

from Royal Vain
THE

2000

CONFESSION OF FAITH,

COVENANT

AND

STANDING RULES,

OF THE

CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH,

IN

NORTH BRANFORD, CONN.

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LONG ISLAND
HISTORICAL
SOCIETY

CONFESSION OF FAITH.

I. We believe that the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments were given by inspiration of God, contain a perfect revelation of divine truth, and are our only infallible rule of faith and practice.

II. We believe in one eternal and unchangeable God, subsisting in three persons, the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost; that He is the Creator and Upholder of all things; that His purposes and providence extend to all events, and that He governs all things for His own glory and the good of His kingdom.

III. We believe that our first parents, although created upright, broke the holy law of God by disobedience to His commands, and thus brought themselves into a state of guilt and condemnation. We believe, also, that all mankind have followed the example of their disobedience, are sinners in the sight of God, and until renewed by the Holy Spirit, are subject to the same condemnation of a holy law.

IV. We believe that Jesus Christ, the Son of God, the second person of the eternal Trinity, having assumed our nature, and died upon the cross, the just for the unjust, has made a complete atonement for sin; that through him forgiveness and salvation are freely offered to all; and that all who come to him with true repentance for their past offences, and faith in his atoning blood, shall be reconciled to God and made heirs of His heavenly kingdom.

V. We believe that the Holy Spirit is always present in the earthly kingdom of God, convincing of sin, revealing the truth, and sanctifying penitent and believing souls.

VI. We believe that the law of God is holy, just and good, that it is imperatively binding upon every rational creature, and that every member of the Church of Christ, in taking upon him the vows of his holy calling, does solemnly covenant and engage that he will strive earnestly to render to it by divine aid, a perfect obedience in all things—in thought, word and deed.

VII. We believe that a Christian Church is a voluntary association of believers for worship and communion, for mutual watchfulness and improvement, for the administration of Christian ordinances, and for the extension of the kingdom

of God among men; and that it is the right of each Church to govern itself, subject only to the rule of Christ.

VIII. We believe the essential ordinances of the Christian Church to be the preaching of the Word, the Communion of the Lord's Supper, and the rite of Baptism.

IX. We believe the Sabbath to be a divinely appointed day of rest, to be observed by the public worship of God in the assemblies of his Saints.

X. We believe in the Resurrection of the dead, and in the Day of Judgment, at which every man shall give an account of himself to God, when the wicked shall go away into everlasting punishment, but the righteous into life eternal.

COVENANT.

In a humble sense of your own unworthiness and with a simple trust in your Saviour's forgiving grace and divine assistance, you do now, in the presence of the holy and everliving God, and before these, His people, as witnesses, solemnly avouch the Lord Jehovah to be your God. You give yourself up to God the Father, as your Creator, your Preserver, your bountiful Benefactor and rightful Sovereign; to His Son Jesus Christ, as your only Saviour and Redeemer; and to the Holy Ghost, as your Sanctifier, Guide and Comforter. You do also enter into covenant with this Church as a Church of Christ, binding yourself to walk together with it in a faithful attendance upon all the ordinances of the gospel, and the constant performance of all the duties of the Christian calling; promising also to seek its good, to labor for its upbuilding, and to submit to its discipline until regularly dismissed therefrom.

Sensible that it is a solemn thing to transact with the living God, you thus covenant.

We, then, the members of this Church, do receive you into our communion, and the full enjoyment of all the privileges of the Church of Christ, promising to watch over you, to seek your good, and to walk towards you in all things as it becometh Saints. And may God have both you and us ever in His holy keeping. AMEN.

STANDING RULES.

I. The Pastor (or acting Pastor) shall preside, when present, at all business meetings of the Church. In the absence of the Pastor a moderator shall be chosen.

II. The annual business meeting of the Church shall be held at the close of the Preparatory Lecture preceding the administration of the Lord's Supper in January.

III. There shall be a Prudential Committee of the Church, consisting of the Pastor (or acting Pastor), the Deacons, and three other members, who shall be chosen annually at the annual business meeting of the Church. It shall be the duty of this Committee to examine and propound candidates for admission to the Church, to prepare and present cases of discipline, to visit and labor with all members of the Church whose life or conduct is, in their judgment, inconsistent with their covenant obligations, and to exercise a general supervision over the business of the Church. The Pastor (or acting Pastor), and when the

Church is without a Pastor, the senior Deacon, shall be Chairman of this Committee. The Prudential Committee shall be empowered to call business meetings of the Church at any time, but shall always specify distinctly in the call, the business which is to be brought before the meeting.

IV. There shall be a Clerk of the Church, who may be chosen at any annual meeting of the Church, and who shall hold his office until his successor is chosen. The Clerk shall have charge of the records and public documents of the Church, and shall keep a careful and exact record of all business transacted by the Church, including the admission and dismissal of members, also of the decease of church members and baptisms—unless relieved of this duty by the Pastor.

V. Candidates for admission to the Church, having been duly examined and propounded by the Prudential Committee, shall stand upon probation for a period of not less than two weeks; when, if no objection has been made to their admission, either publicly or in private to the Committee, they shall be received to full communion upon assenting publicly to the Confession of Faith and Covenant of the Church. When objection is made to the admission of any candidate, the Prudential Committee may, in their discretion,

either defer the case, or submit it to the vote of the Church.

VI. Members of other Churches recommended to the watch and fellowship of this Church by letter, shall be received by vote of the Church after a probation of one week. If the Church shall, for any reason, decline to receive a member thus recommended, the Church giving the letter shall be courteously notified of their action and the reasons therefor.

VII. In cases of necessity the terms of probation, required by the 5th and 6th rules, may be varied by the special vote of the Church.

VIII. Whenever any member of this Church shall remove to another locality, it shall be his duty to apply for a letter to some other evangelical Church within one year from the time of his removal, or to notify the Prudential Committee of the reasons why he neglects so to do.

Any member of the Church who shall be absent for five years without either applying for a letter or notifying the Prudential Committee of the reasons for his neglect, shall be liable to be cut off for violation of covenant obligations.

IX. Members guilty of scandalous offences, shall, upon proof of their guilt, be immediately suspended from the privileges of their Church re-

lations, and shall not be restored until, after a reasonable probation, they have given satisfactory evidence of penitence and a return to a life of purity and rectitude. If, after faithful and patient efforts for their recovery, no signs of true penitence appear, they shall be finally excommunicated from the Church.

X. Any inconsistency of conduct or neglect of duty, involving a violation of covenant obligations, shall be a sufficient ground for Church discipline. But no case of discipline shall be brought before the Church without full and distinct notice previously given, nor without a definite statement of the charges preferred, nor without giving the accused member full opportunity to meet the evidence against him and to be heard in self defence.

XI. The Pastor and Deacons are authorized in their discretion to administer the communion to sick or infirm members of the Church at their homes. And when such persons desire to unite with the Church, having been duly examined and propounded by the Prudential Committee, they may, by vote of the Church, be received to full communion, upon giving their assent to the Confession of Faith and the Covenant in presence of the Pastor and Deacons.

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