

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



**December 2023**

**THE CONSTITUTION OF THE  
CENTRAL BAPTIST CHURCH OF JAMESTOWN, RHODE ISLAND**  
*(December 2023)*

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**THE CONSTITUTION OF THE  
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*(December 2023)*

**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 will 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 will, 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 should make a request to the Diaconate for membership. Membership will 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 in any of the following ways:

- a. By Death: A member or associate will 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, will be received and, said person's name shall be removed from the appropriate list.

Section 4: Responsibilities of Members

1. Members are expected 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 will be responsible to the congregation for all its decisions and actions. It will 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, Pastoral and Staff Relations committee and various standing committees.

2. Each board will consist of five persons of whom at least four 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 only be eligible for reappointment in that capacity for a period of one year.

4. The length of term of board members will be two years. Upon completion of that term, a board member will only be eligible for reappointment in that capacity for a period of one year. Should a board member be unable to serve a complete two-year term, a replacement would be appointed 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

1. Function as the spiritual and administrative leader of the church.
2. Worship design: seek to weave together continuity and creativity, intellect and emotion, in a pattern that reflects thematic integrity.
3. Preaching: endeavor to proclaim the Christian Gospel in such a way that both illumines the personal journey of faith and gives perspective on the issues of the day.
4. Pastoral work: bring the resources of the Christian faith to the people and minister as counsel in time of need.
5. Administrative capacity: conduct general supervision over the total program of the church and lead the church in developing an effective program and a fellowship of genuine Christian concern. Serve as member, ex-officio, of all boards, committees, and auxiliary organizations of the church.

### Section 2: Responsibilities

1. 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.
2. Submit an Annual Report for presentation at the Annual Meeting.
3. In the absence (vacancy or part time) of a fulltime settled pastor, the Pastoral and Staff Relations committee will **coordinate** the paid administrative leadership of the church supported by volunteers as needed.

## ARTICLE VII: EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

### Section 1: Composition

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

### Section 2: Frequency of Meetings

1. The Executive Committee will meet at least two times a year. It may meet more frequently, as determined by the Moderator, any board chairperson 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. 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, for example communion, baptism, weddings, etc. 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. Determine, in consultation with the family, how best to use and recognize memorial gifts received, consistent with the Endowment Policy.
7. May 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. May appoint a Congregational Care Committee (Shepherds), 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. May 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 will 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. Appoint one trustee member as the General Treasurer or a volunteer approved by the trustees.

3. Arrange for the investment, monitoring, and control of the capital funds of the church.
4. Oversee and manage the Endowment Fund(s) per the CBC Endowment Policy.
5. Be responsible for the employment of, and maintenance of job descriptions for, personnel for the positions of Organist/Choir Director, Financial Secretary, Administrative Assistant, and for such other services as may be required. Compensation for designated positions will be made part of the church budget.
6. Appoint an Auditing Committee to examine the church financial records; 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. Hold 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. May 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, minutes, 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.
8. Serve as church librarian and historian
9. In the absence of a Church Clerk, volunteers may accomplish some or all of the Church Clerk duties.

## ARTICLE X: STANDING COMMITTEES

### Section 1: Nominating Committee

1. Membership and Terms  
Will consist of two 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  
The Pastoral and Staff Relations Committee will consist of three 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. Conduct 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. **Coordinate** administrative leadership in the absence of a fulltime pastor with the assistance of various volunteers
- j. Submit an Annual Report for presentation at the Annual Meeting.

#### ARTICLE XI: AUXILIARY ORGANIZATIONS

1. The church **will** support such organizations as may provide for the fulfillment of its spiritual and social obligations. All auxiliary organizations within the church will 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 will 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 may 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 will be extended to members and associates of the church.
- b. Twenty members and/or associates present, or represented by proxy, 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 will 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, shall be May 1 through April 30.
- b. The church Annual Meeting shall be held on a Sunday in May.
- c. An Annual Report will be submitted for consideration and will 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 (including proposed budget), the Pastoral and Staff Relations Committee, the Financial Secretary, and all auxiliary organizations.
- d. The Nominating Committee will 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.
- e. In the absence of a Church Clerk or volunteer to record the minutes, all actions recorded during the Annual Meeting shall be noted as footnotes for each section of the Annual Report by the applicable responsible body and a revised Annual Report filed.

## 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 will nominate a representative Search Committee of at least four members to be approved by the congregation. It will 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 will be notified two weeks in advance of a candidate's appearance, which will include participation in a worship service.
2. A business meeting will be held following the service for the purpose of considering said candidate. A vote of two-thirds of the members and/or associates present will 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 will 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 will have the option of terminating the office earlier and paying for the balance of ninety days.

## ARTICLE XV: PROPERTY CHANGE OR MODIFICATION

### Section 1: Property Modifications

1. All sales of the church real estate property will be subject to congregational approval.
2. Any proposal related to real estate property modifications must be submitted to the Board of Trustees in writing. Any sale of church property must first be approved by the Board of Trustees and the Executive Board; approval must be submitted to the Church membership for a two-thirds majority vote.
3. Routine and minor repairs and maintenance that do not significantly impact the use or appearance of the property may be carried out by the Board of Trustees without congregational approval.

Proceeds from any sale of real estate property would be used to further the purpose of the Church as stated in the Constitution.

### Section 2: Congregational Approval

1. The Board of Trustees shall notify the congregation of any proposed property modifications at least 30 days before the congregational vote.

2. During this notice period, congregational members will have the opportunity to discuss and seek clarification on the proposed property modifications.
3. A special congregational meeting shall be called for the purpose of voting on the proposed property modifications.

#### ARTICLE XVI: RULES OF ORDER

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

#### ARTICLE XVII: AMENDMENTS

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.