

## By-Laws of the Constitution

### ARTICLE I Membership

**Section 1. Purpose.** The purpose of membership is to join with other followers of Christ in building 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, the membership covenants together 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.

**Section 2. Responsibilities.** The members of this church do covenant together by God’s grace to live lives in a manner consistent with the standards of biblical teaching, including the support of this congregation in attendance, prayer, service, and giving, to live lives in word and deed that are an encouragement to others to know and be like Jesus Christ, to reflect in all our relationships the servant love of our Lord, and to support the broader mission of Christ through the Evangelical Covenant Church (ECC) and Midwest Conference.

**Section 3. Procedure for Admission.**

- a. Membership in the church is granted to those who through faith in God’s Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, have been born anew to a living hope through the Holy Spirit, have been baptized according to the Holy Scriptures, desire to live a Christian life, promise to faithfully support the mission, ministries, and policies of the church, and to share in its fellowship and obligations.
- b. Upon completion of a membership class, persons desiring to apply for membership shall submit their application to the Lead Team. Applicants shall meet with an interview team appointed by the Lead Team to give testimony to personal faith in Jesus Christ. Upon completion of such, the team shall submit its recommendations on the applications to the Lead Team who shall notify members of the church of the recommendations. Any member objecting to or having concerns over the granting of membership to an applicant shall communicate in writing such objection or concern to the Lead Team within 10 days after notification by the Lead Team.
- c. Final action on applications for membership shall be taken by the Lead Team within sixty (60) days of receiving the recommendations of the interview team. Such action may be appealed by a member at the next congregational meeting where the action of the Lead Team may be overturned by a majority vote of members present and voting.
- d. Applicants who are received into membership of the church shall be welcomed at a service and make public confession of their Christian faith, as outlined in *The Covenant Book of Worship*.

**Section 4. Children.** Children of the church shall be nurtured under its spiritual care. They shall receive instruction in the Word of God, Christian doctrine, and the history of the church, normally using the confirmation/discipleship material of the ECC. At age 14, they may apply for church membership as outlined under Section 3 of this article.

**Section 5. Discipline.**

- a. Discipline of members. The Lead Team shall be responsible for admonishing members who willfully neglect their responsibilities to the church or who err in doctrine or conduct.
- b. Erring members. Any member known to err in doctrine or conduct shall be counseled according to the procedure outlined in Matthew 18:15-18 and Galatians 6:1. Any member having knowledge of such error shall, in the spirit of Christian love, seek to restore the erring member. If he or she does not heed this counsel, the matter shall be brought to the attention of the Lead Team in writing, which shall in meekness and gentleness seek to restore the member.
- c. After the above process has been completed, dismissal of a member remaining in gross error in doctrine or conduct may result by a 2/3 vote of all current Lead Team members. Such action may be appealed by the member to the congregation for consideration at the next congregational meeting.

**Section 6. Withdrawal and Removal of Membership.** Any member desiring to transfer or withdraw from membership shall make such request in writing to the Pastor or Lead Team. Letters of transfer shall be issued by the Pastor if so requested, and if the member is in good standing. The Lead Team shall annually review the membership roster to determine inactivity. Those determined to have neglected their responsibilities may be approached under the process outlined in Section 5 of this article.

**Section 7. Recording.** The names of those joining and terminating membership shall be duly recorded and reported at the congregational meeting following action.

**Section 8. Non-Member Friends.** The church and its pastors shall serve them in all their spiritual needs, and they shall be encouraged to consider First Covenant Church as their church home.

## **ARTICLE II The Lead Team**

**Section 1. Purpose.** The Lead Team shall be responsible for building, maintaining and overseeing the spiritual welfare of the congregation and for directing and overseeing all ministries and business affairs of the church.

**Section 2. Composition.** The Lead Team shall be comprised of not less than 5 nor more than 9 Lead Team members, one of whom shall be the Senior Pastor (ex officio). The Lead Team may appoint other pastors or staff members as non-voting advisors, and may remove the same.

**Section 3. Qualification.** Any member of the church meeting the biblical standards of character and giftedness for church leaders may be nominated and elected to the Lead Team.

**Section 4. Election.** Lead Team members shall be nominated by the Nominating Team and elected by a majority vote of those members voting at a meeting of the congregation called for that purpose.

**Section 5. Term of Office.** Lead Team members shall be elected for a term of 2 years and shall not be elected for more than three consecutive terms. After at least one year off, a person may be eligible for subsequent service, subject again to the terms stated in this article.

**Section 6. Vacancies and Removal.** A Lead Team member may resign. A Lead Team member may be removed from office by a majority vote of congregational members voting at a meeting called for that purpose. Vacancies created by resignation or removal may be filled by nomination by 2/3 vote of the Lead Team and elected by majority vote of congregational members voting at a meeting called for that purpose. A Lead Team member elected to serve an unexpired term of less than half the remaining term shall not be precluded from being elected thereafter to three full consecutive terms.

**Section 7. Notification of Meetings.** All Lead Team members shall receive a minimum 3-day advance notification of any meeting, including time and place of the meeting. In emergency situations, the 3-day notice may be waived by the 2/3 vote of the entire Lead Team. Minutes of all Lead Team meetings will be prepared and made available within 45 days.

**Section 8. Quorum.** A majority of Lead Team members shall constitute a quorum.

**Section 9. Decisions.** The Lead Team shall strive for unanimity. Matters shall be determined by a majority vote of a Lead Team quorum, unless on a matter in which the Constitution and Bylaws require a different percentage.

**Section 10. Organization.** The Lead Team shall include a chair, a vice chair, a secretary, a personnel officer, and a financial officer, as elected by the congregation at the annual meeting. The Lead Team may have additional members as elected by the congregation.

- a. **Chair.** The chair shall preside at all business meetings of the church and of the Lead Team. The chair shall confer with the senior pastor in preparing the agenda for such meetings, and shall utilize the counsel that the senior pastor can give by virtue of training, experience, and calling. The chair shall be an ex-officio member of all teams of the church or may delegate another Lead Team member to serve as an ex-officio member in his/her place.
- b. **Vice-chair.** The vice-chair shall assume the duties of the chair in the chair's absence, assist in the Chair's duties, and chair the Ministry Coordination Team meetings.
- c. **Secretary.** The secretary shall keep and preserve the minutes of all business meetings of the church and of the Lead Team, conduct and preserve all official correspondence as shall be delegated, and be responsible for the official seal and documents of the church. The secretary will work with the staff, leadership and the church to foster healthy communication processes.
- d. **Financial Officer.** The financial officer shall ensure proper policies, processes, reporting, and reviewing of all matters related to the finances of the church, including the submission of monthly

financial reports to the Lead Team. The financial officer shall be an ex-officio member of the Financial Stewardship Team and must be included in all salary and benefit considerations for prospective and current employees.

- e. **Personnel Officer.** The personnel officer shall work with the Senior Pastor toward a vital, healthy, mutually beneficial relationship between the congregation and the pastors, ministry staff, and support staff. The personnel officer shall be the leader of the Personnel Relations Team.

**Section 11. Responsibilities of the Lead Team.** In being responsible to the congregation for building, maintaining and overseeing the spiritual welfare of the church and for directing and overseeing all ministries and business affairs of the church, the Lead Team shall:

- a. discern God's leading for First Covenant Church through prayer, study of the Scriptures, awareness of community opportunities, and servant leadership.
- b. cast vision by articulating a compelling vision that mobilizes the congregation to pursue the call of God on First Covenant Church.
- c. engage in strategic planning in order to set objectives and goals that will fulfill the mission and bring the vision into reality.
- d. review annually the mission, objectives and effectiveness of the church's Ministry Teams in light of the church's mission and make changes as necessary to fulfill the mission of the church.
- e. determine Ministry Teams needed to carry out the church's mission and ministry, and appoint appropriate leadership for additional Ministry Teams.
- f. evaluate any new ministry team formation request to determine if the team mission meets the church's mission, the financial resources needed are prudent and available, and if there is sufficient leadership and participation by congregational members to support the team's mission.
- g. approve church policies.
- h. be responsible for representing the congregation in certain staff relationships including:
  - 1. hiring and dismissal of staff subject to the provisions of these Bylaws. Action shall be by 2/3 vote;
  - 2. review of the annual appraisal of the senior pastor and of the ministry staff by the Personnel Relations Team (PRT), and providing godly counsel or discipline as required;
  - 3. annual review and approval of staff compensation and compensation for new staff; and other personnel expenses for any staff member or activity with input and recommendations from the Financial Stewardship Team and PRT;
  - 4. establishment of personnel policies recommended by the PRT;
  - 5. approval of changes in staff job descriptions and approval of job descriptions for new staff positions recommended by PRT; and
  - 6. maintenance of current job descriptions for all staff members as recommended by the PRT.
- i. be responsible for reviewing and approving the submission of a proposed budget by the Financial Stewardship Team for each fiscal year and to present the budget for approval by the congregation at the annual meeting. Upon approval of the budget by the membership, the Lead Team shall be responsible for the implementation of the budget as approved. The Lead Team shall have the final authority to appropriately adjust budget items and amounts where ministry objectives necessitate, but in no event shall total expenditures exceed the total authorized budget without prior notification of the membership of the church at a regularly scheduled congregational meeting or one specifically called for this purpose. The Lead Team shall appoint a member of the church as financial secretary (not necessarily a Lead Team member) who shall be authorized to receive monies on behalf of the church and shall appoint a treasurer (not necessarily a Lead Team member) to disburse funds for church purposes in accordance with standard accounting procedures for non-profit organizations. The Lead Team shall annually appoint an independent review of the financial records of the church and report such findings to the congregation. Neither the treasurer nor financial secretary shall serve more than four consecutive years. The Lead team can delegate any of its financial responsibilities to the Financial Stewardship Team as deemed prudent and necessary.
- j. hear and respond appropriately to concerns of members;
- k. be responsible for church discipline as outlined in Article I, Section 5 of these Bylaws;
- l. act as the trustees of the church for the advancement and protection of its assets. The Lead Team shall designate those Lead Team members and any other members of the church who shall be authorized to sign legal documents on behalf of the church;
- m. be responsible for action on applications for membership as outlined in Article I, Section 3 of these Bylaws.

**Section 12. Unity.** Action by the Lead Team shall be taken in such manner as to preserve the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.

## **ARTICLE III**

### **Ministry Teams**

**Section 1. Purpose.** Ministry Teams shall be formed as required to implement the varied ministries of the church. Teams are empowered to carry out identified ministry goals in the manner they deem appropriate for their individual ministries.

**Section 2. Establishment.** Ministry Teams shall be established by the Lead Team to implement specific ministries. The configuration of Ministry Teams shall be reviewed regularly by the Lead Team, upon recommendation of the church staff, in accord with the church's purpose, strategies, and objectives for mission and ministry.

**Section 3. Duties.** The duties of Ministry Teams shall be to:

- a. Meet as necessary to plan and execute specific mission and ministry objectives.
- b. Recruit and train ministry personnel.
- c. Define and provide the necessary materials required for ministry.
- d. Submit annually to the Lead Team proposed budgets and objectives for the forthcoming year and manage consistent with approved budgets.
- e. Report as requested to the Lead Team.
- f. Operations and communications. Teams meet in accord with established policy or as need dictates. Teams will develop and publish written policies and procedures in accord with their area of responsibility and all policies and procedures remain on file in the church office. Communication may be by multiple modes using available technology when necessary and agreed to by a majority of the team members. All team meetings will be open and announced in advance. Minutes for all team meetings will be prepared and made available within 45 days.

**Section 4. Foundational Ministry Teams.** Some Ministry Teams have been identified as “foundational” to accomplish the mission and to sustain the life and health of First Covenant Church.

- a. Each Foundational Ministry Team will have an elected leader and 2-6 additional team members. A list of current Foundational Ministry Teams will be kept on file in the office.
- b. The Lead Team will review annually the effectiveness and necessity of the Foundational Ministry Teams in fulfilling the mission of the church. The Lead Team can add Foundational Ministry Teams or remove Foundational Ministry Teams by a majority vote of Lead Team members to better accomplish the mission of the church.

**Section 5. Leadership of Foundational Ministry Teams.**

- a. Leaders of the Foundational Ministry Teams shall be nominated by the Nominating Team and be elected by a majority vote of members voting at the annual congregational meeting. Any member of First Evangelical Covenant Church may be nominated and elected to serve as a Foundational Team leader.
- b. Foundational Team leaders shall be elected for a term of 2 years and shall not be elected for more than 3 consecutive terms. After at least 2 years off the team, a person may be eligible for subsequent service as a Foundational Ministry Team leader for that team. A Foundational Ministry Team leader may be nominated and elected to serve as the leader of a different Foundational Ministry Team without having to take 2 years off.
- c. A Foundational Ministry Team leader may resign. A Foundational Ministry Team leader may be removed from leadership by a 2/3 vote of the Lead Team. Vacancies created by resignation or removal may be filled by appointment through the 2/3 vote of the Lead Team. A Foundational Ministry Team leader appointed to serve an unexpired term of less than half the remaining term shall not be precluded from being elected thereafter to 3 full consecutive terms. Any action taken by the Lead Team to remove a Foundational Team leader may be rescinded by the congregation (see Article VI, Section 8).

**Section 6. Leadership and Participation of All Ministry Teams.**

- a. The leader of a Ministry Team other than a “Foundational Team” shall be approved by the Lead Team in consultation with the pastor(s).
- b. The team leader of all teams will serve as liaison to the Lead Team to provide reports and information when requested, and to forward requests to the Lead Team when necessary.

- c. Ministry Team members may be selected by the Ministry Team leader. All who consider First Covenant Church to be their church home will be encouraged to participate and serve on ministry teams annually through signups and ministry fairs. The Lead Team may remove a Ministry Team member.
- d. Each Ministry Team shall organize itself as necessary to perform its ministry.
- e. The Lead Team may appoint one of its members to be an ex-officio member of any Ministry Team, who may also serve as that Ministry Team's leader.

## **ARTICLE IV**

### **Pastoral and Ministry Staff**

**Section 1. Purpose.** Pastoral and additional ministry staff servant-leadership positions are created to help the congregation fulfill Christ's purposes in the world and among its members.

**Section 2. Pastoral Qualifications.** Pastors of the church shall meet the qualifications for character, giftedness, and call set forth in the Holy Scriptures. The Senior Pastor shall be an ordained pastor in good standing with the ECC. A credentialed pastor in good standing who is pursuing ECC ordination may be considered if they have a mutually agreed upon timeline for completion. Other pastors shall be credentialed by the ECC in accordance with their qualifications and duties. A pastor shall be a member of the church by virtue of the call to serve the church.

**Section 3. Call of the Senior Pastor.** The Senior Pastor shall be called at a regular or special congregational business meeting, the purpose of which shall be announced two weeks in advance. The Senior Pastor shall be nominated by a pastoral search team. This team shall be nominated by the Lead Team and elected by the membership at a congregational meeting. It shall be representative of the congregation and have five to nine members, including the Lead Team chair. It shall work closely with the regional conference superintendent. The Senior Pastor shall be called by written ballot with a 2/3 vote of members present and voting required for a call. The call shall be for an indefinite period of time. When the church receives aid from the conference and/or denomination through appropriations, the call shall be with the approval of the Midwest Conference.

**Section 4. Call of Additional Pastors and Credentialed Ministry Staff.** Additional staff members to hold ministerial credentials shall be called at a congregational meeting, the purpose of which shall be announced at least two weeks in advance. The Financial Officer, the Personnel Officer and the Lead Team Chair shall be responsible to develop the compensation and benefits anticipated for prospective employees. The meeting shall include the budget implications of the proposed position. The Lead Team will recommend one candidate for a call, and the vote shall be by written ballot, with 2/3 vote required for call. The Lead Team may establish a search team, or may serve as the search team. When the church receives aid from the conference and/or denomination through appropriations, the call shall be with the approval of the Midwest Conference. The call shall be for an indefinite period of time unless otherwise noted at the time of call.

**Section 5. Non-Credentialed Ministry and Support Staff.** Non-credentialed ministry staff will be hired, overseen, and dismissed by the Senior Pastor (or other staff as he delegates the responsibility) with majority approval by the Lead Team. These staff members include non-pastoral ministry directors and coordinators, interns, and support staff, either full or part-time. The decision to create and fill such position(s) is made by the congregation through regular congregational meetings and the approval of the annual budget.

**Section 6. Duties of the Senior Pastor.** The Senior Pastor shall preach and teach the Word of God, administer the sacraments, provide missional leadership, and faithfully carry out pastoral work. The Senior Pastor shall direct the church staff, providing counsel, encouragement, and Christian discipline so as to assist in the accomplishment of objectives for each staff member. All staff shall be responsible to the Senior Pastor. The Senior Pastor shall be a member of the Lead Team and an ex-officio member of all ministry teams and in such capacity shall strive to establish and accomplish objectives and strategies in conjunction with the mission and purpose of the church.

**Section 7. Duties of Additional Pastors and Ministry Staff Members.** Additional pastors and ministry staff members shall carry out specific areas of ministry under the direction of the Senior Pastor. They may be designated by the Lead Team to be the leader or member of one or more Ministry Teams.

**Section 8. Cooperation.** The pastor(s) shall, both in word and precept, work in harmony with their fellow pastors, the ECC, and the Midwest Conference.

**Section 9. Resignation of a Pastor or Ministry Staff Member.** A pastor or ministry staff member may resign by submitting a letter of resignation to the Lead Team. Unless there are extenuating circumstances, six weeks notice should be observed.

**Section 10. Dismissal.** The dismissal of a pastor or ministry staff member should be undertaken only after avenues of remediation have been pursued.

- a. **Dismissal of the Senior Pastor.** The dismissal of the senior pastor shall be by congregational vote at a special meeting called for that express purpose. Such an agenda item cannot be a part of, or added to, the agenda of any other meeting. The congregational meeting for such a vote may be called by the 2/3 action of the Lead Team, or through the request of the congregation accomplished by a petition for such a meeting signed by 20 percent of the active membership. The quorum for such a meeting shall be 50 percent of the active membership. The grounds for dismissal shall be presented. Members shall be allowed to speak to the matter. The pastor shall be allowed to speak to the matter. The vote shall be by written ballot. A majority vote of active members present and voting is necessary to dismiss the senior pastor.
- b. **Dismissal of Additional Pastors and Ministry Staff.** Additional pastors and ministry staff called by the congregation may be dismissed by the 2/3 vote of the Lead Team. A meeting to overturn the action of the Lead Team may be called through the request of the congregation, accomplished by a petition signed by 20 percent of the active membership. The quorum for such a meeting shall be 50 percent of the active membership. The grounds for dismissal shall be presented. Members shall be allowed to speak to the matter. The pastor or ministry staff member in question shall be allowed to speak to the matter. The vote shall be by written ballot. A majority vote of active members present and voting is necessary to overturn the action of the Lead Team.

**Section 11. Charges Against a Pastor.** Charges against a pastor shall be submitted in writing to the Lead Team and the Midwest Conference superintendent, charging a pastor with indiscretion, immorality, doctrinal error, unethical behavior, or disloyalty to the ECC. The superintendent shall confer with the ECC executive minister of the ordered ministry. These two officers shall confer and determine the order of responsibility in pursuing the matter according to the Rules and Regulations of the Board of Ordered Ministry of the ECC regarding discipline, prior to further action by the church. A pastor or staff member credentialed by the ECC may be suspended by the ECC during this process. However, any minister who fails to become credentialed with the ECC may be suspended or recommended for dismissal at any time without prior notice by the Lead Team.

**Section 12. Hiring of Interim or Transitional Ministry Staff.** Pastors and other ministry staff may be hired on an interim basis for up to a two-year period by a 2/3 vote of the Lead Team. Terms exceeding two (2) years must be approved by a majority of members voting at a congregational meeting.

## **ARTICLE V Special Teams**

### **Section 1. Nominating Team.**

- a. **Composition.** The Nominating Team shall consist of one Lead Team member designated by the Lead Team, the Senior Pastor or staff member designated by the Senior Pastor, and at least 2 at-large members elected by a majority of the members voting at a congregational meeting. The Lead Team shall designate one of the nominating team members to serve as leader of the nominating team.
- b. **Term.** The terms of the member from the Lead Team shall be at the pleasure of the Lead Team. The at-large members shall serve 2 year terms. The initial terms of the at-large members shall be alternated so that at least one at-large member shall be elected each year. A Nominating Team at-large member may not be elected for more than 2 consecutive terms.
- c. **Quorum.** A majority of members shall constitute a quorum of the nominating team.
- d. **Responsibilities.** The Nominating Team shall be responsible for nominations to fill the offices of the Lead Team, the leaders of the Foundational Teams, the at-large members of the Nominating Team, the at-large members of the Personnel Relations Team, and any other positions assigned to it either by the Lead Team or congregation.
- e. **Nominating procedure.** Any member of appropriate character, giftedness, and call may be considered for any position. One or more candidates for each office or position open shall be nominated.
- f. **Unity.** Actions by the nominating committee shall be taken in such manner as to preserve the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.

**Section 2. Pastoral Search Team.** The Senior Pastor shall be nominated by a Pastoral Search Team. The nominee shall meet the criteria set out in Article IV, Section 3 of these Bylaws. The Pastoral Search Team will be nominated by the Lead Team and shall be members of First Covenant Church. The congregation may provide recommendations to the Lead Team for consideration. Members of the Pastoral Search Team shall be elected to serve by a majority vote of members present at a congregational meeting. It shall be representative of the congregation and have 5 to 9 members, including the Lead Team chair. It shall work closely with the regional conference superintendent.

**Section 3. Personnel Relations Team.**

The PRT shall work toward a vital, healthy, mutually beneficial relationship between the congregation and the pastors, ministry staff, and support staff. The PRT shall have four main areas of responsibility:

- a. care and encouragement for the pastors, ministry staff, and their families;
- b. receiving the perspectives and concerns of each pastor and ministry staff member relative to the congregation and ministry;
- c. communicating the perspectives and concerns of the congregation to each pastor and ministry staff member relative to that person's ministry;
- d. provide recommendations to the Lead Team concerning job descriptions for ministry and staff positions;
- e. perform annual reviews and appraisals of the ministry staff and provide recommendations to the Lead Team; and
- f. periodic review of pastoral staff members' personal and church goals and provide input to the Financial Stewardship Team and Lead Team to recommend appropriate compensation changes annually.

The PRT may be called upon as a resource to support pastors and ministry staff in handling personnel reviews and challenges in their area of responsibility. The PRT will work with the pastor and church administrator to keep a personnel policy up to date regarding all personnel matters. All personnel policy changes are subject to review and approval by the Lead Team.

The PRT shall be made up of the personnel officer from the Lead Team (who shall lead this team), one member of the congregation appointed by the ministry staff, and two congregational members elected by the congregation at a congregational meeting. Elected at-large members shall serve a 2 year term and may serve 2 consecutive terms.

**Section 4. Ministry Coordination Team.** This team will be led by the vice-chair of the Lead Team and supported by the pastors and ministry staff. The purpose is to bring all ministry team leaders together quarterly at a minimum to coordinate ministry activities/schedules, assist in leadership and ministry development, and foster healthy communication.

**Section 5. Other Special Teams.** The Lead Team or the congregation may establish a team to address a specific task. The team shall report back to the body which formed it unless otherwise instructed by its founding body. The team shall terminate upon the completion of its task.

## **ARTICLE VI Congregational Meetings**

**Section 1. Annual Meeting.** See Article X of the Constitution.

**Section 2. Other meetings.** Other meetings may be called by the Lead Team or by written request signed by 10 percent of the membership, unless otherwise noted in these Bylaws.

**Section 3. Notification of meeting.** All meetings shall be announced by written communication to the membership at least two weeks prior to the meeting date.

**Section 4. Conduct of meeting.** The Chair of the Lead Team or such other person as may be designated by the Lead Team in the Chair's absence shall serve as Chair of any meeting of the membership. Minutes of the meeting will be prepared and made available within 45 days.

**Section 5. Voting.** Each member, and only members (as designated by Article I, Section 3 of these Bylaws), shall be entitled to cast one vote on any matter at hand at any meeting of the membership. Such votes must

be cast in person. Vote by proxy shall not be allowed. All votes shall be by written ballot. The Chair of the meeting may call for open balloting where no objection is raised.

**Section 6. Quorum.** Ten percent of the membership shall constitute a quorum for the annual meeting. Unless otherwise noted in these Bylaws, 10 percent of the membership shall constitute a quorum for any other meeting.

**Section 7. Rules of order.** All congregational meetings of the church and of any other teams or organizations shall be conducted according to the current edition of Robert's Rules of Order, subject to the provisions of this Constitution and Bylaws.

**Section 8. Final voice.** The congregation reserves for itself final authority in any matter of its choice. A member may advance an item to the agenda of a congregational meeting by the majority vote of the membership at that meeting, providing that the item is not in conflict with other provisions of the constitution and by-laws. An item brought to the agenda in this way shall be decided by a majority vote of the membership, unless the item requires a different percentage as outlined elsewhere in the Constitution and Bylaws, in which case that percentage shall be used.

## **ARTICLE VII**

### **Assets**

**Section 1. Title.** The congregation shall hold title to its own assets.

**Section 2. Acquisition.** Assets acquired through budgetary provisions do not need additional congregational approval. Assets acquired beyond budgetary provisions, particularly land or facility acquisition, require the approval of the congregation by majority vote.

**Section 3. Disputed Assets.** In the event of schism within the church, in which there are competing claims to the assets by various factions of the membership, the title of all church property, real or personal, shall remain with the group which abides by the constitution and bylaws, as determined by the executive board of the Midwest Conference.

**Section 4. Assignment of Assets.** No action for the sale or transfer of assets may be taken when the closure of the church is under consideration without the prior approval of the Midwest Conference executive board. In the event the congregation votes to cease, the property and all assets of the church shall become and be the property of the ECC and the Midwest Conference, shared equally for the furtherance of the mission of both in that region, primarily through church planting.

## **ARTICLE VIII**

### **Closure**

**Section 1. Action Needed.** The congregation may terminate its existence by a majority vote of the membership present and voting at a congregational meeting called for that purpose.

**Section 2. Meeting Provisions.** The decision on whether to close the church cannot be a part of, or added to, the agenda of any other meeting. The congregational meeting for such a vote may be called by the Lead Team or through the request of the congregation, accomplished by a petition for such a meeting signed by 20 percent of the membership.

**Section 3. Notification.** All members of record must be notified of the meeting through first-class mail at least two weeks in advance.

**Section 4. Quorum.** The quorum for such a meeting shall be all members of record who are present at the meeting.

**Section 5. Asset Distribution.** Upon the vote to close, the assets of the congregation shall be transferred according to Article VII, Section 4 of these Bylaws.

**Section 6. Collaboration.** Should congregational attendance stand below 25, the conference executive board may appoint an ex-officio member to the Lead Team.

## **ARTICLE IX**

### **Amendments**

**Section 1. Procedure.** These Bylaws may be amended by a vote of 2/3 of the membership present and voting at a duly called meeting for that purpose. A proposed amendment to the Bylaws must be presented in writing to the membership not less than 90 days prior to the meeting called for the purpose of voting on bylaws changes. Article VII, Sections 3 and 4, Article VIII and Article IX may only be amended with the prior approval of the Midwest Conference executive board.