

CONSTITUTION
AND
BYLAWS OF
HARBOR COVENANT
CHURCH



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HARBOR COVENANT CHURCH

CONSTITUTION*

PREAMBLE

“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. In conformity with its principle of freedom, the denomination has given room for divergent views of baptism. Similarly, although the church has no gender restrictions for its leadership, the church recognizes that some believe that such restrictions should exist. In the face of such differences in belief, members are free to vote their consciences in such matters, and agree to accept and comply with outcomes determined by a majority vote of the congregation. This should never be understood as a compromise of personal

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conviction, but as a part of the essential give and take of living in harmony as a diverse people within the one Body of Christ our Lord. 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 Harbor Covenant Church of Gig Harbor, Washington.

ARTICLE I

Name

The name of this church shall be the Harbor Covenant Church.

ARTICLE II

Affiliation

The church is a member of the Evangelical Covenant Church and its North Pacific 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.

Section 5. Rules of Order

All business meetings of the church and of the boards, committees and organizations of the church shall be conducted according to Roberts' Rules of Order.

Section 6. Voting

Any vote at a business meeting shall be conducted by secret ballot upon the request of any member.

ARTICLE XI
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 Congregation at a preceding regular business meeting.

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

Membership

Membership in the church is granted upon application to those who give witness that, through faith in God's Son our Lord Jesus Christ, they 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. The entire membership of the church constitutes the congregation.

ARTICLE VI

Officers

The officers of the church shall be a Chair, a Vice-Chair, a Secretary, a Financial Secretary, a Treasurer and such other officers as the Church Council, a Congregational Business Meeting and the bylaws may specify.

ARTICLE VII
Church Council

Section 1. The general administration of the church shall be vested in a body known as the Church Council. The Council derives its powers from the congregation and shall have such powers as are granted to it in the bylaws. Where the law requires action by “trustees” the council shall be known as the “Board of Trustees” and the members of it as “trustees”.

Section 2. The Council shall consist of members of the Board of Elders, members of the pastoral staff, such Deacons as the congregation shall elect from time to time, the church Secretary, and the church Treasurer.

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

ARTICLE VIII
Board of Elders

Section 1. Responsibility for spiritual guidance and direction of the church shall be vested in a body known as the Board of Elders. In addition to supervising the spiritual life of the church, the Board shall have such powers as are granted in the bylaws.

Section 2. The board shall consist of five (5) or more members, as specified in the bylaws, in addition to the senior pastor, who shall be a member ex-officio, and shall serve as its chair.

ARTICLE IX
Commissions for Ministry

Commissions for ministry shall be entrusted with the programs and ministries of the church in accordance with duties established in the bylaws, by the Church Council, or the congregation, and shall be composed of a Deacon elected by the congregation, assigned pastoral staff and an unspecified number of appointed members.

Section 4. Elections

1. Elections of members of the Board of Elders and of Deacons shall be conducted during even numbered years. The elections of Elders and Deacons shall be conducted by written ballot at a meeting scheduled in accordance with Article IX, § 3, of these bylaws. (Elections shall be conducted in October 1999 for the positions of those Elders and Deacons whose terms expire at the end of that year. Elders and Deacons elected in October 1999 shall be elected for a term of one year.)
2. With respect to the election of Deacons, if more than one candidate is nominated for a given position, the candidate with the majority of votes cast for that position shall be deemed elected. If more than two candidates are nominated and no candidate receives a majority vote on the initial ballot, the name of the candidate with the fewest votes on that ballot shall be eliminated from the next ensuing ballot. Balloting shall proceed in this manner until a candidate has been elected to the position by majority vote.
3. With respect to the election of Elders, the following rules shall apply except when an election is conducted to fill a single vacancy occurring during a term. Each congregation member may vote for, or write in the names for, as many candidates as there are positions to which Board of Elder members are to be elected. Candidates receiving a majority of the votes cast shall be deemed elected. (For purposes of the election, a majority shall be no less than the total number of votes cast for elder candidates divided by twice the number of elders being elected, plus one). If not all positions are filled on the first ballot, balloting shall continue for the unfilled positions in like manner as set forth in this paragraph above. If no candidate receives a majority vote on any two successive ballots, the name of the candidate on the ballot with the fewest votes on the last ballot shall be eliminated from the next ensuing ballot. Balloting shall proceed in this manner until candidates have been elected to all positions by majority vote.

ARTICLE X
General Provisions

Section 1. Quorum

1. Ten percent of the membership, but not less than ten members present and voting at a business meeting properly called shall constitute a quorum.
2. The quorum for the Council, commission, 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. Commission members are appointed for one year, but with unlimited tenure.

Section 3. Nominations

1. In addition to the nominees submitted by the nominating committee or Church Council, three congregation members may nominate and place on the ballot the name of a candidate who is qualified and has consented to serve. The name of the nominee must be submitted to the nominating committee for inclusion on the ballot three weeks prior to the election.
2. Except when an election is conducted to fill a single vacancy occurring during a term, candidates for the office of Elder shall not be nominated for a particular Elder office but shall be nominated to be elected for any Elder office that is to be filled at the election.

ARTICLE X
Business Meetings

Section 1. Regular business meetings of the congregation shall be held not less than twice a calendar year. One regular business meeting shall be the Annual Meeting, which shall be held at a time specified in the bylaws. At the Annual Meeting, written progress reports shall be submitted by the Board of Elders, the Church Council, each member of the pastoral staff, and each Deacon of a commission for ministry. In an election year, another regular business meeting shall be held at a time specified in the bylaws to elect members of the Board of Elders and Deacons. The elections shall be conducted by written ballot. At each regular business meeting, financial reports shall be submitted by the Treasurer.

Section 2. Special business meetings may be called by the chair of the church in consultation with the pastor or by the Board of Elders or the Church Council.

Section 3. Written notice of all congregational business meetings shall be published not less than two weeks prior to the meeting, and shall include the date, time and place of meeting, and an agenda of business to be transacted.

ARTICLE XI
Property

In the event of schism within the church, from which we earnestly pray to 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 North Pacific 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 North Pacific Conference.

ARTICLE XII
Amendments

Amendments to this constitution, 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 and distributed in written form at the preceding Annual Meeting.

Section 2. Committees or Task Forces

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

ARTICLE IX
Meetings

Section 1. Public Services

Public services shall be conducted at least weekly 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 as determined by the Pastoral Staff. The sacrament of baptism shall be conducted in keeping with Covenant principles and according to the needs of the constituency.

Section 3. Business Meeting

The Annual Meeting shall be held no later than February 15. Another regular business meeting shall be held no later than the third week in October. In an election year, elections for members of the Board of Elders and Deacons shall be conducted at this meeting. Special business meetings may be called by the Church Chair in consultation with the pastor, or by the Board of Elders or the Church Council.

Section 4. Commissions, Committees, and Task Forces

Commissions, committees, and task forces shall meet as needed at the call of their respective chair, but no less frequently than specified by the Church Council.

Section 3. Qualifications for Deacons & Commission Members

Any member of the congregation in good standing and of evident Christian commitment who meets the spiritual qualifications for administrative leadership contained in the Word of God is eligible for election to the office of deacon. (For examples of scriptures indicating the *spiritual* qualifications required for leadership see Mark 10:42-45; I Timothy 3:8-13 and Acts 6:2-4.) At least three fourths of the appointed members of any commission for ministry must be members of the congregation.

**ARTICLE VIII
Committees or Task Forces**

Section 1. Nominating Committee

The nominating committee shall consist of not less than five (5) members who shall be elected at a business meeting no later than July 1 in election years. The senior pastor shall be an *ex officio* member of the committee. The Vice Chair shall convene and chair the nominating committee. The responsibilities of the committee shall include the following:

1. Preparing a ballot for a business meeting scheduled during the first three weeks of October, listing at least one qualified candidate for each office to be filled.
2. Confirming the willingness of each listed candidate to serve.
3. Presenting a complete ballot (see Art. X § 3) at a business meeting scheduled during the first three weeks in October.

In the case of a vacancy occurring during a term, the Church Council shall act as a nominating committee to present to the congregation candidate(s) to fill the vacancy.

BYLAWS

**ARTICLE I
Membership**

Section 1. Admission into membership

- a) Application for membership. Written applications for membership will be placed with the senior pastor or with the Board of Elders. Applicants should complete a Membership Class series, after which they shall appear before the Board of Elders to confess their Christian faith, according to Article V of the Constitution. When the Board of Elders has reviewed the applications and received the testimonies favorably, the applications shall be submitted to a meeting of the Church Council for action, with a two-thirds vote required for approval. Names of applicants shall be published at least one week prior to the Council meeting at which the applications are to be acted upon. Applicants who are members of other Christian churches should, when possible, arrange for a letter of transfer at the time of application for membership.
- b) Reception of new members. Applicants who are voted into the membership of the church shall be welcomed at a public service of worship and shall make public confession of their Christian faith.
- c) Any person who accepts a call by the congregation to be a member of the pastoral staff shall be deemed to have applied for membership in the church and shall automatically become a member upon beginning the person's ministry to the church.

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Section 2. Responsibility of membership

Each member shall assume the responsibilities and obligations placed on that member by the Word of God and the church. Each member shall through personal witness by life and word, consecrated service, prayer and financial support further the cause of Christ in the local church and the Covenant.

Section 3. Discipline

- a) Negligent members. Members who willfully neglect their duties or fail to attend services of the church regularly or to contribute to its support according to their means may be admonished by the Board of Elders.
- b) Erring members. A member known to seriously err in doctrine or conduct shall be dealt with 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 the erring member from that member's error. If the erring member does not heed this counsel, the matter shall be brought to the attention of the Board of Elders, which shall in meekness and gentleness seek restoration of the member from such error. If the erring member fails to heed the counsel of the Elders, the error shall be brought before a business meeting of the congregation. 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 members. Dismissal of a member must be acted upon by the congregation, which alone has this authority. A two-thirds vote of those present and voting at a congregational business meeting is necessary for such dismissal.

4. Act, without the senior pastor, as the Pastoral Relations Committee. The committee shall make recommendations to the appropriate commission or to the Church Council concerning the compensation of pastoral staff members; mediate disputes between members of the congregation and members of the pastoral staff; evaluate the performance of the senior pastor and in accordance with Article II §2 (b), that of the other members of the pastoral staff, making recommendations for action where appropriate to the Church Council or the congregation; and provide counsel to members of the pastoral staff when appropriate.
5. Keep the congregation informed of actions and decisions of the Board.

ARTICLE VII Commissions for Ministry

Section 1. Establishment and Duties

Commissions for Ministry established by the congregation shall develop and implement programs and ministries to carry out the policies, goals and programs adopted by the Church Council or the congregation. In addition each commission shall consider for adoption and implementation programs and ministries proposed by the pastoral staff assigned to the commission. A Deacon elected by the congregation will serve as chair of each commission, will report to the Church Chair, and will report and be responsible to the Church Council concerning the actions of the commission.

Section 2. Deacons

There shall be as many Deacons as there are Commissions for Ministry. Deacons shall be elected from and by the congregation for two year terms. Deacons may succeed themselves twice. Any vacancy during a term shall be filled by election by the congregation to finish the term. Service as a Deacon for one (1) year or less shall not be considered for purposes of succession.

Section 2. Qualifications

Any member of the congregation in good standing and of evident Christian commitment who meets the spiritual qualifications for oversight leadership contained in the Word of God is eligible for election to the office of elder. (For examples of scriptures indicating the *spiritual* qualifications required for leadership see I Timothy 3:1-7; Titus 1:5-9; I Peter 5:1-4; and Mark 10:42-45.)

Section 3. Meetings

In addition to frequent informal meetings for prayer and evaluation of the life of the congregation, the Board of Elders shall conduct official meetings not less than once a month. The senior pastor shall preside as chair at these meetings. A quorum shall consist of four Elders. All actions of the Board of Elders must be by consensus of those present or by 5/6^{ths} vote of all members of the Board.

Section 4. Duties

The Board of Elders shall fulfill the duties conferred on it by the constitution and bylaws including the following:

1. Oversee the spiritual life and pastoral care of the congregation.
2. Develop and submit to the Church Council or congregation goals, policies, and plans relating to the ongoing life and ministry of the church.
3. Oversee the church membership, make recommendations to the Church Council concerning admission of new members, and make recommendations to the congregation concerning the discipline or dismissal of existing members. See Art. III §3.

Section 4. Change of Membership

- a) Inactive Members: In cases where members have been inactive for more than a year and either cannot be located or are unresponsive to written queries about their relationship with the church, the Board of Elders may recommend their removal from membership to the congregation for action at a business meeting. A two-thirds vote of those present and voting is necessary for such removal.
- b) Transfer or Withdrawal from Membership: Members who wish to withdraw from membership or transfer membership to another congregation may do so by requesting withdrawal or a letter of transfer from the Elders, who shall report the withdrawal or transfer at the next business meeting, where it shall be made a matter of record.

Section 5. Forfeiture of property rights

Members who have been properly dismissed for the church (Art. I § 3) or have withdrawn their memberships (Art. I § 4) have forfeited all rights to any and all property of the church.

ARTICLE II Pastoral Staff

Section 1. Senior Pastor.

- a) Qualifications. The senior pastor of the church shall meet the New Testament requirements for the pastoral office (I Timothy 3:2-7; Titus 1:5-9, and I Peter 5:1-4) and shall be a member in good standing in the Covenant Ministerium.

- b) Duties. The senior pastor shall be devoted to the service of the church, preaching and teaching the Word of God, administering the sacraments, and faithfully performing pastoral work. The senior pastor shall be an *ex officio* member of the Board of Elders, serving as its chair, and an *ex officio* member of the Church Council, and, at the senior pastor's choosing, of any Commissions for Ministry or special committees. The senior pastor shall be responsible for directing the operations of the church office and staff, including other members of the pastoral staff, and shall be responsible for reporting on their performance to the Church Council or the Pastoral Relations Committee. The senior pastor shall provide a written report of the senior pastor's pastoral activities to the church annual business meeting.
- c) Cooperation. The senior pastor shall, both in word and precept, work in harmony with the Covenant, the regional conference, and his fellow ministers.
- d) Call. The senior pastor shall be called at a regular or special church business meeting, the purpose of which shall be announced in advance. The senior pastor shall be nominated by a pastoral search committee. The senior pastor shall be chosen by ballot with a two-thirds vote of those members present and voting required for a call. The senior pastor shall serve for an indefinite period of time, with a minimum of six weeks notice required by the church or the pastor for termination of the senior pastor's duties.
- e) Pastoral Search Committee. The pastoral search committee shall be elected by the congregation. The Church Council and members of the congregation may nominate members in good standing for election to the committee. The committee shall have no fewer than five and no more than nine members. At least two members of the committee shall be members of the Board of Elders.

- 7. Hire and terminate the employment of non-pastoral church employees.
- 8. Review and approve schedules of church activities and personnel.
- 9. Report to the congregation on a regular basis concerning its actions.
- 10. Admit applicants to membership in the church.
- 11. Determine the duties of associate pastors and directors of ministries.
- 12. Upon recommendation of the Board of Elders, assign associate pastors and directors of ministries to commissions.
- 13. When such actions will not cause the church to incur any indebtedness the Church Council may approve unforeseen expenditures not provided for in the budget.

Section 4. Meetings

The Church Council shall conduct regular meetings at a frequency it determines necessary, not less than every other month, with advance notice given to all members of the Council as to time and place of the meeting.

ARTICLE VI Board of Elders

Section 1. Members

The Board of Elders shall consist of five (5) lay persons, each of whom shall be duly elected from and by the congregation, and the senior pastor, who shall serve as Chair of the Board. Elders shall serve terms of two years and may succeed themselves twice. Any vacancy during a term shall be filled by election by the congregation to finish the term. Service as an Elder for one (1) year or less shall not be considered for purposes of succession. At the Board's discretion, other members of the pastoral staff may serve as advisors to the Board.

ARTICLE V
Church Council

Section 1. Membership

The Church Council shall consist of members of the Board of Elders, members of the pastoral staff, such Deacons as the congregation shall elect to chair Commissions for Ministry, the Treasurer, and the Secretary

Section 2. Organization

As soon as feasible after the first of the year, the Church Council shall convene to select the Church Chair, Vice-Chair, Secretary, Financial Secretary, Treasurer, and such other officers as the Council, a church business meeting, or these bylaws may specify. These officers shall be the corporate officers of the church.

Section 3. Powers and Duties

The Church Council shall have such powers as are not delegated to the Board of Elders or the Commissions for Ministry, or reserved to the congregation in the constitution and bylaws. The powers and responsibilities of the Church Council shall include, but not be limited to:

1. Review and adopt plans, programs, and policies pertaining to the ministries of the church.
2. Prepare an annual budget for submission to the congregation.
3. Appoint non-elected members of all commissions, committees, and boards.
4. Coordinate the administration of church programs and ministries.
5. Review the ongoing programs of the commissions for ministry.
6. Recommend the hiring or termination of the employment of members of the pastoral staff.

Section 2. Associate Pastors and Directors of Ministries

- a) Call. In addition to the senior pastor, the pastoral staff shall consist of associate pastors and directors of ministries the congregation calls to carry on the ministries of the church. Upon recommendation of the Church Council the congregation shall call, and may terminate the services of, associate pastors and directors of ministries.
- b) Duties. The Church Council shall determine the duties of associate pastors and directors of ministries subject to review by the congregation. The associate pastors and directors of ministries shall be members of commissions to which they are assigned and shall initiate and develop ministries and programs for review, approval and implementation by such commissions.
- c) Supervision. The activities of other members of the pastoral staff shall be directed and supervised by the senior pastor.
- d) Evaluation. The performance of other members of the pastoral staff shall be reviewed by the senior pastor and the commissions to which they are assigned, who shall report on such performance to the Pastoral Relations Committee.

Section 3. Charges Against a Credentialed Pastor

Charges against a credentialed pastor alleging indiscretion, immorality, doctrinal error, unethical behavior, or disloyalty to the Evangelical Covenant Church must be submitted in writing to the Pastoral Relations Committee. If in the judgment of the Pastoral Relations Committee there is substance to the charges, the matter shall be referred to the regional conference superintendent or to the Executive Director of the Ministry for assignment of respective responsibilities of the Evangelical Covenant Church and Harbor Covenant Church in pursuing the matter prior to further action by the Church. Pending response to such referral, the church shall not be precluded, however, from taking immediate, reasonable and appropriate, temporary action, such as suspending or reassigning the pastor, or from any action required by law.

ARTICLE III
Powers of the Congregation

The congregation consists of the entire membership of the church. Ultimate authority and responsibility for the church decisions reside in the congregation, acting in a lawful business meeting. The congregation may review, reverse, or modify any action or decision of the Board of Elders, the Church Council, or any commission, committee, or officer of the church. The congregation shall have sole authority to:

1. Adopt and amend the church budget.
2. Incur or authorize the incurring of indebtedness on the part of the church. When such action will not cause the church to incur an indebtedness, the Church Council may approve unforeseen expenditures not provided for in the budget.
3. Dismiss or remove members from membership pursuant to Art. I §3 (c) and Art. I § 4(a).
4. Elect Deacons and Elders.
5. Call or dismiss members of the pastoral staff.
6. Establish or disestablish commissions for ministry.
7. Dispose of church real property or interest therein.
8. Amend the constitution and bylaws.

ARTICLE IV
Officers

Section 1. Chair

The Church Chair shall be a member of the Board of Elders and shall be selected by the Church Council. In the absence of the senior pastor, the chair shall serve as chair of the Board of Elders, supervise the church office and staff, and be responsible for conducting public worship services. In addition to such additional administrative duties as the Church Council may assign, the chair shall preside at all Council and church business meetings, and in consultation with the senior pastor, shall prepare the agenda for such meetings.

Section 2. Vice Chair

The vice chair shall be a member of the Board of Elders and shall be selected by the Church Council. The vice chair shall assume the duties of the chair in the latter's absence, chair the nominating committee, and assist the chair in the latter's duties.

Section 3. Secretary

The Secretary shall be selected from the church membership by the Church Council, and is an *ex officio* member of that body. The Secretary shall keep and preserve minutes of all business meetings of the church and the Church Council, shall conduct official correspondence delegated, and shall be responsible for preservation of the official documents of the church.

Section 4. Financial Secretary

The Financial Secretary shall be selected by the Church Council, but need not be a member of that body. The Financial Secretary shall receive, record, and transmit to the church treasurer all funds contributed to the church. The Financial Secretary shall be an *ex officio* member of any ministry commission pertaining to the finances of the church.

Section 5. Treasurer

The Treasurer shall be selected by the Church Council, and is an *ex officio* member of that body. The Treasurer shall be responsible for all funds committed to the Treasurer and shall make disbursements as authorized by the church or the Church Council. The Treasurer shall also submit a written report of all receipts and expenditures to each regular meeting of the Church Council and each regular church business meeting. The Treasurer shall be an *ex officio* member of any ministry commission pertaining to the finances of the church.