

# Government

The church acknowledges the Lord Jesus Christ as its only Head and accepts the Scriptures as its supreme and only guide in all matters of faith, order, and discipline. Under that Authority, the government of this church is vested in the corporate body of believers who compose its membership. Within the guidelines and limitations defined by this document, the members assign authority and administrative functions to the elders as its board of directors.

## **Section 1. Members**

While the members (Article V) assign authority and administrative functions to the elders, they retain the right to be involved in:

1. Calling (Article VI, Section 2.C.1) or dismissing (Article VI, Section 2.G.2) the Pastor or Associate Pastor(s)
2. Affirming the selection of elders (Article VI, Section 2.C.2)
3. Nominating and affirming the selection of deacons (Article VI, Section 3.B) and deaconesses (Article VI, Section 4.B)
4. Affirming the recommendation of new members (Article V, Section 3)
5. Excluding unrepentant members as the final step in church discipline (Article V, Section 5)
6. Adopting, amending, or repealing the constitution as may be required (Article VIII, Section 1)
7. Affirming the annual budget (Article VII, Section 4.C.1)
8. Changing its associations (Article IV)
9. Dissolving the corporation
10. Selling, acquiring, or encumbering property

## **Section 2. Elders**

The elders are charged with teaching, feeding, and protecting the church; and it is the elders who are accountable to God on behalf of the church (1 Peter 5:1-4).

### **A. Qualifications**

Each elder must be an active male member of this church. He must subscribe without reservation to the statement of faith and agree to abide by the guidelines of this constitution. He must possess the qualifications described in 1 Timothy 3:1-7 and Titus 1:6-9:

1. Aspires to the office of overseer; exercising oversight voluntarily and eagerly, according to the will of God (1 Timothy 3:1; 1 Peter 5:2)
2. Blameless as a steward of God; above reproach (1 Timothy 3:2; Titus 1:6-7)
3. Husband of one wife; a one-woman man (1 Timothy 3:2; Titus 1:6)
4. Temperate, sober, vigilant (1 Timothy 3:2)
5. Sober minded, prudent (1 Timothy 3:2; Titus 1:8)
6. Of good behavior; orderly, respectable (1 Timothy 3:2)
7. Given to hospitality (1 Timothy 3:2; Titus 1:8)

8. Able to teach; he can exhort believers and refute false teaching (1 Timothy 3:2; Titus 1:9)
9. Not given to wine (1 Timothy 3:3; Titus 1:7)
10. Not violent; not pugnacious (1 Timothy 3:3; Titus 1:7)
11. Patient, moderate, forbearing, gentle (1 Timothy 3:3)
12. Not a brawler; not contentious; not soon angry or quick tempered (1 Timothy 3:3; Titus 1:7)
13. Not covetous; not a lover of money; not greedy of base gain (1 Timothy 3:3; Titus 1:7)
14. Rules well his own house; his children are faithful, not accused of rebellion to God (1 Timothy 3:4; Titus 1:7)
15. Not a novice; not a new convert (1 Timothy 3:6)
16. Has a good report or reputation with outsiders (1 Timothy 3:7)
17. Not self willed (Titus 1:7)
18. Loves what is good (Titus 1:8)
19. Just, fair (Titus 1:8)
20. Holy, devout (Titus 1:8)
21. Self controlled (Titus 1:8)

## B. Types

### 1. Pastor

The pastor is a Scriptural elder, overseer, shepherd, and a spiritual leader of the church; and is henceforth referred to as “pastor”. The pastor is a professional staff member and is responsible for the pulpit ministry. The pastor will have direct supervisory oversight for all paid and volunteer office staff members, including the right to delegate oversight as needed.

### 2. Associate Pastor(s)

Additional professional pastoral staff may be needed to compliment the total ministry of shepherding this church body. Responsibilities will be designated in a job summary written by the elders before candidates are sought.

### 3. Elder(s)

## C. Selection

Elders are called by God, confirmed by the church elders, and appointed by the elders to the task of leadership. The starting point in identifying a potential elder is the desire in the heart of the individual (1 Timothy 3:1; 1 Peter 5:2). God plants in a man’s heart a passion for the ministry (Acts 20:28), and then confirms it by the leading of the Holy Spirit in the hearts of the elders through prayer and fasting (Acts 14:23).

A man should be considered for the office only after he has proven himself suitable for a ministry of leadership through a period during which he is *tested*. Then he may be *tempered* for a time, where he is observed functioning in a limited position of delegated oversight. At this point if it becomes clear to the elders that God is preparing this man for leadership in the church, an announcement of such should be made to the congregation. After this time of being tempered if he demonstrates capability in

leadership and loyalty to the Scriptures, he can be publicly acknowledged as one who is to be *trusted* in the service of leadership (1 Timothy 5:22).

This public acknowledgment will be done through the laying on of hands by the elders (1 Timothy 4:14). This visible act will demonstrate solidarity between the elders and the one on whom they laid their hands, and is a means of saying, “We commend you to the ministry. We stand with you, support you, and affirm your right to function in a position of leadership in this church.”

#### 1. Pastor & Associate Pastors

When it is necessary to call a pastor or associate pastor, it will be the duty of the elders to investigate the merits of every man under consideration in regard to personal character, education, ministerial record, and preaching ability to determine his fitness for the pastorate of this church. When a suitable man has been found and unanimously agreed upon by the elders, they will recommend him to the members for consideration.

The call of a pastor will come before the church at a specially called business meeting and handled in accordance with Article VII, Section 3. Only one candidate will be presented to the church at a time. The vote will be a written ballot, and a call will not be extended unless 80% of those voting vote in the affirmative.

Absentee voting may be permitted only when a qualified voting member has sufficiently informed himself or herself concerning the candidate by being present when the candidate occupied the pulpit and participated in subsequent congregational activities relative to his candidacy.

The salary and other compensations will be fixed at the time of the call and will be documented as a bylaw.

#### 2. Elders

In accordance with there being a desire in a man’s heart to be an overseer, a unanimous confirmation of the elders through prayer and fasting, and a period of time where the man is tested and tempered for the position, that man may be appointed by the elders to join them as an elder. The elders will present this new elder before the church for their affirmation and officially recognize him through the laying on of hands by the elders (1 Timothy 4:14).

### D. Responsibilities

Elders, as the spiritual overseers of the flock, are to determine church policy (Acts 15:22); oversee the church (Acts 20:28); appoint other elders (1 Timothy 4:14); rule well, teach, and preach (1 Timothy 5:17); exhort and refute (Titus 1:9); and act as shepherds, setting an example for all (1 Peter 5:1-3). They are to devote themselves first of all to prayer and to the ministry of the Word, and select deacons and deaconesses to handle the daily operational matters of the church (Acts 6:3-4). The elders will be responsible to:

1. Uphold the truth of the Scriptures
2. Identify, equip, and organize the members for their best possible service to the Body of Christ
3. Develop procedures to establish order in the church’s activities that will fulfill its purpose and vision
4. Administer the ordinances
5. Serve as the church’s board of directors, exercising trusteeship over the physical and financial assets of the church

6. Adopt or amend the annual budget
7. Establish the functional departments of the church; and organize itself, the deacons, and the deaconesses to support the work of these departments
8. Meet regularly
9. Have complete authority to oversee the administrative affairs of the church with the exception of those items listed in Article VI, Section 1 that include the members.

#### E. Accountability

The elders, under the headship of Jesus Christ, the guidance of the Holy Spirit, and the authority of the Scriptures, are accountable to:

1. God (1 Peter 5:1-4)
2. Each other (Galatians 6:1; Matthew 18:15-18)
3. The members (1 Timothy 5:19-21; Matthew 18:15-18)

#### F. Organization

##### 1. Officers

The elders will appoint their own officers who will also serve for legal purposes as chairman of the church, vice-chairman of the church, and secretary of the church. Men with an expressed desire to serve in these offices will be eligible for nomination. If an officer desires to step down from his position, new officers may be appointed at their first meeting following the church's annual meeting.

Because of his position as the main teaching elder and his need to commit his time to the study of the Word, the pastor will not be allowed to serve as an officer of the elders.

##### 2. Number

The number of elders will be determined by the number of male members who meet all of the qualifications listed in Article VI, Section 2.A.

##### 3. Term of Office

The term of office for an elder will be continuous as long as he remains a member of the church and meets the qualifications of an elder. Elders may have the option of taking a sabbatical if personal need warrants such. The sabbatical policy for the pastor or associate pastor is addressed in the bylaws.

#### G. Termination

##### 1. Elders

An elder may be removed from office at any regular or special meeting of the elders if he is found to be spiritually unqualified according to the qualifications listed in Article VI, Section 2.A. and pertinent Scripture (1 Timothy 3:1-7; Titus 1:5-9), in accord with the procedures prescribed by pertinent Scripture (Matthew 18:15-18; 1 Timothy 5:19).

When an elder is removed because of sin that is deemed sufficient to disqualify him from shepherding, a notice will be made before the church congregation at a regularly scheduled worship service (Matthew 18:15-18). If he refuses to repent from that sin, the removal will be accompanied by a public rebuke (1 Timothy 5:20).

## 2. Pastor or Associate Pastor(s)

Following the same Scriptural guidelines outlined for removing elders from office a pastor or associate pastor may be removed from his position if he is found to be spiritually unqualified.

He may also be dismissed from his position by a unanimous decision of the elders followed by a vote of the members at a specially called business meeting in accordance with Article VII, Section 3. Before the elders consider this action, efforts must be made to resolve any differences with the pastor.

### **Section 3. Deacons**

Deacons are charged with supporting the ministry of the elders (Acts 6:3-4), uniting the body (Acts 6:5), and caring for the needy (Acts 6:2-3). Their role is of service, sacrifice, and commitment to others' needs.

#### A. Qualifications

Each deacon must be an active male member of this church. He must subscribe without reservation to the statement of faith and agree to abide by the guidelines of this constitution. He must possess the qualifications described in 1 Timothy 3:8-13:

1. Aspires to the office of deacon (1 Timothy 3:1, 8)
2. Men of dignity; worthy of respect (1 Timothy 3:8)
3. Sincere; not double-tongued; not a malicious gossip (1 Timothy 3:8)
4. Not indulging in much wine; not addicted to much wine (1 Timothy 3:8)
5. Not fond of gain; not pursuing dishonest gain (1 Timothy 3:8)
6. Keep hold of the deep truths of the faith with a clear conscience (1 Timothy 3:9)
7. He must first be tested, then appointed to serve as deacons if he is beyond reproach (1 Timothy 3:10)
8. Husband of one wife; a one-woman-man (1 Timothy 3:12)
9. Manages and leads his children and his household well (1 Timothy 3:12)
10. Known to be full of the Holy Spirit and wisdom (Acts 6:3)

#### B. Selection

Deacons are called by God, confirmed by the church's elders, and appointed by the elders to the task of leadership. The starting point in identifying a potential deacon is the desire in the heart of the individual (1 Timothy 3:1, 8). God plants in a man's heart a passion for the ministry, and then confirms it by the leading of the Holy Spirit in the hearts of the elders through prayer and fasting.

Any male member who meets all of the qualifications listed in Article VI, Section 3.A. may be nominated by a member of the church for the office of deacon. The nominations will be reviewed by the elders where, upon a unanimous decision, a list of qualified nominations will be formed. This list will be made available to the members one month before the annual meeting. If one or more members, because of knowledge of some existing circumstance, deem it necessary to object to a nomination, a written objection shall be brought in person to the elders to examine. Should the objection be found valid, the nomination for deacon will not be approved. The elders will appoint approved nominations for the office of deacon and at the annual meeting present them to the members for their affirmation.

A public acknowledgment of this appointment will be done through the laying on of hands by the elders (1 Timothy 4:14). This visible act will demonstrate solidarity between the elders and the one on whom they laid their hands, and is a means of saying, “We commend you to the ministry. We stand with you, support you, and affirm your right to function in a position of leadership in this church.”

#### C. Responsibilities

Deacons are to assist the elders in shepherding the church. In fulfilling their calling to serve, the deacons are responsible to serve the general, physical, and spiritual needs of the church. The deacons will be responsible to:

1. Assist the elders in the administration of communion and baptismal services
2. Organize ministries specifically designed to meet the needs of the men in the church
3. Together with the deaconesses, administer the ministries of benevolence, caring for the needy, widows, and orphans
4. Oversee the routine care of the facilities and properties
5. Together with the deaconesses, elect the financial committee (Article VII, Section 4.A.)
6. Meet Regularly
7. Perform other duties as assigned by the elders

#### D. Accountability

The deacons, under the headship of Jesus Christ, the guidance of the Holy Spirit, and the authority of the Scripture, are accountable to:

1. The elders (1 Thessalonians 5:12-13; 1 Peter 5:1-5; Hebrews 13:7, 17)
2. Each other (Galatians 6:1; Matthew 18:15-18)
3. The members (Matthew 18:15-18)

#### E. Organization

##### 1. Officers

The deacons will appoint their own chairman, vice-chairman, and secretary to administer their meetings. Men with an expressed desire to serve in these offices will be eligible for nomination. If an officer desires to step down from his position, new officers may be appointed at their first meeting following the church’s annual meeting.

##### 2. Number

The number of deacons will be determined by the number of male members who meet all of the qualifications listed in Article VI, Section 3.A.

##### 3. Term of Office

The term of office for a deacon will be continuous as long as he remains a member of the church and meets the qualifications of a deacon. Deacons may have the option of taking a sabbatical if personal need warrants such.

#### F. Termination

A deacon may be removed from office at any regular or special meeting of the elders if he is found to be spiritually unqualified according to the qualifications listed in Article VI, Section 3.A. and pertinent Scripture (1 Timothy 3:8-13), in accord with the procedures prescribed by pertinent Scripture (Matthew 18:15-18).

When a deacon is removed because of sin that is deemed sufficient to disqualify him from the office of deacon, a notice will be made before the church congregation at a regularly scheduled worship service (Matthew 18:15-18). If he refuses to repent from that sin, the removal will be accompanied by a public rebuke (1 Timothy 5:20).

#### **Section 4. Deaconesses**

Deaconesses are charged with supporting the ministry of the elders, uniting the body, and caring for the needy. Their role is of service, sacrifice, and commitment to others' needs.

##### **A. Qualifications**

Each deaconess must be an active female member of this church. She must subscribe without reservation to the statement of faith and agree to abide by the guidelines of this constitution. She must possess the qualifications described in 1 Timothy 3:11:

1. Aspires to the office of deaconess (1 Timothy 3:1, 11)
2. Worthy of respect; dignified (1 Timothy 3:11)
3. Not a malicious talker or gossip (1 Timothy 3:11)
4. Temperate (1 Timothy 3:11)
5. Trustworthy in everything; faithful in all things (1 Timothy 3:11)

##### **B. Selection**

Deaconesses are called by God, confirmed by the church's elders, and appointed by the elders to the task of leadership. The starting point in identifying a potential deaconess is the desire in the heart of the individual (1 Timothy 3:1, 11). God plants in a woman's heart a passion for the ministry, and then confirms it by the leading of the Holy Spirit in the hearts of the elders through prayer and fasting.

Any female member who meets all of the qualifications listed in Article VI, Section 4.A. may be nominated by a member of the church for the office of deaconess. The nominations will be reviewed by the elders where, upon a unanimous decision, a list of qualified nominations will be formed. This list will be made available to the members one month before the annual meeting. If one or more members, because of knowledge of some existing circumstance, deem it necessary to object to a nomination, a written objection shall be brought in person to the elders to examine. Should the objection be found valid, the nomination for deaconess will not be approved. The elders will appoint approved nominations for the office of deaconess and at the annual meeting present them to the members for their affirmation.

A public acknowledgment of this appointment will be done through the laying on of hands by the elders (1 Timothy 4:14). This visible act will demonstrate solidarity between the elders and the one on whom they laid their hands, and is a means of saying, "We commend you to the ministry. We stand with you, support you, and affirm your right to function in a position of leadership in this church."

##### **C. Responsibilities**

Deaconesses are to assist the elders in shepherding the women and children of the church. In fulfilling their calling to serve, the deaconesses are responsible to serve the general, physical, and spiritual needs of the women and children of the church. The deaconesses will be responsible to:

1. Assist the elders in the administration of the baptismal services and prepare the elements for communion

2. Organize ministries specifically designed to meet the needs of the women in the church
3. Together with the deacons, administer the ministries of benevolence, caring for the needy, widows, and orphans
4. Assist the deacons with the care of the facilities
5. Together with the deacons, elect the financial committee (Article VII, Section 4.A.)
6. Meet Regularly
7. Perform other duties as assigned by the elders

#### D. Accountability

The deaconesses, under the headship of Jesus Christ, the guidance of the Holy Spirit, and the authority of the Scripture, are accountable to:

1. The elders (1 Thessalonians 5:12-13; 1 Peter 5:1-5; Hebrews 13:7, 17)
2. Each other (Galatians 6:1; Matthew 18:15-18)
3. The members (Matthew 18:15-18)

#### E. Organization

##### 1. Officers

The deaconesses will appoint their own chairman, vice-chairman, and secretary to administer their meetings. Women with an expressed desire to serve in these offices will be eligible for nomination. If an officer desires to step down from her position, new officers may be appointed at their first meeting following the church's annual meeting.

##### 2. Number

The number of deaconesses will be determined by the number of female members who meet all of the qualifications listed in Article VI, Section 4.A.

##### 3. Term of Office

The term of office for a deaconess will be continuous as long as she remains a member of the church and meets the qualifications of a deaconess. Deaconesses may have the option of taking a sabbatical if personal need warrants such.

#### F. Termination

A deaconess may be removed from office at any regular or special meeting of the elders if she is found to be spiritually unqualified according to the qualifications listed in Article VI, Section 4.A. and pertinent Scripture (I Timothy 3:11), in accord with the procedures prescribed by pertinent Scripture (Matthew 18:15-18).

When a deaconess is removed because of sin that is deemed sufficient to disqualify her from the office of deaconess, a notice will be made before the church congregation at a regularly scheduled worship service (Matthew 18:15-18). If she refuses to repent from that sin, the removal will be accompanied by a public rebuke (1 Timothy 5:20).

### **Section 5. Non-Pastoral Staff**

#### A. Office Staff

All non-pastoral office staff positions will be administered by the elders. The positions may be paid or nonpaid, part-time or full-time. If designated as such by the elders the positions may require special education, training, or skills and may be supervisory in scope.

1. Hiring and dismissal

Within the approved budget, the elders may establish, revoke, or modify each office staff position's job description, rate of pay, and fringe benefits. The elders will have the authority and responsibility to hire or dismiss all non-pastoral office staff. The needs of the pastor and associate pastor(s) must be considered in these positions.

2. Accountability

All paid and volunteer office staff will report to the pastor and the elders.

**B. Facility Operations Staff**

These are role positions that may be established as needed and will be supervised by the deacons to complete those services or tasks required by the church in its day-to-day operations. The positions may be paid or non-paid, part-time or full-time. These positions, designated as such by the deacons, may require special education, training, or skills and may be supervisory in scope.

1. Hiring and dismissal

Within the approved budget, the deacons may establish, revoke, or modify each position's job description, rate of pay, and fringe benefits. The deacons will have the authority and responsibility to hire and dismiss all facility operations staff.

2. Accountability

All facility operations staff will report to the deacons.

## **Section 6. Offices**

From among the offices of the church, the officers of this organization will be a chairman, vice-chairman, secretary, and treasurer. All of these offices will serve under the direction and authority of the board of directors, the elders.

**A. Chairman**

The chairman of the elders will be the chairman of the church. He will preside over all meetings of the church, leadership, and elders. He will have general supervision of the activities and officers of the church.

**B. Vice-Chairman**

The vice-chairman of the elders will be the vice-chairman of the church. In the absence or disability of the chairman, the vice-chairman will perform all the duties of the chairman having the same authority and being subject to the same restrictions as the chairman.

**C. Secretary**

The secretary of the elders will be the secretary of the church. In the absence of the chairman and the vice-chairman, the secretary will perform all the duties of the chairman having the same authority and being subject to the same restrictions as the chairman. He will keep, or assign to be kept, a record of the minutes of all meetings of the members, elders, deacons, deaconesses, and other designated committees. These minutes will include the date and time of the meeting, names of those present, reason for meeting, and the proceedings thereof.

**D. Treasurer**

The treasurer of the church will be elected by the deacons and deaconesses from among their membership and must be approved by the elders before taking office. The treasurer will be responsible for keeping financial records of all money deposited and withdrawn both for designated funds and budgeted items. The treasurer will pay all bills

and payroll promptly, and will complete the tax requirements for the church as an organization and to its employees. The treasurer will give a financial report at every leadership team meetings, regular church meetings, and at any time a request with sufficient notification has been given by the elders. The treasurer will serve as a member of the financial committee responsible for preparing and submitting the annual budget to the elders.

E. Vice-Treasurer

The vice-treasurer of the church will be elected by the deacons and deaconesses from among their membership and must be approved by the elders before taking office. The vice-treasurer will be assigned to work under the direction of the treasurer to assist in the tasks assigned to the treasurer. In the absence of the treasurer, the vice-treasurer will be responsible to submit a financial report at the required meetings, or complete other tasks of the office, as required by the elders. The vice-treasurer will serve as a member of the financial committee responsible for preparing and submitting the annual budget to the elders.

F. Financial Secretary

The financial secretary of the church will be elected by the deacons and deaconesses from among their membership and must be approved by the elders before taking office. The financial secretary, under the direction of the treasurer, will be responsible to receive, keep individual record of, and deposit all funds contributed to the church. A copy of all deposits made to each specific fund will be given to the treasurer to be added to the financial records. The financial secretary will prepare and deliver forms detailing all charitable contributions for tax deductions. The financial secretary will serve as a member of the financial committee responsible for preparing and submitting the annual budget to the elders.