

# *Constitution and By-laws*

CONSTITUTION and BY-LAWS for PROVIDENCE BAPTIST CHURCH

Huntsville, AL

Updated on December 4<sup>th</sup>, 2024

## PREAMBLE

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We, as an assembly of believers who affirm that our salvation is by grace alone, through faith alone, because of Christ alone, to the glory of God alone, on the authority of Scripture alone, and who desire to join together to glorify God through worship, prayer, preaching, teaching, discipling and obedience to Him, do hereby ordain, establish and voluntarily submit to this constitution in order that we might individually and collectively develop and maintain a passionate pursuit of the Triune God.

### *ARTICLE I. Name*

The name of this church shall be: Providence Baptist Church.

### *ARTICLE II. The Faith of the Church*

#### *Section 1. Purpose*

To declare the Sovereign Majesty of God through proclamation, exaltation and education, according to the revealed Word of God, to the ends of the earth, by His grace and for His glory.

#### *Section 2. Church Covenant*

Having been led, as we believe, by the Spirit of God, to receive the Lord Jesus Christ as our Savior, and, on the profession of our faith, having been baptized in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, we do now, in the presence of God, angels and this assembly, most solemnly and joyfully enter into covenant with one another as one body in Christ. We engage, therefore, by the aid of the Holy Spirit, to walk together in Christian love, to strive for the advancement of this Church in knowledge, holiness and comfort; to promote its prosperity and spirituality; to sustain its worship, ordinances, discipline and doctrines; to contribute cheerfully and regularly to the support of the ministry, the expenses of the Church, the relief of the poor, and the spread of the gospel through all nations. We also engage to

maintain family and personal devotions; to educate our children in the Christian faith; to seek the salvation of our kindred and acquaintances; to walk circumspectly in the world; to be just in our dealings, faithful in our engagements, and exemplary in our deportment, to avoid all tattling, backbiting and excessive anger; to seek God's help in abstaining from all practices which produce unwarranted harm to the body or jeopardize our own or another's faith.

We further engage to watch over one another in brotherly love; to remember one another in prayer; to aid one another in sickness and distress; to cultivate Christian sympathy in feeling and courtesy in speech; to be slow to take offense, but always ready for reconciliation and mindful of the rules of our Savior to secure it without delay. We moreover engage that when we remove from this place, we will, if possible unite with a church where we can carry out the articles of this confession and the spirit of this covenant.

### *Section 3. Articles of Faith*

#### *1. The Word of God*

We believe the Scripture is self-authenticating. Its authority does not depend upon the testimony of any man or church, but entirely upon God, its author, who is truth itself. It is to be received because it is the Word of God. The heavenliness of its content, the efficacy of its doctrine, the majesty of its style, the agreement between all of its parts from first to last, the fact that throughout it gives glory to God, the full revelation it gives of the only way of salvation declare emphatically that it is the Word of God. However, we recognize that apart from the Holy Spirit's inward work of bearing witness by and with the Word in our hearts, we would not be persuaded of its infallible truth and divine authority.

We believe that the Scripture of the Old and New Testaments was written by men moved by the Holy Spirit and is a perfect treasure of divine instruction; that it has God for its author, salvation for its end, and truth, without any mixture of error for its matter; that it reveals the principles by which God will judge 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 testimony to Christ, who is himself the focus of divine revelation.

(Psalm 19:7-10, 119:1-9; John 1:1-5, 14:6, 16:13-15; II Timothy 3:15-17; Hebrews 12:1-2; II Peter 1:19-21)

#### *2. The Triune God*

We believe that there is one living and true God, eternally existing in three persons; that these are equal in every divine perfection and execute distinct and harmonious offices in the work of creation, providence and redemption.

(Genesis 1:1, 26-27; John 1:1, 3; Matthew 28:19; John 4:24; Romans 1:19-20; Ephesians 4:4-6)

#### *a. God the Father*

We believe God as Father reigns with providential care over His creation and the flow and stream of history according to the purposes of His grace. He is sovereign over all the affairs of men and nations. He is the ineffably holy, all-powerful, all-knowing, all-wise Creator.

(Genesis 2:7; Exodus 3:14, 6:2-8, 15:11, 20:1-7; Leviticus 22:2; Deuteronomy 6:4, 32:6; I Chronicles 29:10-12; Psalm 19:1-3; Isaiah 43:3,15, 64:8; Jeremiah 10:10, 17:13; Matthew 6:9, 7:11, 23:9, 28:19; Mark 1:9-11; John 4:24, 5:26, 14:6-13, 17:1-8; Acts 1:7; I Corinthians 8:6; Galatians 4:6; I Timothy 1:17; Hebrews 11:6, 12:9; I Peter 1:17)

#### *b. God the Son – Jesus Christ*

We believe in Jesus Christ, God's only begotten Son conceived by the Holy Spirit. We believe in His virgin birth, sinless life, miracles and teachings. We believe in His substitutionary atoning death, bodily resurrection, ascension into heaven, perpetual intercession for His people, and personal visible return to earth.

(Matthew 1:18-25, 20:28; Luke 1:26-38; John 1:1, 20:28-31; Acts 1:11; Romans 5:6-8, 6:9-10, 9:5; II Corinthians 5:21; Colossians 1:15; I Timothy 3:16; Hebrews 7:25, 9:28; I Peter 2:21-24)

#### *c. God the Holy Spirit*

We believe in the Holy Spirit who came forth from the Father and Son to convict the world of sin, righteousness, and judgment, and to regenerate, sanctify and empower all who believe in Jesus Christ. We believe, at regeneration, the Holy Spirit indwells every believer in Christ, and that He is an abiding helper, teacher and guide.

(John 14:16-17, 26, 15:26-27, 16:7-14; Romans 8:9; I Corinthians 3:16, 6:19; Galatians 5:22-26)

### *3. Providence*

We believe that God from all eternity in order to display the full extent of His glory for the eternal and ever-increasing enjoyment of all who love Him, did by the most wise and holy counsel of His will, freely and unchangeably ordain and foreknow whatever comes to pass. We believe that God upholds and governs all things, from galaxies to subatomic particles, from forces of nature to the movements of nations, and from the public plans of politicians to the secret acts of solitary persons, all in accord with His eternal all-wise purposes to glorify Himself. In so doing, He never sins. Though God ordains that sin should be, He remains holy and blameless. God does permit sin, but always for His own good purposes.

In so doing, He does not Himself commit sin, nor does He ever condemn a person unjustly. Thus His ordaining and governing all things is compatible with the moral accountability of all persons created in His image.

(Deuteronomy 32:4; Job 9:7, 37:5-13, 38:1-41; Psalm 33:10-11, 135:6-7; Proverbs 20:24; Isaiah 40:26, 45:7, 46:10-11; Daniel 4:34-36; Matthew 10:29-31; Romans 3:19, 8:28, 11:36; Ephesians 1:6, 11-12, 14, 3:11; Colossians 1:16-17; James 1:13; Revelation 17:16-17)

#### *4. Election*

We believe that election is the eternal purpose of God, according to which He graciously regenerates, justifies, sanctifies, and glorifies sinners; that being perfectly consistent with the free agency of man, it comprehends all the means in connection with the end; that it is a most glorious display of God's sovereign goodness, being infinitely free, wise, holy and unchangeable; that it utterly excludes boasting, and promotes humility, love, prayer, praise, trust in God, and active imitation of his free mercy; that it encourages the use of means in the highest degree; that it may be ascertained by its effects in all who truly believe the Gospel; that it is the foundation of Christian assurance; and that to ascertain it with regard to ourselves demands and deserves the utmost diligence.

(Genesis 12:1-3; Exodus 19:5-8; Deuteronomy 7:6, 14:2; I Samuel 8:4-7, 19-22; John 1:12-13, 6:44-45, 65, 10:27-29, 15:16, 17:6,12; Romans 8:28-29, 9:11-18, 11:5-7, 26-36; I Corinthians 1:1-2, 26-29; Ephesians 1:4-23; I Thessalonians 1:4; II Thessalonians 2:13-14; II Timothy 1:9, 2:10,19; I Peter 1:1-5, 2:6-10; II Peter 1:10; II John 1; Revelation 5:9, 7:9)

#### *5. Mankind and the Fall*

The entire world is a revelation of God, a mirror of his virtues and perfections; every creature is in his own way and according to his own measure an embodiment of a divine thought. But among all creatures only man is made in the image of God, the highest and richest revelation of God, and therefore the head and crown of the entire creation, the Lord's own glory. Mankind being made in the image of God means that man possess similar attributes of God and represents God. At creation God granted humanity eternal souls, the ability to make moral choices, dominion over the earth, the privilege to be in relationship with one another and the command to propagate the human race. In his providence, we believe that God wonderfully and immutably creates each person as male or female as a reflection of his glory. These two distinct, complementary genders together reflect the image and nature of God. Consequently, gender is not a social construct. Rejection of one's biological sex is a rejection of the image of God within that person. God's purpose for mankind in creation was perfect and consistent with the thought and character of the creator.

Therefore, we believe that man was created in holiness, under the law of his Maker; but by voluntary transgression fell from that holy and happy state; in consequence of which all mankind are now sinners, not by constraint but choice; being by nature utterly void of that holiness required by the law of God, positively inclined to evil; and therefore under just condemnation to eternal ruin, without defense or excuse.

(Genesis 1:26-31, 2:16-23, 3:12-13, 5:1-2, 6:5; Job 14:4; Psalm 8:3-8, 139:13-14; Jeremiah 1:5, 17:9; Matthew 19:4; Romans 3:10-19, 23, 5:12-14; I Corinthians 11:3, 15:21-22; II Corinthians 11:3; Ephesians 2:1-3, 5:23-32; Titus 1:15; Hebrews 2:14-15)

### *6. The Way of Salvation*

We believe that the salvation of sinners is wholly of grace exclusively through the mediatorial offices of the Son of God; who by the appointment of the Father, freely took upon Him our nature, yet without sin; honored the divine law by His personal obedience, and by His death made a full atonement for our sins; that having risen from the dead He is now enthroned in heaven; and uniting in His wonderful person the tenderest sympathies with divine perfections, He is every way qualified to be a suitable, a compassionate, and an all-sufficient Savior.

(Psalm 2:6; Isaiah 42:1, 53:10; Matthew 1:21-23; John 1:14, 14:6; Acts 3:22, 17:31; Romans 3:24, 5:6-21, 8:3,30, 9:5; II Corinthians 5:21; Galatians 4:4; Ephesians 1:22-23, 2:8-9; Philippians 2:5-11; I Timothy 2:5-6; Hebrews 1:2, 2:14,16-17, 4:15, 5:5-10;I Peter 1:19-20, 2:21-24)

### *7. Justification*

We believe that the great gospel blessing which Christ secures to such as believe in Him is justification; that justification includes the pardon of sin, and the promise of eternal life on principles of righteousness; that it is bestowed, not in consideration of any works of righteousness which we have done, but solely through faith in the Redeemer's blood; and by virtue of that faith His perfect righteousness is freely imputed to us of God; that it brings us into a state of most blessed peace and favor with God, and secures every other blessing needful for time and eternity.

(Genesis 15:6; Habakkuk 2:4; John 1:12; Romans 3:24-30, 4:5-8, 5:15-19, 8:30; I Corinthians 1:30-31; Ephesians 1:7, 2:8-10; Philippians 3:8)

### *8. The Freeness of Salvation*

We believe that the blessings of salvation are made free to all by the gospel; that it is the immediate duty of all to accept them by a cordial, penitent, and obedient faith; and that nothing prevents the salvation of

the greatest sinner on earth, but his own inherent depravity and voluntary rejection of the gospel; which rejection involves him in an aggravated condemnation.

(Isaiah 55:1-3, 6-7; Joel 2:32; Matthew 11:28-30, 28:19-20; John 3:16, 36, 6:37; Acts 2:21; Romans 10:9-13; Revelation 22:17)

### *9. Regeneration*

We believe that, in order to be saved, sinners must be regenerated, or born again; that regeneration consists in giving a holy disposition to the heart; that it is effected in a manner above our comprehension by the power of the Holy Spirit, in connection with divine truth, so as to secure our voluntary obedience to the gospel; and that its proper evidence appears in the holy fruits of repentance, and faith, and newness of life.

(Ezekiel 36:26-27; John 3:3,7-8; Colossians 3:1-11; Titus 3:5; James 1:18; I Peter 1:3,22-23)

### *10. Repentance and Faith*

We believe that repentance and faith are God's good gifts that follow regeneration. They are sacred duties, and also inseparable graces, effected in our souls by the regenerating Spirit of God; whereby being deeply convinced of our guilt, danger and helplessness, and of the way of salvation by Christ, we turn to God with unfeigned contrition, confession, and supplication for mercy; at the same time heartily receiving the Lord Jesus Christ as our Prophet, Priest and King, and relying on Him alone as the only and all sufficient Savior.

(II Samuel 12:13-14; Psalm 51:17; Jeremiah 4:1-4; Hosea 6:1-6, 10:12; Luke 24:47; John 16:8-11; Acts 3:17-26; Romans 10:9-13, 17; II Corinthians 7:10-12; Timothy 1:13; Titus 3:5; Hebrews 1:1-4, 4:14-16)

### *11. Sanctification*

We believe that sanctification is the process by which, according to the will of God, we are made partakers of his holiness; that it is a progressive work; that it is begun in regeneration; and that it is carried on in the hearts of believers by the presence and power of the Holy Spirit, the Sealer and Comforter, in the continual use of the appointed means— especially the Word of God, self-examination, self-denial, watchfulness and prayer. Sanctification means that we are free from the performance of religious works and thus free to live unto and upon Christ in obedience to His word by the power of the Holy Spirit.

(John 17:17; Acts 20:32; Romans 5 – 8; I Corinthians 1:2; II Corinthians 3:18; Galatians 5:16-25; Ephesians 3:16; I Thessalonians 4:3-8; Hebrews 10:10, 14, 12:14)

## *12. The Perseverance of the Saints*

We believe that such only are real believers as endure unto the end; that their persevering attachment to Christ is the grand mark which distinguishes them from superficial professors; that a special Providence watches over their welfare; and they are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation.

(John 10:28-29; Romans 5:9-10; II Timothy 2:8-13,19; I Peter 1:5-9; II Peter 1:3-11; I John 2:19)

## *13. The Local Church*

We believe that a visible church of Christ is a congregation of baptized believers, associated by covenant in the faith and fellowship of the Gospel; observing the ordinances of Christ; governed by His laws; and exercising the gifts, rights, and privileges invested in them by His word; that its scriptural offices are Pastors and Elders, whose qualifications, claims, and duties are defined in the New Testament. Likewise, scripture allows the church to call Deacons to serve in leadership of a specific function as needed.

(Matthew 16:18, 18:15-18; Acts 2:41-47, 5:13-14, 6:1-7, 14:23, 20:17; Romans 1:7; I Corinthians 1:2; I Timothy 3:1-13, 4:14; Titus 1:5-9; Hebrews 13:17, 1 Peter 5:1-4)

## *14. Baptism and the Lord's Supper*

We believe that Christian Baptism is the immersion in water of a believer, into the name of the Father, and Son, and Holy Ghost; to show forth in a solemn and beautiful emblem, our faith in the crucified, buried, and risen Savior, with its effect, in our death to sin and resurrection to a new life; that it is prerequisite to the privileges of a church membership. We believe that the Lord's Supper, in which the members of the church by the sacred use of bread and the cup, are to commemorate together the dying love of Christ; preceded always by solemn self-examination. It is to be celebrated by the regenerated person regularly as a means of proclaiming the gospel until the Lord returns.

(Matthew 3:16, 26:26-28, 28:19-20; Mark 1:1-11; John 3:23; Acts 2:37-41, 8:38-39; Romans 6:3-5; I Corinthians 10:16-17, 21, 11:23-28; Colossians 2:12)

## *15. 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 be employed in exercises of worship and spiritual devotion, both public and private.

(Exodus 20:1-8; Nehemiah 8:1-18; Matthew 4:10, 12:1-13, 28:19; John 4:21; Acts 20:7; I Corinthians 16:1-2; Colossians 2:16-19; I Timothy 4:13; Hebrews 10:25; Revelation 1:1)

### *16. Civil Government and Religious Liberty*

We believe God alone is Lord of the conscience, and He has left it free from the doctrines and commandments of men that are contrary to His Word or not contained in it. Church and state should be separate. The state owes to the 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, is 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.

(Matthew 22:17-21; Romans 13:1-7; I Timothy 2:1-3; I Peter 2:17)

### *17. The Righteous and the Wicked*

We believe there is a radical and essential difference between the righteous and wicked. Those only who are justified through the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and sanctified by the Holy Spirit are truly righteous in His sight. Those who continue in impenitence and unbelief are in His sight wicked and are under condemnation, consigned to hell, the place of everlasting punishment. The distinction between the righteous and the wicked holds in and after death, and will be made manifest at the judgment when final and everlasting awards are made to all men.

(Matthew 25:32-46; Mark 9:43-48; Luke 23:39-43; Romans 9:22-23; II Corinthians 5:1, 6, 8; I Thessalonians 4:17; Revelation 20:11-15)

### *18. The Return of the Lord*

The New Testament teaches in many places the visible and personal return of Jesus to the earth. "This same Jesus which is taken up from you into heaven shall so come in like manner as ye have seen Him go into heaven" (Acts 1: 11b). The time of His coming is not revealed. "Of that day and hour knoweth no one, no, not the angels in heaven, but my Father only" (Matthew 24:36). It is the duty of all believers to live in readiness for His coming and by diligence in good works to make manifest to all men the reality and power of their hope in Christ.



(Matthew 24:36-51; Mark 13:32-37; Luke 21:27-28; Acts 1:6-11; I Thessalonians 4:13-18; II Peter 3:10-12)

### *19. The Family*

God had 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.

(Genesis 1:26-28, 2:15-25, 3:1-20; Exodus 20:12; Deuteronomy 6:4-9; Joshua 24:15; Psalms 51:5, 78:1-8, 127:1-5, 128:1-6, 139:13-16; Proverbs 1:8, 5:15-20, 6:20-22, 12:4, 13:24, 14:1, 17:6, 18:22, 22:6, 15, 23:13-14, 24:3, 29:15,17, 31:10-31; Ecclesiastes 9:9; Malachi 2:14-16; Matthew 5:31-32, 19:3-9; Mark 10:6-12; Luke 16:18; Romans 1:18-32; I Corinthians 7:1-16; Ephesians 5:21-33, 6:1-4; Colossians 3:18-21; I Timothy 5:8,14; II Timothy 1:3-5; Titus 2:3-5; Hebrews 13:4; I Peter 3:1-7)

### *20. Final Authority for Matters of Belief and Conduct*

The statement of faith does not exhaust the extent of our beliefs. The Bible itself, as the inspired and infallible Word of God that speaks with final authority concerning truth, morality, and the proper conduct of mankind, is the sole and final source of all that we believe. For purposes of Providence Baptist Church's faith, doctrine, practice, policy, and discipline, our council of elders is the church's final interpretive authority on the Bible's meaning and application.

(Ephesians 4:11-16, I Timothy 3:2, 5:17; II Timothy 2:1-2; Hebrews 13:7, I Peter 5:1-4)

NOTES: See also the Cambridge Declaration of the Alliance of Confessing Evangelicals (1996), the Baptist Confession of 1689, and the Chicago Statement on Biblical Inerrancy (1978).

### *ARTICLE III. Church Membership*

The membership of this Church shall consist of persons who confess faith on the Lord Jesus Christ as personal Savior, who give evidence of regeneration by a living consistent with their profession and with the views of faith, doctrine and practice of this Church, who have been baptized by immersion and who have been received into its membership according to Article I of the By-Laws of this Church. Service in the leadership and ministries of the church is a privilege and responsibility given solely to church members.

### *Article IV. Church Leadership and Government*

To preserve the focus and purpose of this church as stated in Article II, Section 2 of this Constitution, the government of this church, under the leadership of the Holy Spirit and vested in its members shall be administered by the Council of Elders whose authority is derived from and limited by the articles of this Constitution and By-Laws.

### *ARTICLE V. Revisions, Additions, and Amendments*

Revisions, additions, and amendments to this constitution may be made only in the following manner:

- a. at the annual business meeting;
- b. by nine-tenths majority vote of resident members voting in person and by absentee ballot at such meeting.
- c. after presentation by written motion at a quarterly or special business meeting held at least three months before the annual meeting; and
- d. if notice of the proposed change or addition has been given, in writing and from the pulpit, on at least two Sundays in the interim period between said meetings.

# BY-LAWS

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## *Article I. Church Membership*

### *Section 1. General Procedure*

All actions regarding membership, either of admission or dismissal, shall be by vote of the Church upon recommendation of the Council of Elders. Membership in the local church is a privilege and an honor and is not without responsibility. As such, prospective members must know that just as Christ is responsible for their Salvation, the Scriptures dictate that the local church is responsible for maintaining its purity and unity of faith and spirit. Requirements for membership are not meant for exclusion of prospective members, but rather to emphasize the importance and responsibilities associated with church membership. All requests for membership shall be made to a Pastor or Elder. Upon making such a request, the person shall be given an application for membership, along with a copy of the Constitution and By-Laws. After receiving the completed application, an interview with at least 2 Elders will be scheduled where each applicant shall provide their testimony, shall assent to the Articles of Faith set forth in the Constitution (Article II Section 3), commit to the church covenant set forth in the Constitution (Article II Section 2). Completion of the prospective members' class (or its equivalent) can take place at any stage of the above. Once this class is deemed complete, the applicant can be presented to the congregation for a vote to admit as a member.

### *Section 2. Admission into Membership*

A congregational vote on membership applicants shall take place at the quarterly business meetings. Additionally, a special business meeting can be called if deemed necessary by the elders to hold a special vote outside of the normal quarterly business meetings. Applicants admitted to membership shall, if possible, present themselves at a worship service at which they shall publicly affirm their membership commitment and be publicly acknowledged as members.

### *Section 3. Denial of Membership*

If, upon review of an application for membership and after meeting with a prospective member, the Council of Elders determines that the applicant does not confess Jesus Christ as his/her Lord and Savior, or that there is a lack of evidence of a godly lifestyle, membership shall be denied. Similarly, a vote by the church body that does not accept the applicant would result in denial of membership. The decision made by the Council of Elders or by vote of the church shall be final and there shall be no appeal to any court from that decision. When this occurs, a representative from the Council of Elders shall meet with the applicant to explain the reasoning behind the decision with the hope that concerns would be addressed.

#### *Section 4. Duties and Privileges of Membership*

In accord with the duties enumerated in the Church Covenant set forth in the Constitution (Article II Section 2), each member shall be privileged and expected to participate in and contribute to the ministry and life of the church, consistent with God's leading and with the gifts, time, and material resources each has received from God.

#### *Section 5. Membership Status*

**Covenant Member:** Those children who are members but have not completed the 5th grade. This membership does not carry the privilege of voting in the church business meetings.

**Resident Member:** Those members whose permanent residence is within a 60-mile radius of the Providence Baptist facility and who have completed the 5th grade. This membership carries with it the privilege of voting in the church business meetings. Members, such as students and servicemen, temporarily living beyond this 60-mile radius shall retain the right of voting in all church business meetings.

**Non-resident Member:** Those members whose permanent residence is outside a 60-mile radius of the Providence Baptist facility. This membership retains status on the church roll but does not carry the privilege of voting in the church business meetings.

#### *Section 6. Church Discipline*

The threefold purpose of church discipline is to glorify God by maintaining purity in the local church (1 Corinthians 5:6), to edify believers by deterring sin (1 Timothy 5:20), and to promote the spiritual welfare of the offending believer by calling him/her to return to a biblical standard of doctrine and conduct (Galatians 6:1).

Any member of this church who teaches or insists on holding false doctrine, or persistently conducts himself/herself in a manner inconsistent with Biblical teaching, or who persists in disturbing the unity and/or peace of the church shall be subject to church discipline, including dismissal according to Matthew 18:15-18. Before such dismissal, however, (1) it shall be the duty of any member of this church who has knowledge of the erring individual's heresy or misconduct to warn and correct such erring individual in private, seeking his or her repentance and restoration. If the erring individual does not heed this warning, then (2) the warning member shall again go to the erring individual, seeking his or her repentance, but accompanied by one or two individuals who shall confirm that the sin has occurred or is continuing to occur, and/or that the erring individual has been appropriately confronted and has refused to repent. If the erring individual still refuses to heed this warning, then (3) it shall be brought to the attention of the Council of Elders. If the Council of Elders determines (after thorough investigation in accord with the

procedures prescribed by pertinent Scripture) that there is corroborating evidence that the erring individual has sinned or is continuing to sin, that he or she has been appropriately confronted, and that he or she has refused to repent, then the Elders shall inform the congregation that the church may call the erring individual to repentance. If the erring individual demonstrates repentance, then notice to that effect may be given at a worship service. If, however, the erring individual does not repent in response to the church in its collective call to repentance, then (4) he or she shall be publicly dismissed from the membership of the Church. There shall be no appeal of the discipline process or the dismissal to any court. The congregation shall be encouraged to pray for the repentance and restoration of the erring member.

Notwithstanding the foregoing, the Elders in the exercise of their discretion may proceed directly to the third or fourth stage of church discipline where the transgression and the refusal to repent have been public, i.e. openly and to the offense of the whole Church (1 Corinthians 5:1-5). It is clearly understood that the discipline process will continue to conclusion whether the erring member leaves the church or otherwise seeks to withdraw from membership.

### *Section 7. Termination of Membership*

Membership may be terminated in one of four ways:

- a. By physical death.
- b. By transfer: When it is requested, the Elders may grant to a departing member in good standing, a letter of dismissal to the fellowship of another church. No such letter may be given to a member who is at the time under the corrective discipline of this church. The Elders may refuse to grant a letter of transfer to any church, which is in their judgment disloyal to the gospel (Jude 3).
- c. By exclusion: If a member habitually absents himself/herself from the stated meetings of the church without valid reason, or if due to relocation he/she ceases to maintain a vital contact with the church, he/she may be dismissed from membership. If an excluded member applies again for membership, the procedures set forth will again be followed.
- d. By dismissal as a final step of church discipline: In accordance with the procedure described above. If an erring dismissed member or an applicant who is denied membership applies again for membership, the procedures set forth will again be followed.

## *Article II. Church Leadership*

### *Section 1. Council of Elders*

The Council shall consist of men who satisfy the qualifications set forth in I Timothy 3:1–7 and 5:19- 22; 2 Tim. 2:24-25; and Titus 1: 5–9. There shall be a minimum of five (including the Senior Pastor) and a maximum as determined by the Council. Each Elder shall hold office as long as he is faithful to his calling and has the confidence of his brethren and the congregation (1 Tim 5:19-22). Each Elder, except the Senior Pastor, shall be reaffirmed not later than the third Annual Meeting after his call or previous reaffirmation. A three-fourths majority vote shall be required for reaffirmation. Removal of an Elder shall require a majority vote.

While the primary responsibility of the Elders is spiritual leadership, they shall be responsible and accountable to the church for all its affairs. In doing so, they are encouraged, even expected, to turn to others in the body for assistance as needed.

The Council of Elders and each member thereof shall be devoted to prayer and the study of God's Word; to sustaining a caring ministry for the flock; to teaching and exhorting as well as refuting those who contradict the truth; and to leading by Christ-like example by consistently modeling spiritual character, attitudes, values, and behavior among the congregation, providing and inviting the opportunity for frequent and ongoing contact with members of the congregation, conducting the affairs of the church in an atmosphere of openness and mutual sensitivity, focusing as much on nurturing one another as on decision-making.

The Council of Elders shall oversee: the affairs of the church, the terms of employment of all paid staff members; the installation of the duly elected Pastor and/or Pastors; approval of all applicants for church membership; and, maintenance of the legal status of the church. Other responsibilities include conducting the regular and special business meetings of the church; planning, obtaining approval for and implementing the church's annual ministry plan (includes the annual budget); submitting nominations for the Council of Elders; appointing members to positions such as clerk, treasurer, and trustee as necessary; establishing ministry teams as necessary; communicating to the congregation on a regular basis concerning the activities and concerns of the Elders; and performing other constitutional, Scriptural, and general duties of oversight as required.

The Council of Elders shall elect a chairman and a secretary from its members. The Senior Pastor shall not serve as an officer of the Council of Elders. The chairman of the Council of Elders shall preside over the meetings of the Council of Elders and shall ensure that the Council serves the congregation in a balanced manner addressing each area of responsibility as outlined in the duties. The term of chairman shall be for one and no more than two consecutive years. A break of one year shall occur before assuming chairmanship again. An Elder may, however, resign his office without prejudice if for good and valid reasons he finds he is no longer able to discharge the duties required. Since the task of Eldership is significant and is accomplished while continuing care of family and work responsibilities, it is expected

that individual Elders may need to take leave of some of the responsibilities of Eldership for periods of time. Such sabbatical times will be arranged through mutual consent of the Elders. This process of mutual accountability among the Elders shall also safeguard against the continuation in office of an elder who has rendered himself unqualified for future participation.

The Elders shall achieve a consensus (complete agreement) on all issues with respect to their guidance and recommendations as well as actions taken on behalf of the church.

### *Section 2. Senior Pastor*

As an Elder of this church, the Senior Pastor shall give himself to prayer and the study of the Word of God; preach and expound the Word of God; administer the Ordinances in accordance with the Word of God; share in the pastoral care of the congregation along with the other Elders and members of the pastoral staff; maintain, together with the other Elders, church discipline; participate in the installation of newly designated Elders; and perform other constitutional, Scriptural, and general pastoral duties.

### *Section 3. Pastoral Staff*

The Pastoral Staff shall perform such duties as are outlined by the Council of Elders. Recommendations by the Council of Elders to elect or to remove Pastoral Staff members shall be brought before the congregation for consideration. Election of a Pastoral Staff member requires a nine-tenths majority vote. Removal of a Pastoral Staff member requires a majority vote.

### *Section 4. Deacons*

As modeled in Acts 6:1-6, Deacons shall be appointed and empowered by the church to serve as leaders of various ministry areas. The elders shall present Deacon candidates to the church following the nomination and selection process identified in Article II, Section 5. Deacons shall have the authority to make decisions and enlist the other members in helping meet their assigned ministry needs. Deacons shall provide regular updates at the quarterly meetings and a report at the annual business meeting summarizing the previous year's efforts and plans for the coming year. Deacons shall be presented to the church for reaffirmation every three years, assuming the deacon wishes to continue to serve.

### *Section 5. Nomination and Selection of Elders, the Senior Pastor, and Deacons:*

Elders:

The selection process shall be as follows:

- The members shall be encouraged to submit to the Council of Elders the names of men whose lives and gifts are consistent with being considered for nomination as Elder.
- The Council of Elders shall present at a business meeting a candidate or candidates for consideration to the Eldership. In no case should a man be presented without his knowledge and prior consent. Any questions concerning the nominees shall be addressed to the Elders in writing no later than one week prior to the business meeting.
- Resident members shall vote on the list of nominations. A three-fourths majority vote shall be required for the election of an Elder.
- Following election of an Elder, he shall be publicly installed during a regular worship service by the prayer of the whole church and the laying on of hands by the existing Elders.

Senior Pastor:

When the senior pastorate of this church becomes vacant, it shall be the duty of the Council of Elders to provide for the filling of the pulpit ad interim, and to nominate for Senior Pastor one who possesses the requirements set forth in these articles. In carrying out this process, the Council of Elders shall directly, or through a search committee, communicate to the congregation at reasonable intervals. All church members who desire to suggest the name of an individual for consideration as Senior Pastor shall do so in writing to the Council of Elders. When the Council of Elders shall invite a candidate for Senior Pastor, they shall notify the church of the trial sermon and associated business meeting in accordance with Article III, Section 2. Only one person eligible to become Senior Pastor shall be considered or voted upon at a meeting. The election results shall be announced publicly at the election meeting and shall be sent by mail to all church members promptly. A nine-tenths majority vote shall be required for the election of a Senior Pastor. After the Senior Pastor has been duly elected, a written call shall be tendered to him, signed by the Council of Elders.

Deacons:

The selection process shall be as follows:

- The members shall be encouraged to submit to the Council of Elders the names of individuals whose lives are consistent with being considered for nomination as Deacon.
- The Council of Elders shall present at a business meeting a candidate to serve as a Deacon. In no case should an individual be presented without their knowledge and prior consent. Any questions concerning the nominees shall be addressed to the Elder's in writing no later than one week prior to the business meeting.
- Resident members shall vote on the nominated Deacon. A three-fourths majority vote shall be required for the election of a Deacon.



- Following election of a Deacon, they shall be publicly installed during a regular worship service by the prayer of the whole church.

### *Section 6. Termination of Senior Pastor:*

The Senior Pastor shall serve until removed by the Lord, by a majority vote at a business meeting or by resignation. Should the Senior Pastor resign he shall give the church a minimum two-weeks notice in writing of his intention to do so.

## *Article III. Church Business*

### *Section 1. Meetings*

a. The annual business meeting of the church shall be held during the last month of the church's fiscal year. At this meeting, annual ministry reports shall be received; the annual budget proposed for the upcoming fiscal year shall be approved; Elders and Deacons may be elected and reaffirmed; other necessary business shall be transacted; and information shall be communicated. The Council of Elders shall determine the day and time of the meeting.

b. Quarterly meetings of the church shall be held within the first month of each quarter of the fiscal year. At these meetings, the church shall be informed of the status of church ministries and vote to admit new members or dismiss members as necessary. The Council of Elders shall determine the day and time of each meeting.

c. Other business meetings may be called by the Council of Elders as necessary.

d. Council of Elders, Deacon led ministry and Ministry Team meetings shall be open to members for the purpose of observation. An exception will be made when the Council of Elders, Deacon led ministries or Ministry Team decides by majority vote that a subject requires confidentiality. Then, only that confidential portion of the meeting will be closed. If, in addition to observing, members desire to participate in Council of Elders or Ministry Team meetings, they will be permitted to do so provided prior arrangements have been made with the appropriate chairman.

### *Section 2. Notice*

a. Written notice of the time of a business meeting shall be given at the regular worship services of the church for two Sundays prior to the date of the meeting. Recognizing that there may be situations in which two weeks written notice is not possible, the Council of Elders shall notify the church of an urgent business meeting through alternate means.

b. A meeting agenda shall be published with the notice of the time of a business meeting. The agenda shall list items to be discussed as well as motions to be brought before the church.

c. None of the following actions may be taken or approved at any business meeting of the Church unless so stated in the agenda:

- Election or removal of a Senior Pastor
- Election, reaffirmation or removal of an Elder or Deacon
- Election or removal of a Pastoral Staff member
- Approval of the annual budget
- Borrowing of money by the Church
- Amendment of the budget or a deviation in excess of 5% of the total annual budget
- Amendment of these By-Laws

### *Section 3. Voting*

a. All matters shall be determined by a majority vote, except when otherwise specified in these By- Laws. Throughout these By-Laws, the terms “majority”, “two-thirds majority”, “three-fourths majority”, and “nine-tenths majority” indicate a vote equal to or greater than one-half, two-thirds, three-fourths, or nine-tenths of all votes cast, in person and by absentee ballot respectively.

b. The following actions require a church vote:

- Admission of new church members or dismissal of church members
- Election or removal of a Senior Pastor
- Election, reaffirmation or removal of an Elder or Deacon
- Election or removal of a Pastoral Staff member
- Approval of the annual budget
- Borrowing money by the Church
- Amendment of the budget or a deviation in excess of 5% of the total annual budget
- Amendment of these By-Laws

c. In matters involving the election or removal of a Senior Pastor, the election, reaffirmation, or removal of an Elder or Deacon, or the election or removal of a Pastoral Staff member, voting shall be by secret ballot. It is hoped that in such matters the vote of the church will be unanimous. However, if unanimity is

not realized, the absolute minimum number of votes required for passage of the motion shall be as specified in Article II of these By-Laws.

d. Unless specifically prohibited by these By-Laws, any resident member of the church who is unable to attend a church business meeting may submit a request to the Council of Elders for an absentee voting ballot. To be considered valid, the absentee ballot must be completed and returned by the absent member and received by the Council of Elders prior to the applicable church business meeting.

#### *Section 4. Confidentiality of Church Records*

No member shall have the right to inspect the church records pertaining to the disciplining of any member, the hiring or firing of any employee, the needs or problems of any member or employee, the financial contributions of any member or any other records which the Council of Elders may determine to be in the best interest of the church to keep confidential.

#### *Article IV. Church Affiliation*

Local churches can best promote the cause of Jesus Christ by cooperating with each other. Providence Baptist Church is affiliated with the Southern Baptist Convention and may, as the Lord directs, cooperate with interdenominational ministries on a voluntary independent basis.

#### *Article V. Church Finance*

##### *Section 1. Annual Budget*

The Providence Baptist Church Finance Team shall develop the annual budget based on inputs from the Elders and team leads. The annual budget shall use a cash basis as the method of accounting and shall use the calendar year (January-December) as the Fiscal Year. At the annual business meeting, the members shall approve a budget for the Fiscal Year. Approval of the budget shall constitute authority for the expenditure of funds in the amounts and for the purposes stated in the budget.

##### *Section 2. Quality Assurance*

Financial procedures and records shall be reviewed and evaluated annually by an independent entity, not affiliated with the church, and appointed by the Council of Elders. A report of findings shall be prepared and presented to the Council of Elders no later than 60 days after the end of the review.

##### *Section 3. Church Property*

a. This Church shall have the power to receive, either by gifts or purchases, and to hold such real, personal, or mixed property as is authorized by the laws of the State of Alabama, and as is deemed

necessary for the business of the Church. It shall also have the power to dispose of such property by mortgage, deed, or otherwise. All such property shall be held in the name of the Church. No member or groups of members shall have any individual property rights in the assets of the Church.

b. In the case of a division, from which may God in His mercy save us, the property shall belong to those who abide by this Constitution and By-Laws.

c. In the event of dissolution, the property shall be sold and all proceeds, above liabilities shall be given to missions receiving support from this Church.

#### *Section 4. Raising Funds*

It shall not be the policy of this church to promote the sale of products and/or services for the purpose of raising funds. Any exception to this general policy must have the prior approval of the Council of Elders.

#### *Article VI. Revisions, Additions and Amendments*

These By-Laws may be amended or altered by a two-thirds majority vote at any business meeting of the church.