

CONSTITUTION  
of  
**PROVIDENCE BIBLE CHURCH**

Culpeper, Virginia

## **Preamble**

Because it has pleased God in His gracious providence to bring forth this new church in the Northern Piedmont of Virginia to uphold the praise of His sovereign grace, the people of Providence Bible Church do ordain and establish this Constitution that all things may be done in a just and orderly manner to God's glory.

## **Article I. Name**

The name of this church is Providence Bible Church; its headquarters is in Culpeper, Virginia.

## **Article II. Purpose and Functions**

Providence Bible Church exists to glorify God through the proclamation, exposition, and application of His Word.

### **To achieve this purpose, we seek to:**

**Equip** believers to appreciate, obey, serve, and worship God more perfectly by instructing them in the truths and applications of sound doctrine, as we teach and preach the whole counsel of biblical truth.

**Exalt** the one true God in truth-centered, Spirit-filled, and joyous corporate worship that offers praise to God and enjoys His presence.

**Evangelize** lost sinners who need to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and submit to His Lordship, as we proclaim the gospel of God's grace, and support missionaries who proclaim that gospel throughout the world.

**Effect**, within God's people, a glad-hearted submission to the authority of God's Word and to the power of God's Spirit.

**Express** our deep dependence on God by nurturing the ongoing practices of individual and corporate prayer, including thanksgiving to Him, supplication for His aid, intercession for other Christians and for the unsaved, and repentance of sin.

**Establish** distinctively Christian homes by helping people to joyfully live out their biblical responsibilities as spouses, parents, children, and/or singles.

**Encourage** warm and caring fellowship and mutual concern among God's people that they may exhort and emulate one another, with compassion and brotherly love, to grow in the knowledge and grace of God.

**Exhibit** a devotion to purity within our local body of believers by the loving application of biblical means for confronting sin.

**Exhort** believers to actively love God through obedience to Him and to love man by serving our brethren and by ministering to physical needs in the community in accordance with biblical principles.

**Exemplify** Godly order through the leadership of a plurality of biblically-qualified elders.

## **Article III. Statement of Faith**

### **The Bible**

**We believe the Bible alone is the verbally inspired Word of God, in whole and in part** (2 Peter 1:20-21; 2 Timothy 3:16). **We believe that the sixty-six canonical books of the Old and New Testaments are without error as originally written, infallible, authoritative, wholly sufficient for faith, life and practice** (2 Timothy 3:15-17; Psalm 19:7-11, 119:9, 11, 104, 105), **and do not change or fade away** (Psalm 119:152, 160; Matthew 5:18; Luke 16:17).

### **God**

**We believe in the one triune God, eternally subsisting as Father, Son and Holy Spirit, equal in power, glory and dignity** (John 14:26; 16:13-15; Acts 2:33). **God is self-existent, infinite, perfect, all-knowing, all-powerful, and He is the sovereign ruler of all. While He is incomprehensible to the human mind, He is knowable to the extent that He has revealed Himself in the written Word (Holy Scripture), the living Word (the Lord Jesus Christ), and in His creation. Other attributes of the triune God include His holiness, His love, His justice, His goodness, and His immutability** (Psalm 135:6; Revelation 4:8; Psalm 90:1-2; James 1:17; Malachi 3:6; Romans 9:15-16; 11:33; 2 Peter 3:9; Psalm 147:5, 9; 1 John 3:18; Psalm 145:1-7; Isaiah 55:8-9; 1 Peter 1:15-16; Ephesians 3:20; Job 36:4, etc.).

**We believe in the Father, who ordains and works all things after the counsel of His will** (Ephesians 1:11). **He is the Father of the Lord Jesus Christ** (Matthew 3:17)

**and of all true believers** (Galatians 3:26). **The Father and the Son are one** (John 10:30) **and the Father is the head of Christ the Son** (1 Corinthians 11:3).

**We believe in Jesus Christ, God's only Son** (John 3:16; 1 John 4:9), **who was virgin-born** (Isaiah 7:14; Luke 1:26-35) **and sinless** (Hebrews 4:15; 1 Peter 2:21-22); **that He is fully God and fully human** (John 1:1, 14; 10:30; Philippians 2:5-8), **who in Himself fulfilled all righteousness before God His Father** (Matthew 3:15), **and bore our sins upon the cross** (1 Peter 2:24), **fully satisfying God's justice for sinners before God** (Romans 3:24-25). **We believe Christ rose bodily from the dead** (John 20:26-27; 1 Corinthians 15:3-9), **ascended to heaven** (Acts 1:9), **presently intercedes for His own** (Romans 8:34; Hebrews 7:25), **sustains all of His creation** (Colossians 1:17), **and one day will return with power and glory to judge the living and the dead** (Acts 17:30-31; 1 Thessalonians 4:16; Revelation 19:19-21).

**We believe in the Holy Spirit, His personhood** (John 16:13-14; 15:26; Acts 13:2) **and deity** (Acts 5:3-4; 1 Corinthians 12:6, 11; Matthew 28:19), **who, sent by the Father and the Son** (John 14:26, 15:26), **came to convict the world of sin** (John 16:8-11), **and to call** (Revelation 22:17), **regenerate** (John 3:3-5), **seal** (Ephesians 1:13, 4:30), **sanctify** (Romans 15:16; 1 Corinthians 6:11), **assure** (Romans 8:16), **guide** (Romans 8:14; John 16:13), **and empower God's children to holy life and fruitful service** (Acts 1:8; Micah 3:8, Ephesians 5:18-19; Galatians 5:16, 22-23).

## Angels

**We believe that angels are created beings and are therefore not to be worshipped. They bring glory to God by serving Him and ministering, under His direction, to His people** (Luke 2:9-14; Hebrews 1:6-7, 14; 2:6-7; Revelation 5:11-14; 19:10; 22:9).

**Satan is a created angel who incurred the judgment of God by rebelling against his Creator** (Isaiah 14:12-17; Ezekiel 28:11-19). **He took numerous angels with him in his fall** (Matthew 25:41; Revelation 12:1-14), **and introduced sin into the human race by his temptation of Eve** (Genesis 3:1-15).

**Satan is the declared enemy of God and man** (Isaiah 14:13-14; Matthew 4:1-11; Revelation 12:9-10). **He is the prince of this world and has been defeated through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ** (Romans 16:20). **He shall be eternally punished in the lake of fire** (Isaiah 14:12-17; Ezekiel 28:11-19; Matthew 25:41; Revelation 20:10).

## Creation

**We believe God created the heavens and earth out of nothing** (Genesis 1:1), **all things seen and unseen** (Colossians 1:15-16), **in a literal six-day period** (Exodus 20:11), **for His glory** (Revelation 4:11; Psalm 147:4; Isaiah 43:7).

## Man

**We believe that God created man in His own image to have dominion over the earth (Genesis 1:26-30), to glorify God (Isaiah 43:7), and to live in fellowship with Him (1 Corinthians 1:9; 1 John 1:3). Man was created free of sin, but Adam and Eve rebelled against God's command. Adam's disobedience brought sin and death upon the entire human race (Romans 5:12, 19). As a result, man is sinful by nature (Psalm 14:3; 51:5; Jeremiah 17:9) and by choice (Romans 3:23; 1 John 1:8-10). Man is able to make choices that are his own and for which he is responsible (Genesis 4:7; Acts 16:31); however, such choices are governed by his nature (John 8:42-44; Ephesians 2:3). Apart from Christ, man is in spiritual darkness (John 12:46), enslaved to sin (Romans 6:16-19), and spiritually dead in his sins (Ephesians 2:1, 5). Man's sinful nature makes him unable to comprehend the things of the Spirit of God (1 Corinthians 2:14), unable to do anything that is pleasing to God (Isaiah 64:6; Romans 8:8, 14:23; Hebrews 11:6), and unable to commend himself to God (John 6:44).**

**We also believe that God is gracious to all of mankind (Psalm 145:8-9). By His grace, God gives physical blessings (Matthew 5:44-45), provides a restraining influence on sin (Genesis 31:7; Romans 2:15; 13:1-4), and gives man an intellectual understanding of His existence (Romans 1:21). Through these means and others, God demonstrates His love, patience, and kindness toward sinners.**

## Salvation

**We believe that salvation is wholly by God's grace (Ephesians 1:7; 2:9-10), through the finished work of Jesus Christ and His substitutionary death (1 Peter 3:18) and resurrection (1 Corinthians 15:3-4). God chose those whom He graciously regenerates, saves, and sanctifies to the praise of His glory (Ephesians 1:4, 6; Colossians 1:12-13). Salvation from sin and spiritual death is found in Christ and Christ alone (Acts 4:12; John 14:6). The blessings of salvation are offered freely to all by the gospel (John 3:16), and it is the responsibility of man to respond to that gospel by repenting of his sin and trusting in Jesus with obedient faith (Romans 10:9-10; John 5:24). We acknowledge that from man's perspective there appears to be a great tension between sovereign election and human responsibility (Romans 9:19-23; John 6:35-37, 44); however, we know that God's ways are higher than ours (Isaiah 55:8-9) and confidently rest in the fact that these matters are settled in His infinite wisdom.**

**We believe that those who are truly born again are kept secure forever in Christ (John 6:39-40; 10:27-29) and are enabled by God to persevere to the end (Philippians 1:6; 1 Thessalonians 5:23-24; 1 Peter 1:5; Jude 24). Those whom God calls, He sanctifies, and these will He also glorify (Romans 8:28-30). This security is a cause for believers to rejoice, but it is not to be regarded as a license for sinful living (Romans 6:1-2; Galatians 5:13). Those who profess faith in Christ, but**

**who later harden their hearts toward Him, show that their faith was not genuine and they were not born of God** (Hebrews 3:14; 1 John 2:19).

## **The Church**

**We believe in the church, the body of Christ** (Ephesians 1:22-23; Colossians 1:18-24). **The church is comprised of all regenerate believers from its beginning at Pentecost until it is taken out of the world by the imminent return of the Lord Jesus Christ** (Acts 2:47; 1 Corinthians 12:13; Galatians 3:26-27; Philippians 3:20; 1 Thessalonians 1:10, 4:16; Titus 2:13; James 5:8-9). **We believe that professing Christians are called to commit themselves to active participation in a local church. Among the primary functions of the local church are worship** (John 4:23; Colossians 3:16), **teaching** (Ephesians 4:11-12, 15-16; 2 Timothy 2:2, 4), **fellowship** (1 Thessalonians 4:18; Hebrews 3:13, 10:25), **and discipline** (Romans 15:1; Galatians 6:1; 1 Thessalonians 5:14; Hebrews 13:7). **These ministries of the local church equip believers to go out into the world to be witnesses unto Christ and to make disciples** (Matthew 28:19-20; Mark 16:15; James 5:20; 1 Peter 3:15).

## **Future Things**

**We believe that Jesus Christ will return in a visible, bodily, and glorious fashion to establish His Messianic kingdom for a thousand years on the earth** (Acts 1:11; Revelation 20:1-7). **We believe in the resurrection of the dead** (John 5:28-29; 1 Corinthians 15:42-44; 1 Thessalonians 4:13-16; Revelation 20:12-13), **and that believers in Christ will enjoy eternal blessedness in His presence in the new heaven and new earth** (John 14:2-3; 2 Corinthians 5:8; Revelation 21:1-7). **Those who are not in Christ, because they remain in sin** (John 8:21-24) **and do not believe and obey the gospel** (2 Thessalonians 1:8), **will justly suffer eternal and conscious torment for their sins** (Matthew 13:41-42; 2 Thessalonians 1:7-9), **apart from the presence of God** (Matthew 7:21-23; Revelation 20:15, 21:8).

## **Article IV. Membership**

### **Section A. Purpose**

In order for Christians to develop fully in their faith, they must be in a fellowship of believers characterized by mutual accountability and submission. To minister effectively, this church must know those persons who have committed themselves to Christ and who desire to live under its ministry. Church members are those persons who are received into and continue in such a relationship with this church in accordance with this Article.

### **Section B. Requirements**

To become a member of this church, one must:

1. Profess faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, give evidence of a new birth (regeneration), and have been baptized after becoming a Christian.
2. Affirm agreement with the membership covenant (Section D) and intent to keep the promises contained in it.
3. Attend this church regularly for at least six (6) consecutive months immediately prior to acceptance into membership.
4. Attend the church membership class, which covers the church's membership covenant, its doctrinal statement, and this constitution.
5. Meet with the elders to discuss his or her relationship with God, as well as his or her relationship to Providence Bible Church.
6. Have his or her name posted for congregational review for three (3) weeks.

### **Section C. Nonmembers**

Subject to the exceptions herein, anyone who calls himself or herself a Christian, or who is inquiring concerning the faith, is welcome to participate in the services of the church or other meetings not otherwise limited to members. Anyone who professes to know the Lord Jesus Christ through spiritual rebirth is also welcome to partake of the Lord's Table. However, those under discipline or any person whose presence is deemed to be detrimental to the church, by its leadership, may be excluded from any service or property of the church. The church is not a public institution and its property is not a public place. The church maintains the right to determine who may and who may not attend meetings or come onto property owned or used by the church.

### **Section D. Membership Covenant**

1. I believe that there is one and only one living and true God eternally existing in Three Persons – Father, Son, and Holy Spirit – as revealed in Holy Scripture.
2. I believe that the books of the Old and New Testaments uniquely constitute Holy Scripture, which are without error as originally written the Word of God and reveal what we should believe and how we should live.
3. I acknowledge that I am a sinner by birth and practice, for which I justly deserve God's condemnation and wrath. I believe that the Lord Jesus Christ died as a substitutionary sacrifice satisfying God's just wrath on behalf of all those who call upon him as Lord and Savior and that He rose bodily from the dead for their justification and assurance of eternal life.
4. I have personally trusted the Lord Jesus Christ as my Lord and my Savior.
5. I have read the constitution of this church, and I pledge, as a member of this church, to share in its public worship of God, to submit to its teachings and government, to

serve the Lord through its ministries according to the gifts God has given me, to attend congregational business meetings, to support this church with financial offerings as the Lord enables, and to work for the well being and unity of the people of this church.

6. I desire to be in a relationship of mutual accountability with my brothers and sisters in Christ. I understand that if I persist in a pattern of unrepentant sin, this church may exercise church discipline for the purpose of restoring me to full fellowship with the body of Christ.
7. I pledge to diligently and personally pursue spiritual growth in the grace and knowledge of God and in that pursuit to use the opportunities that this church provides through the instruction of God's Word, through fellowship, and through the celebration of the ordinances of the Church (baptism and the Lord's Supper). I likewise pledge to raise the children that God places in my care in the faith of Christ and to diligently instruct God's Word to them.

## **Section E. Acceptance into Membership**

An individual who has satisfied the requirements of Section B and whose application for membership has been approved by the elders will be received into membership and will be publicly presented to the congregation at a worship service.

## **Section F. Termination of Membership**

A member in good standing who desires to have his name removed from the membership may do so by submitting a notice to the elders.

A member who willfully, and without plausible reason, absents himself from the services of the church for a period of six (6) months may be removed from membership by the elders, after reasonable attempts to contact the member.

Membership may also be terminated as a result of church discipline (Article VII).

## **Article V. Church Government**

This church is a local, independent, organized assembly of Christian believers who are under the authority of the Lord Jesus Christ and His Word as given in Holy Scripture. Under that authority, the oversight of this church is vested in a body of elders who operate in concert with the deacons and the membership. With the exception of proper submission to the laws of the civil government, this church is, under Christ, a self-governing body that determines its proper understanding of God's will for its worship, doctrine, and fellowship without submission to any external ecclesiastical authority.

## Section A. The Elders

The elders of this church are a group of mature Christian men selected from the church's members who are gifted by God with the disposition, character, and abilities to oversee and shepherd the church. The elders are accountable to God and to the membership.

### 1. Specific functions and responsibilities:

- a. To be well acquainted with the members of the church to help them grow in the knowledge of God's Word and in its application in their lives
- b. To oversee the spiritual growth and welfare of the members of the church
- c. To be examples to the church in appreciating the grace of God toward us in Christ Jesus by living to please God
- d. To lead in the corporate worship of God
- e. To teach the Bible and Christian doctrine
- f. To oversee the church's public instruction of the Bible and Christian doctrine
- g. To uphold the church in prayer
- h. To determine the qualifications of candidates for church membership
- i. To encourage church members in exercising and developing their spiritual gifts
- j. To counsel, exhort, admonish, and individually instruct church members in doctrine and practice
- k. To oversee church discipline by reconciling differences, correcting errors, and, when necessary, dismissing members who persist in ungodly conduct, divisive activities, or propagating serious doctrinal errors
- l. To determine the qualifications and eligibility of candidates for all church offices and staff positions
- m. To hire, supervise, and, if need be, dismiss non-pastoral staff employees
- n. To research and recommend missions and para-church organizations to be supported by the church
- o. To oversee the use of church property and finances
- p. To propose a detailed annual church budget that shall include compensation for current and proposed staffing and an itemized listing of missionaries and missionary organizations that are supported by the church
- q. To oversee the implementation of said budget, including the ability to approve expenditures not listed in the budget or spending that exceeds the budget, assuming such spending does not annually exceed 5% of the total projected annual expenses.

### 2. Qualifications

- a. An elder must be a man who meets the qualifications of 1 Timothy 3:2-7 and Titus 1:5-9 and who is a mature Christian of irreproachable character and able to teach and oversee the people of God.
- b. A candidate for elder must have been a faithful member of this church for at least two (2) consecutive years immediately prior to assuming that office.
- c. A candidate for elder must hold the Bible to be uniquely the inspired, inerrant Word of God and the only infallible reference for doctrine and practice. He should support the Statement of Faith (Article III) as a concise expression of basic Christian doctrine; he must make clear any exceptions he takes to it or reservations he has about it. Minor differences (as judged by the elders) do not necessarily disqualify a candidate; he must agree not to make any differences an issue for contention within the church.

### 3. Term of service, selection, installation

- a. Term of service – The basic term of an elder’s active service shall be three (3) years. An elder may be selected to serve a second consecutive term but must have a sabbatical leave of at least one (1) year’s duration following his second term of service.
- b. Selection
  - i. The membership may nominate elder candidates by submitting the nominee’s name to the Board of Elders at least two (2) months prior to the January, May or September business meetings.
  - ii. The Board of Elders shall review and examine the nominees as to their eligibility and qualifications. This review should include an interview of the candidate’s wife (if married). The names of qualified candidates shall be posted before the congregation at least three (3) weeks prior to the meeting. Members of the congregation shall be urged to prayerfully consider each candidate. Any member who believes that a candidate is not qualified to serve should speak directly to the candidate and give any necessary input to the elders.
  - iii. At least one (1) week prior to the meeting, the candidates shall appear before the congregation to state their reasons for seeking the office, their sense of calling, and their aspirations for the church. Members shall have the opportunity to question the candidates.
  - iv. At a previously announced meeting, the membership shall vote to approve candidates.
- c. Installation – During a regular Sunday morning worship service, the men, who for the first time have been elected elders, shall be ordained to office with the laying on of hands of the elders of the church and a prayer of invocation of God’s blessing.

### 4. Meetings of the Board of Elders

- a. Purpose – to review the church’s condition and to make decisions and recommendations to lead the church
- b. Frequency – at least twice a month
- c. Organization
  - i. Each Board of Elders’ meeting should have an acting chairman to moderate the meeting and an acting secretary to compile minutes of the meetings for posting to the congregation.
  - ii. The elders shall make every effort to reach unanimity in their decision making, but a three-fourths majority will be required.
  - iii. Elder meetings generally will be conducted in private sessions, but individual church members who so request in advance, or are invited by the elders, shall be received for short presentations of items of concern. Any open elders’ meeting should be announced on the preceding Sunday.

## 5. Removal

- a. Grounds – An elder may be removed from office for any of the following reasons:
  - i. Failure to perform adequately the duties of the office
  - ii. Sinful behavior or conduct unbecoming an elder
  - iii. Adoption of serious doctrinal error
- b. Accusations – No accusation against an elder will be acted upon unless there are two witnesses to the alleged wrongdoing or there is irrefutable documentary evidence.
- c. Method – An elder may be temporarily suspended by a unanimous action of the remaining elders. The elders may also make a unanimous request for his resignation. If he fails or refuses to resign, the elders shall recommend his removal from service. The membership may then act to remove him at a congregational meeting. The voting membership may also act to remove an elder without a recommendation from the Board of Elders. If 20% of the voting membership requests, in writing, a congregational vote on the removal of an elder, it shall be scheduled within thirty (30) days.

## Section B. The Pastors

Pastors are elders who serve the church and are financially compensated for their work.

### 1. All pastors

#### a. Responsibilities

- i. In general, the scope of a pastor’s responsibilities include all those that pertain to other elders, but pastors shall have no voting authority on the Board of Elders concerning their own salaries or that of other pastors or church staff.

- ii. The pastors' duties shall emphasize certain areas of giftedness, abilities, and training for which the church calls them to full-time vocational service, for example, in preaching, teaching, counseling, or church music.

b. Qualifications

- i. Character – Pastors must meet the same rigorous requirements of moral character, exemplary conduct, and spiritual maturity required of all elders.
  - ii. Abilities – Pastors must be extraordinarily well qualified by education and/or experience in their area of particular service.
- c. Term of service – The pastors shall serve for an indefinitely long period. Their service will be terminated by resignation, retirement, removal, or abolition of position.
- d. Removal – Pastors may be suspended or removed from office in the same manner as other elders.

2. Pastor-Teacher

a. Responsibilities

- i. He shall be the principal preacher of the Word of God during Sunday morning worship services and shall also preach at other services as determined by the Board of Elders. He shall diligently prepare messages to teach the Scriptures, to encourage believers in their walk with the Lord, to uphold the gospel of grace, to admonish the congregation concerning sin, to call people to repentance, etc.
- ii. He shall encourage the development of pastoral skills among the elders through instruction and leadership.
- iii. He shall be available to counsel members of the church with personal needs, problems, and aspirations in life but shall share this responsibility with other elders/pastors and members as the gifts and abilities of the church are manifested and developed.
- iv. He shall preside at special services, such as weddings, memorial services, and funerals.

b. Particular qualifications

- i. The Pastor-Teacher shall possess a Master of Divinity degree from a conservative theological seminary or have completed a rigorous program of training in theology and pastoral ministries.
- ii. He shall be well versed in original biblical languages (Greek and Hebrew) to aid him in effective teaching.
- iii. He shall be an effective expository preacher having both understanding of the Scriptures and the ability to prepare and deliver a message in a manner that commands the attention of the congregation.
- iv. He shall have an uncommon concern for the spiritual welfare of the people to whom he ministers – a shepherd's heart.

- v. He shall have substantial experience in effective, faithful ministry.

## **Section C. The Deacons**

The deacons of the church are men of earnest Christian character who serve the church by providing physical support to its ministries and meeting physical needs within the congregation. Their faithful service allows the elders to concentrate on spiritual leadership.

1. Responsibilities – Under the direction of the elders, the deacons are specifically responsible for the organization and/or performance of:
  - a. Discovering and responding to various needs among the church members and administering a benevolent fund, as needed
  - b. Maintaining the church building and grounds
  - c. Ushering and welcoming for church services
  - d. Physically supporting worship services and fellowship activities
  - e. Supporting other activities as directed by the elders.
2. Qualifications
  - a. The deacons, like the elders, must be men of upright Christian character. Their specific qualifications are found in the Scriptures in 1 Timothy 3:8-13.
  - b. A candidate for deacon must have been a faithful member of this church for at least one (1) year immediately prior to assuming that office.
  - c. A candidate for deacon must hold the Bible to be uniquely the inspired, inerrant Word of God and the only infallible reference for doctrine and practice. He should support the Statement of Faith (Article III) as a concise expression of basic Christian doctrine. He must make clear any differences he has with it and must agree not to make any differences an issue for contention within the church.
3. Term of service, selection, and installation
  - a. Term of service – The basic term of a deacon's active service shall be three (3) years. A deacon may be selected to serve another term only after a leave from office of at least one (1) year's duration.
  - b. Selection – Deacons shall be nominated, examined, selected, and installed in the same manner as elders.
  - c. Chairman of the deacons – The Board of Elders shall appoint one of the deacons to serve as chairman.
4. Meetings

The deacons shall meet at least once per month to discuss and organize their ministries. The chairman will moderate each meeting. An acting secretary will be chosen to compile the minutes; a copy of the minutes shall be provided to the elders. Decisions will be by majority vote.

## 5. Removal

- a. Grounds – A deacon may be removed from office for any of the following reasons:
  - i. Failure to perform adequately the duties of the office
  - ii. Sinful behavior
  - iii. Adoption of serious doctrinal error
- b. Method – A deacon may be temporarily suspended by a unanimous action of the Board of Elders. The elders may also make a unanimous request for his resignation. If he fails or refuses to resign, the elders shall recommend his removal from service. The membership may then act to remove him at a congregational meeting.

## Section D. The Congregation

### 1. Requirements

For purposes of worship and ministry, the congregation consists of all members of the church who have been received into membership pursuant to Article IV. All members shall be entitled to participate in discussions of church business. However, voting at congregational business meetings shall be restricted to active members in good standing who are at least 18 years of age.

### 2. Responsibilities

The Board of Elders shall bring the following matters to the membership for discussion and for voting. The affirmation of at least three-fourths (75%) of the voting membership present shall be required to approve any of these matters.

- a. Approval of recommended church leadership, including all elders, pastors, and deacons
- b. Removal of an elder, pastor, or deacon
- c. Approval of the annual budget
- d. Approval of the establishment of all non-pastoral staff positions through the adoption of the budget
- e. Approval of the church's financial support of missions, missionaries, and para-church organizations
- f. Approval of incurring any financial debts
- g. Approval of the acquisition or sale of real property
- h. Approval of such other matters as the elders bring before the voting membership

### 3. Congregational meetings

- a. Frequency

There shall be at least three (3) congregational meetings held each year (January, May, and September). Additional meetings of the congregation may be called by the Board of Elders if required for transaction of urgent matters. A meeting will also be scheduled if requested, in writing, by 20% of the voting membership. The elders shall schedule such a meeting within thirty (30) days of the request. All congregational business meetings shall be announced at the morning worship services on the two (2) Sundays preceding the meeting. A congregational meeting may be held with only one (1) week's notice, provided no votes are taken.

b. Agenda

The elders shall publish the agenda for all business meetings at the time such meetings are announced. A member may submit new business to any elder at any time for consideration, evaluation, and prayer. This should be done at least three (3) weeks prior to a business meeting; however, an open forum time shall be included on the agenda of each regularly scheduled business meeting to provide for further congregational input.

c. General procedure

- i. Meetings shall be moderated by an elder, as designated by the Board of Elders. All meetings are to be conducted in an orderly way with all participants demonstrating Christ-likeness in their attitudes and actions.
- ii. The presence of a quorum, being one half (50%) of the membership of the church, shall be determined. Without a quorum, issues may be discussed, but no congregational votes may be taken.
- iii. A report of the general progress, condition, and needs of the church shall be presented by one of the elders.
- iv. Votes to elect or remove elders, deacons, and/or pastors must be by paper ballot, and results shall be announced only on a pass/fail basis.
- v. The church secretary or other designated individual will keep the minutes of the meetings; copies of which will be available to the congregation on the following Sunday.

d. Budget meeting

The congregational business meeting held in January will focus on the adoption of the annual budget, as presented by the elders. The moderator will lead congregational discussion of major items with budget approval by vote on major line items. Other business will be conducted after the budget approval.

## **Article VI. Appointed and Hired Non-Pastoral Staff**

### **Section A. Treasurer**

#### **1. Duties**

- a. Keeps accurate records of church finances, including monies received and expenses, that are available for periodic review and independent audit
  - b. Maintains the church's bank accounts, writing checks for church expenses that must also be signed by a designated elder or deacon
  - c. Deposits the weekly offerings after an elder and a deacon have counted them
  - d. Prepares and presents a monthly financial statement for review by the elders and a statement for distribution and review at each regular congregational meeting
  - e. Supervises anyone who assists with the preceding duties, such as a bookkeeper
2. Qualifications
- a. Must be a member of the church
  - b. Must have accounting skills and knowledge of standard accounting practices
  - c. Must be impeccably honest and discrete, guarding the Lord's property and the privacy of givers
3. Selection

The Board of Elders shall interview interested candidates. The name of the candidate selected by the elders shall be posted for congregational review for three (3) weeks. Without pertinent objections from any church member, the elders shall appoint the candidate to serve.

## **Section B. Other Staff**

1. Establishment, selection and supervision
  - a. The Board of Elders may recommend the establishment of other paid positions, which will be established with the approval of a three-fourths (75%) vote of the voting membership present.
  - b. The elders shall fill such positions using procedures they deem appropriate, including the posting of the names of prospective employees for congregational review. All paid positions should be filled with persons from the congregation, if such are available, willing, and qualified, before anyone is sought from outside.
  - c. The elders shall determine the duties of these positions and supervise all paid employees.
2. Abolition/Termination
  - a. Non-pastoral employees may be dismissed and church staff positions may be abolished by the Board of Elders.
  - b. Staff personnel may be dismissed for any indiscretion, sin, incompetence, negligence, or incompatibility by the Board of Elders.

## **Article VII. Church Discipline**

### **Section A. Purpose**

Church discipline is a biblically-mandated practice that is designed:

1. To glorify God by maintaining purity in the church (1 Corinthians 5:6)
2. To edify believers by deterring sin (1 Timothy 5:20)
3. To promote the spiritual welfare of the offending believer by calling him or her to return to a biblical standard of doctrine and conduct (Galatians 6:1)

### **Section B. Who May Be Disciplined**

Church discipline may be applied to any member or attendee who has been made aware of the expectations of the church covenant.

### **Section C. Grounds for Discipline**

Grounds for discipline will be determined by the elders. In general, it shall be grounds for discipline if a member of the church is involved in conduct that is contrary to the Scriptures and is unrepentant. More particularly, three types of unscriptural conduct shall be disciplined:

1. Teaching of false doctrine
2. Immoral living
3. Divisive conduct within the church

### **Section D. Process of Discipline**

When a member has grievously offended another, or is known by another to be living in sin, or has adopted serious doctrinal error, the following steps should be followed pursuant to Matthew 18:

1. Individual reconciliation – The member who is offended or perceives an error should lovingly approach the other member concerning the matter. The issue should be considered settled if the personal offense has been reconciled, if there has been a misunderstanding and it has been corrected, and/or if the erring member sees his error and repents of it.
2. Small-group correction – If Step 1, above, does not resolve the issue, the offended party should take one or two spiritually mature members with him to discuss the issue. If the offending or erring party accepts the judgment of this small group and responds accordingly, the issue is then settled.
3. Board of Elders intervention – If Step 2, above, fails to bring about reconciliation, the offended party should take the matter to the Board of Elders, who will investigate the matter. The Board of Elders may also take up a matter without being sought out by

an offended party, if the offense is of a public nature or endangers the peace of the church.

While the elders are investigating the matter, some or all of the member's privileges may be revoked until the matter is resolved. The member who is the subject of the discipline shall have the right to appear before the elders and to speak in defense, justification, or repentance. The elders shall judge the matter. The elders may institute discipline as they see fit in each individual circumstance. If the elders find the member without justification, they will ask for repentance. If the member repents, the elders may reinstate all revoked privileges of membership or, at its discretion, may temporarily withhold participation in certain church activities.

If repentance is not forthcoming, the elders shall inform the voting membership in order that the church may call the erring individual to repentance. If the erring individual demonstrates repentance, then notice to that effect may be given to the voting membership. If there is no repentance, discipline is carried to the fourth and last stage.

4. Dismissal – Without repentance and with unanimous approval of the Board of Elders, membership will be revoked from the erring member. The church membership will be informed by the elders at a congregational meeting of the revoked membership. If the leadership of another church requests information concerning this person, it shall be informed of the disciplinary action taken.

Once the process of discipline has formally reached the point of Board of Elders intervention and the Board of Elders has requested a meeting with the erring member, resignation of membership by the erring member or non-cooperation with the Board of Elders, so as to avoid discipline, will be considered as a breach of the Membership Covenant and will lead directly to dismissal by the Board of Elders. The voting membership shall be notified of the dismissal, without details regarding the offense that initiated discipline. If the leadership of another church requests information regarding this person, it shall be informed of the disciplinary action taken.

5. Restoration of dismissed members – If, through God's providence and grace, an individual who has been dismissed from membership later repents of his error and desires to be restored to membership, he may petition the Board of Elders for restoration. After examining the individual concerning his repentance, his faith, and his understanding of the Membership Covenant, the Board of Elders may publicly restore the individual to all the rights, duties, privileges, and responsibilities of membership.

## **Article VIII. Amendments**

This constitution may be amended by the unanimous vote of the Board of Elders and assent of three-fourths (75%) of the voting membership at a congregational meeting.

*Constitution adopted July 17, 2003*

*Amended 9/29/04, 1/26/05, and 5/23/07*

*Reformatted and minor corrections made – 12/15/08*