



TRINITY
BAPTIST CHURCH

Constitution & Members' Covenant

MEMBERS' COVENANT

Since God has saved us by His grace and joined us together in Christian love, we promise as members of Trinity Baptist Church:

To love, serve, pray for, and sacrifice for each other as brothers and sisters in Christ

To watch over one another in love and maintain a spirit of unity and peace.

To be slow to take offense and ready for reconciliation as Jesus taught us.

To use our spiritual gifts to build each other up, to give cheerfully as God prospers us financially, to be involved in weekly worship, and to remain committed to prayer.

To guard our behavior and speech, so as not to damage the cause of Christ or the testimony of our church family.

And to work together to help the poor, to share the gospel near and far, and to seek the growth and health of Christ's church throughout the world.

May God, by His grace, help us to keep these promises.

(changed 4/6/2025)

CONSTITUTION

PREAMBLE

We, the members of Trinity Baptist Church, do ordain and establish the following articles, to which we voluntarily submit ourselves.

ARTICLE I

NAME

The name of this church shall be “Trinity Baptist Church of Vidalia, Georgia”.

ARTICLE II

PURPOSE

The purpose of this church is to glorify the God of the Scriptures by promoting His worship, evangelizing sinners, and edifying saints. To this end we are committed to proclaiming God’s perfect law and His glorious Gospel of Grace in Jesus Christ throughout the world, and to defending the “faith once delivered unto the saints” (Jude 3)

ARTICLE III

ARTICLES OF FAITH

1. The Scriptures

We believe that the Holy Bible was written by men divinely inspired, and is a perfect treasure of heavenly instruction;¹ that it has God for its author, salvation for its end;² and truth without any error for its matter;³ that it reveals the principles by which God will judge us;⁴ and therefore is, and shall remain to the ends of the world, the true center of Christian union,⁵ and the supreme standard by which all human conduct, creed, and opinions should be tried.⁶

- 1) 2 Timothy 3:16-17, 2 Peter 1:21
- 2) 2 Timothy 3:15; John 5:38-39
- 3) Proverbs 30:5-6
- 4) John 12:47-48
- 5) Philippians 3:16; 1 Corinthians 1:10
- 6) 1 John 4:1; Isaiah 8:20; 1 Thessalonians 5:21; 2 Corinthians 13:5; Acts 17:11

2. The True God

We believe that there is one, and only one living and true God, an infinite, intelligent Spirit, whose name is JEHOVAH, the Maker and Supreme Ruler of heaven and earth;¹ inexpressibly glorious in holiness;² and worthy of all possible honor, confidence, and love;³ that in the unity of the Godhead there are three persons, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit;⁴ equal in every divine perfections;⁵ and executing distinct but harmonious offices in the great work of redemption.⁶

- 1) John 4:24; Psalm 83:18; Hebrews 3:4; Jeremiah 10:10
- 2) Exodus 15:11; Isaiah 6:3; 1 Peter 15-16; Revelation 4: 6-8
- 3) Mark 12:30; Revelation 4:11
- 4) Matthew 28:19; 1 John 5:7
- 5) John 10:30; Acts 5:3-4; John 1:1-2
- 6) Ephesians 2:18

3. The Fall of Man

We believe that man was created in holiness, under the law of his Maker;¹ but by voluntary transgression fell from the holy and happy state;² in consequence of which all mankind are now sinners;³ not by constraint but choice;⁴ being by nature utterly void of that holiness required by the law of God, positively inclined to evil; therefore, under just condemnation to eternal ruin;⁵ without defense or excuse.⁶

- 1) Genesis 1:27, 31; Ecclesiastes 7:29; Acts 17:26; Genesis 2:16-17
- 2) Genesis 3:6-24; Romans 5:12
- 3) John 3:6; Psalms 51:5; Romans 5:15-19
- 4) Isaiah 53:6; Genesis 6:12; Romans 3:9-18
- 5) Ephesians 2:1-3; Romans 1:18, 2:1-16; Galatians 3:10
- 6) Romans 3:19; Galatians 3:22

4. The Way of Salvation

We believe that the salvation of sinners is wholly of grace;¹ through the Mediatorial offices of the Son of God;² who according to the will of the Father, freely took upon Him our nature, yet without sin;³ honored the divine law by His personal and perfect obedience,⁴ and by His death made a full atonement for our sins;⁵ that having risen from the dead, He is now enthroned in Heaven;⁶ and uniting in His wonderful person the tenderest sympathies with divine perfections, He is in every way qualified to be a suitable, a compassionate, and all-sufficient Savior.⁷

- 1) Ephesians 2:5, 8-10; 1 John 4:10; Acts 15:11
- 2) John 1:1-14; Hebrews 4:14, 12:24; 1 Timothy 2:5
- 3) Philippians 2:6-7; Hebrews 2:14; 2 Corinthians 5:21
- 4) Isaiah 42:21; Philippians 2:8; Galatians 4:4-5; Romans 3:21
- 5) Isaiah 53: 4-5; Matthew 20:28; Romans 4:25, 3:21-26; 1 John 4:10, 2:2; 1 Corinthians 15:1-3; Hebrews 9:13-15
- 6) Hebrews 8:1; Colossians 3:1-4
- 7) Hebrews 7:25; Colossians 2:9; Hebrews 1:8, 2:18, 4:15-16, 7:26

5. Justification

We believe that the great gospel blessing which Christ¹ secures to such as believe in Him is justification;² that justification includes the pardon of sin,³ and the gift of eternal life on principles of righteousness;⁴ that it is bestowed, not in consideration of any works of righteousness which we have done, but solely through faith in the Redeemer's blood,⁵ by means of which faith His perfect righteousness is freely imputed to us by God;⁶ that it brings us into a state of most blessed peace and favor with God, and secures every other blessing needful for time and eternity.⁷

- 1) John 1:16
- 2) Acts 13:39; Romans 8:1
- 3) Acts 10:43; 1 John 2:12; Ephesians 1:7
- 4) 1 John 2:25; Romans 5:21
- 5) Romans 4:4-5, 6:23; Philippians 3:7-9
- 6) Romans 4:23-25, 5:19
- 7) Romans 5:1-3; 1 Corinthians 1:30-31; Matthew 6:33

6. The Freeness of Salvation

We believe that the blessings of salvation are made free to all by the gospel;¹ that it is in the immediate duty of all to accept them by a sincere penitent, and obedient faith;² and that nothing prevents the salvation of the greatest sinner on earth, but his own inherent depravity, and

voluntary rejection of the gospel;³ which rejection involves him in an aggravated condemnation.⁴

- 1) Isaiah 55:1; Revelation 22:17
- 2) Mark 1:15; Romans 1:15-17
- 3) John 5:40; Proverbs 1:24; Acts 13:46
- 4) John 3:19; 2 Thessalonians 1:8

7. Regeneration

We believe that in order to be saved, sinners must be regenerated, or born again;¹ that regeneration consists in giving a holy disposition to the mind;² that it is effected in a manner above comprehension by the power of the Holy Spirit, in connection with divine truth,³ so as to secure our voluntary obedience to the gospel;⁴ and that its proper evidence appears in the holy fruits of repentance, faith, and newness of life.⁵

- 1) John 3:3, 6-7; 1 Corinthians 2:14
- 2) 2 Corinthians 5:17; Ezekiel 36:26; Romans 2:28-29
- 3) John 3:8; James 1:16-18; 1 Peter 1:22-25
- 4) 1 Peter 1:22-25
- 5) Romans 8:9; Galatians 5:16-23; Matthew 3:8-10, 7:20; 1 John 5:18; 2 Corinthians 5:17

8. Repentance and Faith

We believe that repentance and faith are sacred duties, and also inseparable graces, wrought in the soul by the regenerating Spirit of God;¹ whereby being deeply convinced of our guilt, danger, and helplessness, and of the way of salvation by Christ,² we turn from sin to God with unfeigned contrition, confession, and supplication for mercy;³ at the same time heartily receiving the Lord Jesus as our Prophet, Priest, and King, and relying on Him alone as the only and all-sufficient Savior.⁴

- 1) Mark 1:15; Acts 11:18; Ephesians 2:8
- 2) John 16:8; Acts 2:37-38, 16:30-31
- 3) Luke 18:13, 15:18-21; 2 Corinthians 7:10; Psalm 51
- 4) Romans 10:9-10; Acts 3:22-23; Hebrews 4:14, 9:25; John 1:12

9. God's Purpose of Grace

We believe that election is the eternal purpose of God, according to which He graciously regenerates, sanctifies, and saves sinners;¹ that being perfectly consistent with the free agency of man, it comprehends all the means in connection with the end;² that it is a most glorious display of God's sovereign goodness;³ that it utterly excludes boasting, and promotes humility;⁴ that it encourages the use of means;⁵ that it may be ascertained by its effect in all who truly believe the gospel;⁶ that it is the foundation of Christian assurance;⁷ and that to ascertain it with regard to ourselves demands and deserves the utmost diligence.⁸

- 1) 2 Timothy 1:8-9; Ephesians 1:3-14; Romans 11:5-6; John 15:16; 1 John 4:19
- 2) 2 Thessalonians 2:13-14; Acts 13:48; John 10:16
- 3) Exodus 33:18-19; Matthew 20:15; Ephesians 1:11; Romans 9:23-24; Jeremiah 31:3; James 1:17-18; 2 Timothy 1:9; Romans 11:28-29, 32-36
- 4) 1 Corinthians 1:26-32, 4:7, 15:10; Romans 3:27; Colossians 3:12
- 5) 2 Timothy 2:10; 1 Corinthians 9:22
- 6) 1 Thessalonians 1:4-10
- 7) Romans 6:28-39, 1:29
- 8) 2 Peter 1:10-11; 2 Corinthians 13:5

10. Sanctification

We believe that sanctification is the process by which, according to the will of God, we are made partakers of His holiness;¹ that it is a progressive work;² that it is begun in regeneration;³ that it is carried on in the hearts of believers by the presence and power of the Holy Spirit, the Sealer and Comforter, in the continual use of the appointed means—especially the Word of God, self-examination, self-denial, watchfulness, and prayer;⁴ and in the practice of all godly exercise and duties.⁵

- 1) 1 Thessalonians 4:3, 5:23; Ephesians 1:4
- 2) Proverbs 4:18; 2 Corinthians 3:18; Philippians 3:12-16
- 3) 1 John 2:29; Ephesians 1:13-14; Romans 8:5
- 4) Philippians 2:12-13; Ephesians 4:11-12; 1 Peter 2:2; 2 Corinthians 13:5; Luke 9:23; Matthew 26:41; Ephesians 6:18; Hebrews 12:14
- 5) 1 Timothy 4:7

11. Perseverance of Saints

We believe that such as are truly regenerate, being born of the Spirit, will not utterly fall away and perish, but will endure unto the end;¹ that their persevering attachment to Christ is the grand mark which distinguishes them from superficial professors;² that a special providence watches over their welfare;³ and that they are kept by the power of God through faith unto Salvation.⁴

- 1) John 8:31, 10:28; 1 John 3:9, 5:8; Romans 5:8-10
- 2) 1 John 2:19; Matthew 13:20-21; Job 17:9
- 3) Romans 8:28; Jeremiah 32:40; Psalm 91:11-12
- 4) Philippians 1:6; Jude 24-25; Hebrews 13:5; 1 Peter 1:3-5

12. The Law and Gospel

We believe that the law of God is the eternal and unchangeable rule of His moral government;¹ that it is holy, just, and good;² and that the inability which the Scriptures ascribe to fallen mankind to fulfill its precepts arises entirely from their sinful nature,³ to deliver them from which, and restore them through a Mediator to unfeigned obedience to the holy law, is one great end of the gospel, and of the means of grace connected with the establishment of the visible church.⁴

- 1) Matthew 5:17; Luke 16:17; Romans 3:20
- 2) Romans 7:12, 14; Galatians 3:21
- 3) Romans 3:10-23, 8:7-8
- 4) 1 Timothy 2:5; Matthew 28:18-20

13. A Gospel Church

We believe that a visible church of Christ is a congregation of baptized believers,¹ associated by covenant in the faith and fellowship of the gospel;² observing the ordinances of Christ;³ governed by His law;⁴ and exercising the gifts, rights, and privileges invested in them by His Word;⁵ that its only scriptural officers are pastors (elders, bishops) and deacons,⁶ whose qualifications, claims, and duties are defined in the Epistles to Timothy and Titus.

- 1) Matthew 18:17; Acts 2:41, 47, 5:11, 8:1; 1 Corinthians 12:13, 14:23
- 2) Acts 2:41-47, 4:32-35
- 3) 1 Corinthians 11:2, 23, 26
- 4) Matthew 28:20; John 14:15, 15:12; 1 John 4:21
- 5) Ephesians 4:7; 1 Corinthians 14:12
- 6) Philippians 1:1; Acts 14:23; 1 Timothy 3; Titus 1

14. Baptism and the Lord's Supper

We believe that baptism and the Lord's Supper are two ordinances of special significance which our Lord has commanded us to observe.¹ We believe that Christian baptism is the immersion in water of a believer in Christ into the name of the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Ghost,² to show forth in a solemn and beautiful emblem his faith in the crucified, buried, and risen Savior, with its effects, in His death to sin and resurrection to a new life;³ that it is a prerequisite to the privileges of a church relation, and to the Lord's Supper.⁴ We believe that the Lord's Supper is a provision of bread and fruit of the vine, representing Christ's body and blood, partaken of by the members of Christ's church assembled for that purpose;⁵ in commemoration of the death of their Lord,⁶ showing their faith and participation in the merits of His sacrifice, their dependence on Him for spiritual life and nourishment,⁷ and their hope of life eternal through His resurrection from the dead; its observance to be preceded by solemn self-examination.⁸

- 1) Acts 8:36-39; Mathew 3:5-6; John 4:1-2; Mark 16:16; Acts 2:38, 10:48; 1 Corinthians 12:23-26; Matthew 26:26-29, 28:19
- 2) Matthew 28:19; Acts 8:38-39, 10:47-48; John 3:23
- 3) Romans 6:4; Colossians 2:12
- 4) Acts 2:41-42; Matthew 28:19-20
- 5) Luke 22:19-20; Mark 14:20-26; Matthew 26:27-30; 1 Corinthians 10:16
- 6) 1 Corinthians 11:26
- 7) John 6:35, 54-46
- 8) 1 Corinthians 11:28

15. The Lord's Day

We believe that the first day of the week is the Lord's Day, or Christian Sabbath;¹ and is to be kept sacred to religious purposes² by abstaining from all secular labor, except works of mercy and necessity;³ by devout observance of all the means of grace, both private and public;⁴ and by preparation for that rest that remains for the people of God.⁵

- 1) Acts 20:7; John 20:19; 1 Corinthians 16:1-2
- 2) Exodus 20:8; Revelation 1:10
- 3) Isaiah 56: 2-8, 58:13-14; John 5:8-9, 7:21-24, 9:14
- 4) Hebrews 10:24-25; Acts 13:44; Leviticus 19:30; Luke 4:16
- 5) Hebrews 4:3-11

16. Civil Government

We believe that civil government is of divine appointment, for the interest and good order of human society;¹ and that magistrates are to be prayed for, conscientiously honored, and obeyed;² except only in things opposed to the will of our Lord Jesus Christ,³ who is the only Lord of the conscience, and the Prince of the kings of the earth; King of Kings and Lord of Lords.⁴

- 1) Romans 13:1-7
- 2) Matthew 22:21; Titus 3:1; 1 Peter 2:13-15; 1 Timothy 2:1-3
- 3) Acts 5:29; Matthew 10:28; Daniel 3:15-18, 6:7-10; Acts 4:18-20
- 4) Matthew 23:10; Revelation 1:5, 19:16; Psalm 72:11; Romans 14:9-13

17. Righteous and Wicked

We believe that there is a radical and essential difference between the righteous and the wicked;¹ that such only as regenerated, being justified through faith in Jesus Christ and sanctified by the Spirit of God, are truly righteous in His esteem;² while all such as continue in

impenitence and unbelief are, in His sight, wicked and under the curse;³ and this distinction holds among men both in and after death.⁴

- 1) Malachi 3:18; Genesis 18:23
- 2) Romans 6:18, 22, 7:6; 1 John 2:29, 3:7
- 3) 1 John 5:19; Galatians 3:10; John 3:36; Isaiah 57:21
- 4) Proverbs 14:32; Luke 16:25; John 5:28-29, 8:21-24

18. The World to Come

We believe that the end of this world is approaching;¹ that at the last day Christ will descend from heaven,² and raise the dead from the grave for final retribution;³ that a solemn separation will then take place;⁴ that the wicked will be adjudged to endless punishment, and the righteous to endless joy;⁵ and that this judgment will fix forever the final state of men in heaven or hell on principles of righteous.⁶

- 1) 1 Peter 4:7; 1 Corinthians 7:29-31; Hebrews 1:10-12; Matthew 24:35, 28:20, 13:39-40; 1 John 2:1
- 2) Acts 1:11; Revelation 1:7; Hebrews 9:28; 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18
- 3) Acts 24:15, 10:42; 1 Corinthians 15:12-59; Luke 14:14; Daniel 12:2; John 5:28-29
- 4) Matthew 13:37-43, 49, 24:30-31, 25:31-33
- 5) Matthew 25:31-41; 2 Peter 2:9; Jude 7; Philippians 3:19; Romans 6:22; 2 Corinthians 5:10-11
- 6) 2 Thessalonians 1:6-12; Hebrews 6:1-2; Acts 17:31; Romans 2:2-16; Revelation 20:11-12; 2 Peter 3:11-12

19. Marriage and the Family

God ordained marriage and the family as foundational for society. Marriage is the union of one man and one woman in covenant commitment for a lifetime. The husband and wife are of equal worth before God, since both are created in God's image.¹ God designed marriage to reveal the union between Christ and His church and to bless humanity through companionship, sexual intimacy, and a means of procreation.² Just as Christ loves the church, a husband is to love his wife by providing for, protecting, and leading her. A wife is to submit herself graciously to the servant leadership of her husband, as the church joyfully submits to the headship of Christ.³ Children, from the moment of conception, are a blessing and heritage from the Lord. Parents are to teach their children to love and serve Christ and children are to honor and obey their parents.⁴

- 1) Genesis 1:26-28; Matthew 19:3-9
- 2) Ephesians 5:21-33; Genesis 2:15-25
- 3) 1 Peter 3:1-7; Colossians 3:18-19
- 4) Psalm 127:3; Deuteronomy 6:6-7; Ephesians 6:1-4

ARTICLE IV **MEMBERSHIP**

1. Requirements of Membership

Any person who professes repentance toward God and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ, who has been baptized as a believer, and who expresses substantial agreement with the doctrines, aims, and government of this church, shall be eligible for membership. It is understood that each individual will have studied the Covenant and Constitution of this church for mutual agreement and conscientious commitment.

2. Types or Forms of Membership

Each member of the church is acknowledged to form a vital part of the body and to have a peculiar function in the life of that body (1 Corinthians 12:14-27). Practical considerations, however, require that certain distinctions be recognized in the membership of this church.

A. Regular Members

All who are received into the membership of the church according to the procedures set forth in Section 3 or this Article, who continue in regular attendance at the stated meetings of the church, and who do not come under the corrective discipline of the church as set forth in the Article on Discipline, shall be considered regular members in good standing and entitled to all the rights and privileges of membership in the church.

B. Temporary Members

Persons who live in our area for a limited period of time (e.g., college students, military personnel, persons on special work assignments) may be received into the membership of the church on the same basis and in the same manner as persons who have permanent residence in our geographical area. If such a person is already a member of a church in his place of permanent residence, he need not be released from the membership of his "home church" but will be regarded as a temporary member while in our midst, enjoying all the rights and privileges of regular membership. When such a person terminates his period of temporary residence and leaves our area, he will automatically be released to the fellowship of his "home church" and no longer be regarded as a member of this church.

C. Associate Members

Regular members who move away from our area and who cannot find another local church, with which they can conscientiously unite, will, at their request, be retained as associate members of this church. Such persons must maintain regular communication with the church in order to maintain their associate membership in it. Nevertheless, they are urged to seek diligently a church with which they can unite elsewhere. An associate member shall not be allowed to vote in any business meeting of the church.

3. Procedure in Reception of Members

A. Any person who desires membership in this church shall be given a copy of the Constitution and By-Laws of Trinity Baptist Church. A time shall then be fixed when at least two of the elders shall meet with each candidate for membership. During the membership interview an effort will be made to determine whether the candidate meets the membership requirements of this church as stated in Article IV, Section 1.

B. The name of each candidate shall be given to the membership of the church. Members are expected to voice any questions or objections concerning any candidate's qualifications for membership. Members are expected to consider this a personal duty of the most serious character. If no valid questions or objections are raised the candidate shall be recommended for membership at a regular worship service.

4. Termination of Membership

A. By Physical Death

When a member of the church is removed from our midst by death, his name shall be transferred to the file of former members.

B. By Transfer

When it is so requested a member in good standing may be granted a letter of dismissal to the fellowship of another church. No such letter may be given to a member who is under the corrective discipline of this church. Letters of dismissal shall be forwarded only to other churches of like faith.

C. By Exclusion

If a member habitually absents himself from the stated meetings of the church, without showing just cause, or if due to relocation he ceases to maintain a vital contact with the church, he may be excluded from the membership. Also, any member, who personally so requests, may be excluded from the membership. Because of the seriousness of church membership, members shall be excluded only after counsel and due admonition. If exclusion is warranted, the congregation shall be informed. If no compelling objections are raised, then the member shall be excluded. If an excluded member again applies for membership, the normal procedures shall be followed as set forth in Section 3 of this article.

D. By Excommunication

According to the teaching of Holy Scripture, a congregation must cut off from its fellowship and visible membership any person who teaches or insists on holding to false and heretical doctrine, or who blatantly or persistently conducts himself in a manner inconsistent with his Christian profession, or who persists in disturbing the unity or peace of the church. (Matthew 18:15-17; Romans 16:17; 1 Corinthians 5:1-13; 2 Thessalonians 3:6,11,16; Titus 3:10,11; Hebrews 10:23-25). The procedure to be followed in such excommunication is set forth in Article 6, Section 2, of this Constitution.

E. A file of all former members shall be kept which shall include reasons for termination of membership.

5. Conduct Expected of Members

A. All regular and temporary members are expected to attend all the stated meetings of the church unless providentially hindered (by illness, accident, unusual working conditions, and other such circumstances). The stated meetings of the church are all the services on the Lord's Day and the midweek prayer service. (Hebrews 10:25)

B. Church members are expected to make use of the various other means of grace which are available to them, such as the regular daily reading of the Bible, regular private and family prayer, and a proper reverence for and observance of the Lord's Day.

C. Since it is clearly taught in Scripture that Christians should support financially the work of the Lord by systematic and proportionate giving made through the local church (Malachi 3:8-10; 1 Corinthians 16:1-2; 2 Corinthians 8-9), all the members of this church are expected to conform to this rule of Scripture. The tithe (10% of one's income) is not imposed on the people of God as a tax but is strongly urged upon each member as an expression of worship and biblical norm for basic giving, to which should be added gifts and offerings according to one's ability and the willingness of his heart. (2 Corinthians 8:1-5; Exodus 3:2-7)

D. Church members are expected to obey the teaching of the Scriptures in respect to family life and government. As the God appointed head of the family, the husband must rule over the household with gentleness and love but also with wisdom and firmness (Ephesians 5:25; 1 Timothy 3:4-5; 1 Peter 3:7). The wife must be in subjection to her husband in all things according to the

rule of Scripture (Ephesians 5:22-24; 1 Peter 3:1-6). The husband with the wife must bring up their children “in the nurture and admonition of the Lord” (Ephesians 6:1-4). This includes setting a godly example before them, consistently instructing them from the Scriptures (Deuteronomy 6:4-9), and by using wise and firm discipline, including corporal punishment when it is needed (Proverbs 13:24, 22:15; Hebrews 12:7).

E. We now who have been joined to Christ by faith and are members of this church are also members one of another (Romans 12:5). With this privileged relationship come particular responsibilities. We must maintain mutual transparency and honesty (Ephesians 4:25). We must rejoice in each other’s honor and bear one another’s sorrow (1 Corinthians 12:26). We must discreetly confess our faults one to another and avoid all backbiting and gossip (Matthew 18:15ff; 1 Thessalonians 5:14-15; Hebrews 3:12-13; 10:24-25). We must help one another materially as necessity may require (Galatians 6:10; James 2:14-16; 1 John 3:16-18). We must keep in strict confidence all matters of private concern to the church and not discuss them with persons outside of this fellowship. In summary, we are to “have love one to another” (John 13:25; 1 Corinthians 13).

F. It is the duty of every Christians individually and as a member of a local church to labor for the extension of the Kingdom of God both at home and to the ends of the earth (Acts 1:8). Therefore, every member of this church is expected prayerfully to recognize and to seize every opportunity to bear witness to his faith in Christ both by consistent Christian conduct and by the testimony of his lips (Matthew 28:18-20).

G. Each member of this church is expected to render in his daily life loyal obedience to all the moral precepts of God’s Word (Romans 8:3-4). If God has not condemned or forbidden a practice in His word, a Christian is at liberty to participate in it. The exercise of Christian liberty, however, must at all times be governed by an earnest desire to walk in the fear of God and to glorify Him in all things (1 Peter 1:17; 1 Corinthians 10:31), a loving regard for the consciences of weaker brethren (1 Corinthians 8:9; Romans 15:1-3), a compassion for the lost (1 Corinthians 9:19-22), and a zealous regard for the health of one’s own soul (Romans 13:14; 1 Corinthians 6:12, 9:24-27; Galatians 5:22-23; 1 Peter 2:16).

H. All who come into the membership of this church are expected to recognize and to submit to the authority of the Overseers (Elders) of the church (1 Corinthians 16:15-16; 1 Thessalonians 5:12-13; Hebrews 13:17).

ARTICLE V

AFFILIATION

- 1.** We acknowledge no ecclesiastical authority other than our Lord Jesus Christ, who is the Head of the Church (Ephesians 5:23) and who directs the affairs of the church through elders chosen and ordained according to the precepts of the Holy Scripture. The elders themselves at all times and in all their activities stand under the authority of Holy Scripture.
- 2.** The church may and does cooperate with other like-minded churches in matters of mutual interest and concern. We may seek the assistance and counsel of other churches in matters of special concern to use, but the decision of no other church or group of churches shall at any time be acknowledged as binding on this church.

ARTICLE VI

CHURCH DISCIPLINE

1. Formative Discipline

Formative discipline is primarily positive through the teaching of God's Word, the example of Christian living, and the mutual ministry of the several members of the body of Christ. It has as its objective the instruction of disciples, the transformation of their lives, and their edification in love (Romans 12:1-6; 1 Corinthians 12:4-27; Ephesians 4:11-13). Mutual submission to one another (Ephesians 5:2) and to the overseers whom the Lord has set over His church (1 Peter 5:5; Hebrews 13:17) is a vital part of this discipline. Formative discipline will result in the sanctification of each member individually and of the whole body of the church collectively. There are occasions, however, when one's failure to respond to this formative discipline makes the application of corrective discipline necessary.

2. Corrective Discipline

A. General Statement

Corrective discipline becomes necessary when heretical doctrine or disorderly or scandalous conduct appears among the members of the church. In all such cases reasonable effort must be made to resolve difficulty, correct error, and remove offense through counsel and admonition before more drastic steps are taken (Galatians 6:1; James 5:19-20). When admonition is not heeded, suspension of some of the privileges of membership may need to be imposed. If this measure fails, excommunication from the membership of the church may be necessary. No offenses shall be brought before the church until the instructions of Scripture have first been followed (Matthew 5:23-24, 18:15; Galatians 6:1-2). Corrective discipline always has for its aim the glory of God, the purity, unity, influence, and witness of the church, and the restoration and spiritual growth of the offender.

B. Suspension

(1) Some kinds of conduct and doctrine may be categorized as "disorderly" or "unruly" (2 Thessalonians 3:6,7,11; 1 Thessalonians 5:15). Such conduct disturbs the peace and unity of the church and damages its testimony. Yet a disorderly member is not to be immediately excommunicated if he does not respond to counsel. Rather, he is to be suspended in accordance with the directions of 2 Thessalonians 3:6-15 and "counted not as an enemy, but admonished as a brother" that "he may be ashamed" and repent.

(2) A member guilty of sinful conduct may be suspended if upon the admonition of the church (Matthew 18:17) he shows hopeful signs of repentance. Such a member could not properly be excommunicated under such circumstances. Nevertheless, his sinful conduct must not be overlooked, lest occasion be given "to the enemies of the Lord to blaspheme" (2 Samuel 12:14), lest others be emboldened to sin, and the offender himself fail to test his own soul and to appreciate the gravity of his offense. Lesser discipline may be imposed upon a member, such as public rebuke, or suspension of membership. The latter consists of a temporary suspension to the rights to attend the Lord's table, publicly serve in the church, and vote in congregational meetings. Those who humbly submit to such discipline and repent are to be wholly forgiven and publicly reinstated to all privileges of membership from which he/she was suspended.

C. Excommunication

(1) Some kinds of conduct and doctrine are not merely disorderly, but are actually traitorous to the cause of Christ (Matthew 18:15-17; Romans 16:17-18; 1 Corinthians 1 5:1-13; 6:9-10; 1 Timothy 1:19-20; 2 Timothy 2:16-18; Titus 3:10; Revelation 2:2, 14-16, 20). A member guilty of such conduct or doctrine must be removed from the fellowship of the church (Matthew 18:17, 1 Corinthians 5:1-13). Before such action is taken, earnest efforts must be made to bring the offender to repentance (Matthew 18:15-17; Titus 3:10). If these efforts fail, the offender is to be excommunicated by the church at a congregational meeting. To be valid, an act of excommunication must have the approval of a majority of the members present and voting (2 Corinthians 2:6). (Amended 2/11/90)

(2) A suspended member shall be excommunicated if he continues impenitent.

D. Restoration

The right to exclude or excommunicate persons or the withdrawal of fellowship (1 Corinthians 5: 2 Thessalonians 3:6) is in harmony with the teachings of the New Testament (Matthew 18:16-17). The Apostolic Church also had a right to restore those persons who gave satisfactory evidence of repentance (2 Corinthians 2:6-8). The object of discipline having been accomplished, the congregation shall have the right to restore the repentant member of full membership by the approval of a majority of the members present and voting. Our zeal for the glory of God must ever be tempered by a loving and prayerful concern for the full restoration of an offender. (Amended 2/11/90)

ARTICLE VII **ORDINANCES**

1. General Statement

There are two ordinances of special significance which our Lord has commanded us to observe, namely, Baptism and the Lord's Supper. Neither of them has saving merit, nor is any grace imparted to the recipient through the water of Baptism or the bread and the cup of the Supper. These ordinances are not means of "special grace," but they are "special means of grace" and powerful aides to the faith of the believers who participate in them.

2. Baptism

Only confessed disciples of our Lord Jesus Christ are proper candidates for Baptism, and all such persons should be baptized and joined to a local church (Acts 2:28, 41, 47, 5:13-14). Believing that baptism is the God-ordained sign of one's personal union with Christ in His death, burial, and resurrection, and the door of entrance into the visible community of the people of God, we shall receive into the membership of the church only those who have been baptized in the Biblical manner which is by immersion and "into the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit (Matthew 28:19).

3. The Lord's Supper

Where baptism is the initiatory ordinance by which one enters the visible church and should be observed only once by each believer, the Lord's Supper should be celebrated frequently by the assembled church (1 Corinthians 11:26). While this is a most holy ordinance and should be observed with solemnity and dignity, the bread and the cup of the Supper are and remain only symbols of the broken body and the shed blood of our Lord Jesus Christ. The Lord's Supper shall, under normal circumstances, be celebrated by the church on the first Lord's day of each even numbered month.

ARTICLE VIII

OFFICE BEARERS

1. General Statement

Jesus Christ alone is Head of the Church (Colossians 1:18), and He governs His church through office-bearers whom He appoints and who are endowed by His Spirit with the gifts and graces needed to accomplish their work. Office-bearers in the church are of two kinds, elders (also called “pastors” and “bishops”) and deacons (Philippians 1:1; 1 Timothy 3:1-13) the duty of the church to seek and discover among its members those to whom Christ the Lord has imparted the necessary gifts for office-bearing, and after formally recognizing them by common suffrage, to set them apart by united prayer, and then to submit to their authority.

2. Elders

A. Those who have been called of God to rule and teach in the church are called Elders, Pastors, or Bishops. These are three interchangeable names designating one and the same office in a New Testament church (Acts 20:17, 28; Titus 1:5, 7). The Scriptures indicate that normally there should be a plurality of elders in the local church (Acts 20:17; Philippians 1:1). They are the “pastors and teachers” given to the church “for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ” (Ephesians 4:11-12).

B. In view of the fact that the responsibilities of this office are numerous and grave, it is highly desirable that at least one elder should devote his full time to the work of the ministry and the oversight of the church. Such elders are usually referred to as “pastors”, not to the exclusion of the others, for they all share the pastoral responsibility, but because they “labor in the word and in teaching” (1 Timothy 5:17). The church is responsible to give adequate financial support to such men (1 Corinthians 9:9-11; 1 Timothy 5:17-18), and it is free to invite men from outside the local congregation to come into its midst and serve in this capacity. Any man thus called to this office must be able conscientiously to affirm his agreement with the Articles of Faith and the Constitution of this church. Should he at any time move from this position, he is under spiritual and moral obligation to make this fact known to the church.

C. The elders of the church have equal rule (parity) and are responsible for the spiritual ministrations of the church, the implementation of discipline, and the oversight of the souls of the church’s members “as they that shall give account” to God (Acts 20:28; Hebrews 13:17; 1 Peter 5:2-3). While every elder should be “apt to teach”, some will be more engaged in formal and public teaching, while others will be more engaged in pastoring and governing.

D. While elders are overseers of the flock, they are themselves members of the flock. Therefore, each elder as an individual is under the oversight of his fellow elders and is subject to the same discipline as are all the members of the church.

E. The church should endeavor to discover and then formally to recognize all the men whom the Holy Spirit has endowed with the requisite gifts and graces and has set over the church, but only such men. Thus when men have been ordained to this office, the church will have the confidence that it has recognized the overseers who the Holy Spirit has set over it (Acts 20:28).

F. Though a plurality of Elders is the New Testament norm for every church, the New Testament does not specify the number of Elders each church should have, nor does it dictate the length of an Elder’s term of office. One truly called to this office is usually called to it for

life. He is a gift of Christ to the church, and the gifts of God are without repentance. Only when an Elder fails to meet the necessary Scriptural qualifications for his office does he disqualify himself from being an Elder. An elder may honorably resign from his office for a time if he feels he is providentially hindered from properly discharging his pastoral responsibilities. He may at the discretion of the Elders and without re-examination by the congregation re-assume the office when these providential hindrances have been removed.

G. The qualifications for the office of elder are clearly set forth in Scripture, particularly in 1 Timothy 3:1-7; Titus 1:5-9. Anyone desiring the office of an elder must evidence to God's people the personal, domestic, and ministerial qualifications that are set forth in these Scriptures.

3. Deacons

A. Deacons are responsible to administer the ordinary business, secular affairs, and benevolent concerns of the church (Acts 6:1-4). They must fulfill the duties of their office in cooperation with, and in subjection to, the Elders. They shall be watchful to assist the Elders in every possible way.

B. The number of deacons shall not be fixed. The church shall set apart as many men as are needed and who give evidence of having the scriptural qualifications for that office. (Acts 6:3; 1 Timothy 3:8-13).

C. The Deacons shall inform the Elders of all of their meetings so that a representative may be present. The Deacons may also be asked to present regular reports of its business to the Elders.

4. Appointment of Office Bearers

A. General Statement

The appointment of Elders and Deacons is the prerogative of the Lord Jesus Christ alone. However, He has ordained that each local church exercise the responsibility of recognizing those whom He has appointed to be Elders and Deacons in that particular church. Elders and Deacons are ordained to office by the laying on of hands by the Eldership (1 Timothy 4:14). This is an expression of approval of both the elders and the church as a whole. The Lord's appointment of an individual to either of these offices is recognized by means of that individual's possession of those graces and gifts required by Scripture for the particular office and his own conviction that the Lord is calling him to minister in that office. The recognition of office bearers is a matter of such importance that it should never be dealt with without much prayerful waiting upon God, an honest perusal of the relevant passages of Scripture, and a frank evaluation of those who are being considered. Each member of the congregation has a spiritual responsibility to be intelligently informed regarding these matters. A time will be set for the Scriptural qualifications to be read and expounded prior to receiving nominations.

B. Procedure of Appointment

The recognition of those whom the Lord has appointed to bear office in this church is executed in four steps: nomination, review and interview, election, and ordination.

(1) Nomination - During the first two Lord's Days of September in every year, unless otherwise announced, nominations shall be received for the office of elder and deacon. At this time any voting member may nominate any male member to the office for which he believes that member to be qualified. Only those men nominated by 25 percent or more of

the total voting members of the church shall be considered. At any time during the year, under special circumstances, the Elders may recommend the nomination of a candidate or candidates to either office and call a special congregational business meeting for their consideration. Nominees may decline nomination to either office.

(2) Review and Interview - The Elders shall review and interview those men nominated for both offices in an effort to assure that they are Scripturally qualified, to determine their willingness to serve, and to explain (if needed) the requirements and responsibilities of the office to which they have been nominated. The names of the men nominated by the church and approved by the elders shall be presented to the church prior to the announcement of the congregational meeting for the election of office bearers. Members are expected to voice any questions or objections they might have about any candidate. If no questions or objections are raised, a congregational meetings for the election of office bearers shall be called.

(3) Election - Any congregational meeting for the election of office bearers shall be announced on two consecutive Lord's Days prior to its being held. The congregation should seek unity of mind concerning each nominee, but should such unity not be fully realized, no less than a majority of the members present and voting shall be required for the election to the office bearers. This vote shall take place by written ballot. (Amended 2/11/90)

(4) Ordination - Following the election of an office bearer by vote of the congregation, he shall be publicly installed in his office at a regular worship service by the prayer of the whole church, and the laying on of hands of the existing elders.

5. Review of Office Bearers

A. Although our elders and deacons are not elected for a specific period of time, the congregation shall have the opportunity of periodically confirming the election of existing officers. Each elder and deacon shall be considered by the congregation for a confirmation of his election to the office three years following the date of his installation and every three years thereafter. A majority of the members present and voting shall constitute such a confirmation. (Amended 2/11/90)

B. Should an existing office bearer fail to receive the necessary votes for confirmation, his office shall terminate immediately. If the office bearer is receiving financial support from the church, the church shall continue his support for a period of time not to exceed three months, or a shorter time if mutually agreed upon.

C. There may arise reasons that would require an office bearer to be reviewed before the regularly scheduled time. Such a review meeting may be called by a unanimous decision of the Elders (or the other Elders in the case of an Elder). The members may also request such a meeting. This request must be set forth in writing with the signatures of one-fourth of the members in good standing. It must be presented to the Elders, who shall in turn make the proper announcement of the meeting. Such a review meeting would also follow the procedure outlined in Section 4, Paragraph B (3) of this Article entitled "Election."

ARTICLE IX

TRUSTEES

1. General Statement

In order to “render unto Caesar the things that are Caesar’s” this church shall have Trustees. The Trustees shall be called upon to perform whatever legal and business transactions as are peculiarly designated to them by the laws of the state. In the discharge of their duties, they shall act only at the direction of the elders and of the congregation.

2. Election

The Trustees shall consist of three members who shall be elected by the corporation (the church) for a term of three years. The election of Trustees shall take place every three years at the annual congregational meeting. A Trustee may be elected to succeed himself. Trustees may be elected from among the office bearers or from the congregation at large.

ARTICLE X

CONGREGATIONAL BUSINESS MEETINGS

1. General Statement

There shall be an annual business meeting of the church in the month of December for the hearing of reports, the presentation of the budget, and the transaction of such business as may properly be brought before the meeting. Monthly meetings shall be held at a time suggested by the elders and deacons and approved by the church. (Amended 10/14/07) Special business meetings may be called at other times during the year.

2. Notice of Special Meetings

A. Notice of all special congregational meetings shall be given by notifying each regular member by mail of the time, place, and purpose, of the meeting.

B. Meetings for the hearing of special reports or for seeking the counsel of the congregation may be called on shorter notice, but no vote may be taken or other business transacted at such meetings.

3. Quorum

The regular members present at any properly convened congregational meeting shall constitute a quorum for the transaction of business.

4. Chairmanship

The elders shall appoint one of their members to preside at all business meetings.

5. Voting

A. All regular members who have reached the age of eighteen years and are in good standing in the church may vote on any question properly brought before the congregation.

B. Unanimity of heart and mind under God shall at all times be sought and prayed for (Acts 6:5) but when unanimity is not realized, a majority of the members present and voting shall be required to make a resolution valid. (Amended 2/11/90).

ARTICLE XI

FINANCES

1. Budget

The work of this church is financially dependent upon the voluntary gifts of God's people. Before the annual congregational meeting, the Elders shall obtain from the Deacons a prepared budget, detailing the proposed expenditures for the coming year. When this budget is subscribed to by the vote of the congregation, it shall be considered the basis for current liabilities.

2. Real Estate

The Elders and Deacons shall not transfer, sell, or purchase any real estate for the church except by the express authorization conveyed by a majority of the members present and voting at a duly called congregational meeting. (Amended 2/11/90).

3. Non-Budget Expenditures

No obligation shall be incurred to spend over \$1000.00 on one item without the special vote of the congregation, unless that item already appears in the adopted budget. (Amended 8/28/22).

4. Fiscal Year

The fiscal year of the church shall begin January first and end December thirty-first.

5. Church Treasurer

The Church Treasurer shall be appointed by the Deacons from the Deaconate. The treasurer shall deposit all church funds in a bank account or accounts, as instructed by the Deacons, which account shall be opened and maintained in the name of the church. He shall disperse the same at the direction of the Deacons. He shall make monthly reports to the Deacons and the church and an annual report to the congregation at the Annual Meeting. He shall submit his books for an annual audit prior to the Annual Meeting, and at such other times as he may be directed by the deacons. He may be required to furnish a bond, the amount of which shall be determined by the Deacons, and the cost of which shall be paid by the church. The Treasurer shall be primarily responsible for all offerings received by the church, and immediately following any service he shall count and keep a record of all offerings. An assistant treasurer will be appointed to assist in these duties.

ARTICLE XII

BY-LAWS

The Elders shall draft and amend from time to time, with the advice and consent of the deacons, such by-laws as they shall deem necessary for the efficient implementation of this Constitution; but no by-law which is in violation of any of the terms of this Constitution shall be valid.

ARTICLE XIII
AMENDMENTS

This constitution may be amended by a majority of the members present and voting at a duly convened business meeting of the congregation. No proposed amendment may be voted on which has not been distributed to the congregation in written form at least two weeks prior to such a meeting. (Amended 2/11/90)

Last Updated 4/6/2025