

*Mission Statement*  
*Virginia Council of Churches*

*The Virginia Council of Churches is a community of Christian communions, who covenant with one another to manifest ever more fully the unity of the Church.*

**CONSTITUTION**

**Preamble**

*“The glory that you have given me I have given them, so that they may be one, as we are one, I in them and you in me, that they may become completely one, so that the world may know that you have sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me.” John 17:22-23*

In response to the Gospel as revealed in the Scriptures, we confess Jesus Christ, the incarnate God, as Lord and Savior. We, the Christian Communions of the Virginia Council of Churches, covenant with one another to manifest ever more fully the visible unity of the Church. Relying upon the transforming power of the Holy Spirit, we gather in common mission, serving our neighbor’s good, and to the glory of the one God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. We covenant to make more fully visible our oneness by the creation of a state Council of Churches, to be governed by the following Constitution and By-Laws.

**ARTICLE I**

**Name**

The name of this organization shall be VIRGINIA COUNCIL OF CHURCHES, Inc.

**ARTICLE II**

**Purpose**

To discover and manifest more fully the oneness of the Church of Jesus Christ, according to the Scriptures and outlined in the Covenant Statement, represented by these marks of covenant:

1. Worship

- Encourage opportunities for shared worship, prayer, learning, and celebration, as appropriate to our traditions
- Invite each other to be present at or participate in annual meetings, baptisms, ordinations, the Lord’s Supper and other gatherings, services and sacraments, as appropriate to our traditions
- Pray for one another, the Council, and the unity of the church, as appropriate to our traditions

## 2. Dialogue

- Respect each other and each others traditions
- Celebrate our shared tenets of the Christian faith
- Engage in intentional conversation and education, seeking to understand the gifts we each bring, listening and learning together in order to discern the will of God

## 3. Ecumenical Vision

- Proclaim the vision of unity and wholeness for the church which Christ has set before us
- Promote the understanding, appreciation, value of ecumenism
- Coordinate the practice of ecumenism within and among our communities

## 4. Evangelism

- Share the Christian message and witness through word and deed with sensitivity to our mutual relationships and without proselytizing or denigrating our distinctions
- Identify, encourage and equip joint efforts in spreading the gospel and developing followers of Jesus Christ
- Maintain ongoing dialogue to clarify theological issues in order to strengthen our shared witness

## 5. Social Mission and Witness

- Engage together in Christ's mission on a regular and intentional basis, speaking and acting together in all matters, except those in which deep differences of conviction compel us to speak and act separately
- Promote education and action that embody God's justice, peace, and love
- Witness to the gospel by confronting injustice and marginalization

## 6. Covenantal Unity

- Revisit and reaffirm our faithfulness to this covenant on a regular basis
- Actively build a community that depends on and demonstrates the transcending and transforming love of God in Jesus Christ
- Financially support our shared ministries through the Council

## ARTICLE III

### **Principles**

1. This Council shall be a voluntary association, and shall be without mandatory power in relation to the bodies choosing to utilize it as a channel of counsel and of joint Christian expression.
2. The complete autonomy and corporate integrity of each Communion shall be mutually respected and safeguarded in all relations involving ecumenical fellowship and action.
3. All constituent bodies will be expected to share in the basic operating costs of the Council.

## ARTICLE IV

### **Relationship**

1. Communions in Covenant Relationship

Christian Communions within the Commonwealth of Virginia that accept the purposes of this Council as set forth in the Covenant, Constitution, and By-Laws, are invited to become members of the Council following review of a written application, which states acceptance of the purposes of this Council, and following approval at any duly constituted meeting of the Coordinating Cabinet.

## 2. Affiliated Bodies

For the purposes of consultative and liaison relationships, ecumenical or interfaith bodies, agencies, ministerial associations, or churches, so long as they share a common interest with the VCC, may be accepted as Affiliated Bodies by the Coordinating Cabinet. Affiliated Bodies may participate in the Coordinating Cabinet with voice but without vote.

## ARTICLE V

### **Governance**

1. The Coordinating Cabinet shall be the governing and policy-making body of the Council, which shall meet at least twice annually.

#### a) Composition

- i) Every judicatory shall be entitled to two voting members, one of whom shall be the principal executive officer of that judicatory, or his/her proxy, plus one other chosen by the judicatory.
- ii) The officers of the Council shall be voting members.
- iii) The chairperson or president of each Program Unit, Commission, and Committee shall have voice without vote.
- iv) The president or another representative designated by the Governing Board of an Affiliated Body shall have voice without vote.

#### b) Functions: The Coordinating Cabinet shall:

- i) Oversee and coordinate the general program of the Council
- ii) Establish and oversee Program Units, Commissions and Committees, and modify or discontinue same as deemed necessary in fulfilling the objectives and purposes of the Council
- iii) Receive and act on applications for membership in the Council
- iv) Elect a General Minister and officers of the Council
- v) Adopt program goals, objectives, and an annual operating budget

#### c) Annual Meeting:

The fall meeting of the Coordinating Cabinet will constitute the Annual Meeting of the Virginia Council of Churches, Inc.

#### d) Quorum:

The presence of one third of voting members shall constitute a quorum.

2. The Steering Committee shall be the administrative body of the Council between meetings of the Coordinating Cabinet. It shall meet at least twice a year.

#### a) Composition:

- i) The officers of the Council
- ii) Six members at large, elected by the Coordinating Cabinet
- iii) The chairpersons of the Program Units and Commissions
- iv) The Immediate Past President of the Council (ex-officio)

- b) Functions: The Steering Committee shall:
- i) Prepare the agenda for meetings of the Coordinating Cabinet
  - ii) Fulfill directives of the Coordinating Cabinet and act on its behalf when specifically delegated to do so
  - iii) Call meetings of the Coordinating Cabinet in addition to regularly scheduled meetings when it deems necessary
  - iv) Provide for the employment of Associates and Support staff
  - v) Approve the appointment/election of Chairpersons and Board Presidents for all Program Units, Commissions, and Committees of the Council
  - vi) Name a Nominating Committee of at least five members who shall be from among the representatives of member Communions to the Coordinating Cabinet. The Nominating Committee shall present to the annual meeting of the Virginia Council of Churches, Inc. nominations for the officers of the Council. Opportunity shall be given for nominations from the Meeting floor.
- c) Quorum:  
The presence of fifty percent of the voting members shall constitute a quorum.

#### Article VI.

##### **Annual Assembly**

There shall be an Annual Assembly for the purpose of enhancing ecumenical life in the Commonwealth of Virginia. The installation of Council officers shall be part of this gathering.

#### ARTICLE VII

##### **Financial Support**

The primary financial support of the Council shall be the responsibility of the member communions.

#### ARTICLE VIII

##### **By-Laws**

The Coordinating Cabinet may adopt such By-Laws as it deems proper provided the same are not in conflict with this Constitution.

#### ARTICLE IX

##### **Amendments**

The Coordinating Cabinet may amend the Constitution provided the proposed amendment shall be submitted in writing to all members of the Coordinating Cabinet at least thirty days prior to a Coordinating Cabinet meeting. At that meeting, there shall be a first

reading of the proposed amendment. The proposed amendment will be acted upon at the next Annual Meeting of the Virginia Council of Churches, Inc. For adoption, an amendment must be approved by two-thirds of the voting members present.

# BY-LAWS

## ARTICLE I

### **Officers**

#### 1. Qualifications

a. The officers of the Council shall be a President, Vice-President, Secretary, and Treasurer, elected for terms of two years by the annual meeting.

b. Officers in each case shall be one of the designated representatives of the member Communions or shall be certified by one of the member Communions.

c. The officers shall continue in office until their successors have been elected and have begun to serve.

d. No person shall serve as President for more than two terms in succession.

e. In case of death, resignation, or inability of any officer to act, the Steering Committee may elect a successor to hold the office thus vacated until the next Annual Meeting.

#### 2. Duties

a. **PRESIDENT:** The President shall preside at meetings of the Coordinating Cabinet, Steering Committee, the Annual Assembly, and upon request shall represent the Council at state, denominational, ecumenical, agency, and community gatherings. The President shall be an advisory member without vote of Program Units, Commissions, and Committees of the Council.

b. **VICE PRESIDENT:** The Vice President shall preside at meetings of the Coordinating Cabinet, the Steering Committee, and the Annual Assembly in the absence of the President, and shall fill the chair when vacated temporarily by the President. The Vice President shall ordinarily serve as the chairperson of the program planning committee for the Annual Assembly of the Council.

c. **SECRETARY:** The Secretary shall provide for the recording and safekeeping of minutes of the Coordinating Cabinet, the Steering Committee, and the Annual Assembly.

d. **TREASURER:** The Treasurer shall ensure that an accurate record of accounts is kept and that a written report is provided to all meetings of the Steering Committee and the Coordinating Cabinet. The Treasurer and other person(s) handling funds shall be bonded in such sum and surety as may be required by the Coordinating Cabinet.

## ARTICLE II

### **Staff**

1. **GENERAL MINISTER:** The General Minister, called for an indefinite term upon election by the Coordinating Cabinet, shall be the general executive and advisor of the Council and shall render such service in its several areas as the Coordinating Cabinet or the Steering Committee may determine. The General Minister shall supervise all staff for the Council. The General Minister shall provide leadership for the Council, promote interdenominational witness, and strengthen our common

ministries. The General Minister shall particularly seek to correlate the various activities of the Council and to maintain such relationships with the executive officers of the Communions and ecumenical agencies as shall help to develop a comprehensive and well-balanced program of religious life and witness throughout the Commonwealth. The General Minister shall be an advisory member, without vote, of the Coordinating Cabinet and the Steering Committee. The General Minister shall serve as a member of, and provide support to, all Program Units, Commissions, and Committees.

2. ASSOCIATE(S) - The Coordinating Cabinet may authorize the employment of such associate staff, as it may deem necessary. The Steering Committee shall determine the terms of employment. All Associate Staff shall be accountable to the General Minister and the Steering Committee. The Associate staff shall be advisory members without vote of such units of the Council as pertain to its responsibilities.
3. SUPPORT STAFF - The General Minister, with the concurrence of the Steering Committee, may employ such support staff as is deemed necessary to the efficient functioning of the Council office. All support staff shall be accountable to the General Minister.

### ARTICLE III

#### **Program Units, Commissions, and Committees**

##### 1. Mission:

The Program Units, Commissions, and Committees shall carry out the mission of the Council.

##### 2. Definitions:

- a) Program Units are established by the Coordinating Cabinet to carry out the purposes of the Virginia Council of Churches in its social mission and witness. They are responsible to the Coordinating Cabinet, which determines their membership. They may be dissolved by the Coordinating Cabinet
- b) Commissions are enduring bodies that are responsible for the purposes of the Virginia Council of Churches in the areas of worship, dialogue, ecumenical vision, evangelism, and covenantal unity. Their membership shall reflect the ecclesial diversity of the Virginia Council of Churches and shall be determined by the Coordinating Cabinet and the judicatories. Commissions are responsible to the Coordinating Cabinet and to the judicatories. They are created by the Coordinating Cabinet and may be dissolved by it.
- c) Committees may be established for specific purposes by the Coordinating Cabinet, the Steering Committee, Program Units or Commissions of the Virginia Council of Churches. Committees are responsible to and may be dissolved by the body that establishes them. The body that creates them determines their membership.

##### 2. Representation:

The chairperson of a program unit, commission, or committee, shall be accredited by a member communion of the Council and shall be appointed by the Steering Committee.

##### 3. Accreditation:

- a) All members of commissions and committees shall be accredited by a member communion and shall be appointed by the Steering Committee. Representatives of non-member communions may be invited to participate.
  - b) Program Unit boards shall determine the composition of their boards, with the approval of the Steering Committee.
4. Functions:
- Program Units, Commissions, and Committees shall have responsibility for program development within the assigned area in keeping with the policies and guidelines established by the Coordinating Cabinet. Such responsibilities shall include:
- a) Study needs and develop cooperative programs to meet needs.
  - b) Provide a forum for sharing concerns and an opportunity for coordinating and strengthening the witness of member Communions and Affiliated Bodies in common areas of concern.
  - c) Recommend to the Coordinating Cabinet such policies and procedures as may seem advisable for conducting the ministry.
  - d) Work with staff to carry out the particular ministry of the Program Unit, Commission, or Committee.

#### ARTICLE IV

##### **Amendments**

The Coordinating Cabinet may amend the Bylaws provided the proposed amendment shall be submitted in writing to all members of the Coordinating Cabinet at least thirty days prior to a Coordinating Cabinet meeting. At that meeting, there shall be a first reading of the proposed amendment. The proposed amendment will be acted upon at the next Coordinating Cabinet meeting. For adoption, an amendment must be approved by two-thirds of the voting members present.