

NHC adopted its constitution almost 30 years ago. Much has changed in our country and in our church. This document exists to provide orderliness so that we can live out our calling consistent with God's Word. This commitment has not changed. But because of changes like increased church and staff size, multiplied services, and decentralized ministries, our operating document must be updated. Changes reflect how we actually function and provide necessary accountability, efficiency and clarity to facilitate ministry rather than hinder it. Vague accountability leads to no accountability. Antiquated language and processes lead to stagnation and redundancy.

Our goal in the editing process is two fold:

First, to proactively include items of importance that did not exist when the document was written. Changes like this are reflected primarily in additions.

Second, to produce a document that reflects the value the elders place on it, provides accurate and efficient decision-making and accountability structures, and simplifies the document for understanding.

Sincerely,

NHC Elder Board

North Hills Church
CONSTITUTION-Bylaws
Adopted 1993
 (Revised 7/25/2017)
 Draft 5/13/21

Article I NAME

This local expression of the body of Christ shall be called North Hills Church (“NHC”).

Article II PURPOSE

The purpose of NHC is to be a local group of baptized believers who glorify God through unified Christ-likeness (Acts 2:41; Ephesians 4:11-16). Our method of pursuing this purpose is as follows:

- to magnify God through **gospel-fueled** personal and public worship (Romans 15:6)
- to edify others **build one another up** through service, fellowship, **accountability** and teaching (1 Corinthians 5; James 1:27; Ephesians 4:12)
- to evangelize the world through living, preaching and teaching the Word of God (Matthew 28:19, 20)
- to keep our lives pure (Eph. 5:26, 27; James 1:27b) through personal examination (I Cor. 11:28-31) and public accountability (I Cor. 5:6, 7, 13)

Article III AUTHORITY

The Elder Board will look to the ~~Holy Judeo-Christian Scriptures~~ 66 books in the Old and New Testaments as the recorded Word of God and the only authoritative text upon which to base the Church’s theological beliefs. Any doctrinal statement of the Church will be established by the Elder Board and may only be amended by unanimous consent of the elders and affirmation of the congregation as outlined in Article IV, Section 4.3.

All decisions shall be made by the Elder Board within the limitations of the constitution. ~~Approval from the church membership is required in decisions outlined in Article VII, Section 1.8. This church can thrive only as decisions are made in conformity to the Word of God and each member (including leadership) submits in love to one another under the authority of Christ as the head of the body (John 16:12-14; II Tim. 3:16; Eph., 4:15, 16; 5:21).~~

Article IV MEMBERSHIP

Section 1. Purpose and Prerequisites

Membership in NHC does not produce a relationship with Christ, but is a public expression of a personal unity with Christ through salvation (I Cor. 1:9; I John 1:3). Mutual accountability is the primary purpose of membership. Christians are commanded to “come together” (I Cor. 11:20; Heb. 10:25) and are called to be accountable to each other (Acts 5:1-11; Eph. 5:21).

Membership in NHC is for the purpose of living out who we are in Jesus. Therefore, joining NHC is identifying with brothers and sisters, affirming to whom we are accountable, acknowledging who the leaders are watching over, and uniting with whom we commit to serve (Acts 20:28; Hebrews 10:24-25; 13:17; 1 Peter 4:8-11). Confession of faith and baptism are the prerequisites of membership. We practice believers' baptism and baptize by immersion. However, we will recognize the baptisms of individuals who have been baptized as children in gospel-teaching churches (Acts 2:41; Matthew 28:19). All potential members of NHC are asked to read and sign the membership covenant.

Section 2. Prerequisites Procedure

The following prerequisites must be fulfilled for membership at North Hills Church:

1. ~~Salvation~~—Individuals desiring to become members of NHC must present a verbal testimony of their salvation experience (i.e., faith in Christ) to an elder. The members of NHC do not hold to professing a mere creed (truth about Jesus—Matt. 7:21-23), but to knowing a person—the Lord Jesus Christ (Acts 2:36). All potential members are encouraged by the elders to share their testimony with the church for edification of believers and an example to the lost for praise to God.
2. ~~Baptism~~—Believer's baptism is a public testimony to the inner identification with Jesus Christ (Acts 2:41). Therefore, conversion is a prerequisite to baptism. Due to the significance of baptism in Scripture and the picture this act of obedience is of the work of Christ, believers must be baptized prior to joining (Matt. 28:19). NHC baptizes by immersion.
3. ~~Membership Covenant~~—All potential members of NHC are asked to read and sign the membership covenant, thereby agreeing to support the policies and beliefs of this body and expressing a willingness to use their gifts for the edification of the body and to be held accountable by the leaders and members of NHC (Heb. 13:17).

Prospective members do the following:

1. Complete a training process addressing NHC doctrinal statement, practices, Bylaws, and membership covenant;
2. Participate in an elder-overseen interview to ensure eligibility for membership, and to sign the membership covenant.

Section 3. Procedure

The Board of Elders will approve a written procedure to be followed by persons desiring membership at NHC. The written membership procedure will include the following minimum requirements:

1. All of the prerequisites of Section 2 (above) are met;
2. A training process is completed addressing NHC doctrinal statement, practices, constitution and membership covenant;
3. An elder-overseen interview with the interested individual to ensure eligibility for membership and to sign the membership covenant; and
4. A minimum one-week notice to the congregation and Board of Elders of the individual's intent to join NHC prior to the membership becoming final.

The written procedure may be changed as deemed necessary by approval of the Board of Elders provided the above elements are included in the procedure.

Section 4 3. Policies Responsibilities

- NHC appreciates letters from other churches, but does not recognize these as substitutes for the membership procedure.

- ~~Members seeking to withdraw their membership from NHC are requested to contact an elder and personally communicate this intent. Following this, a written request from the member to withdraw his membership shall be submitted to NHC. A request for removal from membership by an individual currently undergoing the church discipline process will not be recognized.~~
- ~~Members who are absent from services for an unusual length of time are encouraged to notify church leaders of any difficulties. If a member is absent from services for over six months, the elders shall continue to seek to resolve any problem or meet any special need. But if an understanding is not reached, the absentee member shall be released from the roll at the discretion of the Board of Elders.~~
- ~~NHC does not retain an "inactive" church membership roll.~~
- ~~See NHC Church Discipline Policy Statement (a separate, written document approved by the Board of Elders) for the biblical method of dealing with an erring church member.~~

The responsibilities of members of NHC are fully outlined in the Membership Covenant, and include (but are not limited to):

- Attendance and participation in the Church corporate worship gatherings;
- Personal discipleship and disciple-making, generally through community;
- Financial giving according to member's ability and the dictates of his/her own conscience;
- Prayerful submission to the leadership and authority of the elders of the Church.

The Elder Board will seek the affirmation of the members in a called meeting on matters of (a) the purchase of real estate; (b) the annual budget; (c) amendment of the Bylaws or Doctrinal Statement; (d) installing a new elder; (e) other actions deemed major and extraordinary by the Elder Board. All items above will be communicated to the church members not less than fourteen (14) days prior to the meeting.

4.4 Removal

Members of the Church will be removed from membership for reasons of (a) death; (b) the member's request for removal; (c) member inactivity in excess of six months; or (d) the Elder Board's decision based upon the process of church discipline for the cause of unrepentant sin – see church discipline policy statement.

Members seeking to withdraw their membership from NHC are requested to contact an elder and personally communicate this intent. A request for removal from membership by an individual currently undergoing the church discipline process will not be recognized.

Article V STATEMENT OF FAITH (See separate document)

Article VI CHURCH MEETINGS

Section 1. Weekly Services

NHC holds services on Sunday and any other day deemed beneficial to the needs of the body.

Section 2. Business Meetings

2.1. Annual Meetings

There shall be an annual meeting of the membership held for the purpose of providing financial and ministry reports, approving the budget, and conducting other appropriate business. Time and place shall be announced publicly to the congregation and/or in written form at least two weeks prior to the meeting date. Additional meetings may be scheduled at the discretion of the elder board throughout the year as needed.

2.2. Decisions

A congregational quorum shall consist of thirty percent (30%) of all voting members. Once a quorum has been established, a two-thirds majority of votes cast is required to approve a motion. Members must be sixteen years of age to vote. ~~Within the confines of the constitution and as deemed appropriate by the Board of Elders, the meetings shall follow the procedures in *Robert's Rules of Order*.~~

Article VII LEADERSHIP

Section 1. Elders

1.1. Powers

Subject to the limitations of this Constitution, all the activities and affairs of NHC shall be exercised by or under the direction of the Elder Board ("Board"), who is responsible for the shepherding and the spiritual oversight of the membership (Acts 20:28; Hebrews 13:17). All elders on the Board are equal regardless of the position they hold in the utilization of their particular gifts.

1.2. Priorities of the Board of Elders

The following are the priorities of the Board of Elders:

- ~~to keep right with God (Acts 20:28)~~
- ~~to rule the church of God with a servant attitude (I Tim. 5:17; I Pet. 5:1-3)~~
- ~~to feed (i.e., teach) and lead the flock of God (Acts 20:28)~~
- ~~to facilitate the ministries of the people (Eph. 4:11, 12)~~
- ~~to warn and protect the flock (Acts 20:28; I Tim. 1:3, 4)~~
- ~~to pray and study (Acts 20:32)~~
- ~~to be free from self-interest (Acts 20:32)~~

1.3 2. Number

~~The authorized number of qualified men on the Board of Elders shall always be at least three. Elders should be added as necessary to properly shepherd an increase in the flock.~~

The Elder Board shall be comprised of no fewer than three and no more than twelve men who meet the biblical qualifications. The Board will be comprised of a combination of staff and non-staff elders. Additional elders serve in various capacities.

The Elder Board Board of Elders shall appoint a Chairman, Vice-chairman and Secretary each year. The Teaching Pastor shall not be Chairman of the Elder Board Board of Elders.

1.4. Equality

All elders are equal regardless of the position they hold in the utilization of their particular gifts (e.g., Chairman of the Elder Board or Teaching Pastor).

1.53. Selection

Candidates earnestly desiring the office of Elder, including the commitment inherent thereto, shall be carefully examined as to their qualifications (see Section 1.65) and support of the Bylaws and Doctrinal Statement.

The following steps are the process by which the Elder Board evaluates an individual to discern God's hand upon his life and to discern his qualifications for leadership:

1. Consideration – The Board agrees that an individual has the potential for leadership and thereby assumes the responsibility with the congregation to earnestly seek confirmation from the Lord (Acts 13:2). This step may be initiated by the nominee (1 Timothy 3:1).
2. Demonstration – After careful preparation, The Board will present the nominee publicly to the congregation. In the given amount of time, the people may go to the nominee first with qualification questions or concerns, and then, if necessary, present these biblical concerns to the Board.
3. Presentation – After hearing the concerns of the people, if any, the Board may, upon consensus, present the candidate to the congregation for affirmation (in accordance with Article VI, Section 2.2) as one whom God has qualified for leadership ordination (Acts 15:22).

1.64. Qualifications

Each member of the Elder Board must have been a member of NHC for at least a year and must have been demonstrating demonstrated leadership qualities in ministry. Each Elders must possess the qualifications described in 1 Timothy 3:1-7 and Titus 1:6-9. He shall have the following characteristics:

- male (I Tim. 3:2)
- blameless (above reproach) as a steward of God (I Tim. 3:2; Titus 1:6, 7)
- husband of one wife, "one woman man" (I Tim. 3:2; Titus 1:6)
- temperate (sober, vigilant) (I Tim. 3:2)
- sober minded (prudent) (I Tim. 3:2; Titus 1:8)
- of good behavior (orderly, respectable) (I Tim. 3:2)
- given to hospitality (I Tim. 3:2; Titus 1:8)
- apt to teach (exhort believers and refute false teaching) (I Tim. 3:2; Titus 1:9)
- not given to wine (I Tim. 3:3; Titus 1:7)
- not violent (I Tim. 3:3; Titus 1:7)
- patient (moderate, forbearing, gentle) (I Tim. 3:3)
- not a brawler (not contentious, not soon angry or quick tempered) (I Tim. 3:3; Titus 1:7)
- not covetous (not a lover of money) (I Tim. 3:3; Titus 1:7)
- rules well his own house (which embodies proper relationships with all family members in his household as well as the responsible financial management of his family's needs) (I Tim. 3:4; Titus 1:6; I Tim. 5:8)
- his children must be faithful, not accused of rebellion to God (Titus 1:6)
- not a novice (not a convert, has demonstrated growth) (I Tim. 3:6)
- has a good reputation with outsiders (I Tim. 3:7)
- a lover of good (men and things) (Titus 1:8)
- just (Titus 1:8)
- holy (devout) (Titus 1:8)
- self-controlled (Titus 1:8)

1.75. Accountability

Elder accountability is first and foremost unto God (1 Peter 5:1-5). It is mandatory, however, that the elders be accountable to one another and to the congregation. ~~If an elder errs, the primary goal should always be spiritual restoration (Gal. 6:1-5). In situations where the erring elder has rendered himself unqualified, the Board of Elders may ask for his resignation.~~ Accountability between elders and before the people must always be consistent with Matthew 18:15ff and 1 Timothy 5:19. Church members are encouraged to may attend Board meetings and may share ministry opportunities and concerns if the member has notified the Chairman of the Board, or his designee, of his desire to be placed on the meeting agenda. The Chairman of the Board of Elders may reserve a part of the meeting for confidential business.

1.86. Decisions of the Elder Board

Decisions shall be reached after prayerful consideration only by consensus of the Elder Board in a spirit of humility with each elder regarding one another before himself consistent with our elder covenant (except in cases of removal, see Article VII 1.13).

In cases of normal business, a quorum consists of a majority of elders present. ~~The Board of Elders will approve a written procedure for absent Board member input on Board decisions. If absent Board members who follow the written procedure raise strong objections to any decision, a reconsideration of that decision will be warranted.~~

- ~~Whenever the matter to be considered concerns (1) buying or selling real estate, (2) calling or dismissing an elder, (3) sending of a missionary, (4) approval of the yearly budget, or (5) the amendment to or modification of the Constitution or the Doctrinal Statement, a quorum shall consist of all the members of the Board of Elders (with the exception of any elder that is under consideration) whether responding in person or in absentia (to be later confirmed in writing). In the above decisions, the Board of Elders shall also seek the affirmation of the congregation in accordance with Article VI, Section 2.2.~~
- ~~The Board of Elders may call or request the dismissal of a pastor by consensus (not including the pastor under consideration) with the approval of the congregation in accordance with Article VI, Section 2.2. The Board of Elders shall serve as a pastoral search committee.~~

1.9. Elder-appointed Membership Committees

~~To promote efficient handling of church business, the Board of Elders may appoint various committees from within NHC membership. The committees shall exist for that specific time period as directed by the Board of Elders. These committees shall perform tasks solely in accordance with the duties and with the powers specifically delegated by the Board of Elders. The general functions of the committees shall be the following:~~

- ~~to bring considered recommendations to the Board of Elders concerning ministries~~
- ~~to provide a wider base of counsel to the Board of Elders in their general oversight of specific ministries~~

1.10. Offices

~~The Board of Elders shall appoint a Chairman, Vice-chairman and Secretary. These officers may resign effective upon giving written notice to the Board of Elders or may be removed by the Board of Elders from these offices if deemed necessary. The Teaching Pastor shall not be Chairman of the Board of Elders.~~

- ~~The secretary or his delegated representative at meetings of the Board of Elders shall record written minutes of each meeting and, following the Board approved written~~

procedure for absent Board member input, shall make available for review by the elders a record of these minutes.

- Other responsibilities of each of the officers shall be at the discretion of the Board of Elders.

1.7 Non-Staff Elders and Staff Elders

Non-staff elders are defined as those elders who are not in the employ of the church as a regular part-time or full-time staff member. Staff elders, or pastors, are defined as those elders who are in the employ of the church as a regular part-time or full-time staff member. Non-staff elders shall not receive compensation or salaries for their service, but they may be reimbursed for expenses incurred in their service to the Church. Staff elders may receive reasonable compensation for fulfilling their vocational responsibilities as employees of the Church.

The Teaching Pastor is a staff elder and is responsible to the Elder Board for the preaching of the Scriptures and shall oversee the corporate gathering of NHC and the administration of the ordinances (Baptism and Lord's Supper).

1.118. Terms

Elders are appointed to serve a term of three years with a maximum of two terms in a row. After two terms, an elder must have at least one year off prior to eligibility for another term. The length of service should be so arranged that no more than a third of the Board of Elders shall expire each year.

- Any elder may be removed from office if he becomes physically incapacitated, if he becomes spiritually unqualified as outlined in Section 1.6, or if his inability to serve is determined by consensus of the remainder of the Board of Elders and is agreed to by the congregation. (See Section 1.8.)
- Any elder may resign effective upon giving written notice to the Chairman or the Vice-chairman of the Board of Elders.

Non-staff elders (defined in 1.7), who serve on the Elder Board, are appointed to serve a term of three years with a maximum of two terms in a row. After two terms, non-staff elders (not including pastors) must have at least one year off prior to eligibility for another term. The length of service should be so arranged that no more than a third of the Elder Board shall expire each year. Staff elders serve for an indefinite period of time, at the discretion of the Board.

If the Elder Board determines that an elder needs an extended rest for a season because of a legitimate need (e.g. personal request, illness, tragedy), then that elder can transition to being an inactive elder for a set period of time as determined by the Board.

1.129. Delegation of Deacons

The Elder Board shall appoint Deacons as delineated in Article VII, Section 3.

1.1310 Hiring

Additional church staff may be hired at the discretion of the Elder Board or the hiring teams they create.

1.11 Removal

Consistent with the Elder Covenant, any elder may be dismissed for reasons of (a) death; (b) the elder's resignation; or (c) the Elder Board's unanimous consent. Additionally, elders may be removed based upon the exercise of church discipline for the cause of unrepentant sin, with the caveat that the elder under consideration may not participate in the vote. Any accusation of sin against an elder must be made in accordance with 1 Timothy 5:19. Staff elders may be dismissed with a 30-day notice, except in cases in which the staff elder is rendered unqualified. A staff elder shall give a 30-day written notice prior to his resignation.

Section 2. Pastors

2.1. Qualifications

~~As elders, pastors must meet the qualifications set forth in Article VII, Section 1.6 and must clearly possess a "pastor's heart" (1 Peter 5:1-4).~~

2.2. Responsibilities

~~The primary task of a pastor is the "equipping of the saints for the work of the ministry" (Ephesians 4:11-12). Along with the task of equipping, the pastors will also be responsible with the other elders for the spiritual welfare of the congregation. The Teaching Pastor is responsible to the Board of Elders for the preaching of the Scriptures and shall have in his care the stated services of NHC and the administration of the ordinances.~~

2.3. Term

~~The term of a pastor is for an indefinite period of time. Dismissal shall be in accordance with Article VII, Section 1.8 and, except in cases in which the pastor is rendered unqualified, should carry thirty days notice. A pastor shall give a thirty day written notice prior to his resignation.~~

Section 32. Deacons

32.1. Purpose

Deacons are servant-leaders who facilitate a broad and diverse range of congregational care with a particular emphasis on the poor, the widow, and the marginalized. They provide practical leadership within the church to ensure excellent care for every member of the body. Deacons are to emulate our Lord's example of humble, loving service to needy people within the church under the direction of the Elder Board.

~~The biblical role of Deacons is one of Ministries of Mercy, compassionately ministering to the poor and needy. They are to ensure that the widows, orphans and suffering of the church are cared for in a thoroughly Christian manner. Deacons are to emulate our Lord's example of humble, loving service to needy people. Deacons are to be responsible for ministries such as, but not limited to, the following:~~

- ~~• Caring for widows and orphans~~
- ~~• Hospitality~~
- ~~• The poor~~
- ~~• Special needs~~
- ~~• Benevolence~~
- ~~• Helps~~
- ~~• Encouragement~~
- ~~• Stewardship~~

~~Deacons will be involved in other ministries as determined by the Board of Elders.~~

32.2. Qualifications

Deacons must meet the qualifications outlined in 1 Timothy 3:8-13.

32.3. Selection and Terms

Deacons shall be appointed by and accountable to the Elder Board. Length of deacon terms are determined according to need, on a case-by-case basis, by the Elder Board.

Article VIII FINANCES

Section 1.

NHC will be primarily supported by the tithes and offerings of its people, who give as God prospers and according to His leading (2 Corinthians 9:6-7).

Section 2.

~~The church treasurer~~ A director of finance shall be appointed by the Elder Board, and along with his/her team shall be responsible for financial records and shall provide periodic reports to the Elder Board. ~~These Financial reports will~~ can be made available for ~~viewing~~ membership upon request.

Section 3.

The annual budget will be prepared by ~~the Church Finance Team~~ a director of finance and his/her team and approved by the Elder Board prior to being submitted to the congregation for approval. The proposed budget will be made available to the congregation a minimum of one week prior to the annual meeting.

Section 4.

The Elder Board may not spend more than one tenth of one percent (0.1%) of the annual gross budget per month of available funds without congregational approval (i.e. non-budget items).

Section 5.

NHC shall give a minimum of fifteen percent (15%) of all undesignated tithes and offerings to missions with a goal of increasing that percentage.

Article IX LICENSING AND ORDINATION

Section 1. Licensing

~~NHC does not issue a "clergy license" as ordination is the official qualification considered by the State and counties of South Carolina for performance of recognized ecclesiastical duties (e.g., officiate a marriage, clergy penitent privilege, etc.).~~

Section 2. Ordination

~~Ordination by NHC refers to the mutual recognition by the Board of Elders of a man's call to the ministry, preparation as a shepherd and qualification to serve. The council before which the candidate is examined shall be the NHC Board of Elders. The candidate shall be presented to the congregation. Ordination shall be conferred for life so long as the man continues to manifest the qualifications of an elder and supports the NHC Statement of Faith.~~

Article X ORDINANCES

Section 1. Believer's Baptism

See Article IV, Section 2.

Section 2. Lord's Supper

All who have received Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior and are walking in fellowship with the Lord are welcome to join in this service.

Article XI DISSOLUTION

In the event of dissolution, the assets of NHC will be distributed in accordance with a plan of distribution adopted by the Elder Board and approved by the congregation (simple majority vote). No part of the assets of NHC shall benefit any elder, deacon, member, donor or private individual. All assets must be distributed to one or more non-profit organizations whose purpose is consistent with that of NHC, and such organization(s) must be duly recognized by the Internal Revenue Service. Dissolution shall be only by three-fourths vote of the voting membership at a special meeting called for that purpose.

Article XII AMENDMENTS

~~Amendments to these Bylaws may be made by a two-thirds vote of the voting members at any regular business meeting. Proposed amendments must be submitted to the Elder Board at least four weeks prior to the business meeting, at which the vote will be taken, and, if approved by the Board, must be publicly presented to the congregation at least two weeks in advance of the meeting.~~

Amendments to these Bylaws must be approved by a two-thirds majority of the voting members at a regular business meeting. Proposed amendments must be approved by the Elder Board and be publicly presented to the congregation at least two weeks in advance of the meeting.

Article XIII DEFINITION OF MARRIAGE

Because NHC exists for the glory of God, for the good of the city, and to extend hope to others through the gospel, NHC defines marriage in a manner consistent with those purposes as determined by our Elder Board based on their deeply held theological convictions. Marriage is an exclusive covenant union in which God joins one man and one woman together for life (Matthew 19:4-6). NHC's definition of marriage is not self-generated, but consistent with that defined by God in the Scriptures as interpreted by our Elder Board. As such, it reflects both God's nature (Genesis 1:26-28, 2:18-24, 1 Corinthians 11:3) and God's mission on earth through the gospel (Ephesians 5:31-32). NHC is bound by the very nature and purposes of God to define and strengthen marriages in such a manner.

Article XIV ACCEPTABLE USE POLICY.

Any property owned by NHC is to be used in a manner consistent with all previous articles, and will not be used in a manner inconsistent with those purposes as determined by the Elder Board. Use of the facility is to be consistent with our theology, mission, and practice, and is subject to the discretion of our Elder Board.