

**Hope Baptist Church, Of Mankato, Minnesota
Constitution [2017]**

Constitution

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Preamble

Certain believers who had been gathering as a mission congregation in Mankato, Minnesota, met in 1983 to organize formally as a church. In order to more effectively worship Almighty God and propagate the Gospel of Jesus Christ, they adopted rules and principles that, as revised from time to time, are as follows:

Article 1. Name

The name of this church is **Hope Baptist Church**, of Mankato, Minnesota, also referred to in this Constitution as the “church.”

Article 2. Purpose

The purpose of this church is to glorify God by pursuing Him in worship and proclaiming Him in evangelism.

Article 3. Membership

3.1. Requirements for Membership

Interested persons may apply to the church for membership. During the application process, an elder will counsel the candidate concerning the gospel, the Statement of Faith, the Membership Covenant and this Constitution. The elders will determine each person’s qualification for membership. In making this determination, the elders may rely on the candidate’s profession of faith or other appropriate evidence. Individuals will demonstrate their acceptance of the church’s “faith and practice” by signing the Statement of Faith and the Membership Covenant.

3.2. Admission into Membership

Upon the elders’ recommendation, and vote of the members at any duly convened members meeting, the church shall admit candidates into its membership.

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3.3. Duties and Privileges of Membership

The Membership Covenant describes the basic activities of the healthy Christian life. Since these are none other than the demands of the Scriptures, they are also the duties of regular church membership. By subscribing to the Membership Covenant, one becomes a member in good standing and agrees to participate in and contribute to the church's life and ministry.

Foremost among the privileges of membership is the opportunity for each member to receive the covenant care of the pastors and members of the church. Each member commits to extend brotherly love, affectionate care, and genuine forgiveness toward other members. Individual members will also wisely and compassionately admonish or exhort other members as led by the Holy Spirit.

A member has the privilege and responsibility to attend church meetings. Only a member in good standing may vote on decisions regarding membership status, church budget, or other matters as may come before the church. Only a member in good standing may be a candidate in the officer selection process, or serve in the regular ministries of this church.

The church is organized as Hope Baptist Church of Mankato, Minnesota, to operate exclusively as a nonprofit corporation for religious purposes. All church members in good standing are admitted to membership in the church corporation. Members of the church corporation are entitled to privileges and voting rights conferred by this constitution.

3.4. Termination of Membership

The Membership Covenant assumes that members will remain faithful, enjoy fruitfulness, and grow spiritually as part of the church. However, the church shall recognize termination of membership by death, by transfer, or by dismissal.

3.4.1. Transfer. Members may request transfer of membership for any reason. Requests shall be made to the elders for recommendation to the congregation.

3.4.2. Dismissal. The church may dismiss an individual from membership as an act of corrective discipline.

3.5. Discipline within Membership

Members will encourage one another to follow the biblical principles summarized in the Statement of Faith and the Membership Covenant. Straying from the church's beliefs set forth in the statement or failing to honor the covenant disrupts harmony in the fellowship and jeopardizes the welfare of the church. Church members should seek to correct, at an individual level, any breach of the church's covenant or doctrine, according to biblical principles. In encouraging positive discipline or in applying corrective discipline, members shall seek God's glory, the church's purity and harmony, and the individual's spiritual growth.

3.5.1. Corrective Discipline. When an individual persistently breaches the Statement of Faith or Membership Covenant and remains unrepentant after being counseled by one or more members,

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those concerned members should refer the matter to the elders. The elders will determine the appropriate course of action. Should formal proceedings be necessary, written notice that corrective discipline is being contemplated shall be given to the individual. All formal corrective discipline requires hearing by the elders, written notice to the church, and a two-thirds vote of the members at a duly called members meeting.

The scripture intends disciplinary actions to encourage repentance by producing a sense of sorrow and shame [2Cor. 2:7; 2Thes. 3:14]. Corrective discipline may take the form of verbal reproof [Mat. 18:17; 1Tim. 5:20], avoidance [Rom. 16:17; 1Cor. 5:9–11; 2Thes. 3:6,14], suspension from the Lord's Supper [1Cor. 5:11], or dismissal from church membership [Mat. 18:17; 1Cor. 5:13].

Should the elders believe that a request for membership transfer has been made to avoid corrective discipline, such request will not be honored. The elders will consider the transfer request after the disciplinary process has been properly concluded.

3.5.2. Loss of Good Standing. Individual church members and the elders must make every effort to resolve discipline issues at the lowest level possible. However, once an individual becomes the subject of corrective discipline at the level of congregational notification, he or she is no longer considered a member in good standing.

3.5.3. Restoration. One purpose of church discipline is to restore a fallen brother or sister who demonstrates repentance. Following the elders' recommendation, a two-thirds vote at a duly called members meeting will make this restoration effective. Upon restoration an individual regains membership in good standing.

4. Meetings

4.1. Worship Services

The church will meet for worship each Lord's Day, and throughout the week as the church shall determine.

4.2. Members Meetings

4.2.1. Order. The spirit of the Membership Covenant shall guide member conduct and Robert's Rules of Order shall guide parliamentary procedure at members meetings. For a meeting to be duly called, the elders will announce the date and time of the meeting at all worship services of the church for at least two weeks preceding such meeting. A simple majority of votes cast, unless otherwise specified in this constitution, will decide church business. Abstentions will not be considered as votes cast. No proxy or absentee votes will be accepted.

4.2.2. Moderator. At all members meetings of the church, a church member designated by the elders will act as moderator.

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4.2.3. Quorum. Those members present at a duly called members meeting shall constitute a quorum.

4.2.4. Regular Meetings. The church will hold a members meeting at least three times per year as scheduled by the elders. Members meetings will convene at some time apart from a worship service. Members may hear reports submitted to the church by the appropriate persons and conduct other business as may come before them. At any duly called members meeting the church may choose officers, elect corporate directors, or affirm appointments.

Each year the members shall meet to evaluate and approve a proposed church budget. Approval of the annual budget shall take place no more than three months before the start of the fiscal year.

4.2.5. Special Meetings. The elders may call special members meetings. Members, comprising at least 10 percent of the membership, may also initiate the call of a special meeting by submitting a written request to the elders. Upon receiving an appropriate written request, the elders shall call a meeting within one month.

4.2.6. Membership Actions. The elders may convene meetings anytime during the year to take membership actions, unless otherwise specified in this constitution.

5. Biblical Officers

Pastors [elders] and deacons are the only biblical church offices. The church shall choose as many biblical officers as are needed and qualified for office. The number of elders and deacons shall not be fixed. All officers must be members in good standing before assuming their responsibilities.

5.1. Elders

The elders consist of compensated staff pastors and other elders the church may choose. When the church chooses staff pastors, they will become elders. No more than half of the elders ordinarily may be compensated church staff members. Elders shall annually select from among themselves one who will serve as the chair.

5.1.1. Qualifications. Any elder or staff pastor must satisfy the qualifications given in scripture [1Tim. 3:1–7; Tit. 1:6–9]. Candidates will be men.

5.1.2. Selection. The church shall recognize as elder a man particularly gifted and called by God to the ministry of spiritual leadership and teaching in the church. The church shall recognize as preaching pastor a man particularly gifted and called by God to the compensated ministry of preaching and teaching [1 Tim. 5:17].

Before calling any man to serve as elder, the church will obtain assurances that he wholeheartedly agrees with and supports the Statement of Faith and the Membership Covenant. Also, the church must have an adequate opportunity to assess his teaching or preaching gifts.

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The church may call men from outside the congregation or recognize members to become staff pastors. Selection of any elder or staff pastor requires a two-thirds majority of all votes cast at a members meeting. The church will select elders according to the provisions of Article 7. The church shall receive elders as gifts of Christ to His church, and formally set them apart [Acts 13:2, Rom. 1:1] at a public service.

In the absence or incapacity of the preaching pastor, the elders shall assume the responsibility to accomplish his various duties or delegate them, as may be appropriate.

5.1.3. Duties and Responsibilities. Elders serve to care for spiritual needs in the church, as they exercise oversight, and lead the congregation by prayer, and careful, patient teaching of the Word, to equip the saints for ministry [Acts 6:1–6; Eph. 4:11-12; 1 Pet. 5:1–4].

The elders more particularly shall:

1. examine and instruct prospective members
2. oversee the process of church discipline
3. plan and conduct worship services
4. administer the ordinances of baptism and the Lord's Supper
5. help coordinate the work of the deacons and appointed church agents
6. oversee the administration of finances and present an itemized annual budget to the church
7. form ad hoc committees or establish uncompensated ministry positions to help fulfill their responsibilities
8. as necessary, propose compensated ministry staff positions and associated funding requirements, to the membership for approval
9. supervise and evaluate compensated staff members in accordance with church personnel policies and procedures
10. execute other duties not specifically enumerated in this constitution

5.1.4. Term. A non-staff elder shall serve for a three-year term, after which the church may have the opportunity to reaffirm its recognition. An elder's term of office may end by resignation, dismissal, or in the case of non-staff elders, end of term.

Members who raise some cause for an elder's dismissal must proceed with great care. Such action must conform to the instructions of scripture [Mat. 18:15–17; 1Tim. 5:17–21]. Before the church can dismiss an elder, the elders must first give him written notice and allow adequate time for his response. All parties involved should act in the spirit of the Membership Covenant and the provisions of Article 9. Any dismissal that appears unavoidable requires a special meeting called for that purpose and a two-thirds majority of all votes cast at such meeting.

5.1.5. Meetings. The elders shall hold regular and special meetings at such times and places as the elders shall designate.

5.2. Deacons

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5.2.1. Qualifications. The Bible describes the office of deacon [1Tim. 3:8–13; Acts 6:1–7]. A deacon possesses serving gifts to promote the unity of the church and the ministry of the Word.

5.2.2. Selection. The church may recognize members as deacons and select them according to the provisions of Article 7. The church will receive deacons as gifts of Christ to His church and formally affirm them at a public service.

5.2.3. Duties and Responsibilities. Deacons serve the congregation by

1. caring for needy members,
2. tending to the accommodations for public worship, and
3. assisting the pastor in the service of worship as needed.
4. In addition, they may oversee the maintenance of properties and administer benevolence funds.
5. Deacons may form ad hoc committees of members, or establish uncompensated administrative positions to help them fulfill their responsibilities in the church.

5.2.4. Term. Deacons shall serve for three-year terms, after which the church may have the opportunity to reaffirm its recognition. A deacon's term of office may end by resignation, dismissal, or end of term. Members who raise some cause for a deacon's dismissal must proceed with great care. Such action must conform to the instructions of scripture [Mat. 18:15–17]. Before the church can dismiss a deacon, the elders must first give him written notice and allow adequate time for his response. All parties involved should act in the spirit of the Membership Covenant and the provisions of Article 9. If dismissal appears unavoidable, it requires a special meeting called for that purpose and a two-thirds majority of all votes cast at such meeting.

6. Other Officers

As the church pursues its purpose of glorifying God by pursuing Him in worship and proclaiming Him in evangelism, it shall require administrative and ministry support. Administrative offices consist of clerk and treasurer who shall serve as the corporate secretary and corporate treasurer, respectively. Officers shall be selected at a duly called members meeting according to the provisions of Article 7. Officers shall be church members in good standing who display spiritual maturity and faithfulness.

6.1. Clerk

The clerk, who concurrently serves as the corporate secretary, shall:

1. preserve an accurate roll of the membership, present an annual statement of membership to the church and provide other membership reports as requested by the pastor, deacons, or elders;
2. record the minutes of all regular and special members meetings of the church;
3. ensure that copies of church organizational documents are available for all church members; and
4. maintain the corporate seal, stamping or affixing it to such documents as the board of directors or the law may prescribe.

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The clerk shall serve for a one-year term.

6.2. Treasurer

The treasurer, who concurrently serves as the corporate treasurer, shall:

1. ensure that the church properly holds all its funds and securities in appropriate institutions;
2. keep full and accurate accounts of receipts and disbursements in books belonging to the church;
3. implement adequate controls to guarantee that any officer, employee, or agent of the church handles its funds appropriately;
4. provide reports of church account balances, revenues, and expenses as requested by the pastor, deacons, or elders; and
5. provide an annual statement of accounts and balances to the church.

The treasurer shall serve for a one-year term, and under ordinary circumstances may not concurrently serve as a deacon, elder, or compensated church staff member.

6.3. Corporate Directors

A five-member board of director/trustees, three of which will serve as corporate officers, shall govern **Hope Baptist Church**, of Mankato, Minnesota, a religious corporation. The three officers of the corporation shall be: president, secretary, and treasurer. The chair of the elders shall serve as the corporate president. The duly elected church clerk shall serve as the corporate secretary, and the duly elected church treasurer as the corporate treasurer. The two other director/trustees shall serve for one-year terms.

The corporate board of directors shall represent the church in all legal matters concerning real property, except that they shall have no power to buy, sell, mortgage, lease, or convey any real property without a vote of the church members authorizing such action.

The corporate board of directors shall serve as the church trustees until the laws of the State of Minnesota pertaining to church property, and other pertinent church legal matters, are revised, amended, or repealed.

Article 7. Selection of Officers

The officer selection process enables the church to recognize individuals that God has given to help it function and bring Him glory. Church members should conduct themselves in the spirit of the Membership Covenant when formally recognizing and affirming officers. During the selection process members should seek the will of God in prayer both individually and corporately.

7.1. Process

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Throughout the year church members may give the elders recommendations for nominations. At least two weeks before a duly called members meeting, the elders shall present the church with nominations for officers.

Any member who objects to a nomination should inform the senior pastor or elders of this concern as far as possible in advance of the relevant members meeting.

To become an officer, a member must receive a two-thirds majority of all votes cast for a particular office at a duly called members meeting. Persons thus selected by the church will assume their respective offices immediately unless another date has been specifically designated.

Article 8. Indemnification

8.1. Obligatory Indemnification

The church shall indemnify and hold harmless its officers, employees and agents to the fullest extent allowed by law for acts or omissions as part of their duties to or for the church. Such indemnification must be based upon the elders finding that the particular officer, employee, or agent acted:

1. in good faith;
2. with the care an ordinarily prudent person in a similar position would exercise under similar circumstances;
3. in a manner the person reasonably believed to be in the best interest of the church; and
4. with no reasonable cause to believe his or her conduct was unlawful.

8.2. Discretionary Indemnification

At the discretion of the elders, the church may indemnify any officer, employee or agent to the fullest extent allowed by law for acts or omissions as part of their duties to or for the church. Such indemnification must be based upon the elders finding that the particular officer, employee or agent:

1. acted in good faith;
2. reasonably believed that his or her conduct was in the church's best interest; and
3. reasonably believed that his or her conduct was lawful.

A quorum of the elders may not be available for an indemnification finding because of the number of church officers or elders members seeking indemnification. In such cases the church may make, or appoint special legal counsel to make, the requisite finding.

Article 9. Dispute Resolution

Church members should seek to resolve conflict among themselves according to biblical principles. Consistent with its call to peacemaking, the church shall encourage the use of biblical principles and the avoidance of suits of law to resolve disputes [Mat. 18:15–17; 1Cor. 6].

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Article 10. Amendments

Throughout the year, church members may give the elders recommendations for amendments to church documents.

The elders will notify members in writing of any proposed changes, including the actual text of such proposed amendments. Following such notification, the church will discuss the proposals at a duly called members meeting, then vote on the proposals at a subsequent duly called members meeting. At least four weeks shall have elapsed between the time of written notice and the time of vote.

A two-thirds vote will make effective any proposed amendment(s) to the Statement of Faith or Membership Covenant. A majority vote will make effective any proposed amendment(s) to this Constitution.

The church clerk shall make the revised version of church documents available to all church members.