

# **Cornerstone Bible Church Constitution**

**March 2014**



# Cornerstone Bible Church Constitution

<b>Article I – NAME</b> .....	<b>p.3</b>
<b>Article II – PURPOSE</b> .....	<b>p.3</b>
<b>Article III – CHURCH COVENANT</b> .....	<b>pp.3–4</b>
A. Introductory Statement .....	p.3
B. Summary of Our Responsibilities...	p.4
<b>Article IV – ARTICLES OF FAITH</b> .....	<b>p.5</b>
<b>Article V – MEMBERSHIP</b> .....	<b>pp.5–12</b>
A. Warrant For Membership .....	pp.5–6
B. Requisites For Membership .....	pp.6–7
C. Types of Membership .....	p.7
D. Reception Into Membership .....	pp.7–8
E. Termination of Membership .....	pp.8–10
F. Privileges of Membership .....	p.10
G. Requirements For Membership ...	p.11
H. Records of Membership .....	p.12
<b>Article VI – CHURCH DISCIPLINE</b> .....	<b>pp. 13–16</b>
<b>Article VII – ORDINANCES</b> .....	<b>p.17</b>
<b>Article VIII – OFFICERS</b> .....	<b>pp. 18–24</b>
<b>Article IX – OFFICIAL BOARD</b> .....	<b>p.25</b>
<b>Article X CHURCH MEETINGS</b> .....	<b>p.25</b>
<b>Article XI – CONSTITUTIONAL AUTHORITY</b> .....	<b>p.26</b>



## Preamble

We, the members of Cornerstone Bible Church of Miami, Inc. do ordain and establish the following Articles, to which we voluntarily and solemnly submit ourselves.

### Article I – NAME

The name of this church shall be Cornerstone Bible Church of Miami, Inc.

### Article II – PURPOSE

The purpose of Cornerstone Bible Church is to glorify the God of the Scriptures by maintaining and promoting His worship both individually and corporately, by evangelizing sinners, and by edifying His saints. Therefore, we are committed to the proclamation of God's perfect Law and of the glorious Gospel of His grace through all the world, to the defense of that "faith which was once delivered unto the saints", and to the pure and faithful celebration of the ordinances graciously given by Christ as Mediator of His New Covenant.

### Article III – CHURCH COVENANT

**A. Introductory Statement** – God has graciously entered into a covenant relationship with His believing people. Jesus Christ is the Mediator of the New Covenant. His blood is the blood of the New Covenant, which infallibly secures all the benefits of the covenant for all of God's people. God has in this New Covenant made us members one of another. Therefore, we have covenant responsibilities to each other, as well as to God. God has promised in this covenant to write His laws in our hearts and to cause us to walk in His ways (that is, to enable us to walk according to His statutes with sincerity). The motivation and ability to sincerely obey God's law springs from the atoning sacrifice of Jesus Christ, who, by His death, satisfied the holy wrath of God that was against us due to our sins. It is by the enablement of the Holy Spirit that we obey, in loving gratitude for Christ's righteousness, which has been imputed to us, and not to establish our own righteousness before God. We obey with the confidence that the end of Christ's death will be realized in us (that is, "that the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us" and that we should be a people "zealous of good works".) The following paragraphs are a of what we believe are our covenant responsibilities toward God and toward one another as fellow members in the church of Jesus Christ. This is given to perspective members as a basis and testimony for the goals of Cornerstone Bible Church seeking to serve the Lord to the edification of His saints both individually and corporately for His glory.

Judges 3

Jer. 31:31-34; 32:40; Heb. 8:7-13; 10:16-17; 13:20-21

Heb. 8:6

Mat. 26:26-28; Heb. 13:20-21

Rom. 12:4-5; 1 Cor.12:12-27; Eph. 4:25

Rom.8:1-4

Titus. 2:14

### **B. Summary of Our Covenant Responsibilities to God and to One Another**

Having been brought by God's gracious mercy to embrace the Lord Jesus Christ in salvation

together with the other members of this local body, we solemnly and joyfully covenant to walk together united to Him as one body to His glory. We, therefore, in His perfect love and strength sincerely agree... (Ephesians 2:8-10; 4:1-16; Romans 15:5-7)

- ❖ That in brotherly love we will remember one another in prayer, encourage each other in our Christian walk, carefully watch over one another, and faithfully warn, exhort, admonish and forgive our fellow members as the occasion may require: (Ephesians 4:31-32; 6:18-20; 1 Thessalonians 5:13b-15; Galatians 6:1-5; Matthew 6:14-15)
- ❖ That we will not, unless providentially hindered, forsake the assembling of ourselves together, but will uphold the public gatherings of the worship of God with His people and the ordinances of His church: (Acts 2:41-47; Colossians 3:16-17; Hebrews 10:19-25; 1 Timothy 3:14-15)
- ❖ That we will not omit our own personal and family religion at home, nor neglect the spiritual training of our children and those under our care for the salvation of their souls and the enjoyment of our Lord: (Deuteronomy 6; Ephesians 6:4; Joshua 24:15)
- ❖ That as a light in this world and as salt in the earth, we shall seek God's grace, through prayer, to deny all ungodliness, and worldly lusts, and to be able to walk in a manner worthy of that which He has called us to, that, by which we might win the souls of men: (Matthew 5:14-16; Titus 2:11-15; Ephesians 4:1)
- ❖ That we will strive for the purity and the propagation of the glorious gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ: (Matthew 28:16-20; Acts 1:8; Romans 1:16-17; 10:9-17; 2 Corinthians 5:14-21)
- ❖ That we will cheerfully contribute of our personal and material resources according to that which God has given so to maintain a faithful and biblical ministry among us, to support the poor and to spread the gospel to the ends of the earth: (2 Corinthians 8-9; 1 Corinthians 16:2; Galatians 6:10)
- ❖ That the ultimate authority in every area of life is to be the Word of God alone by which we shall strive to live under to the glory of the Lord: (Matthew 4:4; 22:29,31-32; 5:17-18; 2 Timothy 3:16-17; Revelation 22:18-19; Hebrews 4:12-13)
- ❖ That we shall joyfully submit to the God-appointed leaders and to the other members of this church for the sake of the well being and unity of this body: (Hebrews 13:17; 1 Thessalonians 5:12-13; Romans 12:5; Philippians 2:2-3; 1 Corinthians 1:10-13; Ephesians 5:21)
- ❖ That we recognize any willful and continued abuse of the privileges bestowed upon us as members of Cornerstone Bible Church shall result in partial restriction of or the total withdrawal of privileges of membership according to the biblical mandate: (Matthew 18:15-18; Romans 16:17-18; Titus 3:10-11, I Thessalonians 3:6, 14-15)

## Article IV ... ARTICLES OF FAITH

We regard that the **1689 London Baptist Confession of Faith** (excepting the assertions regarding the certain identity of the antichrist [26:41) as an excellent, though non inspired, expression of the teaching of the Word of God. Because we acknowledge the written Word of God to be the supreme authority in all matters of faith, morals, and order, we adopt this time tested, historic document as our doctrinal standard. We find it to be a protective assistance in controversy, a confirmation in faith, and a means of edification in righteousness.

## Article V ... MEMBERSHIP

**A Warrant for Membership** – the New Testament demands of all Christians, formal, open, solemn, voluntary and enduring commitment to Jesus Christ, to His truth and to His people. A true Christian's commitment to the Lord Jesus Christ must include, and is inseparable from their commitment to Christ's truth and to Christ's people. Such a commitment to Christ, His truth and His people ordinarily requires a formal, open, solemn, voluntary and enduring commitment of church membership in a local church for the following biblical reasons:

1. Fulfillment of Christ's Great Commission requires church membership. According to the Great Commission of Christ there is an inseparable connection between making disciples, baptizing them and teaching them. The Apostles implemented this commission by gathering baptized disciples into local churches. It was therefore in local churches that baptized disciples were taught all that Christ commanded. With the uncertain exception of the Ethiopian eunuch, the New Testament knows nothing of believing men and women who are not identified with a local church.
2. Obedience to Christ's directive to observe the Lord's Table requires church membership. Since all believing men and women are required by Christ to observe the Lord's Table, and since the Lord's Table is clearly a local church ordinance, it follows that all Christians must, belong to, or be in the process of seeking biblical identification with, a local New Testament church in order to partake biblically.

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Matthew 28:18–20

Acts 2:38–42; 1 Corinthians 4:17

Luke 22:19; 1 Corinthians 11:23–25

1 Corinthians 11:17–18, 33–34 cp. 1 Corinthians 1:1–2

3. The New Testament presents the local church as a distinct group of individuals which could
- be counted;
  - be added to;
  - be called upon to select leaders and representatives from among itself;
  - be officially gathered together;
  - carry out church discipline;
  - observe the Lord's table as a wholly present corporate assembly.

There is, therefore, clear biblical warrant for the existence and careful maintenance of local church membership involving a formal, open, solemn, voluntary and enduring commitment. This biblical warrant compels us to use great care in maintaining a biblically-ordered church membership.

## B. Requisites for Membership

- To be eligible for membership, a man or woman must demonstrate repentance toward God and the fruits thereof, as well as that faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ which produces godly works. They must be baptized as believers by immersion and profess substantial agreement with the Purpose (as stated in Article II), Covenant (as stated in Article III), Articles of Faith (as stated in Article IV), and government of this church (as stated in Articles VIII, IX, X). **Substantial agreement** means that you agree with those things which you are able to clearly understand, and that you are teachable in all other things which are not clear to you. Furthermore, they must not be under the biblically warranted corrective discipline of a genuine church.
- Church members must be in submission to the ordained rule of the church to which they belong. Anyone who cannot intelligently and freely submit to this church's government which seeks to maintain proper biblical mandates should not belong to this church.
- Any perspective member who is in substantial disagreement with the constitution or confessions of the church could not be consistently submissive to the church's teaching ministry. Therefore, to admit the applicant to membership in this church would be unwise and un-scriptural.

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Acts. 2:41-42; 4:4  
 Acts. 2:47; 5:14  
 Acts. 6:1-6, 2 Cor. 8:19, 23; Acts. 15:22  
 Acts. 14:27; 15:22  
 Mt. 18:17; 1 Cor. 5:4, 13; 2 Cor. 2:6  
 1 Cor 11:17-20; 33-34  
 Acts. 5:14; 8:3,12  
 Acts. 26:20  
 Acts. 20:21  
 Eph. 2:8-10; James. 2:18,22  
 Mt. 18:17-18; 1 Cor. 5:11-13; 2 Thess. 3:6,14-15; 3 Jn. 9-10; 2 Cor. 2:6-8  
 Heb. 13:17 13. Eph. 4:3

4. Mastery of church confessions is not required of any new disciple before they are admitted to church membership. Such a requirement would violate the order of Matthew 28:19–20, which instructs us to disciple, to baptize, and then to teach the baptized disciple to observe all things whatsoever Christ has commanded. It is necessary, however, that any disciple applying for membership manifest a willingness to be taught and have substantial agreement with what they already know concerning the church's doctrine and government.
5. If one who is already a member of the church at any time concludes that they no longer satisfy the requirements for membership, they are under obligation for the integrity and ultimate good of the church to inform the elders of that fact.

## C. Types of Membership

**1. Regular Members** – All who are received into the membership of the church according to the procedures set forth in Section D of this Article and who do not come under the corrective discipline of the church as set forth in Article VI, Section B, shall be considered regular members in good standing and entitled to all the rights and privileges of membership in the church.

**2. Associate Members** – An Associate Member is someone who will come under the care of the church in all the rights, privileges and responsibilities, except for voting and holding church office. The following is one example of someone who might come under the category of “Associate Members:”

a. Members in good standing of other churches who come to live in the area of Cornerstone Bible Church temporarily and desire accountability to the local church (i.e. student, military personnel, temporary job assignment). Because of the temporary nature of the stay, this person need not be released from the membership of their "home church" but will be regarded as an associate member of this church. If circumstances change from temporary to permanent residence, they should seek to become a regular member.

## D. Reception into Membership

1. Persons desiring membership in the church must complete an application for membership which includes a written testimony explaining their understanding and experience of the Gospel of Christ and read the documents given with the application. Exceptions to this requirement shall be determined by the elders in cases involving extraordinary circumstances. Applicants will then meet with the elders to discuss the given testimony and to become acquainted with one another.

2. If the applicant has been a member of another church, the elders will investigate the individuals previous standing in that church before they are accepted as a member in this church. Where it is possible and appropriate, a letter of transfer will be requested. Reception by transfer does not negate any of the requirements for becoming a member in this church.

3. Upon the applicant meeting with the elders and there being a unanimous consensus by the elders in the meeting, the name of the applicant shall be announced at the next Sunday Worship Service. There will be an approximate four week period for the existing members to become acquainted with, and examine the testimony of, the applicant. During this time, should any of the members have reason to doubt the testimony of the applicant or have proof that the character of the applicant is not in keeping with a sincere Christian testimony, they are expected to seek to make personal contact with the applicant and then, if the issue(s) in question is(are) not resolved, to privately voice that concern to the elders. If there are questions raised which then remain unresolved, another meeting with the elders will be scheduled to clarify and resolve any questions or concerns raised. The elders may postpone the reception of the person into membership until any objections can be resolved. If the elders and member(s) who are involved are satisfied that the matter has been biblically resolved, the person will be received as outlined in #4 below.

4. After the four week period, or after any questions or objections have been resolved, the applicant will be formally recognized during a stated meeting to be a member of Cornerstone Bible Church.

## **E. Termination of Membership**

### **1. Types of Termination**

**a. By Physical Death** – When a member of the church is removed from our midst by death, their name shall be transferred to the file of former members.

### **b. By Transfer**

- (1) Because the New Testament norm for Christians is that they be members of true local churches of Christ, and because the spiritual health of believers is endangered when they are not thus committed to a church, any Christian who leaves the membership<sup>1</sup> of this church should seek to do so by means of transfer to another true church of Christ. Therefore, when members in good standing whose conduct does not warrant corrective discipline desires to leave the membership of this church, they are strongly urged to leave in an orderly way by privately indicating that desire to the elders giving explanation for their reasons for leaving, and by submitting a written request to the elders for a transfer of membership to another true church of Christ.
- (2) When such a departing members have not yet chosen a suitable church to which they may transfer, the elders may provide, if they wish, for the transitional period, proper oversight and assistance. Such a transitional status will be allowed to continue as long as the departing members maintain regular contact with the elders, or a properly designated member, and does not unnecessarily prolong the transitional process, and does not engage in conduct requiring the exercise of church discipline.

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Matthew 18:15–17; Lev. 19:16–17  
Matthew 3:6–12; Acts 9:26–27, 1 John 4:1; Revelation 2:2

- (3) When it is so requested, the elders may transfer a departing member of good standing to the fellowship of another church. A letter of transfer will be sent to the appropriate officer(s) of the church to which the member wishes to transfer. No such letter may be given to a member who is at the time under the corrective discipline of this church. The elders may refuse to grant a letter of transfer directed to any church which has in their judgment demonstrated themselves to be disloyal to “the faith which was once for all delivered unto the saints” or which does not exercise godly care over its members.
- (4) Transfers are to be reported to the church by the elders.

### **c. By Dismission**

- (1) Occasionally, a person's membership may need to be terminated under circumstances which make both transfer and corrective discipline inappropriate. In such circumstances a member may be dismissed.
- (2) While there is no explicit precedent for dismission in the New Testament, it is required by biblical principles, including the voluntary nature of local church membership and the demands of biblically defined love and justice; and by the realities of being a church not yet wholly redeemed and seeking to learn the lessons from nearly 2,000 years of church history.
- (3) Dismission may be initiated either by the written request of a member to the elders, or by the elders themselves when a member ceases to maintain vital contact with this church. In either case, the final decision regarding the action of dismission will lie with the elders. Church membership is a very serious matter. Members, therefore, shall be dismissed only after due inquiry and admonition by the elders, whenever such contact is possible. Before any individual is dismissed, the church shall be informed of the intention of the elders to dismiss the individual. This information must include the grounds for the proposed dismission. A suitable period of time following the announcement shall be given to the membership of the church to privately raise concerns with the elders. After due consideration of such concerns, the elders may proceed with the appropriate action. When possible, they shall send a letter of dismission informing the individual. The elders shall subsequently communicate to the church that the person has been dismissed. If one who has been dismissed applies again for membership, the normal procedures shall be followed as set forth in Section D of this Article.
- (4) Dismission may be warranted for any of the following reasons:
- (a) Member(s) in good standing conclude that they are not truly saved.
  - (b) Member(s) in good standing wish to terminate their membership for reasons that do not impugn their Christian profession.
  - (c) A member ceases to maintain vital contact with this church.
  - (d) A member ceases to maintain vital contact with this church due to relocation or other unique circumstances.

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Jude 3

Acts 5:13; 9-26; 1 John 2:19

Lamentations 3:31-33; 1 Cor.13:4-7; Proverbs 17:15; 18:5

### **d. By Excommunication**

According to the teaching of Holy Scripture, a church must cut off from its fellowship and visible membership any person who teaches or insists on holding to false and heretical doctrine, or who blatantly or persistently conducts himself in a manner inconsistent with their Christian profession, or who persists in disturbing the unity or peace of the church. The procedure to be followed in such

excommunication is set forth in Article VI. Section B, of this Constitution.

## 2. Implications of Termination

- a. Cornerstone Bible Church does not exist in isolation from, but is part of the universal church of Christ, composed of all true churches. Accordingly, open and forthright communication among the churches is vital for the purity, peace, edification and unity of the church universal. Therefore the elders may, at their discretion, disclose to the members of this church and to other churches the circumstances under which a person's membership was terminated for the protection of Christ's body and the ultimate good of the person.
- b. In addition, Cornerstone Bible Church does not exist in isolation from society at large. Accordingly, this church has a moral obligation to society both to act with integrity and to maintain its testimony. Therefore, the elders may, at their discretion, disclose to other persons outside the ecclesiastical circles mentioned above, the circumstances under which a person's membership was terminated.
- c. Termination of membership does not give license to former members to sow discord, spread false teachings or reports, or engage in any other behavior which threatens the peace and unity of this church or the church universal. Accordingly, when it is established that a former member is behaving divisively, the elders may issue whatever warnings they deem appropriate to maintain and preserve the peace and harmony of this church and the church universal.

**F. Privileges of Membership** – In God's order, commitment normally constitutes the pathway to the possession of privileges. Therefore, membership in this church includes the following privileges:

1. Participation in the Lord's Supper;
2. Attendance at, appropriate participation in, and voting during church business meetings;
3. Laboring to extend God's Kingdom in ministries of the church (as one's gifts, graces and calling make appropriate)
4. Reception to the committed oversight and care of the pastors and fellow members of the church.
5. Reception to the committed care and discipline (as needed) of the membership of the church.

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Matthew 18:15–17; I Cor. 5:1–13. Romans 16:17; Titus 3:10–11;  
 Acts 13 24; 1 Tim. 1:20. 2 Tim.2:17; 4:10; 1 John 2:18–19  
 2 Cor. 8:20-21; Lev. 5:1; 1 Peter 4:15; Acts 15:24; Romans 16:17-20; I Tim.1:20 2 Tim 2:17; 4:10; 1 John 2 18-19  
 Acts 2.41-42. 1 Cor. 11:18-26, 33; 7. Acts 6:1-6 [cf. Acts 2:41; 4:4; 5:13-14] 1 Cor.5:4-7:13 [cf. 1 Cor 1:21)  
 1 Cor.12:4–27; Eph. 4:7, 11–12,16; 1 Peter 4:10–11

## G. Requirements of Membership

1. Members are biblically responsible, first of all, to be faithful to all the spiritual duties essential to the Christian life. These duties include mutual edification (Rom. 14:9), encouragement (Heb. 10:24), and exhortation (Heb. 3:13). Each member is biblically responsible to faithfully attend the meetings of the church (Heb. 10:25). As Christian members of Cornerstone are expected to be active in church, as God allows, given their skills, abilities, talents, gifts and time. Romans 12:5; 1 Cor 12:12;14-23;27;Eph 4:2;1 Peter 4:10; 1 Thess 5:11; James 5:16; 1 Peter 5:1-4; Heb 13:17

2. All the members of the church are commanded by God's Word to make use of the various other means of grace that are available to them, such as daily private prayer and systematic reading of the Bible, daily family worship, and a proper reverence for and observance of the Lord's Day.

3. Because it is clearly taught in the Scriptures that Christians should financially support the work of the Lord by systematic and proportionate giving made through the local church, all the members of this church are expected to conform to this rule of Scripture. This is done as a corporate expression of worship to God in thankfulness for all that God has given to us. Offerings or gifts are done in accordance with one's ability and the willingness of their heart.

4. All the members of this church are required to obey the teachings of Scripture in respect to the life and government of the family. The husband is the God-appointed head of the family and must rule his household with gentleness, love, wisdom, and firmness. The wife must be in Scriptural subjection to her husband in all things. The husband and wife must bring up their children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. This includes setting a godly example before them, consistently instructing them from the Scriptures, and administering corporal chastening to them when needed.

5. It is the duty of every Christian, as an individual and as a member of a local church, to labor by prayer, word, and deed for the extension of the kingdom of God in ever widening circles. beginning at home and stretching forth to the ends of the earth. Therefore, every member of this church is expected to seek to recognize and prayerfully seize every opportunity to bear witness to their faith in Christ, both by consistent Christian conduct and by the testimony of their mouth.

Acts 20:28; 1 Peter 5:2-3

Acts 2:41 5:13-14; 6:1-2; 9:26; 1 Cor.5:4-5; Gal. 6:1-2.10

Heb. 10 24-25

~~Mal. 3:8 10:1 Cor. 16 1-2:2 Cor. 8-9~~

Phil. 4:18

2 Cor. 8:1-5; Exodus 36:2-7

6. Each member of the church is required to render loyal obedience to all the moral precepts of God's Word in daily life. If God has not condemned or forbidden a practice in His Word, a Christian is at liberty to participate in it. The exercise of Christian liberty, however, must at all times be governed by an earnest desire to walk in the fear of God and to glorify Him in all things, a loving regard for the consciences of weaker brethren, a compassion for the lost, and a zealous regard for the health of one's own soul.

7. All who come into the membership of this church are expected to recognize and to submit to the authority of the elders of the church. This responsibility will include willingly scheduling an oversight meeting with an elder(s) when requested.

8. We who have been joined to Christ by faith and are members of this church are also members one of another. With this privileged relationship come particular responsibilities. We must maintain mutual transparency and honesty. We must rejoice in each other's honor and bear one another's sorrows. We must discreetly confess our faults one to another. We must forgive one another and not allow sins directly or indirectly against one another to cause harm to the entire body. We must mutually oversee each other, faithfully admonish and encourage one another, avoid all backbiting and gossip, and keep in strict confidence all matters which the elders determine are of private concern to the church. We must also, when necessary, help meet the material needs of our brethren as to their providential circumstances.

9. Any member absent from the regularly stated services for a period of three months shall be removed from the membership roll at the discretion of the elders

**H. Records of Membership** – The elders shall keep a file of all past and present members. This file shall have three divisions: regular members, associate members, and former members. The file of former members shall include the date and reason why church membership was terminated, as well as any other necessary information (see Article V, Section E).

Eph. 5:25–33. 1 Tim 3:4–5 | Peter 3:7

Eph. 5:22–24: 1 Peter 3:1–6

Eph. 6:1–4

Deut. 6.1–4

Proverbs 13:24. 22:15: 29:15; Heb. 12:7

Isaiah 54:1–3; Acts 1:8

Romans 8:3–4: 1 Cor.9:20–21;

1 Peter 1:17: | C or.10:3 1

1 Cor.8:9; Romans 15:1–3

1 Cor. 9:19–22

Romans 13:14; 1 Cor. 6:12; 9:24–27; Gal. 5:22–23: 1 Peter

2:16

1 Cor.16:15–16; | Thes.5:12–13; Heb. 13:17

## Article VI -- CHURCH DISCIPLINE

### A. Formative Discipline

Every disciple (follower) of Christ must be under His discipline (His instruction and His correction), which is administered to each one through the church. Mutual submission to one another and to the elders whom the Lord has set over His church will result in the sanctification of each member individually and of the whole body of the church collectively. There are occasions, however, when one's continued disobedience in responding to the admonition of the Word and the fellow members of the church that make it necessary to apply the biblical commands of corrective, formative discipline.

### B. Corrective Discipline

#### 1. General Statement

a. Corrective discipline becomes necessary when heretical doctrine or disorderly, immoral, or scandalous conduct appears among the members of the church. As a general rule and whenever feasible, an effort must be made to resolve difficulty, correct error, and remove offense through counsel and admonition before more drastic steps are taken. The principles given to us throughout the New Testament must be carefully followed and applied to each and every case of corrective discipline as appropriate. In some cases public admonition and/or public repentance may be warranted. In the most extreme cases excommunication from the membership of the church may be necessary. All the members of the church are obliged to submit to and enforce, as appropriate, the decision of the church in acts of corrective discipline.

b. Since the church is a spiritual and religious institution, the punishments inflicted by the church in corrective discipline are also spiritual in nature. They include public verbal reproof, social avoidance, suspension from the Lord's Supper, and removal from the membership of the church. They are intended to effect repentance through a sense of sorrow and shame. The church has no right, however, to confiscate goods, revoke conjugal rights, or inflict corporal punishment of any kind. Nevertheless, a member guilty of criminal actions may be delivered to the civil authorities according to the rule of Scripture.

c. The goals of corrective discipline must always be for the glory of God, the welfare and purity of the church and the restoration and spiritual growth of the offender.

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Romans 12:5; Eph. 4:25; I Cor. 12:26; Eph. 4:32; Proverbs 11:13  
 Matthew 18:15ff; 1 Thes.5:14-15; Gal. 6:10; Santiago 2:14-16; 1 John 3:16-18  
 1 Cor.12:12-27; 1 Thes.5:12-15; Hebrews 3:12-13; 10:24-25; Eph. 5:21; 1 Peter 5:5; Eph. 5:26  
 Gal. 6:1; Santiago 5:19-20; Matthew 18:15-16; Romans 16:17-20; 1 Cor.5:1-13; 2 Thes.  
 3:6-15; 1 Tim. 5-19-20; Tit 3: 10; Matthew 18:17. 1 Tim 3:20  
 Romans 16:17-20; I Cor.5:1-13; I Tim. 1 : 20; Tit 3:10; 2 Cor.6:7  
 Matthew 18:17. 1 Tim. 5:20  
 1 Cor.3:9-11; 2 Thes.3:6,14; 1Cor.5:11  
 Matthew 18:17; I Cor.5:13; 2 Cor.2:7; 2 Thes.3.14; 1 Peter 4:15  
 1 Cor.5:5-6; 2 Cor.2:5-8; 1 Tim.5:20

## 2. Public Reproof or Censure

Public reproof consists of a pastoral effort, together with the gathered church to call an impenitent church member to repentance for sin(s) too blatant to be dealt with in an exclusively private manner: or to deal with serious sin(s) even where there may have been repentance. The elders may administer public censure whenever, in their judgment, either public misconduct, patterns of sin, or serious doctrinal error pose a significant threat to the godliness, unity or testimony of the congregation. Those who humbly receive the word of public reproof, own and confess their sin, and manifest a transformed life shall afterward be publicly commended nor their godly repentance. If the reproof is not heeded, further discipline may be imposed.

## 3. Suspension

Some misconduct on the part of a member is so detrimental to the unity, holiness and testimony of the church that the Lord requires the suspension of some of the privileges of membership. In all cases of suspension the offending person is still to be regarded as a brother in Christ and as a member of the church. Therefore, in accordance with the procedures outlined below for each of the five major categories of offenses, the elders shall recommend that the offending member be suspended, specifying the grounds biblically. To safeguard the members from abuse in this process, it will be open for anyone having knowledge which proves otherwise or knows of the repentance of the person in question, to make that known. Proof given would postpone any action so that the facts may be confirmed.

Furthermore, in the interest of maintaining a climate of holiness and peace, the elders shall have the right, at their sole discretion, to impose a temporary suspension upon a member which will bar them from not more than one Lord's Table while they deliberate the most prudent course of action. This is not for public knowledge but one of private shepherding for the good of that member until repentance is confirmed to be sincere through loving accountability.

### a. A Stubborn Private Offender

When a private offense remains unresolved, even after the method prescribed by our Lord has been graciously and prayerfully followed, it is considered an aggravated offense. The brethren involved shall bring the matter to the elders who, if they judge the matter to be serious and cannot persuade the member to repent, shall report the situation to the church, and recommend that the stubborn member be suspended. If, even after a period of suspension, the member remains adamant to continue in sin, excommunication shall be enacted according to the procedure outlined in Paragraph B, 4, b of this Article.

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Gal. 2 11-14; 1 Tim.5 20

Titus 1:12-13)

Titus 1:10-13

Proverbs 28:13; 2 Cor 7:7-11

Romans 16:17-20; 2 Thess 3:6-15

Matthew 18:15-17

## **b. Divisive Teachings or Behavior**

When after admonition a member persists in the propagation of serious doctrinal error contrary to the Scripture, or willfully persists in promoting division among the membership which is contrary to the Scriptures and this Constitution, such a member may be suspended for bringing division to the Body of Christ. Since every member is responsible to help preserve the unity of the Spirit, no member is to conceal such flagrantly divisive behavior, but rather to reprove it, and disclose it to the elders. Whenever the elders become aware of such divisive behavior, they are to confront it meekly and patiently according to the Word of God. If, even after receiving repeated admonition from the elders and fellow member(s).. a member willfully persists in such behavior, the elders shall report the situation to the church and recommend that the divisive member be suspended. If, even after a period of suspension, the member remains impenitent, excommunication shall be enacted according to the procedure outlined in Section B, Paragraph 4b of this Article.

## **c. Disorderly Behavior**

When a member deliberately persists in conduct which displays a flagrant or public disregard for either the order appointed by God for all mankind in the creation ordinances, namely, work, Sabbath and marriage; or for the order established by Christ for His church in Scripture and adapted to our church in this Constitution, that member may be suspended as disorderly. Whenever the elders become aware that, in spite of the admonitions of formative discipline, a member is behaving disorderly, they are to confront that member meekly and patiently according to the Word of God. If, even after receiving such admonition from the elders, a member persists in this behavior, the elders shall report the situation to the church and recommend that the disorderly member be suspended. If, even after the period of suspension, the person remains impenitent, excommunication shall be enacted according to the procedure outlined in Section B, Paragraph 4b of this Article.

## **d. Contempt of Church Discipline**

If a person is accused or suspected of a sin requiring corrective discipline, yet absents himself from the meetings of the church, or refuses to meet with the elders and/or other member so that the matter may be investigated, such a person may be suspended. The elders may recommend to the church the further action of biblical excommunication to be taken at a later date according to the procedure outlined in Section B, Paragraph 4b of this Article.

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Romans 16:17-20; Titus 3:10

Eph. 4:1ff; Deut.13:6f; I Cor.1:1-10; 1 Cor. 1:10-4:2 I: Tit 3:10

Genesis 2:1-3,15,18-24; Exodus 20:8-11. I Cor.7:1-17,39; 2 Thess 3:6-15; I Tim.5:8;

Tit 2:5; 1 Cor 11:17-34; 14:37-40; 1 Tim 3:14-15; 2 Thess 3:6

1 Thess 5:14; 2 Thess 3:14-15

Matthew 18:17; Numbers 16:12,20,23-27

## 4. Excommunication.

a. In addition to the excommunication of those who have been previously suspended. some expressions of sin (ethical or doctrinal) are so gross and heinous in nature that preliminary actions like public reproof and suspension are inappropriate. In such cases, the guilty member may be immediately excommunicated by the church. In order to maintain orderliness in the church, it would be necessary to inform the elders of the situation prior to such a meeting and thus prevent any unnecessary and ill-timed events. This severe measure is to be employed when both aggravated lawlessness is discovered and there are no hopeful signs of repentance. This severe measure is designed to purge the lawbreaker of their attachment to their sin, unto a sincere and enduring repentance. Those members. with the help of the elders, having made earnest but unsuccessful efforts to bring the offender to true repentance and reformation, shall report the same to the church for the offender to be excommunicated.

b. All acts of willful continuance of rebellion in sin resulting in excommunication must be validated by the gathered church. This is to be done publicly by those directly involved. The church will be foretold (except in such cases as in 4a above) for the purpose of the corporate prayers and the urging of fellow members upon the one in question, so that if someone knows of the individuals repentance or of any wrong done to the person in question, or of facts which are not proper that they might be made known. Thus, as with suspension above, excommunication will be postponed so that the facts may be properly evaluated and confirmed. This is done to protect against any deliberate or accidental human error that would bring unnecessary reproach upon a member and the testimony of the church before the world. If there is not any information brought to the elders privately before the excommunication, or publicly during the actual process—of church excommunication, it shall be confirmed that this is the voice of the church of Jesus Christ, in one accord, speaking in obedience with the Word of God for the glory of Christ and the good of the person being put out of membership.

## 5. Restoration

Since one purpose of church discipline is to restore a fallen member, it is the duty of the church to forgive and to restore to full membership a suspended or excommunicated member who gives satisfactory evidence of his or her repentance under the oversight of the elders. Then the suspended or excommunicated member shall be restored publicly with the testimony given as to the genuineness of their repentance. As with suspension and excommunication, this announcement will be done in a manner that would allow for any member who might have knowledge of anything which would prove contrary to what was told to the church, to make that known. If that were to occur, the restoration would be postponed until the facts could be established. Otherwise, the fallen member shall be joyfully restored to membership in the presence of the gathered church.

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1 Cor 5:1-4  
1 Cor. 5:5; 6:9-11  
Matthew 18:17; 1 Cor.5:4  
2 Cor. 2:6-8

## Article VII -- ORDINANCES

**A. General Statement** - There are two ordinances of special significance that our Lord has commanded us to observe, namely, Baptism and the Lord's Supper. (These are sometimes referred to as "sacraments.") Neither of them has saving merit, nor is any grace imparted to the recipient through the water of Baptism or through the bread and the cup of the Supper. These ordinances are not means of "special grace," but they are special "means of grace" and powerful aids to the faith of the believers who participate in them.

**B. Baptism** - Only confessed disciples of our Lord Jesus Christ are proper candidates for Baptism. All such persons should be baptized and joined to a local church. Believing that Baptism in water is the God-ordained sign of one's personal union with Christ in His death, burial, and resurrection, and the door of entrance into the visible community of the people of God; we shall receive into the membership of the church only those who have been baptized as believers "into the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit". Immersion in water is believed to be the biblical mode of baptism and thus, the only mode to be practiced at this church.

**C. The Lord's Supper** - whereas Baptism is the initiatory ordinance by which one enters the visible church, and should be observed only once by each believer, the Lord's Supper should be celebrated frequently by the assembled church. While this is a most holy ordinance and should be, observed with a joyful solemnity, the bread and the cup of the Supper are and remain the only symbols of the broken body and the shed blood of our Lord Jesus Christ. In order to maintain the purity of this ordinance, the elders will faithfully seek to insure that only true believers who are members in good standing of true churches are admitted to the Table. True believers whose church membership involves unusual circumstances may be admitted to fully share in the Lord's Supper at the discretion of the elders. The Lord's Supper shall be celebrated by the church no less than once every month unless providentially hindered.

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Acts 2:38,41,47; 5:13-14  
Romans 6:4  
Matthew 28:19  
1 Cor. 11:26

## Article VIII -- OFFICERS

**A. General Statement** – Jesus Christ alone is the Head of His Church. He has ordained that individual churches should be governed by Himself through officers whom He appoints, who are endowed by His Spirit with the gifts and graces needed to accomplish the work to which He has called and entrusted them. Christ has ordained that local churches are to be administered by elders and deacons. Beside these two offices, the Scriptures acknowledge no official office which continues in the church today.

### **B. General Prerequisites**

1. All officers of this church must be members of it except as provided in Sec. H of this Article.
2. All officers must be also be male members. The Bible teaches that only men shall hold the office of elder in the church. The women of the church serve a valuable and essential service within the local congregation in the ministry of their God-given gifts in their God-ordained roles. Because Christ has not called women to serve within the office of elder, women shall not be nominated, elected, nor ordained to this office. God has given the duty of leadership over the formal corporate gathering of the whole church. This includes such aspects of church life such as the conducting of worship services, leading in public prayer, public reading of the Scripture, leading in singing, administering the church ordinances of communion and baptism, and the ministry of the Word of God through preaching and teaching. The women of the church are to serve in the important task of assisting in the ministry of instructing the children and other women, the informal instruction even of men and in the diaconal services and benevolent ministries of the church. In this way, the women may serve in many of the same ways of the deacons. But, in order to safeguard against women exercising official authority over the men in the business of the church before the corporate assembly, women shall not serve in the official capacity as a deacon and shall therefore not be nominated, elected, nor ordained to that office.
3. Any individual set apart to one of these offices must be able to conscientiously affirm his agreement with the church's Confessions of Faith, Articles of Faith and By-laws, and Covenant. If he should at any time move from this position, he would be under spiritual and moral obligation to immediately make that fact known to the elders in an orderly manner.

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Col. 1:18  
 Phil. 1:1; 1 Tim. 3:1-13  
 1 Cor.14:33b-35; 1 Tim.2:9-15; 3:1-7  
 Romans 16:1-6; Phil. 4:3; 1 Tim. 3:11  
 Titus 2:3-5  
 Acts 18:26.1 Cor.11:5  
 1 Tim.3:11; 5:9-10; 1 Tim. 2:12

## C. Elders

1. Those men who have been called of God to rule and teach in the church are called elders, pastors, or overseers. These are three interchangeable names designating one and the same office in a New Testament church.
2. Any man desiring the office of an elder must give evidence to God's people that he has the personal, domestic, and ministerial qualifications as set forth in the Scriptures.
3. Because the authority of the elders of the church is human authority exercised in the house of God according to the Word of God, it has both high prerogatives and important limitations:
  - a. It is divinely-delegated authority. Thus, elders are answerable to God for the exercise of this authority. Therefore, elders are obligated to discharge all of the duties specified by God in the Scriptures.
  - b. In the exercise of this God-given authority they must seek to gain the consciences of God's people through the ministry of the Word carried out both publicly and privately.
  - c. The authority of the office of the elders does not include the right to make certain decisions unilaterally. In major decisions of church life (such as those having to do with corrective discipline, recognition of officers, and the sale of a church building), the entire local church as a whole is to have a voice. Yet the elders must provide definitive leadership to the church in the making of such decisions.
  - d. The authority of the elders is limited to the sphere of the local church. Thus, they will not require punishments for sin beyond those of biblical church discipline, will not invade the biblically-defined spheres of other divinely-ordained human authorities (husbands, fathers, civil rulers, and employers), and will not command God's people regarding matters not specified in Scripture except to order the house of God by the application of His Word.
  - e. The authority of elders is conditioned by the fact that they are themselves members of the local church. While elders are shepherds over the flock, they are also members of the flock. Therefore, each individual elder is entitled to the same privileges, is obligated by the same responsibilities, and is subject to the same discipline as are all the other members of the church. Thus, each individual elder is both under the oversight of his fellow elders and accountable to the church as a whole. (However, Section H of this Article does provide for the temporary oversight of elders from a sister church who would not be members of this particular local church.)
  - f. The authority of every elder is the same. Thus, every elder shares an equality in the oversight of the church. Though gifts possessed and functions performed will vary from elder to elder, this God-given diversity must not come at the expense of the goal of real parity among the elders.
  - g. Finally, the authority of the elders is very real authority because it is given by Christ. God's people are, therefore, required to submit when such authority is biblically exercised according to the Word of Christ for the good of Christ's church.
4. One crucial aspect of the elders' duties is personally shepherding the flock of God. Fulfillment of this duty shall include regularly and systematically meeting with each member of the church

on at least an annual basis, except when unable because of providential circumstances.

5. Elders will be maintained in material necessities and disentangled from the cares of another vocation according to their gifts, the needs and capability of the church, and the direction of Christ her Head.

6. Though a plurality of elders is the New Testament norm for every church, the New Testament does not specify the number of elders each church should have, nor does it dictate the length of an elder's term of office. One truly called to this office is usually called to it for life. He is a gift of Christ to the church, and the gifts of God are without repentance. Therefore, only when an elder fails to meet the necessary scriptural qualifications for his office, or fails to be faithful to his calling, and thus no longer has spiritual support of the people of Christ, does he disqualify himself from being an elder. However, there may be circumstances that may cause an elder to remove himself from the office due to such things as moving away from the area.

7. While the call may be for life, it may be prudent for an elder to step down from his responsibilities for providential reasons that are beyond his control (i.e. – personal or family sickness or concerns.. etc.). This temporary leave from the duties of the office would remain as long as the providential circumstances continued to be evident. Under the oversight of his fellow elders, together they would monitor when it seems most prudent for all concerned to resume his duties as an elder in Christ's church. Upon the elder returning to his biblical duties, the people would be advised of that decision and be allowed to respond or ask questions at a pre-announced time. This would be done to protect the integrity of the church and the elder in question.

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Acts 20:17,28; Eph. 4:11-12; Titus 1:5,7; 1 Tim.3:1-7; Titus 1:5-9; Acts 20:28; Hebrews 13:17; (particularly texts like Acts 20:17, 28ff; 1 Peter 5:1-4; Hebrews 13:17; Eph. 4:11; 1 Tim.3:2c; 2 Tim.4:1-2; Hebrews 13:17; Acts 6:2-9; 9:26; 1 Cor.5:4-5, 13; 2 Cor.2:6; Matthew 22:21; Luke 12:13-14; Acts 20:28; 1 Peter 5:3. Romans 13:1-7; Eph. 5:22-6:9; 1 Cor.7:25-28; 35-40; Matthew 18:17; 23:9; 26:31; 2 Cor.11:19-20; Gal. 2:11; Eph. 5:21; 3 John 1,9,10; Acts 20:17,28; Gal. 2:11; 1 Peter 5:1-2; 1 Tim.5:17-18; Hebrews 13:17: note also the Scriptural titles and functions... 1 Tim. 5:17-18; Eph. 4:11; Romans 11:26

## **D. Deacons**

1. The office of deacon, similar to that of elder, can find a description of the function of the office by the name which God has given to it. The office of deacon is to be viewed as one of service given to the church for the good of the saints. Deacons are responsible primarily to assist the saints in their service, coordinate the benevolent concerns of the church and its business affairs. They must fulfill the duties of their office in cooperation with, and in subjection to, the elders.
2. The number of deacons shall not be fixed. The church shall set apart men who have proven themselves faithfully as servants to the church according to the scriptural qualifications for that office.
3. For the length of term of a deacon, see C.6 & 7 under elders above.

## **E. Appointment of Officers**

### **1. General Statement**

The appointment of elders and deacons is the prerogative of the Lord Jesus Christ alone. However, He has ordained that each local church exercise the responsibility of recognizing those whom He is appointing to be elders and deacons in that particular church. Elders and deacons are ordained to office by the laying on of hands by the eldership. This is an expression of approval for which the elders are responsible. Therefore, each officer must have the approval, not only of the church as a whole, but of the eldership. The Lord's appointment of an individual to either of these offices is recognized by means of that individual's possession of those graces and gifts required by Scripture for the particular office, and his own conviction that the Lord is calling him to minister in that office. The recognition of officers is a matter of such importance that it should never be considered without much prayerful waiting upon God, a biblical appraisal from the relevant passages of Scripture, and a sincere evaluation of those who are being considered. Each member of the church has a spiritual responsibility to be intelligently informed regarding these matters.

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Acts 6:1-4

Acts 6:1-7: 1 Tim.3:8-13

1 Tim. 4:14

1 Tim. 5:22

**2. Procedure of Appointment** – The recognition of those whom the Lord has appointed to bear office in this church is executed in three steps: nomination, election, and ordination.

**a. Nomination** – Nominations to either office are made by the eldership. At least once every year at the annual business meeting an advisory ballot shall be taken for use by the elders. On this ballot each voting member may write the name of any male members and the office for which he believes that member to be qualified. After meeting with the particular men named, if any, as given from such an advisory ballot, the elders shall make the official nominations for each office known to the church at an announced stated meeting. Proper time for prayerful consideration before God and His Word and discussions, if needed, with the nominees would properly follow before the stated election. For candidates for the office of elder, a time will be set for church members to submit written questions to be answered by the candidate(s). The candidate(s) will then be given an opportunity to orally answer these questions before the congregation.

If any member has first hand knowledge that would bring to question the qualifications of a nominee, it is their responsibility to speak to that man and/or an elder pertaining to the issue before the stated election. Also, any member who has knowledge that there was unjust consideration given to a nominee(s) has the duty to ask an elder(s) as to the reasons behind the withdrawal of any such name(s) from the advisory ballot. If the man involved and/or others witnessed the un-biblical handling of the nominations of church officers and has not received credible and just reason to support such a decision, a special church business meeting may be called according to Article X, Section B.

**b. Election** – Any church meeting for the election of officers shall be announced on four consecutive Lord's Days previous to its being held. At the stated meeting for the election of officers, the names of all nominees shall be separately voted upon. The scriptural qualifications shall be read by all to prayerfully, once again, consider the qualifications of each nominee. Should there be any reason for public discussion, the person who desires to do so must first speak with an elder of their intent and their reason for such, out of respect for and the reputation of the nominee and the unity of the church. After corporate prayer, a vote will take place by secret ballot. The goal is unity for each nominee but should that not be realized, no fewer than three-fourths of those ballots cast shall be required for election. The vote shall stand as it is first given in the written ballot.

**c. Ordination** – Following the election of an officer there shall be a portion of a regular worship service set aside at which time the officer shall be ordained by the laying on of the hands of the eldership. This solemn act should always be accompanied by the special prayers of the whole church. The laying on of the elders' hands shall signify their public support of an officer-elect. Should an elder(s) be unable to conscientiously ordain an officer-elect, they shall inform each member of their reasons in an appropriate manner.

## **F. Review of Officers**

1. Officers shall hold office only as long as they meet the biblical qualifications for their office in the esteem of the church.

2. There may arise reasons that would require an officer to be reviewed before the regularly scheduled time. Such a review meeting may be called by a majority of the elders (or a majority of the other elders in the case of an elder). The members may also request such a meeting. This request must be set forth in writing with the signatures of one-fourth of the total voting membership of the church stating their biblical and factual warrant for such concern. "It must be presented to the leaders, who shall in a timely and constitutional way (see Paragraph 3 below) call such a meeting.

3. Any meeting for the review of an officer shall be announced on four consecutive Lord's Days previous to its being held. During the discussion, the officer under consideration and members of his immediate family shall leave the presence of the church until the written ballot is taken. The scriptural qualifications shall be read and expounded, and the officer's qualifications openly discussed in the fear of God and with due respect for the reputation of the officer. Just as it is wrong for a church to retain an officer who is not biblically qualified, so also it is rebellion against the head of the church to reject an officer for any but biblical grounds. Additionally, any officer about whom such concerns are raised must be permitted, if he wishes, to return to the meeting and defend himself. The church should seek unity of mind concerning the matter, but should such unity not be fully realized, no fewer than three-fourths of those ballots cast shall be required for the confirmation of an officer in his office. Any officer failing of confirmation no longer holds office in the church. This vote shall take place by written ballot; and the vote shall stand as it is first given in the written ballot.

4. An officer may resign from his office without prejudice if he does so in an orderly fashion and for good and valid reasons. This resignation together with its reasons and the date upon which he wishes his resignation to be effective shall be submitted in writing to the elders of the Church.

## **G. Financial Support of Elders**

1. Though all elders are equal as to the authority of their office, not all elders possess qualifications warranting full financial support in the office. The Bible teaches that special ability in ruling the church and, more especially, in public teaching and preaching are gifts worthy of full financial support. Thus, before it undertakes his financial support, the church must recognize that an elder or nominee to the eldership possesses special ministerial gifts and that he is excelling in the employment of those gifts for the benefit of the church, in ways appropriate to his opportunities. Special caution should be exercised in giving financial support, whether full or partial, to an elder for the following reasons:

- a. full support necessitates his removal from a secular vocation, which, in the interests of Christ's Kingdom and of his family, might be a more advantageous position for him to occupy;
- b. a major portion of the church's financial stewardship is involved, for which its Head will hold it accountable; and
- c. a financially supported elder has a greater influence upon the church, for good or ill. The provisions of this Section apply to any portion of financial support required by an increase of ministry that would hinder an elder's full-time employment in a secular vocation.

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Gal. 6:6; 1 Tim.5:17-18; 1 Cor 9:1-14

2. The elders may recommend to the church that an existing elder or a nominee to the eldership be financially supported.

a. In the case of a nominee, full support may be considered in conjunction with the consideration of his qualifications for the eldership. In such a case, the elders will inform the church of their recommendation when the business meeting for this purpose is announced. A distinct discussion and vote for both election to the office and financial support in the office is not necessarily intended but may be needed so that the mind of the church might be made known.

b. In the case of an existing elder who is being recommended for financial support, whether full or partial, a church meeting to consider this recommendation shall be announced on four consecutive Lord's Days prior to its being held. Such a recommendation may be considered in conjunction with the review of the elder involved. A distinct discussion and vote for both confirmation in the office and financial support in the office is not necessary.

3. During any meeting where financial support is being considered, special attention shall be given to the relevant teaching of Scripture. During the discussion the man under consideration and members of his immediate family shall leave the presence of the church until the written ballot is taken. Such discussion must at all times reflect the fear of God, the claims of truth, and the gravity of the matter. Any vote upon full support requires three-fourths of those ballots cast for approval.

4. The financial support of elders as well as their continuation in office will be subject to review (see Section F). Normally a review of full support will take place in conjunction with the review of an elder's qualification for office, whether at regular intervals or at special review meetings. However, circumstances may arise in which an elder's financial support may need to be reviewed as an issue separate from his continuation in office. In such cases, a review shall follow the applicable procedures outlined in Paragraphs 2 and 3 above. Continuance of financial support shall require three-fourths of the ballots cast.

5. The financial support given to an elder shall be reviewed yearly by the elders. The actual amount of salary and possible benefits shall be at the discretion of the elders in cooperation with the deacons.

**H. Loss of a Plurality of Elders** – This Constitution assumes, and the norms of biblical church order require, that a plurality of elders oversee this local church. Therefore, if at any period in the life of the church, there no longer exists a plurality of elders in office; and this lack cannot in a timely way be supplied, the remaining elder (or the church, if there are no elders) shall seek the temporary oversight of the pastors of a trusted sister church holding as its doctrinal standard (1689 London Baptist Confession). The purposes of such an arrangement are to provide pastoral care for the lone elder and to safeguard the congregation in the recognition of a lack of plurality of elders.

**I. Financial Support for Church Staff Positions** – In seeking to faithfully carry out the commands of Christ for His church, it may be necessary for the church, in its proper administrative functioning, to give financial support to a member who is neither an elder or deacon, nor nominated to such an office, for the purpose of greater aid in the furtherance of the edification of the church. The purposes may Nonetheless, vary in each individual case. according to the discretion of the elders, in cooperation with the deacons as to proper appropriations according to the budget, such cases shall then be presented to the church to gain the needed two-thirds majority vote according to the terms of occasional business meetings (Article X, Section B & C).

## **Article IX -- OFFICIAL BOARD**

In order to "render unto Caesar the things that are Caesar's," this church shall have an official Board of Trustees. The official board shall consist of the resident pastors (elders) as voting members and deacons as non-voting members. In the absence of a resident plurality of elders,

both the eldership and the diaconate must approve any decision relevant to the Board of Trustees. The voting members of this board shall serve as the legal representatives of the church.

## **Article X -- CHURCH MEETINGS**

**A. The Annual Business Meeting** – An annual business meeting of the church shall be held in January or February of each year. At this annual meeting the advisory nominations ballot shall be taken (see Article VIII, Section E, Paragraph 2, a). A report shall be given by the elders which shall contain an account of the membership of the church. The status of those whose membership involves unusual circumstances will be reviewed. A financial report for the previous year and the proposed budget for the coming year shall also be presented. These reports including the proposed budget shall be approved by a vote of the church.

**B. The Occasional Business Meetings** – Church business meetings may be called by the pastors or when one-fourth (1/4) of the voting members make a written request for such a meeting. This request must state the reason for the meeting, be signed by one-fourth (1/4) of the members in good standing, and must be presented to the pastors, who shall in turn make the proper announcement of the meeting. Every meeting at which business is to be transacted shall be announced at regular services for at least two (2) successive Sundays. Any other business meeting at which there is to be no official actions taken by the vote of the members may be called at the discretion of the elders without previous notice.

**C. Voting** – All members, except those suspended by under a form of church discipline, shall constitute the voting membership of the church (Article VI, Section B, Paragraph 3). All voting members should regard their presence at a duly called church meeting with the same seriousness with which they would regard their attendance at a stated service of worship. It shall be our goal to prayerfully discern the mind of God so that in all matters of church business it may be said of us, as it was said of that church business meeting recorded in Acts 6, that this thing "pleased the whole multitude." However, in situations in which this unanimity is not realized, no less than a two-thirds (2/3) majority of those voting will make a resolution valid. In other matters wherein the Constitution requires a different proportionate vote, this two-thirds (2/3) figure will be overridden by the express statements of the Constitution regarding those categories of business. The voting members present at any properly convened meeting of the church shall constitute a quorum for the transaction of business. The elders shall cancel any previously announced business meeting of the church if through an act of God (such as inclement weather) an unusually large proportion of the members of the church cannot be present.

## Article XI -- CONSTITUTIONAL AUTHORITY

**A. Nature** – This Constitution, as with any other non-inspired document, is not infallible. It does, however, reflect an earnest and sincere attempt to apply the Scriptures in the proper ordering the life of this local church. Furthermore, we as members of this church, including the elders, have solemnly committed ourselves to follow this Constitution in ordering the life of this church (see the Preamble). Therefore the demands of the ninth commandment, and the sanctity of truth in general, require that the elders and all of the members of this church abide by our mutual commitment.

### **B. Deficiencies**

Only when we must obey God rather than the provisions of this Constitution may its requirements be disregarded. If at any time a member of this church becomes aware that adherence to this Constitution would violate biblical principle, they should make this known to the elders. If the elders conclude that biblical principle requires disregarding a provision of this Constitution, they are obligated to communicate this together with the reason(s) for their conclusion to the church within one month at a duly called meeting of the church. Furthermore, relevant amendments to this Constitution must be submitted to the church and acted upon in accordance with the provisions of Section C within one year following this informational meeting. The failure of the elders to observe these requirements will constitute a legitimate reason for the calling of a special meeting by the members of the church in accordance with Article X, Section B.

### **C. Amendments**

Amendments to this Constitution may be adopted by three-fourths of those voting at any regular church meeting or at a special meeting called for this purpose provided, in either case, that such proposed amendments shall be distributed in written form to the membership at least four weeks prior to such a meeting.

