

Hope Community Church of Racine, WI Incorporated

Constitution and Bylaws

Author(s): Hope Community Church Constitution Committee

Donald Bennett, Pastor
Lawrence Tolson, Elder
Yuniwo Nfor, Elder
Nancy Kinkade, Member
Ann Kirchner, Member
Kathleen Lawrenz, Member
Minnie Jackson, Member

Approver(s): Hope Community Church Council of Elders and Congregation

Revised; July 2025

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Hope Community Church of Racine, WI

Constitution and Bylaws

Preamble

We, the members of Hope Community Church of Racine, WI, 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, the Minnesota-Wisconsin Baptist Convention, and the Lakeland Baptist Association. We cooperate with other like-minded entities in keeping with our mission and purpose as the Lord leads.

Article III - Mission and Vision

The Mission of the Hope Community Church is to "engage the city with the gospel of Jesus Christ with all we have wherever we are!"

The Vision of the Hope Community Church is that every seat in the building be occupied by a disciple of Jesus Christ.

Article IV - 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 who was with them before His crucifixion. He ascended into heaven and is now exalted at the right hand of God, where He 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 who 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 image, and in that Christ died for all. Therefore, every person, regardless of 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 blood obtained eternal redemption for the believer. In its broadest sense, salvation includes reconciliation, 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:
 - a. **Physical death:** which is the separation of the soul and spirit from the body. (Genesis 35:18; 1 Kings 17:21-22; Luke 8:54-55; James 2:26; Revelation 6:9).
 - b. **Spiritual death:** which is the 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).
 - c. **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 glory 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 full 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, deacons, and elders. Both men and women are gifted for service in the church, so the office of Pastor, Deacon, and Elder is not limited to just men, as qualified by Scripture.

The New Testament also refers to the Church as the Body of Christ, which encompasses all the redeemed from every age, believers from every tribe, tongue, 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 deserves 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 V - Core Values

1. We Value BIBLICAL AUTHORITY

We are committed to the Word of God being the absolute authority in the life of the church and its members. We preach, teach, and live the scriptures.

4 (Jesus) answered, "It is written: Man must not live on bread alone but on every word that comes from the mouth of God." (Matthew 4:4)

16. All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for instruction, for conviction, for correction, and for training in righteousness, 17. so that the man of God may be complete, fully equipped for every good work. (2 Tim. 3:16-17)

2. We Value DISCIPLESHIP

We are committed to coming alongside individuals in becoming Christ-like disciples and disciple makers.

We cared so much for you that we were pleased to share with you not only the gospel of God but also our own lives, because you had become dear to us ... As you know, like a father with his own children, we encouraged, comforted, and implored each one of you to walk worthy of God, who calls you into his own kingdom and glory. (1 Thessalonians 2:8,11-12)

A disciple is not above his teacher, but everyone fully trained will be like his teacher. (Luke 6:40)

3. We Value MISSIONS

We are committed to supporting the work of missions locally, regionally, nationally, and internationally.

18 Jesus came near and said to them, “All authority has been given to me in heaven and on earth. 19 Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, 20 teaching them to observe everything I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age.” (Matthew 28:18-20)

8 But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come on you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.” (Acts 1:8)

4. We Value PRAYER

We are committed to continue advancing the priority and necessity of prayer as we worship God in our private lives and as a local body of baptized believers.

6 Don't worry about anything, but in everything, through prayer and petition with thanksgiving, present your requests to God.

7 And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. (Philippians 4:6-7)

Pray without ceasing (1 Thessalonians 5:17)

5. We Value KNOWING AND WORSHIPING GOD

We are committed to educating believers in the biblical knowledge of God, and our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ found in scripture, as well as our dedication and commitment to worship Him in Spirit and in Truth.

But an hour is coming, and is now here, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in Spirit and in truth. Yes, the Father wants such people to worship him. God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship in Spirit and in truth. (John 4:23-24)

Our Lord and God, you are worthy to receive glory and honor and power, because you have created all things, and by your will they exist and were created. (Revelation 4:11)

6. We Value SERVING OTHERS

We are committed to being service-minded for our church membership and the community and demonstrating Christ's heart by being His hands and feet to the unbeliever.

Do nothing out of selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility, consider others as more important than yourselves. Everyone should look not to his own interests, but rather to the interests of others. (Philippians 2:3-4)

Just as each one has received a gift, use it to serve others, as good stewards of the varied grace of God. If anyone speaks, let it be as one who speaks God's words; if anyone serves, as one who serves, let it be by the strength that God provides, so that God may be glorified through Christ Jesus in everything. (1 Peter 4:10-11a)

7. We Value BEING A MULTICULTURAL CHURCH

We are committed to advancing the gospel to people of all ethnic backgrounds and providing culturally relevant services and support.

After this I looked, and there was a vast multitude from every nation, tribe, people, and language, which no one could number, standing before the throne and before the Lamb. (Revelations 7:9)

There is no Jew or Greek, slave or free, male or female; since you are all one in Christ Jesus. (Galatians 3:28)

Article VI – Membership, Employees, and Volunteers

Section 1 - New Membership

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

1. Complete the New Membership class.
2. Submit to the Believer's Baptism by immersion after salvation.
Accommodations will be made for individuals with medical or health restrictions.
3. Agree with our Core Beliefs as referenced in Article IV.
4. Live a life that demonstrates Gospel transformation, imitating 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 and Core Values 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 VII, 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 who remains inactive for 90 days without providing a viable explanation will be removed **from membership**. A letter will be sent to the member two weeks prior to the 90-day deadline by the church to confirm their membership status. If no response is received by the 90-day deadline, the member will be removed from the membership roster. All members are eligible for voting rights upon reaching 18 years of age and regularly attending services, consistently contributing their time, talent, spiritual gifts, and resources to support the Church. (I Corinthians 12; Hebrews 10:25).

Section 3 - 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 always endeavor to set Christian examples, sharing our faith in Jesus Christ with others and being 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 seizing opportunities for spiritual growth, both individually and collectively. (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 in serving in church ministry, utilizing our spiritual gifts. (Romans 12:7; 1 Peter 4:10; Galatians 5:13b).
6. We commit to encouraging one another, loving and doing good works, and in all things, giving our Lord Jesus Christ the preeminence. (Colossians 1:17-18; Hebrews 10:24-25).

Section 4 - Discipline of Members

Discipline must be a vital part of the local Church. The Christian faith teaches this, as seen in 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, as outlined in 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 5 - Employees and Volunteers

We believe that 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 outlined in Article IV, Section 12 and conduct themselves accordingly. (Matthew 5:19).

Section 6 - Friends of Hope Community Church

Individuals who wish to support Hope Community Church but are neither members, employees, nor volunteers can do so under this category. They will not be afforded membership rights or participate in member-only activities such as business meetings.

Article VII - 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 church's spiritual leadership and must promote the glory of God. The term of the Senior Pastor shall continue indefinitely unless he is incapacitated, 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 between the Word of God and the Church's policies, programs, and services.

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 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 serve as the primary spokesperson for the policies, goals, direction, vision, and ministry of the Church to its members and the broader community.
5. The Council of Elders shall annually recommend the salary of the Senior Pastor. The Senior Pastor is not eligible to vote or participate in 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 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 fewer than a majority of Elders are not in attendance at a meeting. The proxy of an Elder may not constitute attendance for a quorum.
3. The Council of Elders shall make policy decisions and authorize their selected appointee(s) to execute documents, contracts, and other legal

papers necessary to transact the business of the Church. The governance of the Church is vested in the Council of Elders; however, the Council may seek input when making decisions 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, which has been called to consider the termination of the Senior Pastor's position. 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 defense before a vote and any such removal action 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 vote at any meeting relating to such investigation or removal from office.

8. The Council of Elders shall allow the Elder to speak to the Council of Elders in his defense before a vote and any such removal action is taken. After conducting such an inquiry, the committee shall submit a written report of its recommended action to the Council of Elders. If the committee recommends the 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 outlined 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 an 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 the proper accounting of 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, as well as a statement of cash accounts. Recommendations for the Church Treasurer shall be made by the Council of Elders and confirmed by the majority vote cast by

the membership of the Church. The Church Treasurer shall be elected for 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 at least every five years, or more frequently if necessary. 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 the Church membership.
2. The draft Constitution and Bylaws must first be approved by the Council of Elders and then processed as follows:
 - a. Approval by majority vote of the Elders present at a meeting called for this purpose.
 - b. After which, final approval by the congregation must be obtained via a vote.
 - c. The congregation shall be allowed to review the draft Constitution and Bylaws before the vote.
 - d. The draft Constitution and Bylaws shall be provided to the congregation for review no less than two (2) weeks before the designated voting date.
 - e. There is no minimum number of members required to be present before a vote can be held. However, Church members (excluding elders) must comprise the majority present for the vote.
 - f. Constitution and Bylaws approval is obtained by majority vote cast by the members present.