

ROCHFORD CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH

CHURCH CONSTITUTION

Reprinted March 2025 – taken from the 1999 reprint

FOREWORD

A Congregational Church is a company of persons who, having faith in Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour, have associated themselves together for the purposes of fellowship, worship, and service for the Kingdom of God.

NAME

1. This Church shall be known as the **Rochford Congregational Church**. The Church shall be constituted of those who have become members in the ways described in (3) and (4) below.

MEMBERSHIP

2. The essential conditions of Membership are confession of faith in Jesus Christ as our Lord and Saviour; a resolution to live day by day in all the engagements of life according to His teaching; and a willingness to uphold the honour, discipline, work and worship of this Church by the consecration of individual gifts of time, talent, and means.
3. Persons desirous of becoming members of the Church are asked to make their desire known to the Minister or one of the Deacons, either personally, or by letter, or through the introduction of some friend already a Church Member. They will then be seen by the Minister, and if he is satisfied with their reasons for desiring to join the Church, he will, in conjunction with the Deacons, nominate them as candidates at a Church Meeting.

In the case of persons joining the Church by profession of faith, the Church Meeting at which they are nominated, as above prescribed, may appoint one or two members of the Church to visit them, and so qualify themselves to propose their acceptance at the next Church Meeting.

Candidates who have attended Special Classes in preparation for Church Membership shall be accepted on the recommendation of the Leader of the Class and the Deacons.

4. Members from other Christian Churches may be admitted to Fellowship by Letter of Transfer, Certificate of Membership, or such other credentials from the Church of their last Communion as shall be satisfactory to the Church they are joining.
5. Members absent from Communion six consecutive months shall be visited or written to. If no satisfactory explanation of the absence is forthcoming they shall be considered to have withdrawn from Fellowship.
6. Members removing to another neighbourhood, at such a distance that they cannot conveniently attend, are urged to apply for a transfer to a Church nearer their homes. The names of such members cannot be retained upon the Church Roll for more than twelve months except for special reasons.
7. The Church Roll should usually be revised in accordance with the above Rules (5) and (6) each year in the month of November, but no name shall be removed except by the vote of the Deacons.

THE CHURCH MEETING

8. The Church Meeting is the representative gathering of the Church for worship and fellowship, for the admission and dismissal of members, for the reception of reports of Church and Denominational organizations, and for discussion and decision concerning matters pertaining to the Service of Christ and the Kingdom of God. It is the Church assembled in order that the Spirit of Christ may direct its members in all things touching the Work of God. All members should, therefore, regard it as a privilege and obligation to attend.
9. The Church Meeting shall be held monthly during the week following the first Sunday. All members of the Church who have reached the age of eighteen years are competent to vote at such Meetings. Church Meetings for special business shall be held when necessary, notice being given in the Services of the Church on the two Sundays preceding the evening fixed for such Meeting.
10. The Minister of the Church, by virtue of his office, is entitled to preside over all Church Meetings. In his absence, one of the Deacons appointed by the Deacons Meeting shall occupy the position, or, failing such arrangement, the meeting may appoint its own Chairman.
11. No subject upon which a special resolution is to be taken shall be voted upon at any Church Meeting without notice of motion being given at the preceding Meeting. Members desirous of introducing important business must give a month's notice in writing to the Secretary of the Church.

ELECTION OF A MINISTER

12. The election of a Minister shall take place at a Church Meeting specially convened for that purpose. That such election may truly express the wish and feeling of the Church it is essential that members should by their presence make the Meeting representative, and a vote of at least two-thirds of those present shall be required in favour of the Minister nominated in order to make the election valid. In no case shall the name of more than one Minister be placed before the Meeting. The vote shall be by ballot papers distributed at the Meeting. The names of ministers for the vacant pastorate may be referred to a small Committee (either the Deacons or a Committee which shall include the Deacons specially appointed by the Church for the purpose).

THE DIACONATE

13. Deacons are called by the Church to an office of great honour and responsibility. They are, with the Minister, the religious leaders of the Fellowship, and are required to give consideration to all the Church's work and to carry out its decisions.

The Diaconate shall consist of eight Deacons who shall be elected for three years; each year three of these shall retire, but shall be eligible for re-election; but every third year the retiring number shall be two.

All members of the Church who have reached the age of 24 years shall be eligible for service upon the Diaconate, but no member shall hold the office unless his or her name has been upon the Church Roll for a period of at least twelve months.

14. The Deacons shall from among their number nominate a Church Treasurer, a Church Secretary and Envelope Steward, and shall submit their names to the Church Meeting for election.

ELECTION OF DEACONS

Nominations shall be made in writing by any two members of the Church, each such nomination having the written approval of the nominee, and shall be placed in the hands of the Church Secretary at or before the Church Meeting prior to the meeting at which the election is to take place.

Voting papers containing the names of the members thus nominated shall be distributed at the meeting at which the election is to take place.

Should the number of nominees exceed the number of vacancies to be filled there shall be two ballots.

The first ballot to consist of a simple majority vote to select the nominees whose names shall go forward (*i.e. one vacancy, one nominee; 2 vacancies, 2 nominees.*) Following the first ballot a second ballot will be held. This time to be elected, nominees will have to secure a two-thirds majority of those present and voting. Where a first ballot is unnecessary the second ballot procedure only will be used.

FINANCE COMMITTEE

15. The Deacons shall also be empowered to co-opt 4 members of the Church or Congregation to act with them (or with such of their number as they may select) to form a Finance Committee.

TRUSTEES

16. The Church shall appoint such Trustees as may be required by the Charity Commissioners for the proper continuance of those Trusts appertaining to property and funds held in the name and for the benefit of this Church.
17. The number of Trustees at any one time shall not be less than THREE, and for the purposes of attending to the affairs of the Trust should normally be EIGHT Trustees.
18. Each Trustee so appointed shall be a Congregationalist and must make a solemn declaration to uphold the Constitution and accept unreservedly the Doctrinal Basis of the Church.
19. Nominations for Trustee shall be made in writing by any two members of the Church, each such nomination having the written approval of the nominees and shall be placed in the hands of the Church Secretary at or before the Church Meeting prior to the meeting at which the election is to take place.

To be appointed a Trustee must receive a two-thirds majority vote of the Church Meeting when the appointment is being considered.
20. Trustees are appointed for life but may withdraw on their own decision.

ALTERATION OF CONSTITUTION

21. None of the foregoing rules shall be altered except at the Annual Church Meeting without three months notice given in writing to the Secretary of the Church.

APPENDIX

1. The Minister shall be ex-officio member and normally Chairman of all Committees of the Church and its institutions.
2. All Collection moneys shall be counted and checked after each Service, and the amount entered in a book kept for that purpose. The money contained in the Weekly Envelopes will, however, be dealt with separately by the Envelope Steward.
3. The Offertories taken at the Communion Services shall be used for the relief of poor members of the Church except that the April and September offerings should be given to special causes as shall be determined by the Church.
4. A Statement and Balance Sheet of all money received and spent, duly audited, shall be submitted to the Church at the Annual Meeting.
5. Any organization or individual connected with the Church requiring monetary assistance or other help should apply for and received sanction of the Deacons before issuing an appeal.

SEXUAL ORIENTATION REGULATIONS 2007

Marriage and homosexuality – the Members of the Church agreed in adopting these Rules that in the understanding and application of the statement in the Basis of Faith on the Bible the teaching of the Bible is that all extra-marital sexual practices are sinful and wrong. This includes homosexual practices (Romans 1:24-32; 1 Corinthians 6:9-11). The Bible also teaches that we must not be actively or passively complicit in sin (1 Corinthians 6:18-20; Ephesians 5:8-16; 1 Timothy 5:22) and that faith without works is dead (James 2:17). It is therefore part of our doctrine that in relation to any activities of this Church we must in no way condone, promote, assist or encourage homosexual practices.