

## **The Constitution of Sovereign Grace Church**

### **Preamble**

Sovereign Grace Church does ordain and establish the following Articles, to which we the members voluntarily and solemnly submit ourselves.

### **Article 1: Name and Purpose**

#### **Section 1.01—Name and Location**

The official name of this church is Sovereign Grace Church Inc. The church meets together for worship and fellowship at 444 Douglas Ave. Chillicothe, Ohio 45601

#### **Section 1.02--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 seek to glorify the God of Scripture (Eph. 3:21) by promoting His worship (Exod. 20:3-11; 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), evangelizing the nations (Acts 13 and 14; 1 Cor. 14:24-25; 1 Tim. 2:1-4; 3:15), planting and strengthening churches, calling other assemblies to biblical faithfulness and purity (Acts 11:29-30; 15:3, 36, 41; 16:5) and ministering to the needy (Rom. 15:26-27; Gal. 2:10; 6:10), thus proclaiming and defending God's perfect law and glorious gospel of grace throughout the world (Luke 24:47; Acts 20:20-21, 27; Rom. 1:15-8:39; Jude 3).

### **Article 2: Statement of Faith and Covenant**

#### **Section 2.01 Statement of Faith**

The 1689 London Baptist Confession Faith

At **Sovereign Grace Church**, we have adopted The 1689 London Baptist Confession Faith as our statement of faith. We see this as a very good reflection of the teachings of Scripture. We find this statement to be an aid in controversy, a confirmation in faith, a means of edification in righteousness and a basis for church unity. We acknowledge, however, the inerrant Scriptures to be the supreme authority in all matters of faith,

morals and order. Other confessions we affirm and are guided by are The Westminster Confession of Faith and the Abstract of Principles.

## **Section 2.02 Church Covenant**

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 (Matt. 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 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. Sovereign Grace 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 expressly renew the New Covenant, confessing both our joyful faith in the God of that 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, affirming them by our verbal acknowledgement and signature:

### **Our New Covenant Commitments**

#### **Sovereign Grace Church Covenant**

Having, as we trust, been brought by divine grace to repent and believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and to give up ourselves to him, and having been baptized upon our profession of faith, in the name of the Father and of the Son and the Holy Spirit, we do now, relying on His gracious aid, solemnly and joyfully make a covenant with each other.

I. We will walk together in Christian love through the power of the Holy Spirit, as becomes the members of a Christian Church, exercising affectionate care, watchfulness and discipline over each other, as occasion may require.

**II.** We will fervently pray for one another. As we do so, we will rejoice at each other's happiness and show sympathy as we bear each other's burdens and sorrows.

**III.** We will not forsake the assembling of ourselves together. Unless providentially hindered, we will faithfully attend all gatherings of the church for worship, Disciple Hour, fellowship, and small groups. We will also endeavor to use our spiritual gifts for the good of the church.

**IV.** We will joyfully and consistently support the church through sacrificial giving for the spread of the gospel and for the expenses of the church.

**V.** We will live carefully in the world, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts because there is on us a special obligation now as Christians to lead a new and holy life.

**VI.** We will work together for the continuance of a faithful evangelical ministry in this church, which includes seeking the salvation of our families, friends and neighbors.

May the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with us all as we strive diligently to fulfill this covenant.

### **Article 3: Membership**

#### **Section 3.01 Warrant**

The New Testament requires of all Christians a formal, open, solemn, voluntary and enduring commitment to Jesus Christ, His truth and His people. A genuine Christian's commitment to the Lord Jesus Christ is inseparable from his commitment to His truth and His people. Such a commitment to Christ, His truth and His people ordinarily requires a formal, open, solemn, voluntary and enduring commitment to membership in a local church. This is true for the following biblical reasons:

(1) Fulfillment of Christ's Great Commission requires church membership. According to the Great Commission of Christ (Matt. 28:18-20), there is an inseparable connection between making disciples, baptizing them and teaching them. The Apostles implemented this commission by gathering baptized disciples into local churches. It was therefore in local churches that baptized disciples were taught to observe all that Christ commanded (Acts 2:38-42; 1 Cor. 4:1-7; Tit. 1:7). With the uncertain exception of the Ethiopian eunuch, the New Testament knows nothing of believing men and women who are not members of local churches.

(2) Obedience to Christ's directive to observe the Lord's Supper requires church membership. Since all believing men and women are required by Christ to observe the Lord's Supper (Luke 22:19; 1 Cor. 11:23-25), and since the Lord's Supper is clearly a local church ordinance (1 Cor. 11:17, 18, 33, 34 cp. 1 Cor. 1:1, 2), it follows that all Christians must belong to a local New Testament church in order to partake biblically.

(3) The New Testament presents the local church as a distinct and defined group of individuals. This defined group may be counted (Acts 2:41-42; 4:4) and added to (Acts 2:47; 5:14). It may also be called upon to select leaders and representatives from among itself (Acts 6:1-6; 15:22; 2 Cor. 8:19, 23) so that it becomes an organization with recognized officers (Phil. 1:1; Acts 14:23); may be officially gathered together (Acts 14:27; 15:22); may observe the Lord's Supper as a formal, corporate assembly (1 Cor. 11:17-20, 33-34) and may carry out church discipline (Matt. 18:17; 2 Cor. 2:6) with the result that some who were within the boundaries of the church are put out (Matt. 18:17; 1 Cor. 5:12, 13).

### **Section 3.02 Qualifications for Membership**

**I.** To be eligible for membership, a person must demonstrate repentance toward God and its fruits (Acts 26:20), as well as that faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ (Acts 20:21) which works through love (Gal. 5:6; Eph. 2:8-10; James 2:18, 22). He must also be baptized as a believer (Acts 2:38-42).

**II.** The person applying for membership must profess agreement with and submission to the constitution and the statement of faith (as stated

in Section 2.01 under Article 2 Statement of Faith) of this church. Anyone who is in disagreement with the constitution or the statement of faith of the church could not be consistently or cheerfully submissive to the church's teaching ministry. To admit such a person to membership in this church would be unwise (Eph. 4:3) and unscriptural. Mastery of the church's statement of faith is not required of any new disciple before he/she is admitted to church membership. (Such a requirement would violate the order of Matt. 28:19, 20, which instructs us to disciple, baptize and then teach the baptized disciple to observe all things whatsoever Christ has commanded.) It is necessary, however, that any disciple applying for membership be teachable, submissive to and in basic agreement with what he/she understands of the church's statement of faith.

**III.** Potential church members must be willing to submit to the eldership of the church (Heb. 13:17). One who cannot intelligently and freely submit to a church's government should not belong to that church.

**IV.** In keeping with principles pertaining to those seeking membership it is necessary to recognize and endorse the following biblical teaching concerning the family and human sexuality:

They must submit to the truth that God created mankind as man and woman which is established at every individual's birth (Genesis 1:26-27)

They must submit to the truth that God created one woman for one man that they may be united in marriage to become one flesh that no man may separate, thus establishing the family (Genesis 2:18-25; cf., Matthew 19:4-6)

They must submit to the truth that God commands that this family would then procreate and fill the earth with offspring who would also honor and obey the Creator and all His commands (Genesis 1:28)

Therefore, due to the good and necessary consequences of the Scriptures, any union other than between one man and one woman is considered by God to be rebellion (1 Timothy 1:9-10) and an abomination (Leviticus 18:22). Therefore, they will not inherit the

Kingdom of God (1 Corinthians 6:9; Galatians 5:21) and are in need of forgiveness and repentance (1 Corinthians 6:11).

In relation to the God-ordained institution of the family, we hold to His decrees concerning the sanctity of innocent life (Ex. 21:22-24). After the creation of Adam and Eve, life does not begin, but simply continues. Each life is created in the image of God (Gen. 1:26-27) and He alone has the power over life and death (Deut. 32:39). Therefore, we are vehemently opposed to the aborting of any life, at any stage of pregnancy, for any reason (Prov. 31:8-9).

V. Because we belong to Him (Lev. 20:26, Isa. 43:1) and submit to His supreme authority, each member reserves the right, given to them by God to decide for themselves, by His wisdom, to accept or reject the administering of medicines and vaccines (1 Cor. 6:19-20).

VI. To be eligible for church membership, a person must not be deservedly under the corrective discipline of another church (Matt. 18:17-18; 1 Cor. 5:11-13; 2 Thess. 3:6, 14-15; John 9-10; 2 Cor. 2:6-8).

VII. If a church member concludes that he/she never met or no longer truly satisfies the prerequisites for membership, he/she is under moral obligation to inform the elders of that fact.

### **Section 3.03 Reception of Members**

I. The scriptural pattern for the reception of new members involves careful inquiry into the potential member's fitness according to the qualifications detailed in Section 3.02 Qualifications for Membership. Members are received only upon the recommendation and vote of the elders and by the consent of the church.

II. A person who desires to become a member of the church shall apply to the elders and request an interview. During the interview the elders will seek to determine whether that person meets the prerequisites for membership. In the case of those eighteen years of age and over, the elders will normally require the completion of the new members' class. This class thoroughly exposes the potential member to the doctrines of the church (as summarized in our statement of faith) as well as the

privileges and responsibilities of membership. At the completion of the class, the elders will interview each prospective member with a view to being certain that the applicant is committed to the responsibilities of church membership and in agreement with and cheerfully submissive to the doctrines and practices of the church. Those whom the elders believe are qualified will be recommended to the church for membership on the Lord's Day and after two weeks if no objections have been expressed the elders will bring them in as members. Those who are deemed unqualified will not be recommended for membership, but encouraged to seek from the Lord that which is necessary to become qualified.

**III.** If the potential member has been a member of another church; the elders will seek to determine his reasons for leaving that church and, if possible, request a letter of commendation from that church. When the elders are assured that such an applicant satisfies the requirements for membership, they will recommend his reception to the church and if no objections have been expressed, the applicant will become a member of the church.

**IV.** In order to insure an authentic exercise of congregational consent in the reception of new members, the elders shall announce those they are recommending for membership on two Lord's Days prior to the Lord's Day on which those applicants are to be received. If objections are raised, the elders will seek to resolve the objections to the satisfaction of the member or members of the church who raised the objections. If no resolution is reached, a meeting of the members objecting shall be called by the elders. After an opportunity for discussion, a vote will be taken among the elders with those in objection asked to be dismissed during the vote. The applicant must be accepted by three-fourths vote of the elders present.

### **Section 3.04 Duties of a Member**

On becoming a member of this church, in addition to submitting to the covenant (Section 2.02 under Article 2 Statement of Faith and Church Covenant) each member further covenants to love, honor, and esteem the pastor and elders; to pray for them, to recognize their authority in spiritual affairs of the church; to cherish a brotherly love for all the

members of the church; to support the church in prayer, tithes, offerings and other financial support as the Lord enables; and in accordance with biblical commands, to support through a lifestyle walk affirming the beliefs and practices of the church.

### **Section 3.05 Special Cases**

#### **I. Minor Members**

Believing that all those who credibly profess faith in Christ ought to be baptized and joined to the church, Sovereign Grace Church will receive into membership young people who have not yet reached the age of eighteen. Christian prudence teaches that it is inappropriate to allow such members to have a voice in meetings of the church. Accordingly, after their eighteenth birthday, those originally received as minor members must complete the new members' class and be received as adult members of the church. Their application for adult membership must be announced for two Lord's Days prior to the Lord's Day on which the elders vote to accept them as adult members. If those originally received as minor members do not take this step upon reaching their eighteenth birthday, then, after a reasonable period of time, the elders will speak with them about the matter. If after pastoral encouragement they do not apply for adult church membership, the elders will remove them from the membership of the church as prescribed in Section 5 of this Article.

#### **II. Other Special Circumstances**

The eldership of the church may at its discretion recommend for church membership those whose membership may involve special circumstances, providing those recommended satisfy Section 3.02 Qualifications for Membership. Such cases may include those whose residence in the area may be temporary and who do not wish to withdraw their membership from their home church or those who because of their health or place of residence cannot comply with the normal requirements of membership. Similarly, the elders may at their discretion allow those to continue as members of Sovereign Grace Church whose membership becomes characterized by such special circumstances.

### **Section 3.06 Privileges of Membership**



In God's order, commitment normally constitutes the path to privileges. Membership in this church includes the following privileges:

- I. Participation in the Lord's Supper (Acts 2:41-42; 1 Cor. 11:18-26, 33);
- II. Laboring to extend God's Kingdom in ministries of the church (as one's gifts, graces and calling make appropriate) (1 Cor. 12:4-27; Eph. 4:7, 11, 12, 16; 1 Pet. 4:10-11);
- III. Coming under the formal oversight and care of the pastors of the church (Acts 20:28; 1 Pet. 5:2-3); and
- IV. Receiving the loving discipline (if needed) of the membership of the church (Acts 6:1-2; 1 Cor. 5:4-5 (cp. 1 Cor. 1:2); Gal. 6:10). Some or all of these privileges may be revoked if a member comes under the discipline of the church.

### **Section 3.07 Termination of Membership**

#### **Introduction:**

Just as membership in a local church is mandated by the Word of God, so also its termination must be governed by the principles of the Word of God. Accordingly, membership in Sovereign Grace Church may be terminated in three ways: (1) by death, (2) by transfer or (3) by exclusion.

#### **I. By Death**

When a member of the church is removed from our midst by physical death, the elders shall remove his name from the membership roll.

#### **II. By Transfer**

The New Testament norm for Christians is that they be members of true local churches. The spiritual health of believers is endangered when they are not thus committed to a church. Therefore, any Christian who leaves the membership of Sovereign Grace Church should seek to do so by means of transfer to another true church. If a member in good standing desires to move his membership to another church, he should submit such a request to the elders. If such a member has not yet chosen a suitable church to which he may transfer, the elders may provide for a transitional period which will allow the departing member to seek guidance from the Lord on the matter. When requested, the elders may transfer a person's membership by sending a letter of

commendation to the appropriate officer(s) of the church to which the member wishes his membership to be transferred. The elders may refuse to grant a letter of commendation to any church which is in their judgment disloyal to "the faith which was once for all delivered unto the saints" (Jude 3) or which does not exercise godly care over its members. The Elders may refuse to transfer membership if the member is under the church's discipline.

### **III. By Exclusion**

#### **Introduction:**

Membership is initiated jointly by the voluntary commitment of the applicant and acceptance by the church. Accordingly, it follows that members may not terminate their membership unilaterally. If a member wishes to terminate his membership and does not seek transfer to another local church, he must be excluded from the membership by a vote of the elders and with the knowledge of the church. In some cases a member's conduct may require that he/she be excluded from the church even though he/she expresses no wish to be excluded.

Exclusion from the church may take two different forms: exclusion not under discipline and exclusion by excommunication.

#### **A. Exclusion not under Discipline**

The membership of a person may need to be terminated for reasons which, in the judgment of the elders, do not warrant church discipline. Such cases may include the resignation of a member who concludes that he is not a Christian; the resignation of a member who, for reasons that do not impugn his Christian profession, is no longer willing to fulfill the duties of membership in Sovereign Grace Church; and the relocation of a member who does not remain in contact with the elders of the church. After attempts by the elders to resolve such cases (in a way not requiring exclusion), the elders shall vote to exclude the member without discipline.

#### **B. Exclusion by Excommunication**

According to the teaching of Holy Scripture, a church must exclude from its membership any person who persists in teaching or holding serious doctrinal errors, who persistently conducts himself in a manner inconsistent with his Christian profession, or who persists in disturbing

the unity or peace of the church (Matt. 18:15ff; 1 Cor. 5:1ff; Rom 16:17; Titus 3:10-11).

Sovereign Grace Church seeks to follow Scriptural guidelines when conducting church discipline. In most cases, the pattern set forth in Matthew 18: 15ff will be followed. However, some offenses which are public in nature and/or those which bring disgrace to the church and the name of Christ may be acted upon quickly and not necessarily follow the Matthew 18 pattern.

A general example of the steps this church will follow will be:

-When one member offends or sins against another, both parties will be encouraged to resolve such offenses/sins with each other individually. According to Matthew 18, the offended party is responsible to go to the one who committed the offense/sin and seek that person's repentance.

-If the brother/sister does not repent then the next step is for the offended party to take a witness(s) with him/her to seek repentance.

-If the offender still refuses to repent then the one offended should come to the elders and tell them of the nature of the offense/sin. The elders will start by investigating the matter to determine the nature of the offense/sin. If the elders believe discipline is in order, they will begin to call the offender to repentance.

-If after a short time there is still no repentance seen in the offender the church will be notified by letter explaining the nature of the offense/sin and given notice as to when a special session will be called.

-A special session will be called after a selected worship service in which the elders will come to the front of the congregation and explain the situation in a general sense, not wanting to bring any undue harm to other members. A short teaching will be presented on church discipline and members will be encouraged to pray and call the offender to repentance. Normal fellowship with the offender will cease until a time when he/she repents. Also, the offender will be asked to not partake of the Lord's Supper as a means of discipline until a time when repentance and restoration takes place.

If after a two month period, the offender is still unrepentant he/she will be notified of their excommunication in writing with general instructions on how to be restored to the church.

### **Section 3.08 Restoration**

Since one crucial purpose of church discipline is to restore a fallen brother or sister, it is the duty and privilege of the church to forgive and to restore to full membership a suspended or excommunicated member who gives satisfactory evidence of his repentance (2 Cor 2:6-8). This shall be done in a duly convened elders meeting.

### **Section 3.9 Records**

The elders shall keep careful records of the membership of the church including both past and present members. They shall use this list to pray for and care for the membership.

## **Article 4 Officers**

### **Section 4.01 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 and elsewhere in this constitution (Matt. 18:15-20; 1 Cor. 5:1-13; Acts 6:1-7; 2 Cor. 2:6). Christ has ordained that local churches be governed by elders and served by deacons. Besides 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). The pastor is considered an elder and shall serve as the chairman or shall appoint a chairman.

### **Section 4.02 General Prerequisites**

- I. All officers of this church must be members in good standing.
- II. Any individual set apart to one of these offices must be able to conscientiously affirm his agreement with the church's statement 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.
- III. 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. With regard to formal ministries of the church where the whole congregation is not gathered (for example, Disciple Hour Classes or any other meetings sanctioned by the church), no woman shall be appointed to a teaching or leading position over men. Nevertheless, we gratefully acknowledge the valuable gifts and assistance of women in the formal instruction of children and other women (Titus 2:3-5), in the informal instruction even of men (1 Cor. 11:5; Acts 19:26) and in the diaconal and benevolent ministries of the church (1 Tim. 3:11; 5:9-10).

### **Section 4.03 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). This office will be referred to at Sovereign Grace Church as elder.

**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 (1 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:

**A.** 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.

**B.** 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; 1 Tim. 3:2; 2 Tim. 4:1-2; Heb. 13:17).

**C.** 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; 1 Cor. 7:25-28; 35-40).

**D.** 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; 2 Cor. 11:19-20; Gal. 2:11; 3 John 1, 9-10).

**E.** The authority of every elder 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 equality among the elders (Acts 20:28 [cp. 17]; Gal 2:11; 1 Pet. 5:1-2; 1 Tim. 5:17).

**F.** 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 regular 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 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.5:17ff).

**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.

#### **Section 4.04 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. The elders may at their discretion appoint one of the deacons to act as the chairman of the deacons in order to facilitate communication with the elders and the general organization of the diaconate.

III. The number of deacons shall not be fixed. The church shall set apart according to its need, as determined by the elders, 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.

#### **Section 4.05 Appointment of Officers**

##### **I. General Statement**

The appointment of elders and deacons is the prerogative of the Lord Jesus Christ alone. At the same time, 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**

The members of the church are encouraged to express to the elders (privately) their views concerning those whom Christ *may* be gifting for an office in the church. The elders will seriously consider the wisdom God gives to His church; however, nominations to office are to be made by the eldership alone.

### **B. Election**

Any elder's meeting for the election of officers shall be announced to the congregation on four Lord's Days prior to its being held. The names of all nominees shall be separately discussed and voted upon by the elders. During the discussion the nominee under consideration and members of his immediate family shall leave the meeting until a formal vote of the elders present is taken. 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. The elders will be unanimous in the calling of additional elders. In the calling of deacons a three-fourths majority will constitute a calling.

### **C. Ordination**

Following the election of an officer there shall be a portion of a regular 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. Should reasons arise which prohibit the elders from conscientiously ordaining an officer-elect (1 Tim. 5:22), the church shall be informed of their reasons in an appropriate and discreet manner.

### **Section 4.06 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 with the signatures of one-fourth of the total membership of the church. It must be presented to the elders, who shall in a timely and constitutional way (see Paragraph 3 below) call such an elder's meeting to look into the situation.

III. Any elder's meeting for the review of an officer shall be announced on four consecutive Lord's Days prior to its being held. At the meeting the officer under consideration and members of his immediate family shall leave until the issue has been adequately discussed. 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. Prior to the vote, the officer under discussion must be permitted to return to the meeting and defend himself. The elders should seek unanimity of mind concerning the matter, but if such unanimity is not realized, three-fourths of those votes cast shall be required for the removal of an officer 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. Should the man at a later time wish to hold the office again, he will follow the steps in Section 4.05. An officer cannot take a sabbatical but must resign said office.

## **Article 5 Ordinances**

### **Section 5.01 General Statement**

There are two ordinances of special significance which our Lord has commanded us to observe, namely, Baptism and the Lord's Supper. Neither of these ordinances has saving merit, nor is any grace automatically imparted to the recipient. These ordinances are means of grace and precious aids to the faith of believers.

### **Section 5.02 Baptism**

Only confessed disciples of our Lord Jesus Christ are proper candidates for baptism, and all such persons should be baptized and joined to a

local church (Acts 2:38, 41, 47; 5:13, 14). Believing that baptism in water is the God-ordained sign of one's personal union with Christ in His death, burial and resurrection and the door of entrance into the visible community of the people of God, we shall receive into the membership of the church only those who have been baptized as believers "in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit" (Matt. 28:19). Immersion in water is the biblical mode of baptism. A true believer, however, whose baptism involved an irregularity of mode or circumstance may be recommended for membership at the discretion of the elders.

### **Section 5.03 The Lord's Supper**

Baptism is the initiatory ordinance by which one enters the visible church and rightfully should be observed only once by each believer. The Lord's Supper should be celebrated frequently by the assembled church (1 Cor. 11:26). This is a holy ordinance and should be observed with solemnity and dignity. Yet, the bread and the cup of the Supper are and remain only symbols of the broken body and the shed blood of our Lord Jesus Christ. In order to maintain the purity of this ordinance, the elders will faithfully seek to ensure that only true believers who are members in good standing of true churches are admitted to the Table. True believers whose church membership involves unusual circumstances may be admitted at the discretion of the elders. The elders shall insure that the Lord's Supper is celebrated regularly by the church.

### **Article 6 Meetings**

#### **Section 6.01 The Annual Business Meeting**

An annual meeting of the church shall be held in December of each year. A financial report from the previous year and the budget for the upcoming year shall be presented to the membership. A membership report shall also be given by the elders. This report shall list the members of the church, noting their status as minor or adult. It shall also identify those whose membership involves unusual circumstances and indicate those added to and removed from the membership in the past year. The general reason for each removal shall be included in the report.

#### **Section 6.02 Elders and Deacons**

The Elders and Deacons shall hold regular monthly meetings. Included in these meetings will be prayer for the members and for the pastor.

#### **Article 7 Amendments to the Constitution**

Amendments to this constitution must be adopted by three-fourths of those voting at any regular elder's meeting. Such proposed amendments shall be distributed in written form to the elders at least four weeks prior to such a meeting.

#### **Article 8 Ecclesiastical Affiliations**

Scripture (2 Cor. 8:18-24) teaches the legitimacy and value of fellowship, consultation and cooperation with local churches of like faith and order. Upon the recommendation of the elders, this church may join itself to various associations of churches. Such affiliations must be entered by a vote of the elders. Withdrawal from such an affiliation also requires such a vote. A three-fourths majority of those voting is necessary in both cases. The decision of no church or association of churches shall at any time be regarded as legally binding on this church or shall assume any legal rights to the church's assets or property. Delegates to such associations of churches shall be chosen by the eldership of the church. The elders will oversee all delegates and business matters connected with such associations. Any positions taken or votes cast by the delegates must reflect the views of the church as led by its elders.