

CONSTITUTION

of the

Durham Evangelical Church (Conservative Baptist)

Incorporated May 29, 1973

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Article I. – Purpose

The purpose of this church is to worship and honor God as Father and Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. D.E.C. is a Christ-Centered Church that actively cares for people. This will be done through:

1. Corporate services of worship and prayer.
2. Christ-centered instruction in the Scripture.
3. Development of the local body of believers to a place of spiritual maturity, faithful service, and mutual love and concern.
4. Visible expression of concern for the total person in the local community with emphasis on meeting spiritual needs.
5. Support and encouragement of the worldwide Christian ministry.

Article II. – Amending

This constitution may be amended by a three-quarters vote of the qualified voting members. A quorum (as defined in Article XII clause F) of the qualified voting members must participate in the vote. This vote may take place at a congregational meeting called for such purpose or by an appropriate digital method setup for such purpose.

Article III. - Statement of Faith

A. God - We Believe:

1. In God, Who is the Creator and Sustainer of the universe, eternally existing in three persons: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.
2. In God the Father, perfect in holiness, infinite in wisdom, measureless in power. He concerns Himself in human affairs; He hears and answers prayer; and He saves from sin and death all who come to Him through Jesus Christ.
3. In Jesus Christ, the eternal and only begotten Son of God, who was conceived by the Holy Spirit and born of a virgin, Mary. He is truly God and truly man. He was tempted in all points as all mankind, yet was without sin. He made atonement for the sins of the world by His death. He conquered death by His bodily resurrection. He ascended into heaven, and He presently ministers as High Priest and Advocate. He will visibly return for His church, and will establish His kingdom.

4. In the Holy Spirit, the eternal Spirit of God, whose ministry is to convince the world of sin, righteousness and judgment; to impart new birth, to glorify Jesus Christ; and to baptize, seal, sanctify, teach, comfort, and give spiritual gifts to those who believe in Jesus Christ.

B. Scriptural Authority - **We believe:**

That the Bible is God's Word, that it was written by men divinely inspired, and that it is the supreme and infallible authority in all matters of faith and conduct.

C. Man and His Salvation - **We believe:**

1. That men and women were created in the image of God and that they chose to sin and thereby incurred both physical and spiritual death. Thus by our nature, choices, and deeds we are all sinners and, apart from Christ, shall be forever separated from God.
2. That the Lord Jesus Christ died as a representative and substitutionary sacrifice for the sins of mankind according to the Scriptures. All who believe on Him are thereby justified on the basis of His shed blood.
3. That salvation is by grace through faith, not by works, and that all who receive by faith Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior are born again of the Holy Spirit, thereby becoming children of God, rejoicing forever in God's presence.
4. That both the just and the unjust shall be resurrected in body, the just to everlasting life in the presence of the Lord and the unjust to everlasting punishment.

D. The Church - **We believe:**

1. In the church universal, a living spiritual body of which Christ is the Head and of which all believers in Christ are members.
2. In the local church, a faithful reflection of the church universal gathered in a local setting, of which Christ is the head and believers in Christ are the members.
3. That the primary purpose of the local church is to make disciples of Jesus-- evangelizing the lost through the proclamation of the Gospel, and maturing the saints through teaching, worship, fellowship, and service.
4. That every believer in Jesus Christ is to follow the example and command of the Lord in observing the ordinances of baptism and the Lord's Supper.

Article IV. -Ordinances

- A. **Baptism** As a Baptist church we teach and practice believer's baptism, i.e., immersing in water those who have made a credible profession of having been born again through faith in Jesus. We see this as a faithful way to obey our Lord's command to baptize, believing that baptism is a sign of the New Covenant, in which the washing away of our sins and our union with the crucified, buried, and risen Savior is best symbolized.
- B. **The Lord's Supper** We believe that the commemoration of the Lord's Supper is a proclamation of the Lord's suffering and death, and that through the symbols of the bread and the cup we are reminded of the sacrifice of our Lord which has inaugurated a New Covenant, not of law but of the Spirit.

Article V. – Member's Covenant: A Statement of Purpose and Desire

- A. Having been led by the Spirit of God, I have received Jesus Christ as my Savior and Lord. I have been born again through the Holy Spirit and have publicly confessed my faith by word and by baptism. I subscribe to this constitution and do now state my purpose and desire as a member of the Durham Evangelical Church (Conservative Baptist):
 - 1. To walk lovingly and humbly with my brethren, to pray for them, and to do all that I can to maintain and encourage the unity of the Spirit in the body of Christ.
 - 2. To pray for the advancement in knowledge, spiritual growth and fruitfulness of the Durham Evangelical Church (Conservative Baptist); to uphold its program of worship, training and teaching; to observe its ordinances and affirm its teaching.
 - 3. To give regularly and cheerfully to the Durham Evangelical Church (Conservative Baptist) as God prospers for the support of the ministry of the church, for the relief of the needy, and for the spread of the Gospel both in Durham and throughout the world.
 - 4. To serve faithfully in some activity in the church body according to both God's leading and my spiritual gifts and abilities, taking care to assume only such duties as can be effectively performed.
 - 5. To maintain family worship, training, and discipline in my home, encouraging family prayer, Bible study and spiritual growth for any under my care.
 - 6. To endeavor by my example and effort to point people to Christ and to do my part in building

them up in the faith.

7. To follow the Bible as my rule of faith and practice and to separate myself from worldly and unchristian practices.
8. To endeavor to understand and appreciate my fellow members in the church, especially those who may have personalities, ministries, strengths, weaknesses, and backgrounds quite different from mine.

Article VI. – Membership

The Board shall establish membership criteria and categories of church members. They are presently outlined in the Bylaws. Only those persons who have placed their faith in Jesus Christ and have been baptized are eligible for membership. Furthermore, only those who have shown commitment to the local body by becoming active members shall be empowered to vote and to provide leadership within the body.

Article VII. - Church Discipline

- A. Definition: The term "discipline" shall refer to the correction of dissension, disunity, disobedience, and doctrinal deviations within the church body. It shall begin with Christian teaching, training, and admonition and has as its object the unity of the church community and the restoration of the individual concerned.
- B. Causes for Discipline:
 1. Any outward violation of the moral law of God's Word.
 2. Holding and advocating teachings or practices opposed to those set forth in the Constitution and Bylaws of this church.
 3. Treating the church contemptuously.
 4. Pursuing a course that produces discord.
- C. Attitude: Prayer, love, patience, encouragement, and understanding shall be the framework for all matters of church discipline. When discipline is necessary, it must be remembered "if one part of the body suffers, all the other parts suffer with it; if one part is praised, all the other parts share its happiness" (I Cor. 12:26). The object of discipline is to restore the offender to right doctrine, to godly behavior, and to full fellowship among the believers.
- D. Procedure:
 1. Jesus, aware of the power of sin and desiring to keep His church free of serious impurity, gave steps to follow in working with disobedient members. When teaching, training and admonition have failed to correct difficulties within the membership, the principles and steps in Matthew 18:15-17 will be followed. The step before bringing it to the whole church shall be a step

wherein the "one or two more" of Matthew 18:16 are Elders.

2. Discipline of a member, when necessary, shall be accomplished by a majority vote of the Board. Elders have the authority to specify the reconciliation process, to determine who will be involved in the reconciliation, to specify the sanctions, and to determine when the requirements for restoration have been met.
3. Once disciplinary procedures have begun, no resignation from church membership will be accepted until reconciliation has been achieved.

Article VIII. – Elders

- A. The term Governing Elder as used in this Constitution shall refer to an individual nominated by the Board from among the active membership and ratified by the congregation to be such. For legal purposes, Governing Elders are the trustees of the corporation.
- B. The term Elder as used in this Constitution shall refer to Governing Elders, former Governing Elders, and individuals who have been hired as pastors in accordance with Article X.

Elders shall be men of spiritual maturity according to the principles expressed in Titus 1:5-9, I Peter 5:1-3, and I Timothy 3:1-7, and they should feel called by God to serve in this capacity. The congregation also should feel each Elder is called to such a position. Elders shall serve as the spiritual and organizational leaders of the church, and work willingly and enthusiastically in carrying out their duties.

- C. The Board shall set the number of Governing Elders. That number shall be dictated by availability of men meeting the criteria above and by the leadership needs of the congregation.

D. Becoming a Governing Elder

1. The Board shall determine when to start a nomination process to fill the Board of Elder position based on the needs of the Board and Church. The Board shall also consider how many total Board positions are currently appropriate.
2. The Board with input from the membership shall nominate individuals for the office of Governing Elder according to the number of open positions, and these nominations shall be brought to the membership at a business meeting. In no case shall there be more nominations than open positions. No nominations shall be taken from the floor at the business meeting.
3. The membership shall vote on each nomination by written ballot. To be ratified as an Governing Elder, a candidate must receive four-fifths of the votes of qualified voting members.

E. An Governing Elder can be removed from office at any time by any one of the following procedures:

1. A four-fifths vote of the Board at one of its meetings.
2. A two-thirds vote of the qualified voting members at a business meeting called for such purpose, following the presentation to the membership of a removal recommendation from a majority of the Board. The candidate for removal shall be allowed to speak at this business meeting.
3. In the absence of such a recommendation from the Board, a three-quarters vote of the qualified voting members at a business meeting called for such purpose. The candidate for removal shall be allowed to speak at this business meeting.

F. The normal term of office for a Governing Elder shall be three years, after which a Governing Elder may stand for election again for another three-year term. A Governing Elder may not serve more than two consecutive full terms without stepping down for at least a year. The Board shall have the power to modify this provision in exceptional circumstances.

Article IX. - The Board

- A. The Church Board, or simply, the Board, shall consist of the Senior Pastor and the Governing Elders. Although Board meetings may involve additional parties, only the Governing Elders and Senior Pastor shall be able to cast votes.
- B. The Board has overall responsibility for the spiritual and material welfare and work of the church, except in such matters as are specifically accorded by this Constitution to a pastor, a ministerial staff member, or the church body. For legal purposes, the Board is the corporation's board of trustees.
- C. Should any difference arise between the Board and any individual, office holder, team, or committee within the church, it shall be incumbent upon each of them to consider the views of the other with care and respect, earnestly endeavoring to arrive at a conclusion agreeable to both. If they are unable to agree, the position of the Board shall prevail.
- D. A quorum of the Board shall consist of one-third of its voting members rounded up to the next integer number, but in no case less than three.
- E. The Board shall elect from its Governing Elder members a Board chairman, who shall preside over Board business meetings, for which he shall produce written agendas with copies to all Board members ahead of time. In his absence, the Board chairman shall appoint another Elder to chair the meeting. If the Board chairman neglects to do this, the Board shall elect a temporary chairman from among its members present. For legal purposes, the Board chairman shall be the chief executive officer of the corporation. The Senior Pastor shall not serve as the Board chairman.

- F. The Senior Pastor or Board chairman has power to convene the Board, and the chairman shall do so at the request of any two Governing Elders. All reasonable attempts shall be made to notify all members of the Board for all its meetings. The Board shall convene regularly and not less than ten times each year.
- G. The Board shall elect from its members a Board clerk, who shall keep minutes of all official proceedings of the Board as well as a copy of agendas. These minutes and agendas shall be available for inspection by any Governing Elder at any time. In addition, the Board clerk shall provide to each member of the Board a copy of the minutes within a reasonable time after each meeting and preferably not less than one week prior to the next meeting. The Board clerk shall also keep the minutes of all church business meetings, both regular and special. If the Board instructs, the Board clerk shall provide for inspection by the church membership a copy of the Board's agenda or meeting minutes with sensitive material deleted. For legal purposes, the Board clerk shall be the clerk of the corporation. The Senior Pastor shall not serve as the Board clerk.
- H. The Board shall be responsible for examining and recommending to the church body all candidates for membership in the church.
- I. In overseeing the work of the ministry, the Board shall have broad powers to create, modify, and dissolve positions, teams, groups, etc., except that of Senior Pastor, Governing Elder, and the Board itself. Except as otherwise provided by the Constitution or Bylaws, the Board shall also have the power to install or remove individuals from any position at any time and to effect any personnel action. These actions do not require congregational ratification; however, they will be announced to the membership no later than the next regular business meeting.

Article X. – Pastors

- A. Definition: A Pastor is a man who is called by God and this church to assume the responsibilities listed below. The church shall provide for his material needs, including salary, benefits, vacations, continuing education, and sabbaticals, and shall provide to the best of its ability for his educational and emotional needs. The Board shall review his needs at least annually.
- B. Qualifications:
 - 1. Character: He must meet the requirements for being an Elder.
 - 2. Gifts: He must be able to equip others to carry out the ministry of the church and provide leadership to the church, both by example and instruction. He must possess exceptional leadership, pastoral, preaching, and teaching gifts.
 - 3. Convictions: He must be in complete agreement with Articles I, III, IV, and V, and be in basic agreement with all remaining Articles of this Constitution. He also must meet the requirements for membership and become a member within six months of the inception of his duties. He is to notify the Board when he can no longer subscribe to any provision of Articles I, III, IV, or V.

C. On-going Personal Responsibilities:

1. Spiritual: He is to be a maturing disciple of Jesus Christ in teaching and in practice.
2. Emotional: He is encouraged to develop close relationships with several individuals in whom he can confide, since it is important that his psychological, physical, and spiritual needs be met.
3. Physical: He is to take care of his body so that his work in the ministry is not hindered.

D. Church - He is to:

1. Be a faithful student of the word of God and spend adequate time in sermon preparation.
2. Provide overall leadership and direction in carrying out the purposes of the church.
3. Oversee the equipping and encouragement of church members and the visitation of shut ins.
4. Preach and teach effectively the whole counsel of God, expounding Scripture on a regular and sustained basis.
5. Be a Godly example in his family life
6. Oversee the administration of the ordinances of baptism and the Lord's Supper.

E. Calling a Senior Pastor

1. When a Senior Pastor is needed, the Board shall itself or shall delegate to a pulpit committee the following tasks:
 - a. Keeping the congregation well apprised of the progress in this process.
 - b. Searching, advertising, and soliciting suggestions for the most appropriate man to assume this position.
 - c. Thoroughly researching the backgrounds, abilities, and qualifications of a few of the best possibilities, including interviewing them personally, listening to their sermons, and checking out their effectiveness in their current settings.
 - d. Bringing what appears to be the best individual to the church, preferably with his whole family, so that he can preach and get to know the membership, while the membership gets to know him.
 - e. Holding one or more informational meetings for the membership to ask questions and voice opinions after the candidate has visited.
2. Based on the findings above, the Board shall make a recommendation to the membership to call or not to call the candidate presently under consideration, and this will be considered at a business meeting called for this purpose. Whether the recommendation is to call or not to call, the motion at the business meeting shall be framed to call him. To extend the call, a vote of 80% (eighty percent) of the qualified voting members is necessary. The chairman of the Board shall inform the candidate of the results by telephone as soon as possible, and a letter prepared by the clerk of the Board shall follow this up.
3. If the congregation votes not to call or if the candidate turns down the call, the procedure above shall be repeated. No more than one man shall be in the position of candidating at any given time. Either the membership must vote not to call the current candidate or he must turn down the call before another man can be invited to candidate at the church.

F. Calling of Pastors other than the Senior Pastor

1. When the church requires the services of a pastor in addition to the Senior Pastor a process like that of the Senior Pastor should be followed to identify the best candidate, and make that candidate known to the body. The Board may, at its discretion, use other means to identify the best candidate and present that candidate to the body based on the circumstances of the hire and nature of the pastoral position.

2. The Board shall make a recommendation to the membership to call or not to call the candidate presently under consideration, and this will be considered at a business meeting called for this purpose. Whether the recommendation is to call or not to call, the motion at the business meeting shall be framed to call him. To extend the call, a vote of 80% (eighty percent) of the qualified voting members is necessary.

G. Terminating the Senior Pastor The services of the Senior Pastor can be terminated by any of the following:

1. The acceptance by the Board of his resignation.

2. A four-fifths vote of the Board at one of its meetings.

3. A two-thirds vote of the qualified voting members at a business meeting called for such purpose, following the presentation to the membership of a termination recommendation from a majority of the Board. The Senior Pastor shall be allowed to speak at this business meeting.

4. In the absence of such a recommendation from the Board, a three-quarters vote of the qualified voting members at a business meeting called for such purpose. The Senior Pastor shall be allowed to speak at this business meeting.

The Senior Pastor or the Board shall give notice of thirty days. This can be waived if mutually agreed upon. The Board shall determine an appropriate severance package, if any.

Article XI. – Finances

A. Treasurer: The Board shall nominate and the church shall ratify a Treasurer to prepare budgets and to receive, invest, disburse, and keep a record of funds as directed by the Board. The Church may elect or the Board may appoint others, such as a financial advisor and a financial secretary, to assist the Treasurer. For legal purposes, the Treasurer shall be the treasurer of the corporation.

B. Sources of Income: Monies for the support of the work of the church shall consist primarily of tithes and offerings from the Church body. All members are encouraged to bring such tithes and offerings with cheerfulness on a regular basis. Income from other sources, designated contributions, conditional gifts, and gifts other than money must be approved by the Board.

- C. Disbursement: Disbursements shall normally be in accordance with the Church's annual budget. Any exceptions, including amounts less or greater than the budgeted amount, the disbursement of a designated gift to a recipient requested by the donor, or the transfer of an asset other than money must first be approved by the Board.
- D. Budget Override: When it deems it of sufficient importance, the Board shall have the power to disburse funds differently from the manner specified by the budget. In this case, the Board shall report its action to the membership no later than the next regular business meeting.
- E. Missionaries: The Church will provide a significant proportion of its budget for the support of missionaries.
- F. Budget: The Board shall formulate a proposed annual budget after seeking broad input from the teams, council, committees, and congregation. The budget shall be made available to the congregation no less than at the two Sundays immediately prior to the chief regular business meeting of the year (the "annual meeting"). The budget may be amended at this meeting, as long as there are no objections from a majority of the Board members present, and the amended budget shall be adopted by majority vote of qualified voting members.

Article XII. - Business Procedures

- A. Voting age is 18 years of age.
- B. Although the sentiments of a non-attender may be reported at a church business meeting, only those present may vote.
- C. For church business meeting purposes, a "**qualified member**" is an active member of voting age who is present at the meeting. Only qualified members may vote at a church business meeting.
- D. For church business meeting purposes, a "**qualified voting member**" is a qualified member who is not abstaining from voting on the issue at hand. (This provision is necessary to keep an abstention from having the force of a "no" vote.)
- E. Since it is desired that the church act in one accord, consensus is to be sought in all matters of business. Nevertheless, motions shall be enacted officially by vote of the stated fraction of qualified voting members, as specified by the Constitution or Bylaws. If no fraction is stated, the fraction is a majority. In all cases the fraction refers to that fraction of the active members of that body (congregation, Board, team, committee, etc.) who are both present and not abstaining on the issue at hand.
- F. A **quorum** for any church business meeting is one-quarter of all the church's active members of voting age.

G. All business meetings shall be announced in writing (e.g., in the church bulletin) and orally at the services on the two Sundays immediately prior to the meeting. Also on these two Sundays the agenda and nominations shall be made available at the church.

H. Voting on personnel issues, including the filling of offices, shall be by written ballot. At the discretion of the moderator, other issues may be decided by show of hands or voice vote, except that if one qualified member asks for a written ballot vote on any issue, it must be by written ballot.

I. The Board shall call a minimum of one regular church business meeting each year, at which qualified members as individuals or groups may bring up any relevant issue as new business if it does not appear on the posted agenda.

J. The Board shall appoint a moderator for each congregational business meeting, whether regular or special.

K. After obtaining an informal consensus of the qualified members, the Moderator may rule a new-business issue out of order.

L. A special church business meeting may be called by the Senior Pastor, the Board, or by written request of any ten active members of voting age. Only such business can be transacted as is stated in the notice of a special church business meeting.

M. Robert's Rules of Order shall govern the conduct of church business meetings unless specified otherwise in the Constitution or Bylaws.