

Bethel Evangelical Covenant Church

CONSTITUTION

PREAMBLE

(a Historical Statement from the Preamble of the Constitution
and Bylaws of the Evangelical Covenant Church
as revised in 1957)

“The Evangelical Covenant Church has its roots in historical Christianity as it emerged in the Protestant Reformation, in the biblical instruction of the Lutheran State Church of Sweden, and in the great spiritual awakenings of the nineteenth century. These three influences have in large measure shaped its development and are to be borne in mind in seeking to understand its distinctive spirit.

“The Covenant Church adheres to the affirmations of the Protestant reformation regarding the Holy Scriptures, the Old and the New Testament, as the Word of God and the only perfect rule for faith, doctrine, and conduct. It has traditionally valued the historic confessions of the Christian church, particularly the Apostles’ Creed, while at the same time it has emphasized the sovereignty of the Word over all creedal interpretations. It has especially cherished the pietistic restatement of the doctrine of justification by faith as basic to its dual task of evangelism and Christian nurture, the New Testament emphasis upon personal faith in Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord, the reality of a fellowship of believers which recognizes but transcends theological differences, and the belief in baptism and the Lord’s Supper as divinely ordained sacraments of the church. While the denomination has traditionally practiced the baptism of infants, in conformity with its principle of freedom it has given room to divergent views. The principle of personal freedom, so highly esteemed by the covenant, is to be distinguished from the individualism that disregards the centrality of the Word of God and mutual responsibilities and disciplines of the spiritual community.”

This document, which is in harmony with the above preamble, is the constitution and bylaws of the Bethel Evangelical Covenant Church of Bethel, Alaska.

ARTICLE I

Name

The name of this church shall be the Bethel Evangelical Covenant Church of Bethel, Alaska.

ARTICLE II

Affiliation

The church is a member of the Evangelical Covenant Church and the Alaska Conference and is pledged to work in harmony with the Covenant and its decisions and to support its program, policies, and institutions.

ARTICLE III
Confession of Faith

The church believes in the Holy Scriptures, the Old and the New Testament, as the Word of God and the only perfect rule for faith, doctrine, and conduct.

ARTICLE IV
Purpose

Section 1. The purpose of the church shall be to unite Christians in fellowship for spiritual development, for the winning of persons to Christ, and for the propagation of the gospel of Jesus Christ through Christian education, home and world mission, and the institutions conducted by the Evangelical Covenant Church and its local regional conferences.

Section 2. In order to achieve this purpose, the church, in the unity of the Spirit, shall use the gifts that God has given it and the means of grace which God has placed at its disposal: the Word of God, baptism, and Holy Communion.

ARTICLE V
Partnership

Partnership in the church is granted on application to those who through faith in God's Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, have been born anew to a living hope, have been baptized according to the Holy Scriptures, desire to live a Christian life, and promise to support the total ministry of the church and to share its fellowship and obligations.

ARTICLE VI
Officers

The officers of the church shall be a chairman, a vice-chairman, a secretary, a financial secretary, and a treasurer.

ARTICLE VII
Church Council

Section 1. The general administration of the church shall be vested in a body known as the Church Council. In circumstances or where law requires action(s) by "Trustees" the council shall be known as "the Board of Trustees" and the members of it as "trustees." The council shall also serve as a diaconate to supervise the spiritual life of the church, as stated in 1 Timothy 3:8-13.

Section 2. The council shall consist of seven (7) or more members, as specified in the bylaws, including the pastor, who shall be an ex-officio member of the council.

Section 3. The council shall organize itself including the election of church officers in a manner specified in the bylaws.

ARTICLE VIII
Business Meetings

Section 1. Regular business meetings shall be held at stated intervals, but not less than semiannually. The annual business meeting shall be held as near the first of the year as feasible. At the annual meeting, written progress reports shall be submitted by the pastor and by each committee of the church. Financial reports shall be submitted by the treasurer for the church and each of its organizations to partners of the council for the ensuing year shall be elected by ballot.

Section 2. Notice of all congregational business meetings shall be posted at the church, to the website, or emailed to registered partners not less than two weeks prior to the meeting and shall include the date, time of the meeting, and an annotated agenda of business to be transacted.

ARTICLE IX
Property

In the event of schism within the church, from which we earnestly pray God to spare us, the title of all church property, real or personal, shall remain with the group, which abides by this constitution, as determined by the executive board of the Alaska Conference. In the event of dissolution, the property and all assets of the church shall become and be the property of the Evangelical Covenant Church and the Alaska Conference.

ARTICLE X
Amendments

Amendments in harmony with this constitution and not in conflict with Covenant principles and policies may be adopted by a two-thirds vote of those present and voting in an annual meeting of the church, providing the proposed amendment was presented in written form at the preceding partnership meeting according to Art 8 Sect. 2. When the church receives appropriation aid from the regional conference and/or the Covenant through subsidy or loans, proposed amendments must also be approved by the regional conference board and the executive secretary of Covenant church.

BYLAWS

ARTICLE I Partnership

Section 1. *Admission into partnership.*

a) Application for partnership.

A written application for partnership shall be placed with the pastor or the enlistment chairman of the council. The applicant should complete a course in the inquirers' class, after which he shall appear before the council to give a confession of his Christian faith, according to Article V of the Constitution. When the council has reviewed his application and received his testimony favorably, his application shall be submitted to the next congregational business meeting for action.

b) Transfer of partnership.

Applicants from other Christian churches shall submit letters of transfer when available, to the pastor and/or the enlistment chairman of the council, who shall act upon the application according to the requirements of paragraph a) of this Section.

c) Reception of new partners.

Applicants who are voted into the partnership of the church shall be welcomed at the next service of Holy Communion and shall make public confession of their Christian faith, as outlined in *A Book of Worship for Covenant Churches*.

Section 2. *Children of partners.*

Children belonging to partners of the church and its constituency shall be nurtured under its spiritual care. When they have reached 18 years of age, they shall receive special instruction by the pastor in the word of God, Christian doctrine, and the history of the church; whereafter, upon personal manifestation of spiritual life and examination by the council, they shall be received into partnership of the church, as outlined under Section 1, paragraph a), of this Article.

Section 4. *Responsibility of partnership.*

Every partnership shall assume the responsibilities and obligations placed on him by the Word of God and the church. He shall through his witness by life and word, consecrated service, prayer, and financial support further the cause of Christ in the local church and the Covenant.

Section 5. *Discipline.*

a) Negligent partners.

A partner who willfully neglects his duties or fails to attend services of the church regularly or

to contribute to its support according to his means shall be admonished by the council. If this admonition is not heeded, he shall be dealt with as an erring partner.

b) Erring partners.

A partner known to err in doctrine or conduct shall be counseled according to the procedure outlined in Matthew 18:15-18 and Galatians 6:1. A fellow member having knowledge of such error shall in the spirit of Christian love seek to restore him. If he does not heed this counsel, the matter shall be brought to the attention of the council, which shall in meekness and gentleness seek to restore him. If he fails to heed the counsel of the council, his error shall be brought before a business meeting of the church. Discipline shall then be administered in the spirit of Christ with due regard for the welfare of the individual as well as the church.

c) Dismissal of partners.

Dismissal of a partners under paragraphs a) and b) of this Section must be acted on by the church, which alone has the authority. A two-thirds vote of council members is needed to dismiss a partner. The name(s) of removed partners shall be presented at the next business meeting.

Section 6. *Transfer of partners.*

A partner who moves to another community should soon thereafter identify himself with the local Covenant church. If there is no Covenant church, he should identify himself with some other evangelical Christian church. Application for transfer of partnership shall be made in writing to the pastor, who shall issue the transfer to the church with which a partner is uniting. Withdrawal of said partnership shall be reported through the council to the next business meeting, where it shall be made a matter of record.

Section 7. *Removal of partnership.*

Request for withdrawal from partnership in the church shall be made in writing to the pastor or the council. The council may present the notification for withdrawal to a business meeting of the church.

Section 8. *Forfeiture of property rights.*

A partner who has been properly dismissed from the church or has withdrawn his membership has forfeited all rights to any and all property of the church.

Section 9. *Church Attendees.*

Regular church attendees shall be enrolled by the church as a part of its total constituency. The church and its pastor shall serve them in all their spiritual needs, and they shall be encouraged to consider this as their church home. They shall be kept informed of the activities of the church.

ARTICLE II
Pastor

Section 1. *Qualifications.*

The pastor of the church shall meet the New Testament requirements of his office (I Timothy 3:2-7) and shall be a member in good standing in the Covenant Ministerium. He shall by virtue of his call be a partner of the church and an ex-officio member of the council and the boards of all organizations within the church.

Section 2. *Duties.*

The pastor shall be devoted to the service of the church, preaching and teaching the word of God, administering the sacraments, and faithfully giving himself to pastoral work. He shall provide the church with an accurate record of his pastoral acts and present a written report to the church annual business meeting. He shall practice good administrative procedures and cooperate with the council.

Section 3. *Cooperation.*

The pastor shall, both in word and precept, work in harmony with the Covenant, the regional conference, and fellow ministers.

Section 4. *Call.*

The pastor shall be called at a regular or special church business meeting, the purpose of which shall be announced in advance. He shall be chosen by ballot with a two-thirds vote of partners present at the meeting required for a call. The call shall be for an indefinite period of time, with a minimum of six weeks notice required by the church or the pastor for termination of his pastoral duties. When the church receives aid from the conference and/or the Covenant through subsidy or loans, a call to the pastor shall be extended jointly by the church and the local regional conference, subject to approval by the executive secretary of covenant church growth and evangelism.

Section 5. *Charges against the pastor.*

Charges against the pastor shall be submitted in writing and shall not be considered unless supported by the testimony of three witnesses. If in the judgment of the church he erred in doctrine or conduct, the case shall be referred to the committee on ministerial standing and discipline of the local regional conference prior to further action by the church.

ARTICLE III
Officers

Section 1. *Chairman.*

The chairman shall preside at all business meetings of the church and of the council. He shall confer with the pastor in preparing the agenda for such meetings, and shall utilize the counsel that the pastor may give by virtue of his training, experience, and calling. The chairman shall be responsible for appointing leadership for church services in the absence of pastoral leadership.

Section 2. *Vice-chairman.*

The vice-chairman shall assume the duties of the chairman in his absence, and assist him in his duties.

Section 3. *Secretary.*

The secretary shall keep and preserve the minutes of all business meetings of the church and of the council. He shall conduct and preserve all official correspondence as shall be delegated to him. He shall also be responsible for the official seal and documents of the church.

Section 4. *Financial secretary.*

The financial secretary shall receive, record, and transmit to the church treasurer all funds contributed to the church.

Section 5. *Treasurer.*

The treasurer shall be responsible for all funds committed to him and shall make disbursements as authorized by the church or the council. The treasurer shall also present a written report of the receipts and expenditures to each regular meeting of the council and to each regular business meeting of the church.

ARTICLE IV
Church Council

Section 1. *Size and tenure.*

The council shall consist of seven (7) members, who shall be duly nominated and elected from the membership of the church, except for the pastor, who shall serve in an ex-officio capacity. Members elected to the council shall serve for terms of three years in such a manner that the terms of approximately one-third of the members shall expire each year. A council member may succeed himself only once. Should a vacancy on the council occur the board shall nominate a new councilperson from the partnership of the church. The nominee is to be approved by the partnership at a special meeting.

Section 2. *Organization.*

Following the annual spring meeting of the church, the council shall convene to select from its own number a chairman, a vice-chairman, a secretary, a financial secretary, and a treasurer, and such other officers as the council, church business meeting, or these Bylaws may specify. These officers shall be the corporate officers of the church.

Section 3. *Council duties.*

The council in its administrative responsibility in cooperation with the pastor shall fulfill the functions defined by the Constitution and Bylaws, including the following:

- a) Supervise church membership, including recommendations relative to reception or removal of members.
- b) Assist the pastor in nurturing the spiritual life of the church and in the service of communion as planned by the pastor.
- c) Establish administrative and program policies in conformity with the spirit of the church constitution.
- d) Evaluate the total church program on a continuing basis.
- e) Plan and recommend the annual budget and stewardship opportunities for the church.
- f) Review and approve the schedule of the church activities and personnel.
- g) Appoint administrative committee members and church workers as defined by the Bylaws as the council and pastor may deem appropriate.

Section 4. *Council Vacancies.*

- a) If a council member is absent three consecutive absences without being excused that seat will be considered vacant.

A council member shall serve as chairman of the committee to which he is appointed and

assume responsibility for directing all congregational activities which fall within that functional category, in cooperation with the pastor.

ARTICLE V

Committees

Section 1. *Executive committee.*

The executive committee, consisting of the church chairman, the secretary, and the treasurer, together with the pastor of the church, shall strive to promote effective working relations and communication in the church. The committee shall have no legislative power, but shall function in an advisory capacity to the council, unless specific responsibilities shall have been assigned to it by the council or the church. The Executive Committee shall serve as the Nominating Committee.

Section 2. *Nominating committee.*

The nominating committee shall consist of three members, including two board member and the pastor, who shall be an ex-officio member of the committee. After being convened by the church chairman, committee members shall elect their own chairman and secretary. The responsibility of the committee shall include the following:

- a) Prepare a ballot for the annual meeting of the congregation listing at least one qualified candidate for each office to be filled.
- b) Confirm the willingness of each candidate to serve before listing his name on the ballot.
- c) Present a complete ballot to the annual meeting of the congregation. This shall constitute completion of the committee assignment, unless given specific responsibilities at said annual meeting.

Section 3. *Pastoral relations committee.*

The pastoral relations committee shall consist of the members of the executive committee and shall meet at least semiannually in keeping with the program and purpose of the Covenant Commission on Pastoral Relations as adopted by the Annual Meeting.

Section 4. *Special committees and task forces.*

Special committees or task forces for specific purposes may be appointed by any duly constituted business meeting of the congregation or by the council according to need, but shall be automatically terminated at the next annual meeting unless specifically extended by said annual meeting.

ARTICLE VI

Meetings

Section 1. *Public services.*

Public services shall be conducted regularly on Sundays and weekdays for worship, the preaching and teaching of God's Word, and prayer.

Section 2. *Conducting sacraments.*

The sacrament of Holy Communion shall be conducted regularly. The sacrament of baptism shall be conducted in keeping with Covenant principles and according to the needs of the constituency.

Section 3. *Business meetings.*

Church business meetings shall be held regularly not less than semiannually, as specified in Article VIII of the Constitution. Special business meetings may be called by the chairman of the church in consultation with the pastor or by the council.

Section 4. *Church council and administrative committee meetings.*

Regular meetings of the council shall be held not less than monthly. Administrative committees, special committees, and task forces shall meet not less than at a frequency specified by the council. Special meetings of the council, the executive committee, the administrative committees, and the task forces may be called by their respective chairmen.

Section 5. *Organization meetings.*

Meetings and activities of the organizations of the church shall be planned and conducted regularly under the direction and supervision of the council.

ARTICLE VII
General Provisions

Section 1. *Quorum.*

a) Fifteen partners present and voting at a business meeting properly called shall constitute a quorum.

b) The quorum for the council, committee, and task force meetings shall be a majority of their respective memberships.

Section 2. *Tenure.*

Officers of the church shall be elected for terms of one year. They may not succeed themselves more than three successive terms.

Section 3. *Rules or order.*

All business meetings of the church and of the boards, committees, and organizations of the church shall be conducted according to a simplified version of *Robert's Rules of Order* to allow for smoother progression of meetings.

ARTICLE VIII
Amendments

Amendments to these Bylaws not in conflict with the Constitution may be adopted at any regular business meeting, or at a special business meeting called for that purpose, by a two-thirds vote of the members present and voting, providing that such amendments have been presented in writing to the council and at a preceding regular business meeting. When the church receives aid from the regional conference and/or the Covenant through subsidy or loans, proposed amendments must also be approved by the regional conference board and the executive secretary of Covenant church growth and evangelism.