

# Beit Chesed Messianic Congregation Constitution as of *August 2014*



*The House of Lovingkindness*

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# **Constitution and By-laws of Beit Chesed Messianic Congregation (BCMC) (The House of Loving Kindness)**

## **PREAMBLE**

Beit Chesed Messianic Congregation (BCMC) has been in a rebuilding mode for the last few years. BCMC began as a Torah Study in the home of Max and Delores Tepper and grew to a small congregation incorporated in the state of MO on the 7<sup>th</sup> of July 2000. Later BCMC was meeting for Shabbat services and Torah study at Dorsett Village Church. After losing a large percentage of membership, and in anticipation of more of the leadership moving out of state, the board of elders asked Pastor Jake Rosen to begin teaching. He helped conduct services in that same location for well over a year. Max Tepper passed away and Jake Rosen was asked to lead BCMC. After some time it became apparent that the congregation would need to make profound changes in order to continue. At a Passover Seder in 2010 an invitation was extended to join an effort to grow BCMC. The venue and format moved to a more informal Friday evening service. We began meeting in the Clayton Community Church building at 2501 Rockford Avenue on April 30, 2010.

We have maintained weekly Shabbat and Holidays Services intending to grow BCMC into a mature, healthy, self supporting congregation. Presently, we have one Elder and one Deacon. As we grow in numbers and maturity we intend to add additional Deacons and Elders since a plurality of Elders in the leadership is the model we find in the Bible. It is our hope that adopting this constitution would serve to help us toward that goal and help guide our congregation to maintain a unified vision.

May the Lord use this constitution to help us "maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace".

We, the members of Beit Chesed Messianic Congregation located in suburban St. Louis, Missouri, do voluntarily submit ourselves to the following Articles in order to glorify Messiah Yeshua (Jesus) by helping BCMC to achieve its stated goals.

## **ARTICLE ONE — MISSION STATEMENT**

God has called Beit Chesed Messianic Congregation (BCMC) to be a place where we remember that Yeshua (Jesus) came to "the lost sheep of the house of Israel". Over the years Christianity has lost sight of the fact that Jesus (Yeshua) said, "salvation is of the Jews". BCMC is committed to living out our faith in Jesus in Jewish ways to clarify this truth.

Because we believe you can be Jewish and believe in Jesus. We worship, pray, raise our children and build up our community in Jewish ways because Jesus is the *Jewish* Messiah. We do this in a congregational setting because being Jewish is traditionally passed on in community *l'dor v'dor* which means *from generation to generation*. A message results from our act of meeting together regularly in this way: ***God has not forgotten His people or His promises.*** We want to provide a safe and healthy environment where Jews and Gentiles can grow in their faith in Jesus the Jewish Messiah.

## **ARTICLE TWO — VISION STATEMENT**

*“Pass through, pass through the gates! Prepare the way for the people. Build up, build up the highway! Remove the stones. Raise a banner for the nations (Isaiah 62:10).”* What are these stones? Our challenge is to clear a path for people to connect with God. In order to do that we need to get certain stones out of the way, stones that distract Jewish people from considering Yeshua. Stones like fear of ostracism from the traditional Jewish community, and the loss of Jewish identity and family. The history of Christianity is replete with stones like anti-semitism that

should be addressed. The way we conduct ourselves can also get in the way. Also, the lack of clarity in communicating the Message of the good news, that Salvation is a gift purchased for all, Jew and Gentile, by the Messiah and offered freely to all who receive Him. A particularly weighty stone is the false idea that “You can’t be Jewish and believe in Jesus.” What we do together as a congregation can help free Jewish truth seekers to consider faith in the claims of Messiah *apart from* the false assumption that accepting Jesus means forfeiting one’s Jewish identity. Faith in Jesus is a Jewish option. Jewish believers in Jesus who don't

think their Jewishness is relevant is a stone as well. We try to help Jewish believers to work out their Jewish identity in the body of Messiah. Gentile believers need to learn what the apostle Paul meant by the phrase “*to make them jealous*” in Romans 11:11. Gentiles are to come alongside the “*natural branches*” working humbly together to glorify God. Only then will we effectively “*Raise a banner for the nations*” building a highway together for our God (Isaiah 62:10).

## **THE STONE OF A CHRISTIAN CULTURAL BOX**

Clear communication happens through the culture of the people we want to speak to. Jesus was born into the world to connect to us on every level. Language was part of it but His “*incarnation*” teaches us how we should effectively communicate God's truth. He became part of and spoke through 1<sup>st</sup> century Israeli culture. Jewish people are a culturally diverse people who should not be put in a *Christian cultural box*. We can't assume that if we say particular words in the right order, Jewish people will “*get the message*”. If you ask a Jewish person the question “Have you accepted Jesus as your personal savior?” They will most probably not know what you are talking about. Some people call this use of language “Christianese”. We should endeavor to communicate God's love in caring, clear and creative ways. For instance, the cross is a loving symbol to Christians the world over, but many in the Jewish community see in it a history of persecution. We want to present the message that a

personal faith in the Messiah's death and resurrection is *the only way*, using meaningful symbols that communicate God's loving truth.

## **THE STONE OF THE LOSS OF JEWISH IDENTITY**

Because there is a prevailing attitude that you can't be Jewish and believe in Yeshua, it is vitally important that we demonstrate that *you can* be Jewish and believe in Jesus. Therefore, we praise God using liturgy, music, dance, drama and instruction to reflect the reality that Jewish believers in Jesus never stop being Jewish. Whether in mourning or happy occasions, there are Jewish ways to do things. As long as Yeshua is the center of attention at Beit Chesed, all is fair game. Besides, Christianity is Jewish—

understanding that helps us all understand the Scriptures! Worshiping God in a Jewish way makes sense for many Christians who love their Jewish savior.

At BCMC a Jewish believer should come to realize the significance their Jewish identity holds. Often through exposure to erroneous replacement theologies, Jewish believers don't see the need to continue to recognize their Jewishness. The practical reality is there are not many Jewish believers. Romans 11: 15 emphasizes that the Jewish acceptance of the gospel would mean “life from the dead”. That sounds pretty significant! When Jewish believers come together at a service, it makes a statement; that a Jewish person can accept Jesus as Messiah and not deny their Jewish heritage.

## **THE STONE OF FEAR**

Fear of ostracism from the traditional Jewish community is real. Believers in Jesus can't be buried in an Orthodox Jewish cemetery Many have been cut off completely from family and considered dead. Therefore these costs need to be understood by everyone involved. Beit Chesed means “House of Loving kindness” and practically speaking our congregation may need to become a family to those who undergo this

type of ordeal. Rejection by friends and family is common. We should provide wise counsel to our brothers and sisters during such times and help them to have wisdom in the way they explain their faith to those close to them. The events BCMC hosts should be designed with love, extending hospitality that offers a bridge of understanding to help save these relationships. Yeshua does warn us all to “*count the cost*” (**Luke 14:28**). and we are commanded to “*mourn with those who mourn*” (**Romans 12:15**)

## **THE STONE OF CONGREGATIONAL CLARITY**

The walls of hostility are broken down in Messiah, and Jew and Gentile are one; so there should be no elevation of any member of the body of Messiah, whether Jew or Gentile. The Bible teaches that “... *the gifts and calling of God are irrevocable*” (**Romans 11:29**). In this context, the “*gifts and calling*” are who God made you— whether Jew or Gentile. Gentiles do not need to “convert to being Jewish,” and Jewish believers do not need to “set their Jewishness aside.” All believers have “converted” from sin to faith in Messiah, not from who God made us in the first place. As we worship, we strive to avoid confusion by being clear about who we are individually— whether Jew or Gentile; male or female; God uses our particularity to glorify His name. (Romans 1:16)

## **THE STONE OF ANTI-SEMITISM OVERCOME BY LOVE**

We will endeavor to create a space that invites the Spirit of the Living God to meet with all the people He loves. Jesus did this successfully in a Jewish context; maybe we can too! Jesus quoted, “*V'ahavta l'reacha kamocha (Love your neighbor as yourself)*”. As the scriptures predicted, the Messiah Jesus was rejected by the leadership of Israel. Numerically, the body of believers in Jesus became less Jewish as Gentile adherents to the faith multiplied. Eventually, Christianity didn't look very Jewish at all. Possibly as a result of Jewish opposition to the claims of Christianity, Jews have been maligned, their property seized,

their Talmudim burned and whole communities have been decimated. We believe this factor has been detrimental to the proclamation of the good news of Salvation. The historical Church has had a big problem in this area of obedience with regard to the Jewish people. We will try to “*speak the truth in love.*” (Ephesians 4:15). Jesus (Yeshua) said, “salvation is of the Jews”. BCMC is committed to living out our faith in Jewish ways grounded in the revealed word of God.

The book of Revelation describes a scene in heaven where people from every nation, tribe and tongue will worship Yeshua, Jesus, together (Revelation 7:9). We should reflect that heavenly reality of various peoples praising God in their own languages and in harmony here on earth while maintaining fidelity to our specific calling to the Jewish people.

## **THE STONE OF INAPPROPRIATE SELF-CONDUCT**

According to Leo Rosten, author of *The Joys of Yiddish*, a "mensch" is "someone to admire and emulate, someone of noble character". The key to being 'a real mensch' is nothing less than character, rectitude, dignity, a sense of what is right, responsible, decorous."

We envision that one day all members of BCMC will not only embody the meaning a mensch, but live out the reality the Apostle Peter speaks of: “*His divine power has given us everything we need for life and godliness through our knowledge of him who called us by his own glory and goodness*” (2 Peter 1:3). It is vital that all BCMC members “*make every effort to add to your faith goodness; and to goodness, knowledge; and to knowledge, self-control; and to self-control, perseverance; and to perseverance, godliness; and to godliness, brotherly kindness, and to brotherly kindness, love. For if you possess these qualities in increasing measure, they will keep you from being ineffective and unproductive....*”(2 Peter 1:5-8).



This “stone” that gets in the way can be us. It's important that we conduct ourselves with graciousness towards any unbelievers that are courageous enough to attend one of our functions. It's hard to get people to come in the first place. We shouldn't overwhelm them. We should “be quick to listen and slow to speak” (James 1:19). We are God's household and we should be hospitable. We should ask questions and learn about them. When Jesus conversed with the two on the road to Emmaus after He rose from the dead, He “*acted as though He were going farther. But they urged him saying 'stay with us.'*” (Luke 24:28-29). He didn't tell them everything and left them wanting more. That's the impression we want a visitor to come away with when they leave a meeting.

### **NOW GOD CAN *BUILD THE HIGHWAY WITH “LIVING STONES”***

*“Pass through, pass through the gates! Prepare the way for the people. Build up, build up the*

*highway! Remove the stones. Raise a banner for the nations (Isaiah 62:10).”*

*We are living stones, growing and building each other up (1 Peter 2:4,5).* Now that the stones are out of the way, we can begin construction! The Bible instructs us to “*... grow in the grace that is in Messiah Yeshua*” (2 Peter 3:18).

- We need to start with a firm foundation understanding that we are saved *by grace*, through faith [(i.e., through God's efforts, not our own; it is the gift of God (Ephesians 2:8-9)] and that we mature *by grace* as well (Galatians 3:2, 3). The Bible instructs us that we are sinners in need of salvation *by grace*, through faith.
- We need to grow together towards maturity in a bond of love that builds community by praying for, helping and mentoring one another, being and making disciples of Yeshua.

- We should treat our brothers and sisters with respect by resolving disagreements, grudges and misunderstandings by first “judging ourselves”(Matthew 7:1-5) and then directly approaching the person/s with whom we have an issue (Matthew 18:15). BCMC leadership is available to help, but just as we expect children to grow-up and solve their own problems, so our hope is that issues of personality and power-struggles won't arise in the first place (“judge yourselves”) but when they do, they will be quickly attended to by the parties involved.
- We need to grow leaders by giving ministry responsibility to those who display faithfulness, helping them to succeed and encouraging them through failure, to learn from it and grow (Romans 5:3-5).
- We need to grow in our love of Israel, the Jewish people and Jewish styles of worship.
- We need to provide Jewish/Christian rites of passage (e.g., Bris [circumcision] or Naming, Hebrew lessons, Bar-Bat Mitzvah, Weddings, Funerals, sitting Shiva and Yahrzeit [yearly memorial of someone’s passing away]).
- We need to help Jewish children grow by teaching them God's Word, providing a Jewish education, and modeling His word in our lives.
- We should encourage families to remain intact in a society which is increasingly hostile to marriage. We can't “fix people”, but we can point them to Yeshua.
- We also need to grow through spreading the good news of salvation to those around us, which should result in new baby believers who will also be fruitful and multiply.

- Our congregation's leadership should equip the members to do the work of ministry (Ephesians 4:11) so that the mandate to go “*to the Jew first*” (Romans 1:16) and to “*make disciples of all nations*” (Matthew 28:18) can be effectively pursued in an atmosphere of grace!

In Isaiah 62:10-11 we have the original great commission.

***“Behold the Lord has proclaimed to the end of the earth, Say to the daughter of Zion, 'Lo, your salvation comes...!'”***

## **ARTICLE THREE — STATEMENT OF FAITH**

**We believe** that the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments are divinely inspired, verbally and completely inerrant in the original writings, and of supreme and final authority in all matters of faith and life. (We recognize the value of traditional Jewish literature, but only where it is supported by, or conformable to, the Word of God. We regard those writings as in no way binding upon life or faith.)

**We believe** in one Sovereign God, existing in three persons (Father, Son and Holy Spirit), perfect in holiness, infinite in wisdom, unbounded in power and measureless in love; that God is the source of all creation; and that through the immediate exercise of His power all things came into being.

**We believe** that God the Father is the author of eternal salvation, having loved the world and given His Son for its redemption.

**We believe** that Yeshua (Jesus the Messiah) was eternally pre-existent and is co-equal with God the Father, and that He took on Himself the nature of man through the virgin birth so that He possesses both divine and human natures. He lived a sinless life in perfect obedience to the Torah. He died as a sacrifice instead of us. He was buried and raised back to life in His resurrected body. He ascended into heaven, where He now makes intercession for us as the great High Priest. We look forward to Yeshua’s personal return in power and glory.

**We believe** that the Holy Spirit is co-equal and co-eternal with the Father and the Son, and that He was active in the creation of all things. The Holy Spirit regenerates, sanctifies, baptizes, indwells, seals, illumines, guides and bestows His gifts upon all believers. He convicts the world. “When He comes, He will convict the world of guilt in regard to sin and righteousness and judgment...” (John 16:8).

**We believe** that God created man in His image. Because of the disobedience of our first parents at the Garden of Eden, (1) they lost their innocence, (2) they and their descendants are separated from God, (3) they suffer physical and spiritual death, and (4) all human beings, with the exception of Jesus the Messiah, are born sinners and therefore need a savior.

**We believe** that Yeshua died for our sins, according to the Scriptures, as a representative and substitutionary sacrifice. All who believe in Him are justified, not by any works of righteousness they have done, but by His perfect righteousness and atoning blood shed on the cross. There is no other name under heaven by which we must be saved. One who has accepted Yeshua's payment, believing in their heart He rose bodily from the dead, is "born from above" and may know in this life that he or she is going to heaven and cannot lose that salvation, which is kept by the power of God.

**We believe** that the people of Israel are the physical descendants of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, and that the term *Israel* has been used interchangeably with "the Jews" and "Jewish people" for millennia. The people of Israel exist, and will continue to exist, because of God's unconditional covenant with Abraham. God also gave the land of Israel to the Jewish people, although enjoying that land has always been a privilege. The blessing that comes with “blessing Abraham” is also still in effect, as is the curse associated with “cursing him.” A subset of believing people within Israel is known as “*the remnant*” (Romans 11:5). This minority of true believers within a larger Israel is not a new phenomenon. Presently “*the remnant*” comprises Jewish believers in

Jesus the Messiah. We are also promised that at some time in the future “all Israel will be saved” (Romans 11:25-27). Israel continues to be a blessing to the world.

**We believe** that the Holy Congregation (Church) is not a physical building, nor has it replaced Israel, but is invisible and described in the Bible in various ways: as a body, as a bride, as a household and as a spiritual building or a Holy Temple, with Messiah being the Chief Cornerstone. This “building” is built of stones or bricks which are people—both Jews and Gentiles who acknowledge Jesus as Messiah and Redeemer— and is built on the “foundation of the apostles” (Ephesians 2:20). These Jews and Gentiles together comprise one body and share in spiritual promises in Messiah Yeshua (Ephesians 2:13-19 & 3:6).

**We believe** that Jesus the Messiah will return personally in order to consummate the prophesied purposes concerning His kingdom.

**We believe** in the bodily resurrection of the just and the unjust, the everlasting blessedness of the saved, and the everlasting conscious punishment of the lost.

## **ARTICLE FOUR — MEMBERSHIP**

### **Section 1— Types of Membership**

#### A. Regular Members

We consider as regular members those who are regular in attendance, active in support of the congregation and agree with this constitution, especially the statement of faith (Article Three). We extend regular membership only to persons over 18 years of age. This membership carries with it the opportunity to hold office and participate in congregational meetings. Benefits of membership include Jewish education for children leading to Bar/Bat Mitzvah, messianic naming or dedication of children, weddings and memorial services. *(NOTE: BCMC wishes to extend every courtesy to our members for family events,*

including the free use of the facilities in which the congregation meets. However, if a family event requires that the congregation incur extra costs, it will be necessary for the member to pay those costs.)

## B. Occasional Members

We recognize that not everyone is called to join a messianic congregation, but many who belong to other churches know that being Jewish is important to them and to God. Therefore, they may want to participate with BCMC in a more limited fashion. We would still like to be able to know these occasional members will support the congregation at various holidays and special events. We might also call upon them to help in practical ways because of a specific gift or talent, or perhaps because they are Jewish (e.g., to *sit Shiva* for someone with more orthodox family concerns to help “make a minion” [10 Jewish men are needed to have a prayer service held at the mourner’s home]). Because the occasional member’s primary membership and regular offerings reside in another congregation, the Jewish-Christian education for their children will not be free. Also, rental fees should be expected when the congregational facility is needed for family occasions. Also under section 2A below (Spiritual Support), points 6- 9 should happen at their home congregation.

## **Section 2 — Regular Members’ Responsibilities**

### A. Spiritual Support

Every member should endeavor to faithfully perform the following spiritual responsibilities with the help of God's Holy Spirit:

1. To read the Bible daily and systematically. (Psalm 1)
2. To maintain a daily prayer life including prayer for BCMC leaders and other members. (Ephesians 6:18, 1 Thessalonians 5:17)

3. To execute a personal and public testimony in conformity with godly character. (1 Peter 2:12, Philippians 2:15)
4. To grow in grace and develop a spirit of mutual love, concern, encouragement and bear one another's burdens. (Philippians 2:1-11, Galatians 6:1-2)
5. To endeavor to share their faith with non-believers in accordance with God's love and biblical truth. (Matthew 28:18-20)
6. To participate in the activities of BCMC, being willing to adjust one's schedule to give priority to meeting together as a local body. (Hebrews 10:24-25, Acts 2:42)
7. To be open to being discipled (mentored) and to be trained to disciple others. To be willing to join smaller fellowship meetings (Havurah).
8. To share in Zikkaron (The Lord's Supper) and follow Messiah in Mikvah (water immersion). (Acts 2:38, 1 Corinthians 11:23-26)
9. To seek to identify, develop, and use one's spiritual gifts and abilities, and to seek a place of service within the congregation. (1 Corinthians 12:1, Romans 12:3-8)

## B. Financial Support

Every member shall make regular and proportional financial contributions to BCMC as the Lord provides. The Bible has much to say on this matter, and members should pray and seek the Holy Spirit's guidance with regard to cheerful giving (2 Corinthians 9:7).

## C. Miscellaneous: It is the duty of every member

1. To notify BCMC of any change of address, email or telephone number.
2. To inform us of your sickness, prayer requests and visitation needs.
3. To understand that if you see something that you think is a problem here, and you approach us with it, you should assume that we will probably give you permission to become part of the solution.
4. To not assume that: We're too busy to be bothered, We don't care about you, We are omniscient and should already know your need.

## D. Loving Confrontation

If a member of the congregation has something against another member or is concerned about a sin, they should go directly to the party with the intent of reconciliation. If the matter cannot be resolved there, a person well-respected by both parties should be brought in to help mediate and establish the issues involved, with the same intent. In the case that there is no resolution, the pastors should be brought into the discussion. And finally, in extreme cases of blatant sin, after all these actions happen, the congregation would be involved (Matthew 18:10-20).



# **ARTICLE FIVE – CONGREGATIONAL OFFICERS (PASTORS, DEACONS, AND DEACONESSES)**

## **Section 1 – Biblical Authority Structure**

We believe in the following principles related to congregational governance, as indicated in the New Testament Scriptures shown below:

1. The Head of the universal body of believers is the Messiah Jesus (Ephesians 1:22- 23, 4:15-16, Colossians 1:18). He is the Chief Shepherd (1 Peter 5:4) and is to be glorified in all that the body does.
2. The leadership of the local body consists of a plurality of pastors (see appendix 2). The Bible refers to pastors as overseers and shepherds interchangeably. They are “under shepherds” and will give account to the Chief Shepherd regarding how they have cared for the flock. They are to look to Messiah for wisdom and guidance in caring for the congregation (1 Peter 5:2, Hebrews 13:17). They are also accountable to one another.
3. Deacons (servants) were first appointed in Acts chapter 6 for the purpose of keeping the growing body of believers functioning smoothly. At that time, a fitting job description would have been peacekeepers, problem solvers and servants.
4. The work of the ministry of the local congregation is effectively carried out by its members. They are to recognize and follow their appointed leaders as they would the Messiah Jesus. The primary job of leadership is to equip and train these ministers. Each member is gifted by the Holy Spirit to make a contribution to the growth of the local body of Messiah, which is necessary and not optional for each member if the body is to be built up (1 Corinthians 4:1; 12:4-7, Ephesians 4:16, Hebrews 13:7, 1 Peter 4:10-11).

## Section 2 — Pastors

### A. Their Position

Pastors are to lead according to the will of God as found in the Word of God, not lording it over the body, but being examples.

### B. Their Number

Spiritual authority rests with a plurality of pastors. The evidence of the New Testament points to a plurality of pastors in the local congregations (see appendix 2). This establishes a basis for avoiding the concept of a single man with total authority and responsibility as the sole leader. A plurality of pastors leads to a distribution of authority and responsibility that more nearly corresponds to the Jewish community from which the office of pastor was originally adopted. The number of pastors should not be set according to any fixed form or tradition, but should rather be based on the needs of BCMC and the presence of qualified individuals.

### C. Their Qualifications (1 Timothy 3:2-7, Titus 1:6-9)

- 1. Above Reproach.** Pastors must be blameless, presenting no patterns of Scriptural disobedience or grounds for accusation.
- 2. Husband of One Wife.** Pastors must be “one-woman men.” They must be devoted and faithful spouses if married, chaste and not flirtatious if unmarried.
- 3. Temperate.** Pastors must be self-controlled, enslaved to nothing, and free from excesses.
- 4. Prudent.** Pastors must be somber, sensible, wise, balanced in judgment, not given to quick, superficial decisions based on immature thinking.

- 5. Respectable.** Pastors must demonstrate a well-ordered life and good behavior.
- 6. Hospitable.** Pastors must be unselfish with their personal resources. They must be willing to share blessings with others.
- 7. Able to Teach.** Pastors must be able to communicate the truth of God and sound doctrine in a non-argumentative way.
- 8. Not Addicted to Wine.** Pastors must be free from addictions, and must be willing to limit their liberty for the sake of others.
- 9. Not Pugnacious.** Pastors must be gentle, characterized by forbearance and tenderness, and not having a quick temper.
- 10. Not Contentious.** Pastors must not be given to quarreling or selfish argumentation.
- 11. Free From the Love of Money.** Pastors must not be stingy, greedy or out for sordid gain. They should not be preoccupied with amassing material things, but rather should be models of giving.
- 12. Manage Own Household.** Pastors must have a well-ordered household, a healthy family life, and well behaved children. (Pertains to children still under the authority of their parents.)
- 13. Not a New Believer.** Pastors must have been believers for long enough to demonstrate the reality of their redemption and the depth of their spirituality.

- 14. Good Reputation with Outsiders.** Pastors must be well respected by unbelievers, and must be free from hypocrisy.
- 15. Not Self-Willed.** Pastors must not be stubborn, insensitive or prone to forcing their opinions on others. They must be more interested in service than self-pleasure.
- 16. Not Quick-Tempered.** Pastors must be able to exercise self-control and patience in difficult situations.
- 17. Loves What is Good.** Pastors must desire the will of God in every decision.
- 18. Just.** Pastors must be fair and impartial. Their judgments must be based on Scriptural principles.
- 19. Devout.** Pastors must be reverent, continually desiring to be separated from sin. They must be devoted to prayer, the study of Scripture, and the guarding of their own spiritual walk.
- 20. Holding Fast the Faithful Word.** Pastors must be stable in the faith, obedient to the Word of God, continually seeking to be controlled by the Holy Spirit.

#### D. Their Specific Duties

The division of labor of the oversight of BCMC is for the pastors to decide.

Pastors should be committed to the goals and unique character and function of BCMC. They should be sensitive to the needs of both Jewish and Gentile believers. They should be thoroughly prepared to engage in this work of ministry as a livelihood if it is apparent that the congregation needs them full time and is able to support them. Pastors should not micromanage tasks unrelated to their primary functions of

teaching the Word of God and prayer. Pastors may choose members who have various gift mixes to administer various programs and ministries. Delegation is an opportunity to test and train leadership. To burden pastors unduly with functions that can be performed by other members is to rob them of study time and devotion to the Word (Acts 6:2-4). All aspects of congregational life are important, but the pastors' primary responsibility is to train up members for service (Ephesians 4:11-12) rather than to be personally involved in all areas.

Pastors shall meet regularly to provide consistent, unified leadership. They shall prepare minutes of each meeting to document the date, time and place of the meeting, and names of attendees. The minutes will also summarize the results of discussion and decisions reached. The pastors will make the minutes available to the other officers and inform the congregation as much as possible.

Pastors shall plan a calendar of public Jewish/Christian services, providing Mikvah (water immersion) and Zikkaron (The Lord's Supper) as occurred in the New Testament, watching over the spiritual welfare of the congregation, and leading the members in accomplishing the evangelistic and edification goals of BCMC.

Pastor(s) shall have complete responsibility of oversight for the administration of all the business of BCMC. The pastor(s) shall appoint all officers and committees necessary for the fulfillment of BCMC's mission. The pastor(s) are empowered to enter into contracts; establish and maintain bank accounts; buy, sell or lease real and personal property owned by BCMC; erect and maintain buildings; contract for services of all kinds; employ firms, persons and corporations; form societies within BCMC; assist in the formation of new congregations that subscribe to the BCMC statement of faith; direct and supervise any officers of the corporation in the performance of their duties; and make other purchases in accordance with fulfilling the Mission and Vision of BCMC.

However, as wise guardians of the congregation, they shall refrain from making *non-routine* decisions (the definition of "non-routine" is to be

determined at the yearly pastors/deacons meeting, but these would include *large* expansion of facilities or *large* property purchases) without first carefully asking the membership for their input. All officers and staff shall be under the jurisdiction of the pastors.

#### E. What you can expect of BCMC's leadership

The leadership of BCMC should be honest and open to Scripture. They should be accessible and approachable. The pastors shall make their directions and decisions accessible to the congregation. They should be "Diligent to preserve the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace" (Ephesians 4:3). They should be responsible stewards over the precious resources entrusted to their care such as the Word of God, the Gospel, the children, their time, any building and property, offerings. Since leaders are generally "placed on a pedestal" don't be surprised if they get knocked off. The only one who will never disappoint us is the one who forgave us all and taught us to forgive one another as we have been forgiven.

#### F. Their Term of Office

The pastor(s) shall serve for an indeterminate term, subject to their good standing in the congregation and conformity to the biblical qualifications for pastor(s) as given in Section 2C of this article.

#### G. Process for Selecting Pastors

It must be recognized that God alone appoints men to be pastor(s) on the basis of spiritual qualifications and their inward desire. Taking on, and being faithful in, ministry responsibilities is a proving ground, as is leading a family or serving as a deacon; it should become obvious to the pastor(s) and the flock that this calling has been made clear. The pastor(s) shall prayerfully consider any tested candidate and make a selection. The pastor(s) are to be unanimous in all decisions, especially the recognition of pastoral candidates. Those selected as pastor(s) will be presented to the membership at a service of ordination.

When we ordain pastors, we prefer to raise up people from within our congregation. We want to see them “tested” within our midst, rather than have unknown, untested people (with a degree) who can preach a good sermon. We recognize the importance of education in the Jewish community. We encourage as much formal training as God leads and provides the candidate (Bible college, seminary, missions training, colleges and universities). This can be part of the proving ground for candidates, but is not a qualification (see 2C). With a plurality of pastors working in harmony, the congregation would never be without one when and if one were to be incapacitated in some way.

#### H. Pastoral Compensation

It is desirable for one or more of the pastors to serve the congregation full-time if the congregation has the means to compensate them financially. There were times when Paul the Apostle made tents and supported himself by means of his trade; at other times he was fully supported by a congregation. Bearing this in mind, a healthy, self supporting congregation should give adequate financial compensation for this man or these men to make a decent living. Being a healthy, self supporting congregation is what BCMC aspires to (1 Corinthians 9:7-11, 1 Timothy 5:17-18).

1. **Salary.** When the congregation is able to pay a full-time pastor(s), their salary shall be determined by a written agreement. Unanimous vote of the pastors and members of the Deacon Board is required. This salary may be changed by unanimous vote of the pastors and members of the Deacon Board after considering fair compensation and the congregation’s resources. The pastor(s) should not be paid more or less than someone with comparable education & position as represented in the congregation. Full time pastor(s) should not take significant time away from BCMC (e.g., for outside meetings and seminars) without the prior approval of the other pastors. A pastor’s wife should be fairly compensated if expected to be working full- or part-time for the congregation.

2. **Vacation.** The full-time pastors(s) vacation time shall be determined in the written agreement that states their pay. This vacation time may be changed by unanimous vote of the pastors and members of the Deacon Board after considering fair compensation and the congregation's resources.

3. **Sabbaticals** are desirable and should be requested in writing with a plan to the annual combined pastor and deacon meeting. Pastoral board will make the final determination as to matters of duration, compensation, tuition reimbursement or leave of absence depending upon the request and the resources available.

#### I. Their Review and Removal

An individual's service as a pastor may be discontinued by his own decision or by the unanimous decision of the other pastors. A person's voluntarily leaving the Board of Pastors would not preclude his service some time in the future, subject to the regular pastor selection process. In this event, thirty days written notice should be given to the Board of Pastors.

### **Section 3 — Deacons**

#### A. Their Position

Deacon means *servant* and they are to serve in a way that frees the pastors to devote themselves to their priorities, the word of God and prayer (Acts 6:1-4). They were originally raised up to provide a peacekeeping role when there was a dispute in the early church about perceived unfairness in the distribution of benevolence to the Greek speaking and Hebrew speaking widows. Thus they were to help solve important problems having to do with the functioning of the community. Anything that would interfere with the pastor(s) oversight of the congregation should be cared for by the deacons. The deacons are in a position of service responsibilities under the leadership of the pastors and report to them.



## B. Process for Appointing Deacons

1. The congregation recommends candidates. (Acts 6:3)
2. The pastors review the list of candidates and send the approved names to the Board of Deacons.
3. The Board of Deacons determines which candidates will be appointed.

## C. Their Number

The Scriptures display a plurality of deacons (Philippians 1:1, 1 Timothy 3:8, Acts 6:1-6). The Board of Deacons determines the number of deacons that are needed.

## D. Their Qualifications (I Timothy 3:8-12)

1. **Individuals of Dignity.** Deacons must be mature, of sound mind and character, and yielded to the Holy Spirit.
2. **Not Double-Tongued.** Deacons must demonstrate verbal consistency. They must not be prone to saying one thing to one person and something else to another. They must be truthful in all things.
3. **Not Addicted to Wine.** Deacons must be free from addictions, and must be willing to limit their liberty for the sake of others.

4. **Individuals who do not pursue dishonest gain.** Deacons must be purely motivated in their service. They must not be greedy for money.
5. **Holding to the Mystery of Faith With a Clear Conscience.** Deacons must have a sound knowledge of biblical truths and a lifestyle in accord with them. They must not be easily swayed from the truth.
6. **Beyond Reproach.** Deacons must display a lifestyle free from ongoing patterns of Scriptural disobedience.
7. **First Tested.** Deacons must have proven over time that they are faithful and that their walk is credible.
8. **Husband of One Wife.** Deacons must be devoted and faithful spouses if married, chaste and not flirtatious if unmarried.
9. **Manage Own Household.** Deacons must have well-ordered households, a healthy family life and well behaved children. (Pertains to children still under the authority of their parents.)

#### E. Their Duties

Deacon(s) shall fulfill their divine calling by assisting the pastor(s) by performing delegated responsibilities and initiating ministries in areas in which God has gifted them. They are to perform a variety of practical ministries within the congregation, such as: promoting harmony within the congregation, counting the offering and preparing it for bank deposit, as representatives of BCMC caring for the practical and material needs of people (benevolence), serving various roles in worship services, maintaining property and equipment, helping to plan and implement retreats and other activities, and meeting together regularly to carry out a

variety of administrative and congregational affairs. The deacon(s) shall assist the pastor(s) in preparing an annual report for presentation to the congregation at a congregational meeting.

#### F. Their Term of Office

The deacons shall serve for at least a three-year term. After that time they can either 1) resign their position, 2) become inactive for a period of time (six months or a year), or 3) remain and serve with the consent and blessing of the rest of the Deacon Board. We want to guard against burnout from overcommitment.

#### G. Their Review and Removal

An individual's service as a deacon may be discontinued by his own decision or by the unanimous decision of the elders. A person's leaving the Deacon Board would not preclude their service as a future officer, subject to the regular selection process.

### **Section 4 — Deaconesses**

#### A. Their Position

Deaconesses serve the Messiah and His people on the Deacon Board but will have a higher level of involvement in the women's ministries of the congregation (Titus 2:3-5). Their term of office, their selection, their review and renewal are all identical to that of deacons.

#### B. Their Qualifications

Their qualifications—in addition to all the qualifications for deacons listed in section 3D above— include the following from 1 Timothy 3:11:

1. Dignified
2. Not malicious gossips
3. Temperate
4. Faithful

## C. Their Duties

Deaconesses will perform the same duties as deacons.

### **Section 5 — The Deacon Board**

The Deacon Board shall consist of the combined group of deacons and deaconesses. It shall meet regularly as needed to carry out its tasks. The Deacon Board shall prepare minutes of each meeting to document the date, time and place of the meeting, and names of attendees. The minutes will also summarize the results of discussion, decisions reached and recommendations. The Deacon Board submits its minutes to its overseeing pastor, who has the authority to approve and disapprove decisions and recommendations. The overseeing pastor designated by the board of pastors should take care not to “lord it over” and should always grant authority commensurate with responsibilities delegated.

## **ARTICLE SIX — OTHER STAFF**

Salaried employees other than pastors may be employed by the congregation. All employees shall be under the general oversight of the pastors.

Salaries and vacation shall be fixed at the time of employment and may be changed upon the recommendation of the pastors.

The pastors shall approve a written description of duties and responsibilities to be given to each employee.

## **ARTICLE SEVEN —**

### **MEETINGS AND FISCAL YEAR**

Regular public worship service shall be conducted each week. Mikvah (water immersion) services shall be previously announced and held at least once a year, and Zikkaron (The Lord’s Supper) shall be observed at

the first service of the month. The Lord's Supper shall be open to all believers, and it may be celebrated at a service other than the first service of the month if the pastors deem it necessary. Additional regular and special worship opportunities shall be provided in accordance with the Jewish – Christian calendar and needs of the congregation.

Congregational Family Business meetings shall be held at least once a year (preferably in the first quarter) and shall be announced at least thirty (30) days prior to the meeting. An agenda of items to be discussed will be made available at least one week in advance of the meeting. One of the pastors or someone designated by the pastors shall preside at all meetings.

The fiscal year of BC shall begin on the first day of January and end on the thirty-first day of December.

## **ARTICLE EIGHT – AMENDMENTS**

Amendments to the Constitution may be suggested by any regular member at any time. Such suggested amendment must be given to the pastors in writing. In order to amend the Constitution, the pastors first need to approve, and a two-thirds vote of the regular membership at a duly called meeting will also be required. Regular members may vote by proxy.

## **ARTICLE NINE – BY-LAWS**

By-laws may be established, as necessary, to govern the routine operation of BC. By-laws provide the guidelines and regulations necessary to assist the congregation in fulfilling its various purposes, as stated in Article Two above.

A by-law can be established, modified or eliminated by a unanimous vote of the pastors. Although a by-law may be proposed by any regular member or members of BCMC, it must be submitted at least six weeks in advance of a scheduled congregational meeting. With the unanimous

agreement of the pastors, they will revise the wording, if necessary, and present the proposed by-law or by-law modification to the congregation at least two weeks in advance of the congregational meeting. At the scheduled meeting, the regular members present will submit written comments on the by-law as presented by the pastors. In order to be adopted, the proposed by-law or modification must be approved within (30) days by unanimous consent of the pastors after hearing the comments from regular members of the congregation. Every by-law shall be in effect and binding until modified or rescinded by due process as described above. Existing by-laws shall be documented in a printed addendum to this constitution; such an updated copy of the current by-laws will be issued to the membership by the pastors within four weeks of any by-law revision.

### **By-Law for Advisory Council Creation**

In the event that the number of pastors falls below two and there are no qualified pastor candidates available to serve, an Advisory Council will be established. It will consist of men who fulfill the qualifications of deacon as described in article five, section 3D, and women who fulfill the qualifications of deaconesses in article five, section 4B of this Constitution. Their function will be to advise and offer input to the pastors as an advisory body. Their specific duties include meeting with the pastors at least once each calendar quarter.

Their selection process will be the same as deacon selection in article five, section 3B, except that they will not be ordained.

The review and removal of an advisory council member will be the same as outlined for a deacon in article five, section 3G.

The function of this council will terminate when the number of ordained pastors of BC reaches three.

# Appendix 1

## Israel, Gentiles, Body of Messiah

The universal body or fellowship of Messiah is composed of all people, Jewish and Gentile (Ephesians 2:11-15, 1 Corinthians 7:17, 12:12-13), who through faith in Him have been regenerated by the Holy Spirit. It began at Shavuot (Pentecost) with the baptism of the Holy Spirit after the ascension of Yeshua, and it will be completed when He returns (Acts 2:1-4). Membership in the universal body is not based on any earthly organizational affiliation but on faith in Jesus the Messiah (Ephesians 2:11- 15).

This universal fellowship is distinct from Israel though it shares the spiritual blessings of the covenants God made with Israel. The universal body should not be seen as fulfilling nor replacing God's plan for Israel because the gifts and calling of God are irrevocable (Romans 11:28-29, Ephesians 3:10).

The local body is the visible manifestation of the universal body. It is a congregation of believers organized for the purpose of glorifying God through worship, instruction (Acts 2:41-42, Romans 12:4-13, 1 Corinthians 11:16, Ephesians 4:4-16), accountability, fellowship, service and outreach. Whereas entrance into the universal body is based on an act of faith, entrance into the local body is based on an act of volition in obedience to God (Hebrews 10:19-25).

The officers of the local congregation are elders and deacons but the true Head to whom all are ultimately answerable is the Lord Jesus (Ephesians 1:22-23; 2:20-22; 5:23-24, Colossians 1:18, 1 Timothy 3:1-13, Hebrews 10:19-25; 13:7,17)

Israel is distinct from the body of Messiah (the church). Jewish believers, however, have a unique, two-fold identity—first, as the spiritual remnant of the Jewish people (e.g., Joshua and Caleb, two of

the twelve spies sent into the Promised Land were a believing remnant), and second, as part of the body of Messiah (Romans 11:1-5).

God has made unconditional covenants with Israel (Jeremiah 31:31-34) that have remained unfulfilled including the provisions of seed, land and blessing. The seed aspect refers to a descendant who would come to redeem Israel (2 Samuel 7:12-16). The land aspect of the covenant refers to the land of Israel (Genesis 15:17-18; 17:6-9). The blessing aspect of the covenant refers to the blessings of the entire world through Israel and her Messiah (Genesis 12:1-3). God intends to fulfill all His promises to Israel in a literal way, just as His warnings and judgments were fulfilled in a literal way. In the Messianic kingdom (2 Samuel 7:12-16), the Jewish people will know God personally through Messiah Yeshua and will possess the entire land of Israel according to its biblical boundaries (Ezekiel 36:25-28). When Jesus first sent his disciples out to spread the gospel, the Jewish people were given priority (Matthew 10:5-6). It is the believer's duty and privilege to communicate to the Jewish people, the good news of Jesus the Messiah in a bold (Acts 13:46, Romans 1:16) yet sensitive way (1 Corinthians 9:20). It is also the believer's duty to support and love Israel, while opposing anti-Semitism according to the provisions of the Abrahamic Covenant (Numbers 24:9, Romans 9:1-5).

We believe the Law of Moses as a rule of life (Deuteronomy 29:1; 30:10) has been fulfilled in the Messiah (Romans 10:1-4), and therefore, believers, whether Jewish or Gentile, are no longer under its obligation or condemnation (Romans 6:14; 8:2). However, both Jewish and Gentile believers have the freedom in Messiah to maintain those aspects of the Law of Moses and Jewish cultural identity which do not violate Scripture (Acts 21:24-26). Observances of Jewish customs are to focus on biblical truths and are to magnify Yeshua (2 Corinthians 3:1-11). These observances are not nor ever were a means of justification (Galatians 3:11) or sanctification (Galatians 3:1-6) which are by faith alone. Neither are they a source of sinful pride resulting in the re-institution of the dividing wall between Jew and Gentile (Ephesians



2:14-12). Rather, for Jewish believers, these observances can be intrinsically biblical expressions of a God-given Jewish identity. They can also be a means of testifying to God's faithfulness in preserving His remnant of Jewish believers who maintain in belief and practice that you can be Jewish and believe in Yeshua (Jeremiah 31:35-37).

Gentile believers who stand in fellowship with their Jewish brothers and sisters testify to God's love for Israel despite centuries of persecution of Jews by the Christian church. Their presence testifies that the middle wall of partition has indeed been torn down (Ephesians 2:14). Gentiles serving and worshiping in a Messianic congregation is a means of identifying with a Jewish Savior, Jewish apostles and a Jewish Bible which is for the whole world. Since the Holy Congregation, the Body of Messiah is made up of Jews and Gentiles who are one in Him, BC should strive to have both, bringing their gifts together in unity to lift up Jesus, thereby showing the world our love for one another (John 13:34-35).

## **Appendix 2**

### **Plurality of Pastors – Wise words from Baptists in 1846**

Certainly a church may have one elder for a time. But why do our churches go on for years without a plurality of leadership? One reason is because people mistakenly believe that there is to be only one pastor.

W.B. Johnson, the first President of the Southern Baptist Convention (1845), wrote in 1846: In a review of these Scriptures, we have these points clearly made out:

1. That over each church of Christ in the apostolic age, a plurality of rulers was ordained, who were designated by the terms elder, bishop, overseer, pastor, with authority in the government of the flock.

2. That this authority involved no legislative power or right, but that it was ministerial and executive only, and that, in its exercise, the rulers were not to lord it over God's heritage, but as examples to lead the flock to the performance of duty ...

6. That these rulers were all equal in rank and authority, no one having a preeminence over the rest. This satisfactorily appears from the fact, that the same qualifications were required of all, so that though some labored in word and doctrine, and others did not, the distinction between them was not in rank, but in the character of their service...

8. That the members of the flock were required to follow, imitate, the faith of their rulers, in due consideration of the end of their conversation, Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, and today, and forever....

It is worthy of particular attention, that each church had a plurality of elders, and although there was a difference in their respective departments of service, there was a perfect equality of rank among them ("The Gospel Developed Through the Government and Order of the Churches of Jesus Christ," reprinted in Baptist Reformation Review, Vol. 4. Numbers 2 and 3. Summer/Autumn, 1975, pp.29-30).

***Southern Baptists as a whole - along with the bulk of Evangelicals - have departed from Mr. Johnson's summary of New Testament teaching on this matter.***