



## **The Constitution of the Hanoi International Fellowship**

### **Article I: Name**

This Church shall be known as the Hanoi International Fellowship (HIF).

### **Article II: Purpose Statement**

HIF exists to glorify God among the nations through Christ Centered worship, genuine relationships, and transformational outreach.

### **Article III: Purpose of the Constitution**

The Constitution for HIF plays an important role to protect HIF from anyone gaining undue authority and making unauthorized changes to the church structure and beliefs. When considering a change to the structure of HIF or to the beliefs outlined in the Constitution, the Constitution is to be the first reference and if the proposed change does not fit under the Constitution, the leadership will follow Article III for changing the Constitution. After a successful vote the Amendment(s) will be enacted.

### **Article IV: Amendments**

1. Proposed changes will be considered by the Elders Team. If approved they will be voted on by the Members.
2. Members will be notified what the proposed changes are three weeks before a vote.
3. Members will be given information on how to express their questions or concerns about the proposed change(s) to the Constitution. A member forum will be scheduled for any raised questions or concerns at least one week after the initial announcement of the proposed changes. If there are no concerns or questions raised, the forum will be canceled.
4. If feedback and discussions result in additional edits or changes, Members shall receive a final version of the proposed changes at least one week prior to the vote.
5. For the proposed change to be ratified, three-fourths (3/4ths) of the votes cast by the Members are needed to affirm the change.

### **Article V: Statement of Faith**

1. We believe God has revealed Himself to us in His creation (Genesis 1-2), in the Bible (Isaiah 46:9-10), and in His Son, Jesus Christ (Hebrews 1:1-4). God is to be worshipped, obeyed and enjoyed as the source and Lord of all life. We believe that there is one God, eternally existent in three persons: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit (Isaiah 61:1; Matthew 3:16-17; John 14:16-17).
2. We believe that humanity was originally created in the image of God without sin, but that the first of these fell through the sin of disobedience. All people are therefore sinful by nature, are eternally separated from God, and are in need of reconciliation (Genesis 1-3; 2 Cor. 5:17-21; Romans 5:6-11).
3. We believe that Jesus Christ is God's unique Son, sent to the world as God in the flesh. He came to reveal God to us and to provide the only way for us to know God personally and have eternal life (John 3:16-21; Acts 4:10-12).

4. We believe that God has graciously provided Salvation only through Jesus Christ, who died on the cross as the substitutionary atonement (substitute punishment) for sin and rose again from the dead to open the way to new life (Luke 23:26-24:53; Romans 6:1-11; Philippians 2:1-11; 2Timothy 2:8-13). All who place their faith in Jesus Christ are saved from their fallen condition into eternal life with God, by His grace alone, apart from works or merit (Ephesians 2:1-10).
5. We believe that God's Holy Spirit gives new and eternal spiritual life to all who receive Jesus Christ by faith. The Holy Spirit indwells the believer, providing power for service (1 Corinthians 12:1-11) and enabling a joyful, holy lifestyle (John 16:15; Acts 1:8; Philippians 2:12-13; Galatians 5:15-26; 1Peter 1:13-16; 1Thessalonians 4:3-8).
6. We believe the Bible to be the inspired, infallible, authoritative, and inerrant Word of God. (2 Timothy 3:15-17; 2 Peter 1:19-21).
7. We believe that the Kingdom of God has come to us in the person of Jesus Christ on earth. We believe in the visible, personal return of Jesus Christ in power and great glory to judge both the living and the dead. We believe that the Scriptures set out only two destinies for humanity; the joyful prospect of eternal life in the presence of God for those who have received Christ and the agonizing prospect of eternal separation from God for those who have rejected Him (Jeremiah 31:31-34; Mark 1:14-15; Matthew 5:3-12; Luke 17:20-21; 1Thessalonians 2:12; Revelation 1:7; Daniel 7:14; John 5:28-29; Revelation 20:15).
8. We believe the Universal Church is the Body of Christ, composed of all believers, for all time, who have been sealed by the Holy Spirit through faith in Jesus Christ for salvation. The Lord has given the Church two ordinances, which are to continue until Jesus returns: believer's baptism by immersion and Holy Communion. Water Baptism is not necessary for salvation, and cannot remove sins, but is a picture of the salvation already received by the believer (Ephesians 2:19-22; John 17; 1 Corinthians 12:27).
9. We believe that God created mankind as two distinct sexes: male and female and that each person affirms God's infinite wisdom by living in alignment with their birth sex (Genesis 1:26-28; Matthew 19:4-5). We believe that marriage is a sacred institution established by God; it is exclusively the uniting of one man and one woman in covenant commitment for a lifetime and the only relationship within which sexual intimacy is to be enjoyed (Matthew 19:4-6; 1 Corinthians 7:9; Ephesians 5:22-24; Colossians 3:18; Titus 2:4-5; 1 Peter 3:1-6).
10. We believe in the Great Commission (Jesus' mandate) to share the Gospel with the world and make disciples of all nations (groupings of people) (Acts 1:8; Matthew 28:19-20; Mark 16:15-16), and to love as Jesus modeled and commanded, both through word and deed, demonstrating God's love and compassion for all people (Matthew 22:37-41; Psalm 112:9; Galatians 2:10, 6:10; James 1:27; Hebrews 10:24; 1 John 3:16-18).

#### **Article VI: Membership**

- 1 HIF invites and encourages followers of Christ who wish to identify with this church as a Member must affirm HIF's Statement of Faith, agree to follow the HIF Constitution, and commit to active participation and spiritual growth in the body of Christ.
- 2 Membership does not require relinquishing membership in a church of the member's home country, nor does it involve any legal responsibility, nor does it indicate any affiliation with any other group other than HIF.
- 3 Members must be eighteen (18) years of age and above, shall be allowed to vote, and participate in Members Meetings (see Article VII).
- 4 Membership will be granted by the Elders Team following the procedures described in the Elders Team Handbook (Appendix).
- 5 Membership is discontinued when it is evident that the member has departed Hanoi with no intent to return; or while remaining in country the member has ceased to attend and participate in the life of the church; or when the member affirms disagreement with the statement of faith.

## **Article VII: Eldership Team**

- 1 HIF shall be governed by an Elders Team consisting of no less than five (5) Elders plus the Lead Pastor and Site Pastor(s). The Elders Team's primary responsibilities are the oversight of a) the spiritual health, b) the vision and mission, c) the lead and site pastors, and d) the fiscal health of HIF. To accomplish these responsibilities, the Elders will have periodic reviews on each item. When it relates to the lead or site pastor(s), the pastors will be absent from the meeting. The Elders will delegate the implementation and administration of the various church ministries to HIF staff and volunteers as needed.
- 2 The Elders Team shall appoint a chairman, secretary, and treasurer as officers from among themselves.
- 3 Elders shall be those who satisfy the scriptural qualifications (1 Timothy 3:1-13; Titus 1:6-9), may be single or married, are part of HIF for at least one (1) year, are current Members, affirm The HIF Statement of Faith, and agree to follow the Constitution.
- 4 Nominations for the Elders Team will be received from the Members. The Elders Team shall prayerfully consider all nominations and determine who should be appointed. Newly appointed Elders shall be presented to Members for prayerful consideration and voting. To be confirmed, a nominated Elder must receive at least two-thirds (2/3) of all votes cast. (see Article VII)
- 5 The appointment shall be for two (2) years, though the Elder may resign or request a leave of absence if either unexpected circumstance arise or there is a planned absence approved at the time of appointment. Elders may be reappointed for an additional two-year term by the Elders Team without a vote of confirmation by the Members. After serving 4 consecutive years as an Elder and the Elder expresses a desire to continue, the Elders Team will select some of its members to interview the Elder to assist in determining whether it is time to step down or to continue and to stand for a vote of confirmation as described in Article 5.4.
- 6 Acknowledging that beliefs can change and being an Elder is a position of trust and responsibility, each Elder will need to affirm HIF's Statement of Faith every two (2) years.

## **Article VIII: Pastoral Staff**

- 1 The Lead Pastor is appointed by the Elders Team and confirmed by a three-quarters (3/4) vote of the Members participating in the vote (see Article VII). Every five (5) years the Elders Team will select some of its members to interview the Lead Pastor to assist in determining whether it is time to step down or to continue and to stand for a vote of confirmation. The Lead Pastor must be affirmed by the Members with three-quarters (3/4) of the votes cast. The Lead Pastor is a voting member of the Elders Team.
- 2 The Elders Team may appoint additional Site Pastors for each congregation it establishes. A site-pastor needs to be confirmed by two-thirds (2/3) of the votes cast by the Members participating in the vote. After each three (3) year term and the Site Pastor desire to continue, the Elders Team will select some of its members to interview the Site Pastor to assist in determining whether it is time to step down or to continue and to stand for a vote of confirmation – or if the contract is lesser or greater than three (3) years, the interview will take place before the end of the term. Site Pastors are voting Members of the Elders Team.
- 3 The Lead Pastor may recruit additional pastoral staff with the approval of the Elders. The Elders may invite pastoral staff to attend Elders Team meetings as non-voting Members.
- 4 Acknowledging that being a Pastor is a position of trust and responsibility, the Lead Pastor and each Site Pastor will need to affirm HIF's Statement of Faith on a bi-annual basis.

## **Article IX: Discipline**

1. The goal in any complaint is a process that is respectful and loving. If discipline is necessary, the desire is that it will be restorative.

2. A panel of three (3) Elders will review a complaint on Members. The Elders will verify that the person making the complaint has spoken to the Member first (Matthew 18:15-17). The three (3) Elders will make a decision and if discipline is required, will determine what would be appropriate. The decision can be appealed to the full Elder Team. Their decision will be final.
3. If the complaint is about an Elder, or Pastor, the concern needs to be brought by at least two witnesses (I Timothy 5:19).
4. The Elders Team is responsible to review any complaints of an Elder or Pastor and after following the process outlined in the Elders' Handbook, will make a decision on what actions, if any, are necessary (the Elder or Pastor whom the complaint is about will not vote on the decision) . This can include, when necessary, removing the Elder or Pastor from active ministry and/or membership. Elder Team action shall be taken only on the basis of two thirds (2/3) agreement.

#### **Article X: Members Meetings**

1. The Annual General Meeting (also called Celebration Sunday) of HIF shall be held within three months following the end of each fiscal year, May 1 to April 30, during which the Elders Team shall report on HIF's financial status, ministries, vision, and goals.
2. Members Meetings may be called when the need arises. Notice of such meetings should be given at least three (3) weeks prior to the meeting, electronically and/or publicly. Members Meetings may be site/congregation specific. (e.g. The first announcement on July 1<sup>st</sup> with July 8<sup>th</sup> and July 15<sup>th</sup> as the second and third week. The meeting would take place at the earliest on July 22<sup>nd</sup>).
3. In case of an emergency meeting, the Elders Team may waive the notice of three (3) consecutive weeks if confirmed by a two-thirds (2/3) votes cast of the Members.
4. An electronic system for voting may also be used instead of holding a meeting. The same period for notice must be given with communication taking place publicly or electronically.
5. The votes will be verified by a team of two Elders (not being voted on), one Member in good standing, and a senior staff person who is responsible for collecting the data. These four are the only ones who will have access to the recorded votes.
6. The results of the vote will be published for Members.

#### **Article XI: Property and Records**

- 1 Title and contracts to any lands and buildings shall be held in accordance with the laws of Vietnam.
- 2 Equipment and furnishings purchased by or donated to HIF remain the property of HIF.
- 3 Administrative documents relating to the Elders Team shall be kept, archived and remain the property of HIF. All financial records shall be audited annually.
- 4 In case of dissolving the organization of HIF, all debts must be settled, and all remaining assets must be donated to another international or local church.

#### **Article XII: Fellowship Seal**

All official papers for the Hanoi International Fellowship shall have the HIF stamp.

*This Constitution was adopted on May 7, 2000.*

*Amended on May 26, 2019, May 21, 2017; May 6, 2012; May 29, 2005; August 14, 2003; June 12, 2001.*