

CONSTITUTION

of

The

Bethlehem Covenant Church



WARREN, PA.

Adopted January 1, 1945

CONSTITUTION



ARTICLE I

NAME

The name of this church shall be The Bethlehem Covenant Church of Warren, Pennsylvania.

ARTICLE II

CONFESSION OF FAITH

SECTION I. This church believes in the Holy Scriptures, the Old and New Testaments, as the Word of God and the only perfect rule for faith, creed, and conduct. Psalm 119:105 — Isaiah 40:8 — I Thessalonians 2:13 — Acts 17:11.

SEC. 2. — We believe in God the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth; and in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord, who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary; suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, dead and buried; he descended into hades; the third day he rose again from the dead; he ascended into heaven and sitteth on the right hand of God the Father Almighty; from thence he shall come to judge the quick and the dead. We believe in the Holy Spirit, the Holy Christian Church, the Communion of Saints, the Forgiveness of sins, the Resurrection of the body, and the Life Everlasting.

ARTICLE III

OBJECT

The object of this church is to unite believers in fellowship for spiritual edification, for the winning of unbelievers for Christ, and for the propa-

gation of the Gospel of Jesus Christ through home and foreign missions.

ARTICLE IV

MEMBERSHIP

SECTION 1. — Membership in this church is open to anyone who through faith in God's Son, Our Lord Jesus Christ, has been born again to a living hope; has manifested himself as a true Christian; has been baptized in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit; and desires to share in the fellowship and ministry of this church.

SEC. 2. — Admission of Members — Persons desiring membership in this church shall apply to the pastor, a deacon, or a deaconess; the application is then acted upon by the board of deacons, who shall interview the applicant with regard to his spiritual life. If they find him eligible for membership they shall recommend him to the next business meeting of the church, at which time if possible, the applicant shall make public confession of his faith in Christ.

Members of other churches, recognized as evangelical, may become members upon presenting a letter of transfer within six months from the date of the letter. Their names shall be recorded at the next business session of the church.

The applicant for membership shall be accepted by unanimous vote. If any member objects to the applicant, his objections must be in harmony with the Word of God.

The newly elected members shall be welcomed into the fellowship of the church at the next communion service.

SEC. 3. — Responsibility of Members — Every member shall consider the responsibilities and obligations placed upon him by the Word of God and

the church. He shall in all things conduct himself as becomes a Christian. He shall be considerate of his fellow-members and by word and deed encourage them to love and good deeds.

SEC. 4. — Negligent Members — Members who wilfully neglect their duties and have not attended a service or contributed to the support of the church for one year, shall be warned by the board of deacons. If this warning is not heeded, they shall be liable to forfeiture of membership.

SEC. 5 — Erring Members — If a member errs in doctrine or conduct, it is the duty of the member who has that knowledge to warn and correct him. If he does not heed this warning, the board of deacons shall be notified, who also shall admonish him to repent. If he still continues in his course, the board of deacons shall report the case to a business meeting of the church, which shall then act according to Matthew 18:15-18. The church may then at the regular business session expel such person from membership by a majority vote, taken by secret ballot.

SEC. 6. — Removal of Members — A member who moves to another community shall notify the pastor, who upon request, will issue a letter of transfer.

ARTICLE V

OFFICERS, ELECTION AND DUTIES

SECTION 1. — The officers of this church shall be members thereof and shall be elected by secret ballot at the annual meeting of the church, and shall consist of a chairman, a vice-chairman, a secretary, an assistant secretary, a financial secretary, a treasurer, three deacons, three deaconesses, five trustees, and a superintendent of the Sunday School. These officers, together with the pastor ex-officio, shall constitute the church board.

SEC. 2. — For election of officers, a majority of the votes cast shall be necessary, provided a quorum of not less than twenty percent of the entire membership be present at the meeting. Vacancies may be filled at a meeting called for that purpose, notice of which shall be announced from the pulpit on two Sundays preceding. Where vacancy occurs within sixty days of the date of the annual meeting, no special election shall be held.

SEC. 3. — CHAIRMAN — The chairman shall preside at all the church business meetings and church board meetings according to parliamentary rules of order and shall issue calls for special meetings as occasions require. He shall be actively interested in the welfare of the church and in the absence of the pastor shall be responsible for the leadership of the church services.

SEC. 4. — VICE-CHAIRMAN — The vice-chairman shall assume the duties of the chairman in the absence of the latter.

SEC. 5. — SECRETARY — The secretary shall keep minutes of all business sessions of the church and of the church board, and shall conduct and preserve all correspondence relating to the work of the church.

SEC. 6. — ASSISTANT SECRETARY — The assistant secretary shall assume the duties of the secretary in the absence of the latter.

SEC. 7. — FINANCIAL SECRETARY — The financial secretary shall record all moneys contributed to the church, and together with the treasurer, shall count all moneys received at all meetings sponsored by the church, and shall immediately transmit all such moneys to the treasurer. In the absence of the financial secretary at a meeting, a trustee shall serve in his place.

He shall keep separate records of membership dues and all special offerings, and shall at each business meeting of the church submit a written report of all moneys received and transmitted to the treasurer.

He shall, if he receives any contribution outside the church sponsored meetings, give the contributor a receipt.

His records shall be subject to inspection by the auditors at all times.

SEC. 8 — TREASURER — The treasurer shall, together with the financial secretary, count all moneys received at all meetings sponsored by the church, and shall immediately receive the same from the financial secretary, and shall give him a receipt for the same; and shall make disbursements by check as authorized by the church or the board of trustees. The treasurer shall also present a written report of receipts and disbursements to each regular business meeting of the church. In the absence of the treasurer at a meeting, a trustee shall assist the financial secretary in the counting of all moneys.

His records shall be subject to inspection by the auditors at all times.

SEC. 9. — BOARD OF TRUSTEES — The trustees shall exercise proper supervision over church properties and shall submit an inventory of all church properties to the annual meeting of the church. The trustees are not permitted to make disposition of any church property nor to purchase any property for the church except as directed by the church at a business session. Smaller repairs not exceeding seventy-five dollars (\$75.00) in cost may be decided by the trustees.

In the absence of the financial secretary or treasurer at a meeting sponsored by the church, the

trustees shall assist in the counting of all moneys received.

The trustees shall annually elect their own chairman and secretary, and shall if possible, report the results of this election to the next regular business meeting of the church following the annual meeting.

SEC. 10. — BOARD OF DEACONS — The deacons and deaconesses, together with the pastor ex-officio, shall constitute the Board of Deacons and shall meet regularly and shall render a comprehensive report of their activities to the annual business meeting of the congregation.

They shall annually elect their own chairman and secretary-treasurer, and shall if possible, report the results of this election to the next regular business meeting of the church following the annual meeting.

They shall assist the pastor in the spiritual care of the congregation, visit the sick and needy, and absent members. They shall from time to time recommend to the congregation such missionary activities as they deem advisable. The Board of Deacons shall investigate all applicants for membership and report to the congregation as provided in ARTICLE IV, SECTION 2, and in the absence of the pastor provide a pulpit supply. They shall assist the pastor in administering the communion service and in their character should reflect the requirements stated in Acts 6:3 and I Timothy 3:12-13.

SEC. 11. — AUDITORS — Two auditors shall be elected at the annual meeting of the church for a term of one year, who shall at the close of the fiscal year, audit the accounts of the financial secretary and treasurer, and submit a written report to the annual meeting of the church.

ARTICLE VI

TERMS OF OFFICE

SECTION 1.—The chairman, vice-chairman, secretary, assistant secretary, treasurer, financial secretary, and Sunday School Superintendent shall be elected for terms of one year, and shall be eligible to re-election for two successive years, and after a lapse of one year shall again be eligible for said office.

SEC. 2.—The deacons shall be elected for terms of three years and in such manner that one deacon is elected each year. The deaconesses shall be elected for terms of three years and in such manner that one deaconess is elected each year.

SEC. 3.—The trustees shall be elected for terms of three years and in such manner that one or two trustees shall be elected each year.

SEC. 4.—No member shall be elected to the office of trustee, deacon or deaconess for more than three full terms in succession, but shall be eligible to re-election to said offices after a lapse of one year after serving three full terms.

ARTICLE VII

PASTOR

SECTION 1.—The choice of a pastor, when a vacancy occurs, shall be made by the congregation at a meeting called for that purpose and which has been announced at the public services during the last two previous Sundays. When the congregation is ready to vote on selection of pastor, a vote shall be taken by secret ballot, and the candidate who receives a two-third majority of the votes of the meeting shall be elected provided at least one-third of the total number of members be present at said meeting. When a choice of pastor has been made by the congregation, the

secretary shall in the name of the church extend a call to such pastor, setting forth fully the terms and conditions of the call. The secretary shall also transmit to the candidate a copy of the constitution of the church. If the call is accepted as tendered, the new pastor shall so notify the congregation in writing to be preserved in the records of the church.

SEC. 2. — It shall be the duty of the pastor with the aid of the board of deacons, to take charge of the spiritual nurture of the church, to oversee the Christian instruction of the children and the young people, to preach the word of God clearly and candidly, and to perform the regular pastoral functions. As far as his time and strength permit, he shall visit the sick and the needy, and without partiality manifest his love and sympathy. The pastor shall not absent himself from the field without consent of the church board. He shall make detailed report of his work to the annual meeting.

SEC. 3. — Complaints against the pastor shall not be taken up for consideration except upon testimony of at least two witnesses and shall first be considered by the deacon board. Should the pastor actually be in error in doctrine or practice, the deacon board shall in humility and love admonish him. If the admonition of the deacon board has no effect, the matter shall be placed before the congregation for further action. If the pastor does not heed the congregation, he may summarily be dismissed without notice but he shall receive pay for the time he has served the church and to the end of the month of dismissal. In all other cases the pastorate may be terminated upon three months advance notice by either party.

ARTICLE VIII

MEETINGS

SECTION 1. — This church shall have business meetings at stated intervals and an annual business meeting as near to January 1st as may be found practical, the exact time to be determined by the preceding regular business meeting. At this annual business meeting, written reports shall be submitted by the pastor and the departments of the church, and members of the church board and other officers for the ensuing year shall be elected.

SEC. 2. — Special business meetings may be called by the chairman of the church or a majority of the church board.

SEC. 3. — The church board, the Board of Deacons, and the Board of Trustees shall meet as occasion demands.

ARTICLE IX

PROPERTY RIGHTS

In the case of dissolution of the church, all the property of the church shall become the property of the last remaining members.

ARTICLE X

QUORUM

Twenty percent of the members of the church, including two officers, shall constitute a quorum of the church at the annual meeting, and ten percent of the members of the church, including two officers, shall constitute a quorum at all other business meetings.

ARTICLE XI

INTER-CHURCH ORGANIZATIONS

No organization or groups within the church shall be allowed to use the name of the church nor

use the church property for their meetings or activities unless authorized and approved by the congregation. Where such organizations adopt a constitution or by-laws, a copy thereof shall be deposited with the church secretary. All inter-church groups or organizations shall render full report of their activities to the annual meeting each year and shall not collect or solicit funds in the name of the church unless previously authorized so to do by the Church Board or the congregation. All inter-church organizations shall be subject to supervision by the congregation to the end that complete harmony and cooperation may prevail and the objective of this church as stated in this constitution, may be attained.

ARTICLE XII

CHANGES IN THE CONSTITUTION

Amendments to this constitution can be adopted only by a two-third majority vote at an annual business meeting of the church, and must be presented in written form at the preceding annual meeting.

ARTICLE XIII

ADOPTION OF BY-LAWS

By-laws not in conflict with this constitution may be adopted at any regular business meeting or at a special meeting called for that purpose by a two-thirds majority vote of all members present, but a proposed by-law or amendment shall first be presented in writing at a preceding regular business meeting.