
**CONSTITUTION
NORTH SEA BAPTIST CHURCH
STAVANGER, NORWAY**

APPROVED 11 MAY 1975

**AMENDED
28 SEPTEMBER 1975
9 JUNE 1976
6 DECEMBER 1978
25 MAY 1994
OCTOBER 1995
27 OCTOBER 1996**

**CURRENT REVISION APPROVED
29 APRIL 2007**

COVENANT

Having been led, as we believe, by the Spirit of God, to receive the Lord Jesus Christ as our Saviour, and on the profession of our faith, having been baptized in the name of the Father, and of the son, and of the Holy Spirit, we do now, in the presence of God, angels, and this assembly, most solemnly and joyfully enter into covenant with one another, as one body in Christ.

We engage, therefore, by the aid of the Holy Spirit, to walk together in Christian love; to strive for the advancement of North Sea Baptist Church (hereafter known as Church), in knowledge, holiness, and comfort; to promote its prosperity and spirituality; to sustain its worship, ordinances, discipline, and doctrines; to contribute cheerfully and regularly to the support of the ministry, the expenses of the Church, the relief of the poor, and the spread of the gospel through all nations.

We also engage to maintain family and private devotions; to religiously educate our children; to seek the salvation of our kindred and acquaintances; to walk circumspectly in the world; to be just in our dealings; faithful in our engagements, and exemplary in our deportment; to avoid all tattling; backbiting, and excessive anger; and to be zealous in our efforts to advance the kingdom of our Saviour.

We further engage to watch over one another in brotherly love; to remember each other in prayer; to aid each other in sickness and distress; to be slow to take offence, but always ready for reconciliation, and mindful of the rules of our Saviour to secure it without delay.

We moreover engage that when we remove from this place we will, as soon as possible, unite with some other church, where we can carry out the spirit of this covenant and the principles of God's Word.

I PURPOSE

The purpose of the Church is to worship God, interpret Christian truth, give guidance in Christian living, witness to persons in need of Christ, administer the ordinances of baptism and the Lord's Supper, participate in Christian missions, and otherwise do the will of Christ under the leadership of the Holy Spirit. The Church accepts a special ministry to English-speaking persons in the Stavanger area.

II BELIEFS AND PRACTICES

The Church regards the Bible as its authoritative guide in faith and practice. Its doctrines and practices are in general harmony with those set forth in the 2000 Southern Baptist Convention Statement of Faith.

III MEMBERSHIP

The membership is made up of persons professing faith in Jesus Christ as Saviour and Lord and pledging with one another to participate in the Church's fellowship and service through its ministries, and to abide by the above covenant. Each person requesting membership/associate membership will be properly counselled concerning their experience of salvation and the privileges and responsibilities of membership/associate membership prior to being presented to the Church for membership. The pastor and deacons will be responsible for such counselling and/or any new member orientation program. Candidates for membership/associate membership can not hold membership in another church in Norway.

Members are received:

1. Upon profession of faith (conversion) and baptism (immersion) or,
2. By letter of recommendation from another Baptist Church or,
3. By personal statement of faith and dedication (for persons previously baptized as believers by immersion but without church letters of recommendation).

Persons professing faith in Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord who have been baptized (but not by immersion) and who wish to participate in the fellowship and ministries of the Church may be received as Associate Members. However they are not permitted to serve as Deacons or vote on matters related to church doctrine and must not promote any doctrines or teachings contrary to the beliefs and practices of the Church.

Membership may be terminated:

1. By death
2. By written request of the member
3. By joining another Church
4. By permanently moving away from Norway
5. By not attending worship services for a period of one year and/or

6. By church action upon recommendation from the deacons

IV GOVERNMENT

Christ is recognised as the supreme authority of the church whose will is revealed in the Holy Scriptures. Under Him the church governs itself, and all members are equal in authority. Church decisions are made in regularly scheduled or specially called church business meetings if the special time requirements of this constitution are met. A special business meeting can be called to take place at a regular church meeting, or at a regular church worship service by the pastor, deacons, or by vote of the church. Unless otherwise specified in the constitution, decisions are by simple majority vote of those present and voting.

V POLICY MANUEL

A manual of policies which give direction to the regular operation of church life will be maintained by the church clerk. No policy shall abrogate, alter or supersede any portion of the church Constitution. Policies shall be drafted by the church council in cooperation with the body of deacons and approved by the church at a regular business meeting. Policies may be altered or cancelled by a majority vote at a regular business meeting.

VI LEADERSHIP

A – STAFF

I. SENIOR PASTOR

The senior pastor shall preach the gospel and encourage the people in following the Word of God. The relationship between the senior pastor and the Church shall be governed by a written covenant.

The senior pastor is selected by the Church. For this purpose the Church will elect a pulpit committee of not less than three members at least one of whom shall be an active deacon, to make investigation and present a recommendation. The name and qualifications of the person recommended to be called as senior pastor shall be presented to the Church by the pulpit committee at least ten days prior to any vote for the call. The vote to call a senior pastor shall be held at a special church business meeting with at least ten days prior notice. The senior pastor will be called when two-thirds majority of those voting approve the recommendation of the pulpit committee.

If the person called to be senior pastor has not been ordained, he shall be ordained before he assumes his duties as senior pastor.

Termination of the senior pastor may be by resignation, or by vote of the Church using the same procedure as for calling a pastor.

II. Other Paid Staff

All paid staff shall be presented to the Church by a committee selected for this purpose and approved by 2/3 majority with at least one-third of the active church members represented in person or by written proxy. Ten days prior notice shall be given. The deacons shall approve each candidate prior to being presented to the Church. Each paid staff shall be governed by a written covenant. Termination of paid staff may be by written resignation or by vote of the Church upon recommendation of the deacons and in accordance with any written covenant in place.

B - DEACONS

Deacons exercise oversight over the material interests of the Church, assist with the ordinances, and are associated with the pastor in caring for the spiritual welfare of the Church. The chairman of the deacons or acting chairman shall assume leadership of the Church in the absence of a pastor. There shall be three deacons plus a goal of one for each thirty members of the Church.

Upon determination of the need for a deacon or deacons by the Church, the Church shall elect a deacon review committee consisting of three ordained members of the Church. The deacon review committee will compile a list of men who are full members in good standing, exhibiting spiritual maturity (Acts 6:3), and are regularly attending worship services (Hebrews 10:25). These men shall be approached by the deacon review committee to determine whether they are willing to serve if elected.

The Church shall then nominate, by vote, prospective deacons from the final list. The deacon review committee shall interview the nominees based on order of preference from the tabulated votes, including deacons who are currently serving or previously ordained, to determine if they meet the qualifications of 1 Timothy 3 and Acts 6. The interviews are suspended and the selection process concluded once the required number of deacons is obtained, or all qualified candidates have been interviewed.

At a regular or special business meeting the names of the required number of deacons shall be presented by the deacon review committee for election. An elected deacon, not previously ordained, shall be ordained before serving. Each deacon will serve for one year, October through September, or the remainder of term if he is a replacement, and can be re-elected each year. If replacements are needed before the annual term expires, the "standing" deacon review committee will initiate the nomination, interview and election process for the required number of deacons as outlined above. The nomination and interview process would then be conducted in the same manner by the "standing" deacon review committee.

In addition to the stated duties, the Deacons shall function as trustees of North Sea Baptist Church. Trustees act as legal representatives of the Church and are responsible to ensure the Church functions in accordance with its constitution and consistent with its values, mission, and purpose, and are able to provide an accounting for the use of its resources.

C - OTHERS

Elected officers of the Church may include, but are not limited to, the Sunday School Director, Hospitality Coordinator, Treasurer, Music Director, Nursery Co-ordinator, Outreach director, Youth Director and Church Clerk/Secretary. All shall be elected for a one year term beginning October 1 of each year except the Treasurer whose term shall begin January 1.

A Church Council composed of the leaders or chairpersons of all church ministries and committees shall meet regularly to assist the pastor in the co-ordination of church activities, plans, and the preparation of a church calendar. The Pastor shall be the chairman of the Church Council. Any resulting recommendations shall be presented to the Church for vote at a business meeting.

VII ORGANIZATIONS AND COMMITTEES

The Church shall conduct programs that include discipleship, religious education, outreach, and ministries for men, women, youth and children as it is able. Each program and ministry leader shall carry out a program consistent with the beliefs, practices, and statement of faith of the Church. Some committees shall be Standing Committees, that is, elected to serve for a full year term. These are Nominating, Finance and Property committees.

The Nominating Committee composed of four members shall be elected at a business meeting in March of each year to serve for a term of one year from April 1. The members shall be nominated as Follows; one by the Pastor, one by the Chairman of the Deacons and one by the Sunday School Director, and one by the previous nominating committee. The committee is responsible for annual nominations and nominations for filling vacancies of church officers (except deacons), standing committee members, and organization workers. The names of nominees shall be presented for election at any business meeting.

The Finance committee shall be composed of at least three members, one of whom shall be the Church Treasurer and one shall be an active deacon. It is responsible for preparation and recommendation of a calendar year budget, any changes to the budget, financial guidance, and other financial matters as governed by Sec VII.

The Property committee shall be composed of at least four members with an active deacon serving as chairman. It is responsible for securing housing and furnishings and overseeing maintenance of the same.

Other committees shall be formed to handle special functions of the Church. Committees can be two or more persons nominated in business meetings and approved by the membership. Committees shall be terminated upon completion of their assigned task or committee members replaced annually as nominated by the nominating committee. The Pastor shall serve as ex-officio member of all committees.

Organizations and committees shall report the progress, activities and outlook of their assigned tasks at each regular business meeting.

VIII FINANCES

The Church shall be non profit in its organization and practices. Funds can come from all sources except where obligation is incurred and with membership contributing regularly and freely without obligation except as the Lord leads. Additional aid may be sought from others such as the International Baptist Convention to meet special requirements.

The Church shall operate under a calendar-year budget prepared by the finance committee and approved by a 2/3 majority vote of the Church members present and voting. The proposed budget shall be presented to the church membership at least 10 days prior to the announced time of voting. The budget should be presented for approval in the December business meeting.

The Treasurer or a designated representative is authorized to make payments for items included in the approved budget upon proper receipt of documentation.

Expenditures for unbudgeted amounts will be permitted as follows:

I. Emergency expenditures* up to 10,000 NOK may be made with the unanimous consent of active deacons who can be reasonably contacted. Responsibility for determining the emergency nature of an item will rest with the Treasurer or in his absence a designated representative.

II. Expenditures up to 20,000 NOK (not including those of an emergency nature passed by Deacon vote) can be obligated by church action of 2/3 majority vote of members present, without prior notice of such vote being taken. This vote can be taken at a regular or called church meeting.

III. Expenditures exceeding 20,000 NOK will require a 2/3 majority vote at a regular church meeting with 10 days notice given prior to such meeting.

*Amount approved in no. 1 shall not exceed 30% of the undesignated gifts available in checking and savings accounts.

IX RELATIONSHIPS

The Church cultivates fellowship with the Norwegian Baptist Union and its member churches and seeks in co-operation with them to further the cause of Christ in Norway.

The Church cultivates fellowship and co-operation with the International Baptist Convention and its member churches.

The Church recognizes all true believers in Jesus Christ as fellow Christians and welcomes co-operation where no abridgement of Baptist faith and practice is required.

Everyone shall be welcome regardless of creed, race, or condition in life - all will be shown the love of Christ.

X
ARTICLE of DISSOLUTION

In the event of dissolution any assets of the Church remaining after satisfaction of its debts and liabilities, shall be given or transferred to the International Baptist Convention in Germany (IBC).

XI
AMENDMENTS

Recommended constitutional changes must be reviewed by the active deacons. The proposed changes must be announced and presented in writing to the Church along with the date, time and place of voting at least ten days prior to voting. Changes will be made if one-third of the active church members are represented in person or by written proxy and two-thirds of those voting approve the recommended change.
