

# CONSTITUTION

## Covenant Hope Church

Dubai, United Arab Emirates

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### Preamble

Since it pleased Almighty God, by His Holy Spirit, to call certain of His servants to unite here in March 2017, under the name Covenant Hope Church for the worship of God and the spread of the gospel of Jesus Christ, and He has sustained and prospered this work to the present day; and Whereas the elders of Covenant Hope Church having searched the Scriptures under the guidance of His Spirit, have recognized the need to constitute ourselves to more closely conform to His will for the Church in this age and prepare ourselves for greater efforts in His name; Now therefore we, Covenant Hope 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 Holy Bible and articulated in the standards set forth in the Statement of Faith and Covenant of this church.

### Article 1 – Purpose

This church exists by the grace of God, for the glory of God, which shall be the ultimate purpose in all its activities. This church glorifies God by loving Him and obeying His commands through:

- Worshipping Him;
- Equipping the saints through Bible instruction and study;
- Proclaiming the gospel of Jesus Christ through preaching and personal evangelism, and any other means consistent with the teachings of Holy Scripture;
- Encouraging, supporting, and participating in missions work, local, domestic, and international; • Administering the ordinances of baptism and communion;
- Encouraging Biblical fellowship among believers;
- Serving other individuals, families, and churches by providing for physical, emotional, and spiritual needs, in the name of Jesus Christ;
- Calling fellow churches to biblical faithfulness and purity through instruction and encouragement about the nature of the local church.

### Article 2 – Membership

#### Section 1 – Qualifications

*Clause 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, and who wholeheartedly believes in the Christian faith as revealed in the Bible.

**Clause 2** - 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.

### **Section 2 – Admission of Members**

**Clause 1** - 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 such other evidence, as the elders deem appropriate.

**Clause 2** - To be admitted into church membership, applicants shall be recommended by the elders for admission and accepted by a simple majority vote of the members present at any regular or special meeting of the members.

### **Section 3 – Duties and Privileges of Membership**

**Clause 1** - 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, consistent with God's leading and with the gifts, time, and material resources each has received from God.

**Clause 2** – Only members of this congregation shall be entitled to serve in the ministries of the church; non-members may serve on an ad-hoc basis with the approval of the elders. Non-members may not lead any ministry or hold any office of the church. Notwithstanding, non-members may serve the church for purposes of administration and professional consultation.

**Clause 3** - 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 such other matters as may be submitted to a vote.

### **Section 4 – On Church Discipline**

**Clause 1** - Any member consistently neglectful of his or her duties or guilty of conduct by which the name of our Lord Jesus Christ may be dishonored, and so opposing the welfare of the church, shall be subject to the admonition of the elders and the discipline of the church, according to the instructions of our Lord in Matthew 18:15–17 and the example of scripture.

**Clause 2** - Church discipline, then, should ordinarily be contemplated after individual private admonition has failed.

**Clause 3**- Church discipline can include admonition by the elders or congregation, removal from office, and excommunication (see Matthew 18:15–17; 2 Thessalonians 3:14–15; 1 Timothy 5: 19– 20; 1 Corinthians 5: 4–5).

**Clause 4** - The purpose of such discipline should be:

- For the *repentance, reconciliation, and spiritual growth of the individual disciplined* (see Proverbs 15: 5; 29: 15; I Corinthians 4:14; Ephesians 6:4; I Timothy 3:4–5; Hebrews 12:1–11; Psalm 119:115; 141: 5; Proverbs 17: 10; 25: 12; 27: 5; Ecclesiastes 7:5; Matthew 7:26–27; 18:15–17; Luke 17:3; Acts 2:40; I Corinthians 5:5; Galatians 6: 1–5; II Thessalonians 3:6, 14–15; I Timothy 1: 20; Titus 1:13–14; James 1 22);

- For the *instruction in righteousness and good of other Christians*, as an example to them (see Proverbs 13: 20; Romans 15: 14; I Corinthians 5: 11; 15: 33; Colossians 3: 16; I Thessalonians 5: 14 [note this is written to the whole church, not just to leaders]; I Timothy 5: 20; Titus 1: 11; Hebrews 10: 24–25)
- For the *purity of the church* as a whole (see I Corinthians 5: 6–7; II Corinthians 13: 10; Ephesians 5: 27; II John 10; Jude 24; Revelation 21: 2);
- For the *good of our corporate witness* to non–Christians (see Proverbs 28: 7; Matthew 5: 13–16; John 13: 35; Acts 5: 1–14; Ephesians 5: 11; I Timothy 3: 7; II Peter 2: 2; I John 3: 10);
- And supremely for *the glory of God* by reflecting His holy character (see Deuteronomy 5: 11; I Kings 11: 2; II Chronicles 19: 2; Ezra 6: 21; Nehemiah 9: 2; Isaiah 52: 11; Ezekiel 36: 20; Matthew 5: 16; John 15: 8; 18: 17, 25; Romans 2: 24; 15: 5–6; II Corinthians 6: 14–7: 1; Ephesians 1: 4; 5: 27; I Peter 2: 12).

### **Section 5 – Termination of Membership**

**Clause 1** - The church shall recognize the termination of a person’s membership after he or she has voluntarily resigned or joined with another church.

**Clause 2** - Membership may also be terminated as an act of church discipline (ordinarily, but not necessarily, at the recommendation of the elders) upon the vote of at least two-thirds of the members present at any regular or special meeting of the members. Church discipline is ordinarily, but not necessarily, considered at the recommendation of the elders.

**Clause 3** - The church shall have authority to refuse a member’s voluntary resignation or transfer of membership if the church intends to proceed with a process of church discipline or for any other biblical reason.

**Clause 4** - The church shall also remove a member following his or her death.

## **Article 3 - Meetings**

### **Section 1 – Worship Meetings**

**Clause 1** - Covenant Hope Church will gather regularly on Sundays for corporate worship. In addition, the church may hold semi-regular worship gatherings on other days as well.

### **Section 2 – Members’ Meetings**

**Clause 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.

**Clause 2** - There shall be a regular members’ meeting as needed and a minimum of 2 per year. No members’ meeting shall be held until the date, time, and place of such a meeting shall be announced at every public meeting of the church for at least one week immediately prior to the members’ meeting in question.

**Clause 3** - An elder designated by the elders shall preside as moderator at all members’ meetings of the church.

*Clause 4* - The elders shall see that the stated meetings of the church are regularly held and that required reports are submitted to the church by the responsible members. Provided all constitutional provisions for notification have been met, a quorum shall be understood to be met by those members present.

*Clause 5* - All votes shall be tallied based on the number of votes cast by members present.

*Clause 6* - A budget shall be approved by the membership at a members' meeting not more than three months after the start of the fiscal year. Prior to this approval and subject to the elders' discretion, expenditures may continue at the prior year's level.

*Clause 7* - At any regular or special members' meeting, officers may be elected and positions filled as needed, so long as all relevant constitutional requirements have been met. Special members' meetings may be called as required by the elders, or at the written request, submitted to the elders, of 20% of the voting membership. The date, time, and purpose of any special meeting shall be announced at all public services of the church within two weeks preceding the meeting. In the event of a written request from the members, the elders shall call a special meeting to be held within one month of their receipt of the request.

## **Article 4 – Officers**

### **Section 1 – Summary**

*Clause 1* - The Biblical offices in the church are elders and deacons, though final earthly authority is vested in the assembled congregation. All officers (other than new pastors) must be members of this church prior to assuming their responsibilities.

### **Section 2 – Elders**

*Clause 1* - The elders shall be comprised of not less than three men who satisfy the qualifications for the office of elder set forth in I Timothy 3: 1–7 and Titus 1: 6–9.

*Clause 2* - All elders must wholeheartedly affirm and believe every article of the statement of faith.

*Clause 3* - No elder shall hold the office of deacon during his tenure.

*Clause 4* – In accordance with I Timothy 2:12 and 3:2, women shall not serve as elders.

*Clause 5* – An equal or greater number of elders shall be laymen.

*Clause 6* -Subject to the will of the congregation, the elders shall oversee the ministry and resources of the church. In keeping with the principles set forth in Acts 6: 1–6 and I Peter 5: 1–4, the elders shall devote their time to prayer, the ministry of the Word (by teaching and encouraging sound doctrine), and shepherding God's flock.

*Clause 7* - The church shall recognize men gifted and willing to serve in this calling, 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. This recognition shall be reaffirmed by the church triennially. After an elder, other than the senior or associate pastor(s), has served

two consecutive three-year terms, he may only be elected to the office of elder after at least one year.

**Clause 8** - An elder's term of office may be terminated by resignation or by dismissal. Any two members with reason to believe that an elder should be dismissed should express such concern to the elders and, if need be, to the congregation. 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 Any of the elders may be dismissed by a two-thirds vote of the members at any members' meeting of the church.

**Clause 9** - The elders shall take particular responsibility to examine and instruct 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 worship services, administer the ordinances of baptism and communion, equip the membership for the work of the 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 world missions. The elders are further to ensure that all who minister the Word to the congregation share our fundamental convictions concerning the means of salvation. This includes outside speakers.

**Clause 10** - The elders may establish ministry positions or committees to assist them in fulfilling their responsibilities. The elders may also propose funding for new paid staff positions.

**Clause 11** - The membership shall approve all candidates to fill the positions of senior and associate pastor. The scope and approval of job descriptions for any staff position shall reside in the hands of those with hiring authority for that position. The elders shall have primary responsibility for the employment, supervision, and evaluation of staff members. This responsibility may, on a case-by-case basis, be delegated to another staff member.

**Clause 12** - Each year the elders, after consultation with the deacons, the deaconesses, and the membership, shall present to the church an itemized budget. This budget shall be presented for discussion at a specially-called budget meeting and called up for a vote at the following members' meeting. No money shall be solicited by or on behalf of the church or any of its ministries without the approval of the elders.

### **Section 3 – The Senior Pastor**

**Clause 1** - The senior pastor shall be an elder. He shall perform the duties of an elder described in Section 2, above, and shall be recognized by the church as particularly gifted and called to the full-time ministry of preaching and teaching.

**Clause 2** - His call shall not be subject to the triennial reaffirmation or to the term limitation set out in Article 5, Section 2, for elders. His call shall be defined as per Article 5, Section 3.

**Clause 3** - He shall preach, administer the ordinances of baptism and the Lord's Supper, and perform such other duties as usually pertain to that office, or as set forth in the constitution. In the absence or incapacity of the senior pastor the elders shall assume responsibility for his duties, any of which can be delegated.

### **Section 4 – Associate Pastors**

*Clause 1* - The church may call additional pastors whose relationship to the senior pastor is that of associate.

*Clause 2* - An associate pastor shall be an elder. He shall perform the duties of an elder described in Section 2, above, and shall be recognized by the church as particularly gifted and called to the full-time ministry of preaching and teaching.

*Clause 3* - His call shall not be subject to the triennial reaffirmation or to the term limitation set out in Article 5, Section 2, for elders. His call shall be defined as per Article 5, Section 4.

*Clause 4* - He shall assist the senior pastor in the performance of his regular duties and shall perform any other duties as usually pertain to the office of pastor, or as set forth in the constitution, or which may be specifically assigned to him by the congregation. In the absence or incapacity of the senior pastor for defined periods of time (such as sabbatical or illness), the associate pastor(s) shall assume the responsibility for his duties under the oversight of the elders.

### **Section 5 – Assistant Pastors**

*Clause 1* - The church may call additional pastors, from within the congregation only, whose relationship to the senior pastor is that of assistant.

*Clause 2* - An assistant pastor shall be an elder. He shall perform the duties of an elder described in Section 2, above, and shall be recognized by the church as particularly gifted and called to the full-time ministry of preaching and teaching.

*Clause 3* - His call shall be subject to the triennial reaffirmation and term limitation set out in Article 5, section 2, for elders. His call shall be defined as per Article 5, Section 5.

*Clause 4* - He shall assist the senior pastor and associate pastor(s) in the performance of their regular duties, and shall perform any other duties as usually pertain to the office of pastor. The elders shall define the responsibilities of the assistant pastor(s).

### **Section 6 – Pastoral Assistants**

*Clause 1* - The elders may hire additional staff to assist with pastoral ministry, designated as pastoral assistants.

*Clause 2* - These shall not be pastors, though they may be recognized as elders should they be nominated by the elders and elected by the congregation, in accordance with Article 5, Section 2.

*Clause 3* - The senior pastor shall define the responsibilities of the pastoral assistant(s) in consultation with the elders. They shall serve at the will of the elders.

### **Section 7 – Deacons & Deaconesses**

*Clause 1* - The office of deacon is described in I Timothy 3: 8–13 and 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. These members shall be received as gifts of Christ to His church and set apart as deacons and deaconesses.

*Clause 2* - Deacons and deaconesses shall care for the temporal needs of members, attend to the accommodations for public worship, and encourage and support those able to help others and those with gifts of administration.

*Clause 3* - The deacons and deaconesses shall receive, hold, and disburse a fund for benevolence, reporting on its use to the elders at their request, and reporting to the church its total receipts and total disbursements only.

*Clause 4* - The deacons and deaconesses, with the agreement of the elders, may establish unpaid administrative positions or committees of members to assist them in fulfilling their responsibilities in the church.

## **Article 5 – Elections**

### **Section 1 – Principles**

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

- Substantial prayer, both individually and corporately, should be an integral part of the election process;
- Nominations should proceed with the support of the elders;
- All candidates for church office should be treated with the grace, kindness, and honesty appropriate in evaluating fellow members;
- The election 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 – Selection of Officers**

*Clause 1* - The election of officers shall be held at a members' meeting of the church.

*Clause 2* - Names of nominees to serve as elders, and deacons shall be presented by the elders at the previous members' meeting (providing that the previous meeting occurred at least eight weeks prior), and the election shall proceed as directed by the moderator.

*Clause 3* - The elders should seek recommendations and involvement from the general membership in the nomination process. 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 church members' meeting.

*Clause 4* - The moderator shall declare elected all men receiving 75% of all votes cast for the office of elder.

*Clause 5* - For all other offices, the moderator shall declare elected all persons receiving a simple majority of all votes cast; abstentions will not be considered as votes cast.

*Clause 6* - The persons elected shall assume their respective offices upon election, unless another date has been specifically designated.

### **Section 3 – Calling of the Senior Pastor**

**Clause 1** - In the calling of any man to this position, the same basic process of calling an elder must be followed.

**Clause 2** - In addition, however, the church must be given adequate opportunity to assess the preaching gifts of any potential senior pastor 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 Statement of Faith and Church Covenant. A period of at least one month shall be given for the congregation to assess and express its judgment.

**Clause 3** - Notice of the nomination of a man to be elected to membership and called as senior pastor (which shall include, if necessary, election to membership of his wife if he is married) must be given at two Sunday services following the nomination, prior to the vote at a members' meeting.

#### **Section 4 – Calling of Associate Pastor**

**Clause 1** - In the calling of any man to the position of associate pastor, the same basic process of calling an elder must be followed.

**Clause 2** - In addition, the church must be given adequate opportunity to assess the preaching gifts of any potential associate pastor 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 Statement of Faith and Church Covenant.

**Clause 3** - Notice of the nomination of a man to be called as associate pastor (which shall include, if necessary, election to membership of him and his wife if he is married) must be given at two Sunday services following the nomination, prior to the vote at a members' meeting.

#### **Section 5 – Calling of Assistant Pastor**

The calling of any man to the position of assistant pastor requires that that man have been recognized and called by the congregation to the office of elder, according to the process described in Article 5, Section 2. Such a man may then be called by the elders to serve as assistant pastor with defined duties for a fixed period of time specified by the elders in the terms of his call.

### **Article 6 – Dispute Resolution**

**Clause 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., Matthew 18: 15–20, I Corinthians 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.

**Clause 2** - Consistent with its call to peacemaking, the church shall encourage the use of biblically based principles to resolve disputes between itself and those outside the church.

## **Article 7 – Amendments**

### **Section 1 – Amendments to the Statement of Faith and Church Covenant**

*Clause 1* - The Statement of Faith and Church Covenant may be amended by a 75% vote of the members present at a members' meeting, provided the amendment shall have been offered in writing at the previous members' meeting, and shall have been announced from the pulpit at church services two successive Sundays prior to such vote.

### **Section 2 – Amendments to the Constitution**

*Clause 1* - This constitution may be amended by a two-thirds vote of the members present and voting at a members' meeting, provided the amendment shall have been offered in writing at the previous members' meeting, and shall have been announced from the pulpit at church services two successive Sundays prior to such vote.

*Clause 2* - The revised version of this constitution, following adoption of an amendment, shall be made available to all church members.