

# **Constitution**

## **Preamble**

To affirm and preserve the principles of our faith, to guarantee that this body may be governed in an orderly and efficient manner consistent with the Scriptures, and for the purpose of preserving the unity of this church, the liberties inherent in each individual member and the freedom of action of this body with respect to other churches of the same faith, we do declare and establish this Constitution.

## **I. Name**

The name of this church shall be Hope Baptist Church.

## **II. Purpose**

Hope Baptist exists to join with God in leading people to follow Christ and into a loving relationship with Him (Matthew 22:36-38, Matthew 28:18-20). Therefore, Hope is a place to:

1. enjoy God through worship,
2. embrace people through ministry and fellowship, and
3. experience growth through evangelism and discipleship.

## **III. Articles of Faith**

Our beliefs are summarized on the Hope Baptist Church website and can be found at What We Believe | Hope Baptist Church ([hbcmanchester.org](http://hbcmanchester.org)).

## **IV. Church Members' Affirmation and Covenant**

Our church covenant reflects the mutual commitments and obligations that the members of our church have before God and each other. It can be found on the Hope Baptist Church website at Church Covenant | Hope Baptist Church ([hbcmanchester.org](http://hbcmanchester.org)).

# **By-Laws**

## **Article I MEMBERSHIP**

### **Section (1) Qualifications:**

To be received into this church, any person must:

- confess Jesus Christ as their personal Lord and Savior,
- agree with the Articles of Faith, the Church Members' Affirmation and Covenant, and the Constitution and By-Laws,
- experience water baptism by immersion, and
- attend a Hope Baptist membership class.

### **Section (2) Procedure:**

Each applicant for membership of the church shall relate his or her Christian experience to the Pastors and the Elders. The Pastors and Elders will recommend candidates for membership at the next business meeting. Acceptance of the candidates will be by majority vote of the church membership.

### **Section (3) Duties:**

Members are expected to be faithful in all the duties essential to the Christian life, by glorifying God, by seeking to live holy lives in this present world, and, with the help of God, by investing their lives for His glory, for the good of their fellow believers, and to produce and maintain unity among the body of believers.

### **Section (4) Termination:**

Prior to the annual business meeting, the Pastors and Elders will review the membership list. A member shall be recommended for dismissal if:

- a) he or she has become a member of another church,
- b) he or she was subject to dismissal by church discipline (See Article II – Discipline), or
- c) he or she has stopped attending church services for one year, after every effort was made for restoration to active fellowship.

## **Article II DISCIPLINE**

### **Section (1) Definition of Discipline:**

- a) Definition – The term “Discipline” refers to corrective action for problems and difficulties in the church body. Corrective action should begin with Christian teaching, training, and admonition and has as its object the unity of the church community and the restoration of the individual concerned.
- b) Attitude for discipline – An attitude of prayer, love, patience, calmness, and understanding shall be the foundation in all matters of church discipline, regardless of the nature of the difficulty or offense.

### **Section (2) Matters Requiring Discipline:**

- a) Difference between individuals – The order given in Matthew 18:16 shall be followed to resolve disharmony between members.
- b) Heresy – Members who hold and/or persistently propagate false doctrine (Titus 3:10)
- c) Public sin – Members found walking in a manner unbecoming to disciples of Christ (I Corinthians 5:1-13)
- d) Attitude toward the local church – Members treating the acts and decisions of the church contemptuously (Hebrews 13:17, I Timothy 5:19-21) or pursuing such a course which produces discord, disunity, or dissension (Romans 16:17-18, I Thessalonians 5:12-14)

### **Section (3) Procedure of Discipline:**

The Pastors and Elders are responsible to see that discipline is administered in true love, patience, and understanding and with a calm spirit. The principles and steps laid down in Matthew 18:15-17 will be followed as a guide in all matters requiring church discipline.

- a) Exclusion: If the member in question neglects to hear the church (Matthew 18:17) and a biblical solution cannot be worked out, the member who is found

guilty of an offense will be dismissed from the membership by vote per Article V Meetings.

- b) Restoration: Excluded members may be restored to membership upon recommendation of the Pastors and Elders. Restoration occurs by a three-fourths (3/4) vote of the members present at the meeting.

## **Article III CHURCH OFFICERS**

### **Section (1) Introduction:**

All duly elected officers shall have the full trust and confidence of the church body so that they may carry out their ministries and responsibilities. It is their responsibility to keep the church body informed. They are to remain within the bounds of authority placed upon them by the Constitution and By-Laws and by the church body.

### **Section (2) Senior Pastor:**

- a) Qualifications:

The qualifications of the Senior Pastor are those given in I Timothy 3:1-7 and Titus 1:5-9. He must be spiritually and educationally qualified to lead the church as an under-shepherd of God. He must be able to preach, teach, train, and provide leadership to carry out the spirit and letter of the New Testament. At the time of his call, he shall be in complete accord with our Articles of Faith, Constitution, and By-Laws. Both he and his wife shall become members of this church, and he shall also become an Elder. The term limit for Elders shall not apply to the Senior Pastor.

- b) Duties:

- 1) To earnestly carry on a preaching, teaching, and training ministry with the aim of bringing each member to a place of spiritual maturity and fruitfulness, and to a place of spiritual harmony with the rest of the church body (Colossians 1:28-29, II Timothy 2:2).

- 2) To oversee the teaching and training ministries of the church, to tenderly watch over its members, and to seek to develop their strengths for the best possible service.
- 3) To set an example in Christian living and dedication (I Timothy 4:12, I Peter 5:12-13).
- 4) To establish priorities and direction for the spiritual life of the church with input from the Elders.

c) Respect for his office:

The Pastor shall be held in esteem and respect as an under-shepherd of God (I Thessalonians 5:12-13, I Timothy 5:17-19, Hebrews 13:17). To aid the Pastor in carrying out his ministry, the church body shall not burden him with tasks unrelated to those duties in Article III, Section 2(b).

d) Call:

Whenever a senior pastor vacancy occurs, the Elders are responsible for presenting a candidate to the membership. The Elders will, if necessary, form a search committee and appoint four additional members (two men, two women). When a suitable candidate is found he will be recommended to the membership for their consideration. A vote will be held per Article V. Meetings.

e) Termination:

The office of Senior Pastor may be terminated either by resignation as read from the pulpit or by church vote. A thirty-day notice must be given by either party desiring the termination. This provision may be waived if mutually agreed upon. To terminate a Senior Pastor, a recommendation shall be made to the church by the Board of Elders at a special meeting called for this action. A vote shall be held per Article V Meetings.

### **Section (3) – Other Church Staff:**

When it is determined by the Elders that other church staff are needed, they will, if necessary, form a search committee and appoint two additional members (one man and one woman member). When a suitable candidate is found, he or she will be

recommended to the membership for their consideration. A vote will be held per Article V Meetings.

- a) If the Elders wish to invite any other pastoral staff to serve on the Board of Elders, they shall be exempted from the two-year membership requirement stated in Section 4(a)(4) and may be elected to the Board of Elders at the next duly constituted business meeting. Pastoral staff Elders are not subject to term limitations.
- b) General oversight of the other church staff shall be the responsibility of the Senior Pastor with the support from the Elders. When necessary, the Senior Pastor and the Elders shall be responsible for the dismissal of all church staff.
- c) Ministry descriptions for each pastoral and church staff person will be determined by the Elders and kept on file.

#### **Section (4) Board of Elders:**

While the Pastors are considered Elders, the term Elder in these By-Laws shall refer only to an individual nominated by the Board from among the active membership and ratified by the congregation to be such.

##### **a) Qualifications:**

Elders

- 1) shall be men of mature judgement and loyalty to the Lord Jesus Christ and His church,
- 2) shall meet the requirements of I Timothy 3:1-7, Titus 1:6-9, and I Peter 5:1-5,
- 3) shall be led to serve and become an overseer of the church,
- 4) shall have been a member of Hope Baptist Church for at least two (2) years, and
- 5) shall be experienced in service to the Lord and devoted to prayer and the ministry of the Word.

b) Election:

- 1) The term of service is 2 years. Elders may serve 3 consecutive terms with a minimum of one year off at the end of the third term. Pastors are excluded from this term limit and serve as Elders for as long as the Senior Pastor desires.
- 2) An Elder must be elected at a business meeting by a vote which will be held according to Article V Meetings.
- 3) As many men as are qualified and willing to serve may be elected.
- 4) When there is a need to replace an Elder:
  - a. The Elders shall serve as the nominating committee for the Board of Elders.
  - b. After deliberation and prayer, the Elders will unanimously recommend qualified individuals to the congregation, to be announced two Sundays before the duly constituted business meeting.

c) Duties and Responsibilities:

The Elders shall exercise their scriptural responsibilities of shepherding, oversight, and leadership as God directs them. These responsibilities include:

- 1) oversight and administration of all ministries of teaching, discipleship, and evangelism,
- 2) oversight of all church services, including baptism, communion and preaching,
- 3) working with the pastoral staff in shepherding the flock of God by supporting their leadership and pastoral care ministry (I Peter 5:1-2),
- 4) oversight and administration of the membership process in coordination with the pastoral staff,
- 5) oversight and administration of the church discipline process in coordination with the pastoral staff,
- 6) coordination with the Board of Deacons on a regular basis, including recommending candidates for the Board of Deacons,

- 7) determination of personnel needs and authorization for the hiring of church staff in consultation with the pastoral staff and the Deacons regarding budgetary considerations,
- 8) oversight of the Senior Pastor, and
- 9) choosing a chairman at the first Board of Elders meeting after the Annual Meeting. The Senior Pastor shall not serve as the Board chairman.

#### **Section (5) Deacons:**

The Deacons assist the Elders by caring for the practical needs of the church.

a) **Qualifications:**

Deacons shall be men who are active members of this church, of mature judgement, unquestioned Christian character, loyal to the Lord Jesus Christ, living in accordance with the qualifications of I Timothy 3:8-13 and Acts 6:1-7.

b) **Election:**

- 1) The term of service is 2 years. Deacons may serve 3 consecutive terms with a minimum of one year off at the end of the third term.
- 2) A Deacon must be elected at a business meeting by a vote which will be held according to Article V Meetings.
- 3) As many men as are qualified and willing to serve may be elected, with a minimum of three.

c) **Duties and Responsibilities:**

The Deacons assist the Elders by caring for the practical needs of the church.

Their responsibilities include:

- 1) caring for all matters relating to facilities, equipment, finances, and the audit of financial records,
- 2) establishing various committees, as needed, to carry on their work,
- 3) in consultation with the Elders, making appointments to these various committees and determining their responsibilities and policies,
- 4) appointing a chairman, whose duties shall include the following:



- a. presiding at meetings of the Board of Deacons,
  - b. serving as administrative overseer of various committees established by the Board of Deacons, and
  - c. maintaining direct, personal contact with the Elders.
- 5) working with the Elders in attending to the needs of members for aid and assistance through the Fellowship Fund,
  - 6) preparing, in cooperation with the Elders, an annual budget to be submitted to the church for approval, with copies of the proposed budget distributed at least two weeks in advance of the Annual Meeting, and
  - 7) serving as legal trustees of the church as required by the State of Maine.

The Board of Deacons is authorized to alter the annual budget to expend funds not provided in the budget to carry out the work of the church. Such fund expenditures in any fiscal year shall not exceed 3% of the annual budget approved by the church.

#### **Section (6) Women's Ministry Team:**

##### **a) Qualifications:**

Women's Ministry Team members shall be

- 1) women of mature judgement, above reproach, and loyal to the Lord Jesus Christ and His Church,
- 2) led to serve and lead the women of the church,
- 3) experienced in service to the Lord and devoted to prayer and the ministry of the Word, and
- 4) active members of the church.

##### **b) Election:**

- 1) The term of service is 2 years, so arranged that half the number is elected each year. Women's Ministry Team members may serve 3 consecutive terms with a minimum of one year off at the end of the third term.

- 2) The church may elect as many members as it deems necessary with a minimum of three.

c) Duties and Responsibilities:

The Women's Ministry Team shall

- 1) lead women of the church to the heart of God through encouragement, discipleship, fellowship, and outreach,
- 2) enlist the women of the church to help fulfill the team's purpose,
- 3) seek to make their own lives a spiritual example for the women of the church,
- 4) be accountable to the Elders in carrying out these duties and responsibilities, and
- 5) choose a leader who has at least one year's experience in serving on the Women's Ministry Team.

d) Meetings:

The Women's Ministry Team shall meet at regular intervals to plan church activities and carry out their duties.

**Section (7) Moderator:**

The Moderator of the church meetings shall be elected annually. An Elder shall preside in his or her absence.

**Section (8) Clerk:**

The Clerk, elected at the Annual Meeting of the church, shall keep a record of all the actions of the business meetings of the church, except as otherwise herein provided.

The Clerk shall be responsible for the storage of formal church documentation such as annual reports, business meeting minutes, and other similar records. In coordination with the church staff, the Clerk shall keep at the church the names of active and inactive members and a record of baptisms.

**Section (9) Treasurer:**

The Treasurer shall be elected at the Annual Meeting of the church. The Treasurer shall obtain a receipt of all funds from the Financial Secretary and is responsible for the

oversight and disbursement of all funds of the church as authorized by the annual budget. If they see fit, the Deacons may instruct the Nominating Committee to nominate an Assistant Treasure or Bookkeeper to be elected at the Annual Meeting.

#### **Section (10) Financial Secretary:**

The Financial Secretary, other than the Treasurer, shall be elected at the Annual Meeting. The Financial Secretary shall:

- a) receive and deposit all monies,
- b) keep a record of such monies,
- c) give the record of receipts and their proper designation to the Treasurer, and
- d) provide giving statements to donors on an annual basis.

If they see fit, the Deacons may instruct the Nominating Committee to nominate an Assistant Financial Secretary to be elected at the Annual Meeting.

#### **Section (11) Kids of Hope Church Director:**

The Kids of Hope Church Director shall be elected at the Annual Meeting. Under the direction of and in cooperation with the Pastors and Board of Elders, he or she shall have charge of all volunteer staffing, curriculum, and scheduling duties of the Kids of Hope Church.

#### **Section (12) Tenure of Office:**

All officers of the church shall be elected for a one-year term except Elders, Deacons, Women's Ministry Team members, and Missions Committee members, which shall be for a two-year term. No member elected for a one-year term shall serve in one office for more than six consecutive years. No church officer or member of any committee elected for a two-year term may be re-elected after three consecutive terms in office without having had a one-year leave of absence. In the event of a vacancy in office, the Nominating Committee may present a recommendation at the next called business meeting to fill the vacancy for the unexpired term.

### **Section (13) Time Qualification for Office:**

No person may be elected to any board, committee, or office until that person has been a member for six months, except as otherwise stated in the bylaws. The Elders may waive this requirement at their discretion.

## **Article IV COMMITTEES**

### **Section (1) Nominating Committee:**

The purpose of this committee is to prayerfully select nominees to fill vacant positions in the church's slate of officers, except for the office of Elder. The Nominating Committee shall be composed of the Senior Pastor, one Elder, one Deacon, one member of the Women's Ministry Team (appointed by their respective boards), and two members of the church at large, appointed by the Elders.

Upon initiation by the Senior Pastor, a new Nominating Committee will convene annually. The responsibilities of the committee are to:

- a) review the current membership list and prayerfully discuss the candidates for each vacant position, evaluating their character, spiritual gifts, and abilities,
- b) contact each nominee to see if they are willing to serve in the nominated position, and
- c) prepare a list of nominations for officers, board members and committee members to be presented and voted on at the Annual Meeting.

The Nominating Committee shall serve throughout the fiscal year. Vacancies on the Committee shall be filled by the Elders.

### **Section (2) Missions Committee:**

The Missions Committee shall consist of not less than three members, elected at the Annual Meeting of the church for a term of two years. It shall have oversight of all missionary interests and coordinate all missionary activities of the church. These duties include but are not limited to:

- a) maintaining an updated list of active, supported missionaries,

- b) recommending new missionaries for support,
- c) engaging missionaries to speak at the church in consultation with the Pastors,
- d) being responsible for correspondence with missionaries and/or missionary agencies, and
- e) presenting an itemized budget and written summary of activities for the annual report.

The Missions Committee shall be accountable to the Elders, Deacons, and Pastors in carrying out these duties and responsibilities.

### **Section (3) Pastoral Search Committee:**

If a Pastoral Search Committee is formed in accordance with Article III, Section 2 (d), the Pastoral Search Committee shall bring to the church only one candidate at a time for consideration. The church shall act upon the recommendation of the Pastoral Search Committee within one week after the candidate speaks at the church. A business meeting called for the purpose of acting upon the recommendation will be held per Article V Meetings ballot and voting will be by ballot.

## **Article V MEETINGS**

### **Section (1) Worship:**

Church services shall be held regularly on Sunday with communion being held monthly. Small groups and special meetings are encouraged for Bible study, prayer, praise, and fellowship.

### **Section (2) Business:**

- a) The Annual Meeting shall be held during the third week of May unless another date is specified with proper notice given. The business of the Annual Meeting will include:
  - 1) call of meeting,
  - 2) prayer,
  - 3) reading of previous business meeting minutes,

- 4) old business,
  - 5) presentation of the pastoral and annual ministry reports,
  - 6) election of officers, board members, and committee members,
  - 7) discussion and adoption of the new church budget,
  - 8) other business as indicated by the notice of the meeting or as authorized in church By-Laws, and
  - 9) closing prayer
- b) The moderator will conduct all meetings in an orderly fashion.
  - c) Special business meetings may be held, as need arises, and will be called by the Elders. Only business stated in the call for the meeting will be addressed.
  - d) Notice of special meetings shall be announced publicly from the pulpit by a Pastor or an Elder of the church on two consecutive Sundays (Lord's Day) preceding the meeting. The purpose of the meeting will be included in the notice.
  - e) A quorum will be established when 20% of the members are present. This quorum will apply to all meetings.
  - f) All elections and decisions require a three-fourths (3/4) vote of approval to pass. Any vote not reaching three-fourths (3/4) approval shall be automatically sent back to the committee for reconsideration. The method of voting shall be determined by the moderator.
  - g) Proxy votes and absentee ballots are not admissible for the conduct of church business.

## **Article VI MISSIONS**

The purpose of the missionary program is to carry out the great commission of our Lord. The missionary program will especially give preference to church members who have been led by the Lord to serve as missionaries. Missionary candidates from World Venture and Missions Door will be given high consideration due to our affiliation with Church Venture Network. This in no way restricts missionary giving to other organizations and mission boards whose policies and programs are in basic agreement with our Constitution and By-Laws.

## **Article VII FINANCES**

The Scriptures are the sole authority over the financial policy. Therefore, the operating expenses of the church, as outlined in the budget and approved at the Annual Meeting, will be met from tithes and offerings. All members are encouraged to cheerfully bring them into the church, God's Store House (Malachi 3:10, I Corinthians 16:13, II Corinthians 8-9, Acts 4:34-35). At no time will the selling of goods or the provision of service be used to fund the church's budget. However, special projects approved by the Elders may be funded by various and sundry means providing they do not violate the Scriptures nor imply to the public that they are being used to fund the church.

As a matter of good stewardship, the church may purchase insurances or enter into contractual agreements deemed necessary for the economic and responsible care of the physical assets and employees of the church. The church may also accept other available financial assistance in the form of grants or other funding as long as it does not conflict with God's Word or with the Purpose, Statement of Faith, or any other function of the church.

## **Article VIII Affiliations**

We are a Baptist Church independent of any external control. We choose to affiliate with the Venture Church Network of Denver, Colorado, formerly the Conservative Baptist Association.

## **Article IX GENERAL**

### **Section (1) Fiscal Year:**

The fiscal year of the church shall begin on the first of May. All committee members and officers shall remain in office until their successors are elected and the church shall continue to operate on the previous year's budget until the Annual Meeting. The budget approved at the Annual Meeting will be retroactive to May 1.

### **Section (2) Will of the Church:**

When the church, by vote, has expressed itself and is not in conflict with the Lord's will, with this Constitution and By-Laws, nor with the religious corporation laws of the State

of Maine, the will of the church shall be carried out by the officers, the committees, and organizations.

### **Section (3) Licensing, Ordaining, and Commissioning to Ministry:**

- a) The church may grant a license to preach to any male member recommended by the Elders who gives evidence of his ability and spiritual preparedness. The Licensee must have preached within hearing of the church before any church action is taken.
- b) The church may ordain any male member who gives evidence of having been called to pastoral ministry, after having been appointed by an ordination committee. The procedure shall be as follows:
  - 1) The Elders shall examine the candidate to determine their agreement concerning his call from God. The qualifications recommended by Mission Northeast should be taken into consideration.
  - 2) Upon agreement by the Elders, the candidate shall be presented to the church for vote at a business meeting.
  - 3) Upon church approval, the Clerk shall call an ordination council to further examine the candidate. Ordination shall proceed upon satisfactory recommendation of the ordination council.
- c) The church may commission any member who gives evidence of having been called to missionary service, after having been appointed by a missionary board.

### **Section (4) Amendments:**

- a) The Constitution and By-Laws may be amended at any special business meeting or the Annual Meeting. The voting requirements are as follows:
  - 1) Articles of Faith by vote per Article V Meetings
  - 2) Constitution and By-Laws by vote per Article V Meetings
- b) The notice for the proposed amendment shall be given on four consecutive Sundays preceding the meeting at which it is to be considered. The text of the amendment shall be provided along with the notice for the meeting.



- c) This Constitution and By-Laws shall go into effect when adopted by the church.
- d) All previous actions of the church that in conflict with these articles are set aside.
- e) Hope Baptist Church was incorporated on April 1, 1977.

**Section (5) Dissolution of the Corporation:**

In the event of dissolution of the corporation, the assets will be distributed to other charitable and religious corporations which prescribe to the doctrine as stated in these By-Laws and which enjoy an exempt status for tax purposes under the current provisions of the Internal Revenue Code of the United States. As long as this church is affiliated with the Venture Church Network, they shall receive first consideration.

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