

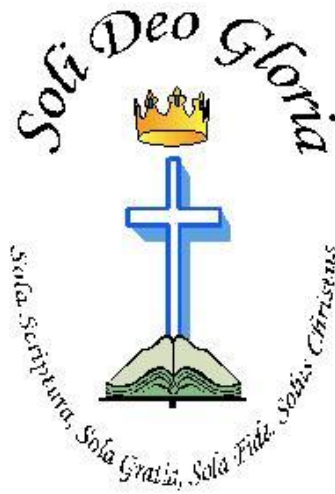
THE  
CONSTITUTION  
OF THE

***Bible Chapel of Delhi Hills***

Articles of Faith and Government

January, 2016

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## Article I

**NAME**

The name of this church shall be "Bible Chapel of Delhi Hills", and the principal place of conducting its business shall be 705 Pontius Road, Cincinnati, Ohio.

## **Article II**

### **PURPOSE**

The purpose for which Bible Chapel of Delhi Hills is assembled is to glorify God in all things by:

1. corporate public and private worship of God,
2. holy living which adorns the gospel of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ,
3. unity and fellowship with the body of Christ,
4. the edification of one another in knowledge and sanctification,
5. the proclamation of the gospel both locally and to the ends of the earth, and
6. contending earnestly for the faith in our generation.

## **Article III**

### **POWERS**

1. This Church shall have the right to acquire, own, use and sell real and personal property.
2. This Church shall have the right to do all things necessary to enable it to carry out its purposes.
3. This Church shall have all the rights which are guaranteed to churches of like nature by the laws of the State of Ohio and of the United States.
4. This Church shall have an official Board of Trustees for legal purposes only in order to comply with the Ohio Revised Code. The official board shall consist of the elders and deacons.
5. The church shall operate under the guidelines of the Internal Revenue Service Section 501(c) (3) for tax exempt purposes.

## **Article IV**

### **ARTICLES OF FAITH - Introduction**

We, the members of Bible Chapel hold, that inasmuch as the doctrines here stated are an accurate representation of biblical teaching, they indeed are true. Truth is defined as conformity to fact or reality. The nature of truth is such that unconditionally contradictory statements cannot both be true. In other words, something cannot be true and untrue at the same time and under the same conditions. Truth is not subject to negotiation or compromise, and is both absolute and universal, meaning that what is true, is true for everyone, and is not based upon any conditions or upon our perceptions. In the material world, this is readily observable and generally accepted; in the spiritual realm, truth is no different. Therefore, we believe that agreement with, and faith in the doctrines set forth in this confession are matters of truth or error. We are fallible, and error in our understanding or expression of truth is possible, but truth itself is absolute and final, and as it regards God and eternity, is a matter of eternal life or death. We are convinced that these essential doctrines, as far as they accurately reflect biblical teaching, express not just our view, but real truth.

### **1. THE HOLY SCRIPTURES**

- a. We believe in the Holy Scriptures, consisting of the 66 books of both the Old and New Testaments as the very Word of God, verbally inspired by God in all parts and therefore wholly without error as originally given by God, and altogether sufficient in themselves as our only infallible rule of faith and practice.  
*Psalm 119:89; Isaiah 40:8; Matthew 5:18; John 10:35; II Timothy 3:16-17; II Peter 1:20-21.*
- b. We believe that God spoke in His written Word by a process of dual authorship. The Holy Spirit so superintended the human authors that, through their own personalities and styles of writing they composed and recorded God's Word to man without error. This being true the Holy Scripture is self-authenticating. Its binding authority does not depend upon the testimony of human beings or any church, but entirely upon God, it's Author, who is Truth itself. All people must acknowledge its authority because it is the Word of God.  
*I Thessalonians 2:13; II Peter 1:20-21; I John 5:9-12.*
- c. We believe the special revelation of God appears in its entirety in the Scripture, which contains all things necessary for God's glory, the salvation of sinners, and the instructions necessary for

life and godliness. All such matters are either expressly declared in Scripture, or by good and necessary consequence may be deduced from Scripture, to which nothing at any time may be added or removed, whether by so called "new revelations" or by traditions of men.

*I Corinthians 2:6-15; Galatians 1:6-9; II Timothy 3:13-17; Revelation 22:18-21.*

- d. These things being true, we believe that the Bible is literally true, and is to be interpreted as such using the grammatical, historical, and contextual principles of interpretation under the enlightenment of the Holy Spirit.

*John 17:17; I Corinthians 2:7-15; I John 2:20-21.*

## 2. THE ONE TRIUNE GOD

### a. God's Nature

We believe that there is one living and true God, who is self-existent and self-sufficient. He is infinite, eternal, and unchangeable in His being, wisdom, power, holiness, justice, goodness and truth. God is omnipotent, omniscient, and omnipresent. All that He does is the out-working of His righteous will and therefore demonstrates His glory, as He directs all things according to the good pleasure of His will. God is perfectly loving, gracious, merciful, and patient. He forgives iniquity and sin, and He abundantly rewards those who seek Him. God is, nevertheless, just and terrible in His judgments because He hates sin, and He will not spare the guilty.

*Exodus 3:13-14; 34:4-7; Deuteronomy 6:4-9; Psalm 5:4-8; 90:1,2; 115:1-3; 139:7-12; Proverbs 16:4; Isaiah 6:1-3; 46:9-11; Daniel 4:35; Malachi 3:6; John 4:23-24; Romans 11:33-36; I Corinthians 8:4-6; Hebrews 11:6; James 1:17; Revelation 4:8.*

### b. God's Tri-unity

We believe there are three persons in the Godhead: God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit. These three are one in essence, equal in power and glory. Each person is fully God, yet the Godhead is one and indivisible.

*Isaiah 6:8; Matthew 28:19-20; John 14:1-11; 15:26-27; Acts 20:28; II Corinthians 13:14; Galatians 4:4-6.*

#### 1. God the Father

We believe in the Father, the first Person of the Triune Godhead, who reigns over His creation as Sovereign Lord and King and relates Himself to His people as Father.

*Daniel 4:35; Isaiah 46:9-10; Matthew 5:16,48; 6:3,4,9,26; Acts 4:28; Romans 1:7; 8:15; 11:33; Ephesians 1:11; 3:11.*

#### 2. God the Son

We believe that Jesus Christ is the eternal Son of God; He is absolute Deity; He is very God; existing from all eternity equal with the Father and the Holy Spirit, He has never ceased to be God; as perfect Man He was miraculously begotten of the Holy Spirit, born of Mary, a virgin; and that He is both perfect God and perfect Man, the Son of God and the Son of Man. Central to His incarnation was the redeeming of a people given to Him by His Father. As the sinless sacrifice, He died, was buried and raised on the third day. He ascended into heaven where, at the right hand of the Father, He ever lives to intercede as Mediator for His people.

*Psalms 2:7; Isaiah 7:14; Matthew 1:18-25; 28:6,7; Mark 16:6,19; Luke 1:34-35; John 1:1,14; 6:38,39; 7:26; 17:2; I Corinthians 15:45,47; II Corinthians 5:21; Galatians 4:4; Philippians 2:5-11; Colossians 2:9; I Timothy 2:5; Titus 2:11-14; Hebrews 1:3,8; 2:17; 4:15; 5:9-10; 7:25-26; 8:1,6; 12:2; I John 3:5.*

We believe that for the benefit of His people, Christ fulfills the threefold offices of prophet, priest, and king. They need Him as prophet to overcome their sinful ignorance, because sin has alienated them from God; they need Him as priest to reconcile them to God and to intercede on their behalf; and they need Him as king to rule over them because of their averseness and utter inability to return to God, and for their rescue and protection from spiritual adversaries until they enter His heavenly kingdom.

*Psalms 2; 110:1-4; Isaiah 9:6-7; Luke 1:32, 68-75; John 1:15-18; 10:27-29; Acts 3:22; Romans 8:34; Colossians 1:21-23; Hebrews 7:25-27; 10:11-14.*

#### 3. God the Holy Spirit

We believe that the Holy Spirit is a divine Person, equal with God the Father and God the Son and of the same nature. We believe in the work of the Holy Spirit in relation to creation, the incarnation, the writing of Scripture and convicting the world of sin, righteousness and judgment. He is the supernatural Agent of regeneration, and simultaneous with regeneration, baptizes all believers into the body of Christ, indwelling, sanctifying, and sealing them unto the day of redemption.

*Genesis 1:2; Matthew 1:18; John 3:5-7; 14:16; 16:8; Romans 8:9,15; I Corinthians 3:16; 12:12-14; Ephesians 1:13-14; 4:30; Titus 3:5; II Peter 1:20-21.*

We believe that the present ministry of the Holy Spirit is not to glorify Himself, but rather the Person and work of the ascended Lord Jesus Christ.

*John 16:13-15*

We believe that the apostolic "sign" gifts revealed through special healers, miracle workers, prophecies, tongue speakers and interpreters were given in the first century to authenticate the authority of the apostles and their message. Because the Scriptures are complete and the apostolic age has passed, such sign gifts gradually ceased.

*Acts 2:43; 5:12; 14:3; Romans 15:18,19; I Corinthians 13:8-10; 14:22; II Corinthians 12:12; Hebrews 2:3,4; Revelation 22:18.*

#### **c. God's Decree**

We believe God freely and unalterably for His own glory decreed from all eternity all that should happen, according to His own wise and holy will. God's decree is not based on mere foreknowledge of events but rather is independent of all such foreknowledge. He is sovereign over all His creatures, and He employs them as He pleases to accomplish His purpose. This does not, however, make Him the author of sin. His decree does not violate the wills of His creatures, nor does it negate the reality of secondary causes. God is completely sovereign, and human beings are entirely responsible to believe His Word and obey His laws.

*Psalms 115:3; Isaiah 46:9-10; Daniel 4:35; John 19:8-11; Acts 4:27-28; Romans 8:28; 9:14-29; Ephesians 1:3-14; 3:11; James 1:13-15.*

#### **d. God's Providence**

We believe God, who is infinite in wisdom and power, has created all things, and governs them by His supremely wise and holy providence. He fulfills His purposes for His creatures, ruling them and all their actions for His own glory and praise.

*Job 38:1-40:2; Psalm 135:5-12; Isaiah 46:8-13; Matthew 10:26-31; Ephesians 1:3-14; Hebrews 1:1-3.*

Although, in relation to God's foreknowledge and decrees, all things come to pass immutably and infallibly, yet by His providence, God orders them to occur through genuine secondary causes, either as fixed laws or freely by human volition. God's providence extends to His entire creation, but He exercises it in especially benevolent ways on behalf of His people, to whom He has promised His fatherly goodness.

*Genesis 8:20-22; Psalm 90; Proverbs 16:9,33; Isaiah 43:1-5; Amos 9:5-10; Acts 2:22-28; Romans 8:28-39.*

#### **e. God's Creation**

We believe it pleased God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, for the manifestation of the glory of His eternal power, wisdom and goodness, in the beginning, to create out of nothing, or to make out of His created material, the world, and all things therein whether visible or invisible, in the space of six literal days; and all very good. God created all creatures, each in its turn, and species did not evolve from one another. Human beings came last in the order of creation, and God gave them dominion over all the earth. God designed and made human beings for harmonious fellowship and relationship with Himself by endowing them with the "image of God," that is, God-like qualities that made them distinctive and superior to all animals.

*Genesis 1:1-2:2; Psalm 19:1-6; 90:1-2; Isaiah 40:25-26; John 1:1-3; Romans 1:18-20; 4:17; Colossians 1:15-16; Hebrews 11:3.*

### **3. SALVATION**

#### **a. All of Grace**

We believe that salvation is the restoration of fallen men to a right relationship with God. We believe that salvation is the free gift of God, neither merited nor secured in whole or in part by any virtue or work of man. This being the nature of salvation, we believe that from beginning to end it is all of grace ("sola gratia").

*Acts 15:11; Romans 3:24; 4:4-5; 5:1; 6:23; 11:6; Ephesians 2:8-9; Titus 3:5.*

**b. The Fall**

We believe that although God created humans perfect, our first parents lost their righteousness and forfeited their standing with God when they sinned against Him. They violated the covenant of works that required obedience as a condition of life, and they fell from the divine favor into a condition of sin, misery and both physical and spiritual death. Since Adam represented all mankind, his sin brought the imputation and consequences of his guilt upon all who descend from him by ordinary generation. As a result, his descendants are conceived and born in sin and corrupted in all faculties of body and soul.

*Genesis 2:15-17; 3:1-24; 6:5-7; Psalm 14:1-3; Jeremiah 17:9-10; Romans 3:9-20; 5:12-21; I Corinthians 15:21,22; Titus 1:15-16.*

Prior to the fall God endowed humans with the liberty of will to act upon choice, so that He compelled them to do neither good nor evil. In their state of innocence Adam and Eve enjoyed freedom of will and the ability to do good that was acceptable to God. By a perverse use of that freedom they sinned and fell from God's favor and thereby lost their liberty to choose and perform anything that is truly good and acceptable to their holy Creator, who can accept only that which is absolutely pure and holy in deed and motive. Because of the fall, all humanity is by nature "dead in trespasses and sins," unwilling and unable to merit favor and cannot prepare itself to turn to God.

*Genesis 3:1-7; Isaiah 59:2; I Samuel 16:7; Psalm 15:1-5; Ephesians 2:1-3; James 1:13-15.*

Conceived in sin and subject to divine wrath, humans are servants of iniquity, who find pleasure in rebellion against God. They are therefore subject to the spiritual, physical, and eternal consequences of sin, unless Christ, the Redeemer, sets them free. The sins that people commit are the products of their corrupt nature transmitted to them by their first parents. Because of this corruption, they are unable and unwilling to please God and can do nothing to merit His favor.

*Psalm 51:1-5; Proverbs 14:12; Jeremiah 17:9,10; Matthew 15:16-20; Romans 1:32; 3:9,10,23; 5:12-21; 6:15-23; 8:5-8; I Corinthians 2:14; 15:20-49; Ephesians 2:1-3; Colossians 1:21-23; Titus 1:15,16; Hebrews 2:14-18; 11:6.*

Although God mercifully intervenes to save His elect from sin and spiritual death, a corrupt nature remains within them as long as they remain in this world. That corruption and all the evil thoughts and deeds that come from it are actually sinful and deserve condemnation, from which Christ has spared them by His grace.

*Romans 7:14-25; Galatians 5:16-17; I John 1:8-10.*

**c. God's Eternal Saving Purpose (God's electing grace)**

We believe that God the Father, according to His all wise purpose and for His own glory, in love chose before the foundation of the world certain sinners to eternal life through Jesus Christ, thereby revealing His grace. Others, who were not the objects of His saving purpose, were left to perish in their sins, thereby revealing the terrors of His justice.

*John 15:16; Acts 13:48; Romans 8:29; 9:22-24; Ephesians 1:3-14; I Thessalonians 1:4; II Thessalonians 2:13-15; II Peter 1:10; Jude 3,4.*

We believe that God chose in Christ certain people to be the recipients of His saving favor. He did so out of His mere pleasure without regard to any merit within those He chose, and He appointed the means to accomplish His purpose in saving them. He willed that His elect should be redeemed by the sacrifice of Christ and called effectually by His Holy Spirit to embrace Christ through faith. By the work of His grace God elects, calls, regenerates, justifies, adopts, sanctifies, preserves and glorifies His people for eternal life with Him. The elect alone enjoy these undeserved benefits.

*Psalm 65:4; John 6:35-40; 10:22-30; 17:1-26; Romans 8:29-30; 9:10-24; I Peter 1:1-9.*

The mystery of predestination must be proclaimed with care and prudence, so that people are directed to the revealed will of God in Scripture that they may obey it. Believers become

assured of their election in Christ through the effectual calling of the Holy Spirit. The doctrine of predestination therefore leads the elect to praise God gratefully with reverence and wonder that He has included them with the body of His chosen people. It encourages humility and diligence in the service of God, and it brings great comfort to all who sincerely believe and obey the gospel.

*Luke 10:17-20; Romans 11:1-6; 33-36; I Corinthians 1:26-31; Ephesians 1:1-6; I Thessalonians 1:4-6; II Timothy 2:10-14; II Peter 1:10-11; Revelation 7:9-10.*

#### **d. Christ, the Mediator**

We believe that in order to enact His eternal purpose, God commissioned His unique, eternal Son, Jesus Christ, as the mediator between God and His people. Jesus entered history to be Prophet, Priest, and King, Head and Savior of His church, Heir of all things, and Judge of the world. He came to redeem those whom the Father had given Him in eternity, those whom the Father decreed to call to Himself, to justify, sanctify, and glorify.

*Psalms 2:1-12; Isaiah 42:1-4; 52:13-53:12; Luke 1:26-33; John 17:6-12; Acts 3:22-23; 17:29-31; Romans 8:28-30; Ephesians 1:15-23; Hebrews 1:1-4; 6:17-20; I Peter 1:17-20.*

In order to execute the work of mediator, Christ the Son of God, became a man and subject to God's law and fulfilled its requirements completely. He endured the punishment due for the sins of His people and thereby suffered incomparably in body and soul, as he was "obedient unto death, even death upon a cross." After His crucifixion Jesus rose bodily from the grave and ascended to heaven, where He sits at the Father's right hand and intercedes for His redeemed people. He will come back to earth at the end of time to judge the living and the dead.

*Isaiah 53:4-5; Matthew 26:26-28; 27:45-46; John 10:14-18; 20:24-31; Acts 1:1-11; 10:39-43; Romans 8:31-39; I Corinthians 15:1-8; II Corinthians 5:21; Philippians 2:5-11; Hebrews 9:23-28; 10:5-10; 12:2; I Peter 3:18; II Peter 3:1-18.*

By His perfect obedience to and fulfillment of the divine law, Jesus Christ demonstrated that He was fully qualified to save sinners by His sacrifice on the cross, which satisfied all of the claims of divine justice vicariously for His people, reconciled them to God and gave them an eternal inheritance in heaven.

*John 17:1-5; Romans 3:21-26; Hebrews 9:11-15.*

Christ certainly and effectually applies eternal redemption to all of those for whom He accomplished it. By His Holy Spirit He unites them with Himself, persuades them to believe and obey the Word of God, and assures them of His fellowship. He does all things graciously for His elect with no regard for any merit of their own.

*John 3:1-15; 6:35-40; 10:14-16; 17:6-12; Romans 5:9-11; 8:9,12-17; I Corinthians 15:20-28; Ephesians 1:7-10.*

Christ's threefold offices, prophet, priest, and king are for the well-being of His people. They need His prophetic office to overcome their sinful ignorance, and because sin has alienated them from God, they need His priesthood to reconcile them to God and to intercede on their behalf. His kingship is necessary to rule and protect them until they enter His heavenly kingdom.

*Psalms 110:1-4; Luke 1:68-75; John 1:15-18; 10:27-29; Colossians 1:21-23.*

#### **e. Effectual Calling**

We believe that effectual calling is the work of God, whereby He convinces His elect of their spiritual misery and lost condition and persuades them to embrace Christ, freely offered in the gospel. As a consequence of this call His people begin to understand revealed truth, to seek and to perform what is actually good. The elect respond willingly to this call, for the regenerating work of the Holy Spirit makes them willing.

*Ezekiel 36:26-27; John 17:6,7; Acts 26:15-18; Romans 8:30; Ephesians 1:15-23; 2:1-10; II Thessalonians 2:13-15; I Peter 2:9-10.*

God's effectual call of sinners proceeds from His grace alone. Until sinners receive spiritual life, they remain dead in sin and insensitive to God's demands. In regeneration and effectual calling they are entirely passive and make no contribution to their salvation. The power that



enables them to answer God's call comes completely from God Himself, and the effect is comparable to a resurrection from the dead.

*John 5:24-27; Romans 3:10-18; 5:10; I Corinthians 2:10-15; II Corinthians 4:4; Ephesians 1:18-21; 2:4-9; II Timothy 1:8-10.*

**f. Regeneration**

We believe that regeneration (new birth from above) is a gracious and sovereign work of God whereby an inward change is effected in the spiritually dead sinner and he is thereby made to be a partaker of the divine nature. The change effected in regeneration is both moral and spiritual. This supernatural and gracious act of God is effected by the Holy Spirit in a manner above our comprehension and in connection with God's Word. In this gracious work of God the sinner is passive and neither initiates nor cooperates to effect it. Regeneration is a sovereign and gracious exercise of God's power upon His elect people and as such cannot be frustrated or made ineffective by them or anyone else. Although the sinner is passive in the act of regeneration, the fruits of it will be evidenced in the holy fruits of repentance, faith and a new manner of life. Regeneration is the basis for all change in heart and life in the believer. All those who have been regenerated have a "new heart," are a "new creation," are no longer dead in sins and transgressions but "made alive together with Christ" and are "born again" and "born of God."

*Ezekiel 36:26; Matthew 7:20; John 1:13; 3:3-8; Romans 5:5; 6:11,17,18; 8:9; I Corinthians 1:30; 2:14; 15:22,23; II Corinthians 5:17; Galatians 5:16-23; 6:15; Ephesians 2:1,4,5,14-22; 4:20-24; 5:9; Philippians 2:13; Colossians 2:13; 3:9-11; Titus 3:5; James 1:16-18; I Peter 1:3,22-25; II Peter 1:4; I John 3:7-10; 5:1-5,18; Revelation 21:27.*

**g. Repentance and Faith**

**1. Repentance**

We believe that biblical repentance is the product of a gospel grace by which the Holy Spirit causes elect sinners to realize the wickedness of their sins and to humble themselves before God. This repentance expresses itself in deep sorrow for sin, a profound hatred and grief because of sin, a turning to Christ alone for forgiveness of sin, and a firm resolve to abandon sin and to live a righteous life which is in accord with God's moral laws and for His glory.

*Psalms 119:5-8; Proverbs 28:13; Ezekiel 36:24-32; Luke 24:47; Acts 11:15-18; 17:30-31; I Corinthians 6:19,20; II Corinthians 7:9-15.*

When our Lord Jesus said, "repent," He willed that the entire life of believers be one of repentance, because Christians remain sinners with an inner corruption that inclines them toward disobedience. Repentance for particular sins, regular confession of sins and frank admissions of their unworthiness to receive divine favor will characterize true believers.

*Psalms 32:3-5; 34:14; 119:36,37; Luke 19:1-10; Acts 17:30; I Timothy 1:12-17; I John 1:9.*

**2. Faith**

We believe the Holy Spirit confers the gift of faith upon the elect and thereby enables them to whole-heartedly trust in Christ alone for salvation (*sola fide, solus Christus*). The ministry of the Word of God, the fellowship of the saints, and the ordinances nourish this faith and enable believers to strengthen their confidence in Christ and to progress in holy living.

*Acts 20:32; Romans 10:14-17; 2 Corinthians 4:13-15; Galatians 3:6,9; Ephesians 2:8-10; Philippians 3:9; I Peter 2:2.*

The primary object of saving faith is the person and work of the Lord Jesus Christ, whom believers receive and rest upon for justification, sanctification, and eternal life. In the Christian life the believer is progressively led by the Holy Spirit to believe everything God has revealed in Scripture.

*Psalms 19:7-9; 119:72; Isaiah 40:8; 66:1-2; John 1:10-13; Acts 15:5-11; 16:29-31; 24:10-16; Galatians 2:20-21; II Timothy 1:12; Hebrews 11:1-16.*

We believe that the gospel calls men to both repent and believe. At times these are mentioned together in the Scripture and at other times not. When repentance stands

alone it implies not only turning from sin but faith in Christ. When faith stands alone it implies not only faith in Christ but repentance from sin. Repentance and faith are two aspects of the one act of conversion.

#### **h. Justification**

We believe those persons whom God effectually calls He justifies, by pardoning their sins and reckoning and declaring them righteous. He does this for Christ's sake alone and not because of any merit in them. The righteousness that God imputes to His elect is through the means of faith, but is in no way merited by faith or by any other act of obedience they may have rendered. The righteousness of justification is based upon the obedience and merits of Christ -- His active obedience in satisfying the demands of Divine law flawlessly, and His passive obedience to the Father's will in His death upon the cross. The faith through which sinners believe and rest upon Christ alone for salvation is a free gift from God, not an ability inherent within them. Justification through faith alone in Christ alone is indispensable to true Christianity, the article upon which the true church stands.

*John 1:10-13; Romans 1:16-17; 3:21-24; 4:1-8; 5:12-21; 8:28-30; I Corinthians 1:26-31; Galatians 3:6-9; Philippians 3:1-11.*

By His obedience and death Christ paid the full debt of all of those He justifies. By the sacrifice of Himself, Jesus entirely and absolutely satisfied all the claims which God's justice had against His people.

*Isaiah 53:5-6; Romans 3:25-26; 8:31-34; II Corinthians 5:21; Ephesians 1:1-10; I Peter 1:17-19.*

God decreed from eternity to justify His elect, and at the proper time Christ died for their sins and rose again. The chosen people are not, however, justified personally until the Holy Spirit regenerates them and calls them effectually to the Savior and thereby enables them to receive Him through faith. Believers in the Old Testament were justified exactly the same way as New Testament believers. Whereas Old Testament believers were justified through faith in a promise that awaited future fulfillment, New Testament believers are justified through faith in the actual fulfillment of that promise.

*Matthew 13:17; John 8:56; Romans 4:18-25; Galatians 3:6-9; Colossians 1:21-23; Titus 3:4-7; Hebrews 9:11-28; 11:13.*

#### **i. Adoption**

For the sake of Christ, God confers the grace of adoption upon all justified persons. In this way, they are received into and enjoy all the privileges and duties of the children of God, and are entitled to call Him "Father," and by His grace they remain in His family forever.

*Psalms 103:13; Proverbs 14:26; Isaiah 54:8-10; John 1:10-13; Romans 8:15-17; II Corinthians 6:18; Galatians 4:4-6; Ephesians 1:1-7; 4:30; Hebrews 12:4-8; I John 3:2,3; Revelation 3:11-13.*

#### **j. Sanctification and Good Works**

Because of the Word and Spirit of God at work within them, those who are justified are being transformed into the image of God, such that God enables them progressively to die unto sin and live unto righteousness. Sanctification weakens the desire to sin and increases and strengthens a desire for holiness, without which no one will see the Lord. These blessings flow from the merits of Christ's death and resurrection.

*John 17:3-19; Acts 20:32; Romans 6:5-14; I Corinthians 1:30; Galatians 5:22-24; Ephesians 3:14-19; Colossians 1:9-14; I Thessalonians 5:23-24; Hebrews 12:14.*

Sanctification is a progressive growth in holiness that will not come to completion in this temporal life. The remnants of sinful corruption remain within believers and defile all parts of their lives. A spiritual warfare therefore occurs within them, an antagonism between the renewed image of God and the sinful nature inherited from Adam. Saints, nevertheless, grow in grace and sincerely love God's law and habitually endeavor to obey it in all things, as they submit to Christ, their King.

*Romans 7:7-25; 2 Corinthians 3:18; 7:1; Galatians 5:16-26; I Pet. 2:11-12.*

We believe that the desire and ability to do good works does not arise from human nature but from impartation of saving grace, so that good works are the fruits and evidences of genuine, living faith. By means of such works, believers demonstrate their love and gratitude,

strengthen their assurance of salvation, and improve their Christian witness. They glorify God, who has made them new creatures in Christ.

*Psalm 116:12-14; Matthew 5:13-16; John 15:1-8; Galatians 5:6; Ephesians 2:8-10; Philippians 2:12-13; Hebrews 6:11-12; James 2:14-18.*

Although the works of believers are never perfect, God is pleased by them because they are done in faith, proceed from the new heart of love bestowed in regeneration, and are made acceptable to God through Christ. The works of unbelievers, even though they may conform to the outward requirements of God's law, are not acceptable to God. They do not proceed from faith, nor do they express love for God. They cannot make the doers worthy of divine favor, but to neglect such works is even more sinful and displeasing to the Lord than is the performance of them.

*Isaiah 64:6; Matthew 25:14-30; 25:31-46; Romans 12:1,2; I Corinthians 1:30; 13:1-13; II Timothy 3:16,17; Titus 2:11-14; 3:3-8; Hebrews 11:4-6; I Peter 2:5.*

#### **k. Perseverance and Preservation of the Saints**

We believe that salvation is all of God's grace through the all-sufficient work of Christ and therefore all of God's elect are preserved in this grace in which they come to stand. They are kept by the power of God so that nothing in them or outside of them will ever be able to sever them from the love of God in Christ.

*John 5:24; 6:37-50; 10:27-30; Romans 5:2,9,10; 8:1,29-39; I Corinthians 1:4-9; Ephesians 4:30; Hebrews 7:25; 13:5; I Peter 1:5; Jude 24.*

We further believe that because all true believers are preserved by God and cannot fall from grace, that they will endure in persevering attachment to Christ throughout all their lives. This persevering attachment to Christ is the chief mark that distinguishes them from superficial professors. God's providence watches over their welfare, and His power keeps them through faith unto salvation.

*Psalm 37:23-29; John 8:31-32; 10:25-30; Colossians 1:22-23; Hebrews 3:14; I John 2:18-19; II John 9.*

The preservation and perseverance of the saints rests upon the free, unchangeable love of God the Father, the immutable decree of God in election, the redeeming merits of God the Son, the Son's present intercession, and the believers' union with Him. The Holy Spirit indwells the saints and never departs from them.

*Jeremiah 32:36-41; John 14:13-21; Romans 5:9-11; 8:28-30; 9:10-16; Hebrews 6:13-20; I John 3:9-10.*

When Christians fall into sin, they incur God's displeasure, grieve His Holy Spirit, dishonor God's holy name, diminish their comforts, experience accusations of conscience, impair their witness, and bring divine chastisements upon themselves. Yet, because they are saints, they will renew their repentance and through faith persevere in Christ to the end of their lives.

*Psalm 32:1-5; 51:1-10; Isaiah 64:1-9; Matthew 26:69-75; Ephesians 4:29-32; I John 1:5-10.*

#### **l. Assurance**

We believe that the certainty of salvation is not mere probability but an infallible assurance of faith grounded in the blood and righteousness of Christ revealed in the . The Holy Spirit bears witness with believers' spirits that they are children of God.

*Romans 8:15-17; Hebrews 6:11-20; I John 3:1-3.*

The infallible assurance of salvation is not an essential part of salvation, for true believers may struggle long before attaining to it. It does not come by extra-biblical revelation but by means of grace, as the Holy Spirit enables believers to know the reality of God's eternal love as guaranteed to the elect in Scripture. It is the joyful duty of all who claim saving faith to be diligent in making their calling and election sure by regular self-examination for a love of God and those things He has ordained for progress in holiness, and for an obedience to His demands for holiness.

*Psalm 77:1-12; 119:33-40; Isaiah 50:8-10; Romans 5:1-5; 6:1-2; 14:16-18; Titus 2:11-14; II Peter 1:3-11; I John 4:13-16.*

#### **m. Glorification**

We believe that all of God's elect will be glorified in the last day when they shall stand perfect before God in body and soul. Perfected in holiness, the saints shall never again struggle against sin but with perfect hearts will worship and serve God forever and ever.

#### **4. THE CHURCH**

- a. We believe that the universal or catholic church is the whole number of Christ's people, the elect, whom He has gathered or will gather to Himself, saving them by grace alone though its membership God alone knows. Therefore, it is invisible in the sense that God's knowledge and love of His own, and His work of grace in their hearts, cannot be seen externally. Jesus Christ is the sovereign Head of this church, which is His body and His bride.  
*Ephesians 1:1-23; 5:22-32; Colossians 1:18; Hebrews 12:22-24.*
- b. We believe that New Testament visible churches are local autonomous congregations. The people who make up these local churches have credibly professed saving faith in Jesus Christ, have given witness to their faith through believer's baptism by immersion, and show forth marks of regeneration in their lives. As saints we are called to be united, holding common biblical truth, and gather for the purpose of serving God through corporate worship, observation of the ordinances, instructions, fellowship, prayer and exhortation of each member to live holy, obedient lives. The Holy Spirit has baptized and gifted each and every saint for unity and the edifying of the body of Christ. It is God's plan that these congregations give corporate testimony to Christ as they are conformed to Him, but even the purest of local congregations is liable to be troubled by error and sin in its members, and the inclusion of those whose profession of faith is false. Some have degenerated to the point of becoming synagogues of Satan and are no longer true churches. Nevertheless, Christ governs and protects His body to enable churches to corporately worship and serve Him.  
*Matthew 16:13-20; 28:18-20; Acts 2:41,42; I Corinthians 1:2; Philippians 1:1; I Thessalonians 5:14; I Timothy 4:13; II Timothy 4:2; Hebrews 10:24-25; Revelation 2:1-3:21.*
- c. We believe that in addition to the common fellowship of professing believers, local congregations are to appoint elders and deacons.
  - 1. Elders, also referred to as bishops, overseers or pastors, are to be appointed based upon the qualifications set forth in Scripture. They are to faithfully guide and rule for the spiritual welfare of the body as a whole, and members individually, by giving themselves to the ministry of God's Word and prayer. They are to be examples to the flock in their life and conduct.  
*Acts 6:4; Ephesians 4:11,12; Philippians 1:1; I Timothy 3:1-7; Titus 1:5-9; Hebrews 13:17; I Peter 5:1-3.*
  - 2. Deacons are also to be appointed based on Scriptural qualifications. They are to serve the body in ways the elders and the body direct, both in matters of routine administration and in ministry. They are also to be examples of godliness in life and conduct. *Acts 6:1-6; I Timothy 3:8-13.*
  - 3. Members, including elders and deacons, are to love, pray for, encourage, exhort, confront and admonish, discipline, forgive and restore, submit to, and minister gifts to one another. As God's providence in their individual lives allows, they are to faithfully attend the gatherings of the body; support the ministries with prayer, work, time and money; submit to the proper authority of the elders and each other, and sacrifice themselves for the good of one another and for the testimony of Christ. There is to be in the local assembly a striving for a holy unity of heart and purpose, reflecting the love of Christ and manifesting itself in ways which may vary greatly depending upon God's providence, but which are always under the authority of Scripture. Members ought always to be striving to show forth the love of Christ and the truth of the Scriptures to those who are outside the body. This work of evangelism is one of the central responsibilities of the church as a whole, and of its members individually. It is a work involving both word and deed, and is inseparably connected to the proper life and administration of the whole body.  
*Proverbs 3:9; Matthew 28:19,20; Acts 1:8; Romans 12:9-21; I Corinthians 12:22-27; 15:1,2;*

## **5. THE ORDINANCES OF THE NEW TESTAMENT CHURCH**

We believe the term *ordinance* refers to specific commands which Christ gave His church to corporately observe to identify the believer's union with Christ's sacrifice for the forgiveness of sins. Ordinances are outward, visible signs of an inner, spiritual grace, visible enactments of the Word proclaimed through preaching. The Word of God proclaims the truth of the gospel and the ordinances corporately illustrate it. In the proper observance of the ordinances, the Word of God becomes visible, for there is a visible portrayal of the truth of redemption through Christ's work. Baptism and the Lord's Supper are the only two ordinances that Christ commanded to be observed by the New Testament church.

### **a. Believer's Baptism**

1. We believe the ordinance of baptism signifies the forgiveness and acceptance of the believer by the Triune God through Christ's work. It signifies the believer's fellowship and union with Christ in His death, burial and resurrection; it portrays to them the remission of their sins because of Christ's sacrifice on their behalf. It indicates that baptized people have received Christ as Savior and Lord and have accepted the obligation to live in a manner pleasing to Him.  
*Matthew 28:18-20; Romans 6:1-4; I Corinthians 10:14-17; 11:26.*
2. We believe that faith in Jesus Christ and repentance for sin are the prerequisites for baptism. Believers are to be immersed in water in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.  
*Matthew 28:19-20; John 3:22-23; Acts 2:37-41; 8:12-40; 10:44-48; 16:25-34; 18:7-8; Col.2:9-13.*

### **b. The Lord's Supper**

1. We believe that Christ instituted the Lord's Supper on the night when He was betrayed as a remembrance of His sacrifice until He comes. The Lord's Supper is the commemoration and proclamation of His death. All those who are obediently trusting Christ for their salvation and are looking for His return are invited and encouraged to take part in this act of worship.  
*Matthew 26:26-29; I Corinthians 11:17-34.*
2. We believe that all who desire to receive the Lord's Supper must examine themselves so that they express proper reverence for the Lord and His ordinance, lest they sin against His body and blood and bring judgment upon themselves. The Supper is for Christ's own people, so unbelievers and Christians who live with the knowledge of unconfessed sin must refrain from participating. *I Corinthians 11:27-32; 2 Cor. 6:14-18.*
3. We believe that the Lord's Supper is not a sacrifice. It does not supplement the sacrifice of Christ on the cross but is a memorial of that sacrifice, a spiritual offering of praise to God for the atoning death of Christ, which is forever sufficient for sin and therefore needs no repetition or supplement. The outward signs of the bread and cup do not become the body and blood of Christ, although they are sometimes called by the names of the things they signify. The bread symbolizes the broken body of Christ and the cup symbolizes the atoning blood of Christ.  
*Matthew 26:26-30; I Corinthians 11:17-34; Hebrews 9:11-28; 10:10,12,14,18.*

## **6. ANGELS**

- a. We believe that angels are personal spiritual beings created by God, and therefore are not to be worshipped. They were originally created in a state of holiness. We believe that a great company of elect angels kept their original holy estate and worship before the throne of God, from which they are sent forth as ministering spirits to them who are the heirs of salvation.  
*Isaiah 6:1-3; Matthew 18:10; Luke 1:26-33; 2:8-14; Ephesians 1:21; Hebrews 1:6-7,14; 2:6-7; I Peter 1:12; II Peter 2:11; Revelation 7:11-12.*
- b. We believe that a great company of angels fell from their original state of holiness, being led by

Satan in a rebellion against their Creator and continue to exist as demons in an impenitent state of rebellion against God. We believe Satan is a created angel and the first to sin, being lifted up with pride.

*Job 1:6-7; Isaiah 14:12-21; I Timothy 3:6; II Peter 2:4; Jude 6.*

- c. We believe that Satan is the open and declared enemy of God and His people; the prince of this world; the father of lies; accuser of the brethren, seeking whom he may devour; a deceiver whose great work is against truth; and who may often appear as an angel of light in pursuing his ends. Satan was defeated through the death, resurrection and ascension of Christ and he, along with all the fallen angels and unbelievers, shall be eternally punished in the lake of fire. *Matthew 4:1-11; 25:41; John 16:11; Romans 16:20; II Corinthians 4:4; Ephesians 2:2; II Timothy 2:26; Hebrews 2:14; I Peter 5:8; I John 3:8; 5:19; Revelation 20:10.*

- d. We believe that although Satan is the prince of this world and has supernatural powers, he is strictly under the rule of God, who overrules all his wicked devices for good. The believer is able to resist and overcome him by the work of the indwelling Holy Spirit, by employing the armor of God, and by the blood of the Lamb.

*Job 1:1-22; Luke 22:31-32; Ephesians 6:12-18; James 4:7-10; Revelation 12:11.*

## **7. THE STATE OF MAN AFTER DEATH AND THE RESURRECTION OF THE DEAD**

- a. We believe that after physical death human bodies return to dust, but souls live on. The souls of the redeemed are perfected in holiness and received into heaven, where they dwell with Christ and await the resurrection of their bodies. The souls of unbelievers are confined to Hades, where they endure just and terrible punishment while they await final judgment and condemnation to hell. We believe that heaven and hell are literal places, heaven being the place of eternal blessedness in which the redeemed dwell, and hell being the place of awful, eternal torment and despair into which the lost are cast, to dwell apart from God forever. Heaven and hell are the only places of everlasting residence for departed souls.

*Genesis 3:17-19; Ecclesiastes 12:1-7; Luke 16:19-31; 23:32-43; II Corinthians 5:1-10; Philippians 1:21-26; Hebrews 12:22-24; Jude 6-7; Revelation 20:11-15.*

- b. We believe that the blessed hope of believers, the event for which we live and long, is Christ's bodily and glorious return. At the return of Christ, Christians then on earth will not die but will be changed into the likeness of their Savior. The dead in Christ will arise bodily from their graves and will likewise be conformed to Christ, and all who are in Him will receive a blessed immortality, in which they are gloriously united in complete physical and spiritual bliss, joyfully serving and praising God forever. *Job 19:25-27; Isaiah 26:19; Daniel 12:1-4; I Corinthians 15:35-56; I Thessalonians 4:13-18; Titus 2:13; I John 3:2,3.*

- c. We believe that when Christ returns, He will raise the bodies of lost sinners as well as those of His redeemed children. The lost will then, as whole beings, body and soul, go to judgment to receive the penalties their sins deserve.

*Daniel 12:1-4; John 5:28-29; Acts 24:14-15; II Thessalonians 1:6-10.*

## **8. THE LAST JUDGMENT**

- a. We believe that God has appointed a day in which he will judge all men in righteousness by Jesus Christ, to whom the Father has given all authority to judge. At that time apostate angels and all human beings who have lived upon the earth will appear before the Lord to account for their thoughts, motives, words, and deeds, there to receive just reward in accordance with their deeds on earth, whether good or evil, according to the standard of God's perfect righteousness.

*Ecclesiastes 12:13-14; Matthew 12:36-37; 25:31-46; John 5:19-30; Acts 17:29-31; Romans 14:9-12; II Corinthians 5:6-10; Jude 7; Revelation 22:12.*

- b. We believe that God's purpose in judgment is to display the glory of His mercy in the eternal salvation of His elect, and to show the glory of His justice in the damnation of the lost. In that day, the saved, justified through faith alone in Christ alone, will inherit everlasting life and

blessed immortality to enjoy in the presence of their Lord. Those who do not know God and have not obeyed the gospel of Christ will suffer exclusion from the divine presence forever and will receive the everlasting punishment due to their sins.

*Matthew 25:31-46; Romans 9:19-26; Ephesians 2:4-7; II Thessalonians 1:5-10; Revelation 22:12-21.*

- c. We believe that the certainty of divine judgment to come is to deter sinners and to encourage saints to realize that full redemption approaches ever nearer. God has kept the time of Christ's return secret. Believers are to watch and ever be prepared to meet their returning Savior, no matter how soon or how distant His advent may be. Their prayer must be, "Come, Lord Jesus, come quickly! Amen!"

*Mark 13:32-37; Luke 12:35-40; II Timothy 4:1-8; Revelation 22:12-21.*

## **9. A Summary Statement of Doctrine**

1. We believe in the one true and living God, in three Persons: the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, who is invisible, personal, omnipresent, eternal, dependent on none, unchanging, truthful, trustworthy, almighty, sovereign, omniscient, righteous, holy, good, loving, merciful, long-suffering and gracious.
2. We believe that Almighty God has revealed all that is necessary to life and salvation in the sixty-six books of Holy Scripture which are the Word of God. All Scripture was given by inspiration of God, is infallible and inerrant, and is the final arbiter in all disputes. Its authority is derived from its Author and not from the opinions of men.
3. We believe that God made our first father Adam perfect, holy and upright. He was appointed representative and head of the human race thereby exposing all his offspring to the effects of his obedience or disobedience to God's commands.
4. We believe that Adam fell from his original righteousness into sin and brought upon himself and all his offspring death, condemnation and sinnership.
5. We believe it is utterly beyond the power of fallen man to love God, to keep His laws, to understand the gospel, to repent of sin or trust in Christ.
6. We believe that God, before the foundation of the world, for His own glory did elect an innumerable host of men and women to eternal life as an act of free and sovereign grace. This election was in no way dependent upon His foresight of human faith, decision, works or merit.
7. We believe that God sent His Son into the world, conceived of the virgin Mary by the Holy Spirit, unchangeably sinless, both God and man, born under the Law, to live a life of perfect righteousness, on

- behalf of His elect people.
8. We believe that God's Son died at Calvary to effect propitiation, reconciliation, redemption and atonement for His elect people. God bore testimony to His acceptance of His Son's work by raising Him from the dead.
  9. We believe that God's Son ascended to the right hand of His Father and is enthroned in glory, where He intercedes on behalf of His people and rules over all things for their sake.
  10. We believe that God the Son has poured out the Holy Spirit to work through the preached Word. The Spirit of God regenerates the elect sinner and draws him irresistibly to faith in Christ the Savior.
  11. We believe the elect, who are called by grace, are justified in the sight of God on account of the imputed righteousness of Jesus Christ which is received by faith alone.
  12. We believe that such as are regenerated, called, and justified shall persevere in holiness and never finally fall away.
  13. We believe that baptism by immersion and the Lord's Supper are gospel ordinances belonging only to regenerated believers.
  14. We believe that the local church is under the authority of Christ alone. The communion of saints, however, requires recognition of and fellowship with other churches.
  15. We believe that the Lord Jesus Christ shall come again to raise the dead, both righteous and unrighteous, and that the righteous shall enjoy everlasting life and the wicked endure everlasting punishment.

## **Article V**

### **GOVERNMENT**

#### **1. Membership**

##### **a. Qualifications**

Membership in this church shall consist only of such persons who profess to have been regenerated by the Spirit of God; have come to trust Christ alone for salvation; have publicly confessed union with Christ through believer's baptism by immersion in water; and are resolved by God's grace to submit to Christ as Lord and therein to adorn the gospel by a life of holiness as set forth in the Scriptures. Members may not hold concurrent membership in another church except at the discretion of the elders.

We recognize that our confession of faith is very defining and substantial. Although potential members may have varying degrees of understanding and convictions, we do desire that there be a basic agreement with the confession of faith. Where they may differ, they are asked to note such differences on the membership application form. If upon review by the elders these differences are not found to be of substantial consequence, the applicant will be received into membership upon his promise not to promote doctrine contrary to the confession of faith or engender strife. He must also understand that such differences may also preclude them from holding a church office.



## **b. Responsibilities**

1. Every member agrees to give unreserved subjection to the Lord Jesus Christ in every area of his life. This subjection is lived out through willing obedience to the Word of God, which expresses the mind of Christ our Lord (Matt. 28:20; Rom.14:8-9).
2. Every member agrees to give willing submission to Christ's appointed overseers in the church whose duty is to shepherd the church according to the will of God as contained in the Scriptures (Acts 20:28; Heb.13:17).
3. Every member is urged to be faithful in attendance at all the stated meetings of the church (Acts 2:42; Heb.10:24-25). The stated meetings are all the services on the Lord's Day, the Lord's Supper, the midweek prayer service, the business meetings of the membership and any special meetings which the elders may occasionally call.
4. Every member agrees to be willing to serve the local body of Christ according to his natural talents, spiritual gifts and God-given responsibilities. The members must actively seek to cultivate acquaintance with one another so that they may be better able to pray for one another; love, comfort, and encourage one another; and help one another materially as necessity may require (I Cor.12:12-31; Eph .4:11-16). They must refrain from speaking ill of one another. Their differences and offenses with each other must be handled in the manner taught in Scripture (Matt. 5:23-24; 18:15-16; Col. 3:12-15; I Pet. 4:8). This applies as well to their relationship with the office bearers of the church.
5. Every member agrees to submit to the corrective discipline of the church (Matt 18:15-17; Heb 3:12-13). Such discipline is mandated in the Scriptures for the three-fold purpose of:
  - recovering the straying and fallen member
  - maintaining the purity of the church
  - upholding the honor of Christ's name in the earth.
6. Every member agrees to give wholehearted cooperation in the outreach of the church, seeking to extend the gospel to the ends of the earth (Matt 28:18-20) through the means of
  - Bearing witness to Christ through deed and word (Matt 5:14-16; Col 4:5-6; I Pet 2:12).
  - Praying. This is one way we enter into the labors of others (II Cor 1:11; Col.4::2-4; II Thess. 3:1-2).
  - Giving. Members are responsible to maintain the on-going life and ministry of the church by their regular financial gifts (I Cor 9:13-14; 16:2; II Cor 8-9).

## **c. Church Covenant**

*Having been born again by the grace of God, and being justified through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ and His shed blood, and having confessed our faith before men, we do now in the presence of God and this assembly, most solemnly and joyfully enter into covenant with one another, as one body in Christ.*

*We engage, therefore, by the power of the Holy Spirit, to walk together in Christian love; to strive for the advancement of this church in knowledge, holiness and comfort; to guard the spiritual and Scriptural purity, peace, and prosperity of the church, and to promote its usefulness as a witness to the saving grace of God and Christ Jesus; to submit to the proper biblical authority of the elders who are the overseers of this local church; to contribute cheerfully and regularly to the financial support of the ministry, the relief of the poor, and the spread of the gospel to all nations.*

*We also engage to regularly read God's Word and pray, and to establish family devotions where possible; to bring up such children as may be entrusted to our care in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.*

*We engage too, by the grace and power of God, that as strangers and pilgrims we will abstain from fleshly lusts which war against the soul; that we will put away from us all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamor, and evil speaking, and be kind one to another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake has forgiven us.*

*We further engage to watch over one another in brotherly love; to remember each other in prayer; and to aid each other in sickness and distress.*

*We moreover engage that, should we remove from this place, we will, as soon as possible, unite with another church of like faith and practice where we can carry out the*

**d. Voting Privileges**

All members in good standing (as described below) and 18 years of age and older shall have full voting privileges. Members must be present to cast their vote; no voting shall be done by proxy.

**e. Changes of Voting Privileges**

The elders will personally (if at all possible) contact any member who has not attended any service of the church for a period of (1) one month so that they might minister to the needs of that member and/or restore him to the fellowship of the church. Any member who has not attended a Sunday service for (2) two months will be notified by the elders that his voting privileges have been suspended. The board of elders may restore privileges only upon receiving satisfactory evidence of a change of attitude and attendance. The voting privileges of members having reasonable cause for extended absence (i.e., sickness, missions trip, extended vacations, college, armed forces, etc.) may be restored at the discretion of the elders.

**f. Receiving New Members**

Any person desiring membership and meeting the qualifications (Art.V, sec.1.a.) shall make request to the elders. Said person shall be given an application form provided by the elders and a copy of the church constitution. Each applicant shall complete and return the form to an elder. Arrangements will be made with the applicant to meet with two or more of the elders to review the application, to put forth any questions the elders may have and to answer any questions the applicant may have. Upon approval by the board of elders, the applicant becomes a member and will be presented at a worship service designated by the pastor, at which time he will be publicly recognized and given the right hand of fellowship.

**g. Removal from Membership**

Any member may have his name removed from membership in the following situations.

1. Any member may make such request in writing to the board of elders.
2. Any member who has not attended any church service for a period of (1) one year may be removed from the membership at the discretion of the board of elders, after an attempt has been made to restore them to fellowship.
3. Should a member become an offense to the church by reason of an accusation or observation of immoral or unchristian conduct, or conduct which is contrary to the teachings of the Holy Scriptures, a faithful effort shall be made by a faithful member of this body to credibly establish whether or not a biblical offense has truly taken place. If it has, a faithful member should attempt to bring such a one to repentance and restoration in accordance with Matthew 18:15-17. The practice of this body regarding the presentation of the sin of the erring member to the congregation, as Matthew 18 instructs, shall be to pursue this step of discipline through the agency of the board of elders. Should such efforts prove unfruitful, the board of elders may terminate the membership of the sinning member by a unanimous vote, which shall then be made known to the congregation.
4. Any member whose name has been removed from membership and desires to be reinstated must follow the procedure for receiving new members (Art.V.sec.1.e.).

**2. General Qualifications for Holding Office**

- a. Elected offices will be as follows: lay elder, deacon, financial comptroller, treasurer, Sunday School Superintendent and secretary.
- b. Any member who is at least 21 years old and has been a member for the previous year can hold any elected church office, if they meet all of the specific requirements of that office. A person may hold more than one office concurrently except for the offices of financial comptroller and treasurer which may not be held by the same person in the same year.

- c. Each candidate for office must first be approved by the nominating committee (see Art.V sec.11) and thereby have his name placed on the slate for a vote at the annual congregational meeting.

### **3. Board of Elders (Pastor, Staff and Lay Elders)**

#### **a. Qualifications**

Each member of the board of elders must be a man who is actively involved in the functions of the church and possesses the qualities described in I Timothy 3:1-7 and Titus 1:6-9.

#### **b. Duties**

The elders are responsible for shepherding and overseeing the congregation and all its ministries, officers, staff and committees. Specific duties of this board would include:

- 1) To minister with the pastor in the administration of the ordinances and other duties;
- 2) To pray specifically and systematically for those under their charge;
- 3) To instruct members of the body in the truths of the Scripture both corporately and personally;
- 4) To lead by Christ-like example, which involves consistently modeling spiritual character, attitudes, values and behavior among the congregation; providing and inviting the opportunity for frequent and on-going contact with members of the congregation; and conducting the affairs of the church in an atmosphere of openness and mutual sensitivity, focusing as much on nurturing one another as on decision-making;
- 5) To recommend to the congregation removal of the pastor or other staff elder;
- 6) To pursue as deemed necessary the employment (full or part-time) of any other church staff. This would include a job description and salary package; establishing the qualifications desired for the position; the pursuit of qualified candidates; as necessary consulting with and gathering input from the deacons and members; and presenting to the members of a duly called congregational meeting or meetings the approval of the recommended position, compensation and of any persons presented to fill such a position. All these must be approved by three- fourths ( $\frac{3}{4}$ ) of the members present at the meeting;
- 7) To examine all individuals desiring membership in the church;
- 8) To oversee the work of the nominating committee and to select at their discretion one (1) to three (3) elders to serve on that committee each year;
- 9) To provide for the discipline of erring members, always striving for reconciliation;
- 10) To fill, if necessary, any elected office which may become vacant during the church year with a qualified candidate from the congregation. Such appointments will expire on the date of the next annual congregational meeting, regardless of the original termination date of the office;
- 11) To review the pastor's and other church staff's compensation and recommend any changes to the congregation;
- 12) To determine the amount of support for local and foreign missionaries and missions; to review the ministry of current missionaries; and to examine and evaluate others desiring support; and
- 13) To authorize benevolence expenditures by the treasurer.

#### **c. Meetings**

The board of elders shall meet as often as they may find necessary to fulfill their duties. All decisions by the elders shall be reached by a majority consensus after prayerful Consideration in a spirit of humility with each member regarding one another before himself. The pastor shall act as chairman of the board of elders. When he is unable to preside, those members present shall appoint a chairman pro-tem. No meeting shall be convened with less than a majority vote of the members present.

#### **d. Pastor**

**1. Qualifications**

The qualifications shall be the same as those in Article V Section 3a.

**2. Responsibilities**

Because the responsibilities of the eldership are both numerous and grave, it is highly desirable that at least one elder should devote himself to the work of the ministry and oversight in a "full-time" manner. The pastor is to serve along with the other elders in fulfilling the duties set forth in Article V 3b. Foremost among his duties shall be the public and private preaching of the Word of God, to administer the ordinances, and to conduct or arrange for all regular services of the church. The pastor, though not superior to the other elders in authority, shall occupy the position of chairman of the board of elders, by virtue of the heavier burden that he bears in proportion to his teaching and preaching ministry. He shall be responsible to the board of elders.

**3. Calling**

When a vacancy exists in the office of pastor, the board of elders shall select an interim chairman. The elders shall seek to secure a qualified candidate to fill the office of pastor. All candidates will be examined concerning their doctrine, training, and other qualifications for ministry. Any candidate who is approved by this preliminary examination shall then be asked to preach as well as be reviewed by the members. Only one candidate at a time may be presented to the members. Upon a unanimous vote of the board of elders and approval by the deacons a special congregational meeting shall be called at which time the candidate will be voted upon. A call will be extended to the candidate based upon a three fourths (3/4) affirmative vote of the members present. He shall serve until he resigns or is dismissed.

**4. Resignation**

It is preferable that the pastor give (3) three months written notice to the board of elders if he intends to resign.

**e. Staff Elders**

**1. Hiring of staff elders**

The board of elders shall be responsible to determine the need for other full or part-time staff elders. A formal proposal for the hiring of staff elders shall originate from the board of elders and be approved by the Joint Board before being presented to the Congregation for a vote. The proposal shall include: a job description, the number of hours to be worked each week, financial compensation and any other compensation deemed appropriate. The board of elders shall be responsible to seek after qualified candidates to fill any approved staff elder positions. They shall examine the candidates concerning their doctrine, Christian life, training, experience, and any other qualifications.

Upon the selection of a candidate for a staff elder position, the board of elders shall present the candidate for confirmation by the board of deacons. After such a confirmation, the candidate shall be presented to the Congregation for a vote at a duly called meeting. Approval of the candidate shall be by a three-fourths (3/4) vote of the members present.

**2. Responsibilities**

Any staff elder shall be recognized as an elder and shall serve on the elder board. He shall carry out the responsibilities of an elder (Art. V 3b) as well as those specifically set forth in his job description. He shall be accountable to the board of elders and under the direction of the pastor.

**3. Resignation**

It is preferable that any staff elder give (3) three months written notice to the board of elders if he intends to resign. This time limit is subject to a lesser length if a simple majority of the members present at a Joint Board meeting provide otherwise.

**f. Lay elders**

## **1. Responsibilities**

To serve on the elder board with the pastor and or staff elders to fulfill the duties as set forth in Article V 3b.

## **2. Election**

Elders will be elected at the annual congregational meeting by no less than a seventy percent (70%) majority of the members present and voting. An elder is elected for a three-(3) year term and may be re-elected.

## **4. Board of Deacons**

### **a. Qualifications**

Each member of the board of deacons must be a man who is actively involved in the overall ministry of the church and possesses the qualities described in I Timothy 3:1-7 and Titus 1:6-9.

### **b. Election**

Deacons will be elected at the annual congregational meeting. A deacon is elected for a two (2) year term and may be re-elected.

### **c. Responsibilities will include:**

- 1) To assist the elders in the care of and ministry to the congregation;
- 2) To assist the elders in the serving of the Lord's Table and baptism;
- 3) To be an example to the congregation in word and deed;
- 4) To exercise general oversight, upkeep and maintenance of the church property, equipment and buildings;
- 5) To hear and consider all petitions and reports which may be presented to it;
- 6) To arrange for an annual audit of all financial records excluding personal giving and to report the results to the congregation;
- 7) To oversee the use of the buildings, facilities and grounds by any interested persons;
- 8) To recommend, as needed, long-range property improvement programs;
- 9) To give general oversight of the temporal expenditures by the treasurer;
- 10) To attend to the legal responsibilities of the church including compliance with various federal, local or state codes and regulations.

### **d. Meetings**

The board of deacons shall endeavor to meet monthly to fulfill its responsibilities. No meeting shall be convened with less than one-half of the members present. All decisions shall be made by majority vote of the board members present. The deacons shall select among themselves a chairman (-men).

## **5. Joint Board**

### **a. Composition**

The Joint Board shall consist of all members of the board of elders and board of deacons.

### **b. Responsibilities**

- 1) To review and evaluate proposals for acquisition, improvement or disposal of all real or personal property.
- 2) To authorize unforeseen expenditures not to exceed 1% of the annual budget.
- 3) To plan, as needed, for long-range property improvement programs.
- 4) To review the monthly Treasurer's report and to advise the Treasurer regarding stewardship of Church financial accounts.
- 5) To review the monthly Secretary's report.
- 6) To hear and consider all petitions presented to it.
- 7) To provide for a yearly performance appraisal of any non-pastoral staff.
- 8) To review and evaluate proposed amendments to this constitution and make

- recommendation to the congregation regarding passage or rejection.
- 9) To consider any matter of business referred to it by the board of elders or board of deacons.
  - 10) To prepare an annual budget to be voted on by the congregation at the annual meeting.
  - 11) To authorize and implement any emergency expenditures.

**c. Meetings**

The Joint Board shall endeavor to meet monthly in conjunction with the meetings of the board of deacons to fulfill its responsibilities. No meeting of the Joint Board shall be convened with less than one-half of the Joint Board members present. The chairman of the elder board shall serve as chairman of the Joint Board. All decisions shall be made by majority consensus of the members of the Joint Board in submission to Biblical principle.

**6. Superintendent of the Sunday School**

**a. Office**

The superintendent shall be a godly man elected each year at the annual congregational meeting. He shall serve a one-(1) year term, and may be re-elected.

**b. Duties**

He shall have general oversight of the Sunday School program and coordination of the Sunday School teachers to see that its purposes are carried out in a smooth and orderly fashion. He shall cooperate with the elders in the selection of qualified teachers and material. Male teachers shall be selected for all classes attended by men 7<sup>th</sup> grade and older.

**7. Financial Comptroller**

The financial comptroller shall be a man who exhibits a godly walk in all areas of his life. The FC shall be elected at the annual congregational meeting to a two year term and may be re-elected. The FC shall be responsible to receive from the church all tithes, offerings and special collections of this church. He shall make all bank deposits and keep accurate records of all transactions. The FC shall record all individual giving and furnish to these members yearly records of their giving. The books of the FC can be reviewed by any elder or deacon except for the specific giving of individuals, which must be kept in strictest confidence. In an emergency the FC shall be able to sign checks at the discretion of the elder board, if the treasurer is unable to perform this duty. He shall keep records of all church assets and liabilities. If he is unable to perform his duties the position will be filled with one of the non-staff elders for the remainder of the year. The FC shall be directly responsible to the Joint Board.

**8. Treasurer**

The treasurer shall exhibit a godly walk in all areas of his life. The treasurer shall be elected at the annual congregational meeting and shall serve a one-(1) year term and may be re-elected. The treasurer shall receive a weekly report from the financial comptroller of all income, assets and liabilities. He shall be responsible for payment of all expenses. He shall receive all receipts and dispense all funds as designated by the Joint Board. The treasurer shall sign all checks unless providentially hindered. The elder board may permit the financial comptroller to sign checks. The treasurer shall prepare an accurate monthly report to be presented to the Joint Board. This report shall show all receipts and distributions along with assets and liabilities. He shall also provide quarterly and yearly reports of the same. The chairman of the deacons shall fulfill the responsibilities of the treasurer in an emergency as determined by the elder board.

**9. Secretary**

The secretary shall be elected at the annual congregational meeting, shall serve a one-(1) year term, and may be re-elected. The secretary shall keep a record of all congregational,

and board of deacons meetings as well as a record of church membership. All records shall be open to review by members of the elder or deacon boards. The secretary shall also validate signatures on any petitions which may be submitted to a church board.

## **10. Impeachment and Removal of the Pastor, Staff or Elected Church Officer**

### **a. Reasons**

Allowable reasons for attempting to dismiss a pastor or remove an elected official include:

- 1) teaching doctrine which is clearly contrary to Holy Scripture or these articles of faith as they represent our understanding of Scripture; or
- 2) becoming an offense to the church by reason of habitual unchristian conduct; or
- 3) being unable or unwilling to fulfill the requirements of his position.

### **b. Procedure**

Any member with reasonable concerns of the qualification about the pastor, staff elder, or elected officers shall present their concerns to the board of elders. The elders shall review the stated concerns and report back to the party as well as take any necessary steps of correction. If removal from office is necessary a special congregational meeting shall be called by a majority of the board of elders.

### **c. The Meeting**

The board of elders shall notify the accused pastor, staff elder or elected officer of the specific charges so that he may have time to prepare an adequate defense. At the meeting no other charges may be presented. The charges shall be read and any witnesses heard who may be able to substantiate those charges. The accused shall have the right to examine the witnesses and be given ample time and opportunity to defend himself against the charges and to call his own witnesses in his defense. This meeting shall be presided over by an elder selected by the board of elders as chairman pro-tem. After full and reasonable defense has been made to the charges, the members present shall vote by secret ballot for or against dismissal, a three-fourths (3/4) vote of the members present being necessary for dismissal. If the pastor or staff elder is occupying the parsonage as a part of his compensation, he shall be given thirty days (30) to vacate it if he has been dismissed.

## **11. Nominating Committee**

### **a. Members**

A nominating Committee shall be elected at the annual congregational meeting and shall serve (1) one year and may be re-elected for subsequent terms. The committee shall consist of: (1) the pastor, (2) in addition to the pastor one to three members of the board of elders (selected by the elders), and (3) three members (and two alternates) elected from the members of the congregation. All nominees for the nominating committee shall, at the time of the Congregational Meeting, be at least 18 years old and have been a member in good standing for the previous year. The members of the nominating committee shall elect an elder other than the pastor as chairman of the committee.

### **b. Purpose**

The nominating committee shall be responsible for the submission of a slate of candidates for all elected church offices (excluding pastor) which are or will be vacated at the annual congregational meeting. The nominating committee shall begin meeting no later than October 1<sup>st</sup> and shall meet as often as necessary to fulfill its responsibilities.

### **c. Function**

Members of the congregation are encouraged, after prayerful consideration and obtaining

the consent of the individual, to submit names to the nominating committee for consideration for a specific office. Members are encouraged to have all nominations submitted by the 2<sup>nd</sup> Sunday of November to allow the nominating committee enough time to fulfill its responsibilities. No nominations for elected offices will be taken from the floor at the annual congregational meeting. Nominations may come from the nominating committee and members of the nominating committee may be nominees, but no committee members may nominate themselves.

The nominating committee shall review each person submitted as a candidate for office with respect to their character and qualifications for office (general and biblical qualifications specific to the office) and shall verify the individual's consent to serve as an officer prior to placing the individual's name on the preliminary slate.

The nominating committee shall provide the preliminary slate to the elder board at least four weeks (five Sundays) prior to the Sunday of the annual congregational meeting for review and approval. The elder board shall review and work with the nominating committee to finalize the slate of officers. Upon approval of the elder board, the nominating committee shall post the slate of nominations for officers in the church bulletin no later than two weeks (three Sundays) prior to the Sunday of the annual congregational meeting.

Members are encouraged to prayerfully consider each nominated candidate and make any concerns regarding a specific candidate's qualifications known to the nominating committee as soon as possible after the slate is posted.

At the annual congregational meeting, the slate of officers (excluding lay elders) shall be approved as a whole by a vote of the members, coming to the floor with the recommendation of the board of elders.

Those men submitted by the committee to serve as lay elders shall be voted on individually. The vote shall be by secret ballot and shall be counted by the presiding secretary and at least two presiding deacons. No less than a seventy percent (70%) majority of the members present and voting shall be required for the election of an elder.

In the event that an office is left vacant on the slate, a nomination is removed from the slate, or the slate does not receive the approval of the congregation, the board of elders may appoint, at their discretion, members in good standing to fill the office(s) until the end of the church year.

*Clarification:* In the carrying out of their responsibilities to select candidates for the slate, it is not the purpose of the nominating committee to hear or resolve grievances. If such grievances should be presented to the committee they shall exhort those parties involved to resolve their differences according to the biblical pattern.

## **12. Support Staff**

### **a. Hiring**

Should the Joint Board deem it necessary to hire any full or part-time support staff, they shall present a proposal to the Congregation for a vote. The proposal shall include: a job description, the number of hours to be worked each week, financial compensation and any other compensation deemed appropriate. The Joint Board shall be responsible to fill any approved positions. Such positions may be filled from within the church or from outside. At the discretion of the Joint Board the number of hours may be increased or decreased by up to 8 hours per week. Any further changes must be approved by a congregational vote.

### **b. Accountability**

All support staff shall be under the direction of the Joint Board. The Joint Board may delegate support staff under the specific direction of the pastor or another individual. All



support staff are to exemplify Christ-like conduct, and should they walk otherwise or fail to fulfill their required duties, the Joint Board may, by a majority vote, terminate their employment. If necessary, this termination may be immediate; otherwise, it shall be determined by the Joint Board. The Joint Board will be responsible at their own discretion to fill any vacated positions.

### **13. Congregational Meetings**

#### **a. Order**

All meetings shall be chaired by the pastor or elder as determined by the board of elders. It should be the endeavor of all members to maintain a spirit of Christ-like love and humility, praying for the unity of the saints. As pertaining to business matters, the meetings shall be generally governed by the principles of Robert's Rules of Order (Revised).

#### **b. Church Year**

The church year shall extend from January 1 to December 31.

#### **c. Annual Meeting**

The annual congregational meeting shall be held each year in January, the exact date and time being determined by the board of elders. At this meeting, reports shall be made, elections held, approval of the annual operating budget made, and other church business transacted.

#### **d. Special Meetings**

Special congregational meetings may be called by a majority of the members of the board of elders.

#### **e. Notification of the Members**

The board of elders shall be responsible for setting the date of all congregational meetings (except the annual meeting, Art. V., Sec. 11.c.). They shall notify the members by announcing the date from the pulpit during the Sunday morning services for at least three consecutive Sundays, including the Sunday of the meeting.

#### **f. Quorum**

No congregational meeting shall be conducted with less than (1/2) one-half of the members present. Should a duly called meeting fail to obtain a quorum or due to some providential hindrance be unable to assemble, the meeting shall be held the following week or another Sunday specified by the board of elders.

#### **g. Business**

All proposals brought to the Congregation for a vote shall require a simple majority of those members present unless otherwise specified. No voting shall be done by proxy at any church meeting.

### **14. Special Purpose Committees**

#### **a. Definition**

Special purpose committees are official church committees commissioned by the Joint Board and convened for a specific purpose and duration. A special purpose committee may represent the church in matters of business within the scope of its purpose as outlined by the Joint Board.

#### **b. Formation of Special Purpose Committees**

Recommendation for special purpose committees may come from either the board of elders or the board of deacons. Anyone from the congregation wishing to make a recommendation, must obtain an elder or deacon to sponsor the recommendation through the respective board. Special purpose committees may only be commissioned by approval of the Joint Board. Committee members shall be appointed by the Joint Board.

**c. Scope and Duration of Special Purpose Committees**

The purpose, scope and duration of a special purpose committee shall be clearly defined in a written statement prepared by the Joint Board prior to the formation of such committee. The Joint Board shall appoint an elder or deacon to act as a liaison. The committee shall provide a monthly written report of its activities to the Joint Board. The purpose, scope or duration of a committee may be modified only by approval of the Joint Board.

**d. Expenditure of Church Resources**

Special purpose committees may expend church resources in nominal amounts under the oversight of the Joint Board liaison. Significant expenditures must be authorized by the Joint Board (see Art.V.,Sec.5.b..2.).

**Article VI**

**Miscellaneous**

**1. Life of the Church**

The life of the Bible Chapel of Delhi Hills is intended to be perpetual.. All property of the church is irrevocably dedicated to the Glory of God.

**2. Dissolution of the Church**

In the event of dissolution of the church, or if it shall cease to hold public services for at least one year, its remaining assets shall be assigned by the Joint Board to one or more evangelical Christian, non-profit corporations which are qualified as tax-exempt organizations of the Internal Revenue Code.

**3. Amendments**

Amendments to this constitution may be presented by any one of the following:

- 1) The board of elders;
- 2) The board of deacons; or
- 3) A petition signed by at least (50%) fifty percent of the members of the congregation presented to either of the above boards, the exact amendment being written at the top of each page.

The constitution may be amended by a two-thirds (2/3) vote of the members present at any annual or special congregational meeting, provided the amendment has been posted on the church bulletin board and copies are available for the members at the church for at least two (2) Sundays prior to the meeting.

**4. Adoption**

This Constitution, when adopted, shall supersede the previously adopted constitution.

**5. Contributions**

Contributions to the Bible Chapel of Delhi Hills are tax deductible to the fullest extent of the law. This church is recognized by the Internal Revenue Service as a tax-exempt non-profit organization, contributions to which are tax deductible when the church fully controls the use of such funds. The Bible Chapel will be supported by the free will offerings of its people, and the church will not participate in fund-raising programs of any kind.

In keeping with the biblical principles of the unity of the body, and of deferring individual preferences and concerns to the overall good of the church, the designation of gifts to specific uses is discouraged. Any expressed preference of a donor for any particular application of gifts contributed will be considered by the Joint Board, and carried out only if consistent with the overall needs of the body. The donor of such approved gifts will remain anonymous. Non-monetary gifts will be accepted only by vote of the Joint Board. Gifts or

bequest of real estate will be accepted only upon completion of a thorough examination of the property by qualified professionals. (Acts 4:35-37; I Corinthians 12:12-25; 16:1-2; Philippians 2:3-4).

## **APPENDIX I**

### **BIBLICAL SUPPORT FOR ELDER-LED CHURCH GOVERNMENT**

(Written and used by permission of Pastor Tim Pasma of LaRue Baptist Church)

It is our hope that this constitution reflects the church government revealed in Scripture. As one studies Scripture, a pattern of church organization emerges that, in many ways, is different from what many churches have today. The church government proposed in this constitution may seem strange to many at first glance. Here, then, is a summary of the biblical data upon which it is built. This appendix is, in fact, a biblical defense of this constitution.

It is clear from the start that the biblical pattern of church government revolves around a group of men called elders. What are they? What do they do? Having understood their functions and authority, how do we avoid authoritarianism?

#### **What are elders?** (Staff and lay elders)

There are a number of passages that speak of the office of elder. In Acts 10:17,28, the elders are identified as the "overseers" and "shepherds" (pastors) of the church. Thus, when you come to I Timothy 3:1, which speaks of the office of "overseer," it is speaking of elders. In I Peter 5:1-2, the elders are commanded to "shepherd" or "pastor" the flock of God, serving as "overseers." In Titus 1:5,7, an elder is identified as an "overseer" and "steward" (NIV's "entrusted with God's work" is one word, *oikonomos*, which is "steward"). So those who are elders are the overseers, stewards and pastors/shepherds of the local church.

The term "elder" emphasizes the maturity of the leader. As you look at the use of the term in the Old Testament, you get the idea of those wise men who, because of their wisdom and maturity, have the authority to lead and direct the activities of the group. The elders are those entrusted by God to lead and direct the church because of their proven wisdom and maturity.

"Overseer" carries with it the idea of leading, guiding and directing the affairs of the congregation. This emphasizes the function of administration. "Shepherd" emphasizes the function of leading, feeding, guiding and caring. Those who are elders are to lead, guide and care for the flock that God has entrusted to their care. This is a tender and affectionate term.

Finally, as "stewards" the elders must manage the church. This term means "one who is in charge of, one who is responsible for, an administrator or manager." It was normally used of a servant who was put in charge of his master's estate, to manage and rule over it in the master's absence. The steward would then have to give an account of his administration when the master returned. You can see this use in Luke 16. Thus, the elders are those to whom God has given the authority to manage his possession, the church.

It is also important to note that the New Testament almost always refers to elders in the *plural* (see Acts 11:30; 14:23; 20:17; I Thessalonians 5:12-13; I Timothy 4:14; 5:17; Philippians 1:1; Titus 1:5; James 5:14). The pattern is that each church has a *plurality* of elders/pastors/overseers. The scriptural norm is not a single pastor per church, but rather a council of shepherds for each church. The pattern is to have a group of men who labor in the pastoral ministry.

Simply put, the elders of a church are the pastors or shepherds of the church. They are not to be confused with deacons who are not given the same responsibilities of oversight or shepherding, but have a different and subordinate ministry.

These elders do not act as a "board" of pastoral advisors or watchdogs (which has happened in many churches). They **are** the pastors and must **all** shoulder pastoral responsibilities.

Finally, the Scriptures make it abundantly clear that only men may occupy the office of elder (I Timothy 2:11-14; 3:1-7). This certainly stands opposed to the modern spirit evident in many churches, but we must determine to stand with the Word of God against the spirit of this age when necessary.

### **What do the elders do?**

The elders of the church have a variety of functions. These are carefully outlined in the constitution under Article V Section 3b. Many today have ignored what the Scriptures say concerning the authority of elders in managing and directing the affairs of the local church.

Such authority is implied in the titles given the elders. As overseers they are to "over-see" the workings of the church. Elders are always seen in Scripture as leaders whose counsel others normally follow. As pastors they relate to the congregation as shepherds relate to a flock of sheep. Stewards are those given complete charge of the master's estate, so elders are those in charge of Christ's church. Each title carries with it the unmistakable sense of authority.

The authority of the elders is revealed in the functions given to them in the New Testament. Notice those functions as the church developed. The first elders were the Apostles and they led in solving problems and laying down the parameters of policy, setting the congregation to work and assigning the candidates their responsibilities (Acts 6:1-7). The elders had ultimate responsibility for the distribution of funds (Acts 11:27-30). When new congregations were formed, they were purposely entrusted to the care and oversight of a group of elders (Acts 14:21-23). Elders heard and judged matters of doctrinal controversy (Acts 15:4-6). The instructions concerning the church's direction were given to the elders (Acts 20:17-31).

In the epistles, the functions mentioned of the elders show again the authority of leadership. Elders in three places are described as those who "have charge over you" (prohistemi is the word used in I Thessalonians 5:12; I Timothy 3:4-5; 5:17). They are those who shepherd God's flock (I Peter 5:1-4). Finally, elders function in the church in the same way that a father functions in the family. (I Timothy 3:4-5)

Most importantly are the explicit commands of Scripture. The elders are specifically commanded to shepherd and direct the church (see, for example, I Peter 5:1ff. and I Timothy 5:17). The congregation on the other hand is told to "respect" their leaders and hold them in the "highest regard" (I Thessalonians 5:12-13) and to "obey" and "submit" to the elders (Hebrews 13:17; cf. the use of the word "submit" in Titus 2:9).

It is obvious from the Scriptures that no other entity in the church (congregation, deacons or anything else we might create) is told to exercise authority in the affairs of the church. The body of elders alone is charged with the responsibility of all the functions of the church. They can delegate responsibilities but they are ultimately responsible and have final authority. The Bible thus indicates that anyone at a lower level of leadership in decision-making, as it relates to church policy or doctrine, should be under the elders' authority.

### **How do we avoid authoritarianism?**

The biblical data is noticeably silent about congregational rule, but says a great deal about the leadership of elders and the congregation's responsibility to submit. Is this, then, dictatorial rule? Absolutely not! We all hate dictatorships and the heavy hand of rulers who are authoritarian in their dealings. God hates it too. In fact, one whole book, 3 John, is written against an authoritarian church ruler by the name of Diotrophes.

But in the well-intentioned effort to combat authoritarianism in the church, many churches have adopted governmental structures that are unbiblical. For example, many churches have adopted some form of democratic rule in order to check the authority of shepherds. Many have adopted forms of board and committee structures that hamper the leadership of a church. However, such checks and balances are not scriptural. What are the scriptural checks and balances? The first is a **biblical understanding** of the elders' ministry. Elders are to **shepherd the flock** (I Peter 5:1-4; Acts 20:28). Although they are administrators (overseers) they are to guard, feed, guide, and take care of the sheep

as they face the issues of their spiritual battles. The elders must be vitally involved in the lives of those entrusted to their care. If shepherding is a priority, authoritarianism will not be a problem.

They are to serve with humility, "not lording it over those entrusted" to them (I Peter 5:3). They must never use their authority for serving themselves (Mark 10:42-45). Pastors must never minister in such a way that they become the center of attention as the bosses. They must be examples of servanthood. All that they do and say must be for the benefit of the flock. So a biblical understanding of pastoral ministry is essential to combat authoritarianism.

The second check on abuse of power is the biblical structure of pastoral ministry. Elders exercise delegated authority, not absolute authority. Pastors use their authority under the authority of Christ, the Chief Shepherd (I Peter 5:4). They will someday give an account for their ministry to God (Hebrews 13:17).

The norm for each church, as mentioned above, is a plurality of shepherds and that within that group there must be unanimity in making decisions. Thus, no one man can achieve dictatorial powers.

There must always be congregational involvement. The congregation works at tasks under the elders' leadership (cf. Acts 6:5-6; 15:22). The church is more than a flock; it is the Body of Christ as well, composed of many gifted people who minister (I Corinthians 12:1-11; Romans 12:6-8). The elders do not do everything but they do guide the ministry of the church as members exercise their gifts. There must be free and open communication between the leadership and the congregation. Elders are not to be aloof, secret or independent, seeking their own direction. They should not want a passive congregation, but an educated, involved and mature congregation. Simply stated, shepherds must always seek the counsel and mind of those whom they lead.

Elders, like all members are subject to the discipline of the church. In fact they are subject to an even stricter discipline according to I Timothy 5:19. So the structure of church leadership is a necessary guard against the abuse of power.

The final scriptural check and balance is the **qualifications of the office**. Leaders must be servant-leaders (Matthew 20:24,28; I Peter 5:5b). Men should be chosen who are known for their humble and submissive spirits. They must also meet the specific qualifications for the office (I Timothy 3:1-7; Titus 1:5-9). Those chosen for the office must have proven themselves in these areas. There will not be authoritarian rulers if men are chosen for leadership on the basis of these **proven, demonstrated** qualities.

If we obey the Scriptures, there will be shepherds who lead, not dictate. In the end, no ultimate cures, formulas or constitutional procedures for decision-making will safeguard the church. Only wise, humble men who are servant-leaders will do. The checks against abusive power are found in the Scriptures.

**BIBLE CHAPEL OF DELHI HILLS**  
**MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION**

Being a part of God's family and a member of a local church is both a privilege and a great responsibility. We rejoice in your desire to become a member of Bible Chapel. Please fill out the following form as completely and accurately as possible. When you have completed the form, please return it to the pastor or to one of the elders. You will then be contacted about a time to meet with the elders to further discuss your membership and to allow you to ask any questions you might have.

1. Name \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

2. Address \_\_\_\_\_

3. Phone Number \_\_\_\_\_

4. Marital status \_\_\_\_\_

Spouse's name \_\_\_\_\_

(ages)

Children

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

6. Occupation and place of employment \_\_\_\_\_

Business phone number (if available) \_\_\_\_\_

7. How long have you attended Bible Chapel? \_\_\_\_\_

8. Are you currently a member of another church? \_\_\_\_\_

9. Have you read the Constitution? \_\_\_\_\_ Are you in agreement with them in so far as you understand them? \_\_\_\_\_ Please explain any reservations or differences you may have in regard to any area of doctrine or church government:

10. Are you confident that you can work in harmony with the people and policies of Bible Chapel? \_\_\_\_\_. Are you willing to fulfill, by the grace of God, the duties of a member as stated in the church covenant in Article V. Section 1b of the Constitution? \_\_\_\_\_.

11. Please indicate by an "X" areas in which you have previously served and by an "O" areas in which you would like to serve:

_____ Elder	_____ Song leader	_____ Pianist
_____ Deacon	_____ Music Director	_____ Organist
_____ Trustee	_____ Special Music	_____ V.B.S.
_____ Secretary	_____ Choir	_____ Youth worker
_____ Treasurer	_____ Maintenance	_____ Cleaning
_____ Sunday School Superintendent	_____ Lawn care	
_____ Sunday School Teacher/Helper	Other _____	

(over)

12. Have you been baptized by immersion since you were saved? \_\_\_\_\_  
If not, please explain:

13. In the following space (use an additional sheet of paper if necessary), please write out your personal testimony and explain your understanding of Regeneration (being "born again"):