

The Constitution & By-laws of



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CONSTITUTION

PREAMBLE

We the members of Sovereign Joy Community Church (SJCC), do ordain and establish the following articles, to which we voluntarily submit ourselves.

ARTICLE I

NAME

The name of this church shall be “Sovereign Joy Community Church”.

ARTICLE II

PURPOSE

The purpose of this church is to glorify the God of the Scriptures in promoting His worship, edifying saints, and evangelizing sinners. To this end we are committed to proclaiming God’s perfect law and His glorious Gospel of Grace in Jesus Christ throughout the world, and defending the “faith once delivered unto the saints” (Jude 3).

ARTICLE III

ARTICLES OF FAITH

We hereby adopt the The 1677/89 London Baptist Confession of Faith as a sufficient expression of our faith.

ARTICLE IV

MEMBERSHIP

Section I - Requirements for Membership

Any person who professes repentance toward God and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ, who has been baptized as a believer, and who expresses substantial agreement with the doctrines, aims, and government of this church, shall be

eligible for membership. It is understood that each individual will have studied The 1677/89 London Baptist Confession of Faith and Constitution expressed in the by-laws of this church for mutual agreement and conscientious commitment. All members will be encouraged to attend any congregational meetings summoned by SJCC.

- A. By Confessions of Faith - Any person who meets the above mentioned requirements shall apply for membership through one of the Elders. The Elders shall then fix a time and place for meeting with the applicant, who shall attend and be questioned as to his or her basic Christian experience, doctrinal beliefs, and seriousness of intention to wholeheartedly support the total ministry of this church (Philemon).
- B. By Letter - Any person desiring to unite with this church upon letter of recommendation from another evangelical church shall be examined by the Elders concerning his or her Christian experience, doctrinal beliefs, and seriousness of intention to wholeheartedly support the total ministry of this church (Philemon). After which time they shall be received as members upon condition of receiving a letter of recommendation from their previous church.

Section 2 - Forms of Membership

- A. Regular - All who are received into the membership of the church on the aforementioned conditions shall be considered members in good standing until such status is changed by one of the conditions set forth in Article IV, Section 4. Any change in the status of membership shall be determined by unanimous vote of the Eldership.
- B. Other - The membership status of invalids, Christian workers, and others whose relationship to the church involves special circumstances and consideration shall be determined in each case by a unanimous vote of the Eldership.

Section 3 - Procedure for Receiving New Members

For admission into church membership, applicants shall be recommended by the elders for admission (when the Board of Elders is satisfied that an applicant gives a

credible profession of faith and meets the requirements for membership) and then accepted by vote of the members at any regular or special meeting of the church, and shall at that point relinquish their membership in other churches.

Section 4 - Termination of Membership

- A. By Transfer - Letters of recommendation shall be granted by the Eldership to churches which request them, provided the member in question is in good standing and not subject to or under discipline at the time of the application. When such letters have been granted, the relationship to this church shall be considered terminated. Letters of dismissal shall be forwarded and given only to other evangelical churches. If the person in question is in the process of, subject to, or under church discipline then visits or requests membership in another church, the Eldership will inform the other church of the person's status and the specific sins involved. (Philemon 2; 1 Cor. 5).

- B. By Discipline - It is right and in harmony with the Scriptures for the congregation, upon recommendation of the Eldership, to exclude from this fellowship any person who persists in holding false or heretical doctrine; who obviously and persistently lives a life inconsistent with his Christian profession; who lives in violation of the law of the land or public morals; who walks disorderly; any person who persists in disturbing the unity and peace of this church; or who habitually absents himself from the stated meetings of this church without just cause (Matt. 18:15ff; 1 Cor. 5:1ff; 2 Thess. 3:6, 11, 15; Rom. 16:17; Heb. 10:23-25).

ARTICLE V

CONDUCT

Section 1 - Means of Grace

All public and private means of grace, such as regular attendance at the services of the church (Heb. 10:25), daily systematic reading of the Bible, and private and family prayers shall be urged and encouraged to our members for the edification of the body and the individual.

Section 2 - Government of the Home

- A. The church expects its members to follow the Scriptures in home government. God requires that godliness in the home have a high priority in every life. The home holds a central attention in God's Law and is the object of frequent exhortation in the New Testament. Men are expected to rule their homes with gentleness but firmness, loving their wives and children as Christ loves the Church (Eph. 5). Women must be subject to their husbands in everything as unto the Lord (Eph. 5). Parents should train up their children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord (Eph. 6:4) by holy example, catechizing, consistent education, and firm discipline. Children must reverently obey their parents (Eph. 6:1). These primary responsibilities, prayerfully executed, will honor the name of Christ in the community and strengthen the cause of Christ in generations to come.
- B. We believe that marriage was ordained by God at creation as the sacred union of one man and one woman. All sexual relations must therefore be reserved for that union. Christian marriage is a representation of Christ's relationship to His church. We also believe that children are a blessing from the Lord. Thus all human life is sacred and worthy of protection from the moment of conception. (Gen. 1:26-28; Ps. 127, 128, 139:13-16; Matt. 19:1-10; 1 Cor. 6:9-11; Eph. 5:22-33; Heb. 13:4)
- C. Our elders will perform a marriage only in accordance with the above definition.

Section 3 - Missions and Witnessing

- A. Missions: Missionary efforts are the command of the Risen and Exalted Christ (Matthew 28:18-20). It is the duty of every church of Christ, building on the foundation of the apostles, to obey this command. The pastors will obey Christ's command by the preaching of the Gospel and calling all to repentance and faith; by seeking to preach the Gospel beyond our church as we have opportunity; by planting or assisting in the planting of other churches; and by seeking to extend the Gospel to the ends of the earth. As church members, obeying this command means we unite in common efforts for sending forth the Gospel. These efforts include praying, and (as we are able) financial giving. We also pray that God will raise up gifted men who will go out as church-planters, whether in the United States or in foreign countries, that many lampstands may bear witness to Christ and faithfully

preach His Word around the world.

- B. Witnessing: While every Christian has differing gifts according to the grace that is given to us (Romans 12:6), it is the duty of every Child of God to witness to each other and to those that are outside the church by being salt and light in this world (Matthew 5:13-16); being faithful in worship (Hebrews 10:25); being ready to give a defense to everyone who asks a reason for the hope that is within us (I Peter 3:15); commending the Gospel by providing for our families' earthly needs (1 Thessalonians 4:10b-12); and walking in wisdom towards those that are without, that we may know how to answer each one (Colossians 4:5-6). Further, it is our duty to grow in the knowledge of Christ (II Peter 3:18) that, as we have opportunity, we may share the Gospel with those whom God providentially brings into our lives.

Section 4 - Principles of Giving

We assert our conviction that Christians are to support the work of the Lord through offerings made to the local church. Proportionate giving is a distinct and positive command in Scripture (Mal. 3:8-11; Matt. 23:23). Hence we pledge ourselves to a systematic contribution toward the support of this church with a proportion of our income according to the principle in 1 Cor. 16:2.

Section 5 - Christian Liberty

We shall require of each other in our daily walk and conversation loyal obedience to all those moral precepts established in the Word of God (Heb. 10:24-25); however, where God has not prohibited certain practices in His Word, the Christian has liberty to participate in them. The following principles must always guide the Christian's exercise of liberty:

- A. Fear of God - As the servant of Christ, all action must be motivated by love for God, and all objects must be used for His glory. The term "liberty" is often used as a cloak of malicious self-indulgence, which is sin (1 Cor. 10:31; 1 Tim. 4:4).
- B. Love of the Brethren - Though no man may dictate to the Christian's conscience, the welfare of fellow saints must always deeply affect his decisions. In a spirit of serving the brethren, he must do that which he judges will edify them and prevent their stumbling (Gal. 5:13; 1 Cor. 10:23;

1 Cor. 8:9; Rom. 14:21-23).

- C. Compassion for the Unconverted - Use of liberty must always be regulated by its effect upon sinners, and behavior chosen which is likely to win some (1 Cor. 9:19-22).
- D. Watchfulness over the Soul - Though free in conscience to use all of God's creation, carefulness in practice is demanded because of remaining lusts. Where the Christian judges himself weak through lust, he must abstain in order to Scripturally persevere (1 Cor. 9:23-27). Note: See Article VIII, Section 5 for further application of these principles to worship.

Section 6 - Support of the Church Leaders

It is the duty of every member to respect the God-appointed officers of the church. The duties of church members toward their elders, deacons, teachers, ministers, and pastors are as follows:

- A. To pray for them, that God would open a door of utterance unto them, to unfold the mysteries of the Gospel (Eph. 6:18-20).
- B. To obey the Elders in the Lord, in whatsoever they admonish them, according to the Word of God (Heb. 13:17-22; 3 John 3,4).
- C. To follow their example and footsteps, as far as warranted by the Word (1 Cor. 4:16, 11:1; Phil. 3:17; Heb. 13:7).
- D. To stand by them in trial and affliction, and to defend them in all good causes, as far as each member is able (2 Tim. 1:15-18).
- E. In the event of the necessity of exposing the transgressions of the officers, let it be done according to the principles of Matt. 18:15-21 and 1 Tim. 5:19-20, with soberness and charity for the sake of the Gospel.
- F. To support the Elders financially within the guidelines of 1 Tim. 5:17 (see Article VII, Section 2D).

Section 7 - Congregational Voting

Under Christ this congregation is governed by its members. Therefore, it is the privilege and responsibility of members to attend all membership meetings and vote on the election of officers, on decisions regarding membership status, and on such other matters as may be submitted to a vote.

ARTICLE VI

CHURCH DISCIPLINE

Section 1 - Formative Discipline

Formative discipline is primarily positive through the teaching of God's Word, the example of Christian living, and the mutual ministry of the members of the body of Christ. It has as its objective the instruction of disciples, the transformation of their lives, and their edification in love (Eph. 4:11-13; Rom. 12:1-16; 1 Cor. 12:4-27). Formative discipline has a sanctifying influence. All members should be satisfied with their God-given ministry, and thus we shall all grow in grace and the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ (1 Pet. 4:7-12). Formative discipline utilizes the gifts of each church member, whether old or young, for the edification of all. All who have been redeemed by Christ should live for Him and His church and not for themselves (2 Cor. 5:15).

As members of this church we recognize our obligation to honor, serve, worship, praise, and glorify the Lord Jesus Christ in all that we say and do (1 Cor. 10:31). Jesus Christ is the head of the church and therefore, its endeavor is to keep His commandments (John 14:15). In His Holy Word our Lord has entreated believers to perform certain duties one toward another. Some of these duties are:

- A. To love one another without offense or hypocrisy (John 13:34-35; Rom. 12:9-10; 13:8-10).
- B. To labor to keep the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace (Eph. 4:3).
- C. To endeavor for the edification and spiritual benefit of the whole body, that they all may grow up to be a holy temple in and for the Lord (1 Cor. 14:12, 26; Eph. 4:12, 29; 2:21-22).
- D. To look out for the best interests of others (Phil. 2:3, 4).

- E. To pray with and confess our sins to one another (James 5:16).
- F. Not to neglect the assembling of ourselves together, for the celebrating of divine worship, and so promote one another's spiritual benefit (Heb. 10:25; Acts 2:42).
- G. To unanimously contend for the faith and truth once for all delivered to the saints, in the purity thereof, according to the Holy Scripture (Ps. 93:5; Zech. 14:2; 1 Cor. 14:33-40; 11:2; Jude 3).

The above duties, when faithfully performed by all will have a positive, formative effect upon the whole assembly; and with the blessing of the Holy Spirit we will all be enabled to grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

Section 2 - Corrective Discipline

Corrective discipline results from disorderly conduct or heretical doctrine which is contrary to the church's standard of life and doctrine. Reasonable efforts shall be made to resolve difficulties and remove offenses before further action is taken. No offenses shall be brought before the church until the instructions of Scripture have first been followed (Matt. 5:23-24; 18:15; Gal. 6:1-2). Corrective discipline always has for its aims the glory of God, the welfare and purity of the church, and the restoration and spiritual growth of the offender.

- A. Exclusion - If a member is habitually absent from the fellowship of this church without just cause, or requests severance of membership, he or she may be excluded from the membership at the discretion of the Board of Elders.
- B. Expulsion Under Church Discipline - We recognize termination of church membership as a disciplinary measure to be a most serious action; however, in order that the purity of the church may be maintained, any member guilty of a serious offense (see Constitution Article IV, Section 4. B) who remains unrepentant despite repeated admonitions must be removed from the membership of the church. Yet our zeal for the glory of God must ever be tempered by a loving and prayerful concern for the full restoration of the offender (Gal. 6:1).

The procedure to be followed depends upon the nature of the offense; however, the following procedure shall be followed in most cases. The suspected person shall first be interviewed as directed in Matthew 18:15-18. If this does not lead to restoration of fellowship, charges shall be filed with the eldership. After a fair and impartial hearing of all the witnesses accessible and all the facts ascertainable, if the eldership unanimously believes the accused to be guilty, the eldership shall make an appropriate recommendation to the congregation for their action at a regularly called congregational meeting. This recommendation will include a detailed explanation of the offense, including the pertinent sinful actions committed by the offender. The congregation shall have the right to excommunicate a member by a two-thirds majority vote of the members present and voting. Upon this affirmation a certified letter will be sent to the offender explaining the judgement of the church upon which the offender will be given 30 days to repent of the offense. If after this time there is no repentance then the offender will be considered ex-communicated from the body.

The aim of exceptional discipline is the glory of God, the purity, unity, influence, and witness of the church, and for the good of the one disciplined.

- C. Restoration to Church Membership - The right to exclude or excommunicate persons or the withdrawal of fellowship (1 Cor. 5; 2 Thess. 3:6) is in harmony with the teachings of the New Testament (Matt. 18:16-17). The Apostolic church also had a right to restore those persons who gave satisfactory evidence of repentance (2 Cor. 2:6-8). The object of the discipline having been accomplished, the congregation shall have the right to restore the repentant member to full membership, under the unanimous recommendation of the elders and by a two-thirds majority vote of the members present and voting.

ARTICLE VII

CHURCH OFFICERS

Section 1 - General Statement

Jesus Christ alone is head of the church (Col. 1:18). He governs His church through office-bearers whom He appoints and who are endowed by His Spirit with the gifts and graces needed to accomplish their work. Office-bearers in the church are of two kinds: Elders (also called Overseers and Pastors) and Deacons (Phil. 1:1; 1 Tim. 3:1-13). It is the duty of the church to seek and discover among its male members those to whom Christ the Lord has imparted the necessary gifts for office-bearing. It is ultimately the duty of the Eldership to recognize those who qualify for the offices of the church (Titus 1:5; Acts 14:23). The decision of the Eldership is ultimately subject to and determined by the qualifications found in Scripture (1 Tim. 3; Titus 1). Any members of the church who are privy to disqualifying factors pertaining to the potential candidate under consideration should bring the matter before the Eldership for thorough investigation. Scriptural complaints must be the basis for disqualification (1 Tim. 3:1-7, 8-13; Titus 1:5-9), after which no less than a three-fourths majority of the members present and voting shall be required for the election of an officer. After formally recognizing them by common suffrage, the church shall set them apart by united prayer, and then submit to their God-given authority.

When the church is too small to maintain both offices, one Board will function as both Elders and Deacons until such time that qualified officers are recognized. In such cases where one Board functions in the capacity of both Elders and Deacons, all references in the Constitution or By-laws to either Elders or Deacons will apply to that one Board (Acts 6:1ff; Titus 1:5).

In the case that the church no longer has qualified officers, the membership may invite another like-minded congregation to oversee the church until such time that qualified officers are raised up.

Section 2 - Elders

- A. Plurality and Parity - The scriptures indicate that normally there should be a plurality of Elders in the local church (Acts 20:17; Phil 1:1). These men are called "Bishops" (meaning overseer) because they have oversight of the

assembly (Acts 20:28; 1 Pet. 5:2; Heb 13:17). They are called the “Pastor-Teachers” given to the church “for the perfecting of the saints, unto the work of ministering unto the building up of the body of Christ” (Eph. 4:11-12; Acts 20:28). There is parity (equality) among the Elders, each bearing authority in the deliberations and decisions of the Board of Elders. Thus the plurality and parity of the Elders guard the flock from the weakness of rule by one man and use the collective wisdom of several godly men to rule the flock of God as one Board.

B. Qualifications - The qualifications for a man chosen to fill the office of Elder are clearly set forth in 1 Tim. 3:1-7 and Titus 1:5-9. The recognition of these qualifications by the congregation will help prevent the infiltration of hirelings who forsake the flock and wolves who enter in and destroy the flock (John 1:12-13; Acts 20:28-30). Any man called to the Eldership must be able conscientiously to affirm his agreement with and support of The 1677/89 London Baptist Confession of Faith, Constitution and By-Laws of the church. Should he at any time move from his positions, he is under spiritual and moral obligation to make this fact known to the Elders for further consultation. In the event of irreconcilable differences after consultation, this fact must be made known to the church for further disposition.

C. Responsibilities - All Elders are pastors of the flock (Acts 20:28). They are responsible for the spiritual ministrations of the church, the implementation of discipline, the oversight of the souls of the members, and the oversight of all ministries and functions of the church. They shall give account to God for all things in the church (Acts 20:28; Heb. 13:17; 1 Pet. 5:2-3).

While every Elder should be “apt to teach”, some will be more engaged in formal and public teaching while others will be more engaged in pastoring (that is, private teaching and admonishing) and governing (1 Tim. 5:17a). The gifts of each man will be considered by the Board of Elders in assigning responsibilities.

One or more of the Elders (usually the supported Elder[s]) may use the title of “Pastor” for the sake of denominational communication and public contacts. It shall be the duty of the Elders to be diligent and faithful in attendance at the Board of Elders meetings and the regular services of the

church. They shall make suggestions regarding the pulpit ministry and encourage the one preaching in the work of the Lord. Elders may call upon one or more of the Deacons to assist them in the fulfillment of their responsibilities.

- D. Support - In view of the fact that the responsibilities of the Eldership are numerous and great, Scripture makes provision for the financial support of Elders. 1 Tim. 5:17 encourages the support of “elders who rule well” (oversight) but “especially those who work hard at preaching and teaching.” Thus a congregation may support more than one Elder in the various duties of that office but should place priority on the teaching function.
- E. Election - The normal procedure in the New Testament for the election of Elders is the process of recognition (1 Tim. 3:1-13). For this reason, the congregation normally will look first among its members for officers (See By-Laws, Article III). However, in the event that none of the Elders possess sufficient proficiency to be engaged full time as to “labor in preaching and teaching” (1 Tim. 5:17b), the Elders may look outside the congregation for such a man. In such a case, the Elders and the congregation should exercise extreme caution to avoid introducing a hireling or wolf into the flock (John 10:12-13; Acts 20:28-30). The procedure for the election of Elders is outlined in By-Laws Article III, Section 2.
- F. Length of Service - The Holy Spirit equips and places Elders in the church (Acts 20:28). Therefore, the church cannot arbitrarily fix either the number of Elders or their term of service. Therefore, the term of service for Elders and Deacons is indefinite except for certain cases discussed in By-Laws Article III, Section 2.

ARTICLE VIII Board of Elders

The Board of Elders shall consist of all of the duly elected Elders. There is parity (equality) among the Elders, each bearing equal authority in the deliberations of the Board of Elders.

Section 1 - Responsibility of the Board of Elders

The Board shall have the general oversight of all this church’s affairs.

The conduct of all church business and the work of all church organizations shall be subject to its supervision and government.

Section 2 - Membership and Discipline

The Board shall accept applicants for church membership, and apply discipline to offending members in accordance with Article VI. The Elders shall watch over the souls of the flock as “they that must give account” (Heb. 13:17). They must be persistent in prayer for, visitation of, and instruction of the membership and their families.

Section 3 - Church Officers and Teachers

The Elders shall appoint the Superintendent of the Sunday School and the directors of all church groups from its own membership. These, in turn upon request, shall be responsible to present to the Elders, for its approval, all proposed teachers and leaders.

Section 4 - Pulpit Supply

The Elders have complete responsibility for the teaching ministry of the church. It shall be the duty of the Board of Elders to supply the pulpit with men whose ministry in our church shall be consistent with the doctrinal statement of this church.

Section 5 - Administration of Baptism and the Lord’s Supper

The Elders shall examine and approve candidates for professor’s baptism and church membership.

The Elders shall have complete oversight over the administration of the Lord’s Supper. Christian liberty in the matters of food and drink has application to the relationship between believers at all times and places (Rom. 14:20-21; 1 Cor. 10:31-32). This is especially true at the Lord’s Supper, the supreme symbol of Christian unity (1 Cor. 10:14-17, 23-24, 31-33). While recognizing with the 1689 London Confession that Jesus instituted the Lord’s Supper with the elements of the Passover (unleavened bread and mixed wine), it must also be noted that the New Testament seems to allow some degree of liberty in the choice of the elements. Jesus used the generic term “fruit of the vine” instead of the specific term “wine”

(Matt. 26:29; Num. 6:3-5), providing biblical harmony with Paul's instructions on Christian liberty (Rom. 14:20-21; 1 Cor. 10:14-17, 31-33). Also, the broken bread of the Lord's Supper on the day of Pentecost was most likely the leavened bread of that feast (Lev. 23:16-17; Acts 2:42). Therefore, the Elders of this church shall exercise wisdom and liberty in accordance with the above principles in the selection and administration of the elements of the Lord's Supper for our worship.

Section 6 - Grievances and Suggestions

The Board shall receive, consider, and/or dispose of any grievance, suggestion, or recommendation by any member or organization of this church.

Section 7 - Miscellaneous Duties

The Board of Elders shall exercise oversight over all other powers and duties which properly belong to a local church, congregation and corporation.

ARTICLE IX Board of Deacons

Section 1 - Ministry of Mercy

The ministry of mercy in our church and community is a special responsibility of the Diaconate. The Board of Deacons shall see that the sick, the sorrowing, the aged, and the feeble-minded receive spiritual and physical comfort. They shall minister the Word of God, administer this church's benevolence funds, and render counsel to those in need of comfort. They shall be vigilant for opportunities to do good, especially to those who are of the household of faith (Gal. 6:10).

Section 2 - Business Affairs

The Board of Deacons shall have general executive powers to administer the business affairs of this church. It shall be the Deacons' and Elders' joint responsibility to prepare the church budget each year. Upon reaching joint agreement of the proposed budget, the Board of Elders will submit the budget to the congregation for commitment by a three-fourths vote. It will be the Deacons' responsibility to administer it.

The duty of caring for and maintaining the church's properties shall belong to the

Deacons.

Section 3 - Limitations of Powers

The Board of Deacons shall not encumber, transfer, sell, or purchase any real estate for the church except by the express authorization conveyed by a three-fourths vote of the membership present and voting at a duly called congregational meeting. No obligation shall be incurred to spend over \$2000 on one item without the special vote of the congregation, unless that item already appears in the adopted budget. In the case of legal necessity, trustees may be elected from the Board of Deacons.

Section 4 - Representation at Meetings

The Board of Deacons shall inform the Board of Elders of all of their meetings so that a representative may be present. Likewise, the Board of Deacons may be asked to present regular reports of its business to the Board of Elders.

ARTICLE X

ORDINATIONS

Section 1 - Recognition for Specific Ministries

It is our hope that spirit-filled men will be called out from among us to proclaim the Gospel of the Grace of God. The Elders may oversee such men for preaching, missions, planting churches, foreign missions, the military chaplaincy, etc.

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

When there is a prospective candidate for such ministries, the Board of Elders shall guide that person in his studies and preparation. It shall then call the Elders and the congregation to examine the qualifications of the candidate. It shall look into the soundness of his conversion, the godliness of his walk, the soundness of his doctrine, the degree of his gifts, the extent of his training, and the blessing of God upon his labor for Christ. The Elders shall insure that the examination will conform to the requirement of the specific ministry.

The Eldership will take preliminary measures for ordination of Elders and Deacons. These preliminary measures will include the input of all SJCC members to examine, pray, consider, as well as voice any grievances concerning the candidates under consideration for ordination. If the Board of Elders considers a man proven, he will be presented to the congregation for the office that he is qualified for. At this time the congregation will have two weeks to bring forth any issue that might disqualify the man for the office. After this two week period, the church may give the recommended commission by a three-fourths majority of the members present and voting at a congregational meeting. If nothing is determined to be disqualifying by the Board of Elders and the congregation, then the man will be appointed to the office at the next regular worship service.

Biblical Qualifications for the office of Elder & Deacon (from 1 Tim. 3:1-13 and Tit. 1:5-9) are on the following page:

DEACON QUALIFICATIONS SUMMARY	ELDER QUALIFICATIONS SUMMARY
1. Dignity	
2. Not double-tongued	
3. Not addicted to much wine	1. Not addicted to wine
4. Not fond of sordid gain	2. Free from the love of money, not fond of sordid gain
5. Hold to the mystery of the faith with a clear conscience	
6. Beyond reproach	3. Beyond reproach
7. A wife of character (1 Tim 3:11)	
8. Husband of one wife (As a Christian who has not had an unbiblical divorce)	4. Husband of one wife (As a Christian who has not had an unbiblical divorce)
9. Good manager of his children and his own household	5. Manages his household well, keeping children under control with all dignity
10. First must be tested and proven to be above reproach	6. Temperate
	7. Prudent
	8. Respectable
	9. Hospitable
	10. Able to teach
	11. Not pugnacious
	12. Gentle
	13. Uncontentious
	14. Not a new convert
	15. Has a good reputation with those outside the church
	16. Not self-willed
	17. Not quick tempered
	18. Lover of what is good
	19. Just
	20. Devout
	21. Self-controlled
	22. Not accused of dissipation or rebellion
	23. Holds fast to the faithful Word – able to both exhort in sound doctrine and refute those who contradict

ARTICLE XI Finances

The work of this church is financially dependent upon the voluntary gifts of God's people. Before the annual congregational meeting, the Board of Elders shall obtain from the Board of Deacons an estimate of the needs of the several divisions of the work, and a prepared budget, detailing the proposed expenditures for the coming year. When this budget is subscribed to, it shall be considered the basis for the current liabilities. No committee or board is authorized to make changes in its provisions, or to make unauthorized disbursements outside of the bounds specified in Article IX, Section 3.

ARTICLE XII Amendments

Amendments to the Constitution may be adopted by a three-fourths majority vote of the members present and voting at a congregational meeting, provided that such amendments have been distributed by the Board of Elders in written form at least two weeks prior to the congregational meeting.

BY-LAWS

ARTICLE I Congregational Meetings

Section 1 - Notice of Meetings

Notice of all congregational meetings shall be given at regular worship services on two successive Sundays immediately prior to the meeting. In an emergency, a meeting may be called on shorter notice by notifying each local member of the time, place, and purpose of the congregational meeting.

Section 2 - Method of Calling Meetings

It shall be the right and responsibility of the Board of Elders to call all congregational meetings. A written request to call a congregational meeting, stating clearly its purpose, signed by fifteen residents, voting members of the church in good and regular standing and presented to the Board of Deacons, shall require the Board of Elders to call such a meeting. When special congregational meetings are called, notice must be given to the congregation as to the purpose.

Section 3 - Responsibility for Meetings

The Board of Elders shall arrange the details of all congregational meetings and see that all possible preparation for their successful conduct is made.

Section 4 - Quorum for Transaction of Business

The resident, voting members present at any constitutionally called congregational meeting shall be considered a quorum for the transaction of business.

Section 5 - Voting Age

Any member of the church eighteen years of age or over, in good and regular standing, shall have the responsibility to vote on any question properly brought before the congregation.

Any person received into membership while under voting age will, upon attaining voting age, sign a statement that they have read the church's Constitution and

By-Laws, and The 1677/89 London Baptist Confession of Faith; and that, as an adult, agree with and will abide by church policy respecting each.

Failure to do so will result in their being excluded from voting privileges of the church and may result in a need to review their desire to maintain membership in this church.

ARTICLE II

MEMBERSHIP

In order to keep an accurate membership roll, there shall be an annual review of the membership roll by the Elders one month prior to the Annual Meeting. All who have been inactive members for whatever cause (see Article VI, Section 2) will be classified as such and will be notified of this action in writing.

In the event such inactivity is not corrected through the counsel of the Elders, the Elders may suspend the voting rights of inactive members until the situation is resolved by further church discipline.

ARTICLE III

CHURCH OFFICERS

Section 1 - Method and Requirements for Election of Elders and Deacons

- A. All nominees shall have been a member of the church for a reasonable period of time before being placed in consideration. No candidate who has been a member of the congregation for less than a year will be considered for any office without the consent of the Elders.
- B. Consent must be secured from the candidates before their names are placed before the congregation for an examination period of two weeks as stated in the constitution (Article X section I).

Section 2 - Election of Church Officers

Elders will be examined on their understanding of the Scriptures and The 1677/89 London Baptist Confession of Faith. They must be apt to teach. Deacons will be examined on these things in a more general way as “holding to the mystery of the faith with a clear conscience” (1 Tim. 3; Titus 1; Acts 6).

If the Board of Elders considers a man proven, he will be presented to the congregation for the office that he is qualified for. At this time the congregation will have two weeks to bring forth any issue that might disqualify the man for the office. If nothing is determined to be disqualifying then the nominees are presented to the congregation for approval by a three-fourths majority of votes from those present and voting. The man will be appointed to the office after an installation service.

Section 3 - Termination of Service

The term of services for elders and deacons is permanent in nature. Therefore, church officers are not elected for a specific period of time. However, there must be allowances for the termination of service under certain circumstances.

- A. Leave of Absence - After consultation with the Elders, an officer may request a leave of absence from the responsibilities of office for a certain period of time. If the Elders grant the request, this action should be reported to the congregation with an explanation. Extended leaves of absence beyond six months are at the discretion of the Elders and may require final resignation from office.
- B. Resignation - If an officer should make application to be released from office, the congregation should receive an explanation and release the officer from office by a two-thirds majority vote of those present and voting. In the case of releasing a supported Elder from office, support will continue for a period not to exceed ninety days until he is gainfully employed. His duties will continue until that time.
- C. Termination - If the relations between an officer and the congregation become detrimental to the welfare of the church, and the officer has not submitted to the exhortations of the Board of Elders (I Tim. 5:19-20), the Board of Elders shall have authority to consider this matter and make

recommendation to the congregation at a duly called congregational meeting. If the officer's life or performance of duties should violate the standards of this church, and the Board of Elders so recommend, the officer's responsibilities may be terminated immediately following a congregational meeting at which his dismissal has been requested by a two-thirds majority vote of those present and voting. If the officer is a supported Elder, his support shall continue for a period not to exceed ninety days until he is gainfully employed.

D. Departure - If an officer moves away from the community and can attend this church no longer, his service will be terminated.

Section 4 - Interim Support for a Prospective Elder

The normal process for the election of elders is to look first in the congregation. But in the event that none of the present elders possess sufficient proficiency to be financially supported to "labor in preaching and teaching" (1 Tim. 5:17), the Elders may look outside the congregation for such a man. Extreme caution is urged in such a case to avoid hirelings and wolves entering the flock. After receiving nominations from the church, the Elders may invite a prospective elder to visit the church for an interview, preaching, officer's meetings and congregational examination.

It is preferred that the Elders work with only one candidate at a time. If the Elders and the nominating committee are satisfied with the prospective elder's qualifications, and if they propose the candidate to the church and receive the required twenty five percent nomination from the resident voting members, they may propose that the congregation extend a call to the candidate for pastoral office. A seventy-five percent majority vote will be required for congregational approval. The above procedure will constitute the normal process of congregational nomination and recognition required of other church officers.

At the discretion of the Elders and with the prior agreement of the prospective candidate, a confirmation vote may be required in some circumstances after a period of one year's service. This procedure is designed to protect the flock in certain cases. This may be required of candidates who are largely unknown to the church beforehand, or who are presently without pastoral charge, or who have limited pastoral experience. In the event that the required seventy-five percent majority is not attained in the confirmation vote, the church will provide ninety

days severance support to assist the candidate in his life plans, or less if mutually agreed upon.

ARTICLE IV

CHURCH BOARDS

Section 1 - Monthly Meetings

The Board of Elders and the Board of Deacons shall hold regular monthly meetings.

Section 2 - Quorum and Call for Meetings

The quorum of the Board of Elders or of the Board of Deacons shall be two-thirds of the total number of the board. They shall meet at the request of any three members of the Board.

Section 3 - Duties of the Church Treasurer

The Church Treasurer, offering counters and offering depositor shall be appointed by the Board of Elders and Deacons. The offering depositor shall deposit all church funds in a bank account or accounts, as instructed by the Board of Elders and Deacons, which account shall be opened and maintained in the name of the church. The Treasurer shall make monthly reports to the Board of Deacons and Elders, and an annual report to the congregation at the annual meeting. After service, two offering counters will count, prepare and seal a deposit of the offerings. A count sheet will be given to the Treasurer and a separate carrier (offering depositor) will deliver the sealed deposit to the bank. The Treasurer shall submit his books for an annual audit prior to the annual meeting, and at such other times as he may be directed by the Board of Elders and Deacons. The Treasurer is responsible for preparing annual contribution reports for the giving members of the church.

ARTICLE V

AMENDMENTS

Amendments to the By-Laws may be adopted by a two-thirds majority of the members present and voting at a congregational meeting, provided that such amendments have been distributed by the Board of Elders in written form at least two weeks prior to the congregational meeting

ARTICLE VI

DISSOLUTION

This church shall be considered dissolved when its membership concludes that it can no longer fulfill its hereto stated purpose of existence. In the event of dissolution, no donor, member, officer of the church, or private individual shall be entitled to share in the distribution of any assets of this church. Any assets of the church upon dissolution shall be used to pay any outstanding debts. Any remaining assets shall be equally divided among the missionaries supported by the church at the time of dissolution or the assets shall be given to another church of like faith and practice, holding to theology which accords with and is within the sphere of The 1677/89 London Baptist Confession of Faith, or other similar religious organization that is qualified as a charitable organization under section 501(c) (3), Internal Revenue Code of 1954, as amended.