

BETHEL CONSTITUTION

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PREAMBLE

We, the members of Bethel Evangelical Free Church, an independent church affiliated with the Evangelical Free Church of America (EFCA), but not subject to exercise and control by the EFCA, do ordain and establish the following constitution to which we voluntarily submit ourselves.

ARTICLE ONE – NAME

This church shall be legally named and known as the Bethel Evangelical Free Church, Chicago, Illinois, but may use as an assumed name, Bethel Community Church for general church business purposes. The use of the name Bethel Community Church within this constitution shall be understood to mean Bethel Evangelical Free Church and not interpreted to mean a separate entity or ministry.

ARTICLE TWO – PURPOSE AND MISSION

We exist to proclaim the truth of Jesus and grow mature disciples for the glory of God. (John 14:6; Matthew 28:18-20; Colossians 1:28-29; Ephesians 4:11-13; 1 Corinthians 10:31; Romans 11:36).

ARTICLE THREE – STATEMENT OF FAITH

God

We believe in one God, Creator of all things, holy, infinitely perfect, and eternally existing in a loving unity of three equally divine Persons: the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Having limitless knowledge and sovereign power, God has graciously purposed from eternity to redeem a people for Himself and to make all things new for His own glory (Deuteronomy 6:4; Matthew 28:19; 1 Corinthians 8:6).

The Bible

We believe that God has spoken in the Scriptures, both Old and New Testaments, through the words of human authors. As the verbally inspired Word of God, the Bible is without error in the original writings, the complete revelation of His will for salvation, and the ultimate authority by which every realm of human knowledge and endeavor should be judged. Therefore, it is to be believed in all that it teaches, obeyed in all that it requires, and trusted in all that it promises (2 Timothy 3:16-17; 1 Thessalonians 2:13; 2 Peter 1:19-21).

The Human Condition

We believe that God created Adam and Eve in His image, but they sinned when tempted by Satan. In the union with Adam, human beings are sinners by nature and by choice, alienated from God, and under His wrath. Only through God's saving work in Jesus Christ can we be rescued, reconciled, and renewed (Genesis 1:26-27; Ecclesiastes 7:29; Romans 3:23, 5:12-15; Ephesians 2:1-5).

Jesus Christ

We believe that Jesus Christ is God incarnate, fully God and fully man, one person in two natures. Jesus, Israel's promised Messiah, was conceived through the Holy Spirit and born of the virgin Mary. He lived a sinless life, was crucified under Pontius Pilot, arose bodily from the dead, ascended into heaven, and sits at the right hand of God the Father as our High Priest and Advocate (1 Corinthians 15:3-4; 1 Peter 2:24; Acts 1:9-11; Hebrews 4:14-16; 1 John 2:1).

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The Work of Christ

We believe that Jesus Christ, as our representative and substitute, shed His blood on the cross as the perfect, all-sufficient sacrifice for our sins. His atoning death and victorious resurrection constitute the only ground for salvation (Romans 3:23; Colossians 1:13-14, 21-22; 1 Peter 3:18).

The Holy Spirit

We believe that the Holy Spirit in all that He does glorifies the Lord Jesus Christ. He convicts the world of its guilt. He regenerates sinners, and in Him, they are baptized into union with Christ and adopted as heirs in the family of God. He also indwells, illuminates, guides, equips, and empowers believers for Christ-like living and service (John 3:3-5, 15:26, 16:7-14; Ephesians 4:3-7; Titus 3:5-6).

The Church

We believe that the true church comprises all who have been justified by God's grace through faith alone in Christ alone. They are united by the Holy Spirit in the body of Christ, of which He is the Head. The true church is manifest in local churches, whose membership should be composed only of believers. The Lord Jesus mandated two ordinances, baptism and the Lord's Supper, which visibly and tangibly express the gospel. Though they are not the means of salvation, when celebrated by the church in genuine faith, these ordinances confirm and nourish the believer (Matthew 28:19-20; Acts 1:6-9; 1 Corinthians 11:17-30; Ephesians 4:4-6).

Christian Living

We believe that God's justifying grace must not be separated from His sanctifying power and purpose. God commands us to love Him supremely and others sacrificially and to live out our faith with care for one another, compassion toward the poor, and justice for the oppressed. With God's Word, the Spirit's power, and fervent prayer in Christ's name, we are to combat the spiritual forces of evil. In obedience to Christ's commission, we are to make disciples among all people, always bearing witness to the gospel in word and deed (Matthew 28:19-20; Romans 12:9-13; Ephesians 2:8-9; James 1:27, 2:14-17, 4:7-8).

Christ's Return

We believe in the personal, bodily, and glorious return of our Lord Jesus Christ. The coming of Christ, at a time known only to God, demands constant expectancy and, as our blessed hope, motivates the believer to godly living, sacrificial service, and energetic mission (Matthew 24:29-31; 1 Thessalonians 4:16-18; Revelation 20:4-6).

Response and Eternal Destiny

We believe that God commands everyone everywhere to believe the gospel by turning to Him in repentance and receiving the Lord Jesus Christ. We believe that God will raise the dead bodily and judge the world, assigning the unbeliever to condemnation and eternal conscious punishment and the believer to eternal blessedness and joy with the Lord in the new heaven and the new earth, to the praise of His glorious grace. Amen (Matthew 25:31-46; John 1:12-13; 1 Corinthians 15:35-57; 2 Peter 3:10-13; Revelation 20:11-15).

ARTICLE FOUR – BIBLICAL DISTINCTIVES

We believe that having biblical distinctives is an important way for us as a church to be able to differentiate ourselves from other churches and from the world. In offering our biblical distinctives, we believe that every person must be afforded compassion, love, kindness, respect, and dignity. We are reminded throughout Scripture that we are saved by God's grace and that all of us as sinners are in need

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of redemption. 1 Corinthians 6:9-11 teaches, “Or do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: neither the sexually immoral, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor men who practice homosexuality, nor thieves, nor the greedy, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God. And such were some of you. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God.” Since all of us are in need of a Savior, any hateful and harassing behavior or attitudes directed toward any individual are to be repudiated and are not in accord with Scripture nor the doctrines of the church. We also believe that God offers redemption and restoration to all who confess and forsake their sin, seeking His mercy and forgiveness through Jesus Christ.

Human Sexuality

We believe that God created mankind in His own image. In two separate acts, He created only two distinct genders: male and female. We believe God determines the gender of all humans by their physiological sex at the time of birth. All attempts to redefine human sexuality beyond the physiological male/female distinction (whether framed biologically or culturally) and all attempts to change one’s birth gender are sinful acts of rebellion against our Creator. As our Creator, God stipulates in His Word that the only legitimate and acceptable sexual desires and sexual acts are those between a man and a woman within the context of marriage (Genesis 1:26-27; Genesis 5:1-2; Matthew 19:4; Mark 10:6; Leviticus 18:22, 20:13; Romans 1:26-27; 1 Corinthians 6:9-11; Galatians 5:19-21; 1 Thessalonians 4:3-8).

Marriage

Marriage is a sacred covenant between one man and one woman for life. God intends that the union between two believers be a loving illustration of the relationship between Christ and His church when carried out in obedience to the Bible and through the enabling power of the Holy Spirit. Scripture teaches that Christians should only marry Christians, and sex before or outside of marriage is a destructive sin. We believe that God hates divorce and intends marriage to last until one of the spouses dies. We believe there are narrowly defined provisions for divorce defined in Scripture in the event of sexual immorality or due to abandonment by an unbelieving spouse. (Genesis 2:18-24; Mark 10:7-9; 1 Corinthians 7:2,12-16; Matthew 19:1-9; Romans 1:26-27; 1 Corinthians 6:9-11; Galatians 5:19-21; 1 Thessalonians 4:3-8).

Sanctity of Human Life

Human beings are made in the image of God and are, therefore, of inestimable worth. God has given people the highest dignity of all creation. Life is a basic gift from a loving God, a gift over which we have stewardship but not absolute dominion. As responsible stewards, we can never intend to cause one's own death or the death of an innocent victim by action or omission. All human life is sacred from fertilization until the final breath (Genesis 1:26, 9:6; Psalm 51:5, 82:3-4, 139:13-16; Jeremiah 1:5; Luke 1:41; Job 12:10; Exodus 4:11).

ARTICLE FIVE – MEMBERSHIP

The church will receive as members only those who have professed Jesus Christ as their Savior and Lord, being born again, who manifest the fruit of the Spirit in their lives, and agree with the constitution of this church.

1. Those seeking membership will:

- a. Submit a membership application.
- b. Be interviewed by at least two Elders. Their names will be brought before the Elders for review.

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- c. Upon Elder approval, the candidate(s) name(s) will be published. With no disqualifying objection from active church members, as determined by the Elders, the candidate(s) will be presented as a new member to the congregation at a regular church worship gathering.
- 2. **Benefits of Membership** include, but are not limited to:
 - a. Active members will vote to establish, change, or confirm leadership positions within the church, and vote to approve budgetary, fiscal, and appropriate operational decisions regarding the church governance.
 - b. Active members will vote to approve all decisions regarding the acquisition, purchase, sale, disposition, or substantial modification of the real property of this church.
 - c. Active members may provide input into decision-making and ministry direction presented to the church body at annual or special meetings.
 - d. Active members may join in leadership service opportunities provided by the church.
- 3. **Responsibilities of Membership** include but are not limited to:
 - a. Members will actively support Bethel Community Church in attendance, prayers, material and financial support, and exercising Christ-like living and service in the individual member's life.
 - b. Members commit to a personal walk with Christ and commit themselves to personal holiness.
 - c. Members commit to engaging in and promoting healthy and biblical relationships within and among the local church body and within the local community.
- 4. **Membership Covenant** of Bethel Community Church

Having been brought by God's grace to personally trust in Jesus Christ as my Lord and Savior, we do now, relying on God's gracious aid, publicly and joyfully commit ourselves to one another. We will pray and work to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.

We will walk together in brotherly love, watch and care for one another, and faithfully admonish and encourage one another as occasion may require. We will not forsake the assembling of ourselves together. We will endeavor to raise those under our care in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.

We will pursue godliness and Christian maturity, forsake sin, and by our example and witness to seek the salvation of those around us. We will rejoice with one another and with compassion seek to bear one another's burdens and sorrows.

We will work together for the continuance of a faithful evangelical ministry in this church, as we sustain its worship, ordinances, discipline, and doctrines. We will submit first to Jesus Christ as Lord and secondarily to the leadership of this church.

We will contribute cheerfully and generously to the support of the ministry of this church and its expenses, the alleviation of the poor, and the spread of the gospel to all peoples. We commit to uphold this covenant for as long as we remain members, or until we move away and join another church of like faith and practice.

May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with us all. Amen.

- 5. **Classifications of Membership**
 - a. Active Members are those members who regularly attend and who are in good standing with Bethel Community Church.
 - b. Inactive Members are those members who have moved their residence outside of the geographic area served by the church or who have ceased attending Bethel for a continuous period of more than six months. This will also include members of the church who may be temporarily displaced geographically through military service, collegiate training, or seasonal residency.

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6. Termination of Membership

- a. Members may terminate their membership by submitting a written request to the Elders.
- b. Members may be terminated by the Elders if the member is chronically absent from church services and activities, or for failure to live in compliance with the responsibilities of membership.
- c. Members may be terminated by the Elders under the church discipline process.

7. Church Discipline

Healthy relationships and holy living are the responsibility of each member of Bethel Community Church as the church submits to the headship of Christ (1 Corinthians 11:3) and as we submit one to another (Ephesians 5:21). All members, including Elders, are under the care of and subject to each other within the church (1 Peter 5:5; 1 Timothy 5:20). The New Testament speaks about pursuing holiness and building one another up in the faith, such as in Ephesians 4:11-32 and Philippians 2:1-18. Members are fashioned into the image of Christ (Romans 8:29) as they engage in accountable relationships with one another (Hebrews 10:24-25, Colossians 3:16) and submit to the preaching, teaching, and shepherding ministry of church leadership (Hebrews 13:7, 17). Most church correction or discipline takes place informally as Christians humbly speak the truth in love privately to one another and point each other to the grace of the gospel. However, there will be times when believers refuse to repent and continue to sin, requiring further steps of church discipline (as outlined below in Matthew 18:15-18) to be taken to restore relationships and right conduct. The goal of discipline is repentance and restoration. It's for these situations that Jesus provides instructions for church discipline:

Matthew 18:15-17b "If your brother sins against you, go and show him his fault, just between the two of you. If he listens to you, you have won your brother over. But if he will not listen, take one or two others along, so that 'every matter may be established by the testimony of two or three witnesses.' If he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church; and if he refuses to listen even to the church, treat him as you would a pagan or a tax collector."

After everything has been done to seek reconciliation with an individual who is unwilling to repent of sin, refusing to listen to godly counsel, and ultimately is refusing to seek reconciliation, the formal act of removing said individual from membership in the church may occur. The Elders of Bethel Community Church will have responsibility for formal church discipline and establish processes and procedures for church discipline, including termination of membership, consistent with the Biblical provisions cited above.

ARTICLE SIX – GOVERNMENT

Jesus Christ is the head of the church (Colossians 1:18; Ephesians 1:22-23). The government of Bethel Community Church is a Christ-centered, Elder-led, congregational government (Acts 14:23, 20:28; Hebrews 13:7).

Membership

The government of this church is vested in the body of the members (1 Peter 2:9; Ephesians 2:11-22; Hebrews 10:19-25; Acts 11:21-26, 15:3, 22-27). The Membership calls its own Pastors; authorizes its own budget; holds its own property; and sets its own Constitution. The Membership confirms the following positions: Elders, Nominating Team, Trustee Team, Deacon Team, Treasurer, Financial Secretary, and Missions Team Leader.

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Elders

1. The Elders are the spiritual leaders who shepherd and govern the church.
2. They will be men selected from the membership who fulfill the biblical requirements for the position as found in 1 Timothy 3:1-7 and Titus 1:5-9.
3. All full-time Pastoral Staff are Elders at the time of hiring and may be referred to as Staff Elders. Non-staff Elders appointed by the membership may be referred to as Lay Elders for the purposes of this constitution.
4. The Elders will meet at a regularly appointed time to be determined by the Elders. Special meetings of the Elders may be called by the chairman or vice-chairman as the need arises. 50% of the Elders will constitute a quorum.
5. At the first regularly scheduled meeting after the Annual Meeting, the Elders will choose Lay Elders to the following offices:
 - a. Chairman –Presides at Elder meetings
 - b. Vice-Chair – Assumes any and all duties and tasks of the Chairman if he is unable to fulfill these duties and tasks.
 - c. Secretary – The Secretary will ensure that all Elder meetings are effectively organized and recorded by written minutes. He will maintain effective records and administration. He will verify the accuracy of church documents and respond to communication and correspondence to the Elders as required by the Chairman.
6. The Elders will be responsible for organizing and conducting the Annual and other Business Meetings of the church.
7. The Finance and Nominating Teams will each have two Lay Elders assigned by the Elders; one of which will serve as the Team Leader.
8. All other Ministry Teams will have a Lay Elder assigned by the Elders as a liaison. Elder liaisons will provide oversight and support to the Ministry Teams. They will not be voting members of the teams.
9. The number of Lay Elders will be based upon the ministry needs of the church at any given time; however, at all times, the number of Lay-Elders will be a minimum of one (1) for every twenty five (25) active members in the congregation up to ten (10) Lay-Elders which may be increased by the elders based on ministry needs. At least once a year the elders will determine the number of active members.
10. If a church member has a matter of church business, the church member may present the matter for consideration in writing to any member of the Elders. Following review by the Elders, the church member presenting the matter will be notified in writing of the action taken.
11. Elders are appointed for three-year terms which are staggered among the number of positions. At the completion of each term, an evaluation of each Elder's fitness and readiness for service shall be conducted by the other Elders prior to consideration for a new term. Each Elder recommended for appointment to a new term must be confirmed by vote of the active membership.

Pastoral Staff

A Pastor is a spiritual leader and must be a man who is above reproach and demonstrates Christ-like character and fulfills the biblical requirements for the position as found in 1 Timothy 3 and 1 Peter 5. He will also be in full agreement with the Constitution of this church. The number and types of Pastors will be based upon the ministry needs of the church at any given time.

All Pastoral staff will fulfill the responsibilities provided in their Pastoral Staff Calling Agreement and Job Description.

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Calling a Pastor

1. To call a Pastor, the Elders will appoint a representative Search Team or, if we are calling a Pastor from within the church, a Confirmation Team of seven or nine church members across various representative demographics, which will include two lay Elders. This team will be approved at an official business meeting. The team will verify a candidate's qualifications, investigate his personal character, education, ministerial record, preaching and visitation ability, and then make their recommendation to the Elders for action.
2. Upon Elder approval, a business meeting for the purpose of calling the Pastor will be convened. A Pastor is called when he receives 75% of the votes cast approving the calling.
3. Upon the approval of the active membership, the Pastor will be hired and complete a Calling Agreement with the Finance Team.
4. Upon installation, both he and his wife, if he is married, will become members of the church.

Resignation/Dismissal of a Pastor

1. **Resignation:** A Pastor will give notice of resignation to the Elders and the church pursuant to his Calling Agreement.
2. **Dismissal:** A Pastor can be dismissed by the Elders for moral misconduct or theological heresy. Prior to dismissal the Elders shall investigate the misconduct or heresy and obtain approval from 75% of all the Elders for dismissal. In such a case, dismissal is immediate. The Elders will notify the congregation promptly of the vote and dismissal. A Pastor may be dismissed for ineffectiveness or failure in performance of duties or responsibilities. If the Elders believe a Pastor to be ineffective or failing to perform duties or responsibilities, the Elders may engage in a process of correction and review to determine whether the Pastor should remain in his position. If dismissal is still deemed necessary for ineffectiveness or failure in performance of duties and responsibilities after this process, a business meeting for the purpose of dismissal will be convened and the Pastor will be dismissed upon a 75% of the votes cast.

Ministry Teams

1. **Deacon Team** – The Deacon Team will consist of at least one (1) deacon for every twenty five (25) active members in the congregation up to twelve (12) Deacons which may be increased by the Deacons based on ministry needs. At least once a year the elders will determine the number of active members. The Deacon Team will select its own leader and members will focus their primary attention toward caring for the congregation's physical welfare, modeling God's compassion, kindness, mercy, and love through visitation, sick calls, and helping the needy. Members who fulfill the biblical requirements are eligible for the position as found in 1 Timothy 3:8-12 and Romans 16:1. When a death occurs in a family of the congregation, the Deacon Team will work with the church office to serve the family as necessary. The team will prepare the elements for the Communion Service and maintain any necessary supplies. The Elders may determine other duties and responsibilities for the Deacon Team as the church requires.
 - a. Ministry Teams will ensure proper communication through personal or published minutes keeping an accurate record of work, progress, and decisions.
 - b. Ministry teams fall under the direction of the Elders and will be open for review, attendance, and assistance.
 - c. Ministry Team leaders completing a ministry year (or term) will turn over all records and pertinent data to the new team leader if new individuals are selected.
 - d. Ministry Teams are encouraged to meet monthly or as often as necessary to complete tasks, maintain ministry objectives, and develop proper working relationships.

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- e. Semi-Annually, a meeting of the Elders, Deacon Team, Trustee Team, Nominating Team, Finance Team, Missions Team leader, and other Ministry Team Leaders will be conducted for the purposes of enrichment, vision casting, and feedback regarding ministry direction and progress.
 - f. Any appointed team member including elders who needs to be removed for cause may be removed by a 75% vote of all the Elders.
 - g. Any appointed Elder may also be removed for cause by 75% of votes cast at a regular or special business meeting called by the Elders or 25% of the active members.
2. **Nominating Team** – The Nominating Team will consist of six church members and two Lay-Elders, one of which will be the team leader. The Nominating Team is responsible for recommending active members to appointed positions. The Nominating Team will work in unison with the team leaders of the various ministry teams to obtain information necessary for selecting qualified active members to present to the Elders as a final slate for approval. At the Annual Business Meeting, the Nominating Team will present the slate of church members nominated to fill appointed positions. The Nominating Team will count ballots (including absentee ballots) and announce the results.
- a. All appointed positions will serve three-year terms to be staggered, allowing appointments each year. The Elders will review and assess any appointed position team members upon their completion of each term.
 - b. At the request of the Nominating Team, any vacancies to appointed positions to serve the unexpired term, excluding Elders, will be filled with the approval of the Elders.
 - c. In the case of an Elder vacancy, the Nominating team, in conjunction with the Elders, will select a qualified replacement who will then be confirmed by a vote of membership.
3. **Trustee Team** – The Trustee Team will consist of one (1) trustee for every fifty (50) active members in the congregation up to 6 trustees which may be increased by the Trustees based on ministry needs. At least once a year the elders will determine the number of active members. The Trustee Team will choose their own leader and:
- a. Will be responsible for the overall maintenance, operation and security of church property.
 - b. Will be responsible for hiring and dismissal of non-ministerial church employees and independent contractors. The Trustee Team will consult with appropriate ministry teams regarding hiring and dismissal. All recommendations for hiring and dismissals shall be approved by the Elders.
 - c. Will be responsible for the safekeeping of all business, legal, and valuable documents.
 - d. Will inspect and oversee the maintenance of all church property and report all needed major repairs or purchases to the Finance Team so that the recommended repairs and purchases may be included in the church budget. Team Members will have authority to appropriate money from current church funds, as delegated by the Trustee Team leader, within the limits of the budget, to make routine and necessary purchases and repairs. All expenditures outside the limits of the budget must be recommended by the Finance Team to must be approved by the Elders.
 - e. Will not have the power to buy, sell, lease, or transfer any real property without the specific approval of the church members.
 - f. Will evaluate requests for use of church property and determine appropriate costs to charge for the using church facilities. If a question should arise about the appropriate use of the facilities relative to the Constitution, Elders will be consulted and assist in determining appropriate use.

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4. **Finance Team** – The Finance Team shall consist of seven active members: Treasurer (which preferably is an active member but need not be due to special skills required that may not be available in the congregation at any given time) , Financial Secretary, two Lay Elders (chosen by the Elders) one of which will be the team leader, one Trustee (chosen by the Trustees), and two lay church members (presented by the Nominating Committee and chosen by the Elders). All Finance Team members should have some financial aptitude and a desire to serve. The Finance Team will have no more than two Elders.

The Treasurer:

- a. Keeps accurate and organized records of revenue and disbursements.
- b. Makes timely payment of recurring bills (utilities, leases, etc.) and disburses other funds after receiving appropriate authorization.
- c. Processes payroll.
- d. Provides reports for budget managers to show status of budget compared to actual expenditures.
- e. Compiles and analyzes monthly financial statements which shall be presented each month to the Finance Team and Elders.
- f. Presents financial statements and the budget guideline at the Annual Meeting.

The Financial Secretary:

- a. Records the individual donor contributions (regular offerings and electronic).
- b. Sends annual contribution statements to donors. iii. Reports the amounts that donors have contributed to each fund to the Treasurer.
- c. Reconciles monthly bank statements.
- d. Maintains strict confidentiality of all financial information pertaining to giving and donors.
- e. Performs accounting tasks as requested by the Treasurer.
- f. The Financial Secretary will not have access to or possession of church funds at any time.

5. **Missions Team** – The Mission Team Leader will build the team with willing and qualified active members of Bethel Community Church for various positions within the team. The Mission Team will be responsible for communicating with and the support of church supported missionaries and ministry organizations. Communication includes regular contact with missionaries and ministry organizations as well as providing updates to the congregation regarding missionary ministries, health, well-being, needs, and support status. The Missions Team is responsible for vetting and presenting to the elders new missionaries for prayer and financial support. The Missions Team will work with church staff to determine events (i.e. annual missions conference and/or periodic events) to provide opportunities for missionaries to interact with the congregation. The Missions Team will submit to the Finance Team a proposed annual budget for all missionaries and mission programs under its oversight.
6. **Other Ministry Teams** – Additional ministry teams may be created by the Elders, which will define the duties of such teams. The leaders of additional ministry teams will be selected by the Elders and must be active members. Additional ministry team leaders will build their teams with willing and qualified active members and/or attenders of Bethel Community Church for various positions and support staffing. Each ministry team will be assigned an Elder liaison to ensure accountability and communication. Ministry teams may include, but are not limited to, Christian Education, Ushers, Women's Ministry, Men's Ministry, and Outreach.

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ARTICLE SEVEN – MEETINGS AND PROCEDURES

Regular Annual Business Meetings

1. The church will conduct at least one regular annual business meeting each calendar year. The meeting will be conducted no later than 45 days after the close of the December 31 fiscal year. The congregation will be given notice of the annual business meeting at least two weeks prior to the date of the meeting.
2. The meeting notice will include the purpose of the meeting and the agenda for the meeting. Only items listed on the agenda may be brought for a vote at the regular annual business meeting. Any other items brought up will be referred to the appropriate person or team for further review.
3. At least two weeks prior to the annual business meeting, the past meeting minutes, nomination slate, and the proposed budget for the following fiscal year will be distributed to the membership for its review and feedback.
4. If any member has any concerns about the proposed nominating slate, past meeting minutes, and/or budget, the member may contact a member of the Elders in writing.
5. The Elders will be responsible for conducting the annual business meetings, and a Lay Elder will be selected to chair the meeting.
6. The annual business meeting will proceed as follows:
 - a. Review and approval of the past meeting minutes.
 - b. Reports as deemed necessary by the Elder chairman.
 - c. Nominating Slate – A written confirmation ballot will be presented for each appointed position; membership will vote to confirm each position.
 - d. Budget – The membership will vote by paper ballot to either approve or reject the budget as presented by the Elders.
 - e. Other business in accordance with the published purpose and agenda.
7. Members 18 years of age and older will have voting privileges.
8. 35% of the total active membership will constitute a quorum.
9. 75% majority of votes cast (including absentee ballots) are required for approval of any business.

Special Business Meetings

Special Business Meetings may be called at any time by the Elders or by a written request presented to the Leader of the Elders by 25% or more of the church members. The congregation will be given notice of any Special Business Meeting at least two weeks prior to the meeting. The rules regarding the Annual Business Meeting will apply to any Special Business Meeting.

Emergency Business Meetings

In the event of an emergency business meeting, the two-week notice may be waived. The Elders will notify the active membership of the purpose and time of the meeting at least 48 hours prior to the meeting. The rules regarding the Annual Business Meeting will apply to any Special Business Meeting.

ARTICLE EIGHT – CHURCH PROPERTY

1. All church property will always and only remain in the possession of the membership.
2. A properly called business meeting will be necessary to authorize the Trustees to purchase, encumber, lease, or sell any real property for the church.
3. If a minority of the membership of Bethel Community Church will ever secede, ownership and control of the property will remain with the majority. In the event of a dispute, the Great Lakes District leadership of the Evangelical Free Church of America will review the dispute and make a decision binding upon both factions.

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4. In the event the membership will vote to unite or combine with another church, the assets and property rights will be transferred to the new combined church.
5. Upon dissolution of this church, all assets and properties will pass to the Evangelical Free Church of America.

ARTICLE NINE – AMENDMENTS

This constitution may be amended at any business meeting by a 75% majority of the ballots cast, the proposed amendments having been submitted in writing and read to the members at a regular or special business meeting or church service at least two weeks before being voted upon.