

CONSTITUTION and BY-LAWS

of the

HARVEST CHRISTIAN FELLOWSHIP Mechanicsville, Virginia

*Adopted by the membership on October 17, 2010
Revised January 10, 2016*

Preamble

Standing in awe of our sovereign Creator whom we serve and whom has, in His providence, brought us to this place, and while acknowledging His working together of all things to advance His Kingdom and bring glory to His holy name in accordance with His perfect will.

Whereas we, the members of Harvest Christian Fellowship, having searched the Holy Scriptures under the guidance of His Spirit, hereby humbly proceed with His aid, to constitute ourselves as an expression of His Church as revealed and spoken of in the Holy Scriptures.

Now therefore we, the members of Harvest Christian Fellowship, do hereby organize ourselves in accord with the non-profit corporation laws of the Commonwealth of Virginia 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 Harvest Christian Fellowship.

Article 2 – Purpose

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 study;
Proclaiming the Gospel of Jesus Christ through preaching and personal evangelism, 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; and,
Serving other individuals, families, and churches by providing for physical, emotional, and spiritual needs, in the name of Jesus Christ.

Article 3 – 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, in obedience to Christ, 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 Church Covenant. Candidates for membership will be required to complete Harvest Christian Fellowship's new member curriculum which will be established and modified as needed by the elders. 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 such other evidence, as the elders deem appropriate.

Section 2 – Admission of Members

To be admitted into church membership, applicants shall be recommended by the elders for admission and accepted by a majority vote of the members at any member's meeting, and shall at that point relinquish their membership in other churches. Members will be given advanced notice of who the applicants are and when the vote will be.

Section 3 – Duties and Privileges of Membership

In accord with the duties enumerated in the Church 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. Only those shall be entitled to serve in the ministries of the church who are members of this congregation; non-members may serve on an ad-hoc basis with the approval of the elders. Notwithstanding, non-members may serve the church for purposes of administration and professional consultation.

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 such other matters as may be submitted to a vote.

Section 4 – On Church Discipline

Any member consistently neglectful of his or her duties or guilty of conduct which is inconsistent with or in opposition to Scripture 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. In Matthew 18:15-17 we read:

“If your brother sins against you go and tell him his fault, between you and him alone. If he listens to you, you have gained your brother. But if he does not listen, take one or two others along with you, that every charge may be established by the evidence of two or three witnesses. If he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church. And if he refuses to listen even to the church, let him be to you as a Gentile and a tax collector.”

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; II Thessalonians 3:14-15; I Timothy 5:19-20; I Corinthians 5:4-5).

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; II Thessalonians 3:6, 14-15; I Timothy 1:20; Titus 1:13-14; and 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; 2 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 5 – Termination of Membership

The church shall recognize the termination of a person's membership following his or her death, and may do so after he or she has voluntarily resigned or joined with another church. Membership may also be terminated as an act of church discipline in conjunction with Matthew 18:15-17 as listed above (ordinarily, but not necessarily, at the recommendation of the elders) upon the vote of at least two-thirds of the votes cast at any member's meeting. Abstentions will not be considered as votes casted.

The church shall have authority to refuse a member's voluntary resignation or transfer of membership to another church, either for the purpose of proceeding with a process of church discipline, or for any other biblical reason; and a member may not resign his or her membership to avoid the discipline process.

Article 4 – Statement of Faith

All members of Harvest Christian Fellowship will be required to sign a copy of the Statement of Faith.

Article 5 – Meetings

Section 1 – Worship Meetings

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

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 members' meetings, as deemed necessary by the Elder body, at some time apart from a public worship service. The date, time, and purpose of any meeting shall be announced at all public services of the church two weeks preceding the meeting.

An elder designated by the elders shall preside as a moderator at all members' meetings of the church.

Provided all constitutional provisions for notification have been met, a quorum shall be understood to be met by those members present. All votes shall be tallied based on the number of votes cast by members present. Abstentions will not be considered as votes cast.

A detailed financial report shall be provided to the membership at every members' meeting and will be available for the review of any member at any time between members' meetings.

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

Members' meetings may be called as required by the elders, or at the written request, submitted to the elders, of twenty percent of the voting membership. In the event of a written request from the members, the elders shall call a special meeting to be held within one month of their receipt of the request.

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

The elders shall be comprised of not less than three men who satisfy the qualifications for the office of elder set forth in I Timothy 3:1-7 and Titus 1:6-9. A majority of the active eldership shall be composed of church members not 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. This recognition shall be reaffirmed by the church triennially. After an elder, other than the senior or associate pastor(s), has served two consecutive three-year terms, he may only be elected to the office of elder after at least one year.

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 senior and associate pastor. The scope of 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.

No money shall be solicited by or on behalf of the church or any of its ministries without the approval of the elders.

The elders shall elect a chairman of 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 Commonwealth of Virginia, the elders shall elect one of their number to serve as the president of the corporation.

Section 3- The Senior Pastor

The senior 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 not be subject to the triennial reaffirmation or to the term limitation set out in Article 6, Section 2, for elders. His call shall be defined as per Article 7, Section 3.

He shall preach on the Lord's Day, administer 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 senior 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 senior 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 the full-time ministry of preaching and teaching.

His call shall not be subject to the triennial reaffirmation or to the term limitation set out in Article 6, Section 2, for elders. His call shall be defined as per Article 7, Section 4.

He shall assist the senior 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 senior 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 shall be received as gifts of Christ to His church and set apart as deacons.

They shall be presented by the elders and elected by the church to serve a three-year term, they may serve a second three-year term if presented by the elders and elected by the church. Following two consecutive three-year terms a mandatory one-year of rest is required.

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

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 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 shall be nominated by the elders and elected by the congregation to serve a term of two years and shall be eligible for unlimited subsequent terms provided there is a re-nomination and subsequent re-election.

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

For the purposes of compliance with the nonprofit corporation laws of the Commonwealth of Virginia, 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 an active elder, deacon, or 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 member's 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.

The treasurer shall be nominated by the elders and elected by the congregation to serve a term of two years and shall be eligible for unlimited subsequent terms provided there is a re-nomination and subsequent re-election.

Section 8 – Employees of the Church

Any employee of Harvest Christian Fellowship which is considered ministerial staff shall be a member of the church. Such staff is defined as Senior Pastor, Associate Pastors, Worship Leaders, and Ministry Assistants. Being members, all work conduct, philosophy, and performance shall be in accordance with membership criteria and subject to these criteria. Under these conditions, work conduct, philosophy, and performance inconsistent with these criteria may lead to both initiation of member discipline and loss of employment; and, any circumstances necessitating member discipline, even if not specifically job-related, are grounds for termination of employment.

Regarding internships and temporary positions established to serve the church in a ministerial capacity, these individuals shall not be required to be members of the church; but, they should be in agreement with church beliefs and philosophy as put forth in the Statement of Faith. Violation of these expectations will result in the termination of the position. They will signify this agreement by signing the Statement of Faith and any job description provided.

The church may employ non-members for non-ministerial positions at the recommendation of the Elders. Such positions include, but are not limited to: maintenance, repair, cleaning, sanitation, technical support, service industries, and professional consultation.

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 the previous members' meeting (providing that previous meeting occurred at least eight weeks prior), 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.

Section 3 – Calling of the Senior 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 senior 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 Church Covenant. Notice of the nomination of a man to be elected to membership and called as senior 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

In the calling of any man to the position of associate pastor, 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 associate 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 Church Covenant. Notice of the nomination of a man to be called as associate pastor (which shall include, if necessary, election to membership of him and 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.

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 to resolve disputes between itself and those outside the church, whether Christian or pagan and whether individuals or corporate entities.

Article 9 – Amendments

The Statement of Faith and Church Covenant may be amended by a three-quarters vote of the members present and voting at a members' meeting, provided the amendment is first reviewed by the elders; 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. Abstentions will not be considered as votes cast. Upon amendment of the Statement of Faith or Church Covenant, members will sign the same individually as an acknowledgement and affirmation of the same.

This constitution and by-laws may be amended by a two-thirds vote of the members present and voting at a members' meeting, provided the amendment is first reviewed by the elders; 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. Abstentions will not be considered as votes cast.

The latest revision of this constitution shall continually be available to all church members by the church clerk or by the elders.