



# Palmwood Church Constitution Articles

## Preamble

WHEREAS, it is the express purpose of God our Heavenly Father to call out of the world a people redeemed by Jesus Christ who shall love God extravagantly, love people with humility and mentor others to do the same, in keeping with the instructions of the Apostle Peter:

<sup>9</sup> But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light.

[The Holy Bible: New International Version](#). (1984). (1 Pe 2:9). Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan.

WHEREAS, these people are enjoined to assemble together for worship, fellowship, counsel, and instruction in the Word of God, therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED, that we organize ourselves as a local church body of Christian believers working together for the common purpose of spreading the Gospel of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, together with all the privileges and protections of the laws of the State of Florida.

## Language

The masculine gender stated within this document shall refer to both men and women. Where titles are specific to gender (e.g. Deacon and Deaconess), the masculine title will stand for both men and women.

Members that serve as **ex officio** members have all the rights and obligations of the board or committee on which they serve. This includes the right to discuss, debate, make decisions, and vote. It also makes them accountable for the **duties** of their position as stated in the bylaws.

## Article I: Name & Principal Office

The name of this corporation shall be PALMWOOD CHURCH, Inc. This corporation will be further referred to in this Constitution and Bylaws as the “church” or the “corporation”. Palmwood Church maintains its principal office at 770 Appleton Place, Oviedo, Florida. The congregation of Palmwood Church shall have full power and authority to change the location of the principal office from one location to another. Such change in address shall not be deemed an amendment of this Constitution. The membership shall be notified in writing at least sixty (60) days in advance of a change of a change of address. Such notices shall include the new address, effective date, telephone numbers, and a copy shall be filed with this Constitution.

The corporation was incorporated in the State of Florida as a non-profit corporation, organized and recognized September 17, 2015. The corporation is a tax-exempt organization under section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code. The corporation shall not be operated for profit, and no profit or any portion thereof, remainder, or residue from dues, donations, or income from operations shall inure the benefit of members or officers. Directors, Elders, Deacons, and Trustees shall serve in those roles without compensation except that they be allowed and paid reasonable reimbursement for actual or IRS allowable reimbursement of expenses incurred in the performance of their regular duties as specified in this Constitution and Bylaws.

## Article II: Affiliation

Palmwood Church is fully autonomous, affiliated with the Conservative Congregational Christian Conference (8941 33rd Street N, Lake Elmo, Minnesota 55042), its Southeastern Regional Fellowship, and in fellowship with all churches which acknowledge Jesus as Christ to be their divine Redeemer and Lord.

## Article III: Polity

### Section 1: Overview

Palmwood Church is congregationally governed, elder-managed, deacon-served and pastor-led, under the Headship of the Lord Jesus Christ. The Board of Elders serves as the Board of Directors of the corporation. All references to directors and the Board of Directors shall refer to elders and the Board of Elders.

Palmwood Church affirms that the whole Word of God shows that God calls both women and men into leadership and service for him. Therefore the leadership of Palmwood Church will be mindful, regardless of gender, to:

1. Call into service the best fitted for each office
2. Invest in future leaders so we will continue to develop quality leadership.

## Section 2: Corporation Officers

The Lead Pastor is President of the Corporation and Chairman of the Board of Elders.

The Vice President of the corporation is also the Vice Chairman of the Board of Elders. At the first business meeting of the Board of Elders following the annual congregation meeting, he will be elected from among the Board of Elders to serve in both positions.

The Recording Secretary of the Corporation serves to record the decisions of the congregation at its meetings, and also to provide for the preservation of church records. In the absence of the Recording Secretary, the President will appoint a suitable alternate to serve in this capacity. The Recording Secretary must meet the qualifications of an elder in Bylaw IV (Board of Elders) and may be removed according to the provisions of Section 7 of that bylaw.

The Treasurer of the Corporation is responsible for overall financial management and oversight of the church. In that capacity he leads the Financial Team. The Treasurer must meet the qualifications in Bylaw IX (Financial Team), and may be removed according to the provisions of Section 9 (Removal from Office) of that bylaw or per Section 7 of Bylaw IV (Board of Elders).

The Recording Secretary and Treasurer each serve a one-year term, beginning at the annual meeting. They may each serve for no more than five consecutive terms.

The Recording Secretary and the Treasurer are nominated by the Board of Elders for election by a majority of the congregation at a business meeting. They may but do not need to be currently serving in another church officer position.

## Section 3: Congregationally Governed

The congregation is the final authority regarding budgets, officers, and the hiring and firing of the Lead Pastor and pastoral staff. Additionally, when the congregation acts prayerfully together, as in a congregational meeting, decisions by the whole congregation are believed to be led by God's Spirit and must be followed by the leaders and members.

## Section 4: Elder Board Managed

Elders are called by God to provide oversight to the church. When the elders make a decision as a unit, pastors, individual elders, and the congregation are to submit to their decisions, unless in extreme cases the congregation prayerfully overrides it. The elders exercise oversight over all church functions and ministries. The pastoral staff, deacons, officers of the corporation, and all other boards, committees, task forces, or individuals report to the elders. Unless limited by the congregation, elders are charged with the management of Palmwood Church. They have

the authority to approve hiring and dismissing of budgeted office or administrative staff, musicians and worship leaders, custodial and maintenance help using whatever process they deem best.

## Section 5: Deacon Served

God also gave the New Testament church the office of deacon to serve the needs of the early church members. Deacons serve the church and train servant-hearted individuals to join them in their task. The deacons take care of the physical and logistical needs of the church under the oversight of the elders. They are the church's physical servants and material managers. Their primary calling is caring for the people of the church followed by caring for business concerns. This allows the elders to concentrate on their primary responsibilities.

## Section 6: Pastor Led

As a biblically-based church we desire to have at least one trained and ordained pastor. The Senior or Lead Pastor is the primary teaching and preaching elder of the church. We believe that pastors are called to serve the church by equipping the believers for the work of the ministry. Pastors are to come alongside the congregation to enable them to identify how God has gifted them for service, teach them how to serve, and empower them to serve.

All church members recognize that the local church is under the ultimate authority and headship of the Lord Jesus Christ. The Lord has called and ordained the Lead Pastor to lead or "shepherd" the congregation in fulfillment of the Lord's mission, and the congregation submits to that authority. The Lead Pastor submits to the decision of the elders when they are acting as the Elder Board and to the members of Palmwood Church when they are acting as the congregation. This mutual submission honors Christ and allows the church to glorify God.

Church staff, including pastoral staff, report to the Lead Pastor. Pastoral staff members lead in their respective areas of ministry under the direction and oversight of the Lead Pastor. Church staff support the Board of Deacons and the various ministry teams in their work.

## Section 7: Congregation Engaged

As believers grow in Jesus and are equipped for service, they are encouraged to join teams where they can use their gifts and abilities to help grow God's kingdom. The participation of the congregation is organized and managed by the Board of Deacons. Ministry teams not only accomplish tasks, but also engage the larger church body in shared ministry through volunteers. Ministry team members work together for the purpose of wisdom, accountability, and encouragement. The best ideas often come out of, and are refined by, a group of people working together to serve Jesus.

## Article IV: Purpose of Palmwood Church

Our purpose is to impact Oviedo and its surrounding communities primarily through:

- *Restoration* – Living so that we restore trust in the local church, its leaders and its people
- *Transformation* – Impacting the lives around us with the love, grace and truth of Jesus so that we all become more like Him together
- *Hospitality* – Welcoming people into our church, our groups and our homes so they experience a real sense of belonging and community
- *Multiplication* – Reproducing this vision through our own lives, through the people we touch, and ultimately throughout the community at large.

The corporation is organized under Florida Nonprofit Corporation Law for charitable purposes. The general purpose of this corporation is to have and exercise all rights and powers conferred on nonprofit corporations under the laws of Florida, provided that this corporation shall not, except to an insubstantial degree, engage in any activities or exercise any powers that are not in furtherance of the primary purposes of this corporation.

## Article V: Statement of Faith

### Introduction

Doctrinal statements help us love and worship God rightly, love others unconditionally, and make disciples of Jesus Christ. We are a Christian church that affirms the orthodox, historic faith taught in the Scriptures. Our beliefs are summarized in the following Statement of Faith, which are affirmed by all our members.

Palmwood Church's Statement of Faith and our Constitution and Bylaws do not exhaust the extent of our beliefs. The Bible itself, as the inspired and infallible Word of God that speaks with final authority concerning truth, morality, and the proper conduct of mankind, is the sole and final source of all that we believe. For purposes of this church's faith, doctrine, practice, policy, and discipline, our pastor and elders are this church's final interpretive authority on the Bible's meaning and application.

### I. The Scriptures

We believe that the entirety of the Bible is the Word of God, free from error in the original words (inerrant), authored under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit (God-breathed), fully authoritative in all matters it addresses, incapable of being wrong (infallible), and always accomplishing its purposes.

## **II. The Godhead**

We believe in one God eternally existing in three persons: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit (Trinity).

### **The Father**

We believe in God the Father, Almighty Creator of heaven and earth, eternal in His being, perfect in holiness, sovereign over all creation, all-knowing (omniscient), all-present (omnipresent), and all-powerful (omnipotent). We rejoice that He concerns Himself mercifully in the affairs of men, hearing and answering prayer, and that He saves from sin and death those who believe in Jesus Christ.

### **The Son**

We believe in Jesus Christ, the eternal and only begotten Son of God, conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of a virgin, sinless in His life, making atonement for sin by His death, and providing access to the Father. We believe in His bodily resurrection, ascension to heaven, and promise to return to this world.

### **The Holy Spirit**

We believe in the Holy Spirit who comes forth from the Father and the Son to convict the world in regard to sin, righteousness, and judgment. The Holy Spirit regenerates, dwells within, sanctifies, teaches, empowers for service, intercedes, and comforts all who believe in Jesus Christ.

## **III. Satan, Sin & Mankind**

We believe in the existence of Satan and the fallen angels, the adversaries of God and His people. Equipped Christians can successfully resist them through the power of the Holy Spirit.

We believe that God created all people in His own image as male and female; that mankind was tempted by Satan, sinned, and thereby incurred eternal physical and spiritual death, which is separation from God.

We believe that as a consequence of the Fall, all human beings are born with a sin nature, rebellious toward God, choose willingly to sin, and are therefore under God's condemnation and in need of salvation.

## **IV. Salvation**

We believe that Jesus Christ secured for us forgiveness for sin and the gift of perfect righteousness through His obedient life, His death on the cross, His being raised from the dead, and His ascension to the right hand of God. We believe that those who repent and put their faith and trust in Jesus Christ alone as Lord and Savior receive eternal life. Through the regenerative work of the Holy Spirit they are delivered from condemnation and become a new creation.

## **V. The Church**

We believe in the universal church, a living spiritual body of which Christ is the head, and of which all people (past, present, and future) who put their faith and trust in Jesus Christ as Savior, are members.

We believe in the local church, which is believers in Jesus Christ gathered locally under biblical leadership for the purpose of worship, teaching and equipping Christians for the work of God and fellowship, all to the glory of God.

We believe that followers of Jesus Christ are to observe the ordinances of the Lord's Supper (communion) and baptism. Our church practices baptism after confession of faith.

We believe that God has called each follower to the task of presenting the gospel ("good news") to a lost world that Jesus Christ reigns, making disciples ("followers") and teaching them to obey Jesus' commands.

We believe that salvation in Christ is intended for every nation, tribe, people, and language.

## **VI. Living as a Holy People**

We believe that God created us, male or female, to be a holy people, set apart to be a witness to God's love and sovereignty, His rule and reign on earth as in heaven. We were created by God as one human race. But when we rebelled, God's plan for us as one people consisting of many unique individuals was marred. We became at odds with each other as well as against God. But in Christ we, who were enemies of God and each other, have been brought near in love. As redeemed followers of Christ, we bear witness in our lives of God's intent for mankind. We recognize that as people becoming sanctified, we may stumble, but when one does stumble, we seek to restore and encourage that one to a holy walk.

We are "fearfully and wonderfully made". God knows our inmost being and is working all in our lives for good, so we can be at peace with ourselves and thankful in all that we experience in life. Our past experiences do not hinder the redemption we can have in Jesus.

We believe that all human life is sacred and created by God in His image. Human life is of inestimable worth in all its dimensions, including pre-born babies, the aged, the physically or mentally challenged, and every other stage or condition from conception through to natural death. We are therefore called to defend, protect, and value all human life.

### Holiness in Community

We believe that we have been called to not just love God, but also to love our neighbor and to teach others to obey Jesus in all that He commanded us. We are to respect and be submitted to those who are in authority over us, to be mutually submitted and in unity within the church, and at peace in the world. However, our ultimate responsibility is to obey God and the Scriptures. By this we glorify Jesus our Lord.

### Holiness in Work

We believe that God created us to be fruitful and multiply, and to subdue (bring order to) the earth, to rule (or steward) over all of the earth. We are to live as citizens of Heaven, in God's kingdom (wherever His authority and power are supreme), while we are dwelling here on earth. This is not our eternal home.

We believe that in doing our work as unto the Lord, we please, honor, and glorify God. We believe that such work demonstrates our faith in God.

### Holiness in our Sexuality

We believe that we are called to live pure lives devoted to God. Devotion means to give whole-hearted allegiance to God; He is our first priority in mind, emotions, spirit, and body. What that looks like will change with the seasons of life; however, throughout our lives we are called to live sexually pure lives. Our marital status will determine how we may express our sexuality in a way that is pleasing and honoring to the Lord.

We believe that God wonderfully and immutably (unchangeably) creates each person as male or female. These two distinct, complementary genders together reflect the image and nature of God.

We believe that we are the bride of Christ, for whom Christ gave Himself up to make her holy and blameless. Our relationship with God is a covenant, just as the marriage between a man and a woman is a covenant: calling on God to be a party to the agreement to help them keep the terms of the covenant. In the same way our covenant with God calls on God to help us keep the covenant. In fact, God describes Himself in very similar terms to a jealous husband, who expects his wife and partner in covenant to be devoted to him. In numerous scriptures God treats spiritual immorality, being unfaithful to Him, as adultery.



There are different reasons why one may be called to singleness. During seasons of singleness, believers have the opportunity to express their whole-hearted devotion to the Lord through their time, money, and other resources in different ways than believers who are married. They are able to more easily give themselves to the Lord through such means as:

1. Spending time with friends and neighbors
2. Spending time to serve in missions opportunities
3. Financial giving
4. Abilities, gifts and time in serving others and the church.

This is why the Apostle Paul wrote, “To the unmarried and the widows I say that it is good for them to remain single as I am.”

## Holiness in Family

We believe that the term “marriage” has only one meaning: the uniting of one man and one woman in a single, exclusive union, as described in Scripture.

We believe that God gave us the covenant of marriage, not only to fulfill the mandate for populating the earth, but even more to show the mystery of Jesus, Son of God, united with the Church, His body. Sexual intimacy is reserved by God for only a husband and wife to share with each other.

We will live faithful to our spouse if married, chaste if single.

We believe that God gave us the marriage covenant as the foundation for the family. Within this family children are raised to have their hearts directed to know and love the Lord as their God. Such a family serves as a living example to a watching world of how God intended to order and lead His people, and so can be light to draw people to Christ.

## VII. The Last Things

We believe in the bodily and undeniable return of the Lord Jesus Christ to Earth and the fulfillment of His promised rule and reign, His kingdom. We believe in the resurrection of the body, the final judgment, the eternal punishment of the wicked, and the eternal peace and joy of the righteous.

## Article VI: Church Covenant

Scripture describes the church as a body, and as the bride of Christ. These terms are covenantal<sup>1</sup> in nature, so we view membership in Palmwood Church the same. Each member of Palmwood Church, whether full or associate, will agree in writing to this covenant upon joining this church, and will renew this covenant annually in a time and manner appointed by the Board of Elders.

### Section 1: Purpose of Membership in Palmwood Church

Membership is significant to Palmwood Church because:

1. We welcome and acknowledge new members as part of our spiritual family, the body of Christ.
2. We commit to grow as a part of this church through our relationships and teaching. We receive regular instruction from the leaders of the church so that we may obey the commands of our Lord Jesus.
3. We support the work of the Lord in Palmwood Church by giving of our time, treasure, and talent. We recognize that all that we have is from the Lord, so we will encourage giving at least a tithe (10th of income) of what the Lord gives us into the Lord's work.
4. We need the *discipline*<sup>2</sup> of close relationships under the guidance of the Holy Spirit and Holy Scriptures<sup>3</sup> to help us grow in the likeness of Christ. We recognize that as humans coming from the darkness of this world into the light of God, we may very well stray. We commit to welcome the discipline of the Lord expressed through this church to help us return to a walk of righteousness and obedience to the way of the Lord.

The qualifications and privileges of membership are detailed in Bylaw I.

### Section 2: Member Covenant

God brought me to Palmwood Church to believe the gospel, mature as a follower of Jesus, love His church, and join His mission. I fully agree with Palmwood Church's Statement of Faith and commit to Palmwood Church's unique calling and expression as explained in the church's statements on Vision, Mission, Core Values, and Philosophy of Ministry. I will faithfully abide by

---

<sup>1</sup> A covenant is seen in scripture as well as commonly understood at that time is a solemn agreement that involves God as a party and as enforcer of the terms of the covenant (blessings and curses). See Genesis 15 (Abraham) and Genesis 8:20-22 (Noah) for examples.

<sup>2</sup> See Bylaw I Section 6 for explanation of what *discipline* means and its purpose as practiced in Palmwood Church.

<sup>3</sup> 2 Tim 3:16: "...you have known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. 16 All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, 17 so that the servant of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work."

the Palmwood Church Constitution and Bylaws as long as I remain a member of Palmwood Church.

I submit myself to the leadership, discipleship, and discipline of the Board of Elders, and the mutual accountability of fellow brothers and sisters in Christ at Palmwood Church. As a follower of Jesus, and a member of Palmwood Church, with the Lord's help and to the best of my ability, I promise to:

1. **Love God Extravagantly** by regularly reading and studying the Bible, praying, seeking to obey Jesus' commands, asking for the Holy Spirit's active presence in my life, faithfully attending worship services, taking the Lord's Supper, and by giving tithes and offerings of my money and time to Palmwood Church
2. **Love People with Humility** by regularly participating in community discipleship, attending congregational business meetings, using my gifts and talents through the church for the benefit of the kingdom of Jesus, being quick to forgive, asking for and receiving forgiveness, encouraging one another, and protecting the unity of the church
3. **Mentor Others to Do The Same** by building friendships with neighbors, coworkers, and family members, praying for them, sharing the gospel, discipling newer believers, inviting the unchurched to Palmwood Church activities, welcoming first-time guests in as new friends, and supporting the work of reaching the lost around the world.

If one day I leave Palmwood Church, it will be my intent to join another fellowship of like-minded believers that follows God in His mission to make, mature, and multiply followers of Jesus Christ through the proclamation of the gospel.

## Section 3: Informed Consent

By signing the Membership Covenant, each member is giving informed consent for:

- Living according to the Statement of Faith and the precepts of the Membership Covenant
- Faithful participation in the church discipline process as defined in the Church Policy Manual
- Resolving conflicts with family, my brothers and sisters in Christ, and others through biblical peacemaking.

## Article VII: Amendments

This Constitution may be amended only at the Annual Congregational Meeting. Proposed changes shall be made when approved by two-thirds of votes cast by the full members of the congregation, provided a quorum is present. The content of the proposed changes shall be published 30 days prior to the meeting.

## Article VIII: Dissolution Clause

The property of this corporation is irrevocably dedicated to charitable purposes, and no part of the net income or assets of this corporation shall ever inure to the benefit of any director, officer, or member of this corporation or Palmwood Church, or to the benefit of any private individual. Upon the winding up and dissolution of this corporation, and after paying or adequately providing for the debts and obligations of the corporation, the remaining assets shall be distributed to the CCCC, or a nonprofit fund, foundation, or corporation that is organized and operated exclusively for charitable purposes and which has established and maintained its tax-exempt status under Section 501(c)(3) of the United States Internal Revenue Law of 1986, as amended (the "Internal Revenue Code") or the corresponding provision of any future Internal Revenue Law.