

# **Epikos Constitution**

## **Article 1 – Name**

The name of this organization shall be epikos, affiliated with the Baptist General Conference and the Great Lakes Baptist Conference.

The organization was incorporated in the state of Wisconsin, June 1<sup>st</sup> 2004.

## **Article 2 – Statement of Purpose**

The purpose of Epikos is to glorify God through worship, prayer, preaching, teaching, and administering the ordinances of baptism and communion. Motivated by the Greatest Commandment (Mark 12:30-31) to love God with all of our heart, mind, soul, and strength, Epikos will seek to fulfill the Great Commission (Matthew 28:19-20) by making disciples of all nations who live out their faith in Jesus Christ every-day.

## **Article 3 – Statement of Faith**

### ***The Bible***

We believe that the Bible is the Word of God, fully inspired and without error in the original manuscripts, written under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, and that it has supreme authority in all matters of faith and conduct. (John 17:17, Romans 15:4, II Timothy 3:16-17, II Peter 1:19-21)

### ***The Trinity***

We believe that there is one living and true God, eternally existing in three persons, that these are equal in every divine perfection, and that they execute distinct but harmonious offices in the work of creation, providence, and redemption. (Matthew 28:19, John 1:1-4, I John 5:7)

### ***God the Father***

We believe in God, the Father, an infinite personal spirit, perfect in holiness, wisdom, power, and love. We believe that He concerns Himself mercifully in the affairs of each person, that He hears and answers prayer, and that He saves from sin and death all who come to Him through Jesus Christ. (John 3:16-17, John 4:24, John 17:5)

### ***Jesus Christ***

We believe in Jesus Christ, God's only begotten Son, conceived by the Holy Spirit. We believe in His substitutionary atoning death, bodily resurrection, ascension into heaven, perpetual intercession for His people, and personal visible return to earth. (Isaiah 7:14, John 1:14, Philippians 2:5-11, Hebrews 1:2-3, I John 1:7)

### ***The Holy Spirit***

We believe in the Holy Spirit who came forth from the Father and the Son to convict the world of sin, righteousness, and judgment, and to regenerate, sanctify, and empower all who believe in Jesus Christ. We believe that the Holy Spirit indwells every believer in Christ, and that He is an abiding helper, teacher and guide. (John 14:26, John 16:7-15, Romans 8:14-17, Ephesians 1:13-14)

### ***Regeneration***

We believe that all people are sinners by nature and by choice and are, therefore, under condemnation. We believe that those who repent of their sins and trust in Jesus Christ as Savior are regenerated by the Holy Spirit. (John 1:12-13, John 3:3, 16-17, Acts 20:21, Ephesians 2:1-9, Titus 3:5)

### ***The Church***

We believe in the universal church, a living spiritual body of which Christ is the head and all regenerated persons are members. We believe in the local church, consisting of a company of believers in Jesus Christ, baptized on a credible confession of faith, and associated for worship, work and fellowship. We believe that God has laid upon the members of the local church the primary task of giving the gospel of Jesus Christ to a lost world, and making fully devoted followers of Christ. (Matthew 16:16-18, Acts 2:38-41, Ephesians 2:19-22, Ephesians 5:25-27)

### ***Christian Conduct***

We believe that Christians should live for the glory of God and the well-being of others; that their conduct should be blameless before the world; that they should be faithful stewards of their possessions; and that they should seek to realize for themselves and others the full stature of maturity in Christ. We believe that the bible is the primary instructor of Christian conduct. (II Corinthians 9:6-8, Ephesians 4:11-16, Philippians 2:14-16, Colossians 3:17-23, I Thessalonians 5:17-18)

### ***The Ordinances***

We believe that the Lord Jesus Christ has committed two ordinances to the local church: baptism and the Lord's Supper. We believe that Christian baptism is immersion of a believer in water into the name of the triune God. We believe that the Lord's Supper was instituted by Christ for commemoration of His death. We believe that these two ordinances should be observed and administered until the return of the Lord Jesus Christ. (Matthew 28:18-20, Acts 2:41-42, Romans 6:3-5, I Corinthians 11:23-32)

### ***Religious Liberty***

We believe that every human being has direct relations with God, and is responsible to God alone in all matters of faith; that each church is independent and must be free from interference by any ecclesiastical or political authority; that therefore Church and State must be kept separate as having different functions, each fulfilling its duties free from dictation or patronage of the other.

### ***Church Cooperation***

We believe that the local church can best promote the cause of Jesus Christ by cooperating with one another in a denominational organization. Such an organization, whether a regional or district conference, exists and functions by the will of the churches. Cooperation in a conference is voluntary and may be terminated at any time. Churches may likewise cooperate with inter-denominational fellowships on a voluntary basis.

### ***The Last Things***

We believe in the personal and visible return of the Lord Jesus Christ to earth and the establishment of His kingdom. We believe in the resurrection of the body, the final judgment, the eternal felicity of the righteous, and the endless suffering of the wicked. (John 5:28-29, Revelation 20:1-15, II Corinthians 5:10, Matthew 25:31-46)

## **Article 4 – Membership**

### **I. Requirements for Covenant Membership**

Requirements for Church Members are:

- a. Jesus Christ is your savior
- b. You have been baptized by immersion as a believer
- c. You agree and understand our statement of Faith
- d. You agree and understand the broad vision of the church.
- e. You are involved in a small group or ministry team that meets weekly
- f. You fast, pray, read scripture on a regular basis.
- g. You faithfully tithe
- h. You are using your gifts to serve the church
- i. You make coming to weekend worship gatherings at Epikos a priority.
- j. Received the recommendation of the Overseer Board or Pastor after a personal interview.

Membership shall not be based solely on a letter of transfer.

## **II. Procedure for Covenant Membership**

A person can begin the process of covenant membership by reading the epikos covenant membership booklet. They must answer the questions in the back and submit them to the Overseer Board or Pastor. They must also begin to read the required books or fulfill the required training. A membership class, in which the Biblical principles for membership are clearly explained, shall be offered on a regular basis. If an individual has completed the questions, readings, and membership class and desires membership with Epikos, an Overseer shall examine each applicant for membership to ascertain the understanding and spiritual readiness of each individual. If the Overseer recommends the individual for membership, that individual will be received into membership by action of the Overseer Board.

## **III. Termination of Covenant Membership**

1. A request of transfer may be granted.
2. Whenever a church member joins another church, his or her membership at Epikos shall terminate without further action. Epikos covenant members who are missionaries and join another church where they are serving may retain their membership at Epikos. Members may also retain their membership when they are temporarily located to another city for job or education.
3. A member may be terminated at his or her own request, to be received in writing by the Overseer Board.
4. A member who has been inactive for more than twelve months may be removed from covenant membership. Prior to removal, contact from the church must take place. If that member fails to respond, the member must be notified that his/her membership at Epikos shall be terminated by action of the Overseer Board.
5. A member may be removed if the member is guilty of gross misconduct contrary to Biblical teaching and remains in an unrepentant state. Prior to removal from membership, reasonable efforts (consistent with Matthew 18:15-20) must be made to confront sin, bring reconciliation, and restore the member to Christian fellowship. If all efforts fail to bring about repentance and restoration, the Overseer Board will remove the individual from covenant membership.

## **IV. Covenant Membership before an Overseers Board Exists**

1. Before the Overseer board exists, the membership will be decided by an task group appointed by the pastor.

## **Article 5: Church Government and Church Leadership**

### **I. The Congregation**

The congregation, made up of covenant members of epikos, is the governing body of this corporation. The Overseer Board acts for the congregation in all matters not specifically reserved to the congregation in this Constitution or where the congregation has not taken specific action. The approval of the congregation must be received in matters pertaining to: the hiring or dismissing of the Senior Pastor, the purchase or sale of real estate, the proposed annual budget, approving the Overseer Board, and amending this Constitution.

### **II. The Overseer Board**

#### **A. The Overseer Board Purpose**

The Overseer Board have been called to provide general care and spiritual oversight for the church body. The Overseer Board is responsible to God and to the congregation for the spiritual health and strategic implementation of the vision and ministry of Epikos.

Some specific duties of the Overseer Board are:

**Hold Senior Pastor Accountable.** The major role of the Overseer Board is to provide support and accountability to the Senior Pastor. The Overseer Board will annually appraise and review the character, work, ministry, and compensation of the Senior Pastor and the health of the Senior Pastor's family. The Overseer board holds the Senior pastor accountable to the vision of the church and the specific objectives stated to accomplish the vision.

**Shepherd the flock of God.** The Overseer Board will serve the needs of people with humility and love.

**Lead through Example.** Those on the Overseer Board are to be scriptural role models for the rest of the church body to look up to and follow.

**Teach and Exhort.** The Overseer Board must see that the epikos body is well taught through sound Biblical instruction.

**Refute False Teaching.** The Overseer Board must confront those who teach what contradicts Biblical truth and admonish those who continue in a pattern of behavior that contradicts clear Biblical principles.

**Pray for the Church.** The Overseer Board will regularly intercede for the church, praying for the physical and spiritual well-being of the congregation and the advancement of the work of Christ.

**Oversee the Ministry of epikos.** The Overseer Board will regularly review and evaluate the direction of the church. The Overseer Board and Senior Pastor will together establish strategies and objectives to honor God and fulfill the mission of the church. This includes the authority to establish and dissolve ministries.

**Receive New Members.** The Overseer shall interview prospective new members and receive new members into the epikos community.

**Legal Representatives.** The Overseer Board shall be the church's representatives in signing legal documents that are consistent with the church's budget and constitution. This includes the authority to borrow money, and to acquire, encumber, and sell real and personal property.

**Policy Establishment.** The Overseer Board shall establish operating policies and procedures as are deemed appropriate and necessary for the effective operation of the church.

**Licensing and Ordination.** The Overseer Board has the authority to act in matters of licensing and can recommend to the congregation any ordinations or commissioning.

#### B. The Overseer Board Composition

The Overseer Board shall consist of the Senior Pastor and no fewer than three and no more than nine additional members who will serve as overseers of the church.

#### C. Overseer Board Qualifications

A member of the Overseer Board at Epikos must...

1. Be a covenant member of epikos (see membership requirements) and an active participant in the life of the epikos community
2. Meet Biblical standards of conduct and character for overseers (as established in I Timothy 3:1-7, Titus 1:5-9, and I Peter 5:1-4).

#### D. Overseer Board member term of service

Members of the Overseer Board shall be affirmed by the congregation at its annual membership meeting. Each Overseer Board member shall be asked to make a one-year commitment, subject to review, re-commitment, and re-affirmation by the church membership each subsequent year.

During the period of annual review, both the individual and the other Overseer Board members shall evaluate their continued service as an Overseer Board member, again considering Biblical qualifications, ministry effectiveness, and any personal factors that might affect their service. An individual's service as a Overseer may be discontinued by his own decision or by the unanimous decision of the other Overseer Board members.

Overseer Board members who renew their commitment to serve for another year would then be presented before the membership at the annual meeting for affirmation and dedication for another year of service.

#### E. Overseer Board Member Selection Process

Scripture gives evidence of the first leaders being appointed by the founders of the church. By this example it is implied that the current existing spiritual leadership of the church should be intimately involved in the process of selecting members of the Overseer Board to insure selection based on qualifications of character, conduct, spiritual vitality, and spiritual giftedness.

The Overseer Board shall annually review the status of the members of the board and determine if any new members are needed for the coming year. If the Overseer Board determines that additional members are needed, they shall initiate the following process for Overseer Board member selection:

1. Nominations from the Body

With the Biblical qualifications in mind, active members of epikos will be encouraged to prayerfully submit names of other active epikos members for consideration as an Overseer Board member over a period of approximately two weeks.

2. Notification of the Nominees

Those individuals whose names have been submitted shall be so informed, and they shall be urged to engage in self-appraisal and personal evaluation in light of the Scriptural qualifications and Overseer Board role description. Any person may withdraw their name at that point because of not aspiring to the position of becoming a member of the Overseer Board or not believing they meet the qualifications.

3. Interviews Conducted

The existing Overseer Board shall review the names and nominees, and shall conduct interviews and a background check with each nominee to evaluate their readiness for the role of becoming a Overseer Board member.

4. Overseer Board Selections

After prayerfully considering each nominee, the existing Overseer Board members will make final selections. Nominees not selected at this point shall be given reason by the Overseer Board as to why they were not selected.

5. Affirmation of the Body

The names of the prospective new Overseer Board members shall be brought before the members of epikos, who will be given two weeks to show cause why any one of the prospective Overseer Board members would not be qualified to serve. Any member with such "cause" must first express their concern to the prospective Overseer Board member and then must also express their concern to the existing Overseer Board for consideration.

6. Ratification of the Body

At the annual business meeting, the existing Overseer Board members will present their selections to the members of epikos for a final vote of affirmation.

F. Overseer Board Meetings

The Overseer Board will meet on a monthly basis, unless otherwise determined by the Overseer Board members. A quorum will be a simple majority of the Overseer Board.

G. Before the Overseer Board Exists

Before the Overseer Board exists, decisions shall be made by the senior pastor with the direction of his church planting coach and/or temporary task forces. If there are questionable decisions made by the senior pastor during this time, the District Executive Minister of the Great Lakes Baptist Conference shall be contacted to resolve any issues.

### **III. The Senior Pastor**

#### **A. Senior Pastor Role and Purpose**

The Senior Pastor shall perform all the Scriptural duties of the office, and under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, have freedom at the pulpit. The Senior Pastor shall be a member of the Overseer Board. Together with the Overseer Board, the Senior Pastor is responsible to lead, shepherd, and direct the church, as well as to seek and discern God's leading for the church and provide leadership and Biblical instruction toward the fulfillment of the vision.

Together with the other pastoral staff, the Senior Pastor shall be responsible for the equipping and mobilization of the church body to do the work of ministry.

The Senior Pastor shall lead and develop the church staff, providing counsel, encouragement, and guidance to assist in the accomplishment of objectives for each staff member. All staff are directly or indirectly responsible to the Senior Pastor.

#### **B. Senior Pastor Search Committee**

In the case of a vacancy in the role of Senior Pastor, a Pastoral Search Committee shall be formed by the Overseer Board and shall be responsible to the Overseer Board. The duties of the Pastoral Search Committee shall be:

1. To check background, interview, evaluate, and select possible candidates for the position. No more than one candidate shall be presented to the congregation at a time for a vote to issue a call.
2. To make a recommendation to the congregation at a properly called congregational meeting; to issue a call with specific terms approved by the Overseer Board.
3. To handle all communication with candidates until a call is accepted.

### **IV. Church Staff**

1. **Hiring.** New employees may be hired and added to the church staff under the authority of the Senior Pastor with confirmation by Overseer Board. Each staff member should receive a written job description to communicate responsibilities and expectations. Each staff member should also be reviewed annually by his/ her direct supervisor.
2. **Dismissal.** A staff member's employment may be terminated by action of the Senior Pastor with confirmation by Overseer Board. Severance pay shall be determined by majority vote of the Overseer Board.

## **Article 6 - Congregational Meetings**

## **I. Annual Meeting**

An annual congregational (business) meeting of the church shall be held within six weeks of the new fiscal year. The agenda of the annual meeting shall include ratification of new members of the Overseer Board and the affirmation of existing Overseer Board members, approval of budgets and objectives for the current year, and other matters determined by the Overseer Board. In preparation for the meeting, the Overseer Board shall supply church members with a financial report, budget, and a written report from the Senior Pastor. A quorum of 20% of the voting members must be present. A 2/3 majority of any quorum will be required to approve any action.

## **II. Special Meetings**

Special congregational meetings, in addition to the Annual Meeting, may be convened by the Overseer Board as it deems necessary. Meetings must have two weeks notice; all members must be notified.

## **III. Voting**

Members must be at least 16 years old to cast a vote at a congregational meeting. A 2/3 majority of any quorum will be required to approve any action.

## **Article 7 - Books and Records**

The church shall keep correct and complete books and records of accounts and shall also keep minutes of the proceedings of its Overseer Board, and any committees having any of the authority of the Overseer Board. The church shall also keep at the registered or principal office a record of the members entitled to vote. All books and records of the church may be inspected by any members of the Overseer Board.

## **Article 8 - Fiscal Year**

The fiscal year of the church shall begin on the first day of January and end on the last day of December each year.

## **Article 9 - Limitations of Liability and Indemnification**

The Corporation shall indemnify any and all persons who may serve or have served at any time as Senior Pastor or in an executive level staff position in the church, or as a church officer, or member of a board or committee, or as a leader elected or appointed by the church, against any and all expenses, including amounts paid on judgments, counsel fees, and amounts paid in settlement (before or after suit is commenced) actually and necessarily incurred by such persons in connection with the defense or settlement of any claim, action, suit or proceeding in which they, or any of them, are made parties, or a party, or which may be asserted against any of them or any of them by reason of being or having been in one or more aforesaid positions of responsibility with the Corporation, except in relation to matters as to which any such person shall be adjudged in any action, suit or proceeding to be liable for his or her own negligence or misconduct in the performance of his or her duties. Such indemnification shall be in addition to any other rights to which those indemnified may be entitled under any law, agreement, or otherwise.

## **Article 10 – Dissolution, Division, and Disaffiliation**

**Dissolution.** epikos is affiliated with the Great Lakes Baptist Conference of the Baptist General Conference, the parent religious organization. Should this church cease to exist as a corporate body, then all of

its property, appurtenances, and effects then owned or held by it shall inure to the benefit of and become the property of the district corporation of the Great Lakes Baptist Conference within which jurisdiction this church is located and with which it is affiliated by law.

**Division.** In case of organic division of the church membership, the church property shall belong to those members who abide by this constitution. Should any controversy arise as to who is abiding by this constitution, the question shall be submitted to the Overseers of the Great Lakes Baptist Conference, and their decision shall be final.

**Disaffiliation.** Should Epikos decide to dissolve its affiliation with the Great Lakes Baptist Conference and/or the Baptist General Conference, the Great Lakes Baptist Conference has the right to request and receive full reimbursement for any district monies and services dispensed during the first three years of the church.

### **Article 11 - Amendments to the Constitution**

The power to alter, amend, or repeal the articles of the constitution or the Articles of Incorporation shall be vested in the congregation. Proposed amendments must be submitted through the Overseer Board and approved by the members of epikos.. Written copies of the proposed amendment must be made available to the congregation at least 30 days prior to a congregation meeting to approve an amendment. Only church members may vote to amend this constitution or the Articles of Incorporation. A two-thirds vote of the quorum shall be required to amend the Constitution or the Articles of Incorporation.