

# Commonway Church

## By-laws

Adopted 9/19/11

Updated 6/18/19

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### Preamble

Commonway Church endeavors to be a Church of the Lord Jesus Christ as described, established, and mandated by the New Testament. The purpose of these Commonway Church By-laws is to create guidelines to accomplish the tasks of this Church in a biblical and orderly manner through the effective and efficient use of the body's time, gifts, and other resources. It is recognized that this local church is part of the global and historic Christian Church. These guidelines serve as the By-laws of Commonway Church, as that term is used in Indiana nonprofit corporate law.

The name "Commonway" is a combination of two New Testament concepts. The first Christians were called "followers of the Way" (Acts 22:4), meaning these individuals were committed to living a life of discipleship patterned after Jesus Christ. These early believers were transformed by the power of the Holy Spirit working in their church community. Thus, there is the description of this early Church "holding everything in common" (Acts 2:45). While not interpreting this through an economic lens, the Commonway believes that a church community is intended to be marked by mutual submission, accountability, humility, hospitality, worship, caring for those in need, and modeling the Way of Jesus in a way that ultimately brings glory to God.

### Article I: Church Partners

Any person who confesses faith in Jesus Christ as Savior from sin, who desires to be a part of what Christ is doing at Commonway Church, and who embraces our philosophy of ministry and values may be considered a church partner.

#### Qualities of a Church Partner

The responsibilities of partners are described by, but not limited to, the following:

- regular presence in corporate worship
- participation in a smaller group for the purpose of growing in their discipleship and connecting in relationships
- regular financial giving
- service in an area of their giftedness
- commitment to and support of the vision of Commonway Church as it continues to evolve
- being accountable to Commonway Church leadership and to each other
- submitting to Commonway's Core Beliefs within any volunteer ministry role.

#### Special Communication to Church Partners

The elder board desires to be transparent with the congregation regarding the state of the church. The elder board will present the general operating budget and reports deemed necessary annually through an in-person meeting, a shared pre-recorded video, or other means considered appropriate by the elder board.

The elder board has discretion on how to communicate in special situations. Examples might include but are not limited to, announcing a change in Commonway Church By-laws or accruing indebtedness that results in a mortgage against Commonway Church property.

## **Article II: Elder Board**

### Philosophy of Church Leadership

At Commonway Church, the function of the Elder Board is to direct, protect, and enable. While these functions are more fully described in the Elder Board Manual, they are briefly outlined as:

#### **Direct**

The elder board directs by organizing, energizing and providing oversight for the church and its leadership. Throughout the life of the church, the elder board will seek the Lord to navigate and guide the church and to stay on course with its mission and vision.

#### **Protect**

The elder board protects by safeguarding the financial, legal and ethical integrity of the church. Through prayer and discernment, the board guides spiritual and theological direction, acts as a mediator, and seeks the peace, unity and well-being of the church.

#### **Enable**

The elder board enables by providing leaders with the means and opportunity to carry out Commonway's mission and vision. To enable is to encourage, promote, and salute the creative initiatives that fuel the creative vitality of the church.

### Decision Making

Decisions on the following issues will require a formal board vote: passing an annual budget, entering into debt, hiring/firing lead pastor, core doctrinal belief changes, and adding new board members. An affirmative vote of two-thirds of the elders then serving on the elder board is required.

For all other general decision-making, the goal is to achieve a level of unity that represents the general will or best interests of the board as a whole. This unity allows for some differing opinions but a path forward that all can support.

### Composition of Elder Board and Terms of Service

The elder board will consist of a minimum of, but not be limited to, five members. Additional elders may be added as necessary, but not to exceed 11 members. Each elder will be asked for a three-year

commitment. An elder may serve two consecutive three-year terms if approved by the consensus of the elder board. After six consecutive years of service, a minimum of a one-year sabbatical will be required of an elder before he or she is qualified to serve in the capacity of an elder again. During a significant transition, the board may vote to extend terms for up to one year.

The lead pastor will serve on the elder board as an ex-officio member. With an affirmative vote of the elder board members, additional senior-level pastors may be added as ex-officio members. Ex-officio members do not count among the 5-11 member parameters.

Only one person from an immediate family residing in the same household will serve on the elder board at any given time. Immediate family residing in the same household as Commonway Church staff will not serve on the elder board for the duration of the staff member's tenure.

#### Nomination/Selection for the Elder Board

Members of the elder board as well as the lead pastor or other senior level staff members may submit names and rationale for new board members. After prayerful consideration, the elder board will select and approve new members with a vote.

#### Elder Board Officers

The elders will appoint annually from their own number those who will serve in the following roles: chairman, treasurer, and secretary. These individuals will also serve as the corporate officers of Commonway Church. The elder board chair should not be the pastor. Ex-officio members are not eligible to serve in an officer role.

#### Elder Board Meetings

Any elder board meeting will be preceded by a minimum of a 24-hour notice to all members through any written and/or oral means of communication. Meetings will be held monthly.

#### Quorum

More than half of the elder board must be present to hold the meeting and conduct business. Any major decision will be distributed digitally to members who are not present.

#### Minutes and Elder Board documents

Minutes of all elder board meetings will be kept on record permanently and made available to any member of Commonway Church upon request. However, it is not appropriate for everyone to have full access to all information from the elder board documents. Private conversations are not required to be included.

#### Mechanisms for Financial Health

The board will make financial decisions related to: the annual budget, the salary of the lead pastor, land or building sale/acquisitions, construction contracts, and approval of expenses over 1% of the annual budget. The board shares the burden of ensuring there are mechanisms for financial health.

### Staff Management

The lead pastor is the only staff member directly accountable to the board. The lead pastor is responsible for hiring, leading, developing, and managing staff. In cases where termination is necessary, the lead pastor should consult with the board before making a final decision.

### Resignation and Removal of Elders

An elder may choose to resign from serving on the elder board at any time. An elder may also be removed by the vote of the elder board after prayer and careful deliberation.

## **Article III: Pastors**

### Philosophy of Vocational Ministry

Commonway Church pastors are individuals God has equipped to serve our church through vocational ministry. These individuals must function as humble servants of Christ in our body. They should be people with a growing heart for God, a growing love for people, a Godly character, a firm commitment to the scriptures, a willingness to allow Christ's strength to shine through their personal weakness, and a dedication to appropriate accountability relationships with elders. In turn, the elder board will be committed to maintaining an environment in which pastors are safe to be fallible, to turn to Christ for forgiveness and healing, and to experience restoration. We value the health and longevity of our Commonway Church pastors and believe this commitment is critical to ensuring they are fit for ministry over time. Commonway Church pastors must also fully embrace our philosophy of ministry and values. Pastors' responsibilities include, but are not limited to, the following:

- live life in response to Christ's love for us
- shepherd the flock
- teach and encourage according to sound biblical principles
- lovingly address situations in which Commonway Church's missional values are being openly challenged
- cast vision for and provide leadership to Commonway Church marked by mutual submission with the elder board
- pray for those in need
- develop and maintain ministries to support the needs of Commonway Church members, Muncie, Indiana, and the world beyond
- make his or her family a priority over church-related responsibilities
- be in regular and meaningful communication with the Elder Board

The members of the elder board may engage the services of one or more pastors according to the needs of Commonway Church.

### Resignation and Removal of Pastors

A pastor's tenure will be for an indefinite period. The relationship may be changed by the resignation of the pastor, by mutual agreement between the elder board and the pastor, or by removal after prayer,

deliberation, and affirmative vote of the elders then serving on the elder board. Pastors who are currently serving on the elder board will not participate in a vote regarding the possible removal of a pastor.

#### Pastoral Search Process

When a pastoral vacancy occurs or the elder board determines that an additional pastor be sought, the elder board will approve a description of the responsibilities and compensation package for the new position. When searching for any position other than Lead Pastor, the lead pastor will conduct a thorough process and bring a final recommendation to the elder board. The elder board has hiring authority for the lead pastor and approval authority for other positions.

When searching for a lead pastor, the elder board will initiate the search process by formulating a search team. The search team shall consist of a cross-section of Conway attendees and shall include the following:

- Representation from the elder board
- Representation from the church body
- Representation from the staff

In addition to initiating the search team process, the elder board may seek the assistance of a search firm that will work in conjunction with the search team. The search team will conduct interviews with a minimum of two candidates and make a recommendation to the elder board. After prayer and deliberation, the elder board will approve the hiring of a candidate via an affirmative vote of two-thirds of the elders then serving on the elder board.

#### **Article IV: Amendments**

The Elder Board will review these Conway Church by-laws at minimum biennially. Any provision of them may be altered, amended, or repealed, and new Conway By-laws may be adopted at any time by the elders after Conway Church Partners have had the opportunity to review the proposed changes, ask questions, and comment.

Amy Reed, *Chairman*

Mary Kaminsky, *At-large*

Ted Baker, *Treasurer*

Tom Davis, *At-large*

Ryan Ellsworth, *Secretary*

Beth Bilby, *At-large*

Cameron Andry, *At-large*

Lisa Ashton, *Interim Lead Pastor*