

# CONSTITUTION AND BY-LAWS HARPER CHRISTIAN CHURCH

## PREAMBLE

We, the members of HARPER CHRISTIAN CHURCH of Harper, Kansas, a congregationally governed body, in order to promote the work of the Church in the Spirit of Christ and thus advance His Kingdom, do hereby adopt this constitution.

## ARTICLE I. NAME AND PURPOSE

### Section A. Name

The name of this organization shall be HARPER CHRISTIAN CHURCH of Harper, Kansas, founded upon the teachings of Our Lord Jesus Christ as found in the New Testament; subscribing wholly to the Church as the body of Christ, in doctrine and practice and being affiliated with no Organization, Association, Denominational Body or any such Body which tends to control or influence said congregation. (*Ephesians 5:23*) (*Colossians 1:18 & 24*)

### Section B. Purpose

The purpose of Harper Christian Church shall be as revealed in the New Testament to win people to faith in Jesus Christ and commit them actively to the Church, to help them grow in the grace and knowledge of Christ that increasingly they may know and do His will, and to work for the unity of all Christians and with them engage in the common task of building the Kingdom of God. (*Matthew 22:36-40*) (*Matthew 28:18-20*) (*Romans 15:5*)

### Section C. Core Beliefs

1. We believe that the Bible is the verbally inspired Word of God and without mistakes as originally written. It is inerrant, infallible and God-breathed and is, therefore, the final authority for faith and life. (*2 Timothy 3:16-17*) (*2 Peter 1:20-21*)
2. We believe in one God, Creator of all things, eternally existing in three persons - Father, Son, and Holy Spirit - and that these three are co-eternal and of equal dignity and power. (*Deuteronomy 6:4*) (*John 14:10 & 26*) (*Matthew 28:19*)
3. We believe in the deity of Jesus Christ; His miraculous conception by the Holy Spirit; His virgin birth; His sinless life; His substitutionary death on the cross; His bodily resurrection; His ascension to the right hand of the Father, and His personal, imminent return. (*Isaiah 7:14 & 9:6*) (*John 1:1-2 & 14*) (*Luke 1:35*) (*Philippians 2:5-8*) (*Acts 2:18-36*) (*1 Peter 1:3-5*)
4. We believe that man was created by and for God; that by man's disobeying God, every person incurred spiritual death, which is separation from God, and physical death as a consequence; and that all people are sinners by nature and practice. (*Genesis 1:26-27*) (*Isaiah 45:18*) (*Ephesians 2:10*) (*Romans 5:12 & 19*) (*Romans 3:22-23*)
5. We Believe that the Lord Jesus Christ died for our sins, and all who trust in Him are declared righteous because of His sacrificial death and are, therefore, in right relationship with God. (*John 3:15-17*) (*Ephesians 1:7*) (*1 Peter 2:24*) (*Romans 5:8*) (*1 Corinthians 15:3*)

6. We believe in the present ministry of the Holy Spirit indwelling all believers and thus enabling and empowering the life and ministry of the believer. (*Matthew 1:18-20*) (*Matthew 3:11*) (*Luke 12:12*) (*John 14:26*)
7. We believe in the bodily resurrection of everyone who has lived, the everlasting blessedness of those in right relationship with God, and the everlasting conscious punishment of those who have rejected God's forgiveness in the person of Jesus Christ. (*John 5:28-29*) (*Matthew 25:46*) (*John 11:25*) (*Philippians 3:20*) (*1 Thessalonians 4:16-17*)
8. We believe that water baptism, repentance and confession (i.e., acts of obedience) are not acts of salvation but should be the result of salvation which comes through faith (trusting) in Jesus Christ as personal Savior. (*Ephesians 2:8-9*) (*Acts 2:38*) (*Acts 2:41 & 8:36-37*)

#### Section D. Statement of Faith

##### 1. *The Scriptures*

We believe that the Bible is the verbally inspired Word of God and without mistakes as originally written. It is inerrant, infallible and God-breathed and is, therefore, the final authority for faith and life. We believe the Bible tells the truth about Jesus Christ and His authority over us. The Bible is God's Word to us and provides the truth for Christian beliefs and instruction for Christian living. We believe that what is written is complete and cannot be changed by adding to or taking away from the Scripture. (*Luke 24:27 & 44*) (*Acts 17:2-3 & 18:28*) (*Romans 15:4*) (*1 Corinthians 10:11*) (*2 Timothy 3:16-17*) (*2 Peter 1:20-21*)

##### 2. *About God*

We believe in one God, Creator of all things, eternally existing in three persons - Father, Son, and Holy Spirit - and that these three are co-eternal and of equal dignity and power. We believe that God is the supreme Ruler of the universe. (*Genesis 1:1*) (*Psalms 90:2*) (*Deuteronomy 6:4*) (*John 14:10 & 26*) (*Matthew 28:19*)

##### 3. *About Jesus Christ*

We believe that the Lord Jesus Christ, the eternal Son of God, became man, without ceasing to be God, having been conceived by the Holy Spirit and born of the virgin Mary, in order that He might reveal God and redeem sinful men. (*Isaiah 7:14 & 9:6*) (*Luke 1:35*) (*John 1:1-2*) (*2 Corinthians 5:19-21*) (*Galatians 4:4-5*) (*Philippians 2:5-11*)

- A. We Believe that the Lord Jesus Christ accomplished our redemption through His death on the cross as a representative, vicarious, substitutionary sacrifice, and that our justification is made sure by His literal, physical resurrection from the dead. (*Acts 2:18-36*) (*Romans 3:24-25*) (*Ephesians 1:7*) (*1 Peter 1:3-5 & 2:24*)
- B. We believe that the Lord Jesus Christ ascended to Heaven and is now exalted at the right hand of God where, as our High Priest, He fulfills the ministry of Representative, Intercessor, and Advocate. (*Acts 1:9-10*) (*Romans 8:34*) (*Hebrews 7:25 & 9:24*) (*1 John 2:1-2*)

4. *About The Holy Spirit*

We believe that the Holy Spirit is co-equal with God and Jesus Christ. He is present to convict the world of sin, righteousness and judgment; and, He lives in every Christian from the moment of salvation. He is the divine Teacher who assists believers in understanding the truth of the Scriptures and provides guidance in doing what is right. (2 Corinthians 3:17) (John 16:8-11) (Ephesians 1:13-14) (Acts 1:8) (1 John 2:20)

5. *About Salvation*

We believe that salvation is God's free gift brought to man by grace and received by personal faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. Man cannot be saved by his good works; and, no degree of reformation, no attainments in morality, no culture, no water baptism or other ordinance can help the sinner get to Heaven. That only through belief in Jesus Christ and acceptance of Him as Lord and Savior can man be saved. We believe that all sins, except the blasphemy of the Holy Spirit, are forgivable. (Matthew 12:31) (John 1:12 & 6:40 & 10:29-30 & 14:6) (Titus 3:5) (Galatians 3:26) (1 John 1:9)

6. *About Scriptural Ordinances*

We believe that water baptism is the testimony of one's salvation; of one who has repented of their sins and believes in the Lord Jesus Christ for the saving of their soul. Water baptism is a required ordinance of the church. (Matthew 28:19) (Acts 10:47-48 & 18:7-8) (Romans 6:3-5)

We believe that the Lord's Supper, or Communion, is a time to look back at what Jesus Christ did for man. It is a required ordinance of the church. (Matthew 26:26-29) (Luke 22:19-20) (1 Corinthians 11:23-26)

7. *About The Church*

We believe that all who are united to the risen and ascended Son of God are members of the church, which is the body and bride of Christ. The establishment and continuance of local churches is clearly taught and defined in the New Testament. (Acts 2:46-47) (1 Corinthians 12:12-14) (Ephesians 1:22-23)

We believe in the autonomy of the local church free of any external authority or controls. Any affiliations, societies, organizations, associations, or agencies this church affiliates with to further the objectives stated in the Purpose Statement are not authoritative in matters of church practice or belief. (Acts 20:28; 13:1-4; 15:19-31 & 20:28) (Romans 16:1, 4) (1 Corinthians 3:9, 16 & 5:4-7, 13) (1 Peter 5:1-4)

8. *About Creation*

We believe that the Genesis account of creation is neither allegory nor myth, but a literal, historical account of God's creation of the universe in six literal, 24-hour periods. We reject evolution, the Gap Theory, the Day-Age Theory, and Theistic Evolution as unscriptural theories of origin. (Genesis 1:2) (Exodus 20:11)

9. *About Civil Government*

We believe that God has ordained and created all authority consisting of four basic institutions: 1) the home, 2) the church, 3) the state and 4) employment. Every person is subject to these authorities, but all (including the authorities themselves) are answerable to God and governed by His Word. God has given each institution specific Biblical responsibilities and balanced those responsibilities with the understanding that no institution has the right to infringe upon the other. The home, the church, employment and the state are equal and sovereign in their respective Biblically assigned spheres of responsibility under God. (*Romans 13:1-7*) (*Hebrews 13:17*) (*1 Peter 2:13-14*)

10. *About the Home*

We believe that men and women are of equal value and worth before God but that God has ordained distinct and separate spiritual functions for men and women in the home and the church. The husband is to be the leader of the home, and men are to be the leaders (pastors, elders and deacons) of the church. Accordingly, only men are eligible for licensure and ordination by the church. (*Galatians 3:28*) (*Colossians 3:18*) (*1 Timothy 2:8-15 & 3:4-5 & 3:12*)

We believe that God has ordained the family as the foundational institution of human society. The husband is to love his wife as Christ loves the church. The wife is to submit herself to the Scriptural leadership of her husband as the church submits to the headship of Christ. Parents are responsible for teaching their children spiritual and moral values through consistent lifestyle example and appropriate discipline. (*Genesis 1:26-28*) (*Deuteronomy 6:49*) (*Mark 10:6-12*) (*1 Corinthians 7:1-16*) (*Ephesians 5:21-33 & 6:1-4*) (*Colossians 3:18-21*)

11. *About Marriage*

We believe that the term 'marriage' has only one meaning and that is marriage sanctioned by God which joins one man and one woman in a single, exclusive union as stated in Scripture. Marriage is an institution ordained by God from the foundation of the world, and intended as a lifelong union of one man and one woman as taught in both the Old and New Testaments. We do not believe in any marriage that does not conform to the Bible. (*Genesis 2:24*) (*Romans 7:2*) (*1 Corinthians 7:10*) (*Ephesians 5:22-23*)

12. *About Human Sexuality*

We believe that God has commanded that no intimate sexual activity be engaged in outside of marriage between one man and one woman. We believe that any form of homosexuality, lesbianism, bisexuality, bestiality, incest, fornication, adultery and pornography are sinful perversions of God's gift of sex. We believe that God disapproves of and forbids any attempt to alter one's gender by surgery or appearance.

13. *About Divorce*

We believe that God disapproves of and forbids divorce and intends marriage to last until one of the spouses dies. Divorce and remarriage are regarded as adultery except in circumstances of sexual immorality or if one party is an unbeliever and

departs. Divorced and remarried persons or divorced persons may hold positions of service in the church, may be greatly used of God for Christian service, and may be considered for the offices of pastor, elder or deacon. (*1 Corinthians 7:15*) (*Matthew 19:3-12*)

14. *About Abortion*

We believe that human life begins at conception and that the unborn child is a living human being. Abortion constitutes the unjustified, unexcused taking of unborn human life. Abortion is murder. We reject any teachings that abortions due to rape, incest, birth defects, gender selection, birth or population control, or the physical or mental well-being of the mother are acceptable. (*Psalms 51:5 & 139:13-16*) (*Isaiah 44:24*) (*Jeremiah 1:5 & 20:15-18*) (*Luke 1:44*)

15. *About Euthanasia*

We believe that the direct taking of an innocent human life is a moral evil, regardless of the intention. Life is a gift of God and must be respected from conception until natural death. Thus, we believe that an act or omission which, of itself or by intention, causes death in order to eliminate suffering constitutes a murder contrary to the will of God. Discontinuing medical procedures that are extraordinary or disproportionate to the expected outcome can be a legitimate refusal of over-zealous treatment. (*Exodus 20:13 & 23:7*) (*Matthew 5:21*) (*Acts 17:28*)

16. *About Lawsuits Between Believers*

We believe that Christians are prohibited from bringing civil lawsuits against other Christians or the church to resolve personal disputes. We believe the church possesses all the resources necessary to resolve personal disputes between members. We do believe, however, that a Christian may seek compensation for injuries from another Christian's insurance company as long as the claim is pursued without malice or slander. (*1 Corinthians 6:1-9*) (*Ephesians 4:31-32*)

17. *About Giving*

We believe that every Christian, as a steward of that portion of God's wealth entrusted to him, is obligated to support financially his local church. We believe that God has established the tithe as a basis for giving. We believe that a Christian relinquishes all rights to direct the use of his tithe or offering once the gift has been made. (*Genesis 14:20*) (*Proverbs 3:9-10*) (*1 Corinthians 16:2*) (*2 Corinthians 9:6-7*)

*Section E. Authority of Statement of Faith*

The Statement of Faith does not exhaust the extent of our faith. The Bible itself is the sole and final source of all that we believe. We do believe, however, that the foregoing Statement of Faith accurately represents the teachings of the Bible and, therefore, is binding upon all members. All literature, whether print or electronic, used in the church shall be in complete agreement with the Statement of Faith.

## **ARTICLE II. MEMBERSHIP**

### Section A. Qualifications for Membership

The membership of this Church shall consist of those who are now identified as members of the congregation and those who shall unite with it by confessing their faith in Jesus Christ, being baptized by immersion or by transfer of membership of baptized (immersed) believers in Christ and who read and agree to be governed by the Constitution and Bylaws of this Church.

### Section B. Duties of a Member

1. Members must, in the presence of God and this Church, solemnly and joyfully enter into a covenant with one another, as one body in Christ. (John 13:34-35) (Romans 12:16) (Romans 13:8) (Ephesians 4:2) (Hebrews 10:24) (1 Peter 1:22) (1 John 4:7)
2. It is the will of God for all members, acting in obedience, to:
  - a. Grow in the grace and knowledge of Jesus Christ. Therefore, all church members are strongly encouraged, in obedience to Him, to study; be engaged in The Word through personal bible study, family devotions and prayer. (Colossians 1:10) (2 Timothy 2:15) (1 Peter 2:2) (Ephesians 6:4)
  - b. Seek the salvation of others, advancing the Kingdom of our Savior. (Matthew 28:19-20)
  - c. Refrain from or get rid of: bitterness, discord and jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, slander, gossip, arrogance, disorder and moral filth. (2 Corinthians 12:20) (Ephesians 4:31) (James 1:21)
  - d. Members covenant to love, honor and esteem the pastor and all church leaders; to recognize their authority in the affairs of the church. (Hebrews 13:17)
  - e. Support the church with prayer, their tithes and offerings as the Lord enables. (Ephesians 6:18) (Colossians 4:2) (Malachi 3:10)

### Section C. Privileges of Membership

1. Only members at least eighteen (18) years of age who are physically present at a duly called meeting of the Church shall be entitled to vote. Members may not vote to initiate any church action, but to confirm or ratify the direction of the Church as determined by the pastor and the board of elders and deacons.
2. Membership in this church does not afford the members with any property, contractual, or civil rights based on principles of democratic government.
3. A member may not, under any circumstances, inspect or copy any record relating to individual contributions to the church or the accounting books and financial records.

#### Section D. Termination of Membership

1. The Church Board shall be authorized to remove members from the active list of memberships under the following:
  - a. Voluntary withdrawal from membership.
  - b. Deceased during the year.
  - c. No longer faithfully attending (*as decided by the current Board of Elders*)
2. The Church Board shall be authorized to remove members from the active list, if an individual or individuals, after being counseled by church leaders, continue in: (Mathew 18:15-17) (Titus 3:10) (James 5:19-20)
  - a. Propagation of doctrines and practices contrary to the teachings of Scripture or the Statement of Faith, which cause discord, dissension and division in the church. (Romans 16:17-18) (Galatians 1:8-9) (Titus 3:9-11) (2 Thessalonians 3:6)
  - b. Unrepentant sins or whose lives are inconsistent with Biblical standards of holiness. (I Corinthians 5:11) (Galatians 5:19-21) (Hebrews 12:14)
  - c. A spirit of dissension, actively engaging in secretive discussions and/or intentionally organized, secretive meetings in a concerted effort to overthrow any or all of the seated-church leadership.
3. Any person may be restored to membership upon request and upon evidence of the person's repentance and reformation. (II Corinthians 2:6-8)

#### Section E. Transfer of Membership

*Members may request that letters of transfer be sent to another church.*

### **ARTICLE III. OFFICERS**

#### Section A. Officers

1. CHURCH OFFICERS. The following officers (Elders and Deacons) shall be known as the General Church Board and shall be elected by the Church **on the first Sunday in May for a term of two years** or until such time as a successor is elected or appointed by the General Church Board.
  - a. ELDERS: There shall be a maximum of seven Elders. The seven receiving the highest number of votes above a majority shall be considered elected. Qualifications for Elders shall be those found in the New Testament and: A member of the local congregation for one year; a Christian for four years; and affirms their agreement with the Statement of Faith. (1 Timothy 5:17)
  - b. DEACONS: There shall be a maximum of seven Deacons. They will be elected in the same manner as the Elders. i.e., majority vote. Qualifications for Deacons shall be those found in the New Testament and: Must be a Christian for two years; an active member of the local

- congregation for one year; and affirms their agreement with the Statement of Faith. (1 Timothy 3:8 & 3:12)
2. CHURCH BOARD OFFICERS (elected by the General Church Board)
    - a. CHAIRMAN: The Chairman shall be elected by the General Board for a term of two years.
    - b. VICE-CHAIRMAN: The Vice-Chairman shall be elected by the General Board for a term of two years.
    - c. SECRETARY: The secretary shall be elected by the General Board for a term of two years.
    - d. TRUSTEES: The Trustees shall consist of three in number, one-third of which shall be elected each year for a three-year term by the General Board.
    - e. TREASURER: The Treasurer shall be elected by the General Board for a term of two years.
    - f. FINANCIAL SECRETARY: The Financial Secretary shall be elected by the General Board for a term of two years.
  3. CHURCH SECRETARY: Appointed by the General Church Board for a term as designated or until such time as a successor is appointed to assume office.

#### Section B. Duties of the Officers

1. The Elders, in cooperation with functional committees, shall promote the growth and welfare of the Church, give spiritual oversight to the members with respect to regular attendance at the Lord's Supper, visitation to the sick and concern for the morally delinquent and spiritually indifferent; give thoughtful consideration to policies of the Church; serve at the Lord's Table; and perform such other duties as may be assigned.
  - a. The Chairman of the Elders shall fulfill the usual duties of such an officer; call and preside at all regular or special meetings of the Elders; and serve in selection of the Elders to preside over the Lord's Supper.
  - b. The Secretary of the Elders shall keep minutes of the regular and special meetings of the Elders and keep accurate record of all recommendations of the Elders.
2. The Deacons, in cooperation with functional committees shall cooperate with the Elders in promoting the growth and welfare of the Church: Assist in the greeting and ushering of the worshippers; distribute the Lord's Supper and receive the offerings; visitation projects and preparation of the candidates for baptism, give counsel and service in the business affairs and program activities of the Church; cooperate in ministering to the needy; and perform such other duties as may be assigned.
3. The Chairman of the General Board shall fulfill the duties of such an officer; call and preside at all regular or special meetings of the congregation and serves as a chairman of the General Board. The Vice-Chair shall perform these duties when the Chairman is absent.



4. The Secretary of the General Church Board shall keep minutes of all regular or special business meetings of the board and congregation and perform such other duties as may be assigned.
5. The Trustees shall act as the legal agents of the Church in all business matters, under the direction of the General Board and subject to the approval of the Church; hold legal title to all Church property and handle all business transactions related thereto; have supervision over all endowments and trust funds; and perform such duties as are required by the laws of the State of Kansas.
6. The Church Treasurer shall disburse and deposit all funds of the Church according to the authority designated to him by the General Board and make regular reports at each regular meeting of the General Board.
7. The Financial Secretary shall assist the Treasurer in the counting of offerings; keep an individual account record of each contributor, if requested by the giver, and serve as a member of the Stewardship committee.
8. The Church Secretary shall keep a complete record of the Church membership, baptisms, and weddings; receive all applications for Church letters and issue them under the authority delegated by the General Board or Pastor.

#### Section C. Election of Church Officers

1. All nomination ballots from the congregation for nominees shall be in the hands of the Pastor or Elders on or before the third Sunday of March. The Pastor and Elders shall then consider qualifications, secure consent from nominees for each office. The slate shall then be presented to the General Board for approval at the April Board meeting.
2. The election shall be held by printed ballot on the first Sunday in May after the morning service.
3. A candidate for any office must receive the largest number of votes cast to be elected. The number of Elders and Deacons voted for, receiving the highest number of votes above a majority are considered elected.
4. In case any office is vacated before the end of the term, the Pastor and Elders will appoint a new officer. The Pastor will notify the congregation of such appointment.

## **ARTICLE IV. THE PASTOR**

### Section A. Duties

The pastor of the Church shall perform the duties which usually pertain to that office, and as spiritual administrator of the Church. He must be capable to take charge of a congregation. He shall be an ex-officio member of all organized groups, auxiliaries, and committees. He shall perform all religious functions:

1. Preach the Gospel regularly and shall be at liberty to preach the whole counsel of the Word of God as the Lord leads him.
2. Act as moderator at all church meetings
3. Supervise the teaching ministries of the church
4. Responsible to fill the pulpit for each regularly scheduled church service
5. Responsible, in coordination with deacons, to establish mandatory safety and security procedures for all ministries and programs involving minors.
6. Provide spiritual counseling

And other pastoral functions to include:

1. Perform baptisms
2. Provide marital counselling
3. Perform weddings
4. Conduct funerals
5. Visit the sick and shut-in
6. Minister in prisons (as called)

### Section B. Selection

The pastor shall be chosen by the Church as hereinafter provided.

1. A representative committee of three or more, appointed by the Chairman of Elders and approved by the Elders, shall serve as the pulpit committee and be responsible for recommending a prospective pastor to the General Board.
2. The General Board shall consider the recommendations of the pulpit committee and, if approved, recommend the perspective pastor to the congregation. It shall be the policy of the Church to consider only one prospective pastor at a time.
3. The recommendation of the General Board must be accepted by at least two-thirds of the members of the congregation present and voting by a printed ballot in a regular or special business meeting of the Church before a call may be extended.
4. The term of his pastoral ministry shall be for an indefinite period and may be terminated by either party upon 30 days' notice or if agreed upon by the Elders, his release can be prior to the 30 days. A written statement

setting forth the salary to be paid and other conditions of the call shall be made, a copy for each party.

## **ARTICLE V. MEETINGS**

### Section A. Meetings for Church Administration

1. A biennial business meeting shall be held on the first Sunday in May after the morning service for the purpose of election of Church Officers.
2. The Church shall hold special meetings as required, such meetings to be called by the General Board or written petition of twenty-five or more members of the Church.
3. The General Church Board shall meet once each month. Time and date to be designated by the Church Board.
4. The Board of Elders shall meet as needed. Time and date to be designated by the Board of Elders.

### Section B. Notice

Notice of all regular or special business meetings of the congregation must be announced two consecutive weeks in advance and publicized in the Church bulletin and by electronic media.

### Section C. Rules of Order

All business meetings of the Church and the General Board shall be guided by Roberts Rules of Order, adopted by the congregation.

## **ARTICLE VI. AMENDMENTS**

This constitution may be amended at any business meeting, regular or special, of the Church by a two-third's vote of the members present and voting on the amendment, provided that written notice of the proposed amendment has been read at two regular Sunday services, and published in the Church bulletin and by electronic media, before the vote is taken.

## **ARTICLE VII. MUTUAL INTEREST**

The behavior of anyone in fellowship with this church is of common interest to the Board and membership. (Galatians 6:1) This church requires every Board member and

Congregational member to adhere to a lifestyle that is consistent with the doctrines of this church as taught in the Holy Scriptures. Therefore, this church reserves the right to refuse service to any individual, whether member or not, that is not submitting their lifestyle to this Scriptural code of conduct. This refusal would include services, benefits, and any use of church assets.

### **ARTICLE VIII. PROHIBITED ACTIVITIES**

This church is prohibited from engaging in activities which violate its written Core Beliefs, Statement of Faith or other doctrines and policies. This church is prohibited from condoning, promoting, or allowing any of its assets to be used for activities that violate its written Core Beliefs, Statement of Faith or other doctrines and policies.