

**TABLE OF CONTENTS** – Local Church Bylaws – Recommended by the Board of Directors, Berean Fellowship of Churches, Inc.

- I. Name ..... 1
- II. Affiliation..... 1
- III. Doctrine and Purpose ..... 1
  - A. Doctrine..... 1
  - B. Purpose ..... 3
- IV. Membership..... 3
  - A. Qualifications ..... 3
  - B. Procedure..... 4
  - C. Privileges and Responsibilities..... 4
  - D. Membership Covenant ..... 4
  - E. Removal from Membership..... 5
- V. Church Discipline ..... 5
- VI. Meeting of Members ..... 6
- VII. Church Leadership ..... 6
  - A. Church Board ..... 6
  - B. Elders..... 7
  - C. Lead Pastor ..... 7
  - D. Deacons ..... 9
  - E. Additional Staff ..... 10
- VIII. Officers of the Church Corporation..... 10
- IX. Church Property ..... 10
- X. Rules of Order ..... 11
- XI. Limitations of Liability ..... 11
- XII. Interpretation and Amendments..... 12

*Prepared in 2014, corrected and adopted by the BFC Board of Directors on July 21, 2014.*

## **Recommended Bylaws for a Berean Fellowship Church**

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### **Bylaws: Rules for Internal Operation of**

(name of church) **Church**

**(City, State)**

**I. Name:** The name of this organization is \_\_\_\_\_. This name shall be reported to the Berean Fellowship of Churches via the Regional Fellowship.

#### **II. Affiliation:**

A. This church is affiliated with the Berean Fellowship of Churches (BFC) through membership in the representative bodies known as the Regional Fellowship (RF) and the General Council. (For the definition of BFC terms and relationships, consult the current BFC Bylaws.)

B. An established BFC church is one that

1. is financially self-supporting
2. has a Church Board composed of at least three male members of the church, in addition to the pastor, who are biblically qualified as either Elders or Deacons, and
3. has been formally recognized by the BFC Regional Fellowship as an established BFC church.

C. Mission Churches: (If this church is a new church plant or returned to Mission Status, see description in the BFC bylaws, Section IV, H, 3.)

#### **III. Doctrine and Purpose**

A. Doctrine:

##### 1. BIBLE

We believe the Bible, consisting of both the Old and New Testament Scriptures in their entirety, is the only divinely inspired, inerrant, objectively true, and authoritative written Word of God, and the only infallible rule of faith and practice. The divine inspiration of Scripture extends to each word of the original manuscripts, but not to the various copies or translations of Scripture. The Bible should be interpreted literally, grammatically, contextually, and historically. (Gen. 1-3; Deut. 29:29; John 10:35; 2 Tim. 3:15-17; 2 Pet. 1:21; 1 Cor. 2:13)

##### 2. GOD

We believe in only one God, the Creator, who is infinite, personal, eternally existing in three persons, and who is revealed to us in Scripture as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. (Gen. 1:1; Deut. 6:4; Isa. 43:10; 44:6; 45:22; Matt. 28:19; John 4:24; 5:26; Col. 1:16-19; 1 Cor. 8:4)

### 3. JESUS CHRIST

We believe that Jesus Christ is God the Son who has neither beginning nor ending. He was conceived in the flesh by the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary, and is fully God and fully man. Jesus died for our sins, was buried, and arose bodily on the third day. He ascended into heaven and is now seated at the right hand of God the Father as our only mediator, high priest, and advocate. (Matt. 1:23-25; John 1:1; 14:3; Acts 4:12; 1 Cor. 15:3,4,20; Phil. 2:5-11; 1 Tim. 2:5-6; Heb. 4:14-16; 1 Pet. 2:22)

### 4. HOLY SPIRIT

We believe the Holy Spirit is God, the third person of the Trinity. He is a person, not a force. The Holy Spirit's ministries include convicting all people of sin; calling, regenerating, indwelling, and baptizing believers into the Body of Christ; setting them apart to a holy life; and teaching, keeping, and empowering them day by day. The Holy Spirit distributes spiritual gifts to each believer according to His will. God in His sovereignty still works in miraculous ways. However, we understand that the sign gifts have served their purpose and should not be expected in the church today. (John 3:5-8; Acts 1:8; 5:3-4; 16:7-14; 1 Cor. 2:9-12; 3:16; 12:3-13,28-31; 13:8-11; Gal. 5:16-25; Eph. 1:13-14; 5:18; Heb.2:3-4)

### 5. HUMAN RACE

We believe that both man and woman were created in the image of God to enjoy a personal relationship with Him. As a result of deliberate disobedience they fell from their sinless state and they and all their descendants became sinners. Consequently, they cannot save themselves and apart from the grace of God in Jesus Christ, they are condemned to a place of eternal torment. (Gen. 1:26-27; 2:7; Matt. 5:20-48; John 3:16-18,36; Rom. 2:6-16; 5:12-21; 6:23; 2 Thess. 1:6-9; Rev. 20:13-15)

### 6. SALVATION

We believe we are saved solely by the grace of God through faith in Christ alone. This salvation was purchased by the substitutionary death and shed blood of Jesus Christ for the sins of every person and is offered to everyone as a free gift. The person who has trusted in the Lord Jesus Christ as Savior is eternally secure, and can enjoy the assurance of salvation. We believe that at death believers enter eternal glory and that unbelievers enter eternal torment. (Acts 16:31; 20:20-21; Rom. 3:28; 10:9; 1 Cor. 15:3-4; John 1:12; 3:16; 10:28; Eph. 2:8-9; Phil. 1:6)

### 7. SANCTIFICATION

We believe that every believer has been sanctified, set apart with a perfect standing before God. As believers yield themselves to the Holy Spirit, they will experience spiritual growth in holiness, but they will not experience perfection in conduct. Future rewards are determined by a believer's obedience to the Lord. (Heb. 10:10; Phil. 3:12; Rom. 6:13-19; 1 Cor. 3:8)

### 8. CHURCH

We believe that Christ is the Head of the Church, which is His Body. All who have trusted in Him as Savior are members of this Body. Christians should commit themselves to worship, instruction, fellowship, stewardship, and service in a local church. The church is responsible to represent Jesus Christ in the world

through godly living and evangelism. All believers are commanded to participate in two church ordinances: believers' baptism by immersion and the Lord's Supper. (Matt. 26:26-29; 28:18-20; Acts 2:42; 1 Cor. 12:13; Eph. 1:22, 23; 2:19-22; 3:6-10; 4:11-13; 5:23-27; 1 Thess. 2:14; Heb. 10:25; 1 Pet. 2:9-10; 1 John 4:17)

## 9. SATAN

We believe that Satan was created an angelic being. He became the author of sin, our adversary and accuser, and the great deceiver of the nations. He will finally be overcome by the Lord Jesus Christ and suffer eternal punishment in the lake of fire. (Gen. 3:1; Job 1:6-12; Matt. 4:3-11; John 8:44; 2 Cor. 4:4; 1 John 3:8; 5:19; Rev. 12:9-10; 20:10)

## 10. FUTURE EVENTS

We believe, on a day known only by God the Father, Jesus will rapture His Church to deliver it from the judgments that God will pour upon the earth. After this terrible period, the Lord Jesus Christ will return in glory to establish His Millennial Kingdom on the earth. This will be followed by the final judgment of the wicked in the lake of fire and eternal bliss for God's children in a new heaven and a new earth. (John 14:3; Acts 1:7, 11; Rom. 8:1; 1 Cor. 15:20, 23; 2 Cor. 5:10; Phil. 1:23; 1 Thess. 4:16-17; Rev. 11:15; 19:11-21:5)

**B. Purpose:** It is our desire to be a vital and growing church, as designed by the Lord Jesus. Prayerfully guided by the Holy Spirit, we will attain the following standards by establishing the necessary annual plans to achieve them:

1. Be an authentic, caring, loving group, committed to making disciples who understand and live out the teachings of Jesus Christ and are engaged in the Great Commission both locally and globally.
2. Be directly involved in starting at least one new BFC church every five years, strategically targeting the communities God is calling us to serve.
3. Be financially self-sufficient, believing that God will provide resources to accomplish our mission.
4. Partner with other churches of the BFC in our common mission.

## **IV. Membership:**

The membership of this church shall consist of those who are born again in the Lord Jesus Christ, are seeking to be obedient to the teachings of Scripture, and are consistently functioning as a part of this body to fulfill its mission and accomplish its expected outcomes.

### **A. Qualifications**

1. Confess faith in Jesus Christ as personal Savior and Lord, and give evidence of a regenerated life.
2. Agree with the Articles of Faith, Mission Statement, and Expected Outcomes of this church.
3. Indicate commitment to being a follower of Jesus Christ by being baptized in water by immersion, or giving testimony to this experience.

## B. Procedure

1. A person interested in membership in this church will participate in a membership class, as prescribed by the Church Board, to help him or her to understand the church bylaws and the privileges and responsibilities of membership.
2. The candidate for membership shall then be examined by the Church Board to ensure that he or she meets the qualifications for membership.
3. Upon approval, each new member shall be publicly affirmed into the membership of the church.

## C. Privileges and Responsibilities –Members will demonstrate Christ’s life by:

1. Showing progress in their relationship with Jesus Christ, in scriptural knowledge, in Christ-like conduct, and faithfulness in church attendance. (Heb. 10:24, 25)
2. Showing honor, love, and encouragement and praying for the pastor and other spiritual leaders. (Heb. 13:7)
3. Meeting all personal obligations, living in a peaceful manner, respecting the biblical liberty of others, and witnessing faithfully. (Titus 2: 11-14)
4. Supporting and participating in the ministries of this local church. (1 Cor. 12:26, 27)
5. Additionally, members will be invited to vote for specific provisions made in these bylaws.

## D. Membership Covenant: When joining this church, the members agree to the Membership Covenant with one another and before God. This Covenant will be regularly reaffirmed aloud by the entire church membership, as a reminder of mutually held commitments.

Being led by the Holy Spirit of God to receive Jesus Christ as Savior and to confess Him as Lord, and confessing this faith, having been baptized in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, we do now covenant together, as members of (name of church), to lead lives of obedience to the Lord, fully pleasing to Him.

We will, strengthened by the Holy Spirit, forsake sin and walk together in love and righteousness. We will preserve the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace, becoming the pure and spotless bride Jesus deserves. We will gather for encouragement and celebration, holding to and proclaiming the truth of God’s Word as we go, making disciples of Jesus. We will gratefully and generously give our time, talent and money in obedience to God so that He will be glorified in our community and around the world as we proclaim the gospel.

We will devote our lives to Jesus so that our families grow in the training and instruction of the Lord. We will live and speak of the life of Jesus so that our families and neighbors may come to know Him. Our daily lives will be beyond

reproach and lived worthy of the Lord. In all we say and do, our devotion is Jesus Christ first and foremost.

As we gather and live together as a church family, we will love one another, pray for one another, build up one another and care for one another in all circumstances. We will pray for and support those whom God has put as overseers and teachers in this church family. We will respond humbly and immediately to the conviction of the Holy Spirit and the love of the family of God when confronted with sin and failure. And, as the time approaches, we will encourage one another in the hope of the return of Jesus.

If God moves us away from this church family, we will intentionally and swiftly join another church family in the new location where we will continue to live out the intent of this covenant

#### E. Removal of Membership

1. If a member joins another church, his or her membership in this church automatically terminates. A letter certifying the member's baptism and membership standing will be sent upon request.
2. Members who develop irreconcilable differences with either the doctrinal position of this church or the policies and procedures described in these bylaws shall quietly resign their membership without attempting to cause any trouble.
3. Members may be removed from membership at the discretion of the Church Board as the final result of church discipline according to the procedure described in Matthew 18 and in these bylaws.
4. Members who are absent from church events and activities for six months may be removed from membership after the Church Board has made meaningful contact to discern the reasons for their absence and ascertain their spiritual health.

**V. Church Discipline.** The purpose of church discipline is restoration of the sinning member to Christ and the church body.

#### A. Guidelines for Discipline of Church Members

1. Biblically, each believer is responsible before God to examine his or her own obedience to Christ. (1 Cor. 11:31)
2. In disciplinary actions it is imperative that all parties be sensitive to the Holy Spirit's leading and follow scriptural guidelines.
3. Church discipline is for specific sins, not for differences of opinion. (1 Cor. 5: 1; 11-13; 1 Tim 5:19-21)

#### B. Process for Church Discipline (Matt. 18: 15-20)

1. The person who is aware of the offense is to be the first to prayerfully and privately confront the sinning member.

2. If the sinning member refuses to repent, the first person is to take one or two witnesses for a second attempt to confirm and clarify the facts.
3. If the matter remains unresolved, it is to be brought to the Church Board.
4. If the sinning member still refuses to repent, the Church Board may bring the matter to the attention of the members of the church.
5. When the sinning member repents, he or she should be forgiven, restored to fellowship, and lovingly affirmed by those involved.
6. Restoration to ministry responsibilities shall be at the discretion of the Church Board.

## **VI. Meetings of Members**

### **A. Annual Meetings**

1. An annual church meeting will be held for the purpose of presenting reports considered necessary by the Church Board, casting vision for ministry in the coming year, affirming men being recommended to serve on the Church Board, and other necessary items of business.
2. Notice of the date of the annual meeting shall be publicized at least three Sundays prior to the meeting by public announcement from the pulpit or by written form, either physical or digital.

### **B. Specially Called Meetings**

1. The Church Board or 10% of the active membership may call a special meeting of the church.
2. Notice of the date of the meeting, including its purpose, shall be publicized at least three Sundays prior to the meeting.

## **VII. Church Leadership**

### **A. Church Board**

1. The Church Board shall be the Board of Directors for this corporation and will provide accountability for all organizations, committees, and ministries of the church.
2. The Church Board (referred to hereinafter as “the Board”) may consist of Elders and Deacons.
3. A man will be nominated by the Board and recommended for affirmation by the membership of the church to serve on the Board for a term of three years. At the end of each term, he may choose to stand for an additional term with the consent of the Board and reaffirmation of the church membership. There is no limit on the number of consecutive terms a Board member may serve.
4. The Board will meet regularly to conduct the business affairs of the church.
5. When the number of Board members becomes fewer than three (not including the pastor), the church shall revert to a mission church status, and

the Regional Fellowship shall form a Provisional Leadership Team to serve as the Board of Directors of this church.

6. Board Member's Covenant. When joining the Board, the Board member agrees to the following covenant:

As a Board member of ( name of church ), I commit myself to maintain the character of an Elder or Deacon given in 1 Timothy 3. I will be faithful in my family relationships, my witness, my giving, my conduct my ministry and in any work consistent with Scripture and these bylaws. I will faithfully fulfill my role as a shepherd and guard of the flock of God, of which He has made me an overseer. I will be alert and hard working, serving willingly, eagerly and humbly, and recognizing that I will give account to God and to this church for my work. I will defend the faith, holding fast the faithful word, and will fulfill my role as a witness and disciple-maker. If at any time I am out of harmony with the Board, or these bylaws, and if we cannot be reconciled, I will resign from the Board immediately, causing no trouble that would damage the church in any way.

#### B. Elders

1. An Elder is a man whose qualities follow the descriptions in 1 Timothy 3, Titus 1, Hebrews 13, 1 Peter 5 and other New Testament passages. He will be selected for his Christ-like character, giftedness and his sense of personal call to the role.
2. Elders of this church are responsible to the Lord Jesus and accountable to the Board and to the church to shepherd and teach the church as Jesus would.
3. A man shall be identified as an Elder until his death, resignation, or removal by other Elders in the event of heresy, immorality, misconduct, incompetence, or failure to maintain a good testimony.
4. While all Elders are identified in perpetuity, some will serve actively on the Board.

#### C. Lead Pastor

##### 1. Responsibilities

- a) The Lead Pastor shall provide spiritual leadership to the church and shall perform all duties usually associated with that office.
- b) The Lead Pastor is an Elder of the church, with voice and vote, and shall be accountable to the Board for the performance of his duties.
- c) He shall be an ex-officio member of all committees and other organized groups within the church.
- d) He shall participate in the BFC Regional Fellowship and the annual BFC General Council meetings.
- e) The practice of this church will be to grant our pastoral staff a multiple-month sabbatical every seventh year.

## 2. Calling a Lead Pastor

- a) The Board shall appoint a search committee consisting of five to seven church members.
- b) All discussions of the search committee shall be confidential, as to the names and evaluations of each potential candidate, although they will keep the congregation well informed of their process.
- c) The committee shall review all résumés received and shall send a copy of the bylaws of this church and the BFC bylaws to each potential candidate.
- d) The search committee will be instructed to contact the Regional Fellowship Leader for names of potential candidates as well as assistance with the process.
- e) Though many potential candidates may be considered, only one will be chosen, by unanimous vote of the Committee, for recommendation to the Board.
- f) If the Board has a favorable response to his application, résumé, and ministry experience, it will set up a time for the Regional Fellowship to examine the prospective candidate.
- g) The Regional Fellowship will examine the prospective candidate after receiving the prospect's resume and credentials. This examination will be in regard to his life, doctrine, experience and agreement with the bylaws of the prospective BFC church and the bylaws of the BFC. The Regional Fellowship will give a recommendation concerning the prospective candidate to the Board. With a favorable recommendation, the church may continue the process.
- h) The Board shall extend an invitation to the prospective candidate to visit the church (for at least a long weekend), meet with the Board, and preach.
- i) Upon a unanimous affirmative vote of the Board, the candidate shall be presented to the congregation for a vote of affirmation.
- j) Upon an affirmative vote of three-fourths of the church members present at a specially called meeting, a call shall be extended to the candidate.

3. A pastor shall serve as long as mutually agreeable between him and the church, provided that he continues to affirm the Pastor's Covenant.

4. Pastor's Covenant: Throughout his tenure with this church, the pastor will maintain the character and commitments of the following Covenant:

In order to preserve the dignity, maintain the discipline and promote the integrity my calling to Christian ministry, I agree with and affirm the following covenant:

As a servant of God and Pastor-leader of (name of church), I will set an example of godliness, maintaining a life of purity, integrity, and truthfulness. I will make choices that contribute to my spiritual, physical, and emotional health. Further, I will plan regular and frequent times with my family, guarding my schedule to ensure adequate time away from ministry responsibilities.

Being in a position of spiritual leadership, I will prayerfully maintain the character described in I Timothy 3, giving particular attention to reading and studying God's word and intentional prayer and meditation. I will exercise responsibility before God for speaking the truth of God's Word with conviction and in love. I will acknowledge any extensive use of material prepared by someone else.

I will lead the flock of God in a balanced ministry of shepherding, teaching and evangelizing and will regard all persons in the congregation with equal love and concern, ministering impartially to their needs. I will exercise confidence in the lay leadership, assisting in their training and mobilizing their creativity. I will remain open to constructive criticism and to suggestions intended to strengthen our common ministry.

I will cooperate with the personnel of the Berean Fellowship of Churches (BFC) and offer responsible criticism in order that our common service in the cause of Christ might be more effective. Furthermore, I will use my influence to affirm and align this church with the mission of the BFC.

Upon my departure from this ministry, I will release my pastoral responsibilities with the congregation, recognizing that all pastoral functions should henceforth rightfully be conducted by my successor.

If at any time I am unwilling to submit to the authority of the Board or the church bylaws, I want the Board to call it to my attention. If I fail to be reconciled, I will resign immediately, and will quickly and quietly leave the community, causing no trouble, which would damage the church.

5. Any pastor not previously ordained shall be licensed for ministry, as set forth in the BFC bylaws. If the pastor was formerly ordained, his ordination may be formally recognized and endorsed by the church and reported to the BFC.
6. An Interim Pastor has the same duties and covenant as a Lead Pastor and must be chosen by vote of the Board and the approval of the Regional Fellowship Leader. He will not be eligible for the permanent pastoral position.

#### D. Deacons

1. A Deacon must possess qualities that follow the descriptions in 1 Timothy 3 and Acts 6. Deacons of this church are responsible to the Lord Jesus and accountable to the Board and to the church serve the church as Jesus would.
2. A Deacon will be identified and appointed by the Board to serve according to polices determined by the local church.

#### E. Additional Ministry Staff

1. The Pastor, in conjunction with the Board may hire/appoint staff, whether full-time, part-time or volunteer, who are deemed necessary to effectively lead the church in accomplishing its mission and expected outcomes. These staff members shall be directly accountable to the Pastor and annually evaluated by him.
2. All ministry staff shall abide by these bylaws, and will quietly resign if he/she is unwilling to submit to the authority of the Pastor and Board.

### **VIII. Officers of the Church Corporation**

- A. A Chairman, Vice-Chairman, and Secretary will be appointed annually by the Board from its membership, also filling the roles of President, Vice-President and Secretary of the Corporation. These officers will be granted the authority and responsibilities generally accorded these positions to act on behalf of the Corporation.
- B. The Secretary shall also serve as the church clerk. He shall keep a record of all church business and minutes of any church meetings. He shall be responsible for any correspondence associated with his office.
- C. Treasurer
  1. The Treasurer shall be appointed annually by the Board to oversee receipt and disbursement of funds for church finances.
  2. The Treasurer will provide financial reports, as required by the Board, and prepare for and assure an annual audit or financial review.
  3. The Treasurer will prepare an annual report for the General Council of the BFC using the format requested by BFC Board of Directors.
- D. In the event of a vacancy in any office, the Board will appoint a replacement to complete the remainder of term for that year.

### **IX. Church Property**

- A. Titles. This locally incorporated church shall hold titles to all church property, real or personal.
- B. Use. Property held by this locally incorporated church shall be for the use of church ministry consistent with the doctrine, practice, and ministry contained within these bylaws.
- C. Division. In the case of an organizational division of the church, the group of members that abides by these bylaws shall retain all church property. Should controversy arise as to which group that is, the question shall be submitted to the BFC Board of Directors or its successor, and their decision shall be final. Upon determination by the BFC Board of Directors, all titles for church property shall be conveyed to the group of members retaining ownership.

- D. Dissolution. If at any time there are insufficient members to continue a viable church work and a decision is made to close the church, the ownership and title of all church property, real and personal, shall be transferred to the BFC.
- E. Disaffiliation. This church may vote to disaffiliate from the BFC, as provided in Article V, C of the BFC bylaws.

## **X. Rules of Order**

- A. General Powers: This organization shall receive gifts, bequests and legacies; acquire, buy, hold, improve, rent, lease, mortgage, sell and convey, and otherwise deal in real and personal property as may be necessary to conduct the business of this church and fulfill its stated mission. Appeals for funds may be made as deemed advisable by the Board.
- B. Fiscal Year: The fiscal year of this church shall be January 1 through December 31.
- C. Quorum: A quorum for any meeting of the membership shall be 50% and not less than 10 people of the active membership. A quorum for a duly called meeting of any board or committee shall consist of 50% of its membership.
- D. Decisions will be by the majority vote of those present, unless alternately defined in these bylaws or previously stipulated. Each member has one vote.
- E. Parliamentary Guide: In order that "...all things be done decently and in order," Robert's Rules of Order, Newly Revised (of the most recent edition) shall be followed in all cases to which they are applicable, and in which they are not inconsistent with the bylaws of this church.
- F. "Ex officio" members, meaning "by virtue of office," shall have the right to vote and function in accordance with *Robert's Rules of Order, Newly Revised*.
- G. Policies: Each board, committee and auxiliary organization of this church may formulate and maintain its own manual of policies and procedures, which shall be approved by the Board and be in harmony with these bylaws. A current copy of these manuals shall be kept on file at the church office.

## **XI. Limitation of Liability**

- A. No member of the Board of (name of church) shall be personally liable for the debts, liabilities, or other obligations of (name of church).
- B. To the extent that a person who is, or was, an officer, employee or other agent of this organization has been successful on the merits in defense of any civil, criminal, administrative or investigative proceeding brought to procure a judgment against such person by reason of the fact that he or she is, or was, an agent of the (name of church), or has been successful in defense of any claim, issue or matter, therein, such person shall be indemnified against expenses actually and reasonably incurred by the person in connection with such proceeding.
- C. If such person settles any such claim or sustains a judgment against him or her, then indemnification against expenses, judgments, fines, settlements and other

amounts reasonably incurred in connection with such proceedings shall be provided by this organization but only to the extent allowed by, and in accordance with state law.

- D. The Board of (church name) may adopt a policy authorizing the purchase and maintenance of insurance on behalf of any agent of the organization against any liability other than for violating provisions of law relating to self-dealing asserted against or incurred by the agent in such capacity or arising out of the agent's status as such, whether or not (church name) would have the power to indemnify the agent against such liability under the provisions of state law.

## **XII. Interpretation and Amendments**

- A. These bylaws may be amended upon three-fourths affirmative vote of the church membership at a meeting in which a quorum is present, provided that written notice of the proposed amendment has been distributed, either physically or electronically, to the church membership at least thirty days prior to the meeting at which the amendment is to be considered.
- B. The counsel of the Regional Fellowship of the BFC will be sought before considering the revision or amendment of these bylaws.
- C. Upon adoption of an amendment to these bylaws, a current copy will be provided to the Board of Directors of the BFC.
- D. Matters of clarification and interpretation of these bylaws will be referred to the Regional Fellowship of the BFC.
- E. These bylaws of (name of church) supersede and replace all prior bylaws.

**XIII. THE UNDERSIGNED CERTIFY** that the above bylaws have been approved by the Board of Directors of this church and affirmed by the membership, at a duly called meeting of the (name of church) , on (month) (date), 20 \_\_, and are adopted for the Corporation.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Chairman of the Corporation

\_\_\_\_\_  
Corporation Secretary

## Appendix A: Organizational Chart