

Constitution and Bylaws



Adopted by the membership on August 29, 2021.

Amended by the membership on September 18, 2022.

Preamble

Now therefore we, the members of HOPE BIBLE FELLOWSHIP, do hereby organize ourselves in accord with the IL Nonprofit Corporation Act and adopt this Constitution as our articles of governance, to be interpreted at all times to reflect the character of and bring glory to Jesus Christ, as revealed in the Holy Bible and articulated in the standards set forth in the Statement of Faith and Covenant of this church.

Article 1: Name

The name of this church is **HOPE BIBLE FELLOWSHIP** .

Article 2: Purpose and Values

This church exists by the grace of God, for the glory of God, which shall be the ultimate purpose in all its activities. This church glorifies God by loving Him and obeying His commands through:

- Worshipping Him;
- Equipping the saints through Bible instruction and discipleship;
- Proclaiming the gospel of Jesus Christ through preaching, personal evangelism, works of mercy, and any other means consistent with the teachings of Holy Scripture;
- Encouraging, supporting, and participating in missions work, local, domestic, and international;
- Administering the ordinances of baptism and communion;
- Encouraging Biblical fellowship among believers;
- Serving other individuals, families, and churches by providing for physical, emotional, and spiritual needs, in the name of Jesus Christ.

Article 3: Statement of Faith

We are in full agreement with the statement of faith of the Evangelical Free Church of America which states:

**EFCA Statement of Faith
Adopted by the Conference on June 19, 2019**

The Evangelical Free Church of America is an association of autonomous churches united around these theological convictions:

God

1. We believe in one God, Creator of all things, holy, infinitely perfect, and eternally existing in a loving unity of three equally divine Persons: the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. Having limitless knowledge and sovereign power, God has graciously purposed from eternity to redeem a people for Himself and to make all things new for His own glory.

The Bible

2. We believe that God has spoken in the Scriptures, both Old and New Testaments, through the words of human authors. As the verbally inspired Word of God, the Bible is without error in the original writings, the complete revelation of His will for salvation, and the ultimate authority by which every realm of human knowledge and endeavor should be judged. Therefore, it is to be believed in all that it teaches, obeyed in all that it requires, and trusted in all that it promises.

The Human Condition

3. We believe that God created Adam and Eve in His image, but they sinned when tempted by Satan. In union with Adam, human beings are sinners by nature and by choice, alienated from God, and under His wrath. Only through God's saving work in Jesus Christ can we be rescued, reconciled and renewed.

Jesus Christ

4. We believe that Jesus Christ is God incarnate, fully God and fully man, one Person in two natures. Jesus—Israel's promised Messiah—was conceived through the Holy Spirit and born of the virgin Mary. He lived a sinless life, was crucified under Pontius Pilate, arose bodily from the dead, ascended into heaven and sits at the right hand of God the Father as our High Priest and Advocate.

The Work of Christ

5. We believe that Jesus Christ, as our representative and substitute, shed His blood on the cross as the perfect, all-sufficient sacrifice for our sins. His atoning death and victorious resurrection constitute the only ground for salvation.

The Holy Spirit

6. We believe that the Holy Spirit, in all that He does, glorifies the Lord Jesus Christ. He convicts the world of its guilt. He regenerates sinners, and in Him they are baptized into union with Christ and adopted as heirs in the family of God. He also indwells, illuminates, guides, equips and empowers believers for Christ-like living and service.

The Church

7. We believe that the true church comprises all who have been justified by God's grace through faith alone in Christ alone. They are united by the Holy Spirit in the body of Christ, of which He is the Head. The true church is manifest in local churches, whose membership should be composed only of believers. The Lord Jesus mandated two ordinances, baptism and the Lord's Supper, which visibly and tangibly express the gospel. Though they are not the means of salvation, when celebrated by the church in genuine faith, these ordinances confirm and nourish the believer.

Christian Living

8. We believe that God's justifying grace must not be separated from His sanctifying power and purpose. God commands us to love Him supremely and others sacrificially, and to live out our faith with care for one another, compassion toward the poor and justice for the oppressed. With God's Word, the Spirit's power, and fervent prayer in Christ's name, we are to combat the spiritual forces of evil. In obedience to Christ's commission, we are to make disciples among all people, always bearing witness to the gospel in word and deed.

Christ's Return

9. We believe in the personal, bodily and glorious return of our Lord Jesus Christ. The coming of Christ, at a time known only to God, demands constant expectancy and, as our blessed hope, motivates the believer to godly living, sacrificial service and energetic mission.

Response and Eternal Destiny

10. We believe that God commands everyone everywhere to believe the gospel by turning to Him in repentance and receiving the Lord Jesus Christ. We believe that God will raise the dead bodily and judge the world, assigning the unbeliever to condemnation and eternal conscious punishment and the believer to eternal blessedness and joy with the Lord in the new heaven and the new earth, to the praise of His glorious grace. Amen.

Hope Bible Fellowship Additional Statement on Marriage and Sexuality

Regarding marriage and sexuality, Hope Bible Fellowship believes that the term "marriage" has only one meaning and that meaning is marriage sanctioned by God which joins one biological man and one biological woman in a single, exclusive union, as delineated in Scripture (Genesis 2: 18-25; Matthew 19: 4-6). Hope Bible Fellowship believes that God intends sexual intimacy to only occur between a man and a woman who are married to each other. Hope Bible Fellowship believes that any form of sexual immorality, such as adultery, fornication, homosexuality, bisexual conduct, bestiality, incest, pornography or any attempt to change one's sex, or disagreement with one's biological sex, is sinful and offensive to God (Romans 1: 24 – 2:2). Hope Bible Fellowship believes that in order to preserve the function and integrity of the church as the local Body of Christ, and to provide a biblical role model to the church members and the community, it is imperative that all persons employed by the church in any capacity, or who serve as volunteers, should abide by and agree to this doctrinal statement on marriage and sexuality and conduct themselves accordingly. Furthermore, in compliance with these doctrinal beliefs, the property and facilities of Hope Bible Fellowship shall only be utilized by all such peoples who hold to and practice these doctrinal beliefs. Therefore, if any one person(s) desires to use the property and facilities of Hope Bible Fellowship and yet be in direct violation of upholding the doctrinal beliefs of marriage and

sexuality contained herein, he or she will not be permitted to use the property and facilities, which includes but is not limited to marriage ceremonies, marriage retreats, and / or marriage counseling. This is not to discriminate against an individual based upon his or her sexual orientation or marital status, but rather this is a statute of Hope Bible Fellowship to obey God in religious freedom so as to abide by such doctrinal beliefs. Although opposition to comply with the practice of these doctrinal beliefs of marriage and sexuality is to sin against God, Hope Bible believes that God offers redemption and restoration to all who confess and forsake their sin, seeking His mercy and forgiveness through Jesus Christ.

Constitution

Article 4: Membership

SECTION 1: QUALIFICATIONS

To qualify for membership in this church, a person must be a believer in Jesus Christ who gives evidence of regeneration, who has been baptized by immersion, following his or her regeneration, and who wholeheartedly believes in the Christian faith as revealed in the Bible. Each member must agree to submit to the teaching of scripture as expressed in the Statement of Faith and must promise to keep the commitments expressed in the Membership Covenant. The elders shall be responsible for determining each person's qualification for membership. In making this determination, they may rely on a person's profession of faith, or evidence of faith, as the elders deem appropriate.

SECTION 2: ADMISSION OF MEMBERS

To be admitted into church membership, prospective members shall be recommended by the elders for admission and accepted by vote of the members at any regular or special meeting of the members, and shall at that point relinquish their membership in other churches.

SECTION 3: DUTIES AND PRIVILEGES OF MEMBERSHIP

In accord with the duties enumerated in the Membership Covenant, each member shall be privileged and expected to participate in and contribute to the ministry and life of the church, consistent with God's leading and with the gifts, time, and material resources each has received from God. Those who are members of this congregation shall be entitled to serve in all appropriate ministries of the church. It is our desire to encourage non-members and those pursuing membership to serve as well. They may serve in specific roles of most ministries alongside serving members. Non-members and those pursuing membership may also serve in areas normally reserved for members with special permission from the elders.

Under Christ this congregation is governed by its members. Therefore, it is the privilege and responsibility of members to attend all members' meetings and vote on the election of officers, on decisions regarding membership status, and on the annual budget.

Constitution

SECTION 4: INACTIVE MEMBERSHIP

Unless providentially hindered, members who are absent from Sunday morning worship gatherings for 12 consecutive weeks will be considered inactive members. Inactive members may not vote in members' meetings, nor hold any office in the church. The elders will seek to meet with inactive members, encourage their full participation in the gatherings and work of the church and will determine when/if the duties and privileges of full membership can be restored.

SECTION 5: ASSOCIATE MEMBERSHIP

Students and others temporarily residing in the area who are members of an evangelical church may apply for associate membership for the purpose of uniting with other believers for worship, ministry, accountability, and encouragement. Associate members retain membership at their home church. A letter of commendation will be sought from the applicant's home church.

Duties and privileges of associate members are the same as for other members except that:

- when absent from the Dixon area for extended periods of time they are released from the responsibility to attend our church services;
- while they will be encouraged to participate in members' meetings they will not be eligible to stand for any office or to vote on any matters.

Termination of associate membership as a disciplinary measure will be as it is for other members, except that the elders shall notify the pastor or elders of the home church of that termination. Associate membership will normally terminate immediately upon the ending of the period of temporary residence in the Chicago area.

SECTION 6: CHURCH DISCIPLINE

Any member consistently neglectful of his or her duties or unrepentantly guilty of conduct by which the name of our Lord Jesus Christ may be dishonored, and so opposing the welfare of the church, shall be subject to the admonition of the elders and the discipline of the church, according to the instructions of our Lord in Matthew 18:15–17 and the example of scripture. Church discipline, then, should ordinarily be contemplated after individual private admonition has failed.

Church discipline can include admonition by the elders or congregation, suspension from communion for a definite period, deposition from office, and excommunication (see Matthew 18:15–17; 2 Thessalonians 3:14–15; 1 Timothy 5:19–20; 1 Corinthians 5:4–5).

Constitution

The purpose of such discipline should be:

- **For the repentance, reconciliation, and spiritual growth of the individual disciplined** (see Proverbs 15:5; 29:15; I Corinthians 4:14; Ephesians 6:4; I Timothy 3:4–5; Hebrews 12:1–11; Psalm 119:115; 141:5; Proverbs 17:10; 25:12; 27:5; Ecclesiastes 7:5; Matthew 7:26–27; 18:15–17; Luke 17:3; Acts 2:40; I Corinthians 5:5; Galatians 6:1–5; II Thessalonians 3:6, 14–15; I Timothy 1:20; Titus 1:13–14; James 1:22);
- **For the instruction in righteousness and good of other Christians, as an example to them** (see Proverbs 13:20; Romans 15:14; I Corinthians 5:11; 15:33; Colossians 3:16; I Thessalonians 5:14 [note this is written to the whole church, not just to leaders]; I Timothy 5:20; Titus 1:11; Hebrews 10:24–25);
- **For the purity of the church as a whole** (see I Corinthians 5:6–7; II Corinthians 13:10; Ephesians 5:27; II John 10; Jude 24; Revelation 21:2);
- **For the good of our corporate witness to non-Christians** (see Proverbs 28:7; Matthew 5:13–16; John 13:35; Acts 5:1–14; Ephesians 5:11; I Timothy 3:7; II Peter 2:2; I John 3:10); and
- **Supremely for the glory of God by reflecting His holy character** (see Deuteronomy 5:11; I Kings 11:2; II Chronicles 19:2; Ezra 6:21; Nehemiah 9:2; Isaiah 52:11; Ezekiel 36:20; Matthew 5:16; John 15:8; 18:17, 25; Romans 2:24; 15:5–6; II Corinthians 6:14–7:1; Ephesians 1:4; 5:27; I Peter 2:12).

SECTION 7:

TERMINATION OF MEMBERSHIP

Termination of membership shall be recognized by the church following the death or voluntary resignation of any church member unless church discipline has been initiated. Membership may be terminated as an act of church discipline at the recommendation of the elders and with the vote of two-thirds of the members at any regular or special members' meeting. The request or recommendation to terminate membership must be presented to the church at a regular or special members' meeting, and then be voted on at the next regular or special members' meeting.

Article 5: Meetings

SECTION 1:

WORSHIP MEETINGS

Worship services shall be held each Lord's Day (Sunday) and may be held throughout the week as the church determines.

Constitution

SECTION 2: MEMBERS' MEETINGS

In every meeting together, members shall act in that spirit of mutual trust, openness, and loving consideration which is appropriate within the body of our Lord Jesus Christ.

There shall be a regular members' meeting quarterly, at some time apart from a public worship service agreed upon by the membership.

An elder designated by the elders shall preside as moderator at all members' meetings of the church. The elders shall see that the stated meetings of the church are regularly held and that required reports are submitted to the church by the responsible members.

Provided all constitutional provisions for notification have been met, a quorum shall be understood to be met by those members present, and as determined by the elders. All votes shall be tallied based on the number of votes cast. If providentially hindered, members in good standing may vote in absentia.

A budget shall be approved by the membership at a members' meeting no more than three months nor less than one month prior to the start of the fiscal year.

At any regular or special members' meeting, officers may be elected and positions filled as needed, so long as all relevant constitutional requirements have been met.

Special members' meetings may be called as required by the elders. The date, time, and purpose of any special meeting shall be announced at all public services of the church within two weeks preceding the meeting.

Article 6: Officers

SECTION 1: SUMMARY

The Biblical offices in the church are elders and deacons. In addition, our church recognizes the administrative positions under this constitution of clerk and treasurer. All officers must be members of this church prior to assuming their responsibilities.

SECTION 2: ELDERS

Depending upon the availability and willingness of biblically qualified men, the elders shall be comprised of a minimum of three men who satisfy the qualifications for the office of elder set forth in I Timothy 3:1-7 and Titus 1:6-9. In the event that three qualified men are not present in the congregation, the church elders will be comprised of the qualified and duly called elders that are currently in the church membership.

Upon congregational approval of this document, the pastor and congregation will begin working toward growing the plurality of elders as qualified men are available and willing. The goal will be to work up to a minimum of three elders and then maintain this number. If at any time due to resignations, relocations, etc, the number of elders falls below three, a plan will be put in place to begin moving toward growing the number of elders back to the minimum as the availability and willingness of qualified men allows. No more than half of the men serving in eldership may be in the regular pay of the church, and no elder shall hold the office of deacon during his tenure.

Subject to the will of the congregation, the elders shall oversee the ministry and resources of the church. In keeping with the principles set forth in Acts 6:1–6 and I Peter 5:1–4, the elders shall devote their time to prayer, the ministry of the Word (by teaching and encouraging sound doctrine), and shepherding God’s flock.

The church shall recognize men gifted and willing to serve in this calling, in accordance with the constitutional provisions on elections. These men shall be received as gifts of Christ to His church and set apart as elders.

An elder’s term of office may be terminated by resignation or by dismissal. Any two members with reason to believe that an elder should be dismissed should express such concern to the elders and, if need be, to the congregation. Any such action shall be done in accordance with the instructions of our Lord in Matthew 18:15–17 and I Timothy 5:17–21. Any of the elders may be dismissed by a two-thirds vote of the members at any members’ meeting of the church.

The elders shall take particular responsibility to examine and instruct prospective members, examine and recommend all prospective candidates for offices and positions, oversee the work of the deacons and appointed church agents and committees, conduct worship services, administer the ordinances of baptism and communion, equip the membership for the work of the ministry, encourage sound doctrine and practice, admonish and correct error, oversee the process of church discipline, coordinate and promote the ministries of the church, and mobilize the church for world missions. The elders are further to ensure that all who minister the Word to the congregation, including outside speakers, share our fundamental convictions.

The elders may establish ministry positions or committees to assist them in fulfilling their responsibilities. The elders may also propose funding for new paid staff positions. The membership shall approve all candidates to fill the positions of lead and associate pastor. The scope and approval of job descriptions for any staff position shall reside in the hands of those with hiring authority for that position.

The elders shall have primary responsibility for the employment, supervision, and evaluation of staff members. This responsibility may, on a case-by-case basis, be delegated to another staff member.

The elders shall elect a chairman for all elders’ meetings and shall also elect one of their number to serve as moderator of members’ meetings. For purposes of compliance with the nonprofit corporation laws of the State of Illinois, the elders shall elect one of their number to serve as the president of the corporation.

Each year the elders shall present to the church an annual, itemized budget at a special or regular members’ meeting. This budget shall be presented for discussion at that time and called up for a vote at the following members’ meeting. No money shall be solicited by or on behalf of the church or any of its ministries without the approval of the elders and deacons.

Constitution

The elders will seek, at all times, to work together in unanimous agreement concerning the direction and work of the church. Issues will only be brought to the congregation for consideration when all elders are in agreement.

SECTION 3: THE LEAD PASTOR

The lead pastor shall be an elder. He shall perform the duties of an elder described in Section 2, above, and shall be recognized by the church as particularly gifted and called to the full-time ministry of preaching and teaching.

His call shall be defined as per Article 6, Section 3.

He shall preach on the Lord's Day, oversee the ordinances of baptism and communion, and perform such other duties as usually pertain to that office, or as set forth in the constitution.

In the absence or incapacity of the lead pastor the elders shall assume responsibility for his duties, any of which can be delegated.

SECTION 4: ASSOCIATE PASTORS

The church may call additional pastors whose relationship to the lead pastor is that of associate.

An associate pastor shall be an elder. He shall perform the duties of an elder described in Section 2, above, and shall be recognized by the church as particularly gifted and called to vocational ministry.

His call shall be defined as per Article 6, Section 4.

He shall assist the lead pastor in the performance of his regular duties and shall perform any other duties as usually pertain to the office of pastor, or as set forth in the constitution, or which may be specifically assigned to him by the congregation.

In the absence or incapacity of the lead pastor for defined periods of time (such as sabbatical or illness), the associate pastor(s) shall assume the responsibility for his duties under the oversight of the elders.

SECTION 5: DEACONS

The office of deacon is described in I Timothy 3:8–13 and Acts 6:1–7. The church shall recognize, in accordance with the constitutional provisions on elections, men who are giving of themselves in service to the church, and who possess particular gifts of service. These members

Constitution

shall be received as gifts of Christ to His church and set apart as deacons. This recognition shall be reaffirmed by the church triennially.

Deacons shall care for the temporal needs of members, attend to the accommodations for public worship, and encourage and support those able to help others and those with gifts of administration.

The deacons shall receive, hold, and disburse a fund for benevolence, with approval from the elders. Only total receipts and disbursements will be reported to the church.

The deacons, with the agreement of the elders, may establish unpaid administrative positions or committees of members to assist them in fulfilling their responsibilities in the church.

SECTION 6: CLERK

It shall be the duty of the clerk to record the minutes of all regular and special members' meetings of the church, to preserve an accurate roll of the membership, and to render reports as requested by the pastor, the elders, the deacons, or the church.

The clerk, a member in good standing, shall be nominated by the elders and elected by the congregation to serve a term of one year. The clerk may be reaffirmed by the church annually.

In the absence or incapacity of the clerk the elders shall appoint a member to perform the duties of the church clerk.

For purposes of compliance with the nonprofit corporation laws of the State of Illinois, the clerk shall serve as the secretary of the corporation.

The church clerk shall ensure that dated copies of the most recent revision of this constitution shall be available for all church members.

SECTION 7: TREASURER

The treasurer, who shall not be paid church staff member, shall ensure that all funds and securities of the church are properly secured in such banks, financial institutions, or depositories as appropriate. The treasurer shall also be responsible for presenting regular reports of the account balances, revenues and expenses of the church at each members' meeting. The responsibility may be delegated with the approval of the elders. The treasurer shall also ensure that full and accurate accounts of receipts and disbursements are kept in books belonging to the church, and that adequate controls are implemented to guarantee that all funds belonging to the church are appropriately handled by any officer, employee, or agent of the church. The treasurer shall render to the elders annually, or whenever they may require it, an account of all transactions as treasurer and of the financial condition of the church.

Constitution

The treasurer shall be bonded with the church paying the required fee. All other persons who are authorized to sign checks and count receipts shall do so with another church member present.

The treasurer shall be nominated by the elders and elected by the congregation to serve a term of one year. The treasurer may be reaffirmed by the church annually.

Article 7: Elections

SECTION 1: PRINCIPLES

The process for church elections shall be interpreted and carried out to fulfill the following principles:

- **Substantial prayer** , both individually and corporately, should be an integral part of the election process;
- Nominations should proceed with the **support of the elders** ;
- All candidates for church office should be treated with the **grace , kindness , and honesty** appropriate in evaluating fellow members;
- The election process shall express that spirit of **mutual trust , openness , and loving consideration** that is appropriate within the body of our Lord Jesus Christ.

SECTION 2: SELECTION OF OFFICERS

The election of officers shall be held at a members' meeting of the church. Names of nominees to serve as elders, deacons, clerk, or treasurer shall be presented by the elders at a previous members' meeting and the election shall proceed as directed by the moderator.

The elders should seek recommendations and involvement from the general membership in the nomination process. Any member with reason to believe that a nominated candidate is unqualified for an office should express such concern to the elders. Members intending to speak in opposition to a candidate should express their objection to the elders as far in advance as possible before the relevant church members' meeting.

The moderator shall declare elected all men receiving a 75% majority of all votes cast for the office of elder. For all other offices, the moderator shall declare elected all persons receiving a simple majority of all votes cast; abstentions will not be considered as votes cast.

The persons elected shall assume their respective offices upon election, unless another date has been specifically designated.

Constitution

SECTION 3: CALLING OF THE LEAD PASTOR

In the calling of any man to this position, the same basic process of calling an elder must be followed. In addition, however, the church must be given adequate opportunity to assess the preaching gifts of any potential lead pastor and, before being asked to express its judgment, must receive assurance from the elders that, having interviewed the man concerned, they are in no doubt as to his wholehearted assent to the Statement of Faith and Membership Covenant. Notice of the nomination of a man to be elected to membership and called as lead pastor (which shall include, if necessary, election to membership of his wife if he is married) must be given at two Sunday morning services following the nomination, prior to the vote at a members' meeting.

SECTION 4: CALLING OF ASSOCIATE PASTOR

The process of calling an associate pastor shall be the same process as calling the Lead Pastor. See Article 6; Section 3.

Article 8: **Dispute Resolution**

Believing that the Bible commands Christians to make every effort to live at peace and to resolve disputes with each other in private or within the Christian Church (see, e.g., Matthew 18:15–20, I Corinthians 6:1–8), the church shall require its members to resolve conflict among themselves according to biblically based principles, without reliance on the secular courts. Consistent with its call to peacemaking, the church shall encourage the use of biblically based principles and the avoidance of suits of law or equity to resolve disputes between itself and those outside the church, whether Christian or pagan and whether individuals or corporate entities. The elders shall adopt policies and procedures to effect these requirements and aspirations.

Article 9: **Church Ministries and Organizations**

All ministries, programs and organizations of the church shall operate under the oversight of the elders and report regularly to the congregation.

Constitution

Article 10: Amendments

The Statement of Faith and Membership Covenant may be amended by a three-quarters vote of the members present and voting at a members' meeting, provided the amendment shall have been offered in writing at the previous members' meeting, and shall have been announced from the pulpit at church services two successive Sundays prior to such vote.

This constitution may be amended by a two-thirds vote of the members present and voting at a members' meeting, provided the amendment shall have been offered in writing at the previous members' meeting, and shall have been announced from the pulpit at church services two successive Sundays prior to such vote.

Article 11: Church Property Rights, Division, and Dissolution Statement

"This Church shall have the power to receive, either by gift or purchase, and to hold such real, personal or mixed property as is authorized by the laws of the State of Illinois and as is deemed necessary for the business of the Church, and shall have the power to dispose of such property by mortgage, deed or otherwise. All such property shall be in the name of the Church.

"In order to maintain the integrity of Hope Bible Fellowship, when an irreconcilable division occurs within the body which threatens its unity and/or existence, District Leadership, along with other members of the Great Lakes District Board of Directors, has the prerogative of taking the initiative to mediate the situation."

"In case of dissolution of the church organization, the assets shall be assigned to the Great Lakes District Conference of the Evangelical Free Church to enable said conference to renew the work or use the values thereof for further Gospel enterprises. The church shall be considered dissolved if so decided by the church, or when the church has not held an annual meeting for three years, or when less than six members remain."