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**CONSTITUTION AND BY-LAWS
FOR
MARANATHA EVANGELICAL FREE CHURCH
RICE LAKE, WISCONSIN**

CONSTITUTION

PREAMBLE

We, the members of Maranatha Evangelical Free Church, in order to carry out more efficiently the commission given by Jesus Christ to His Church, do ordain and establish the following constitution to which we voluntarily submit ourselves.

ARTICLE I: NAME

The name of this church shall be Maranatha Evangelical Free Church of Rice Lake, Wisconsin.

ARTICLE II: AUTHORITY AND AFFILIATION

Authority: The congregation, at its annual and special business meetings, is the legislative and governing body of this organization.

Affiliation: This church shall be affiliated with the Evangelical Free Church of America through its Forest Lakes District Conference and shall send delegates to other conferences, support their home and foreign missions, 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 III: STATEMENT OF FAITH

God

1. 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.

The Bible

2. 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.

The Human Condition

3. 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.

Jesus Christ

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

The Work of Christ

5. 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.

The Holy Spirit

6. 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.

The Church

7. 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.

Christian Living

8. 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.

Christ's Return

9. 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.

Response and Eternal Destiny

10. 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: VISION

The vision of this church is to reach all generations for Christ.

ARTICLE V: MISSION

According to God's Word, we proclaim the joy of salvation in Christ to people in need and encourage His followers in their devotion to Him.

ARTICLE VI: CORE VALUES

1. Grounded in Scripture
2. Powered by Prayer
3. Responding With Worship
4. Intentional in Discipleship
5. Committed to Evangelism
6. Characterized by Love
7. Founded on Christ

(2)

ARTICLE VII: AMENDMENTS

This Constitution may be amended or altered by a two-thirds majority vote of the members present at any regular or special business meeting of the church, providing notification of the proposed alteration or amendment has been made to the members at least 30 days prior to such meeting.

BY-LAWS

ARTICLE I: MEMBERSHIP

Section 1: Qualifications

Members of this church shall consist of persons who have been saved by grace through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ and who are Christians of good standing.

Section 2: Admission

Admission to membership in the church shall be as follows:

- A. Applicants for membership shall be given a copy of the Constitution and By-Laws of the church and be instructed in a membership class in church doctrine and policy by the Pastors or designated members of the Maranatha Leadership Team which consists of Elders and Ministry Team Leaders.
- B. Following such instruction an application shall be submitted to the Elders, a list of applicants shall be provided to all active members of the congregation. If any member has a valid reason for objection to the receiving of any applicant into the church, that member shall immediately appear before the Elders and give Scriptural reasons for the objections. The validity of these objections shall be considered by the Elders.
- C. Applicants shall meet with the Elders to give personal testimony of their salvation through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ and evidence of their understanding of and agreement with the Statement of Faith and the Constitution and By-Laws of the church.
- D. The applicant shall be received by a two-thirds vote of the Elders at the next business meeting following the applicant interview. Any dissenting vote must be accompanied by a Scriptural reason. Applicants shall not be present in the meeting when their applications are being considered.
- E. The accepted applicants shall be publicly welcomed as new members at a subsequent regular worship service of the church and may publicly confirm their faith in Jesus Christ.

Section 3: Conduct

- A. Regular attendance at the services of the church, daily reading of the Bible, private and family devotions, personal and public testimony, and the winning of others to Christ are urged upon each member. It shall be the sacred duty of parents to provide Christian instruction for their children. Each member shall consider it their sacred duty and privilege to make full use of their talents for the Lord's service whenever opportunity affords.
- B. All members are encouraged to remember each other in prayer, to aid each other in sickness and distress, and to be courteous in speech and slow to anger.
- C. All members are urged to pledge a systematic contribution of a portion of their income for the support of the church, according to the principles laid down in I Corinthians 16:2, 3.
- D. Each member is called upon to heed the admonition of the Lord: "Do not love the world or the things of the world," and "do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind that you may prove what is the good and acceptable and perfect will of God." Members are to be an "example in speech and conduct, in love, in faith (*and*) in purity." I John 2:15, Romans 12:2, I Timothy 4:12. Members are expected to abstain from any act or practice which may be harmful in its influence or a stumbling block to the weak. Romans 14:13, 21.

Section 4: Absence

- A. Members who move from the community may retain their membership but have their names transferred from the Active to Inactive Membership list.
- B. It is expected that members who are absent 12 months of the year or longer will communicate with the church annually concerning their spiritual life and interest in the Lord's work. Such members shall be listed as inactive, non-voting members by the Elders. The Elders have the authority to reinstate inactive membership.
- C. Any person, absent more than two years, from whom no communication has been received, may be dropped from the roll by a vote of the Elders. Prior to removal from membership an attempt will be made by the Elders to communicate either their continuance or removal.

Section 5: Withdrawal

Any member who wishes to withdraw from the church shall receive a letter of withdrawal from the Elders, providing such a request for withdrawal is presented in writing. All letters of dismissal shall be reported to the church at the next regular business meeting.

Section 6: Discipline

- A. If any member's conduct is in a manner which, in the studied opinion of the Elders, is not in harmony with Scriptural principles and for which no evidence of repentance is shown, the member shall be interviewed and counseled by the Elders after the manner clearly indicated in the Word of God. Matthew 18:15-17; Galatians 6:1. The restoration of the erring member shall be the single purpose, and love the sole motivating force in these interviews.
- B. If, however, the member should choose to continue in an unrepentant condition, membership shall be terminated by a two-thirds vote of the Elders.

Section 7: Property Rights

- A. Any member who has withdrawn or who has been excluded from the church loses all rights of the church.
- B. The private property of the individual members of this church shall be exempt from corporate debt.

ARTICLE II: GOVERNMENT

Section 1: Congregation/Members

Congregation/Members In keeping with the Evangelical Free Church tradition, Maranatha Evangelical Free Church will adhere to a congregational governing structure on many church matters.

Responsibilities

- Give of their time, talent and treasure
- Attend annual and special business meetings
- Voting on: the annual budget, constitutional changes, building expansion projects, purchasing or selling property, hiring or dismissing senior pastor and electing or removing elders.

Qualifications

- Believe in the sufficient and saving work of Jesus Christ.
- Attend and complete the Maranatha Evangelical Free Church membership classes.

Section 2: Pastors/Elders/Lay Staff

The Elders of the church shall consist of the senior pastor and at least five elected members of the congregation. The Pastors and Elders of the church must be of irreproachable Christian character, having a "good report." I Timothy 3:1-13.

The Senior Pastor shall be chosen by a two-thirds majority vote at any regular or special business meeting of the Maranatha membership. He shall be called for an indefinite period of time. The pastor or the membership may terminate his ministry at a mutually agreeable time. In the case of termination, there must be a majority vote of the congregation to terminate. Compensation packages are limited to thirty days from the termination date.

Pastors, other than the Senior Pastor, and all lay staff will be chosen with a two-thirds vote of the Elder Board. They shall be called for an indefinite period of time. The pastor/staff member or Elder Board may terminate such pastor/staff member's employment at a mutually agreeable time.

The Elders are responsible for doctrinal integrity, ministry vision, church discipline and strategic development of the ministry of Maranatha Evangelical Free Church. Made up of men elected by the congregation, this board typically meets once a month for vision and business related issues.

Responsibilities - To shepherd God's people, preach/teach God's Word, lead the public services of the church, watch over the spiritual welfare of the church, administer the ordinances, establish/lead in the vision for Maranatha, and assist in the vision for the specific ministries. The Elders shall elect their own officers to preside over the annual church meetings, appoint an auditing committee, and appoint and conduct an annual evaluation of Ministry Team Leaders. Each Ministry Team (see below) has an Elder or Pastor as a liaison providing help with ministry oversight.

Qualifications/Terms - Elders must be a member of Maranatha Evangelical Free Church of Rice Lake for at least two years. A term of service for an Elder is three years with a limit of two consecutive terms (6 years). Elders completing two consecutive terms are eligible to return to the position of elder after one year from the end of their term. Biblical texts defining their leadership are found in 1 Timothy 3:1-7, Titus 1:5-9 and 1 Peter 5:1-4. Examples are given in the lives of Jesus Christ and the Apostles.

Section 3: Ministry Team Leaders

The Ministry Team Leaders of this church, appointed by the Elders, shall be the Directors of Ministries created to meet the vision and mission of Maranatha.

The Ministry Team Leaders would be likened unto the Scriptural example of a Deacon or Deaconess - Acts 6, Romans 16). They are to be responsible for overseeing the ministry teams of the church. Each Ministry Team has an Elder or Pastor as a liaison providing encouragement and help with ministry oversight. The ministry team leadership is made up of men and women and are appointed by the Elders. These individual teams would typically meet once per month for vision and business related issues that arise within their respective ministry team. Elder team liaisons shall act as ministry leaders in vacant team director positions until such positions are filled.

Responsibilities - Their duties will consist of setting vision and direction for a particular ministry team, recruiting team members to work and minister with them, establishing budgets for the year, and working along side of the Elders and Pastors of Maranatha. An attitude of servanthood is necessary for men and women in this position while they serve to oversee specific Ministry Teams.

Qualifications – A Ministry Team Leader must be a member of Maranatha Evangelical Free Church of Rice Lake. There would be an indefinite term of service for the Ministry Team Leader with an annual evaluation by the Elders. Biblical texts defining their leadership are found in 1 Timothy 3:8-10, and verses 12-13 for spiritual maturity. Examples are given in Acts 6:1-6, 8:26-39, Luke's service to Paul in Acts 20-28 chapters, Phoebe, a deaconess of the church in Romans 16:1, Timothy and Titus serving with Apostle Paul and others mentioned in the Epistles.

- A. Secretary: The secretary, appointed by the Elders, shall keep an accurate record of the proceedings and decisions at all business meetings of the church, such records to be approved at the next following business meeting. The secretary shall preserve, in a safe place, all church records, and shall keep correct register of the membership, showing date and manner of their admission and dismissal. They shall inform all members of their election or appointments to an office or committee, and shall give legal notice of all meetings when such is required. At the annual meeting of the church, he shall submit a statistical report on the membership of the past year. The secretary shall issue credentials to all members duly chosen to represent the church at any meetings in which the church shall decide to be represented.
- B. Financial Secretary: The financial secretary, appointed by the Elders, shall receive and account for all the monies of the church, and shall transfer these funds to the bookkeeper as directed by the Elders. They shall make a financial report to the church at all regular business meetings and at such other times as may be requested by the Elders. The financial secretary shall be a member of the Finance Team.
- C. Bookkeeper: The bookkeeper, appointed by the Elders, shall receive from the financial secretary the funds of the church, and make disbursements as directed by the elders. Financial reports shall be submitted monthly to the elders, quarterly at leadership meetings, annually at the membership business meeting, or when requested by the elders. The bookkeeper shall be a member of the Finance Ministry.
- D. Maranatha Leadership Team: The Maranatha Leadership Team is responsible for ministry unity within the church body. The Maranatha Leadership Team would consist of the Elders, the Pastors, secretary, financial secretary, bookkeeper, and all of the Ministry Team Leaders. The Maranatha Leadership Team will meet quarterly to update each other on their respective ministries, financial status, and upcoming Maranatha functions and events. These would be non-voting meetings.

Section 4: COMMITTEES

- A. Nominating Committee: The nominating committee shall consist of the Senior Pastor, two Elders, two Ministry Team Leaders, and four church members elected by the membership at the annual meeting. Elders on the nominating committee shall not have their name on the ballot. This committee shall stay intact until the following annual meeting. The members of the nominating committee will select their own officers. In the event a committee member is unable to fulfill their committee appointment, the Senior Pastor may appoint a replacement from the church membership. This committee shall prepare a ballot for the election of Elders. This committee will strive to provide a candidate for each open Elder position. All candidates shall meet the personal qualifications for Elder.
- B. Auditing Committee: The auditing committee of two members shall be appointed by the Elders. It shall examine the books, accounts, and vouchers of all the officers having charge of any church funds and shall submit a report to the annual business meeting of the church.
- C. Additional committees may be formed and disbanded at the discretion of the Elders or by the membership at an annual or special business meeting.

ARTICLE III: MEETINGS

- A. Worship Services, special church services, Sunday School Services, and other Gospel Services shall be conducted at such times as is decided by the Elders.
- B. An annual business meeting of the church shall be held during the month of July at such time as may be decided by the elder board. At this meeting annual reports shall be received, Elders elected and other necessary business transacted. The fiscal year shall end June 30th.
- C. Regular Maranatha Leadership Team meetings shall be held on a quarterly basis. The Maranatha Leadership Team is responsible for ministry unity amongst the church body. The Maranatha Leadership Team will meet to update each other on their respective ministries, financial status, and upcoming Maranatha functions and events. These would be non-voting meetings.

Special congregational meetings may be called by the Elders. Notice of such special meetings shall be given either by announcement at the regular Sunday services of the church at least three days previous to the date of the meeting, or by written notice mailed in time to reach all resident members at least three days prior to the date of the meeting.

- E. Rules of Order. The Elders shall conduct the annual meeting and other business meetings in the following order:
 - 1. The reading of God's Word and prayer.
 - 2. Minutes of the previous meetings read and approved.
 - 3. Reports from Elders and Ministry Team Leaders on their activities.
 - 4. Undecided, unfinished, or tabled business.
 - 5. Elders elected if their terms expire or vacancies occur.
 - 6. New business for discussion.
 - First, that which is occasioned by the reports.
 - Second, that which may be proposed by members of the meeting.
 - 7. Set the date for the next meeting.
 - 8. Closing prayer.

The rules of order contained in Robert's Rules of Order (revised) shall govern the organization when it is not inconsistent with its Constitution and By-laws.

- F. Quorum. Twenty percent of the active membership shall constitute a quorum for the transaction of business.
- G. Voting. All members have the right of vote in all matters coming before the business meetings. All matters shall be determined by majority vote (one more than half of all the votes cast), except when otherwise specified in the By-Laws or by decision of the session. Absentee voting is not permitted.

ARTICLE IV: PROPERTY

Section 1:

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 laws of the State of Wisconsin and as is deemed necessary for the business of the church, 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.

Section 2:

In case of a division of the church (from which we pray God by His mercy to preserve us), the property of the church shall belong to those who abide by its Constitution and By-Laws.

Section 3:

The church shall be considered dissolved if so decided by the organization, or when the church has not held an annual meeting for three years, or when less than sixteen members remain. The property shall be assigned to the Forest Lakes District Conference of the Evangelical Free Church of America to enable said conference to renew the work or use the value thereof for further Gospel enterprises.

ARTICLE V: MARRIAGE

In keeping with our commitment to the truth of the Bible and its application to all areas of faith and practice, it is to be believed in all that it teaches and obeyed in all that it requires as previously stated in our Statement of Faith, we affirm the following:

We believe that marriage has been instructed and ordained by God as described in the Bible, and His plan for marriage and sexual intimacy is defined as the exclusive covenantal union of one man and one woman in which such union is for a lifetime commitment. When found to conflict with laws and/or social norms, we will follow the Biblical principle and definition of marriage.

ARTICLE VI: AMMENDMENTS

These By-Laws may be amended or altered by a two-thirds majority vote of the members present at any regular or special business meeting of the church, providing notification of the proposed alteration or amendment has been made to the members at least 30 days prior to such meeting.

