

Grace Reformed Baptist Church of Owensboro Constitution

Preamble

We, the members of Grace Reformed Baptist Church do declare and establish this constitution for the preservation and security of the principles of our faith, and so that this body may be governed in a scriptural and orderly manner. This constitution will preserve the liberties and state the responsibilities of each individual member of this church including its officers. As members of Grace Reformed Baptist Church we voluntarily and solemnly submit ourselves to the following ten (10) articles of this constitution.

It is hereby resolved that upon the church's acceptance of this constitution, all previous constitutions, rules and regulations, or by-laws, will be declared void and invalid. This constitution will serve as the only articles of government of this church.

The present constitution was accepted by the common suffrage of the church on December 8 of 2024 and February 23 of 2025. The present constitution builds on the original constitution dated October 28 of 2012 and additional revisions adopted on August 30 and October 4 of 2015. Its provisions replace all previous constitutions, rules and regulations, or by-laws. This constitution will serve as the only articles of government of this church.

Article 1: Church Name

This body of Christ shall be known as Grace Reformed Baptist Church.

Article 2: Church Purpose

This church exists by the grace of God and for the glory of God, which shall be the ultimate purpose of all its activities. We will seek to glorify the God of Scripture (Eph. 3:21) by promoting His worship (John 4:23,24; 1 Cor. 3:16,17; 1 Pet. 2:5); edifying and equipping the saints (1 Cor. 12:27,28; 14:12,18,19,26; Eph. 4:11-16); spreading the gospel of Christ both locally and worldwide (Mat. 28:18-20; Luke 24:46-48; Acts 1:8; Acts 13 & 14); seeking whenever possible to both plant and strengthen other churches, promoting biblical faithfulness and purity in all the assemblies of Christ (Acts 15:36,41; Acts 16:5; Jude 3); and seeking to minister relief to the needy, especially among the saints (Rom. 15:26,27; Gal. 2:10; Gal. 6:10).

Article 3: Church Confession of Faith

Section 1: Our Statement of Faith

We accept the London Baptist Confession of Faith of 1689 (excepting the assertions regarding the salvation of the mentally incompetent [10:3] and the identity of the antichrist [26:4]), as our primary confession of faith. We find this confession to be an aid in controversy, a confirmation in faith, a means of edification in righteousness, a basis for church unity, and formal association with other churches. We acknowledge, however, the inerrant Scriptures to be the supreme authority in all matters of faith, morals and order.

Section 2: Our Views of Marriage and Sexual Ethics

The London Baptist Confession of Faith of 1689 clearly affirms in chapter 25, paragraph 1 that “Marriage is to be between one man and one woman; neither is it lawful for any man to have more than one wife, nor for any woman to have more than one husband.” It seems necessary because of the present widespread degradation of sexual morality in our culture to state our views of this matter more specifically and formally.

- We believe that the term “marriage” has only one meaning, and that is marriage sanctioned by God, which joins one man and one woman in a single, exclusive, covenantal union, as delineated in Scripture.
- We believe that God intends sexual intimacy to only occur between a man and a woman who are married to each other. We believe that God

has commanded that no intimate sexual activity be engaged in outside of a marriage between a man and a woman.

- We believe that any form of sexual immorality, such as adultery, fornication, homosexual conduct, bisexual conduct, bestiality, incest, any use of pornography or any attempt to change one's sex, or disagreement with one's biological sex, is sinful and offensive to God.
- We believe that God offers redemption and restoration to all who confess and forsake their sin, seeking His mercy and forgiveness through Jesus Christ.
- We believe that every person must be afforded compassion, love, kindness, respect, and dignity. Hateful and harassing behavior or attitudes directed toward any individual are to be repudiated and are not in accord with Scripture nor the doctrines of the church.
- We believe, nevertheless, in spite of the kindness to be shown to sinners, impenitence in the aforementioned sins is inconsistent with membership in Grace Reformed Baptist Church and exposes any member to the discipline of the church including ultimately excommunication.
- Therefore as a result of these perspectives marriage ceremonies performed in any facility owned, leased, or rented by this church will only be those ceremonies that are sanctioned by God as reflected in the above perspectives.

Major portions of Scripture from which these beliefs are drawn are as follows: Genesis 1:27-28; Genesis 2:18-25; Exodus 20:14; Matthew 19:3-12; Romans 1:26-27; 1 Corinthians 6:9-20; Ephesians 5:22-33; Hebrews 13:4.

Section 3: Our Views of the Sanctity of Life

The London Baptist Confession of Faith of 1689 clearly affirms the abiding validity of the moral law as summarily comprehended in the Ten Commandments. We are, thus, bound as a church by the Sixth Commandment: "You shall not murder" and the sanctity of life which it enshrines. Nevertheless, because of the abounding ignorance of God's law and its most basic implications in our society, we express our faith in the sanctity of life as follows: We believe that all human life is sacred and created by God. Human life at all stages—including pre-born and end of

life—should be valued and respected (Psalm 51; 139). We believe, however, that the sanctity of life does not contradict, but actually requires, capital punishment in some cases.

Article 4: Church Covenant

Section 1: Our New Covenant Confidence

God has graciously entered into a New Covenant with His people (Jer. 31:31-34; 32:40; Heb.8:7-13; 10:16,17; 13:20,21) through the work of Jesus Christ (Heb.8:6), whose obedience and blood infallibly secure all of its benefits for them (Mat. 26:26-28; Heb. 13:20,21). By making us members of the one body of Christ (Rom. 12:4,5; 1 Cor. 12:12-27; Eph. 4:25), the New Covenant lays upon us responsibilities, not only to God, but also to each other. In this covenant God writes His law upon our hearts and causes us to walk in His ways. Thus, both our desire and ability to obey God spring from the work of Jesus Christ. Christ purchased for us the Holy Spirit, by whose gift of faith we obey, not to establish our own righteousness before God but to express our gratitude for grace. Grace Reformed Baptist Church exists on the basis of the New Covenant and as a local expression of the power and grace of God in that covenant. In our church covenant we confess both our joyful faith in the God of the New Covenant and our willing embrace of its obligations. These New Covenant obligations require that we love God supremely and our neighbor as ourselves. By the grace of that covenant, we commit ourselves to the following obligations:

Section 2: Our New Covenant Commitments

I. Our Commitment to God: We will seek to love the Lord our God with all our heart, soul and mind, and to live before Him in such manner as will manifest this love in our worship, walk and witness.

A. We agree to worship God (1) only (2) scripturally (3) sincerely and (4) regularly.

- We agree to worship only the one true and living God (Father, Son and Holy Spirit), who has revealed Himself to us in the Scriptures, only through the mediation of His Son.
- We will worship God in His appointed way in the Scriptures, excluding from our worship anything that He has not commanded while

conscientiously observing those duties and ordinances of the New Covenant.

- We will worship God sincerely, avoiding drawing near to Him with lips only, but offering that true heart worship which He seeks from us.
- We will worship God regularly, faithfully observing that public and corporate worship which He commands on the Lord's Day, while also being diligent to attend all the stated services of the church, except when legitimately hindered.

B. We agree to walk before God in Biblical holiness of heart and life. We recognize the seriousness of taking upon ourselves the name of the one true God in our baptism and church membership. We agree not to take that glorious name lightly, but rather to adorn our profession with honor by ever seeking a closer walk with God through the means of grace which He has appointed, including not only our faithful attendance at public worship, but also the maintaining of both private devotions (Bible study and prayer) and family worship. We will also pursue the salvation and sanctification of our children and other loved ones, by instructing them in God's truth, while also seeking to exemplify that truth in our godly walk before them.

C. We further commit to honor God by our witness in this world, resisting the sins of this present evil age, while zealously endeavoring both by holy lives and faithful words to advance the Kingdom of Christ in this world by making known everywhere the one true God and the saving gospel of Jesus Christ.

II. Our Commitment to Men: We will seek to love our neighbors as ourselves.

A. We will love one another in this church according to the Scriptures.

- We will care for each other in temporal things, rejoicing together in God's blessings, bearing one another's burdens and seeking whenever possible to actively relieve each other in our trials and sufferings.
- We will care for each other spiritually, watching over one another's souls. We will each seek to help others on the way to heaven, not only by praying for each other, but also by scripturally encouraging and admonishing one another.

- We will work diligently for the peace of this assembly by maintaining loving relationships with each other. We will seek to avoid sinning against each other in any way, and be quick to repent and seek forgiveness when we have done so. We will be slow to take offense, forbearing with one another, and always ready for reconciliation in conflict, being mindful of the rules of our Savior to secure it without delay.
- We will covenant to diligently, sincerely and actively promote the well-being of this church, seeking to sustain its worship, ordinances, doctrine and discipline. We will happily submit to the Christ-appointed leaders of the church, while cheerfully giving tithes and offerings to the support of its ministry. We will endeavor each one to do all within our power to make this church that which the Head of the church desires it to be.

B. We will love our neighbors who are not part of this church.

- We will love all of our Christian neighbors, realizing that all true brothers in Christ are part of the same household of faith (Gal. 6:10). While seeking to faithfully hold to what we are convinced is taught in Holy Scripture, we will avoid all unholy sectarianism, seeking as far as possible to pursue and maintain the highest degree of friendship and fellowship, while also promoting the temporal and spiritual welfare of all of the family of God.
- We will love our unsaved neighbors, seeking also their temporal well-being. But we will especially, according to Christ's great commission, seek to make disciples of the lost by clearly and faithfully sharing the saving gospel with them. We will also endeavor to walk before them in true holiness so that we may adorn the saving gospel we share with them. We engage moreover to promote the spread of the gospel of Christ worldwide, by our prayers, finances, and whatever other scriptural means are available to us.

III. Our Commitment to This Covenant: We voluntarily and joyfully enter into this covenant, humbly acknowledging our remaining sin and shortcomings, but with prayerful dependence on the Omnipotent Spirit of God who is able to work in us that which is well-pleasing in His sight. We enter this covenant with a serious desire to please our God by keeping it to the best of our God-given ability. If the providence of God should move us

from this church, we will endeavor to unite with some other faithful church where we can carry out the duties of this covenant.

Article 5: Church Membership

Section 1: General Statement

This is an independent, congregational, Elder-led Baptist church under the Lordship of Jesus Christ. The membership retains unto itself the right of exclusive self-government in all phases of the spiritual and temporal life of this church. The membership reserves the exclusive right to determine who shall be members of this church and the conditions of such membership.

Section 2: The Warrant for Church Membership

A genuine Christian's commitment to the Lord Jesus Christ is inseparable from his commitment to His truth and His people. This commitment ordinarily requires a formal, open, voluntary, solemn and enduring commitment to membership in a local church. Following are some proofs of the existence of the local church which Christ ordained for His own glory and worship, and also for the spiritual benefit of His people, which shows the warrant for every true Christian to seek membership therein:

- The New Testament presents the local church as a distinct and defined group of individuals covenanted together to worship God and carry out the commands of our Lord Jesus Christ. The local church is made up of individuals who may be counted (Acts 2:41,42; Acts 4:4), added to (Acts 2:47; 5:14), and even subtracted from (Mat 18:17; 1 Cor. 5:12,13; 2 Cor. 2:6).
- Each local church of Christ is called upon to select leaders and representatives from among itself (Acts 6:1-6; Acts 15:22; 2 Cor. 8:19,23), thus making it a formal organization with recognized officers (Phil. 1:1; Acts 14:23).
- Fulfillment of the great commission requires church membership (Mat 28:18-20). In this commission there is an inseparable connection between making disciples, baptizing them, and then teaching them all things that Christ has commanded. It is clear from the Scriptures that the Apostles implemented this commission by gathering baptized disciples into local churches where they were taught all the things that Christ had commanded (Acts 2:38-42; 1 Cor. 4:1-7; Titus 1:7).

- The whole of the New Testament presents a picture of disciples of Christ worshipping and serving Him in connection with some local church. We believe this is what Christ intends for His disciples to the end of the age.

Section 3: Duties of Church Members

Members of Grace Reformed Baptist Church are expected (1) first and foremost, to have a good confession of faith in Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior; (2) to have obeyed the Lord Jesus in the ordinance of believer's baptism; (3) to be faithful in all the duties essential to the Christian life; (4) to attend regularly the stated services of this church unless providentially hindered; (5) to submit cheerfully to the eldership of the church (Heb. 13:17); (6) to give cheerfully to its support and its causes as God has prospered them; (7) to participate in its organized work and make available to the church such talents and abilities as God has endowed them with.

Section 4: Candidacy and Reception

Any person may offer himself as a candidate for membership in Grace Reformed Baptist Church. We understand the scriptural priority of serving the Lord in one of His churches and therefore welcome any and all persons who are biblically qualified to join with us. However, we also recognize the vital importance of keeping the Lord's church sound in doctrine and holy in practice, and therefore we desire all potential members to understand and meet those biblical qualifications. Members are to be received only upon the recommendation of the elder(s) and by the consent of the church. The method of receiving members into Grace Reformed Baptist Church will be according to the following steps:

- An initial interview with a pastor in the church for the following reasons: (1) To ascertain by the applicant's testimony, with as much certainty as possible, that the proposed member knows the way of salvation and has a personal saving knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ. This is necessary because we believe that church membership is for true believers only. (2) To make sure that the proposed member understands and is in general and substantial agreement with the doctrinal beliefs of our church. To gain this purpose, the prospective member will need to become generally familiar with the confession of

this church. It is not expected that every new member (especially a recent convert) understand all the doctrines we believe, but there must be a general soundness in faith, and a humble willingness to learn God's truth, together with a determination not to sow any discord in the church with regard to any doctrinal matters in which the prospective member might be in disagreement with the church. (3) To make sure that the proposed member understands what is expected of members of the church. These expectations will include: regular attendance at all the stated meetings of the church unless providentially hindered; promoting the unity and spiritual well-being of the church through such things as a scriptural relationship with other members, adherence to biblical truth, and submission to the care, oversight and leadership of the pastors; a godly, separated life which will promote the honor of Jesus Christ, His religion and His church. It is probable that in most cases the accomplishment of the above goals will entail more than one meeting with the pastors and may take more time than most churches do to bring new members into formal church membership. However, the importance of Christ's church, and the seriousness of membership therein demands careful consideration before adding members to the church. While prospective members are going through the membership process, they may still, if they desire, derive the benefit of the church's ministry and pastoral care.

- When the pastoral interview process has been satisfactorily completed, then the membership candidate will be presented before the church for formal membership. This process will include the following: a formal announcement to the church of the desire of the candidate to become a member; the prospective member's testimony will be made available to the members of the church; allowance of a period of not less than four weeks for the members to review the testimony, and voice any concerns to the pastors concerning the church receiving the candidate into membership. After time has been allotted for the accomplishment of Step 2, the membership candidate will be voted on. A 3/4 vote of those members voting shall be required for acceptance into church membership. If the vote passes the candidate will be formally received into membership by the right hand of fellowship at the next Lord's Supper.

Section 5: Termination of Membership

As is the case with receiving members, so the termination of church membership must be governed by biblical principles. Accordingly, membership in Grace Reformed Baptist Church will be terminated in one of the following three ways:

I. Death: Physical death obviously warrants the removal of membership from the church roll.

II. Transfer of membership to another church: Since the New Testament norm for all Christians is that they be members of true local churches, any person leaving the membership of Grace Reformed Baptist Church should seek to transfer membership to another true church as soon as possible. We realize that this process may sometimes require a transitional period, and the elders will take such things into account when dealing with a member's transfer of membership. It will be the duty of the elders to handle transfer of membership in a way that accords with scriptural principles.

III. Exclusion

A. Exclusion, not under discipline: In some cases, a person's membership may need to be terminated for reasons which, in the judgment of the church, may not warrant discipline. Such cases may include the resignation of a member who concludes that he is not a Christian; the resignation of a member who requests to be relieved from his church covenant obligations for reasons that the church or its Elders may deem satisfactory; or the relocation of a member who no longer remains in contact with the church. The church shall exclude such persons from its membership role, without the exercise of church discipline by a simple majority vote of the church.

B. Exclusion by excommunication: According to Holy Scripture, a church must exclude from its membership any person who persists in holding or teaching serious doctrinal heresies, or who persists in conduct which is either publicly scandalous, or blatantly inconsistent with his Christian profession, or who persists in disturbing the unity and peace of the church (Matt. 18:15ff; 1 Cor. 5:1 ff; Rom. 16:17; Tit. 3:10, 11).

1. Excommunication should ordinarily be a last resort of the church and often should not be exercised until milder forms of

biblical discipline have been meekly, lovingly and prayerfully utilized in a sincere effort to restore the offending member. Such restorative efforts may include public verbal reproof (Mat. 18:17; 1 Tim. 5:20), and temporary suspension of certain privileges of church membership, such as the right to vote or participate in the Lord's Supper (Rom. 16:17; 1 Cor. 5:9-11; 2 Thess. 3:6,14). Suspension shall be enacted at the recommendation of the elders by a simple majority vote of the church.

2. When other scriptural means of restoring an offender have failed, the church must be willing to excommunicate an offending member (Mat. 18:17; 1 Cor. 5:13). Persons may be excommunicated only by a majority vote of the church (2 Cor. 2:6). As stated above, excommunication should ordinarily be a last resort. However, since some cases of sin (either moral or doctrinal) are so scandalous, gross and heinous in their nature, the church has a scriptural right and mandate to immediately excommunicate those guilty of such sins if the honor of Christ and His church necessitate this.

3. All acts of church discipline, including excommunication, must be lovingly carried out for the glory of Christ, the welfare and purity of the church (1 Cor. 5:6), with the goal of eventually restoring the offender to good standing in the church (2 Cor. 2:7).

Section 6: Restoration to Membership

Since full restoration is the goal of all church discipline, all members of the church should unite in its exercise when necessary, praying earnestly for God's gracious, restorative blessing upon those who have been disciplined. It is also both the duty and privilege of the church to forgive and to restore to full membership a disciplined or excommunicated member upon satisfactory evidence of repentance (2 Cor.2: 6-8). Thus any person whose membership has been terminated for any offense may be restored upon evidence of his repentance and reformation by a simple majority vote of the church.

Article 6: Church Officers

Section 1: General Statement

Jesus Christ alone is the Head of His Church (Col. 1:18). He has ordained that individual churches be governed by Himself through officers whom He

appoints, who are endowed by His Spirit, with the gifts and graces needed to accomplish their work. These officers govern with due respect to the rights and liberties of the whole church set forth in the Scriptures (Matt. 18:15-20; I Cor. 5:1-13; Acts 6: 1-7; 2 Cor. 2:6). Christ has ordained that local churches be ruled by elders and served by deacons. Beside the offices of elder and deacon the Scriptures acknowledge no other offices which continue in the church today (Phil. 1:1; 1 Tim. 3:1-13).

Section 2: General Prerequisites

- All officers of this church must be members in good standing of this church.
- Any individual set apart to one of these offices must be able to conscientiously affirm his agreement with the church's confessions of faith and constitution. If he should at any time move from this agreement, he is under immediate, spiritual and moral obligation to make that fact known to the elders privately.
- While we acknowledge the valuable gifts which God has given to women and the wonderful assistance they may render to the officers of the church (Rom. 16:1-6; Phil. 4:3; 1 Tim. 3:11), the Bible prohibits them from holding either the office of deacon or elder (1 Cor. 14:33b-35; 1 Tim. 2:8-15; 3:1-7). Women, therefore, shall not be nominated, elected, or ordained to either of these offices in the church. It is also contrary to Scripture for any woman to exercise headship or leadership in a formal meeting of the whole church either by leading in prayer, conducting the worship, reading the Scripture, leading the singing, administering the sacraments, or ministering the Word of God (1 Cor. 14:33b-35; 1 Tim. 2:8-15).

Section 3: Elders

I. Those who have been called and equipped by God to rule and teach in the church are identified as elders, pastors, or overseers. These three names designate one and the same office in a New Testament Church (Acts 20:17, 28; Eph. 4:11-12; Titus 1:5, 7).

II. Anyone desiring the office of an elder must evidence to God's people the personal, domestic and ministerial qualifications set forth in the Scriptures (I Tim. 3:1-7, Titus 1:5-9).

III. Because the authority of the elders of the church is human authority exercised in the house of God, it has both high prerogatives and important limitations;

- It is divinely-delegated authority. Thus, elders are answerable to God for the exercise of this authority (Acts 20:28; Heb. 13:17). They are, therefore, obligated to discharge all the duties specified in the Scriptures in such passages as Acts 20:17-35; 1 Peter 5:1-4; and Hebrews 13:17.
- When elders exercise this authority by requiring obedience to their leadership, they must seek to gain the consciences of God's people through the ministry of the Word (Eph. 4:11; I Tim. 3:2; II Tim. 4:1-2; Heb. 13:17).
- The authority of the elders does not include the right to make all decisions unilaterally. The Bible makes clear that decisions having to do with corrective discipline and the recognition of officers require the consent of the local church (Acts 6:2-6; 9:26; 1 Cor. 5:4-5, 13; 2 Cor 2:6). It is only fitting that other important matters such as the reception and exclusion of church members, the full support and involuntary removal of officers and major financial decisions be approved by the consent of the church. Nevertheless, the elders must provide definitive leadership to the church in the making of such decisions.
- The authority of the elders is limited to the sphere of the local church. They may not require consequences for sin beyond those of church discipline, invade the spheres of other ordained human authorities (husbands, fathers, civil rulers and employers), or command God's people regarding matters not specified in Scripture (Matt. 22:21; Luke 12:13-14). They must, however, order the house of God by the application of His Word (Acts 20:28; 1 Pet. 5:3a; Rom. 13:1-7; Eph. 5:22-6:9; I Cor. 7:25-28; 35-40).
- The authority of elders is conditioned by the fact that they are themselves members of the local church. While elders are shepherds over the flock, they are also members of the flock. Therefore, each individual elder is entitled to the same privileges, is obligated by the same responsibilities and is subject to the same discipline as are all other members of the church. Thus, each individual elder is both under the oversight of his fellow elders and accountable to the church as a whole (Matt. 18:17; 23:9; 26:31; Gal. 2:11; 3 John 1,9-10).

- The authority of every elder (overseer or pastor) is the same. Thus, every elder has equal rule in the church. Though gifts possessed and functions performed will vary from elder to elder, this diversity must never undermine real parity among the elders (Acts 20:28 [cp.17]; Gal. 2:11; 1 Pet. 5:1-2; 1 Tim. 5:17).
- Finally, the authority of the elders is a very real authority. When it is biblically exercised, God's people are required to submit to this authority (Heb. 13:17).

IV. One crucial aspect of the duties of elders is overseeing the flock of God. Fulfillment of this duty shall include, when possible, regular pastoral visits with each member of the church.

V. Another crucial aspect of the duties of elders is exercising leadership with regard to the meetings and worship of the church. The elders shall appoint such meetings as they believe good for the spiritual health of the church and assure that they are conducted to the glory of God and according to the provisions of His Word.

VI. While the New Testament clearly indicates that there may be elders who are not financially supported by the church, the elders who rule well, and especially those who labor in the Word and doctrine, will, when possible, be maintained in material necessities and disentangled from the cares of another vocation according to their gifts, the needs and capability of the church and the direction of Christ her Head (1 Tim. 5:17f).

VII. 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. If, however, an elder fails to meet the necessary scriptural qualifications, he may be removed from his office by the church.

VIII. This constitution assumes, and the norms of biblical church order *ordinarily* require, that a plurality of elders oversee the local church. *While each local church is independent, not every local church is fully organized. The lack of a plurality of elders is a real, serious, and practical deficiency in the order of a gospel church (Tit. 1:5).* Therefore, if at any period in the life of the church, there no longer exists a plurality of elders, and this lack cannot in a timely way be supplied, the remaining elder (or the church, if there is no elder) shall seek the temporary *assistance* of the pastors of a

trusted sister church holding as its doctrinal standard the London Baptist Confession of Faith of 1689. The purpose of such an arrangement is to provide both pastoral care and leadership in the recognition of a plurality of elders. When a suitable eldership willing to undertake these responsibilities is located, the church shall within a reasonable period of time *seek the assistance of* that eldership. If the church has a remaining elder, the aforementioned eldership shall *provide assistance and counsel* as if they were his fellow elders. This action shall be taken by a written ballot at a properly called meeting of the church. A three-fourths majority of those voting is necessary for such an action. The recognition of the oversight of such an eldership shall be confirmed (or failing a three-fourths majority withdrawn) in the same way at the annual meeting of the church in succeeding years. When a plurality of resident elders is realized, the oversight arrangement described here shall immediately cease.

Section 4: Deacons

I. Deacons are primarily responsible for assisting the elders in those practical aspects of ministry which would otherwise distract them from their priorities of the ministry of the Word, prayer and shepherding. Such practical matters include the administration of benevolence, the maintenance and improvement of the church's facilities, the management of various business affairs and the facilitation of ministries within the church.

II. Deacons must fulfill the duties of their office in cooperation with, and in subjection to, the elders. Deacons shall meet regularly with the elders in order to facilitate communication with them and to facilitate the efficient functioning of the diaconate.

III. The number of deacons shall not be fixed. The church shall set apart according to its need men who evidence the scriptural qualifications for that office (Acts 6:1-7; 1 Tim. 3:8-13).

IV. No term of office shall be fixed for deacons. If a deacon fails to meet the necessary Scriptural qualifications for his office, he may be removed from office by the church.

Section 5: Appointment of Officers

I. General Statement

The appointment of elders and deacons is the prerogative of the Lord Jesus Christ alone. However, He has ordained that they be formally recognized by the consent of the particular church they serve. Elders and deacons are ordained to office by the laying on of hands by the eldership (1 Tim. 4:14). This is an expression of approval for which the elders are responsible (1 Tim. 5:22). Therefore, each officer must have the approval, not only of the church as a whole, but of the eldership in particular. 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 officers is a matter of such importance that it should never proceed without much prayerful waiting upon God, careful consideration of the relevant passages of Scripture and thorough evaluation of those persons being considered. Each member of the church has a responsibility to be intelligently informed regarding these matters.

II. Procedure of Appointment

The recognition of those whom the Lord has appointed to bear office in this church is carried out in three steps: nomination, election and ordination.

A. Nomination

1. The Advisory Nominations Ballot: The members of the church are encouraged to express to the elders (privately) their views concerning those whom Christ may be gifting for office in the church. The elders will seriously consider the wisdom God gives to His church. In order to further encourage the church to contribute its wisdom to the elders an advisory nominations ballot shall be held once each year on which the members of the church will express their views concerning those the Lord is equipping for office in the church. The results of this ballot shall be secret—known only to the elders and those they deem it appropriate to also know the results. Nevertheless, since it is the elder's responsibility to lead the church, nominations to office are to be made by the eldership.

2. The Pulpit Committee: If at any time the church is without a pastor, a pulpit committee shall be elected by the church at any regular or specially called business meeting. The committee shall seek out a scripturally qualified man, and then nominate him to the church. The church shall then prayerfully consider him for the office of overseer. When

possible, the church should look within its own membership to see if Christ is actually equipping someone for the office from within the church.

B. Election

Any church meeting for the election of officers shall be announced at least four Lord's Days prior to its being held. The church should seek unanimity concerning each nominee, but where unanimity is not realized, three-fourths of those ballots cast shall be required for election.

In order to provide opportunity for the church to examine the nominee and to be further assured of his scriptural qualifications, at least two weeks prior to the night of the election of any officer, a church meeting will be held in which the scriptural qualifications of the nominee will be discussed. The scriptural qualifications shall be read and expounded, and the nominee's qualifications openly discussed in the fear of God and with due respect for the reputation of the nominee. Special care must be taken that the provisions of Matthew 18:15-17 regarding accusations of sin not be violated. The nominee shall be present to answer any questions which pertain to his qualifications for the office.

C. Ordination

Following the election of an officer there shall be a portion of a worship service set aside at which time the officer-elect shall be ordained and installed into office by the laying on of the hands of the eldership. This solemn act should always be accompanied by the special prayers of the church (Acts 13:1-3). The laying on of the elders' hands shall signify their approval of an officer-elect.

Section 6: Review of Officers:

I. Officers should hold office as long as in the esteem of the church they meet the biblical qualifications for their office.

II. A meeting to review the qualifications of an officer may be called by a majority of the elders, or a majority of the other elders in the case of an elder. Members of the church may also request such a meeting. This request must be made in writing, must state the name of the officer requested to be reviewed, must avoid slander, must be accompanied by the signatures of one-fourth of the total voting membership of the church, and

must be presented to the elders, who shall in a timely and constitutional way call such a meeting.

III. Any meeting for the review of an officer shall be announced on four consecutive Lord's Days prior to its being held. The scriptural qualifications must form the basis of the discussion and decision of the church. The officer's qualifications must be openly discussed in the fear of God and with due respect for the reputation of the officer. The officer under discussion must be permitted to defend himself. The church should seek unanimity of mind concerning the matter, but if such unanimity is not realized, a majority of those ballots cast shall be required for the confirmation of an officer in his office. Any officer failing confirmation will be immediately removed from his office.

IV. An officer may resign his office without prejudice if he does so in an orderly fashion. This resignation shall be submitted in writing to the elders of the church and in a timely fashion announced to the church.

Article 7: Church Government

The government of this church under Christ its Head embodies and acknowledges both the liberty of its members and the authority of its elders. The liberty of its members is acknowledged in (but is not limited to) the necessity of their formal consent to matters related to church discipline and the election of officers. The authority of its elders is acknowledged in (but is not limited to) their necessary leadership in matters of church discipline and necessary ordination of church officers. This church is subject to the control of no other ecclesiastical body, but recognizes the propriety of formal association and the obligation of mutual counsel and cooperation with other churches of like faith. Except where otherwise noted in this constitution, a simple majority vote of the members is sufficient for the expression of the formal consent of the church on any matter where it is needed. Both the elders and members of the church will seek by prayer and searching of the Scriptures to discern the will of God for the church in the exercise of their roles in the government of the church.

Article 8: Church Property

All property of this church is to be held for the use and benefit of those who are members thereof. This property is set apart to be used for the worship of God, the edification of His people, and any other use which *is* deemed necessary for the propagation of the gospel of Christ by this church and its leadership. Should any disagreements arise regarding the use of said property, such disputes shall be settled by majority vote of the members of this church. We believe that each and every local church of Christ is autonomous under the headship of Jesus Christ, and shall choose for itself what shall be done with its own property. We agree together to seek Divine wisdom in the usage of this property for the glory of God, the good of His church, and the promotion of His truth, according to the Holy Scriptures.

Article 9: Business Meetings

Section 1: Appointed Business Meetings

The church shall have two business meetings each year. The first semi-annual business meeting of the church shall be held in January or February of each year. The second business meeting will be held in November or December of each year. During the first meeting a financial report for the prior year shall be given to the church; the nominations advisory ballot shall be taken; and a report shall be given specifying the names of the membership of the church at the end of the prior year and any changes in the membership in the prior year. In the second meeting a projected financial report will be provided to the church and the proposed budget presented and approved by a vote of the church.

Because the yearly budget is approved by the church, significant changes to the budget should be approved as necessary by the church. At the same time, the yearly budget is a human projection. Thus, smaller changes will probably occur frequently. It would be cumbersome for the church to approve all such changes. Further, the Scriptures suggest that confidence should be placed in faithful leaders to wisely care for such smaller changes without consulting the whole church (2 Kings 12:15; 22:7). Therefore, the elders in consultation with the deacons of the church shall regularly review the budget and expenditures of the church and approve changes which exceed the budgeted operating expenses of less than 5% of the total approved budget. If expenditures are foreseen to exceed the approved budgeted operating expenses by more than 5% of the total approved budget, the elders will seek the approval of the church for such expenditures. A simple majority of those voting is necessary for such approval.

Section 2: Occasional Business Meetings

Additional church business meetings may be called by the pastors. They may also be called by one-fourth of the voting members, providing they make a written request for such a meeting. In the latter case, this request must state the reason for the meeting, be signed by one-fourth of the members in good standing and be presented to the pastors, who shall in turn make the proper announcement of the meeting, which shall be announced at regular services for at least two successive Lord's Days prior to the meeting. The Pastors may at any time and without prior notice call for an informational meeting of the church, but no business may be conducted which requires a vote of the church in such a meeting.

Section 3: Voting at Business Meetings

All voting members should regard their presence at a duly called church meeting with the same seriousness and responsible churchmanship with which they would regard their attendance at any other meeting of the church. It shall be our goal to discern prayerfully the mind of God so that it may be said of us, as it was said of the church in Acts 6, that this "pleased the whole multitude." In situations where unanimity is not realized, except where the constitution requires a different proportionate vote, a simple majority of those voting will make a motion valid. The voting members present at any properly convened meeting of the church shall constitute a quorum for the transaction of business.

The elders of the church in circumstances where they deem it appropriate and at their sole discretion shall permit members to vote in absentia. The ballots of those voting in absentia shall be submitted in writing to the elders of the church.

Section 4: Clerk

The elders shall appoint a clerk from among the members of the church. The responsibility of the clerk will be to record all the business transacted by the church, collect all documents submitted to the church at its meetings

and provide for the church and its elders a careful record of the church's business. This record shall be available to the church and its elders. The elders shall have the authority to replace the clerk whenever it seems wise.

Article 10: Constitutional Authority

Section 1: Nature

This constitution, like all merely human documents, may be fallible. It simply reflects an earnest and sincere attempt to apply the Scriptures in ordering the life of this local church. Nevertheless, we as members of this church have solemnly committed ourselves to follow this constitution in ordering the life of this church. Its provisions must be followed until it is amended in the constitutionally mandated fashion.

Section 2: Deficiencies

If at any time an elder or member of the church believes that adherence to this constitution would require a violation of the Word of God, he should make this known to the elders. If the elders conclude that biblical principle requires an amendment of the constitution, they must communicate this matter in a timely way, submit relevant amendments to the church and seek by church vote to amend the constitution.

Section 3: Amendments

Amendments to this constitution must be adopted by three-fourths of those voting at any regular church meeting or a special meeting called for this purpose. Such proposed amendments shall be distributed in written form to the membership at least two (2) weeks prior to such a meeting.

Article 11: Trustees

In order to "render unto Caesar the things that are Caesar's," this church shall have an official Board of Trustees. The official board shall consist of the elders as voting members and deacons as non-voting members. In the absence of a resident plurality of elders, both the remaining elder and the diaconate must approve any decision relevant to the Board of Trustees. The Board shall appoint from its number the legal representatives of the church required by the civil authorities. These legal representatives shall act only with the consent of the Board of Trustees.

