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Universalist, 186
Articles of government - 1

ARTICLES

OF

RELIGION AND GOVERNMENT

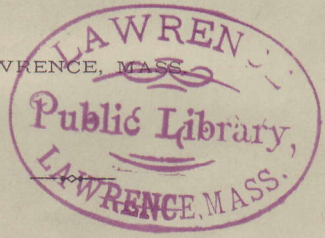
OF

The Universalist Church,

ADOPTED BY THE

Church of the Good Shepherd,

LAWRENCE, MASS.



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PRINTED FOR THE CHURCH,---GEO. S. MERRILL & Co., PRINTERS.

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The Church of the Good Shepherd.

ARTICLES OF RELIGION.

I. OF FAITH IN GOD.

We believe in the one living and true God, creator of heaven and earth; in His Paternal Providence; that He is not only Divine Sovereign, but Heavenly Father; that His justice is in perfect harmony with His mercy; and that in His essential nature, God is Love.

II. OF FAITH IN JESUS CHRIST.

We believe in Jesus Christ, the Son of God, and the Mediator between God and man; the Divine Teacher, the sufficient Saviour, and the ever-living Head of the Church.

III. OF THE HOLY SPIRIT.

We believe in the Holy Spirit—that Spirit which proceedeth from the Father, which was signally poured upon the early disciples, and which God is ever ready to give to them who ask it. We believe in the immediate agency of the Holy Spirit in renewing our hearts, helping our infirmities, and in comforting and sanctifying our souls.

IV. OF THE HOLY SCRIPTURES.

We believe that the Holy Scriptures of the Old and

New Testaments contain a revelation of the character and will of God, and of the duty, interest and final destiny of mankind; that whatsoever is not taught therein, nor may be proved thereby, is not to be required of any man that it should be believed as an article of the faith.

V. OF SIN.

We believe that sin is the transgression of the law—a known, unholy action of the soul; that while suffering from the effects of Adam's sin, mankind has no participation in the guilt of his transgression.

VI. OF RETRIBUTION.

We believe in the necessity and certainty of retribution; that God will render to every man according to his deeds, whether they be good or bad; that while He will by no means clear the guilty, none of His chastisements are vindictive; that He chastens us for our profit that we may be partakers of His holiness.

VII. OF THE ATONEMENT.

We believe that Jesus Christ lived, suffered, died, rose, and ever lives, to redeem the world from sin, and bring all souls into oneness with God; that if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ, the righteous, who is the propitiation for our sins; and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world.

VIII. OF CONVERSION AND REGENERATION.

We believe in the reality and necessity of Conversion and Regeneration; of turning to God with the purpose of submitting to His will, and obeying His law; and of that inward spiritual state, or life of faith and love, which is the gift of the Holy Spirit.

IX. OF THE DIVINE FORGIVENESS.

We believe in the forgiveness and remission of sins, through the mercy of our God; that if we confess and forsake our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins; that wherever and whenever, in this life or

in the life to come, we heartily repent and turn to God, He will mercifully hear and forgive.

X. OF THE CHURCH.

We believe that the visible Church of Christ is a company of faithful persons who have united together in the name and faith of the Master, that they may the better learn of Him, and grow in the christian life; to whom the pure Word of God is preached, and the sacraments duly administered, according to Christ's ordinance.

XI. OF THE SACRAMENTS.

We believe that the Sacraments ordained of Christ are not only badges or tokens of a christian's profession, but also signs of grace and God's good will toward us, by which He works within our souls, quickening, strengthening and confirming our faith in Him. There are two sacraments ordained of Christ our Lord in the Gospel: Baptism and the Supper of our Lord.

Of Baptism.—Baptism is a sign of our relationship to God, the Heavenly Father,—that we are His children; to Jesus Christ,—that He is our Saviour; and to the Holy Spirit as our comforter and sanctifier. It is also a sign of New Birth and Regeneration.

Of the Lord's Supper.—The Supper of the Lord is a sign and pledge of our redemption by Christ. It is also expressive of the love which Christians ought to have among themselves, one to another.

XII. SALVATION.

We believe that salvation is inward and spiritual,—the deliverance of the soul from sin, and its growth in holiness; and that no soul can be saved, here or hereafter, except by repentance toward God, and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

XIII. UNIVERSAL REDEMPTION.

We believe that the crowning truth of revelation is the final redemption of all souls; that by the power of redeeming Love, all souls will return to God in peni-

tence and obedience, so that not only all who now live, but all who have lived, and shall live, will bow to Christ, accept him as Lord, and enter into the joy of Heaven.

GOVERNMENT of the CHURCH.

I. NAME.

This Church shall be known as the Church of THE GOOD SHEPHERD.

II. OFFICERS.

The Officers of this Church shall consist of a Pastor, two or more Deacons, a Clerk, and a Treasurer. The Deacons shall be chosen by ballot, and unless they resign, shall remain in office during the pleasure of the Church. The Clerk and Treasurer shall be elected annually by ballot.

III. MODERATOR.

The Pastor of the Church shall preside at its meetings; in his absence, one of the Deacons shall preside.

IV. DEACONS.

The Deacons shall assist the Pastor in the administration of the ordinances, and in the general supervision of the affairs of the Church.

V. CLERK.

The Clerk shall keep a record of the proceedings of all meetings, notify officers and committees of their election, and take charge of all books and papers, except the books of the treasurer and the pastoral committees. He shall also enter the names of all persons admitted into the church in a book provided for the

purpose, giving the date of their admission, noting the time of all withdrawals, of all removals, and of the decease of the members. In the same book, and under the direction of the Pastor, he shall enter the names and ages of the children baptized into the church, giving date of baptism, and names of the parents; and this record shall be called the roll of the Children of the Church. At the Annual Meeting, he shall report the condition of the church.

VI. TREASURER.

The Treasurer shall receive all moneys contributed for the use of the Church, and disburse the same under the direction of the Pastor and two of the Deacons, and exhibit at every annual meeting an account current of receipts and expenditures.

VII. CHURCH AND SUNDAY SCHOOL.

For the sake of a more vital union between the Church and the Sunday School, the Church, at its annual meeting, shall elect, by ballot, a Superintendent of the Sunday School, unless the office is otherwise provided for; and the Superintendent may nominate officers and teachers for the School, and present their names to the Church for its action, confirming or else rejecting them.

VIII. PASTORAL COMMITTEES.

The Church shall be divided into the following Pastoral Committees, which shall be appointed by the Pastor and Deacons, at the annual meeting of the Church, viz.: Committee on the Sick; Committee on Benevolence; Committee on Hospitality; Committee of Visitation; Committee on Sunday Schools and Missions.

IX. DUTIES OF PASTORAL COMMITTEES.

Sec. 1. The Committee on the Sick shall visit the sick in their respective districts, provide watchers when needed, do all in their power to make the sick comfortable, and report the cases to the Pastor.

Sec. 2. The Committee on Benevolence shall devise and put in operation such means as they may deem suitable to reach and help the needy, especially of the household of faith. They shall also endeavor to provide employment for those who are seeking it.

Sec. 3. The Committee on Hospitality shall seek out the strangers in the parish, call upon them, introduce them to the Pastor and members of the congregation, and endeavor to make them feel that they are among friends.

Sec. 4. The Committee of Visitation shall endeavor to make the acquaintance of all the members of the congregation who reside in their respective districts, call upon every person, and exert themselves to unite the parish as one great family.

Sec. 5. The Committee on Sunday Schools and Missions shall be charged with the superintendence of these great departments of christian work in the parish. They shall visit the Sunday School as often as once a quarter, and report on its condition, at the quarterly meetings of the Church. They shall also interest themselves in the establishment of Mission Sunday Schools, distribution of tracts and books, and in all other work, which relates to the spread of the Gospel and the good of souls.

Sec. 6. The Pastoral Committees shall be ready to report at any regular meeting of the Church, at the request of the presiding officer.

X. MEMBERSHIP.

Those persons who wish to become members of this Church shall make their desire known to the Pastor or Deacons, and if they are satisfied concerning the christian faith and character of the applicants, they shall recommend them to the Church; and if the Church approve, they shall be received in the manner hereinafter provided. All children baptized into the Church are within its folds, under its fostering care, and shall be known as the Children of the Church, and they shall remain such until they present themselves for confirmation, when they may openly confirm what was prom-

ised for them in baptism, and also promise, that, by the grace of God, they will themselves evermore endeavor to live a christian life.

XI. THE ORDER FOR RECEIVING MEMBERS.

¶ *When the Church is assembled for communion, all who are to be received shall present themselves before the altar, when the Pastor shall address them, saying,*

Dearly beloved, on profession of your faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, your desire to learn of Him, and to co-operate with us in the study and practice of religion, we gladly receive you into our number. We welcome you to this communion of christian souls. We earnestly desire to sympathize with you, and will endeavor to watch over and support you in the trials of life, and the work of duty. And may God, our Father, grant that this union formed on earth may continue in Heaven, and fit us for the fellowship of the saints in light.

¶ *Then all of them in order, kneeling before the minister, he shall baptize those who have not been baptized, saying,*

N. I baptize thee in the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

¶ *After that, he shall lay his hands on the head of every one severally, saying,*

Defend, O Lord, this thy child (or, this thy servant,) with thy heavenly grace; that he may continue thine forever, and daily increase in thy Holy Spirit, more and more until he come into thine everlasting kingdom. Amen.

¶ *Then the Minister may say,*

The Lord be with you.

Answer. And with thy Spirit.

Minister. Our help is in the name of the Lord;

Answer. Who hath made heaven and earth.

Minister. Blessed be the Name of the Lord;

Answer. Henceforth, world without end.

Minister. Lord, hear our prayers;

Answer. And let our cry come unto thee.

¶ *Then the Lord's Prayer shall be said, Minister and people repeating it together, all reverently bowing the head, or kneeling.*

¶ *Then the Minister may offer prayer in his own words.*

¶ *Then shall follow the Benediction:*

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with us all evermore. Amen.

¶ *The above order may be preceded by singing, by the Church, two verses of the hymn, beginning,*

"Come in, thou blessed of the Lord,"

and, at the close of the ceremony, the closing verse of the same hymn may be sung.

SPECIAL RULES.

I. The Annual Meeting shall be held in the month of January, to hear reports, for the election of officers, and for the transaction of any other necessary business.

II. The Regular Meeting of the Church shall be held on Tuesday previous to the first Sunday of each month. Special meetings shall be called at the written request of five members of the church, and at such other times as the Pastor may determine.

III. A Fellowship Meeting for fraternal sympathy, in the union of all the Members of the Church, and in the union of all hearts, shall be held once a year, in the month of November, and shall be arranged by, and under the direction of, the Pastor and the Committee of Visitation.

IV. At the Regular Meetings of the Church, the following ORDER shall be observed:

1.—Singing, reading^g of the Scriptures, and prayer.

2.—Reading the records of the previous meeting.

3.—Names of candidates for membership, given by the Pastor.

4.—Reports of Committees, which shall be introduced successively, in the following order:

The Pastor, or the Deacon who occupies the chair, shall say:

Does any one present know of any Member of the Church or Parish who is sick, or in trouble?

This question will call for the Report of the Committee on the Sick, or a response from some member who may know of a case of sickness.

Does any one present know of any Member of this Church or Parish who is in need?

This question will call for a Report from the Committee on Benevolence, mentioning the fact simply that there are cases of poverty, and reporting more fully in private to the Pastor, and to such Members of the Church as may be necessary.

Does any one present know of any stranger who desires to attend our Church, or of any one who has recently come amongst us?

This question will call for the Report from the Committee on Hospitality, or some response from Members of the Church.

Does any one present know of any one now connected with this Church or Parish, who ought to be brought into more intimate relations with us as a christian people?

This question will call for a Report from the Committee of Visitation, or a response from some Member.

Has any one present anything to say for the good of the young of our Parish, for the good of the Sunday School, or in behalf of Missions?

This question will call for a Report from the Committee on Sunday Schools and Missions.

5.—Remarks from the Pastor, or from any member present, concerning the general good of the Church, and the comfort and edification of souls.

6.—Hymn, Prayer, Benediction.

v. When cases of personal difficulty between the members arise, the directions given by Christ, in Luke xvii: 3, 4, Matthew xviii: 15, 16, 17, shall be the rule of procedure.

vi. It shall be an especial duty of Members of this Church to minister to each other's welfare in times of sickness and misfortune; and it shall be the duty of any Member of the Church, knowing of a case of sickness or distress, to report the same to the proper committee, or to the Pastor.

vii. It shall be the duty of all parents who are members of this Church, to present their children for consecration in baptism, making the sacred vow before God, carefully to attend to their spiritual nurture.

viii. The Sacrament of the Lord's Supper shall be administered to this Church on the first Sunday of each month, unless otherwise ordered, and on such other days of the christian year as the Pastor may appoint.

ix. It shall be the duty of the Members of this Church to attend all its meetings, and faithfully observe the celebration of Holy Communion, or the Supper of the Lord. And any member who disregards Church obligations shall be visited by the Pastor or Deacons, and if found to have lost all interest in the Church, fellowship may be withdrawn.