; and is supported by a three-fourths majority of legal votes cast.

ARTICLE 8. DISSOLUTION

Should it ever become necessary to dissolve Downcity Church, the board of elders shall, after paying or making provisions for the payment of all liabilities of the church, cause the assets of the church to be distributed to another non-profit organization of like faith and practice. The assets of this church shall be dispersed in a way that continues to give glory to God and honor to Christ our Head. If necessary, the board of elders shall also seek and obtain legal assistance to complete said proceedings.