

# HOPE FELLOWSHIP CONSTITUTION

## PREAMBLE

As members of this church we band ourselves together in order to carry out the commission given by our Lord Jesus Christ, and do ordain and establish the following constitution to which we voluntarily submit ourselves.

## ARTICLE I NAME

The legal name of this church shall be Hope Fellowship Evangelical Free Church, more commonly known as Hope Fellowship.

## ARTICLE II STATEMENT OF FAITH

### We believe:

#### *God*

We believe in one God, Creator of all things, holy, infinitely perfect, and eternally existing in a loving unity of three equally divine Persons: the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. Having limitless knowledge and sovereign power, God has graciously purposed from eternity to redeem a people for Himself and to make all things new for His own glory.

#### *The Bible*

We believe that God has spoken in the Scriptures, both Old and New Testaments, through the words of human authors. As the verbally inspired Word of God, the Bible is without error in the original writings, the complete revelation of His will for salvation, and the ultimate authority by which every realm of human knowledge and endeavor should be judged. Therefore, it is to be believed in all that it teaches, obeyed in all that it requires, and trusted in all that it promises.

#### *The Human Condition*

We believe that God created Adam and Eve in His image, but they sinned when tempted by Satan. In union with Adam, human beings are sinners by nature and by choice, alienated from God, and under His wrath. Only through God's saving work in Jesus Christ can we be rescued, reconciled and renewed.

#### *Jesus Christ*

We believe that Jesus Christ is God incarnate, fully God and fully man, one Person in two natures. Jesus-Israel's promised Messiah-was conceived through the Holy Spirit and born of the Virgin Mary. He lived a sinless life, was crucified under Pontius Pilate, arose bodily from the dead, ascended into heaven and sits at the right hand of God the Father as our High Priest and Advocate.

#### *The Work of Christ*

We believe that Jesus Christ, as our representative and substitute, shed His blood on the cross as the perfect, all-sufficient sacrifice for our sins. His atoning death and victorious resurrection constitute the only ground for salvation.

#### *The Holy Spirit*

We believe that the Holy Spirit, in all that He does, glorifies the Lord Jesus Christ. He convicts the world of its guilt. He regenerates sinners, and in Him they are baptized into union with Christ and adopted as heirs in the family of God. He also indwells, illuminates, guides, equips and empowers believers for Christ-like living and service.

### *The Church*

We believe that the true church comprises all who have been justified by God's grace through faith alone in Christ alone. They are united by the Holy Spirit in the body of Christ, of which He is the Head. The true church is manifest in local churches, whose membership should be composed only of believers. The Lord Jesus mandated two ordinances, baptism and Lord's Supper, which visibly and tangibly express the gospel. Though they are not the means of salvation, when celebrated by the church in genuine faith, these ordinances confirm and nourish the believer.

### *Christian Living*

We believe that God's justifying grace must not be separated from His sanctifying power and purpose. God commands us to love Him supremely and others sacrificially, and to live out our faith with care for one another, compassion toward the poor and justice for the oppressed. With God's Word, the Spirit's power, and fervent prayer in Christ's name, we are to combat the spiritual forces of evil. In obedience to Christ's commission, we are to make disciples among all people, always bearing witness to the gospel in word and deed.

### *Christ's Return*

We believe in the personal, bodily and glorious<sup>1</sup> return of our Lord Jesus Christ. The coming of Christ, at a time known only to God, demands constant expectancy and, as our blessed hope, motivates the believer to godly living, sacrificial service, and energetic mission.

### *Response and Eternal Destiny*

We believe that God commands everyone everywhere to believe the gospel by turning to Him in repentance and receiving the Lord Jesus Christ. We believe that God will raise the dead bodily and judge the world, assigning the unbeliever to condemnation and eternal conscious punishment and the believer to eternal blessedness and joy with the Lord in the new heaven and the new earth, to the praise of His glorious grace. Amen.

## **ARTICLE III PURPOSE**

The purpose of this church is, and shall be, the preaching of the Word of God to the mutual edification, instruction, and discipline of its members and other believers; the winning of the unsaved to Christ; helping young Christians develop their spiritual lives; and furthering the cause of Christ on the mission fields at home and abroad.

## **ARTICLE IV RELIGIOUS BELIEF REGARDING MARRIAGE, GENDER, AND HUMAN SEXUALITY**

We believe God creates each person as male or female. These two genders together reflect the image of God in man (Gen. 1:26-27). Rejection of one's biological gender is a rejection of God's work in a person and is contrary to God's will (Rom. 1:26-32; 1 Cor. 6:9-11). We believe that "marriage" has only one meaning which is the joining of one man and one woman in a single, exclusive union, as delineated in Scripture (Gen. 2:24; Matt. 19:4-6; Eph. 5:25-27). We believe that God intends sexual intimacy to only occur between a man and a woman who are married to each other and that he forbids intimate sexual activity outside of marriage (Exod. 20:14; Lev. 18:7-23; 20:10-21; Matt. 5:27-28; 15:19; Rom. 1:26-32; 1 Cor. 6:9-13; 1 Thess. 4:3). We believe that in order to preserve the function and integrity of the church as the local Body of Christ, and to provide a biblical role model to church members and the community that all members and

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<sup>1</sup> Changed from premillennial to glorious.

employees of Hope Fellowship should abide by this Statement on Marriage, Gender and Human Sexuality and conduct themselves accordingly. Failure to do so will result in loss of membership and/or employment unless the elders determine the person has repented. We believe that God offers redemption and restoration to all who confess and forsake their sin, seeking His mercy and forgiveness through Jesus Christ. We believe that every person must be afforded compassion, love, kindness, respect, and dignity.

#### **ARTICLE V STAND**

This church shall remain free and independent and shall not join itself to any other denomination or synod. It shall remain its own highest authority and conduct its business through its business sessions. The church shall cooperate with the Evangelical Free Church of America and the TX-OK<sup>2</sup> District Conference of the Evangelical Free Church by sending delegates to Conferences, supporting home and overseas missions, and uniting in any mutual effort for the furtherance of the Gospel as the Church itself may officially decide.

#### **ARTICLE VI MEMBERSHIP**

This church shall receive as members those applicants who have accepted Jesus Christ as their personal Savior and Lord and are manifesting a true Christian life. All applicants must be in agreement with the church's statement of faith, comply with all procedures, and be willing to support the church with their prayers, their attendance, and their contributions.

#### **ARTICLE VII CHURCH GOVERNMENT**

All authority in the church is vested in the congregation, which consists of all voting members. The congregation shall decide upon the calling of the pastor, admission of applicants for membership, purchase or sale of church real property, and such other matters as it shall determine.

#### **ARTICLE VIII PROPERTY RIGHTS**

The church shall have power to buy, own, and sell real property in its own name. If a division occurs in the church, the name and all property shall be retained by those adhering to the constitution. If the church ceases to function and its organization is dissolved, the property shall automatically become the property of the Evangelical Free Church TX-OK Central District Conference.

#### **ARTICLE IX<sup>3</sup> AMENDMENTS**

Amendments to this constitution may be made at any business meeting of the congregation by three-fourths of the votes cast, when said proposed amendments have been presented in written form and discussed at a business meeting at least three months prior to the time of their adoption.

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<sup>2</sup> All cases of South Central District changed to TX-OK district

<sup>3</sup> Changed a typo... made this IX instead IXI

## REVISION HISTORY

Rev. No.	Date Revised	Section Revised	Revision Description
0	18-MAY-1995	-	Initial Issue
1	12-JAN-1997	Article III-D	Updated requirements for Ministry Team Leaders
2	14-OCT-2001	Article III-G	Updated section on Committees
3	24-AUG-2008	Article I-B, C	Updated section on Steps to Becoming New Member & Membership Status
<a href="#">4</a>	26-OCT-2008	Article IV	Updated section on Congregational Business Meeting
5	28-AUG-2010	Article IV	Updated section on Congregational Business Meeting
6	26-MAR-2012	Entire document	Added Revision Summary page. Added Table of Contents with page numbers. Deleted reference to business meeting for new members (Art I, Sect B) Added requirement for members to be present to vote (Art I, Sect G)
7	27-SEPT-2015	Article	Membership, Discipline of Members, Elders are ultimate authority of interpreting the Bible in terms of church governance.

**Changes footnoted**

# BYLAWS

## ARTICLE I MEMBERSHIP

### ***A) Qualifications for Membership***

- 1) The church will welcome as members those who by faith have received Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior, who subscribe to the Constitution, Statement of Faith,<sup>4</sup> and Bylaws of Hope Fellowship, who endeavor to manifest true faith in God, and are willing, according to their ability, to support the church by their regular attendance, prayers, service, financial contributions.
- 2) There shall be no arbitrary limits to membership in this church such as race, class, or national origin. All persons are welcome into membership who meet the moral and spiritual requirements as set forth in God's written Word.
- 3) The minimum age for membership shall be twelve (12) years of age.

### ***B) Steps to Becoming a Member***

- 1) A request shall be made by the prospective member to a Pastor or any other Elder.
- 2) The pastor and elders must oversee a membership process that ensures new members meet the criteria for membership. This process should allow for the regular admitting of new members.
- 3) If a person is denied membership, the Pastor and Elders will give that person an explanation in a timely manner.<sup>5</sup>

### ***C) Membership Categories***

- 1) Active Members: those members who are fulfilling their membership obligations in the church. Only those active members who are eighteen (18) years and older will be allowed to vote.
- 2) Inactive Members: members who do not fulfill their membership obligations for a period of six (6) months are classified as inactive members. After six (6) months of inactive membership status they may be dropped from the membership of this church. If a person begins attending again after their membership was cancelled, their membership can be reinstated at the discretion of the elders.

### ***D) Membership Obligations***

- 1) All members should make every effort to consistently attend worship services of this church.
- 2) All members shall willingly and voluntarily support the ministry of this church through the use of their spiritual gifts and through the giving of their talents, time and finances.
- 3) All members should endeavor to attend business meetings consistently.

### ***E) Withdrawal***

- 1) A member who wishes to withdraw from membership will make such a request in writing to the church. The Elder Board or designated entity shall be responsible for reviewing that request. After the request for withdrawal is reviewed and accepted, membership is terminated.
- 2) A member may not terminate membership if the elder board has already requested to meet with them to begin discipline proceedings.

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<sup>4</sup> Changed "Doctrinal Beliefs" to "Statement of Faith" in order to be consistent with wording in the Constitution.

<sup>5</sup> Completely overhauled this section, removing the process and establishing responsibilities.

- 3) A member in good standing who desires to withdraw his or her membership shall, if that person desires, receive a letter of recommendation to affiliate with another church. (Acts 18:27; Romans 16:1-2)

### ***F) Voting Rights<sup>6</sup>***

- 1) Each member eighteen (18) years or older shall be entitled to one vote on each item submitted to a vote of the members. Members must be present at business meetings to vote. Inactive members and members not in good standing shall have no voting rights.

## **ARTICLE II DISCIPLINE OF MEMBERS AND OFFICIALS**

### ***A) Authority***

- 1) Church discipline has been authorized and commanded by its Head -- the Lord Jesus Christ (Matthew 18:18). Further, the members of this congregation collectively give authority to the Elder Board to administer discipline when needed.

### ***B) Purpose***

- 1) In keeping with God's Word, those guilty of sinful conduct will be dealt with in the manner prescribed by God's written Word (Matthew 18:15-20; Galatians 6:1 ff.). All church discipline procedures are designed to restore the person who sins to a right relationship with God, with those affected by the sin, and with the church (Galatians 6:1 ff.). In keeping with that biblical imperative, the following procedures shall be used if a member or members have an accusation against another member or official of this church. Those overtaken in sin will be consulted in the spirit of Galatians 6:1 ff., that they may be restored.

### ***C) Procedure for Accusations Against Church Members or Officials***

- 1) Accusations against a church member
  - a) The procedures delineated in Matthew 5:23-25; 18:15-20 shall be followed (looking to 1 Corinthians 5:1-13 and 2 Thessalonians 3:1-16 for clarification of the last step in Matthew 18:15-20.), for any accusation of sinful, illegal, or immoral conduct of a church member.<sup>7</sup>
  - b) If the matter needs to proceed to the step of church discipline, the Elder Board shall investigate the matter to determine the validity of the accusation (s). They shall do this with discretion and in such a manner that the matter is held in confidence until a final determination is made regarding the validity of the charges.
  - c) If the Elder Board discovers that the matter is not valid, then those raising the matter shall be informed of those findings, giving them adequate information and input into the situation. If those bringing the charges have done so in a false manner, the Elder Board may, at their discretion, initiate discipline procedures toward them.
- 2) Accusations against a church official
  - a) In addition to Article II Section C.1.a. above, the following shall guide an accusation against a church official:
  - b) No accusation shall be taken up by the church against a church official except by the complaint of two (2) or more witnesses. (1 Timothy 5:19)

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<sup>6</sup> Removed transfer of membership. Removed "members not in good standing shall have no voting rights" since the phrase is never defined.

<sup>7</sup> Removed the previous sections b and c which explained Matthew 18.

- c) Any accusation of sinful, illegal, or immoral conduct of a church official shall be brought to the Elder Board in a written document signed by the accusers.
- d) The Elder Board shall investigate the matter to determine the validity of the accusation(s). They shall do this with discretion and in such manner that the matter is held in confidence until a final determination is made regarding the validity of the charges.
- e) If the Elder Board discovers that the matter is not valid, then those raising the matter shall be informed of those findings, giving them adequate information and input into the situation. If those bringing the charges have done so in a false manner, the Elder Board may, at their discretion, initiate discipline procedures towards them.
- f) If the Elder Board finds that there exists valid evidence to support the charge(s), the Elders shall follow the steps of church discipline outlined in these Bylaws. At the initiation of the discipline process the church official shall be placed on administrative leave until the matter reaches its conclusion. At that time, whatever decision the Elder Board shall make regarding the continuance of service shall be in effect.

## ***D) Procedure for Discipline of Members or Officials***

### 1) Initiating Discipline

- a) If after following the steps in Article II Section C, it is found that a member or official is guilty of biblical sin and the person will not repent when confronted by witnesses, then the Elder Board shall proceed with the following discipline process. Ideally, if the person accepts the admonition and there is repentance during any of these steps, the matter can end there and will involve no one else.

### 2) Discipline of Members

- a) If any member of this church is found to live or teach contrary to the Word of God or of the "Statement of Faith" of this church for which that person does not show evidence of repentance, that person shall be interviewed by the Elder Board in the manner delineated in the Scriptures. The restoration of the erring one shall be the single purpose and love the sole motivating force in these interviews.
- b) If the member should choose to continue in his or her unrepentant condition, and the above procedures have been followed, that person shall be deprived of his or her membership by simple majority congregational vote at a member only meeting.<sup>8</sup>

### 3) Discipline of Church Officials

- a) Those that are in leadership who are overtaken in sin are to be cared for in the manner stated above (Article II Section C). After there is evidence of immoral, illegal or unbiblical conduct, the church official shall step out of leadership until such time as their situation and disposition of the case can be determined. If they repent, they are to make confession before the Body that all may learn and be able to offer support. Restoration to a leadership position in the church will be determined by the Elder Board.
- b) If a grievance involves a Salaried Elder, the problem shall be reviewed by the Elder Board following the above procedures. If there is no satisfactory resolution, the Elder Board will seek the counsel of Christian leaders from the TX-OK District of the Evangelical Free Church of America or other brethren who have experience in the areas of problem solving and mediation.
- c) After weighing the matter prayerfully and following the above procedures, the Elder Board will call upon the congregation for a vote of affirmation of the official's term. This shall be done only if such conditions merit. For an official to retain that position a

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<sup>8</sup> Removed item c which indicated that people under discipline are to be treated like an unbeliever. This is true, of course (Mt. 18:17), but doesn't need to go in the bylaws.

minimum 75% vote of affirmation must be received from the members of this church in a business meeting called for that purpose.

### ***E) Restoration of Repentant Member***

- 1) Restoration to unrestricted fellowship with the church and to full membership privileges can occur whenever the person repents of his or her sin. The Elder Board will review this repentance and vote to restore the person to fellowship.<sup>9</sup>

### ***F) Division Within the Church***

- 1) When there is a definite division within the church, it is recommended that the Elder Board seek external help from the leaders of the TX-OK District of the Evangelical Free Church of America or other brethren who have experience in the areas of problem solving and church mediation.

## **ARTICLE III CHURCH OFFICIALS**

### ***A) Authority for Church Officials***

- 1) Meeting minutes
  - a) Meeting minutes shall be recorded for the Elder board, Trustee, and congregational meetings. These shall be retained for a minimum of five years and made available to the congregation upon request.
- 2) Elder Board
  - a) The congregation shall grant to an Elder Board authority and responsibility to lead the church to fulfill its purpose, guide the church's overall direction, make decisions and oversee church discipline procedures deemed necessary. The elder board shall be considered the church's final interpretive authority on the Bible's meaning as applied to church governance.
- 3) Trustees<sup>10</sup>
  - a) The congregation shall grant authority to the Trustees to carry out the financial and legal transactions required to operate and maintain the physical facilities and meet the financial and legal obligations of the church in accordance with the Bylaws, Policy Manual, and approved annual budget.

### ***B) Elder Board***

- 1) All board members will have equal voting privileges.<sup>11</sup>
- 2) Qualifications of Elders
  - a) Elders must be men who meet the Biblical qualifications for Elder as found in the New Testament (1 Timothy 3:1-7; Titus 1:7-9; 1 Peter 5:1-3), are recognized as spiritual leaders and are able to meet the criteria for Elder as outlined in these Bylaws.

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<sup>9</sup> Removed unnecessary procedural details "Formal reinstatement will occur at the next congregational meeting. Personal reconciliation with individuals and restitution where appropriate should be handled privately."

<sup>10</sup> Trustee board changed to "The Trustees." This is because the word "board" usually indicates the executive committee in charge of operations, and that is not what the Trustees are. Having two "boards" is organizationally confusing. This does not change their responsibilities or duties... or importance!! Clarified the scope by replacing the vague statement "The congregation shall grant authority to the Trustees to manage the financial, property and legal affairs deemed necessary."

<sup>11</sup> Removed "The Elder Board is composed of the Senior Pastor and those men who meet the following qualifications."

- b) Must be a member in good standing of this congregation for at least one year, publicly confessing Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior (John 3:16; Romans 10:9; Acts 4:12) and be able to, without reservation, publicly affirm and ascribe to the Constitution, Statement of Faith, and Bylaws of this church
  - c) Desires to serve in accordance with 1 Timothy 3:1 and Titus 1:6-9
  - d) Must be able to demonstrate in his life that he has been born again through evidence of Christian maturity and ministry (John 3:3; 2 Corinthians 5:17; Galatians 5:22; Ephesians 4:11-13)
  - e) Must be willing to work with the other Elders in leading the church to fulfill its purpose and vision in the Lord
  - f) Prior service as a Ministry Team Leader/Staff Member is preferred
  - g) The Senior Pastor shall meet all of the qualifications given above except for the requirements of one-year membership in this church and prior service as Ministry Team Leader/Staff Member.
- 3) Terms of Office
- a) The minimum number of Elders shall be three (3), and there shall be no limit on the number of Elders serving at one time. The Non-Salaried Elders must exceed the Salaried Elders by at least one (1).
  - b) Each Non-Salaried Elder shall serve a term of three (3) years. In general, he shall be ineligible for re-election to the same office for a period of one (1) year. However, this period of ineligibility may be waived if there are insufficient numbers of qualified and available candidates.
- 4) Organization<sup>12</sup>
- a) Each year, the Elder Board shall designate one of the non-salaried Elders to serve as Chairman.
  - b) Two-thirds of the members of the Elder Board shall constitute a quorum for the transaction of business.
- 5) Elder Board Responsibilities
- a) The primary role of the Elder Board is to follow Jesus Christ as they oversee the entire ministry of this church (Titus 1:7). In fulfillment of that role the Elders are responsible for:
    - (i) Leading and determining the overall spiritual vision of the church. (Timothy 5:17; 1Thessalonians 5:12; Hebrews 13:17)
    - (ii) Shepherding (I Peter 5:1-4)
    - (iii) Teaching (I Timothy 3:2; Titus 1:9; Acts 6:4)
    - (iv) Leading in prayer (Acts 6:4)
  - b) Equipping individuals for the work of the ministry (Ephesians 4:11-12; Acts 6:3-4)
  - c) They shall have authority and responsibility to see that all other duties that are not expressly given to another entity of the church are accomplished in order to fulfill the mission and vision of this church.
  - d) They shall strive to conduct its affairs and the affairs of this church by application of the principles of unanimity as set forth in the Scriptures (1 Corinthians 1:10; Philippians 1:27; 2:5; Ephesians 4:3-6).
  - e) Duties
    - (i) Maintain an evaluation of ongoing ministries and new ministry opportunities consistent with the stated vision of this Church.
    - (ii) Provide support and spiritual guidance to Ministry Teams
    - (iii) Is responsible for church discipline matters

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<sup>12</sup> Removed the requirement to designate a Vice-Chairman and Secretary.

- (iv) A maximum of three elders shall serve on any Pastoral Search Committee.
  - (v) Provide ongoing performance feedback, coaching, and support to the Senior Pastor; update the job description for the role as needed.<sup>13</sup>
  - (vi) Affirm or deny nominations for Elders, Ministry Team leaders, Trustees, other officers, and all other positions as defined by the Bylaws of this church.<sup>14</sup>
  - (vii) Serve as an ex officio member of any committee, as needed and agreed upon by the elders.
- 6) Selection and Removal of Officers and Staff
- a) Calling Elders
    - (i) Elders shall be nominated by the Elder Board.<sup>15</sup> Elders shall be approved to the office of Elder upon a three-quarters majority vote by ballot of the members present at a congregational business meeting.
    - (ii) If a qualified person is not called by God to fill the position, it will go unfilled until such a person is called by God.
    - (iii) Vacancies occurring in the Elder Board during the year shall be filled by the Elder Board. The appointed member will serve until the next congregational business meeting. At that meeting, the position will be filled for the remainder of the unexpired term by following procedures outlined in these Bylaws (Article III Section B).
    - (iv) An Elder position shall be declared vacant:
      - (a) Upon the resignation of an Elder
      - (b) If an Elder establishes residence in another locality which prevents him from fulfilling his duties
      - (c) If an Elder fails to attend half of the regularly scheduled meetings of the Board within a six-month period
      - (d) Through the discipline process described in these Bylaws.
  - b) Calling of the Senior Pastor
    - (i) Upon the church's need for a Senior Pastor, the Elder Board shall appoint a Pastoral Search Committee according to the adopted policies and procedures of this church. The appointment of this committee is to be approved by the congregation in a special approved meeting. This committee shall be charged with seeking a qualified individual to fulfill the duties of the vacant Senior Pastor position. The committee will then make their recommendation(s) to the Elder Board as outlined in Article III Section G. The Senior Pastor will be chosen by a minimum three-quarters (75%) majority vote by ballot of the members present at a business meeting called for that purpose.
  - c) Calling Support Staff
    - (i) In addition to the Senior Pastor, the church may employ staff members. They shall be considered members of the Staff for purposes of evaluation and salary review.<sup>16</sup>
    - (ii) The elders are authorized to hire or dismiss any staff.

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<sup>13</sup> Changed the requirement from an annual performance review to ongoing feedback

<sup>14</sup> Removed "oversee teaching to maintain doctrinal integrity" because it is listed under 5 a iii. Removed annual performance review because 1.) the pastor does that for the staff and 2.) it is previously listed. Removed shares with pastoral staff in ministry to families of the church because it is listed previously 5 a ii. Removed oversee membership orientation because that is listed previously. Removed review job descriptions because that is included under "evaluation of ongoing ministries."

<sup>15</sup> Removed "The Elder Board may receive congregational input for potential Elders." There is no reason for this duty to be expressly given. Why would it be not allowed?

<sup>16</sup> Removed all instances of "pastoral staff" and replaced with the word "staff."

- (iii) The congregation must approve any budgetary changes required for adding staff. This is the congregation's "check" on this process.
- (iv) The elders should inform the congregation as to the nature of these staff changes.<sup>17 18</sup>
- d) Notification of Termination of duties for church officials
  - (i) Any church official may choose to resign their position. It is recommended that they give the church adequate notice for the church to find a qualified person to fulfill their position.
  - (ii) The following shall guide the notification of termination of the Senior Pastor's relationship by the congregation:
    - (a) In the event of pastoral ineffectiveness, the elder board will seek to provide the necessary support for the pastor's success, including the informing and involvement of the TX-OK district of the EFCA.<sup>19</sup>
    - (b) Termination of the pastoral relationship shall be acted upon at a duly-called business meeting of the church by the Elder Board. For the Senior Pastor to retain his position, a minimum 75% vote of affirmation must be received from the members of this church in a business meeting called for that purpose must be received. This vote shall be by ballot.
    - (c) A minimum of two (2)-month notice shall precede a termination of relations between the Senior Pastor and the church, unless waived by mutual consent.
    - (d) A minimum of two (2)-month severance pay (including benefits) shall be paid by the church to that individual. The Elder Board may recommend extension of the severance pay for congregational approval.
  - (iii) The following shall guide the notification of resignation of the Senior Pastor's relationship with the congregation:
    - (a) The Pastor shall submit a letter of resignation to the Elder Board. The Elder Board shall make it known to the membership.
    - (b) Two-month notice shall precede a severance of relations between the pastor and the church, unless waived by mutual consent. Section D.(c) above will apply.

### **C) Ministry Team Leaders**

- 1) Qualifications For Ministry Team Leaders
  - a) Shall be men or women who meet the qualifications given in Acts 6:1-6; 1 Timothy 3:8-13, and able to meet the criteria for Ministry Team Leader as outlined in these Bylaws.
  - b) Must have served in good standing (active) for a year and be a member of this congregation, publicly confessing Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior (John 3:16; Romans 10:9; Acts 4:12) and be able to, without reservation, publicly affirm and ascribe to the Constitution, Statement of Faith, and Bylaws of this church.
  - c) Desires to serve in accordance with 1 Timothy 3:1 and Titus 1:6-9.

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<sup>17</sup> **Significant Change!** Added ii, iii, and iv. Removed "Employment of staff members will require congregational approval of the position, qualifications, and salary, and job description. Selection of a candidate will be made by the Elder Board, and/or Senior Pastor, or designated Ministry Team Leader(s). The Elder Board is authorized to hire or dismiss any support staff." Those underlines existed because previous elder boards planned on changing this section already.

<sup>18</sup> Removed "other support staff members can include secretaries, clerks, janitors, ministry coordinators, choir director, etc."

<sup>19</sup> This is added. We removed the detailed procedure under article 3 item c.

- d) Must be able to demonstrate in their life that they have been born again through evidence of Christian maturity and ministry (John 3:3; 2 Corinthians 5:17; Galatians 5:22; Ephesians 4:11-13).
  - e) Must be willing to work with the Elders and other church officials in leading the church to fulfill its duties and vision in the Lord.
  - f) Must have prior service on a Ministry Team.
- 2) Term Length
- a) Each Ministry Team Leader shall serve a two-year term. They may be re-elected for a second consecutive term for the same position.<sup>20</sup>
  - b) There shall be no limit to the number of Ministry Team Leaders.
  - c) If there is not a qualified person called by God to fill a position, it will go unfilled until such a person is called by God.
  - d) If a staff member occupies a ministry team leadership position, they will occupy that position for so long as their employment continues.<sup>21</sup>
- 3) Duties and Responsibilities
- a) General Responsibilities
    - (i) Team Leaders will be selected to lead Ministry Teams to fulfill the biblical functions of this church as we seek to fulfill God's redemptive purposes in our community. At minimum, Ministry Teams shall be organized around the biblical functions of Worship, Discipleship, Stewardship, Outreach, and Fellowship. The names of the Ministry Teams provided are general in nature and the Elder Board may define each. As additional ministries are identified the Elder Board may recommend forming new teams or disbanding existing ones.<sup>22</sup>
  - b) Each Ministry Team Leader shall:
    - (i) Form teams to implement the goals and vision of this church. These teams are comprised of those members of the congregation who are gifted, talented, and have a heart for that area of ministry. The Ministry Team Leader (s) shall disciple, direct, encourage, train, and evaluate the team and its individual members to ensure the effective accomplishment of the goals of this church and the ministry groups.
    - (ii) Work together in unity to promote the ministry of this church.
    - (iii) Be available to the Elders, Trustees, committees, other Ministry Team Leaders, and groups of this church for assistance and guidance.
    - (iv) Manage the expenditures of funds in accordance with the congregational approved budget and according to the stated policies of this church.
    - (v) Submit an annual report to the congregation.<sup>23</sup>
- 4) Selection Process
- a) Ministry Team Leaders shall be nominated by the Elder Board, after determining an individual's ability and suitability to meet the qualifications of a ministry team leader of

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<sup>20</sup> Removed "they are then ineligible to serve as a Ministry Team Leader for a period of one (1) year. However, this period of ineligibility may be waived if there are insufficient numbers of qualified and available candidates."

<sup>21</sup> Added this section to avoid a referendum vote on staff every two years. This was to keep bylaws in line with current practices.

<sup>22</sup> Removed "Each Ministry Team Leader will be responsible to meet regularly with an assigned Elder for:

- (i) Prayer, discipleship, training, and spiritual growth.
- (ii) Developing and prioritizing goals and plans for their particular team.
- (iii) Reviewing and evaluating the direction of the ministry they are leading."

<sup>23</sup> This is added.

- this church. Ministry Team Leaders shall be approved by the congregation during a business meeting. Election shall require a simple majority.
- b) Vacancies occurring among the Ministry Team Leaders during a term will be filled by the Elder Board. The appointed person will serve only for the remainder of that unfilled term.
  - c) Staff members may be utilized to fill ministry team leader positions as part of their job description. These individuals shall meet the outlined duties and responsibilities of ministry team leaders, but they shall otherwise be selected and managed according to the section on "Calling Support Staff" (Article III, Section B-6-c).<sup>24</sup>

## **D) Trustees**

- 1) Qualifications
  - a) The Trustees are the specific Stewardship Ministry Team of this church. All Trustees members, including Treasurer and Financial Secretary, shall meet the qualifications for Ministry Team Leaders as outlined in Article III Section D, except for prior service on a ministry team.
- 2) Terms of Office
  - a) The Trustees shall have a minimum number of five (5) members, including the Treasurer and Financial Secretary.
  - b) Each Trustee shall serve a term of three (3) years. Additional three-year terms may be served upon nomination by the Elder Board and election by the congregation. Approximately one-third of the number of trustees shall be elected each year.
  - c) The Treasurer and Financial Secretary shall be voting members of the Trustees.
  - d) At the first meeting following the election, the Trustees shall choose a chairperson. The Chair must not be the Financial Secretary or Treasurer.
  - e) Two-thirds of the members of the Trustees shall constitute a quorum for the transaction of business.
- 3) Duties and Selection process<sup>25</sup>
  - a) Duties
    - (i) Finances and stewardship
    - (ii) Budget coordination
    - (iii) Physical property of the church
    - (iv) Legal matters
    - (v) Appointment of an auditing committee (see Article VI, Section A.5)
    - (vi) The Treasurer shall be custodian of all moneys received from all organizations of the church and perform other duties as outlined in the job description and policies governing this office.
  - b) Selection Process
    - (i) Trustees shall be nominated by the Elder Board, after determining an individual's ability and suitability to meet the qualifications of a Trustee of this church. Trustees shall be elected by the congregation at a business meeting. Election shall require a simple majority.

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<sup>24</sup> This was to clarify the ambiguous situation of ministry lead positions formerly occupied by laypeople being now occupied by staff members. In this situation, they will be handled as staff and will not be subject to the vote every two years. This is in accordance with current practice. We were out of alignment with our bylaws before this – Raymond, leading the worship team, has never been voted on for another “two year term” because we treat him like staff.

<sup>25</sup> Changed this from “duties and responsibilities” to “duties and selection process”

- (ii) Vacancies occurring on the Trustees, during a term, will be filled by the Elder Board. This appointee will serve only for the remainder of the unfilled term.

## **E) Other Officers**

- 1) Qualifications
  - a) All other officers of this church shall meet the requirement for ministry team leaders. (see Section D. 1.)
- 2) Term Length
  - a) Each Officer shall serve a term of three years. Additional three-year terms may be served upon nomination by the Elder Board and election by the congregation.
- 3) Duties and Responsibilities
  - a) The Church Moderator shall preside over all congregational meetings. The Church Moderator shall also perform other duties normally required for this office as directed by the Elder Board.
  - b) The Church Clerk shall keep accurate records of the proceedings of all regular and special congregational business meetings and other duties normally required for this office as directed by the Elder Board.
  - c) The Financial Secretary shall receive all funds and deposit all funds in the bank as directed by the church, giving duplicate deposit slips to the Treasurer and perform other duties as outlined in the job description and policies governing this office.<sup>26</sup>
- 4) Selection Process
  - a) Church officers shall be nominated by the Elder Board after determining an individual's ability and suitability to meet the qualifications for that office. All church officers shall be elected by the congregation at a business meeting. Election shall require a simple majority.
  - b) Vacancies occurring during a term will be filled by the Elder Board. This appointment by the Elder Board will serve only for the remainder of the unfilled term.

## **F) Committees**

- 1) Special Committees
  - a) Special Committees may be called by the Elder Board to accomplish a specific purpose for a limited duration. These may be annual special committees or "one-time only" committees.
  - b) Each Special Committee will have a specified beginning and ending date.
  - c) All Special Committees will be evaluated by the Elder Board. If the committee is no longer required, the Elder Board will disband that committee.
  - d) The Elder Board will develop for each committee:<sup>27</sup>
    - (i) A purpose
    - (ii) Instructions
    - (iii) Specified results
- 2) Salaried Elder/Pastor Search Committee
  - a) This committee will be chosen by the elder board<sup>28</sup> based on their spiritual maturity, their knowledge of the needs of the church, their ability to work industriously and effectively as members of a team and their ability to represent the church in a professional and Christ-like manner. They shall continue to exist until a new Salaried Elder has accepted the call and the Elder Board dismisses them.

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<sup>26</sup> Moved this up one section, because it was previously in the section "Selection Process."

<sup>27</sup> Removed the phrase "in writing."

<sup>28</sup> Inserted "by the elder board" to clarify who selects and appoints committees.

- b) The committee will consist of a maximum of eight (8) church members. A maximum of three (3) Elders will serve on this committee. They shall follow the guidelines as outlined by the Elder Board in a charge and charter given to this committee.
- 3) Staff Compensation Committee
  - a) This committee meets at least one time a year to recommend staff compensation adjustments in preparation for the annual budget.
  - b) This committee shall consist of the senior pastor, a lay elder, a trustee, and one or more lay persons which can include the team leader.
  - c) This committee makes a recommendation of salary adjustments to the elders and trustees. This recommendation can be based on job responsibilities market conditions, cost of living changes, quality of performance, and/or other factors.<sup>29</sup>

### **G) Leadership Community**

- 1) The purpose of the Leadership Community is to facilitate communication, evaluation of the church ministry, and ministry training. The Leadership Community is not an administrative board. The Leadership Community shall meet **at least**<sup>30</sup> quarterly.<sup>31</sup> This Leadership Community is composed of the following church leaders:
  - a) All Members of Elder Board
  - b) Ministry Team Leaders
  - c) Trustees Chair
  - d) Church Moderator
  - e) Any currently-existing Special Committee Chair

## **ARTICLE IV CONGREGATIONAL BUSINESS MEETINGS**

- A) Regular business meetings shall be held twice a year.<sup>32</sup>
- B) One business meeting<sup>33</sup> shall include the election of officers and an update from the Elder Board on the spiritual life of the church.
- C) The other business meeting shall<sup>34</sup> be for the purpose of presenting written reports from the previous year and ministry goals for the next year, vote on the annual budget and a presentation from the Elder Board of the list of upcoming open leadership positions.
- D) Special business meetings may be called by the Elder Board, or by a written request to the Church Moderator from 20% of the voting membership of the church.
- E) All business meetings shall require a minimum of two (2) weeks communication notice to the congregation. Agenda items to be voted on must be communicated at this time.
- F) One-third of the regular membership of the church shall constitute a quorum at a business meeting of the church.
- G) It is desired that a spirit of unanimity be sought before an important motion is brought to the congregation for a vote. As such, final decisions should result in unity, but not necessarily uniformity. All decisions must be made by a majority vote of those members present and voting, except where stipulated otherwise in these Bylaws. There shall be no absentee voting.

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<sup>29</sup> Added this entire section

<sup>30</sup> Added "at least"

<sup>31</sup> Removed "The meeting will be Chaired by the Chairman of the Elder Board, who shall schedule the meeting."  
We have not practiced this ever.

<sup>32</sup> Changed this to "twice a year."

<sup>33</sup> Changed this from "the January meeting" to "one business meeting."

<sup>34</sup> Changed this from "the September meeting" to "the other business meeting"

- H) Congregational business meetings will be conducted in the spirit of the New Testament principle of deferring to one another in Christian love, therefore Robert's Rules of Order shall not be employed to govern meeting procedures.
  - 1) In the event of a divisive or uncomfortable situation arising, the elders may move the discussion to the next meeting to allow for prayer and the leading of the Holy Spirit<sup>35</sup>
- I) The Church Moderator (or in the Chair's absence a person whom the Chair chooses), shall preside over the business meetings of the church.
- J) Voting
  - 1) Voting shall be by voice or hand count.
  - 2) Ballot voting may be requested by the Chairman of the meeting or by any member. When a member duly submits a motion requesting a ballot vote, approval of that request must be received by a majority vote from the members at that meeting. Voting by ballot shall be specifically required for the election of officers, the hiring or dismissal of staff, and to authorize the purchase, encumbrance, or disposition of any real property for the church.
- K) Although the congregation is usually considered to be all who attend services, for the purpose of transacting business, the congregation consists of active members who are age 18 and older.
- L) Congregational meetings shall<sup>36</sup> include the following:<sup>37</sup>
  - 1) Call to order
  - 2) Scripture / Prayer
  - 3) Verify Quorum <sup>38</sup>
  - 4) Undecided, unfinished or tabled business
  - 5) New Business
  - 6) Old Business
  - 7) New Business<sup>39</sup>
  - 8) Prayer
  - 9) Adjournment

## ARTICLE V CONGREGATIONAL GOVERNMENT

### A. Overview

- a. As an affirmation to the adoption of a congregational form of government (see Constitution, Article VII. Church Government), the following are powers and responsibilities assigned to the Congregation:
- b. The congregation chooses its own Constitution and has the right to revise it to stay abreast of changing situations.
- c. The congregation will choose and/or remove local church leaders.
- d. Leaders are responsible to, as well as, for the congregation. This means that all leaders receive their mandate to lead from the congregation. Responsibility is reciprocal.
- e. Leadership decisions are subject to congregational reversal.

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<sup>35</sup> Added this item.

<sup>36</sup> Changed to allow flexibility if required

<sup>37</sup> Removed statement regarding the keeping of minutes by "all organizations and committees" since this section deals with congregational meetings, and the requirement for congregational meeting minutes is covered elsewhere.

<sup>38</sup> Removed Reading of last minutes and Reports from officers

<sup>39</sup> Changed wording from: Scheduled Business **and** Business proposed by members of the meeting

- f. The congregation will legally hold its own property.
  - g. The congregation distributes its funds as it sees fit by an approved unified annual budget.<sup>40</sup>
- B. Congregational Responsibilities<sup>41</sup>
- a. The congregation appoints elders who lead the church.
  - b. The congregation affirms the nomination of ministry team leaders and other church officials.
  - c. The congregation approves the budget.
  - d. The congregation approves and elects the senior pastor.

## **ARTICLE VI FINANCES AND PROPERTY**

### ***A) Finances and Accounting***

- 1) This church is a non-profit organization. No expenditures shall be made or business conducted which would threaten the non-profit nature of the church. Necessary steps shall be taken to ensure the recognition of the church as a non-profit organization by appropriate local, state, and federal government agencies.
- 2) The Financial Secretary is expected to develop guidelines and train personnel in order to appropriately account for all funds received by the church. The Trustees [**Trustees**] shall approve any changes to these guidelines as necessary.
- 3) The Treasurer is expected to develop guidelines and train personnel in order to appropriately account for all funds expended by the church. Guidelines shall include procedures for the approval of budgeted expenditures, and procedures for preparation and reporting of salaries to the appropriate local, state, and federal government agencies on appropriate forms. The Trustees shall approve any changes to these guidelines as necessary.
- 4) The Treasurer and Financial Secretary shall each prepare a report for the monthly Trustees meeting showing the monthly activity and cumulative financial status of the church. A financial summary shall be presented to the congregation during regular business meetings.
- 5) All financial accounts shall be audited annually. The church Treasurer shall annually submit all church financial records to another member of this church for the financial audit. This auditing member shall be appointed by the Trustees and is not involved in the finances of the church. An external auditor may be called upon to audit the church financial records upon the request of the Elder Board or by a 2/3 vote of the congregation.
- 6) The Trustees will solicit input from all Ministry Teams, Staff Compensation Committee, other committees and other ministry areas regarding their expected financial needs to determine a church budget for the next church fiscal year. The Trustees shall then make their recommendations to the Elder Board based on the request of the various ministry groups and needs of this church. The Elder Board shall have the authority to modify the budget and shall approve the budget before the Trustees submit it to the congregation for discussion, amendment and approval.

### ***B) Support***

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<sup>40</sup> Removed "The congregation makes the final decision on matters of church discipline. "

<sup>41</sup> Added this entire section for clarity

- 1) The primary means by which this church will be supported is through the receiving of freewill gifts. Other fund-raising activities must be approved by the Elder Board and must be in keeping with the current legal requirements of a non-profit church. No member may use the name of this church in fund-raising activities without prior approval of such an activity by the Elder Board.

### **C) Budget**

- 1) All financial support shall be disbursed through an adopted annual budget composed of the budgetary needs of each ministry area of this church (Article VI. Section A). The approval of the annual budget requires a 75% affirmative vote at a business meeting of the church. This adopted unified budget shall be the guide for all church expenditures.
- 2) The Trustees shall have the authority to authorize up to \$10,000 of non-budgeted expenditures, total, per year. To exceed this amount, a budget amendment at a congregational meeting is required.

### **D) Indebtedness**

- 1) The church can only incur indebtedness with the consent of a 75% vote of approval from members voting at a meeting of the congregation.

### **E) Property Rights**

- 1) Property and Asset Transfer
  - a) In keeping with Article VIII of our Constitution, "Property Rights," and in the unlikely event of the dissolution of this church, the following shall apply.
  - b) This church shall be dissolved if so decided by a 75% vote of the congregation, when less than six (6) members remain, or when there has been no congregational business meeting in two (2) years. If this church dissolves and ceases to function as a church, or if the membership should be dissolved through some disaster, no member(s) shall personally be entitled to any assets of the church. All assets and property rights shall pass to the TX-OK District Conference of the Evangelical Free Church of America to enable said organization to renew the work or use the values thereof for further Gospel enterprises.
  - c) In case of a division in this church (from which we pray God by His mercy to preserve us), the name and all property rights shall be retained by those adhering to this Constitution and Statement of Faith. In the event of a dispute as to which faction is adhering to this Constitution and Statement of Faith, the TX-OK District Conference Board shall review the dispute and make a decision binding on both factions. It is expressly prohibited by the Scriptures to take church disputes into civil courts. (I Corinthians 6:1-7)
- 2) This church shall have the power to receive either by gift or purchase, and to hold such real, personal or other property as is authorized by the laws of the State of Texas and is deemed necessary for the business of the Church, and shall have the power to dispose of such property by mortgage, deed or otherwise. The Trustees shall have the management responsibility of all property belonging to the church.
- 3) All contracts, deeds, conveyances, deeds of trust, assignments, transfers, mortgages, notes, leases, releases, encumbrances and other documents pertaining to real estate or loans in which the church is either the borrower or lender, shall be executed in the name of Hope Fellowship by the Elder and Trustees, attested to by the Chair of the Trustees and by the Chairman of the Elder Board.

## **ARTICLE VII ORGANIZATIONS WITHIN THE CHURCH**

- A. No organization shall be formed within or considered to be a part of the church activities before the sponsors have submitted their plans to the Elder Board for their approval.
- B. No organization shall be permitted to function under the name of the church whose chairman or supervisor is not a member of the church.

## **ARTICLE VIII AFFILIATED ORGANIZATIONS**

### **A) Definition**

- 1) An affiliated organization is one which has an organizational structure separate from the church and which desires to carry on activities in relation to the ministries of the church.

### **B) Affiliation**

- 1) To be affiliated, an organization must first apply to the Elder Board for its recommendation and then obtain approval by a simple majority of the voting membership at a congregation meeting.
- 2) An affiliated organization shall conduct its activities in a manner consistent with the Constitution and Bylaws and policies of this church.
- 3) The Elder Board shall assume the responsibility or assign responsibility to a proper authority for the following;
  - a) Liaison with the programs and activities of the affiliated organization.
  - b) Access, at any time, to the budget of the affiliated organization.
  - c) Review of the appropriateness of continued affiliation with the organization.
- 4) The Senior Pastor or designated member of an assigned board, or team, shall be an ex official member (without voting rights) of each affiliated organization.
- 5) The church shall incur no liability for any wrongful or unlawful acts, real or alleged, of an affiliated organization.

## **ARTICLE IX AMENDMENTS**

These Bylaws may be amended by a written motion from the Elder Board to the congregation or from any voting member of the church submitting a written motion signed by 20% of the voting members of this church to the Elder Board. Upon the reception of such a motion, the proposed amendment shall be communicated to all members of the church at least one month prior to an announced congregational meeting at which the proposed amendment is to be voted on. A 75% majority of the active membership, present and voting, is required to amend the Bylaws.

## **PROCEDURE FOR JOINING THE CHURCH AND BEING RECEIVED INTO MEMBERSHIP**

### **I. Church Constitution: Article VI - Membership**

This church shall receive as members those applicants who have accepted Jesus Christ as their personal Savior and Lord and are manifesting a true Christian life. All applicants must be in

agreement with the Church's Statement of Faith, comply with all procedures, and be willing to support the church with their prayers, their service, their attendance, and their contributions.

## **II. The Three Qualifications for Church Membership**

- A. Personal faith in Jesus Christ for salvation.
- B. Agreement with the Doctrinal Statement.
- C. Commitment to the responsibilities of membership.

## **III. Steps to Becoming a Member**

- A. A pastor or an elder shall oversee a membership orientation which prospective members shall attend. The orientation may be a scheduled membership orientation class or may be a personal meeting with a pastor or an elder. In either case, the following shall be included:
  - Information about the church
  - Review of the church Doctrinal Statement
  - Ordinances of Baptism and Communion
  - Biblical duties and responsibilities of church membership
  - Review of a membership application form
- B. Complete a membership application form and online spiritual gift assessment and return them to a pastor or an elder. An elder will schedule an interview to review with you, your membership application and spiritual gift assessment.
- C. If you do not qualify for membership according to the above three qualifications, your membership application will be returned to you at your interview. All three qualifications are important, but the primary concern will be your personal faith in Jesus Christ as Savior. Joining our church will not make you a Christian. We do not want anyone to think that they are a Christian because they belong to our church. Membership in our church will not get you into heaven or save you from eternal separation from God in hell.
- D. If you do qualify for membership your name shall be presented to the congregation for two weeks. If any member is knowledgeable about a reason the church should not accept an applicant, a signed statement giving a biblical reason shall be presented to a pastor or an elder during that two week period. The Elder Board shall inquire into the matter, and only if the reason is Scriptural and valid will the applicant be denied membership.
- E. After your name has been presented to the congregation for two weeks, you will be welcomed into membership at the next worship service.

**[Does not belong to the bylaws.]**