Constitution

**for**

Rockland Community Church

# CONSTITUTION

## Article 1 Name

The name of this church shall be Rockland Community Church.

## Article 2 Purpose

The purpose of this church is to worship God, and in obedience to the Great Commission and the full revelation of God through His Word, make disciples of Jesus Christ. (Matt. 28:18-20; Acts 1:6-8). As disciples of Jesus Christ, the church desires to demonstrate the fruit of the Spirit and extend God-defined, biblical love to everyone, serving each other in love; love your neighbor as yourself; bear with each other and forgive one another and be thankful.

The ‘Great Commission’:

Then Jesus came to them and said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age." (Matt. 28:18-20)

Jesus also tells us in Mark 12:30-31, disciples are those who obey the Great Commandment, “Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength. The second is this: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.' There is no commandment greater than these."

## Article 3 Head of the Church

This church acknowledges Jesus Christ as its head (Col. 1:15-18, Matt 16:16-20, Eph. 5:22-33). We acknowledge the Bible as the inspired Word of God, completely accurate in all to which it speaks and as our authoritative guide in all matters affecting the church.

## Article 4 Government of the Church

The government of this church is vested in its members who are represented by the Board of Elders elected by the members of Rockland in accordance with the bylaws. The Board of Elders is responsible for the mission, vision, operations, direction, and overall health and shepherding of the church as well as its doctrinal faithfulness and integrity (Titus 1:5-9, Acts 20:18-31, 1 Tim 4:14, 1 Tim 3:2-7, 1 Peter 5:1-5).

The Board of Elders delegates responsibility for the day-to-day operation of the church (including the supervision of all staff) to the Lead Pastor. The Lead Pastor is accountable to the Board of Elders.

The Board of Elders shall establish ministry teams to support the staff of the church in carrying out the mission of the church.

# Doctrine

## Article 5 Rule of Faith and Practice

This church recognizes the Bible as sufficient for faith and practice and holds that living in accordance with its teachings and bearing fruit is the evidence of genuine faith. (John 15:8, Gal. 5:19-26, James 1:22, Ps. 119:9, Is. 40:6-8)

For more details on specific biblical teaching on other doctrinal matters, see Policies and Procedures, section “Other Doctrinal Matters”, which every elder and pastor affirms.

## Article 6 Statement of Faith

We believe in:

The only true God, the sovereign Creator and Sustainer of all things, existing eternally in three persons: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit (2 Cor. 13:14, Col 2:9, Is 44:6, John 10:30, 1 Cor 8:5-6, Matt 3:16-17, 28:19,).

The divine inspiration, entire trustworthiness and authority of the Bible in faith and practice (Ps. 119:9, 105, Is. 40:6-8, Heb. 4:12-13, 2 Tim. 3:16-17).

The full deity and humanity of Jesus Christ, who lived as a perfect example, who atoned for the sins of the world at the cross, who was bodily raised from the dead and ascended as both Lord and Savior, and who will return in power and glory in the fullness of time to judge the living and the dead, to consummate history and the eternal plan of God (Col. 1:15-23, 2:9, John 1:1-18).

The true Church, which is composed of all persons who through saving faith in Jesus Christ and the sanctifying work of the Holy Spirit are united together in the body of Christ. The Church finds her visible, yet imperfect, expression where the Word of God is preached in its purity, and baptism and communion are administered in their integrity, where scriptural discipline is practiced, and where loving fellowship is maintained (Eph. 2:11-22, 1 Peter 3:18-22, Acts 2:42-47, John 3:16, Matt 18:15-20).

The value and dignity of all humankind, originally created in God’s image to live in love and holiness (Ps 139:13-16, Gen 1:27), but who became alienated from God and each other because of sin and guilt, and who are justly subject to the judgment of God (Rom. 3:21-26).

The justification (being forgiven and made righteous before God) by God’s grace of all who repent and put their faith in Jesus Christ for salvation (Rom. 5:6-11). We affirm God’s offer of redemption and restoration to all who confess and forsake their sin, seeking His mercy and forgiveness through Jesus Christ (Acts 3:19-21; Rom 10:9-10; 1 Cor 6:9-11).

The ministry of the Holy Spirit whose indwelling and transforming power enables us to live out our new life and new calling to evangelism and discipleship within the fellowship of the Church. (Jn. 3:5-6, Titus 3:2-7)

As brothers and sisters in Christ, the spiritual unity of believers in our Lord Jesus Christ, with equality in race, between men and women, and age. (Gal 3:28, Gen 1:27, Rom 5:6-8).

## Article 7 Other Matters

### Christian Baptism

Baptism is an act of initiation into the Christian fellowship of one who, by public declaration of faith and repentance, shall affirm belief in what God's love has done in the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. We also baptize children who have not yet reached the age of accountability as an act of dedication on the part of the parents to rear such children according to the teaching of Christ within a church community, and trust that when such children reach the age of accountability they will confirm this act of dedication for themselves (Acts 22:12-16, Col 2:11-15, Acts 16:25-33).

### The Lord's Supper (Eucharist, Holy Communion)

The Lord’s Supper is a commemoration of the incarnation and ultimate sacrifice of Jesus. This sacrifice of Jesus is represented by the bread and wine/grape juice as Jesus’ body and blood given for all so that some will enter into covenant with God through the intercession of Jesus. This covenant is the New Covenant which Christians proclaim when they take the Lord’s Supper. This universal act of fellowship for the body of believers displays not only the unity we have with Christ but also with one another. The Lord’s Supper points us to hopeful expectation that we have with the return of Christ when every believer from every age in history will unite as one multitude to observe the wedding supper of the Lamb, our King Jesus. (Matt. 26:20-30, Mark 14:18-26, Luke 22:14-23, 1 Cor. 11:18-34)

**Unity**

In essentials unity, in non-essentials liberty, in all things charity. (Eph 4:1-16, John 17:20-26, 1 Cor 1:10, Eph 4:11-14, Col 3:12-17, Psalm 133:1)

# Membership

## Article 8 Qualification

Rockland will welcome into its membership any person who understands, affirms, and agrees to live in accordance with our doctrine (stated in Articles 5-7). It is Rockland’s aspiration for members to grow in the following areas:

1. Corporate worship and private devotion;
2. Biblical community with others;
3. Service in one’s giftedness in the life of Rockland;
4. Financial support of the church and its mission;

Individuals may also be received into membership upon presentation of a letter of transfer from another church and affirmation of Rockland’s doctrine.

## Article 9 Voting Members

A voting member is any member in good standing who has attained the age of 18 years. Voting members are eligible to vote at a congregational meeting.

## Article 10 Discontinuation of Membership

## Membership shall be discontinued when written notice is received by the church from the member indicating the member’s intention to transfer to another church or a desire to no longer be a member of Rockland.

The staff will recommend dropping individuals from membership based on individuals no longer attending worship or activities of the church and only after repeated attempts to contact the member. Recommendations will be made annually to the elders who will be responsible for approving or disapproving them.

On occasion a Christian will wander away from the fellowship of other believers and find himself or herself ensnared by sin through ignorance or willful disobedience. Such sin is usually one causing harm to another member or has created divisiveness between members. It is evidenced by the direct actions of the individual. It then becomes necessary for the church, and particularly its shepherds, to actively seek the repentance and restoration of that Christian. As shepherds of the flock, the elders love the sheep and are also held accountable by God for their spiritual welfare, including that of the wandering sheep. As in Jesus’ parable in [Luke 15:3-8](https://biblia.com/bible/nasb95/Luke%2015.3-8%22%20%5Ct%20%22_blank), it is a time of joy, both in heaven and within the church, when the wandering Christian truly repents.

One means by which the church seeks to lovingly restore wandering believers is the process of church discipline. In Matthew 18, the Lord explains to His disciples how to respond when a fellow believer sins. The principles He sets forth must guide the body of Christ as she seeks to implement discipline in the church today.

The purpose of church discipline is the spiritual restoration of fallen members and the consequent strengthening of the church and glorifying of the Lord. When a sinning believer is rebuked and he or she turns from his sin and is forgiven, they are won back to fellowship with the body and with its head, Jesus Christ.

The goal of church discipline, then, is not to throw people out of the church or to feed the self-righteous pride of those who administer the discipline. It is not to embarrass people or to exercise authority and power in some unbiblical manner. The purpose is to restore a sinning believer to holiness and bring him or her back into a pure relationship within the assembly.

In [Matthew 18:15-17](https://biblia.com/bible/nasb95/Matt%2018.15-17%22%20%5Ct%20%22_blank), Jesus sets forth the four-step process of church discipline:

Step One ([Matt. 18:15](https://biblia.com/bible/nasb95/Matt.%2018.15%22%20%5Ct%20%22_blank)). The process of church discipline begins on an individual level. Jesus said, “And if your brother sins, go and reprove him in private” (v. 15a). Here, an individual believer is to go to a sinning brother or sister privately and confront him in a spirit of humility and gentleness. This confrontation involves clearly exposing his or her sin so that they are aware of it and calling him or her to repentance. If the sinning brother or sister repents in response to the private confrontation, that brother is forgiven and restored (v. 15b).

Step Two ([Matt. 18:16](https://biblia.com/bible/nasb95/Matt.%2018.16%22%20%5Ct%20%22_blank)). If the sinning brother or sister refuses to listen to the one who has rebuked him or her privately, the next step in the discipline process is to take one or two more believers along to confront him or her again (v. 16a). The purpose of taking other believers is so that “by the mouth of two or three witnesses every fact may be confirmed” (v. 16b). In other words, the witnesses are present not only to confirm that the sin was committed but, in addition, to confirm that the sinning brother was properly rebuked and that he has or has not repented.

The presence of additional witnesses is as much a protection for the one being approached as it is for the one approaching. After all, a biased person could erroneously say, “Well, I tried to confront him, but he’s impenitent.” It would be presumptuous to think that one person could make that ultimate determination, especially if he was the one who had been sinned against. The witnesses need to confirm whether there is a heart of repentance or one of indifference or rejection. Such a report provides the basis for further action because the situation has been verified beyond the report of one individual. Ideally, their added rebuke will be sufficient to induce a change of heart in the offending brother or sister that the initial rebuke did not cause. If this change of heart does occur, that brother is forgiven and restored, and the matter is dropped.

Step Three ([Matt. 18:17a](https://biblia.com/bible/nasb95/Matt.%2018.17a%22%20%5Ct%20%22_blank)). If the sinning brother or sister refuses to listen and respond to the confrontation of the witnesses after a period of time, those witnesses are then to tell it to the church (v. 17a). This is most appropriately done by bringing the matter to the attention of the elders. The elders would then confront the brother or sister as representatives of the church seeking repentance and restoration. If the brother or sister has a change of heart they are forgiven and restored and the matter is dropped.

## Step Four ([Matt. 18:17b](https://biblia.com/bible/nasb95/Matt.%2018.17b%22%20%5Ct%20%22_blank)). The fourth and final step in the process of church discipline to discontinue the brother or sister’s membership at Rockland. If the brother or sister continues with actions that harm others or are divisive, the individual may be asked to no longer attend Rockland. This step four requires a unanimous vote of all elders.

## Article 11 Reinstatement

Inactive or moved members will be reinstated to membership when they begin to attend Rockland again. Those removed due to matters of unrepentant sin or divisiveness will be received with joy upon repentance and a majority vote by the elders (Luke 15:11-32).

# Amendments

This constitution may be amended by a two-thirds vote of the voting members in attendance at a properly called annual or special congregational meeting, which is attended by at least 10% of the voting members. The bylaws may be amended in the same manner with a majority vote of those present at a properly called annual or special congregational meeting. The complete text of any proposed change shall be communicated to the membership at least 30 days before the annual meeting in which the vote is to be taken or at least 72 hours before a special meeting in which the vote is to be taken.