

CONSTITUTION OF THE GREAT LAKES CONFERENCE OF THE EVANGELICAL COVENANT CHURCH

Preamble

The Evangelical Covenant Church is a communion of congregations gathered by God, united in Christ, and empowered by the Holy Spirit to obey the great commandment and the great commission. It affirms its companionship in faith with other church bodies and all those who fear God and keep God's commandments.

The Evangelical Covenant Church adheres to the affirmations of the Protestant Reformation regarding the Bible. It confesses that the Holy Scripture, the Old and the New Testament, is the Word of God and the only perfect rule for faith, doctrine, and conduct. It affirms the historic confessions of the Christian Church, particularly the Apostles' Creed, while emphasizing the sovereignty of the Word of God over all creedal interpretations.

In continuity with the renewal movements of historic Pietism, the Evangelical Covenant Church especially cherishes the dual emphasis on new birth and new life in Christ, believing that personal faith in Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord is the foundation for our mission of evangelism and Christian nurture. Our common experience of God's grace and love in Jesus Christ continues to sustain the Evangelical Covenant Church as an interdependent body of believers that recognizes but transcends our theological differences.

The Evangelical Covenant Church celebrates two divinely ordained sacraments, baptism and the Lord's Supper. Recognizing the reality of freedom in Christ, and in conscious dependence on the work of the Holy Spirit, we practice both the baptism of infants and believer baptism. The Evangelical Covenant Church embraces this freedom in Christ as a gift that preserves personal conviction, yet guards against an individualism that disregards the centrality of the Word of God and the mutual responsibilities and disciplines of the spiritual community.

The Evangelical Covenant Church has its roots in historical Christianity, the Protestant Reformation, the biblical instruction of the Lutheran Church of Sweden, and the great spiritual awakenings of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. These influences, together with more recent North American renewal movements, continue to shape its development and distinctive spirit. The Evangelical Covenant Church is committed to reaching across boundaries of race, ethnicity, culture, gender, age, and status in the cultivation of communities of life and service.

Introduction

The Great Lakes Conference of the Evangelical Covenant Church, in order to accomplish its mission and purposes, has formulated and adopted this Constitution and Bylaws. The Constitution recognizes that the highest constituted authority of the Great Lakes Conference is the convention of delegates known as the Annual Meeting, which alone can adopt and amend the Constitution and Bylaws. The Great Lakes Conference (GLC) shall be governed by this Constitution and Bylaws, its Articles of Incorporation, and all applicable laws subject to the requirements of the Evangelical Covenant Church (ECC). ECC requirements shall take priority over conflicting GLC provisions.

ARTICLE I

Name

The name of this organization shall be the Great Lakes Conference (GLC) of the Evangelical Covenant Church (ECC). Hereinafter, the Great Lakes Conference may be called the GLC and the Evangelical Covenant Church may be called the ECC.

ARTICLE II

Confession

The GLC confesses that the Holy Scripture, the Old and the New Testament, is the Word of God and the only perfect rule for faith, doctrine, and conduct.

ARTICLE III

Establishment and Purpose

Section 3.1. The GLC is a mission region of the ECC. As such, it is a separately incorporated association of ECC congregations, recognized as provided in the bylaws of the ECC.

Section 3.2. As a mission region, the GLC exists to serve its local churches and to minister on their behalf to better make known the good news of saving faith in Jesus Christ, to encourage a Christ-like life among its members, and to carry out Christ's redeeming work of love, mercy, and justice in the world.

Section 3.3. The GLC is incorporated in the state of Ohio as a not-for-profit organization. The delegates to the Annual Meeting are the corporate members of the GLC.

Section 3.4. The objectives of the GLC shall be to propagate the gospel in accordance with the precepts of Christ and his apostles and to promote Christ-like life among the churches and their members, and to apply the gospel in every area of life. To accomplish these objectives, the GLC, in cooperation with the ECC, shall endeavor to:

- a. Assist GLC congregations in the performance of ministries in which they engage individually;
- b. Enable GLC congregations to perform together certain ministries which they cannot feasibly undertake alone;
- c. Engage with the ministry priorities of the ECC for the benefit of the GLC congregations and GLC Entities;
- d. Engage with, and when appropriate initiate, the life cycle of the church from conception to life's end, supporting and resourcing the local church and GLC Entities for the best missional health of the GLC congregations;
- e. When appropriate and useful: recognize, or establish, or acquire GLC Entities and see to their ongoing vitality in order to further the above purposes.
- f. When appropriate, acquire and own by purchase, gift or grant such real and personal property as may be necessary to carry out these objectives.

ARTICLE IV

Territory

Section 4.1. The boundaries of the GLC shall be determined by the ECC Annual Meeting, upon the recommendation of the Executive Board of the ECC after consultation with the GLC.

Section 4.2. The territory currently assigned to the GLC comprises the states of Kentucky, Ohio, Tennessee, and West Virginia, the lower peninsula of Michigan, and the western parts of New York, Pennsylvania, and Virginia. The principal office shall be located at such a place as the Executive Board shall determine.

ARTICLE V

Membership

Section 5.1. The GLC is composed of Christian congregations united in faith and service.

Section 5.2. Membership is open to evangelical Christian congregations that are in accord with the Preamble and Confession of the ECC, and that meet the requirements stated in the ECC Constitution and Bylaws, which are repeated in this Constitution and Bylaws. A congregation seeking membership shall follow the procedure determined by the ECC Executive Board, which is repeated in these Bylaws.

Section 5.3. Membership is granted dually in both the GLC and the ECC. A congregation cannot be a member of one without being a member of the other.

Section 5.4. Member congregations pledge mutually to support the principles, policies, and programs of the GLC and the ECC. This includes regular financial support of the GLC and the ECC. The Constitution and Bylaws of member congregations shall be in general agreement with the principles of the ECC Preamble, Constitution, and Bylaws. Member congregations have freedom in the management of local matters, and those with either loans or subsidies from the GLC or ECC shall work under the supervision of the Executive Board and the ECC's Start and Strengthen Churches standing committee or its successor organization.

Section 5.5. Member congregations that through decision or practice are out of harmony with the principles, policies, programs, or institutions of the ECC may be subject to discipline and dismissed from the ECC and GLC, according to the procedures stated in the Bylaws.

Section 5.6. A congregation seeking to sever its affiliation with the ECC and GLC shall follow the procedures stated in the Bylaws.

ARTICLE VI

Officers

Section 6.1. One of the officers of the GLC shall be a Superintendent. Other officers shall be a Chair, Vice-chair, Treasurer, and Secretary who shall also serve in those capacities on the Executive Board. The Bylaws may provide for additional officers.

Section 6.2. Officers shall be selected according to the procedures stated in the Bylaws.

Section 6.3. Officers shall have duties and responsibilities provided in the Bylaws.

ARTICLE VII

Annual Meeting

Section 7.1. A convention of delegates, known as the Annual Meeting, shall be the highest constituted authority in the GLC.

Section 7.2. There shall be one regular session of the Annual Meeting each year, the date of which shall be determined by the Executive Board.

Section 7.3. As the highest deliberative and decision-making body of the GLC, the Annual Meeting shall approve the admission and dismissal of congregations, elect or call persons to leadership positions as provided in the Bylaws, approve the budget of the GLC, receive and

approve reports, amend the Constitution and Bylaws, conduct other such business as may properly come before it, and make decisions necessary to the mutual work of the GLC, GLC Entities, and the ECC, as provided in the Bylaws.

Section 7.4. Each GLC congregation is entitled to name one or more delegates to the Annual Meeting, as provided in the Bylaws. The GLC Superintendent and elected members of the Executive Board shall be ex officio delegates. The Bylaws may provide for additional delegates and advisors. Each delegate shall serve for a term that expires at the convening of the next regular session of the Annual Meeting as provided in the Bylaws. Each delegate shall be a corporate member of the GLC for the duration of that delegate's term.

Section 7.5. Special sessions of the Annual Meeting may be called by the Executive Board, by the Superintendent with the concurrence of the Executive Board, or by a majority of the current delegates. At least thirty days before the date of each special meeting, the Secretary of the GLC shall send a notice to each current delegate, stating the time, place, and purpose of the meeting.

Section 7.6. A majority of delegates registered and certified in accordance with the Bylaws shall constitute a quorum for any regular or special session of an Annual Meeting.

Section 7.7. At the discretion of the Executive Board, any session of the Annual Meeting may be conducted in either an in-person format, or a virtual format, or a hybrid format. The Executive Board shall ensure that the arrangements for sessions in either a virtual or hybrid format adhere to the requirements of the GLC's state of incorporation. Where the Bylaws require a written ballot, the Executive Board shall provide a way for virtual participants to vote and these votes will be considered written ballots. The Executive Board shall ensure that the written ballots of virtual participants have, to the greatest extent possible, the same ability to be counted, and the same level of documentation, and the same degree of confidentiality as the written ballots of in-person participants.

ARTICLE VIII

Executive Board

Section 8.1. The Executive Board shall be the agent of the Annual Meeting in making decisions for, and otherwise acting on behalf of, the GLC when the Annual Meeting is not in session. This agency does not include powers reserved exclusively to the Annual Meeting by the Constitution and Bylaws or by decision of the Annual Meeting. The Executive Board shall be responsible to the Annual Meeting for its decisions and actions.

Section 8.2. The Executive Board shall be responsible for ensuring that all matters required to be brought to the Annual Meeting under this Constitution and Bylaws are in fact brought to the Annual Meeting.

Section 8.3. The Executive Board shall have the authority and responsibility for ensuring that the policies, procedures, and actions of the GLC comply with this Constitution and Bylaws.

Section 8.4. The Executive Board shall have the authority and responsibility for ensuring that the officers and staff of the GLC comply with this Constitution and Bylaws.

Section 8.5. The Annual Meeting shall elect members of the Executive Board as provided in the Bylaws.

Section 8.6. The Superintendent shall be an ex officio member of the Executive Board. The Bylaws may provide for additional ex officio members, as well as for advisors.

Section 8.7. The Executive Board may establish committees and otherwise organize itself for the accomplishment of its assignments.

Section 8.8. Additional responsibilities for the Executive Board shall be delineated in the Bylaws.

Section 8.9. A majority of voting members shall constitute a quorum for the meetings of the Executive Board or any administrative body of the GLC.

ARTICLE IX

The Superintendent

The Superintendent shall be the pastor and chief executive officer of the GLC and its mission, with responsibilities delineated in the Bylaws. The Superintendent shall be an ex officio member of the Executive Board and all other administrative bodies within the GLC. The Superintendent shall be elected according to provisions in the Bylaws.

ARTICLE X

GLC Entities

Section 10.1. The GLC may acquire establish, and/or recognize GLC Entities to be responsible for specific missions and purposes of the GLC, in cooperation with each other, the congregations, and the ECC. The types of GLC entities are Associations, Institutions, Ministries, and Commissions.

Section 10.2. Each GLC Entity shall be identified and established in accordance with the Bylaws.

Section 10.3. Each GLC Entity may adopt governing structures consistent with the law and not inconsistent with the Constitution and Bylaws of the GLC. The Superintendent shall be an ex officio member of the governing structures of each GLC Entity.

Section 10.4. Subject to the powers reserved to the Annual Meeting and the Executive Board ("Reserved Powers"), GLC Entities shall have all the powers necessary or incidental to the administration of their respective businesses, affairs and ministries with the exception of the power of purchasing, mortgaging, selling or conveying any real properties, which shall require the prior approval of the Annual Meeting or Executive Board for each such transaction, as may be further specified in the GLC Bylaws and/or the GLC Entity's Articles of Incorporation, Bylaws, Articles of Organization, Operating Agreement, or other operational documents.

ARTICLE XI

Asset Resolution and Distribution of Assets

Section 11.1. In case of schism within the GLC, all property and other assets belonging to the GLC shall belong to the group which upholds and adheres to this Constitution and Bylaws as determined by the ECC Executive Board.

Section 11.2. Should the GLC be dissolved or diminish to less than ten member churches, all right, title, and interest to property, real, personal, tangible, and intangible, and all other assets belonging to the GLC shall pass to the ECC.

Section 11.3. A member church which withdraws or is dismissed from this GLC and the ECC shall be subject to immediate payment of all loans, grants, or property received from the GLC and the ECC, including any applicable interest as determined by the Executive Board. The church shall also forfeit all rights to GLC and ECC property.

ARTICLE XII

Amendments

Section 12.1. Proposed amendments to this Constitution shall be introduced in writing at a regular session of the Annual Meeting, but may not be acted upon until the next regular session of the Annual Meeting, and for adoption must receive the affirmative vote of two-thirds of all the accredited delegates voting in the regular session of the Annual Meeting.

Section 12.2. Proposed amendments to this Constitution shall be in harmony with the ECC Constitution and Bylaws.

Section 12.3. The Secretary shall have proposed amendments published in an official publication of the GLC and shall transmit them in writing to each source of delegates at least thirty days prior to the regular session of the Annual Meeting at which final action is to be taken.