

# **CONSTITUTION**

## **HARVARD AVENUE EVANGELICAL FREE CHURCH**

### **PREAMBLE**

We, the members of the Harvard Avenue Evangelical Free Church, a not-for-profit Illinois Corporation, operating for purposes described in Section 501(C)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code, adopt the following Constitution of our Church, and voluntarily submit to it.

### **ARTICLE I: NAME AND AFFILIATION**

- A. This Church shall be called Harvard Avenue Evangelical Free Church.
- B. This Church shall be affiliated with the Evangelical Free Church of America through its Great Lakes District and unite in all mutual efforts for the furtherance of the Gospel of Christ in the measure that the Church itself may officially decide.

### **ARTICLE II: MISSION**

Our mission as a church is to love Jesus in all aspects of life. We desire to affirm our new life by:

- Internal Transformation: Following Him with our desires and actions.
- Authentic Living: Living in community with love and authenticity.
- Sacred Serving: Serving with a heart of humility and thankfulness.
- Touching Broken People: Reaching out to the hurting and broken.
- Community of Relevance: Influencing our world with the life-changing hope of the cross.

### **ARTICLE III: STATEMENT OF FAITH**

- A. We believe in one God, Creator of all things, holy, infinitely perfect, and eternally existing in a loving unity of three equally divine Persons: the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. Having limitless knowledge and sovereign power, God has graciously purposed from eternity to redeem a people for Himself and to make all things new for His own glory.
- B. We believe that God has spoken in the Scriptures, both Old and New Testaments, through the words of human authors. As the verbally inspired Word of God, the Bible is without error in the original writings, the complete revelation of His will for salvation, and the ultimate authority by which every realm of human knowledge and endeavor should be judged. Therefore, it is to be believed in all that it teaches, obeyed in all that it requires, and trusted in all that it promises.
- C. We believe that God created Adam and Eve in His image, but they sinned when tempted by Satan. In union with Adam, human beings are sinners by nature and by choice, alienated from God, and under His wrath. Only through God's saving work in Jesus Christ can we be rescued, reconciled and renewed.
- D. We believe that Jesus Christ is God incarnate, fully God and fully man, one Person in two natures. Jesus-Israel's promised Messiah—was conceived through the Holy Spirit and born of the virgin Mary. He lived a sinless life, was crucified under Pontius Pilate, arose bodily from

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the dead, ascended into heaven and sits at the right hand of God the Father as our High Priest and Advocate.

- E. We believe that Jesus Christ, as our representative and substitute, shed His blood on the cross as the perfect, all-sufficient sacrifice for our sins. His atoning death and victorious resurrection constitute the only ground for salvation.
- F. We believe that the Holy Spirit, in all that He does, glorifies the Lord Jesus Christ. He convicts the world of its guilt. He regenerates sinners, and in Him they are baptized into union with Christ and adopted as heirs in the family of God. He also indwells, illuminates, guides, equips and empowers believers for Christ-like living and service.
- G. We believe that the true church comprises all who have been justified by God's grace through faith alone in Christ alone. They are united by the Holy Spirit in the body of Christ, of which He is the Head. The true church is manifest in local churches, whose membership should be composed only of believers. The Lord Jesus mandated two ordinances, baptism and the Lord's Supper, which visibly and tangibly express the gospel. Though they are not the means of salvation, when celebrated by the church in genuine faith, these ordinances confirm and nourish the believer.
- H. We believe that God's justifying grace must not be separated from His sanctifying power and purpose. God commands us to love Him supremely and others sacrificially, and to live out our faith with care for one another, compassion toward the poor and justice for the oppressed. With God's Word, the Spirit's power, and fervent prayer in Christ's name, we are to combat the spiritual forces of evil. In obedience to Christ's commission, we are to make disciples among all people, always bearing witness to the gospel in word and deed.
- I. We believe in the personal, bodily and premillennial return of our Lord Jesus Christ. The coming of Christ, at a time known only to God, demands constant expectancy and, as our blessed hope, motivates the believer to godly living, sacrificial service and energetic mission.
- J. We believe that God commands everyone everywhere to believe the gospel by turning to Him in repentance and receiving the Lord Jesus Christ. We believe that God will raise the dead bodily and judge the world, assigning the unbeliever to condemnation and eternal conscious punishment and the believer to eternal blessedness and joy with the Lord in the new heaven and the new earth, to the praise of His glorious grace. Amen.

### **ARTICLE IV: ORDINANCES**

We recognize two God-appointed ordinances for the Church: water baptism and the Lord's Supper.

- A. We believe that Christ commanded all born-again believers be baptized; however, we do not believe that baptism in any outward form is necessary to obtain salvation. (Matthew 3:13-17, 28:19; Acts 16:31)
- B. The Lord's Supper shall be observed regularly (generally once a month) at a time designated by the Elder Board. Participation shall be governed by the standard given in God's Word. (1 Corinthians 11:23-31)

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## **ARTICLE V: MEMBERSHIP**

### A. Requirements/Procedures

1. Membership in this church is open to anyone who confesses faith in Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior and adheres to the constitution. Those desiring membership shall
  - a) attend the membership class
  - b) apply to and/or be interviewed by the Elder Board.Membership shall be based on confession or affirmation of faith.
2. Announcement of their acceptance shall be made at a previous week's Sunday morning worship service before their presentation to the congregation. Any objection to membership shall be brought to the attention of the Elder Board. A candidate shall become a member of the church on the day of the official welcome by the congregation.

### B. Responsibilities

1. Members will protect the unity of the church by acting in love toward other members, by refusing to gossip, and by following the leadership as the leaders follow Christ. (Romans 15:5, 1 Peter 1:22, Ephesians 4:29, Hebrews 13:17 and 1 Corinthians 11:1)
2. Members will share the responsibility of the church by praying for its growth, by inviting the un-churched to attend, by sharing the gospel, and by warmly welcoming those who visit. (1 Thessalonians 1:2, Luke 14:23 and Romans 15:7).
3. Members will serve the ministry of the church by discovering and utilizing their gifts and talents, by being equipped to serve by the church leadership and by developing a servant's heart. (1 Peter 4:10, Ephesians 4:11-12, Philippians 2:3-4,7)
4. Members will support the testimony of the church by attending faithfully, by living a godly life through reading of God's word and prayer, and by regular financial support. (Hebrews 10:25, Philippians 1:27, 1 Corinthians 16:2 and Leviticus 27:30)
5. Members are expected to attend business meetings and vote.
6. Members shall inform the church office of change of address.

C. Absence—When members do not attend church services without reasonable cause, they shall be contacted by two members of the Elder Board to inquire the reason for the absence. If absent for a minimum of six (6) months after being contacted, their membership shall be considered by the Elder Board and, at its recommendation, removed from the church membership and the member shall be notified in writing of their removal.

D. Resignation—Members may be removed from membership at their own request by informing the Elder Board of their intention to withdraw and the reasons therefore. If a member requests to withdraw because of specific problems or disappointments with the church, the Elder Board shall attempt to resolve those matters so that the member may remain in the church and enjoy greater fruitfulness and personal spiritual growth. If it appears to the Elder Board that a member has requested removal merely to avoid church discipline, that request shall not be given effect until the disciplinary process has been properly concluded (Matthew 18:15-20).

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### E. Discipline

1. Christian admonition—Any member having cause of complaint against another must seek reconciliation. If this is not sufficient, the complaint shall be brought before the Elder Board, in writing, for resolution of the matter as seems wise, proper and in accordance with the Word of God. The Elder Board must meet to discuss the issue within a reasonable time (preferably no more than one (1) month) of submission of the written complaint. All complaints must be answered in person and in writing, if requested, by at least two elders within thirty (30) days of the meeting. The problem and recommended solution shall be entered into the Elder Board's records. All discipline shall be formulated and carried out in the spirit of Christ, "to restore him gently." (Galatians 6:1; Matthew 18: 15-17)
2. Exclusion from membership and/or ministry—Upon the decision of the Elder Board, a member guilty of conduct not in accordance with God's word shall be given two (2) weeks notice in writing and an opportunity of a hearing before the Elder Board for defense or explanation. Following the hearing, if there is no resolution, the Elder Board will determine the time and method of exclusion from membership and/or ministry in a way that is most beneficial to the church and the said member. (1 Corinthians 5:9-13) The method of exclusion will be at the discretion of the elder board.
3. Restoration of membership—A member who has been removed from the church membership list and desires re-admittance may be restored to membership by giving satisfactory evidence of repentance and reformation to the Elder Board. The applicant shall then follow the regular procedure for church membership (Article V, Section A).

### F. Types of Membership

1. A member of this church is one who is in compliance with Sections A, B, C, D and E above.
2. A person who is a member of another church is allowed membership in Harvard Avenue Evangelical Free Church only under special circumstances and at the discretion of the Elders. Special circumstances include situations such as students or retirees who live elsewhere for part of the year.

## **ARTICLE VI: GOVERNMENT**

- A. Jesus Christ is the head of the church. The government of this church is vested in its membership and shall be administered by the Elder Board chosen by and responsible to this membership. The Elder Board shall be comprised of the Pastor(s) and Elders.
- B. There is no human authority above the local membership. Therefore, any action of the Elder Board may be subject to review by the membership at a meeting held in accordance with Article VII, B, 3, b. Business Meetings, Special.

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### **ARTICLE VII: MEETINGS**

#### A. Church Services

1. The primary Worship service(s) shall be held on Sunday.
2. Other opportunities for worship, prayer, Bible study, education, edification and outreach shall be held to meet the needs of the congregation and community as determined by the Elder Board and/or ministry team(s).

B. Business Meetings—The date and purpose of all business meetings shall be announced and posted no later than one Sunday prior to the meeting. A simple majority of the membership 18 years of age and older shall constitute a quorum. Only those members 18 years of age and older shall be allowed to vote. A two-thirds (2/3) majority of those present and voting shall be required to approve items presented to the congregation for a vote. Exceptions to this are Constitution and Bylaw changes and Pastoral Call, which require a minimum vote of seventy-five percent (75%) of those present and voting.

1. Annual—The annual meeting of the church shall be held in October at such time as may be decided by the Elder Board. A written annual report will be available at least one week before the meeting. At this meeting, plans and goals for the new year are presented. The budget adopted, elections and other necessary business are transacted. The fiscal year shall begin October 1<sup>st</sup> and end September 30<sup>th</sup>.
2. Semi-annual—The semi-annual meeting of the church shall be held in April at such time as may be decided by the Elder Board. At this meeting, the Treasurer's report is presented and any other verbal reports given to update the status of plans and goals presented at the annual meeting. Any other necessary business items will be transacted.
3. Special—Special meetings may be called by:
  - a. The Elder Board, or
  - b. A written request from at least ten (10) members to the chairman of the Elder Board for consideration.
  - c. The congregation will be given at least two (2) weeks notice.

C. Town Hall Meeting—A meeting called by the Elders for open discussion related to matter(s) of the church.

### **ARTICLE VIII: CONSTITUTIONAL CHANGES**

A. Method—Proposed changes to the constitution shall be submitted in writing to the Elder Board for review at least two (2) months prior to a business meeting at which the changes may be considered by the membership. The Elder Board must approve the changes by a two-thirds (2/3) vote. The proposed changes must be made available to the congregation at least two (2) Sundays prior to a business meeting. The membership shall vote on the proposed changes. If approved by a minimum vote of seventy-five percent (75%) of members present and voting, the changes shall be adopted into the constitution.

B. Periodic Review—A Constitution and Bylaws Review Committee shall review/update the Constitution at five (5) year intervals, presenting the revisions that have been approved by the

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Elder Board at a business meeting. If considered necessary by the Elder Board, the review interval may be shortened.

### **ARTICLE IX: PROPERTY**

- A. This church shall have the power to receive, either by gift or purchase, and to hold such real, personal, or mixed property as is authorized by the law and shall have the power to dispose of such property by mortgage, deed or otherwise. All such property shall be held in the name of the church.
- B. Upon dissolution of the Harvard Avenue Evangelical Free Church, the Finance/Stewardship Team shall pay all known debts from available funds and other assets and investments, liquidating real, personal and mixed property, if necessary.
- C. After payment of all debts, no donor, member, director, officer of the corporation or any private individual shall be entitled to share in the distribution of any of the corporate assets.
- D. No part of the net income of the corporation shall ever inure to the benefit of any donor, member, director, officer of the corporation or any private individual. Remaining real, personal and mixed property owned by this corporation shall be turned over to the Evangelical Free Church of America.

### **ARTICLE X: ADOPTION OF CONSTITUTION**

This constitution, adopted on October 16, 2011, supersedes all previous Constitutions of the Harvard Avenue Evangelical Free Church.

### **ARTICLE XI: BYLAWS (SEPARATE DOCUMENT)**

A supplement to this Constitution, a separate document known as Bylaws, shall contain secondary rules to govern the internal affairs (operation) of this Church.