

Proposed Constitution Update 1.29.12

HARVEST BAPTIST CHURCH CONSTITUTION OSWEGO, ILLINOIS

Preamble

Whereas, the Lord instructs the local church to do all things “decently and in order” (I Cor. 14:40), this congregation sets forth the following, which will serve as the guide for the orderly conduct of the business affairs of this church.

ARTICLE I: NAME

This church was organized June 24, 1963, as the Oswego Baptist Church. The church was started as a church outreach from Claim Street Baptist of Aurora, Illinois. Initially, the church met at East View Elementary School in Oswego until a permanent church building was purchased which was located at the corner of Benton and Madison Streets. On April 22, 1992, the Church was renamed as Harvest Baptist Church of Oswego, Illinois. In July, 1993, the church was relocated to its present facilities at 5315 Douglas Road in Oswego.

ARTICLE II: VALUES



Reach Up

Worship Corporately
Walk Individually

Reach In

**Connect with Significance
Serve with Purpose**

Reach Out

**Evangelize the Lost
Disciple the Saved**

ARTICLE III: MEMBERSHIP

Section 1: Eligibility

Any person who has accepted **Jesus Christ** as his personal Savior and who has been baptized by immersion as a believer is eligible for membership at Harvest Baptist Church.

Membership at Harvest Baptist Church involves a three-step process:

- 1. Informational/Educational classes:** Those interested in membership or who desire to join Harvest Baptist Church must attend the new members classes. These classes are for the purpose of sharing information about the church, studying Biblical passages pertaining to commitment and service within a local church, and answering any questions that prospective members may have. Individuals under the age of eighteen (18) are exempt from attending these classes. However, everyone, including those under the age of 18, must attend the interview as outlined in #2 below.
- 2. Interview:** The interview is for the purpose of hearing the prospective member(s) testimony of their faith in Jesus Christ and their testimony of baptism by immersion or desire/intent to be baptized. There will be at least one current or former deacon or current pastoral staff person present at the interview. It is intended to be a time of welcome and encouragement and gives the new member an opportunity to ask further questions regarding church membership or commitment.
- 3. Presentation to the Congregation:** Those completing the new member classes and interview process will be formally introduced to the church and welcomed into membership. This may be done after a regularly scheduled service, a church business meeting or some other public venue as deemed appropriate. The intent is to formally welcome and encourage our new members and give praise to the Lord as we rejoice in His blessing of adding new members to our congregation.

Section 2: Responsibilities

A member of Harvest Baptist Church has the responsibility to uphold the Biblical

standards of living as recorded in the Church Covenant:

- To protect and promote the unity of the church
- To support the outreach of the church
- To serve in the ministries of the church
- To uphold the testimony of the church
- To grow and mature in one's personal walk with the Savior

Section 3: Classification

Active member: All members are considered active members in good standing unless membership has been terminated in any matter as outlined in Section 6 below.

Section 4: Privileges

All members eighteen years of age or older may participate and vote in the official transactions of the business meetings at Harvest Baptist Church.

Section 5: Termination

Membership will be severed by any of the following:

- a) By death
- b) By written request from the member or by permanently relocating out of the area
- c) By removal through church discipline
- d) By prolonged absence without reasonable cause

Prolonged absence is demonstrated by a willful act of non-attendance and non-participation within the church rather than a specific time frame. This is not to be interpreted as those who are away from the church due to college, illness, military service, etc. It is the policy of this church to reach out to those members who have voluntarily and without cause distanced themselves from the church and have not attended services or participated in the ministries of the church. Everything possible that can reasonably be done to seek the restoration of the member shall be done prior to removal. Any termination of membership by discipline or removal due to prolonged absence shall be the responsibility of the church leadership board. If membership in the church is severed by written request from the member, by church discipline or by removal due to prolonged absence, the person may only be reinstated with the approval of the church board. In certain cases, if deemed appropriate by the church board, the person may be asked to repeat the membership process as outlined in Section 1 above.

In effort to keep the membership roster as updated as reasonably possible, the pastoral/office staff will routinely review the membership list. Members who have distanced themselves by prolonged absence without reasonable cause will be identified. At least annually, these names will be brought to the attention of the church board for determination to remove them from the church membership roster.

ARTICLE IV: Discipline

The ultimate goal of church discipline is to restore fellowship and bring reconciliation before God and between the Christians involved in the dispute.

Offenses or complaints between members should be handled in accordance with the principles established in Matthew 18:15-17. Any member who feels that an offense has been committed against them or feels that conduct unbecoming for a member has occurred should:

- a) First seek to talk **individually** with the offending believer. Many times it may be discovered that a simple misunderstanding has occurred that can easily be reconciled. If an offense has actually occurred, the parties should seek to achieve restoration.
- b) If the matter remains unresolved, another meeting should occur with **two or three** other non-involved believers present also. It is recommended that the other non-involved people be mature believers in Jesus Christ.
- c) If this fails to resolve the matter, the offense should be brought to the attention of the church board and pastoral staff with reference to the offense involved and the steps that had been followed to try to achieve resolution and reconciliation. The matter then becomes the responsibility of the church board and pastoral staff. The determination of the board and pastoral staff will be binding.
- d) If the offense is such that it warrants the attention of the **entire church**, the church board and pastoral staff will bring the matter before the church membership in order that the church body may seek to win and reconcile the offending believer.
- e) If all else fails, the board and pastoral staff will take appropriate disciplinary action that could ultimately lead to a complete **break in fellowship**.

ARTICLE V: Pastoral Relations

Section 1: Calling of a new senior pastor or an associate pastor

The calling of a new senior pastor or an associate pastor shall be as follows:

- a) The church leadership board shall appoint a Pastoral Search Committee that may include representation from the board, church leadership and the general congregation as deemed appropriate.
- b) The Pastoral Search Committee shall be responsible for soliciting resumes, reviewing resumes, contacting and interviewing prospective candidates, arranging for candidates to preach at the church if appropriate to the position being sought, setting up a question and answer session between the candidate and the congregation, and all else that is deemed appropriate to complete their responsibility. The Pastoral Search Committee shall present

- their recommendation to the church board for approval.
- c) Upon recommendation of the church board, a candidate shall be presented to the church for vote. Approval must be by at least a two-thirds majority vote by written ballot of those present at a properly called business meeting of the church. Only one candidate at a time may be presented to the church for vote. Any candidates for senior or associate pastor presented to the church shall be believers in and teachers of the gospel of Jesus Christ and shall meet the spiritual, personal, and family qualifications listed in 1 Timothy 3:1-7 and Titus 1:6-9.
 - d) In the absence of a senior pastor, the church board shall be responsible for arranging for speakers at church services until a new senior pastor is called.

Section 2: Pastoral Staff Term

All pastoral staff shall, for an indefinite term, perform all the scriptural and necessary duties of their offices per the job descriptions for which they were hired. The church Executive Director shall be responsible to keep an updated file of job descriptions for each pastoral position. Any changes to pastoral job descriptions must be approved by the church leadership board.

Section 3: Pastoral Termination

Termination of a pastor shall be:

- 1) **by resignation.** If a pastor wishes to terminate his ministry with the church, he shall, if possible, give the church at least 30 days prior notice.
- 2) **by dismissal.**
 - a) **For the senior pastor:**
 - this shall require a recommendation of the church leadership board and a two-thirds vote of the congregation at a meeting called for that purpose OR
 - a two-thirds vote of the congregation at a meeting called for that purpose.
 - b) **For an associate pastor:**
 - this shall require a two-thirds majority vote of all members of the church leadership board OR
 - a two-thirds majority vote of the congregation at a meeting called for that purpose.

In the event of dismissal, a pastor's salary may continue to be paid at the discretion of the church leadership board for a determined length of time.

ARTICLE VI: Church Leadership Board

Section 1: Description

The church leadership board shall be composed of the senior pastor, one member of the associate pastoral staff, and a maximum of twelve deacons elected by the congregation as outlined in Section 3 of this Article. All of the above mentioned board members shall have full voting privileges. Additionally, the church executive

director is an ex-officio member of the board without voting rights but may contribute to any/all board discussions. The exact number of deacon members to be elected each year (up to the twelve maximum) will be determined by the board according to the administrative and leadership needs of the church. At the beginning of a new board, the pastoral staff will discuss and collectively decide which associate pastor shall have the voting privilege for the upcoming year. It is anticipated that this associate pastor will be an active attendee and participant in the board meetings. Any of the associate pastoral staff may attend board meetings and contribute to discussions but will not have voting authority. Whenever deemed necessary or appropriate, the board may ask to have certain pastoral staff or others within the church attend a specified board meeting.

Section 2: Requirements

All deacons must be members of the church and meet the spiritual, personal and family qualifications listed in 1 Timothy 3:8-13 and agree to the responsibilities as outlined on the deacon qualification sheet. Those who hold paid staff positions in the church may be excluded from deacon board eligibility due to conflicts of interest that may arise with certain voting issues. Eligibility is determined on a case by case basis by the leadership board. In all cases, if any nominated and duly elected deacon also holds a paid staff position within the church, he shall be asked to abstain from voting on issues that may directly affect his position, remuneration or any matters involving a conflict of interest.

Section 3: Term Length

Deacons shall be elected for a three-year term.

- a) The church board shall appoint a nominating committee each year consisting of 3 deacons.
- b) Prior to the annual business meeting, members of the church shall submit nominations for deacon to the nominating committee. The number of names submitted by each member shall not exceed the number of vacancies to be filled on the deacon board. The nomination process shall be made available to all church members for a period of at least 3 weeks including 4 consecutive Sundays. All reasonable means will be utilized to inform members of the nomination process including announcement during regular Sunday announcements and printing in the bulletin.
- c) The nominating committee then tabulates the nominations and notifies the church board of the nominees. The board will collectively determine if the nominees meet the spiritual qualifications to serve. Additionally, the Senior Pastor shall consult with all pastoral staff members and notify the board of any reason that may disqualify a nominee from serving.
- d) The nominating committee shall contact those individuals receiving the most nominations and who also meet the spiritual qualifications for deacon to inform them of the congregation's desire to have them serve as deacon. After prayerful consideration and review of the deacon qualification and responsibility sheet, the nominee will inform the nominating committee of their consent to serve.

- e) The nominating committee shall continue to contact those receiving the most nominations and meeting the qualifications to serve until the slate for deacon board is in agreement with the number of vacancies to be filled.
- f) The nominating committee then prepares the ballot and the election is held at the annual business meeting as outlined in By-laws, Article 1, Section 3.

Having served a full term of three years, deacons may not succeed themselves on the board immediately. A period of one year shall elapse before members may again be eligible for election as deacons.

Section 4: Responsibilities

The role of the leadership board is to provide vision, oversight and assistance in carrying out the varied ministries of the church. All the executive, administrative and ministerial work of the church shall be accountable to the church leadership board. The decision of the church leadership board is final authority for all matters except those which are mandated to be brought before the church congregation as outlined in other portions of this constitution.

Section 5: Officers

The Senior Pastor, Chairman of the Board and one other board member shall at the beginning of each year meet to hold preliminary discussions regarding areas of responsibility and officers of the board for the upcoming year. The board offices consist of a chairman, treasurer and clerk. Over time, areas of responsibilities handled by the board may change and offices may be created or eliminated. However, no board responsibilities or offices may be added or eliminated without the final approval of the board. At the initial meeting of the newly elected board, the proposed officers and areas of responsibilities will be reviewed and openly discussed by the board as a whole and any agreed upon changes will be made. The board as a whole then gives final approval on the offices and areas of responsibility for the upcoming year.

Section 6: Meetings

The board shall establish regular-meeting times as needed to conduct the business affairs of the church. Special meetings of the board may be called at any time with due notice by the Senior Pastor, the Board Chairman or any four members of the board. The chairman of the board shall serve as moderator at board meetings and all business meetings of the church. If the Chairman is aware that he will be absent from an upcoming meeting, the Chairman shall designate a moderator from among the board members.

Section 7: Vacancies:

The board may fill by appointment, if deemed necessary, any vacancies that may occur on the board, except for Pastoral staff, until the next annual election. At the

next annual election, the appointee must step down (appointment expires) and the vacancy will then be filled by the election process as outlined in Article VI, Section 3. However, the appointee is eligible to be nominated for the board via the normal nomination and election process without having to be off the board for at least one year as otherwise would be required.

Section 8: Trustees

The Chairman of the Board and any other two deacons appointed by the board shall act as trustees to serve as legal representatives of the church. This shall be done whenever necessary in accordance with state or local laws for the purchase, sale or mortgage of church real estate or in any other instances when the necessity shall arise. Sale, purchase or mortgage of church real estate shall only be done after official approval of the church membership for such action.

Section 9: Committees

The Board shall be able to create any committees deemed necessary to carry out the work and ministry of the church. The Board shall be able to disband any committees that are no longer needed. Any such committees appointed shall report directly to the board unless directed to do otherwise. The Senior Pastor, at his discretion, may attend any or all committee meetings, or delegate another member of the leadership staff to attend the meeting(s).

ARTICLE VII: Auxiliary Organizations

Section 1: Existence of Organizations

No society, organization, local chapter or branch of any parachurch ministry, or the like, shall be brought into existence within the church without the knowledge and approval of the church leadership board.

Section 2: Leadership of Organizations

Presidents, sponsors or leaders of any such approved organizations within the church shall be members of the church. Their appointment or election must be approved by the church board.

Section 3: Reports

At the discretion and direction of the church board, all such organizations shall make reports to the board and/or the church membership.

Section 4: Termination

The church board shall have the right to terminate and disband any such organizations within the church, especially if such organizations:

- a) Take doctrinal stances that differ from Biblical teaching**
- b) Are no longer in harmony with the doctrinal statement of Harvest Baptist Church**
- c) Seek to displace the importance of the local church**
- d) No longer serve to support the values statement of Harvest Baptist Church.**

BY-LAWS

ARTICLE I: Business Meetings

Section 1: Family Business Meetings

Family business meetings shall be held at the church at least 2x per year preferably in January and August. The January meeting shall be designated as the annual business meeting.

Section 2: Annual Family Business Meetings

The annual family business meeting shall be held at the church in January. Business brought before the membership at the annual meeting shall include (but not be limited to) the presentation and approval of the budget, the election of deacons, and any other reports deemed necessary by the church board.

Section 3: Election of Deacons

The election of deacons shall be by ballot. Each church member in attendance at the annual meeting shall vote "yes" or "no" for each nominee slated on the ballot. The nominating committee shall be responsible for preparing, distributing, collecting and tabulating the ballots.

Section 4: Additional Family Business Meetings

Additional or special business meetings may be called at any time by the Senior Pastor, a majority vote of the church board or by written petition to the church board by any fifty (50) unrelated voting members of the church. Such petition should clearly indicate the reason for calling the special meeting. At such a petitioned meeting, the only business to be transacted shall be the business for which the meeting had been specifically called.

Section 5: General definitions and guidelines

- The **fiscal year** is defined to correspond to the calendar year and shall begin on January 1 and end on December 31.
- A **quorum** is required at all church business meetings for the transaction of business. Twenty-five church members of voting age shall constitute a quorum.
- All business conducted shall be by **simple majority vote** unless specified differently by various sections of the church constitution or by-laws.
- Any scheduled or specially called family business meetings shall be posted in the bulletin and be announced as part of the regular Sunday announcements on the two consecutive Sundays prior to said meeting.
- **Robert's Rules of Order** shall be followed in all business meetings.

- **No absentee ballots** shall be allowed in any church elections or vote.

ARTICLE II: Wages and Salaries

All wages and salaries shall be paid out of the general offering church fund. The personnel committee will review all salaries & wages at least annually. Any recommendations/changes shall be included in the annual budget. The church board holds final approval over the wage & salary administration as presented in the annual budget. Any change in salaries & wages is retroactive to January 1st of the current fiscal year upon approval of the annual budget by the church membership.

ARTICLE III: Amendments

This constitution and bylaws may be amended at any business meeting of the church by a two-thirds vote of the members present provided that both of the following provisions have been met:

- (a) Such amendment has been duly considered and approved by a two-thirds majority vote of the church board.
- (b) Notice of the intent to amend the constitution or articles, church covenant, doctrinal statement or position papers has been posted in the bulletin and announced as part of the regular Sunday announcements on the two consecutive Sundays prior to said meeting.

ARTICLE IV: Dissolution

In the case of dissolution, all assets of the church shall be dispersed in the following manner:

- a) Any outstanding debts, loans, mortgages, bills and the like shall be paid first. If funds are not available to meet the outstanding debts, assets and properties will be sold to obtain the necessary funds.
- b) All remaining assets, or the net proceeds thereof in the case of sale, shall be donated to not-for-profit Christian ministries or missions as determined by vote of the church membership.
- c) The church board shall have the responsibility of carrying out these procedures.

Those who support the work of this ministry with tithes, offerings and donations do so in obedience to the principles of giving established in God's Word. As such, all such gifts become the property of this local church to be used for the Lord's work. No one shall have the right to seek individual recompense for any gifts given.

This Constitution was approved by the membership of Harvest Baptist Church on **(1.29.12)**, and replaces all preceding documents.