

Constitution of the Tabernacle Church of Norfolk

ARTICLE I. THE NAME AND PURPOSE OF THE CHURCH

Section A. Name. The name of this church shall be “Tabernacle Church of Norfolk.”

Section B. Purpose. The purpose of Tabernacle Church of Norfolk is to glorify God by: giving Him our undivided worship, reaching the world for Christ, adopting them into our church family, coaching them to spiritual maturity and empowering them for ministry.

ARTICLE II. STATEMENT OF BELIEFS

1. We believe in the Trinity: One God eternally existing in three persons – the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.

2. We believe in God the Father, creator of heaven and earth, Who by His word and for His glory, created everything both seen and unseen, Whose plans and purposes cannot be thwarted, Who is faithful to every promise, and Who works all things together for His good. Because of His unfathomable grace and love, He predestined His Church to be holy and blameless in accordance with His pleasure and will. We believe that the Father gave His only Son, Jesus Christ, for mankind’s redemption, that He continually concerns Himself mercifully in the affairs of man, hears and answers prayers, saves from sin and death all those who come to Him through faith in Jesus Christ and Who continually blesses His children with every spiritual blessing.

3. We believe in Jesus Christ, God the Son, as the redeemer of mankind and the only mediator between the Father and humanity. We believe that He is co-eternal with the Father and the Holy Spirit, yet begotten by the Father. We affirm His full deity as God and we affirm His full humanity in that though He is God, through the incarnation, He became a human being born of a virgin. We believe in the Son's perfection and that His shed blood and substitutionary death on the cross paid the redemptive price for our sins. We believe that He was buried, rose bodily and ascended into heaven at the right hand of the Father, where He currently intercedes for all believers. We eagerly wait for that day when He will return in bodily form as King and Judge to claim His own and to vindicate Himself by setting all things in order.

4. We believe in God the Holy Spirit, equal in deity to the Father and the Son, co-eternal with Them and worthy of worship. He seals and indwells the believer at conversion, enabling him to grow into the likeness of Christ, filling the Christian with power to live a godly life.

5. We believe that people are created by God in His image for the express purpose of glorifying and loving Him. However, because of man’s disobedience (sin), the entire human race is alienated from God and in need of reconciliation to Him.

6. We believe that a person’s reconciliation to God comes only by God’s grace and through faith. It was earned by Christ's death on the cross, which is totally sufficient to cover all sins. Those who confess Jesus Christ as Lord, repent of their sin and believe on His name, are spiritually born as children of God.

7. We believe that all Christians are members of the body of Christ, the one true Church universal. Spiritual unity is to be expressed among Christians by acceptance and love of one another across ethnic, cultural, socio-economic, national, generational, and denominational lines. The local church is a congregation of Christians who gather in a specific geographical location for the purpose of worship, prayer, instruction, encouragement, mutual accountability, and community with one another. In it, believers invest time, talents, energy, and resources. Through it, they are mutually edified, moving toward full maturity in Christ and are equipped to fulfill the Great Commission (the worldwide proclamation of the gospel).

8. We believe in eternal salvation for all who have been reconciled to God through His Son and in eternal punishment for all who reject His gift of salvation.

9. We believe that the Bible is inspired by the Holy Spirit, inerrant as originally given, and infallible as God's final authority for our faith and practice.

ARTICLE III. CHURCH MEMBERSHIP

Section A. Qualifications.

Qualifications for membership shall consist of a public profession of faith in Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior, a declaration of agreement with the Statement of Beliefs (Article II), an expressed willingness to abide by the provisions of this constitution, and a stated desire to formally ally themselves with the Tabernacle Church of Norfolk's family. Candidates for membership shall be committed to a life of continual Christian maturity and church involvement. Such involvement is to be characterized by the giving of time and energy in acts of service, praying regularly for the congregation and its ministries, and contributing financially to its work. A person must be eighteen years of age to qualify for voting membership. Those below eighteen years of age can be members but cannot vote nor hold elected office. At age eighteen, they must be accepted according to the stipulations below.

Section B. Acceptance.

Candidates for membership must complete a Membership Application Form. After receiving the application, the Senior Pastor, or his designee, and an Elder shall meet with the applicant to discuss the candidate's commitment to Christ and His Church. After the pastoral interview and upon the instruction of the Senior Pastor to the Elder Board Secretary, the applicants shall be added to the membership roll. New members must be presented publicly to the church congregation.

Section C. Termination of Membership.

Termination of membership is made effective by any of the following occurrences: A written request from the member indicating their desire to terminate membership, death of the member, a prolonged and intentional inactivity in the church body-life as determined by the Board of Elders (the member should be contacted to determine their intentions and circumstances), or disciplinary action of the Board of Elders as outlined in Article IV.

When members have been removed from the membership roll, the Elder Board Secretary shall notify the former member by mail and report the removal of the member to the Board of Elders.

Section D. Reinstatement to Membership.

Those whose church membership has been terminated and who desire reinstatement must request their intent in writing. Upon the acceptance and action of the Senior Pastor, their membership shall be reinstated. If termination was due to disciplinary action of the Board of Elders, reinstatement must be approved by the Board of Elders (Refer to Article IV).

ARTICLE IV. CHURCH DISCIPLINE

Discipline is necessary for the spiritual health and unity of the church and its people. Its purpose is to deal scripturally with sin and disunity, to restore fellowship and to thwart Satan's design to disrupt the unity of the Body. Church discipline shall be carried out by the Board of Elders in accordance with Scripture.

Section A. Personal Confrontation.

Members who are living in gross sin such as defined in I Corinthians 5:11 or who by their attitudes or actions foster a spirit of disunity in the church (Titus 3:9-11) shall be approached according to the pattern of Matthew 18:15-17, in a spirit of brotherly love and gentleness, with a goal to bring about repentance and reconciliation. In an effort to restore them spiritually, reproof and admonition will be given privately to those in the church who sin (Galatians 6:1; Matthew 18:15). If the matter is not resolved, a second private meeting should be initiated with the addition of a third party to be a witness to the confrontation (Matthew 18:16).

Section B. Discipline.

If private confrontation has occurred and the member is still not repentant, the issue is to be brought before the Board of Elders who will hear and judge the matter. If warranted, the Board of Elders will confront the offender in a manner of humility and boldness. If the Board of Elders determines that there have been sinful actions or attitudes, the Board will seek to gently restore the member by determining an appropriate course of action. If however, there is still no repentance or modified behavior, the Board of Elders, upon majority vote of those present, will forbid the member from participating or attending the ministry of the church, his name will be removed from the membership roll, and instructions will be given to the church membership not to have fellowship with him. The church will continue to encourage him to confess, repent, and forsake his sin (Matthew 18:17; I Corinthians 5:11; II Thessalonians 3:6, 14, 15). Those who are not church members but who regularly attend church functions and identify themselves with the church community will be disciplined in a similar manner except in the matter of being stricken from the membership roll, which does not apply to them.

Section C. Reinstatement & Restoration

Reinstatement to the membership and restoration to the church community will be allowed after the problems which caused the disciplinary action are resolved to the satisfaction of the Board of Elders. (II Corinthians 2:6-8; 7:9-10)

ARTICLE V. CHURCH GOVERNMENT

Section A. Officers

The Officers of the church consist of Elders, Deacons, Legal Trustees, and the Church Treasurer.

Section B. Elders.

The Elders are the spiritual and governmental leadership of the entire church. Their purpose is to be the spiritual shepherds as decisions makers and pacesetters, and they are to invest themselves fully in the primary task of proclaiming God's truth, praying and interceding on behalf of the people, discerning a Godly vision and direction, judging sinful actions inside the church family, administering church discipline, and guarding the church from error and deception. Their responsibilities also include the call, oversight, and dismissal of the Senior Pastor; ordination and licensure to ministry; being the primary church fiduciary; and oversight of the Deacons, Legal Trustees and the Church Treasurer. The Board of Elders shall also govern all ministries owned and/or operated by the church and shall determine the Senior Pastor's compensation. All associated By-Laws, Rules, Standard Operating Procedures, and other such documents, governing the operation of the church must be approved by the Board of Elders.

The Board of Elders shall consist of no more than twelve men and no less than six. It is to be comprised of Pastoral, Elected and Appointed Elders. Pastoral Elders are church Pastors who serve on the Board of Elders. There shall be no more than three pastors who serve as Elders. The Senior Pastor, by virtue of his office, shall serve as an Elder during tenure. Other Pastoral Elders may be appointed by the Senior Pastor and shall serve from the effective date of their appointment (as determined by the Senior Pastor) through December 31. Elected Elders are those Elders who are elected annually by the congregation and shall serve a term of two years commencing on January 1 and ending at midnight December 31 of the following year. There shall be a minimum of five elected Elders. Appointed Elders are those Elders who have been appointed to serve by the Pastoral and Elected Elders and shall serve from the effective date of their appointment (as determined by the Pastoral and Elected Elders) through December 31. The majority of the Board of Elders must be Elected Elders. There are no limits on the number of terms for Elders, however they will typically spend one year off the board following their term.

At the first board meeting of the calendar year, the Board of Elders shall elect a Chairman from the Elected Elders and appoint a Board Secretary. The Chairman, or his Elder designee, shall chair all meetings of the Board of Elders. He shall set the agenda, location and time of meetings, and shall provide each Elder with all materials necessary for meeting activity. He shall call meetings to order, entertain motions, table discussions, invite guests, supervise activities of the board, and adjourn the meetings. If the Chairman is absent from the board meeting, he must notify the Board Secretary regarding the selection of his chair-designee before the meeting commences. The Board Secretary shall keep minutes of all meetings of the church membership and Board of Elders. The Board Secretary shall sign all instruments that require his signature and shall perform such duties incident to the office as required by the Board of Elders including the safekeeping of all past meeting minutes. The Board Secretary shall preside over a meeting of the Board of Elders in which the Chairman or his appointed chair-designee cannot be present. When the Senior Pastor's performance is evaluated, no Pastoral Elders shall be present. All motions will be carried by a majority vote of Elders present.

Section C. Deacons

The word Deacons comes from a Greek word meaning servant (Acts 6:1-4; 1 Timothy 3:8). These servants shall perform their duties under the direction of the Elders and shall concern themselves primarily with the material needs of the church and its membership. They shall meet regularly for prayer, help prepare and serve the Lord's Table for communion, and work together to provide physical support for various ministries of the church as directed by the Board of Elders. There shall be a minimum of eight elected Deacons. The Board of Elders shall annually appoint a Deacon Chairman from the elected Deacons who shall be responsible for directing and planning the Deacon ministry. Additional deacons may be appointed by the Board of Elders subsequent to elections for the remainder of the current term if required.

Section D. Legal Trustees.

The Legal Trustees shall sign all deeds for the conveyance, transfer, mortgage, or dealings in real estate on order of the church membership. There shall be a total of four Legal Trustees.

Section E. Church Treasurer.

The Church Treasurer shall report directly to the Board of Elders and work with the Church Administrator (or other Pastoral staff member as deemed necessary by the Senior Pastor) in reviewing financial reports and policies. The treasurer shall make regular reports to the Board of Elders and the church membership regarding church finances and financial policies. The Church Treasurer shall, on behalf of the Board of Elders, arrange annual financial reviews of church accounts and report such findings to the Board of Elders and subsequently to the church membership. The Church Treasurer shall sign all instruments that require a signature and shall perform such duties incident to the office as directed by the Board of Elders.

Section F. Officer Qualifications.

Officers shall be a member of the Tabernacle Church of Norfolk in whom the spiritual gifts of leadership rest. They shall be fully and enthusiastically supportive of the church's ministry, people, and leadership. In view of the heavy responsibility incumbent upon Officers as spiritual role models, they shall conform to biblical standards of character and conduct and not use their freedoms to offend weaker brothers and sisters. They shall diligently pursue spiritual maturity and must be affirmed as those in whom the Fruits of the Spirit are evident (Gal. 5:22-23) and whose character is consistent with the leadership qualifications as found in I Timothy 3:1-13 and Titus 1: 6-9, including an unequivocal commitment to fidelity in the covenant of marriage. They must also accept the biblical definition of marriage (Genesis 2:24, Matthew 19:5).

Section G. Officer Elections.

1. Nominating Committee.

A Nominating Committee for the election of church officers shall consist of the Senior Pastor (who is to serve as the committee chair), one Associate Pastor chosen by the Senior Pastor, two members elected by the church membership, and two Elders. All committee members, other than the Senior Pastor, shall be appointed approximately six months prior to the election. The committee shall place in nomination at least one name for each office to be filled, after having confirmed the nominee's willingness to serve and having examined the nominee's qualifications according to this constitution. Candidates are placed in nomination by a majority

vote of Committee Members present. The Nominating Committee shall submit its nominations to the membership at least two weeks before the membership meeting at which elections are to be held.

2. Nominations from Church Members.

Any church member may submit a candidate for office to the Nominating Committee. It must be submitted to the committee at least two weeks before the committee must submit the nominees to the membership (four weeks before the membership meeting at which elections are to be held). It is the prerogative of the Nominating Committee to decide whether the proposed candidate's name shall be considered as a nominee for office. If affirmed, the committee shall confirm the proposed candidate's willingness to serve and examine the candidate's qualifications.

3. Officer Elections.

The Nominating Committee shall present its nominations at the membership meeting in which the annual election of officers takes place. No nominations may be made from the floor. Election to office is by majority vote of those members present at the church membership meeting at which the election takes place. An Elder, Deacon and Trustee will supervise and validate the vote count.

4. Term of Office

All officers, other than the Senior Pastor, Elected Elders, and Legal Trustees shall serve for a term of one year starting on January 1 after their election and continuing through December 31. Elected Elders will serve a two year term with approximately half being elected each year. Elected Elders will typically spend one year off the board following their term, except in circumstances that specifically demand their continuity. Legal Trustees shall be elected to a perpetual term.

5. Dismissal of an Officer.

The Board of Elders may dismiss any officer from his office if the Board of Elders finds that the officer no longer meets the qualifications for an officer as defined in this constitution. Any officer may be removed by majority vote of the Elders present. The Board of Elders may appoint officers until the next election, if an elected office has been vacated, unless it violates a majority of the Elder Board being elected Elders, in which case a special election would be required.

Section H. Pastoral, Ministry, Administrative and Support Staff

1. Qualifications

The Pastoral and Ministry staff shall be members of the Tabernacle Church of Norfolk and shall meet all the qualifications prescribed for church officers. They shall be recognized as ones on whom particular spiritual gifts rest which enable them to effectively carry out their designated ministry responsibilities.

2. The Senior Pastor.

The Senior Pastor is the primary spiritual leader of the church and all its ministries. He shall lead the church Pastoral and Ministry staff. He shall preside over meetings of the membership. He shall be the church's primary shepherd as a visionary, teacher, and counselor. He shall develop church ministry leaders and be responsible for all church staff activities. The Senior Pastor is directly accountable to the Elders in fulfilling his responsibilities, but at the same time he is the church's leader. He must not try to dominate the Board of Elders, while at the same time; he must not be dominated by them. He is to be the church's chief servant. The Senior Pastor and the Elders must work within and maintain this balance of mutual and reciprocal authority and responsibility at all times, recognizing that Jesus Christ is the true Head of the Church and both must submit to His authority through the Word and by the leading of the Holy Spirit.

3. The Hiring of Pastoral, Ministry, Administrative and Support Staff.

When the Senior Pastor's office is vacated, the Board of Elders shall appoint a Pastor Search Committee from among the membership who will carefully and prayerfully seek and examine prospective candidates. In view of Tabernacle Church of Norfolk's history, fellowship and covenant relationship with consortium churches, the Pastor Search Committee shall confer with consortium pastors and their Board of Elders and shall consider their counsel. The Pastor Search Committee shall submit to the Board of Elders the name or names of all such men who, in their judgment, have the proper qualifications and gifts to fulfill the office of Senior Pastor. The pastor shall be installed by a 2/3 majority vote of the entire Board of Elders and a 2/3 majority vote of the members present at the membership meeting at which the vote takes place.

Associate Pastor Candidates shall be nominated by the Senior Pastor. He shall submit his candidates to the Board of Elders for their approval. Approval is given by a 2/3 majority vote of Elders present at the meeting in which the vote is taken.

Other Pastoral, Ministry, Administrative and Support staff positions shall be approved by the Board of Elders. The Senior Pastor shall interview all Pastoral and Ministry Staff, and the Board of Elders, or their designee, shall interview all Administrative and Support Staff. The Board of Elders shall hire all such workers.

4. Termination

The Senior Pastor may resign from the church by giving written notice to the Board of Elders at least 60 days in advance. He may be dismissed from his position by a 2/3 majority vote of the entire Board of Elders. When the office of Senior Pastor is vacant, the remaining Elders shall have direct oversight of all the ministry and operational affairs of the church, including staff management, church gatherings and all other leadership and administrative matters. At their discretion, the Elders may appoint an Interim Pastor by a 2/3 majority vote of the entire board. The Interim Pastor shall have authority and responsibility as determined by the Board of Elders.

All other Pastoral, Ministry, Administrative and Support staff may resign from the church by giving due notice to the Board of Elders at least 30 days in advance. They may be dismissed from their position at the discretion of the Board of Elders in consultation with the Senior Pastor.

Section I. Church Membership.

1. Responsibilities.

Members of the church are to work together in unity seeking each other's best interest and serving one another in seeking to reach maturity in Christ. Members give of their time, talents, and resources for the advancement of the church's ministry and they do so with an attitude exemplified by love.

Governmental responsibilities include the most significant decisions regarding the church. The most important of these is the nomination and election of the church officers. The Elders are elected to conduct duties, as outlined in Section B of Article V, on behalf of the church and its membership. It is therefore equally important for the membership to keep the Elders apprised of their concerns regarding the church and its ministries.

Additionally the members are responsible for approval of motions for the conveyance, transfer, mortgage, or any dealings in real estate. Said motions must come approved by the Tabernacle Church Board of Elders.

All motions are affirmed by a majority vote of those members present at a membership meeting.

2. Meetings.

Membership meetings shall be held at least semi-annually and may be called at other times by the Senior Pastor or by a majority vote of the Board of Elders. The purpose of membership meetings is to provide updates on the church and its ministries, and address congregation concerns. Congregational concerns should be addressed to the Board of Elders, so they can be placed on the agenda for the meeting and adequately addressed. The annual meeting for the election of officers shall be held between November 1 and December 15. All meetings shall be publicly announced for two consecutive Sundays before the meetings occur and all members shall be notified electronically and/or by mail at least two weeks prior. Normally, the Senior Pastor shall preside at all membership meetings and in his absence the Chairman of the Elder Board shall preside. However, the Board of Elders may, at its discretion by a 2/3 majority vote, appoint any Elder to preside at a particular membership meeting.

ARTICLE VI. AMENDMENTS

Section A. Amendments.

Amendments to this constitution can be made according to the following provisions:

1. Amendment proposals can be made by any member of the church and must be submitted in writing to the Board of Elders.
2. The Board of Elders, after receiving the amendment proposal and after verifying that the proposal has been submitted by a member of the church, shall examine the request and either ratify or reject the proposed amendment by majority vote.
3. All amendments ratified by the Board of Elders shall then be forwarded in writing to the membership for their consideration. The proposal shall be discussed at the following membership meeting.

4. At the subsequent membership meeting, following discussion, the membership shall vote on the amendment. A 2/3 majority vote of the members present is required for passage. If approved, the amendment shall be effective immediately unless otherwise stipulated.

5. No tenet contained in the Statement of Beliefs (Article II) may be deleted.

ARTICLE VII. DISSOLUTION

Upon the dissolution of Tabernacle Church of Norfolk and after all debts have been satisfied, any residual equity shall be equally distributed between Consortium Covenant churches and Norfolk Christian School.

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