



NEW HOPE

PRESBYTERIAN • EPC

BY-LAWS

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Article 1 – The Corporation Identified

Section 1 – Name and Principal Address

The name of this corporation shall be New Hope Presbyterian Church of Southwest Florida, Inc., d/b/a New Hope Presbyterian Church (herein referred to as “New Hope Church”). The principal location and mailing address of New Hope Church shall be 10051 Plantation Road, Fort Myers, FL 33966.

Section 2 – Corporate Registration

New Hope Church is registered pursuant to the laws of the State of Florida as a non-profit corporation.

Section 3 – Purpose and Affiliations

- 1) New Hope Church exists to provide a community in which believers in God and in His son, Jesus Christ, can worship, grow in their faith, evangelize to others, and provide ministry and service to people around the world.
- 2) New Hope Church believes the Bible, in its original manuscript, is the infallible Word of God. Moreover, it’s reformed theology adheres to that expressed in the Westminster Confession of Faith and the Larger and Shorter Catechisms of the same.
- 3) New Hope Church is affiliated with the Evangelical Presbyterian Church (EPC) and adheres to its system of governance as presented in the EPC “*Book of Order*” which governance extends only to ecclesiastical and spiritual matters, but not to civil matters.

Section 4 – Corporate Records

- 1) The Board of Trustees will be the trustees of the corporation for all purposes of Florida corporate law and other statutes.
- 2) Correct and complete records and financial accounts shall be kept by New Hope Church, as well as records of all proceedings and meetings of members of New Hope Church. Financial books and records may be reviewed by any member of New Hope Church at any reasonable time.

Section 5 – Officers Defined

Current/active teaching elders, ruling elders, deacons, and trustees comprise the officers of New Hope Church.

Section 6 – Fiscal Year

The fiscal year of New Hope Church shall be January 1 through December 31. The Session has the authority to change the fiscal year if it deems it appropriate to do so.

Article 2 – Membership

Section 1 – General

- 1) Qualifications for, and categories of, membership in New Hope Church shall be established by the Session and shall comply with the guidelines cited in the EPC's *"Book of Order."*
- 2) The Session shall establish procedures for maintaining accurate records of membership in any and all categories and for the removal of individual members from New Hope Church, in compliance with the guidelines cited in the EPC's *"Book of Order."*
- 3) When the term "members" is used throughout this document, it shall refer to the category of membership that is eligible to vote on matters affecting New Hope Church.

Section 2 – Resignation

A member may resign his/her membership in New Hope Church and such resignation shall be effective upon the acceptance of such notification by the Session.

Article 3 – Meetings of Members

Section 1 – Types of Member Meetings

- 1) Annual Meeting – New Hope Church shall hold an annual meeting of its members (“congregational meeting”) at a date and time designated by the Session. It is at this meeting that the members shall vote to elect ruling elders, deacons, and trustees from those nominated to these offices by the Session.
- 2) Special Meetings – The Session may, from time to time, hold a congregational meeting when it deems necessary or when instructed to do so by Presbytery. Moreover, when at least one-fifth of the active membership requests a meeting of members in writing, the Session shall comply without delay.

Section 2 -- Notice of Meetings

Notice for annual and for special congregational meetings shall be given to members at least for two Sundays in succession. The congregational meeting may be conducted on the same day the second notice is given. The notice of a congregational meeting must state the reason for the meeting, and only those matters stated in the notice may be presented and handled at the meeting.

Section 3 – Quorum, Voting, & Conduct of Meetings

- 1) A quorum shall be ten percent (10%) of the active membership of New Hope Church present at the meeting, but not less than 20 people.
- 2) The lead pastor shall moderate the meetings of the congregation. In the event of the pastor’s illness, or if it is deemed impractical by the Session for the pastor to moderate the meeting, the pastor may appoint a member of Session or of Presbytery to do so.
- 3) Those who are active members of New Hope Church, as defined by the Session, and who are present at the congregational meeting are eligible to vote. The moderator of the meeting may not vote.
- 4) The clerk of Session shall serve as clerk of the meetings of the congregation and shall keep a permanent record of the proceedings and business transactions and shall provide such record to the Session.
- 5) “*Robert’s Rules of Order*” shall be the standard in parliamentary procedure at the congregational meetings.

Article 4 – Teaching Elders

- 1) New Hope Church shall have only one lead pastor (teaching elder), with the duties, powers, and obligations of a minister of the Gospel as expressed in the EPC’s *“Book of Order.”*
- 2) New Hope Church may have as many associate or assistant pastors as determined necessary by the Session.
- 3) The lead pastor and the associate or assistant pastor(s) are under the authority of the EPC and its presbytery and, as such, are not members of New Hope Church. They shall not have a vote at any congregational meeting.
- 4) The lead pastor will preside as moderator of the Session and moderator of any and all congregational meetings, unless he delegates this authority to another person.
- 5) The lead pastor is an ex-officio member of the Session.

Article 5 – Boards of New Hope Church

Section 1 – The Session

- 1) Ruling elders, together with the teaching pastors -- lead pastor and associate pastor(s) -- shall constitute the Session. The lead pastor shall be the moderator of the Session.
- 2) The property, business affairs, and ministry of New Hope Church shall be managed by the Session, including the roles and activity of the Board of Deacons and the Board of Trustees.
- 3) The Session will have no less than six ruling elders, divided into three classes of calendar year designations.
- 4) The pastor plus two ruling elders shall constitute a quorum.
- 5) The Session shall meet a minimum of once each quarter, or more frequently at the discretion of its moderator. Such meetings are called “Stated Meetings, and at least one of these meetings should be a joint meeting with the Board of Deacons.

- 6) Stated meetings may contain a variety of agenda topics and are open to members of New Hope Church (although such members will have no voice at the meeting unless granted so by the Session). Minutes of stated meetings are public and shall be made available for review to members of the congregation at the church office by appointment.
- 7) In the event the moderator, the Presbytery, or the Session determines a meeting of the Session is necessary to discuss confidential and/or sensitive matters, such a meeting shall be termed an “executive meeting and will not be open to guests.” The topic(s) of the meeting will be disclosed to members of the Session in advance, and only that topic(s) may be discussed. The lead pastor will moderate the meeting and, in no event shall such a meeting be held without the attendance of the lead pastor. The discussion at such meetings are private to members of the Session and will not be published.
- 8) Some, but not all, of the duties and responsibilities of the Session are: initiate the ministry of evangelism to the unchurched and unbelievers; determine the budget for New Hope Church and monitor revenue and expenditures to meet the effectiveness of the budget and the objectives of New Hope Church; spiritual guidance of the congregation; development of ministry programs and Christian education for all ages of the congregation; provide direction to the Board of Deacons and the Board of Trustees, and other duties as requested by the lead pastor.
- 9) The Session shall elect a clerk of Session to be responsible for keeping records/minutes of all the proceedings of the Session. In addition, the clerk will keep minutes of the congregational meetings, oversee the membership roster of New Hope Church, and shall be the liaison between New Hope Church, the presbytery and the EPC general assembly. The clerk of Session shall be either a current or past elder of New Hope Church.
- 10) On an annual basis, the moderator of the Session shall recommend, for the Session’s approval, current or previously ordained elders to fill the positions of New Hope Church clerk of Session and chairpersons of the standing committees/teams of the Session.
- 11) The procedures and rules for the orderly conduct of the business of the Session shall be in accordance with those outlined in the EPC’s current “Book of Order.”

Section 2 – Board of Deacons

- 1) Deacons serve under the oversight of the Session and are responsible for the ministries of compassion. A moderator and a secretary shall be elected from among the Board of Deacons to serve a term of one year.

- 2) There shall be no less than six elected deacons, divided into three classes of calendar year designations.
- 3) The Board of Deacons shall meet a minimum of once each quarter, or more frequently as determined by the moderator or the Session. The presence of a majority of the deacons shall constitute a quorum. One of these meetings should be a joint meeting with the Session.
- 4) The procedures and rules for the orderly conduct of the business of the Board of Deacons shall be in accordance with those outlined in the EPC's current "*Book of Order*."
- 5) Some, but not all, of the duties and responsibilities of the Board of Deacons are: spiritual care for the widows, orphans, the elderly, and shut-ins; maintaining the grounds and buildings of New Hope Church; organizing hospitality for weddings, funerals, and memorial services; and other functions at the direction of the Session.
- 6) Minutes of the meetings of the Board of Deacons shall be shared with the Session.

Section 3 – Board of Trustees

- 1) New Hope Church has the right to elect trustees from within its membership or, in the alternative, from within the members of Session. From among those trustees, there shall be, at a minimum, a president (longest serving of the trustees), vice president (second longest serving of the trustees), and secretary (on-staff director of Finance). The Session may appoint a church treasurer from among the membership of New Hope Church.
- 2) As per the guidelines in the EPC's "*Book of Order*," trustees shall have the power, upon authorization from the Session, to execute documents for the purchase, sale, and mortgage of property, to execute deeds, and to hold titles for same, to sign checks on behalf of New Hope Church within the limits established by the Session, and to assume such other duties as may be assigned to them by the Session.

Article 6 – Additional Provisions Regarding Officers

Section 1 – Eligibility for Office

- 1) Officers in the positions of ruling elder, deacon, or trustee must be a member of New Hope Church and must declare his/her faith in Jesus Christ and affirmatively answer the vows as outlined in the EPC *“Book of Order”* at the time of ordination.
- 2) Persons who desire to be a ruling elder, deacon, or trustee shall be prepared to be share with the Session or the pastor their testimony of the saving grace of God and their acceptance of Jesus Christ as their savior. They will participate in the education provided to officers and are expected to understand and execute the obligations of their office as outlined in the EPC’s *“Book of Order.”*
- 3) Only one immediate family member may serve on the Session at the same time. Likewise, only one immediate family member may serve on the Board of Deacons or the Board of Trustees at the same time.
- 4) A staff member on the payroll of New Hope Church cannot serve on the Session or the Board of Deacons. The staff position of director of Finance has the role of the office of secretary on the Board of Trustees.
- 5) An immediate family member of a current New Hope Church staff member is not eligible to serve on the Session, the Board of Deacons, or the Board of Trustees.

Section 2 – Ordination

- 1) The positions of ruling elders and deacons are ones for which ordination is required, under the guidelines of the EPC’s *“Book of Order.”* Normally, their ordination will take place at a service of installation to be held in the first quarter of the year, on a date determined by the Session. Trustee positions will be installed at the same time, but do not require ordination.
- 2) The newly elected ruling elders, deacons, and trustees will begin their active service in those roles on the date of their ordination/installation.

Section 3 – Tenure of Office

Each ruling elder, each deacon, and each elected trustee shall hold office for a term of three years, with a limit of two consecutive terms. After two terms, the officer must

wait a minimum of one year before he/she is eligible to be nominated for the same office once again.

Section 4 – Removal From Office

- 1) If an officer of New Hope Church ceases to be a member, for any reason, he/she shall automatically be removed from all offices that he/she may have been elected to within New Hope Church.
- 2) If an officer requests, or if the Session deems it prudent to remove a person from his/her position as an officer of New Hope Church, the procedures taken shall adhere to those as outlined in the EPC's "Book of Order."

Article 7 – Committees/Teams

Section 1 – Required by EPC and/or Presbytery

- 1) New Hope Church shall comply with the EPC's "*Book of Order*" with respect to the need for, and the policies/procedures of, specific committees. In particular, New Hope Church will adhere to the aforementioned when there is a vacancy in the position of lead pastor, which will necessitate the establishment of a formal search committee as well as a nominating committee for the purpose of electing search committee members.
- 2) The Session may, at its discretion, choose to appoint or elect a nominating committee for the purpose of recommending candidates to the congregation for the positions of ruling elders, deacons, and trustees.

Section 2 – Other Committees/Teams

The Session and/or the lead pastor may establish such other committees/teams as deemed prudent for the effective functioning of New Hope Church. Such committees/teams shall keep the Session apprised of their purpose and their actions.

Article 8 – Miscellaneous

Section 1 –Financial Review

An audit or review of the financial records of New Hope Church shall be performed at the direction of the Session.

Article 9 – Amendments

The Session shall have the authority to amend these By-Laws with an affirmative vote of two-thirds of the Session. New Hope Church shall keep a copy of the By-Laws, as amended, at its principal office and the By-Laws shall be open to inspection by any member at all reasonable times during office hours.

These By-Laws were adopted (date)_____.