

# CONSTITUTION

of

The

Bethlehem Covenant Church

*Adopted.*

WARREN, PA.

**CONSTITUTION**  
**OF THE**  
**BETHLEHEM COVENANT CHURCH**  
**OF**  
**WARREN, PENNSYLVANIA**  
**ADOPTED APRIL 11, 1972**

ARTICLE I

NAME

The name of this church shall be the Bethlehem Covenant Church of Warren, Pennsylvania. It is a member of the Evangelical Covenant Church of America and its Middle East Conference.

ARTICLE II

CONFESSION OF FAITH

Section 1. 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

winning of unbelievers for Christ, and for the propagation 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 or diaconate after the completion of either a confirmation or inquirer's class of this church. The extent of the inquirer's class shall be determined by the pastor and the diaconate.

Applicants from other Christian churches shall submit letters of transfer, when available, to the pastor or diaconate, who shall act upon the application according to the first paragraph of this section.

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 willfully neglect their duties and have not attended a service of this church for one year shall be contacted by the diaconate. Members who have not contributed to the support of this church for one year

shall be contacted by the diaconate. If their negligence continues for two years, their names shall be placed on the inactive membership list. Persons on the inactive membership list will not have the rights of membership and shall be so notified by the diaconate.

Sec. 5. - Erring Members - A member known to err in doctrine or conduct shall be admonished according to the procedure in Matthew 18:15-18 and Galations 6:1. A fellow member having knowledge of such error shall in the spirit of Christian love seek to restore him. If he does not heed this counsel, the matter shall be brought to the attention of the diaconate, who shall in meekness and gentleness seek to restore him. If he fails to heed the counsel of the diaconate, his error shall be brought before the business meeting of the church. Discipline shall then be administered in the spirit of Christ with due regard for the welfare of the individual as well as the church.

Sec. 6. - Transfer of Members - A member who desires to move his membership 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, an assistant treasurer, three deacons, three deaconesses, five trustees, a superintendent of the Sunday School and Christian Education Board of three members. These officers together with the Pastor, Covenant Women chairwoman, Covenant Men chairman, and the High League chairman or chairwoman 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 re-

ceipt 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. — ASSISTANT TREASURER — The assistant treasurer shall aid the treasurer in the performance of his duties and shall assume these duties in the absence of the treasurer.

Sec. 10 — 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 business meetings of the church.

## ARTICLE VI

### BOARDS

The general administration of the church shall be vested in a body known as the Church Board. This shall consist of the chairman, vice-chairman, secretary, assistant secretary, financial secretary, treasurer, assistant treasurer, diaconate, board of trustees, Sunday School superintendent and Board of Christian Education. The pastor and chairman or the chairwoman of the High League, Covenant Men and Covenant Women shall be ex-officio members.

Sec. 1. — CHURCH BOARD — The board in its administrative responsibility shall function within the limitations set by the congregation and in general shall have the following responsibilities:

- a. Receive monthly reports from the church treasurer, the trustees, the diaconate, and the Board of Christian Education.
- b. Study the needs of the church and make recommendations for the progress and welfare of the church.

- c. Coordinate and control the church calendar.
- d. Grant the use of church facilities for appropriate events.
- e. Take such action as is deemed necessary in cases of special emergency.
- f. Consider requests for absence by salaried personnel and make suitable arrangements.
- g. Make nominal expenditures as they deem necessary to carry out their responsibilities, the maximum amount of each individual expenditure shall be set at an annual business meeting of the congregation and shall remain in effect until revised by the congregation at another annual business meeting.

All decisions and recommendations shall be recorded by the secretary and reported to the next business meeting of the church.

Sec. 2. — 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 meeting.

The trustees shall be authorized to make such nominal expenditures as they deem necessary to carry out their responsibilities. The maximum amount of each individual expenditure shall be set at an annual business meeting of the congregation and shall remain in effect until revised by the congregation at another annual business meeting.

In the absence of the financial secretary or the 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. 3. — 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 be responsible for and exercise supervision over the entire spiritual life of the church. This shall include evangelism, the missionary efforts of the church and together with the Pastor, visiting the sick and needy and absent members. As the need arises, they shall call on members of the congregation to assist them in carrying out these duties. They shall be responsible for the aiding and counseling of the Pastor in the performance of all his duties.

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. They shall report to the quarterly meetings with the names of new members or members who have left the church.

The diaconate shall be authorized to make nominal expenditures as they deem necessary to carry out their responsibilities. The maximum amount of each individual expenditure shall be set at an annual business meeting of the congregation and shall remain in effect until revised by the congregation at another annual business meeting.

Sec. 4. — BOARD of CHRISTIAN EDUCATION — The Board of Christian Education shall consist of three members plus the Sunday School Superintendent. It shall be responsible for the educational program of the church, its curriculum, Vacation Bible School, summer camp, teachers, counselors and leaders. The Board of Christian Education shall choose its own chairman, vice-chairman and secretary. The board



has the authority to spend Sunday School money as deemed necessary.

## ARTICLE VII

### TERMS OF OFFICE

Section 1 - The chairman, vice-chairman, secretary, assistant secretary, treasurer, assistant treasurer, financial secretary, and Sunday School Superintendent shall be elected for terms of one year, and shall be eligible for 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, deaconess or Board of Christian Education for more than three full terms in succession, but shall be eligible to re-election to said office after a lapse of one year after serving three full terms. The members of the Board of Christian Education shall be elected for a three year term with one member being elected each year.

## ARTICLE VIII

### 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 a 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. — The pastor of the church shall meet the New Testament requirements of his office and shall be a member in good standing in the Covenant Ministerium. He shall by virtue of his call be a member of the church and an ex-officio member of the official board and the boards of all organizations within the church.

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 chairman of the church, or the chairman of the Deacon Board in the absence of the chairman of the church. He shall make a detailed report of his work to the annual meeting.

Sec. 3 — Complaints against the pastor shall not be taken up for consideration except upon the testimony of at least two witnesses and shall first be considered by the deacon board. Should the pastor 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 IX

### MEETINGS

Section 1. — This church shall have business meetings at stated intervals and at least quarterly 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 X

### PROPERTY RIGHTS

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 which abides by this constitution.

The congregation may dissolve in the following manner:

- a. By holding a duly called congregational meeting at either the recommendation of the official board, or by a petition of one-fourth of the members in good standing. Such a meeting shall be announced according to time, place and purpose at least sixty days in advance.
- b. By securing a three-quarters majority vote to dissolve.
- c. Unless a specific motion is offered and passed to the contrary at this meeting, the property and all assets of the church shall become the property of the Evangelical Covenant Church of America and the Middle East Conference.

## ARTICLE XI

### QUORUM

Twenty percent of the members of the church, including two officers, shall constitute a quorum

at all business meetings. The quorum for all board and committee meetings shall be fifty per cent of its members.

## ARTICLE XII

### 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 XIII

### CHANGES IN THE CONSTITUTION

Amendments to this constitution may 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 XIV

### 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.

