

**THE CONSTITUTION
OF
BETHLEHEM CHRISTIAN CHURCH
ALTAMAHAW, NC
(Revised ? 2017)**

[A Constitution Revision Committee was formed by the congregation to act on the advice of the CCCC conference to divide our current combined Constitution and Bylaws document into two separate documents. This requires extensive editing to ensure each document is clear and proper, and that it reflects the actual operation of this church and the will of the congregation. The committee is also tasked with incorporating a membership agreement into these documents and adding a dissolution clause.

*This is a draft presentation of the Constitution document. We are still working on the Bylaws document, but wanted to give the congregation a chance to review this document so that any **critical objections** can be discussed now before we expend too much time on the Bylaws. We are not proposing ratification of this document yet. That will only occur after the Bylaws document is finished and both documents are presented together for congregational approval.*

Please be aware that if you cannot find something in this document that is in the current version of the Constitution and Bylaws, it has not been discarded. It has only been moved to the separate Bylaws document and you will find it there when it is finished at a later date.

If you have concerns or comments about this document, please submit it in writing to the Constitution Revision Committee (Jacky Lee, Cheryl Madren, Jack Madren, Jay Madren and Nathan Simpson) or by emailing it to crc@bethlehemchristian.org.]

ARTICLE ONE - NAME

The name of this church shall be Bethlehem Christian Church.

Bethlehem Christian Church maintains its principle office at the location and address specified in the Bylaws. The congregation of Bethlehem Christian Church shall have full power and authority to change the location of the principal office from one location to another. The membership shall be notified in writing at least sixty (60) days in advance of a change of address. Such notices shall include the new address, effective date, and telephone number.

Bethlehem Christian Church was incorporated in the State of North Carolina as a non-profit corporation, organized and recognized on October 14, 1991. Bethlehem Christian Church is a tax-exempt organization under section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code. Bethlehem Christian Church shall not be operated for profit, and no profit or any portion thereof, remainder or residue from dues, donations or income from operations shall inure

to the benefit of members or officers. Directors, Trustees and Officers shall serve without compensation except that they be allowed and paid reasonable reimbursement for actual or IRS allowable reimbursement of expenses incurred in the performance of their regular duties as specified in this Constitution and Bylaws.

ARTICLE TWO - DOCTRINE

1. FAITH. This congregation recognizes the Bible as the sufficient rule of faith and practice, and holds that living in accordance with the teachings of Jesus Christ is the true test of fellowship. Members shall have the undisturbed right to follow the Word of God according to the dictates of their own conscience, under the enlightenment of the Holy Spirit. The following STATEMENT OF FAITH is not a test but an expression of the spirit in which the congregation interprets the Word of God.

We believe the Bible, consisting of the Old and New Testaments, to be the only inspired, inerrant, infallible, authoritative Word of God written.

We believe that there is one God, eternally existent in three persons: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

We believe in the deity of Christ, in His virgin birth, in His sinless life, in His miracles, in His vicarious and atoning death through His shed blood, in His bodily resurrection, in His ascension to the right hand of the Father, and in His personal return in power and glory.

We believe regeneration by the Holy Spirit is absolutely essential for the salvation of lost and sinful man.

We believe in the present ministry of the Holy Spirit by Whose indwelling power and fullness the Christian is enabled to live a godly life in this present evil world.

We believe in the resurrection of both the saved and the lost, they that are saved unto the resurrection of life and they that are lost unto the resurrection of damnation.

We believe in the spiritual unity of all believers in Christ.

2. CARDINAL PRINCIPLES.

- The Bible is our only rule of faith and practice.
- The Lord Jesus Christ is the only head of the church and our only Savior.
- Christian character is a sufficient test of fellowship and of church membership.
- Christian is a sufficient name for Christ's followers.

- Individual interpretation of the Scriptures is the right and privilege of all Christians.
- All the followers of Christ should be united as one, even as Christ wished and expressed in prayer.

ARTICLE THREE – MISSION, PURPOSE & VISION

1. MISSION. The mission of this congregation shall be to:

Love God, love others, and make disciples as we go.

2. PURPOSE. The purpose of this congregation shall be to glorify God by:

- Sharing in the worship of God and administering the Sacraments of the church (Worship).
- Making God's will dominant in the lives of this congregation by teaching one another to obey all that Christ commanded and living according to the example as set forth in His life, teachings, death, and resurrection (Formation).
- Being a source of spiritual guidance to all who seek it and exercising Christian care over its members. Binding together the followers of Jesus Christ in Christian fellowship (Fellowship).
- Winning people to Christ and serving as a channel of expression for its membership in extending the kingdom of God throughout the world (Outreach).

To accomplish this purpose, the congregation shall maintain public worship and Christian instruction to serve as a vehicle through which its members might become more effective witnesses for Christ. Further, the congregation shall seek cooperation of other like-minded churches and shall join in the common goal of promoting the cause of the kingdom of God.

3. VISION. Based on our statement of faith, Bethlehem Christian Church has established and accepted the following vision statement:

To be a congregation whose doctrine is based solely on the Bible and reaches out to the lost that they might know the joys of salvation and fellowship with God the Father, Christ, and the Holy Spirit, to encourage personal involvement of all its members in missions - both home and abroad, to demonstrate Christian love in interaction with fellow believers, new members, and visitors, to support Christian growth of the youth within the congregation, and to actively function day-to-day in a manner which shows to everyone that Christ lives within us.

ARTICLE FOUR - POLITY

The congregation acknowledges Jesus Christ as its Head and finds in the Bible, as properly interpreted with the help of the Holy Spirit through reason, faith, and conscience, its guidance in matters of faith and discipline.

Bethlehem Christian Church may elect to be affiliated with other churches as provided for in the Bylaws.

The government of this congregation shall be vested in its members, who exercise the right of control in all its affairs when the congregation acts prayerfully together.

ARTICLE FIVE – COVENANT

We are united in striving to know the will of God as taught in the Bible and to walk in the ways of the Lord. We hold it to be the mission of the Church of Christ to proclaim the gospel to all mankind, exalting the worship of the one true God and laboring for the progress of knowledge, the promotion of justice, the reign of peace, and the realization of human brotherhood. Depending, as did our fathers, upon the continued guidance of the Holy Spirit to lead us into all truth, we work and pray for the transformation of the world into the kingdom of God, and we look with faith for the triumph of righteousness and the life everlasting.

ARTICLE SIX – MEMBERSHIP

1. Membership in this church shall be open to any person who has made public confession that Jesus Christ is Lord and Savior, that the Bible is God's Holy Word, and has been baptized.
2. A member shall adhere to the membership agreement contained in the Bylaws.

ARTICLE SEVEN - SERVICES AND MEETINGS

1. WORSHIP.
 - a. Services of worship shall be held at given hours each Sunday, unless the Board of Deacons determines that conditions are unfavorable for attendance.
 - b. The Sacraments. This congregation recognizes as Sacraments the two instituted by Jesus Christ.
 - 1) BAPTISM. The Sacrament of Baptism is the outward symbol of an existing faith. For those who profess faith in Jesus Christ it is a sign of cleansing from sin and spiritual rebirth into a new life in

fellowship with Christ. The mode of baptism may be chosen by the candidate - sprinkling, immersion, or pouring.

- 2) THE LORD'S SUPPER. The Sacrament of the Lord's Supper commemorates the sacrifice by Christ of His body and blood as atonement for sin. It is observed by His command until He returns and is to be entered into by participants only after prayerful self-examination. The elements used are chosen by the congregation.
- c. Child Dedication. This is the church's seal to the act of consecration in which Christian parents have dedicated their child to God and by which the congregation accepts its duty of spiritual oversight of the child.
- d. Ordination is the authorization of someone to take on the office of pastor or deacon. Deacons and members of the pastoral staff shall be ordained prior to the unsupervised performance of their duties.
- e. Other services for worship, inspiration, prayer, and study may be held as determined by the congregation.

2. CONGREGATIONAL MEETINGS.

- a. Regularly scheduled meetings to conduct the business of this congregation shall be held at times announced by the church.
- b. Called meetings may be scheduled by the Pastor, Board of Deacons, Board of Trustees, Church Council, or by written request to the Church Clerk from five voting members of the congregation. The purpose of the meeting must be clearly defined. The congregation must be notified of the date, time and purpose of any called meeting at least two weeks in advance of the meeting date.
- c. Urgent meetings about matters for the good of the congregation may be considered without prior notice. The validity of the urgency shall be determined at the time of the meeting.

ARTICLE EIGHT - PROCEDURES

All congregational and board meetings shall follow parliamentary procedures as prescribed in *Robert's Rules of Order*, with modifications as listed below.

1. QUORUM. A quorum of at least ten percent (10%) of the voting members shall be required to conduct business at regular or called meetings. Urgent meetings require a quorum of more than fifty percent (50%) of the voting members to conduct business.
2. VOTING MEMBERS. A voting member shall be a member sixteen (16) years of age or older who attends Sunday morning worship services at least once a quarter unless prohibited from doing so due to military, educational or professional obligations or

health of self or family. Members who do not meet these qualifications are non-voting members.

3. VOTING.

- a. A member must be present to vote. There shall be no absentee ballots.
- b. All votes shall be open, except a ballot may be used in the case of the call or dismissal of a member of the ministry staff or when an expenditure of more than ten percent (10%) of the current annual budget is being considered. The Church Clerk shall keep ballots for three months following the meeting in which they were used.
- c. A majority vote shall be decisive, unless otherwise specified in this Constitution or Bylaws.
- d. An affirmative vote of at least two-thirds of the votes cast shall be required for any of the following actions:
 - 1) acquiring or disposing of real property
 - 2) incurring secured or unsecured debt
 - 3) entering into a long term lease
 - 4) calling a member of the ministry staff
 - 5) excluding a person from church membership
 - 6) amending this Constitution
 - 7) amending the Bylaws without the advance notice prescribed in the Bylaws for such amendments
 - 8) Incurring an unbudgeted expenditure exceeding ten percent (10%) of the current budget

4. OFFICIAL YEAR. All officers, boards and committees shall assume their duties at installation. The church fiscal year shall begin on January 1.

5. LANGUAGE. The language of this Constitution and Bylaws shall not limit any office, board, or committee to male members of the congregation.

6. BUDGET. Expenses not explicitly authorized by a congregational meeting shall be limited to those in the budget approved by the congregation. No officer, board, or committee may incur any expense which exceeds its budget without the approval of the congregation, except as described in the Church Council article of this Constitution.

ARTICLE NINE – PASTORAL STAFF

1. Any pastoral staff member shall be called for an indefinite time by the congregation. When a vacancy occurs in a pastoral staff position, and the congregation desires for the position to be filled, the Church Council or a special committee appointed for this purpose by the Council, after seeking the guidance of the Holy Spirit, shall obtain and

evaluate applicants, select one deemed worthy of consideration, introduce that candidate to the congregation, and call a congregational meeting to consider the candidate's election. At the first opportunity, the new staff member shall join the church if they have not already done so.

2. While the term of any pastoral staff member shall be indefinite, the congregation may request that member's resignation by a majority vote with the expectation that his services will be terminated within ninety days of said vote. Likewise, the staff member shall be expected to give the church ninety days' notice in the event of a desire to voluntarily leave the church. Should the staff member lose good standing due to personal conduct, an immediate resignation shall be required.

ARTICLE TEN - OFFICERS

All corporate officers shall be voting members of this church. Because of their essential roles in conducting meetings or other corporate business, the following positions are designated as officers of the corporation:

1. CHURCH CLERK. The duties of the Church Clerk shall include the following:
 - a. Keep an accurate record of all congregational meetings of the church. At a minimum, such record shall include information required in *Robert's Rules of Order* if the meeting audio is being clearly recorded. Otherwise full summaries of all reports and discussions are required.
 - b. Notify officers, members of boards and committees, and delegates of their election or appointment.
 - c. Give notice of all congregational meetings.
 - d. Maintain the membership roll to include dates of baptism, dates and methods of reception, and dates and methods of termination of membership. A list of members shall be available at all congregational meetings in order to verify that any vote shall be by eligible members of the congregation.
 - e. Request letters of transfer of membership.
 - f. Issue letters of termination of membership due to transfer, erasure or exclusion.
 - g. Present and distribute an annual membership report at a regular congregational meeting.
 - h. Serve as secretary of the Church Council in the absence of the Assistant Church Clerk.
 - i. Serve as secretary of the Corporation.
 - j. Perform other duties as requested by the Church Council or congregation.

2. ASSISTANT CHURCH CLERK. The duties of the Assistant Church Clerk shall include the following:
 - a. Serve as secretary of the Church Council (non-voting).
 - b. Assist the Church Clerk as needed.
 - c. Function in place of the Church Clerk when necessary.
3. CHURCH TREASURER AND CO-TREASURER. The shared duties of the Church Treasurer and Co-Treasurer shall include the following:
 - a. Receive all monies for the congregation, with the exception of those designated for funds with a separate treasurer. Give receipt of these monies including acknowledgement of contributions given in memory or honor of someone as appropriate. Maintain an accurate, up-to-date record of all income and issue reports concerning collections as requested.
 - b. Deposit non-budgeted funds for any church group into the same depository, maintain an accounting of these funds, and make payments from these funds as directed by each fund administrator.
 - c. Deposit funds received in such depository as the Board of Trustees shall order.
 - d. Have custody of all documents relating to intangible church property, with the exception of those that have a separate treasurer, as the Board of Trustees shall order.
 - e. Make payments of financial obligations as directed by the congregation or by the Church Council acting for the congregation. Make information available to individuals, boards, and committees about the status of the funds which relate to them. If any budget limit is exceeded, the Treasurer shall ensure that the Church Council is notified as soon as possible so that the Council can determine what action is needed to address the excess.
 - f. Present and distribute a financial statement at each regular congregational meeting.
4. MODERATOR. The Moderator shall preside over all congregational meetings of the church and shall make temporary committee appointments relative to situations not resolved on the floor during congregational meetings. The Moderator shall be a non-voting member of all boards and committees and may attend their meetings at his discretion.
5. ASSISTANT MODERATOR. The Assistant Moderator shall assist the Moderator as needed and function in place of the Moderator when necessary.
6. PARLIAMENTARIAN. It shall be the duty of the Parliamentarian to rule on questions of parliamentary procedure at congregational meetings, according to *Robert's Rules of Order*. The Parliamentarian shall also inform the congregation if any motion, before a vote is taken, is a change or addition to this Constitution or Bylaws.

7. ASSISTANT PARLIAMENTARIAN. The Assistant Parliamentarian shall assist the Parliamentarian as needed and function in place of the Parliamentarian when necessary.
8. CORPORATE PRESIDENT. The Corporate President shall be the chairman of the Board of Trustees. Subject to the required congregational approval specified elsewhere in this Constitution, this corporate officer is empowered to implement the congregation's decision for the corporation on real property transactions.
9. OTHER OFFICERS. Other officers may be elected or appointed as the congregation desires.

ARTICLE ELEVEN – CHURCH COUNCIL

Voting members of the Church Council shall be the chairman of the Board of Deacons as council chairman, one representative from each of the other boards, the Church Clerk, the Church Treasurer, one member from the Women's Fellowship(s), one member from the Men's Fellowship(s), and one member from the Youth Fellowship.

Non-voting members of the Church Council shall be the Moderator, all pastoral staff, and the Assistant Church Clerk who shall serve as council secretary.

Members of the council must be voting members of the church. In the absence of the chairman of the Board of Deacons, the Moderator shall serve as chairman of the council.

It shall be the duty of the Church Council to visualize the entire task of the congregation, to provide guidance on the general direction of the church's programs, and to act for the congregation on trivial matters. The Council may also act for the congregation in urgent matters when the Council believes that there would likely be a broad consensus were the congregation to decide the issue directly. This authority also includes spending money to:

- replace or repair existing equipment and facilities
- approve, no more frequently than once per year per budget item, requests from officers, boards, or committees to exceed their budgets
- take other action that the Council deems appropriate

with limits on such spending authority as stated in the Bylaws. Any non-trivial cases in which the Council acts for the congregation shall be reported at the next regular congregational meeting.

It shall be the duty of the Church Council to make nominations for all officers, boards, and committees, except those that are appointed by the Moderator during congregational meetings, and to present this slate to the congregation for adoption. The Council shall have the power to fill all vacancies occurring in these positions between elections.

It shall be the duty of the Church Council to hire and manage all non-ministry staff. The Church Council shall create and maintain written job descriptions for all staff, both ministry and non-ministry.

The Church Council shall be the Board of Directors of Bethlehem Christian Church, Inc.

ARTICLE TWELVE - BOARDS

All board members, except for the Board of Stewardship, must be voting members of this church. The number of members and term definitions and limits for each Board are stated in the Bylaws.

1. BOARD OF DEACONS. It shall be the duty of the Board of Deacons to cooperate with the Pastor in ministering to the spiritual interests of the congregation and community, to assist in the preparation and administration of the Sacraments, to care for the sick and the sorrowing of the congregation, and to provide assistance to members of the community as the Board of Deacons deems appropriate.
2. BOARD OF TRUSTEES. It shall be the duty of the Board of Trustees to oversee the financial affairs of the church and the care of church property, except as limited elsewhere in this Constitution and Bylaws.
3. BOARD OF CHRISTIAN EDUCATION. It shall be the duty of the Board of Christian Education to supervise and direct the educational work of the congregation. It shall create a system of Christian education covering all aspects of Biblical Christian life. It shall be the duty of this board to secure instructors for all educational activities. Adult classes shall have the option of recommending their own instructors.
4. BOARD OF OUTREACH. It shall be the duty of the Board of Outreach to supervise and direct the local outreach ministry of the congregation. The responsibilities of the Board of Outreach shall include the following:
 - a. Plan and coordinate outreach to unsaved people in the community of the church and the various communities represented by the church members.
 - b. Ensure that visitors and newcomers at church services and events are greeted and provided with information and services they need.
 - c. Make the church's voice heard by defending Biblical principles in public.
5. BOARD OF STEWARDSHIP. It shall be the duty of the Board of Stewardship to encourage Christian service, tithing, and the discovery and use of each church member's spiritual gifts. This board shall also plan and coordinate annual events to raise funds for purposes designated by the congregation. This board's officers and Church Council representative must be voting members of this church.

ARTICLE THIRTEEN – AMENDMENTS

Amendments to this Constitution may be made at any congregational meeting by a two-thirds affirmative vote of the congregation. The exact text of the proposed amendment shall be made available to the congregation at least two weeks prior to the meeting at which it is to be considered. The congregation shall also be notified of the intent to propose the amendment at each Sunday morning worship service beginning two weeks prior to the date of the meeting.

ARTICLE FOURTEEN – DISSOLUTION

Upon the dissolution of Bethlehem Christian Church, Inc., any assets which do not have their own dissolution instructions shall be distributed for one or more exempt purposes within the meaning of section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code, or corresponding section of any future Federal tax code. These purposes shall be restricted to those that advance the principles of our doctrine as stated in this Constitution.