



CONSTITUTION

Revised/Approved 6.9.19

ARTICLE I

The name of this organization shall be “The Evangelical Free Church of Willmar, Minnesota.” This organization shall use the Doing Business As (DBA) name: “Living Hope-Evangelical Free Church of Willmar”.

ARTICLE II

The purpose of this organization shall be to spread the Gospel of Jesus Christ in every way prescribed or approved by the Holy Scriptures, to engage in such religious, educational, charitable and benevolent work as the Constitution and By-laws of this organization may determine, and to own and maintain such buildings and equipment as may be required to carry out this purpose.

ARTICLE III

The Statement of Faith of this organization shall be as follows:

1. We believe in one God, Creator of all things, holy, infinitely perfect, and eternally existing in a loving unity of three equally divine Persons: the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. Having limitless knowledge and sovereign power, God has graciously purposed from eternity to redeem a people for Himself and to make all things new for His own glory.
2. We believe that God has spoken in the Scriptures, both Old and New Testaments, through the words of human authors. As the verbally inspired Word of God, the Bible is without error in the original writings, the complete revelation of His will for salvation, and the ultimate authority by which every realm of human knowledge and endeavor should be judged. Therefore, it is to be believed in all that it teaches, obeyed in all that it requires, and trusted in all that it promises.
3. We believe that God created Adam and Eve in His image, but they sinned when tempted by Satan. In union with Adam, human beings are sinners by nature and by choice, alienated from God, and under His wrath. Only through God’s saving work in Jesus Christ can we be rescued, reconciled and renewed.
4. We believe that Jesus Christ is God incarnate, fully God and fully man, one Person in two natures. Jesus—Israel's promised Messiah—was conceived through the Holy Spirit and born of the virgin Mary. He lived a sinless life, was crucified under Pontius Pilate, arose bodily from the dead, ascended into heaven and sits at the right hand of God the Father as our High Priest and Advocate.
5. We believe that Jesus Christ, as our representative and substitute, shed His blood on the cross as the perfect, all-sufficient sacrifice for our sins. His atoning death and victorious resurrection constitute the only ground for salvation.
6. We believe that the Holy Spirit, in all that He does, glorifies the Lord Jesus Christ. He convicts the world of its guilt. He regenerates sinners, and in Him they are baptized into union with Christ and adopted as heirs in the family of God. He also indwells, illuminates, guides, equips and empowers believers for Christ-like living and service.

7. We believe that the true church comprises all who have been justified by God's grace through faith alone in Christ alone. They are united by the Holy Spirit in the body of Christ, of which He is the Head. The true church is manifest in local churches, whose membership should be composed only of believers. The Lord Jesus mandated two ordinances, baptism and the Lord's Supper, which visibly and tangibly express the gospel. Though they are not the means of salvation, when celebrated by the church in genuine faith, these ordinances confirm and nourish the believer.
8. We believe that God's justifying grace must not be separated from His sanctifying power and purpose. God commands us to love Him supremely and others sacrificially, and to live out our faith with care for one another, compassion toward the poor and justice for the oppressed. With God's Word, the Spirit's power, and fervent prayer in Christ's name, we are to combat the spiritual forces of evil. In obedience to Christ's commission, we are to make disciples among all people, always bearing witness to the gospel in word and deed.
9. We believe in the personal, bodily return of our Lord Jesus Christ. The coming of Christ, at a time known only to God, demands constant expectancy and, as our blessed hope, motivates the believer to godly living, sacrificial service and energetic mission.
10. We believe that God commands everyone everywhere to believe the gospel by turning to Him in repentance and receiving the Lord Jesus Christ. We believe that God will raise the dead bodily and judge the world, assigning the unbeliever to condemnation and eternal conscious punishment and the believer to eternal blessedness and joy with the Lord in the new heaven and the new earth, to the praise of His glorious grace. Amen.

ARTICLE IV

This Church shall receive as members any person who confesses personal faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, who has the assurance of salvation, whose conduct is in accord with his confession, who subscribes to the above Statement of Faith, and who is willing to support the Church with faithful attendance, prayer, and material means.

ARTICLE V

The annual meeting shall be held during the month of June. Other business meetings shall be held as provided in the By-laws.

ARTICLE VI

The Corporate Officers shall be: Chairman, Vice-Chairman, Secretary, and Treasurer as provided for in the By-Laws. Each of the above officers shall be a member of this church and shall wholeheartedly subscribe to the Statement of Faith.

ARTICLE VII

Section 1. This church shall have the power to receive, either by gift or purchase, and to hold such real, personal, or mixed property as is authorized by the laws of the State of Minnesota and as is deemed necessary for the business of the Church, and shall have the power to dispose of such property by mortgage, deed, or otherwise. All such property shall be held in the name of the Church. The Church Board shall have the power to receive, purchase, acquire, sell, lease, convey mortgage, deed or otherwise transfer real estate of the Church, but only after having been duly authorized by the Church at a business meeting. All contracts, notes, mortgages, conveyances, assignments, leases, releases and other documents and papers in behalf of the Church shall be executed by the Chairman or the Vice-Chairman of the Church Board.

Section 2. In case of a division of the Church (from which we pray God by His mercy to preserve us) the property of the Church shall belong to those who abide by this Constitution.

Section 3. In case of dissolution of the Church organization, the property shall be assigned to the North Central District Association of the Evangelical Free Church of America. The Church shall be considered dissolved if so decided by the organization, or when the Church has not held an annual meeting for three years, or when less than six members remain.

ARTICLE VIII

Section 1. The congregation, at its annual, quarterly and special business meetings is the legislative and governing body of this organization.

Section 2. This church shall be affiliated with the North Central District Association of the Evangelical Free Church of America and shall send delegates to their conferences, support Home and Foreign Missions of the Evangelical Free Church and shall unite in any mutual efforts for the furtherance of the Gospel of Jesus Christ in the measure and to the extent that this local church may officially decide.

ARTICLE IX

Section 1. The congregation may make changes or Additions to the Constitution only at the Annual Meeting. Such changes must be submitted to the members in writing and adopted as a preliminary step at a regular business meeting of the congregation not less than three months prior to the Annual Meeting. At the Annual Meeting the changes or additions may be fully adopted by a two-thirds majority of the votes cast.

BY-LAWS

ARTICLE I MEMBERSHIP

A. QUALIFICATIONS

Any person who confesses personal faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, who has the assurance of salvation, whose conduct is in accord with his confession, who subscribes to the above Statement of Faith, and who is willing to support the church with faithful attendance, prayer and material means may become a member of this congregation, hereafter referred to as the Church – ARTICLE IV, Section 1. Constitution.

B. ADMISSION

1. Any person, 18 years of age or over, may apply for membership.
2. Applicants shall participate in membership instruction and/or interviews as required by the Church Board.
3. The Church Board shall hear the testimony and examine all applicants for membership.
4. No member shall belong to any organization whose practices (oaths, rituals, etc.) are in conflict with, or contrary to, the Word of God.
5. Before the applicants are recommended to the business meeting, a list of their names shall be made known to the membership at least two Sunday Mornings prior to the business meeting. If any member has a valid reason for objecting to the receiving of any applicant into the church he shall immediately appear before the Church Board and give Scriptural reasons for his objections. The validity of these objections shall be considered by the Church Board.

6. All satisfactory candidates shall be recommended by the Church Board to any business meeting for approval and admission. They shall be elected to membership by a seventy-five percent (75%) vote of the members present. The applicant shall not be present in the meeting when his application is being considered.
7. The accepted applicant shall be publicly welcomed into the membership at some subsequent regular worship service of the Church.

C. RELATIONAL COMMITMENTS

Our relational commitments are designed to guide members of our church to relate to others in ways that honor God and promote the greater mission of His Church. Members pledge to love God with all our heart, soul and strength and to love others as ourselves. (Matt. 22:34-40)

1. We love God by:
 - a. Worshipping God, both privately and publicly. (Heb. 10:25) Worship includes a systematic giving of a portion of our income for the support of His Church (1 Corinthians 16:2ff.; II Corinthians 9:1-15)
 - b. Studying God's word (Ps. 119:16; 2 Tim. 2:15) Study includes application of the principles and precepts of the Bible, heeding the admonition to "Be holy as I am holy." (1 Pet. 1:15,16)
 - c. Serving others in love (Mt. 25:40; Jn. 13:34) Serving includes sharing ourselves with others in material and spiritual ways, including good deeds and witnessing. (2 Cor. 8:1-5)
2. We love others (both inside the church and outside) by:
 - a. Living peaceably with all, as far as it depends on us. (Rom 12:18)
 - b. Doing them no wrong (Rom 13:9-10)
 - c. Thinking the best about them. (1 Cor. 13:4-7)
 - d. Seeking the best for them. (Phil. 2:3-4)
 - e. Speaking the truth in love to them. (Eph. 4:15)
 - f. Overlooking minor offenses. (Prov. 19:11)
 - g. Confronting more major offenses directly, with the offender, always in love. (Mt. 5:23f; 18:15)
 - h. We will not sin by gossip or slander; nor will we listen to it from others (Eph. 4:29)
 - i. Forgiving others, resolving to live with the consequences of their wrong (Col. 3:13)
 - j. Praying for each other and so commending them to God's care (Phil. 1:4; Heb. 13:18)
 - k. Reconciling people to God and to each other (2 Cor 5:17-20)
 - l. Recognizing Spiritual leaders (Elders and Pastors) who have the spiritual qualifications of 1 Timothy 3:1-7 and Titus 1:5-9, and support them.
3. When relational commitments are not kept, those involved will be addressed with the goal of restoring relationship, whether between an individual and God or between individuals themselves. This is essentially a conflict between believers and is to be approached humbly and with gentleness

D. WITHDRAWAL

Any member who wishes to withdraw their membership will make a written or direct verbal request to the church office. They will then receive a letter of withdrawal from the Lead Pastor. Membership withdrawals shall be reported to the Church at the next regular business meeting.

E. ABSENCE

1. A Non-Resident member is one who continues to meet the qualifications of membership but lives at such a distance as to be unable to participate in the church. Examples include missionaries sent out from our church or those serving in the Armed Forces. Non-Residents are allowed to vote at congregational meetings at the discretion of the Elders.

2. Members may be placed in an “Inactive, non-voting” status by action of the Elders for unfaithful attendance and/or lack of participation. Members must be contacted by the Elders prior to being placed in an inactive status. Inactive members may be reinstated to an active status by giving evidence to the Elders of increased attendance and participation. Inactive members may not vote or hold a position of responsibility.
3. If any person has been absent for one year and no communication has been received, the Elders shall make an attempt to establish contact. If no contact can be made, that person may be dropped from the roll by a vote of the Church. If contact is made and the person indicates that they will no longer be active in the Church, they may be dropped from the roll by a vote of the Church or they may withdraw their membership.

F. RESTORATIVE DISCIPLINE

Discipline, following the pattern of Matthew 18:15-17, will be administered with the intent of restoring the individual to God and to the community of believers consistent with 1 Cor 5 coupled with 2 Cor 2:5-11.

1. Believers living in a way that is inconsistent with Scriptural principles are to be approached by a fellow believer in an attempt to turn the brother or sister back from his sin. (James 5:20)
2. If the above action fails to bring restoration, the conflict will be brought to an Elder or Pastor following the principle of “fewer is better” and always with the goal of restoration versus punishment.
3. Only if the above actions fail is the matter to be brought to the Elder Board. The Elders will investigate and call the appropriate individual(s) to repentance and restoration. This failing, the Elder Board may recommend to the membership that the said individual(s) be deprived of membership. This recommendation can be approved by a two-thirds (2/3) vote of the members present and voting at any business meeting of the church.
4. Ministerial staff shall be treated the same.

G. PROPERTY RIGHTS

1. Any member who has withdrawn or who has been excluded from the Church loses all rights of the Church.
2. The private property of the individual members of this Church shall be exempt from corporate debt.

ARTICLE II – MEETINGS

A. WORSHIP SERVICES

Worship Services, Sunday School Services, and other Services shall be conducted at such time as is decided by the Lead Pastor.

B. BUSINESS MEETING

1. The Annual Business Meeting of the Church shall be held during the month of June each year at such time as may be decided by the Elder Board. At this annual meeting, annual reports shall be received, the Board of Elders confirmed and other necessary business transacted. The fiscal and church year shall end May 31st of each year. The budget from the previous fiscal year will remain in effect until the new budget is approved.
2. Regular business meetings of the Church shall be held during the year as decided by the Elder Board.
3. Special meetings may be called at the discretion of the Lead Pastor, or of the Chairman of the Elder Board, or by a majority vote of the membership of the Elder Board, or by a signed petition from ten percent (10%) of the active voting members. Special meetings can only deal with the issues for which they are specifically called. Notice of special business meetings shall state the specific purpose for which they are called. Notice shall be given, either by announcement at the regular Sunday services of the Church, at least three days previous to the date of the meeting, or by written notice, mailed in time to reach all resident members at least three days prior to the date of the meeting.
4. The Chairman of the Board shall have the authority to postpone and reschedule any business meeting if necessitated by bad weather or disaster.

C. RULES AND PROCEDURE

1. The Chairman of the Board shall preside at all business meetings of the Church. In his absence, the Vice-Chairman of the Elder Board will preside.
2. Quorum. Fifteen percent (15%) of the active membership of the Church shall constitute a quorum at the Church business meeting for the transaction of business.
3. Voting. All matters shall be determined by a sixty percent (60%) majority of all the votes cast except when otherwise specified in these By-Laws, or by decision of the Church.
4. Robert's Rules of Order (current revision) shall govern this organization when it is not inconsistent with its Constitution and By-Laws.

ARTICLE III – OFFICES

A. MINISTERIAL STAFF

All ministerial staff shall have experienced the saving grace of God and be of established and irreproachable Christian character, having a good reputation with outsiders (1 Timothy 3:1-13 and Titus 1:5-9).

1. THE LEAD PASTOR

a. RESPONSIBILITIES.

The Lead Pastor shall serve as the primary leader of the church.

- i. He shall preach and teach the Word of God, coordinate the public services of the Church, watch over the spiritual welfare of the Church, administer the ordinances, lead the paid staff, provide leadership to the congregation as a whole, and lead the members in practical Christian living.
- ii. He will define all ministry structures, job descriptions, responsibilities and lines of accountability for the church and the ministerial staff. He may change these as the needs of the church change.
- iii. He will be an ex-officio of all boards, committees, organizations, and groups in the church.
- iv. In the absence of a Lead Pastor, the Elder Board will ensure the responsibilities of the Lead Pastor are being met.

b. SELECTION.

The Elder Board delegates the search process for the Lead Pastor to an ad hoc search committee, which reports to it.

- i. The search committee shall consist of four Elders and four other spiritually mature, active members of the congregation. The Elder Board will present committee candidates to the congregation; nominations will be accepted from the floor. The four candidates in each category receiving the most votes will form the search committee.
- ii. The Elder Board will provide to the search committee the job description and required qualities for the ideal candidate.
- iii. The search committee will present a qualified candidate to the Elder Board for consideration.
- iv. The Elder Board will present its recommended candidate to the membership for approval. Only one name per position shall be presented and discussed at each church business meeting.
- v. The Lead Pastor is ultimately responsible to the congregation and can only be brought on staff by a seventy-five percent (75%) vote at a church business meeting.

c. DISMISSAL

- i. The Lead Pastor may be relieved of his pastoral responsibilities immediately for immoral conduct or heresy by a four-fifths vote of the Elder Board.
 1. Such action shall be presented to the congregation as soon as possible for affirmation.
 2. He can be finally relieved of his duties only by a majority secret ballot of the congregation taken at a duly constituted meeting called for that purpose.

- ii. If the Elder Board determines that the Lead Pastor has become ineffective in leading the church, they shall address the situation with the intent of improving his effectiveness.
 - 1. If these actions fail, the Elder Board may request the Lead Pastor's resignation.
 - 2. If the Lead Pastor does not resign, the Elders may recommend to the congregation his removal as Lead Pastor.
 - 3. He can be finally relieved of his duties only by a majority secret ballot of the congregation taken at a duly constituted meeting called for that purpose.

2. ASSOCIATE PASTORS/MINISTRY DIRECTORS shall serve as leaders in coordinating assigned ministry areas.

a. RESPONSIBILITIES.

- i. They are directly responsible to the Lead Pastor. The Lead Pastor will define ministry structures, job descriptions, responsibilities and lines of accountability for the ministerial staff. He may change these as the needs of the church change.
- ii. They are ex-officio members of all groups in their given areas.
- iii. Ministry Directors may be either male or female.
- iv. Ministry Directors may be either Full Time or Part Time.

b. SELECTION

The Lead Pastor has the authority and responsibility to hire Associate Pastors/Ministry Directors.

c. DISMISSAL

Associate Pastors/Ministry Directors may be relieved of their responsibilities by the Lead Pastor.

3. MEMBERSHIP

All members of the paid Ministerial Staff and their spouses are expected to become members by going through the established membership process at the earliest opportunity. The Lead Pastor and his wife will be accepted as members at the time of his accepting the call to the Lead Pastor position.

B. THE ELDER BOARD

The Elder Board shall consist of the Lead Pastor and the Elders. All Elders shall have experienced the saving grace of God and be of established and irreproachable Christian character, having a good reputation with outsiders. They shall meet the Elder character requirements of 1 Timothy 3:1-7 and Titus 1:5-9.

1. RESPONSIBILITIES

The responsibility of the Board and each Elder is to ensure that the purposes of the church are achieved, and to model servant-leadership in line with Mark 10:42-45 to the congregation. Foundations of that spiritual leadership are based on I Timothy 5:17-22 and I Peter 5:1.

- a) Elder Board shall be responsible, along with the Ministerial Staff, for the overall shepherding of the congregation.
- b) They shall promote the spiritual welfare of the members of the church. They shall provide for the care of the sick and needy and assist at Communion services and shall perform such other spiritual offices as the Word of God teaches.
- c) They will maintain the Governance Policies. Governance policies are the beliefs and values that consistently guide or direct how the Elder Board makes decisions. They set the expected roles of the Elders and the Staff, establishing expected behavior and boundaries of each.
- d) They shall approve reports, set policies, and recommend items for membership approval.
- e) They shall act as the trustees. It shall be their duty to oversee the physical property of the Church and the budget.
- f) They shall perform such other duties as are prescribed by the statutes of the State of Minnesota governing religious corporations.

- g) In accordance with the church constitution, they are responsible for organizing the Board. They shall elect members to serve as Chairman, Vice Chairman and Secretary from among the sitting Elder board. The Treasurer shall be appointed by the Elder Board as required.

2. SELECTION

- a. The Board of Elders shall consist of not less than seven men nor more than twelve. These men shall be elected by confirmation to a term of three years. Each Elder may succeed himself once and shall be free of office for one year before he can be placed in nomination again.
- b. The size of the Board of Elders shall be determined by the Elder Board, based upon the needs of the congregation. Notification of any change in the size of the Board will be made to the congregation at a business meeting at least one month prior to the annual meeting.
- c. Should a vacancy occur on the board during the first three-quarters of the church year, the Elder Board is authorized to nominate someone to fill the vacated position for the remainder of the year, should it deem such action appropriate. Before taking office, the replacement must receive a two-thirds vote of approval by a closed secret ballot from those present and voting at a business meeting.

d. Nominating Committee:

- i. All nominations for the Board of Elders will be made from among the active members by a nominating committee.
- ii. The nominating committee shall consist of the Lead Pastor, two (2) current Elders, and four (4) other spiritually mature, active members of the congregation, who may be Elders. If there is no Lead Pastor, the Church Chairman may take his place or appoint a replacement.
- iii. The nominating committee shall be elected by the congregation at a business meeting at least three months prior to the annual meeting. The Elder Board shall present a recommended slate of candidates to the congregation at least two (2) Sundays before the election. Nominations of people who have been contacted and have agreed to serve will be accepted from the floor. Each member present may cast six (6) votes, voting for two (2) Elders and four (4) other members. The individuals in each group receiving the most votes will be elected if they receive the votes of at least one-half of the qualified ballots cast. If necessary, a runoff vote between the top remaining candidates (one more than the number of open positions) will be taken immediately. The person(s) receiving the most votes for the remaining position(s) will be elected. A vacancy on the nominating committee may be filled by the Elder Board.

e. Elder Nominees:

- i. A nominee for Elder shall have been in active service in the church for three (3) years and have been a member for at least two (2) years. The committee will solicit suggestions for Elder nominees from the congregation. The nominating committee will present the names of all prospective Elders to the Elder Board, who will approach the individuals for their assent to be placed in nomination.
- ii. Names of Elder nominees selected by the nominating committee or Elder Board shall be posted in the Church two (2) Sunday mornings prior to the business meeting.
- iii. Nominees for the Board of Elders will be presented at the annual meeting for appointment by the congregation. Each person must receive a two-thirds vote of approval by a closed secret ballot from those present and voting. Those who vote “no” are encouraged to state “why” on their ballots. Newly appointed Elders take office immediately after the Annual Meeting.

3. DISMISSAL

- a. An Elder may be relieved of his responsibilities immediately for immoral conduct or heresy by a four-fifths vote of the Elder Board.
 - i. Such action shall be presented to the congregation as soon as possible for affirmation.
 - ii. He can be finally relieved of his duties only by a majority secret ballot of the congregation taken at a duly constituted meeting called for that purpose.

- b. If the Elder Board determines that an Elder has become ineffective in his fulfilling his responsibilities as an Elder, they shall address the situation with the intent of improving his effectiveness.
 - i. If these actions fail, the Elder Board may request the individual Elder's resignation.
 - ii. If the Elder does not resign, the Elders may recommend to the congregation his removal as an Elder.
 - iii. He can be finally relieved of his duties only by a majority secret ballot of the congregation taken at a duly constituted meeting called for that purpose.

ARTICLE IV – STANDINGS

- A. AUTHORITY (as in the Constitution Article VIII Section 1)
- B. AFFILIATION (as in the Constitution Article VIII Section 2)
- C. STATEMENT OF FAITH. The statement of Faith of this Church is in its Constitution (Article III). The church endorses the Statement of Faith of the North Central District of the Evangelical Free Church of America.
- D. NAME: This organization shall use the DBA name: Living Hope- Evangelical Free Church of Willmar.

ARTICLE V –AMENDMENTS

- A. These By-Laws may be altered or amended by a two-thirds vote of the voting members present at any business meeting of the Church.
- B. The proposed changes shall have been made available in written form to each member at least two weeks prior to such meeting.

ARTICLE VI – CULTURAL/SOCIETAL POSTIONS

A. MARRIAGE

1. Marriage is the foundational institution of human society, established by God as a one-flesh, covenantal union between a man and a woman.
2. It is designed to be life-long (until separated by death), exclusive (monogamous and faithful), and generative in nature (the bearing and rearing of children), and it is to reflect the relationship between Christ and the church. (Eph. 5)

B. PROTECTION OF CHILDREN

1. It is the duty of parents to provide Christian instruction for their children.
2. Children are a gift from God. They are to be nurtured and cared for as a sacred charge. They are to be led to Jesus with the prayer that they will individually believe in their hearts and confess with their mouths that Jesus is their Lord.
3. The Lead Pastor will ensure guidelines are in place to protect children from reasonably foreseeable risk of harm from those members of the congregation whom the church places in positions of responsibility and authority over them.