

BY-LAWS

of

Reformation Canada Network

(Herein known as the “RCN”)

Edited: March 4, 2023

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PREAMBLE

NOTE ON THE PREAMBLE:

The By-Laws are the operational manual of the RCN which may change from time to time, which are further extended by operational policies made by the membership and recorded in the Policy Manual which may change more frequently. This Preamble summarizes the intentions and thinking behind the By-Laws of the RCN but is not included as a By-Law or an interpretation of a By-Law of the RCN. Not all statements made here need to become By-Laws. However, some statements made in this Preamble which are not stated explicitly in the By-Laws, may be discussed by the membership and result in amending the By-Laws to include such statements.

The *Reformation Canada Network (RCN)* is a family of churches in Canada bearing witness that God so loved the world that He gave His only Son, Jesus Christ, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have eternal life. As we proclaim this good news and live as Jesus taught us, we endeavour to draw others to the joy of new life in Christ.

We acknowledge God’s Word, the Bible, as our only rule of faith and life, and we seek to govern ourselves by it alone.

We affirm as faithful witnesses to God’s Word those creeds and confessions which anchored the historic Reformation churches: the Apostles’ Creed, the Nicene Creed, the Athanasian Creed, the Heidelberg Catechism, the Belgic Confession, the Canons of Dort, the Westminster Confession, the Westminster Larger and Shorter Catechisms, the Augsburg Confession, and Luther’s two Catechisms. We also affirm more contemporary statements like the Belhar Confession as applied to the question of racism within the Church, the Great Lakes Catechism on Human Sexuality, the New City Catechism, and the Evangelical Fellowship of Canada’s Statement of Faith.

We acknowledge, however, that “*All synods or councils, since the Apostles’ times, whether general or particular, may err; and many have erred*” (Westminster Confession 31.4; see also Belgic Confession, Article 7) and therefore no statement of faith, though useful for instruction and as a guide to discipline, rises to the authority of the Scriptures on which they are based.

All believers are gifted by God for ministry, but some are set apart for and ordained to ecclesiastical office. We acknowledge three ecclesiastical offices: pastor, elder and deacon. Pastors and elders exercise overall spiritual oversight in the local church and are responsible for ensuring that the church’s mission of making disciples is carried out. Pastors receive appropriate training and education in order to be able to teach God’s Word, and to guide the church’s life of faith, worship, and obedience. Deacons are responsible for

stewarding the financial and material assets of a church, and for catalyzing ministries of benevolence and compassion.

The qualifications for office bearers and the accreditation of pastors are the jurisdiction of the RCN. Services of ordination, commissioning, or installation to office, once approved, are the responsibility of the local church. Ecclesiastical offices are life-long, but in order to be in good standing, office bearers must annually affirm the RCN's *Covenant Statement on Belief and Practice*.

Each local church is governed by a church council, made up of the serving elders and the pastor(s), and typically assisted by the serving deacons who may or may not be voting members of the council and whose authority does not extend to matters of spiritual oversight and church discipline. If elders and deacons are both voting members of council, they will occasionally function as separate boards within the council to deal with issues specific to their office. A council may set up such leadership teams and structures as it deems helpful. The voting members of the *RCN* are its serving pastors as well as local church elder delegates. Together these members oversee the spiritual health and mission of the *RCN*.

In the short term we anticipate the need for regional gatherings of elders and pastors. As we grow, we envision a future national council forming with regional councils serving the members by representation and regional networks providing relational and ministry support.

The *RCN* and its churches are free to affiliate with other Christian denominations and ministries both within and outside Canada whose beliefs are consistent with the *Covenant Statement on Belief and Practice*. Multiple affiliations for pastors are also permitted provided that the *RCN* has primary jurisdiction in matters of faith and practice. Such affiliations are viewed as a gift to Christian unity including those, for instance, with diverse biblical practices on baptism and charismatic gifting.

Be It Enacted as a By-Law of RCN as follows:

OUR LIFE TOGETHER

Desiring to bring honour to Christ our King, we seek to set and meet the highest aims and qualities of practice. To that end, we hold the following documents as binding.

Section A: As to our joyful responsibility to pursue the building up of the church and the extension of Christ's kingdom, we support a common **MISSION, VISION, AND GOALS STATEMENT**.

Section B: As to our duty to administer the business of the RCN effectively and efficiently, we enact these **GOVERNING ARTICLES**.

Section C: As to our common commitment to uphold biblical beliefs being challenged in our generation, we subscribe to a **COVENANT STATEMENT ON BELIEF AND PRACTICE**.

A. MISSION, VISION, AND GOALS STATEMENT

Mission

Our mission is to equip our congregations to carry out the work Christ gave us:

“All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.”

(Matthew 28:18-20, NIV)

Vision

Our vision is to see every church a healthy church, radiant in Christ, reaching out and reproducing, in anticipation of the fulfillment of God’s promise:

“For the earth will be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the LORD as the waters cover the sea.”

(Habakkuk 2:14, ESV)

Goals

The RCN will annually set and review goals to enable it to effectively equip the congregations and leaders under its care to engage in fruitful kingdom mission in the power of the Holy Spirit.

The RCN will annually assist and encourage the congregations and leaders under its care to seek the Lord’s direction for the setting and keeping of kingdom goals.

B. GOVERNING ARTICLES

DEFINITIONS

1.01 In this By-Law and all other By-Laws of the RCN, unless the context otherwise requires:

“**Act**” means the Canada Not-For-Profit Corporations Act S.C. 2009, c. 23 (<https://laws-lois.justice.gc.ca/eng/acts/c-7.75/>) including the Regulations made pursuant to the Act, and any statute or regulations that may be substituted, as amended from time to time;

“**Articles**” means the original or restated Articles of Incorporation or articles of amendment, amalgamation, continuance, reorganization, arrangement or revival of the RCN;

“**Assessments**” means dues payable by RCN churches.

“**Board**” means all of the Directors of the RCN;

“**Board of Elders**” means a congregation’s Pastor(s) and the elected elders who provide spiritual oversight;

“**By-Law**” means this by-law and any other by-law of the RCN as amended and which are, from time to time, in force and effect;

“**Church Council**” means the governing body of a local congregation comprised of the Board of Elders, or comprised of the Pastor(s) and an equal number of elected elders and deacons.

“**Commissioned Pastors**” means the pastors who have been authorized through an approved training route for a specific RCN ministry. Such pastors may function in the role of a Congregational Pastor or Specialized Pastor.

“**Congregational Pastors**” means the ordained pastors who teach and guide RCN churches;

“**Director**” means those elected by the membership to be responsible for the governance and financial integrity of the RCN;

“**Ecclesiastical Officers**” means elders, deacons and pastors;

“**Elder Delegates**” means an elder who has been appointed to represent the Board of Elders at RCN Member’s Meetings;

“**Executive Team**” means the President, Vice President, Ministry Teams Leader(s), Clerk and Treasurer who comprise the Board of the RCN;

“**Members' Meetings**” includes General Meetings and Special General Meetings, both of which are referred to in the Act as meetings of members;

“**Officer**” means a Director of the RCN who serves on the Board and holds an Office of President, Vice-President, Ministry Team Leader(s), Clerk, or Treasurer;

“Ordinary Resolution” means a resolution passed by a majority of not less than 50% plus 1 of the votes cast on that resolution;

“Pastors” means Congregational Pastors, Specialized Pastors, Commissioned Pastors, and those who used to hold these positions but are now retired or who are currently without an active ministry;

“Policy” mean a written document adopted by the members by majority vote at any Members’ Meetings which are used as binding guidelines and procedures for the operations of the RCN, and which by their nature may be amended more frequently in response to the changing nature of carrying out the business of the RCN;

“Policy Manual” means a collection of individual Policies, organized without sequential numbering so that their removal shall not impact the ordering of the manual, and all of which are binding on the members and the Executive Team for the operations of the RCN;

“RCN Church” means any church which meets the requirements for membership within these By-Laws, joins the RCN, and is granted voting rights.

“RCN Ministry” means any ministry within the RCN which the Executive Team approves, and which is not recognized as or does not qualify as an RCN Church;

“Regulations” means the regulations made under the Act, as amended, restated or in effect from time to time;

“Special Resolution” means a resolution passed by a majority of not less than two-thirds (2/3) of votes cast;

“Specialized Pastors” means the ordained and Commissioned Pastors who use their gifts and abilities in ministries approved by the Executive Team and whose credentials are issued by the RCN; and

“Voting Classes” means those classes of membership which are authorized to vote in corporate matters at Members’ Meetings.

GENERAL

Superior Priority of the Act

2.01 Should a mandatory provision of the Act be omitted or absent from the By-Laws; or should a provision in the By-Laws contravene or conflict with the Act; then the Act shall have superiority over the omitted, absent, or contravening By-Law. Such provisions shall be deemed to have been severed from or adhered to the By-Laws to make the By-Laws comply with the Act as if the By-Laws had always complied with the Act.

Interpretation

2.02 In the interpretation of this By-Law, words in the singular include the plural and vice-versa, and “person” includes an individual, body corporate, partnership, trust, and unincorporated organization. Other than as specified above, words and expressions defined in the Act have the same meanings when used in these By-Laws.

Execution of Documents

2.03 Deeds, transfers, assignments, contracts, obligations, and other instruments in writing requiring execution by the RCN may be signed by any two (2) of its Officers. In addition, the Board may from time to time direct the way and the person or persons by whom a particular document or type of document shall be executed. Any person authorized to sign any document may affix the Corporate Seal (if any) to the document. Any signing officer may certify a copy of any instrument, resolution, By-Law, or other document of the RCN to be a true copy thereof.

Financial Year

2.04 The financial year end of the RCN shall be December 31 in each year.

Banking Arrangements

2.05 The banking business of the RCN shall be transacted at such bank, trust company or other firm or corporation carrying on a banking business in Canada as the Board may designate, appoint, or authorize from time to time by resolution. The banking business or any part of it shall be transacted by an Officer or Officers of the RCN and/or other persons as the Board may by resolution from time to time designate, direct, or authorize.

Borrowing Powers

2.06 The Directors of the RCN may, only with the authorization of the members,

2.06.1 borrow money on the credit of the RCN;

2.06.2 issue, reissue, sell, pledge or hypothecate debt obligations of the RCN;

2.06.3 give a guarantee on behalf; and

2.06.4 mortgage, hypothecate, pledge, or otherwise create a security interest in all or any property of the RCN, owned or subsequently acquired, to secure any debt obligation of the RCN.

Annual Financial Statements

2.07 The RCN shall send to the Voting Classes a copy of the annual financial statements and other documents referred to in subsection 172(1) (Annual Financial Statements) of the Act or a copy of a publication of the RCN reproducing the information contained in the documents. Instead of sending the documents, the RCN may send a summary to members in the Voting Classes along with a notice informing the member of the procedure for obtaining a copy of the documents themselves free of charge. The RCN is not required to send the documents or a summary to a member who, in writing, declines to receive such documents.

Amendments to By-Laws

2.08 Unless otherwise specified, these By-Laws may be amended by a resolution passed by a majority of not less than seventy five percent (75%) of votes cast at a Members' Meeting.

Rules of Order

2.09 Members' Meetings are governed by Robert's Rules of Order (<https://robertsrules.org/rulesintro.htm>) or by special rules approved at a Members' Meeting approved by a 2/3rds majority.

Place of Members' Meeting

2.10 Subject to compliance with section 159 (Place of Members' Meetings) of the Act, meetings of the members may be held at any place within Canada determined by the Board.

Persons Entitled to be Present at Members' Meetings

2.11 The only persons entitled to be present at a Members' Meeting shall be voting and non-voting members except for RCN Churches who are represented by their delegates, the Directors, the Public Accountant of the RCN, and such other persons who are entitled or required under any provision of the Act, Articles or By-Laws of the RCN to be present at the meeting. Any other person may be admitted only on the invitation of the Chair of the meeting or by resolution of the members or as specified in the Policy Manual.

Chair of Members' Meetings

2.12 If the Chair of the Board and the Vice-Chair of the Board are absent, the members who are present and entitled to vote at the meeting shall choose one of their number to chair the meeting.

Quorum at Members' Meetings

2.13 Unless otherwise specified, a quorum at any Members' Meeting (unless a greater number of members are required to be present by the Act) shall be a majority of the members entitled to vote at the meeting. If a quorum is present at the opening of a Members' Meeting, the members present may proceed with the business of the meeting even if a quorum is not present throughout the meeting.

Votes to Govern at Members' Meetings

2.14 At any Members' Meeting every question shall, unless otherwise provided by the Articles or By-Laws or by the Act, be determined by a majority of the votes cast on the questions. In case of an equality of votes either on a show of hands or on a ballot or on the results of electronic voting, the Chair of the meeting in addition to an original vote shall have a second or casting vote.

Participation by Electronic Means at Members' Meetings

2.15 The Executive Team shall provide the option of participating virtually in a Members' Meeting to anyone entitled to vote in a Voting Class who by virtue of their distance or health cannot attend in person. When the RCN provides for virtual participation, it must permit all participants to communicate adequately with each other during a Members' Meeting. Any person entitled to attend such meeting may participate in the meeting by such means in the manner provided by the Act. A person participating in a meeting by such means is deemed to be present at the meeting. Notwithstanding any other provision of this By-Law, any person participating in a Members' Meeting pursuant to this section who is entitled to vote at that meeting may vote virtually, in accordance with the Act, by means that the RCN has made available for that purpose.

Members' Meetings Held Entirely by Electronic Means

2.16 Members' Meetings may be held virtually.

Number of Directors

2.17 The Board shall consist of three (3) to nine (9) Directors as determined from time to time by the members.

Restrictions During the Founding Years

2.18 For three years from the date of incorporation of the RCN the members are prohibited from changing the *Covenant Statement on Belief and Practice*. This is intended to provide enough time for all the founding members to join the RCN so that any amendments made to it shall only be made by a larger group of members than those who shall join in the year of incorporation. The members are required in the

General Meeting immediately following this three-year prohibition, to adopt an amending formula with a voting threshold for making changes to the *Covenant Statement on Belief and Practice* either at that meeting or in subsequent Members' Meetings.

This provision is unalterable during this three-year period, but it shall be removed from the By-Laws after the amending formula for the *Covenant Statement on Belief and Practice* has been adopted.

Permanence of the Covenant Statement

2.19 The *Covenant Statement on Belief and Practice* is central to these By-Laws and therefore it may not be removed from the By-Laws though it may be amended from time to time as allowed for in these By-Laws. Furthermore, the By-Laws may not be amended in any way to remove the actual use of the *Covenant Statement on Belief and Practice* as a binding annual attestation of its members.

Period of Attestation

2.20 The *Covenant Statement on Belief and Practice* is an annual attestation of its members and must be signed before each annual General Meeting with only the last signed version being retained by the Executive Team as a valid agreement. Should a member be unable to sign the *Covenant Statement on Belief and Practice* before a General Meeting due to an incapacity, the Executive Team has the authority to hold forth the member's last signed *Covenant Statement on Belief and Practice* as valid until such time as the member regains the capacity to sign or is removed from membership and is no longer required to sign.

Adoption and Amendment of Policies

2.21 The members and the Executive Team may propose policies which serve the needs of the members and the RCN in the area of its operations. Such proposals shall be voted on at Members' Meetings by Ordinary Resolutions and when passed shall be adopted as Policies and then included in the Policy Manual or revised accordingly if already in the Policy Manual.

Removal of Policies from the Policy Manual

2.22 Should a Policy need to be elevated in importance and permanence the members shall amend the By-Laws so that the Policy becomes a By-Law, thereby removing it from the Policy Manual. Alternately, should a Policy cease to serve the needs of the members and the RCN, the members may vote to strike the Policy from the Policy Manual by Ordinary Resolution, at which time it ceases to have force and is no longer binding for the members and the Executive Team.

MEMBERSHIP

Membership Classes

3.01 The three classes of membership are:

3.01.1 Voting Members, which is composed of Congregational Pastors, Specialized Pastors, Commissioned Pastors, and Elder Delegates;

3.01.2 Non-Voting Members, which is composed of retired Pastors and pastors without an active ministry position at an RCN Church or as a Specialized Pastor, and local church elders and deacons who hold ecclesiastical office; and

3.01.3 RCN Churches, all of which are non-voting, from whom the voting Elder Delegates are sent.

Voting Restrictions

3.02 All Voting Classes are entitled to receive notice of and attend all Members' Meetings but only Voting Classes who are present and in good standing may vote at all Members' Meetings. Neither proxy votes nor voting by those given the privilege of the floor shall be permitted.

Voting Status of Pastors

3.03 Actively serving Congregational Pastors, Specialized Pastors, and Commissioned Pastors become Voting Members of the RCN by virtue of their ministry upon ratification as a Pastor of the RCN as specified in these By-Laws. Their voting membership is in effect for as long as they serve in their ministry. Pastors who are Voting Members become Non-Voting Members when they are without an active ministry position, or when they retire from their position as a Congregational, Specialized, or Commissioned Pastor, unless elected to the Executive Team. They remain as Non-Voting Members as long as either of these two conditions remain in effect.

Reception of Pastors

3.04 Voting and non-voting Pastoral members are received upon written application to the clerk, and ratification by the Executive Team after assuring that the Policy Manual criteria for Pastors are met and are presented to a General Meeting of the RCN which has final authority for such admissions.

Pastors Loss of Good Standing

3.05 Voting and non-voting Pastoral members cease to be in good standing when such person:

3.05.1 has missed a substantial portion of two consecutive General Meetings of the RCN without being excused by either the President or Vice President of the RCN, with the exception of Non-Voting Members who are not required to attend Members' Meetings.

3.05.2 has committed actions that dishonour themselves and the church, or when no longer ascribing to the *Covenant Statement on Belief and Practice*.

Restoration of Good Standing

3.06 Good standing shall be restored to members who are not in good standing by:

3.06.1 the member having attended, but not voted, at a General Meeting if non-attendance was the reason for not being in good standing; or

3.06.2 a vote of the membership to restore good standing after the member successfully completes the disciplinary process required by these By-Laws and detailed in the Policy Manual; or

3.06.3 a vote of the membership to restore good standing after the member ascribes to the *Covenant Statement on Belief and Practice*.

Pastors Membership Termination

3.07 Voting and non-voting Pastoral members' membership is terminated when:

3.07.1 the member dies;

3.07.2 the member fails to maintain any qualifications for membership including no longer ascribing to the *Covenant Statement on Belief and Practice* or other membership conditions in these By-Laws;

3.07.3 the member relinquishes their membership voluntarily by making a request to the President of the RCN;

3.07.4 the member is expelled by decision of the RCN following disciplinary procedures detailed in the Policy Manual addressing dishonourable conduct or other offenses specified in the Scriptures or these By-Laws;

3.07.5 the member leaves their ministry to join another ministry in a different jurisdiction or denomination (membership may not be transferred to those jurisdictions or denominations).

3.07.6 the member's term of membership expires; or

3.07.7 the RCN is liquidated or dissolved under the Act.

Reception of Elder Delegates

3.08 Elder Delegates become voting members of the RCN upon appointment by an RCN Church's Board of Elders in the RCN Church of which they are a member. Their membership becomes effective immediately without review by the Executive Team or vote of the members at a Member's Meeting. Their membership is in effect until the next General Meeting or until another elder is appointed to replace them.

Elder Delegates Loss of Good Standing

3.09 An Elder Delegate member ceases to be in good standing when such person has committed actions that dishonour themselves and the church, or when no longer ascribing to the *Covenant Statement on Belief and Practice*. Disciplinary procedures for an Elder Delegate may be enacted by the Executive Team or referred to their appointing Board of Elders.

Reception of RCN Churches

3.10 A Congregation becomes a member of the RCN as an RCN Church by applying for membership in a written request to the Executive Team including a copy of a resolution vote of the congregations' members to join the RCN which passes by at least 75%. Their written application shall be evaluated by the Executive Team according to criteria specified in the Policy Manual and presented for a vote of the members at the next Members' Meeting. Upon successful reception as an RCN Church by the voting members, the congregation shall become a full member of the RCN at the conclusion of that meeting.

Requirements for RCN Churches

3.11 It is required of all RCN Churches:

3.11.1 that there be at least two (2) persons on the Board of Elders which comprises the Church Council, or where the Church Council includes deacons as voting members, that the majority of Council be members of the Board of Elders;

3.11.2 that the *Covenant Statement on Belief and Practice* is annually attested to in writing by all Ecclesiastical Officers whether on Council or not;

3.11.3 that their by-laws states association with the RCN;

3.11.4 that they pay the required Assessments.

3.11.5 for churches that currently practice credo baptism exclusively, that provision be made for the baptism of infants upon the request of a professing parent(s).

RCN Churches Membership Termination

3.12 An RCN Church's membership is terminated when:

3.12.1 the member is liquidated or dissolved under the Act;

3.12.2 the member fails to maintain any qualifications for membership including no longer ascribing to the *Covenant Statement on Belief and Practice* or other membership conditions in these By-Laws;

3.12.3 the member relinquishes their membership voluntarily by making a request to the President of the RCN;

3.12.4 the member is expelled by decision of the RCN following disciplinary procedures detailed in the Policy Manual addressing dishonourable conduct or other offenses specified in the Scriptures or these By-laws; or

3.12.5 the RCN is liquidated or dissolved under the Act.

All criteria in the Policy Manual are to be satisfied including financial obligations to the RCN before removal.

Membership Dues

3.13 There shall be no membership dues payable by Voting Members and Non-Voting Members for membership in the RCN. However, RCN Churches shall pay Assessments as specified in these By-Laws which shall be treated as Membership Dues under the Act.

Elder Delegate Composition of RCN Churches

3.14 An RCN Church shall always have one Elder Delegate without any regard to the size of its membership.

3.15 An RCN Church with more than one hundred active professing members shall have one additional Elder Delegate for each one hundred active professing members or a fraction thereof. A church shall not have more than four Elder Delegates.

3.16 An RCN Church without a regularly installed Pastor shall have one additional Elder Delegate.

General Meeting Attendance

3.17 Voting Members and Delegates are to attend the General Meetings of the RCN in their entirety unless reason is presented to and approved by either the President or Vice President of the RCN.

3.18 Non-Voting Members may attend but are not required to attend General Meetings. When they attend, they do so at their own expense or at the RCN's expense if reporting for a team or ad hoc or in special circumstances approved by the Executive Team.

Reporting Requirements

3.19 Specialized Pastors who are unable to attend meetings are to report at least annually in writing to a General Meeting of the RCN through the Executive Team in a format specified in the Policy Manual.

3.20 Pastors without a ministry position and Churches without serving Pastors are to report at least annually in writing to a General Meeting of the RCN through the Executive Team in a format specified in the Policy Manual.

Pastoral Credentials and Eligibility

3.21 The RCN shall certify and hold the credentials of its Congregational Pastors, Specialized Pastors, Commissioned Pastors, retired Pastors, and Pastors without an active ministry position in an RCN Church, RCN Ministry, or another ministry authorized by the Executive Team. All serving Pastors, including those who maintain credentials elsewhere, are subject to the oversight and discipline of The RCN unless a sending denomination has stated otherwise as a precondition to service in the RCN.

3.22 The RCN will ensure that women called to such Pastoral ministries are duly ordained or commissioned. The RCN will also maintain both the right of gifted and called women to serve in every ordained or commissioned position, and freedom for those whose Scriptural belief is that there are limits on that service for women. We humbly respect each other as servants of Christ yielding to Scripture and believing that, in various ways, men and women are gifted by God to lead and equip the church.

3.23 The standards for ordination and commissioning and promises to be made before the congregation are found in the Policy Manual.

Pastoral Student Supervision

3.24 At the recommendation of a Church Council, a candidate who is an active professing member of an RCN Church, of good character, and with spiritual gifting for pastoral ministry may apply to be received into student supervision in the RCN.

3.25 The candidate will receive a preliminary interview by the Executive Team or an ad hoc to understand the candidate's faith, call, gifts, education, and ministry experience. A recommendation for reception into the RCN's student supervision program will then be made by the Executive Team and voted on at a General Meeting. The Policy Manual provides the steps and requirements for a candidate to qualify for ordination or commissioning by a local congregation.

Property Ownership of RCN Churches

3.26 All real and personal property of an RCN Church belongs to its congregation therefore the RCN has no interest in, right to, or liability for that property. Accordingly, the sale or mortgaging of a property is at the discretion of the church. However, if a church faces dissolution or seeks to divest, such assets may be given to the RCN in accordance with the Act and Canada Revenue Agency.

MEETINGS

Purposes of a General Meeting

4.01 A General Meeting is always aimed at growing the RCN around its Mission, Vision, and Goals Statement, and its Covenant Statement. As such, each General Meeting will provide opportunity for expression of belief in worship and prayer, for moving forward in mission through its business, for learning focused on its mission, and for listening to and encouraging one another in fellowship.

Scheduling

4.02 General Meetings of the RCN shall be held at least one time a year, in the spring and shall be deemed the annual general meeting for any required government filings. Such meetings may take place virtually at the discretion of the Executive Team.

4.03 The Executive Team shall set the date and location of the next General Meeting at the end of the current General Meeting, selecting a date and location that serves the membership best in consultation with RCN Churches which have facilities and the ability to provide virtual attendance for members who require it.

4.04 The Executive Team shall provide at least four weeks notice to the members if there is a change to the date and or location of a scheduled General Meeting.

Special General Meetings

4.05 A Special General Meeting may be called for by a vote of the members at a General Meeting, or by the Executive Team between General Meetings, or upon the written request of six (6) Voting Members or

Elder Delegates representing at least two (2) RCN Churches. This Special General Meeting may take place only online, at the discretion of the Executive Team.

4.06 At least four weeks notice must be given for a Special General Meeting.

Agenda

4.07 The Executive Team is responsible for setting the agenda of a Members' Meeting according to the formats specified in the Policy Manual. Any four (4) Voting Members or Elder Delegates representing at least two (2) RCN Churches can add an agenda item(s) if 30 days notice is given before the setting of the agenda. New Business can be added to the agenda by any voting members present at a Members' Meeting by a Special Resolution (2/3) vote of the members.

4.08 The Clerk is responsible for circulating an agenda and any reports at least two (2) weeks in advance of a Members' Meeting.

DIRECTORS AND OFFICES

The Election of Directors to Offices

5.01 The members shall elect Directors at the spring General Meeting in years when any Directors' term of office ends or when a vacancy of such office must be filled. Candidates are Pastors and Ecclesiastical Officers who are elders. The members by electing these Directors are simultaneously electing Directors to a specific Office, the sum of Officers in these Offices compose the Executive Team. There shall be one election for each Director which corresponds to the Office being filled.

Offices

5.02 The Offices to which Directors shall be elected are: President, Vice President, Clerk, Ministry Teams Leader(s) and Treasurer.

Requirements

5.03 In addition to the requirement for a Director provided in the Act, a Director must have been ordained or commissioned as a Pastor or Elder for at least one year at the time of their election.

The Election of Directors to the Office of Vice-President and President

5.04 At the first General Meeting of the RCN the members shall elect two Directors, one to each of the Offices of President and Vice-President. The Director elected to the office of President shall have a term of four-years. The Director elected to the office of Vice-President shall have a term of six-years with the first four-years of their term in the Office of Vice-President followed by a two-year term in the Office of President. After the first General Meeting of the RCN Directors shall only be elected to the Office of Vice-President for a term of four-years. For the first two years of this term, they shall be in the Office of Vice-President followed by a two-year term in the Office of President. A Director who completes their term as Vice-President and President may be re-elected to a four-year term as a Director starting in the Office of Vice-President.

5.05 If a Director who is in the Office of President ceases to be a Director and vacates the Office of President before the end of their term, the Vice President shall immediately vacate the Office of Vice-President and complete the remainder of their own four-year term as a Director in the Office of President

5.06 If a Director who is in the Office of Vice-President ceases to be a Director and/or vacates the Office of Vice-President before the end of their term a new Director shall be elected to the Office of Vice-President with a term length that will ensure they will serve in the Office of Vice-President until the end of the new President's term and subsequently serve two-years in the Office of President.

The Election of Directors to the Office of Ministry Teams Leader(s), Clerk, and Treasurer

5.07 A Director(s) shall be elected to the Office of Ministry Teams Leader(s) for a term of two-years and is eligible to be re-elected as a Director to this same Office for an indefinite number of terms.

5.08 A Director shall be elected to the Office of the Clerk for a term of two-years and is eligible to be re-elected as a Director to this same Office for an indefinite number of terms.

5.09 A Director shall be elected to the Office of the Treasurer for a term of two-years and is eligible to be re-elected as a Director to this same Office for an indefinite number of terms.

Meeting Chair and Deciding Vote

5.10 The Director in the Office of the President shall Chair the Board meetings, the General Meetings, and the Executive Team meetings and as such in addition to their own vote they shall have a second deciding vote to be used only when a tie of cast votes occurs in these meetings.

Fiduciary Responsibility and Directors Insurance

5.11 The Directors shall fulfill the duties of their Offices as laid out in the Policy Manual. Furthermore, having fiduciary responsibility for the RCN the Directors shall have all the rights and responsibilities of Directors as specified in the Act unless specified otherwise in these By-Laws. The RCN is to at all times ensure that a Directors insurance policy is in place with adequate coverage for any real or potential liability they may face for being a Director of the RCN.

Executive Team

5.12 The Directors occupying the Offices of the RCN shall govern and run the RCN as the Executive Team. As the Executive Team they shall organize and govern the affairs of the RCN in a manner determined by them if not determined by the Act or specified in the Policy Manual.

5.13 Decisions made by the Executive Team in the execution of their duties between General Meetings, which significantly and materially affect the RCN, shall be ratified at the next General Meeting of the RCN.

FINANCES

Assessments

6.01 Annual Assessments shall be levied upon the RCN Churches at a rate of not less than 1.5% of the previous year's congregational expenditures not including missions disbursements outside of

congregational use. The next year's percentage shall be recommended by the Executive Team and voted on at the spring General Meeting.

6.02 Assessment relief may be granted by the RCN under special circumstances as outlined in the Policy Manual.

6.03 Assessments shall be paid to the Treasurer quarterly.

DISSOLUTION AND DISTRIBUTION

6.04 In the event of dissolution or winding up of the RCN, all remaining assets after payment of liabilities, shall be distributed to one or more recognized charitable Societies in Canada with similar purposes, as determined by the members.

6.05 Notwithstanding the provision on Dissolution in these By-Laws, upon dissolution and after payment of all debts and liabilities, all remaining assets shall be distributed or disposed of to a qualified donee described in Subsection 149.1(1) of the *Income Tax Act*.

C. COVENANT STATEMENT ON BELIEF AND PRACTICE

Introduction¹

The Reformation Canada Network (RCN) gives itself wholeheartedly to kingdom mission and vision, and, for that reason, we are convinced that we must defend those areas of faith and life which are being challenged in our day. This Covenant states clearly where we stand on the core faith issues involved, and we bind ourselves together to uphold whole-heartedly the evangelical truths presented herein.² The annual attestation of this *Covenant Statement* by RCN members, local church officers, and other ministry leaders, is viewed as another level of Scriptural compliance beyond that of the historic Reformed Creeds and Doctrinal Standards, namely, the Apostles' Creed, the Nicene Creed, the Athanasian Creed, the Heidelberg Catechism, the Belgic Confession, and the Canons of Dort.

Outline

1. Essential Christian Truth
2. Faith Issues Under Attack
 - a. The authority and interpretation of Scripture³
 - b. The Application of Scripture
 - i. The creation and fall of man
 - ii. The uniqueness of Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour
 - iii. Marriage and Sexual Morality
 - c. Confessional and Scriptural Integrity
3. Pastoral Considerations
4. Implications for Office Bearers
5. The Commitments as Office Bearers
6. The Amending Formula

1. Essential Christian Truth (Source Regent-College.edu)

- i. The sovereignty and grace of God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit in creation, providence, revelation, redemption, and final judgement.
- ii. The divine inspiration of Holy Scripture and its consequent entire trustworthiness and supreme authority in all matters of faith and conduct.
- iii. The universal sinfulness and guilt of human nature since the fall, bringing everyone under God's wrath and condemnation.
- iv. The substitutionary sacrifice of the incarnate Son of God as the sole ground of redemption from the guilt, penalty, and power of sin.
- v. The justification of the sinner by the grace of God through faith alone in Christ crucified and risen from the dead.
- vi. The illuminating, regenerating, indwelling, and sanctifying work of God the Holy Spirit in the believer.
- vii. The unity and common priesthood of all true believers, who together form the one universal Church, the Body of which Christ is the Head.
- viii. The expectation of the personal, visible return of the Lord Jesus Christ.

2. Faith Issues Under Attack

a. The Authority and Interpretation of Scripture

- We CONFESS that the Bible, from Genesis to Revelation, is revelation given by God, and is therefore to be received as the authoritative Word of God.

- We CONFESS that the Bible is true and reliable in all matters it addresses, whether spiritual or secular.
- We REJECT the view that the Bible receives its authority from the church, or that the authority of the church can at any time and in any part supersede that of the Bible.
- We REJECT the view that some or much of the Bible is the result of fallible human insight, and therefore may need correction.
- We BELIEVE that we rightly follow in the footsteps of the Reformers when we seek to understand Scripture according to its literary genre, in its grammatical and historical context, and by drawing out any larger implications in light of the whole of Scripture.
- We BELIEVE, with the Reformers, that while God's revelation within the Bible unfolded gradually over time, it is always internally consistent because it comes from the same divine source.
- We REJECT the legitimacy of any method of interpretation that looks for themes, such as the love of God or the justice of God, which are then used as a master key to interpret the Bible, overriding Scripture teachings that seem to be in conflict with the master theme.
- We REJECT any treatment of the biblical text that leads to relativizing or discounting its plain meaning, or that denies the unity of Scripture and sets up one passage or theme of Scripture over against another, making the Bible contradict itself.
- We REJECT any practice of interpretation that denies the self-sufficiency of Scripture as the only rule of faith and life.

b. The Application of Scripture

- We CONFESS that the Bible, as God's authoritative Word, needs to be believed in all that it affirms, and obeyed in all that it requires. The truths of Scripture demand both doctrinal faithfulness and behavioral holiness. In this Covenant we will limit ourselves to those areas of faith and life that we perceive to be most compromised at this time.

i. The Creation and Uniqueness of Human Beings

- We CONFESS that human beings are created by God and are unique in having been made in His image.
- We CONFESS, therefore, that human life is sacred from conception to grave and therefore the taking of life, other than that which is biblically justified, is sin.
- We CONFESS that God's creation was good in every respect until the human race, represented by Adam and Eve, rebelled against God's authority and plan, and fell into sin.
- We REJECT the view that human beings are the product of a chance process of evolution. We deny every philosophy, worldview or understanding of the human predicament, nature and destiny that is based on the presupposition of chance evolution.

ii. The Uniqueness of Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour

- We CONFESS that Jesus Christ is the eternal Son of God, of one substance with the Father and the Holy Spirit, and the unique mediator between God and humankind.
- We CONFESS that for the sake of our fallen human race He emptied Himself and became human flesh in order to reveal the full nature of God, to destroy the works of the devil and to take upon Himself the punishment due to us for our sin by His death on the cross. We believe that He rose from the dead in a new and glorified body, that God appointed Him as the Head of the church, and that He will be revealed as Lord of all when He returns personally and visibly to establish the full manifestation of the Kingdom of God on a renewed earth. We believe that the church has been entrusted with the mandate of sharing the Good News of God's saving action in Jesus Christ with all peoples of the earth, regardless of race, creed, culture, or moral condition.

- We REJECT the view that there is salvation outside of Jesus Christ, or that there is saving knowledge of God in other religious traditions.

iii. Marriage and Sexual Morality

- We CONFESS that marriage is between one man and one woman. Jesus affirmed this view when He quoted from Genesis 2:24, saying, “*For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh*” (Matthew 19:5).
- We CONFESS that any understanding, form, or expression of marriage other than what God has instituted is outside of God’s revealed will.
- We DENY that a male and female are to be defined beyond the natural, biological, and genetic distinctions found in Scripture and natural revelation.
- We CONFESS that all Christians, regardless of cultural conditioning or alleged genetic causation are called to holy living according to all the explicit standards of Scripture and need to resist the desires of body and mind that are contrary to God’s revealed will. In the area of sexual morality this means that Christians are called to fidelity within marriage, and to chastity before and after marriage.
- We DENY that the church may lower God’s standards of sexual morality for any of its members, or that those standards themselves can be modified in any way on the basis of changing perspectives or the demands of a dominant culture.
- We CONFESS that our primary and ultimate identity is as a new creation in Christ (II Corinthians 5:17).
- We DENY that Christians can base their identity on anything outside of the biblical norm (I Corinthians 6:9-11), that is, we name our sins, but are not named by them.⁴

c. Confessional and Scriptural Integrity

- We CONFESS our faith as a confessional church, guided by the Reformed Confessions, yet owing a higher allegiance to the Scriptures than to the Confessions. We are an *Ecclesia Reformata* - a Church Reformed, according to the Word of God. We are also *sed semper reformanda* - always reforming according to the Word of God. While we acknowledge a tradition of vigorous theological inquiry, we are limited to reforming only according to the Word of God if we are to maintain confessional and Scriptural integrity. This is nonnegotiable.
- We REJECT any doctrinal change or alleged reform which undermines our confessional and scriptural integrity and introduces ambiguity into our theological heritage. We resolve to maintain and defend our heritage of faith vigorously, in humble dependence upon the Word of God, and, in a spirit of openness, praying that God will yet cause “more truth to break forth from His Holy Word” (John Robinson, 1620).

3. Pastoral Considerations

As we have, in this *Covenant Statement*, confronted beliefs that impact people struggling with these matters, we observe the following.

- i. We are all broken people living in a broken world in need of the grace of God.
- ii. God hates sin precisely because He loves sinners; that is why He sent His Son to bear sin and save sinners.
- iii. What God commands expresses His nature, and we are made in His image; therefore, to approve of sin is to promote misery, and to urge repentance is to pursue the wholeness God desires for all.
- iv. For that reason, we purpose to deal with all people in gracious and respectful ways, so as to be used by the Holy Spirit to draw people through conviction into repentance, rather than in a spirit of self-righteous legalism to repel people through condemnation into further rebellion.

4. Implications for Office Bearers

This *Covenant Statement* has implications especially for our office bearers. As Pastors and elders, we have been entrusted with guarding the purity of the church. We are identified as a Reformation Church because we believe that the marks of a true church can be known: the pure preaching of the Gospel, the pure administration of the sacraments as instituted by Christ, the exercise of church discipline in punishing of sin; and the rejection of all things in the church that are managed contrary to the pure Word of God (Belgic Confession, Art. 29). We are not at liberty limiting ourselves to the pure preaching of the Word while refraining from rejecting what is false, and from exercising proper church discipline. Nor are we at liberty limiting ourselves to our local churches while refraining from speaking out when we see our confessional integrity compromised, either within the RCN itself or in designated ecumenical association.

5. The Commitments as Office Bearers

- We AFFIRM that all present and future office bearers (Pastors, elders, and deacons) within our churches are bound by the application of these words as found in this *Covenant Statement*.
- We COMMIT to presenting this *Covenant Statement* to all incoming office bearers, new ministry staff, and students coming under supervision, in order that they may also affirm it together with us.
- We COMMIT ourselves to an annual reaffirmation of this *Covenant Statement*, both at our first General Meeting of the year, and in our Church Councils prior to that meeting.
- We COMMIT ourselves individually, should we come to believe differently than what we have bound ourselves to herein, to submit ourselves to the counsel, admonition, and discipline of the RCN, always ready to give an account of our understanding of the Christian faith.
- We COMMIT ourselves corporately to the exercise of proper church discipline regarding the matters addressed in this *Covenant Statement*. We will, as warranted, exercise pastoral discipline through admonishment or rebuke, and further steps of judicial discipline through suspension, deposition from office, or excommunication.

I AGREE TO THE SHARED STATEMENTS AND THE EVANGELICAL TRUTHS PRESENTED IN THIS *COVENANT* AND WILL FULFILL MY MINISTRY IN ALIGNMENT WITH THEM AND WILL ONLY HIRE OR PLACE A LEADER IN MINISTRY WHO WOULD ALSO AFFIRM THIS *COVENANT*.

Signature

Name

Role

Date

COVENANT FOOTNOTES:

¹ Historical background: The original version of this Covenant was created in 1999 to address underlying core issues of Scripture interpretation and confessional integrity.

² We take to heart the challenge given by Martin Luther, the Reformer, in a statement drawn from his correspondence: *“If I profess with the loudest voice and clearest exposition every portion of the truth of God except precisely that little point that the world and the devil are at that moment attacking, I am not confessing Christ, however boldly I may be confessing Christ. Where the battle rages fiercely is where the loyalty of the soldier is proved, and to be steady on all the battlefield besides is mere flight and disgrace if he flinches at that point.”*

³ For further study see the *Chicago Statement on Biblical Inerrancy* – 1978

⁴ Report of the Ad Interim Committee on Human Sexuality (Presbyterian Church in America, 2021) by a committee of seven leaders including Timothy Keller and Kevin DeYoung. STATEMENT 9: IDENTITY (p. 13) *“To juxtapose identities rooted in sinful desires alongside the term “Christian” is inconsistent with Biblical language and undermines the spiritual reality that we are new creations in Christ (2 Cor. 5:17). Nevertheless, being honest about our sin struggles is important. While Christians should not identify with their sin so as to embrace it or seek to base their identity on it, Christians ought to acknowledge their sin in an effort to overcome it. There is a difference between speaking about a phenomenological facet of a person’s sin-stained reality and employing the language of sinful desires as a personal identity marker. That is, we name our sins, but are not named by them.”*

<https://pcaga.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/AIC-Report-to-48th-GA-5-28-20-1.pdf>