

CONSTITUTION



PROVIDENCE
REFORMED BAPTIST CHURCH

Founded January 21, 2020

PREAMBLE:

We, the members of Providence Reformed Baptist Church after careful consideration of the Scripture, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit willingly submit to the governing authority of this constitution. We purpose to glorify God in the proclamation of the Gospel, Christ centered worship, and to love our brethren.

ARTICLE 1: Name

The name of this church shall be: PROVIDENCE REFORMED BAPTIST CHURCH of CIBOLO, TEXAS

ARTICLE II: Foundation, Purpose and Priorities of Ministry

- A. The foundation of this church is the Lord Jesus Christ (1 Corinthians 3:11), and its infallible rule for guidance in all its affairs: the Word of God (Psalm 119:89). This church does here affirm its faith that the Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments are the Word of Almighty God (2 Timothy 3:16).

- B. The purpose of this church shall be to glorify and enjoy the God of the Scriptures (1 Corinthians 10:31; Philippians 4:4) according to the teaching of His Word. In addition, this church will preach the word by reproving, rebuking, and exhorting, with complete patience and teaching (2 Timothy 4:2).
- C. The foundation of this church is the Lord Jesus Christ, Who is the full expression of God's glory (Revelation 5:12; John 1:18; 2 Corinthians 4:6). We seek to glorify Him by loving Him and keeping His commandments (John 4:23) by:
 1. Exalting Him in worship
 2. Equipping the saints through the preaching and teaching of His Word glory through the preaching and teaching of His word
 3. Proclaiming the gospel of Jesus Christ through preaching and personal evangelism, and any other means consistent with the teachings of Holy Scripture;
 4. Encouraging, supporting and participating in missions work: locally, domestically and internationally
 5. Administering the ordinances of baptism and communion
 6. Encouraging biblical fellowship among believers
 7. Serving other individuals, families, and churches by providing for physical, emotional, and spiritual needs, in the name of Jesus Christ
 8. Calling fellow churches to biblical faithfulness and purity through instruction and encouragement about the nature of the local church.

ARTICLE III: Statement of Faith

We do hereby adopt as the fullest expression of our faith the *London Baptist Confession of Faith of 1689*, with the following exception: the identity of antichrist [26:4], which we believe do not have sufficient Biblical support and amendment to the language concerning the Lord's Day [22:7,8], which we believe was created for man and ought to be considered a gift given by God as a day of resting and communion with God in prayer and Bible reading (Matthew 12:11-12; Mark 2:23-27) This historic document is, however, an excellent summary of "the things most surely believed among us". We accept it not as an infallible rule or code of faith, but as an assistance to us in doctrinal controversy, a confirmation on faith, a standard for church officers, and a means of instruction in righteousness for the body.

Here the members of our church will have a body of theology in compact form with Scriptural proofs, that they may be ready to give a reason for the hope that is in them (1 Peter 3:15). We also adopt as a *summary expression of our faith* the following ARTICLES OF FAITH

I. The Scriptures

The Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments were given by inspiration of God. Therefore, all scripture is authoritative, infallible and inerrant. The Scriptures are the only sufficient rule for faith and practice (Ps. 19:7; 2 Tim. 3:16-17; 2 Pet. 1:20-21).

II. God and the Trinity

There is one true and living God who exists in three eternally distinct persons: the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. These three are one in being, united in purpose, and equally worthy of glory and adoration. God is invisible, eternal, omnipresent, almighty, all-knowing—his perfect knowledge extends to all things, past, present, and future, including the future decisions of his free creatures, unchanging, dependent upon none, sovereign, righteous, holy, just, gracious, loving, merciful, patient, and good. (Deut 6:4; John 14:26; 15:26; Matt 28:19)

III. Creation

God created all that now exists in six days and from nothing, and it was all very good. The Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit acted together in the work of creation. Out of all living things, only man was created in God's image, and He assigned to each a biological gender, "male and female He created them." And God granted man dominion over all lesser forms of life and over the earth itself. (Gen 1:1; 1:27 John 1:2-3; Heb 1:2)

IV. Sanctity of Human Life

All human life is sacred and created by God in His image. Human life is of inestimable worth in all its dimensions, including pre-born babies, the aged, the physically or mentally challenged, and every other state or condition from conception through natural death. We are therefore called to defend, protect, and value all human life (Ps. 139; Deut 10:18)

V. Providence

God from eternity, decrees or permits all things that come to pass, and perpetually upholds, directs and governs all creatures and all events; yet so as not in any way to be the author or approver of sin, nor to violate the free agency of His creatures, nor share responsibility for their sin (Isa. 46:9- 11; Prov. 16:33; Col. 1:17; Heb. 1:3; Jas. 1:13-15).

VI. Election

Before the foundation of the world, God elected a great multitude of men and women to eternal life as an act of His free grace alone. This election was in no way dependent upon His foresight of human faith, decision, works, or merit. In the unsearchable realm of God's sovereign will, all men remain responsible beings, subject to God's commands to repent and believe, and accountable to God for their rebellion, impenitence, and rejection of Christ. (John 6:37; Rom 8:29,30; 1 Cor 1:26- 28; Eph 1:11; 2 Thess 2:13-14)

VII. Fall of Man

God originally created Man in His own image, and free from sin; but, through the temptation of Satan, Adam transgressed the command of God, and fell from his original holiness and righteousness; whereby his posterity inherit a nature corrupt and wholly opposed to God and His law. As a result they are under condemnation, and as soon as they are capable of moral action, become actual transgressors (Gen. 1:26-27; 3:1-7; Rom. 5:12-19; Eph. 2:1-3).

VIII. Human Inability

The Fall brought every man into a state of utter depravity, meaning every dimension of his being is distorted by sin. Apart from the grace of God, fallen man treats sin as his master, God as an enemy, and the message of the cross as foolishness. Until he is born again, he possesses neither the desire nor the ability to love God, to keep His laws, to understand the gospel, to repent of sin, or to trust in Christ (Job 14:4; John 6:44; Rom 8:7; 10:11).

IX. The Birth and Life of Christ

God sent His Son into the world to save His people from their sins. Conceived of the Holy Spirit and born of the virgin Mary, Jesus was and is both God and man. He was tempted in all things yet without sin, living the perfect life of righteousness on behalf of His people (Matt 1:18-25; Luke 2:1- 21).

X. The Death of Christ

Christ died on the cross as the perfect sacrifice for sin, forever finishing the substitutionary work of atonement for His people (Matt 27:50; Mark 15:37,39; Luke 23:46; John 19:33; Heb 10:10,12,14).

XI. The Resurrection of Christ

On the third day, Jesus rose bodily from the grave. The resurrection affirms the deity and authority of Christ and assures believers of their future bodily resurrection (1 Cor 15:4,20; Acts 2:24,32; 3:15).

XII. The Ascension of Christ

Jesus ascended into heaven to appear in the presence of God as our perpetual High Priest, presenting Himself as the only acceptable sacrifice for sin. He is the one and only Mediator between God and men, and Head of His church. He intercedes forever on behalf of His people and rules over all things for their sake. (Mark 16:19; Acts 2:33,34; Eph 1:20; Col 3:1).

XIII. The Holy Spirit

We believe that God the Holy Spirit brings glory to the Father and the Son. He applies the work of Christ to believers and distributes spiritual gifts to every believer according to His sovereign good pleasure for the purpose of building up the body of Christ. He is the Comforter, the Spirit of Adoption, the Seal of our Salvation and the Guarantor of our inheritance in Christ (John 14:16-17; 16:14; Acts 5:3; Rom. 8:14-17; Eph. 1:13-14).

XIV. Regeneration

Regeneration is a change of heart, wrought by the Holy Spirit, who gives life to those dead in trespasses and sins, enlightening their minds spiritually and savingly to understand the word of God, and renewing their whole nature, so that they love and practice holiness. It is a work of God's free and special grace alone (Eph. 2:1-6; Tit. 3:5; 1 John 5:1).

XV. Repentance and Faith

In response to the conviction of the Holy Spirit a person repents of sin and humbles himself with godly sorrow (Acts

2:37-38; 11:18; 2 Cor. 7:10-11). Saving faith is trusting God's authority regarding whatever is revealed in His word concerning Christ; accepting and resting upon Him alone for justification and eternal life. It is wrought in the heart by the Holy Spirit, and is accompanied by all other saving graces, and leads to a life of holiness (Rom. 3:27-28; 4:1-5; 4:17-25; 10:14, 17; Phil. 1:29; Eph. 2:8; Jas. 2:14-26).

XVI. Justification

The elect are declared righteous in the sight of God because of Christ's perfect life, His substitutionary death, and the imputation of His righteousness. Justification can never be the reward or result of human works or merit, nor does it grow out of an infusion of Christ's righteousness. It is granted through faith alone in the person and work of Christ alone (Rom 3:24; 4:58; 8:30; Gal 2:16; Heb 10:10).

XVII. Sanctification

Those who have been regenerated are also progressively sanctified by God's word and Spirit dwelling in them. All true believers will press on to lay hold of that for which Christ laid hold of them. Positionally, all Christians are clothed with the righteousness of Christ and holy before Him now (Jer. 31:31-34; Ezek. 36:27-27; Rom. 8:1-17; Gal. 5:13-24; 2 Pet. 1:3-11).

XVIII. Perseverance of the Saints

All those whom God has regenerated will never totally nor finally fall away from the state of grace, but shall certainly persevere to the end; and though they may fall through neglect and temptation, into sin, whereby they grieve the Spirit, impair their graces and comforts, bring reproach on the church, and temporal judgments on themselves, yet they shall be renewed again unto repentance, and be kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation (John 6:37-40; 10:28-29; Rom. 8:28-39; 1 Cor. 1:8-9; Phil. 1:6).

XIX. The Church

A local church is a visible representation of the body of Christ and is under the authority of Christ alone. Nevertheless, in every local church, qualified Elder(s) are appointed to serve Christ as they care for His body. Qualified deacons are to assist the Elder(s) as needs arise. Each member of the church is uniquely gifted by the Holy Spirit to edify the body. A local church must recognize and fellowship with the universal body of Christ as represented in other true churches (Matt 16:18; 1 Cor 12:28; Eph 1:22; 5:23-25, 32; Col 1:24).

XX. Baptism

Baptism is an ordinance of the Lord Jesus, obligatory upon every believer. True baptism is immersion in water, symbolizing both the believer's union with Christ in His death, burial, and resurrection to new life, and his cleansing from sin. Baptism may only be administered to those who demonstrate repentance from sin and make a credible profession of faith in Christ (Rom 6:3-5; Acts 2:37-41; 8:12-13, 36-38; 22:16; Col 2:12).

XXI. The Lord's Supper

The Lord's Supper is an ordinance of Jesus Christ, to be administered with the elements of bread and the fruit of the vine, and to be observed by baptized believers in His churches till the end of the world. It is in no sense a sacrifice, but is designed to commemorate His death, to confirm the faith and other graces of Christians, and to be a bond, pledge and renewal of their communion with Him, and of their church membership (Matt. 26:26-29; 1 Cor. 10:16-17; 11:23-34).

XXII. Evangelism

It is the calling of every local church to make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to obey all that Christ has commanded. It is a priority in evangelism to unite new believers with local churches (Matt 28:19; John 17:17-18; Romans 10:13-17).

XXIII. The Family

God has ordained the family as the foundational institution of human society. God has created marriage to be the uniting of one [biological] man and one [biological] woman in covenant commitment for a lifetime, and it is intended to portray the relationship between Christ and His church. Children, from the moment of conception, are a blessing and heritage from the Lord, and parents are to raise them in the fear and admonition of the Lord (Gen 1:26-28; Deut 6:4-9; Eph 5:21-6:4).

XXIV. The Resurrection

The bodies of men after death return to dust, but their spirits return immediately to God—the righteous to rest with Him; the

wicked, to be reserved under darkness to the judgment. The bodies of all the dead, both just and unjust, will be raised (John 5:28-29; 1 Cor. 15:12-28; 2 Cor. 5:1-10; Phil. 1:23).

XXV. The Judgment

God has appointed a day, wherein He will judge the world by Jesus Christ, when every one shall receive according to his deeds; the wicked shall go into everlasting and conscious punishment; the righteous, into everlasting life (Matt. 25:46; John 5:22, 27-29; Acts 17:31; Rom. 2:6-11; 2 Cor. 5:10; 2 Thess. 1:7-10; 2 Tim. 4:8; Rev. 7:13-17; 14:9-11).

XXVI. The Glory of God

Christians must live for God's glory alone through their awareness and enjoyment of His Person, submission to His authority, and reliance upon His goodness. In truth, all things that have or will transpire, serve to glorify God as their highest purpose. For of Him and through Him and to Him are all things, to whom be glory forever. Amen (Romans 11:36).

For more complete scriptural references see the 1689 London Baptist Confession

ARTICLE IV: Affiliation

- A.** We acknowledge no ecclesiastical authority other than our Lord Jesus Christ, Who is Head of the church (Ephesians 5:23) and Who directs the affairs of His church through the Holy Scriptures.
- B.** We believe that local churches can best promote the cause of Jesus Christ by cooperating with one another (Acts 15:27-34; 16:1-3; 1 Corinthians 16:3; Galatians 1:2; Philippians 2:25; Colossians 4:7-11, 16). This church may and does cooperate with other like-minded churches in matters of mutual interest and concern. We may seek the assistance and counsel of other churches in matters of special concern to us, but the decision of no other church, group of churches or association shall at any time be acknowledged as binding on this church.
- C.** Cooperation with other like-minded churches may be pursued by formally joining a conference, association or fellowship. Such an organization must exist and function by the will of the churches involved. Any cooperative ties must be voluntary and may be terminated at any time. Upon recommendation of the elder(s), such affiliations may be entered into by unanimous vote of the Elder(s) and affirmation from the congregation.

- D.** Any meeting appointed for such a vote must be announced to the church on at least two consecutive Lord's Days previous to its being held. Withdrawal from such association may be affected by the same procedure.

ARTICLE V: Our Covenant One to Another

By the grace of God we have been led to repent of our sin and believe in Jesus Christ as our Lord and Savior. We have confessed our faith and been baptized in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Now, therefore, in the presence of God and by His grace, we joyfully and solemnly enter into a holy covenant with the members of Providence Reformed Baptist Church.

We engage, to walk together in Christian love through the power of the Holy Spirit.

We will not forsake the assembling of ourselves together, but faithfully attend the church's Lord's Day meetings for worship, prayer, study, and fellowship. Members are encouraged to attend the mid-week meeting in faithful devotion to one another. We will also use our spiritual gifts for the common good.

We pledge to support the ordinances and doctrines of this church (as summarized in our Confession of Faith, Articles of Faith, & Constitution). We will submit to the church's discipline upon ourselves and lovingly assume our responsibility to participate in the discipline of other members, as taught in Scripture.

We will contribute cheerfully and regularly to this church for its general ministry and expenses, the relief of the poor, the cause of reformation and revival, and the spread of the Gospel throughout all nations.

We will strive by God's grace and power to live as Christ in the world; and denying ungodliness and worldly lusts we will seek to fulfill our calling to lead a holy life and to be salt and light.

We will be just and honest in our dealings and faithful in our responsibilities and commitments.

We will abide by the standards of sexual purity, ethical integrity, and spiritual fidelity as taught in the Bible.

We will reject all heretical beliefs and practices, using Scripture as our final authority.

We purpose to watch over one another in brotherly love, to remember one another in prayer, to help one another in sickness and distress, and to cultivate Christian compassion and courtesy.

Believing that the pursuit of peace with others and personal holiness accompanies true faith in Christ, we will be slow to take offense, always eager to seek the reconciliation Christ commands, and will work to preserve the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.

We resolve to practice personal and family worship, to train our children in the discipline and instruction of the Lord, and to seek the salvation of our family, friends, neighbors, co-workers, acquaintances, and of all the world.

We promise that when we leave this church we will diligently seek to unite with another church where we can continue to carry out the spirit and principles of God's Word (1 Cor 12:25; Gal 6:2; Col 3:13; 1 Tim 2:1; Heb 13:3).

ARTICLE VI: Conduct

- A. Means of Grace:** All public and private means of grace, such as keeping the Sabbath (Matthew 12:12, 28:10), regular attendance at the services of the church (Hebrews 10:25), daily reading of the Bible (Psalm 1:2), and corporate, private and family prayers shall be urged upon our members (Matthew 6:6).
- B. Government of the Home:** The church expects its members to follow the scriptures in home government (Ephesians 5:22-6:4). God requires that godliness in the home have a high priority in every life. The home holds a central attention in God's Word and is the object of frequent exhortation in the New Testament. Men are expected to rule their homes with gentleness coupled with firmness founded upon sacrificial loving actions. Women must strive to be subject to their husbands in everything as unto the Lord. Parents should train up their children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord by holy example, Bible instruction, consistent education, and firm discipline, including corporal punishment (Proverbs 13:24; 19:18; 22:15; 23:13-14; 29:15, 17). Children must reverently obey their parents. These primary responsibilities, prayerfully executed, will honor the name of Christ in the community and strengthen the cause of Christ in generations to come.
- C. Missions and Evangelism:** It is the duty of every Christian and of every church of Christ to seek to extend the Gospel to the ends of the earth (Matthew 28:18-20; Acts 1:8). Missionary efforts are the natural consequences of

regeneration (Psalm 51:10-14). It is the duty of every child of God to witness by life and word (Matthew 10:32-33). Personal efforts at witnessing for Christ are expected of every member. Beyond this, we are committed to common efforts for sending the gospel to the ends of the earth (See Article IX).

- D. Principles of Giving:** We also assert our conviction that Christians are to contribute cheerfully, regularly, sacrificially, and without necessity 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 (2 Corinthians 8 & 9; 1 Corinthians 16:2). The members' time, talents, and treasures require proper stewardship for the glory of God for which we must give an account (Luke 16:1-13).
- E. Christian Liberty:** We shall require of each other in our daily walk and conversation loyal obedience to all those moral precepts established in the Word of God (Hebrews 10:24-25); however, where God has not prohibited certain practices in His Word, the Christian has liberty to participate in them. The following principles must always guide the Christian's exercise of liberty:
1. Fear of God – As the servant of Christ, all action must be motivated by love to God, and all objects must be used for His glory. The term “liberty” is often used as a cloak of malicious self-indulgence, which is sin (1 Corinthians 10:31; 1 Timothy 4:4; 1 Peter 2:15-16).
 2. Love of Brethren – Though no man may dictate to the Christian's conscience, the welfare of fellow saints must always deeply affect his decisions. In a spirit of serving the brethren, he must do that which he judges will edify them and prevent their stumbling (Galatians 5:13; 1 Corinthians 8:9; 10:23; Romans 14:21-23).
 3. Compassion for the Unconverted – Use of liberty must always be regulated by its effect upon sinners, and behavior chosen which is likely to win some to Christ (1 Corinthians 9:19-22).
 4. Watchfulness over the Soul – Though free in conscience to use all of God's creation, carefulness in practice is demanded because of remaining lusts. Where the Christian judges himself weak through lust, he must abstain in order to Scripturally persevere (1 Corinthians 9:23-27).
 5. Desire to Excel in Holiness – As we have been bidden to follow the example of the Apostle Paul (1 Corinthians 4:16; 11:1; Philippians 3:17), we must strive to imitate him by throwing off those things that encumber us in the Christian race (1 Corinthians 9:24; Philippians 3:11-16), remembering that although something may be lawful, it may not be expedient (1 Corinthians 10:23).
- F. Support of the Church Leaders:** It is the duty of every member to respect the God appointed leadership of the elder(s) of the church. The Elder(s) may also be Biblically referred to as pastors, bishops and overseers (Acts 20:28; Ephesians 4:11; 1 Timothy 3:1; 1 Peter 5:1-4). The duties of church members toward their Elder(s) are as follows:
1. To pray for them, that God would open a door of utterance unto them, to unfold the mysteries of the Gospel (Ephesians 6:19; Colossians 4:3; 2 Thessalonians 3:1).
 2. To obey your Elder(s) in the Lord, in whatsoever they admonish according to the Word of God (Hebrews 13:17-22; 3 John 3-4).
 3. To follow their example and footsteps, as far as warranted by the Word (1 Corinthians 4:16; 11:1; Philippians 3:17; Hebrews 13:7).
 4. To stand by them, in all their trials and afflictions, and to defend them in all good causes, as far as each member is able. In 2 Timothy 1:5, those of Asia are blamed for turning away or not standing by the Apostle.
 5. In the event of the necessity of exposing the infirmities of an officer, let it be done according to the principles of Matthew 18:15-20 and 1 Timothy 5:19-20, with soberness and love for the sake of the Gospel.
 6. To support the elder(s) financially within the guidelines of 1 Corinthians 9:7-14, Galatians 6:6-8 and 1 Timothy 5:17.
- G. Congregational Voting:** Recognition of church officers by way of nomination and voting are responsibilities of the members of this church (Acts 6:3-5; 14:23). Also, the exercise of excommunication by vote is the responsibility of

the congregation as is the restoration of an excommunicated member (Matthew 18:17; 1 Corinthians 5:4-5). Congregational vote will also be required for the formal joining or withdrawal from a convention, association or fellowship, for the approval of budgets, for the authorization of any expenditure of the funds of the church when such expenditure is not covered by an approved budget and for approval of any transactions regarding real property. To initiate or terminate the support of missionaries or pastors, likewise, a congregational vote will be required. Furthermore, to amend or alter this constitution in any fashion will also require such a vote. All voting will be performed at regularly scheduled church meetings after having been publicly announced. Three-fourths or 75 percent majority will be required of all those members in attendance and voting for the vote to pass. Due consideration must prevail if a family and/or relatives could adversely affect the congregational desired outcome of a vote.

ARTICLE VII: Church Membership

The New Testament illustrates and teaches that professing Christians are to be baptized and committed to a local church for worship, ministry, edification, discipline and evangelism. While we recognize that the true spiritual condition of an individual is infallibly known only to God, we also recognize that the New Testament places upon the local church and its leaders the responsibility of carefully guarding the admission and exclusion of its members. Therefore this church reserves the exclusive right to determine who shall be members and the conditions of such membership.

- A. Reasons for Membership:** The church is the local expression of Christ's body. The New Testament clearly demands an open, voluntary and enduring commitment to the Lord Jesus Christ, to His truth and to His people. Such a commitment is seen Biblically to involve membership in a local church for the following reasons:
1. Fulfillment of Christ's Great Commission requires church membership. According to the Great Commission of Christ (Matthew 28:18-20), there is an inseparable connection between making disciples, baptizing them and teaching them, The Apostles implemented this commission by gathering baptized disciples into local churches. It was therefore in local churches that baptized disciples were taught all that Christ commanded (Acts 2:38-42; 1 Corinthians 4:17).
 2. Obedience to Christ's directive to observe the Lord's Supper requires church membership. Since all believing men and women are required by Christ to observe the Lord's Supper (Luke 22:19; 1 Corinthians 11:23-26), and since the Lord's Supper is clearly a local church ordinance (1 Corinthians 11:17,18,33,34 cp. 1 Corinthians 1:1,2), it follows that all Christians must belong to a local New Testament church in order to partake Biblically.
 3. Keeping of the clear command to obey and submit to those who have rule over you with regards to spiritual matters (Hebrews 13:17), implies first that one must be in the proper relationship with such a ruler in order that he might be led. Since Elder(s) hold the only Biblically appointed office with the authority to rule and lead in spiritual matters, and that only in the local church context (1 Timothy 5:17), it necessarily follows that all Christians need to belong to a local New Testament church in order to comply.
 4. Our Lord assumed that the disciplinary process as described in Matthew 18:15-17, would require the involvement of the church if the offending party remained unwilling to deal with his/her sin against another. Again, the clear implication is that one must necessarily belong to a church in order to carry out such a process.
 5. The New Testament presents the local church as a distinct group of individuals which could:
 - a. Be counted (Acts 2:41-42; 4:4).
 - b. Be added to (Acts 2:47; 5:14).
 - c. Be called upon to select leaders and representatives from among itself (Acts 6:1-6; 2 Corinthians 8:19, 23; Acts 15:22).
 - d. Be officially gathered together (Acts 14:27; 1 Corinthians 5:4).
 - e. Carry out church discipline (Matthew 18:17; 1 Corinthians 5:5, 13; 2 Corinthians 2:6).
 - f. Observe the Lord's Supper and Baptism (ordinances) as a wholly present corporate assembly (1 Corinthians 11:17-20, 33-34).

B. Qualifications for Membership

Any person who professes repentance toward God and faith toward the person and work of our Lord Jesus Christ (Mark 1:15; Acts 20:21), who has been baptized by immersion as a believer, and who expresses a willingness to submit to the doctrines, aims, discipline, and government of this church, shall be eligible for membership (Acts 2:42; Ephesians 4:3-6; Philippians 2:1-2). Because of the New Testament emphasis upon regenerate church membership, we believe the following constitute the fruit of a true work of the Holy Spirit in regeneration:

1. Repentance toward God – repentance is a heart-felt sorrow for sin, a renouncing of it (a change of mind toward it), and a sincere commitment to forsake it and to walk in obedience to Christ (turning toward God) (Ezekiel 18:31; Hosea 14:2; Joel 2:12; Acts 3:19; 8:22; 17:30; 20:21).
2. Evidence of conversion – conversion is a turning from sin (the dominion of it) and a turning to God to walk in His way of holiness (Psalm 51:12; Matthew 18:3; Luke 22:32; Acts 3:19). Conversion is the result of biblical repentance (2 Corinthians 7:9-11).
3. Faith in Jesus Christ as Lord – faith is totally relying upon the person and work of Jesus Christ for salvation. The evidence of this saving faith is a submissive spirit to live for Him by loving Him and keeping His commandments (John 14:15; Matthew 28:20; Acts 20:21).

It is understood that each individual will have studied the Confession and Constitution of this church for a conscientious commitment to each. Mastery of and full subscription to the church Confession and Constitution are not required for membership. Such requirement would violate the order of Matthew 28:19-20, which instructs us to make disciples by baptizing and then teaching the baptized disciple to observe all things Christ has commanded. However, it is expected that each individual should express a wholehearted commitment to the teaching of Scripture as expressed in the Confession (with Providence emendations), to support the ministry of this church (Hebrews 10:25-26; 1 John 1:3-7), to submit to the disciplines (both formative and corrective) of this church (Matthew 18:15-20; 1 Corinthians 15:1-13; 2 Corinthians 13:2,10; 1 Timothy 1:20; Titus 3:10-11), and to commit themselves to the expected conduct outlined in Articles 5 and 6.

C. Reception into Membership

There is, therefore, clear biblical warrant for the existence and careful maintenance of local church membership involving formal, open, voluntary, and enduring commitment. This biblical warrant compels us to use great care in maintaining a biblically ordered church membership.

1. All requests for membership shall be made to one of the Elder(s). Upon such request, the person shall be given a petition for membership, along with a copy of the Articles of Faith, the 1689 London Confession (with Providence emendations) and a copy of this Constitution.
2. The Elder(s) will then schedule an interview with the petitioner/s following receipt of the completed petition. During the interview the Elder(s) will seek to establish that the person has a credible testimony of faith in the Lord Jesus Christ and a wholehearted commitment to be subject to the doctrines, aims, discipline, and government of the church.
3. If the Elder(s) are confident that the petitioner meets the requirements for membership, he/she will be presented as a prospective member at the next Lord's Supper service. If there are no objections by the congregation during the following month, he/she will be received into the membership at the following Lord's Supper service. The congregation will signify agreement with a corporate "Amen" and the members will greet the new member/s with "the right hand of fellowship." If objections arise, the Elder(s) will consider them and determine the prospective member's eligibility for membership.
4. If the petitioner is a new convert, yet to be baptized by immersion, he/she must be baptized before being received into membership. New converts are not required to fully know or be able to articulate the church's faith, doctrine and/or practice, yet there must be a willingness to learn and to be in subjection to the teachings of the leadership of the church. To require more than this would be to contradict the order of our Lord's Great Commission (Matthew 28:19-20). It is also important to note that the early church did not require the new converts to wait during a season of proving before being added to the church (Acts 2:41). Section C, Parts 2 and 3 of this article will then be followed to receive the new convert into membership.
5. Petitioners desiring to transfer their membership from another church will be required to provide information of their past church involvement. Upon receipt of a letter or letters of recommendation from most recent churches, acknowledging membership in good standing and no unresolved issues, the petitioner will be received into membership per Section C, Parts 2 and 3 of this article.
6. If upon review of a petition for membership or after meeting with the prospective member, the Elder(s) determine that the petitioner 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 or postponed until any objections are resolved. The decision made by the Elder(s) shall be final and there shall be no appeal to any court of that decision.

D. Duties and Privileges of Membership

In accord with the duties enumerated in the Church Covenant, each member shall be privileged and expected to attend the worship service-of the church, 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. Members are encouraged to attend the mid-week meeting in faithful devotion to one another. Only those shall be entitled to serve in the ministries of the church who are members of this congregation; non-members may serve on an ad-hoc basis with the approval of the Elder(s).

Membership in this church shall not vest in any member any proprietary rights in the Corporation.

E. Termination of Membership

1. By Physical Death:

When a member of the church is removed from our midst by death, his/her name shall automatically be removed from the membership roll.

2. By Transfer:

- a. Because the New Testament norm for Christians is that they be members of true local churches of Christ, and because the spiritual health of believers is endangered when they are not thus committed to a church, any Christian who leaves the membership of this church should seek to do so by means of transfer to another true church of Christ. Therefore, if a church member in good standing whose conduct does not warrant discipline, desires to leave the membership of this church, he/she is strongly urged to leave in an orderly way by privately indicating that desire to the Elder(s) along with his/her reasons for leaving.
- b. When such a departing member has not yet chosen a suitable church to which he may transfer, the Elder(s) may provide for a transitional period which will allow the departing member to decide where he/she wishes to be transferred. Such a transitional status will be allowed to continue as long as the departing member maintains regular contact with the Elder(s), does not unnecessarily prolong the transitional process, and does not engage in conduct requiring the exercise of church discipline.
- c. When it is so requested, the Elder(s) may transfer a departing member in good standing to the fellowship of another church. A letter of transfer and/or a letter of recommendation of transfer will be sent to the church to which the member wishes to transfer. No such letter will be given on behalf of a member who is at the time under the discipline of this church. The Elder(s) may refuse to grant a letter of transfer to any church considered disloyal to "the faith that was once for all delivered to the saints."

3. By Dismissal:

- a. Occasionally, a person's membership may need to be terminated under circumstances that make both transfer and discipline inappropriate. In such circumstances, a member may be dismissed.
- b. While there is no explicit precedent for dismissal in the New Testament, it is required by biblical principles, including the voluntariness of local church membership (Acts 5:13; 9:26; 1 John 2:19) and the desire to maintain a regenerate church membership (2 Corinthians 13:5; Revelation 3:4).
- c. Dismissal may be initiated either by a member making request to the Elder(s), or by the Elder(s) themselves when circumstances are appropriate. In either case, the final decision regarding the action of dismissal will lie with the Elder(s). Church membership is a very serious matter. Members, therefore, shall be dismissed only after due inquiry and admonition by the Elder(s), whenever such contact is possible. Before any individual is dismissed, the church shall be informed of the intention of the Elder(s) to dismiss the individual at a regular Lord's Supper service. During the month following the service the church may privately raise concerns with the Elder(s). After due consideration of such concerns, the Elder(s) may proceed with dismissal. When possible, they shall send a letter to the dismissed individual informing him/her of his/her dismissal. The Elder(s) shall subsequently communicate to the church that the person has been dismissed. If one who has been dismissed applies again for membership, the normal procedures shall be followed as set forth in Section C of this article.
- d. Dismissal may be warranted when a member concludes that he/she is not truly saved, when a member willfully, without plausible reason or excuse, absents himself from the services of the church for a period of 6 months, or under other unique circumstances.

ARTICLE VIII: Church Discipline

A. Formative Discipline

Formative discipline is primarily positive through the teaching of God's Word, the example of Christian living, and the mutual ministry of individual members of the body of Christ. It has as its objective the instruction of disciples, the transformation of their lives, and their edification in love (Ephesians 4:11-13; Romans 12:16; 1 Corinthians 12:4-27). Formative discipline has a sanctifying influence. Every member should be satisfied with his/her God-given ministry, and thus we shall all grow in grace and the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ (1 Peter 4:7-12). Formative discipline utilizes the talents of each church member, whether old or young, for the edification of all. Each who has been redeemed by Christ should live for him and His church and not for him/herself (1 Corinthians 8:6; 2 Corinthians 5:15).

As members of this church we recognize our obligation to honor, serve, worship, praise, and glorify the Lord Jesus Christ in all that we say and do (1 Corinthians 10:31). Jesus Christ is the head of the church and, therefore, its Lord and Lawgiver (Ephesians 1:22; Isaiah 33:22); and those who truly love him will endeavor to keep His commandments (John 14:15). In His Holy Word our Lord has entreated believers to perform certain duties one toward another. Some of these duties are:

1. To love one another without offense or hypocrisy (John 13:34-35; Romans 12:9-10; 13:8-10).
2. To labor to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace (Ephesians 4:3).
3. To endeavor for the edification and spiritual benefit of the whole body, that they all may grow up to be a holy temple in and for the Lord (1 Corinthians 14:12,26; Ephesians 2:21-22; 4:12,29).
4. To look out for the best interests of others (Philippians 2:3-4).
5. To pray with and for one another (James 5:16).
6. Not to neglect the assembling of ourselves together for the celebrating of divine worship, and thus promote one another's spiritual benefit (Hebrews 10:25; Acts 2:42).
7. To unanimously contend for the faith and truth once for all delivered to the saints, in its purity, according to the holy Scriptures (Psalm 93:5; Zechariah 14:2; 1 Corinthians 14:33-40; 11:2; Jude 3).
8. In the case of doctrinal difference or unresolved disagreements in the church, it is the responsibility of the member to seek counsel and advice from the Elder(s) before leaving the church in a disorderly manner. Such issues may be resolved because of misunderstandings and such disorderly leaving creates more misunderstandings.

The above duties, when faithfully performed by all, will have a positive, formative effect upon the whole assembly and will be attended by the blessing of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

B. Corrective Discipline

1. The threefold purpose of corrective church discipline is to glorify God by maintaining the welfare of and purity in the local church (1 Corinthians 5:6), to edify believers by deterring sin (1 Timothy 5:20), and to promote the restoration and spiritual welfare of the offending believer by calling him or her to return to a biblical standard of doctrine and conduct (1 Corinthians 5:5; 2 Corinthians 2:5-8; Galatians 6:1).
2. Members of this church and all other professing Christians who regularly attend or fellowship with this church who err in doctrine, or who engage in conduct that violates Scripture as determined by the Elder(s) shall be subject to church discipline, including dismissal according to Matthew 18:15-20 and various other passages in Scripture noted below.
3. According to the teaching of Scripture, a church must cut off from its fellowship and visible membership any person who insists on holding to false or heretical doctrine; or who persistently conducts him/herself in a disorderly manner inconsistent with his/her Christian profession; or who persists in disturbing the unity of peace of the church; or who habitually absents him/herself from the meetings of this church without just cause (Romans 16:17-18; Titus 3:10-11; Matthew 18:15ff; 1 Corinthians 5:1ff; 2 Thessalonians 3:6; Hebrews 10:23-25).
4. As a general rule and whenever feasible, an effort must be made to resolve difficulty, correct error, and remove offense through counsel and admonition before more drastic steps are taken (Galatians 6:1; James 5:19-20). The principles given to us in Matthew 18:15-20, Romans 16:17-20, 1 Corinthians 5:1-13, 2 Thessalonians 3:6-15, 1 Timothy 5:19-20, and Titus 3:10 must be carefully followed and applied to each and every case of discipline as appropriate. In some cases public admonition and/or public repentance may be warranted (Matthew 18:17; 1 Timothy 5:20). In the most extreme cases, excommunication from the membership of the church may be necessary (Matthew 18:17; Romans 16:27-20; 1 Corinthians 15:1-13; 1 Timothy 1:20; Titus 3:10). All the members of the church are obliged to submit to and enforce as appropriate the decision of the church (2 Corinthians 2:6) in acts of discipline.
5. Since the church is a spiritual and religious institution, the punishments inflicted by the church in discipline (2 Corinthians 2:6) are also spiritual. They include public verbal reproof (Matthew 18:17; 1 Timothy 5:20), social avoidance (Matthew 18:17; Acts 10:28; 11:3; Romans 16:17; 1 Corinthians 5:9; Galatians 2:12; 2 Thessalonians 3:6,14; 2 John 10), suspension from the Lord's Supper (1 Corinthians 5:11), and removal from the membership of the church (Matthew 18:17; 1 Corinthians 5:13). They are intended to effect repentance through a sense of sorrow

and shame (2 Corinthians 2:7; 2 Thessalonians 3:14). The church has no right to inflict corporal punishment of any kind, though a member guilty of civil or criminal actions may be delivered to the civil authorities according to the rule of Scripture (Romans 13:1-7; 1 Peter 2:13-14).

6. Since one purpose of church discipline is to restore a fallen brother or sister, it is the duty of the church to forgive and to restore to full membership a disciplined member who gives satisfactory evidence of his/her repentance (2 Corinthians 2:6-8).
7. The members of this church, and all other professing Christians who regularly attend or fellowship with this church, agree that there shall be no appeal to any court because of the dismissal or because of public statements to the congregation during church discipline. Members who are under discipline by the church, as defined above, forfeit and waive the right to resign from this church. Resignations from membership are possible only by members who are in good standing and who are not under disciplinary action.

ARTICLE IX: Meetings

- A. **Worship Meetings:** Worship services shall be held each Lord's Day, and may be held throughout the week as the church determines.
- B. **Prayer Meetings:** A corporate prayer meeting shall be held each week. Every member family is asked to attempt to have at least one family member present.
- C. **Members' Meetings:**
 1. In every meeting together, members shall act in that spirit of mutual trust, openness, and loving consideration which is appropriate within the body of our Lord Jesus Christ.
 2. A regular Annual Meeting of the church members shall be held at the church in January of each year. At such meeting, the members shall consider reports of the fiscal affairs of the church, and transact such other business as the Elder(s) determine shall be brought before the meeting. An Elder designated by the Elder(s) shall preside at all members' meetings and the Elder(s) shall see that the stated meetings of the church are regularly held and that required reports are submitted to the church by the responsible members.
 3. A regular Annual Budget Proposal Meeting shall be held at the church, no earlier than the first week of October nor later than the first week of December to affirm the budget for the fiscal year beginning January 1.
 4. Special members' meetings may be called as required by the Elder(s).
- D. **Notice of Meetings:** Notice of regular meetings shall be given from the pulpit and included in the church bulletin for two successive Sundays prior to the meeting. Notice of date, time, and purpose of any special meeting shall be announced at all public services and included in the church bulletin at least one week prior to the meeting. Under extraordinary circumstances the Elder(s) may call a special meeting at any time without notification.
- E. At all members' meetings, whether regular or special, the members present shall constitute a quorum for the transaction of business.
- F. Those admitted to church membership do not constitute a legislative body, nor do they constitute members of the Corporation, and they cannot vote, pass resolutions binding upon the Corporation, nor shall they have any equity in the real property of the Corporation, or rights to vote on its disposal. Said property of the Corporation is dedicated to religious and charitable purposes as outlined in the Articles of Incorporation.

ARTICLE X: Ordinances

- A. **General Statement:** There are two ordinances of special significance which our Lord has commanded us to observe, namely Baptism (Matthew 28:19) and the Lord's Supper (1 Corinthians 11:24-25). Neither of them has saving merit (Titus 3:5), nor is any grace imparted to the recipient through the water of Baptism or the bread and cup of the Supper. These ordinances can be powerful aids to the faith of the believers who participate in them.
- B. **Baptism:** Only confessed disciples of our Lord Jesus Christ are proper candidates for Baptism, and all such persons should be baptized (Acts 2:38). Believing that Baptism is the God-ordained door of entrance into the visible community of the people of God (Acts 2:41), we shall receive into membership of this church only those who have been baptized by immersion and into the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit (Matthew 28:19).

- C. **The Lord's Supper:** Whereas Baptism is to be observed only once by each believer, the Lord's Supper should be celebrated frequently by the assembled church (1 Corinthians 11:26). While this is a most holy ordinance and should be observed with solemnity, dignity and joy, the bread and the cup of the Supper are and remain only symbols of the broken body and the shed blood of our Lord Jesus Christ. We embrace a close-communion with Christians who are members in good standing with other like-minded churches.

ARTICLE XI: Missions

According to the commission given by our Lord (Matthew 28:18-20), this church will strive to advance the Kingdom of Christ through a missions program that will focus on sending and/or supporting missionaries as the Lord gives us opportunity. We will pray that the Lord of the harvest (Luke 10:2) will raise up those among us that shall go forth into His harvest. This church does and shall attempt to nurture and maintain fellowship among likeminded churches for cooperative missionary endeavors and may find opportunity to support missionaries from sister churches. We believe it to be our responsibility to go and teach all nations or offer our support to those likeminded brethren that are going. This support must consist of much prayer, financial support and personal

involvement and encouragement when opportunity allows. The following is a list of priorities describing the missions program of this church:

- A. We shall seek to support those that are like minded doctrinally (Amos 3:3).
- B. The importance of the local church and church planting must be central to the missionary endeavors of this church (Acts 14:23; 15:41).
- C. In an attempt to help bring to pass the prophetic vision of Revelation 7:9, we shall seek to send the Gospel forth to all nations, tribes, peoples and tongues (Matthew 24:14). We shall attempt especially to support the spread of the Gospel among the unreached people groups of the world.
- D. We will strive to be very involved in the lives and ministries of those we support financially (Philippians 1:5; 2:25-30; 4:14-16). Regular reporting, corporate and private praying and fasting as well as personal visitation when possible shall be the aim of this church.
- E. Though foreign missionaries may be very beneficial and in some cases absolutely necessary, especially where there is no Gospel witness, our missions program will also promote the principle that nationals need to be trained to go among their own people. This principle falls out directly from the commission of our Lord (Matthew 28:18-20).
- F. We shall seek to support those missionaries that we believe will tend to promote the faith, unity, burden, zeal and vision of this church.
- G. Missionary support shall be initiated or terminated by a three-fourths or 75 percent majority vote of those present and voting during a regularly scheduled meeting. The vote must be announced publicly during at least one prior meeting of the church. Due consideration must prevail if a family and/or relatives could adversely affect the congregational desired outcome of a vote.

ARTICLE XII: Church Officers

- A. **General Statement:** Jesus Christ alone is Head of the church (Colossians 1:18). He governs His church through office-bearers whom He appoints and who are endowed by His Spirit with the gifts and graces needed to accomplish their work. Office-bearers in the church are of two kinds: Elder(s) (also called pastors and overseers) and deacons (Philippians 1:1, 1 Timothy 3:1-13). It is the duty of the Elder(s) to seek and discover among the members of the church those to whom Christ the Lord has imparted the necessary gifts and qualifications for office-bearing. It is also the duty of those whom God has called and gifted to make their desire known to the Elder(s).

In addition, our church recognizes the administrative positions under this Constitution of Church Clerk and Treasurer. All officers, with the exception noted in Section B, Point 5 of this article, must be members of this church prior to assuming their responsibilities.

- B. **Elder(s)**

1. Plurality and Parity

Whereas a new or small congregation may actually be without an elder (Acts 16:40) or may only have a single individual with the gifts requisite to his being recognized as an elder, the Scriptures indicate that normally there should be a plurality of Elder(s) in the local church (Acts 20:17; Philippians 1:1; James 5:14). These men are called overseers because they have oversight of the assembly (Acts 20:28; Hebrews 13:17; 1 Peter 5:2). They are called the “pastor-teachers” given to the church “for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry for the edifying of the body of Christ” (Ephesians 4:11-12; Acts 20:28). There is parity among the Elder(s), each bearing authority in the deliberations and decisions made by the Elder(s). Though the Elder(s) shall be equal in authority they may be specialized in function as it is recognized that God gifts and burdens each man in different ways and measures. The plurality and parity of the Elder(s) guard the flock from the weakness of rule by one man and use the collective wisdom of several godly men to lead the flock of God.

2. Qualifications

The following is a list of the biblical qualifications, derived primarily from 1 Timothy 3:1-7 and Titus 1:5-9, that an elder must possess. No elder will be a perfect man, but if he is clearly and persistently lacking in any of these qualities, he cannot serve in the church as an elder.

- a. Blameless as a steward of God; above reproach (1 Timothy 3:2; Titus 1:6-7).
- b. Husband of one wife; a one-woman man (1 Timothy 3:2; Titus 1:6).
- c. Temperate (1 Timothy 3:2).
- d. Sober, vigilant (1 Timothy 3:2; Titus 1:8).
- e. Of good behavior; orderly; respectable (1 Timothy 3:2).
- f. Given to hospitality (1 Timothy 3:2; Titus 1:8).
- g. A lover of good men and good things (Titus 1:8).
- h. Apt and able to teach; he can exhort believers and refute false teaching (1 Timothy 3:2; Titus 1:9).
- i. Not addicted to wine (1 Timothy 3:3; Titus 1:7).
- j. Not violent; not pugnacious (1 Timothy 3:3; Titus 1:7).
- k. Patient, moderate, forbearing, gentle (1 Timothy 3:3; 2 Timothy 2:24).
- l. Not soon angry or quick-tempered (1 Timothy 3:3; Titus 1:7).
- m. Not a brawler; not contentious; not quarrelsome (1 Timothy 3:3; 2 Timothy 2:24-26; James 3:13-18).
- n. Just, fair (Titus 1:8).
- o. Holy, devout (Titus 1:8).
- p. Self-controlled; self-disciplined (Titus 1:8).
- q. Not covetous; not a lover of money; not greedy of base gain; good steward of all God gives (1 Timothy 3:3; Titus 1:7).
- r. Rules his own house well (1 Timothy 3:4; Titus 1:6).
- s. Having his children in submission with all reverence; having obedient, respectful, faithful children (1 Timothy 3:4-5; Titus 1:6).
- t. Not a novice; not a new or immature believer (1 Timothy 3:6).
- u. Has a good reputation or testimony with those outside the church (1 Timothy 3:7).
- v. Must serve, not by compulsion, but willingly. . .eagerly; must desire to serve (1 Peter 5:2; 1 Timothy 3:1).
- w. Not self-willed; not anxious to control others or have his own way (Titus 1:7; 1 Peter 5:3).
- x. An example to the flock (1 Peter 5:3; Titus 2:7).

The recognition of these qualifications by both the Elder(s) and the congregation will help prevent the infiltration of hirelings who forsake the flock and wolves who enter in to destroy the flock (John 10:12-13; Acts 20:28-30). Any man called to the Elder(s)hip must be able conscientiously to affirm his agreement with and support of the Confession and Constitution of this church.

Should he at any time move from his positions, he is under the spiritual and moral obligation to make this fact known to the Elder(s). In the event of irreconcilable differences, he may be required to step down from his office and/or leave the membership of the church.

3. Duties

All Elder(s) are pastors of the flock (Acts 20:28). They are responsible for the spiritual ministrations of the church, the implementation of discipline, the oversight of the souls of the members, and the oversight of all ministries, functions and resources of the church. They shall give account to God for all things in the church (Acts 20:28; Hebrews 13:17; 1 Peter 5:2-3). While every elder must be “apt to teach,” some will be more engaged in formal and

public teaching while others will be more engaged in private teaching, admonishing and governing (1 Timothy 5:17). Each elder must be able to defend the faith handed down to the saints as articulated in the Confession and Articles of Faith of this church. In all their activities, Elder(s) must be given to their primary responsibility of feeding the flock of God being mindful of the admonition to refrain from “being lords over God’s heritage” (1 Peter 5:1-4). While Elder(s) are overseers of the flock, they are themselves members of the flock. Therefore, each elder as an individual is under the oversight of his fellow Elder(s).

- a. **as good shepherds, the Elder(s) are bound to ministers to the flock displaying these characteristics:**
 1. pastoral intimacy – An elder must develop the relationships that undergird all other ministry toward individual members (John 10:11,14).
 2. pastoral tutelage – An elder must provide personal biblical instruction for increasing character, skills, knowledge, faith, love, and enthusiasm (Acts 20:20, 27; 1 Timothy 4:16; 2 Timothy 3:16-17; 4:1-2; Titus 3:1-2, 8).
 3. pastoral guidance – An elder must offer objective biblical direction through conflicts, reversals of life, distortions in thinking, and difficult decisions for those under his care (2 Timothy 3:16-17).
 4. pastoral consolation – An elder must give spiritual comfort during trials (2 Corinthians 1:3-7; 1 Thessalonians 5:14).
 5. pastoral guardianship – An elder must watch out for the enemy’s assaults on the weakness of the sheep. He must warn the sheep of danger and discipline them when they become rebellious (Acts 20:28-31; 1 Thessalonians 5:14; 1 Timothy 6:20; 2 Timothy 4:1- 5; Hebrews 13:17).
 6. pastoral intercession – An elder must pray with and for those entrusted to him (1 Samuel 12:23; Romans 1:9; Ephesians 1:15-21; Philippians 1:9-11; Colossians 1:9-12).
- b. as overseers the Elder(s) are responsible specifically but not limited to:
 1. examine and instruct prospective members
 2. examine all prospective candidates for offices and positions
 3. oversee the work of the deacons
 4. conduct worship services
 5. administer the ordinances
 6. equip the membership for the work of ministry
 7. encourage sound doctrine and practice
 8. admonish and correct error
 9. oversee the process of church discipline
 10. mobilize the church for missions at home and abroad
 11. ensure that all who minister the Word to the congregation share our fundamental convictions
 12. establish ministry positions and propose funding for new paid staff positions
 13. oversee the management of the financial resources of the church (see Section C.2.b. below – Deacons, Duties, Business Affairs)
- c. The Elder(s) shall elect a chairman of Elder(s)’ meetings and also elect one of their number to serve as moderator of members’ meetings. The Elder(s) shall also elect three members of the church to serve as President, Secretary and Treasurer of the Corporation to comply with non-profit corporation laws of Texas. The term of these offices will be one year each.
- d. All decisions of the Elder(s) shall be reached after prayerful consideration by unanimous vote in a spirit of humility, with each Elder regarding the others before himself.

4. Appointment of Elder(s)

- a. **The initial Elder of Providence Reformed Baptist Church shall be Bobby Paul**
- b. **Initiation of the Appointment Process:** As the recognition of candidate/s arise, the Elder(s) of Providence Reformed Baptist Church will initiate the process of identifying and examining the potential Elder/s. A man/ men will be considered for appointment if he/they appear/s to be biblically qualified and he/they appear/s to be doctrinally and philosophically compatible with the existing Elder(s).
- c. **Input from the Church:** The Elder(s) will initiate a written request to the members of Providence Reformed Baptist Church who know the man/men well, asking them to consider his/their qualifications. This will normally include the members of the church who are familiar enough with him/them to provide pertinent input. This letter will describe biblical qualifications for Elder(s) along with the duties an elder must be able and willing to perform.

Each member will be asked to consider the candidate/s in light of the biblical standard, and to indicate with their signature that they are aware of no biblical disqualification. If any member has concerns or objections, he or she should not sign the letter, but rather return it indicating the desire to speak with an Elder in private. If a disqualifying condition is verified, the man will not be considered further.

- d. **Examination of the elder nominee:** The Elder(s) will examine the candidate and his family through personal interviews and other means. The examination will be thorough, including scrutiny of the candidate's moral qualifications, his understanding and defense of sound doctrinal positions, his ability to teach, his philosophical compatibility with the Elder(s), his work ethic, his stewardship of all God puts under his care, including his finances, his motives for desiring Elder(s)hip, and his affection and concern for those who would be under his care. The examination process may include requests for written or recorded responses in some areas (i.e. clarification of doctrinal positions).
- e. **Confirmation from the Church:** When the Elder(s) are in unanimous agreement that the candidate is qualified and that he should be appointed as an elder, they will seek confirmation of their decision from the church, realizing that they are not infallible. At a members' meeting, regular or special, all members present will be asked to confirm, on a response form, their agreement with the Elder(s)' decision. Any members who indicate that they have remaining concerns will be asked to relate them to the Elder(s) in private. Even at this point, if any true disqualification is discovered, the appointment process will be stopped.
- f. **Final Determination:** While input from members and the confirmation from the church will be seriously considered, elder appointment is not a democratic process but rather a responsibility of the Elder(s). Everything carefully considered, the Elder(s) will make the final decision whether or not to appoint the man, knowing that an Elder who does not have the affirmation and confidence of the church will not be an effective leader.
- g. **Ordination of Elder(s):** Formal appointment will take place publicly. In a regular worship service or specially scheduled meeting of the church, the Elder(s) of the church will lay hands on the new Elder in the presence of the church, signifying their unanimous approval as well as their confidence that Christ, the Head of the church, is calling him into service as an Elder. The Elder(s) will pray for the new Elder and for the edification of the church through his leadership. Following this, the people shall be exhorted to esteem and obey those whom God has placed over them.

5. **Appointment of an Elder From Outside the Church**

The normal procedure in the New Testament for the election of Elder(s) is the process of recognition (Acts 14:23; 1 Timothy 3:1-13). For this reason, the Elder(s) and the congregation normally will look first among its own members for Elder(s); however, the Lord may present the opportunity for the church to acquire Elder(s) from outside the congregation. In such a case, extreme caution should be used to avoid introducing a hireling or a wolf into the flock of God (John 10:12-13; Acts 20:28-30). Consent must be secured from any individual being considered for the Elder(s)hip before his name is presented to the congregation for consideration. The nominee and date he will be presented for consideration will be announced on at least four consecutive weeks at regular worship services and in the church bulletin. From that point forward the above appointment process will be followed.

6. In the event that no Elder(s) exist in the church the deacons, as a body, shall oversee the procedure for the appointment of Elder(s). They should also seek the wisdom of other spiritually mature men in the church.

7. **Length of Service**

The Holy Spirit equips and places Elder(s) in the church (Acts 20:28), thus the church cannot arbitrarily fix either the number of Elder(s) or their term of service. Therefore, the term of service for Elder(s) is indefinite with allowances for termination of service under certain circumstances such as resignation, departure or termination because of discipline.

8. **Meetings**

The Elder(s) shall meet as needed, but typically, at least once per month.

The Elder(s) shall also include the deacons as requested.

All Elder(s)' meetings are open to all church members. However, conversations concerning spiritual issues about specific members will be restricted to Elder(s) only.

9. Quorum

A majority of the Elder(s) currently serving shall constitute a quorum.

C. Deacons

1. General Description Using Acts 6:1-7 as a Guide

The deacons' work is practical in nature; they are servants. But practical work becomes spiritual work when done for Christ and the kingdom. Their objective is to relieve the Elder(s) (originally the apostles) for the ministry of the Word, prayer, and oversight of the church. They are to be accountable to the Elder(s), their work is assigned by the Elder(s) and is not related to decision-making for the church as a whole. Some deacons are also gifted in other areas of ministry and are at liberty to use their gifts, i.e., Stephen and Philip. However, as deacons they function in a practical way. Deacons are not limited to practical service, but must be engaged in practical service to be deacons.

2. Duties

a. Ministry of Mercy

The ministry of mercy in our church and community is the responsibility of all members of our congregation (James 1:27). However, this is a special responsibility of the Diaconate (Acts 6:2-3). The deacons shall see that the sick, the sorrowing, the aged, and the feeble-minded receive spiritual and physical comfort. They shall minister the Word of God (Acts 8:35), administer this church's benevolence funds (as directed by the Elder(s)) (1 Timothy 3:8), and render counsel to those in need of assistance. They shall be vigilant for opportunities to do good, especially to the household of faith (Galatians 6:10).

b. Business Affairs

The deacons shall be ready to advise and to assist the Elder(s) in any service that shall support and promote the ministries of this church (1 Timothy 3:12). This includes assisting the Elder(s) with the business affairs of the church (1 Timothy 3:8). It shall be the responsibility of the Elder(s) or the Diaconate to prepare the church budget, annual reports and any other necessary business reports and receipts. Account balances, revenues, and expenses shall be monitored and maintained by the Elder(s) or deacons of the church and compiled into an annual financial report that shall be presented to the church at the annual business meeting. Upon agreement of the proposed budget, the Elder(s) will submit the budget to the congregation for affirmation. It will be the responsibility of the Elder(s) or the Diaconate to administer all aspects of the approved budget. The deacons shall also be required to monitor and make provision for the physical needs of Elder(s) supported by the church (1 Corinthians 9:7-14; Galatians 6:6-8; 1 Timothy 5:17). In addition, the duty of caring for and maintaining the church's property shall belong to the deacons.

c. Organization

The deacons shall organize themselves however the Elder(s) determine to best achieve the mission of the church. The Elder(s) or the deacons may designate any specific deacon or group of deacons to specialize in some particular diaconate function.

Meetings of the deacons shall be held only as needed to best fulfill their responsibilities.

The deacons shall meet with the Elder(s) as requested.

3. Election

The qualifications for deacons are listed in Acts 6:3 and Timothy 3:8-13. While physical abilities and skills may be an important characteristic for those holding this office, the Scriptures clearly reveal that the candidate's spiritual qualifications are of supreme importance.

Deacons will be appointed through the same process as Elder(s). see Section B.4. of this article.

D. Church Clerk

It shall be the duty of the Church Clerk to record the minutes of all regular and special members' meetings of the church, to preserve an accurate roll of the membership, and to render reports as requested by the Elder(s), the deacons or the church.

The Clerk shall be appointed by the Elder(s) and affirmed by the church to serve a term of one year.

In the absence or incapacity of the clerk the Elder(s) shall appoint a member to perform the duties of the Church Clerk.

For the purposes of compliance with the nonprofit corporation laws of Texas, the Church Clerk shall serve as the Secretary of the Corporation.

The Church Clerk shall ensure that dated copies of the most recent revision of this Constitution shall be available for all church members.

E. Treasurer

The Treasurer shall ensure that all funds and securities of the church are properly secured in such banks, financial institutions or depositories as appropriate. The Treasurer shall also be responsible for presenting a review of the account balances, revenues and expenses of the church at the annual members' meeting. The Treasurer shall also present the same review to the Elder(s) and make it available to all church members on a monthly basis. The responsibility may be delegated with the approval of the Elder(s). The Treasurer shall also ensure that full and accurate accounts of receipts and disbursements are kept in books belonging to the church, and that adequate controls are implemented to guarantee that all funds belonging to the church are appropriately handled by any officer, employee or agent of the church. The Treasurer shall render to the Elder(s) annually, or whenever they may require it, an account of all transactions and of the financial condition of the church.

For the purposes of compliance with the nonprofit corporation laws of Texas, the Treasurer shall serve as the Treasurer of the Corporation.

The Treasurer shall be appointed by the Elder(s), and affirmed by the church, and serve for a term of one year.

A. ARTICLE XIV: Ordination to the Gospel Ministry, Licensing and Commissioning

Ordination to the Gospel Ministry

Ordination refers to the unanimous recognition by the Elder(s) of a man's call to the ministry, preparation as a shepherd, and qualification to serve. Ordination shall be conferred for life, so long as the man continues to manifest the qualifications of the office.

B. Licensing

The license is issued by the Elder(s) and is given in recognition of a man's call to that ministry. Its aim is to allow a man to perform the ecclesiastical duties and functions of the church.

C. Commissioning

When local-church certification is required for ministry where ordination would be unnecessary or inappropriate, a person is commissioned by the Elder(s) to minister. This authorization continues as long as the opportunity to minister remains in effect and as long as the person maintains the qualifications for ministry.

ARTICLE XV: Dispute Resolution

Believing that the Bible commands Christians to make every effort to live at peace and to resolve disputes with each other in private or within the Christian Church (Matthew 18:15-20; 1 Corinthians 6:1-8), the church shall require its members to resolve conflict among themselves according to biblically based principles, without reliance on the secular courts. Consistent with its call to peacemaking, the church shall encourage the use of biblically based principles and the avoidance of suits of law or equity to resolve disputes. However, if the dispute is not settled by the members, it shall be brought before the Elder(s) whose resolution and decision shall be final.

ARTICLE XVI: The Church Property

- A. In the event of a division of this church, from which may God in His mercy save us, the property of this church shall belong to that group of such division as represent the largest portion of the church membership provided such group is loyal to the Confession and Constitution of this church; otherwise it shall belong to the group remaining loyal to the Confession and Constitution of this church though it may not be the largest group in such a division. Should any controversy arise as to whether such loyalty exists, the question shall be submitted to the Elder(s) of First Baptist Church of Clinton, Louisiana, and their decision shall be final.

- B. Should a condition arise at any time in the future when for any reason, the church work cannot continue, the church property shall be transferred to another church loyal to the Confession and purpose of Providence Reformed Baptist Church, as determined by the Elder(s).
- C. Should conditions arise where a consolidation with another church may be advisable, the Elder(s) shall be authorized by the church to negotiate the terms of such consolidation in so far as the property of this church is concerned.

ARTICLE XVII: Debt

Though borrowing and lending are not necessarily viewed as sin in the Scriptures (Matthew 5:42; Psalm 37:21; 112:5), debt is recognized as something to be avoided when possible (Proverbs 22:7). This church has and does affirm its belief that God is our ready Provider for all that He has determined for us to undertake (Philippians 4:19; James 1:17; Psalm 81:10). This church is not to take any debt upon itself (other than that which is paid in full on a monthly basis), except after diligently seeking the Lord through corporate discussion and prayer.