



## **Covenant Church of Harrisburg ByLaws**

### **ARTICLE I MEMBERSHIP**

#### **SECTION 1 – QUALIFICATIONS:**

1. The membership roll is open only to those who have received Jesus Christ into their hearts as their personal Savior and Lord, and who give satisfactory evidence of this in the form of a changed life. John 1:12 and Romans 10:9-10
2. It is to be noted that there will be only two qualifications for membership in The Covenant Church of Harrisburg: the first being a personal relationship and acceptance of Christ as Savior and Lord; the second, water baptism, shall be required in obedience to Christ of all new members not previously baptized and the mode, sprinkling or immersion, shall be optional.

#### **SECTION 2 – PROCEDURES:**

##### **1. ACTIVE MEMBERSHIP**

The church session will receive persons who wish to profess their belief in Christ as their personal Savior and Lord and desire to be baptized.

The church session may receive, by letter of transmittal, members from other churches recognized by our own as a true branch of the Church of Jesus Christ.

When a church member is unable to obtain a letter of transmittal, he/she may be received upon his/her reaffirmation of his original covenant obligations. When a member is received by transfer of letter or reaffirmation of faith, the church to which he/she formerly belonged shall be notified by letter.

Persons desiring to unite with The Covenant Church of Harrisburg are to contact either a member of the session, the pastor, or the church office. A copy of the constitution and by-laws will then be sent or given to the candidate so that he/she may read and study it. This may precede a call by the pastor or one of the elders or deacons.

Upon discussing the matter of membership with the candidate concerning his/her Christian relationship and ascertaining if the candidate is in fundamental agreement with the constitution and by-laws of the church, the name shall then be presented to the session of the church for approval. On the first convenient Sunday following his/her approval, the candidate shall be presented to the congregation and extended the right hand of fellowship by the pastor and the congregation of the church.

2. ACTIVE MEMBERSHIP OF CHILDREN

Children who give evidence of having exercised saving faith in Christ may be received into membership according to Article 1 Section 1 paragraph 2 of the by-laws. The privileges of voting shall not be extended to them until they have reached the age of 16.

3. AFFILIATE MEMBERSHIP

As there may be people in our area who are here only for a limited period of time, but who may desire a church home and yet do not want to sever relationship with their home churches, such persons may become affiliate members of presenting a letter from their church or pastor showing that they are members in good and regular standing and recommending them for affiliate membership. Upon leaving the area, the names of such person will be automatically dropped from the roll of affiliate membership.

Affiliate members shall be entitled to all the privileges and liable to all the rules, regulations and discipline governing regular members, except they shall have no vote in congregational meetings, nor shall they hold positions as ordained officers of the church, such as elders and deacons. They shall be able and encouraged to work, support and serve in other positions and ministries of the church. Procedure to affiliate membership shall be handled according to article 1, Section 2 of the by-laws.

**SECTION 3 – TERMINATION:**

1. ACTIVE MEMBERS

When an active member in good standing unites with another church and desires a letter, he or the new church must request it in writing. Upon receipt of such a written request, the clerk of the session is authorized to grant a letter of transmittal and recommendation to the other church and to delete his name from our church roll. A report of this shall be given to the session at its next meeting.

2. INACTIVE MEMBERS

When a written request is made by an inactive member who unites with another church, a letter of transmittal will be sent stating that such a member has been inactive (according to Article 1, Section 4, paragraph 1 of the by-laws).

3. JOINING OF ANOTHER CHURCH WITHOUT NOTIFICATION

If and when it is learned that a member of The Covenant Church of Harrisburg has joined another church, but has not notified us, his/her name shall be dropped from our roll by a majority vote of the session.

**SECTION 4 – CHANGE OF MEMBERSHIP:**

1. NON- ATTENDANCE

When a person has not attended the regular services of the church for a period of **six months** and this absence has not been caused by either sickness or some other providential hindrance, then the person involved shall be visited by either the pastor or some member of the session concerning his/her lack of interest. Should the person indicate no renewal of interest and still prefer an association with the church the session shall direct the clerk of the session to place his/her name on the inactive roll of membership. If such persons have moved away, such procedure may be handled by mail. When such action is taken, the person involved shall be advised in writing by the clerk of the session. The vote needed for this action will be a majority vote of the session.

2. REINSTATEMENT

Should a person on the inactive roll indicate a renewed interest by attendance at the public services and other participation, he may request the clerk of the session to reinstate his active membership. Such reinstatement shall be made upon approval by the session with a majority vote.

**SECTION 5 – DISCIPLINE, DISMISSAL OF MEMBERS:**

1. DISCIPLINE

The session, with the pastor, shall constitute the Discipline Committee of the church and is empowered to make its own decision in cases of discipline according to spiritual teaching. Such action must be exercised in the light and spirit of Galatians 6:1 and Matthew 18:15-17.

2. DISMISSAL

If, upon examination of the person involved, the session finds the member to be no longer in agreement with the Articles of Faith of our church, they can, with a two-thirds majority vote of the total session, dismiss such a person from membership.

3. RESTORATION

Should a dismissed member experience spiritual restoration and desire renewed fellowship with the church, he/she may make such a request known to the pastor or a member of the session. Upon favorable consideration by the session, he/she will be called to give his testimony to the session, and upon their approval by a majority vote shall be reinstated into membership.

**ARTICLE II**  
**THE PASTOR**

**SECTION 1 – DEFINITION:**

The pastor of the church shall be an ordained man, duly called by the membership and installed in due process.

**SECTION 2 – QUALIFICATIONS**

The qualifications of the pastor of this church are enjoined in the scriptures (1 Timothy 3:1-7 and Titus 1: 5-9). He shall be set apart to “labor in the Word and in doctrine”. Further, he shall conscientiously adhere to the constitution and by-laws of the Covenant Church of Harrisburg.

His private and family life must be exemplary, thereby adorning his profession in the Gospel.

He must be a man zealous and industrious in the ministry, kind and loving toward all his people, compassionate and concerned for the lost, and helpful and cooperative with the officers of the church. He must be “a man full of faith and of the Holy Spirit”.

**SECTION 3 – CALL AND TENURE:**

1. FORMATION OF PULPIT COMMITTEE

If the pulpit should become vacant, or is scheduled to become vacant, the session shall act promptly to select a pulpit committee, whose function shall be to seek a new pastor. This committee shall be composed of three elders and three deacons, selected by the session, and four members elected by the congregation at a duly called meeting. This full committee shall meet and elect its chairman and secretary.

## 2. DUTIES OF PULPIT COMMITTEE

This pulpit committee shall act prayerfully, expeditiously, and tactfully to find a potential pastor. When they have agreed on a person to recommend, but not until some members of the pulpit committee shall have visited and heard the prospective pastor speak in his current pulpit or place of ministry, they shall then make their recommendation to the session in a regular, duly called meeting. A session approval of such a recommendation shall require a two-thirds majority of votes of the total session. The man then shall be invited to preach a trial sermon and discuss the matter of becoming the pastor of Covenant Church of Harrisburg.

Following his ministry and discussion with both the pulpit committee and the session, the pulpit committee will go to the session with a firm recommendation whether or not a call is to be extended to the candidate to become pastor. Approval of such a recommendation requires an unanimous vote of the session.

## 3. DISPOSITION

The session will then call for a congregational meeting, which shall be announced two Sundays before the meeting. In acting on such a recommendation of a pastoral call, an affirmative vote by at least two-thirds of all members present and voting shall be required to approve such a call. Upon such a favorable vote, the congregation thereby delegates and empowers the session to extend the call to the candidate to become pastor.

## **SECTION 4 – OFFICE AND DUTIES OF PASTOR:**

1. It shall be the duty of the pastor to preach at the church, to administer the ordinances of the church, to act as moderator, when present, at all meetings of the church and the session, except where the actions of the pastor are involved or ordered by vote of the congregation. He shall also conscientiously perform such duties as may be arranged between the session and himself as pastor. He shall be a member of all committees of the session and also of all boards and committees connected with the church or any of its organizations.
2. The pastor shall not be bound in conscience on preaching content but the overall emphasis for worship will be determined by the pastor in harmony with a majority of the session. The pastor shall have discretion in the choice of scripture and message content, but he should exercise care that the full messages of scripture are delivered over a period of time.
3. The pastor and/or the session shall consider and decide upon all pulpit supplies and special speakers.
4. The pastor shall have control of the music and of the broadcasting of the church services, subject to the approval of the session.
5. The pastor shall take an active interest in, and direction of the missionary affairs of the church.
6. Any assistant pastor or pastors or any employee of this church shall perform such duties as may be designated by the pastor, session or its authorized representatives.

7. The Pastor shall, at his discretion and in accordance with Holy Scripture and the Bylaws of the Church, perform the ceremony of Holy Matrimony. No marriage may be performed by the Pastor in or outside of the Church which violates Romans 1:24-26; Matthew 19:4-9 and other scriptures concerning same-sex marriage.

#### **SECTION 5 – TERMINATING A PASTOR’S SERVICES**

1. The services of the pastor may be terminated in three ways:
  - a. Upon his voluntary resignation made either to the congregation or the session of the church
  - b. By request of the session that he submit his resignation.
  - c. Termination by the session.
2. In the case of voluntary resignation, the pastor shall do so in writing to the session, giving at least thirty (30) days notice. The session shall act upon such a resignation, and upon acceptance of same, shall call for a congregational meeting recommending their acceptance of the resignation. A majority vote of members present and voting shall be required to accept the resignation.
3. The session may for reasons it deems valid and appropriate terminate the pastor .The pastor shall then be notified in writing of the reasons. This is to be followed by a congregational meeting to inform the congregation of the Session’s actions.

#### **ARTICLE III ASSOCIATE PASTORS, ETC.**

The establishment, qualifications, calls, tenure, duties and all other matters pertaining to such offices shall be determined by the session and set forth in writing.

#### **ARTICLE IV OFFICERS OF THE CHURCH**

#### **SECTION 1 – ELECTION:**

1. There shall be elected as initial officers of the church six (6) elders and six (6) deacons. The pastor shall also serve as an officer of the church and will act as moderator. The above body of ruling officers shall be designated as the Session.
2. No member shall hold the office of elder or deacon of the church until he is at least twenty one (21) years of age.
3. A clerk shall be elected for a one-year term to keep the records and minutes of session meetings.
4. In the absence of the pastor a temporary moderator shall be elected.

#### **SECTION 2 – TERM OF OFFICE:**

1. The term of office for both elders and deacons shall be for three years. The term of office for both elders and deacons shall be so arranged that **one third** of each group shall retire each year.

2. After the completion of a term of office, no elder or deacon shall be eligible for reelection to either office until a full year has elapsed. This shall apply to a person elected to fill the unexpired term of an elder or deacon, provided the unexpired term is one year or more in length.

**SECTION 3 – RESPONSIBILITIES OF ELDERS:**

The elders shall be responsible, with the pastor, for the spiritual welfare of the church. They shall assist in administering the ordinances of the church and shall make necessary provisions for the same. They shall be expected to visit the sick and the sorrowing membership, investigate delinquents and endeavor to remedy spiritual weakness in the lives of its members. They shall endeavor by God's grace to live and serve in full conformity with the standards set forth in the constitution for their particular office and especially as found in the Word of God in 1 Timothy 3:1-7, Titus 1:6-9, and Acts 6:5.

**SECTION 4 – RESPONSIBILITIES OF DEACONS:**

The deacons shall have the care of the physical properties and finances of the church and shall hold themselves in readiness to assist in guiding the spiritual life of the church, ministering its ordinances and performing any necessary calling. They shall have the oversight of the ushering in all regular and special services. They shall endeavor by God's grace to live and serve in full conformity to the standards set forth in the constitution for their particular office and especially as found in the Word of God in 1 Timothy 3:8-13 and Acts 6:5.

**SECTION 5 – REMOVAL OF ELDER OR DEACON:**

A majority vote of the congregation present and voting will be required to remove an elder or deacon from the session.

**ARTICLE V  
MEETINGS OF THE CHURCH**

**SECTION 1 – ANNUAL BUSINESS MEETING:**

The annual business meeting of the church shall be held each year during the month of January. Between the end of the fiscal year, December thirty first (31) and the approval of a financial projection for the coming year, disbursements are authorized on the basis of the expiring financial projection with adjustments made as necessary after adoption of the new financial projection. All church departments, committees, and officers in office at the end of one fiscal year shall continue to function until February first (1), on which date newly elected and appointed officers and committee members shall assume their duties. Annually, the session shall review the financial records of the church and present a report to the congregation.

**SECTION 2 – SPECIAL BUSINESS MEETINGS:**

Special business meetings of the church may be called by the session with consent of a majority. Special business meetings shall also be called on written request to the session by twenty-five (25) or more active members. Notice of meetings shall be handled in prescribed manner as stated in Article 6, Section 1 of the By-Laws.

**SECTION 3 – MEETINGS OF THE SESSION:**

The session of the church shall meet regularly each month, with the exceptions as approved by the session. It shall also meet at other times, as called by the pastor or by request of four (4) other members of the session with a week's notice to all members of the session. Any other meetings of the session can be called by common consent of a majority of the session. A quorum to conduct business shall consist of at least seven (7) members.

**ARTICLE VI  
CONGREGATIONAL MEETING**

**SECTION 1 – DULY CALLED MEETING:**

A duly called meeting of the membership shall be one, which has been announced in the bulletin at least one (1) week before the meeting. Such a call shall indicate the purpose of the meeting and only those matters announced therein may be considered.

**SECTION 2 – QUORUM:**

The quorum required for a duly called meeting shall be one-fourth of the active membership, but no less than fifteen (15). There shall be voting by proxy via email, text, or in writing to a Session member.

**SECTION 3 – RULES OF ORDER:**

In the conduct of meetings, any parliamentary questions not covered by the constitution and by-laws shall be handled in accordance with the most current edition of **Robert's Rules of Order**.

**ARTICLE VII  
NOMINATION, ELECTION OF ELDERS AND DEACONS**

**SECTION 1 – NOMINATING COMMITTEE:**

The nominating committee shall be comprised of two (2) active elders and two (2) deacons, who are serving on the session, and four (4) members of the congregation. The session will appoint the elders and deacons of this committee and the congregation will elect the congregational members. The pastor shall serve as moderator of this committee and shall have a vote.

The congregational members of the nominating committee will be elected at a duly called meeting on the **first Sunday in August**. Nominations will be made from the floor and the four (4) members elected, by secret ballot, from those nominated. Only the names of those who have indicated a desire to serve beforehand shall be offered for nomination.

**SECTION 2 – PROCEDURE FOR NOMINATION AND ELECTION OF ELDERS:**

The names of any eligible member of the church who has consented to having their name placed in nomination for the position of elder may be given to any member of the nominating committee during the month of August. All names must be offered for nomination **before September first (1)**.

Each individual whose name has been offered for the position of elder will be examined by the nominating committee. The names of those found to be worthy of serving as an elder of the church will be presented to the session. The session will select five (5) names from those presented to be offered to the congregation at a duly called meeting

on the **first Sunday in October**. The congregation will, by secret ballot, elect three (3) members to serve a three (3) year term as elder.

The newly elected elders will attend all session meetings for the remainder of the year but will be ineligible to vote until installed.

**SECTION 3 – PROCEDURE FOR NOMINATION AND ELECTION OF DEACONS:**

The name of any eligible member of the church, who has consented to having his name placed in the nomination for the position of deacon, may be given to any member of the nominating committee during the month of October. All names must be offered for the nomination **before November first (1)**.

Each individual whose name has been offered for the position of deacon will be examined by the nominating committee. The names of those found to be worthy of serving as a deacon of the church will be presented to the session. The session will select five (5) names from those presented to the offered to the congregation at a duly called meeting on the **first Sunday in December**. The congregation, by secret ballot, will elect three (3) members to serve a three (3) year term as deacon.

The newly elected deacons will attend all session meetings for the remainder of the year but will be ineligible to vote until installed.

**SECTION 4 – INSTALLATION AND ORDINATION OF ELDERS AND DEACONS:**

The elders and deacons elected to serve the church will be instructed by the pastor as to their duties and will be installed by the pastor on the **second Sunday in December**. An ordination service for all officers not previously ordained will precede the installation. Upon being installed the newly elected elders and deacons will replace the retiring members of the session on January first (1).

**SECTION 5 – VACANCIES IN THE SESSION:**

Should vacancies occur in the office of either deacon or elder due to any cause, they shall remain unfilled for the remainder of the current church year.

**SECTION 6 – FAILURE TO HOLD ELECTIONS:**

Should circumstances prevent the holding of a congregational meeting for the election of officers at the regular time, all elders, deacons and corporate officers shall hold office until elections can be held and their successors are elected.

**ARTICLE VIII**  
**GOVERNMENT OF CHURCH**

**SECTION 1**

The government of this church is vested in its membership, which constitutes the congregation and is facilitated through the session.

**SECTION 2**

The session shall consist of all elders, deacons, pastor and each shall have an equal vote.

**SECTION 3**

The session shall be the executive committee of the congregation in its dealings with pastors, employees, affiliate organizations, branch works and any outside organizations.

**SECTION 4**

The session shall have supervision over the business transactions and general work of the church, its organizations and branches.

**SECTION 5**

The session shall make appropriate designations of any missionary and benevolent funds, as gifts received may warrant. This is to be done with congregational approval in reference only to any monthly or regular support of missionaries.

**SECTION 6**

The session shall have the management and control of all property belonging to the church. It shall not encumber with loans, transfers, sell or purchase any real estate for the church except by express authority conveyed through a majority vote of the membership present at a duly called business meeting.

**SECTION 7**

The session shall have the authority to appoint individuals or committees for the transaction of its business. Such individuals or committees shall be answerable to and in subjection to the session.

**SECTION 8**

The session shall have the authority to approve and appoint any and all superintendents, leaders and teachers of the Sunday school and all other church sponsored programs.

**ARTICLE IX**  
**THE CORPORATION OF CHURCH**

**SECTION 1 – OFFICES:**

The members of the session shall constitute the board of directors of the corporation. There shall be three (3) officers of the corporation elected by the board of directors at the beginning of each church year. The offices shall be president, vice president and secretary-treasurer.

**SECTION 2 – RESPONSIBILITIES OF OFFICERS:**

The corporate officers shall perform all necessary legal functions of the corporation and keep proper records, legal papers, and documents and the Official Seal of the Corporation. They shall perform only such functions as directed by the board of directors on behalf of the congregation, provided they do not conflict with the provisions of the Charter of The Covenant Church of Harrisburg.

**SECTION 3 – MEMBERS:**

All active members of The Covenant Church of Harrisburg shall be members of the corporation.

**ARTICLE X**  
**THE CHURCH YEAR**

The fiscal church year shall be the calendar year in both the church and the offices of the church.

**ARTICLE XI**  
**AMENDMENTS**

Amendments to these by-laws, not in conflict with the foregoing constitution or the charter of The Covenant Church of Harrisburg, may be made in accordance with the same procedure as making amendments to the constitution.