

# CONSTITUTION OF THE CHURCH OF THE GOOD SHEPHERD

## PREAMBLE

We, the Elders of the Church of the Good Shepherd, in order to promote the work of the church in the Spirit of Christ and thus advance His kingdom, do hereby adopt this constitution.

## ARTICLE I - NAME

The name of this church shall be the *Church of the Good Shepherd, Inc.*

## ARTICLE II - AUTHORITY

In truth, Holy Scripture is the sacred constitution of this church. Thus, the written Word of God as revealed in both the Old and New Testaments<sup>1</sup> of the Bible shall be the authoritative standard for this church body.

## ARTICLE III - PURPOSE

A. The purpose of this church shall be:

1. EVANGELISM - to preach the gospel; to serve as a faithful witness; to train believers in evangelism; to coordinate evangelistic programs and events.
2. DISCIPLESHIP - to teach the laws and commands of God's Word; to admonish believers to live holy and pure lives; to disciple new believers; to reprove unrighteous lifestyles.
3. MINISTRY - to assist those with spiritual, emotional, physical needs; to train and admonish members to minister to the needy.
4. WORSHIP - to glorify, honor, praise, adore, magnify, revere, laud, celebrate, and extol God in corporate worship; to fulfill the stated chief purpose: *"to glorify God and to enjoy Him forever."*
5. SOCIAL ACTION - to be a prophetic voice in a morally decaying culture; to support efforts that reinforce the values of religious freedom, sanctity of life, and marital fidelity; to oppose attempts in our society that seek to undermine the moral fabric of the family, the church, or Christendom.
6. UNITY - to work toward the unity of all Christians; to engage with other churches in the common task of building the Kingdom of God; to refrain from exclusive attitudes; to pray and work for the fulfillment of John 17:21.

B. This church shall function as a self-governing and autonomous congregation.

C. As a non-profit corporation in the State of Indiana and recognized as a 501(c)(3) religious organization, this church:

1. May not substantially participate in political campaigns for any candidate or act of legislation<sup>2</sup>
2. May not financially benefit any of its officers or members except for a) reasonable compensation for services rendered; and b) benevolent causes.

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<sup>1</sup> This church does not recognize the Apocrypha as divinely inspired.

<sup>2</sup> Federal Court case, IRC § 501(c)(3)-2 allows charitable organizations to advocate social or civic changes on controversial issues with the intention of molding public opinion. Federal case *Consumer Credit Counseling Service of Alabama, Inc. v. United States (DC Dist Col; 1978)* ruled that political activities of a charitable organization does not cause loss of exemption if they are only incidental to organization's principle functions.

3. May not perform any other activities not permitted by a corporation exempt from Federal income tax under Section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code.<sup>3</sup>

#### ARTICLE IV - MEMBERSHIP

- A. The membership of this church shall consist of all persons whose names are recorded on the church's membership roll.
- B. Believers desiring to join the church must 1) publicly confess their faith in Jesus Christ; 2) agree with the church's *Tenets of Faith*; 3) submit their testimony in writing for the church's records; 4) agree to give the church body permission to administer church discipline if ever necessary, and 5) sign the *Commitment of Church Membership*.
- C. Revision of membership roll.
  1. The Elders shall be authorized to examine the membership roll of the church and approach any individual that fails to show regular attendance and involvement in the functions of the church. If the member makes no effort to reinvolve himself or has no desire to return, then his name will be removed from the membership roll.
  2. Any member who geographically relocates permanently and is therefore unable to maintain regular fellowship will be removed from the membership roll.
  3. In the event the procedure of church discipline fails to result in repentance of sin, a member will be subjected to excommunication (final stage of church discipline) and will be removed from the membership roll.
  4. Members may request to terminate their membership with this church. Such requests are preferred in writing.
  5. This church does not maintain an inactive membership roll.

#### ARTICLE V - GOVERNMENT

- A. The government of this church shall be defined as presbyterial, not congregational.<sup>4</sup>
- B. The governing body of this church shall be the Board of Elders.<sup>5</sup>
- C. "Congregational Affirmation" is an expression that refers to that opportunity where members express their approval or disapproval in writing. It is designed to allow the Elders to consider the support or lack of support the congregation may have on any given issue and thus help them determine the will of God (Acts 6:1-6). Congregational Affirmations are not votes and do not seal decisions. All final decisions are the responsibility of the Elders.

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<sup>3</sup> In the event any of these restrictions would impose upon the church's overall purpose, mission, or conviction then it may become necessary to dissolve and/or reorganize this institution without regard to federal income tax exemptions, benefits and restrictions.

<sup>4</sup> Though input from the congregation is encouraged, final decisions will be made by the presbytery (Board of Elders), not congregational votes.

<sup>5</sup> Whenever the term "Elders" is used in this constitution, it is referring to the entire Board of Elders.

## ARTICLE VI - ELDERS

### A. Responsibilities of the Elders

1. In order to faithfully fulfill their responsibilities, the Elders shall meet together regularly at least once a month, and all Elders must be notified and invited. Elders may vote at any meeting where there is a quorum. The final vote of a quorum will represent the decision of the Board of Elders. A quorum is defined as  $\frac{3}{4}$  of the voting members rounded down to the nearest whole number of members, except in matters of employment (hiring, compensation, discipline, and termination). Authority on these issues resides with the non-paid elders and Senior (or Lead) Pastor. On these issues a quorum is defined as  $\frac{3}{4}$  of said group rounded up to the nearest whole number of members.
2. All Elders possess equal authority among themselves and function together as a collective whole. There is no rank among the Elders as their authority is found only in their plurality.<sup>6</sup>
3. Elders should make every effort to make their decisions with unanimous agreement. In the event there is not unanimous consent, all decisions and times set for decisions are effective upon a  $\frac{3}{4}$  majority (rounded-up) vote. Whenever possible, time should be allowed for a season of prayer and fasting.
4. The Elders may delegate authority to other members of the church for the purpose of distributing responsibilities. The Elders, however, are ultimately responsible for all decisions made.<sup>7</sup>
5. The Elders shall oversee all matters involving the spiritual condition and welfare of the church.
6. The Elders shall seek to fulfill their scriptural responsibilities which include: a) training Christians for ministry; b) praying for the sick; c) directing the affairs of the church; d) teaching and preaching; e) setting a Christ-like example; f) protecting the church from false teachings; g) correcting members caught in unrepentant sin; and h) shepherding the flock.<sup>8</sup>

### B. Selection of Elders

1. The existing Board of Elders shall be responsible to appoint all new Elders.
2. The number of Elders shall be determined by the need and availability of qualified men. Though there is no maximum number of Elders that may serve, the minimum is four.
3. New Elders shall serve a six-month probationary period after which time he may be presented for Congregational Affirmation and confirmation by the Board of Elders.
4. Criteria for determining the qualifications of Elders are to be limited to those standards found in Scripture, especially in I Timothy 3:1-7 and Titus 1:5-10.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> There are two different kinds of authority: decision making and spiritual. Because this constitution deals primarily with the actual government of the church, spiritual authority is not addressed. This church recognizes a variety of giftings and callings within the body of Christ (I Cor. 12:27 ff) and nothing in this constitution shall be construed to limit the exercise of *spiritual* authority that certain individuals may have because of their unique anointings. For instance, one of the Elders might possess a certain wisdom, insight, gifting, calling or anointing in a particular area of ministry that the others might lack. His *influence* in this area benefits the Board of Elders and the entire church body. Likewise, the Senior Pastor, because of his calling (Eph. 4:11ff), may possess a certain spiritual authority that enables him to disciple, equip, and train the other Elders for ministry. This authority operates in the realm of respect and trust within relationships - it is recognized, but it can't be forced or institutionalized.

<sup>7</sup> For purposes of both efficiency and fulfilling the mandate of Ephesians 4:11-16, Elders shall make every effort to distribute various responsibilities to capable and qualified members. See Acts 6:1-7.

<sup>8</sup> Acts 11:27-30; 15:1-7, 16:4,5; 20:28-31; Ephesians 4:11-13; I Thessalonians 5:12,13; Titus 1:9; Hebrews 5:12, 13; James 5:14, 15; I Peter 5:2,3.

<sup>9</sup> Though this church recognizes that certain women may possess spiritual authority within the realm of their giftings, callings, and anointings, it does not believe that women serving in the position of elders can be supported biblically.

5. The Elders shall appoint among themselves a chairman for the purpose of facilitating their meetings. The chairman of the Elders shall serve in a one-year term; there is no limit to the number of terms he may serve.

#### C. Removal of Elders

1. An Elder shall occupy his office as long as he is a member of this church or until he either a) chooses to resign from his position, or b) fails to maintain the scriptural requirements for this office.
2. The Board of Elders may remove an elder from his office by the majority vote of a quorum, defined as  $\frac{3}{4}$  of the voting members of the Board of Elders rounded up to the nearest whole number of members.

### ARTICLE VII - PASTORS

#### A. Responsibilities of the Pastor(s)

1. The Senior Pastor shall be regarded as an Elder and shall serve as a Member on the Board of Elders.<sup>10</sup> Though he may be viewed as a “first among equals”, the Senior Pastor shall not possess more decision-making authority than the other Elders.<sup>11</sup>
2. An associate, assistant, or youth pastor shall not be regarded as an Elder unless he has been appointed as outlined in the process described above.
3. The Senior Pastor’s primary responsibilities (job description) are: a) to perform the task of an elder as outlined above; and b) to shepherd the flock, as found in the Scriptures.<sup>12</sup>
4. Job descriptions of associate, assistant, and youth pastors will be determined by the Elders. The Elders will serve as the supervising body of such pastors.

#### B. Selection of the Pastor(s)

1. All Pastors (senior, associate, assistant, youth) shall be appointed by the Elders.<sup>13</sup>
2. A pastor shall be issued an Employment Agreement specifying all relevant issues, such as job description, salary, benefits, etc.
3. When a vacancy in the office of Senior Pastor occurs, the Elders shall determine the selection process.<sup>14</sup>

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The *decision-making* authority (explained in footnote #6), for the purpose of governing the affairs of the church, is different than authority one might possess in his area of ministry. It is the intention of this church to help nourish such ministry and to see both men and women raised up to fulfill their callings in the Lord. However, we understand that the appointments to the office of Elder is an appointment to a *position* of authority, limited to men.

<sup>10</sup> If in the event the Senior Pastor resigns or is dismissed, he shall not continue to serve as an Elder of the church.

<sup>11</sup> The Elders may appoint the Senior Pastor to be their chairman if they so desire.

<sup>12</sup> the New Testament contains a variety of titles for the *minister(s) of the church*. Though there are numerous opinions about this, this church accepts the conclusion that the differences between the office of Elder, Bishop, Shepherd, Overseer, and Pastor are minimal, if any at all. These titles are used interchangeably in the New Testament and appear to address the different responsibilities and functions of the *same office*. The biblical titles of “Pastor” and “Shepherd” refer more to a particular gifting than to the actual office (Eph. 4:11ff). Because this constitution is primarily concerned with church government, it makes no attempt to explain the concept of the pastor’s gifting, calling, or anointing.

<sup>13</sup> The Senior Pastor himself, even as an employee, is still one among equals. There is no rank in the Board of Elders. However, the Senior Pastor should willingly submit to the counsel and advice of the other men, especially in regards to the performance of his ministry; he must be receptive to their input. Mutual accountability is not easily defined on paper and can only work when relationships are built on trust.

4. Nothing shall be construed in this constitution to require the church to have a Senior Pastor.

#### ARTICLE VIII – TRUSTEES OF THE CORPORATION

##### A. Responsibilities of Trustees of the corporation

1. The Trustees shall serve as the legal agents and officers of the corporation, The Church of the Good Shepherd, Inc. They shall represent the church in matters of property, finance, and business with the federal and state governments.
2. To fulfill the requirements of a religious non-profit organization, the offices of President, Vice President, and Secretary of the corporation must be occupied. These offices shall be filled by the Trustees.

##### B. Selection of Trustees of the corporation

1. The number of Trustees shall be three, and Trustees shall be appointed by the Elders.
2. Initially, one Trustee shall be appointed to serve one year, one shall be appointed to serve two years, and one shall be appointed to serve three years. Upon the expiration of the terms of office, the succeeding Trustees shall be elected to a term of three years each.
3. The approval and removal of Trustees shall be the same as the approval and removal of Elders. See Article VI.B. and Article VI.C.

#### ARTICLE IX - CONGREGATIONAL MEETINGS

##### A. Congregational meetings will be held to provide open communication between the Board of Elders and the members of the Church.

1. **Regular Information Meetings** will be held at least once each year and shall consist of: a) allowing various committees and ministry teams to make reports; b) presenting a financial report; and c) proceeding with any matter that might require congregational affirmation.
2. **Special Congregational Meetings** may be called by the Elders to address matters that may arise that require special attention; only those matters that require attention will be brought before the Church. Though a two week notice is preferred, a minimum of one week must be given to call a Special Congregational Meeting.<sup>15</sup>

##### B. Congregational meetings are held for the purpose of communication, not for making decisions. There shall not be any voting or counting of any ballots at any congregational meeting.

##### C. “Congregational Affirmation” is an expression that refers to that opportunity where members express their approval or disapproval in writing. It is designed to allow the Elders to consider the support or lack of support the congregation may have on any given issue and thus help them determine the will of God (Acts 6:1-6). Congregational Affirmations are not votes and do not seal decisions. All final decisions are the responsibility of the Elders.

##### D. The Elders may appoint a moderator to oversee and direct any congregational meeting.

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<sup>14</sup> Though it is common to appoint a *search committee*, the Elders are not limited to this one option.

<sup>15</sup> The calling of any Special Congregational Meeting requires the members to be informed of: 1) date and time of meeting; 2) location of meeting; 3) subject of meeting; and 4) whether a congregational affirmation will be requested.

- E. One Regular Informational Meeting of each year shall serve as the Church's Annual Business Meeting. The agenda of this meeting should include: 1) congregational affirmation of each elder; 2) congregational affirmation of the recommended budget; and 3) reviewing last year's financial report.

ARTICLE X – AMENDMENTS

This constitution may only be amended by the Board of Elders majority vote of a quorum, defined as  $\frac{3}{4}$  of the voting members of the Board of Elders rounded up to the nearest whole number of members, and congregational affirmation.