

**CONSTITUTION AND BYLAWS OF
COTTONWOOD CHRISTIAN FELLOWSHIP
ALAMOGORDO, NEW MEXICO**

PREAMBLE

We, whose names appear upon the formal membership roster of this church, in order to establish and maintain a place for the worship of Almighty God, our Heavenly Father, do hereby recognize ourselves as a sovereign local church. We desire to provide Christian fellowship for those of like precious faith and to assume our share of responsibility and the privilege of propagating the gospel of Jesus Christ by all available means, both at home and in foreign lands. For this purpose we do adopt the following articles of church order and submit ourselves to be governed by them.

**AMENDED
CONSTITUTION**

**ARTICLE I.
NAME**

The name of this church shall be: **COTTONWOOD CHRISTIAN FELLOWSHIP.**

**ARTICLE II.
PREROGATIVES**

Section 1.

This church shall have the right to govern itself and to conduct its own affairs according to the principles of New Testament church government, “endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace...till we all come in the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ,” (Eph. 4:3-13). This right shall specifically include such matters as the calling of a pastor, the election of a board of deacons, the discipline of its members and the conducting of its own services and church program. The following principles of governance shall apply:

- (a) To maintain the preaching of the whole counsel of God, according to the doctrines and teachings of the Holy Scripture, and to administer the regular ordinances defined in Article V of this constitution;
- (b) To advance the Kingdom of God against the kingdom of darkness by loving God, by embodying God’s love for each other, and by proclaiming and demonstrating God’s love to the world;
- (c) To be a community of spiritually empowered people who reflect God’s love and advance God’s Kingdom in Alamogordo, the Tularosa Basin, and to the world as the Lord leads, working hand in hand with other expressions of the body of Christ until all have reached the fullness in Christ;
- (d) To examine and mentor candidates for the ministry, and to license and ordain those who have been approved by both the pastors and elders of this church according to standards set forth by the New Testament;
- (e) To examine, appoint, and endorse missionary candidates based upon New Testament principles;
- (f) To establish small groups, churches, and mission outreaches, both home and abroad according to standards set for that by the New Testament;

- (g) To designate its own officers, to appoint committees, to arrange for its own meetings and to govern itself in accordance with the constitution and by-laws herein and after defined;
- (h) To establish and define the policies by which it shall be governed.

Section 2.

In connection therewith, or incidental thereto, this church shall have the right to purchase or acquire by gifts, bequest or otherwise, either directly or as trustee, and to own, hold in trust, use, sell, convey, mortgage, lease or otherwise dispose of any real estate or chattels as may be necessary for the furtherance of its purposes, all in accordance with its constitution and bylaws.

ARTICLE III. ASSOCIATION

While maintaining its inherent rights and sovereignty in the conduct of its own affairs, this church shall voluntarily enter into Christian fellowship with churches that believe and follow the precepts of the word of God, regardless of denomination.

ARTICLE IV. TENETS OF FAITH

This church accepts the Holy Bible as the revealed word of God, the all-sufficient rule for faith and practice. For the purpose of maintaining general unity, the church adopts the following Statement of Fundamental Truths:

1. The Scriptures Inspired: The Scripture, both Old and New Testaments, are inspired of God and are the revelation by God to man, the infallible, authoritative rule of faith and conduct. (2 Tim 3:15-17; 1 Thess 2:13; 2 Pet 1:21)
2. The Godhead (also known as the Trinity): God eternally exists as the perfect love of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit and collectively possesses divine perfection. (Matt 3:16; 28:19; John 14:26, 17:21; 2 Cor 13:14; Eph 4:4-6)
3. Jesus Christ: Jesus was fully God and fully man. He was conceived in the Virgin Mary, and lived a sinless life. He died an atoning death and rose again to reconcile all people to God and to free them from the power of sin and the devil. He will return and consummate the building of His Kingdom. All who are His bride shall reign with Him. All who reject Him shall suffer eternal destruction. (Matt 1:18-25; Luke 1:26-38; John 1:10-14; Rom 5:8-10, 6:6; 2 Thess 1:8-9; 2 Tim 2:2; Titus 2:13-14, 1 John 1:7, 4:2-3).
4. The Fall of Humanity: We believe that man was created in the image of God, but that by voluntary disobedience he fell from perfection. Since all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, all need to have a saving relationship with God through Jesus Christ as Savior. Persons become children of God when they repent of their sin, place their trust in Jesus Christ, and commit their lives to Him. (Gen 1:26-27; 3:6; Acts 2:38-39; Rom 3:23, 5:17-18; 1 John 1:8)
5. The Holy Spirit. We believe that Jesus draws men to the Father by the convicting work of the Holy Spirit, who indwells them at the time of salvation. We believe that the gift of the baptism of the Holy Spirit is available for all who wish to receive, making them more effective witnesses. The Holy Spirit works in the lives of believers, transforming them into the image of Christ and empowering them for ministry. We believe in the gifts of the Holy Spirit as specified in 1 Cor 12:1-11 and believe that the Holy Spirit distributes these spiritual gifts to

believers, as well as spiritual fruit, which gives evidence of a Spirit-filled life. (John 14:6, 14:26, 20:22; Acts 2:4; 38-39, Rom 8:5-9, 1 Cor 12:1-11, Eph 4:30-32, Gal 5:16-18, 22-23)

6. Resurrection. We believe in the resurrection of both the saved and the lost, the saved to everlasting life and the lost to everlasting damnation. (John 5:29, 11:25, Rom 6:23, 1 Pet 1:3)

ARTICLE V. ORDINANCES

Section 1.

The Ordinance of Baptism by immersion in water shall be administered to all those who have repented of their sins, have believed on the Lord Jesus Christ to the saving of their souls, and who give clear evidence of their salvation. Thus they declare to the world that they have died with Christ and that they also have been raised with Him to walk in newness of life. (Matt 28:18-20, Acts 2:38-41; Acts 8:36-39, Rom 6:3-5; Col. 2:12)

Section 2.

The Ordinance of the Lord's Supper shall be observed faithfully as enjoined by the Scriptures. (Luke 22:19-20; 1 Cor 11:23-26)

ARTICLE VI. MEMBERSHIP

Eligibility: Membership in this church shall be extended to all candidates who give evidence of their faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, subscribe to its tenets of faith, consent to be governed by its constitution and bylaws as herein set forth, subscribe to and sign the Membership Covenant, and who are approved by the elders. Candidates for membership will be required to attend a membership class prior to having their names entered on the official membership roster.

Membership in Cottonwood Christian Fellowship carries with it the responsibility both to obey scripture, and to model a moral life before other members, their families and the community. In certain instances, as directed by the pastor, elders, and board of deacons, it may become necessary to discipline and/or dismiss from voting membership anyone who is unrepentant of sin. (Gal 6:1)

ARTICLE VII. CHURCH GOVERNMENT

Section 1.

Pastor: The senior pastor shall be an ordained minister of the gospel, in good standing with an evangelical recognized fellowship which issues ministerial credentials. The pastor shall meet the biblical qualifications for the office, and shall subscribe, without reservation, to the constitution and bylaws of Cottonwood Christian Fellowship. (1 Tim 3:1-7, Titus 1:6-9)

Section 2.

Board of Elders: The board of elders shall consist of the senior pastor, the ministry staff and any others the pastor might choose. The elders are responsible for the spiritual development and leadership of the fellowship. They will be selected by the senior pastor, the pastoral staff, and the designated elders, after careful consultation and prayer. The number of elders will be

determined by the senior pastor. Elders shall meet biblical qualifications. (1 Tim 3:1-7, Titus 1:6-9)

Section 3.

Board of Deacons: The board of deacons is directly responsible for the oversight of all church business. This includes all oversight of all real property and real estate. Deacons shall meet biblical qualifications. The board will be directly elected by the fellowship, as set forth in the bylaws. The terms of service will normally be three full years for all deacons, but to insure terms of service are staggered, one of the initial positions will be for one year, two positions will be for two years, and two positions will be for three years. Deacons will be at least 25 years of age, of demonstrated mature Christian character, and shall have been active members of the fellowship for at least one year. There will be five deacons until such time as church growth dictates more. They will determine all salaries of all church personnel, based on written job descriptions. The board of deacons will be chaired by the pastor, who is a non-voting member. (1 Tim 3:8-13)

Section 4.

Meetings of the board of deacons will be publicized well in advance and open to all voting members of the congregation, as specified in Article IV, Section 2 of the bylaws. Minutes will be written and available upon request, with personnel or personal matters excluded to insure privacy.

ARTICLE VIII. AMENDMENTS

This constitution may be amended at any regular or special meeting called for that purpose, under these conditions:

1. Notice of proposed change(s) shall be given at all services for at least two weeks preceding the time of the meeting.
2. A copy of proposed changes shall have been publicly posted four Sundays preceding the time of such meeting; and provided that a notice of constitution amendments have been presented in all regular church media communications four weeks in advance of the meeting.
3. The required quorum for such meetings shall be 30% of the voting membership. Amendments will require two-thirds of a quorum voting in favor of any changes.
4. The board of deacons shall cast individual votes on any proposed amendment either by being present at the meeting or by proxy.

AMENDED BYLAWS

ARTICLE I MEMBERSHIP

Section 1.

Eligibility for membership in this fellowship shall be as stated in Article VI of the Constitution.

Section 2.

Voting Membership: All those who meet the preceding standards for membership and whose names appear on the membership roster of the church shall constitute the legal voting membership of this fellowship. They must be active members, 18 years of age or older, who live consistent Christian lives. Membership shall be available for young people who meet the usual qualifications. They shall not have voting privileges until they reach 18 years of age, and have completed all membership requirements set down in Article VI of the Constitution of Cottonwood Christian Fellowship, with exceptions as approved by the board of deacons after petition by the underage member.

Section 3.

Inactive Membership: Enrolled members who shall, without good cause, absent themselves from the services of the fellowship for a period of four consecutive months or more, who cease to contribute of their means to its support, who are out of harmony with its teaching or its ministries, are under charges for misconduct, or who persist in sinful practices, shall be considered as inactive members and shall lose their voting privileges until they are restored to the fellowship. Members of the pastoral staff will make at least three attempts to restore inactive members. In those cases where restoration does not seem possible, the voting member will be given the opportunity to withdraw their voting membership. Where a voluntary withdrawal is not received within 30 days from the third restoration attempt, definite action will be taken by the staff and elders and the voting members will be advised in writing that their name has been removed for cause, and that cause will be specifically noted. Inactive members may have their voting status returned to active again by written request to pastoral staff and upon approval by the staff and elders. The effective date of such return to active status will be the date of written notification that the member has been returned to active status.

ARTICLE II THE PASTOR

Section 1.

The pastor shall be considered the spiritual overseer of the fellowship and shall direct all of its activities. He shall be president of the corporation, the non-voting chairman of the board of deacons, and shall act as chairman of all business meetings of the fellowship. He shall be an *ex officio* member of all committees and departments. He shall provide for all the services of the fellowship and shall arrange for all special meetings, conventions, or revival campaigns. No person shall be invited to speak or preach in the fellowship without his approval.

Section 2.

Vacancies: In the event that the pastor has serious charges preferred against him, or his ministry has ceased to be effective, power is vested in the board of deacons to request his resignation at any of its regular meetings or at a special meeting called for that purpose. If the

pastor refuses to resign, the pastorate shall not be considered vacant until the action of the board of deacons has been confirmed by a two-thirds majority vote of the fellowship at a meeting called for that purpose, provided a quorum is present. A majority of the elders may also request the resignation of the pastor. If the pastor refuses to resign, the matter will be presented to the board of deacons. If the board of deacons is in agreement with the elders, the board of deacons will present it to the fellowship, as provided for above. When a vacancy in the pastorate shall occur, pulpit supply shall be arranged for by the board of deacons until a pastor has been chosen in accordance with this document.

Section 3.

Procedure for choosing a new pastor. When the senior pastor's position is vacated, the elders and the board of deacons will appoint a pastoral search committee. During the search process, the board of deacons will arrange for the preaching from among staff, church elders, or outside guest speakers. The committee will share with the congregation any tapes and/or resumes of those whom they believe might be viable candidates for the office of pastor. Further, while still in the evaluation process, the pastoral search committee may decide it wishes the board to invite a pastoral candidate to come merely as a guest speaker, without formal candidacy.

When the pastoral search committee, elders and the board of deacons have agreed upon a particular candidate for the office of pastor, that individual should be invited to preach a brief series of messages, possibly in a Sunday morning through Wednesday evening format. There should also be some informal forums planned for interviews and questions with the board of deacons and elders, and also from the members of the fellowship. After pastoral candidate has concluded this process, the congregation should be prepared to vote, and a quorum, as defined in Article IX, must be present, with a 2/3 affirmative vote required to elect a new pastor.

ARTICLE III BOARD OF ELDERS

Section 1.

The board of elders shall consist of the senior pastor, the ministry staff and others the pastor might choose. The elders are responsible for the spiritual development and leadership of the fellowship. They will be selected by the senior pastor, the pastoral staff, and the designated elders, after careful consultation and prayer. The number of elders will be determined by the senior pastor.

Section 2.

The board of elders shall act in an advisory capacity with the pastor in matters pertaining to the fellowship in its spiritual life and in the ministry of its ordinances. The elders shall act in the examination of candidates for membership and also in the administration of discipline.

Section 3.

When it is determined that additional staff personnel are needed, the pastor shall present the name of the candidate of his choice to the elders and the board of deacons for approval. Upon approval, the board of deacons shall determine the appropriate compensation. All ministry staff shall be under direct supervision of the pastor and amenable to him for fulfilling ministry responsibilities. Ministry staff shall cooperate with and support the pastor in his vision and responsibilities. Should any staff become divisive in behavior or spirit, they shall submit their resignation to the pastor.

Section 4.

The initiative of terminating the service of ministry staff personnel shall also be the prerogative of the senior pastor, after consultation with church elders and the board of deacons. When the senior pastor resigns, it is understood that all other ministerial staff shall tender their resignations to the incoming pastor. The incoming pastor is free to establish the pastoral staff of his choice, and is free to retain any prior staff he chooses.

ARTICLE IV BOARD OF DEACONS

Section 1.

Responsibilities: The overall business management of the fellowship shall be entrusted to the board of deacons. Its members are responsible for the following:

- (a) To manage all property of the fellowship.
- (b) To administer fellowship funds. The deacons are authorized to make purchases up to \$15,000 without a formal fellowship business meeting.
- (c) To provide a detailed financial statement at the annual business meeting, and to present a budget for the coming year.
- (d) To annually review the salaries of the staff.

Section 2.

Meetings: The board of deacons shall meet at least every two months, or as needed, on a date they shall determine. Special meetings may be held upon decision of said board, or upon request of the pastor provided all board members have been notified. A majority of the board members shall constitute a quorum, and no business of the fellowship may be transacted at any board meeting unless a quorum is present. Proxy votes are expressly disallowed. Meetings will be publicized to the congregation at least a week in advance by publishing such notice in the church bulletin, except for emergency meetings. Meetings are open to the voting membership, but portions of such meetings may be closed when considering personnel or personal matters to insure privacy.

Section 3.

Procedure for election of deacons. Nominations may be made by the voting membership, by closed ballot, for two weeks on dates set by the board of deacons in advance of the annual business meeting. The senior pastor and elders will screen nominees as to eligibility and willingness to serve. A list of qualified nominees will be printed in the bulletin two weeks in advance of the annual business meeting. Nominees will be introduced in whichever worship service they attend on the Sunday before the annual business meeting. Deacon vacancies will be filled by whomever receives the most votes by secret ballot at the annual business meeting. After a deacon has served two consecutive terms, the individual may not be reelected until he has been off the board for one term.

Section 4.

Officers and their duties:

- (a) The senior pastor shall serve as president of the corporation and as the non-voting chairman of the board of deacons. He shall be responsible to provide teaching and preaching of the Bible, lead public worship services and give spiritual direction, counsel, encouragement and Christian discipline to the congregation.
- (b) The board of deacons shall elect a corporate secretary. The secretary shall keep the minutes of the meetings of the board of deacons and the annual and special business meetings of the fellowship, and make these minutes available to the fellowship on

request. He shall keep a record of the membership of the fellowship and perform any other clerical work necessary to the proper discharge of his duties. He shall be the custodian of all legal documents.

- (c) The board of deacons shall elect a corporate treasurer, which may be a combined secretary/treasurer position if they so choose. The treasurer, by means of the bookkeeper, shall be entrusted with all the finances of the fellowship, which may be committed to him. The bookkeeper shall disburse the same by check, as authorized by the board and under the supervision of the treasurer. All checks must be signed by both the bookkeeper and one other person or persons designated by the board. One exception to this will be for checks used in emergency situations where a designated person by the board cannot meet the emergency. In this case, a single signature by the bookkeeper would be authorized on the approval and initials of the treasurer or senior staff. The bookkeeper shall keep an itemized account of all receipts and disbursements. These will be reviewed for accuracy by the treasurer monthly. The treasurer shall make an itemized report at the regular business meetings of the board, and at the annual fellowship business meeting and periodically throughout the year to the congregation.
- (d) If the corporate secretary and treasurer are not members of the board of deacons then they shall serve only as non-voting members of the board.
- (e) An internal audit shall be secured by the board of deacons annually. An outside or independent audit may be secured by the board of deacons at any time they deem necessary. All audit reports performed for Cottonwood shall be made available at the next annual or special business meeting.
- (f) Vacancies of the deacon board, corporate secretary, corporate treasurer, and/or corporate secretary/treasurer may be filled by appointment by the deacon board for the unexpired term. Any service for a partial term will not hinder the appointee from being elected for two full, successive terms.

ARTICLE V MEETINGS

Section 1.

Public Services. Public worship services shall be held each Sunday and during the week as may be provided for under the direction of the pastor and the elders.

Section 2.

There shall be an annual business meeting of the fellowship, which shall be held within the first quarter of the year, the time and place to be determined by the pastor and the board of deacons. Due notice is to be given on the two Sundays prior to the date of meeting.

Section 3

The annual business meeting shall be held for the purposes of electing deacons; receiving the annual reports of the pastor, the board of deacons, the audit, and the departments of this fellowship; presenting objectives for the upcoming year, and transacting such other business as may come before said meeting.

Section 4.

Special business meetings of the fellowship may be called when necessary by the pastor or by a majority of the members of the board of deacons after notice has been given by the pastor or secretary of the fellowship. Notice of the meeting and its purpose will be given on the two Sundays preceding the date of the specially called meeting.

Special business meetings of the fellowship may also be called by a written request of a quorum of the voting members of this fellowship. Notice of the meeting and its purpose shall be given as stated above.

ARTICLE VI INTERNAL ORGANIZATIONS

This fellowship shall provide for the establishment of a Sunday school department, a youth department, and such other departments, committees and auxiliary organizations as may be necessary and advisable for the extension of its work. All such departments, committees and auxiliary organizations shall contribute to the harmony and development of the fellowship. They shall be under the general supervision of the pastor and elders. The pastor shall be an *ex officio* member of all committees, departments and auxiliaries.

ARTICLE VII FINANCES

Funds for the maintenance of this fellowship shall be provided by the voluntary contributions or the tithes and offerings of the members and friends of the fellowship. Offerings shall be accepted by the fellowship at such times and in such ways as agreed upon by the board of deacons, and shall be administered by the treasurer under its direction.

ARTICLE VIII PROPERTY

Section 1.

All property of the fellowship shall be deeded to the fellowship and held in its name. No deeded property of the fellowship shall be bought, sold, leased, mortgaged, or otherwise disposed of without the same having been approved by two-thirds of the voting membership who are in attendance at the regular meeting or special meeting called for that purpose. The pastor and the secretary of the fellowship shall certify in such purchase, conveyance, lease or mortgage, that the same has been duly authorized and approved by a vote of the fellowship. Such certificate shall be held to be conclusive evidence thereof.

Section 2.

In the event that this fellowship ceases to function as a church body, the property owned by the fellowship shall be given to another non-profit religious corporation recognized as such by the Internal Revenue Service. The recipient corporation shall be decided upon by the remaining members of the board, pastor, and voting membership.

ARTICLE IX QUORUM

A quorum must be present at the annual business meeting, or any special called meetings of the fellowship. A quorum shall be 30% of the voting membership of the fellowship.

ARTICLE X PARLIAMENTARY ORDER

In the conducting of its affairs, the fellowship shall be governed by parliamentary procedure as set forth in the current edition of Robert's Rules of Order, Newly Revised, in keeping with the spirit of Christian love and fellowship.

ARTICLE XI AMENDMENTS

These bylaws may be amended by a two-thirds vote of the membership of this fellowship who are in attendance at any regular or special meeting called for that purpose, provided that notice of such proposed change(s) shall have been publicly posted for four Sundays preceding the time of such meeting; and provided that a notice of bylaw amendment proposals have been presented in all regular church media communications four weeks in advance of the meeting.