

MANUAL
OF THE
PEOPLE'S EVANGELICAL
CHURCH,
OF
PROVIDENCE, R. I.

PROVIDENCE :
OFFICE OF BEULAH CHRISTIAN,
1896.

ORGANIZED,
JULY 21, 1887.
INCORPORATED,
FEBRUARY 11, 1888.

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IN DOCTRINE: WESLEYAN;
IN ORGANIZATION AND POLITY:
INDEPENDENT AND CON-
GREGATIONAL.



PREFATORY.

A CHURCH consists of a number of believers who unite themselves by a public profession of the Christian religion, and by mutual covenant, to pray together and watch over one another in love, to maintain the worship and service of God and the ordinances and discipline of the gospel.

Such a company of believers possess all the power which the Lord Jesus Christ has given to his church, and is warranted in exercising, in His name, the authority which he has given in the Scripture for the maintenance of its peace, order and prosperity.

The Church has a right in and of itself, to choose and appoint its own pastor, and such other officers as it may deem necessary in order to its due organization and for its spiritual improvement.

Acknowledging the foregoing as embodying the general principles of church organization and government, we, therefore, whose

names follow,* do now unite together in the following covenant, to be known as the PEOPLE'S EVANGELICAL CHURCH, OF PROVIDENCE, R. I.

COVENANT.

We do now in the presence of the heart-searching God, and before angels and men, avouch the Lord Jehovah to be our God and portion, and we heartily receive the Lord Jesus Christ, for our redeemer and savior, and the Holy Spirit for our teacher and sanctifier. We do wholly renounce the service of Satan, the vain glory of the world with all the covetous desires of the same, and the sinful desires of the flesh, so that we will not follow nor be led by them, and to yield ourselves to God in constant obedience to all the divine commandments. We engage to receive in love the pure doctrines of the Gospel as they are taught in the Holy Scriptures, and we promise to earnestly and prayerfully look to God for full deliverance from all sin, so that we may serve him in

* Members of the Church.

holiness and righteousness all the days of our life.

We now submit ourselves to the government of Christ in his church and to acquiesce cheerfully to such rules and regulations as may be adopted for the promotion of the welfare of the whole Church, always endeavoring to promote unity, purity and love among the entire membership. We do covenant to attend the worship of God and the ordinances of the gospel with this Church, and to contribute to its support regularly and freely of our means, according to our ability, so long as we are members of it, and God continues us in this place.

CONFESSION OF FAITH.

ARTICLE I.

We believe there is one only living and true God, infinite in all his attributes; the Creator, Preserver and Governor of the universe, revealed in the Scriptures as the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost;

that these three are the one God, the same in essence, and equal in every divine perfection.

ARTICLE II.

We believe that the Holy Bible, containing the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments, is the revelation of divine truth, and the record of God's will, from whence we derive all correct knowledge of religious truth and duty; and that it is the only sufficient rule of a Christian's faith and practice.

ARTICLE III.

We believe man was created holy; that he fell from that state by transgression, and that, in consequence of the fall, mankind are by nature destitute of holiness, and inclined to evil and that continually and in all their moral actions sinners against God, and under just condemnation to eternal ruin without defense or excuse.

ARTICLE IV.

We believe that Jesus Christ is both God and man; that by his sufferings and death

he made an atonement for sin, sufficient for all mankind; and that through him salvation is freely offered to all, on condition of repentance and faith; that no one can merit or obtain this salvation, yet good works are pleasing and acceptable to God in Christ, and spring out of a true and living faith, insomuch that by them a lively faith may be as evidently known as a tree is discerned by its fruit.

ARTICLE V.

We believe that all who truly repent of their sins, and believe in Christ, are justified on account of Christ's atoning sacrifice, and are regenerated by the special power of the Holy Spirit, whereby the soul is freed from the dominion of sin and brought into the glorious liberty of the children of God.

ARTICLE VI.

We believe that entire sanctification is that act of the Holy Spirit whereby the justified soul is delivered from inbred sin and made pure in heart; that it is receivable now, by simple faith, enabling the believer

to love God with all his heart, mind, soul and strength, which implies that no wrong temper, none contrary to love remains in the soul; that all the thoughts, words and actions are governed by pure love; that entire sanctification does not exclude ignorance or mistake nor an involuntary transgression of some unknown divine precept.

ARTICLE VII.

We believe that Christ has a visible church in the world, that its ordinances are Baptism and the Lord's Supper; that the Christian Sabbath and the Gospel Ministry are institutions of divine appointment, and that it is the duty of Christians to unite with this visible church and observe its sacred ordinances.

ARTICLE VIII.

We believe that the outward sign in Baptism is water applied in the name of the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Ghost; that the inward grace signified in this ordinance is a death unto sin and a new birth unto righteousness.

ARTICLE IX.

We believe that the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper was ordained by our Lord Jesus Christ for the continual remembrance of the sacrifice of His death, and of the benefits that we thereby receive; that the outward sign is bread and wine; and that the inward grace of this sacrament is the communion of the body and blood of Christ, whereby we are reminded of his sacrificial death and spiritually strengthened to do his will.

ARTICLE X.

We believe that the religious observance of the Sabbath is binding on all, and that any indulgences or avocations on that day that aim at worldly gain or pleasure, rather than at moral and religious improvement, involve a violation of Christian duty.

ARTICLE XI.

We believe in the second coming of Christ at the end of the world; the resurrection of the dead; that God hath appointed a day in the which He will judge the world in

righteousness by that man whom he hath ordained, and that the wicked shall go away into everlasting punishment, but the righteous into life eternal.

STANDING RULES.

1. No person shall become the pastor of this Church by ordination or installation without previously becoming a member of it.

2. The membership of the Church shall be divided into classes and shall meet weekly (except as hereinafter provided) under the charge of devoted leaders. On the ~~Tuesday~~ Tuesday evening before the first Sunday in the month all the classes shall meet together in a covenant meeting.

3. The covenant meeting shall be considered a meeting of the Church and shall have power to decide all matters relating to membership.

4. Persons desiring to unite with the Church by letter must be approved by the Standing Committee and receive a three

fourths vote of those present at the Church meeting when their names are presented, to be entitled to receive the hand of fellowship.

5. Those desiring to unite with the Church on the profession of their faith shall be assigned by the pastor to one of the classes, where they shall continue six months on trial, with all the privileges of members, except the right to hold office and vote in business meetings. At the end of that time they may, if they are approved as suitable candidates, unite with the Church in full, according to the adopted form of admission.

6. Any applicant for membership without a letter, who shall give satisfactory evidence before the Standing Committee of having been a disciple of Christ for the six months just previous to the time of making the application, may be received as one having a letter after the manner prescribed in Rule 4.

7. A member desiring to leave the Church for the purpose of uniting with some other Christian body may be given a certificate of membership, and when said certificate is

deposited with the church of his choice his connection with us shall cease.

8. The object of discipline is the recovery of offending members, the removal of scandals and the purification and edification of the Church, and it is the duty of members of the Church to deal kindly with their brethren concerning many minor offences which ought not to be brought before the Church.

9. In case of some extraordinary offence, where the Church may suffer by delay, direct and summary discipline may be used; in all ordinary cases, however, the process of discipline shall carefully conform to the rule Christ has given (Matt. 18: 15-18); and members with offences shall be held innocent until proved guilty.

10. Violating some moral precept found in the Scriptures, some covenant vow, the profession of opinions opposed to or subversive of the Confession of Faith, or any part of it, neglecting family prayer, unnecessary absence from class meeting or communion, devoting any part of the Sabbath to purposes

of unnecessary work or worldly pleasure, refusing to contribute toward the support of the Church, the sale or use of intoxicating drinks as a beverage, attending any institution, association or place which would encourage the vicious and operate against the good name of the Church, are grounds for Christian admonition and discipline.

11. Any member living in wilful neglect of Church obligations as designated in Rule 10, may be dismissed from membership. On recommendation of the Standing Committee the name of such a person shall be presented to the Church for dismissal, and if no valid objection is made it shall be dropped from the roll. If objection is made so that further consideration appears desirable to a majority present, the Church shall refer the case to the Standing Committee, who shall make such additional examination as may be required, and report to the Church.

12. The decision of all questions that shall come before the Church for considera-

tion, except as otherwise provided, shall be made upon the majority of those present. In the matter of the appointment or dismissal of a pastor, the question shall first be considered and approved by the Standing Committee before it shall be deemed proper business for Church consideration.

13. No alteration shall be made in the Confession of Faith, Covenant, Sunday School Constitution, Standing Rules or rules relating to the duties of officers and committees except by a vote of three-fourths of the members present at a meeting of the Church, such alteration having been approved by the Standing Committee, and public notice of the proposed change having been given from the pulpit on the Sabbath preceding such action.

BUSINESS MEETINGS.

CHURCH.

The annual Church meeting shall be held on the Wednesday before the first Sabbath in January. Special meetings of the Church

shall be called by the clerk, when so directed by the Standing Committee; notice of all such meetings shall be given from the pulpit on the preceding Sunday, and it shall be the duty of the clerk to see that, as far as practicable, all members receive such notice. In all Church meetings for business, twenty members shall constitute a quorum, but a less number may adjourn from time to time, if a quorum is not present. The pastor shall be chairman of all meetings, but in his absence a chairman may be chosen *pro tem.*

STANDING COMMITTEE.

The officers of the Church shall constitute a Standing Committee whose duties shall be to have general charge of the temporal interests of the Church, and attend to all matters of business that may come up during the year for consideration. They shall hear reports from officers; approve committees; examine cases of disorderly conduct; receive applications for membership and report those approved to the Church; divide the membership into classes; designate

places for the class meetings, and revise the class books when necessary. They shall hold regular meetings monthly, on the Monday before the first Sunday.

OFFICERS.

The officers, who shall be members of the Church, shall consist of a pastor, the class leaders, a clerk, a treasurer, a Sunday-school superintendent, the chairman of the regular committees and four representatives, who, with the exception of the pastor, shall be elected by the Church, by ballot, at the annual meeting, or an adjournment thereof, and their term of office shall begin on the first Sunday in January and continue one year, or until their successors are elected. They shall report clearly and fully in writing, concerning the work that has been done in connection with the duties of their respective offices, monthly to the Standing Committee, and annually to the Church. Vacancies from any cause, shall be filled by the Standing Committee until an election shall take place at a meeting of the Church.

DUTIES OF OFFICERS.

PASTOR.

The pastor shall have general oversight of the Church; attend to the usual duties of the ministry; preside in all business meetings; be member *ex officio* of the regular committees and co-operate with them in their work, and visit as often as practicable the people of the Church and community, seeking always to build them up in that "holiness without which no man shall see the Lord." He shall receive probationers and assign them and new members to classes.

CLASS LEADERS.

The class leaders, who must be devoted to the Church and clearly in the experience of entire sanctification, shall consult with the pastor for the welfare of the Church; assist him in the spiritual work, and in his absence or when the pastorate is vacant take the oversight of the meetings. They shall prepare for, and assist, if necessary, in the administration of the sacrament; take charge of the class meetings; inquire of each mem-

ber of their class concerning his spiritual life and work and fidelity to covenant; and give special attention to inquirers after Christ, and to young and inexperienced Christians. They shall labor with those disregarding their covenant and Christian vows and report cases of continued and unconfessed sin to the Standing Committee. They shall keep a list of the names of members of their classes and residence in a suitable book, and give notice to the Standing Committee of the time when probationers should be eligible for full membership.

CLERK.

The clerk shall record the doings of business meetings; keep a chronological register of all the members showing name and date of those baptized, of admission, dismissal or death of members, showing date of the event; notify members of their appointment to any office or work; issue certificates of membership; conduct the correspondence of the Church; and call special meetings when so required.

TREASURER.

The treasurer shall be the custodian of the funds of the Church, and shall have charge of its finances subject to the order of the Church or Standing Committee; he shall execute in the name of the Corporation all instruments duly authorized by the Church or Standing Committee. He shall hold all special collections subject to the call of the committee in charge.

SUPERINTENDENT OF SUNDAY SCHOOL.

The duty of the superintendent, shall be to have general oversight of the School at the regular weekly session, and of all matters pertaining thereto. He shall see that the classes are supplied with suitable teachers; preside at all business meetings of the Sunday-school Board; and be member *ex officio* of the Sunday-school Committee, and of all committees appointed by the Sunday-school Board.

COMMITTEES.

For the efficient prosecution of the work, there shall be a committee of nine on Sun-

day-school, of nine on Care of the Sick and Destitute, of three on the Care of the Church, of three on Finance, and of one on Baptism. After election, the chairman of each committee shall appoint his own associates for the ensuing year, subject to the approval of the Standing Committee. Afterward, each committee shall meet for consultation as often as necessary for the earnest prosecution of the work committed to their charge. The chairman shall be responsible for the working of his committee.

DUTIES OF COMMITTEES.

SUNDAY-SCHOOL.

The duties of this committee shall be to examine and approve all books to be placed in the library; examine the records of the School and see that they are properly kept; visit the families connected with the Church and School and such others in the community as neglect the house of God; taking special interest in strangers coming into the place. The superintendent and librarian shall be members *ex officio*.

SICK AND DESTITUTE.

This committee shall visit the sick, the infirm and the destitute, especially of the Church; furnish watchers for the sick when necessary, as far as possible; and, from the funds at their disposal, provide for the needy the things essential for their comfort; and when any are out of employment, they shall, if desired, assist them in finding a situation to labor.

CARE OF CHURCH.

This committee shall have charge of the Church property; oversee the work of the janitor; provide rules for his direction; see that the place of worship is kept in proper condition; provide fuel for heating purposes; and attend to such other miscellaneous matters as may be properly included in their work. They shall take a full and detailed account annually of the value of the Church property, also the amount of money received and expended on repairs, additions and improvements.

FINANCE.

The duties of the finance committee shall be to carry out any plans for raising money that may be adopted by the Church or Standing Committee and constantly seek to increase the finances of the Church by securing as many regular contributors as possible; they shall keep a correct account of the weekly offerings and all other moneys received for the Church, pay the same to the treasurer and receive his receipt therefor.

BAPTISM.

The committee shall arrange things necessary for the proper observance of this ordinance, and, if the mode of baptism selected by the candidate be immersion, furnish suitable dresses and proper conveyance to and from the water.

SUNDAY SCHOOL CONSTITUTION.

ARTICLE I. NAME—This School shall be called the People's Evangelical Sunday-school, of Providence, R. I.

ART. II. OBJECT—The object of this School shall be the promotion of Christian holiness through the devout and diligent study of the Word of God.

ART. III. SESSION—The School shall assemble on each Sunday and hold its session in the place provided for the purpose, at 10.30 a. m.

ART. IV. MANAGEMENT—The Sunday-school shall be under the supervision of a Sunday-school Board consisting of the pastor, the Sunday-school Committee and the officers and teachers of the School.

ART. V. OFFICERS—The officers of the School shall be a superintendent and assistant superintendent, the secretary and assistant secretary, the treasurer, the librarian and assistant librarian.

ART. VI. ELECTION—SECTION 1.—SUPERINTENDENT—(See officers of the Church).

SEC. 2. OTHER OFFICERS—The other officers shall be elected annually, by ballot, at a meeting of the Sunday-school Board to be held on the second Monday in December.

SEC. 3. TERM OF OFFICE—The term of all officers of the School shall expire on the first Sunday in January, and their successors shall assume the duties of their respective offices at this time, continuing one year or until their successors are elected.

ART. VII. DUTIES OF OFFICERS, SEC. 1. SUPERINTENDENT—(See Church Rules).

SEC. 2. ASSISTANT SUPERINTENDENT—The duties of the assistant superintendent shall be to assist the superintendent in the management of the School, and in the absence of the superintendent or in case of vacancy in the office, the assistant shall perform his duties.

SEC. 4. SECRETARY—The duties of the secretary shall be to keep a correct record of the attendance and collection of each session of the School; he shall be the secretary of the Sunday-school Board, and keep a record of the meetings in a suitable book provided for the purpose.

SEC. 4. ASSISTANT SEC'Y.—The assistant secretary shall do the work appertaining to the office, and in the absence of the secretary, the assistant shall perform his duties; and in the absence of both of them at any business meeting the Sunday-school Board shall appoint a secretary pro tem.

SEC. 5. TREASURER—The treasurer shall keep an accurate account of the finances of the School,

that is, the money received and expended, and shall report in writing once a month at the regular meeting of the Sunday-school Board, and yearly at the annual meeting of the Church.

SEC. 6. LIBRARIAN—The duties of the librarian shall be to have charge of the library books provided for the School, and keep an accurate account of the number of books distributed each week and to whom, and to report once a month to the Sunday-school Board, and annually to the Church the condition of the library, the number of books distributed each month and the average for each Sunday. He shall also keep a catalogue of all books placed in the library.

SEC. 7. ASSISTANT LIBRARIAN—The assistant librarian shall assist the librarian in all the duties connected with the office, and in the absence of the librarian, the assistant shall occupy his position.

ART. VIII. SUNDAY-SCHOOL COMMITTEE—(See Church Rules).

ART. IX. TEACHERS. SEC. 1. APPOINTMENT—The teachers shall be elected by the Sunday-school Board.

SEC. 2. REMOVAL—Any teacher guilty of improper conduct or habitually neglecting his or her duties may be removed at the discretion of the Sunday-school Board, after having been

kindly requested to show cause why such a change should not be made, and no person shall be permitted to teach who holds views contrary to any article of the Confession of Faith.

ART. X. VACANCIES. SEC. 1. SUPERINTENDENT—In case of vacancy in the office of superintendent by resignation or otherwise, said vacancy shall be filled by the assistant superintendent until an election shall take place at a meeting of the Church.

SEC. 2. OTHER OFFICERS—In case of vacancy in these offices from any cause, it may be filled at the next regular meeting of the Sunday-school Board succeeding the one when the vacancy was declared, but such vacancy shall be filled for the time by the superintendent, such person to act until the election.

ART. XI. BUSINESS MEETING—The business meetings of the Sunday-school Board shall be held on the second Monday in each month, and eleven members shall constitute a quorum.

ART. XII. AMENDMENTS—This constitution may be amended according to Rule 13 of the Standing Rules of the Church.

FORM OF ADMISSION.

ADDRESS TO CANDIDATE.

Beloved: In the presence of Almighty God and this congregation you now appear to make a profession of your religious belief, to enter into covenant with this Church and to offer yourself a living sacrifice to the Lord Jesus Christ. By partaking of these memorials in obedience to the commands of Christ, you acknowledge and commemorate his death on the cross as the only ground for your pardon, sanctification and eternal life.

You may, therefore, declare your faith and purpose by giving your assent to the following questions—

Do you wholly renounce the service of Satan, the vain glory of the world with all covetous desires of the flesh, so that you will not follow nor be led by them and to yield yourself to God in constant obedience to all the divine commandments?

Ans. I do.

Has God for Jesus' sake forgiven all your sins?

Ans. He has.

Do you now engage to receive in love the pure doctrines of the Gospel as they are taught in the Holy Scriptures, and promise to earnestly and prayerfully look to God for full deliverance from all sin, so that you may serve Him in holiness and righteousness all the days of your LIFE?

Ans. I do.

[BAPTISM.]

Do you believe in the doctrines of the Bible as they are stated in the Confession of Faith of this Church?

Ans. I do.

Will you now submit to the government of Christ in his Church and to acquiesce cheerfully to such rules and regulations as may be adopted for the welfare of the whole Church, always endeavoring to promote unity, purity and love among the entire membership?

Ans. I will.

Will you now covenant to attend the worship of God and the ordinances of the Gospel with this Church, and to contribute to its support regularly and freely of your means, according to your ability, so long as you are (A) members of it and God continues you in this place?

Ans. I will.

RESPONSE OF THE CHURCH.

We rejoice in the blessings of divine grace, given unto you, through which you have been thus saved from your sins and enabled to publicly assume these obligations of the Gospel. As you have made this solemn covenant, this day, before the Lord, we cordially receive you into our midst and welcome you to the fellowship of the Church of God. Beloved, henceforth you are to share with us in the labors and blessings of the Gospel. May God grant that you may be (A) faithful members of the Church on the earth, all the days of your life, and when the time of your departure shall come, be received into fellowship with the Church in heaven and fully realize the glory of your "inheritance among them which are sanctified."

PRAYER.

HAND OF FELLOWSHIP.