

April 30, 2005
Constitution of the Central Conference of the Evangelical Covenant Church

Preamble

The Evangelical Covenant Church is a communion of congregations gathered by God, united in Christ, and empowered by the Holy Spirit to obey the great commandment and the great commission. It affirms its companionship in faith with other church bodies and all those who fear God and keep God's commandments.

The Evangelical Covenant Church adheres to the affirmations of the Protestant Reformation regarding the Bible. It confesses that the Holy Scripture, the Old and the New Testament, is the Word of God and the only perfect rule for faith, doctrine, and conduct. It affirms the historic confessions of the Christian Church, particularly the Apostles' Creed and the Nicene Creed, while emphasizing the sovereignty of the Word of God over all creedal interpretations.

In continuity with the renewal movements of historic Pietism, the Evangelical Covenant Church especially cherishes the dual emphasis on new birth and new life in Christ, believing that personal faith in Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord is the foundation for our mission of evangelism and Christian nurture. Our common experience of God's grace and love in Jesus Christ continues to sustain the Evangelical Covenant Church as an interdependent body of believers that recognizes but transcends our theological differences.

The Evangelical Covenant Church celebrates two divinely ordained sacraments, baptism and the Lord's Supper. Recognizing the reality of freedom in Christ, and in conscious dependence on the work of the Holy Spirit, we practice both the baptism of infants and believer baptism. The Evangelical Covenant Church embraces this freedom in Christ as a gift that preserves personal conviction, yet guards against an individualism that disregards the centrality of the Word of God and the mutual responsibilities and disciplines of the spiritual community.

The Evangelical Covenant Church has its roots in historical Christianity, the Protestant Reformation, the biblical instruction of the Lutheran Church of Sweden, and the great spiritual awakenings of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. These influences, together with more recent North American renewal movements, continue to shape its development and distinctive spirit. The Evangelical Covenant Church is committed to reaching across boundaries of race, ethnicity, culture, gender, age, and status in the cultivation of communities of life and service.

The Central Conference of the Evangelical Covenant Church, in order to accomplish its mission and purposes, has formulated and adopted this Constitution and Bylaws. The Constitution recognizes that the highest constituted authority of the Central Conference is the convention of delegates known as the Annual Meeting, which alone can adopt and amend the Constitution and Bylaws. The Central Conference shall be governed by this Constitution and Bylaws, its Articles of Incorporation, and all applicable laws.

ARTICLE I Name

The name of this body shall be the Central Conference of the Evangelical Covenant Church (the "Central Conference").

ARTICLE II Confession

The Central Conference confesses that the Holy Scripture, the Old and the New Testament, is the Word of God and the only perfect rule for faith, doctrine, and conduct.

ARTICLE III Establishment and Purpose

Section 3.1. The Central Conference is a separately incorporated association of congregations of The Evangelical Covenant Church (the "ECC"), recognized as provided in the Bylaws of the ECC.

Section 3.2. The Central Conference exists to serve its congregations, to unite them in common mission, to make known the good news of saving faith in Jesus Christ, to encourage a Christlike life among its congregations and their members, and to carry out Christ's redeeming work of love, mercy, and justice in the world.

Article IV Membership

Section 4.1. The Central Conference is composed of Christian congregations united in faith and service.

Section 4.2. Membership in the Central Conference is open to Christian congregations that are in accord with the Preamble and Confession of the Constitution of the ECC, and that meet the requirements and follow the procedures set forth in the Constitution and Bylaws of the ECC and the Constitution and Bylaws of the Central Conference.

Section 4.3. Member congregations pledge mutually to support the principles, policies, programs, and institutions of the ECC and the Central Conference. This includes regular financial support of the ECC and the Central Conference and affiliated institutions. Member congregations have freedom in the management of local matters.

Section 4.4. Member congregations that through decision or practice are out of harmony with the principles, policies, programs, or institutions of the ECC may be dismissed from membership in the ECC and the Central Conference, according to the procedures stated in the Bylaws of the ECC.

Section 4.5. A congregation seeking to end its membership in the ECC and the Central Conference shall follow the procedures set forth in the Constitution and Bylaws of the ECC.

Section 4.6. Disbanded congregations shall be removed from the roster of the Central Conference according to the procedures set forth in the Constitution and Bylaws of the ECC.

Section 4.7. When a congregation is no longer a member of the Central Conference, it shall cease all use of and reference to the name "Central Conference," shall cease all use of the logo of the Central Conference, and shall not represent itself as being a member of the Central Conference.

ARTICLE V Corporate Existence and Territory of the Central Conference

Section 5.1. The Central Conference shall be an Illinois not-for-profit corporation.

Section 5.2. The delegates to the Annual Meeting of the Central Conference are the corporate members of the Central Conference.

Section 5.3. The boundaries of the Central Conference shall be as determined by the Annual Meeting of the ECC, upon the recommendation of the Executive Board of the ECC after consultation with the Executive Board of the Central Conference.

ARTICLE VI Officers

Section 6.1. The Central Conference shall have the following officers: a chair, a vice-chair, a secretary and a treasurer. The Bylaws may provide for assistant officers. Only elected members of the Executive Board of the Central Conference may be assistant officers.

Section 6.2. Officers shall be elected according to the procedures stated in the Bylaws.

Section 6.3. Officers shall have the duties and responsibilities provided in the Bylaws.

ARTICLE VII Annual Meeting

Section 7.1. A convention of delegates, known as the Annual Meeting of the Central Conference, shall be the highest constituted authority in the Central Conference.

Section 7.2. There shall be one regular session of the Annual Meeting of the Central Conference each year.

Section 7.3. As the highest deliberative and decision-making body of the Central Conference, the Annual Meeting of the Central Conference shall recommend to the ECC the admission of congregations to membership in the ECC and the Central Conference, elect or call persons to leadership positions, approve the budget of the Central Conference, receive and approve reports, and make other decisions necessary to the mutual work of the ECC, the Central Conference, and affiliated institutions.

Section 7.4. Each Central Conference congregation is entitled to send one or more delegates to the Annual Meeting of the Central Conference, as provided in the Bylaws. The Bylaws may provide for additional delegates and advisors. Each delegate shall serve for a term that expires at the convening of the next regular session of the Annual Meeting of the Central Conference. Each delegate shall be a corporate member of the Central Conference for the duration of that delegate's term. If a delegate is no longer qualified, is unable to serve, or is unwilling to serve, the congregation or other entity from which that person was a delegate may elect a qualified person to serve in that delegate's stead.

Section 7.5. Special sessions of the Annual Meeting of the Central Conference may be called by the Executive Board of the Central Conference, or by forty per cent of the current delegates representing no less than 25 per cent of the member congregations of the Central Conference. At least thirty days before the date of each special session, the secretary of the Central Conference shall cause a notice to be sent to each member congregation and each current delegate stating the time, place, and purpose of the session.

Section 7.6. No regular or special Annual Meeting of the Central Conference shall be convened until such time as delegates representing at least 25 per cent of the member congregations have registered. A majority of delegates registered and certified in accordance with the Bylaws shall constitute a quorum for any regular or special session of an Annual Meeting of the Central Conference.

ARTICLE VIII Executive Board

Section 8.1. Duties and Responsibilities of the Executive Board of the Central Conference

a. The Executive Board of the Central Conference shall be the agent of the Annual Meeting of the Central Conference in making decisions for, and otherwise acting on behalf of, the Central Conference when the Annual Meeting of the Central Conference is not in session. This agency does not include powers reserved exclusively to the Annual Meeting of the Central Conference by the Constitution and Bylaws of the Central Conference or by decision of the Annual Meeting of the Central Conference. The Executive Board of the Central Conference shall be responsible to the Annual Meeting of the Central Conference for its decisions and actions. Additional duties of the Executive Board of the Central Conference may be set forth in the Bylaws.

b. The Executive Board of the Central Conference shall be responsible for ensuring that all matters required to be brought to the Annual Meeting of the Central Conference under this Constitution and Bylaws are in fact brought to the Annual Meeting of the Central Conference.

c. The Executive Board of the Central Conference shall have the authority and responsibility for ensuring that the policies, procedures, and actions of the Central Conference comply with this Constitution and Bylaws.

d. The Executive Board of the Central Conference shall have the authority and responsibility for ensuring that the officers, the Superintendent, and the staff of the Central Conference comply with this Constitution and Bylaws.

e. The Executive Board of the Central Conference shall have the authority and responsibility for ensuring that the Central Conference ministries and the Central Conference corporations and institutions work in cooperation with each other, the ECC and the member congregations.

Section 8.2. Composition and Selection of the Executive Board.

a. The Annual Meeting of the Central Conference shall elect nine members of the Executive Board as provided in the Bylaws. No employee of the Central Conference or of a Central Conference entity shall serve as an elected member of the Executive Board of the Central Conference.

b. The Superintendent shall be an ex officio member of the Executive Board of the Central Conference. The Executive Board of the Central Conference may have additional ex officio members and advisors as provided in the Bylaws.

Section 8.3. The Executive Board may establish committees as provided in the Bylaws.

ARTICLE IX Ministries

Section 9.1. The Central Conference shall establish ministries to fulfill its mission and purposes. Central Conference ministries shall be identified in the Bylaws.

Section 9.2 Permanent Commissions.

a. The Central Conference shall have permanent commissions as provided in the Bylaws.

b. The Bylaws shall establish the accountability, responsibility, and composition of each permanent commission of the Central Conference.

Section 9.3. Standing Commissions.

a. The Central Conference shall have standing commissions as provided in the Bylaws.

b. The Bylaws shall establish the responsibility, composition, and accountability of each standing commission of the Central Conference.

Section 9.4. Special Commissions.

a. The Central Conference shall have special commissions as provided in the Bylaws.

b. The Bylaws shall establish the responsibility, composition, and accountability of each special commission of the Central Conference.

Section 9.5. Associated Ministries. The Bylaws may identify ministries associated with the Central Conference.

ARTICLE X The Superintendent

Section 10.1. The Superintendent shall be an ECC minister in good standing who is ordained to word and sacrament. The Superintendent shall be called by the Annual Meeting of the Central Conference as provided in the Bylaws. The Superintendent shall have the duties and responsibilities provided in the Bylaws.

ARTICLE XI Corporations and Institutions

Section 11.1. The Central Conference may establish entities to be responsible for specific missions and purposes of the Conference.

Section 11.2. Each corporation and institution established by the Central Conference shall have officers and boards of directors as required by law and provided in the Bylaws. The Superintendent shall be an ex officio member of the Board of Directors of each corporation and institution established by the Conference.

ARTICLE XII Dissolution and Distribution of Assets

Section 12.1. If the Conference is dissolved or diminishes to less than ten member congregations, all right, title, and interest to property, real, personal, tangible, and intangible, and all other assets shall pass to the ECC.

Section 12.2. A congregation that withdraws or is dismissed from membership in the ECC and the Central Conference is obligated to repay immediately all loans and grants received from the ECC or the Central

Conference or both, and to return all property received from either of them. The congregation also forfeits all rights to property of the ECC or the Central Conference, or both.

ARTICLE XIII Amendments

Section 13.1. Proposed amendments to this Constitution shall be introduced in writing at an Annual Meeting of the Central Conference, but cannot be acted upon until the next Annual Meeting of the Central Conference. A proposed amendment shall be adopted upon the affirmative vote of two-thirds of the registered and certified delegates present and voting on the amendment to be adopted.

Section 13.2. Amendments to this Constitution and Bylaws shall be in essential agreement with the ECC Constitution and Bylaws.

Section 13.3. At least thirty days prior to the Annual Meeting of the Central Conference at which final action is to be taken on a proposed amendment to this constitution, the secretary of the Central Conference shall mail a copy of each proposed amendment to each ECC congregation in the Central Conference and shall cause the text of each proposed amendment to be posted on the website of the Central Conference.

ARTICLE XIV Conflict Resolution

Section 14.1. The Executive Board of the ECC shall have the power to resolve otherwise insoluble conflicts arising in the context of the Constitution and Bylaws of the Central Conference.

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