

CONSTITUTION, COVENANT AND CONFESSION OF FAITH
Of
IMMANUEL BAPTIST CHURCH
Adopted December 7, 1938
Revised in 1956, 1967, 1980, 1988 and 1995

ARTICLE I. NAME

The name of this assembly shall be the Immanuel Baptist Church, Inc., Columbus, Ohio.

ARTICLE II. PURPOSE (Object)

The purpose of this church is to function as a body of New Testament believers in accordance with the principles laid down by the Word of God. This church shall glorify God through worship which honors Him, through evangelism which points the lost in Columbus, Ohio and around the world to God, and through discipleship which builds up believers in their relationship with God.

ARTICLE III. COVENANT

Having been brought by Divine Grace to accept the Lord Jesus Christ as our Savior, and to give ourselves completely to Him, we do now solemnly and joyfully covenant with each other to serve together with brotherly love to the glory of our Lord. Therefore, in His strength we promise that we will exercise mutual care for one another, promoting each other's growth in Christian knowledge, holiness, and comfort, so that together we may stand perfect and complete in all the will of God. To accomplish this goal, we promise that we will:

- 1) Uphold the public worship of God and the celebration of the ordinances, and promote fellowship with each other.
- 2) Cheerfully contribute of our income for the support of the Lord's work through this church.
- 3) Strive to maintain family and personal devotions, training our children and those under our care so that we may bring them to a saving knowledge of Christ.
- 4) Maintain a Christian testimony in our interaction with the world, so that we may win them to Christ. We will do this in the spirit of love, through the power of the Holy Spirit, recognizing that we are to be a light to the world and the salt of the earth, and that our testimony should not be hidden.
- 5) Frequently encourage and, if occasion shall require, admonish one another, doing so in the spirit of meekness, considering ourselves lest we also be tempted.

We further covenant together that we wholeheartedly agree with the Constitution and Confession of Faith of this church. We agree to be governed by the Constitution, and we will earnestly defend and teach the doctrines set forth in the Confession of Faith.

Moreover, we promise one another that, when we leave this church, we will unite with a church where we can carry out the spirit of this Covenant and the principles of God's Word as soon as possible.

And may the God of peace who brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great Shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, make us perfect in every good work to do His will, working in us that which is well-pleasing in His sight through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory forever and ever. Amen.

ARTICLE IV. CONFESSION OF FAITH (Doctrine)

1. THE SCRIPTURES

We believe that:

a) The Bible as it was originally written was verbally inspired by God and is the product of Spirit-controlled men, and therefore is truth without error.

b) All 39 books of the Old Testament and all 27 of the New Testament are fully and equally inspired in all their parts.

c) The Bible is God's written revelation to man. Thus it is to be the center of Christian living and is the only infallible rule for all conduct, creeds and opinions.

d) God's special revelation to man was completed with the book of Revelation.

Ref: II Tim. 3:16-17; II Pet. 1:19-21; Rev. 22:18-19.

2. THE TRUE GOD

We believe that:

a) There is one and only one living and true God and that He is an infinite, intelligent Spirit and the Maker and supreme Ruler of Heaven and Earth. He is inexpressibly glorious in holiness, infinitely perfect in all His attributes and worthy of all possible honor, confidence and love.

b) In the unity of the Godhead there are three eternal persons: the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, who are one in substance, equal in every divine attribute, and who each have distinct but harmonious parts in the great work of redemption.

Ref: Exodus 20:2-3; I Cor. 8:6; I John 5:7; Rev. 4:11.

3. JESUS CHRIST

We believe in the absolute Deity of God the Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, and that:

- a) He was both human and divine, God incarnate (in human flesh).
- b) He has existed from all eternity.
- c) He is co-equal with the Father and the Holy Spirit.
- d) He never ceased to be God for one instant and that His life and death did not consist of laying aside His deity.
- e) As a man, He was miraculously conceived by the Holy Spirit and born of the virgin Mary, as no other man was ever born or can ever be born of woman.
- f) He is both the Son of God and God the Son.
- g) He lived a sinless life, died on the cross as the sacrifice for man's sin, was raised from the grave, ascended to God's right hand, and today serves His people as their High Priest, interceding with the Father for them.

Ref: Gen. 3:15; Isaiah 7:14; 53:5-11; Matt. 1:18-25; Luke 1:26-28, 35; John 1:1-2, 14; 2 Cor. 5:21; Phil. 2:5-8; Heb. 4:11-16; 5:5-10; 9:24; I John 2:2; 5:20.

4. THE HOLY SPIRIT

We believe that the Holy Spirit:

- a) Is a divine person equal with God the Father and God the Son and is of the same nature as they are.
- b) Was active in the creation of the universe.
- c) Restrains Satan and the evil in the unbelieving world until God's purpose is fulfilled.
- d) Convicts men of sin, righteousness and judgment, and bears witness to the truth of the Gospel in preaching and testimony.
- e) Is the agent in the New Birth (salvation), giving spiritual life through Jesus Christ.
- f) Baptizes ALL believers into the Body of Christ at the moment of their personal acceptance of Jesus Christ as Savior.
- g) Indwells and seals ALL believers from the moment of their salvation
- h) Encourages, guides, teaches, witnesses, sanctifies, and empowers believers for service and godly living.

Ref: Matt. 28:19; John 3:5-6; 14:16-17; 26; 16:8-11; Rom. 8:14-27; 1 Cor. 12:12-13; 2 Cor. 13:14; Gal. 5:22-23; Eph. 1:13-14; Heb. 9:14.

We further believe that the gifts of the Holy Spirit often called "sign gifts", such as tongues, healings, miracles, and prophecy, were temporary in nature and intended for the infancy of the Church. Thus, we believe that they are no longer being given by God in this age.

We reject all teaching that such gifts are a mark of a "second blessing" of the Holy Spirit and assert that EVERY believer is indeed baptized by the Holy Spirit into the Body of Christ and indwelt by the Spirit at the moment of his salvation.

Ref. Rom. 8:9; 1 Cor. 12-14; Eph. 1:13; 4:30.

5. THE DEVIL (SATAN)

We believe in the real and distinct personality of Satan, and that he is:

- a) The unholy god of this world system.
- b) The leader of all the powers of darkness and sin.
- c) The enemy of God and His people, who, though defeated by Jesus' death on the cross, is still a powerful enemy today.
- d) Destined to the judgment of an eternal justice in the lake of fire.

Ref: Matt. 4:1-2; II Cor. 4:4; 1 Pet. 5:8-9; Rev. 12:10; 19:11-20; 20:10.

6. CREATION

We believe the literal account of creation as recorded in Genesis and that the universe and man came into existence by the direct and immediate creation of God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit and not by evolution.

Ref: Gen. 1 & 2; John 1:3; Col. 1:16-17.

7. THE FALL OF MAN

We believe that the first man, Adam, was created free of sin and righteous before God, but voluntarily and willfully sinned, thus plunging himself and the whole human race into condemnation and spiritual death, so that now all mankind are sinners by nature and by choice, and so are without excuse before God.

Ref: Gen. 3; Psa. 51:5; Rom. 1:18-32; 3:10-19; 5:10-16; 6:23.

8. THE ATONEMENT FOR SIN

We believe that the only escape from the penalty of sin (spiritual death) is through the atoning and reconciling work of Jesus Christ, the Sinless One, who could not sin and did not sin.

We believe that Jesus voluntarily took upon Him a human body and nature, and thus by His suffering, the shedding of His blood, His death, and His resurrection, He fully paid for sin and satisfied God's justice.

Therefore, we believe that salvation is a work of God's grace and not man's effort, and that it is available to all who personally accept Jesus as Savior. At that moment the believer is made righteous in God's sight ("justification") and becomes part of God's family.

Ref. Rom. 3:25-26; 10:9-13; 2 Cor. 5:17, 21; Eph. 2:8-9; Heb. 9:22-28.

9. FAITH AND SALVATION

We believe that true faith in Jesus Christ as Savior, which demonstrates itself in repentance from sin and commitment to the Lord Jesus Christ, is the only condition of salvation, and that no works, however good, earn salvation or make it more secure.

We believe that the attempt of some to say works are needed in addition to this God-given faith is a perversion of the Gospel. However, we also believe that true faith will result in a changed life as the Spirit of God works in the believer to make him more Christ-like.

Ref: Acts 16:31; Rom. 3; 2 Cor. 5:17; Eph. 2:8-10; Titus 3:5-7.

10. THE SECURITY OF THE BELIEVER

We believe that all who accept Christ as personal Savior are born again by God's grace and through His power and are eternally secure in Christ. However, this security should never be viewed as a license to sin, but as a motivation to holy living. It is, therefore, the responsibility of all believers to maintain a pure testimony in both doctrine and conduct, both privately and within the church.

Ref: John 10:28-29; Rom. 6:14-18; 8:35-39; 1 Cor. 5; Phil. 1:6; 1 John 5:11-13.

11. PRIESTHOOD OF BELIEVERS

We believe that the saved, born-again, person is a believer-priest, subject only to Christ our High Priest, and thus he has full and complete access to the Father through the Lord Jesus Christ.

Ref: Heb. 10:19-22; 1 Pet. 2:5, 9; Rev. 1:6.

12. THE LOCAL CHURCH

We believe that a local church is an organized congregation of born-again believers, associated by mutual consent and covenant for the purpose of worship, training, fellowship, and outreach, who:

- a) Have been baptized by immersion following their salvation and who observe the ordinances of Christ.
- b) Are governed by the laws of God and exercise the gifts, rights and privileges invested in them by His Word.
- c) Have as their officers pastors and deacons, whose qualifications are clearly defined in the Scriptures.
- d) Have the absolute right of self-government directed by the Holy Spirit and are answerable only to Christ, exercising final authority under Christ in all matters of church membership, policy, government, discipline, benevolence, and finances.

Ref: Acts 2:41-42; 15:1-18; 20:17-18; I Cor. 11:2; Eph. 1:22-23; 4:11-16; 5:23-24; Col. 1:18; I Tim. 3:1-7.

13. BAPTISM AND THE LORD'S SUPPER

We believe that Christian Baptism is:

- a) The single immersion of a believer in water as a solemn and beautiful symbol of one's faith in the crucified, buried and risen Savior and identification with Him.
- b) A picture of the believer's death to sin and resurrection to a new life.
- c) A prerequisite to the privileges of church membership.

We believe that the Lord's Supper is a commemoration for believers of Jesus' death until He comes, and should always be preceded by solemn self-examination.

Ref: Matt. 3:16; 26:26-30; Acts 2:41-41; 8:36-39; Rom. 6:3-5; I Cor. 11:23-28; Col. 2:12.

14. OF CHURCH DISCIPLINE

We believe that it is the responsibility of members individually and of the church as a whole to seek the spiritual growth of each church member and to seek for harmony in relationships between believers. The Bible gives the procedure for correcting any discord between brethren, for restoring a brother fallen into sin and for a church to purge itself of any member who will not repent. While the Bible makes it clear that God is the supreme Judge of all, and that every Christian is directly and primarily responsible to Him, it also teaches that God has given the local church certain authority over the lives of its members - an authority beyond that of civil government. Therefore:

a) A believer should never live or teach contrary to the decision of his Bible-believing church, unless the decision of that church is contrary to Scripture.

b) A believer should never take another believer or group of believers to civil court, but should accept the decision of his local church as final.

Ref: Matt. 5:23-25; 7:3-5; 18:15-17; I Cor. 5:1-7; 6:1-8; Gal. 6:1.

15. OF THE RIGHTEOUS AND THE WICKED.

We believe that there is a radical and essential difference between the righteous and the wicked. The righteous are those who through faith are justified by the death of the Lord Jesus Christ and set apart by the Spirit of God. However, all who continue in unbelief are wicked in His sight and are under the wrath of God. This distinction holds both in this life and after death.

We believe in the everlasting joy of the saved in Heaven and the everlasting conscious suffering of the lost unbeliever in Hell.

Ref: Mal. 3:18; Matt. 25:34-41; Luke 16:19-31; John 8:21; Rom. 6:17-23.

16. OF THINGS TO COME.

We believe in the bodily, personal, premillennial, and imminent return of Jesus Christ, and that:

a) He will come before the seven-year tribulation period to catch away His church to Heaven with Him (the "rapture").

b) He will come with His church at the close of the seven-year tribulation to judge the living and to set up His Millennial Kingdom.

Ref: Matt. 25:31-46; I Thess. 4:13-18; Rev. 19:11-20:6.

We believe in the resurrection of the bodies of the dead, and that:

a) Believers who died before Jesus' return will be given resurrection bodies at the time of the rapture as they, and the transformed living believers, meet the Lord in the air.

b) Unbelievers will be raised at the close of the Millennial Kingdom and will stand in their bodies at the Great White Throne Judgment to receive their final doom.

Ref: John 5:21-30; I Thess. 4:16; Rev. 20:11-15.

17. CIVIL GOVERNMENT.

We believe that civil government is of divine origin, established for the interests and good order of human society. Therefore:

a) Government officials are to be honored and obeyed, except in things opposed to the Word of God.

b) Christians are responsible to pray for their government leaders.

c) Christians are responsible to participate in government as God leads them and to the extent allowed in their society.

Ref: 2 Sam. 23:3; Acts 5:29; Rom. 13:1-7; 1 Tim. 2:1-4.

18. OF MARITAL AND MORAL STANDARDS

We believe that sexual relationships before or outside of marriage are sinful and cause for judgment by God and discipline by the church.

We believe that there is no such thing as "marriage" between members of the same sex and that such a relationship is sinful and condemned by God, and we reject as unbiblical and perverted all forms of homosexuality and lesbianism.

We further believe that God ordained marriage as a commitment between a man and a woman for life. Thus, we believe divorce, other than for biblical reasons, violates the commands of God.

We also believe that a believer should not marry an unbeliever. However, those who have come to faith in Christ after their marriage should do all in their power to point their mate to Christ by their loving words and actions and by their commitment to the marriage.

Ref. Gen. 2:23-25; Mal. 2:10-16; Matt. 19:1-12; Rom. 1:24-32; 1 Cor. 6:15-20; 7:10-16; Heb. 13:4, 1 Pet. 3:1.

19. OF THE SANCTITY OF HUMAN LIFE

We believe that human life is sacred from the moment of conception, and that all human beings, regardless of race, sex, age, or physical and mental capacity, are created in the image of God and so are valued by God and His people.

We believe that the weak, vulnerable, infirm, handicapped, pre-born, and needy deserve our respect and care. Therefore, we oppose those practices, policies or procedures which undermine or deny the God-given right to life of every human being.

Ref: Gen. 1:26; Psa. 139:14-16; Prov. 24:11-12; 31:8-9; James 1:27.

CONSTITUTION

(The masculine pronoun is often used in this section in its generic sense, thus avoiding the cumbersome "he & she", "his & hers", etc.)

ARTICLE V. MEMBERSHIP

Section A. Admission

Anyone professing faith in the Lord Jesus Christ as his personal Savior, giving evidence of his relationship with Jesus Christ by his lifestyle, and declaring himself in agreement with the doctrinal beliefs, principles and practices of this church may become a candidate for membership in this church in either of two ways:

1. On immersion after profession of faith. Immersion and membership are to be considered as distinct from each other. Being immersed in this church or by its Pastor does not constitute membership. A candidate must indicate his desire to become a member and be examined specifically for membership.
2. By Christian Experience after having been immersed in another church of like faith and practice. A letter of recommendation from another church of like belief will be considered when examining candidates who have such a letter.

A person desiring membership in this church shall present himself for membership before the congregation in a public meeting. He shall then complete a written application for membership and shall be examined by the pastor(s) and the deacons concerning his testimony of salvation and agreement with the Confession of Faith, Covenant and Constitution of this church.

Candidates for membership may be recommended to the congregation at any regular meeting of the church or duly called special meeting. Candidates receiving a 2/3 majority vote by the members present at any such meeting will be accepted into membership after receiving the right hand of fellowship. The right hand of fellowship may be extended at any regular service of the church.

All requests for termination of membership shall be acted upon by the pastor(s) and deacons, who will make their recommendation to the church for its action.

Section B. Classifications of Membership

It shall be the responsibility of the whole church, and especially of the pastor(s) and deacons, to encourage faithful attendance at the regular church services, for this is essential to growth in Christ. However, for the purpose of effective ministry within the membership, the membership shall be divided into the following classifications:

1. Members in Good and Regular Standing:

Any member who consistently attends the regular services of worship of the church unless providentially hindered, and who demonstrates to the best of his ability evidence of his support of the church's faith, doctrine, and material welfare, and who adheres to and observes its Covenant, Confession of Faith, and Constitution, and who is not under discipline for any cause by the church.

2. Members Not in Good and Regular Standing:

a) Those Who Have Lost Voting Rights:

No member absent from the services of the church for a continuous period of two months will be permitted the privilege of voting at any meeting unless satisfactory explanation of his absence has been given to and accepted by the pastor(s) and deacons, or unless it is common knowledge that he has been kept from services because of illness or service for Christ in another place, such as on the mission field, away at school, or as a member of the armed forces.

b) Inactive:

Any member absent from the services of the church or a continuous period of three months will be removed from the active membership roll and placed on the roll of inactive members unless satisfactory explanation has been given (as above). This action can only be taken by a majority vote of the congregation at a regularly called business meeting upon recommendation by the pastor(s) and deacons, and only after a recent visit to the member by the pastor(s) and at least one deacon to determine his reason for not attending, and to restore him to fellowship if possible. The member shall have the right to appear at the meeting and explain his absence.

Members who become irregular in attendance should be remembered in prayer and encouraged by every means not to forsake the assembling of themselves together.

An inactive member may be reinstated to active membership. The pastor(s) and deacons shall examine such a member and recommend him to the church for the vote of the congregation.

A member shall be carried on the inactive list for a period of six months during which time efforts should be made to bring about his restoration to the active membership of the church. If at the end of this six month period he has not been restored, his name may be completely dropped from the church roll by a majority vote of the congregation, and he shall be notified by letter from the Church Clerk whenever possible.

3. Non-Resident Members:

Any member who moves away from Immanuel's ministry area is pledged to seek out a sister church and unite with it as soon as it is practical. Those who for some reason cannot do this may retain their membership in this church by signifying in writing to the Church Clerk each year their desire to be a non-resident member.

Any member who moves away and does not communicate with the church his wishes concerning membership within one year, giving to the church his full address and details of his spiritual state, may be dropped without notification from the church roll by the congregation upon recommendation by the pastor(s) and deacons.

One who has been a Non-Resident Member may become a member in Good and Regular Standing after attending the public services of worship of the church for a period of at least four weeks.

4. Associate Membership

Associate membership is provided for those persons who are living in the Columbus area on a temporary basis such as students, missionaries, and military personnel. Associate members must be members in good standing of Baptist churches of like faith and practice. An associate membership allows temporary residents to be an official part of the church family and to be actively involved in the ministries of the church.

Associate members must meet all of the qualifications of Section A of this article, and must fulfill the appropriate duties of Section E of this article. Associate members may not hold elected offices in the church, and, since they have voting rights in their home church, they will not be extended voting privileges at Immanuel.

Associate membership shall terminate automatically when a person's temporary residence in the Columbus area ceases. Associate membership may also be ended under the conditions of Section D.

Associate members will not be included in any membership records that are sent to the General Association of Regular Baptist Churches (GARBC) or the Ohio Association of Regular Baptist Churches (OARBC). The Associate Member's home church will be notified regarding the person's associate membership status with Immanuel.

Section C. Voting Privileges

In no case shall either a member not in Good and Regular Standing or a Non-Resident Member be permitted to vote in a business meeting of the church.

Section D. Dismissal of Members

Any member of the Church, after having been given due opportunity to be heard, upon at least one month's notice, may be dismissed from membership on recommendation of the Board of Deacons and by a majority vote of the church membership for any of the following reasons:

1. Admission to membership to any other church.
2. Possessing an indifferent or hostile attitude toward Immanuel Baptist Church.
3. Conduct contrary or incompatible with the doctrines of God's Word and the practices of this local church.
4. Death. The names of those called by the Lord in death shall be removed from the church roll.

Section E. Duties of Members

1. Personal Duties: It is the duty of every Christian to be consistent in the study of God's Word, prayer, witnessing, and serving the Lord with the gifts given by the Holy Spirit.
2. To the Church: Since the local New Testament church is the God-established organism in this age for the worship and service of God's people, it shall be the duty of each member of this church to faithfully attend the services of the church, participate in the ministry of the church as led and enabled by the Lord, to invite and encourage others to attend the services of the church, to show genuine Christian friendship to those who do attend, and to contribute his tithes and offerings regularly to this church.
3. To Fellow Members: The duty of members to one another shall be to cultivate and cherish brotherly love, to visit and sympathize with those in affliction, to assist those in financial need, to tenderly regard each other's reputation, to admonish one another, and to strive for each other's spirituality, benefit and prosperity.

4. To Their Pastor(s): It is the duty of members at all times to honor, esteem and love their pastor(s); to pray for them fervently and daily; to submit to them in the Scriptural exercise of their official authority; to follow their leadership as they follow the Lord, and to manifest a tender regard for their reputation.

5. Toward the Unsaved: It is the duty of members to live a consistent Christian life among those who are unsaved, representing and commending the Savior both by word and deed; to be exact in paying all debts and performing all promises; to live in a peaceable manner; to be kind and loving; to set an example of hard work, honesty, and generosity; and, as opportunity and ability may enable, to commend the Gospel of Christ unto them.

SECTION F. Discipline

1. Its Purpose

The Bible teaches that it is the duty of the local church to encourage, exhort and help its members grow to maturity in their faith in Jesus Christ. This includes the responsibility to instruct, warn and counsel those members who are living in clear violation of or rebellion against biblical truth. When a person joins this church, he agrees to place himself under its spiritual care.

The purpose and goal of biblical church discipline is to honor and glorify God. Great care and effort must be taken to restore the individual in question to proper fellowship with God, to a growing and vibrant faith and to a faithful relationship to the church. However, when such efforts fail, the holiness of God and the testimony of God's church demand that the unrepentant person be removed from membership.

2. Its Process

a) Each believer is responsible before God to cooperate with the Holy Spirit in His examination of the believer's life for sin (Psa. 139:23-24). When a believer recognizes sin in his life, it is vital that he confess it to God, turn from it and ask God for forgiveness (1 John 1:9). Failure to do this will result in God's discipline (1 Cor. 11:28-32) and may result in church discipline as well.

b) When a believer becomes aware of persistent sin in the life of another believer or when there are private grievances between believers, the Bible teaches that these issues should be dealt with privately with both believers examining their own hearts and motivation as they prayerfully seek to restore relationships with God and one another (Matt. 18:15-17; Gal. 6:1-2).

c) If the steps detailed in (b) above do not result in reconciliation or repentance and restoration, and the individual(s) involved refuses the admonition of a concerned believer, that believer must make another attempt to resolve the situation, taking with him one or two other believers to substantiate the facts and to join him in a united exhortation for repentance and restoration (Matt. 18:15-17).

d) Should steps (b) and (c) fail or if the sin involved is of an open and public nature so that the testimony of God and the church is being harmed, the individual(s) involved will be asked to meet with the pastor(s) and deacons. These men shall take such steps as they believe biblical and necessary to restore the individual(s) to fellowship with God and the church. This may include (but is not limited to) such things as requiring public confession, instituting a more structured method of accountability, a temporary suspension of the rights of membership, establishing a means of making restitution, or even temporary or permanent removal from ministry areas.

e) If step (d) shall fail to result in a resolution of the grievance or repentance from the sin, the situation shall be brought to the local church for prayer and for action (Matt. 18:17). The individual(s) shall be notified by the Church Clerk in writing of any general church meeting dealing with their formal discipline not less than one week beforehand. No formal charge shall be brought before the church unless the member(s) is present. However, failure to appear (without satisfactory explanation) at such a meeting shall be grounds for immediate removal from membership.

f) Any member who reaches step (e) and steadfastly refuses to turn from his disobedience to the Word of God shall be removed from the church rolls by a majority vote of the congregation. This serious action removes the individual from the fellowship of God's people and from God's special protection and releases him to the ravages of Satan in the hope that such a condition will bring repentance and the restoration of fellowship with God and the church (Matt. 18:17; 1 Cor. 5:1-7).

g) Because the removal of a believer from the membership of a local church is a serious matter, this action is to be undertaken prayerfully, humbly, carefully, and in the fear of God (Gal. 6:1).

h) If at any point in the process of discipline the individual(s) involved demonstrate godly sorrow and repentance, the church **MUST** be quick to forgive and encourage, and steps should be taken to restore the individual(s) to full fellowship

with the church (Matt. 18:21-35; 2 Cor. 2:7; 2 Tim. 2:24-26).

ARTICLE VI. THE GOVERNING OF THE CHURCH

SECTION A. Authority

This is an autonomous local church, obedient to the Bible, the Word of God, and responsible to no outside religious or civil authority, but to the Lord Jesus Christ alone.

SECTION B. Congregational In Form

The work and ministry of this church is governed by its active voting members. However, both individually and collectively, the members are accountable to the Lord Jesus Christ, the Head of the Church (Eph. 4:11-16). They are responsible to see that this church functions according to the Bible and follows the leading of the Holy Spirit in harmony with that Word. The will of this church, as expressed through its vote, is considered final and binding.

The voting age for church members shall be 18 years.

SECTION C. Non-Profit, Charitable Corporation

No part of the net earnings of this corporation shall inure to the benefit of, or be distributable to, its members, trustees, officers, or other private persons, except that the corporation shall be authorized and empowered to pay reasonable compensation for services rendered and to make payments and distributions in furtherance of the purposes set forth in ARTICLE II hereof.

No substantial part of the activities of the corporation shall be the carrying on of propaganda, or otherwise attempting to influence legislation, and the corporation shall not participate in or intervene in any political campaign on behalf of any candidate for public office.

SECTION D. Ownership Of Property

This church shall have the right to own, buy or sell tangible properties, both real and personal, in its own name and through properly elected and authorized officers. Such property shall be solely and completely owned and controlled by the voting members of this church, as expressed by a 2/3 vote at a regularly called business meeting.

SECTION E. Inner Organizations

Every group or organization within this church shall be an integral part of the church and not an entity to itself. They shall therefore assist the church in carrying out its purpose and mission, rather than having separate aims and objectives. All groups or organizations shall report regularly to the pastor(s) and Board of Deacons.

No inner organization or group shall be affiliated with any organization outside of the church without the approval of the congregation. Upon a recommendation from the pastor(s) and deacons, the congregation may temporarily or permanently suspend the existence of any inner organization by a 2/3 vote at a regularly called business meeting.

SECTION F. Indemnification

All those serving in this local church (pastors, staff, volunteer workers) shall be indemnified against all expenses actually or necessarily incurred by said worker in connection with the defense of any action, suit, or proceeding to which they have been made a party by reason of being or having been such a worker, except in relation to matters as to which said worker shall be adjudicated in such action, suit or proceeding to be liable for gross negligence or willful misconduct in the performance of duty.

SECTION G. Dissolution Of The Corporation

In the event of the dissolution of this corporation, the Board of Deacons, after paying or making provisions for the payment of all the liabilities of the corporation, shall dispose of all assets of the corporation to such other non-profit corporations as are in agreement with the letter and spirit of this church's Doctrinal Statement. Such organizations shall be organized and operated exclusively for charitable, educational, religious, or scientific purposes and shall qualify as exempt organizations under Section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code of 1954 (or the corresponding provision of any future United States Internal Revenue Law).

ARTICLE VII. OFFICERS

In harmony with the teaching of the New Testament, the spiritual oversight of this church shall be entrusted to a pastor or pastors, called according to the method outlined in ARTICLE VII, Section A.

The pastor(s) shall be assisted in the work of spiritual oversight and administration of the church by deacons elected according to ARTICLE VII, Section B 2.

The church shall also have the power to elect or appoint other officers and/or committees as they become necessary for the proper and efficient functioning of the church.

Section A. The Pastor(s)

1. The Qualifications of a Pastor

a) He must be a man of spiritual maturity, demonstrating the qualifications and abilities necessary for this office spelled out in 1 Timothy 3:1-7 and Titus 1:5-9.

b) He must not have compromising relationships with denominational apostasy.

c) He must not be a member of a "secret society."

d) Before a call shall be extended, he shall affirm in writing his agreement with the Articles of Faith and Church Covenant, and his willingness to unite as a member of this church.

e) The pastor shall be required to unite with the church at the very outset of his ministry.

2. The Calling of a Pastor

Upon unanimous recommendation of the Board of Deacons a pastor shall be called by a 3/4 vote on the first ballot of the membership present at a meeting duly called for the purpose.

3. The Duties of the Senior Pastor

a) He shall preach the Word of God with faithfulness, declaring not only the gospel, but the whole counsel of God.

b) He shall, with the aid of the deacons, exercise spiritual watch-care over the congregation, giving special attention to the aged and infirm, the sick, the afflicted and bereaved, and to those in particular need of his spiritual assistance.

c) He shall be recognized as moderator to the assembly and shall be ex-officio member of all committees.

d) He shall devote all his God-given powers to the task of bringing the lost to a saving knowledge of Christ and in building up the saints in righteousness.

4. The Duties of Other Pastors on Staff

In the case of more than one pastor, the Senior Pastor and Board of Deacons shall determine the titles and duties of each, based on the needs of the church. Other pastors serve under the headship of the Senior Pastor.

5. Dismissal of a Pastor

a) The engagement between a pastor and the church shall be for an indefinite period.

b) A pastor can be removed from the ministry here upon a unanimous recommendation of the Board of Deacons and a 3/4 vote of the members present at a special business meeting called for this purpose.

Section B. The Deacons

1. Their Qualifications

a) They must be men of spiritual maturity, demonstrating the qualifications for this office spelled out in 1 Timothy 3:8-13.

b) They must be members in good standing and in complete agreement with the Confession of Faith and the Constitution of this church.

c) They must not be members of a "secret society."

2. Their Election

a) When qualified and willing men are available, there shall be at least one deacon for each 20 active members. A larger number of deacons may be elected if the congregation deems it necessary.

b) Nomination of men as candidates for deacon shall be by a Nominating Committee composed of: the pastor(s), 2 deacons chosen by the Board of Deacons and 3 members of the congregation elected by a majority vote of the congregation at a regularly called business meeting. Members of the Committee shall not be men who are potential nominees for deacon or members of their immediate family.

c) Up to 30 days prior to the election of deacons, any active member of the church may submit the name of any church member or members they would like the Committee to consider for nomination. These suggestions must be in writing and must be given to a member of the Committee. The Nominating Committee is not bound by these suggestions.

d) The Nominating Committee shall prayerfully and carefully consider the qualifications of each man before nominating him, and they shall obtain the permission of the nominee to place his name on the ballot.

e) The election of deacons shall be by ballot and shall take place at the Annual Business Meeting. All nominees receiving more than a 2/3 vote of voting members present shall be elected.

f) A vacancy on the Board of Deacons occurring during the year may be filled by the church at a special election. The procedure outlined above shall be followed except that the Nominating Committee from the previous Annual Meeting shall make the nominations. In the case of such an election, the term of office shall run until the Annual Meeting at which the unexpired term would have run out.

g) The term of office shall be two years when there are eight or less deacons, with approximately half the number elected each year. When the number becomes nine or more, the term of office shall be adjusted by the congregation at a quarterly meeting or regularly called special business meeting. Terms shall be adjusted to make it possible for 1/3 or 1/4 of the deacons to be elected each year. When such a change is made, the congregation may vote to elect men for partial terms (that is, 1 or 2 years) in order to put the rotation of terms into effect.

3. Their Duties

a) They shall assist the pastor(s) in the exercise of spiritual watch-care over the congregation and shall be responsible, with the pastor(s), for the administration of all areas, departments and ministries of the church. They shall uphold, direct and carry out the Constitution, By-Laws and policies of this church.

b) They shall hold an annual organizational meeting to choose one of the deacons to be the Chairman of the Deacon Board who shall conduct church business in the absence of the senior pastor. They shall select a Church Clerk who shall keep all church records, a Financial Secretary and a Church Treasurer who shall receive and record all funds and make expenditures as directed by the Board of Deacons, a Sunday School Superintendent who shall direct the Sunday School, and any other chairmanships deemed advisable and necessary by the pastor(s) and deacons.

c) They shall hold regular meetings for prayer and to conduct church business.

d) In compliance with the legal requirements of the State of Ohio, the deacons shall appoint Trustees from their ranks to serve as Trustees of all properties and to act in accordance with the legal code in regard to all such matters. However, the deacons are at all times servants of the church and subject to its corporate actions.

e) As trustees, the deacons shall care for and oversee the repairs of the church's property, hire and supervise the non-pastoral church staff, and have oversight of the approved budget and finances of the church. They shall make such expenditures as directed by the congregation through the budget or through special authorization. They may, however, make non-budgeted expenditures of up to \$500 without specific congregational approval.

f) The deacons shall not have authority to sell, lease, give away, or otherwise dispose of church property valued in excess of \$300, nor to mortgage or otherwise incur debt in excess of \$500 except as the church shall order by corporate action.

g) They shall be responsible to provide a suitable place of worship and to maintain the same in good repair.

h) In the absence of the pastor, the deacons shall provide pulpit supplies and shall be responsible for the conducting of the regular services of the church.

i) Upon the resignation of the senior pastor, the deacons shall constitute the Pulpit Committee, and shall, with the aid of the congregation, seek to obtain the man of God's choice for the pastorate (see ARTICLE VII).

j) As servant/ministers of the church, the deacons shall perform such other duties as are necessary to assist the pastor(s) and to serve the congregation.

4. Termination of Service

a) Any deacon resigning his office before the expiration of his term must submit his resignation in writing. This resignation becomes effective when received by the church.

b) Any deacon who is placed on the inactive roll of the church shall be automatically removed from office.

c) A deacon may be removed from office upon recommendation by 3/4 of the Board of Deacons and a 3/4 vote of the voting members present at a regular business meeting or a regularly called special business meeting.

ARTICLE VIII. MEETINGS

SECTION A. Worship

The regular meetings of the church shall be Sunday School, Morning Worship and Evening Worship on Sundays, and Prayer Meeting at mid-week. The Lord's Supper shall be celebrated at least once a month, preferably on the first Sunday. The regular times of these meetings shall be set by the congregation, but the times may be changed temporarily or additional meetings may be scheduled by the deacons.

SECTION B. Business Meetings

1. Regular Business Meetings

a) The Annual Business Meeting of the church shall be held during the first full week of December. At this time deacons shall be elected and the budget for the coming year shall be approved.

b) The Organizational Business Meeting shall be held during the second full week of January for the purpose of ratifying the various committees and officers appointed by the deacons. The committees and officers from the previous year shall remain in office until this meeting. At this time the annual reports from the previous year shall be examined.

c) The Quarterly Business Meetings shall be held following the second mid-week Prayer Meeting of April, July and October.

d) The dates and times of these regular business meetings may be temporarily changed by a majority vote of the congregation provided the new date and time are announced for at least 2 consecutive Sundays prior to the meeting.

2. Special Business Meetings

A special business meeting may be called at any time by the senior pastor, the Board of Deacons or upon the written request of 10% of the voting members of the church. The day and time of the meeting and its purpose must be announced at least 2 consecutive Sundays prior to the meeting.

3. Routine and Emergency Business Matters:

At the discretion of the senior pastor and deacons, routine business matters (the expenditure of budgeted funds, the receipt of new members, etc.) and legitimate emergency items may be dealt with at any Sunday morning or evening service or the mid-week service where at least 1/3 of the voting membership is present. Neither constitutional changes nor actions relative to the employment of church personnel may be so dealt with.

4. Quorum

The quorum for all regular and specially called business meetings shall be the number of active voting members present. However, the quorum for the Annual Meeting, a meeting for the purpose of calling or terminating the services of a pastor, a meeting to amend the Church Covenant or Church Confession of Faith, or a meeting to dissolve the corporation, shall be 1/3 of all the active voting members.

ARTICLE IX. FINANCIAL PLANNING

SECTION A. Fiscal Year

The fiscal year of the church shall begin on January 1st and end the following December 31st.

SECTION B. Fund Raising

In keeping with God's Word, the work of the church shall be carried on by the tithes and free-will offerings of God's people. Regular public offerings shall be received. No monies shall be raised by the church except by this method.

Envelopes shall be provided for those wishing to give systematically. The Financial Secretary may only issue statements of giving based upon monies received through church envelopes, special giving envelopes and by check or similar financial documents which constitute cash but which can be authenticated.

SECTION C. Debt

No financial obligation shall be placed upon the church either as a mortgage, note or outstanding bill in excess of \$500 except those authorized by the congregation through the budget or through the majority vote of those present at a called business meeting of the congregation.

ARTICLE X. GENERAL ITEMS

SECTION A. Missions

All missionaries, mission boards, educational institutions, and any other groups or individuals supported by this church shall be in complete agreement with the Confession of Faith of this church both in their doctrine and practice.

The primary objective of the missionary endeavors supported by this church shall be evangelism and the establishing of indigenous churches of like faith as our own. All schools, social agencies and any other groups or individuals supported by this church which are not directly involved in this type of work shall promote evangelism and membership in churches of like faith.

SECTION B. Licensing and Ordination

1. Licensing

a) If a man in this church is called to the ministry and desires to be licensed, he shall make his desire known to the pastor(s) and deacons.

b) Upon recommendation from the pastor(s) and Board of Deacons and approval by the congregation, the license shall be granted.

c) The duration of this license shall be for 1 year from the date of issue, but it may be renewed annually by the Board of Deacons.

d) The license shall be revoked upon termination of membership in this church, and it may be revoked for sufficient cause at any time by a majority vote of the congregation.

2. Ordination

a) If this church shall discern that one of its men is called to the ministry, that he possesses the spiritual qualifications for ordination, and that he desires ordination, the candidate shall be examined by the pastor(s) and deacons concerning his salvation, call to the ministry and walk with the Lord.

b) Upon a recommendation from the pastor(s) and Board of Deacons and approval by a majority vote of the congregation, the church shall proceed with the process of ordination.

c) As part of the process of ordination, the church may call an examination council of pastors and members from churches of like faith to examine the qualifications of the candidate. If called, this council shall thoroughly examine the candidate as to his call to the ministry, Christian experience, reputation, character, and doctrinal beliefs. Based on this examination, the council shall make a recommendation to the church.

d) If the council recommends that the candidate be ordained, the church shall proceed with the ordination service. Should the council recommend that the candidate not be ordained, the pastor(s) and Board of Deacons shall reconsider his qualifications in light of this recommendation. If, after this reconsideration, they conclude that the candidate should not be ordained, they shall recommend the same to the congregation and the ordination process shall cease upon a majority vote of the congregation. However, if they conclude that ordination is still warranted, they shall recommend that to the congregation and shall proceed with the ordination service upon a majority vote of the congregation.

e) This church may revoke the ordination credentials for sufficient cause by a majority vote of the congregation.

SECTION C. Messengers

Whenever possible, representatives elected by the congregation shall be sent to all ordination councils, recognition councils, meetings, or conferences of like faith that request our participation.

SECTION D. Absentee Ballots

Absentee ballots shall only be provided for the Annual and Quarterly Business meetings and for specially called business meetings for the purpose of electing deacons, calling a pastor and voting upon by-laws. Absentee ballots shall be specially prepared and identified so as to distinguish them from other ballots used in the meeting.

Only members in good and regular standing, (those who have been in attendance at a regular service of the church in the last 2 months - see Article V. Section B.) shall be eligible for receiving an absentee ballot, and then only the following reasons shall be grounds for receiving an absentee ballot: sickness, employment, vacation, schooling, and missionary service or church-related ministry elsewhere.

Absentee ballots may only be obtained from a pastor or, in the case of a vote for a pastor, from the Chairman of the Board of Deacons. The member must place his ballot in an envelope, seal the envelope and sign his name on the outside of the envelope. Ballots obtained by any other means or returned in any other manner will not be honored.

Absentee ballots must be turned in to the moderator of the meeting before the meeting begins. The moderator and Church Clerk shall open such ballots together and the Clerk shall deliver them to the tellers.

SECTION E. Amendments

1. To the Confession of Faith and Church Covenant:

a) The Confession of Faith and Church Covenant may be amended upon a unanimous recommendation from the pastor(s) and Board of Deacons and a 3/4 vote by the voting members of the congregation present at a quarterly or specially called business meeting (see ARTICLE VIII, SECTION B), provided that at least 2 weeks notice of the proposed amendment(s) is given in writing to every member in good standing, the proposed amendment(s) have also been made available at least 2 weeks prior to the meeting, and the meeting has been announced at a regular preaching service of the church.

b) The quorum for such a meeting shall be 1/3 of the voting members of the congregation (see ARTICLE VIII, SECTION B4).

2. To the Church Constitution

a) These by-laws may be amended at any regular business meeting of the church by a 2/3 vote of all voting members present, provided that at least 2 weeks notice of the proposed amendment(s) is given in writing to every member in good standing, the proposed amendment(s) have also been made available at least 2 weeks prior to the meeting, and the meeting has been announced at a regular preaching service of the church.

b) The quorum for such a meeting shall be 1/3 of the voting members of the congregation (see ARTICLE VIII, SECTION B4).