



Austin Chinese Church
奧斯汀華人教會

By-Laws

2016 Revision
Approved by
General Assembly
on November 20, 2016

I. GENERAL

Austin Chinese Church (referred to as "ACC" in the remainder of this document) believes the Bible has adequate and correct teaching concerning the principles of organization of the church. We have listed the following to help members in understanding and applying these teachings so that everything may be done "in a fitting and orderly way" (1 Corinthians 14:40).

II. MEMBERS

A. ACTIVE MEMBERSHIP

1. Requirements:
 - a. Accepts Jesus Christ as their Savior and has received baptism accepted by ACC.
 - b. Agrees to abide by the Constitution and By-Laws of ACC.
 - c. Regularly attends Sunday worship, and either Sunday School or fellowship activities, for at least three months immediately prior to application. (For new Pastors or full-time Ministry Directors and their spouses that have completed the interview process and been approved by the General Assembly, the three-month requirement is waived. Thus, new Pastors or full-time Ministry Directors, and their spouses can apply for membership when they start their service with ACC).
 - d. Has completed the membership class.
2. Admission Procedures:

Applicants must submit a membership application form for review, and must be approved by the Church Council. After approval, members shall be introduced and announced to the congregation.
3. Privileges:
 - a. All members aged eighteen and above have the right to elect, to be elected and to vote in elections.
 - b. To be ministered to by ACC.
 - c. To use ACC facilities in accordance with the rules and enjoy the benefits.
 - d. To receive other member privileges offered by ACC.
 - e. To bring issues to the Church Council.
4. Responsibilities:
 - a. Abide by the teaching of the Bible concerning Christian faith.
 - b. Actively participate in congregational worship, Sunday School, fellowship, evangelism, loving each other, financial giving and serving in various ministries at ACC.
 - c. Participate in elections and vote.
 - d. Abide by the Constitution and By-Laws of ACC.
 - e. Support ACC in accordance with ACC's Core Values, Mission Statement, and Vision Statements.

B. INACTIVATION AND TERMINATION OF MEMBERSHIP

Inactive members do not have the privileges or responsibilities of active members. A membership may be inactivated or terminated according to the following clauses:

1. In the event that a member moves away from Austin or has not been attending Sunday services of ACC for a period of six months, an effort shall be made to contact the member and determine their intention. If the member's intention is to return to ACC as an active member in a definite timeframe, their membership shall be changed to inactive; otherwise, their membership shall be terminated. If the

member does not respond to the inquiry in a reasonable period, their membership shall be changed to inactive.

2. In the event that a member willfully repudiates ACC's Statement of Faith, Mission Statement, or Core Values, or commits a major transgression, and does not repent upon consultation by members, Deacons, Elders, and Pastors, their membership may be terminated by a two-thirds majority vote of the Church Council. Prior to terminating the membership, disciplinary action must have been undertaken according to Matthew 18:15-20. ACC shall publicly announce memberships terminated as a result of disciplinary action.
3. A member can request termination of their membership by written request to the Church Council, unless the member is under church discipline.
4. A membership that has been inactive for over six months may be terminated.
5. A membership is terminated upon death.
6. Exceptions to these clauses governing inactivation and termination of membership may be granted by a two-thirds majority vote of the Church Council.
7. An inactive membership may be reactivated by filling in a membership application form and having it approved by an Elder and the Pastor leading their congregation. After approval, the Church Council chairman shall be notified.
8. Anyone whose membership has been terminated may reapply for membership by following the Requirements and Admission Procedures of active membership (II.A.1 and II.A.2 above).

III. ORGANIZATION

A. GENERAL ASSEMBLY

1. Responsibility:
The General Assembly is the final decision-making authority in the following areas:
 - a. Approval of budgets.
 - b. Election of Deacons.
 - c. Election of Elders.
 - d. Approval of the hiring of Pastors and full-time Ministry Directors.
 - e. Approval of revisions to the Constitution or By-Laws.
 - f. Approval of other issues as submitted by the Church Council.
2. Formation:
The General Assembly is composed of all active church members.
3. Decision-making:
An election must be held at least once a year. Elections shall be carried out as follows:
 - a. The congregation shall be notified of the date for an election in writing three weeks in advance.
 - b. More than half of all active members aged eighteen and above must vote in order for an election to be considered valid.
 - c. An early voting procedure shall be provided for members who anticipate being absent on the day of the election.
 - d. Ballots must contain the member's printed name and signature in order to be considered valid.
 - e. In general, approval of ballot items (including approval of Deacons, Elders, Pastors, and full-time Ministry Directors) requires a two-thirds majority approval of the total votes cast by active

members aged eighteen and above. The only exception is for approval of ballot items relating to the disposition of ACC's real property, which requires a three-quarters majority approval of the total votes cast by active members aged eighteen and above.

B. CHURCH COUNCIL

1. Responsibility:

The Church Council, as spiritual model for members of ACC and under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, has the responsibilities of decision making and execution of all matters concerning ACC. The chairman of the Church Council represents ACC with regards to legal and external affairs.

2. Formation:

The Church Council is formed by all the Deacons, Elders, and the Pastor serving in the lead role from each of the Cantonese, English, and Mandarin congregations where that Pastor is not already an Elder.

3. Organization:

The Church Council chairman is elected among and by the Church Council members each year. The Church Council may organize its structure to serve the ministries of ACC more efficiently and effectively. The organization and job descriptions are listed in the Church Council Manual.

4. Committees:

- a. According to the needs of ACC, committees may be appointed by the Church Council, which report directly to the Church Council and operate until the conclusion of the tasks.
- b. The Church Council may delegate the oversight of a committee to the Elder Board.
- c. The Personnel Committee shall be a standing committee in charge of ACC's human resources policies and execution. The composition of the committee shall be recommended by the Elder Board and approved by the Church Council yearly.

5. Decision Making:

While ACC seeks the spirit of unanimous decisions, it also recognizes the value of differing perspectives that can exist within the framework of biblical truths (Romans 12:17-18, chapter 14). With this in mind, the following rules govern the approval of items that come before the Church Council:

- a. The following items require two-thirds majority approval of all Council members:
 - i. Election of Deacons
 - ii. Approval of budgets
 - iii. Revisions to the Constitution or By-Laws
 - iv. Termination of membership due to disciplinary action
 - v. Granting exceptions to membership inactivation or termination
 - vi. Denial of extension of a Pastor's or full-time Ministry Director's employment
 - vii. Termination of the term of Deacon
- b. The following items require three-quarters majority approval of all Council members:
 - i. Election of Elders
 - ii. Hiring of Pastors or full-time Ministry Directors.
 - iii. Disposition of real property
 - iv. Termination of the term of Elder, Pastor or full-time Ministry Director.
- c. All other matters require at least a simple majority of all Council members. The Church Council may decide to require a supermajority for certain items at its own discretion.

6. Church budget:

Unexpected circumstances may require expenses not included in the annual budget approved by the General Assembly (III.A.1.a). In any year, the Church Council may approve expenses not in the annual budget up to a cumulative total of five percent of that year's annual budget or \$100,000,

whichever is lower, subject to availability of funds. Any expense above this cap requires approval by the General Assembly.

C. DEACONS

1. Responsibilities:
 - a. Lead through example (1 Timothy 3:8-13)
 - b. Be a Servant (Matthew 23:11, John 12:26)
 - c. Administration of church ministry (Acts 6:1-6)
2. Election of Deacons:
 - a. Deacons shall be nominated by a Deacon Nomination Committee, consisting of the Cantonese, English, and Mandarin Pastors who serve in the lead role for their congregation, and six active members, two from each of the Cantonese, English, and Mandarin congregations, appointed and approved by the Church Council. A coordinator is to be elected among and by the nomination committee members.
 - b. Nominees must be active members, and meet the qualifications described in 1 Timothy 3:8-13.
 - c. Nominees must be approved by a two-thirds majority of the Church Council and approved by the General Assembly.
 - d. If the number of Deacons is reduced by more than one third, the remaining term of the vacant positions shall be filled by election.
3. Term:

The term of Deacon is two years, extendable by reelection to a second two-year term. Afterwards, a lapse of one year is required before renomination. The Church Council may terminate the term of a Deacon in the event of conduct warranting of dismissal.

D. ELDER BOARD & ELDERS

1. Austin Chinese Church is an Elder-led, not an Elder-ruled church, as such, Elders' responsibilities are:
 - a. Shepherd the flock (Acts 20:28, James 5:14, 1 Peter 5:1-3).
 - b. Lead through example (1 Peter 5:3).
 - c. Teach biblical truths (1 Timothy 3:2, Titus 1:9).
 - d. Conduct church discipline (Matthew 18:15-17).
 - e. Provide direction for ACC (1 Timothy 5:17)
 - f. Oversee ACC Pastors, Ministry Directors, and Staff, and the reporting relationship thereof (Titus 1:7-9)
2. Formation of Elder Board:

The Elder Board shall be comprised of elected lay Elders, and the ordained Cantonese, English, and Mandarin Pastors who serve in the lead role for their congregation. Other ordained Pastors may be invited to serve on the Board on an annual rotating basis. In a given year, the total number of active Elders shall not exceed eleven and the number of Pastor Elders shall not exceed the number of lay Elders.
3. Election of Lay Elders:
 - a. Lay Elders shall be nominated by the Elder Board.
 - b. Nominees must be active members, have served as an ACC Deacon for at least one term, and meet the qualifications in 1 Timothy 3:1-7 and Titus 1:5-9.
 - c. Nominees must be approved by a three-quarters majority of the Church Council and approved by the General Assembly.

4. Term:
The term of Lay Elder is three years, extendable by reelection to a second three-year term. Afterwards, a lapse of one year is required before renomination. The Church Council may terminate the term of an Elder in the event of conduct warranting of dismissal.

E. CHURCH STAFF

1. Pastors and Full-time Ministry Directors:
 - a. Responsibilities:
Pastors and full-time Ministry Directors shall consider their main ministry to be the equipping of all members of ACC for the work of service so that the body of Christ may be built up (Ephesians 4:12). Pastors and full-time Ministry Directors have the responsibilities of pastoral care and spiritual leadership over ACC, to officiate ordinances and to work with the Elders and Deacons in all areas of ministry in ACC.
 - b. Calling:
Pastors and full-time Ministry Directors shall be nominated by a Pastoral Search Committee, consisting of five to seven active members appointed by the Church Council. Nominees must be approved by a three-quarters majority of the Church Council and approved by the General Assembly.
 - c. Term:
The initial term for a Pastor or full-time Ministry Director is two years. Upon extension, each subsequent term is three years. The Church Council shall decide on term extensions six months before the conclusion of each term. Upon approval of an extension, the Church Council shall submit a written offer of another term of three years. Denial of an extension requires that a two-thirds majority of the Church Council vote against extension. In the case that an extension is denied, the Church Council shall notify the Pastor or full-time Ministry Director in writing.
 - d. Resignation:
A Pastor or full-time Ministry Director that cannot continue to serve shall submit written notification to the Church Council three months in advance of their intended last day of service.
 - e. Dismissal:
The Church Council may terminate the term of a Pastor or full-time Ministry Director in the event of conduct warranting of dismissal.
2. Other Church Staff:
Other church staff may be hired by the Church Council according to ministry needs. Terms of employment shall be determined by the Church Council.

IV. PROPERTIES

- A. The Church Council shall establish policies regarding the proper use of ACC's properties.
- B. All legal and financial decisions concerning ACC's properties must be recommended and approved by the Church Council except disposition of ACC's real property as described in (C) below.
- C. Any disposition of ACC's real property, except those donated as offerings and not used for ministry, shall be approved by the Church Council and the General Assembly.
- D. In the event of dissolution of ACC, its financial estate shall be donated to other Christian organizations of the same beliefs and shall not become the personal property of any individual.

V. RATIFICATION

These By-Laws establish the name, membership, organization and property policies of ACC. They are based on the 2007 revision of the By-Laws of the Austin Chinese Church, and since then have been revised and made effective by approval of the Church Council, review by the Congregation for three weeks, and finally approval of the General Assembly on November 20, 2016. The previous (2007) By-Laws of the Austin Chinese Church were rendered ineffective on the same date.

Drafted 1984
First Revision 1987
Second Revision 1992
Third Revision 2007
Fourth Revision 2016

Revision of the By-Laws requires a written letter to the Church Council with the co-signature of over ten active members stating the reasons for revision. Upon detailed examination and approval, the Church Council shall start the revision process.

The By-Laws have been translated into Chinese. All interpretations should refer to the original English version in areas where the Chinese version becomes ambiguous.

The Church Council is the final authority in interpreting the By-Laws.