

EVANGELICAL COVENANT CHURCH OF VENICE ISLE, VENICE, FLORIDA

CONSTITUTION – January 22, 2012

PREAMBLE (A Historical Statement from the Preamble of the Constitution and By-laws of the Evangelical Covenant Church as revised in 1957)

"The Evangelical Covenant Church has its roots in historical Christianity as it emerged in the Protestant Reformation, in the biblical instruction of the Lutheran State Church of Sweden, and in the great spiritual awakenings of the nineteenth century. These three influences have in large measure shaped its development and are to be born in mind in seeking to understand its distinctive spirit.

"The Covenant Church adheres to the affirmations of the Protestant Reformation regarding the Holy Scriptures, the Old and New Testament, as the Word of God and the only perfect rule for faith, doctrine, and conduct. It has traditionally affirmed the historic confessions of the Christian church, particularly the Apostles Creed, while at the same time it has emphasized the sovereignty of the Word over all creedal interpretations. It has especially cherished the pietistic restatement of the doctrine of justification by faith as basic to its dual task of faith in Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord, the reality of a fellowship of believers which recognizes but transcends theological differences, and the belief in baptism and the Lord's Supper as divinely ordained sacraments of the church. While the denomination has traditionally practiced the baptism of infants, in conformity with its principle of freedom it has given room to divergent views. The principle of personal freedom, so highly esteemed by the Covenant, is to be distinguished from the individualism that disregards the centrality of the Word of God and mutual responsibilities and disciplines of the spiritual community."

ARTICLE I - NAME

The name of this church shall be the Evangelical Covenant Church of Venice Isle, Venice, Florida.

ARTICLE 11 - AFFILIATION

The church is a member of the Evangelical Covenant Church and its Southeast Conference and is pledged to work in harmony with the Covenant and its decisions and to support its program, policies, and institutions.

ARTICLE III - CONFESSION OF FAITH

The church believes in the Holy Scriptures, the Old and the New Testament, as the Word of God and the only perfect rule for faith, doctrine and conduct.

ARTICLE IV - PURPOSE

Section 1. The purpose of the church shall be to unite Christians in fellowship for spiritual development, for the winning of persons to Christ, and for the propagation of the gospel of Jesus Christ through Christian education, home and world mission, and the institutions conducted by the Evangelical Covenant Church and its local regional conferences.

Section 2. In order to achieve this purpose, the church, in the unity of the Spirit, shall use the gifts God has given it and the means of grace which God has placed at its disposal: the Word of God, Baptism, and Holy Communion.

ARTICLE V - MEMBERSHIP

Membership in the church is granted on application to those who through faith in God's Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, have been born anew to a living hope, have been baptized according to the Holy Scriptures, desire to live a Christian life, and promise to support the total ministry of the Church and to share its fellowship and obligations.

ARTICLE VI - OFFICERS

The officers of the church shall be a Chair, a Vice-Chair, a Secretary, a Financial Secretary, and a Treasurer.

ARTICLE VII - CHURCH COUNCIL

Section 1. The general administration of the church shall be vested in a body known as the Church Council. In circumstances, or where law requires action(s) by "Trustees" the council shall be known as "The Board of Trustees" and the members of it as "trustees" The council shall also serve as a diaconate to supervise the spiritual life of the church as stated in 1Timothy 3:8-13.

Section 2. The council shall consist of nine, and not more than twelve members, as specified in the bylaws, including the pastor, who shall be an ex-officio member of the council.

Section 3. The council shall organize itself including the election of church officers in a manner specified in the bylaws.

ARTICLE VIII - BUSINESS MEETINGS

Section 1. Regular business meetings shall be held at stated intervals, but not less than semiannually. The annual business meeting shall be held as near the first of the year as feasible. At the annual meeting, written progress reports shall be submitted by the pastor and by each committee of the church. Audited financial reports shall be submitted by the treasurer for the church and each of its organizations. Members of the council for the ensuing year shall be elected by closed ballot.

Section 2. Notice of all congregational business meetings shall be mailed to members not less than two weeks prior to the meeting and shall include the date, time of the meeting, and an annotated agenda of business to be transacted.

ARTICLE IX - PROPERTY

In the event of schism within the church, from which we earnestly pray God to spare us, the title of all church property, real or personal, shall remain with the group which abides by this constitution, as determined by the executive board of the Southeast 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 Southeast Conference.

ARTICLE X - AMENDMENTS

Amendments in harmony with this constitution and not in conflict with Covenant principles and policies may be adopted by a two-thirds vote of those present and voting in an annual meeting of the church, providing the proposed amendment was presented in written form at the preceding annual meeting. When the church receives appropriation aid from the regional conference and/or the Covenant through subsidy or loans, proposed amendments must also be approved by the regional conference board and the executive secretary of Covenant Home Mission.

EVANGELICAL COVENANT CHURCH OF VENICE ISLE, VENICE, FLORIDA **BYLAWS**

ARTICLE I **Membership**

Section 1. Admission into membership.

a) Application for membership.

A written application for membership shall be placed with the pastor or the Chair of the council.

b) Transfer of membership.

Applicants from other Christian churches shall submit letters of transfer when available, to the pastor and/or the Chair of the council.

c) Reception of new members.

Applicants who are accepted into membership of the church shall be welcomed at the next service of Holy Communion and shall make public confession of their faith, as outlined in a Book of Worship for Covenant Churches.

Section 2. Associate Membership

Associate membership is available to applicants who desire to retain membership in another Christian church while residing in the local community. Applicants shall qualify for membership under Article V of the constitution and Article 1, Section 1, of these bylaws.

Section 3. Responsibility of Membership

Every member shall assume the responsibilities and obligations placed on the member by the Word of God and the church. Members shall through the witness by life and word, consecrated service, prayer, and financial support further the cause of Christ in the local church and the Covenant.

Section 4. Discipline

a) Negligent Membership

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

b) Erring Membership

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 spirit of Christian love seek to restore the members. If the erring member does not heed this counsel, the matter shall be brought to the attention of council, which shall in meekness and gentleness seek restoration. If the erring member fails to heed the counsel of the council, the error shall be brought before a business meeting of the church. Discipline shall then be administered in the spirit of Christ with due regard for the welfare of the individual as well as the church.

c) Dismissal of members.

Dismissal of a member under paragraphs a) and b) of this section must be acted on by the church, which alone has the authority. A two-thirds vote of those present and voting at a congregational business meeting is necessary for such action.

Section 6. Transfer of members.

A member who moves to another community should soon thereafter locate a Covenant church. If there is no Covenant church, the member should locate some other evangelical Christian church. Application for transfer of membership shall be made in writing to the pastor, who shall issue the transfer to the church with which a member is uniting. Withdrawal of said membership shall be reported through the council to the next business meeting, where it shall be made a matter of record

Section 6. Removal of membership.

Request for withdrawal from membership in the church shall be made in writing to the pastor or the council.

Section 7. Forfeiture of property rights.

A member who has been properly dismissed from the church or who has withdrawn membership from the church forfeits all rights to any and all property of the church.

Section 8, Non member friends

Non-member parish friends shall be enrolled by the church as a part of its total constituency. The church and its pastor shall serve them in all their spiritual needs and they shall be encouraged to consider this as their church home. They shall be kept informed of the activities of the church.

ARTICLE II PASTOR

Section 1. Qualifications.

The pastor of the church shall meet the New Testament requirements of the office (1 Timothy 3:2 - 7) and shall be a member in good standing in the Covenant Ministerium. The pastor shall by virtue of the call be a member of the church and an ex-officio member of the council and the boards of all organizations within the church.

Section 2. Duties.

The pastor shall be devoted to the service of the church, preaching and teaching the Word of God, administering the sacraments, and faithfully giving of self to pastoral work. The pastor shall provide the church with an accurate record of pastoral acts and present a written report to the church annual business meeting. The Pastor shall practice good administrative procedures and cooperate with the council.

Section 3. Cooperation.

The pastor shall, both in word and precept, work in harmony with the Covenant, the regional conference, and fellow ministers.

Section 4. Call.

The pastor shall be called at a regular or special church business meeting, the purpose of which shall be announced in advance. The pastor shall be chosen by closed ballot with a two-thirds vote required for a call. The call shall be for an indefinite period of time, with a thirty days notice, in writing, required by the church or the pastor for termination of pastoral duties. When the church receives aid from the conference and/or the Covenant through subsidy or loans, a call to the pastor shall be extended jointly by the church and the local regional conference, subject to approval by the executive secretary of Covenant home mission.

Section 5. Charges against the pastor.

Charges against the pastor shall be submitted in writing and shall not be considered unless supported by the testimony of three witnesses. If in the judgment of the church the pastor erred in doctrine or conduct, the case shall be referred to the committee on ministerial standing and discipline of the local regional conference prior to further action by the church.

ARTICLE III

OFFICERS

Section 1. Church Chair

The Chair shall preside at all business meetings of the church and of the council. The Chair shall confer with the pastor in preparing the agenda for such meetings, and shall utilize the counsel that the pastor may give by virtue of the pastor's training, experience, and calling. The Chair shall be responsible for leadership of the church services in the absence of the pastor.

Section 2. Vice - Chair

The Vice - Chair shall assume the duties of the Chair in the absence of the Chair, and assist the Chair in the Chair's duties.

Section 3. Secretary.

The secretary shall keep and preserve the minutes of all business meetings of the church and of the council. The secretary shall conduct and preserve all official correspondence as shall be delegated. The secretary shall also be responsible for the official seal and documents of the church.

Section 4. Financial Secretary.

The financial secretary shall receive, record, and transmit to the church all records of funds contributed to the church. An assistant financial secretary will perform these duties in the absence of the financial secretary.

Section 5. Treasurer.

The treasurer shall be responsible for all funds received by the church and make disbursements as authorized by the church or the council. The treasurer shall also present a written report of the receipts and expenditures to each regular meeting of the council and to each regular business meeting of the church. An assistant treasurer will perform these duties in the absence of the treasurer.

In the event a Treasurer cannot be elected from within the council, a member of the church or an outside firm may be appointed by the Council with a majority vote of said council. This shall be a non-voting position, subject to all other duties and requirements of Article III, Section 5

ARTICLE IV
Church Council

Section 1. Size and tenure.

The council shall consist of nine, and no more than twelve members who shall be duly nominated and elected from the membership of the church, except for the pastor who shall serve in an ex - officio capacity. Members elected to the council shall serve for terms of three years in such a manner that the terms of approximately one - third of the members shall expire each year. A council member may serve only two consecutive three-year terms.

Section 2. Organization.

Following the annual meeting of the church, the council shall convene to select from its own number a Chair, a Vice-Chair, a Secretary, a Financial Secretary, and a Treasurer, and such other officers as the council, church business meeting, or these bylaws may specify. These officers shall be the corporate officers of the church.

Section 3. Council duties.

The council in its administrative responsibilities in cooperation with the pastor shall fulfill the functions defined by the constitution and bylaws including the following:

- a) Supervise church membership including recommendations relative to reception or removal of members.
- b) Assist the pastor in nurturing the spiritual life of the church and in the service of communion as planned by the pastor in cooperation with the worship Chair.
- c) Establish administrative and program policies in conformity with the spirit of the church constitution.
- d) Evaluate the total church program on a continuing basis.
- e) Plan and recommend the annual budget and stewardship opportunities for the church.
- f) Review and approve the schedule of the church activities and personnel.
- g) Appoint administrative committee members and church workers as defined by the bylaws for the administrative committees as the council may deem appropriate.

Section 4. Administrative committees

Implementation of policies and programs established by congregational or council action may be accomplished through the following administrative committees:

- a) Music Committees
- b) Missions and Education Committee
- c) Fellowship and Social Committee
- d) Altar and Flowers Committee
- e) Stewardship and Properties Committee
- f) Memorial committee

A council member shall serve as liaison of the committee to which appointed and assume responsibility for directing all congregational activities which fall within that functional category in cooperation with the pastor.

ARTICLE V Committees

Section 1. Executive Committee.

The executive committee consisting of the officers of the church council together with the pastor of the church shall strive to promote effective working relations and communication in the church. The committee shall have no legislative power, but shall function in an advisory capacity to the council unless specific responsibilities shall have been assigned to it by the council or the church.

Section 2. Nominating committee.

The nominating committee shall consist of not less than three members who shall be appointed by the council at a business meeting at least one month prior to the annual meeting. The pastor shall be an ex-officio member of the committee. After being convened by the church Chair, committee members shall elect their own Chair and secretary. The responsibility of the committee shall include the following:

- a) Prepare a ballot for the annual meeting of the congregation listing one or more qualified candidates for each office to be filled.
- b) Confirm the willingness of each candidate to serve before listing the candidate's name on the ballot.
- c) Present a complete ballot to the annual meeting of the congregation. This shall constitute completion of the committee assignment unless given specific responsibilities at said annual meeting.

Section 3. Pastoral relations committee.

The pastoral relations committee shall consist of members of the executive committee and shall meet at least semi - annually in keeping with the program and purpose of the Covenant Commission on Pastoral Relations as adopted by the Annual Meeting.

Section 4. Special committees and task forces

Special committees or task forces for specific purposes may be appointed by a duly constituted business meeting of the congregation or by the council according to need, but shall be automatically terminated at the next annual meeting unless specifically extended by said annual meeting.

ARTICLE VI

Meetings

Section 1. Public Services.

Public services shall be conducted regularly on Sundays and weekdays for worship, the preaching and teaching of God's Word, and prayer.

Section 2. Conducting Sacraments.

The sacrament of Holy Communion shall be conducted regularly as determined by the council. The sacrament of baptism shall be conducted in keeping with Covenant principles and according to the needs of the constituency.

Section 3. Business meetings.

Church business meetings shall be held regularly, not less than semiannually as specified in Article VIII of the constitution. Special business meetings may be called by the Chair of the church in consultation with the pastor, or by the council.

Section 4. Church council and administrative committee meetings.

Regular meetings of the council shall be held not less than quarterly. Administrative committees, special committees, and task forces shall meet not less than at a frequency specified by the council. Special meetings of the council, the executive committee, the administrative committees, and the task forces may be called by their respective Chairs.

Section 5. Organization meetings.

Meetings and activities of the organizations of the church shall be planned and conducted regularly under the direction and supervision of the council.

ARTICLE VII

General Provisions

Section 1. Quorum.

a) Ten percent, or not less than ten members, of the membership attending a business meeting properly called shall constitute a quorum.

b) The quorum for the COUNCIL, committee, and task force meetings shall be a majority of its membership.

Section 2. Tenure.

Officers of the church shall be elected for terms of one year. They may not succeed themselves more than three successive terms.

Section 3. Rules of order.

All business meetings of the church and of the boards, committees, and organizations of the church shall be conducted according to Robert's Rules of Order.

ARTICLE VIII
Amendments

Amendments to these bylaws not in conflict with the constitution may be adopted at any regular business meeting, or at a special business meeting called for that purpose, by a two-thirds vote of the members present and voting, providing that such amendments have been presented in writing to the council and at a preceding regular business meeting.

When the church receives aid from the regional conference and/or the Covenant through subsidy or loans, proposed amendments must also be approved by the regional conference board and the executive secretary of Covenant Home Missions.

This document contains the following changes first presented to the congregation at a business meeting held on November 27, 2011 and approved at the annual meeting held on January 22, 2012.

- The following statement was added to Article III, Section 5, which covers the position and duties of Treasurer: “In the event a Treasurer cannot be elected from within the council, a member of the church or an outside firm maybe appointed by the Council with a majority vote of said council. This shall be a non-voting position, subject to all other duties and requirements of Article III, Section 5”
- Article II, Section 4 was modified to agree with the Employment contract. “Six weeks notice” was removed and “Thirty days notice, in writing” was added.
- Language throughtout was changed to be gender neutral.