

**Christ Church, Evangelical Covenant
Constitution and By-laws**

PREAMBLE

(An Historical Statement adapted from the Preamble of the Constitution and Bylaws of the Evangelical Covenant Church.)

The Evangelical Covenant Church has its roots in historical Christianity as it emerged from the Protestant Reformation. Its distinctive spirit was also shaped by Swedish Lutheranism, and the great spiritual awakenings of the nineteenth century. Today it is a global and multi-ethnic church, committed to helping fulfill God's mission in the world.

The Evangelical Covenant Church adheres to the affirmations of the Reformation regarding the Holy Scriptures, the Old and New Testament, as the Word of God and the only perfect rule for faith, doctrine, and conduct. It has valued the historic confessions of the Christian Church, such as the Apostles' Creed, while at the same time it has emphasized the authority of the Word of God over all creeds and statements. It has cherished the evangelical doctrine of justification by faith and personal faith in Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord, as basic to the tasks of evangelism and Christian discipleship. Baptism and the Lord's Supper are recognized as God ordained sacraments of the church. The church has emphasized the unity and fellowship of believers that allows for diversity of interpretation in secondary issues. For example, the church recognizes the practice of both believer baptism and the baptism of infants of believing parents, refusing to divide the church because of differences that do not affect the central teachings of the faith.

This document, which is in harmony with the above preamble, is the Constitution and Bylaws of Christ Church, Evangelical Covenant, East Greenwich, RI.

ARTICLE I

Name

The name of this church shall be Christ Church, Evangelical Covenant.

ARTICLE II.

Affiliation

The church is a member of the Evangelical Covenant Church and its East Coast Conference and 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 Jesus Christ, Son of God, our Savior and Lord, and in the Holy Scriptures, the Old and New Testament, as the Word of God and the only perfect rule for faith, doctrine, and conduct.

ARTICLE IV

Purpose

1. The purpose of this church is to glorify God the Father, proclaim Jesus Christ, God the Son as Lord and Savior, and to rely on God the Holy Spirit who empowers us to serve one another, our communities, and the world.
2. To achieve this purpose, we commit ourselves to worship and prayer, community and evangelism, Christian education and discipleship, leadership and stewardship, local and global missions.

ARTICLE V

Membership

1. Membership in the church involves a process of introduction and orientation, application, affirmation of faith in Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord, and in the Holy Scriptures; baptism; orientation, an interview with the pastor or other Elders; and agreement with the church's faith, purpose, and goals. New members are affirmed and welcomed at a Sunday worship service and make public confession of their faith as outlined in The Covenant Book of Worship.
2. Active members are defined as those who continue to affirm the faith, purpose and goals of the church and who have attended services of the church at least once in the past 90 days subject to allowances for military service, school, illness, disability, or other extenuating and excusable circumstances where the

intent is to retain active membership. Only active members, 16 years of age and older, may vote at congregational meetings.

3. Members who become inactive will be contacted by the Elders, who will seek to restore them to active involvement and growth. If, after a period of one year, they remain inactive, they will be removed from membership following written notification.

4. Members who persistently err in essential biblical doctrines of the Christian faith or conduct must be called upon by the Pastor or other Elders in a spirit of love and restoration according to the pattern of Matthew 18:15-18, I Timothy 5:19, and Galatians 6:1 with the goal of full restoration. Dismissal of a member who does not respond to these steps must be addressed at a congregational meeting. Dismissal of a member requires a two-thirds vote of members present and voting.

ARTICLE VI

Nominating Task Force

1. The role of the Nominating Task Force (*NTF*) is to lead and manage the process of nomination, evaluation and selection of candidates for Elder, Deacon, Treasurer, and other church leaders as the Council of Elders may direct. Their role shall also include carrying out separate processes for gathering and processing evaluative comments from members of the congregation for consideration in the nomination and evaluation of new Elder, Deacon and Treasurer candidates, and for re-nomination and re-evaluation when candidates are standing for additional terms of service.

2. The NTF shall be a standing task force of the church consisting of five or more church members whom the Council of Elders in its discretion shall appoint. Qualification for selection will be based first on their spiritual discernment and then on their knowledge of the church: its congregation, its culture and its ministries. Where possible, it is preferred that a past Elder not then actively sitting on the Council of Elders be included among the members of the NTF. Elders actively sitting on the Council of Elders shall not be members of the NTF, just as the Council of Elders shall not participate in or influence the work of the NTF before the names of qualified candidates are proposed to them.

3. The term of office for members of the NTF shall not exceed five consecutive years of service. After a one-year absence from the NTF, a prior member may be reappointed.

4. If a member of the congregation feels called to be considered as a candidate for Elder, Deacon, or Treasurer, the member may not accept an appointment to the NTF, and if already a member of the NTF, the member must resign that position.

5. With the exception of the Senior Pastor, no member of the church staff is eligible to serve as Elder. No member of the church staff is eligible to serve as Treasurer.
6. The NTF shall annually begin the process of nominations for church officers and leaders early enough in the year to allow for the timely completion of their work process and presentation of proposed and approved candidates to the Annual Congregational Meeting for affirmation. The Nominating Task Force shall notify the congregational membership of the beginning of the annual nomination process for church officers and leaders. Church members will be given 30 days to prayerfully submit the names of active church members in nomination for particular church offices.
7. All church members nominated to serve for the first time as Elder, Deacon or Treasurer shall be informed by the NTF of their nomination, polled for their interest in being evaluated as a candidate and, if interested, be invited to an interview with members of the NTF.
8. For those Elders, Deacons or Treasurers who after the first or any later term of service feel called to serve for an additional three-year term, he or she must participate again in the NTF process for re-nomination and re-evaluation. In all such cases of term renewal, the NTF shall also provide a 30-day process for written comments and evaluation by the congregation in order to aid the renewing individual and the NTF in discernment and decision making.
9. The names of candidates evaluated, found qualified, and proposed by the NTF for the various offices shall be submitted to the Council of Elders for final approval. The names of nominees who are approved by the Elders for office shall then be published to the church congregation. The members of the congregation shall then be given 30 days in which to bring forward any concerns about a nominee, first to the prospective nominee and then to the Elders for consideration.
10. Candidates for Elder, Deacon and Treasurer that have been evaluated and proposed by the NTF, and approved by the Council of Elders, shall be presented to the congregation for affirmation. They shall be presented at the Annual Congregational Meeting where Elder candidates as a group, Deacon candidates as a group, and the Treasurer must be affirmed by a two-thirds vote of church members present either by a showing of hands or such other method as the Council of Elders shall from time to time prescribe.
11. Within 45 days of congregational affirmation, there will follow a service of dedication of new Elders and Deacons, or a new Treasurer, and recognition of those continuing to serve in office.
12. In the case of a mid-term vacancy, the Council of Elders may fill that vacancy by selecting a replacement Elder, Deacon or Treasurer to serve out that term from nominees previously proposed by the NTF, or wait for the NTF to begin the next annual nomination process. In cases where vacancies must be filled immediately and there are no previously proposed nominees available, the Council of Elders may make a temporary appointment until the NTF begins its next nomination process.

ARTICLE VII

Council of Elders

1. The Council of Elders is the designated body responsible for the spiritual and administrative leadership of the church, subject to the congregation as a whole. The Council will consist of the Senior Pastor and as many other qualified Elders as the Council of Elders shall prayerfully determine are gifted and called by God's Spirit (Acts 20:28).
2. The church in the New Testament affirms a pattern of multiple ministry leaders under the oversight and care of Elders. Elders have the responsibility and authority to "shepherd" the congregation (humbly leading, teaching, developing, guiding, guarding, healing and confronting as necessary) so that Christ may be followed, honored and glorified by all. (1 Peter 5:1-4, Acts 20:28-31, Titus 1:9, James 5:14.) All members of the church are called to lovingly support and respect their spiritual leaders (Hebrews 13:17, I Thessalonians 5:12-13).
3. The Council of Elders has responsibility for evaluation of the total church program, prayer and ministry of the Word, establishing administrative policies, approving and recommending the annual budget and stewardship opportunities for the church, and to develop and coordinate the various ministries of the church. Sitting Elders may be ex officio, non-voting members of any teams and task forces of the church, with the exception of the Nominating Task Force.
4. The qualifications for Elders include appropriate spiritual gifts and calling, and are based on the qualifications outlined in I Timothy 3: 1-7. They shall include active church membership, led by the example of Christ; devoted to the Word and prayer; able to communicate God's truth; devoted to their spouse, if married; disciplined, wise and respected; hospitable; free of addictions; gentle and peaceable; not greedy; having a healthy family life; continually growing in faith; authenticity; servant-minded; committed to God's will; fair and just; stable and persevering.
5. Elders serve with a commitment for a term of three years. If, after the first or any later term of service an Elder feels called to serve for an additional three-year term, he or she must participate again in the same NTF process for re-nomination and re-evaluation as described in ARTICLE VI. 7. An Elder may, for any reason, make a personal decision not to seek re-nomination, or may be denied re-entry into the re-nomination process by the unanimous recommendation of the other Elders. Issues of error or disunity will be approached under church discipline guidelines described in ARTICLE V. 4.
6. As a result of the annual addition of Elders, there will be naturally developed rotating service-terms of Elders on the Council of Elders.
7. The Council of Elders shall meet at least once every month.

8. Within one month of the Annual Meeting, the Council of Elders will elect one Elder to serve as Chairperson, who will preside at Council and Congregational Meetings. A Secretary will also be chosen. Pastors may not hold either of these Council positions. Any issues requiring a vote of the Council will be decided by a two-thirds majority.

9. The Council of Elders shall annually carry out a review and evaluation of the performance of the Council and each of its members. The goal of this process is to provide a year-to-year understanding of the Council's effectiveness in meeting the needs of the church and its ministries, as well as reviewing the gifted service and calling of each of its members. The Elders Council shall solicit written views and recommendations of the congregation to facilitate this process.

ARTICLE VIII **Council of Deacons**

1. The scriptures call every church member to dedicated and joyful service following the example of the Lord Jesus who came, not to be served, but to serve. (Mark 10:45) Some are also called and appointed to serve in a designated capacity. The office of Deacon appears in 1 Timothy 3:8-13, perhaps based on the precedent in Acts 6 of Stephen and 6 others chosen and commissioned to assist in caring for widows in the congregation. The principle appears to be one of assisting the Elders in leading and extending the compassion and helping ministries of the church to the whole congregation. Deacons may be said, therefore, to function as the agents of mercy, comfort and help in Christ Church.

2. Deacons shall be nominated, evaluated and approved based on their spiritual gifts and calling, the qualifications outlined in 1 Timothy 3:8-13, and such other requirements as may be set out by the Council of Elders. The same process and procedures shall be employed as are employed for the nomination, evaluation and approval of Elders.

3. Deacons serve with a commitment for a term of three years. If, after the first or any later term of service a Deacon feels called to serve for an additional three-year term, he or she must participate again in the same NTF process for re-nomination and re-evaluation as described in ARTICLE VI. 7. A Deacon may, for any reason, make a personal decision not to seek re-nomination, or may be denied re-entry into the re-nomination process by the unanimous recommendation of the Council of Elders. Issues of error or disunity will be approached under church discipline guidelines described in ARTICLE V. 4.

4. As a result of the annual addition of Deacons, there will be naturally developed rotating service-terms of Deacons on the Council of Deacons.

5. Within one month of the Annual Meeting, the Deacons shall elect a Chairperson and Secretary.

6. The Council of Deacons shall meet at least once every month.

7. The Council of Elders, with the assistance of the Council of Deacons shall annually evaluate the work and effectiveness of the Council of Deacons and consider the appropriate number of Deacons needed to carry out their work.

ARTICLE IX

The Senior Pastor

1. The Senior Pastor of the church will meet the New Testament requirements of the Elder-shepherd (see Article VI), and will be a member of the Covenant Ministerial Association and follow the Rules for Ordered Ministry of the Evangelical Covenant Church. The Senior Pastor will, by virtue of call, be a member of the church.

2. The Senior Pastor will have responsibility for spiritual leadership, preaching and teaching, overseeing the administration of Baptism and The Lord's Supper, as well as other pastoral duties as defined by his or her job description and as delegated by the Elders. These duties will usually include, but are not limited to: pastoral counseling and referral; communication of the vision and goals of the church; empowering and training of ministry leaders; supervision of other staff members; and sound administrative practices.

3. The Senior Pastor will meet at least annually with the Council of Elders to evaluate pastoral performance, set goals, and recommend changes in the terms of the pastoral call.

4. The Senior Pastor will work in harmony with the Covenant, the regional conference, and other Covenant ministers.

5. The Senior Pastor will be called at a regular or special congregational business meeting, announced at least two weeks in advance. A candidate for Senior Pastor will be recommended by a pastoral search team. The search team will be representative of the congregation, including from five to nine members, two of whom will be Elders with the remaining members selected from the active membership and approved at a congregational business meeting. The search team will work with the regional conference superintendent. Upon the recommendation of the Council of Elders the recommended candidate for Senior Pastor will be called by ballot with a two-thirds vote required for a call. The call will be for an indefinite period of time with a minimum of six weeks notice required by the church or the pastor for termination of pastoral duties.

6. Any charges against the Senior Pastor for misconduct or doctrinal error will be submitted in writing to the Council of Elders. If in the judgment of the Elders there is substance to the charges, the case shall be, at a minimum, referred to the Conference Superintendent. The Superintendent will confer with the Covenant Executive Secretary of the Ministry. These two officers, in consultation with the Elders, will

confer and determine the order of responsibility in pursuing the matter according to the Rules for Ordered Ministry of the Evangelical Covenant Church.

7. The Senior Pastor may not hold any other appointed officer position in the church.

ARTICLE X

The Treasurer & Financial Matters

1. The Treasurer shall be an active church member and will be responsible for all funds committed to him or her and will make disbursements as authorized or delegated by the Council of Elders. The Treasurer will present monthly reports of the church's account balances, receipts and expenditures to the Council of Elders. Quarterly financial reports will be published to the church, and an annual financial report will be presented to the annual congregational business meeting.

2. The Treasurer shall be nominated, evaluated and approved based on spiritual gifts, training, aptitude and calling. The same process and procedures shall be employed as are employed for the nomination, evaluation and approval of Elders.

3. The Treasurer shall serve with a commitment for a term of three years. If, after the first or any later term of service the Treasurer feels called to serve for an additional three-year term, he or she must participate again in the same NTF process for re-nomination and re-evaluation as described in ARTICLE VI. 7. A Treasurer may, for any reason, make a personal decision not to seek re-nomination, or may be denied re-entry into the re-nomination process by the unanimous recommendation of the Council of Elders. Issues of error or disunity will be approached under church discipline guidelines described in ARTICLE V. 4.

4. With the approval of the Council of Elders, an independent contractor, not a member of Christ Church Evangelical Covenant, shall be contracted with to receive, record, and deposit all contributed funds, and report to the Treasurer all contributions to the church with timeliness, confidentiality and accuracy. After each year-end, the Treasurer and/or independent contractor will prepare individual statements of financial giving for financial contributors to the church. Further, an employee of Christ Church Evangelical Covenant shall be designated to prepare payments, and perform other bookkeeping functions, for review, approval and signature by the Treasurer, or if the Treasurer is not available, by non-staff Elders with check signing authority.

5. A representative of the church appointed by the Elders, but not the Treasurer, or an Elder, will review the books and records of the church each year and report to the Council of Elders as to their adequacy and accuracy. This report will be completed prior to and included in the Annual Ministry Report to the congregation.

ARTICLE XI
Leadership Team

1. The Leadership Team will include the Elders, Senior Pastor, Treasurer, Chair of the Deacons, staff pastors and directors, and ministry coordinators designated by the Council of Elders. The team will meet at least quarterly for the purposes of communication, prayer, evaluation, planning, and goal setting.
2. Staff pastors and staff directors will be appointed by the Council of Elders following a search process devised by the Elders. Volunteer ministry coordinators will be appointed by the Council of Elders based on spiritual gifts, aptitude, and calling. Volunteer ministry leaders will serve with a commitment for a term of one year, renewable subject to annual review of individual gifts, calling and effectiveness, as also provided for by the Council of Elders.

ARTICLE XII
Congregational Meetings

1. Congregational business meetings will be held not less often than annually. An Annual Business Meeting of the congregation will be held in late May or early June to vote on the budget for the following fiscal year, July 1 - June 30. Prospective officers will also be presented for affirmation by vote of the members present.
2. An Annual Ministry Report will be presented to the church by August 31 of each year. Written reports will be presented by the Senior Pastor, Council of Elders, Council of Deacons, and all staff pastors, staff directors and ministry coordinators. The reviewed annual financial reports will be presented by the Treasurer.
3. Twenty-five percent of the active membership, but not less than ten members, present and voting at a congregational business meeting properly called shall constitute a quorum.
4. Notice of all congregational business meetings shall be given at least two weeks in advance and must include two Sundays at which the meeting is announced.
5. A two-thirds vote will be required to pass any motion.
6. Business meetings of the church will be conducted according to *Robert's Rules of Order*.

ARTICLE XIII
Property

1. A duly called Congregational Business Meeting must be held to make decisions regarding real property transactions.
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 East Coast 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 East Coast Conference.

ARTICLE XIV

Amendments

Amendments in harmony with this constitution, not in conflict with the Covenant principles and policies, may be adopted by a two-thirds vote of those present and voting in a duly called congregational meeting. This Article and Article XIII (Property) may be amended only with approval of the executive board of the East Coast Conference.

ARTICLE XV

Insurance

The church will obtain proper insurance for all activities and properties of the church and shall fully indemnify the Pastors, Elders, Officers, staff, and members in the reasonable performance of their duties.

Amended at the Annual Congregational Meetings of May 30, 2009, and June 7, 2015.

The Council of Elders
Christ Church, Evangelical Covenant