

ARTICLES OF ASSOCIATION

ARTICLE #1

The name by which this church is to be known in law is the Congregational Christian Church of Maple Rapids. It is a member of the Conservative Congregational Christian Conference, affiliated with both the Michigan and National Conferences.

ARTICLE #2

This church shall have its location and principal place of worship in the Village of Maple Rapids, County of Clinton, and State of Michigan.

ARTICLE #3

This church is organized to worship and labor together as a gathering of believers according to the faith and usages of the churches commonly called Congregational. Its purpose is to know the Biblical Christ, to grow in him, and to show him by word and deed to the world.

ARTICLE #4

At all meetings of said church subsequent to the annual meeting, the right to vote upon questions involving the acquirement and disposition of property, expenditure of money, and proposed amendments shall be confined to adult (18 years of age) members of the church so incorporated.

BY – LAWS

ARTICLE #1

Covenant

The covenant by which this church exists as a distinct body and which every member accepts, is as follows: “We are banded together as a Christian church to maintain the worship of God; to proclaim the gospel of Christ; to develop in men and women a consciousness of their relations and duties to God and their fellowman; and to inspire them with love for truth, passion for righteousness, and enthusiasm for service. To this end we pledge our loyalty to Christ and covenant with each other to strive to express His spirit in our individual and corporate life; to live together as Christian brethren and to submit ourselves to the government of this church; working, giving, praying for its increase, its purity, its peace, and seeking in every way to make it a power for the building up of the Kingdom of God.”

ARTICLE #2

Character and Polity

The government of this church is vested in its members who are in good standing and of adult age (18 years). It is subject to the control of no other ecclesiastical body, but it recognizes and sustains the obligation of mutual council and cooperation with other Conservative Congregational Churches.

Doctrine Regarding Scripture

1. This church accepts the scriptures as its sole authority in matters of faith and practice.
2. We accept the scriptures as our sole authority because it is the Word of God (2 Peter 1:21; 2 Timothy 3:16). As such, we hold the scriptures to be free from error.
3. We accept as our rule of interpreting the Scripture to be the Scripture itself. As a result, when there is a question about the true and full sense of any Scripture, it must be searched out in other passages of Scripture that speak more clearly.
4. We look to the Holy Spirit as our guide and teacher to illuminate and apply Scripture's content to our individual lives and for the life of our Church (John 16:12-15).

Doctrine Regarding the Nature of God and Man

1. We believe there is but one true living God (Deuteronomy 6:4; 1 Corinthians 8:4 & 6) who is infinite in being (Job 11:7, 8, 9); is a Spirit (John 4:24); is Holy (Isaiah 6:3); who is wise and powerful (Daniel 2:20); full of love (Psalm 145:8; 2 Thessalonians 2:13; 1 John 4:8); abundant in goodness and truth; forgiving sin, iniquity, and transgressions (Exodus 34:6 & 7); but also hating all sin and justified in his judgment (Psalm 5:5 & 6; Nahum 1:2 & 3; Romans 1:18).
2. We believe God exists eternally as one in three persons; Father, Son, and Holy Spirit (1 John 5:7; Matthew 28:19; 2 Corinthians 13:14).
3. We believe man to be created in the image of God (Genesis 1:27; Genesis 9:6). Man, when tempted by Satan, fell from his sinless state through disobedience (Genesis 3). This fall plunged man into a state of sin and separation from God (Ecclesiastes 7:29, Romans 3:23, Jeremiah 17:9, Romans 3:10 & 11), and brought upon the entire race the sentence of eternal death (Romans 5:12, 18). Man can be saved from this condition only by the grace of God, through faith in the completed work of Christ, and by the agency of the Holy Spirit (Ephesians 2:8, 3:16; Romans 8:1 & 2).
4. We believe Jesus Christ to be the eternal and pre-existent son (John 1:1 & 2) who became a man without human father (John 1:14), being born of the Virgin Mary by the power of the Holy Spirit (Matthew 1:18; Luke 1:34 & 35). In the Lord Jesus Christ, divine and human natures were united in one person; both natures being whole, perfect, and distinct (Colossians 2:9) to effect salvation. He lived a sinless life and died on the cross as the sinner's substitute, shedding his blood for the remission of sins (Romans 8:3 & 4, Galatians 3:13, Hebrews 9:11 & 12). On the third day He rose bodily from the dead (Matthew 28:1-7). He ascended to the right hand of the Father (Acts 1:9; Romans 8:34) where He performs the ministry of intercession (Hebrews 9:24, Hebrews 7:25). He is head and Lord over all things for His Church (Ephesians 1:22, Colossians 2:10). He shall come again bodily and visibly to complete His saving work, and to consummate the eternal plan of God (Acts 1:11, 1 Thessalonians 4:16 & 17).
5. We believe in the Holy Spirit to be the third person of the Triune God (1 John 5:7, Matthew 8:19, 2 Corinthians 13:14). He convicts the world of sin (John 16:8 & 11). He is the agent of salvation (Titus 3:5-6). He ministers the things of Christ to the believers (John 16:14, 7:15). He guides believers in all truth (John 16:13). He leads the believer in the will of God (Galatians 5:22 & 23, Romans 8:9). He ministers the work of Christ to a lost world by empowering believers for witness (Acts 1:8; Romans 1:14 & 15). He gifts empowered believers with diverse capacities to serve. (1 Corinthians 12:4, 7, 12, 13, 14)

6. We believe that at the end of the age the bodies of the dead will be raised, the righteous will enter into full possession of eternal bliss in the presence of God, and the wicked shall be condemned to eternal death (2 Corinthians 5:10, Romans 14:10, 12, 37, John 5:27-29).

ARTICLE #3 Membership

The membership shall consist of those persons not younger than twelve years of age who have been recommended by the membership committee. Said recommendation will follow the potential member having completed membership training offered by the membership committee, having been baptized or having made a commitment to be baptized, having given public assent to the covenant of the church, and having been publicly welcomed into its fellowship. Voting privileges are extended to adult (18 years of age) members. Members from other churches may be received by consent of the membership committee. The completion of the membership training class is recommended. Persons shall be active members for at least six (6) months before holding an office or serving on any board or committee.

Any members may be granted a letter of dismissal upon request, or recommendation by the majority vote of the Church Council, or at the Annual Meeting. A member in full fellowship may request a letter to transfer to another church, and the clerk will send the customary certificate to the place designated and notify the applicant. The name of any member who has united with another church without obtaining a letter of transfer shall be placed on inactive status for six months then removed by the clerk.

The membership of the church may be divided into an active and an inactive roll. The active roll shall be composed of all who attend the services regularly during the year, and contribute to the support of the church, or take an active part in its work. The inactive roll shall be composed of those who live away and cannot attend the service, or any who neither attend nor support it or contribute in any way. Names of members from whom no word has been received by the deacons over a period of one year, will be administratively moved to inactive status. During the second inactive year an attempt will be made to contact the member and determine if they desire the relationship to continue. After two years of unsuccessful contact the member will be removed from the rolls entirely by agreement of the deacons (Heb 10:24, 25; 1 Cor 16:2; Acts 2:47, 48). Any member may withdraw from church membership by a written request to the Church clerk. Any member, whose conduct is reprehensible, may, after reasonable effort has been made to reclaim the offender and opportunities for defense have been given, be excluded from membership by vote of the church (1 Corinthians 5:1-5, 9-16:2, 1 Tim 5:19-21, Matt 18:15-20, Rom 2:23-24, Rev 2:14-26, Acts 6:1, Heb 10:26, 27).

ARTICLE #4 Minister

1. A Minister or Ministers to be called or dismissed by the members of the Church present at a meeting called for that purpose in accordance with Article 6 & 8. If the call is for an indefinite period, either the Minister or the Church giving three months written notice may dissolve the ministerial relationship. The Minister shall have in his charge the spiritual welfare of the church. To this end, he shall preach the gospel, administer the sacraments, have under his care all services of public worship, be active in pastoral service to the members of his parish, and administer the activities and pastoral staff of the church. In the case of multiple ministers, one shall serve as Sr. Pastor and shall oversee and provide accountability for all other associates in cooperation with the church council and the various officers, boards, and committees appointed or elected by the church.

Youth Pastor

2. A Youth Pastor to be called or dismissed by the members of the Church present at a meeting called for that purpose in accordance with Article 6 & 8. If the call is for an indefinite period, either the Youth Pastor or the Church giving three months written notice may dissolve the pastoral relationship. The Youth Pastor shall provide vision, leadership, and coordination for youth ministries. He shall also assist the Minister as needed or able in cooperation with the church council and the various officers, boards, and committees appointed or elected by the church.

Officers and Committees

3. The officers of the Church shall be members elected at the annual meeting and consist of the following: Clerk, Treasurer, Financial Secretary, Sunday-School Superintendent, Assistant Sunday-School Superintendent, Board of Deacons, Board of Deaconesses, Board of Trustees, Missions Committee, Music Committee, Membership Committee, and Finance Committee. Such other committees as may from time to time be deemed advisable may be elected at the Annual Meetings or elected by the Church Council during the interim of the Annual Meetings. Any ties occurring in annual meeting elections shall be resolved in the affected committee, including waiving committee member limitations, with the approval of the Board of Deacons and Church Council. Members shall serve on no more than three (3) boards or committees, or hold three offices. Persons shall be active members for at least six (6) months before holding an office or serving on any board or committee.
4. A Clerk to be elected to serve for three (3) years and until his successor is elected. He shall keep a complete record in a tool provided for that purpose of all the affairs of the church including memberships, baptisms, dedications, marriages, deaths, etc., and of the transactions of all business meetings of the church. He shall also notify all officers, members of committees, and delegates of their election or appointment. He shall issue letters of dismissal and recommendations voted by the church. He shall bring to notice of the church all communications intended for the church and, when not otherwise provided, conduct all of its correspondence. He shall preserve on file all communications and written official reports, and give legal notice of all meetings, where such notice is necessary, as indicated in these Bylaws. He shall perform all other duties that usually pertain to the secretary of assembly for all council meetings and for the annual meeting.
5. A Treasurer to be elected to serve for three (3) years and until his successor is elected. It shall be his duty to disburse all monies as directed by the proper officers of the church. He shall keep a complete record thereof, in a suitable book or tool provided for that purpose, and report the same to the Annual Meeting. He shall be a member of the Finance Committee.
6. A Financial Secretary to be elected to serve for three (3) years and until his successor is elected. It shall be his duty to receive all tithes, offerings, and pledges, keep an accurate account for each contributor and provide same with an annual statement. He shall deposit all incoming funds to a designated church account, and provide documentation to the Church Treasurer. He shall serve on the Finance Committee and Church Council. He shall provide Church Council with financial reports.

7. A Board of Deacons consisting of up to six (6) members to be elected two each year for a term of three (3) years. After serving two terms in succession they shall be ineligible for re-election or appointment for one year. It shall be their duty, together with the Minister and Youth Pastor, to look after the spiritual interests of the church; to pray regularly and diligently for the needs of God's people; to provide oversight for curriculum, leadership training, leadership development, and multiplication of small group ministry; to take an active interest in the sick and needy; to secure supplies for the pulpit in case of vacancy; to provide for and assist in the celebration of the Lord's Supper; to secure ushers for the worship services; to assist the pastor in the planning, oversight, and leadership in the worship service; to maintain contact with members absent for extended periods of time; to be active in hospital, funeral home, and home visitation and outreach; to maintain membership responsibilities described in Article 3. They shall serve as accountability for the pastors to the concerns of the congregation, and as a confidante and source of encouragement for any concern of the individual pastors or pastoral staff. They shall assist the pastors in communication to the church council or congregation when deemed necessary and appropriate.
8. A Board of Deaconesses consisting of up to six (6) members to be elected two each year for a term of three (3) years. After serving two terms in succession they shall be ineligible for re-election for one year. It shall be their duty to assist the Pastor in looking after the spiritual needs of the church, to pray regularly and diligently for the needs of God's people; to be active in hospital, funeral home, and home visitation and outreach.
9. A Board of Trustees consisting of up to six (6) members to be elected two each year for a term of three (3) years. After serving two terms in succession they shall be ineligible for re-election for one year. It shall be their duty to maintain and supervise the church properties.
10. A Church Council consisting of the Minister, Youth Pastor, Clerk, Treasurer, Financial Secretary, Sunday School Superintendent, and representatives from the following boards and committees: the Board of Trustees, the Board of Deacons, the Board of Deaconesses, the Music Committee, the Missions Committee, and the Women's Fellowship. This council shall meet at least once every quarter during the year to confer on the general work of the church, to promote harmony in the working of its various departments, and to consider and recommend to the church such aims and methods as may increase its usefulness. They shall have authority to act for the church during the interim of the Annual Meetings. The Council shall act as the administrative body for the operational concerns of the church such as elections; business, finance, legal, and staffing matters; and the transacting of business left undone by the Annual Meeting. The Council also provides for the appointment of members to fill vacancies by the recommendation of the various boards. The Council shall determine the time and place for regular Council Meetings when they meet to organize within 30 days following the annual meeting. This organizational meeting shall consist of the election of one of their members as Chairman and another as vice-chairman. The vice-chairman shall assume chair responsibilities in the absence of the chairman at any church meeting. The Church Clerk shall act as Secretary of the Church Council. A simple majority is to be considered a quorum of any Council Meeting.
11. A Sunday-School Superintendent to be elected at the Annual Meeting to serve for one (1) year from June 1 to May 31. He shall direct, supervise, and encourage the Christian Education program of the church under the supervision of the Youth Pastor.
12. Assistant Sunday-School Superintendent to be elected at the Annual Meeting to serve for one (1) year from June 1 to May 31. He shall assist the Sunday-School Superintendent in the direction of the Sunday School.

13. A Nominating Committee shall consist of a deacon, a deaconess, and a trustee. The chairman for a given year may serve on the committee for the following year. They shall receive recommendations from the various committees for the positions available, and shall generate the ballot for the Annual Meeting elections. Nominees shall be made known to the church no later than the Sunday prior to the Annual Meeting.
14. A Mission Committee consisting of three (3) elected persons and three (3) appointed persons from the church body. The elected members shall serve for three (3) years, one member being elected each year at the Annual Meeting. Appointed persons shall be as follows: one from the Women's Fellowship, one from the Board of Deaconesses, and one from the Board of Deacons. The term of appointed members shall be the decision of the committee they represent. The Missions Committee shall meet at least once per quarter and shall administer, evaluate, and update the current missions programs of the church. They shall also oversee the local Benevolence Committee Mission, including the appointment of committee members, its financial accounting, and its (quarterly) report to the church.
15. A Music Committee to consist of three (3) persons to be elected for two year terms at the Annual Meeting of the church alternating between two and one elected each year. It shall be the purpose of this committee to enable the congregation to better glorify and worship God through the music of the regular and special services of the church.
16. A Membership Committee to consist of the Minister, and Board of Deacons. It shall be their duty to confer with candidates for church membership (see Art. 3) and to make appropriate recommendations to the church. They shall consider and recommend to the church all matters pertaining to the discipline of members. They shall assist the Church Clerk in revising the membership role.
17. A Finance Committee to consist of the church Treasurer, the church Financial Secretary, and three (3) members. The three (3) elected members will be elected for a term of three (3) years. After serving two terms in succession they shall be ineligible for re-election for one year. The purpose of the Finance Committee shall be to glorify God by generating a proposed budget to be voted on at the annual meeting and by overseeing the approved budget throughout the year. They shall generate the contractual agreements with paid employees of the church.

All boards and elective Committees shall, within fourteen (14) days following the annual meeting, meet and organize by electing a chairman and a Council representative. The record of this election shall be on file with the Clerk of the Church within seven (7) days following said election.

ARTICLE #5 Vacancies and Appointments

Vacancies in any of the offices or committees named in Article #4 may be filled by appointment made by the Church Council. The candidate for appointment must be presented at least one council meeting (regular or special) prior to council vote. Appointments by Council shall serve the remainder of the year and then be placed on the ballot at the Annual Meeting for the completion of the term in question. This shall constitute a special election.

ARTICLE # 6

Meetings

1. Annual Meeting: The Annual Meeting shall be held during the second week of January. At this meeting the annual reports of the various Offices, Boards, and Committees shall be presented; officers elected; and such other business transacted as may be specified in the call or authorized in the Bylaws. All reports made at the Annual Meeting shall be in writing and for the preceding fiscal year from January 1st thru December 31st. Notice of the meeting specifying time, place, and object thereof shall be read from the pulpit on two (2) successive Sundays on which services shall be held preceding such meeting; provided, however, that in case it is proposed to amend the Articles of Association or By-Laws, the proposed amendment shall be made available on three (3) successive Sundays on which the services shall be held immediately preceding such meeting. The proposed amendment shall not itself be amended in any material point at the same meeting. If there shall be no public service at which the notice herein required might be given, said notice shall be posted on the Church door or published in the town, city, or county newspaper whose circulation among the members is greatest. This notice shall be given three (3) weeks preceding such meeting, specifying the time, place and object thereof. Absentee ballots may be obtained for the Annual Meeting by contacting the nominating committee. The Church Council shall determine the time and place of the Annual Meeting.
2. Special Congregational Meetings: Special congregational meetings may be called in the manner specified above upon request of the Church Council, or the written application of any five (5) qualified voters. The issuing of absentee ballots for special congregational meetings will be at the discretion of the sitting Church Council.
3. Meetings without Notice: The church may at any of its regular services, without special notice, act upon the appointment of delegates to councils, associations, and conferences of Churches, or upon other business not relating to the Church as a corporate body. The Chairman of the Church Council shall be the Chairman at all congregational meetings.

ARTICLE #7

The Church may provide for any auxiliary organizations that may be deemed advisable for the purpose of worship, instruction, recreation, administration, etc. All such organizations shall be regarded as integral parts of the Church and shall report at its Annual Meeting.

ARTICLE #8

Twenty-five (25) percent of qualified voters shall constitute a quorum at any Church Meeting. Any issue brought to congregational vote with the exception of election of officers, must be approved by at least 75% of members who are voting. Exceptions to the 75% majority shall include the election of officers and dismissal of pastors, which shall require a simple majority of members who are voting..

ARTICLE #9

Amendments

The Articles of Association are a revision of the Articles of Association adopted at the Annual Meeting on November 2, 1959; updated and amended at a Special Congregational Meeting March 20, 1969; revised on February 16, 1977, at a Special Congregational Meeting; revised again on March 8, 1981, at a Special Congregational Meeting in which the DOCTRINE was re-written; and revised again in January of 2002 at the Annual Meeting; revised on January 21, 2004 at the Annual Meeting. Revised at a Special Congregational Meeting held August 13, 2007, revised January 8, 2008. Revised January 12, 2010 at the Annual Meeting. Revised at the 2010 Annual Meeting on January 10, 2011. Revised at a Special Congregational Meeting held February 26, 2012.