

The Constitution Of B'nai Chayim/Children of Life Fellowship of Alberta

**A shoot will come up from the stump of Jesse;
from his roots a Branch will bear fruit.
The Spirit of the L-RD will rest on him-
the Spirit of wisdom and of understanding,
the Spirit of counsel and of power,
the Spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the L-RD**
- Isaiah 11:1-2 (NIV)

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Article I: Name of the Organization

This organization shall be called B'nai Chayim/Children of Life Fellowship.

Article II: Purpose

We are a caring community of Jewish and Non-Jewish believers in **Yeshua** (Jesus), which functions in mutual accountability and for the administration of ordinances (**Mikveh** [immersion] and the L-rd's Table)¹ and also for the purposes of worship, prayer, Bible Study, fellowship, and outreach, as we observe the biblical and historical festivals of Israel.

This purpose is **fourfold**:

A. To Glorify G-d

Our highest calling in life is to glorify G-d. The *Shema* (Deut. 6:4-9) articulates this obligation, which is also a privilege. "Shema Yisrael Adonai Elohaynu Adonai echad"-*Hear O Israel, the L-rd our G-d, the L-rd is one*". We are to love the L-rd with all our heart, soul, mind and strength (Mk. 12:28-31). Anything else we do or believe flows from this daily reality.

As a **Messianic Jewish Congregation**, we express our worship:

1. Corporately and individually in our weekly *Shabbat* (Sabbath) services, as well as at home and as families.
2. In a cultural context using Jewish liturgical forms and customs (i.e. *Siddur* [Prayer book], Jewish songs and dance, weekly Torah readings).
3. By observing all the Jewish Feasts according to the Jewish lunar calendar in a **Messiah** centered manner.
4. By regularly celebrating the L-rd's Table (Communion) as admonished by **Yeshua** in I Cor.11:23-26.
5. In corporate and individual prayer: Phil. 4:6, 7; I Pe. 5:7, Eph. 6:18; I Thess. 5:17; Ps. 5:4; Ps. 34:1; Ps. 145:2

B. To Build up the Body of Believers

1. By loving one another and ministering to one another's needs. We are to value those whom G-d created in His own image.
2. So we may grow in **Messiah**, and to attain His likeness and character, through study of the word of G-d, prayer and fellowship.

¹ Not including the middle 'o' in G-d and L-rd in written documents is common amongst the Jewish people, to avoid desecrating the sanctity of His Name, in case the papers should end up on the floor or in the garbage. To avoid offending our Jewish brothers and sisters, we have decided to follow the same procedure.

3. By encouraging Jewish believers to embrace a Jewish lifestyle that reflects our connection with historical Judaism, while worshipping Yeshua (as Messiah). Non-Jewish believers in our midst are encouraged to participate in, and even to embrace our expression of Messianic Judaism according to their conscience. *They are free to do so with liberty, but as sojourners among us, they are under no obligation* (Acts 15:28, 29; Romans 14:5, 10, 13, 14, 17-19, 22, 23).

These Jewish customs and traditions have no bearing on salvation and are not to be interpreted as putting one in bondage or legalism. They are intended to enhance the worship of Messiah with freedom, according to a biblical expression of a Messianic Jewish style of worship and practice.

We recognize three kinds of traditional Jewish customs: biblical (which we observe), non-biblical (not mentioned in the Bible, and which are optional, and which we observe from a Messianic perspective), and unbiblical (we do not observe any that go against the clear teaching of the Scriptures).

C. To Proclaim the Good News of Salvation²

To the Jew first but also to the Gentiles (Rom. 1:16). We have a distinct mandate and calling to the lost sheep of the house of Israel (Rom. 9:1-5; 10:1)

Our purpose is to also train and equip the members of our local body, so that we can have a part in advancing G-d's kingdom in a Messianic context (Is. 58:10-12; Is. 61:1-3; Gal. 3:26-28; Eph. 4:7-16).

D. To Proclaim the Jewish Roots of the Gospel

1. To be a bridge of understanding to the Gentile Christian community by teaching about the inherent Jewish roots of our faith in **Yeshua**, the promised **Messiah** of Israel (Rom. 11:13-32; Eph. 3:6).
2. To provide a venue of Jewish spirituality for Jewish believers and non-Jewish believers who feel called to express their faith and commitment within the historical and biblical Jewish context of the Gospel.
3. To correct the mistaken theological perspective called Replacement Theology, because the church does not replace Israel, and to show both communities, Gentile and Jewish, that there are two equally acceptable expressions of faith in Yeshua of Nazareth, one Jewish and one Gentile.

² See Article III, #3 for a definition of the Good News of Salvation.

Article III Statement of Faith
anachnu ma'aminim b'emunah shleymah
WE AFFIRM WITH PERFECT FAITH

1. That the Bible (the *Tenach* and the *Brit Chadashah*, the Earlier and the Later Scriptures, also called the Old Testament and New Testament) is essentially a Jewish document, and is the only divinely inspired, inerrant, and authoritative, eternal Word of G-d. It has come down to us as intact and integral as it was at its inception, and applies as wholly today as it did then, in the same two contexts - to the Jew first, with rich symbolic ritual and traditional observances; and also to the Gentile, in equivalent spirituality of the same kind and at the same level (II Tim. 3:16; II Peter 1:20, 21).
2. That the Eternal L-rd G-d (Adonai YHVH Elohim) of **Abraham, Isaac and Jacob** is **Echad**. That is, a composite **unity** who has revealed himself to man as the Father (ha Av) in Heaven, the Son (v'ha Ben, Yeshua HaMashiach-Jesus the Christ), who is the Word of G-d made flesh and as the Holy Spirit (v'Ruach HaChodesh), the Spirit of Truth (Is. 48:16; John 1:1, 14; I Tim. 2:5; Joel 2:28).
3. That **Yeshua**, the **Messiah** of Israel, was born of a virgin (Is. 7:14), walked among us sinless, died on the tree (cross) for the sins of mankind, rose from the dead, and ascended to the right hand of the Father (Is. 53:6-12), where He lives and intercedes for His followers (Heb. 7:24,25). He will also return one day personally, which is our great hope and consolation. (Acts 1:11; Jn. 14:1-4; I Thes. 4:13-18)
4. That in Abraham, Israel remains G-d's chosen people. They have received a generational covenant with G-d in regards to the **Messiah**, the Land of Israel, and all **scriptural** and **spiritual** promises that were addressed to them. The Gentiles are children of Abraham's faith, not his blood or his covenants, and together with the Jews were without hope in the world, and must be cleansed from sin by the shed blood of the **Messiah**. Jewish believers and non-Jewish believers remain Jews and non-Jews in the **Messiah** after believing. They both become joined in **one body** and shall inherit eternal life through Him (I Cor. 7:17-20; Rom. 11:29-32; Gal. 3:28).
5. That sin is transgression against G-d's Torah, and can only be forgiven by faith in the atoning blood of **Yeshua** (Col. 1:20, 21) and by repentance of sins (Ez. 33:11). Upon confession of faith, believers receive everlasting life and are not under the wrath of G-d, which shall come upon this present age (John 3:16; John 5:25; I John 1:9; 2 Peter 3:8-10).
6. The Messiah's death is remembered until He returns by the partaking of the L-rd's Supper, as recorded in the Later Scriptures (Luke 22:14-20). This involves the breaking of Matzah (symbolizing His body) and taking the

cup (symbolizing His blood), and believing that Messiah, our Passover Lamb, has been sacrificed for us, for both Jew and Gentile (I Cor. 5:7; Is. 53:2-6).

7. That upon acceptance of Yeshua as Lord and Messiah, there is immersion, or baptism (Mikveh) in water, which is an outward sign of an inward experience of salvation, symbolizing both the effect of the death and resurrection of Messiah in the believer's life as well as the death of the "old man" and the resurrection into newness of life (Rom. 6:3-11; Col. 3:1-4; Matt. 28:18-20).
8. Furthermore, there is also an immersion in the Holy Spirit, which is accompanied by signs and wonders, and whereby the believer obtains spiritual strength and power to witness of Messiah's resurrection (Joel 2:28; Luke 3:16; Acts 1:8; 2:1-4)
9. That the Scriptures teach the orderly practice of the Spiritual gifts of the Holy Spirit as outlined in I Corinthians 12:7-13, 14:29-33, 39, 40 and Rom. 12:6-8. These are for the purpose of edifying the body of believers and bringing the body to maturity in Messiah. The fruit of the Spirit as described in Gal.5:22, 33, should also be the experience of the believer, and are neither a replacement for or in competition with these giftings.
10. That all believers are to live lives of holiness, with *complete freedom of conscience*, and total devotion to our joyful task of applying G-d's word into every situation of our lives (personal and community halacha - Rom. 12:1,2; 14:1, 5, 12, 22; 15:7; I Cor. 6:12; 8:9; 10:31).
11. That Jewish followers of Yeshua are called to maintain their Jewish biblical and historical heritage and to remain a part of the people Israel as well as part of the universal body of believers. (Acts 21:20-24; I Cor. 7:18, 19) This is part of their unique identity and is a witness to the faithfulness of G-d to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob (Rom. 11:28, 29; 15:8, 9).
12. That G-d gave the practices of the Law for moral instruction and as a body of cultural-national practice of holiness (Rom. 3:1, 2; 9:3-5) - which would point forward to the Messiah's work. The Law remains valid as a reflection of G-d's righteous standard of holiness (I John 5:3), and as a means of preserving the distinct nation of Israel (Ex. 19:5,6; I Cor. 10:6, 11). Fulfillment by the work of Yeshua does not imply the abrogation of the Law (Matt. 5:17-20).
13. That righteousness before G-d comes solely by grace through faith. (Eph. 2:8, 9; Gen. 15:6; Hab. 2:4; Rom. 3:27-31; 6:23).
14. That the sacrificial obligations of the Law were symbolic rituals which are fulfilled in our Glorious Messiah (Heb.8:1-6; 9:23-28; 10:1-13). The moral

imperatives of the Law still apply, both to the Jew (in the practice of the covenants of obedience) and to the Gentile (in *application* and *equivalence* - I Cor. 10:6, 11).

15. We believe that the nation of Israel is chosen by G-d to be a channel of blessing to all the nations on earth (Gen. 12:2, 3). We understand that the return of the Jewish people to their land is in fulfillment of Biblical prophecy (Luke 21:24, especially). We believe that the day will also come when Israel as a nation will accept the Messiah Yeshua (Rom. 11:25, 26), then shall the end come, when all shall be fulfilled.
16. We acknowledge our cultural and theological indebtedness to the rich historical traditions of Judaism, outlined in such documents as the *Talmud*, the *Mishnah* and the writings of many learned scholars through the ages. We also acknowledge our indebtedness to the rich tradition of Gentile Christian Writings such as the teachings of the Church Fathers and of other learned theologians through the ages. However, we acknowledge the primacy of the Scriptures, in both matters of faith, and of tradition and practice. We consider it our duty and our privilege to express our faith in every new generation according to the clear principles of the Scriptures. We join hands with all the previous generations of believers, and will joyfully explore these traditions which have come down to us, so that our faith and our observance can be tempered with the wisdom and the insights of those who have gone before us.

Article IV - Affiliation

1. **B'nai Chayim** is a member of the **Union of Messianic Jewish Congregations**. This organization was founded to bring many of the **Messianic Jewish Congregations** around the world together in a relationship of mutual support and accountability.
2. **B'nai Chayim** is NOT to be considered an internal division of a Canadian Registered Charity as per the registration requirements of the Canada Customs and Revenue Agency.

Article V – Membership

SECTION I - IDENTITY

1. UNIVERSAL MEMBERSHIP

We affirm that all believers in **Messiah Yeshua**, are members of the universal body and bride of **Messiah**. Membership in the body is not based on any earthly organizational affiliation, but is based on faith in the **Messiah Yeshua**. This body is distinct from Israel and composed of both Jews and Gentiles, made one by the **Messiah's** death and resurrection. *These members are under a solemn duty to keep*

the unity of the Spirit and the bond of love and peace with a pure heart.

2. LOCAL MEMBERSHIP

Membership in **B'nai Chayim** is open to any Jewish or Non-Jewish believer who has evidence of a new birth experience and the assurance of salvation as described in the Jewish Scriptures (John 3:3-8, 16-21; John 5:24; Rom. 10:9-13; I John 5:11-13); and who believe they are called to identify and be united with the **Messianic** Vision of our Congregation.

SECTION II – REQUIREMENTS (see also Article V – Membership, Section VIII: Transfer of Membership)

Those desiring to become members, after attending the Congregation for at least three months, on a regular basis, shall:

1. Express their desire to the Congregational leader and or elders.
2. Be, or have been, **Mikva'd** (Immersed in water) as commanded in the Scriptures (Matt. 28:19,20; Acts 8:12; 10:47, 48).
3. Be open to the gifts of the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:38-39; I Cor. 12:4-11, 27-31; I Cor. 14:26-33).
4. Agree with our Statement of Faith and the Constitution of our Congregation.
5. Understand the **Messianic** Vision, purpose, role and function of a body, a community of members (Rom. 1:16; Eph. 4:1-6).
6. Be interviewed by the congregational elders after attending regular orientation sessions.
7. Publicly receive the right hand of fellowship, as a token of membership, in covenant with **B'nai Chayim**.
8. Be able to function in ministry, and if able, in leadership in the congregation.

SECTION III - AREAS OF MINISTRY AND SERVICE

“From whom (**Yeshua**) the whole body, is joined and knit together by what every joint supplies, according to the effective working by which every part does its share, causes growth of the body for the edifying of itself in love. “ (Eph. 4:16)

1. Members shall attend congregational services, special meetings, prayer

meetings and other activities on a regular basis. A person grows spiritually by making a firm commitment to one Congregation. This helps to build community.

2. Members agree to support the Congregation with their tithes in accordance with scriptural principles (I Cor. 9:13,14; 2 Cor. 9:6, 7; Gal. 6:6).

3. Members shall recognize and understand their gifting and be willing to be involved in an area of ministry and service in the body.

4. Members shall be committed to and supportive of the **Messianic Vision** of the Congregation (i.e. Feast Days and Special Services).

5. Members shall be diligent to preserve the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace for the building up of the body, and by not speaking slander, nor malice, nor accusing one another. Scriptural principles are to be used in handling conflict among members (Mt. 18:15-20; Eph. 4:2,3, 29-32; I Tim. 5:19,20).

6. Members shall strive to walk in godly character such that their conduct, reputation and behaviour do not compromise their confession of faith.

SECTION IV - DISCIPLINE AND/OR REMOVAL

1. Any member who conducts himself or herself in a manner which is not consistent with Biblical principles (i.e. I Cor. 5:11-13; 6:9-11; Gal. 5:19,20; Mk. 7:21,22) and who shows no evidence of repentance (2 Tim. 3:1-5; Titus 3:10; Rom. 16:17, 18), shall be interviewed by the Leadership (Gal. 6:1). They shall receive counsel by the Leadership in accordance with scriptural procedures (Mt. 18:15-17; 2 Cor. 2:5-11).

2. Primary concern shall be the **restoration** and **reconciliation** of the erring member and the preservation of the *unity*, *purity* and *holiness* of the Congregation.

3. If the member chooses to continue in an unrepentant condition and refuses to heed counsel, he or she shall be asked to leave the Congregation. The members shall be cautioned about having fellowship with the person until reconciliation occurs (2 Thes. 3:14,15).

4. The Scriptures indicate three sins for which a person may be removed from membership in a Congregation:

- (i) Gross immorality from which one does not repent (I Cor. 5:9-11; 6:9,10)
- (ii) An unwillingness to reconcile with a brother or sister in the Congregation (Mt. 18:15-18).
- (iii) Anyone in gross doctrinal error, being divisive, disruptive, or

teaching a different Gospel (Gal. 1:6-9; 2 Cor. 11:4-6; 2 Thes. 3:6-14; Titus 3:9-11).

SECTION V - ADHERENTS - NONMEMBERS

1. Adherents or nonmembers are welcome to participate in all services, classes, congregational functions, or activities, but shall not be involved in an area of leadership in the Congregation, or have a vote at congregational meetings.

SECTION VI - MEMBERSHIP MEETINGS

1. There shall be quarterly meetings of the membership. They will be held before the High Holy Days, before Chanukah, before Purim, and before Shavuot. They shall be for the purpose of voicing any concerns, asking questions, receiving input or suggestions from the members, and the giving of reports on the different areas of ministry in the congregation. These meetings shall be conducted according to Robert's Rules of Order. Adherents are welcome to attend these meetings, but shall not have a vote.

SECTION VII – QUORUM

1. Fifty percent of all members shall constitute a quorum. Seventy five percent of members present must agree with proposed amendments that are not already covered by the stipulations of this constitution and that do not diminish or contradict the Messianic vision of our congregation. Refer to **Article IX – Amendments**.

SECTION VIII – TRANSFER OF MEMBERSHIP (see also Article V – Membership, Section II: Requirements)

1. A letter of recommendation shall be granted to any member, in good standing, who desires to unite with another congregation whose beliefs and goals are compatible with those of B'nai Chayim. Members in good standing from other congregations shall be received into fellowship with a letter of recommendation from their former congregation. In consultation with the leadership, transfer members will be given a variable period of adjustment to allow them to find their place in our fellowship. All the ordinary membership provisions of B'nai Chayim shall apply to these new members.
2. Persons who were members of other congregations and who are not in good standing with their former congregation, for whatsoever reason, shall deal with all and any issues related to their former situation with full scriptural integrity to the satisfaction of the leadership of B'nai Chayim, as a prerequisite to be considered for membership, according to Romans 12:18 (If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone. ¹⁹ Do not take revenge, my friends, but leave room for G-d's wrath, for it is written: "It is mine to avenge; I will repay," says the L-rd) and Matt. 6:14,15 (For if you forgive

- men when they sin against you, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. ¹⁵ But if you do not forgive men their sins, your Father will not forgive your sins).
3. As a redemptive community of grace which is committed to both healing and to spiritual growth, we refuse to allow any sinfulness to take root in our midst as part of the resolution of all and any personal spiritual concerns which newcomers may bring with them. In order to be considered for membership, newcomers need to resolve these issues with full Biblical integrity, as part of the process of healing which will lead them out of wounding and set them on the road to spiritual maturity and wholeness. (I Cor. 6:9-11)

ARTICLE VI - AUTHORITY OF THE CONGREGATION

SECTION I - ULTIMATE AUTHORITY

1. B'nai Chayim shall hold as its highest authority the L-rd G-d of Israel and the Word of G-d (**Tenach** and **Brit Chadashah**), revealed in the person of **Yeshua HaMashiach**, the **Messiah** of Israel and **Saviour** of the world.
2. While we as a **Messianic Jewish Congregation** recognize the value of our Jewish heritage, we are not under **Talmudic** or **Rabbinic** authority. Rather, we are a part of the universal body of **Messiah**, having been founded upon the apostles and the prophets, the **Messiah** Himself being the chief cornerstone of our faith (Eph. 2:20), and we continue to formulate halacha³ which reflects our unique standing in both communities.

SECTION II - CONGREGATIONAL AUTHORITY

1. According to the Scriptures the Biblical model of leadership for a local body recognizes three levels of authority: Pastoral, Elder, and Deaconal, all responsible to the congregation for the maintenance of both high standards of integrity and of our unique Messianic Jewish lifestyle as outlined in Articles II & III of this Constitution (I Tim. 3:1-13; I Tim. 4:6-16). The Scriptures teach that the *elders* are appointed by the rabbi or pastor, and must be confirmed by members of the congregation in order to be given the anointing and authority to lead, shepherd, teach and discipline. This confirmation shall be a vote by the majority of the membership by a show of hands at a duly constituted congregational meeting.
2. The Scriptures command the elders to be shepherds of G-d's flock, that is under their care (Acts 20:28-31; I Tim. 5:17-20; I Thess. 5:12; Heb. 13:7, 17, 24; James 5:14; 1 Peter 5:1-4).

SECTION III – BOARD OF DIRECTORS' AUTHORITY AND RELATIONSHIP TO GOVERNMENT AUTHORITIES

1. The function of the Board of Directors is to manage the business affairs of the congregation on behalf of the members of the congregation, so that the congregation may function as a registered charity under the authority of the Canada Customs and Revenue

³ Literally "to walk," *halacha* refers to laws which are accepted and followed by a Jewish community.

Agency and/or other ministries of the Government of Canada. As well, **B'nai Chayim** shall function as a Religious Society according to the Religious Societies Land Act of the Province of Alberta, and any other ministries and articles of legislation by which the congregation is to function under the authority of the Province of Alberta and the City of Edmonton, or other municipality and/or county where the congregation may be located.

2. While the Board of Directors is to perform as per paragraph 1, the Board of Directors is to recognize that the highest authority remains the Ultimate Authority as defined in Section I, paragraph 1.

2. Next to the Ultimate Authority, the Board of Directors is to be responsible to the members of the congregation similar to the way the Board of Directors of a limited company in Canada is responsible to the shareholders of the company.

SECTION IV – SPIRITUAL LEADERSHIP COUNCIL

1. The function of the Spiritual Leadership Council is to focus on the spiritual or religious matters of the congregation, rather than the business affairs which are the responsibility of the Board of Directors. Since the Board of Directors has certain management responsibilities as specified in Section III, paragraph 1, members of the Board of Directors will form part of the Spiritual Leadership Council.

2. The Spiritual Leadership Council is to recognize that the highest authority is the Ultimate Authority as defined in Section I, paragraph 1. Next to the Ultimate Authority, the Spiritual Leadership Council is to be responsible to the members of the congregation and, after them, to the Board of Directors.

ARTICLE VII - LEADERSHIP

SECTION I - THE SPIRITUAL LEADER⁴

A. CALLING

1. The Spiritual Leader must be born again by the Spirit of G-d

2. The Spiritual Leader must be divinely called of G-d to feed and have oversight of the flock, having been trained theologically.

⁴ We acknowledge that gender is a gift from G-d and that ministry is open equally to all believers, and that gender-specific language does not disqualify anyone from the full exercise of their spiritual giftings (Acts 2:1-4; Gal. 3:28; Eph. 4:11). Where the Scripture distinguishes between men and women in ministry, we understand issues related to marriage are being discussed, not exclusions from ministry based on gender. Examples of women in specific areas of ministry in Scripture include Phil. 4:3 (Elder), Rom. 16:1 (Deacon), Rom. 16:3 (Pastoral), and Luke 2:36 (Prophetic).

3. The Spiritual Leader must be faithful to the ministry, and be in submission to the Biblical commandments and teachings of the L-rd.

4. The Spiritual Leader must qualify according to I Tim. 3:1-7 and Titus 1:5-9.

5. The Spiritual Leader must be **mikva'd** (immersed) according to the Scriptures.

6. The Spiritual Leader must be open to the gifts of the Holy Spirit.

7. The Spiritual Leader must be committed to and understand the tenets of the Messianic Vision as articulated in this document and by our affiliation with the UMJC (see Addendum – Defining Messianic Judaism).

B. DUTIES

The Spiritual Leader is an employee and a member of the congregation responsible to perform the following duties:

1. The Spiritual Leader shall teach and preach the Holy Scriptures of the **Tenach** and the New Covenant.

2. The Spiritual Leader shall administer the scriptural ordinances: the L-rd's Supper (communion) and **Mikvah** (water immersion). The Spiritual Leader is responsible to maintain the **Messianic** Vision, giving leadership to Jewish Feast Days, and other **Messianic** observances such as: **Bar/Bat Mitzvahs**, weddings, and funerals.

3. The Spiritual Leader shall be credentialed with a body recognized by the Government of Alberta for the performance of marriages.

4. The Spiritual Leader shall pray for the sick, minister to needs (emotionally and spiritually), and give Biblical counsel.

5. The Spiritual Leader is charged to correct sin and administer discipline in accordance with scriptural principles. He has judicial authority to decide on disputes between members of the body in consultation with the Leadership.

6. The Spiritual Leader is the presiding chairman of Congregational meetings, business meetings, and Leadership meetings.

7. The Spiritual Leader shall have authority to make purchases, as he deems necessary, in consultation with the Leadership, for the functioning of the congregation, within established budgetary parameters.

8. The Spiritual Leader shall have authority to engage, dismiss, and set salaries of staff members in consultation with the Leadership. He shall have the authority to

remove anyone from leadership who violates the clear stipulations of this document. In cases where this removal shall be challenged, he shall consult with the officers of the UMJC for mediation, and if necessary, adjudication according to the stipulations of the policies and procedures of our UMJC affiliation.

9. The Spiritual Leader shall have the authority to engage guest speakers in consultation with the leadership.

10. The Spiritual Leader shall oversee the office and the administrative duties of the Congregation in consultation with the leadership.

11. The Spiritual Leader shall do outreach to churches and community groups in order to promote the **Messianic** Vision in consultation with the leadership.

12. The Spiritual Leader and any other credentialed leader functioning in a pastoral role shall carry adequate liability insurance.

C. RESIGNATION/DISMISSAL OF SPIRITUAL LEADER

1. In the event that the Spiritual Leader should resign, the Spiritual Leader shall give three months written notice.

2. The Spiritual Leader may be dismissed only in consultation with the Executive of the UMJC, whose intervention according to the stipulations of our registration with both the Provincial government of Alberta and Federal government of Canada, shall have judicial authority over all the proceedings.

3. Any member may request dismissal proceedings be initiated against the leader provided that a copy of the charges has been submitted in writing to all members under the supervision of the Elders. The agreement of 75% of all members must be given in order for the proceedings to continue.

4. The dismissal proceedings require that a congregational meeting be called under the chairmanship of an officer of the UMJC or their designate. A copy of the charges must be submitted to the Executive of the UMJC.

5. It is understood that no dismissal proceedings shall be undertaken unless the three steps outlined in Matthew 18⁵ have been followed to the satisfaction of the

⁵ The steps are: 1) One-on-one; 2) In front of two or three witnesses; 3) Going before the entire congregation. If no resolution is reached, the person is disfellowshipped for non-compliance, in accordance with Mt. 18:15-17: 15 "If your brother sins against you, go and show him his fault, just between the two of you. If he listens to you, you have won your brother over.

16 But if he will not listen, take one or two others along, so that `every matter may be established by the testimony of two or three witnesses.'

17 If he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church; and if he refuses to listen even to the church, treat him as you would a pagan or a tax collector. (NIV)

UMJC Executive. The removal of the Spiritual Leader shall be undertaken for the same three reasons outlined in **Article 5, Section III, Discipline and/or Removal** unless it can be demonstrated that he or she is not satisfactorily performing according to the duties outlined in section I-B of this article.

6. Should the dismissal proceedings determine that there are not sufficient grounds to remove the Spiritual Leader, a UMJC-supervised congregational vote of confidence shall determine whether there is enough support for the Spiritual Leader to remain in office. Throughout the process, the charges against the Spiritual Leader must be proven according to the principles of Scriptural resolution and the ordinarily accepted laws of evidence.

7. Under the supervision of the UMJC, the Elders will determine whether or not the Spiritual Leader shall be dismissed. In any event, when it is deemed appropriate, necessary steps will be taken to deal with the concerns which motivated these proceedings.

8. Should the charges be found not to be true, or should the proceedings not receive the agreement of 75% of the membership needed to continue, the person or persons initiating these proceedings shall be subject to disciplinary action according to **Article V, Section IV – Discipline and/or Removal**.

8. In the event of the resignation, the dismissal, or the sickness of the Spiritual Leader, the leadership shall constitute a search committee. The successful candidate shall be presented to the congregation and a vote of 75% of the members is needed in order for the candidate to be hired.

SECTION II - ELDERS

1. The Scriptures teach that New Covenant congregations are to be led by a plurality of elders with the rabbi or pastor as head elder (I Pe. 5:1-5; I Tim. 5:17-20; Acts 20:28-31; Heb. 13:7,17; I Thess. 5:12).

A. QUALIFICATIONS OF ELDERS

An elder is one who is called of G-d and qualifies according to I Tim. 3:1-7 and Titus 1:6-9. In terms of vision and philosophy of the congregation, an elder:

1. Has the support of the congregation and is committed to its vision and seeks to support and promote it.

2. Understands the vision and purpose of the Congregation and is supportive of the Spiritual Leader.

3. Has a heart for people and is committed to see Jewish and non-Jewish people join the Kingdom of **Messiah Yeshua**.

B. APPOINTMENT

1. Scriptures teach that elders are appointed by the Spiritual Leader or by other elders, and confirmed by the congregation (Acts 14:21-23; Titus 1:5).

C. DUTIES OF AN ELDER

1. To be shepherds and overseers of the flock of G-d in consultation with the spiritual leader.
2. To assist the Spiritual Leader in caring for the spiritual needs of the Congregation. This involves working with the Spiritual Leader in: coordinating the body, setting priorities, establishing programs and ministries, appointing and overseeing ministry committees such as Worship, Special Jewish Feast Days, Youth, Outreach, and Education. Other functions may include helping to clarify the vision of the Congregation, assisting the Deacons, and participating in overseeing the function of all activities of the Congregation.
3. To be an example to the Congregation.
4. To be willing to preach and teach the Scriptures (2 Tim. 2:24-26).
5. To minister to people's needs through such things as prayer for the sick and the laying on of hands, according to James 5:14.
6. To steadfastly pray for the Congregation.
7. To work in cooperation with the spiritual leader when giving Biblical counsel.
8. To assist the Spiritual Leader in the administration of the Scriptural ordinances.
9. To keep watch and guard the flock of G-d (Acts 20:28-31).
10. Elders are charged by G-d to correct sin and, in cooperation with the Spiritual Leader, bar those from the congregation who teach doctrinal error, are immoral, or are divisive to Congregational unity.

D. TERM OF OFFICE

1. Elders shall hold office for a term of three years, with the option of consecutive terms. In the event of an elder stepping down or being dismissed before the term is complete, another elder may be appointed.

E. DISMISSAL/REMOVAL

1. In the event of doctrinal error or moral misconduct, or should the elder no longer qualify according to I Tim. 3:1-6, the elder shall be interviewed and counseled by the Leadership in accordance with scriptural principles and the regular disciplinary procedures that apply to all members (Mt. 18:15-17; 1 Tim. 5:19,20). Refer to **Article V, Section IV – Discipline and/or Removal** for further procedures.

SECTION III - SHAMMASHIM - DEACONS

A. QUALIFICATIONS

All Shammashim (deacons) shall qualify according to Acts 6:3. In terms of vision and philosophy of congregation a shammash (deacon):

1. Is committed to the vision of the Congregation and seeks to support it and promote it.
2. Understands the vision and purpose of the Congregation.
3. Is supportive of the Leader and the elders of the Congregation.

B. APPOINTMENT

1. Deacons shall be appointed by the Spiritual Leader and confirmed by the congregation, in accordance with Acts 6:3: ‘Therefore brethren, seek out from among you, seven men of good reputation and full of the Spirit’. Deacons shall be part of the leadership team of B’nai Chayim. In selecting the deacons, the Spiritual Leader and the elders shall listen to suggestions and receive input from members of the Congregation in the choice of deacons. This input shall verify which persons have earned respect and trust among the members. The appointment of deacons shall occur through prayer and the laying on of hands.

C. DUTIES OF A SHAMMASHIN - DEACON

The deacons are responsible for the practical needs of the congregation in accordance with its spiritual vision. A deacon has four primary purposes:

1. To be responsible for the practical areas of ministry in the Congregation, such as: maintaining the premises, financial disbursements, and supervising congregational ministries such as Shabbat School, worship, hospitality, and communications.
2. To participate in Leadership Meetings.

3. To encourage the involvement of all members of the congregation in practical areas of service.

4. To free the pastoral leadership for prayer and the ministry of the Word.

D. TERM OF OFFICE

1. Deacons shall hold office for a term of three years, with the option of consecutive terms. In the event of any deacon stepping down before his or her term is complete, another deacon may be appointed.

E. DISMISSAL/REMOVAL OF A SHAMMASH (DEACON)

1. In the event of doctrinal error or moral misconduct, or should the deacon no longer qualify according to I Tim. 3:8-13, the deacon shall be interviewed and counseled by the Leadership in accordance with scriptural principles and the regular disciplinary procedures that apply to all members. Refer to **Article V, Section IV – Dismissal and/or Removal** for further procedures.

SECTION IV – BOARD OF DIRECTORS

A. NUMBER AND POSITIONS OF THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS

1. The Board of Directors should consist of at least three members.
2. The positions on the Board of Directors shall consist of at least a Chairman, a Secretary, and a Financial Administrator.

B. QUALIFICATIONS

1. The Spiritual Leader of the congregation is to be the Chairman of the Board of Directors. Other special positions on the Board of Directors are to be the Vice-Chair, the Financial Administrator, and the Secretary.
2. First consideration for the special position members of the Board identified above is to be given to either Elders or Deacons qualified to perform such duties.

C. APPOINTMENT

1. The Spiritual Leader, being also the Chairman of the Board, should propose those members of the congregation to hold office as a member of the Board of Directors for a term of up to three years, and have them confirmed by the congregation at the annual meeting in February, or at any of the three other quarterly meetings held in May, August, or November. Those members of the congregation unable to attend any of these quarterly meetings can confirm the proposed members by proxy.

D. DUTIES OF THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS

1. A Director shall be part of a team with the overall legal duty and responsibility to manage the congregation with due care and in good faith. The members of the congregation look to the Board of Directors for the proper conduct of the congregation's business, and the directors, in turn, in running the congregation, are obliged to be guided by what is in the best interests of the members of the congregation.

E. TERM OF OFFICE

1. Members of the Board of Directors shall hold office for a term of up to three years, with the option of consecutive terms. In the event of any member of the Board of Directors stepping down before his or her term is complete, another member of the congregation may be appointed.

F. DISMISSAL/REMOVAL

1. In the event of doctrinal error or moral misconduct, or should the Member of the Board of Directors no longer qualify according to I Tim. 3:8-13, the member of the Board of Directors shall be interviewed and counseled by the Leadership in accordance with scriptural principles and the regular disciplinary procedures that apply to all members. Refer to **Article V, Section IV – Dismissal and/or Removal** for further procedures.

SECTION V – SPIRITUAL LEADERSHIP COUNCILORS

A. NUMBER AND POSITIONS OF THE COUNCILORS

1. The Spiritual Leadership Council should consist of at least five members, including some members of the Board of Directors.

B. QUALIFICATIONS

1. The qualifications of the Spiritual Leader are specified in **Article VII, Section I.**

2. The qualifications of Elders are specified in **Article VII, Section II.**

3. The qualifications of Deacons are specified in **Article VII, Section III.**

C. APPOINTMENT

1. The Spiritual Leader should propose those members of the congregation to hold office as a Spiritual Leadership Councilor for a term of up to three years, and have them confirmed by the congregation at the annual meeting in February, or at any of the other three quarterly meetings held in May, August, or November. Those members of the congregation unable to attend any of these quarterly meetings can confirm the proposed members by proxy.

D. DUTIES OF THE SPIRITUAL LEADERSHIP COUNCIL

1. A Councilor shall be part of the Spiritual Leadership Team headed by the Spiritual Leader with responsibility to guide the spiritual direction of the congregation with due care and in good faith according to the Purpose and Statement of Faith of the congregation as specified in the Constitution.

E. TERM OF OFFICE

1. Spiritual Leadership Councilors shall hold office for a term of up to three years, with the option of consecutive terms. In the event of any Councilor stepping down before his or her term is complete, another member of the congregation may be appointed.

F. DISMISSAL/REMOVAL

1. In the event of doctrinal error or moral misconduct, or should the Councilor no longer qualify according to 1 Tim. 3:8-13, the Councilor shall be interviewed and counselled by the Leadership in accordance with scriptural principles and the regular disciplinary procedures that apply to all members. Refer to **Article V, Section IV – Dismissal and/or Removal** for further procedures.

ARTICLE VIII -FINANCIAL AFFAIRS OF THE CONGREGATION

SECTION I – DESCRIPTION

1. The financial affairs of the Congregation shall be overseen by a Financial Administrator who should be a deacon or elder and as such will be part of the leadership team.

2. The Fiscal period of the congregation shall be from January 1 to December 31.

3. Expenditures by bank cheque shall be signed by two of the following: the Chairman, Vice-Chairman, Financial Administrator, and Secretary, as per the financial direction of the Financial Administrator.
4. The financial statements shall consist of a Statement of Revenue and Expenditures, a Balance Sheet, and a Cash Flow Statement.
5. The statements should be prepared on a calendar year quarterly basis, as well as the annual statement prepared for the General Meeting in February.
6. The activities and financial affairs of the congregation shall be carried on without purpose of gain for its members, and any profits or other accretions to the congregation shall be used solely to promote its purposes and objectives. Certain members of the congregation though, such as the Spiritual Leader and others who perform regular duties in carrying out the pastoral ministry purposes, as well as the administrative office and financial affairs of the congregation, may become employees depending upon the ability of the congregation to financially support them for their services rendered. Certain members of the congregation may also be compensated for serviced rendered that are performed on a contractual basis. Members of the Board of Directors, however, are NOT to be compensated for simply occupying a position of Director.

SECTION II - DUTIES OF THE FINANCIAL ADMINISTRATOR

1. Conduct the financial affairs of the congregation in consultation with the leadership team under the supervision of the Spiritual Leader.
2. Shall maintain a complete and updated set of general and subsidiary ledgers, including receivables, inventories, fixed assets, payables, and revenue contributions.
3. Shall prepare the annual financial plan/budget on a quarterly basis in consultation with the leadership team.
4. Shall ensure that all offerings are counted and recorded each week and provide regular summaries of the tithes and offerings.
5. Shall make weekly deposits, and issue cheques for monthly bills, wages, and purchases, as deemed necessary in consultation with the leadership team and the annual financial plan/budget.
6. Shall prepare and make available regular financial statements on a quarterly basis.

7. Shall attend regular leadership meetings and supervise financial decisions in consultation with the leadership team, and keep the leadership team updated on the financial condition and needs of the Congregation.
8. Shall ensure that the congregational accounts undergo an annual internal audit or by an outside party as per government regulations.
9. Shall oversee the preparation and distribution of income tax receipts for all qualified contributions made in each calendar year.
10. Shall oversee the preparation of all payroll records and annual employee earnings statements and summary (T4's and T4 Summary).
11. Shall oversee the preparation of the Annual Charity Return in conjunction with the leadership team.

SECTION III - TERM OF OFFICE

1. The Financial Administrator shall serve on the leadership team for a three-year renewable term. In the event of the resignation or dismissal of the Financial Administrator, a new one will be appointed in consultation with the leadership team. All of the regular provisions of Article V – Section III, Discipline/Removal of Members, shall apply to the Financial Administrator.

ARTICLE IX - AMENDMENTS

1. Any member of the Congregation may submit in writing any suggestion for amendments to this constitution one month prior to any quarterly membership meeting. The proposed amendment will be implemented only if approved by the leadership. No approval will be given to any amendment that would remove or diminish the priority of the **Messianic** Vision as outlined in Article II. The correction of typographical errors that do not affect the meaning of their context shall be presented to the congregation for ratification at our annual business meeting.

ARTICLE X - DISSOLUTION

1. Fifty per cent of all members must be present, and the agreement of seventy five percent of members present at a meeting for dissolution is required to approve dissolution of B'nai Chayim. A motion for dissolution must be submitted to all members in writing at least one month prior to the meeting.
2. In the event of dissolution of B'nai Chayim and after settling any debts and liabilities, any remaining assets shall not be distributed among the members of the Congregation but shall be contributed to other **Messianic** works or organizations within Canada or in consultation with the UMJC.

The following statement was affirmed by the
Delegates to the 26th Annual UMJC Conference on July 20, 2005.

DEFINING MESSIANIC JUDAISM

Basic Statement

The Union of Messianic Jewish Congregations (UMJC) envisions Messianic Judaism as a movement of Jewish congregations and groups committed to Yeshua the Messiah that embrace the covenantal responsibility of Jewish life and identity rooted in Torah, expressed in tradition, and renewed and applied in the context of the New Covenant. Messianic Jewish groups may also include those from non-Jewish backgrounds who have a confirmed call to participate fully in the life and destiny of the Jewish people. We are committed to embodying this definition in our constituent congregations and in our shared institutions.

Expanded Statement

Jewish life is life in a concrete, historical community. Thus, Messianic Jewish groups must be fully part of the Jewish people, sharing its history and its covenantal responsibility as a people chosen by God. At the same time, faith in Yeshua also has a crucial communal dimension. This faith unites the Messianic Jewish community and the Christian Church, which is the assembly of the faithful from the nations who are joined to Israel through the Messiah. Together the Messianic Jewish community and the Christian Church constitute the *ekklesia*, the one Body of Messiah, a community of Jews and Gentiles who in their ongoing distinction and mutual blessing anticipate the shalom of the world to come.

For a Messianic Jewish group 1) to fulfill the covenantal responsibility incumbent upon all Jews, 2) to bear witness to Yeshua within the people of Israel, and 3) to serve as an authentic and effective representative of the Jewish people within the body of Messiah, it must place a priority on integration with the wider Jewish world, while sustaining a vital corporate relationship with the Christian Church.

In the Messianic Jewish way of life, we seek to fulfill Israel's covenantal responsibility embodied in the Torah within a New Covenant context. Messianic Jewish halakhah is rooted in Scripture (Tanakh and the New Covenant writings), which is of unique sanctity and authority. It also draws upon Jewish tradition, especially those practices and concepts that have won near-universal acceptance by devout Jews through the centuries. Furthermore, as is common within Judaism, Messianic Judaism recognizes that halakhah is and must be dynamic, involving the application of the Torah to a wide variety of changing situations and circumstances.

Messianic Judaism embraces the fullness of New Covenant realities available through Yeshua, and seeks to express them in forms drawn from Jewish experience and accessible to Jewish people.

UMJC Theology Committee; affirmed by delegate vote, July 20, 2005.