



REDEEMING GRACE

BAPTIST CHURCH

CONSTITUTION

Preamble

Since it has pleased our Sovereign Lord, by His Holy Spirit, to call a certain number of his servants to unite under the name of Redeeming Grace Baptist Church, located in St. Mary's County, Maryland, for the worship of God and the advance of the gospel of Jesus Christ, we, the members of Redeeming Grace Baptist Church do hereby organize ourselves and adopt this Constitution as our articles of governance, to be interpreted at all times to reflect the character of Jesus Christ, as revealed in the Holy Bible and articulated in the Statement of Faith and Covenant of this Church.

ARTICLE I. Church Name

This body shall be known as Redeeming Grace Baptist Church, located in St. Mary's County, Maryland.

ARTICLE II. Purpose

This Church exists by the grace of God and for the glory of God to:

- EXALT the Lord through God-centered worship
- EQUIP Christians to advance in their faith and devotion to Christ
- ENGAGE the world with the gospel of Jesus Christ

ARTICLE III. Confession of Faith

The Holy Bible is the inspired and inerrant word of God and is the final authority concerning truth, morality, and the proper conduct of mankind. While the Church affirms the Baptist Faith & Message 2000, for purposes of doctrinal accountability and Church practice the members of Redeeming Grace Baptist Church subscribe to the New Hampshire Confession of Faith 1853 as an accurate summary of essential doctrinal matters.

New Hampshire Confession of Faith 1853

I. Of the Scriptures

We believe that the Holy Bible was written by men divinely inspired, and is a perfect treasure of heavenly instruction; that it has God for its author, salvation for its end, and truth without any mixture of error for its matter, that it reveals the principles by which God will judge us; and therefore is, and shall remain to the end of the world, the true center of Christian union, and the supreme standard by which all human conduct, creeds, and opinions should be tried. (II Tim. 3:16-17; II Tim. 3:15; Proverbs 30:5-6; Romans 2:12; Phil. 3:16; I John 4:1)

II. Of the True God

We believe that there is one, and only one living and true God, an infinite intelligent Spirit, whose name is YAHWEH¹, the Maker and supreme Ruler of heaven and earth; inexpressibly glorious in holiness, and worthy of all possible honor, confidence and love; that in the unity of the Godhead there are three persons, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost; equal in every divine perfection and executing distinct but harmonious offices in the great work of redemption. (John 4:24; Ps. 83:18; Heb.3:4; Rom. 1:20; Jer.10:10; Ex.15:11; Ps.147:5; Isa.6:3; I Pet.1:15-16; Rev.4:6-8; Mark12:30; Rev.4:11; Matt.10:37; Jer.2:12-13; Matt.28:19; John 15:26; I Cor.12:4-6; I John 5:7; John10:30; John 5:17; John 14:23; John 17:5&10; Acts5:3-4; I Cor.2:10-11; Phil. 2:5-6; Eph. 2:18; II Cor.13:14; Rev. 1:4-5)

III. Of the Fall of Man

We believe that man was created in holiness, under the law of his Maker, but by voluntary transgression fell from that holy and happy state; in consequence of which all mankind are now sinners, not by constraint but choice; being by nature utterly void of that holiness required by the law of God, positively inclined to evil; and therefore under just condemnation to eternal ruin, without defense or excuse. (Gen.1:27; Gen.1:31; Ecc.7:29; Acts 17:26-29; Gen.2:16-17; Gen.3:6-24; Rom. 5:12; Rom.5:15-19; Ps.51:5; Rom.8:7; Isa.53:6; Gen.6:12; Rom.3:9-18; Eph.2:1-3; Rom.1:18,32; Rom.2:1-16; Gal.3:10; Matt. 20:15; Ezek. 18:19-20; Rom.1:20; Rom.3:19; Gal. 3:22.)

IV. Of the Way of Salvation

We believe that the salvation of sinners is wholly of grace; through the Mediatorial offices of the Son of God; who by the appointment of the Father freely took upon him our nature, yet without sin; honored the divine law by his personal obedience, and by his death made a full atonement for our sins; that having risen from the dead, he is now enthroned in heaven; and uniting in his wonderful person the tenderest sympathies with divine perfections, he is every way qualified to be a suitable, a compassionate, and an all sufficient Savior. (Eph.2:3, Matt. 18:11, I John4:10, I Cor.3:5-7, Acts 15:11, John 3:16, John1:1-14, Heb.4:14, Heb. 12-24, Phil. 2:9&14, II Cor. 5:21, Isa. 42:21, Phil. 2:8, Gal. 4:4-5, Rom. 3:21, Isa. 53:4-5, Matt. 20:28, Rom.4:25, Rom. 3:21-26, I John 2:3, I Cor. 15:1-3, Heb.9:13-15, Heb.1:8, Heb. 1:3, Col. 3:1-4, Heb. 7:25, Col. 2:18, Heb. 7:26, Ps. 89:19, Ps.34)

V. Of Justification

We believe that the great gospel blessing which Christ secures to such as believe in him is justification; that justification includes the pardon of sin, and the promise of eternal life on principles of righteousness; that it is bestowed not in consideration of any works of righteousness which we have done, but solely through faith in the Redeemer's blood; by virtue of which faith his perfect righteousness is freely imputed to us of God; that it brings us into a state of most blessed peace and favor with God, and secures every other blessing needful for time and eternity. (John 1:16, Eph.3:8, Acts 13:39, Isa. 53:11-12, Rom5:1-2, Rom. 5:9, Zech. 13:1, Matt.9:6, Acts 10:43, Rom. 5:17, Titus 3:5-7, I Peter 3:7, I John 2:25, Rom. 5:21, Rom. 4:4-5, Rom. 6:23, Phil. 3:7-9, Rom. 5:19, Rom. 3:24-26, Rom. 4:23-25, I John 2:12, Rom. 5:3, Rom. 5:11, I Cor. 1:30-31, Matt. 6:33, I Tim. 4:8)

VI. Of the Freeness of Salvation

We believe that the blessings of salvation are made free to all by the gospel; that it is the immediate duty of all to accept them by a genuine repentance², and obedient faith; and that nothing prevents the salvation of the greatest sinner on earth, but his own inherent depravity and voluntary rejection of the gospel; which rejection involves him in an aggravated condemnation. (Isa. 55:1, Rev. 22:17, Rom. 16:25-26, Mark 1:15, Rom. 1:15-17, John 5:40, Matt.23:37, Rom.9:32, Pro.1:24, Acts 13:46, John 3:19, Matt. 11:20, Luke 10:27, II Thess. 1:8)

VII. Of Grace in Regeneration

We believe that in order to be saved, sinners must be regenerated, or born again; that regeneration consists in giving a holy disposition to the mind; that it is effected in a manner above our comprehension by the power of the Holy Spirit, in connection with divine truth, so as to secure our voluntary obedience to the gospel; and that its proper evidence appears in the holy fruits of repentance and faith and newness of life. (John 3:3, John 3:6-7, I Cor.3:14, Rev.14:3, Rev. 21:27, II Cor. 5:17, Ezek. 36:26, Deu.30-6, Rom. 2:28-29, Rom.5:5, I John 4:7, John 3:8, John 1:13, James 1:16-18, I Cor.1:30, Phil. 2:13, I Peter 1:22-25, I John 5:1, Eph. 4:20-24, Col. 3:9-11, Eph. 5:9, Rom.8:90, Gal. 5:16-23, Eph. 3:14-21, Matt. 3:8-10, Matt.7:20, I John 5:4, 18)

VIII. Of Repentance and Faith

We believe that repentance and faith are sacred duties and also inseparable graces, wrought in our souls by the regenerating Spirit of God; whereby being deeply convinced of our guilt, danger and helplessness, and of the way of salvation by Christ, we turn to God with genuine repentance³, confession and supplication for mercy; at the same time heartily receiving the Lord Jesus Christ as our Prophet, Priest and King, and relying on him alone as the only and all-sufficient Savior. (Mark 1:15, Acts 11:18, Eph. 2:8, I John 5:1, John 16:8, Acts 2:37-38, Acts 16:30-31; Luke 18:13, Luke 15:18-21, James 4:7-10, II Cor. 7:11, Tim. 10:12-13, Ps.51, Rom.10:9-11, Acts 3:22-23, Heb. 4:14, Ps.2:6, Heb. 1:8, Heb. 7:25)

IX. Of God's Purpose of Grace

We believe that election is the eternal purpose of God, according to which he graciously regenerates, sanctifies, and saves sinners; that being perfectly consistent with the free agency of man, it comprehends all the means in connection with the end; that it is a most glorious display of God's sovereign goodness, being infinitely free, wise, holy and unchangeable; that it utterly excludes boasting, and promotes humility, love, prayer, praise, trust in God, and active imitation of his free mercy; that it encourages the use of means in the highest degree; that it may be ascertained by its effects in all who truly believe the gospel, that it is the foundation of Christian assurance; and that to ascertain it with regard to ourselves demands and deserves the

utmost diligence. (II Tim. 1:8-9; Eph. 1:3-14; I Peter 1:1-2; Rom. 11:5-6; John 15:16; I John 4:19; II Thess.:2:13-14; Acts 13:48; John 10:16; Matt. 20:16; Acts 15:14; Ex. 33:18-19; Matt. 20:15; Eph. 1:11; Rom. 9:23-24; Jer. 31:3; Rom. 11:28-29; James 1:17-18; II Tim. 1:9; Rom. 11:32-36; I Cor. 1:26-31; Rom. 3:27; Rom. 4:16; Col. 3:12; I Cor. 3:5-7; I Cor. 15:10; I Peter 5:10; Acts 1:24; I Thess. 2:13; I Peter 2:9; Luke 18:7; John 15:16; I Thess. 2:12; II Tim. 2:10; I Cor. 9:22; Rom. 8:28-30; John 6:37-40)

X. Of Sanctification

We believe that sanctification is the process by which according to the will of God, we are made partakers of his holiness; that it is a progressive work; that it is begun in regeneration; and that it is carried on in the hearts of believers by the presence and power of the Holy Spirit, the Sealer and Comforter, in the continual use of the appointed means especially the word of God, self-examination, self-denial, watchfulness, and prayer. (I Thess. 4:3; I Thess. 5:23; II Cor. 7:1; II Cor. 13:10; Phil. 3:12-16; I John 2:29; Rom. 8:5; Eph. 1:4; Pro. 4:18; II Cor. 3:18; Heb. 6:1; II Peter 1:5-8; John 3:6; Phil. 1:9-11; Eph. 1:13-14; Phil. 2:12-13; Eph. 4:11-12; I Peter 2:2; II Peter 3:18; II Cor. 13:5; Luke 11:35; Luke 9:23; Matt. 26:41; Eph. 6:18; Eph. 4:30)

XI. Of Perseverance of the Saints

We believe that such only are real believers as endure unto the end: that their persevering attachment to Christ is the grand mark which distinguishes them from superficial professors; that a special providence watches over their welfare, and that they are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation. (John 8:31; I John 2:27-28; I John 3:9; I John 5:18; I John 2:19; John 13:18; Matt. 13:20-21; John 6:66-69; Job 17:9; Rom. 8:28; Matt. 6:30-33; Jer. 32:40; Ps. 121:3; Ps. 91:11-12; Phil. 1:6; Phil. 2:13; Jude 24:25; Heb. 1:14; II Kings 6:16; Heb. 13:5; I John 4:4)

XII. Of the Harmony of the Law and the Gospel

We believe that the law of God is the eternal and unchangeable rule of his moral government; that it is holy, just and good; and that the inability which the scriptures ascribe to fallen men to fulfill its precepts arises entirely from their love of sin; to deliver them from which, and to restore them through a Mediator to unfeigned obedience to the holy law, is one great end of the gospel, and of the means of grace connected with the establishment of the visible Church. (Rom. 3:31; Matt. 5:17; Luke 16:17; Rom. 3:20; Rom. 4:15; Rom. 7:12; Rom. 7:7, 14-22; Gal. 3:21; Ps. 119; Rom. 8:7-8; Josh. 24:19; Jer. 13:23; John 6:44; John 5:44; Rom. 8:2-4; Rom. 10:4; I Tim. 1:5; Heb. 8:10; Jude 20&21)

XIII. Of a Gospel Church

We believe that a visible Church of Christ is a congregation of baptized believers, associated by covenant in the faith and fellowship of the gospel; observing the ordinances of Christ; governed by his laws; and exercising the gifts, rights, and privileges invested in them by his word; that its only scriptural officers are elders² or pastors and deacons whose qualifications, claims and duties are defined in the Epistles to Timothy and Titus. (I Cor. 1:1-3; Matt. 18:17; Acts 5:11; Acts 8:1; Acts 11:21-23; I Cor. 4:17; I Cor. 14:23; III John 9; I Tim. 3:5; Acts 2:41-42; II Cor. 8:5; Acts 2:47; I Cor. 5:12-13; I Cor. 11:2; II Thess. 3:6; Rom. 16:17-20; I Cor. 11:23-24; Matt. 18:15-20; I Cor. 5:6; II Cor. 2:17; I Cor. 4:17; Matt. 28:20; John 14:15; John 15:12; I John 14:21; I Thess. 4:2; II John 6; Gal. 6:2; Eph. 4:7; I Cor. 14:12; Phil. 1:1; Acts 14:23; Acts 15:22; I Tim. 3; Titus 1)

XIV. Of Baptism and the Lord's Supper

We believe that the Christian baptism is the immersion in water of a believer, into the name of the Father, and Son, and Holy Spirit; to show forth in a solemn and beautiful emblem, our faith in the crucified, buried and risen Savior, with its effect, in our death to sin and resurrection to a new life; that it is prerequisite to the privileges of a Church relation, and to the Lord's Supper; in which the members of the Church by the sacred use of bread and the cup⁵, are to commemorate together the dying love of Christ; preceded always by solemn self-examination. (Acts 8:36-39; Matt. 3:5-6; John 3:22-23; John 4:12; Matt. 28:19-20; Mark 16:16; Acts 2:38; Acts 8:12; Acts 16:32-34; Acts 18:8; Acts 10:47-48; Gal. 3:26-28; Rom. 6:4; Col. 2:12; I Peter 3:20-21; Acts 22:16; Acts 2:41-42; I Cor. 11:26; Matt. 26:26-29; Mark 14:22-25; Luke 22:14-20; I Cor. 11:28; I Cor. 5:1-8; I Cor. 10:3-32; I Cor. 11:17-32; John 6:26)

XV. Of the Lord's Day⁶

We believe that the first day of the week is the Lord's Day or Christian Sabbath; and it is to be kept sacred to religious purposes, by the devout observance of all the means of grace, both private and public; and by preparation for the rest that remains⁷ for the people of God. (Acts 20:7; Gen. 2:3; Col. 2:16-17; Mark 2:27; John 20:19; I Cor. 16:1-2; Ex. 20:8; Rev. 1:10; Ps. 118:15, 24; Isa. 58:13-14; Isa. 56:2-8; Heb. 10:24-25; Acts 11:26; Acts 13:44; Luke 4:16; Acts 17:2-3; Ps. 26:8; Ps. 87:3; Heb. 4:3-11)

XVI. Of the Civil Government

We believe that civil government is of divine appointment, for the interests and good order of human society; and that magistrates are to be prayed for, conscientiously honored, and obeyed; except only in things opposed to the will of our Lord Jesus Christ, who is the only Lord of the conscience, and the Prince of the kings of the earth. (Rom. 13:1-7; II Sam. 23:3; Ex. 18:23; Jer. 30:21; Matt. 22:21; Titus 3:1; I Peter 2:13; I Tim. 2:1-4; Acts 5:29; Matt. 28; Dan. 3:15-18; Dan. 6:7-10; Acts 4:18-20; Matt. 23:10; Rom. 14:4; Rev. 19:16; Ps. 72:11; Ps. 2; Rom. 14:9-13)

XVII. Of the Righteous and the Wicked

We believe that there is a radical and essential difference between the righteous and the wicked; that such only as through faith are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and sanctified by the Spirit of our God, are truly righteous in his esteem; while all such as continue in impenitence and unbelief are in his sight wicked, and under the curse; and this distinction holds among men both in and after death. (Mal. 3:18; Pro. 12:26; Isa. 5:20; Gen. 18:23; Jer. 15:19; Acts 10:34-35; Rom. 6:16; Rom. 1:17; Rom. 7:6; I John 2:29; I John 3:7; Rom. 6:18,22; I Cor. 11:32; Pro. 11:31; I Peter 4:17-18; I John 5:19; Gal. 3:10; John 3:36; Isa. 57:21; Ps. 10:4; Isa. 55:6-7; Pro. 14:32; Luke 16:25; John 8:21-24; Pro. 10:24; Luke 12:4-5; Luke 9:23-26; Ecc. 3:17; Matt. 7:13-14)

XVIII. Of the World to Come

We believe that the end of the world is approaching; that at the Last Day Christ will descend from heaven, and raise the dead from the grave to final retribution; that a solemn separation will then take place; that the wicked will be adjudged to endless punishment, and the righteous to endless joy; and that this judgment will fix forever the final state of men in heaven or hell, on principles of righteousness. (I Peter 4:7; I Cor. 7:29-31; Heb. 1:10-12; Matt. 24:35; I John 2:17; Matt. 28:20; Matt. 13:39-40; II Peter 3:3-13; Acts 1:11; Rev. 1:7; Heb. 9:28; Acts 3:21; I Thess 4:13-18; I Thess. 5:1-11; Acts 24:15; I Cor. 15:12-58; Luke 14:14; Dan. 12:2 John 5:28-29; John 6:40; John 11:25-26; II Tim. 1:10; Acts 10:42; Matt. 13:49; Matt. 13:37-43; Matt. 24:30-31; Matt. 25:31-46; Rev. 22:11; I Cor. 6:9-10; Mark 9:43-48; II Peter 2:9; Jude 7; Phil. 3:19; Rom. 6:23; II Cor. 5:10-11; John 4:36; II Cor. 4:18; Rom. 3:5-6; II Thess. 1:6-12; Heb. 6:1-2; I Cor. 4:5; Acts 17:31; Rom. 2:2-16; Rev. 20:11-12; I John 2:28; I John 4:17; II Peter 3:11-12)

The following edits were made to the original text of the 1853 New Hampshire Confession of Faith to clarify certain wording:

¹ Transliteration clarified to YAHWEH from JEHOVAH.

² Substituted “genuine repentance” for “cordial penitent”

³ Substituted “genuine repentance” for “unfeigned contrition”

⁴ Substituted elders in place of bishops. See I Peter 5:1-5 where the functions of elder, shepherd (pastor), and overseer (bishop) are used in the same passage. See also section XII of the 1925 Baptist Faith and Message which says “which are bishops, or elders” indicating one office represented by both titles.

⁵ Substituted “the cup” for “wine” (ref. Matt. 26:27; Luke 22:17)

⁶ Substituted “Of the Lord’s Day” for “Of the Christian Sabbath”

⁷ Substituted “remains” in place of “remaineth”

ARTICLE IV. Statement on Marriage and Sexuality

We believe that the term “marriage” has only one meaning and that is marriage sanctioned by God which joins one man and one woman in a single, exclusive union, as delineated in Scripture. We believe that God intends sexual intimacy to only occur between a man and a woman who are married to each other. We believe that God has commanded that no intimate sexual activity be engaged in outside of a marriage between a man and a woman. We believe that any form of sexual immorality, such as adultery, fornication, homosexuality, bisexual conduct, bestiality, incest, pornography or any attempt to change one’s sex, or disagreement with one’s biological sex, is sinful and offensive to God. We believe that in order to preserve the function and integrity of the Church as the local Body of Christ, and to provide a biblical role model to the Church members and the community, it is imperative that all members, persons employed by the Church in any capacity, or those who serve as volunteers, should abide by and agree to this Statement on Marriage and Sexuality and conduct themselves accordingly. We believe that God offers redemption and restoration to all who confess and forsake their sin, seeking His mercy and forgiveness through Jesus Christ. We believe that every person must be afforded compassion, love, kindness, respect, and dignity. Hateful and harassing behavior or attitudes directed toward any individual are to be repudiated and are not in accord with Scripture nor the doctrines of the Church. (Gen. 1:26-28; Ex. 20:14; Deut. 5:18; Ps. 51:1-6; Prov. 5:15-20; 6:32; 18:22; Eccl. 9:9; Jer. 29:23; Mal. 2:14-16; Matt. 5:31-32; 19:3-9; Mark 10:6-12; Rom. 1:18-32; Acts 15:29; I Cor. 5:9-12; 6:9-11,16-20; 7:1-16; 10:8; Gal. 5:19-21; Eph. 5:3-8; I Th. 4:3-7; I Tim. 1:8-11; Heb. 12:15-17; 13:4; I Jude 5-8; Rev. 2:14-16; 21:8; 22:15)

ARTICLE V. Church Covenant

Having, as we believe, been brought by divine grace to repent and believe in the Lord Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord, and having been baptized upon our profession of faith in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, we do now, in the presence of God and this assembly, most solemnly and joyfully renew our Covenant with one another as one body in Christ. We engage, therefore, by the aid of the Holy Spirit, to work and pray for the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. We will walk together in Christian love, exercising an affectionate care and watchfulness over each other and faithfully admonish and entreat one another as occasion may require. We will not forsake the assembling of ourselves together, nor neglect to pray for ourselves and others.

We will rejoice at each other's happiness and endeavor with tenderness and sympathy to bear each other's burdens and sorrows. We resolve to practice personal and family worship, to train our children in the discipline and instruction of the Lord and to seek the salvation and good of our family, friends and acquaintances. We will seek, by the presence and power of God's Spirit, to live carefully in the world, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts. We will remember that we have been buried with Christ by baptism and raised as a new creation to walk in a manner worthy of Christ having now a special obligation to lead a new and holy life. We will abide by the standards of sexual purity, ethical integrity and spiritual fidelity as taught in the Bible.

We will work together for the continuance of a faithful God-centered ministry in this Church as we sustain its worship, ordinances, discipline, and doctrines. We will contribute cheerfully and regularly to the support of the ministry, the expenses of the Church, the relief of the poor, and the advance of the gospel through all nations. We promise that if in the providence of God we move from this place we will seek as soon as possible to unite with another Church where we can carry out the spirit of this Covenant and the principles of God's word. May the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with us all. Amen.

ARTICLE VI. Leadership and Organization

Under the authority of Jesus Christ and the word of God, the congregation of the Church is responsible to guard the purity of the gospel ministry. The congregation exercises authority through the election of officers to govern the Church and through voting on major decisions within the Church. The vote of the membership of this Church at a properly called members' meeting, as provided in the Bylaws, shall be required to affect the following actions:

1. Accept, reject, or otherwise dispose of any matter submitted to the membership of the Church by the elders, a committee, or raised by motion at a members meeting;
2. Accept members into the Church, give letters of transfer or recommendation to members, or remove members from the Church roll;
3. Discipline members by dismissing them and discipline officers by removing them from office;
4. Elect officers of the Church;
5. Approve the call, position description and salary of vocational elders.
6. Approve the annual budget of the Church, authorize any expenditure of the funds of the Church when such expenditure is not included in an approved budget, and approve any transactions regarding real property;
7. Adopt, amend, or repeal any portion of the Constitution or Bylaws of this Church;

The offices of the Church shall be elder and deacon/deaconess. The elders of the Church are responsible for the spiritual oversight of the Church body. The deacons/deaconesses are responsible for the temporal care of the Church body. The leadership of the Church shall be vested in the elders. This leadership should function in a plurality with the Senior Pastor functioning as a first among equals. The elders are responsible for leading the Church, teaching the word and tending the flock of God in this Church. The elders shall be equal in authority but may be specialized in function. Deacons shall assist the elders by performing services of advice, support, administration and implementation as defined in the Bylaws.

ARTICLE VII. Amendments

This Constitution may be amended by a three-fourths vote of the members present and voting at a members' meeting, provided the amendment shall have been offered in writing at the previous members' meeting, and that the upcoming vote is announced from the pulpit at Church services two successive Sundays prior to such vote. The revised version of this Constitution shall be made available to all Church members by the Church clerk.

BYLAWS

ARTICLE I. Membership

Section 1 – Qualifications

The membership of this Church shall be composed of individuals who are believers in the Lord Jesus Christ and affirm the tenets of the Redeeming Grace Baptist Church Constitution, and who offer evidence, by their confession and conduct, that they are living in accord with their affirmations and this Constitution and Bylaws, and are actively pursuing and continuing in a vital fellowship with the Lord, Jesus Christ.

To qualify for membership in this Church, a person must:

1. Be a believer in Jesus Christ who gives evidence of regeneration.
2. Have been baptized by immersion in obedience to Christ, following his or her regeneration.
3. Wholeheartedly believe in the Christian faith as revealed in the Bible.
4. Uphold the doctrines of our Church as expressed within our Statement of Faith.
5. Honor the commitments expressed in the Church Covenant.

While baptism by immersion is not necessary for salvation, it is better understood as a public profession of faith and an important step of obedience in every believer's walk with Christ that results from God's work in the heart to follow his word. For this reason, believer's baptism by immersion is a requirement for membership.

Section 2 – Admission of Members

The normal process for becoming a member includes:

1. The candidate shall complete all sessions of the new members class.
2. The candidate's qualification for membership will be assessed in an interview with an elder.
3. If a candidate is coming from a Church of like faith a letter of recommendation shall be requested.
4. A vote of three-fourths of the members present at any regular or special members' meeting on the basis of the person's profession of faith.

Section 3 – Duties & Privileges

All persons uniting with this Church as a member shall be privileged and expected to participate in and contribute to the ministry of the Church, consistent with God's leading and giftedness, time, and material resources each has received from the Lord. All members of this Church are accountable to fulfill the responsibilities of membership. Therefore, it is the privilege and responsibility of members to attend members' meetings.

Non-members can serve in various ministries of the Church with a member to whom they are accountable. Notwithstanding, a non-member must be a Christian to serve in such a capacity. Non-members may not vote, teach, or hold any office to which they would be providing leadership in the Church. Notwithstanding, non-members may serve the Church for purposes of administration and professional consultation.

Section 4 – Church Discipline

Formative discipline is the spiritual growth that inherently occurs during preaching, teaching, and exercise of other ministries in the Church. When formative discipline fails due to sin, corrective discipline is then necessary. Corrective discipline is conducted when any member of the Church is consistently neglectful of his or her duties as defined in the Church Covenant or guilty of conduct by which the name of our Lord Jesus Christ may be dishonored and the welfare of the Church hindered. When corrective discipline becomes necessary the purpose is always for the good of the Church and member who has sinned. Corrective discipline will follow the instructions of our Lord as given in Matthew 18:15-17 and the example of other Scripture. Such discipline can include admonition by the elders or congregation, suspension from the Lord's Table for

a definite period, deposition from office, and excommunication. (Matthew 18:15-17; 2 Thessalonians 3:14-15; 1 Timothy 5:19-20; 1 Corinthians 5:4-5)

The goal of corrective discipline is always for the restoration of the one being disciplined, welfare of the Church and glory of God. More specifically corrective discipline is employed:

- To serve the one being disciplined in aiding repentance, reconciliation, and growth in grace. (Prov. 15:5; 29:15; 1 Cor. 4:14; Eph. 6:4; 1 Tim. 3:4-5; Heb.12:1-11; Psalm 119:115; 141:5; Prov. 17:10; 25:12; 27:5; Ecclesiastes 7:5; Matthew 7:26-27; 18:15-17; Luke 17:3; Acts 2:40; 1 Cor. 5:5; Galatians 6:1-5; 2 Thess. 3:6, 14-15; 1 Tim. 1:20; Titus 1:13-14; James 1:22)
- For the instruction in righteousness and good of other Christians, as an example to them (Prov. 13:20; Rom. 15:14; 1 Cor. 5:11; 15:33; Col. 3:16; 1 Thess. 5:14; 1 Tim. 5:20; Titus 1:11; Heb. 10:24-25)
- For the purity of the Church as a whole (1 Cor. 5:6-7; 2 Cor. 13:10; Eph. 5:27; 2 John 10; Jude 24; Revelation 21:2)
- For the good of our corporate witness to non-Christians (Prov. 28:7; Matt. 5:13-16; John 13:35; Acts 5:1-14; Eph. 5:11; 1 Tim. 3:7; 2 Peter 2:2; 1 John 3:10)
- Supremely for the glory of God by reflecting His holy character (Deut. 5:11; 1 Kings 11:2; 2 Chronicles 19:2; Ezra 6:21; Nehemiah 9:2; Isaiah 52:11; Ezek. 36:20; Matt. 5:16; John 15:8; 18:17,25; Rom. 2:24; 15:5-6; 2 Cor. 6:14-7:1; Eph. 1:4; 5:27; 1 Pet. 2:12)

Section 5 – Dismissal of Members

Upon the recommendation of the elders, membership may be terminated with the vote of two-thirds of the members present at any regular or special members' meeting. Termination of membership shall be recognized by the Church following the death, transfer of membership, personal request, non-attendance or discipline of any Church member. The Church shall have authority to refuse a member's voluntary resignation or transfer of membership to another Church for proceeding with a process of Church discipline.

Members who willfully and without valid reason have absented themselves from regular Lord's Day services for a period of six months shall be placed on a care list for follow up and encouragement. Such a member would be encouraged to return to the fellowship but if there is no response after one year of non-attendance the member would be brought to the congregation for removal from membership.

ARTICLE II. CHURCH MEETINGS

Section 1 – Worship Meetings

Worship services shall be held each Lord's Day and may be held on other days for special events.

Section 2 – Members' Meetings

In every meeting together, members shall act in that spirit of mutual trust, openness, and loving consideration which is appropriate within the body of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Regular meetings of the Church shall be conducted at least four times a year or more often if deemed necessary by the elders. The date, time and purpose of any regular or special meeting shall be announced at all public services and other appropriate ways at least two weeks preceding the meeting.

Provided all constitutional provisions for notification have been met and at the discretion of the moderator, a quorum shall be understood to be met by those members present. All votes shall be tallied based on the number of votes cast by members present. On any matter that is brought to a vote, a two-thirds vote is needed for it to pass (unless the Church Constitution or these Bylaws specify otherwise). Abstentions will not be considered as votes cast. Vote by proxy will not be accepted.

The elders shall designate a moderator to preside at members' meetings. The elders shall see that the stated meetings of the Church are regularly held and that required reports are submitted to the Church by responsible members for presentation at such meetings.

There shall be an annual members' meeting, at which normally officers are elected, and a budget approved by the membership no less than one month prior to the start of the fiscal year. The fiscal year will commence on January 1 and end on December 31 of the same year.

Regarding items of new business, a member will submit a proposed item to the elders for review at least two weeks prior to the members' meeting. At the discretion of the moderator, any new business submitted at a members' meeting may be discussed at the meeting or referred to the elders or appropriate ministry for review and report at the next members' meeting.

ARTICLE III. OFFICERS

Section 1 – Summary

In addition to the biblical offices of elder and deacon, our Church recognizes the administrative positions under this Constitution of clerk and treasurer. All officers of the Church must be members of this Church prior to assuming their responsibilities. Upon the recommendation of the elders other support staff can be identified to assist the elders in coordinating and carrying out the ministries of the Church.

Section 2 – Elders

Subject to the will of the congregation, the elders shall provide oversight to the overall ministry of the Church. In keeping with the principles set forth in Acts 6:1-6; 1 Tim. 3:1-7; 5:17; Tit. 1:5-9; Jas. 5:14; and 1 Pet. 5:1-4, the elders shall seek the mind of Christ through the guidance of the Holy Spirit and the word of God as they undertake the work of shepherding God's flock. The elders shall teach and exhort; refute those who contradict the truth; care for the Church's members; devote themselves to prayer, and to the oversight of the congregation leading the Church to fulfill its ministries. The responsibilities of the elders shall include the following:

1. Oversee worship services
2. Administer the ordinances of baptism and the Lord's Supper
3. Equip the membership for the work of the ministry
4. Encourage and teach sound doctrine, admonish and correct error
5. Oversee the process of Church discipline
6. Coordinate and promote the ministries of the Church
7. Mobilize the Church for local & world missions
8. Examine and instruct prospective members
9. Examine and recommend all prospective candidates for offices and positions
10. Oversee the work of the deacons/deaconesses.
11. Appoint Church agents and committees
12. Ensure that all who minister the word to the congregation share our fundamental convictions

The number of elders shall be comprised of not less than three men who satisfy the qualifications for the office of elder set forth in 1 Tim. 3:1-7 and Tit. 1:6-9. Only men may serve as elders in accordance with 1 Tim. 2:12; 3:2. A majority of the active eldership shall be composed of Church members not in the regular pay of the Church. No elder shall hold the office of deacon during his tenure. Although biblically and functionally there is no difference among the elders, for the purpose of this Constitution those elders receiving compensation from the Church will be called "vocational elders" and those elders not receiving compensation from the Church will be called "lay elders."

The Church shall recognize male members gifted and willing to serve in this calling, in accordance with the constitutional provisions on elections. These men shall be received as gifts of Christ to His Church and set apart as elders. Lay elders shall be eligible for a sabbatical from elder service when deemed appropriate by the elders. Recognition of lay elders shall be reaffirmed by the Church triennially or after a period of sabbatical. Vocational elders shall be granted periodic sabbatical leave in accordance with adopted policy.

An elder's term of office may be terminated by resignation or by dismissal. Any two members with reason to believe that an elder should be dismissed should express such concern to the elders and, if need be only afterwards, to the congregation. Any such action shall be done in accordance with the instructions of our Lord in Matt. 18:15-17 and 1 Tim. 5:17-21. Any elder may be dismissed by a two-thirds vote of the members at any formally called members' meeting of the Church.

The elders will nominate individuals to serve as deacons/deaconesses who will assist the elders in carrying out the mission and vision of the Church. In addition, the elders will enlist ministry leaders who will provide support to specific ministries of the Church. The elders may also establish committees (i.e. Ministry Teams). Such Ministry Teams shall perform tasks (short or long term) that are solely in accordance with the expressed purpose of our ministry.

The elders shall have responsibility for the employment, supervision, and evaluation of staff members or may delegate that responsibility on a case-by-case basis.

A paid or volunteer staff position does not in and of itself constitute an elder's position. In proposing paid staff positions, the elders shall present a position description and compensation package to the membership for approval. The calling of vocational elders shall be governed by Article IV, Section III of these Bylaws.

The elders shall elect an elder to serve as chairman of elders' meetings. Elders' meetings shall be held regularly for the purpose of prayer, shepherding, discernment, and ministry guidance. The elders will choose among themselves how decisions will be made within elder's meetings.

Section 3 – Deacons & Deaconesses

The office of deacon/deaconess is described in 1 Tim. 3:8-13 and Acts 6:1-7. In accordance with Article IV on elections the Church shall recognize members who possess gifts of ministry and are called to serve the physical needs of the church. The number of deacons/deaconesses shall be determined by the needs of ministry along with the call and availability of qualified candidates. Also, the nature of the need will determine whether a deacon or deaconess would best meet the need. This recognition shall be reaffirmed by the Church annually.

Deacons/deaconesses exercise a ministry of service and administration not a ministry of spiritual leadership. As those who free the elders to provide spiritual oversight to the church, the deacons/deaconesses each coordinate various ministries that relate to the physical needs of the congregation. At their discretion, the deacons/deaconesses gather volunteers in support of their work. At the elders' recommendation, the Church may recognize deacons/deaconesses to serve specific roles as needs arise. Deacons/deaconesses will support ministries such as:

1. Mercy Ministries which includes caring for the sick and the sorrowing.
2. Benevolence Ministry which administers the benevolence fund in accordance with the approved budget.
3. Worship Support which includes preparation for the ordinances and coordinating the usher ministry.
4. Property maintenance which includes the normal care and maintenance of Church properties.
5. First Impressions Ministry
6. Stewardship Ministry

As recognized servants the deacons/deaconesses may be organized in the most fitting way to accomplish the mission of the Church in accordance with their nomination by the elders and election by the membership of the Church. There is no requirement that the deacons/deaconesses meet as a committee of the whole.

Section 4 – Senior Pastor

The senior pastor shall be an elder. He shall perform the duties of an elder described in Section 2, above, and shall be recognized by the Church as particularly gifted and called to the full-time ministry of preaching and teaching. His call shall not be subject to the triennial reaffirmation set out in Section 2, for elders. His call shall be defined as per Article 4, Section 3. He shall preach on the Lord's Day, administer the ordinances of baptism and communion, and perform such other duties as usually pertain to that office, or as set forth in the Constitution. In the absence or incapacity of the senior pastor the elders shall delegate his responsibilities as appropriate.

Section 5 – Associate Pastors

The Church may call additional pastors whose relationship to the senior pastor is that of associate. An associate pastor shall be an elder. He shall perform the duties of an elder described in Section 2, above, and shall be recognized by the Church as particularly gifted and called to the vocational ministry of preaching and teaching. His call shall not be subject to the triennial reaffirmation set out in Section 2, for elders. His call shall be defined as per Article 4, Section 3.

The elders shall define the responsibilities of the associate pastor(s). He shall assist the senior pastor in the performance of his regular duties and shall perform any other duties as usually pertain to the office of pastor, or as set forth in the Constitution, or which may be specifically assigned to him. In the absence or incapacity of the senior pastor for defined periods of time (such as sabbatical or illness), the associate pastor(s) will normally assume the daily responsibilities for his duties under the oversight of the elders.

Section 6 – Other Staff

With the approval of the elders and in keeping with the annual Church budget the senior pastor may hire additional staff to assist with ministry. These may include designations as Ministry Staff, Intern, or Administrative Staff. These positions could specialize in a particular ministry or serve the congregation in a broader sense. Staff will not automatically be recognized as elders unless nominated by the elders and elected by the congregation, in accordance with Article 3, Section 2. The senior pastor shall assign the responsibilities of staff or delegate when appropriate. While staff are accountable to the elders they shall be directly supervised by the senior pastor.

Section 7 – Clerk

It shall be the duty of the clerk to record the minutes of all regular and special members' meetings of the Church, to preserve an accurate roll of the membership, and to render reports as requested by the elders or the Church.

In the absence or incapacity of the clerk, the elders shall appoint a member to perform the duties of the clerk. The clerk shall ensure that dated copies of the most recent revision of this Constitution shall be available for all Church members. The term of service for the clerk shall be one year.

Section 8 – Treasurer

The treasurer, who shall not be an active elder or a paid Church staff member, shall ensure that all funds and securities of the Church are properly secured in such banks, financial institutions, or depositories. The treasurer shall also ensure that full and accurate accounts of receipts and disbursements are kept in books belonging to the Church, and that adequate controls are implemented to guarantee that all funds belonging to the Church are appropriately handled by any officer, employee, or agent of the Church. The treasurer shall render to the elders annually, or whenever they may require it, an account of all transactions as treasurer and of the financial condition of the Church. The treasurer shall also be responsible for presenting regular reports of the account balances, revenues, and expenses of the Church at regular members' meetings. The term of service for the treasurer shall be one year.

Section 9 – Trustees

For purposes of compliance with the nonprofit corporation laws of the state of Maryland, at least three members will constitute a board of trustees. The board of trustees will determine internally the positions of President, Secretary, and Treasurer. The board of trustees, under the oversight of the elders, will act as agents of the Church in accordance with the will of the membership of the Church. They shall hold in trust the Church property and shall act in the capacity of the trustees of the Church, being specifically named as the legal authority for the Church. The board of trustees may only act at the direction of the congregation when executing legal agreements. Trustees are elected by the membership of the church annually.

ARTICLE IV. Elections

Section 1 – Summary

The process for Church elections shall be carried out in accordance with the following principles:

1. Substantial prayer, both individually and corporately, shall be an integral part of the election process.
2. Nominations shall proceed with the support of the elders.
3. All candidates for Church office shall be treated with the grace, kindness, and honesty appropriate in evaluating fellow members.
4. The election process shall express that spirit of mutual trust, openness, and loving consideration which is appropriate within the body of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Section 2 – Selection of Officers

The election of officers shall be held at a regularly scheduled members' meeting of the Church. The elders may seek recommendations and involvement from the general membership in the nomination process. Such recommendations shall be given in private and will be given due consideration by the elders. All such considerations will remain confidential.

The process for electing elders and deacons/deaconesses will be the same. After a season of examination and training a slate of names of nominees to serve as elder and deacon/deaconess shall be presented by the elders and made known to the Church at least four Sundays prior to voting. No name shall be added to the list of nominees which was not included in the original list. Once nominees have been announced, any member with reason to believe that a nominated candidate is unqualified for an office should express such concern to the elders. Members intending to speak in opposition to a candidate should privately express their objection to the elders as far in advance as possible before the relevant members' meeting at which the Church votes on the candidates. When a period of four Sundays has elapsed, the elders shall at the next regular members' meeting present a final list of nominees to the Church, who shall vote Yes or No on each individual nominee in turn. Any nominee having the approval of at least three-quarters of the members present and voting on the nominee shall begin serving in the office to which they were elected.

A slate of names of nominees to serve as clerk, treasurer, and board of trustees shall also be presented by the elders at least four Sundays prior to voting. All nominated persons receiving a three-fourths majority of all votes cast shall be elected to serve.

Section 3 – Calling of Vocational Elders (Sr. Pastor and Associate Pastors)

In the calling of any man to a vocational elder position, the same basic process of calling an elder must be followed. In addition, the Church shall be given adequate opportunity to assess the gifts and spiritual life of any potential candidate.

In selecting a vocational elder, his gifts in preaching and teaching and his commitment to minister personally to the members of this Church will be prerequisites. A committee will be established to assess candidates. The committee shall be nominated by the elders and approved by the congregation. This committee will consist of members of the congregation and shall be chaired by a lay elder. In addition, the Church shall receive assurance from the elders that, having interviewed the man concerned, they are in no doubt as to his wholehearted assent to the Statement of Faith and Church Covenant. The Church must be given opportunity

to assess the preaching gifts of any candidate for vocational elder. The elders shall bring only one recommendation to the Church at a time.

Notice of the nomination of a man to be elected to membership and called as a vocational elder shall be given at two Sunday morning services prior to the vote at a members' meeting. The call of a vocational elder shall take place at a members' meeting set aside for that purpose. The extension of a call shall be made upon an affirmative vote of three-fourths of the voting membership present.

ARTICLE V. Finances

Section 1 – Summary

No method of raising funds shall occur which is in conflict with the scriptural ideals of the Church.

It is understood that membership in this Church involves financial obligations to support the Church and its causes with regular and proportionate giving. Each member shall be encouraged in scriptural giving, with tithing as the ideal minimum. Special offerings may be sought by the Church, or by any of its organizations, with the approval of the elders.

Section 2 – Stewardship Ministry Team

While the elders have the responsibility to oversee all matters of the Church, including finances, they shall appoint a Stewardship Ministry Team to provide day to day oversight in this activity. The Stewardship Ministry Team shall consist of at least five people including the deacon of stewardship serving as chair, one lay elder and the Church treasurer.

It shall be the responsibility of the Stewardship Ministry Team to present an annual budget to the elders for their recommendation and to the congregation for approval. The day to day oversight of the Church's finances shall be in the care of the Stewardship Ministry Team which shall keep the elders and congregation regularly informed regarding the finances of the Church by presenting reports at a minimum of four regular members' meetings each year. Matters involving staff compensation shall be the responsibility of the lay members of the elders with the consultation of the Stewardship Ministry Team.

Section 3 – Budget

The financial planning of the Church shall be accomplished through the annual budget. The Stewardship Ministry Team shall present the budget to the elders for approval. Not less than four Sundays before the final members' meeting of the year, the proposed budget shall be made available to the members of the Church for review. At the last regular members' meeting of the year, the budget shall be adopted upon the motion of the Stewardship Ministry Team and the subsequent agreement of two-thirds of the members present and voting on the budget.

The budget shall be voted on as a whole. Once adopted, the total amount budgeted shall not be overspent. The Stewardship Ministry Team shall have responsibility to oversee and faithfully disburse the budget. Amendments to the budget shall be adopted upon the motion of the Stewardship Ministry Team and the subsequent agreement of a two-thirds of the members present and voting on the question at any members' meeting.

Oversight of and authority over all other resources of the Church shall be vested in the assembled congregation. Upon the recommendation of the elders and the subsequent agreement of two-thirds of the members present and voting on the question at any members' meeting, the congregation may fund preapproved designated accounts distinct from the operating budget which shall be under the oversight of the Stewardship Ministry Team.

Section 4 – Giving

Members of the church are expected to support the overall ministry of the church through regular tithes and offerings to the general fund. In addition to these offerings, designated gifts can be made but designated accounts must be approved by the Stewardship Ministry Team in accordance with adopted policy.

ARTICLE VI. Property

The Church's facilities may not be used in a manner contrary to the Statement of Faith and Covenant outlined in the Church Constitution.

Should a condition arise at any time in the future when for any reason the Church work cannot continue, the Church property shall be sold to retire any debt, and the remaining proceeds shall be donated equally between the International Mission Board of the Southern Baptist Convention and the North American Mission Board of the Southern Baptist Convention.

ARTICLE VII. Relationships and Affiliation

While this Church is not subject to the control of any other ecclesiastical body it does work in friendly cooperation with the churches of the Southern Baptist Convention, the Mid-Atlantic Baptist Network, and Potomac Baptist Association.

In addition, this Church will voluntarily participate in a local network with other likeminded SBC churches whose goal is to advance the gospel. The goal of this network will be churches working together in church planting efforts, volunteer mission activities, and other cooperative opportunities. The network will exist to enable participating churches to take part in mission and evangelistic efforts more effectively than they are able to do on their own.

ARTICLE VIII. Dispute Resolution

Believing that the Bible commands Christians to make every effort to live at peace and to resolve disputes with each other in private or within the Christian Church (see, e.g., Matt. 18:15-20; 1 Cor. 6:1-8), the Church shall urge its members to resolve conflict among themselves according to biblically based principles, without reliance on the secular courts unless obligated by law. Consistent with its call to peacemaking, the Church shall encourage the use of biblically based principles and the avoidance of suits of law to resolve disputes between itself and those outside the Church, whether Christian or non-Christian and whether individuals or corporate entities. The elders shall adopt policies and procedures to affect these aspirations.

ARTICLE IX. Policy Handbook

Church policies shall be maintained by the Church clerk in a policy handbook and made available to members upon request. The elders may at their discretion allow certain committees or ministry teams to develop policies, but these will not be in effect until approved by the elders and voted on at a regularly scheduled members' meeting. Policies in no way constitute a change in these Bylaws or the Constitution.

ARTICLE X. Amendments

These Bylaws may be amended by a two-thirds vote of the members present and voting at a members' meeting, provided the amendment shall have been offered in writing at the previous members' meeting, and that the upcoming vote is announced from the pulpit at Church services two successive Sundays prior to such vote. The revised version of these Bylaws shall be made available to all Church members by the Church clerk.