

Constitution and Bylaws of True North Church

Updated March 2023

Preamble

Since, as we believe, it pleased Almighty God, by His Holy Spirit, to unite certain of His servants here under the name True North Church in Anchorage, AK, for the worship of God and the spread of the gospel of Jesus Christ, we, the members of True North 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 to bring glory to Jesus Christ, as revealed in the Old and New Testaments of the Holy Bible and as articulated in the Statement of Faith and Covenant of this church.

Article 1 – Name

1.1 The name of this body shall be True North Church.

Article 2 – Purpose

2.1 True North Church exists to glorify God by living out his mission as a community transformed by the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Article 3 – Membership

Section 1 – Qualifications

3.1 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 by immersion in obedience to Christ following his or her regeneration, and who wholeheartedly believes in the Christian faith as revealed in the Bible.

Each member must agree to submit to the teaching of Scripture as expressed in the Statement of Faith and must promise to keep the commitments expressed in the Church Covenant. The elders shall be responsible for determining each person's qualification for membership. In making this determination, they may rely on a person's profession of faith, or other such evidence, as the elders deem appropriate.

Section 2 – Admission of Members

3.2 The normal process for becoming a member is attendance of a Starting Points event, active Life Group participation and endorsement by a Life Group leader, submission to baptism post-conversion by immersion per Section 3.1 - "Qualifications" as needed, and completion of a Membership Covenant.

Section 3 – Membership Privileges

3.3 Each member is privileged and expected to participate in and contribute to the ministry and life of the church, consistent with God’s leading and with the gifts, time, and material resources each has received from God. Members will also engage in the mission of the church by fulfilling their commitment to the Church Covenant, which they will be asked to renew annually. Under Christ, this congregation is governed by its members.

Therefore, it is the privilege and responsibility of members to attend all members’ meetings and vote on the election of officers, on decisions regarding membership status, and on other matters as may be submitted to a vote. Only members are entitled to serve in either of the two offices of the church, namely the office of Elder (Article 5, Section 2) and the office of Deacon (Article 5, Section 3).

Section 4 – Church Discipline

3.4.1 If a member is consistently neglectful of his or her membership duties or consistently lives with inappropriate conduct in which the name of our Lord Jesus Christ is dishonored and the welfare of His church damaged, he or she may be subject to the admonition of the elders and the discipline of the church, according to the instructions of Scripture (Matt 18:15-17; 1 Cor 5:1-12; Gal 6:1-2; 1 Thess 5:14).

Church discipline should ordinarily be contemplated after individual private admonition has failed. Church discipline can include admonition by the elders or congregation, suspension from communion for a definite period, removal from office, and excommunication (see Matt 18:15-17; 2 Thess 3:14-15; 1 Tim 5:19-20; 1 Cor 5:4-5).

3.4.2 The purpose of church discipline is:

1. For the repentance, restoration, and spiritual growth of the individual(s) disciplined (Heb 12:1-11; Matt 18:15-17; 1 Cor 5:5; Gal 6:1).
2. For the instruction in righteousness and good of other Christians, as an example to them (1 Cor 5:11; 1 Tim 5:20; Heb 10:24-25).
3. For the purity of the church as a whole (1 Cor 5:6-7; Eph 5:27; Rev 21:2).
4. For the good of our corporate witness to non-Christians (Matt 5:13-16; John 13:35; Acts 5:10-14).
5. Supremely for the glory of God by reflecting His holy character (Deut 5:11; John 15:8; Eph 1:4; 1 Pet 2:12).

Section 5 – Termination of Membership

3.5 Discontinuance of membership shall be recognized by the church following:

1. Death
2. Transfer of membership to another church
3. Failure or neglect to renew Church Covenant
4. By personal request of the member.
5. Membership may be discontinued as an act of church discipline at the recommendation of the elders and with the vote of the members at any regular or special meeting of the members (see **4.2.6**).

Section 6 – Associate Membership

3.6.1 Students and others temporarily (less than 12 consecutive months) residing in Alaska who are members of a like- minded evangelical church may apply for associate membership. Qualifications are identical to those for full membership as set out above, except that home church membership must be retained. A letter of commendation will be sought from the applicant's home church.

3.6.2 Duties and privileges of associate members are the same as for other members except that: (1) when absent from Alaska for extended periods of time they are released from the responsibility to attend True North Gatherings; (2) while they will be encouraged to participate in members' meetings they will not be eligible to stand for any office.

3.6.3 Termination of associate membership as a disciplinary measure will be as it is for other members, except that the elders shall notify the pastor or elders of the home church of that termination. Associate membership will normally terminate immediately upon the ending of the period of temporary residence in Alaska.

Article 4 – Meetings

Section 1 – Corporate Worship Gatherings

4.1 Regular corporate worship shall be held weekly and other such meetings may be held throughout the week as the elders determine. True North worships corporately through prayer, reading and preaching the Scriptures, singing praises and giving generously back to God. We will also regularly celebrate believer's baptism and the Lord's Supper at the timing and direction of the elders.

Section 2 – Members’ Meetings

4.2.1 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.

4.2.2 There shall be an annual members’ meeting held prior to the start of the fiscal year to approve the annual budget by the voting membership and to conduct any other business deemed appropriate by the elders (see **4.2.6**).

4.2.3 Special members’ meetings may be called at any time by the elders or at the written request, submitted to the elders, of fifty voting members or 10% of the voting membership (whichever is greater). In the event of a satisfactory written request from the members, the elders shall call a special meeting to be held within one month of their receipt of the request.

Items that may constitute a special meeting:

1. Elder selection or dismissal
2. Deacon selection or dismissal
3. Capital, building, or indebtedness activities where the value exceeds 10 percent of the annual budget
4. Changes to the Church Constitution, Statement of Faith or Church Covenant
5. Other items the elders believe may substantially impact the direction and operation of the church’s ministry

4.2.4 All annual and special members’ meetings shall be announced at all regular corporate worship meetings of the church at least two weeks preceding such meetings. No business may take place if such notifications have not been made.

4.2.5 For all members’ meetings, a quorum shall consist of a minimum of fifteen members or 10% of the membership (whichever is greater), sixteen years old or older. No business may take place if a quorum is not met. All members sixteen years old or older may make motions, participate in discussion, and vote.

Members less than sixteen years of age may participate in discussion only. A non-member may make presentations to the church which are informational in nature and may answer questions regarding that presentation with permission from the elders.

4.2.6 On any matter that is brought to vote, a three-fourths majority is needed for it to pass. Abstentions will not be considered as votes cast. Only votes cast by voting

members who are present at the time of the meeting will be counted unless an absentee vote is approved by the elders under special circumstances that prevent a member from attending.

4.2.7 One of the elders shall preside as moderator at all members' meetings of the church.

Article 5: Church Officers

Section 1 – Summary

5.1 Jesus Christ is the Lord and head of this church, and he rules primarily through the Scriptures. The biblical offices of the church are elders and deacons. Scripture indicates that the responsibility for shepherding and leading the church under Jesus Christ belongs to the elders.

As necessary, the Scriptures also provide for the appointment of deacons to serve the church, particularly in areas of ministry that would cause the elders to neglect their Biblical responsibilities. True North Church also recognizes the administrative positions of clerk and treasurer.

The elders shall designate the clerk and treasurer. All officers and the administrative positions of clerk and treasurer must be members of this church prior to assuming their responsibilities.

Section 2 – Elders

5.2.1 In keeping with the principles set forth in Acts 6:1-6; 1 Tim 3:1-7; 5:17; Tit 1:5-9; Jas 5:14; and 1 Pet 5:1-4, the elders oversee and administer the ministries and resources of the church.

They lead God's mission in the church by joyfully seeking the mind of Christ through the guidance of the Holy Spirit and the Word of God. The elders must eagerly engage in shepherding the flock by teaching and exhorting with sound doctrine, refuting and admonishing those who contradict the truth, caring for the church's members, and devoting themselves to prayer, to the government of the church, and to ministry.

They are responsible for examining and instructing prospective members, examining and recommending all candidates for offices, overseeing the work of the deacons and other church leaders, conducting corporate worship meetings, administering the ordinances of baptism and the Lord's Supper, equipping the membership for the work of the ministry, coordinating and promoting the ministries of the church, mobilizing the church for world missions, and overseeing church discipline.

The elders are to ensure that all who minister the word to the congregation, including outside speakers, share our fundamental convictions. Finally, elders are to live as examples to the congregation, above reproach in everything.

5.2.2 The elders shall normally be composed of no less than three men who satisfy the qualifications for the office of elder set forth in 1 Tim 3:1-7 and Tit 1:6-9. Only men may serve as elders in accord with 1 Tim 2:12 and 3:2. No elder shall hold the office of deacon or treasurer during his tenure.

5.2.3 The church shall recognize men gifted and willing to serve in this office in accordance with the constitutional provisions on elections. These men shall be received as gifts of Christ to His church and set apart as elders.

5.2.4 An elder's term of office may be terminated by resignation or dismissal. Any member with reason to believe that an elder should be dismissed should express such concern to the elders and, if need be and only afterwards, to the congregation. Any such action shall be done in accordance with the instructions in Matt 18:15-17 and 1 Tim 5:17-21. Any elder may be dismissed by a three-fourths majority vote of the voting members at any formally called members' meeting of the church.

5.2.5 An active elder may voluntarily enter a period of inactivity without compromising his qualifications for up to 12 consecutive months. Should that elder desire to reactivate within 12 months, he may do so at the discretion of the active elders without a congregational vote. Should his rest period exceed 12 consecutive months, he may reactivate at the discretion of the active elders AND with an affirmative congregational vote.

5.2.6 By definition, an active elder will be engaged in the active ministry of the office of elder as defined above. An inactive elder, though not disqualified, will suspend all congregational and organizational responsibilities for the duration of his inactivity.

An inactive elder will not: regularly attend biweekly elder meetings, vote on elder decisions, have access to detailed financial information, nor speak for or otherwise represent the active elder body.

An inactive elder will: maintain meaningful membership at True North Church, maintain the Biblical standards for eldership in his personal life, and preserve the privacy of sensitive member and church information.

5.2.7 Under certain circumstances (see 5.2.8) an elder may permanently exchange the office of elder for the office of elder emeritus. The office of elder emeritus is an extension of the office of elder using the same Biblical qualifications (see 5.2.2).

An elder emeritus is welcome at all elder meetings, continues to hold membership at True North Church (see 3.1), and may administer the ordinances (see 5.2.1), however an elder emeritus is not considered to be a voting member of the elders. An elder emeritus is not counted as an elder for the sake of establishing a voting quorum of active elders.

5.2.8 An elder may enter the office of elder emeritus for any of the following reasons:

- A. Natural aging
- B. Poor physical health
- C. Poor mental health

5.2.9 An elder may enter the office of elder emeritus based on the recommendation of the active elders of True North Church followed by an affirmative congregational vote of the church. All normal voting requirements for elders (see 5.2.11) and the congregation (see 4.2.6) apply. The elder being voted upon is welcome to vote as an elder [if active at the time of the vote (see 5.2.6)] as well as a member of the congregation.

5.2.10 The elders may establish paid and non-paid ministry staff positions and teams to assist them in fulfilling their responsibilities. A paid or volunteer staff position does not in and of itself constitute an elder's position.

All ministerial staff shall meet the biblical qualifications for deacons. The elders may also hire and fire non-ministerial staff or delegate that responsibility on a case-by-case basis. The elders shall have primary responsibility for the employment, supervision, and evaluation of staff members. The outworking of this responsibility may, on a case-by-case basis, be delegated to deacons or another staff member.

5.2.11 The elders must have at least a two-thirds approval among themselves before submitting matters to a congregational vote.

Section 3 – Deacons & Deaconesses

5.3.1 The office of deacon is described in 1 Tim 3:8-13 (cf. Acts 6:1-7). The church shall recognize, in accordance with the constitutional provisions on elections, men and women who are giving of themselves in service to the church, and who possess particular gifts of service (Rom 16:1).

These members shall be received as gifts of Christ to His church and set apart as deacons. The number of deacons shall be determined by the needs of the ministry and the call and qualifications of church members.

5.3.2 Deacons and deaconesses shall serve by caring for members of the congregation, attending to the accommodations for public worship, assisting and visiting those in need, supporting new and existing ministries of the church, and distributing financial resources for those in need through the benevolence fund. The deacons may be organized in the most fitting way to accomplish the mission of the church.

5.3.3 A deacon's term of office may be terminated by resignation or dismissal or when the elders determine that a particular deacon's area of ministry is no longer needed. Any member with reason to believe that a deacon should be dismissed should express such concern to the elders and, if need be only afterwards, to the congregation.

Any such action shall be done in accordance with the instructions in Matt 18:15-17 and other relevant biblical texts. Any deacon may be dismissed by a three-fourths majority vote of the voting members at any formally called members' meeting of the church.

Section 4 – Treasurer

5.4 The treasurer, who shall not be an active elder, or paid church staff member, shall ensure that all funds and securities of the church are properly secured in such banks, financial institutions, or depositories as appropriate.

The treasurer shall also be responsible for presenting regular reports of the account balances, revenues and expenses of the church at each members' meeting. The responsibility may be delegated with the approval of the elders.

The treasurer shall also ensure that full and accurate accounts of receipts and disbursements are kept in books belonging to the church, and that adequate controls are implemented to guarantee that all funds belonging to the church are appropriately handled by any officer, employee, or agent of the church.

The treasurer shall render to the elders annually, or whenever they may require it, an account of all transactions as treasurer and of the financial condition of the church. If the church employs a person or persons to carry out some of these duties then the treasurer shall provide accountability and oversight in those areas.

The treasurer shall be nominated by the elders and elected by the congregation to serve a term of two years. In the absence or incapacity of the treasurer the elders shall appoint a member to perform the duties of the church treasurer.

Section 5 – Clerk

5.5.1 It shall be the duty of the clerk to record the minutes of all regular and special members' meetings of the church, to preserve an accurate roll of the membership, and to render reports as requested by the pastor, the elders, the deacons, or the church. The clerk shall be nominated by the elders and elected by the congregation to serve a term of one year. In the absence or incapacity of the clerk the elders shall appoint a member to perform the duties of the church clerk.

5.5.2 For purposes of compliance with the nonprofit corporation laws, the clerk shall serve as the secretary of the corporation. The church clerk shall ensure that dated copies of the most recent revision of this constitution shall be available for all church members.

Article 6 – Election of Elders and Deacons

Section 1 – Principles

6.1 The process for church elections shall be interpreted and carried out to fulfill the following principles:

1. Substantial prayer, both individually and corporately, shall be an integral part of the election process.
2. Nominations shall proceed with the support of the elders (pastors).
3. All candidates for church office shall be treated with the grace, kindness, and honesty appropriate in evaluating fellow members.
4. The election process shall express that spirit of mutual trust, openness, and loving consideration, which is appropriate within the body of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Section 2 – Election of Elders and Deacons

6.2.1 The election of elders and deacons shall be held on a need basis at the annual members' meeting or at a special members' meeting called by the elders throughout the year. The elders should seek recommendations and involvement from the general membership in the nomination process.

6.2.2 Names of nominees to serve as elders and deacons shall be presented by the elders and made known to the church at all regular corporate worship meetings at least two weeks preceding the vote. Any member with reason to believe that a nominated candidate is unqualified for an office should express such concern to the elders.

Members intending to speak in opposition to a candidate should express their objection to the elders as far in advance as possible before the relevant members' meeting at which the church votes on the candidates.

6.2.3 Nominees must receive a three-fourths majority vote in order to be elected. The persons elected shall assume their respective offices at the beginning of the fiscal year (unless another date has been specifically designated). Elections to fill any need that may occur during the course of the year may be held at any members' meeting, upon recommendation of the elders.

6.2.4 For the office of deacon and deaconess, the church will be called upon to reaffirm them after three years of service for a second three-year term. After they have served two consecutive three-year terms, they may only be re-appointed after at least a one-year sabbatical.

Article 7 – Indemnification

Section 1 – Mandatory Indemnification

7.1 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 the person had no reasonable cause to believe his or her conduct was unlawful.

Section 2 – Permissive Indemnification

7.2 At the discretion 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

7.3 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 8 – Dispute Resolution

8.1 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., Matt 18:15–20; 1 Cor 6:1–8), the church shall require its members to resolve

conflict among themselves according to biblically based principles, without reliance on the secular courts.

Consistent with its call to peacemaking, the church shall encourage the use of biblically-based principles and the avoidance of suits of law or equity to resolve disputes between itself and those outside the church, whether Christian or non-Christian and whether individuals or corporate entities. The elders shall adopt policies and procedures to effect these requirements and aspirations.

Article 9 – Amendments

9.1 The Statement of Faith and Church Covenant may be amended by a three-fourths majority vote at a members' meeting.

9.2 This Constitution may be amended by a three-fourths majority vote at a members' meeting.

9.3 All proposed amendments to the Statement of Faith, the Church Covenant, and the Constitution must be offered in writing at least thirty days prior to the members' meetings at which they are submitted to a vote and shall be announced at all regular corporate worship meetings at least two weeks preceding such votes.