**Smokey Creek Cowboy Church Constitution and By-Laws 2015**

**PREAMBLE**

Under the guidance and leadership of the Lord Jesus Christ, we the members of Smokey Creek Cowboy Church adopt the following constitution in order to declare and preserve the principles of our faith, the freedom of our church, and the rights and responsibilities of our individual members.

**ARTICLE I. Name**

The name of this church is Smokey Creek Cowboy Church.

**ARTICLE II. Purpose**

 The church is organized and maintained to fulfill the following Mission Purpose Statement: The mission of the Smokey Creek Cowboy Church is to reach the lost and unchurched people in the cowboy culture with the gospel of Jesus Christ and provide a church home where they can become more like Him. The church will accomplish this mission by holding to these values:

 **Simplicity –** The church will strive to keep all things it does as simple as possible.

**Non-judgmental Approach –** The church will foster a non-judgmental atmosphere in all it does, accepting people just as they are, just as Christ Himself does.

**Cultural Relevance/Cowboy Heritage –** The church will make sure that all it does, including all of its programming and ministries will be geared toward reaching people in the cowboy culture and those who love it.

**Practice of Biblical Christianity –** The church will practice biblical Christianity by adhering to the teachings of God’s Word and striving to be more Christ-like. This will be practiced by all members of the Smokey Creek Cowboy Church.

**Empowerment with Accountability –** The church will strive to empower as many people as possible to serve Christ through the church with the gifts which God has given, holding them accountable for their actions and commitments.

**Power of the Gospel –** The church believes in the power of the gospel for salvation of souls and healing of body, mind and spirit.

**ARTICLE III. Doctrine**

We recognize the Christian Faith and Message as our statement of doctrine with the exception of the description of scriptural officers. We recognize the Pastor and Team Leaders as scriptural officers.

**ARTICLE IV. Polity and Relationship**

Jesus Christ is the head of the church; the true source of all that the church is and does, and His glory is to be the objective of every act, function, and motive of the body, both individually and corporately. It is before Him that all other leadership must bow. He communicates His will for the church through His Word, the Bible. He gives additional guidance by means of the specific leading of the Holy Spirit who indwells the heart of each believer. He call forth leaders for the church to whom He gives responsibility for the oversight of the church body and the shepherding of its members. The government of this church is vested in the body of believers who compose its membership and leadership. Persons meeting the membership requirements shall constitute the membership. All internal groups created and empowered by the church shall exist to further the purpose of the church. They will be accountable to the church. As an autonomous local church, this church is not subject to the control of any ecclesiastical body. If an entity this church cooperates with ceases to agree with or support the mission of this church, this church reserves the right to disassociate with that entity.

**ARTICLE V. Ordinance**

 **Section I. Baptism (Sacrament)**

A church is understood to be a fellowship of baptized believers brought together to carry out the work of Jesus Christ. A baptized believer is one who has been scripturally immersed and understands baptism to be symbolic of the salvation which has already been accepted in their life by the grace of God through faith in Jesus Christ. (Rom. 10:9) In the event that a believer is physically unable to be immersed, the baptism mode of sprinkling or pouring will be acceptable.

 **Section II. The Lord’s Supper (Sacrament)**

The church will observe the Lord’s Supper on a quarterly basis as led by the Pastor. The Lord’s Supper is a symbolic act whereby the church, through partaking of the bread and the fruit of the vine, memorialize the death of Christ and anticipate His second coming. This observance is open to anyone who has accepted Jesus Christ as their personal Savior and is seeking His righteousness.

**ARTICLE VI. Amendments**

This Constitution may be amended by a three-fourths (3/4) vote of the active members present at a church conference called for that purpose. Amendments may be proposed by the Team Leaders or by written petition signed by 25% of the active members and duly presented to the Team Leaders. Proposed amendments for church consideration shall be announced at the regular worship service and made available in written form to the congregation one week prior to the called church conference in which they will be voted on.

**BYLAWS**

**ARTICLE 1. Membership and Commitments**

 **Section I. Establishing Membership**

Membership in the Smokey Creek Cowboy Church is open to anyone who meets the following qualifications:

1. A member must have a personal commitment of faith in Jesus Christ for salvation.
2. A member must have been baptized by immersion after faith in Christ as a testimony of salvation.
3. Membership may be established in the following way:
4. Transfer of Membership from a Like Faith Church – Candidates who are members in good standing of another church of like faith ask their previous church to transfer their membership.
5. Statement – Candidates may join by affirming that they are baptized believers in the Lord Jesus Christ, holding to the biblical teachings of Christianity.
6. Baptism – Candidates accepting Christ as their Savior and requesting believer’s baptism will be accepted as members upon baptism.
7. All candidates for membership shall give a verbal testimony of their conversion, baptism, and walk with Christ, and acceptance of the church’s mission statements and membership commitments to the Pastor.
8. Candidates for membership will be presented to the church by the Pastor after having been approved by the Leadership Team.

**Section II. Commitments**

1. **Toward God**
2. To reverence the name of God and to honor the Lord by divine worship and spiritual edification, participating in those activities which contribute to the moral and spiritual purposes of this day.
3. To seek only the leading of the Holy Spirit and to abstain from all forms of spiritism, such as the occult, witchcraft, astrology and other similar practices.
4. **Toward Self**
5. To exercise faithful stewardship through the wise use of their time and material resources, practicing careful self-discipline in order to further the mission of Christ’s church (remembering the principle of tithing which is basic to the New Testament standard of stewardship) and to demonstrate compassion to those in need.
6. **Toward Family**
7. To follow the teachings of the Scriptures regarding marriage and divorce. We affirm that sexual relationships outside of marriage and sexual relationships between persons of the same sex are immoral and sinful. We further affirm that heterosexual monogamy is God’s plan for marriage, and we regard sexual sin of the spouse, such as adultery, homosexual behavior, bestiality or incest, or abuse as the only biblical grounds for considering divorce, and then only when appropriate counseling has failed to restore the relationship.
8. To preserve the sanctity of the home by honoring Christ in every phase of family life and by demonstrating Christ-like love (always avoiding spousal or child abuse), and by living peacefully with one another, thereby encouraging the nurture and education of the children in the Christian faith so as to bring them early to the saving knowledge of Christ.
9. **Toward the Church**
10. To work together for the advancement of God’s kingdom and for the mutual edification of fellow believers in holiness, knowledge and love; to walk together in Christian fellowship by giving and receiving counsel with gentleness and affection; by praying for each other; by helping each other in sickness and distress; and by demonstrating love, purity and courtesy to all.
11. To grow in the knowledge, love and grace of God by participating in public worship, the ministry of the Word of God, the Lord’s Supper, family and personal devotions and fasting.
12. To preserve the fellowship and witness of the church with reference to the use of languages. The church believes in the miraculous use of languages and the interpretation of languages in its biblical and historical setting. Therefore, only a language readily understood by the congregation is to be used in public worship.
13. **Toward Others**
14. To do good as much as is possible to all people as God gives opportunity, especially to those in the body of Christ; by giving food to the hungry, by clothing the destitute, by visiting or helping those who are sick or in prison; by instructing, correcting or encouraging them in love.
15. To respect the inherent individual rights of all persons, regardless of race, color or sex.
16. To live honestly, be just in all dealings and faithful in all commitments.

**Section III. Termination of Membership**

A person’s membership in the Smokey Creek Cowboy Church may be terminated one of the following ways:

1. **Death**
2. **Transfer of Membership**
3. **Exclusion**

If a member conducts himself in a manner which brings the name of Christ and the church into disrepute, or is found to be undermining church unity, it will be the responsibility of the Team Leaders under the guidance of the Pastor to attempt to restore the member in a spirit of love according to the guidelines set forth in Matthew 18:15-17. If the member fails to respond positively to these attempts, exclusion will require a written account signed by the Team Leaders outlining the process followed with the member and a two-thirds (2/3) vote by the church.

1. **Erasure**

If a member joins another church his/her name will be removed from the membership roll.

1. **Inactive Attendance**

If a member becomes inactive in church attendance for a period of twelve months for reasons other than sickness or military service his/her name will be removed.

 **Section IV. Rights of Members**

Each active member present, 16 years of age and older, shall be entitled to one (1) vote on each matter submitted for a vote at any called church conference. The right of a member to vote shall cease upon the termination of his/her membership in the church. The right of a member to vote may be suspended if the member is involved in an unresolved matter which conflicts with church membership commitments or is no longer an active member. An active member is a member on the church roll who attends the church worship services on a regular basis. Active members have the right to vote on the following matters: the call of a Pastor and other professional ministerial staff, the selection process of Team Leaders, the annual church budget, indebtedness associated with land acquisition and/or building improvements, cumulative indebtedness for all other aspects of church business that exceeds 20% of the annual church budget, the disposition of all or substantially all of the assets of the church, the merger or dissolution of the church, and any other matter submitted by the Pastor and Team Leaders to the church for a vote.

**ARTICLE II. Ministerial Leadership**

 **Section 1. Pastor**

1. **Call** - Upon the Pastor’s resignation or departure, a church conference will be called by the Top Hand and the church will elect a Pastoral search team. This team will consist of no fewer than three and no more than eight active members. This team will seek out and evaluate prospective Pastoral candidates until they achieve complete consensus on a single candidate. Potential candidates will not be presented to the congregation as a part of the Pastoral search process unless a call is being extended. When consensus is reached on a single candidate, the team will report to the Team Leaders who will set a time and date for the candidate to be presented to the church for a trial sermon. On that date, a church conference shall be called and after a full discussion, a vote will be taken by ballot. A three-fourths (3/4) vote of the active members of the church present and voting is required to extend a call. If a call is not extended by the church to the candidate, or the candidate declines to accept, then the Pastoral search team will begin a new search and come before the church with a second recommendation. This method will proceed until a Pastor is secured.
2. **Duties** - The Pastor shall be the spiritual leader of the congregation. In that capacity, under the Lordship of Jesus Christ and the Leadership of the Holy Spirit, he shall preach and teach the Word of God, lead the church in regular worship services, administer the ordinances of the church, serve as chairman at church conferences, provide leadership to the ministerial staff, serve as administrator of the church, work to implement the model of church structure and function laid out in this constitution and fulfill all his Pastoral duties as set forth in Scripture.
3. **Termination** – The Pastor’s duties with the church may be terminated by resignation, death, or dismissal. A vote for dismissal must be preceded by appropriate intervention in accordance with Matthew 18 by the Team Leaders. Such dismissal will require two-thirds (2/3) vote of the active members present at the called church conference. The moderator for this conference will be the Top Hand. If the Pastor’s dismissal is for anything other than moral misconduct, he has the right to continue leading the church until the end of the calendar year.

**Section II. Professional Ministerial Staff**

1. **Selection** – If it is determined that additional professional ministerial staff, other than the pastor is needed for fulfilling the church’s mission, they may be employed by the church. All professional staff will be appointed by the Pastor with a consensus of the Team Leaders, and a two-thirds (2/3) vote by members of the church conference.
2. **Duties** – Professional ministerial staff persons will have specific and written job descriptions as outlined by the pastor. The pastor will be administrator of all staff members.

**Section III. Lay Pastors**

1. **Purpose and Function -** Lay pastors shall serve as an extension of the Pastor (under the administration of the pastor). They are directed by the Pastor to help him carry out ministry duties.
2. **Selection –** Lay Pastors shall be appointed as needed by the Senior Pastor. If there is no Pastor they may be appointed by the Team Leaders.
3. **Qualifications of Lay Pastor** – Lay Pastors must be active members in good standing and have a definite call from the Lord to serve in ministry.
4. **Term of Office** – Lay Pastors will be appointed to a one year term, but may serve multiple terms. The Lay Pastor is appointed by the Pastor with consensus of the Team Leaders and a two-thirds (2/3) vote by the members of the church conference.

**Section IV. Team Leaders**

1. **Purpose and Function** - Team Leaders shall serve to provide spiritual leadership and accountability to the church in accordance with scripture. They will provide support and accountability for the Pastor, assist the ministry teams with difficult issues, serve as arbiters in matters of conflict or church discipline, and in general provide spiritual leadership, guidance, and assistance wherever and whenever appropriate.

**Spiritual Leadership** – Team Leaders model what it means to be Christ-like. They are committed to the Pastor and act as a buffer between the Pastor and his critics; they meet with the Pastor on a regular basis for prayer and fellowship.

**A Limited Decision Making Body** – The only time the Team Leaders become a decision making body is when:

1. They are called on by the Pastor to help him make a decision.
2. When a ministry team cannot reach consensus on an issue or asks the Team Leaders for help.

**Confidentiality** – It is recommended that no two members from the same household serve as Team Leaders. All discussions between the Team Leaders are strictly confidential; this includes not discussing sensitive issues with spouses or other church members. Breaking confidentiality is grounds for removal. Team Leaders do not have the authority to call meetings. All meetings are called by the Pastor.

1. **Selection** – Team Leaders will be recommended by the Nominating Committee and voted upon by the church body during annual church conference. They will serve a one year term. Team Leader offices are: Top Hand, Treasurer, Secretary, and Ranch Hand.
2. **Qualifications** – Any member in good standing of the Smokey Creek Cowboy Church can be a Team Leader.

**Section V. Trustees**

Shall be elected during Church Conference by a simple majority vote.

1. **Purpose and Function** – Trustees shall sign the title to church property; all legal documents involving the sale, mortgage, purchase, or rental of property; all notes and loan instruments; and such other legal documents as may require execution on behalf of the church.
2. **Selection –** Three trustees will be elected during church conference. One of the three will then be elected to serve as a Team Leader.

**Section VI. Vacancies**

In the event a vacancy occurs in any office, the Team Leaders shall appoint a successor to fill the unexpired term.

**ARTICLE III. Church Business**

 **Section I. Finances**

1. **Fiscal Year** – The fiscal year of the church will be on a calendar year basis beginning on January 1st and ending December 31st of each year.
2. **Budget** - Budget will be presented to the church conference and voted on annually.

**Section II. Church Conferences**

1. **Annual Church Conference** – There shall be one annual church conference called in January of each year to vote on the annual budget, Team Leaders, and other major decisions.
2. **Special Church Conference** – Any church conference other than the annual conference must be called for a specific purpose. Church conference must be called by the Pastor unless it is a conference called by the Top Hand for Pastoral issues.
3. **Notices** – Notices of the time and place of all church conferences shall be given one week in advance.
4. **Place of Church Conference** – All church conferences shall be held on the premises of the Smokey Creek Cowboy Church.
5. **Quorum** – The active church members present at any duly called church conference shall constitute a quorum. No non-members shall be allowed to vote on any issue, nor have a voice during the conference.
6. **Absentee Voting and Proxies** – Absentee voting will only be allowed due to sickness, military service, or work; and only for voting on the pastor. Voting by proxy at any church conference shall not be allowed or recognized.
7. **Will of the Church** – All Ministry Teams, officers, and organizations of the church shall carry out the will of the church on any given matter, duly expressed by its vote.
8. **Rules of Procedure** – The order of proceedings at church conference shall be determined by the rules of practice contained in Robert’s Rules of Order, Revised.
9. **Conduct of Church Business** – All business of the church shall be conducted in a manner that honors Christ and respects others. The church shall strive to seek the will of God by prayerful deliberation and common consensus.

**Section III. Contracts**

The trustees shall execute and deliver any contract or instrument in the name of the church which may be authorized by the church to be so executed and delivered. In this connection, the church body as a whole shall be the ultimate authority for all actions taken by the church and no other persons or organization shall have any authority to contract or otherwise bind the church without express authorization from the church body.

 **Section IV. Books and Records**

The church shall keep and maintain a complete and accurate record of all financial accounts, membership list, and church conference minutes at its principle office.

**Amendments to the Constitution and Bylaws of the Smokey Creek Cowboy Church**

Use of Smokey Creek Cowboy Church Facilities

Facilities means: Any part of church building/s or church property

Members in good standing according to church bylaws and constitution shall be allowed to use the church facility so long as it does not interfere with planned church activities. Member/s must be present during use.

Church facility will not be used for personal money making activities or solicitations.

Church members will not be allowed to use the facility on behalf of someone else who is not affiliated with the Smokey Creek Cowboy Church.

Anyone using church facilities will be responsible for providing the necessary paper products such as plates, cups, napkins, drinks, etc. for their activity.

Anyone using the church facilities will be responsible for all necessary cleanup of facilities.

Anyone using the church facilities will assume responsibility for all liabilities such as physical injuries or damage to facilities which could occur during usage.

**Use of Smokey Creek Facilities for Marriage Ceremonies**

Marriage is a celebration of the love and unity between one naturally born woman and one naturally born man as instituted by God Himself, taught in the Holy Scriptures and understood by the church and supported by the church in the Smokey Creek Cowboy Church constitution and bylaws. Therefore, no marriage/s will be allowed on/in church facilities except within the membership of the Smokey Creek Cowboy Church.

The pastor/s or pastoral staff of Smokey Creek Cowboy Church will only be allowed to perform marriages on/in church facilities which are within the membership of the Smokey Creek Cowboy Church. Also, all marriages shall be considered as worship services and implemented as such.

**Provisional Membership**:

Any person between the ages of 12-15 will be allowed to join the Smokey Creek Cowboy Church as a provisional member if he/she lives in accordance with the church bylaws and constitution. This provisional membership will give the individual identification with the church, but will exclude privileges such as voting rights or the right to hold any leadership Team position. The individual after reaching the age of 16, if he/she so desires can be recommended to the church for a vote for full membership.

**Use of and cleaning of facility**:

Facility should be left as found by cleaning after use. Bathrooms must be left clean. All utensils should be cleaned and placed into proper storage containers. Vacuum floors as no food or crumbs should be left on the floors. Trash must be taken out and removed from property as there are no garbage bins on property. “Do not” leave trash inside or outside the building. Tables must be left clean. Heat or A/C must be turned off. All lights must be turned off and all doors must be checked and locked before leaving. Stage are is off limits for anyone using the facility. Running or rough housing is not allowed inside church facility as this can lead to accidents.