



HARBOR CHURCH

Constitution

PREAMBLE

Since it pleased Almighty God, by his Holy Spirit, to call some of his servants to unite here under the name Harbor Church of Magnolia, Texas, for the worship of God and the spread of the gospel of Jesus Christ, we, the members of Harbor Church do hereby organize ourselves and adopt this Constitution as our articles of governance, to be interpreted at all times to reflect the character of and bring glory to Jesus Christ, as revealed in the Bible and articulated in the Confession of Faith and Covenant of this church.

ARTICLE 1: NAME

This congregation is an assembly of believers in God through faith in Jesus Christ, who is the head of the Church, and shall be known as Harbor Church.

ARTICLE 2: PURPOSE AND VALUES

Harbor Church is built upon the foundation of Jesus Christ and exists to bring glory to the Triune God. Our purpose is represented by the following statements and values. Everything we do must be directly related to one or more of these:

- **The Gospel** - The good news that Jesus came to redeem us is the central message of the Word of God and everything in the church flows from its understanding of the gospel.
- **The Word** - The church must be grounded in the right preaching and teaching of the whole counsel of God's Word for direction, discipleship, flourishing, and sanctification.
- **Discipleship** - All Christians should grow in Christ, imitate Christ, follow Christ, and encourage others to do the same.
- **Evangelism** - Christians are a missional people sent to tell people the good news about what Jesus Christ has done to save sinners and urging them to repent and believe.
- **Gospel Community** - The Gospel creates a congregation of people, informs us on how we should live together in fellowship, and those communities become living proof that the good news of the Gospel is true.
- **Worship and the Ordinances** - All Christians are to live their lives for the glory of God. The church does this through corporate worship, the ordinances, and in communion with God in prayer.

ARTICLE 3: MEMBERSHIP

Section 1 - Qualifications

A. To qualify for membership in this church, a person must be a believer in Jesus Christ who gives evidence of regeneration, who has been baptized in obedience to Christ, and who wholeheartedly believes in the Christian faith as revealed in the Bible. Each member must submit to the doctrines of our church as expressed in our Confession of Faith and must endeavor to keep the commitments expressed in our Church Covenant. The elders shall be responsible for determining each person's qualification for membership.

B. The normal process for becoming a member is completion of all sessions of the Membership Class, an assessment of a person's qualification for membership in an interview with an elder, and the affirmation of the members on the basis of their profession of faith and the elder's recommendation.

Section 2 - Admission of Members

A. An applicant for membership shall be received as a member of the church upon the recommendation of the elders and the subsequent affirmation of 75% of the members present and voting on the question at any duly called members' meeting. At that point newly elected members shall relinquish their membership in other churches.

Section 3 - Duties and Privileges of Membership

A. In accord with the duties enumerated in the Church Covenant, each member shall be privileged and expected to participate in and contribute to the ministry and life of the church, faithfully observe its ordinances of baptism and the Lord's Supper, and submit to its discipline, instruction, and the leadership of the elders (Heb. 13:17). Only those who are members of this congregation shall be entitled to lead in the ministries of the church. Nonmembers may serve in certain circumstances with special permission by the elders.

B. It is the privilege and responsibility of the members to regularly attend members' meetings and vote, following the prerequisite elder recommendations, in four areas: (1) the election of officers, (2) decisions regarding membership status, (3) core document amendments, and (4) an annual macro-level budget. Members are also responsible to vote on any other matter the elders decide ought to be submitted to the congregation's vote.

Section 4 – Children and Membership

A. Children who have expressed a credible profession of faith, demonstrated recognizable evidence of regeneration, and have understood and undergone baptism, may be admitted into membership upon the recommendation of the elders and the subsequent affirmation of the congregation according to 3.2

B. Due to the fact that children must still live under the authority of their parents (Eph. 6:1-3), and are still in the process of growing in maturity (1 Cor. 13:11), children affirmed as members will not independently exercise the duties of 3.3.B until approved by the elders.

Section 6 - Termination of Membership

A. Termination of membership shall be acknowledged by the church following the death, transfer of membership, or voluntary resignation of any church member who is in good standing. Membership may also be terminated as an act of church discipline as described in Section 7, at the recommendation of the elders, and followed by the subsequent affirmation of 75% of the members present and voting on the issue at any duly convened member's meeting.

Section 7 - Church Discipline

A. Any member who is guilty of conduct dishonoring to Christ and his church, or who is consistently neglectful of his or her Scriptural duties as embodied in our Confession of Faith, Membership Covenant, or this Constitution, shall be subject to the admonition of the elders and the discipline of the church. Any such action shall be done in accordance with Matthew 18:15-17 and 1 Corinthians 5:1-5 and 2 Corinthians 2:6-8.

B. Church discipline can include public or private admonition by the elders or congregation, suspension from participation in the Lord's Supper for a definite period, removal from office, and/or removal from membership (excommunication). See Matthew 18:15–17; 2 Thessalonians 3:14–15; 1 Timothy 5:19– 20; 1 Corinthians 5:4–5

C. If private efforts to bring about the member's repentance and reconciliation are unsuccessful; one or more members or elders shall bring the matter to the attention of the elders. The elders shall review and investigate the matter. After prayer and deliberation, the elders may (a) dismiss the matter, (b) take disciplinary action (other than removal from membership, which may only be effected by a vote of the congregation), or (c) submit the matter to the members at a duly convened members' meeting for a decision.

D. A member shall be removed from membership as a matter of church discipline upon the recommendation of the elders and the subsequent affirmation of at least 75% of the members present and voting on the question at any members' meeting.

E. One of the goals of discipline is the restoration of the sinner. Therefore, discipline is to be carried out with much prayer and pleading on behalf of the elders and membership to restore the offending party. Should removal from membership take place, and the disciplined individual seeks restoration, and their conduct is judged by the elders and the members to be in accordance with the Confession of Faith, Membership Covenant, and Biblical repentance, they may be restored and taken back into membership through the normal membership process.

F. The church shall have authority to refuse a member's voluntary resignation from membership for the purpose of proceeding with a process of church discipline, to protect that member from following false teaching, or for any other reason the elders and the church deems necessary or prudent. In these instances, the church has the right and responsibility to bring any disciplinary process to an orderly conclusion, and to make final determination as to the person's membership status in connection with that process.

G. If a member departs from Harbor Church while under church discipline and thereafter attends another church, the elders may inform that church of the pending discipline along with the grounds for that action, seeking to encourage the brother or sister to repent and be restored to the Lord and to any people he or she have offended. The elders may also warn the other church to be on guard against the individual's conduct or beliefs and any risk of harm that he or she might present to the other church (Ephesians 4:1-6).

ARTICLE 4: MEETINGS

Section 1 - Worship Meetings

A. The church shall meet together for public worship each Lord's Day morning, and at other times throughout the week as the elders may determine. All worship gatherings are to be conducted under the oversight of the elders.

Section 2 - Members' Meetings

A. In every meeting together, members shall act in that spirit of mutual trust, openness, and loving consideration which is appropriate within the body of our Lord Jesus Christ.

B. There shall be a regular members' meeting at least annually called by the elders. Additional members' meetings may also be called as determined by the elders. All meetings shall be announced at public services for two weeks preceding the meeting except in cases of an emergency.

C. An elder designated by the elders shall preside as moderator at all members' meetings of the church. The elders shall see that the stated meetings of the church are regularly held and that any required reports are submitted to the church by the responsible members.

D. Provided all constitutional provisions for notification have been met, a quorum shall be understood to be met by those members present, and as determined by the elders. Anonymous votes shall not be accepted. Voting by proxy shall be prohibited, however, members who are unable to attend the scheduled members' meeting shall be permitted to voice questions or concerns to the elders prior to the scheduled meeting.

E. Members opposed to any elder recommendation under consideration shall express their objection to the elders as far in advance as possible before the relevant members' meeting.

F. The church, duly assembled in a members' meeting, may be required to: elect officers; receive applicants into church membership; recognize termination of membership due to death or voluntary resignation; exercise church discipline; approve a church budget; hear reports from the elders, fill positions, and to take any other action the elders deem necessary or desirable.

G. Meetings shall be run according to a reasonable order under the direction and oversight of the elders. Elders shall have authority to bring other recommendations to the members for a vote at their determination, a simple majority is then needed for affirmation (unless this constitution specifies otherwise).

ARTICLE 5: OFFICERS

Section 1 - Summary

A. The biblical offices in the church are elders, who are men, and deacons, who may be men or women. These offices do not dilute the biblical responsibility given to the gathered congregation as defined in 3.3.B. The biblical terms "elder," "pastor," and "overseer" are understood to refer to the same biblical office and may be used interchangeably. The office of elder is called to exercise authority and oversight in the church and will make decisions for the church as defined in 5.2. All officers must be members of this church prior to assuming their responsibilities.

Section 2 - Elders

A. Oversight of the ministry and resources of the church shall be vested in the elders, who are men that satisfy the qualifications set forth in 1 Timothy 3:1-7 and Titus 1:6-9. The church shall select elders according to the provisions of Article 7. As stated in 1 Timothy 2 and 3, only men may serve as elders. The elders shall ordinarily be comprised of not less than three men. Should circumstances arise that leave the church with fewer than three elders, the remaining elders shall act as soon as possible to propose qualified elders.

B. In keeping with the principles set forth in Acts 6:1–6 and 1 Peter 5:1–4, the elders shall devote their time to prayer, to the ministry of the Word (by teaching and encouraging sound doctrine), and to shepherding God’s flock. Moreover, the elders shall oversee the members, member reports, ministries, use of facilities, and all resources of the church.

C. Since Scripture charges the elders with the responsibility to shepherd and oversee the congregation (Acts 20:28; 1 Peter 5:2-3), the elders shall serve as the church’s final interpretive authority on the Bible’s meaning and application as it pertains to church doctrine, practice, policy, and discipline. See also Ephesians 4:11-13; 2 Timothy 4:1-2. In accord with that duty, the elders shall take particular responsibility to examine and recommend prospective members, examine and recommend all prospective candidates for offices and positions, oversee the work of the deacons and appointed church agents and committees, conduct and oversee worship services, administer the ordinances of baptism and the Lord’s Supper, equip the membership for the work of ministry, encourage sound doctrine and practice, admonish and correct error, oversee the process of church discipline, coordinate and promote the ministries of the church, and mobilize the church for missions.

D. The elders may adopt and amend any policies, procedures, positions, or resolutions they deem helpful for the proper function and health of the church provided they do not contradict our Confession of Faith. Such policies, procedures, positions, and resolutions shall be maintained in a Policies & Procedures and/or Positions & Resolutions Manual, which shall be available at the Church office for members to review.

E. The elders are further to ensure that all who minister the Word to the congregation, including outside speakers, share the fundamental convictions of Harbor Church. The elders shall have the authority to establish ministry positions or committees to assist them in fulfilling their responsibilities when needed. The elders may also propose the establishment and funding of paid staff positions and oversee the hiring process to fill vacant paid staff positions. Additionally, elders shall have primary responsibility for the employment, supervision, and evaluation of staff members.

F. The elders may choose to operate among themselves by consensus, but they must have at least two-thirds approval of the elders in order to proceed with an action. The action will then be carried out unanimously. The elders may select an elder to act as chairman for elder meetings. While elders may have different areas of giftedness in the church, they have equal authority in the office of elder whether they are staff elders or serving as lay elders.

G. An elder’s term of office may be terminated by resignation or by dismissal. Any two members with reason to believe that an elder, including staff elders, should be dismissed should express such concern first to the elders and thereafter if necessary, to the congregation at any members’ meeting. Any such action shall be done in accordance with the instructions of our Lord in Matthew 18:15–17 and I Timothy 5:17–21. Dismissal requires a members’ meeting specifically called for that purpose and a vote of at least 75% of the

members present and voting on the question.

Section 3 – Deacons

A. Particular service to the church shall be provided by deacons the number of which shall vary as the church has need, and who shall satisfy the qualifications set forth in 1 Timothy 3:8-13. The church may recognize members as deacons and elect them according to the provisions of Article 7. In keeping with the principles set forth in Acts 6:1-6, the office of deacon is not a position of spiritual authority.

B. Subject to the direction and oversight of the elders, deacons serve the congregation by caring for members, tending to the accommodations for public worship, and assisting the elders as needed. In addition, they may assist in the maintenance of properties, administer benevolence funds, and perform any other duties prescribed by the elders.

C. The deacons shall not meet together as a governing body. Each diaconate position shall serve a particular need of the church and shall be created or dissolved upon the recommendation of the elders and the subsequent affirmation of a majority of the members present and voting on the question at any members' meeting.

D. A deacon's term of office may be terminated by resignation or by dismissal. Any two members with reason to believe that a deacon should be dismissed should express such concern first to the elders and thereafter if necessary, to the congregation at any members' meeting. A deacon may be removed from office upon the recommendation of the elders and the subsequent affirmation of a majority of the members present and voting on the question at any members' meeting.

E. In the event a diaconate position becomes vacant, the elders may appoint a person to fill that position and assume its responsibilities, until such time as some person can be duly recognized by the church as a deacon pursuant to Article 7.

ARTICLE 6: STAFF

Section 1 – Staff Breakdown

A. Although no difference in authority exists between staff elders and lay elders, for the purpose of clarity the church will designate the role and responsibilities of those elders who are paid staff in the church.

B. Lead Pastor/Preaching Pastor - Primary responsibility for leading and shepherding the church through the preaching and teaching of the Scriptures in public meetings of the church may be vested in a Lead Pastor. The Lead Pastor shall be an elder. He shall perform the duties of an elder described in 5.2 and shall be recognized by the church as particularly

gifted and called to the full-time leadership ministry of preaching, teaching, and equipping. The Lead Pastor shall be appointed according to the provisions of Article 7. Preaching duties may be delegated to other elders or guest preachers as need may arise.

C. Staff Pastors - The church may select additional staff pastors to fulfill pastoral responsibilities as needed. A staff pastor shall be an elder. He shall perform the duties of an elder described in 5.2 and shall be recognized by the church as particularly gifted and called to the full-time ministry of preaching, teaching, and equipping. A staff pastor shall be appointed according to the provisions of Article 7. He shall perform any duties assigned by the elders and those required in applicable job descriptions.

D. Support staff - The Church may create or dissolve paid support staff positions upon the recommendation of the elders. Support staff will serve under the supervision of the elders. The elders are responsible for developing job descriptions and qualifications for each position. All staff members shall affirm and support the Confession of Faith, Membership Covenant, this Constitution, and shall exemplify godly character. Support staff may be terminated upon recommendation of the elders. If needed, a deacon may also be a staff member provided the requirements of Article 7 are met.

ARTICLE 7: APPOINTMENTS

Section 1 – Principles

The process for church appointments shall be carried out to fulfill the following principles:

- Substantial prayer, both individually and corporately, should be an integral part of the appointment process;
- Nominations will not proceed without the prerequisite recommendation of the elders;
- All candidates for church office should be treated with the grace, kindness, and honesty appropriate in evaluating fellow members;
- The appointment process shall express that spirit of mutual trust, openness, and loving consideration that is appropriate within the body of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Section 2 – Appointment of Officers

A. The appointment of officers shall be held at a members' meeting of the church. The elders shall be responsible for recommending candidates to serve as officers of the church and at their discretion may solicit nominations from the members. Names of nominees to serve as elders and deacons, shall be presented by the elders at a members' meeting, at least one month prior to the appointment, and the appointment shall proceed as directed by the

moderator. Any member with reason to believe that a nominated candidate is unqualified for an office should express such concern to the elders. Members opposed to a candidate should express their objection to the elders as far in advance as possible before the relevant members' meeting.

B. For the office of elder, the moderator shall declare appointed all men who are first recommended by the elders and subsequently received by a vote of at least 75% of the members present and voting on the question. For the office of deacon, the moderator shall declare appointed all persons receiving a majority vote of the members present. The persons appointed shall assume their respective offices upon appointment, unless another date has been specifically designated. For Staff Elders, appointment shall also include admission to membership for both the husband and his wife, if the staff member is married.

C. All non-staff elders and deacons shall meet with the full council of elders at least every three years after their affirmation to reaffirm their willingness and ability to continue serving in their appointed role. Under normal circumstances, after non-staff elders and deacons have served six consecutive years, it is recommended but not required that they take a sabbatical of at least one year before then being considered for reaffirmation to the office.

Section 3 – Calling of Staff Elders

A. In the calling of any man to the Elder Staff, the same process of calling an elder in Article 7 must be followed. In addition, however, the church must be given adequate opportunity to assess the pastoral and teaching gifts of any potential Staff Elder and, before being asked to express its judgment, must receive assurance from the elders that, having interviewed the man concerned, they are in no doubt as to his wholehearted assent to the Confession of Faith, Membership Covenant, and this Constitution. Notice of the nomination of a man to be appointed to membership and called as a Staff Elder (which shall include, if necessary, election to membership of his wife if he is married) must be given at all church services on two Sundays following the nomination, prior to the vote at a members' meeting. A vote to call a man to serve on the Elder Staff may be certified by the elders as an ordination to ministry at Harbor Church.

ARTICLE 8: DISPUTE RESOLUTION

Believing that the Bible commands Christians to make every effort to live at peace and to resolve disputes with each other in private or within the Christian Church (see, e.g., Matthew 18:15–20, 1 Corinthians 6:1–8), this church expects its members to resolve conflict among themselves according to biblically-based principles, without reliance on the secular courts when possible. Consistent with its call to peacemaking, the church shall follow biblically-based principles and seek, when possible, to avoid lawsuits to resolve disputes between itself and those outside the church, whether Christian or pagan and whether individuals or corporate

entities. The elders may adopt policies and procedures to effect these requirements and aspirations.

ARTICLE 9: ADMINISTRATION

Section 1 – Deacons And Finances

A. The church shall appoint deacons to aid the elders in the management of the church finances. In the absence or incapacity of a member gifted and qualified to serve the church in this capacity as a deacon, as defined in 5.3, the elders shall appoint another member(s) in good standing to temporarily fulfill these responsibilities.

B. The Deacons assisting the elders in this capacity shall help ensure that the church properly holds all its funds and securities in appropriate institutions; keep full and accurate accounts of receipts and disbursements in books belonging to the church; implement adequate controls to guarantee that any officer, employee, or agent of the church handles its funds appropriately; provide reports of church account balances, revenues, and expenses as requested by the elders; and provide an annual statement of accounts and balances to the Church.

C. The Deacons assisting the elders in the management of finances shall be appointed following the same procedures for all deacons as defined in Article 7. They shall operate under the oversight of the elders and will keep the church updated regarding budget goals and actual income and expenses. They may be paid for their services in accordance with 6.1.D

Section 2 – Budget

A. A macro-level budget shall be affirmed by the membership at a members' meeting prior to the start of the fiscal year. Annual Budgets shall be presented by the elders or those appointed by the elders. An annual budget will be affirmed after it has first been recommended by the elders and followed by a majority vote of the members present and voting at the members' meeting. The Elders shall have responsibility to oversee and faithfully disburse the budget. Amendments to the budget shall be adopted upon the recommendation of the elders and the subsequent affirmation of a majority of the Members present and voting on the question at any Members' Meeting.

B. The annual budget will be made available to the church 30 days prior to the meeting held to vote on its affirmation. Members opposed to any element of the budget shall express their objection to the elders as far in advance as possible before the relevant members' meeting.

ARTICLE 10: INDEMNIFICATION**Section 1 - Mandatory**

A. If a legal claim or criminal allegation is made against a person because he or she is or was an officer, employee, or agent of the church, the church shall provide indemnification against liability and costs incurred in defending against the claim if the elders determine that the person acted (a) in good faith, (b) with the care an ordinarily prudent person in a similar position would exercise under similar circumstances, and (c) in a manner the person reasonably believed to be in the best interest of the church, and (d) the person had no reasonable cause to believe his or her conduct was unlawful.

Section 2 - Permissive

A. With the unanimous decision of the elders, the church also may indemnify any person who acted in good faith and reasonably believed that his or her conduct was in the church's best interest and not unlawful.

Section 3 – Procedure

A. If a quorum of the elders is not available for an indemnification determination because of the number of elders seeking indemnification, the requisite determination may be made by the membership or by special legal counsel appointed by the membership.

ARTICLE 11: AMENDMENTS

A. Harbor Church recognizes three core theological documents, informed by scripture, that define the parameters for our beliefs, practices, commitments, and governance as a local church. Those core documents are our Confession of Faith, Church Covenant, and this Constitution.

B. The Confession of Faith and Membership Covenant may only be amended at a duly convened members' meeting of the church, when recommended by the elders, and followed by a vote of 75% of all members voting on the matter, provided (a) the proposed amendment is presented at a previous members' meeting, and made available to the members at least four weeks before the meeting to act on the amendment; and (b) the meeting to affirm the proposed amendment is announced at all Sunday morning services on two consecutive Sundays before the vote is taken, one of which may be the same day as the meeting.

C. This Constitution may only be amended at a duly convened members' meeting of the church, when recommended by the elders, and followed by a majority vote of the members voting on the matter, provided (a) the proposed amendment is presented at a previous members' meeting, and made available to the members at least four weeks before the meeting to act on the amendment; and (b) the meeting to affirm the proposed amendment is announced at all Sunday morning services on two consecutive Sundays before the vote is taken, one of which may be the same day as the meeting.

This constitution was affirmed by the founding members who covenanted together to start Harbor church on January 21, 2024.