

CHURCH OF JESUS CHRIST – OAK GROVE RESTORATION BRANCH

BYLAWS

PREFACE:

1. The members of the Church of Jesus Christ – Oak Grove Restoration Branch consider themselves to be members of the Church of Jesus Christ as restored by God through the Prophet Joseph Smith, Jr. in 1830.
2. We believe the “Restoration” is alive within this Independent Branch and that we form a part of “THE CHURCH” in this day.
3. We are not a separate denomination, nor have we formed a new church.
4. We believe we must preserve the Doctrine as taught by Jesus Christ and restored on earth through His prophet Joseph Smith, Jr. until the kingdom comes.
5. The purpose of forming rules and resolutions for the Church of Jesus Christ is to express our faith in practical and functional ways, which will promote order and unity among the body of Christ. They will stand as a testimony to the world of a God who loves us and desires us to live according to the light and truth we receive from Him.

Because we are human and fallible, we may perceive and interpret passages of scripture somewhat differently while still maintaining the validity and trustworthiness of scripture.

These Bylaws are not a test of faith. Membership in the Church of Jesus Christ shall remain according to instruction given in Doctrine and Covenants Section 17:7.

While the Bylaws represent the thinking of the majority of the Branch members, those with different points of view should be free to express personal opinions without fear of reprisal or expressions of intolerance so often found in our past history.

Our desire is for spiritual truth and righteousness as we seek the will of the Lord and witness of His love in the stewardship of life.

6. We will preach and teach in accordance with the Scriptures as found in the Inspired Version of the Bible, the Book of Mormon and the Doctrine and Covenants. (Amended July 9, 1989)

ARTICLE I – STATEMENT OF BELIEF:

- A. THE HOLY SCRIPTURES: We believe the Bible is the divinely sanctioned Word of God, and it contains the gospel of salvation. The INSPIRED VERSION was produced under divine direction and is the standard version of the Church.
- B. THE BOOK OF MORMON: We believe that the Book of Mormon is divinely revealed scripture, and it contains the fullness of the gospel. It is a true account of God’s dealings with the ancient Americans. The 1908 edition is the standard edition of the Church.
- C. THE BOOK OF DOCTRINE AND COVENANTS: We believe the Doctrine and Covenants is divinely revealed scripture and is to be used as the law of the Church in as far as it is consistent with the Inspired Version of the Bible and the Book of Mormon.
- D. THE LAW OF THE CHURCH: We believe that the Three Standard Books named above contain the Law of the Church, and their teachings must be adhered to in matters of doctrine and practice. Any theological practice or doctrine which is not in harmony with those books is false doctrine.
- E. THE EPITOME OF FAITH: The Epitome of Faith is a summary of our beliefs. (Times and Seasons 3:709-710; RLDS CHURCH HISTORY 2:569-570) See ATTACHMENT #1.
- F. THE GODHEAD: We believe in God the Eternal Father, and in His Son Jesus Christ, and in the Holy Ghost. The statement concerning the Godhead found in the LECTURES OF FAITH, Section 5, expresses our understanding. See ATTACHMENT #2 for full statement.
- G. JOSEPH SMITH, JR.: We believe that Joseph Smith, Jr. was a true prophet and his experiences such as the vision in Palmyra’s grove and the obtaining of the Book of Mormon plates are actual facts of history. We believe that he did not embrace, teach, or practice polygamy. Furthermore, we believe that Joseph Smith did not claim that the practice of polygamy was a divinely inspired law of God.

ARTICLE II – MEMBERSHIP POLICY:

- A. VISITORS: We welcome all who desire to worship God to attend our services, classes, and activities.
- B. COMMUNION SERVICES: We encourage all to attend – members, former members, and non-members. However, we are close communionists and only those baptized and confirmed by men having priesthood authority recognized by the Branch may partake.
- C. MEMBERSHIP (VOTING MEMBERS):
 - 1. Any person or persons baptized and confirmed by an authorized member of the priesthood recognized by the Church of Jesus Christ – Oak Grove Restoration Branch register for membership with the Branch. Application will be made to the Branch Presidency (pastorate). Those who held official membership with the Oak Grove RLDS Congregation on or prior to January 8, 1989, will retain their membership status.
 - 2. Requirements for transferring to the Church of Jesus Christ – Oak Grove Restoration Branch and becoming a voting member:
 - a. The individual must have been baptized and confirmed by men recognized by the Branch as having God-given authority to perform such ordinances.

ARTICLE III – PRIESTHOOD:

- A. SILENCED PRIESTHOOD: Silenced priesthood members or those men who have surrendered their licenses may apply to the Pastor of the Branch and his associates to have their priesthood authority recognized. If approved by the Pastor and his associates, the matter will be presented to the Branch membership for acceptance. Those who held priesthood authority in the Oak Grove RLDS Congregation on or prior to January 8, 1989, will retain their priesthood authority with the Church of Jesus Christ – Oak Grove Restoration Branch.
- B. TRANSFERS: Priesthood members transferring to the Church of Jesus Christ – Oak Grove Restoration Branch will be reviewed by the Pastor of the Branch and his associates to determine if the priesthood member in question was called and ordained by men having authority at the time to do so.

- C. PRIESTHOOD CALLS: The Church of Jesus Christ – Oak Grove Restoration Branch will consider calls to Priesthood when the Branch Pastor has received divine inspiration that such calls should be made and has counseled with Branch High Priests and has presented them to the Eldership for their consideration. The authority of the Branch in such matters is limited to the approval of calls to the office of Elder, Priest, Teacher, and Deacon.
- D. VISITING PRIESTHOOD: Visiting priesthood members participating in ordinances and sacraments must be approved prior to participation by the Branch Pastor.

ARTICLE IV – GOVERNING POLICIES:

- A. ORGANIZATION: The Church of Jesus Christ – Oak Grove Restoration Branch shall be organized and shall function as a “Branch” of the Church in accordance with the commandment of God as outlined in the Scriptures.
- B. POWER AND AUTHORITY: All power and authority of the Branch is vested in the membership of the Branch in business meetings assembled. While it is the role of the officers of the corporation, other officers, and leaders to provide leadership, the membership has the right to direct them in their duties, override their decisions, and/or replace them at any time. (Resolution approved by the Branch, April 30, 1989, business meeting.)
- C. BUSINESS MEETINGS:
 - 1. Election of Branch President shall take place at a previously announced, regularly scheduled meeting of the Church of Jesus Christ – Oak Grove Restoration Branch during the month of June of each year. The method of voting shall be by written ballot with a minimum of two candidates. The two candidates shall be placed in nomination by the priesthood body, other nominations from the congregation will also be recognized. However, all nominees shall be presented to the Branch one (1) week before the election. The newly elected President shall take office on September 1.

When the vote is taken to elect the pastor, the man chosen shall be elected by a 51% majority. If there are more than two nominees and none of them obtains a 51% majority, a second vote shall be taken considering only the two men having the highest number of votes.
 - 2. Election of Branch officers shall take place at a previously announced, regularly scheduled meeting of the Church of Jesus Christ – Oak Grove Restoration Branch during the month of August and take office on September 1 of each year.

3. Approval of the budget shall take place at a previously announced, regularly scheduled meeting of the Branch during the month of December each year.
 4. Meetings for the purpose of conducting Branch business can be called as desired by the President or by petition of a majority of voting membership.
- D. PRIESTHOOD MEETINGS: The priesthood shall meet with the Branch President and his counselors once each month to assess both the spiritual and temporal condition of the Branch. The President shall bring all matters, both spiritual and temporal, concerning the welfare of the Branch before the Priesthood body for consideration.
- E. RECORDS: Records for the Branch shall be kept of all ordinances performed under the authority of the Branch by its duly elected Branch Recorder. Records of all minutes of all business meetings shall also be maintained in safekeeping by the Branch Secretary. Duplicate copies shall be kept by at least one other appointed person within the Branch to guard against possible loss. Minutes of all priesthood meetings shall be taken and kept by the appointed Priesthood Secretary.
- F. PROPERTY: The Branch shall have authority to own property in the form of a building or other properties. All such properties shall be held in the name of the Branch. All purchases or sales of such items shall be approved by the vote of the Branch.
- G. AMENDMENTS TO BYLAWS: Any amendment to these bylaws shall be presented in writing to the Branch at least two (2) weeks before a vote is to be taken. At least 51% of the voting membership must be present to consider change to the bylaws. A two-thirds majority of those present will give approval.
- H. INTERPRETATIONS: Questions over interpretation of doctrine and of what is to be taught and preached, shall be brought before the Pastor and his counselors for a decision. The decision made by the Pastor and his counselors may be appealed to the Eldership, at which time the question would be brought before a meeting of the elders of the Branch. The Decision of the Elders is final. (Amended July 9, 1989)

ARTICLE V – POLICY OF BRANCH FUNCTIONS AND PROCEDURES:

All activities affecting the life and function of the Branch shall be reviewed by the Branch President and his Counselors for approval.

Such as:

- The bulletin – all information found therein.
- Conducting meetings.
- Activities of departments: Women’s Department, Youth activities, etc.
- Posting of information.

ATTACHMENT #1 – AN EPITOME OF FAITH AND DOCTRINE

We believe in God the Eternal Father, and His Son Jesus Christ, and in the Holy Ghost.

We believe that men will be punished for their own sins, and not for Adam's transgressions.

We believe that through the atonement of Christ all mankind may be saved by obedience to the laws and ordinances of the gospel.

We believe that these ordinances are, first, faith in the Lord Jesus Christ; second, repentance; third, baptism by immersion for the remission of sins; fourth, laying on of hands for the gift of the Holy Ghost.

We believe that a man must be called of God by "prophecy, and by laying on of hands" by those who are in authority to preach the gospel and administer in the ordinances thereof.

We believe in the same organization that existed in the primitive church; viz., apostles, prophets, pastors, teachers, evangelists, etc.

We believe in the gift of tongues, prophecy, revelation, visions, healing, interpretation of tongues, etc.

We believe the Bible to be the word of God as far as it is translated correctly; we also believe the Book of Mormon to be the word of God.

We believe all that God has revealed, all that he does now reveal and we believe that he will yet reveal many great and important things pertaining to the kingdom of God.

We believe in the literal gathering of Israel and in the restoration of the Ten Tribes, that Zion will be built upon this continent, that Christ will reign personally upon the earth, and that the earth will be renewed and receive its paradisiac glory.

We claim privilege of worshiping Almighty God according to the dictates of our conscience, and allow all men the same privilege, let them worship how, where, or what they may, believe in being subject to kings, presidents, rulers, and magistrates, in obeying, honoring, and sustaining the law.

We believe in being honest, true, chaste, benevolent, virtuous, and in doing good to all men; indeed we may say that we follow the admonition of Paul, "we believe all things, we hope all things," we have endured many things, and hope to endure all things. If there is anything virtuous, lovely, or of good report or praiseworthy, we seek after these things.

ATTACHMENT #2 – LECTURE FIFTH OF FAITH

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SECTION V

Section 5:1

THE GODHEAD

- 1.a. In our former lectures we treated of the being, character, perfections, and attributes of God.
- b. What we mean by perfections is, the perfections which belong to all the attributes of his nature.
- c. We shall in this lecture speak of the Godhead; we mean the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

Section 2:1

FATHER, SON AND THE HOLY SPIRIT

- 2.a. There are two personages who constitute the great, matchless, governing, and supreme power over all things – by whom all things were created and made that are created and made, whether visible or invisible;
- b. whether in heaven on earth, or in the earth, under the earth, or throughout the immensity of space.
- c. They are the Father and the Son: The Father being a personage of spirit, glory, and power, possessing all perfection and fullness.
- d. The Son, who was in the bosom of the Father, a personage of tabernacle, made or fashioned like unto man, or being in the form and likeness of man, or rather, man was formed after his likeness and in his image.
- e. He is also the express image and likeness of the personage of the Father, possessing all the fullness of the Father, or the same fullness with the Father, being begotten of him;
- f. and was ordained from before the foundation of the world to be a propitiation for the sins of all those who should believe on his name;
- g. and is called the Son because of the flesh – and descended in suffering below that which man can suffer, or in other words, suffered greater sufferings, and was exposed to more powerful contradictions than any man can be.
- h. But notwithstanding all this, he kept the law of God, and remained without sin; showing thereby that it is in the power of man to keep the law and remain also without sin.
- i. And also, that by him a righteous judgment might come upon all flesh, and that all who walk not in the law of God, may justly be condemned by the law, and have no excuse for their sins.
- j. And he being the Only Begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth, and having overcome, received a fullness of the glory of the Father – possessing the same mind with the Father:
- k. which mind is the Holy Spirit that bears record of the Father and the Son;

- l. and these three are one, or in other words, these three constitute the great, matchless, governing, and supreme power over all things; by whom all things were created and made, that were created and made;
- m. and these three constitute the Godhead and are one; the Father and the Son possessing the same mind, the same wisdom, glory, power, and fullness;
- n. filling all in all – the Son being filled with the fullness of the Mind, glory, and power; or in other words the Spirit, glory, and power of the Father – possessing all knowledge and glory, and the same kingdom;
- o. sitting at the right hand of power, in the express image and likeness of the Father – a Mediator for all man – being filled with the fullness of the Mind of the Father, or in other words, the Spirit of the Father;
- p. which Spirit is shed forth upon all who believe on his name and keep his commandments;
- q. and all those who keep his commandments shall grow up from grace to grace, and become heirs of the heavenly kingdom, and joint heirs with Jesus Christ;
- r. possessing the same mind, being transformed into the same image or likeness, even the express image of him who fills all in all;
- s. being filled with the fullness of his glory, and become one in him, even as the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are one.

Section 3:1

NATURE OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

- 3a. From the foregoing account of the Godhead, which is given in his revelations, the saints have a sure foundation laid for the exercise of faith unto life and salvation,
- b. through the atonement and mediation of Jesus Christ, by whose blood they have a forgiveness of sins, and also a sure reward laid up for them in heaven.
- c. even that of partaking of the fullness of the Father and the Son, through the Spirit.
- d. As the Son partakes of the fullness of the Father through the Spirit, so the saints are, by the same Spirit, so be partakers of the same fullness, to enjoy the same glory;
- e. for as the Father and the Son are one, so in like manner the saints are to be one in them through the love of the Father, the mediation of Jesus Christ, and the gift of the Holy Spirit;
- f. they are to be heirs of God and joint heirs with Jesus Christ.

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