

The Constitution of
Providence Church of Southeast Texas

PREAMBLE

We, baptized members of Providence Church, responding in faith to the call of the Holy Spirit through the Gospel, desiring to unite together to lead people into a growing relationship with Jesus Christ, do hereby adopt this constitution and solemnly pledge ourselves to be governed by its provisions. In the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit.

Chapter 1. NAME AND INCORPORATION

*C1.01. The name of the corporation is PROVIDENCE CHURCH of Southeast Texas.

*C1.02. This corporation shall be incorporated under the laws of the State of Texas.

*C1.03. This corporation is organized exclusively as a church for religious, charitable and educational purposes within the meaning of Section 501 (c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code (or the corresponding provision of any future United States internal revenue law).

*C1.04. The corporation has perpetual duration.

*C1.05. The corporation shall have the all the rights and powers customary and proper for tax-exempt nonprofit corporations.

*C1.06. Notwithstanding any other provisions of this constitution, the corporation shall not carry on any activities not permitted to be carried on by a corporation exempt from federal income tax, or by a corporation to which contributions are deductible under federal law.

*C1.07. The corporation shall be empowered to hold or administer property for the purposes stated in *C1.03, including the power to act as trustee.

*C1.08. The congregation may cease corporate activities and liquidate the corporation by a two-thirds vote of a legally convened quorum of at least 50 percent of active membership.

*C1.08.01. Upon dissolution of the corporation, the Leadership Team shall pay or make provision for the payment of all liabilities of the corporation, and shall therefore dispense of all of the assets of the corporation exclusively for the purposes stated in *C1.03 in such manner, or to such organization(s) organized as tax-exempt exempt organization(s).

*C1.08.02. If any such assets are not so disposed of, the appropriate county in which the principal Texas office of the corporation shall dispose of such assets exclusively for the purpose stated in *C1.03 herein.

*C1.09. For this constitution and the accompanying bylaws, the congregation of the corporation is hereinafter designated as "this congregation".

Chapter 2. CONFESSIO OF FAITH

*C2.01. We believe in one God who exists in three distinct persons - Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

*C2.02. We believe Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living god; that he died for our sins according to the scriptures; that he was buried; that he was raised from the dead; that he was seen.

*C2.03. We believe the entire Bible is the inspired Word of God and that men were moved by the spirit to write the words of Scripture.

Chapter 3. NATURE OF THE CHURCH

*C3.01. All Power in the Church belongs to our Lord Jesus Christ as its head. All actions of this congregation are to be carried out under His rule and authority.

*C3.02. An imperfect system filled with men and women of integrity will function far better than a perfect system filled with men and women who lack integrity. The people chosen to lead are as important as the system used.

*C3.03. This constitution outlines guidelines employed in selecting key leadership and managing ongoing systems and procedures. In addition, this constitution provides accountability for ministry leaders and key information for the church body. The intent of this document is to provide flexibility to meet long-term needs and goals.

*C3.04. The Church's vision of ministry is to bring people into a growing relationship with Jesus Christ.

Chapter 4. FULFILLMENT OF VISION

*C4.01. To fulfill its mission, this congregation shall create environments to create an irresistible church where people are encouraged and equipped to pursue intimacy with God, community with insiders, and influence with outsiders.

*C4.02 This congregation shall develop an organizational structure to be described in the bylaws. The bylaws shall contain descriptions of the duties, policies, and responsibilities of The Leadership Team and all areas of this ministry.

Chapter 5. POWERS OF THIS CONGREGATION

*C5.01. The powers of this congregation are those necessary to fulfill its mission.

*C5.02. The powers of the congregation are vested in the Congregational Meeting called and conducted as provided in this constitution and bylaws.

*C5.03. Only such authority as is delegated to The Leadership Team or other organizational units in this congregation's governing documents is recognized. All remaining authority is retained by the congregation. The congregation is authorized to:

- a. call a pastor as provided in Chapter 9;
- b. terminate the call of a pastor as provided in Chapter 9;
- c. adopt amendments to the constitution, as provided in Chapter 17, and amendments to the bylaws, as specified in Chapter 16;
- d. acquire real and personal property by gift, devise, purchase, or other lawful means;
- e. hold title to and use its property for all activities consistent with its mission;
- f. sell, mortgage, lease, transfer, or otherwise dispose of and/or encumber its property by and lawful means with consent of governing bodies as provided;
- g. elect its officers, The Leadership Team, boards, nominating team, and other teams and require them to carry out their duties in accordance with the constitution and bylaws and continuing resolutions; and
- h. make changes to the church's affiliation.

Chapter 6. CHURCH AFFILIATION

*C6.01. This congregation is a member of ECO: A Covenant Order of Evangelical Presbyterians. (ECO)

*C6.02. The mission of ECO is to build flourishing churches that make disciples of Jesus Christ. This is aligned with this congregations' vision.

*C6.03. If this congregation desires to discontinue the affiliation with ECO, the Leadership Team will confer with the proposed denomination to ascertain the obligations that come with affiliation separation. Following this, a special call congregation meeting shall be held. At that meeting, with a quorum of Active Members present and voting, a two thirds majority must vote to cease affiliation.

*C6.03. If this congregation desires to affiliate with a different denomination, the Leadership Team will confer with the proposed denomination to ascertain the obligations that come with affiliation. Following this, a special call congregation meeting shall be held. At that meeting, with a quorum of Active Members present and voting, a two thirds majority must vote for affiliation.

*C6.03. The Leadership Team is authorized to form relationships with other churches for purposes that support the ministry, mission, and vision of this congregation.

Chapter 7. PROPERTY OWNERSHIP

*7.01. The Leadership Team shall be responsible for keeping all titles, mortgages, leases, and all legal documents and making them available to the congregation.

Chapter 8. MEMBERSHIP

*C8.01. Membership is not required to be a full participant in ministry and mission in the congregation. Any person who has not joined into active membership through Baptism or affirmation of Faith, but participates in the congregation shall be deemed a worship participant. Worship participants are valued and valuable in God's plan.

*C8.02. Members of this congregation shall be those persons on the roll of this congregation at the time this constitution is adopted and those thereafter who declare and maintain their membership in accordance with the provisions of this constitution and its bylaws.

*C8.03. All persons who apply for membership shall meet the following requirements:

- a. meet with and be approved by The Leadership Team;
- b. declare Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior; and
- c. declare they desire to serve Him in this Church.

*C8.04. Members shall be classified as follows:

- a. Active Members are those baptized persons who have joined the congregation through confession as described in *C8.03 and who are fulfilling their membership covenant as defined in the bylaws. Active Members are considered voting members.
- b. Baptized Members are those persons who have been received by the Sacrament of Holy Baptism in the name of the Triune God. These persons include children or adults that have not yet confessed per *C8.03. Baptized Members are not eligible to vote.
- c. Inactive Members are persons who remain on the role of the church, but cannot vote or hold office. Member placement upon this role will be in accordance with the bylaws of this congregation.
- d. Worship participants are those persons participating in the ministry of the church who have not confessed per *C8.03 or received the Sacrament of Holy Baptism. Worship participants cannot vote or hold office.

*C8.05. Membership in this congregation shall be terminated by any of the following:

- a. death;
- b. resignation or request;
- c. disciplinary reasons; or
- d. removal from the roll due to inactivity as defined in the bylaws.

*C8.06. It shall be the privilege and duty of members of this congregation to:

- a. make regular use of the means of grace, both Word and Sacraments;
- b. live a Christian life in accordance with the Word of God and the teachings of this Church;

- and
- c. support the work and mission of this congregation.

Chapter 9. THE PASTOR

*C9.01. Authority to call a Senior Pastor shall be in this congregation by at least a two-thirds majority ballot vote of Active Members present and voting at a meeting legally called for that purpose. A minimum of 20% of Active Members must be present and voting. Before a call is issued, a Pastor Search Team, nominated by the Nominating team and elected by the congregation, shall seek a leader suitable to promote the mission of the church and fulfill the duties listed in this constitution. In the event there is only one pastoral position in the congregation, the solo pastor will be considered as the Senior Pastor for purposes of the authorities and duties defined in this constitution and related bylaws.

*C9.02. Only a person trained in the Christian faith and ordained to ministry may be called as a senior pastor of this congregation.

*C9.03. Consistent with the faith and practice of this church, every pastor shall:

- a. teach the Word;
- b. administer the sacraments;
- c. conduct public worship;
- d. insure pastoral care is provided;
- e. speak publicly to the world proclaiming God's love;
- f. work actively to grow the Kingdom through congregational ministry; and
- g. moderate congregational meetings, yet have no vote in such meetings.

The senior pastor of this congregation shall, within the congregation:

- a. Offer instruction, confirm, marry, insure that the sick and distressed are visited, and bury the dead;
- b. supervise and share ministry responsibilities with associate pastors;
- c. provide overall direction and vision for the congregation;
- d. supervise directly or indirectly all staff;
- e. offer leadership and moderation to The Leadership Team;
- f. be a voting member of The Leadership Team;
- g. be a voice for spreading the Gospel;
- h. install regularly elected members of The Leadership Team; and
- i. with The Leadership Team, administer discipline and boundary setting.

*C9.04. The specific duties of the senior pastor, compensation, and other matters pertaining to the service pastor shall be included in a letter of call.

*C9.05. The call of a congregation to a Senior Pastor, when accepted, shall constitute a continuing

mutual relationship and commitment, that, shall be terminated only for the following reasons:

- a. death of the pastor;
- b. agreement to terminate the call or the completion of a call for a specific term;
- c. resignation of the pastor;
- d. inability to conduct the pastoral office effectively in the view of the congregation in view of local conditions, without reflection on the competence or the moral and spiritual character of the pastor;
- e. the physical or mental incapacity of the pastor;
- f. disqualification of the pastor through discipline on the grounds of doctrine, morality, or continued neglect of duty; or
- g. the dissolution of the congregation.

*C9.06. The call of a congregation to an Associate Pastor, shall also constitute a continuing mutual relationship and commitment which is highly valued and which shall not be severed lightly. Associate Pastors can only be dismissed with fair severance on recommendation of the Leadership Team AND approval of the congregation.

*C9.07. If allegations arise for *C9.05 condition d, the Leadership Team shall call a meeting with all making allegations. All concerned persons shall be heard. Then the Leadership Team shall meet separately to determine the course of action. If a petition signed by one-third of the Active Members is brought to the Leadership Team or if the Leadership Team recommend termination of the call, a legally called congregational meeting will be called to address the petition. At that meeting with a minimum of 20% of the Active Members present and voting, the congregation may dismiss the pastor with a simple majority vote if the Leadership Team recommended termination or two-thirds vote if the Leadership Team did not recommend termination of the call.

*C9.08. In the case of *C9.05 condition e, the Leadership Team shall seek competent medical testimony. When such a disability is evident, the Leadership Team shall declare the pastorate vacant. At that time, depending on the condition and prospects for medical recovery, the Leadership Team may choose to wait a period or move to call a congregational meeting for the purposes of terminating the call and initiating a new pastor search.

*C9.09. During times of pastoral vacancy, a Pastor Search Team shall be formed as described in *C9.01 and *C13.02, and an interim pastor shall be sought.

*C9.10. During the period of service, an interim pastor shall have the rights and duties in the congregation of a regularly called pastor. The interim pastor and any ordained pastor providing assistance shall refrain from exerting influence in the selection of a pastor.

*C9.11. This congregation shall make satisfactory settlement of all financial obligations to a former pastor before calling a successor.

*C9.12. When an Associate Pastor is called, the privileges and responsibilities of each pastor shall be

specified in documents prepared by the Leadership Team and Senior Pastor in conversation with the Associate Pastor.

Chapter 10. CONGREGATION MEETINGS

*C10.01. The congregation shall hold an annual meeting. The annual meeting of this congregation shall be held at a time and in a manner specified in the bylaws.

*C10.02. A special Congregation Meeting may be called by the Senior Pastor, or the Leadership Team, or by the Leadership Team upon written request of one third of the voting membership. The call for each special meeting shall specify the purpose for which it is to be held and no other business shall be transacted.

*C10.03. Notice of all meetings of this congregation shall be given at the services of worship on two consecutive Sundays, when in fact, the meeting may be held on the second Sunday. In the case of a meeting to call a Senior Pastor, then the notice must be at least 10 days in advance.

*C10.04. The quorum shall be no less than ten percent of the Active Membership. Once a quorum has been established, business may continue if members do not leave the meeting such that the total falls below the 10%.

*C10.05. Certain actions described in this constitution require larger than 10% of the Active Members be present. Should a congregational meeting be called for one of these actions where a quorum is present but the attendance is less than that required to take the action, then no vote will be held at that congregational meeting. The entity calling for the meeting can motion for a reschedule and if carried the meeting shall be rescheduled in accordance with *C10.03.

*C10.06. Voting by proxy or by absentee ballot is not permitted.

*C10.07. All actions approved by the congregation shall be by majority vote of those members present and voting, except as otherwise provided in this constitution or by state law.

*C10.08. Robert's Rules of Order, latest edition, shall govern parliamentary procedure of all meetings of this congregation, as necessary for good order.

Chapter 11. OFFICERS

*C11.01. The officers of this congregation shall be a board(s) of elected Officers known as the Leadership Team.

- a. Duties of the officers shall be specified in the bylaws.
- b. The Leadership Team shall elect a Secretary and a Treasurer.
- c. The officers shall be active members of the congregation.

*C11.02. The congregation shall elect officers of the Corporation. The officers may be elected by written ballot or by acclamation. The normal term for an officer serving on the Leadership Team is 3 years. No officer is to serve more than 2 consecutive terms. The terms of members on the Leadership Team should be staggered to minimize change in any one year.

*C11.03. The congregation shall elect the President of the Corporation. The Leadership Team shall nominate the candidate for President from among the Leadership Team officers with unexpired terms. The President may be elected by written ballot or by acclamation.

*C11.04. The Leadership Team will form a Nominating Team made up of two (2) Leadership Team members and two (2) Active members. The Nominating Team shall have the duty of bring forth Active Members to be nominated for election to Officers. Members of the Nominating Team are not eligible to be elected as officers.

*C11.04. When an officer is unable to fulfill their term thus generating a vacant position, the Leadership Team will instruct the Nominating Team to bring forth a candidate to fill the unexpired term of the departing officer. The term of the newly elected officer will be equal to the length of time that would have remained for the departing officer and will be eligible to serve as many as two (2) more elected terms consecutively.

*C11.05. In times of strife, to promote stability, the congregation, by vote at a congregational meeting, can suspend the normal officer elections for one year and ask the officers to continue serving even if their term was to expire.

*C11.06. The congregation may choose to elect additional boards with specific duties.

Chapter 12. LEADERSHIP TEAM

*C12.01. The voting membership of the Leadership Team shall consist of the Senior Pastor and eight (8) duly elected members of the Leadership Team. Each has voice and vote. It should be recognized that service on the Leadership Team should be bestowed upon those who call Jesus Lord and are seeking to live a life of Christian discipleship.

*C12.02. A Leadership Team position shall be declared vacant if the member ceases to be an Active Member of this congregation, resigns, or is absent from three successive regular meeting of the Leadership Team without due cause. Consistent with the laws of Texas, the congregation may adopt procedures for the removal of a member of the Leadership Team in other circumstances.

*C12.03. The Leadership Team shall have general oversight of the life and activities of this congregation, and be charged with advancing its mission. This congregation shall support the vision for the mission as articulated by the Leadership Team. Specific duties of the Leadership Team shall be contained in the bylaws.

*C12.04. The Leadership Team shall see that the provisions of this constitution and its bylaws and continuing resolutions are carried out.

*C12.05. The Leadership Team shall maintain and review annually the membership roll.

*C12.06. The Leadership Team shall be responsible for the supervision of the Senior Pastor. The Senior Pastor, in consultation with the Leadership Team, shall be responsible for hiring, supervising, and release of lay workers of this congregation. With the Leadership Team's consent, the Senior Pastor may delegate parts of these supervisory functions to other responsible parties within the church.

*C12.07. The Leadership Team shall submit a comprehensive report to this congregation at the annual meeting.

*C12.08. The Leadership Team shall normally meet once a month. Special meetings may be called by the Senior Pastor, The President, or a majority of the Leadership Team. A 24-hour notice of each special meeting shall be given to all who are entitled to be present. There shall be no meeting of the Leadership Team without either the Senior Pastor or President. In a case where a Senior Pastor has not been called and the President has obligations that prevent their attendance, the meeting should be rescheduled if feasible, but the President may delegate their duties and allow the meeting to continue.

*C12.09. A quorum for the transaction of business shall consist of the Senior Pastor and a simple majority of the Leadership Team members. If a Senior Pastor has not been currently called then a quorum for the transaction of business shall consist of the President and a simple majority of the Leadership Team members. Exception shall occur when meeting(s) must be called for member reception. In such case the quorum shall be no less than the Senior Pastor or President and two additional members of the Leadership Team.

Chapter 13. CONGREGATION TEAMS

*C13.01. A Nominating Team shall be elected for a term of one year pursuant to the conditions in the bylaws. Members of the Nominating Team are not eligible for consecutive reelection.

*C11.04. The Nominating Team will normally be chaired by one of the outgoing Leadership Team members. Details of the Nominating Team's responsibilities are included in the bylaws of this congregation.

*C13.02. When a Senior Pastor vacancy occurs, a Pastor Search Team of six (6) Active Members shall be elected by the Congregation. Term of office will terminate upon installation of the newly called Senior Pastor. Details of the Pastor Search Team's responsibilities are included in the bylaws of this congregation.

*C13.03. When an Associate Pastoral vacancy occurs, The Senior Pastor will form a Pastor Search team with four (4) Active Members of the Congregation. This team will be approved by the Leadership Team.

Details of the Pastor Search Team's responsibilities are included in the bylaws of this congregation.

*C13.04. Other Teams of this congregation may be formed, as need arises, by decision of the Leadership team, in accordance with this constitution.

Chapter 14. ORGANIZATIONS WITHIN THE CONGREGATION

*C14.01. All organizations within this congregation shall exist to aid it in its mission. As outgrowths and expressions of this congregation's life, the organizations are subject to its oversight and direction. This congregation at its meeting shall determine their policies, guide their activities, and receive reports concerning membership, work, and finances.

*C14.02. Special interest groups may be organized only after authorization has been given by the Leadership Team.

Chapter 15. DISCIPLINE OF ACTIVE MEMBERS

*C15.01. Denial of the Christian faith as described in this constitution, conduct grossly unbecoming a member of the Body of Christ, or persistent troublemaking in this congregation are sufficient cause for discipline of a member. Prior to disciplinary action, reconciliation will be attempted following Matthew 18:15-17, proceeding through these successive steps:

- a. Private admonition by a pastor,
- b. Admonition by a pastor in the presence of two or three witnesses, and
- c. Citation to appear before the Leadership team.

If for any reason, the pastor is unable to administer the admonitions required by a. or b. above, a member of the Leadership team shall administer such admonitions. A member will not be 'disciplined' for having incorrect (in the eyes of the Leadership Team) beliefs. However, a person can and should be asked to refrain from teaching or representing the church publicly with such beliefs, and then disciplined for refusing to follow this guidance.

*C15.02. If discipline against an Active Member proceeds beyond steps a and b in *C15.01, specific charges against the accused member(s) of the congregation shall be written by the Leadership Team and presented to the accused with a request to appear at a hearing before the Leadership Team not sooner than ten (10) days from receipt of the written charges. If the member(s) accused with the offense or offensive pattern fail to appear at the hearing, the Leadership may proceed with the hearing and may pass judgement in the member's absence.

*C15.03. Members of the Leadership Team who participate in the preparation of the written charges or who present evidence or testimony in the hearing are disqualified from voting upon the question of guilt of the accused member. Should the allegations be sustained by a two-thirds majority vote and renewed

admonition prove ineffectual, the Leadership Team shall impose one of the following disciplinary actions:

- a. Censure before the Leadership Team or congregation;
- b. Suspension from membership for a defined time; or
- c. Exclusion from membership in this congregation.

Disciplinary actions shall be delivered to the member in writing.

*C15.04. Disciplinary actions may be reconsidered and revoked by the Leadership Team upon receipt of either evidence that an injustice has been done, or evidence of repentance and amendment.

Chapter 16. BYLAWS

*C16.01. This congregation may adopt bylaws. No bylaw may conflict with this constitution.

*C16.02. Bylaws may be adopted or amended at two sequential and legally called meetings of the Leadership Team with a quorum present and with a majority vote of those Officers present and voting. At the first meeting, a bylaw may be passed on a tentative basis until the second meeting is called to finalize the new or amended bylaw.

*C16.03. Changes to bylaws may be proposed by any petition of twenty (20) or more Active members. Such changes are to be submitted in writing to the Leadership team at least 30 days before a regular or special call Leadership Team meeting.

*C16.04. The Leadership Team shall notify the congregation's members of any changes to the bylaws in writing, by announcement at a congregational meeting, or by announcement on two consecutive weeks of worship services.

Chapter 17. CONSTITUTIONAL AMENDMENTS

*C17.01 Amendments to this constitution may be proposed by the Leadership Team or by a petition in writing from forty (40) or more Active Members. Proposal must be filed with the Leadership Team 60 days before formal consideration by this congregation at a regular or special Congregation Meeting called for that purpose. The Leadership Team shall notify the congregation's members of the proposal together with recommendations at least 21 days in advance of the meeting.

*C17.02. Amendments to this constitution under *C17.01 shall:

- a. Be approved at a legally called Congregation meeting;
- b. Be ratified without change at the next annual meeting by a two-thirds majority vote of those present and voting; OR
- c. Have the effective date included in the resolution and noted in the constitution.

Chapter 18. CONTINUING RESOLUTIONS

*C18.01. The Leadership Team may enact continuing resolutions. Such continuing resolutions may not conflict with this constitution or bylaws.

*C18.02. Continuing resolutions shall be enacted or amended by a two-thirds vote of all voting members of the Leadership Team.

Chapter 19. INDEMNIFICATION

*C19.01. Consistent with the provisions of the laws under which this congregation is incorporated, this congregation may adopt provisions providing indemnification for each person who, by reason of the fact that such a person is or was an Officer, Employee, Agent, or other member of any team of this congregation, was or is threatened to be made party to any threatened, pending, or completed civil, criminal, administrative, arbitration, or investigative proceeding.

Adopted by this congregation this ____ day of _____ on the year of our Lord _____

Witnessed:

Senior Pastor

President

Active member

Print

Active member

Print