

# PROPOSED DOCTRINAL STATEMENT, CHURCH COVENANT, & CONSTITUTION: September 3, 2008

## *Features of the proposed constitution...*

**Elder-led with congregational accountability.** *This means the congregation will have final say in matters related to the selection of a Lead Pastor, cases of church discipline, and selection/reaffirmation of all elders, while the elders will be responsible for general oversight of the church—especially the ministry of the word and prayer.*

**Partnership.** *We have chosen to use the word “partner” to describe those who join the church instead of the traditional “member.” This highlights our understanding of a shared responsibility in mission as opposed to simply being part of a club. Partnership is renewed at the beginning of each year to avoid inactive “members.”*

**Relational commitments.** *As part of our partnership commitment, we will agree to the relational commitments recommended by Peacemakers. These commitments will describe how church partners and leaders are to relate to one another within the church, provide a clear track to follow if ever conflict should threaten to divide us, and demonstrate the steps that will be taken to move quickly toward reconciliation. They will also establish guidelines on counseling others, guarding confidential information, and protecting children from abuse.*

**Affiliation and strategic alliances.** *One of the lessons learned in the previous church is the great advantage of being formally associated with other like-minded churches. These groups can be of particular benefit whenever there are irresolvable disputes within a congregation. We are a church plant of an inter-denominational network called Vision 360 and affiliated with a group of churches known as Converge Worldwide. It is our intention to multiply ourselves through planting other churches. We will always remain an autonomous congregation.*

*The elders of CCC: Gregg Heinsch, Richard Starr, Rick Hicks, and Jeff Baker.*

## **The Community Church at Celebration, Inc. (CCC)**

### **Doctrinal Statement:**

**1. The Word of God** - The Bible is God’s Word to us. It tells us of God’s initiative to rescue us from sin and its consequences through His Son, Jesus Christ. He is the key to the interpretation of the whole Bible. The Holy Spirit of God directed human authors to write down just what He wanted. When the Bible was originally written, it was without error. The Bible is true and trustworthy, telling us everything we need to know to please God and find meaning and fulfillment. It is the highest authority for everything we believe and do. (Mk 13:31; Jn 8:31-32; Acts 20:32; 2 Tim 3:16-17; 2 Pet 1:20-21)

**2. The Trinity** - There is only one true God, and God simultaneously exists in three persons. The Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit are equally deserving of worship and honor. The three persons of the Trinity have distinct, but complimentary roles in the fulfillment of God’s perfect plan. (Gen 1:1,26; Deut. 6:4; Matt 28:19; Jn 1:1,3; 4:24; Rom 1:19-20; Eph 4:5-6)

**3. The Father** - The Father is the first person of the Trinity. He is infinite (having no beginning or end) and knows all things (past, present, and future), yet He wants to interact with you on a personal level. The Father is perfect in every quality and virtue. He has the power and integrity to keep all of His promises. (Mt 23:9; Lk 10:21-22; Jn 3:16; 6:27; Rom 1:7; 1 Tim 1:1-2; 2:5-6; 1 Pet 1:3; Rev 1:6)

**4. The Son, Jesus Christ** - Jesus is the second person of the Trinity. He is the unique Son of God who always existed with the Father. Jesus entered human history: God became man, was born to Mary while she was still a virgin, and had no original sin. He then lived his entire life free from any sin. He performed miracles and taught with authority, giving evidence of His position in the Trinity. Jesus was murdered by being nailed to a cross. He died willingly and His blood provides the perfect and only sacrifice for sin. Jesus was buried in a tomb. On the third day after His death He came back to life, demonstrating that His sacrifice for sin on our behalf was accepted by the Father. Jesus returned to heaven and is our advocate in the presence of the Father. (Mt 1:18-25; 20:28; Lk 1:26-38; Jn 1:1; 20:28,30-31; Acts 1:11; Rom 5:6-8; 6:9-10; 2 Cor 5:21; Eph 1:4-5; 1 Pet 2:21-24; Heb 7:25; 9:28)

**5. The Holy Spirit** - The Holy Spirit is the third person of the Trinity. He is the One who shows people how they violate God's standard of perfection. He shows them what is good and right and lets them know there will some day be a judgment. He gives God's people spiritual life and special abilities for service. The Holy Spirit lives in every person who has their sins forgiven by Jesus Christ. He is consistent in His help, teaching and causing people to change from the inside out until they are just like Jesus. (Jn 3:6-8; 14:14-26; 15:26-27; 16:7-14; Rom 8:8, 13-14, 26-29; 12:4-8; 1 Cor 3:16; 6:11,19; 12:1-31; 2 Cor 3:16-18; Gal 4:29; 5:18; Eph 3:16; 4:1-13; 2 Th 2:13; 2 Tim 1:7; Tit 3:5; Rom 15:16)

**6. Spiritual Birth** - Every person has broken God's standard of perfection. Every person has sinned. We have chosen to do things that are wrong and we have inherited an inner nature from our forefathers that has been in rebellion against God since the first person, Adam. Sin requires death which is why Jesus died on the cross. Jesus gave His own blood to provide the only way of forgiveness. When the Holy Spirit convinces a person that they are guilty and that the blood of Jesus Christ is the only satisfactory payment for sin, He also gives the power to turn from sin and trust Jesus Christ for new life, bringing that person into God's family forever. We believe those who have turned from their sin and trusted Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord have new and eternal life. (Gen 1:26; 2:17; 3:19; 5:2; Psa 51:7; Prov 28:13; Ecc 2:11; Jer 17:9; Jn 1:12-13; 3:14; 5:24,30; 8:12; 10:26-28; 16:8; Rom 3:19-20; 5:19; 8:1-17; 9:14-24; 2 Cor 5:17; 2 Th 1:9; 2:13; Tit 3:5-7; 1 Jn 1:9; Jam 1:14; Rev 21:1-8)

**7. The Church** - The Church is people and includes everyone who has experienced this spiritual birth. Followers of Jesus Christ also come together to form local churches that worship, serve and grow together. We grow in relationship to God through the study and application of His Word, which also leads us to love one another. Jesus is Head of the Church. The Church is to do the things Jesus gave us to do and help others learn about the Good News of forgiveness and life in Jesus Christ. (Acts 1:8; 2:41-42; Eph 2:19-22; 5:19-21; Col 1:18; Heb 10:23-25)

**8. How Christians should live** - Christians have the privilege of living free of the control of sin that had us trapped before the Holy Spirit gave us new life. We can now make progress in living in a way that pleases God, maintains our freedom and lets others know God does change lives! It is for our best that we learn to live what the Bible teaches. As we grow we will see God changing our character to be more like the character of Jesus. People around us will see that God real and that He is good. (Jn 14:15, 23-24; Rom 12:1-2; 1 Cor 10:31; 2 Cor 9:6-13; Eph 4:13; Col 1:9-10, 28; Heb 12:1-2; 1 Jn 2:3-6; 4:7-12; 1 Th 4:1)

**9. Two practices Jesus gave the church** - Jesus gave the church two practices that remind us and show others what God has done for His people in the Gospel: baptism and the Lord's Supper. Though practicing them does not make you more acceptable to God, when celebrated by the church in genuine faith, they confirm and nourish the believer. We know that Christians disagree on when and how people should be baptized, but our practice will be to baptize by immersion those who profess personal faith in Jesus Christ. (Mt 28:18-20; Acts 2:38-42; 8:36-39; Rom 6:1-11; Mt 26:26-29; Mk 14:22-25; Lk 22:17-20; 1 Cor 10:16-17; 11:23-26; 1 Pet 3:21)

**10. We have been given freedom and responsibility** - When a person comes to faith in Jesus Christ, the Holy Spirit lives in that person and will teach him/her according to the Bible. Each person can speak and relate directly to God and is accountable to God. The local church also has freedom and accountability before God and is to be controlled solely by the authority of Jesus Christ (not denominational or political authorities). (Acts 5:29; 20:28-32; Rom 14:7-9; 1 Cor 3:16; 6:19-20; Eph 2:20-22; 2 Cor 3:7-18; Col 1:18; 1 Tim 2:5)

**11. The end of time** - Some day soon Jesus Christ will make a bodily return to the earth to set up His kingdom. Every person who has ever lived will be brought before God for a final judgment. Those who have not come to faith in Jesus Christ will spend eternity in Hell, separated from God's loving favor where there is nothing but evil and endless suffering. Those who have experienced spiritual birth (see #6) will live in the joyous presence of God forever. (Mt 16:27; Mk 14:62; Jn 14:3; Acts 1:11; 1 Cor 4:5; 15:20-24,35-58; Phil 3:20; 1 Th 4:14-18; 2 Th 1:6-10; 2 Tim 4:1; Tit 2:13; Rev 20:4-15)

## Church Covenant

Having been led, as we believe, by the Spirit of God, to receive the Lord Jesus Christ as our Savior, we do now, in the presence of God and this assembly, most solemnly and joyfully enter into covenant with one another as one body in Christ.

We pledge, therefore, by the aid of the Holy Spirit, to walk together in Christian love, to strive for the advancement of this church in knowledge, holiness, and faith; to promote its well-being and spiritual maturity; to sustain its worship, ordinances, discipline, and doctrines; to contribute cheerfully and regularly, in the measure that God prospers each of us, to the support of the ministry, the expenses of the church, the relief of the poor, and the spread of the Gospel throughout all nations.

We also pledge to maintain family and private devotions; to teach our children the Christian truths; to seek the salvation of our family and friends; to walk with discernment in the world; to be just in our dealings, faithful in our engagements, a godly example in our behavior, and zealous in our efforts to advance the Kingdom of our Savior.

We further pledge to watch over one another in brotherly love; to remember each other in prayer; to aid each other in sickness and distress; to cultivate sympathy in feeling and courtesy in speech; to seek God's help in avoiding anything that might harm our own or another's faith; to be slow to take offense but always ready for reconciliation and to seek it without delay.

We moreover pledge as individuals that when we move from this community, we will seek out some other church where we can carry out the spirit of this covenant and the principles of God's Word.

## **Constitution**

### **Article 1 - The Name**

The name of this church shall be The Community Church at Celebration, Inc. (CCC) located in or near Celebration, Florida.

### **Article 2 - The Purpose**

CCC exists to make more and better disciples of Jesus Christ.

### **Article 3 - The Criteria for Partnership**

Partnership shall be open to anyone who is personally trusting Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord, and who is in agreement with our statement of faith, church covenant, relational commitments, and constitution.

### **Article 4 - Procedure for Admission to Partnership**

Those meeting the above criteria for partnership, may become partners of CCC through the following procedure:

- A. Demonstration of regular worship attendance and consistent participation in the life and ministry of CCC.
- B. Completion of a New Partners Class (or a meeting with one or more elders). From time to time partnership classes will be offered to provide teaching on our statement of faith, partnership expectations, and principles of church government.

- C. Personal Interviews. Following attendance at partnership classes, individuals desiring to become partners shall meet with an elder or appointed leader to verbalize their personal testimony, to determine the integrity of their faith, and desire to be committed to CCC as a local body of believers.
- D. Signed Statement of Commitment. A signed Statement of Commitment shall confirm an individual's desire for partnership and to serve as a formal record of partnership.
- E. The candidate's partnership shall become effective upon a simple majority vote by the current partners.
- F. Renewal of Partnership - Annually each partner shall sign a statement of commitment to reaffirm his/her continued desire for partnership. In the event that a statement of commitment remains unsigned for a period of three months, partnership will be considered inactive. The process for reinstatement shall be the same as the procedure for admission to partnership.

#### **Article 5 – Annual Meeting and Fiscal Year**

An annual meeting of the CCC partners shall be held in the first quarter of each year for the purpose of informing the congregation of ministry concerns and priorities for the coming year. The fiscal year of the church shall be January 1 – December 31 inclusive.

#### **Article 6 – Discipline of Partners**

- A. Personal Grievances. Whenever partners have a grievance, the persons involved shall follow the rules set forth in Matthew 18. If this procedure does not lead to reconciliation, the issue(s) shall be submitted in writing to the Board of Elders and persons directly involved for consideration. Counsel will be given and appropriate church action, if necessary. (see Gal. 6:1; 1 Cor. 6:8)
- B. Unchristian Behavior and Other Discipline Cases. Each partner will be encouraged to maintain his/her Christian obligations as stated in the church covenant. When the actions of a partner in any of these areas are determined to be detrimental to the church or any other partner, the matter shall be considered by the Board of Elders or person(s) appointed by the elders. Such consideration shall include confidential inquiry, counsel to the partner(s) and recommendation to the church for appropriate action, if necessary. The spirit of this inquiry and counsel is to be supportive and expressive of the acceptance, help, and forgiveness of the church. If the partner responds favorably to the inquiry, demonstrating acceptance of forgiveness through repentance (change of life), no report to the church shall be necessary and the matter shall be considered closed, except that counsel may continue to be given as needed. Should the partner fail to respond to the inquiry or fail to demonstrate the acceptance of forgiveness through repentance, the Board of Elders shall recommend to the church that his/her name be removed from partnership. If possible the partner

must be notified of the meeting and given the privilege of speaking on his/her own behalf. Upon evidence of restoration to the faith and/or the church, a dismissed partner may be reinstated through the regular procedure for admission.

## **Article 7 - Selection of Elders**

While sharing equally in the blessings of salvation, men and women are given distinctive, complementary roles by God as part of the created order. The primary teaching ministry and governing authority of the local church is to be entrusted to men who meet the standards of godliness and maturity described in 1 Timothy 3 and Titus 1. This designation is not a matter of giftedness or ability but the sovereign design of God (1 Tim 2:12-13). The following steps shall be followed in the selection of elders:

- A. The name of any potential elder candidate who is a partner in good standing, senses God's call, and meets the standards of 1 Timothy 3 and Titus 1, may be placed before the Elder Board by any partner of the congregation.
- B. At least two representatives of the elders will interview the candidate to provide an initial determination of whether his desire, qualifications, calling, gift mix, and personality will strengthen and compliment the Elder Board.
- C. If the candidate is approved for consideration, his name will be submitted to the entire Elder Board. Upon the unanimous agreement of the Elder Board, the candidate will be announced to the congregation as an elder apprentice and will begin an apprenticeship of not less than 6 months or more than one year. The apprentice will be assigned to serve alongside one of the elders who will coach, guide, evaluate, and encourage him.
- D. At the beginning of the apprenticeship, the name will be presented to the congregation at any regular worship service. The congregation should observe, encourage, and evaluate the apprentice's suitability to serve in the office of elder throughout the apprenticeship.
- E. If after the apprenticeship the apprentice still believes God is calling him to serve as an elder and upon a unanimous confirmation of the Elder Board, the apprentice's name will be announced to the congregation as a nominee to the office of elder. Any partner of the congregation may present concerns of the nominee's suitability to the elders for a period of thirty days following nomination.
- F. If concerns are raised, issues will be evaluated by the elders in light of 1 Tim. 3:2-7 and Tit. 1:6-9.
- G. Following the thirty-day nomination period, with all concerns resolved, the name of the nominee will be considered by the Elder Board.
- H. Upon unanimous confirmation of the Elder Board, the nominee shall be

presented to the partners of the congregation for approval. The nominee must receive at least three-fourths majority vote for approval.

- I. This process may be discontinued at any point by the candidate, or by unanimous agreement of the Elder Board.

### **Article 8 - Terms of Elders**

Since the Bible indicates no fixed term for elders, no specific fixed term of office is recommended. Instead, each elder, upon appointment, will be subject to review, recommitment, and re-affirmation by the congregation each year at the annual meeting. Those elders who renew their annual commitment and receive at least a three-fourths majority vote of affirmation from eligible partners present at the annual meeting are approved for another year of service.

An individual's service as an elder may be discontinued by his own decision or a unanimous vote of all remaining elders. The decision of an elder to leave the Elder Board would not preclude his service as a future elder, subject to the regular elder selection process (except for apprenticeship requirements).

If, at any time, it is confirmed by two or three witnesses (1 Tim 5:19-20) that an elder is involved in sin that would disqualify him from office according to 1 Timothy 3 or Titus 1, he will be publicly rebuked and removed from office as soon as the Elder Board becomes satisfied the charges are true. It is the intention of the church that a sinning brother be restored in his relationship to the Lord and the church family. Any elder who is removed from office due to sin cannot be a candidate for elder for a period of at least five years. It is most critical that a meaningful relationship with the Lord, a godly lifestyle, and the confidence of the church family be restored.

### **Article 9 - Role of Elders**

Elders are charged with the biblical responsibility of the oversight of the church. All policy, staff, budgeting and ministry plans are ultimately the responsibility of the Elder Board. The Elder Board may appoint individuals or special teams for limited periods of service to complete assigned tasks when the board determines delegation to be the most appropriate method.

The Elders shall determine and approve the annual financial budgets of the church or any changes in or additions to such budgets; authorize any expenditure of the funds by the church Treasurer for any purpose when such an expenditure is not covered by an accepted budget. The Elders shall encourage input from the congregation regarding budgetary needs while keeping them informed of budgetary priorities and financial needs. At least once a year, the Elders shall have a review of the church financial records conducted by someone from outside the congregation.

### **Article 10 - Role of Deacon/Deaconess**

The deacon/deaconess may serve a wide variety of practical tasks within the church family as directed by the Elder Board. The prototype of the deacon ministry is found in Acts 6:1-7. Biblical qualifications for deacons/deaconesses are found in 1 Timothy 3:8-13.

### **Article 11 - Ministry Staff**

The elders shall be responsible for the oversight of ministry staff, including staff selection and dismissal, when necessary. Each ministry staff member will be accountable to one supervisor. The roles and job descriptions for staff members require approval of their immediate supervisor and the elders. Staff salaries shall be determined annually by the Elder Board.

### **Article 12 - The Role of the Lead Pastor**

Consistent with the New Testament teaching regarding spiritual gifts, it is evident that the Lead Pastor, like any partner of the body, is uniquely gifted and should seek to serve within his gift area. (Eph. 4:11ff; 1 Cor. 12)

In addition to his shepherding role as an elder, the Lead Pastor is primarily to be a teacher of the Word of God, the Bible. He is to teach and exhort with words and by example. His goal is to help bring people to maturity of faith through insightful and accurate presentation and proclamation of the Bible, equipping them to be the true ministers of the body. As a teacher he must stress both the understanding and the application of God's Word.

The Lead Pastor should not be responsible to serve in areas unrelated to his primary function as a teaching elder and should maintain a proper balance of prayer, teaching, shepherding and leadership.

As shepherds of the church, it is one of the roles of the elders to appoint other leaders with complementary gifts to undertake areas and aspects of the ministry that cannot and/or should not be filled by the Lead Pastor.

In the case of irresolvable differences between the Lead Pastor and/or Elders, the District Executive Minister of Converge Southeast shall be invited to help facilitate resolution of the disagreement.

### **Article 13 - Selection of the Lead Pastor**

In the event of vacancy in the office of Lead Pastor, the elders shall be responsible to conduct a search for candidates to fill the position.

Once the elders have selected a candidate, evaluated and approved him according to the elder qualifications of 1 Timothy 3 and Titus 1, he will be presented to the congregation as a nominee for the office of Lead Pastor. No candidate may be presented to the congregation who has not first been closely evaluated and approved

by the Elder Board. A suitable process of exposure and evaluation by the congregation will be developed by the Elder Board. At the conclusion of the congregational evaluation, a three-fourths majority vote of the partnership in attendance at a meeting called for that purpose, will be required for approval and appointment.

Notice will be given to all partners at least two weeks prior to a meeting to be held for the purpose of voting on a Lead Pastor. It should be understood that a congregational vote does not constitute a call from God but gives indication of a desire and willingness to follow the leadership of this man and affirms his role as an elder.

#### **Article 14 – Dismissal of the Lead Pastor**

A call for dismissal of the Lead Pastor must be recommended by at least three-fourths of the Elders and shall require the affirmative vote of at least three-fourths of the church partners present and voting at a regular or special meeting called for that purpose. Notice of the time, place, and purpose of such meeting shall be given by letter from the Elders to all church partners at least two weeks prior to the meeting date. Upon termination, the Lead Pastor may receive appropriate severance pay as determined by the Elders.

#### **Article 15 – Indemnification Statement**

CCC will indemnify any and all persons who may serve or who have served at any time as a Pastor, Associate Pastor, or in another executive level staff position in the church, as a church officer or partner of a church board or committee, as a youth leader for a church youth organization, or as a teacher or counselor of the church elected or appointed by the church of any board or committee of the church, against any and all expenses, including amounts paid upon judgments, counsel fees, and amounts paid in settlement (before or after suit is commenced) actually and necessarily incurred by such persons in connection with the defense or settlement of any claim, action, suit, or proceeding in which they, or any of them, are made parties, or a party, or which may be asserted against any such person be adjudged in any action, suit, or proceeding to be liable for duties. Such indemnification will be in addition to any other rights to which those indemnified may be entitled under any law, bylaw, agreement, or otherwise.

#### **Article 16 - Property Acquisition and Disposition**

The Elder Board is responsible to guide the process of property acquisition and disposition. Prior to making any legal agreement to purchase or sell real property, the elders are required to present the proposal to the partners. A majority vote of the partners present will be required for approval of acquisition or disposition. In the event God should lead CCC to disband, the Elder Board will present the recommendation to the partners with a proposal to use any remaining assets to further the purpose of CCC in church planting.

#### **Article 17 - Procedure for Amendment**

This document was drafted by faithful but fallible people. Should the Spirit of God point out the need to revise this document in any way, the Elder Board will present suggested revisions to the partnership of this body for ratification by majority vote of the partners present at a meeting called for that purpose. Notice of the meeting will be given to all partners at least two weeks in advance.

Minor revisions not effecting change in the theology, ministry philosophy or overall structure and government shall be made at the discretion of the elders (i.e. grammar, clarification of ideas considered confusing, added Scriptural support, etc.)

### **Article 18 - Statement of Cooperation and Partnerships**

Planting new churches that seek the transformation of their communities through the Gospel of Jesus Christ is a primary method God has chosen to advance the kingdom of His Son and thus change the world. Therefore CCC is committed to partnering with Vision 360. Vision 360 is a multi-denominational church planting movement seeking to saturate influential and rapidly growing cities across America with impacting churches.

In order to further accomplish what Jesus has given us to do, we network with other churches of similar doctrine and objectives through an association of churches. Our local church is voluntarily a part of Converge Worldwide and Converge Southeast. If it ever becomes necessary CCC may withdraw from the conference at the discretion of the Elder Board. This association exists and functions to help local churches make more and better followers of Jesus Christ. We also join with independent churches and churches of other denominations when we believe this relationship will help us do what God wants us to do. (Acts 15:36,41; 16:5; 1 Cor 16:1; Gal 1:1-3; Rev 1:4,10-11)