

ARTICLES OF INCORPORATION

&

BY-LAWS



HOPE CHURCH

HOPE EVANGELICAL FREE CHURCH

Dubuque, Iowa

Approved April 25th, 2021

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ARTICLES OF INCORPORATION

PREAMBLE

We, the members of the Hope Evangelical Free Church, having recognized the leading of the Holy Spirit in bringing us together as a Christian Fellowship, do hereby unite and form the Hope Evangelical Free Church, and do ordain and establish the following Articles of Incorporation (Articles) to which we voluntarily submit ourselves:

ARTICLE I – NAME & AFFILIATION

The name of this organization shall be “Hope Evangelical Free Church of Dubuque, Iowa”.

Hope Evangelical Free Church (Hope Church) shall be affiliated with the Evangelical Free Church of America through its Central District Conference, uniting with it in mutual efforts for the furtherance of the Gospel of Christ in the measure that Hope Church itself may officially decide.

ARTICLE II - PURPOSE

The three-fold driving purpose of this corporate body and its individuals shall be:

Worship: *To continually worship the true and living God.*

Walk: *To instruct believers in the Word of God and equip them for serving Christ in the home, the Church, and the world.*

Witness: *To spread the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ.*

ARTICLE III - STATEMENT OF FAITH

The Evangelical Free Church of America is an association of autonomous churches united around these theological convictions:

God

1. We believe in one God, Creator of all things, holy, infinitely perfect, and eternally existing in a loving unity of three equally divine Persons: the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. Having limitless knowledge and sovereign power, God has graciously purposed from eternity to redeem a people for Himself and to make all things new for His own glory.

The Bible

2. We believe that God has spoken in the Scriptures, both Old and New Testaments, through the words of human authors. As the verbally inspired Word of God, the Bible is without error in the original writings, the complete revelation of His will for salvation, and the ultimate authority by which every realm of human knowledge and endeavor should be judged. Therefore, it is to be believed in all that it teaches, obeyed in all that it requires, and trusted in all that it promises.

The Human Condition

3. We believe that God created Adam and Eve in His image, but they sinned when tempted by Satan. In union with Adam, human beings are sinners by nature and by choice, alienated from God, and under His wrath. Only through God's saving work in Jesus Christ can we be rescued, reconciled and renewed.

Jesus Christ

4. We believe that Jesus Christ is God incarnate, fully God and fully man, one Person in two natures. Jesus-Israel's promised Messiah-was conceived through the Holy Spirit and born of the virgin Mary. He lived a sinless life, was crucified under Pontius Pilate, arose bodily from the dead, ascended into heaven and sits at the right hand of God the Father as our High Priest and Advocate.

The Work of Christ

5. We believe that Jesus Christ, as our representative and substitute, shed His blood on the cross as the perfect, all-sufficient sacrifice for our sins. His atoning death and victorious resurrection constitute the only ground for salvation.

The Holy Spirit

6. We believe that the Holy Spirit, in all that He does, glorifies the Lord Jesus Christ. He convicts the world of its guilt. He regenerates sinners, and in Him they are baptized into union with Christ and adopted as heirs in the family of God. He also indwells, illuminates, guides, equips and empowers believers for Christ-like living and service.

The Church

7. We believe that the true church comprises all who have been justified by God's grace through faith alone in Christ alone. They are united by the Holy Spirit in the body of Christ, of which He is the Head. The true church is manifest in local churches, whose membership should be composed only of believers. The Lord Jesus mandated two ordinances, baptism and the Lord's Supper, which visibly and tangibly express the gospel. Though they are not the means of salvation, when celebrated by the church in genuine faith, these ordinances confirm and nourish the believer.

Christian Living

8. We believe that God's justifying grace must not be separated from His sanctifying power and purpose. God commands us to love Him supremely and others sacrificially, and to live out our faith with care for one another, compassion toward the poor and justice for the oppressed. With God's Word, the Spirit's power, and fervent prayer in Christ's name, we are to combat the spiritual forces of evil. In obedience to Christ's commission, we are to make disciples among all people, always bearing witness to the gospel in word and deed.

Christ's Return

9. We believe in the personal, bodily and glorious return of our Lord Jesus Christ. The coming of Christ, at a time known only to God, demands constant expectancy and, as our blessed hope, motivates the believer to godly living, sacrificial service and energetic mission.

Response and Eternal Destiny

10. We believe that God commands everyone everywhere to believe the gospel by turning to Him in repentance and receiving the Lord Jesus Christ. We believe that God will raise the dead bodily and judge the world, assigning the unbeliever to condemnation and eternal conscious punishment and the believer to eternal blessedness and joy with the Lord in the new heaven and the new earth, to the praise of His glorious grace. Amen.

ARTICLE IV - MEMBERSHIP

Members shall be persons at least 16 years old who have accepted Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord, have a desire to live in obedience to God's Word and in dependence on God's grace, will abide by these Articles and By-Laws, and who purpose to actively participate in the ministry of the church.

ARTICLE V - AUTHORITY

The voting membership (the Congregation) at congregational meetings shall be the governing body of this church.

ARTICLE VI - PROPERTY

This Church shall have the power to receive, either by gift or purchase, and to hold such real, personal, or mixed property as is authorized by the laws of the State of Iowa and as is deemed necessary for the business of Hope Church, and shall have the power to dispose of such property by mortgage, deed, or otherwise. All such property shall be held in the name of the local Church.

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In the case of a division of Hope Church, its property shall continue to belong to those who abide by its Articles and By-Laws.

In case of dissolution of the Hope Church organization, the property shall be assigned to the Central District Conference of the Evangelical Free Church of America to enable said Conference to renew the work or to use the values thereof for further Gospel enterprise. Hope Church shall be considered dissolved if so decided by the Congregation or when the membership has not held a congregational meeting for two years.

ARTICLE VII - AMENDMENTS TO THE ARTICLES OF INCORPORATION

These Articles may be amended by the following process:

1. A proposed amendment must have three or more church member sponsors to be considered. The sponsors must submit the proposal in writing to the Chairman who will present the proposed amendment at the next congregational meeting.
2. The proposed amendment shall then be announced in the weekly public church communications at least once each calendar month for at least the three calendar months preceding the discussion and vote on the amendment which will take place at the first congregational meeting after the required announcements.
3. The amendment will be presented as a motion, discussed and then voted on by secret ballot. A two-thirds (2/3) majority vote of the membership voting is necessary for the passage of the proposed amendment.

BY-LAWS

INTRODUCTION TO THE BY-LAWS

Based on the Articles of Incorporation, the members of the Hope Evangelical Free Church agree to voluntarily submit ourselves to the following operational By-Laws:

I - GOVERNMENT

1. **Authority:** The Congregation, the voting membership at congregational meetings, shall be the governing body of this church. Congregational meetings are all formal meetings of the voting membership that are so called and conducted 1) According to the requirements found in these By-Laws and 2) For the purpose of making congregational decisions required by these By-Laws.

Per these By-Laws, the congregation is the deciding authority for:

- A. Calling and removing the Senior Pastor
- B. Affirming the individual members of the Church Board
- C. Changing the Articles of Incorporation and By-Laws
- D. Approving the annual church Budget
- E. Approving the purchase or rental of real property and projects that add or expand facilities.
- F. All other decisions explicitly defined in these By-Laws

The Congregation delegates all other decisions to the Church Board and its designates on the staff, in ministry teams and committees as appropriate.

2. **Oversight:** The Church Board shall dedicate itself to the spiritual oversight of the church. It shall be committed to the prayerful following of God's will for this body of believers according to the biblical purposes of the church.

The Bible is our final authority. Should any questions of interpretation and application arise, the Church Board is the final interpretive authority on the Bible's meaning and application for Hope Evangelical Free Church. The Board, as they deem appropriate, may clarify the interpretation and application of the Bible on specific topics in writing in the form of Position Statements. These Position Statements will be drafted and approved by the Board and available to all members as well as prospective members.

The Board shall be responsible for all funds, buildings, properties and other material and physical aspects of the Church. Through direct oversight of the Senior Pastor, it shall oversee the staff, all organizations, programs and committees of the church. The Board shall oversee the budget throughout the fiscal year to ensure overall spending does not exceed giving. It delegates the day-to-day management of expenditures within the approved budget to the Senior Pastor or his delegate. The Board shall have the authority, directly or through its designates, to approve unplanned, unanticipated, or emergency expenditures that individually do not exceed 3% of the annual budget and in aggregate do not exceed 10% of the annual budget.

The Board shall appoint/approve committees to supervise the effective operation of the ministries of the church as mandated in the By-Laws and as otherwise needed.

II - MEMBERSHIP

Members shall be persons at least 16 years old who have accepted Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord, have a desire to live in obedience to God's Word and in dependence on God's grace, and will abide by these Articles and By-Laws, and who purpose to actively participate in the ministry of the church.

The procedures governing membership in this church:

1. **Admission:** A member applicant shall prayerfully consider the Articles and By-Laws of Hope Church with particular attention to the Statement of Faith. He or she shall then submit an application for membership to the Church Board. The application shall include affidavits by a member of the Board and another member of the Congregation, attesting to a credible profession of personal faith, by the applicant, in Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior. The application shall also include a commitment, by the applicant, to use his or her time, talents and treasure in service to the Lord Jesus Christ through the ministry of Hope Church. Upon notification of the Congregation for at least two weeks along with Board review and approval, the member applicant will be notified by the Board. A two-thirds (2/3) majority vote of the Board is required for final approval of the application for membership.
2. **Expectations of Membership:** Signified by agreement with the Hope Church Membership Covenant, it shall be understood that ongoing membership in Hope Church carries with it the expectation of continual commitment to its ministry and mission and, in acknowledging the Lord's claim to one's time, talent and treasures, the offering of these for His glory through Hope Church, specifically, and through a committed Christ-honoring life, in general. Members will be given an opportunity to reaffirm their agreement with these expectations every two years.
3. **Removal from membership:** Membership will be terminated if any of the following applies to a member, subject to the judgment of the Board:
 - A. The member submits a letter of resignation to the Board.
 - B. The member does not submit to terms of discipline brought forth by the Board and/or the Congregation.
 - C. The member moves his or her permanent residence out of the local area, to the effect that it is no longer practical to regularly participate in the worship and ministries of the church.
 - D. The member is absent from the life of the church for more than six months without expectation to return and for whom there are not mitigating circumstances (such as poor health, military assignment, college, etc.) that would excuse them from this requirement.
 - E. The member does not reaffirm their agreement with Hope Church's Articles of Incorporation and Bylaws along with their desire to maintain membership every two years.
4. **Inactive Membership:** Members who plan to be absent from Hope Church for a period due to circumstances such as schooling, active duty service or temporary work assignment may make their

membership temporarily inactive by informing the Board Secretary. These inactive memberships will not count when determining a quorum for meetings. Upon returning to Hope Church the membership can be reinstated to normal membership status by requesting the Board Secretary to do so.

5. **Discipline:** If any member shall conduct himself or herself in a manner which, in the studied opinion of the Church Board, is not in harmony with Scriptural principles, or who is teaching or otherwise promoting beliefs contrary to the Statement of Faith, Articles or By-Laws of Hope Church, and for which he or she does not show evidence of repentance, that member shall be interviewed and counseled by members of the Church Board after the manner clearly indicated in the Word of God. (Matt 18:15-17; Gal. 6:1) The restoration of the erring member shall be the single purpose, and love the sole motivating force in these interviews. If, however, the member should choose to continue in his or her unrepentant condition, membership will be terminated. Final judgment of such matters must be made by a three-fourths (3/4) majority of the Board, with appropriate information communicated to the Congregation.

III – CHURCH BOARD

1. **Authority and duties:** The Church Board shall supervise the affairs of the church. It shall be responsible for the leadership of the spiritual life of the church and the effective pursuit of its purposes.
2. **Meetings:** The Board shall meet regularly for prayer and to conduct its official business. A quorum shall consist of a majority of its members. Board meetings may be called by the Senior Pastor, the Chairman, or any other two Board members.
3. **Members:** The members of the Church Board shall be the church Elders, the Senior Pastor, and, of the other pastoral staff, only those approved by the Board and affirmed by a two-thirds (2/3) majority vote of the Congregation at any congregational meeting. The Elders are to be lay leaders called by the Congregation as outlined in these Bylaws
 - A. **Elders:** Subject to the availability of qualified and willing candidates, six or more Elders shall be recognized by the Congregation and called to service on the Church Board.
 - B. **Officers:** The Board shall, with a prayerful focus on the unique giftedness of its members, elect Elders to fill each of the following positions as necessary: Chairman, Treasurer and Secretary. These officers shall be authorized to serve as trustees for the corporation in the signing of all legal documents pertaining to finances and properties.
 - C. **Qualifications of Elders:** The following qualifications take precedence over the need to fill the Board to the minimum size: The Elders shall be lay members of the church in good standing and whose character conforms to that described for overseers and deacons in I Timothy 3:1-13, 1 Peter 5:2-3, and Titus 1:6-9. They shall be men at least 25 years old and who, through study of the scriptures, are able to affirm their personal belief in all points of the Statement of Faith of this church, and who consistently display Christian character in their daily lives. They shall also be in general agreement with the vision, values and direction of the church.

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- D. **Term of Office:** Elders shall be elected for two-year terms which begin at the normal time of election, or for the balance of such terms when filling a vacancy on the Board. An Elder can be re-elected for additional terms for which he is nominated.
- E. **Election:** The election of Elders for full terms shall be at the annual congregational meeting by a two-thirds (2/3) majority of the voting membership. Voting shall be by secret ballot and shall include proxy and absentee ballots. The beginning of full terms shall be evenly divided between even and odd numbered years to ensure term overlap for the benefit of continuity.
- F. **Interim:** When leaving the Board for any reason, a member is not eligible to be re-elected to the Board for a period of one year.
- G. **Vacancies:** An Elder vacancy that reduces the Board below the minimum number (defined above) shall be filled by election at any congregational meeting to complete the unexpired term of the office being filled. Nomination for such positions must follow the same procedure as for that of normal terms.
- H. **Duties:** All Board members are called to exemplary service, prayerfully seeking God's direction for the unique ministry of this local church. The members are to be actively involved in growing as disciples of our Lord, and committed to the strengthening of the fellowship of believers in our midst.

Additionally:

Chairman: The Chairman shall preside at all congregational meetings and Board meetings, shall champion the purposes and policies of the church and shall see that committees are appointed as needed.

Treasurer: The Treasurer shall lead the Finance Committee, along with the Executive Pastor, to oversee the processes and procedures related to receiving and distributing all funds on authority granted by the Church Board. He shall give regular reports to the Board and membership and shall ensure that effective procedures are in place for the biblical stewardship of the finances of the church.

Secretary: The Secretary shall maintain an accurate membership list consistent with the membership expectations defined in these By-Laws and shall take minutes of Board meetings and congregational meetings. He or his designate shall administer the absentee ballots, proxy votes and secret ballots at congregational meetings.

Elders: Including the aforementioned officers, the Elders are to act as overseers of the affairs of the church, faithfully dispatching their unique gifts and abilities toward the fulfillment of the purposes of the church.

- I. **Discipline:** If any member of the Board shall conduct himself in a manner which, in the studied and unanimous opinion of the other members of the Board, is not in harmony with Scriptural principles, or who is teaching or otherwise promoting beliefs contrary to the Statement of Faith, Articles or By-Laws of Hope Church, and for which he does not show evidence of repentance, that member shall be dismissed from the Board and treated according to the general guidelines for discipline of a church member, as outlined above.
 - J. **Training:** The Senior Pastor shall be responsible for ongoing training for active members of the Board and prospective Board candidates as needed.
4. **Nominations:** Nominations to the Church Board shall be made by the Nominating Committee With prayerful consideration of the qualifications for Elders, the nominating committee shall select one candidate for each vacant or expiring position on the Church Board. The committee shall, at its discretion, leave vacancies open if a qualified and willing candidate is not available for each position. This committee shall present a list of candidates, approved by a two-thirds (2/3) majority of the committee, to the Board for approval* and then to the membership at least two weeks prior to an election. This list of candidates presented to the membership shall contain only the names of persons consenting to be candidates, approved by the Board, and who submit a written statement attesting to their personal qualifications for, and commitment to, the office. Members of the nominating committee shall be eligible for nomination to the Board. If a member of the Nominating Committee becomes a candidate for nomination to the Board, they will recuse themselves from the Nominating Committee. At that time, the alternate Nominating Committee member will be asked to join the committee.

**Override of Board Approval: In the unlikely event that, for any reason, the Nominating Committee wishes to override Board approval, Board approval may be bypassed by a four-fifths (4/5) decision of the five non-Board members of the committee.*

IV – SENIOR PASTOR

1. **Character:** The Senior Pastor must be of irreproachable character, having a “good report” and qualifying according to the biblical guidelines for overseers (I Tim. 3:1-13; I Peter 5:2-3).
2. **Duty and Responsibility:** The Senior Pastor shall preach and teach the Word of God, lead the public services of the church, watch over the spiritual welfare of the church, and lead the members in a practical Christian life. He shall automatically be a member of the Board and all committees and shall, through direct oversight of the staff, be responsible for the administrative oversight of the church.
3. **Vacancy:** The Board shall be responsible for fulfilling and/or delegating the functions of a vacancy.

4. **Calling a Senior Pastor:** At the beginning of the search process, the Search Committee shall provide an updated Senior Pastor job description for approval by the Board. The committee shall then recommend one or more candidates at a time to the Congregation for approval. A three-fourths (3/4) majority vote of the membership voting shall be required to affirm the call of a Senior Pastor. Voting shall be by secret ballot and shall include proxy and absentee ballots.
5. **Term:** A Senior Pastor called to the ministry of this church shall serve for an indefinite term unless a pastoral call is issued for a specific term at the time of the call. A two-week notice shall be given by the pastor or by the church for the termination of his ministry.
6. **Membership in the Church:** The Senior Pastor shall automatically be considered a member during his ministry and thus subject to the same expectations as other members. In calling a married pastor, it is expected that his wife apply for membership, according to these By-Laws, during the final stages of the calling process, with the expectation that his wife is qualified for, and will maintain, active membership in this church.
7. **Discipline:** The Senior Pastor shall be subject to discipline on the same basis as other church members. The Board shall determine the fitness of the Senior Pastor to remain active in his post for the duration of any such disciplinary process.
8. **Termination by the Church:** Dismissal of the Senior Pastor shall require a two-thirds (2/3) majority of the membership voting at any congregational meeting. This vote shall not include proxy votes or absentee ballots.

V – PROFESSIONAL STAFF

The congregation, through budget approval, authorizes the creation and maintenance of professional staff positions for the execution of the mission of the church. These professional staff positions are to report to the Senior Pastor or his delegate, serving him in leading specific aspects of the ministry according to his directives.

1. **Character:** Each member of the professional staff must be of irreproachable character, having a “good report” and qualifying according to the biblical intent for overseers.
2. **Duty and Responsibility:** The professional staff (consisting of positions such as pastors, directors, administrators, etc.) will assist the Senior Pastor in leading the congregation on the mission of the church, equipping and exhorting the believers to use their time, talent and treasure for God’s glory and their greatest fulfillment of God’s calling in their life.
3. **Calling Professional Staff:** Members of the professional staff, called to the ministry of this Church, shall be recommended to the Board by the Senior Pastor. The Senior Pastor shall make final candidate(s) and their qualifications known to the membership and then shall recommend them to the Board for final approval, allowing two weeks for input from the membership prior to the Board decision. A three-fourths (3/4) majority vote of the Board is required for approval.
4. **Term:** Professional staff called to the ministry of this church shall serve for an indefinite term unless otherwise agreed upon at the time of employment. A fifteen-day notice shall be given by the church for the termination of the employment.

5. **Membership in the Church:** Members of the professional staff shall automatically be considered members of the church during their ministry and thus subject to the same expectations as other members. For married professional staff it is expected that their spouse apply for membership, according to these By-Laws, during the final stages of the hiring process, with the expectation that the spouse is qualified for, and will maintain, active membership in this church for the duration of employment.
6. **Discipline:** All members of the professional staff shall be subject to discipline on the same basis as other church members. At the recommendation of the Senior Pastor, the Board shall determine the fitness of professional staff to remain active in their position during any such disciplinary processes.
7. **Termination by the Church:** Dismissal of a member of the professional staff shall be the responsibility of the Board at the recommendation of the Senior Pastor. A two-thirds (2/3) majority of the Board shall be required for termination.

VI – SUPPORT STAFF

1. The Congregation, through budget approval, authorizes the creation and maintenance of support staff positions (full or part time) in the church, including, for example, clerical and custodial positions.
2. The Senior Pastor, either directly or through delegated authority to subordinate professional staff shall authorize the hiring and termination of all support staff within the constraints of the budget that is approved by the Congregation.
3. Each member of the support staff of Hope Church (full or part time) is expected to exhibit character and reputation that is consistent with the values of the church.

VII - COMMITTEES

Unless otherwise specified, committees shall be appointed and approved by the Board and they shall include at least two non-Board, non-staff, members of the church. In general, committees will be created and dissolved according to specific ministry needs of the church. The following specific committees are mandatory:

1. **Finance Committee:** Headed by the Treasurer and staffed by the Executive Pastor, this committee is responsible to ensure that appropriate controls are in place to protect the financial integrity and accountability of the church. These controls shall be applied to collections, counting, deposits, disbursements, and bookkeeping. Only members of the church may serve on this committee. This committee, through the Treasurer, shall report to the Congregation at the annual congregational meeting, attesting to the integrity and accountability of the financial aspects of the church.
2. **Nominating Committee:** The nominating committee for the upcoming fiscal year shall be selected by floor nominations (of consenting candidates) and a subsequent plurality vote* at the annual congregational meeting. It will consist of five non-Board members of the church and one alternate who are in full agreement with the Statement of Faith of the church, as well as the Senior Pastor and the Chairman. All members should be spiritually maturing people who are characterized by active discipleship and commitment to the church. This committee shall appoint its own chairperson from

among the non-Board members. A vacancy to the Nominating Committee will first be filled by the alternate. Additional vacancies to the nominating committee may be filled at any congregational meeting by plurality vote.

**A plurality vote is defined as each voting member getting one vote per vacant position. Nominees receiving the most votes are elected. Because the number of nominees may substantially exceed the number of vacancies, those elected are not required to garner votes from a majority of the Congregation.*

3. **Pastoral Search Committee:** A Pastoral Search Committee may be called at any congregational meeting for a vacancy or an anticipated vacancy in the Senior Pastor position. This committee shall consist of three members from the Board and two non-Board church members who are in full agreement with the Statement of Faith of this church. It shall be elected by a plurality vote. All members of this committee should be spiritually maturing people who are characterized by active discipleship and commitment to the church.

VIII – MEETINGS

1. **Weekly worship services:** The regular weekly worship services will be held at times determined by the Board.
2. **Congregational Meetings:**
 - A. All congregational meetings will be open to members and non-members who are active in the church. Meetings, or portions of meetings, may be closed to non-members at the discretion of the Chairman or by a majority of the members present at the meeting. Non-members have no discussion or voting privileges at meetings.
 - B. All congregational meetings shall be announced to the membership at least one week prior to the meeting.
 - C. The annual congregational meeting of the membership shall be held during the month of August or the month of September each year.
 - D. During each fiscal year, at least one additional congregational meeting may be held during the months of December through April. During this time period, in the absence of a meeting, the Board will provide a written status update to the membership to include a year-to-date Treasurer's report and any other business or ministry items the Board deems important to communicate.
 - E. Congregational meetings may be called by the Senior Pastor, the Chairman or upon the written petition of 25 percent of the church membership, submitted to the Board.
 - F. When necessary, for expediency or when an in-person meeting is not possible, congregation meetings can be held virtually. A means to take attendance of members present for quorum purposes and a means for members to vote electronically and secretly shall be provided.
 - G. Roberts Rules of Order shall govern the conduct of congregational meetings.
 - H. **Agenda:** The agenda, prepared in advance of the meeting, is ratified at the outset of the meeting by simple majority of the assembly. If an agenda fails to be ratified by a majority of the assembly, amendments to the agenda can be considered in order to gain majority approval. Members of the congregation may add items to the prepared agenda by petition of ten percent of the membership submitted to the Chairman three weeks before a specific meeting.

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- I. **Quorum:** Twenty-five percent of the total membership present at the meeting, along with absentee ballots and proxy authorizations, shall constitute a quorum.
- J. **Voting:** All members in good standing (i.e. not under consideration for discipline) and at least 18 years of age shall be eligible to vote. All matters shall be determined by simple majority (more than 50%) vote of the membership voting except when otherwise specified in these Articles and By-Laws or by decision of two-thirds (2/3) of the congregation to change the simple majority requirement on a given issue.
- K. **Proxy voting:** A member, with the authorization of his or her spouse, may vote one additional proxy vote for an absent spouse on any issue coming under consideration at a congregational meeting. The authorization must be in writing, signed by the absent spouse, and submitted to the Secretary or his designate prior to the Call to Order of the congregational meeting. A proxy authorization is valid for only one meeting.
- L. **Absentee ballot:** Absentee ballots may be obtained from the church office upon request. Each absentee ballot shall be returned in a separate sealed envelope to the church office prior to the meeting at which the ballot will be cast. The ballot or envelope shall contain the name of the member voting. It is the responsibility of the member to be knowledgeable on the issues on the ballot. Upon execution of the ballot, the absentee ballot shall be maintained in the custody of the Secretary or his designate, unopened, until the regular ballots are counted, at which time they will be opened and counted as a regular part of the tally. The names of all absentee voters shall be recorded by the vote counters with the vote results.

IX – AMENDMENTS TO THE BY-LAWS

These By-Laws may be amended by the following process:

1. A proposed amendment must have three or more church member sponsors to be considered. The sponsors must submit the proposal in writing to the Chairman who will present the proposed amendment at the next congregational meeting.
2. The proposed amendment shall then be announced in the weekly public church communications at least once each calendar month for at least the three calendar months preceding the discussion and vote on the amendment which will take place at the first congregational meeting after the required announcements.
3. The amendment will be presented as a motion, discussed and then voted on by secret ballot. A two-thirds (2/3) majority vote of the membership voting is necessary for the passage of the proposed amendment.