

Constitution and By-Laws of First Baptist Church of Newman, California
Affirmed October 17, 2015; Amended June 24, 2018

Preamble

That all things may be done decently and in order, and that we may more readily help one another in our Christian service as members of the First Baptist Church of Newman, we adopt the following constitution and by-laws as methods of our works:

Article I - Name and Object

Section 1. Name:

This organization shall be known as the First Baptist Church of Newman, California.

Section 2. Object:

This church, believing in the Bible as the Inspired Word of God and as the sole authority for faith and practice, and adhering to all the teachings of Jesus Christ, declares its purposes: (a) to maintain regular services, both devotional and for public worship; (b) to proclaim earnestly the Gospel Message and to urge its personal acceptance; (c) to cooperate heartily, by prayer, gift, and service, in the effort to further the Kingdom of Christ; (d) to encourage, in every possible way a life lived for the glory of God as a disciple of Jesus Christ; and (e) to secure as far as possible the practice of true religion and Christian philanthropy (James 1:27) as revealed and taught in the sacred scriptures.

Article II - Statement of Faith

The statement of faith of this church is the Baptist Faith and Message 2000. Below is the abbreviated statement.

I. The Scriptures

The Holy Bible was written by men divinely inspired and is God's revelation of Himself to man. It is a perfect treasure of divine instruction. It has God for its author, salvation for its end, and truth, without any mixture of error, for its matter. Therefore all Scripture is totally true and trustworthy. It reveals the Principles by which God judges us, and therefore is, and will remain to the end of the world, the true center of Christian union, and the supreme standard by which all human conduct, creeds, and religious opinions should be tried. All Scripture is a testimony to Christ, who is Himself the focus of divine revelation.

II. God

There is one and only one living and true God. He is an intelligent, spiritual, and personal Being, the Creator, Redeemer, Preserver, and Ruler of the universe. God is infinite in holiness and all other perfections. God is all powerful and all knowing; and His perfect knowledge extends to all things, past,

present, and future, including the future decisions of His free creatures. To Him we owe the highest love, reverence, and obedience. The eternal triune God reveals Himself to us as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, with distinct personal attribute, but without division of nature, essence, or being.

A. God the Father

God as Father reigns with providential care over His universe, His creatures, and the flow of the stream of human history according to the purposes of His grace. He is all powerful, all knowing, all loving, and all wise. God is Father in truth to those who become children of God through faith in Jesus Christ. He is fatherly in His attitude toward all men.

B. God the Son

Christ is the eternal Son of God. In His incarnation as Jesus Christ He was conceived of the Holy Spirit and born of the virgin Mary. Jesus perfectly revealed and did the will of God, taking upon Himself human nature with its demands and necessities and identifying Himself completely with mankind yet without sin. He honored the divine law by His personal obedience, and in His substitutionary death on the cross He made provision for the redemption of men from sin. He was raised from the dead with a glorified body and appeared to His disciples as the person who was with them before His crucifixion. He ascended into heaven and is now exalted at the right hand of God where He is the One Mediator, fully God, fully man, in whose Person is effected the reconciliation between God and man. He will return in power and glory to judge the world and to consummate His redemptive mission. He now dwells in all believers as the living and ever present Lord.

C. God the Holy Spirit

The Holy Spirit is the Spirit of God, fully divine. He inspired holy men of old to write the Scriptures. Through illumination He enables men to understand truth. He exalts Christ. He convicts men of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment. He calls men to the Saviour, and effects regeneration. At the moment of regeneration He baptizes every believer into the Body of Christ. He cultivates Christian character, comforts believers, and bestows the spiritual gifts by which they serve GOD through His church. He seals the believer unto the day of final redemption. His presence in the Christian is the guarantee that GOD will bring the believer into the fullness of the stature of Christ. He enlightens and empowers the believer and the church in worship, evangelism, and service.

III. Man

Man is the special creation of God, made in His own image. He created them male and female as the crowning work of His creation. The gift of gender is thus part of the goodness of God's creation. In the beginning man was innocent of sin and was endowed by his Creator with freedom of choice. By his free choice man sinned against God and brought sin into the human race. Through the temptation of Satan man transgressed the command of God, and fell from his original innocence whereby his posterity inherit a nature and an environment inclined toward sin. Therefore, as soon as they are capable of moral action, they become transgressors and are under condemnation. Only the grace of God can bring man into His holy fellowship and enable man to fulfill the creative purpose of God. The sacredness of human personality is evident in that God created man in His own image, and in that

Christ died for man; therefore, every person of every race possesses full dignity and is worthy of respect and Christian love.

IV. Salvation

Salvation involves the redemption of the whole man, and is offered freely to all who accept Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour, who by His own blood obtained eternal redemption for the believer. In its broadest sense salvation includes regeneration, justification, sanctification, and glorification. There is no salvation apart from personal faith in Jesus Christ as Lord.

- A. Regeneration, or the new birth, is a work of God's grace whereby believers become new creatures in Christ Jesus. It is a change of heart wrought by the Holy Spirit through conviction of sin, to which the sinner responds in repentance toward God and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. Repentance and faith are inseparable experiences of grace. Repentance is a genuine turning from sin toward God. Faith is the acceptance of Jesus Christ and commitment of the entire personality to Him as Lord and Saviour.
- B. Justification is God's gracious and full acquittal upon principles of His righteousness of all sinners who repent and believe in Christ. Justification brings the believer unto a relationship of peace and favor with God.
- C. Sanctification is the experience, beginning in regeneration, by which the believer is set apart to God's purposes, and is enabled to progress toward moral and spiritual maturity through the presence and power of the Holy Spirit dwelling in him. Growth in grace should continue throughout the regenerate person's life.
- D. Glorification is the culmination of salvation and is the final blessed and abiding state of the redeemed.

V. God's Purpose of Grace

Election is the gracious purpose of God, according to which He regenerates, justifies, sanctifies, and glorifies sinners. It is consistent with the free agency of man, and comprehends all the means in connection with the end. It is the glorious display of God's sovereign goodness, and is infinitely wise, holy, and unchangeable. It excludes boasting and promotes humility.

All true believers endure to the end. Those whom God has accepted in Christ, and sanctified by His Spirit, will never fall away from the state of grace, but shall persevere to the end. Believers may fall into sin through neglect and temptation, whereby they grieve the Spirit, impair their graces and comforts, and bring reproach on the cause of Christ and temporal judgments on themselves; yet they shall be kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation.

VI. The Church

A New Testament church of the Lord Jesus Christ is an autonomous local congregation of baptized believers, associated by covenant in the faith and fellowship of the gospel; observing the two ordinances of Christ, governed by His laws, exercising the gifts, rights, and privileges invested in them

by His Word, and seeking to extend the gospel to the ends of the earth. Each congregation operates under the Lordship of Christ through democratic processes. In such a congregation each member is responsible and accountable to Christ as Lord. Its scriptural officers are pastors and deacons. While both men and women are gifted for service in the church, the office of pastor is limited to men as qualified by Scripture.

The New Testament speaks also of the church as the Body of Christ which includes all of the redeemed of all the ages, believers from every tribe, and tongue, and people, and nation.

VII. Baptism and the Lord's Supper

Christian baptism is the immersion of a believer in water in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. It is an act of obedience symbolizing the believer's faith in a crucified, buried, and risen Saviour, the believer's death to sin, the burial of the old life, and the resurrection to walk in newness of life in Christ Jesus. It is a testimony to his faith in the final resurrection of the dead. Being a church ordinance, it is prerequisite to the privileges of church membership and to the Lord's Supper.

The Lord's Supper is a symbolic act of obedience whereby members of the church, through partaking of the bread and the fruit of the vine, memorialize the death of the Redeemer and anticipate His second coming.

VIII. The Lord's Day

The first day of the week is the Lord's Day. It is a Christian institution for regular observance. It commemorates the resurrection of Christ from the dead and should include exercises of worship and spiritual devotion, both public and private. Activities on the Lord's Day should be commensurate with the Christian's conscience under the Lordship of Jesus Christ.

IX. The Kingdom

The Kingdom of God includes both His general sovereignty over the universe and His particular kingship over men who willfully acknowledge Him as King. Particularly the Kingdom is the realm of salvation into which men enter by trustful, childlike commitment to Jesus Christ. Christians ought to pray and to labor that the Kingdom may come and God's will be done on earth. The full consummation of the Kingdom awaits the return of Jesus Christ and the end of this age.

X. Last Things

God, in His own time and in His own way, will bring the world to its appropriate end. According to His promise, Jesus Christ will return personally and visibly in glory to the earth; the dead will be raised; and Christ will judge all men in righteousness. The unrighteous will be consigned to Hell, the place of everlasting punishment. The righteous in their resurrected and glorified bodies will receive their reward and will dwell forever in Heaven with the Lord.

XI. Evangelism and Missions

It is the duty and privilege of every follower of Christ and of every church of the Lord Jesus Christ to endeavor to make disciples of all nations. The new birth of man's spirit by God's Holy Spirit means the birth of love for others. Missionary effort on the part of all rests thus upon a spiritual necessity of the regenerate life, and is expressly and repeatedly commanded in the teachings of Christ. The Lord Jesus Christ has commanded the preaching of the gospel to all nations. It is the duty of every child of God to seek constantly to win the lost to Christ by verbal witness undergirded by a Christian lifestyle, and by other methods in harmony with the gospel of Christ.

XII. Education

Christianity is the faith of enlightenment and intelligence. In Jesus Christ abide all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. All sound learning is, therefore, a part of our Christian heritage. The new birth opens all human faculties and creates a thirst for knowledge. Moreover, the cause of education in the Kingdom of Christ is co-ordinate with the causes of missions and general benevolence, and should receive along with these the liberal support of the churches. An adequate system of Christian education is necessary to a complete spiritual program for Christ's people.

In Christian education there should be a proper balance between academic freedom and academic responsibility. Freedom in any orderly relationship of human life is always limited and never absolute. The freedom of a teacher in a Christian school, college, or seminary is limited by the pre-eminence of Jesus Christ by the authoritative nature of the Scriptures, and by the distinct purpose for which the school exists.

XIII. Stewardship

God is the source of all blessings, temporal and spiritual; all that we have and are we owe to Him. Christians have a spiritual debtorship to the whole world, a holy trusteeship in the gospel, and a binding stewardship in their possessions. They are therefore under obligation to serve Him with their time, talents, and material possessions; and should recognize all these as entrusted to them to use for the glory of God and for helping others. According to the Scriptures, Christians should contribute of their means cheerfully, regularly, systematically, proportionately, and liberally for the advancement of the Redeemer's cause on earth.

XIV. Cooperation

Christ's people should, as occasion requires, organize such associations and conventions as may best secure cooperation for the great objects of the Kingdom of God. Such organizations have no authority over one another or over the churches. They are voluntary and advisory bodies designed to elicit, combine, and direct the energies of our people in the most effective manner. Members of New Testament churches should cooperate with one another in carrying forward the missionary, educational, and benevolent ministries for the extension of Christ's Kingdom. Christian unity in the New Testament sense is spiritual harmony and voluntary cooperation for common ends by various

groups of Christ's people. Cooperation is desirable between the various Christian denominations, when the end to be attained is itself justified, and when such cooperation involves no violation of conscience or compromise of loyalty to Christ and His Word as revealed in the New Testament.

XV. The Christian and the Social Order

All Christians are under obligation to seek to make the will of Christ supreme in our own lives and in human society. Means and methods used for the improvement of society and the establishment of righteousness among men can be truly and permanently helpful only when they are rooted in the regeneration of the individual by the saving grace of God in Jesus Christ. In the spirit of Christ, Christians should oppose racism, every form of greed, selfishness, and vice, and all forms of sexual immorality, including adultery, homosexuality, and pornography. We should work to provide for the orphaned, the needy, the abused, the aged, the helpless, and the sick. We should speak on behalf of the unborn and contend for the sanctity of all human life from conception to natural death. Every Christian should seek to bring industry, government, and society as a whole under the sway of the principles of righteousness, truth, and brotherly love. In order to promote these ends Christians should be ready to work with all men of good will in any good cause, always being careful to act in the spirit of love without compromising their loyalty to Christ and His truth.

XVI. Peace and War

It is the duty of Christians to seek peace with all men on principles of righteousness. In accordance with the spirit and teachings of Christ they should do all in their power to put an end to war. The true remedy for the war spirit is the gospel of our Lord. The supreme need of the world is the acceptance of His teachings in all the affairs of men and nations and the practical application of His law of love. Christian people throughout the world should pray for the reign of the Prince of Peace.

XVII. Religious Liberty

God alone is Lord of the conscience, and He has left it free from the doctrines and commandments of men which are contrary to His Word or not contained in it. Church and state should be separate. The state owes to every church protection and full freedom in the pursuit of its spiritual ends. In providing for such freedom no ecclesiastical group or denomination should be favored by the state more than others. Civil government being ordained of God, it is the duty of Christians to render loyal obedience thereto in all things not contrary to the revealed will of God. The church should not resort to the civil power to carry on its work. The gospel of Christ contemplates spiritual means alone for the pursuit of its ends. The state has no right to impose penalties for religious opinions of any kind. The state has no right to impose taxes for the support of any form of religion. A free church in a free state is the Christian ideal, and this implies the right of free and unhindered access to God on the part of all men and the right to form and propagate opinions in the sphere of religion without interference by the civil power.

XVIII. The Family

God has ordained the family as the foundational institution of human society. It is composed of persons related to one another by marriage, blood, or adoption.

Marriage is the uniting of one man and one woman in covenant commitment for a lifetime. It is God's unique gift to reveal the union between Christ and His church and to provide for the man and the woman in marriage the framework for intimate companionship, the channel of sexual expression according to biblical standards, and the means for procreation of the human race.

The husband and wife are of equal worth before God, since both are created in God's image. The marriage relationship models the way God relates to His people. A husband is to love his wife as Christ loved the church. He has the God-given responsibility to provide for, to protect, and to lead his family. A wife is to submit herself graciously to the servant leadership of her husband even as the church willingly submits to the headship of Christ. She, being in the image of God as is her husband and thus equal to him, has the God-given responsibility to respect her husband and to serve as his helper in managing the household and nurturing the next generation.

Children, from the moment of conception, are a blessing and heritage from the Lord. Parents are to demonstrate to their children God's pattern for marriage. Parents are to teach their children spiritual and moral values and to lead them, through consistent lifestyle example and loving discipline, to make choices based on biblical truth. Children are to honor and obey their parents.

Article III - Membership

Section 1. Definition of Membership:

The membership of this Church shall consist of persons who confess faith in the Lord Jesus Christ as personal Savior, who give evidence of regeneration by striving to live a life consistent with their profession and with the views of faith, doctrine, practice, and the church covenant of this Church, who have been baptized by immersion, and who have been received into its membership according to the By-Laws of this Church. This church will not accept into membership any who do not believe in the virgin birth of Christ, His atoning death and resurrection, or in the whole Bible as being the Word of God.

Section 2. Admission by Letter:

Members from Baptist churches or other churches holding like faith may become a candidate for membership with us requesting a letter of transfer from such churches and accepting the aims and ideals of the church as expressed in the church covenant, and also upon making a suitable enlistment for worship, service, and giving. If such credentials should be of older date than one (1) year prior to their presentation, the applicant may be required to furnish additional information.

Section 3. Admission by Experience or Restoration:

All applicants for membership other than by baptism by immersion or by letter - that is by a Christian experience or statement if previously baptized, or by restoration - shall be received into the church if they have been properly baptized.

Section 4. Candidacy:

A person who comes forward for church membership candidacy shall converse with the Pastor(s) and/or Elder(s) about their desire to join as a member of the church. The process in which one is brought into membership of this local body shall be performed per the By-Laws of this church.

Section 5. Transfer of Members:

Any member in good standing who has fulfilled their obligations to the church, upon their request shall be granted a letter of transfer to unite with another Christ-centered, Bible-believing church as may be designated. A letter of transfer shall be sent to the church which the member intends to join.

Section 6. Removals:

When any member moves to a distance inaccessible to their present church, they shall supply the clerk with their new address, and apply for a letter of transfer within one (1) year, provided there be a church of the same faith in the place to which they move. In case there is no such church, or there are circumstances which render it inadvisable to change, it shall be their duty to report to this church as often as once a year in person or by letter and contributions. All absent members who do not so report shall be liable to discipline by this church as provided by Article VIII, Section 1 of the By-Laws.

Section 7. Voting Membership:

All eligible members age (12) years and older have a vote in all Church Family Meetings of this church.

Article IV - Organization

Section 1. Congregational Authority:

The final authority and will of this church is placed in the membership of the church. Because of the "priesthood of all believers" (1 Peter 2:5), all Christians have the gift and discernment of the Holy Spirit and together form the body of Christ.

The vote or consensus of the membership of this Church at a properly called meeting, as provided in the By-Laws, shall be required to effect the following actions:

- a. Elect officers of the Church
- b. Discipline members by dismissing them and discipline officers by removing them from office.

- c. Approve annual budgets of the Church, authorize any expenditure of the funds of the Church when such expenditure is not covered by an approved budget, and approve any transactions regarding real property.
- d. Accept, reject, or otherwise dispose of any matter submitted to the membership of the Church by the Council of Elders, or raised by motion under Old Family Matters or under New Family Matters at a Church Family Meeting.
- e. Adopt, amend, or repeal the Constitution or By-Laws of this church.
- f. Approve the call, job description, and compensation of ministerial and non-ministerial staff.

Section 2. Elders:

The Elders are congregationally affirmed into their position by the church body. Subject to the will of the congregation, the elders shall oversee the ministry and resources of the church. IN keeping with the principles set forth in Acts 6:1-6 and 1 Peter 5:1-4, the elders shall devote their time to prayer, the ministry of the Word (by teaching and encouraging sound doctrine), and shepherding God's flock. The elders shall have primary responsibility for the employment, supervision, and evaluation of staff members.

Section 3. Deacons:

The Deacons are congregationally affirmed members of the body who are responsible for the execution and oversight of various "spheres of ministry" in the church. In principle, the role of Deacons is drawn from the division of labor seen in Acts 6:2-4 where some in the church gave themselves to the ministry of the Word and prayer (Elders) and others gave themselves to other necessary ministries (Deacons). Deacons shall care for the temporal needs of the church.

Section 4. Committees:

Committees will be made up of affirmed members of the church body. Committees will be assigned certain areas of church ministry and responsibility to oversee. The chairperson of each committee will be a Deacon of the church (the Council of Elders is exempt from this requirement).

Article V - Meetings

Section 1. Worship Meetings:

Worship services shall be held each Lord's Day, and may be held throughout the week for the edification of the body as the church determines.

Section 2. Church Family Meetings:

The church will hold a minimum of quarterly meetings to discuss church family matters. At the annual meeting the church will be presented annual reports from all officers, committees, and

departments of the church. Election of officers and standing committees of the church will be conducted at the annual meeting. Special meetings may be called as needed.

Article VI - Property

Section 1. Property Rights:

- a. This church shall have the power to buy, own, lease and sell property in its corporate name.
- b. This church shall not seek or knowingly accept any public monies or property as donations or compensation for ministerial services.
- c. The church corporation shall be sole owner of all property, personal or real, donated to or purchased by this church. No person shall retain any right, title, or interest in any such property.
- d. Conveyance or encumbrance of all or any church property may be made, provided, however, that any such action must receive at least a two-thirds majority vote of the membership of the church present at a meeting duly called pursuant to the By-Laws of this church. Instruments of conveyance or encumbrance so authorized at any such meeting shall be executed in the name of the church by the Trustees at large.
- e. No part of the income or assets of this church shall inure to the benefit of, or be distributable to, its members, trustees, officers, or other private persons, except that this church shall be authorized and empowered to pay reasonable compensation for services rendered and to make payments and distributions in furtherance of the purposes set forth in Article I hereof. No substantial part of the activities of this church shall be the carrying on of political propaganda, or otherwise attempting to influence legislation, and this church shall not participate in, or intervene in (including the publishing or distribution of statements) any political campaign on behalf of any candidate for public office. Notwithstanding any other provision of this constitution, this church will not carry on any activities not permitted to be carried on (a) by a corporation exempt from federal income tax under section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code, or corresponding section of any future tax code, or (b) by a corporation, contributions to which are deductible under section 170(c)(2) of the Internal Revenue Code, or corresponding section of any future tax code.
- f. Division: In the event of a division of the church membership, the church name and the real and personal property of the church shall belong to the body of members who adhere to the Constitution and By-Laws. Judgment of (a) the applicability of the Constitution and By-Laws to the issues causing the division, and (b) which faction adheres to the Constitution and By-Laws, shall be made by the officers of the Central Valley Baptist Association of the Southern Baptist Convention. In the event said officers conclude that (a) each or none of the factions adheres to the Constitution and By-Laws, or (b) the issues dividing the church are not governed by the Constitution and By-Laws, they shall award the church name and disburse the real and personal property of the church according to their sole discretion and judgment,

provided such distribution shall be for exempt purposes within the meaning of section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code, or corresponding section of any future federal tax code.

- g. Dissolution: In the event that the church dissolves as a Southern Baptist Church, all personal and real properties at the time of dissolution shall revert to the Central Valley Baptist Association (CVBA) for the specific purpose of replanting a Southern Baptist Church in Newman. In the event the CVBA is no longer in existence, then such assets shall revert to the California Southern Baptist Convention (CSBC) for the express purpose of such replanting.

Article VII - Marriage and Sexuality Policy

Section 1. Marriage Defined:

Marriage is ordained by God, and is an exclusive covenantal, physical, and spiritual union of one man and one woman in which such union is a lifetime commitment. Jesus explained the original intention and core elements of marriage, and several New Testament Epistles give explicit instructions on this union. As such, the Church views marriage as a profound spiritual institution established by God and as addressed in our statement of faith, the Baptist Faith and Message (2000).

Section 2. Clergy:

- a. Only church-approved clergy shall officiate at marriage ceremonies conducted on church property. Clergy employed by the church shall be subject to disciplinary action up to and including dismissal for knowingly officiating at a marriage ceremony other than as defined in Section 1 of this Article and our statement of faith, the Baptist Faith and Message (2000).
- b. The clergy assigned by the church to implement the procedures contained in this Marriage and Sexuality Policy may, in his sole discretion, decline to make church facilities available for, and/or decline to officiate at, a ceremony, when, in his judgment, there are significant concerns that one or both of the applicants may not be qualified to enter into the sacred bond of marriage for theological, doctrinal, moral, or legal reasons.

Section 3. Applicant for Marriage:

- a. Applicants wishing to have a ceremony performed by a member of the clergy employed by the church, or to use the church facilities, shall affirm that they agree to conduct themselves in a manner that is consistent with the Constitution and By-Laws.
- b. Applicants shall receive necessary premarital counseling by clergy or counselors employed by the church or other persons who, in the sole opinion of the pastoral staff of the church, have appropriate training, experience, and spiritual understanding to provide such counseling.

Section 4. Church Premises:

- a. Any marriage or funeral service performed on church premises shall be officiated by a member of the clergy.
- b. Clergy officiating marriage ceremonies or funeral service on church premises, whether or not employed by the church, shall affirm their agreement with the Constitution and By-Laws and shall conduct themselves in a manner that is consistent therewith.

Section 5. Sexuality:

Legitimate sexual relations are exercised solely within marriage. Hence, sexual activities outside of marriage including but not limited to: adultery, premarital sex, homosexuality, and pedophilia are inconsistent with the teachings of the Bible and the Church as are lascivious conduct, transgender behavior, and the creation, distribution, and/or viewing of pornography.

Article VIII - By-Laws

Section 1. Supplement to Constitution:

A supplement to this Constitution known as the By-Laws shall include, but not necessarily be limited to:

- a. Procedures for admittance to membership;
- b. The definitions, qualifications, duties, and procedures for the calling and termination of pastoral staff, elders, deacons, officers, and committees;
- c. Procedures for establishing the definitions of the working relationship between the church and any of its ministries;
- d. Provision and procedures for meetings other than those mandated by the Constitution.

Section 2. By-Law Amendments and Changes:

Proposed changes to the By-Laws shall be presented in writing to the Council of Elders for presentation at any Church Family Meeting. The addition, alteration, or amendment must be drawn up in writing and handed out to the membership for the purpose of reading and considering two (2) weeks prior to the Church Family Meeting at which it is read and voted upon. When approved at the Church Family Meeting with two-thirds approval of the votes cast it will be made part of the By-Laws.

Article IX - Constitutional Changes

Amendments to this constitution may be made at Church Family Meetings or specially called meetings of the church when approved by three-quarters of the votes cast. The proposed amendment must be presented to the congregation in writing at least two (2) months prior to its adoption to ensure adequate time for its scrutiny and discussion.

THE FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH of NEWMAN'S BY-LAWS

Article I - Membership

Section 1. Admission, Transfer, and Dismissal:

A person is admitted, transferred, resigned, or dismissed according to the definition of a member found in the Constitution Article III.

Section 2. General Procedure:

- a. Persons desiring church membership should make their request known to a member of the Council of Elders or a pastor. Such persons will be given a copy of the Constitution and By-Laws, Statement of Faith, and the Church Covenant. Upon reading over these documents, they will contact an Elder or the church office to schedule a meeting for discussion.
- b. Two or more Elders will speak with the membership candidate. During this conversation the candidate will share their testimony and their desires for membership.
- c. When the Council of Elders is confident of the applicant's faith in Christ, assurance of salvation, desire to live the Christian life, and willingness to participate in the fellowship and discipline of the local church, then for three consecutive weeks the Council of Elders shall announce (placed in bulletins) that such persons have requested membership.
- d. Any objections to an applicant's membership must be submitted in writing to the Council of Elders within the three-week announcement period. Objections are not to be discussed with anyone except the Council of Elders and must include:
 - i. The reason for the objection;
 - ii. Scriptural basis for the objection; and
 - iii. Evidence that indicates the applicant participates in activities or holds to ideas that are objectionable.
- e. If investigation by the Council of Elders substantiates any objection submitted according to the above and the applicant will not repent of the wrong, they shall be denied membership.
- f. Announcement of new members will be made to the congregation after the close of the three-week announcement period. Those who are admitted as members in the local church will be formally presented to the congregation and given the right hand of fellowship.
- g. Pastors and their wives automatically become members with full voting privileges on receipt and acceptance of a call from the church. Staff members and their spouses, if the hiring process included comparable examination of both spouses, likewise become members at the point of hire.

Section 3. Termination of Membership:

The church shall recognize the termination of a person's membership following his or her death, and may do so after he or she has voluntarily resigned or joined with another church. Membership may also be terminated as an act of church discipline (ordinarily, but not necessarily, at the recommendation of the Council of Elders) upon the vote of at least two-thirds of the members present at any regular or special meeting of the members.

- a. The church shall have the authority to refuse a member's voluntary resignation or transfer of membership to another church for the purpose of proceeding with the process of church discipline.
- b. When a member has been inactive for a period of one year without manifesting interest in the church as an active participant, every effort will be made to enlist the cooperation of the member in question. If these efforts are unsuccessful, the person will be notified in writing at least 30 days prior to removal. The Council of Elders will inform the clerk to place the name of the member in question on the next Family Meeting agenda for the congregation to vote on the removal from membership.

Section 4. Membership Roll:

A current record will be maintained under the supervision of the church clerk. This will be done to define who has voting rights and to maintain communication with the congregation.

Article II - Elders

Section 1. Definition and Qualifications:

Subject to the will of the congregation, the elders shall oversee the ministry and resources of the church. In keeping with the principles set forth in Acts 6:1-6 and 1 Peter 5:1-4, the elders shall devote their time to prayer, the ministry of the Word (by teaching and encouraging sound doctrine), and shepherding God's flock.

Each year, the Elders will assist the Finance Committee to develop an itemized budget to be presented to the church.

Each year, the Elders will work with the Deacons to submit a list of candidates who are church members to fill committee vacancies, other church offices, and positions (See By-Law Articles V and VI for reference).

All elders will serve on a single Council of Elders. The Elders shall be equal in authority but may be specialized in function. A majority of the active eldership shall be composed of church members not in the regular pay of the church. The selection of officers and assignment of responsibilities within the Council of Elders will be determined by internal election. The Council may establish and shall oversee other church committees and task forces as necessary.

An Elder designated by the elders shall preside as moderator at Church Family Meetings.

The qualifications for the office of elder are set forth in 1 Timothy 3:1-7 and Titus 1:5-9.

“The saying is trustworthy: If anyone aspires to the office of overseer, he desires a noble task. Therefore an overseer must be above reproach, the husband of one wife, sober-minded, self-controlled, respectable, hospitable, able to teach, not a drunkard, not violent but gentle, not quarrelsome, not a lover of money. He must manage his own household well, with all dignity keeping his children submissive, for if someone does not know how to manage his own household, how will he care for God’s church? He must not be a recent convert, or he may become puffed up with conceit and fall into the condemnation of the devil. Moreover, he must be well thought of by outsiders, so that he may not fall into disgrace, into a snare of the devil.” (1 Timothy 3:1-7)

“This is why I left you in Crete, so that you might put what remained into order, and appoint elders in every town as I directed you - if anyone is above reproach, the husband of one wife, and his children are believers and not open to the charge of debauchery or insubordination. For an overseer, as God’s steward, must be above reproach. He must not be arrogant or quick-tempered or a drunkard or violent or greedy for gain, but hospitable, a lover of good, self-controlled, upright, holy, and disciplined. He must hold firm to the trustworthy word as taught, so that he may be able to give instruction in sound doctrine and also to rebuke those who contradict it.” (Titus 1:5-9)

In addition, he shall accept and live in accordance with the statement of faith, the church covenant, and the church’s Constitution and By-Laws.

Section 2. Selection of Elders:

- a. The Elder Council will issue a written invitation to the members of the congregation, asking them to submit the names of men whom they believe qualify to serve as Elders. This submission of potential candidates for Elder will be done in writing and the Council of Elders will evaluate all potential candidates.
- b. Those initially thought to be qualified to serve will be made available to the congregation for interview. A mechanism to express concerns in writing regarding any candidate, to the Council of Elders, will be provided.
- c. Upon the investigation and resolution of any submitted concerns, the Council of Elders will submit the names of all candidates for the Council of Elders to the congregation, in writing,, two weeks prior to the election. Affirmation of each Elder candidate will be held at the annual Church Family Meeting. The church will affirm each Elder candidate by secret ballot on the basis of a three-quarter majority of those present.
- d. Elders will be affirmed to a three-year term. A Council member may not serve in excess of two consecutive terms. Following two consecutive terms the Elder will not serve actively in office for a period of one year. Following this period they are again eligible for nomination as Elder.

- e. Departing members of the Elder Council will continue to serve as non-governing Elders of the church to the extent that they are willing and able to serve in that capacity.
- f. When the number of Council members becomes less than that considered to be essential, the Elder Council may appoint members from among the most recent congregational elder nomination list. Elder Council appointments must be confirmed by congregational vote at the next Family Meeting or specially called meeting.

Section 3. Meetings:

The Council of Elders shall meet for the consideration of church and ministry needs and for the prayer of the church body not less than once per month. The Elders may call additional meetings as needed. A quorum of a simple majority is necessary to conduct meetings. Meetings of the Elders may be held at any location and may be conducted by means of electronic communication through which the Elders may simultaneously hear each other.

Section 4. Accountability:

- a. All Elders will participate faithfully in mutual discipleship ministry with the Senior Pastor.
- b. The Council of Elders shall evaluate itself and its members to assure that it is fulfilling its responsibilities in accordance with the word of God, the church covenant, Constitution, and By-Laws.
- c. The Council of Elders shall be responsible for disciplining its members, if the occasion arises, in accordance with the principles established in Article II of these By-Laws.
- d. The Council of Elders shall be accountable to the congregation and ultimately to the Head of the Church, Jesus Christ, for all their actions and decisions (Ephesians 1:22-23, Hebrews 13:17, 1 Peter 5:1-4).

Section 5. Resignation:

Any Elder who ceases to fulfill the biblical qualifications for an Elder, is unable to fulfill the duties of his office, fails to attend three consecutive Council of Elder meetings without good reason, or does not regularly attend the announced services of the church, shall be asked to resign from the Council of Elders.

Article III - Pastoral Staff

Section 1. Qualifications:

Each member shall have been called by the will of God into the ministry of serving God, proclaiming the gospel of Jesus Christ, and edifying the people of God. Each shall be a mature, godly person of outstanding character whose reputation is beyond reproach. He must display the spiritual and personal qualities required of leaders by the Bible (1 Tim. 3:1-13; Tit. 1:5-9). The pastor shall be an ordained minister of the Southern Baptist Convention, or be willing to become one in a timely

manner upon appointment. In addition, he shall accept and live in accordance with the Statement of Faith, Church Covenant, Constitution and By-Laws of this church.

Section 2. Selection:

When the need for Pastoral Staff arises, the Elder Council shall evaluate the needs of the church and present a recommendation to the congregation, which identifies the nature of the staff position to be filled. Upon receiving congregational approval of this recommendation by secret ballot, the Elder Council will proceed to name a search committee.

- a. Search Committees
 - i. The Search Committee for Senior Pastor shall consist of regular members who are mature, discerning believers, representing as broad a spectrum as possible within the church body. At least one member of the Council of Elders will be part of this committee.
 - ii. The Search Committee for an Associate Pastor shall consist of mature, discerning believers, representing as broad a spectrum as possible within the church body. Some members of this committee will be closely connected to the Associate Pastor's sphere of ministry. At least one member of the Council of Elders will be part of this committee.
 - iii. The Senior Pastor will be a member of all Search Committees.
 - iv. An outgoing pastor may not be a member of the Search Committee seeking his replacement, but may be a consultant to it if requested to consult by the Search Committee.
- b. All Search Committees will consult with the Elder Council and solicit recommendations from other members of the congregation to establish a prioritized list of qualifications to seek in selecting a candidate to fill the specific position under consideration.
- c. The Search Committee shall solicit names of candidates from the Pastoral Staff, the SBC national, state, and association staff, the congregation, and other sources.
- d. The Search Committee shall be responsible for investigating the background and qualifications of those it is considering.
- e. Those candidates who meet the criteria established by these By-Laws and by the Search Committee shall be placed on a list from which one candidate will be selected by the Search Committee and invited for more thorough interviews and evaluation.
- f. After being selected by the Search Committee and approved by no less than a three-quarters majority vote, the candidate shall then be presented to the Elder Council for their approval. The Elder Council must approve the candidate before the person may be presented to the congregation for affirmation.
- g. The approved candidate must be presented to the congregation by means of written materials for no less than two weeks previous to a personal visit by the candidate and family.

Congregational evaluation shall include opportunities for personal contact, preaching, or other activities, as appropriate for the position being filled.

- h. Congregational approval shall be demonstrated by an 85% approval vote of qualified voting members present. The votes shall be cast by secret ballot.
- i. All Pastoral Staff members shall be called for an indefinite term of service and shall, together with their spouses, automatically become regular members of the church, upon acceptance of a Pastoral Staff position.

Section 3. Resignation:

Pastoral staff members shall be allowed to resign any time they feel the Holy Spirit is leading them to do so. Resignation should be given in writing to the Council of Elders. Resignation normally becomes effective thirty (30) days after the Elders accept it.

Section 4. Dismissal:

- a. Accusations against pastoral staff that could be grounds for dismissal should be affirmed by two or three witnesses and brought to the attention of the Elder Council. This is in accordance with 1 Timothy 5:19-20: "Do not admit a charge against an elder except on the evidence of two or three witnesses. As for those who persist in sin, rebuke them in the presence of all, so that the rest may stand in fear."
- b. A recommendation for dismissal can be made by the Elder Council only when the requirements established under Article III, Section 1 of the By-Laws and the job description are unfulfilled or when protracted efforts at resolving a policy dispute between the Council of Elders and a member of the pastoral staff has demonstrated an irreconcilable dispute between them as to church policy.
- c. The recommendation for dismissal from the Elder Council shall be presented to congregation for its consideration. This recommendation for dismissal must be announced two weeks prior to a Church Family Meeting or a Specially called meeting and be confirmed by three-quarters majority vote of the qualified members of the congregation present, cast by secret ballot, when the Pastoral Staff member is not present. The dismissal of Pastoral staff requires a quorum of 40 to be present at the meeting.
- d. At any time during the proceedings, the member of the Pastoral Staff may submit his resignation to the Council of Elders, which would eliminate the need for additional public discussion or congregational vote.
- e. In the case of serious disciplinary problems, the Council of Elders shall be empowered to relieve the staff member of his duties until the dismissal process is completed.

Section 5. Senior Pastor:

- a. He shall be responsible for his area of ministry as defined by the Council of Elders and approved by the congregation. These duties will include: conduct the public services of

worship, administer the ordinances of the church, and care for the spiritual need of the church body.

- b. He shall be responsible for coordinating the ministries of the pastoral staff.
- c. He shall be a member of the Council of Elders and an ex-officio member of all other Councils, committees, taskforces, and organizations. He may delegate his ex-officio status to another member of the pastoral staff or Council of Elders for participation in any meeting.

Section 6. Associate Pastor(s):

- a. An Associate Pastor shall be responsible for his area of ministry as defined by the Elder Council and approved by the congregation. Associate Pastors may be responsible for specialized areas such as: ministries in teaching, education, music and worship, church administration, or other needed areas.
- b. An Associate Pastor shall perform such other duties in connection with the work of the church as requested by the Senior Pastor and approved by the Council of Elders.
- c. An Associate Pastor shall be an ex-officio member of all Councils and committees related to his assigned areas of ministry as determined by the Elder Council.
- d. An Associate Pastor shall perform the Senior Pastor's duties when he is unable, is absent, or as requested by the Council of Elders or Senior Pastor.
- e. Associate Pastors shall be Elders of the church. However, the number of pastoral staff on the Council must comply with the Church By-Laws Article II, Section 1.

Article IV - Deacons

Section 1. Qualifications:

A Deacon shall be a regular member of the church, who accepts and lives in accordance with biblical principles (1 Timothy 3:8-13), the Statement of Faith, Constitution, By-Laws of this church and its covenant. It is our understanding of this passage that qualified women may serve as Deacons.

“Deacons likewise must be dignified, not double-tongued, not addicted to much wine, not greedy for dishonest gain. They must hold the mystery of the faith with a clear conscience. And let them also be tested first; then let them serve as deacons if they prove themselves blameless. Their wives likewise must be dignified, not slanderers, but sober-minded, faithful in all things. Let deacons each be the husband of one wife, managing their children and their own households well. For those who serve well as deacons gain a good standing for themselves and also great confidence in the faith that is in Christ Jesus.” (1 Timothy 3:8-13)

Section 2. Selection:

- a. When the need arises, the Council of Elders will invite the congregation to submit the names of those whom they believe would meet the qualifications for Deacon and would be capable of

serving. The Council of Elders will review all candidates and submit the names of those qualified to the congregation for approval.

- b. Deacons shall be elected to three-year term. They may only be elected to another term after a one-year absence.
- c. Regular election of Deacons will be held at the Annual Church Family Meeting. Affirmation will be by secret ballot on the basis of simple majority of those present.
- d. If an urgent need for a Deacon arises, the Elder Council may appoint a qualified individual as an “Acting Deacon” pending congregational approval at the next Church Family meeting or specially called meeting.

Section 3. Responsibilities:

The Deacons shall advise and be ready to assist the Elders in any service that shall support and promote the ministry of the Word, new and existing ministries of the Church, and the care for the members of the congregation.

Section 3.1 Spheres of Ministry:

There are times when certain areas of ministry or responsibility require oversight, but not a full elected committee. In these cases the Council of Elders with the approval of the church membership may establish a position, to be filled by a deacon. These positions may require others to assist or aid in their performance, but do not require one to be elected into a position (i.e. Greeters, A.V. Booth, Worship Team). If need be, the deacon would use their discretion in enlisting volunteers. The process of filling the deacon position will follow Article IV, Section 2 of the By-Laws.

Section 4. Accountability:

Each Deacon shall be accountable to the Elder Council and ultimately to the congregation. Every effort should be made between Deacons and their respective area of oversight to cooperate in the mission of the church. But in the event of disagreement, the Elder Council shall be consulted for assistance in resolution.

Article V - Other Church Offices and Positions

Section 1. Clerk:

The Clerk shall keep accurately the record of all Church Family Meetings, which shall be approved at each regular meeting. The Clerk shall create in conjunction with the Senior Pastor and the Elder Moderator the agenda for all Family Meetings, and both post and distribute by email to church members the final agenda a minimum of 72 hours prior to each Family Meeting. The Clerk shall preserve in a safe place, all church documents and shall keep a correct register of the membership, with date and manner of admission, transfer, and dismissal. He/she shall inform all members of their election or appointment to an office or committee. At the annual meeting of the church, he/she shall

submit an annual statistical report of the work of the church. The Clerk shall serve a three-year term. The Clerk may serve consecutive terms.

Section 2. Treasurer:

- a. The Treasurer, who shall not be an active elder or paid church staff member, shall ensure that all funds and securities of the church are properly secured in such banks, financial institutions, or depositories as appropriate.
- b. The church shall use a budget, and the treasurer shall disburse all funds for local expenses. The Treasurer shall be entrusted with all monies belonging to this church, and shall without special vote or authority pay out of the church funds for all budgeted items. He/she shall pay all non-budgeted items only after they have been approved by the church. He/she may pay emergency expenses belonging to the church upon authorization by the finance committee.
- c. He/she shall keep records of all receipts and disbursements, with proper vouchers.
- d. He/she shall present a summary of the financial condition of the church at each Church Family Meeting and present a financial report, which shall be approved by the church. Also, there shall be a complete report submitted at the annual meeting. He/she shall be elected to a three-year term. The Treasurer may serve consecutive terms.

Section 2.1 Assistant Treasurer:

In cases of emergencies, illness, or absences, the Assistant Treasurer shall assume all of the duties described in Section 2. The Assistant Treasurer shall serve a three-year term. The Assistant Treasurer may not serve consecutive terms.

Section 3. Financial Secretary:

He/she is accountable to the congregation and the Finance Committee to record funds that come into the church treasury. He/she will maintain confidentiality concerning all church giving records. At year-end he/she will provide annual giving reports to each giver for their records and tax purposes. The Financial Secretary shall serve a three-year term and may not serve consecutive terms.

Section 4. Trustees:

The trustees shall be composed of at least three members, elected under the rotating system. Each new trustee shall be elected for a term of three years. All actions of the trustees shall be subject to the approval of the church. Their authority and methods of conducting business shall be in accord with the provisions of statutes of the State of California. This Board of Trustees shall be custodian of all properties whether real or personal, shall transact all business of the church under the direction of the membership of the church, and shall perform all other duties imposed upon them by the laws of the State of California. In no case shall the Board be authorized to make expenditures or create indebtedness without the authorization of the church in a Family Meeting. The trustees of this church shall attest all contracts, obligations, mortgages, deeds of trust, notes, deeds, indentures, and all legal documents of this church organization.

Section 5. Church Messengers:

Once (1) a year, messengers shall be elected to represent this church in the Central Valley Baptist Association, the California Southern Baptist Convention, and the Southern Baptist Convention. It shall be their duty, as we cooperate with other churches in advancing the Kingdom of Christ, to furnish the association and conventions a statement of the condition of the church, if challenged.

Section 6. Non-Pastoral Staff:

Any paid non-pastoral staff position and job description must be confirmed by congregational vote. The congregation will also affirm the salary/hourly wage for the position. The Council of Elders (or an appointee(s) of the Elder Council) will then seek to fill the position. Non-pastoral staff will be or become church members.

Article VI - Church Committees

Section 1. Definition:

A standing committee is a committee that has been approved by the church and is listed as a committee in By-Law Article VI.

Section 2. Finance Committee:

The Finance Committee shall be comprised of six members. The first three members will be the Treasurer, Assistant Treasurer, and the Financial Secretary. The remaining members will be nominated by the Elder Council and affirmed by congregational vote. This committee will formulate an annual budget to be presented to the church, to be voted on at the Annual Church Family Meeting. They will work to oversee the budget and aid the church in understanding its responsibilities as the Lord's stewards.

Section 3. Counting Committee:

This committee shall consist of at least three members. Any alternates to fill in absences must be affirmed by the church. They will count weekly the collected tithes and offerings and deposit the amount into the church's bank account weekly.

Section 3.1 Conflict of Interest:

Neither the Treasurer, Assistant Treasurer, nor Financial Secretary shall participate in the counting of tithes and offerings, nor shall any member of their immediate family.

Section 4. Building & Grounds Committee:

This committee will oversee and care for the facilities, properties, and grounds of the church.

Section 5. Mission Committee:

This committee will aid the church in fulfilling the Great Commission locally, nationally and internationally.

Section 6. Establishing Committees:

Other committees may be established, as they are deemed necessary at a regular church family meeting or presented to the congregation by the Council of Elders for approval. Responsibilities of committees will be outlined in writing and revised as needed. Committees may also be dissolved when their task is accomplished or they become no longer relevant to the mission and ministry of the church. At any regular Church Family Meeting the church may select, or elect the Pastor to select, special committees to investigate or carry out the wishes of the church. If the church membership should see the need for a new standing committee, said committee will be added to the church By-Laws Article VI.

Section 7. Responsibilities:

- a. Each committee shall seek the Lord's leading in carrying out its duties in its area of oversight for the edification of the church and the glory of God.
- b. Each committee may establish its own guidelines, which shall be subject to the approval of the Council of Elders.

Section 8. Vacancy of Office:

When any officer of this church or member of a committee on moving his/her place of residence from this vicinity, being absent for three successive months without a reason satisfactory to the officers or committee, or resigning their post, then their position shall thereby be automatically vacated. In any such case, a successor may be elected at any Church Family Meeting to serve out this unexpired term of office. If a vacancy arises which hinders the committee's responsibility to fulfill their obligation, the Elder Council may appoint a member from among the most recent congregational nomination list. The Elder Council appointment must be confirmed by congregational vote at the next Church Family Meeting.

Section 9. Rotation in Office-holding:

Standing committee members shall be elected on a three-year basis. The first one elected shall be the first one to rotate off, and so on.

Section 10. Pastor & Elders as Ex-Officio:

The Pastor shall be ex-officio member of the committees. He may delegate his ex-officio status to another member of the pastoral staff or Council of Elders for participation in any meeting.

Section 11. Consensus:

Consensus aims for complete agreement and support among those who are part of a committee. This is complete consensus. However, committees should be willing to move ahead with a decision where there is clear support among the majority of members, when not more than two members oppose the decision, and the dissenters do not feel it is a critical issue where they are totally and absolutely opposed (i.e. where they are willing, despite their dissent, to “stand aside”). This latter is “sufficient consensus” or “qualified consensus”. Giving consent does not necessarily mean that the proposal being considered is one’s first choice. Group members can vote their consent to a proposal because they choose to cooperate with the direction of the group, rather than insist on their personal preference. If a consensus cannot be reached and the committee wishes to continue forward a supermajority of 75% must be reached.

Article VII - Meetings

Section 1. The Lord’s Day:

The Church shall meet regularly on each Lord’s Day for public worship. Under normal conditions the Lord’s Supper shall be observed at least once (1) a quarter. The Pastor shall direct the church in this meaningful ordinance more often if he sees the spiritual wisdom to do so.

Section 2. Mid-Week Gatherings:

It is the desire of this church to meet at least once (1) a week for prayer and Bible study.

Section 3. Church Family Meetings:

At the Annual Church Family Meeting written reports from all the officers, departments, and committees will be presented. The election of the officers and members to standing committees will also occur at the Annual Meeting of the church. The transaction of other agenda pertaining to the church and its mission will take place at Church Family Meetings. These meetings shall include reports from such committees and individuals as deemed necessary and desirable by the Council of Elders. The Annual Meeting shall occur during the month of October. Quarterly meetings shall occur in the months of January, April, and July.

Section 4. Special Called Church Family Meetings:

Special called meetings shall be called by the Council of Elders or any ten members in good standing. Notice of the meeting shall be given from the pulpit at two successive Sunday mornings prior to the meeting. The particular object(s) of such meeting will be clearly stated in the notice. Special called meetings are any meetings that do not occur on the dates of regularly scheduled Church Family Meetings.

Section 5. Quorum:

In all regular Church Family Meetings 2/5 (40%) of membership, verified by the administrative assistant, church clerk, or chair, shall constitute a quorum. In any Family Meeting addressing the calling of a Pastor, sale of property, assumption of major financial responsibilities, and amending the Constitution or church By-Laws, 4/5 (80%) of church membership, verified by the administrative assistant, church clerk, or chair, shall be required for a quorum.

Section 6. Manner of Conducting Church Family Meetings:

The Word of God, the Bible, will be the supreme rule of order within the church. Members shall act in the spirit of mutual trust, openness, and loving consideration as is appropriate for those who are members of the body of Christ Jesus. The church shall use Roberts' Rules of Order as the suggested guide in governing the procedures of the affairs of this church during any Church Family Meeting.

Section 7. Regarding the Will of the Church:

The Will of the Church, on any given matter and duly expressed by its vote, shall be carried out by all committees, officers, and organizations of the church.

Article VIII - Discipline

Section 1. Causes for Discipline:

1. The primary biblical cause for disciplinary action is a member being in persistent, unrepentant sin. God's people are to be characterized by holiness, as that standard is defined in His Word. Refusal to conform to God's standard is a serious offense against God and must be dealt with by His people (1 Cor. 5:2; 2 Thess. 3:6; 1 Tim. 5:20-21; 2 Tim. 3:1-5).
2. Any activity which is harmful to the church is also a biblical reason for discipline. The following causes are specifically defined:
 - a. Teaching doctrine which contradict biblical truth (1 Tim. 1:3, 20; 2 Tim. 2:17-18).
 - b. Provoking divisions and quarrels within the church (Rom. 16:17; Titus 3:10-11).
3. When a member of the church needs discipline for one of the causes mentioned above, it is the responsibility of the other members of the body to seek his/her restoration. Disciplinary action is not meant as a means to accuse or condemn another, but rather to bring about mutual restoration according to the process defined in Matthew 18:15-20.
4. No call for disciplinary action shall be considered against an elder or pastor of the church unless supported by at least two witnesses (1 Tim. 5:19).

Section 2. Procedure for Restoration:

1. Go to the offender in private and talk to him/her about the offense. If he/she listens and corrects the offense, it is to be carried no further (Matt. 18:15).
2. If the offender refuses to correct the offense, take one or two mature believers along to talk with the person. They are witnesses to the process and may recommend corrective action to either the accused or the accuser. If the offender listens and corrects the offense, no further action should be taken (Matt. 18:16).
3. If the offender still refuses to correct the offense, go to the church leadership (Matt. 18:17), which is the Council of Elders. The Council of Elders shall constitute a committee for discipline. They shall seek to interview the offender with the purpose of leading the offender to Scriptural truth so that the offender will correct his/her offense and to restore him/her to fellowship with the Lord and with his/her brothers and sisters in Christ. If the offender is an Elder or Pastor, the rest of the Elder Council shall constitute a committee for discipline.
4. If the offender still refuses to correct the offense, the Elders shall
 - a. Take appropriate action to restore the offender.
 - b. As a final recourse, upon the recommendation of the Council of Elders, and by vote of the church, a member guilty of conduct unbecoming to his/her profession of faith and who makes no evidence of confession may be excluded from participation in the activities of the church (Matt. 18:17-20). This offender will be removed from membership and will not have voting rights and may not hold any ministry position, elected or appointed.
 - i. Apart from continued efforts to bring about restoration, church members are to avoid fellowship with the offender after such action is taken (Matt. 18:17; 2 Thess. 3:6; Heb. 12:14-16; 1 Cor. 5:11-13). Whenever such action is deemed necessary, it is understood that the offender has been removed from membership because of failure to submit to the standards of God's word and to the authority of church leadership as defined in the church Constitution and By-Laws.
5. Since disciplinary action is for the correction and reconciliation of the offender, restoration is to be granted as quickly as possible. Upon evidence of the repentance of the offender, the Elder Council will seek to interview the offender. As soon as the Elders are convinced that repentance has occurred, they will restore the person to full membership and announce the decision to the congregation. Forgiveness and restoration to fellowship with the church body is to be granted with appropriate rejoicing (Matt. 18:21-22; Luke 15:21-32; 2 Cor. 2:5-11).

Article IX - General Information

Section 1. Church Financial Review:

This church will have a review of our financials once every three years by an outside reviewer.

Section 2. Dispute Resolution:

We believe that the Scriptures call Christians to put forth every effort to live at peace with each other and the world. The Bible calls us to resolve disputes and conflict with each other in private or within the church (Matt. 18:15-20, 1 Cor. 6:7-8). We desire all our members to resolve conflict among our brothers and sisters according to biblical principles without the reliance on secular courts. The church has a responsibility to be a peacemaker and shall encourage the use of biblical based principles to resolve disputes between itself and those outside of the church (whether Christian or worldly and whether individuals or corporate entities).