

# **COMMON GROUND FELLOWSHIP**

## **Bristol, Tennessee/Virginia**

CONSTITUTION & BYLAWS  
Adopted December 16, 2012

### **CONSTITUTION**

#### **PREAMBLE**

For the purpose of affirming, preserving, and making secure the principles and liberties of our faith and to the end that this body be governed in an orderly manner, in partnership with bodies approved by the congregation, we do declare and establish this constitution.

#### **ARTICLE I - NAME**

This body shall be known as Common Ground Fellowship of Bristol, Tennessee/Virginia.

#### **ARTICLE II - PURPOSES AND OBJECTIVES**

- Common Ground Fellowship and its members seek to be servants of Christ, ministering to the total needs of people and firmly stating that the fellowship will be open to all and closed to none, a progressive fellowship that embraces diversity.
- We seek to cooperate in the global witness to Christ by meeting needs in Bristol and beyond. We seek to minister through our own efforts, partner with other community, church, and faith-based groups, and give financially to provide food, water, clothing, and justice for the needy, care for the sick and mercy for those in bondage.
- We seek to increase the joy and celebration of life through a variety of worship, educational, and learning experiences designed to enable the individual, the family, and the church to grow in faith through their journey with Christ.
- We seek to create a ministering congregation where each individual is a responsible minister, committed to financial discipleship, and committed to a personal commitment of time and energy to ministries as an embodiment of stewardship.
- We seek to be a fellowship of acceptance and forgiveness, where each one learns the discipline of “agape” love and the joy of bearing one another’s burdens and caring for each other, and where each can discover his/her gifts and talents and help others do the same.
- We seek to reflect Jesus Christ and point others toward the love and grace of God.

#### **ARTICLE III - CONFESSIONS OF FAITH**

- We believe in God, who like a trustworthy and health-giving parent, is near to us and strong to help us.
- We believe in Jesus Christ, in whom we see God; He is for us the way of truth and life.
- We believe in the Holy Spirit, whose life is in us, giving us new life and healing strength for our souls.

- We believe God created the world, creates humankind in God’s own image, and desires to engage humanity in spiritual relationships that lead to the ways of love, liberty and the fullness of life.
- We believe the church is a community of individuals who confess Jesus as Lord and who place their faith and trust in God as revealed in scripture, history, and contemporary experience. As Christians, we are called, nourished, and empowered by the Holy Spirit to be a community of love and servanthood.
- We believe God is present, speaking to us through prayer, the Bible, other people, and creation.
- We believe in the forgiveness of sin. We believe in the reconciling power of God in each life and in the world. We believe that humanity is meant to participate in God’s Kingdom work of bringing peace and hope, justice and equality, the relief of suffering and pain, and the final triumph of love and grace.
- Beyond these shared values and beliefs, a great diversity of personal faith, beliefs, and values are found and treasured within our community. We expect no conformity to any creed, and we affirm the priesthood of every believer.

#### **ARTICLE IV – GOVERNANCE**

Common Ground Fellowship shall be governed by the membership in Church Conference in accordance with the Bylaws.

#### **ARTICLE VI – RELATIONSHIPS WITH OTHER ORGANIZATIONS**

Common Ground Fellowship shall partner with the American Baptist Churches, USA and other groups with shared goals and values.

#### **ARTICLE VII – AMENDMENTS**

This Constitution may be amended/revised by the following procedure:

1. The proposed amendment/revision must be offered in writing at a previous Church Conference.
2. The proposed amendment/revision must be published to all members following the Church Conference at which it was offered. This communication must be accomplished at least two weeks prior to the meeting during which the amendment will be offered for a vote.
3. The Constitution may be amended/revised by a two-thirds majority vote of the Church Conference.

## BYLAWS

### ARTICLE I - CHURCH MEMBERSHIP

#### Paths to Membership:

- All persons who have accepted Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior are eligible for membership.
- All persons desiring baptism by this church will receive baptism.
- A person desiring to transfer membership from another church will be received in the same manner as other candidates and will not be required to be baptized by this church unless the person so desires.
- Persons desiring membership are asked to contact the pastoral staff or a deacon. The following steps are required for membership:
  - Complete conferences with the pastoral staff and new member classes designed to orient candidates with this church's concept of discipleship.
  - Be received into membership by a majority vote of church members.

### ARTICLE II - CHURCH GOVERNANCE

**SECTION 1** - The governance of the church shall be congregational in nature and shall be vested in the membership.

#### **SECTION 2** – Church Conference:

- a. Church conference shall be held at least quarterly. The Conference is open to all who wish to attend, and all church members are eligible to vote. Each ministry team shall be represented at the conference to report its work and make recommendations.
- b. Church members unable to be present for voting on specific issues may contact the church leadership in advance to arrange for an absentee ballot.
- c. A simple majority vote carries in all matters unless otherwise stated in this document.
- d. Major matters brought before the church conference for discussion or vote shall be conducted according to Robert's Rules of Order.

### ARTICLE III - GENERAL OFFICERS

**Moderator** – The moderator will officiate during church conference meetings and represent the church in business matters.

**Treasurer** – The church treasurer is responsible for the proper receipt, accounting and disbursement of church funds within policies established by the church for adequate financial

control. The treasurer's work focuses primarily on financial records and payment procedures rather than the handling of cash. Cash is handled and counted by the counting team.

**Clerk** – The clerk will keep official minutes of church conference meetings.

## **ARTICLE IV– MINISTRY TEAMS**

The work and administrative matters of the church will be imagined, planned, implemented, and evaluated through ministry teams, and the ministry teams will work to integrate church members and other interested individuals in the ministries of the church. The aim of the ministry teams will be to allow and encourage church members and attendees to BE the church as they serve in Jesus' name, because we believe each member and participant in Common Ground Fellowship is a minister. As the Fellowship grows, more teams will be needed, so more teams may be added as needed by recommendation of the Leadership Team. These teams will be listed in a separate document published annually.

## **ARTICLE V – DEACON MINISTRY**

Individuals who have been ordained as deacons shall serve the church within their callings. Deacons are free to serve individually or in teamwork as they are called and gifted.

Persons serving as Deacons shall be committed to Christ as Lord and Savior, shall see themselves as both a servant of God and a witness for Christ in word and example to all people, shall be enthusiastically committed to the programs and services of Common Ground Fellowship and its ministries, shall be faithful in attendance, stewardship and service, and shall be a living example of Paul's letter to Timothy.

## **ARTICLE VI- FINANCIAL POLICIES**

Church finances, offerings, budgets, expenditures, and accounts payable will be handled with accountability in accordance with the Internal Financial Controls Policy.

## **ARTICLE VII - AMENDMENTS**

The By-laws may be amended by the following procedure:

1. The proposed amendment/revision must be proposed to the church conference by the Leadership Team.
2. The By-laws may then be amended/revise by a majority vote of the Church Conference.