



## CONSTITUTION

(Approved 4/13/2024)

### ARTICLE I. NAME

The name of this organization shall be **New Hope Community Church of Potsdam, NY**. This name can be changed only in accordance with the laws of the State of New York.

### ARTICLE II. PURPOSE

The purpose of this Church shall be to worship God and to promote the interests and ministry of the Kingdom of God and the Body of Christ in Northern New York and throughout the world. This purpose may manifest itself in church planting and establishing social and educational ministries.

### ARTICLE III. BASIS OF FAITH

**Sec.1. SCRIPTURE** We believe in the 66 canonized and commonly recognized books of the Old and New Testaments as verbally inspired by God and inerrant in the original writing, and that they are of supreme and final authority in faith and life (2 Tim. 3:16; 2 Pet. 1:19-21; 1 Thess. 2:13).

**Sec.2. THE GODHEAD** We believe in the one triune God, eternally existing in three persons, Father, Son and Holy Spirit co-eternal in being, co-equal in power and glory, and having the same attributes and perfections (Deut. 6:4; Matt. 28:19; 2 Cor. 13:14).

#### Sec.3. THE PERSON AND WORK OF CHRIST

(a) **NATURE OF CHRIST** We believe that Jesus Christ is the eternal Son of God, that He was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the virgin Mary, and is true God and true man (John 1:2,14; Luke 1:35).

(b) **WORK OF CHRIST** We believe the Lord Jesus Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, as a representative and substitution sacrifice; and that our justification is made sure by His literal, bodily resurrection from the dead (1 Cor. 15:3-4; 1 Pet. 2:24; Eph. 1:7; Rom. 4:25).

(c) **HEADSHIP OF CHRIST** We believe that the Lord Jesus Christ ascended to heaven, where He is now exalted at the right hand of God, and ministers as our High Priest and Intercessor (Acts 1:9-10; Heb. 4:14; 7:25; 1 John 2:1-2).

**Sec.4. PERSON AND WORK OF THE HOLY SPIRIT** We believe the Holy Spirit is a person who convicts the world of sin, and who regenerates, indwells, enlightens and empowers the saved (John 16:8,13-15; 1 Cor. 3:16; Eph. 1:14).

**Sec.5. DEPRAVITY** We believe that man was created in the image of God, that he sinned and thereby incurred not only physical death, but also spiritual death, which is separation from God; and that all human beings are born with a sinful nature, and become sinners in thought, word and deed (Genesis 1:26-27; Rom. 3:23; Rom. 5:14; Eph. 2:1-3).

**Sec.6. SALVATION** We believe that eternal salvation is solely the gift of God, and that all who in sincere contrition repent of their sins, believe the gospel and receive the Lord Jesus Christ by faith alone are born again of the Holy Spirit (John 3:3-5; Titus 3:5; Acts 2:38; Eph. 2:8-10).

**Sec.7. SECOND COMING** We believe in the personal, bodily, imminent return of Christ in the air for His Saints (Matt. 24:30-31; 1 Thess. 4:13-18).

**Sec.8. JUDGMENT AND THE ETERNAL STATE** We believe in the bodily resurrection of the just and the unjust, the everlasting conscious blessedness of the saved, and the everlasting conscious punishment of the lost (John 5:28-29; Matt. 25:46; Rev. 20:11-15).

#### **ARTICLE IV. MEMBERSHIP**

**Sec.1. ACTIVE MEMBERS** Any person who owns Christ as Lord and Savior, agrees with the New Hope Community Constitutional Basis of Faith, has a primary commitment to the New Hope Community Church as a local body of Christ, and has met with the elders to discuss the privileges and responsibilities of membership shall be considered an Active Member.

**Sec.2. STUDENT MEMBERS** College students may become Student Members of the church with all the rights, privileges and responsibilities of Active Members, except they may not serve as officers of the church or petition the Church Council for the removal of an elder. Student members may retain their membership in a home church. Student memberships expire when the student leaves college. Student members, who leave school but remain in the Potsdam area, may ask the elders to change their membership status to Active Members.

**Sec.3. INACTIVE MEMBERS** Members who anticipate being away from the Potsdam area for more than two months, or who have willfully absented themselves from regular fellowship with us for a period of two consecutive months, will be placed on the Inactive Member list by the elders. Inactive Members may not vote at congregational meetings. Inactive Members may be returned to Active Member status upon their return and meeting with an elder to reaffirm their commitment to New Hope Community Church's Basis of Faith.

**Sec.4. CHURCH DISCIPLINE** In accordance with Scripture, all members shall be subject to church discipline (including excommunication) for failure to repent of immoral behavior or doctrinal error (Matt. 18:15-17; Rom. 16:17; 2 John 10,11; 1 Tim. 1:19,20; Gal. 6:1).

**Sec.5. REVIEW OF MEMBERSHIP** Each year prior to the Annual Business Meeting the elders shall review the roster of Active, Student, and Inactive Members to determine if any changes in status should be made. Before any changes are made, the elders shall consult with the affected individuals.

#### **ARTICLE V. GOVERNANCE**

**Sec.1. ELDERS** Christ has placed elders in the Church to superintend the growth and harmony of the body. Their job is to instruct and guide members of the body of Christ so that each member might perform his ministry to the Church and the world to his greatest potential. The terms pastor, elder and bishop are seen as equivalent in the New Testament, each emphasizing different aspects of the same office (Acts 20:17, 28). Requirements for the office are found in 1 Tim. 3:1-7 and Titus 1:7-9. It is the policy of New Hope Community Church that the office of Elder is restricted to males. In addition to their responsibilities for teaching and spiritual guidance, the elders take a leading role in developing policy to guide the various ministries of the congregation.

**(a) BOARD OF ELDERS** All salaried and non-salaried elders constitute the Board of Elders.

**(b) EQUALITY OF ELDERS** The vote of each elder has equal authority and equal weight.

**(c) LEAVE OF ABSENCE** An elder may take a short-term leave of absence from active service in the office when he feels the need. The terms of this leave shall be arranged in consultation with the Board of Elders and Church Council.

**(d) RESIGNATION.** An elder may resign for personal reasons.

**(e) REMOVAL OF ELDERS**

**(1) REMOVAL BY THE ELDERS** If an elder has serious charges raised against him (Ezek. 34:1-16; 1 Tim. 3:1-7; 1 Tim. 5:19-21; Titus 1:6-9; 1 Peter 5:2-3), the other elders shall confront him in love. If the issue is not satisfactorily resolved, a majority of the other elders may require his resignation. If the individual forced to resign desires to remain within the congregation, the remaining elders should continue to counsel with him in order to restore him to effective ministry within the congregation. When the elders are satisfied that the goal has been achieved, the congregation should be informed. At that point the elders will decide if the person restored is eligible to hold office in the congregation following the election procedures outlined in Article VI.

**(2) REMOVAL BY THE CONGREGATION.** Upon petition to the Church Council by 10 Active Members of the congregation or by one-tenth of the regular members of the congregation (whichever is larger), the Church Council shall call a Special Congregational Meeting to reconsider the congregation's call to an elder. After discussion, a vote will be taken by secret ballot to reaffirm or revoke the call. The elder must receive at least two-thirds of the votes cast in order to retain his position.

**Sec.2. DEACONS** The office of Deacon was ordained by God to minister to the needs of the people. They are to complement, support, and supplement the work of the elders. The function of a deacon or deaconess is to incorporate and manifest the spiritual content of the gospel in and through tangible service. This service should be to the Church, and with the Church to the world. Requirements for the office of Deacon are found in 1 Tim 3:8-13.

**(a) LEAVE OF ABSENCE** A deacon may take a leave of active service in the office when he/she feels the need. The terms of this leave shall be arranged in consultation with the Church Council.

**(b) RESIGNATION** A deacon may resign for personal reasons.

**(c) REMOVAL BY THE ELDERS** If a deacon has serious charges raised against him/her (1 Tim. 3:8-12), the elders shall confront him/her in love. If the issue is not satisfactorily resolved, a majority of the elders may require his/her resignation. If the individual forced to resign desires to remain within the congregation, the elders should continue to counsel with him/her in order to restore him/her to effective ministry within the congregation. When the elders are satisfied that the goal has been achieved, the congregation should be informed. At that point the elders will decide if the person restored is eligible to hold office in the congregation following the election procedures outlined in Article VI.

**Sec.3. MINISTRY HEADS** Ministry Heads oversee the various ministries of our church. Details of their service, including their appointment, term of service and oversight are outlined in the Ministry Head Policy, written by the elders and approved by the Church Council.

**Sec.4. MINISTRY INTERNS** Ministry Interns are usually considering full-time vocational ministry. The purpose of their internship is to further prepare & equip them for ministry under the oversight of the elders. Internships will normally not last longer than one year. Ministry Interns shall participate in all Church Council meetings as non-voting members. Details of their service, including their appointment, term of service and oversight are outlined in the Ministry Intern Policy, written by the elders and approved by the Church Council.

**Sec.5. MINISTRY STAFF** Ministry Staff serve in an indefinite, salaried position entrusted with significant and specific ministry responsibilities, as determined by the church elders. Ministry Staff may be asked to participate in church council meetings but shall not have a vote, unless also serving as a deacon.

Details of their service, including their appointment, term of service and oversight are outlined in the Ministry Staff Policy, written by the elders and approved by the Church Council.

**Sec.6. CHURCH COUNCIL** The Church Council consists of the elders and deacons as voting members, and any Interns as non-voting members. The Church Council is responsible for coordinating and implementing the ministry and affairs of the Church under the leadership of the elders.

(a) **MEETINGS** The Church Council will normally meet once a month and must meet at least once a quarter. Additional meetings may be called upon the request of two members of the Church Council. All Church Council meetings are open to members of the congregation.

(b) **ORGANIZATION OF CHURCH COUNCIL** At its first meeting after the congregation's Annual Business Meeting, the Church Council shall elect from among its members a President, Vice President, and Secretary. Those elected shall serve for a period of one year. If the President, Vice President, or Secretary leaves the Church Council before the next Annual Business Meeting, the Church Council shall elect one of its members to fill the vacant position. Individuals may be re-elected to the same position as long as they are members of the Church Council. The Presiding Elder may not serve as President of the Church Council.

(1) **DUTIES OF THE PRESIDENT** The President of the Church Council shall chair meetings of the Council, the Annual Business Meeting and any Special Congregational Meetings. The President shall consult with the Presiding Elder to develop the agenda for these meetings.

(2) **DUTIES OF THE VICE PRESIDENT** Whenever the President is unable to chair a meeting, the Vice President will take his or her place.

(3) **DUTIES OF THE SECRETARY** The Secretary of the Church Council will take minutes of Church Council meetings, of the Annual Business Meeting and any Special Congregational Meetings.

(c) **BUDGET CHANGES** The Church Council shall have authority to increase or decrease the budget for any ministry by up to one-tenth of its total amount. Any changes in a budget line greater than one-tenth must be approved by the congregation at a Special Congregational Meeting.

**Sec.7. ELIGIBILITY FOR ELECTION** Only Active Members shall be eligible to serve on the Church Council.

**Sec.8. TEMPORARY APPOINTMENT OF AN ADVISER TO THE BOARD OF ELDERS** While there is no required number of elders, it is desirable to have at least three. In the event that the number of active elders falls below three, the Church Council may elect from its membership a person to serve as an adviser with the elders until a third elder is ordained. The adviser shall participate in all official meetings of the elders, but shall not have a vote. The advisor will not be present when private personal issues are discussed.

## **ARTICLE VI. ELECTIONS**

### **Sec. 1. PRESIDING ELDER**

(a) **ROLE** The Presiding Elder will lead and coordinate the other elders in their joint task of equipping the members of the congregation to do the work of the ministry.

(b) **SALARY** Normally the Presiding Elder will receive a salary for his work.

(c) **PERIOD OF CALL** The Presiding Elder shall be called for an indefinite period unless a definite time is stipulated at the time he is called by the church.

(d) **SEARCH PROCEDURES** If the office of Presiding Elder becomes vacant, the elders may appoint a

Candidate Search Committee to solicit and review applications from Scripturally qualified men to become the Presiding Elder. Initially the elders and the Candidate Search Committee shall consider whether there are any qualified candidates among current members or alumni of New Hope Community Church. They will also ask alumni to recommend possible candidates. The Candidate Search Committee may also pursue other avenues to identify qualified candidates. After their review of the applications, the Candidate Search Committee shall present its findings to the elders.

- (e) **CANDIDATE SELECTION AND INTERVIEW** The elders, after prayerful inquiry, with judicious counsel, and full consideration being given to the leading of the Holy Spirit, shall present their leading candidate to the congregation. The elders will ensure that the congregation has an opportunity to hear the candidate preach and to meet the candidate and his family.
- (f) **CONGREGATIONAL VOTE** If the candidate has the unanimous support of the elders, a special congregational meeting shall be held to consider calling the candidate to the position of Presiding Elder. The candidate must receive at least three-quarters of the yes and no votes cast.
- (g) **MEMBERSHIP** Upon his accepting the position as Presiding Elder, the candidate shall automatically become an Active Member of the church if he is not already one.

**Sec.2. OTHER SALARIED ELDERS** The congregation may decide to add additional salaried elders to the staff of the church.

- (a) **PERIOD OF CALL** Each salaried elder shall be called for an indefinite period unless a definite time is stipulated at the time he is called by the church.
- (b) **SEARCH COMMITTEE** At such time as the Board of Elders decides that an additional salaried position should be created, they may appoint a Candidate Search Committee to solicit and review applications from Scripturally qualified men to fill the new position. Initially the elders and the Candidate Search Committee shall consider whether there are any qualified candidates among current members or alumni of New Hope Community Church. They will also ask alumni to recommend possible candidates. The Candidate Search Committee may also pursue other avenues to identify qualified candidates. After their review of the applications, the Candidate Search Committee shall present its findings to the elders.
- (c) **CANDIDATE SELECTION AND INTERVIEW** The elders, after prayerful inquiry, with judicious counsel, and full consideration being given to the leading of the Holy Spirit, shall present their leading candidate to the congregation. The elders will ensure that the congregation has an opportunity to meet the candidate and his family.
- (d) **CONGREGATIONAL VOTE** If the candidate has the unanimous support of the elders, a special congregational meeting shall be held to consider calling the candidate to the designated position. The candidate must receive at least three-quarters of the yes and no votes cast.
- (e) **MEMBERSHIP** Upon his accepting a position, the candidate shall automatically become an Active Member of the church if he is not already one.

**Sec.3. NON-SALARIED ELDERS**

- (a) **NOMINATION** Nominations for the office of Elder may be made only by those who currently hold the office. Individuals who wish to serve as an elder are encouraged to consult with the currently serving elders concerning their desire. Members of the congregation who wish to recommend someone for the office of Elder should consult with one of the currently serving elders.
- (b) **INTERVIEW** The elders will interview the person nominated and consider his qualifications. The

nominee must be approved by all the elders.

- (c) **ELECTION** When a person has been recognized as qualified to be an elder by the other elders, this decision will be reported to the congregation at the main worship meeting for two consecutive weeks. If by the third week no one has shown just cause to the elders why this person is not qualified to be an elder, the person nominated shall have his name presented for election. The nominee must receive at least three-quarters of the yes and no votes cast.
- (d) **TERM OF SERVICE AND RE-ELECTION** Non-Salaried Elders shall be elected for a term of three years. After serving one term, an elder may be nominated by the Board of Elders to serve a second consecutive three year term. He will be presented to the congregation for election following the steps outlined in ART.VI.Sec.3. (c) After serving two terms, an elder must take a one year sabbatical from service as an Elder. At the end of the sabbatical year he is eligible for re-election as an elder.
- (e) **SCHEDULING AN ELECTION.** Elections for non-salaried elders will normally take place during the Annual Business Meeting. If an elder is elected at some time other than during the Annual Business Meeting, the partial year to the next Annual Business Meeting shall count as his first year of service.

#### **Sec.4. DEACONS**

- (a) **NOMINATIONS** Nominations for deacon positions shall *be requested* two months prior to the Annual Business Meeting. Nominations are to be submitted to the Church Council within one month from the date nominations are first called.
- (b) **INTERVIEW** Each nominee shall be interviewed jointly by a deacon and an elder to determine his/her Biblical qualifications for the office of Deacon. All decisions of the interviewers shall be subject to the unanimous approval of the elders.
- (c) **NOTIFICATION** Each nominee shall be notified within *seven* days of the interview whether he/she does or does not qualify for the office of Deacon as set forth in Scripture. If a nominee does not qualify, he/she is to be informed personally by an elder.
- (d) **ELECTION** To be elected a candidate must receive at least three quarters of the yes and no votes cast.
- (e) **TERM OF SERVICE** A deacon shall be elected for a term of three years and is eligible to be re-elected for a second three- year term. After serving two terms, a deacon must take a sabbatical from service on the Church Council and as a deacon. At the end of the sabbatical year he/she is eligible for re-election as a deacon.
- (f) **NUMBER OF DEACONS** While there is no required number of deacons, it is desirable to have at least three in addition to the Treasurer.

**Sec.5. TREASURER** The Treasurer serves as a deacon and as a member of the Church Council. All the provisions of ARTICLE VI Sec. 4 apply to the nomination, election and service of the Treasurer. If the Treasurer is not available to perform the duties entrusted to them (*e.g.* sabbatical, extended illness or family emergency) the Church Council may select an Interim Treasurer from among Active Church Members. If the Interim Treasurer is not a Church Council member, they will attend Church Council meetings to give the treasurer's report as a non-voting member.

### **ARTICLE VII BY-LAWS**

**Sec.1. OFFICERS** The officers of the church are the serving elders and deacons.

**Sec.2. ANNUAL BUSINESS MEETING** The Annual Business Meeting will be held during the month of April. Activity and financial reports for the preceding year will be presented, along with plans, goals and



budgets for the upcoming year. Budgets will be approved or modified by the congregation at the Annual Business Meeting.

**Sec.3. SPECIAL MEETINGS** A special meeting of the Church may be called by the Board of Elders, the Church Council, or on the written request to the Church Council of at least ten Active Members of the congregation or by one-tenth of the Active Members of the congregation (whichever is larger). The elders shall cause notice of the time, place and business to be transacted, to be publicly read by the Presiding Elder or any member of the Church Council at a regular meeting of the congregation for public worship on the two successive Sundays immediately preceding such a meeting.

**Sec.4. QUORUM** No business may be transacted at any Special or Annual Business Meeting without a quorum present. A quorum shall consist of at least one-half of the elders plus a simple majority (including the elders) of the Active and Student Members of the congregation.

**Sec.5. REQUIREMENTS FOR DECISIONS** At all Special and Annual Business Meetings decisions shall be reached by a simple majority of the Active and Student Members voting yes or no (including elders) and a simple majority of the elders present except as noted in other parts of this Constitution and By-Laws.

**Sec.6. VOTING** Members must be present at a congregational meeting in order to vote. Absentee and proxy votes are not allowed.

**Sec.7. ABSTENTIONS** Members may abstain from voting on any particular issue, but only yes or no votes will be counted when determining whether the constitutional requirement needed to pass a proposal has been met. By definition, an abstention is not a vote, and thus is not counted in the total.

**Sec.8. ELIGIBLE VOTERS** All Active and Student Members who are in good standing at the time of the meeting are eligible to vote at the Annual Business Meeting and Special Congregational Meetings.

**Sec.9. AMENDMENTS OF THE CONSTITUTION AND BY-LAWS** The Constitution and By-Laws of the Church may be amended at the Annual Business Meeting or at a Special Congregational Meeting by a two-thirds vote of the Active and Student Members voting, plus a unanimous vote of the elders present. Copies of the proposed changes should be made available for all who desire them at least two weeks prior to the meeting called to discuss and vote on the proposed changes.

**Sec.10. SALARY VOTES** Any vote to establish or change the salary of a staff member or that of an intern requires the approval of at least three-quarters of the Active and Student Members voting yes or no. The elders must be unanimous in their support of the proposal or it cannot pass.

**Sec.11. SECRET BALLOT** All votes to elect elders and deacons shall be taken by secret ballot. All votes to set or change the salary of any staff person shall be taken by secret ballot.

**Sec.12. CHURCH COUNCIL DECISIONS** A majority of the elders must be present at a Church Council meeting for decisions to be reached. A unanimous vote of the elders present shall override a decision of the Church Council.

**Sec.13. DISPOSITION OF PROPERTY**

(a) **SCHISM** In case of schism within the congregation, all property shall go to that group which adheres to the adopted Constitution of this Church.

(b) **DISSOLUTION OF CONGREGATION** In the event of the dissolution of this organization, one-half of the property shall be apportioned to the agencies (foreign mission and others) which received regular contributions from this Church in the last fiscal year. The amounts will be in direct proportion to that year's contribution to that agency. The distribution of the other half of the property shall be decided at the same time as the dissolution of this organization. This decision will be made by the members of the congregation on

recommendation from the Church Council.

Current Version