

ST. PETER’S CHURCH OF COUPLAND

COUPLAND, TEXAS

CONSTITUTION

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Article I. Name

The congregation, in accordance with the corporation charter which it holds from the State of Texas, retains the name **GERMAN EVANGELICAL ST. PETRI CONGREGATION**, but adopts the secondary designation of **ST. PETER'S CHURCH OF COUPLAND**, Coupland, TX.

Our Mission Statement: We, the people of St. Peter's Church of Coupland, recognizing Jesus Christ as the Son of God, invite all to share the joy of God's Word, through the Holy Spirit, calling us to community, worship, service and fellowship.

Article II. Structure

St. Peter's Church of Coupland is composed of its members, whose organization includes officers, committees, boards and other groupings as determined by agreement of the members.

Article III. Doctrine

The articles of faith of this congregation shall be as follows:

- A. The Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments are recognized as the Word of God and the ultimate rule of Christian Faith and practice.
- B. The doctrinal standards of the congregation are the Heidelberg Catechism, Luther's Catechism, and the Augsburg Confession. They are accepted as an authoritative interpretation of the essential truth taught in the Holy Scriptures. Wherever these doctrinal standards differ, the minister and the members of the congregation, in accordance with liberty of conscience inherent in the Gospel, are allowed to adhere to the interpretation of one of these confessions. However, in each case, the final norm is the Word of God.
- C. In our relation to other Christian communions, this congregation shall constantly endeavor to promote the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.
- D. St. Peter's Church of Coupland acknowledges as its sole head, Jesus Christ, the Son of God and the Savior of men. It acknowledges as brethren in Christ all who share in this confession. It looks to the Word of God in the Scriptures, and to the presence and power of the Holy Spirit, to share the church's creative and redemptive work in the world. It claims as its own the faith of the historic church expressed in the ancient creeds and reclaimed in the basic insights of the Protestant Reformers. It affirms the responsibility of the church in each generation to make this faith its own in reality of worship, in honesty

of thought and expression, and in purity of heart before God. In accordance with the teaching of our Lord and the practice prevailing among evangelical Christians, it recognizes two sacraments: Baptism and the Lord's Supper or Holy Communion.

Article IV. Covenantal Relationships

- A. As members of the United Church of Christ, St. Peter's Church of Coupland will relate to the various expressions of the church in a covenantal manner. St. Peter's Church will seek God's will and be faithful to God's mission, attending to its responsibilities in relation to all expressions of the church. St. Peter's Church listens, hears and carefully considers the advice, counsel, and requests of others. In this covenant, St. Peter's Church joins various expressions of the United Church of Christ to seek to walk together in all God's ways.
- B. St. Peter's Church of Coupland has, in fellowship, a God-given responsibility for the United Church of Christ, its labors and its extension, even as the United Christ of Christ has, in fellowship, a God-given responsibility for the well-being and needs and aspirations of its Local Churches. In mutual Christian concern and in dedication to Jesus Christ, the Head of the Church, St. Peter's Church of Coupland shares with the entire United Church of Christ in common Christian experience and responsibility.
- C. Actions by, or decisions or advice emanating from the General Synod, a Conference or an Association, will be held in the highest regard by St. Peter's Church of Coupland, and its members. By discussion and prayerful consideration, St. Peter's Church of Coupland will seek to understand the intent of such actions and decisions, and using respectful language about areas of disagreement, always remembering that General Synod can only provide advice, and never dictate to the local church.
- D. This congregation is a member of the Heart of Texas Association of the South Central Conference of the United Church of Christ, and accepts all privileges and responsibilities as defined in the constitution and by-laws of the United Church of Christ.

Article V. Officers of the Church

- A. The officers of the Church Council shall consist of a Church President, Vice President, Secretary, Treasurer and Financial Secretary. The Council is elected from and by the Voting membership assembled in a Congregational Meeting each year. They shall be responsible to and called by the election of the membership of the church.
- B. The Church Council shall be the administrative body of the church, elected by the Voting members each year during the Annual Meeting by paper ballot. It shall be composed of eight (8) elected members and the Pastor as ex officio. The regular term

of office of each Council member elected shall be three years, with three members being elected each year, except in one year when two (2) will be elected. Each member may seek reelection for one additional term, but no one shall serve more than six consecutive years. The retiring members (a member having served 6 consecutive years) will not be eligible for reelection for at least one year.

- C. The Council shall organize itself each year, electing a President, Vice-President, Secretary, Treasurer and Financial Secretary.
- D. Vacancies on the Council shall be filled by the Council for the unexpired terms. A person filling an unexpired term could still be elected to a second term, but total consecutive years in office cannot exceed the six year term limit.
- E. The Council shall be the policy-making body and shall transact the business of the church, make provision for the approval and monitoring of the current expense budget as well as for the auditing of the financial accounts and for the adequate support of the staff. It shall keep a complete and accurate record of its proceedings, be the custodian of all church records, and report to the church at its regular and special meetings. All acts and deliberations of the Council are subject to the will of and revision by the Congregation.
- F. The Council has fiduciary trust and overall fiscal responsibilities. The Council shall instruct the proper officers on all fiscal matters, including the payment of bills with monthly review by the Council.
- G. The Council shall meet at least once every month for the transaction of business. Special meetings are subject to the President's or Pastor's call and in accordance with the Bylaws.
- H. The Council shall have the care and control of the property of the Congregation as a sacred trust, whether real or personal, in accordance with the provisions of the Constitution and Bylaws of St. Peter's Church of Coupland.
- I. The Church Council shall have original jurisdiction and oversight of the Congregation and all its organizations, including matters of membership, discipline and issues concerning the Pastor.
- J. The Church Council shall provide the elements for the Lord's Supper and, when requested by the Pastor, aid in their distribution.
- K. The Church Council shall admit members into membership and issue letters of transfer to members.

Article VI. Membership

A. Anyone who meets the following conditions may become a member of the church:

1. Accepts Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior, is baptized, and strives to lead a Christian life.
2. Participates in the life and work of the church by regularly attending worship services and/or other functions of the church (unless physically unable).
3. Practices the principles of Christian Stewardship by regularly giving of time, talent and/or financial support.
4. Subscribes to this Constitution and its Bylaws.

B. Adults (14 years and older or have completed Confirmation) become members of St. Peter's Church by: (a) Baptism and either Confirmation or profession of faith in Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior; or (b) reaffirmation of faith; or (c) letter of transfer or certification from other Christian churches. All persons who are or shall become members of St. Peter's Church of Coupland are thereby members of the United Church of Christ.

C. Types of membership

1. "Voting Members" are those who fulfill the conditions listed above in Section A.
2. "Associate Members" are those that either:
 - a. no longer meet the definition of a "Voting Member" but are still interested in being associated with St. Peter's Church.
 - b. have a primary membership in another church, but want to also have a membership associated with St. Peter's Church.

Associate Members may serve on non-elected Committees/Teams but are not eligible to be elected to Committees/Teams or positions of leadership, and are not eligible to vote at Congregational Meetings.

Article VII. The Ministry

- A. St. Peter's Church of Coupland recognizes that God calls the whole church and every member to participate in and extend the ministry of Jesus Christ by witnessing to the Gospel in church and society. St. Peter's Church of Coupland seeks to support the ministry of its members by nurturing faith, calling forth gifts, and equipping members for Christian service.
- B. The governing body of this church shall be the active Voting membership assembled in a Congregational Meeting. The majority vote of the Voting members present at the meeting shall be the action of the church, except as provided under Article XIV of this Constitution.
- C. St. Peter's Church of Coupland recognizes that God calls certain individuals to forms of ministry in and on behalf of the church for which ecclesiastical authorization is required. The Call of an Ordained, Licensed or Commissioned Minister to St. Peter's Church of Coupland establishes a covenantal relationship with both the authorized minister and the United Church of Christ as represented by the Heart of Texas Association.
- D. In cases of pastoral vacancy, a Search Committee composed of Voting members will be appointed by the Church Council to seek and present candidates to the Congregation for approval.
- E. Likewise, if members of St. Peter's Church of Coupland are called to ministries by other bodies in cooperation with the United Church of Christ, a covenantal relationship shall exist between St. Peter's Church of Coupland, the member, the other calling body, and the United Church of Christ as represented by the Heart of Texas Association.
- F. St. Peter's Church of Coupland will act in partnership with its Association and Conference as it seeks, calls and installs pastoral and other leadership, and as it calls forth leadership from its own membership to lead in other settings of the United Church of Christ.

Article VIII. Worship

- A. Our Congregation shall have freedom of worship. The forms and orders of worship that are set forth in the United Church of Christ Book of Worship shall be followed as accepted norms.
- B. The Lord's Day and the festivals and seasons of the church year shall be observed with appropriate services in the House of God.

- C. The Baptism of infants and adults shall be administered publicly in the House of God, if possible.
- D. The Sacrament of the Lord's Supper shall be observed regularly according to the Book of Worship and is open to all.
- E. Marriage is an ordinance of God and shall be solemnized in accordance with the laws of the church as well as of the State of Texas.
- F. Christian Burial is a religious rite that should be conducted in accordance with the customs and usages of the church.

Article IX. Organization and Governance

- A. The ministry of St. Peter's Church of Coupland is organized into committees and boards which are elected and authorized by, and are responsible to, the Congregation. Committees and boards may organize and delegate to other groups as needed to complete their work, under their supervision.
- B. St. Peter's Church of Coupland has six (6) entities, with Voting members elected for a three year term: The Church Council, Board of Christian Education, Cemetery Committee, Memorial Committee, Pastoral Relationship Committee, Investment Advisory Committee and Audit Committee.
- C. St. Peter's Church of Coupland has the following appointed committees, with members appointed and reviewed annually: Building and Grounds, Church Flowers, Church Clerk, Communion Steward, Communications, Funeral, Kitchen, Landscape, Master Planning, Worship and Music, Altar Guild, Budget, Newsletter, Mission and Stewardship, and Nominating. Short-term committees may be appointed at the discretion of the Council.

Article X. The Pastor

- A. The Church Council shall nominate one candidate to be voted upon by the congregation. The Congregation shall consider only one candidate at a time and vote by ballot for or against his/her election. If he/she is elected, the Church Council shall then tender him/her a call.
- B. The Pastor shall have responsibility for planning and leading services of worship; preaching and teaching the Word of God; administering the sacraments of Baptism and

Holy Communion, and the Rite of Confirmation; and conducting pastoral visitations and officiating at weddings and funerals.

Article XI. Property

- A. The Congregation may, in its corporate name, German Evangelical St. Petri Congregation sue and be sued, hold, purchase, and receive title by gift, grant or other conveyance of and to any property, real or personal, with power to mortgage, sell or convey the same, according to the laws of the State of Texas.
- B. In case of a division in the membership of the Congregation, both parties shall submit the question all assets and all property to the proper judiciary (Heart of Texas Association or South Central Conference) and the decision of said judiciary shall be binding on all members of the Congregation.
- C. In the case of dissolution of the Congregation, its assets and all property and interest of which it shall then possess, including any devise, bequest, gift or grant contained in any will or other instrument, in trust or otherwise, made before or after such dissolution, shall be transferred to the South Central Conference of the United Church of Christ.

Article XII. Church Meetings

- A. The Congregation shall have an Annual Meeting in January and such other meetings as may be duly called during the year.
- B. Proper notice shall be given (announced two Sundays in advance) of the time, place and purpose of special meetings. Only such business as has been mentioned in the call may be transacted at such meetings.
- C. Thirty five (35) members shall constitute a quorum.

If there is no quorum present, the meeting will automatically be scheduled for the following Sunday. If the Congregation fails to achieve a quorum at two consecutive duly called business meetings, a quorum for the third consecutive business meeting shall consist of 10% of the membership.

- D. Communicant members shall have the right to voice and vote in the Congregation and also to represent the church on the Church Council or other judicatories of the church.
- E. It is the prerogative of the members at a Congregational Meeting to decide such questions as the buying and selling of property, building projects, the call and rejection of a pastor, and questions of policy of the Congregation, as well as changes in the Constitution and Bylaws. For the transaction of all other business, the administration of the church is entrusted to the Church Council.

- F. Special church meetings may be called by a petition to the Council signed by not less than 10% of the members. The Council shall call such meetings within three weeks from the receipt of the petition and adequate notice of the meeting shall be announced two Sundays in advance to the Congregation, the Council and the Pastor.
- G. In case of a planned absence from a Congregational Meeting, a proxy vote may be cast by a confirmed voting member. No more than 20% of the cast vote may be by proxy. Proxy votes may be given to any other confirmed voting member of St. Peter's Church of Coupland to be submitted in person at the regular time of the Congregational meeting. They must be signed and dated by the confirmed voting member casting the vote, therefore proxy votes cannot be anonymous. The same ballot being used at the meeting will be used for proxy voting. If the proxy vote is determined to be invalid, it will not be counted.

Early votes may be cast IN PERSON by a confirmed voting member up to 2 weeks before the Congregational meeting at a time and place and in a manner approved by the Church Council. The same ballot being used at the meeting will be used for early voting.

Article XIII. Rules of Order

Robert's Rules of Order shall be the parliamentary authority for all matter of procedure not specifically covered by this Constitution and Bylaws.

Article XIV. Amendments

Additions and alterations of this Constitution may be proposed in any duly called meeting of the Congregation. They shall be referred to the Church Council, which shall consider the same and report to the next duly called meeting of the Congregation. Said additions and alterations can be adopted only by a two-thirds majority of all voting members present. The Bylaws may be amended in any called meeting of the Congregation by a majority vote of the members present and voting.

As Amended:

1983, 1991, retyped as is, 2003, 2012, February 3, 2013

March 17, 2024