

Fellowship Bible Church Constitution

ARTICLE I DEFINITION AND PURPOSE

This constitution sets forth our beliefs and our understanding of the Holy Scriptures. It defines our essential doctrine, our organizational structure and our purposes as a church. Agreement on these matters is vital if the church is to glorify God and accomplish His will (1 Corinthians 1:10; Ephesians 4:3, 13; Philippians 2:1, 2). This constitution is intended to promote oneness of mind within our church, and to provide those interested in becoming a part of this ministry a clear presentation of our beliefs and objectives.

This constitution is not higher in authority than the Word of God. Neither is it superior to the authority that God has invested in those believers He has appointed to lead this local church. The church is a living, growing, flexible body, subject ultimately to the authority of Jesus Christ alone (Ephesians 1:22; 4:12-16). As we grow in the Word and/or face changing conditions in the church, this document may be amended according to the provisions of Article X. However, this constitution and any approved amendments are to be followed in all their parts as the authorized governing documents of this local church.

ARTICLE II NAME

The name of this local church shall be **Fellowship Bible Church of Victoria**, a nonprofit corporation under the laws of the state of Texas.

ARTICLE III MISSION AND GOALS

SECTION 1 - Our Mission

The supreme mission of the church, and so also every individual believer, is to glorify God and to enjoy Him forever. As we become more aware of God's plan and His provision for us, we glorify Him by offering ourselves to Him for His use.

Romans 11:36; 1 Corinthians 10:31; Ephesians 3:21; 1 Peter 4:11

SECTION 2 - Our Goals

The goal of this church is to make disciples who:

1. EXALT GOD by honoring and praising Him. We seek to accomplish this through individual and corporate worship.
2. EVANGELIZE UNBELIEVERS, inviting them, by word and lifestyle, to place their personal faith in Christ as Savior. We are committed to presenting the good news about Christ Jesus in our community and around the world.
3. EDIFY ONE ANOTHER, encouraging each other to rely on the Holy Spirit to become more like Jesus Christ; to use their God-given gifts and abilities in the Lord's service; to gather together for fellowship, teaching, prayer, the Lord's Supper and believer's baptism. Matthew 28:18-20; Acts 2:42-47

ARTICLE IV DOCTRINAL STATEMENT

This local church shall function as an independent, evangelical Bible Church, committed to the historic truths recorded in God's inerrant revelation -- Holy Scripture. The Word of God is foundational and is absolutely essential for producing saving faith in unbelievers and for producing true spirituality, fellowship, spiritual growth, effective service and doctrinal accuracy in believers. Therefore we place a high priority on the consistent teaching and study of the Word of God.

The study of God's Word is not an end in itself, but it is the primary means by which God reveals Himself to us. Therefore it is a necessary means by which we fellowship with God, and by which we minister to one another and to the world. Our study of the Bible will not, therefore, be bypassed or be made secondary to social concerns or activities, but will rather be promoted so that the Word and the teaching of the Word become the pulse and heartbeat of all that our church does.

Psalm 119:15-18, 89, 97-105, 130; Romans 15:4; 1 Thessalonians 2:13; 1 Timothy 4:6-7, 13; 2 Timothy 3:15-17; 4:1-3

SECTION 1 - The Scriptures

We believe that the Bible consists of the 39 Old Testament and 27 New Testament canonical books; that every word has been inspired by God and thus the Bible, in the original manuscripts, is without error. Because the Bible is inspired by God it is the supreme and final authority for our faith and conduct. There are no other writings similarly inspired by God and no additional inspired revelation is being made today.

We believe that all Scriptures center about the Lord Jesus Christ, and that no portion, even of the Old Testament, is properly understood until it is related to Him. We also believe that all Scriptures were intended for our practical instruction.

Matthew 5:18; Luke 24:27, 44; John 5:39; 16:12-13; 17:17; Acts 1:16; 17:2-3; 18:28; 26:22-23; 28:23; Romans 15:4; 1 Corinthians 10:11; 2 Timothy 3:16-17; 2 Peter 1:20-21

SECTION 2 - The Triune God

We believe in one God eternally existing in three persons -- the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit -- who have the same nature and attributes, but who are distinct in office and activity, and who are worthy of the same worship, confidence and obedience.

Matthew 28:18-20; Mark 12:29; John 20:26-29; Acts 5:3-4; Hebrews 1:1-3

SECTION 3 - God the Father

We believe in God the Father. He is the first person of the Trinity and is the Father over all creation both in heaven and on earth. He is the Father of the Lord Jesus Christ. The believer can know the Father personally by faith in the redemptive work of His Son, Jesus Christ. All who have believed on Jesus for salvation can call God their Father in the most intimate sense.

Matthew 6:9; Acts 17:29; Romans 8:15; 15:6; Galatians 4:6; Ephesians 1:3; Colossians 1:3; Hebrews 12:9

SECTION 4 - God the Son (Christ the Savior)

We believe that the eternal Son of God came into this world to fulfill prophecy, manifest God to men and redeem lost mankind. He was conceived by the Holy Spirit and born to the virgin Mary. He is therefore both fully God and fully man, yet without sin.

We believe that the Son of God voluntarily accepted His Father's will and became the sacrificial Lamb who took away the sin of the world. His death was therefore substitutionary, the just for the unjust.

We believe that according to Scripture Jesus Christ arose from the dead in the same body, though glorified, in which He had lived and died. We believe that after His resurrection He ascended into heaven and sat down at the right hand of the Father, where He continues His work as Intercessor and Advocate for all believers.

Luke 1:30-35; 2:40; John 1:1-2, 14, 18, 29; 3:16; 20:20; Romans 3:25-26; 1 Corinthians 15:3-8; 2 Corinthians 5:14, 21; Philippians 2:5-8; 3:20-21; Hebrews 1:3; 7:25; 10:10-14; 1 Peter 3:18; 1 John 2:1

SECTION 5 - God the Holy Spirit

We believe that God, the Holy Spirit, is the third person of the Trinity who restrains evil in the world and convicts men of sin. He also regenerates (brings spiritual life to) those who trust Christ as Savior, baptizes them into the church (the body of Christ), indwells them permanently, seals them for the day of redemption, and gives one or more spiritual gifts to each believer. The Holy Spirit empowers those who yield themselves to Him by cooperating with Him.

We believe that the Holy Spirit gives spiritual gifts to each believer in order to edify the church, Christ's body. We believe that some spiritual gifts such as prophecy (special revelation), miracles (including special healings) and speaking in tongues were given primarily as signs to authenticate the message of the first-century church. We believe that speaking in tongues was never the common or necessary sign of the baptism nor of the filling of the Holy Spirit.

We believe that God can and does heal. We further believe that when physical healing is God's will for a person it is available through the prayers of believers. We believe that the complete deliverance of the body from sickness and death awaits the completion of our salvation in the resurrection.

John 3:6; 14:16-17; 16:7-15; Acts 1:8; 4:8, 31; 5:12; 14:3; Romans 8:3-14, 23; 12:3-8; 1 Corinthians 6:19; 12:4-11, 13; 13:8; 2 Corinthians 1:21-22; 12:12; Ephesians 1:13-14; 2:20-22; 4:11-16, 30; 5:18; Hebrews 2:3-4; James 5:14-15; 1 Peter 2:2; 4:10-11; 1 John 2:20, 27

SECTION 6 - Man

We believe that man was originally created in the image of God (he did **not** evolve from lower orders of life). We believe that he sinned, bringing both physical and spiritual death to himself and his descendants. We believe that man has inherited a sinful nature and is alienated from God. He is unable, by his own efforts, to please God or save himself. We believe that man's sinful nature continually asserts its independence from God and seeks to control life to please itself. This leads to acts of sin (disobedience to God's commands in word, thought or deed). Therefore, all men are sinners and are in need of salvation.

Genesis 1:26; 2:17; 3:1-19; Psalm 51:5; Jeremiah 17:9; Romans 3:10-19; Ephesians 2:1-3; 1 John 3:8

SECTION 7 - Salvation

We believe that man's salvation is a gift from God; that salvation is received when a man places his personal trust (faith, belief or acceptance) in the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ as the full and sufficient payment for the penalty of his sin. We believe that faith in Jesus Christ is the sole condition for receiving eternal salvation from hell. We believe that man is justified by grace through faith apart from works either preceding or following his faith. No act of obedience such as commitment to Christ, sorrow for sin, water baptism or submission to Christ may be added to or considered part of saving faith.

We believe that Christ's death on the cross paid the penalty for the sins of all men. Salvation is open to all who will believe. All men are responsible to believe and will be held accountable for their decision concerning Christ.

Leviticus 17:11; Isaiah 64:6; Matthew 26:28; John 1:12; 3:7-18, 36; 6:29; Acts 13:39; Romans 1:16-17; 3:22, 4:5; 5:6-9; 10:4; 2 Corinthians 5:21; Galatians 3:13, 22; Ephesians 1:7; 2:8-9; Philippians 3:4-9; Titus 3:5; I Peter 1:18-19; 2 Peter 2:1; 1 John 2:2

SECTION 8 - Eternal Security

We believe that all who have received Christ as Savior are saved forever. We believe this because of the unchangeable work of God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit.

We believe, however, that God is a holy and righteous Father and that since He cannot overlook the sins of His children, He corrects them in infinite love when they persistently sin.

John 5:24; 6:36-38; 10:28; 14:16-17; 17:7, 9; Romans 8:1, 29, 32-39; 1 Corinthians 1:4-8; 3:15; 6:19; Hebrews 7:25; Jude 24

SECTION 9 - Assurance of Salvation

We believe that it is the privilege of all who are born again by the Spirit through faith in Christ to be assured of their salvation from the moment they believe. We believe that this assurance is not founded upon any feeling, but wholly upon the testimony of God in His written Word.

Luke 10:20; Romans 8:15-16; 2 Corinthians 5:1, 6-8; 2 Timothy 1:12; Hebrews 10:22; 1 John 5:13

SECTION 10 -- Sanctification

We hold that the believer's sanctification, that is his being set apart as holy unto God, is threefold: First, it is already complete, since from the moment of faith the believer is "in Christ" and is therefore perfect in God's eyes, having received Christ's own righteousness. Second, the believer, who has received a new and holy nature "in Christ," still retains his sin nature. Therefore a constant battle is fought to determine which nature will control his life. Real, practical holiness is seen as the believer humbly learns to submit every area of his life to the prompting of his new nature. This results in a progressive sanctification as the believer by faith grows in obedience to God and His Word through the power of the Holy Spirit. While the goal is for every believer to mature in Christ, this is not a guaranteed outcome in his life. Third, the believer will yet be fully sanctified when he meets his returning Lord, his sin nature is done away with and he is made to be "like Him" (Jesus).

2 Corinthians 3:18; 7:1; Ephesians 4:24; 5:25-27; 1 Thessalonians 5:23; Hebrews 10:10, 14; 12:10

SECTION 11 -- Angels

We believe that God created an innumerable company of sinless, spiritual beings known as angels. We believe that one angel, Lucifer, highest in rank, sinned by declaring his independence from God and as a result became Satan. We believe that a great company of the angels followed Satan in his moral fall and became demons, active with him in their opposition to God and His people.

We believe that Satan is the originator of sin, and that he tempted Adam and Eve into self-assertive disobedience to God's command, resulting in their fall. We believe that Satan was initially judged at the cross and that he will be finally judged following Christ's Second Coming and 1000-year reign on earth.

We believe that a great company of angels remained faithful to God and continue to worship and serve Him. As one of their responsibilities they are sent by God as ministering spirits to give help to believers.

Genesis 3:1-9; Isaiah 14:12-17; Ezekiel 28:11-19, 2 Corinthians 4:3-4, 11:34, 13-15; Ephesians 6:10-12; Colossians 2:15; 1 Timothy 4:1-3; Hebrews 1:14; 1 John 4:1-3; Revelation 7:11-12; 12:34; 20:10

SECTION 12 -- The Church

We believe that the universal church, the Body and Bride of Christ, is a spiritual organism, made up of all believers of this present age. Christ is the head of the church. We believe the church began at Pentecost and that a believer is placed into the church by the baptizing work of the Holy Spirit, which occurs when a person trusts Christ as Savior. We believe that the church is distinct from Israel in God's plan.

We believe that the local church is an assembly of believers in Jesus Christ who are voluntarily joined together in one locality for the purpose of worship, study of God's Word, observance of the ordinances, Christian fellowship and Christian service.

Acts 2:44-47; 1 Corinthians 12:12-13; Ephesians 1:22-2:3; 4:11-13; 5:25-27

SECTION 13 -- The Ordinances of Baptism and the Lord's Supper

We believe that Christ instituted the ordinances of water baptism and the Lord's Supper which are to be observed by believers until He returns.

We believe that water baptism is a believer's public testimony to his relationship with his Savior.

We believe that the Lord's Supper is a memorial of Christ's death, the elements being symbols of His body and His blood. We believe that every Christian has a right to partake of the elements of the Lord's Supper, but that each participation should be preceded by careful self-examination for unconfessed sin.

Matthew 28:18-20; 1 Corinthians 11:23-26

SECTION 14 -- Eternal Rewards

We believe that those who trust Christ as their Savior are completely forgiven of all past, present and future sins. We believe that their eternal destiny is forever decided based upon the finished work of Jesus Christ on the cross. We believe that God will one day in the future call believers to account for the way they lived their lives and used their talents. We believe that He will reward them for their faithful service. We also believe that unfaithful believers will be in heaven, but may forfeit their rewards due to their unworthy behavior.

Romans 12:6-8; 1 Corinthians 3:11-15; 12:4-11, 28; 2 Corinthians 5:10

SECTION 15 -- Future Events

We believe in the imminent return of Christ for both the living and the dead who have trusted Him as Savior, at which time these believers will be caught up to be with Him forever. We believe in a seven-year period of tribulation on earth which will end with the Second Coming of Christ to establish His 1000-year kingdom on earth.

We believe that following a brief rebellion by Satan and his followers at the end of the 1000-year kingdom, God will judge living and dead unbelievers and will cast them and Satan into the Lake of Fire forever. We believe that after this God will destroy the present heavens and earth by fire and will create a new, eternal heaven and earth in which believers will dwell with Him forever.

Daniel 9:26-27; Matthew 24:1-31; 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18; 2 Peter 3:7-10; Revelation 6-22

SECTION 16 – Marriage

Definition of Marriage

We regard as true and right that God the Creator designed and ordained marriage to be a one-flesh, lifelong, and exclusive commitment between one man and one woman.

By “one-flesh” we mean that marriage is much more than just a civil union. It is a union of spirit, soul and body. By “exclusive” we mean, that marriage is to be monogamous, one man and one woman faithfully committed to each other alone.

Our definition of marriage is based on Biblical truth:

- God created human beings as male and female (Gen. 1:27). The complementary, relational nature of the human race as “male and female” reflects the created order given by God when He created human beings “in His image” (Gen. 1:26-27; 5:1)
- Scripture grants two life-enhancing options for sexual behavior: monogamous marital relations between one man and one woman (Gen. 1:27-28; 2:18, 2:21-24; Matt. 19:4-6; Heb. 13:4) or sexual celibacy (1 Cor. 7:1, 7:7; Matt. 19:12). Either is a gift from God, given as He wills for His glory and the good of those who receive and rejoice in His gift to them.
- All homosexual behavior is specifically condemned as sin in both the Old Testament and the New Testament (Gen. 19:4-11 [cf. 2 Pet. 2:6-7; Jude 7]; Lev. 18:22; 20:13; Judges 19:22-25; Rom. 1:24-27; 1 Cor. 6:9-11; 1 Tim. 1:8-11). This includes both male and female homosexual activity, both the more passive and more active roles in homosexual practice, and all varieties of homosexual acts.

ARTICLE V CHURCH LEADERSHIP

The local church is one body with many believer-members. Local church government is the responsibility of this body of believers under the headship of Jesus Christ. As authorized by Scripture, local church leadership is invested by the congregation in the elders, to whom the congregation submits. These men have authority to delegate to individuals, committees or other boards authority and responsibility to carry out the ministry of the church in both spiritual and physical matters. In using or delegating their authority to make decisions, the elders must seek to be guided by the Scriptures, the Holy Spirit and input from the congregation.

Acts 6:2-5; 15:6, 22; 20:28; 2 Corinthians 8:19; Ephesians 1:22-23; Philippians 1:1; Colossians 1:18; 1 Thessalonians 5:12-13; Hebrews 13:17

SECTION 1 - Elders (General)

Qualifications

Elders shall be men whose lives demonstrate the character qualities found in 1 Timothy 3:1-7 and Titus 1:6-9. In addition, these men shall be members of Fellowship Bible Church and shall accept the doctrinal statement of this constitution (Article IV) and be supportive of the entire constitution.

Authority

The ministry of Fellowship Bible Church shall be under the direction of the Lord Jesus Christ, working in and through the elders. The elders, through the Board of Elders, will be the primary decision-making body within the church. However, it is crucial that the elders make decisions based upon the individual and corporate leading of the Holy Spirit, supported by scriptural insight, carefully assembled facts and input from the body.

While the church is not a democracy where majority rules, the Lord Jesus does lead and direct the church through both the elders and the body. Therefore, in major decisions of church life, the congregation will be asked to vote to confirm body unity and to show a wide awareness of God's leading. The elders will not take action until a majority of the body is unified on the matter.

The following decisions require a two-thirds majority vote of the church membership:

1. Capital expenditures over \$5,000
2. Adding paid pastoral staff
3. Adding elders to the Board of Elders
4. Some matters concerning church discipline
5. Amending the constitution

Duties

Elders must maintain a close personal walk with God. They must have the attitude of a servant, ministering in the church with gentleness and humility. In keeping with biblical commands, elders are to:

1. Give themselves to prayer and the ministry of the Word
2. Guard and protect the church
3. Oversee and provide spiritual direction for the activities and growth of the church
4. Aid in finding and developing gifted teachers of the Word (2 Timothy 2:2)
5. Warn and discipline believers in the church
6. Support, encourage, counsel and lead in humility
7. Appoint deacons and provide guidance as needed
8. Oversee the finances of the church
9. Pray for and encourage the sick
10. Maintain open communications with those in the church (through congregational meetings and personal contacts)

11. Decide church direction in the event of disagreement within the paid pastoral staff
12. Interpret the Articles and provisions of this constitution in light of Scripture
13. Make decisions and perform other duties as situations within the church require

Organization

This church shall have two kinds of elders, paid (pastor/elders) and non-paid (1 Timothy 5:17-18). Both kinds of elders shall meet together to constitute the Board of Elders of the church. Each elder shall have a single vote in Board decisions.

The Board of Elders shall choose a member of the Board to serve as Chairman of the Board for one calendar year. The Chairman may not serve as Chairman more than one year consecutively. The Board shall also choose a Secretary each year to keep and record the minutes of all Board meetings. No paid elder shall serve as either Chairman or Secretary of the Board of Elders.

A simple majority of the Board of Elders must be present to transact the business of the church. A majority of the elders present is normally sufficient to decide a matter, unless otherwise specified in this constitution.

SECTION 2 - Non-paid Elders

Selection

The need for a new or additional non-paid elder(s) may be recognized by either the Board of Elders or other members of the church body. The elders in consultation with or in response to the request of body members, shall study the nature of the need and follow God's leading in deciding if the need justifies the appointment of an elder(s). Upon a decision by the Board of Elders that a need does exist, the church will prayerfully seek God's direction in choosing the right man or men.

Only biblically-qualified men shall be selected as elders. If no qualified men are available, or if men who are otherwise qualified are unable or unwilling to serve, no appointment will be made. However, the existing Board will maintain at least four (4) non-paid elders on the Board of Elders unless men who are both qualified and willing to serve are unavailable.

When the need arises for an additional non-paid elder(s), the existing Board of Elders shall use the following procedures:

1. The need for a new elder(s) shall be announced to the church body.
2. Church members shall be asked to submit the names of biblically-qualified men to serve as elder(s).
3. From the names submitted and/or their own nominees, the Board of Elders shall prayerfully identify the man or men who are best qualified to serve.
4. Any qualified nominee shall be approached by a Board member to determine the nominee's willingness to serve.
5. Any qualified nominee who is willing to serve shall be announced to the church body and shall be submitted to the membership of the church for confirmation. A confirmation vote shall be scheduled and announced at least two weeks in advance.
6. Following confirmation by the church body, the nominee shall be ordained by the Board of Elders to serve as a non-paid elder.

Tenure

Elders shall be selected for three-year terms consistent with their continued desire and ability to serve. Elder terms shall be considered to begin on the first day of January and run for three calendar years. Following a three-year term, an elder must wait one year before being selected for another three-year term as elder. Elders may leave the Board by voluntary resignation or by involuntary dismissal. Involuntary dismissal for cause shall be handled in accord with church disciplinary procedures (see Article VII). Any appeal of dismissal by an elder shall be decided by a simple majority of the church membership at a called meeting with at least two weeks of advance notice.

SECTION 3 - Pastor/Elders

The pastor/elder(s) is responsible for the quality and content of the teaching and counseling in the church. Since the Lord has given spiritual gifts to all believers, the pastor/elder is *not* responsible for *all* the teaching or other ministries within the body. Rather they are to equip other believers “for the work of service.” The Pastor and his wife shall automatically be considered members of Fellowship Bible Church.

Romans 12:3-8; 1 Corinthians 12:4-11; Ephesians 4:11-16; 1 Peter 4:10-11

Duties, Qualifications and Authority

The duties, qualifications and authority of the pastor/elder(s) shall be the same as those for the non-paid elders (Article V, Section 2), with the following additional duties:

1. Provide the majority of the teaching during worship services
2. Provide guidance, as needed, to the Board of Elders concerning spiritual and business concerns in the church body

3. The senior pastor/elder(s) shall supervise the paid church staff (assistant pastors, youth pastors, secretaries, janitors, etc.)
4. Coordinate the administration of the ordinances (believer's baptism and the Lord's Supper)

Selection

Upon recognition of the need for a new senior pastor/elder, the Board of Elders shall guide and direct the selection process in dependence upon the leading of God. Multiple senior paid elders (co-pastors), functioning as equals, complementing and cooperating with each other, *may be selected* if the Board of Elders and the church membership so chooses.

These procedures shall be followed in selecting a new senior paid elder:

1. A selection committee shall be appointed with a member of the Board of Elders as its head. The committee shall consist of non-paid elders along with at least an equal number of church members, chosen by the elders.
2. The selection committee shall seek names and resumes from any qualified and interested men, by any means at their disposal. This may include contacting doctrinally sound seminaries and seeking information from the congregation about possible candidates.
3. The selection committee shall carefully and prayerfully consider any resumes submitted. These will be evaluated in light of the man's experience, interests, doctrinal beliefs, philosophy of ministry and in light of the needs of the church.

4. The committee will select one or more men who appear to fill the needs of the church based upon their resume and other information gathered. These men may be invited to visit the church one or more times. These visits should include time for the selection committee and the church body to evaluate the men and their families, time for them to teach the Word of God and time for them to evaluate the church and the community. Attendance of a man's family on the first visit is not required.
5. After each visit the selection committee will carefully consider the candidate. During this process they will seek input from the church body concerning the candidate, using a written questionnaire, congregational meetings or any other appropriate means. After evaluation of the candidate, the selection committee must decide whether or not to recommend the candidate. A three-quarters majority vote of the committee is needed to recommend. The committee shall announce any recommendation to the church body.
6. A vote of the church membership will be called to see if there is unified agreement with the selection committee's recommendation. This vote shall be at least two weeks after the committee's recommendation is reported to allow the church ample time for prayer as they consider this decision. If at least two-thirds of the voting members agree with the selection committee's recommendation, the church will offer the position to the man.
7. If the man turns down the offer or if the church body does not agree with the committee's recommendation, the above procedures will be repeated until a qualified man is found and hired.

Tenure

A pastor/elder shall serve in this position until he resigns or is removed. Removal of a pastor/elder *for cause* shall follow the procedures outlined in Article VII concerning church discipline. In this case a three-quarter majority vote by the Board of Elders (*excluding* the pastor/elder in question) is required to take disciplinary action against a pastor/elder. In addition, a removal recommendation based upon factors not covered in Article VII may be approved by three-quarters of the Board of Elders (excluding the pastor/elder in question). Such a recommendation requires the approval of a majority of the church membership at a specially-called church meeting (with two weeks of advance notice) in order to become effective.

SECTION 4 - Associate Pastoral Staff

The need for paid associate pastoral staff to assist in meeting church needs may be recognized by any member of the church leadership or body. Such a need must also be recognized by the senior paid elder(s) -- in consultation with the Board of Elders -- before action is taken. The need for this expenditure should also be discussed with the church body.

The procedure for hiring associate pastoral staff members shall be the same as those used in selecting a senior paid elder. A senior paid elder will automatically head the selection committee. The associate pastoral staff and their spouse shall automatically become members of Fellowship Bible Church.

All paid pastoral staff shall look to a senior paid elder for supervision of their duties and for periodic review of their performance. A written job description will be prepared for all paid staff members. This job description will be prepared by the senior paid elder(s) in consultation with the Board of Elders.

After appropriate consultation with the church leadership, a recommendation by the senior paid elder shall be sufficient to modify the duties, or redirect the efforts of any paid staff member. Removal of an associate pastoral staff member shall follow the guidelines outlined in Article V, Section 3.

SECTION 5 - Deacons

Qualifications

Deacons shall be men who desire to be and are able to be servants of the local church body. Deacons must meet all the qualifications found in Acts 6:3 and 1 Timothy 3:8-12. In addition, these men shall be members of Fellowship Bible Church and shall accept the doctrinal statement of this constitution (Article IV) and be supportive of the entire constitution.

Duties

Deacons shall help the elders in ministering to the needs of the church body (Acts 6:1-6), especially the physical needs (such as caring for the building and property), though they may also serve in other ways. Their specific duties shall be designated by the elders according to the needs of the church, and according to a particular deacon's gifts, talents and capabilities. Deacons shall function under the authority of and be responsible to the Board of Elders.

Deacons shall be selected to serve only if they are biblically-qualified and willing to serve. If no qualified men are available, or if those who are qualified are unable or unwilling to serve, no appointment will be made.

When the need arises for new or additional deacons the following procedures shall be used:

1. The Board of Elders shall decide if the need for deacon(s) exists.
2. When there is a need, the Board of Elders shall notify the church body of the need and ask them to recommend to the Board those men they believe meet the biblical qualifications for deacon.
3. From the names submitted and/or their own nominees, the Board of Elders shall prayerfully identify the men who are best qualified to serve.
4. Any qualified nominee shall be approached by a Board member appointed to this task to determine the nominee's willingness to serve.
5. The elders shall then appoint that man (men) as deacon(s) and will announce their appointment to the church body.

Tenure

Deacons are appointed to three-year terms consistent with their continued desire and ability to serve in this capacity. Deacon terms shall be considered to begin on the first day of January and run for three consecutive years. Following a three-year term a deacon must wait one year before being eligible to be appointed to another three-year term. Deacons may leave office by voluntary resignation or by involuntary dismissal. Involuntary dismissal of a deacon shall be in accordance with the procedures for church discipline outlined in Article VII. If the situation is such that dismissal is required, the Board may suggest voluntary resignation by the deacon involved. If he refuses, the Board may remove him from office.

SECTION 6 - Non-Pastoral Staff

The Board of Elders is responsible for planning and directing the employment of baby sitters, janitors, secretaries, etc. However, since a secretary will be working primarily for the senior pastor/elder(s), he will make the final decision, in consultation with the Board of Elders, on who will fill this position.

ARTICLE VI CHURCH MEMBERSHIP

Scripture describes independent, local assemblies of believers. Each local church is united by a common faith, a common mission, a common commitment to each other, and a common submission to the leadership of that specific body.

Such a doctrine of the local church of necessity implies a formal relationship between believers and their particular local body. Believers who attend and those who lead in the local church are to commit themselves to the Lord, to each other and to the work of the church.

Though not commanded by Scripture, Fellowship Bible Church shall have a membership roll to aid in conducting church business and to provide legal protection in making church decisions (for example, church discipline). An individual believer's decision to seek church membership should flow from their commitment to Christ and His church.

We believe that membership in this local church involves regular attendance at church services; prayer for church members, leaders and activities; material support of the church and its work; the use of personal spiritual gifts to serve others in the church; and commitment to the unity of the body through avoidance of destructive personal criticism and submission to the discipline of this church.

Ephesians 4:4-6, 15-16; 6:18; 1 Corinthians 16:1-3; 1 Thessalonians 1:1; 5:12-13; 2 Thessalonians 1:1; Hebrews 10:23-25; 13:17

Procedure for Membership

Any individual who confesses the Lord Jesus Christ as personal Savior and who is in agreement with this constitution is qualified for membership in Fellowship Bible Church. A member must be 18 years of age or older to vote. Anyone wanting to become a member should contact one of the elders and request membership. Two elders including at least one senior pastor/elder will meet with the individual to discuss their decision. Their names will be presented to the elder board as soon as possible for approval. If the individual meets the qualifications for membership (as determined by the interviewing group and subsequent elder board) his/her name will be placed on the church membership roll and they will be acknowledged before the church body as a new member.

Membership Roll

The elders will review the membership roll annually. Members may be removed from the roll upon their request, as a result of church discipline or as a result of noninvolvement with the body. If a member appears no longer to be involved with the church, an elder(s) will meet with the person to verify their membership status. After nine (9) months of noninvolvement at least two personal contacts from an elder, a member may be declared “inactive” by a majority vote of the Board. An inactive member may not vote, nor will they be counted as part of the quorum required to conduct church business. After another nine (9) months of noninvolvement, the inactive member may be removed from the church roll by majority vote of the Board. No member will be removed from the roll without being contacted by an elder.

Voting

Voting by the church membership is designed to show God's leading in the church on an issue. Unless specifically indicated otherwise in this constitution, a two-thirds majority vote in favor of an issue is required to show that the body believes God is leading favorably in the decision being made. If a two-thirds majority vote in favor is not achieved, no action will be taken and the leadership shall reevaluate the situation.

Any member of the church, 18 years of age or older may vote. A member may vote in person or they may vote “absentee.” An “absentee” vote is valid if the person voting writes down on any piece of paper the issue being voted upon and their vote. This absentee ballot must either be signed or submitted in a signed, sealed envelope to be counted. Absentee ballots must be given to an elder within the time period set for the vote to be taken.

Voting shall normally be done by using written, registered ballots. At least a majority of the church membership must vote to make the results of the vote binding. The church body will be advised of the date and time set for the vote at least two weeks prior to the vote being taken.

ARTICLE VII CHURCH DISCIPLINE

Church discipline is necessary to protect the holiness of the local church body, so that the church continues to bring glory to God. Through church discipline, sinning believers are confronted, brought to repentance and restored to fellowship with God and the church. When the church is faithful in disciplining its members, the holiness of God is seen by those watching the church, enhancing the effectiveness of the church's testimony for her Lord.

Church discipline is the responsibility of *all* church members, but it is uniquely the responsibility of local church leadership, especially the elders. Church discipline can be a difficult task. It must be done in a spirit of humility, always with a readiness to forgive and restore the repentant sinner (Galatians 6:1; 2 Timothy 2:24, 25).

Church discipline shall be exercised in the following situations authorized by Scripture:

1. Interpersonal problems between believers (Matthew 18:15-17)

2. Problems and/or problem people causing division in the church (Romans 16:17-18)
3. Disorderly conduct (2 Thessalonians 3:6-15) or flagrant sins, such as immorality, covetousness, idolatry, abusive speech, drunkenness, swindling (1 Corinthians 5:1-11)
4. False teaching or views expressed which undermine the fundamentals of the faith, but *not* matters involving legitimate differences of interpretation (2 Timothy 2:17-18)

When church discipline is warranted it shall be exercised in the following way:

1. Any potential church discipline situation brought to the attention of the Board of Elders shall be evaluated in light of Scripture to see if it involves an offense requiring church discipline.
2. Where discipline is needed, the elders shall encourage those involved to resolve their differences in private. If this fails, the elders shall send representatives from the Board (witnesses) to work with those involved to resolve the problem.
3. Where the offense is against the church body or threatens the welfare or unity of the body, the Board of Elders shall initiate disciplinary action. They shall first privately contact the party or parties involved to press for resolution of the problem.
4. If all prior efforts fail, the matter shall be taken to “the church.” At the discretion of the Board of Elders, the issues involved may be decided by a two-thirds majority vote of the Board *or* by a two-thirds majority vote of the church membership. Possible disciplinary actions include, but are not limited to, loss of voting privileges, removal from church membership and public censure.

The biblical concerns in church discipline are: (1) the holy character of God, (2) the public witness of the church, (3) the unity and purity of the church, and (4) the edification and restoration of the individual believer.

Matthew 18:15-17; Romans 16:17-18; 1 Corinthians 5:1-13; 2 Corinthians 2:6-8; 1 Thessalonians 5:14-15; 2 Thessalonians 3:6-15; Titus 3:10; Hebrews 12:6, 11; 1 Peter 1:16

ARTICLE VIII SPECIAL CHURCH SERVICES

Ordinances

Baptism of believers shall be administered upon the request of the candidate and with the approval of the Board of Elders. The mode of baptism shall ordinarily be immersion, unless special circumstances make immersion impractical.

The Lord's Supper (Communion) shall be observed monthly and on such special occasions as shall be designated by the Board of Elders. All professing believers shall be permitted to participate in the Lord's Supper.

Dedication of Children

Parents may dedicate their children to the Lord, if this is their desire. However, the dedication of children is *not* an ordinance and shall *not* include baptism.

ARTICLE IX CHURCH FINANCES

The policy of Fellowship Bible Church shall be to keep the congregation informed of financial needs by means of announcements in the weekly bulletin and from the pulpit, as well as by other means as needed. We will *not* solicit members individually for contributions. Each believer is to give cheerfully to God according to their ability to give (2 Corinthians 9:7).

The following policies will govern the church's handling of financial decisions:

1. All paid staff will receive a wage commensurate with their duties and abilities. (1 Timothy 5:17-18)
2. All designated gifts will be used as requested as long as the designation is consistent with the mission and goals of the church. If a special gift is given with the instruction to "use it in whatever area has the greatest need," the Board of Elders shall decide how that gift will be used. All other gifts will go into the general fund.
3. The local church has the privilege and responsibility of providing financial support for those in service to God outside the local church (missionaries, para-church ministries, seminary students, etc.). Fellowship Bible Church will support selected individuals in such service as the Lord leads and provides. All supported ministries and individuals must accept the doctrine presented in the doctrinal statement of the constitution (Article IV). The Board of Elders shall decide which individuals and ministries the church will support.

4. On an annual basis, during the last quarter of the year, the Board of Elders shall oversee the preparation of a draft budget for the coming year. This document shall include a reasonable balance between projected giving and spending (including expenses for paid staff and supported ministries). A budget committee consisting of at least two elders and the church treasurer may be appointed to do this work. All financial and budgetary recommendations of this committee shall be approved by the Board of Elders. The elders shall then present these recommendations to the church membership for their approval. The final approved budget shall be recorded in the written minutes of the next Board of Elders meeting following the church vote.

5. The Board of Elders shall keep adequate financial records and prepare monthly financial statements. The Board of Elders shall authorize individuals it chooses (with the exception of the paid pastoral staff) to sign on church accounts.

1 Corinthians 9:6-11; 2 Corinthians 8:1-6; Galatians 6:6-7; 1 Timothy 5:17-18

ARTICLE X AMENDMENTS

This constitution may be amended or replaced as needed. When changes are made, the elders, after consultation with the church body, shall make provisional modifications in light of Scripture. All essential information concerning these proposed changes shall be communicated to the church body in written form, providing the body with adequate time for study and response. A date shall be set for consideration of the revisions at a meeting of the church membership. The membership shall at this meeting vote to accept or reject the constitutional modifications.

**ARTICLE XI
DISSOLUTION OF PROPERTY**

A decision to dissolve or disband the church must be approved by a two-thirds majority of the church membership. In the event this church dissolves or ceases to function as a church for any reason, all church assets shall be distributed as determined by the Board of Elders at the time of dissolution after the payment of all outstanding bills.

**ARTICLE XII
REGISTERED AGENT DESIGNATION**

For purposes of complying with State of Texas regulations of nonprofit corporations, the current Chairman of the Board of Elders is designated Registered Agent for Fellowship Bible Church at the church.

Revised February 2014