

Updated September 4, 2009

CONSTITUTION AND BYLAWS

COVENANT COMMUNITY CHURCH Fairfield, Ohio

Original Constitution and Bylaws were adopted March 13, 1977

Revised and adopted at the December 4, 2009 Congregational Annual Meeting

The use of the masculine gender in both the Constitution and the Bylaws is intended to facilitate reading and does not connote sexual bias. The use of the word "pastor" may be either singular or plural and refers to ordained pastors who have been called to serve this church.

CONSTITUTION

PREAMBLE

This historical statement from the Preamble of the Constitution and Bylaws of the Evangelical Covenant Church was adopted by the Evangelical Covenant Church in 2002.

The Evangelical Covenant Church is a communion of congregations gathered by God, united in Christ, and empowered by the Holy Spirit to obey the great commandment and the great commission. It affirms its companionship in faith with other church bodies and all those who fear God and keep God's commandments.

The Evangelical Covenant Church adheres to the affirmations of the Protestant Reformation regarding the Bible. It confesses that the Holy Scripture, the Old and the New Testament, is the Word of God and the only perfect rule for faith, doctrine, and conduct. It affirms the historic confessions of the Christian Church, particularly the Apostles' Creed and Nicene Creed, while emphasizing the sovereignty of the Word of God over all credal interpretations.

In continuity with the renewal movements of historic Pietism, the Evangelical Covenant Church especially cherishes the dual emphasis on new birth and new life in Christ, believing that personal faith in Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord is the foundation for our mission of evangelism and Christian nurture. Our common experience of God's grace and love in Jesus Christ continues to sustain the Evangelical Covenant Church as an interdependent body of believers that recognizes but transcends our theological differences.

The Evangelical Covenant Church celebrates two divinely ordained sacraments, baptism and the Lord's Supper. Recognizing the reality of freedom in Christ, and in conscious dependence on the work of the Holy Spirit, we practice both the baptism of infants and believer baptism. The Evangelical Covenant Church embraces this freedom in Christ as a gift that preserves personal conviction, yet guards against an individualism that disregards the centrality of the Word of God and the mutual responsibilities and disciplines of the spiritual community.

The Evangelical Covenant Church has its roots in historical Christianity, the Protestant Reformation, the biblical instruction of the Lutheran Church of Sweden, and the great spiritual awakenings of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. These influences, together with more recent North American renewal movements, continue to shape its development and distinctive spirit. The Evangelical Covenant Church is committed to reaching across boundaries of race, ethnicity, culture, gender, age, and status in the cultivation of communities of life and service.

This document, which is in harmony with the above preamble, is the Constitution and Bylaws of the Covenant Community Church of Fairfield, Ohio.

ARTICLE I

Name

The name of this church shall be the Covenant Community Church of Fairfield, Ohio.

ARTICLE II

Affiliation

The church is a member of the Evangelical Covenant Church of America and its Great Lakes Conference or any successor entity and is pledged to work in harmony with the Covenant and its decisions and to support its programs, policies, and institutions.

ARTICLE III

Confession of Faith

Section 1. 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 2. The position of the Evangelical Covenant Church on human sexuality is outlined in the document Human Sexuality & Marriage Ethic, Part 1, presented at the 2007 Covenant Annual 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 of America and its 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.

ARTICLE V

Membership

Membership 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

Section 1. The officers of the church shall be a chairman, a vice-chairman, a secretary, a financial secretary, and a treasurer. Each position shall be filled by a separate person. Ex-officio members may not serve as church officers.

Section 2. The Council chairman shall also serve as the Head of the Corporation.

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 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 oversee the spiritual life of the church.

Section 2. The Council shall consist of five (5) or more elected members, as specified in the Bylaws, and shall include the pastor, who shall serve as an ex-officio member.

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

ARTICLE VIII

Business Meetings

Section 1. There shall be at least two business meetings per year, one of which shall be the annual business meeting, which is held on the first Friday in December, or as soon thereafter as practical.

At the annual meeting, written progress reports shall be submitted by the pastor and by each administrative committee of the church. Financial reports shall be submitted by the treasurer and

the financial secretary for the church. A proposed budget for the new year shall be submitted for discussion and adoption. In accordance with the Bylaws, participants in the annual meeting will elect, by written ballot, new members of the Council and other positions specified in the Bylaws for the ensuing year.

Section 2. Notice of all congregational business meetings shall be communicated to members in writing and announced at worship services not less than fourteen days prior to the meeting and shall include the date, place, and time of the meeting, and a description of the business to be transacted at the meeting.

Section 3. Use of absentee or proxy ballots is not permitted.

ARTICLE IX

Finance and Property

Section 1. The annual Statement of Income and Expenditures and the year-end Balance Sheet financial reports shall be audited by one Council member (but not the treasurer or the financial secretary) and one congregation member. Such audits shall be completed by June 30th of the following year.

Section 2. 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 that abides by this Constitution, as determined by the executive board of the Great Lakes Conference or any successor entity. In the event of dissolution, the property and all assets of the church shall become the property of the Evangelical Covenant Church of America and the Great Lakes 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 the annual meeting of the church, providing the proposed amendment was presented in written form to the congregation at least sixty calendar days prior to that meeting.

BYLAWS

ARTICLE I

Membership

Section 1. Admission into membership

- a) Application for membership. A written application for membership shall be placed with the pastor. The applicant shall complete the inquirers' class, after which he shall meet with Council members to affirm his Christian faith, according to Article V of the Constitution. When the Council has received his application and expression of faith, the applicant shall be recommended to the next business meeting for congregational affirmation.
- b) Transfer of membership. Applicants from other Christian churches may submit letters of transfer to the pastor, who shall act upon the application according to the requirements of paragraph a) of this section.
- c) Reception of new members. Those who have been received into the membership 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

All children in the church family shall be nurtured under its spiritual care. When they have reached confirmation age, they shall be encouraged to receive special instruction in the Word of God, Christian doctrine, and the history of the church. Upon application, they shall be received

into membership of the church, as outlined under Section 1, paragraph a) of this article, but shall not obtain voting privileges until their eighteenth birthday.

Section 3. Associate membership

Associate membership is available to applicants who desire to retain membership in another Christian church while temporarily residing in the local community for such reasons as study, employment, or health. Applicants shall qualify for membership under Article V of the Constitution and Article I, Section 1 of these Bylaws. Associate members shall not have voting privileges.

Section 4. Responsibility of membership

Every member 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 members.** If a member does not participate in the life of the church for a year through not attending or through lack of financial support, that member will be contacted by a pastor and/or a representative of Council to determine if he wishes to remain a member of the church. If that member so contacted does not respond within thirty days, it will be assumed that he has asked to withdraw from membership and he will be automatically dismissed. An exception to one-year non-participation limit is granted to all those who are legitimately unable to participate, such as students, military personnel, medical shut-ins, missionaries, etc.
- b) **Erring members.** A member known to err in doctrine or conduct, shall be counseled according to the procedure outlined in Matthew 18:15-17. First the erring member shall be counseled in private. If he refuses to listen, then two or three church members shall counsel the erring member a second time. If he still refuses to listen, then the matter will be brought before the church. If he refuses to listen to the church, then as stated in Article I, Section 5, paragraph c) of the Bylaws, a vote will be taken by the church to dismiss the erring member. The goal of this process is to bring the erring member to repentance and restore him to the body. Refusal by the erring member to participate in the counseling process shall be grounds for immediate dismissal.
- c) **Dismissal of members.** Dismissal of a member under paragraph b) of this section requires action by the membership, which alone has such authority. A two-thirds vote of those present and voting at a congregational business meeting is necessary for such action.
- d) **Forfeiture of property rights.** A member 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 6. Transfer of members

Application for transfer of membership shall be made in writing to the pastor, who shall issue the transfer to the church with which a member is uniting. Withdrawal of said membership shall be reported through the Council to the next business meeting, where it shall be made a matter of record.

Section 7. Withdrawal of membership

Request for withdrawal from membership in the church shall be made in writing to the pastor or the Council. Withdrawal of said membership shall be reported through the Council to the next business meeting, where it shall be made a matter of record.

Section 8. Nonmember friends

Nonmember parish friends shall be included in the church as part of its total constituency. The church and its pastor shall serve them in their spiritual needs, and they shall be encouraged to consider this as their church home. They shall be kept informed of, and may participate in, the activities of the church, but they shall not have voting privileges at congregational meetings.

Section 9. Annual review and reaffirmation

In conjunction with the annual review of the total church program by the Council, each member of the congregation shall be given the opportunity at a church worship service to reaffirm his

Christian faith and renew his commitment to the goals and purposes of the church. This shall be planned and arranged by the pastor and the Evangelism and Outreach Committee.

Section 10. Members' rights to inspect church records

Members shall have the right to inspect the official minutes of the church as well as the annual Statement of Income and Expenditures and the year-end Balance Sheet financial reports for the last three years. Requests for review of further records, or the receipt of copies of any such records, must be approved by Council. All costs incurred in this distribution shall be paid by the member requesting the information.

ARTICLE II

Pastors

Section 1. Qualifications

The pastor of the church shall lead us in fulfilling our church's responsibility to witness for Christ, lead us in a public witness through ministries of compassion and justice, keep his life in harmony with the Word of God and be above reproach. He shall keep his practices consistent with the Covenant's *Rules for the Ordered Ministry* and its *Ethical Principles for Covenant Ministers*, shall be a teacher of the Word, and shall be a member in good standing in the Covenant Ministerium.

Section 2. Duties

All pastors shall be devoted to the service of the church, preaching, and teaching the Word of God, administering the sacraments, and faithfully giving themselves to pastoral work. They shall provide the church with an accurate record of their pastoral acts, present written reports to the church's annual business meeting, and shall practice good administrative procedures. They shall, by virtue of their call, be members of the church and ex-officio members of Council and the boards of all organizations within the church.

Section 3. Cooperation

All pastors shall, both in word and precept, work in harmony with the Covenant, the regional conference, their fellow pastors, and all staff members of this church.

Section 4. Call

A pastor shall be called at a regular or special church business meeting. The purpose of that meeting shall be announced in advance in accordance with Article VIII, Section 2 of the Constitution. He shall be chosen by closed ballot, with a minimum of a two-thirds vote 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.

Section 5. Charges against a pastor

Charges against a pastor shall be submitted in writing to the Staff Relations Committee and shall not be considered unless supported by the testimony of at least two witnesses (I Tim 5:19). 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 Great Lakes 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 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 leadership of the church services in the absence of the lead pastor and all associate pastors.

Section 2. Vice-chairman

The vice-chairman shall assume the duties of the chairman in his absence, assist him in his duties as requested, and serve as the chairman of the Nominating Committee. He shall review and consolidate historical records as necessary to maintain a permanent history of the congregation. He shall also review the church's Constitution, Bylaws, and policies annually, and recommend any proposed changes to Council.

Section 3. Secretary

The secretary shall keep and preserve the minutes of all business meetings of the church and of the Council and shall place them in the church archives at the end of each calendar year, where they will be retained as a permanent official record of church business. He shall conduct and preserve all official correspondence as shall be delegated to him. He shall also oversee the maintenance of necessary church documents.

Section 4. Financial Secretary

The financial secretary shall receive, record, and deposit to the account of the church all funds received by the church. He shall transmit a record of such deposits to the church treasurer. By the end of January, he shall provide each giving unit a written record of its contributions for the prior fiscal year.

Section 5. Treasurer

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

ARTICLE IV
Church Council

Section 1. Size, qualifications, and tenure

- a) The Council shall consist of five (5) or more members, who shall be duly nominated and elected from the membership of the church, and 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.
- b) Council members shall be men and women of good character and shall be above reproach. They must be faithful to their spouse, or if single live a chaste life, be good managers of their own household, and believe the fundamentals of the faith. All potential Council members shall be screened to confirm they are members in good standing.
- c) Should a vacancy on Council occur, Council shall appoint a replacement who will serve until the next annual meeting, at which time a member shall be elected to serve a term of up to three years as determined by Council to maintain approximately one-third of the terms expiring each year.

Section 2. Council Organization

- a) Following the annual meeting of the church, the Council shall convene to select from its own number a chairman, a vice-chairman, a secretary, a financial secretary, a treasurer, and such other positions as Council, church business meeting, or these Bylaws may specify.
- b) Officers of the church shall be elected for a term of one year consistent with Article VI, Section 5 of the Bylaws.
- c) Regular meetings of Council shall normally be held monthly.
- d) Council may meet in closed session, without visitors, when confidential issues are to be discussed, such as personnel issues, legal issues, and similar sensitive matters. When appropriate, pastors and other staff may be excluded from closed meetings. Minutes of such closed sessions shall not be made public and shall be stored separately from other Council minutes by the secretary. The decision to meet in closed session is made by the chairman.

Section 3 Council Duties

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

- a) Assist the pastoral staff in nurturing the spiritual life of the church and providing spiritual leadership for the church.
- b) Work with the lead pastor on a regular basis to establish, review, and articulate the mission and vision of the church.
- c) Evaluate the total church program on a continuing basis relative to the church's mission and vision. In preparation for the annual business meeting, Council shall prepare a written statement reviewing the major activities of the past year as measured against the adopted goals and purposes of the church. It shall also spell out, in writing, specific areas of concern and emphasis for the year ahead. These statements shall be seen as both a report to the congregation and a call to participate in the church's mission.
- d) Establish administrative and program policies in conformity with the spirit of the church Constitution.
- e) Supervise church membership, including recommendations relative to reception or removal of members.
- f) Plan and recommend the annual budget and stewardship opportunities for the church.
- g) Review and oversee the schedule of church activities.
- h) Make appointments of program committee chairpersons.

ARTICLE V
Committees

Section 1. Program Committees

Implementation of policies and programs established by congregational or Council action may be accomplished through the following program committees:

- a) Adult Ministries Committee
- b) Evangelism and Outreach Committee
- c) Christian Formation Committee
- d) Stewardship and Properties Committee
- e) Other committees as created by Council

A Council member shall be appointed as chairman of each program committee and shall, in cooperation with the pastor, assume responsibility for directing all congregational activities, which fall within that functional category.

Section 2. Executive Committee

At the option of Council, an Executive Committee may be convened, consisting of the church chairman, the secretary, and the treasurer, together with the lead pastor of the church. It shall strive to promote effective working relations and communication in the church, prepare for Council meetings, and do other business that does not need full Council participation. The committee shall have no legislative power, but shall function in an advisory capacity to Council, unless specific responsibilities shall have been assigned to it by Council or the church.

Section 3. Nominating Committee

The Nominating Committee shall consist of the Council vice-chairman, who shall serve as its chairman, two (2) members of the congregation elected in the previous election, and the lead pastor as an ex-officio member. If an elected member cannot serve, then he shall be replaced by one of two (2) alternate members, who were elected at the previous election. The Nominating Committee shall function as shown in Bylaws Article VI, Section 3.

Section 4. Staff Relations Committee

- a) The purpose of the Staff Relations Committee is to facilitate cooperation between and among the pastoral and support staff and their interactions with the congregation.

- b) The Staff Relations Committee shall consist of two members appointed from Council and may include up to 2 members of the congregation appointed by Council. The Council chairman shall be an ex-officio member. In addition at the time of his annual review, the pastor or staff member may invite a church member to serve as his advocate. The Staff Relations Committee shall meet at least quarterly.

ARTICLE VI

Organizational Operation

Section 1. Operation of committees and other official functions

Administrative committees, special committees, and task forces shall meet not less than at a frequency approved by Council. Special meetings of Council, the Executive Committee, administrative committees, and task forces shall be held as required and may be called by their respective chairmen. All committees may develop sub-committees as needed to achieve their mission and may staff them from the congregation, unless otherwise determined by Council.

Section 2. Organization Meetings

Meetings and activities of the organizations of the church shall be planned and conducted under the general supervision of Council.

Section 3. Election for the annual meeting

- a. The Nominating Committee shall publish and make available to the congregation a proposed ballot at least fourteen days prior to the annual meeting of the congregation.
- b. The ballot shall contain at least one name for each position for which a vacancy exists. In addition, the ballot shall contain at least two names of people to fill two vacancies as members of the Nominating Committee and at least two names of people to fill vacancies as Alternates to the Nominating Committee. All individuals listed must be congregation members and must have agreed to have their names placed in nomination. If the Nominating Committee is unable to secure nominee(s) for one or more positions, the ballot will be provided with that so stated.
- c. Presenting a completed ballot to the annual meeting of the congregation shall constitute completion of the Nominating Committee's assignment, unless given specific responsibilities at an annual meeting. After the annual meeting, the newly elected members of the Nominating Committee shall function as requested.
- d. Provision shall be made on the ballot for nominations from the floor, but such nominations shall be limited to congregation members who have given prior agreement to those nominations.
- e. Election shall be by written ballot. If the ballot has more names than available seats, individuals receiving the highest number of votes shall be elected. If the number of names on the ballot is fewer than or equal to the number of seats available, then all candidates receiving votes shall be elected.

Section 4. Communication to the congregation

Methods of communication for annual meetings, business meetings, and similar events will include church announcements and some combination of notice in church bulletin, insertion in family mail slots, direct mail, and email announcements where we have valid addresses.

Section 5. Term of office

Council members shall take office at the first meeting in January following their election and shall serve until the next Council members take office the following year.

ARTICLE VII

General Provisions

Section 1. Quorum

- a) Twenty percent of the church membership, but never less than ten members, shall constitute a quorum for a business meeting.

Updated September 4, 2009

- b) The quorum for Council, committee, and task force meetings shall be a majority of their memberships, excluding ex-officio members.
- c) A quorum must be present in order for business to be legally transacted for any organization in the church.

Section 2. Rules of order

All business meetings of the church and of the boards, committees, and organizations of the church shall be conducted according to the most recent issue of the Covenant Community Church Rules of Order.

Section 3. Finance

The fiscal year shall run from January 1 through December 31 of the year.

Section 4. Indemnification

In the event of legal action, the church shall financially indemnify pastors, church officers, staff members, Council members, and other volunteers who have acted in good faith in fulfilling their duties.

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, provided that such amendments have been presented in writing to Council and to a preceding business meeting. A two-thirds vote of members present shall be required for adoption.

All biblical references are from the New International Version, 1973.