

Bylaws for Old Fort Baptist Church

**A South Carolina Baptist Nonprofit Religious Corporation
Adopted: _____(date)**

The Preamble to the Church Bylaws

We, the membership of Old Fort Baptist Church, Summerville, SC, USA, declare and establish these bylaws to preserve and secure the principles of our faith and govern the body in an orderly manner.

This church is affiliated with the Southern Baptist Convention, the South Carolina Baptist Convention, and the Screven Baptist Association.

The purpose of this church shall be to propagate among all people the Gospel of Jesus Christ and to provide opportunities for worship, training, spiritual growth, and service. This church recognizes the Bible is God's Word to His people and is inerrant and infallible.

Statement of Faith

This church affirms the statement of doctrine and practice known as the Baptist Faith and Message, adopted by the Southern Baptist Convention in 1963 and enlarged in 2000. A summary of the basic and most crucial doctrinal teachings of that statement are as follows. The statement can be found in its entirety in Appendix A.

1. THE SCRIPTURES. The Holy Bible was written by men divinely inspired and is the record of God's revelation of Himself to man. It is a perfect treasure of divine instruction. It has God for its author, salvation for its end, and truth, without any mixture of error, for its matter. (Matt. 5:17-18; 2 Tim. 3:15-17; 2 Pet. 1:19-21)

2. THE NATURE OF GOD. There is one and only one living and true God. He is an intelligent, spiritual, and personal Being, the Creator, Redeemer, Preserver, and Ruler of the universe. God is infinite in holiness and all other perfections. To Him we owe the highest love, reverence, and obedience. The eternal God reveals Himself to us as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, with distinct personal attributes, but without division of nature, essence, or being. (Deut. 6:4; Matt. 28:19; John. 1:1-3; 4:24; Acts 1:7-9)

3. MAN AND SIN. Man was created by the special act of God, in His own image, and is the crowning work of His creation. In the beginning man was innocent of sin. By his free choice man sinned against God and brought sin into the human race. Only the grace of God can bring man into His holy fellowship and enable man to fulfill the creative purpose of God. (Gen. 1:26-28, 2:4-7; Acts 17:26-31; Rom. 1:19-32; 3:10-18, 23; Eph. 2:1-22)

4. SALVATION. Salvation involves the redemption of the whole man, and is offered freely to all who accept Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior, who by His own blood obtained eternal redemption for the believer. In its broadest sense salvation includes regeneration, sanctification, and glorification. Regeneration, or the new birth, is a work of God's grace whereby believers become new creatures in Christ Jesus. Sanctification is the experience, beginning in regeneration, by which the believer is set apart to God's purposes, and is enabled to progress toward moral and spiritual perfection through the presence and power of the Holy Spirit dwelling in him. Glorification is the culmination of salvation and is the final blessed and abiding state of the redeemed. (John. 1:11-14; 3:3-21, 36; Acts 4:12, 16:30-31; Rom. 6:1-14; Phil. 2:12-13; Rev. 21:1 to 22:5)

5. THE CHURCH. A New Testament church of the Lord Jesus Christ is a local body of baptized believers who are associated by covenant in the faith and fellowship of the gospel, observing the two ordinances of Christ, committed to His teachings, exercising the gifts, rights, and privileges invested in them by His Word, and seeking to extend the gospel to the ends of the earth. (Matt. 16:15-19; 18:15-20; Eph. 1:22-23; 2:19-22; 3:8-11, 21; 5:22-32; 1 Pet. 5:1-4)

6. THE ORDINANCES. Christian baptism is the immersion of a believer in water in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. It is an act of obedience symbolizing the believer's faith in a crucified, buried, and risen Savior, the believer's death to sin, the burial of the old life, and the resurrection to walk in newness of life in Christ Jesus. The Lord's Supper is a symbolic act of obedience whereby members of the church, through partaking of the bread and the fruit of the vine, memorialize the death of the Redeemer and anticipate His second coming. (Mark 14:22-26; Matt. 28:19-20; Acts 2:41-42; Rom. 6:3-5; 1 Cor. 10:16, 21; 11:23-29)

7. LAST THINGS. God, in His own time and in His own way, will bring the world to its appropriate end. According to His promise, Jesus Christ will return personally and visibly in glory to the earth; the dead will be raised; and Christ will judge all men in righteousness. The unrighteous will be consigned to Hell, the place of everlasting punishment. The righteous in their

resurrected and glorified bodies will receive their reward and will dwell forever in Heaven with the Lord. (Mark 8:38, 9:42-49; John 14:1-4; Acts 1:11; 1 Thess. 4:14-18; 5:1 ff.; Rev. 20:11-22:17)

8. EVANGELISM AND MISSIONS. It is the duty and privilege of every follower of Christ and of every church of the Lord Jesus Christ to endeavor to make disciples of all nations. (Matt. 28:18-20; Acts 1:8; Rom. 10:13-15)

9. GENDER: We believe that God wonderfully and immutably creates each person as male or female. These two distinct, complementary sexes together reflect the image and nature of God. Rejection of one's biological sex is a rejection of the image of God within that person. (Gen. 1:26-27).

10. MARRIAGE AND SEXUALITY: We believe God's plan for human sexuality is to be expressed only within the context of marriage, that God created man and woman as unique biological persons made to complete each other. God instituted monogamous marriage between male and female as the foundation of the family and the basic structure of human society. For this reason, we believe that marriage is exclusively the union of one genetic male and one genetic female. Genesis 2:24; Matthew 19:5-6; Mark 10:6-9; Romans 1:26-27; 1 Corinthians 6:9. We believe that in order to preserve the function and integrity of the church as the local Body of Christ, and to provide a biblical role model to the church members and the community, it is imperative that anyone employed by the church abide by and agree to this Statement on Marriage and Sexuality and conduct themselves accordingly.

11. REDEMPTION AND RESTORATION: We believe that God offers redemption and restoration to all who confess and forsake their sin, seeking His mercy and forgiveness through Jesus Christ. Matthew 18:15-17
We believe that every person must be afforded compassion, love, kindness, respect, and dignity. Hateful and harassing behavior or attitudes directed toward any individual are to be repudiated and are not in accord with scripture nor the doctrines of the church.

(In order to maintain consistency within the fellowship and community, only those activities, events, and gathering that affirm the doctrinal stance of the church may utilize church facilities and resources.)

This church also subscribes to **The Nashville Statement on Biblical Sexuality**.
This statement is found in Appendix B.

Article One

Principal Office

Articles of Incorporation dated: September, 29, 1969

Physical Address: 10505 Dorchester Rd. Summerville, SC 29485

Phone: (843) 873-2283

Mailing Address: 10505 Dorchester Rd. Summerville, SC 29485

Web Site: www.oldfortbaptist.org

General Email Address: office@oldfortbaptist.org

Article Two

MEMBERSHIP

Section 1 – General Information

The New Testament presents a picture of definable groups of people who, once committed to the Lord, identified themselves with and committed themselves to a particular local body (Acts 2:42–46; Romans 16:1; 1 Corinthians 1:2; 2 Corinthians 8:1; Philipians 1:1; Acts 11:26).

Membership is open to people who have accepted the Lord Jesus Christ as their personal Savior, have been baptized by immersion, and are united together by covenant as one body in Christ.

This body is a sovereign and democratic Baptist Church under the Lordship of Jesus Christ. The membership retains the right to exclusive self-government in all phases of this church's spiritual and temporal life.

Section 2 – Candidacy

Any person may present themselves to the church as a candidate for covenant membership if they have met any of the following qualifications:

1. By profession of faith and for baptism by immersion
2. By promise of a letter of recommendation from another Baptist Church
3. By statement of belief of prior conversion and membership in a Baptist Church

Upon presentation at any regular church service, candidates shall be received by the congregation into Watch-Care status. Prior to attaining Covenant Membership, all persons in Watch-care status shall complete the New Member's Class, attest to their agreement with the church covenants and receive an affirmative vote of two-thirds (2/3) of members present and voting at any regular church service.

Section 3 – Categories of Membership

To properly reflect the church's membership and to encourage meaningful participation in the life of the body, the following categories of membership shall be maintained:

A) Watch-Care Status

Watch-Care Membership serves as a period of instruction, evaluation, and integration into the life of the church. It is the initial stage of membership for those who have been received by the congregation based upon their faith testimony but currently do not meet the OFBC qualifications for Covenant Membership.

This stage may also include individuals who were previously Covenant Members but have ceased to participate meaningfully in the life of the church and are therefore under restorative care.

The purpose of Watch-Care Membership is to:

1. Provide instruction and integration for new members
2. Provide intentional shepherding and restoration for disengaged members
3. Ensure agreement with the church's doctrine, covenant, and expectations of membership
4. Encourage meaningful participation in worship, fellowship, and service

Watch-Care Members:

1. Shall complete the New Member's Class (if not previously completed)
2. Shall be under the pastoral care of the Elder Body
3. Shall not have voting privileges
4. May serve in appropriate ministry roles as determined by church leadership

All individuals under the age of eighteen (18) shall remain Watch-Care Members and shall not be eligible for Covenant Membership.

All Watch-Care Members the age of eighteen (18) and older shall complete the new members class within six (6) months of becoming a watch care member unless extended by the Elder Body.

Covenant Members who have ceased to participate meaningfully in the life of the church—defined as attending fewer than six times within a six-month period, unless prevented by providential circumstances (e.g., illness or military service) as determined by the Elder Body—shall be placed into Watch-Care Membership for the purpose of restoration.

B) Covenant Members

Upon completion of the New Member's Class, attestation to the OFBC Covenant and receiving an affirmative vote of two-thirds (2/3) of Covenant Members, a Watch-Care Member who is eighteen (18) years of age or older shall be received into Covenant Membership.

Covenant Membership reflects a promised commitment to:

- The doctrine, mission, and life of the church
- The responsibilities of membership as outlined in these bylaws
- Active participation in worship, giving, and fulfilling the responsibilities of membership

Members who cease to fulfill these expectations shall be returned to Watch-Care Membership for the purpose of restoration.

Covenant Member Privileges include:

- Shall be under the pastoral care of the Elder Body
- May exercise their voting privileges on matters brought before Covenant Members as depicted in the bylaws
- May serve in appropriate ministry roles up to and including leadership roles as determined by church leadership

- A covenant church member can review church documents by visiting the church office and viewing with a Ministerial staff member. Church documents can only be reviewed in the church office. Copies cannot be made of church documents and removed from the church office.

Section 4 – Responsibilities of Membership

Church membership is a meaningful commitment to Christ and to His body. Members are expected to actively pursue unity, growth, and service within the church.

The responsibilities of membership are as follows:

1. Protect the unity of the church by acting in love toward other members, practicing forgiveness, refusing to gossip, and supporting the leadership of the church. (John 13:34–35; Eph. 4:1–3, 29–32; Heb. 13:17).
2. Share the responsibility of the church by praying for its growth, inviting the unchurched, and warmly welcoming those who attend. (Matt. 28:18–20; Col. 4:2–6; Rom. 15:7).
3. Serve the ministry of the church by discovering and using individual gifts and talents, being equipped by the Elder Body, and developing a servant’s heart. (Eph. 4:11–16; 1 Pet. 4:10–11; Mark 10:43–45).
4. Support the church’s testimony by attending corporate worship and a small group faithfully, living a godly life, and giving regularly. (Heb. 10:24–25; Acts 2:42–47; Matt. 5:16; 2 Cor. 9:6–8).

Section 5 – Voting Rights

Every Covenant Member who is eighteen (18) years of age or older shall have the opportunity to vote on the following:

1. Approval of a candidate to covenant membership (2/3 vote)
2. Approval of the Annual Church Spending Plan (2/3 vote)
3. The purchase or sale of real property (2/3 vote)
4. Incurring debt (2/3 vote)
5. Election of elders, deacons, and standing committees (2/3 vote)
6. Church merger, dissolution, or the disposal of all or substantially all church assets (3/4 vote)
7. Amendments to the Articles of Incorporation or bylaws (2/3 vote)
8. The calling or removal of the Senior Pastor (3/4 vote)

There shall be no provision for absentee, proxy, or electronic voting.

Section 6 – Membership Transfer and Termination

Membership shall be terminated for the following reasons:

1. Death
2. Transfer of membership to another church
3. Proof of membership in a church of another denomination
4. Failure to cooperate and complete the watch-care member restoration initiatives of church leadership within 6 months
5. Personal written request of the member
6. Exclusion by church vote

Section 7 – Discipline

The church is committed to pursue the purity, peace, and restoration of Christ's people through biblical church discipline. When a member is overtaken in sin, the goal of discipline is not punishment or embarrassment, but repentance, reconciliation, restoration, and the honor of Christ. The Senior Pastor and Elder Body are available for counsel and guidance.

Ordinarily, discipline will follow the pattern of Matthew 18:15–17: private admonition, then admonition with one or two witnesses, then, if necessary, involvement of the church. If a member persists in serious, outward, and unrepentant sin, the church may remove that person from membership and from participation in the Lord's Supper, while continuing to pray and plead for repentance and restoration.

In cases of public, scandalous, divisive, or especially harmful sin, the Elder Body may move more directly to formal church action in keeping with 1 Corinthians 5, with appropriate care for truth, witnesses, due process, and the protection of the church. In keeping with 1 Corinthians 6, members are also expected to pursue reconciliation and resolution of disputes within the church family whenever possible, rather than bringing reproach on Christ through unnecessary public conflict.

All discipline shall be carried out under the oversight of the Elder Body and, when removal from membership is necessary, through the responsible action of the congregation, in accordance with Scripture, the church's governing documents, and the gospel of grace.

If the exclusion of the member best serves the church's welfare, the church may dismiss the member by a two-thirds (2/3) vote at a duly called meeting.

Section 8 – Discipline Restoration

Any person whose membership was terminated because of discipline may request restoration of membership.

Upon recommendation of the Elder Body, restoration shall be affirmed by a two-thirds (2/3) vote of the members present and voting at a duly called business meeting.

Article Three Meetings

Section 1 – Worship

The church shall hold regular meetings for worship, teaching, training, outreach, and fellowship at the principal Church location, unless otherwise designated from time to time by the Senior Pastor or Elder Body.

Section 2 – Ordinances

Baptism

A candidate for baptism is one who

- Receives Jesus Christ as Savior by personal faith
- Professes Him publicly at any worship service
- Indicates a commitment to follow Christ as Lord

Baptism shall be by immersion in water and administered by the Senior Pastor or the Senior Pastor designee. Baptism is an act of worship and may occur any time. (Mark 1:9-11).

A person confessing Christ and not being baptized after a reasonable time will receive counseling by the Senior Pastor, pastoral staff, or Elders. Resisting counsel to pursue baptism results in removal from the baptismal candidate list.

Lord's Supper

The Lord's Supper is a symbol of obedience where members of the church body, through the partaking of the bread and fruit of the vine, commemorate the death of Jesus Christ and anticipate His second coming. (Matthew 26:26-29)

The Senior Pastor and Elder Body (or designated team) bear responsibility for preparing and administering the Lord's Supper.

The observance of the Lord's Supper takes place as deemed appropriate by the Senior Pastor and Elder Body.

Section 3 – Annual Church Conference

The Annual Church Conference will be held during the 4th quarter of the calendar year. The exact date will be determined by the Senior Pastor and Elder Body.

All business meetings will be guided by Christian courtesy and conducted according to parliamentary procedure.

All motions, unless otherwise presented, are subject to discussion. All decisions will be by simple majority vote unless otherwise presented.

The agenda of the conference will close one week in advance. Any motion not on the agenda one week in advance will be called out of order.

Section 4 – Special Meetings

The Senior Pastor or Elder Body may call a Special Called business meeting at any time, for any purpose, by giving notice to the members according to Section 5 of this Article. Special called business meeting requires 2/3 majority votes of members present and voting, unless otherwise stated in these bylaws.

Section 5 – Notices

Notification of covenant membership meetings will occur using any of the following reasonable methods of calling a membership meeting:

1. Distribution of written material to the congregation in attendance at a weekend service
2. Announcement of the meeting in a church program, bulletin, or newsletter
3. Oral announcement to the congregation at a weekend service
4. Delivery by United States mail to each church member
5. Church website and available forms of electronic communication
6. All notices, unless otherwise stipulated in these bylaws, are one week in advance of the discussion/vote.

Section 6 – Quorum

A quorum shall consist of those members present and voting at a meeting duly noticed and called for the transaction of business.

Section 7 – Voting

Every Covenant member, 18 years or older, will have the opportunity to vote on the following:

1. Approval of the Annual Church Spending Plan. (2/3 vote)
2. The purchase or sale of real property. (2/3 vote)
3. Incurring debt. (2/3 vote)
4. Election of elders, deacons, and standing committees (2/3 vote)
5. Church merger, dissolution, or the disposal of all or substantially all church assets. (3/4 vote)
6. Amendments to the Articles of Incorporation or bylaws. (2/3 vote)
7. The calling or removal of the Senior Pastor. (3/4 vote)
8. Election of elders and deacons

There shall be no provisions for absentee, proxy, or electronic ballots.

Section 8 – Rules of Order

The rules contained in the most recent edition of Robert's Rules of Order (Latest Edition) shall guide the church in all cases to which they are applicable and in which they are not inconsistent with the articles, these bylaws, state law, biblical teaching, or any special rules of order the church may adopt.

Section 9 – Emergency Bylaws Action

In anticipation of or during an emergency defined in this section, the Senior Pastor AND Elder Body may: (1) modify lines of succession to accommodate the incapacity of any director, officer, employee, or agent; and (2) relocate the principal office or designate alternative principal offices.

During an emergency defined in subsection (d), unless emergency bylaws provide otherwise: (1) notice of a meeting of the Elder Body need be given only to those directors, officers, employees, or agents it is practicable to reach and may be given in any practicable manner, including by publication and radio; and (2) one or more officers of the church present at a meeting of the Elder Body may be deemed to be directors for the meeting.

Church action taken in good faith during an emergency under this section to further the ordinary affairs of the church: (1) binds the church; and (2) may not be used to impose liability on a director, officer, employee, or agent.

An emergency exists for purposes of this section if a quorum of the Senior Pastor and Elder Body cannot readily be assembled because of some catastrophic event.

Article Four Elder Body

Section 1 – Plurality of Leadership

The New Testament model of church organization and authority is not given to just one Senior Pastor or minister, nor is it solely by democratic rule of the congregation. Scripture states that authority from leadership is through a plurality of leaders affirmed by the church and accountable to God. The Scriptures teach that when the Church supports the Elders, both the Church body and the individual Christian will flourish. Some Elders may be vocational, and some may be Lay-Elders, but all must be continually seeking the best for the church and its members. (Acts 14:23, Acts 20:28, Titus 1:5, 1 Peter 5:1-2)

Section 2 – Biblical Qualifications

To achieve this New Testament model of leadership the Church requires qualified men to serve on the Elder Body. These men must meet the specific moral and spiritual qualifications before they may serve. Selection to serve on the Elder Team will be based on:

1. Character – 1 Timothy 3:1-10, Titus 1:6-9
2. Calling – Ephesians 4:1-3
3. Giftedness – 1 Corinthians 12:12-31
4. Function – Romans 12:3-8; Acts 20:17, 28
5. Service to the Church – Ephesians 4:11-16

A person being considered to serve as a Lay-Elder must be a covenant member of Old Fort Baptist Church for at least one year. This one-year requirement is waived for any full-time vocational staff member joining the Elder Body.

Scripture does not list a specific number of Elders, but clearly indicates there shall be a plurality of Elders with the Senior Pastor serving as leader among equals. A minimum of two Lay-Elders plus the Senior Pastor should be in place at all times.

Section 3 – Duties

A summary of Elder Body responsibilities are:

1. Support and maintain the mission and vision of Old Fort Baptist Church.
2. Work with the Senior Pastor and personnel committee on all decisions relating to personnel issues for church employees including hiring, termination, compensation, and benefits. The Senior Pastor or his designee will provide daily supervision of church personnel.
3. Work with the Senior Pastor and Stewardship Committee to develop and submit the annual church spending plan for congregational approval.
4. Oversee the creation and maintenance of the Church Operations Manual.

5. Oversee the creation and maintenance of comprehensive financial policies
6. The Elder Body carries authority for spending plan revisions equaling no more than 10% of the annual spending plan.
7. The Elder Body must approve all bylaw amendments prior to being presented to the congregation for final approval.
8. The Elder Body shall be empowered to make any and all decisions related to the life of the church of a business, legal, or doctrinal nature not directly designated for congregational approval.

Section 4 – Election and Service

Scripture gives evidence that the first elders were nominated by the founders of the Church. (Acts 14:23). Following this example, the existing spiritual leadership of the church must be intimately involved in the process of selecting Elders, ensuring the process is based on spiritual qualifications.

The term of office for a Lay-Elder will be three years. If an Elder desires to serve up to an additional three years he will be brought before the church for vote at the Annual Church Conference.

During the third quarter of each year the current Elder Body will determine the number of positions to be filled. If it is determined that additional Elders are necessary, the following process will be followed:

1. The congregation will be given a list of Biblical qualifications and responsibilities no less than 45 days before the Annual Church Conference.
2. The congregation will be given 15 days to submit the names of male members for consideration. No member may submit more names than the number of positions available.
3. The Elder Body will review the list of submitted names and interview each candidate and spouse, if married. Each candidate will be given prayerful consideration.
4. The Elder Body will provide the names of newly selected Elders no less than 15 days prior to the Annual Church Conference.
5. At the Annual Church Conference each elder candidate will be voted on individually by secret ballot.
6. New Elders will begin their duties January 1.

Section 5 – Vacancies

The Elder Body may discipline or remove any team member who no longer fulfills the qualification of an elder or fails to fulfill the responsibilities of the office. Removal from the Elder Body requires the majority vote of all serving Elders minus the individual in question. Church members may request a meeting with the Elder Body to discuss the actions of one of the Elder Body members, only as a part of the process outlined in Matthew 18.

An active Elder may resign from Elder Body by submitting a written resignation to the Senior Pastor. If a vacancy occurs, the Elder Body may select another qualified male member to complete the term of service.

Section 6 – Meetings and Quorum

A minimum of six meetings of the Elder Body will take place each year at a location chosen by the Elder Body. As needed, video attendance will be permitted.

A quorum of the Elder Body consists of a simple majority (50% +1) of the Elder Body present and voting. No proxy votes will be allowed.

Section 7 — Team Screening

All Lay-Elders will complete criminal screening procedures (background checks) before their name is presented to the church for election, as outlined in the Policy and Procedures Manual. Any information obtained during the screening process shall be considered highly confidential and shall be kept in a secure location with access limited to those identified by the Elder Body.

Article Five

Professional Ministerial and Support Staff

Section 1 — Staff Overview

Ministerial Staff

The professional ministry staff is responsible for leading the church to function as a New Testament church. They are to lead the congregation, the organizations, and the programs to perform their tasks to process and practice the mission/vision/strategy of the church.

Support Staff

Support staff play a vital role in the daily functioning and long-term health of the church by providing the organizational, operational, and relational support that allows ministry to flourish. They often serve behind the scenes, ensuring that worship services, outreach efforts, administrative responsibilities, communication, and congregational care are carried out effectively and consistently.

Section 2 — Senior Pastor

A Senior Pastor shall be called by the church and will serve until the relationship is dissolved at the request of either the Senior Pastor or the church. In either case, at least a two-week notice shall be given of resignation/termination of the relationship, unless otherwise mutually agreed, with both Senior Pastor and the church seeking to follow the will of God and the leadership of the Holy Spirit.

The Elder Body will serve as the mediating body if disagreement or conflict arises between the Senior Pastor and any covenant member. Should the removal or discipline of the Senior Pastor become necessary, a two-third vote of the Elder Body will be necessary to bring the issue before the church. A four/fifths vote of the congregation will be required to terminate the Senior Pastor.

Section 3 — Senior Pastor Function

The Senior Pastor is considered a full-time employee of the church and is the administrative leader to all church staff and employees of the church. He may serve at will as a member of all church committees, teams, and groups. He may call a special meeting of the deacons, committees, teams, or groups. The Senior Pastor may call the church into business conference with proper notice. The Senior Pastor shall be the spiritual leader of the church and help plan and conduct all worship services of the church or arrange for a substitute when he is absent. He shall minister to the spiritual needs of the total membership. He shall lead the congregation and the deacons in programs of visitation and stewardship. He shall lead in the observance of the ordinances. (Acts 14:23, 20:28-32; I Timothy 5:17; Titus 1:5-9; I Peter 5:1-4).

Section 4 — Pastor Selection Process

A Senior Pastor shall be chosen and called by the church whenever a vacancy occurs. A Senior Pastor Search Committee shall be chosen by the Elder Body. The Senior Pastor Search Committee shall be representative of the congregation by gender, age, and length of membership in the church.

The Senior Pastor Search Committee and Elder Body shall bring the name of only one prospective Senior Pastor at a time for consideration by the church, and no nomination shall be made except by the committee. Election shall be by secret ballot given to all Covenant Members over 18 years of age. An affirmative vote of three-fourths (75%) or higher is a favorable vote to call the candidate.

If a favorable vote is not reached, the Search Committee shall be instructed to seek out another pastoral candidate, and the meeting shall be adjourned without debate.

Section 5 — Interim Pastor Selection

Should the Senior Pastor position become vacant, the Elder Body will continue to act on behalf of the church regarding all administrative functions. The Elder Body will elect by majority vote a temporary Elder Body leader.

In the event an Interim Pastor or Supply Preacher is needed, the Elder Body will select the individuals to serve, define the duties, and coordinate the financial arrangements with the Personnel and Stewardship Committees. If an Interim Pastor Search Committee is put into place it will be separate from the Pastor Search Committee, with different leaders in each.

The Elder Body and Personnel Committee will consult with state and local Baptist Associations for recommendations regarding candidates for interim or supply Pastors as needed. An interim Pastor may not be considered as a candidate for the Senior Pastor position.

In the absence of a Senior Pastor the Elder Body will appoint a pastoral staff member to administrate the church staff and lead the church in performing its tasks.

Section 6 — Other Ministerial Staff

Additional Ministerial Staff may be secured to administer the Mission/Vision/Strategy of the church as needed. The Elder Body and Personnel Committee will be responsible for securing qualified ministers to fill these roles. Compensation shall be specified by the Elder Body in conjunction with the Stewardship and Personnel Committees as approved in the Annual Church Spending Plan.

Ministry staff shall continue to serve until the relationship is ended by resignation with at least 2 weeks written notification to the Senior Pastor and the Personnel Committee, expiration of a predetermined period of service, or termination.

Section 7 — Hiring Support Staff

Support staff may be hired by appropriate supervisors, with approval of the Senior Pastor, Elder Body, and Personnel Committee, following the screening and interviewing process. Compensation shall be specified by the Personnel Committee in conjunction with the Stewardship Committee as approved in the Annual Church Spending Plan.

Section 8 — Staff Termination

Termination Procedures for all staff are addressed in the Personnel Policy and Procedures manual. The Elder Body and Personnel Committee may be briefed on the situations related to terminations when they happen and when consideration for proper Labor Law actions are required.

The Senior Pastor AND Elder Body have the final authority on all situations related to terminations, taking into consideration proper labor law actions as required.

Section 9 — Staff Screening

All candidates for ministry or administrative staff positions may be required to submit to screening procedures including but not limited to credit checks, address verifications, and criminal & academic background checks. Any information obtained during the screening process shall be considered highly confidential and shall be kept in a secure location with access limited to the officers or staff authorized by the Elder Body.

Without exception, all staff and volunteers who will work with minor children must undergo a comprehensive screening process. This process must include, but may not necessarily be limited to, an address verification and criminal background check. Any information obtained during the screening process shall be considered highly confidential and shall be kept in a secure location with access limited to the officers or staff authorized by the Elder Body.

Article Six Deacons

Section 1 – Deacon Qualifications

1. Meet spiritual qualifications of I Timothy 3:8-13.
2. A Covenant Member for more than one year, age 21 or older.
3. Active in a Sunday School Class/Small Group and serving within a ministry of the church.
4. Engaged in supporting and serving in ministries outside the church.
5. Regularly contributes financially to support the financial ministry of the church.
6. Willing to participate in deacon ministry service groups and activities. (Acts 6:2-3; I Timothy 3:11; Peter 2:25)

Section 2 – Deacon Rotation

The number of deacons needed shall be reviewed annually by the Elder Body with recommendations to increase/decrease as needed.

Each deacon elected shall serve a full three-years and may then serve up to three more years if desired. No deacon shall be eligible for re-election until the lapse of at least one year.

Section 3 – Deacon Nominations and Voting

During the third quarter of each year the current Elder Body and Deacon Body will determine the number of positions to be filled. If it is determined that additional Deacons are necessary, the following process will be followed:

1. The congregation will be given a list of Biblical qualifications and responsibilities no less than 45 days before the Annual Church Conference.
2. The congregation will be given 15 days to submit the names of male members for consideration.
3. The Deacon Body will review the list of submitted names and interview each qualified candidate and spouse, if married. Each candidate will be given prayerful consideration.
4. The Deacon Body will provide the names of qualified Deacon candidates no less than 15 days prior to the Annual Church Conference.
5. The Deacon candidates will be voted on at a scheduled church business meeting.
6. New Deacons will begin their duties at the next Deacon meeting.

An ordination service shall be held for the purpose of ordaining any un-ordained person who is elected.

Section 4 – Ordaining Deacons

The Elder Body shall assemble an ordination council to perform the ceremony of ordination in the presence of this church.

Section 5 – Deacon Service

After serving a term of three to six years, no deacon shall be eligible for re-election until the lapse of at least one year.

Section 6 – Deacons Meetings and Subgroups

The Deacons shall meet at least bi-monthly, preferably the same time for each meeting. These meeting times shall be on the general church calendar. Special meetings may be called by the Lay Elder responsible for the Deacon Body or Chairman of the Deacons as needs dictate. The Deacons shall elect their own leadership annually within the active Deacon group.

Sub-groups may be formed to effectively carry out its service duties to the congregation. The Deacons are accountable to the church body as specified in the Bible and as directed by the Holy Spirit.

Section 7 – Deacon Resignation

Any Deacon may resign by written notification to the Elder Body.

The removal from office of any Deacon may occur for 1) physical incapacitation, 2) spiritual or moral issues, 3) doctrinal issues, and 4) failure to fulfill responsibilities of the office. Matthew 18 serves as the basis to implement dismissal by the Elder Body for steps 1–3.

Section 8 – Screening

All Deacons will complete criminal screening procedures before their name is presented to the church for election, as outlined in the Policy and Procedures Manual. Any information obtained during the screening process shall be considered highly confidential and shall be kept in a secure location indefinitely with access limited to those identified by the Elder Body.

**(The remaining bylaws will be
discussed at our next family
meeting on October 4)**

Appendix A

Baptist Faith & Message

I. The Scriptures

The Holy Bible was written by men divinely inspired and is God's revelation of Himself to man. It is a perfect treasure of divine instruction. It has God for its author, salvation for its end, and truth, without any mixture of error, for its matter. Therefore, all Scripture is totally true and trustworthy. It reveals the principles by which God judges us, and therefore is, and will remain to the end of the world, the true center of Christian union, and the supreme standard by which all human conduct, creeds, and religious opinions should be tried. All Scripture is a testimony to Christ, who is Himself the focus of divine revelation.

Exodus 24:4; Deuteronomy 4:1-2; 17:19; Joshua 8:34; Psalms 19:7-10; 119:11,89,105,140; Isaiah 34:16; 40:8; Jeremiah 15:16; 36:1-32; Matthew 5:17-18; 22:29; Luke 21:33; 24:44-46; John 5:39; 16:13-15; 17:17; Acts 2:16ff.; 17:11; Romans 15:4; 16:25-26; 2 Timothy 3:15-17; Hebrews 1:1-2; 4:12; 1 Peter 1:25; 2 Peter 1:19-21.

II. God

There is one and only one living and true God. He is an intelligent, spiritual, and personal Being, the Creator, Redeemer, Preserver, and Ruler of the universe. God is infinite in holiness and all other perfections. God is all powerful and all knowing; and His perfect knowledge extends to all things, past, present, and future, including the future decisions of His free creatures. To Him we owe the highest love, reverence, and obedience. The eternal triune God reveals Himself to us as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, with distinct personal attributes, but without division of nature, essence, or being.

A. God the Father

God as Father reigns with providential care over His universe, His creatures, and the flow of the stream of human history according to the purposes of His grace. He is all powerful, all knowing, all loving, and all wise. God is Father in truth to those who become children of God through faith in Jesus Christ. He is fatherly in His attitude toward all men.

Genesis 1:1; 2:7; Exodus 3:14; 6:2-3; 15:11ff.; 20:1ff.; Leviticus 22:2; Deuteronomy 6:4; 32:6; 1 Chronicles 29:10; Psalm 19:1-3; Isaiah 43:3,15; 64:8; Jeremiah 10:10; 17:13; Matthew 6:9ff.; 7:11; 23:9; 28:19; Mark 1:9-11; John 4:24; 5:26; 14:6-13; 17:1-8; Acts 1:7; Romans 8:14-15; 1 Corinthians 8:6; Galatians 4:6; Ephesians 4:6; Colossians 1:15; 1 Timothy 1:17; Hebrews 11:6; 12:9; 1 Peter 1:17; 1 John 5:7.

B. God the Son

Christ is the eternal Son of God. In His incarnation as Jesus Christ He was conceived of the Holy Spirit and born of the virgin Mary. Jesus perfectly revealed and did the will of God, taking upon Himself human nature with its demands and necessities and identifying Himself completely with mankind yet without sin. He honored the divine law by His personal obedience, and in His substitutionary death on the cross He made provision for the redemption of men from sin. He was raised from the dead with a glorified body and appeared to His disciples as the person who was with them before His crucifixion. He ascended into heaven and is now exalted at the right hand of God where He is the One Mediator, fully God, fully man, in whose Person is effected the reconciliation between God and man. He will return in power and glory to judge the world and to consummate His redemptive mission. He now dwells in all believers as the living and ever present Lord.

Genesis 18:1ff.; Psalms 2:7ff.; 110:1ff.; Isaiah 7:14; Isaiah 53:1-12; Matthew 1:18-23; 3:17; 8:29; 11:27; 14:33; 16:16,27; 17:5; 27; 28:1-6,19; Mark 1:1; 3:11; Luke 1:35; 4:41; 22:70; 24:46; John 1:1-18,29; 10:30,38; 11:25-27; 12:44-50; 14:7-11; 16:15-16,28; 17:1-5, 21-22; 20:1-20,28; Acts 1:9; 2:22-24; 7:55-56; 9:4-5,20; Romans 1:3-4; 3:23-26; 5:6-21; 8:1-3,34; 10:4; 1 Corinthians 1:30; 2:2; 8:6; 15:1-8,24-28; 2 Corinthians 5:19-21; 8:9; Galatians 4:4-5; Ephesians 1:20; 3:11; 4:7-10; Philippians 2:5-11; Colossians 1:13-22; 2:9; 1 Thessalonians 4:14-18; 1 Timothy 2:5-6; 3:16; Titus 2:13-14; Hebrews 1:1-3; 4:14-15; 7:14-28; 9:12-15,24-28; 12:2; 13:8; 1 Peter 2:21-25; 3:22; 1 John 1:7-9; 3:2; 4:14-15; 5:9; 2 John 7-9; Revelation 1:13-16; 5:9-14; 12:10-11; 13:8; 19:16.

C. God the Holy Spirit

The Holy Spirit is the Spirit of God, fully divine. He inspired holy men of old to write the Scriptures. Through illumination He enables men to understand truth. He exalts Christ. He convicts men of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment. He calls men to the Saviour, and effects regeneration. At the moment of regeneration He baptizes every believer into the Body of Christ. He cultivates Christian character, comforts believers, and bestows the spiritual gifts by which they serve God through His church. He seals the believer unto the day of final redemption. His presence in the Christian is the guarantee that God will bring the believer into the fullness of the stature of Christ. He enlightens and empowers the believer and the church in worship, evangelism, and service.

Genesis 1:2; Judges 14:6; Job 26:13; Psalms 51:11; 139:7ff.; Isaiah 61:1-3; Joel 2:28-32; Matthew 1:18; 3:16; 4:1; 12:28-32; 28:19; Mark 1:10,12; Luke 1:35; 4:1,18-19; 11:13; 12:12; 24:49; John 4:24; 14:16-17,26; 15:26; 16:7-14; Acts 1:8; 2:1-4,38; 4:31; 5:3; 6:3; 7:55; 8:17,39; 10:44; 13:2; 15:28; 16:6; 19:1-6; Romans 8:9-11,14-16,26-27; 1 Corinthians 2:10-14; 3:16; 12:3-11,13; Galatians 4:6; Ephesians 1:13-14; 4:30; 5:18; 1 Thessalonians 5:19; 1 Timothy 3:16; 4:1; 2 Timothy 1:14; 3:16; Hebrews 9:8,14; 2 Peter 1:21; 1 John 4:13; 5:6-7; Revelation 1:10; 22:17.

III. Man

Man is the special creation of God, made in His own image. He created them male and female as the crowning work of His creation. The gift of gender is thus part of the goodness of God's creation. In the beginning man was innocent of sin and was endowed by his Creator with freedom of choice. By his free choice man sinned against God and brought sin into the human race. Through the temptation of Satan man transgressed the command of God, and fell from his original innocence whereby his posterity inherit a nature and an environment inclined toward sin. Therefore, as soon as they are capable of moral action, they become transgressors and are under condemnation. Only the grace of God can bring man into His holy fellowship and enable man to fulfill the creative purpose of God. The sacredness of human personality is evident in that God created man in His own image, and in that Christ died for man; therefore, every person of every race possesses full dignity and is worthy of respect and Christian love.

Genesis 1:26-30; 2:5,7,18-22; 3; 9:6; Psalms 1; 8:3-6; 32:1-5; 51:5; Isaiah 6:5; Jeremiah 17:5; Matthew 16:26; Acts 17:26-31; Romans 1:19-32; 3:10-18,23; 5:6,12,19; 6:6; 7:14-25; 8:14-18,29; 1 Corinthians 1:21-31; 15:19,21-22; Ephesians 2:1-22; Colossians 1:21-22; 3:9-11.

IV. Salvation

Salvation involves the redemption of the whole man, and is offered freely to all who accept Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour, who by His own blood obtained eternal redemption for the believer. In its broadest sense salvation includes regeneration, justification, sanctification, and glorification. There is no salvation apart from personal faith in Jesus Christ as Lord.

A. Regeneration

Regeneration, or the new birth, is a work of God's grace whereby believers become new creatures in Christ Jesus. It is a change of heart wrought by the Holy Spirit through

conviction of sin, to which the sinner responds in repentance toward God and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. Repentance and faith are inseparable experiences of grace.

Repentance is a genuine turning from sin toward God. Faith is the acceptance of Jesus Christ and commitment of the entire personality to Him as Lord and Saviour.

B. Justification

Justification is God's gracious and full acquittal upon principles of His righteousness of all sinners who repent and believe in Christ. Justification brings the believer unto a relationship of peace and favor with God.

C. Sanctification

Sanctification is the experience, beginning in regeneration, by which the believer is set apart to God's purposes, and is enabled to progress toward moral and spiritual maturity through the presence and power of the Holy Spirit dwelling in him. Growth in grace should continue throughout the regenerate person's life.

D. Glorification

Glorification is the culmination of salvation and is the final blessed and abiding state of the redeemed.

Genesis 3:15; Exodus 3:14-17; 6:2-8; Matthew 1:21; 4:17; 16:21-26; 27:22-28:6; Luke 1:68-69; 2:28-32; John 1:11-14,29; 3:3- 21,36; 5:24; 10:9,28-29; 15:1-16; 17:17; Acts 2:21; 4:12; 15:11; 16:30-31; 17:30-31; 20:32; Romans 1:16-18; 2:4; 3:23-25; 4:3ff.; 5:8-10; 6:1-23; 8:1-18,29-39; 10:9-10,13; 13:11-14; 1 Corinthians 1:18,30; 6:19-20; 15:10; 2 Corinthians 5:17-20; Galatians 2:20; 3:13; 5:22-25; 6:15; Ephesians 1:7; 2:8-22; 4:11-16; Philippians 2:12-13; Colossians 1:9-22; 3:1ff.; 1 Thessalonians 5:23-24; 2 Timothy 1:12; Titus 2:11-14; Hebrews 2:1-3; 5:8-9; 9:24-28; 11:1-12:8,14; James 2:14-26; 1 Peter 1:2-23; 1 John 1:6-2:11; Revelation 3:20; 21:1-22:5.

V. God's Purpose of Grace

Election is the gracious purpose of God, according to which He regenerates, justifies, sanctifies, and glorifies sinners. It is consistent with the free agency of man, and comprehends all the means in connection with the end. It is the glorious display of God's sovereign goodness, and is infinitely wise, holy, and unchangeable. It excludes boasting and promotes humility.

All true believers endure to the end. Those whom God has accepted in Christ, and sanctified by His Spirit, will never fall away from the state of grace, but shall persevere to the end. Believers may fall into sin through neglect and temptation, whereby they grieve the Spirit, impair their graces and comforts, and bring reproach on the cause of Christ and temporal judgments on themselves; yet they shall be kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation.

Genesis 12:1-3; Exodus 19:5-8; 1 Samuel 8:4-7,19-22; Isaiah 5:1-7; Jeremiah 31:31ff.; Matthew 16:18-19; 21:28-45; 24:22,31; 25:34; Luke 1:68-79; 2:29-32; 19:41-44; 24:44-48; John 1:12-14; 3:16; 5:24; 6:44-45,65; 10:27-29; 15:16; 17:6,12,17-18; Acts 20:32; Romans 5:9-10; 8:28-39; 10:12-15; 11:5-7,26-36; 1 Corinthians 1:1-2; 15:24-28; Ephesians 1:4-23; 2:1-10; 3:1-11; Colossians 1:12-14; 2 Thessalonians 2:13-14; 2 Timothy 1:12; 2:10,19; Hebrews 11:39-12:2; James 1:12; 1 Peter 1:2-5,13; 2:4-10; 1 John 1:7-9; 2:19; 3:2.

VI. The Church

A New Testament church of the Lord Jesus Christ is an autonomous local congregation of baptized believers, associated by covenant in the faith and fellowship of the gospel; observing the two ordinances of Christ, governed by His laws, exercising the gifts, rights, and privileges invested in them by His Word, and seeking to extend the gospel to the ends of the earth. Each

congregation operates under the Lordship of Christ through democratic processes. In such a congregation each member is responsible and accountable to Christ as Lord. Its two scriptural offices are that of pastor/elder/overseer and deacon. While both men and women are gifted for service in the church, the office of pastor/elder/overseer is limited to men as qualified by Scripture.

The New Testament speaks also of the church as the Body of Christ which includes all of the redeemed of all the ages, believers from every tribe, and tongue, and people, and nation.

Matthew 16:15-19; 18:15-20; Acts 2:41-42,47; 5:11-14; 6:3-6; 13:1-3; 14:23,27; 15:1-30; 16:5; 20:28; Romans 1:7; 1 Corinthians 1:2; 3:16; 5:4-5; 7:17; 9:13-14; 12; Ephesians 1:22-23; 2:19-22; 3:8-11,21; 5:22-32; Philippians 1:1; Colossians 1:18; 1 Timothy 2:9-14; 3:1-15; 4:14; Hebrews 11:39-40; 1 Peter 5:1-4; Revelation 2-3; 21:2-3.

****Note:** This article was amended June 14, 2023, by action of the 2023 Southern Baptist Convention**

VII. Baptism and the Lord's Supper

Christian baptism is the immersion of a believer in water in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. It is an act of obedience symbolizing the believer's faith in a crucified, buried, and risen Saviour, the believer's death to sin, the burial of the old life, and the resurrection to walk in newness of life in Christ Jesus. It is a testimony to his faith in the final resurrection of the dead. Being a church ordinance, it is prerequisite to the privileges of church membership and to the Lord's Supper.

The Lord's Supper is a symbolic act of obedience whereby members of the church, through partaking of the bread and the fruit of the vine, memorialize the death of the Redeemer and anticipate His second coming.

Matthew 3:13-17; 26:26-30; 28:19-20; Mark 1:9-11; 14:22-26; Luke 3:21-22; 22:19-20; John 3:23; Acts 2:41-42; 8:35-39; 16:30-33; 20:7; Romans 6:3-5; 1 Corinthians 10:16,21; 11:23-29; Colossians 2:12.

VIII. The Lord's Day

The first day of the week is the Lord's Day. It is a Christian institution for regular observance. It commemorates the resurrection of Christ from the dead and should include exercises of worship and spiritual devotion, both public and private. Activities on the Lord's Day should be commensurate with the Christian's conscience under the Lordship of Jesus Christ.

Exodus 20:8-11; Matthew 12:1-12; 28:1ff.; Mark 2:27-28; 16:1-7; Luke 24:1-3,33-36; John 4:21-24; 20:1,19-28; Acts 20:7; Romans 14:5-10; 1 Corinthians 16:1-2; Colossians 2:16; 3:16; Revelation 1:10.

IX. The Kingdom

The Kingdom of God includes both His general sovereignty over the universe and His particular kingship over men who willfully acknowledge Him as King. Particularly the Kingdom is the realm of salvation into which men enter by trustful, childlike commitment to Jesus Christ. Christians ought to pray and to labor that the Kingdom may come and God's will be done on earth. The full consummation of the Kingdom awaits the return of Jesus Christ and the end of this age.

Genesis 1:1; Isaiah 9:6-7; Jeremiah 23:5-6; Matthew 3:2; 4:8-10,23; 12:25-28; 13:1-52; 25:31-46; 26:29; Mark 1:14-15; 9:1; Luke 4:43; 8:1; 9:2; 12:31-32; 17:20-21; 23:42; John 3:3; 18:36; Acts 1:6-7; 17:22-31; Romans 5:17; 8:19; 1 Corinthians 15:24-28; Colossians 1:13; Hebrews 11:10,16; 12:28; 1 Peter 2:4-10; 4:13; Revelation 1:6,9; 5:10; 11:15; 21-22.

X. Last Things

God, in His own time and in His own way, will bring the world to its appropriate end. According to His promise, Jesus Christ will return personally and visibly in glory to the earth; the dead will be raised; and Christ will judge all men in righteousness. The unrighteous will be consigned to Hell, the place of everlasting punishment. The righteous in their resurrected and glorified bodies will receive their reward and will dwell forever in Heaven with the Lord.

Isaiah 2:4; 11:9; Matthew 16:27; 18:8-9; 19:28; 24:27,30,36,44; 25:31-46; 26:64; Mark 8:38; 9:43-48; Luke 12:40,48; 16:19-26; 17:22-37; 21:27-28; John 14:1-3; Acts 1:11; 17:31; Romans 14:10; 1 Corinthians 4:5; 15:24-28,35-58; 2 Corinthians 5:10; Philippians 3:20-21; Colossians 1:5; 3:4; 1 Thessalonians 4:14-18; 5:1ff.; 2 Thessalonians 1:7ff.; 2; 1 Timothy 6:14; 2 Timothy 4:1,8; Titus 2:13; Hebrews 9:27-28; James 5:8; 2 Peter 3:7ff.; 1 John 2:28; 3:2; Jude 14; Revelation 1:18; 3:11; 20:1-22:13.

XI. Evangelism and Missions

It is the duty and privilege of every follower of Christ and of every church of the Lord Jesus Christ to endeavor to make disciples of all nations. The new birth of man's spirit by God's Holy Spirit means the birth of love for others. Missionary effort on the part of all rests thus upon a spiritual necessity of the regenerate life, and is expressly and repeatedly commanded in the teachings of Christ. The Lord Jesus Christ has commanded the preaching of the gospel to all nations. It is the duty of every child of God to seek constantly to win the lost to Christ by verbal witness undergirded by a Christian lifestyle, and by other methods in harmony with the gospel of Christ.

Genesis 12:1-3; Exodus 19:5-6; Isaiah 6:1-8; Matthew 9:37-38; 10:5-15; 13:18-30, 37-43; 16:19; 22:9-10; 24:14; 28:18-20; Luke 10:1-18; 24:46-53; John 14:11-12; 15:7-8,16; 17:15; 20:21; Acts 1:8; 2; 8:26-40; 10:42-48; 13:2-3; Romans 10:13-15; Ephesians 3:1-11; 1 Thessalonians 1:8; 2 Timothy 4:5; Hebrews 2:1-3; 11:39-12:2; 1 Peter 2:4-10; Revelation 22:17.

XII. Education

Christianity is the faith of enlightenment and intelligence. In Jesus Christ abide all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. All sound learning is, therefore, a part of our Christian heritage. The new birth opens all human faculties and creates a thirst for knowledge. Moreover, the cause of education in the Kingdom of Christ is co-ordinate with the causes of missions and general benevolence, and should receive along with these the liberal support of the churches. An adequate system of Christian education is necessary to a complete spiritual program for Christ's people.

In Christian education there should be a proper balance between academic freedom and academic responsibility. Freedom in any orderly relationship of human life is always limited and never absolute. The freedom of a teacher in a Christian school, college, or seminary is limited by the pre-eminence of Jesus Christ, by the authoritative nature of the Scriptures, and by the distinct purpose for which the school exists.

Deuteronomy 4:1,5,9,14; 6:1-10; 31:12-13; Nehemiah 8:1-8; Job 28:28; Psalms 19:7ff.; 119:11; Proverbs 3:13ff.; 4:1-10; 8:1-7,11; 15:14; Ecclesiastes 7:19; Matthew 5:2; 7:24ff.; 28:19-20; Luke 2:40; 1 Corinthians 1:18-31; Ephesians 4:11-16; Philippians 4:8; Colossians 2:3,8-9; 1 Timothy 1:3-7; 2 Timothy 2:15; 3:14-17; Hebrews 5:12-6:3; James 1:5; 3:17.

XIII. Stewardship

God is the source of all blessings, temporal and spiritual; all that we have and are we owe to Him. Christians have a spiritual debtorship to the whole world, a holy trusteeship in the gospel, and a binding stewardship in their possessions. They are therefore under obligation to serve Him with their time, talents, and material possessions; and should recognize all these as entrusted to them

to use for the glory of God and for helping others. According to the Scriptures, Christians should contribute of their means cheerfully, regularly, systematically, proportionately, and liberally for the advancement of the Redeemer's cause on earth.

Genesis 14:20; Leviticus 27:30-32; Deuteronomy 8:18; Malachi 3:8-12; Matthew 6:1-4, 19-21; 19:21; 23:23; 25:14-29; Luke 12:16-21, 42; 16:1-13; Acts 2:44-47; 5:1-11; 17:24-25; 20:35; Romans 6:6-22; 12:1-2; 1 Corinthians 4:1-2; 6:19-20; 12; 16:1-4; 2 Corinthians 8-9; 12:15; Philippians 4:10-19; 1 Peter 1:18-19.

XIV. Cooperation

Christ's people should, as occasion requires, organize such associations and conventions as may best secure cooperation for the great objects of the Kingdom of God. Such organizations have no authority over one another or over the churches. They are voluntary and advisory bodies designed to elicit, combine, and direct the energies of our people in the most effective manner. Members of New Testament churches should cooperate with one another in carrying forward the missionary, educational, and benevolent ministries for the extension of Christ's Kingdom. Christian unity in the New Testament sense is spiritual harmony and voluntary cooperation for common ends by various groups of Christ's people. Cooperation is desirable between the various Christian denominations, when the end to be attained is itself justified, and when such cooperation involves no violation of conscience or compromise of loyalty to Christ and His Word as revealed in the New Testament.

Exodus 17:12; 18:17ff.; Judges 7:21; Ezra 1:3-4; 2:68-69; 5:14-15; Nehemiah 4; 8:1-5; Matthew 10:5-15; 20:1-16; 22:1-10; 28:19-20; Mark 2:3; Luke 10:1ff.; Acts 1:13-14; 2:1ff.; 4:31-37; 13:2-3; 15:1-35; 1 Corinthians 1:10-17; 3:5-15; 12; 2 Corinthians 8-9; Galatians 1:6-10; Ephesians 4:1-16; Philippians 1:15-18.

XV. The Christian and the Social Order

All Christians are under obligation to seek to make the will of Christ supreme in our own lives and in human society. Means and methods used for the improvement of society and the establishment of righteousness among men can be truly and permanently helpful only when they are rooted in the regeneration of the individual by the saving grace of God in Jesus Christ. In the spirit of Christ, Christians should oppose racism, every form of greed, selfishness, and vice, and all forms of sexual immorality, including adultery, homosexuality, and pornography. We should work to provide for the orphaned, the needy, the abused, the aged, the helpless, and the sick. We should speak on behalf of the unborn and contend for the sanctity of all human life from conception to natural death. Every Christian should seek to bring industry, government, and society as a whole under the sway of the principles of righteousness, truth, and brotherly love. In order to promote these ends Christians should be ready to work with all men of good will in any good cause, always being careful to act in the spirit of love without compromising their loyalty to Christ and His truth.

Exodus 20:3-17; Leviticus 6:2-5; Deuteronomy 10:12; 27:17; Psalm 101:5; Micah 6:8; Zechariah 8:16; Matthew 5:13-16, 43-48; 22:36-40; 25:35; Mark 1:29-34; 2:3ff.; 10:21; Luke 4:18-21; 10:27-37; 20:25; John 15:12; 17:15; Romans 12-14; 1 Corinthians 5:9-10; 6:1-7; 7:20-24; 10:23-11:1; Galatians 3:26-28; Ephesians 6:5-9; Colossians 3:12-17; 1 Thessalonians 3:12; Philemon; James 1:27; 2:8.

XVI. Peace and War

It is the duty of Christians to seek peace with all men on principles of righteousness. In accordance with the spirit and teachings of Christ they should do all in their power to put an end to war.

The true remedy for the war spirit is the gospel of our Lord. The supreme need of the world is the acceptance of His teachings in all the affairs of men and nations, and the practical application of His law of love. Christian people throughout the world should pray for the reign of the Prince of Peace.

Isaiah 2:4; Matthew 5:9,38-48; 6:33; 26:52; Luke 22:36,38; Romans 12:18-19; 13:1-7; 14:19; Hebrews 12:14; James 4:1-2.

XVII. Religious Liberty

God alone is Lord of the conscience, and He has left it free from the doctrines and commandments of men which are contrary to His Word or not contained in it. Church and state should be separate. The state owes to every church protection and full freedom in the pursuit of its spiritual ends. In providing for such freedom no ecclesiastical group or denomination should be favored by the state more than others. Civil government being ordained of God, it is the duty of Christians to render loyal obedience thereto in all things not contrary to the revealed will of God. The church should not resort to the civil power to carry on its work. The gospel of Christ contemplates spiritual means alone for the pursuit of its ends. The state has no right to impose penalties for religious opinions of any kind. The state has no right to impose taxes for the support of any form of religion. A free church in a free state is the Christian ideal, and this implies the right of free and unhindered access to God on the part of all men, and the right to form and propagate opinions in the sphere of religion without interference by the civil power.

Genesis 1:27; 2:7; Matthew 6:6-7,24; 16:26; 22:21; John 8:36; Acts 4:19-20; Romans 6:1-2; 13:1-7; Galatians 5:1,13; Philippians 3:20; 1 Timothy 2:1-2; James 4:12; 1 Peter 2:12-17; 3:11-17; 4:12-19.

XVIII. The Family

God has ordained the family as the foundational institution of human society. It is composed of persons related to one another by marriage, blood, or adoption.

Marriage is the uniting of one man and one woman in covenant commitment for a lifetime. It is God's unique gift to reveal the union between Christ and His church and to provide for the man and the woman in marriage the framework for intimate companionship, the channel of sexual expression according to biblical standards, and the means for procreation of the human race.

The husband and wife are of equal worth before God, since both are created in God's image. The marriage relationship models the way God relates to His people. A husband is to love his wife as Christ loved the church. He has the God-given responsibility to provide for, to protect, and to lead his family. A wife is to submit herself graciously to the servant leadership of her husband even as the church willingly submits to the headship of Christ. She, being in the image of God as is her husband and thus equal to him, has the God-given responsibility to respect her husband and to serve as his helper in managing the household and nurturing the next generation.

Children, from the moment of conception, are a blessing and heritage from the Lord. Parents are to demonstrate to their children God's pattern for marriage. Parents are to teach their children spiritual and moral values and to lead them, through consistent lifestyle example and loving discipline, to make choices based on biblical truth. Children are to honor and obey their parents.

Genesis 1:26-28; 2:15-25; 3:1-20; Exodus 20:12; Deuteronomy 6:4-9; Joshua 24:15; 1 Samuel 1:26-28; Psalms 51:5; 78:1-8; Psalms 127; Psalms 128; 139:13-16; Proverbs 1:8; 5:15-20; 6:20-22; 12:4; 13:24; 14:1; 17:6; 18:22; 22:6,15; 23:13-14; 24:3; 29:15,17; 31:10-31; Ecclesiastes 4:9-12; 9:9; Malachi 2:14-16; Matthew 5:31-32; 18:2-5; 19:3-9; Mark 10:6-12; Romans 1:18-32; 1 Corinthians 7:1-16; Ephesians 5:21-33; 6:1-4; Colossians 3:18-21; 1 Timothy 5:8,14; 2 Timothy 1:3-5; Titus 2:3-5; Hebrews 13:4; 1 Peter 3:1-7.

Appendix B

The Nashville Statement

“Know that the LORD Himself is God; It is He who has made us, and not we ourselves...”

-Psalm 100:3

Preamble

Evangelical Christians at the dawn of the twenty-first century find themselves living in a period of historic transition. As Western culture has become increasingly post-Christian, it has embarked upon a massive revision of what it means to be a human being. By and large the spirit of our age no longer discerns or delights in the beauty of God’s design for human life. Many deny that God created human beings for his glory, and that his good purposes for us include our personal and physical design as male and female. It is common to think that human identity as male and female is not part of God’s beautiful plan, but is, rather, an expression of an individual’s autonomous preferences. The pathway to full and lasting joy through God’s good design for his creatures is thus replaced by the path of shortsighted alternatives that, sooner or later, ruin human life and dishonor God.

This secular spirit of our age presents a great challenge to the Christian church. Will the church of the Lord Jesus Christ lose her biblical conviction, clarity, and courage, and blend into the spirit of the age? Or will she hold fast to the word of life, draw courage from Jesus, and unashamedly proclaim his way as the way of life? Will she maintain her clear, counter-cultural witness to a world that seems bent on ruin?

We are persuaded that faithfulness in our generation means declaring once again the true story of the world and of our place in it—particularly as male and female. Christian Scripture teaches that there is but one God who alone is Creator and Lord of all. To him alone, every person owes glad- hearted thanksgiving, heart-felt praise, and total allegiance. This is the path not only of glorifying God, but of knowing ourselves. To forget our Creator is to forget who we are, for he made us for himself. And we cannot know ourselves truly without truly knowing him who made us. We did not make ourselves. We are not our own. Our true identity, as male and female persons, is given by God. It is not only foolish, but hopeless, to try to make ourselves what God did not create us to be.

We believe that God’s design for his creation and his way of salvation serve to bring him the greatest glory and bring us the greatest good. God’s good plan provides us with the greatest freedom. Jesus said he came that we might have life and have it in overflowing measure. He is for us and not against us. Therefore, in the hope of serving Christ’s church and witnessing publicly to the good purposes of God for human sexuality revealed in Christian Scripture, we offer the following affirmations and denials.

Articles of Affirmation and Denial

Article 1

WE AFFIRM that God has designed marriage to be a covenantal, sexual, procreative, lifelong union of one man and one woman, as husband and wife, and is meant to signify the covenant love between Christ and his bride the church.

WE DENY that God has designed marriage to be a homosexual, polygamous, or polyamorous relationship. We also deny that marriage is a mere human contract rather than a covenant made before God.

Article 2

WE AFFIRM that God's revealed will for all people is chastity outside of marriage and fidelity within marriage.

WE DENY that any affections, desires, or commitments ever justify sexual intercourse before or outside marriage; nor do they justify any form of sexual immorality.

Article 3

WE AFFIRM that God created Adam and Eve, the first human beings, in his own image, equal before God as persons, and distinct as male and female.

WE DENY that the divinely ordained differences between male and female render them unequal in dignity or worth.

Article 4

WE AFFIRM that divinely ordained differences between male and female reflect God's original creation design and are meant for human good and human flourishing.

WE DENY that such differences are a result of the Fall or are a tragedy to be overcome.

Article 5

WE AFFIRM that the differences between male and female reproductive structures are integral to God's design for self-conception as male or female.

WE DENY that physical anomalies or psychological conditions nullify the God-appointed link between biological sex and self-conception as male or female.

Article 6

WE AFFIRM that those born with a physical disorder of sex development are created in the image of God and have dignity and worth equal to all other image-bearers. They are acknowledged by our Lord Jesus in his words about "eunuchs who were born that way from their mother's womb." With all others they are welcome as faithful followers of Jesus Christ and should embrace their biological sex insofar as it may be known.

WE DENY that ambiguities related to a person's biological sex render one incapable of living a fruitful life in joyful obedience to Christ.

Article 7

WE AFFIRM that self-conception as male or female should be defined by God's holy purposes in creation and redemption as revealed in Scripture.

WE DENY that adopting a homosexual or transgender self-conception is consistent with God's holy purposes in creation and redemption.

Article 8

WE AFFIRM that people who experience sexual attraction for the same sex may live a rich and fruitful life pleasing to God through faith in Jesus Christ, as they, like all Christians, walk in purity of life.

WE DENY that sexual attraction for the same sex is part of the natural goodness of God's original creation, or that it puts a person outside the hope of the gospel.

Article 9

WE AFFIRM that sin distorts sexual desires by directing them away from the marriage covenant and toward sexual immorality— a distortion that includes both heterosexual and homosexual immorality.

WE DENY that an enduring pattern of desire for sexual immorality justifies sexually immoral behavior.

Article 10

WE AFFIRM that it is sinful to approve of homosexual immorality or transgenderism and that such approval constitutes an essential departure from Christian faithfulness and witness.

WE DENY that the approval of homosexual immorality or transgenderism is a matter of moral indifference about which otherwise faithful Christians should agree to disagree.

Article 11

WE AFFIRM our duty to speak the truth in love at all times, including when we speak to or about one another as male or female.

WE DENY any obligation to speak in such ways that dishonor God’s design of his image-bearers as male and female.

Article 12

WE AFFIRM that the grace of God in Christ gives both merciful pardon and transforming power, and that this pardon and power enable a follower of Jesus to put to death sinful desires and to walk in a manner worthy of the Lord.

WE DENY that the grace of God in Christ is insufficient to forgive all sexual sins and to give power for holiness to every believer who feels drawn into sexual sin.

Article 13

WE AFFIRM that the grace of God in Christ enables sinners to forsake transgender self-conceptions and by divine forbearance to accept the God-ordained link between one’s biological sex and one’s self-conception as male or female.

WE DENY that the grace of God in Christ sanctions self-conceptions that are at odds with God’s revealed will.

Article 14

WE AFFIRM that Christ Jesus has come into the world to save sinners and that through Christ’s death and resurrection forgiveness of sins and eternal life are available to every person who repents of sin and trusts in Christ alone as Savior, Lord, and supreme treasure.

WE DENY that the Lord’s arm is too short to save or that any sinner is beyond his reach.