

Bylaws of Highlands Community Church

Incorporated 1950

Approved March 19, 2024

Preamble

We believe that an independent, nondenominational church provides a closer fellowship for all who believe in Jesus Christ as their Savior and is better able to supply the spiritual needs of our community, and we unite under these Bylaws and pray God's richest blessing on this effort on behalf of His church.

It is desired that the government of the church be structured in such a way as to facilitate the rule of Jesus Christ over His church. Statements of Scripture on this government are: 1 Timothy 3:1-13, 1 Timothy 5:17; Titus 1:5-9; and 1 Peter 5:1-4. In light of this, the church is ruled by a Board of Elders who are selected from the congregation based on their satisfaction of the qualifications for the position as defined in 1 Timothy 3:1-7 and Titus 1:5-9.

Article I

The Name

Pursuant to the Articles of Incorporation, the church shall be called Highlands Community Church.

Article II

Statement of Faith

Section A – The Scriptures

We believe the sixty-six books of the Bible are God's Word, written by human authors under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, so that every word is God-breathed. The Bible is inerrant and infallible in the original manuscripts. It reveals who God is so that He may be known, trusted, and obeyed. All Scripture testifies about Christ, who is Himself the focus of divine revelation. The Bible alone speaks with final authority concerning truth, morality, and proper conduct.

Section B – The Triune God

We believe there is one and only one living and true God. He is eternally existent simultaneously in three distinct Persons: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Each person is the same in divine nature, divine substance, and divine attributes, equally deserving of worship and obedience. The Triune God is the creator and sustainer of heaven and earth. He is all-present, all-powerful, and all-knowing. He is infinite, eternal, and unchanging in His being; perfect in wisdom, power, holiness, justice, goodness, beauty, and truth. God alone is worthy of all glory, honor, power, and praise.

Section C – God the Father

We believe God the Father is eternally sovereign over all things. He reigns providentially over creation and history with gracious, tender care, freely working everything together according to the purpose of His will. Because of His faithful love and according to His glorious wisdom and grace, He planned and predestined the world's redemption in His Son, Jesus. By His power, the Father keeps believers secure in Christ forever.

Section D – God the Son, Jesus Christ

We believe the Lord Jesus Christ is God's promised Messiah, the one and only eternal Son of God. He is the exact representation of God's nature, and all the fullness of God dwells in Him, so that He is Immanuel, God with us. He is truly God and truly man. He was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of a virgin, lived a sinless life, performed miracles, preached the good news of the Kingdom of God, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died, and was buried. His death was a vicarious, atoning substitute for sinners, satisfying the wrath of God, that all who believe might be saved through His shed blood. In His suffering He provided the model of perfect humility and obedience to the Father. We believe in His bodily resurrection, which vindicated Him and guarantees eternal hope for our future resurrection. He conquered sin, death, and the dominion of darkness. He bodily ascended to the right hand of the Father where He reigns over all things and intercedes for His church. He will personally and imminently return for His church and with His church to judge the living and the dead.

Section E – God the Holy Spirit

We believe God the Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father and the Son. He guided the human authors of the Bible to record God's revelation so that all Scripture is God-breathed. He has been active in every step of God's redemptive plan. He glorifies Christ in all that He does. In the present age, He convicts the world concerning sin, He regenerates sinners, and He baptizes them into the body of Christ, applying Christ's work to believers. He indwells all believers, illuminates their understanding of God's Word, seals them unto the day of redemption, equips them with spiritual gifts, empowers them to obey God's Word, helps them in their weakness, and conforms them into the likeness of Christ. Every believer is commanded to be filled with the Holy Spirit.

Section F – Humanity's Creation and Fall

We believe that human beings, both male and female, are created in the image and likeness of God. As the pinnacle of God's creation, every person is to be respected and loved from conception until death. The human race was created in holiness, free from sin and in fellowship with God, but by voluntary choice fell from that holy and happy state. Consequently, all humans are now sinners, not by constraint but by choice. We all inherit from Adam a nature inclined towards sin, an environment corrupted by sin, and are subject to God's righteous judgment, deserving eternal condemnation.

Section G – Gender, Marriage, & Sexuality

We believe that God created the human race male and female. The gift of male and female genders is thus part of the goodness of God's creation, and all conduct to adopt a gender different from one's biological sex at conception is sin. We believe that God has established marriage as a lifelong, exclusive relationship between one man and one woman. It is a covenantal relationship designed by God to symbolize the union between Christ and His church. All intimate sexual activity outside the marriage relationship, whether heterosexual, homosexual, or otherwise, is contrary to God's design and therefore sin.

Section H – Sin

We believe that sin is rejecting or ignoring God in the world he created, rebelling against him by living without reference to him, failing to love God and be and do all he requires in his law. It stems from our trust in created things rather than the Creator for our hope and happiness, significance and security. It results in death, the disintegration of all creation, and separation from God. While humans are capable of many good works because of God's common grace and our own conscience, none of these works can save. All people need God's salvation, found only in Jesus Christ.

Section I – Salvation

We believe salvation is a gracious work of God to redeem creation from sin and death. Salvation is offered freely in the gospel of Jesus Christ, which was promised in the Old Testament, revealed through Christ's life, death, resurrection, and ascension, and will be fully realized with the final judgment. All humans can receive God's free gift of salvation through personal repentance and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. The saved people of God are united with Christ, born again as new creations, adopted into God's family, forgiven of their sins, justified before God, sanctified for love and good works, and will be glorified in resurrected bodies. The Holy Spirit is a seal and down payment of these great truths for all believers in Christ.

Section J – Baptism & The Lord's Supper

We believe baptism and the Lord's Supper are the two ordinances Jesus gave to the church to visibly proclaim His redeeming work and publicly identify His redeemed people. Baptism is a symbolic washing of a believer into the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. It symbolizes the power of Christ's death and resurrection to cleanse sins once for all, our union with Christ through faith, and our public identification with Christ and His people. The Lord's Supper is a symbolic meal that proclaims Christ's redeeming death for sins. The bread symbolizes the body of Christ; the cup symbolizes the blood of Christ. The Lord's Supper calls believers to remember God's promises and renews believers' commitment to Christ and His people.

Section K – The Church

We believe there is one holy, universal, apostolic Church — God's spiritual community made up of all believers in Christ. The Church is the body and bride of Christ, the spiritual family of God, made visible in local churches. A local church is a congregation of believers who join together to practice the two ordinances of baptism and the Lord's Supper, to worship, to learn and obey the Word, to love one another as Christ loved, to serve and build up one another through exercising spiritual gifts, and to spread the gospel to all peoples. A local church is to be led by qualified elders and served by qualified deacons under the authority of Christ, who is the head of the Church.

Section L – The Eternal State

We believe Jesus will physically return to the earth to judge the living and the dead. At the final judgment, those who have believed the gospel will receive God's promised salvation and humanity will be restored to life with God, reigning forever with Him in the New Heavens and New Earth, free from the curse of sin, in glorified, resurrected

bodies. Those who have rejected the gospel will be condemned to Hell, the place of everlasting, conscious punishment.

Article III

Organization and Administration

Section A - Background

Highlands Community Church was incorporated in 1950 in the State of Washington as the outgrowth of a Sunday school effort to meet the spiritual needs of people representing many denominational backgrounds in a temporary Federal Housing project. The congregation has no denominational support nor obligation and practices congregational autonomy. The congregation is independent in government, bound to other congregations only by love and fellowship. The property belongs to the corporation and is dedicated to God to be used for His glory and the good of mankind.

Section B - The Board of Elders

The Board of Elders is responsible for the shepherding of the congregation and the governance of the corporate business of the church.

Section C - Deacons and Deaconesses

Deacons and Deaconesses act with delegated authority from the Board of Elders in their assigned areas of ministry.

Section D - Pastoral Staff

The lead pastor reports to the Board of Elders. All other pastors and staff report to the lead pastor or a designee of the lead pastor.

Article IV

Board of Elders

Section A - Membership

The Board of Elders is composed of those members of the church who satisfy the qualifications of Scripture for eldership and are appointed to serve in that capacity (1 Timothy 3:1-7; Titus 1:5-9; 1 Peter 5:1-4).

Section B - Qualifications

The qualifications for appointment to the Board of Elders are based on those set forth in the New Testament in 1 Timothy 3:1-7, 5:17-20, and Titus 1:5-9. Additionally, an elder shall be 18 years of age or older, a member of Highlands Community Church (HCC) for at least one year, and active in HCC ministry for at least the previous year, with the exception of the lead pastor who may be appointed prior to achieving one year of membership and active participation in ministry.

Section C - Meetings

1. Meetings of the Board of Elders will be held at least quarterly.
2. Special meetings may be called by the Chairman of the Board of Elders, the Lead Pastor , or 50% of the elders with a minimum of 48 hours notice.
3. Two thirds of the members of the Board of Elders constitute a quorum.
4. When necessary and appropriate, elders may attend meetings of the Board of Elders by teleconference or other electronic means.
5. Because we believe that the leaders of the church should be of "one mind and purpose" (Philippians 2:2), the unanimous consent of those elders present at the meeting is required to approve any motion.
6. When necessary and appropriate, the Chairman of the Elder Board may present a motion for approval to the Board of Elders and receive votes by electronic means. Such a motion may only be approved provided all members of the Board of Elders vote and unanimously consent to the motion.
7. All meetings of the Board of Elders will be conducted in a manner consistent with the spirit and meaning of the Scriptures, and in accordance with the Bylaws of Highlands Community Church. All meetings will follow the parliamentary procedures outlined in Roberts Rules of Order.

Section D - Responsibilities of the Board of Elders

The Board of Elders is responsible:

1. For the spiritual guidance, instruction, and protection of the congregation.
2. To assist the pastoral staff in the administration of all ordinances.
3. To appoint or remove the lead pastor.
4. To oversee the management of the corporation. In this capacity, the elders will ensure that all affairs pertaining to the function and well-being of the corporation are transacted efficiently and in keeping with sound biblical principles.
5. To approve the acquisition or disposition of real property
6. To approve any changes to the Bylaws as per Article XIII (Amendment of Bylaws).
7. To appoint officers of the church.
8. To serve as the final interpretive authority on the Bible's meaning and application for Highlands Community Church.
9. To discipline and/or remove a member of the Board of Elders, deacons, deaconesses, or any other officer in the event that he or she ceases to fulfill the qualifications of the office. No elder is eligible to vote upon the issue of his removal from the Board of Elders.

Section E – Appointment and Term of Service

Candidates for the Board of Elders may be recommended by the Board of Elders, ministry leadership, or the congregation. A call for recommendations by the congregation will be made at least eight weeks prior to the annual appointment of the Board of Elders. If it is determined by the Board of Elders that the number of elders on the board must be increased prior to the next annual appointment time, a call for candidate recommendations by the Board of Elders, ministry leadership, or the congregation may be made at any time. Candidates recommended will be referred to the Board of Elders for review.

The Board of Elders will weigh the qualification of each nominee against the criteria set forth in the New Testament and these Bylaws.

The Board of Elders will annually appoint those to serve on the Board of Elders, with these exceptions: 1) the Lead Pastor who may be considered for appointment to serve upon commencement of employment at Highlands Community Church and 2) qualified candidates who may be considered for appointment to fill positions on the Board of Elders prior to the normal, annual appointment time. Each member of the Board of Elders will serve from the time of his appointment until the normal, annual appointment time when his term may be renewed for another year.

After serving for six (6) consecutive annual appointments (one-year terms), staff and lay elders, with the exception of the Lead Pastor, must rotate off the governing Board of Elders for a one (1) year sabbatical prior to being appointed again. The Lead Pastor will rotate off the Board of Elders during his required sabbaticals.

The Board of Elders is to consist of a minimum 51% of independent, governing elders. The "Independent Elders" shall be defined as:

1. Elders who are not employees or staff members of the organization.
2. Elders who may not individually dictate the operations of the organization similar to an employee or staff member.
3. Elders who are not related by blood or marriage to staff members or other board members.
4. Elders who do not receive a significant amount for consulting, speaking, or any other remuneration from the organization.

Section F - Input from the Congregation

The list of nominees will be submitted to the membership at least two weeks prior to the annual appointment of the Board of Elders.

After publication of the nominees, the Board of Elders will accept for consideration any concerns regarding a nominee that would render him ineligible according to the Scriptures or these Bylaws. The Board of Elders will determine the validity of these concerns and either confirm or remove the nominee.

Article V

Deacons and Deaconesses

Section A - Organization

Deacons and Deaconesses will be organized according to their role within the established Highlands Community Church (HCC) ministries. Deacons and deaconesses will be selected for positions identified by the Board of Elders as requiring "deacon- or deaconess-qualified" individuals.

Section B - Definition of "Deacon- or Deaconess-Qualified" Positions

Those ministry positions where the appointed person will act with delegated authority and responsibility on behalf of the Board of Elders are deacon- or deaconess-qualified positions.

Section C - Qualification of Deacons and Deaconesses

The qualifications of a deacon or deaconess are based on those represented in the New Testament, specifically in 1 Timothy 3:8-13; Acts 6:1-7. Additionally, a deacon or deaconess must be 18 years of age or older, involved in ministry at HCC for one year or longer, and a member of HCC or in agreement with the membership covenant.

Section D – Appointment and Term of Service

Deacons and deaconesses will be appointed annually by the Board of Elders. In addition to those appointed annually, the Board of Elders may, as ministry needs arise, appoint deacons and deaconesses.

Section E - Duties of Deacons and Deaconesses

Deacons and deaconesses will serve in ministry areas and perform the documented responsibilities for which they were appointed.

Article VI

Pastoral Staff

1. All pastors must meet the qualifications of scripture for eldership (1 Timothy 3:1-7; Titus 1:5-9; 1 Peter 5:1-4).
2. The lead pastor will be appointed or removed by the Board of Elders. In order to remove the Lead Pastor, an exclusive vote and unanimous consent by the Independent Elders is required.
3. All other staff will be appointed or removed by the lead pastor, unless otherwise delegated by the lead pastor, following a process approved by the Board of Elders.

Article VII

Officers of the Church

Section A - Officers

The following are the officers of the Church: Chairman, Vice-Chairman, Secretary, and Treasurer. Officers will be appointed annually by the Board of Elders and will be elder qualified.

Section B - Responsibilities of Officers

1. The Chairman presides at all meetings of the Board of Elders and all business meetings of the membership, and is the chief officer of the corporation.
2. The Vice-Chairman assists the Chairman, assuming his duties in the Chairman's absence or at the direction of the Chairman.
3. The Secretary keeps the minutes of all meetings of the Board of Elders and all business meetings of the membership, and carries out other duties as assigned by the Board of Elders.
4. The Treasurer is familiar with the finances of the church and carries out other duties as assigned by the Board of Elders.

Article VIII

Requirements for Membership

Section A - Admission

The Board of Elders appoints new members to the congregation.

The church follows an established process for the appointment of new members.

Members are appointed upon the following terms:

1. One must be born-again by the Spirit of God according to John 3:3-7 and Romans 10:9-10. Prospective members must show by their new life in Christ, demonstrated by their actions and confessions, that old things have passed away and all things have become new, and that they are willing to abide by the teachings of Christ and the Apostles in the Gospels and Epistles.
2. A new member must agree to accept and abide by the provisions of these Bylaws and the Statement of Faith (Article II).

Section B - Membership Responsibilities

1. Conduct. Each member of the church is expected to attend its services, to work for its building up, and to guard its good name and that of the elders, pastoral staff, and each individual member; to give of him or herself and his or her means for the work of the church; and to submit to the authority of the Board of Elders according to the Scriptures. Hebrews 10:25; Romans 12:10; 1 Corinthians 16:2; 2 Corinthians 9:7; Romans 12:1-2; 1 Thessalonians 5:12-13; and Hebrews 13:17.
2. Discipline. All cases involving members and regular attenders will be dealt with in accordance with Matthew 18:15-20, not forgetting Galatians 6:1 and 1 Corinthians 10:12. Final discipline is the responsibility of the Board of Elders.
3. Attitude. Considering the many denominational backgrounds of our community church, we wish to stress the importance of the main fundamental doctrines as being absolutely necessary and to be understanding in minor differences that so often are merely differences in terminology or custom.
4. Resolution of Disputes between Members of the Church. In accordance with 1 Corinthians 6:1-8, any unresolved dispute arising between members of the church will be submitted for final resolution by the saints through spiritually qualified designees appointed by the Board of Elders.

Article IX

Membership Meetings

Section A - Worship Meetings

Worship will be conducted in accordance with the New Testament and contain the elements stated in Acts 2:42.

Section B - Business Meetings

1. The Board of Elders will call at least yearly meetings of the membership to provide timely input on critical matters.

2. After first meeting with the Board of Elders without successful resolution, a special meeting may be called by written petition signed by fifty members and provided to the Chairman of the Elder Board, who must call a special membership meeting within 60 days and publish notice of the meeting at least 14 days in advance.

Article X

Ordinances

Section A - Communion

The communion service will be observed on a regularly scheduled basis. All Christians, regardless of denominational affiliation, are invited to partake of this service. The order given to the church in 1 Corinthians 11:23-33 will be followed.

Section B - Baptism

Because we believe water baptism is a scriptural witness of an inward regeneration, all who have accepted Jesus Christ as their personal Savior will be encouraged to take this step of obedience in their Christian life. 1 Peter 3:21; Romans 6:3-6; Matthew 28:19-20; Acts 2:41, 8:12, 35-39.

Article XI

Ordination and Licensing

The Board of Elders is authorized to ordain and license ministers of the gospel.

When in the judgment of the Board of Elders any person is convinced he or she is called of God to the Christian ministry and has personally requested ordination, or the church he or she is serving has requested the ordination, it is the prerogative of the Board of Elders to call a council of ordination and conduct an examination of the candidate.

Article XII

Amendment of Bylaws

These Bylaws may be amended by a unanimous vote of the Elders present at any meeting of the Board, provided that the Elders are notified before the meeting that an amendment or amendments will be considered at the meeting.