

CONSTITUTION & BYLAWS

OF

HERITAGE BAPTIST CHURCH, WAXAHACHIE, TEXAS

PREAMBLE

We, the members of the Heritage Baptist Church (Hereafter referred to as HBC) of Waxahachie, do ordain and establish the following Articles of this Constitution, to which we voluntarily and solemnly submit ourselves.

ARTICLE I: IDENTIFICATION

The name of this church shall be Heritage Baptist Church of Waxahachie. This church is a Texas not for profit corporation organized under the laws of the State of Texas for religious purposes.

ARTICLE II: PURPOSE

Heritage Baptist Church exists for the broad purpose of glorifying God and is the fundamental backbone of our ministry.

Statement: "HBC exists to spread a passion for the glory of God in all things, for the joy of all people!" (Ps 22:23, 1 Cor 6:20, 1 Cor 10:31)

The Heritage Baptist Church exists to glorify the God of the Scriptures by maintaining and promoting His worship both individually and corporately, by evangelizing sinners, and by edifying His saints. Therefore, we are committed to the proclamation of God's perfect Law and of the glorious Gospel of His grace through all the world, to the defense of that "faith which was once delivered unto the saints" (Jude 3), and to the pure and faithful celebration of the ordinances of the New Covenant.

ARTICLE III: MISSION

Statement: "The mission of Heritage Baptist Church is to develop disciples who *passionately pursue Christ Jesus.*"

Jesus clearly told the church what they were to be doing. This purpose is seen in both the Great Commission (Matthew 28:19-20) and the Great Commandment (Matthew 22:37-40)

- Developing Disciples of Christ who passionately **obey** according to the Great Commission. (Matthew 28:19-20... Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, *teaching them to observe* all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.)
- Developing Disciples of Christ who passionately **love** according to the Great Commandment. (Matthew 22:37-40 – "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind...and you shall love your neighbor as yourself.")

Jesus gave us His mission to make disciples calling them to passionately pursue a relationship of love and obedience with the Lord Jesus and love others as themselves.

ARTICLE IV: DOCTRINAL STATEMENT

We regard the “Baptist Confession of Faith of 1689” and “Doctrinal Statement of Heritage Baptist Church” (Appendix A) as excellent, though not inspired, expressions of the teaching of the Word of God. The Word of God is the supreme authority in all matters of faith, morals, and order. We adopt these historical documents as assistance in controversy, a confirmation in faith, and a means of edification in righteousness.

ARTICLE V: AFFILIATION

Heritage Baptist Church has chosen to voluntarily, but not exclusively affiliate itself with the Baptist Missionary Association of America (BMAA). Fundamental to this affiliation is the understanding that the BMAA is a fellowship of autonomous, biblically sound churches that choose to work together to further God’s Kingdom. This affiliation includes Ellis Hill Association, the BMA of Texas, and the BMA of America for the purpose of joint missions and ministry efforts.

ARTICLE VI: MEMBERSHIP

Section 1: Requirements for Membership

- A. To be eligible for membership, all persons (Acts 5:14; 8:3,12) must demonstrate repentance toward God and the fruits thereof (Acts 26:20), as well as that faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ (Acts 20:21) which produces godly works (Eph. 2:8-10; James 2:18, 22). He must be scripturally baptized as a believer and profess agreement with the essential “non-negotiable” doctrines of the Christian faith listed below. Furthermore, he must not be under the biblically warranted (Matt. 18:17,18; 1 Cor. 5:11-13; 2 Thess. 3:6,14,15; 3 John 9,10; 2 Cor. 2:6-8) corrective discipline of a genuine church.
- **The Trinity:** One God & Three Persons - God the Father, God the Son, God the Holy Spirit. (Deut 6:4, Mt 28:19, 2 Cor 13:14)
 - **The Deity of Jesus Christ.** (Jn 1:1-4, Jn 20:28, Heb 1:1-4, Tit 2:13, 2 Pet 1:1, Rom 9:5)
 - **The Virgin Birth of Jesus Christ:** The uniting of full deity and full humanity in one person. (Matt 1:18-25, Luke 1:27, 34)
 - **The Sinless Life of Jesus Christ.** (2 Cor 5:21, Heb 4:15, 7:26, 1 Pet 1:19, 2:22, 3:18, 1 Jn 2:1, 3:5)
 - **Salvation is by Grace through Faith in Christ alone, not by works!** (Ephesians 2:8-9, Romans 4, Galatians 2:16)
 - **The Substitutionary and Atoning Death of Jesus Christ.** (Rom 5:8, Heb 9:25-28, 1 John 4:10, 2 Cor 5:18-21, 1 Peter 1:18-19)
 - **The Bodily Resurrection of Jesus Christ.** (Matt 28:1-20, Luke 24:1-53, John 20:1-21:25)
 - **The Inspiration, Inerrancy and Authority of the Bible as the Word of God.** (2 Peter 1:21, 2 Tim 3:16, Ps 12:6, John 17:17)
- B. Church members must be in submission to the ordained rule of the church to which they belong (Heb. 13:17). He who cannot intelligently and freely submit to a church's government should not belong to that church.

- C. If one who is already a member of the church at any time concludes that he no longer satisfies the requirements for membership, he is under obligation to inform the elders of that fact.

Section 2: Types of Membership

- A. **Regular Members:** All who are received into the membership of the church according to the procedures set forth in Section 3 of this Article and who do not come under the corrective discipline of the church as set forth in Article VI, shall be considered regular members in good standing and entitled to all the rights and privileges of membership in the church (Acts 2:37-47).
- B. **Inactive Members:** A member of this church who shall absent himself from the services of this Church for a period of one (1) year, without plausible reason or excuse, shall be removable from the Church membership at the recommendation of the Council of Elders. Prior to removal every effort shall be made by the Elders to encourage the inactive member to return to the fellowship and examine themselves to see whether they are in the faith according to 2 Corinthians 13:5. The inactive members will be removed from the Church membership by the Church with a 75 % affirmative vote by qualified members present in a formal business meeting.

Section 3: Reception into Membership

- A. The Elder Council, or their designees, will interview all persons making application for church membership in order to establish that the candidate has a biblical testimony of salvation, has been scripturally baptized and agrees to accept the responsibilities of membership (according to section 1 of this article). Because people often attempt to join the church on any given Sunday, this interview may be performed *after* their initial “public” coming. Not until this interview is complete and the Elder council gives their approval will the candidates become official members of HBC. If the elders feel it is necessary to investigate the candidates standing in his/her prior church, they will have the freedom to do so. Furthermore, where it is possible and appropriate, a letter of transfer will be requested. Once accepted, the name of the new member shall be added to the HBC roll. If the new member had not been presented to the church officially, they will be presented during a regular worship service.
- B. All applicants will be *required* to go through the “Discover Heritage” new member class presented at least quarterly by one of the Elders.

Section 4: Termination of Membership

- A. **By Transfer:** Any member who desires to unite with another church of like faith shall request a letter of recommendation. This letter shall be granted by the elders if the member is not under church discipline. A list of all letters granted shall be available to the church upon request.
- B. **Removal from Roll:** Members who move outside the area and fail to send for their letter of recommendation within one (1) year shall be removed from the membership role according to Section 2, Paragraph B of this Article. In addition, if members join a church that does not send for letters of recommendation, their names shall be removed from the membership roll upon confirmation of their new affiliation.

C. **By Exclusion:** According to the teaching of Holy Scripture, a church must cut off from its fellowship and visible membership any person who teaches or insists on holding to false and heretical doctrine (essential cardinal doctrines), or who blatantly or persistently conducts himself in a manner inconsistent with his Christian profession, or who persists in disturbing the unity or peace of the church (Matt. 18:15ff; 1 Cor. 5:1f; Rom 16:17; Titus 3:10, 11). The procedure to be followed in such exclusion is set forth in Section D, of this Article.

D. **Process of Church Discipline:**

1) **Purpose:** The purpose of church discipline is to glorify God by maintaining (1) purity in the church (1 Cor. 5:6), (2) protecting believers by deterring sin (1Tim. 5:20), and (3) promoting the spiritual welfare of the offending believer by calling him or her to return to biblical standards of doctrine and conduct. (Gal. 6:1)

2) **Process:** Members and all other professing Christians who regularly attend or fellowship at HBC who err in biblical doctrine or biblical conduct shall be subject to discipline according to Matthew 18:15-18 (Such person hereafter will be referred to as an "Erring Person."). Before such discipline reaches its final conclusion:

- It shall be the duty of any HBC member who has knowledge of the Erring Person's unbiblical beliefs or biblical misconduct to warn and to correct such Erring Person in private, seeking his or her repentance and restoration. If the Erring Person does not heed this warning, then,
- The warning member shall again go to the Erring Person accompanied by one or two witnesses to warn and correct such Erring Person, seeking his or her repentance and restoration. If said Erring Person still refuses to heed this warning, then,
- It shall be brought to the attention of the Elder Council. (It is understood that this process will continue to conclusion, whether the Erring Person leaves HBC or otherwise seeks to withdraw from membership to avoid the discipline process.) The elders will appropriately investigate any allegation brought by one church member against another. If these allegations are warranted, two or more of the Elder Council will contact the Erring Person and seek his or her repentance and restoration. If the Erring Person refuses to be restored, the matter will be presented to the Church by the Elder Council. Upon a 75% ballot vote of approval from the qualified Church members present on a Sunday morning special called meeting (Article VIII, Section 3), the erring person will be removed from the membership according to Matthew 18. However, even at this point, HBC will pray for and continue to seek the restoration of the Erring Person.

3) **Reinstatement.** If such dismissed member heeds the warning, demonstrates repentance and requests reinstatement, he or she shall be publicly restored to membership through the affirmation of the Elder Council and notification of HBC.

Section 5: Records of Membership. The church clerk shall keep a file of all past and present members. This file shall have two divisions: regular members, and inactive members. The file of former members shall include the date and reason church membership was terminated, as well as any other necessary information (see Article VI, Sections 3 & 4).

Section 6: Responsibilities of the Membership. No member will be asked to do more than what Scripture clearly requires of them. It should be the desire of every member to submit to what the Word of God expects of us. Following is a general guideline:

- A. **To live holy lives:** Each member has a duty according to Scripture to live a holy life as commanded so as to exhibit genuine faith and a genuine “new birth” in the Lord Jesus Christ (1 Pet 1:15-16, 2 Pet 3:1, 1 John 1:6). According to Titus 2, it is vital that each member live holy lives in order that (1) “the Word of God may not be dishonored (v. 5), (2) “that the opponent may be put to shame, having nothing bad to say about us” (v. 8), and (3) that we “may adorn the doctrine of God our Savior in every respect” (v. 10). This is accomplished by being faithful daily in the spiritual disciplines essential to the Christian life and faithful attendance to worship services and the preaching of God’s Word necessary for spiritual growth (Hebrews 10:25).
- B. **To protect the unity of the Church:** Each member of the church is responsible to protect the unity of the Church (Rom 15:5). This is accomplished by acting with love toward each other (1 Peter 1:22), serving one another and by refusing to gossip (Eph 4:29). It also requires following and submitting to the leadership of the elders as they strive to serve the Lord and lead the Church in the Lord’s will (Hebrews 13:7, 17)
- C. **To serve & share in the ministry of the Church:** Each member is a blessing to the Body of Christ and has been sovereignly endowed from the Lord with a spiritual gift that is necessary for the Church to operate. Each member has a duty to discover what their gifting and talents are and use them for the support of the Church and the testimony of Christ. Every member should be willing to serve when called upon by the Church leadership if they are not providentially hindered from doing so.
- D. **To support the testimony of the Church:** Each member should support the testimony of the Church by faithfully attending worship services, and attending business meetings. Members also have a responsibility to support by continually praying for the ministry and the leaders of the Church. Each member should also support the Church financially by tithing and giving regularly with joy, faith and love for the Lord Jesus and His continual work through His Bride, the Church. Furthermore, each member should be helping the growth of the church by welcoming visitors who attend and by inviting others to worship with us.

Section 7: Privileges of the Membership

- A. **Decision Making:** HBC decisions and affirmations are made by qualified members (Article VIII, Section 5). To participate in such decisions, a member must be at least 18 years old and be in attendance at such meeting.
- B. **Office Holding:** Every qualified member is eligible for consideration as a candidate for offices of leadership (Elder & Deacon) at HBC, subject to scriptural qualifications. (Acts 6:1-7, Eph 4:11, 1 Tim 3) Nonmembers are not allowed to hold any office in the Church. Serving as an Elder or Deacon requires a minimum of a year of faithful attendance before a candidate will be considered according to 1 Timothy 5:22 (see also Article IX, Section 5, & Article X, Section 4).
- C. **Interest in HBC Property:** Members of HBC have no property rights in the property of HBC and upon termination of membership, shall not be entitled to any interest in HBC’s assets.

- D. **Leadership/Teaching/Ministry/Service:** Leadership in the Church is a very serious duty, not to be taken lightly (James 3:1). New members are required to participate faithfully for 6 months before leading out in any church ministry including the following: Teaching a class of any type, or leading a ministry team (Missions, Hospitality, Worship, etc.). Other ministries such as participating in the choir, or helping are not considered leadership ministries and can be participated in by non-members.

ARTICLE VII ORDINANCES

There are two ordinances of special significance that our Lord has commanded us to observe, namely, Baptism and the Lord's Supper. Neither of them has saving merit, nor is any grace imparted to the recipient through the water of Baptism or through the bread and the cup of the Supper. These ordinances are not means of "special grace," but they are special "means of grace" and powerful aids to the faith of the believers who participate in them.

ARTICLE VIII CORPORATE CHURCH-WIDE BUSINESS MEETINGS

Section 1: Annual Meeting. There shall be an annual meeting of HBC within forty-five (45) days of the end of its fiscal year at its principal place of worship in Waxahachie, Texas, at which time the Elder Council shall provide the following:

- A. **Yearly Budget:** The current year's financial report will be presented to HBC. A proposed yearly budget will also be presented and approved by a majority vote of the body of HBC, present at the meeting.
- B. **Past & Future Ministries of the Church:** The goal of the Elders in this meeting is to present a detailed vision of both successes and challenges within the ministry at HBC. Detailed presentations of the activities of HBC during the current year will be reviewed. Furthermore issues, events, and activities that are anticipated for the coming year will be discussed. HBC members shall have the opportunity to discuss such issues as they may consider important at this meeting. The Elder Council will moderate this "family meeting," in order to provide explanations, answers, insights, and comments as appropriate. The Elder Council shall seek counsel, insights and guidance from the members of HBC, carefully considering their opinions and desires. (See Section 7 of this Article for decisions and affirmations reserved to HBC membership.) The minutes of this meeting will be published to the HBC body by the Elder Council.

Section 2: Quarterly Meetings. Business meetings shall be conducted quarterly for the purpose of reviewing financial reports and any other business that is necessary. These meetings shall be conducted during April, July, & October for the previous quarter's review. The annual meeting will serve as the last quarterly meeting.

Section 3: Special Meetings. Special meetings of HBC membership shall be held at its principal place of worship in Waxahachie, Texas. The Elder Council may call a special meeting. Also, the Teaching Pastor, one third of the Elder Council membership, or ten (10) members of HBC can cause a special meeting to be called by the Elder Council within thirty (30) days of such request.

Section 4: Notice. Notice of the time of these business meetings shall be published in writing, in a church-wide publication, to allow each member an opportunity to reasonably know of the meeting.

This official notice must be published at least fourteen (14) days prior to the meeting and not more than thirty (30) days before the date of such meeting. If the place of the meeting is to be at a location other than the principal worship center of HBC, such location must be provided in the notice. The notice shall state the time and date of the meeting. Notice of a Special Meeting shall state the purpose of the meeting.

Section 5: Presiding Official. The Elder Council shall provide the moderation of all such meetings or their designated appointee.

Section 6: Voting. The Elder Council will present issues calling for a decision of the HBC body. These decisions shall be voted upon by the “Qualified Church Members.” A Qualified Church Member is any person at least 18 years of age who has been received into church membership and is not under the action of church discipline (Article VI, Section 4, Paragraph D). Each Qualified Church Member shall be entitled to cast one vote. The method of seeking affirmation shall be determined by the Elder Council & moderator of the meeting.

Section 7: Matters to be considered by HBC. The Elder Council will secure the affirmation of the HBC body regarding the following independently by vote:

- A. Selection, rebuke, or dismissal of the Teaching Pastor
- B. Selection, rebuke, or dismissal of deacons and elders
- C. Selection of pastoral staff members
- D. Building and facilities--major decisions relating to HBC properties
- E. Financial budgets of HBC
- F. Amending the Constitution (Article XIX, Section 1); and,
- G. Other matters in which the Elder Council feel led to seek the members’ advice and counsel.

ARTICLE IX - ELDERS

Section 1: Plurality of Leadership Statement

“Be on guard for yourselves and for all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood.”
(Acts 20:28 NASB)

“For this reason I left you in Crete, that you might set in order what remains, and appoint elders in every city as I directed you.”
(Titus 1:5 NASB)

The Scripture teaches the plurality of Elder leadership within each local body. These leaders are known by three titles, each of which reveals a separate aspect of their function. All three titles are used in 1 Peter 5:1-2 - “Therefore, I exhort the **elders** among you, as your fellow **elder** and witness of the sufferings of Christ, and a partaker also of the glory that is to be revealed, **shepherd** the flock of God among you, exercising **oversight** not under compulsion, but voluntarily, according to the will of God; and not for sordid gain, but with eagerness.”

They are first called “**elders**.” An elder (Greek “presbuteros”) is a godly leader, whose wisdom and maturity are respected by God’s people. Next, these are men who give oversight. That is, they are “**overseers**” (Greek “episkapos”). An overseer is a person who is a good manager of resources and guardian of people. Finally, these leaders are called “**shepherds**,” which is also translated as “**pastors**” (Greek “poimain”). This word refers to the role of caring for and leading the flock.

It is important to note that within the New Testament model of church organization, authority for leadership is not granted to just one individual pastor, nor is it given as democratic rule by the congregation. Instead, the Scripture states that authority for leadership is conducted by a plurality of leaders who are appointed by the church and accountable to God (Heb 13:17). The Scripture further teaches that when the elders are followed by the church, both the church body and individual Christians will flourish (Heb. 13:17; 1 Thess. 5:12-13; 1 Pet. 5:1-5; Acts 20:28). These elders do not form a separated “clergy class” of Christians. Instead, the elders, some of whom fill church vocational roles, others non-vocational roles, are brothers with the people, always seeking God’s best for the members of the church (Acts 14:23; Titus 1:5; 2 Cor. 8:19).

Section 2: General Scope. Heritage Baptist Church seeks to be a New Testament church committed to the teachings of the Bible. No other authority or tradition is to guide the means, faith or structure of the Lord Jesus Christ’s Church. The administrative and pastoral structure for a New Testament church is to utilize a plurality of leadership. HBC will follow this scriptural example. To achieve this New Testament model, HBC requires qualified men to serve as an Elder Council. These men must meet specific moral and spiritual qualifications before they serve (1 Tim. 3:1-7). They must be publicly installed into office (1 Tim. 5:22; Acts 14:23). They must be motivated and empowered by the Holy Spirit to do their work (Acts 20:28). After review, examination and appointment, as noted in Section 5 hereof, men affirmed by HBC to serve as elders shall constitute the “Elder Council.” To effectively perform their duties, the Elder Council needs the prayers, support (1 Tim. 5:17-18) and assent of members of HBC (Heb. 13:17). HBC is called upon to honor their Elder Council and to protect them against false accusations (1 Tim. 5:19). Finally, if an elder falls into sin, and continues in sin, he must be publicly rebuked (1 Tim. 5:20).

Section 3: Responsibilities. The New Testament clearly teaches that the church is to be led by a plurality of godly men. Their assignment falls into five categories. First, these men are given both the responsibility and authority to skillfully and lovingly **lead** the flock (Acts 20:28, 1 Tim 5:17, 1 Pet 5:2, Titus 1:7, 1 Thess 5:12). Second, they are to **feed** the flock, offering accurate and insightful teaching of the Scripture (Titus 1:9, 1 Tim 3:2, 5:17-18). Third, they are to **care** for the flock (Acts 20:35, James 5:14). This care is shown in the love, concern, prayers, ministry, and skillful management of church resources. Fourth, they are to **protect** the flock from harmful influences and beliefs (Acts 20:28, Titus 1:5,9, Acts 15:6, Heb 13:17). Fifth, they must be **examples** to the flock in both character and doctrine (1 Peter 5:3, Heb 13:7).

- A. Provide **leadership** to the flock (Acts 20:28; 1 Thess. 5:12; Heb. 13:17)
 - in practical matters (Acts 6:1-6; 11:29-30),
 - in matters of doctrine (Acts 15; 16:4), and
 - in matters of discipline and character (Heb. 13:17)
- B. **Feed** the flock (1 Tim. 3:2; 5:17; 1 Thess. 5:12; Titus 1:9)
- C. Lovingly **care** for the flock (James 5:14-15; Acts 20:35; Heb. 13:17)
- D. **Protect** the flock (1 Pet. 5:2-3; Acts 20:28)
- E. Prove to be **Examples** to the flock (1 Pet 5:3, Heb 13:7)

Section 4: Qualifications. Each elder must have a “calling” from God to this office. The qualifications of an elder are described in 1 Tim. 3:1-7 and Titus 1:6-9. He must be:

- A. Blameless as a steward of God; above reproach (1 Tim. 3:2; Titus 1:6-7);
- B. Husband of one wife (non-divorced); a one-woman man (1 Tim. 3:2; Titus 1:6);
- C. Temperate, sober, vigilant (1 Tim. 3:2);
- D. Sober-minded, prudent (1 Tim. 3:2; Titus 1:8);
- E. Of good behavior; orderly, respectable (1 Tim. 3:2);
- F. Given to hospitality (1 Tim. 3:2; Titus 1:8);
- G. Apt to teach; able to teach; he can exhort believers and refute false teaching (1 Tim. 3:2; Titus 1:9);
- H. Not given to much wine (1 Tim. 3:3; Titus 1:7);
- I. Not violent; not pugnacious (1 Tim. 3:3; Titus 1:7);
- J. Patient, moderate, forbearing, gentle (1 Tim. 3:3);
- K. Not a brawler; uncontentious; not soon angry or quick-tempered (1 Tim. 3:3; Titus 1:7);
- L. Not covetous; not a lover of money; not greedy of base gain (1 Tim. 3:3; Titus 1:7);
- M. Manages his own house well. His children are faithful, not accused of rebellion to God (1 Tim. 3:4; Titus 1:7);
- N. Not a novice; not a new convert (1 Tim. 3:6);
- O. Has a good report or reputation with people outside the church (1 Tim. 3:7);
- P. Not self-willed (Titus 1:7);
- Q. Lover of what is good (Titus 1:8);
- R. Just, fair (Titus 1:8);
- S. Holy, devout (Titus 1:8); and,
- T. Self-controlled (Titus 1:8).

Section 5: Selection

- A. The Elder Council shall seek the Lord’s leadership regarding the number of additional elders needed to minister at HBC. While the Bible does not give instruction as to the number of elders a church should have, it is recognized that there must be a plurality. A determination of the need for additional elders should be based upon the *work* of God in the HBC family and the *availability* of those with a God-given desire to serve as an elder.
- B. Men who aspire to be elders, due to the calling of God, should express that desire to an elder or the Teaching Pastor of HBC. (1 Tim. 3:1) All candidates must have been a member of HBC for at least one year before they are considered, except for the Teacher-Pastor who might be called from a different location by the church (NEW).
- C. A potential elder will be examined by the Elder Council in order to discover his calling and qualifications. If the Elder Council and the man, in search of God’s will for his life in this matter, are of like mind as to his calling, the Elder Council shall recommend him to the HBC body to be affirmed as an elder. The appointment of a man to serve as an elder is a solemn and serious matter (1 Tim. 5:21-22). Therefore, the Elder Council shall earnestly, without any haste, bias or partiality, seek God’s will with regard to the potential elder’s appointment to the Elder Council.
- D. In a Special Meeting of HBC (Article VIII, Section 3), the Elder Council shall recommend the potential elder to HBC. A three-fourths (75%) ballot vote of the qualified Church Members in attendance is required for affirmation of the recommendation. (1 Tim. 5:21, 22, 24, 25)

Section 6: Initial Elders or Reconstruction of Elder Council

- A. **Initial Elders.** The Pastor-Teacher along with the Deacons and ministerial staff shall make up an Elder Examination Team to seek the Lord's leadership, regarding the first Elder Council. This team shall make this recommendation to HBC in a Special Meeting (Article VIII, Section 3) for HBC's determination of affirmation. This team will review scriptural teachings pertaining to church elders and prayerfully recommend men to serve as elders to form the initial Elder Council. Once a plurality of Elders has been affirmed by HBC, the Elder Examination Team's function will be assumed by the Elder Council, and the Elder Examination team shall be dissolved.
- B. **Elder Examination Team.** When the Elder Examination Team reaches unanimous agreement, they will seek the affirmation of HBC in a Special Meeting. A three-fourths (75%) affirmative ballot vote of the Qualified Church Members attending the Special Meeting is required to affirm a person to be an elder. These elders shall form the Elder Council and shall begin the process prescribed in Article IX, Section 5, seeking to appoint additional elders as God directs.
- C. **Reconstitution of Elders.** In the event that it is necessary to reconstitute the Elder Council, an Elder Examination Team shall consist of the Pastor-Teacher, ministerial staff and Deacons. This team will research and review the scriptural teachings on church elders and prayerfully recommend elders to HBC following Section 4 & 5 of this Article. Once HBC has affirmed a plurality of elders to the reconstituted Elder Council, the Elder Examination Team shall be dissolved.

Section 7: Term of Office. Each Elder shall be called by the membership of the Church to a term of three years. As the Lord leads, an Elder can serve as many consecutive terms in office upon affirmation by the Church. In order to serve a consecutive term, a vote of reaffirmation by the church is required with a three-fourths (75%) affirmative ballot vote during the annual meeting. In the event that the church does not reaffirm a particular elder for any reason that does not merit "removal" according to Article IV, Section 12, the Church body is not to consider this Elder disciplined but should affirm their love for him. Additionally, by the improper actions of an elder, he can be removed from office (Article IX, Section 12).

Section 8: Number of Elders. As God calls men to serve in this office of Elder, they shall be considered, examined, and utilized in service. The number of elders is not determined; it is a matter of the revealed will of God. The Bible indicates a plurality of leadership, which implies more than one leader. However, among the Elder Council, non-vocational elders must make up the majority of the council.

Section 9: Agreement with the Doctrinal Statement. All elders must be in complete agreement with the "non-negotiable" doctrines of Christianity (Article VI, Section 1), and in substantial agreement with the expanded doctrinal statement of the Church (Appendix A).

Section 10: Authority & Responsibilities. The Elder Council shall have the authority and responsibility to oversee the spiritual and administrative activities of HBC unless otherwise reserved to the HBC body elsewhere in these Bylaws. This authority is able to be delegated by the Elder Council. In summary, the Elder Council is to shepherd the "flock" of God (1 Pet. 5:1-5). It is recognized by HBC and Elder Council that there is only one Lord and Master in God's Church: the Lord Jesus Christ. All others are His servants. (Philippians 2:5-11)

Section 11: Training & Education. There are no specific requirements for formal training or education to be an elder. Becoming an elder is a matter of God’s preparation of the man and His call to the place of service. However, it will be the responsibility of the elder council to implement training for the purpose of raising up future elder candidates.

Section 12: Ordination. Elder candidates, who have been affirmed shall be ordained (set apart for service), by the Elder Council in the presence of the membership.

Section 13: Discipline & Removal. Any elder may be removed from office if he becomes incapacitated, spiritually unqualified or his inability to serve is established in the minds of the remainder of the Elder Council. Removal of a particular elder including the Pastor-Teacher must be brought before the Church with a majority vote of the qualified church members voting. HBC has the right to rebuke an elder due to a continuing sin in his life, based upon the procedure established in 1 Tim. 5:19-20. HBC also has the right to remove an entire Elder Council in a Special Meeting (Article VIII, Section 3), with a majority vote of the qualified Church Members voting. The Teaching Pastor is not automatically removed with the removal of the Elder Council.

Section 14: Meetings & Organization. The Elder Council shall establish written policies and procedures for the conducting of their activities. All meetings shall have written or other-wise recorded minutes of the matters considered. These minutes shall become a part of the permanent records of the Elder Council.

Section 15: Trustees. The Elder Council shall function as the trustees of HBC. They manage HBC property, both real and personal, as fiduciaries. They shall represent HBC in all of its legal matters. Other HBC members may be appointed by the Elder Council to be Trustees as necessary.

ARTICLE X DEACONS

Section 1: General Scope. Deacons are the servant-ministers of the church. Their purpose is to relieve the elders of the multitude of practical duties of caring for the flock. Deacons are to give their primary attention toward caring for the congregation’s physical welfare. Deacons have the honor of modeling, for the local church and the lost world, God’s compassion, kindness, mercy, and love. As the church compassionately cares for people’s needs, the world sees a visible display of Christ’s love, which will draw some people to the Savior. Deacons are to be an example of commitment, unity, and harmony in their service.

Section 2: Duties & Responsibilities. The Deacons are to effectively and carefully administer the church’s charitable activities. They shall oversee the collecting and counting of funds, and be the distributors of relief and agents of mercy. They help the poor, the jobless, the sick, the widowed, the elderly, the homeless, the shut-in, and the disabled. They comfort, protect, encourage people, and help to meet their needs. Although they do in many ways meet spiritual needs of those whom they serve, their primary service is related to physical needs. Specific duties include, but are not limited to:

- A. Service to the physical needs of the membership exhibiting the love and compassion of Christ. Specific attention is to be given to widows and widowers, the needy, and the aged. Collection and administration of the benevolent fund is included.

- B. Assisting the Elder Council in the preparation and serving of the Lord's Supper to the membership.
- C. Other such duties and responsibilities shall be determined by the Elder Council.

Section 3: Qualifications. Deacons must be members in good standing of HBC and possess the qualifications stated in I Timothy 3:8-10, 12-13. These qualifications are listed below:

- A. A man of dignity. (1 Tim 3:8)
- B. Not double-tongued. (1 Tim 3:8)
- C. Not addicted to much wine. (1 Tim 3:8)
- D. Not fond of sordid gain. (1 Tim 3:8)
- E. Holding to the mystery of the faith with a clear conscience. (1 Tim 3:9)
- F. Tested (1 Tim 3:10)
- G. Beyond reproach. (1 Tim 3:10)
- H. Husbands of only one wife (non-divorced). (1 Tim 3:12)
- I. Good managers of their children and their own households. (1 Tim 3:12)

Section 4: Selection. As needed, nominations will be made by a cooperative effort from both the Elder Council and Deacon body, annually, from those members in good standing, who are perceived to meet the qualification of deacon and have proved themselves to have a heart to serve others. After examination by the Elder Council those whom they have determined to be qualified and who confirm that they sense the Lord's calling to serve as a deacon will be nominated in a Special Meeting (Article VIII, Section 3) for the purpose of affirming the deacon candidates. All candidates must have been a member of HBC for at least one year before they are considered. Individual deacon candidates will be affirmed to serve by a three-fourths majority (75%) ballot vote of all qualified Church Members voting present at the meeting.

Section 5: Ordination. Deacon candidates, who have been affirmed shall be ordained (set apart for service), by the Elder Council in the presence of the membership.

Section 6: Transition Period. Deacons who are active at the time of the adoption of these By-laws, shall continue to serve their previously established term of service. At the completion of their term, continuance of service will be as stated in Section 7 of this Article. Deacons, who have less than six months lapse in active service at the time of adoption of these Bylaws, may be recommended for continuance of service, according to the provisions of Section 7.

Section 7: Term of Office. The initial term of office of deacon shall be three years. Consecutive terms are acceptable and encouraged, for those who are serving well as deacons. At the completion of their three-year term of service, with the recommendation of the Deacon Officers and the Deacon's affirmation that God's leading is for them to continue serving as an active deacon, the Deacon Officers will present the names of those deacons, whom they recommend to continue to serve, to the Elder Council for concurrence. Deacons recommended and approved for continuance of active service will not require reaffirmation by a vote of the membership. Following any lapse of service by a deacon, the procedures stated in Section 4 will be followed for return to active service.

Section 8: Number of Deacons. The number of active deacons will be as determined by the Deacon Officers with the concurrence of the Elder Council.

Section 9: Training & Education. No special education or training is required to serve as a deacon. The deacon must have a heart to serve others and be committed to work together with the other deacons in fulfilling the deacon ministry.

Section 10: Discipline & Removal. A deacon may be removed from active service upon failure to meet the qualifications stated in Section 3 or for reasons as stated in Article IX, Section 12, Discipline and Removal of an Elder. Removal of a Deacon from active service other than by completion of a term of service or resignation shall be by action of the Elder Council at the recommendation of the Deacon Officers.

Section 11: Meetings & Organization. Deacons shall meet regularly for prayer, Bible study and discussion of the fulfillment of the duties and responsibilities of deacons. Frequency of meetings shall be as determined by the Deacon Officers. A chairman of the Deacons will be selected from among the Deacons on a as needed basis. The Deacon Officers shall prepare written policies and procedures for submission to the Elder Council for concurrence. These shall be submitted to the Elder Council within one year from the adoption of these Bylaws.

ARTICLE XI MINISTRY TEAMS/COMMITTEES

Section 1: General. HBC is committed to accomplishing its stated goals through the ministry of its members. To accomplish these goals, HBC is determined to organize into “Teams” to be more effective. Teams are focused upon accomplishing a stated or determined goal, or set of goals, to fulfill the ministry that God has called those participating to do.

Section 2: Empowerment. Teams organize and function under policies and procedures established by the Elder Council.

Section 3: Ministry. Teams perform the ministry best when it is performed by a plurality. Teams are the basic organizing units of HBC to accomplish its goals within the guidelines of our Purpose Statement. Teams are not policy-setting entities. Rather, they are the “hands and feet” of the body of Christ. These teams devise and carry out the actions to further determine HBC ministries. HBC policies and procedures provide a framework within which teams successfully operate.

Section 4: Dissolution. Teams may be dissolved upon a determination of the Elder Council.

ARTICLE XII THE TEACHING PASTOR

Section 1: Selection. In the event that HBC is without its Teaching Pastor, the Elder Council will act as a search group to seek the Lord’s will regarding the Teaching Pastor. If they desire they can chose other qualified members of the congregation to assist them in this process. When they are unanimous in their recognition of God’s leadership toward a candidate, they will seek the affirmation of the members of HBC in a Special Meeting (Article VIII, Section 3). A vote by written ballot of at least three-fourths (75%) majority of all Qualified Church Members voting is required to call a Teaching Pastor (Eph. 4:11).

Section 2: The Nature of the Office. It goes without saying that the Teaching Pastor will be a “Leader among Leaders.” However, the Teaching Pastor is only one elder among the many elders of equals.

Section 3: Term of Office. The Teaching Pastor shall remain in office an indefinite period of time subject to the following reservation: If at any time the Elder Council secures a majority vote among the council members (excluding the Teaching Pastor) to remove the Teaching Pastor from his position, they can make a recommendation to the Church body. Only after a majority ballot vote of HBC in a Special Meeting can the Teaching Pastor be dismissed. Grounds for dismissal would include grave doctrinal error or moral sin. The Teaching Pastor shall give notice of his resignation to HBC, after having informed the Elder Council.

Section 3: Duties. In addition to his shepherding role, as an elder the Teaching Pastor's primary responsibility is the ministry of the Word and prayer, in order to provide strategic leadership and vision to the body. He is called to help believers mature in their faith, through insightful and accurate presentation of biblical truths, equipping them to be the true "ministers" of the body. Because of these primary roles, the ministry of the Word, prayer, and his leadership, the Teaching Pastor will need to prioritize his time, focusing upon these duties first. (Eph. 4:11-12)

As shepherds of the flock, the elders are responsible to pick up the slack or appoint other leaders, with complimentary spiritual gifts, to undertake areas and aspects of the ministry that cannot be filled by the Teaching Pastor.

ARTICLE XIII STAFF/MINISTRY SERVANTS

Section 1: Identification. Church staff includes all personnel who are paid by the church. This includes ministerial staff and all other ministry servants (administrative assistants, etc.).

Section 2: Selection. The Elder Council, and/or their appointees, will serve as a search committee for all Church staff positions. According to Article VIII, Section 8, the affirmation of the HBC body is required for hiring ministerial staff. A three-fourths (75%) affirmative ballot vote of the qualified Church Members attending the meeting will be required. If the approved budget allows, the Elder Council is not required to obtain a vote by the Church to hire other ministry servants as needed (secretary, etc.).

Section 3: Supervision. All staff members will be supervised and evaluated by the Elder Council. The Teaching Pastor will have the authority with the assistance of the Elder Council to oversee all staff members on a daily basis.

Section 4: Ministerial Staff as Elders. All male ministerial staff members should be qualified to be elders. However, staff members are not automatically accepted as an elder upon hiring. If they desire to be on the Elder Council they must go through the selection process according to Article IX, Section 5. It is also required that newly hired staff members (excluding the Teacher Pastor) be a member of the Church for at least one year before they are qualified to be on the Elder Council.

Section 5: Affirmation/Dismissal. All staff including the Pastor Teacher requires a continual affirmation by the Elder Council. If at any time the elder council does not affirm a ministerial staff member with a majority vote, the elder council can bring a recommendation to the Church body for their dismissal. Only after a majority ballot vote by the Church body will the ministerial staff member be dismissed. The dismissal of any paid non-ministerial servant does not require a vote by the Church body, but does require majority vote by the Elder Council.

ARTICLE XIV RECEIPT, INVESTMENT, AND DISBURSEMENT OF FUNDS

Section 1: Receipt of Money. HBC shall receive all monies or other properties transferred to it for the purposes that are consistent with God's Word. The Elder Council shall determine whether to accept such money or property.

Section 2: Management of Funds. The Elder Council shall manage and distribute any funds or property only for the benefit of HBC consistent with the expressed purposes of HBC.

Section 3: Review of Financial Matters. The Elder Council will ensure that a quarterly financial report be provided to the congregation regularly.

ARTICLE XV COMPENSATION

Any person receiving compensation directly or indirectly from HBC shall not be in a position to determine the nature or amount of such compensation or remuneration.

ARTICLE XVI RECORDS AND REPORTS

Section 1: Records. HBC shall maintain adequate and correct accounts, books and records of its business and properties. All such books, records and accounts shall be kept at its principal place of business in Waxahachie, Texas. The adequacy and accuracy of the books and records shall be overseen by the Elder Council. The location of the principal place of business of HBC may be changed from time to time as determined by the Elder Council.

Section 2: Inspection of Books & Records. Every member shall have the absolute right, at any reasonable time, to inspect all books, records, documents of every kind (with the exception of personnel and contribution records) and the physical properties of HBC. The Elder Council, if necessary to maintain good order, may restrict and limit the number of inspections or establish an orderly manner for such to be conducted. But in no event shall a reasonable inspection of the books and records be denied to a member.

ARTICLE XVII INDEMNIFICATION OF ELDERS

The elders acting together in the Elder Council shall be indemnified and held harmless for actions consistent with the purpose and vision of HBC. HBC shall be primarily responsible for liability arising from such actions or inaction of the Elder Council. Reasonable expenses to litigate or otherwise resolve issues arising from the Elder Council's performance of its duties and responsibilities shall be paid by HBC. At the election of the Elder Council, this same indemnification shall extend to all individuals performing within the scope of their duties and responsibilities for the benefit of HBC.

ARTICLE XVIII DISSOLUTION

Upon dissolution of HBC, the Elder Council shall cause the assets herein to be distributed to the Baptist Missionary Association State Missions Department, located in Waxahachie, Texas.

ARTICLE XIX AMENDMENTS

Section 1: Amendment Process. These Bylaws may be amended and new and additional Bylaws may be made at any time by the Elder Council, with affirmation of such change, as reflected by a (75%) majority vote of the Qualified Church Members voting.

Section 2: Record of Amendments. Whenever an amendment or new Bylaw is adopted, it shall be copied into the books and records of HBC, with the original Bylaws. If any Bylaw is repealed or amended, the fact of repeal or amendment, with the date of the meeting at which the repeal or amendment was confirmed, by HBC, shall be stated in HBC's books and records with the By-laws and the repealed or amended provision, clearly marked as repealed or amended, in the original Bylaws.

APPENDIX A:

HERITAGE BAPTIST CHURCH

ARTICLES OF FAITH

- ◆ We believe in one God, eternally existent as God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit.
- ◆ We believe that the Bible, composed of the Old and New Testaments, is God's inspired and infallible Word, and is the supreme standard and final authority for all conduct, faith, and doctrine.
- ◆ We believe in the deity of the Lord Jesus Christ, in His virgin birth, in His sinless life, in His miracles, in His vicarious and atoning death, in His bodily resurrection, in His ascension to the right hand of the Father, and in His premillennial personal return in power and glory.
- ◆ We believe that man was created in the image of God, but by willful transgressions became sinful and is justly under the condemnation and wrath of Almighty God.
- ◆ We believe that the only salvation from this guilt and condemnation is through faith in the righteousness and atonement of the Lord Jesus Christ, and that this salvation is the free gift of God's love and grace.
- ◆ We believe in the personality of the Holy Spirit and that His ministry is to reveal Christ to men, to convict of sin, to regenerate repentant sinners and, by His presence and power, to sanctify the lives of the redeemed.
- ◆ We believe that the Lord Jesus Christ instituted the ordinances of baptism and communion; that baptism is only to be administered upon profession of faith in Christ, by immersion, thereby declaring our faith in a crucified, buried, and risen

Savior; that communion is only for believers, is to be preceded by faithful self-examination, and is in remembrance of the Lord's death until He comes.

- ◆ We believe that a New Testament church is a body of believers, baptized by immersion, associated for worship, service, and the spread of the gospel of the grace of God to all the world.

- ◆ We believe that there will be a resurrection of the just and the unjust; the just, having been redeemed by the shed blood of the Lord Jesus Christ, to be with Him throughout eternity in glory; the unjust, having died impenitent and unreconciled to God, to eternal condemnation in hell.

WHAT WE TEACH AT

HERITAGE BAPTIST CHURCH

The Doctrine of the Holy Scriptures

We teach that the Bible is God's written revelation to man, and thus the sixty-six books of the Bible given to us by the Holy Spirit constitutes the plenary (inspired equally in all parts) Word of God (1 Corinthians 2:7-14; 2 Peter 1:20-21).

We teach that the Word of God is an objective, propositional revelation (1 Thessalonians 2:13; 1 Corinthians 2:13), verbally inspired in every word (2 Timothy 3:16), absolutely inerrant in the original documents, infallible, and God-breathed. We teach the literal, grammatical-historical interpretation of Scripture which affirms the belief that the opening chapters of Genesis present creation in six literal days (Genesis 1:31; Exodus 31:17).

We teach that the Bible constitutes the only infallible rule of faith and practice (Matthew 5:18; 24:35; John 10:34; 16:12-13; 17:17; 1 Corinthians 2:13; 2 Timothy 3:15-17; Hebrews 4:12; 2 Peter 1:20-21).

We teach that God spoke in His written Word by a process of dual authorship. The Holy Spirit so superintended the human authors that, through their individual personalities and different styles of writing, they composed and recorded God's Word to man (2 Peter 1:20-21) without error in the whole or in the part (Matthew 5:18; 2 Timothy 3:16).

We teach that, whereas there may be several applications of any given passage of Scripture, there is but one true interpretation. The meaning of Scripture is to be found as one diligently applies the literal grammatical-historical method of interpretation under the enlightenment of the Holy Spirit (John 7:17; 16:12-15; 1 Corinthians 2:7-15; 1 John 2:20). It is the responsibility of believers to ascertain carefully the true intent and meaning of Scripture, recognize that proper application is binding on all generations. Yet the truth of Scripture stands in judgment of men; never do men stand in judgment of it.

The Doctrine of God

We teach that there is but one living and true God (Deuteronomy 6:4; Isaiah 45:5-7; 1 Corinthians 8:4), an infinite, all-knowing Spirit (John 4:24), perfect in all His attributes, one in essence, eternally existing in three Persons--Father, Son, and Holy Spirit (Matthew 28:19; 2 Corinthians 13:14) -- each equally deserving worship and obedience.

God the Father

We teach that God the Father, the first person of the Trinity, orders and disposes all things according to His own purpose and grace (Psalm 145:8-9; 1 Corinthians 8:6). He is the creator of all things (Genesis 1:1-31; Ephesians 3:9). As the only absolute and omnipotent ruler in the universe, He is sovereign in creation, providence, and redemption (Psalm 103:19; Romans 11:36). His fatherhood involves both His designation within the Trinity and His relations with mankind. As Creator He is Father to all men (Ephesians 4:6), but He is Spiritual Father only to believers (Romans 8:14; 2 Corinthians 6:18). He has decreed for His own glory all things that come to pass (Ephesians 1:11). He continually upholds, directs, and governs all creatures and events (1 Chronicles 29:11). In His sovereignty He is neither author nor approver of sin (Habakkuk 1:13; John 8:38-47), nor does He abridge the accountability of moral, intelligent creatures (1 Peter 1:17). He has graciously chosen from eternity past those whom He would have as His own (Ephesians 1:4-6); He saves from sin all those who come to Him; and He becomes, upon adoption, Father to His own (John 1:12; Romans 8:15; Galatians 4:5; Hebrews 12:5-9).

God the Son

We teach that Jesus Christ, the second person of the Trinity, possesses all the divine excellencies, and in these He is co-equal, consubstantial, and co-eternal with the Father (John 10:30; 14:9).

We teach that God the Father created "the heavens and the earth and all that is in them" according to His own will, through His Son, Jesus Christ, by whom all things continue in existence and in operation (John 1:3; Colossians 1:15-17; Hebrews 1:2).

We teach that in the incarnation (God becoming man) Christ surrendered only the prerogatives of deity but nothing of the divine essence, either in degree or kind. In His incarnation, the eternally existing second person of the Trinity accepted all the essential characteristics of humanity and so became the God-man (Philippians 2:5-8; Colossians 2:9).

We teach that Jesus Christ represents humanity and deity in indivisible oneness (Micah 5:2; John 5:23; 14:9-10; Colossians 2:9).

We teach that our Lord Jesus Christ was virgin born (Isaiah 7:14; Matthew 1:23, 25; Luke 1:26-35); that He was God incarnate (John 1:1, 14); and that the purpose of the incarnation was to reveal God, redeem men, and rule over God's kingdom (Psalm 2:7-9; Isaiah 9:6; John 1:29; Philippians 2:9-11; Hebrews 7:25-26; 1 Peter 1:18-19).

We teach that, in the incarnation, the second person of the Trinity laid aside His right to the full prerogatives of coexistence with God, assumed the place of a Son, and took on an existence appropriate to a servant while never divesting Himself of His divine attributes (Philippians 2:5-8).

We teach that our Lord Jesus Christ accomplished our redemption through the shedding of His blood and sacrificial death on the cross and that His death was voluntary, vicarious, substitutionary, propitiatory, and redemptive (John 10:15; Romans 3:24-25; 5:8; 1 Peter 2:24; 3:18).

We teach that our justification is made sure by His literal, physical resurrection from the dead and that He is now ascended to the right hand of the Father, where He now meditates as our Advocate and High Priest (Matthew 28:6; Luke 24:38-39; Acts 2:30-31; Romans 4:25; 8:34; Hebrews 7:25; 9:24; 1 John 2:1).

We teach that in the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the grave, God confirmed the deity of His Son and gave proof that God has accepted the atoning work of Christ on the cross. Jesus' bodily resurrection is also the guarantee of a future resurrection life for all believers (John 5:26-29; 14:19; Romans 4:25; 6:5-10; 1 Corinthians 15:20, 23).

We teach that Jesus Christ will return to receive the church, which is His body, unto Himself at the rapture and, returning with His church in glory, will establish His millennial kingdom on earth (Acts 1:9-11; 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18; Revelation 20).

We teach that the Lord Jesus Christ is the one through whom God will judge all mankind (John 5:22-23):

- a. Believers (1 Corinthians 3:10-15; 2 Corinthians 5:10);
- b. Living inhabitants of the earth at His glorious return (Matthew 25:31-46); and
- c. Unbelieving dead at the Great White Throne (Revelation 20:11-15).

As the mediator between God and man (1 Timothy 2:5), the head of His body the church (Ephesians 1:22; 5:23; Colossians 1:18), and the coming universal King who will reign on the throne of David (Isaiah 9:6; Luke 1:31-33), He is the final judge of all who fail to place their trust in Him as Lord and Savior (Matthew 25:14-46; Acts 17:30-31).

God the Holy Spirit

We teach that the Holy Spirit is a divine person, eternal, underived, possessing all the attributes of personality and deity including intellect (1 Corinthians 2:10-13), emotions (Ephesians 4:30), will (1 Corinthians 12:11), eternality (Hebrews 9:14), omnipresence (Psalm 139:7-10), omniscience (Isaiah 40:13-

14), omnipotence (Romans 15:13), and truthfulness (John 16:13). In all the divine attributes He is coequal and consubstantial with the Father and the Son (Matthew 28:19; Acts 5:3-4; 28:25-26; 1 Corinthians 12:4-6; 2 Corinthians 13:14; and Jeremiah 31:31-34 with Hebrews 10:15-17).

We teach that it is the work of the Holy Spirit to execute the divine will with relation to all mankind. We recognize His sovereign activity in creation (Genesis 1:2), the incarnation (Matthew 1:18), the written revelation (2 Peter 1:20-21) and the work of salvation (John 3:5-7).

We teach that a unique work of the Holy Spirit in this age began at Pentecost when He came from the Father as promised by Christ (John 14:16-17; 15:26) to initiate and complete the building of the body of Christ. His activity includes convicting the world of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment, glorifying the Lord Jesus Christ, and transforming believers into the image of Christ (John 16:7-9; Acts 1:5; 2:4; Romans 8:29; 2 Corinthians 3:18; Ephesians 2:22).

We teach that the Holy Spirit is the supernatural and sovereign agent in regeneration, baptizing all believers into the body of Christ (1 Corinthians 12:13). The Holy Spirit also indwells, sanctifies, instructs, empowers them for service, and seals them unto the day of redemption (Romans 8:9; 2 Corinthians 3:6; Ephesians 1:13).

We teach that the Holy Spirit is the divine teacher who guided the apostles and prophets into all truth as they committed to writing God's revelation, the Bible. Every believer possesses the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit from the moment of salvation, and it is the duty of all those born of the Spirit to be filled with (controlled by) the Spirit (John 16:13; Romans 8:9; Ephesians 5:18; 2 Peter 1:19-21; 1 John 2:20, 27).

We teach that the Holy Spirit administers spiritual gifts to the church. The Holy Spirit glorifies neither Himself nor His gifts by ostentatious displays, but He does glorify Christ by implementing His work of redeeming the lost and building up believers in the most holy faith (John 16:13-14; Acts 1:8; 1 Corinthians 12:4-11; 2 Corinthians 3:18).

We teach, in this respect, that God the Holy Spirit is sovereign in the bestowing of all His gifts for the perfecting of the saints today and that speaking in tongues and the working of sign miracles in the beginning days of the church were for the purpose of pointing to and authenticating the apostles as revealers of divine truth, and were never intended to be characteristic of the lives of believers (1 Corinthians 12:4-11; 13:8-10; 2 Corinthians 12:12; Ephesians 4:7-12; Hebrews 2:1-4).

Doctrine of Man

We teach that man was directly and immediately created by God in His image and likeness. Man was created free of sin with a rational nature, intelligence, volition, self-determination, and moral responsibility to God (Genesis 2:7, 15-25; James 3:9).

We teach that God's intention in the creation of man was that man should glorify God, enjoy God's fellowship, live his life in the will of God, and by this accomplish God's purpose for man in the world (Isaiah 43:7; Colossians 1:16; Revelation 4:11).

We teach that in Adam's sin of disobedience to the revealed will and Word of God, man lost his innocence; incurred the penalty of spiritual and physical death; became subject to the wrath of God; and became inherently corrupt and utterly incapable of choosing or doing that which is acceptable to God apart from divine grace. With no recuperative powers to enable him to recover himself, man is hopelessly lost. Man's salvation is thereby wholly of God's grace through the redemptive work of our Lord Jesus Christ (Genesis 2:16-17; 3:1-19; John 3:36; Romans 3:23; 6:23; 1 Corinthians 2:14; Ephesians 2:1-3; 1 Timothy 2:13-14; 1 John 1:8).

We teach that because all men were in Adam, a nature corrupted by Adam's sin has been transmitted to all men of all ages, Jesus Christ being the only exception. All men are thus sinners by nature, by choice, and by divine declaration (Psalm 14:1-3; Jeremiah 17:9; Romans 3:9-18, 23; 5:10-12).

Doctrine of Salvation

We teach that salvation is wholly of God by grace on the basis of the redemption of Jesus Christ, the merit of His shed blood, and not on the basis of human merit or works (John 1:12; Ephesians 1:7; 2:8-10; 1 Peter 1:18-19).

Regeneration

We teach that regeneration is a supernatural work of the Holy Spirit by which the divine nature and divine life are given (John 3:3-7; Titus 3:5). It is instantaneous and is accomplished solely by the power of the Holy Spirit through the instrumentality of the Word of God (John 5:24), when the repentant sinner, as enabled by the Holy Spirit, responds in faith to the divine provision of salvation. Genuine regeneration is manifested by fruits worthy of repentance as demonstrated in righteous attitudes and conduct. Good works will be its proper evidence and fruit (1 Corinthians 6:19-20; Ephesians 5:17-21; Philippians 2:12b; Colossians 3:16; 2 Peter 1:4-10). This obedience causes the believer to be increasingly

conformed to the image of our Lord Jesus Christ (2 Corinthians 3:18). Such a conformity is climaxed in the believer's glorification at Christ's coming (Romans 8:17; 2 Peter 1:4; 1 John 3:2-3).

Election

We teach that election is the act of God by which, before the foundation of the world, He chose in Christ those whom He graciously regenerates, saves, and sanctifies (Romans 8:28-30; Ephesians 1:4-11; 2 Thessalonians 2:13; 2 Timothy 2:10; 1 Peter 1:1-2).

We teach that sovereign election does not contradict or negate the responsibility of man to repent and trust Christ as Savior and Lord (Ezekiel 18:23, 32; 33:11; John 3:18-19, 36; 5:40; Romans 9:22-23; 2 Thessalonians 2:10-12; Revelation 22:17). Nevertheless, since sovereign grace includes the means of receiving the gift of salvation as well as the gift itself, sovereign election will result in what God determines. All whom the Father calls to Himself will come in faith and all who come in faith the Father will receive (John 6:37-40, 44; Acts 13:48; James 4:8).

We teach that the unmerited favor that God grants to totally depraved sinners is not related to any initiative of their own part nor to God's anticipation of what they might do by their own will, but is solely of His sovereign grace and mercy (Ephesians 1:4-7; Titus 3:4-7; 1 Peter 1:2).

We teach that election should not be looked upon as based merely on abstract sovereignty. God is truly sovereign but He exercises this sovereignty in harmony with His other attributes, especially His omniscience, justice, holiness, wisdom, grace, and love (Romans 9:11-16). This sovereignty will always exalt the will of God in a manner totally consistent with His character as revealed in the life of our Lord Jesus Christ (Matthew 11:25-28; 2 Timothy 1:9).

Justification

We teach that justification before God is an act of God (Romans 8:33) by which He declares righteous those who, through faith in Christ, repent of their sins (Luke 13:3; Acts 2:38; 3:19; 11:18; Romans 2:4; 2 Corinthians 7:10; Isaiah 55:6-7) and confess Him as sovereign Lord (Romans 10:9-10; 1 Corinthians 12:3; 2 Corinthians 4:5; Philippians 2:11). This righteousness is apart from any virtue or work of man (Romans 3:20; 4:6), and involves the placing of our sins on Christ (Colossians 2:14; 1 Peter 2:24) and the imputation of Christ's righteousness to us (1 Corinthians 1:2, 30; 6:11; 2 Corinthians 5:21). By this means God is enabled to "be just, and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus" (Romans 3:26).

Sanctification

We teach that every believer is sanctified (set apart) unto God by justification and is therefore declared to be holy and is therefore identified as a saint. This sanctification is positional and instantaneous and should not be confused with progressive sanctification. This sanctification has to do with the believer's standing, not his present walk or condition (Acts 20:32; 1 Corinthians 1:2, 30; 6:11; 2 Thessalonians 2:13; Hebrews 2:11; 3:1; 10:10, 14; 13:12, 1 Peter 1:2).

We teach that there is also by the work of the Holy Spirit a progressive sanctification by which the state of the believer is brought closer to the obedience to the Word of God and the empowering of the Holy Spirit, enabling the believer to live a life of increasing holiness in conformity to the will of God, becoming more and more like our Lord Jesus Christ (John 17:17, 19; Romans 6:1-22; 2 Corinthians 3:18; 1 Thessalonians 4:3-4; 5:23).

In this respect, we teach that every saved person is involved in a daily conflict - the new creation in Christ doing battle against the flesh - but adequate provision is made for victory through the power of the indwelling Holy Spirit. The struggle nevertheless stays with the believer all through this earthly life and is never completely ended. All claims to the eradication of sin in this life are unscriptural. Eradication of sin is not possible, but the Holy Spirit does provide for victory over sin (Galatians 5:16-25; Ephesians 4:22-24; Philippians 3:12; Colossians 3:9-10; 1 Peter 1:14-16; 1 John 3:5-9).

Security

We teach that all the redeemed once saved are kept by God's power and are thus secure in Christ forever (John 5:24; 6:37-40; 10:27-30; Romans 5:9-10; 8:1, 31-39; 1 Corinthians 1:4-8; Ephesians 4:30; Hebrews 7:25; 13:5; 1 Peter 1:5; Jude 24).

We teach that it is the privilege of believers to rejoice in the assurance of their salvation through the testimony of God's Word, which however, clearly forbids the use of Christian liberty as an occasion for sinful living and carnality (Romans 6:15-2; 13:13-14; Galatians 5:13, 25-26; Titus 2:11-14).

Separation

We teach that separation from sin is clearly called for throughout the Old and New Testaments, and that the Scriptures clearly indicate that in the last days apostasy and worldliness shall increase (2 Corinthians 6:14-7:1; 2 Timothy 3:1-5). We teach that out of deep gratitude for the undeserved grace of God granted to us and because our glorious God is so worthy of our total consecration, all the saved

should live in such a manner as to demonstrate our adoring love to God and so as not to bring reproach upon our Lord and Savior. We also teach that separation from any association with religious apostasy, and worldly and sinful practices is commanded of us by God (Romans 12:1-2; 1 Corinthians 5:9-13; 2 Corinthians 6:14-7:1; 1 John 2:15-17; 2 John 9-11).

We teach that believers should be separated unto our Lord Jesus Christ (2 Thessalonians 1:11-12; Hebrews 12:1-2) and affirm that the Christian life is a life of obedient righteousness demonstrated by a beatitude attitude (Matthew 5:2-12) and a continual pursuit of holiness (Romans 12:1-2; 2 Corinthians 7:1; Hebrews 12:14; Titus 2:11-14; 1 John 3:1-10).

The Doctrine of the Church

We teach that all who place their faith in Jesus Christ are immediately placed by the Holy Spirit into one united spiritual body, the church (1 Corinthians 12:12-13), the bride of Christ (2 Corinthians 11:2; Ephesians 5:23-32; Revelation 19:7-8), of which Christ is the head (Ephesians 1:22; 4:15; Colossians 1:18).

We teach that the formation of the church, the body of Christ, began on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2:1-21, 38-47) and will be completed at the coming of Christ for His own at the rapture (1 Corinthians 15:51-52; 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18).

We teach that the church is thus a unique spiritual organism designed by Christ, made up of all born-again believers in this present age (Ephesians 2:11-3:6). The church is distinct from Israel (1 Corinthians 10:32), a mystery not revealed until this age (Ephesians 3:1-6; 5:32).

We teach that the establishment and continuity of local churches is clearly taught and defined in the New Testament Scriptures (Acts 14:23, 27; 20:17, 28; Galatians 1:2; Philippians 1:1; 1 Thessalonians 1:1; 2 Thessalonians 1:1) and that the members of the one scriptural body are directed to associate themselves together in local assemblies (1 Corinthians 11:18-20; Hebrews 10:25).

We teach that the one supreme authority for the church is Christ (1 Corinthians 11:3; Ephesians 1:22; Colossians 1:18) and that the church leadership, gifts, order, discipline, and worship are all appointed through His sovereignty as found in the Scriptures. The biblically designated officers serving under Christ and over the assembly are elders (males, who are also called bishops, pastors, and pastor-teachers; Acts 20:28; Ephesians 4:11) and deacons, both of whom must meet biblical qualifications (1 Timothy 3:1-13; Titus 1:5-9; 1 Peter 5:1-5).

We teach that these leaders lead or rule as servants of Christ (1 Timothy 5:17-22) and have His authority in directing the church. The congregation is to submit to their leadership (Hebrews 13:7, 17).

We teach the importance of discipleship (Matthew 28:19-20; 2 Timothy 2:2), mutual accountability of all believers to each other (Matthew 18:5-14), as well as the need for discipline for sinning members of the congregation in accord with the standards of Scripture (Matthew 18:15-22; Acts 5:1-11; 1 Corinthians 5:1-13; 2 Thessalonians 3:6-15; 1 Timothy 19-20; Titus 1:10-16).

We teach the autonomy of the local church, free from any external authority or control, with the right of self-government and freedom from the interference of any hierarchy of individuals or organizations (Titus 1:5). We teach that it is scriptural for true churches to cooperate with each other for the presentation and propagation of the faith. Local churches, however, through their pastors and their interpretation and application of Scripture, should be the sole judges of the measure and method of their cooperation (Acts 15:19-31; 20:28; 1 Corinthians 5:4-7, 13; 1 Peter 5:1-4).

We teach that the purpose of the church is to glorify God (Ephesians 3:21) by building itself up in the faith (Ephesians 4:13-16), by instruction of the Word (2 Timothy 2:2, 15; 3:16-17), by fellowship (Acts 2:47; 1 John 1:3), by keeping the ordinances (Luke 22:19; Acts 2:38-42), and by advancing and communicating the gospel to the entire world (Matthew 28:19; Acts 1:8; 2:42).

We teach the calling of all saints to the work of service (1 Corinthians 15:58; Ephesians 4:12; Revelation 22:12).

We teach the need of the church to cooperate with God as He accomplishes His purpose in the world. To that end He gives the church spiritual gifts. First, He gives men chosen for the purpose of equipping the saints for the work of the ministry (Ephesians 4:7-12) and He also gives unique and special spiritual abilities to each member of the body of Christ (Romans 12:5-8; 1 Corinthians 12:4-31; 1 Peter 4:10-11).

We teach that there were two kinds of gifts given the early church: miraculous gifts of divine revelation and healing, given temporarily in the apostolic era for the purpose of confirming the authenticity of the apostles' message (Hebrews 2:3-4; 2 Corinthians 12:12); and ministering gifts, given to equip believers for edifying one another. With the New Testament revelation now complete, Scripture becomes the sole test of the authenticity of a man's message, and confirming gifts of a miraculous nature are no longer necessary to validate a man or his message (1 Corinthians 13:8-12). Miraculous gifts can even be counterfeited by Satan so as to deceive even believers (1 Corinthians 13:13-14:12; Revelation

13:13-14). The only gifts in operation today are those non-revelatory equipping gifts given for edification (Romans 12:6-8).

We teach that no one possesses the gift of healing today but that God does hear and answer the prayer of faith and will answer in accordance with His own perfect will for the sick, suffering, and afflicted (Luke 18:1-6; John 5:7-9; 2 Corinthians 12:6-10; James 5:13-16; 1 John 5:14-15).

We teach that two ordinances have been committed to the local church: Baptism and the Lord's Supper (Acts 2:38-42). Christian Baptism by immersion (Acts 8:36-39) is the solemn and beautiful testimony of a believer showing forth his faith in the crucified, buried, and risen Savior, and his union with Him in death to sin and resurrection to a new life (Romans 6:1-11). It is also a sign of fellowship and identification with the visible body of Christ (Acts 2:41-42).

We teach that the Lord's Supper is the commemoration and proclamation of His death until He comes, and should be always preceded by solemn self-examination (1 Corinthians 11:28-32). We also teach that whereas the elements of communion are only representative of the flesh and blood of Christ, the Lord's Supper is nevertheless an actual communion with the risen Christ who is present in a unique way, fellowshiping with His people (1 Corinthians 10:16).

Doctrine of Angels

Holy Angels

We teach that angels are created beings and are therefore not to be worshiped. Although they are a higher order of creation than man, they are created to serve God and to worship Him (Luke 2:9-14; Hebrews 1:6-7, 14; 2:6-7; Revelation 5:11-14; 19:10; 22:9).

Fallen Angels

We teach that Satan is a created angel and the author of sin. He incurred the judgment of God by rebelling against his Creator (Isaiah 14:12-17; Ezekiel 28:11-19), by taking numerous angels with him in his fall (Matthew 25:41; Revelation 12:1-14), and by introducing sin into the human race by his temptation of Eve (Genesis 3:1-15).

We teach that Satan is the open and declared enemy of God and man (Isaiah 14:13-14; Matthew 4:1-11; Revelation 12:9-10), the prince of this world who has been defeated through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ (Romans 16:20), and that he shall be eternally punished in the lake of fire (Isaiah 14:12-17; Ezekiel 28:11-19; Matthew 25:41; Revelation 20:10).

Doctrine of the Last Things (Eschatology)

Death

We teach that physical death involves no loss of our immaterial consciousness (Revelation 6:9-11), that the soul of the redeemed passes immediately into the presence of Christ (Luke 23:43; Philippians 1:23; 2 Corinthians 5:8), that there is a separation of soul and body (Philippians 1:21-24), and that, for the redeemed, such separation will continue until the rapture (1 Thessalonians 4:13-17), which initiates the first resurrection (Revelation 20:4-6) when our soul and body will be reunited to be glorified forever with our Lord (Philippians 3:21; 1 Corinthians 15:35-44, 50-54). Until that time, the souls of the redeemed in Christ remain in joyful fellowship with our Lord Jesus Christ (2 Corinthians 5:8).

We teach the bodily resurrection of all men, the saved to eternal life (John 6:39; Romans 8:10-11, 19-23; 2 Corinthians 4:14), and the unsaved to judgment and everlasting punishment (Daniel 12:2; John 5:29; Revelation 20:13-15).

We teach that the souls of the unsaved at death are kept under punishment until the second resurrection (Luke 16:19-26; Revelation 20:13-15), when the soul and the resurrection body will be united (John 5:28-29). They shall then appear at the Great White Throne judgment (Revelation 20:11-15) and shall be cast into hell, the lake of fire (Matthew 25:4-46), cut off from the life of God forever (Daniel 12:2; Matthew 25:41-46; 2 Thessalonians 1:7-9).

The Rapture of the Church

We teach the personal, bodily return of our Lord Jesus Christ before the seven-year tribulation (1 Thessalonians 4:16; Titus 2:13) to translate His church from this earth (John 14:1-3; 1 Corinthians 15:51-53; 1 Thessalonians 4:15-5:11) and, between this event and His glorious return with His saints, to reward believers according to their works (1 Corinthians 3:11-15; 2 Corinthians 5:10).

The Tribulation Period

We teach that immediately following the removal of the church from the earth (John 14:1-3; 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18) the righteous judgments of God will be poured out upon an unbelieving world (Jeremiah 30:7; Daniel 9:27; 12:1, 2 Thessalonians 2:7-12; Revelation 16), and that these judgments will be climaxed by the return of Christ in glory to the earth (Matthew 24:27-31; 25:31-46; 2 Thessalonians 2:7-12). At that time the Old Testament and tribulation saints will be raised and the living will be judged (Daniel 12:2-3; Revelation 20:4-6). This period includes the seventieth week of Daniel's prophecy (Daniel 9:24-27; Matthew 24:15-31; 25:31-46).

The Second Coming and the Millennial Reign

We teach that after the tribulation period, Christ will come to earth to occupy the throne of David (Matthew 25:31; Luke 1:31-33; Acts 1:10-11, 2:29-30) and establish His Messianic kingdom for a thousand years on earth (Revelation 20:1-7). During this time the resurrected saints will reign with Him over Israel and all the nations of the earth (Ezekiel 37:21-28; Daniel 7:17-22; Revelation 19:11-16). This reign will be preceded by the overthrow of the Antichrist and the False Prophet, and by the removal of Satan from the world (Daniel 7:17-27; Rev. 20:1-7).

We teach that the kingdom itself will be the fulfillment of God's promise to Israel (Isaiah 65:17-25; Ezekiel 37:21-38; Zechariah 8:1-17) to restore them to the land which they forfeited through their disobedience (Deuteronomy 28:15-68). The result of their disobedience was that Israel was temporarily set aside (Matthew 21:43; Romans 11:1-26) but will again be awakened through repentance to enter into the land of blessing (Jeremiah 31:31-34; Ezekiel 36:22-32; Romans 11:25-29).

We teach that this time of our Lord's reign will be characterized by harmony, justice, peace, righteousness, and long life (Isaiah 11; 65:17-25; Ezekiel 36:33-38), and will be brought to an end with the release of Satan (Revelation 20:7).

The Judgment of the Lost

We teach that following the release of Satan after the thousand year reign of Christ (Revelation 20:7), Satan will deceive the nations of the earth and gather them to battle against the saints and the beloved city, at which time Satan and his army will be devoured by fire from heaven (Revelation 20:9). Following this, Satan will be thrown into the lake of fire and brimstone (Matthew 25:41; Revelation 20:10) whereupon Christ, who is the judge of all men (John 5:22), will resurrect and judge the great and small at the Great White Throne judgment.

We teach that this resurrection of the unsaved dead to judgment will be a physical resurrection, whereupon receiving their judgment (Romans 14:10-13), they will be committed to an eternal conscious punishment in the lake of fire (Matthew 25:41; Revelation 20:11-15).

Eternity

We teach that after the closing of the millennium, the temporary release of Satan, and the judgment of unbelievers (2 Thessalonians 1:9; Revelation 20:7-15), the saved will enter the eternal state of glory with God, after which the elements of this earth are to be dissolved (2 Peter 3:10) and replaced with a new earth wherein only righteousness dwells (Ephesians 5:5; Revelation 20:15, 21-22). Following this, the heavenly city will come down out of heaven (Revelation 21:2) and will be the dwelling place of the saints, where they will enjoy forever fellowship with God and one another (John 17:3; Revelation 21,22). Our Lord Jesus Christ, having fulfilled His redemptive mission, will then deliver up the kingdom to God the Father (1 Corinthians 15:24-28), that in all spheres the triune God may reign forever and ever (1 Corinthians 15:28).