

# **New Hope Bible Fellowship Church Covenant, Constitution and By-Laws**

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## Preamble

We the members of New Hope Bible Fellowship hereby adopt and agree to be governed by the following Constitution and By-Laws, which are based on biblical principles. These documents are neither a substitute for nor a supplement of the Word of God. They are, instead, a systematic review of the doctrines and their application to practical matters and shall function as a guide to aid in the application of biblical principles to ensure that this Church may be governed in an orderly manner consistent with the Word of God. The Word of God shall be the first and final authority of all church matters, and any issue whereon this constitution is silent shall be governed by the clear statement of the Word of God. The government of this Church, under the leadership of the Holy Spirit is vested to the body of believers who comprise it and are members of it, whose majority vote shall be final. We look to the Scriptures as the final authority in all matters of faith, church order, and discipline.

## **Church Covenant**

Having been led, as we believe by the Spirit of God, to receive the Lord Jesus Christ as our Savior and on the profession of faith, having been baptized in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, in the presence of God and this Church, most solemnly and joyfully enter into covenant with one another, as a local Church of the body of Christ.

We shall ever seek to allow the Holy Spirit full freedom to do His work of the convicting, converting, cleansing, empowering, teaching, comforting, and guiding. We determine, by the power of the Holy Spirit, that ours shall be a faith that is balanced in every area of life; that we shall maintain a spiritual walk in practical matters as well as spiritual matters. With the help of God we shall strive for our services to be fervent and scriptural and for every member to be a witness, to walk together in Christian love; to strive for the advancement of this church in biblical knowledge, holiness, and comfort; to promote its prosperity and spirituality; to sustain its worship, ordinances, discipline, and doctrines; to contribute cheerfully and regularly to the support of the ministry, the expenses of church, the relief of the poor, and the spread of the Gospel through all nations.

We also endeavor to biblically educate and raise our children in the fear and admonition of the Lord, to direct our families to love and live for Him; to see the salvation of our kindred and acquaintances; to walk circumspectly in the world; to be just in our dealings, faithful in our engagements, and exemplary in our deportment; to avoid all tattling, backbiting, and excessive anger. We further engage to watch over one another in brotherly love; to remember one another in prayer, to aid one another in sickness and distress, to cultivate Christian sympathy in feeling and Christian courtesy in speech; to be slow to take offense, but always ready for reconciliation and mindful of the rules of our Savior to secure it without delay.

## **Constitution**

### **Article I : Name**

The name of this Church shall be New Hope Bible Fellowship.

### **Article II : Purpose**

The purpose of this Church shall be the spreading of the Gospel of Jesus Christ; bringing the unsaved to Christ and strengthening and building fellow believers. It shall seek to attain this end through the public worship of God, the preaching of the Gospel, consistent Christian living by its members, by caring and loving each other as commanded and demonstrated by Jesus Christ, by community benevolence and involvement, personal evangelism, mission endeavors, Christian education.

### **Article III: Cooperation**

This Church shall be independent and self governing, but at the same time, work and cooperate with any other Church or Christian group which honors the Lord Jesus Christ, if such cooperation will lead to the advancement of the Kingdom of God and reach the lost for Christ.

## **Article IV : Doctrinal Statement and Statements of Faith**

This Church accepts the Word of God as the revealed will of God, the all-sufficient rule for faith and practice, and, for the purpose of maintaining general unity, adopts the following statements of faith as our core doctrines:

### Section 1 - The Word of God

We believe the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments are the inspired Word of God, inerrant in the original writings, complete as the revelation of God's will for salvation, and the supreme and final authority in all matters to which they speak.

### Section 2 - The Trinity

We believe in one God, Creator and Sustainer of all things, eternally divine existing in three persons: Father, Son and Holy Spirit; we believe that these are equal in every distinct perfection and they execute distinct but harmonious offices in the work of creation, providence, and redemption.

### Section 3 - God the Father

We believe in God the Father: an infinite, personal Spirit, perfect in holiness, wisdom, power, and love. We believe that He concerns Himself mercifully in the affairs of humanity, that He hears and answers prayer, and that He saves from sin and death all who come to Him through Jesus Christ.

### Section 4 - Jesus Christ

We believe that Jesus Christ is God's eternal Son, who has precisely the same nature, attributes, and perfections as God the Father and God the Holy Spirit. We believe further that He is not only true God, but true man, conceived by the Holy Spirit and born of the virgin Mary. We also believe in His sinless life, His substitutionary atonement, His bodily resurrection from the dead, His ascension into heaven, His priestly intercession on behalf of His people, and His personal, visible, pre-millennial return from heaven.

### Section 5 - The Holy Spirit

We believe in the Holy Spirit, His personality and His work in regeneration, sanctification, and preservation. His ministry is to glorify the Lord Jesus Christ, to implement Christ's work of redeeming the lost, and to empower the believer for godly living and service.

### Section 6 - Man

We believe God originally created persons, male and female, in the image of God and free from sin. We further believe all people are sinners by nature and choice and are spiritually dead. We also believe that those who repent of sin and trust Jesus Christ as Savior are regenerated by the Holy Spirit.

## Section 7 - Salvation

We believe in salvation by grace through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. We further believe that this salvation is based upon the sovereign grace of God, was purchased by Jesus Christ on the cross, and is received by faith, apart from any human merit, works, or ritual. We further believe salvation results in righteous living, good works, and proper social concern.

## Section 8 - The Church

We believe that the Church is the spiritual body of which Christ is the head. We believe that the true Church is composed of all persons who have been regenerated by the Holy Spirit. We believe that this body expresses itself in local assemblies whose members have been immersed upon a credible confession of faith and have associated themselves for worship, for instruction, for evangelism, and for service. We believe the ordinances of the local church are believer's baptism by immersion and the Lord's Supper. We also believe in the interdependence of local churches and the mutual submission of believers to each other in love.

## Section 9 - Separation of Church and State

We believe that each local church is self-governing in function and must be free from interference by any ecclesiastical or political authority. We further believe that every human being is directly responsible to God in matters of faith and life and that each one should be free to worship God according to the dictates of conscience.

## Section 10 - Christian Conduct

We believe that the supreme task of believers is to glorify God in their life and that their conduct should be blameless before the world. We further believe that they should be faithful stewards of their possessions and that they should seek to realize for themselves the full stature of maturity in Christ.

## Section 11 - The Last Things

We believe in the bodily resurrection of the saved and lost, the eternal existence of all people either in heaven or hell, in divine judgment, rewards, and punishments.

## **Article V : Officers**

### Section 1 - Biblical Officers

The biblical officers shall consist of the Pastor and Deacons (we believe that Scripture teaches that these are the only biblical appointed offices of the local church).

## Section 2 - Administrative Officers

Other administrative officers may be authorized as deemed necessary by the Pastor for the proper administration of church business, and satisfy the demands of law. These positions consist of Trustees, Clerk, Treasurer, Sunday School Superintendent, or any other position deemed necessary.

## Section 3 - Official Board

The Official Board, as referenced hereafter, shall be comprised of the Pastor, Deacons, Trustees and other Officers as required by law and necessity. Its composition may be adjusted according to the following:

- In matters of ministry and personal/congregational spiritual needs, the Official Board shall consist of the Pastor and Deacons. If no Deacons are available, then, at the discretion of the Pastor, the Trustees may advise.
- In matters of financial and physical need, the Official Board shall consist of the Pastor, Deacons and Trustees.
- The Treasurer and Other Officers may function as members of the Official Board at the discretion of the Pastor or as needed by law and necessity.

The Pastor and the attendant members of the Official Board shall constitute a quorum at any meeting of the Official Board provided all members of the Official Board have been previously notified of the meeting.

The Pastor, Treasurer, and one other member of the Official Board can function in matters demanding immediate or emergency attention. The Pastor shall report any such actions at the next regular meeting of the Official Board.

## **Article VI : Membership**

The membership of this church shall consist of those who believe on and have trusted Jesus Christ for salvation by faith, are baptized by immersion after salvation and have been recommended and presented by the Pastor or Official Board to the church and have been accepted into fellowship by favorable action of the church. A church meeting to accept a new member may be called, after any church service, by the Pastor, without prior notice.

## **Article VII : Meetings**

### Section 1 – Church Services

Regular services for worship and instruction shall be held every Lord's Day and prayer meeting / Bible study shall be held during one evening of each week. All services may be changed or added at the discretion of the Pastor according to need or ministry.

## Section 2 – Business Meetings of the Church

Business meetings shall be held at least once a year, for budget purposes, at which time a board approved fiscal budget and financial report is presented and reviewed. Other business meetings may be called as deemed necessary by the Pastor for the conducting of church business and informing. Due notice of any church meeting shall be announced at least one Sunday prior to the meeting. Any meeting involving major expenditures must be announced two Sundays before the meeting.

Exceptions are made for approval of members and emergency meetings, and if circumstance will not allow such time. In such an event due diligence shall be made to contact all members in regards to the meeting.

All meetings will use as a guide the Roberts Rules of Order.

### 2A – Voting

All members in good standing, 16 years and older shall have the right to vote at all meetings of the membership, excepting in matters pertaining to the call or dismissal of a Pastor, an encumbering of church property, and dismissal of members due to church discipline. In these matters only members that are 18 years and older shall vote.

The eligible members present shall constitute a quorum.

### 2B – Moderator

The Pastor shall be moderator of all church business meetings. In his absence a representative of the Official Board shall serve as moderator.

### 2C - New Business

Any and all new business to be submitted at a regular business meeting, from a member of the Church, must be presented to the Pastor or Official Board at least two weeks before the church meeting, and must be announced on the Sunday prior to the business meeting. Not all new business items that are offered will be presented if they can be answered or resolved outside of a formal business meeting. No new business will be allowed from the floor at the time of the business meeting unless prior arrangements have been made.

## Section 3 – Other Meetings

All meetings to be held in the church, other than specified services, must be approved by the Pastor.

## Section 4 – Receiving New Members

The granting of letters and receiving new members may be voted upon at any regular scheduled service of the church.

### **Article VIII : Departments and Committees**

All departments and committees shall be subordinate to the Church and shall contribute to the harmony and development of the whole. They shall be under the general supervision of the Official Board, and the Pastor shall be an ex-officio member of all committees and departments.

### **Article IX : Property**

The Church shall have the power to purchase, lease, or otherwise acquire property, support missionaries and missions, raise funds, and do those things necessary to proclaim the Gospel in an adequate manner.

In accordance with the laws of the state of Pennsylvania, ownership of all property shall be vested in the voting membership. Decisions relative to the acquisition or sale of property shall require a majority vote of eligible voters present at a properly called business meeting. The Official Board, if necessary, will act to execute the decision of the Church.

No mortgage may be placed upon the real property nor shall any portion of it be sold without specific vote of the Church.

### **Article X : Dissolution**

Upon the dissolution of this Church as a tax-exempt, non-profit entity, after paying or making provision of the payment of all liabilities of the Church, all assets shall be dissolved to an organization or organizations operated exclusively for charitable, educational, religious, or mission purposes as shall at the time, qualify as an exempt organization under section 501c of the internal revenue code.

Such disposition shall be made by the majority vote of the members present at a specially called meeting. The intent of this paragraph is to prevent the transfer of any surplus funds, in the event of dissolution, for private benefit to an individual and to allow the remaining assets to be used for the continuing work of the Church and the spread of the Gospel.

### **Article XI : Amendments**

The constitution may be amended at any regular business meeting of the Church by majority vote of the members present, providing that pulpit announcement has been made of the proposed amendment on the two Sundays immediately preceding the meeting at which the proposed amendment is to be voted upon.

Proposals for amendment to the constitution shall be submitted to the Official Board who in turn will present it to the church body, if it meets their approval.

Upon ratification of the proposed amendment by the Church, all previous forms of the amended rule or clause are superseded and repealed.

### **Amendment I : Use of the King James Version of the Word of God**

The ratification of this amendment calls for the use of the King James Version of God's Word for the basis for all teaching and preaching within the auspices of the Church. This shall not preclude the use of other versions for reference or by the members and attendees of the Church. Instead, it is intended to direct the members, attendees, and officers of the Church to preach and teach from the aforesaid version as the basis for all instruction.

## **By-Laws**

### **Article I : Duties and Terms of Officers**

#### Section 1 - Pastor

It shall be the duty of the Pastor to have oversight of all the services, function, and spiritual interest of the Church, in accordance with the teaching of the New Testament. He shall have complete and final authority, under God, in any matter directly affecting the spiritual program of the Church. He shall be an ex-officio member of all committees appointed by or upon the authority of the Church. The Pastor is responsible for the teaching and the preaching of the word of God. He shall have complete authority over the Church employees, ministries, and officers.

The Pastor may call any board or committee together for transaction of business.

The Pastor shall devote his time and energies to the Church, and shall receive such compensation as may be fixed by the board. His salary and compensation shall be reviewed yearly and can be changed anytime if need arises. He shall receive such benefit and compensation as set forth by all pay packages.

#### Section 2 - Deacons

The Deacon's position is one of ministry and helps. The Deacons shall aid the Pastor in administration of the Lord's Supper, visitation, visitation of the elderly, sick, the needy, and work and visit those out of the fellowship with the Lord or erring to reclaim them, and the spiritual stimulation of the members of the Church. They shall be watchful over the spiritual work of the Church. They shall be responsible for assisting those who need material help.

They shall be available to assist the Pastor in spiritual advice and guidance pertaining to the congregation, and to assist in business and budget meetings.



The Deacons shall aid the pastor in setting up a mission budget, reviewing membership candidates for offices, and any other duties deemed necessary by the Pastor.

They shall have responsibility to disperse the funds of the Church according to needs of benevolence with approval by the Pastor. The fund shall consist of monies designated as benevolence and up to \$200 of the general fund. Any amount above \$200 must receive approval from the Trustees.

Deacons shall meet as needed. The Pastor or any Deacon may call a special meeting.

### Section 3 - Trustees

Trustees are men who are filled with the Holy Spirit and faith, who love the local church, and who can work together, as a team, for the glory of God, and for the advancement of the church.

It shall be the duty of this committee to take charge of the real property of the Church, keeping the same insured and in repair. As such, this committee shall have the authorization of the Church to spend up to \$1000 for any project. Any project exceeding \$1000 and less than \$1500 will need approval of the Deacons and/or Pastor. Any expenditure, except emergency repairs, than exceed \$1500 must be approved by vote of the Church.

Trustees shall have the authority to act on behalf of the Church for any approved business matters. They shall be responsible for auditing all official financial records of the Church annually if deemed necessary. They shall assist the Pastor and Deacons in financial matters, as deemed necessary.

### Section 4 - Treasurer

The Treasurer shall keep full and accurate accounts of all receipts, expenditure, and transactions. The Treasurer is authorized to pay regular expenses of the Church, and pay all the other expenses, only upon proper authorization of the Pastor or Trustees or Deacons or by vote of the Church.

The Treasurer shall prepare yearly financial reports for the Pastor, officers, and Church. The Treasurer may be required to generate other periodic financial reports.

### Section 5 - Church Clerk

The duties of the church Clerk shall be to keep a correct record of the proceedings of the Church, to take charge of Church records, to keep an accurate register of membership, and to do such other work as pertains to their office.

## **Article II : Election, Terms, and Vacancies of Officers**

The officers of this Church, with exception of the Pastor, shall be chosen from the membership only, and only from those members who are faithful in attendance and loyal to the Church's programs.

All officers of the Church shall be chosen by the Church upon recommendation of the Pastor with advisement from the Official Board as the need arises. Nomination forms for officers will be available to the congregation before elections. Not all nominations will be accepted due to qualifications.

All elected officers are accountable to the Pastor in performance of the appointed responsibilities. Officers may be relieved of their responsibilities any time, for any reasonable cause, by the Pastor. Officers may be added or deleted by the Pastor, as necessary, until the next officer elections.

### Section 1 - Pastor

- The Pastor shall be chosen by vote of the active membership for an indefinite period. The Official Board shall act as the pulpit committee when the Church may be without a Pastor. In the absence of an Official Board, the Church shall appoint, by vote, a pulpit committee. Only such candidates as they recommend, who are of good report, shall be considered for this office. Before being accepted for the pastorate of the Church, any candidate shall submit to the Church in writing a statement of his adherence to the great doctrines of the Scriptures, as stated in the church confession of faith. The pastoral relation may be resolved upon thirty days notice by the Pastor and upon sixty days notice by the Church, or upon shorter notice by mutual consent.
- The Church shall be given no less than two weeks notice before the election of the Pastor.
- The engagement between the Pastor and the Church shall be considered as indefinite and shall be constituted and resolved by 75% vote of the Church.

### Section 2 - Deacons

- The number of Deacons shall be according to need. Neither minimum number nor maximum shall be established.
- Deacons may be added anytime during the year providing proper notice of two weeks is given before any business meeting.
- Deacons elected shall serve a term of two years, and be elected in alternate years. There is no limit to how many terms a deacon may serve.
- Deacon's qualifications will be according to the New Testament standard. (I Tim. 3:8-13)
- Any Deacon vacancy occurring can be allowed to stand open until the next election.

### Section 3 - Trustees

- The number of Trustees shall be according to need and in accordance to the requirements of incorporation.

- They shall be elected yearly, each for a one year term. There is no limit to how many terms a Trustee shall serve.
- Any Trustee vacancy occurring can be allowed to stand open until the next election.

#### Section 4 - Church Clerk

- The church Clerk shall be elected for a two year term.
- A vacancy occurring can be allowed to stand open until the next election.

#### Section 5 - Treasurer

- The Treasurer shall be elected by the Church for a term of two years.
- In the event of a Treasurer's resignation, a replacement can be appointed by the Pastor until the next officer election.

#### Section 6 - Vacancy Coverage

- Pastor - If the office of Pastor is vacant, the duties outlined within this document for the office of Pastor shall be distributed reasonably amongst the Deacons and Trustees to ensure the continued functioning and spiritual welfare of the Church.
- Deacons - If the office of Deacon is vacant, the duties outlined within this document for the office of Deacon shall be distributed reasonably amongst the Pastor and Trustees to ensure the continued functioning and spiritual welfare of the Church.

### **Article III : Membership**

#### Section 1 - Procedure for Reception and Induction

Members may be received one of three ways:

- By baptism by immersion following a profession of faith in Jesus Christ.
- By letter of transfer from other church of like faith and practice.
- By statement of faith of receiving Jesus Christ as Savior and of being baptized by immersion.

All people desiring membership:

- May express their desire by coming forward during any service invitation and informing the Pastor.
- May inform the Pastor or Official Board of their desire at any other time.
- May, at the discretion of the Pastor, have to meet with him and if needed, the Official Board and if available, attend a new membership class before being presented for membership.

#### Section 2 - Duties

It is expected of each member to seek to grow in faith and knowledge of the work of God; to look to the Bible as the final authority for all matter of faith and life, to support and be involved in church ministries, to faithfully attend services and strive to live lives that is pleasing to the Lord; to honor, esteem, and pray for their Pastor; to cherish and love each other according to the guide lines of God's Word; to strive to live a testimony that brings glory to Christ in the world we live.

### Section 3 – Inactive Members

By failing to communicate with the Church, and making no contribution either personal or financial to the Church for a period of 6 months, such a person shall be considered inactive and not be eligible to vote on matters of Church business until restoration of full membership. Full membership is restored after one month of faithful attendance and support or can be removed as in Section 4 below. Any member who has not participated or communicated for a period of one year may at the discretion of the board be removed from the membership rolls of the Church. Exceptions are those who are in the military, missions, school, extended illness, or elderly shut-ins.

### Section 4 - Removal of Members

Member's names may be removed from membership for the following reasons:

- By death.
- By receiving a letter of transfer from another church of like faith. (This shall only be granted to churches not an individual.)
- By personal request that one's name is removed from the rolls of the Church. (If possible request should be received in writing.)
- By removal from the rolls of the Church. (It may be necessary periodically to purge the rolls for organizational and ministry purposes).
- By church discipline.

## **Article IV : Church Discipline**

Members are cautioned to be slow to anger and slow to take offense, remembering always the caution of Gal 6:1. It shall be the purpose of the church to emphasize to its members that every biblical solution should be sought to solve any problems that may arise. The Pastor shall be available for instruction and counsel to resolve any problem. However, in view of the practical command of godly testimony on the part of the member and upon the principles set forth in the Scriptures, this church shall have the right to discipline its members, and if need be, to exclude from membership for any of the following reasons:

1. One who persists in causing division among the brethren and church body
2. Heresy in doctrine – I Tim. 6:3-5; Rom. 16:17-19
3. Gross public immorality in conduct – I Cor. 5:9-13, II Cor. 6:14-17; II Thess. 3:6, I Tim. 5:20

Church discipline should only be applied after much prayer and counsel. It should only be applied after every solution has been sought and all graces applied and after strong consideration of the necessity of said discipline are prayed over. It should only be applied after meeting with the Pastor, and if needed, the Official Board seeking every avenue of forgiveness and testimony of the church body and to help restore the offender to fellowship and forgiveness.

A member guilty of said conduct may be removed from membership by the Pastor, and Official Board, and if necessary, by the voting members of the church body.

All charges against members are to be brought first, before the Pastor, and then if needed, to Official Board. After thorough investigation, if the Official Board is unable to satisfactorily conclude the matter, then they have the responsibility of bringing the matter before the church membership at a weekday meeting. All disciplinary action involving church members being brought before the Church, shall be at a closed meeting of the church membership.

If a member having erred, shall voluntarily confess it to the Pastor, and if deemed necessary, to the Official Board, and manifest repentance, no further proceedings, except as the Pastor and/or Official Board deem advisable, shall be entertained against him.

### **Article V : Amendments**

The By-Laws may be amended at any regular business meeting of the Church by majority vote of the members present, providing that pulpit announcement has been made of the proposed amendment on the two Sundays immediately preceding the meeting at which the proposed amendment is to be voted upon.

Proposals for amendment to the constitution shall be submitted to the Official Board who in turn will present it to the Church, if it meets their approval.

Upon ratification of the proposed amendment by the Church, all previous forms of the amended rule or clause are superseded and repealed.

### **Amendment I : Election, Terms, and Vacancies of Officers**

The ratification of this amendment alters paragraph 2 of Article II of the By-Laws to allow for the nomination of officers via a nominating committee rather than having the nomination based simply upon the recommendation of the Pastor. As such, the paragraph is hereby amended to read as follows:

All officers of the Church shall be chosen by the Church via election ballot at a regular business meeting of the church. The names for nomination will be chosen by a nominating committee and submitted to the church for two weeks prior to the meeting in which the election will take place. The nominating committee will meet annually to select a slate of candidates to fill any standing or upcoming vacancies in the various offices and or committees in the Church. The Nominating Committee shall consist of the Pastor and three additional members selected as follows: one member appointed by and chosen from the members of the Official Board, one member chosen from among the

officers and/or leaders of Church ministries, and one member from the active membership at large.

All other paragraphs of Article II of the By-Laws shall remain as stated.