

Proposed Constitutional Amendments

Preamble

Current preamble

PREAMBLE

“The Evangelical Covenant Church has its roots in historical Christianity as it emerged in the Protestant Reformation, in the biblical instruction of the Lutheran State Church of Sweden, and in the great spiritual awakenings of the nineteenth century. These three influences have in large measure shaped its development and are to be borne in mind in seeking to understand its distinctive spirit.”

“The Covenant Church adheres to the affirmations of the Protestant Reformation regarding the Holy Scriptures, the Old and the New Testament, as the Word of God and the only perfect rule for faith, doctrine, and conduct. It has traditionally valued the historic confessions of the Christian Church, particularly the Apostles’ Creed, while at the same time it has emphasized the sovereignty of the Word over all creedal interpretations. It has especially cherished the pietistic restatement of the doctrine of justification by faith as basic to its dual task of evangelism and Christian nurture, the New Testament emphasis upon personal faith in Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord, the reality of a fellowship of believers which recognizes but transcends theological differences, and the belief in Baptism and the Lord’s Supper as divinely ordained sacraments of the church. In conformity with its principle of freedom, the denomination has given room for divergent views of baptism. Similarly, although the church has no gender restrictions for its leadership, the church recognizes that some believe that such restrictions should exist. In the face of such differences in belief, members are free to vote their consciences in such matters, and agree to accept and comply with outcomes determined by a majority vote of the congregation. This should never be understood as a compromise of personal conviction, but as a part of the essential give and take of living in harmony as a diverse people within the one Body of Christ our Lord. The principle of personal freedom, so highly esteemed by the Covenant, is to be distinguished from the individualism that disregards the centrality of the Word of God and mutual responsibilities and disciplines of the spiritual community.”

This document, which is in harmony with the above preamble, is the constitution and bylaws of the Harbor Covenant Church of Gig Harbor, Washington.

Proposed Change

Delete current preamble

Insert updated preamble from the current Model Constitutions from the ECC

PREAMBLE

~~“The Evangelical Covenant Church has its roots in historical Christianity as it emerged in the Protestant Reformation, in the biblical instruction of the Lutheran State Church of Sweden,~~

and in the great spiritual awakenings of the nineteenth century. These three influences have in large measure shaped its development and are to be borne in mind in seeking to understand its distinctive spirit.”

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This document, which is in harmony with the above preamble, is the constitution and bylaws of the Harbor Covenant Church of Gig Harbor, Washington.

PREAMBLE

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 creedal 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 Harbor Covenant Church of Gig Harbor, Washington.

(An historical statement from the Preamble of the Constitution and Bylaws of the Evangelical Covenant Church as adopted by the Evangelical Covenant Church in 2002.)

If adopted, the preamble would read:

PREAMBLE

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 creedal 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.

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Article I

Current Article

Name

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

Proposed changes:

delete the word "the"

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

If adopted the article would read:

The name of this church shall be Harbor Covenant Church.

Article II

Current Article

Affiliation

The church is a member of the Evangelical Covenant Church and its North Pacific Conference and is pledged to work in harmony with the Covenant and its decisions, and to support its program, policies, and institutions.

Proposed changes:

Update the name of the conference,
Minor grammatical change: replace “and” with “The church”

The church is a member of the Evangelical Covenant Church and its ~~North~~ Pacific Northwest Conference. ~~and~~ The church is pledged to work in harmony with the Covenant and its decisions, and to support its program, policies, and institutions.

If adopted the article would read:

The church is a member of the Evangelical Covenant Church and its Pacific Northwest Conference. The church is pledged to work in harmony with the Covenant and its decisions, and to support its program, policies, and institutions.

Article III

Confession of Faith

The church believes in the Holy Scriptures, the Old and the New Testament, as the Word of God and the only perfect rule for faith, doctrine, and conduct.

No proposed changes

Article IV

Current article

Purpose

Section 1. The purpose of the church shall be to unite Christians in fellowship for spiritual development, for the winning of persons to Christ, and for the propagation of the gospel of Jesus Christ through Christian education, home and world mission, and the institutions conducted by the Evangelical Covenant Church and its local regional conferences.

Section 2. In order to achieve this purpose, the church, in the unity of the Spirit, shall use the gifts that God has given it and the means of grace which God has placed at its disposal: The Word of God, Baptism, and Holy Communion.

Proposed change

Replace with current language from the Covenant church model constitution, with the addition of the words “locally and globally”

~~Section 1.—The purpose of the church shall be to unite Christians in fellowship for spiritual development, for the winning of persons to Christ, and for the propagation of the gospel of Jesus Christ through Christian education, home and world mission, and the institutions conducted by the Evangelical Covenant Church and its local regional~~

conferences.

~~Section 2. — In order to achieve this purpose, the church, in the unity of the Spirit, shall use the gifts that God has given it and the means of grace which God has placed at its disposal: The Word of God, Baptism, and Holy Communion.~~

We covenant to cultivate a community of worship committed to prayer, preaching and study of the Word of God, the celebration of the sacraments, and fellowship across gender, race, ethnicity, age, culture, and class. In so doing, we covenant to equip loving, giving, growing Christians to reach out **locally and globally** with the good news of Jesus Christ— evangelizing the lost, ministering to those in need, and seeking justice for the oppressed.

If approved the article would read:

We covenant to cultivate a community of worship committed to prayer, preaching and study of the Word of God, the celebration of the sacraments, and fellowship across gender, race, ethnicity, age, culture, and class. In so doing, we covenant to equip loving, giving, growing Christians to reach out locally and globally with the good news of Jesus Christ— evangelizing the lost, ministering to those in need, and seeking justice for the oppressed.

Article V

Membership

Membership in the church is granted upon application to those who give witness that, through faith in God's Son our Lord Jesus Christ, they have been born anew to a living hope, have been baptized according to the Holy Scriptures, desire to live a Christian life, and promise to support the total ministry of the church and to share its fellowship and obligations. The entire membership of the church constitutes the congregation.

No proposed changes

Article VI

Officers

The officers of the church shall be a chair, a vice chair, a secretary, and a financial officer.

No proposed changes

Article VII

Current article

Leadership Team

Ultimate earthly authority for the government of this church is vested in its membership acting at and through congregational meetings as delineated in the Bylaws. The administration and oversight of all business and spiritual affairs is delegated by the congregation to the Leadership Team as delineated in the Bylaws. The congregation may review, reverse, or modify any action or decision of the Leadership Team. Where the law requires action by “trustees,” the Leadership Team shall be known as the “Board of Trustees” and the members of it as “trustees.”

Proposed change:

Clarify: Change title from “Leadership Team” to “Governance”

Update: add “active” to membership and “business” to congregational meetings

Governance Leadership Team

Ultimate earthly authority for the government of this church is vested in its **active** membership acting at and through congregational **business** meetings as delineated in the Bylaws. The administration and oversight of all business and spiritual affairs is delegated by the congregation to the Leadership Team as delineated in the Bylaws. The congregation may review, reverse, or modify any action or decision of the Leadership Team. Where the law requires action by “trustees,” the Leadership Team shall be known as the “Board of Trustees” and the members of it as “trustees.”

If approved the article would read:

Governance

Ultimate earthly authority for the government of this church is vested in its active membership acting at and through congregational business meetings as delineated in the Bylaws. The administration and oversight of all business and spiritual affairs is delegated by the congregation to the Leadership Team as delineated in the Bylaws. The congregation may review, reverse, or modify any action or decision of the Leadership Team. Where the law requires action by “trustees,” the Leadership Team shall be known as the “Board of Trustees” and the members of it as “trustees.”

Article VIII

Current article

Business Meetings

Section 1. An annual meeting shall be held as near to the first of the fiscal year as feasible. At the annual meeting, written progress reports shall be submitted by the pastor(s), ministry staff, officers, and ministry teams. Election for offices shall be held. The church budget shall be submitted for action. Additional congregational meetings shall be held not less than semiannually. Items as required by the Constitution and By-laws shall be submitted for congregational action.

Section 2. Written notice of all congregational business meetings shall be published not less than two weeks prior to the meeting, and shall include the date, time and place of meeting, an agenda of business to be transacted, and the text of all motions to be acted upon.

Section 3. The rules of conduct for all congregational business meetings shall be as prescribed in the Bylaws.

Proposed changes:

Clarification: changed “first” to “beginning”; added ”business” to meeting

Minor grammatical change: “and” to “The”

Updated: revised to broaden to electronic postings; changed “ministry staff” to “pastoral staff” to match the Bylaws; deleted “pastor(s)” as redundant with pastoral staff, correct spelling of Bylaws.

Section 1. An annual **business** meeting shall be held as near to the **first beginning** of the fiscal year as feasible. At the annual **business** meeting, written progress reports shall be submitted by the **pastor(s), ministry pastoral** staff, officers, and ministry teams. Election for offices shall be held. The church budget shall be submitted for action. Additional congregational **business** meetings shall be held not less than semiannually. Items as required by the Constitution and **By-laws** shall be submitted for congregational action.

Section 2. ~~Written~~ Notice of all congregational business meetings shall be published not less than two weeks prior to the meeting, ~~and The~~ **notice** shall include the date, time and place of meeting, an agenda of business to be transacted, and the text of all motions to be acted upon.

Section 3. The rules of conduct for all congregational business meetings shall be as prescribed in the Bylaws.

If approved the article would read:

Section 1. An annual business meeting shall be held as near to the beginning of the fiscal year as feasible. At the annual business meeting, written progress reports shall be submitted by the pastoral staff, officers, and ministry teams. Election for offices shall be held. The church budget shall be submitted for action. Additional congregational business meetings shall be held not less than semiannually. Items as required by the Constitution and Bylaws shall be submitted for congregational action.

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Section 3. The rules of conduct for all congregational business meetings shall be as prescribed in the Bylaws.

Article IX

Current article

Property

In the event of schism within the church, from which we earnestly pray to God to spare us, the title of all church property, real or personal, shall remain with the group which abides by this constitution, as determined by the executive board of the North Pacific Conference. In the event of dissolution, the property and all assets of the church shall become and be the property of the Evangelical Covenant Church and the North Pacific Conference.

Proposed change:

Clarify property ownership (from the ECC Model Constitution)
update the name of the conference
change language around dissolution and disposition of property

Section 1. The congregation shall hold title to its own property and assets.

Section 2.

In the event of schism within the church, from which we earnestly pray to God to spare us, the title of all church property, real or personal, shall remain with the group which abides by this constitution, as determined by the executive board of the ~~North Pacific~~ Northwest Conference. ~~In the event of dissolution, the property and all assets of the church shall become and be the property of the Evangelical Covenant Church and the Pacific Conference.~~

Section 3.

In the event of dissolution, the active members of the congregation shall determine the disposition of the property and assets of the church by vote at a congregational business meeting. The guiding principle for disposition is to further ministry work in

the local region. If this disposition fails to occur, the property and all assets of the church shall become and be the property of the Pacific Northwest Conference and the Evangelical Covenant Church.

If approved the article would read:

Section 1. The congregation shall hold title to its own property and assets.

Section 2. In the event of schism within the church, from which we earnestly pray to God to spare us, the title of all church property, real or personal, and assets shall remain with the group which abides by this constitution, as determined by the executive board of the Pacific Northwest Conference.

Section 3. In the event of dissolution, the active members of the congregation shall determine the disposition of the property and assets of the church by vote at a congregational business meeting. The guiding principle for disposition is to further ministry work in the local region. If this disposition fails to occur, the property and all assets of the church shall become and be the property of the Pacific Northwest Conference and the Evangelical Covenant Church.

Article X

Current article

Amendments

Amendments to this constitution, not in conflict with Covenant principles and policies, may be adopted by a two-thirds (2/3) vote of those present and voting in an annual meeting of the church, providing that a quorum is present (as defined in the Bylaws), and providing the proposed amendment was presented and distributed in written form at the preceding annual meeting.

Proposed change:

clarification of voting members, add “active”;
remove “present and” to allow for absentee voting as permitted in the Bylaws
consistency of “business meetings” language throughout;
use of “published” to cover email.

Amendments to this constitution, not in conflict with Covenant principles and policies, may be adopted by a two-thirds (2/3) vote of those **active members present** ~~and~~ voting in an annual **business** meeting of the church, providing that a quorum is present (as defined in the Bylaws), and providing the proposed amendment was **published and** presented ~~and distributed~~ in written form at the preceding annual meeting.

If approved the article would read:

Amendments to this constitution, not in conflict with Covenant principles and policies, may be adopted by a two-thirds (2/3) vote of those active members voting in an annual business meeting of the church, providing that a quorum is present (as defined in the Bylaws), and providing the proposed amendment was published and presented in written form at the preceding annual meeting.