

THE

MANUAL

OF THE

UNITED GOSPEL CHURCH,

OF

WESTPORT FACTORY, MASS.

1898.

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JANUARY 18, 1898.

Believing in the Divine institution of the Christian Church, and desiring to live together in the enjoyment of each other's watch-care and fellowship, realizing the necessity of maintaining the order of the Gospel and strictly enforcing the discipline of the Testament, which is essential to the Unity, peace and existence of a pure, Gospel Church, we do hereby unite ourselves in the bonds of fellowship as THE UNITED GOSPEL CHURCH.

CONFESSION OF FAITH.

We accept the scriptures of the Old and New Testaments as the written word of God, and affirm that they shall be our rule of Faith, and Doctrine and Practice, both for individual life and church discipline.

We believe in the One Eternal Triune God: the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost, that Jesus Christ, the true and Divine Son of the living God, by his vicarious suffering and death, made complete atonement for all sin, and is therefore the only and complete Saviour from all sin, the only Head of the Church.

We believe in the personality of the Holy Ghost whose office is to guide into all truth, sanctify all believers, so that they, here in this life, shall be cleansed from all sin and filled with Himself.

Man was created upright, but by disobedience fell into a state of sin, condemnation and death. All his posterity inherit this fallen nature, which is cherished by indulgence, so that all who come to the years of moral accountability, sin and come short of the glory

of God: We believe therefore that he must be born again; i. e. created anew in Christ Jesus, in this present life, to enter into the Kingdom of Heaven, and it is his duty and privilege to love God with all the heart, and by the indwelling of the Holy Ghost, live a holy life before God all the days of his life.

THE COVENANT OF THE UNITED GOSPEL CHURCH.

We solemnly covenant and agree before God, that we will, by His assisting grace, exemplify our profession by a corresponding practice, walking circumspectly toward those who are without, that the cause of God may not be reproached on our account, and as members of the church and as Christians to watch over one another in love, for mutual upbuilding in Gospel faith, endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of

peace; to be careful of one another's reputation, to confess our faults one to another; to strengthen the feeble and kindly admonish the erring; to labor together for the building up of the church and the salvation of the ungodly.

We covenant and agree by God's grace to renounce the carnal desires of the flesh and will not follow or be led by them; to abstain from all vain amusements and sinful conformity to the world—as circuses, shows, dances, all grades of gambling, and from all riotous celebrations, and from all unchaste profane and foolish conversation, and from the reading of wicked, corrupting, and false publications; that we will neither traffic in, buy, use, nor furnish to others any intoxicating drink, save for medicinal or mechanical use.

We covenant and agree that we will faithfully, as far as we are able, maintain secret and family prayer and religiously instruct those under our care, doing what we can for the spread of God's truth, and that we will sustain the regular public worship of God and contribute systematically as he prospers us for the expenses of the church, and that we will

be benevolent to the needy and especially to the poor of the household of faith.

And may the very God of peace sanctify us wholly; and we pray God that our whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. I. Thess. V. 23.

CONDITIONS OF MEMBERSHIP.

Persons may become members of this church on profession of living faith in the Lord Jesus Christ as their Savior, a sincere desire to live according to His will and for his glory, and the evidence of a consistent moral and christian character and life.

Members of other evangelical churches may be received on presentation of a letter of recommendation, or in case such a letter cannot be obtained, they may be received on giving evidence of being disciples of Jesus Christ.

Applications for membership shall be made to the Pastor, Deacons or Deaconesses of the church, who shall acquaint the applicant with the church manual and present him or her before a committee of three including the Pastor. If this committee is agreed in deeming it advisable, they shall propose his or her name for membership at any business meeting. Three-fourths of the votes of those present shall entitle the applicant to receive the right hand of fellowship.

BY-LAWS.

The officers of this church shall consist of the Pastor, Deacons, Deaconesses, a Clerk and a Treasurer. The Senior Deacon shall be at the same time a class-leader. These officers and three other members of the church, shall constitute a committee on discipline and oversight.

At any time when the pastorate of this church may be vacant, it may be filled by any minister of the Gospel on whom the church

may unite, and two weeks notice shall be given of the meeting at which this item of business shall be transacted. Two-thirds of the votes cast shall be required for the election of a minister to the pastorate.

The pastoral relation shall be regarded as permanent as long as both church and Pastor are satisfied with its continuance, and when either party shall desire its discontinuance, the other shall be entitled to one month's notice of such desire.

To request the resignation of a Pastor the votes of two-thirds of the members present shall be required. This request shall be presented to the Pastor in writing with the signatures of those whose votes have been given.

No Pastor shall hold the pastorate of this church who is not in the experience of entire sanctification, so that he has a pure heart, is kept from sin, and leads a holy life according to our confession of faith.

The Pastor shall have the entire charge of, and conduct, if he wish, the public worship of all the religious services of the church and shall exercise general superintendence and

leadership over all Christian work of the Church and congregation.

The election of Deacons and Deaconesses shall be governed by the church, upon their fitness for the office being manifest, they being fully established in a deep spiritual life and in accord with the Confession of faith, Covenant and By-laws. Should they at any time become ineligible for office they shall be dealt with by the committee on discipline and oversight.

It shall be the duty of the Deacons and Deaconesses to become assistants to the Pastor in caring for all interests of the Church, and in his absence to have charge of the services and oversight of the work. They shall assist in the administration of the Lord's Supper, Baptism, and other exercises as far as requested by the Pastor.

With the exception of the pastor, all of the officers and committees of the Church shall be elected annually, by ballot.

The Clerk shall notify the Church of its meetings, keep a record of all business meetings, keep a list of members with date of beginning and close of membership, notify

members of their appointment to any office, record such items as shall show the religious interest and changes in membership, and attend to the Church correspondence.

The Treasurer shall keep a true account of all the money received and paid out by him for the Church, and make a full report of the same to the Church at the monthly and yearly meetings. He shall pay no bills without being directed so to do by the Board of Trustees, save those of fuel, lighting, care of Church and the offerings for the support of the Pastor. The Treasurer is never to vote on the recommendation to pay any bill, nor endorse the payment of any.

The Board of Trustees shall consist of the Clerk, Treasurer, and five other members of the Church, whose duty it shall be to have control of all finances under direction of the Church. It shall be the duty of the Trustees to receive, hold in trust and transfer any and all Church property, but never shall any transfer be made, or debt contracted without permission granted at a regular or special meeting of the Church, and then not in any way conflicting with the letter and spirit of

our By-laws, covenant and confession of faith, or the condition of the deed by which the property is held.

The Committee on Discipline and Oversight shall consist of the Pastor, Deacons, Deaconesses, Clerk, Treasurer, and three additional members of the Church. It shall be the duty of this committee to be attentive to inquirers after Christ, to visit the sick and applicants for membership, to visit applicants for baptism, and to labor with those disregarding their covenant and Christian vows; to conduct all cases of discipline before bringing them before the Church at large, and to mark the removal of members to other places and keep up an annual correspondence with them, assuring them of the interest of the Church in their spiritual welfare. This committee shall attend to the offerings for the support of the Pastor and shall fix the amount the Pastor shall receive for his support, and in case of absence it shall be the duty of the committee to secure temporary supplies.

The annual Church meeting shall be held on the Thursday evening preceding the first

Lord's Day of the year; monthly business meetings shall be held on the Thursday preceding the first Lord's Day of each month. Special business meetings may be called by the Pastor or Clerk, twelve members constituting a quorum for the transaction of business; in case there are less than twelve members, two-thirds of the membership shall constitute a quorum. All business shall be brought before the Church for its action, which shall be disposed of by the Church, as a body, or by the appointment of committees for the same. The Pastor, by virtue of his office, shall preside at all the meetings of the Church and committees, and in his absence a chairman *pro tem* may be chosen.

All changes of additions to the By-laws, Confession or Faith, or Covenant of the Church, shall be presented in writing signed by five or more active members, and read in a regular business meeting one month previous to the one in which action is taken, and two-thirds majority of the membership shall be necessary for his adoption, but no such change shall ever be made when it is evident to the committee on discipline and oversight

that such action arises from opposition to the Pastor or Church, and is made to carry some point of wilful disunity or opposition to this Manual.

The Confession of Faith and Covenant shall be read at each communion service.

All requests for dismissal or withdrawal from the Church, or for connection with another body, should be made either in person when convenient or in writing before action be taken. A member desiring to leave the Church with the purpose of uniting with some other evangelical body may receive a letter of recommendation if in good standing, and when such letter is deposited with the church of his choice his connection with the shall cease. Should a member desire to withdraw from this church, he shall receive a letter expressive of his real standing at the time, together with the reason of his withdrawal.

Any member in habitual violation or neglect of the obligations of our Covenant, Confession of Faith and By-laws, shall be visited on account of the same by the Pastor, Deacons, or Committee on Discipline and Oversight, who shall, after patient and loving

service, report the same to the Church for its action. An absence of three months from the Lord's Supper, public, business, and other meetings without a valid excuse will render necessary an explanation to the Pastor, Deacons or Committee on Discipline and Oversight. If this explanation is not made through neglect or refusal, or if it should not be satisfactory, that shall be sufficient reason for bringing it before the Church for its action.

If at any time in the classes of the School, prayer meetings, or in any other way, any member of the Church or School shall openly oppose the teachings or doctrines of the Church, or privately lead contrary thereto, or any error of doctrine or practice, it shall be the duty of the Committee on Discipline and Oversight, immediately on learning the same, to labor with such for their restoration to the truth and unity of the Church. Where the labor seems to be neglected and the person or persons shall continue in their opposition or error, the committee shall bring it before the Church for its action.

It shall be the duty of any member having

ing cause for offence against another to proceed in accordance with the directions given by our Saviour (Matt. V, ~~XXXIII~~, ~~XXXIV~~), If, after bringing it to the notice of the Pastor, Deacons, Deaconesses, or any member of the committee on discipline and Oversight, it should be found necessary to present the matter for action to the committee, the charges shall be made to them in writing. If they cannot attend to the matter to their satisfaction, they shall bring the case before the Church as a whole, and they shall give instructions in regard to it. No one shall be accepted or rejected by the Pastor, Deacons, or the Committee on Discipline and Oversight, without action of the church membership.

The roll of the church membership shall be annually revised at the first meeting of the Church in the year.

Bible School for adults and children on the Lord's Day, being properly a part of the church, all of its business shall be transacted at each monthly and yearly meeting of the Church, as a part of its regular business.

The officers of the school shall consist of Superintendent, Assistant Superintendent,

Librarian, Treasurer and Secretary. The expenses of the school shall be met by its collection, the remainder to be used according to the vote of the school. The Superintendent shall have full control of the workings of the school, subject to the Church.

The course of lessons to be used in the Bible School shall be selected by the Pastor, Superintendent, officers and teachers of the school.