

HOWE METHODIST CHURCH

Constitution, Covenant & By-Laws

PREAMBLE

Being led through faith in our Lord Jesus Christ, by the power of the Holy Spirit, for the glory of God the Father we establish this constitution. We declare and establish this constitution to preserve and secure the principles of our faith, and to govern the body in an orderly manner. These by-laws will preserve the liberties of each individual church member and the freedom of action of this collective body in its relation to other churches.

I. Howe Methodist Church

This body shall be known as Howe Methodist Church located at 810 N. Denny St. Howe, TX 75459 (PO Box 398).

II. OBJECTIVE

To be a body that exists to share the love of Jesus with all people. We have been called together by God for His glory. We believe that a life lived through His grace in obedience to the Great Commission brings glory to Him and it is for this purpose we have been called.

To be a body that worships God in spirit and in truth; Offering thanks and praise to God as a proper response to the abundant life He gives us through the Son, and to worship by a life of obedience to His calling.

To help people enjoy a personal relationship with God in the community of the body of Christ, the church. It is our goal that every believer would experience an increasingly meaningful fellowship with other believers and with God.

To be always offering the love of Christ in ministry to others. We must minister unselfishly to the community and the world in the name of Jesus Christ, following His example of meeting people's needs physically that we would meet their need spiritually.

To be equipping the saints for ministry. We must always be growing in our knowledge of Scripture, God's specific revelation to humanity. Without faith it is impossible to please God and faith comes by knowing the Word of God.

May we daily be conformed to the image of our Lord Jesus Christ!

III. STATEMENT OF FAITH

The Holy Bible is the inspired and inerrant word of God and is the basis for any statement of faith. The church affirms the Apostle's Creed, the Nicene Creed, the Chalcedonian Creed, and John Wesley's 25 Articles of Religion. We band ourselves together as a body of baptized believers in Jesus Christ personally committed to sharing the good news of salvation to lost mankind.

IV. RELATIONSHIPS

The governance of this church is vested in the body of believers by which it is composed. It is subject to the control of no other ecclesiastical body, but it recognizes and sustains the obligations of mutual counsel and cooperation which are common among churches holding to essential Christian doctrine. This church will cooperate with and support other Christians so long as the said groups adhere to essential Christian doctrine. We recognize that God made all creation and saw that it was good. As a diverse people of God who bring special

gifts and evidences of God's grace to the unity of the Church and to society, we are called to be faithful to the example of Jesus' ministry to all persons. Inclusiveness means openness, acceptance, and support that enables all persons to participate in the spiritual life of the Church and its service to the community and the world. Therefore, inclusiveness denies every semblance of discrimination. The services of worship of the Howe Methodist Church shall be open to all persons and church activities wherever possible should take place in facilities accessible to persons with disabilities. Similarly, inclusiveness means the freedom for the total involvement of all persons who meet the requirements of the membership and leadership of the Church at any level and in every place. This church will cooperate with other like-minded groups as it deems appropriate for the propagation of the gospel of Jesus Christ. However, this church will not cooperate with any individual nor any organization that acts in any way to affirm, approve, or endorse any definition of marriage that varies from the biblical ideal of one man and one woman in covenant for life.

V. CHURCH COVENANT

We believe that God has called us to live together in a faithful covenant that expresses our commitments both to God and to each other. With John Wesley, we affirm that the scriptures know of no such thing as "solitary religion," but that we have been designed to grow in our discipleship in the company of others. As a church, we are committed to a connectional organization that is meant to encourage such sharing and accountability, with the end goal of all being partners in the gospel and in our outreach to the world. This connection is founded in both our common doctrinal understandings, as well as in our core mission of sharing the gospel with the world. Towards that end, we celebrate our unity with one another at the table of the Lord that extends across the globe, crossing all boundaries of language, culture, customs, and social and economic distinctions.

BYLAWS

I. DEFINITIONS

1. Church – as used in these by-laws shall mean the local organization incorporated as Howe Methodist Church. Charter number -----.
2. Member – as used in these by-laws shall mean any person properly presented, nominated and accepted into membership of this Church according to the terms and conditions set forth in these by-laws.
3. Congregation – as used in these by-laws shall mean any meeting of members, properly called according to the terms and conditions set forth in these by-laws.
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II. CHURCH MEMBERSHIP

PROFESSING MEMBERS. Those wishing to become professing members of the Howe Methodist Church may present themselves to the pastor and, after any appropriate counsel, be baptized if they have not already done so, and join by professing their faith in Jesus Christ and agreeing to the vows of discipleship. Those wishing to transfer their membership from one Methodist congregation to the Howe Methodist Church may do so by indicating such to the receiving pastor who shall send a request for the transfer to their previous congregation. Persons may also be received by transfer from other denominations in which the Lordship of Christ is affirmed. The pastor has the authority to determine the readiness of any person to assume

the vows of membership. A person deferred by the pastor may appeal that decision to the Church Board. In order to fulfill the mandate to “watch over each other in love,” professing members of the Howe Methodist Church shall be encouraged to participate in a class meeting, small group setting, discipleship or other accountability group on a regular basis, as a key part of the fulfillment of their vows of membership.

MEMBER INVOLVEMENT AND ACCOUNTABILITY. 1. Each member is called to fulfill their vows of baptism and membership, being faithful by participating in the spiritual formation, worship, stewardship, and service opportunities the church provides. It is the responsibility the congregation to establish and communicate clear expectations of their members who share in the partnership (*koinonia*) of the gospel (Philippians 1:5), and the responsibility of each member or partner to strive to meet those expectations.

2. The pastor is responsible for ensuring that members are cared for by implementing a discipleship process focused on helping members to “go on to perfection” by loving God with all of their heart, mind, soul, and strength, and by loving their neighbor as themselves. Pastors are charged with equipping all the members of a congregation to be in ministry by meeting people at their point of need and offering them Jesus (Ephesians 4:11-13).

3. All members of the church are called into a loving accountability with one another. If a member neglects the membership vows or is accused of violating the covenant and failing to keep the vows as stated, however, the congregation shall use every means of encouraging that member to return to an active faith and to lovingly restore them to the fellowship of the church (Matthew 18:15-17). The Pastor and/or the Lay Leader are responsible for facilitating grace-filled efforts to restore negligent members to full participation in the life of the church. Negligent members may be placed on an inactive roll by a two-thirds vote of the church council.

4. Members placed on the inactive roll may remain in that status for up to two years while every attempt is made to return them to active membership. Members on the inactive roll are suspended from serving on church committees or voting on church matters during that time. If an inactive member does not complete the restoration process or show evidence of desiring to return to a more active status after two years, then the church conference, with the recommendation of the pastor, may remove the member by a two-thirds vote.

TRANSFER FROM OTHER DENOMINATIONS. A member in good standing in any Christian denomination who has been baptized and who desires to unite with the Howe Methodist Church shall be received as a professing member. The pastor will report to the sending church the date of reception of such a member. It is recommended that instruction in the faith, work, and polity of the Church be provided by the pastor for all such persons.

III. CHURCH OFFICERS

Section 1. Pastor(s) –

(1) The primary functions of the Pastor(s) are:

- a. To provide spiritual leadership and accountability for both the staff and the church.
- b. To ensure that the church is fulfilling the Great Commission by monitoring and evaluating the church’s progress in its fulfillment.
- c. To serve as a facilitating body in terms of church discipline.

(2) A Pastor should strive to possess the characteristics described in 1 Timothy 3:1-7 and Titus 1:6-9.

- (3) The public services and general development of the church ministry shall be under his supervision. His primary responsibility is to equip the saints for ministry by leading as an example in word, in conduct, in love, in spirit, in faith, and in purity.
- (4) A Pastor shall be prayerfully chosen and called by the church acting through the Staff/Parish Relations Committee and approved by the Church Council whenever a vacancy occurs. The Staff/Parish Relations Committee shall have the exclusive authority to nominate and present a candidate for the position. Thereafter the Church Council shall approve and confirm the nomination at a meeting called for that purpose. A 75% majority of those Church Council members present shall be necessary to extend the call. Notwithstanding the foregoing, in the event of any vote other than a unanimous vote, the Church Council Chairman, serving as chair of the meeting, may recall the question in order to seek unanimity.
- (5) In the absence of a Pastor, the Staff/Parish Relations Committee shall nominate an Interim Pastor to serve as long as necessary until the new Pastor is installed. The prospective interim must be nominated by the Staff/Parish Relations Committee, recommended to the Church Board and receive an affirming vote of at least 75%. The Interim Pastor shall serve along with the Staff/Parish Relations Committee, Church Council and Congregation in the furtherance of the mission of the church until the new Pastor is called. Notwithstanding the foregoing, in the event of any vote other than a unanimous vote, the Church Council Chairman, serving as chair of the meeting, may recall the question in order to seek unanimity.
- (6) The Pastor is responsible for the oversight of the church staff and shall make recommendations to the Staff/Parish Relations Committee regarding personnel decisions, including hiring or termination.
- (7) The Pastor will operate in harmony with the Staff/Parish Relations Committee and the Church Council. He will be accountable to them, and they will be to him as they work together as one body for the furtherance of the gospel.
- (8) Any Pastor, Lay Leader, Interim Pastor, Preacher, or any person who will be considered to address this church in the form of teaching, instructing, or promoting any ministry must adhere to these bylaws and affirm the doctrinal statement of this church. Any reservations shall be made known to the Pastor for consideration.

Section 2. Church Board –

The members of the Church Board shall serve together to fulfill the mission and vision of the congregation while holding to its core values. The pastor shall cast the vision for the congregation in close consultation with key leaders and in consideration of relevant missions and ministries, both new and established. The Church Board has administrative and ministry-related duties to fulfill. Examples of the administrative side of this board include but are not limited to budgeting and financial reports, staff needs, large-scale facility repairs, and developing long range plans. Examples of the ministry side of this board include but are not limited to upcoming church-wide events, ministry area budgets, and reviewing church-wide ministry goals. When meeting in a session, the area function groups will present information while the entirety of the Church Board will engage in discussion and will have a vote. The Church Board shall meet at least once a quarter (preferably more) to ensure the ministries of the congregation are following the same path to accomplish the congregation's mission and vision. The members of the Church Board shall consist of the following:

Pastor (appointed, non-voting)

- The pastor shall serve as the vision caster, spiritual leader and ordained appointee to nurture the congregation and to ensure the congregation fulfills its mission.
- The Pastor shall serve as ambassador of the church to the community. Further, the Pastor will provide care including, but not limited to, visitation, counsel, comfort and meeting the needs of the congregation.
- The administrative role of the pastor is to tend the needs of the congregation, work with congregation to create ministries and missions, oversee the staff, accept the spirit of the church and enhance where possible. The pastor will foster and mentor members of the council and committees to be self-determining champions for the congregation to ensure actions are in God's will, appropriate and nurturing of our mission.
- The pastor will ensure that decisions as to the format of order of worship, Church Board matters, staffing decisions, mission or ministries of the church are made in the voice of the congregation

Board Chair (elected by the Board)

- The board chair shall call and moderate meetings setting agendas no less than four business days before the called meeting.
- The chair will be in communication with the various administrative and ministry groups to set the agenda for necessary items for discussion.

Lay Leader (nominated)

- The Lay Leader serves as a leading voice of the congregation alongside the pastor.
- The Lay Leader should be willing and able to listen to the congregation as a whole and serve as the consistent and uniting voice.
- The Lay Leader shall serve a three (3) year term and will be held accountable to their role and responsibilities by the entirety of the Church Board. Consideration will be taken into account regarding family and health concerns if the Lay Leader is unable to fulfill their responsibilities.

At Large Members (9 members - nominated)

- The At Large member shall serve as the third voice for the congregation with no specific responsibilities unless they are a member of a function area group.
- There shall be 9 total members, including the Lay Leader, serving in 3-year terms (3 people per year)

Function Area Groups

The Function groups shall each have 2 members serving in that role (one as leader, one as co-leader) of the congregation serving in staggered 2-year terms. This shall ensure continuity as each member will serve as a voice and leader in training in their first year and as leader for that area in their second year. When discussing items for vote from each function group, the function group will lead the discussion and present information, but all members of the Church Board shall serve as the voting body. In the event that a nominated individual requests to roll off or has been unable or unwilling to fulfill their responsibilities, each Function Group in consultation with the pastor, Council Chair, and Lay Leader may request a new nomination to be made through the nominations committee.

Trustees Function Group (2 members, nominated)

- The Trustee Function Group shall perform all duties related to the maintenance of the church.
- When Trustee decisions are to be discussed, the function group leads the entirety of the Church Board in conversation and decision making.

Finance Function Group (2 members, nominated)

- The Finance Function Group shall perform all duties related to the financial management of the church.
- When Financial decisions are to be discussed, the function group leads the entirety of the Church Board in conversation and decision making.

SPRC Relationship to Church Board (2 members from SPRC)

- In our simplified structure, we have a separate SPRC. However, in order to ensure communication and coordination in decisions, 2 members of SPRC will also be members of the Church Board. They will have vote and voice on the Church Board and will bring an SPRC update to each Church Board Meeting.

Section 3. Nominations Committee –

The leaders of the church in the simplified board model shall be nominated by the committee on nominations and leadership.

- Members of the nominations committee shall be elected from the floor of Church Conference each year and shall serve 3-year terms. Notice shall be given to the congregation prior to each year's Church Conference to prayerfully consider members who will faithfully serve in their capacity as a member of the nominating committee.
- For nominations to be effective, members asked to serve will be given a description and responsibilities of the role they are committing to regarding time, responsibilities, and the structure of the Simplified Board Model.
- The pastor shall serve as the chair of the nominations committee with the lay leader serving in an ex-officio capacity.
- A quorum of a simple majority of the nominations committee is required for any nominating decisions.
- There shall be no more than nine (9) members, in addition to the pastor and the lay leader, of the Nominations committee. Members serve in 3-year terms with staggered nominations to ensure there are old and new members each year.
- Retiring members of the committee cannot succeed themselves, and only one person from an immediate family shall serve on the committee.

Section 4. Staff Parish Relations Committee (6 members, nominated)

- The Staff Parish Relations Committee (SPRC) shall perform all duties related to the recruitment, supervision, and evaluation of church staff, and make recommendations to the Church Board regarding retention and dismissal.
- The SPRC will function separately from the Church Board, however two members of SPRC will also serve on the Church Board as SPRC representatives to ensure communication and coordination in SPRC related decisions.
- The SPRC will function with 6 members who are rotating in 3-year terms (2 members per year)

- Lay Leader will also be a member of the SPRC.
- No staff members or family of staff may serve on SPRC, and only one member per household may serve on SPRC.

Section 5. Church Staff –

- (1) This church shall call or employ such staff members as the church shall need. A job description shall be written when the need for staff members is determined.
- (2) Staff members shall be nominated by the Staff/Parish Relations Committee to the Church Council. Staff members shall be employed following an affirming vote of at least three-fourths (3/4) of the Church Council.
- (3) At least two weeks' notice should be given by the employee if the said staff member resigns from their position with the church.
- (4) The Staff/Parish Relations Committee, in conjunction with the Church Council, operating in at least three-fourths (3/4) majority agreement, shall have authority to terminate any staff member for cause.

III. CHURCH MINISTRY ORGANIZATIONS

Section 1. Ministry Organizations –

The church shall maintain ministries and programs that accomplish the purpose of the church in the discretion of the Pastor(s).

Section 2. Church Committees -

All committees shall be formed as the Pastor deems necessary in consultation with the Church Council. A simple majority of the number of members serving on any standing committee shall be necessary for any recommendation to be presented. Each member of church committees shall serve one-year terms. Committees shall be called and dissolved as the Pastor deems necessary. Committee chairpersons shall be selected by the Committee and reaffirmed in that position each year.

Section 3. Church Ministries -

Church ministries are those task groups which perform a service or ministry. There shall be no limitation on the number of ministries or their tenure. Ministry groups shall serve under the supervision of the leadership assigned by the Pastor and subject to the direction of the Pastor(s) and shall continue as long as necessary and beneficial to the body.

IV. CHURCH ORDINANCES

Section 1. Baptism –

Through Holy Baptism we are united in Christ's death in repentance of our sins; raised to new life in Him through the power of the resurrection; incorporated into the Body of Christ; and empowered through the work of the Holy Spirit to go on to perfection. Holy Baptism is God's gracious gift to us, flowing from the once for all work of Christ Jesus, and our pledge to follow as His disciples.

Holy Baptism may be performed by sprinkling, pouring, or immersion. The outward and visible sign of Holy Baptism is water. Candidates are baptized "in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit" (Matthew 28:19). The inward and spiritual grace is death to sin and new birth to righteousness by faith through union with Christ in His death and resurrection.

Holy Baptism is administered among a gathered congregation. Those present vow on behalf of Christ's Holy Church to receive the baptized into the Church universal, to grow together in grace, and to remember the profession made and benefits received in Holy Baptism. In the case of believers, the initial profession of faith precedes the baptism. In the case of infants, parents and sponsors who are believers promise to provide Christian nurture and prepare the child for personal profession of faith. Candidates for Holy Baptism, and those presenting candidates unable to answer for themselves, shall be instructed in the Christian faith and the meaning of Holy Baptism.

Holy Baptism, as initiation into Christ's Holy Church, occurs once in a person's life. Holy Communion serves as the regular and continual affirmation of baptismal vows within the church. Through a service of baptismal remembrance and reaffirmation of baptismal vows people can renew the covenant declared at baptism. As Methodists, we acknowledge one baptism and do not require re-baptism.

Section 2. The Lord's Supper -

The Sacrament of the Lord's Supper, also known as Holy Communion or the Eucharist, is the other Sacrament given to the Church by its Lord, Jesus Christ, who instituted it at the time of His Passion and after His Resurrection, and who presides at the meal. It is of vital importance to all of our members to partake regularly and frequently of this Sacrament. They remember the death and celebrate the resurrection of Jesus Christ, through which they receive forgiveness for their sins and the salvation of their souls. They enter into the new Covenant of God with God's people.

Holy Communion is administered by an ordained Minister or by a Probationer, duly authorized thereto, to the Members of the Church and to any believers who may wish to join with us in this Sacrament. The attitude of Jesus was to include children in His Kingdom. Children are able to make a response of faith appropriate to their age, grow in faith by participating in worship, and thus should not be separated from their parents in this central act of worship.

Section 3. Confirmation.

Through the Rite of Confirmation, we personally renew the covenant declared at our baptism, witness to God's work in our lives, affirm our commitment to Christ and His Holy Church, and receive the outpouring of the Holy Spirit through the laying on of hands enabling our lifelong journey toward holiness. The Apostles prayed for and laid hands on those who had been baptized.

It is the duty of pastors to prepare confirmands, teaching them the basic tenets of the historic Christian faith, the history and theology of the Wesleyan revival movement, and the practical meaning of church membership in agreement with approved catechism.

V. CHURCH MEETINGS

Section 1. Worship Services –

The church shall maintain services deemed necessary by the Pastor and Church Council.

Sections 2. Church Conference Meetings –

Church Conference meetings shall be conducted by the moderator/chairman. The church shall meet to conduct business as the Pastor and Church Council deem appropriate.

- (1) Any matter requiring congregational approval will be presented at this time. Any action by the congregation which is not taken in accord with the requirements of these by-laws is void.
- (2) Representatives of the Church ministries, boards and other organizations may also be called upon to share the progress of their ministries during this meeting.
- (3) Two weeks' notice must be given prior to any called meeting. Notice of any meeting shall include the date and time of the meeting and the proposed agenda for the meeting. The final agenda for the meeting shall be posted not less than 7 days prior to the scheduled meeting. Matters to be included in the agenda shall be submitted to the church secretary not less than 3 business days prior to issuance of the final agenda. The Pastor reserves discretion to omit matters from the agenda. Additional matters may be added to the agenda at the meeting by vote of the congregation and with the approval of the moderator/chairman. In the event of an emergency, the Pastor or Church Council may call a meeting and they must provide as much notice as possible for such a meeting.

VI. GENERAL

Section 1. Amendments –

This Constitution and its By-Laws may be amended by three-fourths (3/4) vote of members present at a called member's meeting. Two weeks' published notice of the meeting must be given. The notice must include the date and time of the meeting and must set forth the specific proposed change[s].

Being led through faith in our Lord Jesus Christ, by the power of the Holy Spirit, for the glory of God the Father we hereby ratify and establish the preceding Constitution, Covenant and Amended Bylaws on this the ____ day of March, 2023, hereby declare and establish this constitution, Covenant and Amended Bylaws to preserve and secure the principles of our faith, and to govern the body in an orderly manner. This Constitution, Covenant and Amended Bylaws will preserve the liberties and conscience of each individual church member and freedom of action of this body in its relation to other churches.

To God Be The Glory!