

Major differences between the proposed new Constitution and the current one:

1. The preamble of the new Constitution is very similar to the existing one (written in 1957), but defines the Evangelical Covenant Church as “a community of congregations” that “affirms its companionship in faith with other church bodies and all those who fear God and keep God’s commandments.” this is a more “ecumenical” definition than the current version.
2. The new preamble also describes the approach to baptism in slightly different terms: “we practice both the baptism of infants and believer baptism” - the old preamble describes believer’s baptism as a “divergent view”.
3. The new preamble also states that the “ Evangelical Covenant Church is committed to reaching across boundaries of race, ethnicity, culture, gender, age, and status in the cultivation of communities of life and service.” - perhaps a reflection of the increased diversity of the Covenant since 1957.
4. There are no significant differences in Articles, I, II, and III between the two documents.
5. Article IV - Purpose - has significant differences: It reiterates the language in the preamble about ministering “ across boundaries of gender, race, age, etc., and it specifically identifies “seeking justice for the oppressed” as a purpose of the Covenant churches.
6. Article V - Membership - refers to the new by-laws for specifics about qualification for membership, but also adds a “promise to faithfully support the mission, ministries, and policies of the church, and to share in its fellowship and obligations”.
7. Article VI - entitled “Governance” in the new Constitution, and “Officers and Board” in the current one, is where significant differences can be seen. The current Constitution specifies that a Church Board consisting of 11 specified officers, plus the pastor, two youth representatives, and the heads or representatives of every other “organization of the church” shall serve as its governing body. The new constitution vests governing authority in the church members as a whole, meeting in congregational meetings. Such powers may be delegated to representatives as specified in the new bylaws (the new bylaws specify an elected “Leadership Team” of 7 to 9 elected members). Article VII of the new Constitution specifies 4 elected officers, rather than the 11 specified in the current one.
8. Article VII of the current Constitution - “Business Meetings” is virtually identical to Article VIII of the new Constitution - “Congregational Meetings”.
9. Article VIII of the current Constitution - “Property” is similar to Article IX of the new Constitution = “Assets of the Church”. The new Constitution

includes wording that restricts sale of church assets, when closure of the church is under consideration.

10. Article IX of the current Constitution - "Amendments" is essentially the same as Article X of the new one - "Amendments". It does specify that amendments to Article IX or X of the constitution must be approved by the Central Conference, as well as the congregation.

Major differences between the proposed new Bylaws and the current ones:

1. **Article I** : In the current bylaws, Section I is concerned with membership, as it is in the new bylaws. However, the new bylaws begin with a Section 1 describing the purpose of membership. The current bylaws describe admission and transfer of membership in Section I, which are discussed in Sections 3 and 6 in the new bylaws. The Procedure for Admission described in Section 3 of the new bylaws is more detailed, and a little more rigorous than the current bylaws: completion of a New Members class is recommended in the current bylaws, but required in the new ones.
- Under the current bylaws, "Any person shall be admitted" to membership, upon "public confession of faith in Jesus Christ"; in the new bylaws, membership is "granted" to persons who apply for membership, are baptized, make a profession of faith in Jesus, express a desire to live a Christian life, and promise to support the church. It sets a higher standard than the current bylaws.
- The new bylaws have a Section 4, which refers to membership for children. Since the criterion for membership for adults includes more than just baptism and a confession of faith, so, also, membership for children would require more than just baptism and confession of faith. Nothing in this section would prevent children younger than 12 years, or grade 7 from being baptized and making a confession of faith, thereby "joining church", but this document makes a distinction between becoming a Christian, and being a responsible and accountable member of Oakdale Covenant Church.

The document presumes that children under the age of 12 can not be expected to shoulder the full burden of membership.

2. Section II: In the current bylaws, Section II states that members shall “consider” the responsibilities of membership, and offers some general description of those responsibilities. The new bylaws describe membership as a “covenant”, and defines those responsibilities in more detail.
3. Section 3 in the new bylaws describes a Procedure for Admission, which has no parallel in the current bylaws.
4. Section III in the current bylaws is concerned with “Discipline”; the corresponding material in the new bylaws is found in Section 5:
 - The current bylaws state that members “willfully neglect their duties and have not attended a service or contributed to the support of the church for a period of one year shall have a letter recommended by the deacon board, sent by the pastor . . . “. Failure to respond results in the member(s) being placed on an “inactive members list”. The new bylaws state that the Leadership Team will be responsible for this function.
 - The current bylaws state that in matters relating to members “known to err in doctrine or conduct”, the initial responsibility is placed on members of the congregation to “counsel” or “seek to restore” the erring member. Failing this, the Church Board is to attempt remediation, and if this fails, the matter is referred to a “business meeting of the church.” The new bylaws state that the Leadership Team will be perform essentially the same function as the Church Board, but must be notified in writing, and that the Leadership Team will have the power to remove the erring member from positions of leadership in the church, or to recommend that the member be removed from membership. Members have the right to appeal decisions of the Leadership Team at the next congregational meeting.
5. Section IV in the current bylaws is concerned with Transfer of Members to another congregation, which is discussed in Section 6 of the new bylaws.
6. Section V in the current bylaws is concerned with voluntary withdrawal of members from the church; the new bylaws discuss this in Section 6 .
7. Section VI in the current bylaws states that members who leave “forfeit all rights to any and all rights of the church”; the new bylaws do not specify this policy.

8. Section VII in the current bylaws discusses “Non-member Friends”; Section 7 of the new bylaws includes almost identical language.

9. The new bylaws include a Section 8, which requires that changes in membership status be recorded and reported in the following Congregational meeting.

10. Article II: In the new bylaws, Article II is devoted to describing the composition, duties, and responsibilities of a Leadership Team. The Leadership Team has broadly the same governing role as our current Church Board, but there are several noteworthy differences:

- The pastor is automatically a member of the Leadership Team, but is not a voting member, unless otherwise specified.
- The Leadership Team’s members are all directly elected by the congregation (heads of church ministries or auxiliaries are not automatically members of the Leadership Team).
- Any “member in good standing” may be elected to the Leadership Team (“good standing” is defined in Section 3 of Article II);
- Any member of the Leadership Team may be removed by a 2/3 vote of the congregation in a meeting called for that purpose.
- Leadership Team members are elected for 2 -year terms, on a staggered schedule, and may not be re-elected for more than 3 consecutive terms;
- Members of the Leadership Team will not be elected to specific offices on the team; rather, the Leadership Team will decide which of its members would best serve in the roles of Chair, Vice Chair, Secretary, and Financial Officer.
- The Leadership Team will consist of the pastor and 7 to 9 elected members.
- The Leadership Team will appoint a church Treasurer (not necessarily a member of the team);
- The Leadership Team will have the responsibility to appoint church members to various Ministry Teams, as needed to support the mission of the church.
- The Leadership Team will have responsibility for matters of staffing and staff compensation;
- The Leadership Team will act as Trustees of the church’s assets, and may designate members of the church who will be authorized to sign legal documents, etc.
- The other responsibilities of the Leadership Team are described in Article II of the new bylaws.

11. Article III : Ministry Teams - the current bylaws specify that a number of Officers and Boards shall be elected, including Church Board Chairman, Vice Chairman, Secretary, Assistant Secretary, Financial Secretary, Assistant

Financial Secretary, Treasurer, Assistant Treasurer, and Director of Christian Education. The new bylaws provide that most of these functions will be performed by Ministry Teams. The ministry Teams will be (mostly) appointed by the Leadership Team, and will be self-organizing - that is, they will determine what role each team member will fill after they are appointed. Ministry teams will report to the Leadership Team, but the Chair of a Ministry team will not automatically be a member of the Leadership Team.

- 12. Article IV :** Pastoral and Ministry Staff - This article is roughly equivalent to Article II of the current bylaws. The new bylaws include reference to the role of the Leadership Team in hiring pastoral staff, and charges of misconduct against a pastor.
- 13. Article V :** Committees - the new bylaws specify that the Leadership Team must establish a Nominating Committee, to identify candidates for election to church offices. The members of this committee must include one elected member of the Leadership team, the pastor, and two or more additional church members, who must be elected to serve on the committee. The new bylaws also authorize the creation of other committees by the Leadership Team, as needed.
- 14. Article VI :** Congregational Meetings - This is comparable to Article IV and Section I, Article V of the current bylaws. It requires a higher level of member participation to establish a quorum than the current bylaws, and includes an allowance to permit a legal Congregational meeting without in-person voting, at the discretion of the Leadership Team.
- 15. Article VII :** Assets - Section 3 of this article is equivalent to Article VIII of the current Constitution. The rest of this article in the new bylaws differs from the current bylaws in specifying that non-budgeted expenses (like real estate) must be approved by the congregation in a business meeting.
- 16. Article VIII :** Closure - This article applies to the rare case where the congregation might actually terminate its legal existence. It recognizes the right of the Covenant to add a member to the Leadership Team of a congregation that is failing to maintain itself.
- 17. Article IX :** Amendments - The language in the new bylaws is very similar to the language in the current bylaws, EXCEPT that amendments to the new bylaws (not the Constitution) may be voted on 90 days after they are presented to the congregation at a congregational business meeting. This means more flexibility for the church in amending its bylaws.
- 18. Article X :** General Provisions - This article specifies that elected terms of office shall begin on June 1, and end on May 31 of the year of the terms (rather than January to December). It also states that the fiscal year of the church shall be the calendar year (January to December).
- 19. Article XI :** Deacons - this language is identical to Section X of the current bylaws.

20. Article XII: School - This language is very similar to Article VII of the current bylaws. The chief difference is that responsibilities delegated to the Church Board or the Trustee Board in the current bylaws would become the responsibility of the Leadership Team under the new bylaws. Section VI of the current bylaws, which makes the Chairman of the School Board automatically a member of the Church Board does not have a similar section in the new bylaws - The Chairman of the School board will not automatically be a member of the Leadership Team.