

Port Matilda Baptist Church Constitution and By-laws

**To the King of the ages, immortal, invisible, the only God, be
honor and glory forever and ever. Amen.**

1 Timothy 1:17

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Preamble

Having placed our faith in the Lord Jesus Christ for personal salvation from sin and God's wrath, and believing the Bible to be sufficient for all things pertaining to life, godliness,¹ "doctrine, reproof, correction and instruction in righteousness,"² we, therefore, bind ourselves as a body of immersed believers in Jesus Christ and adopt for our governance, plan of worship, and service, the following articles.

Article I - Name and Affiliation

This organization shall be known as the Port Matilda Baptist Church of Port Matilda, PA. Port Matilda Baptist Church is independent of any other ecclesiastical or governing bodies in matters of faith and practice³ and is to be self-governed by the active membership according to the following articles of faith.

Article II - Purposes

1. The legal purposes for Port Matilda Baptist Church are "religious, charitable and educational."⁴
2. The biblical purpose of Port Matilda Baptist Church is to glorify God in all we do.⁵
3. To achieve this purpose we seek...
 - A. ...to exalt Christ.⁶
 - B. ...to make and baptize disciples through gospel witness about Christ.⁷

¹ "His divine power has granted to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of him who called us to his own glory and excellence" (2 Peter 1:3).

² "All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness" (2 Tim. 3:16).

³ "But Peter and the apostles answered, "We must obey God rather than men" (Acts 5:29).

⁴ These keywords ("religious, charitable and educational") are necessary to insure 501(c)(3) tax exempt status. Please see the short video and/or essay by the National Center for Life and Liberty at <https://www.ncll.org/news-alerts/times-are-changing-church-incorporation>.

⁵ "So, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God" (1 Co. 10:31).
"For from him and through him and to him are all things. To him be glory forever" (Rom. 11:36).

⁶ "And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him" (Col. 3:17).

⁷ "Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age" (Matt. 28:19).

- C. ...to edify and “equip the saints for the work of ministry for building up the body of Christ”⁸ and to work hard to grow every member to maturity in Christ.⁹
- D. ...to live obedient¹⁰ Spirit-filled lives with “the word of Christ dwelling in us richly.”¹¹
1. In short, we purpose to worship God and His Son Jesus Christ by being Christ centered, Christ exalting, Christ promoting and Christ following.

Article III - Church Membership Covenant/Code of Conduct¹²

1. Submit to Christ as Lord in all things out of love for Him.¹³ We do not *make* Jesus Lord. He *is* Lord.¹⁴
2. Love our fellow man¹⁵ and especially our brothers and sisters in Christ.¹⁶

⁸ “to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ, so that we may no longer be children, tossed to and fro by the waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by human cunning, by craftiness in deceitful schemes” (Eph. 4:12-14).

⁹“Him we proclaim, warning everyone and teaching everyone with all wisdom, that we may present everyone mature in Christ. For this I toil, struggling with all his energy that he powerfully works within me” (Col. 1:28-29).

¹⁰ “teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age” (Matt. 28:20)

¹¹ “And do not get drunk with wine, for that is debauchery, but be filled with the Spirit, addressing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody to the Lord with your heart,” (Eph. 4:18-19).

“Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom, singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, with thankfulness in your hearts to God” (Col. 3:16).

¹² Note: Some prefer the term church “fellowship” or “partnership” since “membership” is not a biblical term. While there is nothing wrong with this per se, fellowship is to be had to some extent with all believers everywhere. To maintain the uniqueness and autonomy of the local body and differentiate it from believers throughout the world, membership will be used to prevent confusion.

¹³ “Why do you call me ‘Lord, Lord,’ and not do what I tell you” (Luke 6:46)

“If you love me, you will keep my commandments” (John 14:15).

“and was declared to be the Son of God in power according to the Spirit of holiness by his resurrection from the dead, Jesus Christ our Lord, through whom we have received grace and apostleship to bring about the **obedience of faith** (*emphasis added*) for the sake of his name among all the nations, including you who are called to belong to Jesus Christ” (Rom. 1:4-6).

but has now been disclosed and through the prophetic writings has been made known to all nations, according to the command of the eternal God, to bring about the **obedience of faith** (*emphasis added*)— to the only wise God be glory forevermore through Jesus Christ! Amen” (Rom. 16:26-27).

“Therefore I want you to understand that no one speaking in the Spirit of God ever says “Jesus is accursed!” and no one can say ‘Jesus is Lord’ except in the Holy Spirit” (1 Co. 12:3)

“If anyone has no love for the Lord, let him be accursed. Our Lord, come” (1 Co. 16:22)!

¹⁴ “Thomas answered him, ‘My Lord and my God!’” (John 20:28).

“Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father” (Phil. 2:9-11).

¹⁵ “But I say to you who hear, Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you” (Luke 6:27).

¹⁶“As for the saints in the land, they are the excellent ones, in whom is all my delight” (Psalm 16:3).

“Let love be genuine. Abhor what is evil; hold fast to what is good. Love one another with brotherly affection. Outdo one another in showing honor” (Romans 12:9-10).

“A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another: just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another. By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another” (John 13:34-35).

Note: These two commands (love for God/Christ and love for man) sum up the whole of God's law for Christian living.¹⁷

3. Live with Christ at the center of our lives.¹⁸
4. Live with Christ at the center of our homes.¹⁹
5. Strive to advance the church through...
 - A. ...following the biblical direction of the church leadership.²⁰
 - B. ...faithfully attending church services.²¹
 - C. ...faithfully using our spiritual gifts in the church body.²²

¹⁷ "Owe no one anything, except to love each other, for the one who loves another has fulfilled the law. For the commandments, "You shall not commit adultery, You shall not murder, You shall not steal, You shall not covet," and any other commandment, are summed up in this word: "You shall love your neighbor as yourself." Love does no wrong to a neighbor; therefore love is the fulfilling of the law" (Romans 13:8-10).

"Bear one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ" (Gal. 6:2).

¹⁸ "that according to the riches of his glory he may grant you to be strengthened with power through his Spirit in your inner being, so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith—that you, being rooted and grounded in love" (Eph. 3:16-17).

"And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him" (Col. 3:17).

¹⁹ "Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one. You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might. And these words that I command you today shall be on your heart. You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise. You shall bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes. You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates" (Deut. 6:4-9).

"Train up a child in the way he should go; even when he is old he will not depart from it" (Prov. 22:6).

"Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord" (Eph. 6:4; cf. Col. 3:21).
 "Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit in everything to their husbands. Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her" (Eph. 5:24-25).

²⁰ "We ask you, brothers, to respect those who labor among you and are over you in the Lord and admonish you, and to esteem them very highly in love because of their work. Be at peace among yourselves" (1 Thess. 5:12-13).

"Let the elders who rule well be considered worthy of double honor, especially those who labor in preaching and teaching" (1 Tim. 5:17).

"Remember your leaders, those who spoke to you the word of God. Consider the outcome of their way of life, and imitate their faith" (Heb. 13:7).

"Obey your leaders and submit to them, for they are keeping watch over your souls, as those who will have to give an account. Let them do this with joy and not with groaning, for that would be of no advantage to you" (Heb. 13:7).

"shepherd the flock of God that is among you, exercising oversight, not under compulsion, but willingly, as God would have you; not for shameful gain, but eagerly; not domineering over those in your charge, but being examples to the flock" (1 Peter 5:2-3).

²¹ "And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near" (Heb. 10:24-25).

²² "To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good" (1 Co. 12:20).

- D. ...faithfully giving self-sacrificially, as each person purposes in their own heart,²³ to sustain and promote the church financially.²⁴
- E. ...faithfully witnessing to Christ in word and deed in public.²⁵
- F. ...faithfully speaking positively about our church and church family in public.²⁶
- G. ...faithfully committing to personal growth through prayer and study of the Scriptures.²⁷
- H. ...faithfully promoting unity²⁸ by manifesting a forgiving,²⁹ humble, and submissive attitude toward one another.³⁰

²³ "So I thought it necessary to urge the brothers to go on ahead to you and arrange in advance for the gift you have promised, so that it may be ready as a willing gift, not as an exaction" (2 Co. 9:5).

"Each one must give as he has decided in his heart, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver" (2 Co. 9:7).

²⁴ "...give, and it will be given to you. Good measure, pressed down, shaken together, running over, will be put into your lap. For with the measure you use it will be measured back to you" (Luke 6:38).

"for in a severe test of affliction, their abundance of joy and their extreme poverty have overflowed in a wealth of generosity on their part. For they gave according to their means, as I can testify, and beyond their means, of their own accord, begging us earnestly for the favor of taking part in the relief of the saints" (2 Co. 8:2-4).

²⁵ "You shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain, for the Lord will not hold him guiltless who takes his name in vain" (Ex. 20:7).

"...Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age" (Matt. 28:19-20).

"And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him" (Col. 3:17).

²⁶ "And day by day, attending the temple together and breaking bread in their homes, they received their food with glad and generous hearts, praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to their number day by day those who were being saved" (Acts 2:46-47).

²⁷ "And they devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers" (Acts 2:42).

"And so, from the day we heard, we have not ceased to pray for you, asking that you may be filled with the knowledge of his will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding, so as to walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing to him: bearing fruit in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God; being strengthened with all power, according to his glorious might, for all endurance and patience with joy; giving thanks to the Father, who has qualified you to share in the inheritance of the saints in light" (Col. 1:9-12).

"Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a worker who has no need to be ashamed, rightly handling the word of truth" (2 Tim. 2:15).

"Like newborn infants, long for the pure spiritual milk, that by it you may grow up into salvation—³ if indeed you have tasted that the Lord is good" (1 Peter 2:2-3).

"For this very reason, make every effort to supplement your faith with virtue, and virtue with knowledge, and knowledge with self-control, and self-control with steadfastness, and steadfastness with godliness, ⁷ and godliness with brotherly affection, and brotherly affection with love. For if these qualities are yours and are increasing, they keep you from being ineffective or unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ" (2 Peter 1:5-8).

"But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To him be the glory both now and to the day of eternity. Amen" (2 Peter 3:18).

²⁸ "complete my joy by being of the same mind, having the same love, being in full accord and of one mind" (Phil. 2:2).

"I appeal to you, brothers, to watch out for those who cause divisions and create obstacles contrary to the doctrine that you have been taught; avoid them. For such persons do not serve our Lord Christ, but their own appetites, and by smooth talk and flattery they deceive the hearts of the naive" (Rom. 16:17-18).

²⁹ "Then his master summoned him and said to him, 'You wicked servant! I forgave you all that debt because you pleaded with me. And should not you have had mercy on your fellow servant, as I had mercy on you?' And in anger his master delivered him to the jailers, until he should pay all his debt. So also my heavenly Father will do to every one of you, if you do not forgive your brother from your heart." (Matt. 18:32-35).

³⁰ "O Lord, my heart is not lifted up; my eyes are not raised too high; I do not occupy myself with things too great and too marvelous for me. ² But I have calmed and quieted my soul, like a weaned child with its mother; like a weaned child is my soul within me" (Ps. 131:1-2).

I. ...faithfully participating in the ordinances of baptism³¹ and the Lord's Supper.³²

Article IV - Statement of Faith³³

We believe in the verbal and plenary inspiration³⁴ of the text of the original manuscripts of the 66 books of the Old and New Testaments, which alone constitute the inerrant Word of God.³⁵

We believe the Bible supports using a grammatical, historical method of interpretation in light of the progress of revelation.³⁶ Thus, we believe that the Bible is the clear, sufficient, and only infallible authority for all belief, life, and ministry.³⁷

"Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves. Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others. Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus" (Phil. 2:3-5).
 "submitting to one another out of reverence for Christ" (Eph. 5:21).

"...Clothe yourselves, all of you, with humility toward one another, for "God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble" (1 Peter 5:5b).

³¹ "And Peter said to them, "Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit" (Acts 2:38).

"Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit," (Matt. 28:19).

³² "For I received from the Lord what I also delivered to you, that the Lord Jesus on the night when he was betrayed took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it, and said, "This is my body, which is for you. Do this in remembrance of me." In the same way also he took the cup, after supper, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me." For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes" (1 Co. 11:23-26).

³³ This doctrinal statement has been adapted from Baptist Bible Seminary's "Values and Doctrinal Statement" in Clarks Summit, PA on 11/30/22. <https://baptistseminary.clarkssummitu.edu/about-bbs/values-and-doctrinal-statement/>. The Scripture references have been added to provide the biblical support for the doctrinal statement. Minor changes have been made for purposes of clarity and polity.

³⁴ The view that the inspiration of Scripture extends to the actual words (verbal) and to every part of the entire (plenary) Bible. In past usage verbal plenary inspiration was equated with *inerrancy*. Enns, P. P. (1989). *The Moody Handbook of Theology* (p. 638). Chicago, IL: Moody Press.

³⁵ The law of the Lord is perfect, reviving the soul; the testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple; the precepts of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart; the commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes; the fear of the Lord is clean, enduring forever; the rules of the Lord are true, and righteous altogether. More to be desired are they than gold, even much fine gold; sweeter also than honey and drippings of the honeycomb. Moreover, by them is your servant warned; in keeping them there is great reward (Ps. 19:7-11).

"Every word of God proves true; he is a shield to those who take refuge in him. Do not add to his words, lest he rebuke you and you be found a liar" (Prov. 30:5-6).

"For truly, I say to you, until heaven and earth pass away, not an iota, not a dot, will pass from the Law until all is accomplished" (Matt. 5:18).

"Sanctify them in the truth; your word is truth" (John 17:17).

"in hope of eternal life, which God, who never lies, promised before the ages began" (Titus 1:2).

³⁶ "Long ago, at many times and in many ways, God spoke to our fathers by the prophets, but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed the heir of all things, through whom also he created the world" (Heb. 1:1-2).

³⁷"The secret things belong to the Lord our God, but the things that are revealed belong to us and to our children forever, that we may do all the words of this law" (Deut. 29:29).

"these things God has revealed to us through the Spirit. For the Spirit searches everything, even the depths of God. For who knows a person's thoughts except the spirit of that person, which is in him? So also no one comprehends the thoughts of God except the Spirit of God. Now we have received not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, that we might understand the things freely given us by God. And we impart this in words not taught by human wisdom but taught by the Spirit, interpreting spiritual truths to those who are spiritual" (1 Co. 2:10-13).

"The law of the Lord is perfect, reviving the soul; the testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple; the precepts of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart; the commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes; the fear of the Lord is clean, enduring forever;

the rules of the Lord are true, and righteous altogether. More to be desired are they than gold, even much fine gold; sweeter also than honey and drippings of the honeycomb. Moreover, by them is your servant warned; in keeping them there is great reward (Ps. 19:7-11).

“For truly, I say to you, until heaven and earth pass away, not an iota, not a dot, will pass from the Law until all is accomplished” (Matt. 5:18).

“All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work” (2 Tim. 3:16-17).

“His divine power has granted to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of him who called us to his own glory and excellence” (2 Peter 1:3).

“knowing this first of all, that no prophecy of Scripture comes from someone’s own interpretation. For no prophecy was ever produced by the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit” (2 Peter 1:20-21).

“Beloved, although I was very eager to write to you about our common salvation, I found it necessary to write appealing to you to contend for the faith that was once for all delivered to the saints” (Jude 3).

We believe in the trinity of the Godhead:³⁸ one³⁹ immutable⁴⁰ and omnipotent God,⁴¹ omniscient in all things past, present, and future,⁴² who eternally exists⁴³ in three equal Persons: Father,⁴⁴

³⁸Then God said, "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness" (Gen. 1:26).

"And I heard the voice of the Lord saying, "Whom shall I send, and who will go for us" (Is. 6:8).

"A voice cries: 'In the wilderness prepare the way of the Lord; make straight in the desert a highway for our God. Every valley shall be lifted up, and every mountain and hill be made low; the uneven ground shall become level, and the rough places a plain. And the glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together, for the mouth of the Lord has spoken.'... Who has measured the Spirit of the Lord, or what man shows him his counsel?" (Is. 40:3-5, 13).

"The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me, because the Lord has anointed me to bring good news to the poor; he has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to those who are bound; to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor, and the day of vengeance of our God; to comfort all who mourn" (Is.61:1-2).

"And when Jesus was baptized, immediately he went up from the water, and behold, the heavens were opened to him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and coming to rest on him; and behold, a voice from heaven said, "This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased" (Matt. 3:16-17).

"Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit" (Matt. 28:19).

"The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all" (2 Co. 13:14).

³⁹ "You are my witnesses,' declares the Lord, 'and my servant whom I have chosen, that you may know and believe me and understand that I am he. Before me no god was formed, nor shall there be any after me'" (Is. 43:10).

"I am the Lord, and there is no other, besides me there is no God; I equip you, though you do not know me, that people may know, from the rising of the sun and from the west, that there is none besides me; I am the Lord, and there is no other" (Is. 45:5-6).

"Jesus answered, "The most important is, 'Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one'" (Mark 12:29; cf. Deut. 6:4).

⁴⁰ "Of old you laid the foundation of the earth, and the heavens are the work of your hands. They will perish, but you will remain; they will all wear out like a garment. You will change them like a robe, and they will pass away, but you are the same, and your years have no end" (Ps. 102:25-27).

"For I the Lord do not change..." (Mal. 3:6).

"Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever" (Heb.13:8).

⁴¹ "Our God is in the heavens; he does all that he pleases" (Ps. 115:3).

"For I know that the Lord is great, and that our Lord is above all gods. Whatever the Lord pleases, he does, in heaven and on earth, in the seas and all deeps. He it is who makes the clouds rise at the end of the earth, who makes lightnings for the rain and brings forth the wind from his storehouses. He it was who struck down the firstborn of Egypt, both of man and of beast; who in your midst, O Egypt, sent signs and wonders against Pharaoh and all his servants; who struck down many nations and killed mighty kings, Sihon, king of the Amorites, and Og, king of Bashan, and all the kingdoms of Canaan, and gave their land as a heritage, a heritage to his people Israel" (Ps. 135:5-12).

"Worthy are you, our Lord and God, to receive glory and honor and power, for you created all things, and by your will they existed and were created" (Rev. 4:12).

"For nothing will be impossible with God" (Luke 1:37).

⁴²"Who has measured the Spirit of the Lord, or what man shows him his counsel" (Is. 40:13; cf. Rom. 11:34)?

"And the Spirit of the Lord fell upon me, and he said to me, "Say, Thus says the Lord: So you think, O house of Israel. For I know the things that come into your mind" (Ezek. 11:5).

"And no creature is hidden from his sight, but all are naked and exposed to the eyes of him to whom we must give account" (Heb. 4:13)

⁴³ "Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever you had formed the earth and the world, from everlasting to everlasting you are God" (Ps. 90:2; cf. 93:2).

"Have you not known? Have you not heard? The Lord is the everlasting God, the Creator of the ends of the earth. He does not faint or grow weary; his understanding is unsearchable" (Is. 40:28).

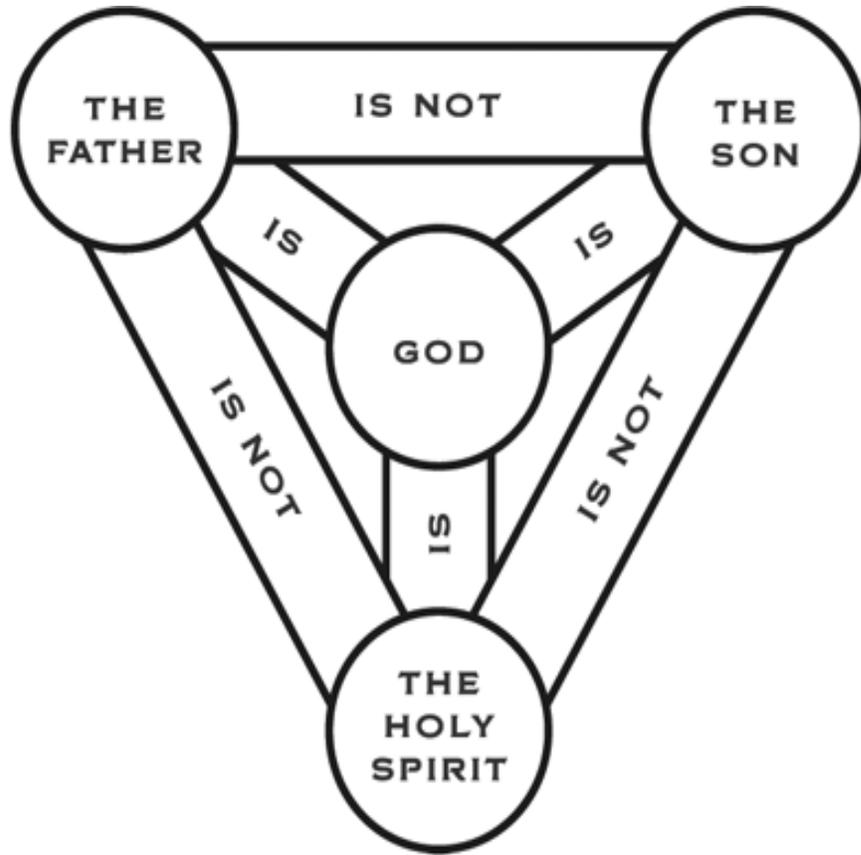
"Who has performed and done this, calling the generations from the beginning? I, the Lord, the first, and with the last; I am he" (Is. 41:4; cf. Rev. 1:8).

"To the King of the ages, immortal, invisible, the only God, be honor and glory forever and ever. Amen" (1 Tim. 1:17).

⁴⁴ "and behold, a voice from heaven said, 'This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased'" (Matt. 3:17).

"Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name" (Matt. 6:9).

Son,⁴⁵ and Holy Spirit.⁴⁶



⁴⁵ “Thomas answered him, ‘My Lord and my God!’ Jesus said to him, ‘Have you believed because you have seen me? Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed’” (John 20:28-29).

⁴⁶ “But Peter said, ‘Ananias, why has Satan filled your heart to lie to the Holy Spirit and to keep back for yourself part of the proceeds of the land? ‘While it remained unsold, did it not remain your own? And after it was sold, was it not at your disposal? Why is it that you have contrived this deed in your heart? You have not lied to man but to God!’” (Acts 5:3-4).

We believe in the deity,⁴⁷ virgin birth,⁴⁸ perfect humanity,⁴⁹ sinless life,⁵⁰ substitutionary death,⁵¹ bodily resurrection,⁵² and ascension of the Lord Jesus Christ.⁵³ He is the only means of

⁴⁷ “Thomas answered him, ‘My Lord and my God!’ Jesus said to him, ‘Have you believed because you have seen me? Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed’” (John 20:28-29).

“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. ³All things were made through him, and without him was not any thing made that was made” (John 1:1-3).

“He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation. For by him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things were created through him and for him. And he is before all things, and in him all things hold together. And he is the head of the body, the church. He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in everything he might be preeminent. For in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell, and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, making peace by the blood of his cross” (Col. 1:15-20).

“For to us a child is born, to us a son is given; and the government shall be upon his shoulder, and his name shall be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace” (Is. 9:6).

⁴⁸ “Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign. Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel” (Is. 7:14)

“And Mary said to the angel, ‘How will this be, since I am a virgin?’ And the angel answered her, ‘The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore the child to be born will be called holy—the Son of God’” (Luke 1:34-35).

⁴⁹ “For there is one God, and there is one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus” (1 Tim. 2:5).

⁵⁰ “And the angel answered her, ‘The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore the child to be born will be called holy—the Son of God’” (Luke 1:35).

“But the other rebuked him, saying, ‘Do you not fear God, since you are under the same sentence of condemnation? ⁴¹And we indeed justly, for we are receiving the due reward of our deeds; but this man has done nothing wrong’” (Luke 23:40).

“Pilate went out again and said to them, ‘See, I am bringing him out to you that you may know that I find no guilt in him’.... When the chief priests and the officers saw him, they cried out, ‘Crucify him, crucify him!’ Pilate said to them, ‘Take him yourselves and crucify him, for I find no guilt in him’” (John 19:4, 6).

For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin” (Heb. 4:15).

“but with the precious blood of Christ, like that of a lamb without blemish or spot” (1 Peter 1:20).

⁵¹ But he was pierced for our transgressions; he was crushed for our iniquities; upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace, and with his wounds we are healed” Is. 53:5).

“even as the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many” (Matt. 20:28; Mk. 10:45).

“For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God” (2 Co. 5:21).

⁵² “...when his soul makes an offering for guilt, he shall see his offspring; he shall prolong his days...” (Is. 53:10).

“Then he said to Thomas, ‘Put your finger here, and see my hands; and put out your hand, and place it in my side. Do not disbelieve, but believe.’ Thomas answered him, ‘My Lord and my God’” (John 20:27-28).

“The God of our fathers raised Jesus, whom you killed by hanging him on a tree” (Acts 5:30).

“For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received: that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures, and that he appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve. Then he appeared to more than five hundred brothers at one time, most of whom are still alive, though some have fallen asleep. Then he appeared to James, then to all the apostles. Last of all, as to one untimely born, he appeared also to me” (1 Co. 15:3-8).

“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! According to his great mercy, he has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead” (1 Peter 1:3).

⁵³ “And he led them out as far as Bethany, and lifting up his hands he blessed them. While he blessed them, he parted from them and was carried up into heaven” (Luke 24:50-51).

“And when he had said these things, as they were looking on, he was lifted up, and a cloud took him out of their sight. And while they were gazing into heaven as he went, behold, two men stood by them in white robes, and said, ‘Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking into heaven? This Jesus, who was taken up from you into heaven, will come in the same way as you saw him go into heaven’” (Acts 1:9-11).

salvation from sin⁵⁴ and the sole mediator between God and man.⁵⁵

We believe in the personality and deity of the Holy Spirit,⁵⁶ through whose ministry believers today are regenerated,⁵⁷ baptized into Christ⁵⁸ and His body,⁵⁹ indwelt,⁶⁰ sealed,⁶¹ gifted⁶² and empowered for service.⁶³

⁵⁴ “...I told you that you would die in your sins, for unless you believe that I am he you will die in your sins” (John 8:24).

“...to open their eyes, so that they may turn from darkness to light and from the power of Satan to God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins and a place among those who are sanctified by faith in me” (Acts 26:18; cf. 5:31; 13:38).

“In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace” (Eph. 1:7; cf. Col. 1:14).

⁵⁵ “Jesus said to him, ‘I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me’” (John 14:6).

“...And there is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved” (Acts 4:12).

“For there is one God, and there is one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus” (1 Tim. 2:5).

⁵⁶ “And the Spirit of the Lord shall rest upon him, the Spirit of wisdom and understanding, the Spirit of counsel and might, the Spirit of knowledge and the fear of the Lord” (Is. 11:2).

“...While it remained unsold, did it not remain your own? And after it was sold, was it not at your disposal? Why is it that you have contrived this deed in your heart? You have not lied to man but to God” (Acts 5:4).

⁵⁷ “Jesus answered, ‘Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. Do not marvel that I said to you, ‘You must be born again.’ The wind blows where it wishes, and you hear its sound, but you do not know where it comes from or where it goes. So it is with everyone who is born of the Spirit’” (John 3:5-8).

“he saved us, not because of works done by us in righteousness, but according to his own mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit” (Titus 3:5).

⁵⁸ “I baptize you with water for repentance, but he who is coming after me is mightier than I, whose sandals I am not worthy to carry. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire” (Matt. 3:11).

“And while staying with them he ordered them not to depart from Jerusalem, but to wait for the promise of the Father, which, he said, ‘you heard from me; for John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now’” (Acts 1:4-5).

“Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? ⁴We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life” (Rom. 6:3-4).

“For in one Spirit we were all baptized into one body—Jews or Greeks, slaves or free—and all were made to drink of one Spirit” (1 Co. 12:13).

⁵⁹ “For the husband is the head of the wife even as Christ is the head of the church, his body, and is himself its Savior” (Eph. 5:23).

“And he is the head of the body, the church. He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in everything he might be preeminent” (Col. 1:18).

⁶⁰ “even the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees him nor knows him. You know him, for he dwells with you and will be in you” (John 14:17).

“Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, whom you have from God? You are not your own” (1 Co. 6:19).

⁶¹ “and who has also put his seal on us and given us his Spirit in our hearts as a guarantee” (2 Co. 1:22).

“In him you also, when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and believed in him, were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit, ¹⁴who is the guarantee of our inheritance until we acquire possession of it, to the praise of his glory” (Eph. 1:13).

“And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption” (Eph. 4:30).

⁶² “To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good” (1 Co. 12:7).

⁶³ “Nevertheless, I tell you the truth: it is to your advantage that I go away, for if I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you. But if I go, I will send him to you” (John 16:7; 14:16, 26; 15:26).

“...But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth” (Acts 1:8).

We believe that gifts of the Holy Spirit are given to build up the body of Christ.⁶⁴ We believe that the sign gifts of the Spirit (tongues, interpretation of tongues, healing, miracles, revelatory words of knowledge, revelatory prophecy and the gift of apostleship⁶⁵) were given only for the apostolic era as signs,⁶⁶ providing revelation and authenticating the ministry of the apostles.⁶⁷

We believe that God created the universe (including mankind) in six literal, consecutive 24-hour days apart from the process of evolution⁶⁸ and that Adam and Eve were historical persons.⁶⁹ We believe that mankind was created in the image of God and retains that image

⁶⁴ “And he gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds and teachers, to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ” (Eph. 4:11-12).

⁶⁵ Prophecy is no longer revelatory. The gift has ceased in the revelatory sense. The gift continues in the sense of speaking forth God’s truth for the purpose of building and encouraging people into Christlikeness. “On the other hand, the one who prophesies speaks to people for their upbuilding and encouragement and consolation” (1 Co. 14:3). In the non-revelatory sense of speaking God’s truth, the gift continues in the present time.

⁶⁶ “Thus tongues are a sign not for believers but for unbelievers, while prophecy is a sign not for unbelievers but for believers” (1 Co. 14:22).

⁶⁷ “The signs of a true apostle were performed among you with utmost patience, with signs and wonders and mighty works” (2 Co. 12:12).

“Last of all, as to one untimely born, he appeared also to me. For I am the least of the apostles, unworthy to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God” (1 Co. 15:8-9).

Note:

While some define the gift of apostleship in the present day as the gift of having the ability to pioneer new ministries, or in the sense of a messenger, that is not what we mean here. Here we mean the original men chosen by Jesus (John 15:16; Acts 1:21-26), confirmed by miracles (2 Co. 12:12; Heb. 2:3-4), and who were witnesses to his resurrection (1 Co. 9:1). They are called “apostles of Christ” and include the Twelve and Paul (Matthias eventually replacing Judas). They were unique in authority and the office ceased with the death of the Apostle John. They were foundational to the church (Eph. 2:20). Once the foundation was complete, the office ceased in the sense in which they possessed it.

“... as for tongues, they will cease...” (1 Co. 13:8).

“Thus tongues are a sign not for believers but for unbelievers, while prophecy is a sign not for unbelievers but for believers” (1 Co. 14:22).

“Erastus remained at Corinth, and I left Trophimus, who was ill, at Miletus” (2 Tim. 4:20).

“(…No longer drink only water, but use a little wine for the sake of your stomach and your frequent ailments)” (1 Tim. 5:23).

“how shall we escape if we neglect such a great salvation? It was declared at first by the Lord, and it was attested to us by those who heard, while God also bore witness by signs and wonders and various miracles and by gifts of the Holy Spirit distributed according to his will” (Heb. 2:3-4).

Dr. Steve Lawson states, “There is no mention of these miraculous sign gifts in the New Testament past 56 or 57 A.D., when 1 Corinthians was written. Once you get past that date to the later general epistles and even Paul’s later epistles, there is no mention of these gifts, which indicates that they were beginning to pass”

(<https://www.ligonier.org/learn/gas/how-would-you-persuade-someone-that-the-sign-gifts-have-ceased>).

⁶⁸ “And there was evening and there was morning, the first day” (Gen. 1:5; cf. 1:8, 13, 19, 23, 31)

“Six days you shall labor, and do all your work, but the seventh day is a Sabbath to the Lord your God. On it you shall not do any work, you, or your son, or your daughter, your male servant, or your female servant, or your livestock, or the sojourner who is within your gates. For in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that is in them, and rested on the seventh day. Therefore the Lord blessed the Sabbath day and made it holy” (Ex. 20:9-11).

⁶⁹ “then the Lord God formed the man of dust from the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living creature” (Gen. 2:7).

“Therefore, just as sin came into the world through one man, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men because all sinned” (Rom. 5:12).

“For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive” (1 Co. 15:22).

after the fall.⁷⁰ All humans, from the time of their conception, including those who are physically or mentally challenged, have value as image-bearers.⁷¹ Therefore, we affirm the dignity of human life and oppose the use of abortion or euthanasia to end life.⁷² We affirm that all people are worth pursuing for the cause of Christ.⁷³ Based on the model of God's creative design, we believe that marriage joins one man and one woman⁷⁴ and is the only relationship in which sexual intimacy should be expressed.⁷⁵

We believe that all human beings are totally depraved and guilty before God as a result of the fall of Adam.⁷⁶ We commit acts of sin because we are sinners by nature.^{77 78}

"For Adam was formed first, then Eve" (1 Tim. 2:13).

⁷⁰ "Then God said, 'Let us make man in our image, after our likeness. And let them have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over the livestock and over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth.' So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them" (Gen. 1:26-27).

⁷¹ "Whoever sheds the blood of man, by man shall his blood be shed, for God made man in his own image" (Gen. 9:6).

⁷² "You shall not murder" (Ex. 20:13).

"There are six things that the Lord hates, seven that are an abomination to him: haughty eyes, a lying tongue, and hands that shed innocent blood" (Prov. 6:16-17).

⁷³ "if indeed you continue in the faith, stable and steadfast, not shifting from the hope of the gospel that you heard, which has been proclaimed in all creation under heaven, and of which I, Paul, became a minister" (Col. 1:23).

"But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth" (Acts 1:8).

⁷⁴ "Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and they shall become one flesh. And the man and his wife were both naked and were not ashamed" (Gen. 2:24; cf. Matt. 19:4-6).

⁷⁵ "But because of the temptation to sexual immorality, each man should have his own wife and each woman her own husband. The husband should give to his wife her conjugal rights, and likewise the wife to her husband. For the wife does not have authority over her own body, but the husband does. Likewise the husband does not have authority over his own body, but the wife does. Do not deprive one another, except perhaps by agreement for a limited time, that you may devote yourselves to prayer; but then come together again, so that Satan may not tempt you because of your lack of self-control" (1 Co. 7:2-5).

⁷⁶ "The Lord saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every intention of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually" (Gen. 6:5).

"And this is the judgment: the light has come into the world, and people loved the darkness rather than the light because their works were evil" (John 3:19).

"For this reason God gave them up to dishonorable passions. For their women exchanged natural relations for those that are contrary to nature" (Romans 1:26; i.e. The fall resulted in inability to know that something is against nature).

"Therefore, just as sin came into the world through one man, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men because all sinned—" (Rom. 5:12).

"For the mind that is set on the flesh is hostile to God, for it does not submit to God's law; indeed, it cannot. ⁸ Those who are in the flesh cannot please God" (Romans 8:7-8).

"For while we were still weak, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly" (Rom. 5:6; i.e. The fall resulted in the bondage of the will.).

"They are darkened in their understanding, alienated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them, due to their hardness of heart" (Eph. 4:18; i.e. The fall resulted in a darkened intellect.)

⁷⁷ "among whom we all once lived in the passions of our flesh, carrying out the desires of the body and the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, like the rest of mankind" (Eph. 2:3).

⁷⁸ Mankind's only hope is to be born again.

"Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God" (John 3:3).

"...he has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead" (1 Peter 1:3)

"Of his own will he brought us forth by the word of truth, that we should be a kind of firstfruits of his creatures" (James 1:18).

We believe that the Triune God saves sinners by grace alone⁷⁹ through faith in Christ alone.⁸⁰ God secures their eternal salvation,⁸¹ having sovereignly elected⁸² them to be willing

⁷⁹ “But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us, even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ—by grace you have been saved—” (Eph. 2:4-5).

“For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast” (Eph. 2:8-9).

“But the free gift is not like the trespass. For if many died through one man’s trespass, much more have the grace of God and the free gift by the grace of that one man Jesus Christ abounded for many” (Rom. 5:15).

“so that, as sin reigned in death, grace also might reign through righteousness leading to eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord” (Rom. 5:21).

⁸⁰ “But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God” (John 1:12).

“And when he wished to cross to Achaia, the brothers encouraged him and wrote to the disciples to welcome him. When he arrived, he greatly helped those who through grace had believed” (Acts 18:27)

“the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all who believe” (Rom. 3:22).

“That is why it depends on faith, in order that the promise may rest on grace and be guaranteed to all his offspring—not only to the adherent of the law but also to the one who shares the faith of Abraham, who is the father of us all” (Rom. 4:16)

“Through him we have also obtained access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and we rejoice in hope of the glory of God” (Rom. 5:2)

⁸¹ “For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life” (John 3:16).

“And these will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life” (Matt. 25:46)

⁸² “And when the Gentiles heard this, they began rejoicing and glorifying the word of the Lord, and as many as were appointed to eternal life believed” (Acts 13:48).

“For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, in order that he might be the firstborn among many brothers. And those whom he predestined he also called, and those whom he called he also justified, and those whom he justified he also glorified” (Rom. 8:29-30).

“So too at the present time there is a remnant, chosen by grace. But if it is by grace, it is no longer on the basis of works; otherwise grace would no longer be grace” (Rom. 11:5-6).

“even as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before him. In love he predestined us for adoption to himself as sons through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of his will, to the praise of his glorious grace, with which he has blessed us in the Beloved” (Eph. 1:4-6).

“For we know, brothers loved by God, that he has chosen you, because our gospel came to you not only in word, but also in power and in the Holy Spirit and with full conviction” (1 Thess. 1:4-5).

“To those who are elect exiles of the Dispersion in Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia, according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, in the sanctification of the Spirit, for obedience to Jesus Christ and for sprinkling with his blood” (1 Peter 1:1-2).

“and all who dwell on earth will worship it, everyone whose name has not been written before the foundation of the world in the book of life of the Lamb who was slain” (Rev. 13:8; cf. 17:8).

recipients⁸³ of His grace in Christ,⁸⁴ whose blood was shed for the remission of sins.⁸⁵ We believe that all who receive through faith by grace the Lord Jesus Christ have been regenerated⁸⁶ by the Holy Spirit, thereby becoming children of God, a relationship in which they are preserved for eternity.⁸⁷

⁸³ “Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light” (Matt. 11:28-30).

“And Peter said to them, ‘Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. For the promise is for you and for your children and for all who are far off, everyone whom the Lord our God calls to himself.’ And with many other words he bore witness and continued to exhort them, saying, ‘Save yourselves from this crooked generation.’ So those who received his word were baptized, and there were added that day about three thousand souls” (Acts 2:38-41).

“because, if you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For with the heart one believes and is justified, and with the mouth one confesses and is saved. For the Scripture says, ‘Everyone who believes in him will not be put to shame.’ For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek; for the same Lord is Lord of all, bestowing his riches on all who call on him. For “everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved” (Rom. 10:9-13).

⁸⁴ “And because of him you are in Christ Jesus...” (1 Co. 1:30).

“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places” (Eph. 1:3).

“In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace” (Eph. 1:7).

⁸⁵ “And Peter said to them, “Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit” (Acts 2:38; cf. 10:43).

“In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace” (Eph. 1:7).

⁸⁶ “Everyone who believes that Jesus is the Christ has been born of God...” (1 John 5:1a).

⁸⁷ “For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life” (John 3:16).

“There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus” (Rom. 8:1).

“What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us? He who did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all, how will he not also with him graciously give us all things? Who shall bring any charge against God’s elect? It is God who justifies. Who is to condemn? Christ Jesus is the one who died—more than that, who was raised—who is at the right hand of God, who indeed is interceding for us. Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or danger, or sword? As it is written, ‘For your sake we are being killed all the day long; we are regarded as sheep to be slaughtered.’ No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord” (Rom. 8:31-39).

“My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me. I give them eternal life, and they will never perish, and no one will snatch them out of my hand. My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all, and no one is able to snatch them out of the Father’s hand” (John 10:27-29).

“to an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you, who by God’s power are being guarded through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time” (1 Peter 1:4-5).

We believe that salvation, while being given apart from good works, is demonstrated through good works that are part of a holy life.⁸⁸ We believe that every Christian has the joyous responsibility of evangelizing sinners in obedience to Christ's Great Commission.⁸⁹

We believe that the universal Church is the body of Christ,⁹⁰ comprised of all true believers from Pentecost⁹¹ until the Rapture.⁹² Jesus Christ is the sole head of the Church.⁹³

⁸⁸ "Everyone then who hears these words of mine and does them will be like a wise man who built his house on the rock. ²⁵ And the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house, but it did not fall, because it had been founded on the rock" (Matt. 7:24-25).

"The good person out of his good treasure brings forth good, and the evil person out of his evil treasure brings forth evil" (Matt. 12:35). "through whom we have received grace and apostleship to bring about the obedience of faith for the sake of his name among all the nations" (Rom. 1:5).

"but has now been disclosed and through the prophetic writings has been made known to all nations, according to the command of the eternal God, to bring about the obedience of faith" (Rom. 16:26).

"For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast. For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them" (Eph. 2:8-10).

"So also faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead" (James 2:17).

"For this very reason, make every effort to supplement your faith with virtue, and virtue with knowledge, and knowledge with self-control, and self-control with steadfastness, and steadfastness with godliness, and godliness with brotherly affection, and brotherly affection with love. For if these qualities are yours and are increasing, they keep you from being ineffective or unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. For whoever lacks these qualities is so nearsighted that he is blind, having forgotten that he was cleansed from his former sins. Therefore, brothers, be all the more diligent to confirm your calling and election, for if you practice these qualities you will never fall" (2 Peter 1:5-10).

⁸⁹ "Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age" (Matt. 28:19-20).

⁹⁰ "And he is the head of the body, the church. He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in everything he might be preeminent" (Col. 1:18; cf. 2:19).

⁹¹ When the day of Pentecost arrived, they were all together in one place. And suddenly there came from heaven a sound like a mighty rushing wind, and it filled the entire house where they were sitting. And divided tongues as of fire appeared to them and rested on each one of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit gave them utterance" (Acts 2:1-4).

"For in one Spirit we were all baptized into one body—Jews or Greeks, slaves or free—and all were made to drink of one Spirit" (1 Co. 12:13).

⁹² "Let not your hearts be troubled. Believe in God; believe also in me. In my Father's house are many rooms. If it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you? And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, that where I am you may be also" (John 14:1-3).

"Behold! I tell you a mystery. We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we shall be changed" (1 Co. 15:51-52).

"For this we declare to you by a word from the Lord, that we who are alive, who are left until the coming of the Lord, will not precede those who have fallen asleep. For the Lord himself will descend from heaven with a cry of command, with the voice of an archangel, and with the sound of the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive, who are left, will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so we will always be with the Lord. Therefore encourage one another with these words" (1 Thess. 4:15-17).

⁹³ "I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it" (Matt. 16:18).

"And he is the head of the body, the church. He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in everything he might be preeminent" (Col. 1:18; cf. 2:19).

We believe that the local church is an assembly of immersed believers,⁹⁴ led by overseers/elders/pastors⁹⁵ with the support and involvement of the congregation⁹⁶ and served

⁹⁴ “...Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age” (Matt. 28:19-20). “And Peter said to them, ‘Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit’” (Acts 2:38).

“Then Philip opened his mouth, and beginning with this Scripture he told him the good news about Jesus. And as they were going along the road they came to some water, and the eunuch said, ‘See, here is water! What prevents me from being baptized?’ And he commanded the chariot to stop, and they both went down into the water, Philip and the eunuch, and he baptized him” (Acts 8:35-38; cf. Acts 10:43-48; 16:14-15, 30-34; 18:8; 19:4-5).

⁹⁵ “Pay careful attention to yourselves and to all the flock, in which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to care for the church of God, which he obtained with his own blood” (Acts 20:28).

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

Note:

We define “husband of one wife” to mean “one woman man” as demonstrated by whole-hearted devotion to the elder or deacon’s one wife.

“Let the elders who rule well be considered worthy of double honor, especially those who labor in preaching and teaching” (1 Tim. 5:17).

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

“Remember your leaders, those who spoke to you the word of God. Consider the outcome of their way of life, and imitate their faith” (Heb. 13:7).

“Obey your leaders and submit to them, for they are keeping watch over your souls, as those who will have to give an account. Let them do this with joy and not with groaning, for that would be of no advantage to you” (Heb. 13:17).

“I exhort the elders among you, as a fellow elder and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, as well as a partaker in the glory that is going to be revealed: shepherd the flock of God that is among you, exercising oversight, not under compulsion, but willingly, as God would have you; not for shameful gain, but eagerly; not domineering over those in your charge, but being examples to the flock” (1 Peter 5:1-4).

⁹⁶ “If your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault, between you and him alone. If he listens to you, you have gained your brother. But if he does not listen, take one or two others along with you, that every charge may be established by the evidence of two or three witnesses. If he refuses to listen to them, **tell it to the church**. And if he refuses to listen even to the church, let him be to you as a Gentile and a tax collector” (Matt. 18:15-17). - emphasis added

“And the twelve summoned the **full number of the disciples** and said, “It is not right that we should give up preaching the word of God to serve tables. Therefore, brothers, pick out from among you seven men of good repute, full of the Spirit and of wisdom, whom we will appoint to this duty” (Acts 6:2-3). - emphasis added

“Then it seemed good to the apostles and the elders, **with the whole church**, to choose men from among them and send them to Antioch with Paul and Barnabas. They sent Judas called Barsabbas, and Silas, leading men among the brothers, with the following letter: ‘The brothers, both the apostles and the elders, **to the brothers who are of the Gentiles in Antioch and Syria and Cilicia**, greetings’” (Acts 15:22-23). - emphasis added

“**When you are assembled** in the name of the Lord Jesus and my spirit is present, with the power of our Lord Jesus, you are to deliver this man to Satan for the destruction of the flesh, so that his spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord” (1 Co. 5:4-5). - emphasis added

“For such a one, this punishment **by the majority** is enough” (2 Co. 2:6). - emphasis added

by deacons and deaconesses⁹⁷ with the support and involvement of the congregation.⁹⁸ This is all done using the Scriptures so that ultimately there is one Shepherd (God/Christ)⁹⁹ over His church.¹⁰⁰

⁹⁷ “Deacons likewise must be dignified, not double-tongued, not addicted to much wine, not greedy for dishonest gain. They must hold the mystery of the faith with a clear conscience. And let them also be tested first; then let them serve as deacons if they prove themselves blameless. Their wives likewise must be dignified, not slanderers, but sober-minded, faithful in all things. Let deacons each be the husband of one wife, managing their children and their own households well. For those who serve well as deacons gain a good standing for themselves and also great confidence in the faith that is in Christ Jesus” (1 Tim. 3:8-13).

⁹⁸ “Having gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, let us use them: if prophecy, in proportion to our faith; if service, in our serving” (Rom. 12:6-7a).

⁹⁹ “The words of the wise are like goads, and like nails firmly fixed are the collected sayings; they are given by one Shepherd. My son, beware of anything beyond these. Of making many books there is no end, and much study is a weariness of the flesh” (Eccl. 12:11-12).

¹⁰⁰ The concept of deacons ruling over spiritual matters in the church is based on a mistranslation and misinterpretation of Acts 6:3. “Wherefore, brethren, look ye out among you seven men of honest report, full of the Holy Ghost and wisdom, whom we may appoint over this business.” The business that was being taken care of was the care of widows which is consistent with the future office of deacon. Dr. Howard Bixby of Baptist Bible Seminary states,

“As American churches adapted to the governmental and corporate culture of the USA, a legislative or board system developed. In Baptist and Bible church groups especially, strong lay boards and committees were elected to “run the church.” A misunderstanding (and misexegesis) of Acts 6:3 gave apparent support to the trend. “... Look for seven men... whom we may appoint over this business.” The term *business* in the Greek text actually refers to the ministry of caring for widows. As the term “business” became the focus, deacon boards were elected and organized to “rule” the church, hire pastors/church staff, and hold pastors accountable for doing the work of the church. In recent years the “ruling elder” position and board have been added on top of trustee and deacon board structures” (Bixby, Howard. *A Biblical Perspective Regarding Elder Rule*: Faculty Forum. Baptist Bible Seminary. 2006.).

Similarly, A.D. Lifting notes in The Bible Knowledge Commentary, “The Bible never speaks of a corresponding group identity for deacons. The notion of deacons functioning as a “board” is never mentioned in the Bible.”

In reality, the Acts 6 account was likely much too early for the development of an organized church governmental structure. The church was in its infancy and still located in Jerusalem before the martyrdom of Stephen. The men selected were selected to meet a specific and urgent need. The two we know much about were almost apostle-like in their function and even could do signs and wonders (Acts 6:8; 8:13). They were likely a prototype for what would eventually become the office of deacon (1 Tim. 3:8-13), but, in reality, were just meeting the current need and then used for other tasks according to the will of God. John MacArthur states,

“There is no strong reason from those epistles to believe that the office of deacon was instituted in Acts 6. Elders are mentioned later in the book of Acts and in several of the epistles to the churches, but no deacons. If Acts 6 is indeed the institution of the deacon’s office, it seems strange that deacons are never referred to again in Acts.... It is more likely that the seven were a group of highly qualified spiritual leaders, teachers, and honorable men chosen to administrate the situation. By doing what they did, they freed the apostles to devote themselves to the priorities of prayer and ministry of the Word” (<https://www.gty.org/library/articles/451020/answering-the-key-questions-about-deacons>).

Three terms are used that are associated with the word “deacon.”

- a. Diakonia (used 34 times) which means “service.”
 1. Translated variously as...
 - a. service (Rom. 12:7; 1 Tim. 1:12)
 - b. serve (Rom. 12:7; 2 Co. 11:8)
 - c. relief (Acts 11:29; 2 Co. 8:4)
 - d. distribution (Acts 6:1)
 - e. ministry (2 Tim. 4:5, 11)
- b. Diakonos (used 30 times) which means “servant.”
 1. Translated variously as...
 - a. deacons (Phil. 1:1; 1 Tim. 3:8, 12, et al.)
 - b. servant/servants (Mark 9:36; Rom. 16:1, et al.)
 - c. minister/ministers (1 Co. 3:6; Eph. 6:21; Col. 1:7, et al.)
- c. Diakoneo (used 37 times) which means “to serve.”
 1. Translated variously as...
 - a. minister/ministering/ministered (2 Co. 8:19; Matt. 4:11; 25:44; et al.)
 - b. provided (Luke 8:3)
 - c. serve, served, serves (1 Tim. 3:10; 1 Peter. 4:10-11; et al.)
 - d. helpers (Acts 19:22)

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- e. bringing (Rom. 15:25)
 - f. delivered (2 Co. 3:3)
 - g. administered (2 Co. 8:20)
 - h. rendered (2 Tim. 1:18)
 - i. as you...do (Heb. 6:10)

Typically the words are translated with the idea of “serving” or “service” or “servant” with a few exceptions in some versions. They can also be translated as “minister” along with words associated with “minister” (e.g. ministry). The idea is that the word denotes “service” of varying kinds and types (i.e. serving food - Luke 4:39; John 2:5, 9; general service - John 12:26; spiritual service - Acts 20:19). Because of how the words for “service,” “serving” and “to serve” are used regarding so many different people in the early church, we learn that, in some sense, everyone is to be a deacon or “serve.” Every member should be a minister in the most basic sense of the word. Gene A. Getz states,

“...note that biblical writers used the basic terms *diakoneo* (to serve), *diakonia* (service), and *diakonos* (servant) to describe the *ministry all believers* should have within the body of Christ. For example, when Paul wrote to the Ephesians, he stated that it’s God’s plan that all believers are to be equipped “for works of service [*diakonia*]” (Ephesians 4:12). Though there are those who are to serve the body of Christ in a special way, every believer is to be a “deacon” or “servant” (*diakonos*) who participates in building up the body of Christ (v. 16).

Getz, Gene. A. *Elders and Leaders: God’s Plan for Leading the Church*. 2003. Moody Publishers. Chicago, Ill. p. 102.]

Lastly, Curtis C. Thomas states,

I was raised in a denominational church in which there was a single pastor and a board of deacons. The deacons were looked upon by the congregation as the leaders of the body. They hired and fired the pastor. They made the decisions for the body. They drew up the budgets, spent the church’s money, determined when congregational meetings were held, set the agendas, and were viewed as those who held the church together. The pastor was considered little more than a hired hand who was somewhat dispensable and often replaced.

But obviously that is not the proper role of deacons according to the New Testament. Elders are to be the spiritual leaders. Deacons are to serve the body. That is what the word *deacon* means—“servant.” This does not mean deacons are to have no spiritual qualities. In fact, in 1 Timothy 3 the qualifications for the offices of deacon and elder are the same except for one. The elder must be apt to teach; that is not required of the deacon. Thomas, C. C. (2001).

Practical wisdom for pastors: words of encouragement and counsel for a lifetime of ministry (pp. 106–107). Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books.

For further information please see Pastor Ben’s sermons on deacons and elders in the following locations.

1 Timothy 3:1-7 “Requirements of a Pastor: Part 1: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4ZrTD0_77sY&t=24s

1 Timothy 3:1-7 “Requirements of a Pastor: Part 2: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=d5cmt-j1LFo&t=17s>

1 Timothy 3:1-7 “Requirements of a Pastor: Part 3 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NvscUFi7Ik0&t=105s>

1 Timothy 3:8-13 “Deacons: Servants of Christ’s Church: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Nudl0W_joh8&t=134s

1 Timothy 5:17-18 “Protecting Pastors and Ministering to Ministers.” <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=b6QTgREGIQM>

This is all to say that the God-ordained spiritual leaders of the church are the elders/overseers/pastors whose responsibility is to shepherd the flock of God exercising oversight (1 Peter 5:1-4) while using God’s Word to do it (Heb. 13:7; 2 Tim. 3:16) so that ultimately it is Christ as the One Shepherd ruling over His church through His Word (Matt. 16:18; Eccl. 12:11-12). There is no innate authority in any human person or group. As always, Scripture is the authority because God rules through His Word. God-ordained shepherds will love, care, and do what is best for the “flock of God” (1 Peter 5:2) because they love them and will have to give an account (Heb. 13:17). This involves the people in the church because their gifts and abilities are needed for the church’s ultimate health and spiritual growth (1 Co. 12:7; Eph. 4:12-16). The concern that often exists regarding sinful, domineering elders (1 Peter 5:3) is dealt with in 1 Tim. 5:19-21 and requires the biblical model of a plurality of elders to keep one another in check for the purpose of God’s glory and loving congregational care. Properly defined, a pastor/elder/overseer is a *mature* Christian man appointed to *lead* in the affairs of Christ’s church and *shepherd* the people of God toward Christlikeness by teaching the Bible in word and deed while knowing he is ultimately accountable to God for how he cares for the people of God. Alexander Strauch states,

“New Testament, Christianized elders are not mere representatives of the people; they are, as the passages above show, spiritually qualified shepherds who protect, lead, and teach the people. They provide spiritual care for the entire flock. They are the official shepherds of the church.” [Strauch, Alexander. *Biblical Eldership: An Urgent Call to Restore Church Eldership*. Lewis and Roth Publishers. 1995. p. 108.]

Similarly, John MacArthur states,

“The consistent pattern throughout the New Testament is that each local body of believers is shepherded by a plurality of God-ordained elders. Simply stated, this is the only pattern for church leadership given in the New Testament. Nowhere in Scripture does one find a local assembly ruled by majority opinion or by a single pastor.”

This is a God-ordained position (Acts 20:28) to which the leaders will be held accountable (Heb. 13:17). For this reason, the flock of God is to follow their example and support them as they use the Bible to shepherd, lead, and direct the church (1 Thess. 5:12; Hebrews 13:7, 17). The following passages are clear:

“Pay careful attention to yourselves and to all the flock, in which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, **to care for the church of God**, which he obtained with his own blood (Acts 20:28).” - emphasis mine

“We ask you, brothers, **to respect those who labor among you and are over you in the Lord** and admonish you, and to **esteem them very highly in love because of their work**. Be at peace among yourselves (1 Thess. 5:12).” - emphasis mine

We believe that the local church is responsible to fulfill the Great Commission.¹⁰¹ It must observe the ordinances of believers' baptism¹⁰² and the Lord's Supper;¹⁰³ foster true fellowship,¹⁰⁴ prayer,¹⁰⁵ and worship;¹⁰⁶ edify and equip believers;¹⁰⁷ and evangelize the world.¹⁰⁸

¹⁰¹ "Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age" (Matt. 28:19-20). "But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth" (Acts 1:8).

¹⁰² "Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit" (Matt. 28:19-20).

"And Peter said to them, 'Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit'" (Acts 2:38).

"Then Philip opened his mouth, and beginning with this Scripture he told him the good news about Jesus. And as they were going along the road they came to some water, and the eunuch said, 'See, here is water! What prevents me from being baptized?' And he commanded the chariot to stop, and they both went down into the water, Philip and the eunuch, and he baptized him" (Acts 8:35-38; cf. Acts 10:43-48; 16:14-15, 30-34; 18:8; 19:4-5).

¹⁰³ "The cup of blessing that we bless, is it not a participation in the blood of Christ? The bread that we break, is it not a participation in the body of Christ? Because there is one bread, we who are many are one body, for we all partake of the one bread" (1 Co. 10:16-17). "For I received from the Lord what I also delivered to you, that the Lord Jesus on the night when he was betrayed took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it, and said, 'This is my body, which is for you. Do this in remembrance of me.' In the same way also he took the cup, after supper, saying, 'This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me.' For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes. Whoever, therefore, eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty concerning the body and blood of the Lord. Let a person examine himself, then, and so eat of the bread and drink of the cup. For anyone who eats and drinks without discerning the body eats and drinks judgment on himself. That is why many of you are weak and ill, and some have died. But if we judged ourselves truly, we would not be judged. But when we are judged by the Lord, we are disciplined so that we may not be condemned along with the world" (1 Co. 11:23-32).

¹⁰⁴ "And they devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers. And awe came upon every soul, and many wonders and signs were being done through the apostles. And all who believed were together and had all things in common. And they were selling their possessions and belongings and distributing the proceeds to all, as any had need. And day by day, attending the temple together and breaking bread in their homes, they received their food with glad and generous hearts, praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to their number day by day those who were being saved" (Acts 2:42-47; see also Acts 4:32-37; Compare with poor fellowship in 1 Co. 11:17-22).

¹⁰⁵ "And when you pray, do not heap up empty phrases as the Gentiles do, for they think that they will be heard for their many words. Do not be like them, for your Father knows what you need before you ask him. Pray then like this: "Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name. Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For if you forgive others their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you, but if you do not forgive others their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses" (Matt. 6:7-15).

"And they devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers" (Acts 2:42; cf. Acts 4:23-31).

"praying at all times in the Spirit, with all prayer and supplication. To that end, keep alert with all perseverance, making supplication for all the saints" (Eph. 6:18).

"pray without ceasing" (1 Thess. 5:17).

"But you, beloved, building yourselves up in your most holy faith and praying in the Holy Spirit" (Jude 20).

¹⁰⁶ "...But the hour is coming, and is now here, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for the Father is seeking such people to worship him. God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth" (John 4:23-24). "I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship" (Rom. 12:1).

¹⁰⁷ "to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ" (Eph. 4:12).

¹⁰⁸ "Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age" (Matt. 28:19-20). "But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth" (Acts 1:8).

We believe that the only biblical mode of baptism is immersion;¹⁰⁹ that baptism is for believers only;¹¹⁰ that it is a testimony of their identity by faith with Christ's death, burial, and resurrection;¹¹¹ and that it is a prerequisite for local church membership.¹¹²

We believe that the ordinance of the Lord's Supper is solely a memorial of Christ's death, and that the body and blood of Christ are not present in the bread and cup.¹¹³

We believe in the priesthood of all believers¹¹⁴ and that we have direct access to God apart from any mediator except Christ.¹¹⁵ We respect the God-given capacity of individual soul liberty through which each person will give account for living by the dictates of his own conscience.¹¹⁶

¹⁰⁹ Only immersion properly represents death and burial as one testifies to his union with Christ in His death, burial, and resurrection (Rom. 6:3-6). Every instance of NT water baptism allows for immersion in water and "to immerse" is the primary meaning of the Greek verbs *baptizo* and *bapto*.

¹¹⁰ "...Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age" (Matt. 28:19-20). "And Peter said to them, 'Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit'" (Acts 2:38). "Then Philip opened his mouth, and beginning with this Scripture he told him the good news about Jesus. And as they were going along the road they came to some water, and the eunuch said, 'See, here is water! What prevents me from being baptized?' And he commanded the chariot to stop, and they both went down into the water, Philip and the eunuch, and he baptized him" (Acts 8:35-38; cf. Acts 10:43-48; 16:14-15, 30-34; 18:8; 19:4-5).

¹¹¹ "Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? ⁴We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life. For if we have been united with him in a death like his, we shall certainly be united with him in a resurrection like his. ⁶We know that our old self was crucified with him in order that the body of sin might be brought to nothing, so that we would no longer be enslaved to sin" (Rom. 6:3-6). "So everyone who acknowledges me before men, I also will acknowledge before my Father who is in heaven, but whoever denies me before men, I also will deny before my Father who is in heaven" (Matt. 10:32-33).

¹¹² Church membership is implicitly taught in Scripture as necessitated by the commands for unity amongst local believers (Phil. 2:1-2; Eph. 4:1-6), the need for purity regarding who was "in" and who was "out" (Matt. 18:15-17; Acts 5:1-11; 1 Co. 5:4-5; 1 Tim. 1:20), and the need for polity and identifying who one's leaders are (Acts 20:28; 1 Thess. 5:2-4; Heb. 13:7, 17; 1 Peter 5:1-4). That the early church kept track of its converts is another clear indication of a record of church membership (Acts 2:41; 4:4). Specific local assemblies are identified as "the church in Jerusalem" (Acts 8:1), "the church at Antioch" (Acts 13:1), "the church at Cenchreae" (Rom. 16:1) etc. and letters of recommendation were sent from one assembly to another (Acts 18:27 - Apollos; Rom. 16:1-2 - Phoebe; 1 Co. 16:10-11 - Timothy; etc.).

¹¹³ "Now as they were eating, Jesus took bread, and after blessing it broke it and gave it to the disciples, and said, 'Take, eat; this is my body.' And he took a cup, and when he had given thanks he gave it to them, saying, 'Drink of it, all of you, for this is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins'" (Matt. 26:26-28; cf. Mark 14:22-24; Luke 22:19, 20).

Note: Jesus was still alive and present when He established the ordinance clearly denoting that the imagery was representative. Later, Luke and Paul recorded that it was to be a "remembrance" (Luke 22:19; 1 Co. 11:24-25).

¹¹⁴ "But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light" (1 Peter 2:9). "and you have made them a kingdom and priests to our God, and they shall reign on the earth" (Rev. 5:10; cf. 20:6).

¹¹⁵ "For there is one God, and there is one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus" (1 Tim. 2:5).

"Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need" (Heb. 4:16).

"But as it is, Christ has obtained a ministry that is as much more excellent than the old as the covenant he mediates is better, since it is enacted on better promises" (Heb. 8:6; cf. 9:15; 12:24).

¹¹⁶ "I am speaking the truth in Christ—I am not lying; my conscience bears me witness in the Holy Spirit" (Rom. 9:1). "Therefore one must be in subjection, not only to avoid God's wrath but also for the sake of conscience" (Rom. 13:5).

We believe in the separation of church¹¹⁷ and state,¹¹⁸ and that believers must fulfill biblical responsibilities to each.¹¹⁹

We believe that the Bible directs us to a life of holiness,¹²⁰ requiring separation from worldliness¹²¹ and ecclesiastical apostasy unto God.¹²²

“For our boast is this, the testimony of our conscience, that we behaved in the world with simplicity and godly sincerity, not by earthly wisdom but by the grace of God, and supremely so toward you” (2 Co. 1:12).

¹¹⁷ “Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit in everything to their husbands” (Eph. 5:24).

“We ask you, brothers, to respect those who labor among you and are over you in the Lord and admonish you, and to esteem them very highly in love because of their work. Be at peace among yourselves” (1 Thess. 5:12-13).

“Obey your leaders and submit to them, for they are keeping watch over your souls, as those who will have to give an account. Let them do this with joy and not with groaning, for that would be of no advantage to you” (Heb. 13:17).

¹¹⁸ “Let every person be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and those that exist have been instituted by God. Therefore whoever resists the authorities resists what God has appointed, and those who resist will incur judgment. For rulers are not a terror to good conduct, but to bad. Would you have no fear of the one who is in authority? Then do what is good, and you will receive his approval, for he is God’s servant for your good. But if you do wrong, be afraid, for he does not bear the sword in vain. For he is the servant of God, an avenger who carries out God’s wrath on the wrongdoer. Therefore one must be in subjection, not only to avoid God’s wrath but also for the sake of conscience. For because of this you also pay taxes, for the authorities are ministers of God, attending to this very thing. Pay to all what is owed to them: taxes to whom taxes are owed, revenue to whom revenue is owed, respect to whom respect is owed, honor to whom honor is owed” (Rom. 13:1-7).

“Be subject for the Lord’s sake to every human institution, whether it be to the emperor as supreme, or to governors as sent by him to punish those who do evil and to praise those who do good” (1 Peter 2:13-14).

¹¹⁹ When the state oversteps its boundaries and tries to dictate church affairs regarding faith and practice, we “must obey God rather than men” (Acts 5:29). Christ is head of the church, not Caesar. It must also be granted that ultimately Christ is the head of government and rulers reign/serve by His sovereign ordination (Rom. 13:1). Evil rulers will ultimately serve his purposes and be held responsible for their evil (see Isaiah 10:5-19). For further study on this topic see “Christ, not Caesar, Is Head of the Church” by John MacArthur at <https://www.gty.org/library/blog/B200723>.

¹²⁰ “For this is the will of God, your sanctification: that you abstain from sexual immorality; ⁴that each one of you know how to control his own body in holiness and honor, ⁵not in the passion of lust like the Gentiles who do not know God; ⁶that no one transgress and wrong his brother in this matter, because the Lord is an avenger in all these things, as we told you beforehand and solemnly warned you. ⁷For God has not called us for impurity, but in holiness” (1 Thess. 4:3-7).

“but as he who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct, ¹⁶since it is written, “You shall be holy, for I am holy” (1 Peter 1:15-16).

¹²¹ “I have given them your word, and the world has hated them because they are not of the world, just as I am not of the world. I do not ask that you take them out of the world, but that you keep them from the evil one. They are not of the world, just as I am not of the world. Sanctify them in the truth; your word is truth” (John 17:14-17)

“Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect” (Rom. 12:2).

“If then you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. ²Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth” (Col. 3:1-2)

“Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world—the desires of the flesh and the desires of the eyes and pride of life—is not from the Father but is from the world” (1 John 2:15-16).

¹²² “Now the Spirit expressly says that in later times some will depart from the faith by devoting themselves to deceitful spirits and teachings of demons, through the insincerity of liars whose consciences are seared, who forbid marriage and require abstinence from foods that God created to be received with thanksgiving by those who believe and know the truth. For everything created by God is good, and nothing is to be rejected if it is received with thanksgiving, for it is made holy by the word of God and prayer” (1 Tim. 4:1-5). “They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would have continued with us. But they went out, that it might become plain that they all are not of us” (1 John 2:19).

We believe in the personal existence of angels as created spirit beings. God's holy angels are ministering spirits.¹²³ Satan and other fallen angels can influence believers,¹²⁴ but believers cannot be demon possessed.¹²⁵

We believe in the pre-tribulational rapture¹²⁶ and bodily resurrection of the Church at Christ's imminent coming.¹²⁷ Believers will give account for their works at the Judgment Seat of Christ,¹²⁸ which will follow the Rapture.

¹²³ "And to which of the angels has he ever said, 'Sit at my right hand until I make your enemies a footstool for your feet' Are they not all ministering spirits sent out to serve for the sake of those who are to inherit salvation" (Heb. 1:13-14)?

"Bless the Lord, O you his angels, you mighty ones who do his word, obeying the voice of his word" (Ps. 103:20).

"he makes his messengers winds, his ministers a flaming fire" (Ps. 104:4).

¹²⁴ "so that we would not be outwitted by Satan; for we are not ignorant of his designs" (2 Co. 2:11).

"Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his might. Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the schemes of the devil. For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places" (Eph. 6:10-12).

"Now the Spirit expressly says that in later times some will depart from the faith by devoting themselves to deceitful spirits and teachings of demons" (1 Tim. 4:1).

"Be sober-minded; be watchful. Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour. Resist him, firm in your faith, knowing that the same kinds of suffering are being experienced by your brotherhood throughout the world" (1 Peter 5:8-9).

"And the angels who did not stay within their own position of authority, but left their proper dwelling, he has kept in eternal chains under gloomy darkness until the judgment of the great day— just as Sodom and Gomorrah and the surrounding cities, which likewise indulged in sexual immorality and pursued unnatural desire, serve as an example by undergoing a punishment of eternal fire.

Yet in like manner these people also, relying on their dreams, defile the flesh, reject authority, and blaspheme the glorious ones. But when the archangel Michael, contending with the devil, was disputing about the body of Moses, he did not presume to pronounce a blasphemous judgment, but said, 'The Lord rebuke you'" (Jude 6-9).

¹²⁵ "Little children, you are from God and have overcome them, for he who is in you is greater than he who is in the world" (1 John 4:4).

¹²⁶ "Because you have kept my word about patient endurance, I will keep you from the hour of trial that is coming on the whole world, to try those who dwell on the earth" (Rev. 3:10).

Note: The word "church" is missing from Revelation chapter 4 to Revelation 22:16 where the word "churches" is mentioned. This is likely due to the absence of the church through the Tribulation Period (Rev. 6-19). Also, the NT epistles are free from warnings or instructions to the church regarding the future Tribulation Period. One would have to assume that God would have warned believers of the coming time of suffering if they were going to potentially have to endure it. These warnings are absent.

¹²⁷ "Let not your hearts be troubled. Believe in God; believe also in me. In my Father's house are many rooms. If it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you? And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, that where I am you may be also" (John 14:1-3).

"Behold! I tell you a mystery. We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we shall be changed. For this perishable body must put on the imperishable, and this mortal body must put on immortality" (1 Co. 15:51-53).

"But we do not want you to be uninformed, brothers, about those who are asleep, that you may not grieve as others do who have no hope. For since we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so, through Jesus, God will bring with him those who have fallen asleep. For this we declare to you by a word from the Lord, that we who are alive, who are left until the coming of the Lord, will not precede those who have fallen asleep. For the Lord himself will descend from heaven with a cry of command, with the voice of an archangel, and with the sound of the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive, who are left, will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so we will always be with the Lord" (1 Thess. 4:13-17).

¹²⁸ "According to the grace of God given to me, like a skilled master builder I laid a foundation, and someone else is building upon it. Let each one take care how he builds upon it. For no one can lay a foundation other than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ. Now if anyone builds on the foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw— each one's work will become manifest, for the Day will disclose it, because it will be revealed by fire, and the fire will test what sort of work each one has done. If the work that anyone has built on the foundation survives, he will receive a reward. If anyone's work is burned up, he will suffer loss, though he himself will be saved, but only as through fire" (1 Co. 3:10-16).

"Therefore do not pronounce judgment before the time, before the Lord comes, who will bring to light the things now hidden in darkness and will disclose the purposes of the heart" (1 Co. 4:5).

We believe in the distinction between the nation of Israel and the Church, the Spirit-baptized Body of Christ.¹²⁹ The Church is not the collection of all believers of all times.

We believe that God will fulfill the biblical covenants made with the nation of Israel.¹³⁰ Though they are now dispersed among the nations, they will be re-gathered in the land of Israel and saved as a nation at the premillennial coming of Christ to the earth.¹³¹ At that time, Christ will begin his Davidic rule over the world for 1,000 years¹³² and continue to reign in the eternal state.¹³³

“For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may receive what is due for what he has done in the body, whether good or evil” (2 Co. 5:10)

“Why do you pass judgment on your brother? Or you, why do you despise your brother? For we will all stand before the judgment seat of God” (Rom. 14:10).

¹²⁹ “For in one Spirit we were all baptized into one body—Jews or Greeks, slaves or free—and all were made to drink of one Spirit” (1 Co. 12:13; cf. Acts 2:1-4).

¹³⁰ “As regards the gospel, they are enemies for your sake. But as regards election, they are beloved for the sake of their forefathers. For the gifts and the calling of God are irrevocable. For just as you were at one time disobedient to God but now have received mercy because of their disobedience, so they too have now been disobedient in order that by the mercy shown to you they also may now receive mercy. For God has consigned all to disobedience, that he may have mercy on all” (Rom. 11:28-32).

Note: The promises given to the patriarchs were unilateral and unconditional as seen by the following “I will” [s] indicating that God would literally fulfill them (Gen. 12:1-3; 2 Sam. 7:13-14; Jer. 31:31-37).

“Now the Lord said to Abram, ‘Go from your country and your kindred and your father’s house to the land that I will show you. And I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and him who dishonors you I will curse, and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed’” (Gen. 12:1-3).

“When your days are fulfilled and you lie down with your fathers, I will raise up your offspring after you, who shall come from your body, and I will establish his kingdom. He shall build a house for my name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever” (2 Sam. 7:12-13).

“Behold, the days are coming, declares the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah, not like the covenant that I made with their fathers on the day when I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt, my covenant that they broke, though I was their husband, declares the Lord. For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, declares the Lord: I will put my law within them, and I will write it on their hearts. And I will be their God, and they shall be my people. And no longer shall each one teach his neighbor and each his brother, saying, ‘Know the Lord,’ for they shall all know me, from the least of them to the greatest, declares the Lord. For I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more.” Thus says the Lord, who gives the sun for light by day and the fixed order of the moon and the stars for light by night, who stirs up the sea so that its waves roar— the Lord of hosts is his name: “If this fixed order departs from before me, declares the Lord, then shall the offspring of Israel cease from being a nation before me forever.” Thus says the Lord: “If the heavens above can be measured, and the foundations of the earth below can be explored, then I will cast off all the offspring of Israel for all that they have done, declares the Lord” (Jer. 31:31-37).

¹³¹ “And in this way all Israel will be saved, as it is written, ‘The Deliverer will come from Zion, he will banish ungodliness from Jacob’; ‘and this will be my covenant with them when I take away their sins’” (Rom. 11:26-27).

¹³² “Blessed and holy is the one who shares in the first resurrection! Over such the second death has no power, but they will be priests of God and of Christ, and they will reign with him for a thousand years” (Rev. 20:6).

Note: New Testament authors were looking for a literal earthly reign of Messiah (Luke 1:67 - Zechariah; Acts 1:1-7 - Disciples at the Ascension; Acts 3:13-26 - Peter; Acts 15:13-18 - James; Hebrews 6:13-17 - writer of Hebrews; Rom. 3:1-4 - Paul; Luke 19:11 - Disciples).

¹³³ “Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea was no more” (Rev. 21:1; cf. 21:2 - 22:21).

We believe in the bodily resurrection and judgment of unbelievers after the millennial reign of Christ.¹³⁴ We believe in the eternal existence and punishment of all unbelievers in the lake of fire¹³⁵ and the eternal existence and blessedness of all believers in the new heavens and earth.¹³⁶

Article V - Authority¹³⁷

The general care of the church shall be vested in the church Elder Leadership Team. The Elder Leadership Team will meet as needed for spiritual oversight of the flock of God (Acts 20:28; 1 Tim. 3:1; 1 Peter 5:2) and direct/manage the affairs of the church (1 Tim. 5:17). Scripture is to be the authority on all matters involving church life and doctrine as determined by the Elders. A member of the Elder Leadership Team will preside over all Elder Leadership Team meetings. The Elder Leadership Team holds final authority on decisions as dictated by the Scriptures.

Article VI - Membership

A. Reception of New Members

1. Candidates shall be spiritually born-again, professing faith in Jesus Christ by identification with Him in baptism by immersion.
2. Candidates must complete a membership training class taught by a member of the PMBC Elder Leadership Team or someone delegated the responsibility by the PMBC Elder Leadership Team.¹³⁸
3. Candidates must agree to the church doctrinal statement.

¹³⁴ “Then I saw a great white throne and him who was seated on it. From his presence earth and sky fled away, and no place was found for them. And I saw the dead, great and small, standing before the throne, and books were opened. Then another book was opened, which is the book of life. And the dead were judged by what was written in the books, according to what they had done. And the sea gave up the dead who were in it, Death and Hades gave up the dead who were in them, and they were judged, each one of them, according to what they had done. Then Death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. This is the second death, the lake of fire” (Rev. 20:11-14).

¹³⁵ “And if anyone’s name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire” (Rev. 21:15; cf. 21:8).

¹³⁶ “...And these will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life” (Matt. 25:46; Dan. 12:2; 2 Thess. 1:9). “...and come out, those who have done good to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil to the resurrection of judgment” (John 5:29).

¹³⁷ The two separate biblical offices of Elder/Overseer/Pastor and Deacon/Deaconess are not to be conflated or confused above and beyond Scripture, but are united in purpose, value, and love, relying on one another to do the work of the ministry and oversight/care of the church. One office is not “higher” than the other. Both exist by God’s sovereign calling/appointment. If both offices are going to be conflated into one “board,” one must ask, “why two offices if all are essentially doing the same thing?” This arrangement allows for each to fulfill their God-ordained responsibilities, primarily consisting of “service” for deacon/deaconess (a broad title for sure), and spiritual oversight/preaching/teaching, as well as related tasks, for Elders/Overseers/Pastors, while not placing either group in a position to go beyond what is written. A spirit of humility and love will value each person’s unique contribution to the group and church as a whole. The elders will go to the congregation as needed for their insight on issues regarding church care and direction.

¹³⁸ A “New Members Training Class” packet is included in the appendices.

4. Candidates must submit an official application for church membership and be approved by the Elder Leadership Team after criteria 1-3 above are met.¹³⁹
5. Candidates can become members by letter of transfer from a church of like faith, order, and practice, but must meet criteria 1-4 above.
6. Candidates may be received into the membership of this church while maintaining membership in another hometown church, providing they meet criteria 1-4 above. Procedures, privileges, and responsibilities are the same as for other members.
7. Candidates should be at least 18 years of age for membership.
8. After meeting the above qualifications, new members will be presented to the congregation at a regularly scheduled service and offered the right hand of fellowship.

B. Removal from Membership

1. By request.
2. By removal through discipline when there is *persistent unrepentant* conduct unbecoming to professing Christians and in all cases involving gross *unrepentant* immorality. After seeking to restore the person according to the pattern of Matthew 18:15-20 and Galatians 6:1, removal shall be completed upon refusal to repent and show contrition regarding the sin involved (Matthew 18:17; 1 Co. 5:1-5 and 1 Tim. 1:20). Removal from membership will be decided and directed by the Elder Leadership Team and performed at a scheduled membership meeting of the church per the above Scriptures utilizing the following procedure.¹⁴⁰
 - a. Church discipline is the exercise of the authority which Christ, the Head of the Church, has given to the visible church to increase and preserve its purity and order. Church discipline is not a substitute for personal, family, or civil discipline. As the outgrowth of careful teaching, specific application, and pastoral concern, it is to be exercised when these other means have failed to produce purity of life and good order. The need for both preventive and corrective church discipline arises from the deceitfulness of indwelling sin and the expressed desire of Christ for holiness among His people. Corrective discipline in the church is doctrinal, moral, or administrative and is always to be done in love with a view toward restoration of the sinning member.
 - b. Doctrinal or moral discipline is an effort to prevent and correct beliefs and actions contrary to the Word of God. The purpose of doctrinal or moral discipline is to vindicate the honor of Christ, to promote the purity of the church, promote godliness in individuals, and to restore the offender.¹⁴¹

¹³⁹ The application for membership will be placed in the appendices.

¹⁴⁰ This procedure has been adapted from The Bible Fellowship Church.
<https://www.bfc.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/12/Principles-of-Order-Vol-2.pdf>

¹⁴¹ "When you are assembled in the name of the Lord Jesus and my spirit is present, with the power of our Lord Jesus, you are to deliver this man to Satan for the destruction of the flesh, so that his spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord. Your boasting is not good. Do you not know that a little leaven leavens the whole lump? Cleanse out the old leaven that you may be a new lump, as you really are unleavened. For Christ, our Passover lamb, has been sacrificed. Let us therefore celebrate the festival, not with the old leaven, the leaven of malice and evil, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth. I wrote to you in my letter not to associate with sexually immoral people— not at all meaning the sexually immoral of this world, or the greedy and swindlers, or idolaters, since

- c. Administrative discipline is an effort to maintain adherence to the governing rules of the church in other than doctrinal or moral cases. The purpose of administrative discipline is to promote unity in the entire body, to encourage faithful discharge of all duties, and to preserve the rights and privileges of each member of the body.¹⁴²
- d. All members of Port Matilda Baptist Church are under the care of that church and are therefore subject to doctrinal, moral and administrative discipline by that church.¹⁴³
- e. No charge shall be received by the Elder Leadership Team unless it appears that the offended party has first done his/her utmost to restore the alleged offender(s) in the manner prescribed by Christ.¹⁴⁴
- f. No charge against a sinning member shall be received by the Elder Leadership Team except on the basis of two or three witnesses.¹⁴⁵
- g. All of the Elder Leadership Team shall preside over a complaint, offense, or individual situation for a trial in Port Matilda Baptist Church. The Elder Leadership Team shall choose one of their number to serve as moderator of the trial. An elder who has personal involvement in the issue may be asked to or ask themselves to be removed from the proceedings.
- h. A charge of offense must describe the alleged offense and state the facts which support the charge. The charge shall include, as far as possible, the time, place, circumstances of the alleged offense, the names of witnesses and titles of

then you would need to go out of the world. But now I am writing to you not to associate with anyone who bears the name of brother if he is guilty of sexual immorality or greed, or is an idolater, reviler, drunkard, or swindler—not even to eat with such a one. For what have I to do with judging outsiders? Is it not those inside the church whom you are to judge? God judges those outside. ‘Purge the evil person from among you’ (1 Co. 5:4-13)

“By rejecting this, some have made shipwreck of their faith, among whom are Hymenaeus and Alexander, whom I have handed over to Satan that they may learn not to blaspheme” (1 Tim. 1:19-20)

¹⁴² “I appeal to you, brothers, to watch out for those who cause divisions and create obstacles contrary to the doctrine that you have been taught; avoid them” (Rom. 16:17).

¹⁴³ “Obey your leaders and submit to them, for they are keeping watch over your souls, as those who will have to give an account. Let them do this with joy and not with groaning, for that would be of no advantage to you” (Heb. 13:17).

¹⁴⁴ “If your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault, between you and him alone. If he listens to you, you have gained your brother. But if he does not listen, take one or two others along with you, that every charge may be established by the evidence of two or three witnesses. If he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church. And if he refuses to listen even to the church, let him be to you as a Gentile and a tax collector. Truly, I say to you, whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven. Again I say to you, if two of you agree on earth about anything they ask, it will be done for them by my Father in heaven. For where two or three are gathered in my name, there am I among them” (Matt. 18:15-20).

¹⁴⁵ “A single witness shall not suffice against a person for any crime or for any wrong in connection with any offense that he has committed. Only on the evidence of two witnesses or of three witnesses shall a charge be established” (Deut. 19:15; cf. 1 Tim. 5:19).

relevant documents. A charge shall be deemed to have been filed when it is presented in writing to the Elder Leadership Team.

- i. No charge shall be received if it is filed more than two years after the time the alleged offense was committed, unless good cause prevented an earlier filing.
- j. When the Elder Leadership Team receives an individual complaint, the offended party will be warned that he may be censured if the accused is found to be innocent of the alleged offense. If the Elder Leadership Team determines that the charge is frivolous, it may dismiss the charge and censure the offended party bringing the charge.

1. See footnote below for conducting a particular trial.¹⁴⁶

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- ¹⁴⁶I. At the beginning of every trial the member of the Elder Leadership Team conducting the trial shall announce that the body is meeting as a judicatory and shall exhort the members of the body to understand that the body is responsible to minister and declare the Word of God, the only infallible rule of faith and practice, and to subordinate all human standards and judgments to that rule. The moderator shall lead in prayer. This announcement and exhortation shall be repeated by the moderator at the beginning of each session of the trial. The Elder Leadership Team conducting the trial shall determine if the trial shall be opened or closed to individuals not directly involved in the trial.
- II. If the accused does not appear for the trial, he shall be cited again to appear for trial with a warning that failure to appear is viewed as disrespect and that the trial will proceed in his absence if he fails again to appear.
 - III. At the first meeting of the trial, only the following actions shall be taken:
 - (1) the accused shall hear read and be formally presented with the charges against him with the names of witnesses and copies of documents which are part of the charges;
 - (2) the accused shall be given opportunity to call witnesses he desires to be summoned to participate in the trial
 - (3) the Elder Leadership Team shall establish the time and place of the next session of the trial, which shall not be less than ten days after the first session, and shall cite all persons it deems necessary for the conduct of the trial to appear at that time.
 - IV. At the second meeting of the trial, the accused may raise objections to the charges or relevancy of the evidence presented against him. The Elder Leadership Team shall determine the validity of such objections. If the accused requests the Elder Leadership Team to do so, it shall determine whether the evidence is sufficient to demonstrate support for the charges made. It may dismiss the case, decide that the charges should be modified, or proceed with the trial. When the trial is ready to proceed, the accused shall be called upon to plead "guilty" or "not guilty" and his plea shall be entered upon the record. If the accused pleads "guilty," the Elder Leadership Team shall determine the censure. If the accused pleads "not guilty" or refuses to plead, the trial shall proceed.
 - V. No person shall be denied the right to offer in evidence in any judiciary of the church the provisions of the Word of God or of any church regulations. Any person serving as a representative of the accused or the Elder Leadership Team must be a member in good standing of Port Matilda Baptist Church.
 - VI. When the evidence against the accused has been presented and he has had the opportunity to cross-examine those testifying against him, the accused shall have the right to move for dismissal of the charges. If this motion is denied by the Elder Leadership Team, the accused may then present evidence in support of his defense. After all evidence in the case has been presented, the accused may make his final argument with respect to the evidence and to church regulations. The Elder Leadership Team shall then deliberate and vote on each charge separately. If the judicatory decides the accused is guilty, it shall also determine the censure.
 - VII. In any trial the Elder Leadership Team shall preserve a complete and accurate record of the proceedings. This record shall include the charges, objections made and exceptions taken by the accused during the trial, the testimony of witnesses, and all rulings and findings of the Elder Leadership Team.
 - VIII. Evidence must be factual in nature. It may be direct or circumstantial.

3. A member will be removed from active membership when they have been absent without cause or contact from the services of the church for a period of three months. Sufficient “cause or contact” for absence will be determined by the Elder Leadership Team on a case by case basis.

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- IX. Caution should be used in consideration of evidence which is purely circumstantial.
 - X. Witnesses shall be required to affirm that they will speak all of the truth and nothing but the truth concerning the matters on which they are asked to testify.
 - XI. The Elder Leadership Team shall appoint one of its members to conduct on its behalf the examination of witnesses, but other members of the Elder Leadership Team may also take part. Witnesses presented by the accused may be cross-examined by the Elder Leadership Team.
 - XII. All censures shall be accompanied by prayer to God that He might graciously use the discipline for the restoration of the offender, the edification of the church, and the glory of God. Any of the five censures shall be taken.
 - (1) **Admonition.** Admonition consists in tenderly and solemnly confronting the offender with his sin, warning him of his danger, and exhorting him to repentance and to greater fidelity to the Lord Jesus Christ.
 - (2) **Rebuke.** Rebuke is a form of censure more severe than admonition. It consists in setting forth the serious character of the offense, reproving the offender, and exhorting him to repentance and to more perfect fidelity to the Lord Jesus Christ. The judicatory shall determine if public rebuke is necessary.
 - (3) **Suspension.** Suspension is a form of censure by which one is deprived of the privileges of membership in the church, of office or of both. It may be for a definite or indefinite time. Suspension of an officer from privileges of membership shall always accompany suspension from office, but suspension from office does not necessarily include suspension from privileges of membership. An individual under suspension from office or from privileges of membership shall be the object of concern and earnest appeal that he may be restored. When the Elder Leadership Team which imposed the suspension is satisfied with the repentance of the offender or when the period of suspension has expired, the censure shall be removed and the offender restored. Restoration shall be accompanied by solemn admonition. Restoration to the privileges of membership may be granted without restoration to the office. If a person is suspended indefinitely and has not within a year manifested repentance, the judicatory shall consider whether suspension shall be continued or more severe censure imposed.
 - (4) **Deposition.** Deposition consists of depriving an officer of his office. Deposition of an elder shall require the dissolution of the pastoral relationship. The sentence of deposition shall be read before the congregation and the pulpit declared vacant. A minister, elder or deacon who has been deposed cannot resume his former office without again being ordained or installed.
 - (5) **Excommunication.** Excommunication is the most severe form of censure and is resorted to only in cases aggravated by persistent impenitence. It consists of a solemn declaration by the Elder Leadership Team that it no longer regards the offender as a member of the body of Christ.
 - XIII. Suspension, deposition or excommunication of an officer or other member of the church shall be announced to the church where the officer holds office or the member holds membership. Such announcement shall be accompanied by an urgent request for prayer for the offender to the end that he might be restored.
 - IX. Restoration shall always be accompanied by prayer of thanksgiving to God for His redeeming grace.
 - X. **Dissent.** Any member of a judicatory who votes against the judgment of the majority may request that his dissenting vote be recorded in the minutes of the Elder Leadership Team.
 - XI. **Protest.** Any member of the Elder Leadership Team may file a written protest during an investigation stating his reasons for objecting to a judgment of the Elder Leadership Team. A protest must be filed with the moderator of the Elder Leadership Team within ten days of the announcement of the judgment. A protest shall be read to the Elder Leadership Team and recorded in its minutes. The Elder Leadership Team may, if it desires, place in its minutes an answer to a protest.

C. Membership Voting Privileges¹⁴⁷

1. Any member in good standing who is not under disciplinary action may vote during congregational meetings. The Elder Leadership Team may have a congregational vote, when necessary, to see what best serves the congregation's needs on various issues and to gain their valuable input on various issues when so determined by the Elder Leadership Team.

Article VII - Church Officers

A. Elder/Overseer/Pastor

1. Qualifications

- a. All elders must be in agreement with the above doctrinal statement of the church.
- b. All elders must meet the qualifications noted in Acts 20:28; 1 Timothy 3:1-7; Titus 1:5-9; 1 Peter 5:1-4 as determined by the Elder Leadership Team.
- c. Because of the qualifications and dignity of the position of Elder, the Elder Leadership Team shall give careful consideration to ensure that a man who has been divorced or who has married a divorced woman has biblically resolved issues in his family, church, and community raised by the divorce and has demonstrated since the divorce, stability of character and is presently characterized as above reproach, and if married, faithful to and exclusively committed to his wife.¹⁴⁸

2. Duties (include, but are not limited to the following)

- a. All elders should evaluate their ministries and character qualifications utilizing the *Elder Leadership Guide* in the appendices of this constitution in conjunction with stringent self-evaluation, encouragement from other elders and other resources (college, seminary, books, seminars, etc) as needed. Scripture should be the ultimate evaluation tool (not personal opinion).

¹⁴⁷ John MacArthur notes, "Church rule, which minimizes the biblical authority of elders in favor of a cultural democratic process, is foreign to the NT (1 Thess. 5:12-13; Heb. 13:17)" - MacArthur, John. *MacArthur Study Bible: ESV*. See note on Acts 20:28. Similarly, Dr. Howard Bixby discusses the history of a democratic form of church government in his work: *A Biblical Perspective Regarding Elder Rule*: Faculty Forum. Baptist Bible Seminary. 2006. He states,

"As American churches adapted to the governmental and corporate culture of the USA, a legislative or board system developed. In Baptist and Bible church groups especially, strong lay boards and committees were elected to "run the church." A misunderstanding (and misexegesis) of Acts 6:3 gave apparent support to the trend. "... Look for seven men... whom we may appoint over this business." The term *business* in the Greek text actually refers to the ministry of caring for widows. As the term "business" became the focus, deacon boards were elected and organized to "rule" the church, hire pastors/church staff, and hold pastors accountable for doing the work of the church. In recent years the "ruling elder" position and board have been added on top of trustee and deacon board structures" (Bixby, Howard. *A Biblical Perspective Regarding Elder Rule*: Faculty Forum. Baptist Bible Seminary. 2006.).

If the Elder Leadership Team believes it to be wise, on occasion, a congregational vote can be held for the following reasons:

1. The congregation can be involved in church matters biblically (Matt. 18:15-20; Acts 6:3; 15:22-23; 1 Co. 5:2; 2 Co. 2:6)) with final authority lying with the elders who will give an account to God (Heb. 13:17).
2. Congregational voting can help the existing elders to know the climate and heart of the congregation on given issues.

¹⁴⁸ Adapted from the Bible Fellowship Church statement on Eldership.
<https://www.bfc.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/12/Principles-of-Order-Vol-2.pdf>

- b. Administration of the ordinances of baptism and the Lord's Supper with appropriate organization and instruction or delegation to qualified individuals (Matt. 28:19-20; 1 Co. 11:23-32).
- c. Preaching and teaching the Word of God to the congregation as a whole and to individuals or small groups as needed (1 Tim. 4:13, 16; 5:17).
- d. Administering weddings and funerals along with appropriate counseling per the individual elder's conscience.
- e. General oversight of the congregation alongside the Elder Leadership Team (Acts 20:28; 1 Tim. 3:1; 5:17; 1 Peter 5:2).
- f. Providing spiritual leadership by example in the congregation and discipleship (Hebrews 13:7; I Peter 5:3).
- g. Teaching and equipping the congregation for "works of service" (Ephesians 4:11-12; II Timothy 2:2).
- h. Protecting the congregation from false doctrine or influence (Acts 20:28-31; 1 Tim. 1:3; Titus 1:9).
- i. Praying for and with the people and watching over their spiritual and physical needs (Acts 6:4; 1 Tim. 2:8; James 5:13-16).
- j. Giving counsel and comfort to those with special needs (2 Thess. 5:12-13).
- k. Exercising discipline with a view toward restoration (Matthew 18:15-20; Gal. 6:1; Titus 1:9).
 - 1. For false doctrine (Titus 1:13-14)
 - 2. For immorality (1 Corinthians 5:1-5)
 - 3. For divisiveness (Titus 3:10)
 - 4. For unrepentant sin in general (Matt. 18:15-20)
- l. Maintaining unity of purpose in the church (Matthew 28:19-20; Philippians 2:2; 1 Co. 10:31).
- m. Making provision for pulpit supply as needed (2 Timothy 1:14; 4:2).
- n. Overseeing all functions of the church including financial oversight (Acts 20:28; 1 Timothy 3:1; 1 Peter 5:2).
- o. Providing support, encouragement, and accountability for one another (Acts 20:28; 1 Tim. 5:17).
- p. Keeping an accurate record of active church members for the purpose of prayer, keeping watch over souls (Heb. 13:17) and ministry of the Word (2:41-47; 4:4).

3. Length of Office¹⁴⁹

- a. An Elder's office is indefinite:
 - 1. Unless he requests removal
 - 2. Unless he is removed due to unrepentance, negligence, discipline, or inability to satisfy the biblical qualifications and demands.

¹⁴⁹ "Once a man is appointed to the pastors' council [eldership] he serves as long as he desires, functions in the work, and qualifies. It is unscriptural, harmful, to the church, and demeaning to the elders to set limits on the time period a pastor elder can serve, or to limit the number of elders to a fixed number. If there are eight men in the church who love and desire to be pastor elders (1 Tim. 3:1), then there should be eight men functioning together as a pastoral council" (Strauch, Alexander. *Biblical Eldership: An Urgent Call to Restore Church Eldership*. Lewis and Roth Publishers. 1995. p. 288-89.).

b. Discipline/Removal of an Elder

1. Elder discipline follows the same procedure as outlined for all church members (Matt. 18:15-20; Galatians 6:1) in accordance with 1 Timothy 5:19-25 and is to be overseen by the Elder Leadership Team.
2. No person can be removed as an Elder except for just cause as determined by the existing Elder Leadership Team due to a failure to fulfill the biblical qualifications or disqualification on grounds that render the elder no longer blameless¹⁵⁰ such as unrepentant sin or sin that permanently disqualifies him.¹⁵¹ Failure to fulfill the qualifications or functions of an Elder are sufficient grounds for removal by the Elder Leadership Team after the Elder in question has been made aware of negligence and/or has failed to remedy the problem if it is not a permanent disqualification.¹⁵² The process will be as stated in Article VI. B. 2 above involving discipline of a church member.
3. The Elders will act upon the written resignation of an elder whenever submitted (1 Timothy 5:19, 22).

4. Paid Pastoral Staff

- a. All elders (paid and volunteer) are to be in subjection to the Elder Leadership Team as a plurality of leaders while they perform their ministries to the church body at large.
- b. The Elder Leadership Team will be responsible for evaluating paid pastoral staff for wage increases (no less than annually) using the *Church Elder Guide* in the appendices as an assessment tool for performance.¹⁵³ Salary guides and recommendations are provided in the appendices to help determine an appropriate path for pastoral salaries that follows 1 Timothy 5:18 regarding workers and wages and provides information and expectations for future earnings based on local/national averages, church size and individual ministry performance. Guides should be updated as needed so as to be current with

¹⁵⁰ “Therefore an overseer must be above reproach, the husband of one wife, sober-minded, self-controlled, respectable, hospitable, able to teach” (1 Tim. 3:2).

“This is why I left you in Crete, so that you might put what remained into order, and appoint elders in every town as I directed you—⁶ if anyone is above reproach...” (Titus 1:5, 6a).

¹⁵¹ “He who commits adultery lacks sense; he who does it destroys himself. ³³He will get wounds and dishonor, and his disgrace will not be wiped away” (Prov. 6:32-33).

¹⁵² Please see the following articles on this issue in relation to both elders and deacons who are commanded to be blameless as a qualification to fulfill their respective offices:

<https://www.gty.org/library/articles/A256/should-fallen-pastors-be-restored>.

<https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/article/fallen-christian-leader-restored/>

https://sbcvoices.com/can-a-fallen-leader-be-restored/#.Y90DNinNO8U_mailto

The Elder Leadership Team will be responsible for prayerfully and carefully evaluating each potential and existing elder/deacon while seeking His guidance from Scripture in each case. These decisions are not always clear cut. Final determination rests with the Elder Leadership Team.

¹⁵³ Please see attached sermon touching on this subject. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=b6QTgREGIQM>

cultural trends, inflation, needs, etc.¹⁵⁴ Above normal pastoral performance in areas involving “ruling well” and “especially preaching and teaching” should yield above average salary per the Scriptural command if finances allow (1 Tim. 5:17). In situations where church finances do not allow continued support at the same rate, the Elder Leadership Team reserves the right to decrease salary and even remove salary/benefits altogether if necessary to maintain church financial health.

- c. An appropriate benefits package (i.e. vacation, health/life insurance, retirement, housing allowance, emergency leave, continuing education, etc.) will be provided for paid pastoral staff per approval of the Elder Leadership Team as able and appropriate.¹⁵⁵
- d. Paid staff must give a minimum of thirty days’ notice upon resignation unless waived or changed by the Elder Leadership Team.

5. Calling/Appointment of Elders/Overseers/Pastors

- a. Elders are appointed, first by God (Acts 20:28) and by other elders in Scripture after stringent examination (Acts 14:23; 1 Tim. 5:22, 24-25; Titus 1:5).
- b. Appointment to Church Eldership shall be as follows:
 - 1. A stringent examination of the prospective elder’s life and practice in accordance with 1 Timothy 5:19-25 which includes:
 - a. Meeting the above biblical qualifications as stipulated in 1 Timothy 3:1-7; Titus 1:5-9; 1 Peter 5:1-4 as assessed by the other elders.
 - b. An extensive assessment of the prospective elder’s life and ministry.
 - c. Once approved by the Elder Leadership Team by majority vote, the candidate will be brought before the church membership as a candidate for eldership. The church membership will have a period of two weeks for any individual member to come before the Elder Leadership Team to express individual concerns.
 - d. After the membership has had time to express concerns, the Elders will make a decision regarding the appointment of the new candidate.

6. Quantity of Elders

- a. There should always be a plurality of qualified elders serving to fulfill the New Testament example and provide accountability for church officers (Acts 11:30; 14:23; Phil. 1:1; 1 Tim. 5:17; Titus 1:5).

¹⁵⁴ The following resource is recommended for helping to establish adequate pastoral pay by Master’s Seminary.

1. The Compensation Handbook for Church Staff by James F. Cobble and Richard R. Hammer (Christian Ministry Resources).
<https://www.churchsalary.com>

¹⁵⁵ Please see the videos on Church Administration that address these issues and the decisions church boards make regarding church finances and paid pastoral staff. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZAYX-JWAusg>

- b. The number of elders will be determined by the existing eldership based upon the needs of the congregation (Acts 14:23; 1 Timothy 3:2; Titus 1:5) and God's calling on individual men (Acts 20:28; 1 Tim. 3:1-2).
- c. At no time should there be fewer than three elders serving in the position of elder unless qualifications cannot be met by enough men to fulfill the number. If qualifications cannot be met, the existing elders will continue to pray and search the congregation for qualified men to fill the office.¹⁵⁶

7. Quorum¹⁵⁷

- a. "Except as otherwise provided herein, a majority of the Elders currently serving shall constitute a quorum. A majority of the Elders present, whether or not a quorum is present, may adjourn any meeting to another time and place. Whenever the matter to be considered concerns calling or dismissing a pastor, a quorum shall consist of not less than two-thirds of the members of the Elder Leadership Team currently serving." "...the act or decision done or made by the Elders present at a regular or special meeting duly held at which a quorum is present shall be the act of the Elder Leadership Team."

8. Action Without Meeting¹⁵⁸

- a. Any action required or permitted to be taken by the Elder Leadership Team may be taken without a meeting if all members of the Elder Leadership Team shall individually or collectively consent in writing to a duly prepared resolution to such action. Such consent or consents shall have the same effect as a unanimous vote of the Elder Leadership Team and shall be documented by attaching the signed resolution with the minutes of proceedings of the Elder Leadership Team.

B. Deacons¹⁵⁹

1. Qualifications

- a. All deacons must be in agreement with the above doctrinal statement of the church.
- b. All deacons must meet the qualifications noted in 1 Timothy 3:8-13.

2. Duties¹⁶⁰

¹⁵⁶ "therefore pray earnestly to the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest" (Matt. 9:38).

¹⁵⁷ Adapted from Grace Community Church
https://s3.amazonaws.com/static.gracechurch.org/membership/ChurchByLaws_2014MarchRevision.pdf

¹⁵⁸ Adapted from Grace Community Church
https://s3.amazonaws.com/static.gracechurch.org/membership/ChurchByLaws_2014MarchRevision.pdf

¹⁵⁹ Please see the Deacon Service Guide in the appendices and footnote #95 above for information regarding the definition and duties of deacons in the NT.

¹⁶⁰ The word has the basic meaning of "servant," "to serve" or "service."

- a. It is the responsibility of a deacon to serve the church in various capacities as needs arrive and as the Elder Leadership Team directs in regard to care of the church buildings and body at large.
- b. The duties of deacons are broad and can include all manner of service and ministry that the meaning of the word deacon encompasses (service at meals - Luke 4:39; John 2:5, 9; Acts 6:2; general service - John 12:26; spiritual service - Acts 20:19).

3. Length of Office

- a. A deacon's office is indefinite...
 1. ...unless he requests removal
 2. ...unless he is removed due to unrepentance, negligence, discipline (per Matt. 18:15-20; 1 Co. 5:4-13; 2 Thess. 3:6, 14), or inability to satisfy the biblical qualifications and demands due to varying circumstances.
- b. Discipline/Removal of a Deacon
 1. Deacon discipline follows the same procedure as outlined for all church members (Matt. 18:15-20; Galatians 6:1) and is to be overseen by the Elder Leadership Team.
 2. No person can be removed as a deacon except for just cause as determined by the existing Elder Leadership Team due to a failure to fulfill the biblical qualifications or disqualification on grounds that render the deacon no longer blameless such as unrepentant sin or sin that permanently disqualifies him.¹⁶¹ Failure to fulfill the qualifications or functions of a deacon are sufficient grounds for removal by the Elder Leadership Team after the deacon in question has been made aware of negligence and/or has failed to remedy the problem if it is not a permanent disqualification.¹⁶² The process will be as stated in Article VI. B. 2 above involving discipline of a church member.
 3. The Elders will act upon the written resignation of a deacon whenever submitted.

4. Calling/Appointment

- a. Deacons can be recommended by members of the congregation or appointed by the Elder Leadership Team and presented to the church after careful

¹⁶¹ "He who commits adultery lacks sense; he who does it destroys himself. ³³He will get wounds and dishonor, and his disgrace will not be wiped away" (Prov. 6:32-33).

"And let them also be tested first; then let them serve as deacons if they prove themselves blameless" (1 Timothy 3:10).

¹⁶² Please see the following articles on this issue in relation to both elders and deacons who are commanded to be blameless as a qualification to fulfill their respective offices:

<https://www.gty.org/library/articles/A256/should-fallen-pastors-be-restored>.

<https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/article/fallen-christian-leader-restored/>

<https://sbcvoices.com/can-a-fallen-leader-be-restored/#.Y90DNinNO8U.mailto>

The Elder Leadership Team will be responsible for prayerfully and carefully evaluating each potential and existing elder/deacon while seeking His guidance from Scripture in each case. These decisions are not always clear cut. Final determination rests with the Elder Leadership Team.

consideration of the candidate in view of the above qualifications. Final determination for the office of deacon lies with the Elder Leadership Team.

5. Quantity of Deacons

- a. The quantity of deacons will be determined by the number of eligible candidates and current needs of the congregation.

C. Deaconesses

1. Qualifications

- a. A deaconess' office is indefinite
 1. All deaconesses must be in agreement with the above doctrinal statement of the church.
 2. All deaconesses must meet the qualifications noted in 1 Timothy 3:11 (dignified, not slanderers, sober-minded, faithful in all things)

2. Duties

- a. It is the responsibility of a deaconess to serve the church in various capacities as needs arrive and as the Elder Leadership Team directs in regard to care of the church buildings and body at large.
- b. The duties of deaconesses are broad and can include all manner of service and ministry that the meaning of the word "deacon" encompasses (service at meals - Luke 4:39; John 2:5, 9; Acts 6:2; general service - John 12:26; spiritual service - Acts 20:19).

3. Length of Office

- a. A deaconess' office is indefinite...
 1. ...unless she requests removal
 2. ...unless she is removed due to unrepentance, negligence, discipline (per Matt. 18:15-20; 1 Co. 5:4-13; 2 Thess. 3:6, 14), or inability to satisfy the biblical qualifications and demands due to varying circumstances.
- b. Discipline/Removal of a Deaconess
 1. Deaconess discipline follows the same procedure as outlined for all church members (Matt. 18:15-20; Galatians 6:1) and is to be overseen by the Elder Leadership Team.
 2. No person can be removed as a deaconess except for just cause as determined by the existing Elder Leadership Team due to a failure to fulfill the biblical qualifications or disqualification on grounds that render the deaconess no longer blameless such as unrepentant sin or sin that permanently disqualifies her.¹⁶³ Failure to fulfill the qualifications or functions of a deaconess are sufficient grounds for removal by the Elder Leadership Team after the deaconess in question has been made aware

¹⁶³ "He who commits adultery lacks sense; he who does it destroys himself. ³³ He will get wounds and dishonor, and his disgrace will not be wiped away" (Prov. 6:32-33).

of negligence and/or has failed to remedy the problem if it is not a permanent disqualification.¹⁶⁴ The process will be as stated in Article VI. B. 2 above involving discipline of a church member.

3. The Elders will act upon the written resignation of a deaconess whenever submitted.

4. Calling/Appointment

- a. Deaconesses can be recommended by members of the congregation or appointed by the Elder Leadership Team and presented to the church after careful consideration of the candidate in view of the above qualifications. Final determination for the office of deaconess lies with the Elder Leadership Team.

5. Quantity of Deaconesses

- a. The quantity of deaconesses will be determined by the number of eligible candidates and current needs of the congregation.

D. Church Treasurer

1. Qualifications

- a. The church treasurer shall be a member in good standing of Port Matilda Baptist Church as determined by the Elders and faithful in attendance.

2. Duties

- a. The Treasurer shall receive all funds and pay all orders drawn on him/her by order of the church.
 1. All funds must be counted and documented after each service where funds are collected.
 2. The counting of funds must include at least one deacon/deaconess of the church in addition to the Treasurer or two deacons/deaconesses of the church if the Treasurer is absent. In the event of a lack of deacons/deaconesses or the Treasurer, members of the congregation can be chosen.
 3. Documentation of funds should include checks received and cash received.
 4. Both individuals present at the counting should sign the receipt to acknowledge their presence.

¹⁶⁴ Please see the following articles on this issue in relation to both elders and deacons who are commanded to be blameless as a qualification to fulfill their respective offices:

<https://www.gty.org/library/articles/A256/should-fallen-pastors-be-restored>.

<https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/article/fallen-christian-leader-restored/>

<https://sbcvoices.com/can-a-fallen-leader-be-restored/#.Y90DNinNO8U.mailto>

The Elder Leadership Team will be responsible for prayerfully and carefully evaluating each potential and existing elder/deacon while seeking His guidance from Scripture in each case. These decisions are not always clear cut. Final determination rests with the Elder Leadership Team.

- b. All offerings granted to the church are to be counted by the Treasurer and those assisting (see above #2) and recorded in the church before leaving the church for deposit in the bank.
- c. The Church Treasurer will be responsible for the banking of all funds. In the event that the Treasurer is absent, a deacon/deaconess can bank the funds.
- d. It will be the Church Treasurer's responsibility to keep a correct account of all funds received, paid out, and sources of all receipts.
- e. At the Annual Business Meeting, the Treasurer will provide a statement of all funds received and paid out. This statement will be examined together with the necessary vouchers by the Auditing Committee appointed by the Elder Leadership Team.
- f. In addition, the Treasurer will provide a monthly statement available to the Elder Leadership Team. The books are the property of the church and are to be accurately kept and open to the members of the church for inspection.
- g. The Church Treasurer will be present at select Elder Leadership Team meetings as requested.

3. Length of Office

- a. The Church Treasurer will be an indefinite term and the Church Treasurer will be a non-voting member of the Elder Leadership Team meetings upon request by the Elder Leadership Team.
 - 1. Unless he/she requests removal
 - 2. Unless he/she is removed due to unrepentance, negligence, discipline (per Matt. 18:15-20; 1 Co. 5:4-13; 2 Thess. 3:6, 14), or inability to satisfy the qualifications and demands due to varying circumstances.
- b. The Elder Leadership Team reserves the right to remove the Church Treasurer for any of the above reasons or other reasons that may arise to best serve the needs of the church body.

4. Calling/Appointment

- a. The Treasurer shall be appointed by the Elder Leadership Team.

E. Church Secretary

1. Qualifications

- a. The Church Secretary will be administratively organized and a member in good standing of PMBC as determined by the Elder Leadership Team.

2. Duties

- a. The Church Secretary will give regular attendance at business meetings of the church.
- b. It shall be the Church Secretary's duty to keep an accurate and permanent record of all meetings of the church and board.
- c. The Church Secretary will provide minutes of each business meeting to the pastor and make them available to the congregation.

- d. The Church Secretary will fulfill other assistance with administrative/correspondence tasks as dictated by the Elder Leadership Team if necessary.
- e. The Church Secretary will be a non-voting member of the Elder Leadership Team.

3. Length of Office

- a. The Church Secretary will serve indefinitely.
 - 1. Unless he/she requests removal
 - 2. Unless he/she is removed due to unrepentance, negligence, discipline (per Matt. 18:15-20; 1 Co. 5:4-13; 2 Thess. 3:6, 14), or inability to satisfy the biblical qualifications and demands due to varying circumstances.
- b. The Elder Leadership Team reserves the right to remove the Church Secretary for any of the above reasons or other reasons that may arise to best serve the needs of the church body.

4. Calling/Appointment

- a. The Church Secretary shall be appointed by the Elder Leadership Team.

H. Committees

- 1. At various times, committees (finance, missions, facilities, auditing, pulpit, fellowship, ushers, education, human resources, etc.) may be necessary to fulfill various church needs and can be selected by the Elder Leadership Team.
- 2. An auditing committee will be selected by the Elder Leadership Team. It will be the duty of the auditing committee to audit all records of money before assigning the records to the new officers if new officers are selected. The committee will report their yearly audit at the next annual business meeting unless there are unexplained irregularities, in which a special business meeting will be called immediately. The Auditing Committee will consist of at least one deacon/deaconess and two members of the congregation in good standing as determined by the Elder Leadership Team.

Article VIII - Meetings

- A.** Sunday Morning Services
- B.** Sunday School
- C.** Special Meetings (i.e. Thanksgiving Eve; Christmas Eve; Maundy Thursday etc.).
- D.** Elder Leadership Team meetings are to be conducted at times most convenient to the group as a whole unless otherwise dictated.
- E.** Regular church business meetings may be called as necessary by the Elder Leadership Team for consideration of church business. Such meetings shall be announced two weeks in advance.
- F.** The Annual Meeting will be held in January or February each year. Meetings will be conducted by a member of the Elder Leadership Team and announced two weeks in advance.
 - 1. Order of Business:

- a. Devotional – Prayer
- b. Reading of Minutes
- c. Reports of Officers
- d. Reports of Organizations and Committees
- e. Unfinished Business
- f. Election of Officers
- g. New Business
- h. Adjournment

Article IX - Statement on Biblical Sexuality

- A. The church will adhere to the Crossville Statement regarding biblical sexuality included in the appendices of this document and included in the current footnote.¹⁶⁵

¹⁶⁵ **Crossville Statement** taken from: <https://www.credoalliance.com/crossville-statement-vs-nashville-statement>

Preamble

Evangelical Christians at the dawn of the twenty-first century find themselves living in a period of historic transition. As Western culture has become increasingly post-Christian, it has embarked upon a massive revision of what it means to be a human being. By and large the spirit of our age no longer discerns or delights in the beauty of God's design for human life. Many deny that God created human beings for his glory, and that his good purposes for us include our personal, biological, and sexual design as male and female. It is common to think that human identity as male and female is not part of God's beautiful plan, but is, rather, an expression of an individual's autonomous preferences and feelings. The pathway to full and lasting joy through God's good design for His creatures is thus replaced by the path of shortsighted alternatives that, sooner or later, ruin human life and dishonor God.

This secular spirit of our age presents a great challenge to the Christian church. Will the church of the Lord Jesus Christ lose her biblical conviction, clarity, and courage, and blend into the spirit of the age? Or will she hold fast to the word of life, draw courage from Jesus, and unashamedly proclaim His way as the way of life? Will she maintain her clear, counter-cultural witness to a world that seems bent on ruin?

We are persuaded that faithfulness in our generation means declaring once again the true story of the world and of our place in it—particularly as male and female. Christian Scripture teaches that there is but one God who alone is Creator and Lord of all. To Him alone, every person owes gladhearted thanksgiving, heart-felt praise, and total allegiance. This is the path not only of glorifying God, but of knowing ourselves, and for flourishing in God's creation. To forget our Creator is to forget who we are, for He made us for Himself. And we cannot know ourselves truly without truly knowing Him who made us. ~~We did not make ourselves.~~ We are not our own. Our true identity as male and female persons is given by God. It is not only foolish, but hopeless, to try to make ourselves what God did not create us to be.

We believe that God's design for His creation and His way of salvation serve to bring Him the greatest glory and bring us the greatest good. God's good plan provides us with the greatest freedom. Jesus said He came that we might have life and have it in overflowing measure. He is for us and not against us. Therefore, in the hope of serving Christ's church and witnessing publicly to the good purposes of God for human sexuality revealed in Christian Scripture, we offer the following affirmations and denials.

Article 1

WE AFFIRM that God has designed marriage to be a covenantal, sexual, procreative, lifelong union of one man and one woman, as husband and wife, and is meant to signify the covenant love between Christ and his bride the church.

WE DENY that God has designed marriage to be a homosexual, polygamous, or polyamorous relationship. We also deny that marriage is a mere human contract rather than a covenant made before God.

Article 2

WE AFFIRM that God's revealed will for all people is chastity from a pure heart outside of marriage and fidelity from a pure heart within marriage.

WE DENY that any affections, desires, or commitments ever justify sexual intercourse before or outside marriage; nor do they justify any form of impurity of heart, lust, or sexual immorality.

Article 3

WE AFFIRM that God created Adam and Eve, the first human beings, in his own image, equal before God as persons, and different as male and female.

WE DENY that the divinely ordained differences between male and female render them unequal in dignity or worth.

Article 4

WE AFFIRM that divinely ordained differences between male and female reflect God's original creation design and are meant for human good and human flourishing.

WE DENY that such differences are a result of the Fall or are a tragedy to be overcome.

Article 5

WE AFFIRM that God being the Creator of all things means that He alone has the right to define what a male is and what a female is, and He has clearly spoken through His creating design and His word. The differences between male and female reproductive structures, according to God's design, are integral to defining what a male is and what a female is.

WE DENY that physical anomalies or psychological conditions nullify the God-designed link between biological sex and what a male is or a female is.

Article 6

WE AFFIRM that those born with a physical disorder of sex development are created in the image of God and have dignity and worth equal to all other image-bearers. They are acknowledged by our Lord Jesus in his words about "eunuchs who were born that way from their mother's womb." With all others who repent and believe in Christ, they are welcome as faithful followers of Jesus Christ and should embrace their biological sex insofar as it may be known.

WE DENY that scientific ambiguities related to a person's biological sex render one incapable of living a fruitful and joyful life in obedience to Christ.

Article 7

WE AFFIRM that the only real self-conception as male or female is defined by God's design of males and females.

WE DENY that adopting a homosexual, transgender, or any self-conception contrary to God's design is consistent with reality.

Article 8

WE AFFIRM that people who are having inclinations of same-sex attraction, if they continually turn from these attractions and trust in Jesus, may live a rich and fruitful life pleasing to God, as they, like all Christians, walk in purity of life.

WE DENY that having inclinations of same-sex attraction is part of the natural goodness of God's design, or that it puts a person outside the hope of the gospel.

Article 9

WE AFFIRM that sin distorts sexual desires by directing them away from the marriage covenant and toward sexual immorality— a distortion that includes both heterosexual immorality and homosexuality.

WE DENY that an enduring pattern of desire for sexual immorality justifies sexually immoral behavior.

Article 10

WE AFFIRM that it is sinful to approve of homosexuality or transgenderism and that such approval constitutes an essential departure from Christian faithfulness and witness.

WE DENY that the approval of homosexuality or transgenderism is a matter of moral indifference about which otherwise faithful Christians should agree to disagree.

Article X - Church Properties

- A. All use of church properties must be consistent with the Port Matilda Baptist Church Constitution and By-Laws as interpreted by the Elder Leadership Team and set forth in this document.
- B. All church properties are to be held in trust and managed by the Elder Leadership Team.

Article XI - Dissolution

- A. In the event of dissolution, all debts will be paid and the assets will be distributed by a $\frac{3}{4}$ vote of the church to religious and charitable corporations holding to the doctrinal position of Port Matilda Baptist Church, and which enjoy exempt status for tax purposes under the then-current provisions of the Internal Revenue Code of the United States. In the distribution of assets, missionaries and mission agencies under support, up and until dissolution, are to receive primary consideration.

Article 11

WE AFFIRM our duty to speak the truth in love at all times, including when we speak to or about one another as male or female.

WE DENY any obligation to speak in such ways that dishonor God's design of his image-bearers as either male or female.

Article 12

WE AFFIRM that the grace of God in Christ gives both merciful pardon and transforming power, and that this pardon and power enable a follower of Jesus to put to death sinful inclinations and desires and to walk in a manner worthy of the Lord.

WE DENY that the grace of God in Christ is insufficient to forgive all sexual sins and to give power for repentance and holiness to every believer who is having sinful sexual inclinations.

Article 13

WE AFFIRM that the grace of God in Christ enables sinners to forsake all forms of self-conception that are contrary to God, including homosexual, transgender, etc., and by divine regeneration to accept the God-designed link between one's biological sex and one's self-conception as male or female.

WE DENY that the grace of God in Christ sanctifies self-conceptions that are contrary to God's design.

Article 14

WE AFFIRM that Christ Jesus has come into the world to save sinners and that through Christ's death and resurrection forgiveness of sins and eternal life are available to every person who repents of sin and trusts in Christ alone as Savior, Lord, and supreme treasure.

WE DENY that the Lord's arm is too short to save or too weak to sanctify, or that any sinner is beyond His reach.

Scripture References

Gen. 1:26-28; 2:15-25; 3:1-24; Ex. 20:14; 20:17; Lev. 18:22; 20:13; Dt. 5:18, 21; 22:5; Jdg. 19:22; 2 Sam. 11:1-12:15; Job 31:1; Ps. 51:1-19; Prov. 5:1-23; 6:20-35; 7:1-27; Isa. 59:1; Mal. 2:14; Matt. 5:27-30; 19:4-6, 8-9, 12; Acts 15:20, 29; Rom. 1:24-27; 1:32; 1 Cor. 6:9-11, 18-20; 7:1-7; 2 Cor. 5:17; Gal. 5:24; Eph. 4:15, 20-24; 5:3, 31-32; Col. 3:5; 1 Thess. 4:3-8; 1 Tim. 1:9-10, 15; 2 Tim. 2:22; Titus 2:11-12; Heb. 13:4; Jas. 1:13-15; 1 Pet. 2:11; Jude 7

[1] This is a modified version of the *Nashville Statement: A Coalition for Biblical Sexuality*.

Article XII - Adoption

- A. To be determined upon congregational approval.

Article XIII - Amendments

- A. Any section or article may be altered or amended or a new amendment added to this constitution by the Elder Leadership Team to meet the needs of the church. Scripture has the ultimate authority in regard to any amendment with the Elder Leadership Team being accountable to God for its use, application and interpretation on any given issue.¹⁶⁶

¹⁶⁶ "Obey your leaders and submit to them, for they are keeping watch over your souls, as those who will have to give an account. Let them do this with joy and not with groaning, for that would be of no advantage to you" (Heb. 13:17).