**Hope Community Church of Racine, WI Incorporated**

**Constitution and Bylaws**

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**Hope Community Church of Racine, WI**

**Constitution and Bylaws**

**Preamble**

We, the members of Hope Community Church of Racine, WI, in order to win men, women, and children to Christ, to build up believers in Christ through the application of Scripture, and to spread the gospel, do establish and approve this Constitution and Bylaws for this Church to which we, as members, agree and voluntarily submit ourselves.

**Article I – Name**

This organization shall be known as Hope Community Church of Racine, WI Incorporated under the laws of the State of Wisconsin.

For the sake of simplicity, the terms “church, we, us” in this document refer to Hope Community Church of Racine, WI.

**Article II – Our Affiliation**

Hope Community Church of Racine, WI is an autonomous church that is affiliated with the Southern Baptist Convention and the Minnesota-Wisconsin Baptist Convention. We cooperate with other like-minded entities in keeping with our mission and purpose as the Lord leads.

**Article III – Core Beliefs**

We require all applicants for membership to adhere to the following beliefs:

Section 1 – The Holy Scriptures

We believe the Old and New Testaments of the Bible to be the inspired Word of God without error in the original writings, the complete revelation of God’s will for the salvation of men and women, and the divine and final authority of Christians in matters of faith and life. We believe that the Bible, in its totality, is the absolute Word of God. (Deuteronomy 4:1-6; Psalm 119:89; Matthew 24:35;

2 Timothy 3:16-17; 2 Peter 1:20-21; Hebrews 1:1-2).

Section 2 – God

We believe in the only one, true and living God who eternally exists in three persons: The Father, The Son, and The Holy Spirit. God is the Creator, Sustainer, Redeemer, and Ruler of the Universe. (Deuteronomy 6:4; Matthew 28:19-20; Mark 12:29; John 1:1-4; Acts 5:3-4; Romans 11:36; 2 Corinthians 13:14; Hebrews 1:1-3; Revelation 1:4-6, 4:11).

Section 3 – Jesus Christ

Christ is the eternal Son of God. In His incarnation as Jesus Christ, He was conceived of the Holy Spirit and born of the Virgin Mary. Jesus perfectly revealed and did the will of God, taking upon Himself human nature with its demands and necessities, and identifying Himself completely with mankind yet without sin. He honored the divine law by His personal obedience, and in His substitutionary death on the cross He made provision for the redemption of all from sin. He was raised from the dead with a glorified body and appeared to His disciples as the person that was with them before His crucifixion. He ascended into heaven and is now exalted at the right hand of God where His is the One Mediator, fully God, fully man, in whose Person is effected the reconciliation between God and man. He will return in power and glory to judge the world and to consummate His redemptive mission. He now dwells in all believers as the living and ever-present Lord. (Genesis 18:1ff; Isaiah 7:14; Romans 1:3-4; Colossians 1:13-20; 2-9; Hebrews 1:1-3).

Section 4 – The Holy Spirit

We believe that The Holy Spirit is Himself God, the third person of the Trinity. He was sent into the world to glorify the Lord Jesus Christ and to convict the world of sin, righteousness and judgment. At the moment of conversion, the Spirit regenerates believers, indwells them and baptizes them into the body of Christ. He is given as a guarantee of their full inheritance. He imparts gifts to each Christian, as He chooses, for the edification of the Church. He fills and empowers believers as they submit to Him. (Isaiah 61:1-3; Joel 2:28-32; John 3:3-8; John 14:16-17; John 16:7-11; John 16:14; Ephesians 1:13; 1 Corinthians 2:10-14;

1 Corinthians 12:1; Acts 1:8).

Section 5 – Angels

We believe in the real existence of angels as spiritual beings, created by God to serve and adore Him, who serve as agents of God’s purposes to humankind, and those who are heirs of salvation.

We also believe in the reality of the fallen angel, Satan, a created being who rebelled and chose to be the enemy of God and mankind. Satan has a host of demons who are also fallen angels to do his work. Although powerful in this age, Satan and his angels are doomed by the sacrificial death of Christ. More numerous are the angels of God that serve Him to accomplish His work and worship Him.

Section 6 – Man

The sacredness of human personality is evident in that God created us, male and female, in His own image, and in that Christ died for all. Therefore, every person of every race possesses full dignity and is worthy of respect and Christian love. When they disobeyed God, they were judged and punished with spiritual and physical death. (Genesis 1:26-30; Psalms 8:3-6; Acts 17:26-31; Romans 3:10-18, 23; Romans 5:12-21).

Section 7 – Salvation

We believe that salvation is by grace alone through faith in Jesus Christ and that Jesus Christ is the only way to God. Salvation involves the redemption of the whole man, and is offered freely to all who accept Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior, who by His own blood obtained eternal redemption for the believer. In its broadest sense salvation includes regeneration, justification, sanctification, and glorification. There is no salvation apart from personal faith in Jesus Christ as Lord. (John 3:16-18, 36; John 14:6; Acts 4:12; Romans 10:1-4; Ephesians 2:8-10).

Section 8 – Death

1. We believe that death in the Bible means separation, not annihilation. We believe that the Bible speaks of three forms of death:
2. Physical death – which is separation of soul and spirit from the body. (Genesis 35:18; 1 Kings 17:21-22; Luke 8:54-55; James 2:26; Revelation 6:9).
3. Spiritual death – which is separation of man from God by man’s sins. (Isaiah 59:1-2; Matthew 8:22; Ephesians 2:1, 5; Colossians 2:13; 1 Timothy 5:6).
4. Eternal death or second death – which is eternal separation of man from God. (Revelation 20:6; 14; 21:8).

2. We believe that at death the soul of the saved person immediately passes into the presence of Jesus Christ and remains there in conscious bliss until the resurrection of the body at Christ’s coming; after which, both soul and body are reunited and remain with Jesus Christ forever. (Ecclesiastes 12:7; Luke 23:43; 2 Corinthians 5:8; Philippians 1:23; 1 Thessalonians 4:16-17; Revelation 6:9-10).

3. We also believe that at death, the soul of the unsaved person immediately passes into Hades in conscious misery until the final judgment of the unsaved, which takes place at the Great White Throne at the close of the Millennium. At this time both soul and body of the unsaved are reunited and cast into the Lake of Fire, not for annihilation, but to be tormented forever. (Luke 16:19-31; Revelation 20:11-15).

Section 9 – The Return of Jesus Christ

We believe in the physical, visible, imminent, and personal return of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. God, in His own time and in His own way, will bring the world to its appropriate end. According to His promise, Jesus Christ will return personally and visibly in gory to the earth; the dead will be raised; and Christ will judge all men in righteousness. The unrighteous will be consigned to Hell, the place of everlasting punishment. The righteous in their resurrected and glorified bodies will receive their reward and will dwell forever in Heaven with the Lord. (Luke 12:40; 1 Corinthians 15:51-58; 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18; 1 Timothy 6:14; Titus 2:13).

Section 10 – Church Ordinances

We believe that the Believer’s Baptism (Water Baptism) and the Lord’s Supper are two Church Ordinances that are to be observed throughout the Church age. We believe in water baptism by immersion in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. We also believe the Lord’s Supper is symbolic of the body that was given and the blood that was shed by Jesus Christ, and that as often as we visibly participate in the Lord’s Supper, we proclaim the Lord’s death until He comes. (Matthew 3:16-17; 28:19-20; Luke 22:14-20; Acts 8:36-39; 1 Corinthians 11:23-24).

Section 11 – Church

We believe the Church is a divine institution built by God and composed of baptized believers (Psalms 127:1; Matthew 16:18; John 12:32; Acts 2:47) who are united corporately to:

1. Worship God (Psalms 95:6; John 4:23-24)
2. Encourage one another (Hebrews 10:24-25)
3. Grow in grace and in the knowledge of Jesus Christ (2 Peter 3:18)
4. Observe the Church Ordinances (Acts 2:42)
5. Exercise spiritual discipline (Matthew 18:15-18)
6. Carry out the Great Commission (Matthew 28:19-20; Mark 16:15)

A New Testament Church of the Lord Jesus Christ is an autonomous local congregation of baptized believers, associated by covenant in the faith and fellowship of the gospel; observing the two ordinances of Christ, governed by His laws, exercising the gifts, rights, and privileges invested in them by His Word, and seeking to extend the gospel to the ends of the earth. Each congregation operates under the Lordship of Christ through democratic processes. In such a congregation each member is responsible and accountable to Christ as Lord. Its scriptural officers are pastors and elders. While both men and women are gifted for service in the church, the office of Pastor and Elder is limited to men as qualified by Scripture.

The New Testament speaks also of the Church as the Body of Christ which includes all of the redeemed of all the ages, believers from every tribe, and tongue, and people, and nation.

Section 12 – Marriage and Sexuality

We believe the term “marriage” has only one meaning and that is marriage sanctioned by God which joins one man and one woman in a single, exclusive union, as delineated in Scripture. We believe that God intends sexual intimacy to only occur between a man and a woman who are married to each other. We believe that God has commanded that no intimate sexual activity be engaged in outside of a marriage between a man and a woman. (Genesis 1:27-28; 2:21-25; Exodus 20:14; Matthew 19:3-6; I Corinthians 7:3-5; Ephesians 5:25-33).

We believe that any form of sexual immorality, such as adultery, fornication, homosexuality, bisexual conduct, bestiality, incest, pornography or any attempt to change one’s sex, or disagreement with one’s biological sex, is sinful and offensive to God. (Leviticus 18:22; 20:13; Romans 1:24-32; 13:13-14; I Corinthians 6:9-11; 6:18-20; 7:1-9).

We believe that God offers redemption and restoration to all who confess and forsake their sin, seeking His mercy and forgiveness through Jesus Christ. (Proverbs 28:13; I John 1:9).

We believe that every person must be afforded compassion, love, kindness, respect, and dignity. Hateful and harassing behavior or attitudes directed toward any individual are to be repudiated and are not in accord with Scripture nor the doctrines of the church. (Romans 14:10-13).

**Article IV – Membership, Employees and Volunteers**

Section 1 – New Membership

All applicants for membership to the Church shall be required to:

1. Complete the New Member’s class.
2. Submit to the Believer’s Baptism by immersion subsequent to salvation. Accommodations will be made for individuals with medical/health restrictions.
3. Agree with our Core Beliefs as referenced in Article III.
4. Live a life that gives evidence of Gospel transformation that imitates the character of Jesus Christ.

Section 2 – Membership

The membership of this Church shall be composed of individuals who are believers in the Lord Jesus Christ and affirm the Core Beliefs of the Church Constitution, and who offer evidence, by their confession and their conduct, that they are living in accordance with their affirmations and this Constitution and Bylaws, and are actively pursuing and continuing in a vital fellowship with the Lord Jesus Christ. The Council of Elders (as defined in Article V, Section 2) of the Church shall have final authority in all matters of church governance, as set forth and described in the Bylaws. (Galatians 5:22-23; Ephesians 2:10; 2 Thessalonians 3:14; 2 Timothy 2:15; Titus 2:12).

All persons who meet the requirements for membership shall be publicly presented to the Church body and extended the right hand of fellowship signifying membership. Any member may be removed from membership when that member is inactive without explanation, for a period of at least six months. All members are eligible for voting rights when they become 18 years of age and attend service regularly and contributes their time, talent or spiritual gifts and treasures to the support of the Church. (I Corinthians 12; Hebrews 10:25).

Section 3 – Associate Membership

Persons are eligible for associate membership when they meet requirements as stated in Article IV, Section 1 – New Membership. Associate membership is typically extended to those who are unable to attend regularly because of health restrictions, college enrollment, military involvement or active members who have relocated without a church home. The Council of Elders must approve all candidates for associate membership. All candidates for associate membership must agree to communicate with the respective elder of their flock to ensure accountability and continued commitment to the Church as described in Article III, Section 11.

Section 4 – Member Responsibilities

The responsibilities of Church members are summarized in the Church Covenant as follows:

1. We confess our faith in Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord, and by the power of the Holy Spirit we will order our lives according to the Scriptures. (Romans 10:9-10; James 1:22).
2. We endeavor to set Christian examples at all times to share our faith in Jesus Christ with others and to be disciple-making disciples. (Matthew 5:16; Mark 16:15; Acts 1:8; 1 Timothy 4:12; 2 Timothy 2:2; Matthew 28:20).
3. We commit to take advantage of opportunities for spiritual growth individually and together. (2 Peter 3:18).
4. We commit to contribute cheerfully and regularly to the support of the ministry. (1 Corinthians 16:1-2).
5. We commit to being actively involved, serving in church ministry using our spiritual gifts. (Romans 12:7; 1 Peter 4:10; Galatians 5:13b).
6. We commit to encourage one another, to love and to do good works, and in all things, to give our Lord Jesus Christ the preeminence. (Colossians 1:17-18; Hebrews 10:24-25).

Section 5 – Discipline of Members

Discipline must be a vital part of the local Church. The Christian faith teaches this according to Matthew 18:15-20. When a member’s conduct or doctrine is detrimental to the cause of Christ and the witness of the Church, the member will be disciplined. The Council of Elders will be responsible for addressing all disciplinary matters. Due process will be used to bring the offending member before the Council of Elders in accordance with Matthew 18:15-20, whenever necessary. The congregation will be notified, as appropriate, of any disciplinary matters at a regularly scheduled business meeting. It is required that the affected member submit to Church discipline. This discipline may result in dismissal. The purpose of Church discipline is to:

1. Protect the glory of God (Isaiah 42:8; Daniel 5:25; 1 Corinthians 10:31)
2. Protect the welfare and purity of the Church (1 Corinthians 5:3-15)
3. Bring about repentance, confession, and restoration (Galatians 6:1; 1 Corinthians 5:1-13; 1 John 1:9)
4. Foster the spiritual growth of the offending member

Section 6 – Employees and Volunteers

We believe that in order to preserve the function and integrity of the church as the local Body of Christ, and to provide a biblical role model to the church members and the community, it is imperative that all persons employed by the church in any capacity, or who serve as volunteers, should abide by and agree to the Statement on Marriage and Sexuality as set forth in Article III, Section 12 and conduct themselves accordingly. (Matthew 5:19).

**Article V – Government**

Section 1 – The Senior Pastor

1. We believe that Jesus Christ is the Head of the Church (Colossians 1:18). We believe that fervent prayer and fasting should be made to Christ to determine whom He has chosen to lead the Church. The Senior Pastor is responsible for the spiritual leadership of the church and must promote the glory of God. The term of the Senior Pastor shall continue indefinitely unless he is incapacitated, or he resigns, or is removed from office.
2. It shall be the duty and obligation of the Senior Pastor to be the primary teacher of the Word of God as contained in the Old and New Testaments and to oversee the ministry of the Church, which shall include, but not be limited to, the administration of Church Ordinances and the direction of worship services. The Senior Pastor shall also be responsible for demonstrating the relationship of the Word of God to the policies, programs and services held within the Church.
3. The Senior Pastor shall be the chief administrator of the Church. He shall be a member of the Council of Elders and eligible to hold any office on the Council of Elders, except the office of Treasurer. The Senior Pastor shall be an ex-officio member of each and every ministry, council, and committee of the Church and shall serve as Chairman of the Council of Elders. He shall be responsible for the general oversight, coordination, administration and operation of all programs and personnel of the Church.
4. It shall be the responsibility of the Senior Pastor to be the primary spokesperson of the policies, goals, direction, vision, and ministry of the Church to the members as well as the broader community at large.
5. The Council of Elders shall annually recommend the salary of the Senior Pastor. The Senior Pastor cannot vote nor be present during this salary discussion. The congregation will act on the Elders’ recommendation at the annual church budget meeting.

Section 2 – The Council of Elders

1. The Council of Elders, or their qualified appointees, shall govern the spiritual affairs of the Church and oversee the business activities. The Elders shall oversee the congregation and shall be responsible for assisting and supporting the Senior Pastor to ensure that the spiritual purposes of the Church are realized.
2. The quorum necessary to conduct the business of the Council of Elders shall be a majority of the members of the Council of Elders. There can be no quorum if less than a majority of Elders are not in attendance at a meeting. The proxy of an Elder may not constitute attendance for the purpose of a quorum.
3. The Council of Elders shall make policy decisions and shall authorize their selected appointee(s) to execute documents, contracts and other legal papers necessary to transact the business of the Church. Governing of the Church is vested in the Council of Elders; however, the Council may seek input when making decisions in order to receive the opinion and recommendation of the membership.
4. Being led by the Holy Spirit, the Council of Elders may act to terminate the services of the Senior Pastor if any of the qualifications listed in 1 Timothy 3:1-5 are violated. If the Council of Elders, at a properly held meeting, deems it necessary or desirable to remove the Senior Pastor from office, the Council of Elders, at such meeting, shall select and appoint a committee of four to inquire into, investigate, and examine the validity of the reason(s) or cause for the action *(1 Timothy 5:19-20)*. The Senior Pastor is excluded from attending the meeting of the Council of Elders called to consider the termination of the Senior Pastor. The Senior Pastor shall have no vote at such meeting either in person or by proxy. At such a meeting, the Senior Pastor’s duties shall be assumed by the Vice-Chairman of the Council of Elders, if the Senior Pastor holds the position of Chairman.
5. The Council of Elders shall allow the Senior Pastor to speak to the Council of Elders in his own defense before a vote and before any such action of removal is taken.
6. The resignation of an Elder from office shall be in writing, subscribed by him, and submitted to the Council of Elders. If personal illness, infirmity, or inability to serve, prevents the resigning Elder from fulfilling this responsibility, another Elder may act on his behalf in submitting his resignation from office.
7. Being led by the Holy Spirit, the Council of Elders may act to terminate the services of an Elder if any of the qualifications listed in 1 Timothy 3:1-5 are violated. If the Council of Elders, at a properly held meeting, deem it necessary or desirable to remove an Elder from office, the Council of Elders, at such meeting, shall select and appoint a committee of four to inquire into, investigate, and examine the validity of the reason(s) or cause for the action *(1 Timothy 5:19-20)*. The Senior Pastor or another Elder shall chair the committee. The Elder who is the subject of such inquiry shall not have the power to cast a vote at any meeting relating to such inquiry or removal from office.
8. The Council of Elders shall allow the Elder to speak to the Council of Elders in his own defense before a vote and before any such action of removal is taken. After such inquiry, the committee shall make a written report of its recommended action to the Council of Elders. If the committee recommends removal of the investigated Elder from office, a two-thirds vote of the Elders, present at a specially called meeting to act on the recommendation of the committee, shall be necessary to remove such Elder from office.
9. When a vacancy (other than the Chairman and the Senior Pastor) occurs on the Council of Elders, such vacancy shall be filled according to the procedures for nomination, appointment, and election of Elders set forth in the Church document, Constitution and Bylaws. Such election of an Elder to fill the position of Elder created by the vacancy may be at the next regular meeting of the Elders or at a meeting specially called for that purpose.
10. After careful consideration, the Council of Elders will determine when it becomes necessary to review and select candidates to the Council of Elders. Those candidates who meet the biblical requirements of Elder *(1 Timothy 3:1-7)* shall then have their name submitted to the Church. All candidates must then be confirmed by majority vote cast by the membership of the Church for a term of three years. When the term of their office expires, they shall be eligible for re-election.

Section 3 – Church Treasurer

The Treasurer shall be responsible for proper books of account for all Church funds. All funds shall be kept in a bank approved by the Council of Elders. At the annual meeting, the Treasurer shall present a report of receipts and disbursements and a statement of cash accounts. Recommendation for Church Treasurer shall be made by the Council of Elders and confirmed by majority vote cast by the membership of the Church. The Church Treasurer shall be elected for a term of three years and when that term expires the Treasurer shall be eligible for re-election.

Section 4 – Constitution Amendments and Updates

1. The Church Constitution and Bylaws must be reviewed every five years or sooner, if needed. A committee formulated for this purpose must draft any amendments and updates to this document. The committee must consist of not less than seven (7) members including the Senior Pastor and Elders. The Senior Pastor is responsible for selecting all committee members. The selection of committee members does not require a vote by Church membership.
2. The draft Constitution and Bylaws must first be approved by the Council of Elders and then processed as follows:
3. Approval by majority vote of the Elders present at a meeting called for this purpose.
4. After which, final approval by the congregation must take place via vote.
5. The congregation shall be allowed to review the draft Constitution and Bylaws before the vote takes place.
6. The draft Constitution and Bylaws shall be provided to the congregation for review no less than two (2) weeks before the designated voting date.
7. There is no minimum number of members required to be present before a vote can be held. However, Church members (not including Elders) must make up the majority present for the vote.
8. Constitution and Bylaws approval is obtained by majority vote cast by the members present.