

# Church Constitution

## CONSTITUTION OF THE SHELTER ROCK CHURCH

**Business Address: 626 Plandome Road, Manhasset NY 11030**

Revised July 5, 1967; Amended October 16, 1979, Revised October 12, 2001; April 9, 2003; April 20, 2004; April 19, 2005; June 10, 2012; December 16, 2012.

### **Article I: NAME**

This church shall be known as Shelter Rock Church, New York (Incorporated).

### **Article II**

#### **Section 1 – Principles and Doctrine**

WE BELIEVE that the Bible is God's Word, that it was written by men divinely inspired and that it is the supreme authority in all matters of faith and conduct. We believe the sixty-six books of the Old and New Testaments are God's complete and sufficient revelation and therefore carry God's authority for the total well-being of humanity.

WE BELIEVE in God the Father, perfect in holiness, infinite in wisdom, measureless in power. We rejoice that He concerns Himself mercifully in the affairs of men, that He hears and answers prayer, and that He saves from sin and death all who come to Him through Jesus Christ.

WE BELIEVE in Jesus Christ, the eternal and one and only Son of God, conceived of the Holy Spirit, of virgin birth, sinless in His life, making atonement for the sins of the world by His death. We believe in His bodily resurrection, His ascension and His visible return to the world according to His promise.

WE BELIEVE in the Holy Spirit who comes forth from God to convict the world of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment, and to regenerate, sanctify, and comfort those who believe in Jesus Christ.

WE BELIEVE that all people by nature and by choice are sinners but, by God's grace, that "God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life." We believe, therefore, that those who accept Christ as Lord and Savior will rejoice forever in God's presence and that those who refuse to accept Christ as Lord and Savior will be forever separated from Him.

WE BELIEVE in the church - a living spiritual body of which Christ is the Head and of which all born-again Believers are members. We believe that a visible church is a company of believers in Jesus Christ, and associated for worship, work, and fellowship. We believe that to these visible churches were committed, for perpetual observance, the ordinances of Baptism and the Lord's Supper, and that God has laid upon these churches the task of persuading a lost world to accept Jesus Christ as Savior, and to enthrone Him as Lord and Master. We believe that human betterment and social improvements are inevitable by-products of such a Gospel.

WE BELIEVE that every human being has direct relations with God and is responsible to God alone in all matters of faith; that the local church is independent and autonomous and must be free from interference by any ecclesiastical or political authority; that therefore Church and State must be kept separate, as having different functions, each fulfilling its duties free from the dictates or patronage of the other.

## **Section 2 – Church Covenant**

Having been led, as we believe by the Holy Spirit of God, to accept as our Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, in whose blood and righteousness alone we trust as the ground of our redemption; and having been buried with Him in baptism into the likeness of His death, and raised in the likeness of His resurrection, to walk in newness of life; and having thus been united to His visible Church; we do now most solemnly and joyfully enter into covenant with God and with one another as one body in Christ.

We solemnly promise and engage that, by the aid of the Holy Spirit, we will love one another as brothers and sisters in the Lord, and that we will exercise Christian care and watchfulness one for another, bearing one another's burdens and thus fulfilling the law of Christ.

We engage to maintain personal and family devotion, to search the Scriptures with all diligence, and to bring up our children in the training and instruction of the Lord.

We covenant that we will not forsake the assembling of ourselves together in the house of the Lord, but will regularly attend its services unless providentially hindered; that we will pray and labor for its prosperity, through its doctrines, its ordinances and its discipline; that we will earnestly and actively endeavor to lead as many people as possible into a joyful and growing relationship with Jesus Christ, realizing that apart from Him there is no hope and that He has left us in the world as His "ambassadors," in His Name to "seek and to save the lost".

We covenant that we will regularly and systematically give of our substance, as the Lord prospers us, for the support of an evangelical ministry amongst us, for the relief of the poor, and the spread of the Gospel in the whole world; that we will endeavor to walk circumspectly in the world; to be just in our dealings, faithful in our engagements and exemplary in our deportment; to remember each other in prayer; to comfort each other in sickness and distress; to cultivate Christian sympathy and courtesy; to be slow to take offense, ready for reconciliation, and mindful of the teaching of our Savior to secure it without delay.

Desiring the triumph of Christ above all earthly good, and joyfully hoping for His coming again in heavenly glory, we covenant that, by the help of His enabling Spirit, we will seek first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness, trusting Him to add unto us all temporal necessities and the fullness of Heavenly grace.

### **Article III: PURPOSE**

The purpose of this church is to fulfill and execute the vows contained in its covenant, worship God, obey the commands of our divine Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, and preach Him crucified, risen, exalted and coming again. We seek to lead as many people as possible into a joyful and growing relationship with Jesus Christ.

### **Article IV: MEMBERSHIP**

#### **Section 1 – Admission**

- A. Every candidate for admission to this church shall relate his or her Christian experience to the Pastor(s) and Board of Elders (henceforth referred to as 'the Elders') or their designated representatives and must agree to the Constitution of the church.
- B. The Pastor and Elders, having satisfied themselves that the candidate has repented of his or her sins, and that he or she is regenerated through faith in the shed blood of our Lord Jesus Christ, and that the candidate will seek by God's help to lead the Christian life, shall recommend that the candidate be received by the church into membership after baptism, unless previously baptized. The candidate shall then be requested to give his or her testimony before some open meeting of the church. Candidates may be received at any regular meeting of the church, as well as at any congregational meeting.

- C. Excluded members may be restored to membership on confession to the Elders of their sins and by giving satisfactory evidence of repentance.
- D. If any objection is made to the reception of a candidate, the case shall be referred to the Pastor and Elders, and after careful consideration has been given to the reasons for objection, they shall render a decision and report their action to the church for ratification.

### **Section 2 – Termination of Membership**

Membership may be terminated by death, by request of the member, or by exclusion.

### **Section 3 – Membership Roll**

The official Membership Roll of the church shall consist of an Active Membership List and an Inactive Membership List. Those members on the Inactive Membership list shall have no voice or vote at the congregational meetings of the church. The decision to change a member's status from active to inactive shall be made by the elders, based on the member's absence from the worshipping community for a period of a year.

- A. Additions to the Membership Roll may be revised by a two-thirds vote of the active members present, at any regular congregational meeting of the church, or at a special meeting called for that purpose.
- B. The Elders, with input from the Pastor(s), shall meet to take into full consideration the behavior of the church's members, their adherence to the Church Covenant, and their ability or inability to support the church. They shall assess which members need pastoral care, which should be removed from active to inactive status, and which should be removed from membership. Elders have authority to remove members from membership but must inform the congregation of any removals at the next regularly scheduled congregational meeting of the church.

### **Section 4 – Baptism**

Shelter Rock Church observes the ordinance of believers' baptism by immersion.

### **Section 5 – Marriage**

Shelter Rock Church believes that marriage is a sacred covenant ordained by God between a man and a woman. We believe that God established and recognizes this sacred union in accordance with the mandate of the Holy Scriptures. We cannot in good conscience support or endorse any view other than the biblical view of marriage found in the Bible. (Genesis 2:18-25; Matthew 19:3-6; Ephesians 5:31-32)

## **Article V: DISCIPLINE**

### **Section 1 – Subjects**

- A. Fellowship may be withdrawn from any member failing to fulfill the obligations and practices of the church Covenant and to uphold the church Constitution.
- B. Members failing either to attend the services of the church or to contribute according to their means to the church for a prolonged period without sufficient reason may be transferred from the Active to the Inactive list. If there is no response on the part of the inactive member within a period of three (3) months from the time of being placed upon the Inactive list, his or her name may be erased from the Membership Roll of the church. It shall be understood that no member will be placed on the Inactive list until a reasonable effort has been made on the part of the Pastor(s) or Elders to restore such a member to active interest in the church.

### **Section 2 – Methods**

In matters of discipline, the letter and spirit of the New Testament shall be strictly enforced and followed.

### **Section 3 – Restoration**

- A. Any member, excluded or stricken from the roll, on giving satisfactory evidence of repentance and reformation, may be restored to the Active membership provided he is first examined and approved by the Pastor and Elders and then presented to the church at a congregational meeting as having been restored.
- B. Members who have been transferred from the Active to the Inactive list may be restored to the Active Roll by the Elders upon proper evidence of their intention to fulfill their covenant obligation.

## **Article VI: OFFICERS**

### **Section 1 – Positions**

The officers of this church shall be the Senior Pastor, a Board of Elders (the number of each board shall be determined from time to time by the Elder Board), a Church Treasurer, and a Church Clerk. Obtaining office in this church, with the exception of the Senior Pastor, shall be contingent upon being an active member of the church.

### **Section 2 – Election**

- A. Pastor – The Senior Pastor, who must be ordained, shall be elected at a special meeting of the church called for that purpose by public notice given on two Sundays immediately preceding the date of the meeting, and two-thirds of the ballots cast shall be necessary for his election. He shall continue in office until he resigns or his resignation is requested by at least two-thirds of those present at a special meeting called for that purpose, of which two weeks' notice shall be given. He shall be given two months' notice of his resignation, if requested, and, in turn, he shall give two months' notice if he resigns.
- B. Elders – At a regular or special congregational meeting of the church Elders shall be elected by ballot for a term of three years. The term of office will commence immediately.
- C. Church Treasurer - The appointment of a Church Treasurer will be announced at the fall congregational meeting. The official term of office will commence immediately and last for a period of three years.
- D. Church Clerk - The appointment of a Church Clerk will be announced at the fall congregational meeting. The official term of office will commence immediately and last for a period of three years.
- E. Calling a New Senior Pastor - Upon a Senior Pastor's resignation or release, the Elders, at their discretion, may determine that a current pastor of Shelter Rock Church is prepared to be the next Senior Pastor. If this is the case they may place his name before a specially called congregational meeting requiring approval of at least two-thirds of those present. If the Elders determine that no such pastor is available at the church, the Elders shall appoint a Search Committee consisting of at least five members in good standing, at least two of them Elders. After the Search Committee has found a candidate, the candidate shall be accepted contingent on the approval of the Elders and then a two-thirds vote by those congregational members who are present.

### **Section 3 – Duties**

- A. Pastor - It shall be the duty of the Senior Pastor to see that Biblically based messages are regularly preached to the church; and to see that he (and any ministry staff) give themselves to prayer and the ministry of the Word; to see that the ordinances of the church are regularly administered; to designate a moderator for the transaction of business at congregational meetings, unless otherwise decided by the members present; to appoint all committees and delegates whose appointment is not otherwise provided for; to see that congregants are called upon who are sick or in spiritual need, and to perform such other duties as are incumbent upon his office. It shall be the responsibility of the Senior Pastor to hire employees or to delegate their hiring through other staff members in

consultation with the Elders. It shall also be the responsibility of the Senior Pastor to establish staff employment policies (standards, sick time, vacation time, etc.) in consultation with the Elders. The Pastor shall be a member ex-officio of all committees and boards of the church.

- B. Elders – The Elders will be men of Unquestionable Integrity, Gracious Disposition, and Temperate Personality, who are Faithful Teachers and Amiable Friends, with Honorable Families. These qualifications are further defined in the Scriptures (see particularly 1 Timothy 3:12-15, 1 Timothy 2:12, Titus 1:5-9, 1 Timothy 5:17-20, 1 Peter 5:1-5, and Acts 15:1-35). Their responsibilities include Leadership and Oversight of the church, Managing the Finances and Facilities, Teaching and Instructing, Overseeing Priestly Functions (Communion, worship, prayer, anointing with oil, etc.), and Protecting and Caring for the congregation. To assist them in carrying out their responsibilities, they may delegate tasks to individuals who are capable, trustworthy and spiritually mature.

For legal purposes, the Elders will function as the trustees in accordance with the religious corporations laws of the State of New York, Article 7. The Elders will be presented by the Nominating Committee, approved by the current Elders and voted in by a two thirds majority of the church membership.

- C. Treasurer – The Church Treasurer shall have responsibility for the financial integrity of all the church funds and shall oversee disbursements of same as authorized by the church through the Board of Elders and the church staff through approved budgets. The Treasurer shall exercise general supervision over the regular and special offerings. At the expiration of the treasurer's term, he or she shall turn over to his or her successor in office all property of the church under his or her control. The Church Treasurer is appointed by the Elders.
- D. Church Clerk – The Church Clerk shall keep a correct record of the Congregational meetings of the church; The Church clerk is appointed by the Elders. At the expiration of his or her term, he or she shall turn over to this successor all property of the church under his or her control.

## **Article VII: MEETINGS**

### **Section 1 - Public Worship**

The primary meetings of this church for public worship shall be on Sundays. The Senior Pastor, and/or Elders, shall also see that other meetings will regularly occur including, but not limited to, "community groups," prayer meetings, and educational classes for members of various age groups.

### **Section 2 – Congregational Meetings**

Regular meetings for the transaction of the business of the church shall be held semi-annually in fall and spring. Special congregational meetings may be called by the Elders and may also be called at the written request of ten members who have previously presented their concerns to the Elders, providing said meeting has been announced two Sundays immediately preceding the date proposed. The minutes of the previous congregational meeting shall be posted in a visible location two weeks prior to the upcoming congregational meeting and shall be made available upon request.

### **Section 3 – Annual Congregational Meetings**

The Annual Meeting of the church for the transaction of the annual business of the church shall be held in the fall.

### **Section 4 – Order of Business**

The content of all congregational meetings shall be determined by the Senior Pastor and Elders and may include:

1. Scripture reflection
2. Reading of Minutes
3. Report of the Nominating Committee

4. Election of Officers
5. Unfinished business
6. New business
7. Various reports
8. Voting for and receiving of new members
9. Adjournment

The Elders and Senior Pastor shall see to it that the congregational meetings be conducted in a spirit of worship and prayer and the outflowing of the fruits of the Spirit (Acts 13, Gal. 5:22)

#### **Section 5 – Rules of Order**

The business of the church and the duties of all the officers shall be conducted in accordance with this Constitution. In matters not expressly covered by this constitution they shall be handled in accordance with New Testament principles. At the request of the Senior Pastor or Elders, or by a majority congregational request, Robert's Rules of Order may be applied.

#### **Section 6 – Quorum**

Ten percent of the active membership shall constitute a quorum. A quorum is necessary to transact any matters regarding the church.

#### **Section 7 – Covenant Reading**

The reading of the Covenant by the members of the church shall be included in the public worship meetings of the church at such times as designated by the Pastor and Board of Elders.

#### **Section 8 – The Lord's Supper**

The ordinance of the Lord's Supper shall be regularly observed, minimally once a month.

#### **Section 9 – Presiding Officer**

Each congregational meeting shall be moderated by the Senior Pastor or someone designated by him. If neither the Senior Pastor nor a moderator designated by him is present, the church shall elect a moderator nominated by the elders.

#### **Section 10 – Question of Order**

All matters of business shall be determined by a majority of votes except where explicitly defined by this constitution as requiring a higher percentage. The votes of two-thirds of the active members present at any regularly called meeting shall decide all questions of order.

### **Article VIII: FINANCES**

#### **Section 1 – Current Expenses**

It is the duty of every member of this church to faithfully financially support the ministries of the church

#### **Section 2 – Various special funds**

Contributions for various special funds may be designated as a part of one's offering.

### **Article IX: MISSIONS**

It is our goal that at least ten percent of the money received for the general budget of the church shall be given to missions.

### **Article X: COMMITTEES**

There shall be a Nominating Committee, Auditing Committee and Missionary Committee. The Nominating Committee shall be nominated by the Elders and affirmed by the congregation at the fall meeting, for a three-year term. The Auditing and Missionary Committees shall be appointed by the Elders. The official term of office will commence on the day of election. Other committees may be formed at the discretion of the Elders.

## **Section 1 – Nominating Committee**

The Nominating Committee shall gather names for elected church positions and present those names to the Elders for evaluation, approval, and final presentation to the congregation for vote.

### *Formation of Nominating Committee*

The Nominating Committee shall be comprised of at least five Shelter Rock Church members who are consistent in their church attendance, well respected members in good standing within the church and who are acquainted with members involved in ministry. Of these, one shall be a current Elder. Before the nominating positions are filled, the congregation can submit recommendations to the Elders in writing at or before the spring meeting. The Senior Pastor or the appointed Elder shall be responsible for calling the first meeting, at which time a chairperson shall be elected by the committee. The Senior Pastor shall serve as an ex-officio member of the committee.

### *Procedure for nomination and election of elected positions*

1. The Elders will nominate the Nominating Committee to be voted on by the congregation.
2. The Nominating Committee shall solicit and accept names for potential candidates from the congregation at large, staff, and other Shelter Rock Church leaders.
3. The Nominating Committee shall thoroughly discuss those names under consideration. The Elder on the committee may at this time indicate any persons not ready to hold office.
4. Once the Nominating Committee members agree with the nomination(s), the committee shall then present names to the Elders.
5. All nominations must be presented to the Elders through the Nominating Committee.
6. If the Elders agree with nominations, the Nominating Committee will then contact nominees and ascertain their willingness to serve.
7. At the annual congregational meeting, names of nominees who have agreed to serve shall be presented by the Elders to the church for approval. In the event a mid-year election is deemed necessary by the Elders, the presentation of name(s) may be made to the congregation and voted on during a properly noticed regular or special congregational meeting.
8. All nominations for Elder receiving at least a two-thirds majority vote shall assume office. All other nominations receiving a majority vote shall assume office.

## **Section 2 – Auditing Committee**

The Auditing Committee shall consist of two members of the church who shall see that the books of the church are audited annually.

## **Section 3 – Missions Committee**

The Missionary Committee shall consist of at least three members of the church, and shall help to procure missionary speakers, assist in any missionary conferences of the church, and assign, with Elder oversight, an Annual Missions Disbursement Budget, for approval by the church as part of the annual church budget. This committee is appointed by the Elders.

## **Article XI: GENERAL**

No societies or subsidiary organizations, the membership of which shall be constituted wholly or in part of members of the church, shall use the name of the church in any manner designated to further their object without first having secured the approval of the Elders or their staff designates. Time and nature of stated meetings will be arranged at the time of authorization.

## **Article XII: AMENDMENTS**

This Constitution may be amended, altered or revised at any regular congregational meeting of the church, or at a special meeting called for the purpose, by a two-thirds vote of the members present, provided notice of the proposed amendment has been given in writing at a church service on two Sundays at least two weeks prior to action thereon.

### **Article XIII: DISSOLUTION**

This church, in accordance with the Articles of this constitution, commits its continued existence and fellowship to our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, until He comes to receive His own. If and when, under the providence of God, such circumstances may arise that stand irrevocably in the way of the continuation of this commitment, a resolution calling for the dissolution of this church may be entertained at a congregational meeting of the church. Said meeting shall be held in accordance with Article VII, meetings notice for which shall be made in accordance with the notification procedures of Article XII, Amendments, including written justification for the dissolution given in terms of the applicable Articles of this constitution. Approval of the resolution for dissolution shall be contingent upon the justified determination, in accordance with the approval procedures of Article XII, Amendments, to execute the Dissolution Clause stated below under the supervision of the Officers of the church as prescribed by Article VI, Officers: to wit:

Upon approval of the resolution calling for the dissolution of the said corporate body, and in accordance with a schedule specified by the resolution for dissolution, all assets of the church shall be converted to cash, for the purpose of liquidating any outstanding debts of the corporate church body. Upon payment of said debts, the remaining members of the church, by a two-thirds vote of such members present, shall either transfer the remaining assets to a church of like faith and practice as part of a merger with said church or shall distribute the remaining assets proportionately to the three or more surviving missionary organizations which represent, at the time of dissolution, the majority portion of missionary giving of the said corporate body during the preceding ten-year period; distribution of assets to be made in shares proportionate to that which was received by each during the said ten-year period; and, No member of record, or prior member, or relative of a member, either present or prior, may receive any share of the assets of the corporation upon dissolution, except by reason of bona fide claim for payment of debt owed by the corporation to said member; and, A written report summarizing the dissolution activities, including disposition of all church records, shall be prepared and distributed to all members of record as of the time of adoption of the resolution of dissolution.

This Dissolution Clause accepted and passed pursuant to the vote of the general membership, at a duly called special corporate meeting, held on October 16, 1979, for the purpose of amending the Constitution by the addition of Article XIII.