

# Constitution First Covenant Church Omaha, Nebraska

Adopted ~~Submitted~~ December ~~January~~, 1999 ~~2010~~

## PREAMBLE

~~The Evangelical Covenant Church has its roots in historical Christianity as it emerged in the Protestant Reformation, in the biblical instruction of the Lutheran State Church of Sweden, and in the great spiritual awakenings of the nineteenth century. These three influences have in large measure shaped its development and are to be borne in mind in seeking to understand its distinctive spirit.~~

~~The Covenant Church adheres to the affirmations of the Protestant Reformation regarding the Holy Scriptures, the Old and the New Testament, as the Word of God and the only perfect rule for faith, doctrine, and conduct. It has traditionally valued the historic confessions of the Christian Church, particularly the Apostles Creed, while at the same time it has emphasized the sovereignty of the Word over all creedal interpretations. It has especially cherished the pietistic restatement the doctrine of justification by faith as basic to its dual task of evangelism and Christian nurture, the New Testament emphasis upon personal faith in Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord, the reality of a fellowship of believers which recognizes but transcends theological differences, and the belief in baptism and the Lord's Supper as divinely ordained sacraments of the church. While the denomination comes out of a tradition in which infant baptism has been the primary understanding and practice, the Covenant chooses to respect the biblical positions of both infant and believer baptism equally. The principle of personal freedom, so highly esteemed by the Covenant, is to be distinguished from the individualism that disregards the centrality of the Word of God and the mutual responsibilities and disciplines of the spiritual community.~~

~~This document, which is in harmony with the above preamble, is the constitution and bylaws of the First Evangelical Covenant Church of Omaha, Nebraska~~

(An historical statement from the Preamble of the Constitution and Bylaws of the Evangelical Covenant Church as adopted by the Evangelical Covenant Church in 2002.)

The Evangelical Covenant Church is a communion of congregations gathered by God, united in Christ, and empowered by the Holy Spirit to obey the great commandment and the great commission. It affirms its companionship in faith with other church bodies and all those who fear God and keep God's commandments.

The Evangelical Covenant Church adheres to the affirmations of the Protestant Reformation regarding the Bible. It confesses that the Holy Scripture, the Old and the New Testament, is the Word of God and the only perfect rule for faith, doctrine, and conduct. It affirms the historic

confessions of the Christian Church, particularly the Apostles' Creed and Nicene Creed, while emphasizing the sovereignty of the Word of God over all creedal interpretations.

In continuity with the renewal movements of historic Pietism, the Evangelical Covenant Church especially cherishes the dual emphasis on new birth and new life in Christ, believing that personal faith in Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord is the foundation for our mission of evangelism and Christian nurture. Our common experience of God's grace and love in Jesus Christ continues to sustain the Evangelical Covenant Church as an interdependent body of believers that recognizes but transcends our theological differences.

The Evangelical Covenant Church celebrates two divinely ordained sacraments, baptism and the Lord's Supper. Recognizing the reality of freedom in Christ, and in conscious dependence on the work of the Holy Spirit, we practice both the baptism of infants and believer baptism. The Evangelical Covenant Church embraces this freedom in Christ as a gift that preserves personal conviction, yet guards against an individualism that disregards the centrality of the Word of God and the mutual responsibilities and disciplines of the spiritual community.

The Evangelical Covenant Church has its roots in historical Christianity, the Protestant Reformation, the biblical instruction of the Lutheran Church of Sweden, and the great spiritual awakenings of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. These influences, together with more recent North American renewal movements, continue to shape its development and distinctive spirit. The Evangelical Covenant Church is committed to reaching across boundaries of race, ethnicity, culture, gender, age, and status in the cultivation of communities of life and service.

This document, which is in harmony with the above preamble, is the Constitution and Bylaws of First Evangelical Covenant Church of Omaha, Nebraska.

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## **ARTICLE I NAME**

The name of this church shall be FIRST EVANGELICAL COVENANT CHURCH of Omaha, Nebraska.

## **ARTICLE II AFFILIATION**

The church is a member of The Evangelical Covenant Church and its Midwest Conference and is pledged to work in harmony with the denomination and conference.

## **ARTICLE III CONFESSION of FAITH**

The church believes in the Holy Scriptures, the Old and the New Testament, as the Word of God and the only perfect rule for faith, doctrine, and conduct.

#### **ARTICLE IV PURPOSE**

~~The purpose of this church shall be to unite Christians in fellowship for spiritual development, for the winning of persons to Christ, and for the propagation of the gospel of Jesus Christ, to serve one another, this community, and the world through Christian education, home and world mission, and the institutions conducted by the Evangelical Covenant and its local regional conferences.~~

We covenant to cultivate a community of worship committed to prayer, preaching and study of the Word of God, the celebration of the sacraments, and fellowship across gender, race, age, culture, and class. In so doing, we covenant to equip loving, giving, growing Christians to reach out with the good news of Jesus Christ-- evangelizing the lost, ministering to those in need, and seeking justice for the oppressed.

#### **ARTICLE V MEMBERSHIP**

Membership in the church ~~shall be granted on application~~ is granted as provided in the Bylaws to those who through faith in God's Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, have been born anew to a living hope, have been baptized according to the Holy Scriptures, desire to live a Christian life, and promise to support the total ministry of the church and to share its fellowship and obligations.

#### **ARTICLE VI OFFICERS**

The officers of the church shall be a chair, a vice-chair, a secretary, ~~a vice-secretary, a financial secretary and a treasurer~~ and a financial officer. All officers shall be members of the Lead Team.

#### **ARTICLE VII CHURCH BOARDS GOVERNANCE**

~~The general administration of the church shall be vested in the executive board, the board of trustees, the diaconate, and the board of Christian education and discipleship. Each of these church boards shall report to the congregational business meetings of the church. The executive board shall consist of the pastor(s), the chair, the vice chair, the secretary, the vice secretary, the financial secretary, the treasurer, the chairs of the other church boards, and the chair of Covenant Women Ministries. The executive board shall coordinate the working of the other church boards. Motions to be presented by the other church boards to the congregational business meetings for action must be first considered by the executive board.~~

The authority of the government of this church is vested in its membership acting through duly called congregational meetings. The management, administration and oversight of business and spiritual affairs are delegated by the congregation to appropriate leadership as delineated in the Bylaws. All elected leadership specified in the Bylaws shall be members of the church.

## **ARTICLE VIII PROPERTY**

### Section 1

In order to accomplish the purposes of the church (Article IV), the church shall own and control such property as shall be deemed necessary, and shall also have power and authority to accept and convey title to property, both real and personal, and to receive donations, devises or bequests of real or personal property for the promotion of its work.

### Section 2

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 that abides by the constitution, as determined by the executive board of the conference. In the event of dissolution, the property and all assets of the church shall become and be the property of The Evangelical Covenant Church and the Midwest Conference.

## **ARTICLE IX AMENDMENT**

Amendments in harmony with this constitution and the Model Constitutions for Local Covenant Churches and not in conflict with Covenant principles and policies may be adopted by a two-thirds vote of those present and voting in an annual meeting of the congregation, providing the proposed amendment was presented in written form at the preceding annual meeting. Articles VIII and IX may be amended only with the approval of the executive board of the regional conference.

## **ARTICLE X CONGREGATIONAL MEETINGS**

An Annual Meeting shall be held as near the first of the fiscal year as feasible. At the Annual Meeting, written progress reports shall be submitted by the pastor(s), ministry staff, officers, and ministry teams. Reports on a review of financial records shall be submitted by the treasurer for the church and each of its supporting organizations. Election for offices shall be held. The church budget shall be submitted for action.

Additional congregational meetings shall be held not less than semiannually. Items as required by the Constitution and By-laws shall be submitted for congregational action.