



**Fair Grove  
Baptist Church**

**Church Documents**



# FAIR GROVE BAPTIST CHURCH CHURCH DOCUMENTS

<b>CHURCH COVENANT</b> .....	<b>1</b>
<b>CHURCH CONSTITUTION</b> .....	<b>3</b>
<b>Preamble</b> .....	<b>3</b>
<b>Article I: Name</b> .....	<b>3</b>
<b>Article II: Purpose</b> .....	<b>3</b>
<b>Article III: Confession of Faith</b> .....	<b>3</b>
Section 1: The Bible, the Word of God .....	3
Section 2: God, the Holy Trinity.....	3
Section 3: Creation and the Fall of Man .....	4
Section 4: God’s Gracious Purpose .....	4
Section 5: The Way of Salvation .....	4
Section 6: The Free Offer of the Gospel.....	5
Section 7: Sanctification .....	5
Section 8: The Perseverance of the Saints .....	5
Section 9: The Church of Christ .....	6
Section 10: Baptism and the Lord’s Supper .....	6
Section 11: The State .....	6
Section 12: The Last Things .....	6
<b>Article IV: Membership</b> .....	<b>7</b>
Section 1: Reception of Members.....	7
Section 2: Termination of Membership .....	7
Section 3: Conduct.....	7
<b>Article V: Church Discipline</b> .....	<b>10</b>
Section 1: Formative Discipline.....	10
Section 2: Corrective Discipline .....	10

<b>Article VI: Church Officers, Committees, and Staff</b> .....	<b>11</b>
Section 1: Church Officers.....	11
Pastors.....	11
Deacons.....	16
Treasurer.....	18
Clerk.....	19
Trustees.....	19
Section 2: Committees.....	20
Section 3: Church Staff.....	20
<b>Article VII: Church Affiliations</b> .....	<b>20</b>
<b>Article VIII: Missions</b> .....	<b>21</b>
Section 1: The Local Church and Missions.....	21
Section 2: Fellowship in Missions.....	21
Section 3: Selection of Missionaries.....	21
Section 4: Support of Missionaries.....	21
<b>Article IX: Church Budget</b> .....	<b>21</b>
<b>Article X: Business Meetings</b> .....	<b>22</b>
Section 1: Notice of Meetings.....	22
Section 2: Number of Meetings.....	22
Section 3: Responsibility for Meetings.....	22
Section 4: Quorum for Meetings.....	22
Section 5: Voting Age.....	22
Section 6: Moderator of Church Meetings.....	22
Section 7: Majority Vote.....	22
Section 8: Rules of Order.....	23
<b>Article XI: Amendments</b> .....	<b>23</b>
<b>Article XII: Matters not Clarified in this Constitution</b> .....	<b>23</b>

## **FAIR GROVE BAPTIST CHURCH CHURCH COVENANT**

Having been led, as we believe, by the Spirit of God to receive the Lord Jesus Christ as our Savior, and on the profession of our faith, having been baptized in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, we do now in the presence of God, the angels, and this assembly, most solemnly and joyfully enter into a Covenant relationship with one another as one Body in Christ.

We engage, therefore, by the aid of the Holy Spirit, to walk together in Christian love; to strive for the advancement of this Church in knowledge, holiness, and comfort; to promote its prosperity and spirituality; to sustain its worship, ordinances, discipline, and doctrines; to contribute cheerfully and regularly to the support of the ministry, the expenses of the Church, the relief of the poor, and the spread of the Gospel throughout all nations.

We also engage to maintain family and private devotion; to educate our children religiously; to seek the salvation of our kindred and acquaintances; to walk circumspectly in the world; to be just in our dealings, faithful in our engagements and exemplary in our deportment; to avoid all tattling, backbiting, and excessive anger; and to be zealous in our efforts to advance the kingdom of our Savior.

We further engage to watch over one another in brotherly love; to remember each other in prayer; to aid each other in sickness and distress; to cultivate Christian sympathy and courtesy of speech; to be slow to take offense, but always for reconciliation, and mindful of the rules of our Savior, to secure this reconciliation without delay.

We, moreover, engage that when we remove from this place we will, as soon as possible, unite with some other Church, where we can carry out the spirit of this Covenant, and the principles of God's Word.



# **FAIR GROVE BAPTIST CHURCH CHURCH CONSTITUTION**

## **PREAMBLE**

We, the members of Fair Grove Baptist Church of Fair Grove, Missouri, do establish and voluntarily submit ourselves to the following articles.

## **ARTICLE I: NAME**

The name of this Church shall be Fair Grove Baptist Church.

## **ARTICLE II: PURPOSE**

The purpose of this Church is to glorify the God of the Bible in promoting His worship, evangelizing sinners, and edifying saints. To this end we are committed to proclaiming God's glorious Gospel of grace in Jesus Christ our Lord throughout the world and to defend the "faith once delivered unto the saints." *Matthew 28:18-20; Jude 3; 1 Timothy 3:15.*

## **ARTICLE III: CONFESSION OF FAITH**

While we are in substantial agreement with many of the Baptist confessions, such as the London, Philadelphia, and New Hampshire confessions, we declare the substance of our faith in the following statements.

### **SECTION 1: THE BIBLE, THE WORD OF GOD**

We believe the Bible, consisting of 66 books (Genesis through Malachi, and Matthew through Revelation), was written by holy men of God who were controlled by the Holy Spirit so that the result of this cooperative work is the inspired and infallible word of God. The Bible is without error in the original manuscripts. The Bible perfectly reveals the will of God and therefore is the basis for Christian unity and the standard by which all conduct, creeds, and opinions should be judged. *Psalms 19:7-14; 2 Timothy 3:15-17; 2 Peter 1:19-21.*

### **SECTION 2: GOD, THE HOLY TRINITY**

We believe that there is one and only one living and true God, who is the infinite, personal, holy and good Spirit, the Creator, Sustainer, Governor, Judge, and Redeemer. He is inexpressibly glorious in all His perfections and worthy of all honor, confidence, and love. In the unity of the one God are three Persons: God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. Each of these three Persons executes a distinct but harmonious office in the work of

redemption. *Matthew 28:19; John 4:24; John 10:30; Romans 11:36; 1 Corinthians 8:4–6; Ephesians 1:3–14; 1 Timothy 1:17; 4:10.*

### **SECTION 3: THE CREATION AND FALL OF MAN**

We believe that God created mankind, male and female, in His own image and in righteousness and holiness, although capable of sinning. By voluntary disobedience man fell from that happy and holy state and as a result all mankind are sinners by nature. From birth all are utterly void of the righteousness required by God and are positively inclined only to evil. Therefore all are under God's righteous condemnation to eternal ruin and without any excuse or hope apart from the love and grace of God. *Genesis 1–3; Romans 3:9–19; 5:12–19; Ephesians 2:1–10.*

### **SECTION 4: GOD'S GRACIOUS PURPOSE**

We believe that God graciously regenerates, justifies, sanctifies, and preserves His chosen ones in time through the Gospel. God's choice is not based on foreseen faith yet is consistent with the free agency of man; it comprehends all the means in connection with the end. God's choice of sinners is a glorious display of His sovereign love and is infinitely gracious, wise, holy, and unchangeable. It excludes all boasting and promotes love, humility, worship, prayer, and trust in God. His sovereign love encourages the sinner to seek God. God's choice may be seen by its effects in all who believe the Gospel, and it is the foundation of Christian assurance. *Matthew 28:18–20; John 17:2; Romans 8:28–29; Ephesians 1:3–14; Colossians 3:12–17; 2 Thessalonians 2:13–14; 2 Timothy 2:10; 2 Peter 1:10–11.*

### **SECTION 5: THE WAY OF SALVATION**

- A. Grace.** We believe that the salvation of sinners is wholly of grace, through the Son of God, Jesus Christ. He is the only Mediator between God and man. In obedience to the Father, He freely took upon Himself our human nature (yet without sin). He honored God's Law by His personal and complete obedience. By His death He atoned for the sins of His people. Having risen from the dead He is now at the Father's right hand where He, as both God and man, intercedes for us. He is in every way qualified to be an all-sufficient Savior. *Romans 4:25; 5:19; 8:3; Galatians 3:13; Ephesians 2:8–10; 1 Timothy 2:4–6; Hebrews 2:9–18; 7:25.*
- B. Regeneration.** We believe that in order to be saved, sinners must be regenerated or born again. Regeneration consists of the impartation of Divine life to the soul, whereby the mind and heart are inclined toward God. It is effected in a manner above our comprehension by the power of the Holy Spirit in connection with the Word of the Gospel, so as to secure our voluntary obedience to the Gospel call. The evidence of regeneration consists in the holy fruit of repentance and faith leading to holiness and newness of life manifested in obedience to God's commandments. *John 1:12–13; 3:1–13; Acts 2:37–47; Ephesians 4:17–24; Titus 3:4–6; James 1:18; 1 Peter 1:22–25; 1 John 2:3–6.*

**C. Repentance and Faith.** We believe that repentance and faith are sacred duties and inseparable graces, wrought in our souls by the regenerating Spirit of God. In repentance and faith we turn to God with sincere contrition, confession, and supplication for mercy, being deeply convinced of our guilt, danger, and helplessness, and of the way of salvation through Christ. At the same time, we heartily receive the Lord Jesus Christ in His mediatorial offices as our Prophet, Priest, and King, relying on Him alone as the only and all-sufficient Savior. *Acts 2:37–38; 11:18; 17:30; Romans 10:9–13; Ephesians 2:8; 1 John 3:23.*

**D. Justification by Grace through Faith.** We believe that the great Gospel blessing, which Christ secures to believers, is Justification. Justification includes the forgiveness of sin and the gift of eternal life on the basis of God's righteousness in Christ. It is bestowed not in consideration of any works of merit which we have done, but solely through faith and on the basis of Christ's obedience and death. By virtue of Christ's obedience and death, God imputes His perfect righteousness to us. Justification brings us into a state of blessed peace and acceptance with God, establishes the basis for God's treatment of us as His children, and secures every other blessing needed for time and eternity. *Romans 3:21–5:21; 8:14–17; 8:31–39; 2 Corinthians 5:21.*

## **SECTION 6: THE FREE OFFER OF THE GOSPEL**

We believe that the blessings of salvation are offered freely to all without distinction. It is the immediate duty of all to accept these blessings by a penitent and obedient faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. Nothing prevents the salvation of any sinner but his or her own inherent depravity and willful rejection of the Gospel. Such rejection aggravates the condemnation of the sinner. *Isaiah 55:1–2; Matthew 11:20–30; 23:37–39; Mark 16:15–16; Acts 17:30; Romans 1:16–17; Hebrews 2:1–4; Revelation 22:17.*

## **SECTION 7: SANCTIFICATION**

We believe that sanctification is the process that, according to the will of God, makes us partakers of His holiness. Sanctification is a definitive work begun at regeneration with a radical change in one's affections toward sin, and a setting apart of the believer to God. We are sanctified in the progressive work of the Holy Spirit in our hearts, in an ongoing separation from sin and a dedication to God through the regular use of the appointed means, especially the study of the Word of God, self-examination, self-denial, prayer, watchfulness, and Christian fellowship. *Lamentations 3:40; Matthew 6:9–13; 26:41; Acts 20:36; Romans 6:1–7:6; Ephesians 4:1–6:20; 2 Peter 1:4–11.*

## **SECTION 8: PERSEVERANCE OF THE SAINTS**

We believe that all those whom the Father has redeemed in His Son and sanctified by His Spirit shall surely persevere unto the end and be saved. Their love for Christ and perseverance in holiness are the grand marks that distinguish them from false professors of the faith. A special providence watches over the welfare of believers and they are kept by the power of God through faith unto final salvation and glory. *Matthew 10:24–33; 13:1–13; 25:1–36; John 6:39–44; 6:66–71; 10:26–29; Romans 8:28–29; 1 Peter 1:3–5; 2:1–12.*

## **SECTION 9: THE CHURCH OF CHRIST**

We believe that the emphasis given to the doctrine of the Church in the New Testament is to local churches, complete in themselves, in various geographical locations, each having its own ordinances, order, and officers. These churches are congregations of baptized believers, associated in the fellowship of the Gospel for worship, ministry, evangelism, instruction, and observance of the ordinances, according to the Word of God. Each church includes the offices of Pastor and Deacon, and its only head is the Lord Jesus Christ. Under the direction of the Holy Spirit, each church is separate from the State, free from human ecclesiastical authorities, and divinely authorized to decide all its internal and external affairs and associations. *Matthew 16:18; John 13:34–35; Acts 2:37–47; 14:23; 18:1–11; Romans 12:4–5; 1 Corinthians 1:2; 12:13; Galatians 1:2; Ephesians 2:11–3:21; 4:1–11; 6:24; Philippians 1:1; 1 Timothy 3:1–15; Hebrews 10:23–25; Revelation 2–3.*

## **SECTION 10: BAPTISM AND THE LORD'S SUPPER**

We believe that Christian baptism is the immersion in water of a believer in the Name of The Father and of The Son and of The Holy Spirit. Baptism shows our faith in the crucified, buried, and risen Savior, with its effect in our death to sin and resurrection to a new life. Baptism is a prerequisite to the privileges of membership in the local church. We believe that the Lord's Supper is a sacred commemorative meal in which believers, by partaking of the bread and of the fruit of the vine, remember and proclaim the dying love of the Lord Jesus Christ until He returns. Participation in the Lord's Supper should always be preceded by solemn self-examination. *Matthew 26:26–29; 28:18–20; Luke 22:17–20; Acts 2:27–41; Romans 6:3–6; 1 Corinthians 11:17–34.*

## **SECTION 11: THE STATE**

We believe that God ordains the civil government for the interests and good order of human society. We are to pray for civil leaders, honor them, and submit to them except in anything opposed to the will of our Lord Jesus Christ as revealed in the Bible. *Acts 5:24–29; Romans 13:1–10; 1 Timothy 2:1–3; 1 Peter 2:13–17.*

## **SECTION 12: THE LAST THINGS**

We believe that at the Last Day the Lord Jesus Christ will descend from heaven and will be visibly manifested as Lord to the whole world. All who have died will be bodily raised. The Lord Jesus will judge and condemn all who do not know God and have not obeyed the Gospel and will condemn them to everlasting torment in hell. The Lord Jesus Christ will glorify His redeemed and receive them into the everlasting joy of His presence. We recognize the existence of differing views and opinions concerning the particulars pertaining to the Lord's return, and further recognize that these matters are widely debated among Christians. Therefore, we do not make adherence to any particular view to be a test for fellowship with, or be necessary for membership in, this Church. *John 6:37–44; Acts 1:11; 1 Thessalonians 4:13–5:11; 2 Thessalonians 1:6–10; 2 Timothy 4:1; Hebrews 9:28; 2 Peter 3:10–14; Revelation 20:11–15; Revelation 21, 22.*

## **ARTICLE IV: MEMBERSHIP**

### **SECTION 1: RECEPTION OF MEMBERS**

Any person desiring to unite with this Church shall make his or her desire known to the Pastor or Deacons. The Pastor shall meet with all applicants who shall be examined as to their conversion, Christian experience, views of Biblical doctrine, and willingness to submit to our Church doctrine and practice. Baptism by immersion is a prerequisite for membership in this Church.

If the applicant has been a member of another church of like faith and practice, our Church shall generally send inquiry or request for a membership transfer before the applicant's acceptance is final.

Upon approval of the applicant by the Pastor, the prospective member shall be presented to the Church Body. A three-fourths vote among the members present is necessary to approve the applicant's request for membership. The names of those who are seeking membership will be posted or announced at least two (2) services before they are voted on.

*Note:* Any objection concerning an applicant's request for membership should be brought to the attention of the Pastor prior to his or her publicly being received into the membership of the Church.

### **SECTION 2: TERMINATION OF MEMBERSHIP**

**A. Letters of Commendation.** Letters of commendation will be granted by the Church after a decision of the congregation for members who request that they be sent to a different church. To receive such a commendation the member must be in good standing and not under discipline at the time of the request. Such letters will be granted only to other churches of like faith and practice.

**B. Exclusion.** If a member is absent [this is generally understood to mean inactive in the regular services for more than three (3) months] from the fellowship of the Church or requests severance of membership for reasons unrelated to matters of Church discipline, he or she may be excluded from the membership of the Church by recommendation of the Pastor and a two-thirds vote of the membership present and voting. The Church may grant exceptions in such instances involving students, missionaries, members of the armed services, or those homebound or hospitalized due to age or infirmity.

### **SECTION 3: CONDUCT OF MEMBERSHIP**

**A. Standard of Conduct.** The standard of conduct for the members of this Church is the Word of God. We are committed to the Scriptures expounded by the Prophets of the Old Testament and by our Lord Jesus Christ and His Apostles in the New Testament. We are further committed to walking in the power of the Holy Spirit, who alone enables the people of God to fulfill His work of progressive sanctification in the believer. *Matthew 5:17-48; John 17:17; Romans 8:4-5; 13:8-10; 2 Timothy 3:15-17.*

- B. Means of Grace.** Unless they are providentially hindered from doing so, it is expected that all members will observe all private and public means of sanctifying grace. Such means are observing the Lord's Day, regularly attending the services of the Church, regularly engaging in systematic reading of Scripture, and regularly engaging in private and family prayer (see the Church Covenant).
- C. Government of the Home.** The Church, in keeping with the Scriptures, expects its members to be subject to God's Word in the government of the home. Men are expected to rule their homes with loving firmness. Husbands must love their wives as Christ loved the Church, and wives must be subject to their husbands in everything not contrary to the Word of God. Parents are to train their children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord by their holy example, consistent education, and firm discipline (which is to be applied in love). Believing children must be taught to obey parents reverently. These responsibilities, prayerfully executed, will bring glory to God in the community and strengthen the cause of Christ in the generations to come. *Ephesians 5:21–6:4.*
- D. Missions and Evangelism.** We believe that the "Great Commission" to evangelize the world was given to the Church by our risen Lord. It is therefore the duty and privilege of every church and every Christian to seek to extend the pure Gospel to the ends of the earth. Therefore, personal efforts in witnessing for Christ by conduct and conversation are expected of every member. We also as a Church are committed to collective efforts with churches of like faith and practice to send the Gospel to the ends of the earth. *Matthew 28:18–20; Acts 1:8; Romans 1:14–16.*
- E. Principles of Giving.** Christians are to support the work of the Lord by offerings (tithes, faith-promise, and offerings) given to their local church. Therefore, we pledge ourselves to a systematic giving of our offerings for the support of this Church and its ministries with a portion of our income according to the principle laid down in God's Word. *1 Corinthians 16:2; 2 Corinthians 8–9.*
- F. Christian Liberty.** Where God in His Word has not prohibited certain practices, the Christian is free to participate in them; however, the term "liberty" is often used as a cloak for malicious self-indulgence, which is sin (*2 Peter 2:15–16*). Therefore, the following Biblical principles are always to guide the believer's exercise of liberty:
- 1. The Fear of God.** As one who lives, moves, and has his being in God, a Christian must act solely from a motive of love to God and must use all objects for His glory. *Psalm 119:6; Acts 17:28; 1 Corinthians 10:31; 1 Timothy 4:4–5.*
  - 2. The Lordship of Christ.** Because all of life is under the Lordship of Christ, the servant of Christ is responsible to direct soberly and deliberately every area of his life toward the establishment of Christ's rule over all areas of life. *Romans 11:1–2; 1 Corinthians 10:23, 31; 2 Corinthians 5:19–10; Ephesians 5:8; 5:15–17; 1 Peter 1:13–15.*

3. **Love of the Brethren.** Although no man may dictate to the Christian's conscience, the welfare of our fellow saints must always affect our actions. In a spirit of loving service to our brothers and sisters in Christ, we should do only those things that will edify the saints. *Romans 12:9–10; 15:1–2; 1 Corinthians 10:23–24; 13:1–13; Galatians 5:13; Ephesians 4:15–16; 1 John 4:7–5:2.*
  4. **Compassion for Lost Sinners.** Use of liberty must always be regulated by its effect upon sinners. The choices that we make should be those that would most likely win them to Christ. *1 Corinthians 9:19–22.*
  5. **Watchfulness over Our Soul.** Although the believer is free in conscience to use all of God's creation, he must exercise carefulness in practice. Where the believer judges himself weak because of indwelling sin, he or she must abstain in order to assure his or her perseverance. *Romans 13:11–14; 1 Corinthians 9:23–37; 16:13; 1 Peter 2:11.*
- G. Soul Liberty.** God alone is Lord of the conscience and has not bound it to the teachings and commandments of men which are contrary to His Word or not explicitly revealed in His Word. To believe or obey such teachings for conscience sake is to betray the freedom that is in Christ. Requiring an implicit faith or blind obedience destroys reason and liberty of conscience. *Galatians 5:1–13.*
- H. The Church and "Contemporary Concerns."** We believe that the Gospel requires the Church in every period of human history to testify against the forms of ungodliness and unrighteousness peculiar to their time. *Romans 1:18–32; Ephesians 5:11–13.*

Of the many forms of disobedience to God's Word practiced in our day, we would single out the following as requiring special attention:

1. **Abortion and Euthanasia.** Because we regard life from its inception in the womb to its termination at death to be the special gift of God, we reject the current attitude toward the unborn and the aging and/or dying manifested in the promotion and practice of abortion and euthanasia ("mercy-killing") as being violations of God's Law. *Exodus 21:22–24; Job 7:1; 14:5; Luke 1:26–56.*
2. **Alcohol and Drug Abuse.** We regard the use of mind-altering drugs and the abuse of alcohol to be contrary to the sobriety and soundness of mind to which we are called by the Gospel. Furthermore, we testify against the sinful abuse of these things which has led to the violence, domestic disruption, and death so current in our society. *1 Corinthians 6:9–12; Galatians 5:17–26.*
3. **Materialism.** We regard wealth and the power to achieve it to be gifts of God and power for God in both Church and society. However, we testify against the predominant, blatant lust for wealth as being idolatrous and destructive. We assert that Christians are to live without covetousness in simplicity, contentment, and generosity in this present evil age. *Matthew 6:19–34; 1 Timothy 6:17–19; 1 John 2:15–17.*

- 4. Sexual Debasement.** We affirm the divine intention for the expression of man's sexuality to be within the covenant of marriage between one man and one woman. We testify therefore against the debasement of human sexuality inherent in our current society, demonstrated in sexual promiscuity, homosexuality, pornography, and unlawful divorce as being violation of human beings and of God's Law. *Matthew 5:31–3; 19:3–9; Romans 1:24–32; 1 Corinthians 6:9–12.*

## **ARTICLE V: CHURCH DISCIPLINE**

### **SECTION 1: FORMATIVE DISCIPLINE**

The preferred method of discipline is formative discipline. This is accomplished when each member of the Church “forms or shapes” one another through the proper use of their spiritual gifts and the sanctifying influences that all members (young and old) have upon each other within the local Church. If *1 Corinthians 12:12–27* be well understood and every member is satisfied with his or her God-appointed place, we shall all “grow in grace and in the knowledge of our God and Savior Jesus Christ” (*1 Peter 3:18*). *1 Thessalonians 5:14; Hebrews 3:13–13.*

### **SECTION 2: CORRECTIVE DISCIPLINE**

Corrective discipline is necessary because of conduct or doctrine that is contrary to Biblical standards. No offenses shall be brought before the Church until the instructions of the Lord Jesus Christ have been followed as outlined in *Matthew 5:23–24; 18:15–16*. Corrective discipline always aims for the glory of God, the welfare and purity of the local Church, and the restoration and spiritual growth of the offender.

- A. Suspension.** There are occasions when a member's slackness in the performance of duty, disorderliness, and departure from the traditions and instructions of the Word of God require corrective discipline, but of a less severe nature than excommunication (*2 Thessalonians 3:6, 11, 14–15*). Nevertheless, serious offenses may not be overlooked altogether lest God's enemies multiply their blasphemies, other saints be emboldened to sin, and the offender be harmed by a failure to test his or her own soul and appreciate the gravity of his or her offense. Therefore, if a member's disorderliness requires discipline, the Church may suspend the offender from the Church membership and publicly rebuke the offender through the words of exhortation from the Pastor. This public rebuke will take place at a duly-called congregational meeting. This form of corrective discipline will be determined by a two-thirds majority vote of members present and voting at a meeting prior to the public rebuke.
- B. Excommunication.** The more severe form of corrective discipline is that of excommunication. It is right and in harmony with the Scriptures for the congregation to exclude from the fellowship any member who persistently holds false and heretical doctrine, is unwilling to settle differences in a Scriptural manner, or openly and persistently lives inconsistently with the Christian profession, or lives in violation of the law of public morals, or persistently disturbs the peace and harmony of this

Church. This discipline may occur when suspension fails to secure the offender's repentance, or it may be enacted without prior corrective steps if the offense is of a sufficiently serious nature.

The following steps are to be followed before the Pastor may bring a potential disciplinary action before the Church Body:

A disciplinary meeting will be announced to the Church at least one (1) week before the congregation meets to consider the vote to excommunicate one of its members. The Pastor will preside over this meeting unless he is the one in question or the Church is presently without a Pastor, in which cases, the Deacons will choose one of their members to moderate the meeting.

If the Church decides to excommunicate the member in question, then a period of time will follow the meeting, and another meeting will be set in which the vote itself will be taken.

All the details concerning the sin of the member in question need not be shared with the entire Church Body due to the nature of some sins and the repercussions of sharing them in public.

If the member in question is excommunicated, a formal letter shall be signed by the Pastor and Deacons and sent to the excluded member. The Church is required to deal subsequently with excommunicated individuals according to *Matthew 18:17* and *1 Corinthians 5:1-13*.

**Note:** If the Pastor is the member who is being disciplined, then *1 Timothy 5:1, 19-20* should also be considered.

- C. Restoration.** The Church must restore fellowship and full forgiveness to those who show satisfactory evidence of repentance (*2 Corinthians 2:6-8*). These shall be restored at a duly-called congregational meeting upon recommendation of the Pastor and Deacons. A two-thirds majority of the members present and voting is required for restoration to be complete.

## **ARTICLE VI: CHURCH OFFICERS, COMMITTEES, AND STAFF**

### **SECTION 1: CHURCH OFFICERS**

The two Scriptural offices that shall assume the oversight and care of this Body are Pastors (also referred to as Elders and Bishops) and Deacons. All other offices, whether elected or appointed, will be under the oversight of the Scriptural offices of this Church. *1 Timothy 3:1-13; Philippians 1:1*.

#### **A. Pastors.**

- 1. Qualifications.** A man whose life is in harmony with the qualification set down in *1 Timothy 3:1-7* and *Titus 1:5-9* may be chosen by the Church Body to serve as Pastor. Pastors shall be men in full communion with the Church, of mature judgment, of unquestioned Christian character, loyal to the Word of God, able to teach sound doctrine, and devoted to the Lord Jesus Christ. Only those who will

conscientiously uphold the Confession of Faith and the Constitution and by-laws of this Church shall be chosen.

- 2. Duties.** It is the duty of the Pastor to oversee the general spiritual welfare of the Church through faithful preaching and teaching of the Word, and personal attendance to the members of the Church. He shall have the general oversight of all Church matters including the administration of the Church ordinances of Baptism and The Lord's Supper. He is also responsible for leading the Church in matters of Church discipline. He shall oversee the work of the Deacons and may, if necessary, call upon the Deacons to assist him in appropriate ministries. *Acts 6:1–6; 20:38; 1 Thessalonians 5:12–13; Titus 1:5; 2:15; Hebrews 13:7, 17; 1 Peter 5:1–4.*

Because the responsibilities of the Pastor are both numerous and grave, it is highly desirable that at least one Pastor (where plurality exists) should be chosen to devote himself to the work of the ministry and the oversight of the Church full-time. While the evidence in the New Testament points to a plurality of pastoral leadership in a local church, this plurality is neither necessary for a local church to be a church, nor does it mean that all Pastors are equal in their work or position in the church. It does, however, establish a basis for distribution of authority and responsibility among the Pastors for the welfare of God's people. *Acts 14:23; Philippians 1:1; 1 Timothy 5:17; Titus 1:5.*

Whenever possible, this man should be adequately trained, skilled in public preaching, and thoroughly prepared to engage in this work of ministry as a livelihood. *1 Timothy 4:15; 5:17; 2 Timothy 2:4.*

This man shall function as the appointed Senior Pastor who, along with the other Pastors, shall lead the Church through the careful application of the Word of God in all matters. Foremost among his duties shall be the public and private instruction of the Word in order that the saints might be fully equipped and mature. *Acts 20:20; Ephesians 4:11–12.*

It shall be the duty of the Pastor (or Pastors, when applicable) to supply the pulpit with men whose ministry is consistent with our doctrine and able to edify the saints. This officer is also responsible for the receiving, consideration, and resolution of all grievances, suggestions, or recommendations from any member or minister of the Church. This man, although not superior to the other elected Pastors in authority, is recognized as the principal leader by virtue of the heaviest burden that he bears both publicly and privately in proportion to his preaching and teaching ministry.

- 3. Financial Care of the Pastor.** It is the Biblical responsibility of the local church to relieve the Pastor of personal financial concerns whenever possible. If the finances of the Church are not adequate to relieve the Pastor of personal financial concerns, then it should be the commitment of the Church Body to do all that they can do in an effort to provide his material needs.
- 4. The Pastor's Resignation.** We recognize that God is the "Builder and Keeper" of His Church and that Pastors are servants who labor under His oversight. Therefore the Lord of the Church may redirect His servants away from one ministry into another requiring the Pastor to resign.

There may also be times when health and/or age can hinder a Pastor's effectiveness, and in these situations a resignation would be appropriate.

If a Pastor would choose to step away from public ministry for a season in order to refocus on an area of his life and/or his family, the Pastor would be required to resign.

In order to ensure that the Church has time to prepare for a Pastor's resignation, it will be his responsibility to notify the Church at least thirty (30) days before he steps down from his office. The Church will be responsible to provide four (4) weeks of severance pay for the Pastor and his family.

**Note:** This severance pay will be sent to him on a weekly basis for four (4) weeks unless another ministry supports him. The Church will not be responsible to complete the four-week commitment if he is being supported from another source. It is his responsibility to inform the Church when his new support begins. This pertains to the Senior Pastor only. However, the severance pay of any other Pastor on the Church staff will be determined by the Senior Pastor and Deacons of the Church.

- 5. Replacing the Pastor.** **Note:** This is in reference to the Senior Pastor of the Church only. When a Pastor is being replaced (regardless of the reason), the following steps will be used as a guideline for calling a new Pastor.
- a.** The Church will elect a "Pulpit Committee" as soon as possible which will consist of all Church officers (Pastor, Deacons, Treasurer, Clerk) and at least three (3) members not presently holding one of the mentioned offices of the Church. Those members who are elected by the Church Body to serve on this committee can be either male or female members who are in good standing, that is, endeavoring to live their lives in harmony with our Church Covenant and in substantial agreement with our Confession of Faith. Those who are nominated must be confirmed by a two-thirds vote of those members who are present.
  - b.** It will be the responsibility of the Pulpit Committee to meet as soon as possible in order to elect a Chairman for their committee. It will be the Chairman's responsibility to collect names of possible candidates for the position of Senior Pastor. Names may be submitted by other members of the committee, Church members, or other Pastors who are of like faith. All names that have been submitted must receive a majority vote from the committee before they are to be considered as a possible candidate.

The process for determining candidates should include the following: (1) a completed application or résumé, (2) references, and (3) an interview with the committee. These steps should be completed before a man is invited to candidate for the position of Pastor.

**Note:** When distance is a problem, a conference call should be set up with the candidate and the committee. It is desirable that all committee members be present for this interview. However, because this is not always achievable, it is recommended that each interview be recorded for those who may not be able to attend and for future reference.

It is recommended that this initial process should not exceed three (3) months. The committee must act not only prudently but also quickly in establishing a priority list among those who are being considered as candidates.

**Note:** The committee must avoid artificial requirements not established by the Scriptures.

- c. The Chairman of the committee is then responsible to contact the candidate who has been placed at the top of the list by the vote of the committee. If this candidate declines for whatever reason, the Chairman will continue to contact the candidates according to the priority list that was established by the committee.

**Example:** If the second ranking candidate on the list declines, then the Chairman will contact the third ranking candidate and will continue this process until he finds a man who is interested in candidating for the position of Pastor.

- d. After a candidate has accepted an invitation to preach to the Church, the Chairman will immediately mail a copy of all Church documents to the candidate for review. Any disagreements should be discussed before the candidate is invited to preach to the Church. The committee must determine if a disagreement concerning the Church Covenant, Confession of Faith, or the Church Constitution would disqualify a potential candidate.
- e. The committee should be thoroughly prepared to ask questions concerning the candidate's views on
  - public ministry of the Word
  - shepherding the flock
  - study habits
  - views on counseling
  - visitation
  - the role of the Pastor's family in the Church

The committee should not hesitate to inquire into the candidate's past if something appears to be questionable. All questions or concerns should be resolved before a candidate is invited to preach to the Church.

- f. The Chairman should make arrangements with the candidate to spend an entire Sunday with the Church and to preach at least twice. It is also recommended that the candidate make himself available to the committee for more discussion during the day, if necessary. It is also recommended that the Church provide a time of fellowship after the evening services to allow the members to interact with the candidate and his wife.
- g. The committee should choose one of its members to make sure that all necessary arrangements are made for the candidate and his wife during their visit to the Church.

- h.** Voting on the candidate should take place the following Sunday evening. The announcement concerning the vote should be made the Sunday morning that the candidate is scheduled to preach. It is recommended that the Chairman contact the candidate before the vote, to make sure the candidate is still interested in becoming the Pastor of the Church. If any questions remain on the part of the committee, the Church, or the candidate, then a delay for a vote would be appropriate until the matter can be quickly resolved.

*Note:* It is strongly recommended that one candidate be voted on before another candidate is invited to preach.

- i.** Between candidates, the Chairman is responsible for keeping the pulpit filled with capable ministers of the Word to ensure that the Body does not needlessly suffer during the process of selecting a new Pastor.

**6. The Removal of a Pastor.** Because of the viciousness of Satan's attacks upon this office, it is crucial for the members of the Church, as well as all officers, to endeavor to protect this man's life and calling. Frivolous and unsubstantiated complaints should not be tolerated, and those who bring them should be openly rebuked (*1 Timothy 5:1, 19–20*).

If there is a serious question regarding the Pastor's qualifications (*1 Timothy 3:1–7; Titus 1:6–9*) and the Scriptural teachings of *Matthew 18:15–20* have been followed, then the congregation may make a recommendation to remove a Pastor from his office.

Before this congregational meeting takes place, all the officers of the Church must meet for the purpose of determining whether or not the accusations have been searched out thoroughly and proven to be true. The Chairman of the Deacons will act as the moderator of this and all subsequent meetings, until the matter is resolved. It will require a two-thirds vote among the officers before this matter is brought before the congregation. The Chairman of the Deacons will announce to the congregation the date and general purpose of the meeting in at least two (2) services before the meeting takes place. The decision to remove a Pastor from any or all of his duties temporarily until the matter is resolved will be decided by a two-thirds vote among the officers of the Church.

The Pastor should be present to answer any questions regarding his fitness for the office.

Once the matter has been thoroughly dealt with, the Church must then decide if the issues that have been discussed necessitate his resignation. In order to release a Pastor from his position, a two-thirds vote of the members who are present is required.

If the members believe that the Pastor has already dealt with this matter, and that the nature of the failure does not require him to resign, the members may also vote to retain him as their Pastor, by a two-thirds vote.

*Note:* If the Pastor is released from his duties, his severance pay will follow the same guidelines that are mentioned in part 4 of this Section.

## **B. Deacons.**

### **1. Qualifications.**

- a.** Deacons must be men whose lives are in harmony with the standard established by the Scriptures. *Acts 6:3; 1 Timothy 3:18–13.*
- b.** They must be members living consistently with the Church Covenant and in substantial agreement with our Confession of Faith.
- c.** They must be members who have been in good standing in this ministry for at least one (1) full year.

### **2. Duties.** It will be the duty of the Deacons to assist the Pastor by having oversight of the physical and practical needs of the Church Body. This will include both the individual members of the Church as well as the practical care of the Church as a whole. Their duties may include the following:

- a.** Serving individuals who have financial and/or physical needs.
- b.** Assisting the Pastor by taking the oversight of various committees such as:
  - the maintenance committee, which would be responsible for the care of the physical property of the Church
  - the finance committee
  - the usher committee
  - the planning committee
- c.** Keeping the Pastor informed of all matters involving these committees.

*Note:* If any problem were to develop within a committee or between the Deacons and a committee, they must immediately inform the Pastor and seek his counsel.

### **3. Nominations.** During the last quarter of each year, the congregation may submit nominations for this office to the Pastor and Deacons. The Pastor and Deacons will review these nominations before any recommendation is made to the congregation. All nominations will be handled in the following manner:

- a.** All nominations must be received for consideration no later than September 30 of that year.
- b.** It is the responsibility of the Pastor and Deacons to determine if the nominee is qualified for the office. All nominees must receive a two-thirds vote from the Pastor and Deacons.
- c.** All candidates (those who have received a two-thirds vote in favor of their appointment) must be interviewed by the Pastor and Deacons to further determine their interest and readiness for the office.

- d. All candidates who have been interviewed must again receive a two-thirds vote before they are to be voted on by the congregation at the annual meeting.
  - e. All names of candidates who are to be voted on must be posted at least thirty (30) days prior to the annual meeting. Any concerns or objections should be made during this time to the Pastor or Deacons.
4. **Term (Length) of Service.** We do not believe that those who are elected to this office should be limited to a term of service as long as a man is qualified, remains committed to the duties required of him, and is willing to continue his service. Then his service will continue uninterrupted.
5. **Termination of Service.** A Deacon may be required to step down from his position of serving for several reasons:
- a. His job may relocate him.
  - b. His health may restrict his abilities to function effectively.
  - c. Personal decline in his life spiritually.

*Note:* If a Deacon is asked to resign, a two-thirds vote of the officers (Pastor and Deacons) is required. When a Deacon resigns from his office for whatever reason, he will submit a letter of resignation to the Church. This letter will be read at a congregational meeting by the Pastor, or if he chooses, the Chairman of the Deacons. This letter should be signed, dated, and filed by the Church Clerk.

6. **The Chairman of the Deacons.** The Chairman of the Deacons will be determined by the voting of the Pastor and Deacons. Nominations will be submitted, and a secret ballot will be used to determine the Chairman. His term will be for two (2) years, and he is eligible for being reelected. His duties will include the following:
- Direct all business meetings of the Deacons
  - Keep accountability over assigned work
  - Make sure that the board provides an accurate record of their funds (income and expenses)
  - Keep the Pastor informed

*Note:* Since the Pastor has the oversight of the Body, he should attend the Deacons' meetings and has the right at any time to assume the chair of any meeting, if necessary.

7. **Deacons' Funds.** The source for these funds used to maintain their work may include the following:
- Budgeted money from the general offerings
  - Sunday evening offerings
  - Gifts

The use of these funds will be determined by a two-thirds vote of the Deacons. The funds should be used for needs that exist in the lives of our Church family first, but may also be used for the needs of those who live in our community.

**C. Treasurer.** This officer is not to be equated with Scriptural officers (Pastors and Deacons) of the Church. However, because of the necessity for recording all contributions and expenditures, this officer is to be viewed as a necessary servant to the Church Body.

It is best if this officer comes from those men who serve as Deacons in the Church. Knowing that Deacons serve the needs of the Body, it seems appropriate that their service would include the responsibilities of this office as well. However, if there is not a man among the Deacons who can effectively keep the books and accurate records for the Church, then it would be appropriate for the Pastor and Deacons to appoint a man who possesses the knowledge of keeping financial records.

### **1. Qualifications.**

- a.** This man should be living consistently with the Church Covenant and in substantial agreement with our Confession of Faith.
- b.** It is necessary that he has been a member in good standing for at least one (1) full year.

**2. Nomination and Appointment of the Treasurer.** He will be elected by a majority vote of the Pastor and Deacons before the annual budget meeting. This appointment is not voted on by the congregation. His term will be for two (2) years and is renewable through the same process.

### **3. Duties.**

- a.** Record all donations that are made to the Church.
- b.** Provide an annual summary of all donations made by each member for his or her own records.
- c.** Provide a quarterly report for the Pastor and Deacons and an annual report for the annual Church budget meeting.
- d.** To pay all Church bills, salaries, or expenditures in a timely manner.

**Note:** The Pastor and Deacons will determine the signatures on all checks.

**D. Clerk.** This office, like that of Treasurer, is appointed to assist the leadership of the Church in keeping accurate records during all business meetings of the Church.

**1. Qualifications.**

- a. This individual (male or female) should be living an exemplary life as stated in our Church Covenant. He or she should also be in substantial agreement with our Confession of Faith.
- b. He or she must have been a member in good standing for at least one (1) year. It is recommended, although not required, that the Deacons' wives be considered for this ministry to the Church.

**2. Nomination and Appointment of the Clerk.** He or she will be elected by a majority vote of the Pastor and Deacons before the annual budget meeting. This appointment is not voted on by the congregation. His or her term will be for two (2) years and is renewable through the same process.

**3. Duties.**

- a. Keep an accurate record of the proceedings of the Church at all business meetings.
- b. Keep a complete registry of membership.
- c. Issue letters of dismissal and write for the letters of new members coming into the Church.
- d. Conduct all official correspondence and preserve all documents, papers, and letters coming into his or her hands during his or her term of office.

**E. Trustees.** This Church shall have an official Board of Trustees for legal purposes only. They will consist of all Church officers (Pastor and Deacons) along with the Church Treasurer and at least two (2) other men from the congregation.

**1. Qualifications.** These other men will meet the qualifications outlined for all appointed officers (see the qualifications for Treasurer, Article VI, Section 1C, Part 1, paragraphs a and b).

**2. Appointment.** Any Church officer (Pastor, Deacon, Treasurer, and Clerk) automatically becomes a member of the Board of Trustees. The other two are appointed by a majority vote of the existing officers.

**3. Duties.** The Trustees will be responsible for researching and discussing all matters related to the purchasing and selling of property. They will present their findings and make recommendations to the congregation.

*Note:* Only the congregation can determine to purchase, sell, or build property that exceeds \$1,000.

## SECTION 2: COMMITTEES

- A. Purpose.** Committees will be formed in order to provide a more effective ministry for the Church Body. The Pastor and Deacons will be responsible for defining the function of each committee in writing.
- B. Appointment.** All committee members, including the head of each committee, will come by appointment of the Pastor and Deacons. This appointment will be for a term of two (2) years, which is renewable.
- C. Qualifications.** See the qualifications for the Treasurer (Article VI, Section 1C, Part 1, paragraph a).

## SECTION 3: CHURCH STAFF

Church staff includes anyone who receives financial support (full-time or part-time) from this Church Body.

- A. Qualifications.** It will be the responsibility of the Pastor and Deacons to find (whether from inside or outside the Church) the person who is best suited for the job and who also demonstrates spiritual qualities that are necessary for serving the area of need.

*Note:* If they come from outside the Church, a letter of recommendation from their former Pastor will be required. If they are raised up from within the Church, then they must fit the qualifications mentioned under Treasurer (see Article VI, Section 1C, Part 1, paragraphs a and b).

- B. Appointment and Oversight.**

1. The commitment of the Church is required (i.e., a two-thirds vote approving the decision) before a search begins in an effort to fill the present need.
2. All staff members will be chosen by the Pastor and confirmed by a majority vote of the Deacons.

## ARTICLE VII: CHURCH AFFILIATIONS

When it is thought desirable to have fellowship, consultation, and cooperation with local churches of like faith and order, this Church may join an affiliation of churches. Upon recommendation by the Pastor, such affiliations may be entered into by a two-thirds vote of the congregation. Withdrawals from such associations may be effected by the same procedures.

## **ARTICLE VIII: MISSIONS**

(See Article IV, Section 3D.)

### **SECTION 1: THE LOCAL CHURCH AND MISSIONS**

We believe that the evangelization of the world is accomplished through the outreach ministry of the local church. *Matthew 28:18–20; Acts 1:4–8.*

### **SECTION 2: FELLOWSHIP IN MISSIONS**

In order to accomplish our task more effectively, we willingly participate with other churches of like faith and practice.

We presently use the services of the Baptist Bible Fellowship Missions Office, which provides for us many valuable services that aid us in our effort of sending and supporting missionaries.

### **SECTION 3: SELECTION OF MISSIONARIES**

Selection of missionaries is primarily handled by the Pastor of this Church. It is his responsibility to contact and bring missionaries into the Church so that they can present their field for consideration.

### **SECTION 4: SUPPORT OF MISSIONARIES**

Before a new missionary can be added to the list of those this Church supports, a two-thirds congregational vote of approval is required.

The increase of missionary support must come from a recommendation from the Pastor and Deacons, and must be followed by a two-thirds vote of approval by the congregation.

## **ARTICLE IX: CHURCH BUDGET**

The work of this Church is financially dependent upon the voluntary gifts of God's people. Before the annual congregational meeting, the Pastor with the assistance of the Deacons and the Church Treasurer, shall estimate the needs of the several divisions of the Church and prepare a budget with itemized expenditures for the coming year. This proposed budget should be submitted to the gathered Church at the annual business meeting. If approved by a two-thirds vote of the congregation, it shall be the basis for financial action during the new Church year. No committee or organization within the Church is authorized to make changes in its provisions or to make unauthorized disbursements without the consent of the Church officers. No single expenditure shall exceed \$500 without congregational approval, unless previously provided for by the adopted annual budget.

## **ARTICLE X: BUSINESS MEETINGS**

In order to participate in the meetings of this Church, a member must be in regular attendance (at least half of the regular services of each month). Members must also be regular in their financial contributions. Living consistently with the Church Covenant is the standard for participation. This qualification would be subject to reevaluation when there are health issues or schooling, vacation, military, or business commitments.

### **SECTION 1: NOTICE OF MEETINGS**

Notice of all congregational meetings shall be given at the regular worship services of the Lord's Day at least one (1) week prior to the meeting.

### **SECTION 2: NUMBER OF MEETINGS**

The annual congregational meeting shall be held on the fourth Sunday in January for the election of leaders and the adoption of the annual budget. Any other necessary business shall be considered as well.

### **SECTION 3: RESPONSIBILITY FOR MEETINGS**

The officers of the Church shall see to it that all possible preparations are made for the successful conduct of each congregational meeting.

### **SECTION 4: QUORUM FOR MEETINGS**

The quorum for any congregational meeting in which business is transacted is one-third of the active, voting membership.

### **SECTION 5: VOTING AGE**

Any member of the Church eighteen (18) years of age or over who is in good standing shall have the privilege of voting on any question properly brought before the congregation.

### **SECTION 6: MODERATOR OF CHURCH MEETINGS**

The Pastor, or a Deacon chosen by the Pastor, shall moderate the congregational meetings. If this fails to produce a moderator for a properly called meeting, then the congregation may choose a moderator for the meeting in question pro tempore.

### **SECTION 7: MAJORITY VOTE**

A simple majority of those attending the meeting is necessary for passing any motion unless otherwise stated in this Constitution.

## **SECTION 8: RULES OF ORDER**

*Robert's Rules of Order* shall be a general guide in order to aid in the decorum and direction of business procedure.

## **ARTICLE XI: AMENDMENTS**

Amendments to the Constitution or Confession of Faith may be adopted by a two-thirds vote of the members present and voting at a duly-called congregational meeting, provided that amendments have been distributed by the Church officers in written form at least two (2) weeks prior to the congregational meeting.

## **ARTICLE XII: MATTERS NOT CLARIFIED IN THIS CONSTITUTION**

All questions relating to Church function and order that are not clarified in these documents should be directed to the Pastor. It will be the Pastor's responsibility to give definition or clarification to all questions concerning these Church documents.

**Note:** In a situation where there is no Pastor holding office at the time, the Chairman of the Deacons may be called upon to give clarification.