

# Articles of Faith & Biblical Principles for Living



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# Foreword

The Faith and Order of the Bible Fellowship Church is comprised of two volumes. Volume One contains the Articles of Faith and the Biblical Principles for Living. Volume Two contains the Principles of Order. Together the two volumes contain the denomination's teaching on faith and practice.

This edition of the Faith and Order represents the latest official version and supercedes all previous editions. An electronic edition posted on the website, [www.mybfc.org](http://www.mybfc.org), includes any intervening updates between printings.

Citations in this format are made by section and paragraph, not necessarily by page number. For example:

Composition of the Board of Elders .....	401-1.1
Bylaws for Particular Churches	Section 400
Board of Elders and Deacons	Article 401
The Board of Elders	401-1
Composition of Elders	401-1.1

The following words or phrases are technical terms in the Faith and Order and are usually capitalized:

- BFC Conference
- Board of Deacons
- Board of Elders
- Particular Church

A Table of Contents and Indexes are incorporated for easy reference.

# Key and Abbreviations

Abbreviations:

BFC Bible Fellowship Church  
F&O Faith and Order

Scripture References - Unless otherwise noted the ESV is used.

Gen.	Genesis	Nah.	Nahum
Exo.	Exodus	Hab.	Habakkuk
Lev.	Leviticus	Zeph.	Zephaniah
Num.	Numbers	Hag.	Haggai
Deu.	Deuteronomy	Zec.	Zechariah
Josh.	Joshua	Mal.	Malachi
Judg.	Judges	Mat.	Matthew
Ruth.	Ruth	Mark	Mark
1Sam.	First Samuel	Luke	Luke
2Sam.	Second Samuel	John	John
1Kgs.	First Kings	Acts	Acts
2Kgs.	Second Kings	Rom.	Romans
1Chr.	First Chronicles	1Cor.	First Corinthians
2Chr.	Second Chronicles	2Cor.	Second Corinthians
Ezra	Ezra	Gal.	Galatians
Neh.	Nehemiah	Eph.	Ephesians
Est.	Esther	Phil.	Philippians
Job	Job	Col.	Colossians
Psa.	Psalms	1Thes.	First Thessalonians
Pro.	Proverbs	2Thes.	Second Thessalonians
Ecc.	Ecclesiastes	1Tim.	First Timothy
Song.	Song of Solomon	2Tim.	Second Timothy
Isa.	Isaiah	Titus	Titus
Jer.	Jeremiah	Phi.	Philemon
Lam.	Lamentations	Heb.	Hebrews
Eze.	Ezekiel	James	James
Dan.	Daniel	1Pe.	First Peter
Hos.	Hosea	2Pe.	Second Peter
Joel	Joel	1Jo.	First John
Amos	Amos	2Jo.	Second John
Obad.	Obadiah	3Jo.	Third John
Jonah	Jonah	Jude	Jude
Mic.	Micah	Rev.	Revelation

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## **Preamble**

The Bible Fellowship Church (BFC) has adopted this statement of Faith and Order to declare with clarity and precision its faith and testimony to the glory of God.

The BFC acknowledges as its sole Head, Jesus Christ, the Son of God and Savior of man. It submits to the written Word of God and to the Holy Spirit as its only sources of guidance and power in maintaining its redemptive life and work in the world.

The BFC has adopted this Faith and Order (F&O) not in substitution for, but in subordination to the Word of God. These standards have been received as being based on the Scriptures; even the elements not drawn directly from the Word have been acknowledged as based on the general rules and tenor of the Word. These standards seek to provide an effective means for the application of the teaching of the Scriptures to the faith, worship, government, and discipline of the church. Although these standards have been acknowledged to be of lesser importance than the inspired words of the Scriptures, they cannot be neglected without resulting in serious impairment of the life of the church.

The BFC acknowledges as brethren all those who share its confession of faith in the person and work of Jesus Christ. It confesses gladly the benefits of the historical and geographic breadth of this fellowship. It acknowledges specifically the benefits derived from similar statements of faith and order devised at many times in the history of the church. It seeks to respond to the responsibilities that these benefits bring by beseeching Almighty God to indwell it in such a way that it may, by His grace, bring glory to Himself and blessing to men.





# Articles Of Faith



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## Article 1 - The Holy Scriptures

**1-1** The Holy Scriptures, both Old and New Testaments, are the inspired,<sup>1</sup> infallible Word of God,<sup>2</sup> a divine revelation, the original writings of which were verbally inspired by the Holy Spirit.<sup>3</sup> They are the supreme and final authority of faith and conduct.<sup>4</sup>

**1-2** Inspiration is a special act of the Holy Spirit<sup>3</sup> by which He guided the writers of the Scriptures so that their words would convey the thoughts He wished conveyed, would bear a proper relationship to the thoughts of the other inspired books, and would be kept free from error of fact, doctrine, and judgment.<sup>5</sup>

**1-3** The Holy Scriptures, the written Word of God, are composed of all books of the Old Testament and New Testament, namely:

### Old Testament

Genesis	2 Chronicles	Daniel
Exodus	Ezra	Hosea
Leviticus	Nehemiah	Joel
Numbers	Esther	Amos
Deuteronomy	Job	Obadiah
Joshua	Psalms	Jonah
Judges	Proverbs	Micah
Ruth	Ecclesiastes	Nahum
1 Samuel	Song of Solomon	Habakkuk
2 Samuel	Isaiah	Zephaniah
1 Kings	Jeremiah	Haggai
2 Kings	Lamentations	Zechariah
1 Chronicles	Ezekiel	Malachi

### New Testament

Matthew	Ephesians	Hebrews
Mark	Philippians	James
Luke	Colossians	I Peter
John	I Thessalonians	II Peter
Acts	II Thessalonians	I John
Romans	I Timothy	II John
1 Corinthians	II Timothy	III John
2 Corinthians	Titus	Jude
Galatians	Philemon	Revelation

<sup>1</sup> And how from childhood you have been acquainted with the sacred writings, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. 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 (2Tim. 3:15-17).

<sup>2</sup> Forever, O LORD, your word is firmly fixed in the heavens (Psa. 119:89). If he called them gods to whom the word of God came—and Scripture cannot be broken— (John 10:35). The grass withers, the flower fades, but the word of our God will stand forever (Isa. 40:8).

<sup>3</sup> 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 (2Pe. 1:21). Concerning this salvation, the prophets who prophesied about the grace that was to be yours searched and inquired carefully, inquiring what person or time the Spirit of Christ in them was indicating when he predicted the sufferings of Christ and the subsequent glories (1Pe. 1:10,11). 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 (1Cor. 2:12,13).

<sup>4</sup> Sanctify them in the truth; your word is truth (John 17:17). And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he interpreted to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning himself. Then he said to them, “These are my words that I spoke to you while I was still with you, that everything written about me in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms must be fulfilled” (Luke 24:27,44). I warn everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book: if anyone adds to them, God will add to him the plagues described in this book, and if anyone takes away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God will take away his share in the tree of life and in the holy city, which are described in this book (Rev. 22:18,19).

<sup>5</sup> Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them. 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 (Mat. 5:17,18).

## **Article 2 - The Trinity**

**2-1** There are three persons in the Godhead: the Father, the Son,<sup>1</sup> and the Holy Spirit.<sup>2</sup> These three are one God,<sup>3</sup> the same in substance, eternally equal in power and glory.

<sup>1</sup> 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." (Mat. 3:16,17). Thomas answered him, "My Lord and my God!" (John 20:28).

<sup>2</sup> 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).

<sup>3</sup> In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth. 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" (Gen. 1:1,26). 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 (Mat. 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 (2Cor. 13:14).

## Article 3 - God The Father

**3-1** There is but one living and true God,<sup>1</sup> immanent, transcendent, infinite in being and perfection, pure spirit,<sup>2</sup> invisible, immutable,<sup>3</sup> eternal, almighty, all wise,<sup>4</sup> most holy, most free, most loving, most gracious, most merciful, longsuffering, abundant in goodness and truth, forgiving wickedness, rebellion and sin,<sup>5</sup> the rewarder of them that diligently seek Him, and withal most just and terrible in His judgments, hating all sin. He will by no means clear the guilty.

<sup>1</sup> 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(Isa. 45:5,6).

<sup>2</sup> God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth (John 4:24).

<sup>3</sup> I the LORD do not change (Mal. 3:6a).

<sup>4</sup> Oh, the depth of the riches and wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments and how inscrutable his ways! “For who has known the mind of the Lord, or who has been his counselor?” (Rom. 11:33,34).

<sup>5</sup> The LORD passed before him and proclaimed, “The LORD, the LORD, a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness, keeping steadfast love for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, but who will by no means clear the guilty, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children and the children’s children, to the third and the fourth generation” (Exo. 34:6,7).

## **Article 4 - God The Son**

**4-1** Jesus Christ, the Son of God, is the Word,<sup>1</sup> the eternal and true God who is of one substance and equal with the Father.<sup>2</sup> He took on Himself man's nature, with all of its essential properties except sin: Being conceived of the Holy Spirit and born of the Virgin Mary,<sup>3</sup> He embodied two perfect and distinct natures in one person. He is truly God and truly man, the only mediator between God and man.

**4-2** The Lord Jesus Christ is the revelation of God to man.<sup>4</sup> In the days of His humiliation<sup>5</sup>, He lived a sinless life, performed miracles, taught the will of God,<sup>5</sup> was crucified, and died. He was buried and arose bodily from the dead on the third day. The Lord Jesus offered Himself a sacrifice for sins,<sup>6</sup> satisfied the justice of the Father, propitiated the wrath of God, reconciled God and man,<sup>7</sup> and obtained an eternal inheritance.

**4-3** The Lord Jesus Christ ascended into heaven, from whence He had come, and was exalted, taking His place at the right hand of the Father, where He makes intercession on behalf of all who come to God through Him.<sup>8</sup>

<sup>1</sup> In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things were made through him, and without him was not any thing made that was made. And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth (John 1:1-3,14).

<sup>2</sup> 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).

<sup>3</sup> All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had spoken by the prophet: "Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and they shall call his name Immanuel" (which means, God with us) (Mat. 1:22,23).

<sup>4</sup> 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. He is the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of his nature, and he upholds the universe by the word of his power. After making purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high, having become as much superior to angels as the name he has inherited is more excellent than theirs (Heb. 1:1-4).

<sup>5</sup> Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. 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. 2:5-11).

<sup>6</sup> How much more will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without blemish to God, purify our conscience from dead works to serve the living God (Heb.9:14).

<sup>7</sup> For if while we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, now that we are reconciled, shall we be saved by his life (Rom. 5:10).

<sup>8</sup> Since then we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus, the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession. 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. 4:14,15).



## **Article 5 - God the Holy Spirit**

**5-1** The eternal<sup>1</sup> Holy Spirit, proceeding from the Father and the Son,<sup>2</sup> is of the same substance and equal in power and glory with the Father and the Son. By Him the prophets were moved to speak the Word of God, and all writers of the Holy Scriptures were inspired to record infallibly the mind and will of God.<sup>3</sup> He is the only efficient agent in the application of redemption. He convicts men of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment,<sup>4</sup> moves them to repentance, and regenerates<sup>5</sup> them by His grace, enabling them to embrace Jesus Christ by faith.

**5-2** The Holy Spirit indwells all true believers, baptizing them into one body, of which Christ is the head.<sup>6</sup> He, the divine Comforter, Intercessor, and Advocate, empowers the believer for service.<sup>7</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without blemish to God (Heb. 9:14b).

<sup>2</sup> And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Helper, to be with you forever. –But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he will teach you all things and bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you (John 14:16,26).

<sup>3</sup> 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 (2Pe. 1:21).

<sup>4</sup> 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. And when he comes, he will convict the world concerning sin and righteousness and judgment: concerning sin, because they do not believe in me; concerning righteousness, because I go to the Father, and you will see me no longer; concerning judgment, because the ruler of this world is judged (John 16:7-11).

<sup>5</sup> Jesus answered, “Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God” (John 3:5).

<sup>6</sup> 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 (1Cor. 12:13).

<sup>7</sup> “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).

## **Article 6 - Creation**

**6-1** The triune God, according to His sovereign will, created out of nothing and out of things that He had made, by immediate and mediate action, the worlds and all that is in them.<sup>1</sup> He is the Governor and Upholder of the creation by His wisdom and by the word of His mighty power.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth. The earth was without form and void, and darkness was over the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters (Gen. 1:1,2). (See also Gen. 1:3-2:3). By faith we understand that the universe was created by the word of God, so that what is seen was not made out of things that are visible (Heb. 11:3).

<sup>2</sup> 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 (Col. 1:16,17).

## **Article 7 - Satan**

**7-1** Satan is a created angelic being who fell from his first estate.<sup>1</sup> He is the god of this age, ruling by the permissive will of God.<sup>2</sup> He exercises authority over the unsaved, tempts the believer to sin, and continually accuses the brethren before the throne of God.<sup>3</sup>

**7-2** He has been defeated by the finished work of Christ on Calvary. During the millennium he will be confined to the abyss,<sup>4</sup> to be released at the end of that period to lead the armies of evil against God. He will be finally judged and doomed to the lake of fire.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>1</sup> How you are fallen from heaven, O Day Star, son of Dawn! How you are cut down to the ground, you who laid the nations low! You said in your heart, 'I will ascend to heaven; above the stars of God I will set my throne on high; I will sit on the mount of assembly in the far reaches of the north; I will ascend above the heights of the clouds; I will make myself like the Most High.' But you are brought down to Sheol, to the far reaches of the pit. Those who see you will stare at you and ponder over you: 'Is this the man who made the earth tremble, who shook kingdoms, who made the world like a desert and overthrew its cities, who did not let his prisoners go home?' (Isa. 14:12-17). 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 (Jude 1:6).

<sup>2</sup> In which you once walked, following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience (Eph. 2:2). In their case the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelievers, to keep them from seeing the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God (2Cor. 4:4).

<sup>3</sup> For this reason, when I could bear it no longer, I sent to learn about your faith, for fear that somehow the tempter had tempted you and our labor would be in vain (1Thes. 3:5). For the accuser of our brothers has been thrown down (Rev. 12:10b).

<sup>4</sup> And he seized the dragon, that ancient serpent, who is the devil and Satan, and bound him for a thousand years, and threw him into the pit, and shut it and sealed it over him, so that he might not deceive the nations any longer, until the thousand years were ended. After that he must be released for a little while (Rev. 20:2,3).

<sup>5</sup> And the devil who had deceived them was thrown into the lake of fire and sulfur where the beast and the false prophet were, and they will be tormented day and night forever and ever (Rev. 20:10).

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## Article 8 - Man

**8-1** God, by a special, instantaneous act, created man in His image<sup>1</sup> – holy, righteous, and possessing true knowledge<sup>2</sup> – by forming him out of the dust of the earth and breathing into his nostrils the breath of life. Thus man became a living soul.

**8-2** Our first parents did not remain in the glorious and happy state of their original creation, but, through the subtlety and deception of the devil,<sup>3</sup> they disobeyed and transgressed the command of God the creator, incurring on themselves and their posterity the sentence of spiritual and physical death. The guilt and consequences of Adam’s sin are imputed to the whole human race, so that all men are guilty,<sup>4</sup> inherently corrupt, totally depraved,<sup>5</sup> and subjects of the wrath of God.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>1</sup> So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them. (Gen. 1:27).

<sup>2</sup> And to put on the new self, created after the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness (Eph. 4:24). And have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge after the image of its creator (Col. 3:10). (See also Psa. 8:4-6.)

<sup>3</sup> Now the serpent was more crafty than any other beast of the field that the LORD God had made. He said to the woman, “Did God actually say, ‘You shall not eat of any tree in the garden?’” And the woman said to the serpent, “We may eat of the fruit of the trees in the garden, but God said, ‘You shall not eat of the fruit of the tree that is in the midst of the garden, neither shall you touch it, lest you die.’” But the serpent said to the woman, “You will not surely die. For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.” So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was to be desired to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate, and she also gave some to her husband who was with her, and he ate (Gen. 3:1-6).

<sup>4</sup> 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—for sin indeed was in the world before the law was given, but sin is not counted where there is no law. Yet death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over those whose sinning was not like the transgression of Adam, who was a type of the one who was to come. 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. And the free gift is not like the result of that one man’s sin. For the judgment following one trespass brought condemnation, but the free gift following many trespasses brought justification. For if, because of one man’s trespass, death reigned through that one man, much more will those who receive the abundance of grace and the free gift of righteousness reign in life through the one man Jesus Christ. Therefore, as one trespass led to condemnation for all men, so one act of righteousness leads to justification and life for all men (Rom. 5:12-18).

<sup>5</sup> No one understands; no one seeks for God. All have turned aside; together they have become worthless; no one does good, not even one. “Their throat is an open grave; they use their tongues to deceive.” “The venom of asps is under their lips.” “Their mouth is full of curses and bitterness.” “Their feet are swift to shed blood; in their paths are ruin and misery, and the way of peace they have not known.” “There is no fear of God before their eyes” (Rom. 3:11-18).

<sup>6</sup> 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). (See also Rom. 1:18.)

## Article 9 - Sin

**9-1** Sin is any lack of conformity to the will of God<sup>1</sup> or any transgression of the law of God.<sup>2</sup> Sin separates man from God, incurring His wrath and judgment, and is manifest in the selfishness, rebellion, unbelief and total depravity of man's being.<sup>3</sup> Sin is the cause of the curse on and defilement of the created universe.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> All wrongdoing is sin (1Jo. 5:17a). So whoever knows the right thing to do and fails to do it, for him it is sin (James 4:17).

<sup>2</sup> Everyone who makes a practice of sinning also practices lawlessness; sin is lawlessness (1Jo. 3:4). For whoever keeps the whole law but fails in one point has become accountable for all of it (James 2:10).

<sup>3</sup> And you were dead in the trespasses and sins in which you once walked, following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience—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.2:1-3). For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who by their unrighteousness suppress the truth. For what can be known about God is plain to them, because God has shown it to them. For his invisible attributes, namely, his eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly perceived, ever since the creation of the world, in the things that have been made. So they are without excuse. For although they knew God, they did not honor him as God or give thanks to him, but they became futile in their thinking, and their foolish hearts were darkened (Rom.1:18-21). (See also Rom. 3:10-12, 8:7-8.)

<sup>4</sup> For we know that the whole creation has been groaning together in the pains of childbirth until now (Rom.8:22). (See also Gen.3:17,18.)

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## Article 10 - Human Ability and Responsibility

**10-1** In his original creation man was endowed with the ability to will and do good or evil and was accountable for his willing and doing.<sup>1</sup> But through the fall of Adam man lost his ability, apart from God's grace,<sup>2</sup> to will and to do those things necessary for a right relationship with God;<sup>3</sup> however, he is still accountable to God for obedience to all of His commands.<sup>4</sup> Man has not lost his ability to make decisions,<sup>5</sup> but left to himself, he acts only in accordance with his fallen, sinful nature.<sup>6</sup>

**10-2** Only by God's infinite grace can man will or do anything necessary to his salvation.<sup>7</sup> By that grace, God saves those men whom He causes to will and to do good;<sup>8</sup> however, He does this without nullifying man's ability to act responsibly.<sup>9</sup>

<sup>1</sup> And the LORD God commanded the man, saying, "You may surely eat of every tree of the garden, but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die" (Gen. 2:16,17).

<sup>2</sup> And you were dead in the trespasses and sins in which you once walked, following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience—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. 2:1-3).

<sup>3</sup> No one understands; no one seeks for God. (Rom. 3:11). Those who are in the flesh cannot please God (Rom. 8:8).

<sup>4</sup> He will render to each one according to his works: to those who by patience in well-doing seek for glory and honor and immortality, he will give eternal life; but for those who are self-seeking and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, there will be wrath and fury. There will be tribulation and distress for every human being who does evil, the Jew first and also the Greek, but glory and honor and peace for everyone who does good, the Jew first and also the Greek (Rom. 2:6-10). The times of ignorance God overlooked, but now he commands all people everywhere to repent (Acts 17:30).

<sup>5</sup> For this commandment that I command you today is not too hard for you, neither is it far off. —I call heaven and earth to witness against you today, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and curse. Therefore choose life, that you and your offspring may live (Deu. 30:11,19).

<sup>6</sup> As it is written: "None is righteous, no, not one; All have turned aside; together they have become worthless; no one does good, not even one" (Rom. 3:10,12). Can the Ethiopian change his skin or the leopard his spots? Then also you can do good who are accustomed to do evil. (Jer. 13:23). (See also footnote 2.)

<sup>7</sup> So then it depends not on human will or exertion, but on God, who has mercy (Rom. 9:16).

<sup>8</sup> 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). But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God, who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God (John 1:12-13).

<sup>9</sup> Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, so now, not only as in my presence but much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God who works in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure (Phil. 2:12,13).



## **Article 11 - Election**

**11-1** Election is a free act of the sovereign God in which from eternity,<sup>1</sup> for reasons known only to Himself,<sup>2</sup> and apart from any foreseen faith and/or goodness found in man,<sup>3</sup> He graciously chose from among the fallen mankind a people unto salvation, that they might be conformed to Christ's image.<sup>4</sup> Those so chosen He redeemed by His Son<sup>5</sup> and seals by His Spirit.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Even as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before him. —In him we have obtained an inheritance, having been predestined according to the purpose of him who works all things according to the counsel of his will (Eph. 1:4,11).

<sup>2</sup> All things have been handed over to me by my Father, and no one knows the Son except the Father, and no one knows the Father except the Son and anyone to whom the Son chooses to reveal him (Mat. 11:27).

<sup>3</sup> Who saved us and called us to a holy calling, not because of our works but because of his own purpose and grace, which he gave us in Christ Jesus before the ages began (2Tim. 1:9). 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).

<sup>4</sup> 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 (Eph. 4:13).

<sup>5</sup> But we ought always to give thanks to God for you, brothers beloved by the Lord, because God chose you as the firstfruits to be saved, through sanctification by the Spirit and belief in the truth (2 Thes. 2:13).

<sup>6</sup> 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 (Eph. 1:13).

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## Article 12 - Salvation

**12-1** Salvation is the work of God<sup>1</sup> in which He reconciles fallen men to Himself,<sup>2</sup> ultimately removes the consequences of the curse,<sup>3</sup> and bestows upon His redeemed Creation<sup>4</sup> the riches of His grace, all to His glory.<sup>5</sup>

**12-2** Salvation is offered in the gospel to all men<sup>6</sup> and is accomplished in all the elect.<sup>7</sup> It is received by grace through faith and the instrumentality of the Holy Spirit,<sup>8</sup> apart from works or human merit.<sup>9</sup> Salvation centers in a person, Jesus Christ, and receiving Him<sup>10</sup> includes the remission of sins on the grounds of His shed blood on the cross,<sup>11</sup> the imputation of His perfect righteousness,<sup>12</sup> the reception of the Holy Spirit,<sup>13</sup> and the impartation of eternal life.<sup>14</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Consequently, he is able to save to the uttermost those who draw near to God through him, since he always lives to make intercession for them (Heb. 7:25). (See also Eph. 2:4-5, 8-9.)

<sup>2</sup> And through him to reconcile to himself all things (Col. 1:20). For if while we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, now that we are reconciled, shall we be saved by his life (Rom. 5:10).

<sup>3</sup> No longer will there be anything accursed (Rev. 22:3a).

<sup>4</sup> For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us. For the creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the sons of God. For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of him who subjected it, in hope that the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to corruption and obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God. For we know that the whole creation has been groaning together in the pains of childbirth until now. And not only the creation, but we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies. For in this hope we were saved. Now hope that is seen is not hope. For who hopes for what he sees? But if we hope for what we do not see, we wait for it with patience (Rom. 8:18-25).

<sup>5</sup> "I, I am he who blots out your transgressions for my own sake, and I will not remember your sins" (Isa. 43:25).

<sup>6</sup> "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).

<sup>7</sup> All that the Father gives me will come to me, and whoever comes to me I will never cast out (John 6:37). No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him. And I will raise him up on the last day (John 6:44). Since you have given him authority over all flesh, to give eternal life to all whom you have given him (John 17:2). 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).

<sup>8</sup> And when he comes, he will convict the world concerning sin and righteousness and judgment (John 16:8).

<sup>9</sup> 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).

<sup>10</sup> But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God (John 1:12).

<sup>11</sup> In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace (Eph. 1:7).

<sup>12</sup> And because of him you are in Christ Jesus, who became to us wisdom from God, righteousness and sanctification and redemption (1Cor. 1:30).

<sup>13</sup> Anyone who does not have the Spirit of Christ does not belong to him (Rom. 8:9b).

<sup>14</sup> And this is the testimony, that God gave us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. Whoever has the Son has life; whoever does not have the Son of God does not have life (1Jn. 5:11,12).

## **Article 13 - Repentance**

**13-1** Repentance unto life is a gift of God<sup>1</sup> and a voluntary act of man,<sup>2</sup> accomplished by the convicting power of the Holy Spirit through the Word of God. Repentance consists in a knowledge of sin,<sup>3</sup> a sense of guilt and corruption that results in the confession and forsaking of sin and a turning to God<sup>4</sup> that results in loving, obedient service.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Or do you presume on the riches of his kindness and forbearance and patience, not knowing that God's kindness is meant to lead you to repentance (Rom. 2:4)? When they heard these things they fell silent. And they glorified God, saying, "Then to the Gentiles also God has granted repentance that leads to life" (Acts 11:18). Correcting his opponents with gentleness. God may perhaps grant them repentance leading to a knowledge of the truth (2Tim. 2:25).

<sup>2</sup> And that repentance and forgiveness of sins should be proclaimed in his name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem (Luke 24:47). The times of ignorance God overlooked, but now he commands all people everywhere to repent (Acts 17:30).

<sup>3</sup> And when he comes, he will convict the world concerning sin and righteousness and judgment (John 16:8).

<sup>4</sup> For they themselves report concerning us the kind of reception we had among you, and how you turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God (1Thes. 1:9).

<sup>5</sup> For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them (Eph. 2:10). Remembering before our God and Father your work of faith and labor of love and steadfastness of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ (1Thes. 1:3).

## **Article 14 - Regeneration**

**14-1** Regeneration, or the New Birth,<sup>1</sup> is an instantaneous creative act of God through the agency of the Holy Spirit,<sup>2</sup> whereby divine life is imparted to those dead in sin, making them members of the family of God.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Jesus answered him, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again he cannot see 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.'" (John 3:3,6,7). Since you have been born again, not of perishable seed but of imperishable, through the living and abiding word of God (1Pe. 1:23).

<sup>2</sup> 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).

<sup>3</sup> He came to his own, and his own people did not receive him. But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God, who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God (John 1:11-13). Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come (2Cor. 5:17). 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).

## **Article 15 - Justification**

**15-1** Justification is the act of God's grace whereby the sinner is declared righteous solely through faith<sup>1</sup> in the redemptive work of Christ.<sup>2</sup> By this action the righteousness of Christ is imputed,<sup>3</sup> sin is pardoned, and the sinner is restored to divine favor.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Therefore, since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. 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. 5:1,2). And by him everyone who believes is freed from everything from which you could not be freed by the law of Moses (Acts 13:39).

<sup>2</sup> 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 (Rom. 8:33,34).

<sup>3</sup> Therefore, as one trespass led to condemnation for all men, so one act of righteousness leads to justification and life for all men (Rom. 5:18). For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God (2Cor. 5:21).

<sup>4</sup> Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts; let him return to the LORD, that he may have compassion on him, and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon (Isa. 55:7).

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## Article 16 - Sanctification

**16-1** Sanctification is a progressive work of the Holy Spirit in the believer<sup>1</sup> that purifies the life<sup>2</sup> and conforms the whole man to the image of Christ as the Word of God is believed and obeyed.<sup>3</sup> It begins at regeneration,<sup>4</sup> continues throughout the believer's life<sup>5</sup> on earth, and reaches its completion at the appearance of the Lord Jesus Christ.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>1</sup> And we all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another. For this comes from the Lord who is the Spirit (2Cor. 3:18).

<sup>2</sup> For this is the will of God, your sanctification: that you abstain from sexual immorality (1Thes. 4:3).

<sup>3</sup> Sanctify them in the truth; your word is truth (John 17:17).

<sup>4</sup> And such were some of you. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God (1Cor. 6:11).

<sup>5</sup> And to put on the new self, created after the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness. Be angry and do not sin; do not let the sun go down on your anger, and give no opportunity to the devil. (Eph. 4:24,26,27).

<sup>6</sup> Now may the God of peace himself sanctify you completely, and may your whole spirit and soul and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ (1Thes. 5:23).

## Article 17 - Perseverance of the Saints

**17-1** Salvation is the work of God, from its commencement to its consummation.<sup>1</sup> Those regenerated by the Word of God through the work of the Holy Spirit become partakers of the divine nature.<sup>2</sup> They are preserved by the power of God<sup>3</sup> so that they shall never totally or finally fall away,<sup>4</sup> but shall persevere unto the end.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>1</sup> 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).

<sup>2</sup> By which he has granted to us his precious and very great promises, so that through them you may become partakers of the divine nature, having escaped from the corruption that is in the world because of sinful desire (2Pe. 1:4).

<sup>3</sup> And I am sure of this, that he who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ (Phil. 1:6). Who by God's power are being guarded through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time (1Pe. 1:5).

<sup>4</sup> 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). Who will sustain you to the end, guiltless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ (1Cor. 1:8). 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 (1Jo. 2:19).

<sup>5</sup> But the Lord is faithful. He will establish you and guard you against the evil one. And we have confidence in the Lord about you, that you are doing and will do the things that we command (2Thes. 3:3,4).



## **Article 18 - The Church**

**18-1** The Church is the body of which Christ is the head.<sup>1</sup> All those redeemed by His blood<sup>2</sup> and born of His Spirit are members of that body and are in mystical union and communion with Christ<sup>3</sup> and fellow believers.<sup>4</sup> The Church is universal and local, visible and invisible. The visible Church consists of all those professing faith in Christ. The invisible Church is composed of all those born of the Spirit.<sup>5</sup>

**18-2** The purpose of the Church is to worship God,<sup>6</sup> to edify the saints<sup>7</sup> and to evangelize the world.<sup>8</sup>

**18-3** The Head of the Church administers the affairs of His body through overseers chosen by Himself and selected by the people.<sup>9</sup>

**18-4** A properly constituted local Church must include the ministry of God's Word, the observance of the ordinances, the oversight by elders,<sup>10</sup> and the exercise of discipline.<sup>11</sup> The overseers of the Church are to be prayed for, obeyed, and honored.<sup>12</sup>

<sup>1</sup> And he is the head of the body, the church (Col. 1:18a).

<sup>2</sup> Knowing that you were ransomed from the futile ways inherited from your forefathers, not with perishable things such as silver or gold, but with the precious blood of Christ, like that of a lamb without blemish or spot (1Pe. 1:18,19).

<sup>3</sup> 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. We 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. 6:5,6).

<sup>4</sup> I appeal to you, brothers, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that all of you agree, and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be united in the same mind and the same judgment (1Cor. 1:10).

<sup>5</sup> 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 (1Cor. 12:13).

<sup>6</sup> 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). You yourselves like living stones are being built up as a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. —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 (1Pe. 2:5,9).

<sup>7</sup> To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good. All these are empowered by one and the same Spirit, who apportions to each one individually as he wills (1Cor. 12:7,11).

<sup>8</sup> 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 (Mat. 28:19,20).

<sup>9</sup> 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).

<sup>10</sup> 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. Likewise, you who are younger, be subject to the elders. Clothe yourselves, all of you, with humility toward one another, for “God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble.” (1Pe. 5:2,3,5).

<sup>11</sup> 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 (Mat. 18:17).

<sup>12</sup> Remember your leaders, those who spoke to you the word of God. Consider the outcome of their way of life, and imitate their faith. 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. Greet all your leaders and all the saints (Heb. 13:7,17,24a).

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## **Article 19 - The Evangelistic Mission of the Church**

**19-1** The Church has been commissioned by Jesus Christ to preach the gospel to all nations.<sup>1</sup> Each Particular Church and every believer bear responsibility for this commission.<sup>2</sup>

**19-2** God has clearly revealed in the Gospel the only way of salvation sufficient for and applicable to the whole lost race of mankind.<sup>3</sup> Based on His infinite and perfect love and His expressed desire that all men be saved,<sup>4</sup> He bids that the Church – with urgency, compassion, and persuasion – proclaim the gospel to all people and invite them to believe.<sup>5</sup>

**19-3** It is the duty and privilege of everyone who hears the gospel to repent and receive its merciful provisions.<sup>6</sup> Those who do are saved,<sup>7</sup> and those who continue in impenitence and unbelief incur aggravated guilt and perish by their own fault.<sup>8</sup>

<sup>1</sup> 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.” (Mat. 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).

<sup>2</sup> But in your hearts honor Christ the Lord as holy, always being prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you; yet do it with gentleness and respect (1Pe. 3:15).

<sup>3</sup> He is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the sins of the whole world (1Jo. 2:2).

<sup>4</sup> “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). This is good, and it is pleasing in the sight of God our Savior, who desires all people to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth (1Tim. 2:3,4).

<sup>5</sup> All this is from God, who through Christ reconciled us to himself and gave us the ministry of reconciliation; that is, in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting to us the message of reconciliation. Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, God making his appeal through us. We implore you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God (2Cor. 5:18-20).

<sup>6</sup> The times of ignorance God overlooked, but now he commands all people everywhere to repent (Acts 17:30). For “everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved” (Rom. 10:13).

<sup>7</sup> And they said, “Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved, you and your household” (Acts 16:31). Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life. He does not come into judgment, but has passed from death to life (John 5:24).

<sup>8</sup> Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life; whoever does not obey the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God remains on him (John 3:36). No, I tell you; but unless you repent, you will all likewise perish (Luke 13:3). But because of your hard and impenitent heart you are storing up wrath for yourself on the day of wrath when God’s righteous judgment will be revealed (Rom. 2:5).

## **Article 20 - Ordinances**

**20-1 Baptism.** Water baptism,<sup>1</sup> the immersion of the believer, is a visible testimony to the work of regeneration<sup>2</sup> and a mark of identification and union with Christ.<sup>3</sup> It has no saving or cleansing power, but it is the answer of a good conscience before God; hence, it should be administered only to those who have, by faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, realized the forgiveness of sins and possess the assurance of acceptance with God.

<sup>1</sup> 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?” (Acts 8:36).

<sup>2</sup> So those who received his word were baptized, and there were added that day about three thousand souls (Acts 2:41).

<sup>3</sup> “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” (Mat. 28:19,20). Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? We 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). In him also you were circumcised with a circumcision made without hands, by putting off the body of the flesh, by the circumcision of Christ, having been buried with him in baptism, in which you were also raised with him through faith in the powerful working of God, who raised him from the dead (Col. 2:11,12).

**20-2 The Lord's Supper.** The Lord's Supper is an ordinance of the New Testament,<sup>1</sup> in which, by the giving and receiving of bread and wine, according to the appointment of Jesus Christ, His death is proclaimed.<sup>2</sup> Those who worthily partake in this remembrance of Him feed upon Him to their spiritual nourishment and growth in grace,<sup>3</sup> have their union and communion with Him confirmed, and testify and renew their thankfulness and commitment to God<sup>4</sup> and their mutual love and fellowship each with the other as members of the same mystical body.<sup>5</sup>

The Scriptures direct that each one spiritually examine himself before partaking of the bread and the cup "until He comes."<sup>6</sup>

<sup>1</sup> And he took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and gave it to them, saying, "This is my body, which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me." And likewise the cup after they had eaten, saying, "This cup that is poured out for you is the new covenant in my blood (Luke 22:19,20).

<sup>2</sup> For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes (1Cor. 11:26).

<sup>3</sup> For my flesh is true food, and my blood is true drink. Whoever feeds on my flesh and drinks my blood abides in me, and I in him (John 6:55,56).

<sup>4</sup> You cannot drink the cup of the Lord and the cup of demons. You cannot partake of the table of the Lord and the table of demons (1Cor. 10:21).

<sup>5</sup> Because there is one bread, we who are many are one body, for we all partake of the one bread (1Cor. 10:17).

<sup>6</sup> For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes (1Cor. 11:26).

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## Article 21 - The Lord's Day

21-1 The first day of the week has been recognized by the Church as the Lord's Day since apostolic times<sup>1</sup>. We believe, therefore, that it ought to be observed by all believers, voluntarily and in love<sup>2</sup>, as a day set apart as holy to the Lord for the corporate worship of God<sup>3</sup>, remembrance of the resurrection of our Lord from the dead, and fellowship and mutual encouragement of the saints.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Now on the first day of the week Mary Magdalene came to the tomb early, while it was still dark, and saw that the stone had been taken away from the tomb...On the evening of that day, the first day of the week, the doors being locked where the disciples were for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood among them and said to them, "Peace be with you." (John 20:1, 19). On the first day of the week, when we were gathered together to break bread, Paul talked with them, intending to depart on the next day, and he prolonged his speech until midnight (Acts 20:7). On the first day of every week, each of you is to put something aside and store it up, as he may prosper so that there will be no collecting when I come. (1 Cor. 16:2).

<sup>2</sup> One person esteems one day as better than another, while another esteems all days alike. Each one should be fully convinced in his own mind (Rom. 14:5). For you were called to freedom, brothers. Only do not use your freedom as an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another. (Gal. 5:13).

<sup>3</sup> Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for he who promised is faithful. 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. 10:23-25)

<sup>4</sup> And they devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers (Acts 2:42). Look carefully then how you walk, not as unwise but as wise, making the best use of the time, because the days are evil. Therefore do not be foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is. 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 all your heart, giving thanks always and for everything to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, submitting to one another out of reverence for Christ (Eph. 5:15-21). Therefore let no one pass judgment on you in questions of food and drink, or with regard to a festival or a new moon or a Sabbath. (Col. 2:16).

## **Article 22 - Divine Healing**

**22-1** It is the believer's privilege to seek the will of the Lord in matters of physical healing. This healing, whether by natural, medical, or supernatural means, must come from the omnipotent God who created the human body. The believer may implore the Lord for physical restoration according to the Scriptures,<sup>1</sup> and if the healing is for the highest glory of God, His power will be displayed.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Is anyone among you sick? Let him call for the elders of the church, and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord. And the prayer of faith will save the one who is sick, and the Lord will raise him up. And if he has committed sins, he will be forgiven. Therefore, confess your sins to one another and pray for one another, that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous person has great power as it is working (James 5:14-16).

<sup>2</sup> But when Jesus heard it he said, "This illness does not lead to death. It is for the glory of God, so that the Son of God may be glorified through it" (John 11:4).

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## Article 23 - Civil Government

**23-1** God ordained and instituted civil government<sup>1</sup> for the welfare of society, to promote and to protect the good and restrain and punish the evil.<sup>2</sup> It is the duty of Christians to pray<sup>3</sup> for those in authority, to render due loyalty,<sup>4</sup> respect, and obedience<sup>5</sup> to them, and to pay taxes and customs demanded of them. Where demands of civil law militate against the supreme and higher law of God, Christians should obey God rather than man.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The sentence is by the decree of the watchers, the decision by the word of the holy ones, to the end that the living may know that the Most High rules the kingdom of men and gives it to whom he will and sets over it the lowliest of men' (Dan. 4:17).

<sup>2</sup> 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 (Rom. 13:1-3).

<sup>3</sup> First of all, then, I urge that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgivings be made for all people, for kings and all who are in high positions, that we may lead a peaceful and quiet life, godly and dignified in every way (1Tim. 2:1,2).

<sup>4</sup> 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 (1Pe. 2:13,14).

<sup>5</sup> Remind them to be submissive to rulers and authorities, to be obedient, to be ready for every good work (Titus 3:1).

<sup>6</sup> But Peter and John answered them, "Whether it is right in the sight of God to listen to you rather than to God, you must judge" (Acts 4:19). But Peter and the apostles answered, "We must obey God rather than men" (Acts 5:29).



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## Article 24 - Resurrection

**24-1** The bodily resurrection of Christ is the basis for the resurrection of man.<sup>1</sup> At the return of the Lord the bodies of the righteous dead will be raised, and the living believers will be caught up together with them to meet the Lord in the air.<sup>2</sup> Believers will, at the resurrection, receive spiritual and immortal bodies like Christ's own glorious body.<sup>3</sup>

**24-2** The event of the resurrection is divided into two stages, separated by a period of a thousand years and differing in respect to both their subjects and their issues.<sup>4</sup> The first resurrection includes only the righteous dead.<sup>5</sup> The second resurrection is universal and occurs at the close of the millennium when all the unregenerate dead are raised to be brought before the great White Throne for judgment.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live" (John 11:25).

<sup>2</sup> 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. Therefore encourage one another with these words (1Thes. 4:14-17).

<sup>3</sup> But our citizenship is in heaven, and from it we await a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, who will transform our lowly body to be like his glorious body, by the power that enables him even to subject all things to himself (Phil. 3:20,21). For I know that my Redeemer lives, and at the last he will stand upon the earth. And after my skin has been thus destroyed, yet in my flesh I shall see God, whom I shall see for myself, and my eyes shall behold, and not another. My heart faints within me! (Job 19:25-27).

<sup>4</sup> And many of those who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt (Dan. 12:2). Do not marvel at this, for an hour is coming when all who are in the tombs will hear his voice 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 5:28,29).

<sup>5</sup> The rest of the dead did not come to life until the thousand years were ended. This is the first resurrection. 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. 20:5,6).

<sup>6</sup> 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 (Rev. 20:13).

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## Article 25 - The Second Coming of Christ

**25-1** The Second Coming of Jesus Christ is the personal, visible, bodily return of our Lord to this earth<sup>1</sup> to conform believers to His image and to establish the millennial kingdom. In connection with Christ's return there will be the resurrection of the righteous dead,<sup>2</sup> the rapture of the saints,<sup>3</sup> the salvation of Israel,<sup>4</sup> the great tribulation,<sup>5</sup> and the inauguration of the millennial reign.<sup>6</sup> Following the millennium will be the resurrection and judgment of the unrighteous. The righteous will be eternally glorified with Him; the unrighteous will be eternally punished.

**25-2** The Second Coming is the believer's source of encouragement and comfort inspiring him to active service for Christ, and is a motive for purification and holy living.<sup>7</sup>

<sup>1</sup> 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 14:2,3). "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 1:11).

<sup>2</sup> Beloved, we are God's children now, and what we will be has not yet appeared; but we know that when he appears we shall be like him, because we shall see him as he is (1Jo. 3:2). 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 (1Cor. 15:51,52).

<sup>3</sup> 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. Therefore encourage one another with these words (1Thes. 4:13-18).

<sup>4</sup> A partial hardening has come upon Israel, until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in. And in this way all Israel will be saved (Rom. 11:25b, 26a).

<sup>5</sup> For then there will be great tribulation, such as has not been from the beginning of the world until now, no, and never will be (Mat. 24:21).

<sup>6</sup> 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).

<sup>7</sup> And everyone who thus hopes in him purifies himself as he is pure (1Jo. 3:3).

## **Article 26 - The Judgments**

**26-1** The Scriptures enumerate several judgments that differ in time, place, subjects, and results. All judgment has been entrusted to the Son by the Father.<sup>1</sup>

**26-2** Through the death of Christ on the cross, the believer's sins have been judged, and he has passed from death unto life.<sup>2</sup> In no case do the redeemed come again into judgment concerning their eternal destiny. Each saint, however, will be required to give an account before the judgment seat of Christ regarding his works and conduct.<sup>3</sup>

**26-3** The unregenerate will be judged, condemned, and banished to eternal damnation in the lake of fire.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The Father judges no one, but has given all judgment to the Son (John 5:22).

<sup>2</sup> Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life. He does not come into judgment, but has passed from death to life (John 5:24).

<sup>3</sup> There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus (Rom. 8:1). 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 (2Cor. 5:10).

<sup>4</sup> 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. And if anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire (Rev. 20:11-15).

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## Article 27 - The Kingdom of God

27-1 God is the almighty Sovereign who reigns eternally over all His creation.<sup>1</sup> His kingdom triumphs forever according to His will. Even the sinful rebellion of mankind cannot defeat Him, but instead serves and glorifies Him.<sup>2</sup>

27-2 God's plan, demonstrated throughout human history, has been to reveal His kingship on earth by delegating kingly dominion to human beings as His image bearers.<sup>3</sup> Through Adam's fall the exercise of this dominion has been corrupted, and man needs redemption in order to glorify God and reign in accordance with His will. As the Last Adam, Jesus in His humanity manifests the proper vice-regency of the kingdom of God for the purpose of redemption and restoration, which will ultimately usher in the glorious kingdom for which creation was destined.<sup>4</sup> Thus, the kingdom of God is advanced in Jesus' life, death, resurrection, ascension, and His present reign.<sup>5</sup> Acknowledging this reign, Christians confess Christ as Lord and willingly submit to His rulership in their personal lives and welcome His authority over all creation.<sup>6</sup>

27-3 The millennial reign of Christ is a further advancement of the kingdom whereby Jesus, through His second coming, brings His inaugurated kingdom to earth and makes it visible. During this reign, Christ will fulfil kingdom promises as He establishes righteousness, justice and peace throughout all creation.<sup>7</sup> At the start of this period, saints will be resurrected bodily to join in the reign with Christ. Satan will be bound and his deceitful activities suspended. Nevertheless an undercurrent of human sinful resistance will continue through the millennium, though held in check as Christ rules with a rod of iron. At the end of this millennial reign, Satan will be released to lead a rebellion against God's people and the Lord Jesus. In a climactic manifestation of His kingship, Christ will defeat the rebellion.<sup>8</sup>

27-4 When Christ has subdued all enemies, including death, He will present the kingdom to His Father.<sup>9</sup> The triune God will preside over a new heaven and a new earth, and the people of God will dwell with Him forever.<sup>10</sup> All prophecies of Scripture will have been fulfilled. God's eternal kingship, having been established and vindicated by the royal exercise of the Son's authority, will at that time be present and manifest in full glory over all creation forever and ever.

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<sup>1</sup> The LORD has established his throne in heaven, and his kingdom rules over all (Psa. 103:19). His dominion is an eternal dominion; his kingdom endures from generation to generation" (Dan. 4:34).

<sup>2</sup> The LORD works out everything for his own ends – even the wicked for a day of disaster (Prov. 16:4). Surely the wrath of men brings you praise, and with the remainder of wrath you arm yourself" (Psa. 76:10).

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<sup>3</sup> Then God said, "Let us make man in our image, in our likeness, and let them rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air, over the livestock, over all the earth, and over all the creatures that move along the ground" (Gen. 1:26).

<sup>4</sup> For if, by the trespass of the one man, death reigned through that one man, how much more will those who receive God's abundant provision of grace and of the gift of righteousness reign in life through the one man, Jesus Christ (Rom 5:17). The creation waits in eager expectation for the sons of God to be revealed. For the creation was subjected to frustration, not by its own choice, but by the will of the one who subjected it, in hope that the creation itself will be liberated from its bondage to decay and brought into the glorious freedom of the children of God (Rom. 8:19-21).

<sup>5</sup> But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels, now crowned with glory and honor because he suffered death, so that by the grace of God he might taste death for everyone (Heb. 2:9). For David did not ascend to heaven, and yet he said, "The Lord said to my Lord: 'Sit at my right hand until I make your enemies a footstool for your feet'" (Acts 2:34-35). But about the Son he says, "Your throne, O God, will last forever and ever, and righteousness will be the scepter of your kingdom" (Heb. 1:8).

<sup>6</sup> If you declare with your mouth, "Jesus is Lord," and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you profess your faith and are saved (Rom. 10:9-10). Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven (Matt. 6:10).

<sup>7</sup> I saw heaven standing open and there before me was a white horse, whose rider is called Faithful and True. With justice he judges and makes war. ... On his robe and on his thigh he has this name written: KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS (Rev. 19:11,16). He will judge between the nations and will settle disputes for many peoples. They will beat their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks. Nation will not take up sword against nation, nor will they train for war anymore (Isa. 2:4). With righteousness he will judge the needy, with justice he will give decisions for the poor of the earth. He will strike the earth with the rod of his mouth; with the breath of his lips he will slay the wicked (Isa. 11:4).

<sup>8</sup> He seized the dragon, that ancient serpent, who is the devil, or Satan, and bound him for a thousand years. He threw him into the Abyss, and locked and sealed it over him, to keep him from deceiving the nations anymore until the thousand years were ended. After that, he must be set free for a short time. I saw thrones on which were seated those who had been given authority to judge. And I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded because of their testimony for Jesus and because of the word of God. They had not worshiped the beast or his image and had not received his mark on their foreheads or their hands. They came to life and reigned with Christ a thousand years. ... When the thousand years are over, Satan will be released from his prison and will go out to deceive the nations in the four corners of the earth – Gog and Magog – to gather them for battle ... But fire came down from heaven and devoured them. And the devil, who deceived them, was thrown into the lake of burning sulfur, where the beast and the false prophet had been thrown. They will be tormented day and night forever and ever (Rev. 20:2-4, 7-10).

<sup>9</sup> Ask of me, and I will make the nations your inheritance, the ends of the earth your possession. You will rule them with an iron scepter; you will dash them to pieces like pottery (Psa. 2:8-9). Then the end will come, when he hands over the kingdom to God the Father after he has destroyed all dominion, authority and power. For he must reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet. The last enemy to be destroyed is death (1 Cor. 15:24-26).

<sup>10</sup> Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away (Rev. 21:1). No longer will there be any curse. The throne of God and of the Lamb will be in the city, and his servants will serve him. They will see his face, and his name will be on their foreheads. There will be no more night. They will not need the light of a lamp or the light of the sun, for the Lord God will give them light. And they will reign for ever and ever (Rev. 22:3-5).

## **Article 28 - The Eternal State**

**28-1** There are two final, eternal destinies for man: heaven for the righteous and penitent, and hell for the unrighteous and impenitent.<sup>1</sup> At the great white throne judgment, all of the enemies of God will be consigned to the place of eternal conscious punishment, from which there is no escape.<sup>2</sup> The new heavens and the new earth shall be created<sup>3</sup> as the final state in which the righteous shall dwell forever in the presence of God.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> And these will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life (Mat. 25:46).

<sup>2</sup> 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. And if anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire (Rev. 20:11-15).

<sup>3</sup> But the day of the Lord will come like a thief, and then the heavens will pass away with a roar, and the heavenly bodies will be burned up and dissolved, and the earth and the works that are done on it will be exposed. Since all these things are thus to be dissolved, what sort of people ought you to be in lives of holiness and godliness, waiting for and hastening the coming of the day of God, because of which the heavens will be set on fire and dissolved, and the heavenly bodies will melt as they burn! But according to his promise we are waiting for new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells (2Pe. 3:10-13).

<sup>4</sup> And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man. He will dwell with them, and they will be his people, and God himself will be with them as their God (Rev. 21:3).

**100**

**Biblical Principles  
For Living**





## **Article 100-1 - Preamble**

**100-1.1** The Bible Fellowship Church sets forth these Biblical Principles for Living to inform and guide disciples of Jesus Christ in making moral decisions and living lives of obedience.

**100-1.2** The BFC acknowledges the Scriptures as the supreme and final authority of faith and conduct and the Holy Spirit as the source of power and guidance for the believer. These principles are summaries of the biblical truth that reveals the Lord's directives in various aspects of life.

**100-1.3** Increasing ethnic and cultural diversity in many of the churches and the prospect of new congregations being formed among various people groups have prompted the BFC to seek to state the principles so that they may be understood and applied by believers in any cultural context.

**100-1.4** These principles are not exhaustive in that they do not cite all that the Bible says in any of the aspects included and that they do not cover all areas of life that the Scriptures address. In the future it may become apparent that additional aspects of life need to be addressed and that the current principles may need to be reconsidered with a view to amending them after further reflection on the biblical truth.

**100-1.5** Every believer is accountable to God for all that the Bible says. Moral choices and actions should be based on the whole counsel of God. Each believer must faithfully read, study and review all parts of the Scriptures (2Tim.3:16,17).

**100-1.6** In seeking moral guidance, the believer should study the Old Testament books of the Law with special focus on the Ten Commandments (Exo.20:1-17). The implications of the Law are explained and applied in the rest of the Old Testament.

**100-1.7** The Lord Jesus summarized the Law in the Great Commandments (Mat. 22:34-40; Mark 12:30,31) and explained the spiritual depth of the Law in the Sermon on the Mount (Mat.5-7). The application of the Law in the individual life of the believer and the corporate life of the church is set forth in the New Testament letters.

**100-1.8** Since each believer is indwelt and empowered by the Holy Spirit, there is an enabling to obey God's requirements (Rom.8:3,4). The Spirit-controlled person will demonstrate the fruit of the Spirit (Gal.5:22,23). He or she will receive and employ the gifts of the Spirit (1Pe.4:10,11; Rom.12:4-8; 1Cor.12:1-11). Where the life and power of the Holy Spirit are present in an individual or church, the three abiding qualities, faith, hope and love, will be evident (1Cor.13:13; 1Thes.1:3; Rom.5:1,2). The greatest of these is love, and "love is the fulfillment of the law" (Rom.13:10).



**101**

**Biblical Principles for  
Living**



**Relating to God**



**The Christian Before  
God**

## **Article 101-1 - Worship**

**101-1.1** Worship is response to God in all of life, whereby, in love, adoration, confession, thanksgiving, praise, and service God's worth is declared.<sup>1</sup> Worship is rooted in reverence for and awe of the Lord and deepens as knowledge of God increases.<sup>2</sup> Worship is the privilege and responsibility of each individual, family, and congregation. For the believer, worship is a lifestyle not limited by location or circumstance.

**101-1.2** Worship is the ultimate purpose of the church. The mission of the church is to declare God's glory and His salvation to all ethnic groups so that some from all the families of nations shall worship Him.<sup>3</sup> Corporate worship is the assembled church celebrating the glory of God and ascribing to Him praise and honor. Christ, the head of the church, meets with and strengthens His people, who are called out from the world by the Holy Spirit.<sup>4</sup>

**101-1.3** God declares that He alone is to be worshiped<sup>5</sup> and this worship must be in spirit and truth.<sup>6</sup> Such worship engages both mind and emotion, listening and responding to God in joyful obedience, not simply in routine activity.<sup>7</sup> For disobeying God's instructions and substituting their own form of worship,<sup>8</sup> Israel was severely punished. We, therefore, seek to learn from the Bible what kinds of worship please the Lord.

**101-1.4** Worship in the Old Testament was a celebration of the mighty acts of the Lord, the covenant God of Israel. Corporate worship was highlighted through prescribed ritual: a priesthood, a sacrificial system looking forward to Christ's atonement,<sup>9</sup> and particular times and places when and where worship should occur.<sup>10</sup> This ritual was not made valuable by its repetition.<sup>11</sup> Its value came through heartfelt, thoughtful response to God, uniting the worshipers.<sup>12</sup>

**101-1.5** Worship in the New Testament is a celebration of the finished work of Christ, His victory over Satan, sin, and death through His own incarnation, death, resurrection, and ascension. Jesus claims for Himself authority over temple, Sabbath, sacrifice, and service.<sup>13</sup> The former place, priesthood, and ritual were set aside<sup>14</sup> as believers now observe<sup>15</sup> a new day, the Lord's Day,<sup>16</sup> and new ordinances: Baptism and the Lord's Supper.<sup>17</sup>

**101-1.6** Examples of corporate worship in the New Testament include: the reading of Scripture, prayer, praise, confession, singing, giving, thanksgiving, preaching and teaching, and the ordinances.<sup>18</sup> The expression of these may be shaped by the cultural setting of a particular church and must be done in a fitting and orderly way.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Psa.96:7-9; Rom.12:1

<sup>2</sup> Psa.96:4; 2:11

<sup>3</sup> Psa.96; Rom.16:25-27; Rev.7:9-10

<sup>4</sup> Eph.1:22,23

<sup>5</sup> Exo.20:1-4

<sup>6</sup> John 4:24

<sup>7</sup> Mat.15:7-9; 1Cor.14:15,16

<sup>8</sup> 1Kgs.12:25-13:10

<sup>9</sup> Heb.9:13,14

<sup>10</sup> Exo.20-40

<sup>11</sup> Isa.29:13

<sup>12</sup> Psa.51:16,17; 84:1,2

<sup>13</sup> Mark 2:18-28

<sup>14</sup> Heb.10:8-18

<sup>15</sup> Heb.10:19-25

<sup>16</sup> John 20:19,26; Acts 20:7

<sup>17</sup> Mat.28:18-20; 1Cor.11:23-26

<sup>18</sup> Acts 2:42-47; 4:23-37; 1Tim.4:13

<sup>19</sup> 1Cor.14:40

## **Article 101-2 - Prayer**

**101-2.1** Prayer is a drawing near in our hearts to the living and triune God.<sup>1</sup> In prayer we express our praise<sup>2</sup> and thanksgiving<sup>3</sup> to our sovereign God. We confess our sin<sup>4</sup> and ask Him to give to us what we need and desire<sup>5</sup> according to His will.

**101-2.2** Prayer is the natural way that the child of God communicates with his heavenly Father.<sup>6</sup> This relationship was formed because of the death and resurrection of Christ, by whom we have bold access to the Father.<sup>7</sup> Without this union in Christ, we could never hope to speak to and be heard by the sovereign God of the universe.<sup>8</sup> The believer's prayer, offered in the name of Jesus,<sup>9</sup> by the power of the Holy Spirit,<sup>10</sup> is a means of receiving the promises of God's Word.<sup>11</sup> While God may hear the prayer of an unbeliever,<sup>12</sup> the unbeliever has no assurance or guarantee that the Lord will answer his prayer.

**101-2.3** The Scriptures give much instruction on prayer. Jesus Himself demonstrated the need for prayer in his earthly life and ministry. The Lord taught His disciples a model prayer.<sup>13</sup> In the model prayer Jesus revealed that the believer is privileged to address God as Father. Jesus taught that we should pray for God's name to be seen as holy. Jesus emphasized praying about the plan of God in the world. Jesus instructed believers to pray that their daily, physical needs would be met. Jesus also instructed believers to pray that our sins be forgiven, temptation be avoided and the evil one be resisted.<sup>14</sup>

**101-2.4** Prayer that is acceptable to God is not so much the right words but the right heart.<sup>15</sup> This includes freedom from known sin,<sup>16</sup> an unforgiving spirit,<sup>17</sup> and selfish desires.<sup>18</sup> Acceptable prayer includes asking in faith<sup>19</sup> with an attitude of never giving up.<sup>20</sup> Right prayer is both powerful and effective.<sup>21</sup>

**101-2.5** God's people are encouraged to come together to pray.<sup>22</sup> In the Old Testament, the assembling of Israel for prayer was for dedication,<sup>23</sup> worship,<sup>24</sup> confession,<sup>25</sup> and for petition in time of great need and crisis.<sup>26</sup> In Acts, the Church came together corporately for times of devoted prayer.<sup>27</sup> Therefore, the local church ought to gather together to worship the Lord in prayer,<sup>28</sup> to seek God's guidance,<sup>29</sup> to ask God's protection in times of persecution,<sup>30</sup> to pray for one another<sup>31</sup>, and to pray for openness to the gospel.<sup>32</sup>

**101-2.6** The practice of fasting in Scripture is often associated with prayer. To fast is to voluntarily abstain from food,<sup>33</sup> or from anything else that is legitimate in and of itself,<sup>34</sup> for the purpose of spending more time and intensity in prayer and worship.<sup>35</sup> Fasting is a statement that we want our appetite for God to be greater than our physical appetites. The reasons that

may prompt us to fast include a personal or national crisis,<sup>36</sup> a sense of contrition and repentance over sin,<sup>37</sup> and a desire to seek the Lord and His help.<sup>38</sup> The New Testament does not require believers to fast, but in His teachings, Jesus expects that they will fast.<sup>39</sup> The early church practiced corporate fasting at times.<sup>40</sup>

**101-2.7** God hears and responds to the prayers of the righteous.<sup>41</sup> God often responds differently than we ask,<sup>42</sup> but always according to His perfect plan and will.<sup>43</sup> Our joyful responsibility is to submit to His answers and trust His grace. Prayers that magnify the name of God, glorify Him, and seek to fulfill His purposes in this world,<sup>44</sup> are prayers that He answers according to His timing for His glory and our good.<sup>45</sup> While God is fully capable of accomplishing these purposes on His own, He chooses to use the prayers of His children to fulfill them.

<sup>1</sup> Psalm 62:8; Heb. 4:16, 10:22

<sup>2</sup> 1 Chron. 29:10-13

<sup>3</sup> Phil. 4:6

<sup>4</sup> Psalm 32:5, 139:23-24; Acts 8:22

<sup>5</sup> Matt. 7:7-11; 1 Tim. 2:1

<sup>6</sup> Matt. 6:9; Rom. 8:15

<sup>7</sup> Heb. 4:14-16, 6:19, 10:19-22

<sup>8</sup> Psalm 66:18; John 9:31

<sup>9</sup> John 14:12-14; 16:23-24

<sup>10</sup> Rom. 8:26-27; Eph. 6:18; Jude 20

<sup>11</sup> Neh. 1:8-11

<sup>12</sup> Gen. 20:4-5; 1 Kings 8:41-43; Acts 10:2-4

<sup>13</sup> Matt. 6:9-13

<sup>14</sup> 1 Peter 5:8-9

<sup>15</sup> Psalm 66:18-19

<sup>16</sup> Prov. 15:29, 28:9; Isa. 1:15, 59:1-2

<sup>17</sup> Mark 11:25

<sup>18</sup> James 4:2-3; 1 Peter 3:7

<sup>19</sup> Mark 11:23-24

<sup>20</sup> Luke 18:1, Rom. 12:12; Col. 4:2; 1 Thess. 5:17

<sup>21</sup> James 5:16-18; Eph. 3:20-21

<sup>22</sup> Col. 4:2-4; Matt. 18:19

<sup>23</sup> 1 Chron. 29:10-20

<sup>24</sup> 2 Chron. 6:12-42

<sup>25</sup> Ezra 9:4-15

<sup>26</sup> 2 Chron. 20:5-13

<sup>27</sup> Acts 1:14, 2:42, 12:5, 12

<sup>28</sup> Acts 13:2-3

<sup>29</sup> Acts 1:24

<sup>30</sup> Acts 4:24-31

<sup>31</sup> Col. 1:9

<sup>32</sup> Col. 4:2-4; 2 Thess. 3:1

<sup>33</sup> Matt. 4:2 cp. Luke 4:2

<sup>34</sup> 1 Cor. 7:5

<sup>35</sup> Luke 2:37

<sup>36</sup> Neh. 1:4; Esther 4:3

<sup>37</sup> Joel 2:12

<sup>38</sup> 2 Chron. 20:3; Ezra 8:21-23

<sup>39</sup> Matt. 6:16, 9:15

<sup>40</sup> Acts 13:2-3, 14:23

<sup>41</sup> Prov. 15:29

<sup>42</sup> Luke 22:42; Heb. 5:7

<sup>43</sup> 1 John 5:14-15

<sup>44</sup> Matt. 6:9-10, John 14:13-14

<sup>45</sup> 2 Cor. 12:7-9

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## **Article 101-3 - Spirit World**

**101-3.1** God is spirit<sup>1</sup> and has created everything, including the visible and the invisible.<sup>2</sup> The invisible includes a great number<sup>3</sup> of spirit beings. Among these are angels, who are without flesh<sup>4</sup> and remain invisible except when supernaturally revealed.<sup>5</sup> Angels surround God's throne to worship and serve Him.<sup>6</sup> They are powerful<sup>7</sup> and are sent as God pleases<sup>8</sup>, to provide and care for,<sup>9</sup> to protect and deliver,<sup>10</sup> to instruct and guide,<sup>11</sup> to discipline and punish.<sup>12</sup> They long to comprehend fully the grace of salvation and rejoice over each sinner who repents.<sup>13</sup> God also created human beings, who are spirit<sup>14</sup> and flesh, to worship and serve Him as God alone.<sup>15</sup>

**101-3.2** A created angelic being, later known as the devil or Satan, rebelled against God.<sup>16</sup> Within limits allowed by the sovereign God,<sup>17</sup> Satan leads a powerful world system of wickedness which is hostile toward God and His purposes.<sup>18</sup> Satan may inflict pain, suffering, and emotional problems, and may cause death.<sup>19</sup> He can control people to oppose the work of God, blind their minds to prevent their understanding the Gospel, and oppress the servants of God.<sup>20</sup> Anyone not led by the Holy Spirit is open to Satan's influence.<sup>21</sup> He seeks to influence nations and governments.<sup>22</sup> Satan is a masterful deceiver, appearing at times as an angel of light and called the father of lies.<sup>23</sup> False prophets, false religions, and cults are instruments of deception.<sup>24</sup> Those blinded and deceived by Satan live a lifestyle that is opposed to God.<sup>25</sup>

**101-3.3** Other angels followed Satan in his rebellion against God. These fallen angels, also known as evil spirits or demons, serve Satan, the god of this evil world system.<sup>26</sup> Satan and evil spirits can influence the believer<sup>27</sup> and possess unregenerate people and animals.<sup>28</sup> God has enabled believers to cast out demons by His Spirit.<sup>29</sup> God may continue to give this enablement; however, the casting out of demons is not in itself reason for boasting and not necessarily an evidence of an individual's relationship with Christ.<sup>30</sup>

**101-3.4** Believers are commanded to stand against the evil spirit world<sup>31</sup> and are warned against such detestable things as divination, witchcraft, sorcery, interpreting of omens, casting of spells, and consulting the dead. These things are devices that Satan uses to lure people toward destruction. People who practice these things are under the condemnation of God.<sup>32</sup> Because of Satan's power, victory is possible only through our Lord Jesus Christ.<sup>33</sup> Through the blood of Christ that was shed on the cross, God has provided victory over this world system for those born of God.<sup>34</sup> In prayerful dependence upon God, they are protected from and victorious over the powers of darkness as they use all the armor God provides, submissively draw near to Him, and resist the devil.<sup>35</sup>



**101-3.5** The sovereign God is in control of the entire social, political, and spiritual realm.<sup>36</sup> God will cast Satan and all his followers into the lake of fire, which has been prepared for them, where they will remain forever.<sup>37</sup> The kingdom of this world will one day become the kingdom of our Lord and He will reign forever and ever.<sup>38</sup>

<sup>1</sup> John 4:24

<sup>2</sup> Neh.9:6; Psa.148:2-6; Col.1:16

<sup>3</sup> Dan.7:9-10; Rev.5:11

<sup>4</sup> Luke 24:39; Eph.6:12; Heb.1:14

<sup>5</sup> Gen.28:12; Luke 2:8-13; Mat.28:1-6

<sup>6</sup> Psa.89:5-7; Isa.6:1-8; Rev.7:11-12

<sup>7</sup> 2Chr.32:21; Acts 12:5-11; 2 Pe.2:11

<sup>8</sup> Psa.103:20-21

<sup>9</sup> Gen.24:7, 40; 1Kgs.19:5-8; Gen.21:17-19; Luke 22:43

<sup>10</sup> Exo.23:20; Psa.91:11-13; Dan.6:22; Num.20:15,16; Psa.34:7; Acts 5:19-20

<sup>11</sup> Luke 1:26-37; Acts 27:23-26; Rev.1:1; Mat.2:13; Acts 8:26; 10:3-6

<sup>12</sup> Luke 1:18-20; 2Sam.24:16-17; Acts 12:23

<sup>13</sup> 1Pe.1:10-12; Luke 15:10

<sup>14</sup> Rom.8:16; 1Thes.5:23

<sup>15</sup> Exo.20:3-5; John 4:23-24

<sup>16</sup> Eze.28:13-16; Rev.12:9

<sup>17</sup> Job 1:10-12; Psa.103:19; Pro.21:1; Col.2:9-10

<sup>18</sup> Eph.6:11-12; 1Jo.2:15-17; 5:19

<sup>19</sup> Job 1:8-20; Luke 13:10-16; John 8:44

<sup>20</sup> Mat.16:23; Luke 22:3-4; 2Cor.4:4; 2Tim.2:25-26

<sup>21</sup> Mat.12:43-45; Acts 5:3; Eph.4:27

<sup>22</sup> Acts 4:25-26; Rev.20:3

<sup>23</sup> 2Cor.11:13-15; John 8:44

<sup>24</sup> Acts 13:6-11; 2Thes.2:9-10

<sup>25</sup> John 8:37-38,41; Eph.2:1-3

<sup>26</sup> Mat.25:41; Eph.6:11-12; Rev.12:9

<sup>27</sup> 2Cor.11:12-15; Eph.4:25-27; 1Pe.5:8,9

<sup>28</sup> Mat. 8:28-32; Mark 5:2,6-13

<sup>29</sup> Mark 3:14-15; Acts 8:6-7; 16:18; Mat.12:28

<sup>30</sup> Mat.7:22-23; Mark 9:38-40; Luke 10:20

<sup>31</sup> Eph.6:10-14; James. 4:7; 1Pe.5:8-10

<sup>32</sup> Exo.20:4,5; Lev.19:26; Deu.18:10-14,20; Isa.8:19,20

<sup>33</sup> Rom.8:37-39; 2Thes.3:3; 1Pe.1:3-7

<sup>34</sup> 1Cor.15:57-58; Col.2:13-15; 1Jo.5:4-6

<sup>35</sup> Eph.6:13-18; James 4:7-8; Rev.12:10-11

<sup>36</sup> Job 1:1-2:13; Psa.2:1-12

<sup>37</sup> Mat.25:41,46; Rev.20:10,14-15

<sup>38</sup> Dan.7:13-14; Zec.14:9; Rev.11:15



**102**

**Biblical Principles for  
Living**



**Relating to Personal  
Qualities**



**The Christian in Christ**

## Article 102-1 - Holiness

**102-1.1** God is holy.<sup>1</sup> He is separate from and superior to all creation.<sup>2</sup> He is absolutely pure and good.<sup>3</sup> He cannot sin and hates sin.<sup>4</sup> Because He is holy, He calls people to holiness.<sup>5</sup>

**102-1.2** Holiness involves a setting apart a dedicating or devoting of someone or something for a special purpose.<sup>6</sup> Believers are set apart for God and called saints, or holy ones.<sup>7</sup> The Bible reveals the holiness of God and declares His standard for a holy life.<sup>8</sup> God's law teaches all people are sinners and His Spirit convicts of sin.<sup>9</sup> All those who belong to God are, through the work of Christ, declared holy and are responsible to live holy lives.<sup>10</sup> God's purpose is that every believer, through the experiences of this life, be changed into the likeness of His Son.<sup>11</sup>

**102-1.3** Sanctification, or holy living, is progressively realized by the power of the Holy Spirit.<sup>12</sup> For Christians, there is to be a separation from all forms of evil, and a full surrender to the Lord.<sup>13</sup> Believers should not participate in any group which demands behavior or an affirmation of beliefs that are opposed to our allegiance to Christ.<sup>14</sup> They are not to continue any longer in the sinful ways of the world but should rather seek to have all thoughts and actions conformed to the revealed will of God.<sup>15</sup> Sin's control and its continued practice must cease.<sup>16</sup>

**102-1.4** The church is also called to holiness.<sup>17</sup> Believers are to encourage one another to live righteously,<sup>18</sup> warn against the dangers of all sin,<sup>19</sup> confess and repent of all individual and corporate sin,<sup>20</sup> and submit to discipline as taught by the Lord.<sup>21</sup> Christian leaders have a particular responsibility to set proper examples of holy living.<sup>22</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Exo.15:11; Psa.99:9; Isa.6:3

<sup>2</sup> Psa.89:5-8; Isa.57:15; Rev.15:4

<sup>3</sup> Psa.33:5; Hab.1:13; James 1:13

<sup>4</sup> Exo.34:6-7; Psa.5:4-6; 1Jo.1:5

<sup>5</sup> Lev.10:3; 19:2; Acts 17:30, 31

<sup>6</sup> Exo.20:8; Deu.7:6; 1Pe.2:9-10

<sup>7</sup> 1Cor.1:2; Rom.1:7; Heb.12:14

<sup>8</sup> Exo.20:1-17; Mat.22:37-40; James 2:10

<sup>9</sup> Rom.3:19-20; John 16:7-14; 1Tim.1:8-11

<sup>10</sup> Rom.3:23-26; Rom.8:1-17; Heb.10:10

<sup>11</sup> Rom.8:28-29; Phil.1:6; 2Pe.1:3-4

<sup>12</sup> Rom.8:26-30; 2Cor.3:18; 2Thes.2:13

<sup>13</sup> 2Cor.6:14-7:1; Eph.4:17-5:14

<sup>14</sup> Mat.6:24; Acts 4:19,20; Rom.12:1, 2;

1Cor.7:23; Eph.5:11

<sup>15</sup> Rom.12:1-2; Col.3:9-10; 1Pe.1:13-16

<sup>16</sup> Rom.6:1-14; Titus 2:11-14; 1Pe.2:11-12;

1Jo.2:13

<sup>17</sup> 1Cor.3:16-17; Eph.5:25-27

<sup>18</sup> Gal.6:1-2; Heb.10:23-25

<sup>19</sup> 1Thes.5:14; James 5:19-20

<sup>20</sup> Pro.18:13; 1Cor.5:1-2; 2Cor.2:5-8; 1Jo.1:9;

Rev.3:19

<sup>21</sup> Mat.18:15-17

<sup>22</sup> Phil.3:17; Heb.13:7; 1Pe.5:1-3

## **Article 102-2 - Justice**

**102-2.1** By nature God is morally perfect and righteous in every way. To say that God is just is to affirm the rightness of His law and His faithful and consistent adherence to that law in His judgments.<sup>1</sup> Justice is the perfect application of His law in the lives of human beings. Both human law and the application of that law can distort God's justice and therefore be sinful and produce sin. Sin causes human beings to enact and apply laws in ways that are unjust.<sup>2</sup> Because God is just, He abhors the distortions of His law.<sup>3</sup>

**102-2.2** In a world of sinful people, injustice results when human beings are judged by such things as color of skin, ethnicity, gender, age, social, economic and occupational status. To evaluate people based on such external characteristics is inconsistent with faith in Jesus Christ.<sup>4</sup> Those who value people in this way are acting out of ungodly cultural biases and sinful pride.<sup>5</sup> Injustice also results when persons allow their own sinful motivations, such as greed,<sup>6</sup> jealousy,<sup>7</sup> and envy,<sup>8</sup> to shape their relationships with other people. In Jesus Christ such wicked and false distinctions or motivations are abolished.<sup>9</sup>

**102-2.3** God's love for humankind knows no racial, national, economic, age, or gender boundaries and God's people must demonstrate this same impartial love.<sup>10</sup> The proclamation of the gospel to every person regardless of location or status will be a matter of great priority among those who love justice.<sup>11</sup>

**102-2.4** Those who value justice will seek consistent and upright applications of human law so that no one is denied due process because of sinful distinctions.<sup>12</sup> Those who love justice will seek truth and act with integrity in all relationships.

**102-2.5** The quest for justice in a world distorted by sin will often yield imperfect and incomplete results. The people of God who love justice will repent when they recognize their failure to do justice and will renew their efforts to bring justice to those who have been denied it.<sup>13</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Deu.10:17,18; Isa.5:6

<sup>2</sup> Deu.16:19,20

<sup>3</sup> Isa.10:1, 2

<sup>4</sup> James 2:1-4

<sup>5</sup> Lev.19:5

<sup>6</sup> Col. 3:5

<sup>7</sup> James 3:14

<sup>8</sup> Gal.5:25,26

<sup>9</sup> Gal.3:28; Eph.2:14-16

<sup>10</sup> Acts 10:34-36

<sup>11</sup> Rom.3:9; 1Tim.2:3,4

<sup>12</sup> Gen.18:19

<sup>13</sup> Mic.6:8

## **Article 102-3 - Mercy**

**102-3.1** Mercy, the unmerited response to human need,<sup>1</sup> finds its source and highest expression in God, in Whom justice and mercy meet in perfect harmony.<sup>2</sup> Rather than overlook sin, God showed His mercy most clearly and fully by giving His beloved Son to die in our place.<sup>3</sup>

**102-3.2** God the Father demonstrated His mercy in providing salvation.<sup>4</sup> God the Son became the supreme example of that mercy in offering Himself for our sins.<sup>5</sup> Jesus offered forgiveness to the sinner,<sup>6</sup> acceptance to the rejected,<sup>7</sup> healing to the afflicted,<sup>8</sup> food to the hungry,<sup>9</sup> comfort to the bereaved,<sup>10</sup> and life to the dead.<sup>11</sup>

**102-3.3** God's intention is that mercy characterize His people.<sup>12</sup> In extending mercy, we should pattern ourselves after our Head, Jesus Christ.<sup>13</sup> The church and its individual members are called to a ministry of mercy-giving,<sup>14</sup> which aids in our growth and assurance of salvation.<sup>15</sup>

**102-3.4** Our ministry of mercy may be limited by our resources, our discernment, and the Word of God,<sup>16</sup> but it must never be limited by our bias against any group or individual.<sup>17</sup> In all humility, each congregation ought to search itself for the presence of any cultural arrogance, of social or racial prejudice, or of ungodly complacency, all of which will hinder the offering of mercy. In some cases a congregation will need to repent of its sinful attitudes.

<sup>1</sup> Titus 3:5-7

<sup>2</sup> Exo.34:6,7; Psa.89:14

<sup>3</sup> Rom.3:21-26

<sup>4</sup> Eph.2:4,5

<sup>5</sup> Heb.2:17

<sup>6</sup> Mat.9:2-6

<sup>7</sup> Mat.9:9-13

<sup>8</sup> Mat.9:35,36

<sup>9</sup> Mat.14:13-21

<sup>10</sup> John 11:32-38

<sup>11</sup> John 11:25,26,43,44

<sup>12</sup> Mic.6:8; Mat.23:23

<sup>13</sup> Phil.2:1-4

<sup>14</sup> Mat.25:34-40; Gal.6:10; James 1:27

<sup>15</sup> 1Jo.3:17-19

<sup>16</sup> 2Thes.3:10; 2Jo.10,11

<sup>17</sup> Luke 10:30-37; Mat.5:44-46

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## Article 102-4 - Humility

**102-4.1** Humility is an attitude of heart and mind perfectly exemplified in the person and life of Christ.<sup>1</sup> It characterizes those united with Christ,<sup>2</sup> pleases God,<sup>3</sup> and shapes both the life of the community of faith<sup>4</sup> and the ministry of the Lord's servants.<sup>5</sup> The opposite of humility is pride, which meets divine resistance and anger.<sup>6</sup>

**102-4.2** Humility is an acceptance of one's true position in relationship to God,<sup>7</sup> authorities, other believers,<sup>8</sup> society,<sup>9</sup> and all of creation.<sup>10</sup> Its reality is demonstrated in joyful service and appropriate submission, seen most clearly in the willing self-sacrifice of Christ.

**102-4.3** In the individual Christian, humility recognizes the grace of God, which has made each believer to be accepted in Christ. This viewpoint becomes a source of forgiveness and patience within the Christian community.<sup>11</sup> The Christian's love for others is greatly aided by the development of godly humility.

**102-4.4** The unique servant quality of Christian leadership is a direct result of godly humility. Elders of the church do not dominate the congregation but are servants to the whole body.<sup>12</sup> They do not desire to control, but rather to promote the development and enrichment of every member. As heirs of grace together with their brothers and sisters, Christian leaders must renounce the pride which creates divisions and factions<sup>13</sup> based on secondary theological issues,<sup>14</sup> on areas of Christian liberty,<sup>15</sup> or merely on personalities.<sup>16</sup>

**102-4.5** Humility encourages each church to cooperate with believers in gospel outreach,<sup>17</sup> compels us to seek to meet needs of others,<sup>18</sup> and causes us to be advocates for those who have none.<sup>19</sup> Concern shown for the disadvantaged in our world must be expressed through ministries of mercy<sup>20</sup> and efforts to promote the growth of the congregation among all kinds of people.<sup>21</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Phil.2:5-11

<sup>2</sup> Phil.2:1-3

<sup>3</sup> James 4:6

<sup>4</sup> Eph.4:1,2

<sup>5</sup> 1Cor.3:6-9

<sup>6</sup> Pro.3:34; James 4:6; 1Pe.5:5

<sup>7</sup> 1Pe.5:6; Luke 18:14

<sup>8</sup> Eph.4:2; Phil.2:3

<sup>9</sup> Luke 14:11

<sup>10</sup> Psalms 8

<sup>11</sup> Col.3:12,13

<sup>12</sup> 1Pe.5:2,3

<sup>13</sup> 1Cor.1:10

<sup>14</sup> Gal.5:6; Eph.4:2,3

<sup>15</sup> Rom.14,15

<sup>16</sup> 1Cor.3:5; 4:6,7

<sup>17</sup> Luke 9:49,50; Phil.1:15-18

<sup>18</sup> Gal.6:9,10

<sup>19</sup> Psalms 82:3,4; Pro.31:8, 9; Isa.1:17

<sup>20</sup> Rom.12:14-16

<sup>21</sup> Luke 10: 25-37; James 2:5-10

## Article 102-5 - Truth and Integrity

**102-5.1** The Triune God — God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit — is the only true God.<sup>1</sup> God the Father is the God of truth,<sup>2</sup> who has never lied,<sup>3</sup> and never will. He is absolutely truthful.<sup>4</sup> Jesus, who is God the Son, is the truth.<sup>5</sup> He is full of grace and truth.<sup>6</sup> He always tells the truth.<sup>7</sup> God the Holy Spirit is the Spirit of Truth.<sup>8</sup> He is the truth<sup>9</sup> and He guides believers into all truth.<sup>10</sup>

**102-5.2** The Word of God is truth<sup>11</sup> and is the standard for truth. Truth does not change<sup>12</sup> and the opposite of truth is falsehood. God desires<sup>13</sup> and requires<sup>14</sup> that all people speak the truth. His directives for truthfulness are found in the third<sup>15</sup> and ninth<sup>16</sup> commandments. Truth is truth even if it is not understood or fully disclosed.<sup>17</sup> The failure to be truthful, including deceitfulness, is sin.<sup>18</sup> Lying is among the sins of unbelievers that will be judged in hell.<sup>19</sup> Believers who lie are disciplined by the Lord, possibly even to the point of death.<sup>20</sup>

**102-5.3** The believer and the believing community are commanded to be truthful.<sup>21</sup> This includes keeping promises and honoring contracts, whether written or oral. In speaking the truth believers may formally call God to witness with an oath or simply affirm the truth of their statements.<sup>22</sup> The Christian and the church must keep their promises even when it is costly to do so.<sup>23</sup>

**102-5.4** In the Scriptures, truth and integrity stand together.<sup>24</sup> Integrity is soundness, wholeness, consistency of character. Without truth there is no integrity.<sup>25</sup> God is pleased with integrity<sup>26</sup> and judges accordingly.<sup>27</sup> Integrity protects believers<sup>28</sup> and upholds them through difficult times in life.<sup>29</sup> It provides security and guidance for a believer's life.<sup>30</sup> All teaching of God's truth must show integrity.<sup>31</sup> Truth and integrity must be lived out in love so that the body of Christ might mature.<sup>32</sup>

**102-5.5** To fail to keep one's word is a lack of integrity, betraying the trust of others and dishonoring the God of truth.<sup>33</sup>

<sup>1</sup> John 17:3<sup>2</sup> Isa.65:16<sup>3</sup> Num.23:19; Titus 1:2<sup>4</sup> Isa.45:23; John 3:33<sup>5</sup> John 14:6<sup>6</sup> John 1:14; Eph.4:21<sup>7</sup> John 8:40,45,46; 16:7; Rev.3:7,14 <sup>19</sup> Psa.5:6,9,10; Rev.21:8;<sup>8</sup> John 14:16, 17; 1Jo.4:6<sup>9</sup> 1Jo.5:7<sup>10</sup> John 14:16,17, 26<sup>11</sup> John 17:17<sup>12</sup> Psa.119:89,160<sup>13</sup> Psa.51:6<sup>14</sup> Exo.23:1; Psa.34:12-14;

Eph.4:15,25

<sup>15</sup> Exo.20:7; Lev.19:12<sup>16</sup> Exo.20:16<sup>17</sup> Mark 4:33,34; John 16:12<sup>18</sup> Mark 7:22; Rom.1:29

22:14,15

<sup>20</sup> Jer.9:4-9; Acts 5:1-10<sup>21</sup> Col.3:8,9<sup>22</sup> Mat.26:63,64; 2Cor.1:23;

Heb.6:16,17; James 5:12

<sup>23</sup> Psa.15:1-4<sup>24</sup> Job 27:4,5; Mat.22:15,16;

2Cor.1:17-20

<sup>25</sup> Isa.59:3,4<sup>26</sup> 1Chr.29:17<sup>27</sup> Psa.7:8<sup>28</sup> Psa.25:21<sup>29</sup> Psa.41:12<sup>30</sup> Pro.10:9; 11:3<sup>31</sup> Titus 2:7<sup>32</sup> Eph.4:14-16<sup>33</sup> Mat.5:33-37



**103**

**Biblical Principles for  
Living**



**Relating to Personal  
Relationships**



**The Christian in  
Personal Relationships**

## **Article 103-1 - Humanity in God's Image**

**103-1.1** The human race exists as a result of an instantaneous creative act of God.<sup>1</sup> Humanity shares many characteristics with other creatures, but is unique in that each individual bears the image or likeness of God.<sup>2</sup> This image makes possible the worship of God,<sup>3</sup> relationships between persons,<sup>4</sup> and responsibility to rule over God's creation.<sup>5</sup> Only God confers this image, and it cannot be removed by any created being. Originally God's image in humanity included true righteousness and holiness; but by the entrance of sin into humanity these have been lost<sup>6</sup> and the image distorted yet not destroyed.<sup>7</sup>

**103-1.2** Because human beings are made in God's image, every person has a unique identity, individual worth, and purpose to live for God's glory.<sup>8</sup> The image of God is also the basis for the dignity of every person. All human life should be cherished and protected, not neglected, despised or abused. God forbids the unlawful destruction of human life, both murder and suicide, and provides the strongest of sanctions, including capital punishment, to protect it.<sup>9</sup> The killing of the weak and defenseless by means of abortion, infanticide, and euthanasia is a crime against both those persons and the God whose image they bear. Christians should exert every effort to oppose these evils in society, and other evils as defined and condemned by Scripture,<sup>10</sup> including racism;<sup>11</sup> cultural bias;<sup>12</sup> gender discrimination;<sup>13</sup> ignoring the poor,<sup>14</sup> disabled<sup>15</sup> and aged;<sup>16</sup> and every other form of injustice against human beings.<sup>17</sup> They should respect the image of God in every person despite the sins of that person or the consequences of those sins.<sup>18</sup> They should also work to protect the dignity of every human being.<sup>19</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Gen.1:26, 27; 2:7

<sup>2</sup> Gen.5:1

<sup>3</sup> Gen.3:8-9; Acts 17:26-28

<sup>4</sup> Gen.2:18,23

<sup>5</sup> Gen.1:28; 2:15; Psa.8:3-8

<sup>6</sup> Eph.4:24; Col.3:10

<sup>7</sup> James 3:9

<sup>8</sup> Psa.139:1-18

<sup>9</sup> Exo.20:13; Gen.9:6

<sup>10</sup> Pro.24:11-12

<sup>11</sup> Deu.10:17-19; Gal.2:6

<sup>12</sup> Acts 10:27,28; 1Cor.9:19-23

<sup>13</sup> Mark 10:6,10-12; Gal.3:28,29

<sup>14</sup> Pro.14:31; 21:13; James 2:1-4

<sup>15</sup> Lev.19:14; Deu.27:18

<sup>16</sup> Lev.19:32; 1Tim.5:1,2

<sup>17</sup> Deu.27:19; Acts 20:35

<sup>18</sup> 1Cor.6:9-11; James 3:9

<sup>19</sup> Rom.13:8-10; 12:10

## **Article 103-2 - Repentance and Restitution**

**103-2.1** God commands every person to repent.<sup>1</sup> Without repentance there is no salvation.<sup>2</sup> Repentance is a work of the Holy Spirit, producing change of mind and heart that leads to a changed life.

**103-2.2** For the believer, repentance is a daily obligation to live according to the Word of God. When believers sin, they should repent and confess their sins. When they do this, the Lord promises forgiveness and cleansing.<sup>3</sup>

**103-2.3** People who repent are to produce fruit of repentance in their lives.<sup>4</sup> One fruit of repentance for the believer who has sinned is to make restitution for any loss the sin caused other people. Restitution is a demonstration of repentance. Believers should make restitution<sup>5</sup> in accordance with the Word of God to satisfy the righteousness of God.

**103-2.4** Restitution involves restoration to the offended party of that which was lost through injury to reputation, life, limb or property which has been destroyed, lost, stolen, or damaged due to one's sin, negligence or carelessness. Restitution was commanded by the Lord God in the Law.<sup>6</sup> It is reiterated in the Proverbs<sup>7</sup> and the prophets.<sup>8</sup> It was advocated by John the Baptist<sup>9</sup> and practiced by Zacchaeus the chief tax collector.<sup>10</sup> Jesus directed His followers to settle any claims that anyone had against them, even before going to the Lord in worship.<sup>11</sup> Such settlement would include restitution of any loss suffered by others. Restitution is taught by the Apostle Paul in his letter to Philemon<sup>12</sup> and implied in his letter to the Ephesians.<sup>13</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Acts 2:38; 3:19; 17:30

<sup>2</sup> Luke 13:3, 5

<sup>3</sup> 1Jo.1:9; Pro.28:13

<sup>4</sup> Mat.3:8; Acts 26:20

<sup>5</sup> Rom.13:7-10

<sup>6</sup> Exo.21:26-36; 22:1-15; Lev.6:1-7; 24:18; Num.5:5-8

<sup>7</sup> Pro.6:30,31

<sup>8</sup> Eze.33:14-16

<sup>9</sup> Luke 3:7-14

<sup>10</sup> Luke 19:8,9

<sup>11</sup> Mat.5:23,24

<sup>12</sup> Phile.18,19

<sup>13</sup> Eph.4:28

## **Article 103-3 - Sexual Holiness**

**103-3.1** A life of sexual holiness is a life lived by faith, believing that what God says about the purposes and parameters of sexual expression is both true and good.<sup>1</sup> When a believer's thoughts and actions are not in conformity to the revealed will of God, they are to repent of their sin, submit to His lordship, and pursue delight in what God has ordained.

**103-3.2** The purpose of sexual expression has been given to mankind by his Creator. The sexual union between a man and a woman was created, in part, to image the unity of the Godhead and God's covenantal relationship with His people.<sup>2</sup> In addition, sexual union was given for the procreation of children and for the mutual enjoyment of husband and wife.<sup>3</sup>

God created the human race into two complementary sexes ("male and female"). This distinction is the first fact mentioned in connection with mankind being made in the image of God.<sup>4</sup> The first marriage, and thus the first sexual act, was a recognition, expression, and celebration of this complementary distinction. God designed sexual union such that two complementary sexual halves, one man and one woman, come together and become a sexual whole. The Bible refers to this sexual union as becoming "one flesh." This "one flesh" sexual union between the first man and his wife establishes the pattern and standard of sexual expression for all of humanity.<sup>5</sup> The participation in, or promotion of, any sexual act other than this "one flesh" union, within the marriage covenant,<sup>6</sup> or the willful neglect of this sexual union is a sinful disregard of its intended purpose and fails to glorify God in our bodies.<sup>7</sup>

Sexual expression is authorized within the bond of marriage between male and female. God's name is glorified when the sexual union between male and female within the bond of marriage is honored and protected.<sup>8</sup> God is dishonored when His design for sexual union is disregarded and perverted, and He will not allow this perversion to go unpunished.<sup>9</sup> In addition, sexual expression outside the biblical standard corrupts the ideal in human relationships and prevents human flourishing.<sup>10</sup>

**103-3.3** There is hope in Jesus Christ for the sexual sinner, not only for forgiveness but also for the transformation and redirection of life.<sup>11</sup> The battle against improper sexual desires may persist until our weak and fallen bodies are raised anew with Christ, but the present resurrection power of the indwelling Holy Spirit enables the repentant sinner to overcome the controlling influences of sinful fleshly impulses.<sup>12</sup> When a person comes to repentance and faith in Jesus Christ, he is freed from sin's guilt through forgiveness and liberated from sin's tyrannical power by the Holy Spirit.<sup>13</sup>

**103-3.4** We are to approach all sin, including sexual sin in the Church, with humility and sacrificial resolve.<sup>14</sup> We need to recognize and convey that we are all fallen creatures<sup>15</sup> whose present joy and hope lies in the result of Christ's persistent and tender mercy on our behalf. We need to demonstrate that same mercy with one another as we heal and grow together as rescued sinners into the fullness of Christ. In love, we must also exhort all who profess faith in Christ to obey His commands and pursue His holiness in all facets of their lives. If that appeal is rejected and sexual sin persists without repentance, we must be willing to pursue loving discipline with the hope of

restoring the sinner and guarding the life of Christ's body.<sup>16</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Gen. 1:27, 2:24; 1 Cor. 6:19-20.

<sup>2</sup> Gen. 2:24; Mark 10:6-9 (cf. Deut. 6:4); Mal. 2:14-15; 1 Cor. 6:14-19; Eph. 5:30-32.

<sup>3</sup> Gen 1:27-28; Song of Solomon 7:6.

<sup>4</sup> Gen 1:27.

<sup>5</sup> Gen. 2:24; Mal. 2:14; Matt. 19:4; Mk. 10:7-8; 1 Cor. 6:16; Eph. 5:31.

<sup>6</sup> Mal. 2:14.

<sup>7</sup> 1 Corinthians 6:20, 7:2-5.

<sup>8</sup> Gen. 2:24; 1 Cor. 7:1-5; 1 Cor. 6:9-11, 13, 18-20; Eph. 5:30-32; Heb. 13:4.

<sup>9</sup> Lev. 18:1-30; Ex. 20:14; Matt. 5:28; Rom. 1:25-27; 1 Cor. 6:9-11; Eph. 5:3; Col. 3:5-6; 1 Thess. 4:3-8; 1 Tim. 1:10; Heb. 13:4; Jude 7; Rev. 21:8, 22:15.

<sup>10</sup> Gen. 19:30-38; 2 Sam. 11:3-12:23; Ps. 51; 2 Sam. 13; Matt. 14:1-12; Mk. 6:14-29.

<sup>11</sup> 1 Cor.6:11.

<sup>12</sup> Gal. 5:16-25; Titus 2:11-14.

<sup>13</sup> Rom.8:1,2.

<sup>14</sup> Gal. 6:1.

<sup>15</sup> Rom. 3:9, 23; Pro. 20:9.

<sup>16</sup> Matt. 18:15-17.

## **Article 103-4 - The Family**

**103-4.1** The family was divinely ordained by God at creation and is basic in God's dealings with man. God's revealed pattern for the family is the marriage of one man and one woman and includes their children and others who may reside with them. Each marriage establishes a new family.<sup>1</sup>

**103-4.2** The foundation for right relationships in the family is submission, one to another, out of reverence for Christ.<sup>2</sup> The husband is the head of the family as Christ is the head of the church.<sup>3</sup> As such, he should fear the Lord; love, nurture, and encourage his family; provide materially for them; take the lead in burden bearing and problem-solving; and through godly living and prayer give them wise and effective spiritual leadership.<sup>4</sup> He is to love his wife and live with her in a compassionate and understanding way.<sup>5</sup> The wife should fear the Lord,<sup>6</sup> submit to and respect her husband as the church is to submit to Christ,<sup>7</sup> and demonstrate loving and diligent concern for her household.<sup>8</sup>

**103-4.3** God instituted the covenant of marriage prior to the fall of mankind in Adam's sin. When sin entered the world, the effects of sin corrupted all things. The marriage covenant between a man and his wife was also corrupted.<sup>9</sup> It is only in Christ, as husband and wife submit to Him, that there is hope for marriage as God intended.

One of the most destructive sins in the marriage relationship is that of spousal abuse. Spousal abuse is the physical, emotional, or sexual mistreatment of the marriage partner. Such abuse is clearly put forward as sin in God's Word.<sup>10</sup> It is any kind of behavior that a person uses, or threatens to use, to control one's spouse. This is a distortion of God's revealed design for marriage.<sup>11</sup> It is a clear violation of Christ's command to love one another<sup>12</sup> and Paul's admonition to do no wrong to your neighbor.<sup>13</sup> It is enslaving a spouse rather than giving of oneself. It instills fear rather than developing holiness, and corrupts the relationship rather than cleanses. It is treating a spouse as an enemy rather than offering Christ-like sacrificial love. It is the opposite of caring for one's spouse as one would one's own body. Abuse devalues the marriage in order to establish personal superiority.

The Church is to rebuke the abuser for his/her sin and exhort the abuser to confess, repent, and be reconciled through Christ.<sup>14</sup> When a church member abuses a spouse, the Bible requires that fellow believers use the means of church discipline in order to urge the individual to repent and be restored. The Church shall act for the protection of the abused and give comfort<sup>15</sup> and hope in the gospel.<sup>16\*\*</sup>

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\*\* Refer to the Resources in Principles of Order, page 2:211, for guidelines as the church ministers to people in spousal abuse situations.

**103-4.4** The biblical pattern for a married couple is to have children and to manage the home.<sup>17</sup> Some may elect not to have children for valid reasons. Other couples may choose to adopt children. Adoption is a God-honoring way to demonstrate unconditional love by building families and bringing up children in a loving and godly home.<sup>18</sup> Some couples may be providentially prevented from having children. In each of these cases the church must not be judgmental.<sup>19</sup> Where married couples choose to use artificial birth control, great care must be exercised to use only those forms which clearly do not cause an abortion.<sup>20</sup>

**103-4.5** When more than one income seems necessary and added employment is considered, the couple must carefully evaluate the impact on their relationship and children.<sup>21</sup> The decision should be made only after prayer, interaction, counsel,<sup>22</sup> and mutual consent.<sup>23</sup>

**103-4.6** Within the church there exist family units that require special attention and mercy from the church. With prayer, loving support, wise counsel, and God's abundant grace these families can be nurtured.<sup>24</sup> The church should gladly and unwaveringly supply comfort, encouragement, affirmation, and deep fellowship for all family units.

**103-4.7** Children are gifts and blessings from God.<sup>25</sup> The family is the primary setting in which to nurture children in the faith. Great care is to be exercised by parents, and by fathers in particular, to build Christian families and lead them in worship.<sup>26</sup> The father is not to exasperate his children,<sup>27</sup> but to bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord.<sup>28</sup>

**103-4.8** The instruction and guidance of children is the duty of parents.<sup>29</sup> Fathers are primarily responsible for exercising leadership in the maturing of children,<sup>30</sup> and preparing them for service in the church and for living all of life for the glory of God.<sup>31</sup> Mothers share with husbands the bringing up of children.<sup>32</sup> The Scriptures also encourage grandparents to assist in the training and instruction of their grandchildren.<sup>33</sup>

**103-4.9** Children are to obey their parents in respect and love.<sup>34</sup> As long as their parents live, sons and daughters are to honor them with loving concern and material care.<sup>35</sup>

**103-4.10** Christian homes are manifestations of the kingdom of God and each believing family member is an ambassador of the King, to call lost men, women, and children to reconciliation.<sup>36</sup> We should open our homes in vigorous and sustained hospitality to the unsaved as well as to the saved.<sup>37</sup> Genuine compassion and Christian service will involve taking carefully measured risks,<sup>38</sup> but such risks are never a legitimate excuse for cold-heartedness.

- <sup>1</sup> Gen.2:23, 24; Mat.19:4-6  
<sup>2</sup> Eph.5:21  
<sup>3</sup> 1Cor.11:2, 3  
<sup>4</sup> Pro.4:1-4,10,20-23; Eph.5:22-33; 1Tim.5:8  
<sup>5</sup> 1Pe.3:7; Eph.5:25  
<sup>6</sup> Pro.31:30  
<sup>7</sup> Eph.5:22; 1Pe.3:1  
<sup>8</sup> Pro.31:27  
<sup>9</sup> Gen. 3:16  
<sup>10</sup> Ex. 20:13; Matt. 5:21-22; 1 Cor. 7:3-4; 1 Tim. 5:8  
<sup>11</sup> Lev. 19:17; Eph. 5:22-33; Col. 3:19; 1 Pet. 3:7  
<sup>12</sup> Matt. 22:39; John 13:34-35  
<sup>13</sup> Romans 13:10  
<sup>14</sup> Matt. 18:15-20; 1 Cor. 5:4-12; Gal. 6:1; 2 Tim. 4:2; James 5:19-20  
<sup>15</sup> Isa. 1:12-17; Micah 6:8  
<sup>16</sup> Rom 5:2-7; 2 Cor. 1:3-7; 2 Cor. 4:17-18; James 1:2-4; 1 Pet. 1:3-9  
<sup>17</sup> Gen.1:27,28; 1Tim.5:14; Titus 2:3-5  
<sup>18</sup> Est.2:7; Psa.68:4-6; Eph.1:4, 5  
<sup>19</sup> Rom.14:1-23; 1Cor.7:1,7,8  
<sup>20</sup> Exo.20:13  
<sup>21</sup> 1Tim.5:8  
<sup>22</sup> Pro.11:14; 15:22  
<sup>23</sup> 1Pe.3:1-9  
<sup>24</sup> Psa.10:14; Rom.15:1,2; Gal.6:10  
<sup>25</sup> Gen.4:1; 33:5; Psa.113:9; 127:3-5  
<sup>26</sup> Josh.24:15  
<sup>27</sup> Eph.6:4; Col.3:21  
<sup>28</sup> Pro.22:6; 29:15; Eph.6:4; Col.3:21  
<sup>29</sup> Deu.5:28,29; 6:1-9  
<sup>30</sup> Isa.38:19; Eph.6:4; Col.3:21  
<sup>31</sup> 1Tim.3:4,5,12; Col.3:17,23  
<sup>32</sup> Pro.1:8; 6:20  
<sup>33</sup> Deu.4:9; Psa.78:4-7; 2Tim.1:5  
<sup>34</sup> Exo.20:12; Eph.6:1-3  
<sup>35</sup> Mark 7:9-13; 1Tim.5:4,8  
<sup>36</sup> 2Cor.5:18-21  
<sup>37</sup> Pro.11:30; Gal.6:10; Heb.13:2; 1Pe.4:7-11  
<sup>38</sup> Mat.25:14-30



## **Article 103-5 - Divorce**

**103-5.1** Divorce is the breaking of the marriage covenant instituted and ordained of God. God hates it because it is inconsistent with His purpose<sup>1</sup> and creates problems for all those associated with it.

**103-5.2** Divorce may only be initiated after a partner has committed adultery.<sup>2</sup> In case of adultery, divorce should be considered only after careful and prayerful attempts for forgiveness and reconciliation.<sup>3</sup> Scripture permits but never requires divorce in this instance.<sup>4</sup> In the case of adultery, the Lord places the guilt of the divorce on the unfaithful spouse even if the innocent spouse initiates the divorce.

**103-5.3** In the event that an unbelieving spouse initiates divorce against the innocent believing spouse, the recipient of the divorce is not guilty for the sin of divorce, but rather the initiator is. The believer in this case is not enslaved to the bonds of the marriage and may remarry.<sup>5</sup>

**103-5.4** People divorced for reasons other than that allowed by Scripture ought not marry another, but be reconciled, and seek God's resolution for the breakdown of the marriage.<sup>6</sup> Divorced persons must seek forgiveness for any sin that may have led to, or is associated with, their divorce. They should seek the grace of God for their spiritual growth and healing.<sup>7</sup>

**103-5.5** The church should seek to prevent divorce by offering both premarital counseling and ongoing opportunities for marital instruction.<sup>8</sup> The principles that make for a godly marriage should be evident in the life and example of every Christian family, especially the leadership of the church.<sup>9</sup>

**103-5.6** By the grace of God, those who have been divorced and those who have married divorced persons, if they give evidence of forgiveness and Christian living, may be admitted to church membership and do not forfeit the privilege of serving within the Church.<sup>10</sup> The elders of each particular church should evaluate the circumstances surrounding a divorce or remarriage in order to assure obedience to Scripture and confirm or establish the legitimacy of any remarriage.<sup>11</sup>

**103-5.7** The church should counsel those considering divorce to seek other solutions to the problems in their relationships. There are times when a church is called upon to exercise discipline towards those who are seeking or who have obtained a divorce. There are also times when a church is called upon to exercise discipline towards those who are seeking to remarry, or who have already remarried. Remarriage is permissible for those who are divorced due to adultery, believers divorced by their unbelieving spouse, or whose return to the former partner is determined by the elders, as they study the Scriptures,

to be impossible.<sup>12</sup> Individuals involved in these circumstances must submit themselves to the Word of God in their present situation.<sup>13</sup>

**103-5.8** The responsibility of the church towards people considering divorce, remarriage, or those who have been divorced or remarried, is always to apply the Word of God in love.<sup>14</sup> The goal of this ministry is to restore any break in their fellowship with God and with the life of the church, to preserve the purity of the church<sup>15</sup>, and to clear the reputation of a person.

<sup>1</sup> Gen. 2:24; Prov. 2:17; Mal. 2:14-16

<sup>2</sup> Matt. 5:32; Rom.7:2

<sup>3</sup> Mark 10:6-9; 1Cor. 7:10, 11

<sup>4</sup> Matt.19:9

<sup>5</sup> 1 Cor. 7:12-15

<sup>6</sup> Psa. 139:23, 24; Rom.7:2, 3; 1 Pet. 3:7-9

<sup>7</sup> Gal. 5:14-23; Eph. 4:32; Col.3:12, 13

<sup>8</sup> Prov.11:14, 15:22-23; Titus 2:3-8

<sup>9</sup> 1 Tim.3:1-7; Titus 1:6

<sup>10</sup> 1 Cor. 6:9-11; Heb. 2:11

<sup>11</sup> Heb. 13:4

<sup>12</sup> Deut. 24:1-4; Mark 10:11-12; 1 Cor. 7:39

<sup>13</sup> 1 Cor. 7:17-24

<sup>14</sup> Eph. 4:15, 16

<sup>15</sup> 1 Thess. 4:3-7

## **Article 103-6 - Shared Life**

**103-6.1** Each believer belongs to Jesus Christ and to every other believer.<sup>1</sup> This belonging is a relationship to God the Father,<sup>2</sup> God the Son,<sup>3</sup> God the Holy Spirit<sup>4</sup> and to all who belong to God.<sup>5</sup> This relationship is not the result of human effort, but begins with being born from above<sup>6</sup> and is the living out of the divine nature<sup>7</sup> under the Lordship of Christ and the authority of His revealed Word.<sup>8</sup> It unites all believers to one another and causes them to be different from their world.<sup>9</sup>

**103-6.2** The union with the Lord and with one another is spiritual. The relationship of each believer with the Lord is the basis for the relationship between believers<sup>10</sup> in sharing truth,<sup>11</sup> love,<sup>12</sup> and possessions.<sup>13</sup> It is dependence, not self-sufficiency, and inter-dependence, not independence.<sup>14</sup> Participation in this life affects every believer and church<sup>15</sup> and impacts their ministry in the world and to the world.<sup>16</sup>

**103-6.3** Shared life is a privilege and a responsibility.<sup>17</sup> The life of the church, therefore, must be a renewing, God-glorifying celebration of life in Christ and a spiritual participation with other believers.<sup>18</sup> Sharing this life in the presence of God is worship<sup>19</sup> and demands the loving exercise of spiritual gifts<sup>20</sup> as well as realization that we are responsible to one another before God.<sup>21</sup> The exercise of these gifts builds up one another and equips the saints for the Lord's work.<sup>22</sup> Because this responsibility and accountability are necessary for the church to grow in godliness,<sup>23</sup> discipline must be practiced in every community of believers.<sup>24</sup> Not to do so brings the very name of Christ into dishonor.<sup>25</sup>

**103-6.4** Responding in mercy, carrying each other's burdens,<sup>26</sup> is also a responsibility and privilege of all believers to one another, and causes them to love, care, share, and be involved with one another.<sup>27</sup> All believers, and the church as a body, must recognize, accept, and practice the spiritual responsibilities of being one in Christ, no matter how deeply a fellow believer has fallen into sin or the miseries of this world.<sup>28</sup>

**103-6.5** Every believer is a member of the body of Christ and must be joyfully and personally responsible to live a life of loyalty to the Lord of the church,<sup>29</sup> to His Word<sup>30</sup> and involvement in its ministry<sup>31</sup> and purpose.<sup>32</sup> This responsibility, although primarily focused on the local body, extends beyond the particular church to other bodies of believers.<sup>33</sup> Because this is true, the shared life of the church breaks down the barriers of race, class, culture, ethnicity, gender, and geography, for all believers are one in Christ.<sup>34</sup>

- <sup>1</sup> Rom.1:6; 12:4,5
- <sup>2</sup> 1Jo.1:3
- <sup>3</sup> Rom.6:3,4
- <sup>4</sup> 1Cor.12:13
- <sup>5</sup> 1Pe.2:9,10
- <sup>6</sup> John 3:3,5
- <sup>7</sup> 2Pe.1:4
- <sup>8</sup> 1Jo.1:7
- <sup>9</sup> 1Cor.10:14-22; 2Cor.6:14,15
- <sup>10</sup> Eph.2:11-16; Rom.15:5-7
- <sup>11</sup> Eph.4:14-16
- <sup>12</sup> 1Jo.3:13-18
- <sup>13</sup> Acts 4:32-35; 2Cor.8:1-5
- <sup>14</sup> 1Cor.12:14-27
- <sup>15</sup> Acts 2:44-47
- <sup>16</sup> 2Cor.8:23; Phil.1:5; Phile.6; Heb.13:16
- <sup>17</sup> Gal.5:13-16
- <sup>18</sup> 1Jo.1:1-4
- <sup>19</sup> Rom.12:1,2
- <sup>20</sup> 1Pe.4:10
- <sup>21</sup> Rom.12:3-13:10
- <sup>22</sup> Eph.4:11-16
- <sup>23</sup> 1Tim.6:11,12
- <sup>24</sup> 1Cor.5:12,13
- <sup>25</sup> Acts 5:11
- <sup>26</sup> Gal.6:2; Heb.13:16
- <sup>27</sup> Eph.4:31-5:2
- <sup>28</sup> 2Cor.2:7,8; Gal.5:25-6:2; Phile.10,11,15,16
- <sup>29</sup> 1Cor.12:6-11
- <sup>30</sup> John 10:3-5
- <sup>31</sup> Phil.1:27
- <sup>32</sup> Acts 11:19-26; Phil.4:14-16; Col.2:1,2; 1Pe.5:9
- <sup>33</sup> Acts 13:1-4
- <sup>34</sup> Gal.3:27,28; Eph.2:14-16

**104**

**Biblical Principles for  
Living**



**Relating to Personal  
Activities**



**The Christian in Society**

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## **Article 104-1 - Stewardship**

**104-1.1** God owns everything because He is God and created all things.<sup>1</sup> Believers belong to God not only by creation but also by redemption.<sup>2</sup> They are, therefore, to be good stewards or managers of all God has entrusted to them.<sup>3</sup>

**104-1.2** Believers have the responsibility to proclaim the message of redemption and reconciliation to the unredeemed.<sup>4</sup> Spiritual gifts, skills and abilities are given by God<sup>5</sup> and are to be used for the benefit of others, especially the body of Christ.<sup>6</sup> Children<sup>7</sup> and all others needing care call believers to exercise stewardship.<sup>8</sup> All the believers' relationships provide opportunities to bring people to Christ and to strengthen believers in the Christian life.<sup>9</sup> The earth and all things in it are for God's glory.<sup>10</sup> People are given the responsibility to conserve and manage the earth and its natural resources.<sup>11</sup>

**104-1.3** A believer's possessions are to be used for God's glory. The Bible teaches that a portion of all resources is to be willingly and cheerfully returned to God through tithes and offerings. Tithing,<sup>12</sup> the giving of a tenth, was practiced since the time of Abraham<sup>13</sup> and was required by God after the law was given.<sup>14</sup> The New Testament teaches that our giving is to be systematic, proportionate, cheerful, and generous.<sup>15</sup> Such giving is an act of worship<sup>16</sup> and a means of supporting the work of Christ's Church.<sup>17</sup>

**104-1.4** Good stewards live all of life in submission to the Creator/Redeemer. This life should be used to please God and glorify Him in thought, word, and action.<sup>18</sup> The believer's body is the temple of God<sup>19</sup> and is to be acceptable to Him.<sup>20</sup> This wonderful creation is meant to glorify God,<sup>21</sup> in ways such as abstaining from sexual immorality,<sup>22</sup> maintaining a healthful diet<sup>23</sup> including not overeating,<sup>24</sup> proper exercise,<sup>25</sup> and adequate rest.<sup>26</sup> Believers are called to resist worry<sup>27</sup> and to be clear-minded and self-controlled by purifying themselves from everything that contaminates body, mind, and spirit.<sup>28</sup>

**104-1.5** Before physical or mental disability occurs, believers should take steps to provide for children, health care, assets, payment of debts and other personal responsibilities. Good stewardship includes developing an adequate plan to avoid unnecessary loss of resources and to distribute assets in a God-honoring manner.<sup>29</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Gen.1-2; Deu.10:14; Psa.24:1, 2

<sup>2</sup> Gen.3; Rom.5; 1Cor.6:20

<sup>3</sup> Deu.8:11-18; Luke 12:41-48

<sup>4</sup> 1Cor.9:16,17; 2Cor.5:17-19; 1Thes.2:3,4

<sup>5</sup> Exo.35:30-35; Rom.12:4-8; 1Cor.12:28; 1Pe.4:10

<sup>6</sup> Rom.14:19; 1Cor.14:12

<sup>7</sup> Psa.127:3

<sup>8</sup> Luke 10:25-37; Eph.6:4; 1Tim.5:8

- <sup>9</sup> Rom.12:4,5; 15:7; Phil.1:12-14  
<sup>10</sup> Psa.19:1-6; Rev.4:11  
<sup>11</sup> Gen.1:28; 2:15; Psa.8:6-8; Lev.25:23  
<sup>12</sup> Mal.3:8-10; Mat.23:23; 1Cor.16:2; 2Cor.9:6, 7  
<sup>13</sup> Gen.14:20  
<sup>14</sup> Lev.27:30; Deu.14:22; Mal.3:8  
<sup>15</sup> 1Cor.16:2  
<sup>16</sup> 2Cor.9:12-15; Phil.4:14-18  
<sup>17</sup> Num.18:21,24; 1Cor.9:7-14; 1Tim.5:17,18  
<sup>18</sup> 1Cor.10:31; 2Cor.5:9; Col.3:17  
<sup>19</sup> 1Cor.6:19  
<sup>20</sup> Rom.12:1, 2  
<sup>21</sup> Psa.139:13,14; 1Cor.6:19,20; Phil.1:20  
<sup>22</sup> 1Cor.6:18  
<sup>23</sup> Gen.1:30,31; 9:3; Psa.107:9  
<sup>24</sup> Pro.23:2,3,21; Phil.3:18,19  
<sup>25</sup> 1Tim.4:8  
<sup>26</sup> Psa.127:2  
<sup>27</sup> Mat.6:25-34; Phil.4:6  
<sup>28</sup> 2Cor.7:1; 1Pe.4:7  
<sup>29</sup> Pro.13:22; 19:14; Ecc.2:18-21

## Article 104-2 - Work and Rest

**104-2.1** Human work and rest find their origin in the work and rest, or Sabbath, of God.<sup>1</sup> The original cycle of God’s work and rest at creation sets the pattern for human work and rest.<sup>2</sup> Work and rest are therefore an essential part of God’s design for the human race.<sup>3</sup> Humanity’s fall into sin brought a curse upon work and rest, resulting in pain, difficulty, and futility.<sup>4</sup>

**104-2.2** Redemption lays the groundwork for the restoration of human work and rest to their place in the original creation.<sup>5</sup> Christians are therefore to engage in work with honesty,<sup>6</sup> diligence,<sup>7</sup> and excellence,<sup>8</sup> seeing their labor as an aspect of worship,<sup>9</sup> service,<sup>10</sup> and witness.<sup>11</sup> Laziness is condemned in Scripture,<sup>12</sup> as is poor and dishonest work<sup>13</sup> and unjust treatment of workers.<sup>14</sup>

**104-2.3** Christians should do their work both as a service to the Lord<sup>15</sup> and as a calling from God,<sup>16</sup> undertake it with dependence on Him,<sup>17</sup> and enjoy its fruit as His blessing on their labors.<sup>18</sup> Christians who supervise the work of others are responsible to treat them justly and pay them fairly, without threat or intimidation, realizing that they will answer to God for any injustice to those under them.<sup>19</sup> Work is given both to supply the worker’s needs, and to allow the worker to provide for the needs of others.<sup>20</sup>

**104-2.4** Christians should also observe the principle of rest in reverence for God,<sup>21</sup> who mercifully provides a weekly rest for weary workers. The law of Moses also required rest during the three annual feasts, and during the sabbatical and jubilee years.<sup>22</sup> These establish a precedent for occasional opportunities of extended rest as the Lord provides.<sup>23</sup> The principle of rest is violated when people fail to take proper physical and emotional rest.

**104-2.5** Human work and rest will be consummated at the return of Jesus Christ, when He rewards Christians for their labor and invites them into His rest.<sup>24</sup> In heaven, where the Christian will be completely free from sin’s curse, meaningful work for the Lord and glorious rest in His presence will continue forever.<sup>25</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Gen.1:31; 2:1-3

<sup>2</sup> Exo.20:8-11

<sup>3</sup> Gen.1:28, 2:15

<sup>4</sup> Gen.3:17-19; Ecc.2:17

<sup>5</sup> Rom.8:18-25; 1Cor.15:57-58

<sup>6</sup> Pro.11:1

<sup>7</sup> Pro.2:24

<sup>8</sup> Pro.22:29

<sup>9</sup> Col.3:17,22

<sup>10</sup> Col.3:23-24

<sup>11</sup> 1Thes.4:11,12; Titus 2:9,10

<sup>12</sup> Pro.6:6-11; 2Thes.3:10-12

<sup>13</sup> Pro.18:9; Amos 8:4-6

<sup>14</sup> James 5:1-6

<sup>15</sup> Eph.6:5-7

<sup>16</sup> 1Cor.7:17

<sup>17</sup> Psa.127:1,2

<sup>18</sup> Ecc.2:24; 5:18,19

<sup>19</sup> Eph.6:9; Col.4:1

<sup>20</sup> Pro.16:26; Eph.4:28

<sup>21</sup> Deu.5:12-15

<sup>22</sup> Lev.23,25

<sup>23</sup> Mark 6:31

<sup>24</sup> Mat.25:19-21; Heb.4:9-11

<sup>25</sup> Rev.22:3



## **Article 104-3 - Civil Government**

**104-3.1** God, the King of Kings, has established civil government to be under His authority, over people for the public good, and to carry out His sovereign will.<sup>1</sup> He has revealed in His Word how this government should function in order to provide for a peaceful, orderly society in which the Gospel might spread;<sup>2</sup> protect the law-abiding people from the law-breakers by punishing the evildoers;<sup>3</sup> and bring justice and help to the defenseless, poor, and needy of society.<sup>4</sup>

**104-3.2** God requires all people to submit to the civil government. People must pay required taxes for the support of government functions;<sup>5</sup> they must give respect and honor to government officials;<sup>6</sup> and they must be obedient and helpful citizens of society.<sup>7</sup> God also requires governments to be accountable to Him for violation of His law and lawless governments come under His judgment.<sup>8</sup>

**104-3.3** Christians may serve in the various positions of civil government, including the police and military.<sup>9</sup> Christians have special responsibilities toward the civil government, including praying for those in authority over them,<sup>10</sup> exposing corruption and wickedness in government,<sup>11</sup> and bringing a godly influence to bear upon the government.<sup>12</sup> This means setting a godly example as a citizen, raising a biblical voice on issues, accepting positions of leadership when appropriate, and, under a democratic government, voting wisely. The exercise of these responsibilities should demonstrate a Christian's sensitive consideration of the views of others in love without violence and without forsaking biblical principles or the priority of glorifying God.

**104-3.4** A Christian's ultimate allegiance must be to God, for the government's authority over the believer is limited by God's prescribed boundaries.<sup>13</sup> Therefore, a believer may find it necessary at times to disobey human authority in order to heed God's higher laws, bearing the cost or sacrifice involved.<sup>14</sup>

**104-3.5** All Christians have dual citizenship; they are citizens of an earthly nation, and of the kingdom of God.<sup>15</sup> Both of these citizenships have their privileges and responsibilities, and it is possible to cooperate with civil government without compromising biblical principles.<sup>16</sup> Yet, when the believer is forced to choose between the two, he must submit to Jesus as Lord. One day, every knee will bow to Him, and even today He rules sovereignly over the affairs of civil government.<sup>17</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Psa.24:1; Pro.21:1; Dan.4:31-37; Mat.28:18; John 19:11; Acts 17:24; Rom.13:1-4; 1Pe.2:13,14

<sup>2</sup> 1Tim.2:1-4

<sup>3</sup> Gen.9:6; Rom.13:3-5; 1Pe.2:14; Pro.24:23-25

<sup>4</sup> Pro.29:14; 31:8-9

<sup>5</sup> Rom.13:6,7; Mat.22:15-22

<sup>6</sup> Rom.13:7; 1Pe.2:17

<sup>7</sup> Gen.41:46-57; Jer.29:7; Titus 3:1,2

<sup>8</sup> Psa.2:1-5; 9:17; 75:6-7; Dan.2:21; Luke 1:52

<sup>9</sup> Pro.8:15,16; Luke 3:14; Acts 10:1,2; Titus 3:1

<sup>10</sup> 1Tim.2:1, 2

<sup>11</sup> Pro.25:5; Dan.4:27; Luke 3:19

<sup>12</sup> Pro.11:11; Dan.2:40-49; Mat.5:13-16; Luke 3:12-14

<sup>13</sup> Exo.20:1-7; Deu.6:4-5; Luke 20:25; Rom.13:1, 2

<sup>14</sup> Dan.3:8-18; Acts 5:29

<sup>15</sup> Jer.29:7; Phil.3:20

<sup>16</sup> Dan.1-6

<sup>17</sup> Pro.21:1; Isa.43:13; Phil.2:9-11; 1Pe.3:22

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## **Article 104-4 - Christian Liberty & Servanthood**

**104-4.1** Christian liberty is the freedom of the believer to practice everything that is not sin; it is the freedom of the believer to serve God without human restraint.<sup>1</sup> This privilege is obtained by the obedience of Jesus Christ.<sup>2</sup> The believer's authority for faith and conduct is the Holy Scriptures,<sup>3</sup> revealing the unchanging holiness of God. With Jesus Christ as Lord, every thought and action of the believer should be submitted to Him.<sup>4</sup> Christ's death has broken the believer's slavery to sin<sup>5</sup> and has freed the believer to yield obedience to Christ in all things.<sup>6</sup> Though all things apart from sin are permissible, the believer should direct his actions according to what will please the Lord and what will benefit others.<sup>7</sup> Liberty should not be used as a cover-up for evil.<sup>8</sup>

**104-4.2** Believers will find that there are issues of lifestyle and worship not clearly addressed in Scripture. On these issues they may disagree due to differences in spiritual maturity, varieties of cultural or economic backgrounds, personal conscience or associations with their past.<sup>9</sup> In these instances, believers should come to their convictions through studying the Scripture, prayer, and godly counsel, knowing that they will give an account to God.<sup>10</sup> They must not look down upon or withhold acceptance of those who differ.<sup>11</sup> In love they must be willing to limit their actions for the sake of building up rather than harming their brothers and sisters.<sup>12</sup> In so doing, they follow the example of their Lord, who laid aside His rights for their good.<sup>13</sup>

**104-4.3** Occasionally, concerns may arise that will trouble the life and witness of the church. Clear and consistent teaching of the Scriptural principles that govern the life of the believer should prepare the church for a peaceful consideration and resolution of these issues. The particular church or the fellowship of churches may counsel concerning that which is beneficial and that which may well be avoided in a particular setting and time.<sup>14</sup> Church leaders must be careful to avoid unnecessarily burdensome rules, communicate clearly this counsel and provide the biblical basis for their thinking.<sup>15</sup> They should be ready to acknowledge and accept the sometimes temporary nature of such decisions.<sup>16</sup>

**104-4.4** Secular notions of freedom imply unlimited exercise of desires and rights. Christian liberty, on the other hand, includes submission to divinely established authorities and to the needs of others. Obedience to God's appointed overseers<sup>17</sup> does not limit freedom but is an active exercise of it. Great care must be taken to discern what are rightful directives of authority under God for good<sup>18</sup> and what are improper attempts to curtail Christian liberty.<sup>19</sup>

**104-4.5** Christian liberty may be set aside voluntarily for the sake of others or the exercise of one's own spiritual discipline.<sup>20</sup> Glorifying God,<sup>21</sup> edifying fellow believers,<sup>22</sup> growing in grace<sup>23</sup> and avoiding all sin<sup>24</sup> justify yielding up one's rights and desires in keeping with the call to servanthood in the Christian faith.<sup>25</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Gal.2:4; 5:1; Col.2:20-22

<sup>2</sup> Col.2:13-14; 1Pe.2:24

<sup>3</sup> Deu.6:1-3; Mat.5:17; 2Tim.3:16-17

<sup>4</sup> 2Cor.10:4-5; Eph.4:1; Phil.1:27

<sup>5</sup> Rom.6:5-7,11; Col.3:3-5

<sup>6</sup> Rom.6:11-14,19

<sup>7</sup> 1Cor.9:15,23; Phil.2:4-5; Col.3:1-2

<sup>8</sup> Gal.5:13; 1Pe.2:16

<sup>9</sup> Rom.14:1,2,14,23; 1Cor.8:7; 10:27-30

<sup>10</sup> Rom.14:5-12; 1Jo.3:21-22; Col.3:16

<sup>11</sup> Rom.14:1,3,4,13; 15:7

<sup>12</sup> Rom.14:13-21; 1Cor.8:9-13; 1Cor.10:32, 33

<sup>13</sup> Phil.2:5-8; 1Pe.2:21-25

<sup>14</sup> Mat.28:18-20; Acts 15:13-30

<sup>15</sup> Acts 15:19-21; 28-29; 1Cor.11:14,15

<sup>16</sup> Acts 15:29; 1Cor.7:25-28; 8:4,8

<sup>17</sup> Heb.13:7,17; 1Pe.5:1-4

<sup>18</sup> Acts 15:19,20,28; 2Cor.1:12

<sup>19</sup> Mark 7:7,8; Gal.2:3,4

<sup>20</sup> Rom.14:15; 1Cor.8:9-13; 10:23,24

<sup>21</sup> 1Cor.10:31-11:1

<sup>22</sup> 1Thes.5:11

<sup>23</sup> James 4:6; 2Pe.3:18

<sup>24</sup> 1Thes.5:22

<sup>25</sup> Gal.5:25 - 6:2; Rom.12:9-13

**150**

**Declarations on  
Particular Issues**

## **Article 151 - Dedication of Children**

**151-1** Child dedication is a voluntary act in which believing parents publicly present their child to the Lord as an outward expression of their gratitude to Him for the child<sup>1</sup> and as a formal appeal to God for divine assistance in the bringing up of the child. It is not to be confused with baptism, or to be considered as imparting salvation, or viewed as an ordinance of the church.

**151-2** The child is a gift from God and therefore the parents promise, as God's stewards, to bring up the child in the discipline and instruction of the Lord.<sup>2</sup>

**151-3** In dedicating their child in the presence of fellow believers, parents are publicly dedicating themselves to the faithful fulfillment of their parental responsibilities<sup>3</sup> and are acknowledging their need of the prayerful support and encouragement of those fellow believers.<sup>4</sup>

**151-4** Child dedication becomes meaningful as the parents explain to the child the meaning of this act and consistently carry out the promises made before God and the church at the time of dedication. When one of the parents is an unbeliever, only the believing parent shall make the public presentation.

<sup>1</sup> Psa.127:3; James 1:17

<sup>2</sup> Eph.6:4; Col.3:21

<sup>3</sup> Deu.6:4-9; Pro.22:6

<sup>4</sup> Eph.6:18; Heb.10:24,25

## **Article 152 - Abortion**

**152-1** God is the creator, sustainer, and giver of life. Only He has the right to say under what conditions it may be taken away.<sup>1</sup> His Word declares that man is made in His image,<sup>2</sup> and it is for this reason that the death penalty was commanded for murder in the Old Testament.<sup>3</sup> It is an evil before God voluntarily to kill unborn children, since they too bear His image, even if they are disabled or the result of rape or incest. Consequently, as members of Christ's body, the Church, we may not have, give direct assistance to, or perform an abortion,<sup>4</sup> except in the very rare circumstances where the life of the mother would almost surely be lost by carrying the baby to term.

**152-2** Within the marriage bond a pregnancy and resulting child must be accepted as from God, and the parents are commanded to love the child.<sup>5</sup> Pregnancies resulting from promiscuous or licentious behavior are not to be terminated by abortion, which only adds sin forbidden by the sixth commandment to sin forbidden by the seventh commandment.<sup>6</sup> Therefore, anyone contemplating an abortion, even though outside the Church, should be encouraged to preserve life by completing the pregnancy.<sup>7</sup> The child can either be raised by its biological parents or be adopted by others.

<sup>1</sup> Gen.9:5,6

<sup>2</sup> Psa.139:13-16; Gen. 1:27

<sup>3</sup> Exo.21:14

<sup>4</sup> Pro.24:11,12

<sup>5</sup> Psa.127:3-5

<sup>6</sup> Exo.20:13,14; 1Cor.6:18

<sup>7</sup> Heb.10:24

## **Article 153 - Harmful Indulgences**

**153-0.1** All believers are saved through faith in the finished work of Christ on the cross. God calls His people to live by faith.<sup>1</sup> This life of faith is an obedient response to the revealed truth of God in the Scriptures.<sup>2</sup>

**153-0.2** At salvation believers are baptized into the Church, the body of Christ, sealed and indwelt by the Holy Spirit.<sup>3</sup> They are to be filled and led by the Holy Spirit.<sup>4</sup> This filling and leading by the Holy Spirit progressively transforms believers into the Lord's likeness.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Col.2:6, 7; 2Cor.5:7

<sup>2</sup> 1Thes.2:13; 2Tim.3:14-17; 2Pe.1:19-21

<sup>3</sup> 1Cor.12:13; Eph.1:13,14; Rom.8:9

<sup>4</sup> Rom.8:14; Eph.5:18

<sup>5</sup> 2Cor.3:8

### **153-1 - Alcoholic Drinks**

**153-1.1** The abuse of alcoholic beverages is one of the most serious problems in many parts of the world. This abuse has led to personal and family suffering, serious physical and mental health problems, and increased rates of accidental and criminal injury and death. The financial cost and the consequences of such abuse are a tremendous and unnecessary burden on all of society.

**153-1.2** The Scriptures teach that drunkenness is sinful.<sup>1</sup> Due to the addictive quality of alcohol, even the moderate use of alcoholic beverages may lead to serious consequences.<sup>2</sup> This is especially true because the alcoholic content of some beverages has been tremendously increased since biblical times. Furthermore, moderate use may be a stumbling block for believer and unbeliever alike.<sup>3</sup>

**153-1.3** Therefore, the BFC strongly and persistently warns its people of the dangers of alcoholic beverages and urges all members of the BFC to consider abstaining voluntarily from the use, manufacture and distribution of them.

<sup>1</sup> Rom.13:13; 1Cor.6:9,10; Gal.5:18-21

<sup>2</sup> Pro.20:1; Pro.23:31-35

<sup>3</sup> Mat.18:6,7; Rom.14:20,21; 1Cor.8:9-11, 13



## **153-2 - Tobacco**

**153-2.1** Because the use of tobacco is harmful to the body and addictive, it is inconsistent with Christian living.<sup>1</sup> Its use may negatively affect the believer's ministry to the saved<sup>2</sup> and unsaved.<sup>3</sup> Consequently the church should warn its people of the dangers of tobacco products and strongly urge complete abstinence from them.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> 1Cor.6:12,19-20; 2Cor.7:1; 1Pe.2: 9,10

<sup>2</sup> 1Cor.8:9-13; Rom.14:15-21

<sup>3</sup> 1Cor.9:12

<sup>4</sup> 1Cor.9:24-27

## **153-3 - Drugs and Other Substances**

**153-3.1** The misuse of, and overindulgence in, drugs and other substances, including prescribed and non-prescribed, are sin and are not of faith. Such abuse controls the believer and gratifies the sinful nature.<sup>1</sup> Both misuse and overindulgence cause the believer to live by feelings, not by faith in God's revealed Word.<sup>2</sup> The continued abuse of drugs and all other substances destroys self-control, leads to addiction<sup>3</sup> and makes it impossible for the believer to live for the will of God.<sup>4</sup>

**153-3.2** Sinning in this way affects the thinking, attitudes, and passions of the believer.<sup>5</sup> This results in the believer falling deeper and deeper into sin,<sup>6</sup> and can damage the body and the mind. Encouraging or aiding others to misuse or overindulge in drugs or all other substances is sin. Selling drugs or other substances to a person for the purpose of gratification of the sinful nature is sin against God and may be against the law.<sup>7</sup> The Lord Himself holds those who do this responsible<sup>8</sup> and has many ways to exercise His justice.<sup>9</sup>

**153-3.3** The Church must warn against the dangers of the misuse of, and overindulgence in, drugs and all other substances, provide counsel to those enslaved, direct them to places of treatment, help them to rebuild their lives, and determine when such a person is free for ministry in the church.<sup>10</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Rom.8: 5-13; Gal.5:16,17

<sup>2</sup> Eph.2:1-3; 4:20-24

<sup>3</sup> Rom.6:16; 2 Pe.2:19

<sup>4</sup> Col.1:9,10; 1Pe.4:2

<sup>5</sup> Eph.4:17-19; Titus 3:3

<sup>6</sup> Pro.23:29-35; Rom.7:14-24; Col.3:5-10

<sup>7</sup> Luke 17:1-3; Gal.5:19-21

<sup>8</sup> Pro.4:14-19; 5:22; Hab.2:15-16

<sup>9</sup> Zeph.3:5

<sup>10</sup> 1Cor.6:9-11; 1Tim.1:12-16

## **Article 154 - Sexual Immorality**

**154-1** God's Word declares that the expression of sexual relations is authorized only in the union of male and female within the bond of marriage.<sup>1</sup> Any sexual act outside this biblical standard is sinful in God's sight.

**154-2** The Bible teaches that activities such as adultery, bestiality, fornication, homosexuality (i.e. indulging in a lust for or engaging in a sexual act with a member of the same sex), incest, polygamy, and sexual lust are perversions of God's created order.<sup>2</sup>

**154-3** It is a violation of the Word of God to admit into church membership or office any unrepentant man or woman engaged in sexual immorality because such unrepentance invalidates a Christian profession of faith.<sup>3</sup> When a church member yields to sexual immorality, the Bible requires that fellow believers use the means of church discipline in order to urge the individual to repent and be restored.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Gen.2:24.

<sup>2</sup> Ex. 20:14,17; Lev. 18:6-23; 20:13; Matt. 19:4-6; Rom. 1:25-27; 1 Cor. 6:9-10, 7:3-5,9; Heb. 13:4; Rom. 13:13-14, Matt. 5:27-28.

<sup>3</sup> 1 Cor. 6:9-10.

<sup>4</sup> Mat.18:15-17.

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## **Article 155 - Affiliations**

**155-1** It is highly inconsistent and anti-Scriptural for Christians to be members of organizations or societies that bind their members with oaths or affirmations that require involvement in practices or with philosophies which are contrary to our allegiance to Christ. We urge believers to refrain from joining and to withdraw their membership from any such organization or society. In addition, believers must look with grave concern upon organizations or societies which require secrecy for their basic tenets and practices.

**155-2** The Scriptures teach about both proper and improper taking of oaths.<sup>1</sup> While oaths are not forbidden, the kinds of oaths taken by members of such associations are clearly against the teaching of Christ.<sup>2</sup> The secrecy and higher allegiance required by such associations are not in keeping with the believers' call to be light-bearers in the world. This violates Christ's example of openness that rejects secret hidden agenda.<sup>3</sup>

**155-3** Often, being a member of such an organization or society violates the commands of the Scriptures not to be yoked together with unbelievers<sup>4</sup> nor to have fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness.<sup>5</sup> Of supreme importance is that membership in any organization or society must not supercede our brotherhood with believers<sup>6</sup> and must not violate our allegiance to Christ.<sup>7</sup> We cannot serve God and any other master.<sup>8</sup>

**155-4** Therefore, elders are encouraged to consider most seriously the affiliations maintained by persons who are seeking membership or hold membership in a BFC, giving godly counsel whenever necessary. Elders may choose to withhold membership or exercise church discipline in certain circumstances based on an individual's affiliations.<sup>9</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Lev.19:12; Num.5:19-21; 2Cor.1:23; Heb.6:13-16

<sup>2</sup> Mat.5:34-37; James 5:12

<sup>3</sup> John 3:21; Mat.5:14; John 18:20

<sup>4</sup> 2 Cor.6:14

<sup>5</sup> Eph.5:11,12

<sup>6</sup> John 17:21

<sup>7</sup> Mat.10:37

<sup>8</sup> Mat.6:24

<sup>9</sup> Lev.20:26; 2Cor.6:17; 1Pe.1:16

## Article 156 - Immigration

**156-1** – God has a special love and compassion for the alien—whether an immigrant, stranger, or outsider in our midst.<sup>1</sup> He created all human beings in His image, and therefore all people from all cultural backgrounds are dignified.<sup>2</sup> Mary, Joseph, and Jesus as a child escaped into Egypt, per God’s instructions.<sup>3</sup> Our Savior understands the plight of refugees who leave hostile conditions.

**156-2** – Jesus equated welcoming a stranger with welcoming Him. He gave special attention to people who were not accepted<sup>4</sup> and spent time with those on the fringes of society. His mission included bringing good news to the captives, broken-hearted, and oppressed.<sup>5</sup> The New Testament writers challenge the church to break down barriers of hostility and to recognize that we too are strangers and aliens.<sup>6</sup>

**156-3** – People migrate for many reasons, including economics, armed conflicts, and family needs. Such migration provides gospel opportunities which might not otherwise exist. The church should seek ways to reach the alien with the good news of Christ and disciple the new believer in a way that will honor the Lord and obey the laws of government.<sup>7</sup>

**156-4** – Christians are to obey the laws of government<sup>8</sup> except in cases where a regulation is in conflict with the law of God.<sup>9</sup> In faithfulness to God, Christians should stand against injustice and be a voice for the oppressed. Circumstances vary from country to country; however, a believer should attempt to follow the legal process in order to remain in the country. Christian employers who have found an employee to be an illegal immigrant should make every effort to comply with the law<sup>10</sup> while seeking ways to minister to the employee in accordance with our gospel mission.

**156-5** – The church must understand the priority of its heavenly citizenship.<sup>11</sup> The church must not allow political issues to surpass her mission of gospel-centered ministry.<sup>12</sup> Pastors and church leaders should give biblical counsel to those illegally residing in a country, proclaim the truth, and pray for the Holy Spirit to work in the believer’s life.<sup>13</sup> The church should assist believers seeking legal status.

**156-6** - Not all are aliens of their own volition. They are victims of human trafficking and slavery, unwillingly working in situations as diverse as the commercial sex trade and child labor. They are found in places as varied as restaurants, factories, brothels, laundries, and sweatshops. The church needs to stand against this evil by praying and advocating for such victims. The church should be ready to minister to them.<sup>14</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Lev. 19:9-10, 24:19-22; Deut. 10:17-19, 14:28-29, 24:17, 26:12-13

<sup>2</sup> Gen. 1:26,27; 1 Cor. 11:7; Jas. 3:9

<sup>3</sup> Matt. 2:13-18

<sup>4</sup> Matt. 25:31-46; Lk. 17:11-19, 19:1-10

<sup>5</sup> Isa. 61:1; Mk. 7:24-30; Lk. 4:18-20

<sup>6</sup> Acts 10:28; Eph. 2:11-22

<sup>7</sup> Mt. 28:18-20; Acts 1:8; Heb. 13:1-2

<sup>8</sup> Rom. 13:1; Tit. 3:1

<sup>9</sup> Acts 5:29

<sup>10</sup> 1 Pet. 2:13-20

<sup>11</sup> Phil. 3:20; Tit. 2:14

<sup>12</sup> 1 Cor. 2:2

<sup>13</sup> Heb. 4:12; 1 Pet. 5:1-2

<sup>14</sup> Philemon 16

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# Principles of Order



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# Foreword

The Faith and Order of the Bible Fellowship Church is comprised of two volumes. Volume One contains the Articles of Faith and the Biblical Principles for Living. Volume Two contains the Principles of Order. Together the two volumes contain the denomination’s teaching on faith and practice.

This edition of the Faith and Order represents the latest official version and supercedes all previous editions. An electronic edition posted on the website, [www.mybfc.org](http://www.mybfc.org), includes any intervening updates between printings.

Citations in this format are made by section and paragraph, not necessarily by page number. For example:

Composition of the Board of Elders .....	401-1.1
Bylaws for Particular Churches	Section 400
Board of Elders and Deacons	Article 401
The Board of Elders	401-1
Composition of Elders	401-1.1

The following words or phrases are technical terms in the Faith and Order and are usually capitalized:

- BFC Conference
- Board of Deacons
- Board of Elders
- Particular Church

A Table of Contents and Indexes are incorporated for easy reference.

# Key and Abbreviations

Abbreviations:

BFC Bible Fellowship Church  
F&O Faith and Order

Scripture References - Unless otherwise noted the ESV is used.

Gen.	Genesis	Nah.	Nahum
Exo.	Exodus	Hab.	Habakkuk
Lev.	Leviticus	Zeph.	Zephaniah
Num.	Numbers	Hag.	Haggai
Deu.	Deuteronomy	Zec.	Zechariah
Josh.	Joshua	Mal.	Malachi
Judg.	Judges	Mat.	Matthew
Ruth.	Ruth	Mark	Mark
1Sam.	First Samuel	Luke	Luke
2Sam.	Second Samuel	John	John
1Kgs.	First Kings	Acts	Acts
2Kgs.	Second Kings	Rom.	Romans
1Chr.	First Chronicles	1Cor.	First Corinthians
2Chr.	Second Chronicles	2Cor.	Second Corinthians
Ezra	Ezra	Gal.	Galatians
Neh.	Nehemiah	Eph.	Ephesians
Est.	Esther	Phil.	Philippians
Job	Job	Col.	Colossians
Psa.	Psalms	1Thes.	First Thessalonians
Pro.	Proverbs	2Thes.	Second Thessalonians
Ecc.	Ecclesiastes	1Tim.	First Timothy
Song.	Song of Solomon	2Tim.	Second Timothy
Isa.	Isaiah	Titus	Titus
Jer.	Jeremiah	Phi.	Philemon
Lam.	Lamentations	Heb.	Hebrews
Eze.	Ezekiel	James	James
Dan.	Daniel	1Pe.	First Peter
Hos.	Hosea	2Pe.	Second Peter
Joel	Joel	1Jo.	First John
Amos	Amos	2Jo.	Second John
Obad.	Obadiah	3Jo.	Third John
Jonah	Jonah	Jude	Jude
Mic.	Micah	Rev.	Revelation

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**200**

# **Form Of Government**



## **Article 201 - Preliminary Principles**

**201-1** That in seeking to be founded on the Word of God in practice as well as doctrine, the BFC sets forth this form of government as that which is in its judgment most clearly in keeping with the Holy Scriptures.

**201-2** That the formulation of faith and practice must be in submission to the Holy Scriptures because God has not bound the conscience to the doctrines and commandments of men when they exceed or contradict His Word.

**201-3** That every union of Particular Churches shall have the right, in harmony with the preceding principles, to formulate a faith and order that shall seek to provide a basis of fellowship always in submission to the written Word of God.

**201-4** That this form of government shall seek to make this body a church that operates by written standards, which is not, however, to be understood as being opposed to love or spirit, but rather opposed to disorder and injustices that can so easily pervert right human relationships when authority is personal or when there is no accepted way of deciding issues that inevitably arise among men, however deeply they may be committed to Jesus Christ and to one another.

**201-5** That our Lord, the Head of the Church, for the edification of the body and the evangelization of the world, has appointed elders in the visible church to preach the Gospel, administer the ordinances, and exercise discipline.

**201-6** That, although the character, qualifications, and authority of the elders are described in the Holy Scriptures, the electing of persons to oversee shall rest with the body.

**201-7** That careful adherence to these principles will contribute to the glory and happiness of the church in that it can own the blessing of our Lord, the Head of the Church universal, and also the approbation of an impartial public.



## Article 202 - The Church

### 202-1 The Church -- Universal and Particular

**202-1.1** Jesus Christ has established His rule on earth in the church. The universal church consists of all those persons, in every nation, who make profession of faith in Christ and yield submission to Him and His rule. Because this multitude cannot meet in one place for worship and fellowship, the Scriptures indicate that these believers shall be divided into many Particular Churches.

**202-1.2** A Particular Church consists of professing believers voluntarily associated in submission to the Holy Scriptures, for divine worship, corporate prayer, godly living, and evangelism. The Particular Churches seek to demonstrate their participation in the church universal by forming unions with other Particular Churches that have a similar understanding of doctrine and organization.

### 202-2 Responsibilities of the Church Toward Members

**202-2.1** Each Particular Church has been directed by Christ to minister corporately to the needs of individual members. The Elders of each congregation shall endeavor to establish a program that shall honor the body of Christ in fulfilling the following responsibilities toward members:

- (1) To implement the corporate worship of God (John 4:23,24; Eph.5:19,20; Col.3:16)
- (2) To promote the development of Christian character and conduct (Rom.6:1-23; 12:9-21; 14:1; 15:7; Gal.5:16-26; Eph.4:22-5:21)
- (3) To maintain purity of life and doctrine (1 Cor.5:1-13; 1Tim.1:3-11; Titus 2:1-15; 3:1-11; Heb.13:9; 2Jo. 10,11; Jude 3,4; Rev.2:2,14,15,20)
- (4) To instruct and train for Christian service and to give opportunity to serve (Rom.12:1-8; 1Cor.12:1-31; Eph.4:8-16; Mat.28:18-20; 2Tim.2:2)
- (5) To impart a vision for evangelism and missions (Mat.9:36-38; 28:18-20; Acts 1:8; Rom.9:1ff; Rom.10:1ff)
- (6) To assist in building good relationships in family (Eph.5:22; 6:4; 1Pe.3:1-7), employment (Eph.6:5-9; 1Pe.3:18-21), community and state (Rom.13:1-7; 1Pe.2:13-17)
- (7) To promote fellowship and hospitality (Rom.12:13; Heb.13:2,16; 1Pe.4:9; 3Jo.5-8)
- (8) To minister comfort (2 Cor.1:3-7)
- (9) To promote unity and harmony (1Cor.1:10-13; Eph.4:3)
- (10) To care for the needy (Acts 6:1-8; 1Tim.5:3-16)
- (11) To settle disagreements and administer discipline (Mat.18:15-20; 1Cor.5:1-13; 2Thes.3:14-15)

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## 202-3 Qualifications and Duties of Church Membership

**202-3.1** Qualifications. Anyone desiring to be a member of the BFC shall give testimony and evidence of faith in Christ and the new birth. He shall be in sympathy with the *Faith & Order*, be baptized by immersion subsequent to salvation, and manifest holiness toward God and separation from the world (Acts 2:41-47).

**202-3.2** Duties. Commitment to Christ and the BFC shall be manifested by the joyful acceptance of the following responsibilities:

- (1) To live in keeping with the doctrines and standards of the Church as found in the *F&O* (John 17:15-17; 1Cor.5:6-11; 6:14-18; Eph.5:26,27; Titus 3:10; James 1:26,27; 2Jo.9,10)
- (2) To exercise willingly one's spiritual gifts within the body (Eph.4:11-16; 1Cor.12:4-31; Rom.12:3-8)
- (3) To minister under the direction of the Church (Acts 20:28; Heb.13:7; 1Pe.5:2,3; 1Tim.3:1; 5:17)
- (4) To bear the message of the Church to the outside world (Mat.28:19,20; Acts 1:8; Mat.5:13-16)
- (5) To pray daily for the elders and the ministries of the Church (Rom.10:1; Mat.9:38; Acts 4:29; Eph.6:18,19; Acts 13:2-4)
- (6) To support the program of the Church financially with the regular giving of tithes and offerings (Mal.3:10; 1Cor.9:13,14; 16:1,2; 2Cor.8:7-9; 9:6,7)
- (7) To submit to those God has ordained as rulers in the Church (Heb.13:17; cf. also references under #3 above)
- (8) To attend faithfully the stated meetings of the Church (Acts 2:42; Heb.10:25)
- (9) To observe the Lord's Supper (1Cor.11:23-28)
- (10) To demonstrate mutual care and concern for the other members of the Church (John 13:34,35; 15:12,17; Gal.6:1,2,10; James 5:9,16)

## **Article 203 - The Government of the Church**

**203-1** By providing spiritually qualified overseers, called Elders, Christ enables each Particular Church to govern itself.

**203-2** But although the Churches are autonomous, they are not independent, because they are a part of a fellowship of churches. The basis of this fellowship is mutual conviction of the body of truth set forth in the Scriptures.

**203-3** The authority of the fellowship is secondary, being derived from the Particular Churches, and is limited to matters that pertain to the churches in fellowship or to common concerns that churches agree to take care of together.

**203-4** All authority in the Church, whether in Particular Churches or in the denomination, is moral and spiritual, ministerial and declarative. It is moral and spiritual, negatively, in that the church is unable to use civil force to compel obedience, and positively, in that obedience is incomplete unless it is inward and real as well as outward and apparent. All authority in the church is ministerial and declarative in that the Holy Scriptures are the only rule of faith and conduct, and all decisions and laws must therefore be understood as being servants of the Word, announcing what the body believes the Scriptures to teach with the constant recognition that “councils may err” through frailty inseparable from humanity.

**203-5** The church consists of many Particular Churches needing counsel and assistance. Because this counsel and assistance is needed on occasion by each Particular Church, each Particular Church is responsible for and accountable to the others and to the denominational body as a whole. However, this counsel and assistance must neither violate the autonomy of Particular Churches in the body nor negate the accountability of each to all other churches. The goals of this mutual counsel and assistance are to encourage and maintain spiritual health, to preserve soundness of doctrine and discipline, to enter into joint effort for the advancement of the work of Christ, and to guard against doctrinal error and immorality. From these arises the importance and usefulness of assemblies of Particular Churches.

**203-6** The assembly of churches shall represent, in one body, all of the Particular Churches of this denomination and shall be called the Bible Fellowship Church Conference (BFC Conference).

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## **Article 204 - Elders, Deacons, Staff**

Having called and assembled His church, our Lord provides for the leadership and care of each Particular Church by providing elders and deacons and enabling them to do their work. Elders are responsible to rule the church and must be qualified men, and deacons are responsible to serve the church and may be qualified men or women. Elders and deacons are the only terms describing continuing positions in the New Testament church. Those who serve in these ways do not create their positions, nor do their positions clothe the individuals with power, but the Lord endows individuals with gifts and qualifications (1Tim. 3; Titus 1; 1Pe. 5) that enable them to do their work as God Himself has designed.

### **204-1 Elders**

**204-1.1** In the New Testament church Christ has provided men to hold the position of elder to oversee the life of His Church; those whom He commissions He enables to shepherd His Church.

**204-1.2** The position of elder is given broad responsibility and authority in the New Testament. Because they are to be examples to the flock in godliness and to govern well, they are called elders. Because they are responsible for oversight and administration of the life of the church, they are called overseers or bishops. Because they are to care for and feed God's people, they are called pastors (shepherds). Because they serve the people of the church, they are called ministers.

**204-1.3** All elders together share the authority in and responsibility for the life of the church. Some elders are gifted and recognized as teaching elders; their primary authority and responsibility is in the Word and doctrine and secondarily in oversight. Other elders are gifted and recognized as ruling elders; their primary authority and responsibility is in oversight and secondarily in the Word and doctrine.

**204-1.4** The work of the elders is to shepherd the flock. This work includes: guarding (Acts 20:28), overseeing (1Tim.5:17; 1Pe.5:2), discipling (1Thes.5:12; 2Tim.2:2), preaching and teaching (1Tim.5:17; Titus 1:9; John 8:31, 32), evangelizing (2Tim.4:5), praying (Acts 6:4, John 17, John 14:12-14, James 5:13-16), serving (1Tim.4:14; 1Pet.4:10, 11) and disciplining (Titus 1:9).

**204-1.5** Elders, as leaders of the people, are chosen by the membership of the church on the basis of Scriptural qualifications.

**204-1.6** Because of the qualifications and dignity of the position of Elder, including minister, each Particular Church 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.

## **204-2 Ministers**

**204-2.1** The Lord of the Church has given gifts to men called ministers in His church. This position is the first in the church in both dignity and usefulness. Although all elders are to be able to teach, some elders are specially gifted for teaching and preaching. The Lord of the Church has given those gifts to men we call ministers.

**204-2.2** Terminology. The term “minister” is not used in Scripture to identify the specific position of elder, but to indicate the service to Christ and His people given by those who hold this position. “Pastor” is used as a gift to the church. Although neither “minister” nor “pastor” is used in Scripture as a specific position, these titles are used and are interchangeable in practice for those men we call ministers.

Moreover, though the English word “deacon” has its roots in the Greek word *diakonos*, which is translated “minister” or “servant,” this gives no basis for women being elders, ministers or pastors.

A minister or pastor in the BFC must hold or be seeking credentials in the BFC.

**204-2.3 The Qualifications for the Ministry.** The Christian ministry is a divine calling that makes high and holy demands on those who aspire to this work. Although the minister of the gospel preaches Christ and not himself, the personality of the minister is involved in the proclamation of the gospel and the performance of pastoral functions. It is imperative, therefore, to give heed to the qualifications imbedded in the Word of God. To minister effectively to his generation, a man must have certain spiritual, personal, physical, and educational qualifications.

### **Spiritual Qualifications.**

- (1) The Christian minister must give evidence of having been born again, of having the assurance of salvation, of being inwardly persuaded that he is called of God to the Christian ministry, and of being willing to make the necessary commitment.
- (2) To minister in the name of Christ one must possess the gifts of the Holy Spirit and have a knowledge of God’s plan and will.

### **Personal Qualifications.**

- (1) The minister must have a love for the study of Scripture and be devoted to
-

- prayer inasmuch as his primary function is to be pastor-teacher.
- (2) The minister must possess qualities of leadership and administration, together with a willingness to assume responsibility inasmuch as he is an elder who numbers ruling among his duties.
  - (3) The minister, being accountable to God, must have a genuine love for people, exercise patience in dealing with them, be receptive to criticism and correction, and remain steadfast in his duties inasmuch as he is an under-shepherd of the flock of God.
  - (4) The minister must not be a lover of money inasmuch as he is to be a lover of God.
  - (5) The minister must be willing to forgo personal rights and privileges for the sake of ministering to others inasmuch as he is to be an example of a servant.
  - (6) Because of the qualifications and dignity of the position of minister, when considering a man for ordination, the Ministerial Candidate and the Credentials Committees shall give careful consideration to ensure that a man who has been divorced or who has married a divorced woman has Biblically resolved the issues in his family, church, and community raised by the divorce, 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.

**Physical Qualifications.**

The pastor must be a mature man who is physically and mentally fit, being free from impairments that would undermine his ability to minister. His physical and mental fitness should give promise that he will be able to bear the demands of the ministry.

**Educational Qualifications.**

- (1) All men desiring to be ordained to the ministry of the BFC shall have been graduated from college/university and are encouraged to pursue a seminary degree. The minimum requirement is 3 years of theological training or its approved equivalent. A man may be an applicant or candidate during the period of his training, but the 3 years of theological study shall be completed before he becomes a probationer. Exceptions to these rules may be made for some mature men; however, in no case will a man be recommended for ordination examination before completing the equivalent of 3 years of theological training.
- (2) Candidates for the ministry should be men of broad reading interests, giving evidence of understanding and practical wisdom.

**204-3 Pastoral Staff**

**204-3.1** The pastoral staff of a Particular Church is composed of, and limited to, those men who are serving as ministers in the BFC. For an individual to serve as a minister in the BFC, he must be ordained by or have had his previous ordination recognized by the BFC or he must be under the care of the Ministerial Candidate Committee.

**204-3.2** A pastor may only serve as a voting member of the Board of Elders if he has a congregationally-approved call or has been elected as an elder by the congregation. In churches with multiple pastors, the Board of Elders may wish to limit the number of pastors that are voting members of the Board and must communicate to the congregation the pastors that will be voting members of the Board. A sole or Senior Pastor is always a voting member of the Board.

**204-4 Deacons**

**204-4.1** The position of deacon is presented in the Scriptures as a position not of ruling, but of service. A deacon should be a person of deep spiritual life, exemplary conduct, and sound judgment (1Tim.3; Acts 6:1-8). This position is one of sympathetic service to the church and to the distressed, friendless, or sick, after the example of our Lord Jesus Christ.

**204-4.2** Those who serve in this position should be known for their trustworthiness, their temperance, their faith, and their blameless life.

**204-4.3** Deacons, as servants of the church, are chosen by the membership of the church on the basis of Scriptural qualifications.

**204-4.4** Because of the qualifications and dignity of the position of Deacon, each Particular Church shall give careful consideration to ensure that a person who has been divorced or who has married a divorced person is presently characterized as above reproach, and if married, faithful to and exclusively committed to his or her spouse.

**204-5 Church Staff**

**204-5.1** The church staff of a Particular Church is composed of individuals who are employed by that Particular Church. The church staff shall include the pastoral staff, but is not limited to the pastoral staff. Others included in the church staff would be secretaries, sexton, director of women's ministries, director of children and youth, choir director, etc. "The title of Pastor," when it is used in association with a person that is occupying a position on a church staff, is to be reserved for those who are members of the pastoral staff (see §204-3).

**300**  
**Book Of Discipline**





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## **300 - Book Of Discipline**

**300-1** True church discipline is preventive as well as corrective. Preventive discipline includes instruction, exhortation, oversight and all other such means as are necessary to promote maturity and to keep men free from error and sin in doctrine and life.<sup>1</sup> Corrective discipline includes all action necessary to restore those who have been involved in error or sin in doctrine or life.<sup>2</sup> All church discipline should be according to the authority, standards and methods given by God in the Bible.

**300-2** The Bible teaches that preventive and corrective discipline must acknowledge both divine initiative and human responsibility.<sup>3</sup> The divine initiative is acknowledged by instruction and correction, which point to the person and work of Jesus Christ as the only source of true holiness.<sup>4</sup> The human responsibility is acknowledged by instruction and correction, which call believers to apply God's standards of thinking and behavior as the means of achieving the holiness Christ made possible. These standards must be applied to individual lives<sup>5</sup> and to the corporate life of the church.<sup>6</sup>

**300-3** The reason for providing written standards of church discipline for the BFC is to develop from the Scripture specific means of realizing the righteousness which God desires for His church. These means should help individuals, congregations, denominational agencies and the entire BFC to identify sin and to experience cleansing and restoration based, first, on the sacrificial death of Christ and, second, on Elders and people accepting their God-given responsibilities to one another.<sup>7</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age (Mat. 28:20). Him we proclaim, warning everyone and teaching everyone with all wisdom, that we may present everyone mature in Christ (Col. 1:28).

<sup>2</sup> This testimony is true. Therefore rebuke them sharply, that they may be sound in the faith (Titus 1:13).

<sup>3</sup> Now we command you, brothers, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you keep away from any brother who is walking in idleness and not in accord with the tradition that you received from us. (2Thes. 3:6). And have you forgotten the exhortation that addresses you as sons? "My son, do not regard lightly the discipline of the Lord, nor be weary when reproved by him. For the Lord disciplines the one he loves, and chastises every son whom he receives" (Heb. 12:5,6).

<sup>4</sup> Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her, that he might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, so that he might present the church to himself in splendor, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that she might be holy and without blemish (Eph. 5:25-27).

<sup>5</sup> And he said to all, "If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me (Luke 9:23).

<sup>6</sup> 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. (1Cor.5:6-8).

<sup>7</sup> Brothers, if anyone is caught in any transgression, you who are spiritual should restore him in a spirit of gentleness. Keep watch on yourself, lest you too be tempted. (Gal.6:1). "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." (Mat.18:15). Pay attention to yourselves! If your brother sins, rebuke him, and if he repents, forgive him,..." (Luke 17:3).

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## **Article 301 - Nature and Purpose of Corrective Discipline**

**301-1** 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.<sup>1</sup> 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<sup>2</sup> and the expressed desire of Christ for holiness among His people.<sup>3</sup> Corrective discipline in the church is doctrinal, moral or administrative.

**301-2** Doctrinal or moral discipline is an effort to prevent and correct beliefs and actions contrary to the Word of God.<sup>4</sup> The purpose of doctrinal or moral discipline is to vindicate the honor of Christ, to promote the purity of the church and to restore the offender.

**301-3** Administrative discipline is an effort to maintain adherence to the governing rules of the church in other than doctrinal or moral cases.<sup>5</sup> 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.

**301-4** All members of a Particular Church are under the care of that church and are therefore subject to doctrinal, moral and administrative discipline by that church.<sup>6</sup> All congregations and agencies of the BFC are members one of another and are therefore subject to doctrinal, moral and administrative discipline by the whole church.<sup>7</sup>

**301-5** No charge shall be received by the elders of a church or by another judicatory unless it appears that the plaintiff(s) has first done his/their utmost to restore the alleged offender(s) in the manner prescribed by Christ.<sup>8</sup>

**301-6** No charge shall be received against the elders of the church except on the basis of two or three witnesses.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> "I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven" (Mat. 16:19). "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. For where two or three are gathered in my name, there am I among them" (Mat. 18:18,20). "If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you withhold forgiveness from any, it is withheld" (John 20:23).

<sup>2</sup> Take care, brothers, lest there be in any of you an evil, unbelieving heart, leading you to fall away from the living God. But exhort one another every day, as long as it is called "today," that none of you may be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin (Heb. 3:12,13). Now these things happened to them as

an example, but they were written down for our instruction, on whom the end of the ages has come. Therefore let anyone who thinks that he stands take heed lest he fall (1Cor. 10:11,12).

<sup>3</sup> For they disciplined us for a short time as it seemed best to them, but he disciplines us for our good, that we may share his holiness. For the moment all discipline seems painful rather than pleasant, but later it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it. (Heb. 12:10,11). But as he who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct, since it is written, “You shall be holy, for I am holy” (1Pe. 1:15,16).

<sup>4</sup> It is actually reported that there is sexual immorality among you, and of a kind that is not tolerated even among pagans, for a man has his father’s wife. For though absent in body, I am present in spirit; and as if present, I have already pronounced judgment on the one who did such a thing. 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 (1Cor.5:1,3,5). As for a person who stirs up division, after warning him once and then twice, have nothing more to do with him (Titus 3:10).

<sup>5</sup> Remind them to be submissive to rulers and authorities, to be obedient, to be ready for every good work (Titus 3:1). Eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace (Eph. 4:3). But all things should be done decently and in order (1Cor. 14:40).

<sup>6</sup> It is actually reported that there is sexual immorality among you, and of a kind that is not tolerated even among pagans, for a man has his father’s wife. And you are arrogant! Ought you not rather to mourn? Let him who has done this be removed from among you. I wrote to you in my letter not to associate with sexually immoral people. For what have I to do with judging outsiders? Is it not those inside the church whom you are to judge? (1Cor. 5:1,2,9,12). “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” (Mat. 18:17).

<sup>7</sup> Therefore my judgment is that we should not trouble those of the Gentiles who turn to God, but should write to them to abstain from the things polluted by idols, and from sexual immorality, and from what has been strangled, and from blood. For from ancient generations Moses has had in every city those who proclaim him, for he is read every Sabbath in the synagogues.” 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. Since we have heard that some persons have gone out from us and troubled you with words, unsettling your minds, although we gave them no instructions, it has seemed good to us, having come to one accord, to choose men and send them to you with our beloved Barnabas and Paul, men who have risked their lives for the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. We have therefore sent Judas and Silas, who themselves will tell you the same things by word of mouth. For it has seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us to lay on you no greater burden than these requirements: that you abstain from what has been sacrificed to idols, and from blood, and from what has been strangled, and from sexual immorality. If you keep yourselves from these, you will do well. Farewell.” So when they were sent off, they went down to Antioch, and having gathered the congregation together, they delivered the letter. And when they had read it, they rejoiced because of its encouragement (Acts 15:19-31).

<sup>8</sup> “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” (Mat. 18:15-17).

<sup>9</sup> Do not admit a charge against an elder except on the evidence of two or three witnesses (1Tim. 5:19).

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## **Article 302 - Original and Appellate Jurisdiction**

**302-1 Individual Members.** Original jurisdiction over an individual belongs to the congregation of which the individual is a member. All of the elders or a portion of the elders designated by the Board of Elders shall be the judicatory for a trial in a Particular Church. Those serving as a judicatory shall choose one of their number to serve as moderator of the trial. Any elder who has personal involvement in the issue being tried shall be disqualified from participation in the judicatory.

**302-2 Ministers.** Original jurisdiction over ministers belongs to the Ministerial Credentials Committee. All of the members or a portion designated by the Committee shall be the judicatory for a trial involving a minister. Those serving as a judicatory shall choose one of their number to serve as moderator of the trial. Any member of the Committee who has personal involvement in the issue being tried shall be disqualified from participation in the judicatory.

**302-3.1 Particular Churches.** Original jurisdiction over Particular Churches belongs to the Ministerial Relations Committee. All of the members or a portion designated by the Committee shall be the judicatory for a trial involving a Particular Church. Those serving as a judicatory shall choose one of their number to serve as moderator of the trial. Any member of the Committee who has personal involvement in the issue being tried shall be disqualified from participation in the judicatory.

**302-3.2 Departments of the BFC.** Original jurisdiction over departments of the BFC belongs to a judicatory elected by BFC Conference called the Conference Judicatory. Departments of the BFC shall consist of any boards, committees, or departments, temporary or permanent, incorporated or unincorporated, established by BFC Conference.

**302-4.1 Appeals to the Conference Judicatory.** If a judicatory in a Particular Church, the Credentials Committee, or the Ministerial Relations Committee is unable to resolve an issue, or if the defendant or plaintiff in a case desires to appeal the decision of the original judicatory, the appeal shall be made to the Conference Judicatory. (Charges brought against a department of the BFC shall be made directly to the Conference Judicatory.) The Conference Judicatory shall be composed of five ordained ministers who are voting members of BFC Conference and five laymen who are voting members of BFC Conference at the time of their election. Laymen on the Conference Judicatory who are no longer voting members of BFC Conference may continue to serve their term of office as long as they remain members in good standing of a Particular Church. BFC Conference shall elect the members of the Conference Judicatory for three-year terms in three classes as follows:

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Class I	Two pastors and two elders
Class II	Two pastors and two elders
Class III	One pastor and one elder

When a case is presented to the Conference Judicatory, all ten members shall designate which five shall hear the case and shall designate which one of the five shall serve as moderator. The chairman and the secretary shall be chosen by the ten members from among their number. All charges or appeals shall be presented to the secretary. The name of the secretary shall be announced at BFC Conference and included in its minutes.

302-4.2 Appeals to the Special Appellate Judicatory. If the Conference Judicatory is unable to resolve an issue, or if the defendant or plaintiff in a case desires to appeal the decision of the Conference Judicatory, subsequent appeal shall be made to the Special Appellate Judicatory. The Special Appellate Judicatory shall be composed of four ordained pastors who are voting members of BFC Conference and four laymen who are voting members of BFC Conference at the time of their election. Laymen on the Special Appellate Judicatory who are no longer voting members of BFC Conference may continue to serve their term of office as long as they remain members in good standing of a Particular Church. BFC Conference shall elect the members of the Special Appellate Judicatory for three-year terms in three classes as follows:

Class I	Two pastors and two elders
Class II	One pastor and one elder
Class III	One pastor and one elder

When a case is presented to the Special Appellate Judicatory, all eight members shall designate which five shall hear the case and shall designate which of the five shall serve as moderator. The chairman and the secretary shall be chosen by the eight members from among their number. All appeals shall be presented to the Secretary. The name of the secretary shall be announced at BFC Conference and included in its minutes. The Special Appellate Judicatory shall conduct a hearing and their decision shall be final and shall be reported to BFC Conference. The Special Appellate Judicatory shall be the only place of appeal for issues which have had the Conference Judicatory as the place of original jurisdiction.

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## **Article 303 - Steps in Institution of Judicial Process**

**303-1** A charge of an offense must be instituted at the place of original jurisdiction; it may be brought by an individual, Particular Church or Department of the BFC. The one who brings a charge shall be designated as the plaintiff. The one who is charged shall be designated as the defendant.

**303-2** 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 relevant documents. A charge shall be deemed to have been filed when it is presented in writing to the chairman or secretary of the Board of Elders of the Particular Church or the chairman or secretary of any other place of original jurisdiction.

**303-3** 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.

**303-4** When an individual, Particular Church or Department of the BFC is ready to present a charge, the judicial body receiving the charge shall warn the plaintiff that he may be censured if the accused is found to be innocent of the alleged offense. If the judicial body receiving the charge determines that the charge is frivolous, it may dismiss the charge and censure the plaintiff.

**303-5** When a charge is filed, the Board of Elders of the Particular Church, the Ministerial Credentials Committee, the Ministerial Relations Committee, or the Conference Judicatory shall establish the time and place for the trial, and shall cite the accused to appear at the trial and shall constitute the judicial body to conduct the trial.



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## Article 304 - Conduct of Trials

**304-1** At the beginning of every trial the moderator of the body 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 judicatory conducting the trial shall determine if the trial shall be opened or closed to individuals not directly involved in the trial.

**304-2** 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.

**304-3** 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 judicatory 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.

**304-4** At the second meeting of the trial, the accused may raise objections to the charges or relevancy of the evidence presented against him. The judicatory shall determine the validity of such objections. If the accused requests the judicatory 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 judicatory shall determine the censure. If the accused pleads “not guilty” or refuses to plead, the trial shall proceed.

**304-5** No person shall be denied the right to offer in evidence in any judicatory 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 judicatory must be a member in good standing of the BFC.<sup>1</sup>

**304-6** When the evidence against the accused has been presented and he has had 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 judicatory, 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 judicatory shall then deliberate and vote on each charge separately. If the judicatory decides the accused is guilty, it shall also determine the censure.

**304-7** When the judicatory has concluded the deliberations, the moderator shall announce its finding on each charge. If the accused has been found guilty, the judicatory shall also state the censure it proposes. Full censure shall not be carried out until the expiration of the time in which an appeal may be filed. If an appeal is filed, the original judicatory may not execute its censure unless and until its judgment is affirmed by the judicatory to which appeal is made.

**304-8** In any trial the judicatory 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 judicatory. This appeal shall be certified by the trial judicatory to another judicatory in cases of appeal. If the trial is appealed, the accused and the appellate judicatory shall be supplied one written copy of the record at the expense of the judicatory; other copies may be supplied at the expense of those who request a copy.

<sup>1</sup> When one of you has a grievance against another, does he dare go to law before the unrighteous instead of the saints? Or do you not know that the saints will judge the world? And if the world is to be judged by you, are you incompetent to try trivial cases? Do you not know that we are to judge angels? How much more, then, matters pertaining to this life! (1 Cor. 6:1-3).

## Article 305 - Evidence

**305-1** Evidence must be factual in nature. It may be direct or circumstantial. Caution should be used in consideration of evidence which is purely circumstantial.

**305-2** 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.<sup>1</sup>

**305-3** The judicatory shall appoint one of its members to conduct on its behalf the examination of witnesses, but other members of the judicatory may also take part. Witnesses presented by the accused may be cross-examined by the judicatory.

**305-4** Certified records of a judicatory shall be received in evidence in another judicatory if it is relevant.

<sup>1</sup> You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor (Exo. 20:16). You shall not spread a false report. You shall not join hands with a wicked man to be a malicious witness (Exo. 23:1). 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 (Pro. 6:16,17). Let what you say be simply 'Yes' or 'No'; anything more than this comes from evil (Mat. 5:37). Rather, speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ. Therefore, having put away falsehood, let each one of you speak the truth with his neighbor, for we are members one of another. (Eph. 4:15,25).

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## Article 306 - Censure and Restoration

**306-1** 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.<sup>1</sup>

**306-2** There are five degrees of censure in judicial discipline: admonition, rebuke, suspension, deposition and excommunication.

- (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.<sup>2</sup>
- (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.<sup>3</sup>
- (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.<sup>4</sup> 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 judicatory 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 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.<sup>5</sup> Deposition of a minister shall require the dissolution of the pastoral relationship. The sentence of deposition shall be read before the congregation and the pulpit declared vacant. If a minister is deposed who is serving in a non-pastoral office, the agency under which he serves shall be informed of the discipline and that the

man is disqualified from denominational service.

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 judicatory that it no longer regards the offender as a member of the body of Christ.<sup>6</sup>

**306-3** 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.

**306-4** Restoration shall always be accompanied by prayer of thanksgiving to God for His redeeming grace.<sup>7</sup>

<sup>1</sup> “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” (Mat. 18:19,20).

<sup>2</sup> I myself am satisfied about you, my brothers, that you yourselves are full of goodness, filled with all knowledge and able to instruct one another (Rom. 15:14). And we urge you, brothers, admonish the idle, encourage the fainthearted, help the weak, be patient with them all (1Thes.5 :14).

<sup>3</sup> As for those who persist in sin, rebuke them in the presence of all, so that the rest may stand in fear (1Tim. 5:20).

<sup>4</sup> If anyone does not obey what we say in this letter, take note of that person, and have nothing to do with him, that he may be ashamed (2Thes. 3:14). 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 (1Cor. 5:11).

<sup>5</sup> As for a person who stirs up division, after warning him once and then twice, have nothing more to do with him (Titus 3:10). But I discipline my body and keep it under control, lest after preaching to others I myself should be disqualified (1Cor. 9:27).

<sup>6</sup> And you are arrogant! Ought you not rather to mourn? Let him who has done this be removed from among you. 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. 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. God judges those outside. “Purge the evil person from among you” (1Cor. 5:2,7,11,13). “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” (Mat. 18:17).

<sup>7</sup> Brothers, if anyone is caught in any transgression, you who are spiritual should restore him in a spirit

of gentleness. Keep watch on yourself, lest you too be tempted (Gal. 6:1). Therefore, confess your sins to one another and pray for one another, that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous person has great power as it is working. Let him know that whoever brings back a sinner from his wandering will save his soul from death and will cover a multitude of sins (James 5:16,20). “Just so, I tell you, there is joy before the angels of God over one sinner who repents” (Luke 15:10). Now if anyone has caused pain, he has caused it not to me, but in some measure—not to put it too severely—to all of you. For such a one, this punishment by the majority is enough, so you should rather turn to forgive and comfort him, or he may be overwhelmed by excessive sorrow. So I beg you to reaffirm your love for him (2Cor. 2:5-8). As it is, I rejoice, not because you were grieved, but because you were grieved into repenting. For you felt a godly grief, so that you suffered no loss through us. For godly grief produces a repentance that leads to salvation without regret, whereas worldly grief produces death (2Cor. 7:9,10).

## **Article 307 - Appeals**

**307-1** An appeal is a petition asking that the final judgment of one judicatory be reversed or modified by another judicatory.

**307-2** Notice of intention to appeal must be filed in writing within ten days after the judgment of the original judicatory has been announced. This notice must be filed with the moderator of the original judicatory.

**307-3** To perfect an appeal, the appellant must file in writing within thirty days of the notice of appeal his appeal and specifications of error by the original judicatory. This shall be filed with the secretary of the judicatory to which the appeal is made; a copy of the appeal and specifications of error shall also be filed with the moderator of the original judicatory.

**307-4** If the judicatory to which appeal is made does not sustain any of the specifications of error, the judgment of the original judicatory is affirmed. If the appellate judicatory sustains any specifications of error, it shall determine whether the error is of such importance as to require a reversal, or modification of the original judgment. A judicatory to which appeal is made may remand the case to the original judicatory, may modify the original judgment or may reverse the original judgment.

## **Article 308 - Dissents and Protests**

**308-1 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 judicatory.

**308-2 Protest.** Any member of a judicatory may file a written protest stating his reasons for objecting to a judgment of the judicatory. A protest must be filed with the moderator of the judicatory within ten days of the announcement of the judgment. A protest shall be read to the judicatory and recorded in its minutes. The judicatory may, if it desires, place in its minutes an answer to a protest.





**400**  
**Bylaws For Particular**  
**Churches**



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## **Article 401 - Boards of Elders and Deacons**

### **401-1 The Board of Elders**

**401-1.1** The Board of Elders shall be composed of the minister and all of the active elders of the congregation. The active elders shall be elected by majority vote of the congregation. They shall be mature men who meet the qualifications of Scripture (1Tim.3; Titus 1; 1Pe.5). If the congregation has more qualified elders than are needed to serve at one time, the number of active elders shall be determined by the congregation by ballot vote upon recommendation of the Board of Elders.

**401-1.2** The Board of Elders shall elect one of its members to serve as chairman and one of its members to serve as secretary. Two thirds of the membership of the board shall constitute a quorum.

**401-1.3** The Board of Elders shall have the general oversight of the life and work of the church, including worship, preaching, ordinances, evangelism, visitation, discipline, finances, and maintenance of the properties.

**401-1.4** Because they are “undershepherds” and not “lords,” the elders shall rule the congregation according to the direction of Christ, the Chief Shepherd, as expressed in the Scriptures and according to the needs of the membership. They shall conduct at least one congregational meeting per year to report the status of the work to the congregation. When they deem it advisable, they shall present recommendations to the congregation. The congregation shall have the right to agree with, to suggest changes in, or to disagree with such recommendations. Agreement indicates that the congregation is ready to follow the leadership of the Board of Elders. Suggesting changes indicates that the congregation believes that the Board of Elders has overlooked some factors and should revise its recommendation. Disagreement indicates that the congregation is not ready to follow the leadership of the elders.

**401-1.5** Even though the elders are to rule under Christ’s authority, and although the congregation is to follow, the elders should use wisdom and carefully consider the propriety of taking action that is not supported by the congregation. It is the responsibility of the Board of Elders not only to lead but also to provide sufficient information, sound reasoning, and ample time for the congregation to follow intelligently.

**401-1.6** The elders must distinguish between those areas of disagreement that are matters of preference and those that are matters of principle. Even though the decisions of the congregation are not binding on the elders according to the authority invested in the office in the Scriptures, the elders must seek to rule in harmony with the decisions of the congregation except when the standards of

Scripture would be violated, the cause of Christ harmed, or the F&O violated. Whenever there is disagreement, the Board of Elders should consider prayerfully the reasons for the disagreement by the congregation in determining the appropriate action to be taken by the board in the exercise of its leadership.

**401-1.7** The Board of Elders shall be the channel of communication between the Particular Church and the fellowship of churches and its organizations. The Elders shall nominate from their number and the congregation shall elect the appropriate number of delegates and alternate delegates based on congregational membership as follows:

1-299 members	1 delegate
300-499 members	2 delegates
500-749 members	3 delegates
750-999 members	4 delegates
1000 and over members	5 delegates

When congregations have more than one delegate, the Board of Elders shall designate one delegate as “First Delegate” for the purposes of pulpit supply procedures. In the event of death, resignation, or removal of the First Delegate, another First Delegate shall be designated from among the remaining delegates.

A man serving on a pastoral staff is not eligible to serve as a lay delegate to BFC Conference.

**401-1.8 The Election and Installation of Elders.** Every congregation shall elect elders, in keeping with the qualifications set forth in the Scriptures. Elders must be male members in full communion in the church in which they are to hold this position.

The term of service shall be decided by the Particular Church by congregational vote but shall not be for less than three years, except when a Particular Church desires a probationary term of service for newly chosen elders. When possible, the Board of Elders shall be divided into not fewer than three classes, as determined by the congregational vote in each of the Particular Churches. When a church chooses to elect elders for an unlimited term, the requirement for classes does not apply.

In the event of a vacancy by death, resignation, or removal, a man may be elected to complete the unexpired term.

When a man has been elected to this position and has declared his willingness to accept its responsibilities, he shall be set apart in the following manner. In a service of worship, the minister shall state in a concise manner the warrant and nature of the position of elder, together with the spiritual qualifications required

for its exercise and the duties to be fulfilled. He shall then ask the candidate, in the presence of the congregation, the following questions:

- (1) Do you believe the Scriptures of the Old and New Testament to be the Word of God, the only infallible rule of faith and conduct?
- (2) Are you in agreement with the Articles of Faith of the Bible Fellowship Church?
- (3) Will you endeavor to follow the Principles of Order of the Bible Fellowship Church?
- (4) Do you accept the position of elder in the congregation and promise faithfully to perform all of the duties thereof?
- (5) Do you promise to promote the purity, peace and unity of the church?

After the elder-elect has answered these questions in the affirmative, the minister shall ask the members of the church the following questions:

- (1) Do you, the members of the church, acknowledge and receive this brother as an elder?
- (2) Do you promise to yield him all honor, encouragement, and obedience in the Lord to which his position entitles him?

After all members of the church have answered these questions in the affirmative by holding up their right hands, the minister shall proceed to set apart the candidate by prayer to the position of elder and shall give to him and to the congregation an exhortation suited to the occasion.

**401-1.9** The Board of Elders in each Particular Church shall determine which men are in agreement with the Articles of Faith and who will endeavor to follow the Principles of Order of the BFC. Each Elder shall annually declare in writing his agreement with the Articles of Faith, and his willingness to follow the Principles of Order of the BFC, and this declaration be included in the Board of Elders Report to the Congregation. No man can be divested of this position except by deposition for failure to maintain standards of doctrine and life in keeping with the dignity of the position.

#### **401-2 The Board of Deacons**

**401-2.1** The Board of Deacons shall be composed of all deacons duly elected by and from the congregation, and who meet the qualifications of the Scriptures. They shall be mature believers who demonstrate spiritual wisdom and compassion so that they might serve the needy in a Christlike, merciful manner.

**401-2.2** The Board of Deacons shall serve under the direction of the Board of Elders and shall elect a chairman and a secretary from among the membership of the board. The secretary shall be responsible to report the actions of the deacons to the Board of Elders. Two thirds of the board shall constitute a quorum.

**401-2.3** The general responsibility of the deacons is one of sympathetic and benevolent service to the church, to the distressed, and to the friendless and sick, showing the mercy and concern of the church for the material and natural needs of others. The deacons shall assume the responsibility to care for such specific benevolent and material services as directed them by the Board of Elders.

**401-2.4** The function of the deacons is to see that the material and natural needs of the church constituency are met so that the elders can give freely of their time and concern to the spiritual needs of the congregation.

**401-2.5** Election and Installation of Deacons. Each congregation may elect deacons in keeping with the qualifications set forth in Scripture. Deacons must be members in full communion in the church in which they are to hold their position.

The Deacon's term shall be determined by the Particular Church by congregational vote, but shall not be for less than three years, except when a Particular Church desires a probationary term of service for newly chosen deacons. When possible, the Board of Deacons shall be divided into not fewer than three classes as determined by congregational vote in each of the Particular Churches.

In the event of a vacancy by death, resignation, or removal, a member may be elected to fill the unexpired term.

In a service of worship, the minister shall state in a concise manner the warrant and nature of the position of deacon, together with the Scriptural qualifications required for its exercise and the duties to be fulfilled. He shall then ask the candidate, in the presence of the congregation, the following questions:

- (1) Do you believe the Scriptures of the Old and New Testament to be the Word of God, the only infallible rule of faith and conduct?
- (2) Do you accept the position of deacon in the congregation and promise faithfully to perform this ministry of service?
- (3) Do you promise to promote the purity, peace, and unity of the church?

After the deacon-elect has answered these questions in the affirmative, the minister shall ask the members of the church the following questions:

- (1) Do you, the members of this church, acknowledge and receive this brother (or sister) as a deacon?
- (2) Do you promise to give him (her) all of the honor, encouragement, and support in the Lord to which this position entitles him (or her)?

After the members of the church have answered these questions in the affirmative by holding up their right hands, the minister shall proceed to set apart the candidate by prayer to the position of deacon and shall give to him (or her) and to the congregation an exhortation suited to the occasion.

## **Article 402 - Church Committees**

The Board of Elders shall have the general oversight of the life and work of the church, including worship, preaching, ordinances, evangelism, visitation, discipline, finances, and maintenance of the properties.

### **402-1 Required Committee**

**402-1.1 Pastoral Relations Committee.** The Board of Elders of every church shall designate a Pastoral Relations Committee composed of elders.

#### **Purpose**

- (1) Encourage the pastor in his endeavor to minister to the congregation.
- (2) Promote good relationships between the pastor and the congregation.

#### **Duties**

- (1) Meet at least twice annually.
- (2) Conduct an annual review with the pastor. The annual review (Resources for Churches) may be used as a guideline.
- (3) Receive communication and be a liaison between the pastor, his staff, and the congregation.
- (4) Annually review with each member of the pastoral staff the adequacy of his compensation and submit a proposed budget for salary and benefits.

### **402-2 Optional Committees**

**402-2.1** The Board of Elders may organize various committees to assist them in carrying out the work of the board when such assistance is necessary. The size of the congregation and the nature and amount of work to be done will determine the nature and number of committees appointed.

**402-2.2** Should the Board of Elders decide that it needs committees to carry out its work, the committees organized may be subdivisions of the Board of Elders or may be appointed from among the membership of the congregation, subject to the approval of the Board of Elders.

**402-2.3** All church committees organized shall be subordinate to the Board of Elders.

**402-2.4** Some suggested committees for consideration are Membership and Discipline, Ordinances, Building and Maintenance, Missionary, Evangelism, Finance, Christian Education, Benevolence, Music, Visitation, and Nominations.



## **Article 403 - Congregational Meetings**

### **403-1 Miscellaneous Information**

**403-1.1** The congregational meeting of the Particular Church is composed of any and all members of that congregation meeting in an official capacity duly organized according to the Principles of Order and Article 18 of the Articles of Faith. Only those members of the Particular Church conducting the meeting who are present and have attained the age of 16 years are eligible to vote.

**403-1.2** The Board of Elders shall conduct at least one regular congregational meeting each year. Special meetings may be called by action of the Board of Elders. Calls for special meetings shall include a statement of the purpose of the meeting, and no other business shall be conducted. Prayer shall be offered at the beginning and close of all congregational meetings.

**403-1.3** The Board of Elders shall appoint an elder or pastor to serve as chairman of congregational meetings. The secretary of the Board of Elders shall serve as secretary of the congregational meeting. If either of these officers cannot serve in a specific meeting, another elder shall be chosen by the Board of Elders to bear the responsibility. A quorum shall consist of the chairman, the secretary, and all of the eligible voters present.

**403-1.4** The congregational meeting(s) shall include the electing of officers, receiving of reports of officers and committees, and any other business that may arise. The annual report of the Board of Elders to the congregation shall include a summary of the membership of the congregation and a financial statement. This report shall be the source of the information for the report of the congregation to the BFC Conference.

**403-1.5** The secretary shall keep adequate and accurate minutes of all congregational meetings. The Board of Elders shall ensure that a copy of the minutes of all congregational meetings held during the year is sent to the Committee on Examination of Minutes of Particular Churches. The copy(ies) shall be delivered to the designated address by the date set by BFC Conference.

### **403-2 Elections in Congregational Meetings**

**403-2.1** Elections That Use a Nominating Committee. A Particular Church may use a nominating committee to make nominations for church officers or leaders when this desire is expressed by a local congregational resolution. The pastor shall be a member of this committee.

In an election in which a nominating committee is used, the Nominating Committee shall bring to the meeting nominations of one or more eligible persons for each office to be filled.

Each Particular Church shall determine whether additional nominations shall or shall not be received from the floor when a nominating committee is used.

**403-2.2** Elections in Which All Nominations Are Made From the Floor. In an election in which nominations are made exclusively in the congregational meeting, ballots shall be used to nominate the candidates.

Each Particular Church shall adopt those additional procedures in its local bylaws that ensure that only qualified persons be nominated.

A majority of votes shall be necessary for election. After the first ballot has been cast, if there is no election, the name of the candidate receiving the fewest votes shall be dropped. In the event that a candidate receives two-thirds of the votes cast in the nominating ballot, he may be declared elected by congregational affirmation.

**403-3 Suggested Format for Congregational Meetings.**

- (1) Prayer: The meeting shall be opened with prayer
- (2) Roll Call: The roll shall be called at all congregational meetings, regular and special. The roll call shall include all church officers and all individuals responsible for reporting at the regular meeting(s)
- (3) Approval of Minutes of Previous Meeting(s)
- (4) Reports (Annual Congregational Meeting)

**Report of the Board of Elders, to include at least the following:**

- Membership Report
- Financial Report(s), including evidence of annual review
- Submission of the proposed church budget
- Record of Designation of the Pastoral Relations Committee
- Record of Elders' Declaration of Agreement with the Articles of Faith and willingness to follow the Principles of Order
- Status of the Work
- Benevolence Report (may be included in the Board of Deacons Report or in the Financial Report)
- Recommendations

**Report of the Board of Deacons**

**Reports as required by the bylaws of the Particular Church:**

- Sunday Bible School
- Youth Fellowship
- Adult Fellowship(s)
- Women's Missionary Society
- Special Committees

- Pastor
  - Etc.
- (5) Old Business: All motions properly recorded
  - (6) New Business: All motions properly recorded
  - (7) Election of Church Officers: All elections properly recorded. A complete list of the Elders who will be serving the congregation in the new church year shall be included in the minutes so that BFC Conference can verify that the Delegate and Alternate Delegate are active Elders in the congregation.
  - (8) Petition(s) to BFC Conference
  - (9) Adjournment with closing prayer
  - (10) Minutes are to be signed by the secretary.

**403-4 Format for Special Congregational Meetings**

- (1) Prayer: The meeting shall be opened with prayer.
- (2) Roll Call
- (3) Statement of Purpose: The purpose of the special meeting must be stated at the beginning of the minutes of the meeting, and business shall be limited to the stated purpose of the meeting. Any action must be properly recorded.
- (4) Adjournment with prayer
- (5) Minutes are to be signed by the Secretary.

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## **Article 404 - Choosing Leaders Other Than Elders and Deacons**

**404-1** Should the Board of Elders deem it necessary to have positions of church leadership other than elders and deacons, and other than officers and leaders of church organizations, it shall recommend to the congregation the creation of such positions of leadership. If the congregation approves, such leaders shall be chosen by one of the following ways:

- (1) Election by congregational vote upon being presented by a nominating committee and nominated by congregational ballot
- (2) Appointment by the Board of Elders

**404-2** Though these leaders may not meet all of the Biblical qualifications for the position of elder, nevertheless their lives shall be in keeping with the Biblical Principles for Living. Being chosen for one of these positions of leadership does not make one a member of the Board of Elders or the Board of Deacons.

**404-3** The following shall be the procedure in case of death, resignation, or removal of a church leader other than an elder or deacon:

- (1) The Board of Elders shall review and act on the resignation or removal of the leader.
- (2) The Board of Elders shall either appoint someone or determine the time of a congregational meeting to fill the position vacated owing to death, resignation, or removal.

**404-4** Officers and other leaders in church organizations shall be elected or appointed in harmony with the F&O and according to the bylaws of the Particular Church and/or the bylaws of the organization.

## **Article 405 - Communication of Particular Churches to BFC Conference**

**405-1** Any Particular Church has the right to petition BFC Conference to request its action or guidance. A petition must be approved by a majority vote of those present and voting at a duly called congregational meeting and must appear in the minutes. It must be placed on the agenda of BFC Conference and the answer to the Particular Church placed in the minutes of BFC Conference. The Secretary of the Board of Elders shall be responsible for forwarding the petition to the Secretary of BFC Conference. Petitions received by March 1 shall be guaranteed consideration in that session of BFC Conference. Those received after March 1 will be held for consideration in the next conference year. The Secretary of BFC Conference shall send copies to each pastor a month before BFC Conference.

**405-2** The Board of Elders of a Particular Church has the right to request the action or guidance of BFC Conference on issues confronting the Particular Church. There may be times when it will be inadvisable for the whole congregation to be involved in the approach to BFC Conference. The request to BFC Conference must be approved in a duly called board of Elders meeting and appear in the minutes. The delegate of this church may introduce the board's request as a motion from the floor of BFC Conference. When a board intends to use this method, the Secretary and the Moderator of BFC Conference should be notified of its intention by April 1.

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## **Article 406 - Other Organizations in the Particular Church**

### **406-1 Sunday Bible School**

**406-1.1** The Sunday Bible School is a key ministry of the local church for fulfilling its responsibility to teach the Scriptures to people of all ages and encourage them to believe on Jesus as Savior and Lord. As such, each church should exercise prayerful care and concern in the organization and leadership of this ministry.

**406-1.2** The leadership of the Sunday Bible School should come from among the membership of the Particular Church, be elected by the congregation or appointed by the Board of Elders, and be responsible to the Board of Elders.

**406-1.3** The potential for ministry through the Sunday Bible School is unlimited; therefore the leadership should address the following areas but also seek to expand beyond them when resources and the availability of gifted people make it possible:

- (1) Recruit staff and teachers that are believers.
- (2) Insure that teachers are in sympathy with and teach in agreement with the Articles of Faith and Biblical Principles for Living of the BFC.
- (3) Provide curriculum that is in compliance with the Articles of Faith and Biblical Principles for Living of the BFC.
- (4) Provide teaching aids, equipment and other resources for the staff that will assist them in their ministry.
- (5) Evaluate the total ministry of the Sunday Bible School periodically in order to encourage the staff and make improvements.
- (6) Provide a program of teacher training and enrichment.
- (7) Keep records as requested by the Board of Elders.

**406-1.4** Expanded information and bylaw suggestions for the Sunday Bible School are available in the appendix: Resources for Churches.

### **406-2 Mission Organizations**

**406-2.1** Each Particular Church is encouraged to establish organizations that will promote and assist in the carrying out its task of world evangelization. Organizations so established are encouraged to inform the Board of Missions and Church Extension Ministries of their officers in order that information can be circulated to and coordinated with similar organizations from other Particular Churches. Suggested bylaws for such organizations are available in the appendix: Resources for Churches.

**406-2.2** Regional Mission Organization Programs. The Board of Missions and

Church Extension Ministries may coordinate regional programs as deemed advisable.

**406-2.3** Conference-Wide Mission Organization Programs. The Board of Missions shall coordinate Conference-Wide mission meetings and events as deemed advisable. Committees to promote such programs shall be appointed by the Board of Missions.

### **406-3 Youth Organizations**

**406-3.1** “Remember also your Creator in the days of your youth. . . The conclusion when all has been heard, is: fear God and keep His commandments, because this applies to every person” (Ecc.12:1,13, NASB). “Let no one look down on your youthfulness, but rather in speech, conduct, love, faith, and purity, show yourself an example of those who believe” (1Tim.4:12, NASB).

**406-3.2** Reflecting on these Scripture passages, the BFC recognizes and joyfully accepts its responsibility and privilege of ministering to youth. The goal of this ministry is to be used of God to help young people experience the new birth in committing themselves to Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord, to guide them into Christian maturity so that they may be “an example of those who believe,” and to offer them training and opportunities in Christian service. Further, this ministry seeks to develop future leadership for the church (cf. Philosophy of Christian Education, Bylaws of the Board of Christian Education).

**406-3.3** Programs to attain these goals are to be developed by the Particular Churches and the denomination. Particular Churches may have specific organizations whose function is to minister to youth. Such organizations may be parachurch agencies having affiliations outside the BFC, or they may be the Youth Fellowship of the Particular Church. In either situation the youth organization shall be under the control of the Board of Elders of the Particular Church.

**406-3.4** The doctrinal standards, teachings, goals, and programs of all para-church agencies incorporated into the youth ministry of any BFC shall be in compliance with the F&O.

**406-3.5** Churches functioning with their own Youth Fellowship are encouraged to formulate a Youth Fellowship Constitution. This constitution shall provide the Youth Fellowship with an organizational structure and the effective means of attaining its goals. This document shall include a statement of purpose and goals, a definition of and requirements for membership, a listing of officers and their duties, and regulations for election of officers. The constitution shall stipulate that all officers shall be those who profess Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord and who give evidence of this profession in Christian conduct. The Board of Christian Education offers to serve as a consultant for any Particular Church formulating a Youth Fellowship Constitution.

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**406-3.6** To promote regional ministries and activities for the youth of the BFC, Youth Fellowship regions may be established under the direction of the Board of Christian Education. This may be done on the initiative of the Board of Christian Education, or on the initiative of several churches within a given geographic area. In the latter case, the Board of Christian Education shall be consulted by the cooperating churches. In either case the formulation of a constitution is encouraged. To facilitate the coordination of regional and denominational activities, notification of regional activities shall be forwarded to the Secretary of the Board of Christian Education.

**406-3.7** To promote ministries and activities for the youth of the BFC, denominational programs shall be formulated, planned, and operated by the Board of Christian Education. These shall be in compliance with the Bylaws of the Board of Christian Education and the F&O.



## **Article 407 - Miscellaneous Bylaws**

### **407-1 Legal Representatives**

**407-1.1** In an incorporated congregation the authorized legal representatives shall be chosen from among the members of the Board of Elders according to its respective Articles of Incorporation.

**407-1.2** When an incorporated congregation becomes incapable of electing elders and seeks to maintain its work, the BFC Executive Board shall appoint elders who, on ratification by the congregation, shall become the corporate officers of the Particular Church.

**407-1.3** In an unincorporated congregation, three trustees shall be elected by and from the Board of Elders to be the authorized legal representatives.

### **407-2 Church Assessment**

The Particular Churches, through their representatives to the BFC Conference adopt the BFC Annual Budget with a Church Assessment Rate each year. This rate is a percentage of the regular offering from the previous calendar year. (For instance, The BFC Annual Budget for 2006 is adopted at the BFC Conference in 2005. It includes the adoption of a Church Assessment Rate of percentage of the regular offerings reported for 2004. The amount is provided in the Particular Church Budget for 2006 to fund the BFC Annual Budget for that year.)

### **407-3 Offerings**

- (1) Board of Christian Education - annually to its Treasurer by April 1.
- (2) Church Extension - quarterly to its Treasurer
- (3) Victory Valley Camp - yearly, by March 1 to its Financial Secretary
- (4) Board of Missions - quarterly to its Financial Secretary of the Board of Missions.
- (5) Pinebrook Bible Conference - annually to the Director
- (6) All monies due to Conference boards and committees shall be forwarded to them prior to December 31 of the year in which they are to be reported.

### **407-4 Congregational minutes and records.**

Each Particular Church is encouraged to place its minutes and past records in the denominational archives for storage and preservation, where they will be available to the local church as it desires and available to those doing study and research.

**407-5** Each pastor shall inform the Registrar of BFC Conference of the names of the duly elected BFC Conference delegate(s) and alternate delegate(s) by way of the BFC Conference Registration Form.

**407-6** Congregations shall consult with the BFC Executive Board prior to establishing any gift annuities and shall list all gift annuity obligations annually in their financial report to the congregation.

## **Article 408 - Church Properties**

**408-1** The title of church property where the church is incorporated shall be conveyed directly to the Corporation. In cases in which the church is not incorporated, the conveyance shall be made to a Board of Trustees duly elected according to the Rules of the BFC Conference (setting forth their names), their successors, and assigns. Whether the title is conveyed to a corporation or to a Board of Trustees, the title shall contain a trust clause in the following words:

**In trust for the use of the ministry and membership of the \_\_\_\_\_ Church of the Bible Fellowship Church at \_\_\_\_\_ subject to the doctrines, laws, usages, and ministerial appointments of the BFC Conference of the Bible Fellowship Church incorporated under the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania as from time to time established, made and declared by the lawful authorities of the said church, and if the said property shall be sold or encumbered, the proceeds of the sale or the encumbrance shall be applied for the use of the aforesaid, subject, however, to the provisions of the law of the church relating to abandoned church properties and of that forbidding mortgaging of real estate for current expenses.**

**408-2** The title to parsonages shall be conveyed in like manner as that for the churches and shall contain the following clause of trust:

**In trust, that said premises shall be kept, maintained, and disposed of as a place of residence for the use and occupancy of the preachers of the Bible Fellowship Church who are from time to time duly appointed in said place according to the rules and usages of said church, and if sold, the proceeds to be used according to the rules of said church. If the congregation controlling this property shall be disbanded, the property shall be controlled and disposed of according to the rules of the Bible Fellowship Church.**

**408-3** In instances where a Particular Church loses its corporate officers, votes to close, and abandons its property, the BFC Executive Board is authorized to appoint surrogate elders, to settle its affairs in closing the church, and to sell its properties, with any residual proceeds going to the Bible Fellowship Church

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## **Article 409 – Pastoral Change Procedure**

The orderly transition of pastoral leadership is crucial to the health of a church. As the Chief Shepherd, Jesus Christ should be invoked to provide for the care of His under shepherds, the pastors, and for the needs of His flock, the congregation. The Ministerial Relations Committee is responsible to provide guidance to both pastors and churches during this transition.

### **409-1 Instituting the Pastoral Relationship**

**409- 1.1** When a church is seeking a Pastor, the Board of Elders shall meet with representatives of the Ministerial Relations Committee to discuss the following:

- (1) Temporary pulpit supply. The Board of Elders shall provide for temporary pulpit supply on an interim basis. Pastors serving in this capacity shall be in sympathy with the F & O of the BFC. The Board of Elders may hire an Interim Pastor to provide more stability during the pastoral vacancy. If the Board of Elders decides to hire an Interim Pastor who does not hold BFC credentials, they must obtain the approval of the Ministerial Relations Committee. The responsibilities and remuneration of the Interim Pastor shall be established by the Board of Elders. The term of service, whether he is BFC credentialed or not, shall be up to a year, and may be renewed on an annual basis with the approval of the Board of Elders and Ministerial Relations Committee.(2) Election of a pastoral search committee.
- (3) Congregational self-study, pastoral profile, and candidate search procedures.
- (4) Rules for calling a pastor.

**409-1.2** The Board of Elders shall call a congregational meeting according to our rules (see §403) in order to elect a pastoral search committee. The Board of Elders shall recommend the composition, size and election of the pastoral search committee. The committee may vary from church to church, but in all cases shall be viewed as subordinate to the Board of Elders. Under normal circumstances, the chairman of the pastoral search committee shall be an elder.

**409-1.3** The Pastoral Search Committee shall maintain regular communication with the chairman of the Ministerial Relations Committee concerning progress in the pastoral search. The Ministerial Relations Committee shall seek to provide guidance and advice to the Pastoral Search Committee in its work.

**409-1.4** The Pastoral Search Committee shall seek a candidate who is fitted to the needs of the church and is or will be licensed to serve as a pastor in the BFC. If a candidate is not licensed to serve as a pastor in the BFC, he shall be referred to the Ministerial Candidate Committee. Under ordinary circumstances, the candidate must gain final approval by regular procedures in order to be called by the church.

**409-1.5** On certain exceptional occasions, it may be necessary to expedite the procedure for issuing a call to a man who is previously ordained but not licensed by the BFC.

These circumstances are when:

- (1) geographic distance allows limited direct contact.
- (2) the demands of current ministry do not allow for the normal process.
- (3) the church applies for special consideration because of urgent circumstances.

The expedited process is as follows:

- (1) The church shall request the chairman of the Ministerial Relations Committee to use the expedited process. He, in consultation with the chairman of the Ministerial Candidate Committee, approves or disapproves the request.
- (2) If the request is approved, the Ministerial Candidate Committee shall interview the man. If he is approved as a candidate under our rules (see §511-4.5), he shall be given the Open Book Examination.
- (3) Upon the satisfactory completion of the Open Book Examination, the church may seek to issue a call, which is provisional.
- (4) After the provisional call is issued, the man shall complete all other examinations and requirements of the Ministerial Candidate Committee before beginning the new ministry or moving into church-provided housing.
- (5) When all examinations and requirements are satisfactorily completed, the Ministerial Candidate Committee will approve the man as a licensed probationer (see §511-4.4), effective on the date of the approval of his final examination. The Ministerial Relations Committee will recognize the provisional call as the formal call on the same date.

**409-1.6** When the Pastoral Search Committee has completed its work, it shall recommend a candidate to the Board of Elders. The Board of Elders shall conduct any other research or interviews it deems necessary, including establishing the terms of the call.

**409-1.7** When the Board of Elders is ready to present a candidate to the congregation, it shall inform the chairman of the Ministerial Relations Committee of the name and of the terms of the call. The purpose of this consultation is to protect the candidate, the church, and the BFC from unnecessary difficulties. The Ministerial Relations Committee shall have one week to approve or disapprove of the presentation of the candidate to the congregation.

**409-1.8** If the Ministerial Relations Committee approves the presentation of the candidate, the Board of Elders shall call a congregational meeting according to

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our rules (see §403) for the purpose of calling a pastor.

**409-1.9** The congregational meeting shall be led by the First Delegate or, at his request, a member of the Ministerial Relations Committee. Following the report of the pastoral search committee and/or the Board of Elders, the congregation shall vote on the question, “Are you ready to proceed to the calling of a pastor?” If a majority of members present and voting approve, a vote shall be taken to call the pastor. This vote shall be by written ballot. Absentee ballots are not allowed. The leader of the meeting shall announce the outcome of the vote and inform the congregation that the next step in the process is the approval or disapproval of the call by the Ministerial Relations Committee.

**409-1.10** The Ministerial Relations Committee shall be informed of the outcome of the vote. The purpose of this consultation is to advise the Board of Elders concerning the issuing of a call and to approve or disapprove it. If the vote is approved by a strong majority, the Elders will be advised to proceed with the issuing of a call. If the vote is not approved by a strong majority, the Elders may be advised to consider options other than issuing a call. The Ministerial Relations Committee shall have the final authority to approve or disapprove the call.

**409-1.11** Upon receiving the approval of the Ministerial Relations Committee, the Board of Elders may proceed to issue a call to the pastor as follows:

**The (name) Church, of (city and state), believing that you are well-qualified to serve as our pastor for the glory of God and our spiritual benefit, invite you,**

**(name of candidate) to accept this call to serve as our (title of pastor) promising you all proper support, encouragement, and obedience in the Lord.**

**In order to provide for your needs, we promise to pay you an annual salary of \$\_\_\_\_\_ together with additional benefits as follows; (other benefits may include provision of housing as agreed upon by you and the church, housing allowance, educational or professional allowances). We also will provide (number of weeks) vacation each year.**

**We also will pay into your Minister’s Annuity Fund the percentage of your salary established by *BFC* Conference.**

**We will also pay you a sum equivalent to your self-employment tax (FICA).**

**We will also provide health insurance for you and your family, equivalent to a standard set by the *BFC* Executive Board and agreed on by you and the church.**

**And we promise to review with you the adequacy of this compensation annually. We, the elders of \_\_\_\_\_ Church, sign our names to this call on   (date)  .**

**409-1.12** Upon receiving the approval of the Ministerial Relations Committee (see §409-1.9), the Board of Elders or Agency Board may proceed to issue a bi-vocational call as follows:

**The   (church / agency)  , believing that you are well-qualified to serve as pastor for the glory of God and the benefit of His church, invite you   (name of candidate)   to accept this call to serve in the office of   (position / title)  , promising you all proper support, encouragement and obedience in the Lord.**

**In order to help provide for your needs, we promise to pay you an annual salary of \$                  , together with additional benefits as follows: (other benefits may include parsonage use, housing allowance, educational or professional allowances). We also will provide   (number of weeks)   vacation each year.**

**We also will pay into your Ministers Annuity Fund the percentage of your salary established by *BFC* Conference.**

**We also will pay you a sum equivalent to your self-employment tax (FICA).**

**(The following sentence is optional.)**

**We also will provide health insurance agreed on by you and the   (church / agency)  .**

**This is a call to serve bi-vocationally, that is, with the understanding that you will provide part of your support through other employment than the ministerial position to which we are calling you.**

**We promise to review with you the adequacy of this call and its conditions each year, to increase our provision for your support as we are able, and to provide full support for you as soon as it is possible.**

**We sign our names to this call on   (date)  .**

**409-1.13** An Agency of the BFC may call a person to serve in its ministry. In such cases the board of directors of the Agency shall act in the place of the Board of Elders, Pastoral Search Committee, and Congregation. As in the case of a call to a Particular Church, the Ministerial Relations Committee shall approve the name, the terms, and the call of the candidate. The form of the call shall be modeled after the form for Particular Churches (see §409-1.11).

*(Paragraphs §409-1.1 - 409-1.13 refer to the calling of a Senior Pastor in a church with more than one pastor; or the only Pastor in a church with one pastor. In churches with more than one pastor, the elders may choose to adopt the procedure in paragraph §409-1.14)*

**409-1.14** In churches with more than one pastor, the elders may choose to call a pastor other than the Senior Pastor as follows: The Board of Elders shall serve as the Pastoral Search Committee and shall issue a call without a congregational vote.

The Ministerial Relations Committee shall approve the name, the terms and the call of the candidate. The form of the call shall be modeled after the call in paragraph §409-1.11. The call shall be communicated to the congregation.

**409-1.15** Upon receiving the call from the church or agency, the candidate has three weeks to accept or reject the call in writing. If the candidate accepts the call, the Ministerial Relations Committee shall set the effective date in consultation with the candidate and the church.

## **409-2 Dissolving the Pastoral Relationship**

**409-2.1** An Uncontested Resignation. If a minister desires to resign from his pastorate the procedure is as follows:

- (1) Pastor submits his resignation to the church by sending a letter to the secretary of the Board of Elders. He shall at the same time submit a copy of the letter to the chairman of the Ministerial Relations Committee.
- (2) Board of Elders acts on the resignation.
  - (2.1) Special provisions (terms for remaining in the parsonage beyond effective date of resignation, extension of health care benefits, etc.), if any, shall be specified by additional resolutions.
  - (2.2) Ordinarily a resolution to accept a resignation is preceded by a whereas, or series of whereas clauses, which indicate the reason, or reasons, for the recommendation of the Board of Elders. Resolution(s) expressing appreciation for the ministry of the pastor may be included in the resolution(s) which recommend action on the resignation. The action of the Board of Elders shall be communicated to the chairman of the Ministerial Relations Committee prior to the effective date of the resignation.
- (3) The Board of Elders shall call a congregational meeting according to our rules (see §403) in order to consider the resignation of the pastor. When the congregation approves the resignation of the pastor, this information shall be communicated to the chairman of the Ministerial Relations Committee within one week. The special provisions made for the pastor's transition (see 2.1 above) may be announced by the Board of Elders or, if

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they so decide, approved by the Congregation, by a separate resolution at the same meeting.

#### **409-2.2 A Contested Resignation**

- (1) If the congregation approves a resolution from the Board of Elders recommending the resignation of the pastor be rejected, or if the congregation fails to pass a resolution from the Board of Elders recommending the resignation of the pastor be accepted, the congregation must at the same time approve “whereas” clauses which explain the reason for its action. This decision shall be communicated to the chairman of the Ministerial Relations Committee within twenty-four hours.
- (2) If a congregation takes action which either defeats a resolution to approve a resignation, or passes a resolution denying approval of the resignation of the pastor, the Ministerial Relations Committee shall, after weighing the reasons given for denying the resignation, either conclude the reasons given for denying the resignation are insufficient and approve the resignation with an effective date, or appeal the matter to the Conference Moderator with recommendation.

**409-2.3 Churches Desiring Dissolution of the Pastorate.** If a church desires a dissolution of the pastoral relation the procedure is as follows:

- (1) If the issues leading to a desire by the church to dissolve the pastorate involve moral or doctrinal charges against the pastor, the church shall follow the procedure outlined in the Book of Discipline (see §300).
- (2) If the issues leading to a desire by the church to dissolve the pastorate do not involve moral or doctrinal charges against the pastor the process is as follows:
  - (2.1) When, by resolution, a Board of Elders concludes there are issues which threaten continuation of the pastorate it shall, in consultation with the Pastoral Relations Committee, provide in writing to the pastor, a list of issues of concern and proposed solutions. This communication shall include a statement indicating that failure to resolve these issues could lead to a desire to dissolve the pastoral relationship. This constitutes “formal notice,” that the continuance of the pastorate is in question. Although “formal notice” is a serious step, it is not necessarily a public step.
  - (2.2) Accordingly, when “formal notice” is given to a pastor, representatives of the Ministerial Relations Committee shall meet with both parties to offer counsel and advice, upon the written request of either party.
  - (2.3) When a Board of Elders issues “formal notice”, the Pastoral Relations Committee shall meet with the pastor no less than quarterly



- in an effort to resolve outstanding issues and it shall provide the pastor with a written progress report at least semi-annually, in respect to all issues of concern.
- (2.4) If, after making every effort to resolve issues that threaten the pastorate, the Board of Elders reaches the conclusion it can no longer support sustaining the pastoral relationship, it shall pass whereas clauses and resolutions which indicate its desire to end the pastoral relationship and the reasons it has reached this conclusion. Copies of these resolutions shall be provided to the pastor and the Ministerial Relations Committee within forty-eight hours. The Ministerial Relations Committee shall, at the same time, be supplied with copies of the “formal notice,” and all follow-up written communication to the pastor by the Board of Elders or the Pastoral Relations Committee.
- (2.5) Upon receipt of a formal request by a Board of Elders to terminate a pastorate, the Ministerial Relations Committee shall meet with the Board of Elders and the Pastor to discuss the situation.
- (2.6) Following the meeting with the Board of Elders and the Pastor, the Ministerial Relations Committee shall either (a) approve the request of the Board of Elders to submit a resolution calling for dissolution of the pastorate to the congregation, or, (b) deny the request of the Board of Elders to proceed toward dissolution of the pastorate. Denial of a request to proceed toward dissolving the pastorate shall be accompanied by reasons for the decision, recommendations regarding how to restore the health of the pastorate, and assignment of a member, or members, of the Ministerial Relations Committee to work with the church and the pastor as they seek to restore the relationship.
- (2.7) If the Ministerial Relations Committee allows the request of the Board of Elders to dissolve the pastorate to be submitted to the congregation, the pastor may appeal by sending, within one week, a certified letter to the Conference Moderator.
- (2.8) If the Ministerial Relations Committee denies the request of the Board of Elders to proceed toward the dissolution of the pastorate, the Board of Elders may appeal by sending, within one month, a certified letter signifying its appeal to the Conference Moderator.
- (2.9) Should a decision of the Ministerial Relations Committee to permit the Board of Elders to proceed toward dissolution of the pastorate not be appealed to the BFC Conference within one week, the Board of Elders shall schedule and announce a Congregational Meeting to deal with the resolution:
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Resolved, that the pastoral relationship between \_\_\_\_\_ (Church) and \_\_\_\_\_ (Pastor) be dissolved effective (date).

- (2.10) All terms of the dissolution of the pastorate, including date, special provisions (terms for remaining in the parsonage beyond effective date of resignation, extension of health care benefits, severance pay, etc.) shall be specified by additional resolutions. All terms of separation must be approved by the Ministerial Relations Committee before they are presented to the congregation. The chairman of the Ministerial Relations Committee, or his designee, will chair the congregational meeting called to act on dissolution of the pastoral relationship if the Ministerial Relations Committee determines this is in the best interest of the BFC Conference, or if requested to do so by the Board of Elders or the Pastor.
- (2.11) The Ministerial Relations Committee shall approve dissolution of the pastorate upon approval of the resolution to dissolve the pastorate by a majority of those members present and voting at the meeting. If the congregation votes to continue the pastorate with a large minority in dissent the Ministerial Relations Committee may affirm that decision, or conclude that the situation is beyond repair and inform the church and the pastor that it intends to bring the matter to the BFC Conference with a recommendation that the pastorate be terminated.
- (2.12) All decisions of the Ministerial Relations Committee which are appealable are addressed to the Conference Moderator, who shall have the authority to refer the matter to a committee he selects to make final judgement or, to the BFC Conference.

*Paragraphs §409-2.1 - 409-2.3 refer to the resignation of a Senior Pastor in a church with more than one pastor, or the only pastor in a church with one pastor. For pastors called under the procedures §409-1.4, the resignation shall be according to the procedure of §409-2.4.*

#### **409-2.4 Resignation or Removal of Pastors called by Boards of Elders.**

In the case of a pastor called under the procedure of §409-1.14, resignation or removal is as follows:

**Resignation** - The pastor submits his resignation to the Board of Elders. He shall submit a copy to the chairman of the Ministerial Relations Committee. The Board of Elders shall act on the resignation, including special provisions such as in §409-2.1. The Board of Elders shall inform the congregation of the effective date and terms of the resignation.

**Removal** - Boards of Elders shall adopt the procedure of §409-2.3 except that

following the due process of §409-2.3 (1) through (2.1-5) the Ministerial Relations Committee may approve the request of the Board of Elders to terminate the pastorate. The effective date and terms of the termination shall be communicated to the congregation. Paragraph §409-2.3 (2.12) is in effect in this situation.

**500**  
**Bylaws For BFC**  
**Conference**



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## **Article 501 - Ministry in the Bible Fellowship Church**

### **Procedure for the Recognition of a Minister**

All men who desire to have ministerial credentials with the BFC shall apply to the Ministerial Candidate Committee by filling out an application from the Committee.

Every man who is called to serve through the pulpit supply system as a pastor of a BFC must have credentials with the denomination. Men who serve as supply pastors for an extended period may be required to meet with and establish an accountability relationship with the Ministerial Candidate Committee. A supply pastor is a man who has been called to serve as pastor of a BFC for an interim period. Under normal circumstances, a supply pastor is not under consideration to serve as the senior pastor.

### **501-1 Men Entering the Ministry of the BFC**

The Ministerial Candidate Committee divides those under its care into three groups: Applicants, Candidates, and Probationers.

**Applicant.** An applicant is a man who offers himself to this committee for service in the BFC. Men are encouraged to seek this recognition as early in their educational program as they sense the call of God to the ministry.

**Candidate.** A candidate is a man whose application is accepted and who remains under the guidance of this committee. A man becomes a candidate when he is ready to begin ministry with the BFC and has completed a satisfactory interview with the Ministerial Candidate Committee.

**Probationer.** A probationer is a man who has been approved by this committee and has passed the required examinations. Upon completion of his required examinations, he will be classified as a probationer eligible to receive a call. When a probationer receives a call from the BFC (a Particular Church or department) or other ministry (chaplaincy, etc.) approved by the Ministerial Candidate Committee in consultation with the Credentials Committee, he shall become a licensed probationer. Such other ministry does not include service on the pastoral staff of a church other than a BFC.

## **501-2 Probationary Service**

**501-2.1** Full-time Probationary Service in a Particular Church or Mission. Normally a probationer serves in a full-time capacity. After a probationer has served at least two years, or one year if previously ordained, he may be recommended to the Credentials Committee for ordination examination or recognition of previous ordination. The minimum period of probationary service may be extended; having served as a probationer does not guarantee ordination or recognition of previous ordination.

In some instances, the time of probation for a man who is not previously ordained may be shortened by the Ministerial Candidate Committee to one year if he has served on the staff of a BFC in a full-time capacity for two or more years prior to the effective date of his license. In no case will the probationary service be less than one year. The Ministerial Candidate Committee shall determine the length of the probationary service after evaluating the prior service of the probationer.

**501-2.2** Part-time Probationary Service in a Particular Church or Mission. A man serving his probationary period on a part-time basis may do so with the following requirements:

- (1) He shall serve the equivalent of at least two years full-time service, or one year of full-time service if previously ordained, as determined by the Ministerial Candidate Committee in consultation with the Credentials Committee.
- (2) He shall serve at least one year under the supervision of a Board of Elders and/or another evaluating body approved by the Ministerial Candidate Committee and the Credentials Committee.

**501-2.3** Probationary Service in Other Ministry. If a man seeks ordination or recognition of previous ordination in the BFC and is not serving as the pastor of a Particular Church or mission, he may do so with the following requirements:

- (1) He shall be a member of a BFC
- (2) He shall follow the same procedure for ordination as other probationers
- (3) He shall comply with the F&O in the course of his service
- (4) He shall be supervised by the Board of Elders of the church in which he holds membership, the governing board of the ministry under which he serves, and any other evaluating agencies the Ministerial Candidate Committee may require during the probationary period of service. The time of the probationary service may be in full or part-time capacity.

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## **501-3 Ordained Ministers Received From Other Churches**

**501-3.1** When an ordained minister from another church seeks ministerial credentials in the BFC, he shall apply to the Ministerial Candidate Committee.

**501-3.2** The following matters shall be considered when determining whether to recognize a previous ordination:

- (1) the doctrinal position of the ordaining church body;
- (2) the minister's standing with the ordaining church body;
- (3) whether his ordination was intended to be within and to the ministry of the church universal;
- (4) whether his ordination was performed by the authority charged with the exercise of this specific church power within the ordaining community and accompanied by the laying on of hands by such as have themselves been similarly ordained.

**501-3.3** Under certain exceptional circumstances, a previously-ordained minister may be licensed through an expedited process (see §409-1.5)

**501-3.4** Having complied with these provisions, the minister shall be under the authority and discipline of the BFC.

**501-3.5** After serving at least one year as a probationer, he may be examined by the Credentials Committee. The Credentials Committee may then recommend to BFC Conference that he be accepted as an ordained minister with full privileges in the BFC. This recognition shall be made known in a public service.

## **501-4 Ordination**

The BFC understands ordination to the Christian ministry to be the laying-on of the hands of the elders of the church, accompanied by prayer and the public recognition by the church of gifts previously given by God to one called to the ministry of the Word of God. The examination for ordination is conducted by the Credentials Committee of the BFC. So long as an ordained minister maintains a relationship with this denomination, he remains under the care of the Credentials Committee, subscribing annually to the F&O.

**501-4.1 Form For Ordination of Ministers.** After all proper examinations and preparations have been made according to our rules and upon the approval of BFC Conference at the recommendation of the Credentials Committee, the probationer shall be ready for public ordination to the Christian ministry. The Credentials Committee shall be responsible for making proper preparation for the ordination service.

On the day appointed for the service of ordination, a minister shall preach an appropriate sermon.



The Chairman of the Credentials Committee, or another member of the committee appointed by him, shall then briefly cite the proceedings of the committee in preparation for ordination and the importance of the occasion. Then, addressing himself to the candidate, he shall propose to him the following questions:

- (1) Do you believe in one God – Father, Son and Holy Spirit – and do you confess anew the Lord Jesus Christ as your Savior and Lord and acknowledge Him Head over all things to the church, which is His body?
- (2) Do you believe the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments to be the inspired Word of God, the only infallible rule of faith and life?
- (3) Do you sincerely receive and adopt the Articles of Faith of the Bible Fellowship Church as containing the system of doctrine taught in the Holy Scriptures?
- (4) Will you endeavor to follow the government and discipline of the Bible Fellowship Church?
- (5) Do you promise subjection to your brethren in the Lord?
- (6) Have you been inwardly persuaded, as far as you know your own heart, to seek the office of the Christian ministry in response to God’s call, out of love for Him and a sincere desire to promote His glory in the Gospel of His Son?
- (7) Do you determine to be zealous and faithful in maintaining the truths of the Gospel and the purity and peace of the church, whatever persecution or opposition may arise unto you on that account?
- (8) Do you purpose to be faithful and diligent in the exercise of all your duties as a Christian and a minister of the Gospel both private and public, endeavoring by the grace of God to feed the flock of which God shall make you overseer, to seek the salvation of the lost, and to walk with exemplary piety before men?

The candidate, having answered these questions in the affirmative, shall kneel. He shall then be solemnly set apart to the Gospel ministry by the offering of prayer and the laying-on of hands of ministers according to the apostolic example.

Once prayer is concluded, he shall rise from his knees and the minister who presides shall take him by the right hand and say in effect:

- (1) (To candidate) “We give you the right hand of fellowship to take part in this ministry with us.”
- (2) (To congregation) “I now pronounce that (name of candidate) is ordained to the Gospel ministry, according to the Word of God and the Faith and Order of the Bible Fellowship Church; as such, he is entitled to all support, encouragement, honor, and obedience in the Lord. In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.”

Afterward, all of the ordained ministers of the BFC present shall welcome the newly-ordained brother to the ministry with the right hand of fellowship.

## **501-5 Retirement From the Ministry**

**501-5.1** Any minister holding credentials with the BFC and seeking retirement shall notify the Ministerial Credentials Committee of the BFC at least 90 days prior to the effective date of his retirement. The Ministerial Credentials Committee shall set the effective date of the retirement, change the status of the minister on the conference records, and notify the BFC Executive Board for purposes of pension payments. Those ministers pastoring a church shall dissolve the pastoral relationship through the Pastoral Change Procedure (see section 409-2).

## **Article 502 - BFC Conference**

**502-1** The assembly of churches shall represent, in one body, all the Particular Churches of this denomination and shall be called the Bible Fellowship Church Conference (BFC Conference).

**502-2** The BFC Conference performs the legislative function of our denomination. As such, it alone has the power to amend and the final authority to interpret the F & O. By this means it governs the affairs of the Particular Churches, and receives requests and petitions from the Particular Churches. Although it has these powers, it shall not subvert the autonomy of the Particular Churches.

**502-3** The BFC Conference also exercises final oversight of the judicial function of our denomination. In this capacity, it examines, licenses and ordains candidates for pastoral ministry, provides counsel in the calling of pastors to Particular Churches, supervises the resignation and removal of pastors, examines and approves or censures the records of Particular Churches, elects judicatories and serves as a final court of appeal in matters of discipline.

**502-4** The BFC Conference also provides for the executive function of our denomination. As such it elects a President and BFC Executive Board, ratifies the Executive Director, and approves the direction and planning proposed by the BFC Executive Board. To provide for this executive and administrative leadership, the BFC Conference has the authority to assess the Particular Churches a percentage of their offerings.

**502-5** The BFC Conference shall meet annually in performance of its responsibilities as outlined above. Officers and committees shall be elected and appointed each year in order to conduct its business in an efficient manner. The purpose of the annual gathering is to govern the BFC through the F&O, promote unity and fellowship between the churches, and to focus our vision on unified goals for our churches and their joint endeavors.

**502-6** The proceedings of the BFC Conference shall be conducted according to the Business Rules of BFC Conference (see 508). It shall keep and publish a record of its proceedings and make it available to the membership of the churches.

**502-7** BFC Conference convenes in April. The starting time and place of the Conference shall be recommended by the Committee on Agenda and Arrangements] and ratified by BFC Conference.

**502-8** An Adjourned Session of BFC Conference may be scheduled by action of BFC Conference or called by the Moderator by giving the members of BFC Conference a four-week written notification. The call for the meeting shall communicate the time, place, and purpose of the Adjourned Session of BFC Conference.

## **Article 503 - BFC Annual Budget**

### **503-1 Administration**

The BFC Annual Budget is administered by the BFC Executive Board. The Board prepares the budget and presents it to the BFC Conference for adoption. The budget provides for the executive administration of the BFC and includes, but is not limited to, salaries of the Executive Director and other employees, expenses of committees, pension obligations, administrative departments, and any other obligations or projects approved by the BFC Conference.

### **503-2 Funding**

The BFC Annual Budget is funded by the Church Assessment Rate. At the time that the BFC Executive Board presents the budget, a rate shall be recommended which provides for the funding of the budget. The rate shall be a percentage of the regular offerings received by the Particular Churches in the previous calendar year. The BFC Executive Board must present a balanced budget which is adequately funded by the assessment.

### **503-3 Adoption**

The BFC Annual Budget shall be adopted by a two-thirds majority of the BFC Conference. The budget shall include the Church Assessment Rate necessary to fund it, so that a vote for the budget is also a vote for the assessment. The BFC Conference shall not adopt an Annual Budget without approving the Church Assessment Rate which balances it.

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## **Article 504 - Membership of Congregations in BFC Conference**

### **504-1 Particular Church**

Any congregation meeting the standards of Article 18 of the Articles of Faith and committed to the F&O may be admitted to membership in BFC Conference and shall be known as a Particular Church. This admission must follow upon a positive assessment and recommendation by the Board of Church Extension. Assessment includes an evaluation of elders, committed participants and financial stability.

**504-1.1** All new Particular Churches are to be evaluated by the Church Health Committee for two years.

**504-1.2** Any congregation that reports any of the following criteria will allow the Church Health Committee to assist that Particular Church.

A Board of Elders that has declined to fewer than two active lay elders.

If there is a pattern of significant decline in membership, average attendance, and/or offerings.

**504-1.3** If a Particular Church meets one of the following criteria for a period of two years, the Executive Board may place it under the supervisory care of the Church Health Committee (see 511-3.3 Duty 6) upon the recommendation of the Church Health Committee:

It does not meet the standards of a Particular Church (Articles of Faith 18-4)

It does not have at least 20 members

It does not have at least two (2) lay elders

It cannot financially support its work

### **504-2 Mission Churches**

**504-2.1** Any congregation that is under the supervision of the Board of Church Extension of the BFC but has not yet met the standard for recognition as a Particular Church shall be called a mission church. The term “mission church” is used in a technical sense, but this does not preclude the use of the term “church” in any of the congregation’s public relations activities.

**504-2.2** The Board of Church Extension has the responsibility of assessing the preparedness of the mission church for admission to BFC Conference.

**504-2.3** Upon recommendation by the Board of Church Extension, the mission church may be recognized as a church and admitted to BFC Conference by a majority vote of BFC Conference.

## **504-3 Other Congregations**

### **504-3.1 Daughter Churches of Bible Fellowship Churches**

(1) A Bible Fellowship Church desiring to plant a daughter church shall contact the Board of Church Extension and seek its counsel and assistance in the development and preparation of the daughter church for recognition at the BFC Conference.

(2) When the parenting church determines that the daughter church is ready to pursue membership in the BFC Conference, the parenting church shall request an assessment from the Board of Church Extension. The daughter church shall be assessed by the Board of Church Extension.

(3) The daughter church shall be recommended for membership in the BFC Conference by the parenting church and the Board of Church Extension and admitted to BFC Conference upon majority vote of BFC Conference.

### **504-3.2 Pre-existing Congregations**

(1) An independent congregation or an established congregation of another denomination desiring membership in BFC Conference shall contact the Board of Church Extension.

(2) This church shall be evaluated by the Board of Church Extension on the basis of its agreement with the F&O, particularly as to its compliance with Article 18 of the Articles of Faith. This church shall meet the standards of Article 18 of the Articles of Faith and be committed to the F&O.

(3) This church may be recommended for membership in BFC Conference by the Board of Church Extension upon satisfactory completion of an assessment.

(4) A majority vote of BFC Conference shall be required for membership in BFC Conference.

## Article 505 - Members of BFC Conference

**505-1 Voting Members.** The voting members of BFC Conference shall answer to the call of the roll. They shall be:

- (1) ordained ministers working under the direction of the BFC.
- (2) ordained ministers working under the direction of the Board of Missions of the BFC.
- (3) ordained ministers endorsed by the BFC working in the chaplaincy.
- (4) ordained ministers serving in other Christian ministries
- (5) ordained ministers in retirement.
- (6) ordained ministers between calls.
- (7) probationers who have been licensed by the Ministerial Candidate Committee.
- (8) delegates from every properly-constituted church based on congregational membership as follows:

1-299 members	1 delegate
300-499 members	2 delegates
500-749 members	3 delegates
750-999 members	4 delegates
1000 and over members	5 delegates

If a delegate(s) is unable to attend the BFC Conference or some meetings of BFC Conference, the alternate delegate(s), with the permission of the Conference, shall be seated for the conference or those specified meetings. Unexcused absences shall result in the church forfeiting its representation by an alternate delegate during the unexcused absence of the delegate.

- (8) all members of the BFC Executive Board.

**505-2 Advisory Members.** Advisory members of BFC Conference shall not be included in the call of the roll. They shall not participate in the deliberations of the session except by permission of the Moderator. Advisory members of BFC Conference shall include:

- (1) ordained ministers working in non-BFC churches
- (2) ordained ministers on leave of absence.
- (3) probationers who have not been called to be the pastor of a church.
- (4) missionaries who hold membership in one of the churches and are under the supervision of the Board of Missions.
- (5) ordained ministers who are inactive.



## **Article 506 - BFC Conference Registration**

**506-1** The Conference Moderator shall, prior to the adjournment of BFC Conference, appoint a Registrar and Assistant Registrar for the succeeding BFC Conference.

### **506-2 Duties of the Registrar**

(1) He shall register all members who are qualified to be seated at BFC Conference and shall keep the attendance record of each meeting. A list of qualified members of BFC Conference shall be drafted prior to BFC Conference.

(2) He shall prepare a list of the BFC Conference delegate(s) and alternate delegate(s) in each congregation from the information supplied to him on the BFC Conference Registration Form.

(3) He shall verify that the BFC Conference delegate(s) and alternate delegate(s) are elders in their congregation and have been duly elected. This shall be accomplished by comparing the information supplied on the BFC Conference Registration Form with the official list of BFC Conference delegate(s) and alternate delegate(s) supplied to him from the Committee on Examination of Minutes of Particular Churches. Any discrepancies should be resolved prior to a delegate or alternate delegate being seated at BFC Conference.

(4) He shall provide for the registration of all advisory members of BFC Conference and for any official representatives from any other bodies or organizations. He shall notify the Moderator of the presence of such persons at the session.

(5) He shall handle all communications addressed to the BFC Conference.

**506-3** The Committee on Examination of Minutes of Particular Churches shall, prior to BFC Conference, furnish to the Registrar a list of duly elected BFC Conference delegates and alternate delegates as they appear in the minutes of the Particular Churches.

**506-4** The Credentials Committee and the Ministerial Candidate Committee shall, prior to BFC Conference, furnish to the Registrar lists of those ministers qualified to be members of BFC Conference and those who shall be advisory members of BFC Conference.

**506-5** Alternate Delegates who are to be seated at the BFC Conference bar shall report to the Registrar. The Registrar shall communicate their presence to the Moderator. They shall be seated at the beginning of a meeting of BFC Conference, and this action shall be recorded in the minutes of that meeting.

**506-6** Requests to be Excused

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(1) Any lay member desiring to be excused from any meeting must present in writing the reason for such absence to the Registrar. This information will be submitted to the Conference Moderator, and BFC Conference shall determine the validity of each request.

(2) Any pastor desiring to be excused from any meeting must present in writing the reason for such absence to the Secretary of the Committee on Credentials no later than two weeks prior to the commencement of BFC Conference (emergency excuses being the lone exception to the two week advance notice) and the Committee on Credentials will report to BFC Conference stating the validity of such excuses.

**506-7** The names of absentees shall be recorded in the minutes of each meeting, with indication as to whether the absence is excused.

**506-8** The registration records shall be submitted to the Secretary of BFC Conference after adjournment.

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## Article 507 - Officers of BFC Conference

These officers shall have a one year term beginning at BFC Conference and ending the day prior to the following BFC Conference.

### 507-1 Conference Moderator

A Conference Moderator shall be chosen by and from the membership of BFC Conference. He shall conduct the business of BFC Conference in an orderly and efficient manner.

#### Election

- (1) Before BFC Conference adjourns, it shall elect by ballot the Conference Moderator of the next BFC Conference.
- (2) A Moderator shall be eligible to succeed himself three times.
- (3) The BFC Executive Director is ineligible to serve as the Conference Moderator.

#### Duties

- (1) The Moderator, by his election, shall be considered to possess, by delegation from the whole body, all authority necessary to direct the meetings of BFC Conference according to the rules of the BFC and *Robert's Rules of Order*.
- (2) When there is a tie vote, the Moderator shall have the deciding vote. If he is not willing to decide, he shall call for a second ballot; if the vote is again tied, the issue shall be considered lost.
- (3) After the close of BFC Conference, the Moderator shall have the power to convene BFC Conference by circulating a written call for such a session, giving the members a four-week written notification.

### 507-2 Vice-Moderator

#### Election

Before BFC Conference adjourns, it shall elect by ballot a Vice-Moderator from its membership.

#### Duties

- (1) He shall function as Conference Moderator and fulfill all other duties in the absence of the Moderator
- (2) He is to act temporarily as Moderator when the Moderator requests to vacate the chair so as to speak on a given issue. He shall continue to preside until the issue in question has been decided.
- (3) He shall assist the Moderator by performing duties delegated by the Moderator.

### **507-3 Secretary**

#### **Election**

Before BFC Conference adjourns, it shall elect by ballot a Secretary from its membership.

#### **Duties**

- (1) He shall record its transactions, preserve the record carefully, and prepare for publication the proceedings of BFC Conference.
- (2) He shall furnish certified excerpts from the minutes of BFC Conference when properly requested. When such excerpts are given, they shall be considered authentic evidence of the facts that they declare.
- (3) He shall receive and distribute petitions from Particular Churches to BFC Conference.
- (4) He shall be empowered to appoint any assistants that he needs.
- (5) He shall be Editor of the Yearbook (see section 513-1).

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## Article 508 - Business Rules of BFC Conference

### 508-1 Regular Order of Business

Each meeting of the BFC Conference shall be opened and closed with prayer. Times for worship shall be provided in each day's agenda. The parliamentary procedure shall follow the rules of the BFC and *Robert's Rules of Order*. Business shall generally proceed according to an approved agenda. Minutes shall be recorded and approved for each meeting.

### 508-2 Addressing BFC Conference

- (1) Anyone wishing to speak shall rise and respectfully address the Moderator.
- (2) In the event that more than one should address the Moderator at the same time, the Moderator shall decide who is entitled to the floor.
- (3) No one shall be allowed to speak more than ten minutes on any subject unless he receives permission from the Moderator.
- (4) No one shall speak a second time on a given motion unless permission is granted by the Moderator.

### 508-3 Reports of Boards and Committees to BFC Conference

- (1) All BFC Conference boards and committees elected by ballot shall send copies of their reports to the place and by the time designated in the minutes of BFC Conference as recommended by the [Committee on Arrangements] [To be Replaced with; Committee on Agenda and Arrangements]. Study Committees and other committees appointed by the Moderator shall follow the same procedure.
- (2) Reports that have previously been circulated shall not be read publicly unless requested from the Conference floor.
- (3) The reports may be questioned and corrected before being accepted by BFC Conference.
- (4) One corrected copy of each report shall be given to the Secretary of BFC Conference upon acceptance of each report for inclusion in the Conference Yearbook.

### 508-4 Election Procedures of BFC Conference

- (1) Nominations shall be closed at the opening of each meeting for all elections to be conducted at that particular meeting.
- (2) The consent of an individual shall be obtained before nominating that individual for election at BFC Conference.
- (3) A ballot listing the names of all nominees shall be prepared and duplicated at the direction of the tellers for those elections.

- (4) The ballots shall be marked by each member of BFC Conference and shall be submitted to the tellers.
- (5) The tellers, with the aid of the advisory members of BFC Conference, shall tabulate the results and prepare runoff ballots as needed.
- (6) Elections may, at the discretion of BFC Conference, be conducted by oral nomination and hand-written ballots by members of BFC Conference or ballots prepared by the tellers.

#### **508-5 Study Committees**

- (1) **Purpose.** BFC Conference may form a study committee to address a specific topic or question which does not fall under the jurisdiction of one of the standing committees and which is too extensive to be adequately addressed through public debate alone. BFC Conference shall assign a study committee its work in writing by means of a resolution or resolutions.
- (2) **Composition.** BFC Conference may nominate and elect a study committee, or it may request the Moderator to appoint a study committee, subject to the ratification of BFC Conference. The number of members shall be determined by BFC Conference. The study committee shall exist until dissolved by BFC Conference. Vacancies of study committee membership may be filled by further elections or appointments by the Moderator. BFC Conference may add, remove, or replace members at any time.
- (3) **Reporting.** A study committee shall submit an annual written report to BFC Conference, and shall do so until it is dissolved by BFC Conference. The written report may include progress made toward the completion of its assignment, a position paper intended to complete its assignment, and any legislation offered to address the assignment. Legislation proposed by the study committee may be amended, but not replaced by substitute motion, prior to being voted on by BFC Conference.
- (4) **Dissolution.** A study committee is dissolved by vote of BFC Conference when, in the judgment of BFC Conference, its assignment is complete.

**508-6** Any exception to the implementation of the rules of the F&O other than the Articles of Faith may be allowed by vote of a three-fourths majority of BFC Conference. The reason for these exceptions shall be explained fully in the minutes. Such exceptions shall be subject to annual review until approved at second reading.

## **Article 509 - General Rules of Elections and Resignations**

### **509-1 Categories**

- (1) There are three categories of nominees for election to boards and committees. They are ministers, elders, and laypersons.
- (2) Pastoral Staff members are not eligible to serve in the categories of elders or laypersons.

### **509-2 Ministers**

- (1) Ministers who have been called to minister by the rules of Pulpit Supply or who are laboring in any agency of the BFC shall be eligible for election or appointment to Conference offices, boards, or committees.
- (2) A minister who is without a call to a church is eligible to serve in an elective office and on Conference boards and committees as long as he remains on the list of Ordained Ministers Working Under the Direction of the BFC.
- (3) A minister who is granted a leave of absence may serve as a minister in any elected or appointed position only until the next BFC Conference, when a successor will be elected or appointed to fill the unexpired term.
- (4) All retired ministers willing to serve are eligible for election to boards and committees.

### **509-3 Elders**

Elders are men who are serving or who have served and remain eligible for service on the Board of Elders of a BFC.

### **509-4 Laypersons**

- (1) Laypersons are men or women who are members in good standing of a BFC.
- (2) Laypersons are eligible to serve on a board or committee unless the bylaws of the board or committee limit eligibility to ministers and/or elders. Laypersons need not be members of the BFC Conference in order to serve.
- (3) The Nominating Committee shall seek assistance from the pastors and boards of elders in obtaining capable candidates for these positions.

### **509-5 Resignation**

- (1) A resignation from a BFC Conference office shall be sent to the Secretary of BFC Conference. A copy shall also be sent to the Chairman of the Nominating Committee.
  - (2) A resignation from a board or committee shall be submitted to the Secretary of the Board or Committee.
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**509-6 Vacancy**

- (1) A vacancy on an elected board or committee occurs in the following cases:
  - (1.1) Death
  - (1.2) Resignation
  - (1.3) Discontinuation of BFC membership
  - (1.4) Divestiture of office according to the “Book of Discipline,” §300
  - (1.5) Declaration by BFC Conference upon appeal of the Board or Committee that the person is unwilling or unable to fulfill one’s committee responsibility.
- (2) If a vacancy on an elected board or committee occurs during the year, the board or committee may elect a replacement who will serve until the subsequent BFC Conference. The board or committee shall report to BFC Conference any vacancies, shall recommend appropriate action and shall inform the Nominating Committee.

**509-7 Term**

The term of office of those elected and appointed to boards or committees by this body shall be for the term designated by our rules for that office (measured from the last day of the regular BFC Conference at which they are elected to the last day of the regular BFC Conference at which their term expires) or until successors are chosen.



## **Article 510 - Appointments by the Conference Moderator**

### **510-1 Committees and Appointees for the succeeding BFC Conference**

#### **510-1:1 Committee on Agenda and Arrangements**

##### **Composition**

The Committee shall have seven members, at least two of whom shall be members of the Executive Board. The Committee shall include the BFC Executive Director, the BFC Conference Moderator and Vice-Moderator, and the BFC Conference Secretary. The remaining members shall be at-large members appointed by the Moderator of BFC Conference. The Head Page, the Overseer of the Pages, the Conference Registrar, the Chairman of the Communications Committee, and the Conference Host shall be considered ex-officio members of this committee.

##### **Duties**

- (1) It shall implement the BFC Conference program for worship and training that it receives from the Executive Director and BFC Executive Board.
- (2) It shall receive from any Particular Church or Conference entity requests for time on the agenda of BFC Conference. Such requests must be in writing and in the hands of the BFC Conference Secretary by March 1.
- (3) It shall develop the proposed agenda and program to recommend to the upcoming BFC Conference and shall establish the times of the meetings of BFC Conference.
- (4) It shall submit the proposed agenda of the upcoming BFC Conference to the Executive Director for inclusion in the Report Book.
- (5) It shall make provision for the meetings and accompanying hospitality for BFC Conference.
- (6) It shall appoint a committee on resolutions, a timekeeper and tellers for meetings of BFC Conference. Those appointed shall be notified of their appointment by the Secretary of the Committee prior to BFC Conference. Guidelines for those appointed shall be provided.
- (7) It shall recommend to BFC Conference the place and dates of the succeeding BFC Conference (F&O §502-7).
- (8) It shall recommend to the BFC Conference the collection point and deadline for reports for the succeeding BFC Conference.

#### **510-1.2 Committee on Examination of Minutes of Particular Churches**

##### **Purpose**

- (1) It shall provide a degree of uniformity in the manner in which the Particular Churches conduct their respective congregational meetings.
- (2) It shall ensure that Particular Churches are in conformity with the F&O.
- (3) It shall furnish to the Registrar, prior to BFC Conference, a list of duly elected BFC Conference delegates and alternate delegates as they appear in the minutes of the Particular Churches.
- (4) It shall assist the pastors in the manner in which they shall preside at congregational meetings.
- (5) It shall assist the secretary of each Particular Church in keeping proper and accurate records of the proceedings of the congregational meetings.

### **Appointment**

- (1) It shall consist of five members.
- (2) It shall organize itself.
- (3) It shall meet at least annually prior to BFC Conference.

### **Duties**

- (1) It shall determine annually, by use of the Suggested Format for Congregational Meetings (see § 403-3), the adequacy of the minutes of each Particular Church.
- (2) It shall notify any Particular Church of inadequacies found in the minutes, along with suggested corrective measures.
- (3) It shall verify that the Delegate(s) and Alternate Delegate(s) are Elders, have signed their annual declaration of agreement with the Articles of Faith and willingness to follow the Principles of Order, and are the persons reported to the Registrar of BFC Conference. It shall report such verification and any discrepancies to the Registrar during the week prior to BFC Conference.
- (4) It shall verify that petitions as circulated for consideration at BFC Conference have been adopted by the congregation
- (5) It shall submit a report to BFC Conference, including the above verifications.

### **510-1.3 Registrar and Assistant Registrar (see §506-1, 506-2)**

### **510-2 Committees and Appointees for the current BFC Conference**

#### **510-2.1 Committee on Examination of BFC Conference Minutes**

#### **Purpose**

To certify that the Yearbook is an accurate account of the proceedings of BFC Conference.

#### **Appointment**

It shall have at least one experienced member being retained when possible.

**Duties**

- (1) It shall independently monitor the proceedings of BFC Conference in order to assist the Secretary of BFC Conference in producing accurate minutes.
- (2) It shall assist BFC Conference in correcting the Secretary's minutes. The Secretary's minutes, as corrected, become the official minutes of BFC Conference at the time of their approval.
- (3) Following the approval of minutes by BFC Conference, all corrections to the official minutes shall be certified by the Secretary, recorded by this committee, and reported to BFC Conference if judged by this committee to be substantive.
- (4) It shall examine the minutes as printed in the Yearbook and compare them with the official minutes of the Secretary of BFC Conference.
- (5) It shall receive notification from members of BFC Conference of any suggested correction in the Yearbook and shall research its validity.
- (6) It shall report in writing to the next BFC Conference any and all discrepancies between the Yearbook and the official minutes, and any other recommended corrections to the Yearbook. Recommended corrections take effect upon adoption of the report by BFC Conference.
- (7) It shall submit to BFC Conference two corrected copies of the Yearbook certified to contain an accurate account of the proceedings of the previous BFC Conference. These copies shall be placed in the BFC Archives.

**510-2.2 Parliamentarian**

He should be well-versed in the F&O of the BFC, the Bylaws for BFC Conference and Robert's Rules of Order.

**Duties**

- (1) He shall assist the Moderator and BFC Conference in following appropriate parliamentary procedure.
- (2) He shall render interpretations on proper parliamentary procedure when requested to do so by the Moderator. The parliamentary procedure shall follow *Robert's Rules of Order* except when superseded by the Bylaws for BFC Conference.
- (3) He shall monitor the proceedings of BFC Conference and inform the Conference when discussion or motions are out of order.

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## **Article 511 - Boards and Committees Elected by BFC Conference**

### **511-1 Bible Fellowship Church Executive Board**

The Bible Fellowship Church Executive Board (BFC Executive Board) performs the executive function of the denomination. It shall have and exercise in the name and on behalf of the corporation all rights and privileges conferred by the charter creating the corporation. This activity must always be in conformity with the Faith and Order and with the rules, decisions, and directives of the BFC Conference. It shall provide leadership for the BFC by proposing strategic direction to the BFC Conference, implementing direction through the oversight of the BFC departments, and monitoring progress in the direction approved by the BFC Conference. It shall have the authority between the meetings of the BFC Conference to execute the decisions made by that body.

#### **511-1.1 Composition, Election, and Terms of Office**

- (1) The BFC Executive Board shall have thirteen voting members: a President (who is elected directly by the BFC Conference), the Executive Director (by virtue of his office), and eleven members (five ordained ministers and six elders).
- (2) The elected Classes shall be as follows:
  - Class I    President, one ordained minister and two elders
  - Class II    Two ordained ministers and two elders
  - Class III    Two ordained ministers and two elders
- (3) Each member shall be elected for a term of three years.

#### **511-1.2 Meetings and Quorum**

- (1) Meetings. The BFC Executive Board shall establish a schedule of stated meetings, at which any business of the board may be conducted. Special meetings may be convened by the President on his own initiative, or at the call of the Secretary when requested by five members. Any special meetings must be held with at least a seven-day notice, and business must be limited to the announced purpose unless all thirteen members of the board are present and consent to transact other business.
- (2) Quorum. Nine voting members must be present to transact business of the BFC Executive Board.

#### **511-1.3 Organization**

- (1) President. The President shall be elected by the BFC Conference for a term of three years. He may be an ordained pastor or an elder. The Executive Director is ineligible to serve as President.
- (2) Other Officers. The BFC Executive Board shall elect annually from their number a Vice President, Secretary, Financial Secretary, Treasurer and

any other officers as the business of the board may require. The Executive Director is ineligible to serve in these offices.

- (3) Vacancies. Vacancies in these offices shall be filled as soon as possible. In the event that the office of President is vacant, the Vice President shall serve until the next meeting of the BFC Conference.
- (4) Removal from Office. The President may be removed from office at any time by a majority vote of the BFC Conference. The other officers elected by the BFC Executive Board may be removed from office at any time by the majority of the whole BFC Executive Board.

#### **511-1.4 Duties of Officers**

##### **President**

- (1) He shall chair the meetings of the BFC Executive Board.
- (2) He shall serve as legal representation for the corporation, empowered to execute all contracts, deeds, mortgages, and other documents, as the business of the corporation may require. He may designate another officer of the BFC Executive Board to exercise this power in his place. He shall report all such executions to the board.
- (3) He shall carry out all other responsibilities as are usually conducted by the president of the corporation.

##### **Vice President**

- (1) He shall chair the meetings of the BFC Executive Board in the absence of the President.
- (2) If the President is unable to serve, he shall serve as President until the next meeting of the BFC Conference.

##### **Secretary**

- (1) He shall record and maintain minutes of the BFC Executive Board.
- (2) He shall provide for the safe preservation of the records and legal documents of the corporation.

##### **Financial Secretary**

- (1) He shall maintain accurate records of all assets held by the corporation and all financial transactions of the corporation.
- (2) He shall issue payment of all duly authorized financial obligations.

##### **Treasurer**

- (1) He shall deposit all funds for which the BFC Executive Board is responsible in depositories approved by the Board.
- (2) He shall provide for an annual audit of all funds held by the BFC Executive Board.

**511-1.5 Duties of the BFC Executive Board**

- (1) It shall provide leadership for the BFC by presenting strategic direction to the BFC Conference. It shall seek approval of the BFC Conference to pursue this direction through the implementation of strategic plans.
- (2) It shall appoint the Executive Director, subject to ratification of the BFC Conference, and oversee his performance in carrying out the work of the BFC Executive Board.
- (3) It shall appoint the directors of the departments and establish the terms of their employment in consultation with the Department Committees. It shall have authority to terminate the employment of the directors of the departments.
- (4) It shall offer counsel, advice and direction, oversee the work of the departments in furthering the overall ministry of the BFC and shall ratify the elections of each department.
- (5) It shall administrate the BFC Annual Budget, and make annual recommendations to the BFC Conference concerning the Budget and Church Assessment Rate.
- (6) It shall provide for and oversee the administrative aspects of the BFC including, but not limited to, education, accounting, auditing, pensions, publications, publicity, stewardship, and development.
- (7) It shall hold title to and have charge of all property, both real and personal, belonging to the corporation. It shall buy or sell property for the corporation only by the approval of two-thirds of its members of the board or by direction of the BFC Conference. It shall have the authority to borrow money, contract mortgages, or make loans against any property of the corporation by approval of two-thirds of its members or by direction of the BFC Conference.
- (8) It shall have oversight over all funds entrusted to it by the BFC Conference.
- (9) It shall have oversight of all insurance programs offered by the BFC Executive Board.
- (10) It shall act as the legal representative in the name of and on behalf of the corporation known as the Bible Fellowship Church (a nonprofit corporation in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania). Its activities must always be in conformity with the Faith & Order and with the rules, decisions and directives of the BFC Conference. It shall have all the rights and privileges, as well as responsibilities and liabilities, conferred by the charter creating the corporation.
- (11) It shall have oversight of the Pinebrook Educational Foundation.
- (12) It shall report annually to the BFC Conference.

**511-1.6 Executive Director of the Bible Fellowship Church**

The Executive Director shall be an ordained pastor or elder appointed by the BFC Executive Board to carry out the direction approved by the BFC Conference. He shall be appointed, with the terms of employment, for a term of three years, subject to ratification by the BFC Conference. He shall serve as a voting member of the BFC Executive Board.

**Duties:**

- (1) He shall implement the direction and strategic plans of the BFC Conference.
- (2) He shall represent the BFC in public ministry.
- (3) He shall encourage churches and pastors toward achieving the plans of the BFC Conference.
- (4) He shall encourage and coordinate BFC committees in achieving the plans of the BFC Conference.
- (5) He shall oversee the department directors and coordinate their work so as to advance the plans of the BFC Conference.
- (6) He shall oversee the daily operations of the BFC administration.
- (7) He shall report to the BFC Executive Board and the BFC Conference.

## **511-1.7 Sub-Committees Supervised by the BFC Executive Board**

### **511-1.7 (1) Communications Committee**

#### **Purpose**

To promote communication in the BFC through various media.

#### **Composition**

It shall be appointed by the BFC Executive Board in composition and terms of service determined by the BFC Executive Board.

#### **Duties**

- (1) It shall publish the annual Yearbook and other BFC literature.
- (2) It shall maintain and oversee the BFC website
- (3) It shall perform the duties assigned by the BFC Executive Board.
- (4) It shall submit an annual written report to the BFC Executive Board.

### **511-1.7 (2) Christian Education Committee**

#### **Purpose**

To promote and support Christian education on behalf of the BFC

#### **Composition and Election**

- (1) The committee shall be composed of six ministers and six laypersons.
- (2) They shall be elected for a term of three years in classes as follows:
  - Class I - Two ministers and two laypersons
  - Class II - Two ministers and two laypersons
  - Class III - Two ministers and two laypersons
- (3) The committee shall elect its own members, subject to the ratification of the BFC Executive Board.

#### **Duties**

- (1) It shall provide guidance to the local church in carrying out the Christian education program.
- (2) It shall provide helpful regional denominational programs for any or all aspects of the work of Christian education.
- (3) It shall promote the cause of Christian post-secondary education on both the undergraduate and graduate levels. This may be done in a variety of ways, including, but not limited to, providing information about Christian institutions and encouraging members and other participants of our churches to attend them.
- (4) It shall receive funds designated by BFC Conference and disburse them for the needs of its work.
- (5) It shall submit an annual written report to the BFC Executive Board.



### **511-1.7 (3) Youth and Young Adult Committee**

#### **Purpose**

To bring glory and honor to God as it ministers to adult youth leaders, teens, and young adults of the BFC. This will be done by:

- (1) Promoting unity in youth and young adult ministry with the BFC
- (2) Providing training and resources for youth and young adult ministries of Particular Churches within the BFC
- (3) Being a catalyst for networking of youth and young adult ministries of Particular Churches within the BFC

#### **Composition and Election**

- (1) The Committee will be composed of five ministers and four laypersons
- (2) They will be elected for a term of three years in classes as follows:  
Class I - Two ministers and one layperson  
Class II - Two ministers and one layperson  
Class III - One minister and two laypersons
- (3) The committee shall elect its own members, subject to the ratification of the BFC Executive Board

#### **Duties**

- (1) It shall offer guidance to Particular Churches in developing a ministry to youth and young adults.
- (2) It shall oversee denominational youth and young adult activities.
- (3) It shall provide training and resources for Particular Churches in equipping them for youth and young adult ministries.
- (4) It shall provide networking between youth and young adult ministries of Particular Churches with the BFC.
- (5) It shall submit an annual written report to the BFC Executive Board.

### **511-1.7 (4) Historical Committee**

#### **Purpose**

To preserve our heritage and to promote the study of the history of the BFC.

#### **Composition and Election**

- (1) It shall be composed of the archivist and five [Proposed: eight] persons (ministers, elders, or laypersons) elected by the committee [Proposed: its own members], subject to the ratification of the BFC Executive Board.
- (2) They shall be elected for a term of three years in classes as follows:  
Class I - Two [Proposed: Three] persons  
Class II - Two [Proposed: Three] persons

Class III- One [Proposed: Two] person[s]

- (3) [Proposed] Organization: The Committee shall elect annually by and from its membership a chairman and a secretary.

### **Duties**

- (1) It shall develop and encourage the study of the history of the denomination.
- (2) It shall maintain denominational archives for the accumulation of materials and memoirs relating to the history of the denomination.
- (3) It shall maintain a website of relevant materials and information for research and reference.
- (4) It shall encourage each Particular Church and mission to maintain a file of important documents relating to the historical development of the local fellowship, and it shall encourage each church or mission to appoint a local archivist to maintain this file.
- (5) It shall appoint an archivist, who shall be responsible for the maintenance and oversight of the archives.
- (6) It shall assist the archivist in the collection of relevant historical materials.
- (7) It shall determine policy and procedure by which the archivist can maintain and supplement the historical material of the denomination.
- (8) It shall oversee a Bible Fellowship Church Historical Society made up of those who purchase annual memberships or receive honorary or gift memberships.
- (9) It shall appoint a coordinator and a treasurer for the Historical Society.
- (10) It shall make an annual report to the Executive Board of the Bible Fellowship Church.

## **511-1.8 Pinebrook Educational Foundation**

### **Section 1 - Establishment and Purpose**

The Pinebrook Educational Foundation was established as a division of the Bible Fellowship Church (“Church”) on October 18, 1994. The purpose of the Pinebrook Educational Foundation is to continue the ministry of Pinebrook Junior College (formerly Berean Bible School), to aid Christian individuals involved in higher education and Christian post-secondary institutions (“Purpose”). Said purpose will be construed broadly enough to include a wide spectrum of aid projects involving Christian post-secondary education, including but not limited to scholarship aid to students and grants to Christian post-secondary institutions.

### **Section 2 - Overview**

The Pinebrook Educational Foundation shall receive, invest, and administer funds (“Funds”) in accordance with its stated purpose, and such funds shall be

designated for such Purpose, segregated from the general funds of the Church, and administered and distributed by the Pinebrook Educational Foundation’s Board of Directors (“Foundation Board”) in conformity with said Purpose. Emphasis and priority will be given to individuals attending Christian institutions and to higher education endeavors closely related to the BFC. Special consideration shall be given to educational organizations with which the BFC Executive Board has affiliations.

### **Section 3 - Control**

#### **A. Election and Composition of the Foundation Board**

The Pinebrook Educational Foundation shall be directed by the Foundation Board composed of six members (“Board Members”) elected by the Pinebrook Educational Foundation and subject to ratification by the BFC Executive Board. Board Members shall be elected in three classes and shall serve three-year terms of service. The three classes shall be composed of two Board Members each. Each Board Member shall serve until a successor is duly elected.

#### **B. Accountability**

The Foundation Board shall be accountable to the BFC Executive Board. The Foundation Board shall administer all activities and investments of Pinebrook Educational Foundation to ensure that all such activities and investments are financially and legally appropriate with respect to the status of Pinebrook Educational Foundation. The Foundation Board shall report semi-annually to the BFC Executive Board and shall report annually to the BFC Conference.

#### **C. Officers of the Foundation Board**

The Foundation Board shall elect annually from its number a Chairperson, a Vice-Chairperson, and a Secretary/Treasurer.

### **Section 4 - Administration**

#### **A. Director/Chairperson of the Pinebrook Educational Foundation**

1. Director of Pinebrook Educational Foundation (“Director”) may be selected by the Foundation Board and ratified by the BFC Executive Board. The position may be paid or unpaid as determined by the BFC Executive Board.
2. The Director shall not be required to be a member of the Foundation Board or the BFC Executive Board. Membership on one of these boards will not, however, disqualify an individual from serving as Director. The Director shall not be an officer of the Pinebrook Educational Foundation.
3. The Director shall be responsible for the orderly conduct of the business of the Pinebrook Educational Foundation. Such duties as

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administration of the grant and scholarship application process, oversight of all financial activities, investments, administrative procedures, and communication shall be the responsibility of the Director. The Director shall consult with the Foundation Board's Chairperson regarding general administration matters and with both the Chairperson and Secretary-Treasurer of the Foundation Board regarding financial matters.

4. If a Director has not been selected by the Foundation Board, the Foundation Board's Chairperson shall be responsible for the conduct of the business of the Pinebrook Educational Foundation and shall perform the duties identified in paragraph 3 above.

### **B. Foundation Secretary**

1. The Secretary of the Pinebrook Educational Foundation shall be selected by the Foundation Board subject to approval by the BFC Executive Board.
2. The Secretary shall report to and assist the Director (or Chairperson of the Foundation Board if a Director has not been selected by the Foundation Board).
3. The Secretary shall be a volunteer or a part-time employee until the Pinebrook Educational Foundation activity requires more assistance and additional funding is available for full-time compensation, as shall be determined by the Foundation Board.
4. The compensation (if any) of the Secretary shall be determined by the Foundation Board and shall be subject to approval by the BFC Executive Board.

### **C. Auxiliary Groups**

Support groups previously affiliated with Pinebrook Junior College such as the Alumni Association may be encouraged to continue in existence or to be reactivated. The assistance of such support groups may be sought in raising funds and in providing other assistance to the Pinebrook Educational Foundation.

### **D. Administration of Funds**

1. Pinebrook Educational Foundation Funds shall:
  - (a) be segregated from the general funds of the Church;
  - (b) be separately invested and administered by the Foundation Board; and
  - (c) not be disbursed for any purpose other than the Purpose of the Pinebrook Educational Foundation.
2. A professional investment firm or counselor may be chosen by the Foundation Board to carry out the investment of Pinebrook Educational Foundation Funds. Risk levels and investment criteria shall be determined

by the Foundation Board and approved by the BFC Executive Board.

3. The Pinebrook Educational Foundation may be the transferee of funds:
  - (a) existing Pinebrook Junior College endowment funds;
  - (b) donations or bequests to, and annuity arrangements made for the benefit of Pinebrook Junior College (or the Berean Bible School);
  - (c) grants from foundations;
  - (d) proceeds from general and endowment investments; and
  - (e) other sources acceptable with respect to the tax-exempt status of the Church.
4. Funds shall be used to disburse grants, scholarships and/or loans in accordance with the Purpose of Pinebrook Educational Foundation and to pay administrative costs of the Pinebrook Educational Foundation.
  - (a) The Foundation Board shall formulate rules for the administration of all Funds. These shall be subject to review by the BFC Executive Board.
  - (b) Administrative costs shall be paid from the General Fund (as defined in Section 5 herein) subject to the approval of the Foundation Board and review by the BFC Executive Board.

#### **Section 5 - Aid Projects/Designated Accounts**

- A. The Pinebrook Educational Foundation shall be structured to include many types of aid to Christian higher education in accordance with its purpose. Specific programs of aid shall be designated by the Foundation Board as separately administered endowment or current gift “funds” or “accounts” (“Designated Accounts”) within the Foundation.
- B. A donation identified by a donor for the support of a specific Designated Account shall be used to fund such Designated Account. Designated Account Funds shall be expended by the Foundation Board in furtherance of the specific aid project(s) for which the Designated Account has been established.
- C. Undesignated donations shall go to a General Fund from which administrative costs shall be paid and Board directed grants, loans and scholarships shall be made.
- D. Donors shall be encouraged to contribute to Designated Accounts set up as endowments in order to insure a continuous stream of proceeds for the future. However, donations to Designated Accounts which expend non-endowment restricted (“current gift”) funds are also encouraged.
- E. Additionally, sizable initial gifts may be used to establish a Designated Account (as an endowment or current gift fund) of the donor’s choosing, subject to Foundation Board approval.
- F. There shall be compliance with donor limitations and/or restrictions on Funds received from (or donated, bequeathed, etc. to or for the benefit of)

Pinebrook Junior College.

## **Section 6 - Miscellaneous Regulations**

### **A. Bylaws**

The Bylaws of the Foundation Board may be amended by majority vote of the total membership of the Foundation Board at a regular or special meeting.

### **B. General**

The Foundation Board shall be empowered to adopt policies and regulations in addition to its Bylaws. Such policies and regulations must be in conformity with the F&O of the BFC and within the rules, decisions, and directives of BFC Conference.

### **C. Quorum**

Four Board Members attending a duly announced meeting of the Foundation Board shall constitute a quorum. Unless otherwise specified, a majority vote shall mean a simple majority of those attending any meeting of the Foundation Board in which there is a quorum.

## **511-2 Nominating Committee**

### **511-2.1 Composition and Election**

- (1) After nominations have been closed for all other elections required by the bylaws, members of the Nominating Committee shall be elected to serve a term of three years.
- (2) No member of the committee shall be permitted to succeed himself.
- (3) It shall be composed of three classes as follows:
  - Class I Two ministers and one layperson
  - Class II One minister and one layperson
  - Class III One minister and one layperson

### **511-2.2 Duties**

- (1) It shall present nominees for election at BFC Conference.
- (2) It shall inform in writing all persons who are not present at BFC Conference of their election to Boards and Committees.

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## 511-3 Church Health Committee

### 511-3.1 Purpose

The Church Health Committee exists to serve the Particular Churches of the BFC by promoting strong church health.

### 511-3.2 Composition and Election

- (1) The Church Health Committee shall consist of four ministers and four elders.
- (2) They shall be elected for a term of three years in classes as follows:
  - Class I Two ministers and one elder
  - Class II One minister and two elders
  - Class III One minister and one elder

### 511-3.3 Duties

- (1) It shall oversee the compilation of an annual BFC statistical report of the churches which will assist them in this work.
- (2) The Church Health Committee shall monitor the health of Particular Churches.
- (3) It shall provide counsel and resources for the self-assessment of the health of Particular Churches.
- (4) It shall provide a list of recommended consultants to Particular Churches needing assistance in moving toward stronger church health.
- (5) It shall offer training and seminars to promote church health.
- (6) It may recommend to the BFC Executive Board that a Particular Church be placed under the supervisory care of the Church Health Committee. When a Particular Church is under the supervisory care of the Church Health Committee, the Committee has the right to appoint interim elders to the church. By simple majority, the Executive Board in this case may place the Particular Church under the supervisory care of the Church Health Committee. If a Particular Church resists being placed under the supervisory care of the Church Health Committee, then the Executive Board will recommend its placement to the BFC Conference for their consideration. This action by BFC Conference shall be by a simple majority. A Particular Church is removed from the supervisory care of the Church Health Committee by a simple majority vote of the BFC Conference.
- (7) It shall inform the Ministerial Relations Committee if a matter threatening the pastoral relationship becomes evident at a Particular Church receiving Church Health Committee assistance and shall assist a Particular Church at the request of the Ministerial Relations Committee.
- (8) It shall in cooperation with the BFC Executive Board assist Particular Churches to close when necessary.



- (9) It shall provide a report on the closing of a Particular Church to BFC Conference.
- (10) In the event of a church closing it shall consult with the Board of Church Extension regarding the feasibility of planting a new church in the same area.
- (11) It shall develop sources of financial assistance for Particular Churches who cannot afford church health resources.
- (12) It shall submit a report to BFC Conference.

### **511-3.4 Conference Church Health Pastor**

#### **Election**

- (1) The Conference Church Health Pastor shall be an ordained minister of the Bible Fellowship Church. He may, at the direction of the Church Health Committee and the BFC Executive Board, serve either full-time or part-time.
- (2) He shall be elected for a three-year term by the Church Health Committee and his election shall be ratified by the BFC Conference. He shall not be a voting member of the Church Health Committee but shall serve under the direction of the committee, where full authority shall reside.

#### **Duties**

- (1) He shall, in the performance of his duties, work according to policies and directives of the Church Health Committee.
- (2) He shall, as requested by the committee, represent the Church Health Committee in its dealings with pastors, elders, and churches.
- (3) He shall be available as a resource to local churches regarding Church Health.
- (4) He shall be available to meet with pastors, boards of elders, and congregations for consultation, evaluation, exhortation, and advice.
- (5) He shall give a full report to the Church Health Committee at each of its meetings, and be available to report to the BFC Executive Board as requested.

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## 511-4 Ministerial Candidate Committee

### 511-4.1 Purpose

The objective of the Ministerial Candidate Committee shall be to provide the BFC with a minister that is called of God, true to the Word, filled with the Holy Spirit, dedicated wholeheartedly to Jesus Christ, and thoroughly furnished unto all good works.

### 511-4.2 Composition and Election

- (1) It shall be composed of five ordained ministers.
- (2) They shall be elected for a term of three years in classes as follows:
  - Class I     Two ministers
  - Class II    Two ministers
  - Class III   One minister

### 511-4.3 Duties

- (1) It shall receive applications from all who offer themselves for service in the BFC.
- (2) It shall take under its supervision the candidates and probationers while in training.
- (3) It shall examine those who offer themselves for service in our Church and determine as far as possible the sincerity and genuineness of their call to the ministry.
- (4) It shall ascertain as far as possible whether the candidates and probationers have the Scriptural qualifications of a minister of the Word of God.
- (5) It shall safeguard the doctrinal purity of the church by exercising vigilance when examining prospective ministers concerning their beliefs and practices, endeavoring to approve only those who are committed without reservation to the authority of the Scriptures and the doctrines and practices of our church as the system of doctrine taught in the Scriptures.
- (6) It shall license probationers for BFC Conference prior to ordination.
- (7) It shall recommend qualified probationers to the Ministerial Credentials Committee for ordination examination.
- (8) It shall furnish prior to the BFC Conference to the Registrar a list of probationers who are eligible to be members of the BFC Conference.
- (9) It shall submit a written report to BFC Conference.

### 511-4.4 Terms

The terms used to designate the classification of those under the care of this committee shall be **applicant**, **candidate**, and **probationer**.

- (1) An **applicant** is a man who offers himself to this committee for service in

the BFC.

- (2) A **candidate** is a man whose application is accepted and who remains under the guidance of this committee.
- (3) A **probationer** eligible for a call is a man who has been approved by this Committee, has passed the examinations required by the Committee, and is eligible to be called through the Rules of Pulpit Supply.
- (4) A probationer eligible for a call becomes a licensed probationer when one of the following occurs:
  - (4.1) he has been called through the Rules of Pulpit Supply to serve in a BFC;
  - (4.2) he has been called through the Rules of Pulpit Supply to serve in one of the denominational agencies of the BFC;
  - (4.3) he is serving in a ministry approved by the Ministerial Candidate Committee in consultation with the Ministerial Credentials Committee.

#### **511-4.5 Procedure**

The procedure to be followed by a man offering himself for service in the BFC shall be as follows:

- (1) Men who seek to be ordained in the BFC will fill out an application from the Committee.
- (2) The applicant will carry out a program of personal development and training developed in consultation with the Committee.
- (3) The candidate will be examined through a series of tests.
- (4) Upon satisfactory completion of the testing and approval of the Committee, the candidate will be recognized as a probationer eligible for a call and recommended to the Ministerial Relations Committee or BFC departments.
- (5) During the time of working in the BFC or in one of the denominational departments or other ministries, the probationer will be under the jurisdiction of this Committee as well as the department or ministry with which he works.
- (6) At the end of the probationary period, upon approval of this committee, the probationer will be recommended to the Ministerial Credentials Committee. Serving as a candidate and probationer does not guarantee being recommended for ordination examination.

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## 511-5 Ministerial Credentials Committee

### 511-5.1 Composition and Election

- (1) The Ministerial Credentials Committee shall be composed of five ordained ministers.
- (2) They shall be elected for a term of three years in classes as follows:

Class I	Two Ordained Ministers
Class II	Two Ordained Ministers
Class III	One Ordained Minister

### 511-5.2 Duties

- (1) It shall examine all candidates for ordination. This examination shall take place at least one month prior to BFC Conference.
- (2) It shall recommend candidates for ordination to BFC Conference. It shall recommend the place and time for the Ordination Service.
- (3) It shall have the oversight of all men who hold credentials with BFC Conference.
- (4) It shall annually send a F&O questionnaire to all ordained ministers of the BFC. All those desiring to retain credentials with the BFC must return the signed questionnaire by December 31. The F&O questionnaire shall contain the following:

**Do you subscribe, without reservation, to the Articles of Faith of the BFC? (yes or no)**

**If you have any reservations about any Article of Faith of the BFC, state them specifically.**

**Will you endeavor to follow the Rules of Order of the BFC? (yes or no)**

**If you desire to retain credentials with the BFC, this questionnaire must be returned by December 31. Failure to do so may result in withdrawal of your credentials.**

(4.1) No minister shall be allowed to hold credentials in the Bible Fellowship Church who does not subscribe to our Articles of Faith and endeavor to follow the Rules of Order except as allowed by the Ministerial Credentials Committee. Those who are allowed to hold reservations must teach in accordance with the Articles of Faith.

(4.2) No minister shall be allowed to hold credentials in the Bible Fellowship Church who does not attend a BFC church where possible as determined by the Ministerial Credentials Committee. A written request for an exception can be submitted, which will be reviewed and may be granted by the Ministerial Credentials Committee.

- (5) It shall process and approve all applications for the military chaplaincy, and its Chairman shall be the representative of the BFC to the General Commission on Chaplains and Armed Forces Personnel.
- (6) It shall deal with charges brought against any ordained minister. The BFC Conference delegates to the Ministerial Credentials Committee the right to authoritatively interpret the Faith & Order as it relates to ordained men. Charges brought against any minister of the BFC must be in writing and presented to the Ministerial Credentials Committee. It shall request that the accused minister be present during the hearing of the case. If these charges involve departure from any doctrine or practice of the BFC, or any improper conduct, a thorough investigation shall be made. If the charge is of sufficient magnitude in the judgment of the Ministerial Credentials Committee, the accused minister may temporarily be suspended by the Committee and his name withheld from the Eligibility List for Pulpit Supply. A report of this action, with appropriate recommendations for disposition of the case, shall be made to the Conference Judicatory. The accused party shall have the right of appeal to the Conference Judicatory. If appeal is made to the Conference Judicatory by the accused minister, his name shall remain on the Eligibility List until the Conference Judicatory has passed judgment on the case.
- (7) It shall furnish to BFC Conference Registrar a list of the ordained ministers who are eligible to be members of BFC Conference and those who shall be advisory members of BFC Conference. This list shall be submitted annually prior to BFC Conference.
- (8) It shall receive all requests from those seeking retirement from ministry in the BFC. It shall set the effective date of the retirement, change the status of the minister on the conference records, and notify the BFC Executive Board, the Beneficiary Society and the Conference Pastor of the effective date of retirement.
- (9) It shall submit a report to BFC Conference.

### **511-5.3 Categories of Ministry**

All ordained men who hold Ordination Credentials with the BFC shall be members in good standing in a Particular BFC and shall subscribe annually to the F&O.

The categories of ministry are as follows:

- (1) **Ordained Ministers Working Under the Direction of the BFC**
  - (2) **Ordained Ministers Working Under the Direction of the Board of Missions of the BFC**
  - (3) **Ordained Ministers Working in Chaplaincy Ministries Under the Sponsorship of the BFC.** The BFC qualifies to have men with its ministerial credentials to serve under the U.S. Armed Forces Chaplains
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Board as well as other chaplain ministries such as prison and hospital. Applications for such ministries shall be made through the Ministerial Credentials Committee. Chaplains may vote at the BFC Conference if approved by the Ministerial Credentials Committee.

- (4) **Ordained Ministers Working in Other Christian Ministries.** An ordained minister of the BFC, consistent with his ordination vows and without prejudice to his ministerial standing, may properly, under certain circumstances and conditions, and approved by the Ministerial Credentials Committee, labor in organizations other than those of the BFC. He may vote at the BFC Conference if approved by the Ministerial Credentials Committee.

The following rules must be adhered to in such cases: Such labor shall not require the performance of functions inconsistent with his ordination vows required of ministers and other provisions of the F & O. They shall not be regarded as under the sole jurisdiction of the church in which they serve. Such a church must recognize that those who hold credentials with the BFC are under its discipline in their faith and life.

- (5) **Ordained Ministers in Retirement or on Permanent Disability**

These are men who have retired under the provisions of 501-5 or men who are on permanent disability as determined by the Ministerial Credentials Committee (see definition below). A minister must serve a minimum of five years (cumulative) as an ordained minister in the BFC and be under the care of the Ministerial Credentials Committee at retirement or when they go on permanent disability in order to be a member of BFC Conference as a “Minister in Retirement or on Permanent Disability.” He must also be involved in the ministry of the BFC where possible as determined by the Ministerial Credentials Committee in order to be a voting member of the BFC Conference.

Pastors who are permanently disabled, but too young for retirement, are men who have a physical or mental handicap that is medically determinable and would prevent a man from performing his duties as a pastor in the Bible Fellowship Church. This disability would be determined by the Ministerial Credentials Committee in consultation with the pastor’s primary physician.

- (6) **Ordained Ministers Between Calls.** When a minister leaves his church or ministry without a call to another BFC, he may be placed in either the “Between Calls” or “Leave of Absence” category, as determined by the Ministerial Credentials Committee. A Minister who is in the “Between Calls” category is one who is presently seeking a call from a BFC. He may remain in this category for a maximum of two years. A written
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request for an extension will be reviewed and may be granted by the Ministerial Credentials Committee.

- (7) **Ordained Ministers on Leave of Absence.** A minister who is in the “Leave of Absence” category is not currently open to receiving a call from a BFC. He may remain in this category for a maximum of two years. A written request for an extension will be reviewed and may be granted by the Ministerial Credentials Committee. The combination of “Leave of Absence” and “Between Calls” in any consecutive period shall not exceed five years total, except under unusual circumstances as determined by the Ministerial Credentials Committee.
- (8) **Ordained Inactive Ministers.** A minister who has exhausted his stay in the “Between Calls” and/or “Leave of Absence” categories will be placed in the “Ordained Inactive Ministers” category. He may remain in this category for a period not to exceed ten years, of which time spent in the “Between Calls” and/or “Leave of Absence” categories is counted. At the end of ten years, he loses his credentials with the BFC. In this case, or in any situation where a man loses his credentials, if he wishes to return to active ministry within the BFC, he must reapply to the Ministerial Credentials Committee.
- (9) **Ordained Ministers Working in Non-BFC Churches.** An ordained minister of the BFC, consistent with his ordination vows and without prejudice to his ministerial standing, may properly, under certain circumstances and conditions, and approved by the Ministerial Credentials Committee, labor in churches other than those of the BFC. He may remain in this category for a period not to exceed ten years. A written request can be submitted each year for an extension which will be reviewed and may be granted by the Ministerial Credentials Committee.

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## **511-6 Ministerial Relations Committee**

### **511-6.1 Purpose**

The purpose of the Ministerial Relations Committee is to foster a healthy relationship between pastors and churches, to help to resolve problems in the pastoral relationship, and to assist churches in calling pastors.

### **511-6.2 Composition and Election**

- (1) The Board shall be composed of four ordained ministers who are serving as pastors and three elders.
- (2) They shall be elected for a term of three years in classes as follows:  
Class I    One minister and one elder  
Class II    Two ministers and one elder  
Class III   One minister and one elder

### **511-6.3 Duties**

- (1) The committee shall provide counsel and advice to churches and pastors upon their invitation. The committee may be invited to assist a church in this way upon request of the Board of Elders, the Pastoral Relations Committee of the church, an individual Elder or Elders, or the Pastor.
- (2) The committee may initiate involvement and call a meeting with the Pastor, Pastoral Relations Committee, or Board of Elders if the committee concludes there are matters threatening the health of the pastoral relationship which are not being adequately addressed by the Particular Church. This request for a meeting shall be in writing, stating the reasons that the Ministerial Relations Committee has for requesting it.
- (3) The committee shall seek to resolve difficulties in the pastoral relationship whether they have been invited or have initiated involvement in the Particular Church. This involvement may take the form of meetings with the Pastor, Elders or Members, with the Pastoral Relations Committee, with the Board of Elders, or with the Congregation.
- (4) The committee shall oversee the resignation of a pastor according to our rules.
- (5) The committee shall meet with the Elders and/or Pastoral Search Committee with respect to temporary pulpit supply, the pastoral search process, and the calling of a pastor. It shall oversee the calling of a pastor according to our rules.
- (6) The committee shall refer any problems concerning pastoral relationships that it cannot resolve to BFC Conference for final resolution. This referral may or may not have recommendations concerning resolution.
- (7) The committee shall submit a report to BFC Conference, including recommendations concerning compensation for pastors called under our rules.



### **511-6.4 Conference Pastor Election**

- (1) The Conference Pastor shall be an ordained minister of the Bible Fellowship Church. He may, at the discretion of the Ministerial Relations Committee, serve either full-time or part-time.
- (2) He shall be elected for a three-year term by the Ministerial Relations Committee and his election shall be ratified by the BFC Conference. He shall not be a member of the Ministerial Relations Committee but shall serve under the direction of the committee, where full authority shall reside.

### **Duties**

- (1) He shall, in the performance of his duties, work according to policies and directives of the Ministerial Relations Committee.
- (2) He shall, as requested by the committee, represent the Ministerial Relations Committee in its dealings with pastors and churches.
- (3) He shall be a pastor to the pastors in order to encourage the men and to maintain a harmonious relationship between each church and pastor.
- (4) He may meet with boards of elders and pastoral search committees to aid them in their search for a pastor. He shall:
  - (4.1) Be knowledgeable of men available as potential candidates, including men newly approved as probationers by the Ministerial Candidate Committee.
  - (4.2) Communicate to potential candidates information on open churches.
  - (4.3) Keep pastoral search information current.
- (5) He shall encourage ongoing ministry training for pastors, including regional ministeriums for pastors and wives.
- (6) He shall be available as a resource to local pastoral relations committees in the fulfillment of their duties.
- (7) He shall be available to meet with boards of elders for consultation, evaluation, and advice.

## **512 BFC Departments**

### **512-1 BFC Departments**

**512-1.1** The BFC, both through its particular churches and the BFC Conference, may enter into joint endeavors to further the cause of Christ in the world. Concerns such as church-planting and cross-cultural missions, education and publication, camps and conferences are addressed more effectively by working together than by working alone.

**512-1.2** In order to work together in these joint endeavors, the BFC Conference shall establish departments. The departments shall perform as the servants of the Bible Fellowship Church, shall operate in accordance with the guidelines of the BFC Conference, and shall be directly accountable to the BFC Executive Board.

**512-1.3** Each department shall be headed by a department director. The department director is appointed by the BFC Executive Board, who shall implement and oversee a program which will advance the goals for the department. The department director is overseen by the BFC Executive Director.

**512-1.4** Each department is served by a department board, which shall assist the department director in achieving the goals of the department. The department board is elected internally, subject to the ratification of the BFC Executive Board. The number and terms of office for each department board is established by its bylaws.

**512-1.5** Each department shall administer its own finances in conformity with policy approved by BFC Conference. Budgeting, fund-raising, and auditing will be overseen by the BFC Executive Board. All gift annuities established by the departments shall be approved by the BFC Executive Board and reported annually.

**512-1.6** All funds administered by the departments are held in trust for the BFC Conference. The Bible Fellowship Church denomination takes title to all acquired real estate used by the departments.

**512-1.7** Each department shall submit an annual written report to the BFC Executive Board, which will in turn report annually to the BFC Conference on the status of each department.

## **512-2 Board of Church Extension**

The Board of Church Extension governs Church Extension Ministries, which consists of the Board of Church Extension, the Executive Director of Church Extension Ministries, church planters serving under the direction of the Board, all other employees of the Board, and mission churches under jurisdiction of the Board.

### **512-2.1 Purpose**

Church Extension Ministries exists to plant churches in order to build the Body of Christ through extending the Bible Fellowship Church.

It does this by evangelizing in areas, communities, and neighborhoods, as well as among people where Bible Fellowship Churches do not exist by forming and nurturing to maturity new congregations.

### **512-2.2 Composition and Election**

- (1) The Board of Church Extension will be composed of the Director of Church Extension Ministries, and selected ministers and members of BFC churches.
- (2) The Director shall be appointed by the BFC Executive Board.
- (3) The Board of Church Extension will select members to serve on the board who have a heart for Church Extension Ministries and can provide valuable assistance to the board. The number of members will be determined by the Director after consultation with the BFC Executive Board. Members will be presented to the BFC Executive Board for ratification to a three year term of office before beginning service on the board. All members must be members in good standing of a BFC.

### **512-2.3 Duties**

- (1) It shall have authority to establish and oversee the development of mission churches.
- (2) It shall issue calls to church planters credentialed by the BFC.
- (3) It shall have authority to hire church planters not credentialed by the BFC, but they must be under the care of the Ministerial Candidate Committee and be seeking credentials in the BFC. In such cases, a contract for ministry shall be established.
- (4) It shall function as a Board of Elders in behalf of mission churches.
- (5) It shall receive applications for admission to BFC Conference from daughter churches or congregations outside the BFC.
- (6) It shall require all mission churches to adhere to the F&O.
- (7) It shall receive and disburse monies designated for Church Extension Ministries.
- (8) It shall make recommendations to the BFC Executive Board on the approval and consummation of legal transactions for the purchase of real

estate and/or the erection of buildings for purposes of Church Extension Ministries.

- (9) It shall make recommendations to BFC Conference on the admission of mission churches and daughter churches to membership in BFC Conference.
- (10) It shall make a written report of its activities to the BFC Executive Board.
- (11) It shall promote the program of Church Extension Ministries and develop a broadening financial base for its ministry.

**512-2.4 Director of Church Extension Ministries**

The Director of Church Extension Ministries shall be an ordained minister of the BFC. He shall, by virtue of his office, be a member of the Board of Church Extension and shall be accountable to the BFC Executive Board.

**512-2.5 Rules Relative to the Recognition of Churches**

- (1) Any congregation that has a relationship with the BFC but has not yet met the standards for recognition as a particular church shall be called a mission church. (See §504-2)
- (2) When, in the opinion of the Board of Church Extension, a mission church is prepared for recognition, the Board shall recommend to BFC Conference that this mission church be recognized as a Particular Church and that it be admitted to the membership of BFC Conference. This recognition will be by a majority vote of BFC Conference.
- (3) Churches which have been recognized by the BFC Conference are no longer under the jurisdiction of the Board of Church Extension and are no longer eligible for financial aid from the Board. Churches recognized by the BFC Conference shall not again come under the jurisdiction of the Board of Church Extension but may seek counsel from the Ministerial Relations Committee and assistance from the Church Health Committee.

## **512-3 Board of Missions**

### **512-3.1 Purpose**

The Board of Missions is delegated by BFC Conference to direct and promote the missions program of the BFC, and to select, oversee, and care for its missionaries who serve in foreign countries and in the United States of America in ministries other than Bible Fellowship Churches and Agencies, except where cooperative ventures in cross-cultural church planting have been developed with the Board of Church Extension.

### **512-3.2 Composition and Election**

- (1) The Board of Missions shall be composed of the Director of Missions, the Financial Secretary, and selected ministers and members of BFC Churches.
- (2) The Director shall be appointed by the BFC Executive Board.
- (3) The Financial Secretary shall be selected by the Board of Missions in consultation with and subject to ratification of the BFC Executive Board.
- (4) The Board of Missions will select members to serve on the board who have a heart for missions and can provide valuable assistance to the board. The number of members will be determined by the Director after consultation with the BFC Executive Board. Members will be presented to the BFC Executive Board for ratification to a three-year term of office before beginning service on the board. All members must be members in good standing of a BFC church.
- (5) The Chairman and Vice Chairman (who both must be either ordained ministers or elders), Secretary, and Treasurer of the Board of Missions shall be elected annually by and from the Board of Missions at its organizational meeting. The Director is not eligible to serve in these offices. The Officers of the Board and the Director shall comprise the Executive Committee of the Board of Missions.

### **512.3.3 Duties of the Board of Missions**

- (1) To formulate objectives and policies for the missions program of the BFC as directed by BFC Executive Board.
  - (2) To interview and examine all prospective candidates for missionary service and to make decisions pertaining to approval and support of individuals who are committed to follow the F&O of the BFC.
  - (3) To cooperate with the elders of a Particular Church, the Ministerial Credentials Committee and the Ministerial Candidate Committee (for men holding ordination or license within the BFC) and sending agency, in the oversight and spiritual care of the missionaries and appointees serving under the direction of the Board of Missions.
  - (4) To maintain, within the missions program of the BFC, standards
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compatible with the F&O of the BFC.

- (5) To supervise and care for financial and administrative matters pertaining to the Board of Missions. It shall solicit, receive, safeguard, and disburse funds related to its mission program.
- (6) To promote interest and involvement in missions in conjunction with the Particular Churches (e.g., assisting Missions Committees and missionary organizations within the local church).
- (7) To submit a written report to the BFC Executive Board.
- (8) To appoint committees as needed for regional and Conference-Wide missionary meetings and/or events.

#### **512.3.4 Duties of the Board Officers**

- (1) Chairman. He shall be responsible to convene and preside over meetings and to initiate implementation of policies and decisions made by the Board of Missions and to carry out the responsibilities as outlined in the Policy Handbook of this Board.
- (2) Vice-Chairman. He shall fulfill the duties of the Chairman in the absence of the Chairman.
- (3) Director. He shall be responsible under the supervision of the Board of Missions for the development of vision, strategy and mobilization for world evangelization among Bible Fellowship Churches and to carry out the responsibilities as outlined in the Policy Handbook of this Board.
- (4) Financial Secretary. Under the Director and the BFC Executive Board, he shall be responsible for overseeing monies received, disbursed, and invested, and to circulate appropriate statements and other reports as directed by the BFC Executive Board.

#### **512-3.5 Contributions**

All financial contributions shall be made payable to “BFC Board of Missions” and sent to the Board of Missions.

## **512-4 Board of Pinebrook Bible Conference**

### **512-4.1 Composition and Election**

- (1) Pinebrook Bible Conference Board is composed of a Director and a Board.
- (2) The Director shall be appointed by the BFC Executive Board.
- (3) The Pinebrook Board will select members to serve on the board who have a heart for Pinebrook Bible Conference and can provide valuable assistance to the board. The number of members will be determined by the Director after consultation with the BFC Executive Board. Members will be presented to the BFC Executive Board for ratification to a three year term of office before beginning service on the board. Because of the various ministries of Pinebrook Bible Conference, the Board shall be composed of persons, two-thirds of whom are members in good standing of a BFC. The remaining persons must be in sympathy with the Articles of Faith and be members in good standing of Bible-believing churches.

### **512-4.2 Duties**

- (1) It shall formulate the objectives and establish the policies for the ministry and operation of the Conference.
- (2) It shall be responsible to execute all legal transactions of the Conference and manage all business affairs in accord with their own bylaws and subject to the F&O.
- (3) It will assist the Director, who is responsible for the immediate supervision and operation of the Conference.
- (4) The chairman shall appoint any necessary committees or sub-committees to carry out their responsibilities.
- (5) It shall hire or terminate all the full time personnel upon recommendation of the director and the Personnel Committee.
- (6) Other than the Director's compensation package, it shall establish all full time personnel salaries and shall approve an annual budget as recommended by the Director and the Finance Committee.
- (7) It shall submit an annual written report to the BFC Executive Board.

## **512-5 Board of Victory Valley**

### **512-5.1 Composition and Election**

- (1) The Board is composed of a Director and other members.
- (2) The Director shall be appointed by the BFC Executive Board.
- (3) The Victory Valley Board will select members to serve on the board who have a heart for Victory Valley Camp and can provide valuable assistance to the board. The number of members will be determined by the Director after consultation with the BFC Executive Board. Members will be presented to the BFC Executive Board for ratification to a three year term of office before beginning service on the board. Because of the various ministries of Victory Valley Camp, the Board shall be composed of persons, two-thirds of whom are members in good standing of a BFC. The remaining persons must be in sympathy with the Articles of Faith and be members in good standing of Bible-believing churches.

### **512-5.2 Duties**

- (1) It shall formulate objectives and policy for the camp.
- (2) It shall plan the year-round camp program.
- (3) It shall develop and maintain the site of the camp.
- (4) It shall formulate and maintain the standards of the camp.
- (5) Along with the Director it shall secure and provide for the training of the camp staff.
- (6) It shall supervise the financial and business matters of the camp.
- (7) It shall promote the camp to the public.
- (8) It shall evaluate the camp and its program.
- (9) It shall submit an annual written report to the BFC Executive Board.



## **Article 513 Miscellaneous Bylaws of BFC Conference**

### **513-1 Yearbook**

- (1) The Secretary of BFC Conference shall be editor of the Yearbook, in which the official minutes of BFC Conference shall be published.
- (2) The Yearbook shall contain the annual reports of boards and committees.
- (3) If a pastor or missionary dies during the year, a photograph honoring the pastor or missionary's ministry shall be inserted in the Yearbook in the next year.
- (4) If a church or parsonage is built or purchased during the year, a photograph of it shall be taken and a picture inserted in the Yearbook in the next year.

### **513-2 Past Minutes of Boards and Committees**

The past minutes of BFC Conference boards and committees shall be deposited for storage and preservation in the denominational archives.

## **600 Regionalization**

### **600-1 Purpose**

The purpose of regionalization is to strengthen the corporate testimony of the BFC through the development of groups of sister churches within geographic regions. Regional groups are not legislative bodies, but gatherings of sister churches for fellowship, prayer, and joint endeavors.

### **600-2 Organization**

The Executive Board shall organize all of the BFC churches and missions into regions, subject to the approval of BFC Conference, and shall list the regions each year in the Yearbook. This organization shall take place as often as necessary.

### **600-3 Duties**

- (1) The pastors of each region shall endeavor to meet for prayer and fellowship on a regular basis.
- (2) The churches of each region shall endeavor to work together on projects of common interest for the purpose of worship, fellowship, discipleship, evangelism, diaconal service, missions and evangelistic church planting.



# **Part III**

# **Amendments**

## **700 Amendments To The Faith & Order**

### **701 Amendments to the Articles of Faith**

**701-1** BFC Conference may propose to the churches amendments or changes in the Articles of Faith of the BFC by a two-thirds majority of those voting.

**701-2** After the approval of a first reading of the proposed change, the pastor and delegate of each Particular Church shall be responsible to inform their Board of Elders of the proposed change.

**701-3** The Board of Elders of each church shall vote on the proposed change, and an affirmative vote by a majority of the total number of elders shall be required for approval.

**701-4** Before BFC Conference can consider a second reading of the proposed amendment of change in the Articles of Faith, approval of the proposed change must be reported within 24 months to the Secretary of BFC Conference by the Board of Elders of at least two-thirds of the churches.

**[Proposed] 701-5** The amendment will be declared to be in effect when approved by two-thirds majority of those voting on a second reading of the amendment at any one of the three succeeding BFC Conferences. 2nd Reading 2014 p24 151-10

### **702 Amendments to the Principles of Order**

**702-1** Amendments to the Principles of Order may be proposed to the churches by a two-thirds majority of those voting at BFC Conference.

**702-2** After the approval of a first reading of the proposed change, the pastor and delegate of each Particular Church shall be responsible to inform their Board of Elders of the proposed change.

**702-3** The amendment will be declared to be in effect when approved by two-thirds majority of those voting on a second reading of the amendment at any one of the three succeeding BFC Conferences.

**702-4** Failure to consider the amendment for second reading at any one of the three succeeding BFC Conferences requires resubmission for consideration as first reading.

### **703 General Rules on Amendments**

**703-1** If an amendment receives the votes of a two-thirds majority at first reading but receives only a simple majority vote at second reading, it may be resubmitted at the following BFC Conference to be reconsidered for second reading.

**703-2** If the amendment is not resubmitted at the next BFC Conference, or if it

fails again to receive the votes of a two-third majority, it is lost. Any resubmission must be considered a first reading.

**704 Special Rules on Amendments**

**704-1** A special rule is an enactment of BFC Conference limited to one year of application.

**704-2** It may not violate the F&O.

**704-3** It may be reenacted on an annual basis.

**704-4** It may be placed in the F&O by simple majority vote of BFC Conference after being enacted at three successive sessions of BFC Conference.



# **Part IV**

## **Resources**





## **Beneficiary Society**

**Preamble** - The Beneficiary Society of the Bible Fellowship Church is a mutual aid society of the ordained and/or licensed ministers engaged in the ministries of the BFC. We seek to aid one another in the time of death or when disability may cause one of our brethren to be laid aside. This aid is not only for the minister but extends to his family as well. We suggest that every minister and his wife read the rules and regulations and become aware of their responsibilities and benefits.

### **Organization**

- (1) The Beneficiary Society shall meet at least once a year to transact business relative to the Society. This meeting shall be held at the time of BFC Conference.
- (2) The secretary's annual report and the financial report shall be submitted at this meeting.
- (3) At this annual meeting officers shall be elected by and from the members of the Society. They shall be elected for terms of three years. These terms shall be staggered so normally one officer is elected each year. The elected officers shall be privileged to organize as chairman, secretary and treasurer.
- (4) The accounts of the secretary and treasurer shall be submitted for review by the BFC Executive Board prior to BFC Conference.
- (5) The officers of the Beneficiary Society shall be authorized to invest the funds of the Beneficiary Society according to the BFC investment policy.
- (6) The officers shall be authorized to conduct all necessary business of the Society throughout the year.
- (7) All three officers' names shall be on record at the financial institutions chosen by the officers. The secretary is authorized to carry out investments and arrange with financial institutions for financial transactions when benefits for members of the society are necessary. If the secretary is unable to carry out his duties, the two remaining officers together are authorized to engage in financial transactions with the financial institutions. Benefits for members are paid by check, signed by two officers.

### **Rules and Regulations**

**Membership.** On becoming licensed as a probationer in the ministry of the BFC, one shall become a member of the Beneficiary Society beginning at the succeeding BFC Conference, at which time one and shall be responsible to pay into the fund. Every probationer/ordained man licensed or ordained by the BFC must be a member of the Beneficiary Society of the BFC, except those excluded in the next paragraph.

Only active and retired ministers of the BFC can continue to be part of the Society. Ministers of the BFC who are working with other Christian ministries and inactive ministers are not members of the Beneficiary Society and are not eligible for benefits from the fund.

**Dues.** The dues of all members of the Beneficiary Society shall be set at the annual meeting and shall be paid at BFC Conference. Dues may be paid in two installments: ½ due at BFC Conference and the remaining ½ due by November 1. If dues are not paid within thirty days after the due date, the pastor and his family are disqualified from being eligible to receive benefits until all unpaid dues are paid.

Ministers receiving Ministers' Retirement Fund benefits, ministers on disability, and ministers who have retired at age 65 or later are members of the Society but are exempt from dues. Members who continue on active service are exempt from dues after they have paid dues for forty years. Ministers over age 65 who choose to continue to serve as pastors or under ministries of the BFC must pay dues until they reach the age of 72 or have paid dues for forty years. Ministers who retire before age 65 are required to pay dues until age 65.

**Benefits.** Each member of the Society is eligible for death benefits for himself, his wife and his children. Each child is included until he or she reaches the age of nineteen. If a pastor-member of the Beneficiary Society is called home to be with the Lord, his children are included until their nineteenth birthday. The widow of a deceased member shall not be eligible if she remarries. If a minister marries after he retires, his wife is not eligible for benefits.

These benefits, as recommended by the officers of the Society, are determined by the members of the Society at their annual meeting. Benefits are subject to annual review.

A member must pay into the Beneficiary Society Fund for at least 10 years to receive full benefits. If a member pays into the fund less than 10 years the benefits are as follows:

1-4 years – 1/4 of the prescribed benefits

5-9 years – 1/2 of the prescribed benefits

### **Aid Grants**

(1) Widows. Widows of deceased ministers who have complied with the provisions of the Beneficiary Society (membership, dues) shall receive aid grants beginning at the time of the death of the husband and continuing until she is 65 years of age or until the time of her death or remarriage.

Widows of ministers who were retired at the time of marriage shall not be eligible to receive aid grants.

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These aid grants, as recommended by the officers of the Society, are determined by the members of the Society at their annual meeting. Aid grants are subject to annual review.

(2) Ministers. A minister who, because of physical illness or disability, finds it necessary to leave the active ministry under the terms of a leave of absence and who has complied with the provisions of the Beneficiary Society (membership, dues) shall receive aid grants beginning at the time of the severance from the active ministry and continuing until he reaches the age of 65 years, or until the time of his death or severance from membership in a Bible Fellowship Church.

These aid grants, as recommended by the officers of the Society, are determined by the members of the Society at their annual meeting. Aid grants are subject to annual review.

A minister shall be eligible for disability benefits from the Beneficiary Society if he has fulfilled a full-time ministry in the BFC for ten years, is permanently disabled and is otherwise unemployed. Appeals of exception can be made to the officers of the Beneficiary Society.

**Miscellaneous Rules.** The term of office for officers elected or appointed to this Society shall be for the term designated by our rules for that office or until successors are elected.

Once a member leaves the active ministry of the BFC (except for retirement or disability under the Conference rules and regulations), he is no longer a member of the society. This is a mutual aid society and there are no refunds.

If a man has paid into the Beneficiary Society Fund for 30 or more years and leaves the ministry of the BFC to labor in a full-time ministry with some other Christian organization, he may, if he desires, continue as a member of the Society by making the regular yearly payments to the fund.

## **Ministerial Convention**

### **Purpose**

- (1) To provide an annual continuing educational experience for the improvement of ministerial skills of pastors in the BFC
- (2) To provide a time of spiritual renewal for Bible Fellowship pastors and their wives
- (3) To promote fellowship, familiarity, and unity among the pastors of the BFC and their wives
- (4) To provide a forum for study and discussion of subjects of mutual interest directly relevant to the needs of ministry within the BFC
- (5) To provide a time for the physical and emotional refreshment of pastors and their wives

### **Composition and Election**

- (1) The Ministerial Convention Committee shall be composed of six men who are ordained ministers or probationers in the BFC.
- (2) The members of the committee shall be elected at an annual business meeting during the Ministerial Convention by the ordained ministers and probationers in attendance.
- (3) The members of the committee shall be elected for a term of three years in classes as follows:

Class I	Two Pastors
Class II	Two Pastors
Class III	Two Pastors
- (4) No member of the committee may be elected to consecutive terms.
- (5) The committee shall organize itself at the call of the chairman of the previous year prior to the conclusion of the Ministerial Convention, at which time officers shall be elected.

### **Duties of the Committee**

- (1) It shall plan and conduct an annual Ministerial Convention.
  - (2) It shall work in cooperation with the Ministers' Wives' Fellowship in planning for the Ministerial Convention.
  - (3) It shall provide publicity and arrange registration for the Ministerial Convention.
  - (4) It shall receive and disburse funds for the Ministerial Convention. The committee shall establish the amount of the registration fee for each pastor and wife. The committee shall receive the allowance for the convention provided in the Administrative Budget. The committee shall return any excess funds to the Treasurer of the BFC Executive Board.
  - (5) It shall conduct an annual business meeting during the Ministerial
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Convention for the election of committee members and for the consideration of any recommendations from those who attend the Convention.

- (6) It shall report at each Ministerial Convention the program for the Convention of the succeeding year.
- (7) It shall provide an annual report on the Ministerial Convention to BFC Conference.
- (8) It shall elect officers by and from the committee.

### **Duties of Officers**

#### **Chairman**

- (1) He shall convene and preside over all meetings of the Ministerial Convention Committee.
- (2) He shall convene and preside over meetings and sessions of the Ministerial Convention.

#### **Vice-Chairman**

- (1) He shall serve in the absence of the chairman.

#### **Secretary**

- (1) He shall keep an accurate record of all meetings of the committee.
- (2) He shall conduct all correspondence for the committee.
- (3) He shall prepare an annual report for BFC Conference.

#### **Treasurer**

- (1) He shall be in charge of registration for the Convention.
- (2) He shall see that all expenses are paid.
- (3) He shall provide a financial report for the report to BFC Conference.

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## History of the Bible Fellowship Church

### A Fellowship of Evangelical Mennonite Revivalists

Seven Mennonite revivalists, under pressure from their Bishops to give up their style of evangelism, huddled at a farm house in Milford Township, Lehigh County, Pennsylvania. It was Friday, September 24, 1858, just two weeks before the next high council. Should they acquiesce to restrictions upon the freedom of expression they enjoyed in their revival and prayer meetings? No, they would not. And so they established the **Evangelische Mennoniten Gemeinschaft** (Evangelical Mennonite Society). In their new fellowship which would remain Mennonite in doctrine, they would continue enthusiastic evangelism. Within two weeks all seven--Elder William Gehman, Bishop William N. Shelly, Preachers David Henning, and Henry Diehl, and Deacons David Gehman, Joseph Schneider and Jacob Gottschall--were outside the New Mennonite Association (now the General Conference Mennonite Church). One year later, the first Tuesday in November 1859, they held their first semi-annual Preachers Conference in the Evangelical Mennonite Meeting House in Haycock Township, Bucks County. Eleven days later they dedicated a new meeting house in Upper Milford Township, Lehigh County. Thus began the Bible Fellowship Church.

**The prayer meeting crisis.** The crisis which led to this new fellowship of Mennonite revivalists had erupted in the Upper Milford Mennonite Meeting House, "number two." **Nummer zwee**, as the congregation was called in the local dialect, was one of the new progressive congregations which had come out of the Franconia Conference of the (Old) Mennonite Church in 1847. John H. Oberholtzer, Bishop of the Swamp Mennonite Congregation, had resisted the pressure to wear the traditional unrolled coat collar. He also urged the Conference to allow written minutes and a constitution (German, *Ordnung*). Division followed. Some congregations separated from the Conference and a few new congregations emerged. Into the progressive Upper Milford Congregation came a young convert named William Gehman. Evidently a magnetic individual, he was soon selected Preacher by vote and by lot.

Gehman preached and conducted prayer meetings wherever he gained entrance. In 1853 the high council of the "New" Mennonites discussed their type of prayer meetings and allowed them to continue. Some, evidently, remained suspicious of these enthusiastic meetings. More discussion ensued. In 1856, the Bishops restricted these prayer meetings. The following year Bishop William N. Shelly, one of the Bishops who had enjoined the prayer meetings, had a change of heart and entered a formal protest. He attempted to demonstrate to the Council that these prayer meetings were in accord with the Gospel. The vote went against Shelly. These prayer meetings had to cease. Thus, his name was stricken from the

list of preachers in May, 1858, and the others had until October to conform.

**Unacceptable restrictions.** A controversy over the ownership of the Upper Milford meeting house followed. The Congregation, by one vote, rejected Gehman's claims on the meeting house. Through a financial settlement and contributions, he and his followers began to erect their own meeting house, which was known as "nummer drei" (number three), in the Valley. In it, he preached, prayed, exhorted and from there went forth to homes and nearby churches spreading the joy of the message he loved. He inspired many young men from his congregation to follow him into ministry. Possibly, the most significant was his cousin, Jonas Musselman, whose three sons became preachers.

**The Fellowship reaches out.** In 1861, Eusebius Hershey, a traveling preacher from Rebersburg, Center County, Pennsylvania, joined the Evangelical Mennonite Society. He inspired many as he traveled widely conducting protracted meetings and prayer meetings throughout Pennsylvania, Ohio, and Ontario, Canada. He also kindled interest in overseas missions. After years of travel in America and as an old man, he moved on to Liberia, West Africa, where he preached the Gospel and soon laid down his life.

As the other young men joined the preachers in revival, the organization developed. In 1866, they published their *Glaubenslehre*, which contained a statement of faith and church order along with a constitution for their mission society. The articles of faith were essentially the Mennonite Dortrecht Confession of Faith of 1632. The organization was doubtless derived from the Ordnung of the East-Pennsylvania Conference of Mennonites. The missions constitution may have been their own creation. It certainly was what they were all about. Their mission was to proclaim the Good News everywhere they could and to help others do the same where they could not go. They added meeting houses and preaching stations from Coopersburg, Pennsylvania, to Wadsworth, Ohio. Congregations in the Lehigh Valley survived; Wadsworth passed away. It was just too far away for proper nurture.

### **Mennonite Brethren in Christ, Pennsylvania Conference**

**Union with like-minded Brethren.** Other Mennonites were influenced by the same revival winds which blew through southeastern Pennsylvania. In Canada, Daniel Hoch spread the Word. He encouraged the Evangelical Mennonites, but many opposed him in Canada. Other Mennonites in Canada and the Midwest came under the spell of the revival tides. Among these were Solomon Eby of Ontario and Daniel Brenneman of Indiana and their followers who were excommunicated. They joined forces to become the Reformed Mennonites (1874). Some New Mennonites, followers of Daniel Hoch, united with these Reformed Mennonites to become the United Mennonites (1875). These kindred spirits found the



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Evangelical Mennonites of Pennsylvania and together became the Evangelical United Mennonites (November 1879).

With the new union came a church paper, greater structure and new theological emphases. The *Gospel Banner*, edited by Daniel Brenneman, provided reports of evangelistic activities, stories to challenge the heart, and doctrinal articles which developed a new way of thinking. When the Preachers Conference excommunicated those who refused to relinquish their life insurance policies, the Banner cheered. Reports from camp meetings challenged people to seek entire sanctification and healing. Articles selected from Methodist sources pointed away from Mennonite emphases. A new understanding of the Return of Christ to establish His earthly kingdom gained acceptance.

William Gehman, the only active preacher of the founding seven, was elected the first Presiding Elder of the Pennsylvania Conference in 1880. At the time, there were five active congregations: Zionsville, Cooperburg, Quakertown, Fleetwood, and Springtown. It was about this time, that a stationing committee began to assign preachers to the congregations.

In 1883, a small group in Ohio which called itself Brethren in Christ merged with the Evangelical United Mennonites to form the Mennonite Brethren in Christ. This was the last merger of the Pennsylvania Conference. At the time, many wondered whether it was time to drop Mennonite from the name of the Denomination. Tradition and the concern to allow young men to be certified conscientious objectors in Canada preserved the name.

**Leadership for the new century.** New leadership arose in the final decade of the nineteenth century, from which issued the leadership for most of the first half of the twentieth century. They launched new efforts at evangelism and Church planting. Tabernacle or tent meetings were conducted in various places where homes were not obtainable. The first Sunday School Convention was held in 1889.

In 1892, William Brunner Musselman became the second Presiding Elder. A man of boundless energy, he developed the first Denominational hymnal; created the Gospel Worker Society, an organization for women's ministries; inaugurated a new magazine, the *Gospel Worker Society Herald*; and began a printing organization known as Union Gospel Press. Later, he moved the Press and his organization to Williamsport, Pennsylvania, and eventually to Cleveland, Ohio.

Charles Henry Brunner, writer, poet, and musician, succeeded his cousin as Presiding Elder and Chairman of Annual Conference. C.H. and his wife established the Gospel Herald Society for men. Together with the Gospel Workers they planted many new congregations on the edges of Conference. He promoted foreign missions in the Pennsylvania conference through the newly-formed Christian and Missionary Alliance in which he became an honorary Vice President. He edited

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the *Gospel Banner*, and for many years, the Annual Conference Yearbook (1896-1941).

The Conference began to commission missionaries to diverse parts of the world; Henry and Kate Weiss to Chile, Calvin and Phoebe Snyder to China, and Rose Lambert to Armenia, Turkey. Others soon followed. For the early decades of the twentieth century, the majority of missionaries were associated with The Christian and Missionary Alliance.

New articles of faith were debated and approved. The Wesleyan emphasis on a "Second Blessing" or second work of grace, was evident in the article on Entire Sanctification. According to this teaching, the sin nature could be eradicated and the sanctified person be free from all conscious or intentional sin. The new articles on the Return of Christ reflected the widespread preoccupation with the impending end of the age.

The leadership of the Pennsylvania Conference until the fourth decade of the twentieth century was essentially the same. Presiding Elders, Harvey Brunner Musselman and William George Gehman, controlled every aspect of the Conference. Musselman chaired Annual Conference and Gehman governed the Gospel Herald Society during a period of growth. Interest in outreach and missions increased. The vision of reaching beyond the old boundaries and into nearby urban areas inspired many.

World War One, the Great Depression, and the outbreak of World War Two did not dampen the spirit of evangelism. By 1920 the Conference was double what it had been in 1900. In the next twenty years it doubled again.

Loyalty was a central theme during this era. Most people trusted and submitted to their leaders with little resistance. Disloyalty was unacceptable. A drift from the Wesleyan doctrine of the late nineteenth century grew as the twentieth century progressed. The Wesleyan notion of eradication of the sinful nature was replaced by the idea that the tendency to sin was counteracted by living victoriously in the Spirit as taught by Keswick sources. This was the beginning of an emphasis on the process of sanctification rather than on a second work of grace. Pastors began to write Sunday School lessons for the Uniform Lesson Series which were published by the Union Gospel Press. The Conference had its own hymnal, *Rose of Sharon*. The first history of the denomination, *History of the Mennonite Brethren in Christ*, edited by Jasper Huffman, was published in 1920.

**New leadership and new directions.** The end of an era began with the death of W.G. "Daddy" Gehman in 1941. Four years later H.B. Musselman became emeritus. Paul Timothy Stengele and Timothy D. Gehret provided transition to a new, post war era. Relations with the other Mennonite Brethren in Christ Conferences were not good. Doctrinal and ecclesiological disagreements were

magnified by personality differences. When General Conference in 1947 voted to change the name of the denomination to United Missionary Church, the Pennsylvania Conference resisted. Pennsylvania was allowed to use the old name, but five years later voted to separate from the other Conferences. The official reasons included differences over the doctrine of holiness, foreign mission programs, educational plans, financial autonomy, church government, and objection to a projected merger with The Missionary Church Association.

The Gospel Herald Society became the Home Mission Society. Later it became the department of Church Extension. Other changes followed. Berean Bible School was opened in 1950 to prepare Pastors, Missionaries and Christian workers for the Church. A shortage of Ministers was stemmed and new Missionaries were commissioned. After eighteen years as a three-year Bible School, the School became Pinebrook Junior College. The College closed in 1992. College and Seminary had become the preferred preparation for ministry. To compete with existing theological institutions which were considered acceptable did not seem wise to many.

### **The Bible Fellowship Church**

In 1959, the Conference adopted a new name, Bible Fellowship Church. New articles of faith were ratified; which reflected more accurately the beliefs of the Fellowship. The practice of feet washing was dropped. The title of Presiding Elder which had recently become District Superintendent became Conference Superintendent when there was only one such officer for the Denomination. Finally, when a more Presbyterian structure of government was adopted, the position was dropped altogether.

An important feature of the Conference was camp meeting. This was the place where the whole Conference came together. Here, they heard other Preachers and met Brothers and Sisters from other Congregations. They worshiped, prayed, fellowshiped and ate together. The first site was Chestnut Hill, near Coopersburg, in 1881. Other locations were used until the purchase of Mizpah Grove in East Allentown in 1910. There and at Edgewood Grove, near Shamokin, many encountered God in special ways and made lasting commitments. Evangelism, Bible teaching, reports from Missionaries, children's meetings, and youth meetings inspired the campers. A children's camp, Victory Valley, near Zionsville, opened in 1956. In 1968, the Fellowship sold Mizpah Grove and purchased Pinebrook Bible Conference. Pinebrook became the center for Summer and Winter spiritual vacations and retreats.

A home for the aged and for orphans was begun in Center Valley around the turn of the century. Few aged and fewer orphans lived in the home. A new home for the aging was opened in Nazareth in 1960. Two years later, the original home

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and farm were sold. The original home in Nazareth could accommodate only six to eight residents. An additional 1.5 acre tract was purchased in Nazareth, and a 28 bed nursing facility was dedicated in September 1968. Twenty years later the Home in Nazareth was converted to a Personal Care facility when a 121 bed skilled nursing facility was dedicated in Whitehall, Pennsylvania on a 42 acre tract. The tract continues to be developed for various types of housing and care for Elderly and indigent people.

The pursuit of a Biblical basis for every facet of the Denomination characterized Annual Conferences and Ministerial Conferences. A multitude of study papers, discussions, and recommendations focused on a wide range of topics such as eschatology, inerrancy, finance, ordination, church government, the relationship between Annual Conference and the Particular Church, divorce and church membership, church discipline, total abstinence, and church membership, and the role of women in the church. Abortion, homosexuality, the AIDS crisis, and other social issues were addressed.

From a loose association of Mennonite revivalists, influenced by the Holiness movement to a Wesleyan denomination to a Reformed fellowship holding to believers' baptism, the Bible Fellowship Church stands today. Once, each Congregation was autonomous. Later they came under the strong hand of Presiding Elders in a modified Episcopal system. Today Particular Bible Fellowship Churches are ruled by local Elders. Each Particular Church sends Elders along with their pastors to Annual Conference. New churches continue to be built, education facilities are being added and new congregations and daughter churches planted.

For further reading see: Shelly, Harold P., *The Bible Fellowship Church: Formerly Mennonite Brethren in Christ, Pennsylvania Conference, originally die Mennoniten Gemeinschaft von Ost-Pennsylvanien*. Bethlehem, PA: Historical Committee, 1992.

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# **Historical Society of the Bible Fellowship Church**

## **I. Purpose**

The Historical Society of the Bible Fellowship Church shall promote interest in the history and heritage of the Bible Fellowship Church.

## **II. Membership**

The membership will include those who subscribe through the payment of an annual fee to be determined by the Historical Committee of the BFC. The Historical Committee may give complimentary memberships as it determines.

## **III. Leadership**

- A. The Historical Society will exist under the leadership and oversight of the Historical Committee.
- B. The Historical Committee shall appoint a Coordinator of the Historical Society from its membership. The Coordinator will be responsible to direct the activities of the Historical Society. The Coordinator shall report on the activity of the Historical Society to the Historical Committee.
- C. The Historical Committee shall appoint a treasurer of the society from its membership. The treasurer shall collect dues and disburse funds as directed by the Historical Committee. He shall deposit the funds received for the Historical Society in a bank approved by the Historical Committee. He shall make an annual report of the receipts and disbursements of the Historical Society to the Historical Committee.

## **IV. Activity**

- A. The Historical Society shall hold at least one meeting annually, at which presentations relevant to the history and heritage of the Bible Fellowship Church shall be offered.
- B. The Historical Society shall periodically publish materials of historical interest to the membership.

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## **Guidelines for the church in handling suspected spousal abuse situations**

As those who minister in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, we are called to bear forth the hope of the gospel to the hurting and oppressed. And we are not only to represent Christ in bringing his message, but also by displaying his manner. We need to be ready with a word of truth, but we must also readily show forth Christ in love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. As pastoral under-shepherds, we must hunger for justice and be quick to the cause of the oppressed.

Following are guidelines for churches in addressing suspected spousal abuse situation. Note: these are only basic guidelines. A good resource for Elders dealing with domestic violence may be the National Domestic Violence Hotline (1-800-799-7233, <http://www.thehotline.org/>). Each church should develop a policy for managing the process of responding to domestic abuse situations in their church.

When an Elder receives a report of spousal abuse, those first moments of interaction with the accuser (and sometimes the accused) are critical.

- Pause to pray. Seek the Lord's wisdom. Situations involving suspected spousal abuse are among the most challenging an Elder can face, and call for great discernment.
- Listen attentively and take seriously the initial report of the accuser about the alleged abuse. We must be ready, without reservation, to come to the aid of the oppressed. All reports of domestic violence should be received and believed as presented. However, the Elder should remain committed to pursuing the truth in the situation.

At the onset of ministering in a spousal abuse situation, the Elder needs to make clear to the accuser the process with regard to the accusation and continue throughout to inform her/him of progress in its resolution. The Elder must be committed to continue to give pastoral care, bringing healing and reconciliation when possible to the accuser, the accused and their respective families. Perhaps most importantly, the Elder must be careful not to move to reconciliation of the marriage without the repentance of the accused (and perhaps the accuser).

In cases of the report of immediate physical (or sexual) abuse:

- If possible before authorities are contacted, secure the safety of the accuser. Protect and care for the accuser when the accuser is, for whatever reason, unable to care for her/himself and her/his family.
- The authorities ought to be contacted, preferably with the accuser's consent. If the accuser will not consent to involving the authorities, much wisdom

is needed. If there is sufficient reason to believe the accuser is in danger, shepherds must act to protect those who are being oppressed.

- If a safe place for the accuser to stay has not already been arranged, make such arrangements.
- Inform the accuser that he/she may wish to seek legal counsel.
- Minister comfort to the accuser (see below).
- Where possible, minister to the accused. It should be the desire of the shepherd to seek to speak the gospel into the life of the accused as well as the accuser, but this is not always possible. If the accused is an unbeliever, he/she needs to be shown his/her wickedness and see the hope of the gospel. If the accused is a believer, he/she needs to be pursued in accordance with Matthew 18.

In cases where an Elder receives a report of a history of abuse (physical, sexual, emotional, neglect), but there is no immediate physical violence:

- Ensure the safety of the accuser and establish appropriate protections. Make sure that the accuser has a safety plan in place (<http://www.domesticviolence.org/personalized-safety-plan/> or <http://www.thehotline.org/help/path-to-safety/> ).
- If there is sufficient reason to believe the accuser is in danger, suggest the involvement of authorities. (The Elder may need to involve the authorities even if the accuser is against this idea. Again, great wisdom is needed here.)
- Inform the accuser that she/he may wish to seek legal counsel.
- Minister comfort to the accuser (See **Tripp, Paul David; Powlison, David; Welch; Edward T., “Queries and Controversies: How should you counsel a couple in a case of domestic violence,”** *The Journal of Biblical Counseling*, Vol. 15, No. 2, 1997, pp. 51-55).
- If the accuser is a woman, it would be wise to have another woman present as comfort and counsel is given.
- Hear the cries of the oppressed. The Psalms are a great place to turn to hear confident cries of those who are helpless.
- The helpless needs to hear that she/he is not powerless in the situation.
- The victim of abuse needs to hear that she/he is not at fault.
- Bring them to hope in God in the midst of their sufferings. God doesn't forget us. He knows our sufferings. He loves His people. He is a God of justice.

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- Teach them how to disarm their oppressor. The accuser must resist going toward either timidity or revenge. They must not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good (see Rom. 12:21). The accuser should seek to disarm her/his tormenter with gentleness and love (Prov. 15:1). The accuser should be directed toward pursuing peace with her/his spouse (Rom. 12:18). Accusers should also be encouraged to confess their own sins, and be ready to forgive.
  - Confront the accused (See **Tripp, Paul David; Powlison, David; Welch; Edward T., “Queries and Controversies: How should you counsel a couple in a case of domestic violence,”** *The Journal of Biblical Counseling*, Vol. 15, No. 2, 1997, pp. 51-55).
  - Elders must represent Christ in message and manner to one accused of abuse.
  - Elders should recognize a common need of grace. We are not so very different from one accused of abuse. Paul Tripp, in an article in the *Journal of Biblical Counseling*, writes, “Every argument is, in principle, on a continuum with outbreaks of actual violence.”<sup>1</sup> However the Elders should not be reticent to confront sin in the accused.
  - Elders should expect that the accused is not the only sinner in the home.
  - Elders should be aware of common personality traits of those who are oppressors:
    - Evasiveness. Violent people don’t know themselves, and don’t want others to know them. They live in self-deceit, and are liars, hidiers, and manipulators. They are winsome and smooth talkers. Elders should expect to find patterns of pseudo-confession/repentance.
    - Selfishness at the core. The abuser is fixated on his pleasure, his agenda, his desires, and his demands.
    - Manipulative. Those who oppress others tend to manipulate their victims.
  - Ministering to the accused:
    - Their heart issues that motivate violence (desire for power, love, control, comfort...) need to be exposed. Oppression of others is primarily not about those who are oppressed, but about the sin of the oppressor.
    - Be prepared to deal with minor versions of the major sins. Judgmentalism, grumbling, and bickering can be preludes to violence. The oppressor must repent of these.
-



- Point them to Christ. Christ died for the ungodly, the wicked. They also need to know the fear of the Lord and His righteous wrath.
- Bring them to God-centered repentance.
- Show them God-honoring alternatives to their behavior.

## **Suggested Forms**

The following forms are suggested for use in Particular Churches. The services normally are to be led by the pastor, but may be conducted by another person authorized by the Board of Elders.

### **Admission of Members**

See F&O, Article 18: The Church, and Qualifications and Duties of Church Membership

The exact words of the form on Admission of Members are not required, but the spirit and substance is required.

#### **Questions to Candidates**

- (1) **Can you testify that through repentance toward God and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ you have experienced the forgiveness of your sin and enjoy peace with God? If so, answer “Yes.”**
- (2) **Do you believe the Bible to be the inspired, infallible Word of God and the sole authority for the way of salvation, and do you take this Word to be your rule of faith and conduct? If so, answer “Yes.”**
- (3) **Will you endeavor by God’s help to be responsible for faithful attendance of public worship, daily reading of the Scripture, prayer, praise, and systematic giving? If so, answer “Yes.”**
- (4) **Are you willing to submit to the authority of (name of church) Bible Fellowship Church and to live in keeping with the Faith and Order of the Bible Fellowship Church? If so, answer “Yes.”**
- (5) **Since the time that you were born again, have you been baptized by immersion as instructed in the Word of God? If so, answer “Yes.”**

#### **Act of Admission**

The Minister shall say, “ (name of candidate) , I extend to you the right hand of fellowship in the name of Christ and His Church and welcome you as a member of (name of church) Bible Fellowship Church.”

## **Baptism**

See Articles of Faith, Article 20: Ordinances

The exact words of the form on Baptism are not required, but the spirit and substance is required.

A time of singing and prayer and a brief message by the officiating pastor shall be followed by the questioning of the candidate(s).

Question to Candidate

**“Can you testify that through repentance toward God and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ you have experienced the forgiveness of your sin and enjoy peace with God? If so, answer “Yes.”**

Act of Baptism - The Minister shall immerse the candidate, saying:

**“(Name of candidate), upon the confession of your faith in the Lord Jesus Christ as your Savior, I baptize you in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, Amen.”**

## **Dedication of Children**

See Declaration on Particular Issues, Article 151: Dedication of Children.

**To the Congregation**

**Inasmuch as these parents are presenting this child (these children) to the Lord, let us join with them in their act of dedication. Only those parents who are born again and are living in fellowship with Christ may present their children in dedication to the Lord. This act has no saving power, but it is a public declaration by the parents that they will rear their children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. Dedication becomes meaningful to the extent that these parents train their children in the Lord through spiritual admonitions and exemplary living.**

**To the Parents**

- (1) Inasmuch as God has given you this child (these children), do you consecrate him (her, them) to God and His service, and do you publicly acknowledge that in so doing, you are submitting yourselves to God’s will for this child, whatever it may involve? If so, answer “We do.”**
  - (2) Will you be responsible to bring this child (these children) regularly to the house of God and teach him (her, them) reverence to the Lord and respect for His house and worship? If so, answer, “We will.”**
-

- (3) **Will you instruct this child (these children) in the Word of God and encourage him (her, them) to memorize portions of it? If so, answer, “We will.”**
- (4) **Will you endeavor to lead your child (children) to a saving knowledge of Christ? If so, answer, “We will.”**
- (5) **Will you teach this child (these children), as soon as he (she, they) is (are) able to understand, the nature and purpose of this dedication? If so, answer, “We will.”**
- (6) **Do you dedicate yourselves as parents to live a godly life so that this child (these children) will see Christ in you? If so, answer, “We do.”**

(The minister shall continue).

**Inasmuch as (name of parents) have dedicated (name of child) to God and His service, let us join in prayer that God’s blessings may be upon them.**

(The minister shall then pray, and may give the following benediction:)

**“The Lord bless thee and keep thee; the Lord make His face shine upon thee, and be gracious unto thee; the Lord lift up His countenance upon thee, and give thee peace” (Num. 6:24-26, KJV).**

## **Marriage**

See Biblical Principles for Living, Article 103-3: Marriage & Singleness; Article 103-4: Family; and Article 103-5: Divorce

Prior to the ceremony, the minister should arrange for counseling with the couple concerning marriage.

At the time appointed for the marriage ceremony, the persons to be married shall stand together, the man on the minister’s left and the woman on the right.

### **The Service**

**(1) Dear friends, we are gathered here in the sight of God and in the presence of this company to join together this man and this woman in holy matrimony, which is an honorable estate, instituted of God in the time of man’s innocency, signifying to us the mystical union which is between Christ and His church, which He purchased with His own blood at Calvary.**

**(2) As Christ’s love for the church is sacred, in like manner marriage is sacred, is not to be entered into inadvisedly, but reverently, discreetly, and in the fear of God. Be well assured that if**

**any persons are joined together otherwise than God's Word allows, their marriage is not blessed of God. Into this holy estate these two persons come now to be joined.**

**(3) Who gives this woman to be married to this man?** (Appropriate reply, such as "I do," or "Her mother and I do," etc.)

**(4) Take her right hand and place it in his right hand signifying that you surrender her to his care and keeping for life.**

**(5) (To the groom) Do you, (name of groom), take this woman whose hand you now hold to be your true and wedded wife, and do you solemnly promise before God and these witnesses to love, cherish, honor, and protect her, and her only, forsaking all others for her sake, as long as you both shall live? If so, answer, "I do."**

**(6) (To the bride). Do you, (name of bride), take this man who now holds your hand to be your true and wedded husband, and do you solemnly promise before God and these witnesses to love, honor, cherish, obey, and protect him; to forsake all others for his sake; and to cleave to him and him only, so long as you both shall live? If so, answer, "I do."**

**(7) (The minister shall then ask the groom to repeat after him the following:). I, (name of groom), take thee, (name of bride), to be my wedded wife to have and to hold, from this day forward, for better, for worse, for richer, for poorer, in sickness and in health, to love and to cherish till death do us part.**

**(8) (The minister shall then ask the bride to repeat after him the following:). I, (name of bride), take thee, (name of groom), to be my wedded husband; to have and to hold, from this day forward, for better, for worse, for richer, for poorer, in sickness and in health, to love, cherish, and obey till death do us part.**

**(9) (Exchange of rings) (To the groom) What pledge do you give of the sincerity of your vows? "This ring." (To the bride) Do you accept this ring as a pledge of the sincerity of his vows? "I do." (As the groom places the ring on his bride's finger, he shall repeat after the minister the following:) As a pledge and in token of the vows between us made...with this ring I thee wed and with all my worldly goods I thee endow; in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen. (The minister shall say:) And may this circlet of gold, which has no end, be henceforth the chaste and changeless symbol of your evermore pure and changeless affection.**

(To the bride) **What pledge do you give of the sincerity of your vows? “This ring.”** (To the groom) **Do you accept this ring as pledge of the sincerity of her vows? “I do.”** (As the bride places the ring on her groom’s finger, she shall repeat after the minister the following:) **As a pledge and in token of the vows between us made,...with this ring I thee wed, pledging my constant faith and abiding love, in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.** (The minister shall say:) **And may this circlet of gold, which has no end, be henceforth the chaste and changeless symbol of your evermore pure and changeless affection.**

**(10) Inasmuch as (name of groom) and (name of bride) have consented together in holy wedlock, and have witnessed the same by these sacred vows in the presence of God and this company, and have confirmed the same by the giving and receiving of rings, now therefore by the authority conferred upon me as a minister of the Church of Jesus Christ, and by the laws of the state of (name of state or commonwealth), I pronounce that you are husband and wife, in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.**

**(11) In this new relationship let me remind you that you are one in interests, one in reputation, and above all, one in affection. These, therefore, whom God has joined together, let not man put asunder.**

**(12)** (Prayer may be offered, if desired.)

**(13)** (To the groom) **You may kiss the bride.**

**(14)** (To the congregation) **May I now present Mr. and Mrs. (full name of groom).**

## Funeral

### The Service

**(1) Beloved: We are gathered together in the name of Christ to honor the memory of (name of deceased). The comfort of this hour is found in the Holy Scriptures. Let us hear what they say.**

**(2)** (The Scripture reading may be followed by prayer, hymns, poems, and an appropriate message, words of comfort, and a closing prayer.)

**(3) As we depart, let us be reminded that every man will stand before God in a day of judgment. Blessed is the one whose heart is prepared to meet God.**

**(4) We invite you to join us for the service of committal at (name of cemetery) cemetery.**

### **The Committal Service**

**(1) “I am the Resurrection and the Life; he that believeth in Me, though he were dead, yet shall he live; and whosoever liveth and believeth in Me shall never die.”**

**(2) “Verily, verily I say unto you, he that heareth My Word, and believeth on Him that sent Me hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation, but is passed from death unto life. Verily, verily I say unto you, the hour is coming, and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God; and they that hear shall live.” “Marvel not at this; for the hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear His voice, and shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation.”**

**(3) “Man that is born of woman is of few days, and full of trouble. He cometh forth like a flower and is cut down; he fleeth also as a shadow and continueth not.” (John 11:25, 26; 5:24, 25, 28, 29; Job 14:1, 2 - KJV)**

**(4) Inasmuch as it has pleased the Lord, in whose power are life and death, to remove our departed (name of deceased) from our midst, we therefore commit the body to the earth; Earth to earth! Ashes to ashes! Dust to dust! awaiting the resurrection through Jesus Christ our Lord, by Whom each must come forth in his own order when this corruptible must put on incorruption and this mortal must put on immortality, and all shall appear in His presence, according to the mighty working whereby He is able to subdue all things unto Himself.**

**(5) “And I heard a voice from heaven saying unto me... Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth; Yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labors; and their works do follow them.” (Rev. 14:13 - KJV).**

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## Dedication of a Church Building

See Articles of Faith, Article 18: The Church

(Officiating pastor). **Beloved, in this solemn hour, in the presence of the Lord, the God of Heaven and Earth, the Source and Giver of all good, Who has given us the desire and ability to build this house, we now give thanks for its completion and dedicate it to His service and glory.**

(1) Our blessed Redeemer gives us the precious assurance that He will meet with His people where they assemble themselves together.

(2) Thus encouraged and strengthened in faith, we have confidence that the Most High, Who inhabits eternity and dwells also in those who are born in His Spirit, will accept this house which we have built to His glory, and regard it with good pleasure, to the salvation and benefit of those who here assemble to magnify His holy name.

(3) **Having this confidence, we now designate this house as (name of church) Bible Fellowship Church of (location of church), unto the Triune God. We dedicate this house to the singing of His praise, the offering of thanksgiving, prayer, reading, expounding, and preaching His Word, the administration of the ordinances, and the observance of such other devotional services as are according to the rules adopted and practiced in public worship by the Bible Fellowship Church agreeable with His Word. Here may His name be magnified and His church increase through the maturing of the saints and the salvation of men.**

**Responses. (Pastor) God, our Heavenly Father, has prospered us and enabled us by His grace to complete this house of worship. We are gathered here this day to dedicate this building to the honor and service of our Lord. Within His house of worship the Word of God will be truly preached, His ordinances faithfully administered, prayer and praise freely offered unto Him Who, above all, is worthy. We desire that this shall be His house and the place of His presence. We are thankful unto Him and bless His name.**

(People) The Lord is Good, His mercy is everlasting, and His truth endureth to all generations.

(Pastor) To God, the Everlasting Father, in Whom we live and move and have our being, and from Whom cometh every good and perfect gift, by Whose mercy and grace we are saved,...



(People) We now with gratitude solemnly dedicate this house of worship.

(Pastor) To the service of Jesus Christ, our Lord and Savior, Who loved us and gave Himself for us, Who rose again and lives forevermore, to Him Who is the Way, the Truth, and the Life,...

(People) We dedicate this house of worship.

(Pastor) To the ministry of the Holy Spirit, our Comforter and Guide, by Whom alone is wrought the renewal of heart, Who leads us to repentance, and enriches us through His work,...

(People) We dedicate this house of worship.

(Pastor) For the comfort of those who mourn, for strength to those who are weak, for instruction in the truths of the Word of God, for the sanctification of the family and the promotion of Christian character, for the giving of hope to one and all,...

(People) We dedicate this house of worship.

(Pastor) For the carrying out of the Great Commission to the end that the Gospel may be preached to the ends of the earth through its constituency,...

(People) We dedicate this house of worship.

**(Pastor and people) We, the members and friends of (name of church) Bible Fellowship Church of (location of church), grateful to God for our Christian heritage, consecrate ourselves anew, and all that we are and possess, to Him as His people, for His service, and dedicate this house of worship in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.**

## **Installation of a Pastor**

Suggested Outline and Elements of a Service of Installation of a pastor of the BFC.

Prelude

Call to Worship

Statement of Purpose of Meeting

Hymn

Invocation

Greetings from Invited Guests

Community Leaders

Representatives of the Bible Fellowship Church

Evangelical Leaders of Church and Parachurch Organizations

Recognition of the presence of other pastors and missionaries

Offering

Special Music

Message or Sermon

Installation of pastor

**Leader (Delegate to BFC Conference) takes podium, as pastor stands before the congregation.**

Leader: Do you, \_\_\_\_\_, confess that Jesus Christ is your Lord and Savior and that He alone is the Redeemer and Head of the church?

Pastor: (Brief affirmation)

Leader: Are you inwardly persuaded that you are called of God to the proclamation of the Gospel and to the office of pastor and teacher?

Pastor: (Brief affirmation)

**Leader: On (date) \_\_\_\_\_, (name of church) \_\_\_\_\_ voted to call you as its pastor to serve under the FAITH & ORDER of the Bible Fellowship Church and the bylaws of this body. Do you believe that this call is the will of God, and do you accept this call?**

Pastor: (Brief affirmation) (Takes his seat in front pew)

Charge to the Congregation: (By designated person; charge should not take more than three minutes)

Question: Will you as a congregation, on the basis of the evidence given as to the validity of the call of \_\_\_\_\_, receive and honor him as your minister and pastor?

If so, answer “We will” (Congregation responds.)

Charge to Elders and Deacons: (By designated person, who directs the elders and deacons to stand in front of the congregation.) (Charge should take no more than three minutes.)

Question: Will you, the elders and deacons of this congregation, assume your God-given responsibilities and support the pastor in the carrying out of his and your sacred stewardship? If so, answer, “We will” (Elders and deacons respond.)

Charge to the Pastor: (by designated person; charge to be no longer than three minutes) (He directs pastor to stand before the elders and deacons.)

Question: Will you as pastor-teacher solemnly affirm that you will take heed to yourself and to all the flock, over which the Holy Spirit has made you an overseer, to feed the church of God, which He has purchased with His own blood?

Pastor: By God’s help, I will!

Installation Prayer: (Pastor kneels, with elders, deacons, and other designated participants around him. Designated person(s) will lead in prayer)

Response from the Pastor

Hymn

Benediction

Reception

## **Local Church Recognition of Ordination**

Prelude

Call to Worship

Statement of Purpose

Hymn

Invocation

Special Music

Greetings from Invited Guests:

Community Leaders

Representatives of the Bible Fellowship Church

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Evangelical Leaders of Church and Parachurch Organizations

Recognition of the Presence of Other Pastors and Missionaries

Offering

Sermon

Declaration by Credentials Committee of the Bible Fellowship Church

Announcement of Date and Place of Ordination

(Announcement of Recognition of Previous Ordination, if pastor was ordained when he was accepted by the Bible Fellowship Church)

Hymn

Benediction

Celebration/Reception/Refreshments (optional)

### **Chartering Ceremony for a New Church**

This ceremony shall be a worship service held in the community of the church. It shall be planned by the Particular Church and may include the following:

Singing of Hymns

Reading of Scripture

Ministry in Music

Prayers

Presentation of the Charter by an Officer of BFC Conference

Reception of the Charter by an Officer of the Local Church

Signing of the Charter by all Members who are Present

Presentation of the Minutes of the Board of Surrogate Elders by an Officer of the Board of Surrogate Elders

Reception of the Minutes by the Secretary of the Board of Elders

The Offering

The Sermon

Declaration of Commitment by the Congregation

Prayer of Commitment

Installation of the Pastor (if he has been called)

The Benediction

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