# BY-LAWS OF THE FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH OF CASTLE SHANNON

# ARTICLE I AUTHORITY OF BY-LAWS

The First Presbyterian Church of Castle Shannon being a particular congregation of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) in the United States of America recognizes that the Constitution of said Church is, in all its provisions, obligatory upon it and its members. The principal office of the congregation/corporation shall be in the Borough of Castle Shannon, Allegheny County, Pennsylvania, in the church building.

### ARTICLE II MEETINGS OF THE CONGREATION/CORPORATION

# Section 1. Annual Meeting.

There shall be an annual meeting of the congregation/corporation as early as possible in the first quarter of each fiscal year at such time as the Session may fix and on any subsequent day or days to which such meeting may be adjourned. At the annual ecclesiastical meeting members of the Session shall be elected for such terms as shall have expired and to fill such vacancies as may exist; and immediately following this, the congregation shall meet as a corporation and elect the elders as trustees. Notice of the time and place of the annual meeting shall be given from the pulpit on two successive Sundays immediately preceding the day of the meeting and such notice shall be posted physically and/or electronically that members may see the same on the said two Sundays. Special Meetings of the congregation/corporation may be called at any time for specified purpose by the Session or by a petition of a quorum of communicants.

# Section 2. Voting

- **Eligibility** All active members (see: Article IV, Sec. 2 ) of the church shall be entitled to vote at meetings:
  - a) Ecclesiastical meetings—all active members.
  - b) Corporate meetings—all active members 18 years of age or older.
- **Proxy** No person shall be permitted to vote by proxy.
- **Quorum -** A quorum shall consist of the Moderator and the Secretary and ten percent (10%) of the eligible members of the congregation. This quorum is necessary for the transaction of business at all meetings of the congregation/corporation.
- **Questions -** All questions shall be decided by a vote of the majority of the electors present at the meeting unless otherwise especially provided by law or by these by-laws and each elector shall have one (1) vote.
- **Election** Election by ballot shall be conducted by three judges of elections who shall be electors and appointed by the presiding officer.

# Section 3. Presiding Officer

The pastor shall preside as Moderator at meetings of the congregation. The President of the Board of Trustees shall preside at all meetings of the Corporation.

### Section 4. Records

The Clerk of the Session shall be secretary of the meetings of the congregation. In his/her inability to attend, the Session shall designate a secretary in his/her stead.

# ARTICLE III THE SESSION

Section 1. *Membership* 

The Session shall consist of the installed Pastor, or designated moderator, and a number of elected ruling elders as recommended by the current Session and approved by the congregation. No ruling elder shall be elected to the Session for a term of more than three years, nor shall a ruling elder serve on the Session for consecutive terms, either full or partial, aggregating more than six years.

# Section 2. Organization

The Session may expand its activities by the appointment of committees, either permanent or temporary, as they may decide. These committees are answerable to the Session. The Session may delegate functions and powers within this framework as they see fit.

# Section 3. *Removal* Members of the Session may be removed by the Session if their behavior is not in compliance with the Book of Order regulations.

# Section 4. Filling Vacancies

Unexpired terms on the Session shall be filled within sixty (60) days by congregational action as specified in Article II, Section 1 of these by-laws.

# Section 5. Quorum

Two thirds or more of ruling elders with the moderator shall be necessary to constitute a quorum. Any item for action shall be decided by a vote of a majority of the elders present unless otherwise specified by law or these by-laws. Meetings shall be held on dates decided by the Session. These meetings may be held at the discretion of the Session in-person or electronically by a video meeting platform such as Zoom, (provided all elders and the Moderator have access to said platform).

## Section 6. As Trustees

The members of the Board of Trustees shall be one and the same as the ruling elders of the Session. No ruling elder may, by reason of the law of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, be a member of the Board of Trustees if under the age of 18. The Session as Board of Trustees shall take charge of all real and other property of the church and shall permit its use for only such purposes as they shall approve. They shall have custody of the charter and the seal of the corporation. They shall collect all the revenue of the church. They shall report at the annual meeting of the congregation/corporation the receipts and payments for the fiscal year last ensuing and an estimate of expenses for the current year. They shall report new business necessary to be undertaken for the welfare of the congregation/corporation and an exhibit of the real property, trust funds and all other resources of the congregation/corporation.

### Section 7. As Deacons

The members of the Board of Deacons shall be one and the same as the ruling elders of the Session. The Board of Deacons shall perform all the duties required by the form of government of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) in the United States of America. The moderator of Session shall be the moderator of the Board of Deacons.

# Section 8. Records

The Session shall keep books and accounts. The Session as Board of Trustees shall elect from among its members a president and such other officers as may be required or deemed appropriate. The Clerk of Session shall be secretary of the Board of Trustees. The Board of Trustees shall annually elect a financial secretary who may or may not be a member of the Board of Trustees and who may be salaried. No elder shall contract or pay any bill that has not first received the approval of the Session in open meeting except bills of current expense.

## Section 9. Property

In case of a sale, conveyance, or mortgage or lease of any land with or without improvements thereon, or of any buildings of the congregation/corporation, the instruments affecting such sale, conveyance, mortgage or lease shall be valid after approval of the congregation and the Presbytery if executed in the name of all the Session or by the President attested by the Clerk of Session.

# **Section 10.** *Electronic special meeting procedures*

Email may be used to call a special Session meeting by the moderator only. All members must have email access and have agreed prior to its use to follow the set procedures for an electronic meeting. All members must have all email addresses of Session members.

- a) Moderator must open the email with a written prayer, clearly state the purpose for the meeting, state the motion to be discussed, who made the original motion, call for a second to the motion, state the cut off time and date for voting on any motion and remind all members to "Reply All" on all communications concerning the meeting.
- b) All members must respond within one day to all members with "Reply All" to acknowledge receipt of the initial email from the moderator. If after one day acknowledgement is not made by one or more members, the moderator can not continue the meeting until attempting, for one additional day, to make contact with the unresponsive member(s) by either telephone, additional emails, fax, or in person at which point the unresponsive member(s) wishing to join the meeting will "Reply All" in order that all members know which members have joined the meeting. Once the above procedures have been followed and a quorum has been established, the meeting can proceed.
- c) A motion having been stated in the initial email, a second will be in order for the email discussion to continue. All members who respond may second the motion. The moderator will determine who seconded the motion by the time stamp on each email received.
- d) At the designated time (or prior if all members are in agreement), if a quorum has been attained, each member will email his/her vote in a "Reply All" message. Any member not responding by the prearranged time and date will be considered an abstention. When all votes are in, the moderator will state the vote result to all Session members. If the total number of votes received by the established date and time do not equal a quorum, the moderator will declare the motion defeated. The Clerk will record the necessary information and create minutes to be approved at the next regularly called Session meeting.

- e) The moderator will close the meeting with a final email prayer.
- Section 11. Using electronic procedures at regularly called Session meetings Members who are unable to attend a regularly called meeting may ask the moderator for permission to attend by electronic means. The only acceptable forms of electronic attendance are a telephone set to speakerphone or video conferencing using software such as Skype or FaceTime, or equivalent application. Other forms are not acceptable, such as email, as these methods do not allow for full deliberation by the member not physically present.
  - a) Prior to the start of the meeting the moderator will inform the physically present members of the request to use electronic means to attend. The moderator reserves the right to limit the number of persons attending electronically. If the number wishing to participate electronically becomes unwieldy, the moderator reserves the right to call a physical meeting.
  - b) The member attending electronically is to be counted towards the quorum. The Clerk of Session will mark the attendee as present electronically.
  - c) Electronic communication shall be established prior to calling the meeting to order. All members must be able to hear, and when using video conferencing, see the member attending electronically. Likewise, that member must be able to hear and, when applicable, see the members physically attending.
  - d) The member attending electronically may fully participate in the meeting, including all discussions, making motions, and votes.
  - e) Should electronic communication be lost during the meeting, a reasonable amount of time will be allowed to reestablish it. If it cannot be reestablished, the meeting will proceed, if a quorum still exists, and a notation in the minutes will be made of the situation.

- f) Any written motion submitted at the meeting must be read aloud and/or submitted electronically to the member attending electronically prior to discussion and voting. Secret ballot voting is not permitted unless the ability of the electronic attendee allows him/her to send an instant message, email or fax that can be collected and counted by the moderator and Clerk of Session.
- Section 12. Committee meetings using electronic procedures: Committee chairpersons may use the same methods established above for committee meetings done electronically.

### ARTICLE IV. CHURCH MEMBERSHIP

#### Section 1. Profession of Faith.

Persons may enter into active church membership by a public profession of faith, a certificate of transfer, or through a reaffirmation of faith. The following profession of faith in Christ shall be made publicly, before the congregation, by any new Christians seeking membership in the FPCCS:

### RECEPTION OF NEW MEMBERS\*

PRESENTATION OF NEW ACTIVE MEMBERS (Read by an Elder, addressing those assembled at the front and the congregation):

*"{INSERT FULL NAME OF NEW MEMBERS HERE} have been received by the Session as an active member of the church. They are here to declare their faith, and to be joined with us in the service of Jesus Christ."* 

"Hear the words of our Lord Jesus Christ, "You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit. Everyone who acknowledges me before men, I also will acknowledge before my Father who is in heaven."

"Friends, Jesus Christ has chosen you and, in baptism, has joined you to Himself. He has called you, together with us, into the church, which is His body. Now, He has brought you to this time and place so you may confess His name and go out to serve Him as a faithful disciple."

PROFESSION OF FAITH (Led by the Minister, addressing those assembled at the front and the congregation):

"Sisters and brothers in Christ, our baptism is the sign and seal of our cleansing from sin, and of our being grafted into Christ. Through the birth, life, death, and resurrection of Christ, the power of sin was broken and God's kingdom entered our world. Through our baptism we were made citizens of God's kingdom, and freed from the bondage of sin. Let us celebrate that freedom and redemption through the renewal of the promises made at out baptism. I ask you therefore, once again to reject sin, and to profess your faith in Christ Jesus, and to confess the faith of the church, in which we were baptized."

\* In compliance with the specifications/requirements of *The Constitution of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)*, Book of Order Revision 2011/2013, Section W-3.3603 with excerpts from the Book of Occasional Services, A Liturgical Supplementing the Book of Common Worship, 1993, Section on the Reception of New Members and the Reaffirmation of the Baptismal Covenant.

QUESTIONS OF COMMITMENT (To be asked by the Minister, addressing those assembled at the front):

• "Do you acknowledge Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior?" I do.

- "Do you promise to turn from the ways of sin and renounce evil and all the ways of Satan?" **I do.**
- "Do you promise, with God's help, to live as becomes a follower of Christ, to participate faithfully in the church's worship and work, to give of your substance as God has prospered you and to submit yourself to the government and discipline of this church?" I do.
- "Do you agree with the confessional statement of the First Presbyterian Church of Castle Shannon?" **I do.**

COMMITMENT OF THE CONGREGATION (To be asked by an Elder, addressing the congregation):

"Do you, the members of this congregation, welcome these disciples who have affirmed their faith in Jesus Christ and promise by your fellowship to strengthen their ties with the household of God? If so, signify by saying, 'Amen.'"

PROFESSION OF FAITH (To be led by the Minister):

*"With the whole church, let us confess our faith."* The congregation and new members shall then profess their faith by reciting the Apostle's Creed.

PRAYER (Lead by the Minister or Elder):

"Let us pray. O God, our Father, we praise You for calling us to be a servant people, and for gathering us into the body of Christ. We thank You for choosing to add to our fellowship brothers and sisters in faith. Together, may we live in Your Spirit, and so love one another that we may have the mind of Jesus Christ our Lord to Whom we give honor and glory forever. Amen."

#### Section 2. Active Member.

We are all called into God's service with a diverse range of abilities and talents. The Father charges us with the responsibility to use these gifts to glorify Him and to elevate His church <sup>(a,b,c)</sup>. Just as the gifts and blessings the Lord has bestowed upon us are greatly varied, the ways in which these same gifts and talents are used to serve our Lord and Savior are equally diverse. As Christians we are called to give back to the Lord in proportion to the blessings he has bestowed upon us <sup>(d, e, f, g)</sup>. The following list outlines examples of the ways new members can, and some of the ways active members of the FPCCS currently, serve to the Lord:

# Worship

- a) attend Sunday morning and special worship services
- b) participate in church services as a pulpit assistant, choir member, Communion server, reader, greeter, sound board operator, vocalist, etc.

# Education

- a) participate in or lead an adult or children's Sunday school class
- b) participate in a Bible or book study
- c) join the Men's Group or Women's Association

# **Outreach and Witnessing**

- a) volunteer with Vacation Bible School (VBS), the Christmas Day dinner, nursing home visitations, rescue ministry, and become a member of the Jail Ministry team
- b) make visitations to shut-ins

# Ministry and Governing

- a) contribute to the mission of the church with donations of time, talent, and/or finances
- b) participate in a church committee (Worship, Fellowship, Evangelism, etc.)
- c) become a Ruling Elder or deacon
- d) volunteer to help with the newsletter, bulletin preparation, and other types of church office duties

# Worship Preparation

- a) prepare the projected files for Sunday morning worship
- b) setup Communion
- c) help rearrange the worship space for various special occasions

# Property Maintenance

- a) mow the lawn, shovel snow, trim trees and shrubs, landscape
- b) participate in "work days"
- c) participate in general property upkeep

Although this list represents some of the many ways an active church member can give back to the Lord and pursue ministry to further one's spiritual growth or that of the body, it is at the

discretion of the Session to determine if other attributes/ministries in addition to those listed define an active member. It is also up to the Session to determine if extenuating circumstances are preventing a member from serving the Lord in one or more of these capacities.

#### **References**

- (a) Romans 12:4-8 "...so in Christ we, though many, form one body..."
- (b) 1 Corinthians 14:12 "...try to excel in those [gifts] that build up the church."
- (c) Ephesians 4:7-12 "...So Christ himself gave the apostles, the prophets...'
- (d) Deuteronomy 16:17 "Each of you must bring a gift in proportion..."
- (e) Proverbs 3:9-10 "Honor the Lord with your wealth..."
- (f) Luke 6:38 "Give, and it will be given to you..."
- (g) Malachi 3:9-12 "...Bring the whole tithe into the storehouse..."

### Section 3. Membership Rolls.

As Christians, we are called to elevate one another, to help those in need, and to serve one another <sup>(h, i, j, k, l, m)</sup>. It is Session's responsibility to review the membership rolls on a yearly basis to determine individual needs (physical and spiritual), as well as to ensure the accuracy of the rolls based on the requirements associated with each roll. This yearly periodicity is contingent upon adherence to the current 'Prayer and Care' model in which Session members/elders are to remain in more frequent contact with church members. In the event this program is discontinued, the frequency of membership roll review shall increase to once every six months.

At each evaluation interval, a determination will be made as to which members need to be contacted and the purpose for the contact. This could include moving a member from one roll to another (Baptized, Active, or Former Member Rolls), addressing a spiritual need, or some other identified purpose. A specific official Session action must be made to define the nature of the contact. The purpose of the contact, length of time to resolve the issue, and the parties responsible for this contact shall be documented in the Session meeting minutes. Either a written or verbal report is required at a future Session meeting, with a summary of the results being documented in the Session meeting minutes.

#### <u>References</u>

- (h) Acts 20:28 "Keep watch over yourselves..."
- (i) Acts 20:35 "... by this kind of hard work we must help the weak..."
- (j) 1 Corinthians 12:12-31 "Just as a body, though one, has many parts..."
- (k) 1 Thessalonians 5:14 "...warn those who are idle...help the weak..."

(I) Hebrews 10:24-25 "...spur one another on toward love and good deeds..."
(m) Matthew 20:28 "just as the Son of Man did not come to be served..."

Section 4. Former Member Roll.

A former member roll shall be maintained for those who are no longer active members of the FPCCS. The roll shall include the former member's full name, active membership termination date, and reason for becoming a former member. Prior to moving an active church member to the former membership roll, the following steps must be taken by the Session and church member:

> a) An attempt at personal contact must be made initially, prior to resorting to other methods of correspondence. The member should first be contacted by phone and an effort should be made to schedule a personal visitation if the member is receptive to a meeting. If the individual being contacted is more comfortable with communication via phone, this is an acceptable form of personal contact.

The purpose of this conversation/visit is to determine if there is something the church could be doing to help the member and the reason the person isn't fulfilling the fundamental responsibilities of an active member. This conversation should be approached in a loving and concerned manner. If it is determined through conversations with the member that they are no longer interested in being an active member of the FPCCS, the person making contact with the individual will explain that, based on the new form of government, there are no longer inactive members of a church, but former members

The personal contact will be followed up with a letter reiterating this and notifying the member that, it they change their mind, they can contact the church within thirty (30) days of receiving the letter and they will not be automatically moved to the former member roll. Also, the letter shall be written to convey to the member that the door to the church will always be open if they choose to visit us again.

b) If personal contact is unable to be made, after three (3) attempts, a letter shall be written to explain the nature of the contact and sent to the last known address for the member. All letters shall give the member thirty (30) days to contact the church prior to placing the individual on the

former member roll. The letter shall include all methods a person can use to contact the church (phone number, address, email, etc.). In addition, the letter shall ask the individual to contact the church if they have a need or if there is a reason the person is not participating in any of the activities that define an active member. The letter shall also include a clear statement that if the church isn't contacted within thirty (30) days of the receipt of the letter, then the person will be automatically moved from the active member roll to the former member roll, but that our church is always here for them if they have a need and/or choose to visit with us once again.

# ARTICLE V. BAPTISM<sup>(n, o)</sup>

### Baptized Member Roll.

Two separate Baptized Member rolls shall be maintained for the church. The first roll shall be a "Persons Baptized in the FPCCS" roll. This roll will include the person's full name, date of baptism, and date of birth. For children, the parents' names shall also be included in the roll. The purpose of this roll is solely to track baptisms conducted in our church and other church sanctioned occasions such as a retreat.

A second "Baptized Member" roll shall be maintained for those individuals who wish to be considered baptized members and are therefore afforded the privileges extended to this membership group as per the Book of Order. A person who regularly visits or participates in the spiritual life of our church may request to become a baptized member of the FPCCS by writing a letter to Session providing they have already been baptized in another church.

All new adult baptisms conducted in the church will automatically place the individual on both the "Person Baptized in the FPCCS and "Baptized Member" rolls. If the same baptized member goes through the process to become an active member, they will still remain on the "Persons Baptized in the FPCCS" roll, but will move from the "Baptized Member" roll to the "Active Member" roll. Aside from the "Persons Baptized in the FPCCS" roll, no person shall be listed on more than one roll.

Infant and children baptisms conducted in the church will place the child on both the "Persons Baptized in the FPCCS" and "Baptized Member" rolls provided the parents of the child/infant are active members.

No person added to the "Persons Baptized in the FPCCS" shall ever be removed from the roll. In addition, no person shall be removed from the "Baptized Member" roll unless requested in writing by the person or their parent/guardian, or for the purpose of moving the member to the "Active Member" roll.

#### **References**

- (n) Mark 16:16 "Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved..."
- (o) 1 Corinthians 12:13 "For we were all baptized by one Spirit as to form..."

#### ARTICLE VI.

### THE SACRAMENT OF THE LORD'S SUPPER<sup>(p)</sup>

#### Criteria for Partaking in Communion.

Per the Book of Order<sup>(q)</sup>, coming to the Lord's Table represents a time for the believing community to come together and unite with the Church in every place, to join with all the faithful in heaven and on earth in offering thanksgiving to the triune God, and to renew the vows taken at Baptism. Baptized children who are being nurtured and instructed in the significance of the invitation to the Table and the meaning of their response may receive the Lord's Supper. Recognizing that each child's understanding of participation will vary according to their maturity, it is at the discretion of the parents to determine the appropriate time for their child. It is recommended, but not required, that parents consult with the pastor prior to their child participating in Communion.

Since a person's Baptism and understanding of the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper may not be known, no one shall be denied to participate in this sacrament. However, if information is disclosed that may put a person's rightful participation in this sacrament in question, it is the responsibility of the Session to discuss the matter with the individual.

#### <u>References</u>

- (p) 1 Corinthians 11:23-32 "...This is my body, which is given for you..."
- (q) The Constitution of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), Book of Order Revision 2011/2013, Section W-2.4006.

# ARTICLE VII COMMITTEES

## Section 1. Auditing

There shall be an auditing committee elected by the congregation to which all board, committee and organization treasurers shall submit their previous fiscal year books for audit prior to the annual congregational meeting. The auditing committee shall consist of three persons and one alternate, not members of any church board. The first person nominated and elected shall be the chairperson for that committee. Should a vacancy appear during the year the alternate member shall fill that position.

# Section 2. Nominating

The nominating committee shall consist of two members designated by and from the Session, one of whom shall be named by the Session as chairperson. Three members shall be elected by the congregation. In addition, the pastor shall be a member of this committee ex-officio but without vote. Members shall be ineligible to be elected for a new term until one year has elapsed since their previous years' service.

# ARTICLE VIII FISCAL YEAR

The fiscal year of the corporation and of the congregation/corporation shall begin January 1 and end December 31.

# ARTICLE IX AMENDMENT OF BY-LAWS

These by-laws may be repealed, amended or a new set of bylaws may be adopted by the affirmative vote of the majority of electors present at any regular or special meeting of the congregation/corporation, provided that notice of the intention to amend, repeal or establish new by-laws shall have been given in the call of the said meeting.

## ARTICLE X DESIGNATED FUNDS/SPECIAL PROJECTS

### Section 1. General

Individual donors often desire that a portion of their financial donations to the church or an additional financial donation to the church beyond their regular giving be directed towards a specific project within the church. These donations fall under the category "Designated Funds". Further, the Session or individual donors may desire to establish a limited-duration Special Project to address an emergent need (e.g., stained glass pane replacement, kitchen renovation).

# Section 2. Administration of Designated Funds and Special Projects

- a) The Session, as Trustees of the church, has a fiduciary duty to the church and, as such, has overall responsibility for the management of all incoming and disbursed church funding and church projects, including Designated Funds and Special Projects. Consequently, all requests for the establishment of a Designated Fund or Special Project must have the formal approval of the Session. All Designated Funds and Special Projects must support and benefit the ongoing ministry of the church in contrast to an individual donor or a group of donors.
- b) Any donor may propose the establishment of a Designated Fund or Special Project by formally requesting such in writing to the Session for action. More than one donor may provide funding towards an approved Designated Fund or Special Project. Donors requesting establishment of and/or supporting a Designated Fund may, at their request, establish and maintain their anonymity. Donations towards a Special Project may be solicited from the congregation.
- c) *Completion of the Project* Once the Session approves the request, the Designated Fund or Special Project will continue until the completion of the project. Upon completion of the project, any unused funds will be addressed as follows:
  - i. Designated Funds Upon completion of the project, the Session can redirect the unused portion of the Designated Fund towards other uses with the written approval of the donor requesting the Designated Fund. If the donor desires to retain anonymity, the written approval may be provided to the Financial Secretary.

- Special Projects Upon completion of a Special Project, the Session may redirect any unused funds as they consider best to serve the needs of the congregation.
- d) Designated Fund no longer necessary Should the donor requesting the Designated Fund and/or the Session determine that the Designated Fund is no longer needed, the donor and Session shall work together to determine where the funding can be best redirected.
- e) *Existing Designated Fund* For an existing Designated Fund, the Session may not alter or dissolve the Fund without the specific written approval of the donor requesting the Designated Fund and all donor(s) towards the Special Fund.
- f) Transfer of Membership or Death of Donor
   When a new Designated Fund is established, the donor(s)
   will specify in writing to which fund (General Fund or Building Fund) their donation(s) will be applied upon their transfer of membership or their death.

# **ARTICLE XI**

### **MEN'S MINISTRY**

The Men's Ministry of FPCCS, which meets in the Fellowship Hall on the first and third Saturdays of each month, is subject to the bylaws and authority of the Session.

- a) The Men's Ministry may maintain its own bank checking and/or savings account that is to be annually audited by the FPCCS's auditing committee.
- b) The group may choose its own leadership and who is authorized to write checks on its account.

# ARTICLE XII RULES OF ORDER

Any business not covered in these by-laws should be referred to the current Book of Order of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) of the United States of America for specifics.