

Constitution
of
Bethlehem Church

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Constitution of Bethlehem Church

TABLE OF CONTENTS

1	NAME	2
2	ARTICLES OF FAITH	2
3	MEMBERSHIP	3
3.1	QUALIFICATIONS FOR MEMBERSHIP	3
3.2	MEMBERSHIP PROCESS	3
3.3	ATTENDANCE	3
3.4	DISCIPLINE	3
4	CONGREGATIONAL MEETINGS	4
4.1	ANNUAL CONGREGATIONAL MEETING	4
4.2	OTHER CONGREGATIONAL MEETINGS	4
5	BOARD OF ELDERS	4
5.1	GENERAL	4
5.2	QUALIFICATIONS OF ELDERS	4
5.3	INSTALLATION OF ELDERS	5
5.4	SPECIAL BOARD OF ELDERS POSITIONS	5
5.5	RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE BOARD	5
5.6	OFFICERS OF THE BOARD AND CHURCH	7
5.7	BOARD MEETINGS	7
6	DEACONS AND TRUSTEES	7
6.1	DEACONS	7
6.2	TRUSTEES	7
7	COMMITTEES	8
7.1	NOMINATING COMMITTEE	8
7.2	PULPIT COMMITTEE	9
8	MINISTERIAL STAFF	9
8.1	MINISTERIAL STAFF POSITIONS	9
8.2	QUALIFICATIONS	9
8.3	CALLING	10
8.4	RESPONSIBILITIES	10
8.5	TERMINATION	10
9	ORDINATION	10
10	DISSOLUTION OF CORPORATION	11
11	OPERATING MANUAL	11
12	REVISIONS AND AMENDMENTS TO THIS CONSTITUTION	11

Constitution of Bethlehem Church

1 Name

The name of this congregation shall be: *Bethlehem Church*.

2 Articles of Faith

1. **We believe** in one God, eternally existing in three persons: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. (*John 14:8-17,26; John 15:26; Isaiah 9:6; II Corinthians 13:14; Isaiah 42:8; Isaiah 45:15; Matthew 28:19.*)
2. **We believe** the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments to be verbally inspired of God, inerrant in the original writings, and are the supreme and final authority of faith and life. (*II Timothy 3:16; II Peter 1:21; I Cor. 2:13.*)
3. **We believe** that Jesus Christ was begotten by the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary, and is true God and true man. (*Matthew 1:18-23; Luke 1:26-35; John 1:1-3; John 1:14; Hebrews 1:1-3; Colossians 1:15, 2:9; Philippians 2:5-11.*)
4. **We believe** that man was created in the image of God, that he sinned, incurring not only physical death, but also spiritual death (which is separation from God); and that all are sinners in thought, word and deed. (*Genesis 1:27; Ephesians 2:1,5; Romans 5:12; Romans 3:23.*)
5. **We believe** that the Lord Jesus Christ died for our sins, according to the Scriptures, as a representative and substitutionary sacrifice that we might be justified by His blood. (*I Corinthians 15:3; I Timothy 1:15; II Corinthians 5:21; Romans 5:8,9.*)
6. **We believe** that all who receive by faith the Lord Jesus Christ are born again of the Holy Spirit, and thereby become the children of God. (*John 1:12,13; I Peter 1:23; Romans 8:14.*)
7. **We believe** that salvation is entirely and only by grace through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, that no works of any description can in any degree contribute to our salvation; but, on the other hand, that good works are expected of those who have been born again. (*Ephesians 2:8-10; Titus 3:5-8.*)
8. **We believe** that all who have been saved are kept by God's power and are thus secure in Christ forever. We further believe it is the privilege of believers to rejoice in the assurance of their salvation through the testimony of God's Word, which, however, clearly forbids the use of Christian liberty as an occasion to the flesh. (*John 6:37-40; John 10:27-30; Romans 8:1,38,39; I Corinthians 1:4-8; Hebrews 6:17-20; I Peter 1:5; Romans 13:13,14; Galatians 5:13; Titus 2:11-15.*)
9. **We believe** that the Lord Jesus Christ rose from the dead in the body in which He was crucified, that He ascended into Heaven, and that He lives in Heaven today in the same body in which He arose from the grave. (*I Cor. 5:14; Luke 24:30-46; John 20:19,20; Acts 1:9.*)
10. **We believe** in the personal, imminent, premillennial return of the Lord Jesus Christ, first, at the rapture, to catch up unto Himself all believers and then to return to earth with His resurrected saints to establish His Millennial Kingdom. We further believe that the Scriptures strongly imply that the Rapture will precede the Great Tribulation. (*John 14:3; Acts 1:11; I Thessalonians 4:13-18; I Thess. 3:13; I Thess. 1:10; I Thess. 5:9; Jude 14; Revelation 3:10; Titus 2:11-14; Zechariah 14:4-11; Daniel 12:1; Matthew 24:21,29,30.*)
11. **We believe** in the bodily resurrection of both the saved and the lost; the saved to be raised at the first resurrection to receive their glorified bodies and to be forever with the Lord; the lost to be raised at least 1,000 years later only to face the judgment of the Great White Throne and to be cast into the lake of fire forever. (*I Cor. 15:51-59; I Thess. 4:13-18; John 5:28-29; Rev. 20:5,6; Rev. 20:11-15.*)
12. **We believe** that the Lord has ordained for this period of grace the ordinances of Believer's Baptism by immersion and the Lord's Supper. (*Matthew 28:19; Acts 8:36-38; Acts 18:8; Luke 22:19,20; I Cor. 11:23-26.*)
13. **We believe** in the one true Church composed of all who have been born again through faith in Christ Jesus, and only of such; that the church is the body of Christ, all members being united by the Holy Spirit to Him who is the Head, and to each other. (*I Cor. 12:12,13; Matthew 16:18; Colossians 1:18; Ephesians 1:22,23; Ephesians 4:15,16,25*)

Constitution of Bethlehem Church

3 MEMBERSHIP

3.1 Qualifications for Membership

The privilege of membership in Bethlehem Church (hereafter “Bethlehem Church” or “Church”) shall be extended to all who:

- a) give testimony of having put their trust in Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior according to the Scriptures (John 3:16; Romans 10:9,10)
- b) express their agreement with the Articles of Faith
- c) agree to live a consistent Christian life in accordance with the Scripture
- d) agree to attend Bethlehem Church as regularly as possible, to serve the Church, and to contribute to its support as God prospers
- e) accept the authority of the Board of Elders with respect to their relationship to the Church. (See section 3.4)

3.2 Membership Process

Application for membership shall be made to the Senior Pastor, one designated by the Senior Pastor, or a member of the Board of Elders. Those applying for membership should normally have been in attendance for at least six months and should have become familiar with the life of the Church.

A group of at least three persons, two of whom must be members of the Board of Elders, shall interview the candidates to hear their testimony and to confirm that they meet the conditions listed in Section 3.1. Candidates approved for membership shall be publicly received into membership at a subsequent Lord’s Day service.

Candidates for ministerial positions and their spouses shall, as part of the interviewing process for the respective position, be interviewed for membership. All members of the Ministerial Staff, as well as their spouses, shall be members of Bethlehem Church.

3.3 Attendance

Regular attendance and involvement in the life of the Church comprise important parts of a member’s commitment to the Church. Those who have not attended the services of the Church for a year or more shall be contacted by a Pastor, Elder, or Deacon, who shall inquire into the member’s reasons for not attending. On this basis, or if contact is not possible, the non-attending member may, on the approval of the Board of Elders, be removed from membership or placed on the list of inactive members.

3.4 Discipline

The Elders are responsible for maintaining suitable Christian discipline within the Church. All those who have accepted Church membership are subject to the authority of the Board of Elders with respect to their relationship to the Church.

The Board of Elders shall ensure that any member shall be counseled in love who is found to:

- espouse false teaching that is significantly contrary to the Statement of Faith and to Scripture
- be guilty of flagrant sin: moral, sexual, or criminal

When the individual is not responsive to counseling, or when the Elders determine that the situation warrants, the Elders may limit the individual’s privileges and responsibilities. In situations when the individual is unrepentant, the Elders may remove the individual from Church membership. A discipline action by the Board requires the agreement of two-thirds or more of the entire Board of Elders.

The Elders may reinstate the individual when a change in behavior and repentance is observed.

Constitution of Bethlehem Church

4 CONGREGATIONAL MEETINGS

All Congregational Meetings for conducting the business of the Church (“Congregational Meeting”) shall be presided over by the Chairman of the Board of Elders, and shall be announced at the Sunday services on the two preceding Sundays. Voting privileges shall be extended to all members who are 18 years of age or older and who are active members. Any member of the Church may request that a vote take place via confidential (paper) ballot. Informational Meetings at which business will not be conducted need not be announced on two preceding Sundays. Every member has the right to speak in a Congregational Meeting. This privilege, however, shall be used to the glory of God and the intended good of the congregation.

Ten percent of the Church’s active members shall constitute a quorum at any Congregational Meeting. In the event that a quorum is not met, a second Congregational Meeting may be called at which business may be conducted without a quorum. All congregational votes shall require the approval of two-thirds of the members present, unless otherwise specified.

4.1 Annual Congregational Meeting

The annual Congregational Meeting shall be held in the month preceding the start of the Church year. (The Church calendar is set by resolution of the Board of Elders.)

The Board of Elders shall present the following reports to the congregation at least two weeks prior to the annual Congregational Meeting:

- report on the work of the Church for the past year
- financial report for the past year
- budget for the coming year
- financial secretary’s report for the past year
- names of any nominees for the Board of Elders and for Church Treasurer

At the Annual Congregational Meeting the budget for the coming year and the candidates for the positions of Elder and Treasurer shall be approved by congregational vote.

4.2 Other Congregational Meetings

At least two additional Congregational Meetings shall be held each year. Other Congregational Meetings may be called by resolution of the Board of Elders.

5 BOARD OF ELDERS

5.1 General

There shall be a single Board of elected leaders called the Board of Elders (“Board of Elders”, “Board”, or “Elders”). The Board shall be responsible for the overall direction of the Church, including its spiritual and ministerial functions as well as its financial, property, and legal concerns. The Officers of the Board shall also be designated the Officers of the Church.

5.2 Qualifications of Elders

The Elders shall be appropriately gifted men of godly and mature character, who meet the scriptural qualifications for such office and model the Christian life. Membership in Bethlehem Church is a prerequisite to holding the elected office of Elder. Elders may not be members of the immediate family of either the Senior Pastor or the Senior Associate Pastor. (see 1 Tim 3:1-7; Titus 1: 6-9)

Constitution of Bethlehem Church

5.3 Installation of Elders

5.3.1 Membership

The Board of Elders shall include nine to twelve (9-12) men elected by the congregation, including an Elder elected as the Church Treasurer. In addition, the Board shall include the Senior Pastor and Senior Associate Pastor, but shall not include other Ministerial Staff. The Board shall not exceed fourteen (14) members total, except as approved by congregational vote.

5.3.2 Nomination

The nomination of Elders shall be overseen by the Board and shall involve the congregation and the Ministerial Staff. The Board shall establish a Nominating Committee, which shall proceed as delineated in section 7.1.2. Once the Nominating Committee has issued its recommendations to the Board, the Board shall then make its selections. The nominees shall then be presented to the congregation for approval by congregational vote at the Annual Congregational Meeting.

The Board shall have the authority to appoint Elders to fill any vacancy, including Treasurer, between annual Congregational Meetings, but such appointment shall require a two-thirds vote of all elected Elders, and the appointed Elder must be presented to the congregation for election at the next Annual Congregational Meeting.

5.3.3 Term of Office

Elders will normally be elected for terms of 3 years. After serving six consecutive years, an Elder may not be re-elected or serve for a period of one year.

5.3.4 Discipline and Removal of Elders

An Elder, by accepting election to the Board, voluntarily submits himself to discipline by the Board. (See section 3.4.)

5.4 Special Board of Elders Positions

The Board shall ensure that three different Elders serve in the following positions:

5.4.1 Deacon: The Board of Elders shall appoint an Elder to lead the ministry of the Deacons. This Elder shall report to the Board regarding the Deacon ministry.

5.4.2 Trustee: The Board of Elders shall appoint an Elder to lead the ministry of the Trustees. This Elder shall report to the Board regarding the Trustee ministry.

5.4.3 Treasurer: The Elder elected by the Congregation to serve as the Church Treasurer shall be responsible for:

- preparing, in conjunction with the Ministerial Staff and other ministry leaders, the annual budget for the coming year, and for presenting that budget to the Elders at least two months before the annual Congregational Meeting
- advising the Elders regarding the financial status of the Church
- ensuring that the Elders and the Ministerial Staff are provided with monthly and annual financial reports of all funds of the Church, and that an annual financial statement is provided to the congregation
- ensuring the review and payment of all appropriate bills of the Church
- ensuring that all of the financial actions of the Church remain fully consistent with Biblical standards of Christian integrity, as well as with all appropriate governmental regulations.

5.5 Responsibilities of the Board

The Board shall be responsible for the overall direction of Bethlehem Church, worked out in the following general areas:

Constitution of Bethlehem Church

5.5.1 Setting Direction

The Senior Pastor and other Ministerial Staff (collectively: “Ministerial Staff”) together with the Elder Board will shape the vision of the Church, set the direction of its ministries, and provide for evaluation of its progress.

5.5.2 Ministerial Staffing

The Board shall ensure that an adequate Ministerial Staff exists to lead the ministries of the Church and shall support, enable and encourage each Ministerial Staff person.

- a) **Filling Ministerial Staff positions:** The Board shall have responsibility and authority with regard to filling Ministerial Staff positions, as detailed in section 8.3.
- b) **Ministerial Staff oversight** - The Board will oversee the Senior Pastor and conduct periodic performance evaluations of the Senior Pastor. The Board will also advise the Senior Pastor as he organizes, directs, and evaluates all other Ministerial Staff.
- c) **Dismissal** - The Board shall have responsibility and authority with regard to dismissing Ministerial Staff, as detailed in section 8.5.
- d) **Compensation** - The Board shall determine the compensation of the Ministerial Staff.

5.5.3 Leadership Development

The Board shall be responsible for ensuring the vitality of lay leadership within the Church. This responsibility will include developing and enabling potential lay leaders of ministries, in cooperation with the Ministerial Staff.

5.5.4 Caring for the Church Family

The Board shall ensure that the ministry of the Church nurtures the individual and encourages spiritual growth, as well as commitment to the body through service. The Board shall be responsible for all matters pertaining to membership in Bethlehem Church. To help fulfill these responsibilities, the Board shall appoint and oversee godly and qualified men and women, who shall be members of the Church, to serve as Deacons. (See section 6.1)

5.5.5 Financial, Property, and Legal Authority

The Board shall be responsible for all matters pertaining to the financial, property, and legal concerns of the Church.

- a) **Fiduciary Responsibilities** The Board shall hold in trust all real and other property belonging to Bethlehem Church, and shall ensure that the corporate status of the Church be maintained in good standing. The Board shall arrange for periodic independent reviews and/or audits of the Church’s financial records and practices.
- b) **Managing Finances and Properties** The Board shall ensure that the Church’s finances and properties be protected and maintained in good standing. To help fulfill these responsibilities, the Board shall appoint and oversee godly and qualified men and women, who shall be members of the Church, to serve as Trustees. (See section 6.2)
- c) **Financial Authority** On occasion, the Board may find it necessary to make additional expenditures for non-budgeted items or projects to meet the needs of the Church. The Board shall therefore have the authority to make such expenditures, but under no circumstance shall the expenditure for any single non-budgeted item exceed 3% of the Church’s then current annual budget. Any such expenditure requires the approval of at least two-thirds of the Board.

5.5.6 Appointments

The Board shall make appointments to the following positions:

Constitution of Bethlehem Church

- Deacons
- Trustees
- Financial Secretary
- Mission Council Chair (the Mission Council Chair must be a member of the Church)
- Church Clerk (the Church Clerk will record the minutes of the Congregational Meetings)
- Nominating Committee
- Pulpit Committee

5.6 Officers of the Board and Church

The Board's officers shall include:

Chairman – Elected by the Board, the Chairman shall preside over the meetings of the Board of Elders and of the Congregation. The Chairman is also designated as the corporate President of the Church.

Vice-Chairman – Elected by the Board, the Vice Chairman shall perform the duties of the Chairman when the Chairman is absent. The Vice-Chairman is also designated as the corporate Vice-President of the Church.

Treasurer – The Elder elected by the Congregation to fulfill the responsibilities of Church Treasurer, as described in section 5.4.3.

Secretary - Elected by the Board, the Secretary shall record the minutes of all meetings of the Board of Elders.

Other Officers – The Board may also elect such other officers as may be deemed necessary or appropriate.

5.7 Board Meetings

The Board shall meet monthly.

6 Deacons and Trustees

6.1 Deacons

6.1.1 Appointment

To help fulfill its responsibilities in caring for the Church family, the Board of Elders shall appoint and oversee godly and qualified men and women to serve as Deacons. Deacons must be members of the Church.

6.1.2 Organization

The Board of Elders shall appoint an Elder as a Deacon to lead the ministry of the Deacons. This Elder shall report to the Board regarding the Deacon ministry.

6.1.3 Duties

The Deacons shall be responsible for:

- a) administering the Deacons Fund for the welfare and relief of the needy
- b) developing and maintaining a ministry of visitation and helps
- c) providing assistance to the Senior Pastor in his ministry of counseling
- d) attending, by other means, to the needs of individuals in the Church community.

6.2 Trustees

6.2.1 Appointment

To help fulfill its responsibilities in matters pertaining to the financial, property, and legal concerns of the Church, the Board of Elders shall appoint and oversee godly and qualified men and women to serve as Trustees. Trustees must be members of the Church. The Financial Secretary and the Treasurer shall be included among those serving as Trustees.

Constitution of Bethlehem Church

6.2.2 Organization

The Board of Elders shall appoint an Elder as a Trustee to lead the ministry of the Trustees. This Elder shall report to the Board regarding the Trustee ministry.

6.2.3 Duties

The Trustees shall be responsible for:

- a) the maintenance, repairs, and improvements of all facilities
- b) the maintenance, repair, replacement, and usage of Church vehicles
- c) insurance: property, liability, casualty, auto, workers' compensation, directors and officers, and other
- d) safety and risk management
- e) arranging and managing employee health and welfare benefits.

6.2.4 Financial Authority

A Trustee shall have authority to spend budgeted monies within his/her areas of responsibility, and in accordance with the requirements of the Operating Manual.

6.2.5 Financial Secretary

The Financial Secretary must be a member of Bethlehem Church, and may not be a Ministerial Staff member. The Financial Secretary shall be appointed by the Elders. The normal term of appointment will be for 3 years. After serving six consecutive years, the Financial Secretary may not serve again for a period of one year.

The Financial Secretary shall be responsible for:

- receiving and recording all monies and gifts to the Church
- issuing tax deduction statements to the respective donors in compliance with IRS regulations
- providing the Treasurer with records necessary for the balancing of Church accounts

7 COMMITTEES

The following committees are established under this Constitution to carry out the work of the Church. Members of these committees are to be members of Bethlehem Church.

7.1 Nominating Committee

The nominating committee shall be formed each year approximately four months prior to the annual Congregational Meeting. The Board of Elders shall inform the committee of the vacancies to be filled and the terms of service of these positions. (see section 5.3.2)

7.1.1 Appointment

- (a) Members of the Nominating Committee and its chairperson are to be appointed by the Board of Elders.
- (b) The Nominating Committee shall consist of men and women as follows:
 - four members of the Board of Elders, one of which shall be the Senior Pastor
 - four members of the congregation

7.1.2 Duties

The Nominating Committee is responsible to present to the Board its nominations for positions on the Board of Elders. The Nominating Committee will proceed by:

Constitution of Bethlehem Church

- a) Soliciting names from the Congregation for all positions to be filled on the Board of Elders, including the person designated for the position of Church Treasurer whenever this position needs to be filled.
- b) Prayerfully considering all potential candidates in view of the qualifications for the position of Elder (see section 5.2) and the needs of the Church.
- c) Presenting its final recommendations to the Board of Elders at least two months before the annual Congregational Meeting. (see section 5.3.2)

7.2 Pulpit Committee

The Pulpit Committee shall be formed by the Board of Elders whenever: the position of Senior Pastor is vacant or is about to become vacant; or the position of Senior Associate Pastor is vacant or is about to become vacant and it is the intention of the Board of Elders to fill the position.

7.2.1 Appointment

- (a) Members of the Pulpit Committee and its chairperson are to be appointed by the Board of Elders.
- (b) The Pulpit committee shall consist of men and women as follows:
 - four members of the Board of Elders, one of which must be the Senior Pastor when the position of Senior Associate Pastor is to be filled
 - four members of the congregation.

7.2.2 Duties

The pulpit committee shall conduct a search for candidates for the positions of Senior Pastor or Senior Associate Pastor, considering the qualifications for the position and the needs of the Church. They shall prayerfully evaluate potential candidates and shall present their recommendations to the Board of Elders.

8 MINISTERIAL STAFF

8.1 Ministerial Staff Positions

The Ministerial Staff are those in paid positions who are responsible for overseeing and directing various portions of the overall Church ministry.

The position of Senior Pastor remains an established position which may not be rescinded. Other ministerial positions, including the position of Senior Associate Pastor, may be established or rescinded by resolution of the Elders.

A permanent Ministerial Staff position is defined as continuing one year or more. A temporary Ministerial Staff position continues for less than one year. A full-time Ministerial Staff position is defined as assigning more than 20 hours of work per week. A part-time Ministerial Staff position is defined as assigning 20 hours of work per week or less. Permanent and temporary Ministerial Staff positions may be either full-time or part-time.

8.2 Qualifications

All persons being considered for any Ministerial Staff position at Bethlehem Church must be in agreement with the Church's Statement of Faith (See section 2), must demonstrate a godly and maturing personal character, and must be living in obedience to Scripture. Each member of the Ministerial Staff shall be a member of Bethlehem Church.

In addition, the Senior Pastor and the Senior Associate Pastor must meet the qualifications of Elders. (See section 5.2)

Constitution of Bethlehem Church

8.3 Calling

8.3.1 Senior Pastor and Senior Associate Pastor - The Board of Elders shall appoint a Pulpit Committee when the position of Senior Pastor is vacant or is about to become vacant. (See section 7.2) The Pulpit Committee shall conduct a search and present their recommended candidate(s) to the Elders for review. When a candidate has been approved by two-thirds of the Elders, the Elders shall present the candidate to the Congregation for approval by congregational vote at a Congregational Meeting.

The same process shall be followed when the Board of Elders is seeking to fill the position of a Senior Associate Pastor, except that the Senior Pastor must approve the candidate before he is presented to the congregation.

8.3.2 Other Ministerial Positions

When ministerial positions other than the Senior or Senior Associate Pastors are to be filled, the Board of Elders may appoint a search committee to identify qualified candidates for the positions to be filled.

- a) Candidates for such full-time permanent ministerial positions require the approval of two-thirds of the Board of Elders and of the Senior Pastor, as well as approval by congregational vote.
- b) Candidates for part-time or temporary positions require the approval of two-thirds of the Board of Elders and of the Senior Pastor.

8.4 Responsibilities

The Senior Pastor, under the authority of the Board of Elders, will be responsible for preaching and teaching the Word of God, and for the leadership of the Church.

The Senior Associate Pastor, under the authority of the Senior Pastor, will be responsible for the leadership of the Ministerial Staff, and for other duties as assigned by the Senior Pastor.

All other Ministerial Staff will be responsible for their respective areas and should possess gifts and skills appropriate to these areas.

8.5 Termination

8.5.1 Termination of either the Senior Pastor or the Senior Associate Pastor shall require a vote of at least two-thirds of the entire Board, and must be ratified by a simple majority of members in attendance at a Congregational Meeting.

8.5.2 Termination of all other Ministerial Staff shall require a vote of at least two-thirds of the entire Board.

9 ORDINATION

Non-ordained pastors in Bethlehem Church shall be encouraged to seek licensing or ordination with the Evangelical Free Church of America.

Credentials for ministry are granted by the E.F.C.A. in response to the individual's request and by that individual providing the appropriate information regarding his call and doctrinal convictions.

These credentials are issued by the E.F.C.A. and are therefore recognized by other churches, as well as the military, for Chaplain positions. The national credentialing board approves the credentials. The removal of credentials will also be initiated by the National Credentialing Board of the E.F.C.A.

Constitution of Bethlehem Church

10 DISSOLUTION OF CORPORATION

In the event that it becomes necessary to dissolve this corporation, none of the assets remaining after meeting all the responsibilities and payment of all just obligations shall inure to the benefit of any individual member of the corporation, employee, or other private individual. All such assets, if any, shall in the event of dissolution be turned over by the decision of the congregation at a Congregational Meeting, convened in accordance with this Constitution, to an organization or organizations which is or are in harmony with the Articles of Faith given in Article 2 of the Constitution. Such an organization or organizations must also be recognized by the United States Treasury Department as entitled to income tax exemption. No profit shall ever accrue to the benefit of any person or persons from the disposal of the assets or holdings of the Church or any other transaction in which the Church is involved.

11 OPERATING MANUAL

The Operating Manual of Bethlehem Church (“Operating Manual”) is to be issued as an addendum to this document, and shall contain the information and procedures necessary for the orderly operation of Bethlehem Church, including:

- Ministerial Staff job descriptions
- general organizational and functional structure of the Church
- major operating procedures

The Operating Manual shall be issued, amended, or revised by approval of the Board of Elders.

Manuals specific to particular areas of the Church may be issued as well. All such manuals shall be referenced in the Operating Manual.

In the event that anything in the Operating Manual or any other Church manual or document conflicts with anything in this Constitution, the terms of this Constitution shall control.

12 REVISIONS AND AMENDMENTS TO THIS CONSTITUTION

The Constitution of Bethlehem Church can be revised or amended only at a Congregational Meeting following a preceding Congregational Meeting at which a resolution to do so was passed. Proposed revisions shall first be approved by the Board of Elders. Copies of any proposed revision shall be made available to the congregation at least two Sundays prior to each of the meetings, and at least two months shall elapse between the Congregational Meetings. Approval by congregational vote in the first meeting shall be by a simple majority and in the second meeting by a two-thirds majority.