

**Constitution and By-Laws**  
**EVANGELICAL COVENANT CHURCH of WOODSTOCK**  
Adopted January 28, 2006  
Last Revised February 11, 2017

**CONSTITUTION**

**Article I. Name**

The name of this church shall be the Evangelical Covenant Church of Woodstock, Connecticut.

**Article II. Constitution**

The Constitution of the church, is subordinate to the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments. Whenever possible, the By-Laws shall be interpreted so as to be consistent with the Constitution, should any bylaw be found to contradict a provision of the Constitution, the Constitution shall control.

**Article III. Affiliation and Organization**

Section 1: This church stands under the affiliation and authority of our Lord Jesus Christ who is the head of the church (Ephesians 5:23) and who directs the affairs of the church through elders chosen according to the precepts of Holy Scripture. The elders at all times and in all their activities stand under the authority of Holy Scripture (Acts 16:4; I Corinthians 7:17)

Section 2: This church is a member of the Evangelical Covenant Church and its East Coast Conference. We may seek the assistance (I Corinthians 16:1-2) and should seek the counsel (Proverbs 11:14; I Thessalonians 2:14) of our sister churches and the leaders in the East Coast Conference in matters of special importance and concern to us, but the decision of no other church, group of churches, or council shall ever be binding on this church (Acts 14:21-23).

Section 3:

A): Advisory Counsel. We will seek the assistance of the East Coast Conference and other Evangelical Covenant Church leaders in cases of critical concern which threaten the integrity, unity, or biblical order of this congregation (Act 15:2).

B): Seeking Counsel. East Coast Conference Covenant Church leadership shall be consulted at the discretion of a majority of the elders or, should the church be without elders, at the discretion of a majority of the deacons.

Section 4: This church shall be organized as a nonprofit corporation under the laws of the State of Connecticut in accordance with 501c (3) of the internal revenue code.

**Article IV. Location of Office**

The registered office of the church shall be located within Connecticut at 24 Child Hill Road, Woodstock, CT. The Elders (may be also known as Trustees as required by Connecticut State Statute) or a majority of the members may change the address of the registered office, upon filing the appropriate statement with the Secretary of State.

## **Article V. Statement of Faith**

We believe in the Holy Scriptures, the Old and New Testaments, as the inspired and inerrant word of God in its original writings. (2 Timothy 3:16-17; 2 Peter 1:19-21) They are of supreme and final authority for fostering faith, fellowship, doctrine/teaching, morality, and conduct. (Romans 10:17) We value and hold to the historic confessions of the Apostles' Creed, to the doctrine of justification by faith, and the belief in baptism and the Lord's Supper as divinely ordained sacraments of the church. Therefore, the doctrines we specifically hold to and confess are:

1. We believe in one God, eternally existing in three persons: Father, Son and Holy Spirit. (Matthew 28:19; John 14:10, 13, 16-17; II Corinthian 13:14)
2. We believe that Jesus Christ was begotten by the Holy Spirit, born of the virgin Mary, and is therefore full deity and full humanity. (Matthew 1:18 & 23; Luke 1:35; John 17:11 & 21) We believe in His sinless life and in His miracles.
3. We believe that man was created in the image of God: male and female He created them. They sinned, and thereby incurred, not only physical death, but also Spiritual death which is separation from God; and that all human beings are born with a sinful nature; and, in the case of those who reach moral responsibility, become sinners in thought, word, and deed. (Genesis 1:26-27, 2:7; Jeremiah 17:9; Ezekiel 18:4; Romans 3:23, 5:12; Ephesians 2:3)
4. We believe that the Lord Jesus Christ died for our sins, according to the Scriptures, as a representative and substitutionary sacrifice; and that all who believe in Him are justified on the grounds of His shed blood. (Isaiah 53:6; John 3:16; Romans 5:9, 12, 6:23; I Corinthians 15:3, 21; I Peter 2:24)
5. We believe in the physical resurrection of the crucified body of our Lord, in His Ascension into heaven, and in His present life there for us as High Priest and Advocate. (Luke 24:6; Acts 1:9; Hebrews 4:14, 10:12)
6. We believe in "that blessed hope", of the personal return of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. (John 14:3; Acts 1:11; I Thessalonians 4:13-18; Titus 2:13; Revelation 1:7)
7. We believe that all who receive by faith the Lord Jesus Christ into their lives are born again of the Holy Spirit, and, thereby, become children of God. (John 1:12-13, 3:3; I Peter 1:23)
8. We believe that those who have been born again have everlasting life and shall not come into condemnation, but are passed from death to life. The Lord Jesus Christ gives unto them eternal life and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of God's hand. (John 5:24 & 10:28-29)
9. We believe in the resurrection of the just and unjust, the everlasting blessedness of the saved, and the everlasting punishment of the lost. (Matthew 25:46; John 3:36; Romans 4:10; Revelation 20:12 & 15)
10. We believe in the spiritual unity of believers, that is the church, of which Jesus Christ is the head and that it includes all who have been born again.

## **Article VI. Object, Mission & Vision**

### **A). Object**

The object of this organization is to provide for the uniting and assembling together of God's children in fellowship for worship, Bible reading, prayer, and for spiritual edification and spiritual strengthening of the body of believers for works of righteousness. We will also provide for the administration of the New Testament ordinances of the Lord's Supper and Baptism; the maintenance of a preaching and teaching ministry of the Word of God and the proclaiming of the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ both at home and abroad unto the salvation of souls and spiritual growth of believers.

### **B). Mission**

The Evangelical Covenant Church of Woodstock exists to:

1. *Love God with all our heart, soul, mind, and strength, (Mark 12:30, Luke 10:25b –28),*
2. *Love our neighbor as ourselves (Matthew 22:39, Mark 12:31),*
3. *Go into all the world and make disciples of all nations, . . . (Matthew 28:18-20)*

### **C). Vision**

Our vision is to:

- Express our love of God through worship, study, prayer, and fellowship.
- Serve one another, our families and our community.
- Send and support local and foreign missions.
- Teach God's word and make disciples.

**(See detailed Mission & Vision Statement as adopted by the Evangelical Covenant Church of Woodstock on April 26, 2005)**

## **Article VII. Membership**

- A. Membership in this church is granted as provided in the By-Laws to those who by grace through faith (Ephesians 2:8-9) confess Jesus Christ as God's Son and their Savior and Lord; having been born again (John 3:3) and baptized according to the Scriptures, after which our lives are to be characterized by sanctification & participation in the life and ministry of this church. *(1 Corinthians 1:2, Galatians 5:24 – 25, and Hebrews 10:23 – 25)*
- B. The membership shall consist of all communicant members, all of whom agree to the benefits of pastoral oversight, instruction, and government by the church. Communicant members are those who have been baptized, have made a credible profession of faith in Jesus Christ, and have been received into membership as provided in Article I, Section 1. of the By-Laws. Members also agree to be accountable to one another **(Galatians 6:1-6 & Colossians 3:12-16)**.

## **Article VIII. Governance**

The authority of the government of this church is vested in its membership acting through duly called congregational meetings. The management, administration, and oversight of business and spiritual affairs are delegated by the congregation to appropriate leadership as delineated in the By-Laws. Jesus is the model for all those who serve in the Biblical offices. (Matthew 20:25-28; Mark 10:42-45) His example of sacrifice and servant-hood are the basis of service for the Biblical office of Elders and Deacons. *Those elected to positions in the Biblical Offices shall be members of this church.*

Section 1: The spiritual oversight and general welfare of the church shall be vested in a body known as the Elders. They shall give themselves to prayer, teaching, and general spiritual oversight and guidance to all the ministries carried on within and by this congregation. In circumstances or where law requires action(s) by 'trustees', the Elders will be known as the "Trustees".

Section 2: The Diaconate (Deacons & Deaconess) shall provide help to the spiritual, physical and emotional needs of the congregation and under oversight of the Elders provide benevolent ministries to the church, the local community, and the world beyond.

## **Article IX. Steward Ministry Leadership**

Jesus is the model (Matthew 20:25-28; Mark 10:42-45) for all those who serve in Steward Ministry Leadership. His example of sacrifice and servant-hood are the basis of service for Steward Leaders.

While all members of the church are members of the priesthood of believers, we recognize and value those stewards who exercise their passion and gifts in specific areas of ministry. The operational functions of the church are conducted under the positions of Stewardship Ministry through giftedness and calling.

By virtue of their service these stewards are leading in their respective areas of ministry.

## **Article X. Meetings**

Section 1: This church shall hold regular meetings for worship, preaching, and teaching of the Word of God and the observance of the Lord's Supper and baptism.

Section 2: This church shall have an Annual Business Meeting and two (2) corporate business meetings at stated intervals. At the annual business meeting written reports shall be submitted by the Pastor(s), Elders, Deacons, and the Steward Ministries and Committees. Elders, Deacons, and Steward Leaders for the ensuing year shall be elected. Any voting member in attendance at a duly called meeting shall

be entitled to one vote on matters brought before the congregation. Voting by proxy shall not be permitted. The Pastor(s) shall also be entitled to vote.

### **Article XI. Property**

In the event of schism within the church, from which we earnestly pray God spare us, the title to all church property, real and personal, shall remain with that group abiding by this Constitution as determined by the executive board of the East Coast Conference. In the event of dissolution, the property and all assets of the church shall become and be the property of The Evangelical Covenant Church and the East Coast Conference.

### **Article XII. Amendments**

Amendments to this Constitution, and not in conflict with Scripture must be first either submitted in writing at a regularly scheduled corporate meeting or the Elders may convene a special corporate business meeting for the purposes of presenting the amendment. A review period of six months shall be given after which at the next regularly schedule corporate meeting the proposed amendment change(s) shall be put to a vote. A two thirds (66%) majority affirmative vote of voting members present at the meeting is required before enactment of any changes. No proxy or absentee votes will be accepted.

## **BY – LAWS**

### **Article I MEMBERSHIP**

#### **Section 1. Admission of Members**

##### **A. Qualifications for membership**

- (1) Any man or woman shall be eligible for membership in this church (Acts 5:14):
- Who professes repentance toward God and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ (Acts 2:37-42; 8:12; 16:30-34),
  - Who manifests a life transformed by the power of Christ (1Corinthians 1:1-2, 6:11; I Thessalonians 1:2-10),
  - Who has been baptized (Acts 2:41; 16:30-34)
  - Who expresses agreement with the Constitution of this church (I Corinthians 1:10; 14:40; Ephesians 4:3)
  - Who is committed to the cause of Christ through the ministry of this church (2 Corinthians 8:5; I Thessalonians 5:12-14)
  - Who is willing to submit to its government (I Corinthians 14:40; Acts 2:42; Hebrew 13:17) and discipline (Matthew 18:15-18)
  - Who is not under the biblically warranted corrective discipline of another Christian church. (I Corinthians 5:11-13; 2 Thessalonians 3:6, 14-15), and
  - Who has signed an application for membership.

(2) No persons may be eligible for membership before they have reached their twelfth birthday; and no members shall have the privilege to vote at church business meetings until they have reached their eighteenth birthday. Except for the power of voting, all members under the age of eighteen will have all the privileges of membership identified in Section 3. of this Article, including the right to attend business meetings and recognition to speak from the floor. No member under twenty-one years of age may be elected to the stated offices of the church which are listed in Article II of the By-Laws.

##### **B. Desire for Membership**

It is recommended that persons desiring membership in this church attend an Inquirers Class. Persons desiring membership shall express this to the elders who will then meet with them for the purpose of hearing their confession of faith, testimony, and, if applicable, review any letter of recommendation regarding their life of service in another church body. Those desiring membership shall fill out an Application for Membership.

### **C. Acceptance of New Members**

#### (1) Elder examination and investigation:

Any person who is twelve years and older desiring membership in the church shall apply to the elders by submitting a completed membership application form. The elders will interview the individual and seek to determine whether that person has a credible profession of faith in Christ and meets all the other qualifications detailed in Section 1 A) of these By-Laws. If an applicant is or has been a member of another church, efforts will be made to determine the person's standing in that church and his reasons for leaving (Acts 15:1-2, 24-25). No member shall hold simultaneous memberships at other churches.

#### (2) Congregational Advice.

If the elders are satisfied that the applicant meets the requirements for membership, their name shall be presented for acceptance by church membership a congregational business meeting. The elders will allow at least two weeks prior to the meeting for objections or questions to be raised privately to the elders concerning the applicant's manner of life or doctrine.

### **D. Reception of New Members**

Having professed personal faith in Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior, having appeared before the eldership to bear testimony to their faith, and having filled out and signed an Application for Membership, the new members shall be received into the fellowship of the church. Having been approved by elder and congregational vote, new members shall be publicly received at a convenient Sunday Service.

## **Section 2. Assimilation, Duties, and Conduct of New Members**

The new members shall be assimilated into the body so that "the whole body . . . , grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work". This is accomplished when members serve one another in ways that are consistent with their passion for ministry, giftedness and resources.

#### **A): Attendance**

It is the biblical model and privilege of members to attend meetings of the church. Members are encouraged to attend stated meetings of the church. (Hebrews 10:24-25) The stated meetings of the church are all the worship services on the Lord's Day, the midweek prayer service, the business meetings of the congregation, and any special meetings to which the elders may occasionally summon the church (Joel 2:15-16).

#### **B): Financial Support**

Since it is clearly taught in Scripture that Christians should support financially the work of the Lord by regular and proportional giving made through the local church (Malachi 3:8-10; I Corinthians 16:1-2), all members of the church should conform to this rule of Scripture. The tithe (ten percent of one's income) is strongly urged upon each member as an expression of worship and as the biblical norm for basic giving, to which should be added gifts and offerings according to one's ability and the willingness of their heart. (I Corinthians 8:1-5)

#### **C): Support of and Submission to the Leadership**

We are called as a church to submit to one another out of reverence for Christ (Eph. 5:21). We are also taught to submit to those who labor in the work of the church (1Cor. 16:15-16), especially those leaders who teach us from the word of God (Hebrews 13:17). Supporting God's servants involves praying for them and their labors (Romans 15:30-32; Ephesians 6:18-19), standing by them in their afflictions and in all their good causes (2 Timothy 1:15-18), assisting them (Romans 15:23-24), and defending rather than prejudicing or damaging their good name (Acts 23:5). Submitting to God's servants includes imitating their faith and receiving their teaching and leadership, yet with ultimate allegiance to God and His Word (Acts 17:11; I Thessalonians 2:13).

#### **D): A Godly Christian Life**

It is the biblical duty of Christians to walk obediently with the Lord, that His name would be exalted (Colossians 1:10-12; I Peter 2:9-10). Therefore it is the responsibility of each member to practice and cultivate godliness in all areas of life, including the following:

- 1) **Personal Devotions to God.** Each member is to walk personally with the Lord (Genesis 5:22-24; 6:9), making regular use of daily prayer (Matthew 6:6; Psalm 55:17), daily reading, and meditating on God's word (Psalm 119:9-16).
- 2) **Family Life.** Members are to obey the teachings of the Scriptures with respect to family life. Parents must nurture their children in the Lord (Ephesians 6:1-4) by setting a godly example before them; in family devotions by instructing them consistently in the Scriptures (Deuteronomy 6:6-9), by praying for them (I Chronicles 29:18-19), and by wise, loving and firm discipline (Hebrews 12:7-11).
- 3) **Personal Evangelism.** It is the biblical duty of every member to pray and share the 'good news' according to their God-given ability and opportunity (Romans 12:6) for the extension of the Kingdom of God, both at home and to the ends of the earth (Act 1:8). Therefore every member should seek to recognize and seize every opportunity to bear witness to Christ by consistent Christian conduct and by verbal testimony (Matthew 10:32-33; Colossians 4:5-6; I Peter 3:15-16).

#### **E): Interactive Fellowship**

It is the biblical exhortation to all believers in Christ to live in community with one another. Koinonia is the Greek word for community that Christians are to live. This includes loving one another, speaking the truth to one another, sharing meals with one another, encouraging one another to good works in the Lord, and holding one another accountable for living a Christian lifestyle. Members are encouraged to connect with each other through fellowship opportunities within the congregation such as small groups, Bible studies, and Sunday School. (Hebrew 10:25)

### **Section 3. Privileges of Membership**

Primarily it is those who are under the government of Christ's local church that are allowed the privileges of His Church (Act 2:41-47; Galatians 6:10). Therefore, membership in this church includes and insures the following privileges:

**A): Ordinances.** The administration of the Ordinances of Baptism (Matthew 28:18-20; Acts 2:38-410 and the Lord's Supper (I Corinthians 11:23-33).

**B): Oversight.** The committed oversight, care, counseling, and services of the elders of the church (Acts 20:28).

**C): Prayer.** The regular and faithful intercession of the body (Acts 2:42; Ephesians 1:16 & 6:18).

**D): Discipline.** The gracious and loving steps of church discipline (Matthew 18:15-17; I Thessalonians 5:12-14).

**E): Suffrage.** Attendance, participation in, and voting during church business meetings (Acts 6:3-7).

**F): Service.** The use of one's gifts, graces and calling in ministry opportunities in the church (I Corinthians 12:4-30; I Peter 4:7-11).

**G): Benevolence.** The hospitality and benevolence of the congregation (Acts 6:1-2; Galatians 6:10; I John 3:16-19)

### **Section 4. Inactive Members**

Members who have not attended worship services and have not fellowshiped with the church for greater than one year, but wish to maintain affiliation with the church may be placed on an inactive status

by the elders. Inactive members shall not be eligible to vote at congregational meetings, shall not be eligible to serve in any elected positions, and shall have no rights to any or all property of the church. An inactive member may petition the elders to be restored to active membership. Members who become inactive due to negligence may be subject to dismissal as per Article I, Section 5. of these By-Laws.

## **Section 5. Discipline of Members**

### **A): Negligent members**

A member who willfully neglects their duties or fails to attend services of the church regularly or to contribute to its support according to their means shall be admonished by the elders. If this admonition is not heeded, they shall be dealt with as an erring member.

### **B): Erring Members**

A member known to err in doctrine or conduct shall be counseled according to the procedure outlined in Matthew 18:15-18 and Galatians 6:1. A fellow member having knowledge of such error shall in the spirit of Christian love seek to restore them. If they do not heed this counsel, the matter shall be brought to the attention of the elders, who shall in meekness and gentleness seek to restore them. If they fail to heed the counsel of the elders, their error shall be brought before a business meeting of the church. If reconciliation efforts do not bear fruit, the elders may recommend the erring member's name be removed from the membership records to the congregation. Discipline shall then be administered in the spirit of Christ with due regard for the welfare of the individual as well as the church.

## **Section 6. Termination of Membership**

**A): Dismissal of Members.** Dismissal of a member under Section 4 and Section 5 must be acted on by the church, which alone has the authority. The elders shall present the member's name before a congregational business meeting recommending dismissal. A two-thirds majority of those present and voting at this meeting is necessary for such action.

**B): Transfer of Members.** Any member of this church who moves to another community should seek fellowship with an evangelical Christian church. A *current member of this church* who wishes to transfer their membership to another church body shall submit in writing a request for letter of transfer to the elders. When it is so requested, the elders shall grant to a member in good standing a letter of commendation to another church (Act 18:27).

**C): Withdrawal of Membership.** Withdrawal of membership due to a letter of transfer shall be reported by the eldership at the next regular corporate meeting and made a matter of record.

Any member desiring to withdraw their membership from this church shall present a resignation in writing to the eldership. Action must be taken promptly by the eldership, provided they and the pastor have either fully investigated the reason for such request or have met with those requesting withdrawal to ensure that the ministry of reconciliation has been offered, if applicable. Otherwise, the request will be submitted by the elders to the church body at the next regularly scheduled corporate meeting.

**D): Physical Death.** When a member of the church dies, their name shall be removed from the membership roll by the elders. The elders will then report this to the congregation at a corporate business meeting, and made a matter of record. (Hebrews 12:22-23)

## **Section 7. Missionary Membership**

Any missionary supported by the Woodstock Evangelical Covenant Church is entitled to hold missionary membership in the church, even though they may hold membership in another church, where they serve, providing they meet the requirements of Article I, Section 1. Missionary members shall be entitled to all rights and privileges of regular members. Extended periods of absence are expected due to the nature of their work and shall not be cause for termination of membership.

## **Article II. Officers**

### **Section 1. Stated Officers**

The stated officers of this church shall consist of the Senior Pastor, Moderator, Recording Secretary, Treasurer, Financial Secretary, Assistant Treasurer, Assistant Financial Secretary, Elders, and Deacons. All stated officers shall be voting members of the church.

### **Section 2. Biblical Offices**

Jesus Christ alone is the Head of the church (Ephesians 5:23; Colossians 1:18), and He governs His church through officers (Acts 20:28; Acts 15:2-3; Ephesians 4:11) with the gifts and graces needed to accomplish their work (I Timothy 3:1-13). There are two kinds of church officers identified in Scripture, elders and deacons (Philippians 1:1; I Timothy 3:1-13).

It is the duty of the church to seek to discover among its members those to whom Christ the Lord has imparted the graces and gifts necessary for office (Acts 6:3), and after formally recognizing them through election by the congregation (Acts 6:5-6), to set them apart by united prayer (Acts 6:6), and then to submit to their authority (John 13:20; Hebrew 13:17)

### **Section 3. Elders**

A): Responsibility and authority of the elders.

The elders shall watch over the spiritual welfare of the church and together with the pastors ensure a continuing program of evangelism and training to equip the members of the church for the work of ministry. The elders, as a body, are authorized and responsible to give comprehensive oversight to the church (Acts 20:28; I Peter 5:1-3). This includes the preaching and teaching of the whole counsel of God (Titus 1:9), watching out for the welfare of the soul of every member of the church (Colossians 1:28) and leading the church in accomplishing its mission and vision. Elders as servants of the congregation, shall encourage and oversee visitation of the people, especially the sick, the instruction of the church, comfort the mourning, and nourish and guard the congregation. The elders, together with the deacons shall assist in administering the sacraments with the pastor(s). As overseers, having responsibility over all aspects of the church and yet not doing all the actual work, it is expected the elders shall seek the assistance, advice, and involvement of any other mature Christians who have expertise, wisdom, giftedness, and sensitivities in areas of interpersonal relationships and spiritual discipline the elders may find themselves in.

Elders shall pray with and for the people. They shall have particular concern for the doctrine and conduct of the pastors and help them in their labors. It is the duty of the elders to oversee all the ministries, committees and operations in terms of their spiritual implications on the church and impact on our testimony to the glory of God. They shall supervise the instruction and training of the congregation. Elders are to equip the congregation but all members, men and women, are to use their gifts to build up the body. The elders must exercise this authority as servant leaders, with sensitivity to the congregation (Acts 6:5).

The elders, in as much as they serve as trustees, shall have oversight for the custody and maintenance of the property of the church and its financial operations including oversight of the offices of Financial Secretary and Treasurer of the church. To carry out its responsibilities with regard to the finances and property of the church, the elders may at their discretion delegate to one individual the overall supervision of these functions.

The elders shall appoint one or more of their number to be liaison to the Diaconate and to each of the Steward Ministries.

There shall be a subcommittee of at least three elders. They shall meet with all of the church pastoral and paid ministry staff (except custodians) at least twice a year to review, evaluate, and promote effective working relations among staff and to recommend compensation for the church budget and congregational approval.

Elders shall carry out other duties as described for Eldership Ministry in the "ECCW Ministries Manual".

### **B): Limits of their Authority**

The elders have responsibility and authority to ensure that the teaching that is done at Woodstock Evangelical Covenant Church is in accord with biblical teachings. Elders have responsibility to see that all

persons are using their gifts for the good of the body. The elders may not impose officers on the church without Congregational election, nor may they dismiss any member without action by the church (Acts 6:3-6; Matthew 18:17). The elders shall not be empowered to buy, sell, lease, mortgage, or transfer real estate without specific authority from the congregation. Furthermore, congregational approval is required for any change to this Constitution and By-Laws and for receiving, suspending, or excluding members of the church.

### **C): Plurality of Elders and Term Length**

The Scriptures teach that normally there should be a plurality of elders in each local church (Acts 14:23; Philippians 1:1). Therefore the church should endeavor to discover and formally recognize at election the men whom the Holy Spirit has endowed with the requisite graces and gifts for the elder office (I Timothy 5:22). Therefore, in addition to the pastor, all the elders share the burden of spiritual oversight and responsibility of the general welfare of the church (Exodus 18:17-26).

The number of elders on the eldership shall not be fixed but be between five (5) and twelve (12) members. The number of elders serving among us will be in proportional relation to members and those in attendance. Candidates for elders shall be examined according to biblical principles by the current eldership, meeting the qualifications in section 3. E of this article, and presented to the Nominating Ministry for any additional examination by congregational members as needed. Elders shall be elected to office by the congregation for terms of four years with approximately one fourth of the terms expiring each year and shall serve as long as they remain qualified, able, and willing to serve (I Peter 2:5). Except for the pastoral staff, only those who have been members of this church for two years or more shall be eligible for election as elders. Current elders may continue to serve additional terms as necessary upon congregational approval before taking a sabbatical year off.

### **D): Parity and Diversity of Elders**

The elders are all equal in office and authority, but diverse in gift and function. Each elder must be "apt to teach" (I Timothy 3:2; Titus 1:9) and must be engaged in discipling and in the administration and government of the church (Acts 20:28). Some elders will be more gifted by God and more proficient than others in executing various dimensions of the pastoral office (Romans 12:3-8; I Corinthians 12:4-7). Therefore, some will be devoted to full-time ministry and others part time. Those that have devoted themselves to full time service, engaging in public preaching, teaching and training shall be known as pastors (pastor elders). The church is responsible to give adequate financial compensation, according to its ability and the evidence of a man's gift, to those pastor elders who labor in the Word and doctrine. (Proverbs 3:27; I Timothy 5:17-18) All elders shall share in the duties of spiritually protecting, feeding, watching over, teaching and overseeing the flock (congregation) (Acts 20:27-28; I Peter 5:1-2; I Timothy 5:17). They also should be personally equipped and ready to protect the spiritually weak, refute those who oppose sound doctrine, and encourage others with sound doctrine. (Acts 20:29-31, 35; Titus 1:9) As with the pastoral office, some elders will be more gifted by God and more proficient than others in executing these various functions therefore the body of elders shall encourage one another to exercise the stronger of each other's spiritual gifts to the full ministrations of the eldership role as a body of shepherd overseers to the congregation.

### **E): Qualifications of Elders**

The general qualifications for an elder are clearly set forth in Scripture, particularly in I Timothy 3:1-7, Titus 1:5-9, and I Peter 5:2-3. Elders must be male voting members. In order to be eligible for election, a man shall have been a member in good standing in the church for at least two years, and shall have a good reputation both in the congregation and in the local or regional community. He shall (if married) have a record of marital fidelity to one woman or, if unmarried shall have a record of sexual celibacy and moral purity. He shall have received appropriate training under the direction or with the approval of the elders, and shall have served the church in functions requiring responsible leadership.

### **F): Chairmanship and other Offices within the Elders**

To help the elders function in an efficient and orderly manner (I Corinthians 14:40), the elders shall choose from among their number a chairman, vice-chairman, and record keeper. The chairman shall be responsible to organize and lead the regular elders' meetings and, in the absence of the moderator, all congregational business meetings. The vice-chairman shall perform the chairman duties in the event of his absence. The record keeper shall write an accurate account of all proceedings of all elder meetings. The responsibilities of chairman, vice-chairman, record keeper, and ministry liaisons may be rotated among the

elders to ease the burden of individual responsibility and allow flexibility of coverage of duties for business meetings.

## **Section 4. The Pastor(s)**

### **A). Senior Pastor Qualifications**

The Senior Pastor of the church shall scripturally meet the requirements of elder or bishop as outlined in I Timothy 3:1-7 and Titus 1:5-9. He shall by virtue of his call be a member of the church and an ex-officio\* (See Article V. Section 6.) member of all ministries and committees. He shall without further election be a voting member of the eldership and serve as shepherd leader in accountability with the other elders. The Senior Pastor shall possess, as his strongest, the spiritual gifts of teaching, preaching, and pastoring.

### **B). Other Pastoral Staff**

Pastoral Staff such as Associate Pastor, Youth Pastor shall scripturally meet the requirements of elder or bishop as outlined in I Timothy 3:1-7 and Titus 1:5-9. He shall, by virtue of his call, be ex-officio member of ministries and committees associated with the tasks for which he has been called. All pastoral staff may be members of the eldership and shall be under the care and authority of the elders and senior pastor. They shall, without further election, be voting members of the eldership.

### **C). Duties and Responsibilities**

It shall be the duty of the senior pastor to devote himself to the full time service of the church, together with the elders shepherd the flock as defender of doctrine, practice good communication and conflict resolution, preach and teach the Word of God, and administer the sacraments. As stated in the church "Worship Statement" the pastor shall oversee the church worship services. The senior pastor and all other pastoral staff shall watch over themselves and their flock, visiting, as far as time permits, all the members of the church, especially the sick and poor. The pastor(s) together with the elders shall encourage any members, who move to another place, to seek to join themselves with an evangelical Christian church and issue a letter of recommendation upon application. At every annual business meeting they shall submit a written report of their pastoral work to the congregation.

### **D). Call**

The Pastor(s) shall be called at a regular or special church business meeting, the purpose of which shall be announced in advance. They shall be chosen by ballot with a two-thirds affirmative vote required for a call. They shall hold his office without limitation of time.

### **E). Accountability**

The Senior Pastor shall be accountable to the elders. Associate Pastor(s) and other pastoral staff shall be accountable to the senior pastor and elders. Specifics of accountability and responsibilities shall also be written into the contract of the pastor(s)' call according to the position of ministry being filled at ECCW. The elders shall carry out the duties of the former Pastoral Relations Committee with respect to the pastoral staff needs, vacations, and evaluations.

### **F). Charges against the Pastor(s)**

Charges against a pastor shall be submitted in writing first to the eldership and shall not be considered unless supported by the testimony of two or three witnesses. (I Timothy 5:19). If in the judgment of the elders he errs in doctrine or conduct, the case may be referred to the Committee on Ministerial Standing of the Evangelical Covenant Church, or discipline by the local regional conference may be initiated prior to further action by the church. The congregation shall then decide, based on recommendations from the elders, on either appropriate discipline or dismissal from the pastoral office of this local church. Congregational decision shall be affirmed upon a two-thirds majority vote.

### **G). Severance**

Should the Senior Pastor's ministry be no longer edifying to the congregation, a special meeting with the elders shall be held to remedy the situation. If correction and recommendations are not received by the pastor, the ministerial relationship may be dissolved as follows: (1) a special congregational meeting shall be called as provided in the bylaws on congregational meetings; (2) the elders

requesting the pastor's resignation shall be allowed to state the reasons for their request, and the pastor shall be given the opportunity to respond, as shall other members of the church; (3) the meeting shall be adjourned to a time not sooner than one week later and no more than two weeks later; (4) at the next congregational meeting, further appropriate debate shall be allowed, and a vote shall be taken; (5) the ministerial relationship may be dissolved upon a two-thirds majority vote. If the ministerial relationship is dissolved, the church shall provide the pastor with at least one month's severance pay, and shall consider providing such other assistance as is necessary for his needs and the needs of his family while he seeks other employment.

## **Section 5. Deacons**

Deacons are servant ministers to others (Romans 16:1). They are known for their works of practical service/ministry among others. Christ, the Head of the Church, has instituted the office of deacons as an aid to the people of God, and to the elders of the church (Acts 6:1-6). While the office of deacon is a serving rather than a ruling office, God has promised a special blessing to those who serve well as deacons. (I Timothy 3:13) "For they that have served well as deacons gain to themselves a good standing, and great boldness in the faith which is in Christ Jesus."

### **A). Qualifications of the Deacons**

The general qualifications for a deacon are clearly set forth in Scripture, I Timothy 3:8-13, Titus 2:1-5, and I Peter 5:2-3. Both men and women may serve as deacons provided they meet these qualifications. (Romans 16:1-2, I Timothy 3:11, Titus 2:3-4) In order to be eligible for election, they shall have been a member in good standing in the church for at least one year, shall have reached the age of 21, and be recognized as having served the church in various functions.

### **B). Responsibilities and Authority of Deacons**

Deacons are responsible to administer to the benevolent concerns and practical needs of the church so that the elders may devote themselves to the biblical priorities of their office (Acts 6:3-4). Deacons must fulfill the duties of their office in cooperation with and under the oversight of the elders. (Acts 11:30; 20:28; Philippians 1:1) The function of deacons is to carry out the decision of the elders and to respond to the needs of the local body of believers. They shall respond to these needs through practical works of service/ministry. The deacons are responsible for the administration of the Deacon's Fund for the assistance of the needy. They shall serve with the pastor and elders in the visitation ministry of the church with special attention to the sick and needy, assist in counseling (such as marriage counseling and young couples mentoring), and shall assist in the serving of communion when requested by the elders. The deacons may appoint other servants from the congregation to help with ministry needs in the congregation as needs arise. The deacons with oversight from the elders shall carry out their duties as defined in the "ECCW Ministries Manual"

### **C). Chairmanship of the Deacons**

To help the Diaconate function in an efficient and orderly manner (I Corinthians 14:40), the deacons shall at their next regular meeting after annual elections, choose from among them a chairman and another as vice-chairman. The chairman shall be responsible to organize and lead the regular deacons' meetings and to routinely communicate deacon business and concerns to the elders and congregation as appropriate. In the chairman's absence, the vice-chairman shall undertake these responsibilities. The deacons shall at their discretion elect a Secretary/Treasurer to record minutes of meetings and oversee the Deacon Fund.

### **D). Number of Deacons and Length of Term**

The number of deacons shall not be fixed. The church shall choose as many as are needed for the work to be done from among the men and women who give evidence of having the scriptural qualifications for the office (Acts 6:3; Titus 2:2&3; Romans 16:1-3, 6, 12). Deacons shall serve a term of two years and may be elected to three consecutive terms as long as they remain qualified, able and willing to serve. (I Peter 5:2) Members may be eligible for re-election to additional terms (after the first three) after taking one year off.

## **Section 6. Treasurer**

The office of Treasurer is under the oversight of the elders. The treasurer is an ex-officio position on the Stewardship & Properties ministry. The treasurer shall be responsible for receiving all church monies from

the financial secretary, shall ensure that designated monies have been directed to the proper funds and account, and shall give to the financial secretary receipts for all monies received and make disbursements as authorized by the eldership or the church. The treasurer shall present a written report of receipts and expenditures to each eldership meeting, to each regular church business meeting, and an annual written report to the annual business meeting. All non-current records shall be preserved in the permanent file in the church. The treasurer shall be elected for a term of two years and shall not succeed themselves more than twice in the same office.

### **Section 7. Assistant Treasurer**

The Assistant Treasurer shall fill the duties of the treasurer in the event they cannot fulfill their duties. The person filling this position shall familiarize themselves with the records and duties of the treasurer sufficiently enough to perform the duties as needed. The assistant treasurer shall be elected for a term of two years and shall not succeed themselves more than twice in the same office.

### **Section 8. Financial Secretary**

The Financial Secretary shall be under the oversight of the elders and an ex-officio member of the Stewardship & Properties Ministry. The financial secretary shall receive, record, and transmit to the church treasurer all funds contributed to the church, and shall also give to the church a detailed report of all income. All non-current records shall be preserved in the permanent file in the church. The financial secretary shall be elected for a term of two years. Because of the need for confidentiality, the number of terms shall not be limited.

### **Section 9. Assistant Financial Secretary**

The Assistant Financial Secretary shall fill the duties of the financial secretary in the event they cannot fulfill their duties. The person filling this position shall familiarize themselves with the records and duties of the financial secretary sufficiently enough to perform the duties as needed. The assistant financial secretary shall be elected for a term of two years. Because of the need for confidentiality, the number of terms shall not be limited.

### **Section 10. Moderator**

The Moderator, under the Constitution and By-Laws, shall preside at all business meetings, and shall be familiar with and run all business meetings according to Roberts Rules of Order. The moderator shall be elected for a term of two years and shall not serve more than two consecutive terms in the same office. The chairman of the elders shall serve as Vice-Moderator.

### **Section 11. Recording Secretary**

The Recording Secretary shall write a faithful and accurate record of all the proceedings of all congregational business meetings of the church. These minutes are to be presented in writing, and approved at their following business meetings. All non-current records shall be preserved in the permanent file in the church. The recording secretary shall be elected for a term of two years and shall not serve more than two consecutive terms in the same office.

### **Section 12. Vice Recording Secretary**

The Vice Recording Secretary shall fill the duties of the recording secretary in the event they cannot fulfill their duties. The person filling this position shall familiarize themselves with the records and duties of the recording secretary sufficiently enough to perform the duties as needed. The vice recording secretary shall be elected for a term of two years and shall not succeed themselves more than twice in the same office.

## **Article III. Steward Ministries**

We affirm that the New Testament teaches the priesthood of every believer and that each believer is uniquely equipped by grace with the gifts needed to build up the body. Consequently, ministries are centered around the operational gifts of the Spirit in the individual believer(s) and are recognized by the body as existing for their edification and building up. (I Corinthians 12: 4-7, 12, & 27-30)

We affirm that there are those believers who, by virtue of their calling, gifts and recognition among the body, will come together and serve us as Steward Leaders in various ministries.

As the make-up of the body changes, so too does the ministries it offers. As the needs of the body change, the functional gifts within the body change also. As people join the body, they bring with them ministries that are consistent with their gifts.

God, through His Spirit, has equipped His people with all the gifts necessary to ensure that the body is building itself up in love. All steward leaders serving in ministries operate within the oversight and blessing of the elders of this body.

The members of the Nominating Ministry, Christian Education Ministry, Stewardship and Properties Ministry, and Missions Ministry shall be elected by the congregation. The members of the remaining ministries shall be appointed by the elders. Except where otherwise stated, the term of office shall be three years with approximately one-third of the terms expire each year. Members of the Steward Ministries shall not succeed themselves more than once in the same office.

The Steward Ministries shall be under the authority of the eldership with at least one elder serving as liaison to each ministry team.

Members of Steward Ministries shall choose from among their number a chairman, vice chairman, secretary, and treasurer (if needed).

### **Section 1. Nominating Ministry**

A). The Nominating Ministry shall consist of at least three elders, one elected member from the church body for a term of three years with a two term limit, and one representative from each of the Deacon, Stewardship and Properties, and Christian Education Ministries for a term of one year with a three term limit. One of the elders shall chair the nominating ministry.

B). The Nominating Ministry, after being convened by the elders shall elect from among its members a secretary. The responsibilities of this ministry shall include the following:

- (1) Review the ministry manuals of the church to familiarize themselves with the duties, responsibilities, and requisite spiritual gifts required for the various offices and Steward Ministries.
- (2) Review the spiritual gifts assessment files of the church members to select the names of potential nominees to fill church officer and steward ministry leader positions.
- (3) Confirm the willingness of each candidate to serve before listing their name on the ballot.
- (4) Prepare a ballot for the annual meeting of the congregation listing at least one qualified candidate for each office to be filled.
- (5) Present a complete ballot to the annual meeting of the congregation.
- (6) The moderator of the meeting shall give opportunity for nominations from the floor for any office except the position of elder. These nominations shall be given to the Nominating Ministry for further consideration.
- (7) As the need arises the Nominating Ministry members may be reconvened to present nominations at other congregational meetings.

### **Section 2. Christian Education Ministry**

**A). Vision and Mission.** The vision statement for the Christian Education Ministries is:  
Serving through facilitating teaching and training so the Body may come to full maturity by knowing God, becoming like Christ, and reproducing disciples.

The Evangelical Covenant Church of Woodstock is a training church. We not only study and teach the Word of God, evangelize the lost, and lead our congregation in worship, we also follow the leading of our Lord in purposefully and actively training the flock He has called to Himself and brought into the life of our congregation. The Lord and the Holy Spirit have entrusted them and their spiritual worship, growth, training and service to us as a church, the body of Christ on earth and we not only teach but also train, having learned that teaching doesn't make it so . . . training does.

**B). Duties, Roles and Responsibilities of Christian Education Ministries.** Duties, specific roles, and responsibilities of the Christian Education Ministry Stewards and vision statement are detailed in the Christian Education section of the "ECCW Ministries Manual".

C.E. Ministry under the oversight of the Elders, shall be responsible for the educational programs, leadership training, and curricula for teachers, counselors, and leaders.

**C). C.E. Ministry Tenure and term of office.**

Christian Education Ministry Team shall consist of three or more elected voting members and one or more elders. The C.E. Ministry shall at their next regularly scheduled meeting after the annual meeting of the church, choose a member to serve as chairman, vice-chairman, and secretary. Ex-officio members of this ministry shall be one pastoral staff and one Sunday School Superintendent. Members of Christian Education Ministry shall be elected for terms of three years each in such an order that approximately one-third of the terms expire each year. Members of the Christian Education Ministry shall not succeed themselves more than once in the same office.

**Section 3. Stewardship & Properties Ministry**

The Stewardship & Properties Ministry under authority of the eldership, shall consist of three or more elected members and shall be responsible for overseeing and maintaining the physical and structural properties of the church and preparing a stewardship plan for each calendar year. They shall prepare an annual budget proposal for the church to present to the elders and the church for approval at the annual meeting. They shall have responsibility for hiring and supervising custodial and maintenance staff. They shall also be responsible for long range planning, implementation, and fiscal oversight for expanding or major renovating of the existing church facilities. They shall perform other duties as detailed in the "ECCW Ministries Manual".

The Kitchen Ministry shall be a sub-ministry of the Stewardship and Properties Ministry and shall consist of two members appointed by the Stewardship and Properties Ministry. This Ministry will establish policy, keep the kitchen organized, clean, and supplied, recruit and instruct servers on the use of the equipment, and serve as a contact for caterers.

**Section 4. Missions Ministry**

The Missions Ministry shall consist of three or more members elected from the congregation and shall promote missions interest through all the ministries of the church. It shall arrange and hold meetings with visiting missionaries, plan mission events yearly, and prepare an annual missions budget. Missions Ministry shall promote regular prayer, care, and communication with the church's missionaries and encourage generous giving toward global outreach. They shall perform other duties as detailed in the "ECCW Ministries Manual".

**Section 5. Worship and Music Ministry**

The Music Ministry shall consist of three or more appointed members, with no more than two being members of the choir or praise team(s). They shall act as the search committee and make recommendations to the elders for filling vacant music staff positions. They shall perform other duties as detailed in the "ECCW Ministries Manual".

**Section 6. Women's Ministry**

The Women's Ministry shall consist of three or more appointed female members who concern themselves with the various women's ministries and discipleship groups. The members of the Women's Ministry shall be approved by and accountable to the elders. The goals, policies and procedures of these ministries shall be identified in the "ECCW Ministries Manual". They shall provide a written report of activities at the annual meeting of the church.

**Section 7. Men's Ministry**

The Men's ministry shall consist of three or more appointed male members who concern themselves with the various men's ministries and study groups of ECCW. The leaders of the Men's Ministry shall be approved by and be accountable to the elders. The goals, policies and procedures of these ministries shall be identified in the "ECCW Ministries Manual". They shall provide a written report at the annual meeting of the church.

## **Section 8. Small Group (Christ Care Groups) Ministries**

The Small Group (Christ Care Group) ministries shall consist of two or more appointed members and at least one deacon and one elder. The leaders of this ministry shall receive training as outlined in the ECCW Ministries Manual. They shall choose from among their number a team coordinator and supervision coordinator. The leaders of this ministry shall be approved by and be accountable to the elders. This ministry shall concern itself with the training and supervision of small group leaders, as well as the further development of small groups that support the vision of ECCW. This ministry shall partner with the Men's, Women's or any other specialized ministry in need of training and supervising of their small group leaders. The goals, policies and procedures, and officers of these ministries shall be identified in the "ECCW Ministries Manual".

## **Section 9. Stephen Ministry**

The Stephen Ministry shall consist of two or more members and at least one elder or deacon. The leaders of Stephen Ministry shall attend the Stephen Leader's Training Course. There shall be elected from among themselves a team coordinator and supervision coordinator. The leaders of this ministry shall be approved by and accountable to the deacons. This ministry will concern itself with training and organizing members for a one-on-one caring ministry in and around the ECCW congregation. The goals, policies and procedures of these ministries shall be identified in the "ECCW Ministries Manual".

## **Section 10. The Christian Citizenship Ministry**

The Christian Citizenship Ministry shall consist of three or more appointed members who seek to inform the church on matters relating to civic affairs and to recommend and take appropriate actions based on biblical principles. They shall perform other duties as detailed in the "ECCW Ministries Manual".

## **Section 11. Greeting, Ushering & Auditing Ministries**

- A) Greeting Coordinator, Head Usher, two Auditors, and an Alternate Auditor shall be appointed by the elders. These positions shall be accountable to the eldership.
- B) The greeting coordinator and head usher shall be responsible for a schedule of greeters and ushers for each month.
- C) Auditors shall make a careful audit of all financial records and report their findings in writing to the annual meeting of the church. If the financial records are found to be correct all concerned shall, by virtue of the auditors' report be relieved of all responsibility. There shall be an alternate auditor who serves in the absence of an auditor.

The head usher, the greeting coordinator, the auditors and an alternate auditor shall be appointed for a term of one year. The number of terms shall not be limited.

## **Section 12. Pastoral Relations Ministry**

The Pastoral Relations Ministry shall consist of three or more members appointed by the elders for a term of three years with no term limit. The purpose of the ministry is to come along side our pastor(s) to provide encouragement, personal and spiritual support, and to help promote a healthy relationship with the congregation. The PRM would report matters of concern to the elders. The ministry shall meet with the pastors as often as necessary.

## **Article IV. Other Staff Positions**

The elders and senior pastor shall have responsibility for the hiring and oversight of other educational and office staff ministry positions. Examples of such potential staff positions would include but not be limited to: Director of Christian Education, Director of Children's Ministries, Director of Youth Ministries, Director of Worship and Music Ministries, Director of Small Group Ministries, Office Manager, Office Assistant, etc. A description of such positions, qualifications, and duties would be found in the ECCW Ministries Manual.

## **Article V. Ministry Doctrinal Positions**

### **Section 1. Marriage and Human Sexuality**

Marriage is the uniting of one man and one woman in covenant commitment for a lifetime. It is God's unique gift to reveal the union between Christ and His church and to provide for the man and the woman in marriage the framework for intimate companionship, the channel of sexual expression according to the standards found in God's Word, the Bible, and the means for procreation of the human race. Any legalized form that does not meet the biblical definition of marriage as one man and one woman (e.g. same-sex marriage) will not be approved or performed by the pastors, elders, and all other ministers licensed, employed, commissioned, or ordained by the Evangelical Covenant church of Woodstock. (Genesis 1:26-28; 2:24; Exodus 20:12; Matthew 19:4-6; Ephesians 5:23, 31-32; II Corinthians 6:14-18)

Intimate sexual activity is designed and commanded by God to be expressed only in the context of mutual fidelity within the marriage of one man and one woman. We believe that any form of pornography, fornication, adultery, incest, homosexuality, lesbianism, bisexuality, or bestiality is a sinful perversion of God's gift of sex. (Genesis 1:27; 2:24; 5:1-2; 19:5, 13; Leviticus 18:1-30; Proverbs 5:15-20; Matthew 5:27-28; 19:4; Romans 1:18, 21, 24-28; I Corinthians 6:9-11; Ephesians 5:31; Hebrews 13:4)

## **Article VI. Meetings**

### **Section 1. The Annual Business Meeting**

The annual business meeting of the church shall be held the second Saturday of February each year. The exact time of the meeting will be determined at the preceding regular business meeting.

### **Section 2. Special Congregational Meetings**

Special congregational meetings may be called by the pastor, the eldership of the church or by a petition of thirty (30) voting members of the church.

### **Section 3. Elder and Diaconate Meetings**

The elders and the Diaconate shall meet regularly at least once a month.

### **Section 4. Steward Ministry Meetings**

The Steward Ministries shall meet as often as is necessitated by the needs of the church but not less than quarterly during the year. The eldership may call steward ministry leaders to elder meetings as necessary to carry out their scriptural duties of oversight.

### **Section 5. Announcements of All Congregational Business Meetings**

Announcements of all congregational business meetings shall be made two Sundays prior to the selected date and shall state in writing the purpose(s) of the meeting and items to be voted on.

### **Section 6. Ex-officio**

Ex-officio is a person, who by virtue of the office he holds, becomes a member of a ministry. The intent in such cases, is to allow officers (such as chairmen and pastors) to serve on all ministries but not require them to do so. Therefore the position of ex-officio is not counted toward a quorum of the committee but may vote during such meeting once quorum is met. (Roberts Rules of Order)

## **Article VII. General Provisions**

### **Section 1. Quorum**

- a) Ten percent of the active membership present and voting at a business meeting properly called shall constitute a quorum.

b) The quorum for all biblical office groups and Steward Ministries shall be a majority of its membership.

### **Article VIII. Amendments**

Amendments to these By-Laws, not in conflict with the Constitution, shall be first presented in writing at a regular or special business meeting of the congregation, and may be voted on at any subsequent regular business meeting or special meeting called for that purpose. Adoption will be by a two thirds majority vote of members present.