

Constitution
Northwest Hills Community Church
Corvallis, Oregon
2002

CONTENTS

PREAMBLE.....	2
OUR IDENTITY	2
OUR BELIEFS.....	2
OUR PURPOSE.....	3
OUR ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE.....	4
ELDERS	
QUALIFICATIONS	4
AUTHORITY	5
ORGANIZATION.....	5
DUTIES.....	5
RECOGNITION	6
CONFIRMATION.....	7
TENURE	7
CHURCH STAFF	
ORGANIZATION.....	8
APPOINTMENT AND TENURE	8
DEACONS	
QUALIFICATIONS	9
DUTIES.....	9
CHOOSING	9
TENURE	10
BODY MEMBERS	
RECEIVING	10
PRIVILEGES	11
RESPONSIBILITIES.....	11
CONSTITUTIONAL CHANGES.....	11
EPILOGUE	11

PREAMBLE

We, the members of Northwest Hills Community Church, do hereby constitute and organize ourselves as closely as possible to the New Testament pattern of church life, membership and leadership. We desire to enable each member to:

Experience God's love through the fellowship of believers; learn the application of God's Word to his/her life; stimulate others to love and good works; and identify and implement his/her spiritual gift for serving the needs of others in the church and community.

We are therefore dedicated to the Scriptural ideal that *"we are to grow up in all aspects into Him who is the head, even Christ, from whom the whole body, being fitted together by that which every joint supplies, according to the proper working of each individual part, causes the growth of the body for the building up of itself in love."* (Ephesians 4:15-16)

OUR IDENTITY

We are a body of people who have placed our faith in the Lord Jesus Christ as our personal Savior. In trusting Jesus as Savior, we have identified with Him in His death, burial and resurrection by public witness and baptism. Now, as His ambassadors, we desire to be a pure representation of the "universal body of believers in Christ," which is His beloved bride. We hold that every member is equally a priest before God and shares in the responsibility for the total ministry of the Northwest Hills fellowship. We welcome all who seek to know and serve God and who desire fellowship with other believers in Christ, based upon the principles and practices of the New Testament church. 1 Corinthians 12:12 says *"For even as the body is one and yet has many members, and all the members of the body, though they are many, are one body, so also is Christ."*

OUR BELIEFS

We have examined the Scriptures to seek out the truths concerning the fundamental doctrines of the Christian faith and their applications to life. It is recognized that some of the doctrines stated herein go beyond the essentials of salvation, although we believe them to represent the message of the Bible. We are convinced of and deeply committed to the following basic truths:

1. The Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments were verbally inspired by God the Holy Spirit, are completely inerrant in the original writings and serve as supreme and final authority in faith and life. 2 Timothy 3:16-17; 2 Peter 1:20
2. There is one God, eternally existing in three persons: Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Matthew 28:19; 2 Corinthians 13:14
3. Jesus Christ was begotten of the Holy Spirit, was born of Mary, a virgin, is true God and true man. He died for our sins according to the Scriptures as a representative and substitutionary sacrifice, and God justifies all who believe in Him on the basis of His shed blood. Matthew 1:18-23; 1 Peter 1:18-21; Romans 3:24, 25a; 4:5

4. Man was created in the image of God. He sinned and thereby incurred not only physical death but also spiritual death, which is separation from God. All human beings are born with a sinful nature and in the case of those who reach the age of moral responsibility, become sinners in thought, word and deed. Romans 5:12; Ephesians 2:1-3
5. The crucified body of our Lord Jesus was resurrected. He ascended into heaven, and presently intercedes for us as High Priest and Advocate before God. Likewise, there shall also be a bodily resurrection of the just and of the unjust, an everlasting blessedness of the saved and an everlasting conscious punishment of the lost. 1 Corinthians 15:1-4; Hebrews 4:16; 1 John 2:1-2; John 5:24-29
6. There shall be the imminent, personal, premillennial return of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Titus 2:13-14
7. All who receive the Lord Jesus Christ by faith are born of the Holy Spirit and thereby become sons of God, a relationship in which they are eternally secure. John 1:12; 10:28-29
8. Church members, including deacons, are subject to discipline in accordance with Matthew 18:15-17. Elders are subject to discipline in accordance with 1 Timothy 5:19-20. All church discipline is to be exercised in the spirit of Galatians 6:1.

OUR PURPOSE

Our purpose is two-fold: to worship and glorify God, and to serve and enjoy Him forever; and to help as many as possible become committed and continuing disciples of Jesus Christ. To this end we purpose to "preach and teach the Word of God proclaiming Christ Jesus, admonishing every man and teaching every man with all wisdom, that we may present every man complete in Him." (Colossians 1:28)

Toward this purpose, we are committed to:

- A. Evangelization
Luke 24:46b-47; John 15:16; Acts 19:10; Romans 1:14-16, 10:1, 2 Corinthians 4:14-21; 2 Peter 3:9.
To have a biblically based evangelistic strategy that encompasses effective outreach to all age groups and all segments of our community. This is basic to all other goals and plans.
- B. Edification
Romans 14:19; 1 Corinthians 14:26; 2 Corinthians 10:8, 12:8 8 19; 1 Thessalonians 5:11.
To have an effective ministry of discipleship which involves:

1. Enlisting
To assist people in making a personal commitment to the Lordship of Christ resulting in baptism and committed membership. Colossians 1:28
2. Establishing
To nurture each member to a level of strength and stable consistency in the life of discipleship. 1 Peter 2:1-3.
3. Encouraging
To help each member to understand and implement our Scriptural responsibilities to one another. Hebrews 3:13; 10:24-25
4. Equipping
To prepare each member of the body for successful Christian living and service. Ephesians 4:11-12
5. Employing
To assist every Christian in having a fruitful ministry in the body and in the community. 2 Corinthians 5:20; 1 Peter 2:9

C. Expansion

Matthew 5:13-16; Acts 1:8

To see every area of our ministry grow both in quality (effectiveness) and quantity (numerical), to start new ministries as needed, and to see new churches started in Corvallis and in the surrounding area.

D. Evaluation

To evaluate periodically our progress in each area, seeking to remain sensitive to needs we may not be meeting as well as we could, and striving toward an efficient balance of edification and evangelism. We desire that all of our operational ministries contribute a part in the process that will present every person mature in Christ.

OUR ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE AND FUNCTION

Our local church body, under the headship of the Lord Jesus Christ, is organized as elders (overseers), deacons (servants), and body members (believer-priests, saints, proclaimers). The needs of the church shall be fulfilled through:

- The faithful teaching of the Word;
- Diligent oversight by elders who shall represent the perspectives of both pastors and body members;
- The faithful implementation of task-oriented deacon ministries; and
- Every member's discovering and deploying of his/her gift in the power of the Holy Spirit.

ELDERS: QUALIFICATIONS

Elders shall be men who are members of Northwest Hills; men who are able and desire to serve God by shepherding, teaching and leading His people; men whose lives meet all the Scriptural requirements set forth in 1 Timothy 3:1-7 and Titus 1:6-9; and men who have conscientiously accepted the articles of faith and the constitution of this local church.

ELDERS: AUTHORITY

The ministry of Northwest Hills Community Church shall be under the direction of the Lord Jesus Christ by means of a plurality of elders who function under the authority of the Scriptures and God's Spirit. The elders, appointed with confirmation and support of the church are the decision-making body. (Hebrews 13:17; 1 Peter 5:1-3; 1 Timothy 5:17) Decisions made by the elders shall be based on Scriptural principles, carefully assembled facts, the individual and corporate leading by the Holy Spirit, and the solicited input of body members. The elders are responsible for helping to preserve the unity of the Spirit by soliciting the input of body members by such means as informational meetings, advisory polls, home Bible studies, information cards, pulpit announcements, the Sunday bulletin, and newsletters. The elders must seek and find the mind of Christ and come to unified agreement before deciding matters of church business. (Ephesians 4:1-6; Philippians 2:1-4)

The Senior Pastor has decision-making authority regarding day-to-day operations of the ministry. The elders decide matters of church policy and church governance.

ELDERS: ORGANIZATION

There shall be a minimum of five elders, including the Senior Pastor. Qualified, paid staff may serve as elders, subject to nomination by the Senior Pastor and confirmation by the body. Lay elders shall be a majority of the elders. If for any reason there is not a majority of lay elders, then an adequate number of paid staff elders shall take a leave of absence until a sufficient number of lay elders are appointed.

Elders shall at all times avoid conflict-of-interest situations. They shall not be involved in decisions that potentially could result in direct financial benefit for themselves or their family. They shall not be involved in decisions to hire family members.

ELDERS: DUTIES

Inherent with the Scriptural authority of elders over the church body are the clear statements of Scripture concerning self-judgment (1 Corinthians 11:31), subjection to all Christians (1 Peter 5:5; Ephesians 5:21), and maintaining harmony with the body through gentleness rooted in humility (Galatians 6:1).

Consistent with these Scriptural statements, the elders shall undertake with joy the duties and responsibilities set forth in the New Testament, such as, to shepherd, oversee, and guard (Acts 20:28); rule (1 Timothy 5:17); teach (1 Timothy 3:2); help the weak (Acts 20:35); admonish and encourage (1 Thessalonians 5:14); visit and pray for the sick (James 5:14-15). Elders shall undertake these duties with both eagerness and selfless motive (1

Peter 5:2; Acts 20:33), "proving to be examples to the flock" (1 Peter 5:3). They shall delegate to deacons and to other body members as appropriate those task-oriented functions that would better enable elders to carry out these duties.

In recognition of any given unique blend of abilities and spiritual gifts among the plurality of elders, and of time and energy limitations for individual elders, the elders will be free to determine specialization of duties and/or function among themselves as befits the overall responsibilities of shepherding, ruling and teaching.

In order to assure knowledgeable participation of body members in the life of the church, elders shall maintain effective two-way communication with the church body by such means as informational meetings, advisory polls, publication of regular synopses of elders' meeting minutes, publication of agendas of upcoming elder meetings as appropriate, home Bible studies, pulpit announcements, the Sunday bulletin, and newsletters. Elders shall innovate appropriate means of communication as necessary for the purpose of maintaining harmony and unity within the church body. The elders shall rely upon the Senior Pastor to monitor and assure the effectiveness of the communication process within the body. The Senior Pastor may designate a staff person or body member to perform this function.

ELDERS: RECOGNITION

All body members are challenged to exercise faith in, rely upon, and actively pray for the working of the Holy Spirit to prepare, identify, and raise up the number of men necessary to oversee God's work through the body. The process of recognizing and appointing elders must never lower the requirements of the office to insure the provision of an adequate number of qualified candidates. It is the responsibility of both elders and members to continually identify potential elder candidates and encourage and assist their preparation for service as future elders.

The elder candidate must have served as a body member for a period of time sufficient to demonstrate himself as a man of impeccable integrity, a man who is keenly sensitive to the body, and a man who has widespread support from within the body. It is recognized that a man may have been proven as an elder in another local church body prior to his membership at Northwest Hills, but it is essential that he take the time necessary to establish relationships with body members, to acquaint himself with our history, and to earn the respect and support of body members prior to his seeking the office of elder.

The source of new elders shall be from within the church body. The calling of an additional elder will be expected to occur in any one, or a combination of, the following ways:

1. Any individual senses God's call, receives confirmation from others, and formally presents himself to the elders.
2. The existing elders recognize and encourage a candidate to formally present himself.
3. Members of the church body recognize and encourage a candidate to formally present himself.

ELDERS: CONFIRMATION

There shall be no limitation placed upon God's sovereign choice to call and confirm a new elder. Under God's leading, however, the elders shall exercise their discretion as to time and need of recognizing elder candidates. The nominees shall be men who are scripturally qualified, who have been gifted by the Holy Spirit for service as elders, and who are known to have widespread support within the body. As a result of consultation with body members and the elders, a man will formally present himself to the elders as an elder candidate and indicate his desire for the office. The elders shall confer with the candidate concerning his willingness to serve, his qualifications, and the requirements and function of the position. Upon receiving affirmation from the elders, the candidate will be presented to the body for confirmation.

Confirmation of an elder candidate shall be achieved by signed responses from body members. These signed responses shall be shared with the elder candidate. If a given member has serious and specific reservations about the candidate it shall be the equal responsibility of both that member and the candidate, with the oversight of the elders, to resolve the conflict in accordance with the spirit of Ephesians 4:25 and Colossians 3:12-14, and in a manner consistent with the principle of Matthew 18:15-17. Should the resultant discussion satisfy the member that the candidate is scripturally qualified and able to serve as an elder, the objection shall be withdrawn. In the event that the candidate does not hear or agree with the objection, or the member is still not satisfied, the matter must be placed before the elders for resolution in the light of the Scriptures. The judgment of the elders shall determine whether or not the candidate's name is withdrawn or his candidacy is confirmed.

ELDERS: TENURE

Elders shall be appointed to a three –year term of service. After the completion of a three-year term, an elder may serve a second three-year term if (1) the elder is willing to serve a second term, and (2) the elders endorse a second term. Church members shall be asked to formally evaluate the service of an elder by signed response prior to the initiation of a second term. Such evaluation will serve to encourage and confirm an elder in his office, or to raise concerns that require resolution. Resolution of concerns shall follow the procedure set forth in the preceding section. The Senior Pastor is not subject to elder term limits or reconfirmation.

A minimum service period of three years is encouraged. The maximum length of consecutive service shall be six years. Each period of elder service shall be followed by a minimum of one year not serving as an elder. An elder may at any time, however, take a temporary leave of absence from his formal duties, or, as personal circumstances may dictate, resign with honor. Removal of elders from office shall be effected by disciplinary action in accordance with 1 Timothy 5:19-20 and Galatians 6:1.

CHURCH STAFF: ORGANIZATION

Church staff includes the following types of positions: (1) Senior Pastor, (2) Associate Pastors, (3) ministry support staff, (4) office staff and maintenance staff.

The Senior Pastor has primary responsibility for leading the ministry at Northwest Hills. He has supervisory authority over all other staff, and is responsible for hiring, terminating and evaluating all other staff. The Senior Pastor serves as an elder and provides guidance to the elders on church priorities and elder function. The Senior Pastor has decision-making authority regarding day-to-day operation of the ministry. The elders decide matters of church policy and church governance.

The lay elders are responsible for hiring, terminating and evaluating the Senior Pastor. Formal evaluation of the Senior Pastor shall occur annually. The confirmation process for the Senior Pastor is described under Church Staff: Appointment and Tenure.

In the absence of a Senior Pastor, the lay elders shall have all the authority defined for the Senior Pastor when the Senior Pastor position is vacant. The lay elders also have authority to hire a transitional Senior Pastor.

The lay elders define salary and benefits for all staff (including the Senior Pastor).

Paid staff members normally shall not be considered for the office of elder. The Senior Pastor, however, may at his discretion nominate a paid staff person for consideration as an elder. Paid staff who are nominated by the Senior Pastor must be confirmed by the body as described under Elders: Confirmation. If either the Senior Pastor or lay elders discern a conflict of interest, the paid staff member(s) shall be excluded from the discussion and decision-making.

CHURCH STAFF: APPOINTMENT AND TENURE

Senior Pastor

The lay elders are responsible for hiring a Senior Pastor. When seeking a Senior Pastor, the lay elders shall provide the church membership with a profile of the responsibilities and qualifications of the position and allow comment from the membership. After receiving input from the membership, the lay elders shall finalize the Senior Pastor profile and seek qualified candidates for the position. The lay elders may appoint a search committee or task force to assist with the recruitment and evaluation of Senior Pastor candidates. Once the lay elders have decided on the best candidate, the lay elders will present the candidate to the church body. Church members will be asked to review the qualifications of the Senior Pastor candidate and to sign an advisory poll that either confirms the candidate or specifies objections. The advisory polls shall be shared with the Senior Pastor candidate. The lay elders shall weigh concerns raised in the advisory polls, as well as all of the other information obtained in the search and candidating process, in making a final decision regarding the candidate.

Associate Pastors and Ministry Support Staff

Associate pastors and ministry support staff shall be hired by the Senior Pastor to meet the priorities of ministry in accomplishing the purposes of the church. A clear job description shall be developed by the Senior Pastor, which identifies the responsibility, function, authority, and accountability of the position. Prior to hiring, the lay elders shall review the proposed job description of associate pastors and ministry support staff. The review shall include financial impact, balance of staff gifting, and relationship of the new position to the ministry purposes. If satisfied with the review, the lay elders shall approve the position and the Senior Pastor may proceed with hiring the person of his choice. The Senior Pastor shall inform the lay elders of his selection of a candidate prior to hiring.

The Senior Pastor shall provide formal performance evaluations of associate pastors and ministry staff annually and informally on an ongoing basis. The Senior Pastor may delegate supervisory and evaluation authority to other members of the staff. The Senior Pastor has the authority to terminate the employment of associate pastors and ministry staff.

Office and Maintenance Staff

Office and maintenance support staff are hired, supervised, evaluated, and terminated by the Senior Pastor. Supervisory and evaluation responsibility may be delegated to associate pastors or ministry support staff.

DEACONS: QUALIFICATIONS

Deacons shall be men who are members of Northwest Hills and who are able and desire to be servants of the local church body, who have conscientiously accepted the articles of faith and the constitutions of the church, and whose lives meet all the Scriptural requirements set forth in Acts 6:3 and 1 Timothy 3:8-13.

DEACONS: DUTIES

It is the responsibility of the elders, in communication with body members, to designate specifically defined areas of need or task to which deacons will be assigned. It shall be the duty of deacons to undertake with joy those tasks set before them, including care over the material needs of the church, serving the needs of people, or any type of service which enables elders to more effectively fulfill their duties. Deacon positions may be added or withdrawn at any time dependent upon existing needs. In accordance with Acts 6:3, a deacon selected and confirmed by the congregation shall be "put in charge of this task." He shall possess and exercise authority to fulfill the responsibilities of his task. Each individual deacon receives this authority from the elders, and is thus accountable to them through the Church Administrator.

DEACONS: CHOOSING

Nomination of deacon candidates will commence immediately after the elders establish one or more specific and well-defined area(s) of need for which a position of deacon is required. It is the responsibility of body members to recognize and to select candidates for each task area. The selection will be expected to occur in one or both of the following ways:

1. An individual senses God's preparation for and call to that task, receives confirmation from others, and is recognized as a candidate.
2. Members of the church body and/or elders recognize an individual's proven ministry and qualifications, and encourage him to be a candidate.

Candidates for each defined task will meet with the Church Administrator or elders for determination of his qualifications, a definition of the task area and its responsibilities, and the candidate's ability and desire to serve. At this time, any candidate will be free to remove his name from consideration. It is the responsibility of the elders to evaluate a candidate's past service within the body according to Luke 16:10 - "He who is faithful in a very little thing is faithful also in much...." If a candidate has no proven past ministry in the body, the elders shall examine his qualifications with greater scrutiny, or give the candidate opportunity to serve in some limited capacity prior to deacon candidacy.

Confirmation of deacon candidates shall be achieved by signed response of the membership. If a given member has serious and specific reservations about the candidate, it shall be the equal responsibility of both member and candidate, with the oversight of the elders, to resolve the conflict in accordance with the spirit of Ephesians 4:25 and Colossians 3:12-14, and in a manner consistent with the principle of Matthew 18:15-17. Actual confirmation of a deacon is understood to occur only when all conflicts or objections are resolved. It is the responsibility of the elders to monitor such resolution and to assure that a candidate's appointment "seems good" to both the elders and the "whole church" (Acts 15:22).

DEACONS: TENURE

Deacon-oriented tasks are understood to involve either definite periods of time, or to be on going. For on-going tasks there shall be no established term of office or service. A deacon may resign from service at his own request, or upon completion of a given task. Removal from office will follow disciplinary procedures as operative for elders. After one year of service, body members shall be formally encouraged to evaluate the service of a deacon by signed response. Such evaluation will serve to encourage and confirm a deacon in his task, or to raise concerns that require resolution. If a deacon remains in office past one year, an evaluation will occur after every three additional years of service.

BODY MEMBERS: RECEIVING

Those who indicate a desire to join Northwest Hills Community Church shall attend a membership class, if possible, or become informed of requirements of membership through interaction with an elder or pastoral staff member. Those desiring to join the church shall be interviewed personally by at least one elder or staff person to determine their relationship to Jesus Christ and their identification with Him in His death, burial and resurrection by public baptism and to determine their understanding and acceptance of the church constitution. Upon satisfaction of the above provisions they shall be presented to the congregation and welcomed as members with full privileges and responsibilities and shall be extended the Right Hand of Fellowship by assembled church members. (Galatians 2:9)

BODY MEMBERS: PRIVILEGES

As a member of Northwest Hills Community Church, an individual will be privileged to come under the shepherding care of the elders, to record his perspectives and opinions on matters of church business on Advisory Polls, to evaluate and confirm church leaders, and to have opportunity to serve in positions of leadership.

BODY MEMBERS: RESPONSIBILITIES

The members shall be responsive to authority (Hebrews 13:17), maintain fellowship (1 John 1:6-7), maintain the unity of the Spirit (Ephesians 4:3), esteem others better than themselves (Philippians 2:3), be constant in prayer (Romans 12:12), assume financial responsibility for the total ministry of the church according to one's ability (2 Corinthians 9:7), and be willing workers (1 Peter 4:10). Disagreements between members will be resolved in accordance with 1 Corinthians 6:1-4 and Matthew 18:15-17 and with cognizance of Romans 14:19 and Galatians 6:1.

The previous delineation of responsibilities presupposes a whole-hearted and serious commitment by each member to identify with and be involved in this body. Members are expected to maintain and exemplify these responsibilities in a manner that glorifies Jesus Christ and makes for the building up of one another in love.

The elders will counsel anyone who evidences serious doctrinal or moral deviation or who evidences a divisive spirit. Those persisting in such attitudes or behavior will be subject to such disciplinary action as is appropriate and in accord with Scripture.

CONSTITUTIONAL CHANGES

This constitution may be replaced or amended when elders and other members of the church body recognize the need for change. At that time, the elders, in consultation with body members, shall seek to discern the nature of the need and to visualize God's provision for its fulfillment. Provisional modifications shall be proposed and all essential information on this matter shall be communicated to the congregation. Responses from the church body shall be solicited by appropriate means and the language of the proposed constitutional modification shall be further examined in light of Scriptures and the congregational response. The elders shall then propose a date on which the new or amended constitution shall take effect; the elders will provide adequate time for additional response by body members, if appropriate.

EPILOGUE

This constitution is conceived for the purpose of introducing ourselves as believers in Christ to all interested persons and of facilitating orderliness and understanding in our exercise of church ministries. It is intended to be an implement of Scripturally based policies, embracing the true spirit of God's Word. Operating procedures within specific church ministries, in the form of bylaws, shall be written as necessary for the purpose of elaborating the detailed outworkings of the constitution. The constitution is acknowledged to be subject to the limited insights of its writers and may be amended as needs develop.

