

Movements of Organizations.

From the Evangelist.

A STATEMENT OF THE CONSTITUTION, ORDER AND DISCIPLINE OF THE EVANGELICAL UNION CHURCH, MIDDLETOWN, CONNECTICUT.

PREFATORY NOTE.

The Evangelical Union Church of Middletown was organized on the 16th day of September, 1855. The following statement of the principles was, after careful consideration, adopted by all the brethren of which the church was composed at its formation. It is our sincere desire and earnest prayer that the union love, cordiality, and Christian spirit which have been manifested by the founders of this Christian Church, will be exhibited by all who, in future years, may become members of it.

H. M.

It is necessary to state that our object in giving an outline of the Constitution, order and discipline of a Christian Church is principally, if not solely, for the information of applicants for membership.

I.—CONSTITUTION OF THE CHURCH.

Without entering into details, the following appear to us to be the leading features of the Constitution of the Church of Christ.

1. *In its external relations the Church is independent.* It is complete within itself. It manages its own affairs; elects its own office-bearers, and if need be calls upon any of them to resign, without interference from other churches beyond the fraternal liberty of tendering counsel and warning when required. This is one of the fundamental principles of Congregationalism, and we believe it to be an essential element in the Constitution of a Christian Church. Each church in the New Testament is spoken of and addressed as separate and distinct from all other Churches. See 1 Cor. i. 2; 1 Thess. i. 1; Rev. ii. 1, 8, 18; iii. 1, 7, 14.

2. *In its internal constitution the Church is Presbyterian.* It has a plurality of presbyters or elders, (including the monitor), who are also in the New Testament called Bishops and Pastors, that is Overseers and Shepherds, Acts xiv, 23, xv. 4, xx. 17-28; Phil. i. 1; Titus i. 5; 1 Tim. v. 17; Heb. xiii. 17. These elders are invested with the oversight of the Church. They attend to cases of admission and of discipline, and exercise a watchful care over the spiritual interests of the Church. They meet as often as circumstances require for consultation and prayer. They discharge their duties without interference from church members so long as they retain the Church's confidence, and remain in office. But they avail themselves as far as practicable of the co-operation of their brother members; and they never admit, suspend, or expel members, or decide on anything important without communicating it to the collective brethren, with the requisite particulars, at a regular meeting of the Church.

3. The Church equally recognizes the scripturalty of the office of Deacons to attend to the temporal concerns of the Church when their services may be required. Acts vi. 1-4; Phil. i. 1; 1 Tim. iii. 8, 15.

4. The Church is composed of those who give evidence of having peace with God, and of being new creatures in Christ Jesus, and who can yield a cordial and practical submission to its recognized Order and Constitution.

5. The only standard of doctrine recognized as infallible is the Word of God, as that Word is revealed in the Old and New Testaments.

II.—ORDER OF THE CHURCH.

1. The public services of the Sabbath are conducted in the usual manner, at the usual hours.

2. The members of the Church hold the practice of infant baptism.

3. The Church stately observes the Lord's Supper every three months, and more frequently, if deemed expedient by two-thirds of the members.

4. The Church being bound to honor and worship God in their public collective capacity and to do all things decently and in order, with a view to maintain uniformity of worship, to foreclose strife and division and to prevent any ordinance which they may deem Divine from falling into contempt or neglect; receive none into church membership but those who, besides giving evidence of being Christians and of one mind with them in their evangelical views, are able conscientiously and in good faith to observe the various religious ordinances and ecclesiastical regulations, recognized and established in this Church.

5. The Church see it to be their duty, and feel it to be their privilege to admit to the communion table (which is not theirs but the Lord's) and to welcome to their fellowship, at their various meetings for prayer and exhortation, all brethren in whom they have confidence, as Christians who desire their fellowship, and who are willing in peace and love to unite thus far with the Church. The roll of communicants accordingly is not regarded as identical with the roll of members; and on this ground the church and such brethren as those referred to can enjoy each other's fellowship without compromise, dissimulations, division, or restraint. The Pastor of the Church will deem it a duty and a privilege to care for and visit such brethren though not members of the Church.

6. The church meets stately on some convenient evening, duly intimated, for devotional exercises, church business and mutual exhortation, previous to each communion season.

7. A special meeting of the Church may be called by the elders as often as they deem it necessary, either at their own instance or at the suggestion of other office-bearers, or members; the meeting to be publicly intimated from the pulpit on the Lord's day.

III.—ADMISSION INTO THE CHURCH.

1. Application for church membership is made to the Minister, or in his absence, to one of the Elders, who mentions it at the first elders' meeting.

2. It is then mentioned at the first meeting of the Church, thereafter, in order that members may have an opportunity of conversing with the applicant, inquiring into his condition and character, and furnishing the elders with any information that may affect his fitness for membership.

3. Each applicant converses privately (1) with the minister (2) with at least one elder—the elder residing in the district where he lives; and (3) with some of the members belonging to the same district specified by the minister or elder; and then the reports of these members and elders, and the minister, are simultaneously given in at the elders's meeting.

4. Any member having objections to the admission of an applicant into membership, or desiring delay in his admission, makes his mind known to some one of the elders previously, and the information thus communicated is taken into consideration at their next meeting.

5. Should no one object to the applicant's admission, or desire delay, and should both elders and minister be satisfied with the case, the applicant is reported to the Church as approved of, and actually and solemnly received into fellowship. New mem-